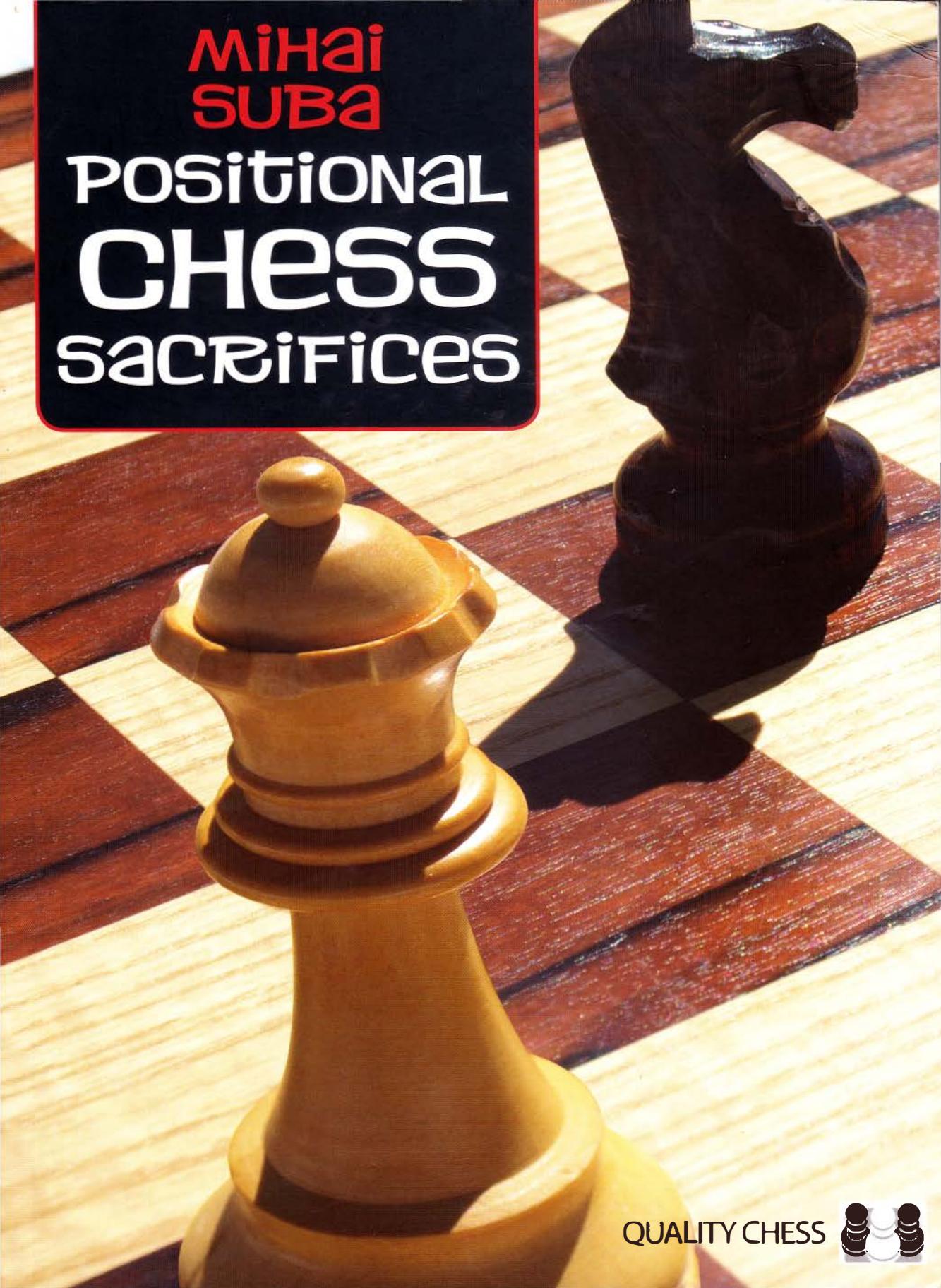


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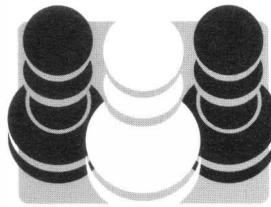
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Positional Chess Sacrifices

By

Mihai Suba



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Positional Chess Sacrifices

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Contents

Key to Symbols used	4
Introduction	5
1 The Open Games	14
2 The Ruy Lopez	36
3 The Semi-Open Games	46
4 Alekhine's Defence	56
5 The French Defence	74
6 The Caro-Kann Defence	91
7 The Sicilian Defence	118
8 The Closed Games	165
9 The Semi-Closed Games	181
10 The Modern Benoni	214
11 The Nimzo-Indian Defence	231
12 The Queen's Indian Defence	243
13 Flank Openings	257
14 Pawn Sacrifices	279
15 Exchange Sacrifices	286
16 Minor Piece Sacrifices	312
17 Queen Sacrifices	324
18 Other Sacrifices	333
19 Endgame Sacrifices	345
End Notes	360
Game Index	363
Name Index	368

Key to symbols used

$\frac{+}{=}$	White is slightly better
$\frac{=}{+}$	Black is slightly better
$\frac{+}{+}$	White is better
$\frac{+}{+}$	Black is better
$+ -$	White has a decisive advantage
$- +$	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
$\frac{+}{\equiv}$	with compensation
$\frac{+}{\rightleftarrows}$	with counterplay
\circ	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

Introduction

Positional Chess Sacrifices – The Power of Intuition

Combinations have always been the most intriguing aspect of Chess. The masters look for them, the public applauds them and the critics praise them. It is because combinations are possible that Chess is more than a lifeless mathematical exercise. They are the poetry of the game; they are to Chess what melody is to music. They represent the triumph of mind over matter. – Reuben Fine

Part 1 – Historical Background and Definitions

Combinations

Some series of moves stand out from the expected trend of a chess game. They are surprising to our common sense. They often go beyond our *erudition* or chess culture, however extensive it might be. We call them *combinations*. Usually, the distinctive feature of a combination is a *sacrifice*.

In a simple and quite restricted meaning, a sacrifice is an exchange of one or a set of pieces for another set of pieces which add up to an inferior points value. But in a chess game we can recognize more values, other than raw material, which is counted in pawns or points: the bishop pair, advanced passed pawns, the superior pawn structure, general coordination of pieces and pawns, an advantage in development, space, mobility, etc. On the negative side we may count lack of coordination, disharmony, damaged pawn structures, pieces out of play, weaknesses around one's king, the king being trapped in the wrong area of the board (be it centre or corner).

In a more extended meaning, a sacrifice is an exchange of values – normally of more tangible (the most obvious being material) for less tangible ones. The decision-making process has to do with evaluation, and this normally depends on the strength and style of the chess player. Giving up a rook for a c3-knight in many Sicilians, which may be simply routine for a grandmaster, may look profound or even inconceivable to the eyes of an amateur.

To begin with, let us suppose we all have the level of “just better than beginner”, so we can savour most combinations presented in this book, and we can take some mental notes for our future games. The more difficult they are, the more help the reader may expect from the author.

Even if we know some of the games or the diagrammed patterns beforehand, we can still derive a profit by revisiting them. During the flight to the Havana Chess Olympiad, a master saw Mikhail Tal immersed in Kurt Richter's combinations book.

"Excuse me, grandmaster, I thought you knew all that by heart, and much more!"

"Of course I do," answered the Wizard of Riga, "but let them be fresh in my mind!"

Some of the most intriguing games in chess history, which will be well known to most readers, have been included here, but I can promise that they will "wear new clothes" in my comments, as compared with other sources.

In developing the theory of combinations, two authors from the first half of the twentieth century deserve a attention: Eugene Znosko-Borovsky and Rudolf Spielmann. More recently, Shamkovich immersed himself in the ocean of combination and "specialized" in it. About chess intuition and its connection with combinatorial play, the book of Beliavsky and Mikhalkishin, *Secrets of Chess Intuition*, makes a good reference, while the positional sacrifice is the subject of a most inspired booklet by Kondratiev. Of course, many distinguished authors have touched on the theme in non-monographic works.

Are sacrifices classifiable?

Those who say they understand Chess, understand nothing – Robert Hübner

Most theoreticians, overwhelmed by the diversity of chess combinations, have avoided a thorough classification and given priority to an empirical study. At best, they have classified combinations by the quantity of material given up. That is not a bad approach; however, the character of the chess fight can be exceedingly volatile. For example, one may first give up a pawn or so for an easier game, or some initiative; then an exchange sacrifice will ruin the opponent's defences; and finally, the coup de grâce could take the form of a queen sacrifice. Moreover, such a classification will not consider "sacrificing" static values like structure or space, to increase the dynamic factors.

The adjectives "intuitive", "positional" or "speculative", associated with those actions could also be appropriate or relative. The semantic paradox, that one cannot judge a "language" using that language, applies to chess as well. Rudolf Spielmann was aware of it, as he tried to impose a more scientific classification. To start with, Spielmann distinguishes two large categories of sacrifices, **true** and **sham**.

A **sham sacrifice** (or pseudo-sacrifice) is a part of a combination with a foreseeable result (by calculation) which is either a definite result: mate or draw (when the initial position was critical), or regaining the invested material with a benefit.

A **true sacrifice** (also called "real") is the beginning of a sequence without a clear outcome, based partly on concrete calculation and partly on positional evaluation. A true sacrifice is made in the belief of getting an advantage or improving one's chances, when compared with a "normal" game flow, that is, without the sacrifice.

Most chess players and theoreticians call the latter type a **positional sacrifice**, although the terms **intuitive sacrifice** and **speculative sacrifice** are also used. More types can be added to this concept, for example those sacrifices which are **forced** – when anything else is unplayable;

or **best-chance** – when the sacrifice is the least of the evils in an unfavourable position. The latter also comes with its extreme form, the **desperation** sacrifice or **last-chance** sacrifice. Quite modern are sacrifices with a **draw-in-the-pocket** – when one can force a draw but may also keep playing, without losing the option to draw (usually by perpetual).

Within the **sham** sacrifices, we find three types: the **positional** sacrifice (in Spielmann's definition), the **utility** sacrifice and the **mating** sacrifice.

According to Spielmann, a **positional** sacrifice is a particular sham sacrifice where the initiator just recuperates the material with a strategic bonus. I disagree with both the name and the inclusion into this category, for reasons explained later.

A **utility** sacrifice is the one that, by force, recuperates the material investment with a plus.

I do not think you need an explanation of what a **mating** sacrifice is, and Spielmann adds “The mate itself can be frequently avoided, but at a price of heavy counter-sacrifices, for example, with the loss of the queen, which is practically equivalent to mate.”

The **true** sacrifices have more subdivisions, according to their purpose, which are similar to the themes of general combinations: **development**, **obstruction**, **deflection**, **line-opening**, **space-freeing**, **decoying**, **blowing up the castled position**, **king-hunt**.

A **sham** sacrifice is one made with a specific purpose, and a foreseeable outcome, while a **true** sacrifice is one with an outcome impossible to calculate and with a provisional purpose, which may vary according to the evolution of the play. Of course, the terms are quite subjective, as foreseeable (by calculation) depends on the player involved. Foreseeable to Fischer or Kasparov may not be so for most of us; what for them are sham sacrifices, for lesser mortals might appear as true sacrifices. Spielmann gives us the ultimate criterion – a true sacrifice implies a **risk**.

Spielmann was, for a long time, one of the greatest practitioners of the real sacrifice, and I very much like his flair for it and his approach to it. But in contrast I do not like his definition of a positional sacrifice. What all good players mean by **positional** sacrifice is one which changes material assets for positional improvement for the originator, and/or positional damage to his opponent, replacing some or most of the exhausting calculation by strategic evaluation. When the exchange or more is sacrificed, some material (for example, a pawn for the exchange, two pawns for a piece, etc.) may contribute to the positional assets. These assets may be static (such as pawn structure), dynamic (such as development) or an amalgamation of both.

In *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy*, John Watson considers the “positional pawn sacrifice” and the “exchange sacrifice” as very distinctive features of modern games, and he reserves for each one a separate section of his book. I certainly subscribe to his opinion, and recommend the readers to revisit those sections. I don't know why he avoids the same adjective “positional”, or an equivalent, before “exchange sacrifice”, when the section is obviously referring to that type only and he is inspired by an article written by Petrosian titled precisely “Positional Exchange Sacrifice”. I think that this “secret” might be worth the trouble to elucidate.

Resuming, the general classification of sacrifices, as seen by other authors, has two aspects:

- A) The clarity of outcome – unclear for true sacrifices and clear for sham sacrifices.
- B) The material invested – pawn(s), exchange, minor piece, rook, queen; a mixture of the above, for example, two pieces for rook and pawn.

Further definitions

Apart from “pawn gifts”, sacrifices can be pure or impure. The latter means that some material is in the balance, for example, a pawn for the exchange, two pawns for a knight, a couple of pieces for a queen, which in normal conditions would not constitute suitable compensation.

The sacrifice can be concrete (measurable in points) or abstract, when one side gives up positional assets. It can be positive, when the active side improves its fighting capacity (for example, ensures better mobility) or negative, when it diminishes the opponent’s capacity to react or defend (for example, by obstruction, annihilation). In any case, the border between the extremes is not so easy to draw and most sacrifices will reflect, to a certain extent, both aspects.

We can also make a classification by aims or by motifs. In the first category we may include material gain (including pawn promotion), better development, demolition, king-hunt, obstruction, pawn storm, simplification, getting a draw (by perpetual, stalemate, reaching a fortress or a theoretical position) etc. With regard to motifs, we may distinguish between lack of development, an unsafe king, a pawn majority, passed pawn(s), etc. This method of looking at a sacrifice applies to combinations in general, be they the fruit of calculation or intuition.

In the case of an “intuitive” or “positional” sacrifice, we mentioned two types of compensation, **static** and **dynamic**, depending on the other assets summed up to the upset material balance.

Static compensating factors (also called stable or long-term) include:

- ♦ **direct material** compensation (which many authors suggest should be limited, otherwise we cannot call our action a *sacrifice* but a beneficial exchange).
- ♦ **structure** modification – when we harm the opponent’s pawn skeleton, or improve our own. The same applies when the sacrifice increases the value of a passed pawn, of a pawn majority, etc.
- ♦ the **demolition** sacrifice – a particular case of the structure modification sacrifice, but on a bigger scale; its name says it all.
- ♦ **annihilation** – eliminating one or more key pieces of the opponent
- ♦ **obstruction** – hampering the activity of one or more pieces of the opponent, e.g., by a change in pawn structure.
- ♦ **immobilization** of one or more of the opponent’s pieces
- ♦ the **blockade** is a particular case which combines the previous two.
- ♦ getting the **bishop pair**. The coordinated action of two bishops represents an advantage in most cases; the more open the position, the better.
- ♦ obtaining a superiority in the **centre**. A strong domination of the central area of the board can amount to a general obstruction for the opposing side.

The dynamic compensating factors are those which depend on time as an important factor, therefore many authors call them temporary. The term is not entirely correct, because a dynamic feature acquired at some moment may persist throughout the rest of the game. Generally, they may be represented by:

- ◆ **development**, when one directly wins time
- ◆ **deflection**, moving away an important defensive force
- ◆ the **decoy**, forcing one of the opponent's pieces into a bad situation (often in the corners) where it may be trapped or have problems escaping, or you may gain time by attacking it, etc.

Those three assets above do indeed have a temporary influence only; in a word, they are volatile. The following may be more persistent:

- ◆ **insecurity**, which is inflicted on the enemy king, for example, when it loses the right to castle or when its surroundings are weakened.
- ◆ **energizing**, which is increasing the activity and effectiveness of some pieces, for example, in case of domination of the squares of a certain colour. In a sense, it is the opposite of obstruction or blockade.
- ◆ a **radical change** in the dynamics of the position, regarding the initiative, attack, etc.

Often several types of counter-balance for the material come together, augmenting the general value of the compensation.

From all the above, we might conclude that a sacrifice is associated with playing for win, with attacking. That would be wrong, because giving up something for a defensive purpose can work just as well. Moreover, in the heat of the battle, the assailant often overlooks the opponent's resources, and is therefore more vulnerable to the "defensive sacrifice".

Part 2 – My Approach to Writing this Book

The problem of classification

My belief about improving one's game is that the student should not be preoccupied by any classification. He will be better off by looking at full games, especially when they have a *logical unity*. This way, the reader can more easily understand the accumulation of "ifs" in the big river-bed of a game, allowing it to flow into a sacrifice. Many games in this book have detailed comments with respect to the opening and other instructive aspects about important moments in the middlegame. The game fragments from the middlegame chapters were selected because the positions presented could come from different openings, and any relation with a specific opening is very loose.

To illustrate how difficult it is to formulate a workable classification (and here I share the opinion of several theoreticians of the combination like Znosko-Borovsky, Shamkovich and Kondratiev), I'll tell you that we cannot always clearly distinguish between an authentic intuitive sacrifice, a

forced sacrifice, a bluff sacrifice, a psychological sacrifice or a romantic sacrifice. Let's be honest, many sacrifices are also the fruit of ignorance or miscalculation, of mistakes that turn out to be playable or even winning.

My classification is much simpler and I hope it has practical value. Those sacrifices performed during the opening or at the beginning of a middlegame but related to an opening, are associated with that specific opening. Later on, when a position may be reached by several openings, or the opening is not easily recognizable, I went back to the traditional classification by the value of the material investment. In the endgame chapter there are just a few examples of intuitive sacrifices, and there seemed no compelling reason to impose a classification.

How did I choose the title of this book?

A day without books is a lost day – Kasparov

As you can see in the text above, I had a choice of the adjectives “intuitive”, “positional” and “speculative”. As applied to the sacrifice, all three mean approximately the same thing: that is, the idea of the sacrifice (which may or may not be backed by some calculation) comes from the subconscious mind, is the fruit of experience and comprehension, and is always combined with a strong desire to get the best out of a given position. In my book *Dynamic Chess Strategy*, I explained why most of our decisions are intuitive, although our time at the chessboard is almost exclusively dedicated to the concrete calculation of variations.

I will not dwell on that, but just bring in a weighty testimony, from the present World Champion, Anand: “It is absolutely certain that if I think, I make mistakes. It happened to me many times. Once I see the right move at a bird's eye view, I don't look for a better one because I'm not going to find it. Generally I see at a glance what is best for my position.”

I also understood long ago (when I played him in 1989) and “at a glance” that Vishy is a Capablanca-type player, a “natural player” as used to be said. What a pity that in his match against Kasparov, he let himself be driven by the “Ogre of Baku” to irrational, wild positions, where Garry's super-quick and precise calculation beat down his intuition.

A scientific approach to intuition

The general definition adopted by neuropsychology for intuition is, “the curious feeling of knowing at a glance if something is good or bad for us”. It is difficult to explain those feelings very well, because they are based on emotions we cannot be conscious of. Intuition helps us even in the most complicated situations, whether we realize it or not. Science has for centuries refused to accept information as fact without reasoning or proof. However, intuition does not come from any paranormal phenomena. We get it through experience. It eases our life and saves us precious time. *Mutatis mutandis*, such things hold true for non-biological functions such as playing chess.

My favourite expression is “Intuition = ‘Digested’ Erudition”. Of course, those who advocate calculation as being responsible for ninety-something percent of chess performance are naive. Chess is mostly erudition plus concentration. Chess players think “positionally” rather than relying on exhaustive calculation.

How to get the most from this book

To obtain the maximum benefit from this book, you should not just “read” it but replay the games on a real board, if possible on two boards (a recommendation of Nimzowitsch), reserving one for the main line and first level analysis only. When it comes to a branching point of sub-variations, try to memorize the position so you can easily go back to it. Gaze at the positions before sacrifices. Please also consider the opponent’s possible counterplay (mentioned above) associated with the sacrifice.

If you can follow my advice, your **tactical intuition** should improve with every step.

Choice of games

When I had to choose an example of a theme from several alternatives, I preferred the older (which might have been forgotten by the reader!) rather than the newer. For obvious reasons, I also gave priority to some of my own games, but I tried to avoid self-quoting as much as possible.

Content

With a few exceptions, positional pawn sacrifices in the established gambits are not considered in this book. Openings like the King’s Gambit, the Benko Gambit and others, where the material is given up very early, have monographs of their own, and became theory long ago. The same policy is applied to other gambits like the Najdorf Poisoned Pawn. The two or three exceptions deal with relatively rare gambits, and lines where sacrifices occur at a later stage of the game. Even if they were popular at some point, and therefore also theory, I tackled some variations which are little covered by specific quality literature.

Attitude

In my view, a reader may benefit in equal measure from seeing sacrifices that were actually played, or those that only occurred backstage. I gave the latter almost the same treatment as the former, because I was not aiming to extol the players; the only hero of this book is the “positional sacrifice”! I reckon that this attitude is quite novel and it explains why some of the games or positions presented here do not have a brilliant conclusion and do not immediately seem related to our title.

I feel that it is my duty as the author to offer readers a piece of advice regarding their attitude when they play chess. One must continuously evaluate the opponent’s counterplay, try to guess his ideas or plans and act accordingly. That makes for keeping good control of the game and is even more important when you are about to initiate a sacrifice. Following your intuitive sacrifice, the opponent should have only mild counterplay or, ideally, none at all. If the strength of the counterplay is a bit higher, we have to make sure that we can control it without deviating too much from our own plans. If the counterplay is alarming, the probability of an intuitive sacrifice succeeding is low, and if we feel that we should have something, it is better to look for a sham sacrifice. Otherwise, forget it altogether and go back to defence!

Pre-game bullet points

I chose not to write an introduction to every game, as the reader will already know its approximate theme based on the classification of the chapter title. Some chapters have also been divided into sub-sections. Instead of a traditional introduction I decided to whet the reader's appetite by listing two or three bullet points indicating the most noteworthy moments of the game, some of which occur in the annotations.

In-game analysis

When annotating a chess game, one must strive for a balance between concrete analysis and explanatory prose. The appropriate balance will depend partially on the intended audience, as well as on what the author is trying to achieve. For this book I have leaned towards the side of concrete analysis, in order to reflect the kind of thinking that occurs during a competitive game.

After reading this book some readers might get the idea that I am obsessed with long variations, which is definitely not the case. It is true that, in several instances, I have analysed well beyond a normal level, and certainly beyond anything that one could expect to foresee at the board. I would rather err on the side of giving too many details than offer just a couple of moves and leave the readers with an evaluation that few, if any of them, are likely to understand. Where applicable, I have continued along a more or less forced sequence, until a final evaluation was easier to accept. I have then continued further only if something interesting or instructive happens.

Post-game reflections

During a game, our focus will mainly be on explanations and analysis as described above. Once the game is over, it is time to reflect on the pivotal moments with a view to learning lessons. To this end, I have offered some thoughts regarding the reasons for success or failure, and any other aspect of the game that particularly caught my attention. It is my hope that these musings will contain some practical insights that will enable the reader to improve his own results.

Games annotated in depth

There are two categories of games (not mutually exclusive) which have been “obsessively” commented upon:

1) Top-level games, including historic games, which contributed to a significant shift in understanding at the time. Most of them were annotated either quite long ago, or (may I say) more superficially in books, magazines, tournament bulletins, etc. Using the latest technology and directing my comments to the theme of sacrifices, I have tried to bring something new to satisfy even the best-informed readers.

2) Games featuring *hot* lines of fashionable openings whose intricacies are well known to the author. Here you will find a concentration on the first part of the game, more than might have been expected from the title of the book, but I hope that those interested in such specific openings will be grateful. Discovering the inner logic of a system or variation is useful, even if you don't play that particular system yourself. When there was a choice to be made, I have always chosen the variations charged with potential true sacrifices, whether they were played or not, trying to

benefit the more enterprising chess players.

Computer analysis

It is not a secret that I checked all the variations with computer engines. Most times I “pushed” or “water-tortured” the engine until I got what I wanted, but there were certainly cases when the machine proved “creative” and forced me to follow it. I used the latest versions of the strongest chess engines, generally one at a time; but when analysing very unclear positions, I compared the results of two or three programs until some consensus was reached. My computer is quite strong, but even so some errors in evaluation might have sneaked in.

It is not my business to make publicity or counter-publicity for any commercial program (don’t worry, I bought the licences!). As a way of showing gratitude for the service that their creators bring to the chess community, I would mention the best “freeware” programs, which helped my analyses significantly, but not before complaining that they froze the system more often than the commercial programs, generating (at best) loss of time. Those engines are “Houdini” and “Fire”. During some journeys, continuing to work was only possible on a much weaker machine (a netbook) using “Robbolito”, which is the best option for a mono-processor system.

In this book, I refer to them all (including the commercial programs) under a generic name such as program, machine, etc.

Translation and punctuation

The translation from various languages (especially Russian) represents the author’s interpretation, and may not correspond exactly to an accepted English precedent.

The parentheses within quoted text, whether in mottos or elsewhere, belong to the author, unless otherwise specified.

Quotations

Some chess quotations, used as mottos or morals for the games, were remembered courtesy of J.L. Badillo of *chess-poster.com*, others were gathered by my friend Joseph Siroker; a book about Murphy’s Laws hopefully spiced up comments that might otherwise have been bland; and finally my declining memory contributed a few. It seems that the book’s motto belongs to Reuben Fine, although some years ago Spassky told me that one of Tartakower’s *bons mots* made a similar reference to combinations being the “victory of spirit over matter”.

Notes

In a few cases – four, to be precise – you may see numbers in superscript. These refer to notes of a personal character, or to explanations at a tangent to the subject. The curious may find that content in the appendix at the end of the book.

Now, let’s go straight to the games, and avoid falling for the folk wisdom:

After all is said and done, a lot more will have been said than done.

Chapter 1

The Open Games

In many of the openings and variations featured in this chapter, the shooting starts early and most of the games are decided by tactics, be they intuitive or not. Those who say that chess is 90% (or 95% or 99%) tactics certainly have in mind the Open Games. Due to their inherent sharpness as well as their primacy in chess history, they are quite theoretically demanding. The possibility of a quick opening of the centre along with the vulnerability of the f7- and f2-squares gives rise to a great many gambit and attacking possibilities, and innumerable sacrifices – some of them sham, some genuine – have become “book”.

The sacrifices in this chapter occur at various stages and involve different amounts of material. Without any better way to classify the material, I have divided the games according to the opening. We will begin with one of the oldest gambits of all, which remains a serious option today.

Evans Gambit

The b-pawn is a handy offering if one likes development, airy positions and good control of the centre. Although not entirely correct, it is an enterprising alternative to the boring

Giuoco Piano. The imbalance in material and dynamics is defined very early and the game is prone to combinative play.

No experience is totally wasted. It may always be used as a negative example – Carson’s Consolation

Garry Kasparov – Viswanathan Anand

Tal Memorial, Riga 1995

The choice of this game was not based on the intuitive pawn sacrifice of Captain Evans, because, as I said in the introduction, my book does not cover those gambits which are long established as opening theory. It was rather to draw the reader’s attention to a very “natural” exchange sacrifice, arrogantly rejected by all annotators. That sacrifice, in my view, promises Black satisfactory play. Later in the game, and in real danger, Vishy had another opportunity – giving up two pieces for rook and pawn would have calmed down Garry’s attack. Many players lose their way when trying to get off the hook in tough situations, but I am surprised that Anand did, as he is one of the greatest experts, both in tactical and positional sacrifices.

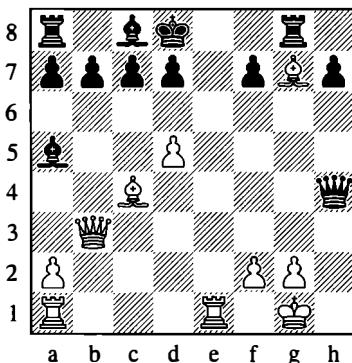
Points to look for in this game:

- Pawn sacrifices for initiative – 7.♕e2 and 15.♕h6!
- A missed opportunity for the defender to return material – 11...0–0?
- Attacking the uncastled king – 15.♕h6! and 18.c5!

**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.b4 ♗xb4
5.c3 ♗e7**

A solid approach, second in popularity to the classical 5...♗a5.

Regarding this alternative, I would just mention the game Fischer – Fine, New York (blitz) 1963, which continued: 6.d4 exd4 7.0–0 dxc3 8.♗b3 ♗e7 9.♘xc3 ♘f6? 10.♘d5! ♘xd5 11.exd5 ♗e5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♗b2 ♗g5 14.h4! ♗xh4 15.♗xg7 ♗g8 16.♗fe1† ♘d8

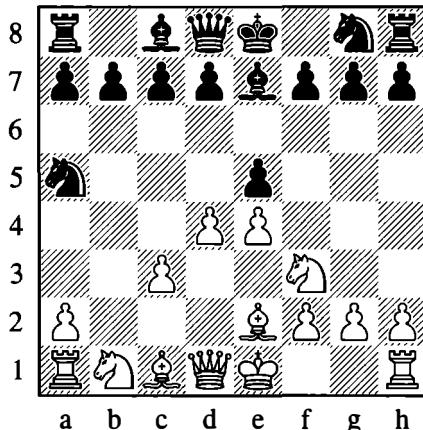


17.♗g3! 1–0

6.d4 ♘a5 7.♗e2

An important moment – Kasparov chooses to remain a pawn down in order to maximize his initiative.

Taking back the pawn by 7.♘xe5?! does not offer anything: 7...♘xc4 8.♘xc4 d5 9.exd5 ♗xd5 10.♘e3 ♗a5= The position is equal, but it is the sort of equality where I prefer Black.



7...exd4

Accepting the challenge; 7...d6 is just equal.

8.♗xd4?

This is White's best try. 8.cxd4 d5 9.exd5 c6 10.dxc6 ♘xc6 11.0–0 ♘f6 12.♘c3 0–0 was good for Black in Miettinen – Bekermann, e-mail 2010.

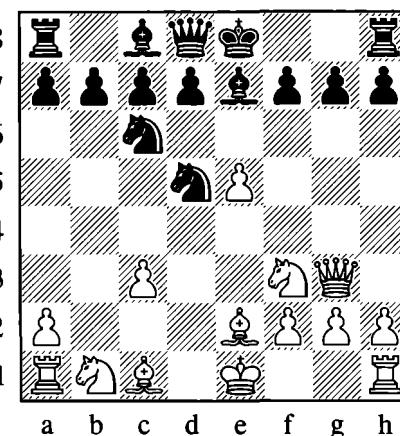
8...♘f6

Of course, this is the only serious option. Moves like 8...♗f8, 8...f6 and 8...♘c6 are not to be recommended – especially against Kasparov.

9.e5 ♘c6 10.♗h4

10.♗f4 ♘d5 11.♗g3 would just be a transposition.

10...♘d5 11.♗g3



11...g6

Objectively this is good, but for practical purposes it is a bit risky.

Curiously, nobody has tried:

11...0–0?

Offering an exchange sacrifice to dampen White's initiative.

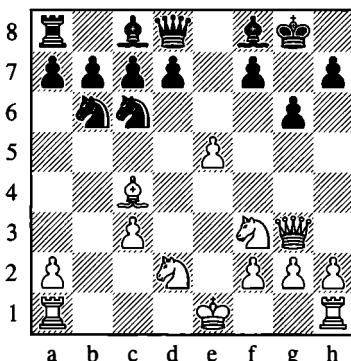
12.♕c4

If White takes the exchange immediately with 12.♕h6 g6 13.♕xf8 ♕xf8 14.0–0, then Black also obtains sufficient compensation. The following line is not forced, but it shows how play could develop: 14...♕h6 15.♗d1 ♔f4 16.♗e1 ♔e6 17.♗b5 a6 18.♗xc6 dxc6 19.♗h4 ♕xh4 20.♗xh4 ♔c5 21.♗f3 ♔a4 22.c4 ♕e6 23.♗bd2 ♔g7 24.h4 b6 25.♗g5 ♕xg5 26.hxg5 ♔b2 27.♗e4 ♔xc4 28.♗f6 h6 29.gxh6† ♔xh6 30.f4 g5 31.g3 ♔g6 32.♔f2 gxf4 33.gxf4 ♔f5 34.♔f3 ♔d8 35.♔ad1 ♔d2† 36.♔e3 ♔c4† 37.♔f3=

12...♗b6 13.♕h6 g6 14.♕xf8 ♕xf8

14...♕xf8 is also possible, for instance 15.♗b3 a5 16.a4 d6 17.0–0 ♕f5 18.♗bd2 dx5 19.♗xe5 ♔xe5 20.♕xe5 ♕d6 21.♗d4 ♕c5 22.♗f4 ♕d6 23.♗d4 ♔d8 24.♗h4 ♕e7 25.♗f4 with equality.

15.♗bd2



15...d5

Not the only playable move.

15...♗xc4 16.♗xc4 d6 17.exd6 ♕e6 18.dxc7 ♕d3 19.♗fe5 ♕e4† 20.♕e3 ♕xg2

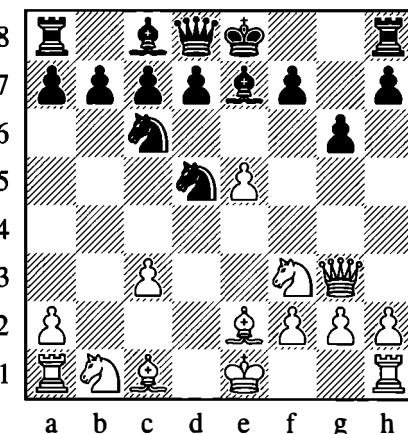
21.0–0–0 also offers Black roughly equal chances. An example of how play could continue is: 21...♗c8 22.♗hg1 ♕xh2 23.♗h1 ♕g2 24.♗xf7 ♕xf7 25.♗dg1 ♕d5 (even 25...♕xh1 must lead to a draw, e.g. 26.♗xh1 ♕xc4 27.♗d1 ♕e7 28.♗d7 ♖f8 29.♗h6† ♔g8 30.♗e3=) 26.♗h3 ♕h6† 27.♗xh6 ♕xc4 28.♗h3 ♗e7 29.♗xh7† ♖f8 30.♗d1 ♕xc7 31.♗h6† ♖e8 32.♗e3 ♕e6 33.♗g7 ♕f4 34.♗d2 ♕g4 35.♗f6 ♕c6 36.♗d4 ♕g1† 37.♗d2 ♕b1 38.♗h8† ♖f7 39.♗h7† ♖f6 40.♗h8† ♖f7=

16.♗b5 ♗e7 17.h4 ♗f5 18.♗g5 f6 19.exf6

19...♕xf6 ♕e7 traps the queen.

19...♕d6 20.f7† ♖xf7 21.h5 ♕e7 22.♗g4 ♕f6 23.hxg6† hxg6 24.♗h7† ♗g7 25.♗e8† ♖xe8 26.♗xg6†=

In all variations after the exchange sacrifice, it seems that White can get a draw practically by force, but no more than that. If White eschews the forcing lines then Black obtains excellent compensation for the exchange, with an extra pawn and a more compact structure, not to mention his two dangerous bishops.

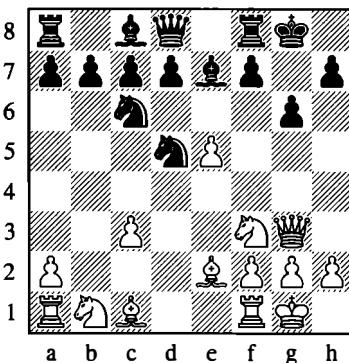


12.0–0 ♗b6

Played in anticipation of being attacked, very much in the style of a strong program.

Black had a good alternative in:

12...0–0!



13.c4

Or 13.♗d1 ♜b6 14.♗bd2 (14.a4?! d6†) 14...d5 15.♗b3 ♜a4 16.♗d2 a6 17.♗bd4 ♜xd4 18.cxd4 ♜f5 19.♗ac1 ♜b2 20.♗e1 b5† and the knight comes to c4.

13...♜b6 14.♗c3

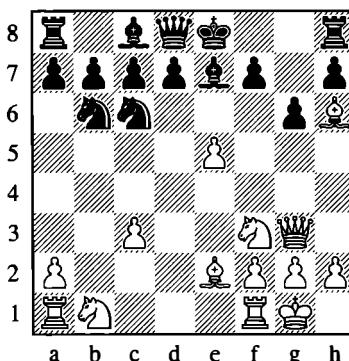
14.♗h6 ♜e8 15.♗c3 d6 16.♗ad1 ♜f5 17.♗b5 ♜xe5 18.♗xe5 ♜h4 19.♗xf7 ♜f6 20.♗f3 ♜xf7†

14...d6 15.♗d1 ♜d7 16.exd6 ♜xd6 17.♗f4 ♜xf4 18.♗xf4 ♜f6 19.♗d2 ♜e8 20.♗d5 ♜d8=

White has enough compensation to maintain the balance, but nothing more.

13.c4

There was much ado in the media about 13.♗h6? which was considered a stronger move, for instance:



a) 13...d6 14.♗b5 and “Black’s king cannot easily find shelter in the long term.”

b) 13...d5?! led to success, but only after White later went wrong: 14.♗bd2 (14.♗b5!) 14...♜e6 15.♗fd1 ♜d7 16.♗e4 0–0–0 17.♗g7 ♜hg8 18.♗f6 ♜xf6 19.♗xf6 ♜de8 20.c4 g5 21.♗ac1 d4 22.♗d2 ♜f5 23.♗b3 ♜a4 24.c5 a6 25.♗c4? (25.♗xd4 ♜xd4 26.♗f1 ♜e6 27.c6 bxc6 28.♗b1 ♜b6 29.♗xa6† ♜b8 30.♗c3±) 25...d3 26.♗g4 ♜xg4 27.♗xd3 ♜e6 28.♗xa4 ♜xf6 29.♗xg4† ♜e6 30.h4 ♜xg4 0–1 Degraeve – Petkov, Saint Affrique 2009.

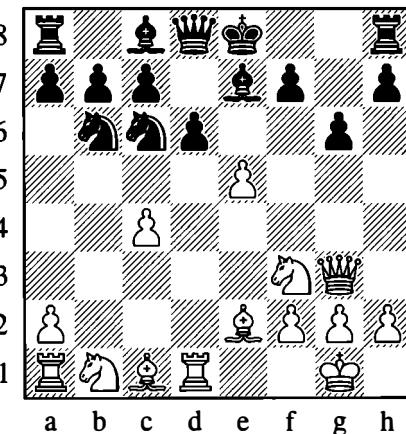
All this is only half true, as Black has a third option:

c) 13...♗f8! 14.♗g5 ♜e7 15.♗bd2 ♜xg5 16.♗xg5 d6 and the game is equal.

13...d6

Once again 13...0–0 is good, transposing to the note to Black’s 12th move.

14.♗d1



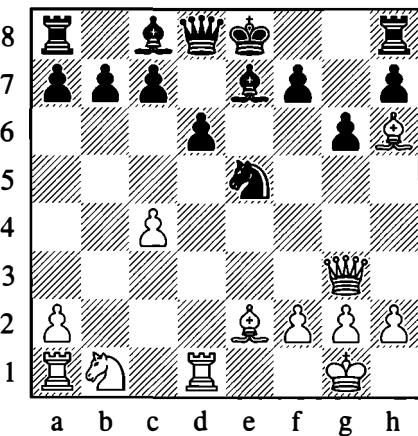
14...♝d7

This avoids the threat of 15.c5 and aims to clarify the tension in the centre.

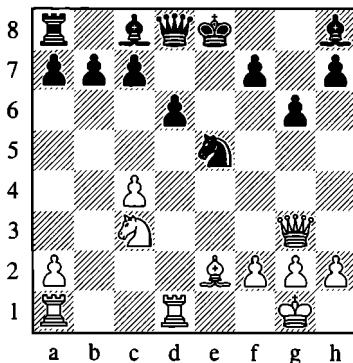
However, 14...♝a4! is more precise, controlling three key squares in c5, c3 and b2. For example: 15.♗h6 f6 16.♗d3 ♜c5 (16...♝xe5 17.♗xe5 fxe5 18.♗xg6† hxg6 19.♗xg6† ♜d7 20.♗f5† ♜e8=) 17.♗c3 ♜xe5 18.♗xe5 fxe5†

15.♕h6!

On move 11 we saw Anand rejecting a promising exchange sacrifice which would have enabled him to maintain the balance. A few moves later, Kasparov seizes an opportunity to make a positional sacrifice of his own. Already one pawn down from the opening, he doubles his material investment in order to keep the enemy king pinned down in the centre.

15...♝cxe5 16.♝xe5 ♜xe5**17.♝c3!**

17.♝g7? would be completely the wrong idea. 17...♞f6 18.♝xh8 ♜xh8 19.♝c3 With two pawns for the exchange and excellent control over the dark squares, Black has the makings of an excellent game. The only negative features of his position are his king position and the threat of c4-c5, but he can solve these problems with the help of the following precise sequence:

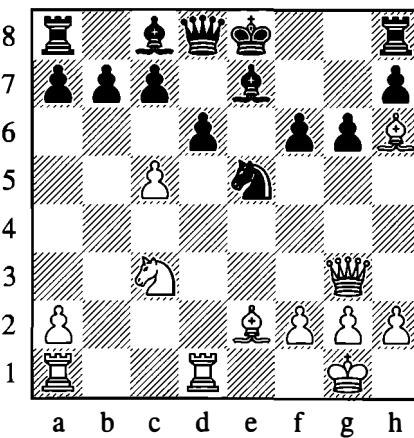


19...♝d7! 20.♝ac1 ♜c5 21.♛e3† ♜e7 22.♛h6 ♜e6 23.♝d5 ♜xd5 24.cxd5 0–0–0†

I doubt that Garry took more than a few moments to discard this line. He is not the kind of player to trade the initiative for material. The 13th World Champion values activity (or, to use one of my favourite terms, “dynamic potential”) much more highly.

17...f6 18.c5!

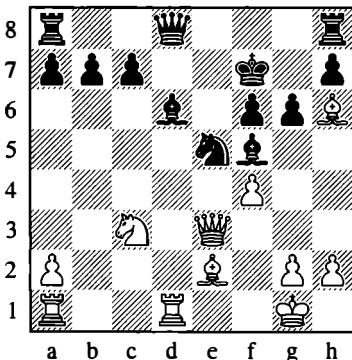
Softening up the d6-pawn while opening the a2-g8 diagonal.

**18...♝f7?**

After a few imprecise moves Black's position has become difficult, and the text only worsens his situation.

I do not want to get too bogged down with deep analysis, so I will just mention that the natural candidates of 18...♝f8, 18...♝e6 and 18...♝d7 all have their drawbacks.

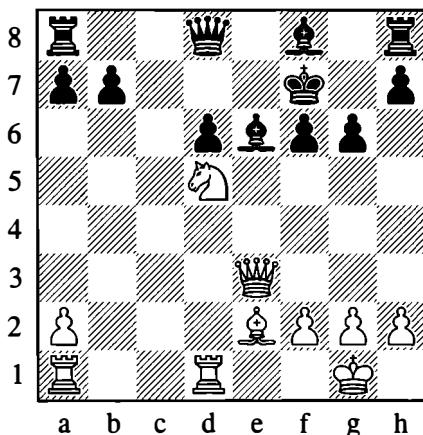
Black's best chance was to return the material, even with a little interest, in order to complete development and activate his rooks. This could have been achieved by means of: 18...♜f5! 19.♛e3 ♜f7 20.cxd6 (20.♝d5 ♜f8; 20.f4 ♜g4) 20...♜xd6 21.f4



21... $\mathbb{W}e7$! Black has just enough resources to defend, for instance: 22. $\mathbb{B}xd6$! $cxd6$ 23. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$! 24. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $dxe5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{E}c6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}c5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}d4$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}b3\#$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$

19. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $cxd6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black had no real improvement over the past few moves; it is impossible to defend when White is so far ahead in development. Kasparov finds a quick way to kill the game.



24. $\mathbb{Q}f4$! $\mathbb{W}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{R}e1$

After this quiet move, White has too many threats, and so Vishy decided to resign. It is easy to see why: 25... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ is refuted by 26. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, and 25... $\mathbb{E}e8$ loses to 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ (or 27... $\mathbb{E}xe6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c4+-$) 28. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#+-$.

1–0

Post-game reflections

Few players in all of chess history are as dangerous as Kasparov when he has given up some material for a dynamic initiative. His 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$! pawn sacrifice showed excellent judgement, and with the help of 18.c5! followed by a few more powerful attacking moves, he was able to cause his opponent insurmountable problems.

Anand's biggest mistake was failing to take the opportunity to return his extra material in order to dampen White's initiative. The most straightforward way of doing this would have been 11...0–0?!, but he also had a chance to equalize later with 18... $\mathbb{Q}f5$!, although the latter move necessitated the calculation of some difficult variations which would have made it a dangerous proposition over the board.

Italian Game

The Italian Game has many variations which are quite different from one another both in plans and degree of aggressiveness, so I would not attempt to describe its characteristics in overly general terms. However, I would remark that the popularity of this opening is decreasing with time in general and with the strength of the players in particular.

One doesn't have to play well; it's enough to play better than your opponent – Siegbert Tarrasch

Albert Becker – Imre Korody Kereszty

Tatastovaros 1935

Although the open games have a deserved reputation for sacrifices and early bloodshed, they can also give rise to a slower manoeuvring battle. In this game Black declines a typical sacrifice designed to bring White a lead in development and direct attacking chances,

only to be hit with a completely different kind of positional pawn sacrifice.

Points to look for in this game:

- Pawn sacrifice to block the opponent's position – 7.d6!?
- Positional exchange sacrifice – 22.♗xf6!
- Tactics in the endgame – 29.c4!?

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♕c4 ♕c5 4.c3 ♜e7?!
5.d4!

Daring Black to take on d4, which would win a pawn but lead to a situation with an open centre, where White would have excellent chances to capitalize on his lead in development.

5...♕b6

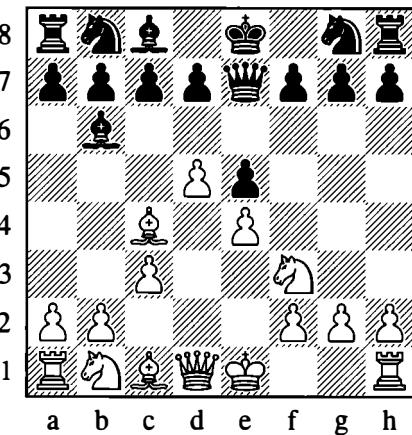
Sensibly refusing the bait, although if this was Black's intention, it begs the question of why the queen went to e7 in the first place.

6.d5

Modern players, such as Anand, have preferred 6.0–0, but best of all might be 6.♕g5.

6...♘b8

6...♘d8 is probably better.



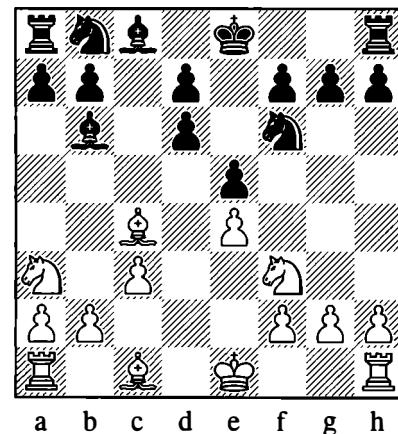
7.d6?!

This type of “obstruction sacrifice” (to use Spielmann's terminology) is more typical of certain variations of Alekhine's Defence, and indeed one incarnation of it can be found in the Bellon Lopez – Kovacevic game beginning on page 60 in Chapter 4.

7...♗xd6 8.♗xd6 cxd6

So Black has won a pawn, but for the time being his extra pawn on d7 is more of a liability than a strength, as it obstructs his queenside pieces, especially the bishop on c8. Black's position is not so bad, but he will have to play carefully to avoid being caught in a positional bind. In some scenarios he may *re-sacrifice* his front d-pawn in order to play ...d7-d6 and renew the harmony in his position. For the time being both sides need to finish developing and find purposeful squares for their pieces.

9.♘a3 ♘f6



10.♕d5?!

The right path was 10.♘b5! ♘xe4 (10...♗e7 11.♕g5 a6 12.♗xf6+ gxf6 13.♘a3 ♔c7 14.♘h4 gives White the cruellest of blockades, similar to that seen in the actual game) 11.♘g5 ♘xg5 12.♗xg5 f6 13.♗e3 ♔xe3 14.fxe3 ♖d8 15.♗xd6 ♖c7 16.♗d1 ♖c6 17.0–0± when White has fine positional compensation.

10...♝c6?!

After 10...♝xd5 11.exd5 ♜a6 12.♔e3 ♜c7 Black can defend successfully, for instance: 13.♝b5 ♜b8 14.♝d2 f5 15.f4 0–0 16.♝c4 ♜c7 17.♝bx d6 ♜xd5?

11.♝b5 0–0 12.♔e3?!

White decides to put development before pawn structure. Note that he is in no hurry to capture the d6-pawn as this would only help Black to unravel his queenside.

12...♜xe3 13.fxe3 ♜e8 14.0–0

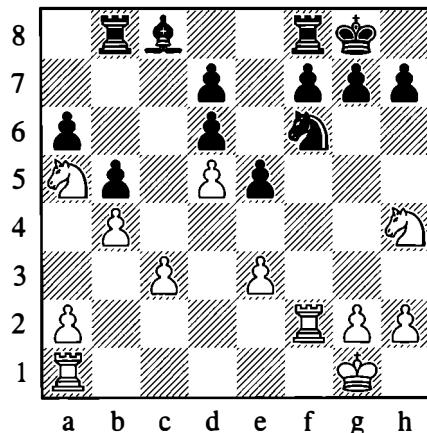
14.0–0–0?! is also possible, with an approximately equal position.

14...a6 15.♝a3 ♜b8

15...♝e7!?

16.♝f2 ♜d8 17.♝c4 b5 18.♝a5 ♜e6 19.b4 ♜6c7 20.♝h4 ♜xd5 21.exd5 ♜f6?

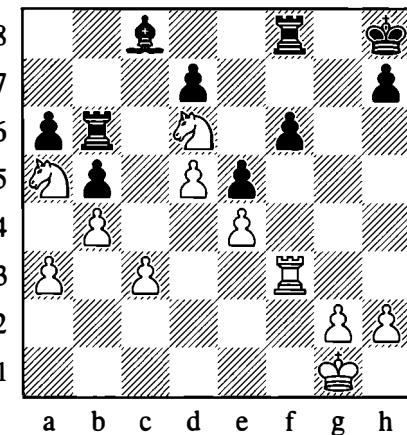
Black could still have obtained the better chances with 21...g6 22.e4 f5! 23.exf5 g5! 24.♝f3 ♜xf5, but he must have completely overlooked the strength of White's next move.

**22.♝xf6!**

This obvious obstruction sacrifice can be viewed as the ultimate triumph of the previous pawn offer, as without the 'dead' pawn on d7 Black's bishop would control the f5-square.

22...gx f6 23.♝f1 f5 24.♝xf5 f6 25.♝f3 ♜h8**26.e4 ♜b7 27.♝xd6?!**

One should always think carefully about taking such a pawn, as its disappearance may facilitate the unblocking of Black's queenside. It turns out that White has a particular idea in mind to justify the decision.

27...♜c8 28.a3 ♜b6**29.c4?!**

The amusing resource of trapping the rook in the middle of the board reinforces the blockade. Things are just as they should be, with tactics supporting the strategy.

That being said, the prosaic 29.♝f5 was also strong, the point being that 29...d6 can be met by 30.♝e3 followed by c3-c4 when Black's queenside is on the verge of collapse.

29...bxc4?

A final mistake in a difficult position. Instead the counter-sacrifice 29...♝xd6 30.c5 ♜xd5! (30...♝e6? 31.dxe6 dxe6 32.♝f2 should win for White) 31.exd5 ♜g7 would have given Black a better chance of survival.

30.♝axc4 ♜b8 31.♝f2

This is the final move given in the database (instead of the obvious 31.♝xe5), and the game

result is marked as a draw! Sergiu Samarian, who was a well-informed correspondence player and an outstanding coach and writer, also gives 31.♕f2 as the last move, but he says that Black resigned, which is a lot easier to believe. Black is helpless against quiet plans, such as a stroll of the white king to a5, and against many mating ideas as well, for example ♘e3, ♘ef5, ♗g3 and ♘h6. In the meantime, the e5-pawn is still hanging, and all engines assess White's advantage as the equivalent of a piece up! We shall consider the result as:

1–0

Post-game reflections

This game featured two positional sacrifices from White (not including the pseudo-sacrifice on move 29), both of which were part of an overall strategy based on blockading and dominating the enemy pieces.

The restricting pawn sacrifice (7.d6!) was intended to create a logjam in the enemy queenside. In such cases the side making the sacrifice should anticipate the defender's attempts to break free of his shackles, and prepare suitable countermeasures. See the notes between moves 10-15 for some variations illustrating this theme.

The exchange sacrifice on move 22 was strong for a number of reasons. White damaged his opponent's pawn structure and secured a fantastic outpost for his knight on f5, from which it exerted a powerful influence over both the centre and the kingside. When sacrificing the exchange a key consideration is whether or not the enemy rook(s) will have any useful open files available. In this case the answer was an emphatic "No". Factor in White's sounder pawn structure, better piece coordination and safer king, and it is hardly surprising that the exchange sacrifice was a resounding success.

King's Gambit

It is time to move on to the most romantic of gambits, which was the cornerstone of many a player's repertoire in the 19th century.

In most other open games Black can choose his reaction from quiet to sharp, but against the King's Gambit he has no choice but to roll up his sleeves and prepare for a fight. The opening has dwindled in popularity and yet it continues to attract a loyal band of followers, and has even been used at the highest levels by Carlsen (once!) and Nakamura. Some players thrive on intense battles and (to them) a victory with the King's Gambit is worth three with the Queen's Gambit. [Note to censor: No male chauvinism here, please learn the game!]

You cannot escape the thing you are afraid of –
Romanian proverb

Jacob Murey – Boris Nikitinyh

USSR 1971

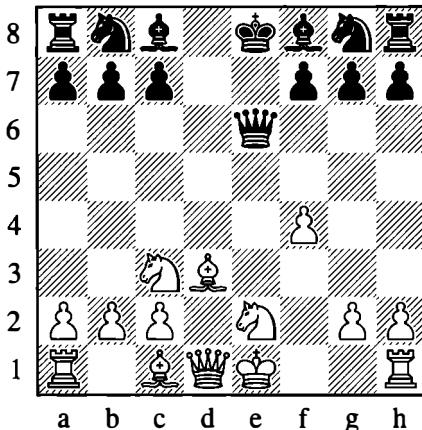
Points to look for in this game:

- Pawn sacrifice for development – 8.f5!
- Using tactics to optimize development – 12.♘f4!
- Smashing through the defences – 14.♗xg6!

1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 e4 4.d3 exd3?!

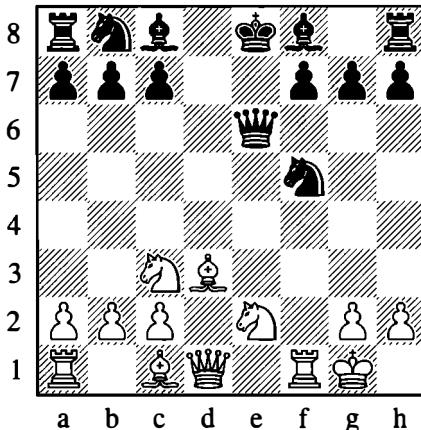
Black would have been better off maintaining the tension and developing a piece with 4...♝f6. The resulting positions are interesting to study, but I won't say any more about the theory of the King's Gambit here, as it just so happens the chief editor at Quality Chess is writing a monograph on it.

5.♗xd3 ♜xd5 6.♘c3 ♜e6† 7.♗ge2

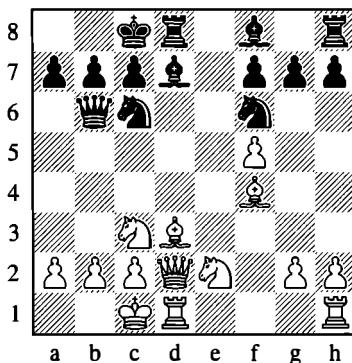


7...Qh6?!

White has achieved a conspicuous advantage in development, yet his piece placement is a bit awkward. Black could have overcome his lag in development by precise play: 7...Qf6 8.f5 Wb6 9.Qf4 Qd7 10.Wd2 Qc6 11.0–0–0 0–0–0



Although this particular variation of the King's Gambit is rarely seen, the intuitive sacrifice of the f-pawn is fully in keeping with the tradition of White's opening. The pawn on f4 was obstructing three of White's pieces, so the decision to sacrifice it speaks for itself.



The position is approximately equal. The reader may appreciate that in this variation the advanced f-pawn is something of an inconvenience for White.

8.f5!

Black's last move was intended to stop the f-pawn going further, but it has the opposite effect!

8...Qxf5 9.0–0

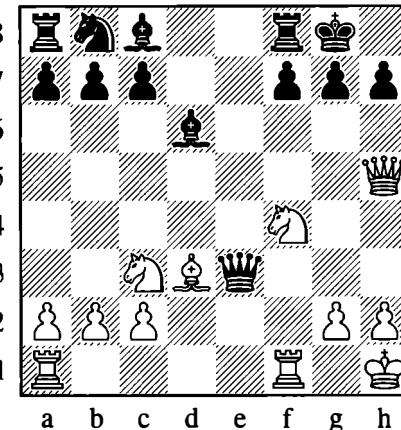
9...Qe3

Black buys himself a tempo to arrange castling, but in doing so he allows White to exchange the undeveloped bishop on c1, further increasing his development advantage.

10.Qxe3 Wxe3† 11.Qh1 Qd6 12.Qf4! 0–0

Taking the knight would cost Black his queen.

13.Wh5

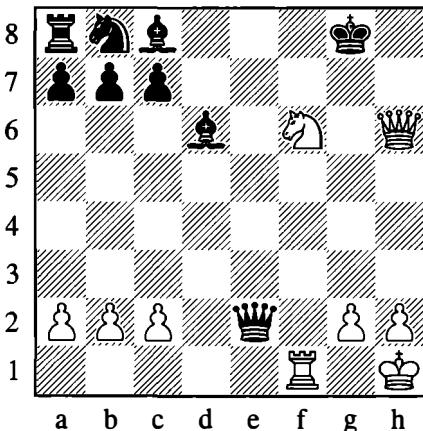


In just six moves the situation has changed dramatically. White has kept a big lead in development, but more importantly he has achieved optimal piece coordination and set up a mating attack which will quickly decide the game.

13...g6

13...h6 14.♕cd5 ♖d4 15.c3 is winning.

14.♕xg6! fxg6 15.♖xg6 hxg6 16.♗xg6† ♕h8 17.♕d5 ♜xf1† 18.♕xf1 ♖e2 19.♕h6† ♕g8 20.♕f6†



Black resigned as he is about to be mated by force: 20...♔f7 21.♕h7† ♔e6 22.♕g8† ♔e7 23.♕e8#

1–0

Post-game reflections

Murey's 8.f5! was a good example of the kind of positional sacrifice that would be made almost automatically by a grandmaster. There was no need to calculate more than a few moves ahead, as it was obvious that White's lead in development would be the deciding factor in such an open position with the black king so far from safety.

Latvian Gambit

This is an ambitious attempt by Black to fight for the initiative from the second move, but it is too optimistic and has *almost* been refuted by today's programs.

By consulting enough experts, one may justify any opening – paraphrasing Hiram's Law.

Pablo Atars – Hans Tomson

Correspondence 1973

Points to look for in this game:

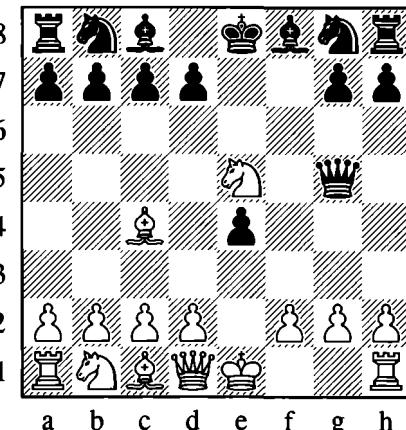
- Sacrificing a rook for an attack with 8.♖xg6!!
- Excessive greed meets with swift punishment – 11...♖xa1?
- Beauty behind the scenes – 12...♗d6 13.♗c5!!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 f5 3.♗c4

The strongest continuation is 3.♘xe5!!

3...fxe4 4.♘xe5 ♖g5

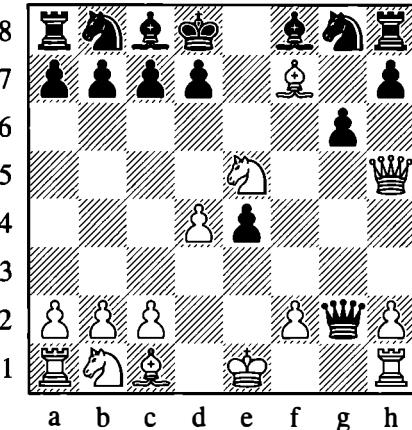
Black doesn't play the strongest opening moves either; better is 4...d5.



5.d4!!

5. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ wins material and should be good for White, but in practice Black's results have been outstanding.

5... $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 6. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

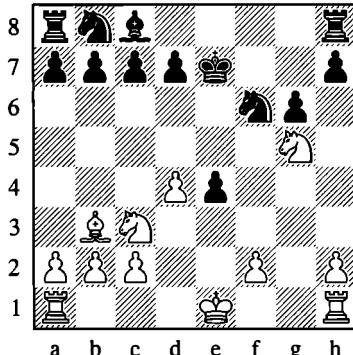


8. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#?$

White gambles a whole rook in order to maintain his attack. There is no forced mate, so it was largely an intuitive decision based on his huge lead in development.

No good was 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#?$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$
10. $\mathbb{W}h4$ g5+-.

Objectively the strongest continuation was probably: 8. $\mathbb{W}g5\#?$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

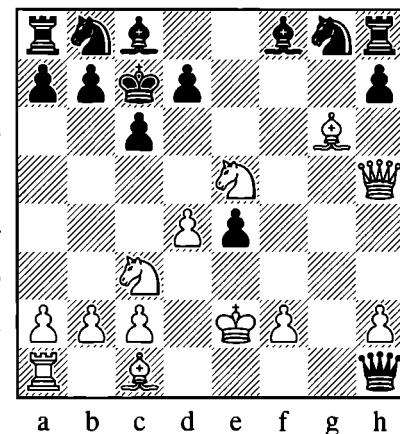


With some initiative for White.

8... $\mathbb{W}xh1\#$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c6!

Avoiding the draw by perpetual which arises from 9... $\mathbb{W}xc1$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$, but this is hardly to be recommended as White now reinforces the attack.

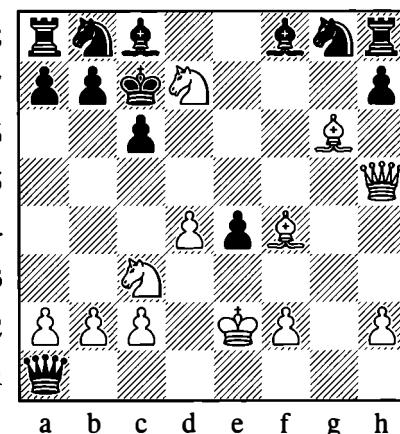
10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$



11. $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$?

Too greedy. 11... $\mathbb{W}xg6$! 12. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ was a better try although 13. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$ and 13. $\mathbb{W}xg6$ both give White excellent chances.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#!$



12... $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#?$

Losing quickly. 12... $\mathbb{Q}d8$? 13. $\mathbb{W}e5$ is a similar story.

The best chance was 12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, after which White would have had to find the attractive 13. $\mathbb{W}c5!!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f5\#$ and mate in two.

13. $\mathbb{W}f5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$
1–0

Post-game reflections

This short game was far from perfect, but still it highlighted the theme of material versus development in its purest form. In the final position Black was two rooks ahead, but he found himself mated with only his queen being developed, and even then she was nowhere near the defence of her king.

Let us also not forget that Black could have improved on various turns, most notably on move 9 with 9... $\mathbb{W}xc1$ when White is more or less forced to accept a draw by perpetual check. In this case the queen would have made a ‘greedy’ move, but the difference is that the bishop is a vital attacker, unlike the rooks which were not in a position to threaten anything.

Petroff Defence

A modest option, but solid for an open game. Its fame as a drawing platform for Black is a bit overshadowed today by the Berlin Wall variation of the Ruy Lopez. Most lines of the Petroff Defence, known also as the Russian Defence, confront White with the difficult task of extracting an advantage out of a symmetrical structure.

A player surprised is half beaten – Proverb

Vassily Ivanchuk – Evgeny Bareev

Linares 1993

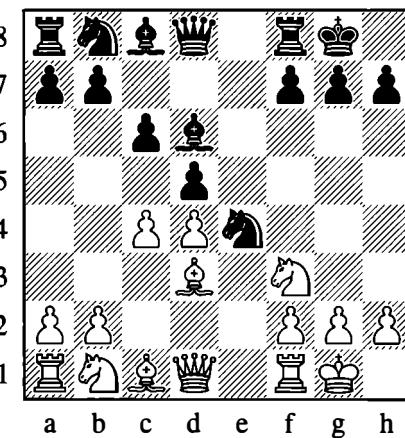
Points to look for in this game:

- Black wastes time and weakens his light squares with 12... $b6$?
- A far-sighted exchange sacrifice – 15. $\mathbb{h}xg4$!
- Restricting the enemy pieces – 18. $g3$ and 20. $g5$!

1.e4 e5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 5.d4 d5 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

The main line nowadays is 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.c4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with a small plus for White.

7.0–0 0–0 8.c4 c6



9.cxd5!

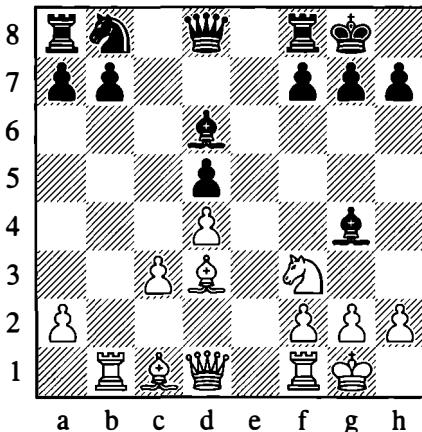
Earlier in the same tournament, against the same opponent, Gata Kamsky had tried 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and the game continued 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10.bxc3 dxc4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with dynamic equilibrium. Vassily avoids this variation by first exchanging the c-pawns.

9...cxd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

This is perhaps too early. The bishop sortie leaves several squares and pawns on the

queenside unprotected. Here I go along with the instructional books that recommend developing the knights first.

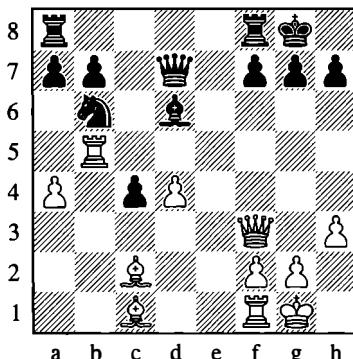
12.♘b1



12...b6?!

12...♗c7? is even worse: 13.♕xh7† ♔xh7 14.♗g5†+-

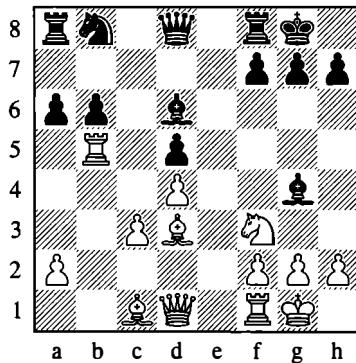
The best option was: 12...♝d7 13.h3 (13.♗xb7? ♜b6 traps the rook) 13...♜h5 14.♗b5 ♜b6 15.c4! ♜xf3 16.♗xf3 dxс4 17.♗c2 ♜d7 18.a4



18...g6 (not 18...♝c7 19.♗c5 ♜d6, when White has yet another true exchange sacrifice with 20.a5!±) 19.♗e3 ♜ac8 20.♗fb1∞

13.♗b5! ♜c7

Against 13...a6 (and 13...♝c6) White gets a winning advantage with:

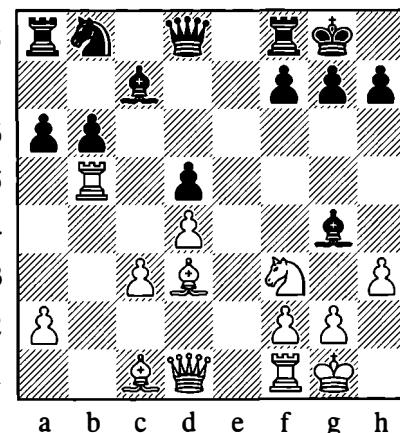


14.♗xd5 ♜xh2† 15.♗xh2!+-

14.h3 a6

14...♜h5 is no good due to 15.c4±.

