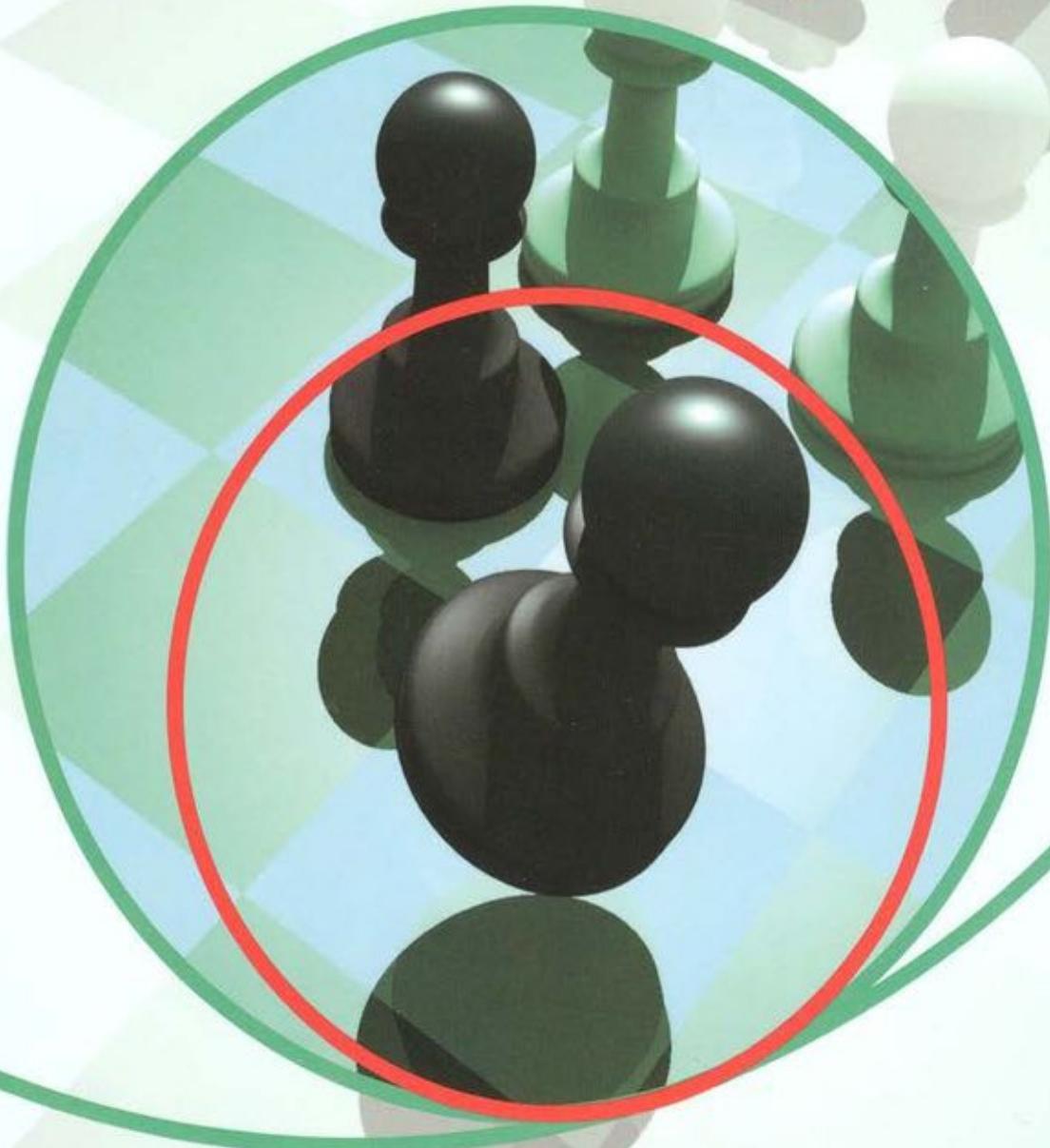


Cyrus Lakdawala

the Slav

move by move



EVERYMAN CHESS



Cyrus Lakdawala

the Slav

move by move

EVERYMAN CHESS

www.everymancross.com

First published in 2011 by Gloucester Publishers plc (formerly Everyman Publishers plc),
Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT

Copyright © 2011 Cyrus Lakdawala

The right of Cyrus Lakdawala to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted
in accordance with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a
retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic,
electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permis-
sion of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

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

ISBN: 978 1 85744 678 4

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

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess, Northburgh House,
10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT
tel: 020 7253 7887 fax: 020 7490 3708
email: info@everymchess.com; website: www.everymchess.com

Everyman is the registered trade mark of Random House Inc. and is used in this work under
licence from Random House Inc.

Everyman Chess Series

Chief advisor: Byron Jacobs
Commissioning editor: John Emms
Assistant editor: Richard Palliser

Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.
Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.
Printed and bound in the US by Versa Press.

Contents

Series Foreword	5
Bibliography	7
Introduction	9
1 The Mainline Dutch Variation	17
2 6 ♕e5	111
3 6 ♔h4	166
4 The Geller Gambit	196
5 Fifth Move Alternatives	225
6 4 e3 Lines and 3 ♔c3 dxс4	248
7 Fourth Move Alternatives	306
8 The Exchange Slav	340
9 Slav Versus Réti and King's Indian Attack	377
Index of Variations	407
Index of Games	413

Series Foreword

Move by Move is a series of opening books which uses a question-and-answer format. One of our main aims of the series is to replicate – as much as possible – lessons between chess teachers and students.

All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions and complete exercises, to test their skills in chess openings and indeed in other key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess openings, and also to study chess in general.

Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms
Everyman Chess

Bibliography

Books

- Caro-Kann Defence: Panov Attack*, Anatoly Karpov and Mikhail Podgaets (Batsford 2006)
- Chess Explained: The Main-Line Slav*, David Vigorito (Gambit 2009)
- Dealing with d4 Deviations*, John Cox (Everyman Chess 2005)
- English: Franco, Slav and Flank Defences*, John Watson (Batsford 1981)
- Gambits in the Slav*, Jeremy Silman and John Donaldson (Chess Enterprises 1993)
- Grandmaster Repertoire: 1 d4 (Volume One)*, Boris Avrukh (Quality Chess 2009)
- My Great Predecessors Part I*, Garry Kasparov (Everyman Chess 2003)
- Play 1 d4!*, Richard Palliser (Batsford 2003)
- Semi-Slav Defense: Non-Meran Variations*, John Donaldson and Jeremy Silman (Summit 1988)
- Slav Defence: Meran Variation*, Rini Kuijf (New in Chess 1992)
- Starting Out: Slav and Semi-Slav*, Glenn Flear (Everyman Chess 2005)
- Starting Out: The Colle*, Richard Palliser (Everyman Chess 2007)
- The ...a6 Slav*, Glenn Flear (Everyman Chess 2003)
- The Chebanenko Slav According to Bologan*, Victor Bologan (New in Chess 2008)
- The Complete Semi-Slav*, Peter Wells (Holt 1994)
- The Exchange Variation of the Slav*, Jeremy Silman and John Donaldson (Chess Enterprises 1994)
- The Gambit Guide to the Torre Attack*, Graham Burgess (Gambit 1999)
- The Meran System*, Steffen Pedersen (Gambit 2000)
- The Semi-Slav*, Matthew Sadler (Chess Press 1998)
- The Slav for the Tournament Player*, Glenn Flear (Batsford 1988)
- The Slav versus 1 d4*, Jeremy Silman and John Donaldson (Chess Enterprises 1996)
- The Slav*, Graham Burgess (Gambit 2001)
- The Slav*, Matthew Sadler (Chess Press 1997)

Electronic/Online

ChessBase 10

Chess Today (with annotations from Alexander Baburin and Mikhail Golubev)

Chesspub.com

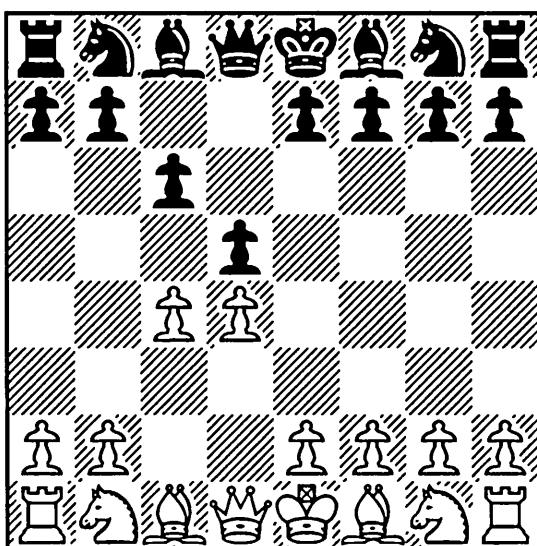
Chesslive database

The Week in Chess

Introduction

The Slav has been around for a long time. For your viewing pleasure, here it is in all its glory!

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6



World Champion Dr. Max Euwe elevated it to the world stage when he defended the Black side against Alekhine in their World Championship matches of 1935 and 1937. Today, the Slav is considered the most solid and most pedigreed option against queen's pawn openings, and is championed by 9 out of the 10 top players in the world. (We stockholders of Slavcorp Industries Incorporated still wait to see if Radjabov will get on board, but so far it's been a no-go from this one holdout GM who continues to resist our attempts at a hostile takeover and insists on playing the King's Indian.)

From beginningless time to about the 1930s, virtually everyone responded to 1 d4 with 1...d5 and the Queen's Gambit Declined with 2 c4 e6. The emergence of the Slav provided Black with a path which escaped some of the troubles that plagued QGD players:

1. In the QGD Black shuts in his light-squared bishop. With the Slav Black plays 2...c6, and Black's bishop is free to roam, usually to f5 but sometimes to g4 or even b7 and a6 in some of the gambit lines.

2. When White plays ♜g5 in the QGD he pins the f6-knight. In the Slav we have yet to play ...e6, so there is no pin with ♜g5. In fact ♜g5 often turns out to be an illogical move for White, since Black may respond with ...♝e4 or in some cases ...♞a5.

3. With the Slav we don't immediately allow White a structural imbalance. In the QGD Tarrasch Black gets handed an isolani, and in the Exchange QGD White gets the minority attack on the queenside.

Enough shop talk. I don't need to sell you on the Slav, perhaps the most popular chess opening in the world.

The Format of the Book

The book is designed to mimic a chess lesson with a question and answer format. Some of the questions are authentic, from my students. Keep in mind that students range from 1100-2400, so some are basic; others rather sophisticated. We work in an interactive format and the reader is expected to put in some effort. The book contains various exercises featuring planning, calculation, multiple choice quizzes, combination alerts, critical decisions and yes, even homework assignments. This is an opening book designed for club-level players and the emphasis remains just that. But the focus isn't exclusively there, and we also touch on middlegame and endgame training. I want you to get better at chess, not just the Slav!

An Early Slav Game

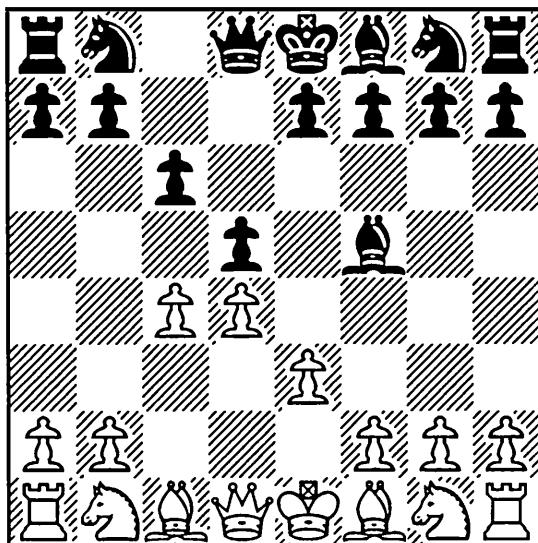
Let's begin the book by looking at one of the earliest Slav encounters:

Game 1
J.Zukertort-W.Steinitz
World Championship (Game 1), USA 1886

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6

One normally associates the Slav in World Championship games with Euwe and Kramnik. Well now you know: the Slav has been around for a while.

3 e3 ♜f5



Steinitz follows Matthew Sadler's suggestion from his 1997 book on the Slav. I wonder if he had access to a time machine. I admit I am a little hurt that Steinitz followed Sadler's line and not mine from this book.

I recommend the lines 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6, and 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (see Chapter 6).

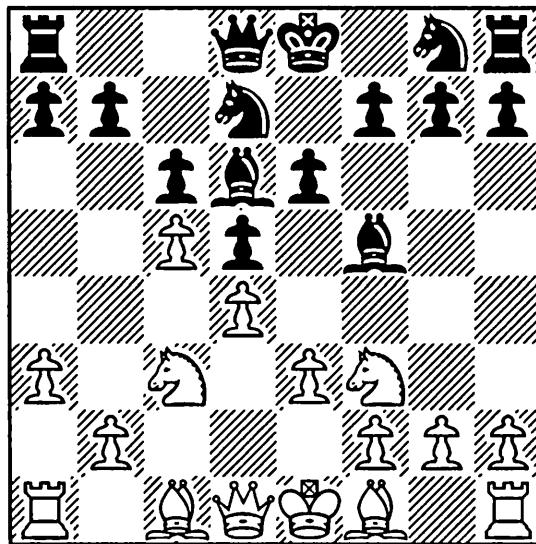
4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6 a3

Alternatively:

a) 6 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 7 c5 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 10 g4 $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ exf5 12 gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and White's bishop pair doesn't make up for the damage to his structure, E.Meduna-K.Rasmussen, Manila Olympiad 1992.

b) 6 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 7 e4 dxe4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12 b3 0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a5 and the exchange of a pair of pieces gives Black equality, V.Kosyrev-A.Dreev, Moscow 2003.

6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7 c5?!



Question: This move looks quite strong.
Why did you give it a dubious mark?

Answer: 7 c5?! is the kind of move which is played all the time at club level. Some of my students are fearful of this plan by White no matter how much I tell them it's harmless. My reassurances go unheeded and are akin to lecturing the wind on the virtues of keeping still. In reality, Black should welcome an unprovoked c5. His d5-pawn is no longer under pressure which means he can hit back with ...e5 soon.

The move is also a poor choice from Zukertort's perspective: Zukertort, a lion when attacking, held his own against Steinitz in open games. Tragically, Steinitz made him look like a pre-schooler in closed positions. Surely Zukertort must have been aware of this fact. So then why block the position with his last move?

7... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 8 b4 e5 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$

He blows his last chance to keep the position somewhat open with 10 dxe5!.

10...e4

Too late now. The caravan runs from b7 to e4. Black may already stand better since his chances on the kingside outweigh White's queenside attack.

11 ♜d2 h5 12 h3 ♜f8!

The knight seeks action on the kingside.

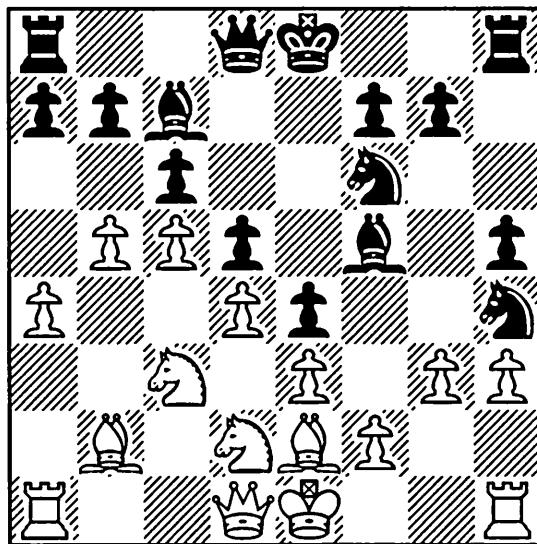
13 a4 ♜g6 14 b5

Rybka, which is closed-game challenged much like Zukertort, recommends the moronic 14 a5?. After 14...a6! White just shuts down all his counterplay on the queenside while Black is boss on the kingside. Even if White castles queenside, which he should, Black makes headway on the kingside due to his massive space advantage.

14...♜h4 15 g3?!

Taking the bait.

In 1886, a retreat like 15 ♜f1! violated chivalric law, but it was White's best move. He shouldn't weaken further.



Exercise (multiple choice): What course should Black take? The options are:

- a) 15...♜g6. Back off, the knight has achieved its aim, creating weaknesses.
- b) 15...♜f3+. Sac a pawn to open the e4-square.
- c) 15...♜g2+. The knight goes on a suicide mission, intending to sac on e3.

Answer: 15...♜g2+!

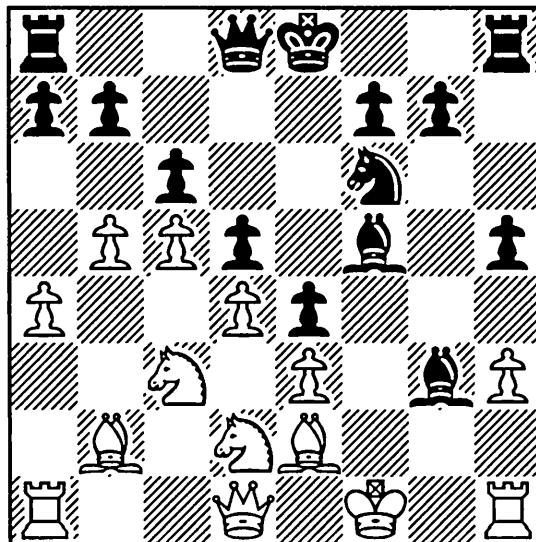
Black's knight plunges into the suicide mission to whip up an attack for its comrades.

16 ♜f1 ♜xe3+ 17 fxe3 ♜xg3

For the piece Black gets:

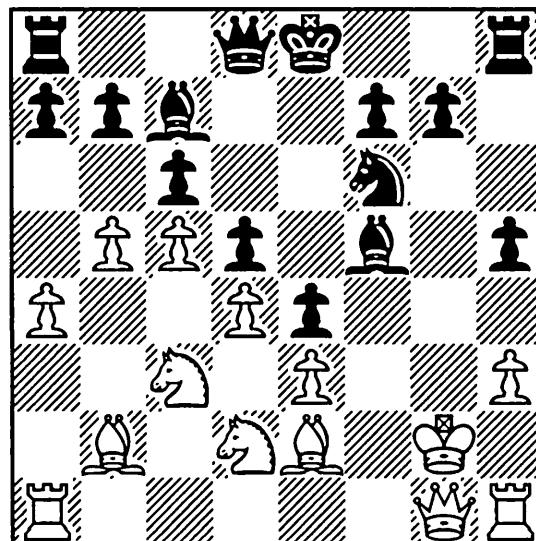
1. Two pawns;
2. A perpetually exposed white king; and
3. A potential pawn avalanche on the kingside.

Conclusion: The sac is sound and White's position becomes very difficult to navigate.



18 ♕g2 ♜c7 19 ♖g1?

White plans a five kilometre fun-run to the queenside with his king but picks the wrong way to go about it. 19 ♔f1! preparing ♔f2, ♔e1 and ♔d2 was his best plan.



Exercise: Find a method of halting White's plan.

Answer: 19...♝h6!

Now ...♝g6 is a very strong idea.

20 ♔f1

20 ♔f2?? is even worse: 20...♝g6 21 ♖b1 ♜g3+ 22 ♔f1 ♖d7 23 ♔d1 ♜xh3+ 24 ♔e2 ♜g4+ and White gets crushed.

20...♝g6 21 ♖f2 ♖d7 22 bxc6

22 h4?? ♜h3+ 23 ♔e1 ♜g3 drops the queen.

The Slav: Move by Move

22...bxc6 23 ♜g1 ♜xh3+

Picking up a third pawn for the piece. White doesn't have an iota of counterplay.

24 ♔e1 ♜g4 25 ♜xg4 ♜xg4 26 ♜e2 ♜e7 27 ♜f4?

27 ♔d1 was better. White's king should put on his Air Jordan running shoes and take off fast for the queenside.

27...♜h6?!

Wasting a tempo. 27...♜f6! 28 ♜h4 ♜xf4 29 exf4 e3! 30 ♜f1 ♜b8 31 ♜c3 ♜e4 threatens mate with ...♜b1+, or better yet, ...♜b1+!.

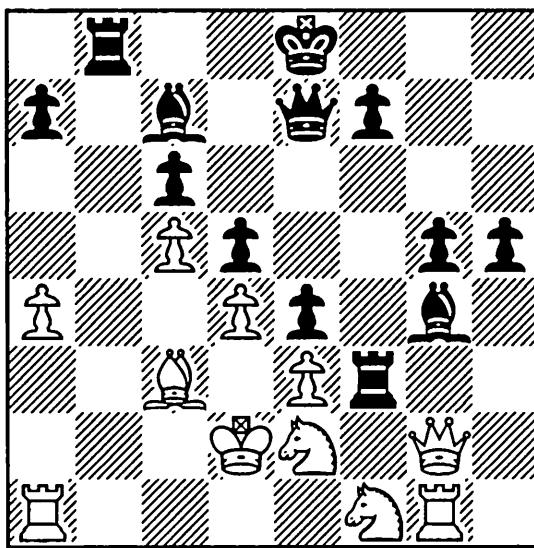
28 ♜c3

28 ♜b3 ♜f6 29 ♜h4 ♜xf4 30 exf4 ♜b7 31 ♜g3 ♜xf4 is also hopeless for White.

28...g5 29 ♜e2 ♜f6 30 ♜g2 ♜f3!

Making inroads into White's position.

31 ♜f1 ♜b8 32 ♔d2?



Exercise: Black has a way of reducing White to total paralysis. How?

32...f5

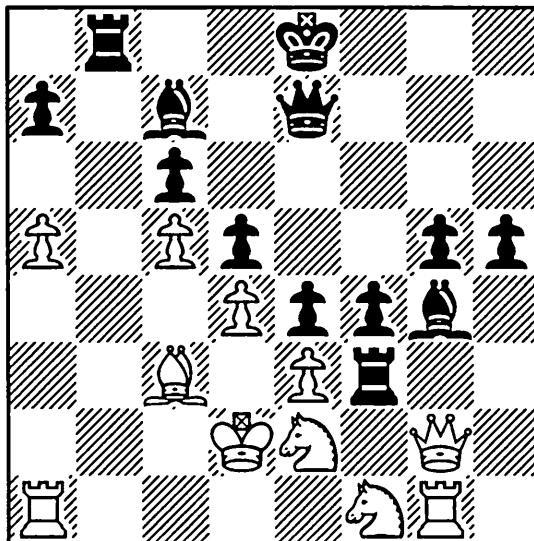
This plan is okay, but not Black's best. Kasparov, in his monumental series *My Great Predecessors*, claimed the old lions were ginormous patzers in comparison to today's top players. He intimated that a current master-strength player might be able to take down a world championship contender if transported back a couple hundred years. Of course such comparisons can't be made, and a player's strength should be judged for his own time. It's not out of the realm of possibility that if we transported Morphy in his prime to our time, gave him a database and books spanning the last 50 years (don't give him *My System* or Morphy may plateau at a 1599 rating!), and gave him access to a good psychiatrist, he could be kicking Topalov's, Anand's, Carlsen's, and yes, Kasparov's collected butts within a few years! And if not that, then at least playing competitively within the group.

Answer: 32... $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ is the move. After 33 $\mathbb{W}h1$ g4 34 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ h4 37 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}f3$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ White is in zugzwang with nearly all his pieces remaining!

33 a5

I'm afraid the queenside attack isn't destined to go very far.

33...f4

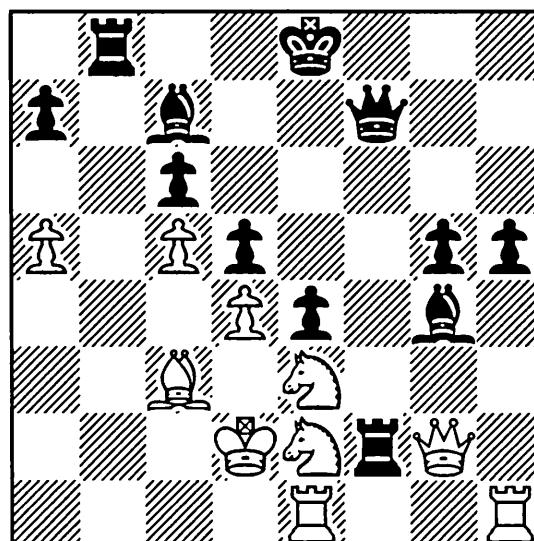


A pawn roller like this, a routine plan for us, was a very strange notion in 1886. Most players considered pawns a nuisance which got in the way of their piece activity. Here we see Steinitz using his pawns as attacking weapons. Once again his time machine pays dividends and Steinitz proves to be ahead of his time.

34 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}f7$

Steinitz, like everyone, had his flaws (judging from photographs, I'm pretty sure he didn't own a razor) but closed games was not one of them. With python-like play, he kept squeezing White and threatened to take on e3 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f2$.

35 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ fxe3+ 36 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$



... $\mathbb{W}f3$ follows. The game is over.

37 $\mathbb{W}xf2!?$

I said “The game is over!” I assure you this isn’t going to help.

37... $\mathbb{W}xf2$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{h}xg4$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e3 41 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}g2$ 42 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

Practising what he preached: “The king is a fighting piece – use it!” and heading for f5!

43 $\mathbb{Q}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}xe3!?$

This brave attempt at a combination doesn’t cut it.

45... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 46 $\mathbb{Q}f1+$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0-1

Summary

If paired with Steinitz it would be best if you didn’t block the position.

Acknowledgments

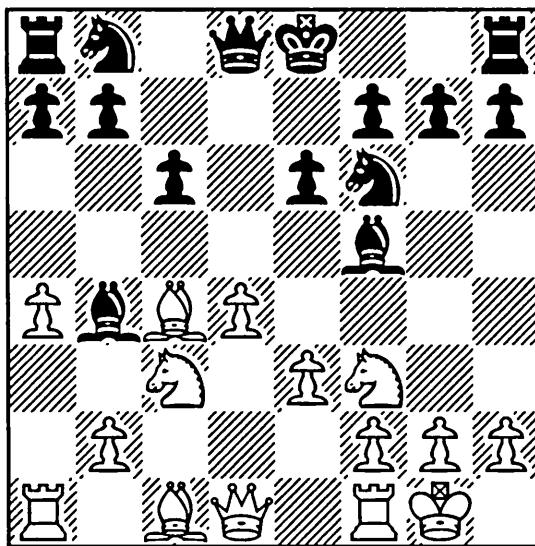
Many thanks as always to John Emms, for allowing me to run around the park without a leash in every chapter. Thanks to Nancy for proof reading without rolling her eyes too many times, and for generously offering so many sips of her coffee. Thanks to Timothy for being such a staunch ally against my computer, which I suspect is sentient and determined to delete all my work. And thanks also to you, the reader, for having the genius to avoid all the other openings against 1 d4 and choosing the Slav! May your Slav wall always remain intact against the battering rams of the enemy forces!

Cyrus Lakdawala,
San Diego,
May 2011

Chapter One

The Mainline Dutch Variation

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 e3 e6 7 ♜xc4 ♜b4 8 0-0



Let's get our toughest challenge out of the way first. Take a good long look at the starting position of the Dutch Variation of the Slav. It may be our biggest threat of the many lines White throws at you. Some of Black's potential problems include:

1. White commands more central influence and may soon push his e-pawn forward gaining even more space. Black must be vigilant about both e5 and d5 pushes later on.
2. The extra space automatically hands White attacking chances. Castling queenside doesn't get you off the hook either due to the c-file.
3. In many cases White picks up the bishop pair with a well timed ♜h4.

I realize that what I have just described doesn't sweeten the deal much for Black! Relax, the Slav isn't a forced loss. Black has the following potential:

1. Black occupies a hole on b4. Later it may be possible to lock it down completely with ...a5 and transfer a knight to b4. Don't underestimate control over b4. Black often wins Slav endings solely on the basis of just this one hole in White's position.

2. Black's position is a fortress – not so easy to pierce. White must break down several defensive barriers to even begin making a dent.

3. The third advantage for Black is mostly psychological. White usually believes himself to be in charge in such positions and often carries dreams of expansion (à la Napoleon) of his space advantage. Often, the harsh reality for White is that he overreaches and pushes his pawns too far. Then Black simply occupies the holes and weak squares left behind.

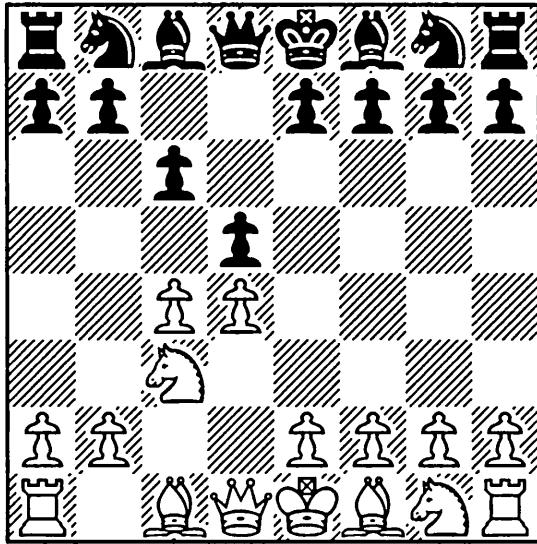
Let's begin this chapter with one of the most famous Slav games of recent years. This also gives us an opportunity to go through the early moves leading to the position after 8 0-0.

Game 2
V.Topalov-V.Kramnik
World Championship (Game 2), Elista 2006

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6

The pure Slav move order. Most Semi-Slav players avoid this move order and choose 2...e6 instead to avoid the annoying Exchange Slav which we deal with in Chapter 8.

3 ♜c3



Question: Why can't Black just win a pawn now by capturing on c4?

Answer: You can actually take the pawn right away with 3...dxc4! but don't expect to hang on to it! We examine this idea in some detail in Chapter 6.

3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 is the other move order to reach the game position.

3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Later we examine 4 e3 a6!?, which leads to the e3 variation of the Chebanenko Slav.

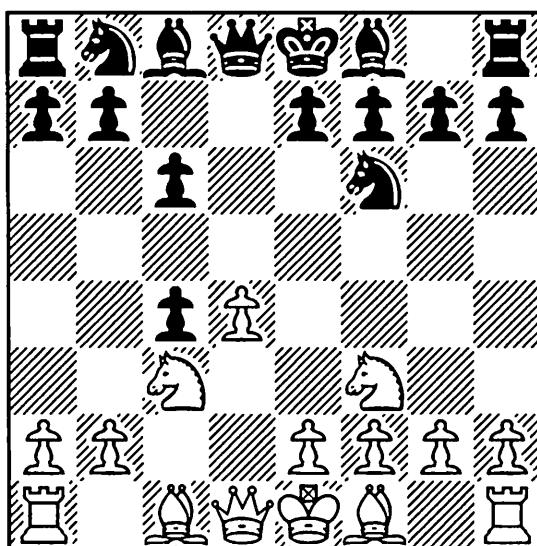
Question: What if White plays 4 $\mathbb{Q}g5$?

Answer: $\mathbb{Q}g5$ isn't such a good move. First of all, $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ exf6 only assists Black to free his game and grab the bishop pair. If this is the case then what is the point of playing the bishop to g5?

Watch the way Dutch prodigy Anish Giri handled it as Black: 4...dxc4 5 a4 $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ e5! 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (10 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is also nice for Black) 10... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$, P.Hopman-A.Giri, Hilversum 2009. I already prefer Black, for the following reasons:

1. He owns the bishop pair in the queenless middlegame;
2. He opened the position, favouring the bishops; and
3. White's king may not be all that safe. True, queens are off the board but there are still many black pieces out there and the white king may soon face a black rook down the d-file.

4...dxc4



This may be Black's best time to take on c4.

Question: Why do we have to enter complications like this?

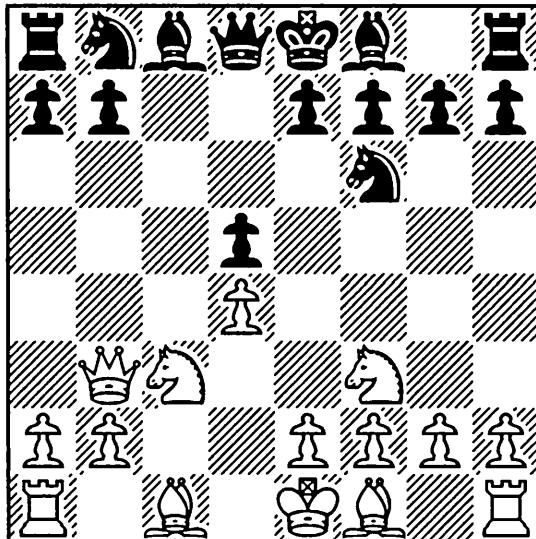
What is wrong with the solid 4... $\mathbb{Q}f5$?

Answer: It pains me to have to criticize this London-style move but it just leads to trouble after 5 cxd5! cxd5 6 $\mathbb{W}b3$!. Now Black has real problems defending b7 and d5. Let's look:

a) 6...b6 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ e6 8 e4! dxe4 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$, S.Pinchuk-D.Danchenko, Nikea 2002, couldn't have been fun for Black! Instead, after 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ Black drops a piece.

b) 6... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ e6 9 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 11 axb3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}a4$!, P.Haba-S.Movsesian, Litomysl 1994. White hangs on to an extra pawn in the ending and retains all the winning chances.

c) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c8$



Question: Didn't Black just give away two tempi?

Answer: He sure did. This is the only way to avoid material loss or slaughter! After 7 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e6 8 e3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ the balance of power between White's dominant bishop and its sickly Black counterpart became obvious in G.Kasparov-D.Hausrath, Düsseldorf (simul) 1988.

Question: Let's return to Black's 4th move. What is wrong with 4...e6?

Answer: Nothing. 4...e6 leads to Semi-Slav lines which we don't cover in this book. Here, we purists only cover the real Slav.

5 a4

Otherwise Black gets to hang on to his extra pawn by playing ...b5. We examine the mean-spirited Geller Gambit 5 e4!? b5 in Chapter 4.

5... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 e3

We cover 6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ next chapter, and 6 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ in Chapter 3.

6...e6 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$

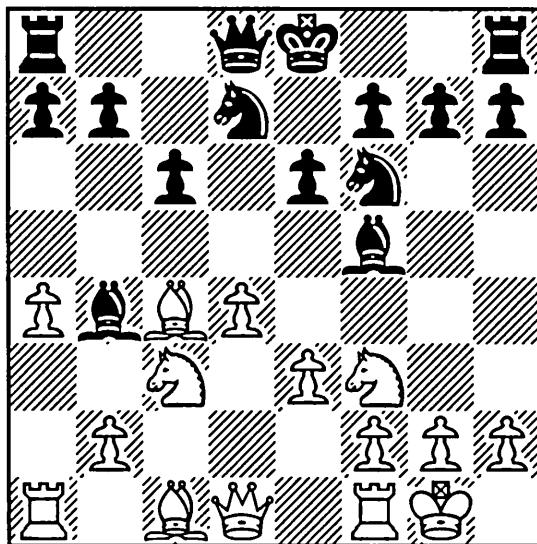
Black logically occupies the hole on b4 and keeps White worried about ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ in case White decides to push his e-pawn forward.

8 0-0

We've reached the "starting position" of the main line. Let's buckle up our seat belts and deal with possibly our biggest challenge/headache in the entire book.

8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

Black can also castle here, and we look at that line later in this chapter. With 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, Black keeps the option of castling queenside.



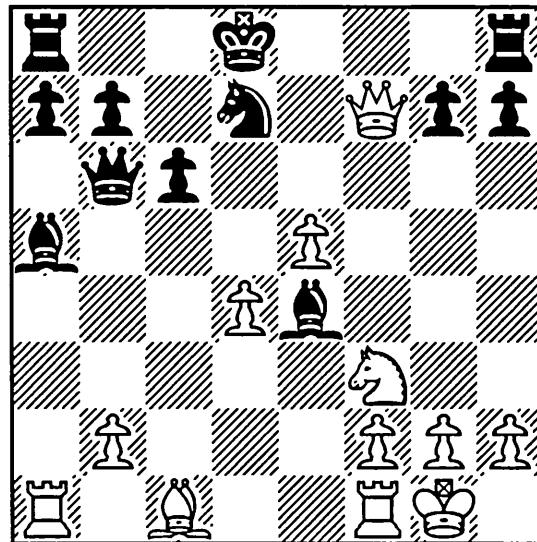
9 ♕e2

White prepares e4. Later in this chapter we examine lines with ♔h4 and ♕b3.

One very important point to note with the 8...♔bd7 move order is that White has a draw if he wants one with 9 ♕b3:

a) 9...a5 (only move) 10 ♔a2 ♕e7 11 ♕xb7 ♕b8 12 ♕a6 (12 ♕xc6?? ♕b6! traps the queen and would be a nice present if one of your opponents did this) 12...♕a8 13 ♕xc6 ♕c8 14 ♕b5 ♕b8 draws by an eternal game of tag between queen and rook.

b) I played 9...♕b6? against my good friend, Professor and IM David Strauss. Unfortunately, he stabbed me in the back with a deadly prepared novelty for the game: 10 e4 ♕g6 11 ♕xe6!! fxe6 12 a5! ♕xa5 13 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 14 e5 ♔e4 15 ♔xe4 ♕xe4 16 ♕f7!!.



This huge novelty was discovered by my friend, David Gliksman, who passed it onto Strauss for this game against me. (Note to self: remember to de-friend David Gliksman and David Strauss from my Facebook page!)

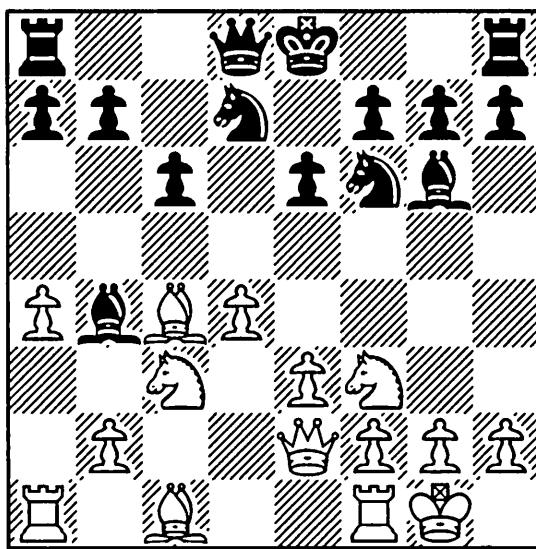
17 ♕f7!! refutes 9...♕b6, which was the main book move at the time! White clears the

The Slav: Move by Move

way for his e-pawn. Believe it or not, Black is defenceless against this idea. And now the innocent lamb is led to the slaughterhouse: 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18 e6! $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 19 $\mathbb{W}g5+$ (the nightmarish point of 12 a5! is revealed: my bishop on a5 is en prise due to the double attack) 19... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xa5$ and I was toast, D.Strauss-C.Lakdawala, Southern California State Championship, Anaheim 1992.

You can avoid all this horror by sidestepping 9... $\mathbb{W}b6?$. Also, remember if you want to avoid this drawing line as Black you must play the 8...0-0 move order rather than 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$.

Returning to 9 $\mathbb{W}e2$:



We have reached one of the most important positions in the Slav, and also one critical to its survival.

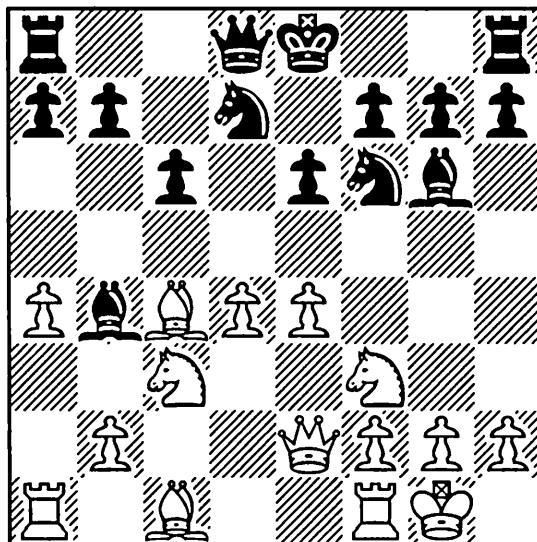
Question: Can Black mess up White's plan of playing e4 by occupying the square with 9... $\mathbb{Q}e4?$

Answer: No, the knight is just an uninvited visitor on e4 which is not a stable square for the horse: 10 $\mathbb{Q}a2!$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12 g3 0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (the knight returns triumphantly to take back lost territory: e4) 14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15 f4! (locking down on e5 before Black manages to play the freeing move himself) 15...h6 16 e4. White recaptured control over e4 and got a few free kicks on Black's pieces in the process.

9... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

Black often plays 9...0-0 10 e4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$, transposing.

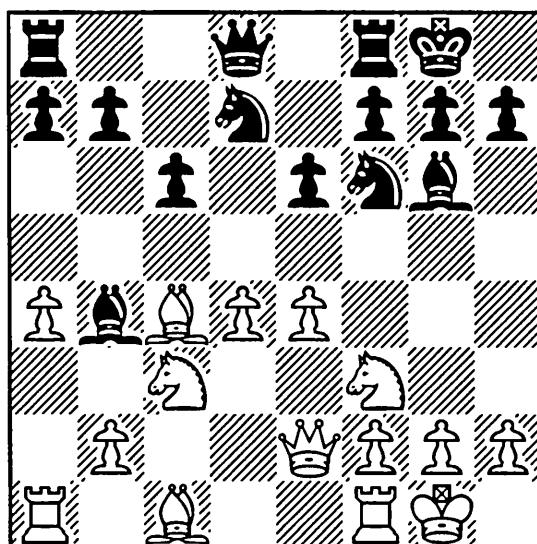
10 e4



10...0-0

Question: Did Kramnik miss the win of a pawn with
10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11 $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$?

Answer: In chess we rarely get something for nothing. Kramnik saw he could take the pawn but doesn't want it because White gets a huge attack for it. For example, 12 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$? 13 $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ is suicide for Black) 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}df6$ (White is willing to give up a second pawn in order to open lines with 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $cxd5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}fc1$) 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ 0-0-0 16 $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}he8$ 17 $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 19 $a5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $f6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ $e5$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}ea1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and White aimed his guns directly at Black's king, G.Kasparov-E.Bareev, Tilburg 1991. You can actually play this way with Black if you have great confidence in your defensive abilities, but I warn you, if you choose to do so you are asking for it.



The Slav: Move by Move

It is a lot easier to play White in such positions and most club-level players know exactly what to do when you castle into their open b-files.

11 ♜d3

Question: Why is White bothering to cover his e-pawn?
Shouldn't he just get on with it and go forward with 11 e5?

Answer: He can do this, but Black gets good counterplay after 11...♝d5 (see Game 5).

11...♝h5

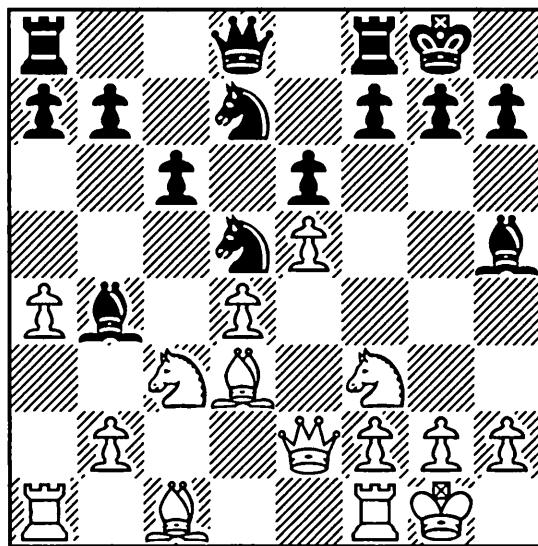
Question: This is the third time the bishop moved.
Why is Black doing this?

Answer: It is worth the time loss because the bishop puts White in an irritating pin, and it is White who may lose time trying to unravel from it.

12 e5

Chess is a kind of barter system where one must often give up something in order to get something else. Here Topalov hands over the d5-square to Black to seize more central space which increases his attacking prospects on the kingside.

12...♝d5



13 ♜xd5

Sealing d5 with a black pawn instead of a piece.

13 ♜e4 gets the knight to a good square in exchange for Black taking control over d5. I think this is a good bargain for Black: 13...♝e7! (remember this manoeuvre, which clears b4 for a knight) 14 ♜g3 ♛g6 15 ♜xg3 hxg3 16 ♜e4 c5. Black looks all right after this freeing move. White still enjoys a space advantage with his e5-pawn outpost but Black's powerful knight on d5 compensates.

13...cxd5 14 ♛e3!

An instructive multi-purpose move. White unravels from the pin and prepares ♜g5!.

14...♝g6 15 ♜g5!

Scary stuff. White threatens to trade bishops on g6, followed by ♘h3.

15...♞e8!

Clearing f8 for the knight, which can then defend h7 without creating weaknesses.

Black avoids various traps here:

a) 15...h6?? 16 ♜xe6!.

b) 15...♝xd3? 16 ♘xd3 g6 17 ♘h3 h5 18 g4 ♜e7 19 ♘h4 ♜g7 20 gxh5 ♘h8 21 h6+! (this trick ruins things for Black) 21...♚g8 22 ♜e3 and it's clear that Black has only misery awaiting him.

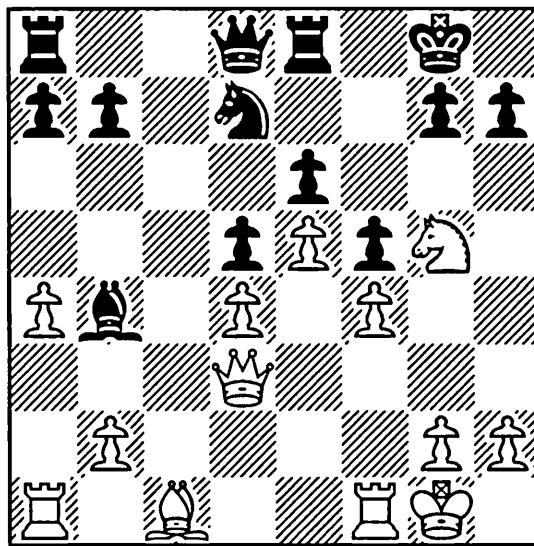
c) 15...♜e7 16 ♜xg6 hxg6 17 f4! ♜xg5?. It is easy to kid yourself in such positions and rationalize the thought "Ah, I have saddled him with a bad bishop!" This is just not true. The bishop will be ruler of the a3-f8 diagonal. This conveniently bumps Black's rook from f8, and defence of f7 will be an impossible task: 18 fxg5 ♘c7 19 b3! ♘ac8 20 ♜a3 ♘fe8 21 ♘f3 and Black has no good defence to the pile-up on f7.

16 f4 ♜xd3!?

A new move in the position when the game was played. Previously Black had normally played 16...♜c8, and now:

a) 17 ♘h3 ♜f8 18 ♜b5 ♜e7 19 g4!? ♜ec7 20 ♜e3 was G.Vescovi-S.Oliveira, Porto Alegre 2008. I have learned over the years not to trust such attacks and prefer Black in this complex position.

b) 17 g4!? f6! (you must get a feel for the timing of such counters) 18 ♜xg6 hxg6 19 ♜f3 ♘c7 20 ♘d3 ♜f8 21 f5 was Y.Pelletier-A.Deviatkin, Moscow 2003. I have confidence in Black's ability to defend such positions since White's centre is not so stable.

17 ♘xd3 f5!**18 ♜e3!**

Question: Why didn't Topalov saddle Kramnik with a backward e-pawn with 18 exf6 ♜xf6?

Answer: Black's e-pawn is not so weak, and like in a favourable French Defence, it can easily be defended. Also, White is burdened with many pawn weaknesses:

1. An isolani on d4;
2. Potential infiltration spots along the c-file; and
3. A potentially bad bishop.

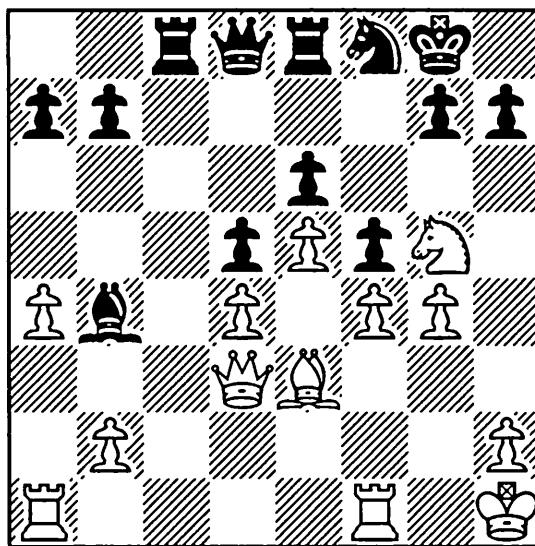
18...♝f8

By all appearances Black looks healthy here. After all, he has a good bishop, control over b4, potential on the queenside against White's weaknesses, and lastly Black's king looks as safe as can be.

19 ♜h1!

Oops! Maybe I was a bit hasty to say Black's king was safe! White plans to launch a big attack with ♜g1 and g4, and his queenside be damned!

19...♜c8 20 g4!



Exercise: Let's say Black kicks the knight with 20...h6 intending to take on g4 when White retreats. Come up with an attacking plan for White.

Answer: 20...h6? blows up on Black big time because Topalov had no intention of retreating and planned 21 ♜xe6! ♜xe6 22 gxf5 ♜f8 23 ♜g1. White's rolling pawns and open g-file give him a vicious attack for the piece.

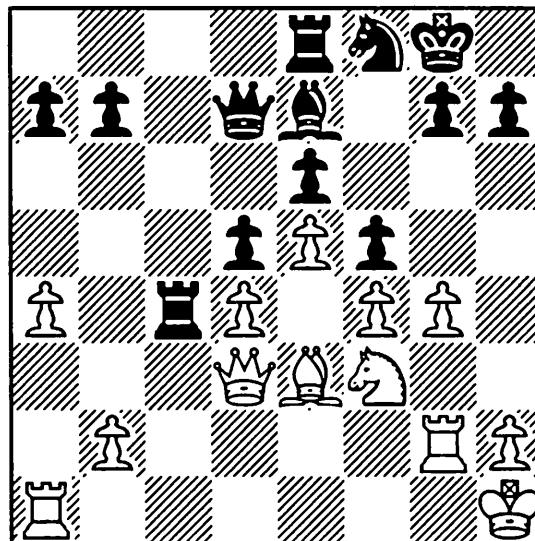
20...♜d7 21 ♜g1 ♜e7 22 ♜f3!

White needs the knight in the attack and keeps pieces on the board.

22...♜c4

Attacking a4.

23 ♜g2!



Question: You said “attacking a4” but Topalov didn’t bother to protect it. Why didn’t he?

Answer: Don’t believe everything I tell you! After Topalov’s pawn sac he gets a huge attack. The trouble is, White has burned all bridges and has essentially abandoned his queenside. If his attack fails on the kingside White has little chance in an ending.

Topalov could have played it safe with 23 b3 $\mathbb{N}c6$. Now White has two attacking paths:

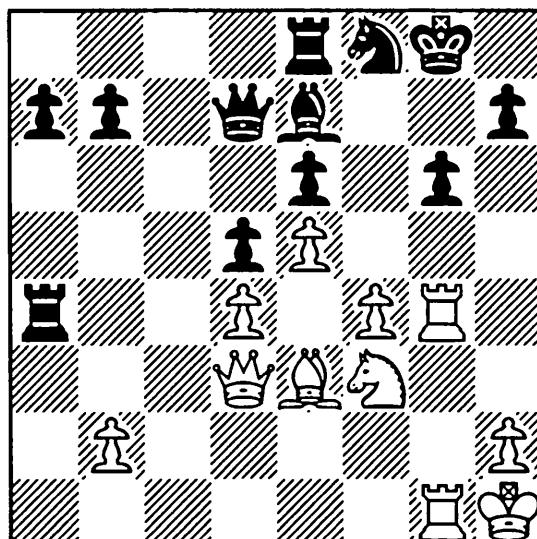
a) 24 $\mathbb{N}g2 \mathbb{N}ec8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{N}xg4$ 26 $\mathbb{N}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}e8!$ 27 $\mathbb{N}ag1$ g6 28 h4 $\mathbb{W}f7$ intending ... $\mathbb{W}f5$ with a complicated position where it isn’t clear whose weak wing will fold first.

b) White can try 24 $\mathbb{N}xf5?$! $\mathbb{N}xf5$ 25 $\mathbb{N}g2 \mathbb{N}ec8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ but Black holds after 26... $\mathbb{N}g6!$.

23...fxg4!

Black must exercise patience. The pawn was poisoned: 23... $\mathbb{N}xa4?$ 24 $\mathbb{N}xa4$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 25 $\mathbb{N}xf5$ $\mathbb{N}xf5$ 26 $\mathbb{N}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}d1+$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 28 $\mathbb{W}h3!$ $\mathbb{N}e7$ 29 f5 gives White a decisive attack.

24 $\mathbb{N}xg4 \mathbb{N}xa4$ 25 $\mathbb{N}ag1$ g6



Exercise: Could White sac twice on g6 and draw by perpetual check with 26 $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$ $\mathbb{h}xg6$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xg6+?$

Answer: No, the sac fails. Black accepts the first sac but declines the second with 27... $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}a1+$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ and his king slips away to e8.

26 h4!

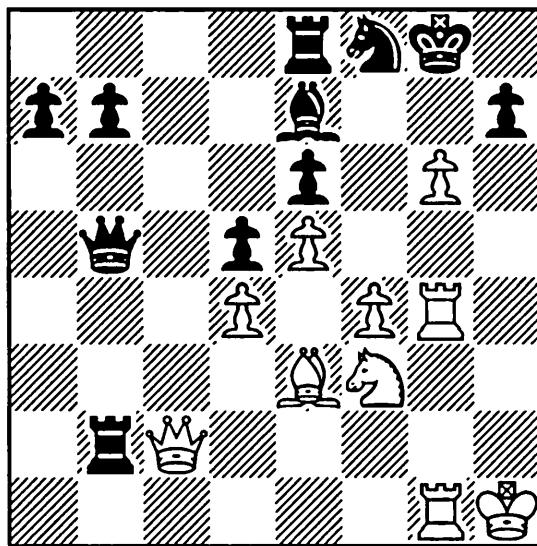
Impressive power chess by the fearless Topalov, who utilizes every ounce of energy his position contains to airlift another attacker into the fight.

26... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 27 $\mathbb{h}5$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

It looks like Black is taking command of the game but this is just not the case. Topalov's dynamic potential in the position erupts after his jarring next move.

29 $\mathbb{h}xg6!!$

Topalov unleashes a multi-layer combination, one of the greatest ever played in a World Championship match. This game reminds me of Réti-Alekhine, Baden-Baden 1926, where Alekhine left his rook hanging for 14 straight moves, with the only difference being that Topalov tragically loses instead of crowning his creative masterpiece with a victory.



Exercise: I have told you that the combination works.

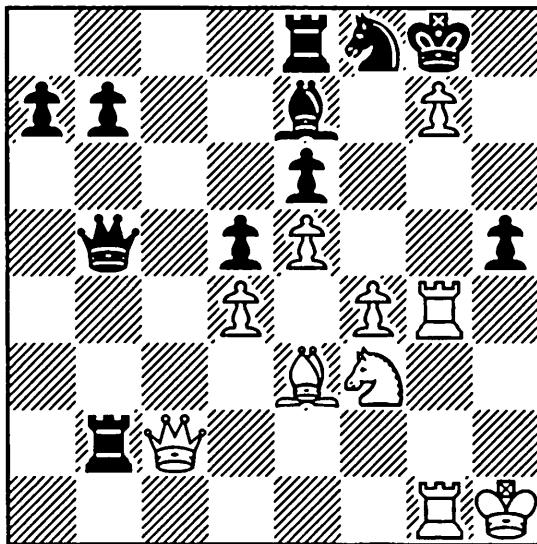
Try to work out the mate without moving the pieces if Black succumbs to greed and grabs the queen with 29... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$. (Beware, difficult!)

29... $\mathbb{h}5!$

Winston Churchill once said: "If you are going through hell, keep going!" Kramnik finds the only prayer to stay alive for the moment.

Answer: After the gullible 29... $\mathbb{Q}xc2??$ the brutal solution is 30 $gxh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}g8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}1g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 33 $f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$ $\mathbb{Q}f1+$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}5g6+$ and mate next move. If you were able to work this out on your own, then you are a very strong player and should perhaps be thinking about going after your IM and GM norms!

30 g7!



The parade of endless tricks and surprises go on unabated. White continues to leave both queen and rook en prise.

30...hxg4

Black can't touch the queen: 30... $\mathbb{Q}xc2??$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}xf8\mathbb{W}+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}g8+\mathbb{Q}f7$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}1g7$ mate.

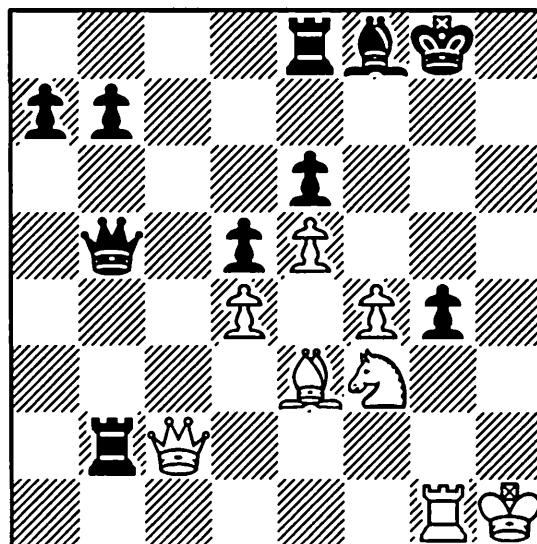
31 $\mathbb{Q}xf8\mathbb{W}+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8?$

So far Topalov has thrown every possible obstacle at Kramnik. Finally, Kramnik buckles under the force of the hurricane and blunders. He misses a defence based on a couple of problem-like interference moves. He should play 31... $\mathbb{Q}xf8!$:

a) 32 $\mathbb{Q}h7 \mathbb{W}e2$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}h8+\mathbb{Q}f7$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}h5+\mathbb{Q}f8$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$. Now Black saves himself with the remarkable 35... $\mathbb{Q}g5!!$ when he gets the reprieve he needs to survive the onslaught.

b) 32 $\mathbb{Q}g6 \mathbb{Q}h4!!$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ (if 33 $\mathbb{Q}xg4 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}xh4+\mathbb{Q}d7$ and Black holds things together) 33... $\mathbb{W}e2!$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{W}f3$ and White has nothing better than to take the perpetual.

Let's return to 31... $\mathbb{Q}xf8$:



Exercise: The game is on the line. Find the path to White's well deserved victory.

32 $\mathbb{Q}g6+$?

The unimaginable strain of a World Championship match does strange things to great players. Remember when Fischer grabbed Spassky's h-pawn and voluntarily entombed his bishop in the first game of their Reykjavik match? I was a dorky 12-year-old at the time and even I knew Fischer's move was dumb!

Topalov at this stage reminds me of a young cat who has a street-smart mouse cornered but doesn't know what to do next to finish the job!

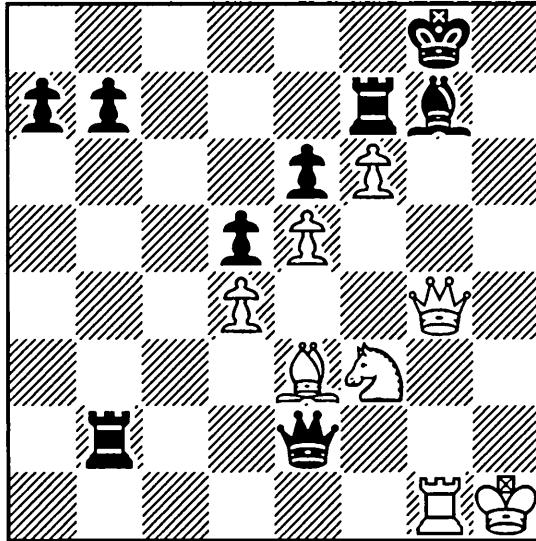
Answer: 32 $\mathbb{B}xg4+$! wins easily after 32... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (forced) 33 $\mathbb{W}c7!$ $\mathbb{W}f1+$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ and Black must give up a full queen to avoid mate.

32... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 33 $f5!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

Question: It looks crazy to walk into a fork on f6.
Why not play 33...exf5?

Answer: Black gets bludgeoned after 34 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 35 $\mathbb{W}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 36 $\mathbb{B}f1$!

34 $f6$ $\mathbb{W}e2!$ 35 $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{B}f7$



36 $\mathbb{B}c1$?

Topa falters a second time. White still wins after 36 $\mathbb{W}h5!$ $a5$ (36... $\mathbb{W}xe3??$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ wins on the spot) 37 $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 38 $fxg7$ $\mathbb{B}b1+$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{B}b2+$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{B}xg7$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$. For example, 41... $\mathbb{W}f4$ 42 $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 43 $\mathbb{W}xf8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $a4$ 46 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{B}b3$ 47 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 48 $\mathbb{B}xb3!$ $axb3$ 49 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $b2$ 50 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. Just in time! Black's passers are halted and the protected passer on e5 wins for White.

36... $\mathbb{B}c2$

Naturally Kramnik denies the rook entry into his camp.

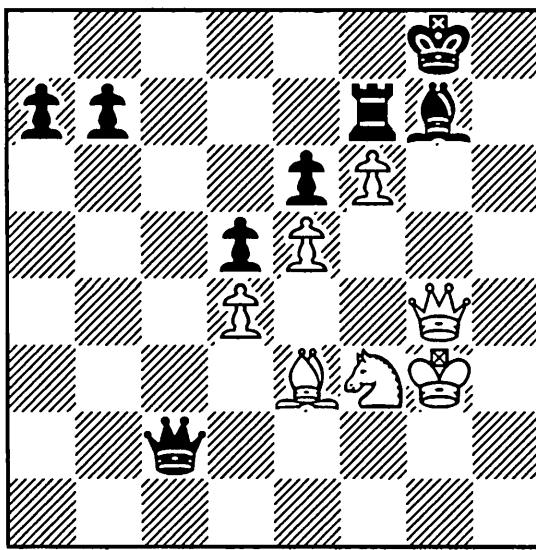
37 ♜xc2 ♛d1+?!

GM Bareev thinks 37...♜xc2! is more accurate. Let's see if he is right: 38 ♔g5 ♛b1+ 39 ♕g2 ♛c2+ and now:

a) 40 ♔h3 ♛d3 41 ♛f3 ♜f8 42 ♜xe6 ♜h7+ 43 ♔g3. I played out several scenarios from this point with Captain Rybka at the helm, and amazingly they always worked out to a draw.

b) 40 ♜f2!? ♛g6! 41 ♔h3 ♜h6 42 ♜xe6 ♛xg4+ 43 ♔xg4 a5. It's almost impossible to correctly evaluate this position without playing out the next 20 moves or so, but I prefer White's chances on the kingside with those deeply entrenched passers over Black's queen-side passers.

38 ♕g2 ♛xc2+ 39 ♔g3



Exercise: White's attack looks formidable despite the reduction in material.
What is your defensive plan?

39...♛e4?!

Answer: If Black gets queens off the board, White's attacking chances go up in smoke and those two connected queenside passers will be very difficult for White to halt. However, Kramnik picks the wrong spot to swap.

Stronger was 39...♛f5!, as pointed out by GM Bareev, which turns the game into a crap shoot and total chaos after 40 ♛xf5 exf5 41 ♔g5 ♜c7. I am praying you don't ask me for an assessment here because I don't have a clue as to who is winning or losing!

40 ♜f4?!

White mistimes the queen trade. It was better to do it now with 40 ♛xe4! dxе4, as after 41 ♔g5 ♜d7 42 fxg7! (42 ♜xe6!? led to drawn games with the computer playing itself) 42...♜xg7 43 ♔f4 ♜e7 44 ♔xe4 a5 45 d5 exd5+ 46 ♔xd5 White has real chances to win:

1. Black's pawns are probably halted by the busload of white pieces.

The Slav: Move by Move

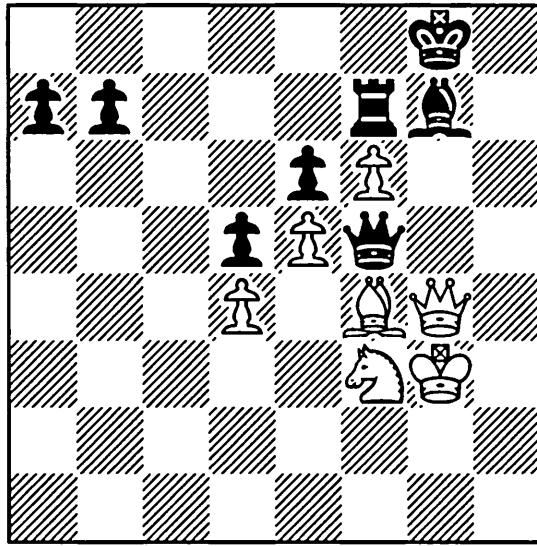
2. The d-pawn may eventually cost Black his rook.

3. I'm pretty sure Topalov knows how to deliver mate with bishop, knight and king against lone king!

40... $\mathbb{W}f5!$

I insist!

Question: Can White avoid a queen trade?



41 $\mathbb{W}xf5$

Answer: White must submit to the swap. If he dodges the trade with 41 $\mathbb{W}h4?$ his attack fails miserably after 41... $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ 42 exf6 $\mathbb{R}xf6$ 43 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ a5! 44 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a4 45 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{R}g6$ 46 $\mathbb{W}d8+$ $\mathbb{W}f8$. Those two connected passers carry the day for Black. White can't go on a pawn-grabbing adventure on the queenside since this would allow Black's queen and rook to gun down White's king on the other wing.

41...exf5 42 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

Topalov finds the best practical chance in a bad situation.

42 $\mathbb{Q}g5?$ should lose to 42... $\mathbb{R}c7$ 43 fxg7 a5 44 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a4 45 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ a3! 46 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{R}c3+$ 47 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{R}xa3$ 48 e6 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 49 e7 $\mathbb{R}a8$ 50 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ b5 51 $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 52 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{R}g8$ 53 e8 $\mathbb{W}+$ $\mathbb{R}xe8$ 54 $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ and Black wins the king and pawn ending. This line is somewhat straightforward so Topa's choice looks better because at least he continues to confuse the situation.

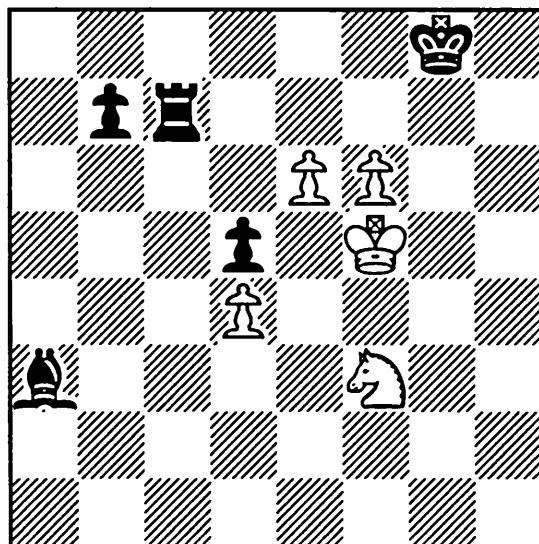
42...a5!

Black endured the bullying for a long time. Finally, it's his turn.

43 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a4 44 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ a3 45 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 46 e6 $\mathbb{R}c7$ 47 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$

White must cough up another piece. 47 e7? loses to 47... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 48 fxe7 $\mathbb{R}xe7$ 49 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{R}e3!$.

47... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$



Question: Black is up a rook in the ending. Why isn't White resigning?

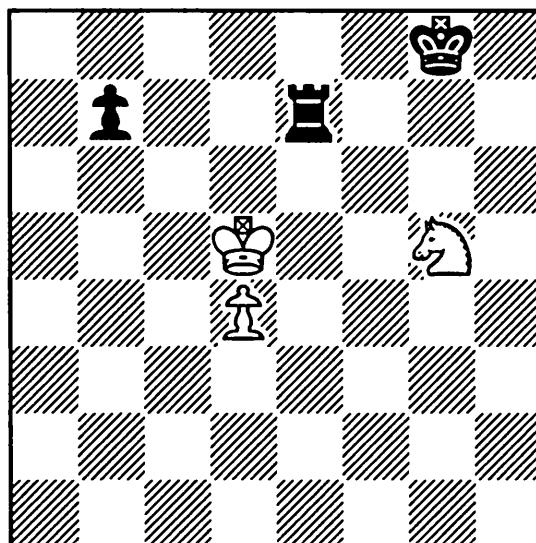
48 ♔e5!

Answer: Despite Black's massive material advantage, the position remains tricky. White wins the d5-pawn and gets three deep, connected passers supported by king and knight. I guarantee that if you or I were Black here, Topa would draw or beat us!

48...♜c1 49 ♜g5 ♜f1 50 e7

Yipes! f7 is covered and the Black king can't help stop the pawn.

50...♜e1+ 51 ♜xd5 ♜xe7 52 fxe7 ♜xe7



Question: Should White resign now? He is down a clean exchange.

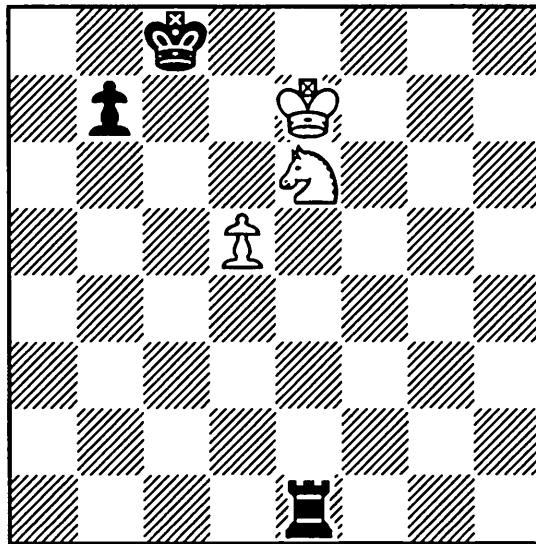
Answer: Not yet. White still has chances in the event Black mishandles the position.

Black still has three issues to resolve in the ending:

1. His king is still away from the action.
2. White's king is in the thick of the fight.
3. If White's king and knight gang up and win the b-pawn, the position is drawn because a king and rook can't beat a king and knight on their own.

53 ♜d6 ♜e1 54 d5 ♜f8 55 ♜e6+ ♜e8 56 ♜c7+ ♜d8 57 ♜e6+ ♜c8 58 ♜e7

He threatens to shepherd his passed d-pawn forward to the queening square with d6, d7 and d8!.



Exercise: Come up with the best plan to put the brakes on White's queening ambitions.

Answer: 58...♜h1!

The threat of a check on h7 throws White out of sync.

58...b5? is a false path allowing White to escape with a draw after 59 d6 ♜d1 60 ♜c5 ♜e1+ 61 ♜e6 ♜d1 62 ♜c5 b4 63 d7+ ♜xd7+ (63...♛c7 64 ♜a6+! draws) 64 ♜xd7 b3 65 ♜b6+! ♛b7 66 ♜c4, catching the pawn in the nick of time.

59 ♜g5 b5!

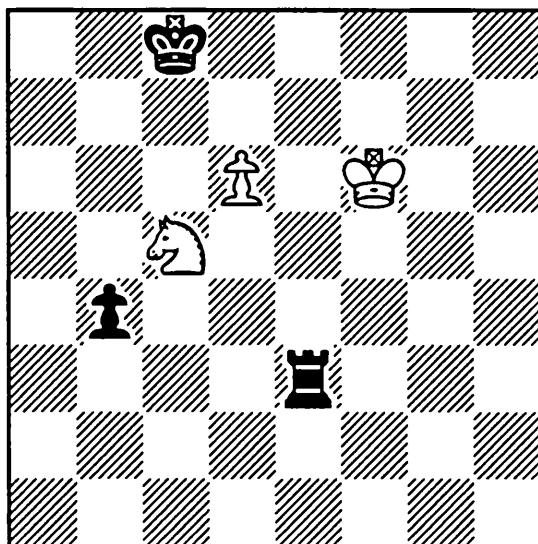
At last, the shy b-pawn rolls forward.

60 d6 ♜d1 61 ♜e6 b4 62 ♜c5 ♜e1+! 63 ♜f6 ♜e3! 0-1 (see following diagram)

What a rook!:

1. It cuts off White's king;
2. The d-pawn has been halted; and
3. Black's b-pawn is unstoppable since the rook now covers the b3-square.

Chapeaus off to both players! This titanic battle is one of my all-time favourite Slav games and an amazing clash of styles.



Summary

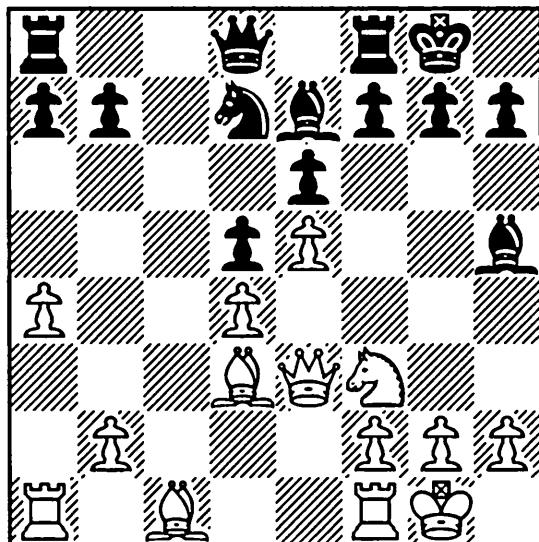
When White gets such attacks in the main line Slav based on e5, f4 and g4, Black must drum up adequate counterplay along the c-file and queenside. In this game, Kramnik initially got outplayed even though his position was inherently defensible. In the end, it was Topa who faltered when he was on the brink of one of the greatest victories of his life. Sometimes it seems unfair that there isn't a first runner-up prize to the loser of an incredible chess game.

Game 3
M.Carlsen-X. Bu
Cap d'Agde (rapid) 2008

After Kasparov retired from world domination over the chessboard, I thought there would be a void where no one great player would really stand out. Now that Carlsen is on the scene, I can see this is not so. It is as if King Kong retires and Godzilla immediately applies for the job of terrorizing the masses.

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxс4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 e3 e6 7 ♜xc4 ♜b4 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♜e2 ♜bd7
 10 e4 ♜g6 11 ♜d3 ♜h5 12 e5 ♜d5 13 ♜xd5 cxд5 14 ♜e3 ♜e7**

The main move in the position, but I don't like it because Black must fork over his important dark-squared bishop in this line. I think 14... ♜g6!, as Kramnik played in the previous game, is the most accurate move.



15...Bg5!

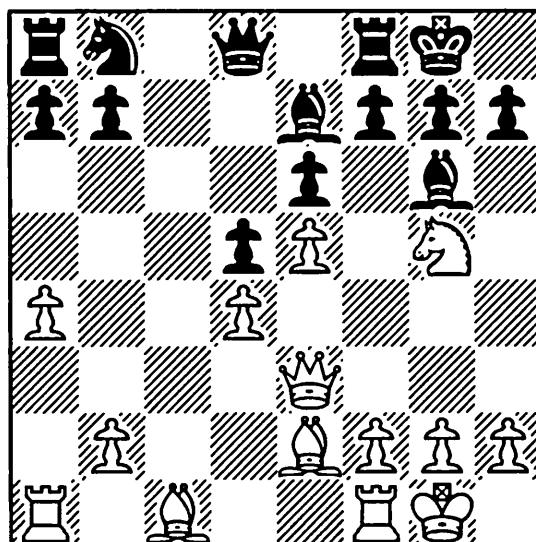
15...Bg5! 16.Qfc1 Qb8! 17.b4 Qxf3 18.gxf3? Qc6 19.Qcb1 Wb6 20.Qc3 Qfc8 21.b5 axb5 22.Qxb5? (22.Qxb5 looks level) was played in K.Lerner-M.Sadler, Oberwart 1996, and here Black missed the trick 22...Qxe5! stealing a pawn in broad daylight.

15...Bxg5

Probably too compliant with White's wishes. Giving up the bishop pair so obligingly may be the causal link to Black's future defeat. Black will suffer for a long time to come against White's space and bishop pair.

Question: What should Black play instead?

Answer: Black should make White work a lot harder for the bishop pair by choosing 15...Bg6!, and if 16.Qe2 then 16...Qb8!.

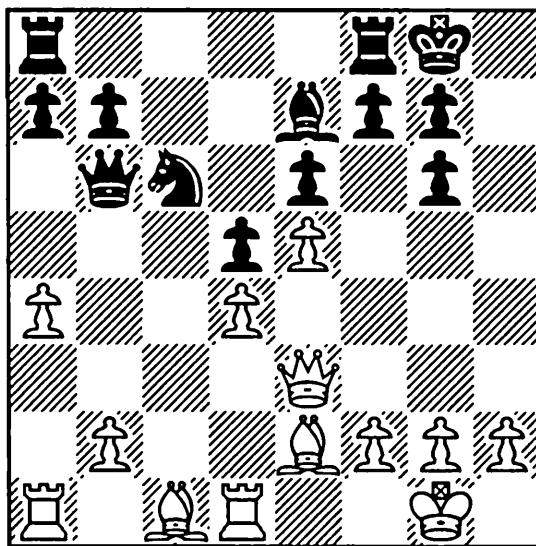


Question: Why retreat an already developed piece?

Answer: The knight retreat to b8 is standard operating procedure in Slavs where White earlier sealed the d5-square with $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. The position is closed, which means quality development overrides quantity development. The knight had few prospects on d7. By playing ... $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ Black intends to redeploy to c6, where the knight:

1. Pressures the d4-pawn;
2. Eyes the hole on b4; and
3. Has potential for ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$, where it may head for b3 or c4.

After 16... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ the game N.Vitiugov-Zhou Jianchao, Moscow 2009, continued 17 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d1$.



Let's assess:

1. White has the usual extra space and the bishop pair.
2. White is tied down for now to the defence of d4.
3. White's queenside is in need of defence.
4. Black has an iron grip on the b4-square, plus b3 and c4 are potential outposts for his forces.
5. Black has a powerful bishop covering several key dark squares. Many of his pawns are well placed on the opposite colour of his remaining bishop.

Conclusion: The position is probably dynamically balanced, and whenever I say "dynamically balanced" this is code for: "I prefer Black!" It was Tal who once observed that if Black equalizes, then he stands better simply from the psychological boost he gains!

16 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Principle: When you own the bishop pair avoid swapping one of them.

17... $\mathbb{Q}b8!?$

Black doesn't fully escape the pressure if he keeps queens on the board: 17... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 19 $h4$ $h6$ 20 $h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 22 $a5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8?$ (23... $\mathbb{W}d8!$ provides an exit for the rook) 24 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and White will soon win the exchange due to the

The Slav: Move by Move

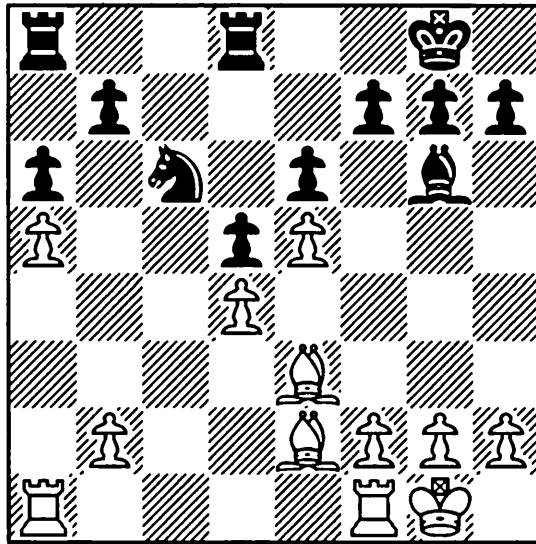
over-eagerness of Black's rook on c2, H.Grooten-M.Al Modiahki, Gibraltar 2007.

18 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 19 a5!

The pawns on e5 and now a5, like the tentacles of an octopus, wrap tightly around Black's position and seize territory.

19...♝c6 20 ♔e3 a6

He could have made White's task more difficult with the line 20...♝b4! 21 ♜fc1 ♜dc8 22 ♜c3 ♜c2 23 ♜xc8+ ♜xc8 24 ♜c1 a6.



Let's assess the position after the chosen move, 20...a6. White's many advantages include:

1. The bishop pair;
2. Dark-square control;
3. Space;
4. The ability to expand on the queenside; and

5. A possible target of b7 via a rook lift to b3. It's not easy for Black to dissolve this weakness by engineering ...b6 because he would be left with a loose knight on c6 and a weak pawn on a6.

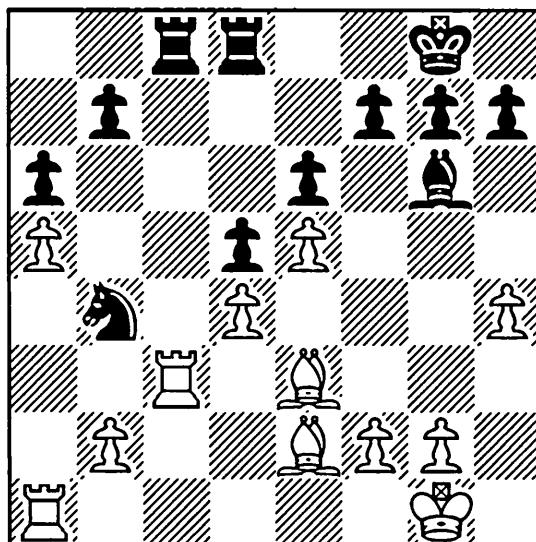
Conclusion: It's going to be a long, hot afternoon for Black and only misery lies ahead.

21 ♜fc1 ♜ac8 22 h4

The immediate 22 ♜c3 looks more accurate.

22...♝b4 23 ♜c3?!

An inaccuracy which could have cost White a half point. 23 ♔g5! ♜e8 24 ♜c3 h6 25 ♔d2 retains the advantage.



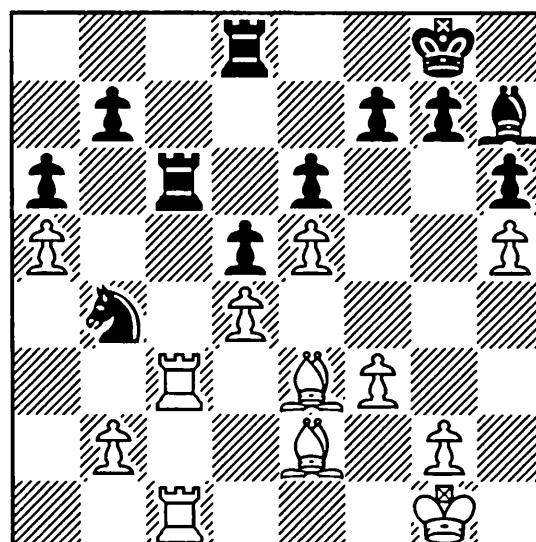
23...h6?!

Bu, at one time the youngest GM in the world (age 13 I believe), is a monster calculator and tactician. In such difficult defensive manoeuvring positions, however, he seems out of his element. Here he misses a golden opportunity with 23... $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ 24 $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{R}xc3$ 25 $bxc3$ $h6!$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 27 $h5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 28 $f3$ $\mathbb{R}c8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{R}xc4$ 31 $\mathbb{R}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ when Black should hold the draw without too much sweat.

24 $h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 25 $\mathbb{R}ac1$ $\mathbb{R}c6?$

Another plan for Black would be to create a light-squared defensive wall on the queen-side with 25... $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{R}xc3$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{R}c8$ 28 $\mathbb{R}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}c5$. Although Black's troubles are far from over, this line puts up stiffer resistance than the game continuation.

26 $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$



Exercise: How does White make progress? What's the plan?

27 $\mathbb{B}b3!$

Answer: By finding a new target, namely b7.

27... $\mathbb{B}xc1+$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xc1 \mathbb{B}c6$

Avoiding Carlsen's devilish trap 28... $\mathbb{B}c8?$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{B}c2?$ 30 $\mathbb{B}xb4 \mathbb{B}xd2$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}xa6!$ which picks off the queenside pawns due to the back rank mate threat.

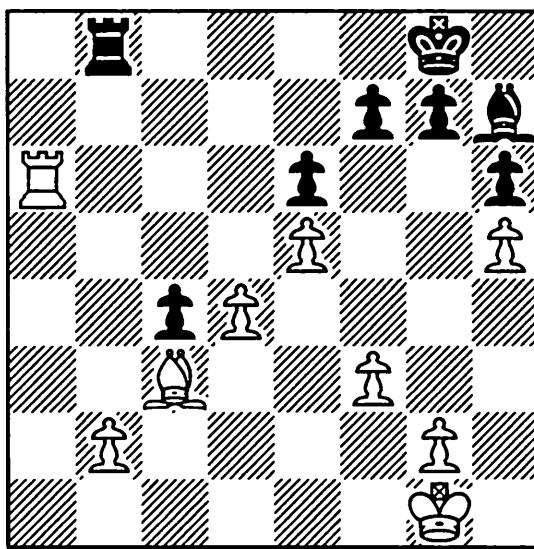
29 $\mathbb{B}xb7 \mathbb{Q}xa5$

He can't afford to give White two connected passers with 29... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xa6.$

30 $\mathbb{B}b6 \mathbb{B}c8$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{B}c4$

Forcing White into an opposite-coloured bishops ending.

32 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $dxc4$ 33 $\mathbb{B}xa6$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}c3$



Question: Shouldn't Black hold? White is only one pawn up in an opposite-coloured bishops ending and he doesn't even have a passed pawn. Also, White's bishop stands passive on c3.

Answer: All true, but the reality is the situation is grim for Black for these reasons:

1. White will eventually turn his five-to-four kingside pawn majority into a passer.
2. Black's bishop is a problem piece. It sits on h7 like an uninvited relative. If it manoeuvres to b3, it is also out of play there. If it goes to d3, Black is vulnerable to this trick: White brings his king to e3 and then plays b4! creating a passer due to Black's hanging bishop on d3.
3. White's king may move unimpeded up the board.
4. White pushes his kingside pawns forward, creating a potential endgame attack by exposing Black's king.

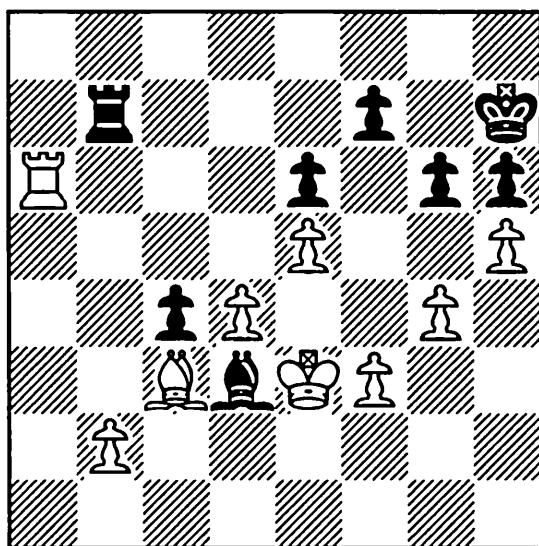
Conclusion: In this case, the principle stating that opposite-coloured bishops favour the pawn- (or pawns-) down side is overridden by the other principle: Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker.

I remember an interview of Carlsen's where he surprisingly said that Kasparov still cal-

culates better than he does but Carlsen claimed to assess positions better than Kasparov! Maybe he is right. If you asked the majority of players to assess this position, my guess is that most would say the logical result of the game should be a draw. Carlsen was capable of seeing through the veil and realized that this just wasn't so.

34...♝d3 35 ♜f2 ♜b7 36 g4 ♜h7 37 ♜e3 g6?

This impatient move weakens his dark squares beyond repair. Black should just wait and do nothing.



Exercise: Come up with a winning plan for White.

Answer: 38 d5!!

A brilliant decision. The extra pawn is not as important as dark-squared control. With his last move, Carlsen unleashes the attacking potential of his buried bishop and opens up d4 in case his king cares for a stroll up the middle.

38...exd5 39 ♜a8!

Mates on h8 begin to loom over Black's head.

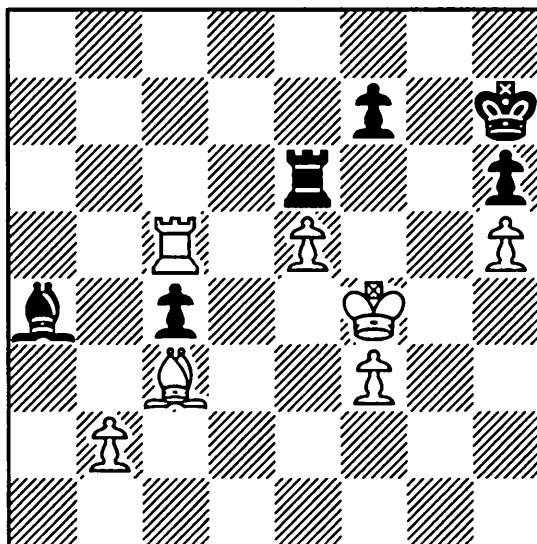
39...♜e7 40 ♜f4!?

Missing or rejecting the creation of a passer with the trick 40 b4! f6 41 ♜d4!, when White's b-pawn, supported by the king, marches forward with deadly effect.

40...gxh5 41 gxh5 ♜e6 42 ♜d8

Regaining his pawn advantage.

42...♝c2 43 ♜xd5 ♜a4 44 ♜c5



44...Ba6

Question: Why didn't Black defend his c-pawn?

Answer: If 44...Bb3, Black falls into hopeless passivity after 45 Rc7 Qg8 46 Rc8+ Qh7 47 Re3!. The threat of f4-f5 eventually forces Black's bishop away from defensive duties on b3.

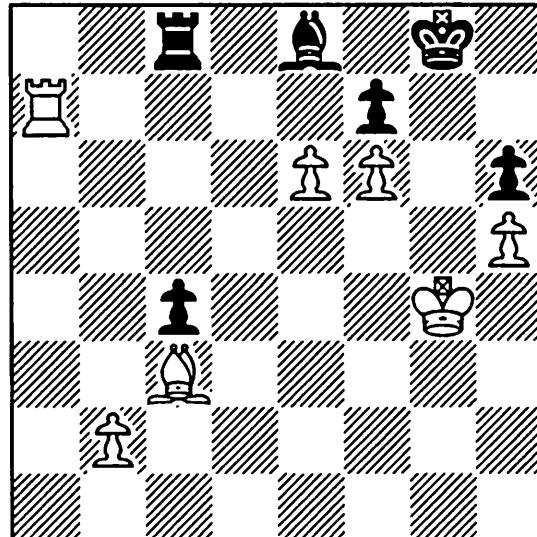
45 Rc7!

According to Rybka, this is even stronger than 45 Rxc4.

45...Be8 46 Qg4

Black is in a straightjacket and helpless to prevent the forward march of the f-pawn.

46...Rc6 47 Ra7 Rc8 48 f4 Qg8 49 f5 Rd8 50 e6 Rc8 51 f6!

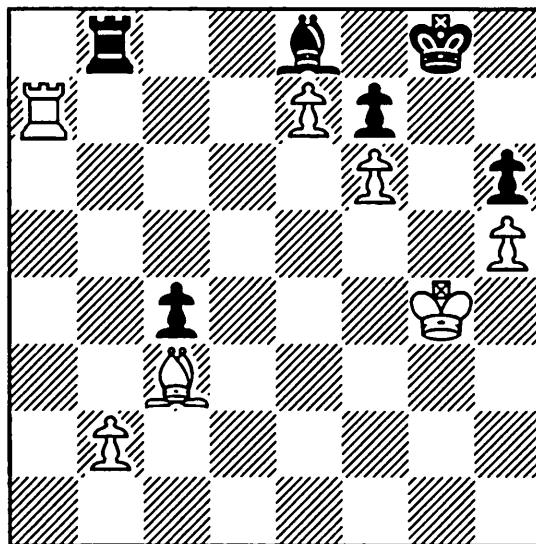


Exercise (multiple choice): How does White win after 51...fxe6?

The choices are: a) 52 Rg7+; b) 52 Qf4; c) 52 Rd2

Answer: White wins with the tricky 52 $\mathbb{B}g7+$! $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 53 $\mathbb{B}c7!$ which puts the big hurt on Black. The prosaic 53 f7 is also good enough.

51... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 52 e7



It's over. White's rook may be coming to d8 soon. The remainder is like one of those movies where you can easily guess the ending even before the movie finishes.

52... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 53 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 54 $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 55 $\mathbb{B}g1$ 1-0

55 $\mathbb{B}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 56 $\mathbb{B}d1!$ is curtains for Black.

Summary

This game illustrates some of the dangers facing Black. If his position sours, White pushes him around with extra space and a bishop pair while Black continues to languish sans counterplay.

Game 4
V.Anand-V.Kramnik
World Championship (Game 7), Bonn 2008

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 e3 e6 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 10 e4 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12 e5

White can also postpone the e5 advance. A couple of options:

a) 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ inhibits the freeing break ...e5 (see Game 7).

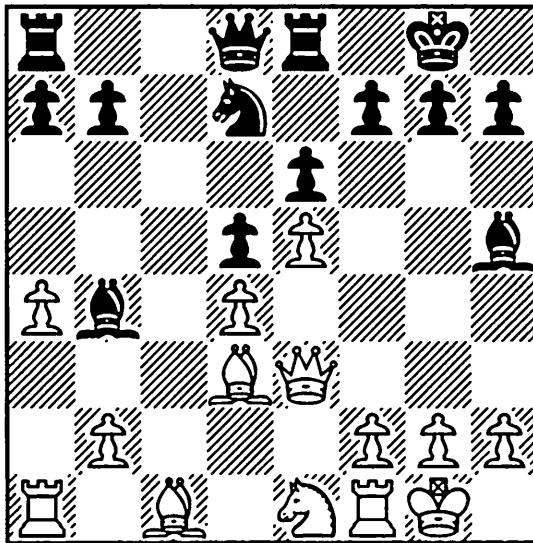
b) 12 $\mathbb{B}d1$ e5! 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 h3 exd4 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 16 $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18 $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 20 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ and Black already stands slightly better due to his iron grip on the dark squares, R.Kempinski-A.Wojtkiewicz, Warsaw 1995.

12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 14 $\mathbb{W}e3$

This is the point where Kramnik played 14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ against Topalov (see Game 2). Here he tries something different:

14... $\mathbb{B}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{N}e1!$?

15 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{B}g6$ 16 f4 $\mathbb{B}xd3$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ f5 transposes to Topalov-Kramnik.



Question: Why would Anand retreat an already developed piece?

Answer: Several reasons:

1. $\mathbb{N}e1$ clears the path for a kingside pawn storm beginning with f4.
2. The knight may be redeployed to c2, where it not only attacks Black's good bishop, but also fights for b4 and covers White's weak d4-pawn.
3. If Black plays ... $\mathbb{B}g6$, as he does in the game, and swaps on d3, White's knight recaptures where it is ideally placed to fight for b4.

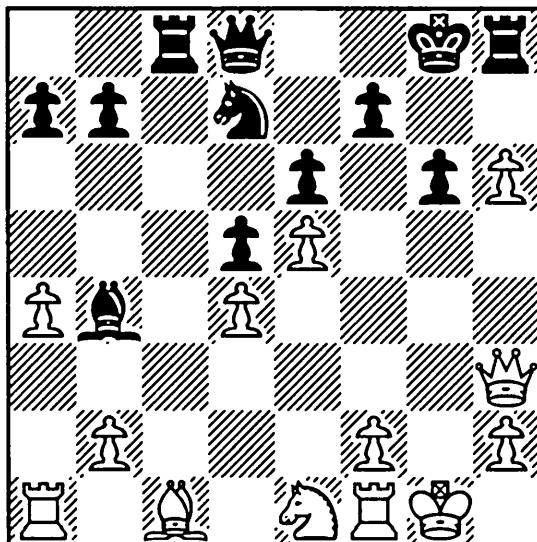
15... $\mathbb{B}g6$

Kramnik is the first to deviate. He played 15... $\mathbb{B}c8$ against Topalov once and got a good position quickly after 16 f4 $\mathbb{B}xe1$ 17 $\mathbb{B}xe1$ $\mathbb{B}g6$ 18 $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{B}c2$ (V.Topalov-V.Kramnik, World Ch. (play-off) Elista 2006). It's a sure bet Anand had some improvement cooked up had Kramnik retraced his steps and followed this path.

Question: After 15... $\mathbb{B}c8$, does the Greek gift sac on h7 work?

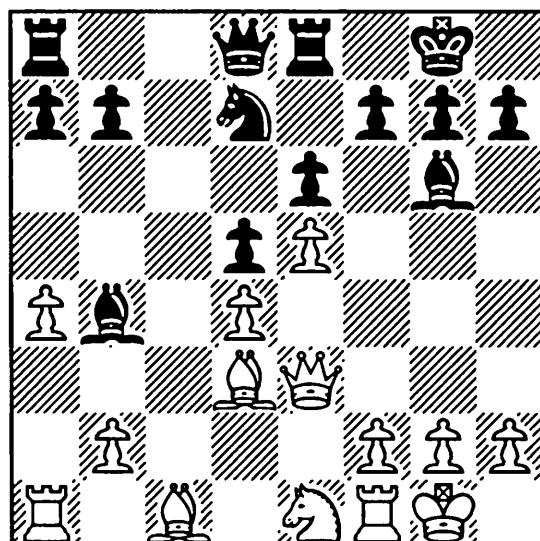
Answer: I'm not sure. White regains his piece but the assessment of the final position is hard to evaluate. Let's look: 16 $\mathbb{B}xh7+!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 17 $\mathbb{W}h3$ g6 18 g4 $\mathbb{B}h8!$ 19 gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 20 h6 (see following diagram) and now:

1. White is up the extra doubled h-pawn on h6.
2. White may have attacking chances with the plan $\mathbb{Q}h1$, $\mathbb{B}g1$, $\mathbb{N}f3$ and then either play on the dark squares or set up a sac on g6 by first playing $\mathbb{Q}h4$.
3. Black has the clearly superior pawn structure since White's kingside is in tatters, and his d4-pawn is also a target.
4. Black controls holes galore on b4 and f5.



5. Black may be able to regain his lost pawn by ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ at some point.
6. Black owns the c-file and infiltrates there later.
7. White's queenside pawns are weak and may be easily picked off later by a pawn-grabbing black queen or rook.

Conclusion: I personally prefer Black but an attacker may be licking his chops and would probably go for White. So essentially, the assessment depends upon your style of play. I would think that we Slav guys would take Black though.



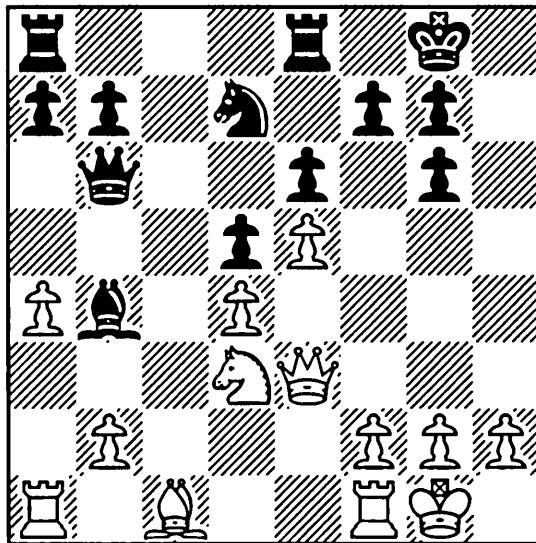
16 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6

Question: Is there any merit in capturing away from the centre with 16...fxg6?

Answer: It's another tough call. The benefit of capturing away from the centre is that the open f-file keeps Black's king safer. The downside is that later the e6-pawn could be-

come a target for White's pieces, especially in an ending. It definitely looks like an idea though, and I believe it is fully playable here.

17 ♜d3 ♕b6?



Exercise: Should White trade knight for bishop, or should he keep his knight on the board for his attack?

18 ♜xb4!!

Answer: Exchanging knight for bishop is a brilliant strategic decision.

Question: But hasn't White just backed himself into a bad bishop versus good knight situation?

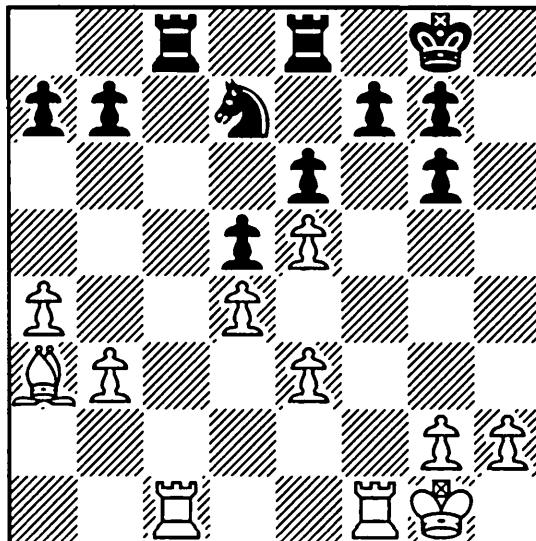
Answer: It appears that way, but it's a mirage. This position is an exception to the rule and White's bishop later dominates Black's knight despite the fact that White's centre pawns are fixed on the dark squares d4 and e5.

In hindsight 17...♕b6 was an uncharacteristically poor strategic decision by the high priest of positional play. Kramnik refused to back down with 17...♞f8, but that would have been the correct choice.

18...♝xb4 19 b3! ♜ac8 20 ♜a3 ♜c3

After 20...♜b6 21 ♜fc1 ♜c6 22 ♜xc6 bxc6 23 ♜d6!, Black's weakness on c6 outweighs White's easily defendable weakness on b3.

21 ♜ac1 ♜xe3 22 fxe3



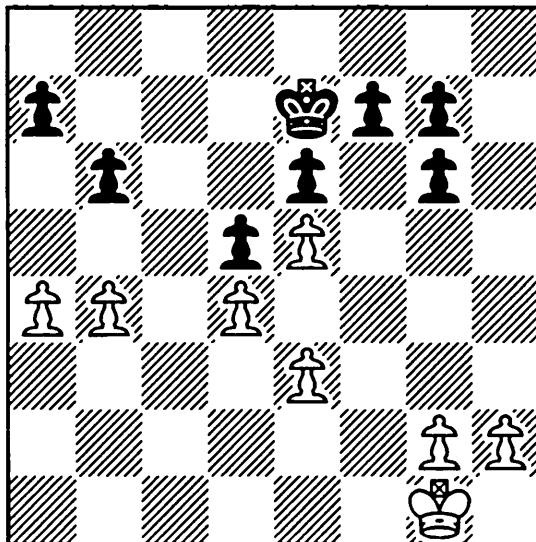
Question: This looks like a classic bad bishop versus good knight situation.
What am I missing?

Answer: I remember watching this game live on the ICC. The GM commentator – I believe Alex Baburin – had at this point come to the realization that White stood better. He tried to convince the kibitzers that the endgame is better for White for these reasons:

1. Formally White's bishop is "bad" (many of White's pawns are on dark squares), but in reality it's a fine piece as it roams a good diagonal.
2. Black's knight has few prospects.
3. One other strange defensive problem Black faces is the prospect of a lost king and pawn ending, should all the pieces come off the board.

Question: How would White win the king and pawn ending?
White only has space. It doesn't look like he can even
create a passer or break though with his king.

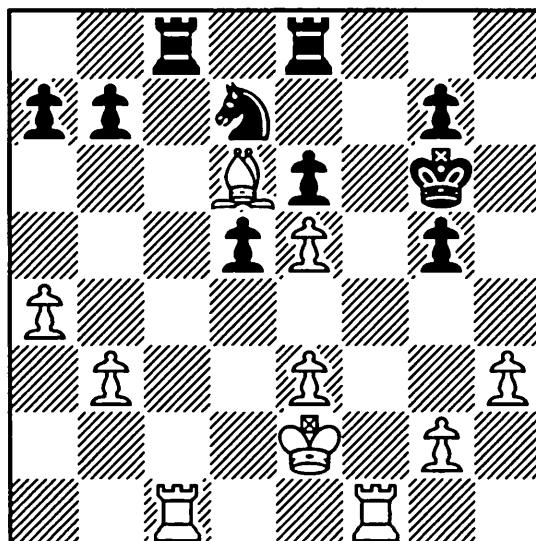
Answer: As a training exercise, let's take a look at a logical scenario where we get into a king and pawn ending: 22... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 25 $b4!$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ $b6$ (27... $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$ 28 $dxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 29 $b5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ $a6$ 31 $c6!$ creates a deadly passer and wins) 28 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$.



Okay, here we are: 32 h4 f6 33 ♔f2 a6 34 b5 a5 35 ♔f3 ♔f7 36 ♔f4 (White's goal is to create a puncture for king entry through Black's kingside pawn wall) 36...♔e7 37 e4! dx4 (on 37...♔f7 there follows 38 exf6 gxf6 39 e5 f5 40 ♔g5 ♔g7 41 g3 and zugzwang!) 38 ♔xe4 ♔d7 39 d5 ♔e7 40 exf6+ gxf6 41 dx4 ♔xe6 42 g4 ♔d6 43 h5! and finally White wins due to his outside passed pawn.

Returning to the position after 22 fxe3:

22...f6 23 ♔d6 g5 24 h3 ♔f7 25 ♔f2 ♔g6 26 ♔e2 fxe5 27 dx5



Question: Surely White's doubled e5-pawn is weak and a target, isn't it?

Answer: e5 is secure for the following reasons:

1. Black can never play ...♝f8 intending ...♝f5 because White's bishop is trained on f8.
2. Black's king can't move to f5 either, because White's rook covers the f-file, and if Black manages to lure White's rook away from the file, White still has g2-g4 imprisoning Black's

king and cutting off access to the f5-square.

27...b6 28 b4!

A multipurpose move:

1. It cuts off c5 for Black's knight.

2. It creates a potential for b5 which would fix Black's pawns on b6 and a7, juicy targets for White's bishop later in the game. The b5 advance would also create a possibility for $\mathbb{B}c6!$ which would make serious inroads in Black's camp.

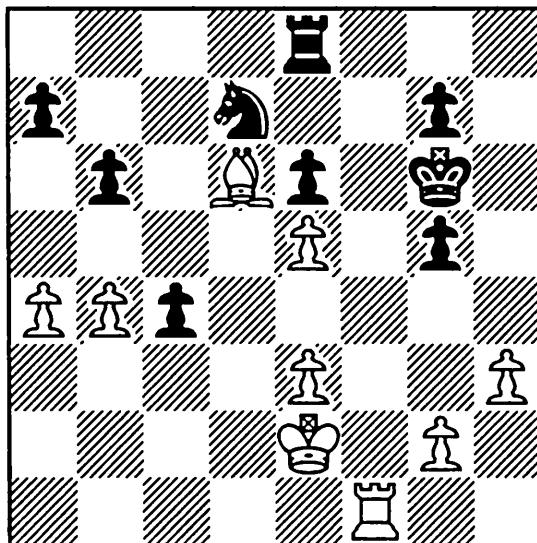
28... $\mathbb{B}c4!$

Question: This looks pretty risky, almost desperate.
Are such radical measures necessary for Black's survival?

Answer: Let's see if passive defence works: 28... $\mathbb{B}h8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{B}he8$ 30 e4 dxe4+ 31 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}h8$ 32 $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{B}h4+$ 33 g4! $\mathbb{B}hh8$ (if 33... $\mathbb{B}xc1$ 34 $\mathbb{B}xc1$ $\mathbb{B}xh3$ 35 $\mathbb{B}c7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 36 b5 $\mathbb{B}h8$, now the nonchalant 37 $\mathbb{B}xa7$ wins for White) 34 b5! $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 35 $\mathbb{B}c6!$ and White either doubles rooks to infiltrate or creates a deadly passed pawn on c6.

Conclusion: Black's position is on the brink of collapse and Kramnik's 28... $\mathbb{B}c4!$ is his only ray of hope for survival.

29 $\mathbb{B}xc4$ dx $c4$



Exercise (multiple choice): Which is White's best move?

- a) 30 a5; b) 30 $\mathbb{Q}d2$; c) 30 $\mathbb{B}c1$

30 $\mathbb{B}c1?$!

I'm afraid Anand botched the exercise!

I have noticed a strange pattern throughout my career which I call The Leader Syndrome. It occurs when I lead a match or a tournament and become prone to over-caution. Just recently at the Gambito rapid tournament I play in every week, I beat a 2264, then a

The Slav: Move by Move

2251, followed by a win against a 2150. I led the tournament by a full point going into the fourth and final round. I got paired with a 1994 player, with the White pieces, and only drew the game (with great difficulty!) due to my predictably overcautious play.

In Anand's case, it was easy to blow the win because in the back of his mind he could play it safe due to his lead in the match. Safety took precedence and he played less energetically than he should have. Watch how in the next few moves Anand falls prey to this chess disease and avoids the strongest line.

Answer: 30 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ is the correct choice. After 30... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 32 b5 axb5 33 axb5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$, White has excellent chances of converting his advantage.

Reducing pawns with 30 a5?! bxa5 31 bxa5 $\mathbb{B}c8$ only helps Black.

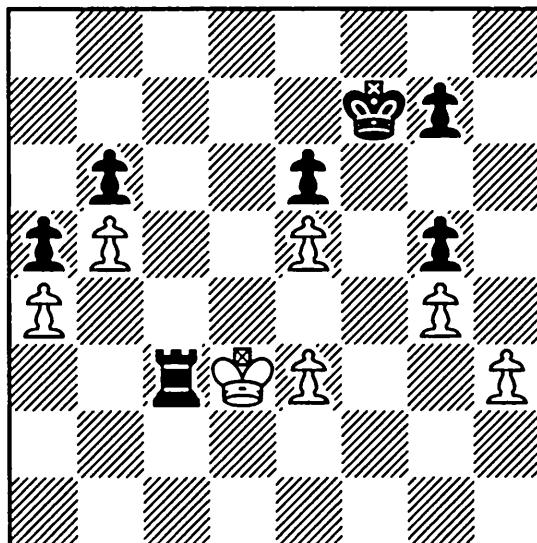
30... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 31 g4 a5!

Excellent defence. Black needs access to c5 for his knight or rook in the future.

32 b5 c3! 33 $\mathbb{B}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5+$!

A nice save. Kramnik forces a pawn-down, drawn king and pawn ending.

35 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{B}xc5$ 36 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{B}xc3+ \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$



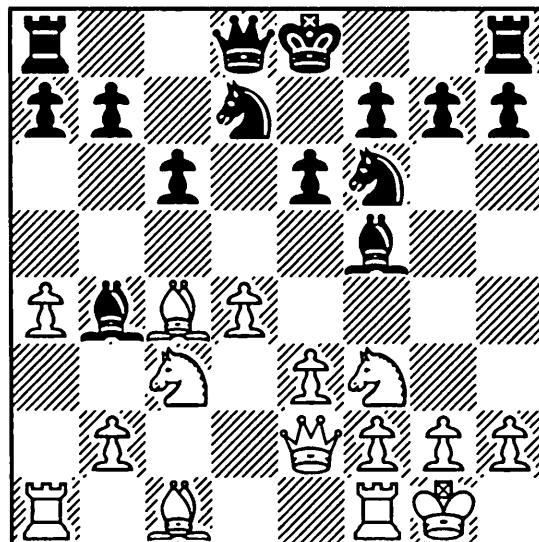
After the recapture 37 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ I am sorry to report that my normally stable friend Rybka freaks out and falsely claims a winning advantage for White! A quick examination shows that White's king has no entry into Black's position and there is no win.

Summary

You can try 14... $\mathbb{B}e8$!? just as long as you like Black's position after a possible bishop sac on h7.

Game 5
A.David-A.Grischuk
French League 2003

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 e3 e6 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9 $\mathbb{W}e2$



9...0-0

As mentioned previously, Black can also reach this position by castling on move 8.

Question: Why not pin with 9...♝g4?

Answer: Pinning is an option. This is the type of position I normally go for as Black, rather than the normal ...♝g6, and we look at a few of my games with this idea at the end of the chapter. The benefit of ...♝g6 is that it continues to put pressure on White's centre, whereas pinning with ...♝g4 may provoke h3 and g4.

You can look at ...♝g4 in two contrasting ways:

1. We tempt White into overextending; or
2. We just gave White two tempi for his attack!

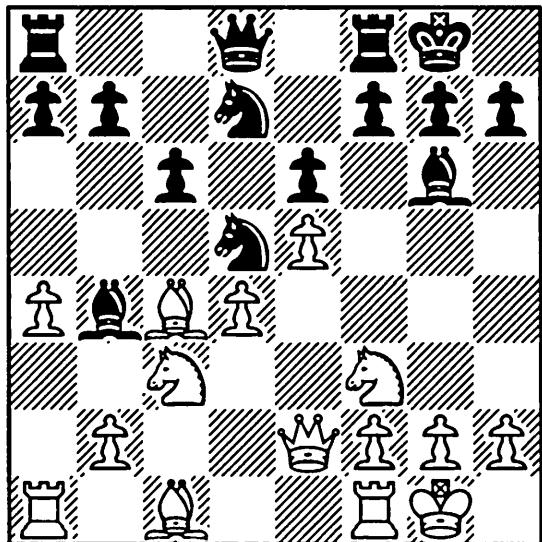
Probably ...♝g6 is the more solid move and it is the choice of strong GMs. But maybe it's like one of those inkblot tests psychiatrists show their patients. People see what they want to see in any given move.

After 9...♝g4, the game can go 10 ♕d1 0-0 11 e4 ♜a5 12 e5 ♖d5 13 ♖e4 and you can decide whether you prefer the bishop on g6 or where it stands on g4.

10 e4 ♜g6 11 e5

White deviates from the main move, 11 ♖d3.

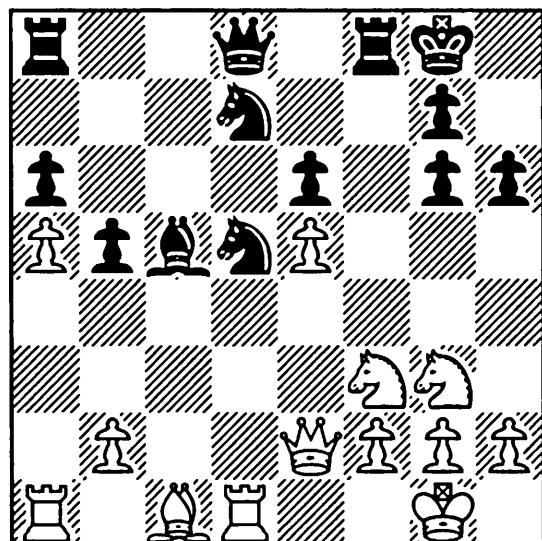
11...♜d5



12 ♜d2

Question: Is 12 ♜e4 a better move for White?

Answer: 12 ♜e4 is playable but probably not better than the move chosen in the game. A logical path is 12...♜e7! (freeing b4 for a knight in the future, although 12...c5 is also possible) 13 ♜d1 h6 14 a5 b5 15 ♜d3 a6! (securing b5 in order to hit back in the centre with ...c5) 16 ♜g3 c5! 17 ♜xg6 fxg6 18 dxg5 ♜xc5, as in L.Yurtsev-J.Hector, Copenhagen 1991.



An assessment:

1. White has an advanced pawn on e5, but unlike similar Slav situations, he doesn't really have an attack because Black is so aggressively posted on the kingside.
2. Black has a powerful knight outpost on d5.
3. Black benefits from an open f-file and possible attacking chances there, or pressure later on against f2 or f4.

4. White's advanced e- and a-pawns may turn into endgame targets.

Conclusion: I am going to contradict *Rybka* who claims White has the edge and say Black has the better chances.

12...♜a5

Adding pressure to c3 and clearing d8 for a rook.

13 ♜fc1

Question: How about sealing the hole on d5 the way Topalov did in the first game with 13 ♜xd5?

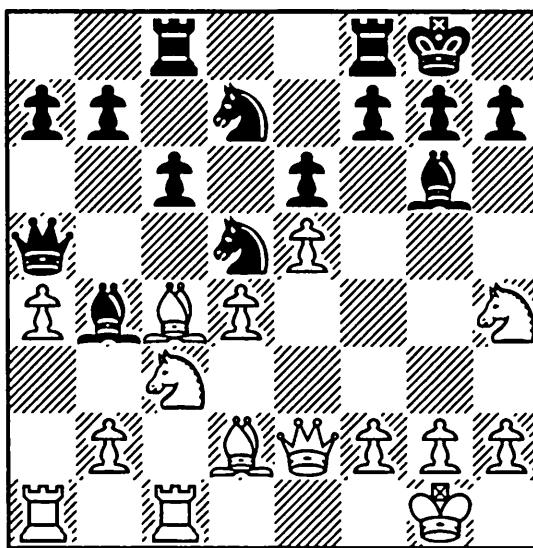
Answer: White gets less than nothing if he takes this route. After 13...cxd5 14 ♜b5 ♜b8! 15 ♜fc1 a6 16 ♜d3 ♜xd2 17 ♜xd2 ♜c6, Black stands slightly better:

1. White has few chances for a kingside attack due to the limited remaining material.
2. Black still has some hope for a win due to White's queenside weakness and hole on b4.

13...♜ac8

13...♜fd8 was a logical alternative.

14 ♜h4



Question: White controls more space and is going to pick up the bishop pair. Should Black be worried?

Answer: Not yet. Sure, we give White the bishop pair but we also reduce the number of attackers and maybe strengthen our pawn structure around our king. Also, White has plenty to worry about:

1. Holes on d5 and b4, controlled by Black; and
2. A backward d4-pawn which could turn into a target later in the game.

14...♝b6 15 ♜xg6 hxg6 16 b3!?

White gets cute and sets a trap for Black. Instead, he should play the more reliable 16

The Slav: Move by Move

$\mathbb{Q}b3$ c5 17 d5! exd5 18 e6! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19 exf7+ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}c2$. White has good play in the form of targets on the kingside. Black can't really hang on to his extra pawn and relies on his rolling pawn centre instead.

16...c5!

Black has seen deeper and deliberately “falls into” White’s trap.

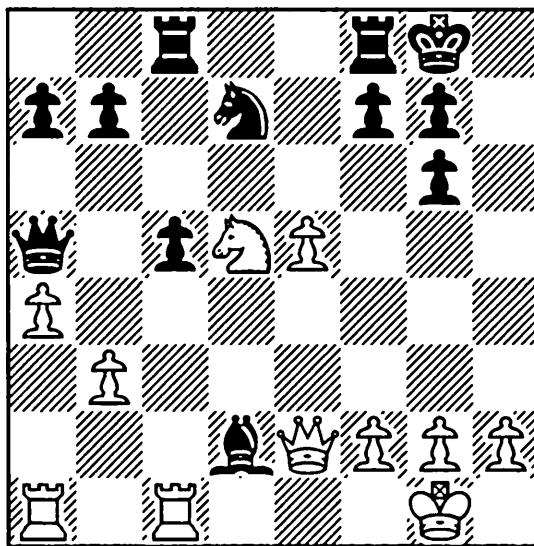
17 d5

It is too late to back down with 17 dxc5? $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18 bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$. Black wins a pawn and destroys White’s pawn structure to boot.

17...exd5 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

18 e6? just drops material to 18...dxc4 19 exd7 $\mathbb{Q}cd8$.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$



Question: It looks like White just dropped a piece.
What am I missing?

20 b4!

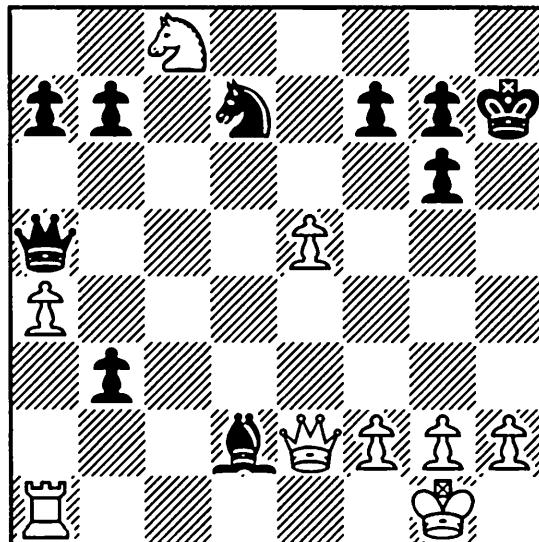
Answer: This trick, which creates a short circuit between the queen on a5 and the bishop on d2, regains the material.

20...cxb4!?

Question: Why did Black allow the knight fork?
He looks pretty good in the line 20... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$
22 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxb4 25 $\mathbb{Q}b5$.

Answer: This is an interesting psychological moment in the game. The line you demonstrated leads to a probable draw. Grischuk is playing for the win against his lower-rated GM opponent and is willing to take a calculated risk to do so.

21 $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ b3



Let's assess:

1. Black will win e5 and probably get two pawns for the exchange, a fair deal.
2. The b-pawn surges forward and if White doesn't find a way to win it in the next few moves it could spell big trouble for him.
3. White has ideas of ♖d6 which simultaneously hits b7 and f7.

Conclusion: The position looks pretty messy to us humans. However, computers see through the fog and *Rybka* finds a path to a clear advantage for White.

24 ♖b1?

The complexity of the position leads White astray and Grischuk's gamble pays off. It's amazing how often a brave, semi-sound move works in chess. Emerson (not the lead vocalist with Lake and Palmer, I mean the philosopher!) once wrote: "Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen!"

Rybka claims an advantage for White in the line 24 ♖d6! ♖xe5 25 ♖b1 ♕d5 26 ♖e4 ♘h6 27 ♖c3! and Black is fighting for the draw since he soon drops his prize b-pawn.

24...♕c3!

Securing the b-pawn. On c3 the queen sits at the top of the food chain with no natural predatory threats. White can't find a way to win the pesky pawn and soon finds himself in a state of paralysis.

25 e6

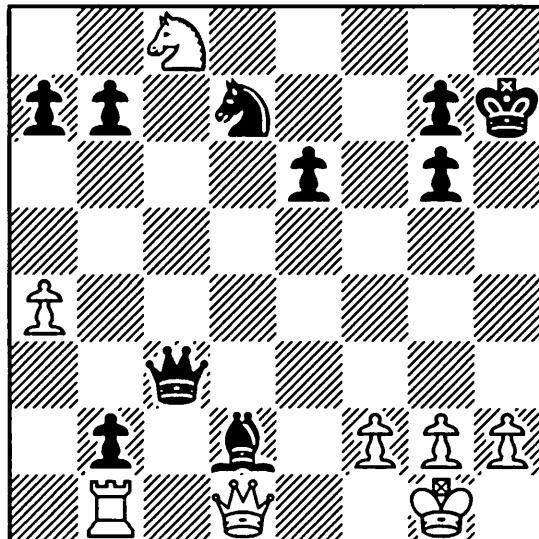
Hoping to get something going against Black's king.

25...fxe6 26 ♕d1

26 ♖xa7 b2 27 ♖b5 ♕c1+ 28 ♕d1 ♖c5 29 g3 ♖xa4 would be similar to the game continuation.

26...b2

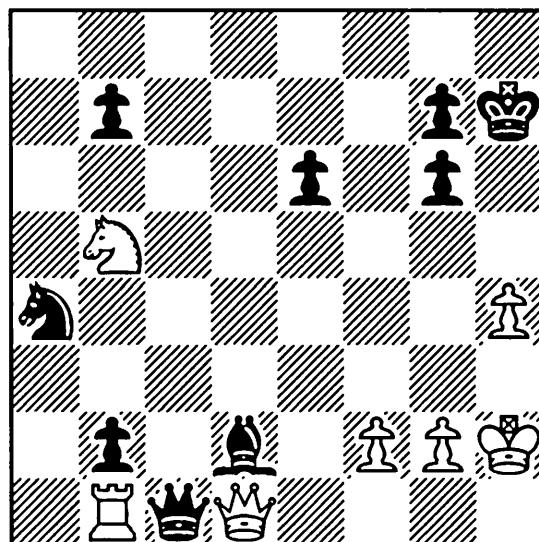
The killer b-pawn reminds me of Al Pacino's line from the movie *Scarface*: "Say hello to my little friend!"



27 ♜xa7 ♜c5 28 ♜b5 ♛c1

Forcing White on the defensive. The simple threat is ...♜xa4 and ...♜c3.

29 h4 ♜xa4 30 ♛h2



Exercise (multiple choice): Which move is Black's simplest path to victory?

- a) 30...♞f4+; b) 30...♜c5; c) 30...♛xd1

30...♜c5?

Missing an opportunity.

Answer: The ending is trivial after 30...♛xd1! 31 ♜xd1 ♛c1 32 ♜a3 ♜c3 33 ♜d7 b5 34 ♜d4 ♜d5 35 ♜b1 b4 with ...♜c3 to follow.

31 h5 g5 32 ♜a3 ♛c3 33 ♜b5 ♛d3! 34 g3

Much as White would love to eliminate the b-pawn, it is poisonous after 34 ♜xb2?? ♜f4+.

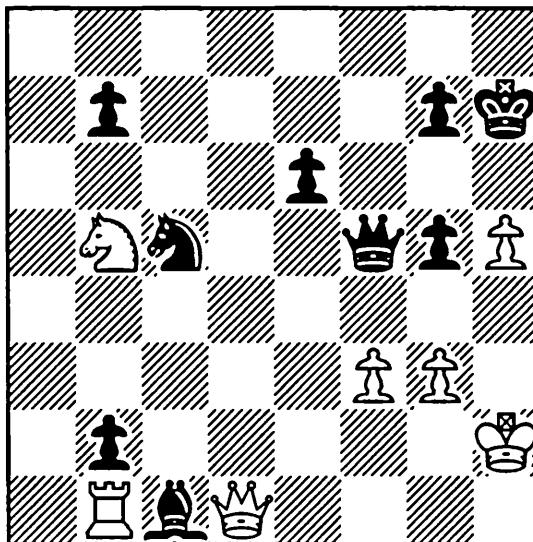
34...♛f5!

Grischuk finds clever methods of slowly eroding White's pawn cover around his king.

35 f3

Once again the pawn is immune: 35 ♜xb2? ♛xf2+ 36 ♔h3 ♖e4 37 ♜b3 ♖e3.

35....♝c1



36 ♔a3

Question: Why didn't White return the exchange in order to eliminate the b-pawn?

Answer: Unfortunately for White, it is too late to bail out with 36 ♜xc1 bxc1 ♛ 37 ♛xc1, since after 37...♞d3 38 ♛b1 ♛xf3 his position is hopeless.

36...b5!

Threatening to undermine the knight with ...b4.

37 g4

Once again, bailout attempts fail: 37 ♜xc1 bxc1 ♛ 38 ♛xc1 b4 39 ♞b1 b3 40 ♞d2 ♛c2 wins.

37...♛f4+ 38 ♔g2 ♛e3!

Nice. The queen creeps closer to White's king and Black clears f4 for his knight. Now 39 ♞xb5 fails to 39...♞d3 40 ♛f1 ♞f4+ 41 ♔h2 ♛d2+ 42 ♔h1 ♞e2 43 ♛f2 ♛d3 44 ♞a3 ♔e3 45 ♛e1 ♔c5!.