Black's hopes of escape were based on the intermediate pawn move with a view to driving the enemy rook away, but an unpleasant surprise awaits him.

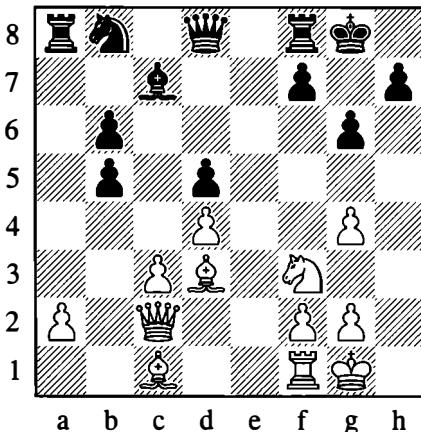


15.hxg4!

White will gain a pawn for the exchange, he has the positional plus of the two bishops, and the g4-pawn could play an important role in the ensuing kingside attack. Moreover, something is terribly wrong in the deployment of Black's forces; they are getting in each other's way and not a single piece is on an ideal post. This sacrifice had already been played a few times in the preceding two years, and Bareev's

willingness to allow it may be an indication that he believed that Black's defence could be improved.

15...axb5 16.Wc2 g6



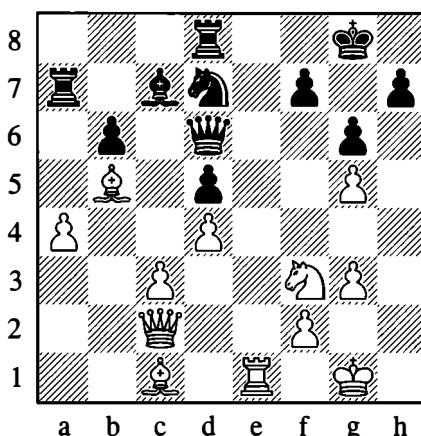
17.Qxb5!

17.Qh6 had been played in nearly all of the previous games. Instead of waiting for his opponent's improvement, Chucky is first to alter the course of the game; a frequent policy between top players. It certainly seems that he took Bareev by surprise. There is a proverb, "It's never too late to mend" – but in this case, it is too late.

17...Wd6 18.g3 Ra7 19.Qe1 Qd7 20.g5!

Gaining space and preventing ...Qf6.

20...Rd8 21.a4



21...Qb8

A bad omen and an acknowledgement that Black's position is hopeless. The defence is going to collapse soon and what follows resembles an execution.

**22.Qh2 Wf8 23.Qg4 Qd6 24.Qg2 Qh8
25.Qh1 Wg7 26.Qf6 h5 27.Qd1**

1–0

Post-game reflections

It is remarkable that Black had to resign barely ten moves after the positional exchange sacrifice took place. There did not appear to be any direct threats, and yet Ivanchuk was able to crush his opponent almost effortlessly. The key to his victory was the way he was able to restrict his opponent's pieces, especially the knight which had to make a most humiliating retreat to b8. Once Ivanchuk had positioned his pieces on their best squares, he turned his attention to Black's kingside weaknesses and won effortlessly.

Staying with the Petroff, in the following game we can see how a coffee-house sacrifice looks in the hands of two super-grandmasters.

To err is human, but it feels divine – Mae West

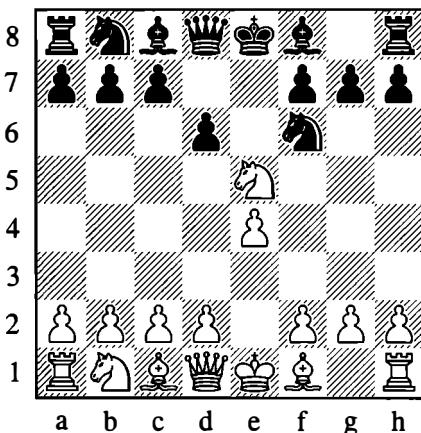
Veselin Topalov – Vladimir Kramnik

Linares 1999

Points to look for in this game:

- A cheeky opening sacrifice – 4.Qxf7!?
- White misses a chance for a dangerous attack – see 11.0–0! in the notes
- Sometimes pawn-grabbing can be a good thing – see 19...Qxc2? and 21...Wxc2! in the notes

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6



4.♗xf7!?

Commenting on this game for ChessBase, GM Blatny says, “Certainly, this sacrifice is not entirely correct, so we again have to admire Topalov’s bravado, this time facing one of the most solid players of our days.”

This gambit, blunder, true sacrifice or whatever, is over 150 years old and the quantity of analysis surrounding it is the envy of many *serious* variations. In contrast to some of the other games in this book, I will not insist on giving many opening variations, because I think and hope that none of them is really important to the reader. The game entered my collection as a curiosity rather than as study material.

Besides achieving two central pawns and making the enemy king insecure for a while, the piece sacrifice does not ensure the lead in development that is so characteristic of most gambits. And yet it is playable, until there is irrefutable proof to the contrary!

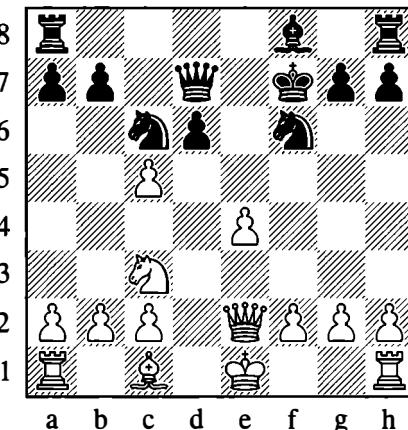
4...♗xf7 5.♘c3 c5

As in the Sicilian, the purpose of this move is to split the mass of white pawns which tend to occupy the centre. Perhaps it is not the *best* move, but it is the *safest*.

6.♕c4† ♗e6 7.♕xe6† ♗xe6 8.d4 ♖f7!? 9.dxc5 ♘c6 10.♗e2?!

Rather than takes pawns, each player tries to outsmart the other in development.

10...♗d7



11.♘e3?!

Until now, the play had been following the machines’ recommendations. It is curious that neither Topalov nor the annotators looked at the most natural move here:

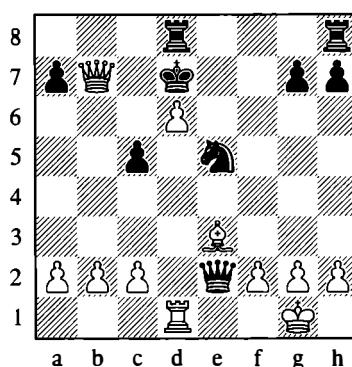
11.0–0!

White may succeed in turning his dubious true sacrifice into a draw-in-the-pocket one.

11...dxc5

11...♗e6!? 12.f4 d5 13.♗h1 dxe4 14.f5 is extremely sharp, but White isn’t worse.

12.e5 ♘g4 13.♗e4 ♘d4 14.♗c4† ♗e8 15.♗e1 ♘b5 16.♗d5 ♘d8 17.♗d6† ♗xd6 18.exd6† ♘e2† 19.♗xe2† ♘xe2 20.♗e3 ♘d7 21.♗d1 ♘e5 22.♗xb7†



Black must choose between allowing a perpetual or being mated. Please bear in mind that this line of analysis comprises the best moves in defence, which in this specific situation are far more difficult to find than the best attacking moves.

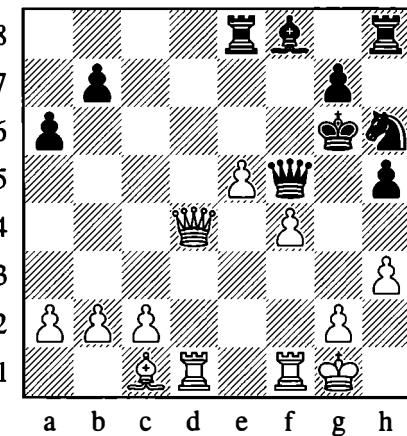
11...dxc5 12.f4 ♜e8 13.e5 ♜g4 14.♗d1 ♜f5 15.0-0 h5! 16.♕c1 ♜d4 17.♗c4† ♜g6

Black had a good alternative: 17...♝e6!? 18.♗a4 (or 18.♗d3 ♜e7 19.♗e4 ♜d8†) 18...♝g8 19.h3 ♜h6 (19...b5 20.♗xb5 ♜e2† 21.♗h1 ♜b8 24.♗f3 is unclear) 20.♗xa7 b5 21.a4 with a confusing position which looks slightly in Black's favour.

18.h3 ♜h6 19.♗b5 a6

19...♝xc2!? deserved attention, for example: 20.♗xa7 ♜e7 21.♗b5†

20.♗xd4 cxd4 21.♗xd4



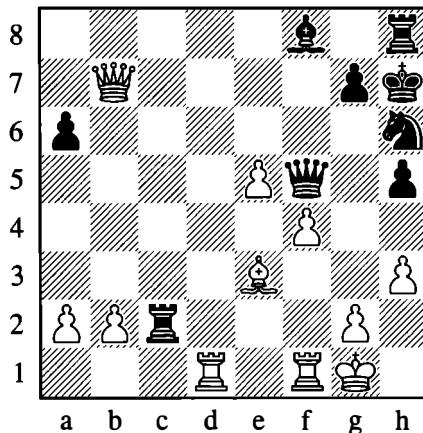
21...♝c8?!

Black's best hope for an advantage was to take the pawn straight away: 21...♝xc2! 22.♗f2 ♜c6 23.♗d3† ♜f5 24.♗e3 h4†

22.♗b6† ♜h7 23.♗xb7 ♜xc2

23...♜c5† 24.♗h2 ♜xc2 is not good: 25.b4! ♜c7 26.♗f3 ♜xb4 27.f5†

24.♗e3



24...♝g6

Black still had a chance for an edge with the much more aggressive: 24...♝e2!? 25.♗a7 ♜c2 26.♗d7 ♜f5 27.♗f3 ♜h6†

25.♗c1!

White gains a lot by exchanging the active enemy rook.

25...♝xc1

25...♝f5!? 26.♗f2! ♜xc1 transposes to the game.

26.♗xc1

Now the boot is on the other foot and it is Black who must be careful to avoid being worse. White has three pawns for a knight and his forces are ideally placed for both attack and defence.

26...♝f5

Black's best chance of keeping the balance was 26...♝d3 27.♗f2 ♜f5 28.♗f7 h4.

27.♗f2 h4 28.♗c7?!

It is Veselin's turn to squander his small advantage, which could have been maintained by 28.♗c6 ♜h5 29.♗xa6±.

28...♝g3 29.♗h2 ♜f1† 30.♗g1 ♜b1 31.♗xh4 ♜c5†!

Setting up a fork, should the white king try to escape. A draw was agreed in view of 32.♗xc5 ♗g3† 33.♔h2 ♗f1† with a repetition.
 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Post-game reflections

By including this game I broke my rule about not including sacrifices that are well documented in opening theory, but I decided it was worth making an exception as it is so rare to see the outrageous 4.♗xf7!? played at elite grandmaster level. The fact that both of these fantastic players made a number of middlegame inaccuracies speaks volumes about the difficulty of positions with material imbalances. There is a delicate balance between material and positional factors, and we must strive to make improvements in one area without sacrificing too much in the other.

Ponziani Opening

Yet another old-fashioned approach. For a nearly forgotten opening, the next game (which starts here and concludes in Chapter 15) is as simple as it is instructive.

The best way to refute a gambit is to accept it –
 Wilhelm Steinitz

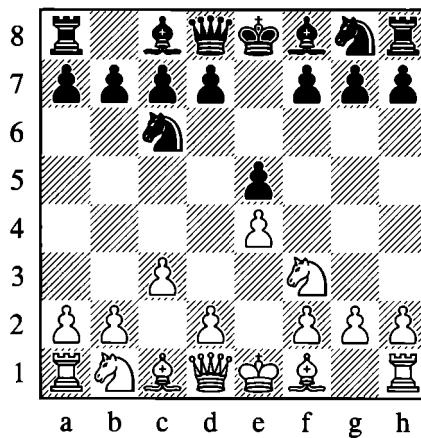
Alexey Dreev – Gata Kamsky

Pavlodar 1987

Points to look for in this game:

- The slow 3...d6?! turns White's timid opening into a promising one.
- The dynamic option is not always the best – see 21.♗d5?!
- Exchanging one bishop to activate another – 21...♗xd5!

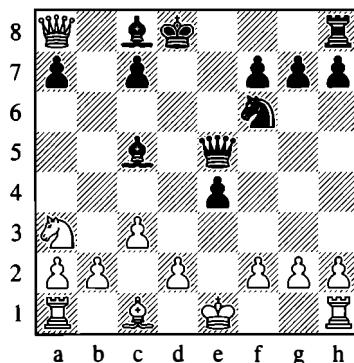
1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.c3



3...d6?!

Black's most reliable antidote is 3...♗f6 4.d4 ♗xe4 5.d5 ♗e7 6.♗xe5 ♗g6 7.♗d4 ♗f6 8.♗xe4 ♗xe5 with approximate equality.

3...d5 can lead to romantic variations: 4.♗b5 dxe4 5.♗xe5 ♗d5 6.♗a4 ♗xe5 (better is 6...♗ge7! 7.f4 exf3 8.♗xf3 a6 9.♗e2 ♗f5 10.0–0 0–0–0 11.d4 f6 12.b4 ♗b8 13.b5 axb5 14.♗xb5 g5 with well-timed counterplay) 7.♗xc6† bxc6 8.♗xc6† ♗d8 9.♗xa8 ♗f6 10.♗a3 ♗c5



Although in the past this gave Black good practical results, today it is laughed at by the strong programs. These alternatives require deep knowledge of theory, and this was never Gata's strength.

4.d4 $\mathbb{W}e7$

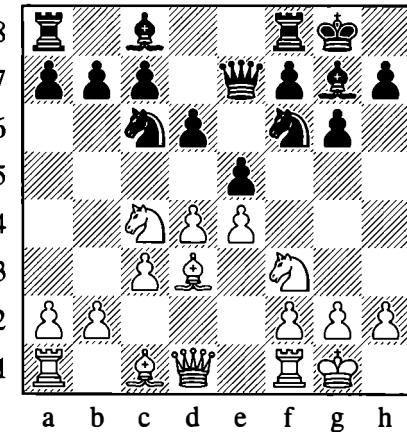
With good reason, Kamsky didn't like 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ g6 6.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7.h3 0–0 8. $\mathbb{B}e1\pm$.

5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ g6 6.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

7... $\mathbb{exd}4$ 8.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (not 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow$) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{B}e1$ f6 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0–0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ offers White good prospects in return for a minimal investment.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0–0

This is strategically dubious. A better line is 8... $\mathbb{exd}4$ 9.cxd4 0–0 10.d5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ a5 and in spite of White's space advantage, Black can be happy with his position.

**9.dxe5??**

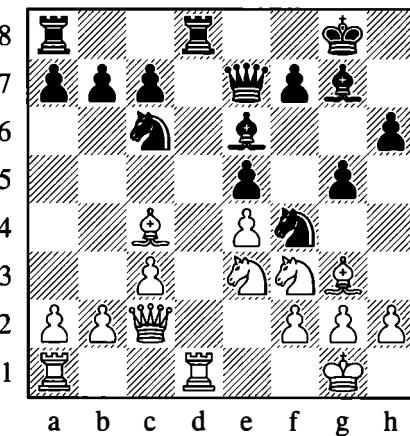
White releases the tension in the centre, but restricts the activity of the g7-bishop.

9...dxe5 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

A slight advantage could be maintained by 10.b4 a6 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{B}d1$.

10...h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ g5

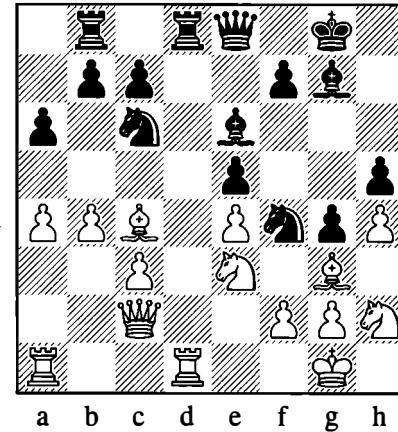
12...a5 is preferable, although the text move should also come close to equalizing the chances.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 15. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ **16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$** **16...a6**

Too deep! The simpler 16... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 18.b3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19.h3 h5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ would limit White to an edge.

17.a4 $\mathbb{B}ab8$

Simplification by 17... $\mathbb{B}xd1\uparrow$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}d8\pm$ is again the best Black can do.

18.b4 $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19.h4 g4 20. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ h5**21. $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$**

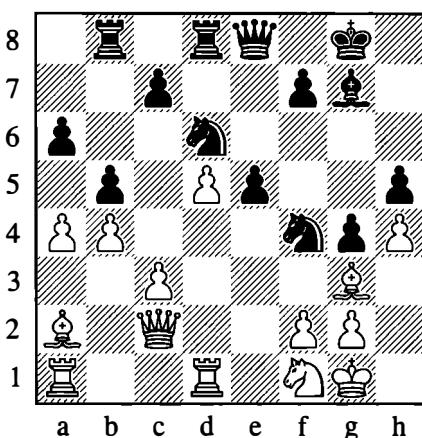
Appearances are deceptive! This continuation looks strong, but the change in the central

pawn structure frees the restricted bishop and therefore favours Black. A better approach is 21.♗xe6 ♜xe6 22.f3±.

21...♗xd5! 22.exd5 ♜e7 23.♗e4 ♜c8

Going for the blockade is not bad, but 23...♝d6 24.♗f1 ♜bd8 25.♗e3 b5† is even better. Let me paraphrase Larsen: “One should neither blockade the weak pawn (Nimzowitsch), nor attack it (Alekhine). One must take it.”

24.♗a2 ♜d6 25.♗c2 b5 26.♗f1!?

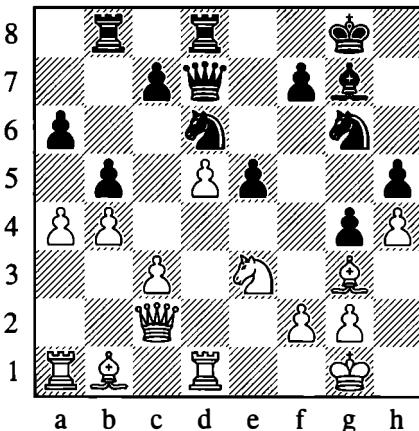


26...♝g6

White's pawn sacrifice passes almost unnoticed. Few players at the elite level would consider taking on a4, except perhaps Fischer or Kasparov. Such decisions are automatic actions based on generalities or just routine. We may call this attitude the “intuitive refusal” of a sacrifice.

However, Black's strongest option was: 26...bxa4! 27.♗b1 ♜b5 28.♗xf4 exf4 29.♗xa4 (29.♗h7† ♜f8 30.♗xh5 ♜xc3 is very good for Black) 29...♝c4†

27.♗e3 ♜d7 28.♗b1



The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 303.

Two Knights Defence

In this opening, the natural development of the pieces is abruptly upset. One or other player commonly sacrifices at least one pawn – and they will always get full compensation for half a pawn! Giving up exchanges or pieces in the early phases of this opening is also quite customary for both sides.

In the following game, White sacrifices the most prized piece in the open games, the light-squared bishop, for just two pawns. But instead of quickly mobilizing his superior forces, Black seems to cooperate in providing White's mass of pawns with a terrible penetrating strength.

Goliath was missing, so David could play “cat and mouse”.

David Bronstein – Ernst Rojahn

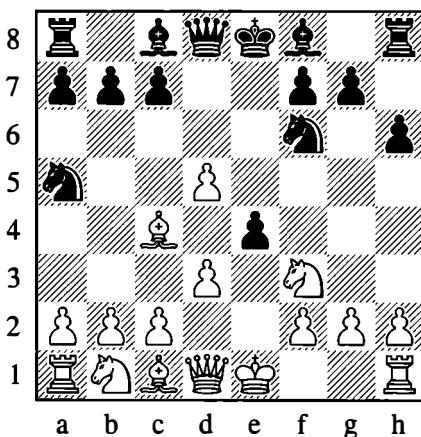
Moscow Olympiad 1956

Points to look for in this game:

- A cheeky piece sacrifice – 8.dxe4?!
- Building the ultimate pawn centre – 21.e5, 22.f4!, 25.g4 and 26.f5
- Winning a won position in style – 37.Qxf6!

**1.e4 e5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.Qc4 Qf6 4.Qg5 d5
5.exd5 Qa5 6.d3 h6 7.Qf3 e4**

More natural is 7...Qxc4 8.dxc4 e4.

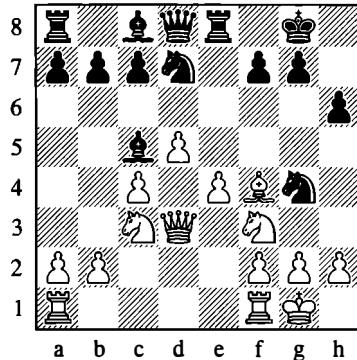
**8.dxe4?!**

Here we are! Of course this sacrificial possibility is not exactly “bread of heaven” from White’s point of view. However, two central pawns for a piece promises an interesting fight. I don’t think David Ionovich ventured this true piece sacrifice out of arrogance, but rather to have some fun.

8...Qxc4 9.Qd4 Qb6 10.c4 c5?

This is anti-positional and is played just for the sake of a tempo, but White now has a strong passed pawn.

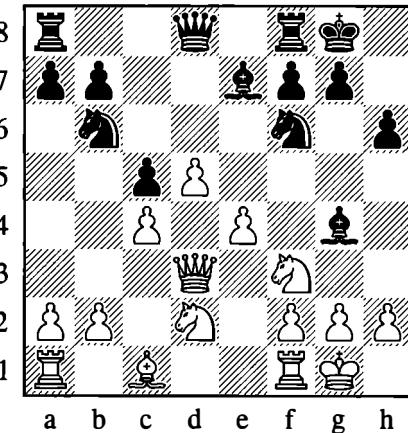
A better alternative is: 10...Qbd7 11.0–0 Qc5 12.Qd3 0–0 13.Qc3 Qe8 14.Qf4 Qg4



With the idea of ...Qd6 to block White’s central infantry.

11.Qd3 Qg4

Trying to exchange some pieces, Black makes a lot of concessions. He would still have been better after 11...g6 12.0–0 Qg7 13.Qc3 0–0 14.h3 Qe8 15.Qe1 g5??, or after 11...Qbd7 12.0–0 Qe7 13.Qd2 Qg4??.

12.Qbd2 Qe7 13.0–0 0–0**14.Qe5?!**

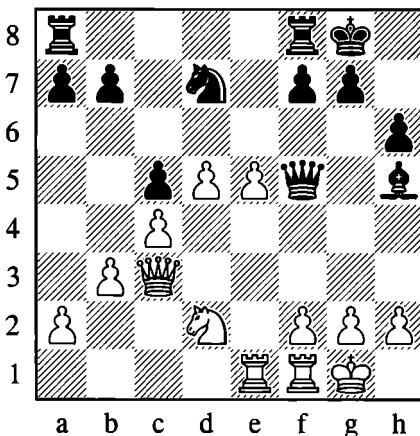
White’s strongest option was 14.Qe1 Qd7 15.a4 a5 (not 15...Qxa4 16.e5 Qf5 17.Qb3 Qxd5 18.cxd5 b5??) 16.h3 Qh5 17.Qb3 Qd8 18.e5 with equality. But we know that Bronstein didn’t look for equality!

14...Qh5 15.b3 Qbd7

White's imprecision could have been penalized by 15... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$, with a slight advantage to Black.

16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ael$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21.e5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$

21... $\mathbb{W}f4$ was a better try.



22.f4!

Finally, the central phalanx is reinforced. Everything is prepared for the imminent advance, and White's position is already preferable. We have apparently not seen any brilliant moves by one side, or gross blunders by the other. How many players would consider 10...c5? to be Black's *original sin*?

22... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 25.g4 $\mathbb{W}g6$ 26.f5 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}g3$ f6 28.e6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 29.h4 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 30.g5 $\mathbb{Q}bc8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

White could also win with the prosaic 31.d6, or with the spectacular 31.gxf6 gxf6 32. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ 34. $\mathbb{W}xg8\#$ 35.e7 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 37.e8=+ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}f4+-$.

31... $\mathbb{W}d8$

Black decides to prolong his agony.

32.g6

There are many ways to win, for example 32.d6 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xc5+-$.

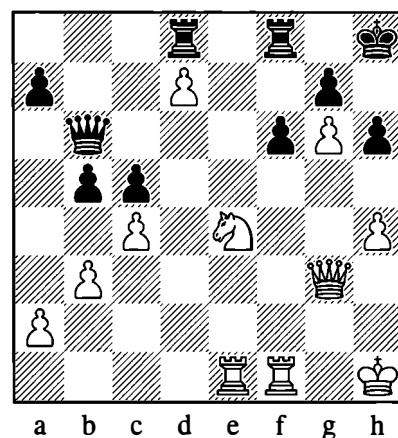
32... $\mathbb{Q}xg6$

Black cannot endure the pressure anymore; by this stage of the game, each white pawn will cost him a piece. 32... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 33.d6+- is no better.

33. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ b5 34.d6 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 35.d7

Or 35.e7 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$!.

35... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 36.exd7 $\mathbb{Q}cd8$



37. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$! $\mathbb{W}c6\#$ 38. $\mathbb{W}g2$

Black resigned here, without testing further the technique of a player who missed the title of World Champion by a whisker. For example, 38... $\mathbb{W}xg2\#$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ gxf6 40. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 41.g7 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$.

1–0

Post-game reflections

This game made a striking visual impression thanks to White's marauding pawn mass. Black spent most of the game with an extra piece, but he never found a way to put it to use. The key mistake was 10...c5?, which set the tone for the rest of the game by making it hard for Black to mount any counterattack against the central pawn wedge.

Chapter 2

The Ruy Lopez

The Ruy Lopez is one of the oldest openings, and it remains the most popular 1.e4 e5 opening by far. This is explained by its complexity and inner logic for both sides (everything revolves around the central squares) and by the possibility of building up an idea step by step. The slow but sure improvement of the position with every move in many closed (and long) variations provoked Tartakower to call it the “Spanish Torture”. It has numerous variations, and something to fit both sides’ every taste: quick, slow, open, closed, gambit variations and everything in between.

The Marshall Attack

When discussing sacrifices in the context of the Ruy Lopez, one cannot help but think of this most enduring of opening gambits. Even though it is backed by a truckload of theory nowadays, I would still regard it as an intuitive sacrifice, as Black commits himself to an ongoing material deficit with no clear resolution in sight.

Investigating long theoretical lines is not the aim of this book. Fortunately a number of ‘clones’ or offshoots of the Marshall have become quite popular against anti-Marshall systems, so I’ll tackle one of these.

There is no limit to how bad things may get – Hane’s Law

Ivan Cheparinov – David Navara

European Team Championships, Crete 2007

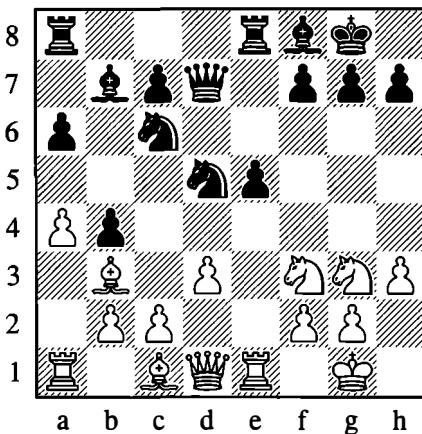
Points to look for in this game:

- The ‘delayed Marshall’ – ...d7-d6 followed by ...d6-d5
- Sacrificing the e5-pawn with ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$
- Using tactics to dampen the opponent’s initiative – see 19... $\mathbb{W}g4!$ in the notes

**1.e4 e5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6 4. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
5.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{E}e1$ b5 7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 0-0**

The Ruy Lopez is much too analysed nowadays, so I won’t risk entangling myself (and the reader) by commenting on the opening moves, other than mentioning that the variation played by White is intended to avoid the dangerous Marshall Attack.

**8.h3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9.d3 d6 10.a3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$
12.a4 b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5 14.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$
 $\mathbb{Q}f8$**

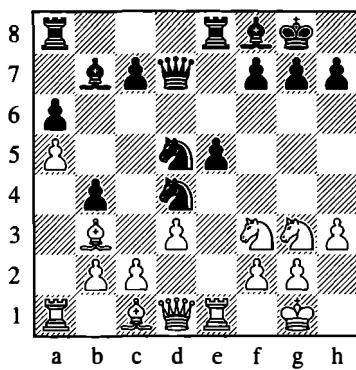
**16.♖d2!?**

This was a novelty. Finishing development can't be that bad!

The other two games played at a high level have featured:

16.a5

This is logical, but it loses time and allows a true pawn sacrifice.

16...♘d4**17.♗xd4**

This has been White's choice in practice.

17.♗xe5 ♖d6 18.♗c4 ♕xe1† 19.♕xe1 ♖g6 20.♗e4 (20.♕a4 b3! is given by Leko) 20...♗xb3 21.cxb3 ♖c6 22.♗f3 ♕e8 23.♗e3 ♖b5 gives Black compensation for the pawn.
17...exd4 18.♗xe8 ♕e8 19.♕d2 ♗f6 20.♕g5 ♖c6 21.♗f1 ♗d7

Or 21...♖d6 22.♗e1 ♕e5 23.♗xe5 ♖xe5

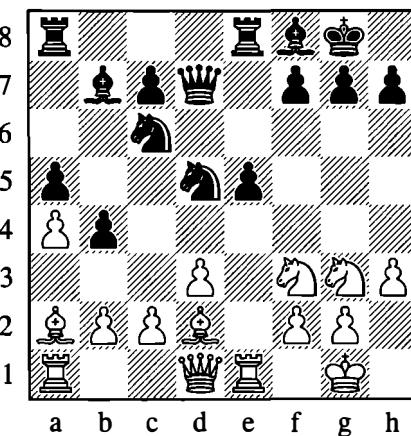
24.♗xf6 ♖xf6 25.♗e2 g6 26.♗g4 ♕d6 27.♗e4 ♖f4! 28.♗xf4 ½–½ Grischuk – Leko, Mexico City 2007.

22.♕a4 ♖d6 23.♗e4 ♕xe4 24.dxe4 ♕e6 25.♗d2

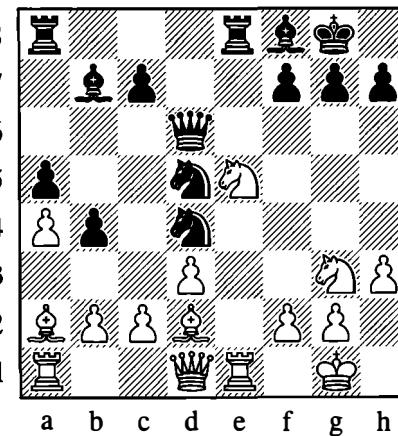
This led to a draw in Karjakin – Onischuk, Foros 2007.

16...a5 17.♗a2

White's play is designed to inhibit ...♘d4.

**17...♘d4?!**

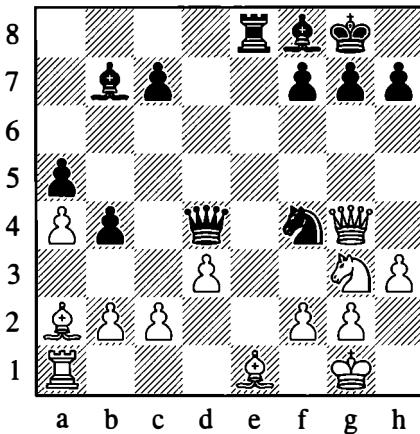
In spite of the discouragement, Navara goes for it anyway. We have a true pawn sacrifice, similar to the two games quoted above. In this position it is less justified, but it has great psychological value.

18.♗xe5 ♖d6

19.♕f3?!

This loses the advantage, which could have been maintained by: 19.♗g4! c5 (19...♕xc2 loses to 20.♕f5, while the exchanges after 19...♝xe5 20.♗xd4 would emphasize White's superiority) 20.♕f5±

**19...♝xe1† 20.♔xe1 ♕f4 21.♕xd4 ♘xd4
22.♗g4 ♘e8**



The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 327.

The next game starts with what I have dubbed the Father Joseph Variation, named in honour of my friend Joseph, who showed this strange line to me over forty years ago. It is known as such by my students and many chess fans in Spain; of course, I tell them the name translated as "Papá José". I play this scheme frequently against computer programs, and always emerge from the opening slightly better. The system thwarts a simplistic human approach to development, and such an approach, translated into algorithms, is precisely the "logic" of a program. I would like to use this digression to hint at how development is often wrongly defined as the "number of moves", irrespective of their usefulness, purposefulness, aggressiveness, etc.

The optimist thinks this is the best of all possible worlds. The pessimist fears it is true.
J. Robert Oppenheimer.

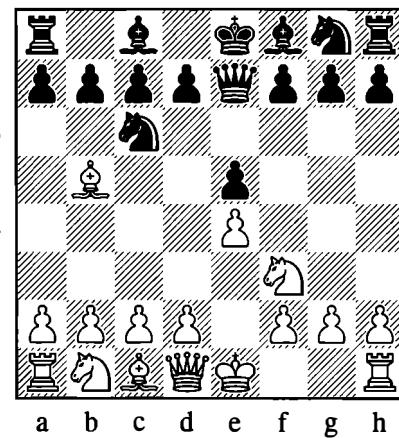
Constantin Lupulescu – Mihai Suba

Eforie Nord 2007

Points to look for in this game:

- A curious regrouping – 3...♘e7?! and ...♗d8
- An 'ugly' move to stabilize the centre – 7...f6! in the notes
- A fine positional pawn sacrifice – 8.c5!

1.e4 e5 2.♕f3 ♔c6 3.♗b5 ♘e7?!



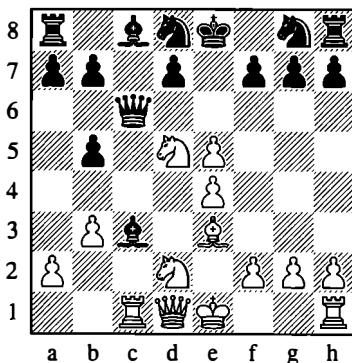
4.0–0

Against Black's 'extravagant' play, the most annoying is:

4.♗c3 ♗d4?

As far as I could remember my analysis, after 4...♗d8 5.♗d5 ♘d6 6.d4 c6 7.dxe5 ♘b8 8.♗e2 (or 8.♗d3) 8...cxsd5 9.exd5 ♘c5 White has good compensation for the piece, but in my opinion nothing more.

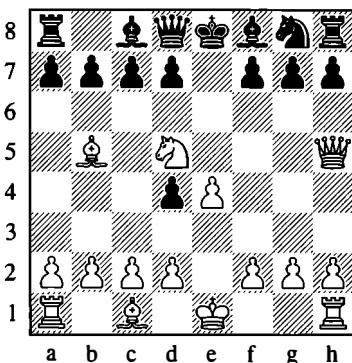
Unfortunately, when my opponent played his 4th move I saw a ghost after 4...♗d8 5.d4 c6 6.dxe5 cxb5 7.♗d5 ♘c5 8.♗e3 ♘c4 9.b3 ♘b4† 10.c3 ♘xc3† 11.♗d2 ♘c6 12.♗c1.



It seemed to me that Black's position was lost. And so it happened that during the panic about what 4th move to choose, I replaced a move that *seems* bad, by one that is losing by force! In reality, after 12...b4 13.Qxb4 Qxb4 14.Qxc6 Qxc6 Black has a rook and two pieces for the queen, and his only problem is to consolidate the material advantage.

5.Qd5 Wd8 6.Qxd4 exd4 7.Wh5!

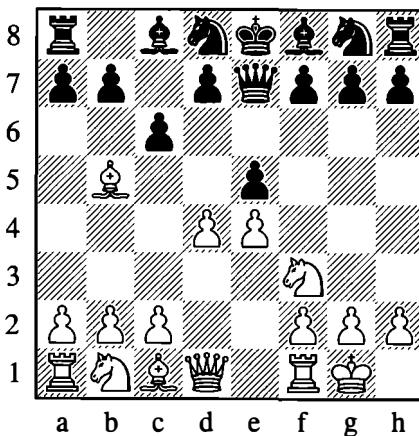
Threatening a lethal check on e5. Black already has no good defence.



7...Qd6 8.e5 g6 9.Wf3 Qe7 10.Qc4 f5 11.d3 c6 12.0–0 Qf8 13.Qf6† Qxf6 14.Qg5 d5
14...Qe7 15.exf6 Qxf6 16.We2† Qf8
17.Qh6† Qg7 18.We5!+–
15.Qxf6

White converted his advantage into a win in Kurnosov – Suba, Bucharest 2008.

4...Qd8 5.d4 c6



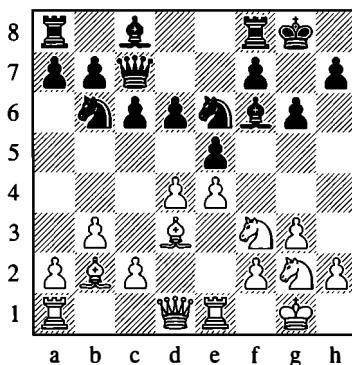
6.Qd3

A natural alternative is:

6.Qc4 d6 7.b3!?

Most programs play: 7.Qc3 g6 8.dxe5? dxе5 8.Qg5? f6 Thank you! 9.Qe3 Qh6 10.Qxh6 Qxh6 11.Qd2 Qhf7 12.Qad1 Qf8 With respect to the pawn structure, Black's cavalry is more suitably placed than White's.

7...Qf6 8.Qe1 Wc7 9.Qb2 Qd7 10.Qh4 g6 11.g3 Qe7 12.Qg2 Qb6 13.Qd2 0–0 14.Qd3 Qe6 15.Qf3 Qf6



16.dxe5?

In such positions, releasing the tension in the centre is a mistake, as White cannot use the d-file.

16...dxe5 17.Qe3 Qg7 18.a4 a5 19.Qg4 f6 20.Qd2 Qd8 21.Qf3 Qf7 22.Qc4 Qg5 23.Qe2 Qxc4 24.Qxc4 Qe6 25.Qxe6 Wxe6

The threat of 26... $\mathbb{E}d2$ wins Black an important tempo.

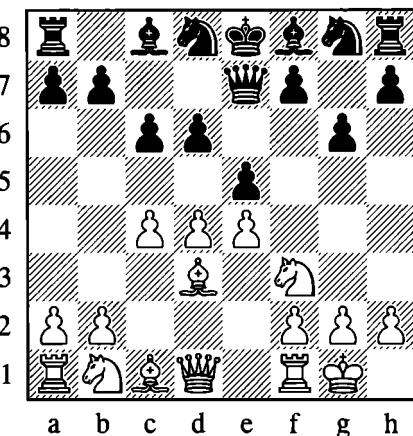
26. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ f5+

Black went on to win in Rodriguez Guerrero – Suba, Granada 2006.

White has a third option in 6. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$?, which has given him good results and might be strongest.

6...d6 7.c4 g6!?

Underestimating my opponent's idea. Holding the e5-square is a key objective for Black in many Ruy Lopez variations, the more so when White has a substantial lead in development. With this in mind, it would have been better to play 7...f6! with the idea of ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$.



8.c5!

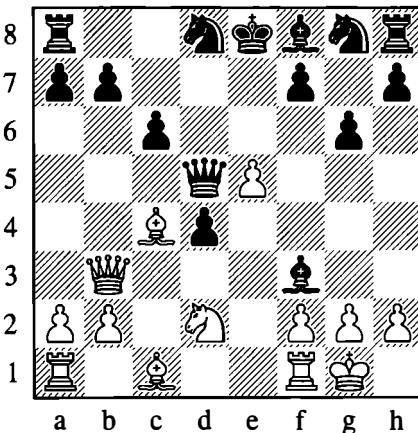
Sacrificing a pawn to destabilize Black's centre and open lines of attack.

8...exd4 9.cxd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 10.e5 $\mathbb{W}d5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

$\mathbb{Q}g4!$

Less appetizing is 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $gxsf5$ is good for Black) 12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13.a4, which gives White a lot of play for his sacrificed pawn.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$



This intermediate move was of course anticipated, although it seems that Black will be swept off the board. The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 328.

In the next game we will see how even the supposedly dull Exchange Variation can give rise to an early conflict with difficult challenges for both sides.

Everything that begins well will end badly, and everything that begins badly will end even worse
– Rowe's Rule

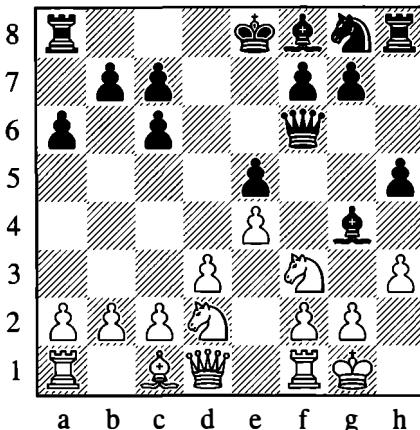
Oskar Piotrowski – Jerzy Sokolow

Correspondence 1971

Points to look for in this game:

- An unexpected refusal to recapture – 16... $\mathbb{W}f4!$?
- A crushing exchange sacrifice – 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$

**1.e4 e5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6 4. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6
5.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 6.h3 h5 7.d3 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**



8...b5?!

8...g5 9.b3 ♜xf3 10.♗xf3 ♜xf3 11.♘xf3 f6=

9.♗e1 ♜c5 10.c3 ♜d8 11.♗c2 ♜e7 12.b4 ♜a7 13.♗b2

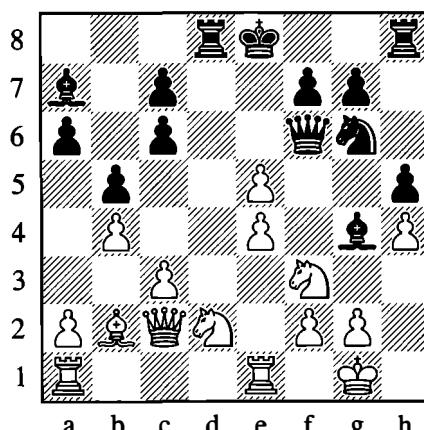
13.a4± was a bit better.

13...♗g6 14.d4 ♜f4 15.h4?!

The last chance to keep a slight advantage was 15.♗e3!±.

15...♗g6 16.dxe5

A key moment in the game. How many of us would pick up our knight and take back on e5 without thinking here?



16...♗f4?!

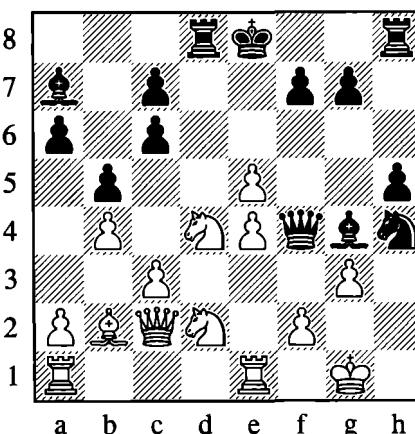
A most unexpected move, which provokes an immediate crisis. Even though Black is sacrificing a mere pawn – and then only temporarily – the text move is actually rather striking, as Black is resisting the almost reflex action of recapturing the pawn on e5.

Although the game continuation contains some instructive value and led to a quick success for Black, it should be mentioned that the more ‘normal’ 16...♝xe5 17.c4 ♜xd2! 18.♗xd2 ♜xf3† 19.gxf3 ♜xh4 ensures some advantage for Black. The text move keeps the tension and sets a nasty tactical trap, although I was under the impression that such ploys were not supposed to work in correspondence chess.

17.♘d4 ♜xh4 18.g3??

I was wrong, they do!

After 18.♗e3 ♜g5 19.♗g3 ♜xe5 20.♗f1 ♜d6 21.♗e3 ♜g6 White is a bit worse, but he is still in the game.



18...♜xd4! 19.cxd4

Or 19.gxf4 ♜xd2 20.♗xd2 ♜f3†+.

19...♗xd2 20.♗xc6† ♜d7 21.♗a8† ♜e7 22.♗xh8 ♜f3† 23.♔h1 ♜xf2 24.♗xh5 ♜g4 0-1

Post-game reflections

The sacrifice on move 18 may have been visually more striking, but it looks like the quieter sacrifice on move 16 may have unsettled White. When the opponent captures one of our pieces, we will often reach out and recapture without even contemplating an alternative course of action. When the situation is reversed and we take one of the enemy pieces, we likewise expect our opponent to recapture. We are also quite accustomed to the idea of a zwischenzug, or intermediate move before the planned recapture is executed. But calmly moving the attacked piece away, leaving the offending enemy piece unharmed, is a rare sight indeed.

Success is the result of behaviour that clearly contradicts the usual expectations about the behaviour of a successful person – Paturi Principle

The final two games of the chapter feature the good old Classical Defence.

Nikola Padevsky – Hrvoje Messing

Vrnjacka Banja 1973

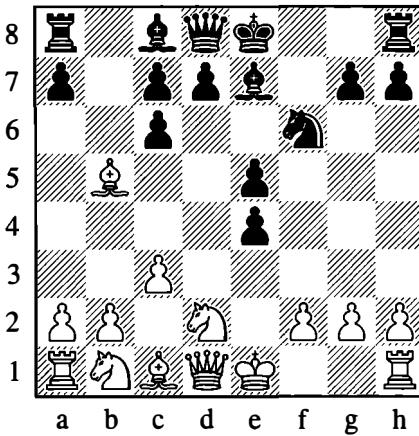
Points to look for in this game:

- Mobilizing the pawn mass – 9...d5 and 10...c5
- A missed opportunity to return the material – 16.♘e3! in the notes
- The knight penetrates all the way to the first rank – 21... ♘e1!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♗c5 4.c3 f5 5.d4 fxe4 6.♗fd2 ♗e7 7.d5 ♘f6?!

A spirited though not fully correct decision. In return for the knight Black gets a couple of central pawns and wins some time. It looks quite promising, but it isn't; nevertheless, one may always get some help from the opponent!

8.dxc6 bxc6



9.♗e2??

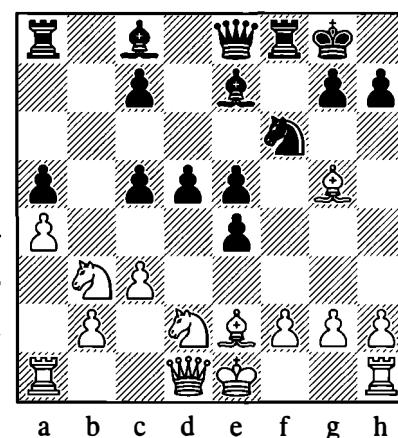
This “normal” move is the first sign that White is not going to defend his advantage fiercely.

A more cunning retreat is 9.♗a4, fixing the d-pawn for the time being.

9...d5 10.♘b3 c5

The pawn mass starts rolling and Black can already be happy with his position.

11.♗g5 0–0 12.♘1d2 a5 13.a4 ♗e8



14.♘f1?

Senseless manoeuvring. Natural and good is 14.0–0 ♗g6 15.♗h4 c4 16.♘c1.

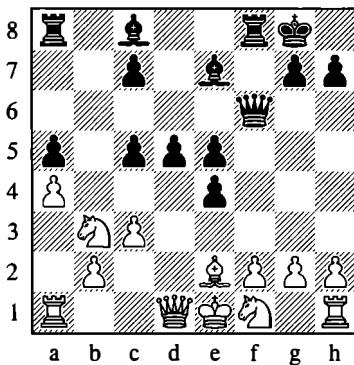
14... $\mathbb{W}g6\#$

Suddenly White is confronted with big problems. Nikola had not realized that Black could do this without first protecting the d5-pawn.

15.h4

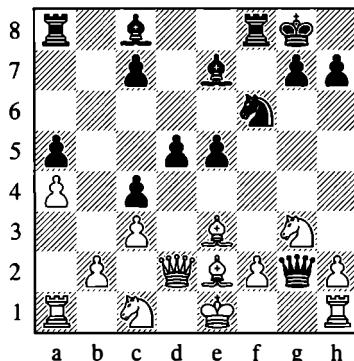
The best try under the circumstances.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$ $\mathbb{W}xf6!$



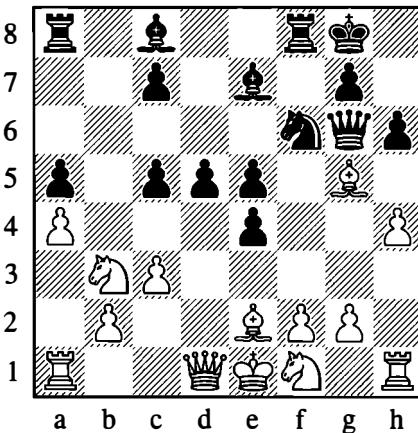
16.f3 (not 16. $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ c4 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{R}ab8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ leads to a desperate situation for White.

15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ is no better than the game move:
15...c4 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ e3 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ (17. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$)
17... $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$



18...d4! 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8\#$ and White is caught in the crossfire of Black's pieces.

15...h6

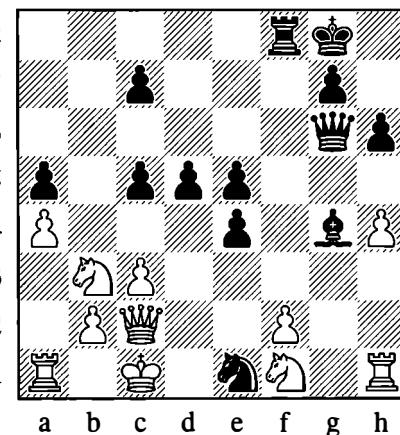
**16. $\mathbb{Q}h5?$**

Another mistake, this time decisive. It was necessary to give back material: 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}f3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ with some chances to defend.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ +

Now it's all over.

19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e1!$



Finishing the game in style. Now queen moves will be met by ... $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ followed by ... $\mathbb{W}xf2$, so White resigned. His extra rook was meaningless in the end, although at least he died with a full stomach!

0–1

Post-game reflections

When confronted by the wall of enemy pawns, White's play was reminiscent of a deer caught in the headlights of a truck. He failed to take resolute countermeasures and allowed his pieces to become scattered across the board as Black bulldozed his way through. The story of the game was remarkably similar to the Bronstein – Rojahn game from the previous chapter, and so it is quite fitting that our next example features a namesake of the great David, whose play in this game was truly inspired.

The most powerful weapon in chess is to have the next move – David Bronstein

Jose Gutierrez Castillo – Luis Bronstein

Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978

Points to look for in this game:

- The greedy 9.♕xg6?! wins a pawn but loses time
- Keeping the enemy king pinned down in the centre – 12...♝d3!
- Devastating the defences with 15...♞d5! and 17...♝e3!!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♗c5 4.c3 f5?!

5.♗xc6

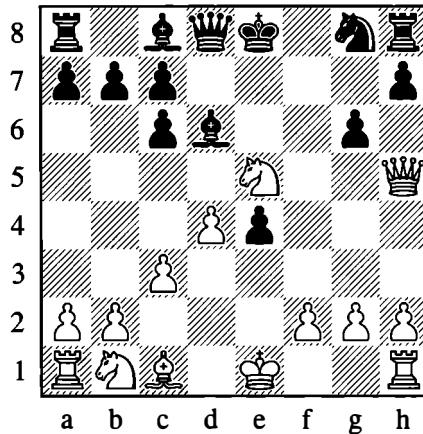
The most promising move is 5.d4, but that is another story.

5...dxc6 6.♘xe5 ♔d6 7.d4

The immediate 7.♗h5† g6 8.♘xg6 ♘f6 9.♗h4 ♜g8 gives Black a healthy lead in development.

7...fxe4 8.♗h5† g6

Offering a pawn sacrifice, but Black had no other choice.

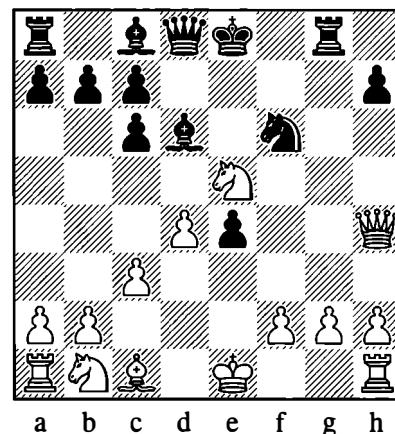


9.♘xg6?

This greedy move is risky. 9.♗e2 would have been better.

9...♞f6 10.♗h4 ♜g8 11.♘e5

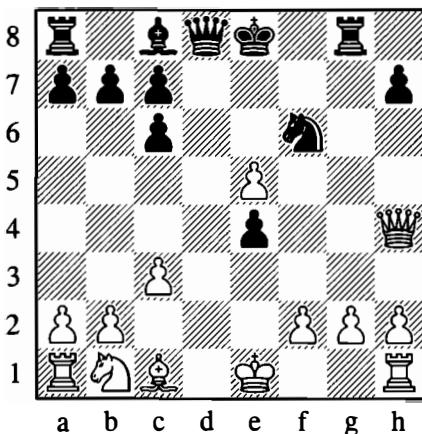
Black has obtained a promising lead in development, and now he must decide how to use it.



11...♝xe5??

Setting a lovely attacking idea in motion. The prosaic 11...♜xg2 would have given Black a healthy position, but the less famous Bronstein has something more ambitious in mind.

12.dxe5



12...Wd3!

This comes with the terrible threat of 13...Qg4, so White has no time to take the knight.

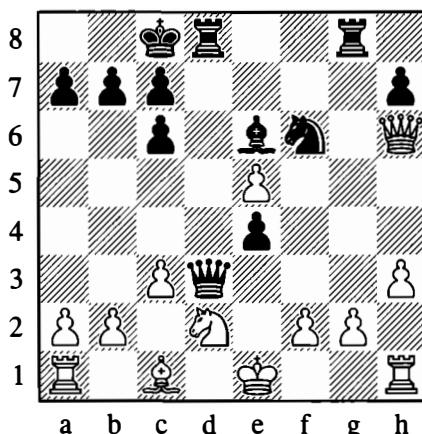
13.h3?

Something has gone wrong for White in this sharp variation. The best he can do here is 13.c4 Qg4 14.h3 Qxe5 15.Qc3 Qxg2 16.Wh5† Qg6†.

13...Qe6!

Threatening ...Qc4 and mate on e2.

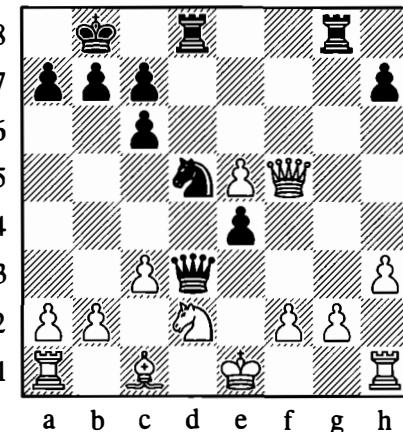
14.Qd2 0–0–0 15.Wh6



15...Qd5!

A splendid attacking move. Black allows his bishop to be captured with check in order to penetrate the white king's defensive shield.

16.Wxe6† Qb8 17.Wf5



17...Qe3!!

Sometimes a tempo is worth more than a kingdom. White will not be given time to relieve the defence by playing Wxe4.

18.fxe3

Losing quickly, but there was no other choice. The rest is easy.

18...Wxe3† 19.Qd1 Qxg2 20.Qc2 Qxd2† 21.Qxd2 Wxd2† 22.Qb3 Wxb2† 23.Qc4 Wb5†

0–1

Post-game reflections

This was a fabulous attacking game. It would be interesting to know how far ahead Black had calculated at various stages. I suspect that 12...Wd3! was mostly an instinctive decision to keep the white king pinned down in the centre – of course relying on the elementary tactical point that the f6-knight could not be taken immediately. His next few moves flowed quite naturally, before the spectacular 15...Qd5! and 17...Qe3!! sealed White's fate.

Chapter 3

The Semi-Open Games

In the semi-open games we can find many sacrifices related to a specific opening. From the start, White generally has a little more space, and at some point one side (generally Black) may lose time as well, due to the necessity to protect key squares. The combination of these two elements may build up a kind of dynamic potential energy, which might be converted into kinetic energy with the help of a suitable sacrifice.

King's Indian Attack

Octavio Troianescu – Tigran Petrosian

Bucharest 1953

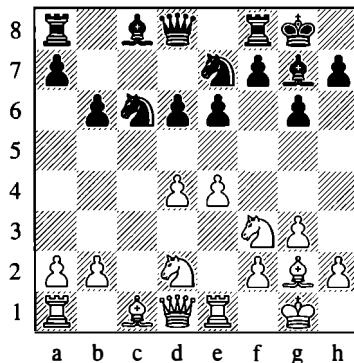
Points to look for in this game:

- Even quiet openings may lead to interesting sacrificial possibilities – see 10.d4!? in the notes
 - Missed opportunities by White – 19.Qb3! and 25.f5!
 - A trademark positional exchange sacrifice from Petrosian – 25...Exe4!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.♗bd2 g6 5.g3

8.g7 6.Qg2 e6 7.0-0 Qge7 8.Qe1 0-0 9.c3 b6 10.Qf1

The most interesting try is:
10.d4!? cxd4 11.cxd4



11..d5

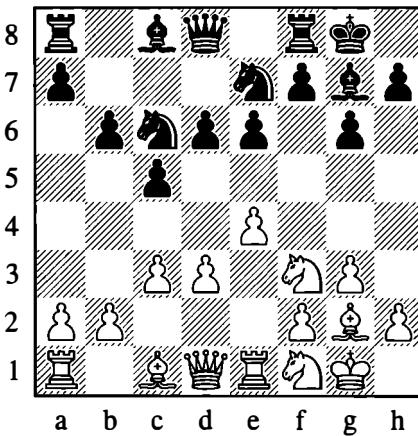
Taking the pawn is risky: 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13.e5 $\mathbb{B}b8$ (13...d5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$ leaves Black's dark-squared
 bishop misplaced) 14.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

12.e5 ♜a6 13.♘f1 ♜c8 14.♗e3 ♜c7 15.a3

This was Maus – Teske, Germany 1991.

15...h6!?

Although White has a space advantage, I believe that Black has enough resources to maintain the balance.



10... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$?

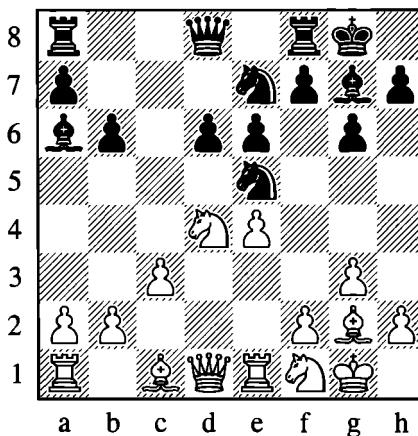
Petrosian takes aim at the d3-pawn, hoping to provoke a weakness of some kind.

11.d4 cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

White should have preferred the natural 12.cxd4. Perhaps he was afraid of 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$? (12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ is better, with a balanced position) but then 13. $\mathbb{W}a4!$ is excellent for White, for instance: 13... $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf1\pm$) 14. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$

12... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

Black has a pleasant position, as his pieces are somewhat better suited to this Sicilian structure.



13. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ h6

Of course not 13... $\mathbb{Q}d3??$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c6!+-.$

14. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

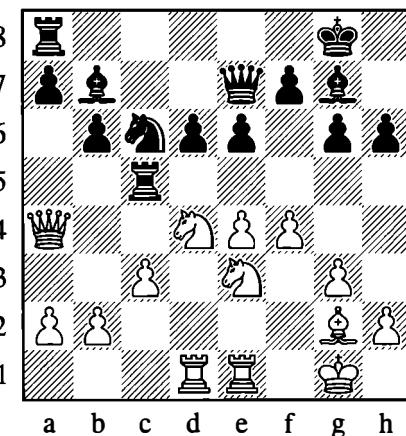
Parting with the bishop is unusual with such an elastic pawn structure. 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is preferable.

15... $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Although White has made a few odd decisions, his position is not so bad. Black should try to build his position slowly, beginning with a move like 17...a6. Instead the future World Champion embarks on a risky escapade.

17... $\mathbb{E}c5?!$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6?$

The black rook's adventure on the fifth rank is now liable to end up badly. 18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ was necessary.



19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6?$

The “Doc” (Dr. Octavio Troianescu, an eminent surgeon) misses a golden opportunity to embarrass the enemy rook with 19. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$. It is hard to guess what Petrosian had in mind. One possible continuation is: 19...b5 20. $\mathbb{W}a3$ b4 21. $\mathbb{W}a4!$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 22.e5 d5 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3+-.$

19... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b5

Black begins to creep forwards on the queenside. Objectively he does not really have

an advantage, but he has a clearly defined strategy of a minority attack supported by his bishop pair.

23... $\mathbb{E}d2$

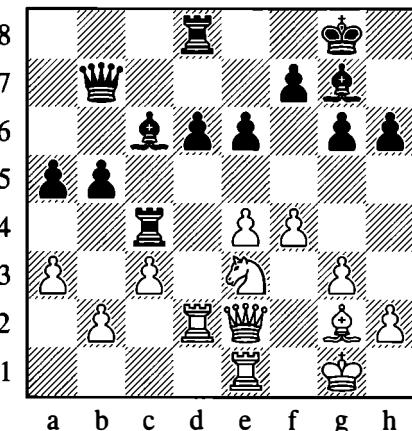
23. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ b4 24. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{B}h5$ 25.cxb4 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 26.e5 $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 27. $\mathbb{B}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}b7\ddagger$ should lead to equality.

The same can be said about 23. $\mathbb{W}f2$ h5 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}c4$ 25.a3.

23... $\mathbb{E}c4$ 24.a3 a5 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$

The critical moment of the game. Instead of this, White should have taken aggressive action on the kingside with 25.f5! in order to weaken the opponent's light squares. In that case his position would have been slightly preferable, and he should at the very least have obtained enough active play to keep Black suitably distracted from his queenside play.

Having missed the opportunity to attack Black on the light squares, White will soon be made to suffer on the same colour complex.



25... $\mathbb{E}xe4!$

A textbook example of a positional exchange sacrifice. In return for a small material investment Black achieves full domination over the centre and the light squares.

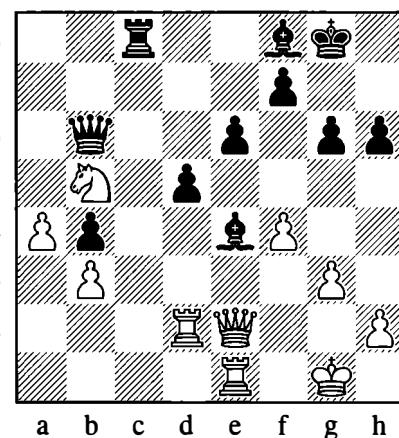
26. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ d5 28. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ b4!
Powerful play, eroding the enemy centre.

29.cxb4 axb4 30.a4 $\mathbb{W}a7$ 31. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{E}c8!$
Not 31... $\mathbb{W}xa4?$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ fxe6 33. $\mathbb{E}xe4\pm$.

32.b3?

Weakening the c3-square and depriving the knight of a good retreat. White should prefer 32. $\mathbb{E}a1$.

32... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 34. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b6\ddagger$



The concluding phase of the game can be found on page 333.

Modern Defence

Amador Rodriguez Cespedes – Tomislav Rakic

Vrnjacka Banja 1977

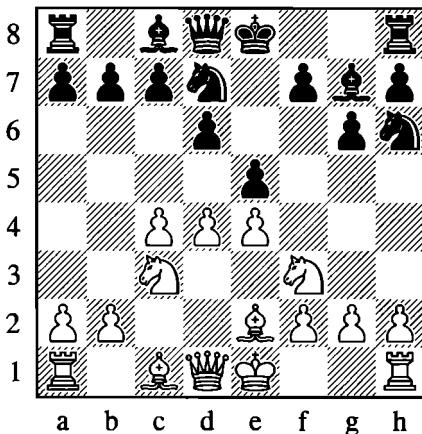
Points to look for in this game:

- Black's irregular opening play proves costly – 6... $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$, 10... $\mathbb{W}e7?!$ and 11... $\mathbb{g}5?$
- The first sacrifice – 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$
- The sting in the tail – 16.e5!

1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{B}g7$ 3.c4 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
e5 6. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$

This has been used by some strong players, but I am personally not a fan of this odd knight move.

It is safer to play 6... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$, transposing to a variation of the King's Indian. Alternatively, if Black wishes to keep the game in independent territory then 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$ is playable.



7.h4!?

Aiming for an instant benefit from the opponent's strange move.

It is also possible to play in classical style with 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.h3 0–0 9.0–0 c6 10.b4 when I much prefer White's position.

7...exd4 8.Qxd4 Qc5 9.h5 c6 10.Qf4 We7!?

A better option is 10... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and only now 11... $\mathbb{W}e7$, forcing the opponent to reply 12.f3. In that case, White's advantage is minimal.

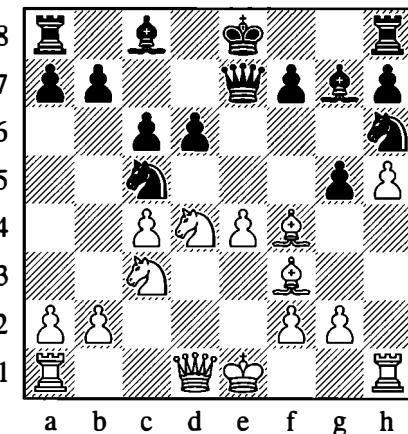
11.Qf3!?

11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ was a better way to take advantage of Black's previous move, for example: 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13.0–0–0±

11...g5?

Black could have made sense of his previous play with 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

$\mathbb{Q}e6\pm$, when his position is not so bad. Instead he makes a final reckless pawn move which allows a strong sacrifice.



12.Qxc6! bxc6 13.Qxd6

It looks as though White will simply regain his material while keeping two extra pawns and an overwhelming advantage, but actually it was necessary to look more deeply into the position.

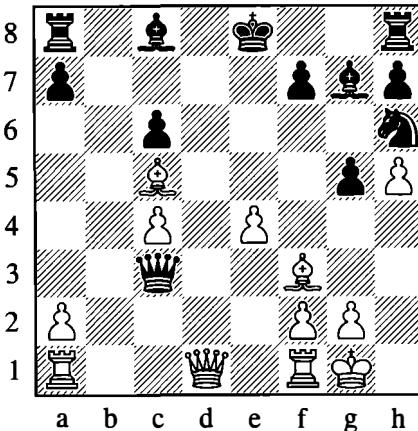
13...Wb7 14.Qxc5 Wxb2

The point. White's knight and rook are caught on the long diagonal, so Black will restore his material advantage.

15.0–0 Wxc3

It is possible that Black anticipated the earlier knight sacrifice, but calculated as far as the present position and believed his extra piece would be the deciding factor.

Indeed, Black is threatening to take the rook on a1, as well as to bring his queen back to assist the defence via c4, e5 or f6. But it turns out that White has either calculated further, or intuitively sensed that it would be possible to break through the defences. The next move confirms the correctness of his judgement.



16.e5!

Combining an attack on the c6-pawn with the obstruction of the long diagonal, while crucially preventing the black queen from defending via the e5- and f6-squares. Now everything falls into place for White.

16...Qd7 17.Qxc6! Qd8

17...Qxc6 18.Qd6+– is even worse.