39 ♛c2+ ♞d3 40 ♞xb5 ♔h6! 0-1

A cute unpinning and winning move. Black has too many threats and *Rybka* claims a forced mate in 12!

Summary

11 e5 is a reasonable alternative to 11 ♔d3, but Black does get more counterplay against this move.

Game 6
K.Sasikiran-S.Rublevsky
Foros 2007

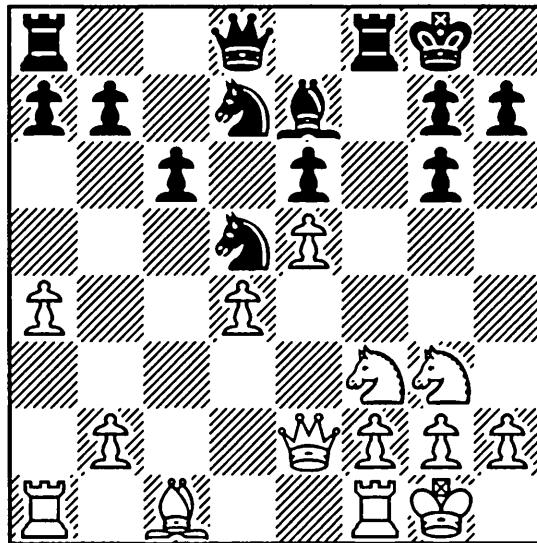
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 e3 e6 7 ♜xc4 ♜bd7

An odd move order which doesn't change anything. Normally Black plays 7...♜b4 at this point.

8 0-0 ♜b4 9 ♜e2 0-0 10 e4 ♜g6 11 ♜d3 ♜h5 12 e5 ♜d5 13 ♜d2!?

White refuses to commit to either ♜xd5, which we examined in Games 2-4, or ♜e4 lines, and keeps the position in stasis.

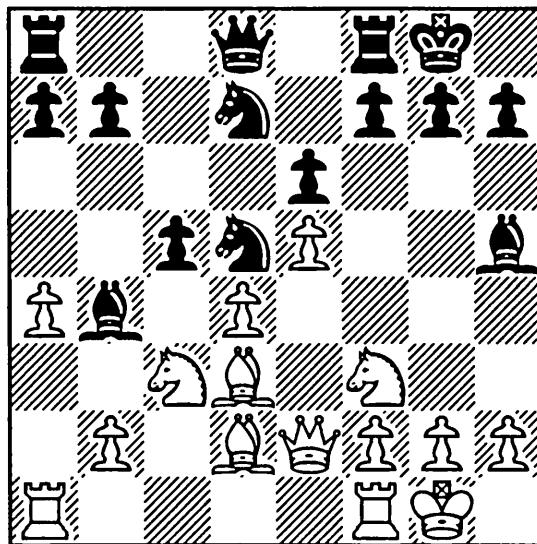
Let's take a closer look at 13 ♜e4, and follow the game J.Ehlvest-D.Barua, Yerevan Olympiad 1996: 13...♜e7! (standard operating procedure: Black covers sensitive dark squares on the kingside while clearing b4 for his knight) 14 ♜g3 ♜g6 15 ♜xg6 fxg6!.



Black follows the principle: Capture away from the centre if you feel that your king's safety is under threat. Capturing away from the centre slightly weakens Black's structure, but this is easily compensated by the rook's activity on the f-file and heightened king safety. The game continued 16 a5 a6 17 ♜e4 h6 18 ♜e1 ♜f5 19 ♜d3 ♜f8 20 ♜d1 g5 21 ♜g4 ♜e8 22 ♜g3 ♜g6!. A brilliant positional exchange sac to take over the light squares and get the kingside pawns rolling. Ehlvest wisely declined it, after which his space and Black's light-square control balanced each other out.

Returning to 13 ♜d2, the only difference between this game and the previous one (David-Grischuk) is the position of the light-squared bishops. In David-Grischuk, White's bishop was on c4 and Black's on g6. Such subtle shifts should be noted because in the two games we execute radically different plans!

13...c5!



An ambitious move which attempts to immediately dismantle White's centre. The alternative is the solid $13\dots \mathbb{Q}e7$; for example, $14\,\mathbb{Q}xd5\,cxd5\,15\,\mathbb{W}e3\,\mathbb{Q}b8!\,16\,\mathbb{R}fc1\,\mathbb{Q}c6\,17\,\mathbb{Q}e1\,\mathbb{Q}g6$ with equality, A.Rychagov-A.Khalifman, Moscow 2009.

Question: It seems very difficult to determine when to play the ...c5 break, and when to sit tight and refrain. Are there any guidelines Black can follow as to when ...c5 is playable and when it's not?

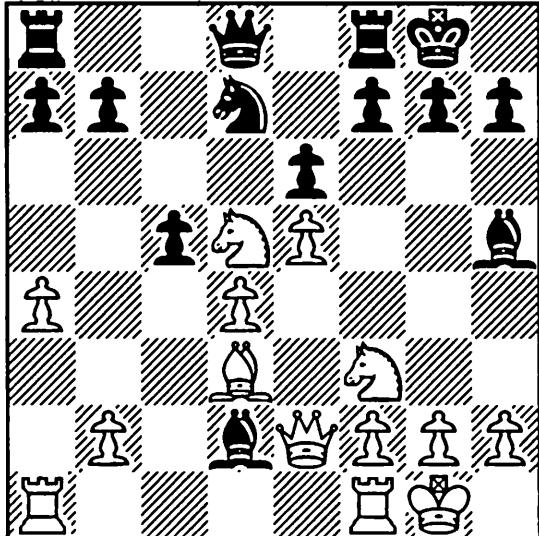
Answer: Deciding if and when Black should play ...c5 is one of the toughest challenges of the Slav. Here are a few guidelines you can follow to determine whether you should play the move or not:

1. Black had better not lag in development at the moment of ...c5 or you could get blown away in the centre.
2. If there is a traffic jam of White pieces on the d-file, as in this game, you may be in a better position to play ...c5 since a white rook won't instantly appear and attack Black's queen on the d-file.
3. It is generally better to play ...c5 if White's knight is not on c3 (unlike this game, which would be an exception to this rule). The reason is after $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ you will normally be forced to accept an isolani on d5 which could become a target for White.
4. If you have White's f3-knight pinned, then ...c5 is more likely to be playable for Black.

Conclusion: The line between when to play and when to avoid ...c5 is often blurred. Frequently one small shift in the position changes the assessment from no to yes! Intuitive understanding and proper timing of ...c5 (or not!) is something that develops over time as you play the Slav.

14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5\,\mathbb{Q}xd2!$

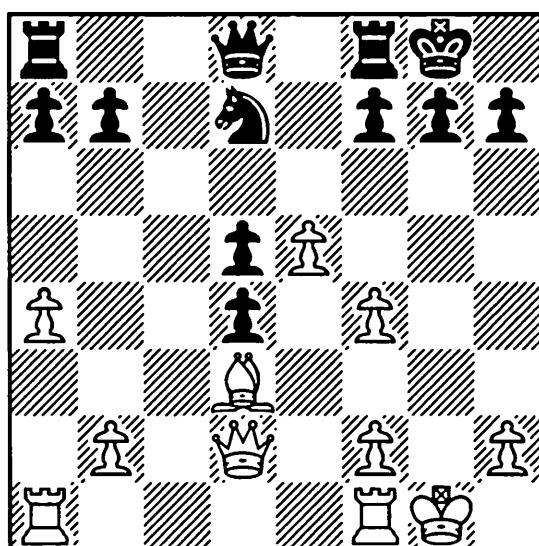
Black's clever point. Now we begin to see some of the problems with White's 13th move:



1. White's f3-knight can't recapture due to the pin and his pieces are thrown a bit out of sync.
2. Recapturing with the queen damages White's pawn cover around his king.
3. The weakness of Black's future isolani on d5 will be outweighed by the structural damage White sustains around his king.

Conclusion: This is an example of a well-timed ...c5 break.

15 ♕xd2 ♖xf3 16 gxf3 exd5 17 f4 cxd4



Question: Is this really so bad for White?

Answer: Let's break down the position:

1. White has a good bishop, controls more space with his advanced e-pawn and may be able to attack along the open g-file.
2. Black has an extra, doubled d-pawn but he won't be able to keep it.

3. Black's knight is a very strong piece. It can be manoeuvred to c5, e6 or g6 depending on circumstances.

4. White's king may become exposed later.

5. Those broken white pawns could get hit with a well timed ...f6! pawn break.

Conclusion: Maybe the chances are dynamically balanced but I still prefer Black, whose attacking chances and superior pawns look to me to outweigh White's plusses.

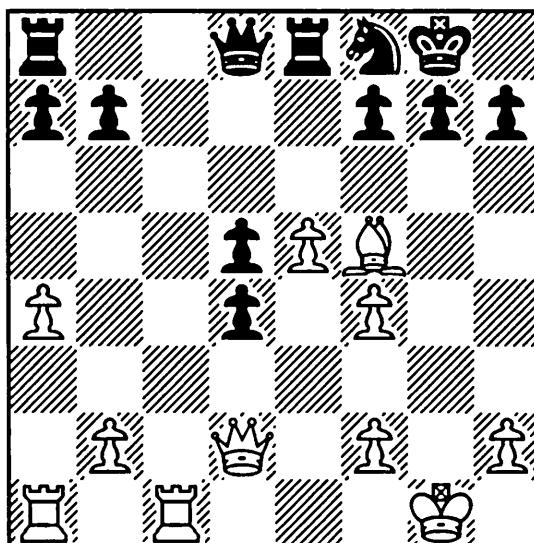
18 $\mathbb{E}fc1?!$

Question: It looks like White is trying to play positionally.

Shouldn't he go for a direct attack with 18 $\mathbb{Q}h1?$

Answer: I think you are correct in suggesting 18 $\mathbb{Q}h1!$, which may be the most thematic way to play the position. White just goes for a direct attack with everything he has. The following is a logical scenario: 18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}c8!$ 20 $\mathbb{E}a3$ (White gets overextended after 20 $\mathbb{W}xd4?$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 22 f5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}f4!$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 21 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 24 $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 25 $\mathbb{E}fg1$ g6 26 f5 $\mathbb{W}c2$ 27 $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{E}c5$ 28 $\mathbb{E}g5$ $\mathbb{E}cxе5$ 29 $fxg6$ $\mathbb{W}c6+$ 30 f3 $fxg6$ 31 $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 32 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xf3+$ with perpetual check.

18... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$



20 $\mathbb{E}a3$

20 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ leads to positions similar to the game after 20... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 23 $\mathbb{E}c7$ $\mathbb{E}e7$.

20... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21 $\mathbb{E}g3$

White doesn't have the time for 21 $\mathbb{Q}h1?!$ in view of 21... $\mathbb{W}h4$ 22 $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{W}h5!$ 23 $\mathbb{W}d3$.

21... $\mathbb{W}h4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

22 $\mathbb{E}g4$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 24 $\mathbb{E}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}ac8!$ doesn't change the picture much.

22... $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xd4?$

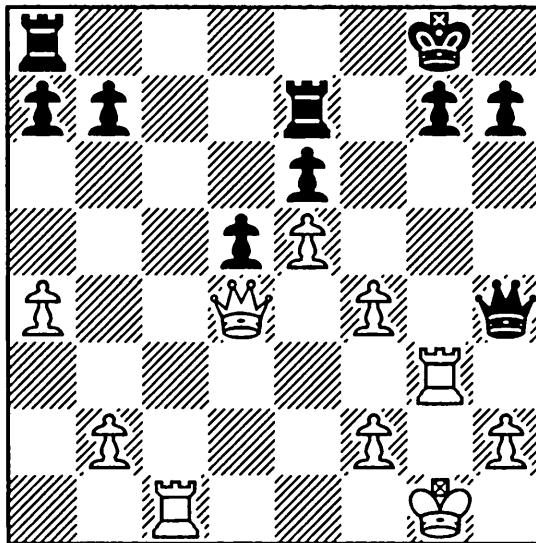
Drifting into passivity, which is a death sentence in major piece endings.

It was time for White to take bold action and sac a pawn for activity: 23 $\mathbb{E}c7$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 24

The Slav: Move by Move

$\mathbb{Q}xe7 \mathbb{W}xe7 25 f5! exf5 26 \mathbb{W}xd4$. The resulting position looks quite difficult to win for Black, despite his extra pawn.

23... $\mathbb{E}e7$

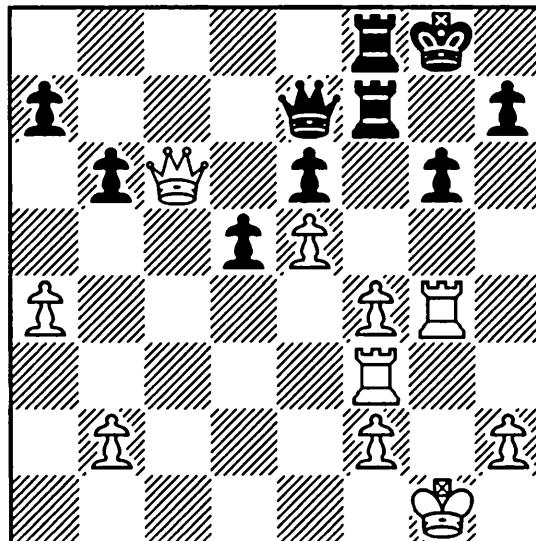


Time to assess:

1. White is burdened with a doomed f4-pawn. Black simply gangs up on it with all his major pieces. When the f-pawn falls, White's king faces serious trouble.
2. White's control over the c-file doesn't mean much.
3. White can't get anything going on the open g-file either since Black has adequate defence of g7.
4. White has a tiny bit of pressure on Black's queenside pawns.

Conclusion: White's structural defects leave him fighting for his life.

24 $\mathbb{R}cc3 \mathbb{R}f7 25 \mathbb{R}cf3 b6 26 \mathbb{W}c3 \mathbb{R}af8 27 \mathbb{W}c6 \mathbb{W}e7 28 \mathbb{R}g4 g6$



The white rooks have been tied into a pretzel in their attempts to salvage f4.

29 $\mathbb{R}g2 \mathbb{R}g7 30 \mathbb{W}c2!$

Question: The queen on c6 put pressure on the e6-pawn.
Why did White back up voluntarily?

Answer: If White remains passive and marks time with his king with 30 $\mathbb{Q}g1?$, Black has the manoeuvre 30... $\mathbb{R}f5$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h5! (bumping White's rook from the defence of f4) 32 $\mathbb{R}gg3$ $\mathbb{R}xf4$ and f4 has fallen. With 30 $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ White pressures g6 and also retreats the queen for defensive purposes to cover f4.

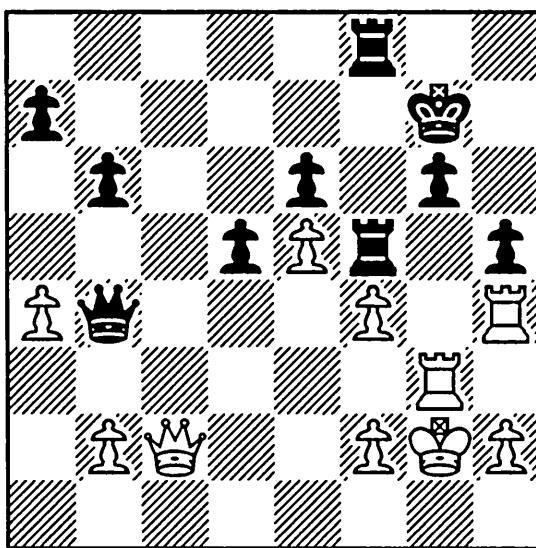
30... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 31 $\mathbb{R}h4$

White gets tied into a knot after 31 $\mathbb{Q}c6?$ h5 32 $\mathbb{R}h4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{R}f5$.

31... $\mathbb{R}f5$ 32 $\mathbb{R}fh3$ h5 33 $\mathbb{R}g3$

Targeting g6 in order to hold on to f4.

33... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 34 $\mathbb{R}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ 35 $\mathbb{R}g3$



35... $\mathbb{W}e7!$

Question: Can Black win the ending after 35... $\mathbb{W}e4+?$

Answer: Black should probably go on to win after 36 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $dxe4$ 37 $\mathbb{R}c3$ g5! 38 $f\#x2103;g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 39 $\mathbb{R}xe4$ $\mathbb{R}xf2+$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{R}xb2$, but it may not be all that easy to convert in the double rook ending. Rublevsky prefers to keep queens on the board to harass White's insecure king.

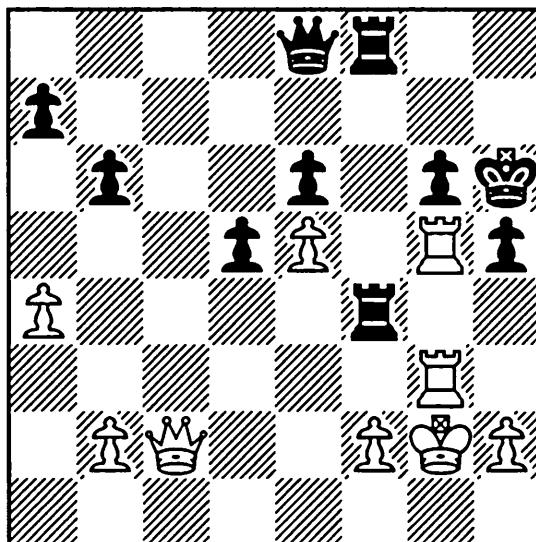
36 $\mathbb{R}hh3$

36 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}e8!$ picks off either the f4- or a4-pawn.

36... $\mathbb{W}e8!$

Covering his soft spot on g6. White's position crumbles.

37 $\mathbb{R}g5$ $\mathbb{R}xf4$ 38 $\mathbb{R}hg3$



Exercise: Black can take on f2. Is two rooks for a queen and pawn a good deal for Black?

38...Rxf2+!

Answer: Yes, the rooks are no match for the nimble queen, which will pick off white pawn targets.

Question: Won't Black's queen be tied down to g6?

Answer: No, Black's queen soon roams about at will. Watch!

39 Qxf2 Rxf2+ 40 Qxf2 Qh7!

So that Rxg6 doesn't come with a check.

41 b3 Wf8+!

Throwing White's rooks out of alignment. Black's queen goes on to perform a one-woman show for the remainder of the game.

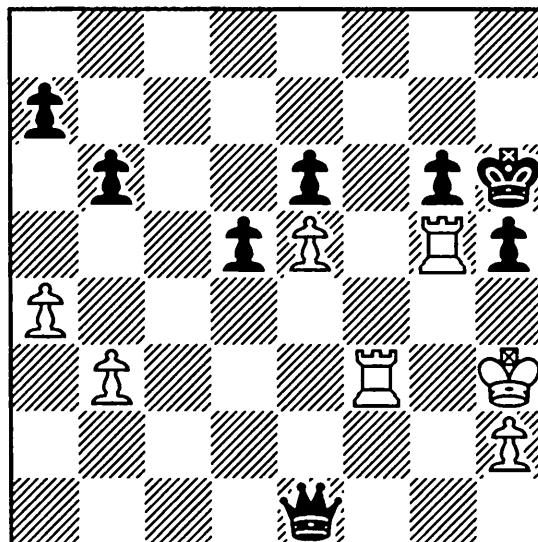
42 Rf3

An unfortunate necessity since 42 Qe2? loses quickly to 42...Wa3! 43 Rxg6? Wb2+ 44 Qf1 Wb1+ 45 Qe2 Wxg6 46 Rxg6 Qxg6, winning the king and pawn ending.

42...Wb4!

Threat: ...Wd2+ picking off the stray rook on g5.

43 Qg3 We1+ 44 Qh3 Qh6!



45 $\mathbb{R}gg3$

Question: Why wouldn't White want to line up on the g6-pawn with 45 $\mathbb{R}fg3$?

Answer: After 45... $\mathbb{Q}f1+$ 46 $\mathbb{R}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 47 $\mathbb{R}2g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 48 b4 d4! the d-pawn marches down the board. Remember the *Brady Bunch* episode when little Bobby and Cindy got lost in the Grand Canyon? Somehow White's confused rooks remind me of the lost Brady kid ordeal.

45... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

The game is over. White's rooks and king are no match for Black's queen and two central passers.

46 $\mathbb{R}f7$ a5 47 $\mathbb{R}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ 48 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ 49 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ d4 50 $\mathbb{R}xb6$ d3 51 $\mathbb{R}d6$

Dropping a rook, but it obviously didn't matter at this point.

51... $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ 0-1

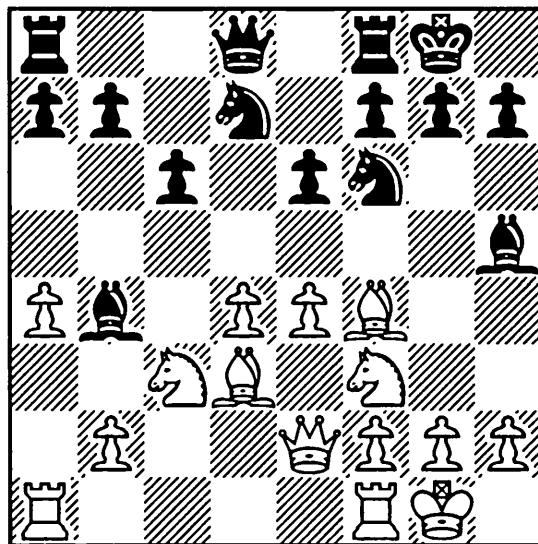
Summary

I am suspicious of the wishy-washy 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$? and tempted to give it a dubious mark. 13...c5! is a good answer which probably offers Black a shade better than equality.

Game 7
L.Polugaevsky-E.Torre
London 1984

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 e3 e6 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 0-0 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10 e4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$

The bishop clamps down on the key e5-square and White refuses to commit to the e5 advance, keeping Black guessing as to when or if he will play it.



Question: If Black can't play for ...e5, what should he do?

12...♝e8!

Answer: Ah, but he *can* play for ...e5 with this excellent reaction. Black either forces White to play e5 or Black forces it through himself.

13 e5

Question: I don't get it. If White chose ♜f4 on his last move to avoid playing e5, then what induced him to play it this move?

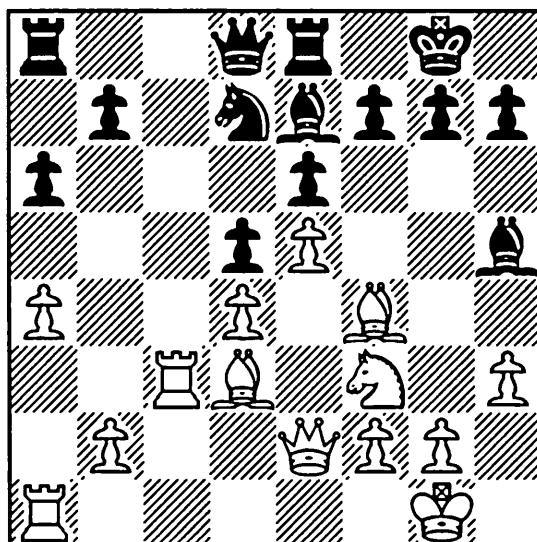
Answer: If White continues his strategy of containment with 13 ♜fd1?!, it fails miserably to 13...e5!. For example, 14 dx5 ♜xe5 15 ♜c2 ♜a5 16 ♜a2 ♜f8 17 ♜ab1 (M.Simonet Pons-M.Ubach Miralda, Spain 2003) and here instead of 17...h6 Black has 17...♜xf3+! 18 gxf3 ♜d5!.

13...♞d5 14 ♜xd5 cxd5 15 h3 ♜e7

A logical move but maybe not the most accurate. ...♜e7 covers his sensitive kingside dark squares and prepares the standard manoeuvre ...♜b8 and ...♜c6. But the move is mis-timed and allows White a rook lift on the third rank later on.

15...a6! should produce equality after 16 g4 ♜g6 17 ♜xg6 fxg6 18 ♜g2 ♜c8 19 ♜e3 ♜f8, as in A.Khalifman-E.Bareev, Neum 2000.

16 ♜fc1 a6 17 ♜c3!



17...♝xf3?!

Black doesn't sense the danger to his king yet.

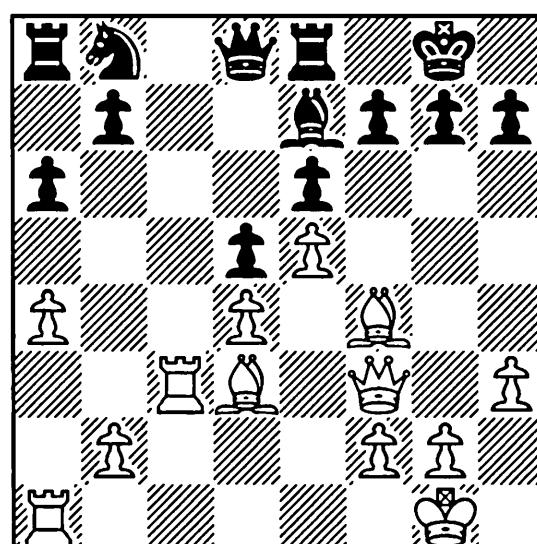
Question: Couldn't Black gain a tempo with 17...♝b4?

Answer: No, it is Black who loses the tempo. After 18 ♜c2, White's rook is happy on the c-file, whereas Black has been induced into moving his dark-squared bishop for the third time.

Maybe it was time to go into Petrosian mode by 17...♝g6! 18 ♜xg6 hxg6 19 ♜b3! ♜a7! (keeping b8 available to redeploy his knight) 20 a5 ♜b8 21 ♜d2 ♜c6. White has some pressure on the queenside and a nagging space advantage. But Black has reasonable chances to hold. The b7-pawn is the only real weakness, and Black can defend it easily. Also, he has a good bishop with most of his pawns on the opposite colour.

18 ♜xf3 ♜b8?

Black's last chance for survival lay in 18...♞f8! 19 ♜ac1 ♜d7 20 ♜d1 ♜ec8.



Exercise (multiple choice): Which is White's most effective continuation?

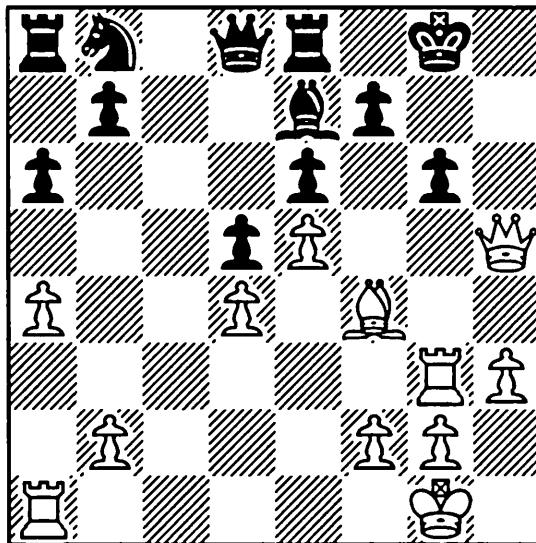
- a) 19 $\mathbb{W}h5$; b) 19 $\mathbb{W}g4$; c) 19 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$.

19 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$!

It is a very rare sight indeed these days to see a GM fall victim to the Greek gift sac. Polugaevsky's monster calculation powers worked out the details of 19 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$! to mate. 19 $\mathbb{W}h5$ and 19 $\mathbb{W}g4$ are not forceful enough to put Black away.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 20 $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21 $\mathbb{B}g3$ g6?!

Allowing White a glorious finish. Marginally better was 21... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c8!$ (intending to send in the reserves with ... $\mathbb{W}c2$ and ... $\mathbb{W}h7$) 23 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ (what else?) 25 $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 26 $\mathbb{B}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}axc8$ 27 $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 28 g4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 30 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}g8+$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ and Black doesn't have the resources to cover his multiple pawn targets, but at least he is still kicking.



22 $\mathbb{B}xg6+$!

I would bet money on it that Polugaevsky, who Fischer said was an incredible calculator in forcing lines, had visualized up to move 33, an impressive 21 ply, when he sac'ed this rook.

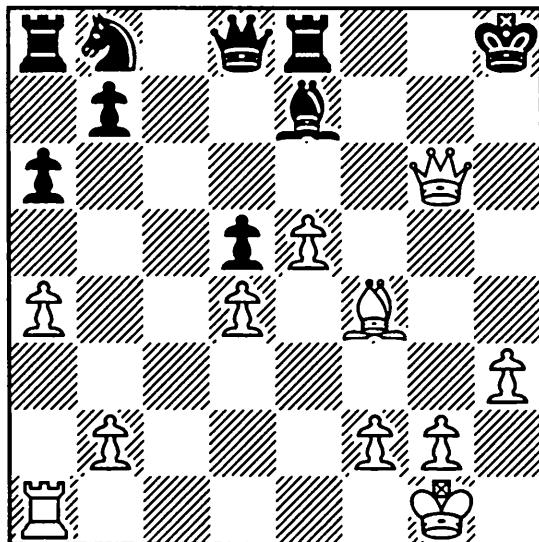
22...fxg6 23 $\mathbb{W}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24 $\mathbb{W}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Maybe Black should opt for assisted suicide with 25... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ mate. At least then his suffering would end sooner.

26 $\mathbb{W}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 27 $\mathbb{W}g6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Question: I don't see anything better than a perpetual check since a3 is out as a possible rook lift, and I don't believe queen and bishop provide enough firepower to deliver checkmate.

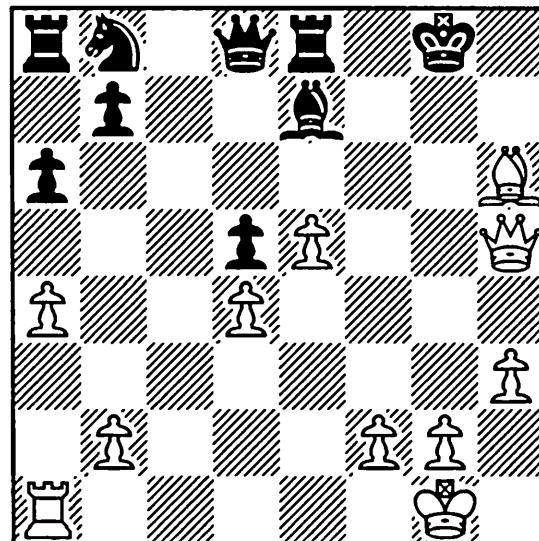
Does White have more than a draw?



Answer: White wins.

Exercise: As a training exercise, give yourself 15 minutes from this position to find a method of bringing White's rook into the attack. Simply look at the remainder of the game for your answer.

28 ♜h5+! ♚g8 29 ♔h6!



The subtle point. Black is forced into a swap of his dark-squared bishop, after which the white rook swoops in on a3.

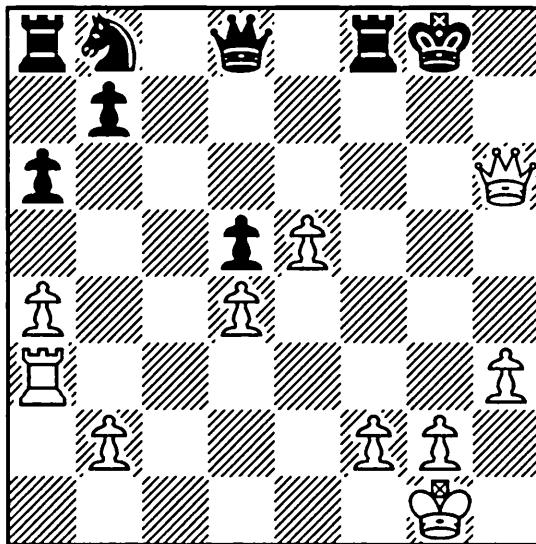
29...f8

Only move.

30 ♜g6+ ♛h8 31 ♕xf8!

Removing the last meaningful defender.

31... $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 32 $\mathbb{W}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ 1-0



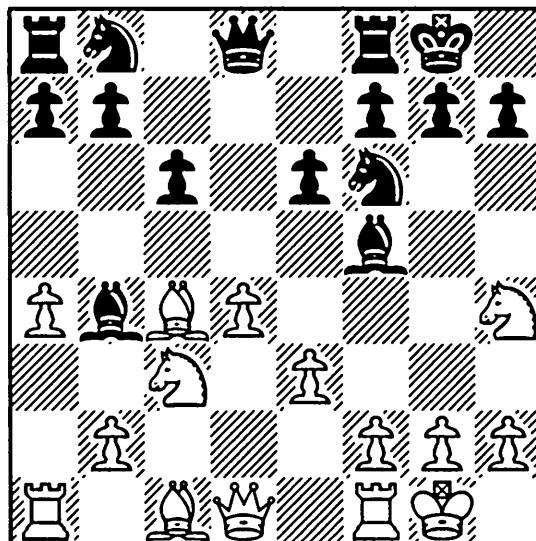
The culmination of White's attack. His rook enters with fatal effect, for example 33... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 34 $\mathbb{R}f3+$ $\mathbb{K}e7$ 35 $\mathbb{W}g7+$ $\mathbb{K}e6$ 36 $\mathbb{R}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 37 $\mathbb{W}g4$ mate. Black's position is not a pretty picture with his kingside a charred ruin and his queenside pieces fast asleep.

Summary

12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ fails to accomplish its goal if Black responds with 12... $\mathbb{R}e8!$. This move induces White into playing 13 e5, the move he tried to avoid in the first place.

Game 8
S.Ernst-I.Sokolov
Netherlands League 2005

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 e3 e6 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 0-0 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}h4$



This is the main alternative to 9 $\mathbb{W}e2$. White is hungry for the bishop and chases it down. We examine 9 $\mathbb{W}b3$ next game.

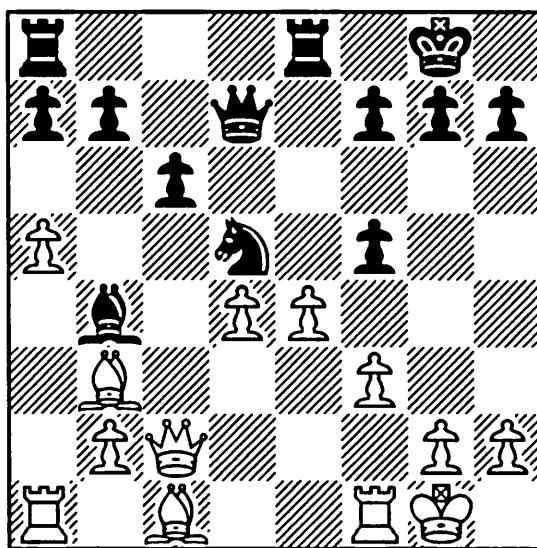
9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$?

My favourite, the dynamic (some would say psycho!) option. Both sides get what they want in this line. White gets to push his pawns forward for his attack and Black goads White forward in the hope of overextension. I tend to favour ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ lines in virtually all Slav situations. My philosophy is: If White wants the bishop pair that badly he must pay for it with the burden of a few pawn weaknesses.

Question: I'm not sure I feel comfortable taunting White forward like this.
Does Black have any non-violent options?

Answer: Yes, there are a couple of safer tries:

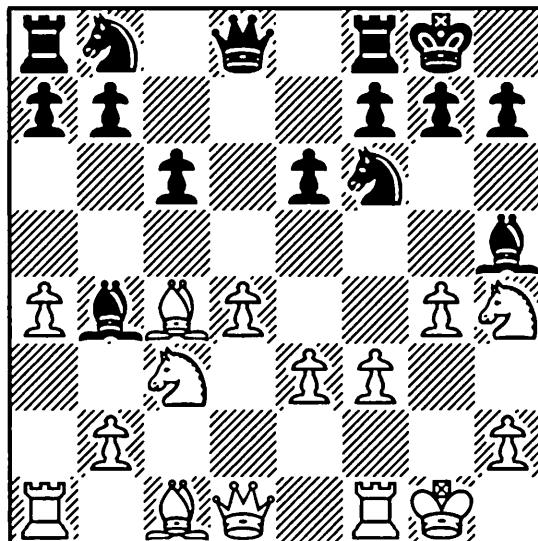
a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ is sound if you know how to navigate around White's attacking ambitions. For example, 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $exf5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$ A rule of thumb in such positions: don't weaken with ... $g6$ unless you are forced to do so. 13 $a5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd5$ 14 $f3!$ Logical: White plans to steamroll Black in the centre and Black must play accurately to avoid disaster. 14... $\mathbb{W}fe8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16 $e4$



16... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$. This is the trick to remember: don't (I repeat don't!) open the f-file for White or you will be going home early that evening. 17 $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $fxe4!$ 19 $fxe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 21 $\mathbb{R}ad1$ $\mathbb{R}ae8!$ (to reduce the attackers) 22 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{R}e1+$ 23 $\mathbb{R}xe1$ $\mathbb{R}xe1+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{R}e7$ and Black achieves equality, J.Lautier-E.Bareev, Enghien les Bains 2003.

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g6$. Caution: This choice is the most passive, and I don't care for the positions Black gets after 10 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$. For example, 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12 $\mathbb{R}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $c5$ 14 $a5!$ $\mathbb{R}ac8$ 15 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $a6$ 16 $dxc5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 18 $\mathbb{W}a3!$ $\mathbb{R}c6$ 19 $f3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}cd7$ 21 $e4$, as in V.Smyslov-W.Unzicker, Graz 1984. White, without appreciable effort, builds up a clearly superior position where his bishops rule the open board and Black's knights lack good squares.

10 f3 ♜h5 11 g4



11...♝d5!?

Be aware of this idea which simultaneously hits h4 and c3.

Question: Are we forced to get fancy like this?
What is wrong with 11...♜g6?

Answer: I think if you comply with ...♜g6 in this position, it is very easy for Black to get squeezed after 12 e4 ♞bd7 13 g5!. For example, 13...♝e8 14 ♞xg6 hxg6 15 ♜e3 ♛d6 16 ♜e2 ♜a5 17 ♔h1 ♜e7 18 ♜b1 ♜fd8 19 b4, L.Polugaevsky-E.Torre, Biel 1989. I don't know about you, but I am not very enthusiastic about taking Black here:

1. White enjoys a gigantic territorial advantage.
2. White has the bishop pair.
3. White can take his pick of kingside, queenside or central assault plans.
4. It's true that Black's position remains solid, but one can also argue that it is entirely devoid of counterplay.

Conclusion: I would avoid 11...♜g6 and take the plunge with 11...♝d5!? instead.

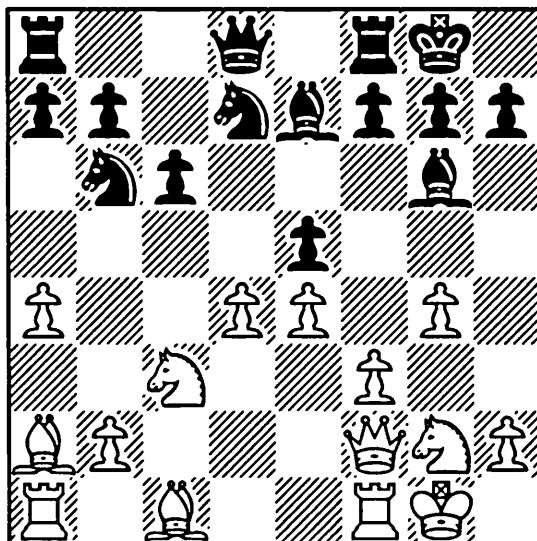
12 ♞g2

Question: What if White plays the tricky 12 ♜e1 to hunt down Black's light-squared bishop?

Answer: Black can also play that game and reply with 12...♝e7!? forcing White's knight back (though there is nothing wrong with 12...♜g6 13 ♞xg6 hxg6). For example, 13 ♞g2 ♜g6 14 ♜f2 ♞d7 15 e4 ♞b6 16 ♜a2 e5, as in Nikolaidis-I.Almasi, Budapest 1994.

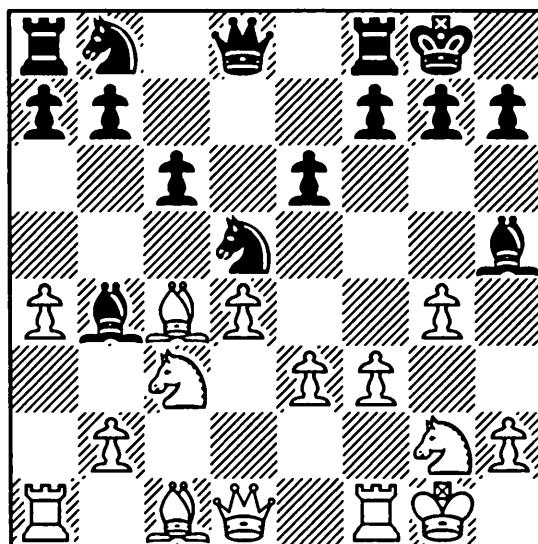
Let's assess this position:

1. Black managed to dodge giving up his light-squared bishop and sent White's knight back to g2.



2. The bishop on g6 is out of play and could become vulnerable to pawn storm attacks with f4, f5 and h4, h5 later on.

Conclusion: If you play 12...Bg6!?, you are making a high-risk gamble and may need to step outside of your normal comfort zone. If you want to increase the complications, then go for it and play this way. But if this line doesn't appeal to you then just stick with the safer but more passive 12...Bg6. Let's return to the position after 12 Ng2:



Exercise: Can Black win a pawn with 12...Nxc3?

Answer: Black falls into a trap if he gets greedy and takes on c3: 12...Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bxc3 14 Ra3! (this is the double attack trick you must see to avoid White's trap) 14...Bb4 15 Bb3 leaves Black's poor bishops dangling. There is a little known 11th commandment which states: "When thou stealest a pawn, thou shalt not get caught!"

12...♝g6 13 ♞e2?!

The knight is a bit clunky on e2. Time is of the essence and White should grab the free tempo with 13 ♞a2!. After 13...♝e7 14 e4 ♞b6 15 ♜b3 a5 16 ♜e3 ♞d7 17 ♞c3 ♜b4 18 h4! White used the placement of Black's bishop on g6 as the focal point of his attack in J.Oms Pallise-H.Holmsgaard, Andorra 2004.

Question: In this line, why not hit in the centre with 15...c5?

Answer: The complications are in White's favour after 16 a5 ♞d7 17 d5.

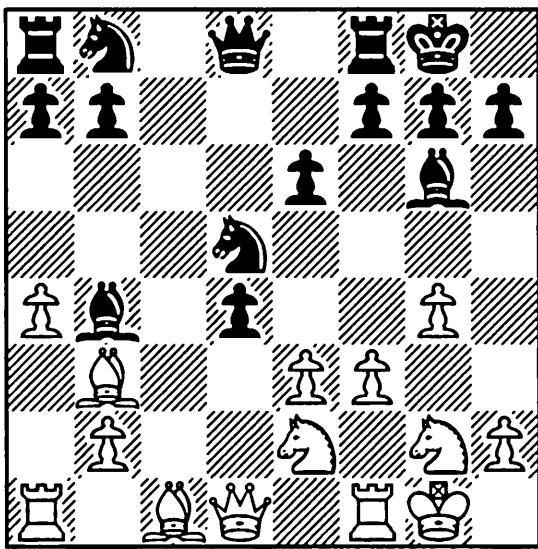
13...c5!

Well timed.

14 ♜b3

Black also stood very well after the natural 14 e4 ♜b6 15 ♜b3 ♜c6 16 ♜e3 ♜e7 17 dx5 ♜fd8 18 ♜c2 ♜d5! 19 ♜f2 ♜ac8 20 ♜ad1 ♜e5 in J.Jorczik-A.Graf, Deizisau 2010. Black regains his sacrificed pawn and his centralized knights create an intimidating presence in the centre of the board.

14...cxd4



15 ♞xd4

Question: Can White get brave and take on an isolani here with 15 exd4?

Answer: White is probably worse off recapturing with the pawn. Let's assess the position after 15 exd4?! ♜c6:

1. White's d4-pawn needs round-the-clock nursing care.
2. White's position suffers punctures on a5, b4 and d5 without any compensation.
3. Black's king looks solid and I don't see even a trace of an attack for White with such an open centre.

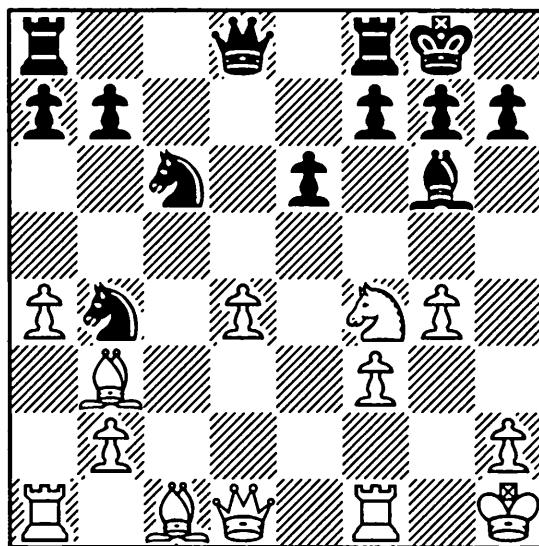
Conclusion: Black enjoys all the advantages and none of the problems of a typical isolani position.

15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$?

Question: Why give up the bishop pair in an open position?

Answer: Taking on d4 ensures that Black's bishop on g6 will never get shut out of the game by e3-e4.

18 $exd4$ $\mathbb{Q}8c6$



19 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Question: Why didn't White unload and trade off his isolated d-pawn with 19 d5?

Answer: White felt he would be swapping one problem for another and probably feared Black's enormous piece activity at the end of the line 19... $exd5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$, but perhaps this was still the better way to play it for White.

19... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

Powerful positional play from Sokolov. Black not only gives himself the option of picking off White's good bishop, but also halts any d5 ideas from White.

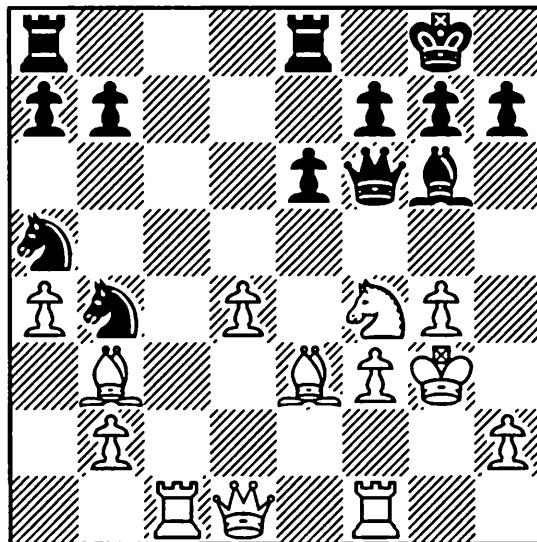
20 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Thinking about opening with...e5 in the near future, despite White's bishops.

21 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ (see following diagram)

Desperate and strong! The white king takes it upon his shoulders to seize stewardship of the beleaguered kingside. Let's assess:

1. White doesn't feel safe anywhere on the kingside on the normal squares like g1 or h1 and decides g3 is his safest option for his king.
2. On g3, the king not only keeps Black's queen out of the h4-square, but also prepares to attack with h2-h4.
3. I like 22 $\mathbb{Q}g3$, if only because it throws unusual problems at Black to solve over the board and creates maximum resistance in what is arguably a rotten position.

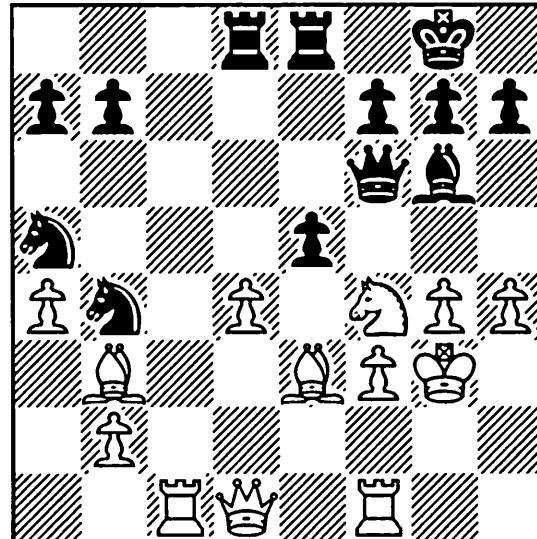


Conclusion: Sometimes desperation is the mother of creativity.

22...♝ad8 23 h4

A key point of his last move.

23...e5!



Naturally Black is happy to begin a brawl in the centre if White's king is hanging out close by on g3!

24 ♜xg6 ♛xg6 25 ♜c7 ♜xb3 26 ♛xb3 ♜d5?

Inaccurate. After 26...exd4! 27 ♜d2 ♜d5 28 ♜xb7 ♛d6+ Black gets the position he got in the game but with the key difference being an extra pawn on d4.

27 ♜xb7 exd4 28 ♜xd4 ♛d6+ 29 f4 ♜e4 30 ♜xa7!

Why not? Black is down two pawns, and should his attack fail, White wins on the queenside.

30...h5!

Creating a puncture wound on the light squares around White's king.

31 gxh5 ♜e7!?

Another possible attacking line could be 31...♛h6 32 ♜b8 ♜xb8 33 ♜xb8+ ♜h7 34 ♜c8! and it is anybody's game to win or lose.

32 ♜b5?!

White's ambition induces him to overreach. Ernst may have underestimated his opponent's firepower on the kingside and rather recklessly goes for the win. White can play safely with 32 ♜b8! ♜e3+ 33 ♜xe3 ♜f5+ 34 ♜h2 ♜xb8 35 ♜c3 ♜xe3 36 ♜xe3 ♜xb2+ 37 ♜f2. Here Black forces the draw due to the exposed position of White's king: 37...♜xf2+! 38 ♜xf2 ♜b4! 39 ♜g3 ♜xa4.

32...♜f6 33 ♜g5 ♜d3+ 34 ♜h2 ♜e6 35 ♜g2

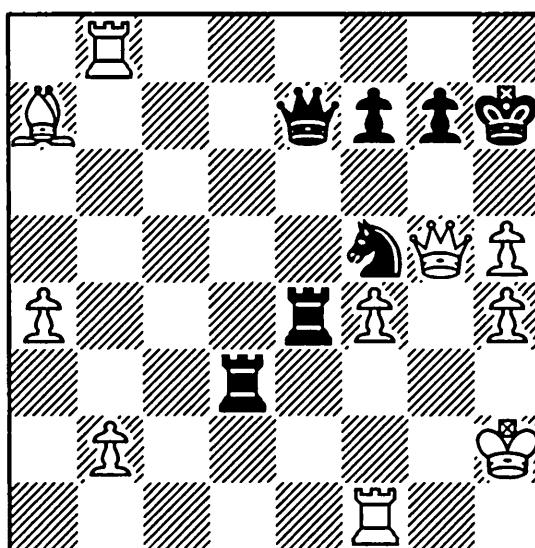
The h3-square must be covered: 35 ♜f2?? ♜h3+ 36 ♜g1 ♜ee3! wins.

35...♝f5 36 ♜b6

Attackers swarm White's king and no defence works. For example:

a) 36 ♜g4 ♜e2+ 37 ♜f2 ♜dd2 38 ♜g1 ♜d1+ 39 ♜h2 ♜e4 40 ♜g2 ♜xf2 41 ♜xf2 ♜xf4+ 42 ♜g3 ♜xg3 wins.

b) 36 ♜b8+ ♜h7 37 ♜f2 ♜xf4 with too many threats.

36...♜e7! 37 ♜b8+ ♜h7 38 ♜g5

Exercise (multiple choice): Sokolov missed an immediate knockout here.

Can you find it? The choices are: a) 38...♝g3; b) 38...♜e2+; c) 38...♜e6

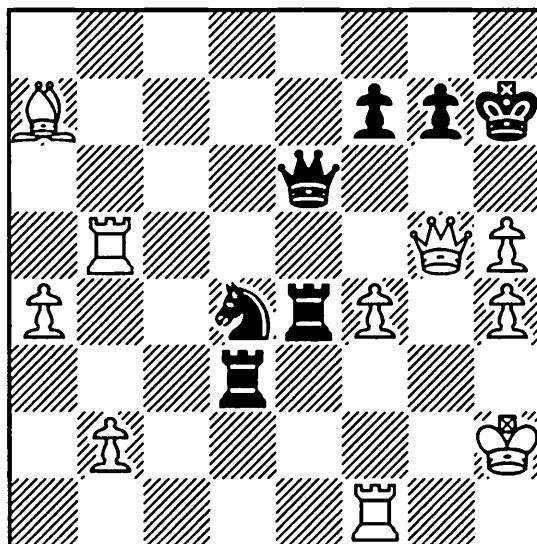
38...♜e6!?

Answer: Sokolov missed the killer a) 38...♝g3! which wins material in all lines due to the double attack on the rook on f1 and bishop on a7.

39 ♜b5?!

His last prayer was 39 ♜e8 ♜xe8 40 ♜xf5+.

39...♝d4! 0-1



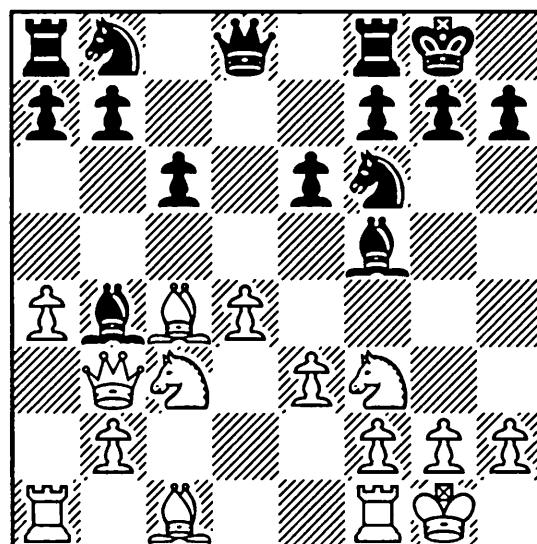
White's hope lies dead by the side of the road, and he can't deal with the multiple threats on b5, f3, e2 and h3.

Summary

When facing the 9 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ line, I suggest you take a chance, buckle up your seatbelt and try the radical option 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$?, which leads to a wild ride for both sides.

Game 9
V.Korchnoi-R.Hübner
Chicago 1982

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 c4 dx c 4 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 e3 e6 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 0-0-0 9 $\mathbb{W}b3$



Question: Besides the obvious threat to Black's bishop, what are some of the ideas behind 9 $\mathbb{W}b3$?

Answer: The main ideas behind 9 $\mathbb{W}b3$ are:

1. You already mentioned that Black's bishop on b4 is now attacked.
2. Should the bishop retreat then b7 is loose.
3. After Black deals with his b4-bishop, White plays $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ and chases down the bishop on f5. Having played $\mathbb{W}b3$, Black doesn't have ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ hitting a queen on d1.
4. White realizes that Black will eventually hit back in the centre with either ...e5, or more likely ...c5. Should this happen, White can then play d5. A queen on b3 stays off the open d-file and away from ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ideas from Black.

9... $\mathbb{W}e7!$

Very useful: Black's queen covers b4, protects b7 and helps prepare for both ...e5 and ...c5 breaks.

9... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ scores better for Black than 9... $\mathbb{W}b6$, where it is vulnerable to a5! tricks from White later on. Observe the continuation of L.Ljubojevic-D.Stellwagen, Amsterdam 2009: 10 $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf5 exf5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{Q}ac8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2 c5?!$ (mistiming his bid for freedom) 14 $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}fd8$ 15 a5! (the ever-alert Ljubojevic finds a reason why Black's queen is precariously placed on b6) 15... $\mathbb{W}d6$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}xa5??$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ wins) 16 $dxc5 \mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ and White squeezed his opponent later with his bishop pair.

10 $\mathbb{Q}h4$

There are a few other tenth-move options for White:

a) After 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2 a5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}fe1 \mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12 e4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{W}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2 h6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}7b6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}e7!$ White's piece placement made an odd impression in W.Uhlmann-Z.Ribli, German League 1993:

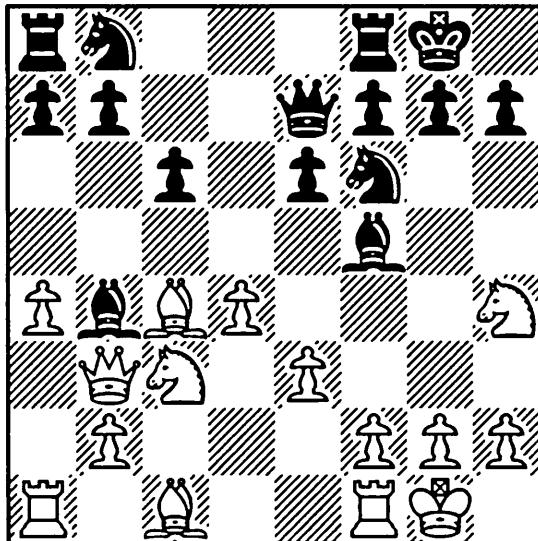
1. Black is ready for ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, which hits both the weak d4-pawn and the bishop on h4.
2. Black owns the d5- and b4-squares.
3. White can try to get a knight to d6 but Black's bishop covers that square, so this shouldn't overly concern him.

Conclusion: Black already looks like he stands better.

b) 10 $\mathbb{Q}e5 a5$ 11 f3 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ (exchanges in general favour Black; I would try to keep pieces on the board with 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$) 12... $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 14 e4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and White stood a shade better in M.Botvinnik-A.Bykhovsky, Tel Aviv 1998. And before you even ask the question, I will answer: No, this is not the three-time World Champ playing White. It's some other guy with the same name and first initial!

c) 10 a5 c5! 11 $dxc5 \mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12 h3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}ad8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf5 exf5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. Now instead of 16... $\mathbb{Q}b4?!$, as in P.Ricardi-D.Campora, Buenos Aires 1995, Black should play 16... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3 g6$ with an excellent position.

Let's return to Korchnoi's choice, 10 $\mathbb{Q}h4$:



Question: White will definitely get the bishop pair but what should we do with our bishop on f5?

Answer: There are three schools of thought:

1. Do we play 10...♝g4 here? If we do, White chases us around with moves like f3 and g4, and then takes when our bishop gets to g6. Now it is up to you to decide if the free moves f3 and g4 are useful attacking moves for White, or if f3 and g4 constitute the seed of White's future overextension.

2. We retreat the bishop to g6 and after White takes, we play ...hxg6. This is solid but passive, and lacks counterplay for Black. I don't care much for Black's position. White has the bishop pair and some extra central space, and should be quite happy with his position.

3. Black just leaves the bishop where it is and when White swaps on f5, we recapture with our e-pawn. This one is a bit more dynamic than Option 2 because our f5-pawn fights for the key e4-square.

My pick of the three would be the sharpest line, Option 1, as played in the game. But if you are okay with a draw, perhaps Option 3 would suit you best.

10...♝g4!?

The matador waves his red cape in the face of the already enraged bull. It took courage to play such a move against Korchnoi, who was a pretty scary opponent in 1982.

Let's take a look at Black's tenth move alternatives:

a) 10...♝g6 is the one I don't really care for. Black is just too passive for my taste. After 11 ♜xg6 hxg6 12 a5 c5 13 dxc5 ♜xc5 14 ♜d3 ♜d6 15 ♜b5 ♜c5 16 ♜d2 ♜c6 17 a6! ♜fd8 18 ♜fd1 ♜ab8 19 ♜e2 ♜d5 20 axb7 ♜xb7 21 ♜a4 Black is solid but still struggling against that bishop pair in the open position, W.Browne-R.Henley, Lone Pine 1980.

b) 10...♜d6 is Option 3: Black leaves the bishop alone on f5. 11 ♜xf5 exf5 12 h3 (to prevent cheapos on h2) 12...a5! (preparing to occupy b4 with his knight) 13 ♜d1 ♜a6 14 b3 ♜b4 15 ♜f3 ♜e4 16 ♜xe4 fxe4 was A.Groszpeter-V.Kupreichik. Black has excellent play in

return for White's pair of bishops, with control over d5 and a cramping pawn on e4.

11 f3 ♜h5 12 g4 ♜g6 13 g5?!

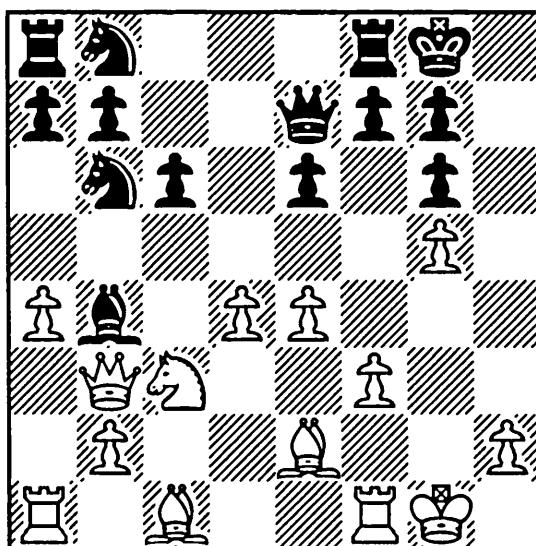
Benjamin Franklin once declared: "Moderation in all things – including moderation!" Korchnoi possesses a magnetic trait which endears him to us all. From time to time, his courage and the force of his will to win exceed his reason! I sometimes dream of a world where White players resist the urge to blow us Slav guys off the board, but alas, I despair that it will never be so.

After Korchnoi lost his 1968 Candidates match to Spassky, he said he was vanquished because he was too reckless with his pawns, but also claimed that he had learned his lesson! Really?! Korchnoi's last move looks rather precarious. It seems the old lion still cannot resist the urge to shove his opponent across the board. He should probably remain on the side of angels and common sense, and implement a risk-mitigation strategy beginning with 13 ♜xg6 hxg6 14 e4, with chances for both sides.

13...♝d5 14 e4 ♜b6 15 ♜xg6 hxg6 16 ♜e2

Time for an assessment:

1. White owns the bishop pair.
2. White controls huge tracts of territory, including the centre and kingside.
3. There is the potential for White's overextension.



Exercise: White owns the bishop pair.
Should Black risk opening the game with 16...c5?

16...c5!

Answer: Black should fear getting squeezed without counterplay more than he should fear the white bishops.

Question: I assume you believe Black's break is well timed?

Answer: Absolutely. Black follows two principles:

1. Counter in the centre when attacked on the wing.
2. Trade when cramped.

The opening of the centre provides Black with freeing trades in the moves to come.

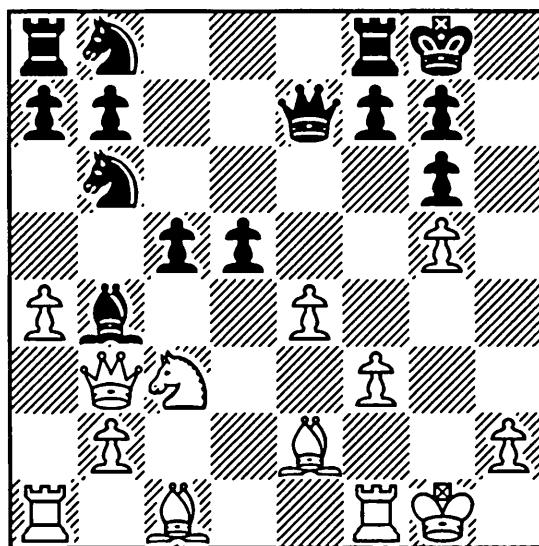
17 d5

This leads to complications favouring Black.

Question: Since 17 d5 leads to problems, should White liquidate in the centre with 17 dxc5?

Answer: Liquidating doesn't help White after 17... $\mathbb{Q}xc5+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19 a5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20 $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$, as played in L.Polugaevsky-E.Torre, Toluca 1982. Black's powerfully centralized pieces and dark-square control give him the advantage here.

17...exd5



18 a5!

Question: Why is Korchnoi plunging into such complications? Isn't the simple 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ a better option?

Answer: No, it is White who gets booted around after 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{R}d8$ 20 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$: Black is ahead in development, rules the central dark squares, has a monster hole to occupy on d4 and White looks overextended.

18...c4!

Opening up c5 for his pieces.

19 $\mathbb{W}d1$ d4!

This classic central counter to a wing attack takes over the initiative and White's ship begins to take on water.

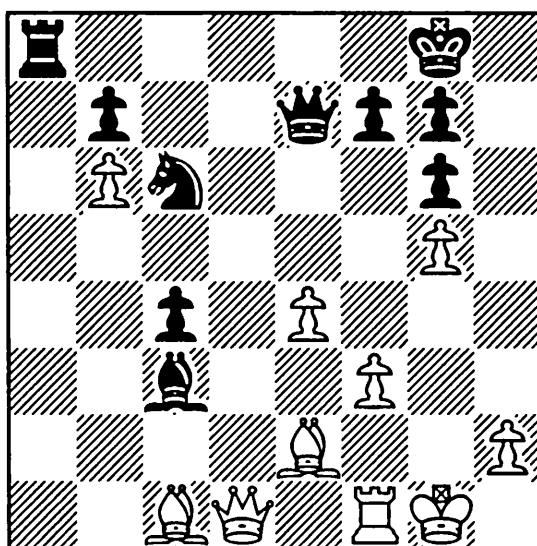
20 axb6 dxc3 21 bxc3

After 21 bxa7? cxb2! 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ Black's c-pawn is secure due to ... $\mathbb{W}c5+$. He will play

...b5 creating a pair of connected passers and then capture on a7.

The four queens on the board after 21 bxa7? cxb2! 22 axb8 \mathbb{Q} ? bxa1 \mathbb{Q} would be a bit of a mind trip, but here Black is having his way and is up heavy material.

21... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$



Let's assess:

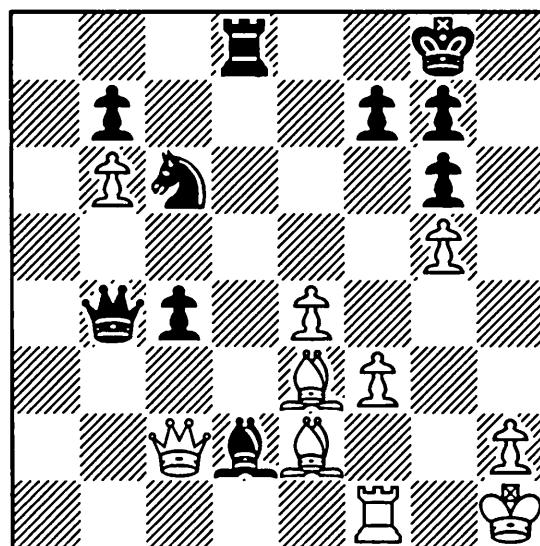
1. The sickly b6-pawn is barely hanging on.
2. Black's powerful c-pawn can't be touched due to ... $\mathbb{Q}c5+$.
3. All of Black's pieces are aggressively posted whereas White's pieces sulk on the first two ranks.

Conclusion: White begins to feel the backlash of his earlier rash pawn moves and hangs on for dear life!

24 $\mathbb{Q}h1$

24 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$! would be similar to the game continuation.

24... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 26 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$!



The Slav: Move by Move

Principle: When your opponent has the bishop pair, remove one of them.

27 ♜b1 ♛a5 28 ♜xd2

Now White bleeds on the dark squares. However, 28 ♜g1 c3 is crushing for Black.

28...♜xd2 29 ♛xc4 ♛xg5 30 ♜d1 ♜b2 31 ♜d7

At last White generates a threat: mate!

31...♜b1+ 32 ♜d1 ♛f4!

Hitting f3 and covering the threat to f7.

33 ♛e2 ♜xb6

Winning a pawn and eliminating the threat of ♜xb7.

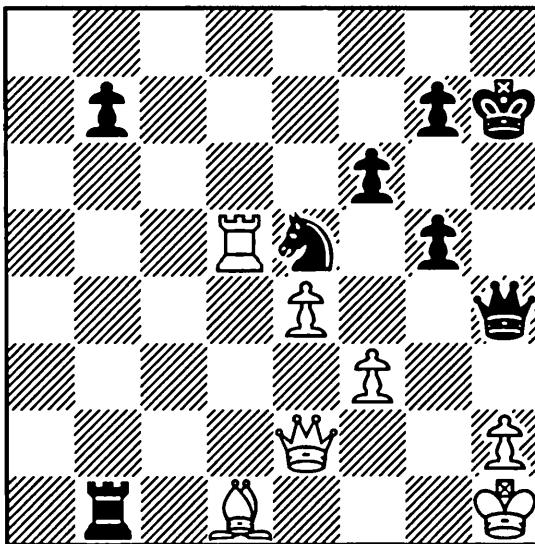
34 ♛a2 ♜e5 35 ♜d8+ ♔h7 36 ♛g2

If 36 ♛a8, then 36...g5 37 ♛c8 g4! 38 ♜h8+ ♔g6 and White's attack is at an end.

36...♛h4 37 ♜d5 ♜b1 38 ♛f1 f6 39 ♛e2

Or 39 f4 ♜b2 40 ♜e2 ♜g4 with threats everywhere.

39...g5!



This is an overextension nightmare for White:

1. Black is king of the dark squares.
2. White's pinned bishop is the baddest of bad bishops.
3. White's king barely has a pulse and rests on life-support, with the plug about to be pulled very shortly.

40 ♔g1 ♛h3!

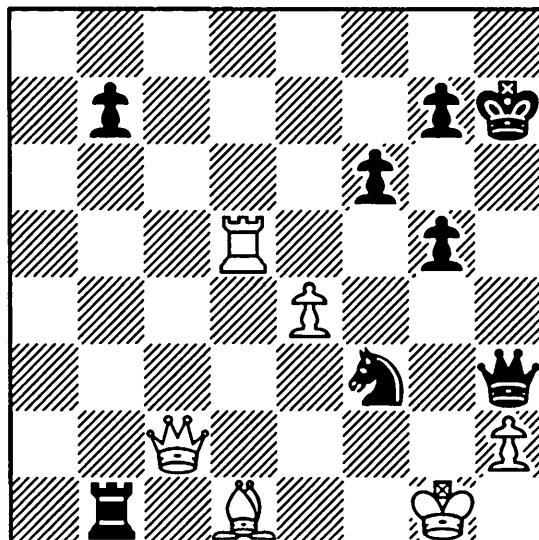
The wrecking crew arrives and there is no reasonable way to protect f3.

41 ♛c2 ♜xf3+ 0-1 (see following diagram)

White doesn't want to wait around to see 42 ♔f2 ♜b2! picking off the queen. 42 ♔h1 ♛f1 mate isn't much of an improvement either!

Summary

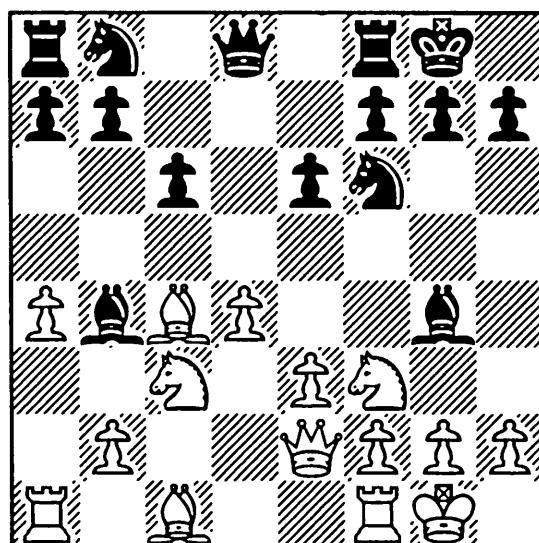
My advice is to go over this game twice. Hübner's play is a perfect blueprint of how to overextend and punish White when he charges at you with his kingside pawns in the Slav.



Game 10
B.Gulko-C.Lakdawala
 US Championship, La Jolla 2004

Few chess players are admired as much as GM Boris Gulko. It's not just because he is a great player whose achievements include winning the 1977 USSR Championship and having a plus score against Kasparov. Gulko is admired even more for his courage in facing down a repressive government when he and his wife Anna went on a hunger strike, which eventually forced USSR leaders to back down due to worldwide negative publicity. Eventually they yielded to the force of the Gulkos' combined wills and allowed the dissident couple the freedom to immigrate to the USA in 1986.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxcc4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 e3 e6 7 ♜xc4 ♜b4 8 0-0-0 9 ♜e2 ♜g4



This line with 9...♝g4 is my personal quirky favourite in the mainline Slav.

Question: Why do you favour ...♝g4 over ...♝g6?
What are some of the differences between the two moves?

Answer: My reasoning behind playing to g4 is this:

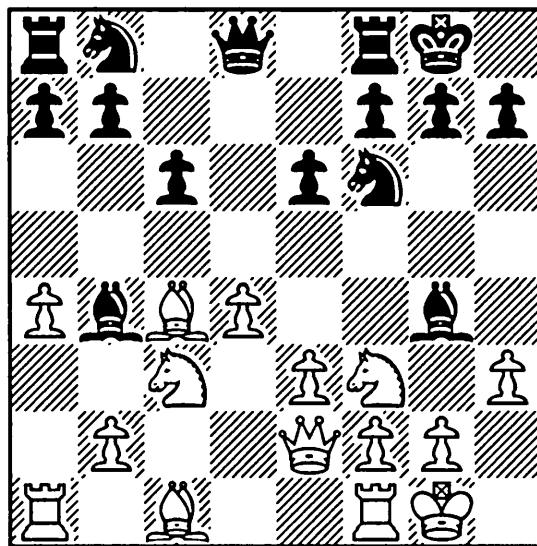
1. When Black moves his bishop to h5, it often takes this path: f5, g6, h5. Three moves for the bishop.

2. When we play the ...♝g4 lines, the bishop gets to the d1-h5 diagonal in just two moves. However, this may not constitute a real gain of tempo since the bishop on g4 can get kicked immediately, while the bishop on h5 cannot.

3. The real reason is probably psychological. I just have a tendency to favour slightly off-beat, quirky lines because it is much more likely my opponents are more in tune and booked up on the main lines. As soon as I play 9...♝g4, White usually goes into a think, indicating he is already out of his theory.

10 h3

In our next game we examine the more common 10 ♕d1 ♛bd7 11 e4.



10...♞xf3!?

Question: Why did you give up the bishop pair?

Answer: Several reasons:

1. White has structural weaknesses but plans on attacking soon. Every piece off the board helps Black defend.

2. White's knight controls the key e5-square. Eliminating the knight makes it a lot easier for Black to play the freeing ...e5 pawn break.

3. Taking on f3 leads to a more positional struggle than the more complex 10...♝h5. I am not in Gulko's class, but my strategic skills are closer to his over my calculation abilities, so I go with a position which plays to my strength.

The alternative is the more provocative 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$:

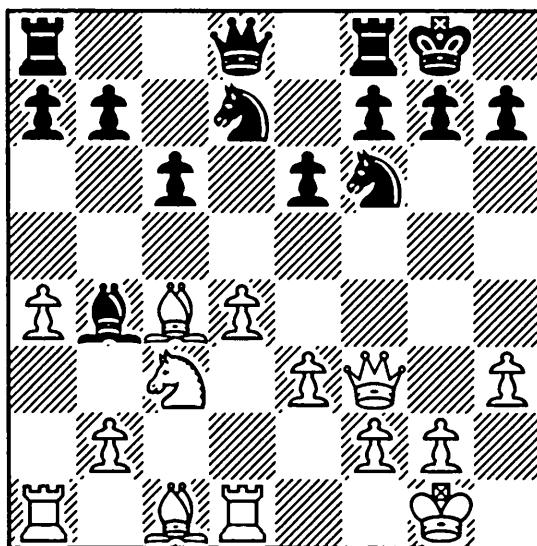
a) 11 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12 e4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ was J.Stocek-I.Sokolov, Warsaw 2005.

Perhaps White may still claim an edge after 15 a5 but this is the kind of position a Slav player should be able to live with.

b) 11 g4!? $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13 f4 was A.Shirov-X.Rechi Montes, Andorra (simul) 2001.

Now instead of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?!$, I like Black's chances in the complications stemming from 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! 14 dx5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 15 f5 $\mathbb{Q}g3$.

11 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12 $\mathbb{B}d1$

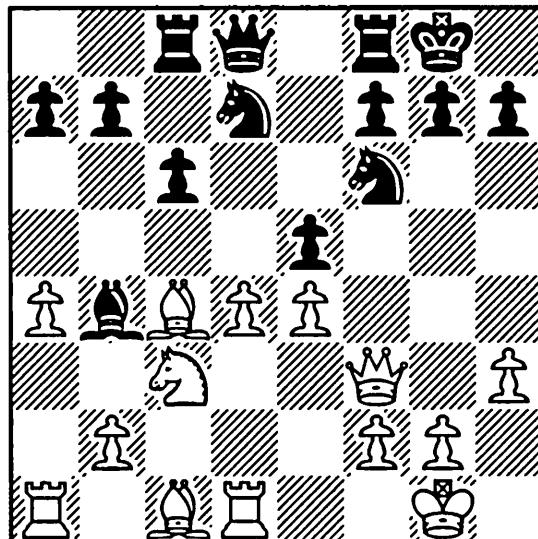


12... $\mathbb{B}c8$

Question: Can you forgo ... $\mathbb{B}c8$ and swing your queen in immediately with 12... $\mathbb{W}a5$?

Answer: That is also playable. The position becomes unbalanced quickly after 13 e4 e5 14 d5. For example, 14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16 bxc3 cxd5 17 exd5 $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 18 c4 $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 20 d6! $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ was G.Kasparov-E.Bareev, Novgorod 1994. White's bishop pair and super activity mean more than Black's structural advantage. Such positions are really difficult to play for White without overextending, and difficult for Black to avoid getting pushed off the board! Luckily, most of us don't face Kasparov as our opponent too often.

13 e4 e5



14. ♘e3

Question: Pinning the knight on f6 looks more aggressive and also more logical, doesn't it?

Answer: The pin is logical but falls prey to a little tactic from Black after 14. ♘g5?! exd4 15. ♜xd4 ♖e5! 16. ♜d1 ♖e7. Suddenly White has problems:

1. His bishop on c4 is hit.
2. His e-pawn looks tender. Black threatens ...♘g6 and ...♗xc3.
3. If White trades bishop for knight on f6 to ease the pressure on his e-pawn then Black rules the dark squares.

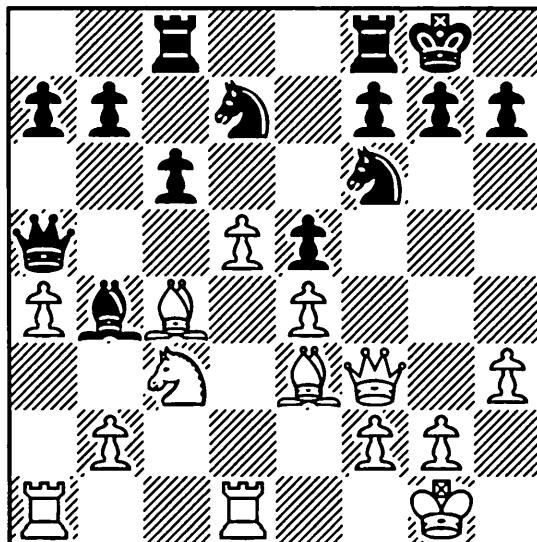
14... ♖a5

14... ♖a5 may be a possible improvement. Black looks fine in the following lines:

- a) 15. d5 ♖b6 16. ♜b3 cxd5 17. ♜xd5 ♖bx d5 18. exd5 b6.
- b) 15. ♖f5?! ♜cd8 16. dx e5 ♖xe5 17. ♜e2 ♜c5! 18. ♘g5 ♜fe8 19. ♜xf6 ♖xf6 20. ♖xf6 gxf6 and Black's dark-square control should compensate him for his damaged kingside pawn structure.

15. d5!?

This new move in the position was Gulko's home preparation for our game. Strangely enough, it has never been repeated by anyone since this game. Possibly this is because 15. ♖f5! gives White a safer edge after 15...exd4 16. ♖xa5 ♖xa5 17. ♜xd4 ♜fe8 18. f3, as in P.Leko-B.Gelfand, Moscow 2006. White may claim a minimal edge after 18... ♜b6!, which eliminates the bishop pair and weakens White's control over the dark squares. Still, I don't mind playing Black in such a position.

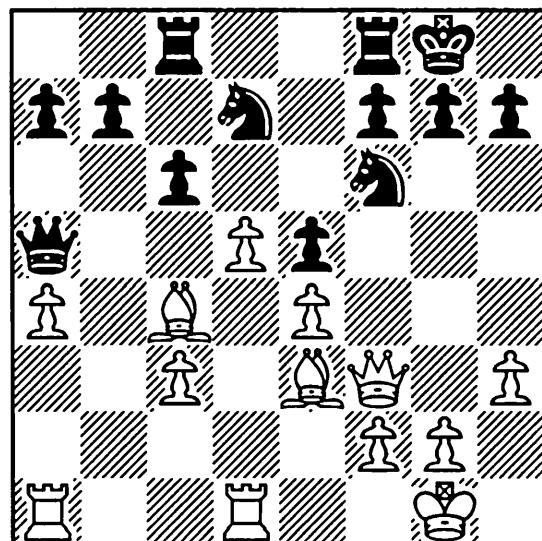


15...Qxc3

I wasn't crazy about Black's position in the line 15...Qb6 16.Qb3 Qxc3 17.bxc3 cxd5 18.exd5 Qxc3 19.Qab1. For the pawn White has:

1. Two bishops against two knights in an open position;
2. A dangerous passed d-pawn; and
3. Fantastic activity for all his pieces.

16 bxc3



16...cxd5?!

Perhaps it was time to grovel with the line 16...Qxc3 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.Qac1 Wa3 19.Qxa7 Wxa4 20.Qe3 when despite the extra pawn, Black is fighting for the draw. Unfortunately for me, I conceived the idea to grab my opponent's a-pawn in broad daylight! My idea reminds me of P.G. Wodehouse's statement about one of his goofier characters: "He had something on his mind – a dangerous condition for one of his mental capacity!"

17.Qxd5 Qc5

Avoiding a few false paths:

a) 17... $\mathbb{R}xc3??$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{R}xf3?$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{R}f4$ 20 $g3$ $\mathbb{R}f3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and Black's rook has no place to hide.

b) Nor did I trust Black's ability to hold the game after 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ 18 $\mathbb{R}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19 $\mathbb{W}f5$ and now:

b1) 19... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20 $\mathbb{R}c5!$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ picks off a pawn.

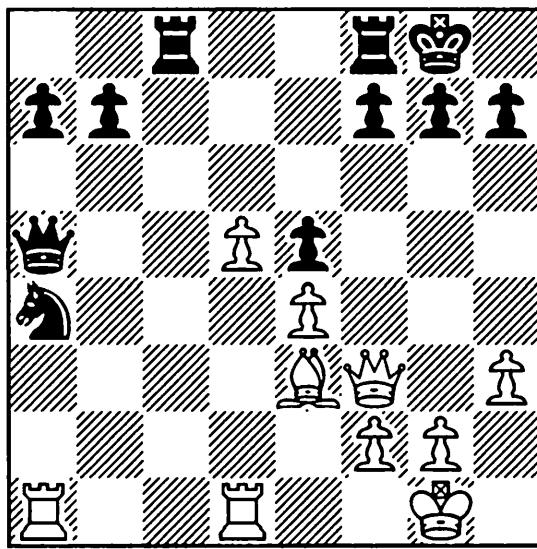
b2) 19... $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 20 $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 21 $fxe3$ $\mathbb{R}xc1+$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ and it's doubtful Black can hold things together.

18 c4!

I had dreamed about the line 18 $\mathbb{W}g3?!$ $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}c7!$ when Black achieves dynamic equality.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19 $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4?$

I should just play 19... $b6$ and hope for the best in this deceptive position.



I was later told that two IMs in the analysis room claimed Black was better or even winning due to the two passed queenside pawns. At the board, I suddenly began to sense the awful truth that my entire greedy idea was a mistake.

Question: Why?

Answer: White's d-pawn moves up the board with great force to tie Black up. Black just doesn't have the leisure of slowly pushing the passed b- and a-pawns up the board.

There is a line in the Grünfeld where White sacs a pawn and gets a powerful d5-pawn in exchange for Black's passed b- and a-pawns. This position is similar but even worse for Black!

A parable for you: I have a boneheaded terrier, Kahless, named after the Klingon messiah, who truly believes himself to be king of kings! Twice a year Kahless repeats the same stupid error. In the middle of the night Kahless, who fancies himself as guard-dog extraordinaire, hears an intruder, barks madly, rushes into our yard through the dog door and

charges a skunk. The following events transpire with depressing regularity:

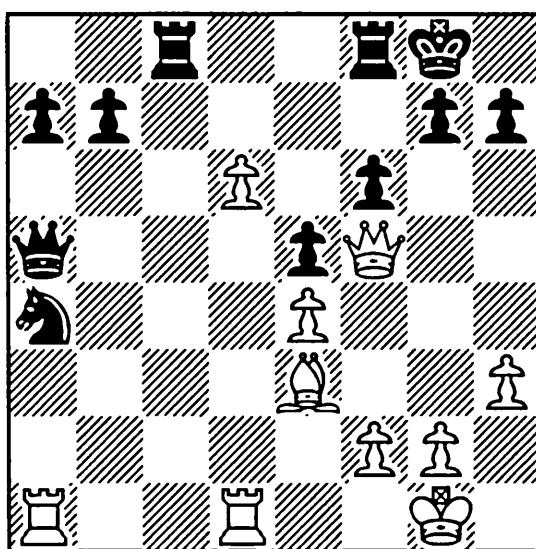
1. Result: Skunk 1 - Kahless 0. The fool gets sprayed.
2. Kahless panics, runs inside and jumps on our bed reeking of skunk spray.
3. Nancy and I give Kahless a de-skunking bath in the middle of the night.
4. Our house stinks of skunk for days on end. All my students hate me and threaten to find a teacher whose house doesn't smell of skunk.
5. General misery ensues among the entire Lakdawala clan.
6. I am constantly reminded by my wife and son of how this is all my fault for adopting a mentally challenged terrier. (I found Kahless as a stray puppy outside the Gambito tournament I play in every Saturday.)

Unfortunately I share the same failing as Kahless. Time and again I underestimate dynamic factors (i.e., Gulko's Frankenstein d-pawn!) in favour of static elements like one measly, worthless extra pawn. No matter how hard I try to avoid it, I keep repeating this error!

20 $\mathbb{W}f5!$ f6

Black can't survive 20... $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 21 d6 $\mathbb{B}cd8$ 22 d7 $\mathbb{B}e7$ 23 $\mathbb{B}d5$ b5 24 $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ h6 26 $\mathbb{B}c1!$.

21 d6



This genetically enhanced über-pawn soon makes my life miserable! The uninvited guest makes himself at home deep in my territory – much like the Salahis, who sneaked into the White House and crashed President Obama's first state dinner in honour of the Indian Prime Minister.

21... $\mathbb{B}cd8$ 22 $\mathbb{W}e6+$ $\mathbb{B}f7$

I sorely wanted to eliminate that bugger on d6 but realized that I would get blown out in the line 22... $\mathbb{B}h8?$ 23 $\mathbb{B}dc1!$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 24 $\mathbb{B}c7$ $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 25 $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 26 $\mathbb{B}h6!$ $\mathbb{B}d1+$ 27 $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 28 $\mathbb{B}xe7$ $\mathbb{B}xh6$ 29 $\mathbb{B}dd7!$.

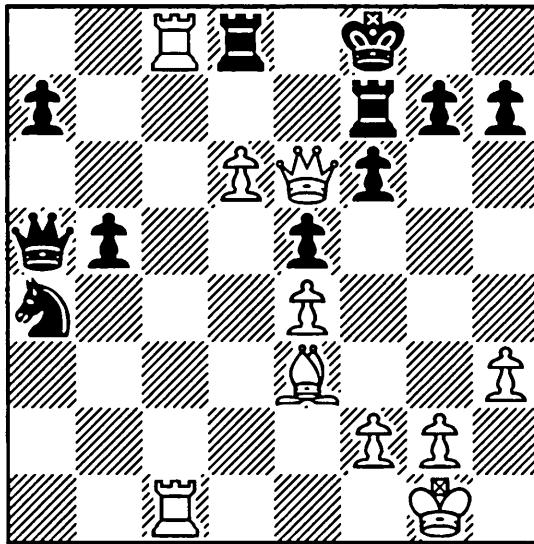
23 $\mathbb{B}dc1!$

Threat: $\mathbb{B}c8$.

23... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24 $\mathbb{B}c8!$

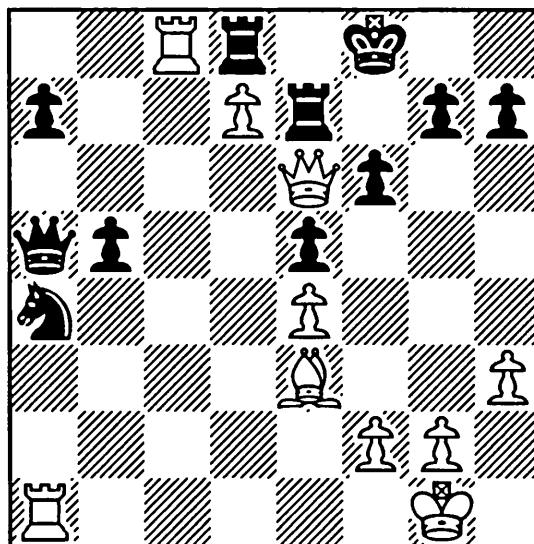
Threat: $\mathbb{B}xa4!$.

24... $b5$ 25 $\mathbb{B}ac1!$ 1-0



Now I understand what it feels like to be a mouse, still alive after being swallowed whole in the digestive tract of a python! White threatens both 26 $\mathbb{B}1c7$ and also 26 $\mathbb{B}xd8+$ followed by $\mathbb{B}c8$. There is no defence.

After the game, Gulko showed me a mindbender line: 25 $d7 \mathbb{B}e7$.



Exercise (multiple choice): Find the combination GM Gulko showed me after the game. The choices are: a) 26 $\mathbb{W}d6$; b) 26 $\mathbb{W}d5$; c) 26 $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Answer: All three moves win, but 26 $\mathbb{W}d6$ and 26 $\mathbb{W}d5$ are not really combinations, just strong moves! The answer is the amazing interference move 26 $\mathbb{Q}b6!!$. Gulko told me that

despite having seen the line, there was no reason to get fancy when there was a trivial win with the move he played. Try to work out the win for White after 26 $\mathbb{Q}b6!!$ on your own.

Summary

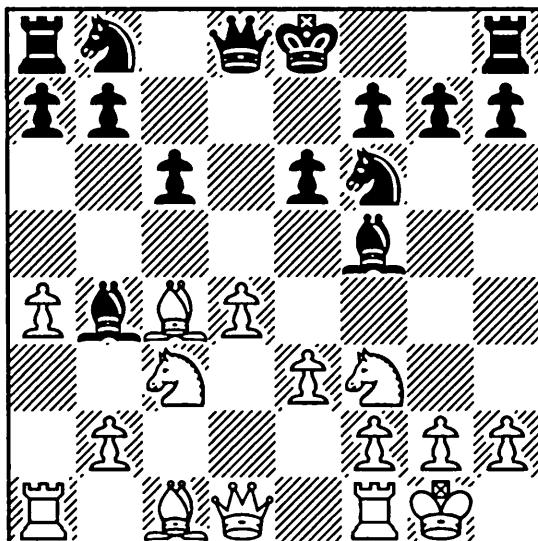
10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ is an interesting possibility for Black should he choose to increase the complications. Maybe Black should make White pay with some pawn weaknesses before handing over the bishop pair so quickly.

Game 11

C.Van Buskirk-C.Lakdawala

Southern California Championship, Irvine 1998

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 e3 e6 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 0-0



8...0-0

Question: What is the difference between 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ and 8...0-0?

Answer: 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ is a bit sharper because Black still has the possibility of queenside castling.

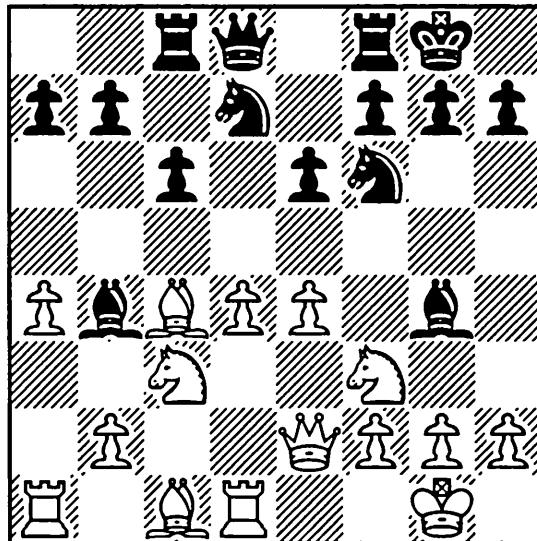
Question: When would Black castle queenside?

Answer: Take this scenario: White plays $\mathbb{Q}h4$ chasing the bishop on f5. Black retreats the bishop to g6 and White takes it. After ...hxg6, Black opens the h-file on White's king. Possibly Black may want to castle queenside and make it an opposite-wings attack. Here is an example: 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 11 h3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g5 13 f3 0-0-0, V.Chuchelov-F.Cuijpers, German League 2002. Compare Ernst-Sokolov (Game 8) where Black already castled when White played 9 $\mathbb{Q}h4$.

9 $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{B}g4$ 10 $\mathbb{K}d1$

White doesn't want to get sucked into early overextension with $h3$ and $g4$, and holds off on these moves for now. He is content to grab central space without weakening his king-side pawns.

10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11 $e4$ $\mathbb{K}c8$



Question: This is a mysterious move.
Can you explain the reasoning behind it?

Answer: Well, in a few moves I plan on getting in the freeing advance ... $e5$. When I do, I want to discourage White from bypassing with $d5$. If he does this, I play ... $cxd5$ and my rook on $c8$ is suddenly:

1. On the open c-file;
2. Hitting his bishop on $c4$; and
3. Hitting his knight on $c3$ in conjunction with my bishop on $b4$.

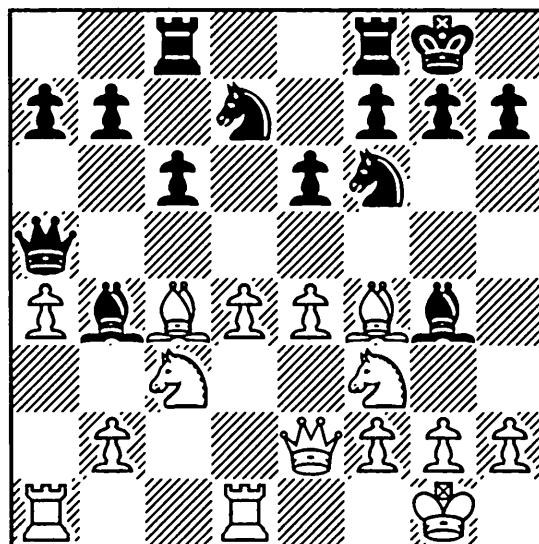
12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$

Logical – White develops a piece and fights for the key $e5$ -square. In the next two games we'll look at alternatives.

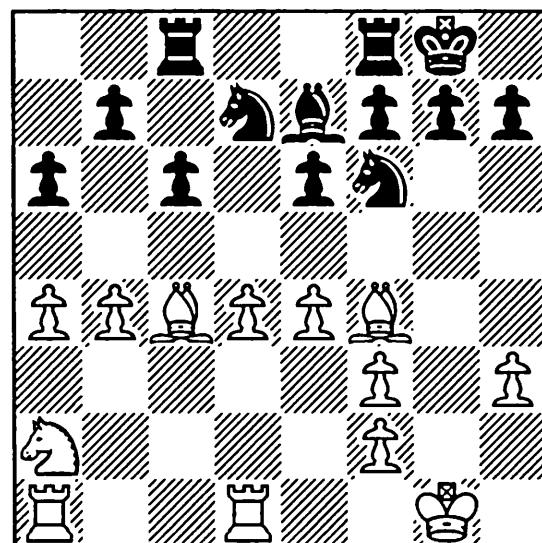
12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

Triple-purpose:

1. Black adds pressure on $c3$ and threatens to win a pawn.
2. If White avoids $e4-e5$ then Black may play ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, increasing the heat on the $f3$ pin.
3. The queen helps with the liberating ... $e5$ break if White doesn't push his own e-pawn to the fifth rank.

**13 e5**

This move probably allows Black equality. White's best shot at an edge lies in 13 $\mathbb{Q}a2!$. Let's follow the game N.Sulava-B.Kohlweyer, Lido Estensi 2002: 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 b4 $\mathbb{W}h5$ (the a4-pawn is taboo for Black: the greedy 14... $\mathbb{W}xa4??$ is punished simply by 15 $\mathbb{B}db1!$ threatening to trap the queen with either $\mathbb{Q}c1$ or $\mathbb{Q}c3$ next move) 15 h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 17 gxf3 a6.



Question: Do you think White stands better? If so, why?

Answer: Yes, I think White holds an edge for the following reasons:

1. Bishop pair;
2. Strong central control; and
3. A queenside and central space advantage.

Question: So is Black lost?

Answer: Certainly not. Black also has some plusses:

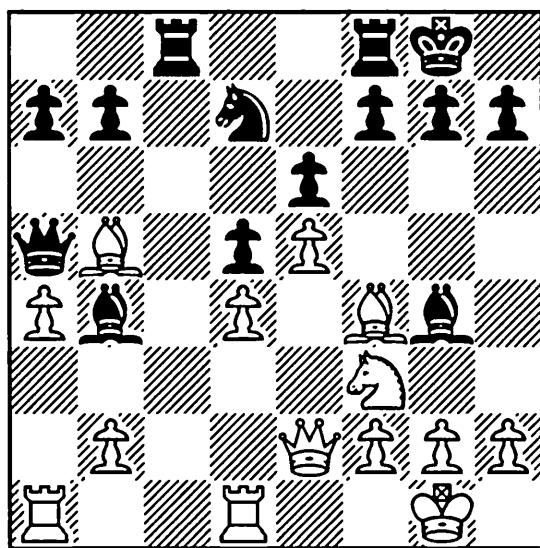
1. A super solid, weakness-free position; and
2. The potential to take advantage of the slight weakening of White's doubled f-pawns.

Conclusion: White does have the edge but a Slav player shouldn't fear playing Black in such a situation. We Slavazoids like to lurk in dark corners and bide our time for our counterattacks!

13...d5 14 d5

Forced, since Black hits both c3 and the bishop on f4.

14...cxd5 15 b5?!



Question: How could White's last move possibly be dubious?

It gains a tempo on Black's knight.

Answer: The Slav is a subtle opening, and often an obvious-looking move may not be the best. 15 b5?! chases Black's knight to exactly where it wants to go, b8 and then c6, as we've already seen on many occasions. It is White's bishop which is misplaced and also a target for ...a6. So the reality is that it is actually White who loses the tempo.

Better was 15 d3! d8! 16 h3 h5 17 g4 g6 18 g2 e7 19 h4! b8 20 h5 d3 21 xd3 c6 with mutual chances, Y.Razuvaev-A.Chernin, Tilburg 1994:

1. White enjoys more space in the centre and on the kingside, and generates attacking ambitions.

2. Black's position is weakness-free. If he survives the coming attack, his chances in a late middlegame or ending look very good due to White's structural weaknesses which include a hole on b4.

15...d8 16 ac1 b8 17 xc8 xc8

Black welcomes swaps since he has the superior pawn structure and would love to play

an ending against White's numerous pawn weaknesses.

18 ♘d3

There is the tempo loss. White's bishop gets out of town before Black hits it with ...a6.

18...♘d8

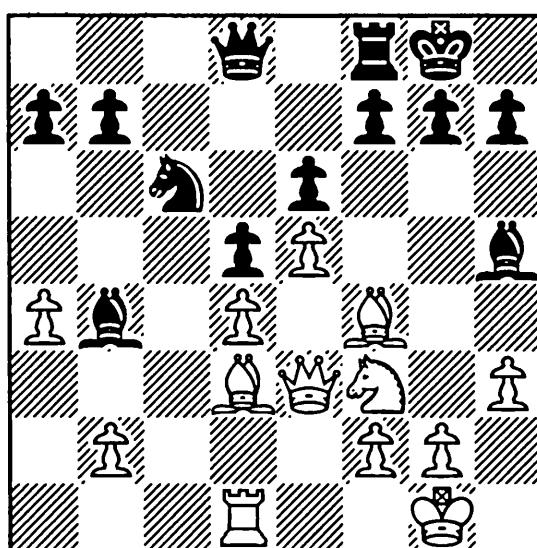
Getting off the open c-file and planning to attack the queenside with ...♗a5.

19 ♖e3!

As we saw in Topalov-Kramnik (Game 2), this is a manoeuvre you should be aware of from White's side. He:

1. Usefully gets out of the pin;
2. Covers d4;
3. Increases his hold on the kingside dark squares; and
4. Prepares ♘g5!, which may induce weaknesses or encourage Black to give up the bishop pair with ...♗e7 and ...♗xg5.

19...♗c6 20 h3 ♘h5



Exercise: Come up with a plan for White.

21 ♘b5?!

Certainly not this, which is an aimless move. In the coming moves, White's position begins to deteriorate because he has trouble finding a concrete plan.

Answer: A logical line for White would be 21 ♜c1 ♗a5 22 ♘g5! ♘g6 (be very careful to avoid careless weakening moves like 22...h6? which hands White a ferocious attack on a steaming plate after 23 ♘h7 ♘d8 24 ♗g3 ♔h8 25 ♘f6!) 23 ♘xg6 hxg6 24 b3 ♗b6 25 ♘f3. White doesn't seem so badly off here. His queenside weaknesses don't look life-threatening and maybe he can try to make progress on the kingside by pushing his h-pawn forward. I would assess the position as equal here, although I would insert my Slav bias and take Black if given a choice.

The Slav: Move by Move

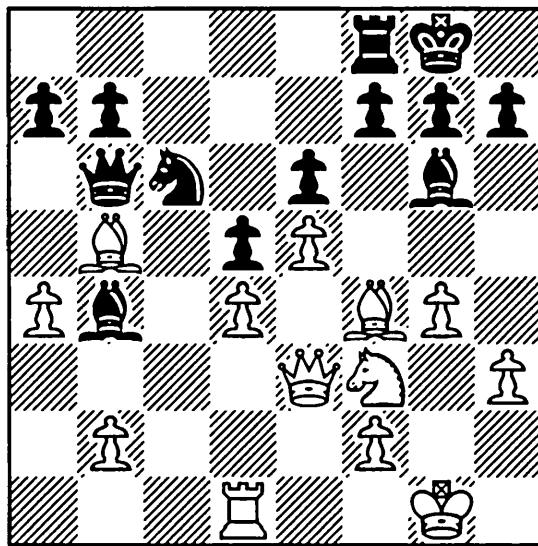
21...♝b6

Double purpose: it covers c6 against structural damage in case of ♜xc6 and adds pressure to the d4 weakness.

22 g4

Weakening his position, but handing over the bishop pair and light squares with 22 ♜xc6 ♛xc6 looks even worse.

22...♜g6



23 ♛c1

Question: How should Black react if White attacks with 23 h4?

Answer: In such situations Black must vigorously counter or else face execution on the kingside: 23...h5! 24 gxh5 (Black would love a sealed kingside after 24 g5) 24...♜xh5. White probably doesn't have time to attack along the g-file because Black threatens ...♝xf3 followed by chopping off White's d4 pawn. After 25 ♜e2 ♛e7, White's attack is nonexistent and now f5 can be added to his list of weak squares.

23...♞a5

Intending ...a6. The knight has potential on b3 or c4 later on.

24 ♜d3?!

Back again. White just can't find a plan he is happy with, and a swap of light-squared bishops will just leave him saddled with a bad dark-squared bishop.

He should play 24 ♜g3 and follow with h4 to try to get something going on the kingside.

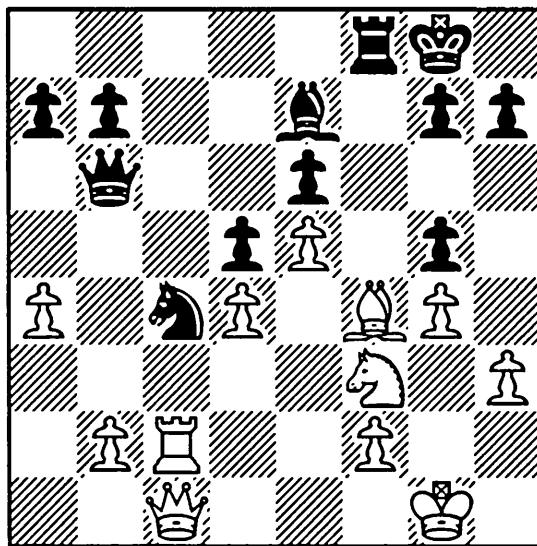
24...♝e7 25 ♜xg6?

I have seen chess writers make the declaration: "A bad plan is better than no plan at all." I tell you emphatically as a three-decade chess teacher, this is patently untrue! A bad plan sinks a position faster than Usain Bolt in the 100-metre dash!

25...fxg6

Of course. My e6-pawn isn't a weakness at all and my rook gets a free open file. Now White's king safety becomes an issue.

26 ♜c2 ♛c4 27 ♜c1 g5!

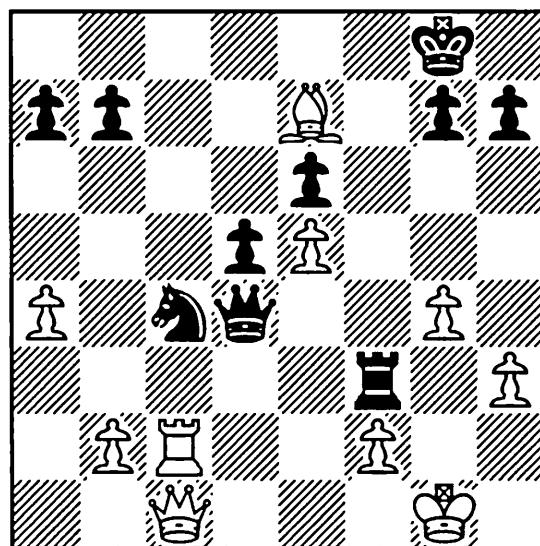


Here my opponent must have regretted his 25th move. The f-file has turned into a bleeding ulcer for White, who now faces trouble on f4, f3 and f2.

28 ♜xg5

White also gets horribly overextended after 28 ♜xg5 ♜xg5 29 ♜xg5 ♜xd4 30 ♜e1 ♜f3 and the position is virtually identical to the game continuation.

28...♜xf3 29 ♜xe7 ♜xd4



White's position has congealed into an ugly mass of indefensible pawn weaknesses and he can resign here.

30 ♜g2

Or 30 ♜f1 ♜g3+ 31 ♜h2 ♜b3 32 ♜d6 ♜xb2.

30...♜e4 31 ♜h2 ♜xe5+ 32 ♜g2 ♜e4 33 ♜h2 ♜d3 0-1

Summary

I get 10 $\mathbb{B}d1$ as the most common response from my opponents and it may be more flexible for White than 10 $h3$.

Game 12
A.Sebekis-C.Lakdawala
Gambito (rapid), San Diego 2007

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{B}c3$ $\mathbb{B}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{B}f3$ $dxc4$ 5 a4 $\mathbb{B}f5$ 6 e3 e6 7 $\mathbb{B}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 8 0-0 0-0 9 $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{B}g4$

9... $\mathbb{B}bd7$ 10 e4 $\mathbb{B}g4$ 11 $\mathbb{B}d1$ is another move order to reach the game position.

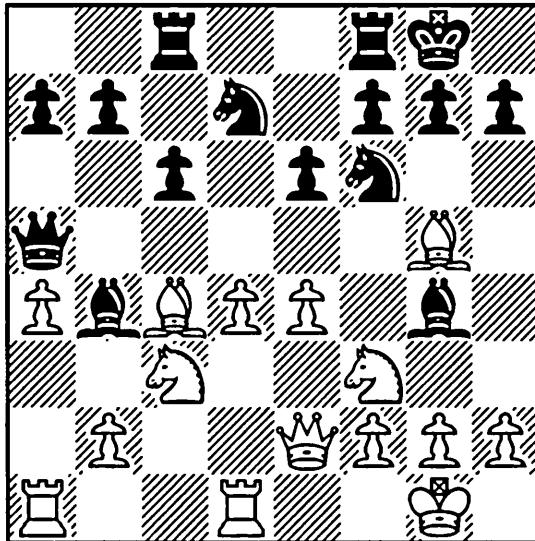
10 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{B}bd7$ 11 e4 $\mathbb{B}c8$ 12 $\mathbb{B}g5!$?

A rare move.

Question: Should Black toss in 12...h6?

Answer: 12...h6 looks logical because then Black has an escape hatch for his bishop in case it gets chased with h3 and g4 later. On the downside ...h6 slightly weakens Black's kingside, but I think overall it's a good move.

12... $\mathbb{B}a5$



13 $\mathbb{B}xf6?!$

Question: You didn't like this move, but doesn't it look okay for White?
After all, White reasons that this could later become
a bad bishop and rushes to swap it off.

Answer: I find several defects in this plan:

1. White gives up the bishop pair in a semi-open position.
2. White, with his extra space, will be attacking the kingside. It isn't logical to reduce the

number of pieces on the board when you are attacking. The principles are:

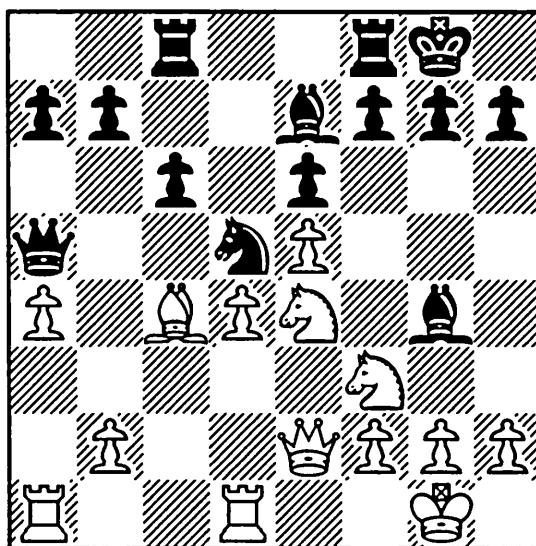
- Avoid swaps when you have your opponent in a cramped situation.
- Avoid swaps when you attack the opponent's king.

3. Although White's bishop had the potential to become a bad bishop, it still fought for some important dark squares. Now Black's grip on the dark squares increases.

4. Sometimes there is sac potential with the dark-squared bishop. For instance, when Black tosses in ...h6 he must worry about ♜xh6 ideas. Now Black is free from the fear of these sacs.

White should probably go for 13 e5 ♜d5 14 ♜e4. After 14...♜b6 15 ♜d3 h6 16 ♜h4! ♜f5!, Black has a decent game and can follow up with ...♝fe8 and ...♝f8 securing his king-side (but not the naive 16...♝f4? 17 ♜f6+! gxf6 18 ♜e4 with a powerful attack in the works).

13...♝xf6 14 e5 ♜d5 15 ♜e4 ♜e7



Question: Why did you retreat voluntarily?

Answer: 15...♜e7 serves two purposes:

1. It clears b4 for a knight.
2. It makes it much harder for White to successfully sac on f6 later on.

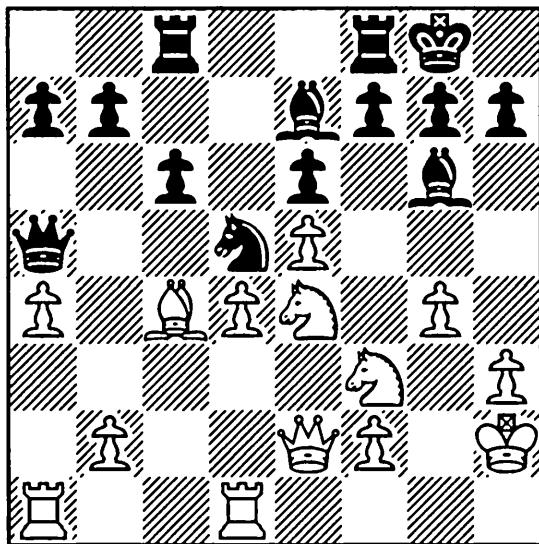
16 h3 ♜h5 17 ♛h2!

White plans an all-out attack, starting with g4, which looks like the beginning of an overly risky plan. His position isn't good as he suffers from the following troubles:

1. A weak d-pawn.
2. A weakened queenside, with holes on d5 and b4.
3. Depleted chances on the kingside due to his earlier swap on f6.
4. Black has the bishop pair, which is rare in main lines of the Slav.

Conclusion: The odds of White's attack working are low. But the alternative plan to just patiently defend all his weaknesses without seeking counterplay isn't tempting either!

17... $\hat{g}6$ 18 g4?!



Is it my imagination or are most players on the White side of a Slav this hyper-aggressive? What is it about us little Slav guys that provoke this reaction?

18 g4?! is the logical follow-up to White's last move, but probably wrong. Just look at that gaping hole on f4. Black may open the f-file to try to exploit this weakness.

18...f5

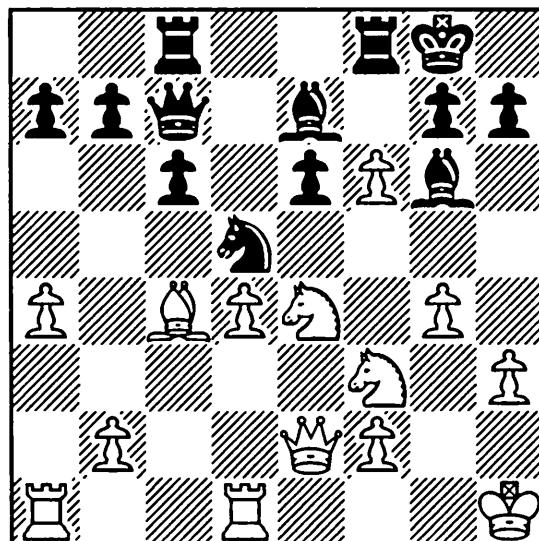
Maybe my opponent's aggression rubs off. 18...f5 is based on the principle: counter in the centre when attacked on the wing, but it may not be the best move.

The quiet 18... $\mathbb{W}b4$! threatens to overload White's queen with the threat ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and improves Black's game without risk. For example:

a) 19 $\mathbb{Q}dc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ picks off a pawn.

b) 19 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 20 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xf4$ c5 and the game opens up to the advantage of Black's bishops.

19 exf6 $\mathbb{W}c7+$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}h1$



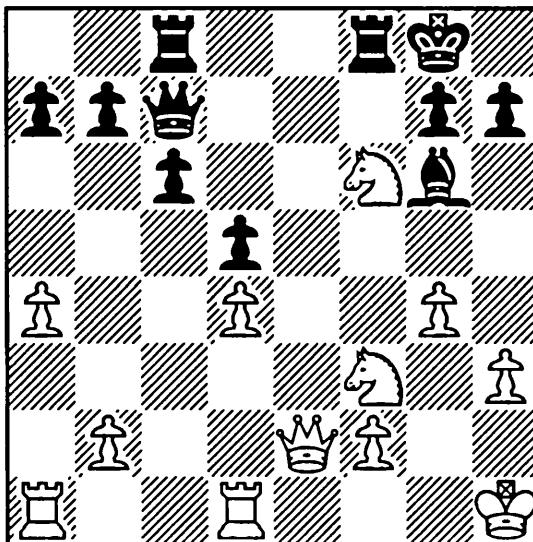
Question: Should Black try to enter a superior ending with 20... $\mathbb{A}xe4$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xf6$ 22 $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{W}f4$?

Answer: Black gets an ending but I'm not so sure about the "superior" part of it. After 23 $\mathbb{A}xd5!$ $\mathbb{C}xd5$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{B}xf4$ 25 $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}c2$ 26 $\mathbb{B}b3$ White seems to be holding things together.

20... $\mathbb{A}xf6$ 21 $\mathbb{A}xd5$?

The wrong plan. My opponent relies too much on a knight outpost and underestimates the danger to his king. It isn't that easy for Black to make progress after either 21 $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{B}ce8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{B}xf6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ or 22... $gxf6$! 23 $\mathbb{B}a3$.

21... $\mathbb{exd}5$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$



Question: Should Black recapture with the rook, allowing White's knight an outpost on e5, or the pawn which prevents $\mathbb{Q}e5$ but blocks the f-file?

Answer: In this case capturing with the rook is superior. Sometimes one must take a chance and give up something in order to get something even more valuable in return.

22... $\mathbb{B}xf6$!

Black's attack along the f-file outweighs the towering knight on e5. 22... $gxf6$ 23 $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{B}ce8$ 24 $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ also provides Black with a safe edge, but I believe not as much as Black gets in the game continuation.

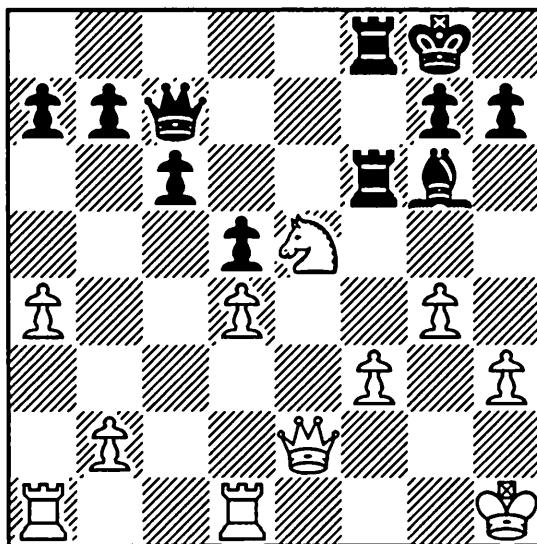
23 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{B}cf8$

Question: Did you miss a combination here? 23... $\mathbb{A}e4+$ 24 $f3$? $\mathbb{W}xe5$!.

Answer: Your combination works but you must consider all possible defences. White can meet 23... $\mathbb{A}e4+$ with 24 $\mathbb{B}g1$ sidestepping your combination. Still, maybe I should have played your suggested move since there was a chance that White may have fallen into the trap, and if he saw the trap my position doesn't look bad at all after 24 $\mathbb{B}g1$.

24 f3?!

A mistake. To be fair though, White didn't have any really great alternatives at hand.



Exercise (multiple choice): With his last move White allows Black a small combination. Can you find it? a) 24... $\mathbb{Q}e4$; b) 24... $\mathbb{R}xf3$; c) 24... $c5$

Answer: 24... $\mathbb{R}xf3$!

f3 turns out to be a soft target.

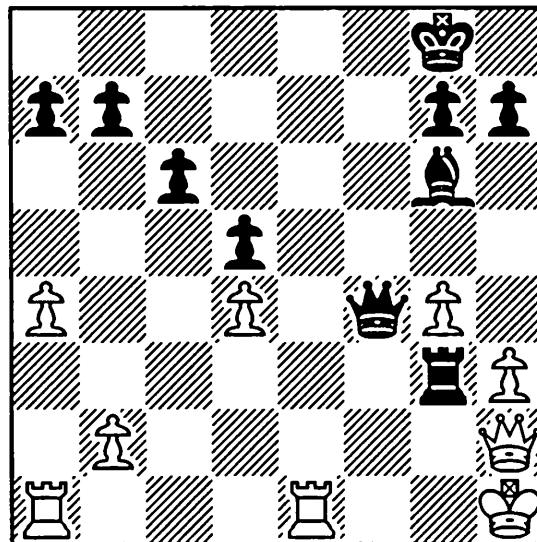
25 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{R}xf3$ 26 $\mathbb{W}h2?$

26 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ was the only prayer. After 26... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 27 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $dxe4$ 28 $\mathbb{R}a3$ $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 29 $\mathbb{R}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 30 $\mathbb{R}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 31 $\mathbb{R}de2$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 32 $\mathbb{R}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ Black will create queenside passed pawns and win.

26... $\mathbb{R}g3!$

Boxing in White's king.

27 $\mathbb{R}e1$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ 0-1



The dual threats of 28... $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ and 28... $\mathbb{W}f3+$ can't be met.

Summary

12 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$? may be all right for White, but he should hang on to the bishop and avoid swapping it for the knight on f6.

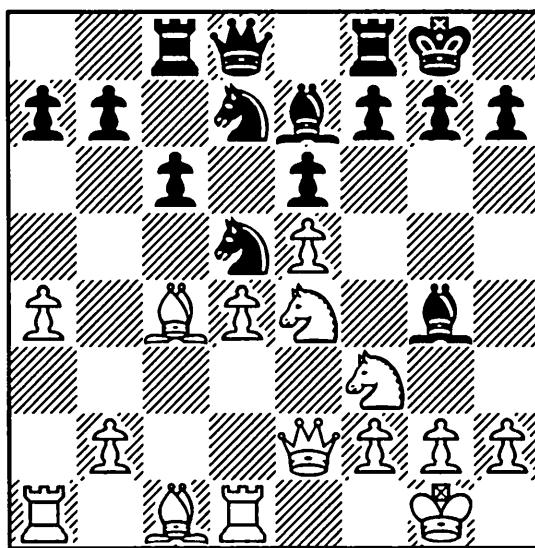
Game 13
A.Morshedi-C.Lakdawala
 Gambito (rapid), San Diego 2008

1 d4 d5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 c4 c6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 e3 e6 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

Question: I have seen 7 a5!? played here. What is the idea?

Answer: James Vigus writes in *Play the Slav*: “This is a positionally desirable advance with three virtues: it gains space and potentially ties down Black’s queenside, it clears a path for the queen to a4, and it reduces Black’s control of the key outpost b4. On the negative side, however, it is White’s fifth pawn move already, and does not trouble Black’s smooth development.” The reviews are mixed: GM Sosonko doesn’t like the move due to the tempo loss whereas GM Ward gives it thumbs up in *Dangerous Weapons: The Queen’s Gambit*.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 0-0 0-0 9 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11 e4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$



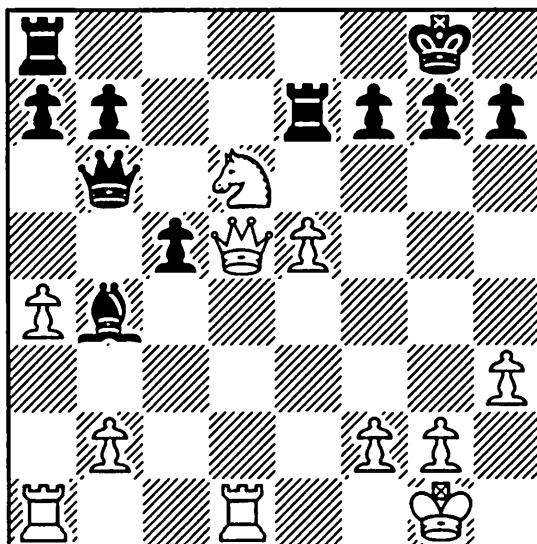
A good move, suggested to me by GM Alex Goldin. 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ clears b4 for a knight, reinforces f6 against future sacs and keeps an eye on important kingside dark squares like g5.

Question: Why manoeuvre around like this and remain cramped?
 Can Black blast through the centre and gain freedom with 13...c5?

The Slav: Move by Move

Answer: Absonotly! 13...c5? is a premature break which reminds me of the Janis Joplin lyric “Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose.”

Black is not yet ready for a fist fight in the centre and there is no need for such a radical solution. I tried the move on GM Goldin once and landed in an inferior position quickly after 14 ♜g5 ♕b6 15 ♖d6 ♜c7 16 ♜xd5! exd5 17 ♜e7! ♜a8 18 h3 ♜xf3 19 ♜xf3 ♖xe5 20 dxe5 ♜xe7 21 ♜xd5, A.Goldin-C.Lakdawala, American Open, Los Angeles 1997.



Black has a prospectless position here. Some of his problems include:

1. White's powerfully centralized pieces outgun Black's.
2. White's knight is impressively perched on the mountaintop on d6, where it hits key points in Black's position.
3. White's advanced e5-pawn is a thorn for Black who feels restricted due to its influence.
4. White's majority on the kingside looks clearly superior to Black's blockaded majority on the queenside.
5. Black's bishop stinks on b4, where it does nothing but shoot off into open space, attacking nothing and going nowhere.
6. White has excellent chances of pulling off a winning attack against Black's king.

Conclusion: Black has many strategic strikes against him and may be close to busted, if not there right now.

Question: Well? Did he pull off the winning attack in your game?

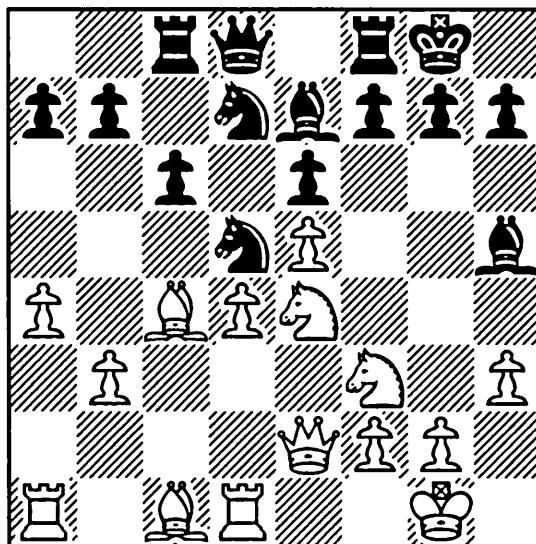
Answer: Umm... I can't recall! Let's not dwell on things long past and move on to this game which is far more interesting!

14 h3 ♜h5 15 b3? (see following diagram)

A new move in this position, with White planning to fianchetto his dark-squared bishop. Let's assess its merits:

1. A bishop on b2 protects d4 and also discourages Black from the ...c5 break since this

would only increase the bishop's scope.



2. It allows Black access to f4 with his knight, and also the bishop doesn't aim at h6 which is a target sac square for White.

Conclusion: Fianchettoing is interesting and playable, with both strong and weak points to the idea.

Previously White had tried 15 g4 ♘g6 16 h4!? with a fist fight ahead in L.Yurtaev-S.Kayumov, Tashkent 2007.

15...♞g6 16 ♘b2 a5

It is always useful to lock down the b4-square, especially when Black has no intention of playing ...c5 later.

17 ♕ac1 ♘b4 18 ♜e3!?

Wasting time, as a Black knight reaches d5, but my opponent has an interesting plan in mind.

18...♝b6 19 ♜fd2!

This is the idea: White will not back off from c4. If Black ever captures, White recaptures with a knight which heads directly for d6.

19...♞d5 20 ♜g3!?

I thought this was a strange move since White often engages in a pawn storm on the kingside and the queen on g3 blocks the path of White's pawns. Maybe he just wanted to keep an eye on d6 in case one of his knights reached that square. Possibly he had attacking ambitions on the kingside and decided to transfer his queen to the vicinity.

20...♚h8!

The idea is to avoid any ♜f6+ tricks and also to be able to play ...f6 and recapture with the g-pawn to play on the open g-file.

21 ♜f1!