18.Qd6 Qf8

18...Qf5 can be defeated in exactly the same way.

19.Qxd7† Qxd7 20.Qb8† Qd8 21.Qb5† Qd7 22.Qad1 Qxc5 23.Qxd7† Qf8 24.Qd8†

It is mate in two more moves.

1–0

Post-game reflections

It is obvious that Black's risky opening play completely backfired. Developing the knight on h6 and delaying castling played a role in his downfall, but the real culprit was the dreadful 11...g5? which led to a losing position by force. There is something to be said for playing provocatively in the opening (as your author can attest) but if you're going to play this way, you need to know where to draw the line.

The next game shows Black handling the Modern in an equally provocative manner, this time against a king's pawn set-up, which turns out to be equally ill-advised.

Michael Yeo – A Erdal-Smith

London 1979

Points to look for in this game:

- Too many pawn moves in the opening – 4...a6, 5...b5, 8...b4? and 9...d5?
- Opening the floodgates with 11.f5!
- A double knight sacrifice to destroy the king's defences – 12.Qxf7! and 14.Qxe6!

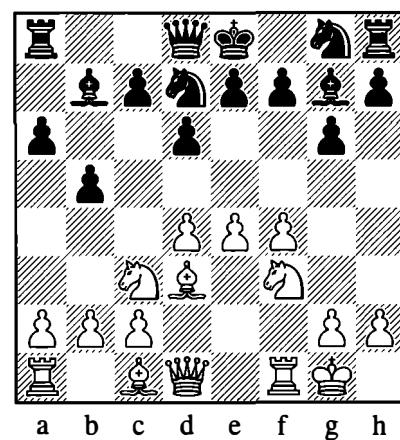
1.e4 g6 2.d4 Qg7 3.Qc3 d6 4.f4 a6 5.Qf3 b5

Black could consider building some fortifications with 5...e6±, but this would be less in the spirit of his counterattacking system.

6.Qd3 Qb7

6...Qd7! is more accurate, in order to implement the ...c7-c5 break as quickly as possible. This is the approach favoured by the Swedish GM Tiger Hillarp Persson, as explained in his book entitled *Tiger's Modern*.

7.0–0 Qd7



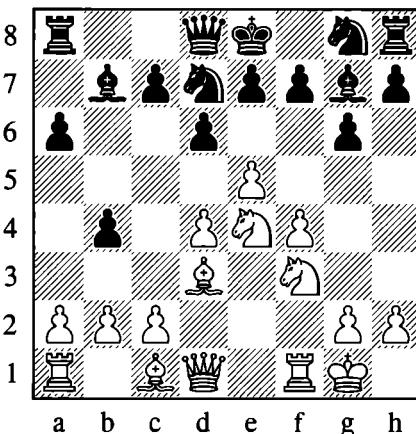
8.e5!

Starting an attack.

8...b4?

Forcing the knight to an attacking position; this is already a grave error.

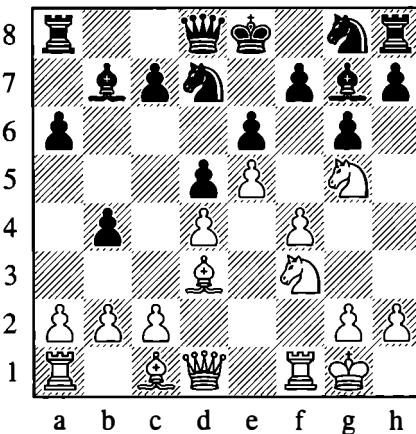
After 8... $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$ Black is still in the game.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ **9...d5?**

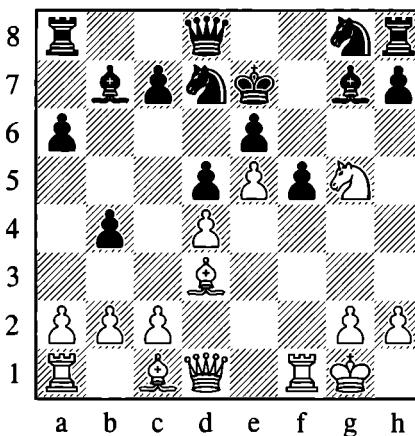
Once again 9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ was necessary.

10. $\mathbb{Q}eg5$ e6

Black must have been pinning his hopes on his solid wall of pawns on the light squares, but he is set for a rude awakening.

**11.f5!**

This brings all of White's pieces to life, and prepares to rip open the black kingside with a cascade of sacrifices.

11...gxf5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ **14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$**

Destroying the last of the king's defences, and eliminating all possible doubt about the outcome of the game.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}df6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$

There were plenty of ways to win, but this calm move makes a good impression.

17... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow!$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$

Post-game reflections

This little game highlights the dangers for Black in many semi-open games, when he insists on developing the queenside without first ensuring a safe place for his monarch. No further comments are required – what could I add that would not risk offending the reader? It can all be found in any handbook for beginners!

Scandinavian Defence

In a chess game, the winner is the player who makes the last mistake but one – Tartakower

Ariel Mengarini – Eric Schiller

New York 1980

Points to look for in this game:

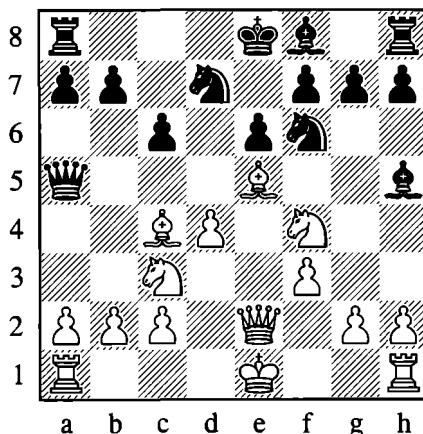
- 7... $\mathbb{Q}h5$?! misplaces the bishop, but provokes a more serious weakening with 12.g4? and 13.h4.
 - A missed tactical opportunity – 13... $\mathbb{Q}a3$!
 - It's not always advisable to take every piece on offer – 19.fxg4?

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 3. $\mathfrak{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 4.d4 c6
5. $\mathfrak{Q}c4$ $\mathfrak{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathfrak{Q}ge2$ $\mathfrak{Q}g4$ 7.f3 $\mathfrak{Q}h5?$!

The bishop could fall into danger here. Safer is 7... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $e6\pm$.

8.♕f4 ♜d8 9.♕e5 ♔bd7 10.♔f4 e6 11.♗e2
♗a5

A quick way for Black to finish his development is: 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 0-0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$



12.g4

12.0-0-0 is better and would retain a slight advantage.

12...g6

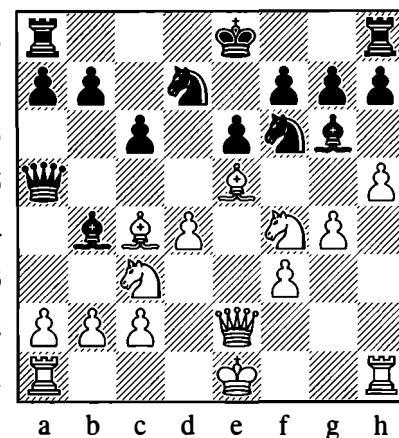
The startling 12...~~a~~^b3! would have given White a serious headache.

13.h4? ♜b4?

With the other bishop no longer attacked, 13... $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ would have been even stronger than on the previous move. Clearly both sides were blind to this possibility.

14.h5

The game is reaching an early crisis, in quite thematic fashion for the Scandinavian. It is clear that he will have to take on c3 and give up his bishop in one way or another, but how should he go about doing it?



14... Qxe5?

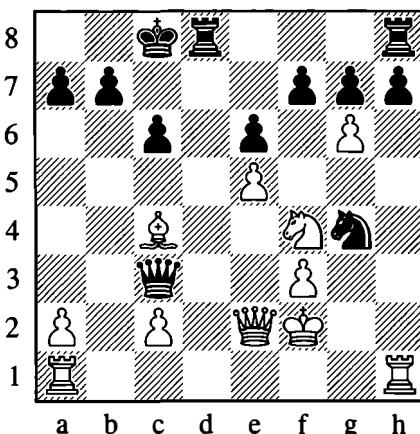
More accurate was 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 15.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xc3\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 17.fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$. Black has two pawns for a piece, a sounder pawn structure and a safer king, which adds up to fair compensation. After the game continuation his position should be worse.

**15.dxe5 ♜xc3† 16.bxc3 ♜xc3† 17.♔f2 0-0-0
18.hxg6**

18.exf6 gives Black fewer options: 18... $\mathbb{B}d2$ 19.hxg6 $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 22.gxf7 $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$

18... $\mathbb{Q}xg4\uparrow$

18... $\mathbb{B}d2$ 19.fxg6 transposes to the previous note and may have been objectively stronger, but the text move ended up working to Black's advantage in the game.



19.fxg4?

A serious error of judgement. White should have preferred 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ $\mathbb{B}d2$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ when his extra piece gives him good winning chances.

19... $\mathbb{B}d2\uparrow$

White will get a rook and two pieces for a queen, but his weak king and numerous loose pawns swing the balance in Black's favour.

20.gxf7?!

20. $\mathbb{B}ae1$ was a better chance.

20... $\mathbb{B}xe2\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$?

21... $\mathbb{B}f8!$ would give a decisive advantage.

22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$?

The last mistake; the position can be held with 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}f6\uparrow$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 24. $\mathbb{B}ae1\uparrow$.

22... $\mathbb{B}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{B}xf7$

0–1

Post-game reflections

This was rather a messy game, with numerous errors from both sides. Early in the game Black failed to play the troublesome ... $\mathbb{B}a3!$ move, and I would advise the reader to make a mental note of this trick as the same idea can crop up in several different openings. Shortly after, we reached a thematic situation for the Scandinavian where Black was forced to sacrifice his trapped bishop for a few pawns. There are no hard and fast rules about the best way to give up this piece, but the game and notes pointed out the kinds of resources available to both sides in these positions.

In the next game, another Scandinavian Defence, the story does not end as happily for Black.

Robert Fischer – William Addison

Palma de Mallorca 1970

Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ A risky pawn grab – 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$
- ◆ A powerful light-square strategy beginning with 12.d5!
- ◆ An exchange sacrifice to end all resistance – 21. $\mathbb{B}xd5!$

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$

A reliable but slightly passive alternative to the main line of 3... $\mathbb{B}a5$ and the currently fashionable 3... $\mathbb{W}d6$!?

4.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$!?

Safer is 5...c6.

6. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c8$

Black could have considered sacrificing a pawn with 6...e6!?, 7. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8. $\mathbb{B}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0, when he has healthy development

and a generally harmonious position, although it probably does not quite amount to full compensation.

7.♕g5!

Fischer sacrifices a pawn in order to maximize his attacking chances. Every piece will be deployed on its most active position, and no time will be wasted.

7...♗xc2

This move is playable but it loses time and opens avenues for the white pieces. More circumspect is 7...♗g6 8.♕ge2 ♜bd7 9.0-0 e6 10.♗fe1 ♘d6 11.♗f4±.

8.♗c1 ♗g6 9.♕ge2

White is not in a hurry to force anything. Instead he finishes mobilizing his pieces and challenges Black to do the same.

9...♜bd7 10.0-0 e6

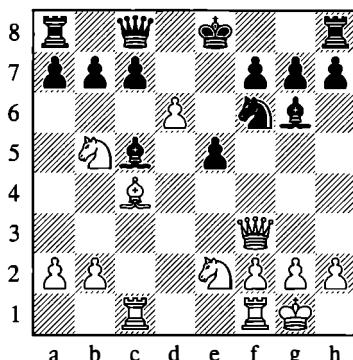
10...♜b6 11.♗b3 c6 was a better defensive try although 12.♗e3± still gives White the upper hand.

11.♗xf6!

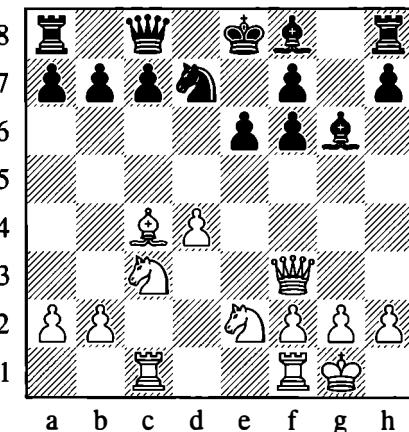
This poses an interesting dilemma to Black.

11...gxsf6

An interesting exchange sacrifice could have kept White's advantage within reasonable limits: 11...♝xf6 12.d5 e5 13.♗b5 ♘c5 14.d6



14...0-0! 15.♗xc7 ♘xd6 16.♗xa8 ♜xa8
17.♗fd1 ♜b8 18.h3 e4±



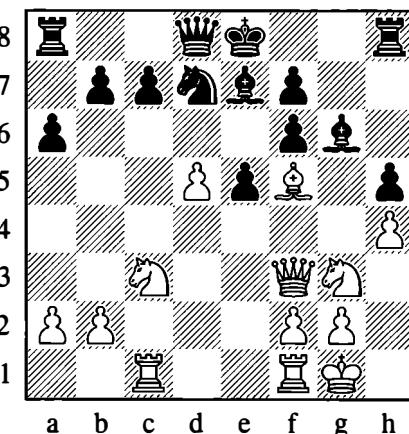
12.d5!

This forces Black to make important positional concessions on the light squares.

12...e5 13.♗b5 ♜e7

13...f5 14.h4 h5 15.♗g3±

14.♗g3 a6 15.♗d3 ♜d8 16.h4 h5 17.♗f5

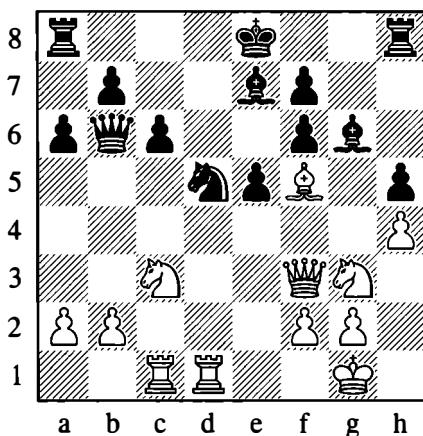


17...♝b6

Black cannot break the strong grip on the light squares, which is practically suffocating him. For example: 17...♝f8 18.♗fd1 ♜g7 19.♗ce4 ♜b6 20.♗xc7 ♜xc7 21.d6 and White's advantage is nearly decisive.

18.♕ce4 ♕xd5?

Black could have survived for longer with 18...♝c8 19.♝c3 ♔d6, although his position is still unenviable.

19.♗fd1 c6 20.♘c3 ♜b6**21.♗xd5!**

Leading to an instant kill.

21...cx_d5 22.♕xd5 ♜xb2 23.♗b1 ♜xa2

24.♗xb7

1–0

Post-game reflections

Black's problems in the above game were not the result of a single blunder, but rather an accumulation of small mistakes. The slightly unfortunate combination of 3...♝d8 and 5...♝f5?! gave White an early initiative, and the subsequent decision to grab a pawn with 7...♝xc2 left Black some way behind in development. Even then his position was far from hopeless, and just as we have seen in several other games, he could have kept a playable position by making a material sacrifice of his own with 11...♛xf6!. Once he missed that opportunity, Fischer developed a horrible clamp on the light squares and Black had practically no chance to save himself.

Chapter 4

Alekhine's Defence

The idea of Alekhine's Defence is to tempt White into advancing several pawns in the centre. Then Black can attack them more easily with his pawns and pieces, because when the enemy is closer, the punch is stronger. I call this a "trench warfare" policy. In the sixties and seventies, the Four Pawns Attack was relatively popular, and this often allowed Black a strong counterattack. In more recent decades there has been a change of approach by White – instead of gambling for a big advantage and risking being crushed, he is happy with a small but steady edge. This approach has made the Alekhine less attractive for Black and its popularity in tournament practice has diminished; nowadays it is mainly used as a surprise weapon.

The truth always wins... in three cases out of seven – Alley's Axiom

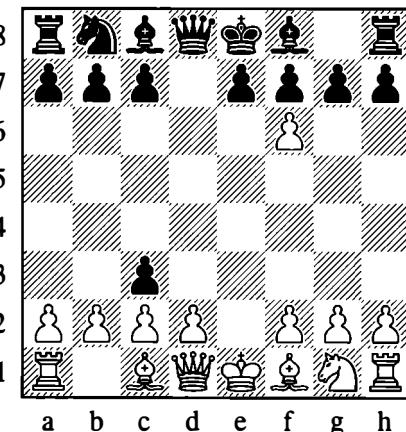
Thomas Casper – Heckert

East German Championship 1975

Points to look for in this game:

- Four queens on the board after just seven moves!
- Excessive greed from Black – 7... $\mathbb{Q}xa2??$
- White's lead in development proves decisive

1.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 3.e5 d4 4.exf6 dxc3



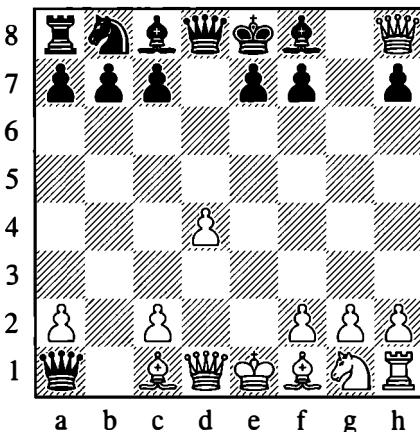
5.d4?

The normal continuation is 5.fxg7 cxd2† 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ (Slightly worse is 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\bar{f}$ although, oddly enough, White has a healthy plus score from this position. Perhaps the unbalanced pawn structure stimulates the attacker's imagination!) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd2\bar{f}$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 8.0–0–0 with a minimal advantage for White.

5...cx b 2 6.fxg7 bx a 1=

6... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$! 7. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ c5 is a safe way for Black to secure an edge.

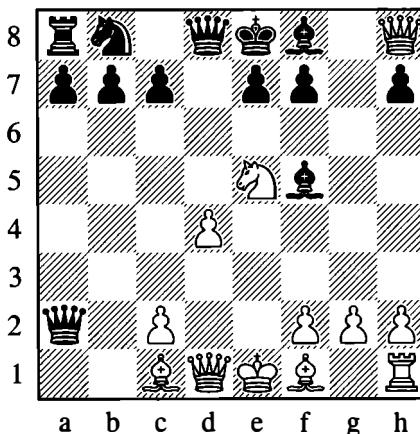
7.gxh8=

**7... $\mathbb{W}xa2?$**

Rather a risky pawn grab. Safer would have been 7... $\mathbb{W}c3\uparrow$, forcing a queen exchange and putting a dampener on White's attacking ambitions.

8. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f5$

Better was 8... $\mathbb{W}dd5!$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ when Black is still holding his own.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ **9... $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow?$**

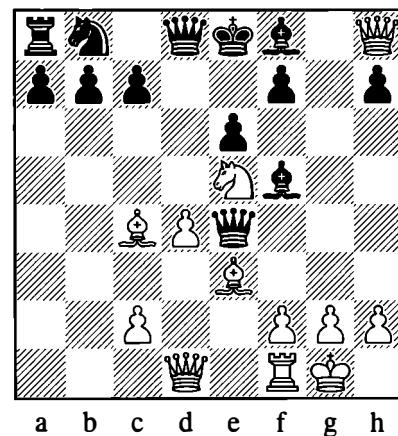
Black loses more and more time.

Taking the c-pawn was a bad idea. 9... $\mathbb{W}xc2?$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ wins, and 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc2?!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is also extremely dangerous for Black.

However, Black could have obtained better defensive chances with 9...e6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$.

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}ad5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}e4\uparrow$

Amazingly, Black has made nine out of his first eleven moves with the same piece: a humble pawn which promoted to a queen in record-breaking time. That achievement aside, he has almost completely neglected the rest of his pieces, and he will soon pay the penalty.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e6 13.0–0**13... $\mathbb{W}dh4?$**

Black seems to be completely fixated on his queens, to the detriment of all his other pieces. He should have tried developing his knight, although it must be said that his position is beyond saving if White plays accurately.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

15. $\mathbb{W}g8!$ was even deadlier, but the text is more than good enough.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$

White includes all his pieces in the attack.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}e4$

Rather a humiliating way to prolong the game.

19. $\mathbb{W}d2$ f6 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xe1\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xe1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}g8\uparrow$
 1-0

Post-game reflections

The early pawn promotions on a1 and h8 gave this game an almost surreal character, and it seems that Black never adjusted to the unusual situation on the board. The pawn grab 7... $\mathbb{W}xa2!$ was not such a bad move in itself, but it was symptomatic of Black's fixation with his queens, and it was the first step along the path of grave time-wasting. It was rather like watching a beginner flailing around with his queen, except that here there were two of them! Meanwhile White developed his pieces smoothly and broke through effortlessly.

No move is as good as it seems at first sight – paraphrasing Eliot's Observation

Albin Planinc – Vlatko Kovacevic

Yugoslav Championship 1978

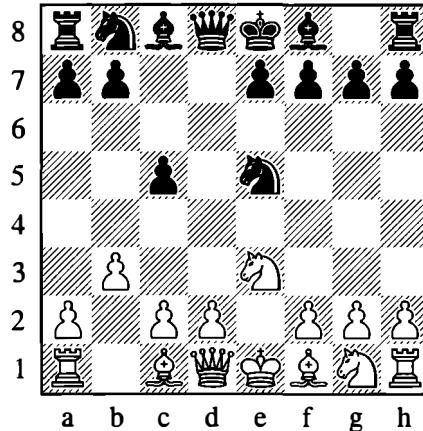
Points to look for in this game:

- An intuitive piece sacrifice – 12.fxe6!?
- Defending along the seventh rank – see 16.. $\mathbb{E}a7!$ in the notes
- Finishing with tactics – 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

1.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 3. e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c5

GM Kovacevic was a strong technical player and an endgame expert (he even beat Fischer once), but main line theory and sacrificial play were not his strengths. By contrast, wild complications made Planinc feel like a fish in water.

6.b3



6... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$

Planinc's spectacular success in this game attracted some converts, but just a year later your author found a more convincing retort: 6... $\mathbb{Q}ec6$! 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e5 8. g3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5! 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12. d3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2?!$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 15. 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ b5 19. $\mathbb{Q}df1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 20. f4 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f2$ exf4 22. gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}hg1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ 25. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}fe7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}cd1$ $\mathbb{Q}bxc2!$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ Groszpeter – Suba, Kecskemet 1979.

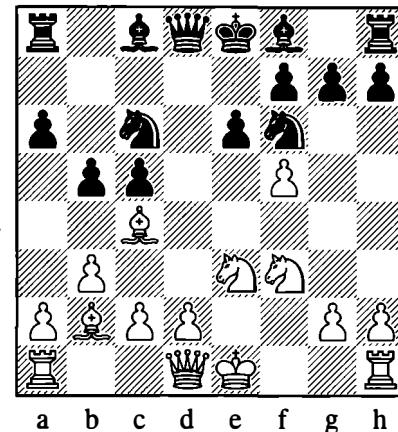
7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a6?!

Rather slow. 7...e6 is more to the point.

8. f4! $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6 11. f5?!

11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. a4! was enough for a positional edge, but this is hardly Planinc's style.

11...b5



12.fxe6!

A promising piece offer, although the exclamation mark is perhaps a bit generous as White had effectively committed himself to the sacrificial path on the previous move.

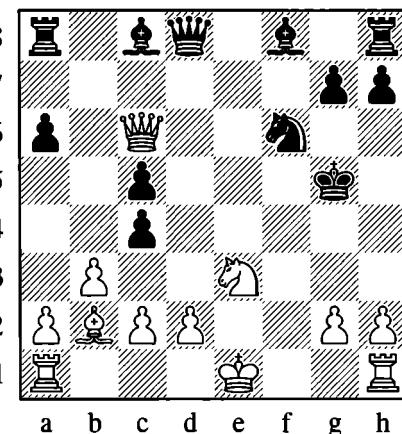
12...bxc4 13.exf7† ♖xf7 14.♗g5† ♖g6?!

Technically this move is okay, but from a practical standpoint 14...♖g8 would have been safer. In that case White retains enough compensation and will probably end up with three pawns and reasonable play for the piece, but Black's position is also playable and the chances of him being caught in a mating attack would greatly diminish.

15.♘f3 ♖xg5?!

Kovacevic must have been in a particularly uncompromising mood!

15...♗d7 also deserved consideration. In that case White keeps the dangerous knight on g5, while Black has the extra possibility of ...♗d4, gaining time while blocking the dangerous bishop.

16.♗xc6**16...♗d7**

I think the best defence would have been 16...♗a7! 17.0–0 cxb3 18.axb3 h5, when

White has ongoing compensation but no clear way through. Black's desire to win a tempo is understandable, but his chosen continuation leaves two key squares, d5 and f7, inadequately defended.

17.♗f3 h5

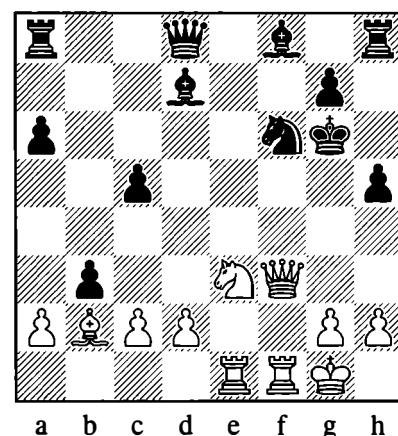
17...♗d6 18.0–0 is also dangerous.

18.0–0 cxb3?

This is hardly the time for pawn-counting! 18...♗g6 was essential.

19.♗ae1!

White correctly ignores the pawn and mobilizes his final attacking unit.

19...♗g6**20.♗d5! ♗h6?!**

Losing quickly, but by now there is no salvation, for example: 20...♗xd5 21.♗f7† ♗h6 22.♗e5+–

21.♗xf6 gxsf6 22.♗xf6 ♗c8 23.♗b2 ♗f5**24.♗e8!**

1–0

Post-game reflections

In this game the great technician Kovacevic allowed himself to be drawn into an early

firefight, playing right into the hands of his opponent who thrived on wild complications. Allowing his king to be enticed halfway up the board left scant margin for error, and the terrible move 18...cxb3? was enough to seal his fate. Planning on the other hand played a perfect game for a player with his attacking style. I doubt that he calculated more than a few moves ahead when making the sacrifice, as his intuition would have told him he would obtain a dangerous and ongoing attack for the piece.

The tactician knows all things about a few positions, while the strategist knows a few things about all positions – paraphrasing Donsen's Law

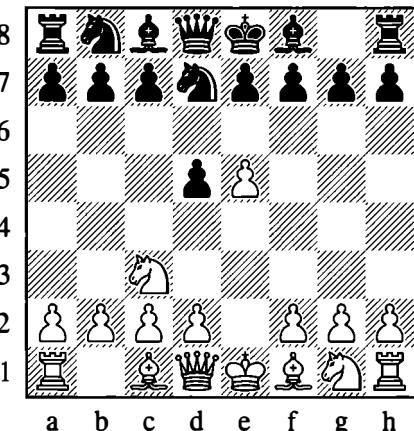
Juan Bellon Lopez – Vlatko Kovacevic

Karlovac 1979

Points to look for in this game:

- An “obstructing” pawn sacrifice – 4.e6!?
- Excessive provocation – 5...g6?
- A powerful exchange sacrifice – 8.Qxh5!

1.Qc3 Qf6 2.e4 d5 3.e5 Qfd7



4.e6!?

After starting as a Romanian Opening¹, we have now transposed to the Spielmann

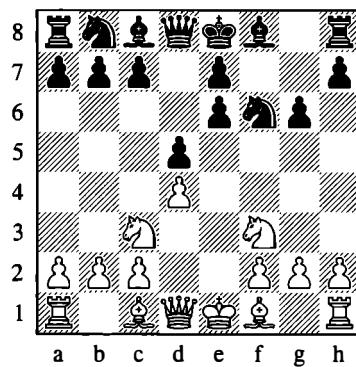
Variation of Alekhine's Defence. By investing a pawn early White hopes to obstruct the development of his opponent's kingside pieces.

A more refined way of entering the gambit seen in the game is first to play 4.d4, and if Black answers with the active 4...c5, only then to advance 5.e6!. Of course that approach allows Black the opportunity to transpose to a main line of the French Defence with 4...e6.

4...fxe6 5.d4 g6?

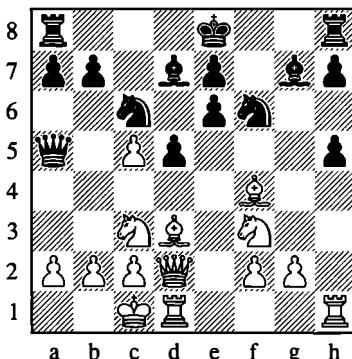
I think one must be especially careful with the moves immediately following an opponent's intuitive sacrifice. Black's choice in the game is not the best answer; on the contrary, it creates a fresh and obvious target.

a) 5...Qf6 is safest, for example 6.Qf3 g6 and now:



a1) 7.Qe5 Qg7 8.h4?! c5 9.h5 cxd4 10.h6 dxc3 11.hxg7 Qg8 12.Wd4 Qbd7 13.Qb5 Wb6 14.Qxd7†?! (14.Wxb6) 14...Qxd7 15.bxc3 Wxd4 16.cxd4 Qxg7† and White's compensation might be just enough for one pawn, but unfortunately he is two pawns down, Suttles – Mecking, Sousse 1967.

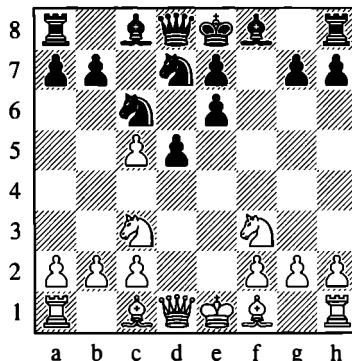
a2) 7.h4 is a bit better but still unsatisfactory: 7...Qg7 8.Qd3 c5 9.dxc5 Qc6 10.h5 gxh5 (10...e5?! 11.Qb5 Qg4 is a decent alternative) 11.Qf4 Wa5 12.Wd2 Qd7 13.0–0–0?! (13.a3)



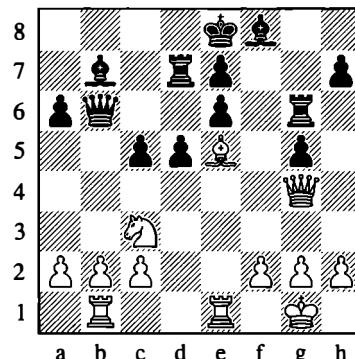
13...0-0 (13...d4 14.Qb5 Wxa2 15.c4 dxc3 16.Qc7† Rf8 17.bxc3?) 14.Qb1 Wxc5 15.Qg3 Qg4?! (15...Rac8=) 16.Qxh5 Qxc3?? 17.Wxc3? (missing a forced mate starting with 17.Qxh7†) ½–½ Nisipeanu – C. Horvath, Balatonbereny 1996.

a3) 7.Qb5† c6 8.Qd3 Qg7 9.We2 is possibly the best continuation, but White cannot expect more than equality.

b) 5...c5 is the most frequent answer and is worth a look, especially as this position may be reached by the move-order trick mentioned in the previous note. After 6.dxc5 Qc6 7.Qf3 we again have three branches:



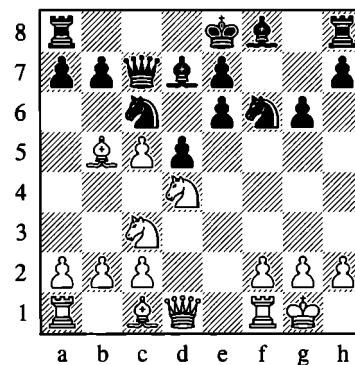
b1) 7...Qxc5? 8.Qb5 Wd6 9.0-0 Qd7 10.Qe1 a6! 11.Qxc6 bxc6 12.Wd4 c5?! 13.Wa4 Qb7 14.Qf4 Wb6 15.Qe5 Qd8 16.Qab1 g5 17.Qxd7 Qxd7 18.Qe5 Qg8 19.Wg4 Qg6



20.b4! Wc6? 21.bxc5 d4 22.Qe4 Wd5 23.Qxd4 Qc6 (23...Wxd4 24.Qxb7!) 24.Qb8†+– and White soon won in Holler – Vaganian, Bad Woerishofen 1991.

b2) 7...Qf6? 8.Qb5 Qd7 9.0-0 g6 10.Qe1 Qg7 11.Qxc6 bxc6 12.Qd4 0-0 13.Qg5 h6 14.Qh4 e5 15.Qxe5 g5?! (15...Qb8) 16.Qg3 Qg4 17.Qe6+– Spielmann – Domenech, Sitges 1934.

b3) 7...g6 8.Qd4 Qf6
This seems the most reasonable defence.
9.Qb5 Wc7! 10.0-0 Qd7

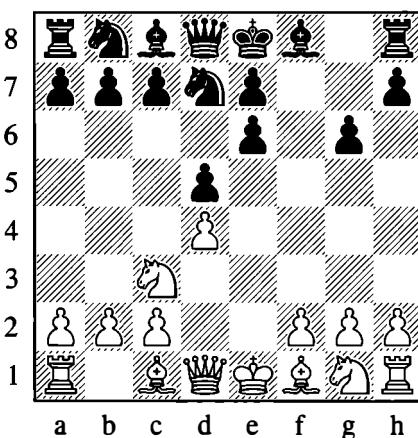


11.Qe1!
11.Qxc6? bxc6 12.f4 Qg7 13.Qe1 0-0 14.Qxe6† (14.Qxe6?) 14...Qae8 15.Wd3 Qg4 16.Qe2 e5 17.Qxe5 Qxe5 18.Qf3 Qf5 19.Qd2 Qxe2 20.Qxe2 Qe4 0-1 Kuyindzhi – Alburt, USSR 1974.

11...e5 12.Qf3 d4

12...e4 13.Qg5 0–0–0 14.Qxf6 exf6
 15.Qxd5 Wa5 16.a4 exf3 (16...Qf5 17.c3 exf3 18.Wxf3±) 17.b4!±
 13.Qe2 Qg7 14.c3 Qg4 15.cxd4 Qxf3 16.gxf3
 0–0–0 17.Wb3±

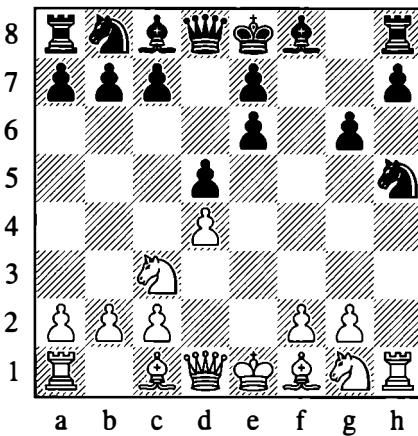
It seems that White can maintain a small plus in all these lines after 5...c5, and even formidable Alekhine players (such as “Rufik” Vaganian) have fallen victim to this variation. For this reason I would recommend 5...Qf6! as a more reliable antidote to the gambit.



6.h4!

Obvious and strong. White wastes no time hitting his opponent where it hurts.

6...Qf6 7.h5 Qxh5



8.Qxh5!

Of course! This is exactly the kind of sacrifice that one can play on purely intuitive grounds.

8...gxh5 9.Wxh5† Qd7 10.Qf3

10.Qxd5! would have been even stronger, as after 10...exd5 11.Wxd5† Qe8 12.Wh5† Qd7 13.Qf3 White has a huge attack.

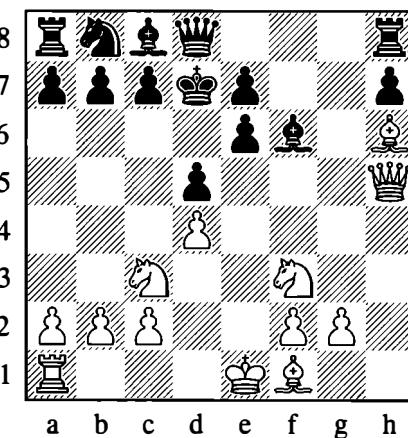
Black does better to decline the offer with 10...Qg7, but then 11.Qf4 leaves White clearly better.

10...Qg7

10...Qc6 gives White a pleasant choice between 11.Qxd5 and 11.Qb5.

11.Qh6 Qf6?

Too slow. Black should have played 11...Wg8!, mobilizing his queen and creating an escape square for the king on d8. Then after 12.Qxg7 Wxg7 13.Qe5† Qd8 14.Qf7† Qd7 15.Qxh8 Wxh8 16.0–0–0 White’s position is preferable, but Black is still fighting.



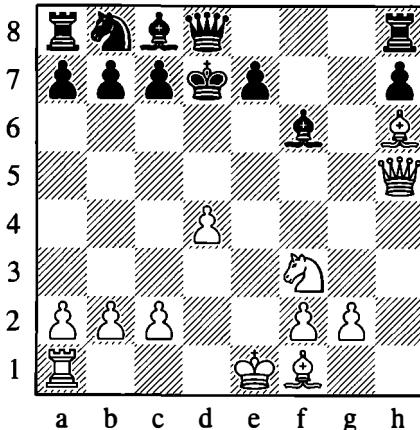
12.Qxd5!

A smashing breakthrough. The knight had nothing better to do, so it gives its life in order to blast through the black king’s defensive shield.

12...exd5

12... $\mathbb{W}g8!$? might have held out for longer, but Black’s position is just horrible.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$



15.0–0–0?!

This is an aesthetic way to continue the attack, but a far more effective method was 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$! $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16.dxe5 when Black can almost resign.

Despite being less accurate, the game continuation should still be good enough. White has a huge lead in development and of course the big threat is $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$. Black is a rook up and has a respite of one move in which to provide shelter for his king. But when the defender’s pieces are in such a huddle, one move is often not enough.

15...c6!

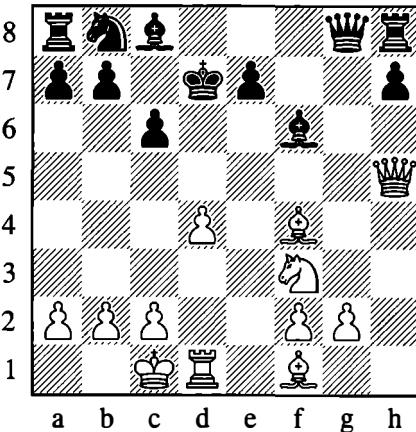
The only chance.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f4?$

The Spanish player does not rise to the occasion. White should first play 16.d5! c5, and then 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ would win quickly.

16... $\mathbb{W}g8?$

It is Black’s turn for a mistake. After 16... $\mathbb{W}f8$! he might still survive.



17. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$

Now it’s all over!

17... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

Or 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18.dxe5# $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19.e6# $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e5\#$.

18. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xc8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$

21. $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$

1–0

Post-game reflections

Perhaps the early 4.e6! sacrifice took Black by surprise, as he reacted poorly. We saw in the notes that the correct response after 4...fxe6 5.d4 was the flexible 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, meeting 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ with 6...g6 when Black should be fine. By contrast, the immediate 5...g6? just gave White an easy target and the rest of the game was largely one-sided, despite White’s inaccuracies near the end. It is worth paying attention to the superior defensive plan of 11... $\mathbb{W}g8!$ as indicated in the notes, as well as the powerful $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ sacrifice which brutally highlighted the plight of the black king.

The following aphorism does not apply only to the game below; it could refer to a good half of the games in this book.

To avoid losing material, many a person has lost the game – paraphrasing Savielly Tartakower

Nigel Short – Jan Timman

Tilburg 1991

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ A missed opportunity for Black to sacrifice a pawn – 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$!
- ♦ A far-sighted structural sacrifice – 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ and 18.b3!

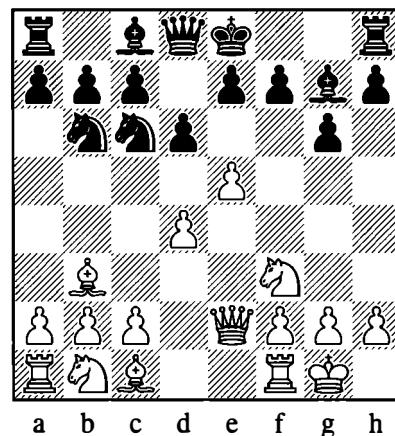
I must come clean and admit that this game does not feature a single material sacrifice, positional or otherwise (apart from the very end of the game where a rook is left hanging in order to force an immediate mate, which hardly counts; see page 326 for details). So why does such a game feature in the book? May lightning strike my head!

Before addressing that issue, I must also emphasize that the game itself is extremely famous, and I guess that most readers will know it already. For this reason I thought it especially important to approach the game in a radically different way to most other commentators. Chess annotators are attracted by clearly visible combinations, and have a tendency to present the winner as a hero. On this occasion I am more interested in looking at the game from the loser's point of view.

When analysing the game, I was able to identify three occasions when Black, burdened by difficulties, had the possibility of reducing his arrears in development and quietening down White's attack. All three solutions involved positional sacrifices. The first occasion required just a pawn sacrifice, the second an exchange sacrifice, and finally we could have seen a queen sacrifice. Instead of looking from the victor's point of view, focusing on these missed defensive opportunities

can be equally enjoyable and possibly more instructive for the reader, without lessening our appreciation of the winner's superb achievement.

1.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 3.d4 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.0–0



8...0–0

This move is not an outright mistake, but in a way it can be viewed as the root of all Black's subsequent problems.

A more enterprising approach is 8...dxe5 9.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ axb6 with equality, Rosito – Zarnicki, Villa Gesell 1997.

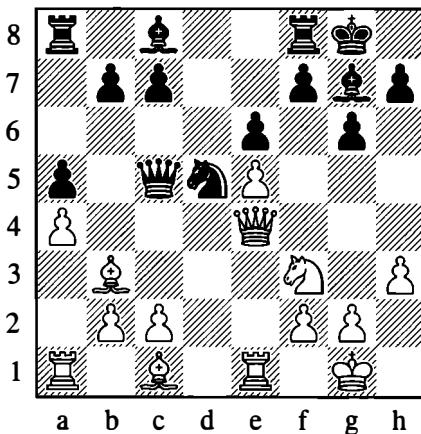
It should be noted that 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$ is a blunder due to 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+!$.

9.h3

The bishop was now threatening to come to g4, so of course White prevents it! I will skip through the next few moves quickly as the later parts of the game are more interesting for our purposes.

9...a5 10.a4 dxe5 11.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e4$

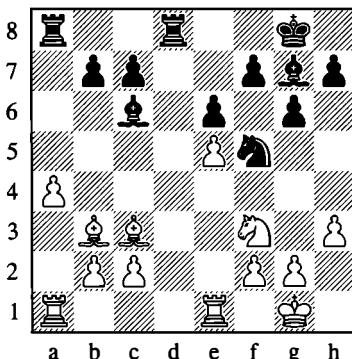
White makes good use of his extra space, and quietly prepares the kingside attack.



16... ♜b4

Black is trying to prevent the transfer of the white queen to h4, but Short is prepared to ruin his pawn structure and give up the bishop pair just to gain that square for his queen.

If Timman had foreseen the coming storm on the kingside, as well as along the d-file, he might have considered a more radical method of bringing his men into play. He could have done this here by giving up a pawn: 16... ♜d7? 17.♕h4 ♜c6 18.♕h6 ♜e7! 19.♕e3 ♜b4 20.♕xb4 axb4 21.♕c5 ♜fe8 22.♕xb4 ♜f5 23.♕c3 ♜ed8



The sacrifice has provoked a fundamental change in the situation. Black has the idea

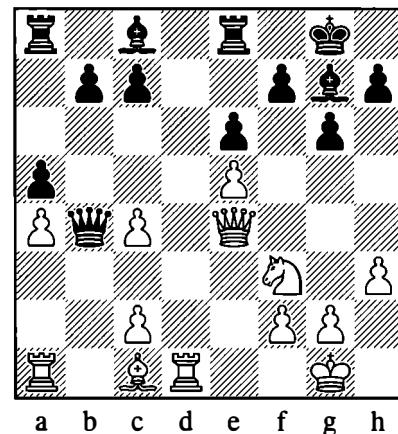
of 24... ♜xf3 followed by either 25... ♜d4 or 25... ♜h4, and the position should be considered almost equal.

17. ♜c4! ♜b6 18. b3!

Though not strictly a sacrifice in the material sense, this move fits in rather well with the overall theme of the book. White is making a huge structural concession in order to make gains in other areas, but without any immediate payoff.

18... ♜xc4 19. bxc4 ♜e8 20. ♜d1!

This creates big problems for Black regarding the development of his queen’s bishop.



The opening phase of this game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 299.

Orense 2000 was one of my best open tournaments in Spain. I started with 8/8, and in the ninth round I pondered whether to play for a perfect score (with White against IM Adla) or to take a rest and preserve my energies for the tournament at La Coruna which started the next day. Finally, I choose the ignominious way out. But here is one of my games from an earlier round.

It is always better to sacrifice your opponent’s men
– Savielly Tartakower

Oleg Korneev – Mihai Suba

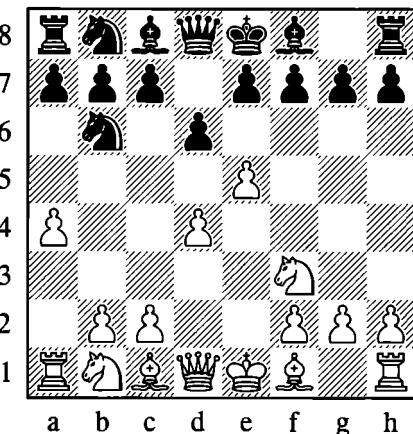
Orense 2000

Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ An overrated pawn move – 5.a4
- ◆ A pawn sacrifice to undermine the centre – 15...c5!
- ◆ The wrong exchange sacrifice – 21.♘d5?

The most critical moment of this game came at move 21, when White had to choose between sacrificing an exchange immediately, and taking a different path which would have led to a different kind of exchange sacrifice in the near future. The second option was more or less satisfactory, but fortunately for me it remained in the background. My opponent went for the ill-fated option, which was overoptimistic and led to a swift downfall. It provides a good counter-example to the theme of this book, showing a tempting sacrifice whose positive features are outweighed by other more salient factors.

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♘f3 ♘b6?!
5.a4



It is a mystery to me why this move with such lamentable consequences is on top of the popularity chart in this variation, and

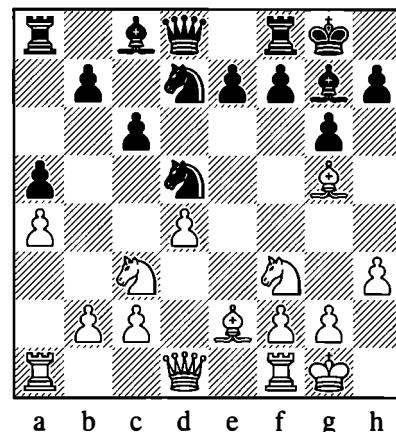
why Theory has cherished it for so long. The weakness of b5 is less important than that of b4 in the Alekhine. If you do not believe me, I call a horse to testify about its possible hippety-hoppety between d5 and b4. And in the event of the exchange of pawns on e5, another horse may bear witness to the secure stable on c5.

The explanation might be that White is afraid that a typical break with ...c5 will ruin his proud centre, and so he seeks compensation “in advance” by creating a hole on b5. Or it could be that White is anticipating an exchange of pawns on d6, and with the a-pawns fixed, he will feel safer against a minority attack by Black. Should an admirer of Nimzowitsch try to encourage you in this overly prophylactic prophylaxis, do not let him assault your ears. Just believe in me and equine testimonies!

5...a5 6.h3

Over the board, Korneev realized that the theoretical recommendation of 6.♗b5† c6 7.♗d3 ♘g4 was not exactly what he wanted. For example: 8.exd6 exd6 9.0–0 ♘e7 10.c3 ♘d8d7 11.♗bd2 d5 12.♗e1 ♘h5 13.♗f1 ♘g6 14.♗g3 0–0 15.♗f5 ♘e8 16.♗c2 ♘f8 17.♗f4 ♘c4 18.b3 ♘xf5 19.♗xh5 ♘d6= led to a draw in 61 moves in Rodriguez Cespedes – Suba, Barcelona 2000.

6...dxe5 7.♗xe5 ♘d8d7 8.♗f3 g6 9.♗e2 ♘g7 10.0–0 0–0 11.♗c3 c6 12.♗g5 ♘d5?!

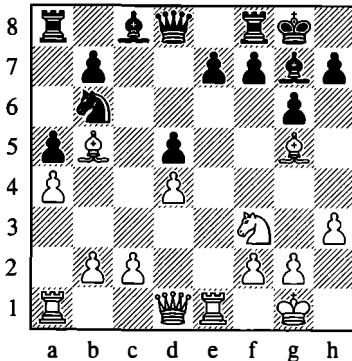


13.♕e4?!

This is not best.

13.♖e1 offers White a slight advantage.

After 13.♕xd5?! cxd5 14.♗b5 ♕b6 15.♖e1 Black has to play well to keep the balance:



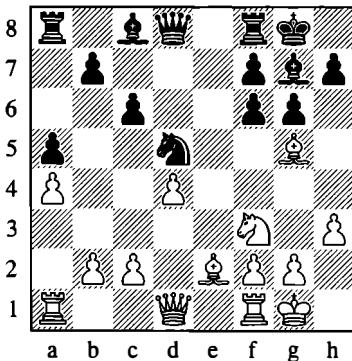
15...f6! 16.♗f4 ♕d7 17.♗e2 ♕e8 18.b3 e6 19.♗d3 ♕c6! 20.♗e2 ♕d7 21.♗ael ♕xb5 22.♗xb5 ♕xb5 23.axb5 ♕f7= and Black intends ...a4 next.

13...♕f6 14.♗g3

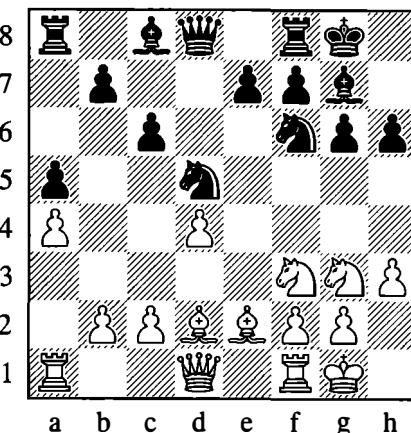
Without central domination or a clear attacking idea, White simply amasses pieces on the kingside. However, he has nothing better, as the alternatives give Black comfortable play:

14.♗c5 b6 15.♗d3 ♕e4 16.♗c1 ♕b7 17.♗de5 c5 18.♗d3 ♕b4†

14.♗xf6† is well met by 14...exf6! when I prefer Black, for example:



15.♗d2 ♕e8 16.♗e1 ♕f8 17.c4 ♕b4 18.♗b3 ♕f5 19.♗ac1 ♕e4 20.♗e3 ♕d6 21.♗d2 ♕f5 22.c5 ♕c7 23.♗c4 ♕d7†

14...h6 15.♗d2

White’s position looks favourable due to the opponent’s apparent lack of counterplay. His plan is simple: with ♗c1 he will provoke ...♗h7. Then, by c3 and ♗d3 he will pin the g-pawn, threatening h4-h5 and provoking ...h5. Once the square g5 is conquered, the queen will be transferred to the b1-h7 diagonal, with various sacrifices in the air.

Is it really that simple? I only omitted one detail – the duty of Black to play moves in the meantime!

15...c5!

As in all hypermodern defences and most semi-open games, Black must undermine the white centre. Of course, he could have prepared this by 15...♗c7 or 15...♗b6, but offering some bait is not bad either. You never know...

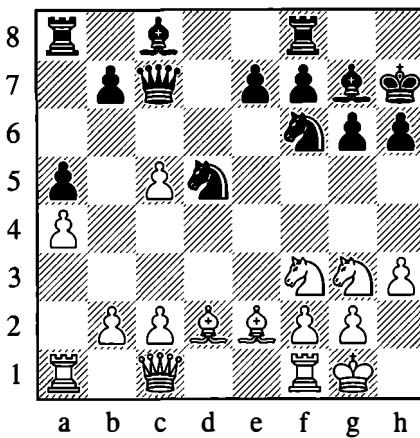
16.dxc5?!

This move is not in itself bad; the “dubious” symbol refers to White’s intention to keep the captured pawn.

Against 16.c3, I intended 16...b6!? accepting an inferior pawn structure in exchange for play in the centre and on the b-file. For example: 17.dxc5 bxc5 18.♘c1 ♖h7 19.♗b5 ♖b7 20.♗d1 ♘c7 21.♗e1 e6 22.♕e5 ♘fd8=

Another possibility for White is 16.c4 ♗b4 17.d5 e6 18.dxe6 ♖xe6 19.♘c1 ♖h7 20.♗c3 ♖e7 21.♘f4 ♖ad8 22.♗fd1 b6 23.♖h4 ♗g8=.

16...♘c7 17.♘c1 ♖h7



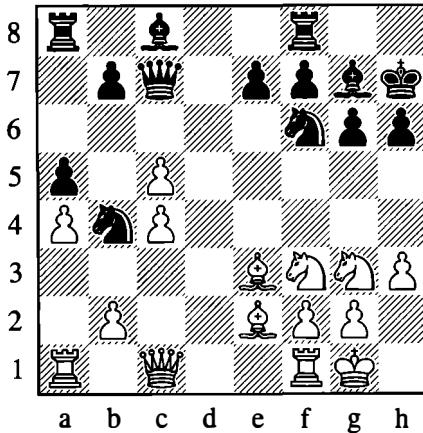
18.c4

This advance “kills” White’s majority on the queenside. As Korchnoi might say, “It is well known that pawns cannot go back.”

An alternative is 18.c3 ♘xc5 (18...♗d7?! 19.b4!±) 19.c4 ♗b4 20.♗e3 ♘c7 21.♗d4 ♖d7 22.♗b5 ♖xb5 23.axb5 ♗d7 24.♗d1 ♗c5 with equality.

18...♗b4 19.♗e3?!

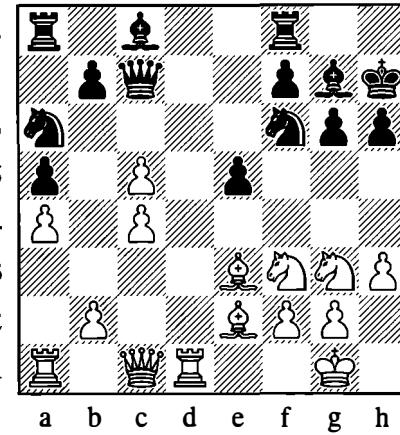
Defending the pawn is not good, but how else should White justify the heresy of his previous move? It is fashionable for football commentators to use chess terms like “strategy” and “tactics”. I shall pay them back by borrowing their terminology and saying that this was an *unforced error*, because 19.♗d4! ♘xc5 20.♗e3 ♘e5 21.♗d1 ♖d7 would still be a touch better for White.



19...e5!

Before getting his pawn back, Black occupies the centre and prevents a knight trip via d4 to b5.

20.♗d1 ♗a6



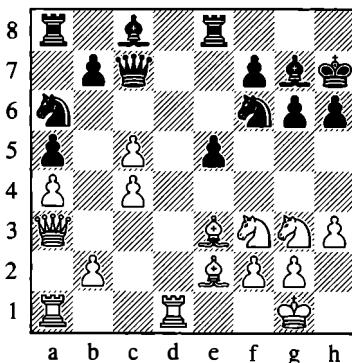
21.♗d5?

Although it may appear tempting, this exchange sacrifice is a mistake. It will quickly become clear that the text move helps Black to mobilize his strong centre against the tangled web of white pieces on the kingside.

The correct path was:

21.♘c3 ♘e8
21...♗d7 22.♗e4 ♗dxc5 23.♗xc5 ♗xc5
24.♗a3 b6 25.♗d2 ♖e6 26.♗b3=

22.♘a3

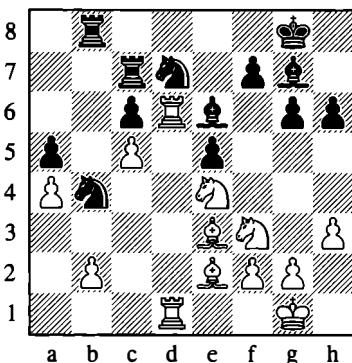


22...♝e6

22...♝f8?! 23.♗d6! would be a much more desirable exchange sacrifice.
23.c6 bxc6 24.♗d6 ♜xd6 25.♗xd6 ♜ec8
26.♗d2 ♜d7 27.♗e4

Threatening 28.♗fg5†.

27...♝g8 28.♗d6 ♜ab8 29.♗ad1 ♜c7 30.c5
♝b4



31.♗xe6!

This exchange sacrifice does not fully solve White's problems, but it is much better than the option seen in the game.

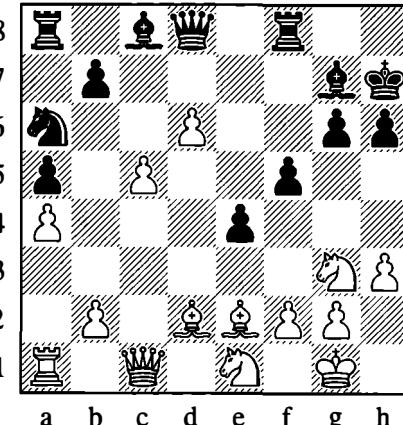
31...fxe6 32.♗xh6 ♜xh6 33.♗xd7 ♜d5!
34.♗d6 ♜xb2†

White's compensation is not quite enough for equality, but at the same time it will not be easy for Black to convert his extra material.

21...♜xd5 22.cxd5 f5!†

Highlighting the awkwardness of White's cluttered kingside pieces.

23.d6 ♜d8 24.♗d2 e4 25.♗e1



The strength of the mobile centre has pushed back White's forces. It is now time to deal with the passed pawns.

25...b6!

The rest is simple.

26.♗xa6 ♜xa6 27.c6 ♜xd6 28.♗f4 ♜e7
29.♗c4 g5 30.♗b8 ♜c5 31.♗b5 ♜a8 32.♗c7
♗d4 33.♗e2 ♜xf2† 34.♗f1 ♜a6 35.♗xc5
♗xc5 36.♗d1 f4 37.♗d7† ♜g6
0–1

Post-game reflections

In a book mostly filled with inspirational examples of glowing positional sacrifices, we should keep our feet on the ground and remember that a tempting sacrifice will not always have the desired effect. In the above example certain elements of the position favoured the exchange sacrifice, such as the correcting of White's pawn structure and the advanced c- and d-pawns. Unfortunately for Korneev, his minor pieces were poorly placed, and he had to waste valuable time moving

them while my kingside pawns roamed forwards. Once that happened, White's prized pawns were devoid of support, and it was easy to undermine and capture them.

We will conclude the chapter with a game from super-GM praxis.

Some part of a mistake is always correct – Savielly Tartakower

Veselin Topalov – Magnus Carlsen

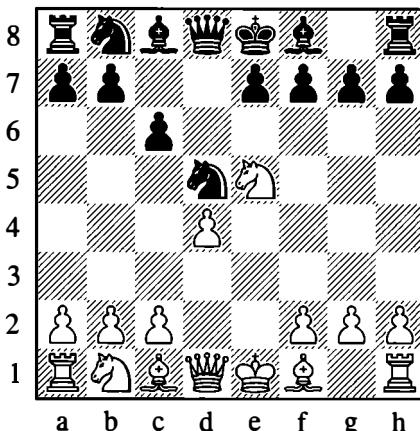
Morelia/Linares 2008

Points to look for in this game:

- Small but significant inaccuracies from White – 6.♗d3, 9.♗d2, 11.♗e1 and 12.c3
- Ambitious play from Black – 12...c5!
- A positional pawn sacrifice to fight for a draw – 15.h3! in the notes

Casual play in the opening by Topalov leads to some problems for White. Black takes over the initiative, and after again failing to choose the more promising options, Veselin finds himself in a difficult endgame.

1.e4 ♗f6 2.e5 ♗d5 3.d4 d6 4.♗f3 dxe5
5.♗xe5 c6



6.♗d3

This is not the best square for the bishop; instead both 6.♗e2 and 6.♗c4 are sound choices.

It should be noted that the aggressive 6.c4?! is hasty here due to 6...♗b4! (threatening 7...♗xd4!) 7.♗e3 ♗f5 8.♗a3 (8.♗d3 e5!) 8...♗d7 with a slight advantage for Black.

6...♗d7 7.♗xd7

This is not bad, but more in the spirit of the position is 7.♗f3 ♗f6 8.h3 (or 8.c3±) 8...♗b4 9.♗c4 ♗f5 10.♗b3 a5∞.

A less ambitious approach for White is 7.0–0 ♗xe5 (7...g6 is also possible) 8.dxe5 ♗e6!? with a balanced position.

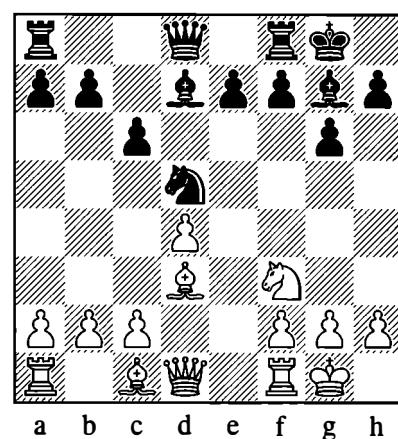
7...♗xd7 8.0–0 g6 9.♗d2

This move is a bit 'flat' and cannot promise any real advantage.

Another move deserving the same epithet, or worse, is 9.♗e1 ♗g7 10.c3 0–0 11.♗g5 ♗b6 and Black already has some initiative.

The forthright 9.c4!± is best.

9...♗g7 10.♗f3 0–0



Topalov now starts to play a bit carelessly.

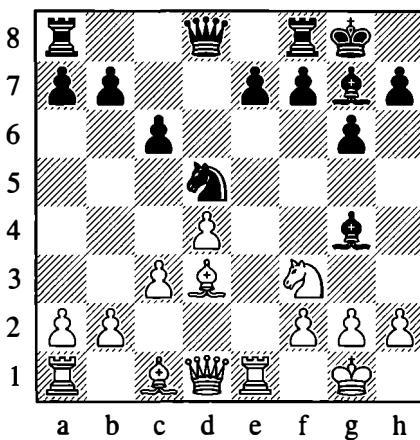
11.♕e1

In order to have h2-h3 available as an immediate answer to ...♗g4, a good preparation for the text move would be 11.c3!.

11...♗g4 12.c3

Another negligent move.

White might still hope for a tiny advantage after 12.♔e2 ♔f5 13.c3 ♕e8 14.♔d3.



12...c5!

The Norwegian prodigy does not miss the opportunity to free his game and seize some initiative, both real and psychological. Beyond the pawn sacrifice looms the spectre of a further offering on the c3-square.

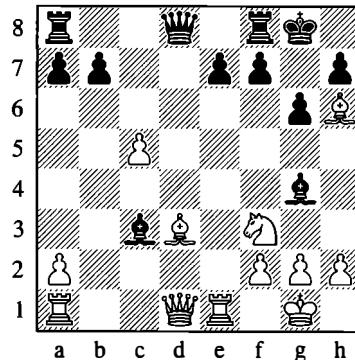
13.♕e4?

Steinitz said that the best way to refute a sacrifice is by accepting it. In the present case White could hardly hope to refute the sacrifice, but he could have equalized by accepting it.

13.dxc5 ♘xc3!

It looks like Topalov overestimated this sham sacrifice.

14.bxc3 ♔xc3 15.♔h6



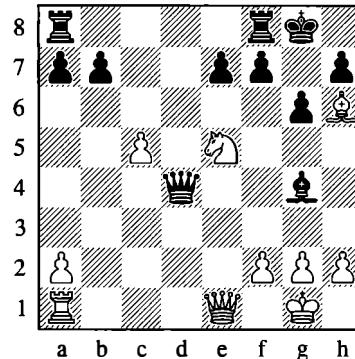
15...♕xe1

The only good option, as 15...♕e8? 16.♕e3 and 15...♘xa1? 16.♗xa1 are both winning for White.

16.♗xe1 ♘xd3 17.♕e5

17.♕e5? f6 18.♕xe7 ♘f7–+

17...♘d4



18.c6!

Probably the move that Topalov missed.

Worse is 18.♔xf8 ♘xf8 19.♕xg4 ♘xg4=.

18...bxc6 19.♕xc6 ♘f6 20.♕xe7† ♘h8

21.♕d5 ♘d4 22.♕c7!

More accurate than 22.♔xf8 ♘xf8 23.♕e3 ♘e6 24.♕d1 ♘e5 25.♕b4 ♘g7 26.h3 ♘c8 27.a3 a5=.

22...♖ac8 23.♔xf8 ♘xf8 24.h3 ♔e2 25.♕c1 ♘b2 26.♕d5 ♘g7 27.♕b1

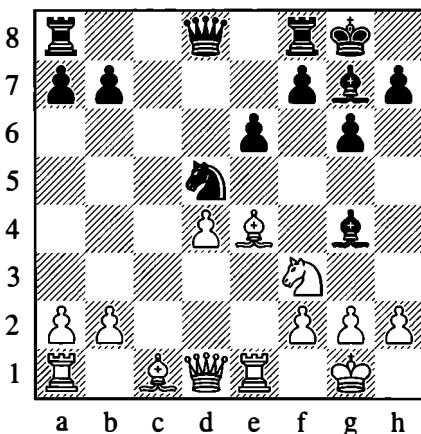
The position is equal.

If White preferred to avoid the above complications, he could also have maintained

the balance by simple means: 13.♕e2? cxd4 (13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 cxd4 15.cxd4= gives White an improved version of the game) 14.♗xd4 ♗xe2 15.♗xe2=

13...cxd4 14.cxd4 e6

Black has a dream version of an IQP position, with a solid blockade on d5 and easy play against the weak d-pawn. Now it is White's turn to think in terms of making a positional sacrifice. His objective is to give up the d4-pawn in a way that will enable him either to regain the pawn in a few moves, or to obtain enough activity to hold a draw.



15.♗b3?

This is a waste of time, as it turns out that Black can ignore the threat to the b7-pawn.

Attempting to keep the d-pawn with 15.♕e3?! leads to trouble after 15...♗xe3 (15...f5?! is also strong) 16.fxe3 f5! 17.♗xb7 (17.♗d3 f4!) 17...♗b8 when Black has a clear advantage.

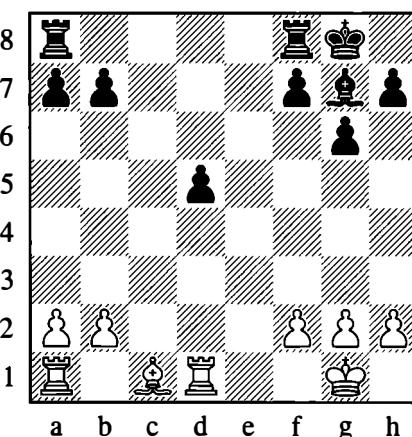
In the absence of a useful developing move, White should have forced simplifications with 15.h3!. Compared with the game continuation this provides a crucial bolthole for the king. Play continues 15...♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♜b6 17.♗xd5 exd5 18.♗e3 ♜xb2 19.♗d3 ♜b6 20.♗ab1 ♜c7 21.♗b5 ♜fd8 22.♗b3

when White succeeds in regaining the pawn. His position remains somewhat worse, but his drawing chances are much higher than in the game.

15...♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♜xd4 17.♗xd5

It is possible that Topalov had been intending 17.♗xb7?!, but only now realized that 17...♝a5! 18.♗d1 ♜ab8 would allow Black to develop both rooks with tempo, followed by capturing on b2 with an extra pawn and a dominant position.

17...♜xd5 18.♜xd5 exd5 19.♗d1 ♜g7



20.♔f1

20.♔g5?! may be a better defensive try.

In the event of 20.♗xd5? ♜fd8! 21.♗xd8† ♜xd8 22.♗e3 (22.♔f1 ♜d1† 23.♔e2 ♜h1) 22...b6 23.♗b1 ♜xb2 Black's advantage is obvious. This is where the weak back rank comes into play, and explains why 15.h3! would have been an improvement earlier.

20...♜fd8

Black is a healthy pawn up, and the presence of the bishops improves his winning chances. The technical part of the game is less relevant to our main subject, so I will refrain from commenting on it.

21.♕g5 ♘d7 22.♗d2 h6 23.♔e3 d4 24.♗d3
♝c8 25.♔d2 ♘c2 26.♗b1 ♘e7 27.a4 f5 28.b3
♝ec7 29.♔e1 ♖f7 30.♗d2 ♘c1 31.♗xc1
♝xc1 32.♔e2 ♘b1 33.♗d3 ♖e6 34.h4 ♖d5
35.♔d2 ♖e4 36.♗g3 f4 37.♗d3 ♖e5 38.f3†
♖d5 39.♔e1 ♖d6 40.♔d2 g5 41.hxg5 hxg5
42.♔e1 g4 43.fxg4 ♖e4 44.g5 ♖e5
0–1

Post-game reflections

Topalov conducted the opening and early middlegame with an uncharacteristic lack of drive, and Carlsen quickly obtained the initiative. The outcome of the game rested on some form of sacrifice by either side. Carlsen's 12...c5! echoed the 15...c5! from the previous game, although this time the active pawn break was not a true sacrifice as Black had the means to maintain material equality through tactics. White's 13.♔e4? was a weak reaction, but even after that mistake he could still have obtained good drawing chances with 15.h3!, a strong defensive sacrifice.

Chapter 5

The French Defence

The French Defence can give rise to all kinds of positional sacrifices of both an attacking and defensive nature. The characteristic blocked centre often gives rise to a deep conflict between space advantage and undermining of the centre; attack versus counterattack; bishop pair versus pawn structure, and more. With so many dynamic factors in play, it is only natural that material should play a limited role in the complex equation that constitutes a position's evaluation.

You know, comrade Pachman, I don't enjoy being a Minister, I would rather play chess like you –
Che Guevara

Ludek Pachman – Eckert

Cista 1940

Points to look for in this game:

- A positional sacrifice in the opening – 6.h4!?
- Poor defence from Black – 9...g6?! and 11...cxd4?
- A double rook sac – 13.Qg5!

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Qc3 Qf6 4.Qg5 Qe7 5.e5 Qfd7 6.h4?!

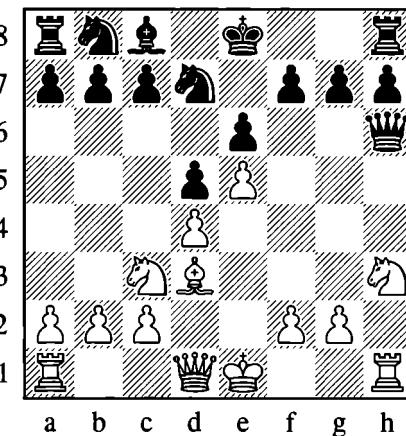
A pawn sacrifice which, if accepted, gives White a lead in development and pressure along the h-file. It was recommended by Alekhine, and many authors endorse it with his name. However, it was in fact invented by the Romanian player Albin, the initiator of many interesting gambits.

6...Qxg5

Black can decline the offer in a number of ways, but that is another story.

7.hxg5 Qxg5 8.Qh3 Wh6 9.Qd3

White develops quickly and aggressively.

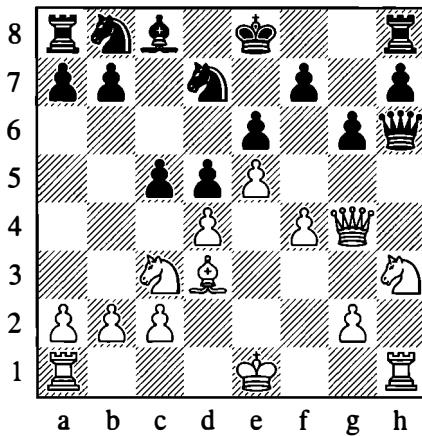


Better is 9...a6 10.♗g4 ♜c6, for instance 11.♕e2 ♜b6 12.♕ef4 ♜d7 13.♕h5 0–0–0 14.♕g5 g6 15.♕g3 ♜f8† and White did not have enough for the pawn in Strikovic – V. Kovacevic, Vinkovci 1989.

10.♗g4 c5

It is safer to prepare this (or anything else) with 10...a6!. If White tries 11.f4, hoping to transpose to the following note, then 11...♜c6 12.♕e2 ♜b4 should avoid any problems for Black.

11.f4



11...cxd4?

A serious error, losing precious time for the temporary gain of a meaningless pawn. Even without this move Black has some problems, as we can see from the alternatives:

11...a6 12.dxc5 ♜c6 (12...♝xc5 13.♕xd5!) 13.♕a4 is highly unpleasant for Black.

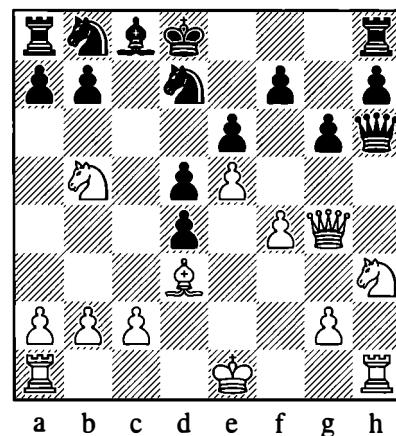
11...♜c6! is the best chance and should enable him to avoid the worst: 12.♕b5 0–0 13.♕c7 ♜b8 14.0–0–0 ♜g7 15.♕g5 h5 16.♖xh5 f5 17.♖h3 gxh5 18.♕cxe6 ♜h6 19.♖xf5 ♜b6 20.dxc5 ♜c4 21.g4 ♜xe5 22.♖xf8 ♜xf5 23.gxf5 ♜xf8 24.♖xd5±

12.♕b5

Threatening to invade on c7 or d6. Black's problems are already insurmountable.

12...♝d8

Or 12...0–0 13.♕c7 ♜b6 14.0–0–0 ♜g7 15.♖h4 h6 16.♕xa8 ♜xa8 17.♕f2 and White's kingside attack will be triumphant.



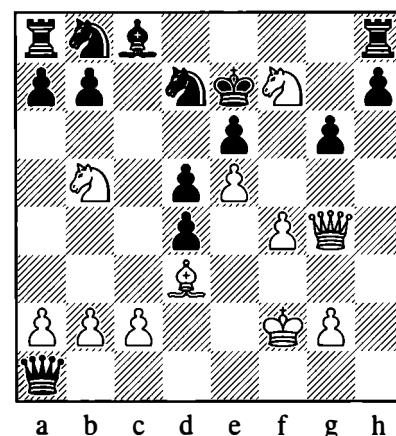
13.♕g5!

A beautiful sacrifice to continue the attack.

13...♜xh1† 14.♕f2 ♜xa1?

This allows White to win by force. The last chance to struggle on was 14...♜h5 15.♖xh5 gxh5 16.♕xf7† ♜e7 17.♕xh8 ♜c6 18.♖xh7±.

15.♕xf7† ♜e7



16.♕g5†!

White seals his victory with a final sacrifice.

16...♗xf7 17.♘d6† ♗g7 18.♗e7† ♗h6
19.♘f7† ♗g7 20.♘g5† ♗h6 21.♘xe6

Black is ahead by two rooks and a knight, but none of those pieces can help him.

21...♘f6 22.♗g7† ♗h5 23.♗xf6 h6 24.♗e2#

The queen and knight did most of the work, but the bishop was not to be denied a piece of the action.

Post-game reflections

This game vividly highlighted the dangers of neglecting development in the opening. From move 6 onwards, Black's only developed piece was the knight on d7. Amazingly, for the rest of the game he failed to activate any other pieces, apart from his queen. He wasted time capturing the irrelevant d4-pawn, while White mobilized his forces for an attack. By the end of the game White had utilized every one of his pieces, either for direct attacking purposes, or in the case of his rooks, as decoys to draw the black queen away from the defence.

Adequate compensation for a sacrifice is having a sound combination leading to a winning position; adequate compensation for a blunder is having your opponent snatch defeat from the jaws of victory – Bruce A. Moon

Bent Larsen – Tigran Petrosian

Havana Olympiad 1966

Points to look for in this game:

- Sloppy play from Black in the opening – 9...♝bd7?! and 10...♝f8?
- A questionable exchange sacrifice – 14...♞xe5?!
- To exchange or not to exchange queens? – 19...♛xg3 in the notes

In the same year that Petrosian successfully defended his World Champion title against Spassky, he had poor results against Larsen. Before this game he had already suffered two defeats at the hands of the Danish legend in the Piatigorsky Cup in Santa Monica. A curious thing about those encounters is that if you play them through without knowing who is which colour, you are liable to guess the wrong way round.

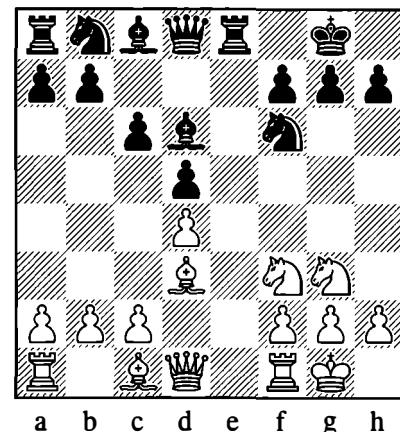
Here too, in a simple Exchange French, clichéd play by Black quickly led him into big trouble. The panacea for bad positions, the exchange sacrifice, was possible, but it was not entirely adequate this time. The "Tiger" wallowed in real danger of losing, yet the goddess of the true exchange sacrifice was too much in love with Petrosian, and did not let him down.

1.e4 e6

In Santa Monica, Petrosian had defended the Accelerated Dragon, and was simply swept off the board by a sham queen sacrifice. He now relies on the more solid armour of the French Defence.

2.♘f3 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.exd5 exd5 5.d4 c6
6.♗d3 ♘d6 7.0–0 0–0 8.♘e2 ♘e8

Or 8...♝g4 9.♘e5! ♘h5 10.♗e1±.

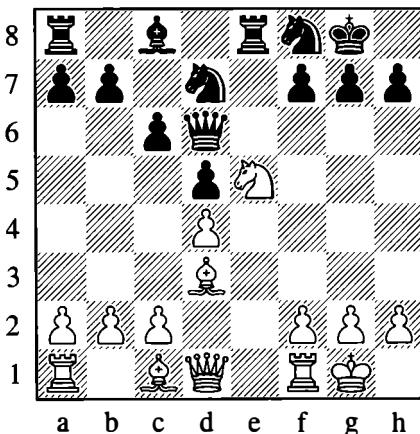
9.♘g3

9...♝bd7?!

Petrosian liked to play *against* an isolated pawn rather than with one, but here 9...c5! was a good alternative.

10.♞f5 ♞f8?

A bad decision. In his annotations Petrosian admits that Black should preserve the bishop: 10...♝f8 11.♝e1 (The Olympiad bulletin suggests 11.♝g5, adorning it with an exclamation mark and the symbol for clear advantage, but that evaluation is clearly wrong. Black can reply 11...h6 12.♝h4 [12.♝f4 ♐e4] 12...♝b6 13.♝c1 ♐e4†.) 11...♝e4 12.♝g3 ♐df6= and Black has no problems.

11.♛xd6 ♜xd6 12.♛e5! ♛d7**13.♞d2!**

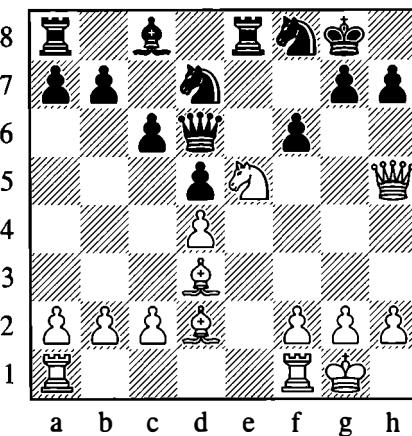
Larsen develops another piece, using some simple tactics to ensure the future of his powerful knight.

13...f6

The alternatives promise trouble:

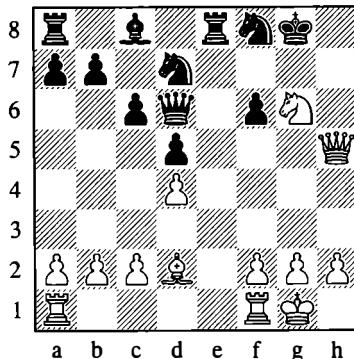
13...♝xe5 14.dxe5 ♜xe5? (14...♝xe5?? 15.♝e1+–) 15.♝f4 Even Petrosian would have been hard-pressed to get away with this exchange sacrifice.

13...♝g6 14.f4 ♛f6 15.♝f3±

14.♝h5!**14...♝xe5?!**

Both Petrosian and the bulletin adorn this move with an exclamation mark, in the belief that it was Black's best chance. Or as Tartakower, with his inexhaustible humour, would put it: "Forced, therefore correct." Petrosian was already famous for using (and sometimes overusing) the exchange sacrifice as a defensive resource, but this time it is not sufficient. Black's position was certainly unappetizing, but he could have minimized his disadvantage with the second of the following alternatives.

14...g6?! meets with a powerful sacrifice: 15.♝xg6! hxg6 16.♛xg6

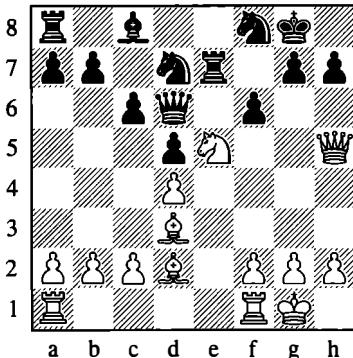


16...♝e7 (worse is 16...♝xg6? 17.♝xg6† ♔f8 18.♝h6† ♔e7 19.♝ae1†+–; while after

16... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17. $f4$! the threat of 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is strong)
 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}f7$
 20. $\mathbb{W}h6$ and the position is uncomfortable for Black.

14... $\mathbb{B}e7$

"After this move, things do not progress as quickly as after 14...g6" – Petrosian.



15. $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Less convincing is 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16.a3 a5 17. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (18...g6 19. $\mathbb{W}f3\pm$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b6 20.a4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ and in spite of White's bishop pair, Black's position is tenable.

15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16.a3 a5 17.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$

White's bishop pair gives him a long-term edge, but objectively his advantage is smaller than in the game.

15.dxe5 $\mathbb{fxe}5$

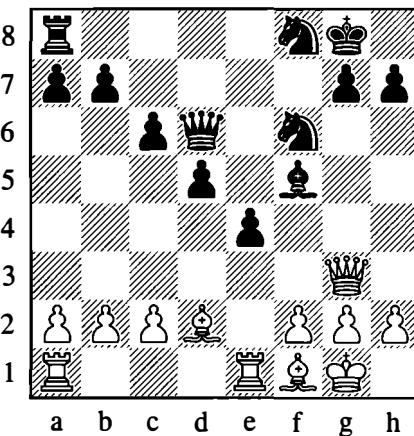
Black has one pawn for the exchange, and his strong central pawns give him some degree of compensation. Nevertheless his pieces are not particularly active, and White's bishop pair is an important asset, so overall the sacrifice is less than adequate for Black.

16. $\mathbb{Q}fe1\pm$

Throwing away a large part of the advantage. To prevent the further advance of the e-pawn, White had to play 16.f3! \pm .

16... $\mathbb{e}4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g3$

Now Black must weigh up the pros and cons of exchanging queens.



19... $\mathbb{W}e7\?!$

Here Petrosian makes a bland comment: "Black must run away from exchanging queens, to avoid giving his opponent the possibility of using his small material advantage." As editor-in-chief of the biggest chess magazine in the USSR, Petrosian had to keep happy millions of readers, and his comments were not always the most objective.

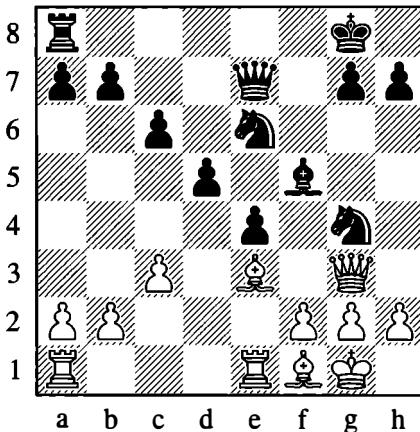
In this position White's queen is very active, and Black should really have swapped it off: 19... $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 20.hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21.c3 h5 22.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ and White's advantage in the endgame is minimal. But nobody likes to play an endgame with just one pawn for the exchange.

20.c3?

Weakening the d3-square, which may become an outpost for a black knight.

Better is 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ (or 20... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 23.f3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g3$ exf3 25.gxf3 \pm) 21. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22.h4 with a clear advantage for White.

20... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$



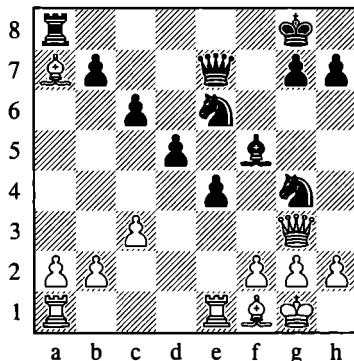
22.h3?!

White has two better options:

22.♔e2!± is a simple way to claim a plus.

22.♕xa7?!

This leads to some interesting tactics.



22...h5!

The alternatives are easily refuted:

22...c5? 23.h3 ♔f6 24.♕e5! ♔g6 25.♔xc5!+–

22...♕xa7? 23.♕b8† ♔f7 24.♕xa7 ♕h4

25.h3 e3 26.g3 exf2† 27.♕xf2+–

23.♔b8 ♕d8 24.h3 h4 25.♕d6 ♕xb8

26.♕xd8† ♕xd8 27.hxg4 ♕xg4±

22...♘xe3 23.♕xe3?!

23.fxe3! blunts the force of Black's majority and allows its quick undermining, for example:
23...♗c5 24.c4±

23...♗f8 24.♕e5 ♕g6 25.♗d1

By this stage the position has become almost equal. But now Petrosian seems to become a little too relaxed, and he plays several nondescript moves which allow White to improve his standing.

25...♕f7 26.♗d2 ♖f4

26...a5 would slow down White's progress on the queenside.

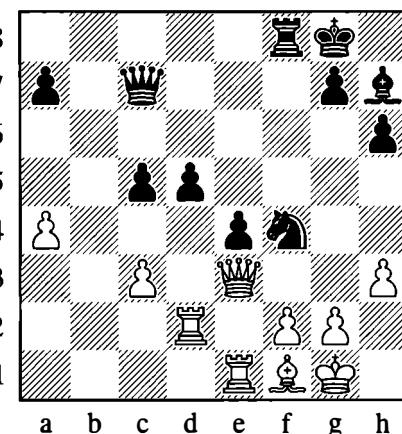
27.b4± h6 28.a4 ♖h7?! 29.♕d4

White returns the favour by missing a good opportunity: 29.b5! c5 30.g3 ♖d3 31.♗xd3 exd3 32.♕d6±

29...b6 30.♗e1

30.g3!± is a bit better for White.

30...♕c7 31.♕e3 c5 32.bxc5 bxc5



33.g3

"A time pressure mistake. White shouldn't force the knight to its cherished square. The correct play was to take the b-file by 33.♗b1." – Petrosian. With a clear advantage, I would add.

33...♗d3 34.♔xd3 exd3 35.♕e6†?

Larsen was surely playing for a win, otherwise he could have simply taken the dangerous pawn with 35.♗xd3 ♕xd3 36.♕xd3=.

In the bulletin 35.c4?! was suggested, but it is not good due to the simple 35...dxc4 36.♗c1 ♖d6 37.♗xc4 ♜c8†.

35...♛f7 36.♛xf7† ♜xf7†

White has misplayed the position and it is now Black who is playing to win. For the continuation of this endgame, see page 349.

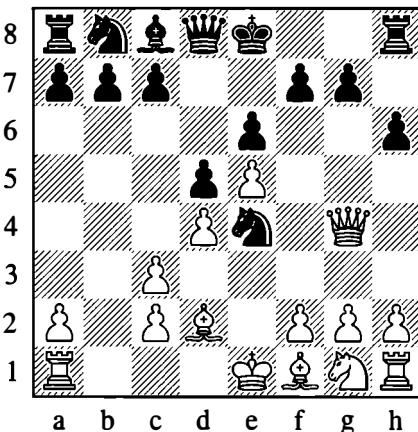
Yuri Shabanov – Eduard Mnatsakanian

USSR Championship semi-final 1971

Points to look for in this game:

- A committal decision in the opening – 8...♝f8
- Black cuts off his own queen – 11...♜a5 and 13...b6?
- A devastating sacrificial attack – 14.♝g5!!

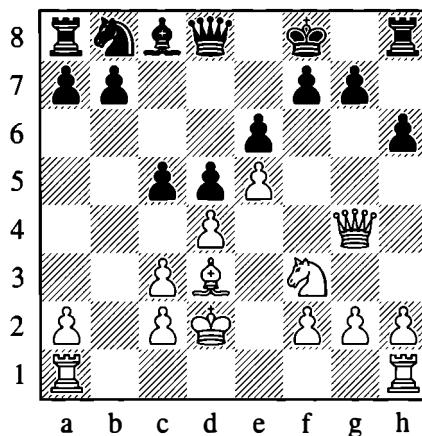
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♞c3 ♜f6 4.♕g5 ♜b4 5.e5 h6 6.♗d2 ♜xc3 7.bxc3 ♜e4 8.♛g4



8...♝f8

There is a big and still open question in the McCutcheon Variation: Is this better than the natural 8...g6? Of course there are pros and cons for each move, but the majority of players will answer "No."

9.♗d3 ♜xd2 10.♗xd2 c5 11.♗f3



11...♜a5

Here the most frequent choice is 11...c4, followed in popularity by 11...♝c6.

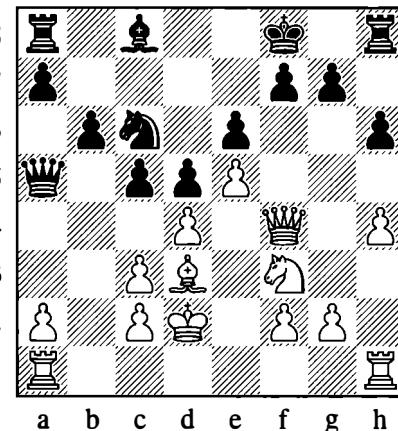
12.h4 ♜c6

Or 12...cxsd4 13.♗xd4 ♜c6 14.♗xc6†.

13.♛f4 b6?

Black's idea is to exchange the light-squared bishop by ...♝a6. But cutting off the queen from the kingside allows an amazing attack.

It was essential for Black to choose either 13...cxsd4 or 13...c4.

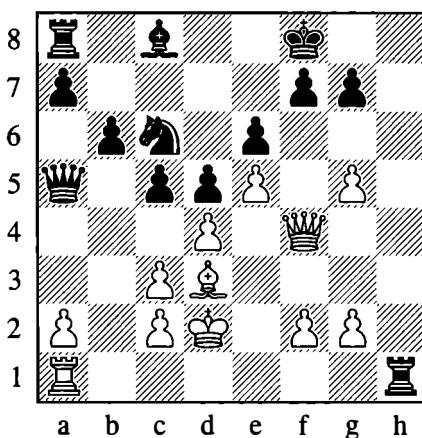


14.♕g5!!

Although this is demonstrably winning outright, it can still be justified on intuitive grounds, as it forces an opening of the kingside at a time when Black is unable to bring in defensive reinforcements.

14...hxg5

14...♝d8 loses to 15.♛xf7 ♛xf7 16.♝g6.

15.hxg5 ♜xh1**16.g6!**

Black must have been thunderstruck by this sequence of moves. The game continuation is the most accurate, but it is worth mentioning that the prosaic 16.♜xh1 would have been perfectly sufficient to win the game, as Black's pieces are all hopelessly stranded on the queenside.

16...♝e7

There is no salvation: 16...♝d8 17.♜xh1 ♜e7 18.♜h7 transposes to the game, and 16...f5 17.exf6 is also hopeless.

**17.♜xh1 ♛d8 18.♜h7 cxd4 19.gxf7 dxc3†
20.♝d1 ♛xf7 21.♜xg7**

1–0

Post-game reflections

Black paid the price for allowing a most toxic chain of events to occur. Firstly he allowed White to establish a space advantage on the kingside, which was punctuated by the menacing queen on g4. Then he chose to commit his king to the f8-square, which increased the level of risk. Finally, he made the fatal error of blocking the queen's path back towards the defence of the kingside. One can often get away with allowing one or two of these types of elements, but on this occasion the combination of all three led to insurmountable problems.

White's knight sacrifice opened the floodgates and emphasized one of the key principles of most successful sacrifices: the important thing is not the overall material count, but rather the localized material count in the pivotal battleground of the game – which was, in this case, the area around the black king.

You must take your opponent into a deep, dark forest where 2+2=5, and the path leading out is only wide enough for one – Mikhail Tal

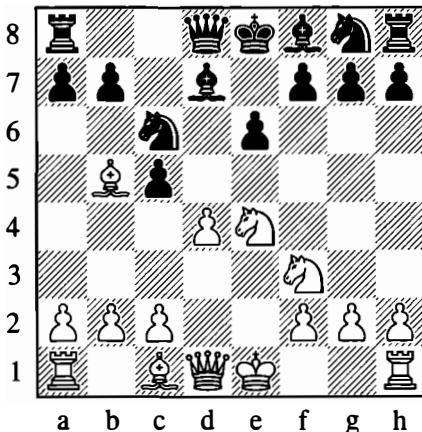
Mikhail Tal – Wolfgang Uhlmann

Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1971

Points to look for in this game:

- Excessive greed from Black in the opening – 11...♝xc3?
- Why only sacrifice a pawn when you can throw a knight into the mix? – 12.♛f5!
- A clever repositioning of the bishop – 15.♝d2!

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♞d2 c5 4.♝g3 ♜c6
5.♝b5 dxe4 6.♝xe4 ♜d7**



7.Qg5!

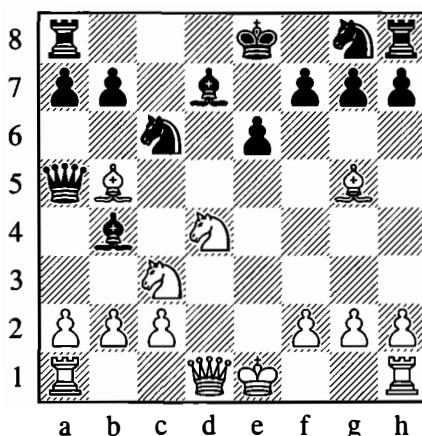
Of course Tal always played for the spectators, who had come to expect a complicated and brilliant game from him, but here Misha is slightly overambitious.

White can preserve a small advantage by 7.dxc5 Wa5† 8.Qc3 Qf6 9.0–0 Qxc5 10.Qf4 Qb4 11.Qd3 0–0 12.Qd2 Qe7 13.a3 Wc7 14.Qb5.

7...Wa5† 8.Qc3 cxd4 9.Qxd4 Qb4

Uhlmann tries to emulate Tal in quick development, but does not take advantage of the precarious position of the g5-bishop.

Best is 9...a6! 10.Qxc6 (after 10.Qb3?! Wc7 11.Qd3 Qb4 Black takes over the initiative) 10...Qxc6 11.Qd2 h6 12.Qf4 Qb4 13.Qxc6 bxc6 14.0–0 Qf6 with equality.



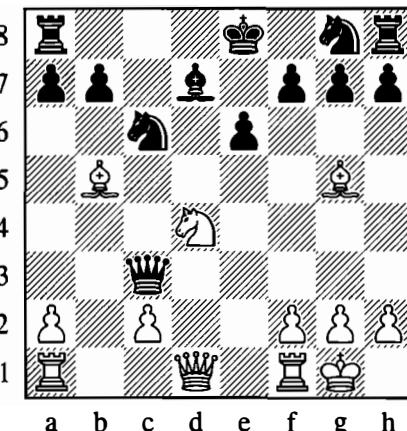
10.0–0!

Such a pawn sacrifice is practically second nature for Tal. It is not clear if he calculated the potential consequences of Black taking on c3, or simply relied on his intuition.

10...Qxc3 11.bxc3 Wxc3?

The German player accepts the gift, but it proves to be a serious error of judgement. The Wizard from Riga will make him regret his decision on the very next move.

The right continuation was 11...h6 12.Qe3 Qge7, catching up on development. Black's position seems resilient enough, for instance: 13.Wg4 0–0 14.Qxh6 Qg6 15.Qxc6 Qxc6 16.Qxc6 bxc6 17.Qe3 Wxc3 18.We4 Qe7 19.Qab1 Qf5 20.Qb3 Wa5=



12.Qf5!

Once you see this move, everything else falls into place. Black's problem areas are the dark squares and the e-file, and Tal's move provides the perfect method of exploiting both of these elements.

12...exf5?!

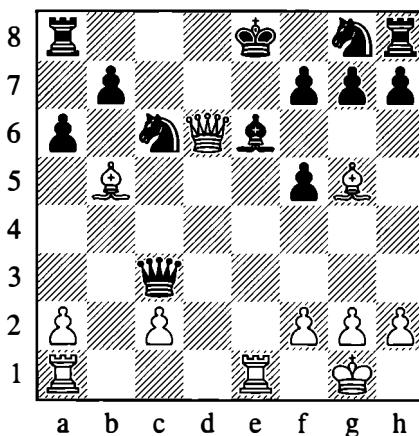
This loses by force.

12...Wc5 13.Qd6† Qf8 14.Qe3 We5 15.Qb1 Qf6 16.Qxb7 h5 17.c4 Qg8 18.h3 Qe8

19. $\mathbb{E}e1$ is a more stubborn defence, but even so Black is on the brink of collapse.

13. $\mathbb{E}e1\uparrow \mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d6$ a6

Black is almost in time to repel the attack, but Tal's next move seals his fate.



15. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b4$

This clever rerouting of the bishop exposes Black's plight on the dark squares. The rest is simple.

16...axb5 17. $\mathbb{W}f8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}ed1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xa8$

In spite of his material plus, Black has no defence against the multitude of threats which include $\mathbb{E}ac1$, $\mathbb{Q}a5\uparrow$, $\mathbb{W}f8$ and a4. Therefore Uhlmann resigned.

1–0

Post-game reflections

This was a textbook example of an excessively greedy pawn grab in the opening. Black was behind in development, his king was still two moves away from castling, and he also gave up his important dark-squared bishop. Tal made all of these factors work to his advantage, and his deadly attacking play left Black without any hope of salvation.

Robert Fischer – Bent Larsen

Denver (1) 1971

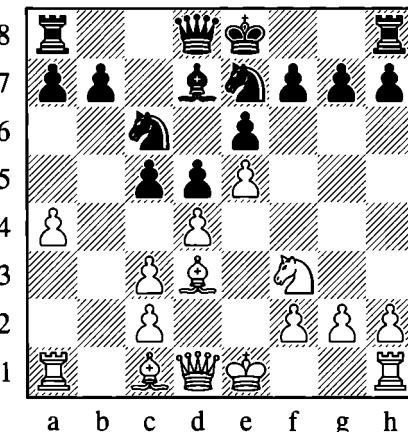
Points to look for in this game:

- A positional pawn sacrifice – 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$!
- A missed opportunity – 21. $\mathbb{Q}d6$!
- A brave black king – 20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 22... $\mathbb{Q}g6$!

The following game is, in my opinion, one of the most dramatic ever played. It was only after its conclusion that nobody doubted any longer who the next World Champion would be, as Bobby proved he had overcome all the shortcomings he had shown in the past. Larsen approached the match confidently, with a strong desire to refute the raw force of his opponent by accepting all offers of material. He was counting on his notorious cold-bloodedness and his less renowned endgame technique. What is more, he was the player who had inflicted on Fischer his only loss during the Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970.

For the first game of the match Larsen prepared the Winawer, a variation that held some bad memories for Fischer.

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4. e5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 5. a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 6. bxc3 c5 7. a4 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$



9... $\mathbb{W}c7$

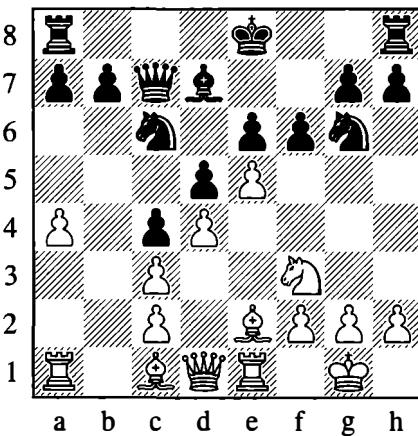
A rare move, aiming for pressure against e5.

Better is 9...c4! 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a5=$.

10.0-0 c4 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f6 12. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6!$?

Leaving the king in the middle is often a risky policy, and all the more so against Fischer. On the other hand, being provocative was often one of Larsen's trumps.

Black should have chosen between the quiet 12...0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\pm$ and the livelier 12...0-0-0!? 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\pm$.

**13. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$**

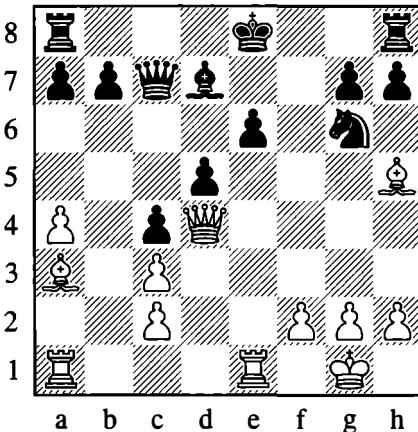
A powerful sacrifice, preventing short castling and daring Black to take on e5 and open additional lines of attack.

13...fxe5

13...0-0-0 is met by the irritating 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6$, but perhaps this would have been the lesser evil.

14.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d4!$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h5$

Taking the g7-pawn would enable Black to castle, so Fischer improves another piece while leaving his queen in the centre to keep an eye on the a7-pawn.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}f7?!$**

Very risky, but Larsen was not prepared to defend an unpleasant endgame such as 17...0-0-0-0 18. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ b6 19. $\mathbb{W}a8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xb8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ 21.a5!±.

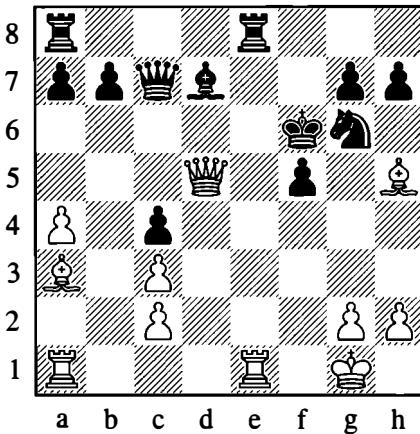
18.f4! $\mathbb{B}he8$

Most commentators have attached an exclamation mark to this move, which is not appropriate. Due to the insecure placement of the black king, the game has become extremely sharp and this natural defence is not necessarily good. When the game has a strong tactical character, general criteria often do not apply. In fact Black is lost and no move can change this verdict, but bringing the other rook to e8 is a little better. The reason for this is that it avoids the variation given in the note to move 21 below, which ends with the a8-rook being lost. However, 18... $\mathbb{B}ae8$ has its own drawback, namely 19. $\mathbb{W}xa7$, which opens a new front on the queenside. Black is still left with insoluble problems, but at least the direct attack on his king is delayed.

19.f5 exf5 20. $\mathbb{W}xd5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

This is the only serious attempt at a defence.

20... $\mathbb{Q}e6?$ loses to 21. $\mathbb{B}xe6!$ $\mathbb{B}xe6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xf5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{B}f1\uparrow$ and 20... $\mathbb{Q}e6?$ is refuted by 21. $\mathbb{W}xf5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}e7\uparrow$.



21.♕f3?

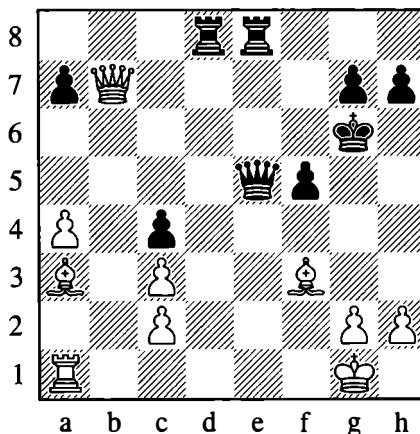
So far Fischer has done everything right, but now he loses all his advantage in one go.

Much better is 21.♕d6! ♖d8 22.♕f3 ♕e6 23.♕d4† ♖f7 24.♕xb7+–.

21...♕e5! 22.♖d4 ♔g6!

Larsen defends resourcefully, and now it is anyone's game.

23.♖xe5 ♖xe5 24.♗xd7 ♖ad8 25.♗xb7



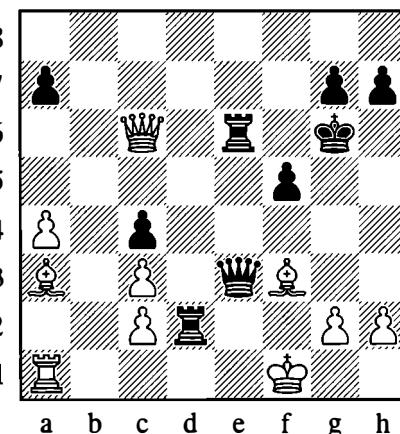
25...♗e3†

At this point all the live commentators and the watching public believed that White was going to lose.

The text move is not bad, although Black could also consider 25...♗xc3, forcing the white queen into a backwater: 26.♗b1 ♗b8 27.♗d1 ♗bd8 28.♗c1 ♗d2 29.♗c5 a5 30.♗b1 h6 with approximate equality.

26.♔f1 ♗d2 27.♗c6† ♗e6

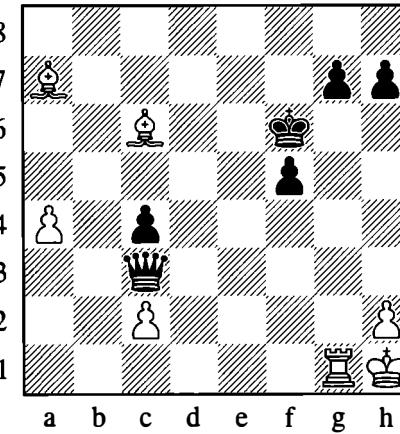
The tension has reached its peak. White is threatened with mate in one, while his queen is also under attack.



28.♔c5!

The climax. It is from this point that I believe Larsen loses the game for the second time.

28...♗f2† 29.♔g1 ♗xg2† 30.♔xg2 ♖d2† 31.♔h1 ♗xc6 32.♔xc6 ♖xc3 33.♔g1† ♗f6 34.♔xa7



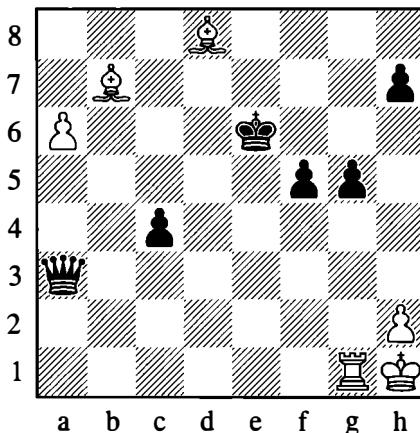
34...g5

This endgame should result in a draw, but with every move we can feel that Larsen was already exhausted. 34... $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ would be an improvement.

35. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 36.a5 $\mathbb{W}b2$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 38.a6 $\mathbb{W}a3?$!

Another inaccuracy. Black should play 38... $\mathbb{W}f2$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ c3 40. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ c2 41.a7 c1= $\mathbb{W}\#$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}xa7\pm$.

39. $\mathbb{Q}b7$



39... $\mathbb{W}c5?$

The final mistake, this time decisive. Black can still hang in there with 39... $\mathbb{W}b3$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ c3 \pm .

40. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ c3 41. $\mathbb{Q}b6$

1–0

Post-game reflections

Larsen played the opening provocatively, and Fischer was absolutely correct to give up a pawn for the initiative. Probably Larsen should not have accepted it, instead agreeing to a passive but solid position. As it transpired, White's attack took on decisive dimensions, but then Fischer unexpectedly committed an inaccuracy

and Larsen came back to life. It even seemed that Black might be winning, but the terrible 28. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ ended Black's dreams. Having lost the second charge, Larsen could not summon the reserves of energy needed for the rest of the game. The ensuing endgame had a drawish character for many moves, but it seems that with every move Black made concessions, until he finally succumbed.

In essence, the match was decided in this single game. Nothing that Larsen had been counting on actually happened in the match. On the contrary, faced with strong punches he lost his composure. He was left groggy for the rest of the encounter, which yielded another perfect 6–0 score for Fischer.

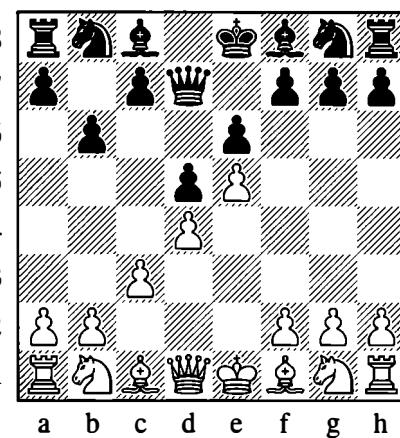
Jose Hedman Senarega – Oleg Romanishin

Cienfuegos 1977

Points to look for in this game:

- Taking over the centre – 11...f6!
- A crushing bishop sacrifice – 18... $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$
- White misses a defensive counter-sacrifice – 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ in the notes

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 b6 4.c3 $\mathbb{W}d7$



An odd variation, pursuing the strategically welcome exchange of the light-squared bishops. However, chess strategy is not as complete and consistent a system as, say, arithmetic. Many concepts overlap and it is up to the players to decide priorities. In this case, providing play for the bad bishop conflicts with the basic concepts of space and time. A similar example is given by the fashionable Advance Variation of the Caro-Kann, in which 3.e5 gains space, but allows 3... $\mathbb{Q}f5$.

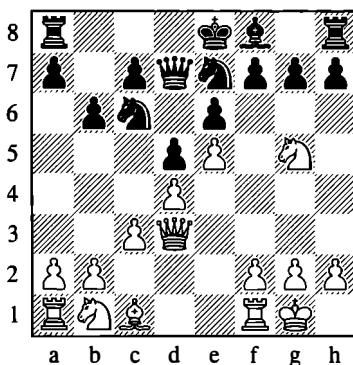
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Here White can play almost anything. The most popular is 6.a4, but the text move is not bad.

6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

White has tried another interesting plan here:

9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$



10...h6

The other ways of meeting the knight thrust may be better:

10... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7=$

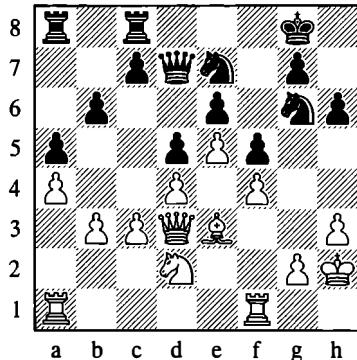
10...f6!? 11. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{f}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$

13.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7=$

11. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$

12... $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ looks more solid.

13.a4 f5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5
17.b3 $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 18.h3 $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h2$



Thanks to his space advantage, White does not need to rush with the thematic g2-g4 break, but can take all precautions while preparing it.

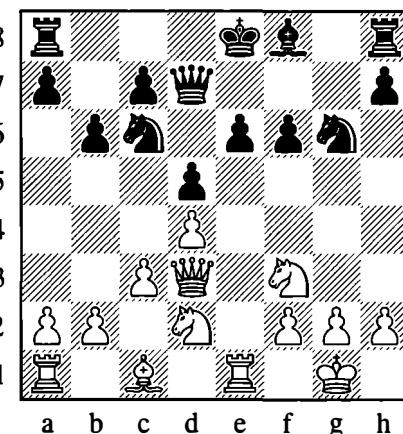
19... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ c5
23.c4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25.cxd5±

White went on to win in Sandipan – Ravi, Visakhapatnam 2006.

9... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ f6!

Eroding the enemy centre and opening the g-file for attacking purposes.

12.exf6 gxf6



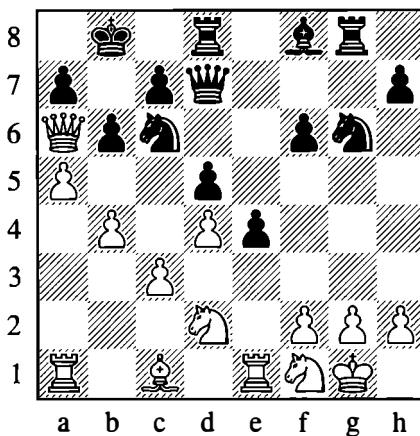
13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

A better move here is 13.b4!, when the possibility of kicking the c6-knight with b4-b5 makes it more difficult for Black to carry out his intended ...e5.

13...0-0-0 14.♔a6† ♔b8 15.a4 e5 16.a5?!

White allows himself to be driven back. Better is 16.dxe5 ♔gxe5 17.♔xe5 fxe5, and only then 18.a5=.

16...e4† 17.♕d2 ♕g8 18.b4?!



18...♕xb4! 19.axb6 cxb6 20.cxb4?

This loses. The only chance was a counter-sacrifice: 20.♕xe4! dxe4 21.cxb4 ♕xb4 22.♗c4 ♔d3 23.♕xe4 f5 24.♗xd3 fxe4† Although White is the exchange down, the strong black centre has disappeared, and so he has some drawing chances.

20...♕xb4 21.♔a4 ♕xa4 22.♕xa4 ♔d3

23.♖d1 ♔gf4

0-1

Post-game reflections

Romanishin's unorthodox opening play seemed to confuse his opponent, who failed to find the most principled moves, such as 13.b4! as given in the notes. Black gained space in the centre and later relied on tactics to reinforce his strategic superiority with 18...♕xb4!. Just as in many other cases in the book, the best defensive chance was a counter-sacrifice, but White missed 20.♕xe4! and lost without much resistance.

Nils Nilsson – Henrik Sorensen

Aalborg 1979

Points to look for in this game:

- Winning after just ten moves – 10.♕d4!
- A murky 'Greek gift' sacrifice – 17.♕xh7†!
- Black misses a counter-sacrifice – 18...♕g8 and later 21...♕xg5! in the notes

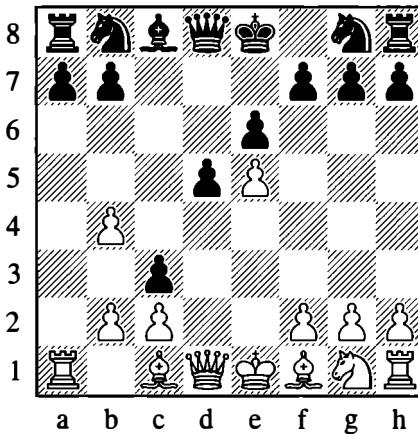
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♕b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 cxd4?!

This risky line has a dubious reputation. Black will have a chance to win a pawn, but it comes at a price as White's pieces will quickly emerge on excellent squares.

6.axb4

Compared with the main lines of the Winawer, the open a-file is a boon for White.

6...dxc3



7.♘f3!

A well-known pawn sacrifice, seeking quick development and maximum mobility. To the same end, White can play 7.♗g4 or 7.♗d4.

7...♕c7 8.♗a3

One of the most aggressive continuations. The machine prefers 8. $\mathbb{W}d4$ cxb2 9. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ a5 10. b5±.

8... cxb2 9. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

Black had to play 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ instead.

10. $\mathbb{B}c3?$!

White can already get a decisive advantage by temporarily doubling his material investment:

10. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$ 11. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}a1!$ e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$ –

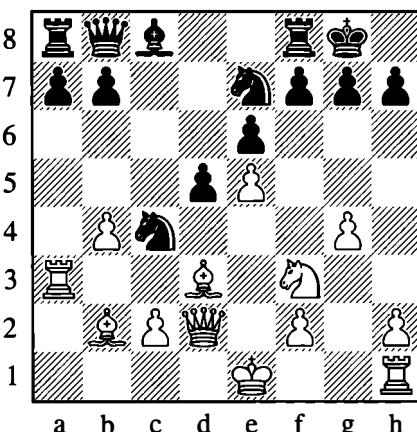
10... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$!

It seems strange to put the bishop here when the more active 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$ is possible. White obviously did not want to reduce the mobility of the rook along the third rank, but this was a lesser priority.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Winning a tempo, but missing a better opportunity: 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 14. $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $dxc4\#$

14. $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. g4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$



17. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$!

A typical sacrifice in the French. It is definitely the best choice in the position, although with so many white pieces en

prise, it is far from obvious how the story will end.

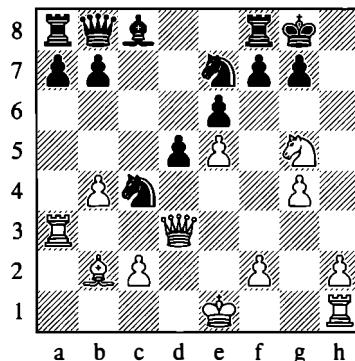
17... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g5?$

Beginning a comedy of errors. White must continue with the standard:

18. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$

This branches out into fantastic variations, with White as first violin.

18... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$



19... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$

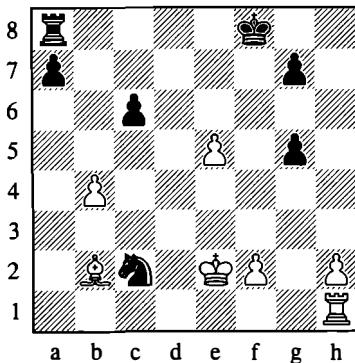
An excellent defensive sacrifice. Much worse is 19... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}h7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{B}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xg6$ and White has a winning attack.

20. $gxf5$ f6!

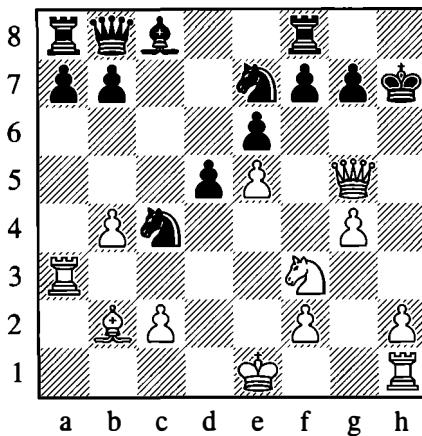
It is essential to eliminate the powerful knight.

The greedy 20... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ is not good: 21. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (21... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 22. f6 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 23. f4 $gxf6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ with a quick mate to follow) 22. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ (22... $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$ 23. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 24. $\mathbb{B}h3+-$) 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ (23... f6 24. $\mathbb{B}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xg7\#$ and mate in four) 24. $\mathbb{B}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 26. $\mathbb{B}h8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 27. $\mathbb{B}xe6\#$ $fxe6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 29. $\mathbb{B}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 30. $\mathbb{B}f8$ and White is probably winning.

21. $fxe6$ $fxg5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 23. $e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 24. $exf8=\mathbb{W}\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}g6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $bxc6$



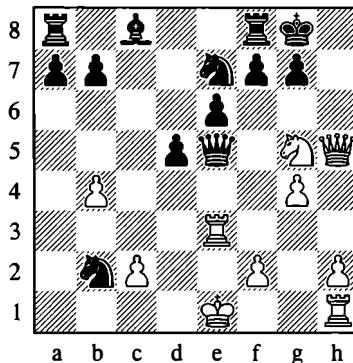
White has only a slight advantage in the endgame.



18...Qg6??

The decisive mistake, which turns the evaluation on its head.

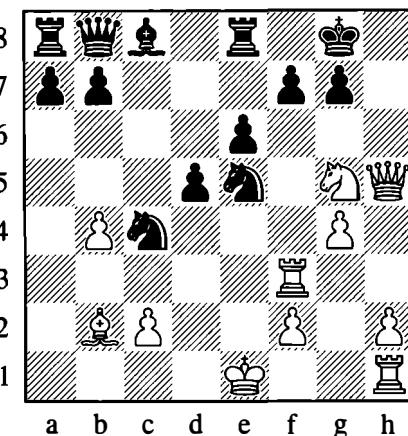
Black could have refuted his opponent's attack by giving up his queen in a heroic counter-sacrifice: 18...Qg8 19.Wh5 Qxb2 20.Qg5 Qxe5† 21.Qe3



21...Wxg5! 22.Wxg5 f6 23.Wh5 a5+–

19.Wh5† Qg8 20.Qg5 Qe8 21.Qf3 Qgxe5

Maximum resistance, but without any real hope, can be achieved by: 21...Qe7 22.Wh7† Qf8 23.Wxg6 Qxe5 24.Qxe5† Wxe5† 25.Qf1 Qc7 26.Qg2 a5 27.Qh7† Qe8 28.Wxg7+–



22.Qxf7!

With mate now inevitable, Black resigned.

1–0

Post-game reflections

This dramatic game featured numerous errors on both sides. White could have obtained a winning position early in the opening with 10.Qd4!, but it looks like he became too fixated on using his rook on the third rank, which caused him to play a few inaccurate moves. Later he managed to launch a powerful attack with 17.Qxh7†!, but then followed it up incorrectly and gave Black a chance to turn the tables by giving up his queen for several pieces. But Black failed to adjust to the changing requirements of the position, and his king soon perished in the flames of the attack.

Chapter 6

The Caro-Kann Defence

The Caro-Kann provides an almost bullet-proof method for Black to gain a foothold in the centre. It is a more modern opening than, say, the French Defence, but it has gained a lot of adherents with its positionally sound approach. One of the reasons may be that it poses more refined strategic problems to “draw-hunters” playing with the white pieces, as it almost never gives rise to a symmetrical pawn structure.

Readers may have a hard life following some of the more heavily commented games in this chapter; so I will start with a miniature to get the ball rolling and inspire some confidence.

Which death is preferable to every other? “The unexpected” – Julius Caesar

Janis Klovans – Felix Levin

Sverdlovsk 1987

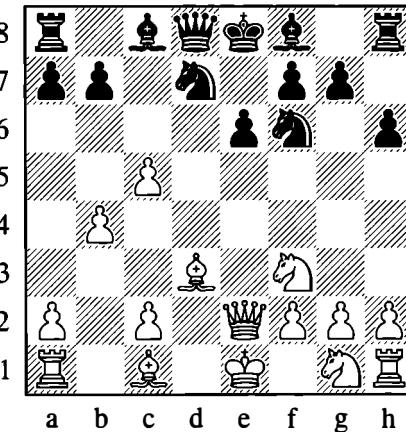
Points to look for in this game:

- A theoretical pawn sacrifice from Black – 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?$!
- Tactics on the e6-square – 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6?$! in the notes, and a mating combination to force resignation in the game

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $dxe4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ e6 7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ h6
9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 10.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7?$!

This is all theory. Of course it is desirable to take on c5 with the knight, although 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ is not so bad. For example: 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13.0–0 b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}e7=$

11.b4



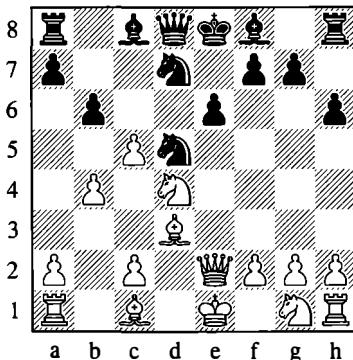
11...a5?

A slightly unusual move, but not a bad one. The most popular continuation has been 11... $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

Another possibility is:

11...b6 12.Qd4 Qd5

Also possible is 12...Qxc5 13.Qb5† Qcd7.



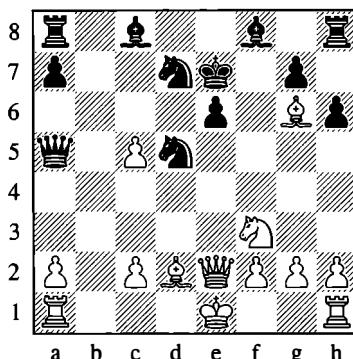
13.Qxe6?

A speculative sacrifice which should not succeed against accurate defence.

13...fxe6 14.Qg6† Qe7 15.Qf3 bxc5 16.bxc5?
16.0–0 is a better try.

16...Wxa5† 17.Qd2

Now Black must make the right decision. In the following game he faltered:



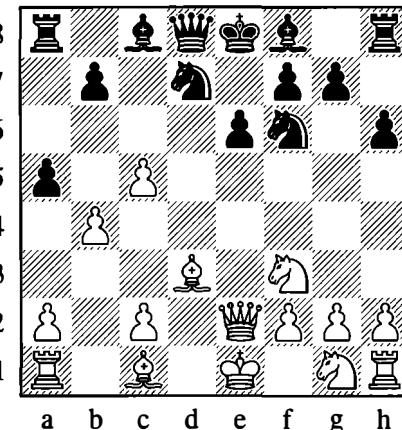
17...Wxc5?

Correct was: 17...Qa6! 18.c4 Wxc5 19.Qc1
Qc8 20.0–0 Qxc4 21.Qd3 Qb6 22.Qfe1
e5 23.Qxe5 Qxe5 24.Wh5 g5 25.Qxg5†
hxg5 26.Wxh8 Qe6 27.Qxc4† Qbxc4
28.Qxc4 Wxc4 29.Wxe5† Qd7 30.Wf5† Qc7
31.Wxg5 Qb7†

18.0–0 a5 19.Qfe1 Qa6 20.c4 Qf6 21.Qad1
Qd8 22.Qe5 Qc7 23.Qf7 Qg8 24.Qe3 Wb4

25.Qf4† e5 26.Qxe5† Qxe5 27.Wxe5† Qd6
28.Qxd6

1–0 De Firmian – Thorsteins, Gausdal 1982.

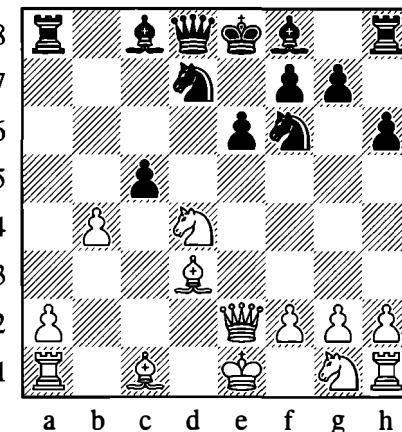


12.c3 axb4 13.cxb4 b6 14.Qd4

So far both sides have played logically, but here Black was far too eager to get his pawn back.

14...bxc5??

14...Qd5! would have given Black reasonable chances in a complex position, for instance:
15.Qc6 Wc7 (15...Wf6? 16.Qb2) 16.Wxe6†!
Qe7! 17.We2 Wxc6 18.Qe4 Wa4 19.Qxa8
Wa8 20.Qf3 bxc5 21.b5 Wa4 22.0–0 f6
23.Qe1 Qf7 24.We6† Qg6=



15.♕c6!

Black resigned, because 15...♛c7 (or 15...♛b6) allows a spectacular mate: 16.♛xe6† ♜xe6 17.♕g6#

1–0

Post-game reflections

Black's play was okay right up to the blunder at the end. Admittedly he was walking a fine line having delayed the development of his kingside pieces, especially since he had previously weakened the g6-square with an early ...h7-h6. Black's positional pawn sacrifice was justified, but he seemed a little too eager to reclaim his material investment, and ended up paying a much higher price.

Life's too short for Chess – Henry James Byron

But that is the fault of life, not Chess – William Ewart Napier

Alexei Shirov – Vassily Ivanchuk

Linares 1998

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ Provocative opening play from Black – 5...♝df6!?
- ♦ The black king stays in the centre – 13.♚b5† ♚f8
- ♦ Two rooks for a queen – 17.♜xd4!? in the notes

In the opening of this game, Shirov, as usual, does everything to complicate the position and get his redoubtable opponent out of his preparation. On the other side, also as usual, Ivanchuk plays solid and sane chess. His deep feeling for the set-up's requirements does not betray him. I have accorded this game extensive analysis, not only because it was very tense and well played by both contenders, but due to its unusually rich backstage tactics.

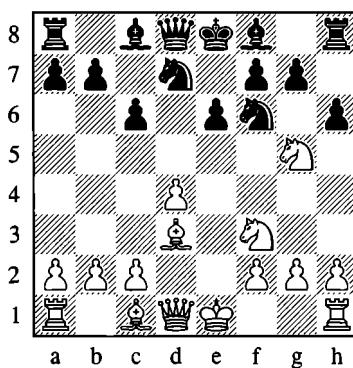
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♕c3 dxe4 4.♕xe4 ♕d7**5.♕g5**

The straightforward (and good) treatment of this variation is 5.♕f3 ♜gf6 6.♕xf6† ♜xf6 7.h3 ♜f5 8.♕d3, which provides the starting position for many games. In general, White does not avoid simplifications; he always has a slight advantage in a simple middlegame or in the endgame. Of course, we should not be surprised that Shirov departs from the routine as early as possible.

Another critical move order is:

5.♕d3 ♜gf6 6.♕g5 e6 7.♕1f3 h6?

The more solid 7...♝d6 is the main line.

**8.♛xe6!**

This popular and intriguing speculative sacrifice is still being investigated today. I do not think that a computer program in 1997 could have played this intuitive sacrifice by itself. It is hard to believe that it could have calculated everything to a clear conclusion. It only remains to suppose that either the inexplicably disappeared "Deep Blue" had all this in its opening library (is this not a form of cheating?), or that the whole match was a sham, an opinion shared by many observers.

8...♛e7

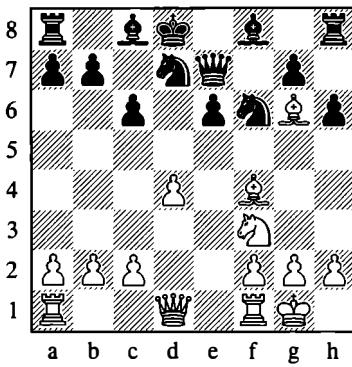
The immediate 8...fxe6! is also possible.

9.0–0 fxe6 10.♗g6† ♜d8 11.♗f4

This may not be best.

11.c4!! $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g8$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g4$ c5 19. $\mathbb{B}d6$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$
 20. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}df6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}d7\#$ 1–0

Leko – Bakhtadze, Spain 1995.



11... $b5!!$

When the opponent has a strong initiative – here, in exchange for material – the last thing you should do is create fresh weaknesses.

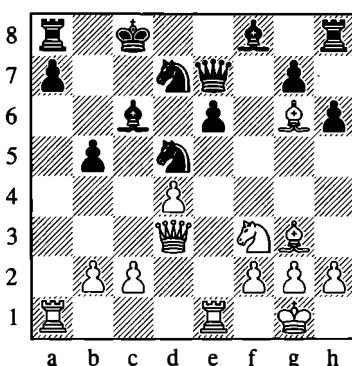
11... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ is less compromising:

- a) 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$
 h5 19.a6 b5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}b8$
 with the idea of ... $\mathbb{B}b6\#$.
- b) 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ hxg5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17.c4 $\mathbb{W}b4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$
 $\mathbb{W}d6$ 19.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$
 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$

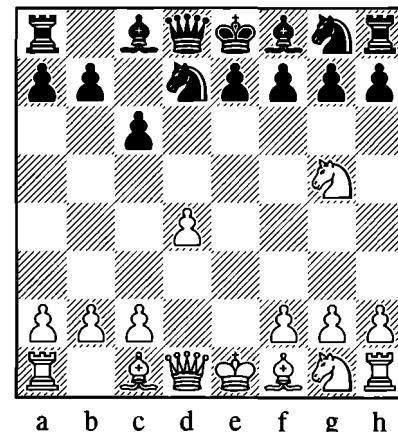
12.a4± $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8??$

15.axb5 cxb5 16. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

16... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ was the last chance to put up any resistance.



17. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ exf5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 19.c4
 1–0 “Deep Blue” – Kasparov, New York (6)
 1997.



5... $\mathbb{Q}df6?!$

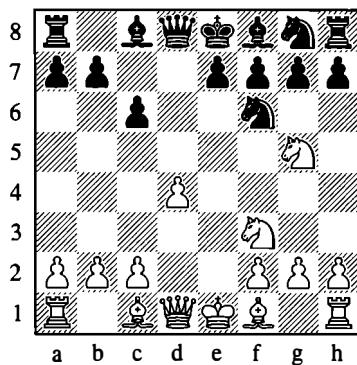
I find this continuation a bit strange, because it loses control of the e5-square.

More natural is 5...e6 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}1f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$. For example: 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ h6 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 12.0–0 c5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ b6 14.c3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15.h4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16.h5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ cxd4 24.cxd4 $\mathbb{W}d6$, as in Topalov – Anand, Linares 1998, which ended in a draw after 40 moves.

6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

More ambitious is:

6. $\mathbb{Q}1f3?!$



6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

The alternatives are rather grim:

6...e6 7. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9.c3 $\mathbb{W}c7$
 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ c5 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.0–0 cxd4
 13.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15.fxe3 (even better is 15. $\mathbb{W}xe3!$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g3$ f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ with a strong initiative) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}ad1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xd7$ 1–0 Nunn – Tal, Brussels 1988.

6...h6? 7. $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ –
 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6 8.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf3\pm$

White has more space, the two bishops and a lasting edge.

6...e6 7. $\mathbb{W}e2?$

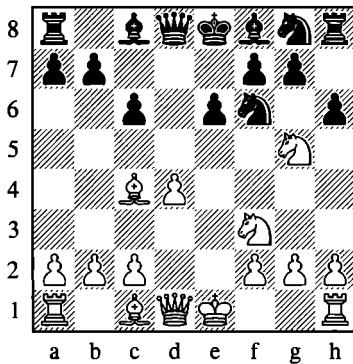
With his move order, White shows clear intentions of castling queenside.

7. $\mathbb{Q}1f3$

This is still playable, though it does not promise as much as before.

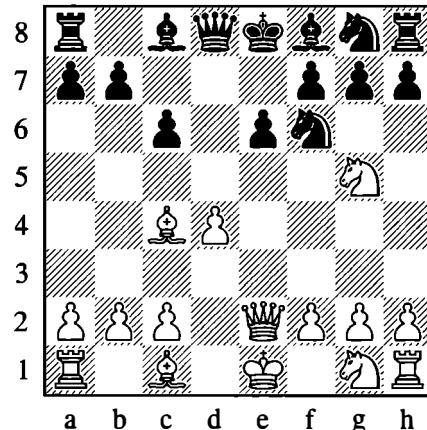
7...h6

7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$) 9.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}xd1\uparrow$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{B}e1$ b5 12.f3 h6 13.fxg4 hxg5 14. $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{B}xh2$ 15. $\mathbb{B}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$



8. $\mathbb{Q}xf7??$

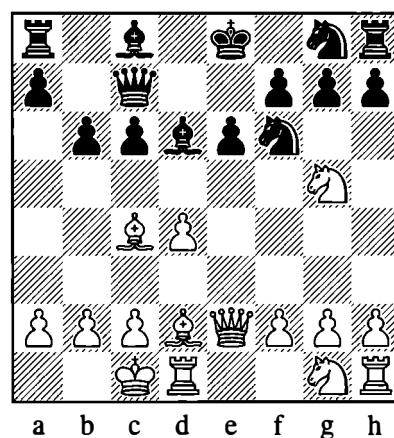
8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9.0–0 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7=$
 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11.0–0 g5
 12. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13.c3
 With dynamic equality.



7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

It seems that White does not want to play $\mathbb{Q}1f3$. He is hoping to meet the weakening ...h6 with $\mathbb{Q}5f3$ rather than condemn the knight to h3.

8... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9.0–0–0 b6



10. $\mathbb{Q}1f3?!$

Alexei is not consistent with his previous policy.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}5f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0–0
 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ c5 gives White hardly anything.

However, 10.f3? $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 13.h4 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ is very interesting.

10...h6 11.Qh3!?

Annotating the game for ChessBase, Stohl says, "True to his nature, Shirov avoids exchanges."

Certainly, 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ offers White nothing.