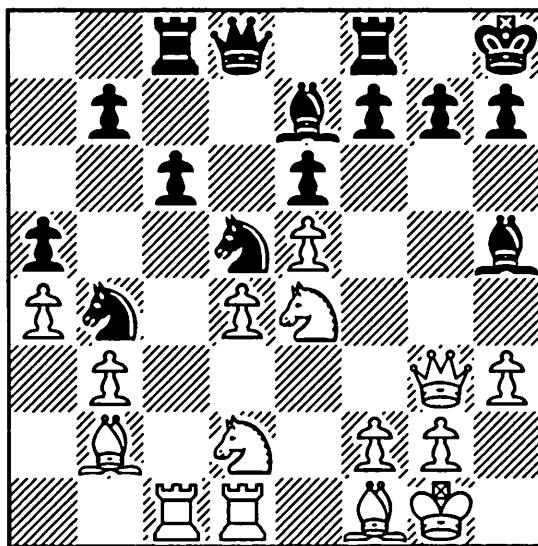
Heading for d6 with the knights.

21...♜h5?!

A typically shallow G/40 move and one not very well thought out. White's rook is better

The Slav: Move by Move

on e1 and inhibits Black from playing ...f6. So essentially I use up a tempo to force my opponent to play a move which is very useful to him!



22 ♕e1 ♖a2 23 ♕a1 ♖ab4 24 ♕ac1 ♖c7

Declining to repeat moves. Playing for the full point comes with risk since White's knights reach menacing positions on c4 and e4.

25 ♖c4 ♖d7 26 ♖c5 ♖c7 27 ♖e4

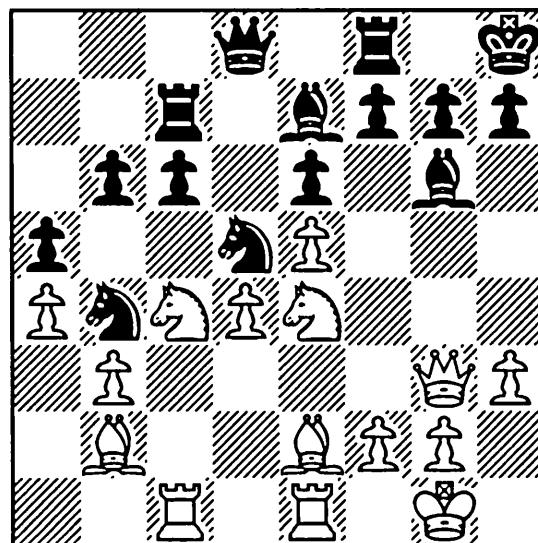
Avoiding the cheapo 27 ♖xa5?? b6.

27...b6

Once again declining the repetition of moves which leads to a draw after 27...♖d7 28 ♖c5.

28 ♔e2 ♔g6

Originally I had intended 28...♔h4 29 ♔h2 but then thought better of it since I didn't want my opponent to clear the way for a kingside pawn storm.



29 ♖ed6?

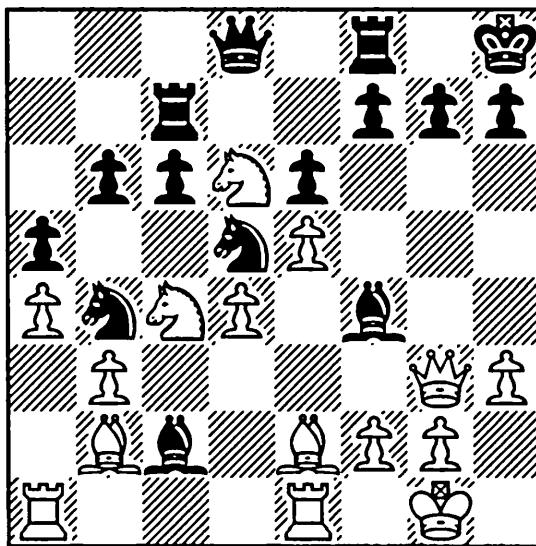
Those two white knights are running around in circles like puppies on leashes. They run around deep in Black's territory but fail to find an effective target to do much damage.

Morshedi overlooks one point, which is that the knight on e4 kept Black's dark-squared bishop out of g5. Better to play 29 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 30 $\mathbb{B}cd1$ with an equal position.

29... $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

Suddenly White wishes his bishop was back on the c1-h8 diagonal, and his knight back on e4. Black's piece activity rises considerably on the kingside and central dark squares.

30 $\mathbb{B}cd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 31 $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4!$



O brave new world that has such bishops in it! (I apologize to the reader for being so obnoxious about my moves.)

White's queen is escorted to f3 where it is vulnerable facing Black's rook on f8, and where it must continue to babysit the weak b3-pawn. Black's pieces create a taffy-pull effect on White's position, yanking him in both directions: A pair of knights and a bishop hammering away at b3 and c2 on the queenside, and on the kingside a dark-squared bishop which harasses White's queen, the only defender of b3.

32 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f6

White's pieces are out of alignment, b3 and c2 are chronic problems, and his queen is in danger with the f-file opening soon.

33 g3!

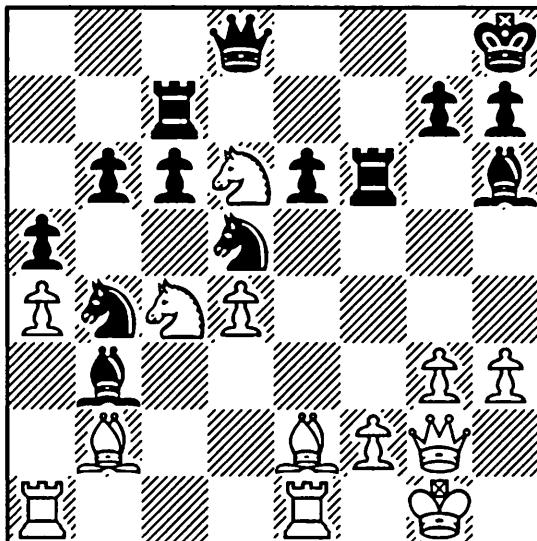
The best defensive move in a bad situation. White creates a cubbyhole on g2 for the harassed queen and keeps Black's pieces out of f4.

33... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{B}xf6$

White is busted: b3 falls since White's queen is denied access to e3, d3 and c3.

35 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$

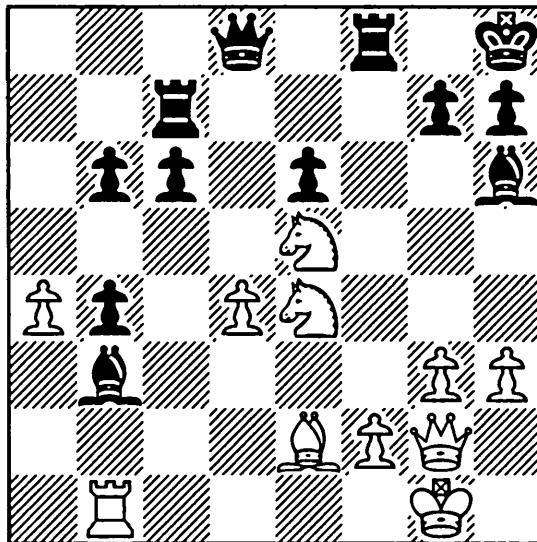
Not only grabbing the pawn but also opening up c2 as a fork square.



36 ♜e4

There is nothing better and White must cough up more material.

36...♜f8 37 ♜e5 ♜c2 38 ♜a3 ♜xe1 39 ♜xe1 ♜b4 40 ♜xb4 axb4 41 ♜b1



41...♚xa4?

Sigh... I never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. Black mops up with 41...♚d5! 42 ♜f3 ♜c2! 43 ♜xb4 ♜a5 44 ♜c4 ♜xe4! 45 ♜xe4 ♜e1+! winning instantly.

42 ♜xb4 ♜c2 43 ♜d3 ♜xd3 44 ♜xd3 c5 45 ♜xb6 ♜xd4 46 ♜d6 ♜a1+ 47 ♚h2 0-1

Black should win without much difficulty. At this point I stopped recording moves and won the time scramble after coming perilously close to bungling it later on!

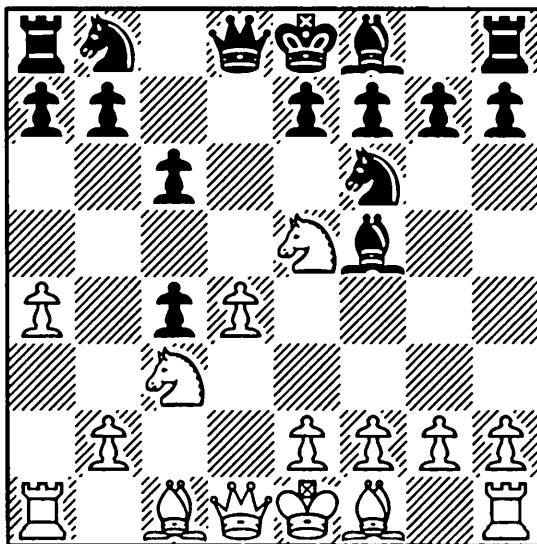
Summary

The timing of playing or avoiding ...c5 is everything in the main lines of the Slav. 13...♝e7! is an improvement over my game against GM Goldin where I lashed out prematurely with 13...c5?. This game is also an example of a mainline Slav where Black forgoes ...c5 and still generates enough play.

Chapter Two

6 \mathbb{N} e5

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 \mathbb{Q} f3 \mathbb{Q} f6 4 \mathbb{Q} c3 dx \mathbb{c} 4 5 a4 \mathbb{Q} f5 6 \mathbb{N} e5



Time for your next critical challenge. Some sources actually give 6 \mathbb{N} e5 as the main line over 6 e3 from Chapter 1. Despite the fact that 6 \mathbb{N} e5 is the current darling of the World's best players, at club level you get 6 e3 much more often.

In the first four games of this chapter we examine 6... \mathbb{Q} bd7, the simplest and possibly best of Black's responses. White meets this with two possible plans:

1. Play f3 and e4, booting away Black's bishop and taking control over the centre; or
2. Play Catalan-style with g3, recapturing on c4 with his e5-knight. At the appropriate moment White aims for e4.

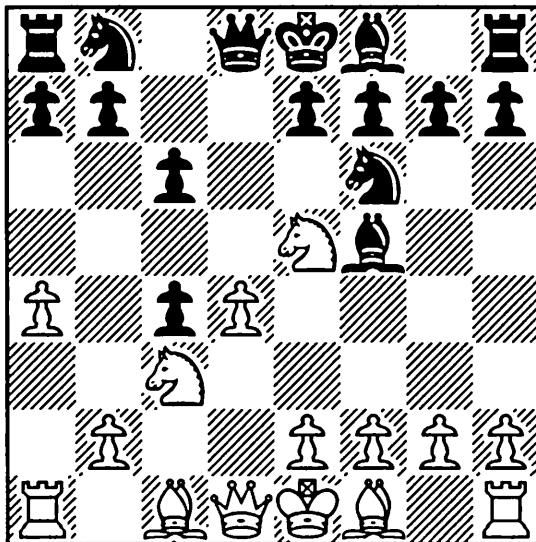
You must hit back at some point with a ...c5 or an ...e5 break, or else you stand worse. We pay close attention to such breaks and their timing in this chapter.

The last three games of the chapter we look at my quirky favourite 6... \mathbb{Q} a6!?. I dub this line "Tony's Big Adventure" after my friend GM Tony Miles, who played it with Black. Warn-

ing: Some of the positions I advocate are pretty scary for Black and may cause the soda you drink to come shooting out of your nose. That said, I feel this line is theoretically playable (although I am in a minority among Slav experts) and you can quickly take your opponent out of his knowledge zone if you learn this one. If you play 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, you make your life a lot more difficult, but your opponent's too. I remind you of an ancient Chinese saying: "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity!"

Game 14
V.Topalov-Wang Yue
MTel Masters, Sofia 2009

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$



Question: Isn't it unnatural to regain the c-pawn by moving the knight twice when with 6 e3 (Chapter 1) White simultaneously recaptures the pawn and develops his f1-bishop?

Answer: 6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ isn't as natural as 6 e3; however, the move does have some good points:

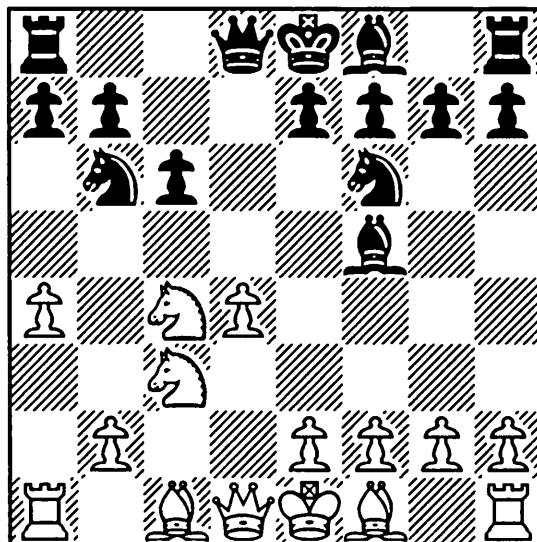
1. After the knight moves, White can play f3 and e4 slamming Black's bishop on f5 and taking full control over the centre.

2. White may later decide to play Catalan style and fianchetto his bishop more effectively on g2 rather than post it on c4 where it normally hits a pawn wall on e6.

6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

The simplest move. If you want to make your life a lot more difficult then you can try my favourite move in the position, 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$?, the Tony's Big Adventure variation, which we examine later in this chapter.

7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$



Once again the simplest move: Black wants trades since he is cramped and chases White's knight with tempo.

7...♝c7 and 7...e6 are also complex lines which, for space reasons, we won't cover. Everyman Chess declined my very reasonable request to author a 1,000 page chess book.
8 ♜e5

Question: White keeps moving this knight over and over.
I realize that White should avoid trades but 8 e3 doesn't look so bad to me. Can White play this move?

Answer: It isn't that 8 e3 is bad; it's more that the move is not forceful enough and it allows Black equality: 8...e6! (Black correctly waits until White's bishop moves before trading on c4) 9 ♜e2 ♜xc4 10 ♜xc4 ♜d6 11 a5?! (he should probably just concede easy equality with 11 f3 e5) 11...0-0 12 a6?! (White wastes a lot of time and all he accomplishes is the potential fall of his a6-pawn later in the game) 12...b5 13 ♜d3 ♜xd3 14 ♜xd3 e5 and Black already stood better in N.Kelecevic-H.Hamdouchi, Porrentruy 2006.

8...a5

Question: What's the point of 8...a5?

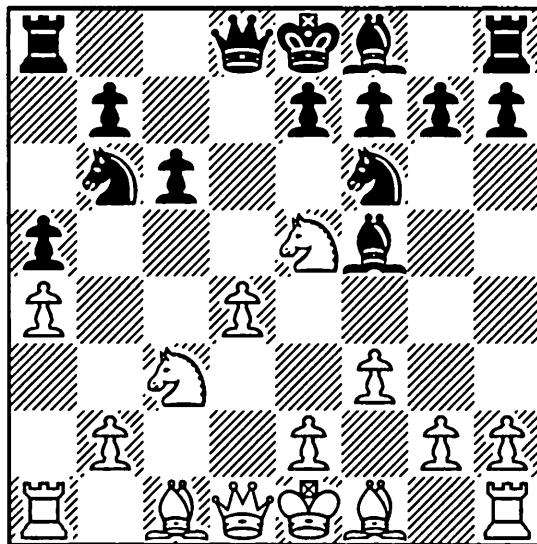
Answer: Double purpose:

1. We lock down on our hole on b4.
2. We prevent White from annoying us with a5 in the future.

Question: Can Black draw by repetition of moves if he continually chases White's knight with 8...♝bd7?

Answer: Moving our knight for the third time is a blunder which loses material for Black after 9 ♜b3! ♜xe5 10 dxе5 ♜g4 11 ♜xb7 ♜xe5 12 f4!.

9 f3



White logically begins to clamp down on the centre. We also examine 9 g3 (in Games 16-17).

9...♞fd7

Remember: Every trade helps Black.

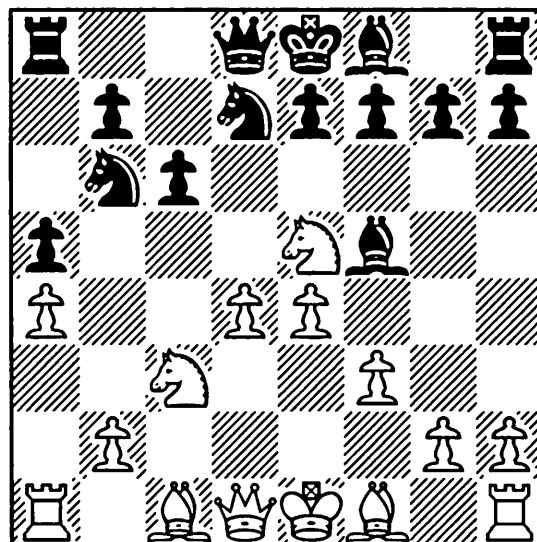
Question: Why not the other knight to d7?

Answer: Two reasons:

1. By playing ...♞fd7! we don't give White the option of ♞c4 since the b6-knight lies in wait covering that square.

2. Black leaves open the possibility of ...f6 in case he needs to challenge a white piece or pawn on e5.

10 e4



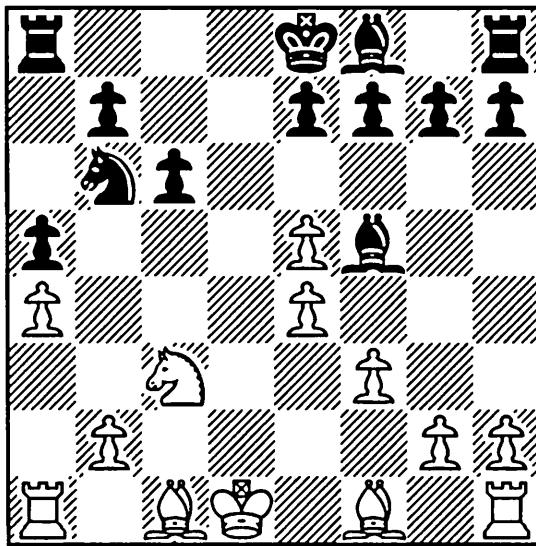
Question: Wait a minute! White allows his pawns to become doubled and his castling rights ruined?
 What is wrong with 10 ♜xd7 followed by e4 next move?

Answer: 10 ♜xd7 is the main move and we cover it next game. It's hard to say which move is White's best chance for an advantage. As you will see, 10 e4 also contains a sting to it.

10...♜xe5 11 dxe5

The combative 11 exf5!? is also possible but I don't think White gets as much. For example, 11...♝ec4 12 ♕b3 ♜d6 13 ♜d3 g6 14 g4! ♜g7 15 ♜e3 ♜d7 16 0-0-0 ♕b6 17 ♕xb6 ♜xb6 18 fxg6 hxg6 with an unbalanced queenless middlegame, M.Carlsen-Wang Yue, Leon 2009.

11...♛xd1+ 12 ♔xd1



Question: Was 11 dxe5 wise? White compromised his kingside pawn majority whereas Black's is healthy on the queenside. Also, White lost his castling privileges.

Answer: All true, but the powerful cramping effect White gains from e5 and the son of e5 (e4) chokes Black on the kingside. The loss of castling rights is no big deal for White since queens are off the board. His king finds shelter on c2 and can also participate in the coming fight. So 11 dxe5! is a good move.

12...♝e6

I like this move more than 12...♜g6 which may also be playable. N.Vitiugov-Ni Hua, Ningbo 2010, continued 13 ♜e3 ♜d7 14 e6!? fxe6 15 ♜c4 e5 16 ♜c2 e6! (a sound investment: Black simply returns the pawn in order to unravel) 17 ♜xe6 ♜f7 18 ♜xf7+ ♜xf7 19 ♜hd1 ♜e6 and Black achieved full equality. In many of the games I researched in this and similar positions, White seemed to flick in the e5-e6 pawn sac. White players loathe allow-

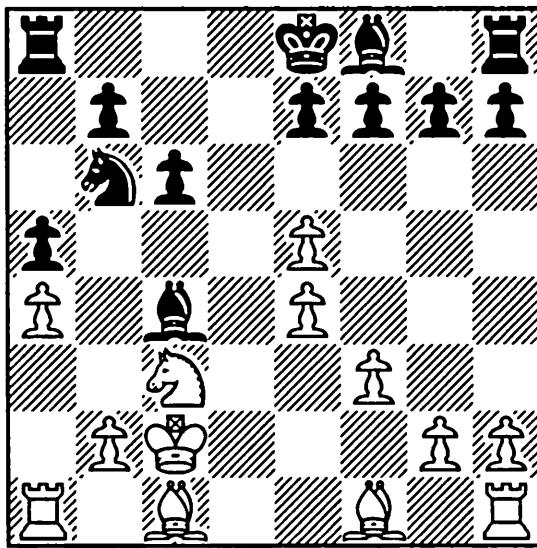
The Slav: Move by Move

ing positions like 14 f4 e6. Here Black can always play ..f6 at a later date to get his offside light-squared bishop back into circulation.

13 ♜c2 f6

The main line, in which Black attempts to remove the e5-bone from his throat. He logically chips away at e5, but I'm not a fan of the thankless positions Black gets later.

There is a dynamic idea for Black coming from the mind of the then 11-year-old Magnus Carlsen, which looks better than the main move. I like 13...♝c4!.



This looks very logical:

1. Black trades off a piece which helps him to eliminate the cramped living quarters his pieces had to endure before the move.
2. Trading bishops weakens c4 for White.
3. The bishop on e6 blocked the e7-pawn. By swapping, Black prepares ...e6, freeing his kingside pieces.

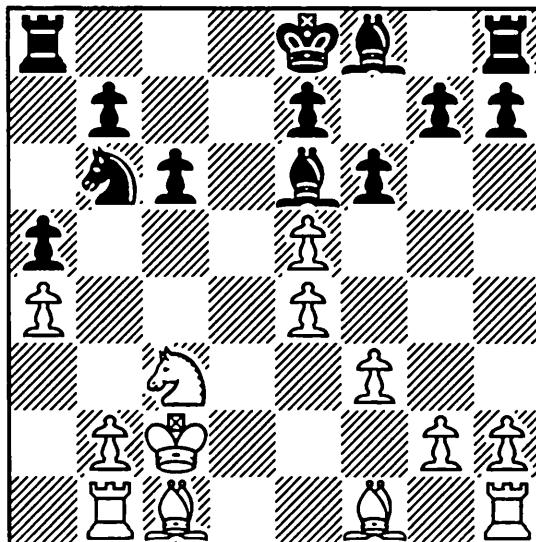
Some variations:

a) 14 ♜e3 ♜xf1 15 ♜hxf1 ♜c4 16 ♜d4 e6 17 b3 (if 17 f4 I like 17...g5! when Black gains counterplay) 17...0-0-0! 18 ♜fd1 ♜xd4 (a forced but powerful positional exchange sac) 19 ♜xd4 ♜e3+ 20 ♜b2 ♜xg2 and Black has good compensation for the exchange in the form of a pawn and a grip on the dark squares, D.Svetushkin-A.Motylev, 1999-2003. At this point infiltration by White is an optical illusion. For example, 21 ♜ad1 ♜c5 22 ♜d7 ♜f8 (Black threatens ...♜f4-g6xe5) 23 ♜e2 g5! and I would take Black any day over White here.

b) 14 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 15 e6!? (otherwise Black develops smoothly) 15...fxe6 16 b3 ♜d6 17 e5 ♜f7 18 ♜e1 g5! 19 ♜e4 b6 20 ♜d2 ♜d7 21 ♜c4 ♜c7 22 ♜a3 c5 23 ♜ad1 ♜g7 24 ♜c1 ♜ad8, D.Berczes-M.Carlsen, Heraklion 2002. This kid just seems to have the gift of knowing exactly where to place his pieces at exactly the right time. Black is about to play ...♜d5 and White has very little compensation for his missing pawn.

Returning to 13...f6:

14 ♜b1!



Refusing to help Black develop by trading on f6.

14...♞d7?!

Black insists and tries to force White to capture on f6. This move may be overly cute and Black would be better off taking the more straightforward route: 14...fxe5 15 b4 ♜c4 16 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 17 bxa5 0-0-0 18 ♜d1 ♜xd1 19 ♜xd1 e6 20 ♜e3 ♜a6 21 ♜g4 ♜d6 22 ♜b2 and White retains only a tiny edge in the ending, F.Vallejo Pons-G.Kasparov, Linares 2003.

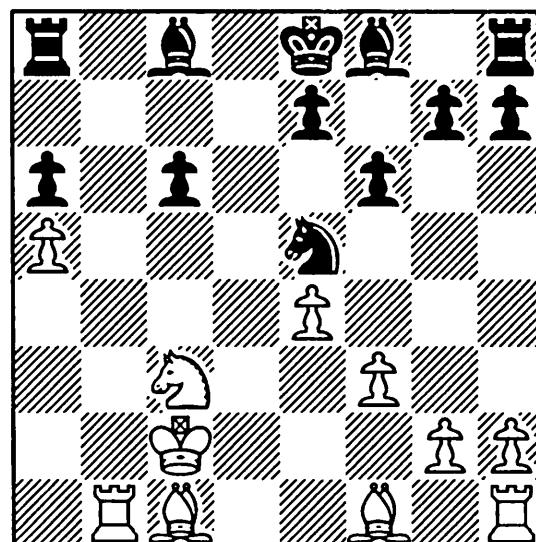
15 b4!

As usual Topalov takes the bold road and sacs a pawn, rather than oblige Black with the lame 15 exf6? exf6 when Black has a very nice game due to the queenside holes on b4 and c5.

15...♜xe5 16 bxa5 ♜c8

Black must undevelop since 16...0-0-0?? would be a ruinous decision after 17 a6.

17 a6 bxa6 18 a5



The position Topalov envisioned when he sacrificed the pawn. Let's assess:

1. Black is perilously behind in development, with dark-squared bishop and h8-rook badly out of the action.
2. White owns the open b-file, and has his sights on pawn targets at a6 and c6.
3. b6 is a juicy occupation square for White's knight or rook.

Conclusion: White has more than enough strategic compensation for his pawn and Black has yet to equalize.

18...♞d7!

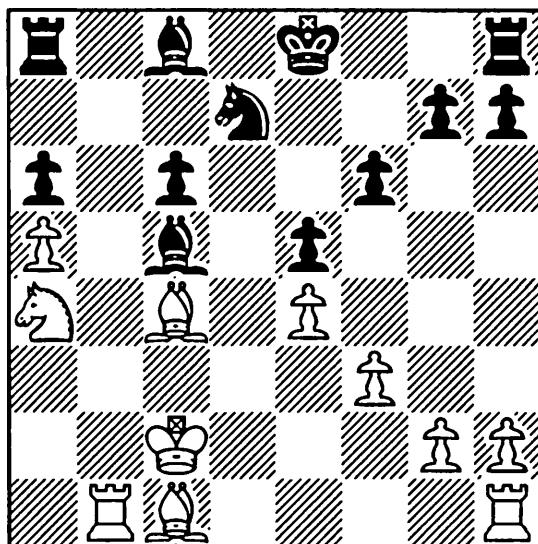
Question: Why would he retreat?

Answer: Three reasons:

1. On d7 the knight covers key weak points in Black's position, like c5 and b6.
2. Black makes room for ...e5 which takes his fair share of the centre and aims to develop his kingside pieces.
3. Black's knight was unstable on e5 and was vulnerable to f4 at any given time.

19 ♞a4! e5 20 ♜c4 ♜c5?!

Too ambitious; c7 is the best spot for the bishop to help cover the numerous weak queenside squares. Black needs to go into full grovel mode with 20...♜d6 21 ♜d1 ♜e7 22 ♜e3 ♜b8 23 ♜b6 (B.Tadic-M.Savic, Kragujevac 2010), and now 23...♜d8 24 ♜xc8+ ♜bxc8 25 ♜b7 ♜c7 when White retains pressure but Black's position is not terminal just yet.



Exercise: Should White grab the bishop pair and take on c5, or continue developing with 21 ♜d1?

21 ♜d1!!

Answer: A shocking exhibition in depth of understanding. When I first saw this game I was stunned that Topa didn't grab the bishop pair and the dark squares, which is something tangible; after 21 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 22 ♜b6 it's a position where White either wins or

draws. Topa, as we all know, is an all-or-nothing chess player and correctly goes for a blow-out instead by retaining his knight. There is a Jerry Garcia song about the Topalov philosophy which goes: "Peaches in the summertime, apples in the fall. If I can't get the girl I love, I won't have none at all!"

Topalov's 21 ♜d1!! is a remarkably deep move. Somehow he saw that a black bishop on d4 does nothing to help Black. From this point on, White's position gets better and better each move with ruthless precision.

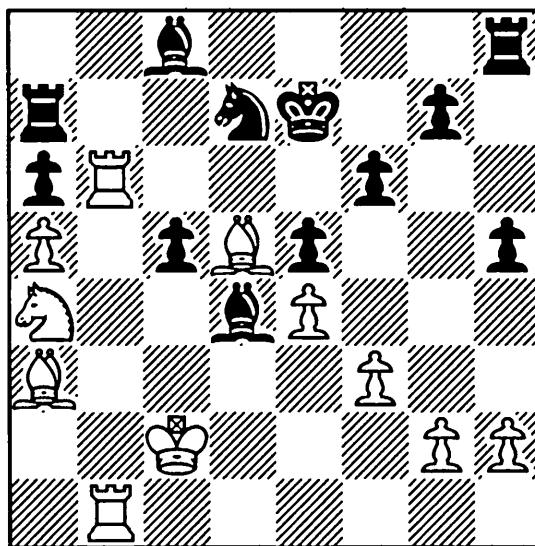
Rybka screams out for 21 ♜xc5, yet Topa's move is stronger. Don't believe it when they tell you machines are better than we are. There remain a few humans who, through accessing that mysterious force call intuition, are capable of penetrating a position deeper than the strongest machines. Our main trouble is we tend to hang pieces from time to time while machines never do – even in morning rounds!

21...♝d4 22 ♜a3 c5 23 ♜b3

Preparing to rule the b-file.

23...h5 24 ♜db1 ♔e7 25 ♜d5 ♜a7 26 ♜b6!

Man, this guy is generous with material. Topalov, like an inverted Robin Hood, steals from the poor (himself) to give to the rich (all his opponents).



Exercise (multiple choice): Which move puts up the maximum resistance for Black? a) 26...♝xb6; b) 26...h4; c) 26...♜c7

26...♜c7?

Answer: Wang Yue could have put up a better fight if he had accepted the gift. Topalov recommended the line 26...♝xb6! 27 axb6 ♜d7 28 ♜xc5+! ♜xc5 29 ♜xc5 ♜xd5 30 exd5 ♜f5+ 31 ♜e4 ♜b8 32 ♜c3 ♜xe4 33 fxe4 ♜d6 34 ♜c4. It's not as simple as it looks for White to win this one since he has problems crossing his king over to a5 without dropping his b-pawn.

27 $\mathbb{E}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$

28... $\mathbb{B}a7$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ is also hopeless for Black who eventually drops the weakling pawn on a6.

29 $a xb6$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 30 $\mathbb{B}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 31 $\mathbb{B}c6$ $\mathbb{B}d7$

31... $\mathbb{B}b8$ doesn't help: 32 b7 $\mathbb{B}d7$ 33 $\mathbb{B}xa6$.

32 $\mathbb{E}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 33 b7! 1-0

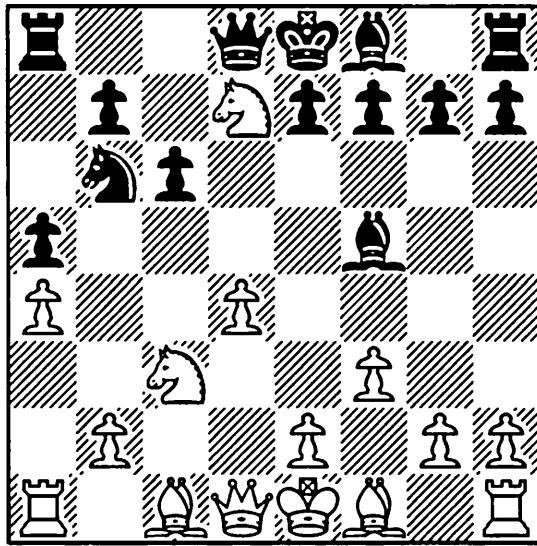
33 b7 $\mathbb{B}xb7$ 34 $\mathbb{B}d6+$ wins a piece.

Summary

I am not a big fan of the meek defensive position Black gets after 13...f6 and urge you to try the more adventurous Carlsen idea 13... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$, which looks like an improvement.

Game 15
B.Tadic-B.Bogosavljevic
Cetinje 2010

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 c6 3 d4 d5 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $dxc4$ 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ a5 9 f3 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$



The main line, as opposed to 10 e4 played by Topalov last game.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$

Other recaptures are inferior:

a) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd7?$! (I would rather end up on g6 than d7, where the bishop gets shut out of the game for a while) 11 e4 e6 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 14 0-0 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{B}d6$ 16 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17 $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 18 $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, D.Navarra-A.Ledger, British League 2005. Black stands passively and many of his pieces sit on the wrong squares.

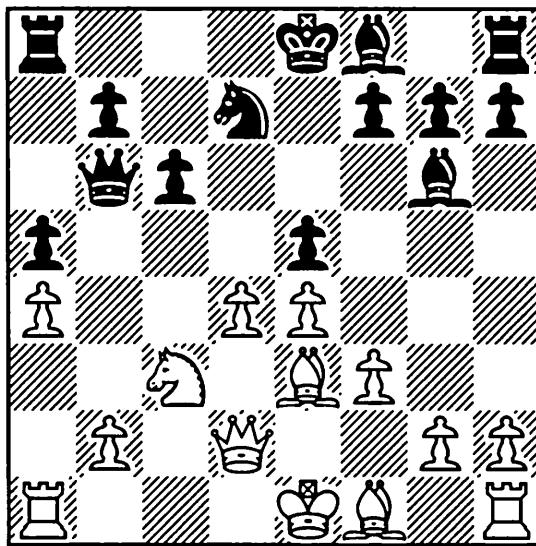
b) The problem with 10... $\mathbb{W}xd7?$! is that Black's knight is left unprotected on b6, a fact that White may use to his advantage with either $\mathbb{W}b3$ or $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and a well timed d5. For ex-

ample, 11 e4 ♜g6 12 ♜e3 e6 13 d5! ♜c8 14 dxе6 ♜xd1+ 15 ♜xd1 fxе6 16 ♜c4 ♜f7? (16...e5 17 ♜e6 isn't very pleasant for Black but had to be played) 17 ♜b5! ♜b4+ (the knight can't be touched) 18 ♜e2 0-0 19 ♜c7 won a clean pawn in Nguyen Anh Dung-Chan Peng Kong, Ho Chi Minh City 2003.

11 e4 ♜g6 12 ♜e2

This move may be White's best option. He has four other tries in this position:

a) 12 ♜e3 ♜b6 13 ♜d2 e5!.



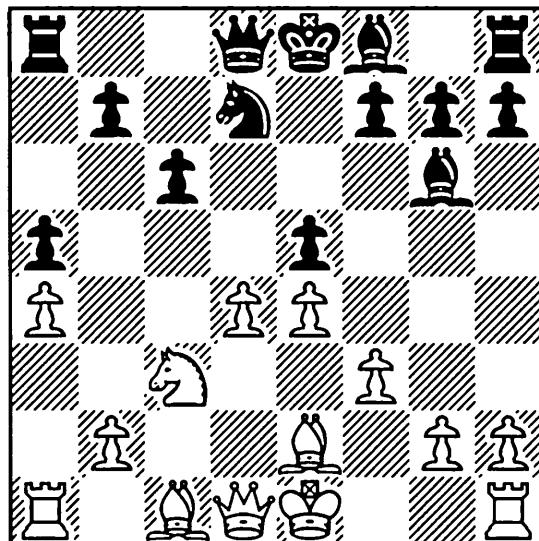
This temporary pawn sac assures Black a good position. 14 dxе5 ♜c5 15 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 was E.Bareev-S.Rublevsky, Khanty Mansiysk 2005. Now Bareev saw nothing better than returning the pawn with 16 ♜d6. He undoubtedly feared Black's initiative if he hung onto the pawn with 16 f4?! 0-0-0! 17 ♜d3 ♜he8 18 ♜e2 f6.

b) 12 ♜b3 e5! (once again this magic move gives Black a very pleasant position) 13 dxе5 ♜b4 was R.Ruck-A.Beliavsky, Leipzig 2002. If White gets ambitious with 14 f4? it is met rudely by 14...♜c5 regaining the pawn with initiative.

c) 12 d5 pre-empts ...e5, but... 12...e5! (Why not? Black plays his freeing break anyway.) 13 ♜e3 ♜b4 14 dxс6 bxс6 15 ♜c4 0-0 16 0-0 ♜e7 17 ♜e2 ♜ab8 18 ♜fd1 ♜c5 and Black enjoyed good play down the b-file, J.Grünenwald-R.Hübner, Swiss League 1994.

d) 12 f4?! is not so bad. White is sick and tired of Black tossing in ...e5! so this time he means business. He prevents ...e5 and threatens f5, winning a piece. The problem is White's last move loosens his pawn centre. A.Beliavsky-P.Acs, Paks 2004, continued 12...e6 13 ♜c4 ♜f6 14 e5 ♜e4 15 0-0 ♜b4 16 ♜e2 0-0 17 ♜e3 ♜e7 when Black's active pieces and the pawn target on d4 made up for White's space.

12...e5!



Question: Is Black freeing his game or is he violating a principle by opening the position when behind in development?

Answer: Black is clearly freeing his game. In fact, he isn't even behind in development!

There is no need to take the solid/passive route with 12...e6 13 0-0 ♕b4 14 ♕e3 0-0 15 ♖b3 ♖c7 16 ♜ac1, as played in V.Akopian-A.Wojtkiewicz, Las Vegas 2006. Black has yet to equalize here since he has not achieved a freeing pawn break.

13 dxе5 ♕c5

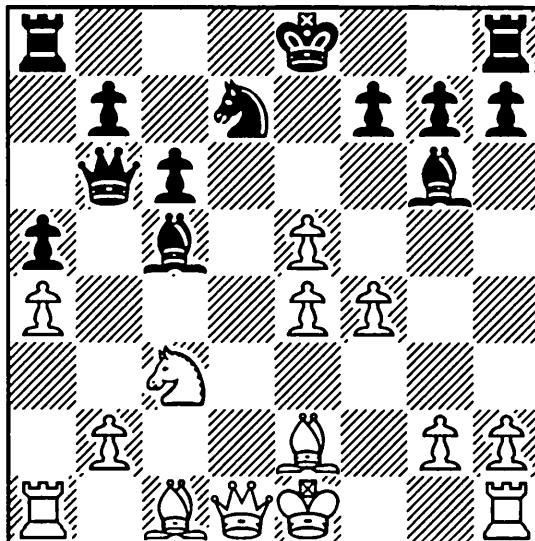
Question: Why play such games and make it a sac? Wouldn't it be prudent to regain our lost pawn with 13...♝xe5?

Answer: We would like to recapture the pawn, but we must be vigilant against White's threats. Recapturing the pawn loses a piece to 14 f4! ♜d7 15 f5.

14 f4

Threatening to trap and smother Black's bishop on g6.

14...♜b6!



Question: What the...!? You just admonished me for dropping a piece earlier in the analysis, but here Black drops the same piece to the same trap and you award the move an exclam! What is the deal?

Answer: This time Black didn't drop the piece, he sacrificed it! A small shift in the position can turn what was once a blunder into a sac just a few moves later. Also, take a look at the alternative. Do you like Black's game after defending White's "threat" with 14...h6? 15 ♜g4!? I'm not crazy about Black's chances in the ending after 15...♝h4+ 16 g3 ♕e7 17 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 18 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 19 g4!.

15 ♜f1!?

White gets nervous and resists the temptation. After 15 f5 0-0-0! his position will not be easy to defend.

Question: Can you back up this sac with a concrete line to prove that it's sound?

Answer: Not really. This is an example of an intuitive sac. I can just tell you my gut feeling is that matters are not going to be so simple for White in the coming moves.

Question: Gut feeling!? You would sac a piece based on a feeling?

Answer: Absolutely! Do you really believe Tal completely worked out all his sacs? He would just get an intuitive feeling about a sac, cross his fingers and plunge joyfully into the great unknown.

Question: How can I improve my intuition about playing such sacs?

Answer: Through faith! Just make the sac when you get the right feel, and pray!

Question: One more thing. Don't you see any irony in a registered chicken like you lecturing to us about the virtues of making speculative sacs?

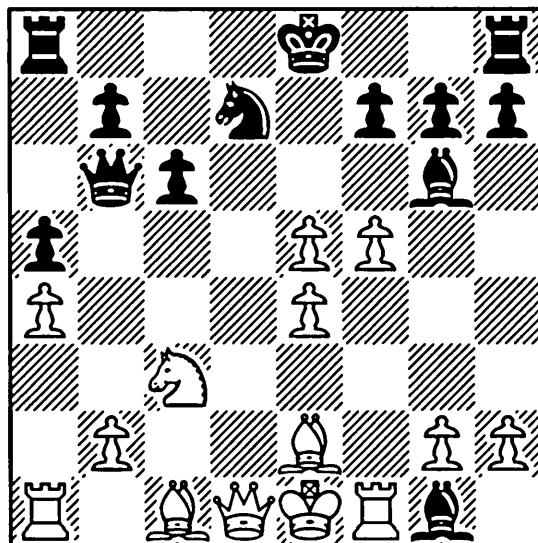
Answer: Well, I concede you got me there. I love the truth – it's those damned facts tripping me up which I don't like so much! In my defence, I quote King Louis XIV, known as le Roi Soleil (the Sun King), who once reminded his subjects when he was cornered in a similar argument: "Do as I say, not as I do!"

15...♝g1!

He insists on sac'ing and plunges into the great abyss of the unknown. This time it's not so bad to keep the piece with 15...0-0-0 16 ♜c2 h6, as Black's development lead gives him solid compensation for the pawn.

16 f5

White is through playing games and bags the piece.



Exercise: Should Black go for the grab and snatch on h2, or increase his already dangerous development lead and castle queenside?

16...0-0-0?

Answer: One of the dangers of continually increasing the complications is the possibility of the compicator getting more confused than the complicatee. To save you time from googling it, yes, I did in fact just make up those words.

Black should first play 16...♝xh2!, which:

1. Threatens a nasty check on g3, and the e5-pawn;
2. Picks up another pawn for the piece; and
3. Covers against ♜f4.

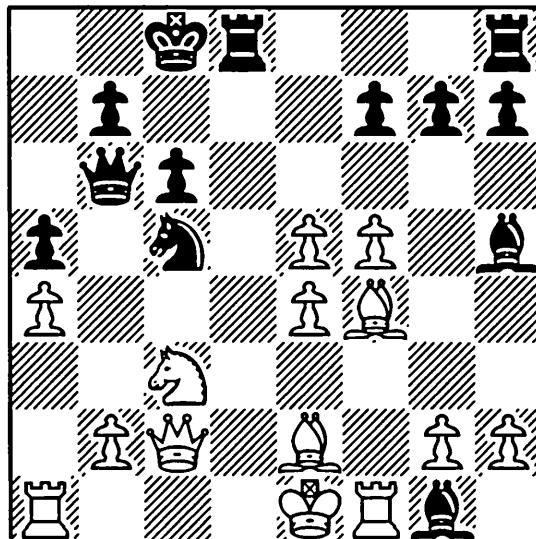
17 ♜f4

Covering h2.

17...♝c5

17...♝xf5 leads to a mess, probably in White's favour after 18 ♜d5! cxd5 19 ♜c1+ ♜b8 20 e6+ ♜a8 21 exf5 fxe6 22 fxe6 ♜f6 23 ♜c7 ♜a7 24 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 25 ♜b3 ♜xh2.

18 ♜c2 ♜h5!



Exercise (multiple choice): Should White try to win Black's h5-bishop, or try to counterattack? The choices are: a) 19 ♜xh5, winning the bishop; b) 19 g4, trapping the bishop; or c) 19 ♜d5, counterattacking.

Answer: 19 ♜d5!

Attempts to trap or win the bishop allow Black shots on d3:

a) 19 ♜xh5?? ♜d3+ 20 ♜e2 ♜xf4+ 21 ♜xf4 ♜e3+ 22 ♜f1 ♜xf4+ 23 ♜xg1 ♜d2 and White must give up his queen.

b) After 19 g4?! g5! 20 ♜g3 ♜xg4! 21 ♜xg1 ♜d3+ 22 ♜f1 ♜h3+ 23 ♜g2 ♜e3 chaos still reigns across the board and it's clear Black's stock just went up.

19...cxd5 20 ♜xh5 ♜b8 21 ♜a3?

Losing the thread of the game. It was crucial to hang on to the initiative with 21 ♜xg1 ♜b3 22 e6+ ♜a8 23 ♜f1 ♜xa1 24 ♜c7 with complications favouring White.

21...dxe4 22 e6+

White doesn't have useful alternatives:

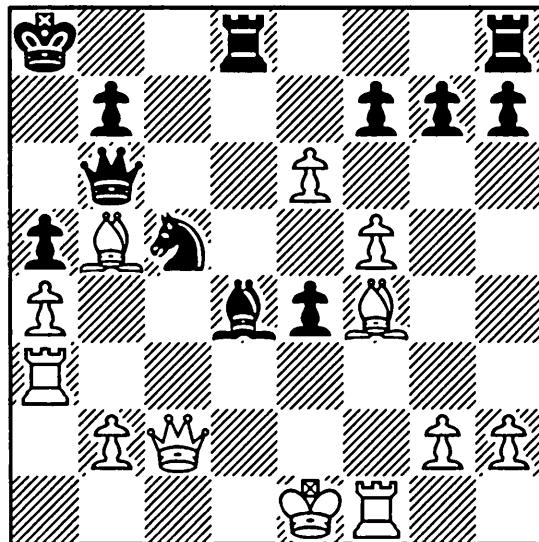
a) 22 ♜xg1? ♜d3+ 23 ♜f1 ♜xf4 wins.

b) 22 ♜e2 ♜c8! 23 ♜b1 ♜d4 24 e6+ ♜a8 25 exf7 ♜xb2 leaves Black in control.

22...♜a8 23 ♜e2 ♜d4?!

White is busted after the simple 23...fxe6.

24 ♜b5?



The force of the fire hose is so powerful that it flips from the grip of the fire-fighter's hands. Tadic misses a chance to claw his way back into the game with 24 exf7 ♜hf8 25 ♜c4 ♜d3+ 26 ♜xd3 exd3 27 ♜xd3.

24...fxe6

Now White's position is in ruins and he is down a pawn to boot. Things only get worse from this point on.

25 ♜g5 ♜c8 26 ♜d1 ♜xb2

I teach a nine-year-old, Jerry, who no matter how much I beg, refuses to ever resign and always plays all his losses out to mate. Somehow I admire this no surrender/fight-to-the-death attitude! Clearly Tadic, like Jerry, is a member of the bitter ender club and plays on for quite some time before hanging it up. Okay then, enjoy the rest of the game. I will be leaving now because it doesn't require an annotator or Nostradamus to foresee the future here.

27 ♜a2 ♜c3+ 28 ♔e2 exf5 29 ♜c2 ♜e6 30 ♜e3 ♜d4 31 ♜d2 ♜c5 32 ♜c3 ♜b4 33 ♜e5 ♜c5 34 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 35 ♜xf5 ♜d8 36 ♜b1 ♜d4+ 0-1

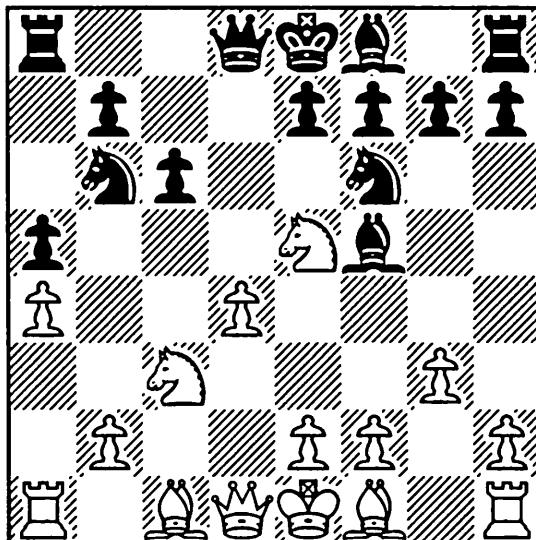
Summary

Dreaming is no substitute for doing! If you feel in your bones that it is time for you to sac, then close your eyes, don't chicken out, and jump in and sac. Iron out the details later.

Game 16 B.Gelfand-Wang Yue FIDE Grand Prix, Sochi 2008

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 4 ♜f3 dxc4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 ♜e5 ♜bd7 7 ♜xc4 ♜b6 8 ♜e5 a5 9 g3

A logical alternative to 9 f3. White plays it Catalan style with his bishop bearing down on the long diagonal, as well as the key e4-square.



Against 9 e3, be aware of White's intention, which is a quick g2-g4. Here 9...e6 10 g4 ♜g6 11 h4 ♜d6 12 h5 ♜e4 leads to complications that look very playable for Black, M.Mchedlishvili-I Sokolov, Villarrobledo (rapid) 2007. You can also avoid the adventure and get a decent position with the simple 9...h6, giving the bishop a safe haven on h7.

9 ♜g5 is another idea, to leave open f3/e4 possibilities as well as g3 ideas. After 9...h6! 10 ♜h4 e6 11 e4 ♜h7 12 f3 ♜e7 13 ♜f2 0-0 14 ♜e2 ♜fd7 15 ♜d3, as played in a few games, White's extra central space gives him an edge and Black should organize an ...e5 break at some point. I prefer 10...♜bd5!, which rushes to occupy b4 before White plays e4.

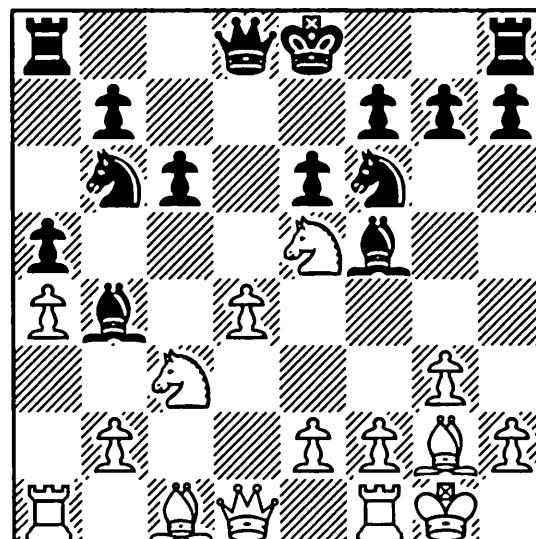
9...e6

The main line and the safest option. Next game we look at the riskier 9...♜fd7!?

10 ♜g2 ♜b4

Black occupies his hereditary hole on b4 and creates the threat of ...♜xc3 later on, should White play for e4.

11 0-0



Question: I have an idea in this position. How about playing 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd5$ to eliminate the knight on c3? This would weaken White's grip on the e4-square.

Answer: The plan is logical but contains a tactical flaw. White then plays the forcing sequence 12 e4! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14 exf5! $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$! and White wins. Sometimes a plan, though appearing logical, is simply refuted by the math in the position.

11...0-0 12 e3

The most common move. White is in no rush to play e4 and is content to build his position with $\mathbb{We}2$ and $\mathbb{Id}1$ first. There are a couple of other possibilities here:

a) 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (a common move in Catalans; White eliminates a defender of e4 for the price of the bishop pair) 12...h6 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 16 e4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$, R.Vaganian-F.Handke, Dresden Olympiad 2007. White's space and Black's bishop pair balance each other out,

b) 12 $\mathbb{Q}e1$? tries to enforce e4 without giving up the bishops, but 12... $\mathbb{Q}e4$! short circuits the plan and gives Black equality or more: 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14 e3 (the point of Black's trick is seen if White attempts to grab material; after 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$? $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xe1$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ Black regains the piece and emerges up an exchange) 14...f6 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$, S.Ernst-Bu Xiangzhi, Ottawa 2007. The weakened light squares in White's camp count for more than his space.

12...h6

At some point White will advance with e4, so Black makes room for the bishop on h7.

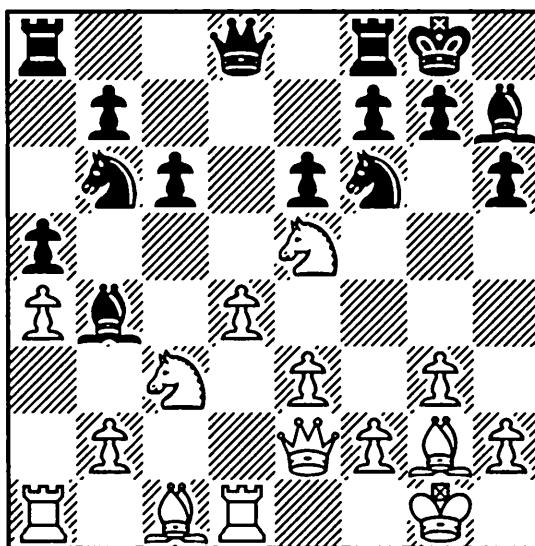
13 $\mathbb{We}2$

Continuing with his plan of $\mathbb{Id}1$ and then deciding whether he wants to play e4 or not.

13... $\mathbb{Q}h7$

Or the immediate 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 14 e4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$. White may have a tiny edge after 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$.

14 $\mathbb{Id}1$



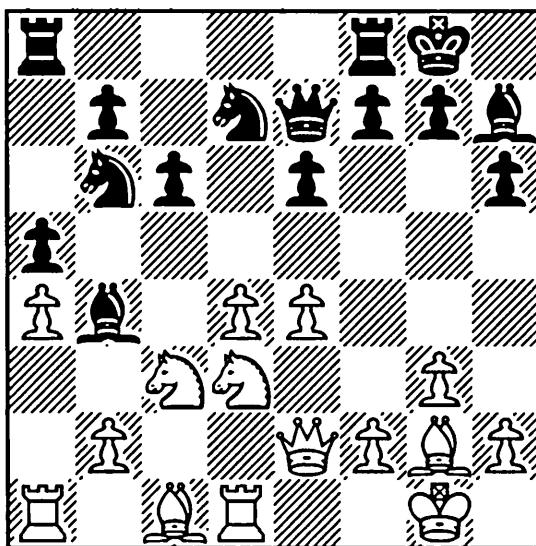
14...♞fd7

The correct knight, which leaves the other one to keep surveillance over c4.

Black can avoid moving a knight to d7 with 14...♝e7 preparing ...♝d8. B.Gelfand-V.Ivanchuk, Prague 2002, continued 15 e4 ♜fd8 16 ♜f4 ♜ac8 17 ♜d3. Perhaps here Black can try the ambitious 17...♝xd4!? 18 ♜e3 e5 19 f4 ♜xd3 20 ♜xd3 ♜bd7 21 f5 ♜c5! 22 ♜xc5 ♜xc5+. Black's pawn, bishop pair and dark-square control provide more than enough for the exchange.

15 ♜d3 ♛e7!

There is no need to move the bishop, as 16 ♜xb4? simply drops a pawn to 16...axb4.

16 e4**16...e5!**

At long last, Black hits back in the centre with this correctly timed break.

Question: Why not play ...c5 instead?

Answer: 16...c5?! isn't as good since Black hands over control of b5 to White, who stands a bit better after 17 ♜b5 cxd4 18 ♜xd4.

Question: How am I supposed to know when to play such breaks?

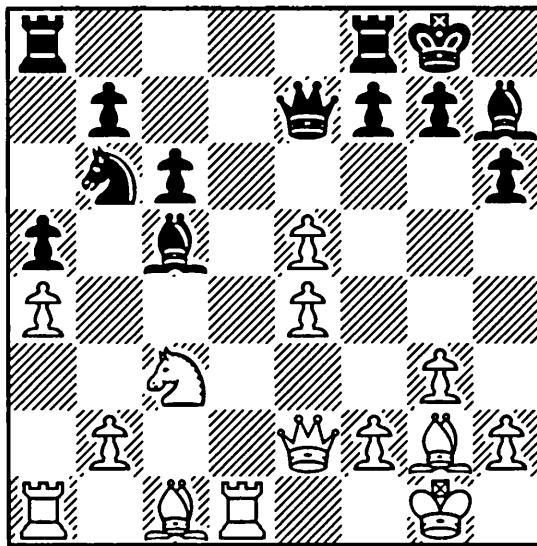
Answer: You build up a feel for the correct timing of such breaks by playing the Slav and also studying excellent books on the Slav like this one! But really, these things take time. You can't rush experience or intuition, and the longer you play the Slav, the better your feel for such breaks.

17 ♜xe5

White has a chance for an edge also after 17 d5 ♜fd8 18 ♜e3 ♜xc3 (18...♜c4 could be an improvement) 19 bxc3 cxd5 20 exd5 ♜c4 (20...♜ac8 21 d6! is probably also better for White) 21 ♜xh6! gxh6 22 ♜g4+ with great complications which lean in White's favour, V.Kramnik-N.Short, Novgorod 1994.

The Slav: Move by Move

If White wants to take on e5, then 17 dx_e5 might be more accurate. 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ transposes to the next note without allowing Black the possibility of 18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.
17... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18 dx_e5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$!



An aggressive new move in the position. Black temporarily sacrifices a pawn to try to seize control over key central dark squares.

After the safer 18... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20 f4 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5+$ 22 $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2+$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f1$, as played in S.Halkias-U.Atkisi, Warsaw 2005, White holds a tiny edge in the ending for a couple of reasons:

1. His more mobile pawn majority; and
2. A centralized king ready to help out.

Even so, it is doubtful that he can accumulate enough advantages to score the full point.

19 $\mathbb{Q}e3$?

Gelfand is not interested in keeping the pawn and challenges Black's grip on the dark squares.

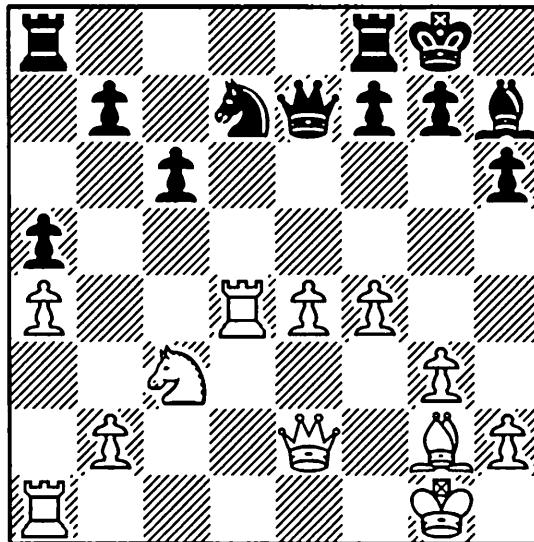
Question: Why was Black's 18th move a pawn sac?

It looks like he can win it back after 19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

Answer: In a sense you are right. Even after 19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$, White won't be able to hang on to the pawn forever. Black just needs to be careful about regaining it without allowing tactical tricks like 19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$? 20 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$!, and if 20...gxh6 then 21 $\mathbb{W}g4+$ double attacks d7 and g8 regaining the piece with interest.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 21 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22 f4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23 $\mathbb{B}d4$

This is a very common pawn structure from Slav positions where Black successfully achieves his ...e5 pawn break.



Question: Who stands better?

Answer: Let's assess:

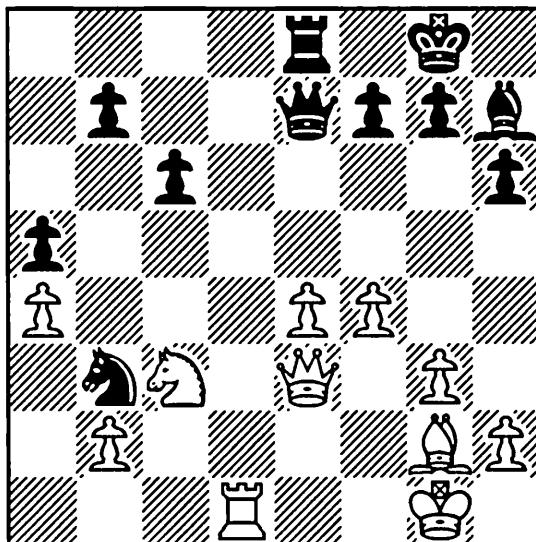
1. We have opposite-wing pawn majorities. White's looks more mobile and therefore more dangerous.
2. White controls more space.
3. Black controls key dark squares like b4 and c5. He also has potential to later pick on White's slightly weak queenside pawns.
4. Black is ready to challenge White on the d-file.
5. Black's bishop on h7 is somewhat buried for the moment, but should White get ambitious and ever play e5, then the h7-bishop transforms into a powerful piece. Also, Black may soon carry out the redeployment ...f6! intending ...♝g6 and ...♝f7 to direct the bishop's gaze to White's weakened queenside.

Conclusion: The game is probably even, and the player with the better feel in such structures will have the edge.

23...♝fd8 24 ♘ad1 ♜c5 25 ♜e3 ♘xd4 26 ♘xd4

White's control over the d-file doesn't mean much after 26 ♘xd4 f6, since the infiltration square d7 is securely covered. Black will regroup next with ...♝g6 and ...♝f7, aiming the bishop at White's weakened queenside.

26...♜b3 27 ♘d1 ♜e8



Exercise: Should White grab more space with 28 e5 or should he hold back?

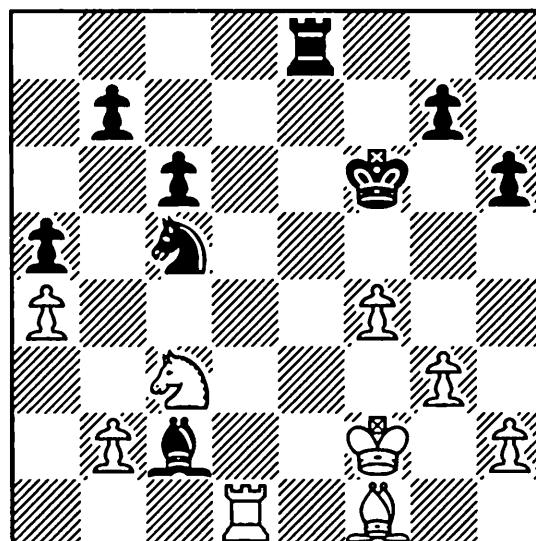
28 e5?

Answer: Unjustified ambition is often the mother of defeat. Gelfand may have believed he stood better here and loses his objectivity. With his last move he gives away many key light squares, most importantly c2 for Black's bishop later on.

28...♝c5!

Black can only exploit White's slightly weakened queenside effectively if queens come off the board.

29 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 30 ♜f1 ♜f8 31 ♜f2 ♜e7 32 ♜e3 f6! 33 exf6+ ♜xf6+ 34 ♜f2 ♜c2!



The vampire, who once lurked in the dark corners of the basement on h7, is now emboldened and wanders the board in open daylight.

White's game has degenerated since he played the rash 28 e5?!:

1. Suddenly, White's majority has been cut down somewhat and doesn't look so impressive anymore.

2. Black's bishop and knight gang up on the weakling on a4.

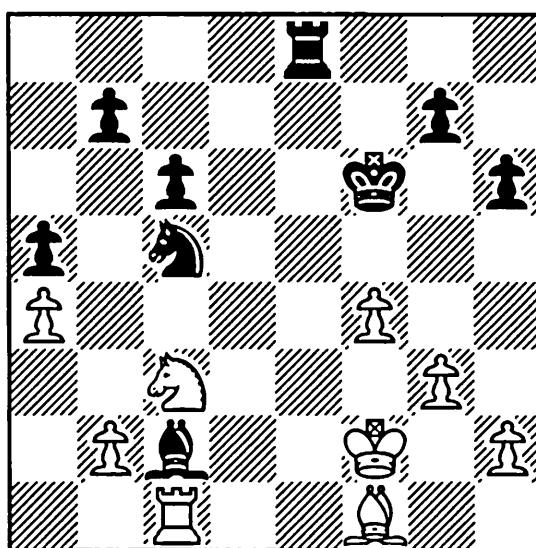
3. White's king has been cut off from assisting the queenside pawns.

35 ♜c1!

The best defence. White's position gets even worse after 35 ♜d4?! ♜e4+! and now:

a) 36 ♜xe4+? ♜xe4 37 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 with ...♜c2 to follow.

b) 36 ♜f3 ♜xc3 37 bxc3 ♜e1! and Black's pieces infiltrate.



35...♜b3

Exercise: Think carefully and calculate.

Why didn't Black grab the pawn with 35...♜xa4?

Answer: Black can't hang on to his extra material after 36 ♜d5+! cxd5 37 ♜xc5. White should hold the draw after 37...♜c6 38 ♜g2 ♛e6 39 ♜xa5.

36 ♜d5+

Forced, but now this trick isn't as effective for White.

36...♜xd5 37 ♜xc5 ♜e4?

Black gets cute and risks the loss of his advantage, which he could have kept after 37...b6.

38 ♜g2?

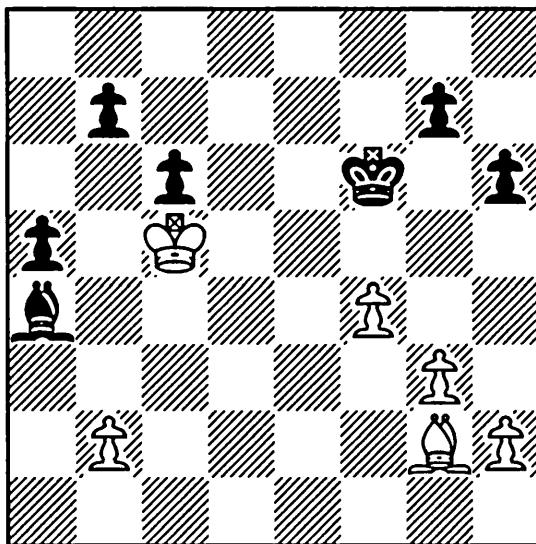
Gelfand misassesses the ending. He mistakenly sacs a pawn thinking his king position saves him. White should hold the game if he reduces the number of pawns on the board with 38 ♜xa5! ♜b4 39 ♜e2 ♜xb2 40 ♛e3.

38...♜c4!!

It took prodigious judgment and superhuman calculation powers to work out that

Black wins this ending.

39 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 40 ♔e3 ♜b3 41 ♔d4 ♜xa4 42 ♔c5



This was what Gelfand had in mind to save himself when he sacrificed the pawn. It looks like the white king is the only adult on the playground, with no one telling him what to do.

Question: What do you mean “save himself”? It looks to me like White is just plain winning. The b7- and c6-pawns are fixed on the wrong colour and White’s king will pick off at least one of the queenside pawns. Isn’t it Black who needs saving here?

42...♜b3!

Answer: The position is an optical illusion. Black may indeed lose his extra pawn but when things clear up he gets a decisive 2-1 queenside pawn majority.

43 ♜e4

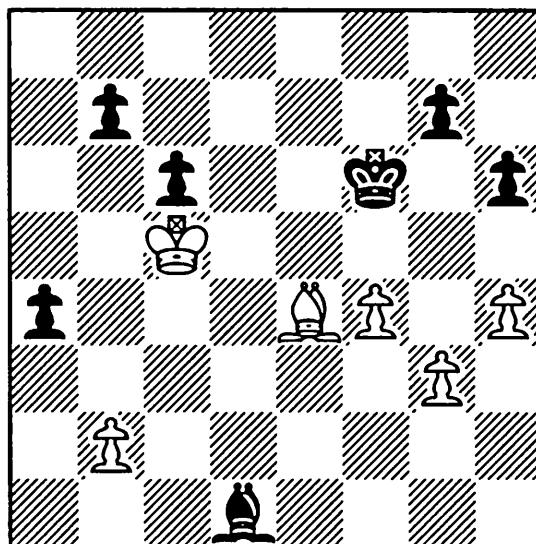
It may have been at this point where the realization dawned on Gelfand that his intended king raid 43 ♜b6 a4 44 ♜xb7?? fails to 44...c5 with no good defence to ...c4 and ...c3, which in turn creates a deadly and unstoppable passed a-pawn for Black.

43...a4 44 h4

44 g4 g5! 45 f5 ♜d1 46 h3 ♜e5 47 ♜d3 h5 48 gxh5 ♜xh5 49 ♜b6 ♜f3! 50 ♜a5 ♜g2 wins for Black.

44...♜d1

He keeps an eye on his a4-pawn while covering against g4, which would activate White’s kingside pawn majority. This position must have been frustrating for Gelfand. It’s as if Iroquois braves managed to breach the settlers’ defence, only to find that there is nobody home in the compound.

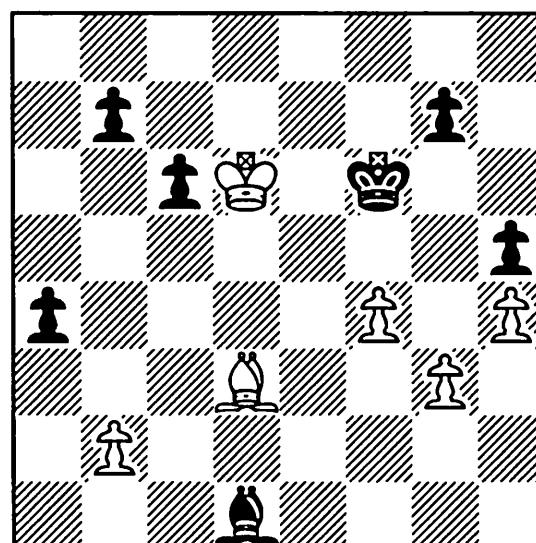


Exercise: Without moving the pieces, try to visualize this 12-ply, single-string line (you can do it!): 45 ♕b6? ♔e6! 46 ♕xb7 c5 47 ♔c6 c4 48 ♔b5 a3! 49 bxa3 c3 50 a4 c2.

Congratulations if you have the ability to visualize the position clearly to this point. Black, after winning White's bishop, will simply sac his bishop for White's passed a-pawn and mop up all of White's unprotected pawns on the other wing with his king.

45 ♔d6 h5 46 ♕d3

46 ♜c5 ♜e6 47 ♜d3 ♜f3 48 ♜b6 ♜d5 49 ♜c2 c5!? 50 ♜xb7 ♜c4+ 51 ♜c7 ♜b4 52 ♜d6 c4 would be the same old story, with Black winning.

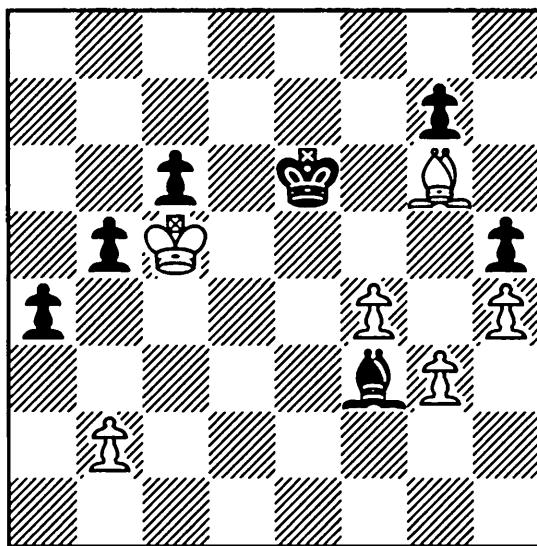


Exercise: Find a plan for Black to make progress after 46 ♘d3.

Answer: 46... ♕ f3!

This deceptively simple and strong move allows Black to mobilize his queenside pawn majority. The key idea is that he can play ...b5 without hanging his c-pawn.

47 ♜c5 b5 48 ♜c2 ♜e6 49 ♜g6



Exercise: What is the correct plan for Black to win the game?

49...♚d7!

Answer: Get the king to a5 to activate the queenside pawn majority.

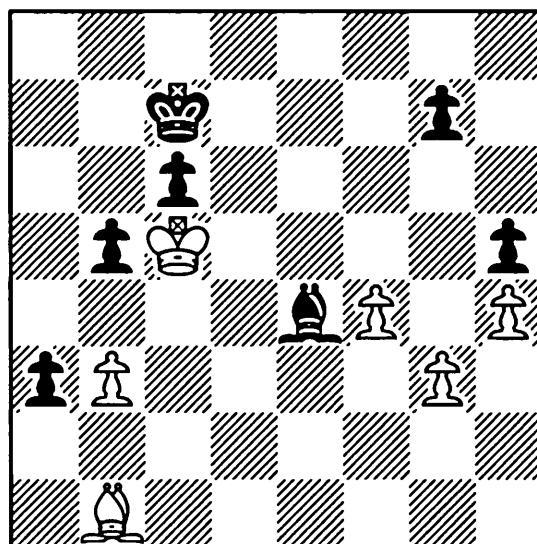
50 ♜c2 ♜c7 51 b3?!

Speeding up his loss but it didn't matter. White loses anyway after 51 ♜g6 ♜b7 52 ♜c2 ♜a6 53 ♜g6 ♜a5 54 ♜c2 b4 55 ♜c4 ♜d5+ 56 ♜c5 a3.

51...a3?!

A minor blemish in an otherwise flawless ending. Wang Yue misses the problem-like shot 51...♜d1!! that ends all resistance.

52 ♜b1 ♜e4!



53 ♜a2 ♛d7 54 ♛b4

There is no wiggle room for White. Black queens first after 54 ♛d4 ♜d5 55 ♛e5 g6 56 ♛f6 c5 57 ♛xg6 c4 58 b4 c3!.

54...♛e6 0-1

White has no answer to the king walk to g4 followed by the massacre of his kingside.

Summary

This game is a good example of how to push for the full point in the endgame, simply based on the long-term consequences of the slight weakening White makes with a2-a4 on his fifth move!

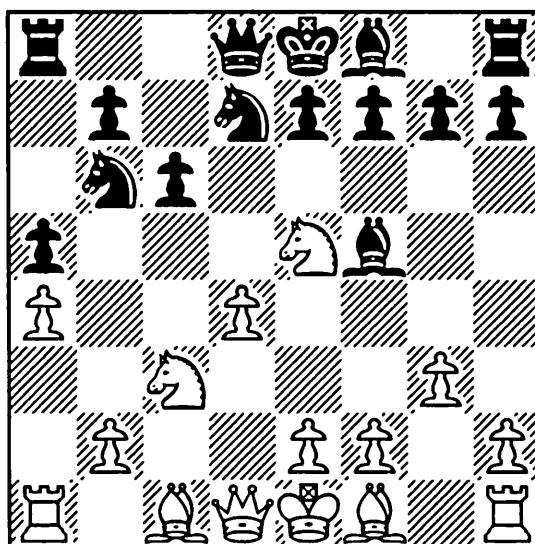
Game 17
H.Wang-F.Caruana
 Reykjavik 2008

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 ♜e5 ♜bd7

Question: I have noticed that both Kramnik and Anand defended the Black side of 6...e6 7 f3 c5 8 e4 against Topalov in World Championship matches. Can you explain more about the line?

Answer: Absolutely not! It is a totally thankless line from Black's perspective. Black goes into full grovel mode and defends for the next 80 moves or so, hoping to bag the draw! This line scores a healthy 59% in White's favour, so Black's attraction to the line remains an unsolved mystery in the chess world. Luckily for the reader, the editor and the author, we won't be covering this line in this book. In fact, let's never speak of it again. I call this a win, win, win situation!

7 ♜xc4 ♜b6 8 ♜e5 a5 9 g3 ♜fd7?!



Caution: When you play this line as Black you ride the dragon, and it's possible you may not like the places it takes you!

10 ♜xd7

Question: This seems a bit obliging on White's part.

Should he retreat the knight to d3 instead?

Answer: You are correct in pointing out that it is in White's best interest to avoid trades, since he controls more space. However, retreating with 10 ♜d3?! is too slow in this position and allows Black a promising pawn sac: 10...e5! 11 ♜xe5 (11 dxе5 ♜c5! also gives Black more than enough compensation for the pawn in the form of a huge development lead) 11...♜xe5 12 dxе5 ♜xd1+ 13 ♜xd1 ♜b4+ 14 ♜c3 ♜c2! 15 ♜d2 ♜c4 and White found himself struggling in T.Baumstark-D.Svetushkin, Ditzingen 2009.

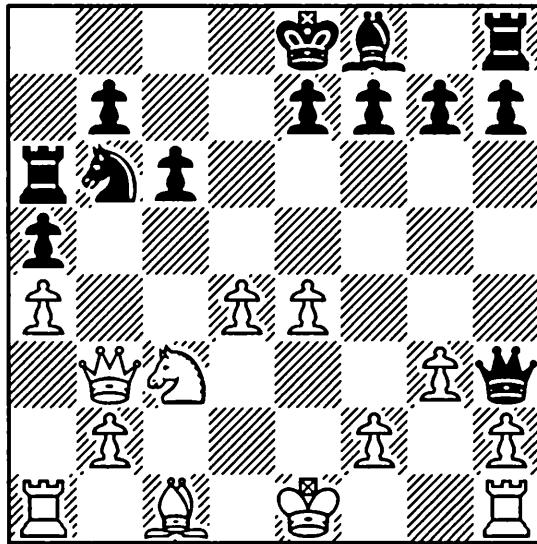
10...♛xd7 11 e4

11 ♜g2 doesn't make sense if Black is ready for ...♜h3: 11...♜h3 12 ♜xh3 ♜xh3 13 ♜b3 ♜a6 14 d5 e6! 15 dxе6 ♜xe6 16 ♜xe6+ fxe6 with equality, T.Rahman-M.Hasan, Dhaka 2007.

11...♜h3 12 ♜xh3

Question: Doesn't this move just give Black a helping hand in infiltrating White's kingside?

12...♜xh3 13 ♜b3 ♜a6



Answer: Yes, White gave Black's queen an invitation to poke around the kingside. In return, Black's queen has been distracted from protection of the b6-knight and also b7 – a fair exchange. Black looks like he is contorting a bit, but really there's no harm done yet to his position. Similarly, Black's queen isn't able to do much damage on the other side of the board. Sometimes we have to endure a temporary unpleasantness in order to get what we want.

14 ♜f4!

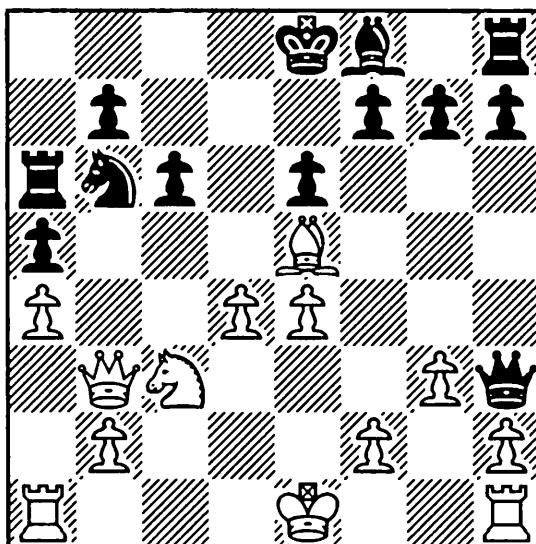
This move, Aronian's invention, may be White's best shot to try to squeeze something

from the position. White's game fizzles after 14 ♜e3 e6. For example:

a) 15 0-0-0 ♜b4 16 d5 exd5 17 exd5 0-0 18 dxc6 bxc6 and Black has the safer king, A.Flumbort-R.Tischbirek, German League 2007.

b) 15 d5 ♜b4 16 dxe6 ♜xe6 was equal in Z.Gyimesi-Bu Xiangzhi, German League 2007.

14...e6 15 ♜e5!

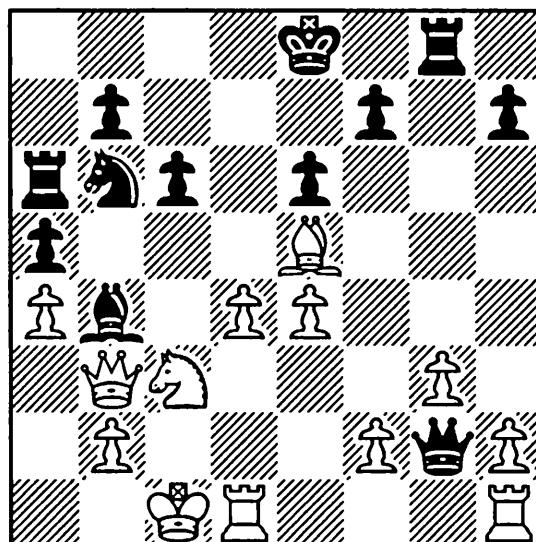


15...♜b4!

Black prefers to sac, avoiding the line 15...f6!? 16 ♜c7 ♜b4 17 0-0-0 0-0 18 ♜e2! g5 (to prevent ♜f4). Rybka tells me it's even here and I don't believe a word he/she/it tells me. My intuition says White stands better due to:

1. A powerful pawn centre;
2. The safer king;
3. A target on e6 and the possibility of pawn breaks with d5 or f4; and
4. Black's queenside pieces are contorted.

16 ♜xg7 ♜g8 17 ♜e5 ♜g2 18 0-0-0



18... $\mathbb{B}xc3$

Question: Black just gave up bishop for knight.

I assume 18... $\mathbb{W}xf2$ is not a good move?

Answer: Correct. Black should avoid the suicidal 18... $\mathbb{W}xf2$? because it opens the f-file for White's attack and does nothing to put a dent in White's pawn centre. White's e4-pawn is a far more important pawn to eliminate, since it gives rise to ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ possibilities.

19 $bxc3!$

A new move in the position, and a good one. It's pretty scary that we are still within theoretical grounds on the 19th move. Welcome to the computer/mega-database era!

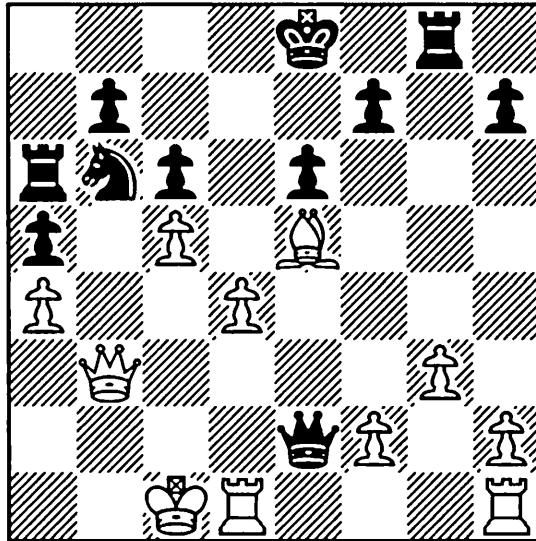
Wang Hao's choice looks like an improvement over 19 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}he1$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 21 $b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 22 $\mathbb{W}c2$ with a very difficult position to evaluate, L.Aronian-M.Carlsen, Elista 2007. With 19 $bxc3!$ White ensures that Black's knight never rests easy on d5 since c3-c4 is always in the air.

19... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 20 $c4!$

Not falling for the little strategic trap 20 $\mathbb{Q}c7?!$ $\mathbb{W}d5!$ when Black improves his position.

20... $\mathbb{W}e2$ 21 $c5!$

21 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4!$ leads to a draw after 22 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ (22 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is met by 22... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{W}e4!)$ 22... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 23 $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24 $\mathbb{W}b7+.$



Exercise (multiple choice): Black's knight is attacked. What should he do?

- a) 21... $\mathbb{Q}d5$; b) 21... $\mathbb{Q}c4$; c) 21... $\mathbb{W}c4+$

21... $\mathbb{Q}d5?$

Answer: This natural move loses, as does 21... $\mathbb{Q}c4??$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}he1$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xc4$. Black has to try 21... $\mathbb{W}c4+!$ when his position remains difficult after 22 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}f4$. Black's loose knight on c4 becomes a big problem for him, and after 23... $b5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ $f6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26

axb5 cxb5 27 ♜b1 e5 28 ♜xb5! exf4 29 ♛b3 ♜d6 30 cxd6 a4+ 31 ♛a3 White should probably still win, but with some difficulty.

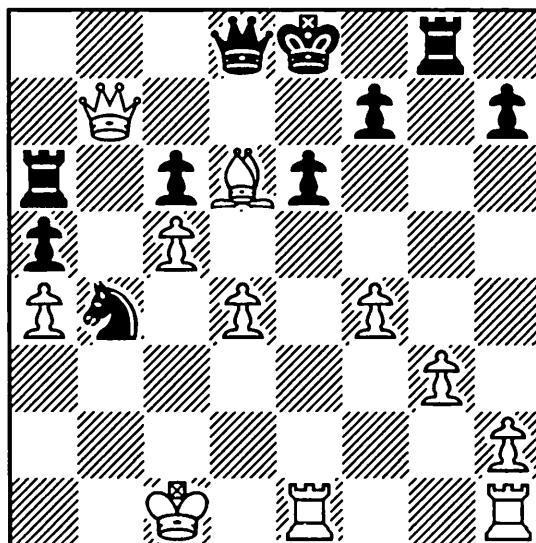
22 ♜de1!

Preserving the other rook for f1 in case Black grabs on f2.

22...♜h5

22...♜xf2?? 23 ♜hf1 ♜xh2 24 ♜xb7 simultaneously hits a6 and f7.

23 ♜xb7 ♜b4 24 ♜d6 ♜g5+ 25 f4 ♜d8



Exercise (combination alert): Work out a forced win for White. (Big hint: it's not very subtle!)

Answer: 26 ♜xe6+!

An uppercut which brings the game to an abrupt end.

26...fxe6 27 ♜xh7 1-0

After 27...♜f8 28 ♜g6+! ♛d7 29 ♜g7+! ♛c8 30 ♜xf8! White's savings account goes up by three full pawns.

Summary

If you poke the hornet's nest and play 9...♝fd7!? (instead of the safer 9...e6) you had better be heavily armed theoretically. The positions which follow are not conducive to winging it.

Game 18
Y.Shulman-C.Lakdawala
Koltanowski Memorial, San Francisco 2000

My friend, the late Tony Miles, and I had much in common:

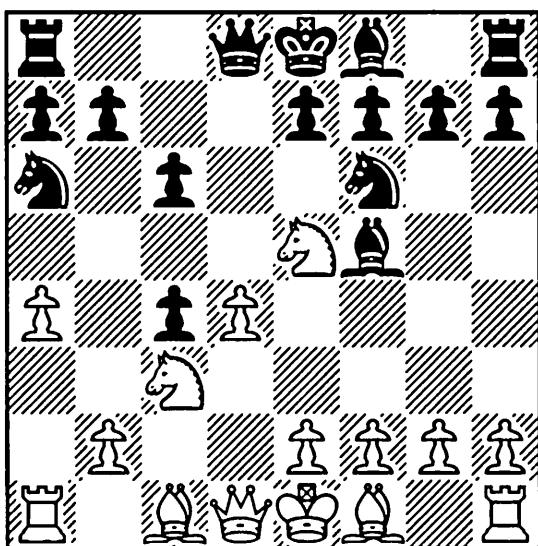
The Slav: Move by Move

1. We were both chess players with chronic back conditions. Remember the picture of Tony in chess magazines, on the hospital gurney when he played in Tilburg lying down?

2. Many in the chess world regarded us both as slightly crazy! I once read an article in the *New York Times* by Gail Collins called “The 5% doctrine”. She claimed at any given time about 5% of the population are just a bit off their rockers – not completely insane, but just considered very odd/eccentric by societal standards. I think Tony felt we were both in the bottom (or is it top?) five percentile of the population in this regard. I responded by telling him that we were not crazy at all. Instead, we both suffered from an incurable affliction – the one that parents dread the most in their children: the artistic gene which I conceded, mimics crazy!

3. We both liked the 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ line of the Slav and would often analyse the positions together over the ICC.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6!$?



The starting position of the line I call “Tony’s Big Adventure”. Black wastes no time in occupying b4 with a knight rather than his bishop.

7 e3!

The only move to play for the advantage.

Many of my opponents have played the tempting but dubious line 7 f3?!, which we consider in Game 20.

Question: Can White try a gambit to get a development lead with 7 e4?

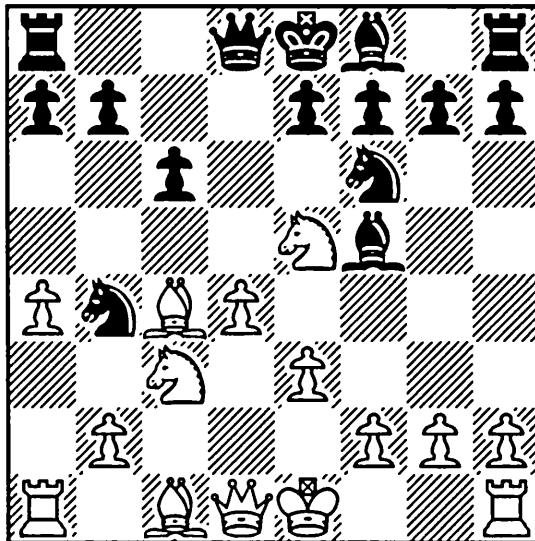
Answer: Let’s look. After 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ e6 White can regain the pawn at a high cost with 9 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ bxa6 when 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc6?$ fails to 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 11 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ picking off the g-pawn, or 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and Black takes over the initiative. If instead White continues to develop with 9 0-0 I just don’t buy that he has compensation.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

Question: What will White do about Black’s threat to fork on c2?

8 ♜xc4!

Answer: Ignore it! Mate on f7 takes precedence:



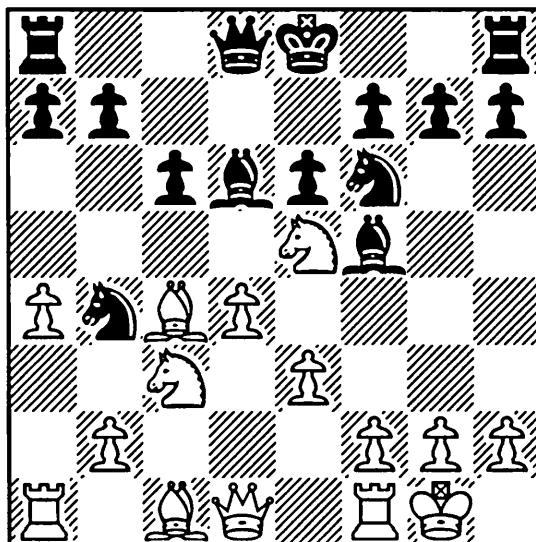
8....e6

Let's all try to avoid 8...♜c2+?? 9 ♛xc2! ♜xc2 10 ♜xf7 mate.

9 0-0

This position is the reason that Slav sources say 6...♞a6 is a dubious line. However, after Black's next move it looks fully acceptable. After about a week of analysis I convinced Tony Miles that it was playable and he began using it in his own games. It's always a gratifying feeling when you successfully proselytize a friend over to your own religion!

9...♝d6!



This is an old discarded idea which I hope to revive. 9...♝d6 adds pressure to the knight and supports a few possibilities:

1. ...♛c7 or, more likely, ...♛b8 to stay off the c-file and White's rook on c1.
2. ...c5, after which White can't take due to his hanging knight on e5.

3. ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, to add further pressure to e5.

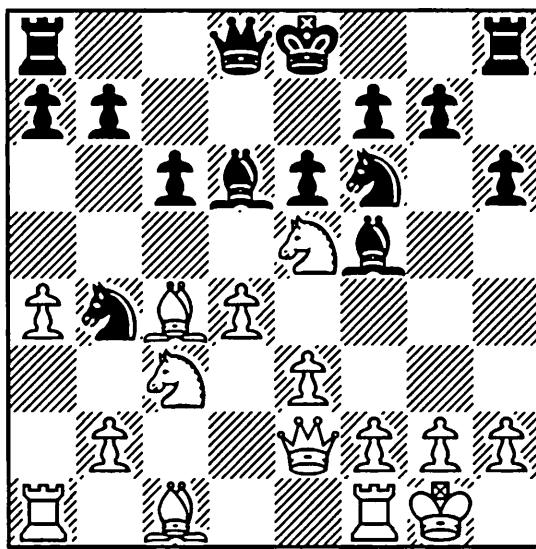
4. In some cases we may just chop the knight with our bishop, although this is not very common.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is also possible but I don't much like the passive positions Black gets after 10 f3 $\mathbb{Q}c2!$? 11 $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 13 $\mathbb{B}xa2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14 $\mathbb{B}d1$, as played in S.Karjakin-V.Kramnik, Nice (rapid) 2008. White got exactly what he wanted: space, with e4 to follow, and the bishop pair.

10 $\mathbb{W}e2$

We cover 10 $\mathbb{W}f3$ next game.

10...h6!



My favourite move in the position. It is only this move, in conjunction with 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$!, which may revive this line for Black theoretically. Black preserves his light-squared bishop and gives it a cosy corner to hide on h7.

Black has several alternatives but I don't like a single one of them!

a) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$?! 11 dx5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$?? falls into a trap: 12 e4 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 13 h3 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! threatens $\mathbb{Q}g5$ trapping Black's queen, as well as Black's loose knight on c4) 12 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13 f3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14 e4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e3$, Zhu Chen-A.Nimmy, Gibraltar 2006, with clear advantage to White:

1. Black's bishop is buried on g6.

2. White has the bishop pair and controls key dark squares.

3. Black is cramped and the queenside pawn majority is pretty meaningless right now.

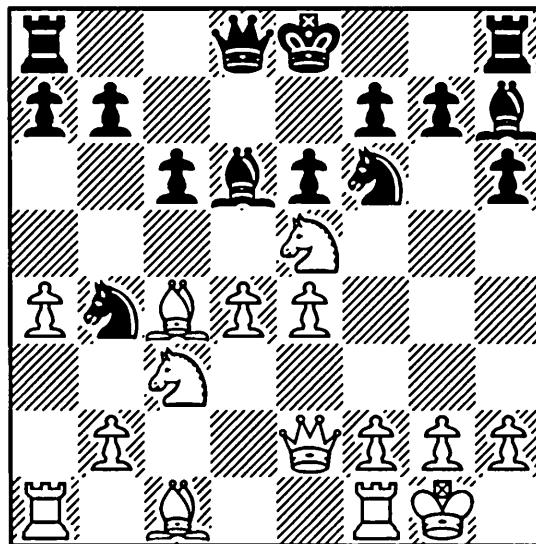
b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c2$?! 11 $\mathbb{B}a2$?! $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (if Black had gone for the draw with 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ I'm positive Grischuk would have played 12 $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 13 $\mathbb{B}b1$! and $\mathbb{B}d1$ and e4 will follow sooner or later, with an edge to White) 12 a5! (giving his rook an extra safe haven on a4) 12...0-0 13 g4! $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14 gxf5. Now Black felt compelled to make a dubious sac with 14... $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$, since 14... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! also wins material, but after 15 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{W}h4+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}g5+$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ Black's attack was at a dead end and there was no perpetual check either in A.Grischuk-J.Sriram, Khanty Mansiysk 2009.

c) 10...c5? 11 ♜b5+ ♜e7 12 e4! ♜g6 13 ♘xg6+ hxg6 14 e5 cxd4 15 ♖d1! ♜c7 16 exf6+ gxf6 17 g3 and once again Black didn't have enough for the piece, V.Menchik-M.Euwe, Hastings 1931.

d) 10...0-0?? (whatever you do, don't do this!) 11 e4 ♜g6 (11...♜xe5 12 dxe5 ♜g4 13 f3 ♖d4+ 14 ♜h1 doesn't help Black a bit) 12 ♘xg6 hxg6 13 e5 and Black can hang it up since he drops a piece for only a pawn, A.Kinsman-B.Halldorsson, Hafnarfjordur 1997.

e) 10...♝bd5?! 11 f3! ♜b6 (11...♜g6 12 e4 ♜b6 13 ♜f2! keeps control of the position for White) 12 e4 ♜g6 13 ♜b3 ♜xe5 14 dxe5 ♖d4+ 15 ♜e3! ♜xe5 16 f4 ♜c7 17 f5! and Black was getting kicked around in D.Rogozenko-S.Atalik, Eforie Nord 2000.

11 e4 ♜h7



Question: I see a powerful sac for White with 12 ♘xf7 ♜xf7 13 e5. Isn't Black getting crushed?

Answer: Not at all. In fact, I think Black actually stands slightly better after 13...♜e8! 14 ♖d1 ♜bd5 15 exd6 ♜xd6 16 g3 ♜g8 17 a5 ♜h8 18 ♜e3 b5 19 axb6 axb6 20 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 21 ♘xd5 ♘xd5, S.Atalik-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2007. White's bishops don't work all that well in such static structures.

12 ♜f4

Shulman realizes that his e5-knight could become a target later or could be undermined eventually with a well-timed ...c5, so he backs up the knight with his bishop.

12...0-0 13 ♖ad1

An aggressive decision. Such a move reveals something about Shulman's style. He keeps his king's rook where it is on f1 to prepare f4 for an attack on Black's king.

13 ♖fd1 would be a more positional approach. S.Nikolov-T.Galunov, Vidin 2009, continued 13...♜c7 14 ♖ac1 a6! 15 ♜g3 c5!? (I wouldn't make this break this early and would probably opt for 15...♜ae8) 16 ♜b3 ♖ad8 17 ♜h1 ♜h8 18 ♘xf7+!? ♜xf7 19 e5. Now instead of 19...♜d3?!, Black looks good after 19...♜c7! 20 exf6 ♜xg3 21 fxg7+ ♜xg7 22 hxg3 cxd4.

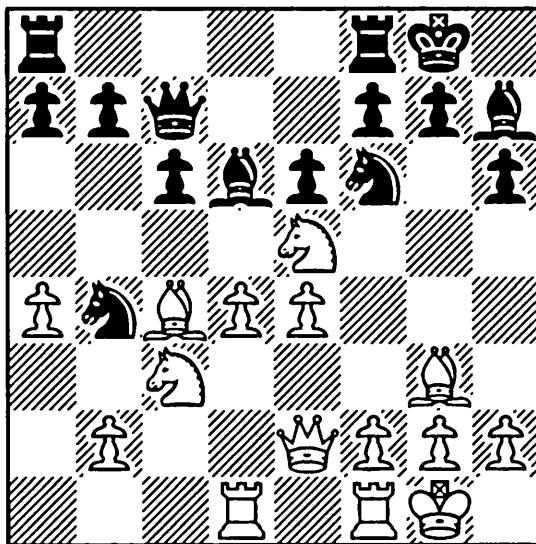
The Slav: Move by Move

13...♛c7

Now that White commits his a1-rook to d1, I don't need to worry about ♜c1 as much, so I place my queen on c7 rather than the more awkward b8-square.

14 ♔g3

Preparing f4.



Question: Your position looks bad. White enjoys a big space advantage. What is your compensation?

14...♜ae8!

Answer: I admit that White has an edge due to his space, but argue that Black's position is not nearly as bad as it looks. He has the following plusses:

1. A weakness-free position;
2. A hole for a knight on b4;
3. Potential for counterattack with ...c5; and
4. Potential for counterattack with ...f5 later on.

15 ♔h1 ♜d7

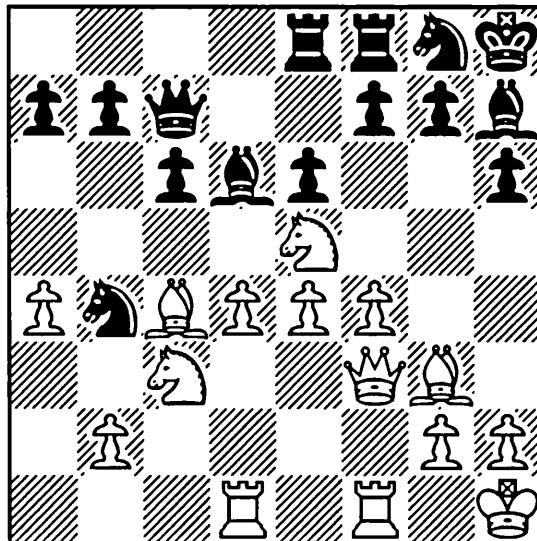
There are a couple of other plans for Black in this position:

a) Rybka points out the atonal computer move 15...♝fd5!? which may actually be worth a try since Black regains his piece after 16 exd5 exd5 17 ♔b3 f6. The second point of the move is that it clears the way for ...f6, evicting White's prize knight on e5. For example, 16 ♔b3 f6! 17 ♐g4 ♐f4 18 ♜e3 ♜b8 with a strange, yet playable, position for Black.

b) 15...a6 plans to hit back in the centre with ...c5, and after 16 f4 c5 17 ♔b3 cxd4 18 ♜xd4 b6 19 ♔c4 ♔c5 20 ♐d2 ♜b7 the pressure on e4 gives Black counterplay.

16 f4 ♔h8 17 ♜h5 ♐f6 18 ♜f3 ♐g8

How very Steinitzian! Black dreams about ...f5!



19 ♜b3

Perhaps White should just surge with 19 f5! f6 20 ♜g6+ ♜xg6 21 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 22 fxg6. At some point Black must find an effective strike in the centre with ...c5, ...e5 or ...f5.

19...f5!

The time has arrived to fight back in the centre.

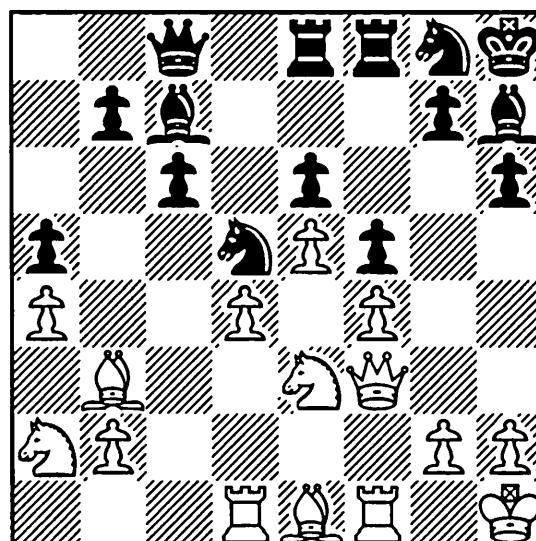
20 ♜c4 ♜b8

20...fxe4! 21 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 22 ♜xe4 ♜f6 is also playable but I considered it risky to give up so many light squares in the vicinity of my king.

21 e5

White doesn't get much either after 21 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 22 e5 ♜d7 23 ♜e1 ♜e7 24 a5 (intending ♜a4 and ♜c5) 24...♜ed5 25 ♜xd5 (25 ♜a4 may have given White a slight edge) 25...♜xd5 26 ♜xd5 cxd5. We agreed to a draw at this point in E.Yanayt-C.Lakdawala Southern Californian Ch., Los Angeles 2006.

21...♜c7 22 ♜e3 ♜c8 23 ♜e1 a5 24 ♜a2 ♜d5



Exercise: It is in White's best interest to plug up that hole on d5. But which way: chop with knight or with bishop? Assess the positions arising from each capture.

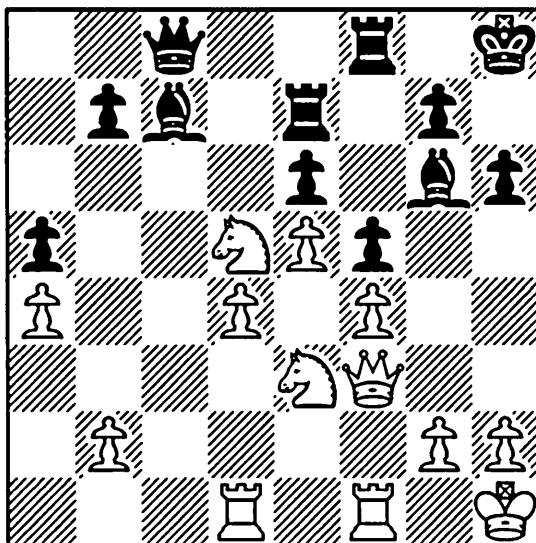
25 ♜xd5!?

Answer: Both moves are correct but lead to very different positions. GM Shulman is in a combative mood. I expected 25 ♜xd5 cxd5 26 ♜c3 ♜d7 27 ♜b5 ♜e7 28 ♜c1 ♜c6 29 ♜xc7 ♜xc7. I am used to such French-style positions. One key factor in Black's favour is that g2-g4, White's only real chance for an attack, would unleash my dormant light-squared bishop.

25...cxd5 26 ♜h4! ♜e7 27 ♜xe7

He unloads his bad bishop before Black's knight reaches c6.

27...♜xe7 28 ♜c3 ♜g6 29 ♜cxd5!?



This is somewhat mean-spirited. Shulman hits me with a cudgel he finds lying around! I thought I stood at least equal before this move. It turns out Shulman had been planning this sac to gain two powerful central passers all along.

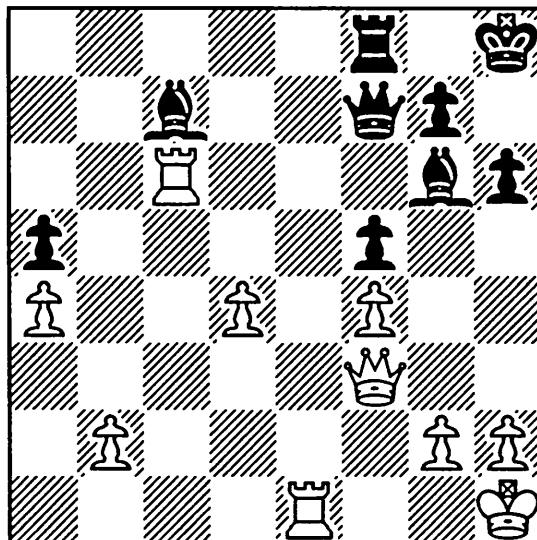
Question: And now?

Answer: All hell broke loose and I didn't have a clue if I was winning or losing! What was worse was that I had to hold at least a draw for a shot at an IM norm in this tournament.

29...exd5 30 ♜xd5 ♜d7 31 e6 ♜d6 32 ♜c1

The point of Shulman's sac. Black must cough up an exchange to ease the pressure.

32...♜c6 33 ♜e7 ♜xe6 34 ♜xc6 bxc6 35 ♜fe1 ♜f7 36 ♜xc6



Question: Could you assess the situation?

Answer: I will try:

1. The material balance: White has a rook and two pawns for Black's two bishops. Normally a fair deal, but here the black a-pawn holds back two white pawns for now.
 2. White's d-pawn is passed and if it surges forward Black can get tied down (à la Gulko-Lakdawala).
 3. Black has two bishops on the open board but right now they don't have stable perches.

Conclusion: I prefer Black but maybe the position is dynamically balanced.

36...d8 37 d5!?

He can also prevent my next move with 37 $\mathbb{W}c3!$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 38 d5.

37...~~Q~~d6!

Heading for b4 where the bishop finds a stable home, blockades White's queenside pawn majority and keeps an eye on the blockade square d6.

38 ♜e6 ♠h5 39 ♜e3 ♠b4?!

I have noted that many inaccuracies are committed in situations where you are 100% certain your move is the best! I missed a subtlety here.

Rybka gives the unnatural, but powerful line 39... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ (covering g7) 40 $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$ and White can't play 41 $\mathbb{Q}xh6+?$ in view of 41... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 42 $\mathbb{Q}he6$ (42 $\mathbb{Q}xh5??$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6!)$ 42... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ when Black is winning.

40 We5!

A powerful centralizing move, which:

1. Threatens $\mathbb{Q}xh6+$;
 2. Threatens $\mathbb{Q}c7$, which hits Black's queen on f7 and also the g7-pawn; and
 3. Adds protection to d6 where he would like to push his pawn.

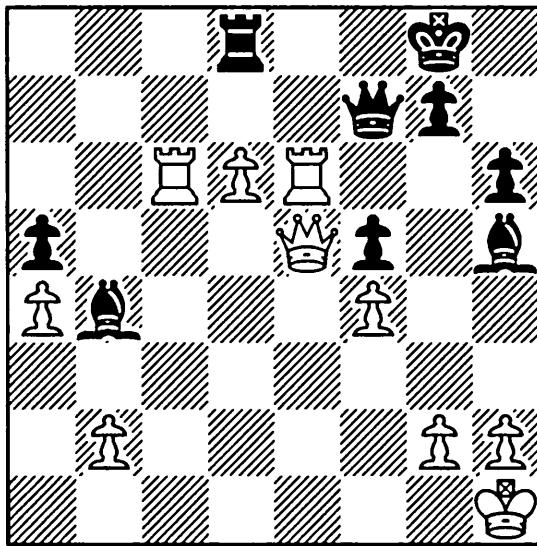
40...g8

The Slav: Move by Move

I can no longer play 40... $\mathbb{W}d7??$ because White wins instantly with 41 $\mathbb{B}c7!$.

41 d6!

The Gulko Frankenpawn re-emerges! Stay calm! Don't panic! Think happy thoughts!



Exercise: There is a plan for Black which eliminates that obnoxious d-pawn. Give yourself ten minutes to see if you can find it.

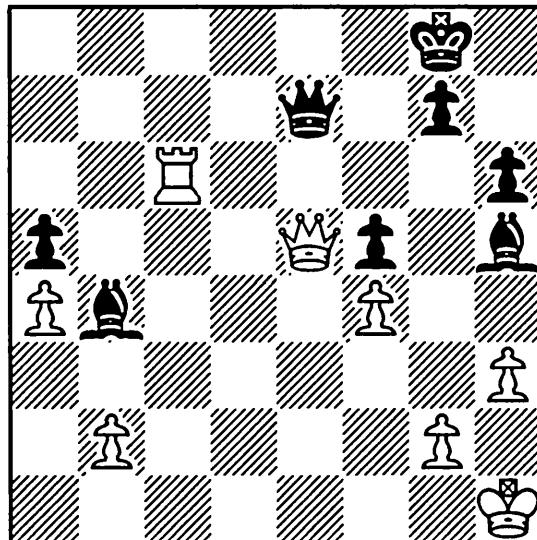
Answer: 41... $\mathbb{W}f8!$ 42 h3

Black also survives 42 $\mathbb{B}e7$ $\mathbb{W}f6!$ 43 $\mathbb{B}cc7$ $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 44 $\mathbb{B}xg7+$ $\mathbb{W}f8$.

42... $\mathbb{B}d7!$

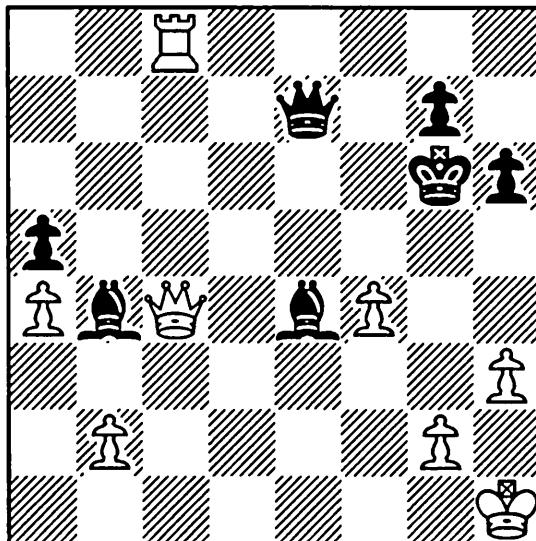
Threatening to chase the e6-rook away with ... $\mathbb{B}f7$. This threat forces White's next move which trades the deadly d-pawn for Black's f5-pawn.

43 $\mathbb{B}e7$ $\mathbb{B}xe7$ 44 dx $\mathbb{B}e7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$



Oh happy days are here again! The much feared pawn reaches the 7th, only to be declared dead on arrival. On the other hand, it turns out I'm alive and feel much better now, thank you. So please unhook the IVs and turn off the morphine drip!

45 ♜c8+ ♔h7 46 ♜xf5+ ♔g6 47 ♜d5 ♔e4 48 ♜g8+ ♔g6 49 ♜c4 ½-½



I accepted Shulman's draw offer here.

Question: Wasn't that a bit of a cowardly decision on your part?
It looks like Black stands better.

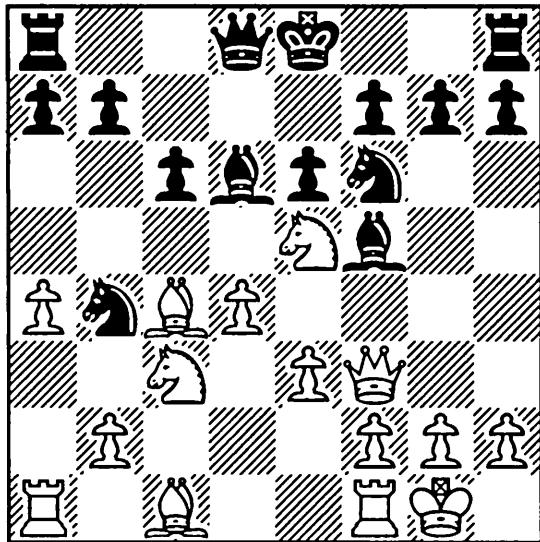
Answer: Well, yes, but I was sick of being FM Lakdawala and wanted the IM norm in the worst way. And let's not forget the talent discrepancy between me and my opponent! Black would have to take risks to win in variations like 49...♜d6 50 ♜e2 ♔f6!? (Rybka's psycho choice, not mine!), which I wasn't prepared to take.

Summary

In my opinion (and Tony's), 9...♝d6! followed by 10...h6 revives a theoretically dubious line into a fully playable weapon for Black.

Game 19
D.Garcia Ilundain-A.Miles
Escaldes Zonal 1998

Many of the suggested lines offered in this game are Tony's from our analysis sessions.
1 ♜f3 ♜f6 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3 d5 4 d4 dxс4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 ♜e5 ♜a6 7 e3! ♜b4 8 ♜xc4 e6 9 0-0 ♜d6 10 ♜f3!?



This sneaky novelty sets a trap for Black and throws Tony completely off guard. "Tony's Big Adventure" quickly turns into Tony's big ordeal!

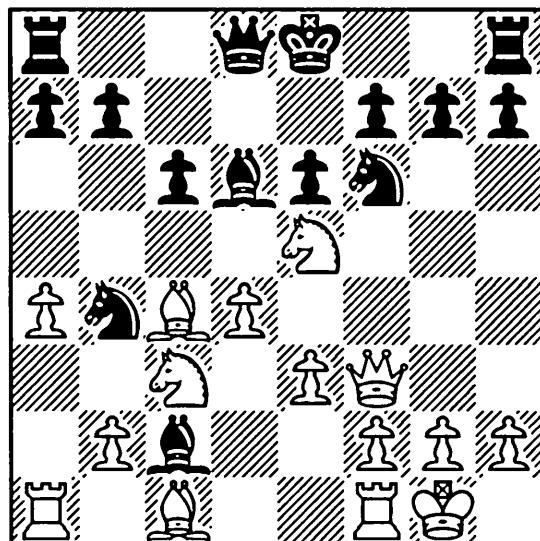
10...Bg6?!

Question: Why give up the bishop pair?
Why not throw in ...h6 to meet e3-e4 with ...Qh7?

Answer: 10...h6?? ignores White's threat: 11 Qxf7! Qxf7 12 Wxf5 winning. It is very easy to miss a shot like this, especially in the opening where many of us have our guards down and are not expecting a combination at this stage of the game.

Tony and I looked at this position and came up with a couple of possibilities for Black:

a) 10...Qc2!? is an odd move, but is actually favoured by Rybka.



The bishop prevents Wd1 and is annoyingly difficult to eject. 11 e4 Qc7 12 We3 0-0 could be a bit awkward for White. For example:

a1) 13 ♜ac1 a6! intends to play ...c5 next, without allowing any ♜b5 complications. This virtually forces White into sac'ing on f7 or playing 13 ♜g4.

a2) We deemed 13 ♜xf7? to be unsound. 13...♜xf7 14 ♜xe6 ♜e8 15 ♜xf7+ ♜xf7 16 ♜ac1 ♜g6! 17 e5 ♜fd5 is strategically lost for White, whose position is riddled with bullet holes on the light squares.

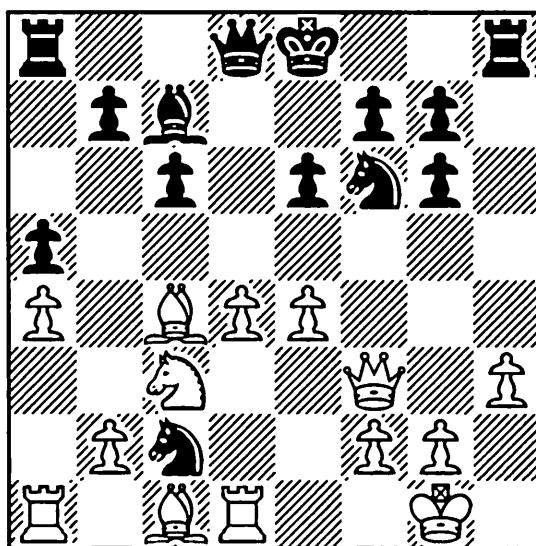
a3) 13 ♜g4 (White's best try) 13...♜d7! 14 ♜h3 ♜h8 15 f3 f5 16 ♜f2 ♜e7. Rybka thinks Black stands slightly better in this bizarre position.

b) We also analysed the strange-looking 10...♝b8!? 11 e4 ♜g6, when ...♜xe5 is in the air, as well as ...♝c2.

11 ♜xg6 hxg6 12 h3 ♜c7 13 ♜d1 a5 14 e4!

Garcia Ilundain unleashes a firestorm after this move.

14...♝c2



Exercise: Black threatens the rook in the corner and also White's valuable d-pawn. How should White react?

15 d5!

Answer: The brilliant point: White is willing to give up a rook in order to force this explosive central pawn break.

15...exd5!

15...♝d6? is fatal for Black after 16 dxе6 ♜h2+ 17 ♜f1 ♜xa1 18 exf7+ ♜f8 19 ♜e2! threatening a decisive ♜a3+.

16 exd5 ♜xa1?

Black will come to deeply regret allowing White's lawn-mowing pawn all the way to b7.

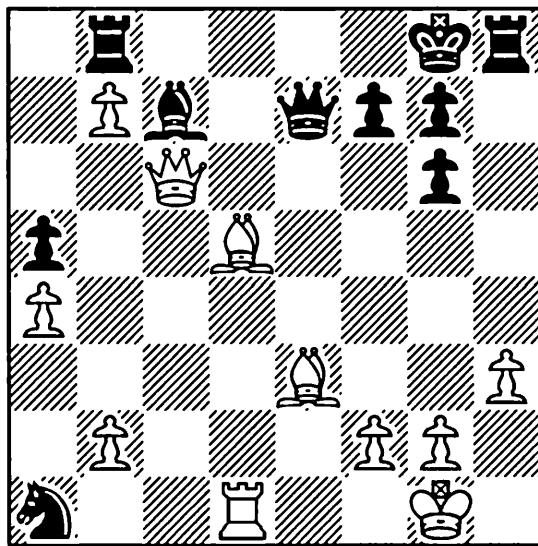
He is still all right after 16...♝d6! 17 dxc6 ♜h2+ 18 ♜f1 0-0! 19 ♜b1! (19 cxb7? ♜ad8 favours Black) 19...♜ad8! threatening ...♜d4! to set up ...♝h1 mate. I wouldn't mind taking Black at this point.

The Slav: Move by Move

17 dxc6 ♜e7 18 cxb7 ♜b8 19 ♜c6+ ♔f8 20 ♜e3!

A cute tail to his combination. The threat of ♜c5 doesn't leave Black time to extricate his a1-knight.

20...♔g8 21 ♜d5! ♜xd5 22 ♜xd5

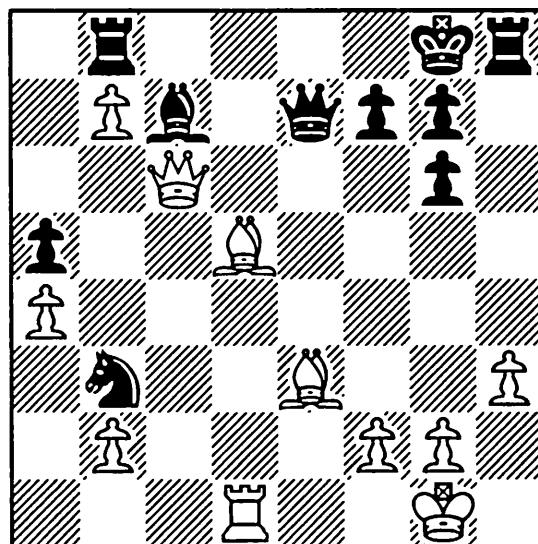


An assessment:

1. The fact Black is up a rook for the moment is a mirage. Black's knight on a1 is trapped, and when White wins the knight he ends up with two pawns for the exchange.
2. White's b7-pawn, anchored by queen and bishop, has a choke-hold on the position and ties down Black's pieces.
3. White's monster bishops roam the open board while Black's rooks make a rather unimpressive picture.

Conclusion: Tony is up the creek without a paddle and the opening stage has been a disaster for him.

22...♞b3



Exercise: Garcia Ilundain has a winning combination at this point, which he missed. Do you see it? Warning: Difficult!

23 ♜xb3?!

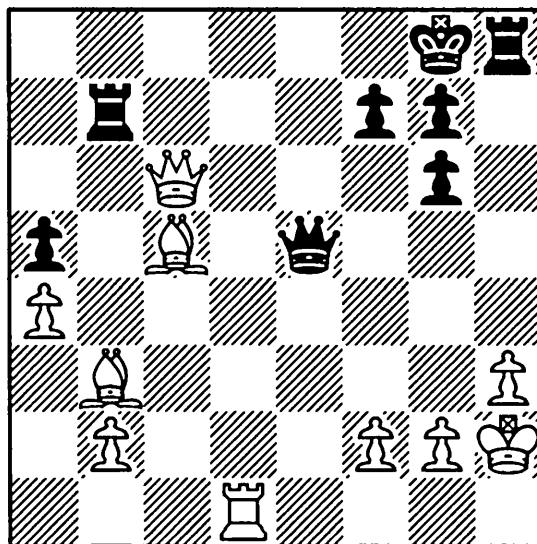
Answer: White is still winning after his chosen move; however, he missed an instant knockout punch with 23 ♜xf7+!! ♜xf7 24 ♜d7 and now:

- a) 24...♜f6 25 ♜xf6! gxf6 26 ♜xc7 g5 27 ♜a7.
- b) 24...♜f8 25 ♜xc7 and the threat of ♜a7 puts Black away.

23...♜xb7!

Clever defence, which eliminates the killer b7-pawn, but it is just not enough to save Black.

24 ♜c5! ♜h2+ 25 ♜xh2 ♜e5+



Question: Isn't White going to be down an exchange after this shot?

Answer: Garcia Ilundain had foreseen Black's last move and had a counter trick ready to keep the extra material.

26 f4! ♜xf4+ 27 g3!

No more checks. White gets to hang on to all his extra material.

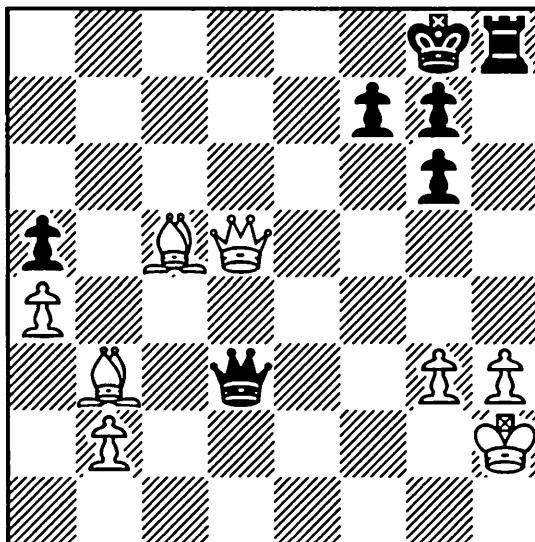
27...♜b8 28 ♜d6 ♜a7 29 ♜c5 ♜b8 30 ♜d8+!

White finds one sweet shot after another.

30...♜xd8 31 ♜xb7

Garcia Ilundain, after having navigated the complications like a maestro, now only needs to endure a few spite checks before putting away his illustrious opponent...

31...♜d2+ 32 ♜g2 ♜d3 33 ♜d5??



Exercise: Do you see a trick for Black that both GMs missed in this position?

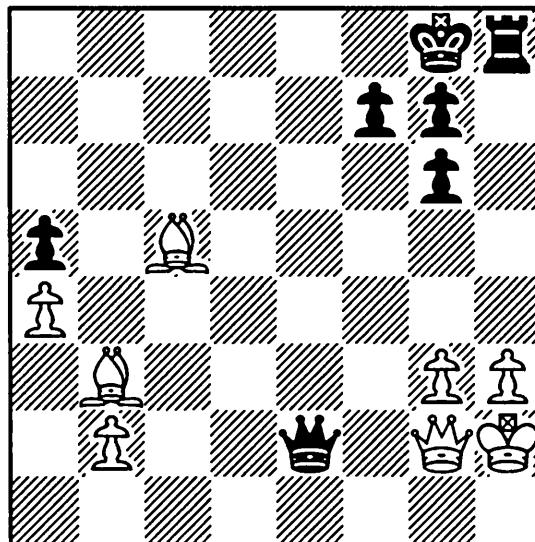
33...♛e2+??

"They have eyes but they cannot see!" A remarkable case of double blindness.

Answer: Black has excellent chances to win after the correct answer 33...♝xd5! 34 ♜xd5 ♜h5! 35 ♜xf7+ ♛xf7 36 ♜d4 ♜d5 37 ♜c3 ♜c5.

34 ♜g2??

It isn't often that an annotator gets the delightful job of slamming a pair of GMs with three double question marks in a row. 34 ♜g1! would consolidate and win.



Exercise: Black to play and win. This one isn't so hard because there is only one possible shot in the position!

Answer: 34...♝xh3+!

This time the trickster doesn't miss his chance. He pulls off a grand swindle and steals the game, like a thief who expertly cracks open a high-security safe.

35 ♕g1

35 ♕xh3 ♖h5 mate would be too horrible for words.

35...♚e1+! 0-1

Black wins the queen after 36 ♖f1 ♞xg3+! (or 36...♜h1+!) 37 ♔h2 ♖xf1 40 ♔xg3 ♖d3+, and now the bishop too!

Chess can be so unfair. Sometimes one side can make 90% of the good moves in a game and then lose on one boneheaded blunder.

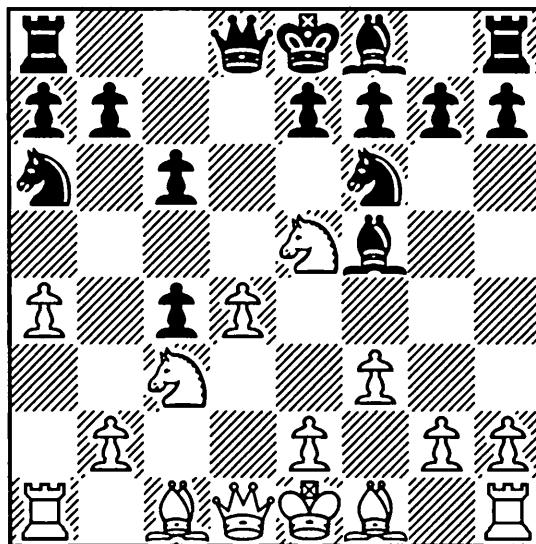
For some psychotic reason Tony was actually proud of this game. I told him his "win" was possibly the product of a diseased mind. I also added that he should burn the score sheet and that we should never speak of the game again! He simply replied with "☺".

Summary

10...♝c2 and 10...♜b8 both look like playable answers to White's tricky 10 ♖f3 idea.