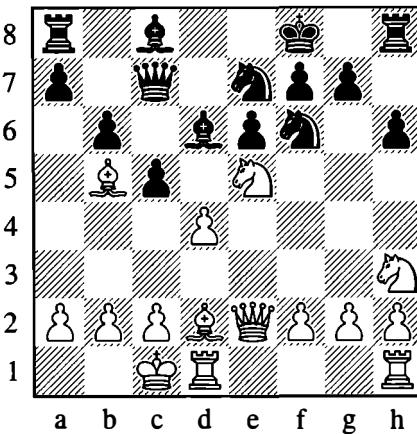
11... ♔e7 12. ♔e5

12... $\mathbb{H}g1!$? with the idea of g2-g4, is more in Shirov's style.

12...c5!?

Of course not 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7?$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#+-.$

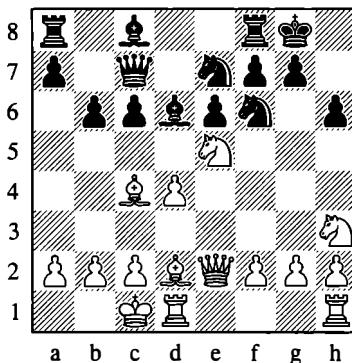
Instead of the double-edged text move, 12...0–0 is quite safe:



Let's take a look at this situation. The programs prefer White by a narrow margin, but I think that both contenders were happy with their position. So which player will be proved right then? As often happens, it will be the one who plays better!

14. $\mathfrak{Q}c4$

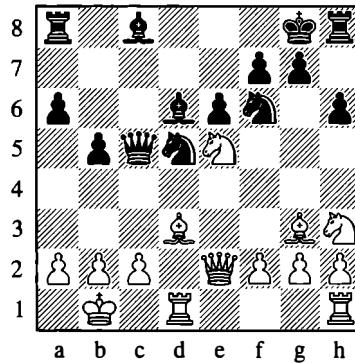
Alexei pushes hard. It would appear he was not satisfied with the following line: 14.♕f4 ♔ed5 (14...♔fd5 15.dxc5 ♕xc5 16.♖he1±) 15.♕g3 a6 16.dxc5 ♕xc5 17.♕d3 ♕g8 18.♔b1 b5



- a) 13.g4?! is too optimistic, for example:
 13...Qfd5 14.Qd3 c5 15.Qe4 Qf6 16.Qxa8
 Qb7 17.Qxa7 Qa8 18.Qxa8† Qxa8 19.g5
 hxg5 20.Qhgl g4 21.Qg5 Qxe5 22.dxe5
 Qxe5†

- b) 13.f4 ♜b7 14.g4 c5 15.dxc5 ♜xc5 16.♖he1
 ♜ac8 17.♗d3 ♜a6 18.♗b4 ♜xb4 19.♕xa6
 ♜cd8 20.a3 ♜a5 21.♗c4 ♜xe5 22.fxe5
 ♜fd5 23.g5 ♜c3 24.bxc3 ♜xc3 25.♖d3
 ♜xd3 26.♗xd3 ♜xa3† should lead to a draw.

13. ♕b5+ ♔f8



19.c4 This is the only way for White to keep some initiative, but it provokes a lot of exchanges. 19...bxc4 20.Qxc4 Qxg3 21.hxg3 Qb7 22.Qc1 Qb4 23.Qf4 Qd5 24.f3 Qxd3 25.Qxd3 Qf2 26.Qe3 Qxg3 27.Qfxd5 Qxd5 28.Qxd5 exd5 After some complications, the game will end peacefully.

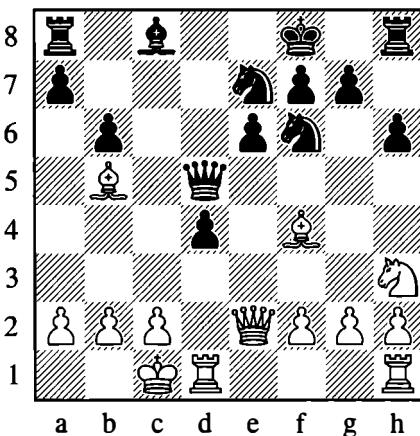
In positions such as that after move 13, a strong tactician may be at a disadvantage compared with an intuitive player. The former will hardly admit that White is not much better or even winning; therefore, he may discard the best move “by elimination”.

14...cxd4 15.Qxd6 Wxd6 16.Qf4

Weaker is 16.Qc3 e5 17.f4 Qg4 18.Wxe5 Wxe5 19.fxe5 dxc3 20.exf6 gxf6 21.Qd6 Qf5 22.Qd5 cxb2† 23.Qxb2 Qg7 24.Qf2 Qe7†.

16...Wd5

This allows a combination, but 16...Wc5 is probably worse: 17.Qe5 a6 18.Qa4 Qf5 19.Qh1 1d7 20.g4 Qxa4 21.gxf5 Qc8 22.Qd2±



17.Qe5?!

Missing his last chance to keep a sustainable initiative. White could, and probably should, “sacrifice” two rooks for the black queen: 17.Qxd4? Wxd4 18.Qd1 Wxd1† 19.Wxd1 b7 20.Qe5 Qxg2 21.Qf4† But Alexei quite possibly considered this “too little”.

17...Qf5 18.c4?!

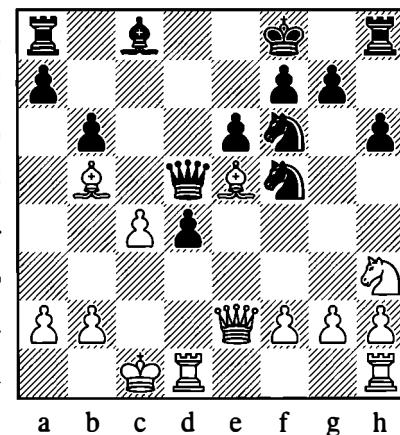
The game has reached the point of greatest tension, and this move could be expressed in words as “anything for the sake of the initiative!” The good news is that this kills four

birds with one stone. The bad news is that three of them (weakening the king’s position, exposing the c-pawn and leaving the light-squared bishop offside) are White’s own birds.

White discarded two variations that would end up in perpetual check:

18.Qf4 Wxa2 19.Qf3 Wa1† 20.Qd2 Wa5†
21.Qc1=

18.Qb1 Qb7 19.Qf4 Wc5 20.Qh1 Qe4
21.Qa6 Wb4 22.Qa1 Qc3 23.bxc3 Wxc3†=



The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 301.

You shouldn't be the first one to do something; watch someone else and learn from their mistakes
– Proverb

Teimour Radjabov – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu

Kings Tournament, Medias 2011

Points to look for in this game:

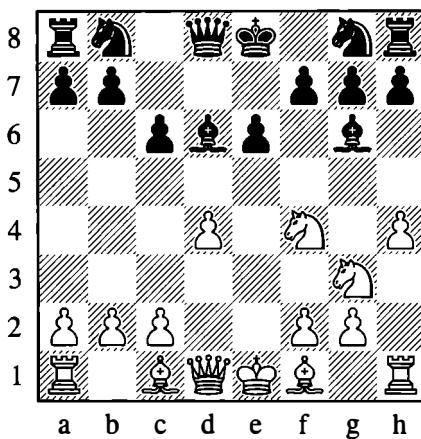
- ◆ A positional pawn sacrifice – 14...c5!?
- ◆ Exchanging a badly-placed piece – 15.Wxc5! in the notes

The 2011 edition of the Kings Tournament was not a successful event for Teimour Radjabov. After starting with a loss (against Ivanchuk), he then drew eight games in a row. This game was played in the final round.

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Qc3 dx e4 4.Qxe4 ♕f5
5.Qg3 ♕g6 6.Qh3**

This move has scored highly in this position, but it is surprisingly rare in practice.

6...e6 7.Qf4 ♕d6 8.h4



8...♕xf4

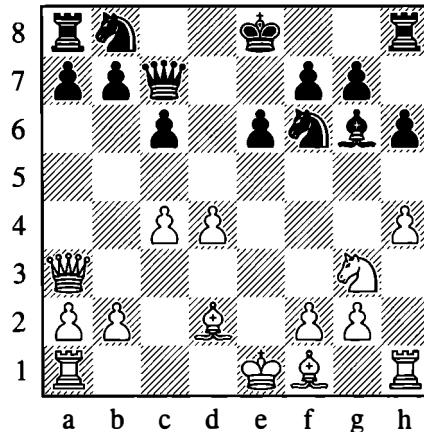
Black gives up the important dark-squared bishop to speed up his development.

The alternative is 8...♛c7 9.Qxg6 (9.Qf3 ♕xc2 10.Qgh5 Qd7 11.Qxg7† ♜e7 12.Qd3 ♛a5† 13.Qd2 ♜b4 14.0-0 is approximately equal) 9...hxg6 10.Qe4 ♕f4 11.Qxf4 ♛xf4 12.Qg5 ♜f6 13.g3 ♛d6 14.c3 ♛d5 15.Qf3 (15.Qg1??) 15...Qbd7±

9.Qxf4 h6 10.c3 ♜f6 11.Qb3 ♜d5 12.Qd2

White must refrain from the greedy 12.Qxb7? ♜xf4 13.Qxa8 ♛b6†.

12...♛c7 13.c4 ♜f6 14.Qa3



14...c5!?

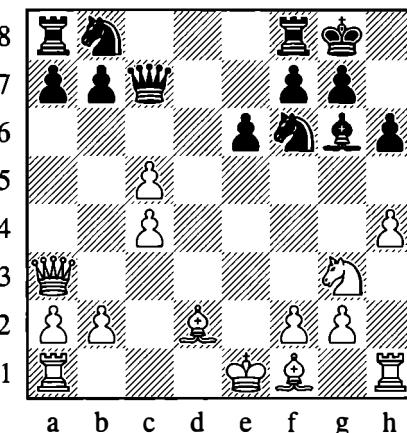
This novelty was preceded by a long period of thought, so it is reasonable to believe that it was found at the board (as was confirmed by Nisipeanu's second, Iordachescu).

The alternative is 14...Qbd7 15.Qe2 c5 16.Qc3 0-0 17.Qd1 cxd4 18.Qxd4 e5 19.Qe3 b6 20.Qd6±.

15.dxc5

15.Qxc5! is a lot safer, removing the queen from its artificial position on a3. For example: 15...♛xc5 16.dxc5 Qbd7 17.Qe3 0-0 18.Qd1 ♜fc8 19.Qe2 ♛xc5 20.Qd4 a5 21.b3±

15...0-0!



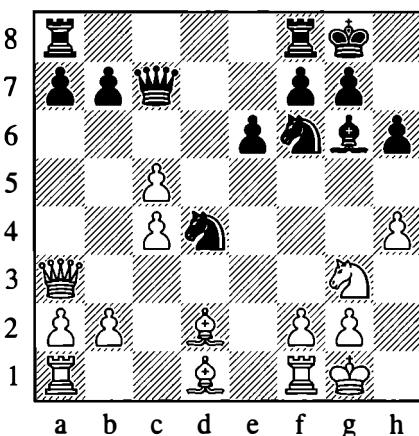
Black does not try to recoup the pawn by 15... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, but plays for quick development, transforming this quiet Caro-Kann variation into a real gambit. There are several reasons why this is possible:

- 1) Most of the white pieces are in odd locations, while Black's forces are focused on the centre.
- 2) The white king is still in the middle.
- 3) The weak h4-pawn completes the picture.

16.♗e2 ♖c6 17.0–0 ♗d4

Black is taking over the initiative.

18.♗d1



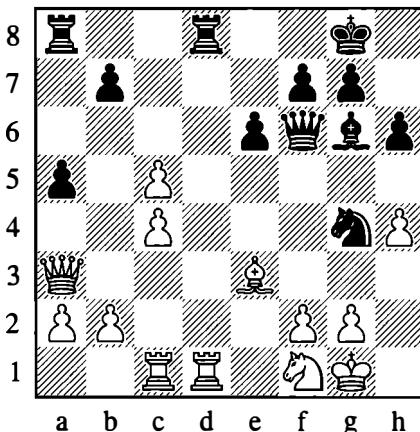
18...a5

Black can also play 18... $\mathbb{R}fd8$ directly, because attempts to make use of the extra c5-pawn are very risky, for example: 19.♗a5 b6 20.♗b4 ♖d7 21.cxb6 axb6 22.♗c3 ♗e5??

19.♗c1 ♘fd8 20.♗e3 ♗c6

It is difficult to believe that this can be the best move, but instead of searching for alternatives we shall just note that Black is still okay. The knight is heading towards the weak g4-square.

**21.♗f3 ♗e5 22.♗e2 ♗eg4 23.♗xg4 ♗xg4
24.♗fd1 ♗e5 25.♗f1 ♗f6**



The opening phase of this game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 307.

Panov-Botvinnik Attack

I separated this section from the rest of the Caro-Kann because it is so unlike all the other variations. Most often the key feature of the Panov is the isolated queen's pawn, so cherished by Tarrasch and Botvinnik, and so despised by Steinitz and Nimzowitsch.

It's worthier studying chess rather than physics; perpetual motion does not exist, perpetual check does!

Lajos Portisch – Tigran Petrosian

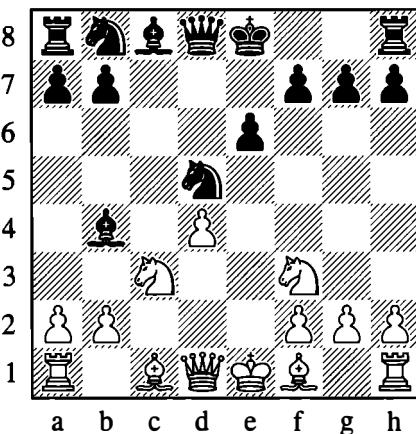
Tel Aviv Olympiad 1964

One of the best books by Petrosian translates as *The Strategy of Reliability*. In this game, he was far from abiding by his watchword.

Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ An overzealous rook – 19... $\mathbb{R}c4$?
- ◆ An unusual attacking manoeuvre – 23.♗e3! in the notes
- ◆ Throwing away the win – 39.♗xg8??

1.c4 ♜f6 2.♘c3 c6 3.e4 d5 4.exd5 cxd5 5.d4 e6 6.♘f3 ♜b4 7.cxd5 ♜xd5



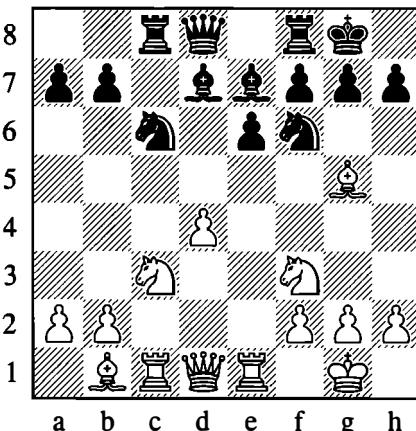
8.♗d2

White may also fight for the initiative with the more aggressive 8.♗c2 or 8.♗b3.

8...♜c6 9.♗d3 ♜f6 10.0–0 ♜e7 11.♗g5
♜c6 9.♗d3 ♜f6 10.0–0 ♜e7 11.♗g5 0–0
12.♗e1 ♜d7

A bit passive, but playable. The alternatives are 12...b6, 12...♝b4, 12...h6 and 12...♝d5.

13.♖c1 ♜c8 14.♗b1



14...♜e8

Black is trying to be ready for White's coming assault, but the black pieces may get in

each other's way. I would prefer 14...h6.

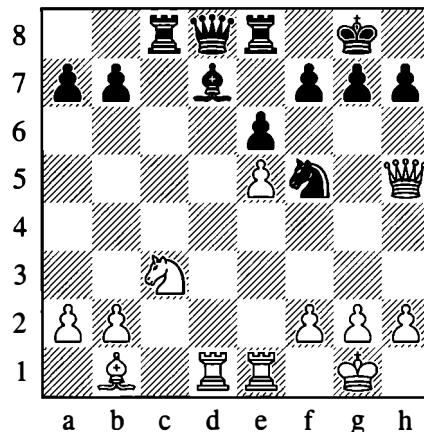
15.♗e5

Threatening 16.♗xf6 followed by 17.♗xh7†.

15...♝xe5?

More reliable is 15...g6, when Black remains solid.

16.dxe5 ♜d5 17.♗xe7 ♜xe7 18.♗h5 ♜f5
19.♖cd1



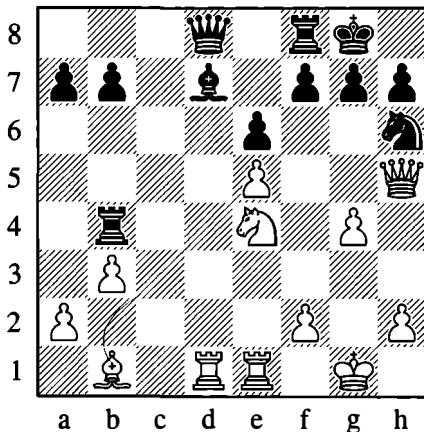
19...♜c4?

The rook sets off on an adventure. Petrosian is looking to employ his favourite weapon, the exchange sacrifice, but he is asking far too much of his position. The situation is rather reminiscent of his game against Troianescu (see page 46) where he was lucky to avoid punishment after leaving his rook exposed on c5.

Better is 19...♜c7 with the idea of 20...♗h4. In this case Black's position is uncomfortable, but it should still be defendable.

20.♗e4 ♜f8 21.g4 ♜h6 22.b3 ♜b4

It is now too late for 22...♜c7, in view of 23.♗f6† ♜h8 (23...gxsf6 24.♗xh6 f5 25.♗e3+–) 24.♗xh7 ♜e8 25.g5 ♗e7 26.♗f6 and White wins.

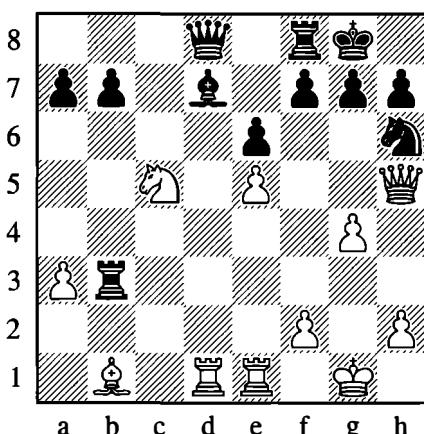


23.a3

Portisch does not believe that Black will get enough compensation, and goes for the exchange.

However, an immediate win was available: 23.♕e3! ♜c7 24.♘f6† gxsf6 25.♗g3!. It is unusual to follow a knight sacrifice by placing a rook in a defensive position behind its own pawn, but it meets the demands of the position by guarding g4 and preventing a defence with ...f5. 25...♜xe5 26.♖xh6 ♜e4 27.♖xe4 ♜xe4 28.♖xd7 White ends up a rook ahead.

23...♜xb3 24.♘c5



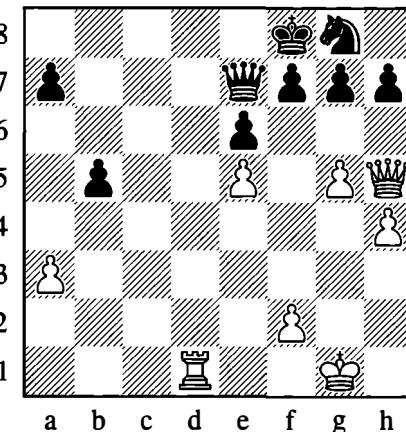
24...♜xb1

Petrosian was pinning his hopes on this sacrifice, but his compensation is woefully inadequate.

25.♘xd7!

Portisch chooses the right way to take the exchange.

**25...♝xd1 26.♜xd1 ♜e7 27.♘xf8 ♜xf8
28.h4 b5 29.g5 ♘g8**



30.♖xh7!!

This complicates White's task.

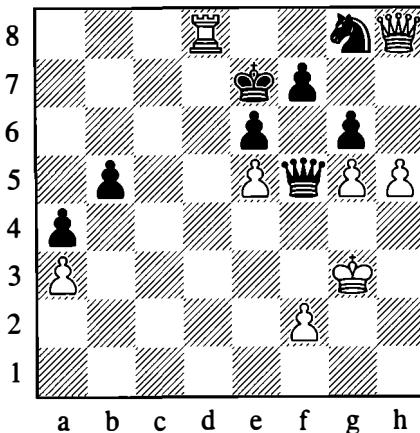
An easy win would result from 30.♖f3! ♜e8 31.♖b7 ♘e7 32.♖d7 ♘d5 33.♖c6 ♜b8 34.♖c5† ♘e8 35.♖xa7.

30...g6! 31.♖f1

Having locked his queen in the corner, matters are not so straightforward for White.

However, he can still win with 31.♖c1 ♜d7 32.♖c3 ♘e7 33.♖f3 ♘f5 34.♖h8† ♘e7 35.♖c3 ♜d8 36.♖c8 ♜xh8 37.♖xh8 ♘d4 38.♖b8 a6 39.♖a8+–.

31...♜c7 32.♘g1 ♜e7 33.♖d6 a5 34.♖h8 a4 35.♘h2 ♜c7 36.h5 ♜c2 37.♘g3 ♜f5 38.♖d8† ♘e7



39. $\mathbb{W}xg8??$

Portisch must surely have been in time pressure, as this is an awful blunder.

After 39. $\mathbb{E}xg8$ $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}f5\#$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d2\#$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}xf2\#$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ the checks would soon run out.

39... $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xh5\#$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}g4\#$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}c4\#$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f4\#$

White cannot avoid the perpetual check.

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Post-game reflections

This game had certain similarities with the Larsen – Petrosian game in the French chapter (see page 76). Once again, “Iron Tigran” played poorly in the late opening and early middlegame, and soon found himself in serious difficulties. Just as before, he tried to solve his problems with the help of an exchange sacrifice, when an objectively stronger course of action would have been to defend calmly and attempt to hold a worse position. This time his situation was even more grave, and Portisch missed several wins before gifting his opponent half a point.

Man occasionally stumbles upon the truth, but more often than not he picks himself up and continues on his way – Winston Churchill

Mihai Suba – Petar Velikov

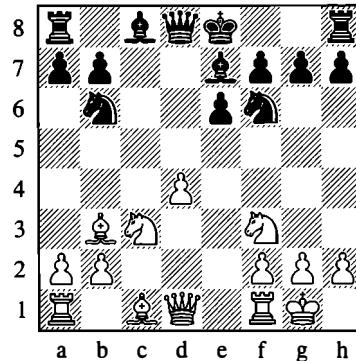
Lucerne Olympiad 1982

Points to look for in this game:

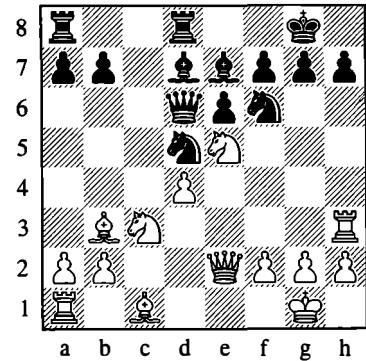
- ◆ Violent attacking ideas – 14. $\mathbb{E}d3!$ and 16. $g4!$ in the note to move 4
- ◆ An intuitive pawn sacrifice – 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6?$?
- ◆ A central battering ram – 20. $c4!$ and 21. $d5!$

1. c4 c6 2. e4 d5 3. exd5 cxd5 4. d4

Another game by your author had the following, very interesting development: 4. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $e6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6?!$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}8d7$ 9. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

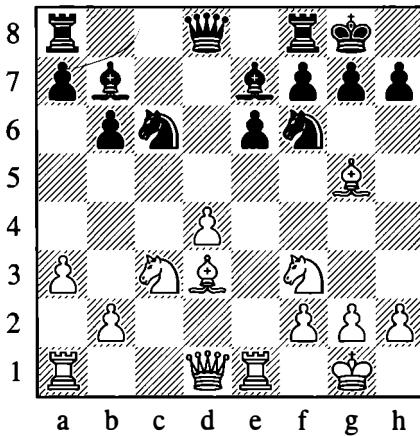


11. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{E}d3!$ A brutal attacking plan. 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ Suba – Bareev, Leon (rapid) 2008. Here I missed a big punch:



16.g4! would have given White a winning attack. I shall leave to the readers the instructive pleasure of analysing this position.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
 8.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9.0–0 0–0 10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11.a3
 b6 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$



13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$?

The blocking of the rook on a1 is only temporary. Most players have elected to retreat the bishop to c2, but if White then carries out the equivalent regrouping to that seen in the game, his bishop will be slightly more exposed on b3 than a2.

13... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ g6 15. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}ad1$

White has an ideal placement of his men against the black set-up. He must now form an attacking plan. For his part, Black will try to exchange pieces and create play against White's organic weakness of the isolated pawn (or the hanging pawns that may arise).

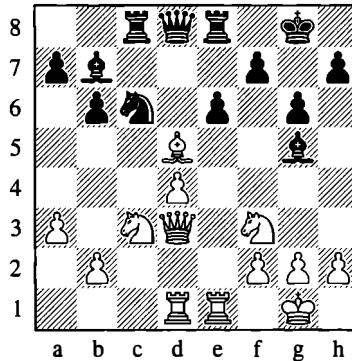
16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$??

An ambitious move, avoiding unnecessary simplifications and keeping the bishop close to the enemy king. It implies a pawn sacrifice, and there is also a danger that if the attack is not successful, White will be left with an ugly pawn structure. Nevertheless my intuition told me that the decision was justified.

White has a safer, and possibly stronger, option which I tested more than two decades later!

17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$?

Black should settle for 17...exd5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\pm$.



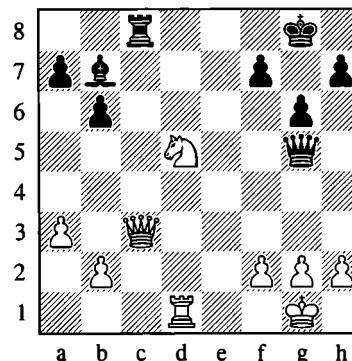
18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$!

18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ was played in Suba – Perez Garcia, Campillos 2005, and also two years later in Matsuura – Molina, Rio de Janeiro 2007, both games ending as draws.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19.d5!

After my above-mentioned game against the Cuban IM, we analysed this temporary pawn sacrifice which had intrigued me during the game. We came to the conclusion that it was strong and probably even winning.

19...exd5 20. $\mathbb{E}xe8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$
 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$



24.h4! $\mathbb{E}xc3$ 25.hxg5 $\mathbb{E}c5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 27.f4
 h6 28.b4 $\mathbb{E}f5$

28... $\mathbb{E}c2$ 29.g4 $\mathbb{E}g2\uparrow$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}c2$ 31. $\mathbb{E}d7$
 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 32. $\mathbb{E}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}c4$ 33. $\mathbb{E}a8$ wins.

29. $\mathbb{Q}e8\# \mathbb{Q}h7$

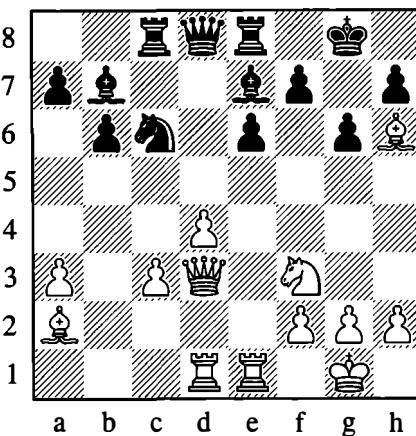
29... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
32. $gxh6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ is
hopeless for Black.

30. $\mathbb{Q}d8$

Or 30. $\mathbb{Q}d6+-$.

30... $hxg5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $g4$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}d7$
White is winning.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18. $bxc3$



18... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Black decides to decline the a-pawn. However, his chosen move is not the best due to the weakening of the dark squares. The difference between trading bishops on f8 rather than e7 is significant, as Black will be forced to misplace either his rook or his king, whereas an exchange on e7 would have enabled the knight on c6 to come closer to the kingside while reinforcing the blockading square on d5.

I did not attach major importance to the possible loss of a pawn:

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

All the programs certainly have a preference for this capture... to start with.

19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

I felt that this would give me a strong attack. Cool analysis seems not only to confirm this,

but even indicates that Black's position can quickly become downright lost.

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

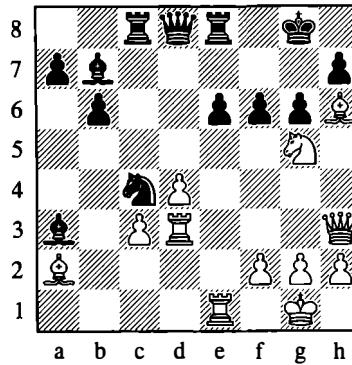
Both 19... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h3$ and 19... $\mathbb{Q}c7?$ 20. $d5!$ $exd5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ lose immediately.

20. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$

20... $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ 21. $c4!$

21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $f6$

21... $f5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ (less convincing is 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$) 23... $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe6+-$

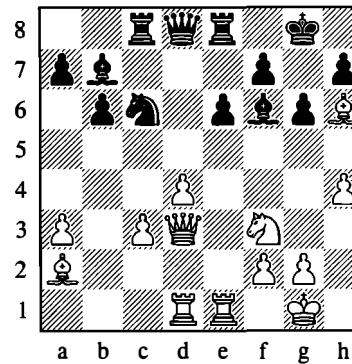


22. $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $g5$

Or 24... $\mathbb{W}f7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}h5!$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $f5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ and Black will soon be mated.

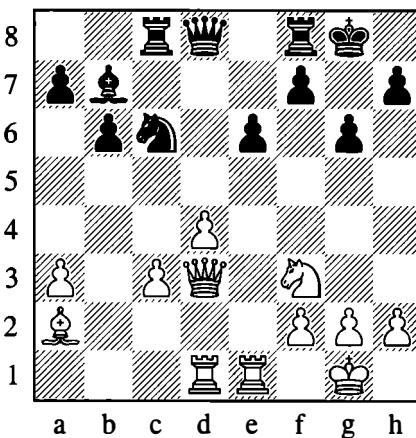
25. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 26. $f4+-$

The best defensive attempt is 18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, but even then White has good chances to develop an attack with 19. $h4!$, for example:



19... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$? 20.d5!+) 20.h5 $\mathbb{W}d6$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ a5 25. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (25... $\mathbb{W}a3$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ +)
 26. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 27.hxg6 hxg6 28. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$
 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ exf5 30. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
 32.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 33. $\mathbb{W}xh1$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}h2\pm$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$



20.c4!

White's pieces are beautifully centralized, but in order to tap into their full power he needs to open some additional lines of attack. Advancing his central pawns is the best way to achieve that objective, and the emergence of a strong passed pawn will put additional strain on the defender.

20... $\mathbb{W}f6$

It is hard to suggest a good solution for Black. Here is one sample line I analysed:
 20... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21.d5 exd5 22.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 23.d6 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ (23... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 25.d7 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 31.g3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 32.h4 $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 33. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ +) 24. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 25.h4! h5 (25... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 27.g4+–) 26. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ fxg6 29. $\mathbb{W}xg6\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$

Perhaps 20... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ would have been the best

chance, although White still keeps a distinct advantage with 21. $\mathbb{W}d2$ or 21. $\mathbb{W}e3$, eyeing the kingside and preparing d4-d5.

21.d5! exd5 22.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}cd8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 25.d6

After this advance, White dominates the whole board. Having the same effect, but possibly even stronger, is 25. $\mathbb{Q}e7$! as suggested by my programs.

25... $\mathbb{Q}a8$

A desperate attempt to reroute the knight to c5.

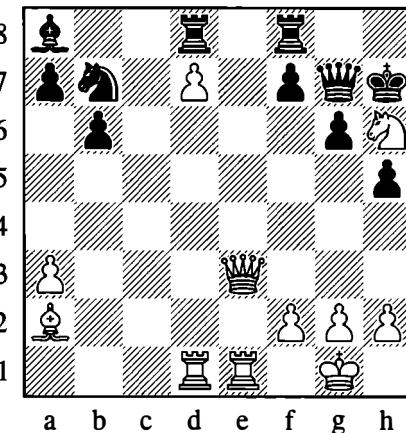
26.d7 $\mathbb{Q}b7$

26... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ doesn't help either: 27. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ +–

27. $\mathbb{W}e3$

With the unavoidable threat of 28. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ followed by 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$.

27...h5 28. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$



29. $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$

An elementary combination to conclude the game.

29... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 31. $\mathbb{W}g5!$

1–0

Post-game reflections

This game showed just how dangerous a traditional IQP position can be for Black. My opponent did not make any obvious mistakes and generally put his pieces on the recommended positions, yet he still fell into difficulties. The intuitive sacrifice of the a3-pawn was quite appropriate for the position, although the note to move 17 shows that an even stronger alternative existed.

In the next game I had the opportunity to test the IQP against a former World Champion.

Nothing is ever done for the right reason – O'Brien's Rule

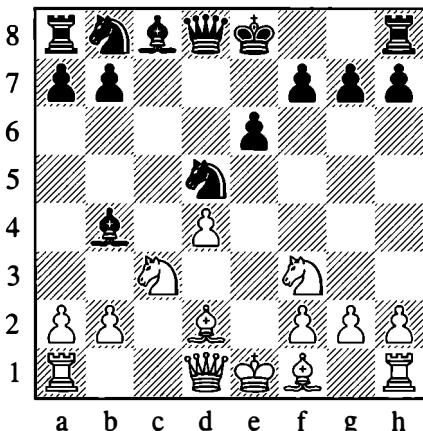
Mihai Suba – Tigran Petrosian

Tallinn 1983

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ A better way to conduct the opening – 11.♕e2! in the notes
- ♦ An exchange sacrifice that should have been attempted: 22.♗e5!!

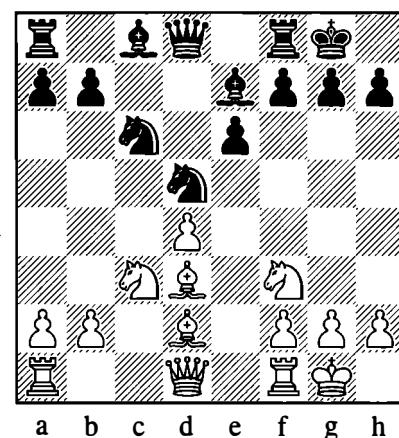
1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 ♜f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.♘f3 ♜b4 7.cxd5 ♜xd5 8.♘d2



8...0-0

More aggressive is 8...♝c6, as occurred in a previous game between the same players: 9.♗d3 ♜f6 10.0-0 ♜e7 11.♗e2 0-0 12.♗ad1 ♜b4 13.♗b1 (13.♗c4?) 13...b6 14.♗fe1 ♜b7 15.♗e5 ♜c8 16.♗e3? (with the idea of 17.♗h3 and 18.♗g5) 16...g6! A not-so-obvious plan leading to a reliable position. 17.♗h3 ♜h5! 18.♗h6 ♜g7= and ½–½ after 26 moves in Suba – Petrosian, Las Palmas 1982.

9.♗d3 ♜c6 10.0-0 ♜e7



11.a3??

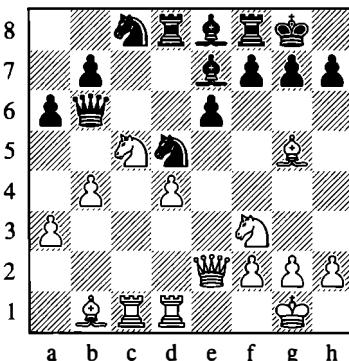
Here I just wanted to avoid transposing into the game quoted above. However, the set-up involving the white queen on e2 (which was introduced in that game, having been recommended by IM Pavlov) is actually rather promising, and later became more popular. We will follow an interesting high-level example.

11.♕e2! ♜f6 12.♗e4!?

This is probably stronger than 12.♗ad1 as I played against Petrosian. The knight move became popular as a result of the Karpov – Kamsky FIDE World Championship match in Elista 1996.

12.♗d7 13.♗ac1 ♜c8 14.a3 ♜b6 15.♗e3 ♜d5 16.b4 a6 17.♗c5 ♜cd8

17... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ looks more natural.
 18. $\mathbb{A}e4$ $\mathbb{A}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 20. $\mathbb{A}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{A}b1$



21... $\mathbb{A}c6?$

On the official site of the Olympiad, Rybka recommends 21... $g6$, limiting White to an edge after either 22. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{A}c6\pm$ or 22. $\mathbb{A}h6$ $\mathbb{A}b5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{A}f6$ (but not 23... $f6?$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g3+-$).
 24. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{E}fe8\pm$.

After the game continuation White missed the opportunity for a winning sacrifice.

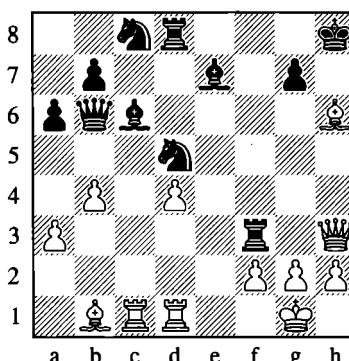
22. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$

Instead 22. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $g6$ was played in Nakamura – Wojtaszek, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010. White's fleeting chance was gone, and he ended up losing in 77 moves.

22... $f \times e6$

22... $\mathbb{A}xg5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}fxg5+-$

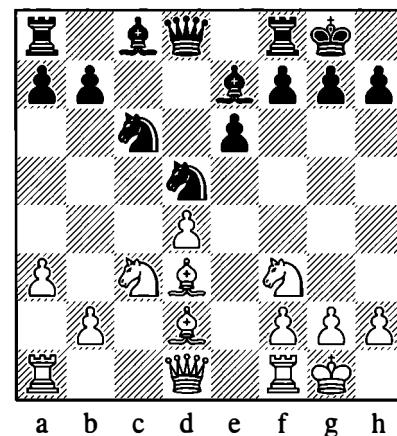
23. $\mathbb{W}xe6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $h6$ 25. $\mathbb{A}xh6$ $\mathbb{E}xf3$



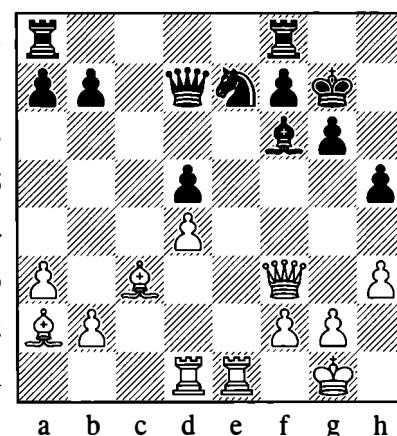
26. $\mathbb{A}xg7\uparrow!$

This final sacrifice crushes all resistance.
 26... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}h7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{A}g6+-$

Let us now return to the game after 11. $a3?!$. The next ten moves are pretty uneventful, so I will refrain from commenting on them.



11... $\mathbb{A}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $h6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $exd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $h5$ 17. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$



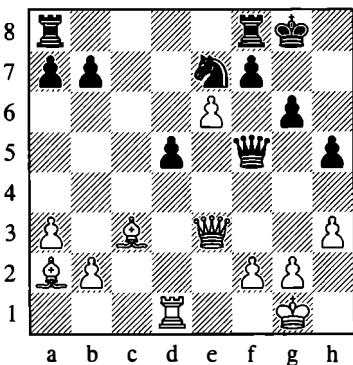
22. $\mathbb{Q}b4?!$

Here I would have liked to have given Petrosian some of his own medicine with:
 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$

Let's see what happens if Black accepts the offer.

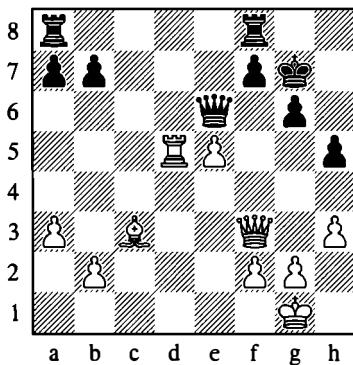
22... $\mathbb{A}xe5$ 23. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{W}e6$

Worse is 23... $\mathbb{W}f5$ 24. $e6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e3$ and now:



- a) 25... $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}h6$ f6 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
 28. $\mathbb{W}xg6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xh5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd5+-$
 b) 25...f6 26. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}c7$
 $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ a6 30.h4 $\mathbb{W}g4$ (30... $\mathbb{W}xh4$
 31. $\mathbb{Q}xg6+-$) 31. $\mathbb{E}e1+-$
 c) 25...fxe6 26. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}h7$
 28. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}h7$ 30. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$
 31.f3 h4 32. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 33. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 34. $\mathbb{W}xb7+-$
 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xd5$

Threatening to oust the queen and open the long diagonal.



- 25... $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 26. $\mathbb{E}a5$ b5 27. $\mathbb{E}xa7\pm$

Unfortunately, Black can decline the offer and play the simple 22... $\mathbb{E}fd8!$. But I should have offered the exchange sacrifice anyway, even if only for psychological reasons. I could then just retreat the rook to e2. The way I played made the defence just too easy for the "Tiger". The rest of the game is flat and I won't add any further comments.

- 22... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{E}xe7$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$
 25. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}c4$ b5 27. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{E}xd4$
 28. $\mathbb{E}xd4$
 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Post-game reflections

This was a short and mostly uneventful game, but it was interesting for the exchange sacrifice that might have been. The key was to consider what would happen if Black declined the sacrifice, as he should and probably would have done. In that case the white rook could simply retreat to e2, and the lost tempo would be of virtually no consequence as the position was equal regardless. At the same time I would have lost nothing by giving my opponent a chance to go wrong, and I might just have tempted him into making a bad decision.

The next game will receive more detailed commentary as it is especially rich in tactical possibilities.

We cannot resist the fascination of sacrifice, since a passion for sacrifices is part of a chessplayer's nature – Rudolf Spielmann

Alexander Morozевич – Artashes Minasian

Istanbul Olympiad 2000

Points to look for in this game:

- An interesting pawn sacrifice – 12.0–0!?
- A powerful exchange sacrifice – 17. $\mathbb{E}xe6\#$!
- Winning by improving the worst piece – 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$! in the notes

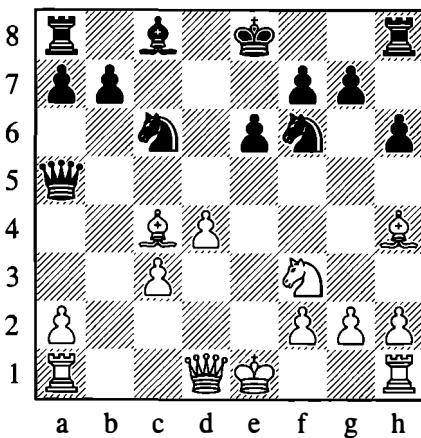
- 1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$

This is the most challenging move against the Panov Attack. 5...e6 is solid, but a bit passive.

6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ e6

6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and 6...dxc4 are serious alternatives which are featured in the next two games. After the text move both sides will have a variety of alternatives available over the next few moves, but I do not want to get too distracted so we will fast-forward to the most interesting part of the game.

7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ dxc4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 11.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}a5$



12.0–0??

12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ is by no means a bad move, but Morozevich decides to offer an unclear pawn sacrifice instead.

12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

12... $\mathbb{W}xc3?$ 13. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 15.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ is much too dangerous for Black.

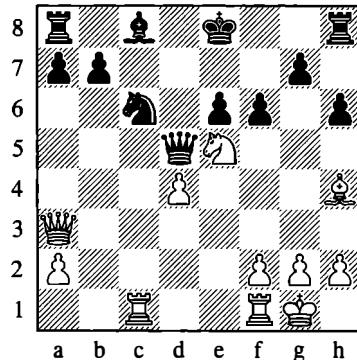
13. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

The machine wants to play 14... $\mathbb{Q}xa2?!$, but few human players would be willing to venture this move.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5?

Black underestimates the danger of opening the centre.

15... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ was necessary. Black may have been afraid of 16. $\mathbb{W}a3$ f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$, but he can equalize with cool defence:



17... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{W}d5!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ exd5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 21. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ 0–0 22. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$

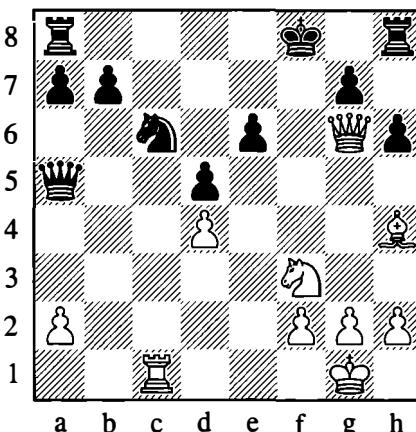
16. $\mathbb{E}fe1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Avoiding this self-pin is no better: 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 18.h3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}c7$ gives White a very strong grip on the position.

17. $\mathbb{E}xe6\#$!

A second intuitive sacrifice. White has no immediate mate, but Morozevich has correctly assessed Black's weak king and poor piece coordination as the most significant factors in the position.

17...fxe6 18. $\mathbb{W}g6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$



19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Not a bad move, but White would have done better to bring his bishop into the attack:

19.♕g3! ♖a3

Or 19...♝e7 20.♕d6 ♖d8 21.♖xe6 and White threatens 22.♝e5 or 22.♝c7.

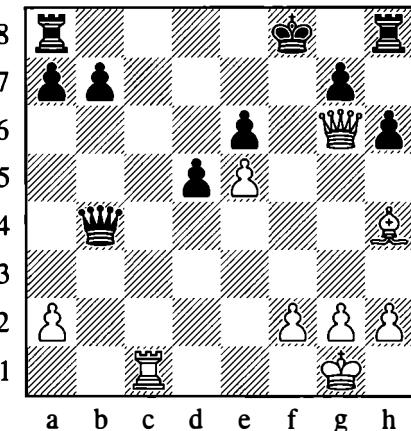
20.♝c5! ♖g8 21.♖xe6† ♖h7 22.♖f5† ♖g8
23.♖xd5†

White still does not have a mating attack, but the elimination of Black's two central pawns is a significant achievement.

23...♝h7 24.♗e4† ♖g8 25.h3 ♕d8 26.♕c2
♖b4 27.d5 ♜d4 28.♗xd4 ♖xd4 29.d6+–

The mighty passed d-pawn far outweighs Black's extra exchange.

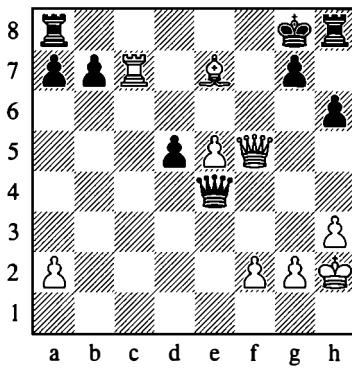
19...♝xe5 20.dxe5 ♖b4



21.g3?

This is a more serious error which risks squandering all of White's advantage.

A stronger way to give the king a square is:
21.h3! ♖d2 (21...♜xh4? 22.♝c7+–) 22.♔e7†
♜g8 23.♖xe6† ♖h7 24.♖f5† ♖g8 25.♝c7
♜e1† 26.♝h2 ♖e4



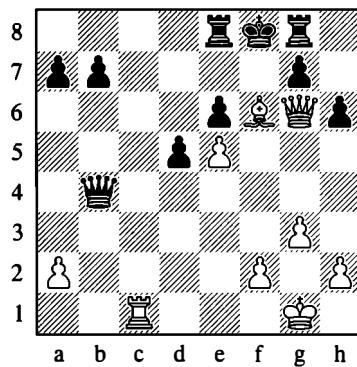
27.g4! ♖xf5 28.gxf5 b5 29.e6± White has good winning chances in the ending, despite his material deficit.

21...♝e8?!

It is Black's turn to miss an opportunity; salvation was available with 21...♜e4! 22.♖xe6
g5 23.♝c7 ♖h7=.

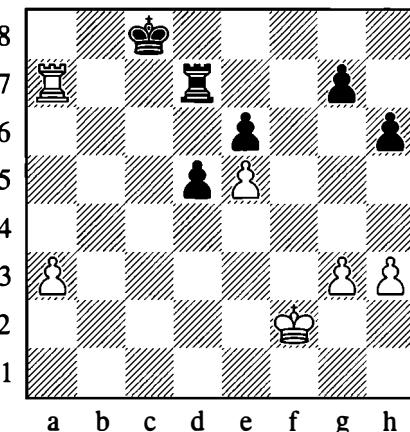
22.h3

Missing another good chance, although this one was not easy to see: 22.♝f6! ♖g8



23.♖h5!! (avoiding the exchange of the queens after 23.♝c7? ♖e1† 24.♝g2 ♖e4†) 23...gxsf
24.♖xh6† ♖e7 25.exf6† ♖d6 26.f7 ♖e4
27.fxe8=♛ ♖xe8 28.♖d2±

**22...♝g8 23.a3 ♖e4 24.♝e7† ♖xe7 25.♝c7†
♝d8 26.♗f7 ♖e1† 27.♝g2 ♖xf2†! 28.♝xf2
♜g8 29.♝d7† ♚c8 30.♝xb7 ♖xf7† 31.♝xf7
♝d8 32.♝xa7 ♘d7**



33.♕a8†?

Missing the possibility of 33.♕a6±. After the move in the game the rook ending should be equal. It remained that way until Black thought he was better and played a losing move. The remaining moves are not so relevant to our theme, so I will keep the comments to a minimum.

33...♔c7 34.♕e3 ♔b6 35.♕e8 ♕a7 36.♕xe6† ♔c5 37.♕g6 ♕xa3† 38.♕f4 ♕a7 39.h4 ♕f7† 40.♕e3 ♕e7 41.♕f4 ♕d4?

41...♕f7† was drawing. Instead Black tries to force his d-pawn through while a pawn down, but he has miscalculated the position.

42.e6 ♕a7 43.♕g4 h5 44.♕g5 ♕e7 45.♕f5 ♔c5 46.♕e5 d4 47.♕xh5 d3 48.♕h8 ♔c4 49.♕c8† ♔b3 50.♕d8 ♔c2 51.♕d6 ♕e8 52.e7 d2 53.♕e6

1–0

Post-game reflections

This sharp game featured numerous errors on both sides. White's early pawn sacrifice was decent enough, but Black was holding his own until he opened the e-file with 15...exd5?. Minasian probably considered the exchange sacrifice 17.♕xe6†! and saw that he was not getting mated immediately, but underestimated the dangers associated with his misplaced king and ongoing coordination troubles. Having done virtually everything right up to that point, Morozhevich then began to falter, missing 19.♕g3! and several other opportunities. Perhaps he was too fixated on deciding the game with a mating attack and failed to appreciate the strength of the simple plan involving capturing the e6- and d5-pawns, followed by advancing his own passed pawn. Indeed, changing one's mode of thinking and switching from one plan to another is one of the most difficult challenges for chess players of all levels.

Chess is a blunderful game! – inspired by Shamkovich and Schiller

Ralf Christ – Igor Berezovsky

German Championship, Altenkirchen 2001

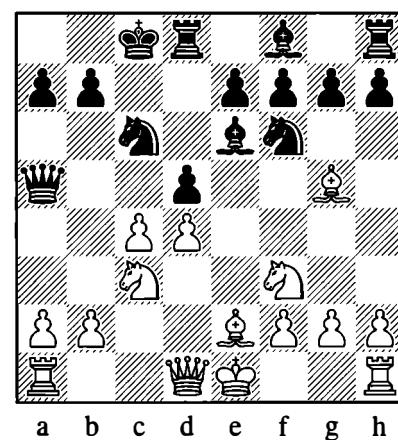
Points to look for in this game:

- Risky play in the opening – 8...0–0–0
- An unnecessary sacrifice – 9.0–0?
- White errs with 12.♕xc4?! and 13.♕xf6?, but still triumphs in the end

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 ♕f6 5.♕c3 ♕c6 6.♕g5 ♕e6 7.♕e2

A good alternative is 7.a3!! ♘d7 8.♕e2 0–0–0 9.c5.

7...♘a5 8.♕f3 0–0–0

**9.0–0?**

Here we see a good example of an intuitive sacrifice which eventually leads to success, but really should not have been played. On the plus side, it creates some tactical possibilities based on White's better development and the exposed position of the black king. Nevertheless, objectively it squanders White's opening advantage.

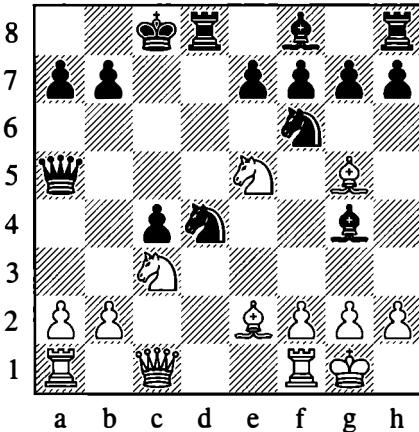
A more appropriate continuation is 9.c5! $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11.0–0 g6 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$, with some advantage to White.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4?$

After the surprise, the mistake swiftly follows.

Better is 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$, when 13.b3 gives White reasonable compensation for the pawn, but nothing more.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4?$!

White is still doing well after this move, but why go for a complicated win when there is a straightforward one available?

The simple 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ would have got the job done with minimal fuss.

12... $\mathbb{W}a6$

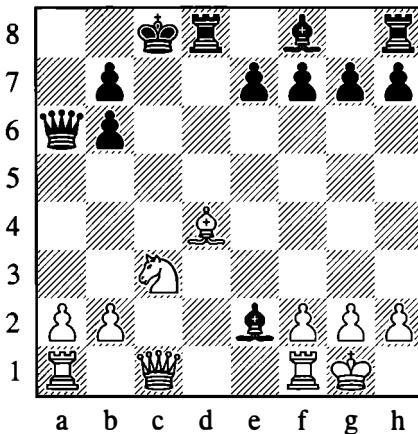
12... $\mathbb{W}xc3$ is the lesser evil, but after 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18.f3 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19.fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}ac1\pm$ Black's position is still not enviable.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$

More incisive is 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe2\uparrow$

$\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ with a winning attack.

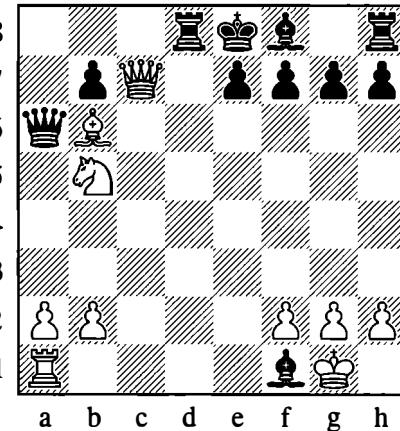
13... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



15... $\mathbb{Q}xf1?$

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ is a better defence, although White keeps some advantage here too: 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe2\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e3$ e6 18. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}hf8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8\pm$

16. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$



18... $\mathbb{Q}a8$

Strictly speaking, this is another blunder, as it allows a quick mate. But 18... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c4$ f5 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ h5 22. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$

23. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{B}xc7$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xc7$ $\mathbb{B}c6$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $bxc6$
 26. $\mathbb{W}e6$ is also lost for Black. So I was put in a delicate position, whether to adorn the text move with a single question mark, the dreaded double, or none. This ‘trilemma’ could have been solved only by the IM playing Black... resigning a little sooner.

19. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $f6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d7\#$

1–0

After 20... $\mathbb{B}f7$ White mates in three, starting with 21. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$.

Post-game reflections

Black played the opening rather riskily, but his position would have been quite acceptable had he calmly accepted White’s pawn sacrifice. Instead he opted for another path but soon fell into a critical position, and never really got back into the game despite his opponent’s errors. Sometimes the simple solution is the most effective – in this case, Black should have taken the money and ran!

The pin is mightier than the sword – Fred Reinfeld

Vassily Ivanchuk – Alexander Beliavsky

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ Black eats a hot pawn – 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$!
- ♦ A strong novelty – 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3!N$ in the note to Black’s 7th move
- ♦ Effective and aesthetic at the same time – 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

1. $c4$ $c6$ 2. $e4$ $d5$ 3. $exd5$ $cxd5$ 4. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

As I have mentioned before, this is Black’s most challenging move here.

6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

White is setting up a pin “in advance” (sometimes called a half-pin): if the e-pawn moves the f6-knight will then be pinned.

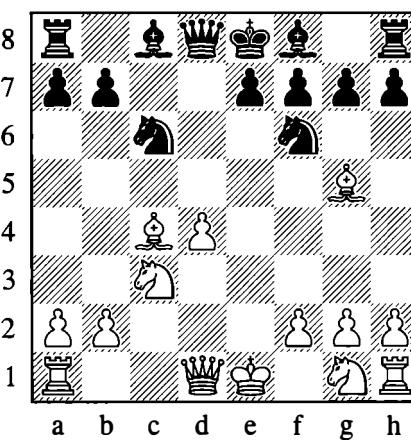
6... $dxc4$

A quick reminder that 6... $e6$ and 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ were considered in the two previous games.

7. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

Offering a well-known pawn sacrifice.

Botvinnik’s old variation 7. $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ has largely been abandoned after it emerged that 8. $\mathbb{W}d4$ is well met by 8... $h6!$, as first played by Kuijff against the author in 1992.

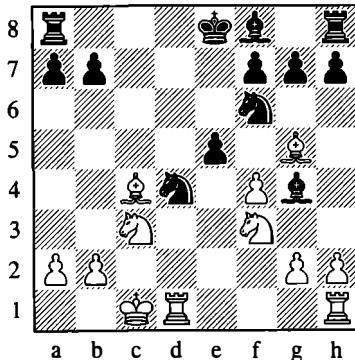


7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$

Black has several better options.

Simply declining the gambit with 7... $e6$ is quite popular.

The other way of accepting the gambit has become fashionable, and deserves detailed attention. I have investigated this whole line in detail, and will share some of my findings here.
 7... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9. $0-0-0$ $e5$ 10. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

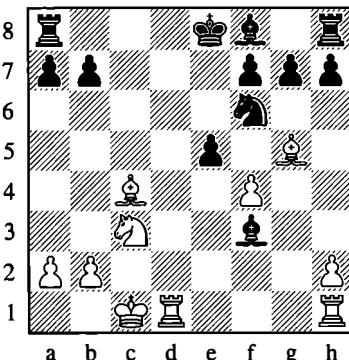


11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{g}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 13. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{E}xc4$ 14. $exf6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (14... $g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ was also good for White in Dubinsky – Nazarenus, Germany 2004) 15. $\mathbb{E}he1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $h6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $gxf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}g8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d3$ $\mathbb{E}g2$ 21. $\mathbb{E}b3$ $\mathbb{E}xh2$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xb7\pm$ White went on to win in P.H. Nielsen – L. Dominguez, Esbjerg 2003.

12. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ (more dangerous than 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $f5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{E}he1$ 0–0–0 16. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$, which eventually led to a draw in J. Polgar – Bareev, Elista [3] 2007) 13... $fxe6$ 14. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{E}c8\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 19. $f4$ $\mathbb{E}e4$ 20. $\mathbb{E}hd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}d8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}b8$ and the situation is becoming desperate for Black.

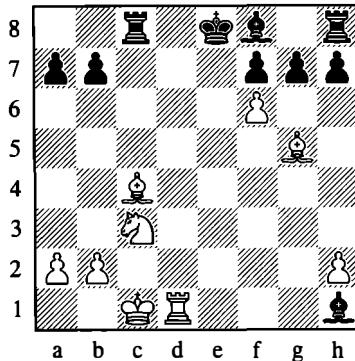


13. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 14. $exf6$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}d1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}d1\uparrow$

Apart from preventing Black from later castling, this repetition gains White some thinking time.

Some time ago I looked at the variation with 18... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$, but this does not give an advantage: 18... $\mathbb{E}xc3\uparrow$ 19. $bxcc3$ $gxf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}a3\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ and Black is at least equal.

18... $\mathbb{Q}e8$



19. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ N

A program helped me to find this strong move. It is likely that Ivanchuk had also found this novelty, and that it was the surprise awaiting Beliavsky had he played this variation. Chucky is excellent in such matters, and is perhaps the world's foremost expert in the dynamic evaluation of the opening moves. The continuation 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $h6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $g5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{E}xc3\uparrow$ 23. $bxcc3$ $\mathbb{Q}a3\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $h5\mp$, as in Jakovenko – L'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2007, cannot impress anybody.

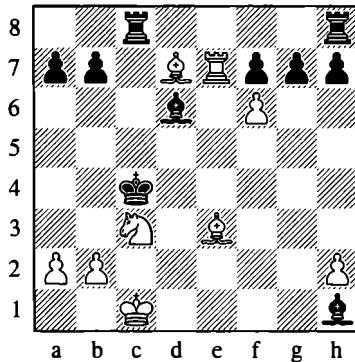
19... $\mathbb{Q}f3$

The alternatives are equally disastrous:

19... $h6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f5\uparrow$ –
19... $\mathbb{E}xc3\uparrow$ 20. $bxcc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $g6$
22. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\uparrow$ $bxcc6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a3\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ –

Any protest about the assessment? I thought it didn't look too bad for Black after he castles. One might even try that in a tournament and get away with it, but my program is more intransigent than an arbiter, and won't let me play an illegal move!

20.♕e1† ♜d7 21.♕f5† ♜c7 22.♕e3 ♜h1
 23.♕f4† ♜d6 24.♕e7† ♜c6 25.♕d7† ♜c5
 26.♕e3† ♜c4



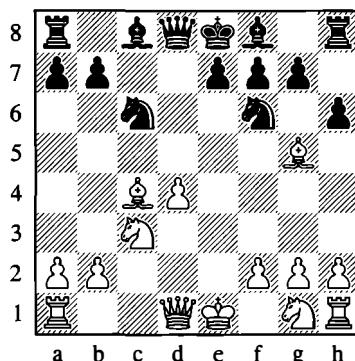
27.♗c2! ♜xe7 28.fxe7

Threatening mate in three, starting with
 29.♕b5†.

28...♜c6 29.a3 ♜e4† 30.♗xe4 ♜d5† 31.♗d3
 ♜ce8 32.♗f4 ♜xe7 33.♗c3† ♜c5 34.b4† ♜b6
 35.♗d5†+–

Unless a major improvement can be found,
 the conclusion must be that Black is in deep
 trouble in the 7...♝xd4 line.

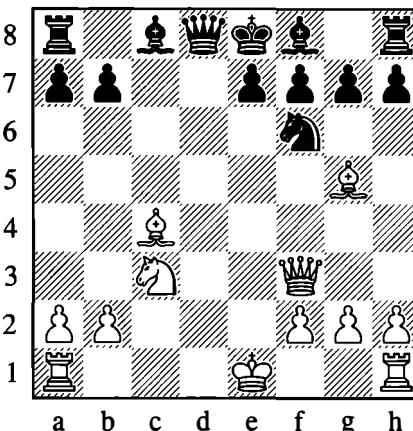
A less common possibility is 7...h6!, but I
 believe this move is likely to become the main
 line:



8.♗e3 (8.♕xf6 exf6= Suba – Arizmendi, Spain
 2011) 8...e6 9.♗f3 ♜e7 10.0–0 0–0 11.♗c1 b6
 12.a3 ♜b7 13.♗e2 ♜d6 14.♗fd1 ♜e7 15.♗e5
 ♜fd5∞ Bareev – Wang Yue, Amsterdam 2008.

I think we have digressed enough for the first
 seven moves and it is high time to return to the
 main game.

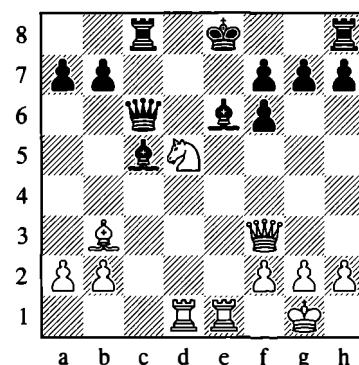
8.♗f3 ♜xf3† 9.♗xf3



9...♝c7

9...e6? loses to 10.♕b5† ♜d7 11.♕xf6 gxf6
 12.0–0–0+–.

9...♜d7 10.♗d1 ♜c8 11.♗b3 ♜c7 12.0–0–0
 ♜c6 13.♗d5 ♜e6 14.♗xf6 exf6 15.♗fe1 ♜c5
 (15...♜e7 16.♗h5+–)



16.♗xf6† gxf6 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.♗xf6 ♜xf2†
 19.♗h1 ♜xe1 20.♗xh8† ♜f7 21.♗xh7†+–

Another attempt to control White's explosive
 dynamism is:

9...a6

But here too Black has difficulties.

10.0–0

Black can try castling on either side, but neither option brings him a satisfactory position.

10... $\mathbb{W}c7?$

Intending to go to the queenside.

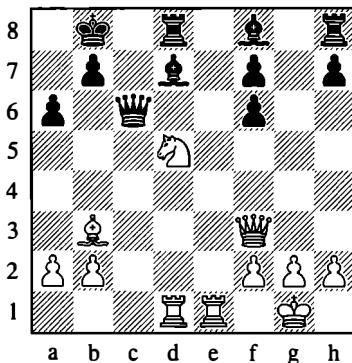
10...e6 is less resilient: 11. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ (not 13...gx $f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$) 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gx $f6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{B}a8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e3$ 0–0 18. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}a7$ 20. $\mathbb{B}h3$ h5 21. $\mathbb{E}g3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e3+-$

11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4\uparrow!$ is strong.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gx $f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ 0–0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

White is clearly dominating, and he can increase his advantage with the help of a nice tactic:



18. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 21... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}xd7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c1\uparrow+-$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}de8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xe8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}xe8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{W}c2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

White is winning.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11.0–0

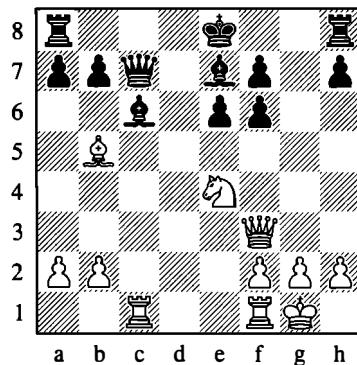
It is obvious that White's opening has been a success. Black is well behind in development and it will not be at all easy to find a safe place for his king.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c6?!$

This is weak, but it is not easy to find an improvement:

11... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13.a4 e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xb7\uparrow+-$

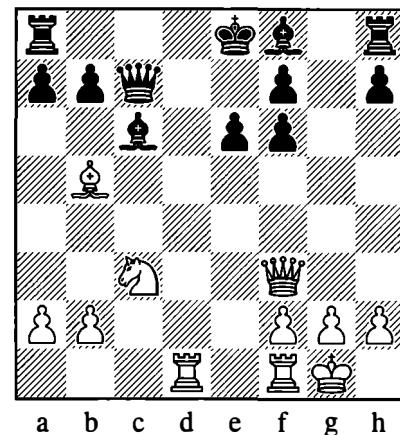
11...e6 12. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is also bad for Black: 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gx $f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (or 14...0–0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bx $c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow+-$)



15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ bx $c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ f5 18. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\uparrow$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 1–0
Harikrishna – Murariu, Nakhchivan 2003.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gx $f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ e6

13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f5\uparrow+-$



14.♕d5!

A beautiful exploitation of the pin.

14...0–0–0

Trying to avoid a catastrophe, but it is too late.

14...exd5 is no better: 15.♗fe1† ♜e7 16.♘xf6 0–0–0 (or 16...♝g8 17.♕xc6† bxc6 18.♗xe7† ♜xe7 19.♕xc6†+–) 17.♗xe7 ♜d6 18.♘xd6 ♘xd6 19.♕xc6 ♘xc6 20.g3 ♘d8 21.♗xf7 and White should win.

15.♕xc6 exd5

15...♘xc6? loses to 16.♗c1 ♜c5 17.♕e7†.

16.♕xd5

White recoups the sacrificed pawn and keeps a dominant position. Black's drawing chances are minimal, notwithstanding the opposite-coloured bishops.

16...♝b8 17.♗c1 ♜d7 18.♗cd1!?

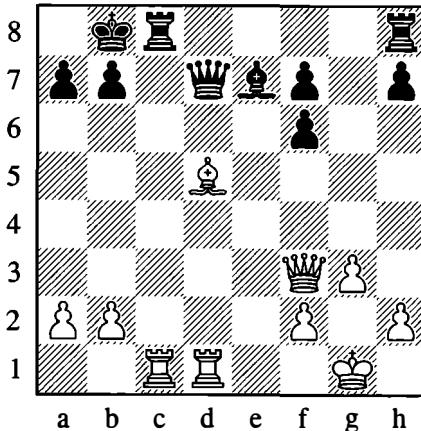
Ivanchuk changes his mind about where to put his rooks – a slight surprise, but his position is strong enough to allow this small indulgence. 18.♗fd1 was natural and strong.