Game 20
T.Radjabov-V.Kramnik
Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2007

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 4 ♜f3 dxс4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 ♜e5 ♜a6 7 f3?!



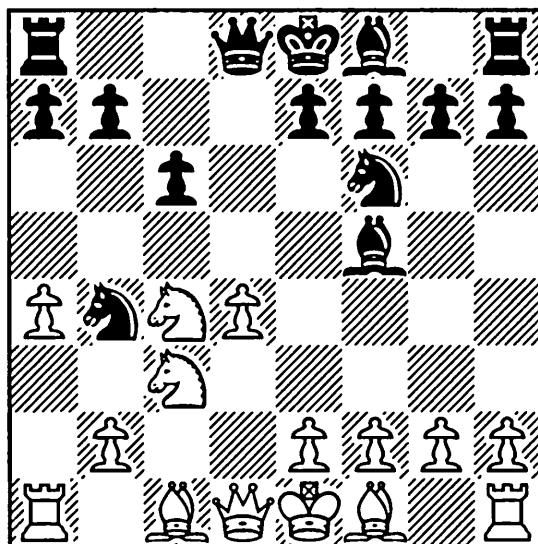
Question: This looks grim for Black! White is about to play e4 and kick our bishop around. Won't he regain his pawn with a very strong position?

Answer: On the contrary, this line is pure joy for Black. Whenever my opponents play

this move on me, the music from Beethoven's 9th, "Ode to Joy", automatically begins to play in my head. It's a chaotic, tactical line, but one where I believe the complications are clearly tilted in Black's favour.

Question: Can White win his pawn back first, and only then play for f3 and e4?

Answer: This plan is too slow and White gets into big trouble quickly after 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4?$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and now:



a) 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9 a5 e6 10 g3 was J.Cuervo-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2009. Here I played 10... $\mathbb{W}d7?!$ planning to win a pawn with ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$, but I missed the much stronger 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ overloading the defence of c2.

b) 8 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9 f3 e5 10 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is also quite awful for White.

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

White can also take a more positional route with 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 9 e4, but this is met strongly by 9...e5!. For example:

a) 10 dx5 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ and Black has chances to exploit White's weakened queenside, T.Ernst-P.Cramling, Stockholm 2001.

b) 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ exd4 11 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12 $\mathbb{W}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 0-0 $\mathbb{W}f6!$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ gxf6 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5+16$ $\mathbb{Q}h1$ fxe6 and Black may even stand a shade better due to his centralized king and strong knight on b4, I.Ivanisevic-A.Miles, Szeged 1997.

8...e5!

Black must react vigorously and accurately to counter the strategic threat of e2-e4. If not for this move, White would be dominating strategically.

9 e4

By far White's most common response. He has a couple of shaky alternatives:

a) 9 dx5?! $\mathbb{W}h4+$ (believe it or not, some of my blitz opponents have actually resigned here in the mistaken belief that they just hung a piece!) 10 g3 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 11 e4 (regaining the

piece) 11...♝e6 12 exf5 ♝xe5+ 13 ♜e2 ♜b4 14 ♔f2 0-0-0 15 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 16 f4 ♜c5+ 17 ♔g2 ♜ed3, D.Reinderman-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2005. White is already fighting for his life:

1. Black's pieces crawl through the centre like ants at a picnic.
2. White's devalued kingside pawn majority leaves him worried about further exchanges.

b) 9 ♜xe5?! ♜xe5 10 dxe5 ♜xd1+ and now:

b1) 11 ♜xd1 ♜b4 12 ♜e3 ♔e6 13 g3 ♔c5 14 ♔d2 0-0-0 15 ♜c1 ♜xd2! 16 ♜xc5 ♜xb2 and White was busted in J.Perez-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2005.

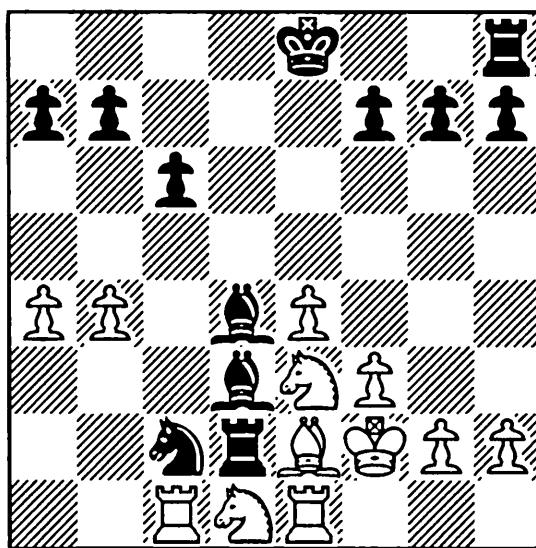
b2) 11 ♜xd1 0-0-0+ 12 ♔d2 ♔c5 13 e4 ♔e3 14 ♜b1 ♜c5 gave Black a ferocious initiative for the pawn in T.Schulte-G.Biebinger, German League 1999.

9...exd4! 10 ♜b5?!

Radjabov attempts to confuse matters in this blindfold game. White's landmine-filled alternatives include the following:

a) 10 ♜xd4 ♜b4! and now:

a1) 11 ♜e3 ♔e6 12 ♔e2 ♜c5 13 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 14 0-0 ♜b3 15 ♜b1 ♔c5 16 ♔f2 ♜c2 17 ♜cd1 ♜d2 18 ♔xd2 ♜xd2 19 b4 ♔d4 20 ♜c1 ♔c4 21 ♜e1 ♔d3 and White was in a straight-jacket, F.Caruana-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2010.



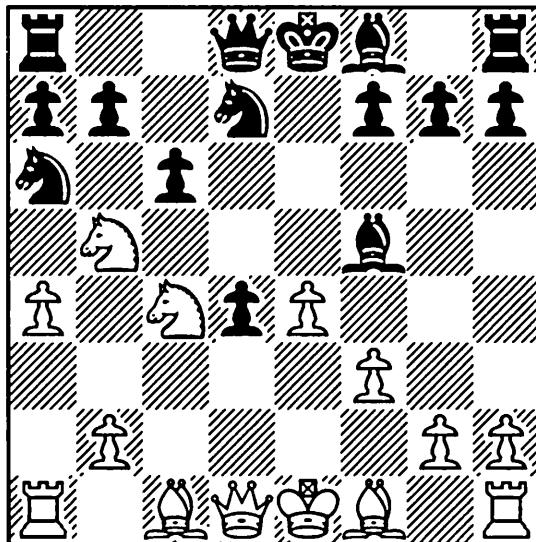
Even very strong GMs may get caught off guard with the 6...♜a6 line.

a2) 11 ♜a3 ♔e6 12 ♔e2 ♜c5 13 ♜xd8+ (if 13 ♔e3? then 13...♛a5! threatens ...♜b3) 13...♜xd8 14 ♔e3 ♜bd3+ 15 ♔xd3 ♜xd3+ 16 ♔e2 ♜xb2 17 ♜hb1 ♔xa3 18 ♜xa3 ♜c4 19 ♜aa1 b6. Black won a pawn and was on his way to consolidation, "Darnoc"-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2010.

b) 10 exf5? dxc3 11 ♜e2+ ♔e7 12 ♜d6+ ♔f8 13 ♜xb7 ♜b6! 14 bxc3 (or 14 ♜xa6 ♔h4+ 15 g3 ♜e8+ 16 ♔d1 ♜b3 mate!) 14...♜c7 and White resigned, "A-1"-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2007. What a wonderful thing it is to rest the brain! I didn't have to think out a single move in this game. It's all computer analysis.

c) 10 ♜e2 ♔b4+ 11 ♔d2 ♔e6! 12 ♜b3 (or 12 ♜xd4 ♔xc4 13 ♔xc4 ♜e5! with many hanging pieces) 12...♜dc5 13 ♜a2 ♜d3+ 0-1, I.Somogyi-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2009.

Returning to 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5$:

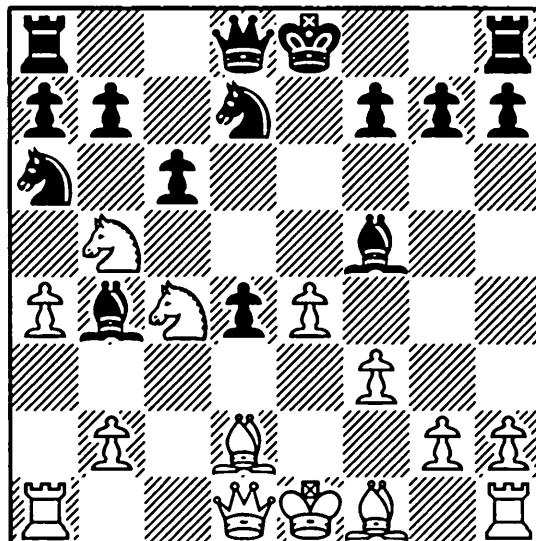


10... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$

Question: Why didn't Black accept the piece sac?

Answer: White regains his piece after 10...cxb5 11 axb5 but I'm not so hopeful about his position after 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$. White doesn't have compensation for the pawn. So 10...cxb5 isn't bad at all. Kramnik wasn't interested in a pawn. He wanted more and went after the initiative with 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$.

11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$



Exercise: White threatens a check on d6 and Black's bishop on f5 is also hanging. How do we deal with these threats?

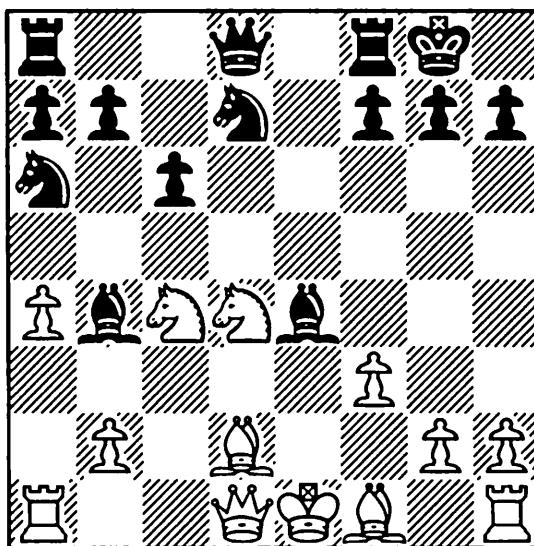
11...0-0!

Answer: Ignore them! Black accumulated a scary lead in development – so he uses it to further intimidate and remind his opponent that he will be doing the attacking in this game.

12 ♜xd4?

A bit too greedy. He had to try 12 exf5 cxb5 13 axb5 ♜xd2+ 14 ♜xd2 ♜ac5 15 ♜a3 ♜e8+ 16 ♜f2 ♜b6 with a worse but playable position for White.

12...♜xe4!

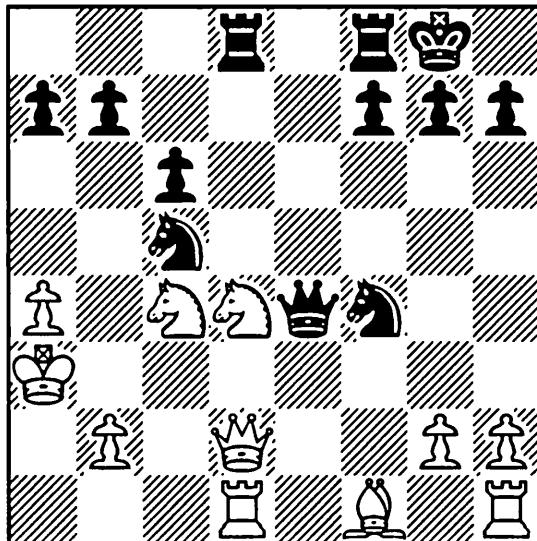


The painful truth: the 7 f3?! line is all fun and games until someone (almost always White) gets hurt! Remember our chat about intuitive sacs? Well, here is a perfect example of one. In return for the piece, Kramnik gets to bounce White's king all over the board. That is all he needs to decide to sac. Zero calculation!

13 ♜xb4?

White should have played 13 fxe4 ♜h4+ 14 ♜e2 ♜c5 15 ♜e3 ♜fe8 16 ♜d2 ♜ad8 but I still hate his position.

13...♜xb4 14 fxe4 ♜h4+ 15 ♜d2 ♜xe4 16 ♜c3 ♜d5+ 17 ♜b3 ♜c5+ 18 ♜a3 ♜ad8 19 ♜d2 ♜f4 20 ♜d1



Exercise (multiple choice): Two of the moves win; one doesn't.

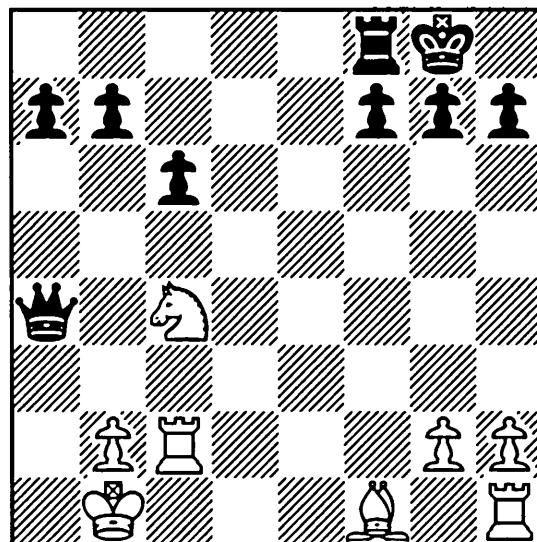
Let's see if you can do better than a blindfolded Kramnik!

- a) 20...b5, giving the c4-knight a good, swift kick; b) 20...Qce6, pinning;
- c) 20...Qfe6, pinning with the other knight.

20...Qfe6?

Answer: Not this one! Kramnik gives White some chances to squirm after his move. Both 20...Qce6! and 20...b5! are crushing blows which would have put White away in just a few moves.

21 Qxe6! Qxd2 22 Qxc5 Qe7 23 Qxd2 Qxc5+ 24 Ra2 Qb4 25 Rc2 Qxa4+ 26 Rb1



White's king looks like that exhausted guy you see returning from work on the 6:00 p.m. commuter train, who finally reaches the comfort of home. Radjabov is still alive due to

Kramnik's stumble on his 20th move. Still, it's not a pretty picture for White:

1. He is behind in material, with two minor pieces and a rook for a queen and three pawns.
2. White's king safety is in question once those queenside pawns begin to move up the board.
3. For now White lacks an obvious target.

Conclusion: White may still be busted, but a win for Black is no longer trivial.

26...b5! 27 ♜d2 c5!

The pawn is immune due to the check on d1.

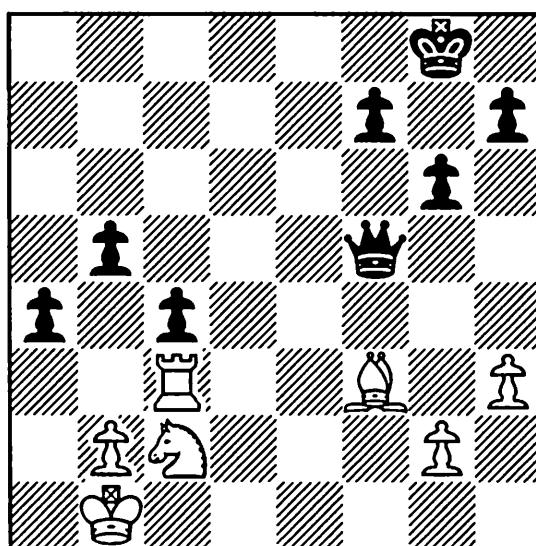
28 ♜e2 c4 29 ♜hc1 ♜b4 30 ♜f3 a5

White can do nothing but await the inevitable on the queenside with his king's friends, relatives and well wishers to comfort him during the execution process.

31 ♜a1 ♜d8 32 ♜b1 g6 33 ♜a3 ♜c5 34 ♜b1 a4 35 h3 ♜d3!

Kramnik has the position under absolute totalitarian control. White can't move a muscle without permission.

36 ♜c3 ♜xc3 37 ♜xc3 ♜f5+ 38 ♜c2



38...b4?!

Ready, fire, aim! This is starting to look more and more like a botched execution. Kramnik wins a piece for two pawns but this is possibly premature.

Question: Why would you criticize Kramnik for winning a piece?

Answer: Because now White enforces a strong blockade and Black's a4-pawn is weak. If Kramnik had been more patient he could:

1. Improve his king's position;
2. Create a passer on the kingside; and
3. Create threats on both wings.

It is highly doubtful that White could pull off the balancing act of coordinating his

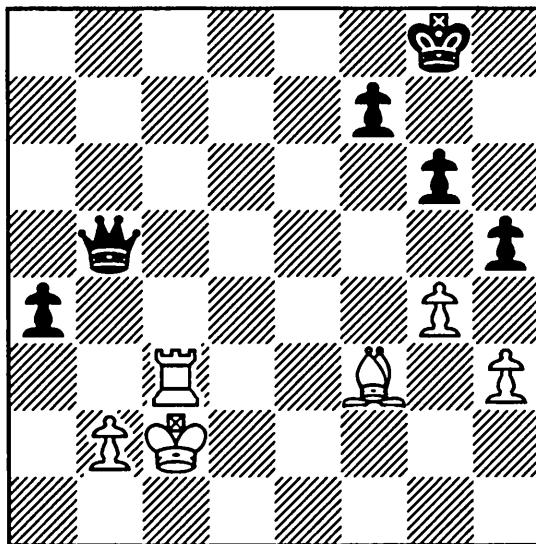
The Slav: Move by Move

pieces to deal with both wings. Remember Lasker's motto? "The threat is stronger than the execution."

39 $\mathbb{A}xc4$ b3 40 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}g5+$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $bxc2+$ 42 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}b5$

The technical stage: Black must create a passer with his kingside pawn majority.

43 $\mathbb{E}c3$ h5 44 g4!



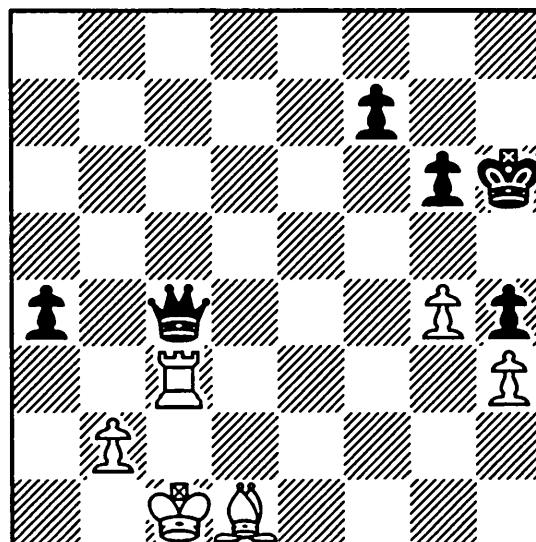
Suddenly White's pieces coordinate wonderfully in defence. His rook on the third rank is especially annoying:

1. It halts all ...a3 attempts;
2. It defends his one kingside pawn weakness on h3; and
3. The rook and bishop worry Black about a gang-up on the loose a4-pawn.

44...h4

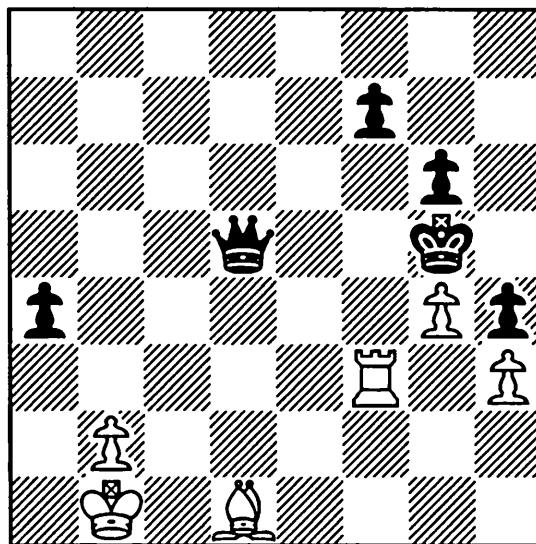
Principle: The winning side should retain as many pawns on the board as possible.

45 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 46 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}f1$ 47 $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{W}g1$ 48 $\mathbb{E}a3$ $\mathbb{W}h1$ 49 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d5+$ 50 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}c4+$ 51 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}f1$ 52 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 53 $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c4+$ 54 $\mathbb{E}c3$



The changing of the guard. White defends with great efficiency and progress for Black will not come easy.

54... ♕f4+ 55 ♔b1 ♕f1 56 ♔c1 ♔g5 57 ♘f3 ♕c4+ 58 ♔b1 ♕d5



59 ♘c3??

Oops! Well it is a blindfold game after all. White can still put up fierce resistance with 59 ♔c1.

59... ♕xd1+ 0-1

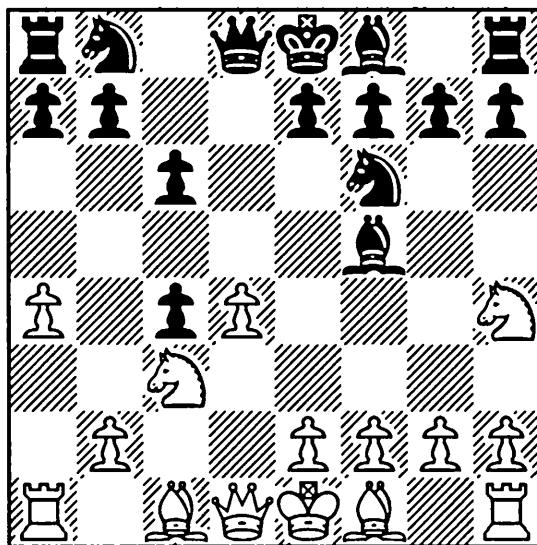
Summary

7 f3?!, the “Ode to Joy” line, is a dubious but thankfully very popular choice for White. I checked my Internet Chess Club (ICC) stats as Black and score 75% against it with many titled players on the White side. Really, I think I am being very kind awarding it a dubious mark. It probably deserves a full question mark since White must navigate a tactical minefield in order to stand slightly worse!

Chapter Three

6 h4

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 f3 4 c3 dx c 4 5 a4 f5 6



With 6 White attempts to throw us off our Slavic stride and force us into some unfamiliar positions. There are many responses Black has at his disposal. I focused on 6..., my favourite, and probably Black's most aggressive response.

In many lines White is willing to gambit his c4-pawn. These positions closely resemble the gambit lines in the Moscow Variation of the Semi-Slav. It is your job to differentiate between positions where we do hang on to the extra pawn with ...b5 and those where we give the pawn back, aiming for a ...c5 break.

In many of the positions White retreats back to f3 – that is three moves to get the knight to f3! We took only two moves for our bishop to get to d7. So in many cases we strive to reach a normal position where we are handed the gift tempo ... Admittedly, not a powerhouse square for the bishop, but hey, it's free!

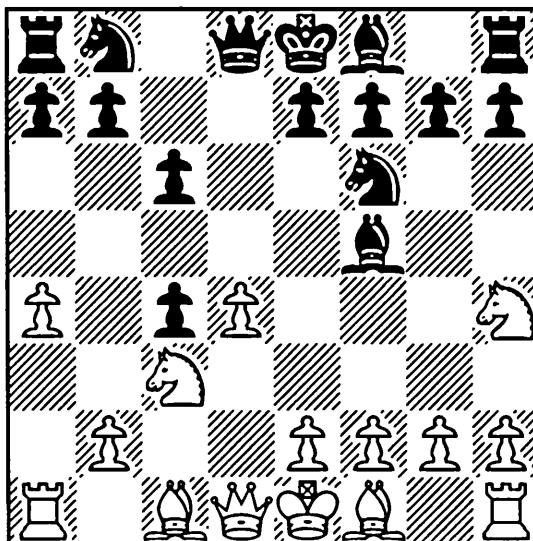
Game 21
J.Kraai-E.Bareev
 World Open, Philadelphia 2009

My friend, GM Jesse Kraai once played on the board next to me at the Far West Open in Reno. Playing against GM Nick de Firmian, I opened with 1 ♘f3 c5 2 c3! which prepares 3 d4! The Slav-hating de Firmian sat there for at least 20 minutes, realizing he was mired in a move-down Slav position. We drew the game and Jesse participated in the post-mortem analysis. Later Jesse talked about 2 c3! in a video, dubbing the new line “The Lakdawala Accelerated!”

Question: You do realize that GM Kraai was most certainly poking fun at your ridiculous 2 c3?! (and you) in his video, don't you?

Answer: I do now!

1 ♘f3 d5 2 d4 ♘f6 3 c4 c6 4 ♘c3 dxcc4 5 a4 ♘f5 6 ♘h4



I like James Vigus' name for the line: “Knight to the Right”. As a former Literature major, I'm a sucker for rhymes.

Question: What is the point of this move if Black doesn't have to give White the bishop with ...♗g6 or ...e6? When Black moves his bishop, White's knight just dangles on h4.

Answer: Here are some of the pros and cons of 6 ♘h4:

1. It's a disruptive move which attempts to throw Black out of his comfortable patterns in the Slav.
2. It's also a risky move since White may later retreat his knight to f3. For the reasons I mentioned above, in essence White may later lose a tempo for this disruption.

3. White may well be able to keep his knight on h4, backing it up with g2-g3. If Black ever attempts his ...e5 break, the knight may swoop into f5.

4. By chasing Black's bishop away, White can then play for e4 in a single shot. So in some lines it may be White up a move, not Black!

6...♝d7

For the sake of space, we will only be covering this move, my favourite and the most combative, against 6 ♜h4. Black has many other options. Here's a brief summary:

a) 6...e6 is played a lot but I'm not a fan. Why give White exactly what he wants, the bishop pair? 7 ♜xf5 exf5 8 e3 ♜b4 9 ♜xc4 0-0 10 ♜c2 g6 11 0-0 ♜bd7 12 f3 was P.Eljanov-E.Inarkiev, Elista 2008. White prepares to build in the centre. Black must counter quickly with ...c5 or risk getting overwhelmed by White's centre and bishop pair.

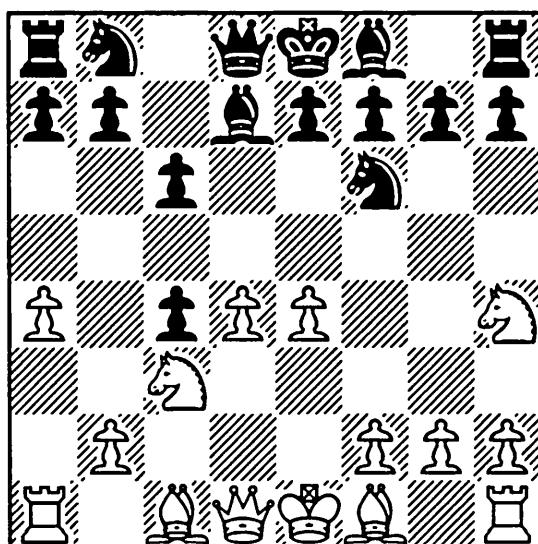
b) 6...♜c8 7 e3 e5 8 ♜xc4 exd4 9 exd4 ♜e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♜e1 was M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura, London Classic 2009. This is an isolani position with White's knight airlifted to h4 rather than the traditional f3-square. I prefer White.

c) With 6...♝g4?! Black won't allow e2-e4 without provoking a few pawn weaknesses first. M.Carlsen-B.Gelfand, Moscow 2006, continued 7 h3 ♜h5 8 g4 ♜g6 9 ♜xg6 hxg6 10 e3 e6 11 ♜xc4 ♜b4. This position is very similar to one out of the ...♝g4 line of the Queen's Gambit Accepted. White's bishop pair and space mean more than Black's solidity and hopes of overextending his opponent.

d) 6...♝g6?! is lame for Black, who gives White all he desires: the bishop pair, the e4 advance in a single move, and space. After 7 ♜xg6 hxg6 8 e4 e6 9 ♜xc4 ♜b4 10 f3 White enjoys a clear advantage.

e) 6...♝e6?!. Even a chess quality as noble as greed can be taken too far! Black agrees to tangle himself up, hoping to hang on to his extra c4-pawn. The problem is this is fake greed. Black can't hang on to the extra pawn and tangles himself up for nothing. After 7 e4 g6 8 ♜f3 h6 (to prevent ♜g5) 9 ♜e2 ♜g7 10 ♜e3 ♜a6 11 ♜e5 White regained his lost pawn and retained his space advantage in B.Damljanovic-V.Stamenkov, Struga 2005.

7 e4



The most aggressive move. White is willing to gambit a pawn in order to slam down e4 without having to wait his turn with e3 first, like the rude customer in line at the grocery store who cuts in front of us.

We examine 7 g3 and 7 e3 in later games.

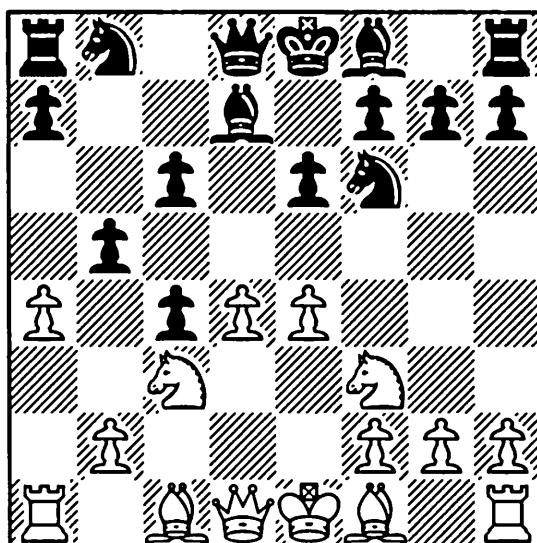
7...e6 8 ♟f3

Sidestepping ... Nxe4 .

Next game we examine 8 ♖xc4 ♗xe4 9 ♗xe4 ♜xh4. 8 g3 is also a common move at this point, and 8...♗b4 9 ♗g2 c5! leads to huge complications where Black should hold his own.

8...b5

Now the game turns into a real gambit for White.



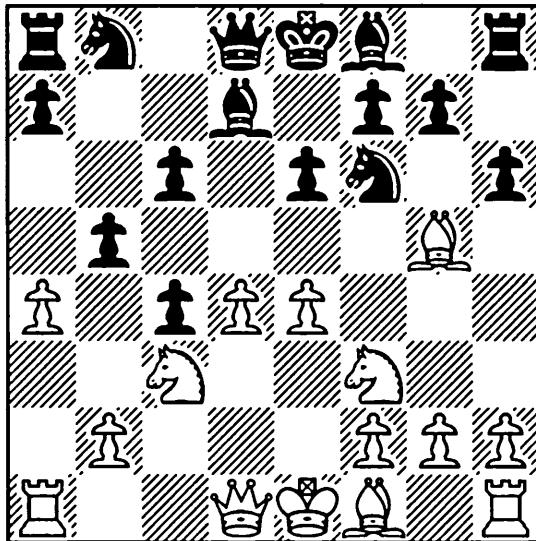
Question: What is White's compensation?

Answer: White gets compensation similar to gambit lines from the Moscow Variation of the Semi-Slav:

1. Development lead;
 2. Monster centre;
 3. Attacking chances; and
 4. Black's pieces are somewhat contorted, especially that odd-looking bishop on d7. Remember, though, the bishop got to d7 without loss of tempo for Black. An argument may be made that the bishop is better off on c8 where it may be deployed more effectively on b7 or a6. So the "free" tempo argument is still in flux.

9 ♕g5 h6

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 e5 $\mathfrak{Q}d5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathfrak{W}xe7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 13 0-0 a5 14 $\mathfrak{Q}e4$ $\mathfrak{Q}a6$ was R.Buhmann-A.Shirov, Mainz (rapid) 2005. I realize White has compensation, but I have a soft spot in my heart for Black in such Slav pawn-grab situations.



10 ♜xf6

Question: Can White try 10 ♜h4!?

Answer: I believe he can. Your idea would be a theoretical novelty – and possibly a good one. Let's look: 10...g5 11 ♜g3 b4 12 ♜b1 ♜xe4 13 ♜e5 and now there are two options:

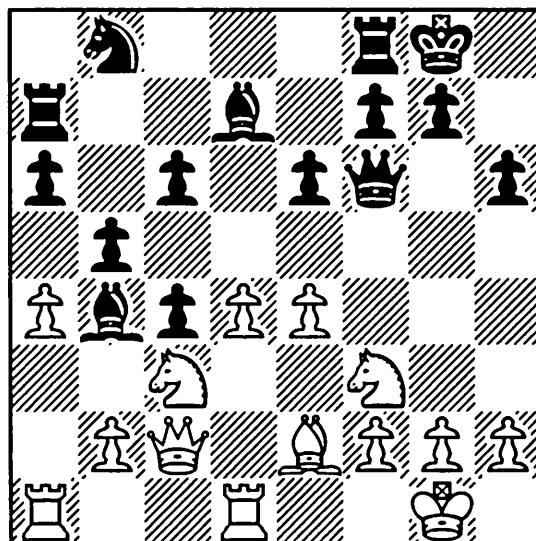
a) After 13...♜g8 14 ♜xc4 White has full compensation for his pawn. Black has ragged pawns, his king doesn't look safe anywhere on the board and his pieces are clumsy.

b) 13...f6 14 ♜c2 fxe5 15 ♜xe4 and I prefer White in the confusion.

10...♜xf6 11 ♜e2 ♜b4 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♜c2

A mellow move for someone down a pawn. Perhaps he should push more forcefully with 13 e5 ♜e7 14 ♜c2 a6 15 ♜e4 ♜a7 16 ♜d1! ♜d8 17 ♜c2 g6 18 ♜f4 ♜xc3 19 bxc3 ♔g7 20 ♜d2 ♜e8, as in A.Greenfeld-E.Bareev, Haifa 2000. Here White's attacking chances and grip on the dark squares give him full compensation for the missing pawn.

13...a6 14 ♜fd1 ♜a7!



Black's pieces are tangled up on the queenside. Bareev's move hopes to slowly transfer the rook to the centre later on.

15 b3!

Breaking up Black's domination of the queenside and opening up lines for White in that region.

15...♝xc3?

Black wants to keep the pawn, but he gets an edge if he returns it with 15...cxb3! 16 ♜xb3 ♛e7 17 axb5 cxb5 18 ♜xb5 ♜b7 19 ♜c3 a5. Black's bishop pair and passed a-pawn probably mean more than White's impressive pawn centre.

16 ♜xc3 cxb3 17 ♜xb3 ♜d8 18 ♜e3!

This multi-purpose move:

1. Covers against Black's ...c5 break;
2. Eyes Black's loose rook on a7; and
3. Prepares ideas like e5, followed by ♜d3 and ♛e4, lining up on h7.

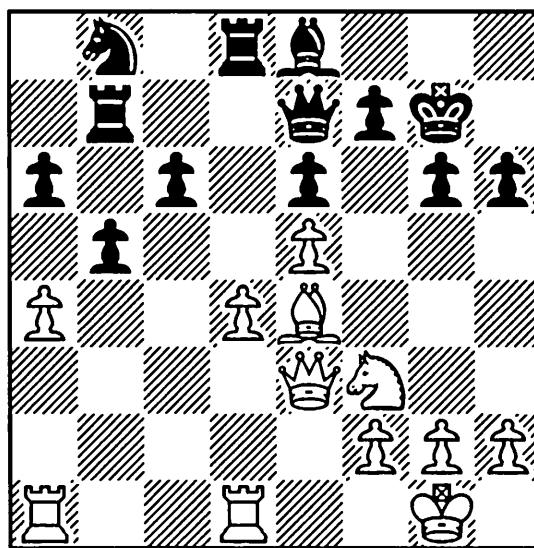
18...♜b7 19 e5 ♛e7 20 ♜d3 ♜e8 21 ♛e4 g6 22 ♛e3

Mission accomplished. Black has been induced into compromising the pawn cover around his king.

Question: Why did White play his queen to e3 instead of f4, where it is closer to Black's king?

Answer: 22 ♛e3 is more accurate since it serves the dual purpose of hitting h6 and also inhibiting Black's freeing ...c5 pawn break.

22...♚g7 23 ♜e4



Question: It looks like neither side accomplished too much in the past few moves. Is the game heading for a draw?

Answer: Equilibrium is sometimes mistaken for peaceful intent. In tense situations like

this one, the players tuck about, giving the impression of a lull in the battle when in fact an eruption is at hand.

White had a choice of two other plans:

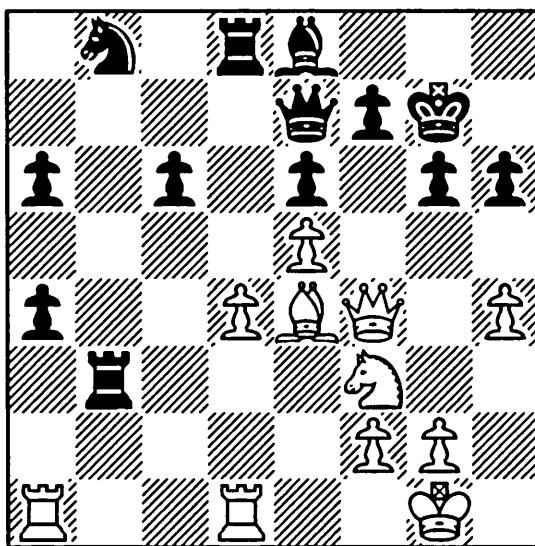
a) If White tries for a queenside bind with 23 $\mathbb{Q}dc1$, Black can break out with 23...c5! 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ bxa4 although White manages to keep some compensation for the pawn even here.

b) 23 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$? $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}ab1!$? $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 28 $\mathbb{W}d2$. White has increased his bind on the dark squares at the high cost of another pawn.

23...bxa4! 24 h4!?

Risky stuff. Jesse is willing to offer another pawn to soup up his attack on the kingside, but I doubt White generates enough on the kingside to justify this second sac. Black's advanced a-pawn turns into a serious threat now. Still, I understand why Jesse didn't settle for 24 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ c5 25 $\mathbb{Q}aa1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ when Black stands better due to his extra a-pawn.

24... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 25 $\mathbb{W}f4$



Exercise: Black is up a couple of ragged-looking pawns which look like they may soon fall. On top of it, his pieces sulk passively on the back ranks. Find a way to energize his position.

25...c5!

Answer: Following the tenets of scripture: Meet a wing attack with a central counter.

26 dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ a3 28 h5 g5 29 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5?$!

Black consolidates after 29... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 30 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 32 $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$.
30 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

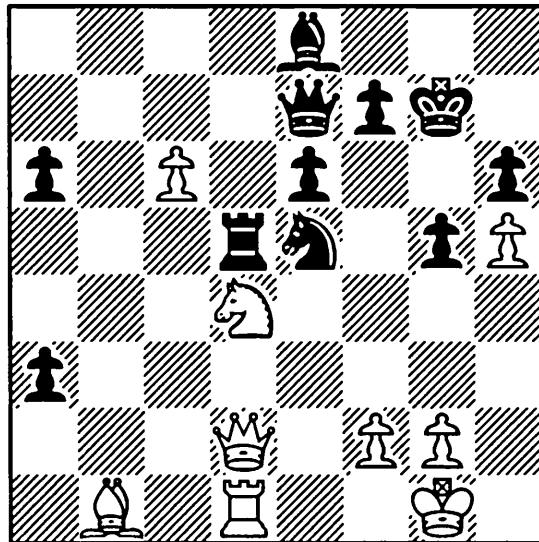
Question: Why didn't Black take on c5?

Answer: He wanted to cover his vulnerable h7-square, so Black played his knight to d7 in order to meet $\mathbb{W}d3$ with ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$.

31 c6 ♜d5?!

Black should win after 31...♜xe5! 32 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 33 ♜c2 (or 33 ♜c1 ♜c7) 33...♜c5! 34 ♜h7+ ♔f6 35 ♜xh6+ ♔e7.

32 ♜d4! ♜xe5



Exercise: Do you see what the players may have missed?
Look carefully, White has a shot.

33 ♜c2?

Answer: White missed his opportunity to get right back in the game with the unexpected 33 ♜f5+! exf5 34 ♜xd5 ♜xc6 35 ♜b3 ♜b5, with an unclear position.

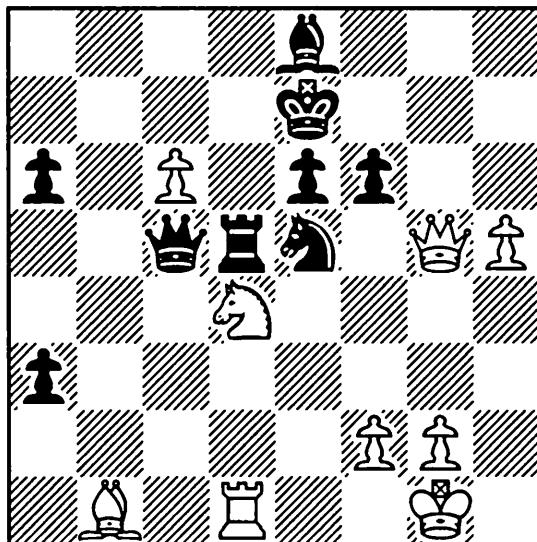
33...♜c5?

Another mistake: 33...♜f6! 34 c7 ♜d7 and now White can't play 35 c8♛? because of 35...♜xc8 36 ♜xc8 ♜g4! with too many threats.

34 ♜h7+!

Boldly rejecting the draw against his higher-rated opponent, which was his after 34 ♜xe6+ fxe6 35 ♜h7+ ♔f6 36 ♜xh6+ ♔e7 37 ♜xg5+ ♔f7 38 ♜f4+.

34...♔f6 35 ♜xh6+ ♔e7 36 ♜xg5+ f6



Exercise (multiple choice): White wins with one of the following. Which?

- a) 37 $\mathbb{W}g7+$; b) 37 $\mathbb{W}e3$; c) 37 $\mathbb{W}h4$. (Beware, difficult!)

37 $\mathbb{W}g7+?$

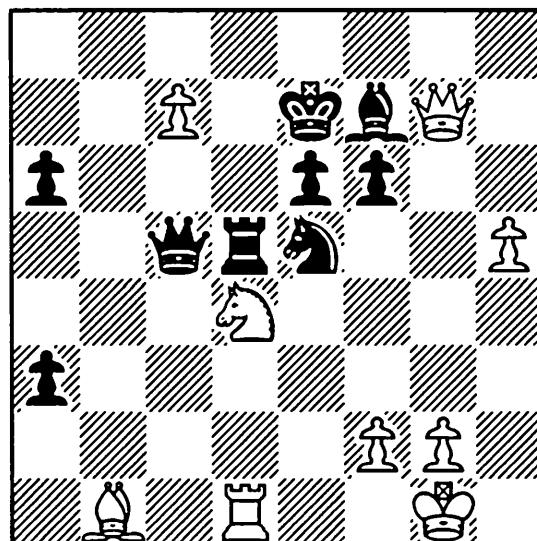
Jesse misses the winning line! The position degenerates into a Lord of the Flies situation where order breaks down and blunders crop up with ease.

Answer: White wins after 37 $\mathbb{W}e3!$, no matter how Black responds:

- a) 37... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}c1!$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 39 $\mathbb{W}xa3+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 40 $c7$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 41 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 42 $c8\mathbb{W}$.
- b) 37... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 38 $h6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 39 $h7$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 41 $f4!$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 42 $g4!$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 43 $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ wins the queen.

37... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 38 $c7?$!

White fights harder with 38 $h6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 40 $c7$ $\mathbb{W}d1+$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}c1$ 42 $h7$ $\mathbb{W}xc7!$ 43 $\mathbb{W}g3$. Instead, 43 $h8\mathbb{W}??$ runs into 43... $\mathbb{Q}g4+!$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}h2$ mate.



38...♞f3+!

A pretty computer shot!

39 gxf3

After 39 ♔f1 ♜xd4 40 ♜xd4 ♛c1+ 41 ♔e2 ♜xd4+ 42 ♔d3 e5 White's king cannot survive.

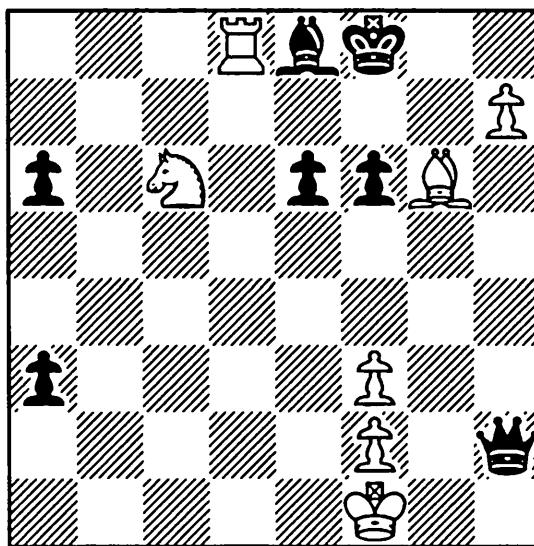
39...♝g5+ 40 ♜xg5 ♛xg5+ 41 ♔f1 ♛c5 42 h6 ♛xc7 43 h7

White's last hope is in his advanced h-pawn.

43...♛h2 44 ♜c6+!

Jesse comes very close to pulling off a miracle comeback. Bareev, however, had undoubtedly worked out the hidden win for Black at this point.

44...♔f8 45 ♜d8+ ♔e8 46 ♛g6



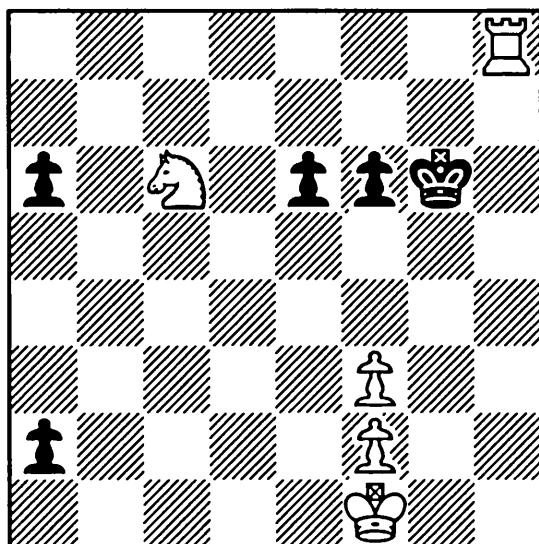
Question: What just happened? It looks to me like White, who threatens to take on e8 followed by a check on g8, is winning!

Answer/Exercise: It certainly looks that way. Black has yet another combination up his sleeve. Do you see it? Just look at the remainder of the game to see how Bareev played it.

46...♔g7! 47 ♜xe8 ♛xg6! 0-1

White hangs it up.

After 47...♔xg6 48 h8♛ ♛xh8 49 ♜xh8 a2 we reach a galling situation (*see following diagram*). White, now up by a rook and knight, watches helplessly as Black promotes his upstart a-pawn.

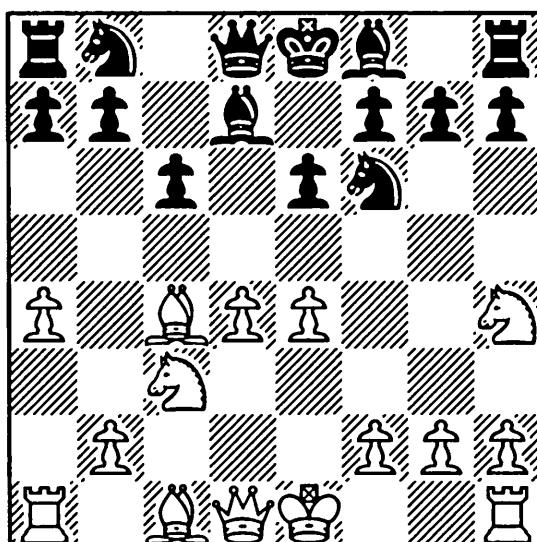


Summary

The novelty 10 $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ may be an improvement for White. His compensation for the pawn looks similar to what he normally gets in the gambit lines of the Moscow Variation of the Semi-Slav.

Game 22
P.Eljanov-A.Giri
European Club Cup, Ohrid 2009

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7 e4 e6 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc4!?$



Question: I see a combination for Black. Doesn't 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ work?

Answer: Yes and no. It works, and I hate to tread upon your celebratory mood, but it's not a combination on Black's part; it's a deliberate sac on White's.

8...♘xe4

Taking advantage of White's dangling horse on h4.

9 ♖xe4 ♕xh4 10 ♔f3!

Preparing ♔f4. The queen also eyes the sac square f6 and may later transfer to g3, where it hits g7 and d6.

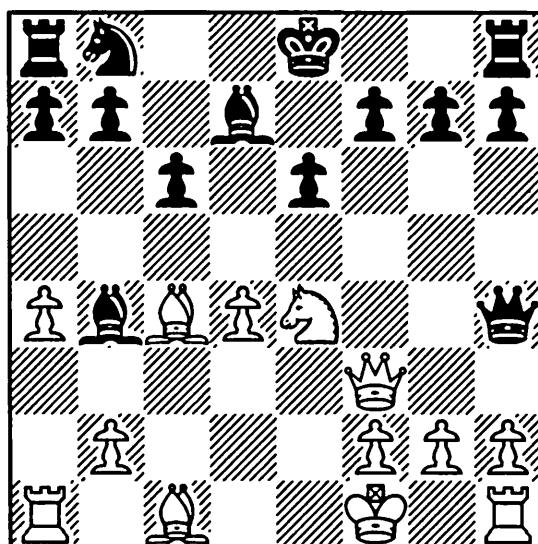
Other weaker tries are:

a) 10 ♖g5?! ♔e7?! was G.Forintos-B.Ivanovic, Bar 1977, but instead of 10...♔e7?! Black can take over the initiative with 10...♗b4+ 11 ♔f1 c5! 12 ♔e3 cxd4 13 g3 ♕h6 14 ♕xd4 ♖c6 15 ♕e4 ♕g6.

b) 10 ♕e2?! ♔b4+ 11 ♔f1 h6, C.Duchhardt-A.Koch, German League 2003, leaves White much less aggressively placed than in the game continuation.

10...♗b4+ 11 ♔f1

The starting position for the sac.



Question: Does White really have full compensation for a pawn?

Answer: Let's assess the plusses for both sides.

For Black:

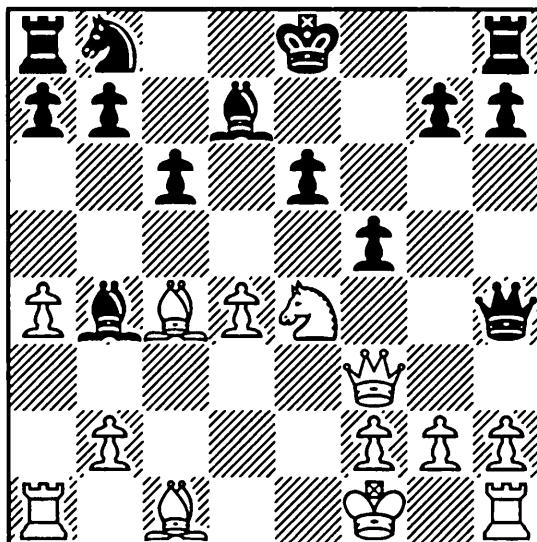
1. He stands a pawn up.
2. His structure is solid, and he owns d5.
3. White has lost his castling rights, which could leave the h1-rook out of the game for quite some time.

For White:

1. He has a development lead.
2. There's a threat of ♔g5 trapping the queen. This threat increases his development lead.
3. He dominates on the dark squares and threatens to infiltrate d6 later on with a piece.

4. He virtually has a written guarantee of an attack to come on Black's king.

Conclusion: Black underestimates White's compensation at his own peril! We must tread very carefully for the next 10 or 20 moves, or risk punishment of biblical proportions!
11...f5!?



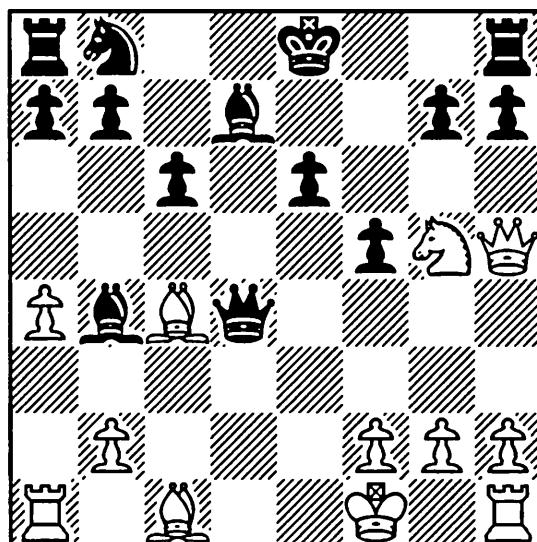
Attempting to disrupt the smooth flow of White's initiative.

11...h6 is a calmer and possibly better approach. **12 ♜f4 0-0 13 ♜e5** and now:

a) **13...c5?** (it is remarkably easy to get slaughtered in this line if Black is not on high alert) **14 ♜f6+!** gxf6 (Black is also in desperate trouble after **14...♔h8 15 ♜h5 f6 16 ♜f4!**) **15 ♜xf6 ♜c6 16 ♜xh4 ♜xf3 17 gxf3** and White had a powerful attack, despite the absence of queens, in D.Doric-B.Esen, Novi Sad 2009.

b) **13...f5! 14 ♜g3** looked fine for Black in V.Borovikov-V.Kupreichik, Pavlograd 2000.

12 ♜g5 ♛xd4 13 ♛h5+



Exercise: Is 13...g6 forced?

A.Greenfeld-T.Burg, Groningen 2009, instead went 13 ♜b3 ♜a6?! 14 ♜e3 ♜d6 15 ♜d1 ♜e7 16 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 17 ♜xe6 ♜c7 (17...♜d8 18 ♜e2! also looks very unpleasant for Black) 18 ♜d7+ ♜f8 19 ♜xf5 and Black was struggling. But Rybka insists Black is okay after 13...a5!. 13...♜d8!

Answer: The force is strong in this one! Giri comes up with an original defensive idea to run his king over to the queenside through heavy traffic.

Having looked at young Anish Giri's games, I can tell you he is a strategic genius – very rare. Prodigies are normally tactics/calculation wizards with kindergarten strategic skills. Giri possesses an innate feel for where his pieces go. Here he comes up with the radical but strong plan of seeking refuge on the queenside.

Question: Why did he deliberately forfeit his right to castle?

Answer: Black doesn't quite equalize after 13...g6 14 ♜e2 0-0 15 ♜xe6+ ♜xe6 16 ♜xe6 ♜d5! 17 ♜xf8! (if 17 ♜c7? ♜f7 18 ♜xa8? ♜e8 19 ♜e3 f4 Black gets a ferocious attack) 17...♜xf8 18 h4! ♜d7 19 h5 ♜f6 20 hxg6 hxg6. Black has a pawn for the exchange, but White probably stands a shade better.

14 ♜e2!

Question: Can White win the exchange with 14 ♜f7+?

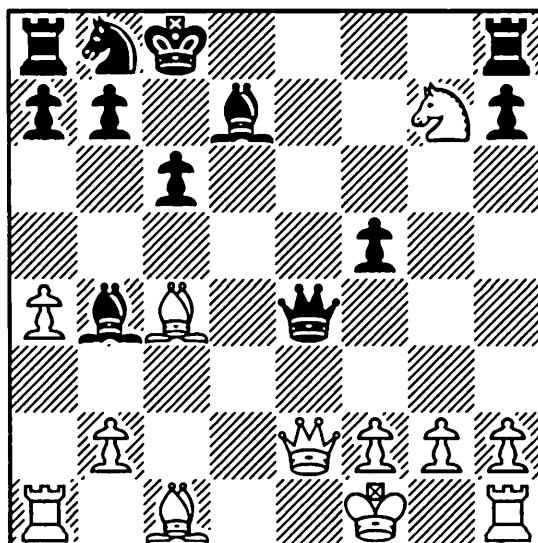
Answer: It wouldn't be wise: 14...♚c8 15 ♜xh8 ♜xc4+ 16 ♜g1 ♜c2 is very strong.

1. Black has two healthy pawns for the exchange.
2. Black may unravel soon with ...b6 and ...♚b7.
3. White's rook on h1 remains unemployed for quite some time.

Question: Well then, how about 14 ♜xe6?

Answer: No good. Black can force a pawn-up ending after 14...♜d3+ 15 ♜g1 g6!.

14...♚c8 15 ♜xe6 ♜e4 16 ♜xg7



Exercise: This is a critical position. How will Black develop his queenside?

16...♝a6!

Answer: Like this!

17 ♜xe4

Black is not afraid of:

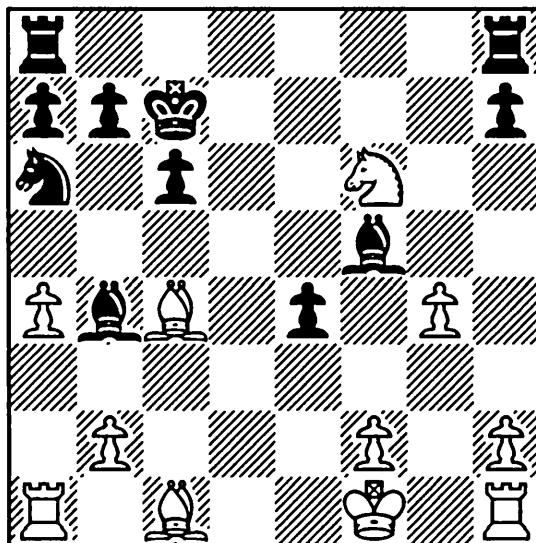
a) 17 ♜xa6? bxa6 18 ♜xa6+ ♔c7. His nasty bishops and safer king give him more than enough compensation for the pawn.

b) 17 f3 ♜xe2+ 18 ♔xe2 ♜d6 and Black is on his way to equality.

17...fxe4 18 ♜h5 ♔c7?!

Black equalizes after 18...♝c5! 19 h4 (if 19 ♜f4?! ♜d3! and Black takes the initiative) 19...♔c7.

19 ♜f6 ♜f5 20 g4!



20...♜hf8?

Alert: Kinderblunder! He will come to regret handing over the bishop pair.

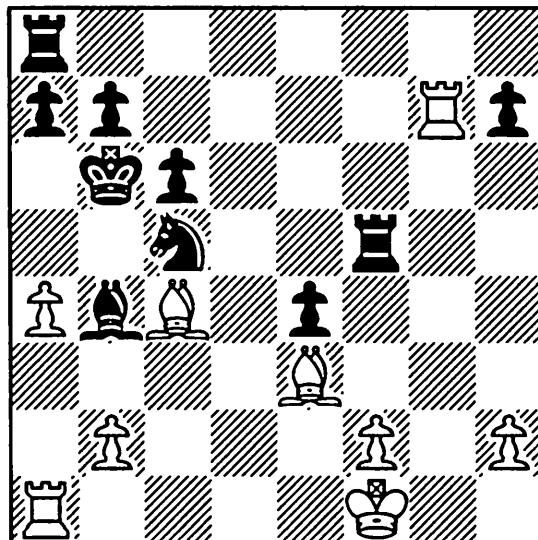
Black should avoid adventure and play the mundane 20...♜g6 21 ♜f4+ ♜d6 22 ♜xd6+ ♜xd6 23 ♜xa6 bxa6. His active king and pressure on b2 give him equal chances in the ending.

21 gx f5 ♜xf6 22 ♜g1 ♜xf5 23 ♜g7+ ♛b6

White has all the chances after 23...♛d6 24 ♜g5! ♜e5 25 ♜h4 ♜c5 26 ♜d1! ♜f3 27 ♜xh7 ♜d3 28 ♜g3+ ♜d4 29 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 30 ♜c1 ♜d8 31 ♜xb7 a5 32 ♜f4.

24 ♜e3+ ♜c5?

24...♜c5?? 25 a5 mate is an unappealing alternative. The only move is 24...♛a5, but 25 ♜xb7 is still good for White.



Exercise: This is Pompeii, just moments before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Find the forcing sequence which wins two pieces for a rook. (Beware, difficult!)

Answer: 25 a5+!

First, a deflection.

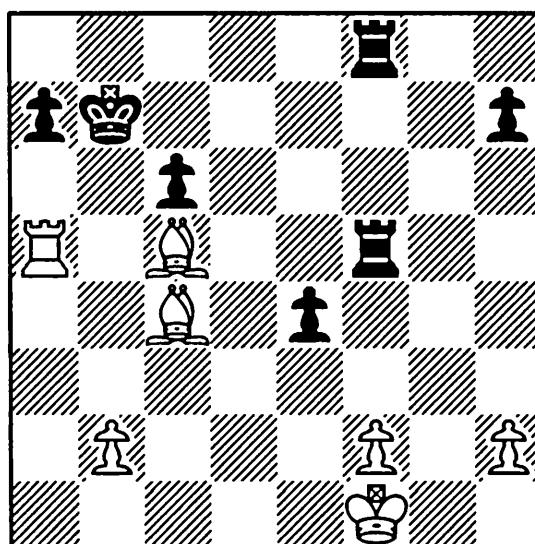
25...♜xa5 26 ♜xb7+!!

Next, a mega deflection with a rook sac!

26...♚xb7 27 ♜xa5

The point: Black's knight falls as well. 27...♝b6 28 b4 doesn't help Black a bit.

27...♞af8 28 ♜xc5



28...♜xf2+

Otherwise it's time to resign. Giri finds the only path to continue the game toward the inevitable. Really, his odds of drawing this game against a 2700+ rated player are near zero.

29 ♖xf2 e3 30 b3 ♖xf2+ 31 ♔g1 ♖c2 32 ♖e5 ♖c3 33 ♔g2 ♔b6 34 h4 a5 35 ♖g8

An alert move which takes away Black's threat of ...a4.

35...h6 36 ♔f3 e2+ 37 ♔xe2 ♖h3 38 ♖e4

The game is over.

38...♔c5

Another bitter ender. Perhaps GM Giri made a careful study of the collected games of my 9-year-old bitter ender student Jerry!

39 ♔d2 ♖h2+ 40 ♔c3 ♖h3+ 41 ♔b2 ♖h2+ 42 ♔a3 ♖h1 43 ♖f7 ♖a1+ 44 ♔b2 ♖f1 45 ♖c4+ ♔b5 46 ♖g6 ♖f2+ 47 ♔c3 ♖f3+ 48 ♖d3 ♔b6 49 ♖g4 ♖h3 50 ♔d4 ♖h2 51 ♖f4 ♖h3 52 ♖e4 ♖g3 53 h5 ♖h3 54 ♖e5 ♖h4+ 55 ♖e4 ♖h3 56 ♔c4 ♖h4 57 ♖e6 ♖xh5 58 ♖xc6+ ♔a7 59 ♖c5! 1-0

Jerry would disapprove and argue the resignation was premature.

Summary

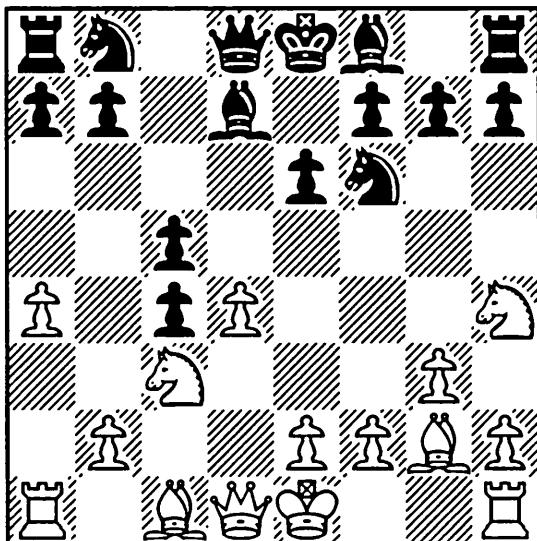
11...h6 may improve on Black's play in this game. Don't underestimate this gambit. We probably have to endure a living hell for the extra pawn. Let's all agree not to flinch!

Game 23
T.Nyback-V.Ivanchuk
European Championship, Antalya 2004

1 d4 d5 2 ♔f3 ♔f6 3 c4 c6 4 ♔c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♖f5 6 ♔h4 ♖d7 7 g3?!

The trouble with this is that White gets a Catalan where his knight on h4 makes little sense. Black's bishop on d7, on the other hand, is perfectly placed for a Catalan structure.

7...e6 8 ♖g2 c5!

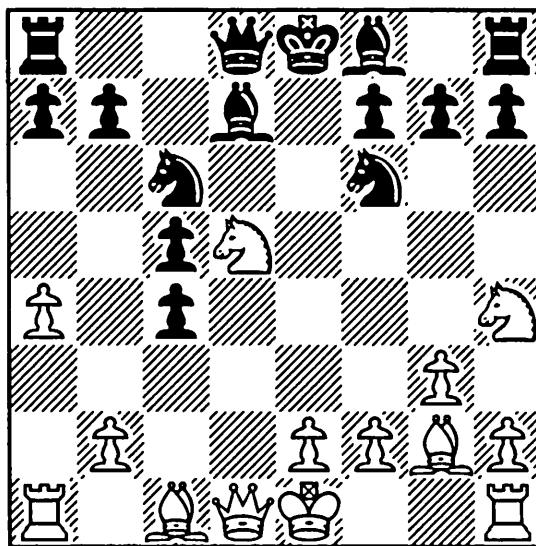


Question: You are kidding, right? Why can't White take the exchange?

Answer: Black gets a terrific position if White grabs the exchange with 9 ♜xb7 ♜c6 10 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 11 0-0 cxd4, as in "Gail"-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2008. Black has obvious compensation with the towering bishop along the a8-h1 diagonal and the rolling central pawns.

If White declines the exchange with 9 ♜xb7 ♜c6 10 ♜xc6+ ♜xc6 11 dxc5 ♜xd1+ 12 ♜xd1 ♜xc5, as in "Cortex"-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2005, Black is ahead in development, has pressure down the b-file and chances to exploit the weakened White queenside.

9 d5 exd5 10 ♜xd5 ♜c6



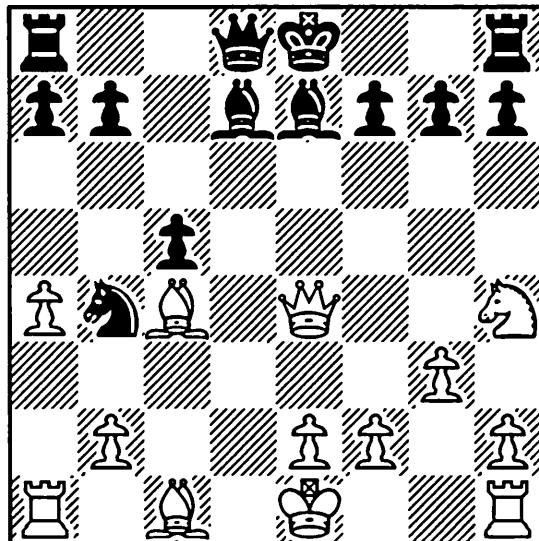
We reach a Catalan-like position, except:

1. White's knight is offside on h4 and vulnerable to ...♜e7;
2. White must deal with that gaping hole on b4; and
3. If White tries to immediately regain his lost pawn on c4 he falls slightly behind in development.

11 ♜c2?

The wrong way to go after the pawn. After the stronger 11 0-0 ♜xd5 12 ♜xd5 ♜e7 13 ♜f3 ♜f6 White was only a smidgeon worse due to that hole on b4 in D.Harika-E.Tairova, Heraklion 2004.

11...♜xd5 12 ♜xd5 ♜b4 13 ♜e4+ ♜e7 14 ♜xc4



Question: This looks like a blunder. Black has a bishop skewer on the long diagonal. Wouldn't it have been better for White to take on b7?

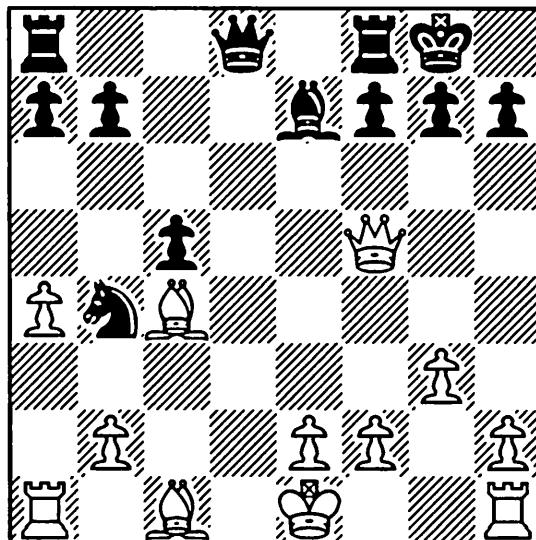
Answer: 14 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ doesn't get White off the hook: 14... $\mathbb{B}b8$ (threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 15 0-0 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ leaves Black with bishop pair, light-square control and strong pressure down the b-file.

To answer the other part of your question, 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ doesn't win the rook on h1. However, your move is good for Black, who has the following startling idea: 15 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ (this move is probably why Ivanchuk rejected 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, but...) 15... $\mathbb{W}d1+!!$ (out of nowhere!) 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 0-0-0+ (he escapes the pin with check) 17 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$. In this position White's king is uncomfortably placed and his queenside still needs tending. All well and good, but the line Ivanchuk chose in the game is at least as strong as this:

14...0-0! 15 $\mathbb{Q}f5!$?

White is willing to fall even further behind in development. The alternative is equally depressing: 15 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 17 $gxh4$ $h5!$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $\mathbb{W}d4!$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 20 $axb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 21 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ and White has a miserable position.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xf5$



Exercise: Black leads in development.
What is his best method of exploiting this lead?

Answer: 16...♝d4!

Black creates immediate central confrontation.

17 ♜d3

Question: Why did White give up his good bishop?
Shouldn't he try 17 ♜b3?

Answer: White's position deteriorates quickly after 17...c4 18 ♜d1 c3 19 ♜e3 ♛f6!.

17...♝xd3+ 18 ♛xd3 ♛b4+!

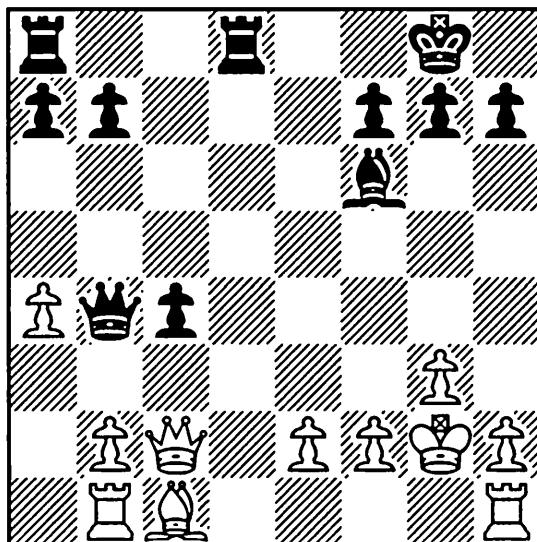
Ivanchuk is not satisfied with a superior ending and keeps queens on the board. After 18...♝xd3 19 exd3 ♜ad8 20 ♜e2 ♜f6 Black obviously stands much better, but is this enough to take the full point? That is in question.

19 ♜f1

Question: Why not 19 ♛d2 instead of 19 ♜f1?

Answer: With 19 ♜f1 White castles by hand. Loss of castling rights isn't a big deal in this position and he may want to keep his rook on h1 just in case he can later stir up trouble with h2-h4. 19 ♛d2 would be similar to the game after 19...♜f6 20 0-0 ♜fd8 21 ♜c2 c4.

19...c4 20 ♜c2 ♜f6 21 ♜g2 ♜fd8 22 ♜b1



Exercise (multiple choice): It is obvious that Black has the advantage. Now what? Which is the best plan for Black? a) 22... $\mathbb{R}ac8$, intending ...c3; b) 22... $\mathbb{R}d7$, intending to double rooks; or c) 22...a6, intending to activate his queenside pawn majority.

Answer: 22...a6!

Activating his queenside pawn majority is Black's best plan in this position.

Exercise (homework assignment): Look up and study the game Marshall-Capablanca, New York (matchgame 23) 1909. In that game the players faced a very similar situation, and it's perhaps the greatest example of how to utilize a pawn majority in all of chess literature. Look at how Capa mopped the floor with Marshall in the ending and then compare his technique to Ivanchuk's.

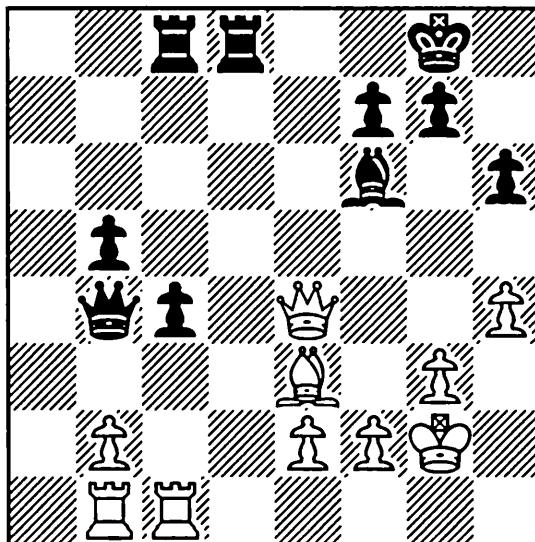
23 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Question: Why doesn't White try to activate his kingside pawn majority?

Answer: The reason White refuses to return fire is that pushing his own majority is much too slow and it creates holes in White's position. Let's look: 23 e4?! $\mathbb{R}d3$ 24 f4? $\mathbb{R}ad8$ and Black already threatens ... $\mathbb{R}d2+$.

23...b5 24 $\mathbb{R}hc1$ h6 25 h4 $\mathbb{R}ac8$ 26 axb5 axb5 27 $\mathbb{W}e4$

Dreaming about an attack starting with g4 and g5. White may as well try since he has nothing better. If he sits around, Black simply creates a passer on the queenside and uses it to paralyse White.



27...♝b3!

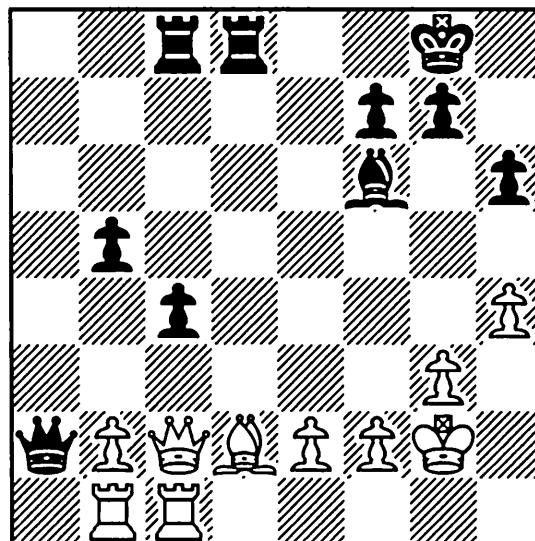
The end of White's attack! Ivanchuk threatens to take on b2 with his bishop, followed by ...c3. White has little choice but to retreat. He could try the desperate 28 ♛f5 ♖xb2 29 ♜c2, but after 29...g6! 30 ♜cxb2 gxf5 31 ♜xb3 cxb3 32 ♜xb3 ♜d5 33 ♜xh6 ♜c4 that passed b-pawn should eventually cost White his bishop.

28 ♜c2 ♜a2!

Nice! ♜a1 isn't possible. Black clears the path for his queenside pawns.

29 ♜d2?

This innocent-looking move loses.



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and win. Capa found a similar shot against Marshall. Do your homework and carefully study that game. It is well worth the effort.

Answer: 29...c3!

The wrecking ball falls on c3. This crushing shot wins material in all lines.

30 ♜xc3

30 bxc3 ♜xd2 wins a piece, while after 30 ♜e3 cxb2 31 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 32 ♜xc8+ ♜h7 White must give up a rook for the b2-pawn.

30...b4 31 ♜a1 ♜d5+ 32 e4

Finally activating his kingside pawn majority! It comes about 15 tempi too late.

32...♜e6 0-1

White can't squirm out after 33 e5 ♜d5+ 34 ♜h2 ♜xe5 35 ♜d1 ♜c5.

Summary

The 7 g3?! line leads White into an inferior Catalan. Make sure to look up the Marshall-Capa game. Please don't make me beg!

Game 24

I.Ivanisevic-I.Sokolov

Croatian Team Championship, Sibenik 2008

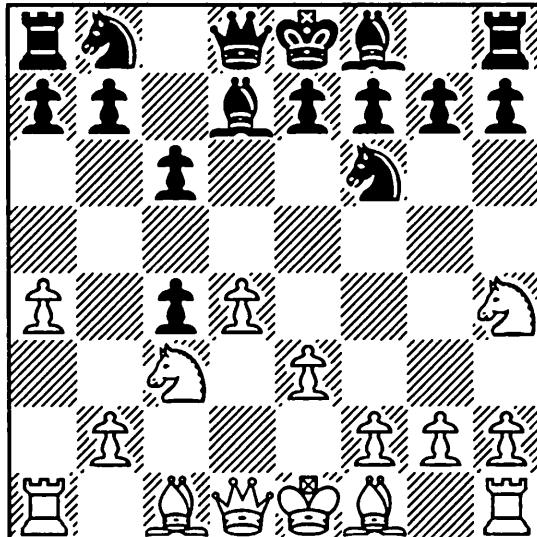
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 ♜h4

White has a couple of inferior alternatives:

a) 6 ♜g5 ♜e4! 7 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 was S.Bermudez-S.Collins, Bled Olympiad 2002. White found himself in an awkward situation since 8 e3 ?? drops a piece to 8...♜xf3 and 9...♜a5+.

b) 6 g3 ♜a6! 7 ♜g2 ♜b4 8 0-0 ♜c2 intending ...♜b3. White has a hard time regaining his pawn. If he is unable or unwilling to regain it, then he lacks full compensation.

6...♜d7 7 e3



White isn't interested in dramas involving risky pawn sacs. He simply regains his pawn.
7...e6!

The simplest move. Black doesn't take the bait with ...b5, and instead plans ...c5 turning it into a Queen's Gambit Accepted with the inclusion of Black's bishop on d7 and White's knight on h4. This should be in Black's favour since White will almost certainly retreat the knight at some point to f3. This will mean Black's ...♝d7 is for free.

Question: What if Black hangs on to the pawn with 7...b5?

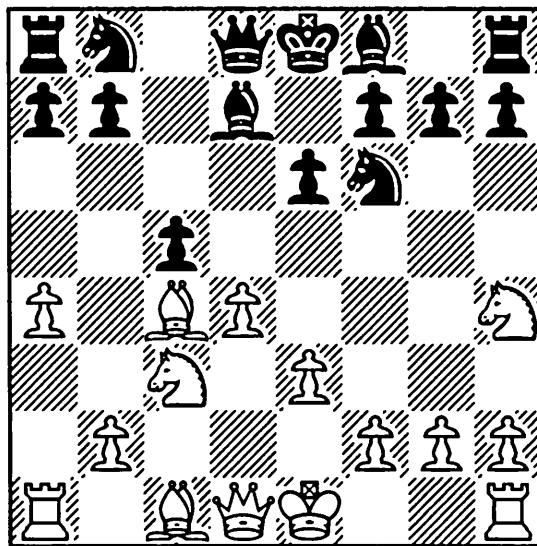
Answer: This time Black gets an inferior version of the pawn grab. For example, 8 ♜f3 e6 9 ♜e5 a5 10 ♜f3! (with latent threats on a8, c6 and f7) 10...♜a7 11 g4! h6 12 h4 ♜b4 13 ♜d2 ♜e7 14 g5 hxg5 15 hxg5 ♜xh1 16 ♜xh1 ♜d5, A.Moiseenko-M.Gagunashvili, Istanbul 2003. Now White got a strong attack after 17 g6, but 17 axb5! would have been even better.

8 ♜xc4

8 ♜f3 should be answered by 8...c5!. Oscar Wilde claimed that the best way to deal with temptation was to yield to it. In this position he would be wrong. Black should stay clear from the greedy temptation to hang on to his pawn with ...b5?!

After 8 ♜f3 c5!, K.Arkell-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2010, continued 9 ♜e5!? (the idea is to pick off the bishop pair) 9...♝c6 10 ♜xc4 cxd4 11 exd4 ♜e7 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 14 d5 ♜xd5 15 ♜xd5 exd5 16 ♜xd5 ♜ad8 17 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 18 ♜e3 a6 19 ♜fd1 ♜fd8 20 ♜xd7 ♜xd7. Black follows up with ...♝f6. His development lead and control over b4 nullifies White's bishop pair.

8...c5



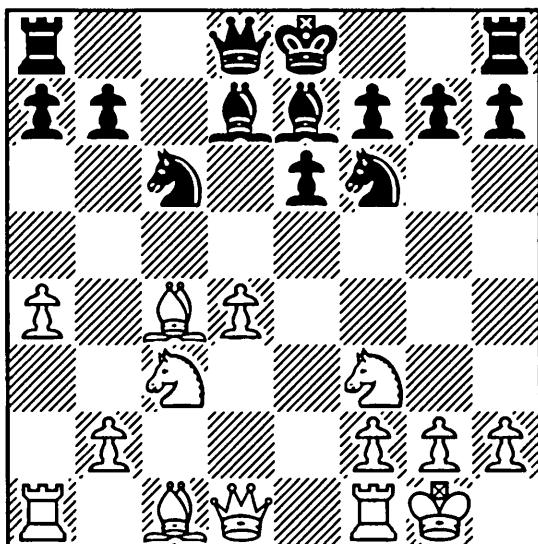
9 0-0

After 9 ♜f3 cxd4 10 exd4 ♜c6 11 d5?! (White shouldn't play this before he castles) 11...exd5 12 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 13 ♜xd5 ♜b4+ 14 ♜d2 ♜e7+ 15 ♜f1 ♜e6 16 ♜e4 ♜xc4+ 17 ♜xc4 ♜xd2 18 ♜xd2 0-0 White found himself seriously behind in development in K.Arkell-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2009.

9...♝c6 10 ♜f3 cxd4 11 exd4 ♜e7

Black must rush to complete his development.

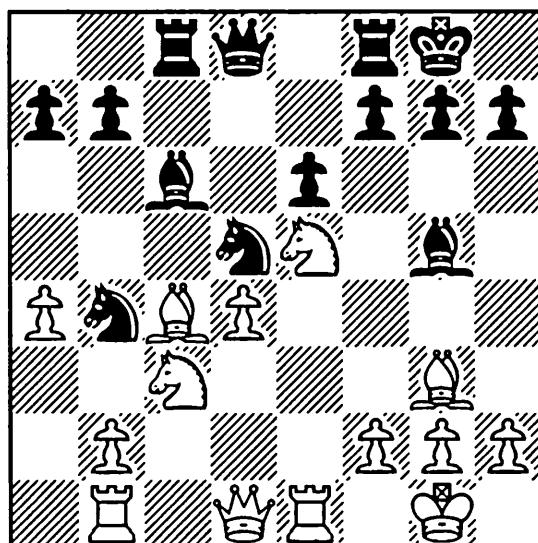
I tried 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4?$ but Black just doesn't have time to establish the blockade on d5. Punishment followed swiftly: 12 d5! (Principle: open the position when ahead in development) 12...exd5 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ and I found myself down a pawn, S.Shipov-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2010.



12 d5

Question: I noticed White is always rushing to liquidate his isolani in this line. Why not hang on to the isolani and go for an attack?

Answer: If White plays a normal isolani position, he stands worse since he has trouble whipping up an attack. The reason: Black has access to ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$. For example, 12 $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0-0 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{R}c8$ 15 $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 17 $\mathbb{R}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and Black has reached an ideal anti-isolani setup:



1. d5 is firmly blockaded.
2. Black knights sit happily on b4 and d5.
3. White doesn't have a trace of the traditional attacking options he normally enjoys in queen's pawn isolani positions.
4. White's queenside is shakier than in normal isolani positions.

Conclusion: The time loss White incurred with ♜h4 earlier in the game, added to Black's access to b4, ensures Black gets a favourable isolani setup.

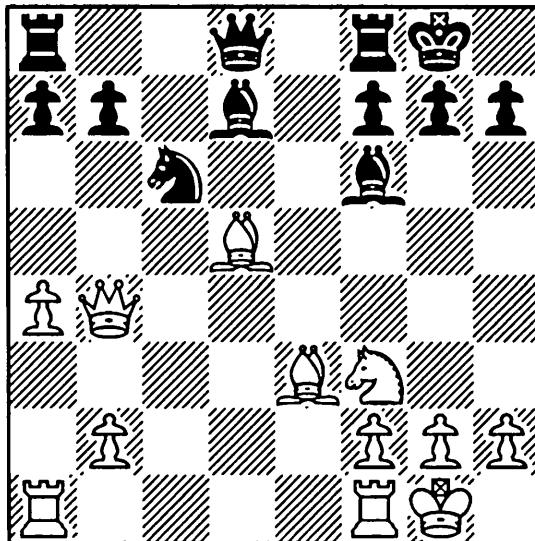
12...exd5 13 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 14 ♜xd5

14 ♜xd5 0-0 15 ♜e3 ♜f6 16 ♜d4? (16 ♜fd1 ♜e6 17 ♜e4 was better) 16...♜xd4! 17 ♜xd4 ♜e6 18 ♜xd8 ♜axd8 19 ♜xe6 ♜xd4 20 ♜h3 ♜b4 left White on the defensive trying to cover his weaknesses on the queenside in K.Arkell-C.Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2010. Keith Arkell and I are attempting to break a world record with the number of blitz games testing this line!

14...0-0 15 ♜e3 ♜f6 16 ♜b3

White hopes his tiny development lead may come to something.

16...♜a5! 17 ♜b4 ♜c6!



Question: Is b7 poisoned? I assume there is some kind of queen trap or tactic if White takes it.

Answer: b7 isn't poisoned, and indeed, White can take it. However, he gets nothing at the end of the line 18 ♜xb7 ♜b8 19 ♜a6 ♜b4! 20 ♜c4 ♜xd5 21 ♜xd5 ♜c7 22 ♜fc1 ♜b7. Black regains his pawn with a good position.

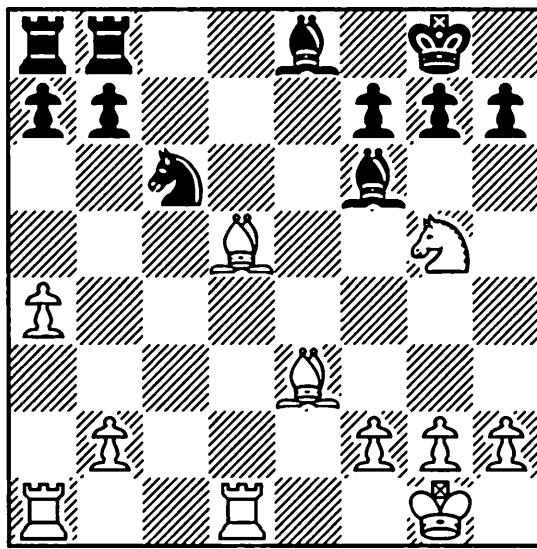
18 ♜f4 ♜b8? 19 ♜xb8

Question: Shouldn't White try to keep queens on the board to whip up an attack?

Answer: He can keep queens on with 19 ♜c4, but after 19...♜e7 20 ♜e4 ♜f5 White has neither attack nor pressure.

19...fxb8 20 g5! e8 21 fd1!?

GMs never seem to defend anything which is attacked! White boldly offers b2 hoping he has enough compensation for the pawn with file pressure and superior piece placement. The best players carry a deep feel for initiative, which they value over material in most cases. Look at the players in your chess club. Notice that the masters tend to sac for initiative, while the lower-rated players have a tendency to defend any time something is attacked.



Exercise: Now from our viewpoint: should we grab the pawn or not?

21...xb2!

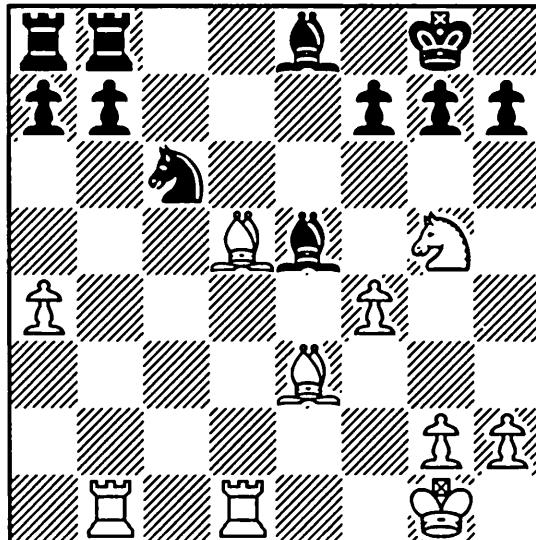
Answer: Why not? It's an ending and it's a pawn!

In this particular case, I believe White may have gone too far by offering the b-pawn. I realize he has practical chances, and you can argue that about 80% of Tal's sacs are refuted by computers. But here, looking at the remainder of the game, I just can't find a path for White to fully justify this pawn sac. The point is, it is a different matter to sac a pawn in an ending than it is to sac one in the middlegame.

Still, I can't bring myself to give 21 fd1 a dubious mark because there is, after all, the practical aspect to the game. As Alekhine once said, "Chess is not all logic."

22 Rab1 e5 23 f4?!

Thrashing about, White misses the correct plan. He should continue with pure piece play with 23 de4!. This forces Black to worry about dc5 and also keeps Black's bishop out of b4.



Exercise: Come up with a clear plan for Black.
Find the best method of nullifying White's pressure down the b-file.

Answer: 23...♝c3!

Black's plan is to set up a blockade on b4, by playing ...♝b4 and ...a5. This will defuse White's pressure down the b-file.

24 ♜e4 ♛b4 25 f5

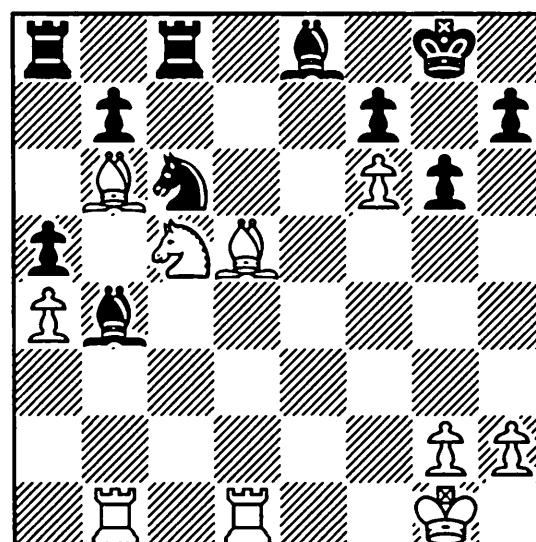
He hopes to jam the pawn on f6 to worry Black about his back rank some day. Black may be untangling after 25 ♜c5 a5 26 ♛f3 ♛xc5 27 ♛xc5 ♜d8 28 ♜a1 ♛c6.

25...a5 26 f6 g6 27 ♛b6

More accurate was 27 ♛f4! ♜d8 28 ♜c7 ♜d7 29 ♛b6.

27...♜c8 28 ♜c5?

White still has a touch of pressure after 28 ♜bc1.



Exercise (multiple choice): White's 28 $\mathbb{Q}c5?$ walks into a small combination.
Which move should Black play? a) 28... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$; b) 28... $\mathbb{Q}xc5+$; c) 28... $\mathbb{Q}c3$

28... $\mathbb{Q}ab8?!$

Answer: Both sides miss 28... $\mathbb{Q}xc5+! 29 \mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{Q}d8!$, double attacking a4 and the bishop on c5.

29 $\mathbb{Q}bc1$

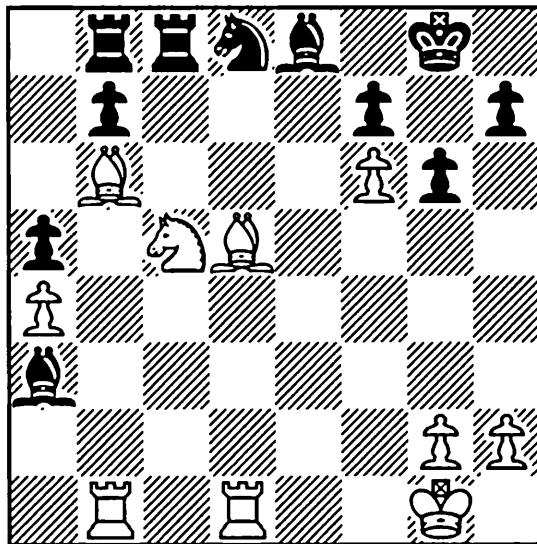
White can't put his finger on a good plan or target and begins to chase the wind, hoping it keeps still. The clock is ticking. White's pieces, infused with only a finite amount of energy, must find a path to cause trouble for Black. The longer he delays in coming up with a good plan, the closer Black comes to consolidation.

29 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is met with 29... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}a1 \mathbb{Q}c6$.

29... $\mathbb{Q}a3$

Both sides continue to miss the idea 29... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ threatening to take on c5 and clip the a4-pawn.

30 $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}d8!$



Finding the right plan is half the battle in a chess game.

31 $\mathbb{Q}e4?!$

White puts up more resistance with 31 $\mathbb{Q}e1! \mathbb{Q}xc5+ 32 \mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{Q}xa4 33 \mathbb{Q}b6 \mathbb{Q}c6 34 \mathbb{Q}ec1$.

31... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$

Picking off a second pawn. Black is well on his way to consolidating his advantage.

32 $\mathbb{Q}b3$

32 $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}b4 33 \mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}a8!$ prepares the future march of his a-pawn.

32... $\mathbb{Q}xb3 33 \mathbb{Q}xb3 \mathbb{Q}b4 34 \mathbb{Q}d7 \mathbb{Q}e6 35 \mathbb{Q}bd3$

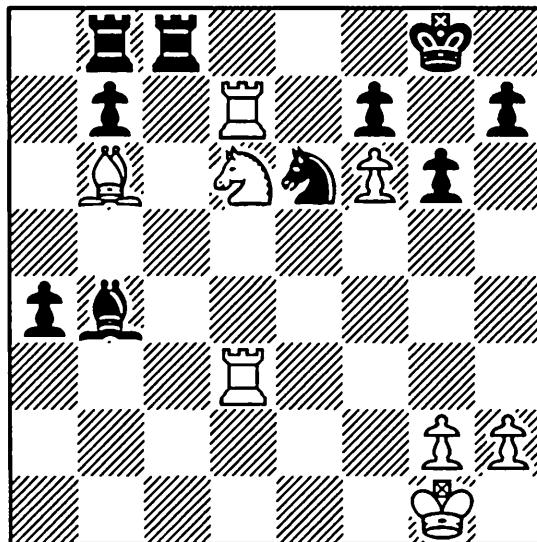
Question: Didn't 35 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ win a pawn?

Answer: It wins a pawn but doesn't save the game. After 35...♜a8 36 ♜xb7 ♜c4! 37 ♜e3 a4 White simply can't generate enough threats to offset the deadly passed a-pawn.

35...a4!

Reminding his opponent that he has threats of his own.

36 ♜d6



Exercise: Find the plan which allows Black the easiest path to consolidation of his two-pawn advantage.

Answer: Remove as many pieces from the board as possible:

36...♝xd6! 37 ♜3xd6 ♜c6! 38 ♜e3 ♜xd6 39 ♜xd6

White runs out of firepower to generate threats.

39...a3 40 ♜c1 ♜a8 0-1

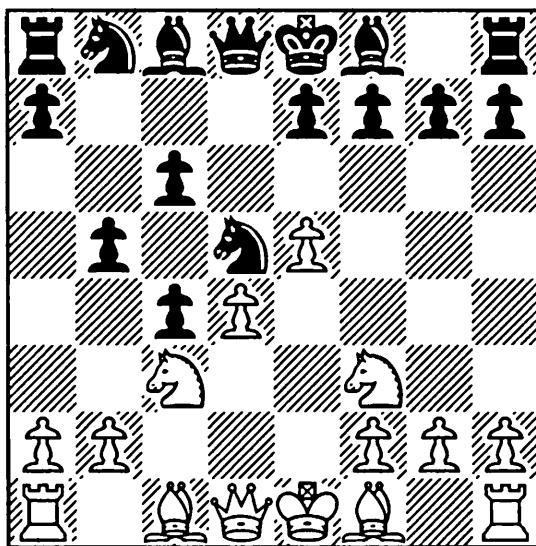
Summary

Meet 7 e3 with 7...e6!, which turns the game into a somewhat favourable version of a Queen's Gambit Accepted due to White's offside knight on h4.

Chapter Four

The Geller Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxс4 5 e4 b5 6 e5 ♜d5



Psychologists tell us that most of our communication is non-verbal. If this is the case then the opponent who plays the Geller Gambit communicates the following: "Prepare to die, Slav lover!" There are three or four paths White can take against the Slav to reach an opening edge. The Geller Gambit is not one of them!

Here are three theories about Geller Gambiteers:

1. Opponents who hit you with this gambit most certainly grapple with some deep-seated and unresolved anger management issues.
2. They do it to get your attention. If you fling a glass at a wall, people take notice. Right out of the starting gate they try to muscle us off the board, like the high school bully who shakes down the other kids for their lunch money.
3. A Geller Gambiteer may be afraid of a positional battle against you and play the gambit in a somewhat desperate bid to create chaos.

Let's not make the huge mistake of underestimating this gambit, which is sadly something I have done on occasion. The opening may be bordering on unsound, but it is also very dangerous. One way to get blown away as Black is to have a shaky grasp of theory. Another way to lose is to improvise at the board. My last Slav loss was to this hated gambit when, in a burst of creativity, I conjured up a nonsensical idea and managed only to confuse myself. I learned my lesson. It's best to stick with known theory. Why try to fix something that isn't broken?

The first two games of this chapter focus on the old main line, 7 a4 e6 8 axb5?!, where White trades his a-pawn for Black's b-pawn. I consider this line dubious and close to downright unsound. The superior path for White is to play 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ and leave the pawn tension in the queenside (Games 27-28). Then the position is a mess, but at least we have our extra pawn to comfort us!

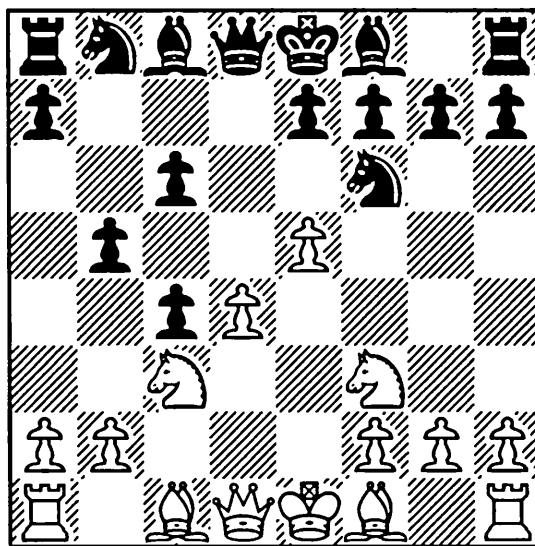
Kasparov said recently that opening gambits are basically unsound in the age of computers. As an experiment, try the Geller Gambit against *Rybka* or *Fritz*, and they will gorge themselves on the pawn and crank out win after win. So we know in our hearts if we defend well the point should rightfully be ours.

Game 25
E.Kahn-L.Portisch
Hungarian League 2003

1 d4 d5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 c4 c6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 e4

Theory number four: They all want to rule the universe!

5...b5 6 e5



Question: This advance seems rather risky for White.
Isn't he handing Black control over d5?

Answer: Very true. White makes a big concession by giving up d5. But remember, very little in life comes without compromise. In chess, a compromise is usually a contractual agreement where both White and Black acquire what neither side wants! In the end, though, pushing to e5 is a good deal for White, who receives many benefits from the move:

1. The e5-pawn gives White a long-term space advantage.
2. It gives White attacking chances, especially if Black castles kingside.
3. It opens up e4 for White's pieces.

I'm not impressed with White's compensation if he avoids the e5 advance. For example:

a) 6 $\mathbb{W}c2$?! (a milquetoast alternative) 6...e6 7 g4?! (I apologize for that milquetoast crack! White goes psycho!) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (maybe Black should take the second pawn, like an all-you-can-eat buffet: 7... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$! 8 a4 and then immediately return the pawn with 8...e5!; Rybka claims a clear advantage for Black in this complex position) 8 g5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10 h4 $\mathbb{Q}8d7$ 11 a4 b4 12 a5 bxc3 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ c5! and Black grabbed the initiative by returning the piece in M.Bosboom-I.Sokolov, Netherlands League 2007.

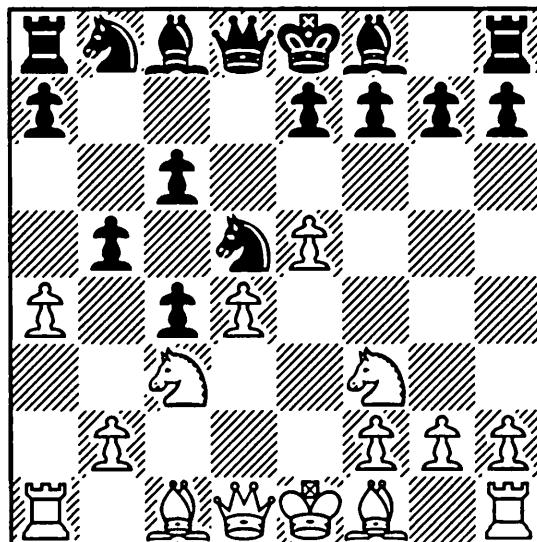
b) 6 a4?! (this really is milquetoast) 6...b4 7 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 10 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ e6 11 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}b8$, P.Savva-L.B.Hansen, Heraklion 2007. Black already stands better here, as he has:

1. The bishop pair;
2. Control over b4; and
3. Control and pressure down the b-file.

6... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 7 a4

White needs to keep Black rattled and shake things up. I don't like 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$? which allows Black to go about his business without worry: 7... $\mathbb{Q}f5$! (a good reaction – Black takes advantage of the lull in the battle to bring his bishop outside the pawn chain since he is worry-free on b5) 8 $\mathbb{W}f3$ e6 9 g4? (he had to try 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 10 g4) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 10 h4? $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and White had no good method of defending c2 and d4, M.Duesterwald-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (rapid) 2007.

Let's look at the position after 7 a4:



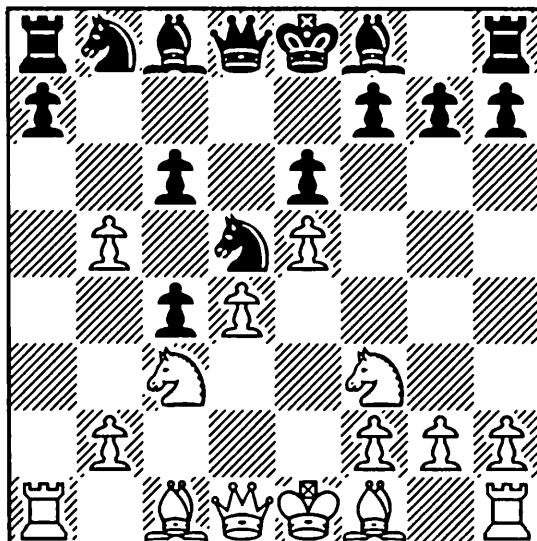
Question: Can Black develop his bishop to f5
on the outside of his pawn chain?

Answer: Often a battle rages between what we need and what we want. Some good advice: Go with what you need! It would be very nice to bring the bishop out to f5 before we play ...e6. The reality is that 7... $\mathbb{B}f5$?! is simply too slow, although Black sometimes tries it for shock value. 8 axb5! is a strong reply:

a) 8... $\mathbb{B}b4$ 9 $\mathbb{B}xc4$! $\mathbb{B}c2+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}xa1$ 11 bxc6 $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 12 d5 with a nightmarishly strong attack for the rook, J.Fedorowicz-F.Braga, German League 1989;

b) 8... $\mathbb{B}xc3$? was the product of my favourite delusion – paranoia. I was surprised by Taylor's choice of the Geller Gambit and, wanting to avoid main lines, came up with a cunning plan: confuse matters by improvising at the board. The result: only I got confused! After 9 bxc3 cxb5 10 $\mathbb{B}g5$! e6 11 g4! $\mathbb{B}g6$ 12 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 13 $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xa7$ White enjoyed all the benefits of the Geller Gambit without being down a pawn in T.Taylor-C.Lakdawala, Southern California State Championship, Century City 2010.

7...e6 8 axb5?!



Question: Am I wrong in thinking this is somewhat bold on your part giving the main book move a dubious mark?

Answer: This is the old school (and in my opinion, inferior) way of playing the Geller Gambit. White releases the pawn tension for no good reason before playing $\mathbb{B}g5$. The move allows Black's bishop to sit pretty on the a8-h1 diagonal which White conveniently opened for him. Just because a tenet has been followed for a long time doesn't make it correct!

Question: That is a flawed argument. Doesn't the wisdom of the majority usually trump the opinion of a single individual?

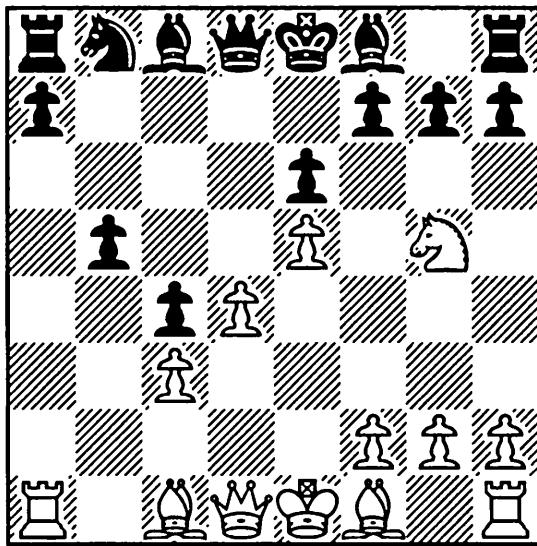
Answer: Not necessarily. In that case the people who believed the earth was flat in the 12th century (the majority) were correct! I am convinced 8 axb5?! isn't a good move and the trend seems to be moving towards this belief.

We examine the more modern and superior move 8 ♜g5!, leaving the queenside pawns as they are, in the final two games of this chapter.

8...♜xc3

The only way for Black to hang on to his extra pawn.

9 bxc3 cxb5 10 ♜g5



Threatening ♜f3, double attacking a8 and f7.

10...♝b7 11 ♜h5 g6

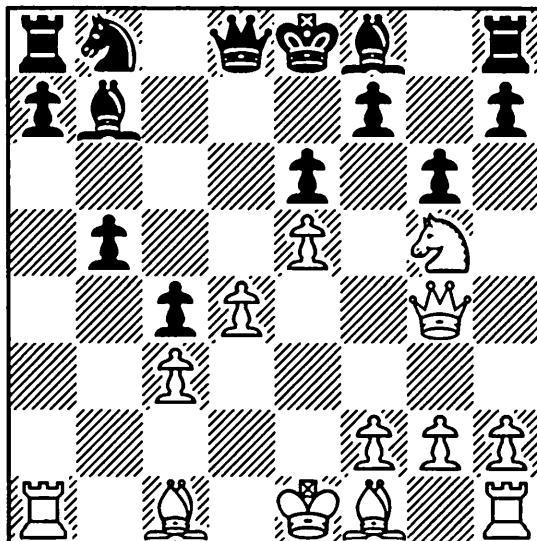
11...♝d7 is also playable. The idea is to avoid weakening the dark squares by forgoing ...g6. One must be on alert for tricks based on ♜xh7 and ♜f6+ or ♜xf8:

a) 12 ♜xh7?! ♜c6! 13 ♜f6+ (after 13 ♜xf8? ♜xd4! 14 cxd4 ♜xh5 Black's connected passed pawns and control over d5 give him a winning position) 13...gxf6 14 ♜xh8 0-0-0! 15 ♜h4 (White doesn't survive 15 ♜xf6?? ♜xd4!) 15...fxe5 with a massive initiative and attack for the exchange, O.Cayon-G.Kanefsck, Salta 1999.

b) 12 ♜e2! (the correct path: White avoids adventures and continues developing) 12...h6 13 ♜f3 ♜c6 14 0-0 ♜d8 15 ♜e4 a5 16 ♜g4 ♜h7 17 ♜d1 h5 18 ♜e2 ♜d5 19 ♜c2 ♜h8 20 ♜g5 ♜b7 21 f4 and the f5 break becomes a serious issue for Black. White's attack gave him more than enough compensation for the pawn in M.Illanes Cordoba-A.Chernin, Pamplona 1991.

12 ♜g4

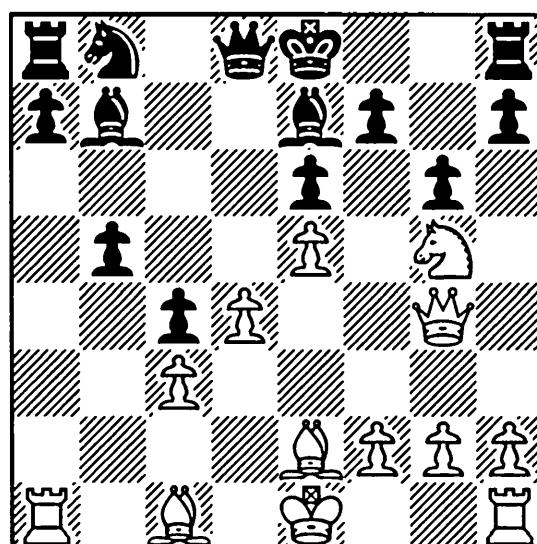
The tabiya position of the old main line. More and more recent games avoid this position and now the trend veers towards 8 ♜g5 instead.

**12...Qe7**

The main move, but there are alternatives:

a) 12...h6 13 Qe4 Qd7 14 Qe2 Qd5 15 0-0 Bb6 16 Qf3 Qc6 17 Re1 a5 18 h4 b4 19 Wf4 b3!?, M.Podgaets-V.Arbakov, Krasnoyarsk 1981. I have more faith in those scary queenside passers than I do in White's attack. 20 Ra3 is met with 20...a4 21 Qxf8 Qxf8 22 Qd6 Rh7 and I just don't see anything meaningful for White on the kingside.

b) 12...Qd5 13 h4 h6 14 Qe4 Qd7 15 h5 g5 16 Qe2 a5 17 0-0 b4 18 Qd2 Qb6 19 f4 bxc3 20 Qf3 gxf4 21 Qxf4 Qd7!? and Black's king is ready to head for the comfort and safety of c6(!), H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen, Gjovik (blitz) 2009. Once again I distrust White's kingside compensation for the missing pawns.

13 Qe2

White is content to develop. Next game we look at the more violent option, 13 h4.

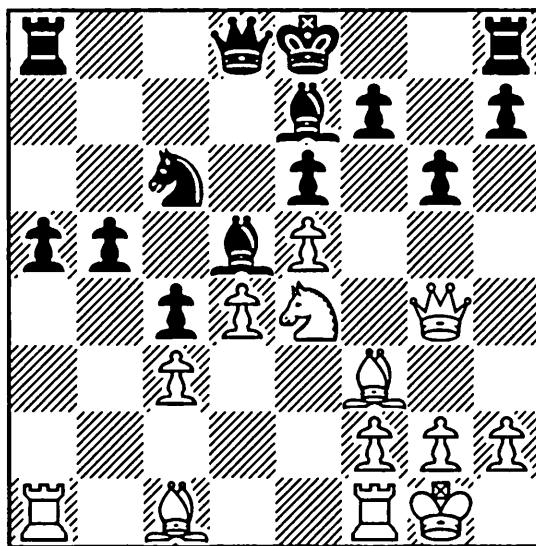
13...Qd5

This makes it harder for White to achieve a reasonable knight sac on e6.

14 ♜f3 ♜c6 15 0-0 a5

I like the mindlessness of Black's plan: Push, push, push until he queens! This move also takes away White's ♜a3 ideas, meet that plan with ...b4.

16 ♜e4



Exercise: Black, while up a pawn, is also riddled with dark-squared punctures on the kingside. Is it worth it to weaken further with 16...h6 in order to shore up our dark squares?

16...h6!

Answer: A good trick to remember. It is definitely worth preventing White's goal of further weakening our dark squares with ♜g5 ideas and a swap of dark-squared bishops.

17 ♜d6+

This move already looks quite desperate, but a slower plan also fails: after 17 ♜f4 b4 18 ♜d6+ ♜xd6 19 ♜xd5 exd5 20 exd6 0-0! 21 ♜xh6 ♜e8 22 f4 ♜xd6 23 f5 ♜e4 White's centre is crumbling and his attack doesn't have legs.

17...♜xd6 18 ♜xd5 exd5 19 exd6 ♜xd6 20 ♜a3

20 ♜e1+ ♔f8 doesn't bother Black, whose king wants to head east anyway.

20...b4 21 cxb4 ♜xb4!

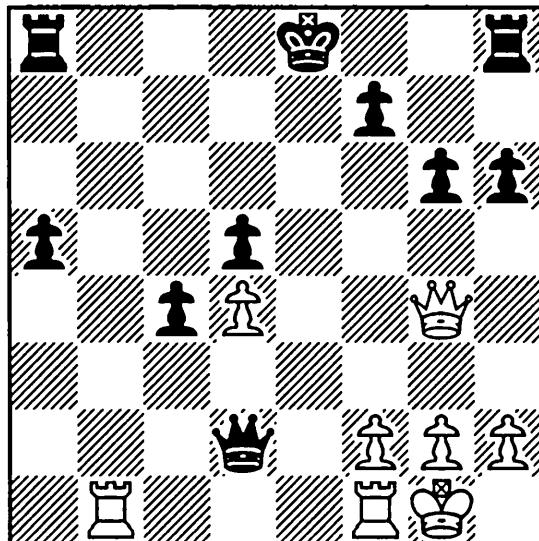
Question: Why didn't Black want to take the passers with 21...axb4?

Answer: Be careful. Black falls into a cheapo if he goes that route. 22 ♜xb4! and Black's rook is loose on a8.

22 ♜xb4 ♜xb4 23 ♜ab1 ♜d2!

A multi-purpose move, which:

1. Hits d4;
2. Prepares the advance of the c- and a-pawns; and
3. Allows Black swift kingside assistance if needed with ...♝g5.



24. Rfd1

White can set a trap with 24. Rfe1+ Rf8 25. Re7!. Here 25...Rxе7? falls for the trap, allowing 26. Rb7+ Rf8 27. Rxf7+! Rxе7 28. Rd7+ with a perpetual, despite a deficit of two rooks. However, 25...Rh7! retains the advantage.

24...Bg5 25. Re1+ Rf8 26. Rd7 Rg7 27. Rb7

27. Re5?! fails to 27...Rhd8! 28. Rb7 Rf4 29. Rxd5 Rab8. The weak back rank costs White the game.

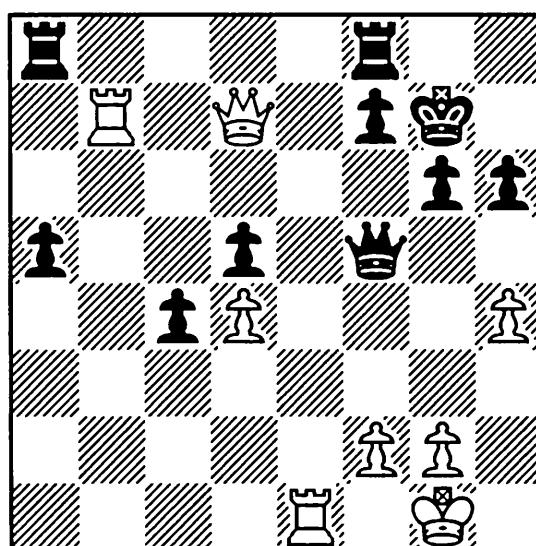
27...Rhf8 28. h4 Bf5!

Assessment:

1. Black's king is secure.

2. Black is ready to push his queenside passers.

3. White's major pieces, on the other hand, can't find a way to generate serious threats and stumble around confused – like friends who have had one too many, returning home from the bar after it closes at 2:00 a.m.



29 ♜b5

He can't afford to swap.

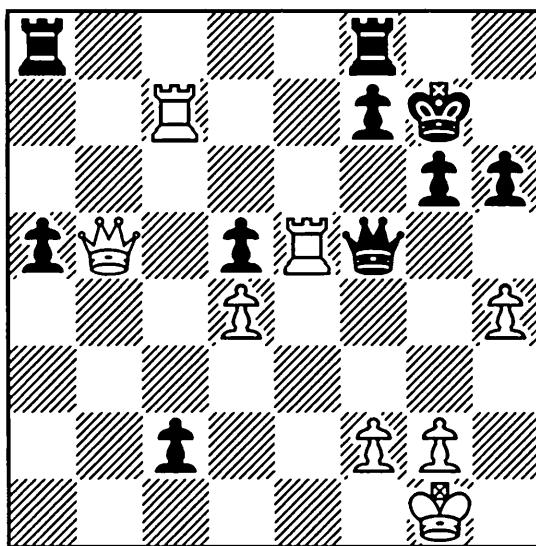
Exercise: Without moving the pieces, try to visualize the end of the line 29 ♜xf5 gxf5 30 ♜e5 a4 31 ♜xd5 a3 32 ♜b1 a2 33 ♜a1 ♜fb8 and ...♜b1+ follows.

29...c3! 30 ♜e5

Nor can White stem the flow of the pawns after 30 ♜c7 ♜fc8 31 ♜ee7 ♜xc7 32 ♜xc7 ♜c8. 30...c2!

The pawn is determined to break through the threshold and score.

31 ♜c7



Exercise: Black's queen and his deeply passed c-pawn are attacked simultaneously. How does Black force the pawn through?

Answer: By ignoring the threat to his queen:

31...♜ac8! 32 ♜xf5 ♜xc7 0-1

Summary

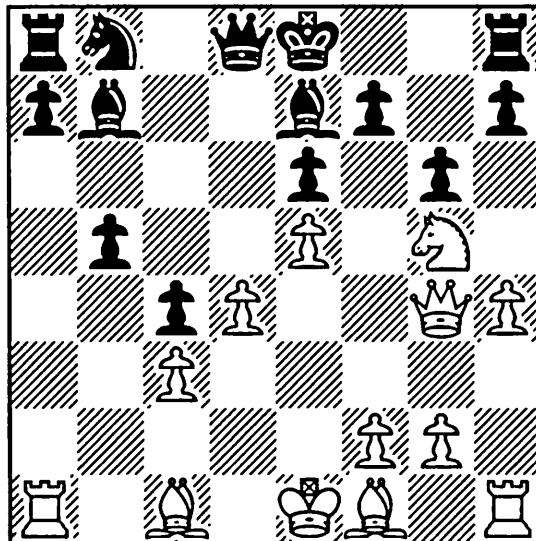
Out with the old (8 axb5?!?) and in with the new (8 ♜g5!)!

Game 26
E.Magerramov-K.Sakaev
Dubai 2003

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 e4 b5 6 e5 ♜d5 7 a4 e6 8 axb5?!

I believe it was Dickens who wrote of this move: "It was the best of moves; it was the worst of moves." I believe the latter!

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 $bxc3$ $cxb5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11 $\mathbb{W}h5$ $g6$ 12 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $h4$



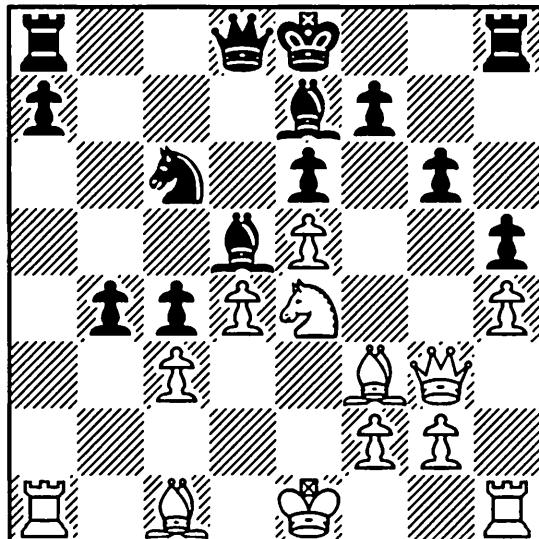
White means business and hopes to block the smooth flow with this disruptive move.

Question: I realize White angles for h5. I can't decide between ...h6 (and avoiding ...h5 all together) or just getting it over with and playing ...h5. Which one is better?

Answer: That is a tough question. The first thing you need to do to make such a decision is to look up the stats and see if one scores overwhelmingly better than the other. In our case both score very well for Black, near 70%. Sometimes stats can be deceiving but in this case both lines look quite good for Black. Then you research games in both positions and simply pick the line you have the better feel for. In this case, after having looked at the games, I feel that 13...h6 leads to crazier positions than the more stable 13...h5. I am basically a positional player who does better in clearer positions, so my personal choice would lean toward the stabilizing 13...h5.

13...h6

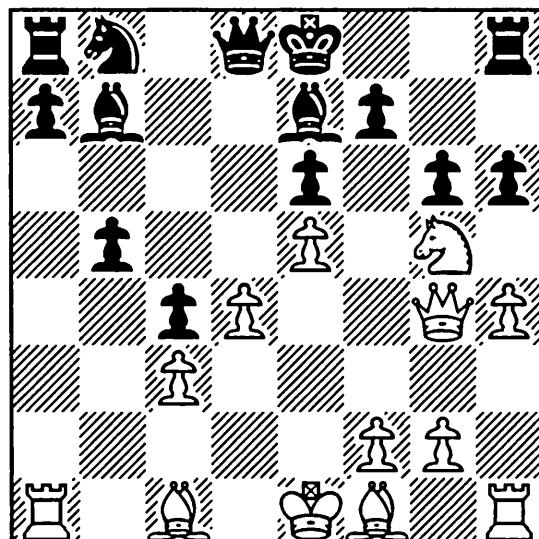
Black refuses to take the strategic bait and play 13...h5, which hands over the g5-square to White. Let's follow the game R.Wendt-P.Haba, Bad Wörishofen 1992: 14 $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ (this makes it a lot harder for White to get away with a knight sac on e6) 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $b4!$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e4$.



Question: Should Black take on c3, or should he play ...b3?

Answer: Here and in similar positions, this decision is going to be crucial. Taking on c3 begins the process of dissolving White's centre, whereas playing ...b3 is like money in the bank. Black will win almost every ending after ...b3 since he has two deep passers on the a- and b-files. However, he must survive the middlegame first in this case! Here Haba chose 17...bxc3, and the game continued 18 ♜g5 c2 19 ♜d6+ ♛f8 20 ♜f4 ♜h7 21 ♜e4 ♜xg5 22 hxg5 ♜xe4 23 ♜xe4 ♜a5+! (Ouch! A cute shot that wins) 24 ♜xa5? (24 ♜e2 was better but still losing for White after 24...♜b6) 24...c1♜+ 25 ♛e2 ♜b2+ 26 ♛f1 ♜b8 0-1.

Now let's return to the position after 13...h6:



14 ♜e4

Question: I see a dangerous sac for White. Does 14 ♜xe6 work?

Answer: You probably shouldn't even analyse a sac like this.

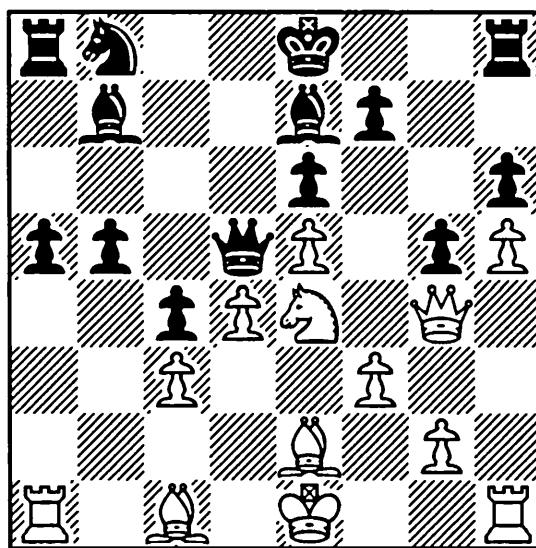
Question: Why not?

Answer: White has only two pieces developed and after the sac, just his queen! One queen won't do the job. For example, 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ (pinning is even stronger than taking immediately) 15 $\mathbb{Q}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16 e6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17 exf7 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 18 h5 g5. White's attack is at a dead end and it should be no surprise with zero development!

14... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

Forcing White's next move and denying him the manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and $\mathbb{Q}f3$ later on.

15 f3 a5! 16 h5 g5 17 $\mathbb{Q}e2$



An assessment:

1. Black is up a pawn.
2. White has kingside space and an ominous build-up there – which means little since Black's king stands uncommitted and may head the other way!
3. White's impressive centre is on the verge of collapse should Black play ...b4 and ...bxc3.
4. Black also has the option of ...b4 and ...b3. Not only will this ensure endgame victory should he reach that stage, it also closes the queenside where his king can live in peace and safety.
5. White is a long way from engineering a successful f4 pawn break.

Conclusion: White stands busted.

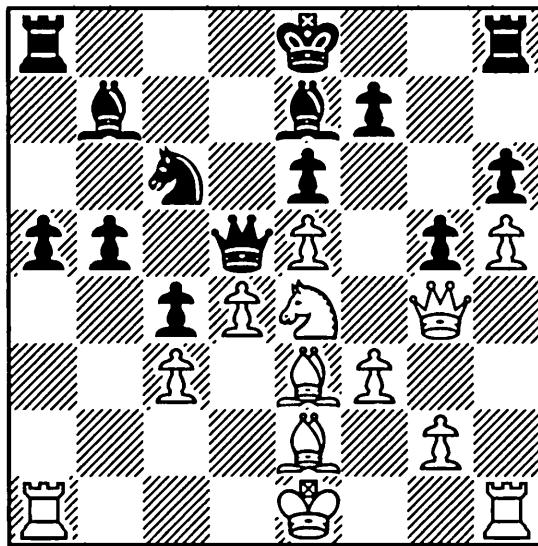
17... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

The most aggressive move. Black is ready for ...b4 and ...bxc3 with threats on d4 to follow.

In the game L.Olsson-N.Pert, Gothenburg 2005, Black tried another plan, taking a more cautious, but no less effective route with 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 0-0 b4 19 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b3! (denying White both $\mathbb{Q}a4$ and $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ideas) 20 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ f5! (creative play, forcing White to take) 22

exf6 0-0! (giving notice that it is Black, not White, who is doing the attacking from this point on) 23 Ke1 Qxf6 24 Qxf6+ Kxf6 25 Ke5 Qd6 26 Kxa5 Qxa5 27 Kxa5 Qd5 and Black's deeply passed b-pawn proved decisive.

18 Ke3



Exercise (multiple choice): Which is Black's most effective plan here?

- a) 18...a4, intending to seal the queenside for king safety with ...Qa5 and ...Qb3; b) 18...b4, intending ...bxc3 to dismantle White's centre; or
- c) 18...b4, intending ...b3, ...a4, and ...a3, pushing the passers.

18...a4?!

Answer: Sakaev's plan is too slow and allows White to drum up counterplay on the f-file.