18...♜e7

It is a safe bet that after 18...♜c7 Ivanchuk would not have settled for a move repetition.

19.g3 ♜c7 20.♗c1 ♜d7 21.♗fd1 ♜c8?

The best defence is 21...f5 22.♕c6 ♜c7 23.♕d7 ♜e5 24.♗el ♜f6 25.♗xf5 h6 26.♗e4 ♜d6 27.♗c3 ♜c7, but even here White's advantage should be decisive.

**22.♕xb7!**

A neat tactical blow to decide the game.

22...♗xcl 23.♗xcl ♜xb7 24.♗f4† ♜a8

25.♗c7

1–0

Whether through disgust with his position or simply trust in Chucky's technique, Beliavsky decided to resign here. Black would indeed have no hope after either 25...♜b4 26.♗e3 ♜b6 27.♗f3† ♜b8 28.♗xe7+–, or 25...♜d5 26.♗xe7 ♜d8 27.♗xf6 ♜c8 28.♗f4 ♜c4 29.♗e8† ♜b7 30.♗b8† ♜a6 31.♗d8!+–.

Post-game reflections

Though I have generally tried to avoid looking at sacrifices known to opening theory, I felt the above game was too good an example to omit. Ivanchuk's play was exemplary, and I was also keen to explore some of the other theoretical possibilities, especially White's methods of pursuing his initiative after 7...♝xd4. The goal is not so much to memorize a sequence of moves leading to a forced win (although this might be of interest to players who enjoy such things) but rather to develop our understanding of how to develop a dynamic initiative.

Chapter 7

The Sicilian Defence

The Sicilian is by far the most frequent answer to 1.e4 today. Its popularity is due not only to more players having a profound understanding of the principles ruling the game. Half a century ago, drawing a game with the black pieces was a most honourable result, whereas nowadays, due to the proliferation of Swiss tournaments and to the “commercial” and ill-conceived rating system, there is greater pressure on the better player to win, irrespective of colour. This encourages openings which are strategically imbalanced. Ideally for our theme, almost every variation of the Sicilian creates opportunities for sacrifices, by both sides.

For any proverb flaunting its wits, there is another one, equal and opposite, to contradict it – And this applies to my mottos too!

Dunaev – Tigran Petrosian

USSR U18 Championship, Leningrad 1946

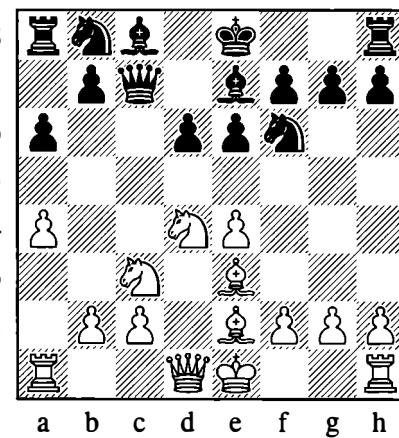
Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ Decentralizing, aimless play from White – 16.a5? and 18.Qa4?
- ♦ A positional exchange sacrifice – 19...Bxe4!
- ♦ Domination in the centre – 23...fxe4! and 24...d5

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qf6
5.Qc3 e6 6.Qe2 a6 7.a4 Qe7

Petrosian expressed doubts about the move 7.a4, which weakens the b4-square. I would be more inclined to distrust Black’s move order. Those who do not like the quick development of the queen’s knight to c6 should play the more elastic 7...Bc7 to avoid problems involving the b6-square – see the next note.

8.Qe3 Bc7

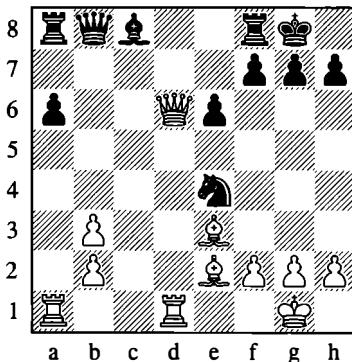


9.Qb3?!

This move has little logic and is not played by strong players. But we shouldn’t be too severe, as the theory of most variations in the Sicilian was little developed at that time.

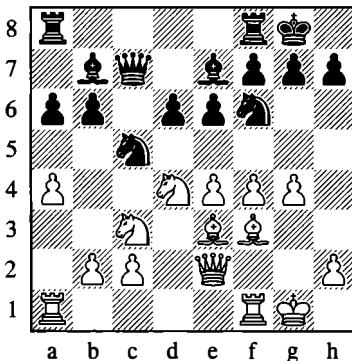
Relative to its period, we must consider this game almost revolutionary. Let's look at two newer treatments of this variation:

9.a5! 0–0 10.0–0 ♜bd7 11.♗b3 b5 12.axb6 ♜xb6 13.♘d4 ♜bd7 14.♖f1 ♜c5 15.♗b5 ♜b8 16.♗xd6 ♜xb3 17.cxb3 ♜xd6 18.♘xd6 ♜xe4

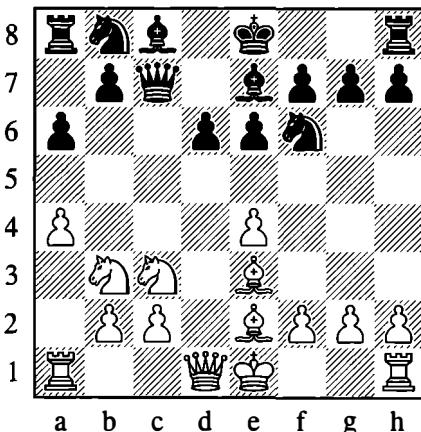


19.♘d4 (19.♘e7±) 19...♜b7 20.♘f3 (20.b4±) 20...♝d8 and a draw was soon agreed in Sutovsky – Yudasin, Israel 1996.

9.f4! 0–0 10.0–0 b6 11.♘f3 ♜b7 12.♘e2 ♜bd7 13.g4 ♜c5 (13...d5 14.e5 ♜e4 15.♗xe4 dxе4 16.♕g2 ♜fd8 17.♕f2 ♜c5=)



14.♘g2! ♜fe8 15.g5 ♜fd7 16.♖ad1 ♜ac8 17.h4 ♜f8 18.h5 e5 19.♗de2 exf4 20.♗xf4 ♜e5 21.♗fd5 ♜d8 22.h6 ♜h8 23.♗g4 ♜a8 24.hxg7† ♜xg7 25.♕f5± and White went on to win in Ivanchuk – Romanishin, Lvov 1987.



9...b6 10.f4 ♜b7 11.♘f3 ♜bd7 12.0–0 ♜c8

Petrosian said that 12...♝b8!? is better, because it will save a tempo compared to the game. This is certainly true and I can give the reader another reason for it: if White puts pressure on the e6-pawn (as in the note to White's 16th move below), the black bishop may come back to c8 to protect it.

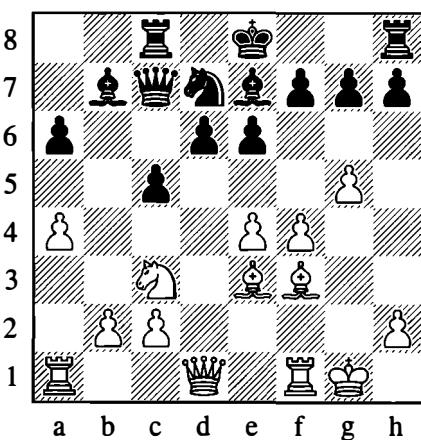
13.g4

A typical attacking plan against the Scheveningen formation. However, in this position it was better to prepare it by 13.♘e2 (or 13.♘e1) and 14.♖ad1.

13...♜c5

In his youth Petrosian was less cautious. Black would be safer after 13...h6!.

14.♗xc5 bxc5 15.g5 ♜d7



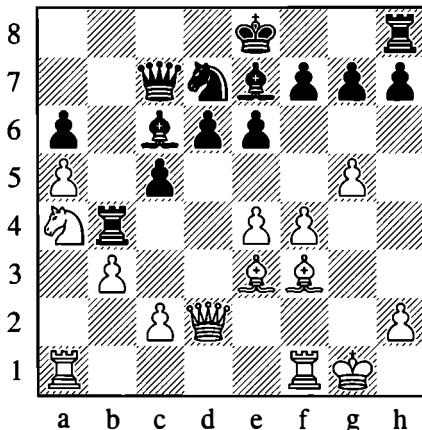
16.a5?

This is absolute nonsense, losing time and weakening White's queenside even further.

White could get a strong initiative by: 16.f5! ♜e5 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.♗g4 ♜d7 19.♗h3±

16...♝b8 17.♗d2 ♜c6 18.♗a4?

Instead of recognizing his mistake at move 16, White makes another one "to justify it".

18...♝b4 19.b3**19...♝xe4!**

A trademark exchange sacrifice from the young Petrosian.

20.c4

Taking the rook immediately would leave White terribly weak on the light squares, so Dunaev sensibly prepares to recruit his knight for the role of executioner.

20...h6!

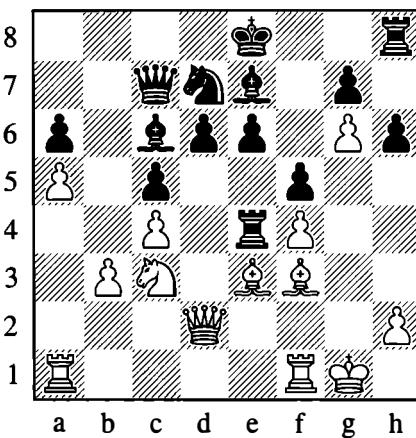
Posing additional problems on the kingside.

21.g6?

After 21.♗c3 a complicated fight would still lie ahead: 21...♝xe3 22.♗xe3 hxg5 23.♗xc6 ♜xc6 24.fxg5 ♜e5 25.♗a2 ♜b7±

21...f5

Not at all bad! Tigran Vartanovich always liked to play towards the centre. However, according to the program, 21...0–0 is even stronger.

22.♗c3**22...♞f6! 23.♗xe4 fxe4!**

Petrosian correctly judges that a central pawn roller will be more significant than a piece outpost on e4.

24.♗ad1

The last chance to stay in the game was 24.b4! cxb4 25.♗e2, but even then White's position is suspicious to say the least.

24...d5 25.cxd5 exd5 26.f5 d4 27.♗f4 ♜c8 28.♗e2 ♜xf5

White loses "even his bags!" as Romanian chess jargon has it. The central pawn mass is a true annihilator.

29.♗g3 ♜xg6 30.♗f4 ♜f7 31.♗c2 g5 32.♗e2 d3

0–1

Post-game reflections

This main theme of this game was Black's central strategy triumphing over White's flank

activity. Having already advanced on the kingside with f4, g4 and g5, White failed to follow up with the principled 16.f5!, which would have brought him some initiative, instead favouring the totally inconsistent 16.a5? and 18.Qa4?. With his opponent's forces spread thinly across the board, Petrosian seized the moment with a powerful exchange sacrifice, and the game was effectively decided.

Rashid Nezhmetdinov – Oleg Chernikov

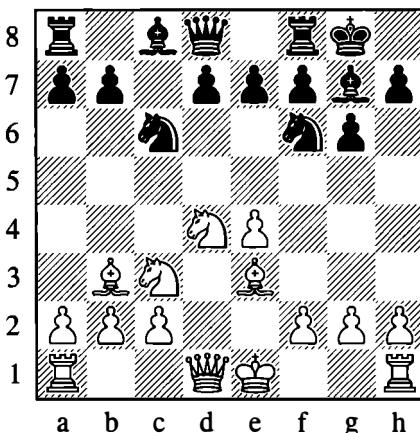
Rostov-on-Don 1962

Points to look for in this game:

- An imaginative, though not fully correct queen sacrifice – 12.Qxf6?!
- Black misses the best defence – 16...Qd8!
- Simple but effective tactics – 19.Qxf6! in the notes

The following game became famous in its day, and has remained a classic example of a queen sacrifice. Despite the charming tactics displayed, it is time to look at it more objectively and draw the correct and helpful conclusions.

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 g6 5.Qc3 Qg7 6.Qe3 Qf6 7.Qc4 0-0 8.Qb3



8...Qg4

This cheeky jump is quite dubious; more promising are 8...d6 and 8...a5.

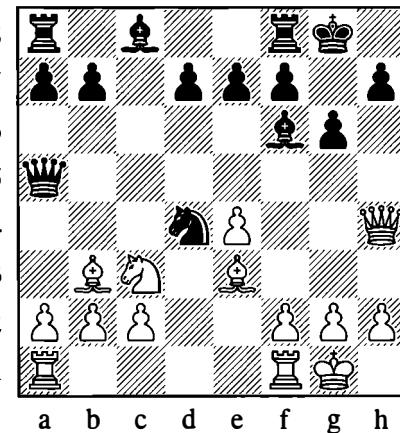
9.Qxg4 Qxd4 10.Qh4

Nowadays 10.Qd1! is preferred, ensuring White a small plus.

10...Qa5

More solid is 10...d6 11.0-0 Qe6 12.Qad1 Qxb3 13.axb3 Qc7 14.Qd4±.

11.0-0 Qf6



12.Qxf6?!

A most enterprising queen sacrifice. As for correctness, well... we should not be too scrupulous when talking about "intuitive" sacrifices.

It was not too late for White to play normal moves such as 12.Qg4 d6 13.Qd1±.

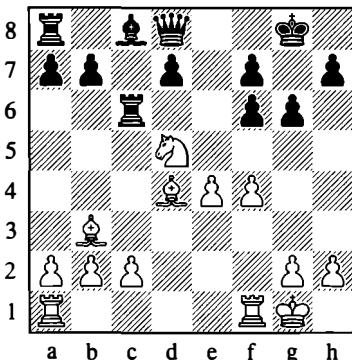
12...Qe2†!

An important finesse.

13.Qxe2 exf6 14.Qc3 Qe8 15.Qd5 Qe6 16.Qd4 Qg7

Coming directly into the pin is not a good idea.

A better defence is: 16...Qd8! 17.f4 Qc6



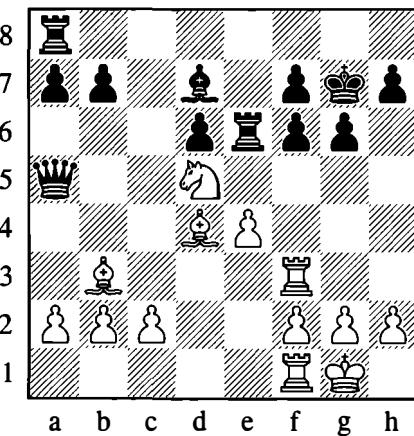
18.f5 (or 18.Qa4 b5 19.Qxb5 Qd6?) 18...g5
19.Qf1 a5 20.a4 b6 21.e5 fxe5 22.Qxe5 Qf8
23.Qad1 Qb7?

17.Qad1 d6

Too slow; Black can obtain equal chances with 17...b6 18.Qc7 Qb7.

18.Qd3 Qd7 19.Qf3

More accurate is 19.Qxf6! Qxf6 20.Qf3 Qe6
21.Qxf6 Qg8 22.Qxe6 fxe6 23.Qxe6 Qc7±.



The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 290.

Robert Fischer – Efim Geller

Skopje 1967

Points to look for in this game:

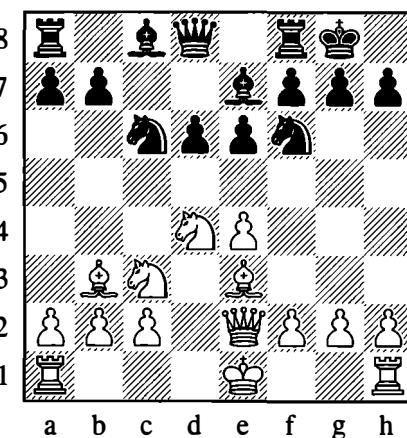
- ♦ An intuitive piece sacrifice – 16.fxe6!
- ♦ A further sacrifice to devastate the defences – 17.Qxf6! in the notes
- ♦ Missing a win – 20.Qf4!! in the notes

Efim Petrovich (like Spassky in the early games, and also Tal) was a troublesome opponent for Fischer, and he won several games against him with the black pieces. The following is the most famous of them.

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qf6
5.Qc3 Qc6 6.Qc4 e6 7.Qe3 Qe7 8.Qb3

Possibly the best continuation, although 8.Qe2 is much more popular.

8...0-0 9.Qe2

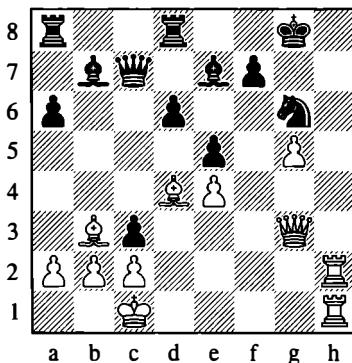


9...Qa5?!

Not the most accurate move.

9...a6 is too slow. Here is one beautiful game:
10.0-0-0 Qc7 (or 10...Qa5 11.Qhg1! with the idea of g2-g4-g5) 11.g4 Qxd4 12.Qxd4! b5 (12...e5?! 13.Qc4! Qd8 14.g5 Qe8 15.Qxc8!

$\mathbb{E}xc8$ 16.h4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g4$ with a strong attack)
 13.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}d3$
 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 18.f5 g6 19.fxg6 hxg6
 20. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 22.h4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 23.h5
 b4 24.hxg6 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 25. $\mathbb{E}dh2$ bxc3 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ e5

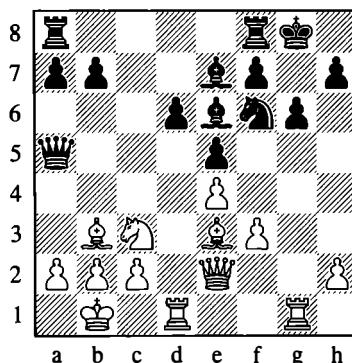


27. $\mathbb{E}h8\#!!$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 28.g6! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 29.gxf7# $\mathbb{Q}f8$
 30. $\mathbb{E}h7\#+$ — Velimirovic – M. Nikolic, Belgrade 1967.

It was later found that both 9...d5 and 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ give Black good chances to equalize.

10.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Also possible is 11. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12.g4?? e5
 13. $\mathbb{E}dd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 14.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{E}hg1$ g6 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$.



The position is balanced. White has compensation for the pawn, but nothing more.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

At that time, curiously enough, the commentators took into consideration lines

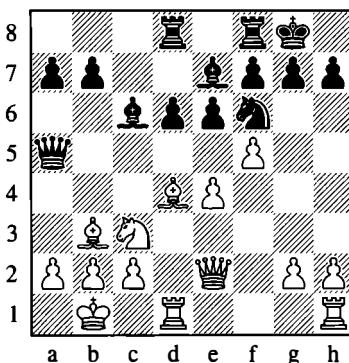
like 11... $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}xg2$, which a contemporary player wouldn't even dream of.

12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13.f4 $\mathbb{E}ad8$

In this position the danger is not e4–e5 but rather f4–f5, so it follows that Black must arrange ...b5–b4 as quickly as possible. Black should thus have preferred 13...b5, and after 14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ he has good chances to equalize.

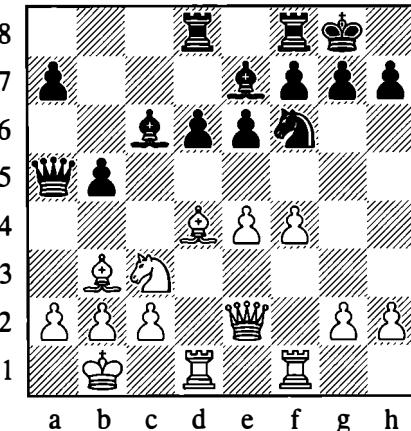
14. $\mathbb{E}hf1$

Preparing to advance the f-pawn, but that could be done immediately: 14.f5!



14...exf5 (14...e5 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ d5? 16.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$) 15.exf5 $\mathbb{E}fe8$
 16. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$

14...b5



15.f5!

Geller gives this thematic move two exclamation marks and evaluates the position as winning for White. I find this claim rather exaggerated.

15...b4?!

It is only after this move that White's attack gathers real momentum.

White could have been limited to a modest positional advantage by an *anti-positional* move: 15...e5! 16.Qe3 h6 17.Qd5 Qxd5 18.Qxd5 Wa4 19.Qc1 Qc8 20.Qf3 b4±

16.fxe6!

A natural and strong sacrifice.

16...bxc3 17.exf7†

Not bad, but Murey and Geller showed a more precise finish:

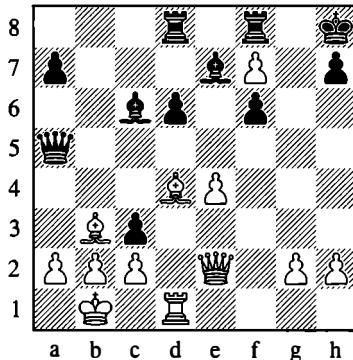
17.Qxf6! gxf6

17...Qxf6 18.Qxf6 gxf6 19.e7±

18.exf7†

But not 18.Qg4†? Qg5! 19.exf7† Qxf7 20.Qe6 Qdf8 21.Qxe7 Qd2!.

18...Qh8



19.Qg4!

Now this works perfectly, as the black queen cannot come to g5.

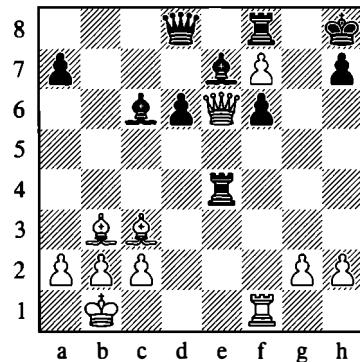
19...Rb8

19...Qd7 20.Qh4 Qg7 21.Qd3 Qxf7

22.Qg3† Qf8 23.Qxh7!+-

20.Qe6 Qd8 21.Qf1 Qb4 22.Qxc3 Qxe4

Now the game ends in a tactical shootout.



23.Qxf6! Qe1†!

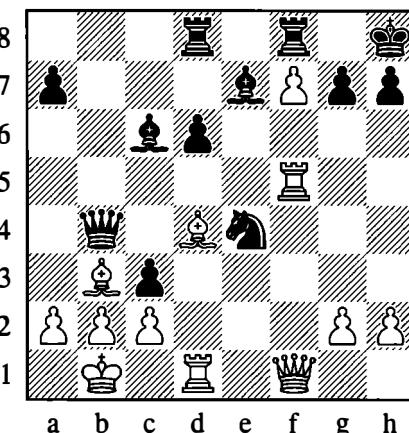
A good try, but it just falls short.

24.Qxe1 Qxf6 25.Qa5!!+-

Fischer's move is not quite as accurate, but Black is still in deep trouble.

17...Qh8 18.Qf5!

Preventing the black queen from joining the defence.

18...Qb4 19.Qf1! Qxe4

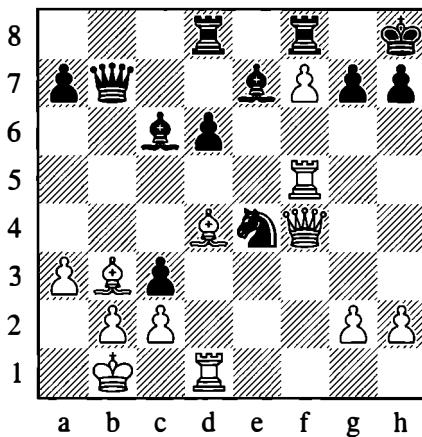
20.a3?

Bobby fails to strike while the iron is hot! He missed a spectacular win by 20.Qf4!!, with

the threat of $\mathbb{B}h5$. Of course, this position was so much analysed in the chess press and books that anything I say would only be repeating what has already been written. I shall leave the reader the pleasure of checking that the move does indeed win.

20... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f4$

Repentance comes too late.



21... $\mathbb{Q}a4!$

Launching a deadly counterattack.

22. $\mathbb{W}g4$

22. $\mathbb{W}h6$ is also hopeless: 22... $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 23. $\mathbb{B}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ (or 24.cxb3 $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 25. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$) 24... $\mathbb{Q}a2\#$ (Geller)

22... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3!$

Fischer resigned, in view of 24. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a2\#$.
0–1

Post-game reflections

This game highlighted the need for intuition to be balanced with precise calculation: in order to succeed, you need both. The initial piece sacrifice with 16.fxe6! could be played on purely intuitive grounds, as it “feels right”, and indeed there is no other way to make sense of White’s position. The subsequent missed

opportunities of 17. $\mathbb{B}xf6$! and 20. $\mathbb{W}f4!!$ were more difficult to find, and relied more heavily on the calculation element – although a well-developed sense of intuition could also play a supporting role in finding these moves. Of course the game of chess is so difficult that even the best players fail to get it right sometimes, and on this occasion what was so nearly an attacking masterpiece from Fischer quickly turned into a bitter defeat against his nemesis.

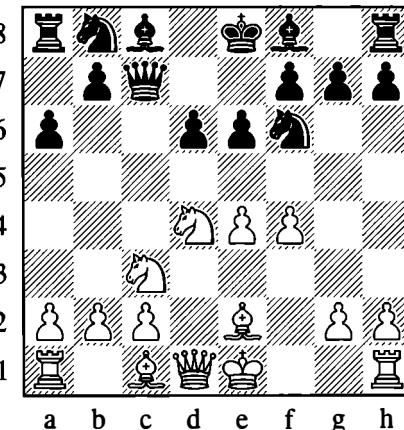
Bent Larsen – Ulf Andersson

Manila 1974

Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ White missed a strong pawn sacrifice – 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ in the notes
- ◆ Black misses a good chance – 22... $g6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}xc3!$ in the notes
- ◆ Better late than never – 27... $\mathbb{B}xc3!$

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}B3$ d6 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a6 7.f4 $\mathbb{W}c7$



8.0–0

A brutal attack by 8.g4 b5 9.g5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ gives Black strong counterplay after 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$

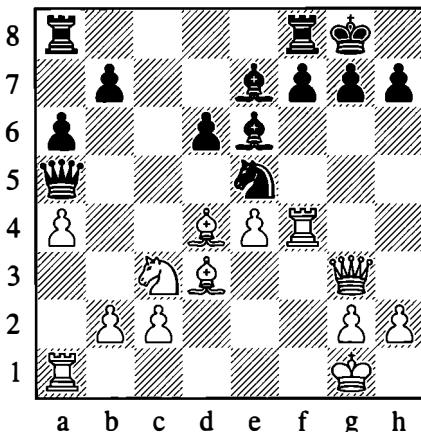
The most flexible is 9...0–0.

10.♕e3 0–0 11.♗e1

I believe the classical 11.♔h1 to be the strongest move, but a theoretical discussion would take us too far afield.

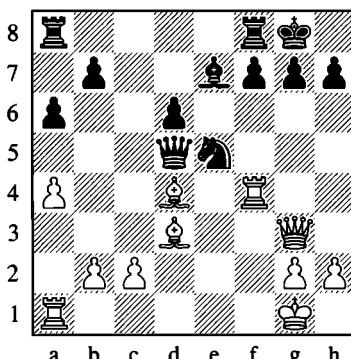
11...♝xd4 12.♝xd4 e5 13.♕e3 exf4 14.♝xf4 ♜e6 15.♗g3 ♜d7 16.♔d4 ♜e5 17.♔d3 ♜a5

Possibly not best; 17...♝d8 looks safer.

**18.♔h1?!**

On this occasion, Larsen's famous cold-bloodedness does not serve him well. This standard prophylactic move is rather slow here and allows Black to build a strong defence.

More enterprising is: 18.♘d5! ♜xd5 19.exd5 ♜xd5

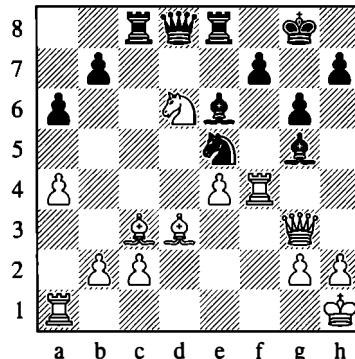


20.c4! (20.♕c4 ♜c6 21.c3 d5 22.♕xe5 f6 23.♔a2 fxe5 24.♗xf8† ♜xf8 25.♕xe5 ♜b6†

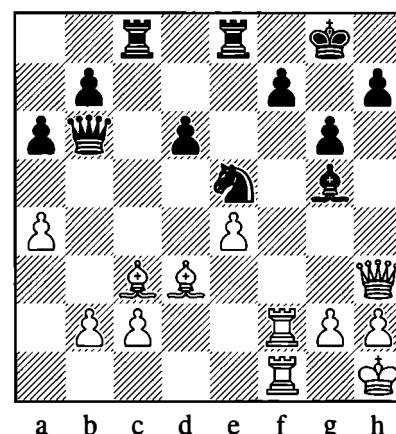
26.♔h1 ♜xb2 27.♔xd5† ♔h8 28.♗e1=) 20...♜e6 21.♔a1 ♜h6 22.♔e4 ♜ac8 23.♔d5± White has more than enough play for a pawn.

18...♜ac8 19.♘e2 ♜fe8 20.♔c3 ♜d8 21.♘d4 ♜g5 22.♘f5 ♜xf5?!

Black misses the chance to initiate favourable complications: 22...g6 23.♘xd6



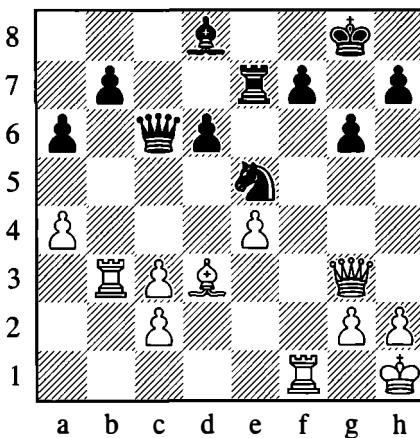
23...♜xc3! 24.♘xe8 ♜xd3 25.cxd3 ♜xf4 (or 25...♜xd3 26.♘f3 ♜xf3 27.gxf3 ♜h4 28.♗f4 g5 29.♗f6 ♜xe8 30.♔d1 ♜d7?) 26.♗xf4 ♜xd3 27.♘f6† ♔g7 28.♗f1 ♜d1 29.♘d5 ♜xf1† 30.♗xf1 ♜g5 31.♗c4 ♜d2 32.♗c3† ♜xc3 33.♘xc3 ♜f6 with an excellent endgame for Black. Had he seen it, Andersson would certainly have gone for this, even against another endgame expert such as Larsen.

23.♗xf5 ♜h4 24.♗h3 g6 25.♗f4 ♜g5 26.♗f2 ♜b6 27.♔a1

27...♝xc3!

I hope the rationale for this sacrifice will be easy for the readers to understand. In one fell swoop, Black ruins the enemy's structure and the cooperation between his pieces. This thematic sacrifice has a bonus here: the minor piece annihilated on c3 is not a knight but White's good bishop.

**28.♗xc3 ♜c5 29.♗g3 ♜d8 30.♗b1 ♜e7
31.♗b3 ♜c6 32.♗f1**



32...♝b6

Since the exchange sacrifice, both sides have played with admirable precision, and here 32...♝xa4 33.♗e3 ♜c6 34.♗d4 would have kept the balance. But instead of regaining material, Ulf prefers to bring the bishop into play. However, the bishop may have been "more in play" when defending the kingside.

**33.h3 ♜c5 34.♗a1 ♜g7 35.♗h4 ♜e6 36.♗f1
♝d7 37.♗e2 ♜c6 38.♗f4 ♜c7 39.h4 h6
40.a5 ♜e7 41.g3 h5 42.♗g2 ♜c6 43.♗c4**

The continuation of this game can be found on page 334 in the middlegame section.

The following game was played when my rating was only 2465.²

Eric Lobron – Mihai Suba

World Team Championship, Lucerne 1985

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ A promising yet unnecessary pawn sacrifice – 14...♝f4!?
- ♦ Failing to make the most of the initiative – 19...e5!?
- ♦ But White returns the favour – 20.♗e3?! and 28.a4!?

**1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 ♜f6 4.♗c3 cxd4
5.♗xd4 e6 6.g4 h6**

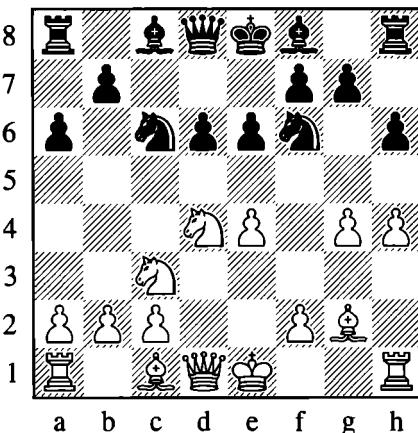
Kasparov did not like this move, which was not suited to his counterpunching style. He played it just once (against Karpov in 1984) and had to fight for a draw. Perhaps the Keres Attack was his reason for switching to the Najdorf.

7.h4 a6

Another possibility for Black is 7...♝c6, while other options, such as 7...♝e7, are weaker.

My choice of the text move was not based wholly on my own preferences. In the same match, IM Mihai Ghinda was playing against Kindermann on board three, and our games started with the same moves. Ghinda and I had prepared the Scheveningen together, looking at both 7...a6 and 7...♝c6. I felt that he was more familiar with the latter, and to avoid a possible duplication of games I played the text move quickly. Mihai understood, continued with 7...♝c6, and won his game too.

8.♗g2 ♜c6



9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6?!$

A poor decision. The consistent 9.g5 is better.

9... $bxc6$ 10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 11.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White controls the f4-square and prepares c2-c4, but the plan seems too ambitious.

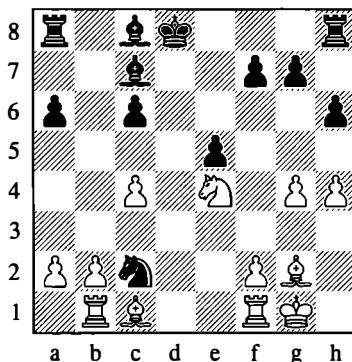
He could have maintained the balance with the safer alternative:

12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$!

Advancing the bishop is weaker: 12... $\mathbb{Q}e5?!$ 13.c4 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f3$ e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ (or 16. $\mathbb{Q}d6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\pm$) 16...gxf6 17. $\mathbb{W}xc6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}d2\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e1\pm$

13.c4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 15.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c2$

16. $\mathbb{E}b1$ e5



17.f3

17.g5?! is overambitious: 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{G}xh6$ $\mathbb{G}xh6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20.b3 $\mathbb{E}ag8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}d1$ f5 22. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ c5 24. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\mp$.

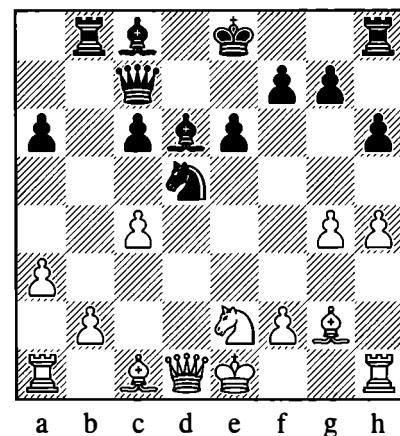
17...a5 18. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 19.b3 a4 20.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7=$

12... $\mathbb{E}b8$ 13.a3?!

This move is a loss of time. White probably felt that 13.c4 $\mathbb{Q}b4?$ (threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}d3\uparrow$) was awkward, but in fact 14. $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ is good for White.

However, Black can meet 13.c4 with the more restrained 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7\mp$.

13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14.c4



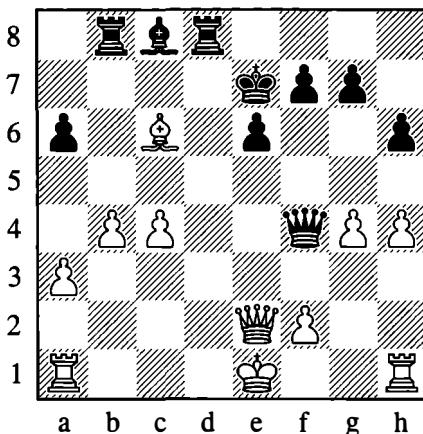
14... $\mathbb{Q}f4?!$

Offering a pawn sacrifice for the initiative. The idea is promising and works well in the game, although the machine considers 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ a stronger move, for example: 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c5 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 17.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7\mp$

15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

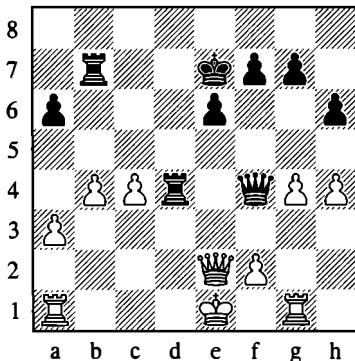
I opted for the pawn sacrifice in the belief that Black's attack would be crushing; after all, he has much the better development in exchange for a minimal material investment. However, White has some resources and can try to survive.

18. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 19. b4



19...e5?!

This appears strong, but in fact it throws away the advantage, which can be maintained simply by exchanging White's active pieces:
19... $\mathbb{A}b7!$ 20. $\mathbb{A}xb7$ $\mathbb{A}xb7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{E}d4$

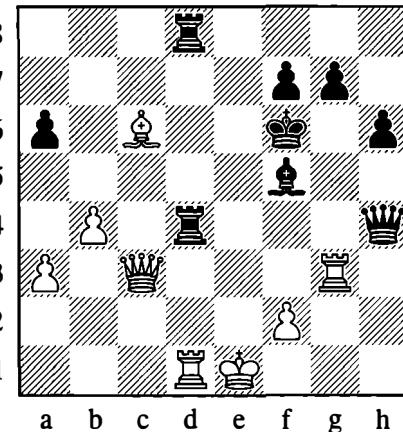


22. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{E}bd7$ 23. $\mathbb{A}f1$ $\mathbb{E}d2$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xc4\#$
25. $\mathbb{A}g2$ $\mathbb{E}7d3$ 26. $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 27. $bxc5$ $\mathbb{E}xg3\#$
28. $\mathbb{A}xg3$ $\mathbb{E}c2\#$ I was understandably in no mood to exchange queens, but I should have been more flexible in my thinking.

20. $\mathbb{W}e3?!$

White fails to take advantage of the opportunity: 20. $\mathbb{A}d5!$ a5 (or 21... $\mathbb{A}xg4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e3=$) 21. $bxa5!$ $\mathbb{A}xg4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\#$
23. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{A}e6$ 24. e4 $\mathbb{E}bc8$ 25. $\mathbb{A}b1$ $\mathbb{A}xd5$ 26. $cxd5$
 $\mathbb{A}c4$ 27. 0–0 $\mathbb{E}xe4=$

20... $\mathbb{W}xc4\#$ 21. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xg4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$ $\mathbb{A}e6$
23. $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ $\mathbb{A}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c3\#$ $\mathbb{E}d4$ 25. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{E}bd8$
26. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 27. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{A}f5$



28. a4?!

This just weakens White's pawns and leaves no doubt about the outcome.

The only chance was 28. $\mathbb{A}f3$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ 29. $\mathbb{A}e2\#$.

28... $\mathbb{W}f4$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 30. b5 axb5 31. axb5
 $\mathbb{A}g4$ 32. $\mathbb{A}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 33. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}d1\#$ 34. $\mathbb{A}g2$
 $\mathbb{E}b1$

Restraining the opponent's passed pawn. The rest is not difficult.

35. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{A}e6$ 36. $\mathbb{E}e4$ $\mathbb{A}e7$ 37. $\mathbb{E}d4$ g5 38. $\mathbb{E}d2$
h5 39. $\mathbb{A}h2$ h4 40. $\mathbb{A}g2$ g4 41. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{A}d6$
42. $\mathbb{E}d2\#$ $\mathbb{A}c5$ 43. $\mathbb{E}d8$ f5 44. $\mathbb{E}h8$ h3# 45. $\mathbb{A}g3$
 $\mathbb{E}b4$ 46. $\mathbb{E}h5$ $\mathbb{A}d6$ 47. f4 $\mathbb{E}b3\#$ 48. $\mathbb{A}h2$ $\mathbb{A}d5$
49. $\mathbb{A}xd5$ $\mathbb{A}xd5$ 50. $\mathbb{E}xf5\#$ $\mathbb{A}e4$

0–1

Post-game reflections

White's troubles began with the faulty plan of 9. $\mathbb{A}xc6?!$ and 10. e5. No doubt Lobron wanted to make use of his bishop on g2, but he gave up too much ground in the centre. Further inaccuracies on moves 12 and 13 allowed me to seize the initiative, and the intuitive pawn

sacrifice was an appropriate tool for the job – although it was noted that simpler means would also have sufficed. Black's only serious error was failing to play 19... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$, which would have increased his initiative and led to a probable endgame win. Fortunately for me the game still ended happily, but we should keep in mind that the best follow-up to a sacrifice will sometimes involve a simple regaining of the material rather than playing aggressively for mate.

The next game illustrates how a queen sacrifice became “theory”!

Krisztian Kerek – Mircea Parligras

Hungary – Romania (U18), Kiskunhalas 1995

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ Counterplay with the a-pawn – 10...a5! and a march to a3
- ♦ A complex sacrificial line – 13... $\mathbb{Q}fxe4$!?
- ♦ Building a secure fortress – 25... $\mathbb{Q}c8$!

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

One of the advantages of the Scheveningen move order, when compared with the Najdorf, lies in the possibility of bringing the knight round to c5 via a6 rather than d7, thus avoiding any sacrifices on e6. Moreover, the a-pawn may advance directly to a5. These two factors render the attacking set-up with 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ relatively harmless against the Scheveningen.

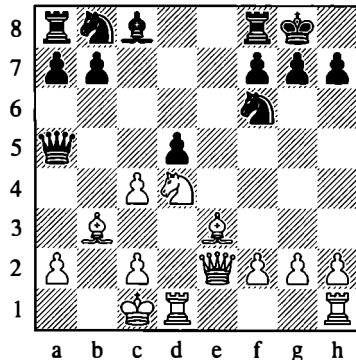
7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

The principal alternative is:

7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$

8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ transposes to the game.

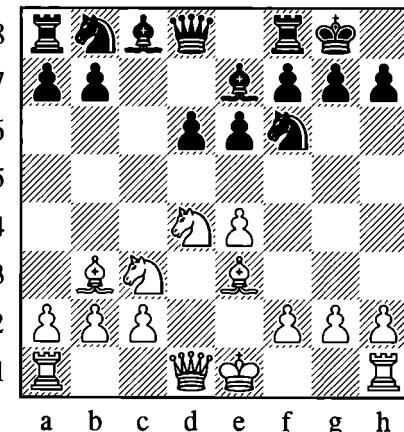
9...d5 9.exd5 exd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 13.c4



13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$

Black should be able to hold even after the less precise: 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ dxc4 (but not 17... $\mathbb{Q}e4$? 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19.c5 a5 20. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}hd1\pm$ and 1–0 after 60 moves in Nisipeanu – Suba, Predeal 1997) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ = 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ =

7...0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



8... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$

Here it comes! You will never see this kind of counterplay in the Najdorf!

9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}f3$ a5!

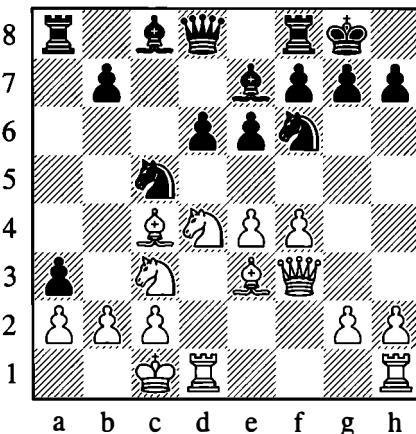
Now the a-pawn gets in on the action.

11.0–0–0

White has little choice but to allow ...a4-a3.

Blocking the pawn causes more harm than good for White: 11.a4? e5 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.Qf5 Qxf5 14.exf5 Qxb3 15.cxb3 Wd3 16.Qd1 Wc2 17.Qd2 Wxb3 18.g4 e4 19.Wg3 Qb4 20.Qd4 e3 21.Qg2 Qad8 22.Wf4 Wd5 0–1 Rodriguez Lopez – Vehi Bach, San Sebastian 1995.

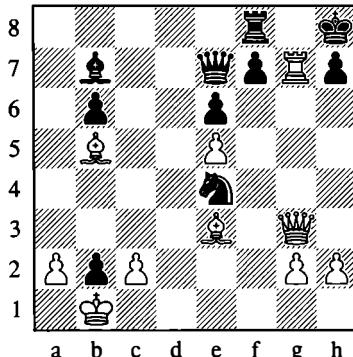
11...a4 12.Qc4 a3



13.b3

Other moves weaken White's king position and are unlikely to succeed:

13.e5 axb2† 14.Qb1 dxe5 15.Qc6 Wc7 16.Qxe7† Wxe7 17.fxe5 Qfd7 18.Wg3 Qh8 19.Qd4 Qa4 20.Qxa4 Qxa4 21.Qhd1 b6 22.Qb5 Qxd4 23.Qxd4 Qc5 24.Qg4 Qb7 25.Qxg7 Qe4



26.Qxh7† White must bail out and take a

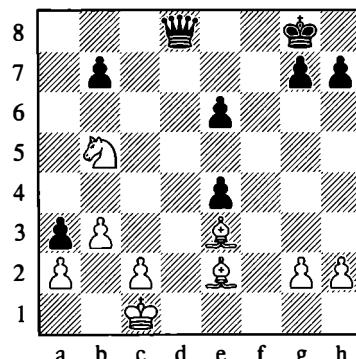
perpetual. We cannot consider this a draw-in-the-pocket sacrifice – only a drawing one, as White has no other way to continue the game. 26...Qxh7 ½–½ Shtyrenkov – Kharitonov, Smolensk 1986.

13.Qdb5 axb2† 14.Qb1 Wa5 15.e5 dxe5 16.fxe5 Qfd7 17.Wg3 Qh8 18.Qhf1 Qb6 19.Qxc5 Qxc5 20.Qb3 Qd7 21.Qd6 Qxd6 22.Qxd6 Qc6 23.Qd4 Qd7 24.Qel Qc5 25.Qh4 The game Istratescu – Stohl, Budapest 1993, was agreed drawn here, but Black could have played on with 25...Qfd8†.

13...Qfxe4!?

This ‘sacrifice’ is in reality a simplifying operation amounting to a positional queen sacrifice.

The history of this variation started with 13...Wa5 14.Qdb5 Qd7 15.e5 Qc6 (four years later Golubev found another possibility, 15...dxe5 16.fxe5 Qd5 17.Qxd5 Qxb5 18.Qxc5 Qxc5 19.Qxb7 Qad8 20.Qxb5 ½–½ Istratescu – Golubev, Romania 1996) 16.exf6 Qxf3 17.fxe7 Qxd1 18.exf8=Q† Qxf8 19.Qxd1 Qd8 20.f5 d5 21.Qe2 Qe4 22.Qxe4 dxe4 23.Qxd8† Qxd8 24.fxe6 fxe6

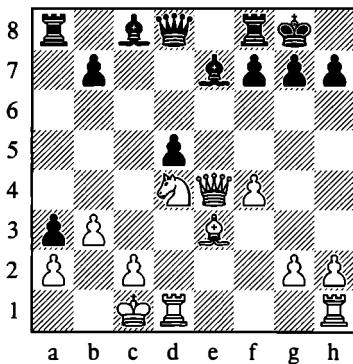


This double-edged endgame eventually resulted in a draw in Istratescu – Suba, Romania 1992.

In the post-mortem I suggested the continuation played in the main game. Intrigued by the queen sacrifice, Andrei and his trainer (IM Stoica) made an extensive analysis of the variation. Their conclusion was that although White is slightly better, Black should draw even against best play. Backed by today's much stronger analysis engines, I agree with this judgement. A word of caution though; when analysing such positions with a computer, one must keep in mind that the program does not recognize a fortress and will always consider it a significant advantage to have queen against rook and bishop or rook and knight.

14.♕xe4 ♕xe4 15.♗xe4 d5 16.♗f3

Sometimes, refusing a sacrifice can be even worse than accepting it, for example 16.♗xd5 exd5 and now:

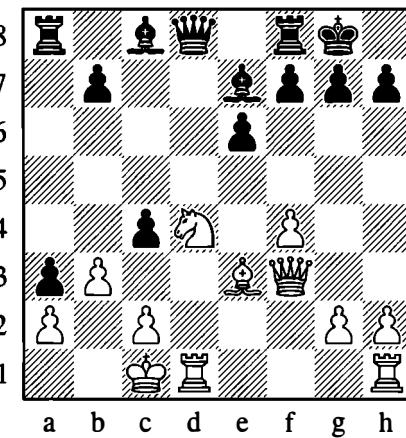


a) 17.♗d3 ♔f6 18.♔b1 ♔e8 19.♔he1 ♔g4† 20.♗c1 ♔e4 21.h3 ♔e7 22.hxg4 ♔xd4 23.♗d2 ♔f2 24.♔h1 h6 25.♗cd1 ♔c8 26.♔h5 ♔d4 27.♗f3 ♔e4 0–1 Adla – Suba, Badalona 1993. In his preparation, Parligras had probably been shown this game.

b) Later there was another unsuccessful try for White: 17.♗f3 ♔e8 18.♗d3 ♔f6 19.g4 ♔e4† 20.h4 ♔c7 21.f5 ♔d7 22.g5 ♔c8 23.gxf6 ♔xd4 24.♗g2 ♔g4 25.♗h2 ♔c6 26.♗hd1 d4 27.c4 dxe3 28.♗xd7 ♔xf6 29.♗b1 h5 30.♗c2 ♔e8 31.♗e1 ♔f4 32.♗d2 ♔xf5 33.♗d3 exd2 0–1 Fernando – Suba, Mondariz-Balneario 2000.

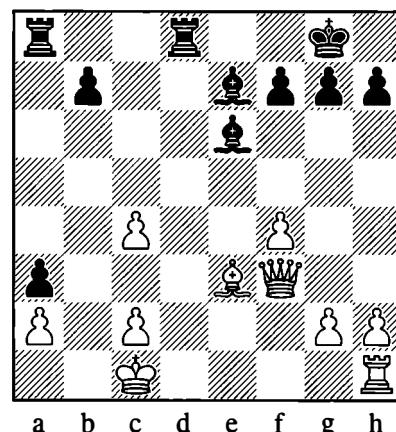
16...dxc4

Restoring material equality for a brief instant, before the next bout of simple tactics.



17.♗xe6 ♔xe6 18.♗xd8 ♔fxd8 19.bxc4

The dust has settled. White's material advantage enables him to claim whatever advantage might exist, but the question is whether it amounts to significant winning chances. The course of the game suggests that Black should be fine, and my home analysis has not given me any reason to think differently.

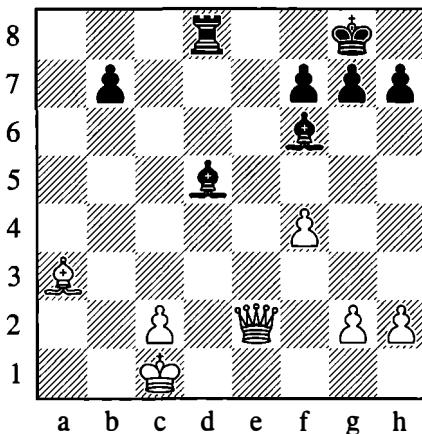


19...♗f6

The hasty 19...♗xc4?? was refuted by 20.♗e4 in Gross – Orsag, Czech Republic 1994.

20.♗d1 ♔xd1† 21.♗xd1 ♔xc4 22.♗c1 ♔xa2

23.♕xa3 ♕d8† 24.♔c1 ♕d5 25.♗e2



25...♝c8!

In all likelihood 25...♝c6 is also enough to hold, but establishing an outpost for the bishop on the c4-square makes Black's task even simpler.

26.♔b1 ♕c4 27.♗e4 b5

Black has succeeded in building his ideal fortress. The b5-pawn and c4-bishop form a symbiotic pair, and the bishop also defends the f7-pawn. (This is why it was preferable to anchor the bishop on the c4-square instead of c6.) All that remains is for Black to tidy up his kingside with ...h7-h6, and then his rook will be free to do whatever it pleases.

28.♕b2 ♕xb2 29.♔xb2 h6=

Black is in no danger whatsoever now, and the remaining moves can pass without comment.

30.g4 ♕d8 31.♗e3 ♕d6 32.♗e8† ♔h7
33.♗e4† ♔g8 34.♗e8† ♔h7 35.♗e4† ♔g8
36.♗c3 ♕e6 37.♗f3 ♕e2 38.h4 ♔h8 39.f5
f6 40.g5 hxg5 41.hxg5 fxg5 42.♗h5† ♔g8
43.♗xg5 ♔f7 44.♗g6† ♔f8

½-½

Post-game reflections

Positional sacrifices can take many forms. Although we all dream of using the more grand and spectacular types of sacrifice to crush our opponents, it is equally important for a practical player to recognize the value of an appropriate defensive sacrifice. In the above game Black's understanding of this principle enabled him to secure a painless and hassle-free draw. In this technological era it is more important than ever for players to understand concepts such as the fortress defence, as this is one of the few remaining areas of the game in which machines are trumped by mammals.

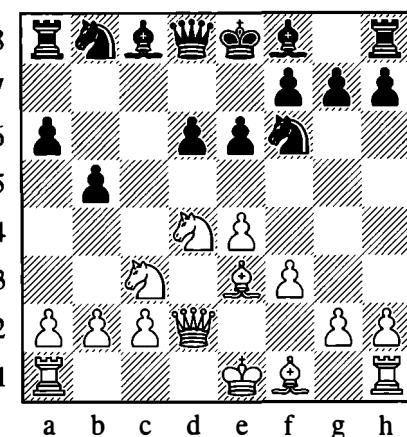
Rafael Rodriguez Lopez – Mihai Suba

Caceres Open 1996

Points to look for in this game:

- A nuance in the opening – 8...♝b7??
- A spirited pawn sacrifice – 15...d4!!
- Undermining the centre – 17...g5??

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 cxd4
5.♘xd4 e6 6.♗e3 a6 7.♗d2 b5 8.f3



8...♝b7??

I favour this move as a measure against 9.g4,

which can now be met by 9... $\mathbb{W}a5!$. Without the queen's knight blocking the retreat square on d7, Black has less reason to fear the rapid advance of the g-pawn.

By contrast, the more common 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ can be met by 9.g4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10.a4! when Black has more problems than in the current game.

9.a4

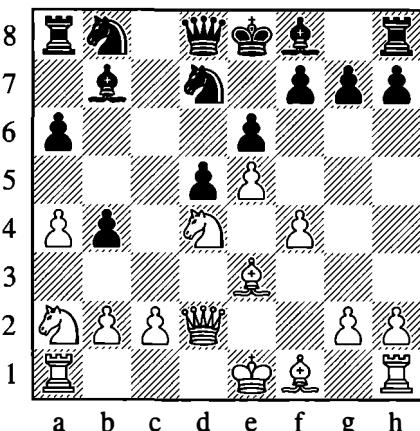
Rafa Rodriguez, one of my best students and friends from Galicia, is a fan of the English Attack, from both sides of the board. A year or so before this game, he asked me what to do against 9.a4 (he had lost a bad game as Black against Ochoa de Echaguen). At that time I had little experience with the line and I think my answer was unconvincing. He remembered that and asked me again, this time at the chessboard.

9...b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ d5

10...e5 (Kramnik) is possible, but it may be better to play it in the move order 9...e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (or 10. $\mathbb{Q}f5$) 10...b4.

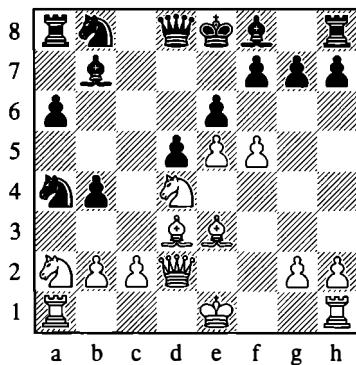
Instead the slow 10...a5 gives White a murderous initiative after 11.c3!.

11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 12.f4



12... $\mathbb{W}a5?$

I was happy with the variation 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4?$ 14.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$, until the machine showed me that White could improve on it with 14.f5!.

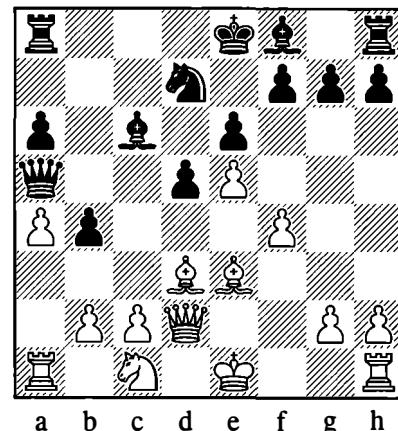


This “truly silicon” sacrifice gives White a strong attack.

In fact, 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ seems to be the best option, but Black should refrain from accepting any pawn sacrifices. Thus after 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ Black should prefer the simple 13...a5!, when White's advantage is minimal.

13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

White avoids 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17.a5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20.0-0 $\mathbb{W}a7\bar{r}$.



15...d4!

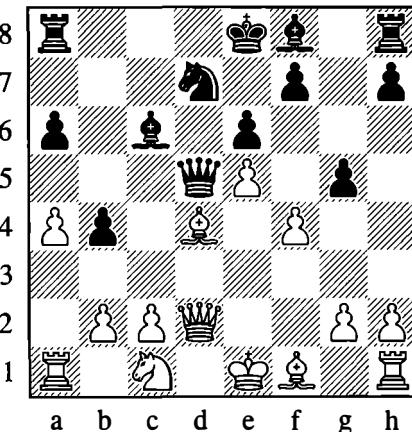
A dynamic pawn sacrifice to energize the position. My programs do not like it, but I do!

16.Qxd4 Wd5 17.Qf1

The variation 17.Qb3 Wxg2 18.Wxg2 Qxg2 19.Qg1 Qd5 20.0–0–0 g6 is preferred by the machine, but I would not complain about Black's position.

17...g5?!

Played to create maximum disruption before White can get organized.

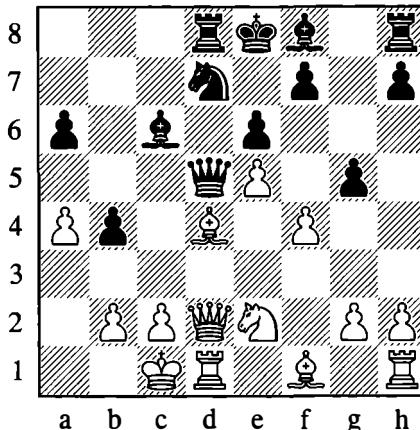
**18.Qe2?!**

So far White has played well, but his last move is a slight error. Instead he should have preferred 18.fxg5 h6 19.g6! fxg6 20.Qe2±.

18...Bd8 19.0–0–0??

White immediately collapses.

Analysing the stronger 19.We3, it took some effort to convince the programs that Black's compensation is sufficient. Eventually I succeeded, with the main line continuing as follows: 19...Qc5 20.fxg5 Wc4 21.Bc1 Qe4 22.b3 Wd5 23.h4 h6 24.c4 Wc6 25.Qg3 Qxg2 26.Qxg2 Wxg2 27.Bd1 hxg5 28.Bd2 Wc6 29.Qxc5 Bxd2 30.Qxd2 Qxc5 31.Qe4 Wd7† 32.Qc2 Bxh4 33.Qxh4 gxh4 34.Wxh4 Wd4 35.Qe4 Wg1=

**19...Wa2!**

This move is obvious, but it relies on a tactical point explained below.

20.b3 Qc5 21.We3 Qe4

Now Rafa realized that his planned 22.Bd2 fails to 22...Bxd4! 23.Qxd4 Qxb3† 24.cxb3 Wb1#, so he resigned.

0–1

Post-game reflections

Despite being cut short by White's unfortunate blunder, this game contained numerous points of interest, and the accompanying notes have hinted at just a few of the many nuances lurking under the surface of the position. For a while the blocked centre gave the game the character of the French Defence, at least until the pawn sacrifice 15...d4! and the undermining 17...g5?! threw the position into turmoil. As I mentioned previously, Rafa knows the English Attack well as he plays it for both sides, but on this occasion he failed to adapt to the situation on the board and quickly collapsed. The psychological effect of a well-timed positional sacrifice should not be underestimated.

In the next game White plays an excellent pawn sacrifice and retains good chances to take the point until he blows it near the end.

Manuel Perez Candelario – Mihai Suba

Orense 2000

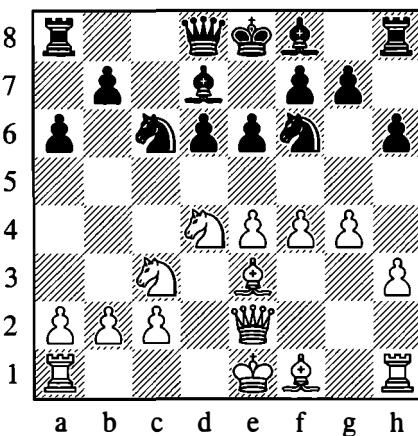
Points to look for in this game:

- A promising pawn sacrifice – 16.e5!
- White misses a good chance – 22.♗xd8 in the notes
- A mistake leading to disaster – 24.♕xg5?

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 e6 6.♗e3 a6 7.g4**

The fearsome Perenyi Attack, which invites huge complications after 7...e5. I was in the mood for something less theoretical.

7...h6 8.f4 ♘c6 9.h3 ♘d7 10.♗e2



10...♕a5?!

We have already reached a position in which theory is scarce. I was sure that my young and aggressive opponent (now a GM) would go for long castling; therefore I chose my favourite manoeuvre in the Sicilian, which practically wins a tempo and reduces White's attacking energy.

A safer option is 10...♗e7 11.♗g2 ♘c7 12.0–0 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 e5 14.♗e3 exf4 15.♗xf4 ♘e6 16.♗d5 ♘xd5 17.exd5 0–0 18.g5 hxg5 19.♗c4 ♘d7 20.♗xg5 ♘ae8 21.♗h4 ♘f5 22.♗d2

♘e4= and a draw was soon agreed in Balashov – Psakhis, Sverdlovsk 1987.

11.♗b3 ♘c7 12.♗g2 b5 13.0–0–0 ♘c8

Stronger is 13...♗b8, with better control of the b6-square. After 14.e5 dxe5 15.♗hf1 b4 16.♘e4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♘d8, Black threatens 18...♗b5, and despite White's lead in development, equality is not out of reach.

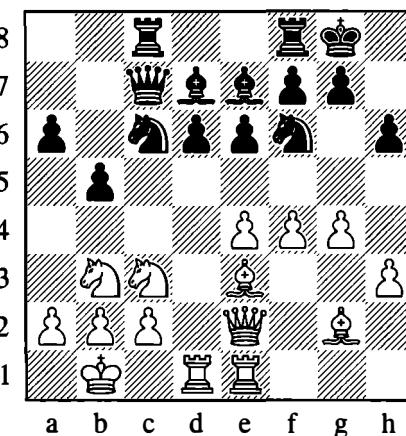
14.♗he1

This stereotyped centralization is hardly useful. More to the point is 14.♗f2 or 14.♗b1.

14...♗e7?!

Black should probably aim for simplifications. For example: 14...♘a5 15.♗xa5 ♘xa5 16.e5 b4 17.exf6 bxc3 18.♗b1 gxf6 19.b3 h5 20.♗b7 ♘b8 21.♗f3 hxg4 22.hxg4 ♘h2 23.♗d4 f5 24.gxf5 ♘xf5 25.♗e4 ♘h3 26.♗xc3 ♘xc3 27.♗xc3 ♘c8 28.♗d4 ♘c6=

15.♗b1 0–0



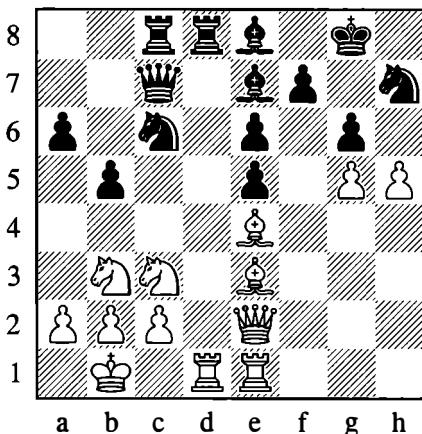
16.e5!

Excellent play. The immediate 16.g5 hxg5 17.fxg5 ♘h7 is harmless, but by flicking in the pawn sacrifice White simultaneously clears the e4-square for his own pieces while preventing the black knight from establishing itself on the e5-square.

16...dxe5 17.g5 hxg5 18.fxg5 ♖h7 19.♕e4

White's initiative is flowing smoothly and Black is in trouble.

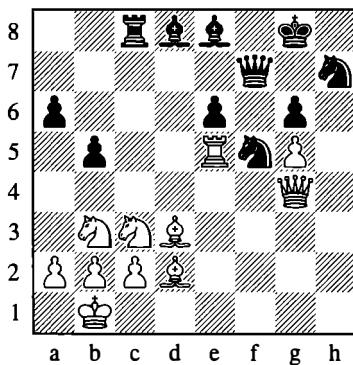
19...g6 20.h4 ♘fd8 21.h5 ♔e8



22.♖c1?!

White decides that he needs both his rooks for a successful attack, but in this type of position “time is money”. A frequent mistake committed by attackers, especially against the Sicilian, is to play only for mate. One should not have any prejudices about how to win, but should be prepared for strategy, tactics, endgames – whatever it takes!

Much stronger is 22.♖xd8 ♕xd8 23.hxg6 fxg6 24.♗g4 ♗f7 25.♕d3 ♖e7 26.♕d2 ♖f5 27.♕xe5±.



White's mating chances may be substantially reduced, but he still holds a significant positional advantage.

22...♘d4 23.♗h2 ♕xg5!

Not only taking a pawn, but also clearing the way for the queen to defend along the seventh rank if needed.

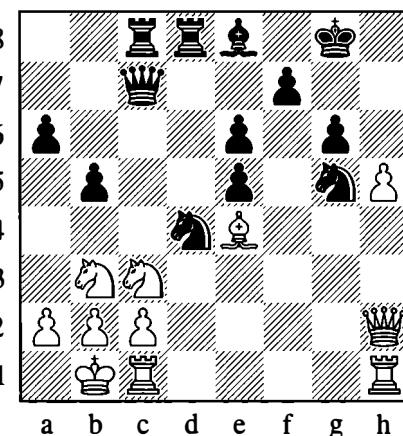
24.♕xg5?

The decisive mistake, probably induced by my cheeky capture.

White would have remained slightly better after the more or less forced 24.hxg6! fxg6 25.♕xg5 ♘xg5 26.♗g3 b4 27.♗xg5 bxc3 28.♘xd4 ♘xd4 29.b3 ♗g7 30.♗e3 ♘c7 31.♗g1 a5 32.a3±.

24...♘xg5 25.♗h1

Against 25.hxg6, Black defends as in the game with 25...f6!.



25...f6!

Underlining the earlier point about the queen.

26.hxg6 ♗g7–+

White's attack is going nowhere, and Black's splendidly centralized forces will decide the game – helped by his extra pawn of course.

27.♕d3 ♜df3 28.♗g3 ♕xg6 29.♕xg6 ♜xg6
30.♖c1 ♜d2† 31.♕xd2 ♜xd2 32.♗h4

This is the result of time pressure, of course, but even after 32.♖c1 ♜c4, Black has a significant material and positional advantage, and should win easily.

32...♗xc2†

0–1

Post-game reflections

A great idea means nothing if not followed up correctly. In this game White found an excellent attacking pawn sacrifice, but became too fixated on checkmating my king. On more than one occasion he overestimated his attacking chances, enabling me to consolidate my position and emerge victorious. Changing between different modes of thinking can be a tricky thing to do, especially when one's mind is flooded with the excitement associated with a dramatic material sacrifice, visions of winning the brilliancy prize, and so on.

Viktor Bologan – Ye Jiangchuan

Tan Chin Nam Cup, Beijing 2000

Points to look for in this game:

- Combining attack and defence – 19.e5!
- A pawn sacrifice to blast open the kingside – 23.g6!
- Finishing in style – 35.♕h7!

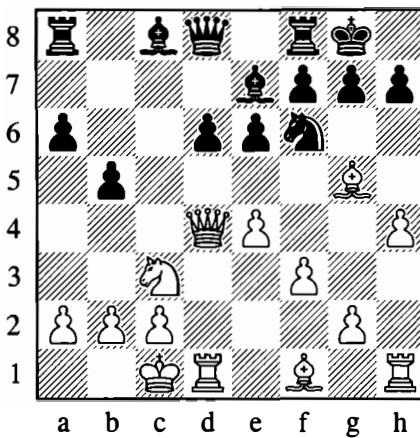
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♜f6
5.♘c3 ♜c6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♗d2 ♜e7

The most popular continuation is 7...a6, as in the game Pilgaard – Chernyshov later in this section.

8.0–0–0 0–0 9.f3 a6 10.h4 ♜xd4

Other possibilities are 10...d5, 10...♗d7 and 10...♗c7, the last option being the most flexible.

11.♗xd4 b5



12.♔b1

This is typical for systems based on f3 (and g4), such as the English Attack or Rauzer – safety first!

The hasty 12.g4 could lead to a confusing game: 12...♗b7 13.♗f2 ♜c8 14.♗b1 d5 15.♗d3 b4.

12...♗b7 13.♗d2

Transferring the knight from c3, where it is exposed, to d4, with an eye on e6, is a frequent idea in these systems.

13...♗c7?

A routine move in many variations of the Sicilian, but in the given position it does not serve Black well.

Perhaps Black should anticipate his opponent's plan with:

13...♜c8 14.♗e2??

14.♗d3 can be met by 14...♗c7! and now rerouting the knight is even worse: 15.♗e2 d5 16.e5 ♜e4!

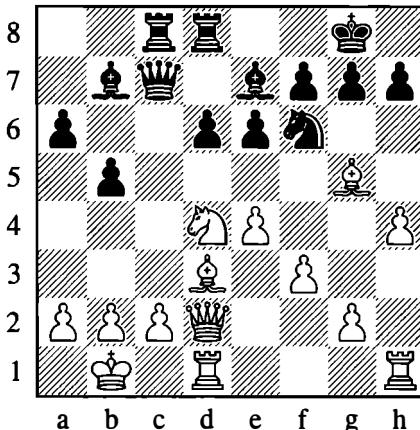
14...e5 15.♗g3

15.♗xf6 ♜xf6 16.♗xd6 ♜xh4 is equal.

15...d5 16.♗xf6 ♜xf6 17.exd5 ♜c5 18.d6 ♜d5 19.♗d3 ♜xd6 20.♗e4 ♜b6

To put it modestly, Black has no problems.

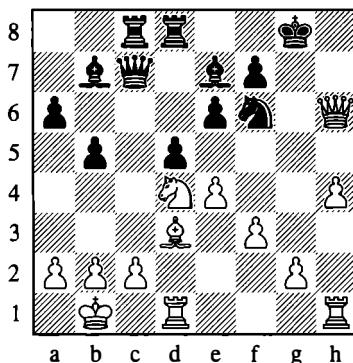
14.♕e2 ♜ac8 15.♕d4 ♜fd8 16.♔d3



16...♞e8?!

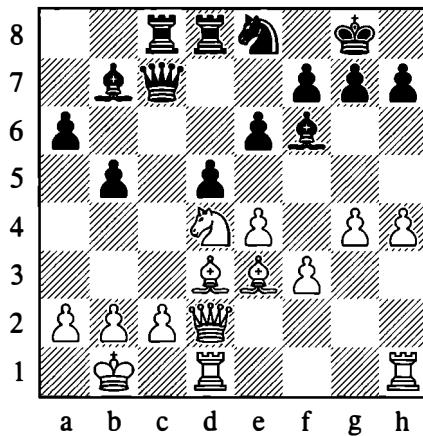
The knight's best routes are d7-c5 or d7-e5. The text move is by no means disastrous, but it reduces Black's margin for error.

If Black tries to relieve the unpleasant pin by 16...h6, then White is offered the possibility a draw-in-the-pocket sacrifice: 17.♕xh6?! (17.♕e3 is comfortably met by 17...♞d7 18.g4 ♜e5=) 17...gxh6 18.♕xh6 d5



19.♖h3 (the program suggests 19.♗g5†? ♔f8 20.e5±) 19...dxe4 20.f4 ♜h7 21.♖g3† ♜g5 22.♖xg5† ♔xg5 23.♗xg5† ♔f8 24.♗h6† ♔e8 25.♗xe6 fxe6 26.♗xb5† and it ends in a draw by perpetual.

17.g4 ♜f6 18.♔e3 d5



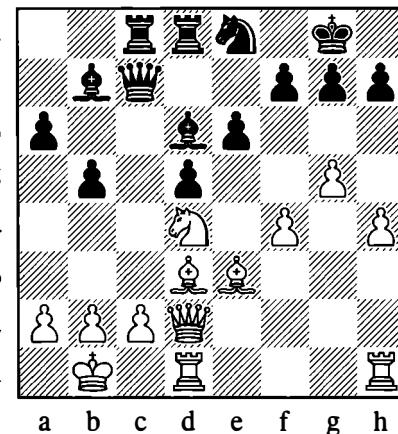
19.e5!

An obstruction sacrifice, which is not only strong but also practically forced. White cannot allow the opening of the centre, when all his efforts on the kingside would look pathetic. By giving up a pawn, he keeps the d-file closed and gains time for launching his attack.

19...♝xe5 20.f4 ♜d6

20...♜xd4 can hardly be recommended: 21.♕xd4 ♜d6 22.h5 ♜e4 23.♗e3 and the threat of ♜b6 gives White obvious positional compensation.

21.g5



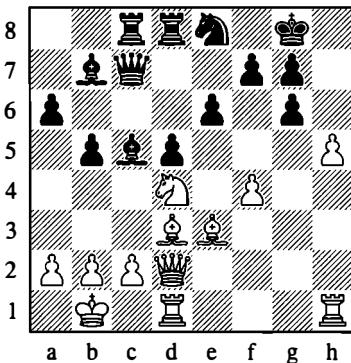
21...e5?!

The d6-square must be vacated to allow the knight to come into play, but this could have been achieved by less committal means:

21...♝c5 22.g6

White's expectations shouldn't be great after 22.h5 ♜d6 23.g6 ♜c4 24.♗e2 ♜xe3 25.♗xe3 ♜e8 26.♘he1 fxe3 27.hxg6 h6 28.♗f5 ♜xd4 29.♗xd4 ♜f8 30.♗d3 ♜c6 31.a3 ♜g8 32.♗f3 ♜d6†.

22...hxg6 23.h5



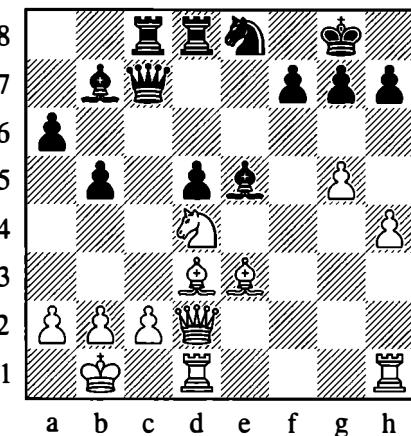
23...gxh5

Also possible is 23...g5 24.h6 g6 25.♗del ♜f6 26.fxg5 ♜e4 27.♗g2 ♜h7 28.♗hf1 ♜d7, and Black should not lose.

24.♗xh5 ♜f6 25.♗h4 ♜f8 26.♗g2 ♜e7 27.f5 ♜xd4 28.♗xd4 e5 29.♗e1 ♜e4 30.♗e3 ♜g8 31.♗h7 ♜d6 32.♗xe4 dxe4 33.♗xg7 ♜xg7 34.♗xg7 ♜d5

Again, Black should have little to fear.

22.fxe5 ♜xe5

**23.g6!**

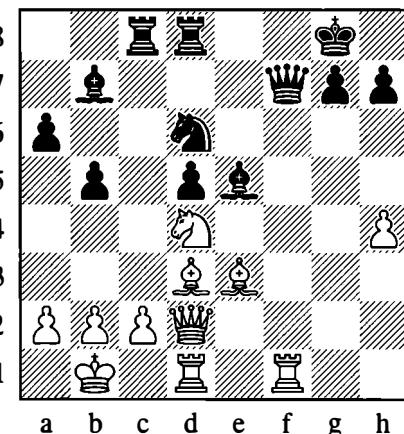
Bologan is using the g-pawn like a stick of dynamite to blast a hole in the enemy kingside. Such sacrifices are commonplace in Sicilians with opposite castling. A slower approach gives White nothing, for example: 23.h5 ♜d6 24.g6 ♜e4=

23...♜d6

Better late than never, or as the French say, "Nothing is later than never." Accepting the sacrificed pawn by 23...hxg6 is very dangerous, due to the typical follow-up 24.h5.

24.gxf7†!

24.gxh7† allows counterplay after 24...♝h8 25.h5 ♜c4.

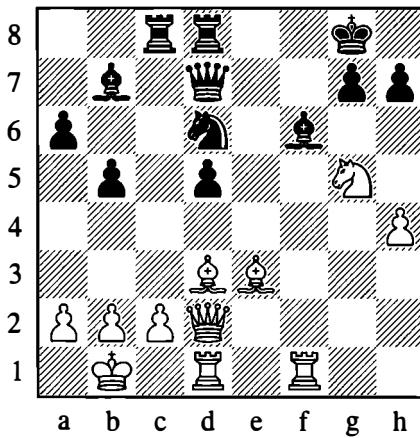
24...♝xf7 25.♗h1**25...♝d7?**

Possibly the decisive mistake. With a knight that may jump to e4 or c4 at will, Black's position should not be too bad. However, in such situations a single tempo can be decisive, and Black must avoid offering his opponent any chance to gain time.

25...♝e8! 26.♗f5 (26.♗f3 ♜c4) 26...♝c4 27.b3 ♜c7 would have provided good defensive resources and equal chances.

26.♘f3

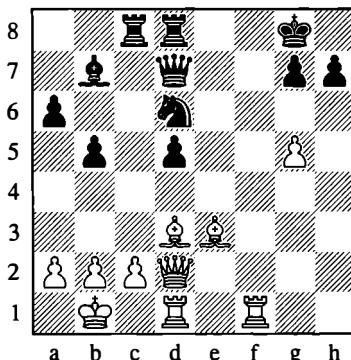
White takes immediate advantage of Black's error, hopping towards the promising land of g5.

26...♝f6 27.♞g5**27...♝c4?**

Another drawback of Black's 25th moves is that the d5-pawn is now pinned, so Black cannot play 27...♝e4.

27...h6 is also weak: 28.♝xf6! gxf6 29.♞h7 ♜e7 30.♝d4 ♜e8 31.♝g1†+-

Black's only try is: 27...♝xg5 28.hxg5

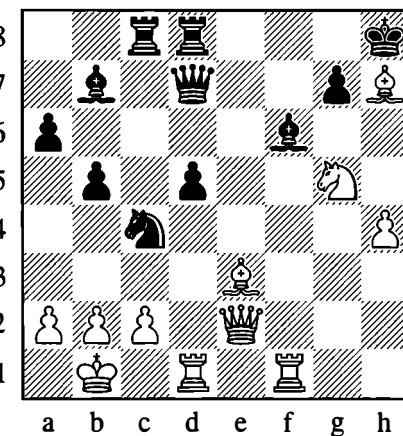


28...d4! Black clears lines for his pieces and also prepares to obstruct the d3-h7 diagonal.
29.♝xd4 ♜e4 30.♝f4 ♜xd4 31.♝f7† ♜h8

32.♝xb7 ♜c5 33.♝g2 ♜xd3 34.♝xd3 Black can continue to fight for a draw.

28.♝xh7†

Now the game is over, as White's fury can no longer be stopped. His pieces have accumulated too much energy and the black king lacks the proper guards against a vicious attack.

28...♚h8 29.♝e2**29...♝e8**

Also hopeless are:

29...♜xe3 30.♝h5 ♜xf1 31.♝xf1†-- (or 31.♝f5†--)

29...♝xg5 30.hxg5 ♜xe3 31.♝g6 ♜g4 32.♝f5 ♜c7 33.♝xg4--

30.♝xf6 gxf6 31.♝d4 ♜c6

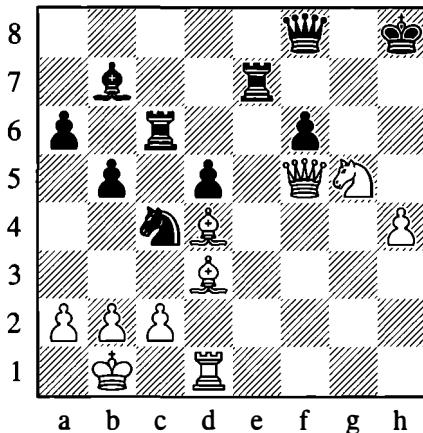
31...♜e5 32.♝f3! ♜d6 (or 32...♜c6 33.♝xe5 fxe5 34.♝f7† ♜xh7 35.♝g1†--) 33.♝xe5 fxe5 34.♝f7† ♜xh7 35.♝xd6 wins.

32.♝f2 ♜f8 33.♝d3

33.♝f3 ♜g7 34.♝g4 is also good enough.

33...♝d7 34.♝f5 ♜e7

34...♝e7 35.♝g1 does not help Black.



35.♕h7!

Nimzowitsch would have been delighted with such an *anti-Tarrasch* move!

35...♝c8 36.♔h5 ♝f7 37.♝g6

1–0

Post-game reflections

Bologan played several excellent moves in this game, but the pawn sacrifices 19.e5! and later 23.g6! were the key moves which really helped to launch his attack. It was interesting to see that, despite committing numerous small errors in the early middlegame, Black still possessed considerable defensive resources and it was not until quite late in the game that his position descended beneath the point of recovery. This speaks quite highly of the resilience and overall soundness of the Sicilian Defence.

The most difficult position to draw is a dead-drawn position – paraphrasing Lasker

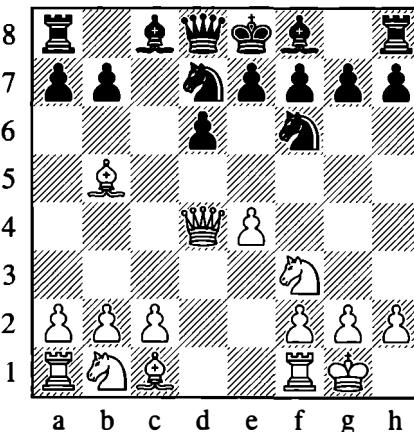
Viktor Bologan – Mihai Suba

Spanish Team Championship, Sanxenxo 2000

Points to look for in this game:

- An amazing queen sacrifice – 11...♝c5?!
- Wisely returning the material – 16.♔d2?!

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5† ♜d7 4.d4 ♜g6
5.0–0 cxd4 6.♗xd4**



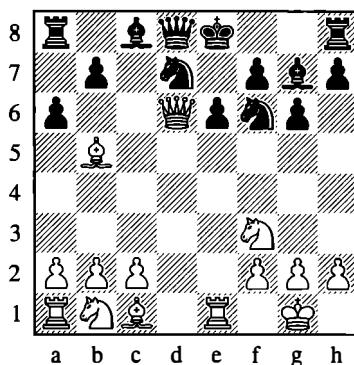
6...g6

I do not like the current fashion of 6...e5!? 7.♔d3 h6 8.c4, and I hope that the majority of readers would agree with me.

7.e5 dxe5 8.♕xe5

Nowadays the preference is for:

8.♗xe5?! ♜g7 9.♗el e6 10.♔d6 a6



11.♕f1?

11.♕a4?! is worse: 11...♛e7 12.♝xe7† ♕xe7 13.♕d2 ♖d5 14.c4 ♖b6 15.♕b4† ♕e8 16.♗c3 a5! and White was already in trouble in Rublevsky – Ivanchuk, Frankfurt (rapid) 2000.

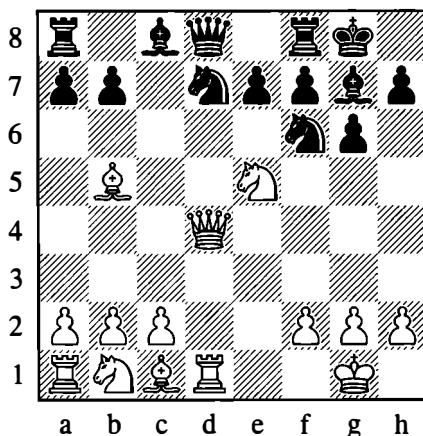
11...♞f8

11...♝b6 also looks playable, although nobody in the elite has tried it. A possible continuation is 12.♝xb6 ♖xb6 13.c4 ♖a4 14.♗bd2 0–0 15.♗e5 b6 16.b3 ♖d7 17.♗df3 ♖ac5 18.♗xd7 ♖xd7 19.♗b1 ♕b7 with equality.

12.♗f4 ♕g7 13.♗c3 0–0 14.♗e3 b6 15.♗ad1 ♕b7 16.♗e2 ♜c8 17.♗h4 ♜e8 18.♗e5 ♜c7 19.♗xd7 ♖xd7 20.♗f4 ♜d8

The position seems equal.

8...♞g7 9.♗d1 0–0



10.♗xd7

The alternatives are innocuous:

10.♗a4 ♜c7 11.♗xd7 ♕xd7 12.♗xd7 ♜fd8
13.♗c3 (not 13.♗g4? b5! 14.♗f4 ♜xf4
15.♗xf4 ♖xg4 16.♗c3 ♜xc3 17.♗xc3 ♖f6†)
13...♗xd7 14.♗f4 ♜b6=

10.♗c3 ♜b6 11.♗xd7

Alternatively after 11.♗e3 ♜xd4 12.♗xd4 ♖xe5 13.♗xe5 ♜e6 14.♗e2 ♜fc8 15.♗d3

♗c4 16.c3 ♜xd3 17.♗xd3 a6 18.♗ad1 b5 19.h3 e6 20.♗f3 ♖d5 21.♗xg7 ♜xg7 22.♗d4 ♜a7† Black eventually won in Golubev – Suba, Romania 1997.

11...♖xd7 12.♗b4

12.♗xb6 ♖xb6 13.♗g5 a6 14.♗f1 ♜e8 15.♗e3 ♜xc3 16.♗xc3 ♖a4 17.c4 ♜e6 is equal.

12.♗a4 ♖f6 13.♗e3 ♜c7 14.♗f4 ♜c5 is equally harmless.

12...a6 13.♗e3

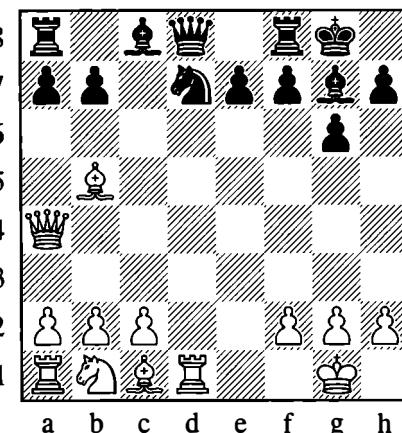
13.♗d5 ♜xb5 14.♗xb5 axb5 15.♗xe7† ♕h8 16.♗xc8 ♜axc8 17.♗xd7 ♜xc2= 13...♜xc3 14.♗xb6 ♜xb4 15.♗xd7 ♜d6 16.♗xc8 ♜axc8 17.c3

½–½ Rublevsky – Yermolinsky, Hyderabad 2002.

10...♗xd7 11.♗a4?

This was the fruit of thorough home preparation and made me suffer for a while.

Another possibility is: 11.♗h4 ♜b6 12.a4 (12.♗xd7 ♜d8 13.♗c3 ♜xd7 14.♗d5 ♜d8 15.c4 b5 16.♗e1 f6 17.♗e4 ♜b7 18.♗xe7† ♜f8 19.♗xg6† hxg6 20.♗xg6 bxc4 21.h4 ♜f7† and Black went on to win in Velicka – Kalod, Czech Championship 2002) 12...♗c3 13.♗c3 ♜f5 14.a5 ♜c5 15.♗e3 ♜c7 16.♗f4 ♜c5 17.♗e3 ♜c7 18.♗f4 ½–½ Shirov – Suba, Bilbao (rapid) 2001.



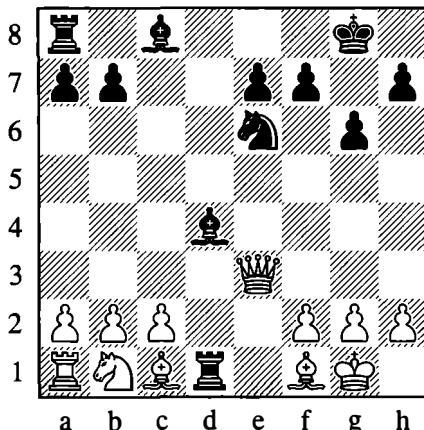
11...Qc5!?

This move, found over the board, surprised Bologan, as he told me after the game. The queen sacrifice had passed unnoticed during his home preparation.

Both my opponent and his program had only considered 11...Wc7? 12.Qxd7 Ed8 13.Qg1 Qxg4 14.Wxg4 Wxc2 15.Ee1 Qxb2 16.Qa3!+– and 11...Wb6? 12.Qxd7 Ed8 13.c3±.

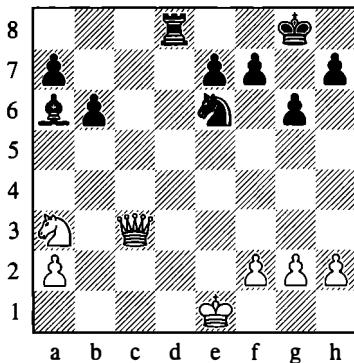
It is curious that Black could also try 11...Qb6!? with a similar idea to the game move. For example: 12.Qxd7 Ed8 13.Wf4 Ed1† 14.Qf1 Qd5 15.Wa4 (or 15.Wf3 Excl 16.Wxd5 Qxb2 17.Wd8† Qg7 18.Qc3 Qxa1 19.Wd4† Qg8 20.Wd8† with equality) 15...Excl 16.Qc3 Exa1 17.We8† Qf8 18.Qxd5 Qe6 19.Wxa8 Qxd5 with compensation.

**12.Qxd8 Ed8 13.Wf4 Ed1† 14.Qf1 Qe6!
15.We3 Qd4**

**16.Wd2!?**

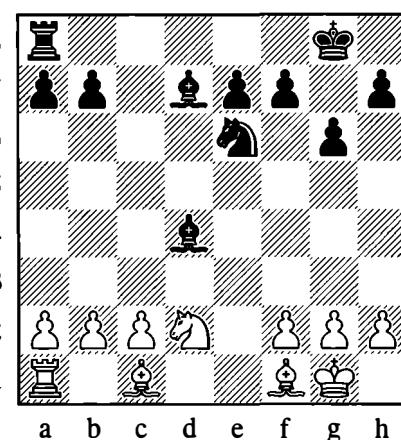
It is dangerous for White to keep the queen: 16.We2 Excl 17.Wd2 (17.c3 Qf6 18.We4 [18.h4 Qxh4 19.g3 Qg5 20.Wd3 Qh6 21.f4 Qxf4 22.gxf4 Qxf4 23.Wf3 e5 24.Qf2 Qf5 25.Qd3 Ed8†] 18...a5 19.f4 Ea6 20.We3 Ed1 21.Qf2 Ed6†) 17...Qxb2 18.c3 Exf1† 19.Qxf1 Qxa1 20.Wc1 b6 21.Qa3 Qa6†

22.Qe1 Qxc3† 23.Wxc3 Ed8



Black had gained a decisive advantage in Antal – Robson, Lubbock 2009.

16...Exd2 17.Qxd2 Ed7=



Of the above position, Psakhis says “Black achieved everything he wanted from the opening.” I shall refrain from giving the remainder of the game, which is irrelevant to our subject. The situation remained level for a long time, until I convinced myself that Black could win a dead-drawn bishop endgame. Finding that impossible, I became nervous and blundered, and the game ended in victory for White after 51 moves.

Kim Pilgaard – Konstantin Chernyshov

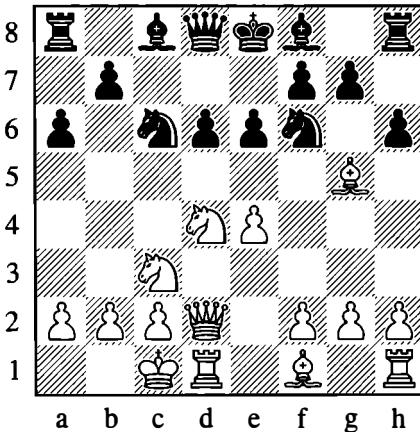
Budapest 2002

Points to look for in this game:

- A risky pawn grab – 12.♕xd6?!
- A strong tactical counter – 13...♝d5!
- Opening further lines of attack – 27...d3†!

Greed is a strong incentive to progress, but also one of the worst sins. This dichotomy applies to chess as well. The pawn sacrifices in this game can be justified on several positional bases: Black gets two pieces out with gain of time, while White has problems on the back rank, a drawback that will cost him another two tempos. However, the programs position themselves on the sinful side – they like material and, of course, they do not have to expiate in purgatory!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 cxd4
5.♕xd4 ♘c6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♗d2 a6 8.0–0–0 h6



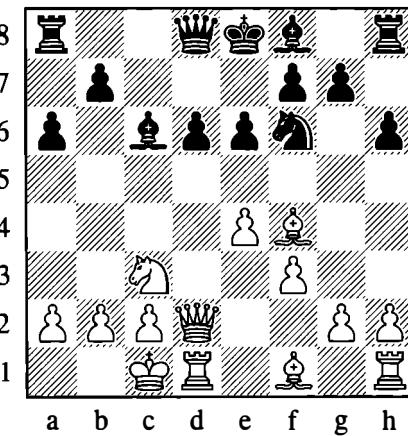
I remember a question of IM Mircea Pavlov's, back in 1977 when my steps in the Sicilian were far from perfected: "What is wrong with Black's position here?" I couldn't find a good answer, but I liked Mihai Ghinda's arguments, preferring the delayed development of the

b8-knight. This has the logic of preserving maximum flexibility. In the Sicilian, Black can rarely compete with White in speed of development; therefore, he must choose the optimal placing for each piece, according to the opponent's set-up, in order to face the first storm with confidence. If he survives intact, then he has good chances for ultimate success. Many readers may be apprehensive: "But we always feel the sword of Damocles above our head. The moment we castle, it falls!" Well... prepare effective counterplay before committing yourself to castling.

9.♗f4

In "my day" 9.♗e3 was played almost exclusively, but fashion changes.

9...♗d7 10.♘xc6 ♘xc6 11.f3



11...♗a5!?

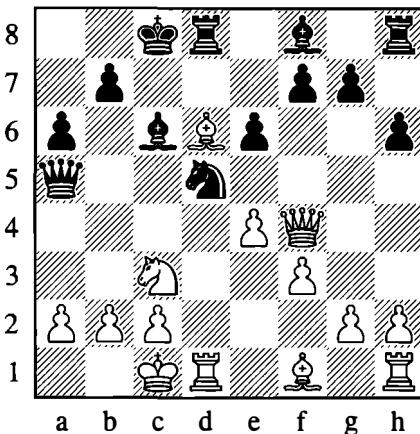
Nowadays, the preference is for 11...d5 12.♗e1 ♘b4, with a very tense position.

12.♕xd6?!

The most solid option is 12.♗b1, to which Chernyshov favours the answer 12...♗d8.

12...0–0–0 13.♗f4 ♘d5!

This tactical stroke provides the justification for Black's pawn sacrifice.



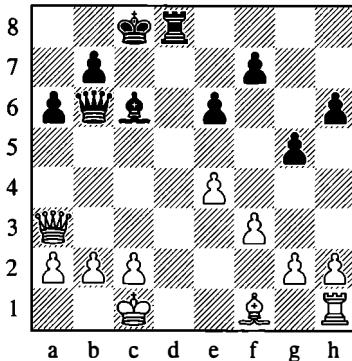
14.exd5

I scored a psychological point in one of my own games, as my opponent was surprised to face the Classical Sicilian instead of my beloved Scheveningen. In this variation of the Rauzer Attack, starting with 11... $\mathbb{W}a5$, my opponent and I were both reinventing the wheel, as many readers probably do on a regular basis! It is often the case that “shameless predecessors” have stolen all our ideas, even the bad ones! After the game, I found out that the whole variation was a favourite of Chernyshov and I hadn’t invented a thing. My game continued:

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 16. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $g5!$

An important intermediate move, as we shall see.

17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}a3$



White has parried the immediate threats, but the story does not end there.

19... $\mathbb{W}f2!$

The point of the pawn sac; White’s development is paralysed.

20. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21.b3

21.h3? is refuted by 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$.

21... $g4!$ 22.fgx4?

White yields to the pressure. Of course, by this point it is not easy to offer him good advice.

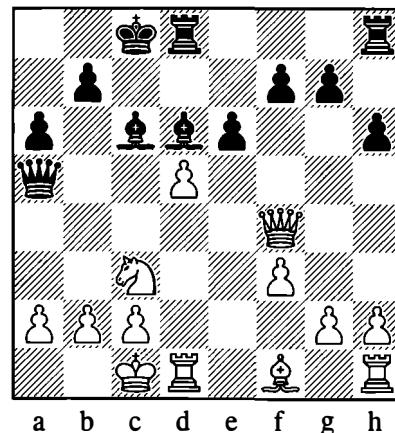
22... $\mathbb{W}f4\uparrow$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{B}d1$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 25.hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 26.g5

This leads to a lost endgame, but if Black is allowed to play ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ the situation is even more desperate, as White cannot stop the march of the e-pawn.

26...hxg5 27. $\mathbb{B}h8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}d2$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2\uparrow$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 31.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ a5 33. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ b6 34. $\mathbb{Q}a7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

0–1 Trepat Herranz – Suba, La Roda 2009.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$



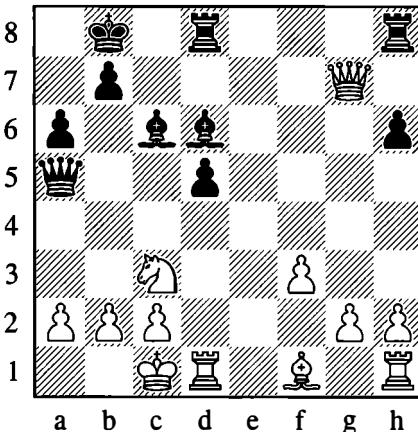
15. $\mathbb{W}f7$ exd5 16. $\mathbb{W}xg7$

This is the most challenging.

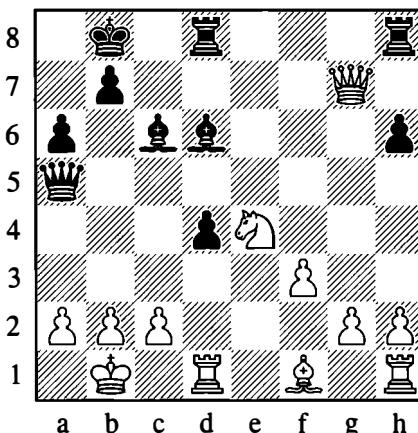
Worse is 16.g3?! $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{B}hf8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h5$ d4 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}h5$ g6 25. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 26. $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 30. $\mathbb{B}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and Black eventually won in Szieberth – Chernyshov, Budapest 2002.

16...♔b8!

Before taking further action, Black calmly hides his king from any troublesome checks.

**17.♕b1**

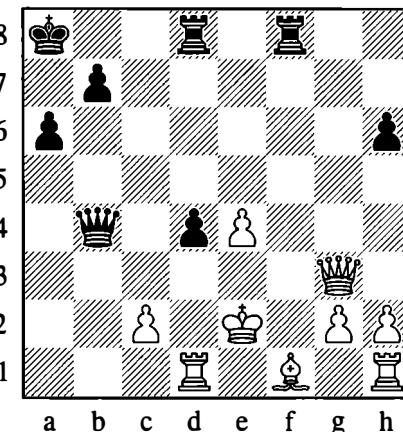
Some programs suggest 17.a3 ♜he8 18.♕a2 ♜e5 19.♗xh6 ♜b6 20.♗b4, but Black has strong attacking resources. For example: 20...♝d6 21.♗h4 (21.♗d2 a5 22.♗d3 ♜d4 23.♗b1 ♜a4 24.♗f4 ♜c8 25.♗c1 ♜c3†) 21...a5 22.♗d3 ♜h8 23.♗e1 ♜d4 24.b3 ♜c8 25.♗b1 ♜a4†

17...d4 18.♗e4**18...♝d5!**

Black ups the stakes, investing a bishop to drive the white king into the open. The

following sequence is not entirely forced, but it certainly represents logical play on both sides.

19.♗xd6 ♜xa2† 20.♗c1 ♜a1† 21.♗d2 ♜xb2 22.♗e4 ♜b4† 23.♗e2 ♜xe4 24.♗g3† ♜a8 25.fxe4 ♜hf8

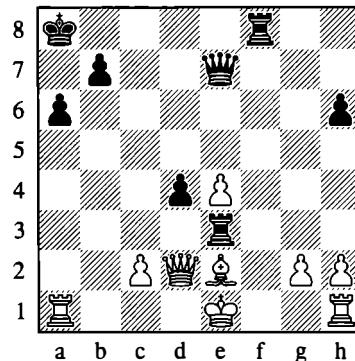


Here the programs abruptly reduce their assessment of White's supposed advantage, which confirms that the true piece sacrifice gives Black excellent practical chances.

26.♗d3 ♜c8 27.♗b3?!

Understandably, White fails to find his way across the tightrope to safety:

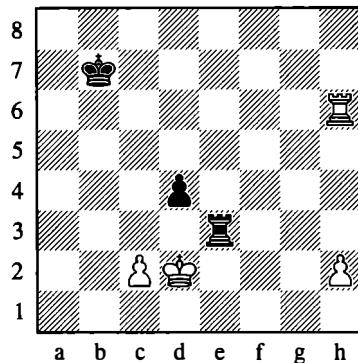
27.♗d2 ♜c3 28.♗e1 ♜e3† 29.♗e2 ♜e7 30.♗a1

**30...♜h4†!**

Black must also be precise. Other moves leave White with a clear advantage:

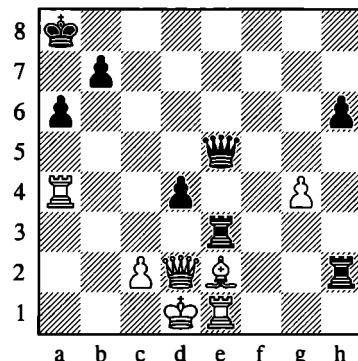
a) 30... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 31. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 32. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 33. $\mathbb{B}a4$
d3 34.cxd3 $\mathbb{W}xh2$ 35. $\mathbb{B}e4$ 36.dxe4
 $\mathbb{B}xe4$ 37. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}h1\#$ 38. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ 39. $\mathbb{B}f3$
 $\mathbb{B}e8$ 40. $\mathbb{W}d7\pm$

b) 30... $\mathbb{B}g8$ 31. $\mathbb{B}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 32. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{B}xg2$
33. $\mathbb{B}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 34. $\mathbb{B}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$ 35. $\mathbb{B}xd2$
 $\mathbb{B}xa6$ 36. $\mathbb{B}xa6\#$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 37. $\mathbb{B}xh6$



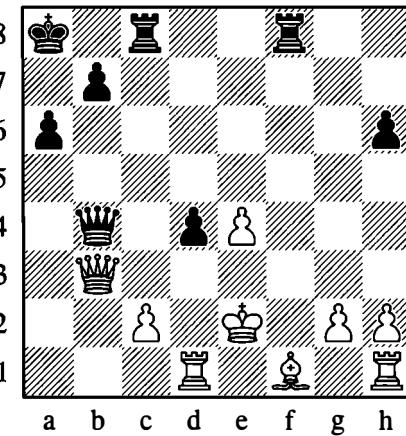
White can win this endgame in highly instructive fashion: 37... $\mathbb{B}c3$ 38.h4 $\mathbb{B}h3$
39. $\mathbb{B}h8$ $\mathbb{B}a7$ 40.h5 $\mathbb{B}b7$ 41.h6 $\mathbb{B}a7$ 42.h7
 $\mathbb{B}b7$ 43. $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{B}a7$ 44. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 45. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}h6$
46. $\mathbb{B}g3$ $\mathbb{B}h1$ 47. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{B}h2$ 48. $\mathbb{B}e4!$ $\mathbb{B}h4\#$
49. $\mathbb{B}e5$ Black is in zugzwang. 49... $\mathbb{B}a7$
50. $\mathbb{B}f6$ $\mathbb{B}h1$ 51. $\mathbb{B}e8$ $\mathbb{B}xh7$ 52. $\mathbb{B}e7\#$ and the pawn ending is winning.

31. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{B}f2$ 32. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 33. $\mathbb{B}a4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 34.g4
 $\mathbb{B}xh2$



35. $\mathbb{B}a5$
35. $\mathbb{B}xd4??$ $\mathbb{W}exe2$ 36. $\mathbb{B}d8\#$ (or 36. $\mathbb{B}xe2$
 $\mathbb{B}h1\#$) 36... $\mathbb{B}a7$ 37. $\mathbb{B}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}a1\#$
35... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 36. $\mathbb{B}h5$ $\mathbb{B}a3!$ 37. $\mathbb{B}a5$ d3 38. $\mathbb{B}xa3$

dxe2 $\#$ 39. $\mathbb{B}xe2$ $\mathbb{B}h1\#$ 40. $\mathbb{B}el$ $\mathbb{B}xe1\#$ 41. $\mathbb{B}xe1$
 $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 42. $\mathbb{B}d8\#$ $\mathbb{B}a7$ 43. $\mathbb{B}d4\#$
With perpetual check.



27... $\mathbb{d}3\#$!

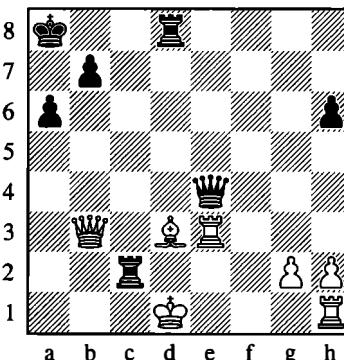
Exploiting the position of the white queen to open further avenues of attack.

28. $\mathbb{B}xd3$

28. $\mathbb{B}xd3?$ $\mathbb{B}cd8\#$ wins immediately and 28. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{B}c4$ is also decisive.

28... $\mathbb{W}xe4\#$ 29. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d4?!$

Black misses a clear win: 29... $\mathbb{B}xc2\#$ 30. $\mathbb{B}d1$
 $\mathbb{B}d8\#$ 31. $\mathbb{B}d3$

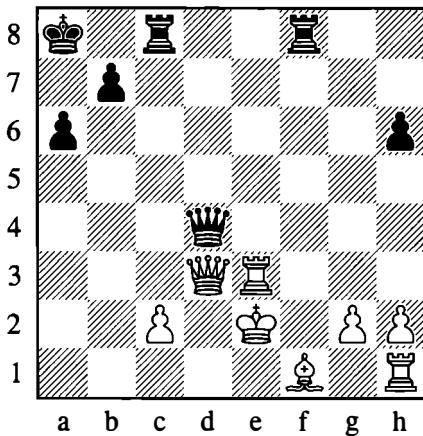


31... $\mathbb{B}b2!+$

30. $\mathbb{W}d3$

White could have kept the game going with

30.c3! when the main line continues: 30... $\mathbb{W}f4$ 31. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{E}ce8\uparrow$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}d8\uparrow$ 33. $\mathbb{E}d3$ $\mathbb{E}xd3\uparrow$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (35.c4? $\mathbb{W}e4$) 35... $\mathbb{W}f2\uparrow$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}xd3$ 37. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}xd1\uparrow$ 38. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 39. $\mathbb{W}d8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 40. $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ b6 41. $\mathbb{W}d6$ h5 42. $\mathbb{W}d7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 43. $\mathbb{W}f5$ h4 44.h3 a5 with a clear advantage for Black.



30... $\mathbb{W}b2!$

Now it is all over.

31. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 32. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xc2\uparrow$

0–1

Post-game reflections

White's early pawn grab seems rather risky, and upon seeing the game continuation I suspect that most strong human players would reject it on intuitive grounds. When analysing the game, I found it interesting to observe the reactions of various programs. Over the years, computers have become rather more adept at assessing positions with material imbalances, and yet in this game they continue to rate White's position as clearly better for many moves. Eventually even the silicon beast gives up and admits that Black was doing okay all along – a triumph for human intuition!

Sergey Karjakin – Viswanathan Anand

Wijk aan Zee 2006

Points to look for in this game:

- A temporary knight sacrifice – 16. $\mathbb{Q}bd4!!$
- A glorious sacrifice – 24... $\mathbb{Q}c7!!$
- White misses a route to an advantage – 23. $\mathbb{W}b4!$ in the notes

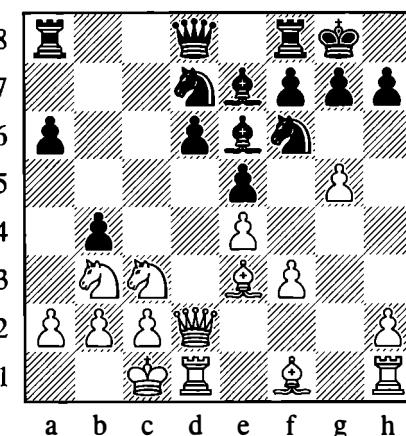
The English Attack, whose most characteristic move is a defensive one (f2-f3), aims to play for a win with minimal risk. White castles long and avoids making weaknesses on the queenside. Little by little, he gains space on the kingside and eventually breaks through, often with a pawn sacrifice on g6. But this may only work given the condition that the black pieces are not orchestrated by Kasparov or Anand!

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 3.d4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e5

The principal alternatives are 6...e6 and 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 8.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0–0 10.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11.g4 b5 12.g5 b4

The players are debating one of the most topical battlegrounds in the English Attack. This is not a theoretical manual, but I have pointed out a few notable directions that the game might take.



13.♕e2

This is by far the most played, but... perhaps not the best. Two other options deserve serious attention:

13.♕a4 ♔h5 14.♔xb4 d5 15.♔a5 ♔xg5
16.♔xg5 ♔xg5† 17.♔b1 dxе4 18.♔d4!? with active play.

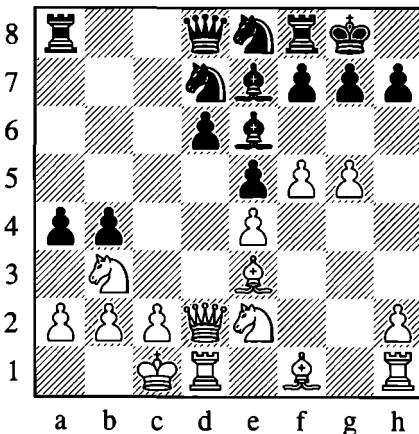
13.gxf6?! bxc3 14.♔xc3 ♔xf6 15.♔a5 ♔d7
16.♔c6 ♔fc8 17.♔xe7† ♔xe7 18.♔a5 with chances for a plus.

13...♔e8 14.f4

14.♔g3 and 14.♔b1 have fared worse.

14...a5 15.f5

15.♔b1 is considered to lead to equality.

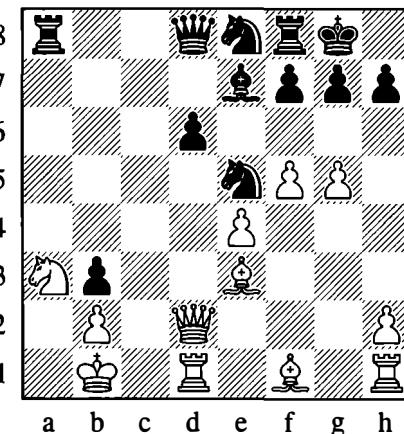
15...a4**16.♔bd4!?**

A simplifying sacrifice, although it is not clear which side this will benefit!

The game is not out of theory yet. 16.fxe6 axb3
17.cxb3 fxe6 18.♔h3 ♔xa2 19.♔xe6† ♔h8
20.♔g3 ♔c7 21.♔c4 is judged as harmless.

16...exd4 17.♔xd4 b3

Black cannot save his bishop, as 17...♔xa2? is well met by 18.♔c6.

**18.♔b1 bxc2† 19.♔xc2 ♔b3 20.axb3 axb3
21.♔a3 ♔e5****22.h4**

22.♔g2 is the program's preference, but humans cannot follow the silicon logic, and if they try to play like a computer they lose! I remember the game Aronian – Gelfand from the World Championship in Mexico 2007, where Aronian played an “exotic move” (in Mihail Marin’s inspired words) which is recommended by the program, and then found himself lost in just a few moves against more “human” play. There are many examples like this at the highest level, proving the vulnerability of the machine against intuitive play. Let’s use the computer as a tool but not as a dictator!

22...♔a5

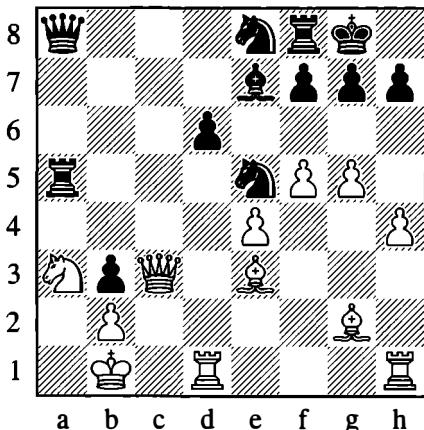
22...♔a4! is a bit more accurate; the move played is an indication that Vishy was now out of his preparation.

23.♔c3

And so apparently was Sergey; the program prefers 23.♔b4! ♔a8 24.♔b6 ♔a4 25.♔xb3 ♔xe4† 26.♔c2 ♔a8 27.♔d5±.

23...♔a8 24.♔g2?

Missing a great idea. 24.♔d4! was necessary.



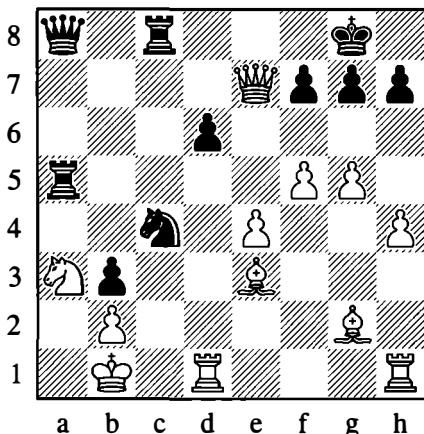
24...♞c7!! 25.♘xc7

White is forced to accept the offer, because Black was threatening 25...♝b5!.

25...♝c8 26.♗xe7

In just a couple of moves, the situation has changed drastically. White is two pieces up, but he cannot stop the fury of Black's attack.

26...♞c4!



27.g6

Losing without much of a fight.

White could have attempted to muddy the waters with the following remarkable idea: 27.♗c5! An obstruction sac, also known by

problemists as “interference on a critical square”. Unfortunately for White it does not quite work. 27...♝xa3! (27...♝axc5? 28.♗xd6 ♜e8 29.e5 ♜c8 30.♗xe8† ♜xe8 31.♗xc4 ♜xc4 32.♗hd1 turns out well for White) 28.bxa3 Now Black wins easily after 28...♝xc5! – but not 28...♝xa3† 29.♔c1 ♜xc5† 30.♔d2 ♜c2† 31.♔e3 when he has no more than a draw.

27...hxg6 28.fxg6 ♜xa3† 29.bxa3 ♜xa3 30.gxf7† ♜h7

White's counterplay has reached its end, and Black is about to have his turn.

31.f8=♛† ♜xf8 32.♗xf8 ♜a1† 33.♗b2 ♜a2† 34.♗c3 ♜a5† 35.♗d3 ♜b5† 36.♗d4 ♜a4† 37.♗c3 ♜c4†

Facing mate in two, White resigned.

0–1

Post-game reflections

This was a fantastic game by the World Champion. Strictly speaking it was not quite appropriate for the book, as White's knight “sacrifice” was only optical due to the black bishop being trapped, while Anand's 24...♞c7!! was based on a concrete mating attack rather than any ongoing positional compensation. Still, when the quality of chess is this high, it should be permissible to bend the rules!

Apart from its general instructive value, the next game is also notable for its impact on opening theory. Both contenders seemed to be highly prepared; unfortunately, we do not get to see Teimour's novelty as Vassily's arrived first.

Vassily Ivanchuk – Teimour Radjabov

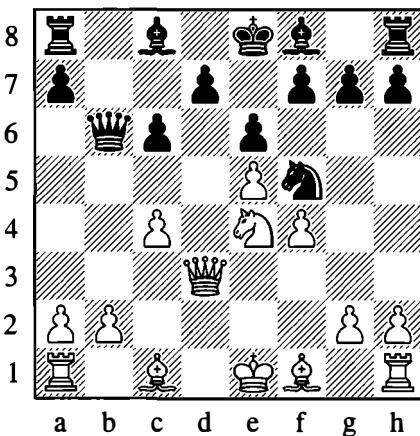
Kings Tournament, Bazna 2009

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ A promising novelty – 12.♕d2!!
- ♦ White establishes a positional clamp – 15.c5!
- ♦ Ivanchuk misses his chance – 22.♗xb4! in the notes

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♗c6 3.♘c3 e6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♗xd4 ♗f6 6.♗xc6 bxc6 7.e5 ♗d5 8.♗e4 ♗c7 9.f4 ♗b6 10.c4 ♗e3 11.♗d3 ♗f5

The variation 11...♗b4† 12.♕d2 0–0 13.♗c1 (with the idea of c4-c5) gives White a slight advantage.



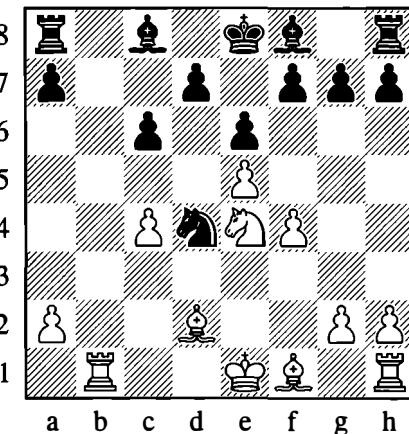
12.♕d2??

Established theory was 12.g4 ♗d4 13.♗g2 h5 14.g5 ♗b7 15.♔e3 ♗c2† 16.♗f2 ♗xe3 17.♗xe3 ♗xb2† 18.♗g3 ♗a6 19.♗ab1 h4† 20.♗h3 and White won in 32 moves, Kasparov – Illescas, Linares 1992. It is quite certain that Radjabov had prepared an improvement on Black's play; therefore Ivanchuk anticipates it with a novelty. At this level, the first one to strike out of theory generally has an important psychological advantage.

12...♗xb2

Steinitz said that the best way to refute a gambit is to accept it, but in this particular case I'm not so sure.

13.♗b1 ♗d4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4



15.c5!

This is the point of the sacrifice; Black's game is cramped and his extra pawn on d7 is just a source of weakness.

15...a5 16.♗f2 ♗e7 17.♗d6†

White might be better just continuing with his development, but this move is not bad either.

17...♗xd6 18.exd6 0–0 19.♗b6

Also possible is 19.a4 ♗a6 20.♗xa6 ♗xa6 21.♗b7 ♗d8 22.♗c2 ♗c2 23.♗hb1 f6 24.♗lb6 ♗aa8 25.♗e2 ♗b4 26.♗xb4 axb4 27.♗xb4 ♗a5 28.♗b8 with a slight advantage for White.

19...♗c2 20.♗c4 ♗b4 21.♗xb4 axb4 22.♗e3

White prepares the defence of the c5-pawn by the king, but this was not necessary yet.

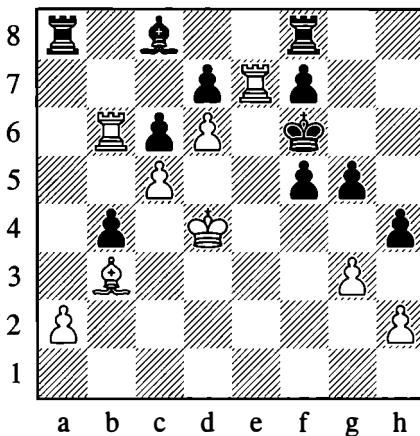
22.♗xb4! was more precise, for instance: 22...♗a5 23.♗hb1 g6 24.♗e3 ♗xc5 25.♗a4! e5 26.♗b8 ♗g7 27.fxe5 ♗xe5† 28.♗d4 f6

29.♕aa8 c5† 30.♗d3 ♕ee8 31.♕a7 f5 32.♗c7 f4 33.♗d2 and Black is helpless against the march of the a-pawn.

22...h6 23.♗d4 g5 24.f5!?

This positional pawn sacrifice is less justified than the first one. A simple move like 24.g3 would keep a slight advantage.

24...exf5 25.♕e1 ♔g7 26.g3 ♔f6 27.♕e7 h5
28.♗b3 h4



29.gxh4?!

After this error, the game becomes equal. A slight advantage could still be preserved with: 29.♗xb4 hgx3 30.hgx3 ♕h8 (30...♕a3? 31.♗b8 ♕a7 32.a4 g4 33.♗c3! f4 34.♗b4 is winning for White) 31.♗xf7† ♔g6 32.♗e5 ♕a5 33.♗f6† ♔g7 34.♗c4 ♔a6 35.♗c3 ♕e8† 36.♗xf5 ♕d3† 37.♗xd3 ♕xc5† 38.♗d5 cxd5 39.♗xg5 ♕e3 40.♗xe3 (or 40.♗f3†) 40...d4† 41.♗g4 dxe3 42.♗f1±

29...♕h8! 30.♗xf7† ♔g6 31.hgx5 ♕xh2
32.♗f8 ♕h4† 33.♗e3 ♕xg5

White is now a pawn down and must force a repetition.

34.♗g8† ♕f6 35.♗f8† ♕g5 36.♗g8† ♕f6
37.♗f8†
½-½

Post-game reflections

This short game had considerable instructive value. Ivanchuk's far-sighted pawn sacrifice gave him lasting compensation and for a while it seemed like Black was in trouble. Ivanchuk did everything right until he misjudged the strength of 22.♗xb4!, which sacrifices the c5-pawn but allows White to obtain a decisive plus on the queenside. There often comes a point in a chess game where positional considerations must give way to concrete calculation, and even the world's best players can struggle to handle this transition, the above game being a case in point.

The next game also features Radjabov, this time upholding the honour of the Dragon and demonstrating that this most provocative system is still very much alive.

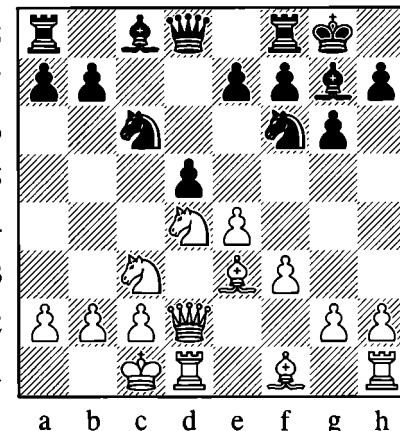
Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu – Teimour Radjabov

Kings Tournament, Bazna 2009

Points to look for in this game:

- A strong (albeit theoretical) exchange sacrifice – 13...d4!
- Improving on theory – 16...f5!
- A well judged queen sacrifice – 23...♛xe8!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 ♘c6 8.♗d2 0–0
9.0–0–0 d5



10.♕b1!?

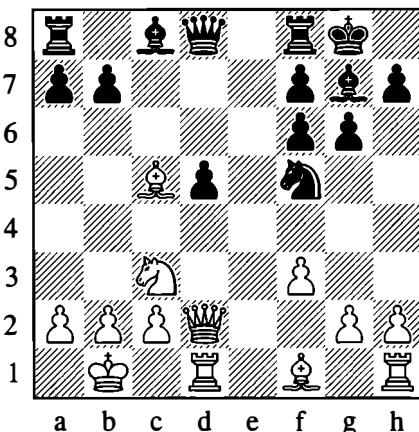
The former main line of 10.exd5 ♜xd5 11.♕xc6 bxc6 12.♗d4 e5 13.♗c5 ♔e6 14.♗e4 ♕e8 15.g4 has been shown to be quite safe for Black.

10...♝xd4

10...♝b8 is interesting, to discourage White from exchanging on c6.

11.e5 ♜f5

The main alternative is 11...♝xf3.

12.exf6 exf6 13.♗c5**13...d4!**

What kind of Dragon would it be, without an exchange sacrifice?

14.♔xf8 ♜xf8 15.♗b5 ♜e3 16.♗e1 ♜f5!

This strong move may well have been a prepared novelty.

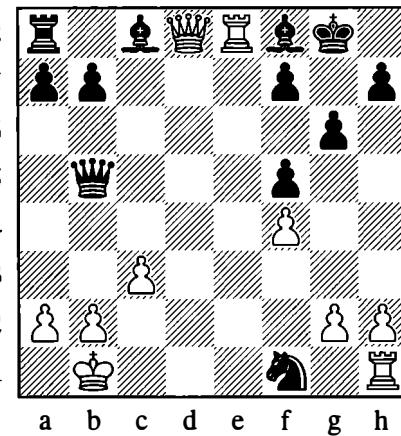
17.f4

White wants to continue his plan of undermining the knight on e3.

17.♗xd4?! f4 18.c3 ♜xd4 19.cxd4 ♜d6 is risky for White, although with good play it might lead to a draw: 20.♗c1 ♔e6 21.g4 ♜d8 22.♗e2 ♜b6 23.♗c3 ♜xd4 24.h4 h6 25.h5 g5 26.♗e1

a5 27.♗c7 ♜b4 28.♗e5 ♜c2 29.♗b8† ♔h7 30.♗d3† ♜xd3 31.♗xe6 ♜a3† 32.♗a1 ♜c2†=

17...♜c5 18.c3 ♜xf1 19.♗e8† ♔f8 20.♗xd4 ♜xb5 21.♗d8

**21...♝d2†**

Life-or-death complications could arise after:

21...♜c5?!

This move sets a nasty trap, but objectively it is bad.

22.♗xf1!

The trick is 22.b4? ♔e6! (22...♝d7 "only" gives Black a clear advantage after 23.♗xa8 ♜d2† 24.♗c2 ♔a4† 25.♗b2 ♜c4† 26.♗a1 ♜d6 27.♗d8 ♜e7†) 23.♗xa8 ♜xc3 24.♗xf8† ♔g7 25.♗g8† ♔h6 26.♗f1 ♜xb4† 27.♗c2 ♜c4† 28.♗d2 ♜xf1 and Black is winning.

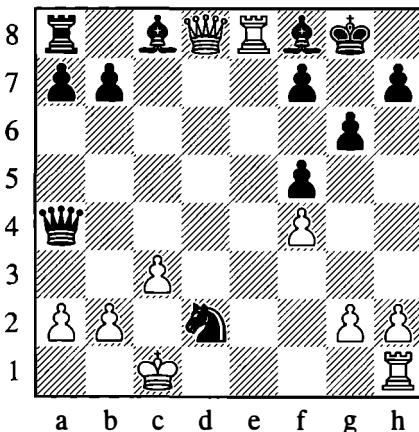
22...♝g7 23.♗c1!

Another precise move, leading to a big advantage.

23...a5 24.b4 axb4 25.♗d4† ♔h6 26.♗xc5 ♜xc5 27.cxb4 ♜a4 28.bxc5 ♔e6 29.g3 ♜xa2† 30.♗b2 ♔d5±

Black has some drawing chances in the endgame, but it will not be much fun for him.

22.♗c2 ♜a4† 23.♗c1



23...Wxe8!

A strong and necessary sacrifice. The attempt to defend with 23...Qb3†? 24.axb3 Wxf4† 25.Qb1 Wh6 is refuted by 26.Qhe1 followed by Qxf8† when White will have good winning chances in the ending with queen against rook and bishop.

24.Wxe8 Qe4

A rare material balance (or should that be imbalance?) for this stage of the game. Three active pieces for the queen, given the essential condition of a safe king, should be more than enough compensation. If it weren't for the pin, Black would have excellent chances to win. As things stand, Black has to work hard to drive the queen away, which evens up the chances. Let's see how Teimour manages to deal with the pin.

25.Qd1 Qf6 26.We5 Qd7 27.We8

The other attempt to profit from the pin leads to repetition: 27.We2 Qc5 28.Qd8 Qe6 29.Qe8 Qg7=

27...Qf6 28.Qd8 Qe4

Or 28...Qg7, also with equality.

29.Qd7 Qxd7 30.Wxa8 Qc6 31.Wxa7 Qc5 32.g3 Qd3† 33.Qb1 Qe4 34.Qa1 Qc5 35.Wb8† Qg7 36.Wd8 Qg1 37.h4 h5 38.a4

Qf2 39.a5 Qxg3 40.Qd4†

Long live the Dragon!

½–½

Post-game reflections

Sometimes one material sacrifice is not enough, and in this game Black had to resort to three different material offerings (not including the early 9...d5, which also entails a pawn sacrifice should White wish to take it). With 13...d4! Radjabov game up an exchange, with 16...f5! a pawn, and seven moves later his queen. The fact that two – or possibly even all three – of these sacrifices may have been prepared at home does not diminish their instructive value, and the above game was a good demonstration of a dynamic balance being maintained throughout the changing landscape of a chess game.

The pawns are the soul of the game

Francois-Andre Danican Philidor

I would not expect to find proof of the above venerable statement in a modern game, least of all at the hands of top players. But... here it is!

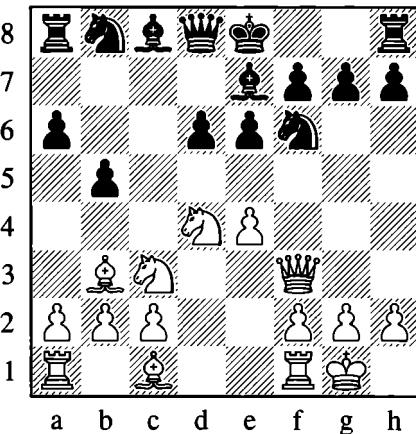
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov – Boris Gelfand

Candidates (3), Kazan 2011

Points to look for in this game:

- A winning pseudo-sacrifice – 14.Qd5! in the note to move 12
- A promising new idea – 15...Qh8!?
- Black seizes the initiative – 17...d5!

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qf6 5.Qc3 a6 6.Qc4 e6 7.Qb3 b5 8.0–0 Qe7 9.Qf3

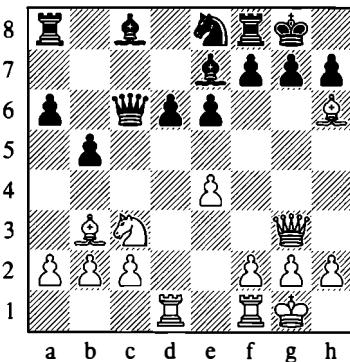


9...Qc7

Of course not 9...Qb7? 10.Qxe6!.

10.Qg3 0-0 11.Qh6 Qe8 12.Qad1 Qd7

The immediate 12...Qc6?? is a known blunder: 13.Qxc6 Qxc6



14.Qd5! Qd8 15.Qd3 Qb7 16.Qc3 Qd7
17.Qc7! Qxc7 18.Qf6†+–

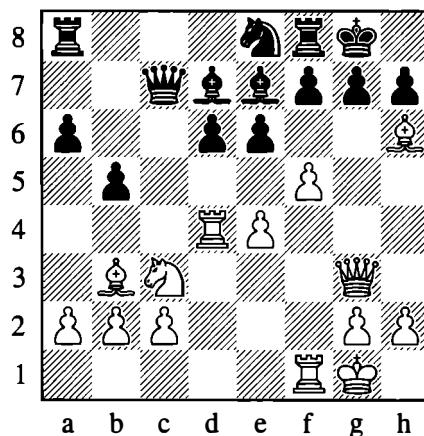
13.f4

The sharpest continuation. The more solid 13.Qf3 was played in Kasparov – Gelfand, Linares 1993, and Short – Kasparov, London (18) 1993, while Short tried 13.a3 in Game 20 of the same World Championship match.

13...Qc6

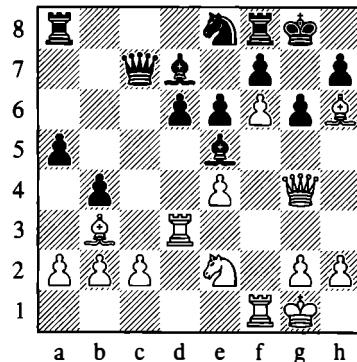
It is important to exchange the knight that attacks e6 and relieve one of Black's worries.

14.f5 Qxd4 15.Qxd4



15...Qh8!!

Morozevich – Kasparov, Astana 2001, continued: 15...Qf6 16.Qd3 Qe5 17.Qg4 b4 18.f6 g6 19.Qe2 a5

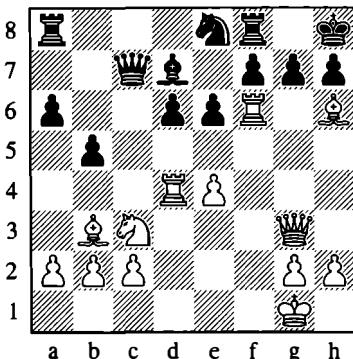


Here 20.Qxf8?!† was played, and Black won in 57 moves.

The burning question concerns 20.Qh4! a4 21.Qg5 h5 22.g4, “with crazy complications, beyond human capacity” (Kasparov). Probably in this niche of theory, Mamedyarov has found an improvement. But Gelfand is an old fox, very experienced in this variation, and he avoids his opponent's likely novelty!

16.Qe3

16.f6?! may provoke waves, but it is not decisive: 16...Qxf6 17.Qxf6



17... $\mathbb{W}c5!$ (17...gxh6 looks worse, yet the machine finds an interesting way to a perpetual after 18. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ f5 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 25. $\mathbb{B}hxe6$ $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 26. $\mathbb{B}d8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xd8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{B}e8$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\uparrow$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3\uparrow$) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 22.a3 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xf2\uparrow$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xf2$ f6 with an approximately equal endgame.

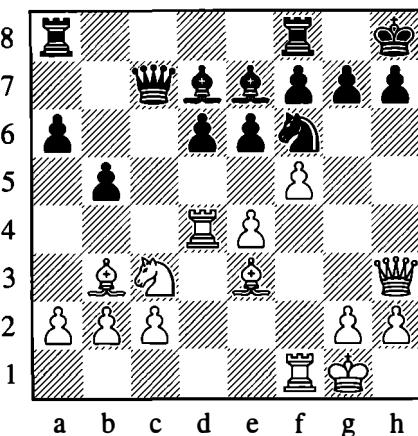
16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

By now it seems that Black has nothing to worry about.

17. $\mathbb{W}h3?$

As so often happens, a novelty quickly leads to a mistake by the opponent. This queen move allows the complete freeing of Black's game.

17.a3 $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 18. $\mathbb{B}f2$ would hold the equilibrium.



17...d5!

Underlining the vulnerable positions of White's queen and rook.

18.e5!

This obstruction sacrifice is White's best chance.

18.exd5 exf5 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 22.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ is uncomfortable for White.

18.fxe6 fxe6 19.exd5? simply loses to 19...e5.

18... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{B}h4$ $\mathbb{B}fc8!$

The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 309.