Plan 'c' is the most effective. Black needs to counter White's f-file ambitions by marching his queenside passers forward. For example, 18...b4! 19 0-0 b3! 20 Qd2! a4! 21 Qxc4 Qa5 22 Qe4 b2 23 Rab1 a3 24 Qxe6! a2! 25 Qxa2 Qxa2 and Black is favoured in what is admittedly still a very complex situation.

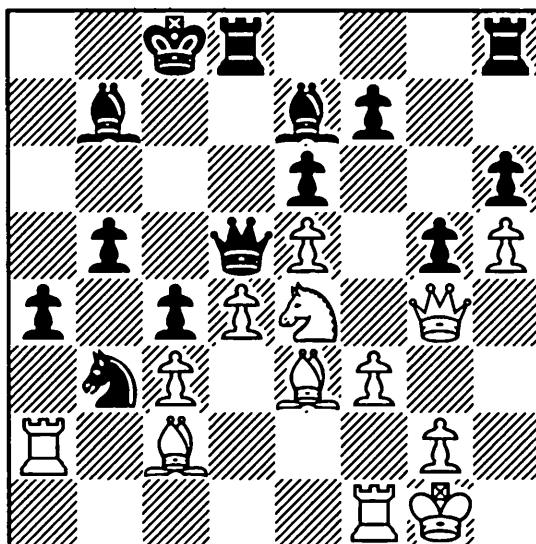
18...b4! 19 0-0 bxc3? (Plan 'b') hands over the initiative to White after 20 Qxc3 Qd8 21 Qxc4. Suddenly Black has given back his extra pawn, his king is unsafe no matter where it goes and White is ready for central action shortly with d4-d5.

19 0-0 Qa5 20 Ra2 Qb3 21 Qd1!

Plan: Qc2 and f4. Result: Dangerous counterplay!

21...0-0-0 22 Qc2

Black has achieved everything he wanted since he began his faulty plan on his 18th move. He sealed the queenside and also castled queenside. But now what? Black also sealed off the source of his counterplay – his queenside pawns. White now generates dangerous threats down the f-file and soon takes over the initiative.



22... ♜c6

A head-scratching moment of confusion for Black, who now realizes he needs queen-side play quickly. Sakaev plans ...b4. The trouble is, this will expose his king to danger. I invoke this simple prayer to the universe when I find myself in a similar situation in my own games: Please protect me from the consequences of my earlier bad decisions!

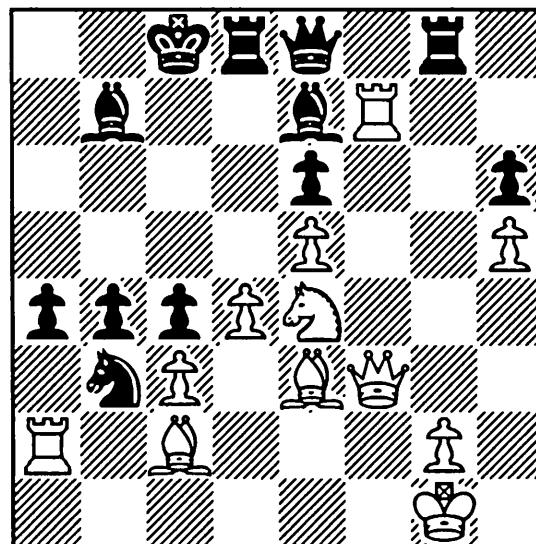
23 f4!

The preparations are completed.

23...gxsf4 24 ♜xf4 ♜hg8 25 ♜f3

The f7-pawn falls. Black doesn't generate compensating counterplay down the g-file.

25... ♜e8 26 ♜xf7 b4!?



He has to try something or else White picks off pawns on the kingside and then makes an effort to queen his own h-pawn.

27 ♜xe7!?

A bold sac – although I'm not convinced about its strength – which weakens Black on

The Slav: Move by Move

the dark squares and also allows White inroads on the queenside by picking off a4.

27... $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 28 $\mathbb{B}xa4$ $\mathbb{W}h4?!$

Black doesn't have a firm footing in his attack and soon finds his own king spinning in a whirlpool on the other end of the board. Black may still find a way to save himself in the line 28... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 29 $\mathbb{B}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}xd4$ 31 $\mathbb{B}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}d2$.

29 $\mathbb{B}xb4!$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Black's game disintegrates after 29... $\mathbb{W}e1+?$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}h4+$ 31 $\mathbb{W}h3$.

30 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}e7?$

Black's last chance was to hope to draw the ending after 30... $\mathbb{W}g4$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 32 $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{B}xg4$ 33 $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}g2+$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d2+$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

31 $\mathbb{W}e2!$

Target: c4.

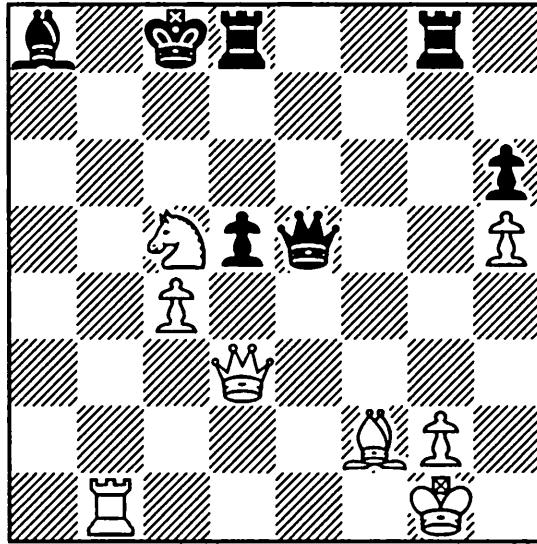
31... $\mathbb{Q}c1$

If 31... $\mathbb{W}c7?$ then 32 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{C}xb3$ 33 $\mathbb{W}a6+$ wins.

32 $\mathbb{W}f1!$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{C}xd3$ 34 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 35 $c4$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 36 $d5$

It's over. Black's attack comes to an end and White's begins in earnest.

36... $\mathbb{W}a1+$ 37 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$



Exercise: White forces mate. Try to work it out to the end.

Answer: 39 $\mathbb{W}h3+!$ 1-0

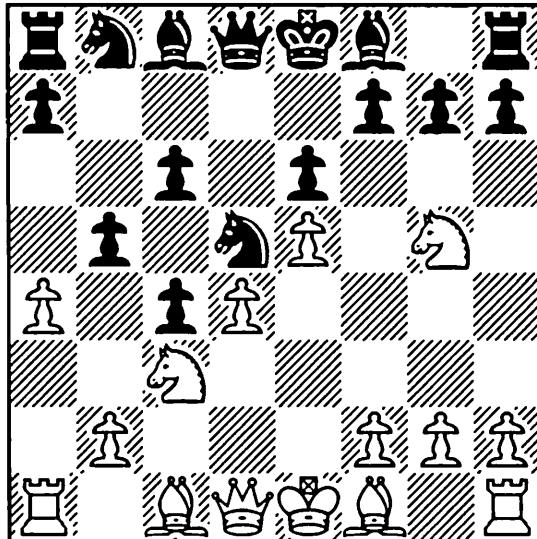
Black's king finds himself blushing after this move. 39... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}a6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 42 $\mathbb{B}b6$ is a pretty mate. All four White attackers do their share of the work.

Summary

The results from the tests are back from the lab and they are not good for White: 13 $h4$ doesn't change anything. Black should emerge on the good end of the complications in the dubious 8 $axb5?!$ line of the Geller Gambit.

Game 27
N.Vitiugov-F.Amonatov
 Sochi 2006

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 4 ♜f3 dxс4 5 e4 b5 6 e5 ♜d5 7 a4 e6 8 ♜g5!



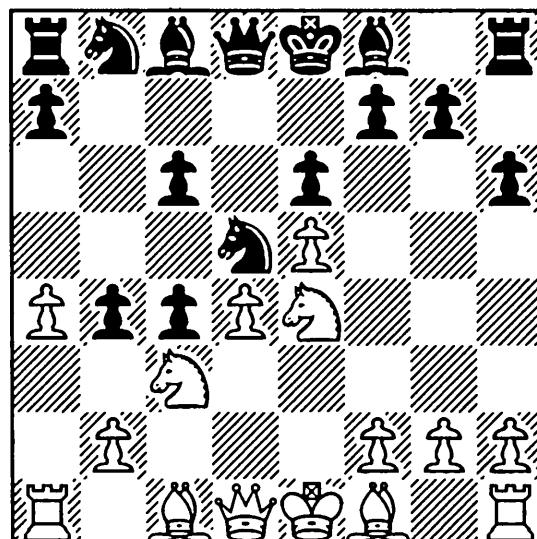
If the Geller Gambit really is playable and passes the test of theory (I give it a C-, which is still a passing grade but nothing to brag about!), it is through this line which maintains the queenside pawn tension.

8...h6

Giving the heave ho to the knight immediately. Next game we examine 8...♞e7.

9 ♜ge4 b4!

Best. Black returns the extra pawn to create confusion in White's camp.

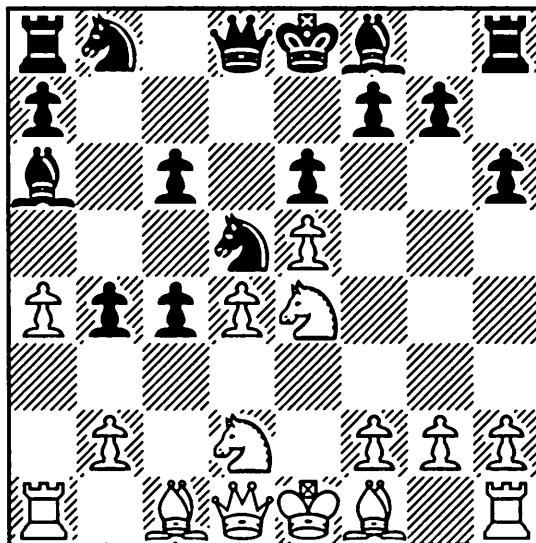


Question: I have a strategic idea for White. How about 10 $\mathbb{Q}a2$?

Here is my plan: I take on c4 with my bishop, and redeploy my knight to c1 and then b3 where it eyes a5 and c5, and covers our d4-pawn. Do you think my plan works?

Answer: With this plan you make a common mistake, which is to get so deeply immersed in your own ideas that you pay insufficient attention to your opponent's plans and threats. 10 $\mathbb{Q}a2??$ fails to 10...b3! 11 $\mathbb{Q}ac3 \mathbb{Q}b4$ and White finds himself embarrassed by the simple threat ... $\mathbb{Q}c2+$.

10 $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$



11... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$?

Black agrees to increase the complexity of the position and sets a little trap.

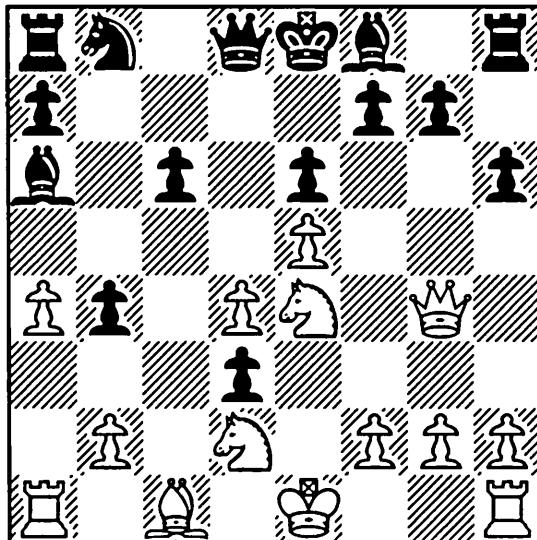
Question: 11...c3 screams out at me. Is it playable?

Answer: Definitely. It may even be as good as or better than the move played in the game. A recent example: 12 bxc3 bxc3 (12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ also looks good) 13 $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}xc4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}h4!$ 15 $\mathbb{W}f3 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 a5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$, C.Rios-J.Lopez Martinez, Sabadell 2010. White hasn't regained the pawn yet. Black stands at least equal, and probably a touch better.

12 $\mathbb{W}g4$

White doesn't get enough for his pawn after 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc4?!$, which fails to 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg2+!$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{Q}xc4$.

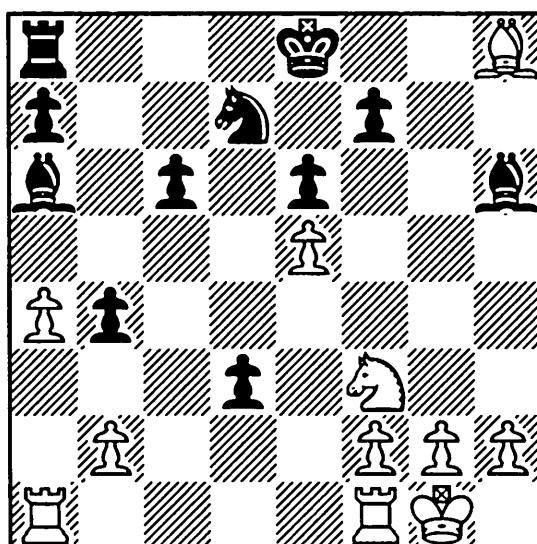
12... $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ cxd3



14 0-0!

Question: Why on earth did White avoid 14 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ which looks crushing?
We come crashing through on g7 if Black takes the knight.
If he doesn't his king gets bounced around.

Answer: Black has a powerful exchange sac in this line: 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xh8$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 17 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{W}xh8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$, as played in F.Fiorito-V.Smyslov, Buenos Aires 1990. Black has more than enough compensation for the exchange here.



Question: Really? I would be pretty nervous taking Black.
I mean, it's a full exchange in an ending!

Answer: But Black has tremendous dynamic compensation:

1. He has a deep, powerful passer on d3.
2. He has excellent chances of mobilizing his queenside majority with ...c5, ...c4 and ...c3.
3. He will soon bag the bishop pair. Why? He threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ which gets the bishop pair and wins another pawn.

Conclusion: Black is down a full exchange in the ending yet he stands better, having accumulated so many strategic advantages on the side.

14... $\mathbb{W}d5!$

A novelty and possible improvement. Black wants to squeeze the most out of his control over d5 and posts his most powerful piece where she is unassailable for quite some time.

Other moves in the position:

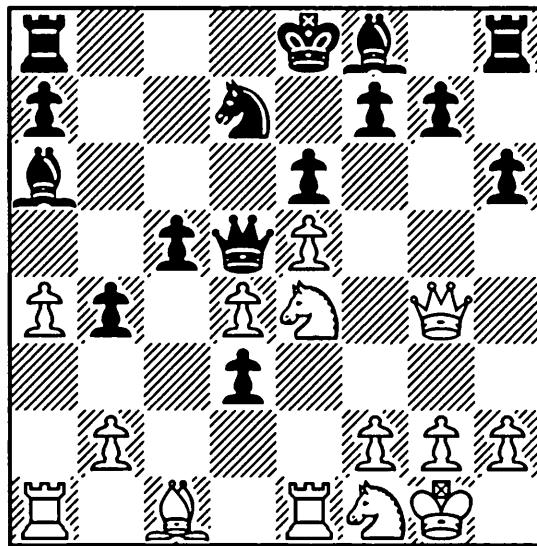
a) 14...h5 15 $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{B}fe1$ c5 19 dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 0-0 was P.Eljanov-M.Godena, Ohrid 2001. That deeply entrenched passed d-pawn should get White nervous. However, White does have chances against Black's king.

b) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 b3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ (note that it took two moves for Black's queen to reach d5 in this line) 17 $\mathbb{B}ac1$ 0-0-0 18 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ with an unclear position, P.Eljanov-D.Svetushkin, Alushta 2001. If $\mathbb{Q}d6+$, Black is happy to sac an exchange for a pawn to eliminate White's powerful knight.

15 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f1?$!

White doesn't have time for this fancy manoeuvre. He should play 16 b3 with the plan $\mathbb{Q}b2$, $\mathbb{B}ac1$ and $\mathbb{Q}c4$ where he has some compensation for the pawn.

16...c5!



Question: Why give this move an exclam? It looks like Black is breaking the principle which is: Don't open the game when you lag in development.

Answer: True, Black breaks that principle but he follows another one, which is: Chip

away at the opponent's centre from the sides if he has a space advantage.

Question: If there are two conflicting principles how am I supposed to know which one to follow?

Answer: Nobody said chess was easy! In such situations we draw upon that infallible, mysterious source of energy available to all of us – intuition! In this case White's slight development lead takes a back seat to Black's demolition of White's centre.

17 dxc5 ♜xe5

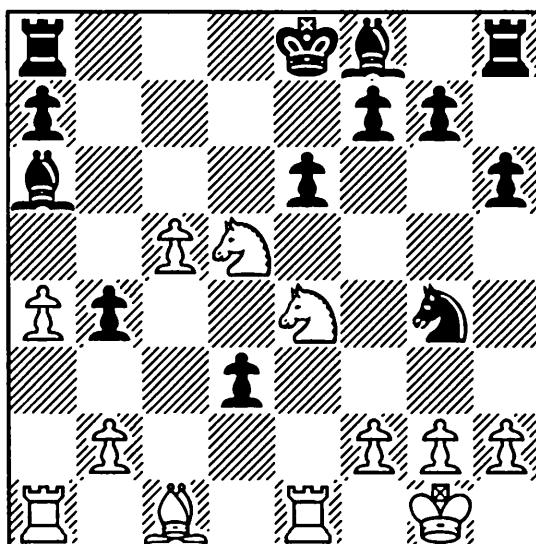
There goes White's centre.

18 ♜e3

Possibly White's tricky point but it has a hole in it.

18...♜xg4 19 ♜xd5

Maybe White deliberately went for this position thinking he had tremendous piece play for his pawn. He was wrong.



Exercise (high difficulty, multiple choice): If you can penetrate the position deeply enough, there's a win for Black. Which move should he play?

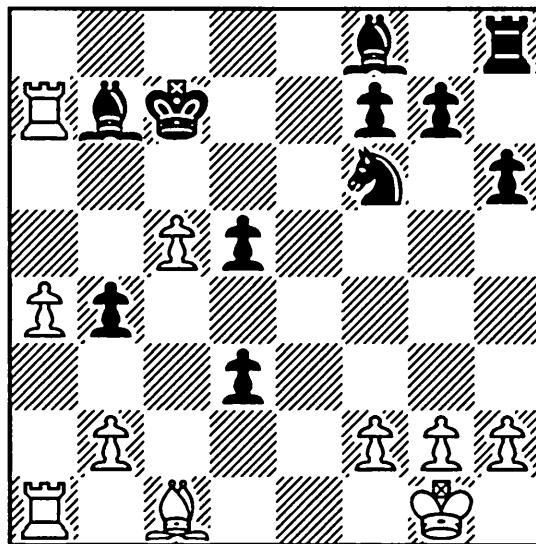
- a) 19...0-0-0; b) 19...♜c8; c) 19...exd5

This is a tough one so take at least 15 minutes to try to work it out.

19...0-0-0?!

Answer: Black missed the startling idea 19...exd5!. Most of us would reject such a move without analysis. After all, who allows the opponent to inflict upon him a dreaded double check? If you improve your power of calculation you will not be deterred by such scary-looking lines.

In this case Black emerges with a winning position after 20 ♜f6+ ♜d8 21 ♜e8+ (21 ♜xg4 ♜xc5 is hopeless for White) 21...♚c7 22 ♜xa8 ♜xf6 23 ♜xa7+ ♚b7.



White's rook has wandered into no-man's land on a7. Also, Black threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ followed by ...d2, and also ... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$. White's trouble is:

1. He is technically down material;
2. He will soon have to cough up more material since his rook is cornered on a7; and
3. His attack is headed nowhere.

For example, 24 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 25 $\mathbb{B}c1$ (covering c5) 25... $\mathbb{Q}xc5!!$ (Oops! My mistake! Black captures anyway) 26 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (26 $\mathbb{B}a5$ d4! doesn't help White at all since 27 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d2 wins) 26... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 27 $\mathbb{B}xc5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (Black regains his exchange and wins the rook ending easily) 28 $\mathbb{B}xb7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 30 $\mathbb{B}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 31 $\mathbb{B}c1$ d2 32 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$. The king of kings! White is helpless. If you solved this one you are a GM, or will be one soon!

20 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}d4?$

Black still keeps some initiative after the more accurate 21...a5! 22 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{B}d4$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}ac3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

22 c6?

White loses his bearings. He fights back to equality after 22 $\mathbb{Q}d6+!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 23 $\mathbb{C}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 24 f3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25 $\mathbb{B}ec1+!$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ (this trick regains the lost pawn) 26...d2 27 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{B}d4$ 28 $\mathbb{B}xd2$.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$

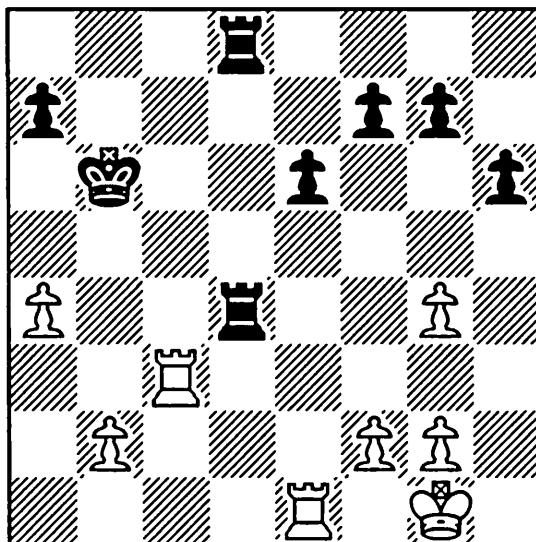
White gains the initiative after 22... $\mathbb{Q}a8?!$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 24 $\mathbb{B}ac1$.

23 $\mathbb{C}xb7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{B}xb4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{B}b3$ 27 h3?!

27 $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 28 $\mathbb{B}d4$ was his best shot at saving the game.

27... $\mathbb{B}xd3$ 28 $\mathbb{H}xg4$ $\mathbb{B}hd8$ 29 $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{B}3d4$ 30 $\mathbb{B}c3$

The jigsaw puzzle comes together. The x-factor is Black's active king who soon terrorizes White's queenside pawns.



30...Rd1!

A simple and important point: White loses all counterplay against Black's active king if one pair of rooks comes off the board.

31 Rb3+Ka5! 32 f1 Rx e1+ 33 Rx e1 Rd7

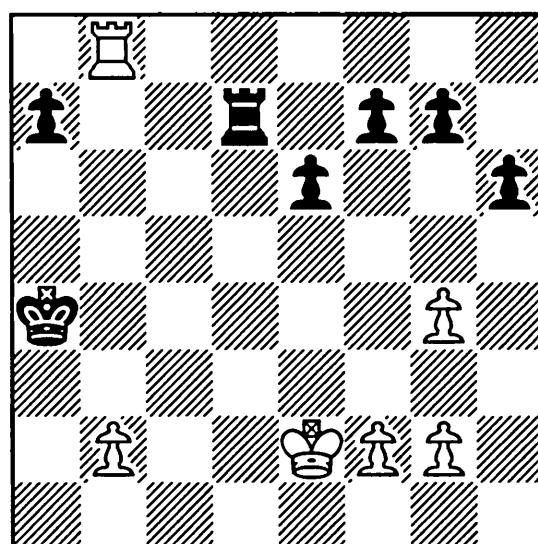
Covering his second rank. White's a-pawn is doomed.

34 Rb8

Question: What about 34 Ra3?

Answer: Never go passive in a rook ending – it is the kiss of death. It's far better to just eject the pawn and stay active. After 34...Rb7 35 Ra2 Rb4 White can resign.

34...Qxa4 35 Qe2



Exercise: Come up with a plan to free Black's king from its prison on the a-file.

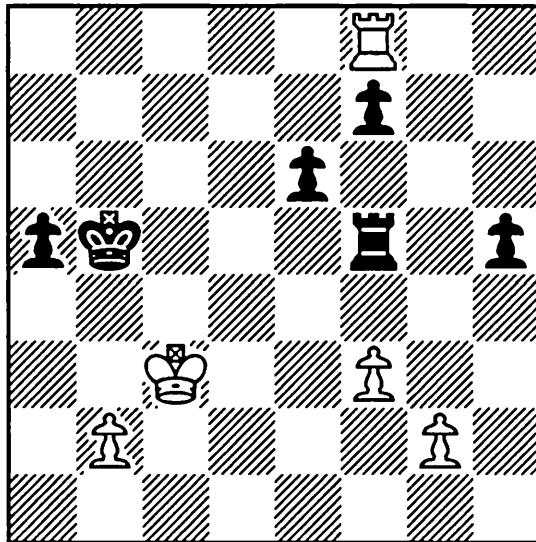
Answer: 35...♔a5!

Intending ...♔a6 and ...♝b7 to free his king.

36 ♕e3 ♔a6 37 ♜g8 g6 38 ♜c8 ♜b7 39 ♜c2 ♔a5 40 f3 ♔a4 41 ♔d2 ♜d7+ 42 ♔c1 ♔b5 43 ♜c8 h5!

Now Black need not worry about his h-pawn, which can be defended laterally.

44 gxh5 gxh5 45 ♔c2 a5 46 ♔c3 ♜d5 47 ♜f8 ♜f5

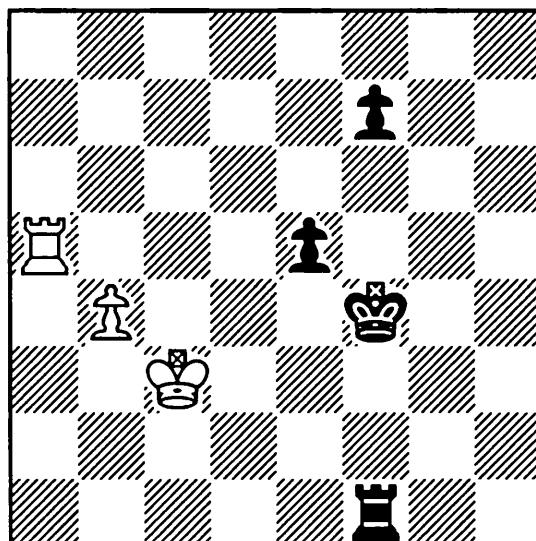


Black's rook performs admirably, covering all three of his pawn weaknesses on a5, f7 and h7. The next step is to create a second pawn weakness in White's camp.

48 ♜b8+ ♔c6 49 ♜g8 ♔d6 50 ♔d4 ♜b5 51 ♜a8 h4 52 ♔c3 ♜g5 53 ♜h8 ♜xg2 54 ♜xh4 ♜f2

There we have it, a second weakness.

55 ♜d4+ ♔e5 56 ♜e4+ ♔f5 57 ♜a4 ♜xf3+ 58 ♔c2 e5 59 ♜xa5 ♜f2+ 60 ♔c3 ♜f1 61 b4 ♔f4



White's position is hopeless. The queening race is not much of a race. It's like when we were six years old and raced our grandmother. Grandma always lost! If White's king tries to help promote his b-pawn it's just too slow. Black simply sacs his rook for the pawn and

marches his two connected passers, supported by his king on the other side.

62 b5 e4 63 ♜a2 e3 64 b6 ♜b1 0-1

The shepherd gets separated from his flock. Compare the two kings. Black's helps his flock forward, whereas White's lags far behind. 65 ♜b2 would lead to a cute finish after 65...♜xb2 66 ♜xb2 e2 67 b7 e1♛ 68 b8♛ (check!) 68...♚e5 (check!). The queens come off the board, and Black wins the pawn ending.

Summary

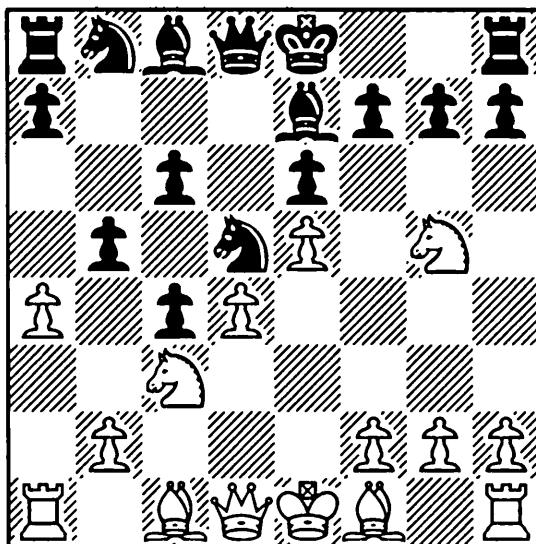
14...♝d5! looks like a possible improvement over 14...h4 and 14...♝d7. Black's queen on d5 radiates power and is free from harassment.

Game 28
R.Buhmann-V.Akopian
 Mainz (rapid) 2009

1 ♜f3 d5 2 d4 ♜f6 3 c4 c6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 e4 b5 6 e5 ♜d5 7 a4 e6 8 ♜g5!

Only move!

8...♝e7



The alternative to 8...h6, which we looked at last game. Black provokes h4 and only then plays ...h6, reasoning that a bishop on e7 is more useful than White's h-pawn thrust.

Question: Is this really true? Are there not problems on g7 if the bishop is brought out to e7 early?

Answer: Quite correct:

1. First, h4 is a very useful attacking move for White. It's intimidating, allows a rook lift to h3 and will most certainly get Black nervous about castling kingside.

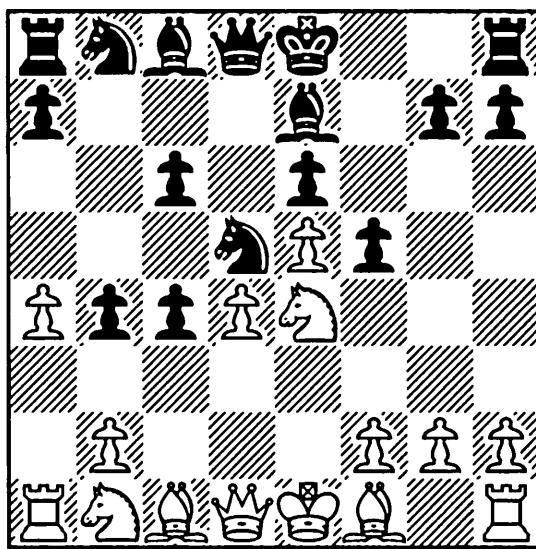
2. Black's ... $\mathbb{B}e7$, a developing move, has its downside: g7 is left unprotected and $\mathbb{W}g4$ is in the air. He can push his pawn forward one square to g6, which creates dark-squared weaknesses in his camp. He can play ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ and lose his castling rights, and keep his rook on h8 in the dark. Or he can play back to f8 with his bishop, in which case his 8... $\mathbb{B}e7$ should be a dubious move.

Conclusion: It's hard to say which move is better. I would probably go for 8...h6 and leave the bishop on f8, as in our previous game.

9 h4

This may be best, but not obligatory:

9 $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ b4 10 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ f5!? was played in L.Aronian-V.Kramnik, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2007.



I am always amazed when I hear chess players describe Kramnik as a quiet positional player. If you take a close look at his games you see he is actually one of the most confrontational players around, but in a strategic way. His last move is an example. Kramnik picks a fight with White, reasoning that Black is actually ahead in development after White's knight retreat to b1. The game continued 11 exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 14 $\mathbb{W}h5+$ g6 15 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e5!$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17 0-0 when White clearly had compensation for the pawn in the form of several black pawn targets. But does White stand better? I doubt it. A pawn is a pawn, especially after queens come off.

Question: Can White play more aggressively with 9 $\mathbb{W}h5$ instead of 9 h4?

Answer: This more aggressive move is a blunder which loses material: 9 $\mathbb{W}h5?$ g6 10 $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 11 $\mathbb{W}g7$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ and White faces dual unanswerable threats on g5 and c2, K. Podzielny-S.Strating, Gent 1993.

9...h6 10 $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ b4

Even though this move commits us to returning the extra pawn it's a good one. We push White's knight back to its original square and gain time.

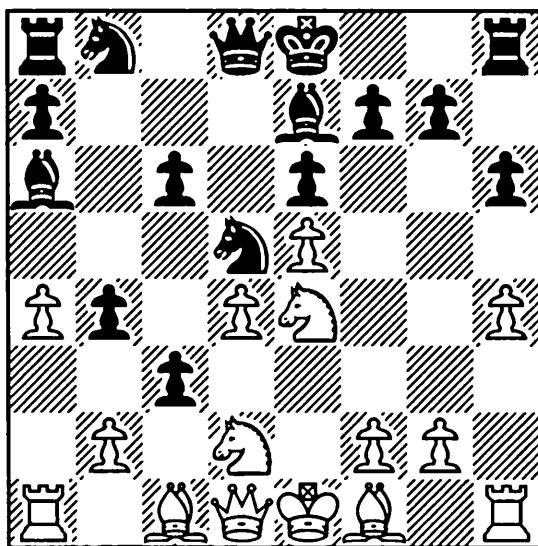
11 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

So we reach a position very similar to last game, with the distinction of the extra moves ... $\mathbb{A}e7$ and h2-h4 tossed in. It's hard to say who benefits more from this trade-off, but I would think White, who has been handed a target on g7.

12 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

The main move in the position, and to my mind, not the most logical. Why not hit Black immediately on his one vulnerable spot, g7? 12 $\mathbb{W}g4!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (the only path for Black; all other moves leave him worse) 13 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ c3 14 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{A}xc4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ (no choice – White is in too deeply and must sac) 16...fxe6 17 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ was S.Williams-S.Collins, Bunratty 2006. Here the position remains unclear with White having full compensation for the piece if Black plays the correct 17... $\mathbb{W}d7$.

12...c3



13 $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Question: I don't understand this. Why didn't White toss in 13 $bxc3$ first?

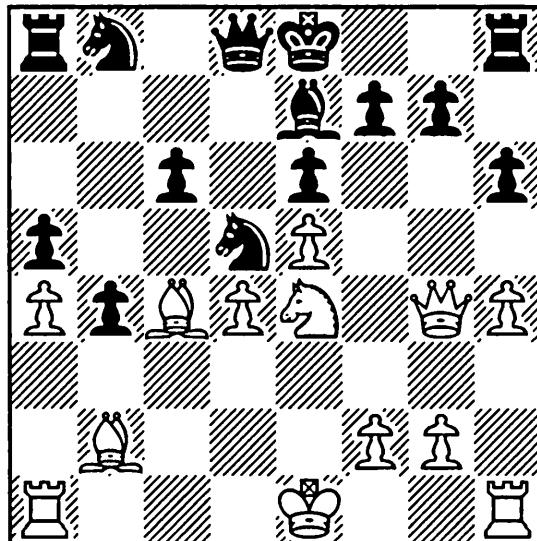
Answer: The main reason White avoided 13 $bxc3$ is that 13... $bxc3$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ gives Black access to the b4-square.

13... $\mathbb{A}xc4$

It's never a bad idea in such positions for Black to reduce the number of attackers on the board. He can also try 13... $cxb2$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 0-0 15 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ f5 17 exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{A}xc4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with sharp play, Li Shilong-Zhou Jianchao, Suzhou 2006. I don't believe Black's chances are any worse.

14 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $cxb2$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ a5 16 $\mathbb{W}g4$

This is the recurring problem with the 8... $\mathbb{A}e7$ line: Black must do something about g7.



Question: Black has three logical options at this point: 16...g6, 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ and 16...0-0. How am I supposed to know which one to pick?

Answer: You are a glutton for punishment! Am I going to be forced to lecture on about the wonders of intuition once again? This is another situation where there may be no correct answer. You play it by feel and head the direction your intuition leads you.

16...g6

Let's take a look at the other options. *Rybka* came up with these scenarios:

a) 16...0-0 17 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 20 h5 f5 21 exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6! 23 $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 24 fxg3 $\mathbb{W}d6$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$. Black stands clearly better in the ending due to his passed b-pawn. White's doubled pawns on the other wing are devalued.

b) 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17 h5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}h3$. It looks to me like White has adequate attacking chances since ...f5 will be risky now for Black.

Conclusion: 16...g6 and 16...0-0 look like better choices for Black than 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$.

17 $\mathbb{R}c1$

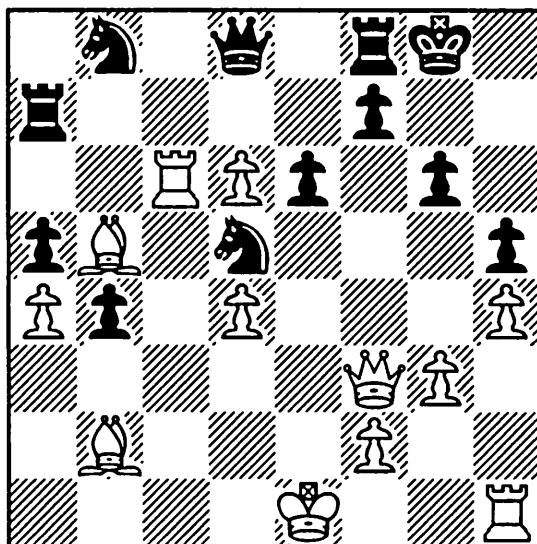
Another option is 17 h5 g5 18 0-0, but preparing an eventual f4 break doesn't look too intimidating from Black's perspective.

17...h5 18 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$

Black consolidates after 21 0-0 0-0 22 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ c5.

21... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 22 exd6 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 0-0 24 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8!$

The clever point: Black regains his pawn. A Henry James character once observed in his novel *Washington Square*: "Do you think it is better to be clever than to be good? You are good for nothing unless you are clever!"



25 $\mathbb{B}c5 \mathbb{W}xd6$

An assessment:

1. White finds himself down a pawn.
2. His bishop pair is equally matched by Black's knights, which may soon control f6 and d5.
3. Black's protected passed b-pawn ensures an ending victory.
4. White enjoys an uncontested dark-squared bishop which, although for the moment is snubbed on b2, has potential to do harm later.

Conclusion: White doesn't have enough for the pawn and must attempt a desperado attack or die trying.

26 g4 hxg4 27 $\mathbb{W}xg4 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 28 h5 $\mathbb{W}f4!$ 29 $\mathbb{W}xf4!$

The trouble is White can't keep queens on the board. If 29 $\mathbb{W}e2$, then 29... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 30 $dxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ shuts down the attack.

29... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 30 $hgx6$

No choice. White is ready to sac an exchange to open the a1-h8 diagonal.

30... $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$

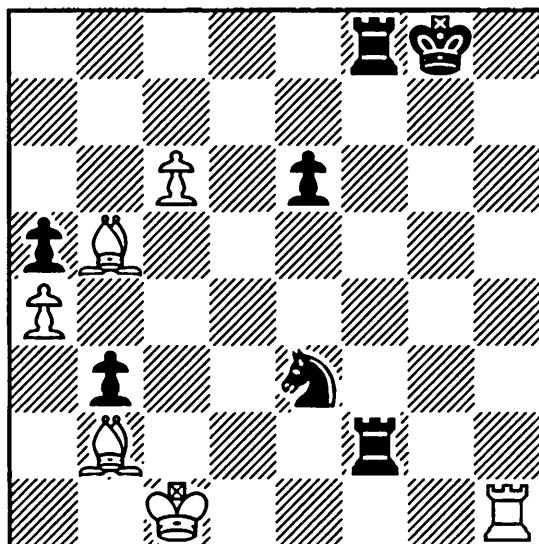
Boldly baring his throat to the hungry wolf that lies in wait on b2. Black is unafraid of ghosts and grabs the exchange, allowing White the long diagonal for his dark-squared bishop.

31 $gxf7+\mathbb{Q}axf7$ 32 $dxc5$

32... $\mathbb{Q}g2+?$

Allowing White right back into the game. 32... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 33 $c6 \mathbb{B}c5$ is the best method of snuffing out White's initiative.

33 $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{B}xf2$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}c1 b3$ 35 $c6 \mathbb{Q}e3$



Exercise (multiple choice): White must find an effective attacking plan.

Your options are: a) 36 c7; b) 36 $\mathbb{Q}g1+$; c) 36 $\mathbb{K}h3$.

There are two reasonable choices, and one false path...

36 $\mathbb{K}h3$?

Answer: Anything but this move!

Both 36 c7 and 36 $\mathbb{Q}g1+$ work. For example:

a) 36 c7! $\mathbb{R}c2+$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ e5 38 $\mathbb{R}c1!$ and Black is struggling due to the combined power of White's c7 passer and bishop pair;

b) 36 $\mathbb{Q}g1+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 37 $\mathbb{R}d3+$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 38 c7 $\mathbb{R}c8$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{R}a2$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{R}xa4$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}b2$. Here also White's paralysing pawn on c7 keeps Black tied down.

36... $\mathbb{R}c2+$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$?

37... $\mathbb{R}ff2!$ is even stronger. After 38 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{R}fd2$ 39 $\mathbb{R}h1$ $\mathbb{R}d5$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{R}d1+$ 41 $\mathbb{R}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 42 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ Black will slowly encroach upon the c-pawn and pick it off after a timely ... $\mathbb{Q}c3+$.

38 $\mathbb{Q}g3+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 39 $\mathbb{R}xb3$ $\mathbb{R}xb2+$ 40 $\mathbb{R}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 42 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 43 $\mathbb{R}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 46 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{R}a8!$ 0-1

Black wins after 47 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ e5 48 $\mathbb{R}b7$ e4!.

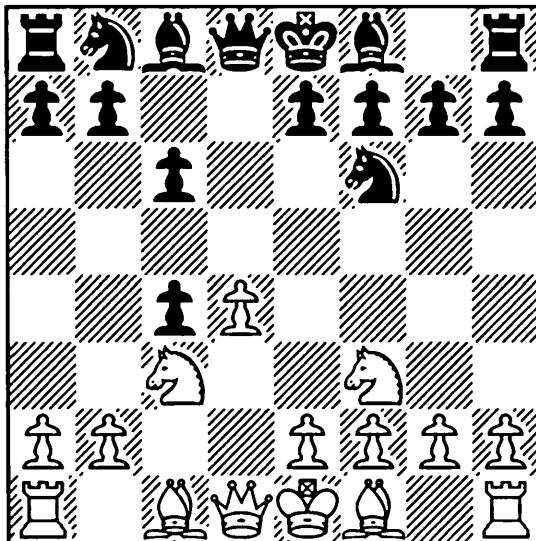
Summary

I prefer 8...h6 over 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, which is also playable but I feel gives White more chances due to his target on g7.

Chapter Five

Fifth Move Alternatives

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxс4



None of White's fifth-move alternatives should keep us up at night tossing about full of angst:

5 e3: The Quiet Line

As the name implies, White plays peacefully and we reach a position akin to a Queen's Gambit Accepted where Black attains easy equality. That's fine with us if the opponent is willing to hand over equality. Our goal: win in 100 moves.

5 g3: The Catalan Gambit

In my bigoted pro-Slav opinion, this is less a gambit and more like a free pawn for Black. If

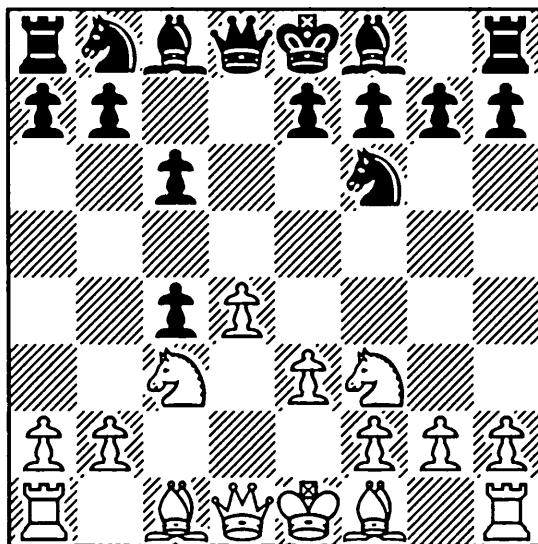
you practice this kind of position, taking the White pieces against *Rybka* and/or *Fritz*, they eat the pawn like a starved man at a buffet and prove to you that the gambit is not so great for White.

5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$: The Catalan Gambit/Benoni

White probably wants a Catalan Gambit but picks a less-than-accurate move order which we meet with 5... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$. This move may be superior to actually allowing White the not-so-great Catalan Gambit. In our version with 5... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$, White typically executes the following unforced knight gyration: $\mathbb{Q}f3$, $\mathbb{Q}e5$, $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ and $\mathbb{Q}e3$. So he uses up four moves to transfer his knight to what appears to me to be a totally idiotic square, blocking his development.

Game 29
L.Cyborowski-L.Fressinet
German League 2009

1 d4 d5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 c4 c6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $dxc4$ 5 e3



This leads to the Quiet Line where positions closely resemble the Queen's Gambit Accepted.

5...b5

Question: Why does Black play ...b5 when he knows he can't hang on to the extra pawn?

Answer: Black can't hang on to the pawn, yet ...b5! is a good move for the following reasons:

1. White loses time in regaining the pawn. ...b4 hits the knight on c3 and sends it to a2 or b1.

2. Black enjoys territorial gains on the queenside. This may later lead to inroads into White's position in endings.

Every alternative for Black is worse:

a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ makes absolutely no sense here, since after 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ e6 White reaches a position clearly superior to what he gets in Chapter 1:

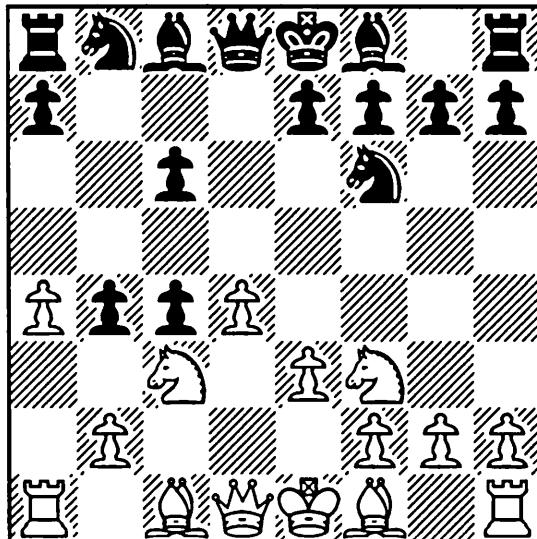
1. White has not weakened his b4-square because his pawn sits on a2 rather than on a4, as in Chapter 1.

2. White is up a tempo over Chapter 1 since he didn't waste a move on a2-a4.

3. After $\mathbb{W}e2$ White is all set to kick the bishop around with e3-e4.

b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e6?!$ has a bad reputation, although it is sometimes utilized as a surprise weapon against a booked up opponent. 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 7 e4 h6 8 exd5 hxg5 9 dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 10 d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ a6 12 $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc4!$ won a pawn in E.Levin-S.Khamitskiy, Peterhof 2007. I don't buy into Black's compensation, and after 14...g5 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5+$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18 0-0-0 White has decent chances to convert his advantage.

6 a4 b4



7 $\mathbb{Q}a2$

Next game we examine the alternative, 7 $\mathbb{Q}b1$.

Question: What are the differences between the two moves?

Answer:

1. When White plays $\mathbb{Q}b1$, he plans $\mathbb{Q}d2$ to recapture the pawn. Black usually responds with ...c3. White's knight will move again. Black's c3-pawn is usually too extended for Black to hang on to it. The trouble for White is when he recaptures the pawn, the game is even since he wastes so much time regaining it.

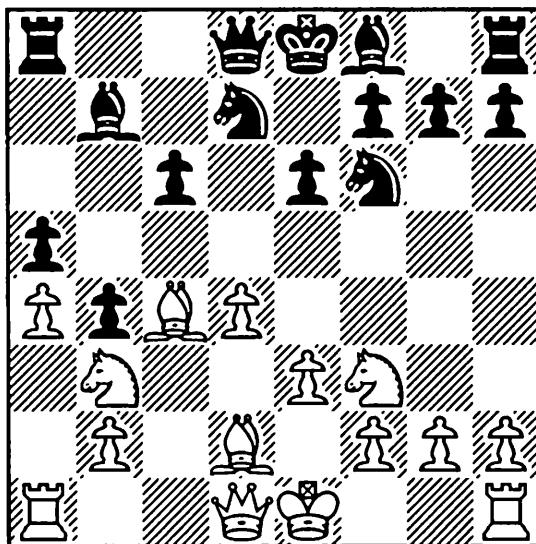
2. When White plays $\mathbb{Q}a2$ he simultaneously hits b4 and c4, ensuring recapture of his missing pawn. The knight is usually then redeployed to b3 via c1 where it eyes Black's ...c5 pawn break. The problem: Black is usually ready to play ...c5 by this time, with equality.

The Slav: Move by Move

7...e6 8 ♜xc4 ♜bd7 9 ♜d2 a5 10 ♜c1 ♜b7

This bishop sits on an excellent diagonal, controlling the key d5- and e4-squares when Black achieves ...c5.

11 ♜b3



Black needs to play ...c5 soon. When he does, his queen will be vulnerable on d8. There are a couple of ways Black may rig his pieces to solve this problem:

1. Black posts his bishop on e7 and his queen on b6, as he does in this game.
2. Black posts his bishop on d6 and his queen on e7.

11...♜e7

An example of Plan 2 would be 11...♜d6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♜e2 c5 14 ♜fd1 ♜e7, where Black has achieved his ...c5 break with harmony.

12 0-0 0-0 13 h3?!

Question: What is the point of White's last move?

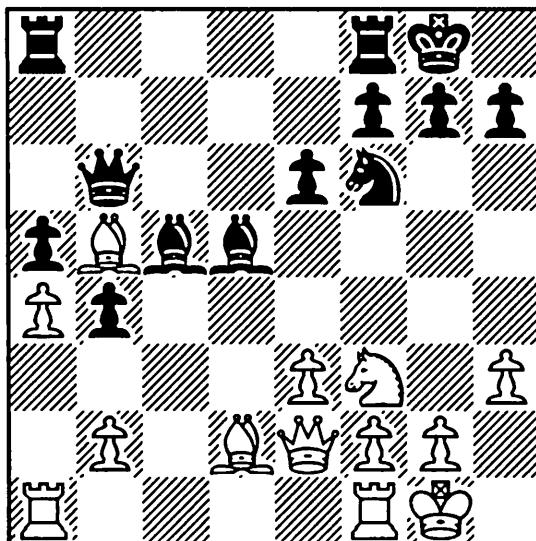
Answer: I don't have a clue! It feels like a lazy move where White just drifts. I suppose he wants to make luft for his king, but he should be developing.

More normal is 13 ♜e2 c5 14 ♜fd1 ♜b6 with full equality, J.Lautier-L.Van Wely, Khanty Mansiysk 2005.

13...c5 14 ♜e2 ♜b6 15 ♜b5 ♜d5! 16 dx5 ♜xc5 17 ♜xc5 ♜xc5

Black already stands a shade better:

1. He has more space on the queenside thanks to his b4-pawn.
2. He controls the e4-square.
3. White's bishop sits awkwardly on d2.
4. White's only plus is that he may later be able to occupy the c4 hole with a piece.



18 ♜e5 ♜fd8 19 ♜d3 ♜e7 20 ♜fc1 ♜e4

The knight will be very annoying here. It may pick off the bishop pair, or White may be forced to weaken with f2-f3 later on if the knight's presence becomes intolerable.

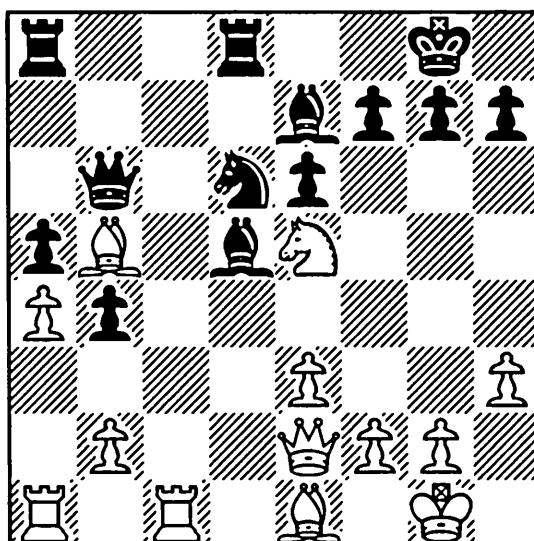
21 ♜e1

White's dorky bishop, deluding himself as a piece full of potential, spurns a swap for Black's powerful knight – a bit like the homely but conceited high school nerd inexplicably turning down a date with the prom queen, reasoning she is not in his intellectual league!

Had White agreed to the exchange, it would be he who would be spurned. Black would reply 21 ♜d1 ♜d6! going after the better bishop on b5.

21...♜d6 22 ♜e5

What goes down must come up!? The knight returns once again, like a distrustful rabbit peering down an unfamiliar hole in the forest. White can't find a plan and now just reacts mechanically to Black's threats.



Exercise: Should Black grab the bishop pair immediately on b5 or continue to build with 22... $\mathbb{B}ac8$? Both moves are good but one may be slightly superior.

22... $\mathbb{B}ac8!?$

Answer: Black is in no hurry and felt his knight did more damage than White's anaemic bishop on b5. Maybe I'm being nitpicky and it may just be a matter of style. I would grab the bishop immediately because it's something tangible. After all, who doesn't want to increase his bank account?

After 22... $\mathbb{B}xb5$, White's position looks devoid of counterplay and his doubled b-pawn is in serious trouble after 23 $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 24 axb5 $\mathbb{A}f6$, while 23 axb5?! $\mathbb{A}d6!$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{B}dc8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ g6 looks terrible for White.

23 $\mathbb{A}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 24 $\mathbb{W}h5$

At last, a superficial show of strength!

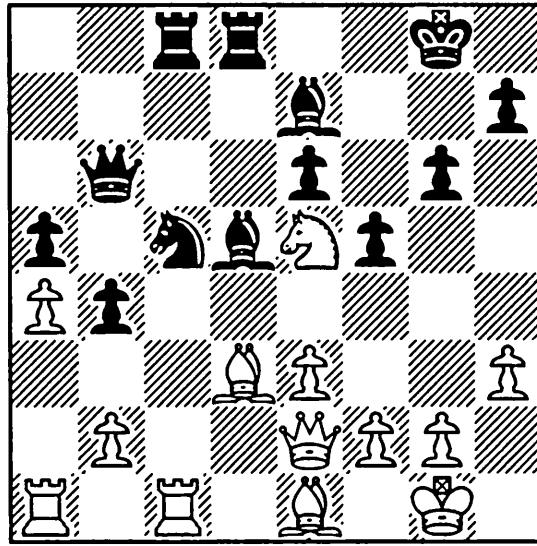
Question: Why doesn't White just boot the knight with 24 f3?

Answer: Black has a trick: 24... $\mathbb{B}xc1$ 25 $\mathbb{B}xc1$ $\mathbb{A}g5!$ 26 $\mathbb{A}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ f5! (threatening ...f4) 28 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c5$, when White's position is on the verge of collapse.

24...g6 25 $\mathbb{W}f3$ f5!

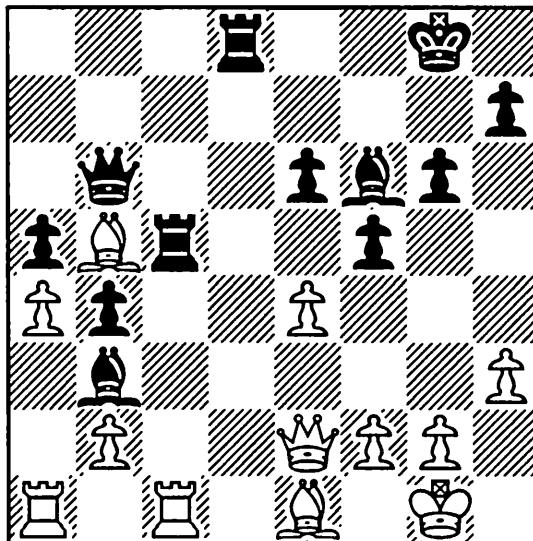
White's knight is unstable on e5 so Black can get away with this move.

26 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$



Targeting a4, b3 and d3. Don't get fooled by the ease with which Black keeps improving his position. A skilled general is almost invisible and his army runs smoothly, as if on its own without the commanding officer's direction. In just this way there is a sense of inevitability about Black's play in this game. We witness subtle strategic magic from Black. It looks easy but in reality, very difficult to emulate.

27 ♜b5 ♜f6 28 ♜d3 ♜b3! 29 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 30 e4?!



White's pieces have been sucked into a black hole of inactivity. His last move looks like complete desperation.

30...♜c7!?

As vapid as it seems, sometimes it is okay to be materialistic! I don't see any reason not to take the pawn with 30...fxe4! 31 ♜xe4 ♜xc1 32 ♜xc1 ♜xb2 33 ♜b1 ♜d5, with an extra pawn and initiative.

31 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 32 exf5 exf5 33 ♜f3?

Cracking under the strain and allowing an invasion on c2. White hangs on longer with 33 ♜f1, but after 33...♜c8 34 ♜d3 ♜d6 35 ♜g1 ♜e5! 36 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 37 ♜b1 ♜a2 38 ♜a1 b3! 39 ♜xa5 ♜xb2 Black's deep b-pawn obviously has more juice than White's a4 passer.

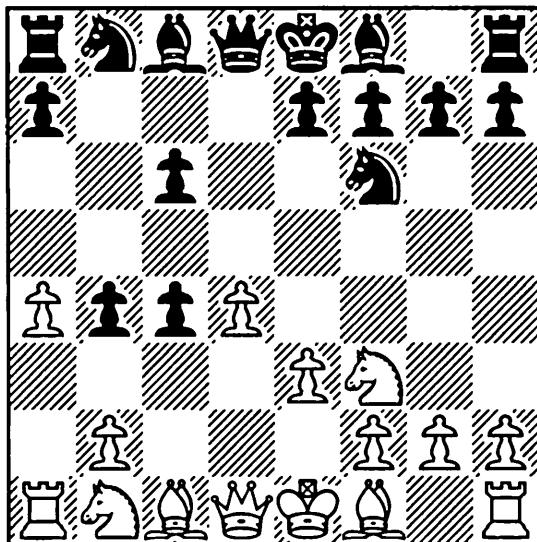
33...♜c2! 34 ♜e3 ♜xb2 35 ♜e7 ♜f8 0-1

Summary

Amazing. Black pulled off a bloodless coup, winning the game without engaging in a single noticeable skirmish. One senses that White lacked the connective tissue to weave together a plan. This game is a good example of how to tangle your opponent up into a knot if he drifts in this line. I used to be afraid of this line, thinking White had an automatic draw out of the opening. Having faced it many times, now I realize that there is no underlying ground or basis for such a fear. White simply hands us equality on a platter. It is our job as Black to slowly improve our position and win these battles.

Game 30
L.Nisipeanu-E.Postny
French League 2008

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 e3 b5 6 a4 b4 7 ♜b1



A move as harmless as its wimpy twin 7 $\mathbb{Q}a2$.

7... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

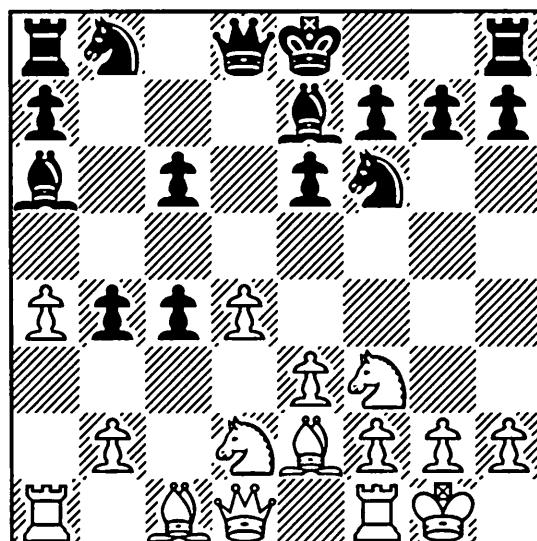
Question: Why play this move when we know White wins his pawn back anyway?

Answer: The idea is to make White sweat a bit before handing back the pawn. The effort White takes to regain the pawn allows us to equalize with comfort.

8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White recognizes there is no rush to regain his pawn and hurries to castle first.

8...e6 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$



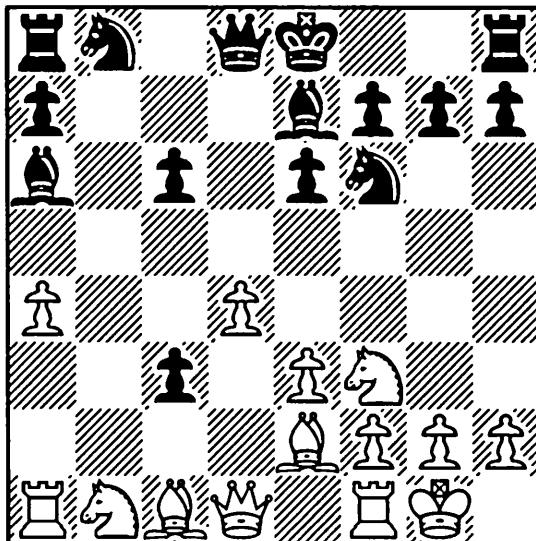
10...c3!

This liquidation is the simplest path to equality.

Question: Can we toss in 10... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ first before playing ...c3?

Answer: Yes, that works too. After 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$ c3 12 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 13 bxc3 bxc3 14 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ a5 16 $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ Black's control over b4 gives him compensation for his slight weakness on c5, G.Flear-A.Kinsman, Paris 1990.

11 bxc3 bxc3 12 $\mathbb{Q}b1$



After 12 moves, White has expended four tempi with his queen's knight to return it to its original square. To be fair though, Black has made an equal number of useless pawn moves on the queenside. Moral: If you waste away a third of your moves don't expect an advantage with White!

12...0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ c5

Black achieved effortless equality.

14 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ cxd4 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xe2$

White hopes he can make something of his control over c6.

17... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 18 $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 19 $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{E}c5$ 20 $\mathbb{E}fc1$ h6?!

I don't understand why he didn't just challenge the file with the simple 20... $\mathbb{E}ac8$, when White has nothing.

21 $\mathbb{Q}cb5$ $\mathbb{E}xc2$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xc2$

White now owns the c-file but this shouldn't lead to real problems for Black.

22... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23 h3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{E}d8$

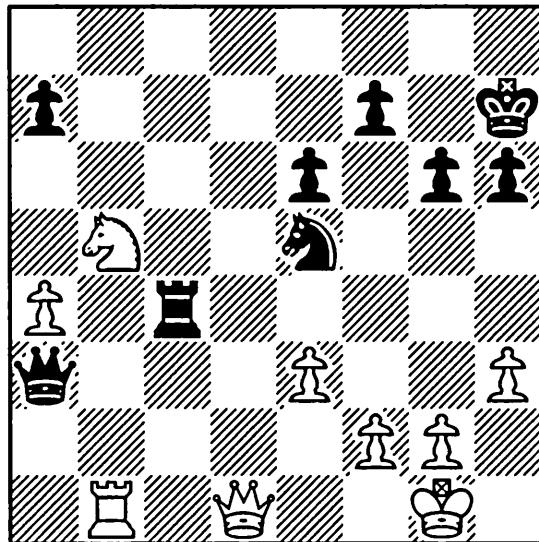
Not falling for the silly trap 24... $\mathbb{E}c8??$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xc2$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ check!

25 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 26 $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 27 $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 28 $\mathbb{W}c2+$ g6 29 $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{E}c5$

White's previous domination of the c-file ends with a whimper.

30 $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{E}c4$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}b5?!$

Wow, Nisipeanu pulls a Mel Gibson and goes bonkers! As we will soon see, the knight takes an obtuse angle toward Black's king.



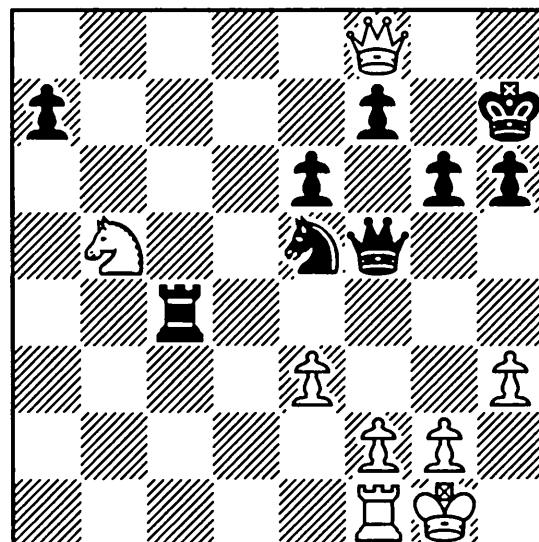
Question: Why did he give up a pawn when he could easily protect it with 31 $\mathbb{E}a1$?

Answer: Mysterious stuff. Nisipeanu avoids going passive at the cost of a full pawn. We are all taught as beginners to avoid passivity. But an entire pawn just to avoid $\mathbb{E}a1$ seems a bit much! However, Nisipeanu goes on to win this one and vindicates his very risky decision.

31... $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 32 $\mathbb{W}d6!$

The key to his counterplay is the weakened dark squares around Black's king.

32... $\mathbb{W}c2$ 33 $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 34 $\mathbb{W}f8$



Exercise (multiple choice): Let's test our analytical abilities here.

Should Black go for 34... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$? If he did, is the result?

- a) White wins; b) Black wins; or c) Draw. Back up your choice with analysis.

Answer: Black should go for it. The correct choice is 'c', 34... $\mathbb{Q}f3+!$ leading to a draw by perpetual check after 35 $gxf3 \mathbb{Q}h4$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{Q}g5+ 37 \mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{Q}xh3+!$

Right around here Black begins to underestimate his opponent's attacking chances and misjudges the position, thinking he is either better or winning. He should take the perpetual.

34... $\mathbb{Q}f6?!$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{Q}c6$

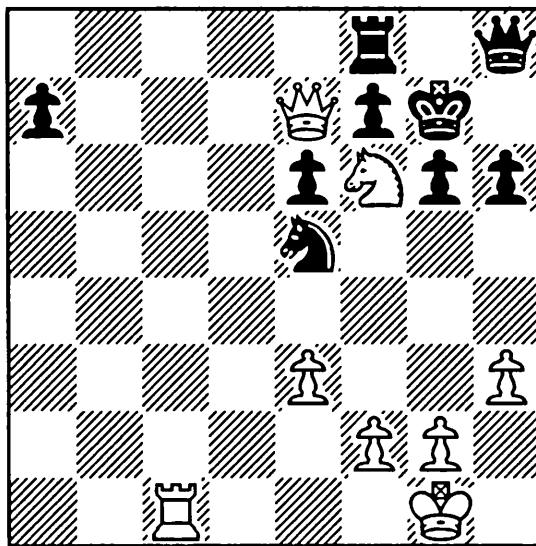
Black could also go with the Neville Chamberlain path of appeasement with 35 ... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}e8 \mathbb{Q}h8$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}e7 \mathbb{Q}g8$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$. The trouble is White still has attacking chances as soon as he activates his rook. Churchill once said, "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last!"

36 $\mathbb{Q}e8! \mathbb{Q}h8$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}e7 \mathbb{Q}c8$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{Q}f8$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}e8! \mathbb{Q}h8$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}f6+$

That wild knight prances around like a runaway garden hose. Meanwhile, Black's king, queen and rook trip over each other, reminding one of the Three Stooges at their best.

41... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Take a look at this position and compare it to the previous diagram. What a tangled mess for Black. Just look at that Nimzowitschian queen on h8! Black's king squeezes into a tight corner and keeps as quiet as possible, hoping he won't be noticed by White's surging pieces.



Exercise (multiple choice): Find White's most deadly attacking plan.

The choices are: a) 42 $\mathbb{Q}c7$; b) 42 f4; c) 42 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ intending $\mathbb{Q}xa7$

Answer: 42 f4!

This move throws a key defender offside. Black can't survive the force of the assault. The less direct 42 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ actually also works, but only because after 42... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ White can still play 43 f4! and if 43... $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}xc7 \mathbb{Q}d3$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}c3!$.

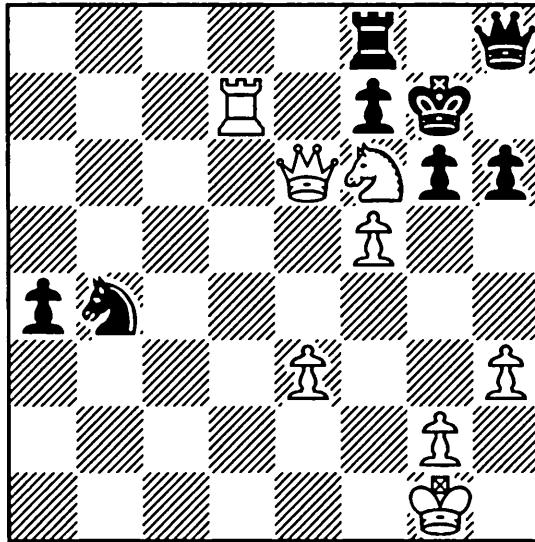
42... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 43 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ a5 44 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

The Slav: Move by Move

44 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is also very strong.

44... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 45 $\mathbb{W}xe6$ a4 46 f5!

The battering ram breaks down Black's protective barrier.



Exercise: Work out the quickest mates after 46...g5 and 46...gxf5.

Answer:

a) 46...g5 47 $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ (a check is not always the best move; I bet you analysed a knight check on h5, didn't you?) 47... $\mathbb{W}h7$ 48 $\mathbb{W}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 49 $\mathbb{Q}xh6+$ mates.

b) 46...gxf5 47 $\mathbb{W}xf5$ a3 48 $\mathbb{W}g4+!$ (this shot is not so easy to see) 48... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 49 $\mathbb{R}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (or 49... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 50 $\mathbb{W}f4$ mate!) 50 $\mathbb{W}d7$ mate!

46...h5 47 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$

47... $\mathbb{Q}xd5??$ 48 $\mathbb{W}xg6$ mate would be cute!

48 $\mathbb{R}xf7!$ $\mathbb{W}a1+$

48... $\mathbb{R}xf7$ 49 fxg6 $\mathbb{W}g7$ 50 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ is not much help either.

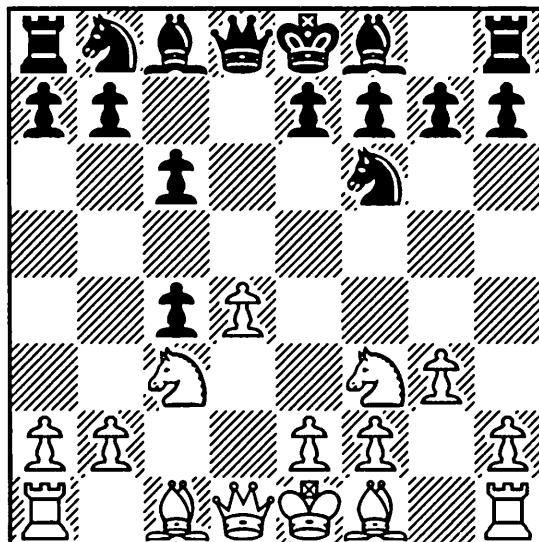
49 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ 1-0

Summary

The Quiet Line, 7 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ and its twin 7 $\mathbb{Q}a2$, both turn out to be duds for White. Our only danger is if we face this line against a lower-rated opponent who wants to draw, in which case we must just patiently outmanoeuvre the opponent.

Game 31
R.Wukits-M.Ragger
Austrian League 2007

1 d4 d5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 c4 c6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx c 4 5 g3



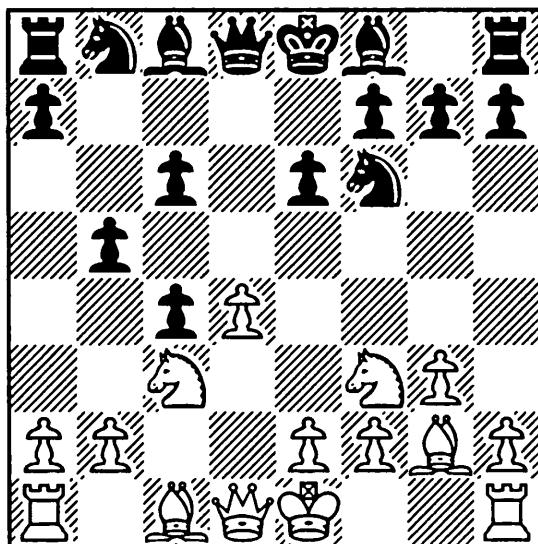
I never really saw what the big attraction was to the Catalan Gambit as White. However, please be warned: I am a notorious bigot when it comes to all things Slav and rush to Black's defence in every line! James Vigus writes, "I have plenty of respect for the Catalan-style gambit 5 g3." I, on the other hand, just see the Catalan as a generous gift of a pawn from my opponent!

My disdain for the Catalan Gambit goes back to a trauma I sustained in 1989. I went into the final round of a weekend tournament leading GM Igor Ivanov by a half point and had command of the White pieces. One look at his rocking gait and his undecipherable scoresheet told me Igor had enjoyed a liquid lunch and was drunk. I had already chalked up the point in my head, and began daydreaming about posing for the photo next to the first-place trophy and how to spend the first prize cheque. At this point of the game, Igor's inebriated state emboldened me to play the Catalan Gambit. What I failed to factor in was that a hammered Igor was possibly still the slight favourite over a sober, tea-swigging me! Igor hung on to his extra pawn like grim death and gave me a beating the way an abusive father would to a disliked stepchild. Igor bumped me out of the main prize money and he did it without breaking a sweat! So even though Igor was drunk, I was the one who suffered the hangover!

Please study this equation carefully: Talent + alcohol > no talent + Catalan Gambit + sobriety!

5...b5 6 ♜g2 e6

6...♝b7 nearly always transposes back to the game position.



7 ♜e5

Threatening both the c6-pawn and ♜xb5. White must react vigorously. If he goofs around he risks consolidation from Black. For example, 7 0-0 ♜b7 8 a4 a6 9 e4?! (too slow in my opinion) 9...♜bd7 10 ♜e2 ♜e7 11 e5 ♜d5 12 ♜e4 h6 13 h4 ♜c7 14 ♜d2 c5 15 axb5 axb5 16 dx5 ♜xa1 17 ♜xa1 ♜xc5 18 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 19 b3 0-0 20 bxc4 bxc4 was M.Ruderfer-A.Karpov, Daugavpils 1971. The c4-pawn is immune, so Black is up a pawn for nothing.

Question: You claim this gambit is barely playable for White, but I seem to get into difficulties defending the Black side. And I would also remind you of Vigus's ominous comment on the Catalan Gambit. What should I do?

Answer: Study it! There is no magic variation for Black. It is up to you to try to understand it. If you just go over a lot of games in this variation you begin to get a feel for how to set up a defence. You also need to know when to play ...c5 and when not to. As your experience grows in the line, so will your confidence in Black's ability to fend off White's initiative.

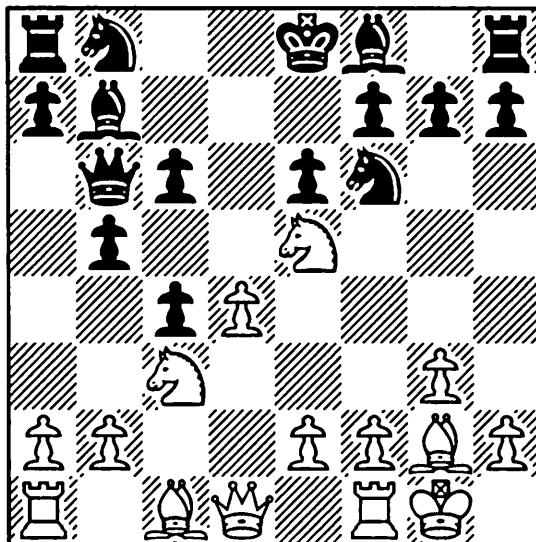
7...♜b6

Alternatively:

a) 7...♜d5 8 a4 f6!? 9 ♜f3 b4 10 ♜e4 ♜e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♜c2 ♜a6 13 ♜h3 f5 14 ♜eg5 b3! and White found it more difficult than expected to regain his pawn in B.Gelfand-A.Shirov, Paris 1992.

b) 7...a6!? offers to return the pawn for gain of time. After 8 ♜xc6 ♜b6 9 ♜e5 ♜b7 10 e4 ♜c6 11 ♜e3 ♜d8 12 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 13 0-0 ♜c5! 14 d5 ♜b6 I like Black's chances against the d5-pawn, M.Matlakov-I.Cheparinov, Sestao 2010.

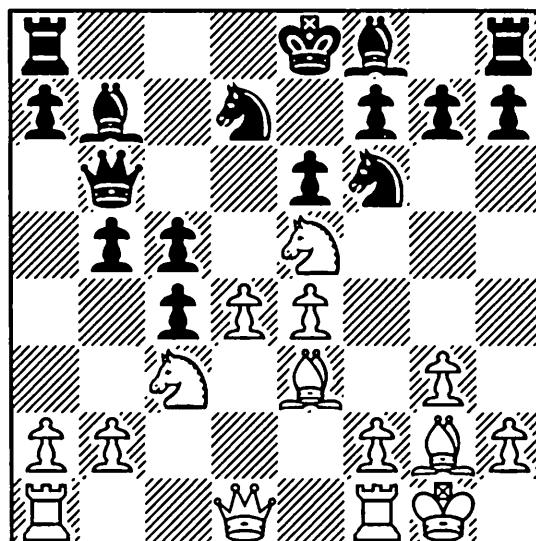
8 0-0 ♜b7



9 e4

9 a4 is also dangerous, keeping the diagonal open, e.g. 9...a6 10 b3! (giving up a second pawn for initiative) 10...cxb3 (*Rybka* suggests 10...d5!?) 11 $\mathbb{W}xb3 \mathbb{W}xd4$ 12 axb5 axb5 13 $\mathbb{B}xa8 \mathbb{B}xa8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ gave White an admittedly scary development lead for the pawns in P.Tregubov-A.Fier, Barcelona 2009. Maybe Vigus was right after all!

9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c5?



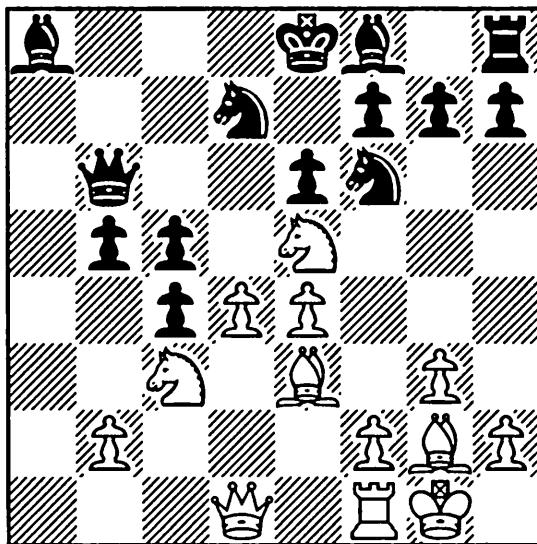
Question: This looks risky. Isn't Black breaking one of your most sacred principles, namely, he's opening the game when behind in development?

Answer: True, but he also follows one, which states: Chip away at your opponent's centre if he has a space advantage. Black intuitively feels he can get away with this move and castle to safety before trouble arises in the centre.

10... $\mathbb{B}d8$ 11 $\mathbb{W}e2$ c5 12 $\mathbb{B}ad1$ cxd4 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd7 \mathbb{B}xd7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{B}xd1$ 16 $\mathbb{B}xd1$

gxf6 was played in H.Pohjala-K.Kulon, Novi Sad 2007. Rybka claims White has compensation for the pawn, probably due to the insecure situation of Black's king. Here White should have played this way: 17 $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0-0 18 e5 $\mathbb{A}xg2$ 19 exf6 $\mathbb{A}xf2+$ 20 $\mathbb{K}xg2$ $\mathbb{A}e3$ with an unclear position.

11 a4 a6 12 axb5 axb5 13 $\mathbb{A}xa8+$ $\mathbb{A}xa8$



Exercise: Is it worth it to gain a tempo with 14 $\mathbb{W}a1$, which hits Black's loose bishop and clears d1 for his rook?

14 $\mathbb{W}a1$!?

Answer: White can't play this line and then drift. Black's bishop simply moves. Later on Black may, in fact, gain a tempo on White's queen with ... $\mathbb{A}a8$. White's queen was better placed on d1 where she could help out with the d5 central break.

White must react with force. For example, 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 15 d5! e5? (15... $\mathbb{A}e7$! offers at least equal chances) 16 $\mathbb{A}h3!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17 b3! and White opened the position before Black was ready in G.De Boer-A.Bang, Copenhagen 1986.

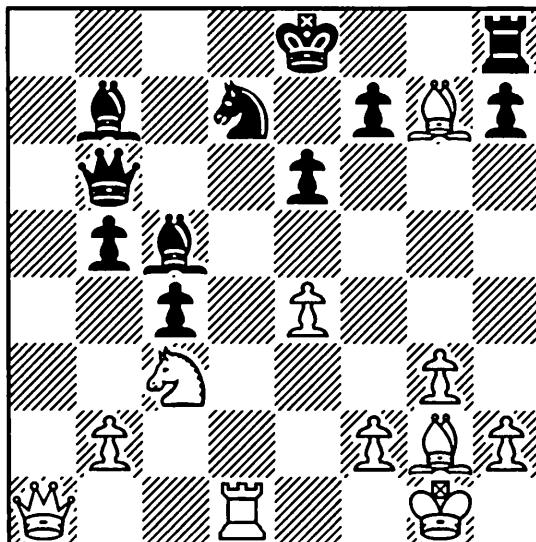
14... $\mathbb{A}b7$ 15 $\mathbb{A}d1$!?

Too slow. He had to try 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 16 d5 $\mathbb{A}e7$, although even then I like Black's chances.

15... $\mathbb{C}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{A}xd4$ $\mathbb{A}c5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 18 $\mathbb{A}xg7$!?

White gets into a knife fight with his opponent but forgets his knife at home! This move creates unintended consequences, speeding up his loss. White's king is harmed more than Black's by this trade-off.

That said, by now nothing really works for White. For example, 18 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 19 b3 $\mathbb{A}a8$ 20 $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{C}xb3$! 21 $\mathbb{A}xg7$?? (if 21 $\mathbb{W}xb3$ White is just down a clear pawn after 21...b4) 21... $\mathbb{A}a2$ wins.

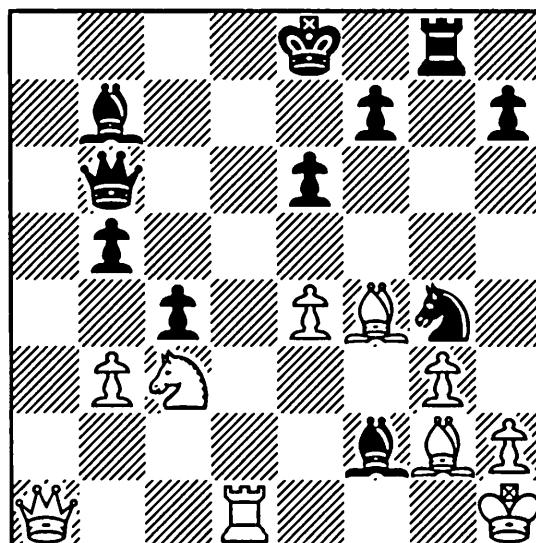


18... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{B}g8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{Q}e5$

... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ are in the air.

21 b3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

A cry for help more than a sac. If White tries the calmer 22 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ then Black has a trick:



Exercise: Find a knockout punch for Black in this position.

Answer: 22... $\mathbb{Q}e1!$. After this clearance shot White has no good defence to the monster knight check coming on f2:

a) 23 $\mathbb{B}xe1 \mathbb{Q}f2+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}g1 \mathbb{Q}h3+$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{W}g1+$ (this smothered mate is so routine that it doesn't deserve an exclam!) 26 $\mathbb{B}xg1 \mathbb{Q}f2$ mate.

b) 23 h3 $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xc3 \mathbb{Q}xd1$ 26 $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{W}d8$ wins a full rook.

22... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 0-1

It's time to turn out the lights. Black threatens ... $\mathbb{N}xb5$ as well as ... $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$.

Summary

Maybe the post traumatic stress disorder sustained from the loss to Igor Ivanov in 1989 permanently impaired my ability to detect danger from the Catalan Gambit! Nevertheless, I stubbornly stick to my guns and declare to you that the gambit is semi-sound at best for White.

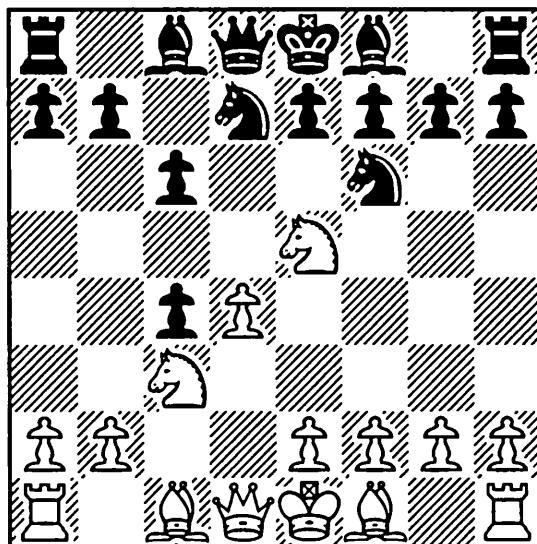
Game 32
S.Mamedyarov-V.Topalov
Benidorm (rapid) 2003

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxcc4 5 ♜e5?!

I believe this is an inaccurate move order for White if he wants to go for a Catalan Gambit ($5.g3$ is better).

5...bd7!

As in Chapter 2, we meet ♜e5 with ...♝bd7. This line is just a lot simpler and probably stronger than 5...b5!? 6 g3 ♛b7 7 ♛g2 a6 which gives the position a Catalan Gambit flavour.



6 ♗xc4

6 f4?! b5! 7 ♜xc6 ♛b6 8 ♜e5 e6 9 e3 ♜b7, as played in O.Romanishin-V.Akopian, Linares 1996, leaves White with a rather shaky looking Reversed Stonewall Dutch formation. Black's clamp on e4 gives him the edge.

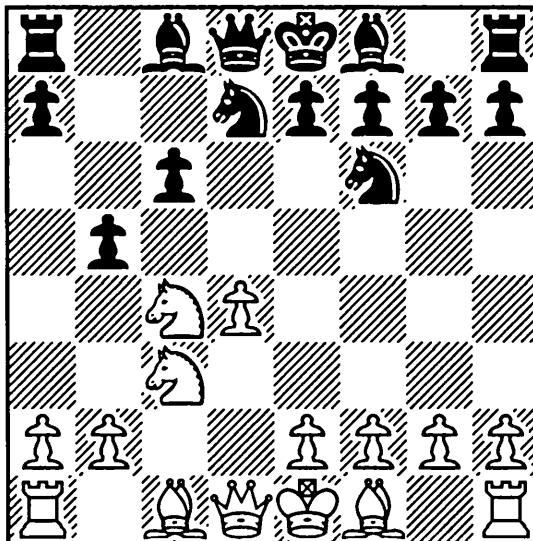
Question: How about gambiting the pawn with 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 7 e4 b5?

Answer: White doesn't have enough compensation.

Question: Why?

Answer: He played $\mathbb{Q}f3$, $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and $\mathbb{Q}xd7$, which blew two tempi. So White is actually technically behind in development, as well as a pawn down.

6...b5!



This is the problem for White, whose knight gets kicked around until kingdom come. Unlike in Chapter Two, 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ is not very effective here. After 7 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ b5 9 $\mathbb{Q}d3$! $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ White has the edge due to his superior pawn structure, M.Sadler-J.Hector, London 1991.

7 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White invested four moves to bring the knight to an awkward square.

After 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 8 e4 e5 9 dxе5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 10 $\mathbb{W}c2$ a6 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5 I already prefer Black, who has control over d4, H.Wirthensohn-D.Komarov, Ticino 1993.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 8 g3

Question: Why would White play such a move if he sees that Black will play ...c5 next move?

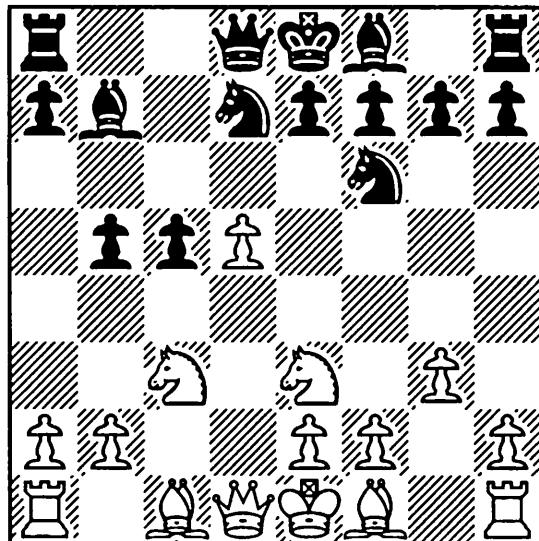
Answer: Believe it or not, he has nothing better. That awkward knight on e3 plugs up White's development. In fact, every single game in my database continued with 8 g3.

Let's look for another idea if 8 g3 bothers you so much: 8 a3 e6 9 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ preparing e4. This just looks like a typical Semi-Slav position for Black. It appears White may have just lost his mind and played the random manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}f3$, $\mathbb{Q}e5$, $\mathbb{Q}xc4$, $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$. So five moves to get to c2 – not such a great bargain for White!

8...c5 9 d5

Welcome to the Slav Benoni! Nobody would believe this arose from a Slav.

9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ isn't exactly inspirational either. 9... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11 dxс5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e6 13 0-0 $\mathbb{W}b7$ gave Black a very nice looking Catalan in J.Timman-V.Topalov, Sarajevo 1999.



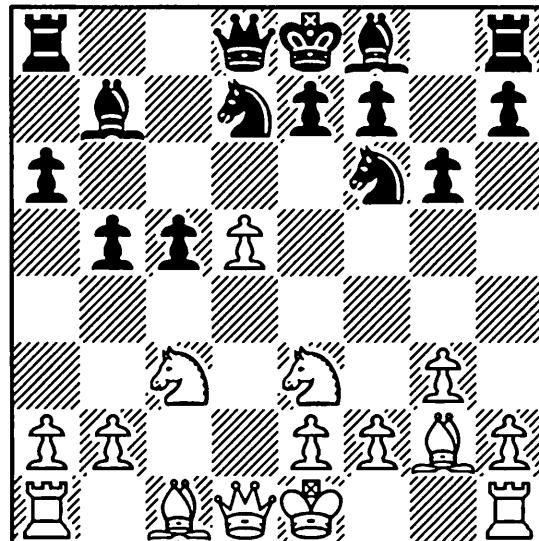
9...a6!

This is the most accurate of Black's options:

a) 9...b4?! 10 ♜a4 e6 11 dxe6 fxe6 (Black's bishop doesn't escape from h1 if he gets greedy and takes the rook) 12 ♜g2 ♜xg2 13 ♜xg2 was N.Sulava-C.Horvath, Budapest 1990. At least in this position White can play on Black's slight pawn weakness at e6.

b) 9...♜b6?! 10 ♜g2 ♜d7 11 a4 b4 12 a5 bxc3 13 axb6 and White stands slightly better, C.De Saegher-P.Boersma, Netherlands League 1994.

10 ♜g2 g6



Question: What are you getting me into? I am a Slav player and don't understand such positions!

Answer: I will let you in on a little secret. It's a Benoni, but a strange one, like one from a Salvador Dali painting. White's knight awkwardly blocks his e-pawn and the black pawn

which should be on d6 (in a real Benoni) sits oddly on e7. Overall I think this is a good trade-off for Black, who achieves dynamic equality. And don't worry, you have my assurance that your opponent will be just as confused as you are!

11 0-0 ♖g7 12 a4!

After 12 ♖c2 0-0 13 ♖d1 ♖c8 14 b3 ♖b6 15 ♖b2 ♖h6! 16 ♖f1 c4 17 b4 ♖g4 18 e3 ♖ge5 Black is infiltrating with initiative, A.Yermolinsky-W.Kobese, Hyderabad 2002.

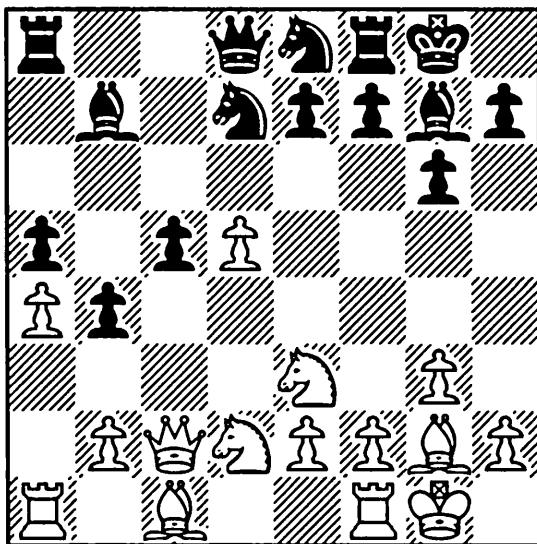
12...b4

Black's pawns become vulnerable if he tries to avoid accepting a hole on c4 with 12...♖b6?! 13 ♖b3 c4? 14 ♖b4!.

13 ♖b1

The fight is on for the c4-square.

13...a5 14 ♖c2 0-0 15 ♖d2 ♖e8!



Nice positional play:

1. Black's bishop on g7 comes alive.
2. Black sends his f6-knight over to help with the battle for c4.
3. Black inconveniences White, who wants to play b2-b3 and ♖b2 to challenge the long diagonal.

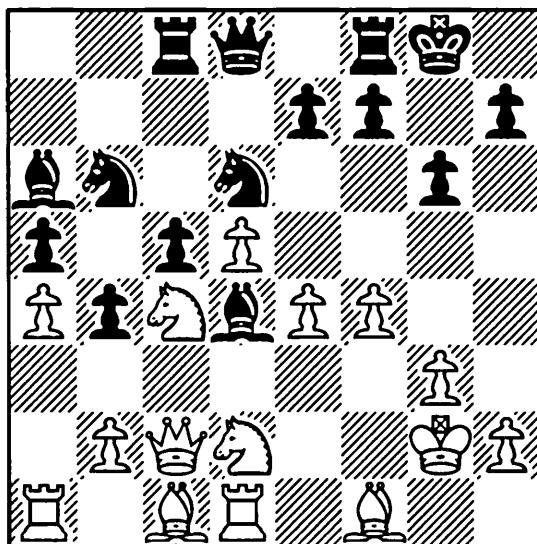
16 ♖ec4 ♖d6 17 e4

At long last he activates his central pawn majority.

17...♖a6 18 ♖d1 ♖c8 19 f4!?

Thematic but weakening. White can also try the more conservative 19 ♖h3.

19...♗b6 20 ♖f1 ♖d4+ 21 ♖g2



Exercise: Black has two(!) combinations in this position.
See if you can find at least one of them.

Answer: 21...Qdxc4!

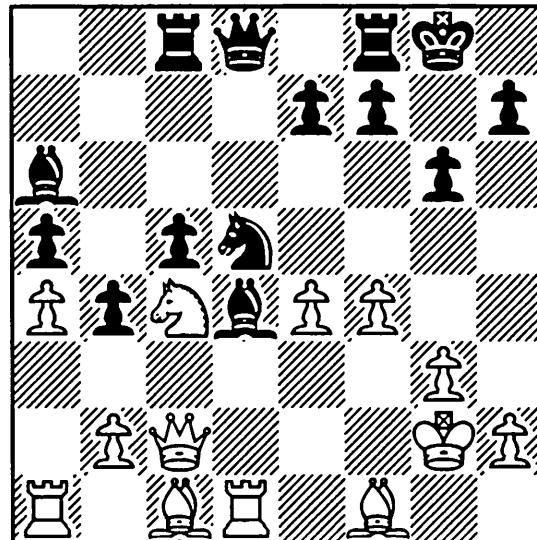
21...Qdxc4! 22 Qxc4 b3! also works for Black and may even be stronger than Topalov's choice. After 23 Wxb3 Qxe4 White faces big problems:

1. Black will exert pressure down the b-file;
2. White's once proud centre has been chopped down; and
3. The d5-pawn is in trouble.

22 Qxc4

If 22 Qxc4 Qxc4 23 Qxc4 Black has 23...f5!.

22...Qxd5!



The point of Topalov's combination: the knight can't be touched in view of 23 exd5?? $\mathbb{W}xd5+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}h5+$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7+$ 26 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ mate.

23 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d2?$!

In desperation White sacs a second pawn.

25 e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ doesn't bother Black since he challenges the long diagonal on b7 and redeploy his knight via g7. Still, this is how White should continue.

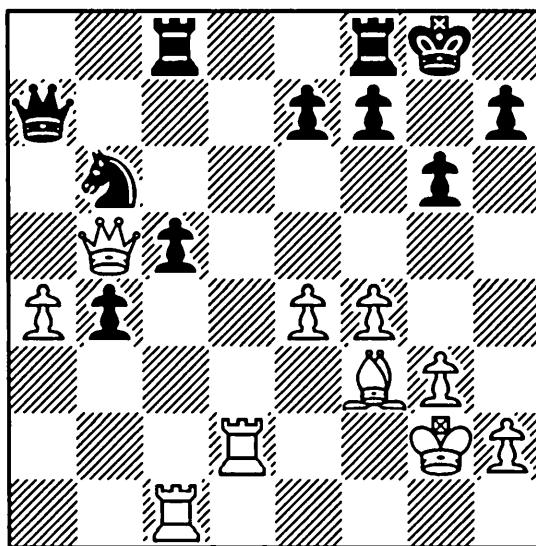
25... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 26 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}bc1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Preparing to eject the White queen from c4. Once the blockade is broken, Black's pawns roll forward. 28...e5! looks good too.

29 $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$

Hoping to confuse matters. However, the move isn't much of a remedy. To be fair though, passive defence was also hopeless.

29...axb4 30 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 32 $\mathbb{W}b5$



Exercise: Is 32... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ possible? Calculate the possibilities.

Answer: Yes!

32... $\mathbb{Q}xa4!$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}a1$

33 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ fails to 33... $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}a2+$.

33... $\mathbb{Q}c3!$

This is the trick which allows Black to escape the pin.

34 $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 35 e5 c4 36 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 37 e6 f5 38 h4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ c3 40 $\mathbb{Q}aa7$ c2! 0-1

In many ways Topalov is a simple man who wants only one thing in life: His way! 41 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7!$ 42 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ c1 \mathbb{W} ends White's would-be attack and leaves Black up a rook.

Summary

If White wants a Catalan Gambit against the Slav, he should probably use the 5 g3 move order. After 5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$ Black forces White into an inferior Catalan or Benoni.

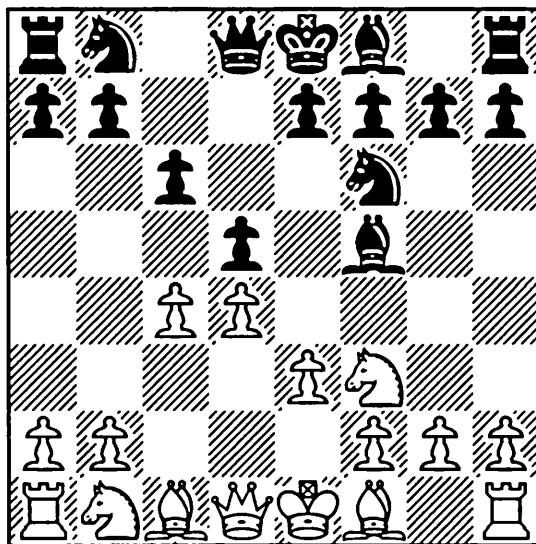
Chapter Six

4 e3 Lines and 3 c3 dxc4

In this chapter we examine two White setups involving e2-e3, plus a third-move divergence on Black's part. Let's avoid our theoretical cousin, the Semi-Slav, and try a couple of alternatives for Black. Don't worry, I'm not going to try to sell you weird lines. Luckily for us, the Slav is a many splendored thing and there are multiple playable options.

White sets up with f3 and e3

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 f3 f6 4 e3

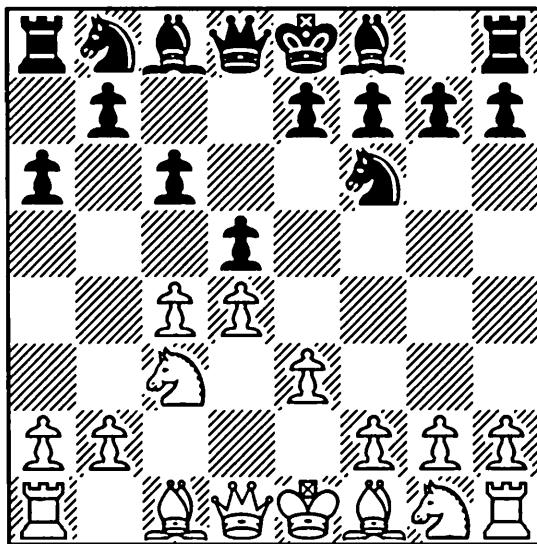


This is one of White's most fashionable and also most deadly options. Both of Kramnik's losses to Topalov in their World Championship match were with Black in this line. In this case I suggest the Reversed London. The albatross across our neck is that White chases

down our f5-bishop with ♜h4 and is content to nurse his bishop-pair strategic advantage. Inarkiev-Shirov (Game 35) is a good example of how to aggressively deal this line an unexpected blow in pure London style.

White sets up with ♜c3 and e3

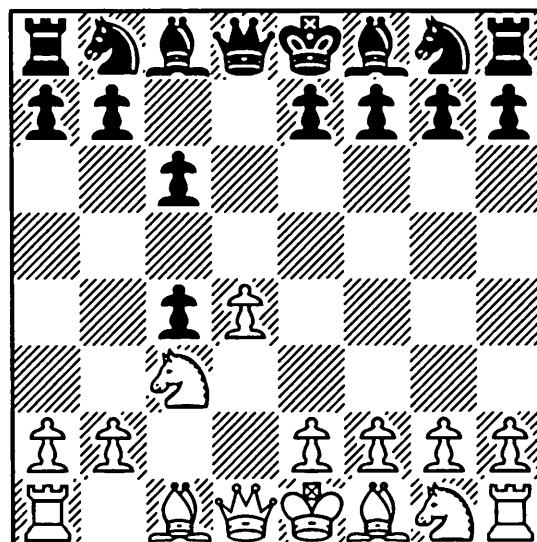
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 4 e3 a6



White can also play the ♜c3/e3 setup. Here the Reversed London doesn't work well for Black, so I suggest the 4...a6 Chebanenko Slav (Games 36-37). There is no need to study the entire Chebanenko. Instead we order our opening à la carte and only deal with the 4...a6 lines where White commits to ♜c3 and e3, which limits our homework.

3 ♜c3 dxc4

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3 dxc4



Sometimes a war between two parties spills into a neighbouring country. In this case we look at a third-move alternative for Black, 3...dxc4, in a chapter on 4 e3! This is in case you still don't like the Chebanenko, even after my sales pitch on it!

3...dxc4, which can only really be played if White chooses the 3 ♜c3 move order, is gaining popularity along with the ...a6 Slav lines and is a good way to throw most White players out of their normal stride. See *Deep Fritz-Kramnik* (Game 38).

Game 33
L.Sussman-C.Lakdawala
Gambito (rapid), San Diego 2009

My buddy, Lenny Sussman, is under tremendous pressure each time we play. The reason: I usually give him a lift home after our Saturday Gambito tournaments, and threaten to stand him up and make him take the bus home if he beats me. (Lasker: "The threat is stronger than the execution!")

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3

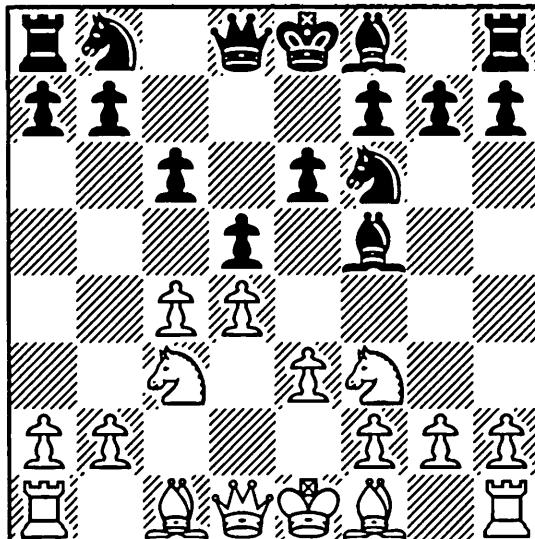
White can also play 3 e3 before committing either of his knights. Then 3...♝f6 transposes to this chapter after either 4 ♜f3 or 4 ♜c3, while 3...♞f5 is also fine for Black (see Game 1).

3...♝f6 4 e3 ♞f5

We meet White's setup with a Reversed London System. I have found that Slav players are happiest with our bishops perched nobly on f5.

To save space we won't cover 4...♝g4 (the Reversed Torre) or 4...e6 (the Semi-Slav), which of course, the reader may play if he or she has experience and familiarity with either.

5 ♜c3 e6



6 ♞e2

A quiet and harmless response. Lenny is a man of peace, and happy to draw and still get

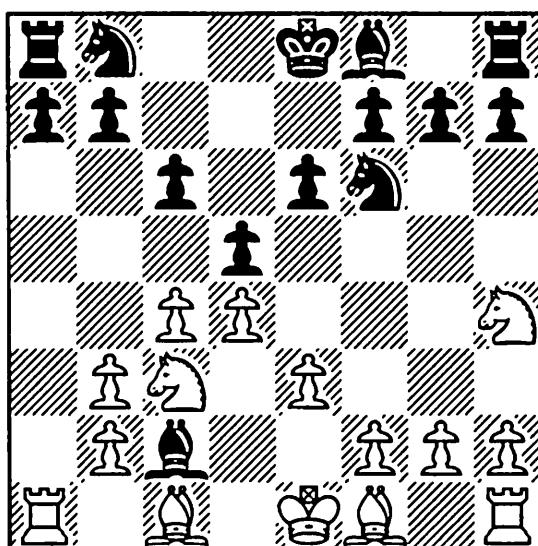
a lift home. Next game we examine White's most dangerous line 6 ♜h4!, going after the bishop pair.

Some alternatives:

a) 6 ♜d3 ♜g6 7 0-0 ♜bd7 8 ♜xg6?! (there is very little profit for White in opening the h-file) 8...hxg6 9 ♜e2 (9 ♜d3 is better) 9...♜e4! 10 ♜xe4 dxe4 11 ♜d2 ♜h4 12 h3 ♜f6 (threatening the plan ...♜d6, ...O-O-O and ...g5) 13 f3 exf3 14 ♜xf3?! ♜g3 15 e4 (15 ♜h1? g5) 15...♜xh3 16 e5 ♜g4 17 ♜e1 (perhaps White should try 17 ♜f4 ♜xf4 18 gxh3 ♜e3 where Black has a lot for the exchange) 17...♜xe1 18 ♜xe1 ♜h8 and White didn't have any compensation for the pawn in P.Nikolic-V.Ivanchuk, Kemer 2007.

b) 6 ♜b3 ♜b6 and now:

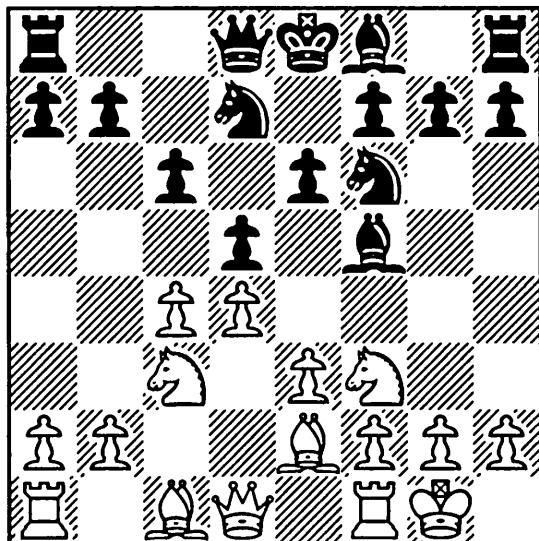
b1) I sometimes get the blunder 7 ♜h4? in blitz: 7...♜xb3 8 axb3 ♜c2! picks off a pawn:



b2) 7 c5 ♜c7 8 ♜h4 ♜e4 9 f3 ♜g6 10 ♜xg6 hxg6 11 f4 ♜bd7 12 g3 b6 (breaking down his space advantage and forcing a swap of his c-pawn for my a-pawn) 13 cxb6 axb6 14 ♜g2 ♜d6, "sovaco"-C.Lakdawala, Internet (blitz) 2009. Black later plays ...c5 or ...b5, giving him counterplay.

c) 6 cxd5 exd5 (to break the symmetry) 7 ♜d3 (this is White's good bishop) 7...♜xd3 8 ♜xd3 ♜d6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♜b1 ♜e7 11 a3 a5 (making it tough for White to start a minority attack) 12 ♜c2 ♜bd7 13 h3 ♜fe8 14 a4!? ♜e4 15 ♜xe4 dxe4 16 ♜d2 ♜f6 17 g3?! h5 18 ♜c4 ♜c7 19 b3 ♜e6 20 ♜g2 ♜d5 21 ♜d2 ♜f5 22 ♜d1 ♜e6 23 ♜e2 ♜g6, R.Aeria-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (rapid) 2008. Black is attacking whereas White doesn't have much going on the opposite wing.

d) 6 b3 ♜b4! 7 ♜d2 0-0 8 a3 ♜d6 and Black has equalized comfortably. White's extra move ♜d2 hurts him more than it helps, since the bishop is in the way and belongs on b2.
6...♜bd7 7 0-0



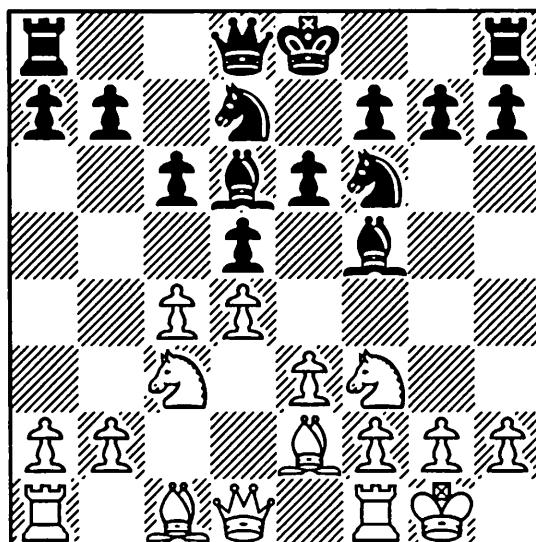
Question: Why didn't you play 6...h6 to preserve your bishop, and why didn't White go after the bishop next move?

Answer: Well, a couple of reasons:

1. Most Londoners and Slav players (this elite group of champions includes Reversed Londoners) are not afraid of $\mathbb{Q}h4$. We give up our bishop for White's knight all the time. In Chapter 1, for example, Black improves his pawn structure and creates an imbalance which is sometimes not so bad if you are the higher-rated player going for the win. So I won't bother with ...h6 this early.

2. If White was going to play $\mathbb{Q}h4$, he would almost certainly have done so on move 6 instead of tossing in 6 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ first. What I am saying is that the move is very playable and probably a good move for White, but psychologically it's not likely. Still, I must admit you are right. I should have tossed in 6...h6 (or 7...h6) when given a chance.

7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

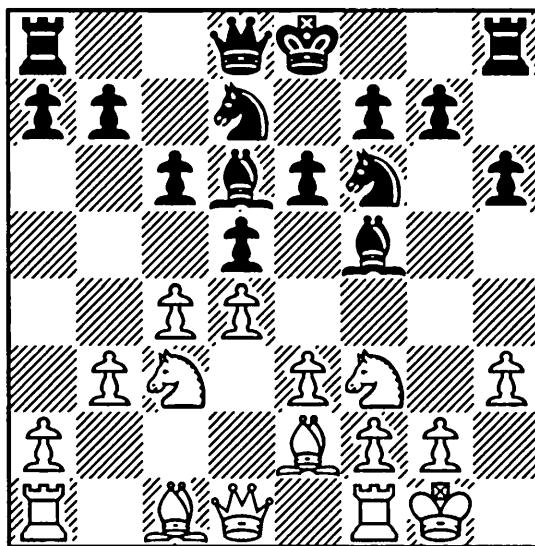


8 h3?

This innocent-looking move is not a good idea. Black may later engineer a pawn storm to exploit it. He should play 8 ♜h4! ♜g6 reaching Topalov-Kramnik (Game 34), which I don't like for Black, and crucially avoiding the continuation in Inarkiev-Shirov (Game 35) which I do like. So I concede, 7...h6! is probably best.

8...h6

There! Everyone happy? I preserved my bishop.

9 b3**9...0-0-0?!**

Question: Since White committed to an early h3 and you haven't yet castled kingside, is it possible to take the berserker route with 9...♜e7 10 ♜b2 g5! and castle queenside?

Answer: Your plan looks very strong, albeit risky, and I actually considered it during the game.

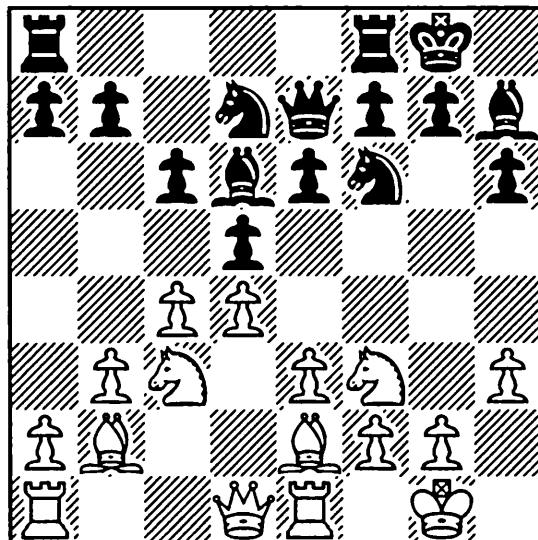
Question: And your reason for rejecting it was...?

Answer: Fine, I see you are hell bent on extracting a confession. I rejected it out of over-caution. I was in that awful place I talked about earlier in the book – the tournament leader going into the final round, and The Leader Syndrome (a fancy term for chickenitis) kicked in, so I took the solid route and wimped out.

10 ♜b2 ♜e7

White has played too quietly for an opening advantage.

11 ♜e1 ♜h7



Question: Why this unforced retreat?

Answer: I am glad you asked. I was full of remorse about chickening out of the ... $\mathbb{W}e7$ and ... $g5!$ plan earlier and I decided to make bold amends. My new plan: ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ followed by ... $f5$ and even ... $g5$.

12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$

White is ready for e3-e4, so I stop that idea with my next move.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$

Oh goody! An imbalance. I expected something like 13 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $f5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}f6!$ to keep control over e5. Black follows with ... $g5$ and attacks the kingside.

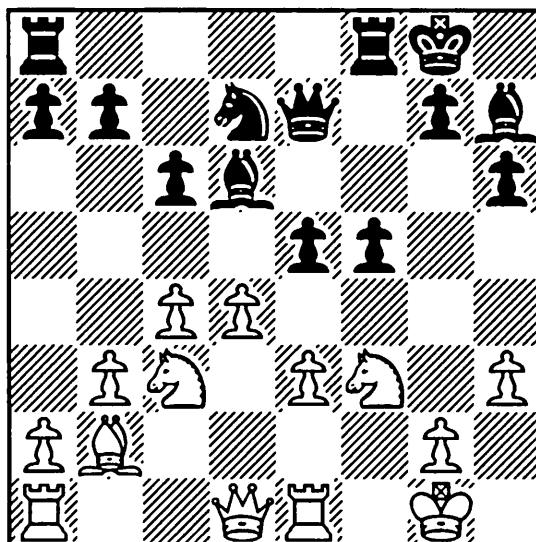
13... $dxe4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $f5$ 15 $f3$

A natural move to challenge e4, but it opens the game for Black's bishops and may do more harm than good. I was concerned about the plan of planting a knight on d6: 15 c5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $e5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $exd4$ 19 $exd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 20 $cxd6$ $\mathbb{W}h4$. In the end I still felt Black had good chances for a successful kingside attack with that rolling kingside majority.

15... $exf3$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

16 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $e5$ is similar to the game continuation.

16... $e5$



Principle: Open the game when you own the bishop pair.

17 ♜e2 e4

Question: You just made the game more closed didn't you?

Answer: Yes, seizing space instead. Stay flexible. Chess is a game of bargaining and negotiations.

18 ♜d2 ♕g5?!

I'm not sure whether this move is a waste of time or not:

1. I was afraid he would play c5, ♜c4, ♜a3 and ♜d6, so I forced his knight to f1.
2. My queen is in the way of a kingside pawn storm with ...g5.

Conclusion: It's a reasonable trade-off for Black. I just didn't want to see a white knight in my face on d6.

19 ♜f1

The Maginot Line strategy. White digs in and surrounds his king with defenders.

19...♜ae8 20 ♜d2 ♜e7

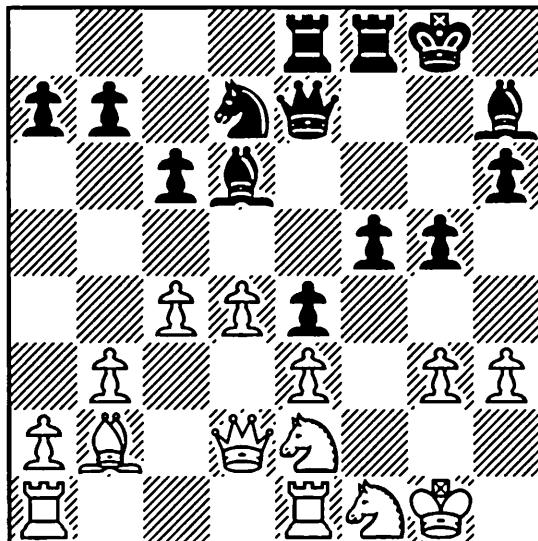
I can't do this with pieces alone and need to begin a pawn storm, so the queen retreats and clears the way for ...g5.

21 g3?!

Interesting. He beefs up control of f4 at the cost of weakening his king and the f3-square. The alternative is to go for a queenside or central plan: 21 a3 g5 22 d5 ♜e5 23 dxc6 bxc6 24 ♜ed1 ♜d3 25 b4 c5 26 ♜c3 ♜xb2 27 ♜xb2 ♜e5 28 ♜c2 f4 29 ♜d5 ♜e6 and ...f3 soon arrives with great force.

21...g5

Obviously dangerous due to White's potential on the a1-h8 diagonal, but there is also danger to his king.



Question: Why play ...g5 now when you rejected it on your sixth move?

Answer: You underestimate the power of redemption. Just because one made a poor decision earlier in the game doesn't mean one is fated to repeat the same mistake in the present. ...g5 is thematic, and honestly, I didn't see how else to conduct the attack.

22 ♖h1 ♕g6

f3-square, here I come!

23 ♔h2 ♔h7

A good precaution to get my king off the g-file. I expose my own king in the line 23...♔h5 24 ♖g2 ♕xe2 25 ♜xe2 f4 26 exf4 gxf4 27 gxf4 ♜xf4 28 ♖h1.

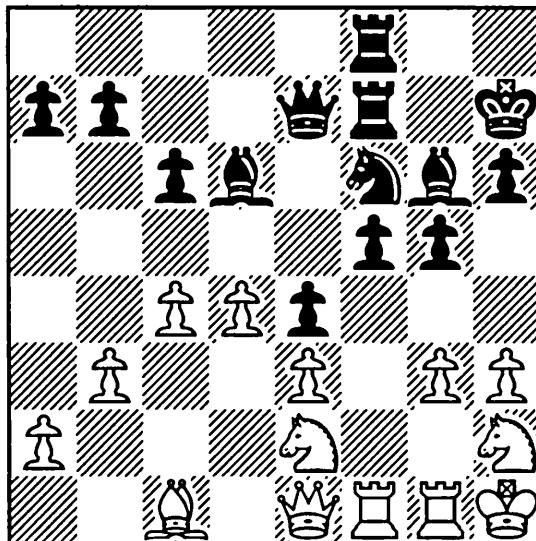
24 ♜g1 ♜f7 25 ♜af1 ♜ef8 26 ♜c1

There is not even a pretext of queenside or central counterplay! White's goal/obsession is to prevent ...f4, avoid loss and still get his lift home!

26...♞f6

Since White makes no effort for queenside or central play, Black has all day. The knight may head for h5.

27 ♜e1



Exercise (planning): We often find ourselves at such impasses. We are aware that we have an excellent position, but they don't win themselves unless the opponent goes bonkers. In this case it is clear White sits and waits. So how to make progress? Try to create a concrete plan for Black.

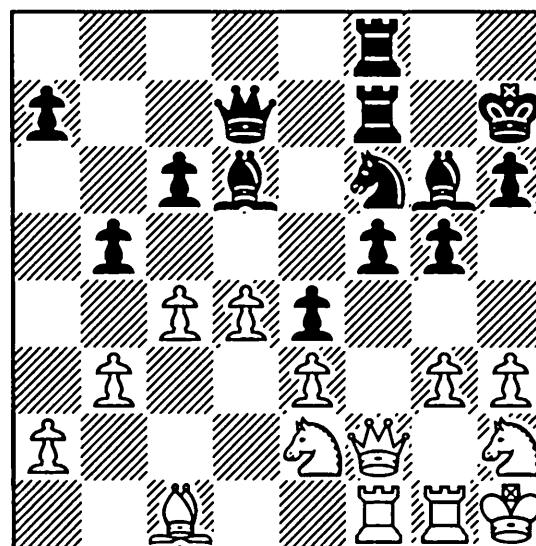
Answer: The key to entry lies in the light squares.

Step 1: We target h3 and make White nervous about ...f4 breaks.

27...♝d7! 28 ♜f2

Step 2: Before we attempt a successful ...f4 we need to create a diversion on the queen-side, where White's entire army is AWOL.

28...b5!



Question: What do you mean by “we”? You are the one playing Black.

Answer: I was using the royal “we!” Seriously, when you analyse such situations, always imagine that you are playing one side and trying to solve a problem in a tournament setting. Inserting yourself into the chess book you read magically increases your concentration.

29 ♕d2

Naturally we would love 29 c5? which hands over the d5-square to our knight.

29...a6 30 ♜g2 ♖h5 31 ♜f2

Breaking up Black’s roller with 31 g4 fxg4 32 hxg4 ♖f6 would leave White worrying about tricks on g4.

31...♜e6!

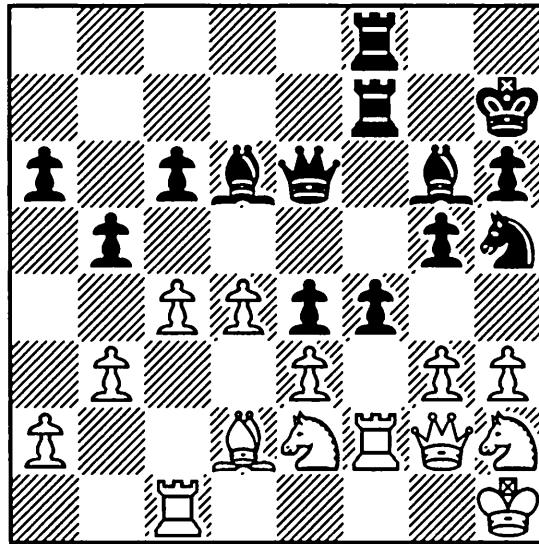
Increasing the diversionary pressure on the queenside.

32 ♜c1?

Yet another concession. Instead, he should just give up the d5-square with 32 c5.

Step 3: Strike with the ...f4 break. Now, with his rook on c1 missing out on the action, the timing is right:

32...f4!



33 gxf4 gxf4 34 ♜g4?!

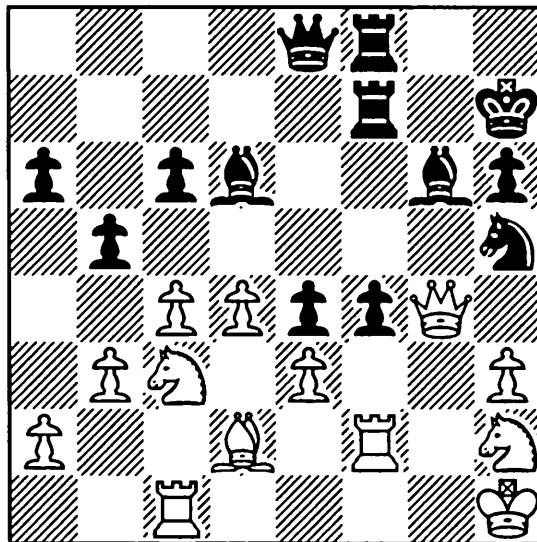
White puts up more resistance if he follows the principle of meeting a wing attack with a central counter: 34 d5! cxd5 35 cxd5 ♜xd5 36 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 37 exf4 ♜xf4 38 ♜xf4 ♜xf4 39 ♜c7+ ♜8f7 40 ♜xf7+ ♜xf7 41 ♜xf4 ♜xf4 and ...e3 follows soon, but White can still hope that Black gets careless and allows a perpetual at some point.

34...♜e8

A shocking moment. Possibly for the very first time in my life I bravely decline a trade!

35 ♖c3

Both 35 c5 ♜c7 36 ♜g1 ♜g7 and 35 ♖f1 f3 are also hopeless for White.



Exercise: Black to play and trap White's queen.

Answer: 35...♜g3+ 36 ♛g1 ♜h5 37 ♜h4 ♜e7 0-1

Strangely enough, the queen is caught in the open board.

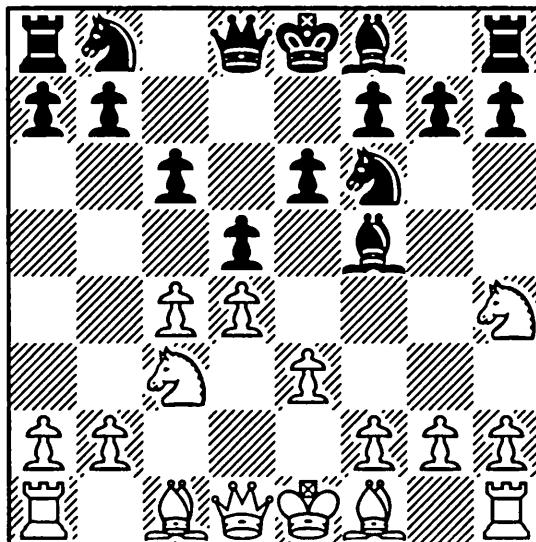
Summary

The good news is that all of White's sixth-move options (except for 6 ♜h4!) give Black easy equality. Now on to the bad news: Next game we examine 6 ♜h4! where we may have to sweat it out for a while to try to achieve equality.

Game 34
V.Topalov-V.Kramnik
 World Championship Playoff (rapid), Elista 2006

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 e3 ♜f5 5 ♜c3 e6 6 ♜h4!

This move proves to be a big headache for Black. White is satisfied with the bishop pair and hopes to later open the position.



6... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

In my opinion, the best move in the position.

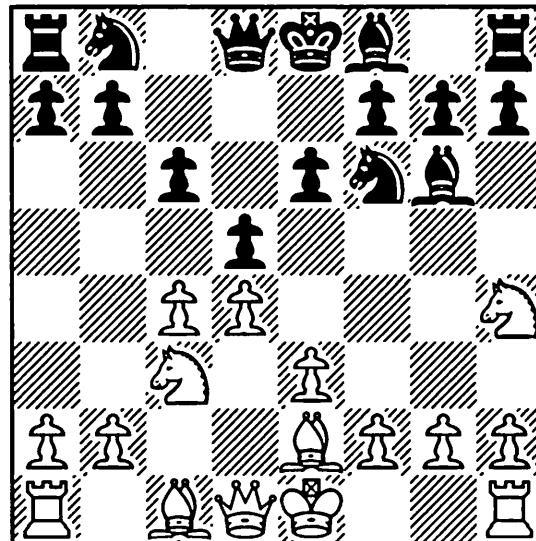
Question: This seems submissive. Shouldn't Black make White weaken first by playing his bishop to e4 or g4?

Answer: Be careful. One person's weakening is another's expansion! Let's look:

a) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 7 f3 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 8 g3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 a3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 11 f4! $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 13 b4 f5 14 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b6 16 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5 17 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g5 19 d5 and the game opens in White's favour, H.Nakamura-J.De Jong, Ohrid 2009.

b) After 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 7 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 8 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 9 g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 11 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ White's kingside expansion clearly benefits him. His territorial advantage and bishop pair make life tough for Black.

7 $\mathbb{Q}e2!$



White cleverly waits for Black to castle before he grabs the bishop on g6, denying Black's rook use of the h-file. White also has a few reasonable alternatives, including:

a) 7 ♜xg6 hxg6 8 ♜d2 ♜bd7 9 ♜c1 a6 10 ♜d3 dxc4 11 ♜xc4 b5 12 ♜e2 c5 13 ♜f3 ♜b8 14 ♜e2 ♜d6 15 g3 0-0 16 0-0 e5! 17 dxc5 ♜xc5 18 ♜b4, when Black's active c5-knight compensates for White's bishop pair, G.Kasparov-F.Vallejo Pons, Linares 2005.

b) 7 ♜b3 ♜c7 8 ♜xg6 hxg6 9 ♜d2 ♜bd7 10 cxd5 exd5 11 0-0-0 a5 with counterplay, I.Cheparinov-A.Grischuk, Sochi 2008.

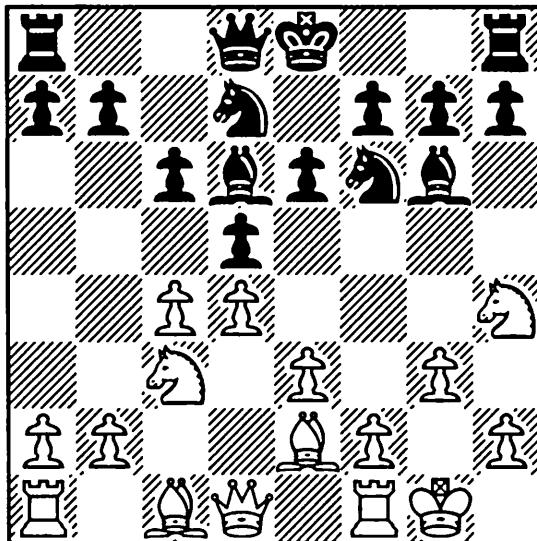
7...♜bd7 8 0-0 ♜d6

The main choice here, but it leaves me unimpressed with Black's position.

I am also not a fan of 8...♜e7. For example, 9 g3 0-0 10 ♜xg6 hxg6 11 ♜c2 ♜e8 12 ♜d1 ♜f8 13 b3 ♜c7 14 ♜b2 ♜ac8 15 ♜ac1 a6 16 ♜f3 and White can open the centre at his leisure to exploit his bishop pair, V.Tkachiev-R.Ovetchkin, Sochi 2007.

Next game we examine a hidden and dynamic option: 8...♜e4!.

9 g3



9...dxc4!?

A new move at the time. Black frees his position somewhat at the cost of handing White a larger share of the centre.

9...0-0 10 ♜xg6 hxg6 11 ♜c2 dxc4 12 ♜xc4 c5 13 dxc5 ♜xc5 14 ♜d1 ♜c8 15 ♜f1 ♜b4 16 ♜d2 ♜e5 17 ♜g2 ♜b6 18 ♜b3 ♜c4 19 ♜e1 left White with a nagging pull due to his two bishops in an open position in V.Kramnik-B.Gelfand, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2007.

10 ♜xc4 ♜b6

Question: Shouldn't Black play 10...♜h5 to preserve his bishop pair?

Answer: Kramnik, like most Slav players, isn't fearful of handing over the bishop pair (maybe we should be after seeing this game!). Perhaps you are right, but even then Topalov would probably respond with 11 f3 and the bishop isn't so hot on h5.

11 ♜e2 0-0 12 ♜xg6

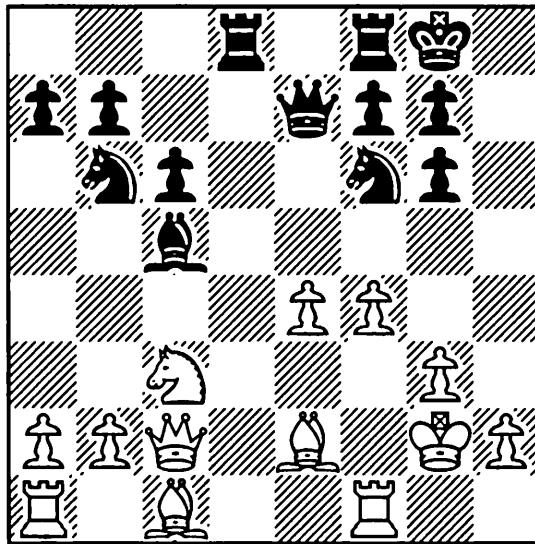
The Slav: Move by Move

Now that Black has castled, it is time to swap.

12...hxg6 13 e4 e5 14 f4!

As always Topalov's car, with a broken reverse gear, only drives forward! He takes control of central space and opens the game for his bishops.

14...exd4 15 ♜xd4 ♜e7 16 ♜g2 ♜c5 17 ♜d3 ♜ad8 18 ♜c2



Exercise: Come up with a plan to conjure counterplay for Black.

Things look ominous for Black, but let's assess:

1. White's central and kingside pawn majority is ready to roll forward to attack.
2. The position has opened somewhat due to Kramnik's risky 9th move.
3. Black lures White's e-pawn forward and hopes to create gaps for his knights to rest.
4. White's undeveloped bishop on c1 is a problem.
5. Black leads in development.

Answer: 18...♝d4!

A key central counter. Kramnik prepares to inflict damage to White's pawn structure and also induces the e-pawn forward at the cost of another bishop-for-knight swap.

19 e5

Everyone knew Topalov would play this move. There is no point holding back from this committal move since Black looks okay after 19 ♜f3 ♜xc3 20 bxc3 ♜fe8 21 ♜e1 ♜c4.

19...♞fd5 20 ♜f3

Covering e3.

20...♝xc3 21 bxc3

White doesn't mind breaking up his pawns. His c-pawn may later eject a black piece from d5.

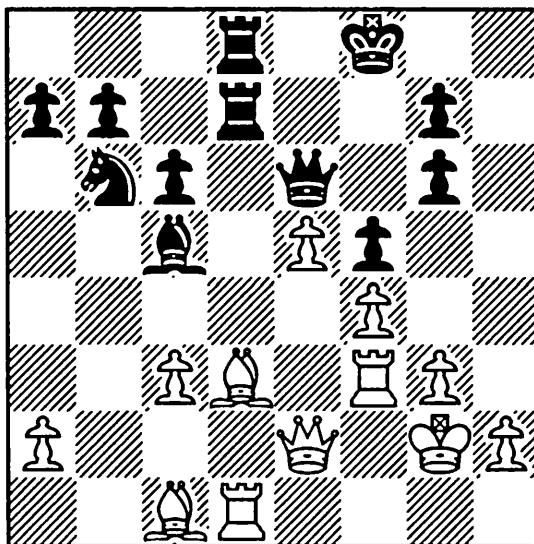
21...♞c5 22 ♜d2 ♜d7 23 ♜e1 ♜fd8 24 ♜d3 ♜e6 25 ♜c1

Threatening to open the position with f5.

25...f5!

A static structure favours the knight over White's bishops. Kramnik's move plugs up the works for a while, but it isn't a permanent solution.

26 ♕e2 ♔f8 27 ♜d1!



Question: Why would White voluntarily enter into a pin?

Answer: While watching the game live over the Internet Chess Club, I found Topa's moves and decisions totally inexplicable and I asked myself the same question. Somehow, almost by witchcraft, he gets his attack going with his pinned bishop participating!

27...♕e7 28 h4 ♜d5 29 ♜c2!?

A courageous move, loading up on f5. I would have panicked and relieved the pin with 29 ♜c2 almost without thinking.

29...♝c4 30 ♜h1

Continuing his balancing act. Now h5 is in the air.

30...♝a3 31 ♕e2!

White accomplishes nothing if he hands back the bishop pair with 31 ♜xa3. Opposite-coloured bishops often favour the attacker – but not here! 31...♝xa3 32 h5 gxh5 33 ♜xh5 g6 34 ♜h8+ ♔g7 35 ♜xd8 ♕xd8 is fine for Black.

31...♛d7

I thought here that Topa had lost the thread and was getting outplayed. I was wrong!

32 ♜d1!?

Remarkable. He re-pins himself. I was certain the game would go 32 e6 ♜d6 33 ♜e1 b5 34 h5 ♔e7! with decent chances for Black.

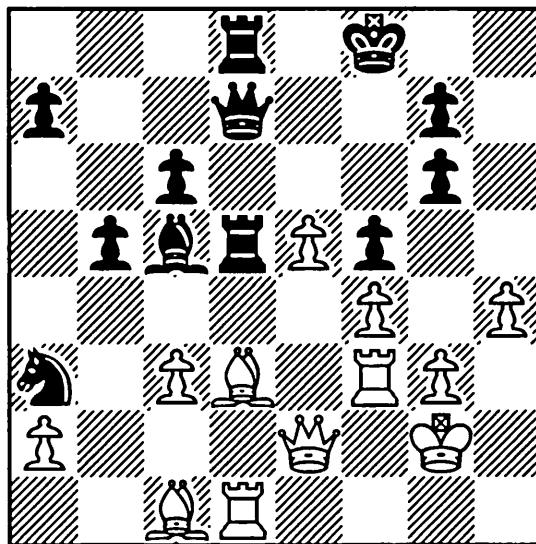
32...b5

At this moment I was thinking:

1. Topalov's pieces looked clumsy and ineffective;
2. His attack was going nowhere; and

3. He was tied up in an unbreakable pin on the d-file.

Conclusion: Topa was toast!



33 g4!

Oops! What I really meant to say was: A toast to Topa!

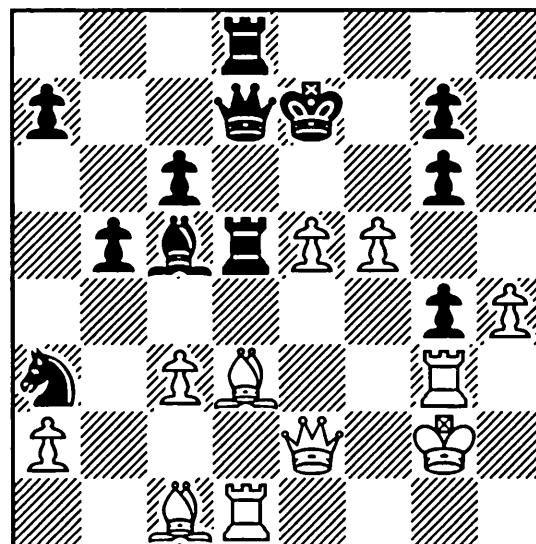
This move changes everything. Topalov attempts the impossible and attacks with half his army tangled up in a pin. Somehow he pulls it off! I had totally misassessed the situation and underestimated White's attack. The actual evaluation of the position is even!

33...fxg4 34 Kg3 Qe7?

The losing move. Kramnik logically insists on keeping the pin, but f5 arrives like a wrecking ball.

34...Qe6! should lead to a draw after 35 Rf1!. Freedom from the tyranny of pindom! Here 35...Qc4 36 f5 Qxe5 37 Qxg4! Rxd3 38 fxg6+ Qe8 39 Rxd3 Rxd3 40 Qc8+ Rd8 41 Qxc6+ Rd7 42 Qc8+ is perpetual check.

35 f5!



Alekhine once said of a game where Capa destroyed him: "Playing loosely, he found one blow after another." Topalov, like Mad Max, seems most in his element when the world is in a muddle and mobocracy reigns.

35...gxе5 36 ♜g5+ ♛e8 37 e6

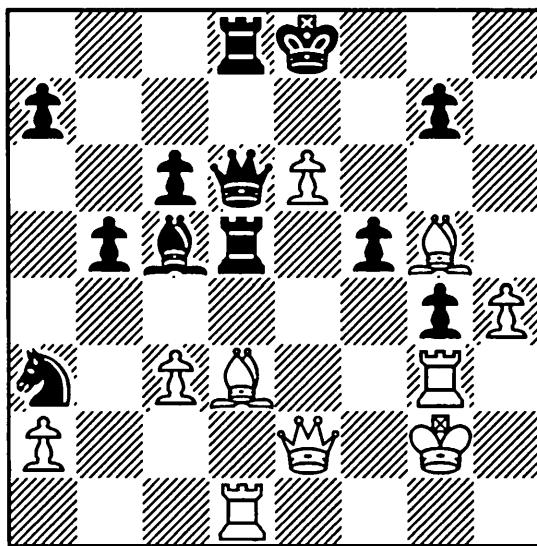
Releasing the pressure with the greedy 37 ♜xd8? ♜xd8 would be stupid. White would then be fighting for the draw.

37...♛d6

37...♛c7 fares no better, as 38 ♜xg4!! wins:

- a) 38...♜xd3 39 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 40 ♜xd3 fxg4 41 ♜g6+ ♛f8 42 ♜h7! and Black is defenceless.
- b) 38...fxg4 39 ♜g6+ ♛f8 40 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 41 e7+ ♜xe7 and here 42 ♜e6!! mates.

Returning to the position after 37...♛d6:



Exercise (multiple choice): White has a hidden path to victory.

The choices are: a) 38 e7; b) 38 ♜xg4; c) 38 ♜xf5. Which move wins?

Answer: 38 ♜xf5!!

The barbarian horde breaches Black's defensive barrier. There is no better word in the English language than "barbarian" to describe how Topalov plays chess.

Watching the game live, my mind was totally blown by this point. I'm afraid this move calls for a heavy quote. Kierkegaard wrote: "Geniuses are like thunderstorms. They go against the wind, terrify people, cleanse the air!"

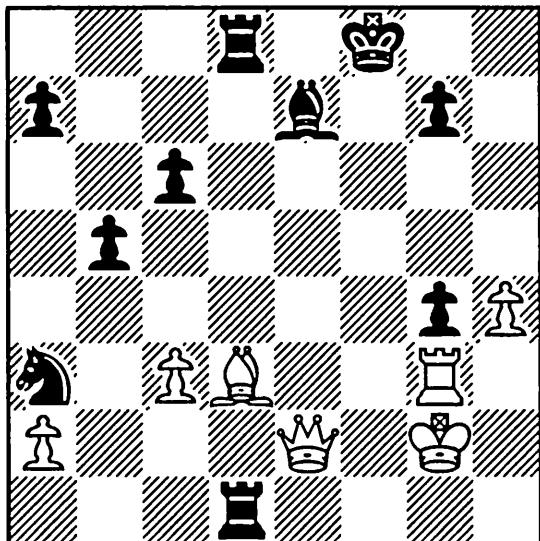
38...♜xd1

There is nothing better.

39 ♜g6+ ♛f8 40 e7+

The deadly point to his combination. Black must hand over his queen to stay alive for the moment.

40...♛xe7 41 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 42 ♜d3!



This interference move messes with Black even more. It is clear there is no governing authority in charge on Black's side. Anarchy ensues and it's every black piece for itself!

On the other hand, 42... $\mathbb{Q}e6??$ would be a bit hasty since 42... $\mathbb{R}8d2+$ mates next move.

42... $\mathbb{R}a1$

I can't imagine Black creating a fortress in the line 42... $\mathbb{R}1xd3$ 43 $\mathbb{R}xd3$ $\mathbb{R}xd3$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 46 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ but perhaps this was the path of greatest resistance.

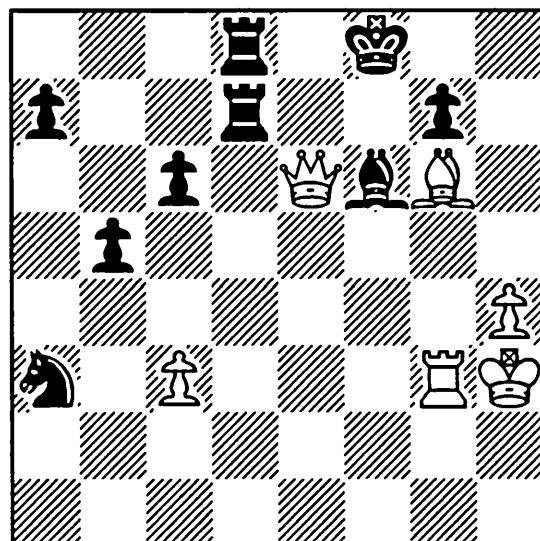
43 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{R}d1$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Vengeance is nature's sweetest narcotic. Topalov lost the World Championship title to Kramnik in this acrimonious "toiletgate" match, but as some consolation he inflicted this amazing victory and also enjoyed a game of cat-and-mouse with his great opponent, whom he loathes.

44... $\mathbb{R}a1$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{R}xa2+$ 46 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 47 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{R}d2$

47... $\mathbb{Q}c4?$ 48 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ wins immediately.

48 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{R}2d7$



Exercise: Find a plan to end Black's resistance.

Answer: 49 ♜f3!

There is no defence to the h-pawn's march down to h8. The trouble is 49...♜e7 loses to 50 ♜xf6+.

49...b4 50 h5! 1-0

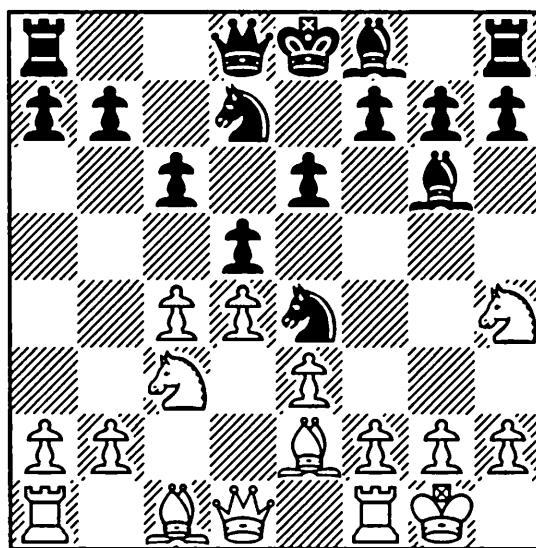
The finish could be 50...bxc3 51 h6 c2 52 h7 c1♛ 53 h8R! mate. Always underpromote!

Summary

No, 6 ♜h4! is not a forced loss for Black. Please proceed in an orderly manner to our next game to see why.

Game 35
E.Inarkiev-A.Shirov
Poikovsky 2008

1 d4 d5 2 ♜f3 c6 3 c4 ♜f6 4 e3 ♜f5 5 ♜c3 e6 6 ♜h4 ♜g6 7 ♜e2 ♜bd7 8 0-0 ♜e4!



I like this virtually unknown, aggressive move that actually achieves a plus score for Black. Shirov's mission: He doesn't wait around while White decides the proper time to exchange on g6, and forces matters.

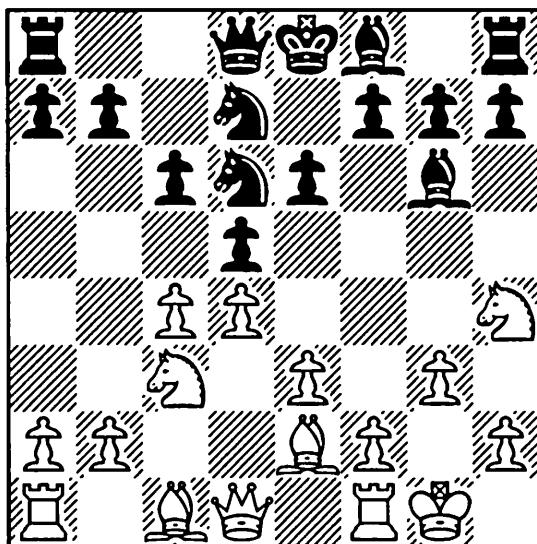
9 g3

9 ♜xg6?! hxg6 looks premature, allowing Black chances down the h-file. The game T.Nyback-R.Leitao, Khanty Mansiysk Olympiad 2010, continued 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♜xe4 dxe4 12 d5 ♜d6 13 h3 c5 (Black is about to play ...♝e5 and ...f5 or bring his queen to e5) 14 ♜b5 a6 15 ♜xd7+ ♛xd7 16 f3 0-0 17 ♜d2 ♜fe8 and Black already stood better:

1. White's blockaded d5-pawn is a liability; and
2. Black enjoys a healthy queenside pawn majority.

9...♞d6!

This knight may later hover on f5, menacing sacs around White's king.



Question: Why doesn't White gain a tempo with 10 c5?

Answer: Black wants to lead his knight to f5 anyway, so it's not a gain of a tempo if you force the opponent into something he wants. Also, the general rule of such pawn structures is: It is in White's favour to maintain central tension. The moment White plays c4-c5, all the pressure on Black's d5-pawn dissolves. Black can then build for an ...e5 break.

10 b3 ♜e7 11 ♜xg6

Question: It looks scary to open the h-file.

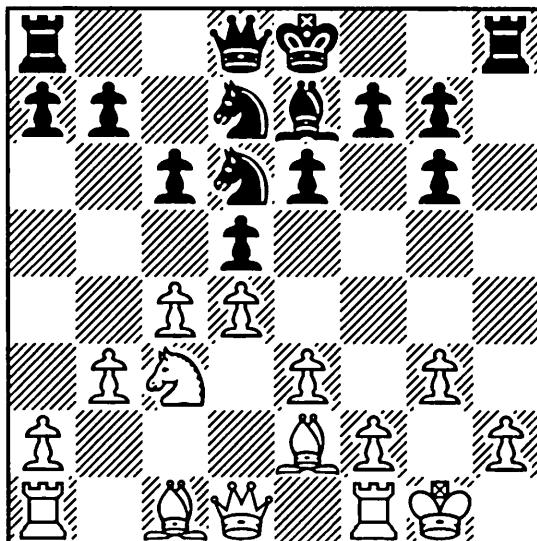
Should White play 11 ♜g2 instead?

Answer: All well and true that opening the h-file is dangerous for White. However, by playing 11 ♜g2 what has White accomplished?

1. He didn't get the bishop pair; and
2. He squandered four moves (♜f3, ♜h4, g3 and ♜g2) to fianchetto a knight!

11...hxg6

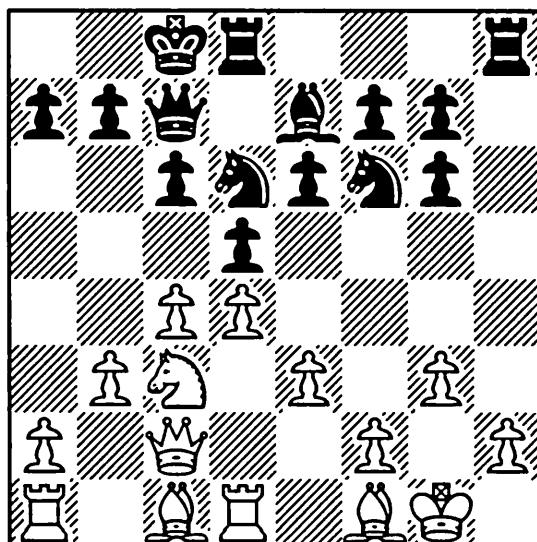
Omission accomplished! Black got what he wanted, namely an open h-file while omitting kingside castling. Black's attacking chances easily make up for White's bishop pair. In fact, as a London player, if given a choice, I would take Black.



12 ♜c2 ♜f6

Making it difficult for White to achieve an e4 central break.

13 ♜d1 ♜c7 14 ♜f1 0-0-0!?



Good judgment. Black is willing to go opposite wings despite White's space advantage. Why? The x-factor (h-factor?) is the open h-file.

15 ♜g2?!

You may not believe me but this move leads to a downward spiral for White. It took four moves to fianchetto this guy ($\text{e}2, \text{g}3, \text{f}1$ and $\text{g}2$).

Question: What happens if White goes for it immediately with 15 c5?

Answer: I think that is exactly what he should have played. White has no time to goof around. Let's see. 15... $\text{g}5$ 16 $\text{b}4$ $\text{g}4!$ 17 $\text{h}3$ $\text{gxe}3!$ 18 $\text{fxe}3$ $\text{wxg}3+$ 19 $\text{wg}2$ $\text{hxh}3$ 20 $\text{de}2$ $\text{wxg}2+$ 21 $\text{dxg}2$ $\text{h}4$ with three pawns for the piece and approximately balanced chances.

15...♝h5

Sending up a trial balloon.

Question: Why not win a pawn with 15...dxc4?

Answer: You shouldn't even consider such a move! Black sells out his entire position for just one pawn. After 16 e4 ♝fe8 17 ♜e3 ♛b8 18 ♜e2 cxb3 19 ♜xb3 White enjoys:

1. A huge, mobile pawn centre;
2. Open freeways along the b- and c-files for his major pieces;
3. The barrels of both bishops aiming at Black's king; and
4. A massive attack to follow.

16 c5 ♝f5 17 h3

Threatening g4.

17...♝dh8!

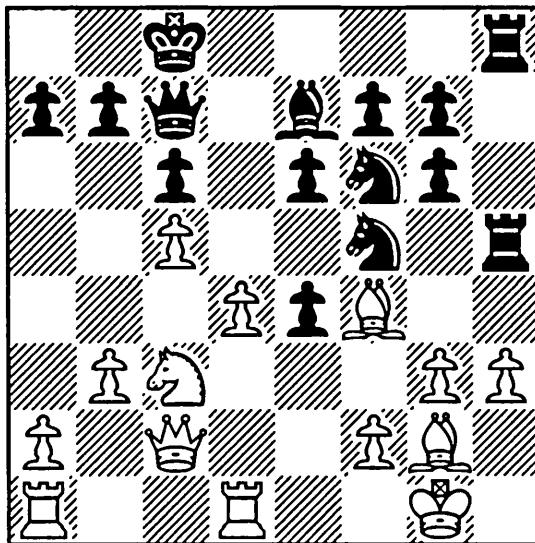
I said "threatening g4", didn't I?

18 e4

Following the principle of meeting a wing attack with a central counter.

18 g4?! allows 18...♝xh3! 19 gxf5 ♜h2+ 20 ♜f1 gxf5 which gives Black a blistering attack similar to the game continuation.

18...dxe4 19 ♜f4



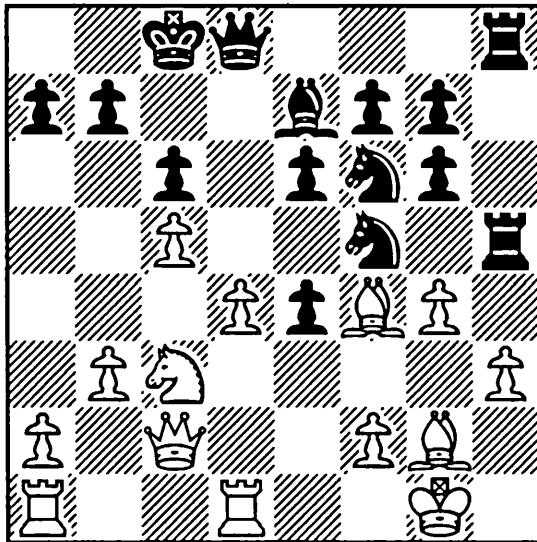
Exercise: Here Black was so focused on his attack that he missed a trick. Black to play and win a pawn.

19...♛d8

Answer: The normal reaction when our queen is attacked is to immediately move it. In this case Black missed 19...♝xd4! 20 ♜xd4 e5 21 ♜xe4 exf4 22 ♜d6+ ♜xd6 23 cxd6 ♜d7 24 ♜xf4 (White gets clobbered after 24 gxf4? ♜xh3) 24...♜xd6, with an extra pawn.

20 g4?

The temptation is overwhelming and White finally succumbs, seriously underestimating the force of Black's attack. 20 ♜xe4 ♜d5 wasn't very tempting for White but had to be played. Also White should almost certainly have played 19 ♜xe4 a move earlier instead of 19 ♜f4.

**20...♜xh3! 21 gxf5**

If 21 ♜xh3 then 21...♝xd4!! 22 ♜xd4 ♛xd4. Now if White tries 23 ♜g2? (23 ♜g2 ♛xc5 is forced, and still good for Black) there follows 23...♝d5! 24 ♜d2 ♜xc5 25 ♜e1 e3 with a winning attack.

21...♝xc3!?

Shirov takes a second bite out of the apple. He wants d5 for his knight. Black had a couple of tempting alternatives:

- a) 21...gxf5 22 ♜xh3 ♜xh3 and ...♛h8 is coming;
- b) 21...♝3h4 22 ♜e5 gxf5.

In both cases Black gets full compensation for his invested material.

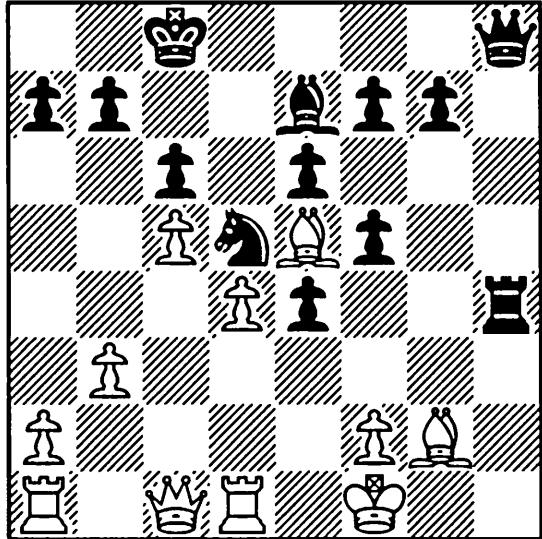
22 ♛xc3 ♜d5 23 ♛c1 gxf5

A full rook for only three pawns. What is so remarkable is the slow, laissez-unfair attitude on Shirov's part. He doesn't seem to be in any hurry at all.

24 ♜f1

Understandably, White's king feels increasing discomfort hanging around the kingside, like a tourist who accidentally wanders into a dangerous and unfamiliar high-crime neighbourhood.

24...♝h4 25 ♜e5 ♛h8



26 ♔e1

This fails, as does everything else. For example:

a) 26 ♔g1 ♕g4 27 ♖a3 ♘f6! 28 ♘g3 a6 29 ♘d6 f4 30 ♔f1 ♕xg2 31 ♔xg2 f3+ 32 ♔g1 ♜h3 mates.

b) 26 b4 ♜h1+! 27 ♔e2 ♜h5+ wins.

26...♜g4 27 ♘f1 ♕g1 28 ♖c4 ♜h4

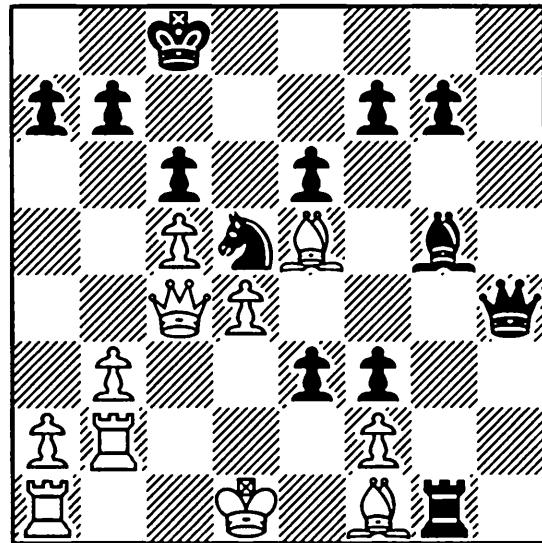
...♘e3 is in the air.

29 ♔e2 ♕g5 30 ♖db1

Somehow one senses that White's "attack" with b4 and b5 could be a wee bit slow in this situation!

30...f4

Nitpicky as always, *Rybka* frowns upon this move and claims mate in 11 after 30...♜g4+. 31 ♖b2 f3+ 32 ♔d1 e3!

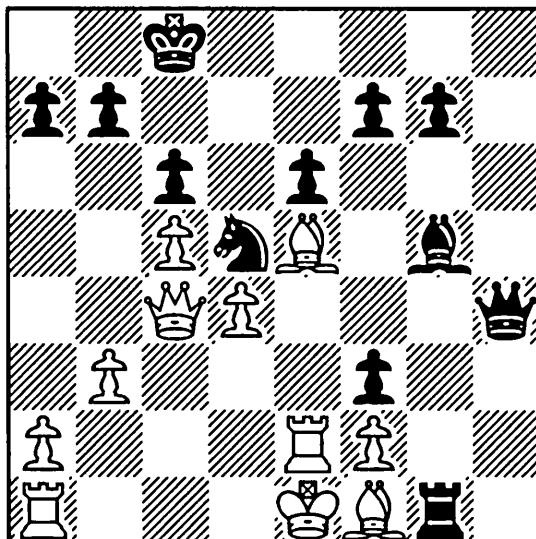


Rybka assessment: -33.36! I have never seen an assessment this lopsided and initially

thought Rybka had gone mad. On top of everything, Black is down a rook. Perhaps it is time for the math police to step in and stop this game!

Kasparov once impolitely referred to Shirov as “a talented amateur”. In this game Shirov’s chess skills look pretty professional to me.

33 ♘e1 e2 34 ♞xe2



Exercise: Find the most efficient way to finish White off.

Answer: 34...♞xf1+! 0-1

It's mate next move.

Summary

8...♝e4! looks like a very good way to meet one of White’s most dangerous Slav continuations.

Game 36
A.Morozevich-V.Ivanchuk
Wijk aan Zee 2009

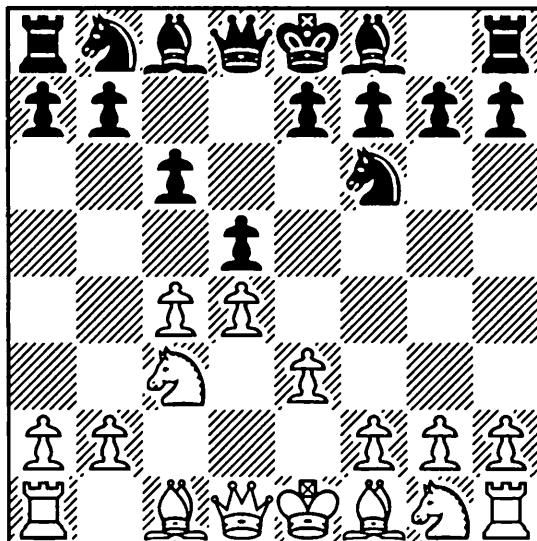
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3

We also reach our position through the move order 3 e3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 a6.

3...♝f6

We look at the option 3...dxc4!? in Game 38.

4 e3

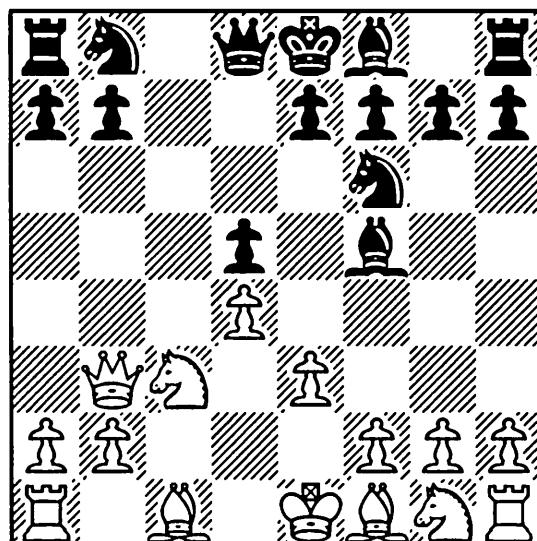


4...a6

Since we don't want to open the Pandora's Box of the Semi-Slav (4...e6) I suggest we try the Chebanenko Slav at this point. If I had recommended this line in a chess book ten years ago you would have thought I was nuts. But now the ...a6 Slav has turned mainstream. It seems to be gaining in popularity each year and now finds itself in the arsenal of the Top 10 GMs in the world, with the exception of Radjabov. The good news is that we only need to study this one line with White's knight on c3 and White committed to playing e3.

Question: Why not stick with your beloved Reversed London by playing 4...♞f5?

Answer: It pains me to the core to say this but the Reversed London isn't playable in this exact move order. After 5 cxd5! cxd5 6 ♜b3! Black experiences difficulties defending both b7 and d5. He has several options but only the last one is playable:



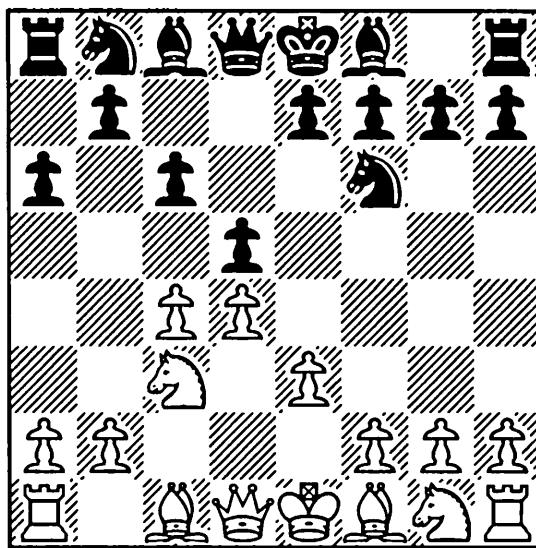
a) 6...b6? is probably the worst of Black's choices. 7 ♜b5+ ♜d7 8 ♜xd5 e6 9 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 10 ♜f3 left Black down a pawn and busted in G.Soppe-R.Herrera, Mendoza 2004.

b) 6...♜d7?! 7 ♜f3 ♜c6 8 ♜e5! ♜c7 9 ♜d2 e6 10 ♜c1 a6 11 ♜a4 ♜d6 12 ♜xc6 bxc6 13 ♜b6! ♜d7 14 ♜xc7+ ♜xc7 15 ♜a5+ ♜b7 16 f3 ♜d7 17 ♜f2 ♜hc8 18 b4 with a clamp on the queenside and the c5-square, G.Kasparov-E.Polivioiu, Patras (simul) 2001.

c) 6...♜b6?! 7 ♜xd5 is a free pawn. After 7...♜xb3 8 ♜xf6+ exf6 9 axb3 Black doesn't have compensation.

d) 6...♜c8. This sorry looking retreat is Black's best! 7 ♜d3 e6 8 f4! and White gets a favourable Reversed Stonewall Dutch where he controls the key e4-square. After 8...♜c6 9 ♜f3 ♜e7 10 0-0 h6 11 ♜e5 ♜d7 12 ♜d2 b5 13 ♜d1 Black has not solved his most pressing need, which is how to defend his king against the coming attack on the kingside, A.Dreev-G.Biebinger, Bad Wiessee 1998.

Let's return to 4...a6:



Question: I have a question about ...a6. What is the point?
It almost looks like a random move!

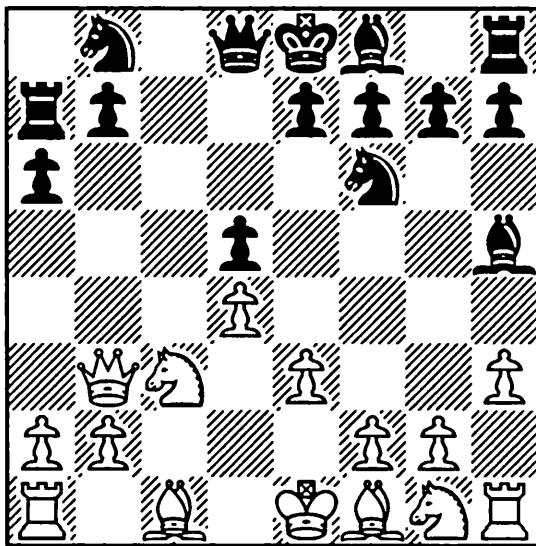
Answer: I admit the move does look crazy, yet it contains the seed of many good possibilities:

1. It prepares ...b5, challenging White on his c4 point. If White pushes to c5, this stabilizes the centre which nearly always favours Black who then plays for an ...e5 break.
2. If White exchanges pawns on d5, he gets a lame version of the Exchange Slav since his dark-squared bishop is stuck behind his pawn chain.
3. If White plays b3 he must be on high alert since it is Black who can break the tension in several ways on each move.
4. If White plays a4 to prevent ...b5, then White must also pay the price of weakening the b4-square.

5 ♜f3

The most non-committal move and the main line. White also has several alternatives:

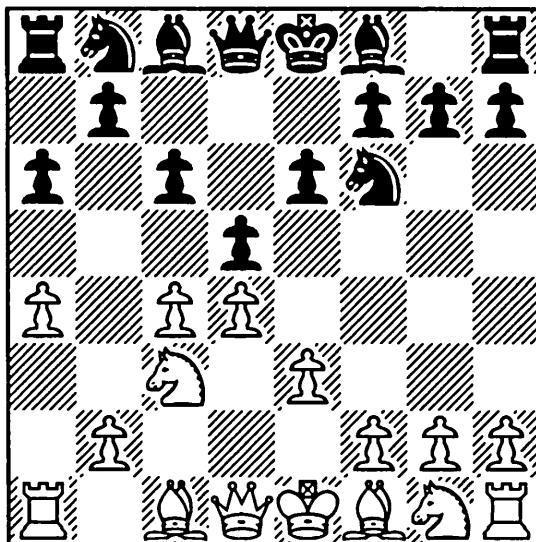
a) 5 $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}g4$ (I like this move best; Black creates the annoying strategic threat ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ to try to exploit White's early queen move) 6 $h3 \mathbb{Q}h5$ 7 $cxd5 cxd5$ 8 $\mathbb{W}b3 \mathbb{Q}a7!$.



Nimzowitsch would approve. This is another nifty benefit of the ...a6 Slav: it opens a7 for Black's rook! And if you claim that the rook has been relegated to a subservient position, then I reply that the rook is no worse than White's queen on b3. What does it do there? S.Mamedyarov-V.Ivanchuk, Moscow 2008, continued 9 $g4!$? $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 10 $g5 \mathbb{Q}fd7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}c6!$? (Ivanchuk isn't satisfied with the mere regaining of his pawn with 11...e6 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{W}xg5$ and instead opts to sac it for a big development lead) 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4 e5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xg6 hxg6$ and Black had plenty of compensation for the pawn due to White's loose structure and lag in development.

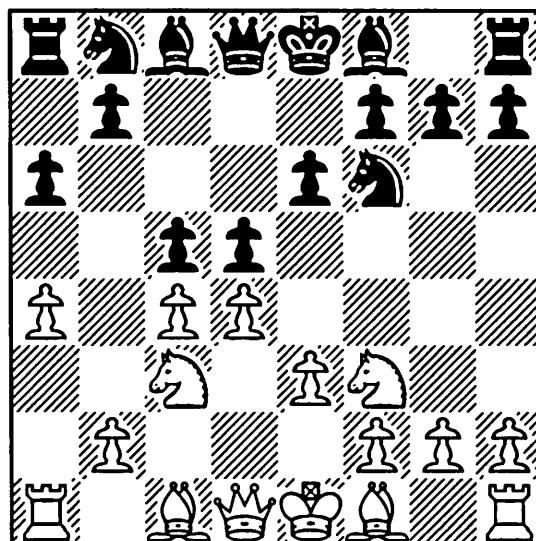
b) 5 $\mathbb{Q}d3 dxc4!$. I prefer this move over 5...b5 6 b3 where White scores well. With 5...dxc4, Black transposes to a favourable and equal version of the Queen's Gambit Accepted. Slav players should not be dogmatic about sticking to pure Slav structures if a favourable transposition to a non-Slav line is available. For example, 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc4 b5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (or 7 $\mathbb{Q}d3 e6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3 c5$ 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10 $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{W}b6$ with a decent variation of the QGA for Black) 7...e6 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3 c5$ 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10 b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ virtually forcing White to exchange on c5 since White ends up with an inferior isolani position if he maintains the central tension. After 11 $dxc5 \mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b2 0-0$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xd8 \mathbb{Q}fxd8$ Black may even have a microbe of an edge due to his extra queenside space, V.Kiselev-E.Bareev, Internet 2006.

c) With 5 a4 White goes to great lengths to prevent ...b5. In this case White is willing to weaken b4 to achieve his aims. We play 5...e6!.



Question: Hold it right there! Earlier in the book you said we would avoid the Semi-Slav. Aren't you now transposing to a Semi-Slav position?

Answer: Ah, but I also said we Slav players should be flexible. Here we agree to go into a Semi-Slav, but only on condition that the extra moves a4 and ...a6 are tossed in by each side. White weakens the b4-square by playing a4, while ...a6 is a very useful move for Black. Now 6 ♜f3 is answered by 6...c5!.



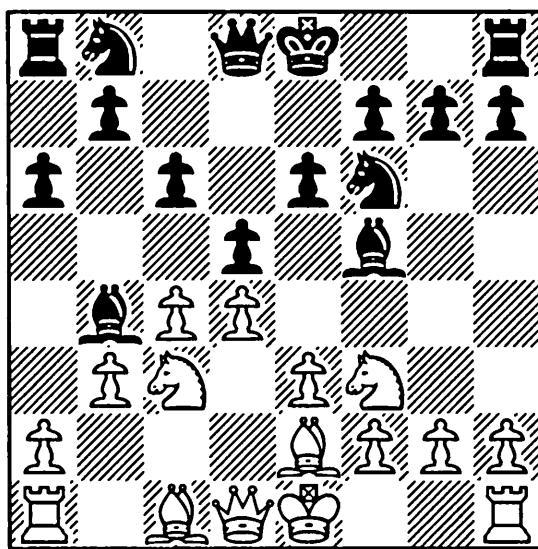
Yes. More of that flexibility stuff! Now we offer to go into a Queen's Gambit Declined Tarrasch a tempo down, where the extra tempo of a2-a4 harms White more than it helps; or a favourable version of the Queen's Gambit Accepted:

c1) 7 cxd5 leads to the QGD Tarrasch version: 7...exd5 8 ♜e2 ♜c6 9 0-0 ♜d6 10 b3 cxd4 11 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 12 ♜xd4 ♜c7! (threatening both h2 and ...♜e5) 13 f4 ♜c5 14 ♜e5+ ♜e7 was B.Gelfand-L.Van Wely, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2002. White's weaknesses on b4, e3 and e4

give Black good counterplay.

c2) 7 $\mathbb{A}d3$ gets us to the QGA version. 7...dxc4 8 $\mathbb{A}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 0-0 $\mathbb{A}e7$ 10 d5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 11 $\mathbb{A}a2$ exd5 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{A}e6!$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 14 $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ was A.Karpov-G.Kasparov, Zürich (blitz) 2006, where Black's control over the queenside light squares and centralized king may even give him the edge in the ending. There's also the more typical 10 $\mathbb{W}e2$, and here 10...cxd4 11 $\mathbb{B}d1$ e5 12 exd4 exd4 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14 $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{B}xd4$ is a well-known and equal queenless middlegame. In this line Black can also choose to play the IQP position with 11...0-0 12 exd4.

d) On 5 b3 we play 5... $\mathbb{A}f5$ and go into a Reversed London with the extra moves b3 and ...a6. This knocks out White's annoying $\mathbb{W}b3$ possibilities. After 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 7 $\mathbb{A}e2$ Black plays 7... $\mathbb{A}b4!$.



A manoeuvre to remember: Black has no intention of staying on b4 and will soon retreat the bishop to d6.

Question: Doesn't this just hand White a tempo?

Answer: Yes, but once again it's an undesirable tempo. White's bishop is forced to d2, but it's clearly misplaced there and belongs on b2.

P.Nikolic-L.Van Wely, Dordrecht (blitz) 2000, continued 8 $\mathbb{A}d2$ h6! (accurate play: Black gives his bishop a cubby hole to hide on h7, eliminating $\mathbb{Q}h4$ possibilities) 9 0-0 $\mathbb{A}d6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11 f4. Here Van Wely upped the ante with 11...g5!?, but Black also has a good position after 11... $\mathbb{W}e7$.

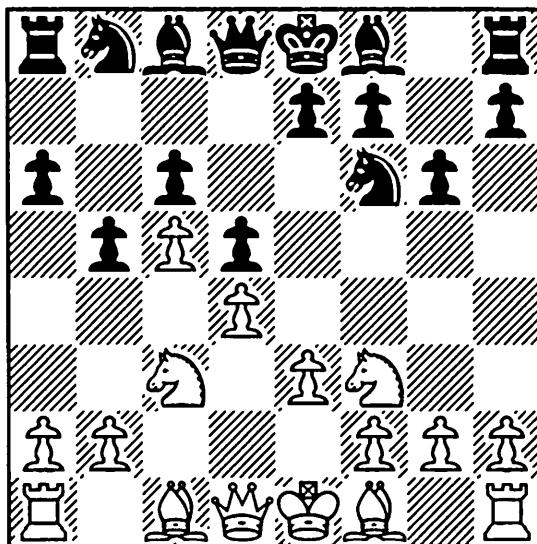
5...b5 6 b3

He decides to maintain the central tension. Alternatively:

a) White doesn't get anything if he steers into a version of the Exchange Slav, mainly because his dark-squared bishop is stuck inside his pawn chain. For example, 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 $\mathbb{A}d2$ e6 8 $\mathbb{A}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9 0-0 $\mathbb{A}b7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (planning $\mathbb{W}b3$ and $\mathbb{A}b4$ to saddle Black with a bad bishop) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ (disrupting White's plan) 11 a4 b4 12 a5 $\mathbb{A}d6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 0-0

15 f4 ♜e7 16 ♜f3 ♜fc8 17 ♜e5 ♜f6 with mutual chances, M.Gurevich-E.Bareev, German League 1992;

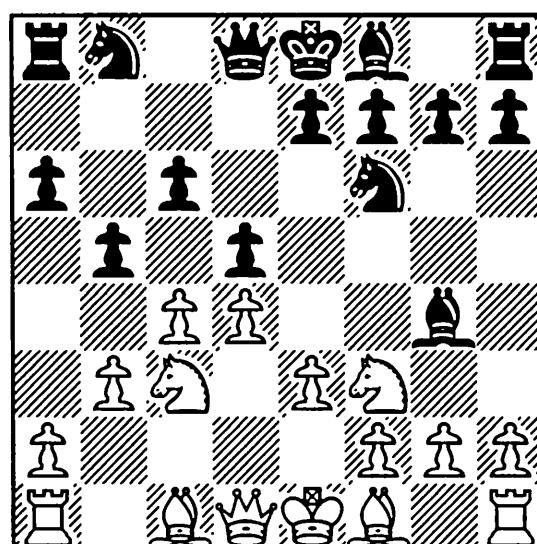
b) 6 c5, grabbing queenside space, is a popular option. Here 6...g6 is a logical move now that White has committed to c5, and Black hurries to prepare the ...e5 break. For example:



- b1) 7 ♜d3 ♜g4 8 h3 ♜xf3 9 ♜xf3 ♜g7 10 g4!? e5 11 ♜g3 ♜fd7 12 ♜e2 ♜e7 13 0-0 h5 14 f3 ♜f8 15 a4 b4 16 ♜d2 a5 17 e4!? dxe4 18 ♜xe4 ♜e6 was P.Svidler-V.Malakhov, Khanty Mansiysk 2009. All hell has broken loose in the centre, and *Rybka* evaluates it as even.
- b2) 7 ♜e5, followed by f2-f4, prevents ...e5 but leads to more closed positions. For example, 7...♜g7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♜e2 ♜e6 10 0-0 ♜e4 11 a4 f6 12 ♜d3 ♜d7 13 ♜b4 ♜c7 14 ♜xe4 dxe4 15 ♜d2 f5 16 ♜c2 ♜f6 17 ♜a3 ♜b7 18 axb5 axb5 with an equal position, F.Caruana-P.Svidler, Amsterdam 2009.

6...♜g4

We are happy to rid ourselves of this bishop because most of our pawns are stuck on light squares.



7 ♜d2

Caution is not a trait one normally associates with Morozevich! White worries about pin tricks on the c3-knight and covers them at the cost of misplacing his bishop on d2.

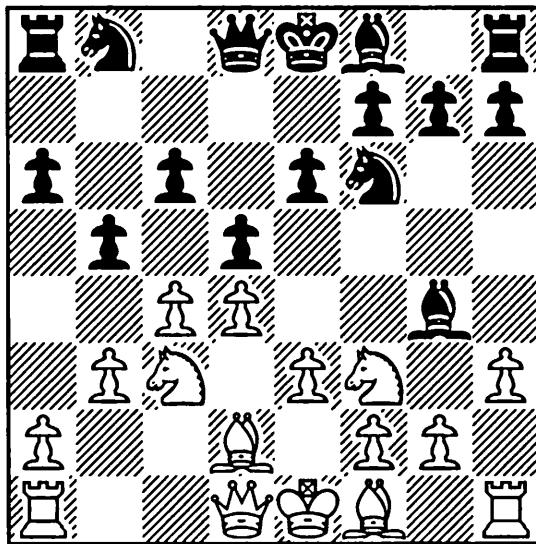
The main choice here is 7 ♜e2 e6. For example:

a) 8 h3 ♜h5 9 g4 ♜g6 10 ♜e5 ♜fd7 11 ♜xg6 hxg6 12 ♜c2 ♜e7 13 ♜b2 ♜f6 was V.Topalov-Wang Yue, Nanjing 2009. Objectively White must stand better with his bishop pair. However, we Slavocratic members of the chess world wouldn't mind taking Black.

b) 8 0-0 ♜bd7 9 ♜b2 ♜d6 10 h3 ♜h5 11 ♜e5 ♜xe2 12 ♜xe2 bxc4 (Black wants to liquidate) 13 bxc4 0-0 14 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 15 ♜a4 ♜fb8 16 ♜a3 ♜xa3 17 ♜xa3 dxc4 18 ♜fc1 ♜d5 19 ♜f4 ♜b5 20 ♜c3 c5 with an equal position, Bu Xiangzhi-Ni Hua, JinZhou 2009.

Next game we look at 7 h3 ♜xf3 8 ♜xf3 e5!?

7...e6 8 h3

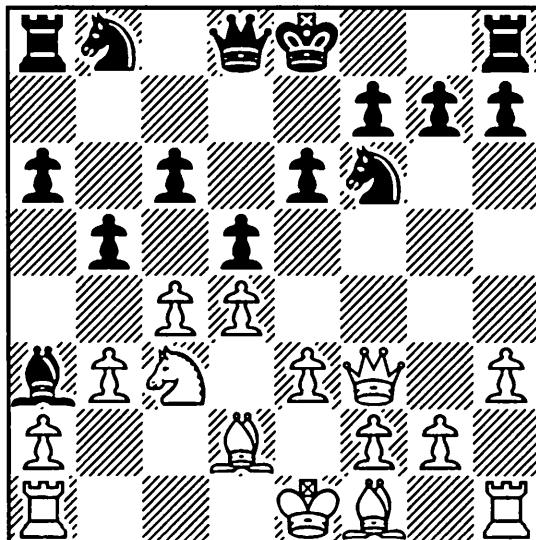


Question: Should we try 8...♜h5 to provoke 9 g4?

Answer: This is one of those intuitive points in the Slav which is very difficult to gauge, and seems to change from game to game. Sometimes Black can liven up the position by provoking g4 from White, but in some cases, like this one, g4 becomes a useful means of gaining space and attacking chances for White. Let's look at an example: 9...♜g6 10 ♜e5 ♜d6 11 h4 dxc4 (I don't like Black's position much after 11...b4 12 ♜a4 ♜xe5 13 dx5 ♜e4 14 h5 ♜xd2 15 ♜xd2 ♜e4 16 ♜h3) 12 ♜xg6 hxg6 13 bxc4 bxc4 14 ♜xc4 ♜bd7 15 g5 ♜d5 16 ♜e4 ♜e7 17 ♜c1, P.Tregubov-A.Iljushin, Moscow 2010. White's space and bishop pair give him the advantage in what is, admittedly, still a complex affair.

9...♜xf3 9 ♜xf3 ♜a3!

Ivanchuk is possibly the most original strategic thinker alive today. His unconventional last move cleverly prevents White from engaging on the queenside with a4, and keeps White vigilant about a potential ...♝b2.



10 ♜d3 0-0

Question: Can White play 11 e4 now?

Answer: Be careful to check the opponent's threats. 11 e4 drops a pawn to 11...dxc4! followed by ...♝xd4.

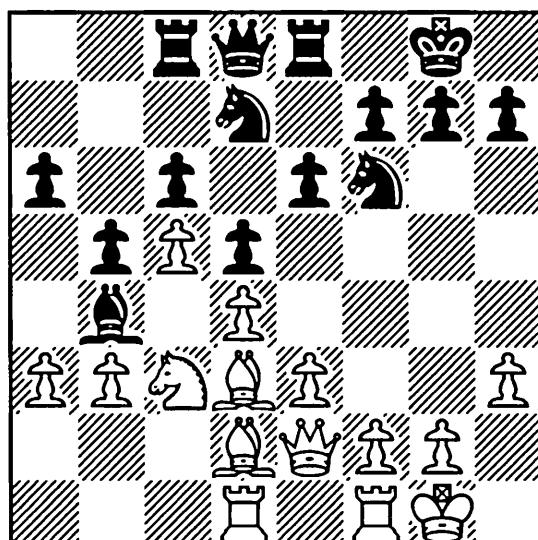
11 0-0 ♜bd7 12 ♜ad1

If White breaks with 12 e4, Black counters swiftly with 12...e5!. After 13 exd5 exd4 14 ♜e4 cxd5 15 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 16 ♜h5 g6 17 ♜xd5 ♜e5 Black's knight and bishop stand their ground well against White's bishops.

12...♜c8 13 ♜e2 ♜e8

Trying to take advantage of White's queen position on e2. Any e4 by White will be met with ...e5!.

14 c5 ♜b4 15 a3!



Exercise: Should we take the pawn, back up to a5 or take the knight?

15...♝xc3!

Answer: A radical yet strong decision. Black's knights stand their ground against the feared bishop pair.

After 15...♝xa3?! 16 ♜b1 b4 17 ♜xa3 bxa3 18 ♜a1 e5 19 ♜d1, eventually White picks off one or possibly both of Black's a-pawns.

15...♝a5?! is passive. After 16 b4 ♜c7 17 f4 White stands better with:

1. Control over e4;
2. Extra space; and
3. Attacking chances on the kingside.

16 ♜xc3 e5 17 dxe5

Black stands well if allowed ...e4.

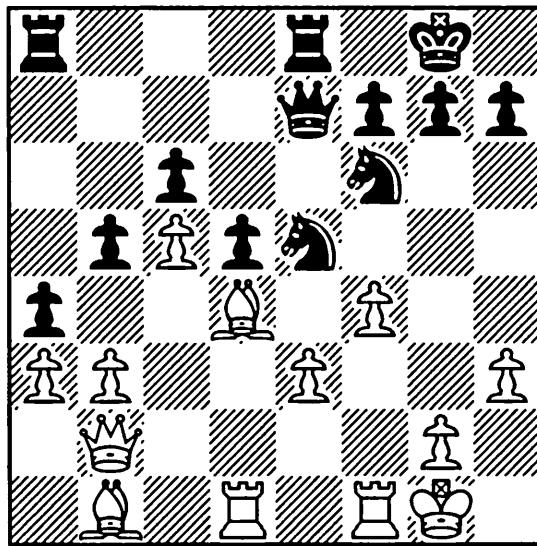
17...♞xe5 18 ♜f5 ♜a8 19 ♜d4 ♜e7

The gut instinct for most would be to declare a White plus based on the pair of bishops versus Black's knights. Being a knight-loving Slav guy, I would like to point out that Black's centralized knights also look good and the e4 break may come at a high cost for White.

20 ♜b1 a5!

Idea: ...a4, which opens c4 to Black's knight.

21 ♜b2 a4 22 f4!



Wow! Strategically risky to say the least, but the only move to keep the dynamic potential in the position. White cedes control over e4 in order to eject the powerful e5-knight and roll forward with a potential of a kingside pawn storm.

The trouble for White is that his alternatives aren't full of promise:

- a) 22 b4 ♜c4 hands over c4, a big square for the knight.
- b) 22 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 23 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 24 b4 is dull and equal.

Sometimes your least bad choice deserves an exclam!

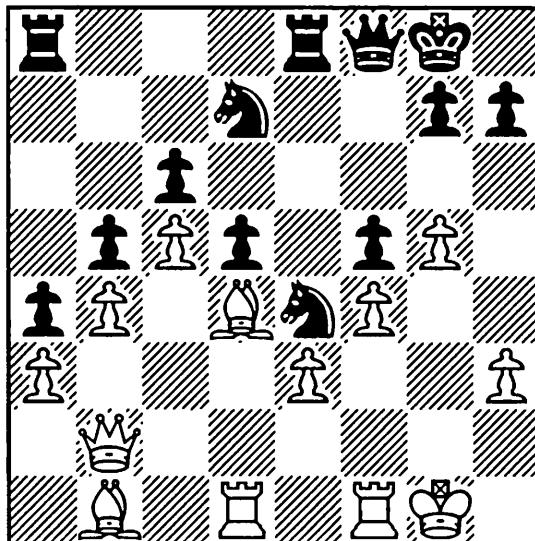
22...♝ed7 23 b4 ♕f8

In order to play ...♝e4 without allowing White into g7.

24 g4

Here he comes!

24...♝e4 25 g5 f5!



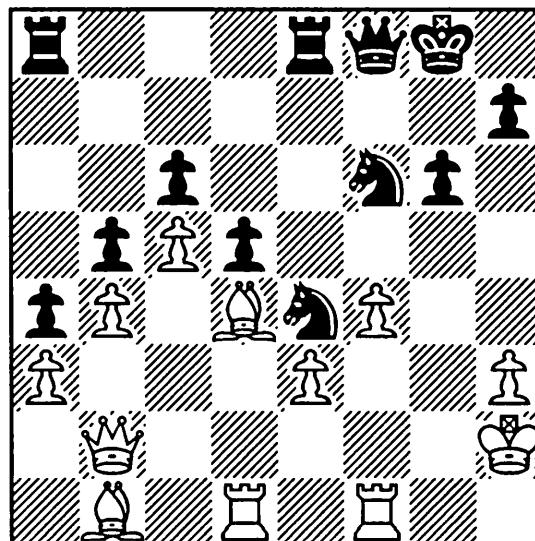
Another strong strategic decision by Ivanchuk. His last move allows White to open the g-file, and also open the position more for his bishops. However, Ivanchuk realizes that if he waits around then White leisurely builds up his attack. So he strikes now and creates a confrontation on his terms.

26 gxf6 ♜dxf6

The d7-knight, sidelined for so long, finally sees action.

27 ♜h2 g6!

Fantastic positional understanding! Ivanchuk plays what looks like an amateurish weakening move, but he wants to play ...g6 before White plays f5 (see below).



28 $\mathbb{E}g1$

Question: Why doesn't White try to crack open the kingside with 28 f5?

Answer: Black has no intention of allowing White to open the game. He would have responded with 28...g5!, the point of his 27th move. After 29 $\mathbb{E}g1 \mathbb{W}h6$ Black would follow up with ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$, ... $\mathbb{E}g8$ and ...g4, and it is he who is attacking.

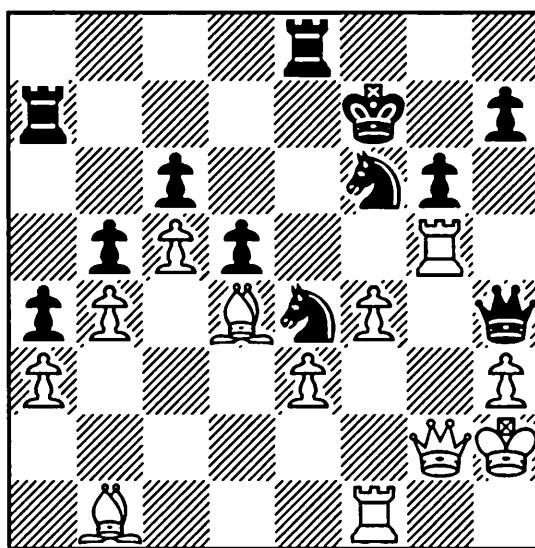
28... $\mathbb{Q}f7!$

Hoping to soon put White under attack with $\mathbb{W}h6$.

29 $\mathbb{W}g2 \mathbb{W}h6$ 30 $\mathbb{E}df1 \mathbb{W}h5$ 31 $\mathbb{W}b2 \mathbb{E}a7$ 32 $\mathbb{E}g5!$

Creating a roadblock on g5! Moro hopes to set up f5 without allowing Black the bypass move ...g5.

32... $\mathbb{W}h4$ 33 $\mathbb{W}g2$



Exercise: Find a plan for Black. What is the best arrangement for his pieces?

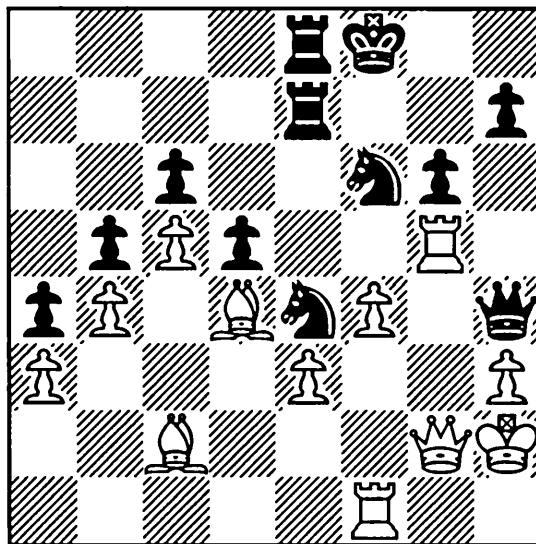
33... $\mathbb{E}ae7?!$

Answer: Not this! Black should play 33... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ intending ... $\mathbb{E}f7!$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$. Undoubtedly Moro would have gone ballistic with 34 f5!? $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 35 $\mathbb{W}xg5 \mathbb{Q}xg5$ 36 fxg6 hxg6 37 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$. Black is up an entire rook but has a lot of loose pieces hanging. The correct result of the game should probably be a draw after 37... $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{E}e6$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}d4+ \mathbb{Q}g8$ 40 $\mathbb{E}g1 \mathbb{Q}f8$ 41 $\mathbb{E}f1+ \mathbb{Q}g8$.

34 $\mathbb{Q}c2$

34 f5 comes close for White but still should lead to a draw after, for example, 34... $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 35 $\mathbb{W}xg5 \mathbb{Q}xg5$ 36 fxg6+ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{E}f8$ 38 $\mathbb{E}f4 \mathbb{E}xe3$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}xg5 \mathbb{E}e2+$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}g3 hxg6$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}xg6 \mathbb{E}e3+$ 42 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{E}xf4$ 43 $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{E}xa3$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}e8 \mathbb{E}d3$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}xc6 a3$ 46 $\mathbb{Q}xb5 a2$ 47 $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{E}e3$ 48 $\mathbb{Q}a1 \mathbb{E}e1$ 49 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{E}e3$ 50 $\mathbb{Q}a1$. White should probably enter this line since Black stands better after his next move.

34...♚f8!



Now he sees the correct idea, opening f7 for his rook.

35 ♜e5 ♜f7 36 ♜xe8+ ♚xe8 37 f5?!

White begins to overpress. Advising Moro to control himself and avoid attacking is a bit like putting Jack the Ripper in charge of a murder investigation. He can't help himself: more murders are sure to follow!

37...g5 38 ♜xe4?!

If you use too strong a solvent it eats away at the dirt and also the floor. Moro over-reacts and his position begins to seriously deteriorate.

38...♜xe4 39 f6 h5!

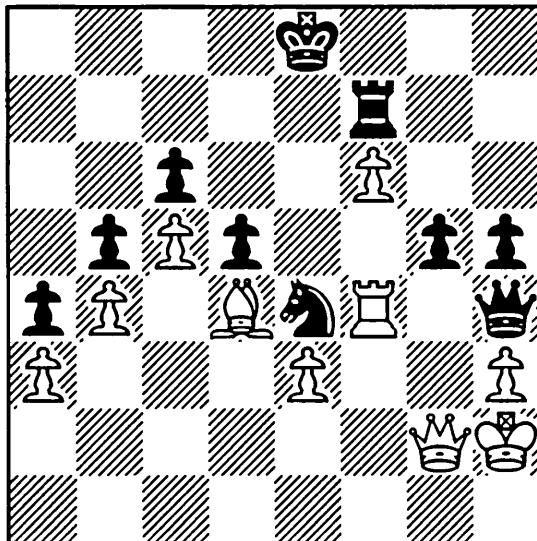
Black's advantages:

- 1 The powerful knight and queen duo dominate.
2. His king is safe.
3. White's king isn't!

4 White's f6 passer is blockaded while Black's kingside majority is mobile and surges forward.

40 ♜f4?!

What the hell...? Of all the sneaky, conniving tricks! Moro hops a ride on the crazy train and manages to confuse the conductor! He has a genius for the swindle which even Bernie Madoff would envy. I have played him several times over the ICC (I mean Moro, not Madoff), normally getting good, and sometimes even winning positions, only to be swindled 90% of the time by some shady computer shot like this.

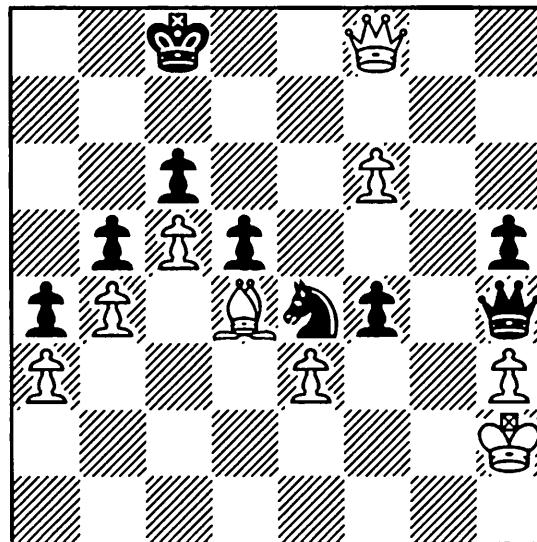


Exercise: Black obviously has two possible paths. Take the rook with 40...gxf4 or block with 40...g4. One of them wins, while the other draws. Can you see your way clearly through the Moro-induced fog?

40...gxf4?

Answer: Black should win with 40...g4! 41 ♜xe4+ (if White does nothing and plays 41 ♜f5 then 41...♜h7! 42 ♜f4 ♛f7! 43 ♜f5 ♜h6! 44 ♜f4 ♜g6! wins) 41...dxe4 42 ♜xe4+ ♛d7 43 ♜f5+ ♛d8 44 ♜f4 ♛c8 45 ♜f5+ ♛b8 46 ♜e5+ ♛b7 (finally escaping the checks) 47 ♜g3 ♜g5.

41 ♜g8+ ♜f8 42 ♜e6+ ♛d8 43 ♜e7+ ♛c8 44 ♜xf8+



Exercise (multiple choice): Black has one path to the draw and two which send him over the cliff: a) 44...♛b7; b) 44...♛c7; c) 44...♛d7. Think carefully!

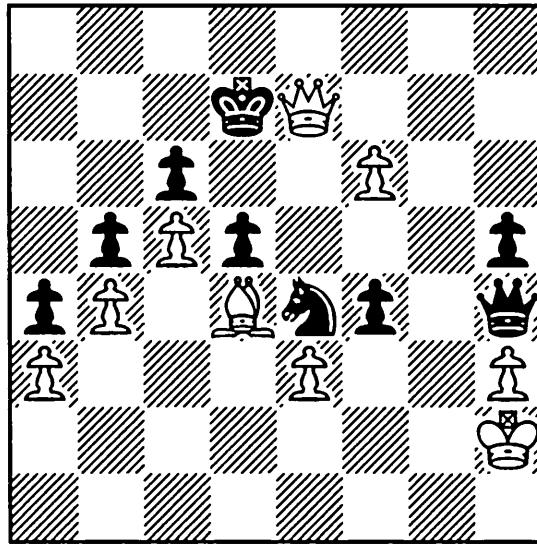
44...♚d7??

Welcome to my world. This is exactly how 100% of my blitz disasters against Moro end.

Answer: 44...♚c7?? makes no sense since it allows White's bishop into the attack: 45 ♘e5+ ♚d7 46 ♜e7+ ♚c8 47 ♜c7 mate.

Only 44...♚b7! saves Black. Here 45 ♜f7+ ♚a6 46 ♜g8 (threatening mate on a8) 46...♚b7! 47 f7 f3! 48 f8 ♜ ♜f2+ 49 ♚h1 ♜f1+ 50 ♚h2 (50...♜g1?? allows 50...♜f2+ 51 ♚h2 ♜xh3 mate) 50...♜f2+ is a rather cool perpetual check.

45 ♜e7+ 1-0



Exercise: Try to work it out to mate without moving the pieces.

Answer: 45...♚c8 46 ♜e8+ ♚b7 47 ♜d7+ ♚a8 48 ♜xc6+ ♚a7 49 ♜c7+ ♚a8 50 ♜c8+ ♚a7 51 c6+ ♜c5 52 ♘xc5 mate. If you made it to the end, congratulations – that's 14-ply!

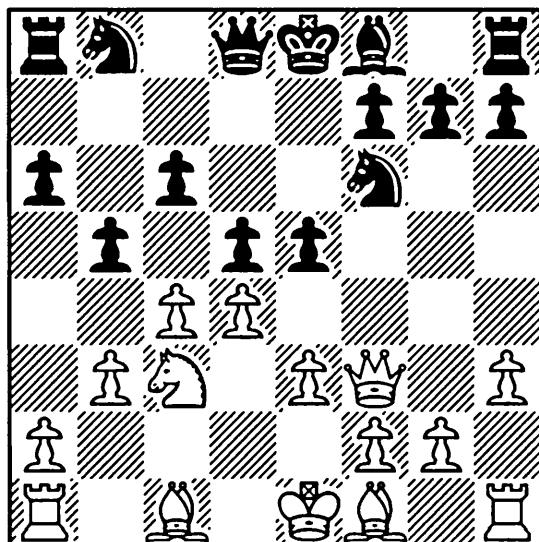
Summary

The ...a6 Chebanenko Slav may be a good choice for you when White plays the ♜c3/e3 Slav lines. You only need to learn this one line of the ...a6 Slav and you're done!

Game 37
W.So-Ni Hua
Olongapo City 2010

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 4 e3 a6 5 ♜f3 b5 6 b3 ♜g4 7 h3 ♜xf3 8 ♜xf3 e5!

8...e6 9 ♜d2 ♜a3 transposes to the Morozevich-Ivanchuk game we just looked at. 8...e5 is the dynamic option which involves a pawn sac.



Question: What are you getting me into? Black's sac looks fishy and seems to break a load of principles:

1. Black opens the position when behind in development.
2. Black opens the position when his opponent owns the bishop pair.
3. Black's pin trick with ... $\mathbb{A}b4$ looks like it's nullified by the simple $\mathbb{A}d2$. Isn't Black just guilty of excessive zeal?
4. Lastly, I don't like studying complicated book lines. I play by feel and subscribe to the Pink Floyd philosophy from the song, The Wall: "We don't need no education!"

Answer: It is clear both you and the band members of Pink Floyd desperately do need education since you employed a double negative. Even my grammar check caught it!

Kierkegaard wrote: "The case with most men is that they go out into life with one or another accidental characteristics of personality for which they say: Well, this is the way I am. I cannot do otherwise!" If you put your mind to it you can indeed play the complicated 8...e5! line, and play it well enough to take down your opponents. The current state of theory in this position suggests that it is indeed playable and the resulting positions are horrifically complex. At club level, White generally lands in this position accidentally without having the slightest clue of theory. Remember, most of us are not destined to face Kramnik playing the White side. If you understand even a little bit of the theory the result is an almost certain 0-1! Clearly you must tinker with the alchemy of such positions in your home lab and get comfortable in the chaos. Soon the confusion disappears (for you!). Don't underestimate yourself – study the line! More good news: Black abruptly snatches the initiative and the coming moves are not easy for White. Watch...

9 dxe5

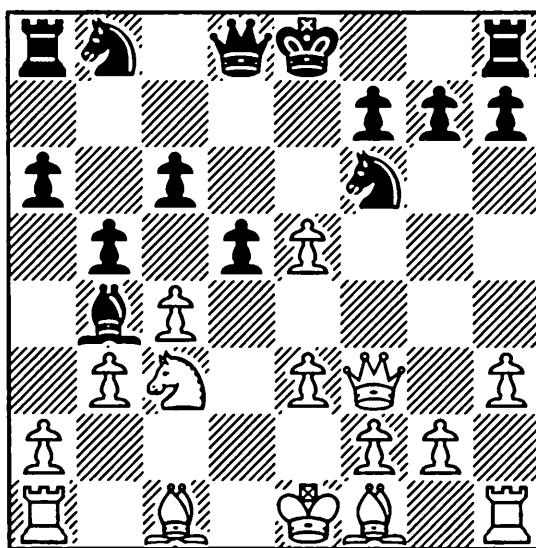
Question: Who says my opponent will accept? What if he declines?

Answer: White gets nothing if he chickens out and declines the sac. For example:

a) 9 c5 ♜bd7 10 ♜e2 g6! (placing the bishop on a better diagonal where it covers e5 and hits d4; this move also makes Black's king safer) 11 0-0 ♜g7 12 ♜b2 0-0 13 b4 a5 14 a3 ♜b8 15 ♜g3 ♜e8 was V.Buli-L.Le Quang, Budapest 2005. Black is not worse and may be the one with all the dynamic potential in the position.

b) If 9 cxd5? White gets all the difficulties of the acceptance version without the extra pawn: 9...♜b4 10 ♜d2 ♜a5 11 ♜b1 (retro development is never a good sign, but after 11 ♜c1 ♜xd5 12 ♜e4 0-0 13 dxe5 ♜d7 White lags dangerously behind in development) 11...exd4 12 dxc6 0-0 13 c7 dxe3! 14 fxe3 (14 ♜xa8?? exd2+ 15 ♜d1 ♜xc7 wins) 14...♜bd7 and White is obviously in deep trouble, A.Zhuravlev-A.Rychagov, Smolensk 2005.

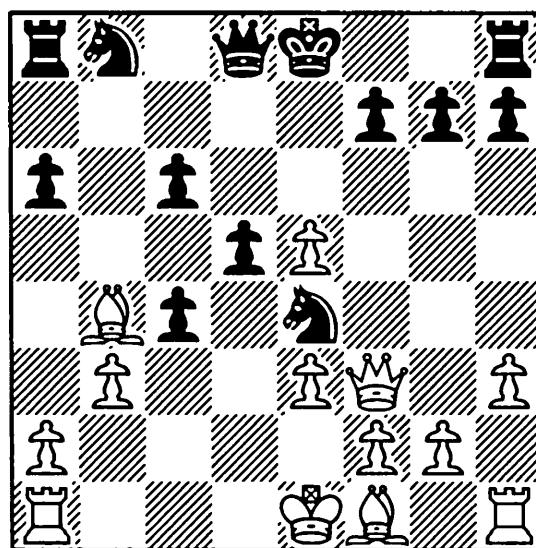
9...♜b4



10 ♜d2 ♜xc3! 11 ♜xc3 ♜e4

Our plan begins to take shape. If we manage to run White's bishop off the a5-e1 diagonal, a queen check on a5 destroys White.

12 ♜b4 bxc4



A crucial position for the assessment of our pawn sac. We intend ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ or ...c5.

13 $\mathbb{W}g4$

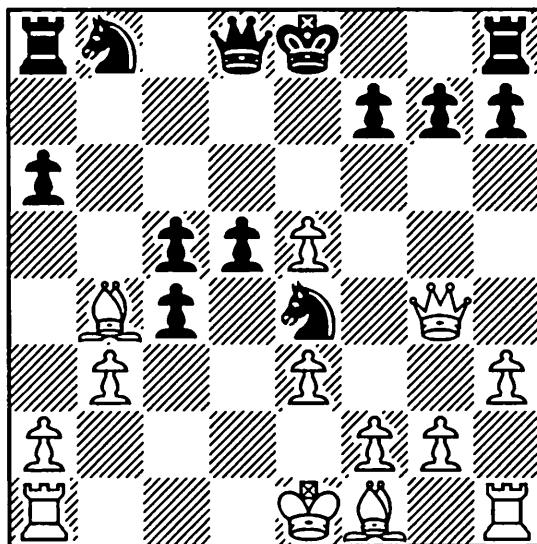
Alternatively:

a) 13 e6 fxe6 14 bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xb4$ 18 $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ with an unclear position that somehow reminds me of a French Defence, W.So-V.Malakhov, Khanty Mansiysk 2009.

b) 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14 a3 a5 15 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 16 exd6 0-0 17 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 18 0-0 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ with equality, Wang Yue-Ni Hua, JinZhou 2009.

c) 13 bxc4 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14 a3 a5 15 e6 $\mathbb{Q}a7$! 16 cxd5 cxd5 17 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and White's alarming lag in development induces him to sac a piece: 18 $\mathbb{W}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 19 exf7+? (19 $\mathbb{Q}c8+$ draws) 19... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? (19... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 20 $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ +? $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ wins) 20 $\mathbb{Q}c4$? was "masteryoda"-C.Lakdawala, Internet 2010. Now I missed the instant winning shot 20... $\mathbb{Q}c2+!$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (21 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3+!$ wins even quicker) 21... $\mathbb{W}b2!$ (threatening to take on e3 and mate on d2) 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}b1+$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$.

13...c5



14 f3!

Question: Why wouldn't White take on g7 with tempo?

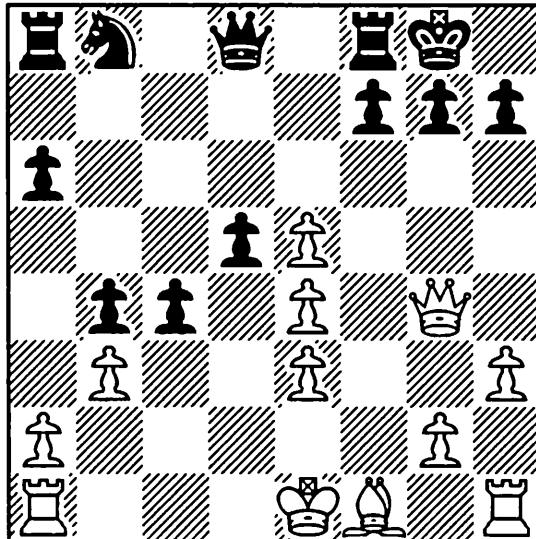
Answer: After 14 $\mathbb{W}xg7$? White loses the initiative: 14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (the trouble is 15 f3?? loses instantly to 15... $\mathbb{W}h4+$) 15... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c3 17 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ c2 18 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ c4! 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}b4+$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ popped a rook in T.Hillarp Persson-I.Ibragimov, Skelleftea 1999.

14...cxb4

Going for initiative over material. After 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 15 fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17 exd5! $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$, as in A.Shimanov-D.Lintchevski, Dagomys 2010, White enjoys plenty of compensation for the rook. However, White still faces one huge hurdle: he is down a rook!

15 fxe4 0-0

Confused yet? *Rybka* assesses this zany position as equal!



16 exd5

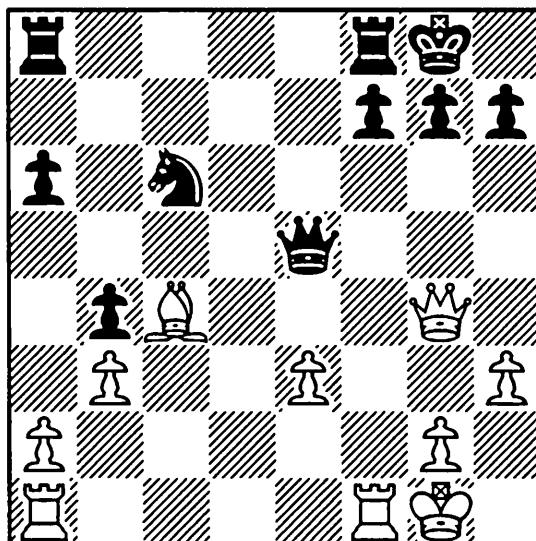
Question: What happens after 16 ♜d1?

Answer: This has never been tried. Black may continue with 16...♜c6. Have faith in Black's development lead. After 17 ♜xd5 ♛e7 18 ♜xc4 ♜xe5 19 ♜f4 (he must cover Black's queen check on h4) 19...♜xc4 20 bxc4 ♜ac8 21 ♜d4 b3! there's a double threat of capturing on a2 and checking on b4, and White struggles to equalize.

16...♛xd5

Or 16...cxb3 17 ♜d4 ♜d7 18 axb3 ♛g5 19 ♜f2 a5 20 ♜e2 with a god-awful mess, Y.Shulman-V.Malakhov, Khanty Mansiysk Olympiad 2010.

17 ♜xc4 ♛xe5 18 0-0 ♜c6!



Let's assess:

The Slav: Move by Move

1. We have a bishop-for-knight imbalance. The bishop is powerfully posted at c4, but the knight is no slouch either, heading for e5.

2. White exerts pressure against f7.

3. Black has a target pawn to work over on e3.

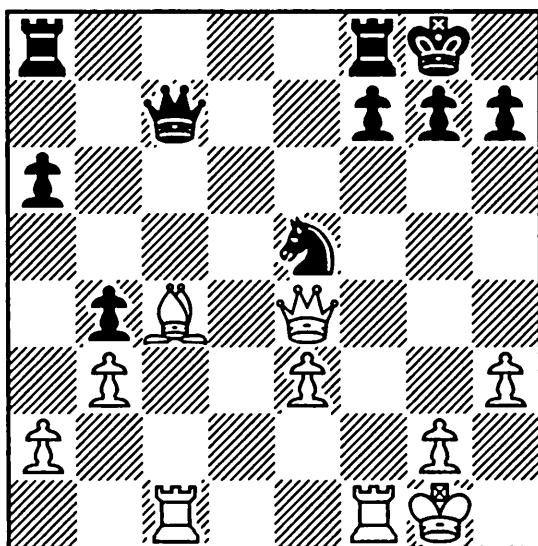
Conclusion: Either a microbe of an edge to White, or possibly dynamically balanced. One bit of advice though: let's not get greedy. White gets an initiative for the pawn after 18... $\mathbb{W}xe3+?!$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{B}a7$ 20 $\mathbb{B}ae1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 21 $\mathbb{B}f5$.

19 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 20 $\mathbb{W}e4!$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

Question: I don't understand White's last move, or Black's last move for that matter. Why didn't Black just gain a tempo with 20... $\mathbb{B}ae8?$

Answer: White set, and Black avoided, the trap 21 $\mathbb{B}xf7!!$ winning on the spot.

21 $\mathbb{B}ac1$



21... $\mathbb{W}b8!$

21... $\mathbb{W}e7??$ 22 $\mathbb{B}xf7!$ would be an echo of the above trap.

22 $\mathbb{R}d5$ $\mathbb{B}a7!$ 23 $\mathbb{B}f5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

That powerhouse on e5 secures Black's defences.

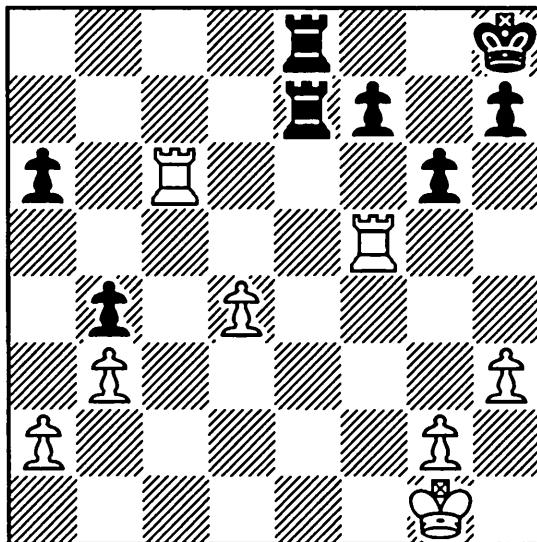
24 $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 25 $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d6!$ 26 $\mathbb{W}d4$

26 $\mathbb{W}xb4?$ walks into 26...g6 followed by a fork on d3 if White refuses to fork over the exchange on e5!

26... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 27 $\mathbb{R}c6!$

White tries to squeeze every ounce of initiative out of the position to make up for his slightly inferior structure.

27... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 28 $\mathbb{exd}4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 29 $\mathbb{B}xc6$ g6



Exercise (multiple choice): How should White proceed?

- a) 30 ♜a5 going after Black's queenside pawns;
- b) 30 ♜f4 securing his d-pawn; or
- c) 30 ♜f2 covering his second rank.

30 ♜a5?

Answer: White decides to feed at the trough of Black's queenside pawns but he begins to overpress and underestimates Black's resources.

30 ♜f4! ♜a7 should lead to an eventual draw, and so should 30 ♜f2 ♜d7 31 ♜xa6 ♜e4 32 d5 ♜d4 33 ♜af6 ♜g7 34 ♜f4 ♜d1+ 35 ♜h2 ♜b7 36 ♜e2 ♜xd5.

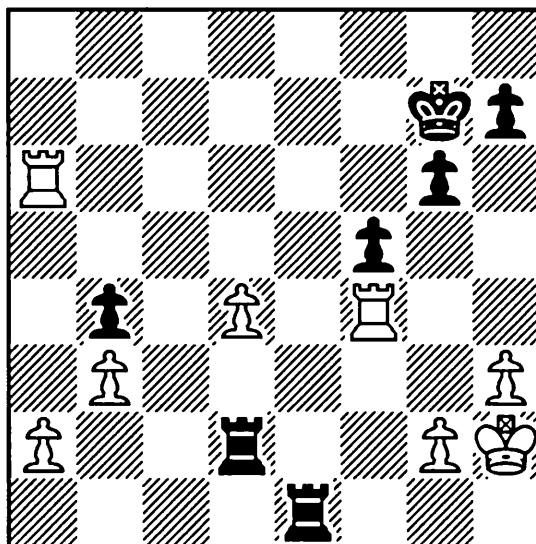
30...♜e1+ 31 ♜h2 ♜8e2 32 ♜xa6 ♜d2

The point. Black achieves the all-important doubling on the 7th rank before his opponent.

33 ♜f6

If 33 ♜a7 ♜g7 34 ♜cc7 ♜f1 35 ♜cb7 h5! (threat: ...h4 and ...♜d1 with a mating net) 36 h4 ♜xd4 37 ♜h3 ♜d3+ 38 ♜h2 ♜f4 39 ♜d7 ♜xh4+ 40 ♜g1 ♜xd7 41 ♜xd7 ♜f6 and Black should convert without much trouble.

33...♜g7 34 ♜f4 f5!



Cutting off $\mathbb{R}g4$ defensive ideas.

35 $\mathbb{R}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 36 $\mathbb{R}f3$

After 36 $\mathbb{R}xh7$ $\mathbb{R}ee2$ 37 $\mathbb{R}a7$ $\mathbb{R}xg2+$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{R}h2+$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{R}xh3$:

1. White's king is cut off;
2. Black has two supported passers coming down the g- and f-files; and
3. White's pawns begin to drop.

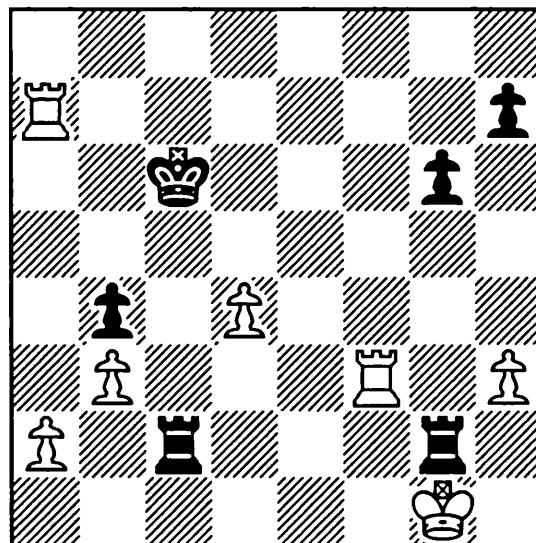
36... $\mathbb{R}ee2$ 37 $\mathbb{R}g3$ $f4$ 38 $\mathbb{R}g4$ $f3!$ 39 $\mathbb{R}f4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 40 $\mathbb{R}g4+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 41 $\mathbb{R}f4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

No draw! The position still may be a draw, but now White must earn it.

42 $\mathbb{R}a6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 43 $\mathbb{R}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 44 $\mathbb{R}xf3?$

White misses a huge opportunity. Black has no path to victory after 44 $h4!$ $\mathbb{R}xg2+$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}h3$.

44... $\mathbb{R}xg2+$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{R}h2+$ 46 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{R}dg2+$ 47 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{R}c2$ 48 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{R}hg2+$



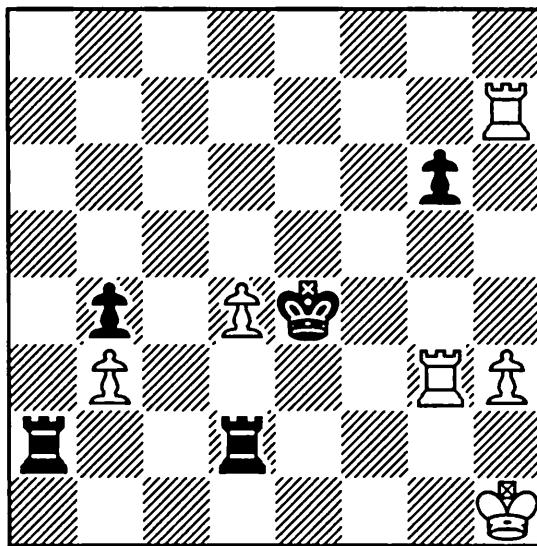
I hate it when I am trapped in such undignified situations. White's king must jump around at Black's beck and call, defending mates everywhere. It's like those old westerns

where the bad guy/bully/gunslinger walks into a bar, picks on a random customer and yells “Dance!” This is followed by the bad guy/bully/gunslinger firing a barrage of bullets perilously close to the customer’s feet. The bullied customer has no choice but to prance about until the bully tires of his amusement!

49 ♜f1 ♜h2 50 ♜g1 ♜d5 51 ♜g3 ♜hd2 52 ♜h1 ♜h2+ 53 ♜g1 ♜hd2 54 ♜h1 ♜xa2 55 ♜d7+ ♜e4!

Black’s harried king survives the arduous trek through the desert to finally arrive at a peaceful oasis on the kingside.

56 ♜xh7



Exercise: One senses there is a win for Black here.
But where? Find the simplest path to victory.

Answer: 56...♜a1+

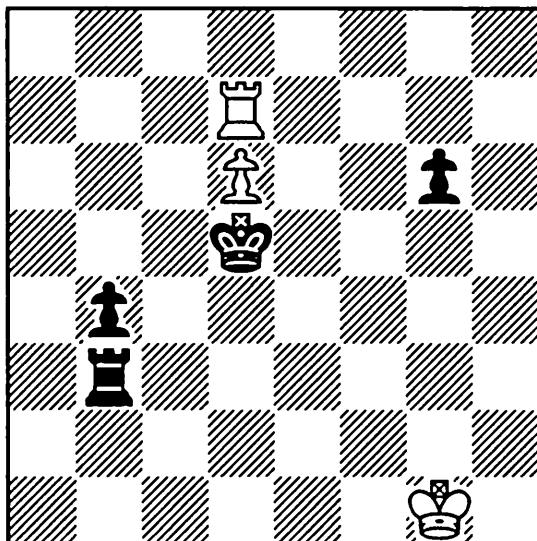
Paradoxically, Black swaps off one of his towering rooks for White’s defensive turkey on g3. White’s passive rook on g3 looks a lot like the dumbest kid in class being assigned a front row centre seat next to the teacher. Yet the g3-rook serves a strong defensive function. With its removal, the b3-pawn soon falls and White will be helpless to halt its advance with only a single rook and no king to help out.

57 ♜g1 ♜xg1+ 58 ♜xg1 ♜d3 59 ♜d7

59 ♜h4+ ♜d5 60 ♜f1 ♜xb3 61 ♜e2 ♜g3 62 ♜d2 g5 63 ♜h7 ♜xd4 64 ♜c2 ♜c3+ 65 ♜b2 ♜e4 66 ♜b7 ♜xh3 67 ♜xb4+ ♜f3 wins for Black. White’s king has been lured away from the kingside.

59...♜xh3 60 d5 ♜xb3 61 d6 ♜d5!

The winning difference is the imbalance of power between the two kings.



62 ♔f2 ♔c6 63 ♕d8 ♕d3 64 ♕c8+ ♔d7

But not 64...♔xd6?? 65 ♕d8+ ♔c5 66 ♕xd3. We have all done things like this in our dark past.

65 ♕b8 b3 66 ♔e2 ♕h3 67 ♔d2 ♔c6 68 ♕d8 b2 69 ♔c2 ♕h2+ 70 ♔b1 ♕g2 71 ♔a2 g5

White helplessly watches this pawn march forward.

72 ♔b1 g4 73 ♔a2 g3 74 ♔b1 ♕f2 0-1

Summary

Come on people, let's fire up our sense of adventure and risk the 8...e5 gambit in the Chebanenko!

One troublesome trait I have noticed in artificial intelligence is that the moment computers become sentient they turn hideously evil and automatically attempt to either enslave or obliterate the entire human race. There's a mountain of evidence on this important issue (okay, admittedly the "evidence" is usually from science fiction like *Star Trek* and *Terminator!*).

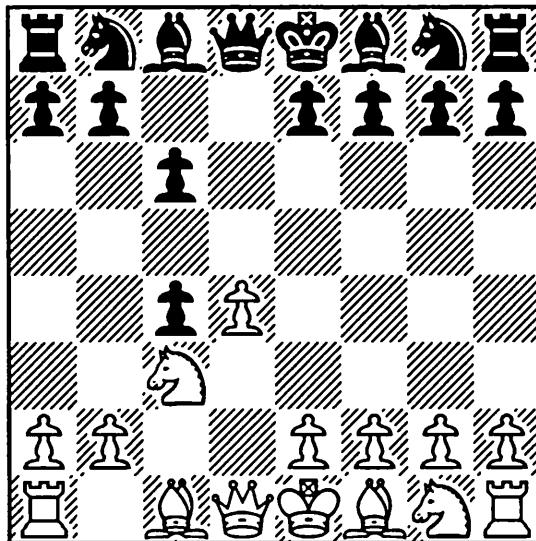
At the present, *Rybka* and *Fritz* both use their abilities for good, not evil, and both comply with Issac Assimov's most sacred robotic laws concerning the non-harming of humans. However, this following game gives me cause to worry about the future.

Game 38
Deep Fritz 10-V.Kramnik
Man vs. Machine Duel, Bonn 2006

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4

Fritz and Kramnik transpose to our position from a Queen's Gambit Accepted move order. The normal Slav move order would be 2...c6 3 ♔c3 dxc4. White has three responses.

Only the first should really be a concern for Black:



a) 4 e4! b5 5 a4! is a critical try for an advantage (see the main game).

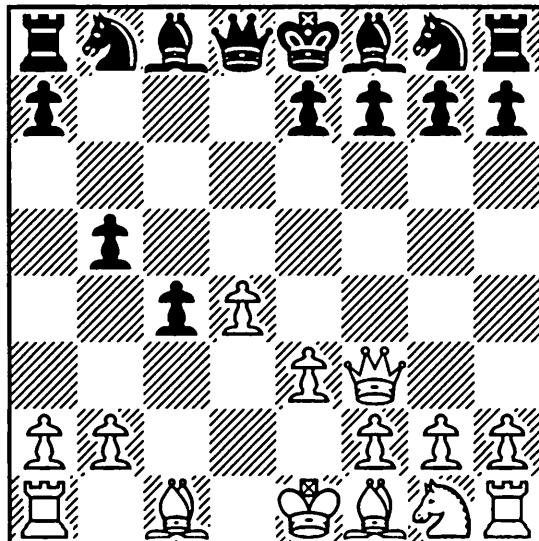
b) After 4 a4 Black has a choice:

b1) 4... ♜f6 5 e4 e5! 6 ♜f3 (6 dxе5 ♜xd1+ 7 ♜xd1 ♜xe4 8 ♜xc4 ♜e6 9 ♜xe6 fxе6 is at least equal for Black, C.Ward-F.Cuijpers, Bern 1993) 6... exd4 7 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 8 ♜xd4 ♜c5 and White was already struggling in M.Casella-L.Altounian, Costa Mesa 2003, with problems on f2 as well as ... ♜b4 threats from Black.

b2) 4... e5 5 dxе5 (Black stands better after 5 e3?! exd4 6 exd4 ♜e6) 5... ♜xd1+ 6 ♜xd1 ♜a6 7 e4 ♜e6 8 ♜e3 f6 9 f4 ♜d8+ 10 ♜e2 ♜g4+ 11 ♜f2 fxе5 12 ♜xc4 exf4 13 ♜xf4 ♜c5 was Z.Azmaiparashvili-B.Gulko San Roque 1996. Both sides are active but White's pawn structure is somewhat compromised.

c) 4 e3 b5 5 a4 b4 6 ♜a2 e6 7 ♜xc4 ♜f6 transposes to Game 29, the quiet line in the previous chapter. 6 ♜e4 is sharper; for example, 6... ♜d5 7 ♜g3 ♜f6 8 ♜e2 ♜a6 9 e4 ♜a5 10 ♜f3 e6 11 0-0 ♜bd7 12 ♜g5 with compensation for the pawn, A.Shabalov-I.Krush, US Championship, Saint Louis 2010.

Question: In line 'c', instead of 5 a4 could White try the sneaky 5 ♜xb5, intending 5...axb5 6 ♜f3 trapping the rook?

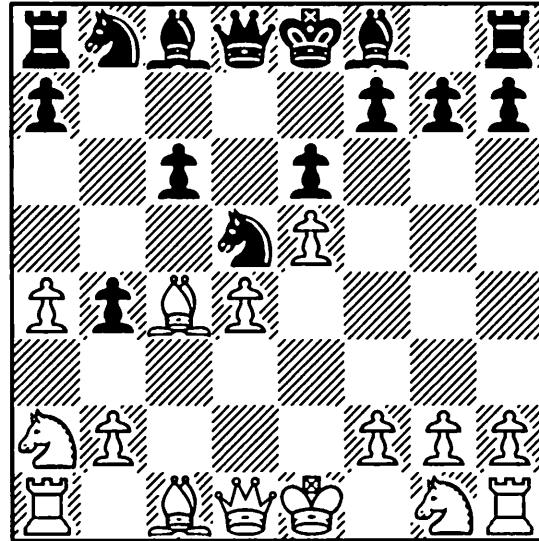


Answer: This is not a good idea for White. He does win the exchange, but then his own queen is in danger of becoming trapped in the corner. In fact, after 6... $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ 7 $\mathbb{W}xa8 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 8 $\mathbb{W}xa7 e5!$ there's already a threat of 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and White is virtually forced to sac a piece with 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc4 bxc4$.

3 e4 b5 4 a4 c6 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b4 6 $\mathbb{Q}a2$

6 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and 6 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ are also played, but this is the most challenging move.

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ e6



The critical position of the line. Let's assess:

- 1 White controls more space with his pawn wedge on e5.
2. The extra space automatically translates into attacking chances on the kingside, where Black's king certainly must reside since the queenside is wide open.
3. A critical fight ensues for control over c5.
4. White may be able to apply pressure down the c-file and on c6 with his rooks.
5. White may use e4 for a knight where it controls Black's freeing ...c5 break and also

looks to the black king over on the kingside. The e4-square can also be used as a rook or queen lift to transfer forces to the kingside later on.

6. Black's knight sits unassailable on the throne of d5, where it shines unchallenged.

7. Black controls extra queenside space with his b4-pawn.

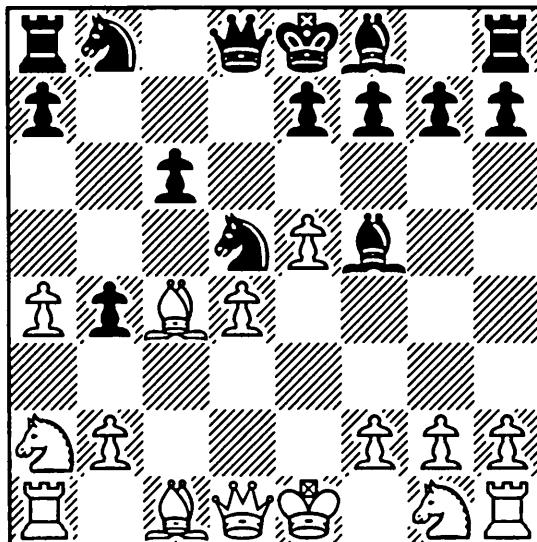
8. Black may train his pieces on the c5-square to enforce his break. For example: bishop on e7, knight on d7, queen on b6, and rooks on c7 and c8. In this case it would be very difficult for White to prevent the ...c5 break.

9. Black will play ...♝a6 and swap it for White's light-squared bishop. This leaves White with a potentially bad dark-squared bishop since he has fixed pawns on d4 and e5. This swap also greatly reduces White's kingside attacking chances.

10. Believe it or not, White's a4-pawn may be weak. Black may later attack it with this setup: knight on b6, queen on c6 or d7. This would force White into the concession b2-b3, which creates a chronic weakness on c3. Then Black may be able to entrench a piece there.

Conclusion: Perhaps White has a tiny edge, but the line is certainly playable, dynamic and – best of all – virtually unknown, so your opponents probably won't be up on the theory.

Question: Why does Black voluntarily lock in his light-squared bishop? Why not play 8...♝f5?



Answer: It looks logical; however, there may be a red flag: The top players avoid it as Black and play 8...e6 instead. Sometimes this is done purely out of fashion, and sometimes they know something we don't! In this case, Black's bishop will come out on a6 so there is no need to play it to f5.

Here's an example with 8...♝f5: 9 ♜f3 e6 10 ♜g5 ♛b6 11 ♜c1 a5 12 ♜b3 h6 13 ♜h4 ♜d7 14 0-0 g5!? 15 ♜g3 ♜e7 16 ♜e2 h5 17 h3 h4 18 ♜h2 g4 19 hxg4 ♜xg4 20 ♜fd2 ♜xe2 21 ♛xe2 ♛a6 22 ♛xa6 ♛xa6 23 ♜c4 and White's central space, grip on c4 and pressure on a5 gave him the edge in K.Sasikiran-A.Hauchard, Elista 1998.

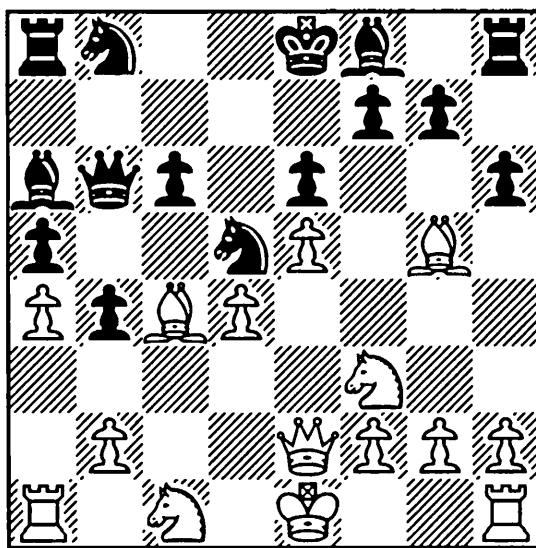
9 ♜f3 a5!?

Unusual at this stage.♜a6 is a big part of Black's opening scheme, but normally Black first plays 9...♝e7 to prevent ♜g5. G.Kasparov-I.Sokolov, Sarajevo 1999, continued 10 ♜d2 a5 11 ♜c1 ♜d7 12 ♜b3 ♜b7 13 0-0 h6 14 ♜c2 ♜c8 15 ♜e4 c5 16 ♜ac1 ♜f8 (Black is understandably afraid of 16...0-0?? 17 ♜d3) 17 ♜b5 ♜a8 18 ♜d3. White has the advantage here since Black's h8-rook is temporarily out of business while a fight rages on in the centre.

10 ♜g5 ♜b6 11 ♜c1

Logical. White redeploys the knight to its optimal square b3 where it watches a5, c5 and d4.

11...♜a6 12 ♜e2 h6



13 ♜e3

Question: Why would White make this passive retreat? Shouldn't he take an aggressive stand and provoke ...g5 by playing 13 ♜h4?

Answer: That would be a blunder. ...g5 is not the problem. 13...♜f4! is, however, the trouble. After 14 ♜f1 Black plays 14...♝xg2+! 15 ♜xg2 ♜xc4.

13...♜xc4 14 ♜xc4

Bishop badification achieved. White's bishop on e3 is a sorry sight when compared to Black's d5-knight. Black still needs to take great care since that e5-pawn is troublesome and may be the launching pad for a future attack.

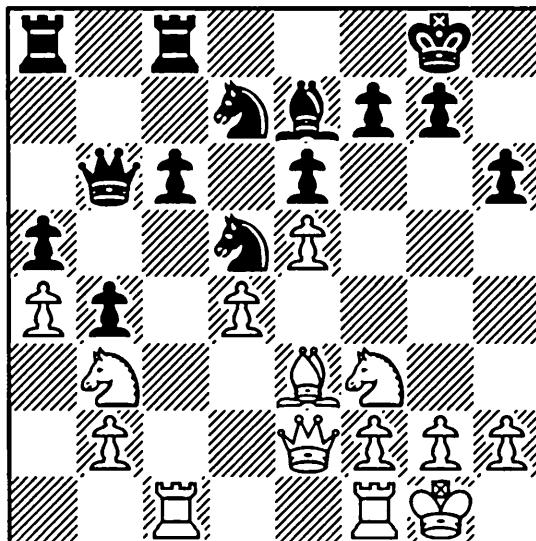
14...♜d7 15 ♜b3 ♜e7 16 ♜c1

Another typical sequence would be 16 0-0 0-0 17 ♜fc1 ♜fc8 18 ♜fd2 c5, and here 19 ♜e4?! (19 ♜e2 is equal) can be met by 19...cxsd4!. If White plays 20 ♜xc8+?? (Black stands slightly better after 20 ♜xd4 ♜xc1+ 21 ♜xc1 ♜b8) then 20...♜xc8 21 ♜xc8+ ♜h7 22 ♜xd4 ♜a6! 23 ♜ac1 ♜d3 wins a piece.

16...0-0! 17 0-0

17 ♜xc6? ♜xc6 18 ♜xc6 ♜7b6 regains the pawn by picking off a4, with a superior ending.

17...♝fc8 18 ♛e2



Exercise: Black would love to play ...c5. Can he get away with it?

Answer: Yes. Kramnik calculated the next few moves perfectly.

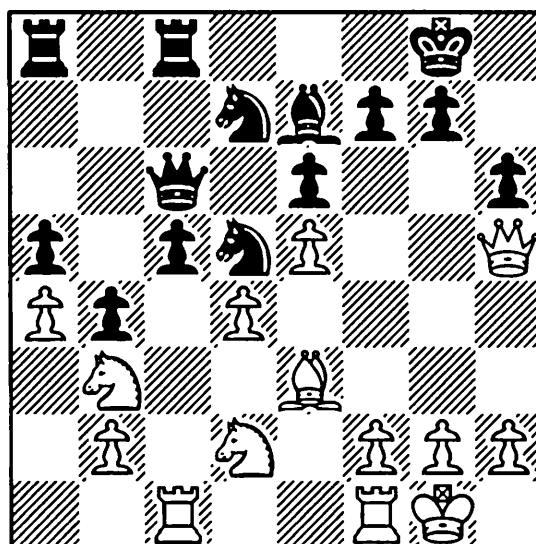
18...c5! 19 ♜fd2

Or 19 dxc5 ♜xc5 (threatening to break the pin by ...♜xe3 followed by ...♜xa4) 20 ♕d4 ♜c7 21 ♜fd2 ♜ac8. If White persists in his pinning and winning philosophy, he gets cold water thrown in his face after 22 ♜e4? ♜xb3! 23 ♜xb6 ♜xc1 24 ♜b5 ♜xb6 25 ♜xb6 ♜e2+! 26 ♜h1 ♜c1 27 ♜d2 ♜xf1+ 28 ♜xf1 ♜c1, winning material. Kramnik had to have seen to this point when he made the excellent decision to play 18...c5!.

19...♛c6!

Reminding White that he/she/it has a weakness to worry about too.

20 ♜h5!?



The Slav: Move by Move

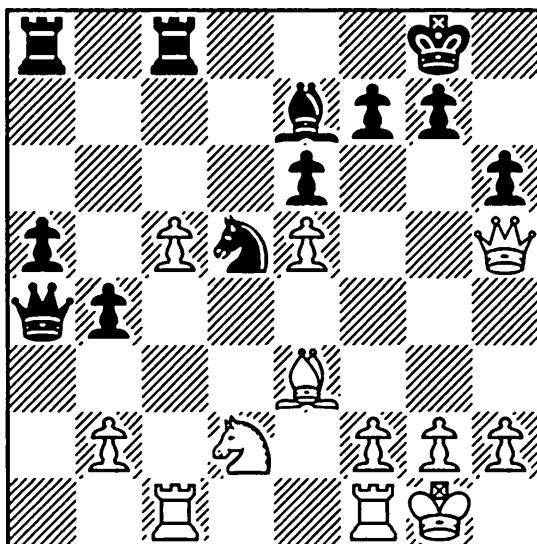
Computers are quick to anger but don't usually hold a grudge. If I didn't know better, this angry-looking move looks like one from an opponent who dislikes you and is itching to take your head off.

Question: Is $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ a threat?

20...Wxa4!

Answer: I doubt it. White just doesn't have the firepower to finish the job after 21 $\mathbb{Q}xh6?$ $gxh6$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xh6$ c4!. Let's say White now goes totally bonkers and sacs the house. After 23 f4 cxb3 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}g3+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$ $fxg6$ 28 $\mathbb{W}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29 f5 $\mathbb{W}a1+$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 31 f6 $\mathbb{W}xd2+$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 34 exf6 $\mathbb{W}f4+$ Black beats White to the finish line.

21 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 22 dxc5



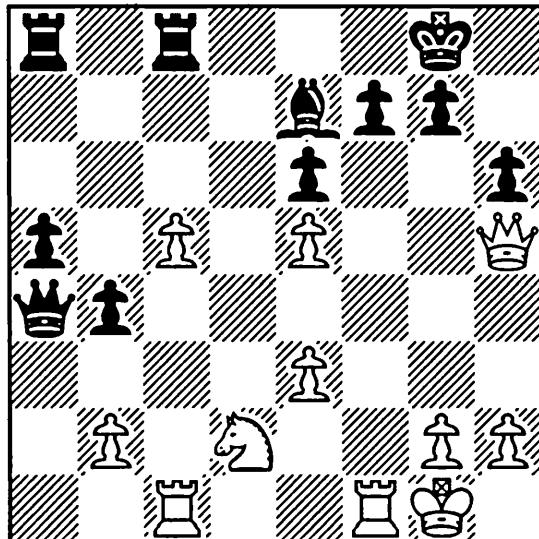
Question: Taking on e3 really messes up White's pawns, but it also opens the f-file for attack. Is it a good decision for Black to take on e3?

22... $\mathbb{Q}xe3!$

Answer: Yes, taking on e3 displays exceptionally good defensive intuition. Black inflicts the structural damage and lives to exploit it.

After the passive 22... $\mathbb{W}c6$?! 23 $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$ $gxh6$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xh6$ White has scary-looking attacking ideas like $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

23 fxe3



Exercise (multiple choice): Which option should Black take here?

- a) Defend with 23...♜f8;
- b) Defend with 23...g6; or
- c) Counterattack with 23...♝xc5.

23...♝xc5?

Answer: This is perhaps the point where our human hero, after having thoroughly outplayed the computer, throws away the win. Black has a clear advantage after the counter-intuitive and downright chickenish 23...♝f8!, which proves to be an effective method of taming White's would-be initiative on the kingside. After 24 c6 (24 ♜e4 allows 24...♛b3!) 24...♛b5! Black enjoys a clear advantage:

1. White's c-pawn isn't going anywhere and may be in some danger;
2. Black's powerful queen hits c6, e5 and d3;
3. Black is ready to roll forward and create a passer soon with ...a4; and
4. Black's king is safe.

24 ♛xf7+ ♔h8 25 ♛f3 ♜f8 26 ♛e4 ♛d7 27 ♜b3 ♜b6 28 ♜fd1 ♛f7 29 ♜f1 ♛a7

Nyet! Request denied! Kramnik avoids the draw by repetition.

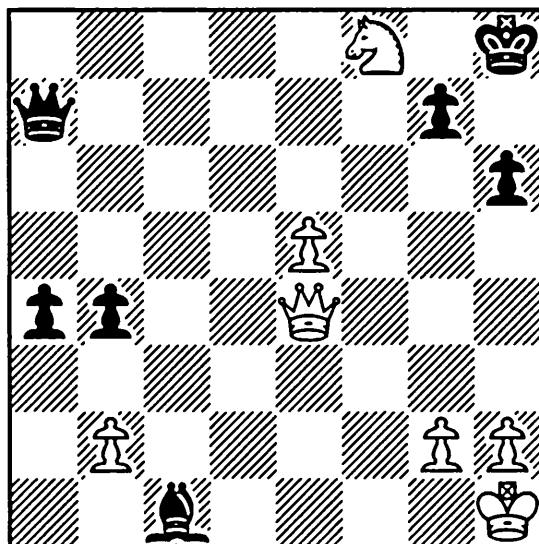
30 ♜xf8+

Black has all the winning chances after 30 ♜d4 ♜xf1+ 31 ♜xf1 ♜xd4 32 ♛xd4 ♛xd4 33 exd4 a4.

30...♜xf8 31 ♜d4 a4 32 ♜xe6 ♜xe3+ 33 ♔h1 ♜xc1?!

His last shot at an attempt to win was 33...♜e8! 34 ♜f1 ♛a6! 35 ♜f3 ♛xe6 36 ♜xe3 ♛a6, when Black's outside passer is more dangerous than White's e-pawn.

34 ♜xf8



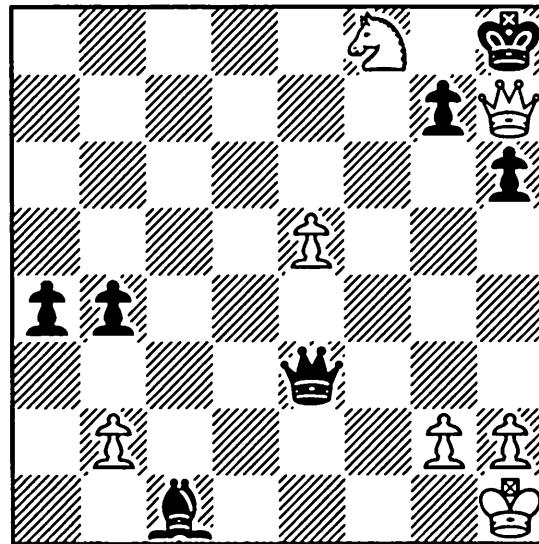
Threatening mate on h7, a one-ply threat! The game is drawn after 34... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ and now, for example, 35.... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}g6+$.

Instead Kramnik played...

34... $\mathbb{Q}e3??$

Oh no!

35. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ mate (1-0)



Well, I must give praise to *Deep Fritz* for the economy of its attack!

Oh, the humanity! Why won't anyone listen to my dire warnings about the computer menace? Now I hope you don't think Kramnik's plight is funny. If you do, I am forced to quote from the movie *Gladiator* and ask the question: "Are you not entertained?"

At this moment I am certain Kramnik's life flashed before his eyes. I walked into a mate in one twice in my life, and as you probably know, what follows is that horrible internal yell like that tormented guy clutching his head in Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream*! Back in the 1980's, during a blitz game against a 2400 player, my opponent actually passed out

at the board (I don't want to embarrass him by mentioning his name) when he overlooked a mate in one. Each of our losses (especially a nauseating one like this) represents a little death, and a grim reminder of our own flickering mortality.

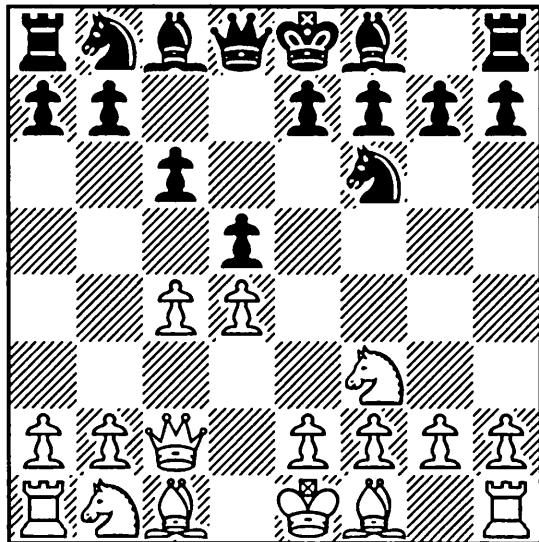
Summary

If White plays the move order 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3, then 3...dxc4 looks like an interesting and viable alternative to the normal 3...♝f6 Slavs.

Chapter Seven

Fourth Move Alternatives

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c2/4 ♜b3



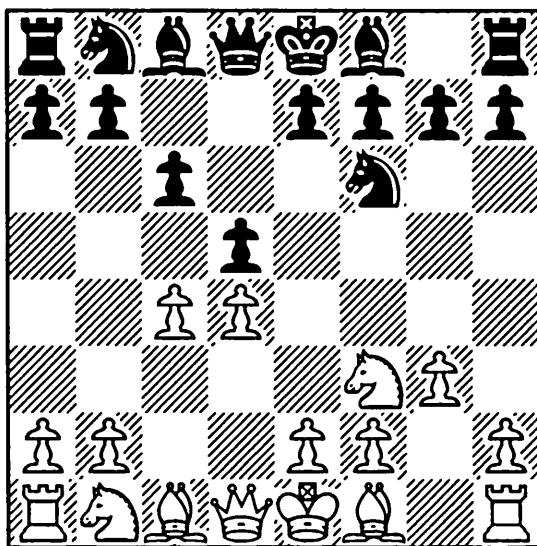
With 4 ♜c2 White hopes to reach Closed Catalan positions. Instead we return to our beloved homeland by playing 4...dxc4. Now White can simply recapture (as in Games 40-41), which does lead to Catalan-like positions, but a poor man's Catalan for White. His queen on c4 tends to be a target and we have great fun bouncing it around with the following ideas:

1. ...b5;
2. ...♜c8 and ...c5;
3. ...♝d7-b6;
4. ...♝e6;
5. ...♝d7 and ...e5, answering dxe5 with ...♝xe5.

White can also try 5 e4!? b5 (Game 39). This idea masquerades as a type of Geller Gambit, but it's a bit sneakier since White isn't trying to blow us away this time. It's kind of like a false friend who is nice to your face, but talks about you behind your back! White accumulates several strategic advantages for his pawn, like a big centre, file pressure down the a- and c-files, and potential control over the hole on c5. Normally it's easier to plant a bomb than disarm one, but in this case computers have pretty much worked out a defensive scheme for Black to defuse White's initiative.

White can also play 4 $\mathbb{W}b3$, but from our standpoint it doesn't make the slightest difference since after 4...dxc4 5 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ we transpose.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 g3



We return to the Catalan Gambit, with a slight tweak. In Chapter 5 White's knight was already committed to c3, whereas here it's still on b1. This slight change helps White a bit since Black is denied ...b5 and ...b4 tempo-gaining ideas on a c3-knight. Even with this favourable twist, though, I still feel White is puffing and sweating, working hard to prove his full compensation for his lost pawn (see Game 42).

Game 39
M.Llanes Hurtado-S.Rublevsky
Spanish Championship, Lugo 2006

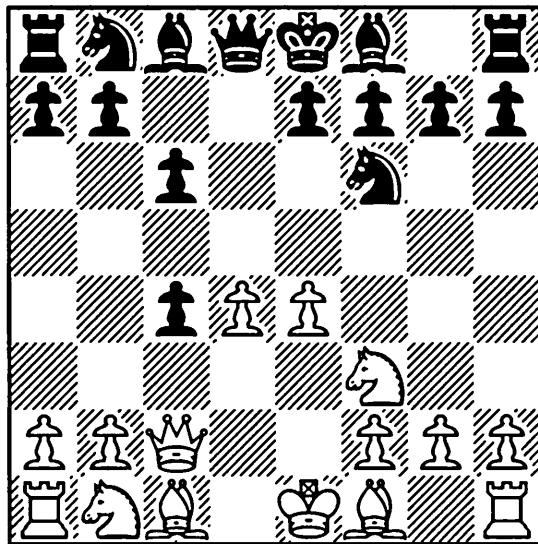
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$

If White wants to play this gambit he must choose this move order, since 4 $\mathbb{W}b3$ dxc4 transposes to Games 40-41.

4...dxc4

We continue our Slavic ways and avoid 4...e6 5 g3 – the Closed Catalan.

5 e4!?

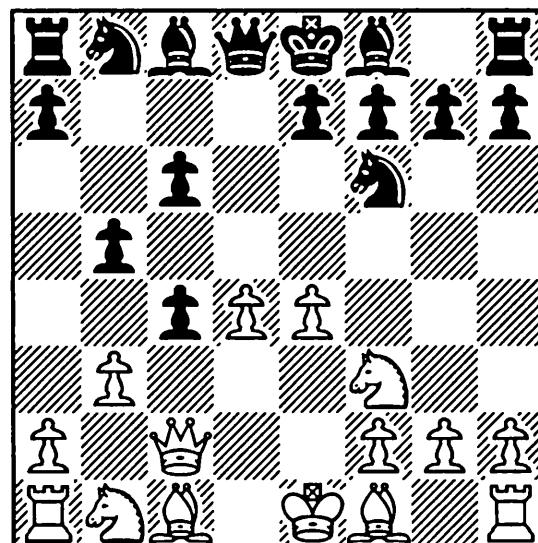


I call this gambit the Geller Gambit's Evil Twin – a remarkable statement if you consider that the Geller Gambit itself oozes with malice! It contains many of the qualities of the Geller Gambit. The differences are:

1. I believe it's sneakier, more subtle, and strategically sounder than the Geller Gambit.
2. It lacks the ferocity of the Geller Gambit and Black is not as likely to get swept away in the opening should things go awry.

I got a tough online workout in this line a few years back against my friend, GM Einar Gausel. He proved to me that the Evil Twin Gambit can be quite potent if Black mishandles it (I had Black's defensive strategy down pat after the initial 50 losses!). Do you have one of those opening positions where you are uncomfortable on either side? Well, the Geller Gambit's Evil Twin is just such a position for me. It reminds me of my aunt's Christmas fruitcake – jam packed with mystery items nobody wants to risk eating!

5...b5 6 b3!



A clear indication this isn't one of those sham pawn sacs where White regains the pawn six moves later.

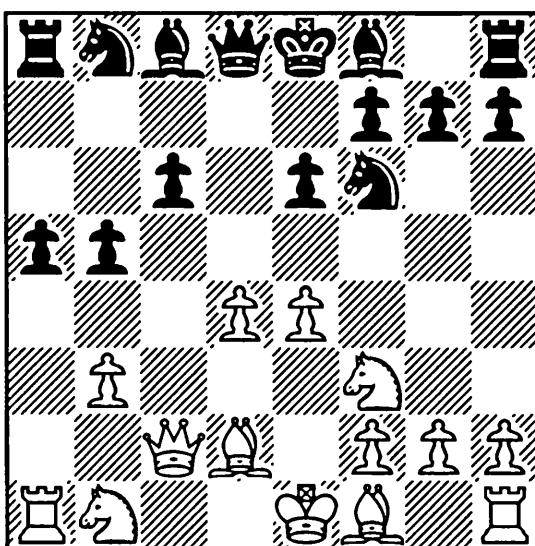
6...cxb3 7 axb3 e6 8 ♜d2!

Threatening to establish a bind with ♜a5.

8...a5!

Oh, no you don't!

8...♜b7?! is also played but I don't think it's wise to allow White's bishop entry to a5. For example, 9 ♜a5! ♜c8 10 ♜d3 ♜a6 11 ♜d2! (fighting for b4) 11...♜e7 12 b4! 0-0 13 0-0 ♜d8 14 ♜c3 ♜xa5 15 ♜xa5, M.Ivanov-K.Thorsteins, Reykjavik 1997. Black is in a bind on the queenside and his remaining bishop stinks.



With 8...a5 we reach the critical starting position.

Question: What exactly does White get for his pawn?

Answer: A lot!:

1. Development lead.
2. A giant centre.
3. Pressure down the c-file and control over c5. It is critical for Black to entice White to post a piece on c5 and, when a black piece captures, to plug c5 with a white pawn. Or, Black enforces ...c5 himself – not so easy to do.

4. A reasonable shot at a kingside attack with the line-up ♜d3 followed by e5. White hits h7 and forces Black to eventually weaken with either ...h6 or ...g6.

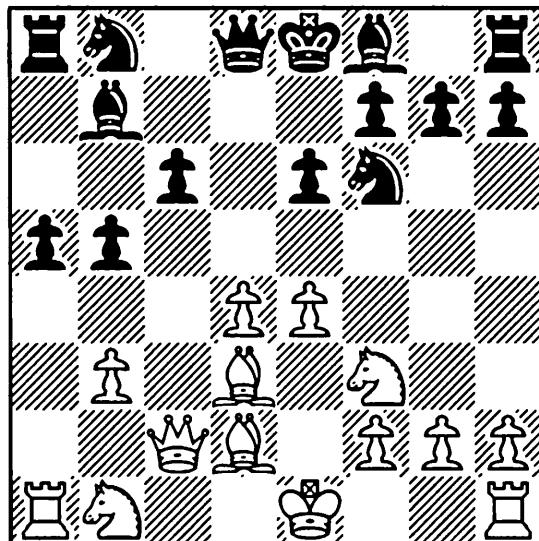
5. The a5-pawn may later turn into a target.

All this just for a pawn! However, thanks to computer's help we can navigate our way through the mess and hopefully convert our extra pawn.

9 ♜d3

Threatening e5 sooner or later.

9...♜b7



10 0-0

Question: Well? Why didn't White follow through with 10 e5?

Answer: It's premature and hands over d5. The h7 grab is unsound: after 10... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xh7?$ g6 12 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ fxg6 13 $\mathbb{W}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ White doesn't get enough compensation, with only two pawns for the piece and a safe black king to boot.

10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

Black can also play 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, although I prefer to play this bishop to b4 later, the way Rublevsky does. After 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ h6 12 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 0-0 14 $\mathbb{Q}fa1$ b4 15 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5 16 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ a4! 17 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ cxd4 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ Black had an edge due to his control over c5 in H.Nakamura-C.Hansen, Malmo/Copenhagen 2005.

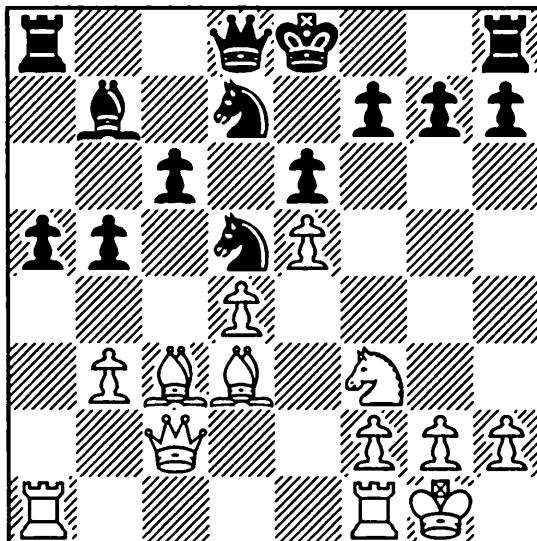
11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$

Holes should be occupied.

12 e5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$

This is stronger than 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$?! 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ exd5 15 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ and the a5-pawn is doomed. When White regains his pawn Black is stuck with all his previous strategic woes without the comfort of extra material.

13 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$



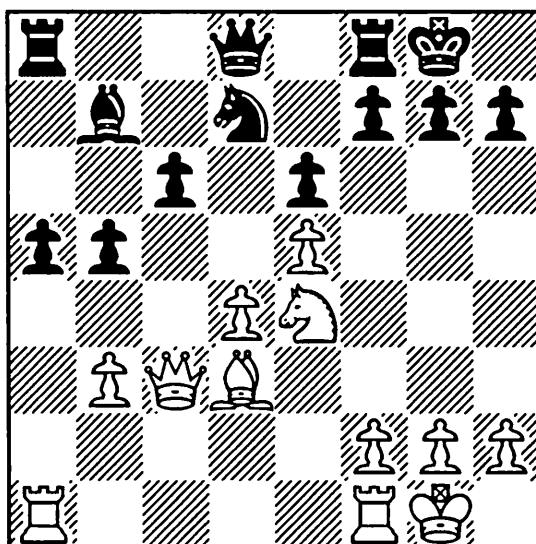
Exercise: A test of your strategic intuition. Which plan is best for White:
14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ preserving the c3-bishop; or 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, transferring
the knight to e4 where it looms over d6 and c5?

14 $\mathbb{Q}d2?!$

Answer: This is a rushed move – he is eager for the job but doesn't want to endure the interview. Although it looks logical to head for the powerful e4-square, 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ may be a strategic error since White seriously weakens his grip on the dark squares.

White needed to enter through the process more slowly. He would only receive some compensation for the pawn if he took the time to hang on to his important bishop: 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ h6 15 $\mathbb{B}fe1$ b4! 16 $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{B}a6$ 17 $\mathbb{B}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$. I still prefer to play Black, but White's space plus, attacking chances and queenside pressure give him compensation.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 0-0 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$



Exercise: White is about to establish a powerful blockading bind on c5. This is the moment Toto pulls back the curtain and everyone realizes the Wizard of Oz is not as great and fearful as his press releases indicated. How do we respond to this strategic threat?

Answer: Don't allow it! Black returns the pawn to open a powerful diagonal to his once buried bishop:

16...c5!

The secret of this line is a well timed ...c5, returning the pawn for either equality or an edge for Black.

17 ♜xc5

I don't believe in White's attacking chances for the pawn after 17 ♜d6 cxd4 18 ♜xd4 ♜d5 19 ♜fe1 (White can't regain his pawn with 19 ♜xb5? due to 19...♝g5! double-attacking g2 and e5) 19...b4 20 ♜e3! g6 since Black has quick access to ...f6 or ...f5 if White tries ideas like 21 ♜f4 ♜xb3 22 ♜h3 ♜e7, with ...f5 to follow.

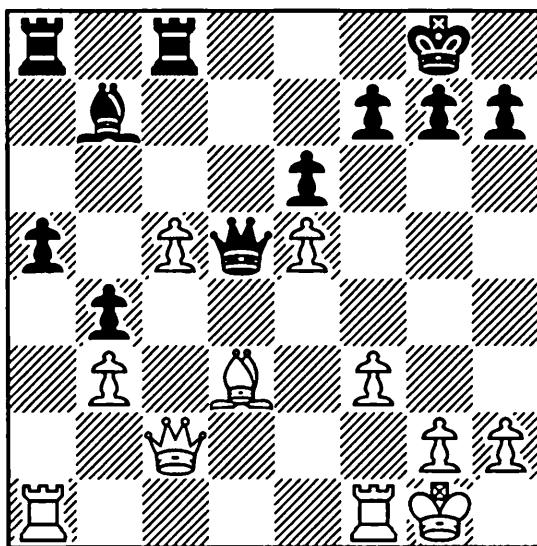
17...♜xc5 18 dxc5

White stands slightly worse no matter how he plays it. 18 ♜xc5 b4 19 ♜c4 ♜e8! intending ...♜e7 and ...♜d7 gives Black an edge.

18...♝d5 19 f3 b4

Artificially isolating White's c-pawn.

20 ♜c2 ♜fc8!



White maxed out on his credit card and now faces the angry creditors. Without making a noticeable error, except possibly on his 14th move, White stands worse. Witness the triumph of computer-generated defence over a dangerous gambit.

21 ♜ac1

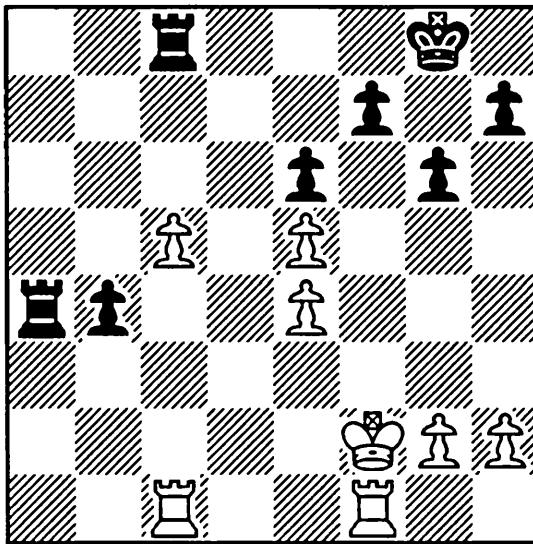
Question: How can it be bad to take a pawn with check?

Answer: The trouble for White is that 21 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+?$ is more of a dubious piece sac than a pawn grab. After 21... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22 $\mathbb{B}ac1$ (22 $\mathbb{Q}e4?$ $\mathbb{W}d4+$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 24 $fxe4$ $\mathbb{B}xc5$ 25 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ leaves Black a pawn up for nothing) 22... $g6!$ (don't be afraid to goad White into this sac) 23 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $fxg6$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xg6$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 25 $\mathbb{B}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}d4+$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ White is busted since there is no perpetual and a lone queen isn't likely to deliver mate any time soon!

21...g6 22 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d4+$ 23 $\mathbb{W}f2$

Only move.

23... $\mathbb{W}xf2+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 25 $fxe4$ a4 26 $bxa4$ $\mathbb{B}xa4$



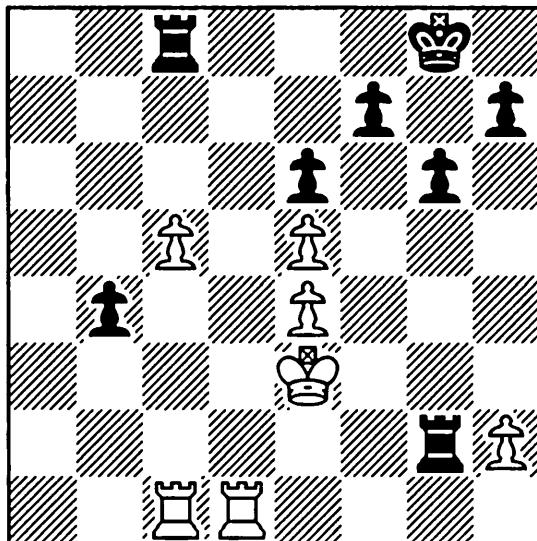
Everything has changed. Earlier White was dispirited and oppressed since his gambit fell flat. Now things have turned around, and he is oppressed and dispirited instead! White's sickly pawns are in grave danger and he must fight for the draw.

27 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}a2$ 28 $\mathbb{B}fd1?$

Activity isn't always the solution. This position is an exception to the principle of staying active at all costs in a rook ending. Oddly enough, passive defence may have held the game: 28 $\mathbb{B}c4!$ $b3!$ (28... $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 29 $\mathbb{B}xb4$ threatens $\mathbb{B}b7$ and holds the draw) 29 $\mathbb{B}c3!$ $\mathbb{B}b2$ 30 $g3!$ should draw, since 30... $\mathbb{B}xh2?$ leads to 31 $\mathbb{B}xb3$ $\mathbb{B}xc5$ 32 $\mathbb{B}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 33 $\mathbb{B}b7$.

28... $\mathbb{B}xg2$

A tough decision. Black also had 28... $b3$ 29 $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}xd2$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $b2$ 31 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}xc5$ 32 $\mathbb{B}xb2$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ with probably a 75% chance of scoring the full point since White still nurses an isolani in the four-versus-three rook ending. Also, four versus three is much harder to draw for the pawn-down side when compared to a three-versus-two rook ending.



Exercise (multiple choice): After 28...Rg2, perhaps White is lost no matter what he does. Find the path of greatest resistance for him: a) 29 Rd4; b) 29 c6; c) 29 Rd2

29 Rd4?

29 c6? intending c7 and Rd8+ looks like a killer but Black has a simple answer – employ exactly the same plan to deflect White's rook on c1: 29...b3 30 c7 b2! 31 Rd8+ Kg7! 32 Rb1 (Black gets there first in the line 32 Rc3 b1R 33 Rxc8 Rd1 34 Rg8+ Kh6! 35 c8R Rd2+ 36 Kf3 Rf2 mate) 32...Rxc7 and Black wins.

Answer: White puts up the stiffest resistance with 29 Rd2!, with the likely sequence 29...Rxd2 30 Rxd2 Kf8 31 Kd3 b3 32 Kc4 b2 33 Kb1 Kb8 34 c6 Ke7 35 c7 Kc8 36 Rxb2 Rxc7+ 37 Kd4. Still, it's a stretch of the imagination to believe that White holds the ending a pawn down, with three isolanis. Black's position is non-biodegradable and never degrades (assuming he doesn't sac four pawns!) no matter what he tries.

29...b3! 30 Rb4 Rxh2 31 c6

Black's b-pawn is immune as long as there is a check on h3.

31...g5

31...b2! 32 Rc5 h5! is a quicker path to victory.

32 Kg4

32 c7 b2 33 Rcc4 h5 34 Rb8 Kg7! wins.

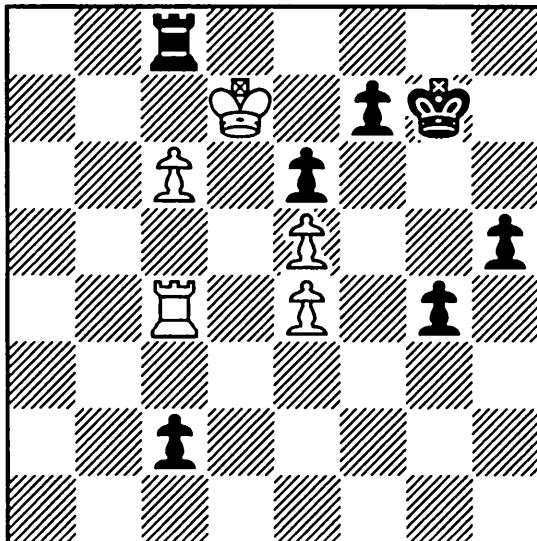
32...Rc2?!

It doesn't make sense for Black to just hand over his b-pawn. Instead he should starve the beast with 32...b2! 33 Rc3 Kg7 34 c7 h5 35 Rb8 h4!, winning easily.

33 Rxc2 bxc2 34 Rc4 Kg7 35 Rc5

Now it's going to be a race.

35...h5 36 Rd6 g4 37 Rd7



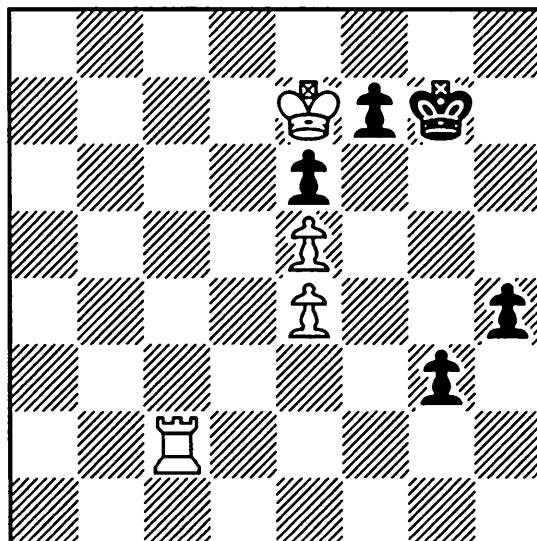
37... $\mathbb{E}xc6$

Confidently calculated. There are three types of people in the world: those who can count and those who can't! Rublevsky, unlike your math-challenged author, proves he is in the first category. Black's two passed pawns prove to be too much for White's single rook. White's king is just too far away to be of help.

38 $\mathbb{E}xc6$ g3

Black's passed pawns run down like a still-not-dry watercolour.

39 $\mathbb{E}xc2$ h4 40 $\mathbb{E}e7$



40... $\mathbb{E}g6$

The careless 40...h3?? throws the game away: 41 $\mathbb{E}c3$ g2 42 $\mathbb{E}g3+$ wins the pawns.

41 $\mathbb{E}c8!$

If 41 $\mathbb{E}g2?$ $\mathbb{E}g5$ 42 $\mathbb{E}xf7$ $\mathbb{E}g4$ 43 $\mathbb{E}xe6$ h3 44 $\mathbb{E}a2$ h2 and Black's pawns beat White's e-pawns by a mile.

41... $\mathbb{E}g5$ 42 $\mathbb{E}xf7$ h3 43 $\mathbb{E}xe6$ h2 44 $\mathbb{E}h8$ g2

A ball finally gets though the goalposts.

45 $\mathbb{R}xh2$ 0-1

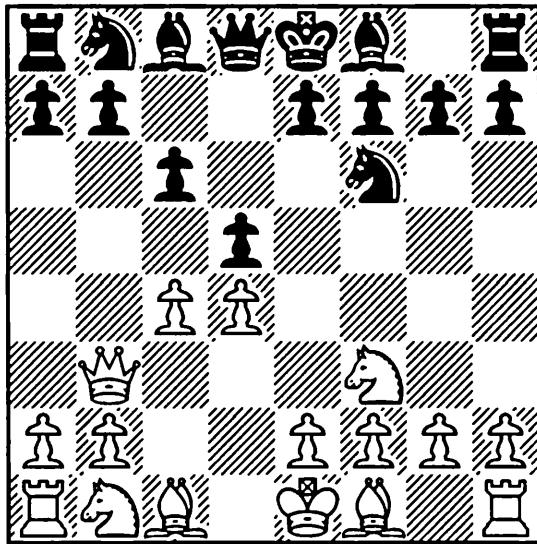
What? Resignation? Perhaps showing too much respect for the GM. I believe in “the show must go on” philosophy and would have played on with 45 $\mathbb{R}xh2$ g1 \mathbb{Q} 46 $\mathbb{R}h8$. Queen versus rook is not a trivial win. I was once stuck with the dreaded rook side, and a master took 48 moves to win my rook. I was just two moves shy from the cherished 50-move rule, and a draw! “Why didn’t you resign?” he asked me after the game. “Possibly because you took 48 moves to put me away!” I replied.

Summary

I used to be afraid of the Evil Twin Gambit, but no more. Computers show us the path to the Promised Land (survival and conversion of the extra pawn).

Game 40
A.Goldin-E.Bareev
World Team Championship, Beersheva 2005

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{W}b3$



For our purposes it doesn’t make the slightest difference if White plays 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ since after 4...dxc4 5 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ we transpose. Just remember, the only difference with the 4 $\mathbb{W}b3$ line is that White can’t play the Evil Twin variation with his queen on b3.

4...dxc4

The most Slavic move in the position. We won’t look at 4...e6 5 g3 which leads to a Closed Catalan.

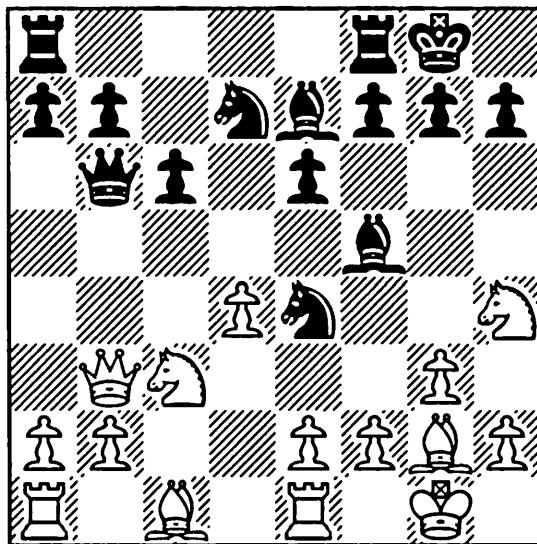
5 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$

The move Vigus recommends in *Play the Slav*.

Question: Why do you and Vigus avoid the main line, 5... $\mathbb{A}f5$?

Answer: 5... $\mathbb{A}f5$ may be the main line now, but I bet you a Starbucks venti coffee of the day that the trend in the next few years will go with 5... $\mathbb{A}g4$. In the words of Bob Dylan: "The first one now will later be last, for the times they are a changing!"

The problem lies in the following line: 6 g3 $\mathbb{A}bd7$ 7 $\mathbb{A}c3$ e6 8 $\mathbb{A}g2$ $\mathbb{A}e7$ 9 0-0 0-0 10 $\mathbb{A}e1$ $\mathbb{A}e4$ 11 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ and here 12 $\mathbb{A}h4!$ makes Black's life rather miserable.

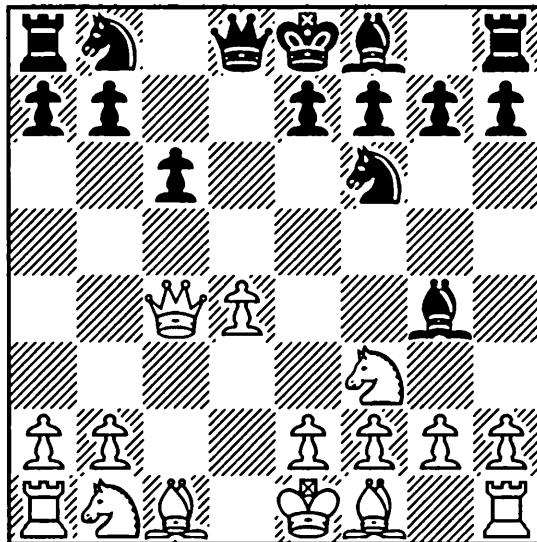


I have tried in vain to defend this position and finally came to the conclusion that the line is not worth my loyalty. One typical continuation is 12... $\mathbb{A}xh4$ 13 gxh4 $\mathbb{A}ef6$ 14 e4 $\mathbb{A}g6$, with the following problems for Black:

1. White owns the bishop pair;
2. White controls the centre and also extra space; and
3. White's one weakness on h4 is infuriatingly hard to exploit.

Conclusion: A clear strategic advantage for White and a position I will be avoiding as Black in the future. It's a bit like the guy who agrees to meet his abusive ex-girlfriend whom he once loved, about getting back together, but soon gets cold feet, panics and makes some lame excuse that he must leave on urgent business!

It's okay to change one's mind in response to new evidence. Maybe one day I will come back to my once beloved (and now crappy!) 5... $\mathbb{A}f5$ line, but first I need some super-GM to come up with a fix. As always with the things you love in life, with separation comes pain. But I ask myself the question, why do I love bishops on f5 (and f4 as White!) so much when g4 isn't such a bad square, is it?

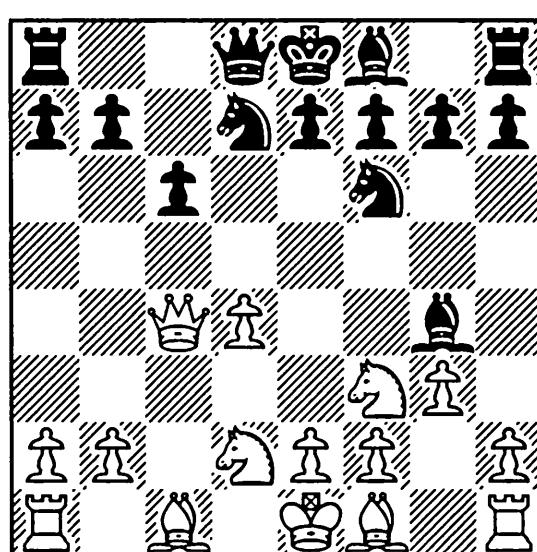


6 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

Some alternatives:

- a) 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is examined next game.
- b) 6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (back again) 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 10 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$! (worrying White about a future ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$) 12 0-0 0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14 h3 $\mathbb{Q}fd8$, M.Grabarczyk-E.Bareev, Warsaw 2002. I like Black, who has White running back and forth, constantly defending his territorial gains. White's queen is especially poorly placed on d3.
- c) 6 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e6 7 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0-0 10 0-0 c5 11 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ a6 gave Black a pleasant QGA-style position in E.Bareev-A.Morozevich, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2002.
- d) 6 e3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e6 8 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12 $\mathbb{W}b3$ b5!? 13 e4 e5 led to a sharp Semi-Slav type position in C.Kosasih-M.Mchedlishvili, Dubai 2004, with the odd difference that Black's bishop is on h5 rather than the traditional b7-square. This alteration could be in Black's favour since his bishop is posted more actively.

6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 7 g3



White often tries to mimic Catalan play in this line. His problem is that this line is really a poor man's Catalan since that floating queen on c4 is vulnerable to tempo loss.

7...e6 8 ♜g2 ♜e7 9 0-0-0 10 ♜e5

White has a few other options:

a) 10 ♜b3 ♜b6 11 e3 c5 12 dxc5 ♜xc5 13 ♜e5 ♜e2 14 ♜e1 ♜a6 15 ♜df3 ♜c8 16 ♜d2 ♜e7 was B.Gundavaa-W.So, Subic Bay 2009. Black achieved the freeing break ...c5 and also developed his pieces in harmony.

b) 10 ♜e1 a5 11 a3 a4 12 ♜e5 ♜h5 13 h3 ♜xe5 14 dxе5 ♜d7 15 ♜c3 ♜c7 16 ♜c4 ♜b6 17 ♜xb6 ♜xb6 18 e4 ♜a5 19 ♜d2 ♜xc3 20 ♜xc3 f5! 21 exf5 exf5 with an opposite-wing majorities ending, A.Zatonskih-A.Giri, Hilversum 2009.

c) 10 b3 ♜f5!? 11 e3 ♜e4 (controlling h4 – see below) 12 ♜b2 ♜e5! 13 ♜e2 ♜xd2 14 ♜xd2 ♜xf3+ 15 ♜xf3 a5 was E.Postny-P.Bobras, Port Erin 2006. Black's relieving exchanges have given him equality and White risks overextension if he starts to push his pawn centre.

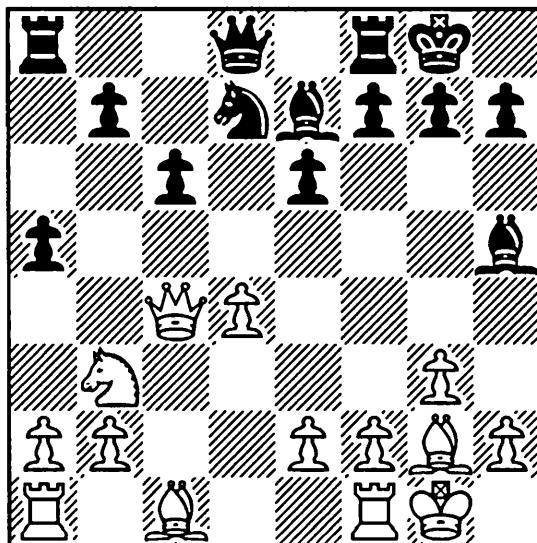
Question: In this line, Why didn't White chase down Black's bishop with the traditional 11 ♜h4?

Answer: Black has a trick, winning a pawn with 11... ♜b6! 12 ♜c3 ♜fd5 13 ♜f3 ♜xh4.

10...♜h5

10... ♜xe5?? is a careless way to drop material: 11 dxe5 b5 12 ♜f4 wins.

11 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 12 ♜b3 a5!



Black gets his traditional queenside play to offset White's superior centre.

13 a4?!

This is almost a knee jerk reaction from White in such positions. I absolutely love it when they give us the b4-square and weaken their entire queenside. If I were White I would admit I got nothing from the opening and would try 13 ♜c5.

13...e5!

The magic elixir which cures all Slav ailments. A rule of thumb in such Slav situations is:

The Slav: Move by Move

If White fianchettoes then Black should play for the ...e5 break. The pawn on c6 blunts the power of White's Catalan bishop on g2.

14 dxe5?!

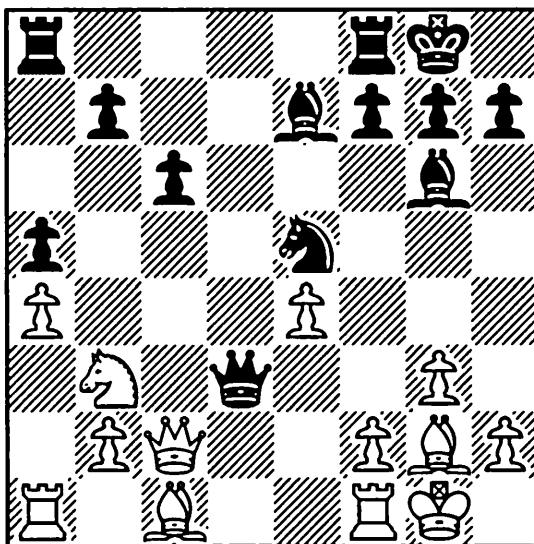
Question: Why this concession?

Answer: You are right in condemning the move. The principle is: Don't be the one to break the central tension unless you get something concrete for it. White should stand his ground with 14 $\mathbb{E}d1$.

14... $\mathfrak{Q}xe5$ 15 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathfrak{Q}g6$ 16 e4?!

Creating another self-inflicted incision, this time on d3. Even very strong players routinely overextend against the Slav. He should play 16 $\mathfrak{Q}e4$.

16... $\mathbb{W}d3$!



Black achieves the dream Slav ending:

1. White's queenside leaks like old plumbing;
2. Black controls d3 and b4; and
3. A black rook gets to the d-file first.

17 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathfrak{Q}xd3$ 18 $\mathfrak{Q}d2$!

White finds a way to finish developing under difficult circumstances. This multi-purpose defensive move avoids giving up the bishop pair and counterattacks a5.

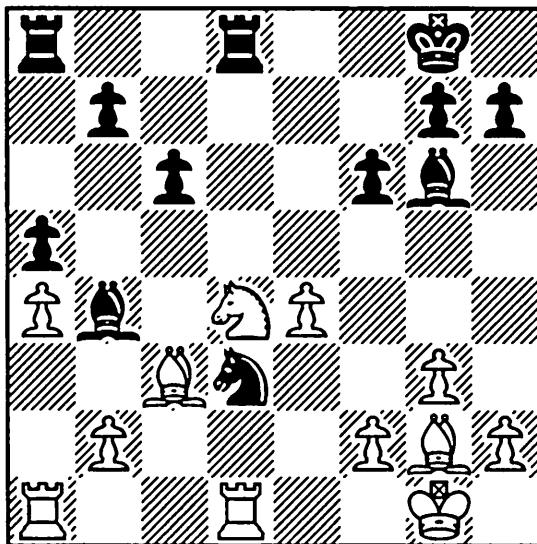
18... $\mathfrak{Q}b4$

White gets queenside counter-chances after the silly 18... $\mathfrak{Q}xb2$?! 19 $\mathfrak{Q}xa5$.

19 $\mathfrak{Q}c3$

Black has a queenside bind after 19 $\mathfrak{Q}xb4$? $axb4$! 20 $\mathbb{E}fb1$ c5!.

19...f6 20 $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 21 $\mathfrak{Q}d4$



21...Qc5

Question: Can Black try 21...Qe5 intending ...Qh5, going after f3 and d1?

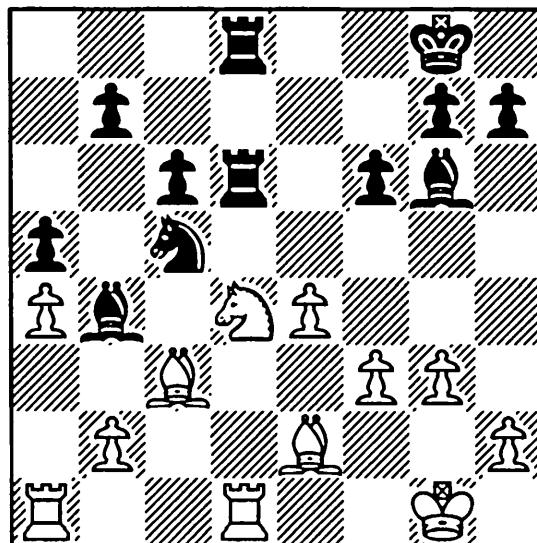
Answer: Your plan looks superior to the game continuation. For example, after 21...Qe5! 22 Qe6 Rxd1+ 23 Rxd1 Qh5! 24 Rb1 Re8 25 Qf4 Qxc3! 26 bxc3 Qg4 27 h3 (if 27 Rxb7? g5 28 Qh3 Qf3+ 29 Rxf3 Rxf3 30 Rf1 Rxе4 31 Qg1 Qd1 Black wins a pawn with a dominating bishop) 27...Qc8 28 Rd1 Qf7 Black enjoys excellent chances in the ending:

1. He has the superior majority, with ...b5 in the air if rooks come off the board;
2. The a4- and c3-pawns could later turn into targets; and
3. Black's king has a head start over White's in the race to the centre.

22 f3 Rd6 23 Rf1

In the case of 23 Rf2 Rad8 24 Re2 Qf7 Black is better.

23...Rad8 24 Re2



Exercise: Does Black have a combination? Calculate the ramifications of 24... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$. (Beware, difficult!)

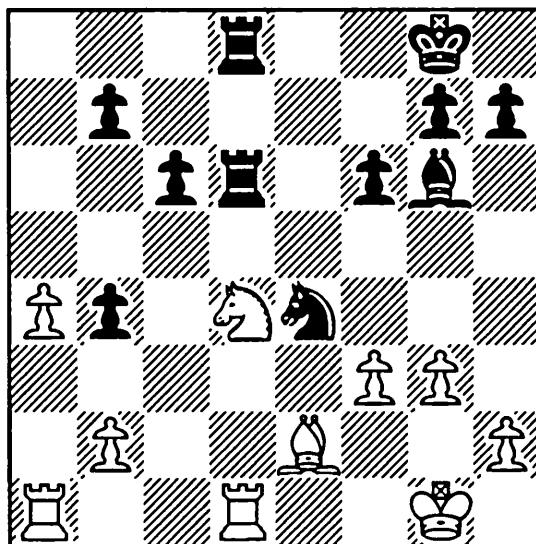
24... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$

Answer: Black provokes a dogfight in the centre but the geometry just isn't with him, and this combination shouldn't work.

25 $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$

Bareev must have counted on 25 $fxe4?$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $b6$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ $bxa5!$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 31 $e5$ $fxe5$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$. Black has excellent chances to win since White's queenside majority is suppressed, while Black has a healthy extra pawn on e5.

25...axb4



Exercise (combination alert): Do you see White's trick in this position?

26 $\mathbb{Q}b3?$

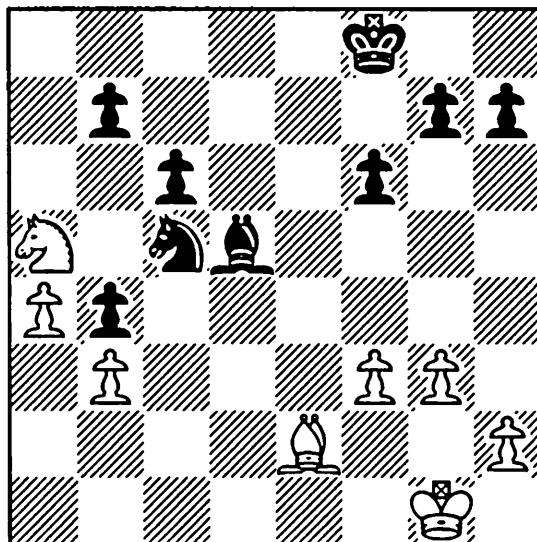
Answer: 26 $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ works for White: 26... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (26... $\mathbb{Q}xd1+?$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xd1!$ wins material since 27... $\mathbb{Q}d6?$ fails to 28 $fxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}b3$) 27 $fxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}dx6$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ and Black has to fight for the draw.

26... $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}a5$

27 $fxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ leaves White down a pawn with a rotten position.

27... $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 30 $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 0-1

Avoiding the ridiculous trap 31... $\mathbb{Q}xb3??$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3??$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}c4+$.



Question: Why did White resign?
He is only down one pawn after 32 $\mathbb{N}d1$.

Answer: White resigned due to the variation 32...b6 33 $\mathbb{N}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 34 bxc4 b3 35 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ b2 36 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4!$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and b1 \mathbb{Q} .

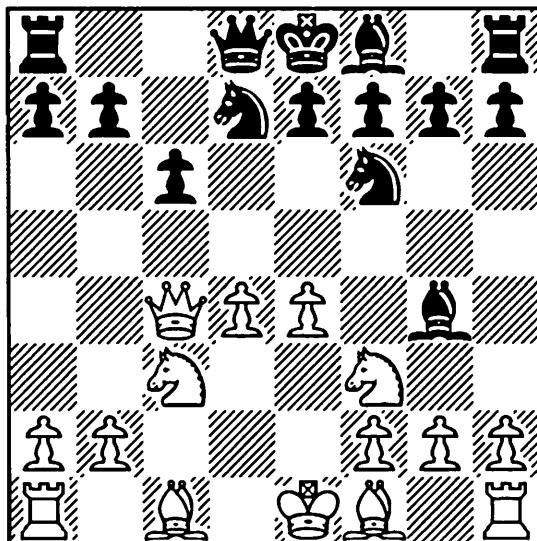
Summary

Break-ups are painful. The move we once loved changed for the worse and the time has come to leave our hurtful and mean-spirited old partner, 5... $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$, for our new, kinder one, 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$.

Game 41
R.Ponomariov-B.Gelfand
FIDE World Cup, Khanty Mansiysk (blitz playoff) 2009

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{N}f3$ $\mathbb{N}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ dxc4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 6 $\mathbb{N}c3$

White isn't worried about ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ and posts his knight to a more aggressive square.
6... $\mathbb{N}bd7$ 7 e4



The most consistent move. White dares Black to inflict a little damage to his structure.

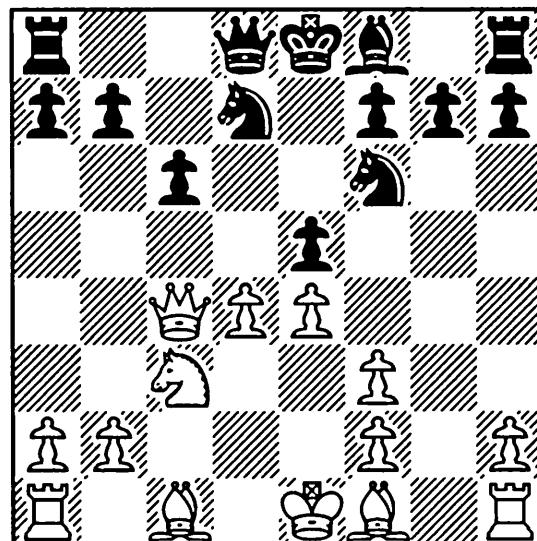
7...Qxf3!?

He dares! This move considerably sharpens the position.

I don't mean to be a killjoy and take an anti-creativity stance here, but I actually prefer the boring 7...e6. After all, White doesn't mind having the open g-file and bishop pair. I realize that it is not to everyone's taste to be so dull, but I prefer delaying or avoiding this swap.

Those of us with a more pragmatic streak may prefer 7...e6, and it does seem to hand Black a risk-free equality. For example, 8 Qe3 Qe7 9 Qe2 0-0 10 0-0 Qh5! (a manoeuvre that should be second nature to any Slav player: Black heads for g6, hitting e4 and goading White forward) 11 h3 Qg6 12 e5 (12 Qd3 allows counterplay with 12...Qd5! 13 Qd2 Q7b6 14 Wb3 c5) 12...Qd5 was E.Alekseev-V.Kramnik, Moscow (blitz) 2008. The powerful d5 outpost compensates for White's extra space. If White plugs up d5 with 13 Qxd5 cxd5 14 Wb3 the position looks like an Advanced Caro-Kann that is going very well for Black.

8 gxf3 e5



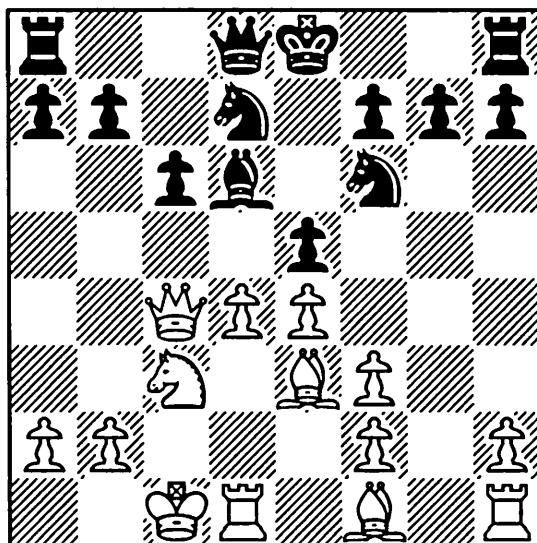
Question: Why is Black opening the position when White owns the bishop pair?

Answer: 8...e6 doesn't score very well, possibly because it's just too passive and doesn't challenge White's centre. After 9 ♕e3 ♕e7 10 ♖g1 0-0 11 0-0-0 ♔h8, the fact that Black has yet to play either ...c5 or ...e5 should help White, J.Hellsten-P.Cramling, Gothenburg 2006.

9 ♕e3

9 dxе5 ♗xe5 10 ♕e2 ♕b4 11 ♕d2 ♕e7 12 f4 ♗g6 13 f5 ♕xc3 14 bxc3 ♗e5 15 ♕g2 0-0-0 16 0-0 g6 (E.Bacrot-V.Potkin, Moscow 2010) reaches an unbalanced position that is hard to evaluate. While it's true White's structure is inferior, Black must also be on high alert not to allow those bishops to get out of control.

9... ♕d6 10 0-0-0



10...exd4?!

This looks premature. There is no reason to break the central tension just yet and allow White centralization. More accurate is 10...♕c7 11 ♔b1 exd4 (well timed) 12 ♘xd4 0-0 13 ♔h3 ♕e5 14 ♖hg1 ♖fd8 when the battle revolves around who gets control over f4, T.Enhbat-M.Gagunashvili, Las Vegas 2007.

11 ♘xd4

Allowing Black to get away with his inaccuracy. White gets the better ending after 11 ♘xd4! ♕e5 12 ♕b4 ♕e7 13 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 14 ♗e2! because:

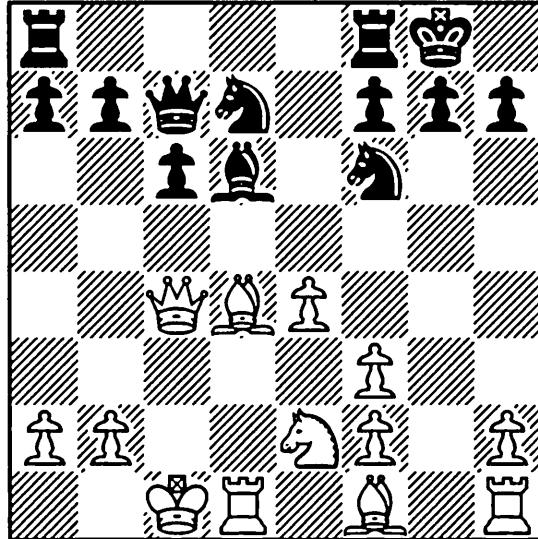
1. His bishops mean a lot in this open position;
2. He has a firm grip over f4; and
3. He controls the centre.

11...♕c7 12 ♗e2!

White's centre rolls if he ever wrests control over f4.

12...0-0

We have a case of opposite-wing attacks.



Question: Isn't White just much faster with that open g-file?

Answer: I'm not so sure. Let's assess:

1. The open g-file is certainly a major concern for Black.
2. If White forces ...g6 then he may be able to pile on with h4-h5 or f4 (conditional of course on his taking control over f4) and f5.
3. Black may not have open files yet, but a pawn storm brews on the queenside.
4. White's queen and bishop are conveniently placed for Black's ...b5 and ...c5 hits.
5. White will most certainly waste another move to play his king to b1.
6. White's bishop pair could play a big role later on if the position opens more.

Conclusion: White has the open g-file but Black will gain at least three tempi on the queenside with ...b5, ...c5 and ♔b1. My prediction for the future: the future is uncertain!

13 ♕c2

Ducking before Black takes a swing with ...b5.

13...b5 14 ♔b1

More time lost.

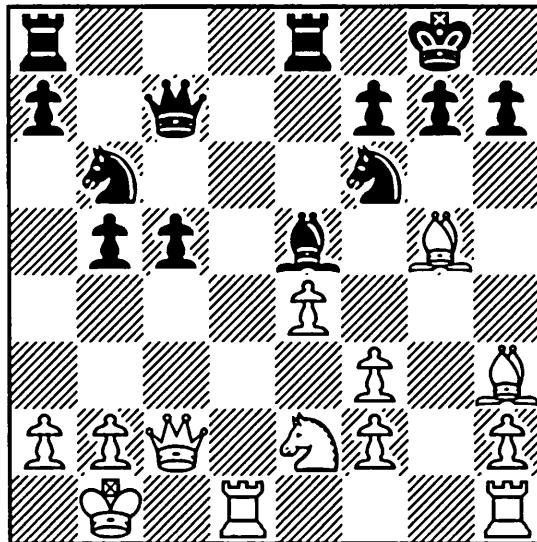
14...♝fe8 15 ♐h3 c5 16 ♐e3

Another lost tempo.

16...♞b6!

Giving White a dilemma: weaken with b3 or allow a knight into c4.

17 ♐g5 ♐e5!



18 ♕c1!?

Question: A passive retreat in the midst of an attack?
Why didn't White take over the initiative with 18 f4?

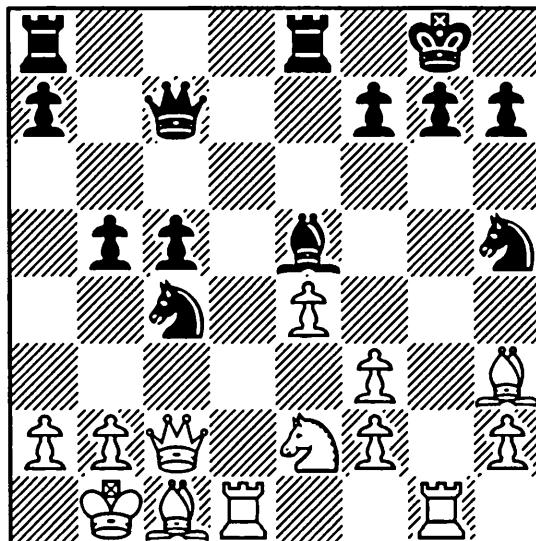
Answer: Because Black had no intention of backing down! Gelfand would certainly have sac'd with 18...♜xb2! 19 ♜xb2 ♞xe4. The position is totally unclear but Black is the one attacking. Pono probably rejected this line simply because he didn't want to go on the defensive – despite Gelfand's attempted bribery of a full piece!

18...♞h5!

It's critical for Black to lock down f4.

19 ♜hg1 ♞c4?

Black's provocation move misses a problem in his own position.



Exercise (multiple choice): Which move is White's best continuation?

- a) 20 b3; b) 20 ♕d7; c) 20 ♖d7

20 b3?!

Answer: White missed 20 ♕d7! ♖eb8 21 ♕g4! ♔f6 22 ♕f5! regaining control over f4. Black is helpless to prevent f4 and e5, which give White a winning attack. He can't play 22...♔h5? due to 23 ♖d7 ♜b6 24 f4 and the pawns roll forward.

Going back a move, Black should have played 19...♖ad8! to prevent ♕d7 ideas. After 20 ♕g4 ♔f4 (blockading f4) 21 ♔xf4 ♕xf4 22 ♕xf4 ♜xf4 23 ♜xc5 ♔c4! I prefer Black's chances:

1. His knight is demonstrably superior to White's bishop; and

2. His attacking chances look good, whereas White's attack hasn't gotten off the ground.

20...♖ab8?!

What looks like a shot turns out to be not even a glancing blow. The invulnerable knight taunts White from c4, but so what? Pono ignores it, following the wisdom mothers passed on to their children since Cro-Magnon times: Sticks and stones can break my bones but names can never hurt me! He should have covered d7 once again with 20...♔b6.

21 ♕g5?!

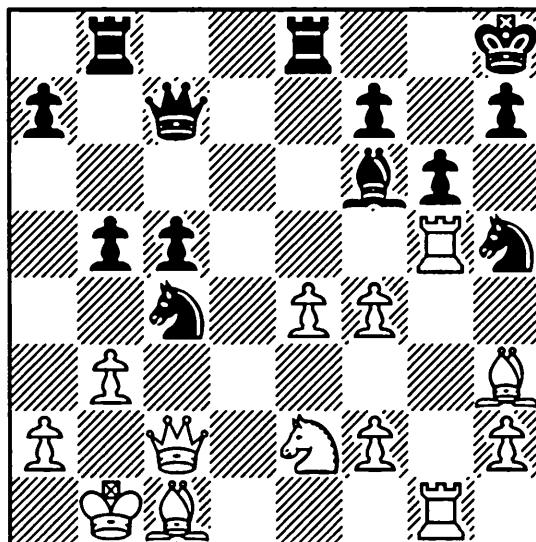
Missing 21 ♕d7! ♖e7 22 ♕xb5! ♔a5 23 ♕c4 ♔xc4 24 ♜xc4. Here the natural 24...♖b4? fails miserably to 25 ♜xc5! exploiting the back rank.

21...g6 22 ♖dg1 ♘h8 23 f4! ♕f6

Alternatively:

a) 23...♔xf4? 24 ♖xe5! ♔xh3 25 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 26 ♖g2 ♔e5 27 f4 ♔d7 28 ♜c3+ picks off the stray knight on h3.

b) 23...♔xf4! is possibly Black's best choice. After 24 ♖xh5 ♕xc1 25 ♘xc1 gxh5 26 bxc4 f6 27 ♜c3 ♖b6 28 ♕f5 Black merely faces hard times, not end times!



Sometimes at the board one senses the critical nature of a position and an internal set of warning lights flash. Here is just such a position. Ponomariov must have realized that matters had gone terribly wrong for his opponent and that White has a dizzying list of tempting possibilities. The question is which one is the best?

Exercise (multiple choice): Find the most potent line for White:

- a) 24 $\mathbb{B}d5$; b) 24 $\mathbb{B}xh5$; c) 24 e5

24 $\mathbb{B}xh5$?

Logically, White gives up something (material) to get something in return (he creates multiple abrasions in Black's kingside), but it's not the best.

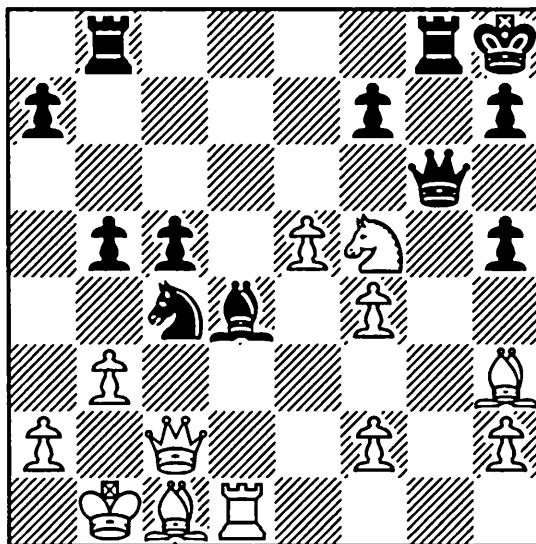
Answer: Instead, White gets something for nothing (always a great deal!) with 24 $\mathbb{B}d5$!. After 24... $\mathbb{B}ed8$ 25 $\mathbb{B}xd8+$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 26 e5! White wins a piece since he threatens the bishop as well as 27 bxc4.

24...gxh5 25 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 26 $\mathbb{B}d1$

26 e5! looks quite promising for White.

26... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 28 e5 $\mathbb{W}g6$?

He should play 28... $\mathbb{B}bd8$.



Exercise: White to play and win material.

Answer: 29 $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ $\mathbb{W}xc2+$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

White's point is 30... $\mathbb{B}ge8$ fails to 31 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and the triple attack on b8, c4 and d4 wins material.

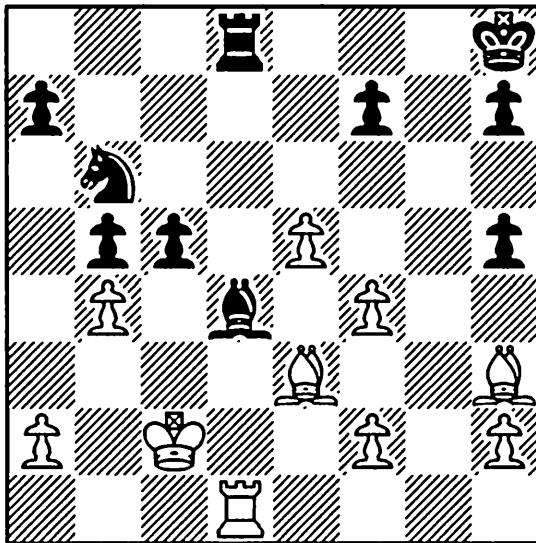
31 $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ $\mathbb{B}xg8$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

The position gels to reveal a clear advantage for White, who has the safer pawns.

32... $\mathbb{B}d8$ 33 b4?

The Slav: Move by Move

Another blunder! White should have played 33 $\mathbb{Q}g2!$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $cxd4$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and the d-pawn soon falls.



Exercise: Black can save himself. How?

33...Qc4??

Answer: Certainly not like this which loses heavy material.

33... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ is the move:

- a) After 34 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $cxb4$ the position is unclear and I doubt Black stands worse.
- b) 34 $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4+$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ leaves White fighting for the draw.

34 bxc5 1-0

Oops! Black finds himself red-faced after this simple move. There is no remedy to the pin and Black drops a piece.

Many mistakes were committed in this game, but of course this is only natural considering the blitz time limit. Sometimes when we see an error-filled game played by two great players it is easy to fall under the delusional belief that we would beat them easily if we played them over the board! I have played too many great players to believe in this delusion. One of the reasons both sides made a lot of not-so-great moves is the simple fact of the incredible complexity of the game. Lesser players (i.e. me!) would be making double question marks left and right in such situations, while Pono and Gelfand merely made dubious moves! Whenever I play super-GMs in online blitz, they invariably play (what appears to me) flawlessly and it's always me who plays like a donkey, making one moronic decision after another.

Summary

Sometimes there is a demarcation line between playing chess for the pure joy of it, and playing chess to be a ruthless business person climbing up the corporate ladder to reach

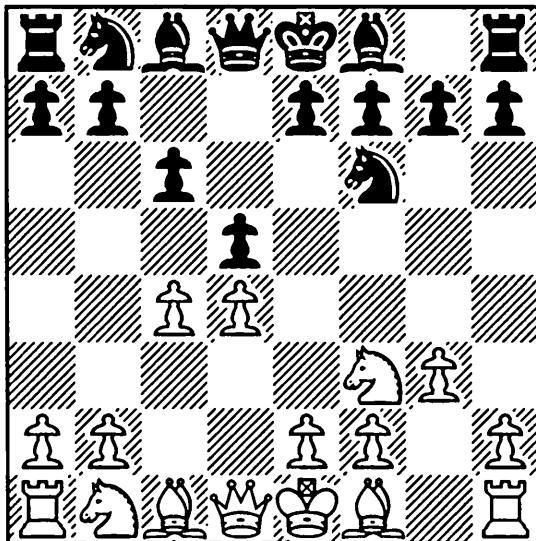
the first prize in the tournament. 7... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$? induces a rich game with creative ideas for both sides. However, it's a game I suspect is in White's favour. The insipid 7...e6! gives Black easy equality. Being a corporate man, I would harness myself in an Armani suit, Gucci shoes and Walmart chess tie, and go with the latter!

Game 42
V.Tukmakov-V.Korchnoi
Leningrad Interzonal 1973

1 d4 d5

The actual move order in the game was 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ dx c 4 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5 6 a4 c6 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ a6, transposing.

2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 g3



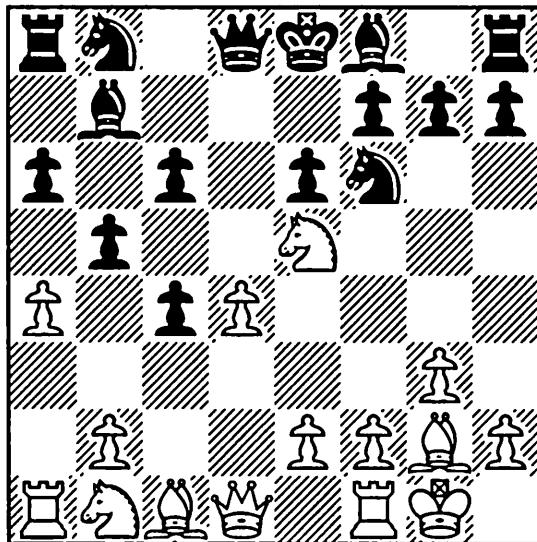
The Catalan Gambit, again!

4...dx c 4

Question: Do I have to keep accepting the Catalan Gambit?

Answer: No, you can also decline with the very easy-to-learn 4... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, which is generally regarded as a rock-solid option with White committed to d2-d4 and probably the reason the 4 g3 move order isn't employed by any 2600+ players. Also, you can get this position if the opponent begins with the Réti versus Slav but then changes his mind and plays his d-pawn to d4 (see Game 47, Réti-Lasker). Play may continue 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ with a solid position. This is a good choice if the Catalan Accepted theory gets you nervous and you want to keep your life simple.

5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ b5 6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7 a4 a6 8 0-0 e6



Question: Why are we back to the Catalan Gambit?
You've already covered it in Chapter 5.

Answer: In Chapter 5, White committed to a very early $\mathbb{Q}c3$, which allowed Black, in many positions, to hit back with ...b4. Here White's knight still sits on b1, so I'm treating it as a separate line. This slight distinction is probably in White's favour when compared to the Chapter 5 version, so I'm not going to trash the Catalan Gambit (as much!) in this chapter.

9 b3

It looks a bit strange covering the Catalan Gambit with a very old game (the oldest!) and a line (9 b3 cxb3 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$) which isn't played as much as newer alternatives.

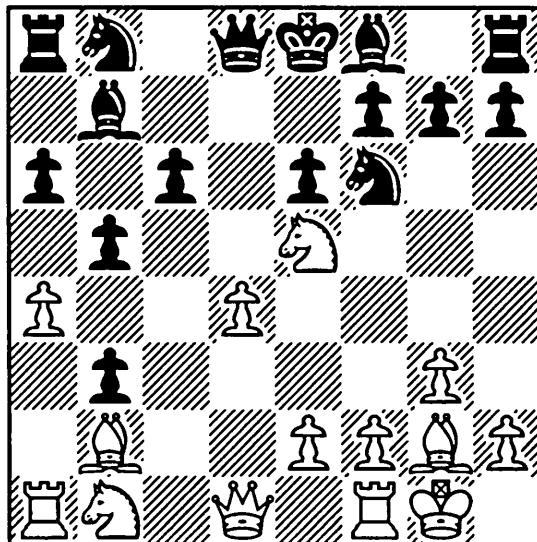
Question: So why pick this game?

Answer: Simply because it's a classic. Newer lines will be covered in the notes. And here they are!

a) 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{W}g4$ 0-0 has been played a few times. I realize many attacking players would prefer White here, but I just don't buy that White has full compensation for his pawn – and White's terrible stats here back me up on this one. Note that White no longer has $\mathbb{Q}h6$ because his f-pawn blocks it.

b) 9 axb5 may be a better choice. For example, 9...axb5 10 $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}g4$ g6 15 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ and White got attacking compensation in C.Bauer-A.David, Degremont 2004. Rybka suggests 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, when I would take Black. I do acknowledge this preference is a matter of style.

9...cxb3 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$



10...Wb6

Supporting his queenside pawns and covering his bishop on b7. One rule of thumb to remember in the Catalan Gambit is that ...Wb6 is a lot more risky for Black if White has access to e2-e4, followed by Ae3, facing the queen on b6.

Alternatives for Black include:

a) 10...Abd7?! returns the pawn, hoping to snatch the initiative in the process. 11 Axcc6 Axcc6 12 Abd7 Wb6 13 axb5 Wxb5 14 Aa5 Ab8 15 Ac3 was M.Orlinkov-E.Sveshnikov, Moscow 2007, and here Black continued his generosity by playing 15...Wh5!?, with an unclear position.

b) 10...Ae7 (Black wants to castle before indulging in any adventures) 11 Wxb3 0-0 12 Ad2 Aa7! (in order to recapture on b5 with his c-pawn) 13 Af1 Ae8 14 Ac1 a5 15 e4 Aa6 16 axb5 Ab5!? (16...cxb5 17 d5 gives White full compensation for the pawn) 17 Ae3 when White's file pressure and Black's extra pawn balance each other out, G.Orlov-V.Akopian, Minsk 1990.

c) 10...Ad5 11 Wxb3 Ad7 12 Abd7! (logical; White avoids trades and increases his grip over the key c5-square) 12...Ae7 13 Ad2 0-0 14 Af1 Ab8 15 a5!? Aa7 16 e4 Ac7 17 Ac3 Ac8 was G.Kaidanov-A.Galkin, Moscow 2003. White had full compensation for the pawn, but such positions are bread and butter to us Slav lovers. We work hard for our money and contract negotiations stipulate that we agree to toil for the next 30 moves to earn our wage of just one pawn!

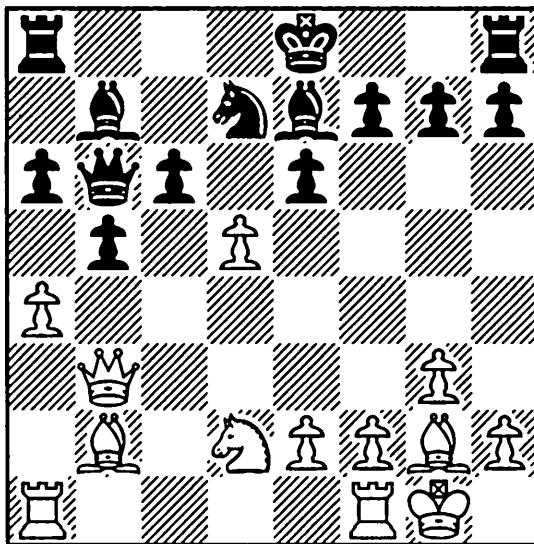
11 Wxb3 Abd7 12 Abd7

If White plays 12 Ad2 Black shouldn't be in any rush to trade on e5. G.Orlov-V.Pupols, Seattle 1990, continued 12...Axe5?! 13 dx5 Ad7 14 Ac2 Ae7 15 Ae4 0-0 16 Af1 Af8 17 Ad6 Axsd6 18 Axsd6, when Black's extra pawn was outweighed by White's advantages:

1. Bishop pair;
2. Control over the dark squares;
3. A grip on d6;
4. Pressure on c6; and

5. Black remains tangled up, despite two connected passers on the queenside.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 d5!?



White swaps his d-pawn for Black's g-pawn in order to disrupt castling rights and inflict a permanently insecure king, at the cost of Black's attaining greater central influence.

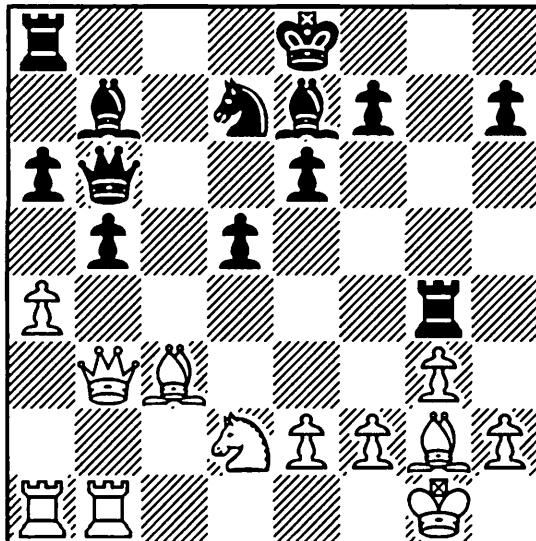
14...cxd5 15 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$?

The rook swims perilously far from the shore. Korchnoi, as is his usual custom, indulges in an adventure even if it violates chess laws. Korchnoi is like the character in *Oliver Twist* who declared “the law is an ass!” We are taught as beginners that it is taboo to bring out rooks early in the game, when they can be attacked by our opponent’s minor pieces and pawns. Here Korchnoi takes his rook for a leisurely drive through heavy middlegame traffic. He trusted in his legendary powers of calculation to compute his way out of any mess, and decided to create one!

For those of us who don’t possess legendary calculation powers, there is the simple 16...b4 17 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a5, as played in R.Wiesen-K.Koegler, correspondence 1988. I just don’t buy the argument that White has full compensation for the pawn.

17 $\mathbb{Q}fb1$!?

Possibly the seed of White’s trouble. 17 axb5 would give White a better version of what he got in the game.

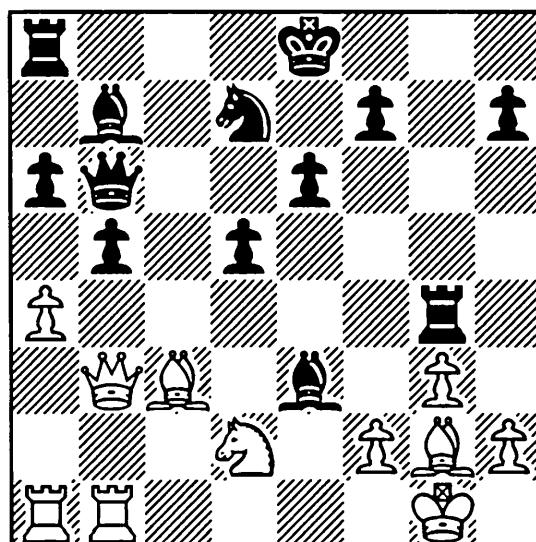


17...Qc5!

Question: Why didn't Black win a pawn with 17...Qc5, with the intention of taking on a4?

Answer: This would actually be a sac since White has the trick 18 Qc2 Qxa4 19 Qxa4! Qxa4 20 Qxa4 bxa4 21 Bxb6. However, I'm not sure whether your line is a blunder or not! Black has some compensation for the piece, and that passed a4-pawn is sure to get White nervous. For example, after 21...Qc8 22 Qd4 Qc1+ 23 Qf1 Qc8 24 Qb8 a3 25 Qb3 Rybka claims an edge for White, but we humans have a deeper understanding of our own propensity for botching such positions!

18 e3 Qxe3!



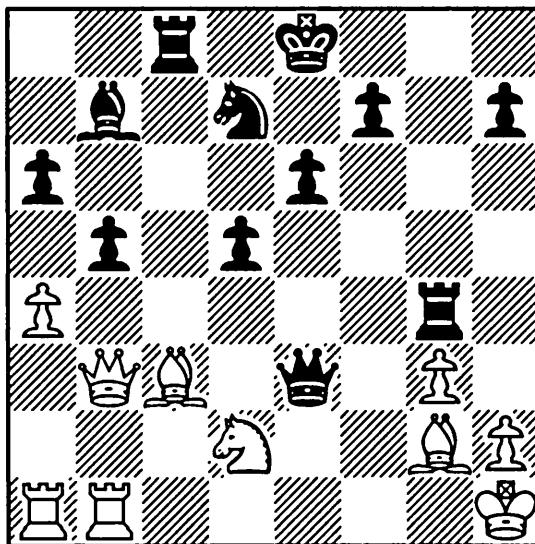
When a chemist takes an element and mixes it with another, the result is a totally separate compound. So far it looks like Korchnoi's focus has solely been on the queenside. Now

The Slav: Move by Move

he unexpectedly sacs a piece in the centre to snatch the initiative (back on the queenside!). In this case Korchnoi's sac is absolutely sound.

The dull, unimaginative proletariat (sadly, I include myself in this unfortunate group) would probably go for 18...b4 19 a5 $\mathbb{W}d6$ 20 $\mathbb{A}b2$ $\mathbb{A}c6$ 21 $\mathbb{A}c1$.

19 fxe3 $\mathbb{W}xe3+$ 20 $\mathbb{A}h1$ $\mathbb{A}c8$



Exercise (multiple choice): White's bishop is under attack and he has a decision to make: a) 21 $\mathbb{A}b4$; b) 21 $\mathbb{A}a5$; c) 21 $\mathbb{W}d1$

21 $\mathbb{A}a5?$

White, wanting everything, gets nothing.

Answer: White's best is to give back some of the material with 21 $\mathbb{W}d1!$. Following 21... $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ White may achieve counterplay against Black's exposed king.

21... $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$

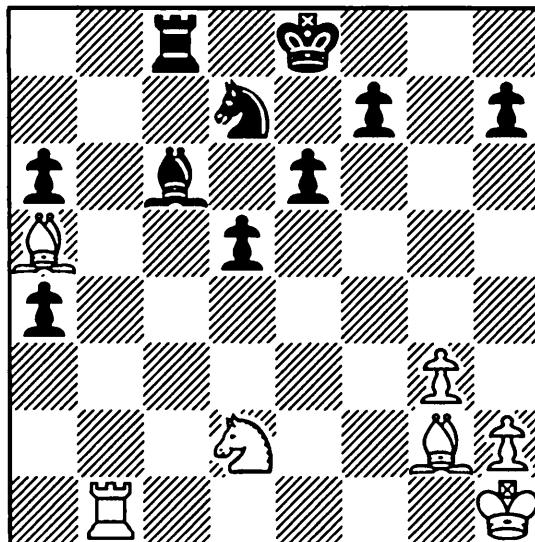
After 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 23 $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ Black has four healthy pawns for the piece.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $bxa4$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

An assessment:

1. Black has a whopping four pawns for the piece.
2. Black's doubled, isolated (but passed!) a-pawns give White some hope.
3. Black's king sits in the centre while White's is separated from the action on h1.

Conclusion: Black has excellent chances to convert if he plays the ending accurately. Unfortunately for Tukmakov, in the early 80's Korchnoi was probably only second to Fischer in the world as an endgame virtuoso.



25 $\mathbb{B}c1$

Question: Doesn't White win a pawn after 25 $\mathbb{B}f1$?

Answer: Indeed he does. But he also loses! In winning the pawn his pieces fall out of sync. Take a look: 25... $\mathbb{B}b5$! 26 $\mathbb{B}xb5$ axb5 27 $\mathbb{B}xb5$ a3! (White is curiously tangled up by the march of this lone pawn) 28 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}c5$! (White's bishop bizarrely runs out of room on the open board) 29 $\mathbb{B}b4$ a2! 30 $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{B}c2$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and White's overloaded boat capsizes on the queenside.

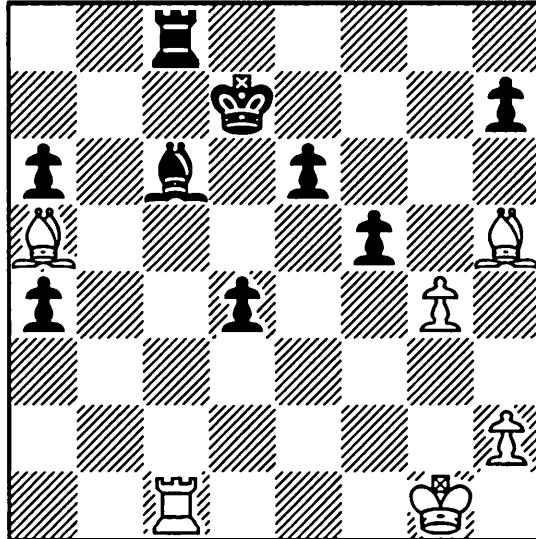
25... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}f3$!

White must play very precisely to hang on. 27 $\mathbb{Q}c3$? $\mathbb{B}b5$ 28 $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{B}xc1+$ 29 $\mathbb{B}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e1$! breaks the blockade on a3 and allows Black's passer to move forward. White's bishop on g2 is totally useless and is of no help in halting the march of the passer on the a-file.

27... $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ d4! 29 $\mathbb{Q}h5$

Swapping down would be a bad decision. It's just too easy for Black after 29 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+?$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 30 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{B}c4$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5.

29...f5 30 g4



Exercise (multiple choice): Black has two easy paths to victory and one which lets White back in the game. You have a 66.66% chance of getting it right even if you guess wildly! a) 30...fxg4; b) 30...Bg8; c) 30...f4

30...fxg4?

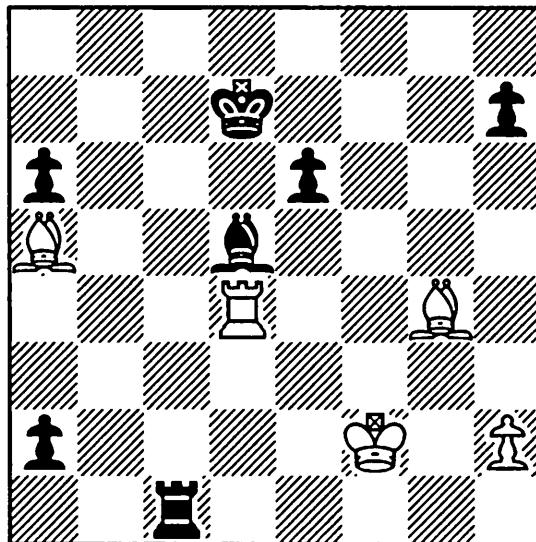
Answer: The endgame maestro blunders in his traditional time trouble and falls victim to the law of unintended consequences: Often the most pragmatic move, intending to clarify a position, may be the one which complicates matters the most!

Both 30...Bg8 and 30...f4 win easily.

31 Bd1?

Missing his last chance with 31 Bd4! Bd5 32 Bxa4! (32 Bxd4?? Bc1+ 33 Bf2 a3 wins). White has serious chances to save the game after 32...Bc1+ 33 Bf2 Bc2+ 34 Bg3 Bg2+ 35 Bf4 Bh2 36 Bxg4 Bd6 37 Bb4+ Bc6 38 Bd1 Bb5 39 Bd6. My feeling is that Black will be unsuccessful in converting with the white bishop pair, rook and king working in such harmony.

31...Bd5! 32 Bxd4 Bc1+ 33 Bf2 a3 34 Bxg4 a2!



The pawn who would be king. Korchnoi, through sheer willpower, finally pierces the veil of White's evasions, and nothing can stop the once disfigured and broken pawn from promotion.

35 ♜c3

35 ♜xd5+ ♔c6 would not be much of a triumph for White since Black is about to queen.

35...♜c2+!

It's important to drive White's king to the first rank.

36 ♔e1 ♜xc3 37 ♜xd5+ ♔e7 38 ♜d1

Or 38 ♜a5 ♜c1+ 39 ♔d2 a1♛.

38...♜b3! 0-1

There is no defence to ...♜b1.

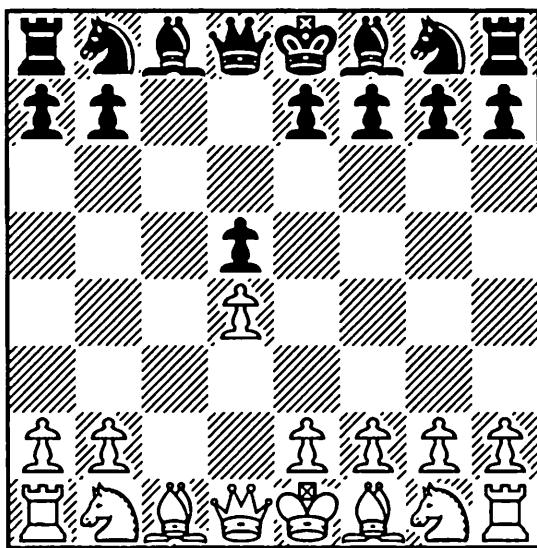
Summary

The Catalan Gambit where White omits ♜c3 still doesn't impress me. I feel that White still struggles to prove his compensation.

Chapter Eight

The Exchange Slav

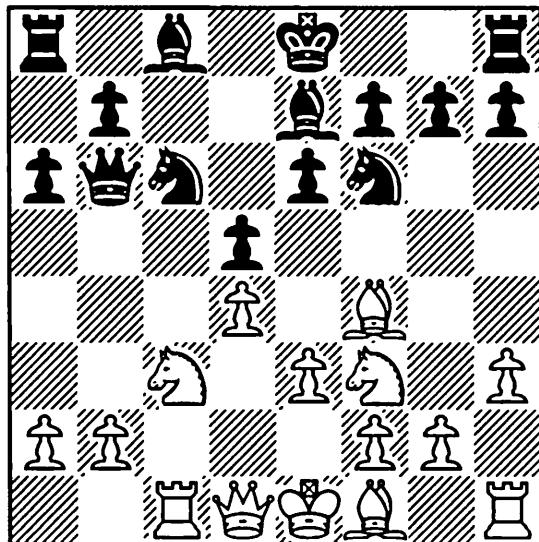
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5



Here we are at the Exchange Slav, favoured weapon of the dullest and hated scourge of everybody else! Being a minimalist, this is the line I always play as White. It's a bit like going to an ice cream parlour and picking vanilla from its array of 50 flavours. I confess I favour the Exchange Slav when I'm White, yet, when I'm Black and my opponents hit me with the Exchange I accuse them (a bit hypocritically) of being grovellers, dullards and cowards!

It's one of those lines where the books tell you not to worry and assure you of equality by move 12. The trouble is if you happen to get this equality, the best you may have is a draw. I picked the games and lines in this chapter under the assumption that you want to play to win with Black.

You may want to sit down before you read on, and I request that you don't freak out on me. I am about to advise you to take a course of action most chess teachers frown upon: Go on a pawn-grabbing spree with your queen when behind in development!



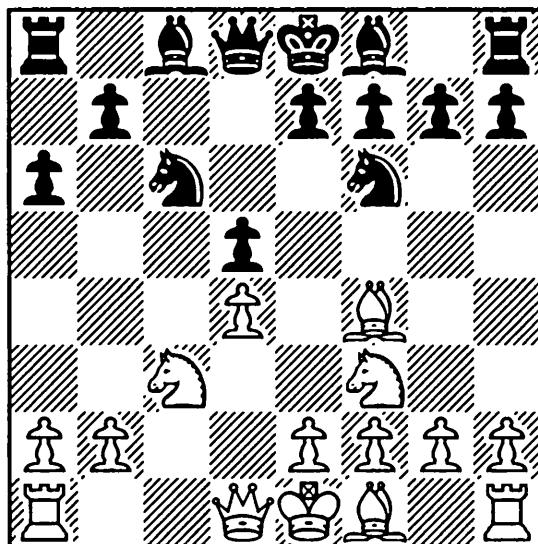
When White brings out both his knights, he creates an almost unloseable fortress. Notice I said *almost* unloseable? In order to win as Black against the Exchange Variation, we need to apply a little shock therapy upon White. If we know what we are doing (with computers as our accomplices!) we can get away with this chess crime. Pay careful attention to Morozevich's game in this chapter (Game 43): 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 6 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ e6 8 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 h3 $\mathbb{W}b6$. It is a perfect example of what I am after from Black's point of view.

Another version of the Exchange, very popular among higher-rated players, is to play $\mathbb{Q}f4$ in place of $\mathbb{Q}f3$. Once again we go about our distasteful business of prying the gold coin from the hand of the corpse by shamelessly grabbing b2: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{W}b6!$ (see Games 45-46). In case you think this is some crazy, eccentric idea, Black has a solid plus score in the database where he grabs the b2-pawn.

Game 43
G.Sargissian-A.Morozevich
Karen Asrian Memorial, Yerevan 2008

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5

The game's actual move order was 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$.
 3...cxd5 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a6



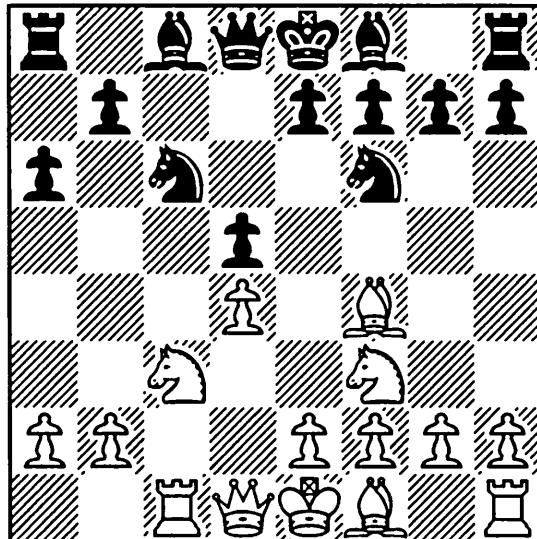
Question: What's the point of 6...a6?

Answer: ...a6 in this or other Exchange Slav positions has many plusses and a few problems:

1. Black, ideally, would like to play ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$. The trouble is, when he does this b7 is vulnerable to $\mathbb{W}b3$ ideas from White. If Black tosses in ...a6 he then has ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ options and on a queen check on a4 Black may follow with ...b5. Warning: If you do play in such a fashion, be aware of White's piece sacs on b5 and make certain they don't work. In this plan Black sometimes even plays ... $\mathbb{B}a7$, as in the Chebanenko lines from Chapter Six.
2. After ...a6 is played Black no longer fears $\mathbb{Q}b5$ invasions to c7.
3. Black no longer worries about $\mathbb{Q}b5$, $\mathbb{Q}e5$, $\mathbb{W}a4$, $\mathbb{B}c1$ ideas ganging up on c6. Black is especially vulnerable to this plan if he plays ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and then locks his bishop out with ...e6. The bishop no longer has access to d7 and cannot help fight the pins on c6.
4. Black may later opt to fianchetto with ...e6, ...b5 (or even ...b6) and $\mathbb{Q}b7$.
5.a6 weakens b6 and subtly weakens c5. Be aware of this when you make your decision to play ...a6.
6. In lines where the bishop is brought out to g4 or f5 and ...e6 is tossed in, be aware of tactics involving $\mathbb{Q}xa6$, undermining Black's knight on c6.

7 $\mathbb{B}c1$!

The most accurate move. We look at 7 e3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ next game.



7...e6!

Question: Why would you voluntarily block your light-squared bishop inside the pawn chain? Why not develop it to f5?

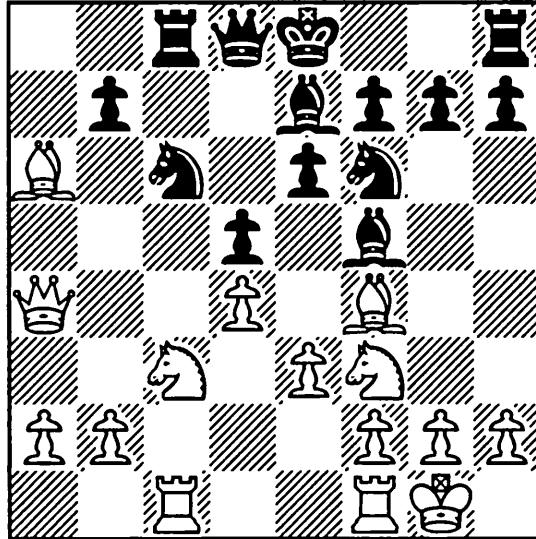
Answer: Two reasons (we talked about this in your earlier question):

1. Black wants to play for a win so he creates an imbalance; either here with ...e6 and ...b6, or with 7 e3 ♜g4 normally followed by taking the knight on f3.
2. I'm not convinced Black fully equalizes after 7...♜f5. In fact, my advice to you is to stay away from ...♜f5 in all Exchange Slavs. The best you get is drawish equality; the worst you get is a kick in the seat of your pants! The development to f5 can create all sorts of hassles for Black on b7, and also c6 later on.

Let's see some examples after 7...♜f5?! 8 e3:

a) 8...♝c8 9 ♜e2 e6 10 0-0 and now:

- a1) 10...♜e7 11 ♜b3! ♜a5 12 ♜a4+! ♜c6? (12...b5?? 13 ♜xb5 axb5 14 ♜xb5+ ♛f8 15 ♜xc8 regains the piece with two pawns interest; 12...♛f8 was Black's only move) 13 ♜xa6!!. This is the kind of tactic I warned about earlier.



13...Ba8 (13...bxa6 14 Qe5 Bb6 15 Qe2 is also horrible for Black) 14 Rxb7 Rxa4 15 Rxc6+ Qf8 16 Qxa4 was V.Kramnik-V.Anand, Moscow (blitz) 2007. Black is busted:

1. White has rook, knight and two connected passed pawns for the queen – not such a bad deal materially.

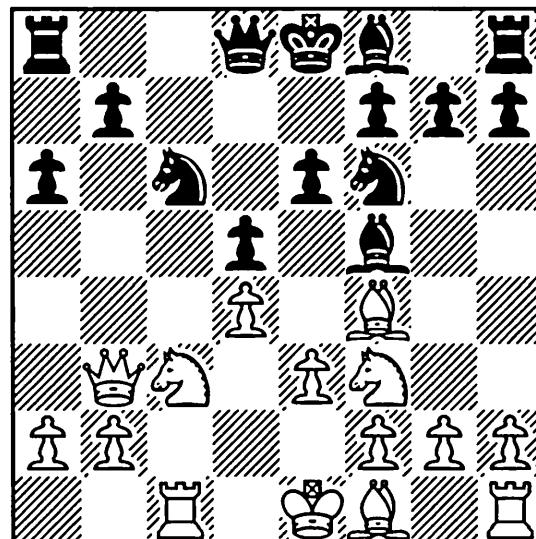
2. Black lags far behind in development.

3. Black's king blocks the h-rook's entry for a while.

3. White threatens to infiltrate down the c-file soon.

a2) 10...Rd6 is safer, but not much fun for Black: 11 Rxd6 Rxd6 12 Bb3 Rc7 13 Qa4 0-0 14 Qc5 Rb8 15 Rc3 Qg4 16 h3 Rxf3 17 Rxf3 e5 18 Bb6 exd4 19 exd4 Qd7 20 Qxd7 Rxd7 21 Qe2 g6 22 Rfc1 Qd8 23 Rb3 Ra8 24 Qg4 f5 25 Rxd6 Rxd6 26 Qf3 and Black still hasn't shaken off White's pressure, V.Ivanchuk-L.Bruzon Bautista, Merida 2007.

b) 8...e6 9 Bb3



9...Ra7 (this awkward move is best; Black can't get away with ...Qa5 and ...b5 since White sacs a piece on b5 in a heartbeat to get a winning attack) 10 Qe2 Re7 11 0-0 0-0 12

$\text{d}4 \text{d}7 13 \text{a}3 \text{a}5 14 \text{a}2 \text{c}4 15 \text{c}5 \text{b}5 16 \text{b}3 \text{cb}6 17 \text{e}5 \text{xe}5 18 \text{xe}5 \text{d}6 19 \text{xd}6 \text{xd}6 20 \text{d}2! \text{b}8 21 \text{a}5$ and Black was completely tied up in A.Dreev-P.Harikrishna, Khanty Mansiysk 2005.

8 e3 $\text{e}7$ 9 h3!

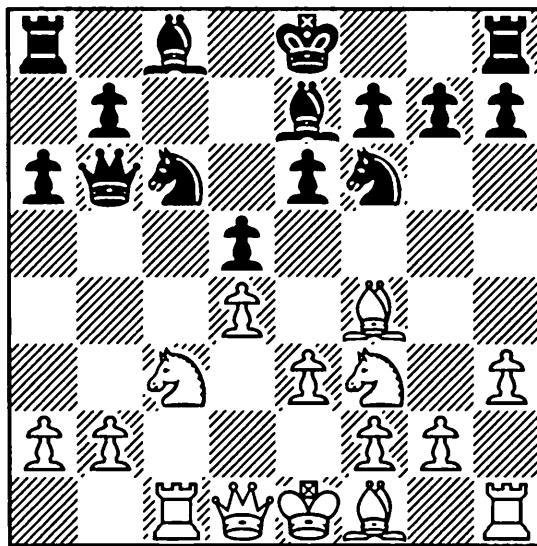
This is not the main line, but it may be White's best choice. He wants to hang on to his f4-bishop and creates space for it on h2.

After 9 $\text{d}3 0-0 10 0-0 \text{h}5!$ (the trick is to play this only after White castles, so White doesn't get to use a rook on the open h-file) 11 $\text{e}5 \text{f}6 12 \text{g}3 \text{xg}3 13 \text{hxg}3 \text{f}5$, I don't think Black stands worse in this pleasant version of a Stonewall Dutch.

Question: But what about 9 $\text{d}3 0-0 10 \text{h}3?$ This seems to kill both ideas: ... $\text{h}5$ because of $\text{h}2$; and 10... $\text{b}6$ which now looks pointless in view of 11 $\text{e}2$.

Answer: In this case we continue with 10... $\text{d}7!$ 11 0-0 $\text{a}5!$. A manoeuvre borrowed from the Dragon (!) which allows Black's f-rook to participate. The move is favoured by Slav experts GMs Dreev and Grachev. Translation: It's the best move! After 12 $\text{a}3 \text{fc}8 13 \text{e}8!$ Black managed to coordinate his compact position well and achieved equality in A.Colovic-A.Dreev, Benidorm 2009.

9... $\text{b}6!?$



And you thought the Exchange Slav was boring!

There are those who like to swim against the current and prefer to hammer the pointed end of the nail rather than the flat side. I am going to do my best to encourage you all to go pawn-grabbing while behind in development in this chapter. I realize that to some of you this may sound like the cardiologist prescribing a diet of fried cheese to his heart patient. But in my opinion we must shake White up and take the shock route if we want to win against the Exchange Slav.

White's last move didn't help his development, so Moro – clearly a person who doesn't

The Slav: Move by Move

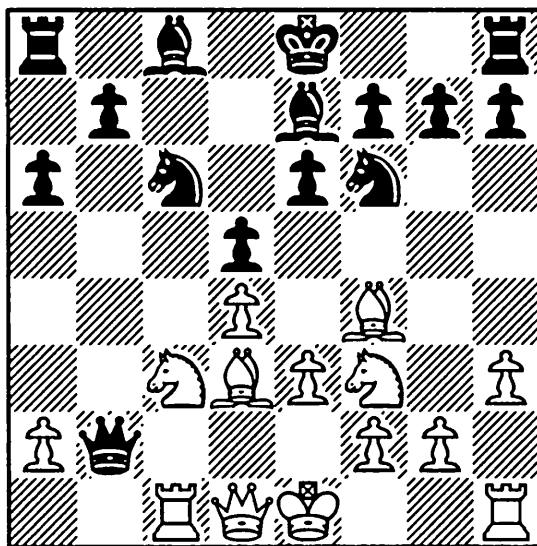
subscribe to the “lead us not into temptation” philosophy – stirs up trouble by indulging in a pawn hunt on the other wing.

10 ♜d3!

Anger flashes when our values are questioned! Sargissian correctly refuses to back down under the provocation.

Offering the pawn is the only try for an advantage. The problem with 10 ♜c2 is that White’s queen gets lured onto the open c-file, and 10...♜d7 11 ♜e2 ♜c8 reaches an equal position. 10 ♜a4 doesn’t make much sense for White either. After 10...♛a5+ 11 ♜c3 ♜e4 Black is doing just fine.

10...♝xb2



The coming moves prove Moro an excellent pickpocket, on a par with the Artful Dodger from *Oliver Twist*.

11 0-0 ♜a3!

After 11...0-0? 12 ♜a4! ♛b4 13 ♜b1 ♛a5 14 ♜b6 ♜a7 15 ♜c2! Black doesn’t have a reasonable defence to the very sneaky threat 16 ♜b8!!.

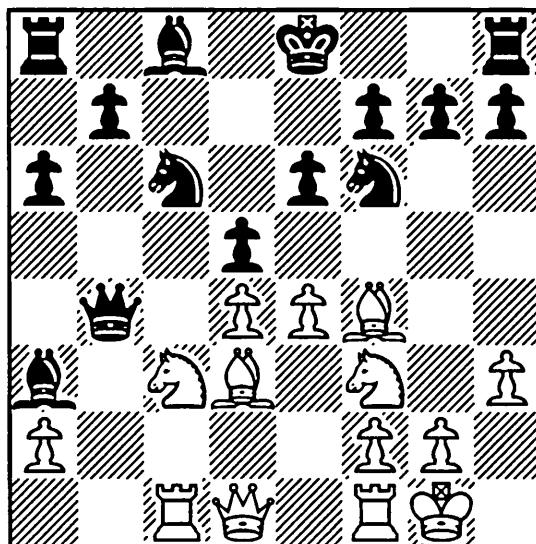
12 e4!

Principle: Open the game when ahead in development.

12...♝b4!

The point of 11...♜a3!. Black gains a crucial tempo by hitting the c1-rook.

Black must take great care not to allow further opening with 12...dxe4?! 13 ♜xe4 after which White’s initiative threatens to get out of control.



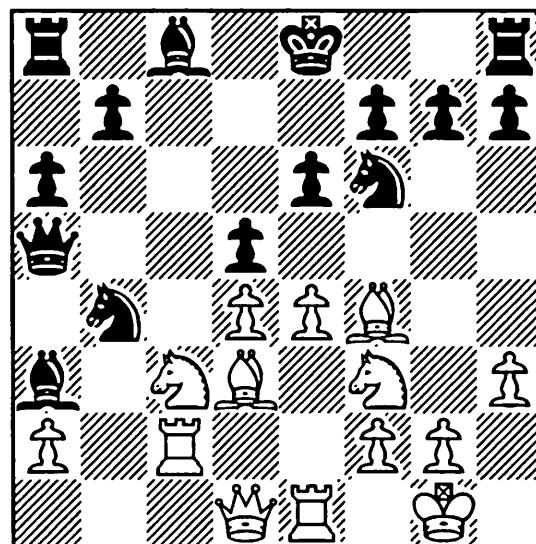
13 $\mathbb{B}c2 \mathbb{B}a5!$

Skilfully continuing to take evasive action. Some of the dangers facing Black are seen in the line 13...dxe4?! 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0-0 16 $\mathbb{W}d3$ h6? 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 18 $\mathbb{B}c3!$ winning.

14 $\mathbb{B}e1$

After 14 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 15 dxe6 $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ 16 d5 $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}b4$ White probably doesn't have full compensation for his pawn. The same applies to 14 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{W}d8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}a4$. I may be preaching a jaundiced viewpoint, but I have won too many similar French Defences from such positions on the Black side to have much respect for White's compensation.

14... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$



A multipurpose move: Black's knight hits c2 and d3, and also reinforces d5.

After 14...0-0?! 15 e5, the trouble is 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7??$ is met with the standard beginner-killer move 16 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+!$.

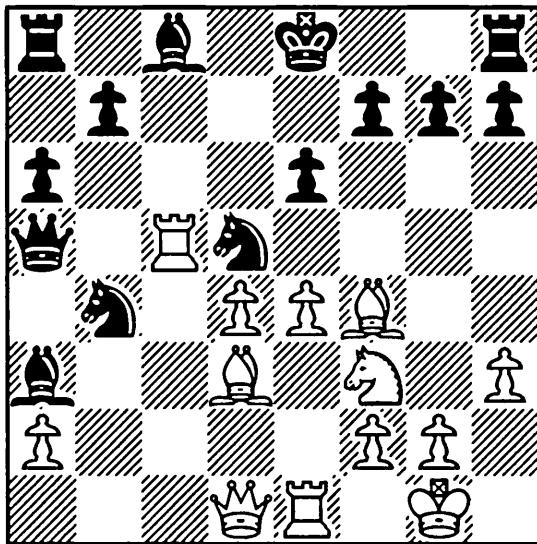
15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5! \mathbb{Q}fxd5!$

He stays alive though some clever slight of hand.

Opening the e-file is suicidal: 15...exd5? 16 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ b5 17 exd5+ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ 20 $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ mates.

16 $\mathbb{Q}c5?$!

GM Alex Baburin suggested the strategic exchange sac 16 exd5! $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xc2$ with a dangerous initiative for the material.



Returning to the game, White believes himself to be in command of the reins. After Morozevich's next move, it becomes unclear just who is the rider and who is the horse! 16 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ looks strong but Moro has everything under control.

Exercise (multiple choice): Come up with Black's best defensive plan:

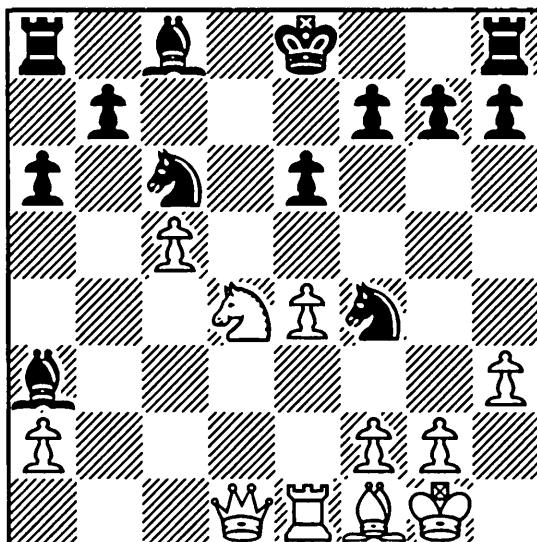
- a) 16... $\mathbb{W}b6$; b) 16... $\mathbb{W}d8$; c) 16... $\mathbb{W}xc5$

Answer: 16... $\mathbb{W}xc5!$

Delaware Senate Candidate Christine O'Donnell, who dabbled in witchcraft when she was a teenager, famously opened a political ad with the words "I'm not a witch!" (probably not the brightest thing to declare to the voter if you want to get elected to public office!). Moro's queen, on the other hand, unquestionably is a witch. For the last seven moves, with the help of her satanic powers, she has flown around the queenside evading the angry town folk below. Now she sacrifices herself and disappears in a puff of smoke. The queen sac takes the air out of White's attack and Black gets full compensation.

17 $dxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

White must react vigorously over the next few moves to try to keep Black off balance and avoid consolidation.



Exercise (multiple choice): Black must proceed with great care.

- Which is the only correct path for him? a) Exchanging: 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$; b) Picking off a pawn: 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$; or c) Continuing to develop: 19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

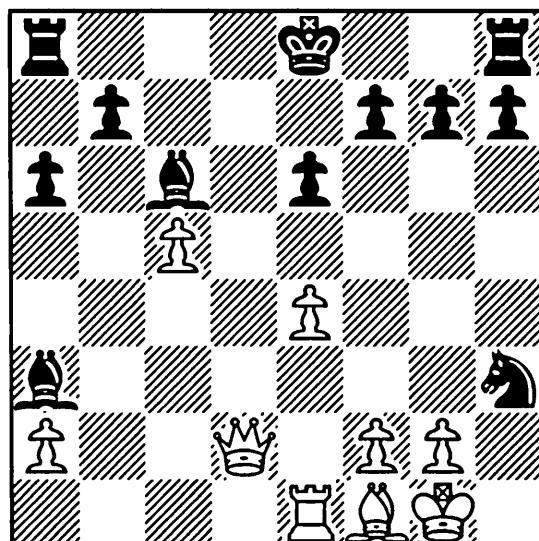
Answer: 19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$!

19... $\mathbb{Q}xd4??$ loses to 20 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 0-0 21 $\mathbb{W}c3!$ trapping the bishop, and so does 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc5??$ after 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 21 $\mathbb{W}c1!$.

20 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 21 $\mathbb{W}d2$

A double attack threatening to trap Black's bishop with $\mathbb{W}c3$. Baburin claims White's last move is an inaccuracy and thinks 21 $\mathbb{W}d4!$ with the dual threats $\mathbb{W}c3$ and $\mathbb{W}e3$ was stronger. I don't believe he is correct. Black gets an impregnable position after 21...a5! 22 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 23 $\mathbb{W}e3$ e5 24 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 0-0. I would rather play Black here.

21... $\mathbb{Q}xh3+$!



The Slav: Move by Move

Black's queen may be gone but her apprentice continues her dark work. Black inflicts maximum damage for the piece and avoids 21... $\mathbb{Q}g6?$ 22 $\mathbb{W}c3$ winning.

22 gxh3 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 23 $\mathbb{W}c3$

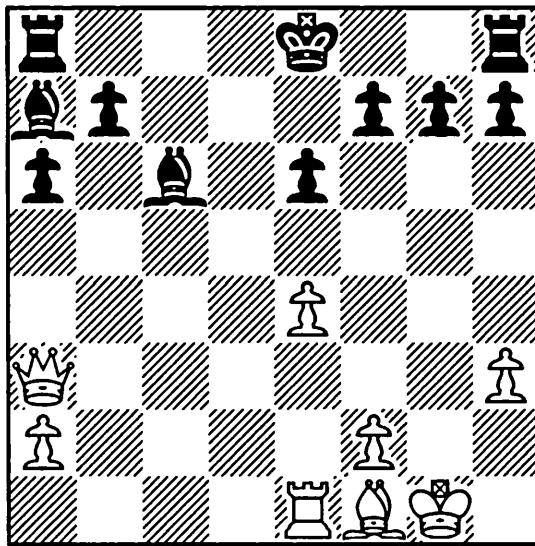
Double attacking the bishop and g7.

23... $\mathbb{Q}a7!$

Black willingly sacs his g-pawn to open lines against White's king. Undevelopment to hang on to the g-pawn with 23... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$, intending ...f6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$, is much too greedy and refuted by 24 $\mathbb{Q}g2 f6?$ 25 e5 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xg2 f5$ 27 $\mathbb{B}b1$.

24 $\mathbb{W}a3$

Baburin gave 24 $\mathbb{W}xg7?$ an exclam. I think it's insane to take on g7 and give Black the attack after 24...0-0-0 25 $\mathbb{W}xf7 \mathbb{Q}hf8$ 26 $\mathbb{W}xe6+ \mathbb{Q}b8$. There is no way I would take White here!



Exercise: Black can't castle kingside and castling queenside is suicidal with all of White's pieces aimed there. How does he complete his development and launch his own attack?

24... $\mathbb{Q}d8?!$

This move may give White enough play to draw.

Answer: Black should calmly swing his h8-rook into the attack from the side with 24...h5!, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$, and leave his king in the centre for now.

25 $\mathbb{Q}xa6!$

His only chance. Moro's rook is no longer on a8.

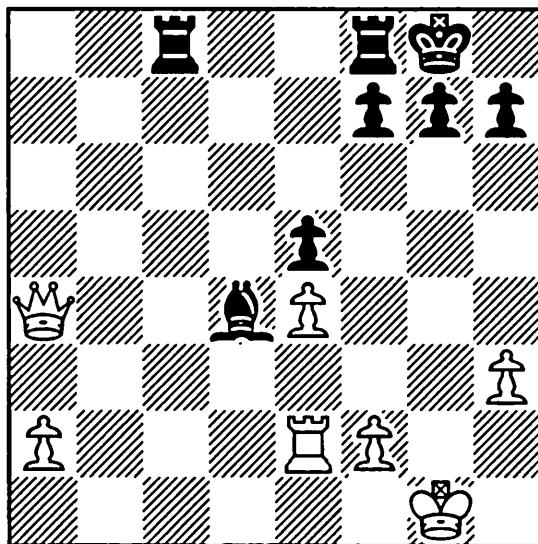
25... $\mathbb{Q}b8?!$

Moro can still make up for his 24th move inaccuracy if he presses the reset button and prepares a hasty do over of his previous inaccuracy with 25... $\mathbb{Q}a8!$ 26 $\mathbb{W}b4! \mathbb{Q}xf2+!$ (White is fine after 26... $\mathbb{Q}xa6?!$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}c8$ 28 $\mathbb{W}d6 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}c7$) 27 $\mathbb{Q}xf2 \mathbb{Q}xa6$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h5!. Black still has chances to win it as White has pawn targets everywhere.

26 ♜f1 ♜d6 27 ♜b2 0-0 28 ♜b5!

Sound defence. He eliminates Black's powerful bishop pair, but Black still keeps an edge.

28...♜c5 29 ♜xc6 bxc6 30 ♜c3 ♜d4 31 ♜xc6 ♜c8 32 ♜a4 e5 33 ♜e2



Exercise: Find a plan to maximize Black's targets.

Answer: Step 1: Double on the c-file.

33...♜c3! 34 ♔g2 ♜fc8 35 ♜d2 g6 36 ♜b5

Step 2: Double on the sixth rank.

36...♜a3! 37 ♜e2 ♜cc3! 38 ♜g4 h5 39 ♜h4 ♔g7

Step 3: Prepare ...♜f3 to pin White down to his multiple targets on a2, f2 and h3.

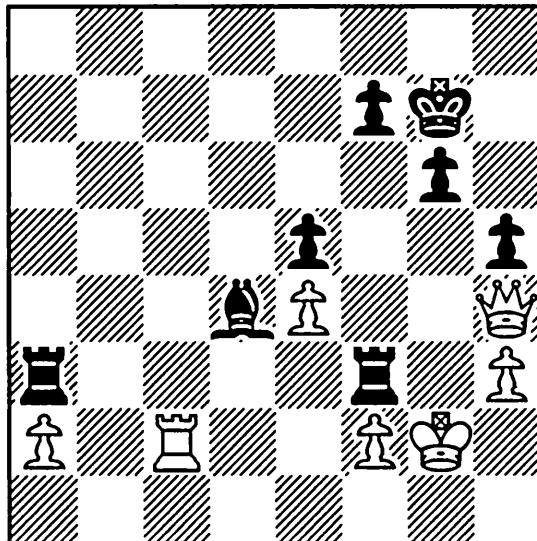
40 ♜e2?

White had to try 40 ♜d8 with the intention to sac the exchange on d4 and later get a perpetual check.

40...♜f3?!

40...f6! cornering White's queen is much stronger.

41 ♜c2??



Exercise: White blunders and for the first time since he was a baby, Moro misses a tactical idea! Can you find it?

41...Rf4?

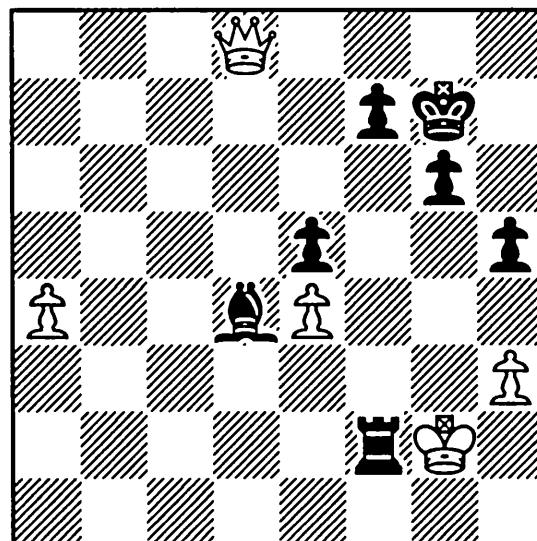
Moro is so intent on going after White's pawns that he doesn't realize he can bag much bigger game.

Answer: After 41...f6! the human sacrifice on h4, now suitably marinated, is ready to be placed on the spit. White is curiously helpless to prevent ...Rh6 and ...g5, trapping the queen.

42 Rd8!

Sargissian sees it now and gets the hell out of there in a hurry!

42...Raf3 43 a4 Rxh4+ 44 Rxf2 Rxf2+



45 ♔h1

Question: Why not go for the win with 45 ♔g3? Black doesn't seem to have the material to launch a serious attack.

Answer: You underestimate Black's attacking potential. After 45...♜a2 46 a5 h4+! Rybka boasts a mate in 16 moves! Let's look:

- a) 47 ♜xh4 ♜f2+ wins the queen.
- b) 47 ♔g4 ♜g2+ 48 ♔f3 ♜f2+ 49 ♔g4 ♜f4+ 50 ♔g5 f6+ also wins the queen.
- c) 47 ♔f3 ♜f2+ 48 ♔g4 ♜f4+ 49 ♔g5 f6+ is the same.

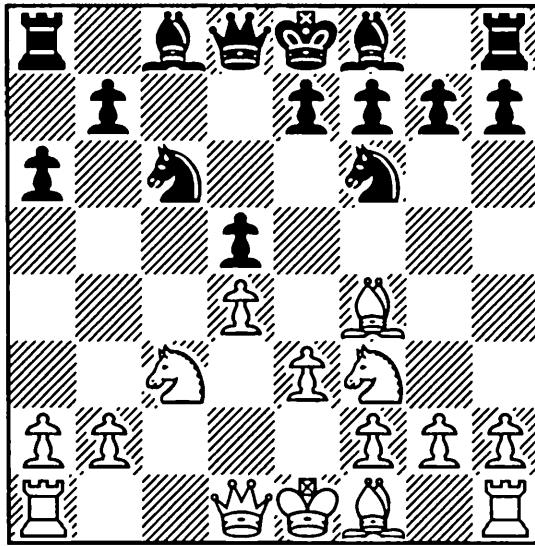
45...♜f1+ 46 ♔g2 ♜f2+ 47 ♔h1 ♜f1+ ½-½

Summary

In my experience against the Exchange Slav, the ...a6/...e6 lines are the best way to play for a win with Black. Clearly one must have great self-confidence and be booked up to steal the b2-pawn and live to tell the tale!

Game 44
A.Lenderman-D.Sadvakasov
Foxwoods Open, Ledyard 2009

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 ♜c3 ♜c6 6 ♜f4 a6 7 e3



This common move gives Black everything he wants and is inferior to 7 ♜c1.

7...♝g4!

Creating some imbalance. This is much better than 7...♝f5 8 ♜c1, as discussed in the previous game.

8 ♜e2

8 h3 is toothless, and 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ e6 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6, seen in many games, is completely equal.

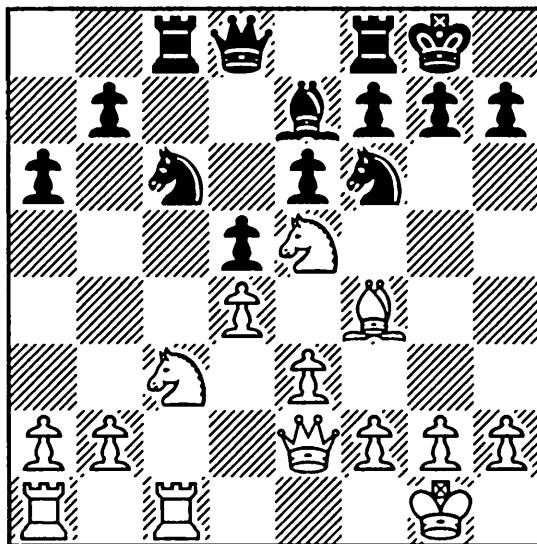
8...e6 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e5$

He doesn't even allow ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ which at least gives Black an imbalance and something to play for. This is a case of someone playing openly for the draw as White against a higher-rated opponent. I face this problem continually. In San Diego tournaments, I normally outrate the next guy down by over a hundred rating points. This leads to annoyances like getting eight straight Exchange Slavs when I'm Black against 1 d4. This of course is an egregious violation of the ancient and most sacred Slavic law which states: "Verily I say unto you, a player must only use the Slav for good. Never for evil!" The motto: Always play the Slav for the win, no matter what your colour!

10... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xe2$

If White is intent on drawing, the best method to do so is 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}fxd1$ 0-0 14 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$, as played in R.Fridman-P.Cramling, German League 2007.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ 0-0



Deadly dull. One gets the impression this is a position where a GM would have difficulties winning as Black against a 2000-rated player. It's instructive to watch Sadvakasov patiently play for the win against a very strong opponent.

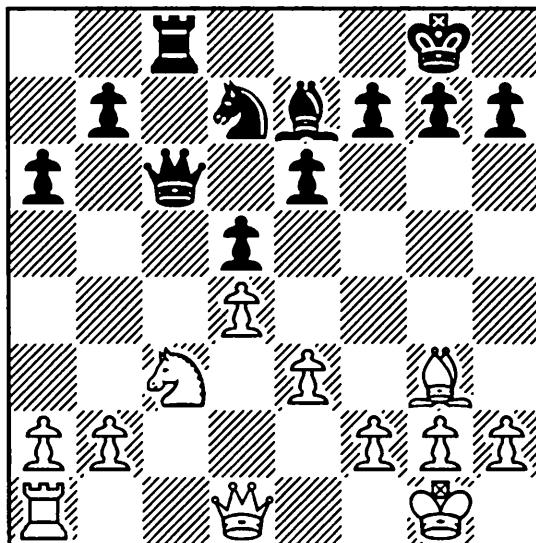
13 $\mathbb{Q}a4?!$

These subtle positions require a finely tuned intuition to know just where every piece belongs. White's natural-looking move turns out to be a waste of time. 13 a3 maintains the balance.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$

White is eager to swap down to the draw. The principle is: Don't be the one to break the tension. However, in this case following the principle doesn't help White much, as after 15 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 20 $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ he has a tough ending to hold, similar to the one in the game.

15... $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c3$



Exercise: White is ready for $\mathbb{B}c1$ and $\mathbb{Q}e2$. Find a way to use Black's slight lead in development to disrupt White's plan.

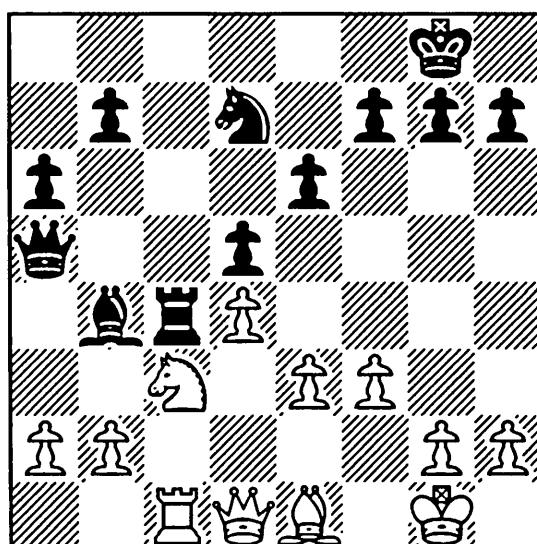
Answer: 18... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 19 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a5!$

Now White has trouble with a2 and can't easily implement his plan of $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and $\mathbb{B}c1$. He could have tried 19 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 20 axb3, but then Black has something in the bank – those weak, doubled b-pawns. Black can play on in such a position tormenting White forever, without risk of loss.

20 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{B}c4$

Black threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

21 f3! $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}e1$



22...b5

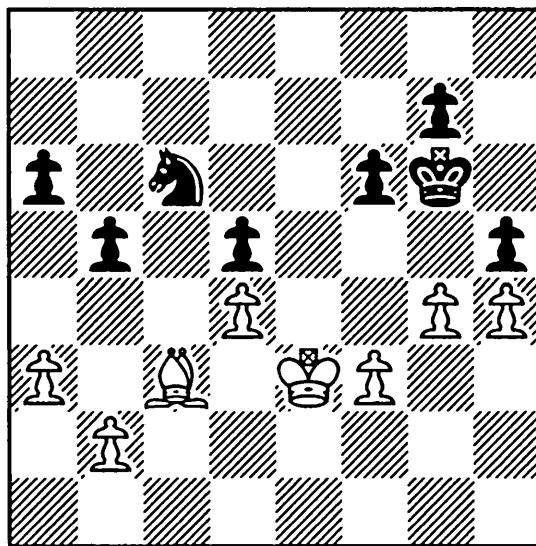
Question: Why didn't Black win a pawn with 22... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ and then take on a2?

Answer: When you analyse such lines don't do it in the abstract. Actually work out all the moves. If you had calculated the line 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ you would have seen that 23... $\mathbb{W}xa2??$ 24 $\mathbb{B}a1$ traps the queen.

23 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 24 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 25 $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{B}xc3$ 26 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Suddenly Black has winning chances. His knight clearly outshines White's bishop, which is bogged down with too many pawns fixed on its own colour.

27... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 29 e4 f6 30 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 31 g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 32 h4 h5 33 exd5 exd5



Exercise (homework assignment): Bobby Fischer won a hauntingly similar ending against his mentor IM Tony Saidy at the 1964 US Championship. Look up that game and compare Fischer's technique with Sadvakasov's.

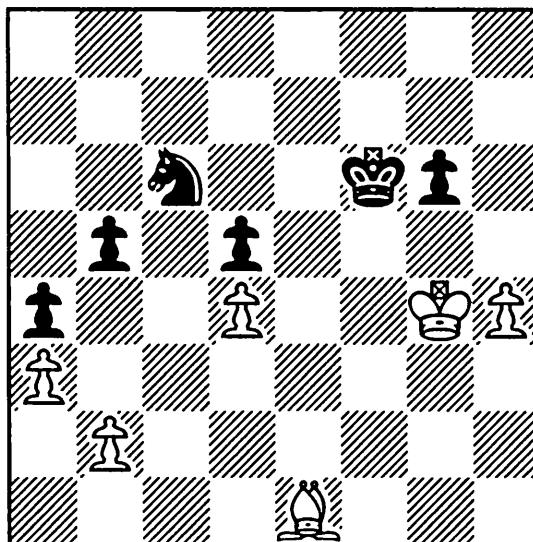
34 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ hxg4 35 fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 36 g5?!

He fixes his h-pawn on dark when there is no need to do so. Better was 36 h5.

36...g6 37 gxf6

He didn't want to allow Black an eventual ...f5.

37... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ a5 39 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ a4



White experiences difficulties defending his light squares. Every black pawn sits on the correct colour for Black's knight and every white pawn on the wrong colour for White's remaining bishop.

40 ♜f4 ♜d8 41 ♜g4 ♜f7 42 ♜d2 ♜d6 43 ♜e3 ♜c4 44 ♜c1 ♜a5 45 ♜d2 ♜b3 46 ♜e3 ♜a1 47 ♜d2

White would love to liquidate the kingside pawns, but it's just not possible: 47 h5?? loses to 47...gxh5+ 48 ♜xh5 ♜f5 and ...♜e4.

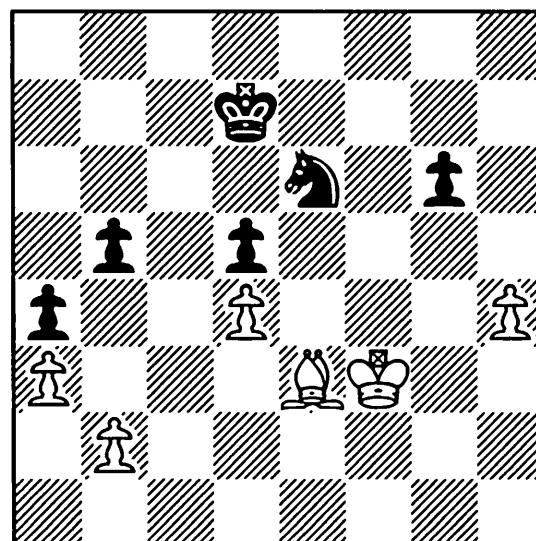
47...♜c2 48 ♜f4 ♜e6

Now Black threatens to take on d4.

49 ♜c3 ♜a1 50 ♜d2 ♜b3 51 ♜e3 ♜a5 52 ♜d2 ♜c4 53 ♜c1 ♜d6 54 ♜e3 ♜f7 55 ♜d2 ♜f6 56 ♜e3 ♜f5 57 ♜f2 ♜g7 58 ♜g4 ♜e6!

The knight and g6-pawn create a firewall against White's king invasion on the kingside.

59 ♜e3 ♜e7 60 ♜f3 ♜d7 61 ♜e2 ♜e7 62 ♜f3 ♜d6 63 ♜e2 ♜d7 64 ♜f3?



Exercise: White missed Black's idea. Can you find the plan?

Answer: 64...b4!

Making progress on the queenside with the help of a temporary pawn sac, which opens a path for Black's king.

65 ♜e2

After 65 axb4 ♜c6 66 ♜d2 ♜xd4+ 67 ♜f4 ♜b5 White finds himself in a mini zugzwang since 68 ♜g5?? and 68 ♜e5?? both lose to 68...♜f3+.

65...b3

Now White must watch:

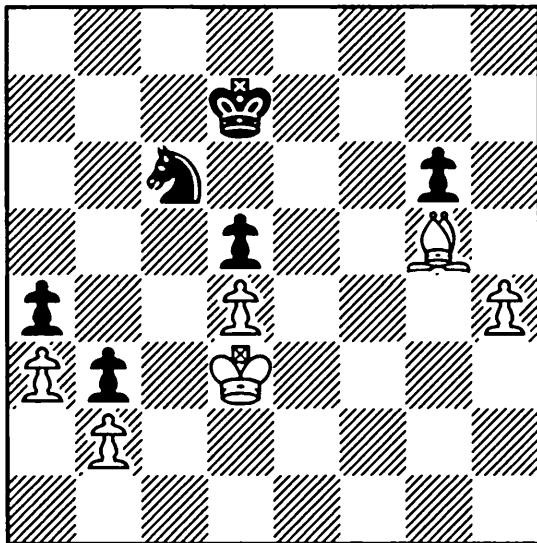
1. Threats to h4, d4 and b2; and
2. Sacs on a3.

This proves to be too much for White's king and bad bishop to handle.

66 ♜d3

Threat: ♜c3, ♜b4 and eat Black's queenside pawns.

66...♝d8! 67 ♜g5 ♜c6



A new firewall on the queenside has been erected. Port entry via b4 denied. The nimble knight shines bright in comparison to White's wheezing old man of a bishop, who hobbles back and forth defending what is essentially the indefensible – his pawns, all fixed on dark squares.

68 ♜c3 ♜e6 69 ♜h6 ♜f5 70 ♜g7 ♜e4 71 ♜f6 ♜e3 72 ♜g7 ♜e2! 73 ♜h6

If 73 ♜f6 ♜d1 74 ♜g5 ♜xd4! 75 ♜xd4 ♜c2 76 ♜xd5 ♜xb2 77 ♜f6+ ♜xa3 and Black wins.

73...♝e7! 74 ♜b4 ♜d3

With the deadly threat of ...♜c2 and ...♜xb2.

75 ♜g5 ♜c2! 76 ♜xe7 ♜xb2 0-1

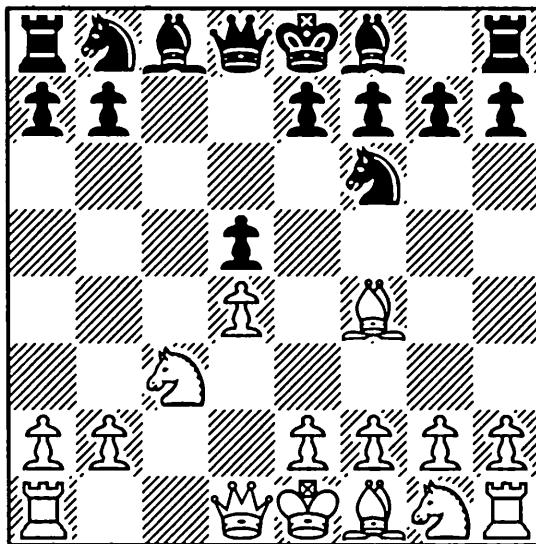
Summary

This game is a great example of how to play for a risk-free win on the Black side. Remember, equalizing and actually scoring the draw are two different matters.

Game 45 A.Saidy-C.Lakdawala

Memorial Day Classic (rapid), Los Angeles 1998

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 ♜c3 ♜f6 5 ♜f4



Very fashionable. White delays the development of his g1-knight.

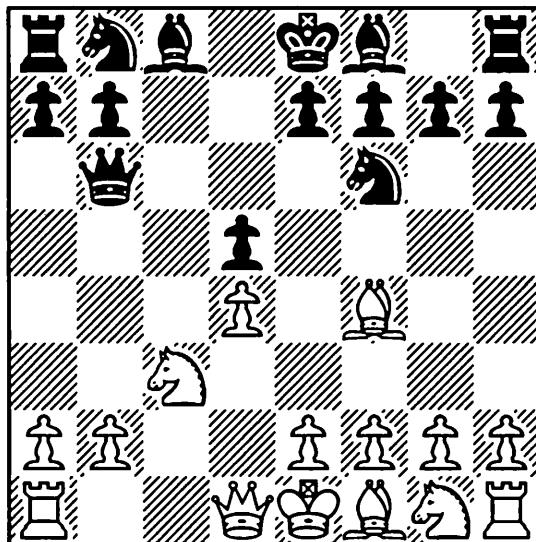
Question: What would be the point of avoiding an early ♜f3?

Answer: There are several points:

1. White realizes that if he plays e3 and ♜f3, then ...♝g4, pinning, is normally an equalizer for Black (see the previous game).
2. If Black develops his bishop to g4, waiting for a knight to chop, then White has f2-f3 options.
3. If White gets in f2-f3 he may want to play ♜e2, ♜g3 and then play for e4.

5...♝b6!?

The audacity of hope! What I like most about this move is the disruptive element. White's only chance for advantage come from sac'ing his b-pawn. In this game we examine the declined lines which, in my opinion, are all inferior for White, and thankfully very common since a lot of players are taken aback by Black's fishing expedition. And in case you think I have gone off the edge and suggested a nutty line, my database has Black scoring 57% from this position! I have never lost from this position either and have come close to beating several GMs with it.



If your goal is to equalize and draw, then the following line is a good way to do so: 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 e3 a6 7 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ (8 $\mathbb{W}b3$ is met with 8... $\mathbb{Q}a5$) 8...e6 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (Black is not afraid of f3 and refuses to take the knight unprovoked) 10 $\mathbb{R}c1$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 f3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7!$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (intending $\mathbb{Q}f4$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d1$ b5 17 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (17 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ also looks fine for Black) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ (principle: when the opponent has the bishop pair, eliminate it) 20 b3 $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 21 $hxg3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ and here the players agreed to a draw in J.Granda Zuniga-B.Gelfand, Khanty Mansiysk Olympiad 2010.

6 $\mathbb{W}c2?$!

An incorrect plan is reason gone mad. My long-time friend Tony responds with the audacity of nope! His refusal to hand over his b-pawn for a development lead leaves him worse. In fact, I feel that White is struggling for equality in all the declined lines:

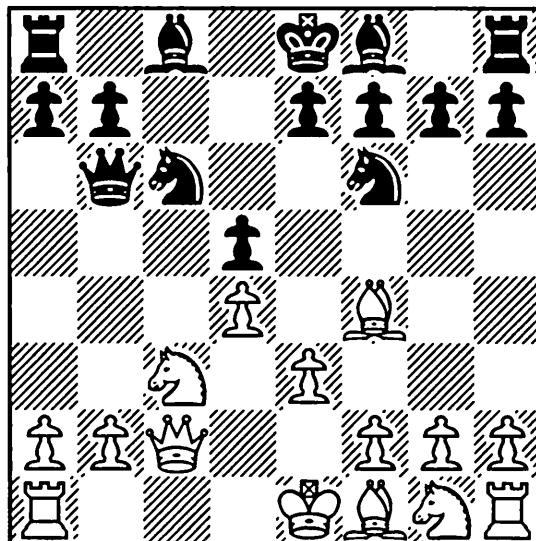
a) 6 $\mathbb{W}d2?$! (lame) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ e6 10 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 12 $\mathbb{R}fc1$ 0-0 13 f3 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 15 a3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ b6 18 $\mathbb{R}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 19 $\mathbb{R}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 22 $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 23 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $dxe4$ 25 $fxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 26 $\mathbb{R}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c1+$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 29 e5 g5! and White's king was in serious trouble, Griffith-C.Lakdawala San Diego (rapid) 2009.

b) 6 $\mathbb{W}b3?$! (also lame!) 6... $\mathbb{W}xd4!$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 8 e3 $\mathbb{W}e4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ e6 11 a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and that knight on a8 will never see the light of day again, B.Roselli Mailhe-C.Matamoros Franco, Dresden Olympiad 2008.

6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

And before you even ask, 6... $\mathbb{W}xd4??$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ ends the game.

7 e3



Exercise: The geometry is unfavourable for White on the queenside. Find a trick to exploit it.

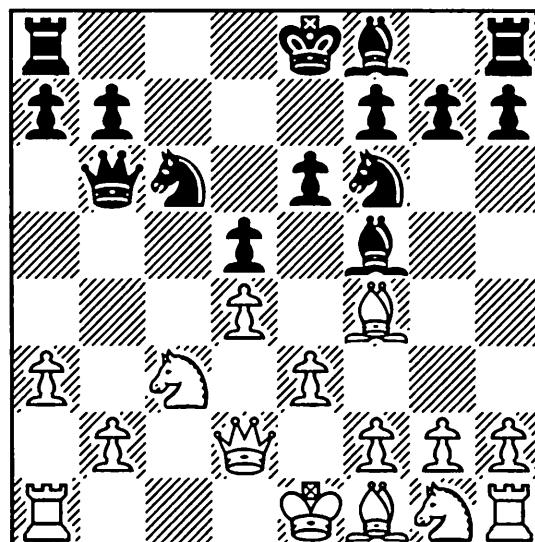
Answer: 7...Qf5!

This gains a tempo since White's queen can't leave b2 unguarded: 8 Qxf5?? Qxb2 9 Rb1 Qxc3+ is disastrous for White.

8 Qd2

8 Qb3?! is unwise, since after 8...Qxb3 9 axb3 e6 White is behind in development and has no compensation for the damage to his structure on the queenside.

8...e6 9 a3



9...Qe7

Question: Why didn't you go after his bishop with 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$
10 $\mathbb{A}g5$ h6 11 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 12 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 13 hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$?

Answer: I've already mentioned before that most Slav players tend to be biased in favour of our beloved knights. We tend to sneer at bishops, especially in closed positions like this one. Perhaps you are right though and the position may later open up for Black's bishop pair.

10 $\mathbb{Q}b5$!?

In bad positions you sometimes just have to pick your poison. Tony didn't like the line 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{A}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 13 $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 14 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$. Still, this is the way I would have played it as White. Black's advantage isn't as concrete as the one I got in the game.

10...0-0 11 $\mathbb{A}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$

The problem is that White suffers from a low white blood cell count. That was his good bishop he just exchanged.

12 h3

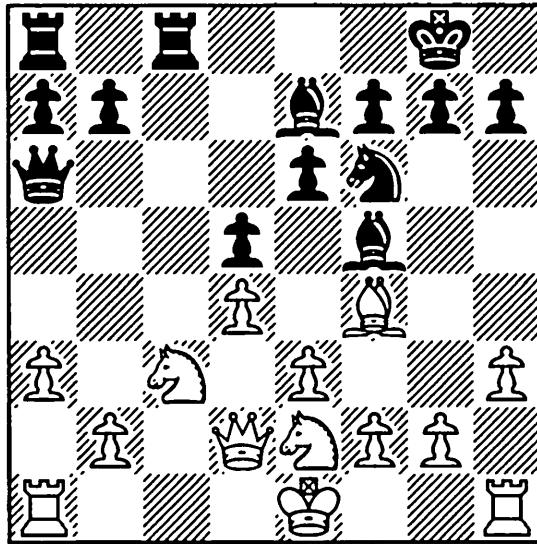
Hanging on to the bishop I don't want to exchange!

12... $\mathbb{R}fc8$

Question: Why this rook?

Answer: The f-rook is the correct one. The other rook may be needed on the a-file later after ...b5 and ...a5 have been played.

13 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$!



Principle: When strong on one colour then play on that colour. Let's list Black's advantages in this position:

1. He leads in development.
2. He owns the bishop pair.
3. He is first to the c-file.

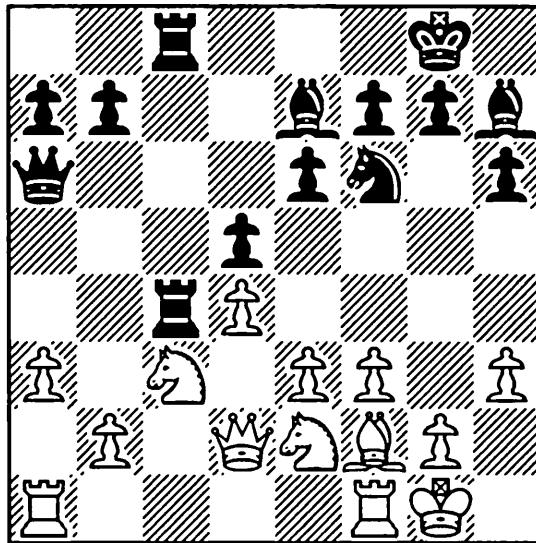
4. His last move gets the queen off the c-file and opens a path for a rook to c4.
5. White is riddled with queenside light-squared holes: b3, c4 and c2 are all weak.

14 0-0 $\mathbb{R}c4$

If White plays b3 to chase the rook it will only loosen his pawn front on the queenside.

15 f3 $\mathbb{R}ac8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 17 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f2$

Perhaps he may try to finagle e4 in at some point. However, this would only open the game for Black. He may also have been worried about ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ tricks.



Exercise: Come up with a plan to increase Black's advantage.

Answer: 18...b5

Intending to move the queen from a6 and play ...a5, and maybe later ...b4. This ejects White's knight from c3 and allows a potential rook infiltration on c2. There's also the possibility to manoeuvre a knight to d6 or b6 and threaten to infiltrate on c4.

19 $\mathbb{R}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

Question: How about 19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, tripling on the c-file and intending ...a5 and ...b4?

Answer: Your suggestion is a huge blunder which loses to the simple 20 b3. When you are working out your plan, watch what your opponent can do too!

20 $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

His dream may be to play $\mathbb{Q}d3$, b4 and $\mathbb{Q}c5$. To his credit Tony finds a way to do so later.

20...a5 21 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}e2$

22 b4? simply drops a pawn to 22... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ axb4 24 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$.

22... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

c4 here I come!

23 b3

The Slav: Move by Move

23 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 24 $dxc5$ $\mathbb{B}xc1+$ 25 $\mathbb{B}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 26 $\mathbb{W}e1$ b4 also looks rough for White.

23... $\mathbb{B}xc1+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}exc1!$

To be able to recapture on d3 with a knight.

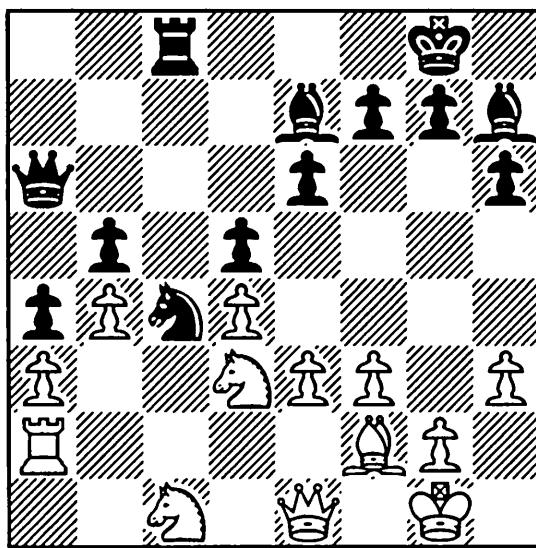
24... $\mathbb{W}a6?!$

A case of commitment phobia. 24...a4 25 b4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 26 $\mathbb{W}d1$ would lead to a position similar to the game but without wasting a move.

25 $\mathbb{B}a2$ a4 26 b4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$

This knight becomes an irremovable splinter in White's hand.

27 $\mathbb{W}e1$



Exercise: Devise a short plan for Black to make progress.

Answer: 27... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Idea: ... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ and ... $\mathbb{W}d6$, targeting h2.

28 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

He attains the counter square, but his knight doesn't attack anything on c5, and I just work around it.

28... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}e2$

I think White has better chances than in the game with the plan 29 $\mathbb{Q}1d3$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e5 31 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $bxc4$ 32 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $exd4$ 33 $exd4$.

29... $\mathbb{B}e8$

Principle: Open the position when you have the bishop pair.

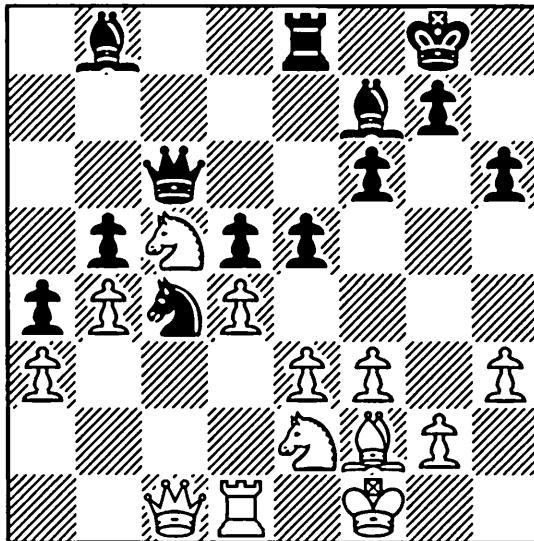
30 $\mathbb{W}c3$ f6 31 $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6!$

Idea: ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$. If I play ...e5 too early, he may take the pawn and get counterplay on my d5-pawn with a rook on d1 and a knight on c3.

32 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ e5 34 $\mathbb{W}c1$

Covering e3 and clearing c3 for his knight.

34... $\hat{a}f7$



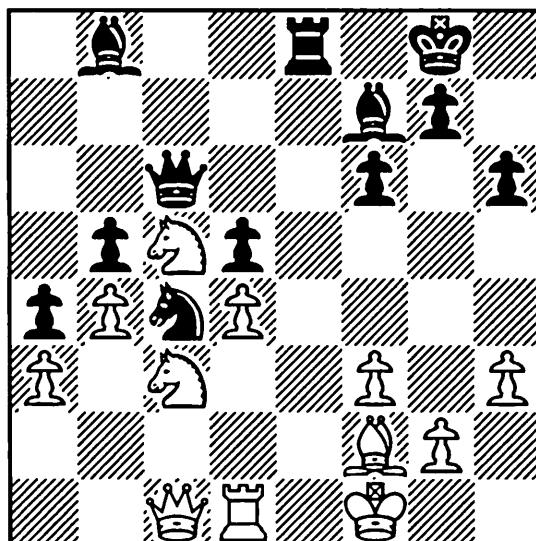
Time to assess again:

1. Black has more space.
2. Black controls the light squares.
3. Black has the bishop pair.
4. Black's knight on c4 rules.
5. There is potential for infiltration along the h2-b8 diagonal.
6. White's queen must babysit the pawn on a3.
7. Many of White's pawns are on the same colour as his remaining bishop.
8. Black is ready to either play ...e4 or take on d4 uncovering his rook.

Conclusion: This position is a disaster for White, who is strategically lost. Interestingly, Rybka misassesses and gives Black only a 0.53 edge.

35 $\hat{a}c3$ exd4 36 exd4

I would have recaptured with the rook.



Exercise: Find a plan to make progress for Black.

Answer: 36...g5!

Immediately exploiting White's lack of coverage on f4. I intend to:

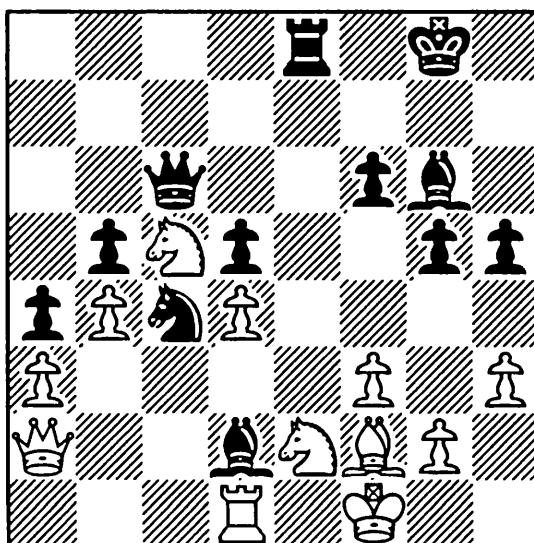
1. Play ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and infiltrate into e3; and
2. Go after White's king with ...h5 and a pawn storm.

37 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ **38** $\mathbb{Q}a1$

The queen must continue to defend the weakling on a3.

38...h5 **39** $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ **40** $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ **41** $\mathbb{Q}a2$

White's queen is a POW interned on a2. Churchill once wrote: "A prisoner of war is a man who tries to kill you and fails, and then asks you not to kill him!" I am not as blood-thirsty as Churchill and don't have any wish to harm White's queen. Keeping her prisoner will do just fine.



Exercise: Find a plan to make further progress for Black.

Answer: 41... $\mathbb{Q}e3$!

Question: Why on earth would you want to swap your powerful bishop for White's bad bishop?

Answer: It's a good idea to eliminate it. A "bad" bishop isn't so bad if it controls key squares in defence, and this is exactly what White's humble bishop does. Black can also play 41... $\mathbb{Q}d6$! or 41... $\mathbb{Q}c7$! planning ... $\mathbb{Q}h2$, with the cheapo 42 $\mathbb{Q}xd2??$ $\mathbb{Q}b1$! winning.

42 $\mathbb{Q}g1$

After 42 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ Black wins by infiltrating the dark squares on the kingside: 42... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 43 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 45 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ h4 46 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 47 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ g4! 48 hxg4 h3 49 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ h2+.

42...Qxf2+

The hissing sound you hear is the air escaping from the punctured tyre on e3.

43 Qxf2 Qe3

The game is over since a3 falls. This game is one of those rare pure strategic battles with almost no tactics involved. Younger players these days are enamoured with attacks and tactics, and tend to ignore skills like strategic build-up and assessment of a position. The tactician who is weak strategically is like a powerful warrior who carries an axe and sword into battle – except he is blind!

44 Ra1 We8

No rush. The a3-pawn is not going anywhere. Lasker's "The threat is stronger than the execution" is one of the best pieces of chess advice around.

45 Qg3 f5!

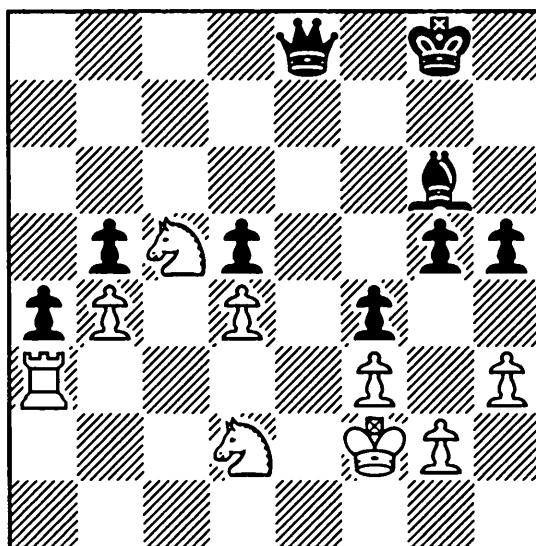
...f4 is coming.

46 Qf1 Qxa3 47 Wxa3

47 Wb1 f4 48 Wd1 Qxa1 49 Wxa1 a3 is also utterly hopeless.

47...Qxa3 48 Qxa3 f4

Denying White access to e3.

49 Qd2

Exercise: Black is winning. All that is left is to find a target?

49...We7!

Answer: There is no way to protect d4.

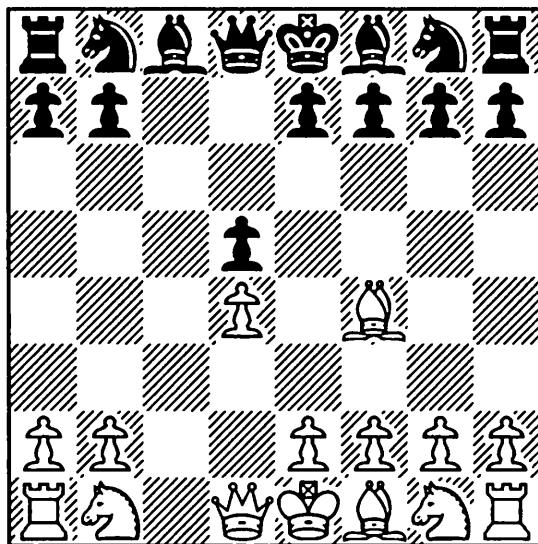
50 Rc3 Wf6 0-1

Summary

After 5...Wb6 White must sac. The declined lines stink. I doubt White even gets equality.

Game 46
B.Gulko-R.Scherbakov
Helsinki 1992

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 ♘f4

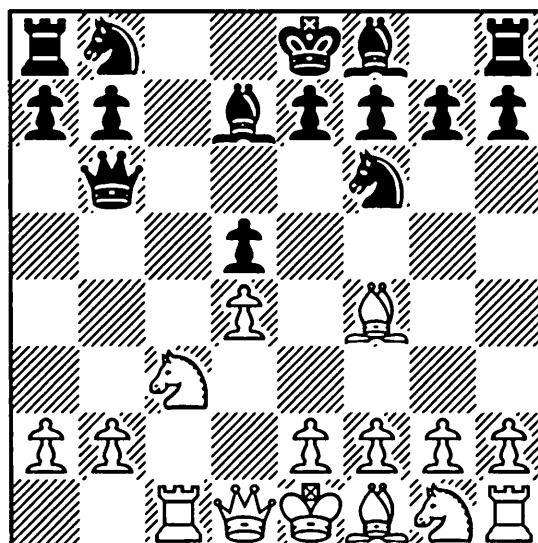


Both sides indulge in a strange move order. Normal would be 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 ♘f4 ♗b6.

4...♗b6 5 ♘c3 ♘f6 6 ♜c1

The alternative way to sac is 6 e3 ♗xb2 7 ♘b5+ (7 ♜c1 ♘d7 transposes to the main game) and now 8...♘d7! 8 ♘xd7+ ♗bxd7 9 ♘ge2 ♗a3 10 0-0 a6 11 ♜b1 b6 was played in O.Rodriguez Vargas-A.Dreev, Logrono 1991. Sure, White has some compensation for the pawn, but he still had to prove it and couldn't in this game. Black got what he wanted – a sharp position where he has chances to win.

6...♘d7!



As Slavocracy takes hold and continues to spread throughout the world, we continue to find new and improved ways to take the steam out of White's initiative.

Question: What is the idea behind 6... $\mathbb{A}d7$?

Answer: This move takes the sting out of White's would-be initiative on many counts:

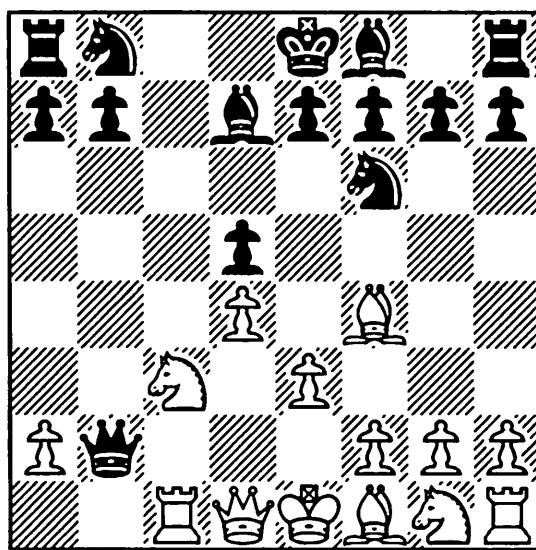
1. There is no longer a hanging bishop on c8 facing a white rook on c1.
2. We cover the sensitive square b5, so Black no longer fears $\mathbb{A}b5$ or $\mathbb{B}b5$.
3. The bishop watches over a4. This means that $\mathbb{A}a4$ will no longer be an effective harassment tool for White.

Question: I don't see the point of playing ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ and then not taking on b2. Why play 6... $\mathbb{A}d7$? Can't we just grab the pawn now?

Answer: Be careful. 6... $\mathbb{W}xb2??$ 7 $\mathbb{A}a4!$ leaves Black embarrassed, since 7... $\mathbb{W}b4+$ 8 $\mathbb{A}d2$ is curtains. The queen hangs on b4 as does the bishop on c8.

6... $\mathbb{A}c6$ is also inferior to playing the bishop to d7. For example, 7 e3 $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 8 $\mathbb{A}d3$ $\mathbb{A}g4$ 9 $\mathbb{A}ge2$ $\mathbb{A}xe2$ 10 $\mathbb{A}xe2$ e5?! (10...e6 is wiser, but after 11 0-0 White's bishop pair and development lead mean more than Black's extra pawn) 11 dx5 $\mathbb{A}b4$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{A}xc3$ 13 exf6 $\mathbb{A}xf6$ 14 $\mathbb{A}f3$ $\mathbb{A}d8$ 15 $\mathbb{A}xd5!$ $\mathbb{A}e7$ 16 e4! $\mathbb{A}xd5$ 17 exd5 0-0 18 d6 $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 19 d7 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 20 $\mathbb{A}c7$ and Dvoretsky lost to Gulko exactly the same way I did in Chapter 1! The Frankenpawn on d7 completely chokes Black and his two queenside passers are worthless (B.Gulko-M.Dvoretsky, Vilnius 1978).

7 e3 $\mathbb{W}xb2$



Black willingly steps into the devil's triangle. I have great affection for lines where one side flagrantly ignores the laws of polite chess society! If you want to win as Black against the Exchange Slav, you must go rogue. However, you must also pick the right opponent to do so. Intuitively, Gulko, the tactician/attacker/master of initiative, seems a rather poor candidate to go pawn hunting against! Perhaps against a player of Gulko's particular chess

skills, 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (or 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with the game's move order) 6 e3 a6! would have been the more prudent choice.

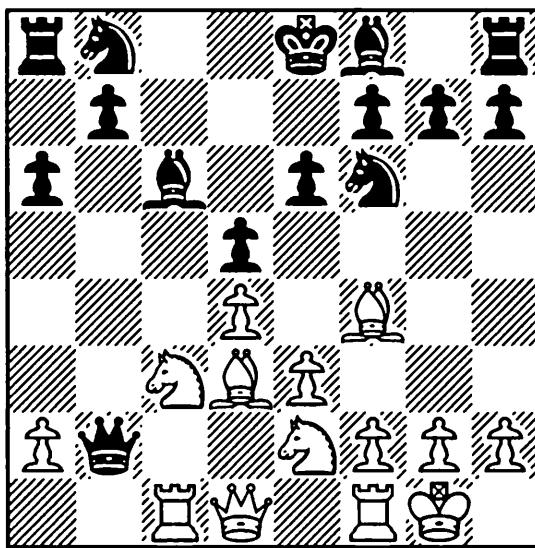
8 $\mathbb{B}d3$ e6 9 $\mathbb{B}ge2$

Threatening $\mathbb{B}b1$.

9... $\mathbb{W}a3$

Everyone plays this move, but I have a new idea and will tell you what it is if you promise not to spread it around and tell everyone about it!

My idea is 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 10 0-0 a6!.



Here is the deal. White's compensation for his pawn is:

1. A huge development lead; and
2. Open lines on the queenside.

By playing ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and ...a6 Black accomplishes the following:

1. ...a6 prevents both $\mathbb{B}b5$ and $\mathbb{B}b5$ tricks from White.
2. By manoeuvring our bishop to c6 we slow down and frustrate White's main plan, which is to open the game with e4.
3. Even when White achieves the e4 break, Black has all his guns trained on his most important defensive square, d5.
4. The bishop on c6 not only clogs the c-file, but also covers Black's sensitive b7-pawn.

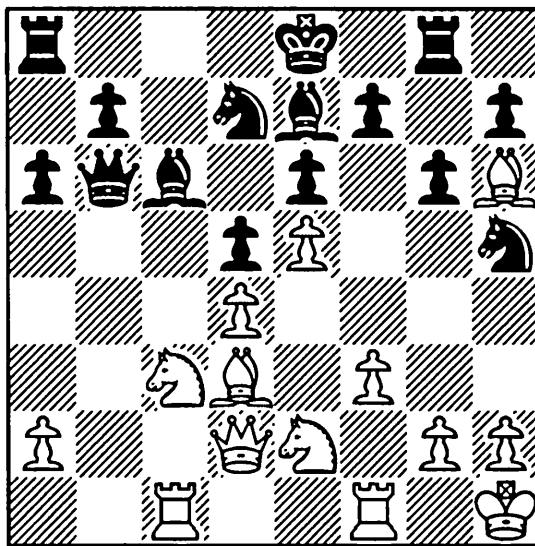
Question: Do you believe Black stands better after your idea?

Answer: I'm not sure I would go that far, but I believe it's an improvement over Black's opening in this game and would be happy to test it out against anyone, even Gulko. (I take back what I said earlier about chickening out of this line against Gulko. Hopefully, the second edition of this book won't be stained with the addition of a second loss of mine to him from this position!)

I fiddled around and played against Rybka as Black from this position. Here are some potential scenarios:

a) The Gulko plan, which was so effective, doesn't work nearly as well here since f6 is immediately covered by the other knight: 11 ♜e5?! ♜bd7 12 f3 ♜e7 13 ♜c7 ♜a3 14 ♜b1 ♜d8! 15 ♜f4 0-0 16 e4 dxe4 17 fxe4 b5 and I don't believe White has enough compensation for the pawn.

b) 11 f3! (slowly preparing e4) 11...♜b6 12 e4 ♜bd7 (Rybka wants to play 12...dxe4 13 fxe4 ♜bd7 but forget that! Why on earth should we open the f-file for White?) 13 ♜h1! ♜e7 14 e5 ♜h5 (14...♝g8!? intending ...h5 and ...♝h6 is also interesting and probably playable) 15 ♜d2 g6 16 ♜h6 ♜g8 17 ♜d2 with a French-type position. Let's assess:

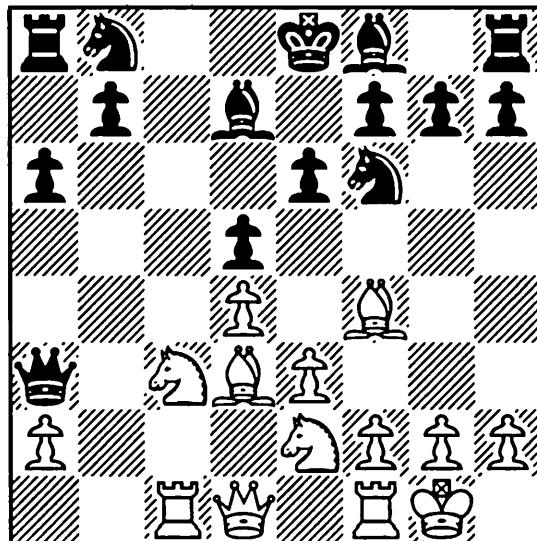


1. White has a space advantage which leaves Black somewhat tangled.
2. White has two open files on the queenside.
3. Black's king, although safe for now, has trouble finding a safe haven. He should possibly risk queenside castling, play his king to a8 and challenge the c-file with his rooks. If he can get away with it, he can then play for ...f6 later on.
4. Black's structure is incredibly solid and White will find it very difficult to make a dent in it.
5. If White goes for the plan g4, f4 and f5, this opens the game and he may get an attack, but he also may weaken his own king.

Conclusion: The position is a mess, and may not be to every discerning Slav player's taste. If you happen to play the French, though, it's a tempting try for Black. Also, consider this: White chose a queen's pawn opening. He may not be a 1 e4 player. If you lure an opponent like this into a French position he may be totally clueless on the White side since he has little or no experience in such positions.

Let's return to Black's choice in the game, 9...♜a3.

10 0-0 a6



Exercise: Conjure up an attacking plan for White.

Answer: 11 ♜e5!

He wants to open the game with e4 and goes after the defenders of d5.

11...♜e7?

Rybka still thinks Black is okay if he goes for the insanely dangerous plan 11...♝c6! 12 ♖xf6 gxf6 13 e4 dx4. Now:

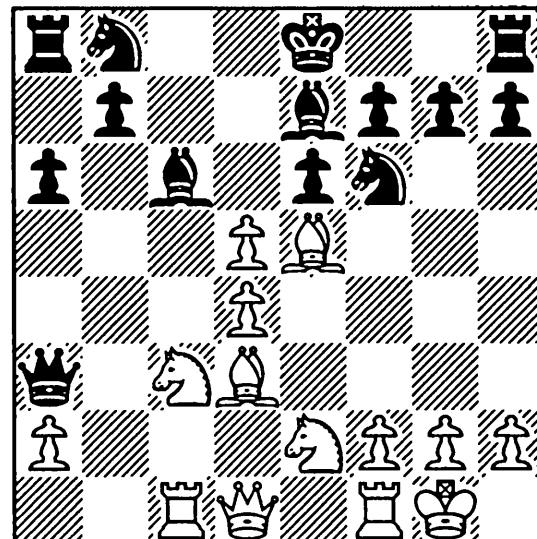
a) 14 ♜xe4! ♜e7 15 ♜f4! f5 16 d5! ♜d4! 17 ♜c3 ♜a5 with immense complications. Rybka slightly favours White here.

b) 14 ♜xe4 f5 15 ♜f3 ♜h6 16 ♜b1 b5! and here the obvious move 17 d5? is met calmly by 17...♜e5 and Black stands clearly better in this very complex position.

12 e4!

Principle: Open the position when ahead in development.

12...♝c6 13 exd5



13...exd5!

Question: Why can't Black play 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and sac his g-pawn to open the g-file for his attack?

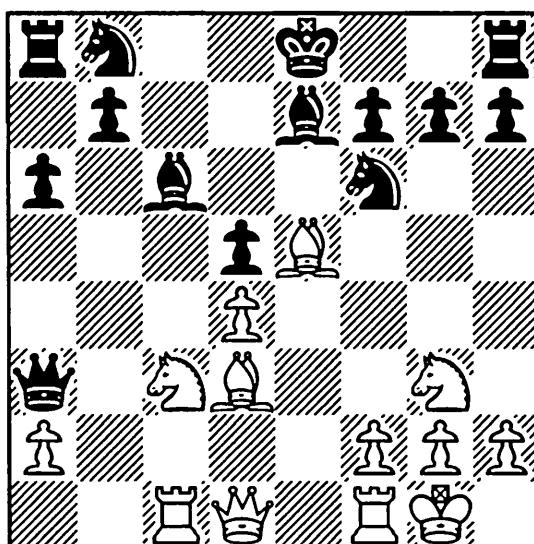
Answer: After 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ Black is busted no matter how he replies:

a) If 14...exd5 15 $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}g8$ the open g-file is meaningless with the c6-bishop shut out of the attack. Meanwhile Black's pawn structure was ripped to shreds and he handed back his extra pawn for no good reason.

b) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17 d5 exd5 18 $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}g8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ and Black's king, caught in the crossfire, gets mated in six moves.

14 $\mathbb{Q}g3!$

Black is in serious trouble. White forced him to recapture on d5 with a pawn instead of a piece. This weakened f5, which White's knight promptly threatens to occupy.



Exercise (multiple choice): Find Black's best defensive move:

a) 14... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$; b) 14...g6; c) 14...O-O. Beware, this one is difficult!

Answer: 14... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$

Only this move keeps Scherbakov alive in a position full of landmines. Other moves allow White to run roughshod over Black:

a) 14...g6? 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ and if Black recaptures he loses instantly to 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5??$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd8+!!$.

b) 14...O-O? 15 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and now:

b1) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xg7!$ is a bloodbath and much stronger than winning the exchange. Black can't touch the knight since he gets slaughtered after 16... $\mathbb{Q}xg7??$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f5$, mating next move.

b2) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ (White disconnects the queen with 17 a3 if it goes to b4) 17

The Slav: Move by Move

$\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{B}xe7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 19 $\mathbb{W}g4+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ is slaughter.

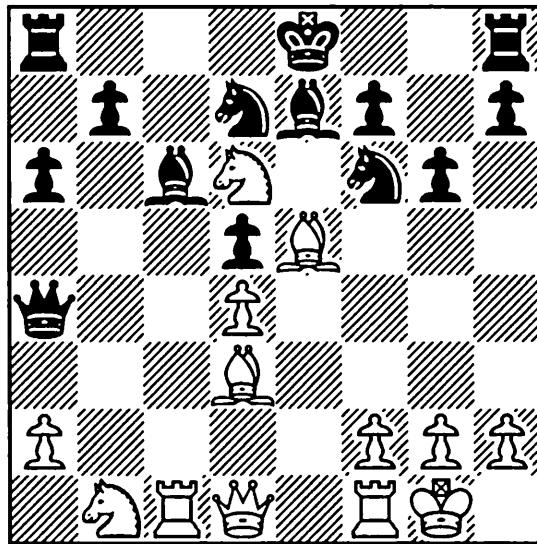
15 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ g6

15...0-0?? falls prey to our now familiar trick 16 $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 17 a3.

16 $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ $\mathbb{W}a4$

Scherbakov deems survival a higher priority than a second pawn grab on a2.

17 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$



17... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$

Question: Why didn't Black chop the knight and trade queens the following move? In this case he would be up a pawn in the ending.

Answer: Black falls for a strategic cheapo if he takes the knight: 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd6?$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ (the cute point: queens remain on the board) 18... $\mathbb{W}b4$ 19 a3! $\mathbb{W}a5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$. The bishop on d6 is a terror and Black haemorrhages on the dark squares.

18 $\mathbb{W}xa4!$

This is the mark of a flexible mind. There are none of Morphy's golden age heroics. Gulko rationally abandons his attack to regain his pawn with a superior ending.

I think most players would be tempted to keep queens on the board with 18 $\mathbb{W}f3!$? but then the position remains unclear after 18... $\mathbb{Q}g7$.

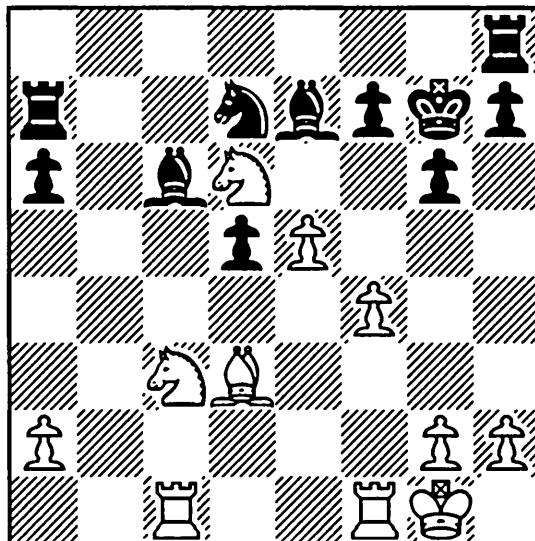
18... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$

A good decision. The bishop was just too powerful on e5. Chess pieces are commodities to be bought and sold. Here Black gets a good deal: a powerhouse bishop in return for an improvement in White's pawn structure.

20 dx e 5 $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

Passive. Black should play 20... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 21 f4 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and his knight, which can be backed up with ...d4, remains a bit of a thorn for White.

21 f4 $\mathbb{B}a7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$



Exercise: Come up with a short plan to strengthen White's game.

Answer: 24 $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

The knight radiates power from d4, with both e6 and f5 disruptive pawn advances in the air. It becomes quite clear that Black's king still feels insecure.

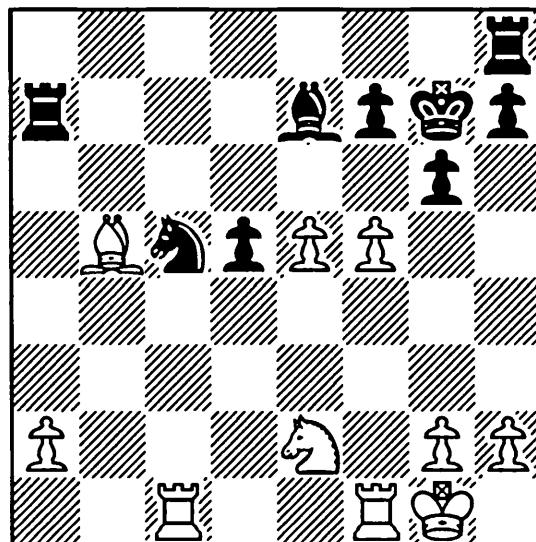
24... $\mathbb{Q}b5?$

Sometimes in difficult situations our passions get the better of us and it's easy to rationalize the irrational. Scherbakov must have imagined this pawn sac somehow eases his position. It doesn't. Black gets nothing for the pawn. He could resist after 24... $\mathbb{Q}a4!$.

25 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ axb5 26 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Black doesn't escape the pawn loss with 26... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$.

27 f5!



A little reminder to Black that White's attack is far from over despite the reduced material on the board. Gulko is one of the best and nastiest closers in the business. When he gets initiative in conjunction with attack he almost never allows his opponents to come up for air.

27...gx f 5?!

He had to grovel with 27... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 28 $f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}f1$.

28 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

28... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xf5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is also hopeless.

29 $\mathbb{Q}xf5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

There goes pawn number two.

31... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

He can't take the a-pawn since 31... $\mathbb{Q}xa2??$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ forks.

32 $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$

A blunder, but it obviously didn't matter at this point.

34 $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 1-0

Black's king can't survive for long.

Summary

Try out my idea 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ (modesty prevented the insertion of two exclaims here) 10 0-0 $a6!$ (and here also!). And if for some crazy reason you reject the 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ idea and prefer to continue as Black did in this game, then try the improvement 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ which leads to murky play.

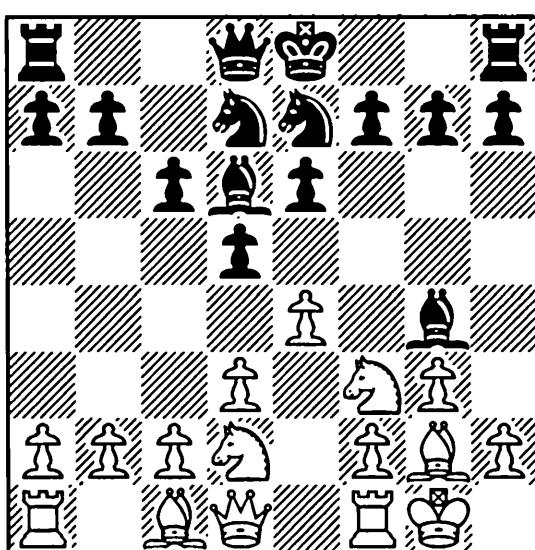
Chapter Nine

Slav Versus Réti and King's Indian Attack

In previous Slav books I've read, I have always wished the authors had included a chapter of lines where White holds back on playing his d-pawn to d4. So let's cover a few of these common but often under-analysed lines in this book.

We start by looking at a few Réti positions ($\mathbb{Q}f3$ and c4), including those where White plays e3 rather than g3. In this chapter, I tend to favour Black's bishop on g4, in Reversed Torre style, instead of our traditional nesting ground on f5. There is no secret or magic trick about winning such games, which usually end up as a war of attrition. You simply outplay the opponent through a better feel for the strategic nuances.

Against the King's Indian attack, we roll out this funky Black setup which tends to score well and will likely be a mystery to your opponents:



Black plays his pawns in the normal "V" formation but the architecture of the knights

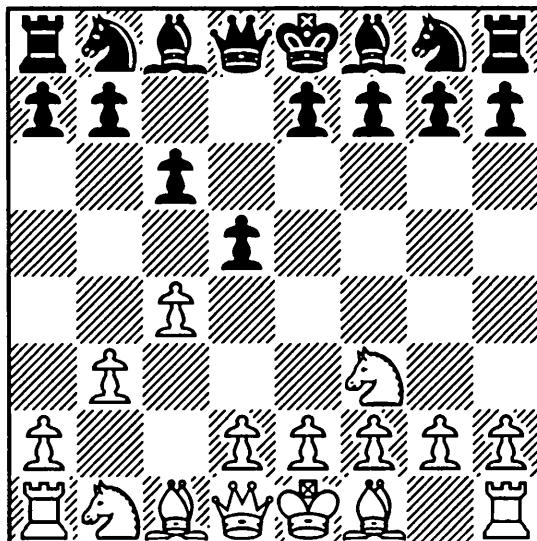
on d7 and e7, and bishops on d6 and g4, is unusual. This line attempts a bit of Aikido on the opponent. His normal plan of e5 usually doesn't work out so well for him because Black simply sidesteps with ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$, and follows with ...c5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, putting nasty French-like pressure on White's centre.

Game 47
R.Réti-E.Lasker
New York 1924

Human beings have the curious habit of loving the dead more than the living. In this case I plan on bucking the trend. I am less than half-kidding when I declare to you that Réti, Nimzowitsch and Larsen are all card-carrying members of the axis of befuddlement. Fine, I realize I am indulging in the dramatic but somehow "axis of bad advice" doesn't have the same effect.

My grudge is that this trio, with their seductive charms, lured me into their hypermodern theories when I was nine years old, and pretty much destroyed all my hopes as a chess player. (Of course it would be an absurd and far-fetched theory to suggest that lack of actual talent from my end could have been the problem!) I remember studying their books and theories as a kid. "Blockade" they assured me, and I would win. "Overprotect" and the world would be mine. Very soon I obsessed about playing $\mathbb{W}a1!$, $\mathbb{Q}h2!!$ and $\mathbb{W}h1!!$ in every one of my games. I would be busy overprotecting e5, only to be mated on g2. I would blockade d4, only to be stunned to learn that my opponent just captured my hanging queen on a1. You get the picture. My mind was hopelessly brainwashed by this chess cult. The healing began only when I studied Capablanca's and Fischer's games. Only then did I break the cherished 1200 barrier! I now annotate this game in the hope of some kind of closure to this sordid, distasteful era of my past.

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2 c4 c6 3 b3



Naturally, hypermodern godfather, Réti, plays the Réti. There are many different paths and move orders to get to Réti versus Slav positions.

3...♝f5

The Reversed London System. Rule of thumb: ...♝f5 is always playable if White has already played b3 and doesn't have access to ♜b3.

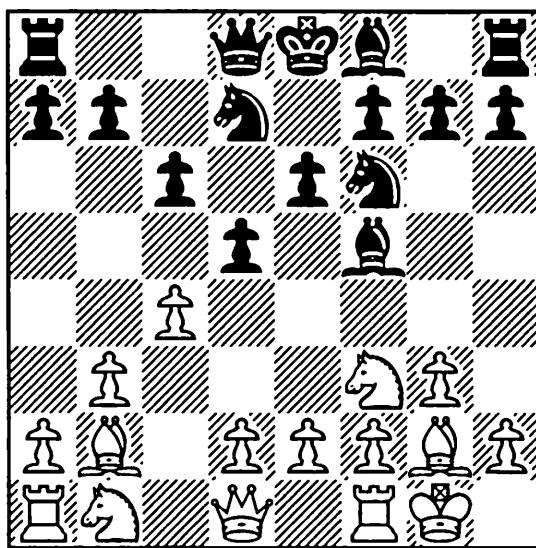
4 g3 ♝f6 5 ♞g2 ♜bd7

A strange move order but it shouldn't matter. 5...e6 is the normal path.

6 ♜b2

White got nothing from 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♜b2 e6 8 0-0 h6 9 d3 ♜c5 10 ♜bd2 0-0 in Z.Janda-P.Pokorny, Czech League 2007.

6...e6 7 0-0



Question: Should Black play his bishop to d6 or to e7?

Answer: I don't know! I have played around with this question now for about two decades and still haven't completely decided. Let's try and differentiate between the two:

1. In some lines the bishop may be vulnerable on d6 if White plays d3 and e4. If Black takes on e4, White's queen on d1 hits the loose bishop on d6.
2. On d6, Black must be aware of White's playing for the e4-e5 fork.
3. On d6, Black controls e5 and later may grab the centre with ...e5.
4. Black's bishop sits solidly on e7 but what is the plan then? If it is ...e5 then the bishop is misplaced!

Conclusion: Both are playable but I tend to prefer ...♝d6. It's riskier due to the vulnerability of the bishop there, but also more in tune to what the position requires of Black, namely, to play for ...e5.

7...♝d6 8 d3

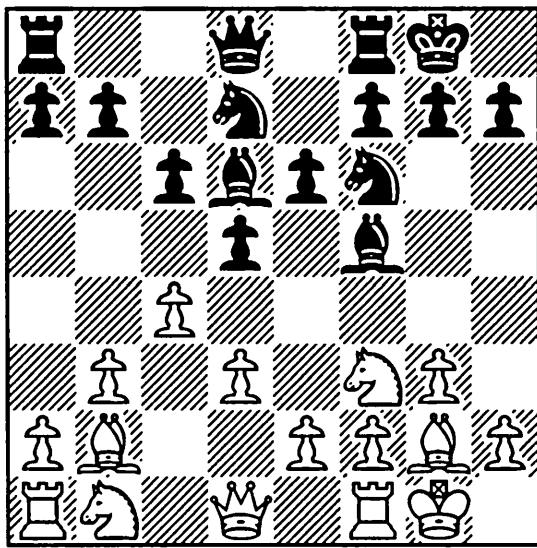
Question: I don't understand why he moves his pawn to d3.

Why not play 8 d4 to control the e5-square?

Answer: 8 d4 leads to a Closed Catalan, but with the important difference that Black's bishop on f5 is outside his pawn chain instead of being shut in on c8. This should give Black equality. For example, 8...0-0 9 ♜c3 ♜e4! (the cramped side benefits from swaps) 10 ♜d2 ♜xc3 11 ♜xc3 ♜f6 12 ♜e1 a5 13 e4 dxe4 14 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 15 ♜xe4 ♜b4! (Black plays for an imbalance and the win) 16 ♜c2 ♜d6 17 ♜g2 ♜fd8 18 ♜ad1 ♜d7 and Black enjoys play against d4 to counterbalance White's extra space, M.Schwarz-T.Luther, Austrian League 2000.

8...0-0

Accurate play. Black doesn't need ...h6 yet.



9 ♜bd2

Question: Can White try the tactical trick 9 e4?

Answer: It doesn't work and should just lose a pawn after 9...dxe4 10 dxe4 ♜xe4 11 ♜h4 ♜e5.

Question: Then why not go after the bishop pair with 9 ♜h4?

Answer: That doesn't work either. Black weasels out with 9...♜g4 10 h3 ♜h5. Now if White is stubborn he loses: 11 g4?? ♜xg4! and then 12 hxg4? only makes matters worse after 12...♝xh4.

9...e5

He can also prepare the move:

a) 9...♝e7 10 a3 e5 11 e4 dxe4 12 dxe4 ♜g4 13 h3 ♜xf3! 14 ♜xf3 a5 15 ♜h4 g6 16 ♜c2 ♜fe8 17 ♜f3 b6 18 ♜h2 ♜ad8 19 ♜e1 ♜h5! (heading for the hole on d4) 20 h4 ♜g7 21 ♜h3 ♜e6 22 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 23 ♜d3 ♜c5 24 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 and Black already enjoys an edge due to his control over d4, A.Kosten-R.Dautov, Swiss League 2006. This is a very good example of how to handle Black in this system.

b) 9...h6?! (there is no need for this move yet) 10 cxd5 exd5 11 e4! (an example of

White's exploiting the loose Black bishop on d6) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12 $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $dxe4$ 15 $dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17 $f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 19 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 20 $e5$. White's kingside pawn majority rolls forward and an attack looms, E.Bogoljubow-A.Staehelin, Bern 1932.

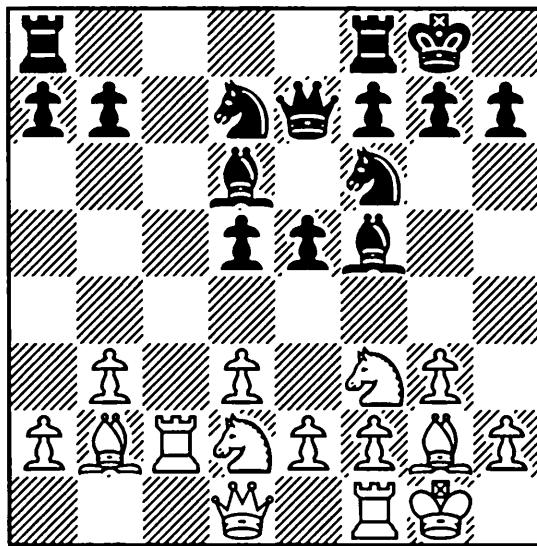
10 $cxd5$

If White holds off this swap for too long, Black usually gets a well timed ...d4 with a space advantage.

10... $cxd5$ 11 $\mathbb{E}c1$

Or 11 $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}df3$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ and Black looks equal, E.Kulikov-E.Shaposhnikov, Moscow 2000.

11... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12 $\mathbb{E}c2$



That's right. Réti can't wait to transfer his queen to a1! Later Réti suggested 12 $\mathbb{E}e1$? intending e4 next.

12... $a5!$

A savvy move by Lasker. He intends ...a4, forcing Réti to weaken to prevent this move.

13 $a4$

Black already stands a shade better. Both b3 and b4 are weak and may need nursing care later on in the game.

13... $h6$

Lasker's strategic threat is ... $\mathbb{Q}h7$, and then ...e4 and ...e3 hits White hard.

14 $\mathbb{W}a1$

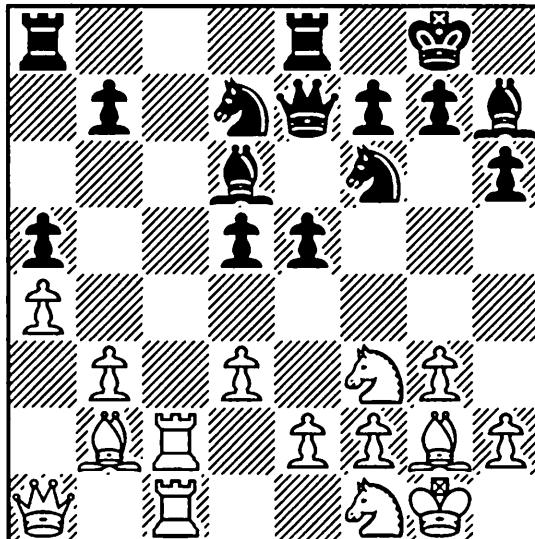
If 14 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ then 14... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 15 $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and d3 is added to the growing list of target pawns.

14... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 15 $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$

He is ready for ...e4 and ...e3.

16 $\mathbb{Q}f1$

Alert. White sees the threat and takes control over e3.

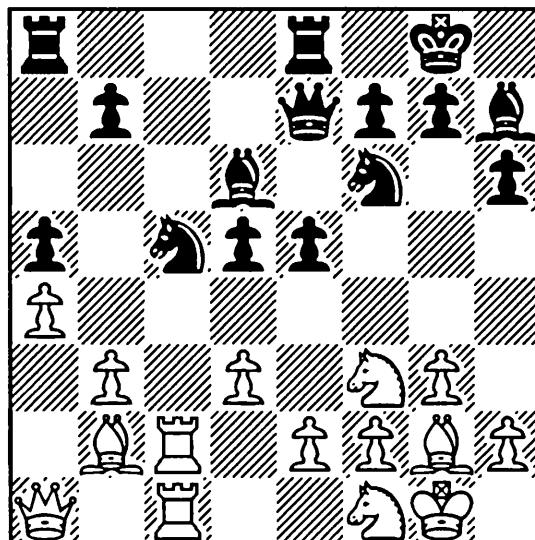


Question: 16...e4 looks very strong here, doesn't it?
White's rook on c2 is in the line of Black's bishop on h7.

Answer: Your move wins material but gives away a lot strategically. After 17 dxe4 dxe4 18 ♜d4 e3 19 ♜xe3 ♜xc2 20 ♜xc2 White has huge compensation for the exchange:

1. The bishop pair;
 2. Powerfully centralized knights which eye squares like f5, c4, b5 and d5; and
 3. White's light-squared bishop rules the long diagonal and the light squares.
- Conclusion: White stands better despite giving up an exchange for a pawn.

16...♝c5!



Exercise (multiple choice): White needs counterplay. How does he attain it?
a) 17 ♜a2; b) 17 ♜xc5; c) 17 ♜d2

Answer: 17 ♘xc5!

This sac, although it probably doesn't equalize, is White's best shot at whipping up some counterplay. In return for the exchange White gets:

1. A pawn;
2. The d4-square for his pieces; and
3. The destruction of Black's centre.

White loses ground if he tries 17 ♖a2?! as after 17...d4! 18 ♘1d2 ♘d5 Black takes over the queenside dark squares. Or if 17 ♘3d2?! there follows 17...d4! 18 ♖b1 ♘fd7 19 h3 ♖ab8! intending ...b5 with queenside pressure.

17...♘xc5 18 ♘xe5 ♘ac8

18...♗d6! forces White to weaken with 19 f4 or 19 d4.

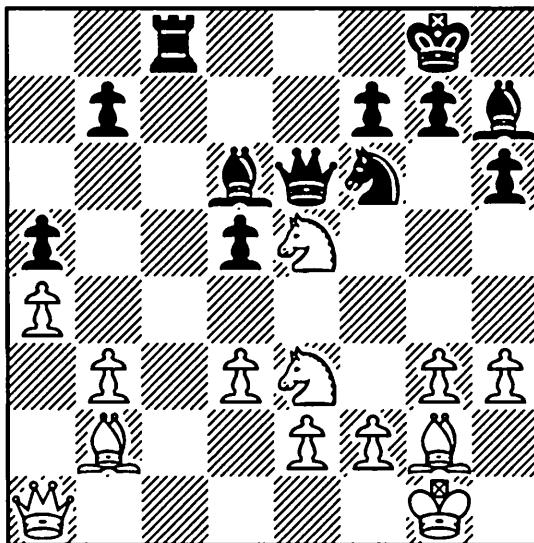
19 ♘e3

Better was 19 ♖h3 ♘c7 20 ♘e3.

19...♗e6 20 h3 ♗d6?

Lasker overlooks White's trick. Black keeps his advantage after 20...♗d6.

21 ♘xc8 ♘xc8



Exercise: White has been on the defensive for a while, but he can turn things around this move. How?

22 ♘f3?

Not with this.

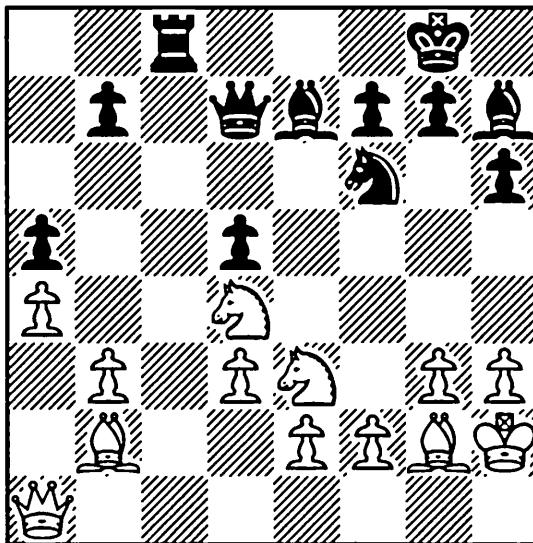
Answer: White suddenly takes over the initiative after 22 ♘5g4! ♘xg4 23 hxg4, with dual threats against d5 and g7.

22...♗e7 23 ♘d4 ♖d7 24 ♘h2?!

Naturally, Réti, with great urgency, transfers his queen from one strange square to another on h1! Weak squares and colour complexes always seemed to take precedence over

piece activity with the early hypermodernists.

White should play 24 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ intending $\mathbb{Q}d4$ and $\mathbb{Q}c3$.



Exercise: Black's d5-pawn is weak and White dominates d4.

All the strategic trumps seem to be on White's end.

Find the core of Black's counterplay in the position.

Answer: 24...h5!

Black earns his counterplay by going directly after White's king. His last move prepares to loosen up White's pawn front.

25 $\mathbb{W}h1?$

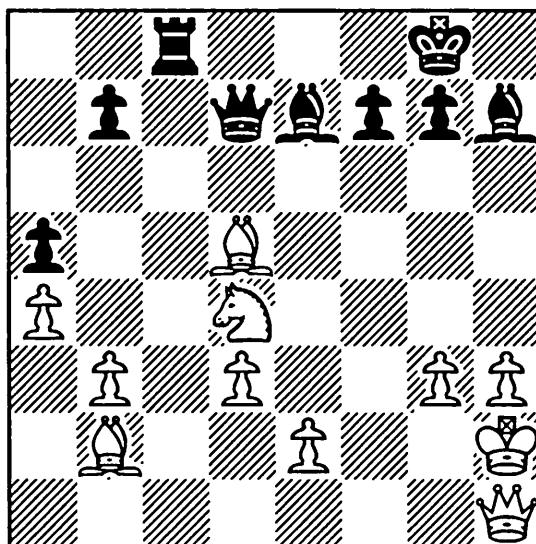
Groucho Marx once said that keeping a straight face was one of the most important abilities in life. Lasker must have chuckled inside after watching his opponent play this move; a clever, eccentric, and Réti-esque method of increasing pressure on d5. Réti's move blew my 9-year-old mind when I played over the game for the first time, and to my shame I thought of Lasker as a square (this was the 1960's and anyone you didn't approve of was automatically "a square") who simply got lucky defeating my then-hero Réti.

The problem with 25 $\mathbb{W}h1$ is its artificiality. Even though Black gets to hang on to his d-pawn if White takes the time to halt Black's h-pawn (with 25 $h4!$ $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $hxg4$ 27 $\mathbb{W}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$), White should have taken this route.

25... $h4!$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

After 26 $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 27 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $hxg3$ 31 $fxg3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ I don't think White will hold the ending.

26... $hxg3+$ 27 $fxg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

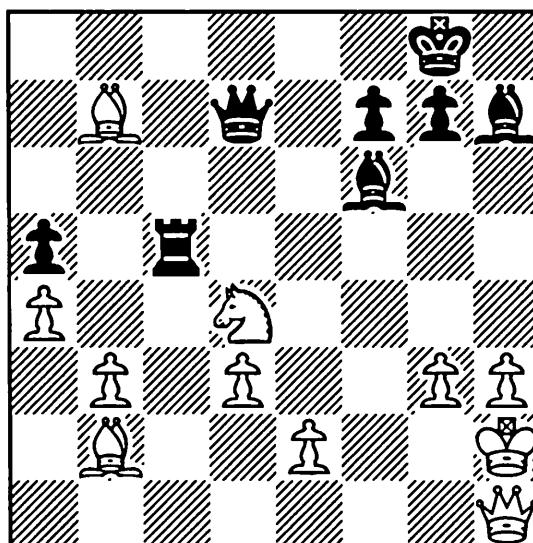


Exercise: White has two pawns for the exchange and attacks b7. What should Black do?

Answer: Keep sac'ing! Initiative and the nasty pin are worth more than the pawns.

28...♝f6!! 29 ♘xb7 ♞c5!

Lasker has given up a third pawn for the exchange and now covers a White block on d5. He unearths some freak geometry in the position. The hidden truth is that White's king is in grave danger.



30 ♘a6

Intending ♜a8+. White's troubles are revealed in the following lines:

a) 30 ♘c6? ♜d6 31 ♘e4 ♘xd4 32 ♘xh7+ ♜xh7 33 ♜e4+f5 34 ♜xd4 ♜e7! (...♞c2 is a brutal threat) 35 e3 ♜c2+ 36 ♜g1 ♜c7 and White's king can't escape without giving up an-

The Slav: Move by Move

other piece with 37 $\mathbb{W}xg7+$.

b) 30 e3?? $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}c2+$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ and White can find no defence to ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

30... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 31 $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{W}d8?$!

Allowing Réti some wiggle room. Lasker could have paralysed his opponent with 31... $\mathbb{W}d6$! 32 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (there is nothing better) 32... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 35 $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e3$. Technically, White has three pawns for the piece. In reality he is completely busted:

1. White's queen is completely tied down to the defence of his king.

2. White's pawns are blockaded big time. A fact which would have caused Réti great consternation since hypermodernists loved to blockade but considered it a terrible affront if someone blockaded them!

3. ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ is the threat. If White responds with the block g4 he weakens his dark squares around his king beyond repair.

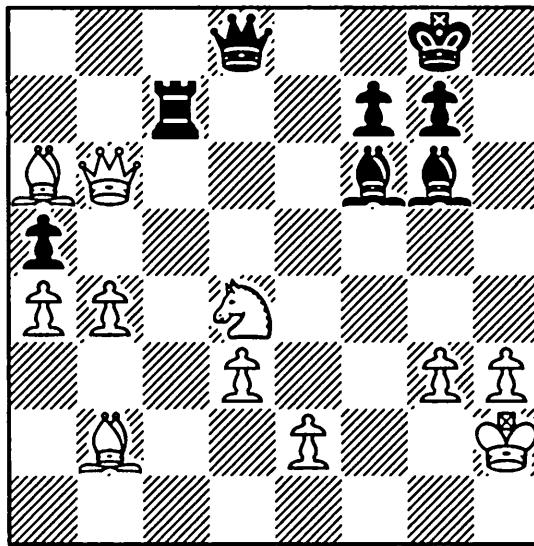
32 b4!

After 32 e3?? Black has the familiar trick 32... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}c2+$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$.

32... $\mathbb{B}c7$

32...axb4? 33 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ allows White easy coverage of d4.

33 $\mathbb{W}b6$



33... $\mathbb{B}d7!!$

This gives Black a winning ending, but you need monumental calculation powers to see it!

34 $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 35 e3

This may have been the "Hey, wait a minute!" moment for Réti. White can't weasel out of the pin with 35 $\mathbb{Q}c6$? since 35... $\mathbb{B}d6$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ wins a piece.

35...axb4

This passer costs White dearly.

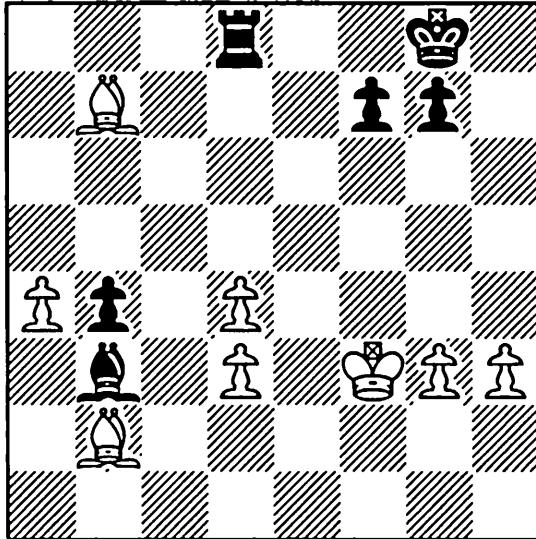
36 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 37 exd4

On 37 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$?:

a) 37... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ wins.

b) 37... $\mathbb{B}xd4?$ is a false path and only leads to a probable draw after 38 $exd4$ $b3$ 39 $\mathbb{B}c4$ $b2$ 40 $\mathbb{B}a2$ $\mathbb{B}xd3$ 41 $a5$ $b1\mathbb{W}$ 42 $\mathbb{B}xb1$ $\mathbb{B}xb1$ 43 $a6$ $\mathbb{B}e4+$ 44 $\mathbb{B}f2$.

37... $\mathbb{B}f5!$ 38 $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 39 $\mathbb{B}f3$ $\mathbb{B}b3!$



This game would baffle even Sherlock Holmes. I feel like a chess crime has been committed and that the perpetrator got away with it, despite the evidence that there is no evidence! How on earth did Lasker, perhaps the most underestimated World Champion, get away with sac'ing so much in an ending and still get a winning position? Well, the reason is the computer-like accuracy from the old man. Korchnoi, more than any other player, is the new Lasker. The two played uncannily alike, relying on brute calculation power and the genius of spotting hidden geometric quirks which everyone else is blind to.

40 $\mathbb{B}c6$

40 $a5?$ $\mathbb{B}d5+!$ 41 $\mathbb{B}xd5$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 42 $a6$ $\mathbb{B}a5$ wins.

40... $\mathbb{B}d6$ 41 $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{B}f6+$ 42 $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{B}e6+!$ 43 $\mathbb{B}f4?$

White puts up a better fight after 43 $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}g6$ 44 $g4$ $\mathbb{B}h6$ 45 $a5$ $\mathbb{B}xh3$ 46 $a6$ $\mathbb{B}h2+$ 47 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{B}h1+$ 48 $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b1!$ 49 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{B}a1$ but still loses.

43... $\mathbb{B}e2$ 44 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{B}c2$ 45 $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{B}d5$ 0-1

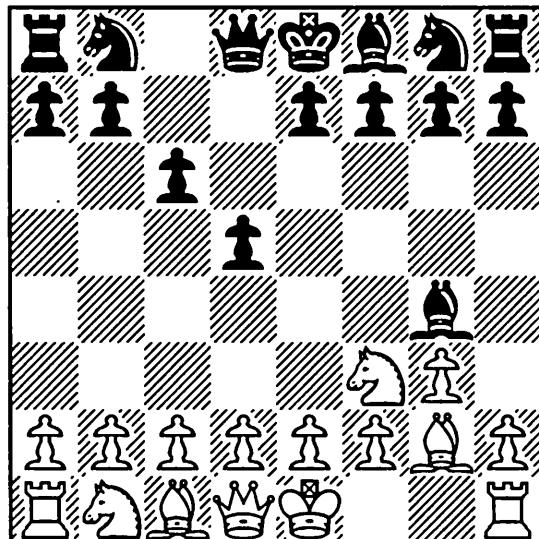
The path is cleared for the b-pawn. An amazing battle of differing chess perspectives.

Summary

The Reversed London is perhaps Black's most solid and Slav-like method of meeting a pure Réti.

Game 48
D.Roos-E.Bareev
 French League 1994

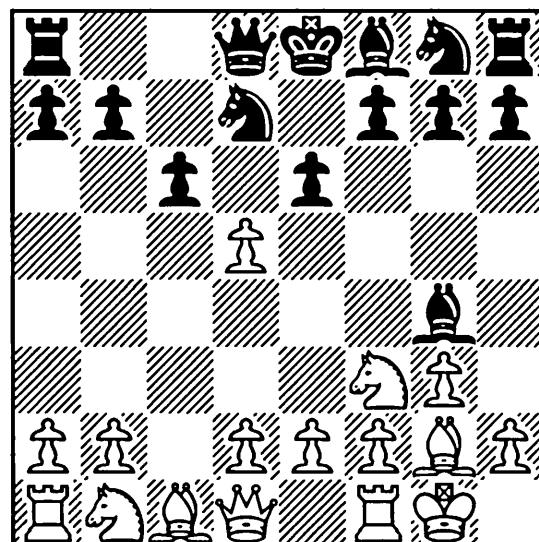
1 $\mathbb{N}f3$ $d5$ 2 $g3$ $c6$ 3 $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}g4$



Question: Why the switch to the Reversed Torre?
Why not stick with the Reversed London?

Answer: I prefer the Torre to the London when White leaves his central pawns uncommitted. I don't particularly like the bishop on f5 if White switches to a King's Indian Attack formation with 0-0, d3 and plays for e4. I have experienced trouble playing White a full move up in the London versus the King's Indian, so I'm not in any rush to play the position a move down from what I am used to! In truth, this is just a personal preference and you can play your bishop out to f5.

4 c4 e6 5 0-0 ♕d7 6 cxd5



This is White's alternative to playing in pure Réti style with b3. White plans the simple d3 and possibly e4.

6...cxd5

This is my preference. I think White gets less if Black maintains the symmetry.

6...exd5 is the more common move, and Bareev also has experience in this line: 7 d3 ♜c5! 8 ♜c3 ♜e7! (I like Black's setup; he stays away from posting a knight on f6 which would be a target for White's plan, e4 and e5) 9 ♜b3 ♜b6!? 10 ♜a4 0-0 11 ♜xb6 axb6 12 ♜c3 ♜e8 13 b3 f6 14 h3 ♜xf3!? (Bareev deserves great praise – only a true Slavocrat would willingly part with both bishops!) 15 ♜xf3 ♜f5 16 ♜b2 ♜d6 17 ♜d2 b5 18 ♜g2 ♜e7 and Black's knights held their own (for now!) against White's feared bishop pair in J.Piket-E.Bareev, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2002.

7 ♜c3 ♜gf6 8 d3

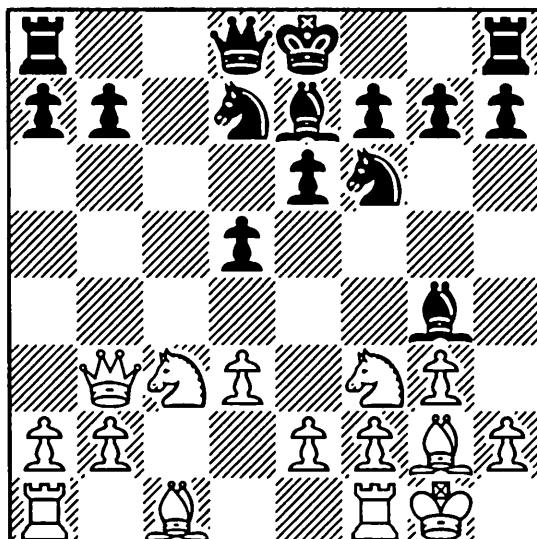
White's only prayer for advantage is the e4 break.

8...♜e7 9 ♜b3?!

Not a good plan. He goads Black into ...♜c5. Then White would retreat the queen and target the knight with b4.

Question: Fair enough, but what should White do instead of this bad move? And how should Black reply?

Answer: I would play something like 9 h3 ♜h5 (White would be happy to play with the bishop pair in a fluid pawn structure if Black decided to chop on f3) 10 e4 (in Reversed King's Indian style) 10...0-0, E.Pigusov-I.Novikov, USSR Ch 1988. The game looks dynamically balanced.



Exercise: Does Black need to cover his b-pawn or can he offer a sac?

9...0-0!

Answer: He doesn't need to defend the pawn. 10 ♜xb7? is a strategic error. After 10...♜c5 11 ♜b4 (forced since 11 ♜c6?? ♜xf3 12 ♜xf3 ♜c8 13 ♜b5 ♜b8 14 ♜c6 ♜b6 traps the queen) 11...♜xd3 12 ♜d4 ♜xc1 13 ♜axc1 Black has regained the pawn favourably:

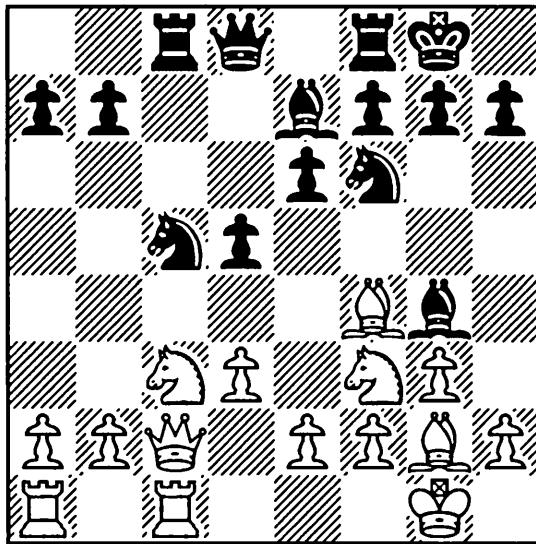
The Slav: Move by Move

1. He swapped a wing pawn for a central pawn;
2. He picked up the bishop pair in a semi-open position; and
3. He may get pressure down those open files on the queenside.

10 ♕f4 ♖c5 11 ♜c2 ♜c8

Clearly White's queen is not comfortable on the c-file.

12 ♜fc1



Exercise: White continues to provoke. What's Black's plan?
Should we get riled up and push forward with 12...d4 now or not?

12...♝fd7

Answer: Yes we should! There is nothing wrong with 12...♝fd7 but I think Black should have put on his war paint and gone for it. White gets pushed around after 12...d4! 13 ♜b5 ♜xf3 14 ♜xf3 a6 15 ♜a3 ♜d5 16 ♜d2 b5 17 ♜d1 ♜d6 18 ♜c2 ♜f6, putting the squeeze on White:

1. White's bishop pair and weakness-free position still don't give him equality.
2. ...♝a4 is in the air. Black may follow up by doubling rooks on the c-file with strong queenside pressure.
3. Black has a plan of slow build up on the kingside with an eventual ...h5, seizing more space. ...h4 would then soften the cover around White's king.
4. Black can play for the ...e5-e4 pawn break should the moment appear.

13 ♜ab1 ♜h5

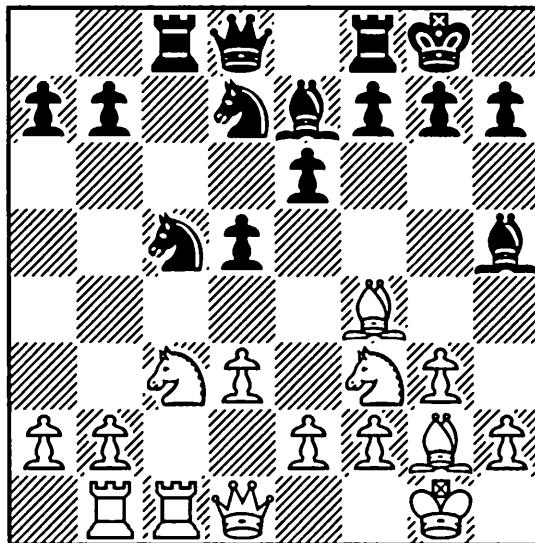
He waits to see what White will do.

14 ♜d1?

The answer is nothing! Boy, this is the mole versus the hedgehog! If a mad scientist cloned me and I was paired with Cyrus2, this is exactly what our game would look like.

Both sides proceed with super-caution. This time White carefully licks his finger and

puts it up to see which direction the wind blows. I don't see a reason for holding back. White should try to get some action going on the queenside with 14 b4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16 $\mathbb{W}a5$.



14...a5!

Good judgment. He offers up the b5-square in order to hold up b4.

15 d4!?

White wants a piece of the centre at the cost of weakening himself along the b1-h7 diagonal and weakens his light squares. He has a couple of alternative plans which offer him approximate equality:

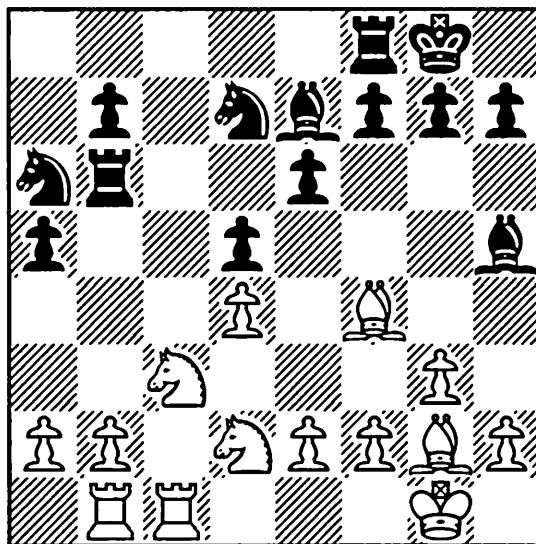
- a) 15 a3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$.
- b) 15 a4 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b5$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$

18... $\mathbb{Q}xb6$?! loses a tempo to 19 $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

19 $\mathbb{Q}d2$?

White plans to meet the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ with e4 but overlooks a trick. Both 19 a3 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}a4$! and 19 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 20 b3 allow White to hang in there.



Exercise: Find a surprisingly strong move for Black.

19...g5!

This clever bank shot to his left kills White's plan in its crib. Unexpected moves like this sometimes show up unannounced on our doorstep while we are busy making other plans, much like the shock of visiting relatives who you barely know, and who don't call beforehand!

20 ♜e3 ♜g6

Oops! White doesn't have access to e4 anymore.

21 ♜a1 ♜xb2

Black is up a clean pawn with the superior position.

22 ♜b3

22 ♜d1 was better.

22...♜b4! 23 ♜d1 ♜c2!

White had hoped to stir up some counterplay with 23...♜xe2 24 ♜c7.

24 ♜xa5 b6 25 ♜b3 ♜a8

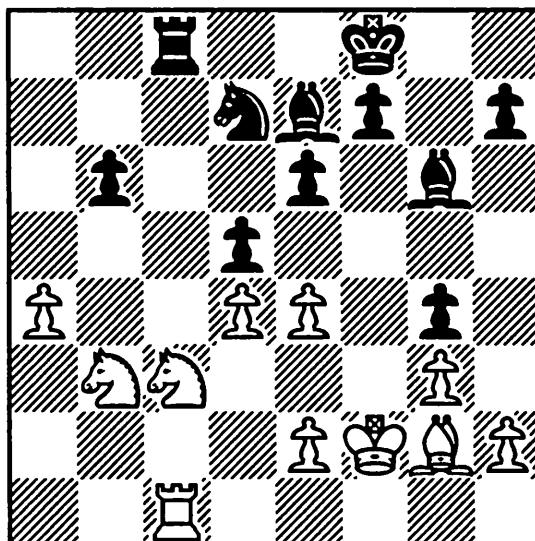
The human move. Computers like the zany, tactical line 25...♜xe2 26 ♜c7 ♜e1+ 27 ♜f1 ♜c2 28 ♜c1 ♜a3! 29 ♜1xc2 ♜xc2 30 ♜xc2 ♜xd1 31 ♜xg5.

26 ♜c3 ♜f6 27 ♜xc2 ♜xc2 28 ♜c1 g4!

Planning to take on e3 and follow up with ...♜g5.

29 a4 ♜xe3 30 fxe3 ♜g5 31 ♜f2 ♜f8 32 ♜d2 ♜c8 33 ♜b3 ♜e7 34 e4??

Even after the superior 34 ♜b5 ♜a8 35 ♜a1 ♜c2 36 ♜c7 ♜c8 37 ♜c1 ♜xc7 38 ♜a1 ♜c4 39 ♜xc2 ♜xa4, Black still comes out a pawn ahead.



Exercise: White's last move was a huge blunder that drops material. Do you see why?

Answer: 34...♝a3!

Winning material.

35 ♜c2

Or 35 ♜a1 ♛b2.

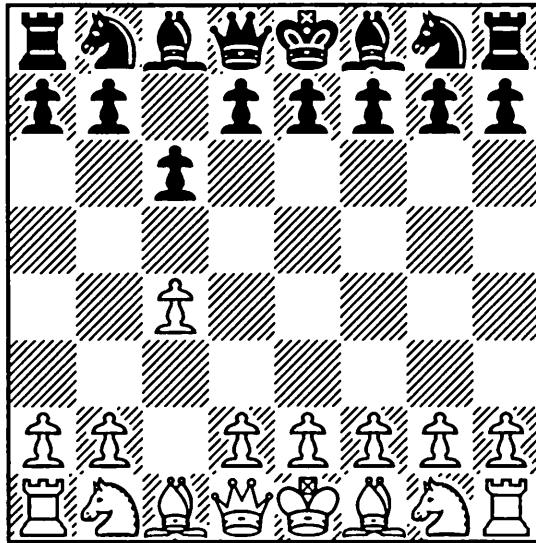
35...♛b4 0-1

Summary

The Reversed Torre is an option against all Réti lines.

Game 49
T.Hillarp Persson-A.Giri
Sigeman & Co, Malmo 2010

1 c4 c6



2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Question: What does Black play on 2 e4?

Answer: I was afraid you were going to ask that. We then get 2...d5 3 exd5 cxd5, which is much more likely to arise from the Caro-Kann (1 e4 c6 2 c4). Now the Caro-Kann really is outside the scope of this book and you should check independent sources to learn more about this line. As a start, here are a few positions you may need to study:

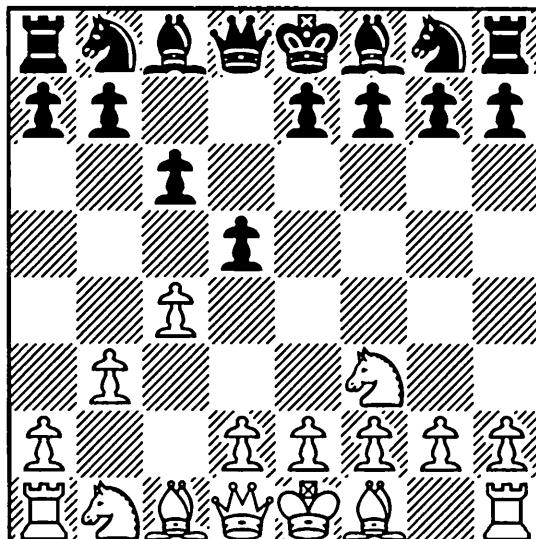
a) 4 d4 (the Panov-Botvinnik Attack) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 (I'm not a fan of 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is also popular here) 7 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 0-0 0-0 10 $\mathbb{K}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ with a typical IQP position.

Exercise (homework assignment): Study Karpov's games as Black in the Panov-Botvinnik. If you familiarize yourself with his games in this line, you will be okay. Nobody understands it better than him.

b) 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and here White's most common options are 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, 5 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ and 5 $\mathbb{W}a4+$, the final one being the most dangerous in my opinion.

2...d5 3 b3

Don't get confused by the myriad move orders White (and Black!) can use. 3 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 b3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ sees White playing e3 first and Black choosing to move his bishop to f5 in London style, rather than to g4 in Torre fashion. After 5 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e6 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ h6 7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ White can play 9 $\mathbb{Q}d4$, as in P.Blatny-C.Lakdawala, American Open, Los Angeles 1998. This move is one of the reasons I tend to favour the Reversed Torre over the Reversed London: White hasn't yet played d4 and may make good use of that square with a piece. Black's bishop is more vulnerable on f5 than it is on g4 in such cases. Even so, after 9... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 10 f4 0-0 11 cxd5 cxd5 chances are probably balanced. In the game White began contemplating an attack with g4 soon, while Black prepared a central counterattack with ... $\mathbb{K}e8$, ...a6, ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ and eventually ...e5.



Question: What about the tricky move order 3 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and delaying d4 to confuse Black? As played by many GMs. What should Black do here? There are $\mathbb{W}b3$ tricks to watch out for if Black develops his bishop to f5 or g4.

Answer: In this instance we can play 4...a6! 5 b3 b5, and if 6 d4 we play 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and are back to our Chebanenko system from Chapter Six. 6 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ doesn't bother us either since we achieved our goal of preventing $\mathbb{W}b3$ tricks from White.

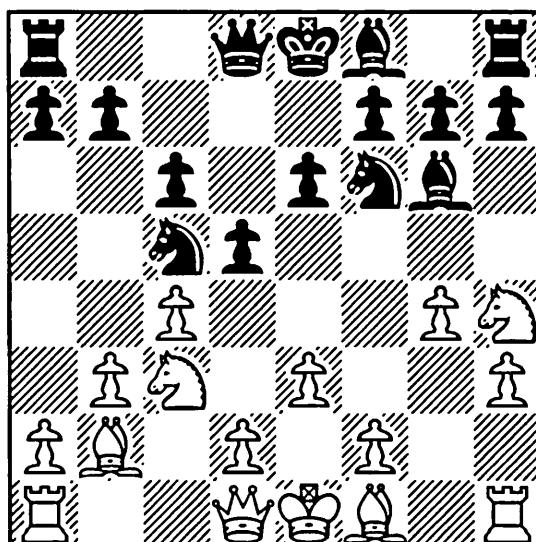
3... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 4 e3 e6 5 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$

Realize that when you play this it gives White the green light to go after the bishops.

8 g4

It comes with a cost. He weakens his kingside pawns.

8... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$



The Slav: Move by Move

Giri hopes to make White pay for not moving his queen's pawn to d4. The trouble for White is that d3 is weak.

10 ♜xg6 hxg6 11 ♛e2

Question: This looks awkward. Why not play 11 ♛c2?

Answer: Awkward is better than a blunder, which 11 ♛c2? is: 11...♜xg4 picks up a clean pawn.

It's also too late for White to toss in 11 d4: 11...♝ce4 12 a3 ♜xc3 13 ♜xc3 ♜e4 14 ♜b2? (White has nothing after 14 ♛c2 but it's his only move) 14...♛a5+! 15 b4? ♜xb4+! wins material.

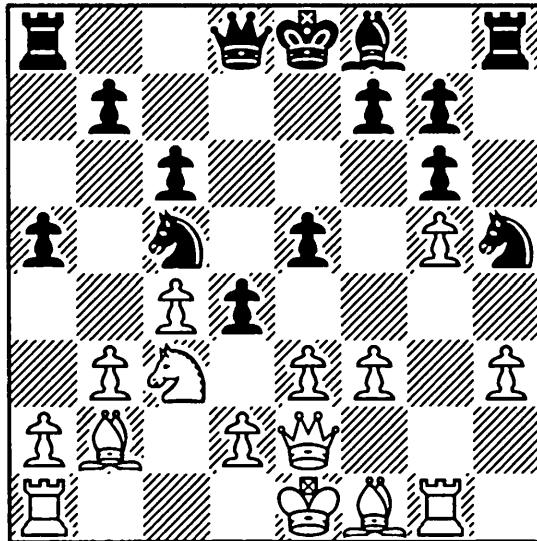
11...a5 12 f3

He fears a black knight heading for e4.

12...e5 13 g5?!

This weakens White's position and I see little benefit for him. He should commend his spirit to adventure and plunge in with 13 0-0-0!? with an unclear position.

13...♝h5 14 ♜g1 d4!



White's position has soured. He pushed a lot of pawns without getting anything back in return.

15 ♜d1

Alternatively:

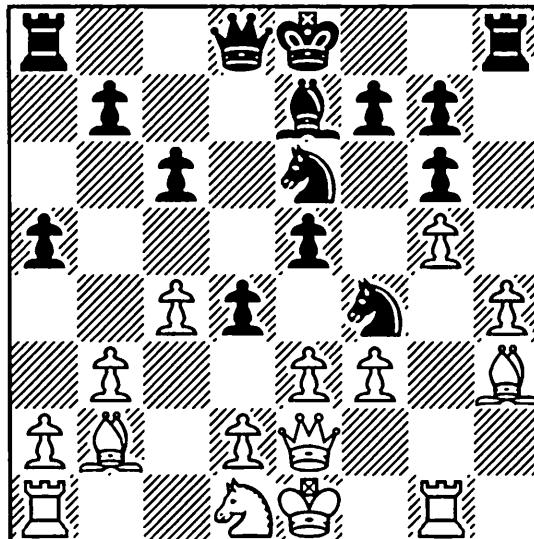
- 15 ♜e4 ♜xe4 16 fxe4 ♜c5 17 0-0-0 0-0. Black's king is safer and his attack faster.
- 15 exd4? ♜xd4 and White has opened access to f4 for Black's knight.

15...♜e7 16 h4 ♜e6 17 ♜h3

Hoping to eliminate the menace on e6.

17...♞hf4!

Spectacular stuff. Giri tosses White a knight.



Question: What does Black get? It doesn't look like enough to me.

Answer: Black gets huge compensation for the piece. *Rybka* thinks the game is even, which is normally a very bad sign for the piece-up guy. When a computer starts to sputter and hedge about an evaluation after a piece sac, it normally means the sac is sound. The pain White feels is by no means purely psychosomatic either. Let's assess:

1. Black gets a behemoth of a knight on f4, unquestioned ruler of d3, lord of e2 and sovereign of h3, which hits virtually every sore spot in White's position.
2. White must scramble to cover all these weak points. This leaves his pieces awkwardly placed.
3. Black gets two pawns for the piece after he picks up the h4-pawn.

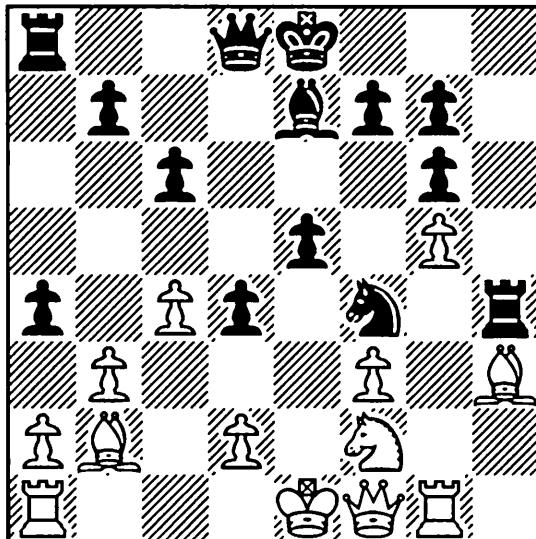
Conclusion: Perhaps White can still save himself, but the practical problems are numerous. This is one of those cases where on paper (i.e. *Rybka*) the game is even. From a practical standpoint Black stands clearly better because his moves are easy, while White faces enormous challenges navigating through the fog.

18 exf4 ♜xf4 19 ♜f1?

Disorientation sticks its foot in the door with this logical-looking but incorrect move. White strains to cover d3 and h3. His only chance of survival lay in the line 19 ♜h2! a4 20 bxa4 ♜xa4 21 ♜g4 ♜xc4 22 ♜f2 ♜d5 23 ♜xf4! exf4 24 ♜xf4 ♜d6 25 ♜e4+ ♜e5. Even then Black stands better. The h4-pawn is chronically weak and Black isn't even down material.

19...♜xh4 20 ♜f2 a4!

Threatening to open the queenside and infiltrate on that wing.



Exercise (multiple choice): White is hanging on by his fingernails. Which of these moves is the one he can't play? a) 21 bxa4; b) 21 b4; c) 21 ♖h1

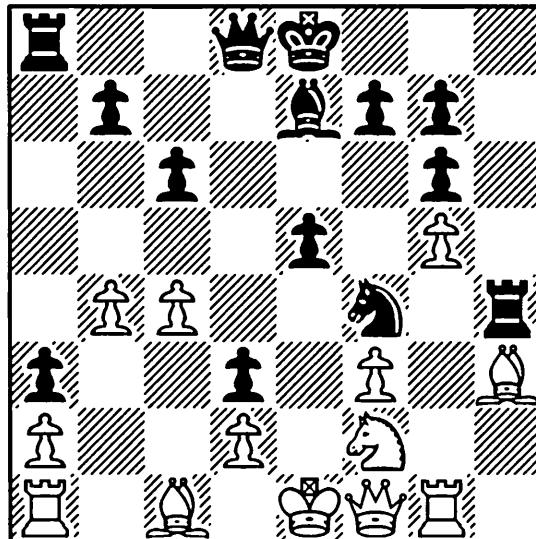
21 b4?

Desperate to close the queenside, White's pieces go over the waterfalls. His only chances to stay alive were with 21 bxa4 or 21 ♖h1.

21...a3! 22 ♗c1

This poor guy, once on top of the world on the a1-h8 diagonal but now just a shell of his old self, must live out the remainder of his life in the gutter on c1.

22...d3!



Damn, the Amsterdamer is just strong, positionally! White, now bound and gagged, can't move a muscle. Black's inexorable threat is ...♗d4, ...♗xc4 and either ...♗xa2 or ...♗c2.

23 ♜b1 ♜d4! 24 ♜h1

At last White generates a threat: ♜d7+.

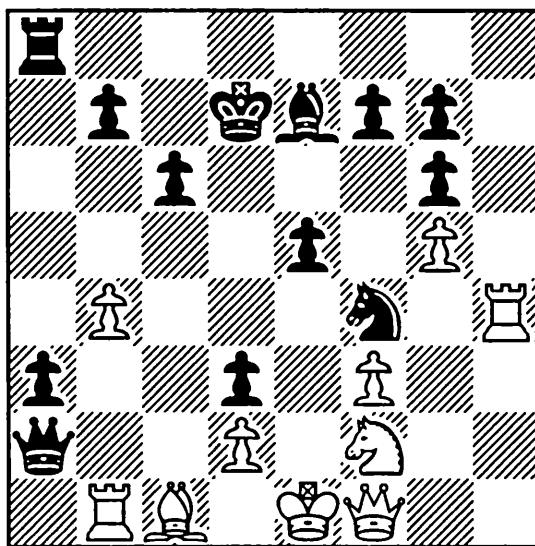
24...♜xc4!

Which Black rudely ignores! He rips the scab off, opening the wound even further.

25 ♜d7+

White fights off a tank with a bow and arrow.

25...♚xd7 26 ♜xh4 ♜xa2



A size 13-wide steel toed boot lands on White's neck.

27 ♜xf4 ♜xb1 28 ♜xf7 ♜xc1+ 29 ♜d1 ♜c4! 0-1

The most practical move:

1. Black eliminates all ♜h3+ cheapos.
2. He hits the rook on f7 gaining a tempo.
3. He prepares to queen the a-pawn.
4. White can't cover both f7 and queening threats simultaneously.

Summary

Be aware of White's b3/e3 setup and then choose between the Reversed London and the Reversed Torre.

Game 50
E.Ubilava-J.Van der Wiel
 Elgoibar 1998

1 ♜f3 d5 2 g3

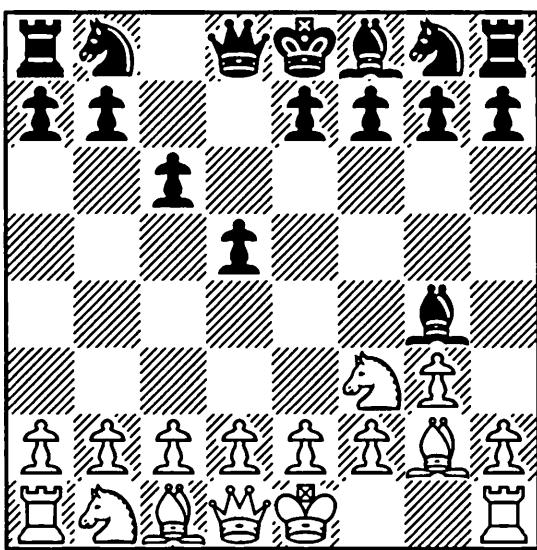
2 b4 is also possible. I prefer the Torre here with 2...♜g4 3 ♜b2 ♜d7. Two examples:

a) 4 b5 ♜gf6 5 a4 ♜xf3 6 gxf3 e5 7 ♜g1 g6 8 e3 ♜c5 9 a5 0-0 10 a6 b6 11 ♜a4 ♜e7 12 f4 was A.Nadanian-R.Ponomariov, Kiev 1997. These hypermodernists with their newfangled

ways! I prefer Black. White's attack has an artificial colour and flavour to it and I just don't believe in its power. Also, he violates the principle stating: Don't launch a mating attack unless you have a sound basis of extra space in the centre to begin with.

b) 4 e3 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 5 h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 6 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ e6 7 a3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 8 g4!? (Here we go again: another hyper-modernist on the warpath!) 8...0-0 9 d3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 11 h4 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 12 g5 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ a5 14 b5 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 15 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16 bxc6 bxc6 17 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ was V.Nevednichy-C.Nanu, Eforie Nord 2009. White's dream attack remains as such, and it is his own king who should be concerned.

2...c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$



Question: Why doesn't Black play ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ before bringing the bishop out?

The principle here is: Develop your knights before your bishops.

Answer: In this line Black has no intention of developing his knight to f6 at all! Observe the following setup:

4 d3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ e6

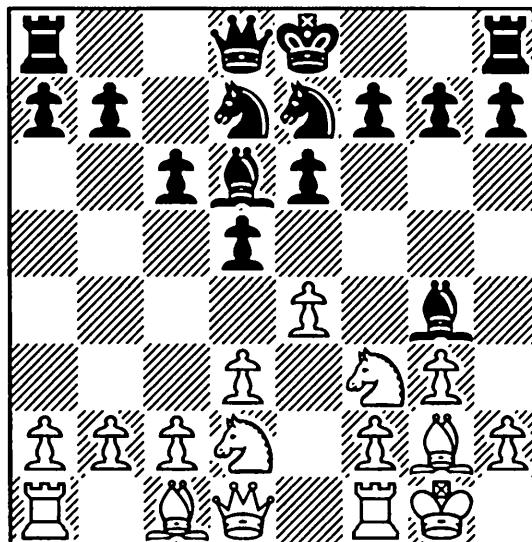
Question: Wait just a minute. Shouldn't we seize the centre with ...e5 here? Why play so passively?

Answer: It's not a matter of passive play. Your choice here depends on what setup you favour. Most Slav players like the c6/d5/e6 "V" formation for their pawns, so I picked this one for the book. There is absolutely nothing wrong with playing 5...e5. An example: 6 e4 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 7 0-0 dxe4 8 dxе4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 10 $\mathbb{W}e1$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12 a4 a5 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ with a balanced position, A.Gasthofer-T.Luther, Bad Wiessee 2003.

6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7 e4

White can still go Réti style with c2-c4: 7 b3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0 9 c4 a5 10 a3 b5 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$ e5 12 c5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13 e4 d4 14 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}df3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17 b4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$, A.Butnorius-P.Keres, Moscow 1972. This position looks like a Closed Ruy Lopez with colours reversed.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



Here is the answer to your earlier question. Black avoids developing his knight to f6 and instead chooses e7. The reasons:

1. White's e4-e5 threat is now a non-threat. First, there is no fork. Second, Black can play ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$, ... $c5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ winning the runaway e-pawn.
2. Black's structure is incredibly flexible. For example, he can play ...f6 ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ later on, bringing his bishop back to the centre. He can also shut down many of White kingside pawn storms with a well timed ...f5!. GM Einar Gausel showed me this ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ line 12 years ago in some blitz games. I remember he would frustrate my kingside attacking attempts with ideas just like this!

8 $\mathbb{W}e1 \mathbb{Q}h5!$?

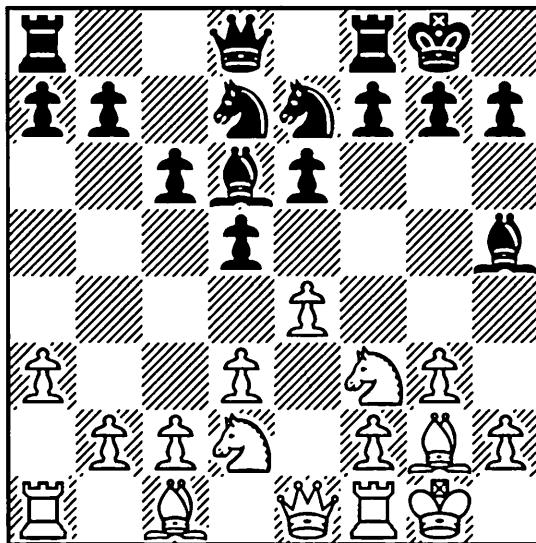
Strange but not bad. Black moves the bishop even before it gets hit with h3. The move seems to work wonders because now White tries mightily to exploit Black's non-error by avoiding h3.

The following is a brilliant example of how *not* to handle Black: 8...0-0 9 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 10 b3 f6?? 11 exd5! exd5?? 12 $\mathbb{W}e6+$! $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ and I resigned, my face the colour of borscht, NN-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (simul) 1992. I forgot the name of my opponent but never forgot this cheapo. Also, another lesson learned: When you give a simul don't show off and take the Black pieces!

9 a3

Out of spite – White refuses to go anywhere near h3 to teach Black a lesson. But 9 h3 would still be the normal thing to do.

9...0-0



10 b3

If 10 e5?! $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and Black is ready for his plan of ...c5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, rounding up the runaway e-pawn. 11 b4 is still met by 11...c5. Any clash on the queenside favours Black.

10... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e5

Flexible. Black decides the time has come for him to regain his rightful place in the central space scheme of things. 11...a5 attempting to stir up things on the queenside is probably how I would play it.

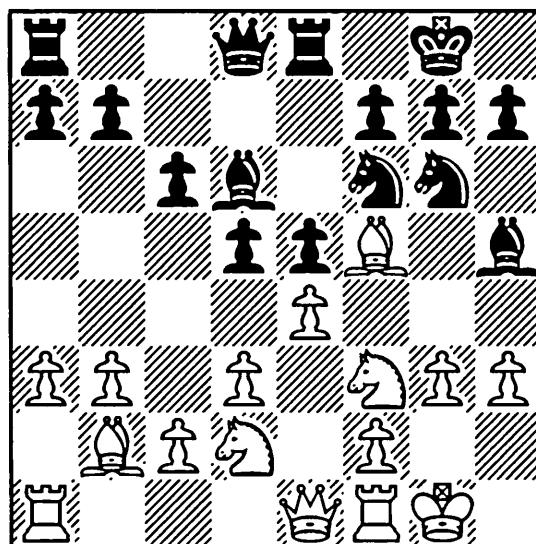
12 $\mathbb{Q}h3$?

Black looks at least equal after 12 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ f6!.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}f5$?

The start of an incorrect plan, going for the cheap shot g4. The trouble is a GM is not going to fall for it! White's pieces suddenly get in front of his potential pawn storm and soon begin to trip over each other.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 h3?



Exercise: Do you see a little trick for Black?

There is a curious psychological point in chess. An opponent is at his most vulnerable when he tries to lure you into his trap. That is exactly the time when his guard is down and he doesn't expect to become trapped himself.

Answer: 14... $\mathbb{B}e7!$

The trapper gets semi-trapped! His f5-bishop has no place to go and his position deteriorates when it is removed from the board.

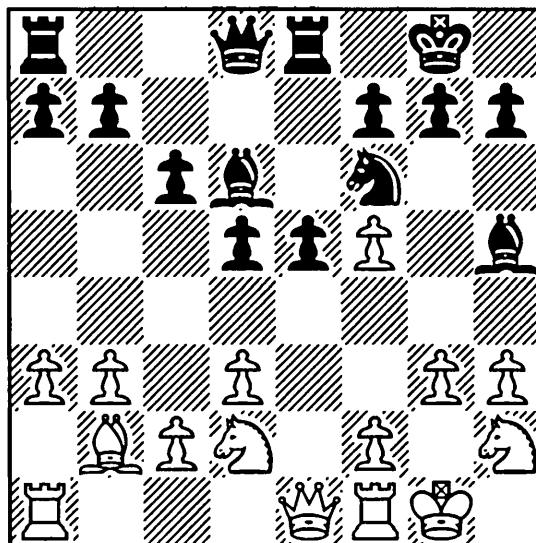
15 $\mathbb{B}h2?$

Handing Black a firm initiative by responding with an apathetic gesture. White has a couple of better options, although he doesn't equalize with either:

a) 15 $\mathbb{B}xe5!$? $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 16 exf5 $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 17 $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 18 f4 f6 19 d4 c5! 20 c3 cxd4 21 cxd4 fxe5 22 fxe5 $\mathbb{W}g5$. Despite those two ominous-looking central pawns on the fifth rank, White doesn't have full compensation for the piece.

b) 15 g4 $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 16 exf5 (if 16 gxf5 Black's bishop sits immune and powerful on h5) 16... $\mathbb{B}xg4$ 17 hxg4 $\mathbb{B}xg4$ with three pawns, the light squares and a strong attack for the piece.

15... $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 16 exf5



Question: It looks like Black has outsmarted himself. g4 is coming, isn't it?

Answer: Black has everything under control after his next move:

16...e4!

Exploiting the black rook and white queen sitting on the same file. Also, he opens the h2-b8 diagonal, making White think twice about trapping the wayward bishop on h5.

17 $\mathbb{B}xf6$

Question: I don't see a reason why White should refrain from winning a piece with 17 g4. Black doesn't have a way out, does he?

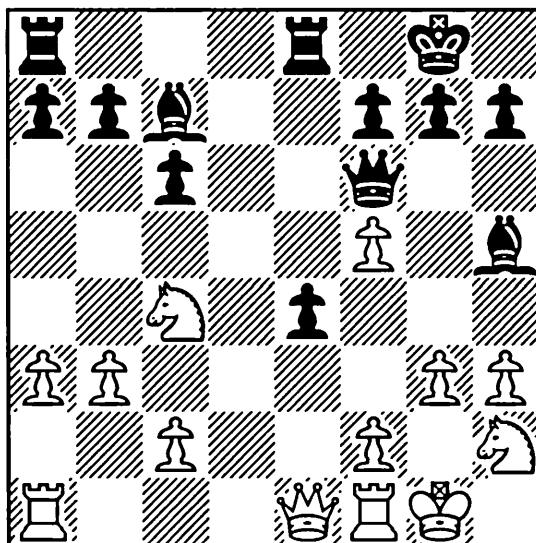
Answer: White wins a piece but allows his king's pawn cover to get obliterated: 17... $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$! 18 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4+$! 19 $hxg4$ $\mathbb{W}h4+$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xg4+$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}h4+$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ mates.

17... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 18 $dxe4$

Question: How about round two? Let's win the piece again with 18 g4.

Answer: Not again! Black wins virtually the same way: 18... $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$ 20 $hxg4$ $\mathbb{W}h4+$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xg4+$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $exd3$ 23 $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$. Next there's ... $\mathbb{E}e6$ with a crushing attack. Stop selling out your king's pawn cover for cash!

18... $dxe4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$



20 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Question: I'm afraid to ask, but can we possibly try 20 g4 here?

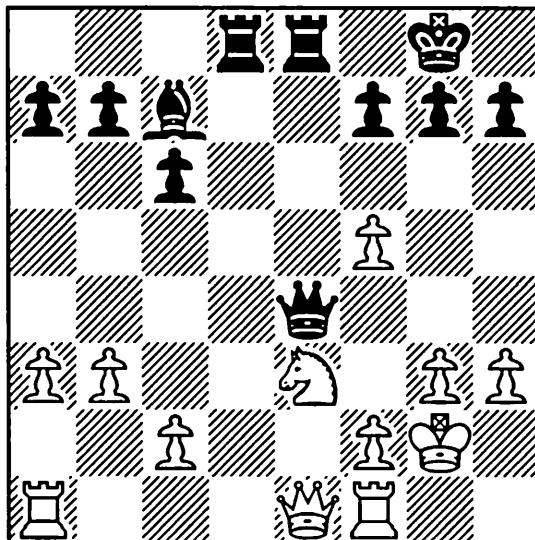
Answer: Sigh ... No, it fails to 20...b5! 21 gxh5 $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ f5. I think we spot an emerging pattern: Stop asking if g4 is good. It always loses! I didn't want to do this but you forced my hand. Einstein defined insanity the following way: "Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result!"

20... $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3+?$

I believe Black risks the win playing this. After 21... $\mathbb{W}d6!$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}hg4$ f6 23 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$, White's clumsy knight duo is no match for Black's bishop pair.

22 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $exf3+$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e4+$

This is the position critical to the assessment of Black's 21st move.



Exercise (multiple choice): White can probably hold things together, but only if he finds the best move. You only have two choices this time: a) 25 ♔g1; b) 25 ♔h2. Don't flip a coin to decide!

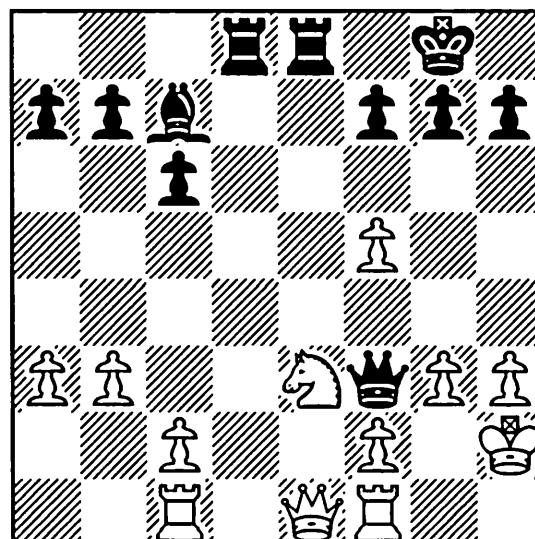
25 ♔h2?

Answer: 25 ♔g1! should probably just hold. After 25...♔xg3 26 fxg3 ♕xe3+ 27 ♕xe3 ♕xe3 28 ♕ad1 ♕xd1 29 ♕xd1 ♔f8 I don't believe Black has enough. I played around with this position with *Rybka* and held several draws playing White. Here is an example: 30 ♕d8+ ♔e7 31 ♕a8! a6 32 ♔f2 ♕c3 33 ♕a7 ♕xc2+ 34 ♔f1 ♔f6 35 ♕xb7 ♕b2 36 a4 h5 37 g4 hxg4 38 hxg4 a5 39 ♔e1 ♕g2 40 ♕b6 ♕xg4 41 ♕xc6+ ♔xf5 42 ♕c5+ ♔e6 (42...♔e4?? 43 ♕c4+ ♔f3 44 ♕xg4 ♔xg4 45 b4 and White queens first) 43 ♕xa5 ♕b4 44 ♕a6+ ♔f5 45 ♕a5+ whew, with a draw!

25...♕f3!

This paralysing move seals White's fate.

26 ♕c1



Exercise: Find Black's winning plan.

Answer: 26...h5!

...h4 is a deadly threat. And if White plays...

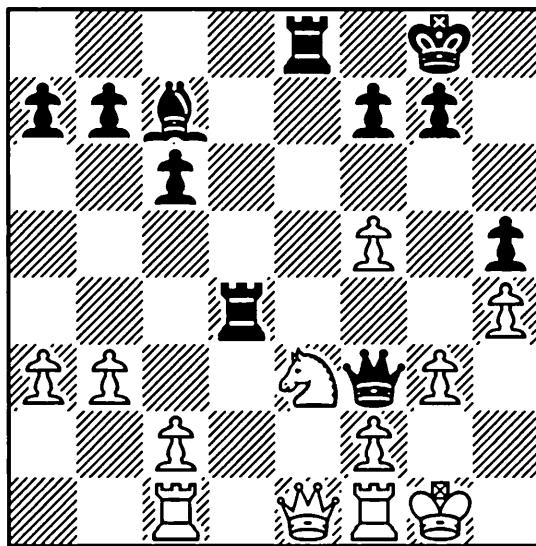
27 h4

...to stop the threat, then...

27...♝d4!

...threatening ...♝xh4+.

28 ♕g1



Exercise: Find the knockout blow.

28...♝xh4! 0-1

A chain link fence is not likely to stop a hail of bullets: 29 gxh4 ♜e4! and if 30 ♜d1 then 30...♝h2+! 31 ♔xh2 ♜xh4+ 32 ♔g1 ♜h1 mate. An important note: If you have a choice, please remember to deliver checkmate with the lower-ranking piece – that way the mate stings more!

Summary

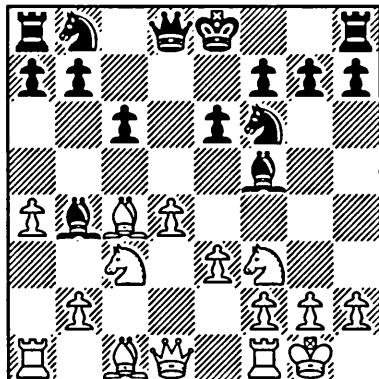
The Reversed Torre "V" formation setup with ...c6, ...d5, ...e6, knights on d7 and e7, and bishops on g4 and d6 is guaranteed to confuse your King's Indian Attacker opponent. My database has Black enjoying a plus score with the line.

Index of Variations

Note: Figures refer to page numbers of relevant games

The Mainline Dutch Variation

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 (or 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 4 ♜f3) 3... ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxс4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 e3 e6 7 ♜xc4 ♜b4
8 0-0



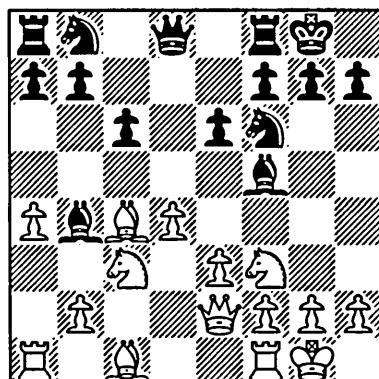
8... ♜bd7

8...0-0

9 ♜b3 - 78

9 ♜h4 - 70

9 ♜e2



9... ♜bd7 10 e4 ♜g6 - main line

9... ♜g4 10 ♜d1 (10 h3 - 85) 10... ♜bd7 11 e4 ♜c8

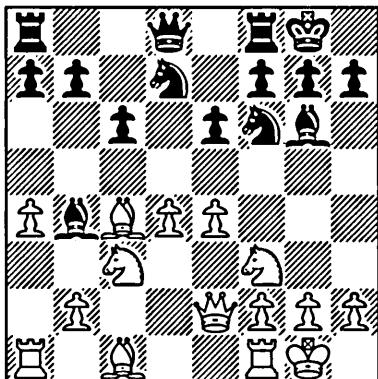
12 ♜f4 - 93

The Slav: Move by Move

12 ♜g5 – 100

12 e5 – 105

9 ♜e2 ♜g6 10 e4 0-0



11 ♜d3

11 e5 – 50

11...♜h5 12 e5

12 ♜f4 – 65

12...♝d5 13 ♜xd5

13 ♜d2 – 58

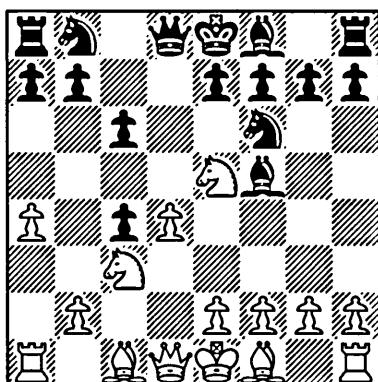
13...cxsd5 14 ♜e3 ♜g6 – 18

14...♜e7 – 35

14...♜e8 – 43

6 ♜e5

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxcc4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 ♜e5



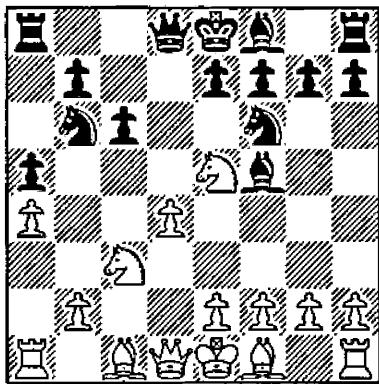
6...♝bd7

6...♝a6 7 e3 (7 f3 – 157) 7...♝b4 8 ♜xc4 e6 9 0-0 ♜d6

10 ♜e2 – 141

10 ♜f3 – 151

7 ♜xc4 ♜b6 8 ♜e5 a5

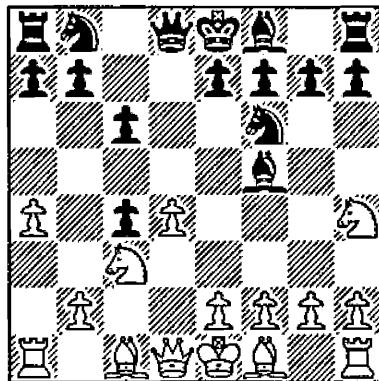
**9 f3**

9 g3

9...e6 – 126; 9...♝fd7 – 137

9...♝fd7 10 e4 – 112

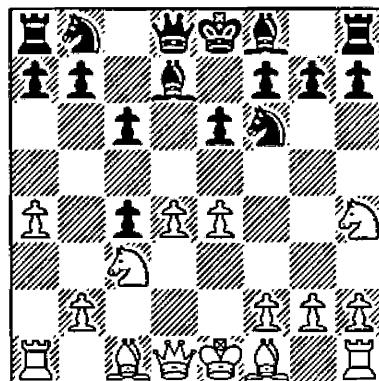
10 ♜xd7 – 120

6 ♜h4**1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxс4 5 a4 ♜f5 6 ♜h4**

6...♜d7 7 e4

7 g3 – 182; 7 e3 – 188

7...e6



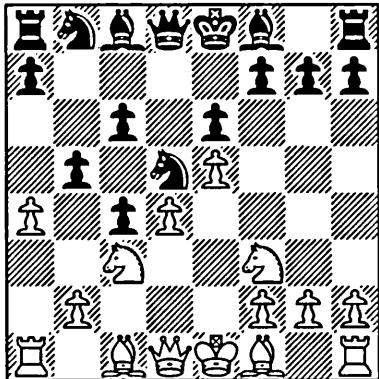
The Slav: Move by Move

8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ – 167

8 $\mathbb{A}xc4$ – 176

The Geller Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx $c4$ 5 e4 b5 6 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 7 a4 e6



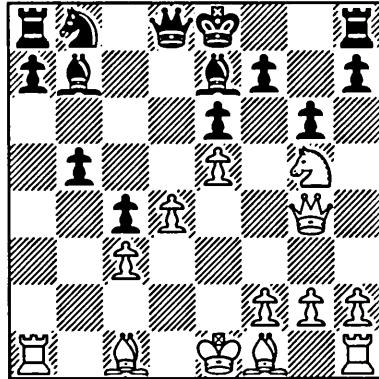
8 axb5

8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$

8...h6 – 211

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ – 219

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bxc3 cxb5 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11 $\mathbb{W}h5$ g6 12 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$



13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ – 197

13 h4 – 204

Fifth Move Alternatives

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx $c4$ 5 e3

5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ – 242

5 g3 – 236

5...b5 6 a4 b4 7 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ – 226

7 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ – 231

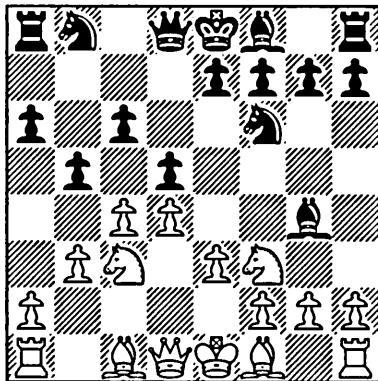
4 e3 Lines and 3 ♜c3 dxc4

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3

3 ♜c3

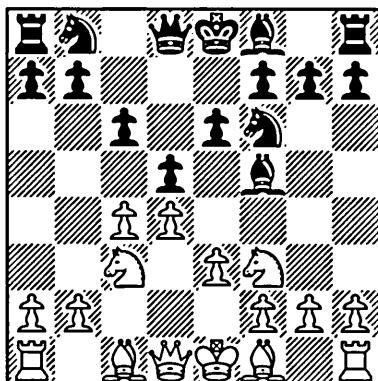
3...dxc4 – 296

3...♜f6 4 e3 a6 5 ♜f3 b5 6 b3 ♛g4



7 ♛d2 – 273; 7 h3 – 287; 7 ♛e2 – 273

3...♜f6 4 e3 ♛f5 5 ♜c3 e6



6 ♜h4

6 ♛e2 – 250

6...♛g6 7 ♛e2 ♜bd7 8 0-0 ♛d6 – 259

8...♝e4 – 267

Fourth Move Alternatives

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜b3

4 ♜c2 dxc4

5 e4 – 307

5 ♜xc4 – 4 ♜b3

4 g3 – 331

4...dxc4 5 ♜xc4 ♛g4 6 ♜bd2 – 316

6 ♜c3 – 323

The Exchange Slav

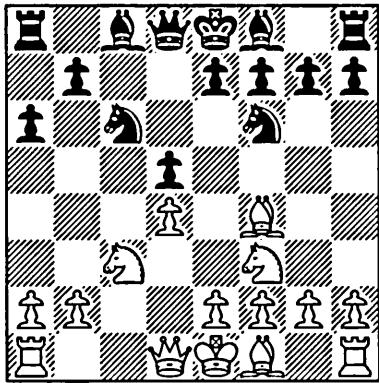
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{B}b6$

6 $\mathbb{B}c2$ – 359

6 $\mathbb{B}c1$ – 368

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 6 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$



7 $\mathbb{B}c1$ – 341

7 e3 – 353

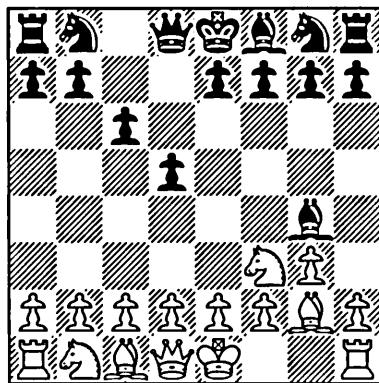
Slav versus Réti and King's Indian Attack

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

1 c4 c6 – 393

1...d5 2 c4

2 g3 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$



4 c4 – 387

4 d3 – 399

2...c6 3 b3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ – 378

3... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ – 393

Index of Complete Games

Anand.V-Kramnik.V , World Championship (Game 7), Bonn 2008	43
Buhmann.R-Akopian.V , Mainz (rapid) 2009	219
Carlsen.M-Bu.X , Cap d'Agde (rapid) 2008.....	35
Cyborowski.L-Fressinet.L , German League 2009.....	226
David.A-Grischuk.A , French League 2003.....	50
Deep Fritz 10-Kramnik.V , Man vs. Machine Duel, Bonn 2006.....	296
Eljanov.P-Giri.A , European Club Cup, Ohrid 2009.....	176
Ernst.S-Sokolov.I , Netherlands League 2005.....	70
Garcia Ilundain.D-Miles.A , Escaldes Zonal 1998	151
Gelfand.B-Wang Yue , FIDE Grand Prix, Sochi 2008	126
Goldin.A-Bareev.E , World Team Championship, Beersheva 2005	316
Gulko.B-Lakdawala.C , US Championship, La Jolla 2004	85
Gulko.B-Scherbakov.R , Helsinki 1992.....	368
Hillarp Persson.T-Giri.A , Sigeman & Co, Malmo 2010.....	393
Inarkiev.E-Shirov.A , Poikovsky 2008	267
Ivanisevic.I-Sokolov.I , Croatian Team Championship, Sibenik 2008	188
Kahn.E-Portisch.L , Hungarian League 2003	197
Korchnoi.V-Hübner.R , Chicago 1982.....	78
Kraai.J-Bareev.E , World Open, Philadelphia 2009	167
Lenderman.A-Sadvakasov.D , Foxwoods Open, Ledyard 2009	353
Llanes Hurtado.M-Rublevsky.S , Spanish Championship, Lugo 2006	307
Magerramov.E-Sakaev.K , Dubai 2003.....	204
Mamedyarov.S-Topalov.V , Benidorm (rapid) 2003	242
Morozevich.A-Ivanchuk.V , Wijk aan Zee 2009	273
Morshedi.A-Lakdawala.C , Gambito (rapid), San Diego 2008	105
Nisipeanu.L-Postny.E , French League 2008.....	231
Nyback.T-Ivanchuk.V , European Championship, Antalya 2004	182
Polugaevsky.L-Torre.E , London 1984	65

Ponomariov.R-Gelfand.B , FIDE World Cup, Khanty Mansiysk (blitz playoff) 2009	323
Radjabov.T-Kramnik.V , Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2007	157
Réti.R-Lasker.E , New York 1924	378
Roos.D-Bareev.E , French League 1994.....	387
Saidy.A-Lakdawala.C , Memorial Day Classic (rapid), Los Angeles 1998	359
Sargissian.G-Morozevich.A , Karen Asrian Memorial, Yerevan 2008.....	341
Sasikiran.K-Rublevsky.S , Foros 2007	58
Sebekis.A-Lakdawala.C , Gambito (rapid), San Diego 2007	100
Shulman.Y-Lakdawala.C , Koltanowski Memorial, San Francisco 2000	141
So.W-Ni Hua , Olongapo City 2010.....	287
Sussman.L-Lakdawala.C , Gambito (rapid), San Diego 2009.....	250
Tadic.B-Bogosavljevic.B , Cetinje 2010.....	120
Topalov.V-Kramnik.V , World Championship (Game 2), Elista 2006	18
Topalov.V-Kramnik.V , World Championship Playoff (rapid), Elista 2006.....	259
Topalov.V-Wang Yue , MTel Masters, Sofia 2009	112
Tukmakov.V-Korchnoi.V , Leningrad Interzonal 1973.....	331
Ubilava.E-Van der Wiel.J , Elgoibar 1998	399
Van Buskirk.C-Lakdawala.C , Southern California Championship, Irvine 1998	93
Vitiugov.N-Amonatov.F , Sochi 2006	211
Wang.H-Caruana.F , Reykjavik 2008	137
Wukits.R-Ragger.M , Austrian League 2007	236
Zukertort.J-Steinitz.W , World Championship (Game 1), USA 1886	10



the Slav

move by move

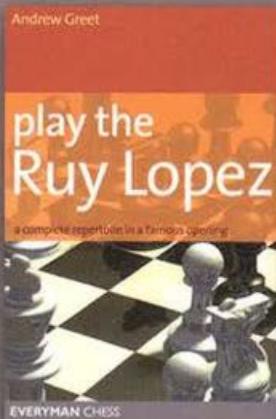
This is a new series which provides an ideal platform to study chess openings. By continually challenging the reader to answer probing questions throughout the book, **move by move** greatly encourages the learning and practising of vital skills just as much as the traditional assimilation of opening knowledge. Carefully selected questions and answers are designed to keep you actively involved, and allow you to monitor your progress as you learn. This is an excellent way to study any chess opening and at the same time improve your general chess skills and knowledge.

In this book, Cyrus Lakdawala examines the universally popular Slav Defence which has been his main choice against 1 d4 for many years. Here he shares his experience and knowledge of his favourite opening, presents a repertoire for Black and provides answers to all the key questions.

- Essential guidance and training in the Slav
- Includes a Slav repertoire for Black
- Incorporates an ideal approach to opening study

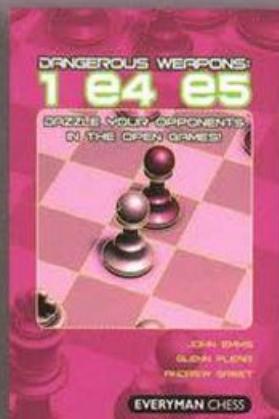
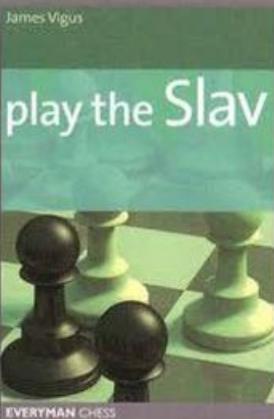
Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the US.

other great chess titles

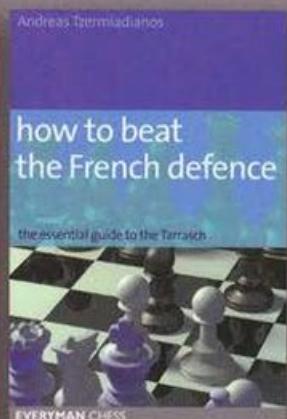


www.everymancross.com

US \$29.95 UK £19.99



ISBN 978-1-85744-678-4
52995



EVERYMAN CHESS

9 781857 446784