Mihai Suba – Vladimir Okhotnik

European Senior Ch., Courmayeur 2011

Points to look for in this game:

- Two subtle rook moves – 10. $\mathbb{B}e1\text{??}$ and 11... $\mathbb{B}e8!$
- A good exchange sacrifice – 26. $\mathbb{W}xd6!$
- A neat way to finish the game – 43. $\mathbb{B}c3!$

This was a key moment in the 2011 European Senior Championship. After six rounds, no fewer than six players shared the lead with 5 points. IM Okhotnik, of Soviet provenance, but now representing France, had the best tiebreak. Throughout the tournament he played combatively, with energy and composure, and despite the result of the following game, he eventually took the silver medal ahead of fifteen GMs. During the short time available to prepare for our game, I was surprised by his broad opening repertoire interspersed with original ideas. I guessed that he would play something based on a kingside

fianchetto, because Vladimir is an expert in the Modern Defence. The only “weakness” I could discern was the warm spot he has in his heart for the Indian bishop, a trait shared with Gufeld among others. I decided that as White I would avoid any fianchetto myself and would reveal my ambitions in the centre from the very beginning. This would be an especially good policy if another supposition proved true: that due to his leading position, the opponent would play more conservatively. These were the trumps I was counting on prior to the game.

**1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 2. c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. d4 cxd4
5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ g6**

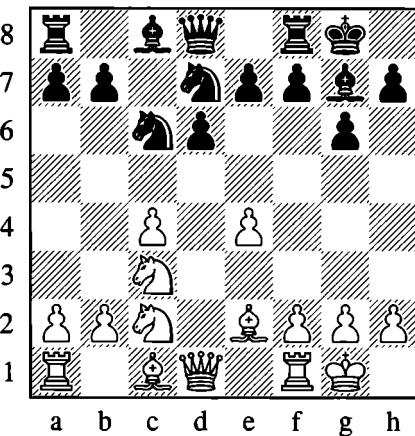
The most difficult to crack is 5...e6, but my first supposition was judicious.

6. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$

In my database this is the move with the best score. It avoids early simplifications; nevertheless, it is not my habitual choice and I would not recommend it.

6.e4 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0
10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is the most used move order in the Maroczy, and probably the best.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. e4 d6 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 9. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



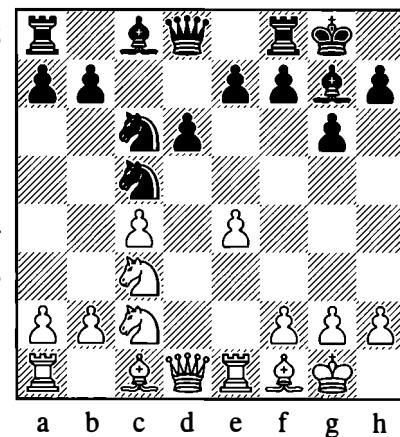
10. $\mathbb{Q}e1!?$

To provide a simple defence to my central pawn and avoid further weaknesses. If the opponent wants to play as in the English Opening (but a tempo down) with ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and ...f5, the rook on e1 may prove very useful. In fact I was rediscovering the wheel, and in the few games that have featured 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, White has achieved outstanding results. The psychology behind allowing ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ was described in the introduction; I was sure my opponent wouldn't exchange his cherished bishop for the knight, whatever the dividend.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

I find it curious that in my database, which has over 5 million games, I could not find any with 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



11... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$

An interesting novelty, probably in anticipation of an eventual $\mathbb{Q}h6$ by White. From the diagram position, I found two games with 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (Beliaovsky – Ermakov and Perez Candelario – Gonzales de la Torre). In both games Black got crushed, but we cannot reach any definite conclusion based on just two games, the more so as in both cases White was the stronger player.

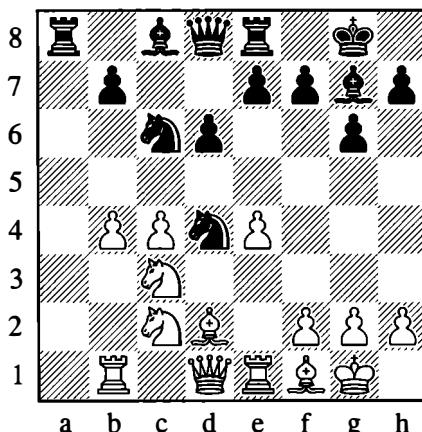
12.♗g5 ♖a5?!

More consistent with Black's previous move is: 12...♝e6 13.♝b1 ♖xc3 14.bxc3 ♖a5 15.♗d4 (or 15.♗d2 ♜e5 16.f4 ♖xc4 17.♗d4 ♜b6 18.♗h6 f6 19.e5 dxe5 20.fxe5 ♜ad8 21.♗b5! ♖xb5 22.♗xb5 ♜xd4 23.♗xd4 ♜d7 24.exf6 a6 25.♗xd7 ♜bxd7 26.fxe7 ♜f7 27.♗b3=) 15...♝ac8 16.♗d2 b6 17.♗h6 with an unclear game. Black has clear targets on the queenside, while White hopes to attack the enemy king. Compared with the games mentioned in the previous note, in both of which the bishop went from c1 to h6 in a single move, Black is a tempo up.

13.♗d2 ♖d8

Okhotnik played his last two moves quite quickly (admittedly, the second is almost forced due to the threat of 14.b4) and seemed quite happy to have lost a tempo. By inducing White to play b2-b4, Black ensures counterplay either on the dark squares or on the a-file (after ...a5). I don't think I have anything better than taking up the gauntlet!

14.b4 ♜e6 15.♗b1 a5 16.a3 axb4 17.axb4 ♜ed4?!



Placing the wrong knight on a good square came accompanied with a draw offer. I might have considered it after 17...♝cd4!, but the

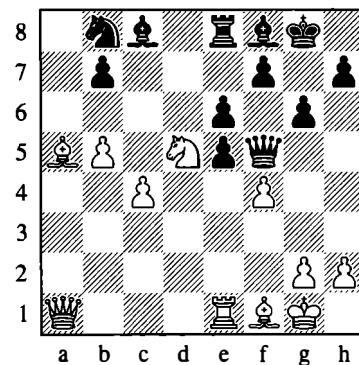
game move allows White to take over the initiative.

18.b5! ♜b8?!

Okhotnik played this move very quickly. Had he anticipated the difficulties in store for Black after this retreat, he might have given a second look to 18...♝xc2 19.bxc6 ♜xe1 20.cxb7 ♜xb7 21.♗xb7 ♖c8 22.♗b3 ♜xg2 23.♗xg2 ♖e6 24.♗f3±, and found that this sacrifice of two pieces for rook and pawn is not worse than the game continuation.

19.♗xd4 ♜xd4 20.♗d5 ♜g7 21.♗g5

One engine drew my attention to the interesting possibility: 21.e5?! dxe5 22.♗b4 ♜f8 23.♗a1 ♜xa1 24.♗xa1 e6 25.♗a5 ♖g5 26.f4 ♖f5

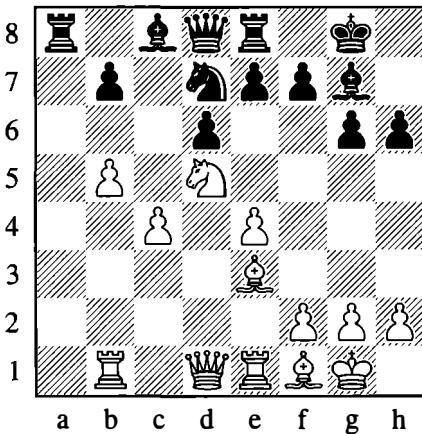


27.♗d3 ♜c5† 28.♗h1 ♖xd3 29.♗f6† ♜f8 30.♗xe8 ♜d4 31.♗b4† ♜xe8 32.♗a8 ♖xc4 33.♖xb8 ♖xb4 34.♖xc8† ♜e7 35.♖xb7† ♜f8 36.♗c1 exf4± I had seen something like this (of course not that far), but even if I had seen the whole sequence, I'm not sure I would have played it. I considered my position to be good, without any need for wild complications.

21...h6?! 22.♗e3

A standard manoeuvre, in order to win a tempo by ♖d2.

22...♝d7

**23.♘d2**

Possibly better is 23.b6, in order to ensure a tempo gain when the knight is driven away from d5, for example: 23...♝a2 24.♗b3 ♘a5 25.♗bd1 ♖c5 26.♗c2 ♗d7 27.e5! ♗xe5 28.♗xh6±

23...e6 24.♗b4

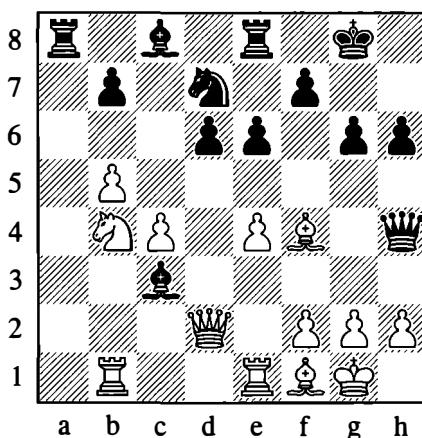
The knight has been expelled, but now two pawns are en prise.

24...♗h4

Looking for tactical solutions in a shaky position is a bad omen, and with all respect to my opponent, this smacks of desperation.

25.♗f4 ♖c3

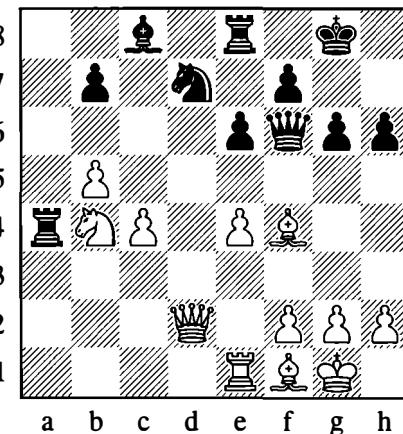
The alternative is 25...♝e5 but Black's position will deteriorate with every move, for example 26.♗g3 ♗e7 27.♗ed1 ♗f8 28.b6 and White threatens c4-c5.

**26.♗xd6!**

The exclamation mark is not only because it fits our theme, it is in fact the simplest solution.

After 26.♗xc3 ♗xf4 27.♗bd1 ♗a4 28.♗d3 ♗f6 29.♗c2 ♗a8 30.♗d2, Black will lose a pawn very soon. But an endgame in which the black knight comes to c5 and the king to e7, would not be so easy to win.

Apart from that, my book was well underway and I could not help but yield to temptation. Anyway, the reader will soon appreciate that White's dark-squared bishop is better than any black rook.

26...♔xel 27.♗xel ♗f6 28.♗d2 ♗a4**29.♗d6**

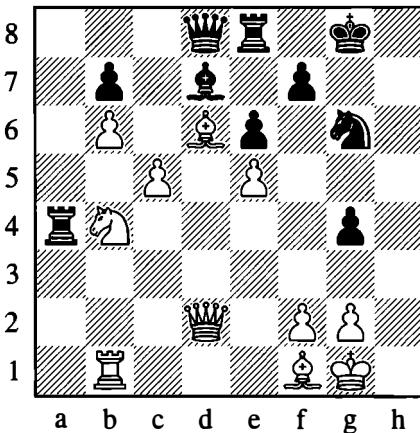
Avoiding the last trick; if 29.♗xh6 ♗xb4 30.♗xb4 g5 and Black survives.

29...g5 30.e5 ♗d8 31.h4 ♗f8 32.hxg5 hxg5 33.c5

This looks nice, but 33.♗a2 ♗a5 34.♗c3 wins immediately.

33...♗g6 34.b6 ♗d7 35.♗b1 g4

Black has nothing to lose anymore.



36.c6

36. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 37. $\mathbb{W}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 38. c6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$
39. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ is another way to win.

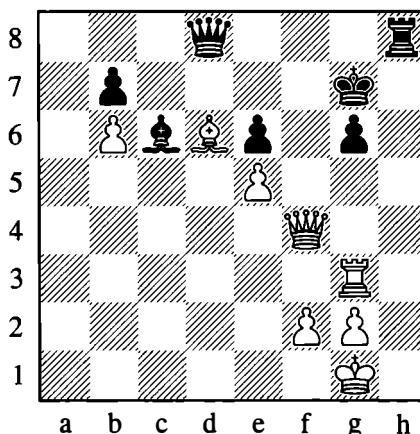
36... $\mathbb{E}xb4$ 37. $\mathbb{E}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 38. $\mathbb{E}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

After 38... $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ Black gets mated quickly.

**39. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}h8$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $f \times g 6$ 41. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{E}h6$
42. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{E}h8$**

Black is in a sort of zugzwang, for example:
42... $\mathbb{E}h7$ 43. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}e7$!

Best is 42... $\mathbb{E}h4$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}f8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 44. $\mathbb{W}f6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$
45. $\mathbb{E}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{E}h5$ 47. $f4$ $\mathbb{E}b5$ 48. $\mathbb{E}h3$
 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}xb6$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}a6$ 51. $\mathbb{E}h8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
52. $\mathbb{E}h7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 53. $g4$, but White's victory is just a matter of time.



43. $\mathbb{E}c3!$ $\mathbb{E}h4$

Black doesn't have any defence against $\mathbb{E}xc6$, so he attacks the queen (well, you never know). Now two sham sacrifices decide the game.

**44. $\mathbb{W}f6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 45. $e \times f 6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 46. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}d4$
47. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{E}d1\uparrow$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $b \times c 6$ 49. $b7$ $\mathbb{E}b1$
50. $b8=\mathbb{W}$ $\mathbb{E}xb8$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $c5$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}g3$**
1–0

Post-game reflections

Black's problems stemmed entirely from the careless move 17... $\mathbb{Q}ed4?$. The reply 18.b5! would normally be considered "anti-positional", but Black never got a chance to make use of the c5-square as White's pieces came into the game with great momentum. The subsequent exchange sacrifice with 26. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ was not the only way to press home the advantage, but it certainly proved to be a convincing one.

Alexei Shirov – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu

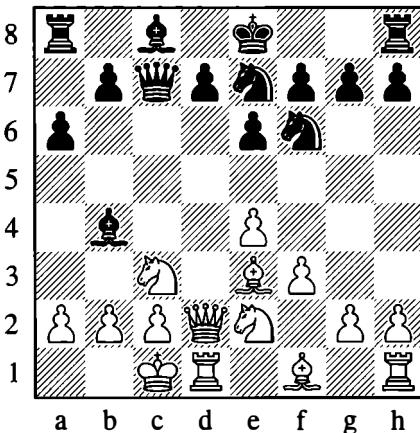
Kings Tournament, Bazna 2009

Points to look for in this game:

- Black fails to take the best defensive chance – 18... $\mathbb{h}xg5$ in the notes
- A lovely exchange sacrifice – 20. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$
- Advancing on both flanks – 23. $c4!$, 29. $h4$, 30. $c5$ and 31. $g4$

In this game we see Shirov at his best. A positional (with a metaphorical capital "P") exchange sacrifice saddles Black with a painful position. Nisipeanu is besieged, he misses his chances to resist, and the game ends in complete disaster for him.

**1. $e4$ $c5$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $e6$ 3. $d4$ $c \times d 4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $a6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $0-0-0$
 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}de2$**



10...b5

In this modern and sharp variation of the Sicilian Taimanov, the text move has brought Nisipeanu several successes.

10...d5 is also playable, for example: 11.a3 ♜a5 12.♗g5 dxе4 13.♗xf6 gxе6 14.♗h6 f5 15.♗f6 ♜g8 16.fxe4 ♜d7 17.g3 ♜c6 18.♗h3 ♜g6 19.♗h8† ♜g8 and White should accede to the repetition with 20.♗f6, because after 20.♗xh7? ♜e5 the threat of 21...♜h8 would cost him a piece.

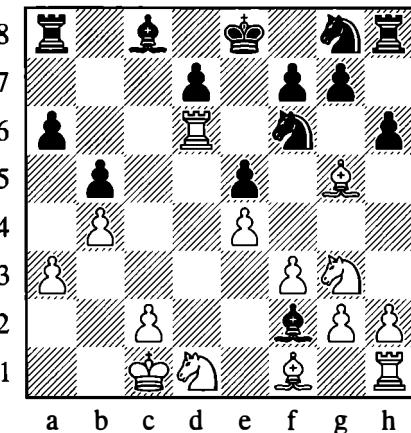
11.♗f4

In this position, Shirov once played 11.♗e1 with the transparent threat of 12.♗xb5. Probably Nisipeanu was prepared for this possibility.

11...e5 12.♗g5 ♜b6

This novelty is an improvement on 12...♜b7 13.♗b1 ♜a5 14.♗xf6 gxе6 15.♗h6 ♜b6 16.g3 ♜e6 17.♗h3 f5 18.♗h4 with a clear advantage for White, Anand – J. Polgar, San Luis 2005.

13.a3 ♜c5 14.b4 ♜f2 15.♗d6 ♜xd6 16.♗xd6 ♜eg8 17.♗g3 h6 18.♗d1



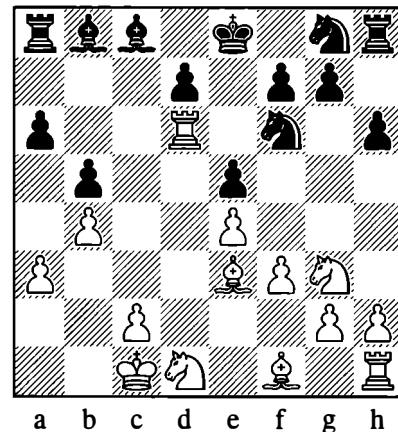
18...♜a7

Simpler is 18...hxg5 19.♗xf2 ♜h5 20.♗xh5 ♜xh5 21.c4 bxc4 22.♗xc4 ♜h6 23.♗xh6 ♜xh6 24.♗d5 ♜a7 25.♗d2 d6 26.h3 ♜e6 27.♗xe6 fxe6 28.♗c1 ♜d7 with a defendable endgame.

19.♗e3 ♜b8

Hoping for the “normal reaction” of moving the rook.

Better is 19...♝e7 20.c4 ♜b8 21.♗c5 ♜xd6 22.♗xd6 ♜c6 23.♗c3 ♜d8 with the idea of ...♝e8, and Black has real chances to contain White’s initiative.



20.♗c5!

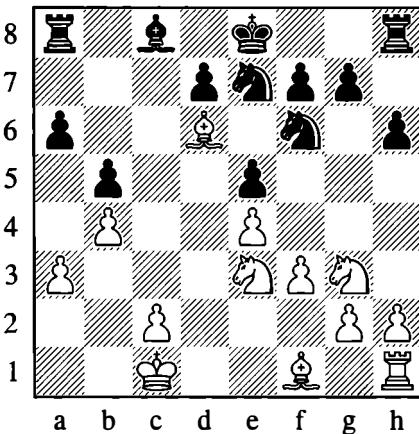
A splendid blockading sacrifice. The bishop on c8 will remain a spectator for most of the game.

20...♝e7 21.♛e3

21.♝d2 ♜a7 22.♝d6 ♜b8 23.c4 is a simple way for White to be better, but Alexei always aims for artistic play.

21...♝xd6

After this, White gets a terribly strong grip on the dark squares, combined with the possibility of invading on the light squares (d5 and f5), but Black has no choice: 21...♝b7 22.♝gf5 ♜xf5 23.♝xf5 ♜d8 24.♝b6 ♜c6 25.♝xb8†! (If the mountain will not come to Mohammed, then Mohammed must go to the mountain.) 25...♝xb8 26.♝e7† ♜c7 27.♝d6† ♜b7 28.♝xe5 ♜a8 29.♝xg7+–

22.♝xd6**22...♝b7?!**

The best Black can do here is to cling on to his pawns with 22...♞c6. For example: 23.c4 ♜d8 24.♝d5 ♜e8 25.♝c5 d6 26.♝b6† ♜d7 27.cxb5 ♜e7 28.♝c3 ♜c7 29.♝b2 g6 30.♝c4 axb5 with approximate equality. It is hard to believe that White's play cannot be improved somewhere, but in this tactical sequence the program was unable to help me find anything more.

23.c4! ♜c6 24.♝b2

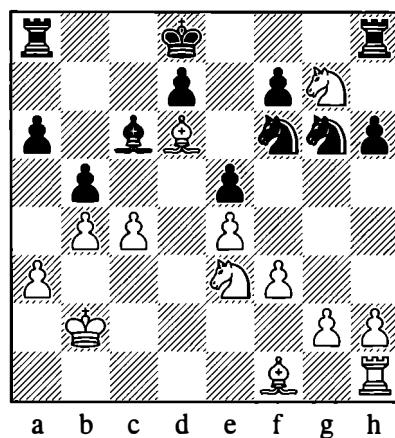
White can afford to build his position patiently, as Black has no good way to free himself.

24...♝g6?!

24...♝h7 25.♝xe5 f6± is a slightly better defence, but it does not solve the problem of Black's poor development.

25.♝g5 ♜d8 26.♝xg7

Shirov eats an important pawn without losing any of his positional advantages.

**26...♝e8**

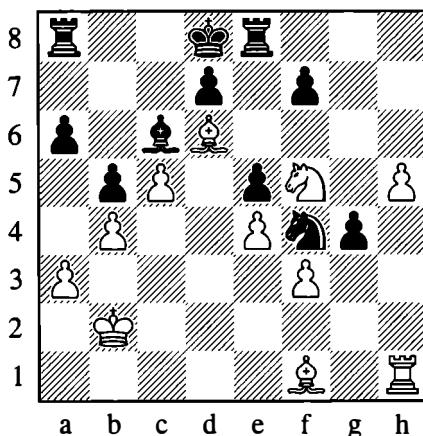
26...h5 27.♝ef5 h4 28.♝d3 ♜h5 29.♝xh5 ♜xh5 30.♝c1 ♜c8 31.♝c5 is also bad; Black's rooks cannot get coordinated.

27.♝xe8 ♜xe8 28.♝f5 ♜e6?

28...h5 puts up more resistance, but Black's position is quite disgusting.

29.h4 h5 30.c5 ♜e8 31.g4 hxg4 32.h5 ♜f4?

Black can still resist with 32...♝f8 33.♝h6 f6 34.♝xg4 ♜h7 35.♝e2 ♜g8 36.h6 ♜e8 37.♝g1 ♜f7 38.♝d1 ♜g5 39.♝c2 ♜e8 40.♝c3 ♜g6.



33.♕h6!

White now has a winning advantage; it doesn't make much sense for Black to prolong the suffering.

33...gxh3 34.♕xf7+ ♖c8 35.♖xe5 ♕xe5

36.♕xe5 ♖c7 37.h6 ♕h8 38.h7

Some more artistry, although the simpler 38.♕f7 ♕h7 39.♕g5 ♕h8 40.h7 wins outright.

38...♕xe4 39.♕h4 ♕xh7 40.♕xf4 ♕h2†

41.♖c3

1–0

Post-game reflections

This game featured a pure and brilliant positional exchange sacrifice. In return for his material investment White obtained a lasting blockade of the d6-square, which prevented Black from freeing his pieces with ...d5. It is remarkable how the absence of that one pawn move left Black's three minor pieces with hardly a single decent square between them. Nisipeanu's position was highly unpleasant, and it is understandable that he committed some further errors which enabled Shirov to seal a crushing win.

Chapter 8

The Closed Games

Blackmar-Diemer Gambit

This romantic gambit is nowadays seen mainly at club level. In our first game of the chapter we will see one of the pioneers, Diemer himself, employing a dubious sub-variation of the gambit that now bears his name.

Without error there can be no brilliancy –
Emanuel Lasker

Emil Diemer – Schuppler

Villingen 1937

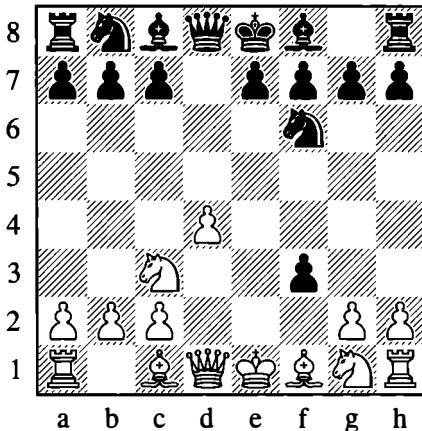
Points to look for in this game:

- Two sacrificed pawns are (one) too many – 5. $\mathbb{W}xf3?$
- Black fails to sense the danger – 15...0–0?
- A powerful exchange sacrifice – 17. $\mathbb{B}xf6!$ in the note to move 16

1.d4 d5 2.e4 dxe4 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4.f3

Curiously, some games reach this very position, but with White to move! This happens after 1.e4 d6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3.f3? d5? 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dxe4.

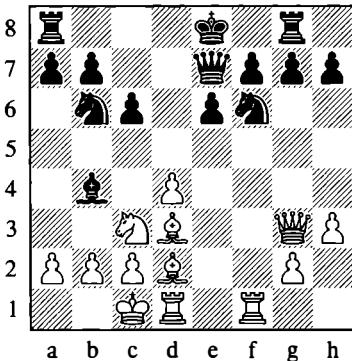
4...exf3



5. $\mathbb{W}xf3?$

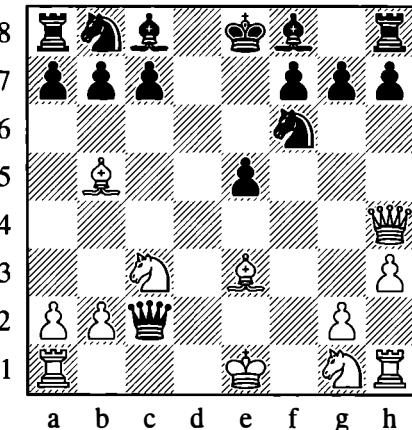
A rare way to play this rare gambit, championed by one of its authors. It is precisely because of this second pawn sacrifice that I added the game to my collection, although it does not mean that I agree with such an extreme Morphy-like attitude.

The normal move is 5. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ with almost sufficient compensation (time, mobility) for one pawn. One example is: 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 6.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ c6 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e6 9.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}hf1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$



14. $\mathbb{B}xf6!$ This true exchange sacrifice secures White the bishop pair and a passed pawn.
 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (not 15. $bxc3?$) $\mathbb{W}a3\#$
 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ and Black wins) 15... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 16. $d5$
 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17. $d6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 0-0-0 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg8$
 $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21. $h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 22. $h5$ $g5$
 23. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $f6$ 24. $c4$ $\mathbb{W}h7\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e3$
 $b6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $e5$ 29. $d7$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}f3$
 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 31. $gx f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 32. $d8=\mathbb{W}\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xd8\#$
 1-0 Velimirovic – Bellon Lopez, Metz 1988.

5... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ 7. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $e5$ 8. $h3$ $\mathbb{W}f5$
 9. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$



10... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

There is no reason for Black to avoid the obvious 10... $c6! - +$.

11. $\mathbb{Q}ge2? a6?$

Instead after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

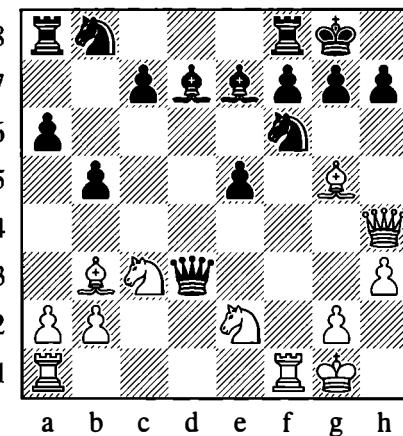
13. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ Black is two pawns to the good.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $b5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. 0-0

Little by little, White drums up some play for his three(!) missing pawns.

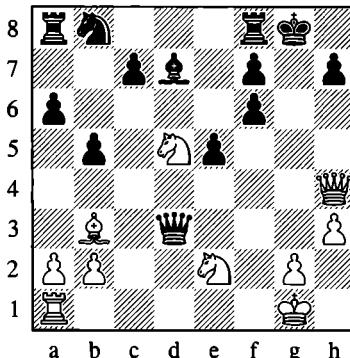
15... 0-0?

This allows a powerful sacrifice. 15... $\mathbb{W}g6$ was a better defence.



16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

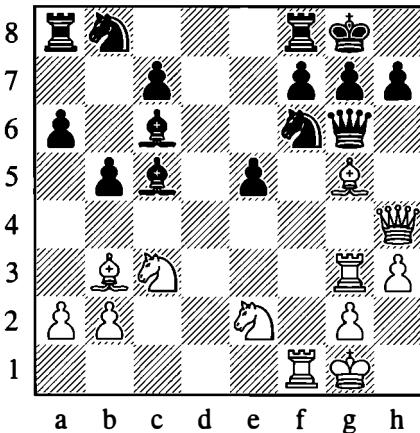
Doubling rooks on the f-file is natural, but even stronger is 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ $gxf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$.



Black is in trouble. For example, 18... $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h6!$ leaves him defenceless.

16... $\mathbb{W}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}af1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$?

18... $\mathbb{W}h5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$
 21. $\mathbb{B}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}1xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{B}xf7$
 24. $\mathbb{B}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b4 26. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
 c6 gives equal chances in the endgame.



The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 324.

Catalan Opening

In the casting of this opening, the “dormant beast” on g2 may eventually become the leading actor. Take care when facing it!

The following game appears unexciting until a speculative sacrifice makes it sparkle. The comments are based on the notes of the Romanian player, Barnaure.

Vlad-Victor Barnaure – Jose Roca Galarza

Spain 2011

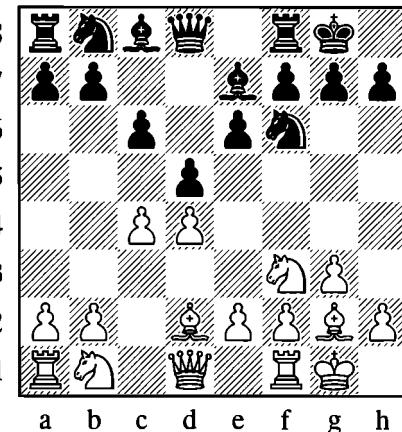
Points to look for in this game:

- An unwise bishop expedition – 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6?$! and 11... $\mathbb{Q}c4?$!
- A brilliant piece sacrifice – 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!!$
- The Catalan bishop finally makes its second move of the game – 29. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3.g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This standard manoeuvre, employed by Kasparov and Kramnik among others, misplaces the white bishop at the cost of a tempo; but in most cases the only gain is thirty seconds on the clock.

5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 7.0–0 c6



8. $\mathbb{W}b3$

Logical, though not the most popular. The main alternatives are 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ and 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, with the latter scoring most impressively.

8...b6

Black prepares to aim his bishop at the inadequately protected c4-square.

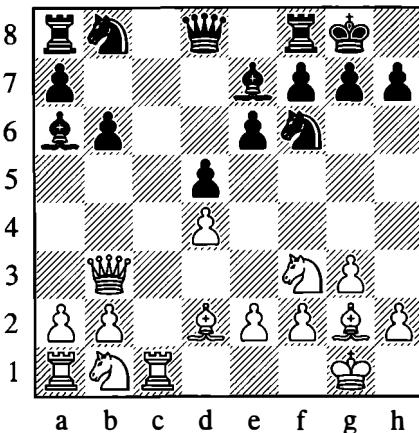
9.cxd5

Releasing the tension in the centre should lead to equality.

Another possibility is 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$, first played by Kasparov against Hübner in a match they contested in Hamburg in 1985.

9...cxd5 10. $\mathbb{B}c1!$ $\mathbb{Q}a6?!$

The bishop is lured by the charm of c4, but the simpler 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$! 11.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12.a5 $\mathbb{B}c8$ does not give White anything.

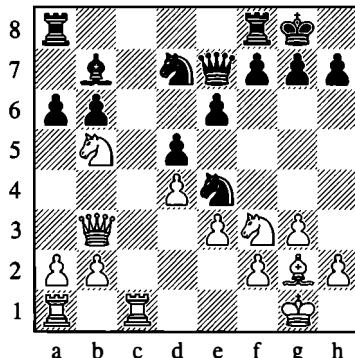


11.♘c3

This is best. The alternatives are:

11.♗f1 looks strange and soon led to a draw in the following game: 11...♗e4 12.♗b4 ♘d6 13.♘a3 ♔b7 14.♗xd6 ♔xd6 15.♗b5 ♘c6 16.♗xd6 ♗xd6 17.♗c3 ♗fc8 ½–½ Malaniuk – Tiviakov, Montecatini Terme 1995.

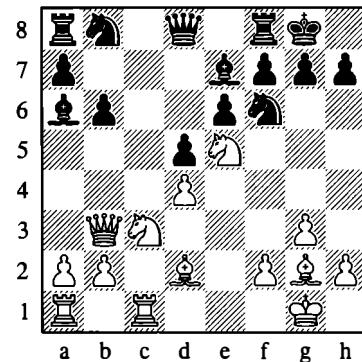
11.e3 is yet to be seen: 11...♗bd7 (11...♗e4 12.♗b4 ♔xb4 13.♗xb4 ♔b7 14.♗c3 ♘c6 15.♗a4±) 12.♗a3 ♗e4 13.♗b5 (13.♔e1 ♔b7 14.♗b5 a6 15.♗c3 ♘d6?) 13...♔b7 14.♗b4 a6 15.♗xe7 ♗xe7



Now 16.♗c7? axb5 17.♗xb7 ♘dc5! 18.♗xe7 ♘xb3 19.♗d1 ♗xa2+ turns out badly, so White should settle for 17.♗c3 with equality.

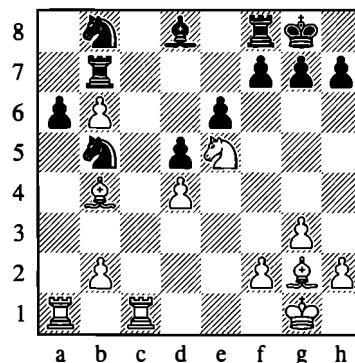
11.♗e5?! is an interesting but slightly

overambitious pawn sacrifice. After the natural 11...♗xe2 12.♗c3 ♗a6 I analysed two plausible continuations:

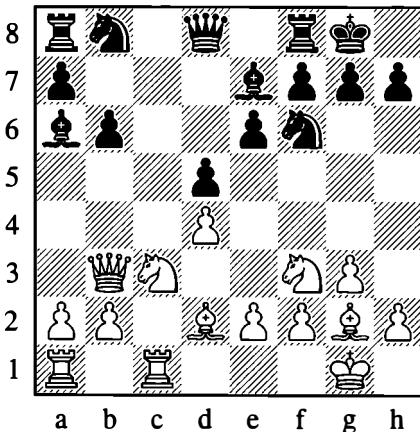


a) 13.♗b5 ♔xb5 14.♗xb5 ♗e4 15.♔f4 ♘d6 16.♗e2 ♔f6 17.♗c3 ♘f5 18.♗d3 ♔xe5 19.♗xe5 ♘d7 and although the two bishops provide symbolic compensation, White lacks concrete threats. For example: 20.♔f4 ♗f6 21.♗c7 ♗fd8 22.♔e3 ♘f8 23.♗ac1 h6??

b) 13.a4 ♔b7 14.♗b5 ♗e8 15.a5 a6 16.♗c7 ♘xc7 17.♗xb6 ♘b5 18.♗xb7 ♗a7 19.♗b6 ♗xb6 20.axb6 ♗b7 21.♔a5 ♔d8 22.♔b4



Now Black can escape the pressure through a positional sacrifice of the exchange: 22...♗xd4! 23.♗c4? f6! 24.♗xf8 ♗xf8 25.♗xd4 fxe5 26.♗da4 ♗xb6 27.b4 e4 28.♔f1 ♗e7 and Black's position is preferable.



11... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$?

An uninspired novelty, probably provoked by White's threat of 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$.

It is better to develop the queenside.

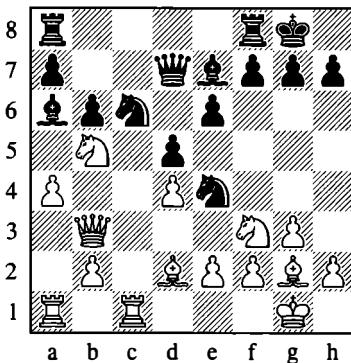
11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Now the critical line continues:

12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

The immediate tactical solution is not dangerous: 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 16. $\mathbb{B}c2$ This was L.B Hansen – Muir, Gothenburg 2005, and now 16... $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 17. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{B}xc2$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ would have been equal.

12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

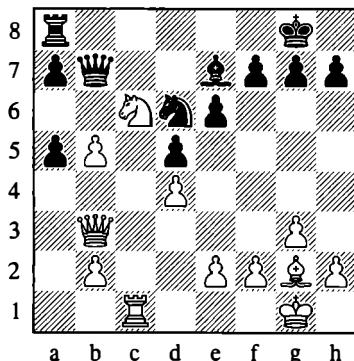


14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

After 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ Black is at least equal.

14... $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 15. $\mathbb{B}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ 17. $\mathbb{A}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{B}xa5$ 19. $\mathbb{B}c6$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$

21. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

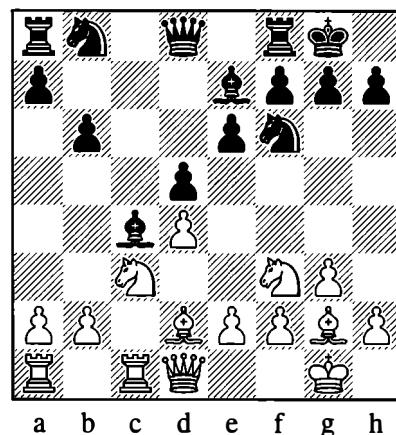


21... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

21... $\mathbb{Q}d8?$ was played in Gleizerov – Dzagnidze, Bucharest 2008, allowing a positional piece sacrifice: 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $\mathbb{Exd}5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xd5\pm$ However, White failed to take advantage of this opportunity and the game ended in a draw after 80 moves.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 24.e3 $\mathbb{B}c7=$

12. $\mathbb{W}d1$



12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

The immediate retreat is a sign that Black was less than happy with his position.

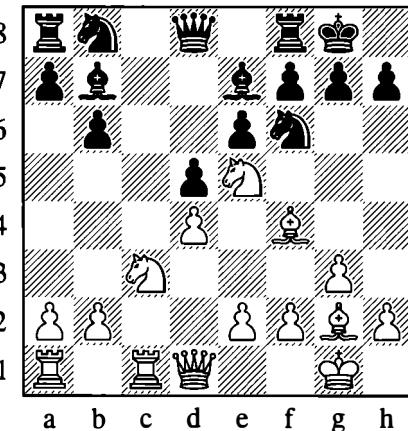
After 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ Black may face some problems on the c-file: 13.a4! (not 13.b3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14.a4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ h6=)

13...a5 14.Qf4 Qh5 15.Qe3 Qhf6 16.Qd2
Qa6 17.Qb5 Qe8 18.Wb3 Qc8 19.Qf3±

13.Qf4 Qb7

13...Qc6 14.Qxd5 Qxd5 15.Qxc6 Qb7
16.Qc1 Qxf4 17.gxf4±

14.Qe5



14...Qfd7

Bringing the other knight to this square leads to sharp variations with sacrifices on both sides, in which Black holds by a hair's breadth:

14...Qbd7 15.Qb5

15.Qd3?! is another idea.

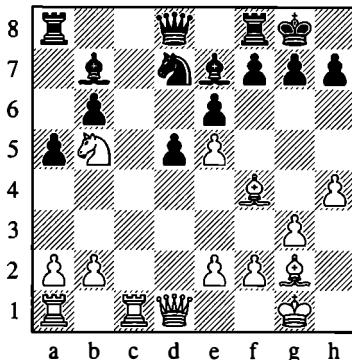
15...Qxe5 16.dxe5 Qd7

16...Qe4 17.Qxe4 dxe4 18.Wxd8 Qxd8

19.Qd6 Qd5 20.f3 f5 21.exf6 Qxf6 22.fxe4

Qxe4 23.Qxe4 Qxb2±

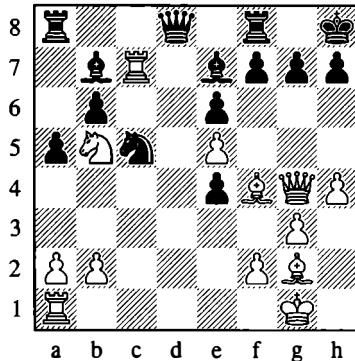
17.h4 a5



18.e4

18.Qd6 Qa6 19.Qc6 Qb8 20.Qc2 Qd7
21.e4 Qxe5 22.Qxe5 Qxd6 23.Qxd6 Wxd6
24.exd5 exd5 25.Qxd5 Qad8 26.Qd2 We7
27.Qc1 Qd7=

18...dxe4 19.Qc7 Qc5 20.Wg4 Qh8

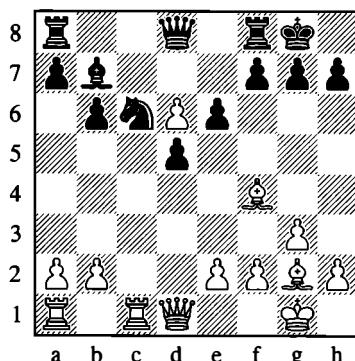


21.Qxb7! Qxb7 22.Qd1 Wc8 23.Qxe4 Wc4
24.Qxb7 Wxb5 25.Qxa8 Wxa8

Black is very close to equality.

15.Qxd5

White may also play: 15.Qb5?! Qxe5
16.dxe5 Qc6 (better is 16...Qd7 17.h4 a5,
transposing to the previous note) 17.Qd6
Qxd6 18.exd6

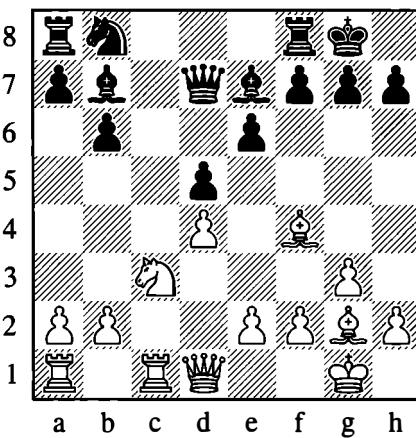


18...Wf6 (or 18...f6 19.e4 e5 20.exd5 Qd4
21.Qe3 Qb5 22.a4 Qxd6 23.a5 and White has
some initiative) 19.e4 e5 20.exd5 Qd4 21.Qe3
Qad8 22.f4 Qf5 23.fxe5 Wxe5 24.Qf4 Wxb2
25.Qc7 Qc8 26.Qac1±

15...♝xd7?!

The lesser evil is 15...♝xd7 16.e4 ♜f6 17.e5 ♜e8 18.♚f1±.

Thanks to the protracted wanderings of his light-squared bishop, Black is a couple of moves behind in development. He is hoping that the symmetrical and solid structure will enable him to overcome this drawback, but White's next move shatters that illusion.

**16.♝xd5!!**

A fantastic intuitive sacrifice. For the time being White will only get one pawn for the piece, but in return he will bring his rooks and g2-bishop to life, while mobilizing his central pawns and scattering the enemy forces into disarray.

16...♝xd5

Of course not 16...exd5? 17.♜c7 ♜e6 18.♜xb7+–.

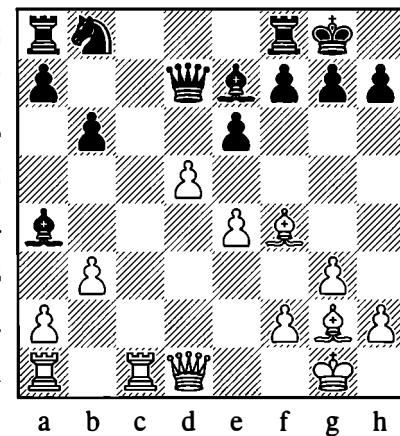
17.e4 ♜c6

Returning the piece does not ease Black's task: 17...♝a6? 18.exd5 exd5 19.♚f1! (best, although White can also gain a serious edge with 19.♝b3 g5 20.♝e5 ♜ad8 21.♚f1 f6 22.♚b5 ♜e6 23.♝c6 ♜f7 24.♝c7 ♜xc7 25.♝xc7±) 19...♜b7 (19...b5 20.a4 ♜b4 21.♝c7+–) 20.♜b5 ♜fd8 21.h4 and Black

is totally tied down. The attempt to relieve the pressure with 21...♜ac8 loses material to 22.♝xc8 ♜xc8 23.♝c1 ♜b7 24.♚f1+–.

18.d5 ♜a4

18...♚b5 19.a4 e5 20.axb5 exf4 21.d6 ♜xd6 22.e5 ♜xe5 23.♝e2 a5 24.♚xa8 ♜d6 25.♝d1 fxg3 26.hxg3 ♜c7 27.♝d3 ♜c5 28.♝ad1 is comfortably winning for White, as the poor knight is condemned to a permanent exile on b8.

19.b3**19...e5**

Some analysts may suggest that the timing is wrong for this move, but I cannot agree. There are lots of unpleasant tactics awaiting Black in other variations. Here are some illustrative lines:

19...♚b5 20.a4 e5

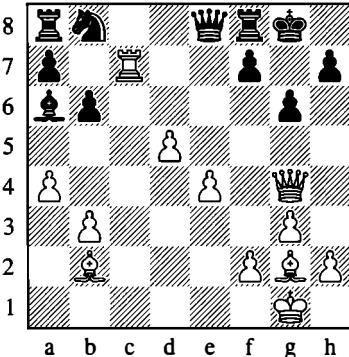
20...♜a6? 21.♝c7 ♜e8 22.dxe6+–

21.♝xe5

Even 21.axb5! is promising: 21...exf4 22.d6 ♜xd6 23.e5 ♜xe5 24.♝a2 a5 25.♝d2 ♜xb5 26.♝xa8 ♜f6 27.♝d5 fxg3 28.hxg3 ♜d7 29.♝g2 In this case, the two pawns do not provide sufficient compensation for the exchange. White has tremendous activity on the open files and the knight cannot get into the game. With the knight better placed,

on c5 for example, the evaluation would be quite different.

21... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}c7$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}g4$ g6 24. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
25. $\mathbb{Q}b2!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xc7$



Despite being a rook up, Black is completely lost.

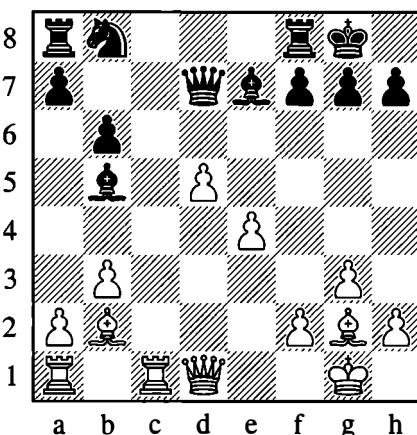
26...f6

Or 26... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}f4$ f6 28. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g5 (28... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 29. $\mathbb{W}h6$ wins) 29. $\mathbb{W}xg5!$ fxg5 30. $\mathbb{B}g7!$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ and Black is soon mated.
27.e5 $\mathbb{B}f7$ 28.d6 $\mathbb{B}xc7$ 29.dxc7 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ fxe5 32. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 33. $\mathbb{W}d5!$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e6+-$

The endgame is easy.

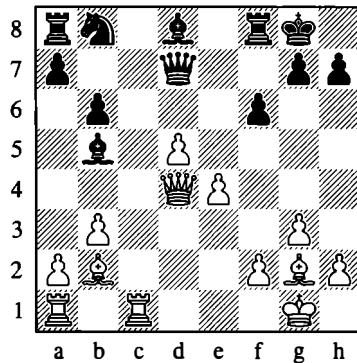
20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2?$

21.a4 is also strong, and transposes to the previous note. The bishop retreat produces a critical moment for Black, who must deal with the threat of 22.d6 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d4$.



21... $\mathbb{Q}c5?$

Black can still put up a decent fight with:
21... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d4$ f6

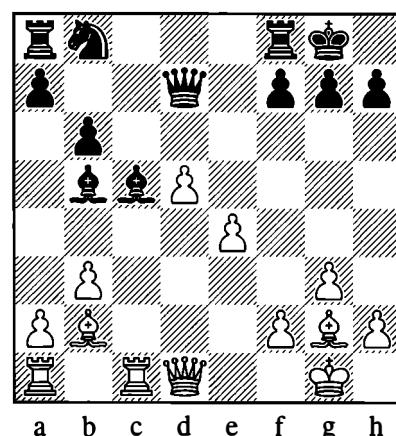


23.d6

23.f4 is also interesting.

23... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}d5!$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 26.e5
 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

26...fxe5 27. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}c8$
29. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 30.d7 $\mathbb{B}cd8$ (30... $\mathbb{B}c7$ 31.f4+–)
31. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 32.f4 e4 33. $\mathbb{B}xf6$ gxf6 34. $\mathbb{B}xe4$
 $\mathbb{B}fxd7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{B}xd7$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ and White's extra pawn gives him good winning chances.
27. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 28. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$
30. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 32.h3 a5 33.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$
34. $\mathbb{B}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 35.g4 h6 36. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ±



22.b4

Good, but not best. 22.a4! $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 23.b4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$
24.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 25.d6 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}f3$ wins outright.

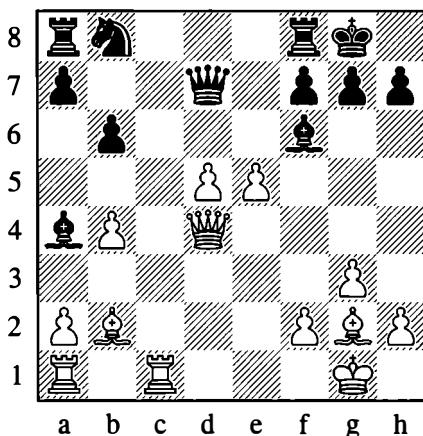
22... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

23... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ does not help: 24.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}c3$ a5 26.e6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ gxf6 28.exd7 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 29.d6+–

24. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

No better is 24... $\mathbb{W}g4$ 25.d6 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 27.dxe7 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ a6 30.f4 winning.

25.e5



25... $\mathbb{Q}d8?$

The only attempt at a defence is 25... $\mathbb{Q}g5$, but even that is losing: 26.f4 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 27.b5! $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 28.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 29.d6 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ +–

26.e6 fxe6

Alternatively 26... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ gxf6 28.exd7 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 29.f4 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ a5 31.a3 axb4 32.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 34.d6 wins.

27.dxe6 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

28... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ leads to a hopeless endgame: 29. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ +–

29. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$

The Catalan bishop has played a pivotal role in the game thus far, by supporting White's central play and generating constant threats

along the h1-a8 diagonal. Finally it makes its second move of the game, and eliminating an enemy rook is a fine contribution indeed!

29... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 31.a3

1–0

Post-game reflections

The 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!!$ sacrifice was a fantastic idea, and the death of the gallant knight really brought the rest of White's pieces to life. The subsequent moves and variations practically speak for themselves. With sacrifices such as this, once you spot the idea it is relatively easy to see its merits and determine its overall correctness. The really difficult part is actually stopping to consider the move in the first place, as most players would filter it out of their list of candidate moves without a second glance.

The good news is that it is possible to develop your intuition for finding such extraordinary moves. There are no hard-and-fast rules, but in the present game we can point to Black's lag in development and the time wasted on the ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ -c4-a6-b7 manoeuvre as indicators that something was not quite right about his position, thus opening our minds to more creative attacking ideas than we would normally contemplate.

Tarrasch and Semi-Tarrasch

Lajos Portisch – Paul Keres

Petroplus 1973

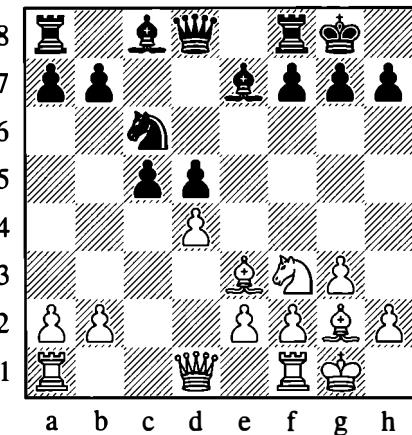
Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ A road to pain – 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$?
- ◆ A pawn sacrifice for a dominant position – 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$!
- ◆ The cleanest route to victory – 20. $\mathbb{W}d3$! in the notes

1.c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5
 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7.0–0 0–0 8.d4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$
9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Very interesting is the author's 9. $\mathbb{B}b1!$?, which is analysed in detail in *Dynamic Chess Strategy*.

9...exd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



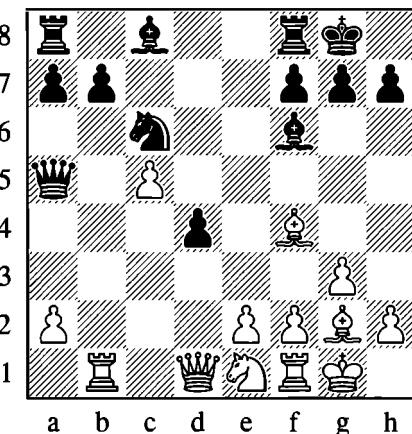
10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$?

Better is 10...c4! with equality.

11.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is not bad either, but Lajos Portisch is the sort of player who likes to threaten something with every move.

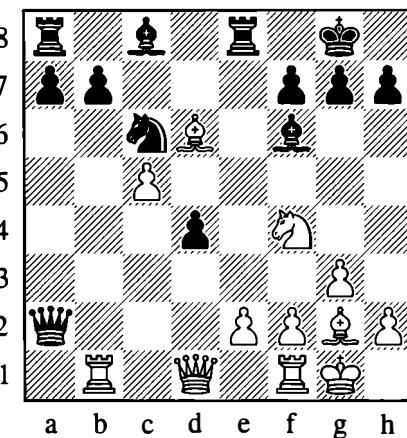
13...d4 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$



15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$!

The a-pawn is of little relevance, and Portisch is much more concerned with getting his pieces to their best squares as quickly as possible.

15... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



17... $\mathbb{Q}f5$?

Concerned by the alarming growth in White's activity, Black is eager to exchange his light-squared bishop for its potent counterpart, and does not mind giving back the extra pawn. However, the medicine proves worse than the disease; White's remaining two minor pieces will still be powerful, and he will have a passed c-pawn to boot.

If you are going to have to suffer, then you may as well suffer with an extra pawn. There were two ways to limit White's advantage:

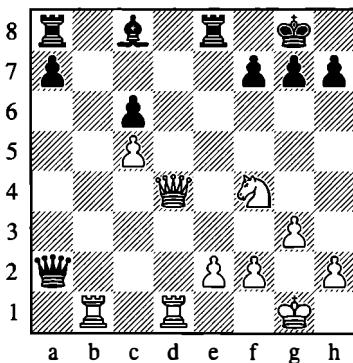
17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$
21. $\mathbb{W}xd4\pm$

18... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

18... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ (not
20... $\mathbb{W}b2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b6+-$) 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}c1$
 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}a3\pm$

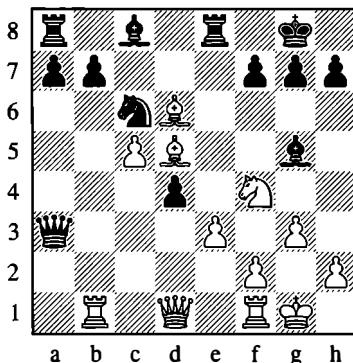
19. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$



21... $\mathbb{W}a6$

21... $\mathbb{W}a5$? 22. $\mathfrak{Q}h5$ f6 23. $\mathbb{B}b7!!+$
22. $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 23.f3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 24. $\mathbb{B}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 25. $\mathfrak{Q}g2$ h6±

17... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 19.e3



19... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ (but not 19...dxe3? 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$)
21. $\mathbb{W}h5\#!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathfrak{Q}d5\#!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23. $\mathfrak{Q}c7\#!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
24.f4 and mate is imminent) 20.exf4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$
21. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{B}xe6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xb7\pm$

18. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$

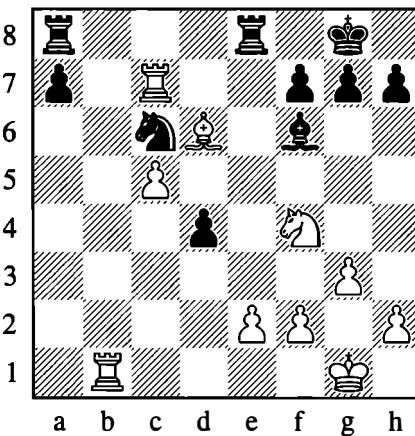
By now White's position should be winning.

20. $\mathbb{W}b1?!$

With safety in mind, Portisch goes for the endgame, but in the process he loses a significant portion of his advantage.

Better is 20. $\mathbb{W}d3!$ $\mathbb{B}ee8$ 21. $\mathbb{B}b3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 22. $\mathfrak{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 23. $\mathbb{B}fb1+-.$

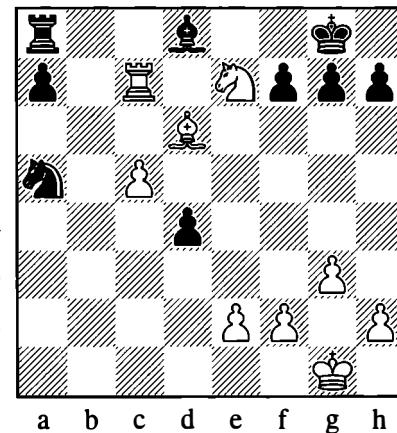
20... $\mathbb{W}xb1$ 21. $\mathbb{B}fxb1$ $\mathbb{B}ee8$ 22. $\mathbb{B}c7$



22... $\mathbb{B}ec8?!$

22... $\mathfrak{Q}d8$ offers more resistance.

23. $\mathbb{B}bb7$ $\mathbb{B}xc7$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xc7$ $\mathfrak{Q}a5$ 25. $\mathfrak{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
26. $\mathfrak{Q}e7\#!$



26... $\mathbb{Q}xe7?!$

After this, Black has no real hope of saving the game. It is slightly better to delay the exchange with 26... $\mathfrak{Q}h8$ in order to force the white rook off the c-file, thereby slowing the advance of the c-pawn: 27. $\mathbb{B}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xe7$ $\mathfrak{Q}g8$ 29. $\mathfrak{Q}g2$ $\mathfrak{Q}c4\pm$

27. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ h6 28.c6 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathfrak{Q}h7$ 30. $\mathbb{B}xf7$ $\mathbb{B}b1\#!$ 31. $\mathfrak{Q}g2$ $\mathfrak{Q}xc6$ 32. $\mathbb{B}c7$ $\mathfrak{Q}d8$ 33. $\mathbb{B}xa7$

$\mathbb{B}b5$ 34.f4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ g5
 37. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 38. $\mathbb{B}a6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 39.e3
 1–0

Post-game reflections

This game featured several pawn sacrifices and trades. Black left a pawn hanging on c5 but collected one on b2, then White sacrificed the pawn on a2 and Black reciprocated by donating the one on b7. The game was effectively decided by the differences in the value gained by both sides. When Black offered to trade c5 for b2, he gave his opponent an outpost on d6 and an open b-file. When White gave up his a-pawn he used the extra time to improve his pieces, whereas when Black gave up b7 his only achievement was to exchange a pair of bishops, which did little to ease his suffering.

Slav and Semi-Slav

Lev Polugaevsky – Eugenio Torre

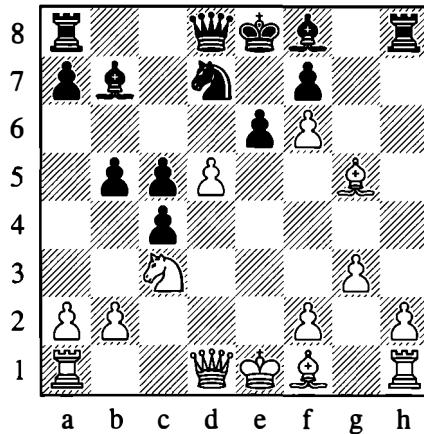
Moscow 1981

Points to look for in this game:

- Dubious opening play from Black – 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!?
- The start of a fine sacrificial idea – 14.dxe6!

Although this is a fantastic game (particularly the first 25 moves), I decided not to go overboard with the annotations. The most important things about it have already been said by other commentators, and if I wanted to elucidate all the details, that would be a lifetime job. In the unconventional situations that arise, the machine is not very helpful.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ hxg5 10. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12.g3 c5 13.d5



13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!?

Nowadays it has been established that 13... $\mathbb{W}b6$ is the best answer, but this only became known precisely because of the present game!

14.dxe6! $\mathbb{W}xd1\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 16.e7 a6

At the time of the game, this line was considered to be a not especially dangerous exchange sacrifice (after the normal 17.exf8= $\mathbb{W}\uparrow$). To see Polugaevsky's extraordinary idea and the further adventures in the middlegame, turn to page 338.

Garry Kasparov – Vladimir Kramnik

Dos Hermanas 1996

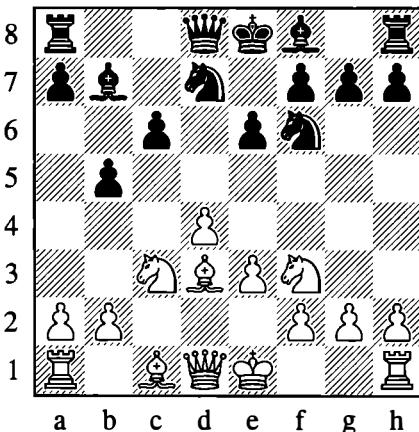
Points to look for in this game:

- White gives up a pawn in pursuit of the initiative – 14.b4
- Black ups the ante with a piece sacrifice – 21...0–0?!
- White falters – 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$? and 24. $\mathbb{Q}c5$!?

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 5.e3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ dxc4 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ b5 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

The most frequent line is 8...a6 9.e4 c5 10.e5 cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ with diabolical complications.

Another reasonable alternative is 8...b4 9.Qe4 ♕e7.

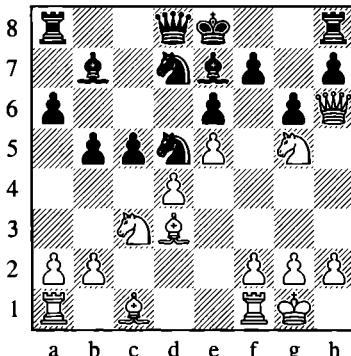


9.0–0

The immediate advance in the centre does not give much. For example: 9.e4 b4 10.Qa4 c5 11.e5 ♕d5 12.Qxc5 ♕xc5 13.dxc5 ♕xc5 14.0–0 h6 15.Qd2 0–0 16.Qe4 ♕d4 17.Qd6 ♕c6 18.Qh7† ♕xh7 19.Wxd4 f6= has featured in many games.

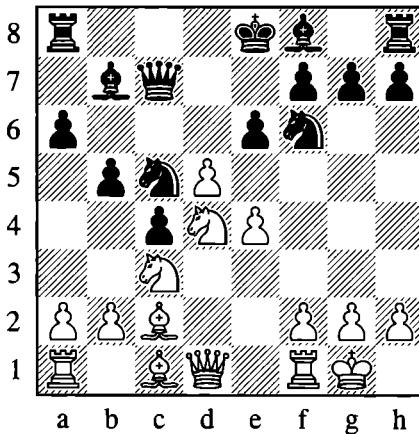
9...a6 10.e4 c5 11.d5

The following sequence led to a *very* positional exchange sacrifice in Sakaev – Dreev, USSR Championship 1991: 11.e5 ♕d5 12.Qg5 ♕e7 13.Wh5 g6 14.Wh6



14...Qxe5 15.Qxd5 ♕xg5 16.Wxg5 Wxg5 17.Qxg5 Qxd3 18.Qc7† ♕d7 19.Qxa8 ♕xa8 20.dxc5 Qxb2 and after ...Qd5 and ...Qc6 I like Black's position.

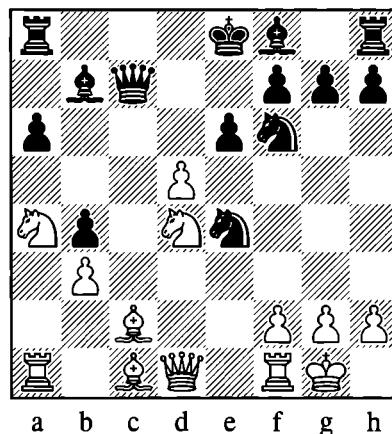
11...c4 12.Qc2 Wc7 13.Qd4 Qc5



14.b4!?

White gives up a pawn for the sake of better development.

14...cxb3 15.axb3 b4 16.Qa4 Qcxe4

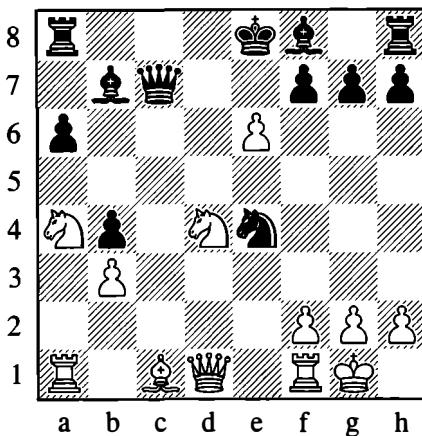


All this is still theory, but Kasparov's next move was a novelty at the time. The idea, to catch the opponent's king in the centre, is a common theme in his games.

17.Qxe4

17.dxe6 ♕d8 18.exf7† ♕xf7 19.Qe3 ♕d6 20.h3 ♕he8 21.Qc1 ♕c3 22.Qxc3 bxc3 was at least equal for Black in Haila – Marttinen, corr. 1994.

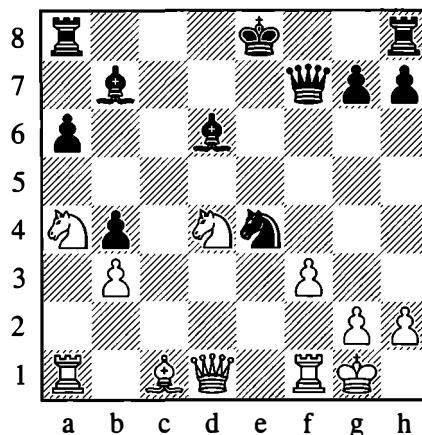
17... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $dxe6$



18... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 19. $exf7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$

Risky play. 19... $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ g6 21. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 22.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}h4$ h6 24. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ is about equal.

20.f3



This weakening is of course forced. If Black succeeds in castling short, his two bishops and better piece placement will make him clear favourite.

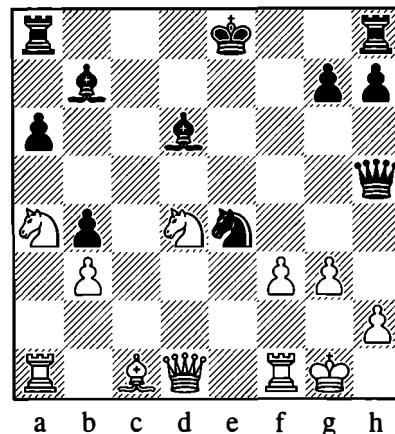
20... $\mathbb{W}h5$

The alternative 20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e1\#$ gives White a winning advantage.

Other possibilities, such as giving up two pieces for a rook by 20...0–0 21. $fxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{W}xf1$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$, are not appetizing at all.

21.g3

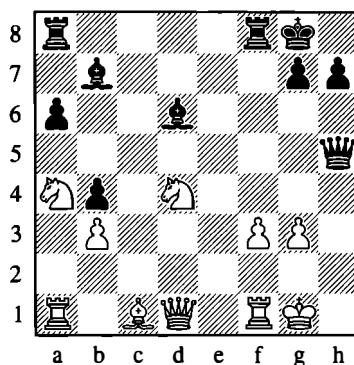
21.h3 $\mathbb{W}e5$ does not solve White's problems.



21...0–0?

An interesting piece sacrifice, although analysis has confirmed that it is not entirely correct. White has the means to fend off the attack and preserve his extra piece, but only with the help of some extremely precise play over the next few moves. Considering the quantity of candidate moves, all generating sharp variations, this is a tall order even for Kasparov.

Black has at his disposal a much "safer" sacrifice: 21... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 22. $hxg3$ (22. $\mathbb{Q}e1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$) 22...0–0



23. $\mathbb{B}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 24. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 27. $f4$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{B}xf4$ and the three pawns are certainly enough to compensate for the missing piece.

22... $\mathbb{W}xe4$

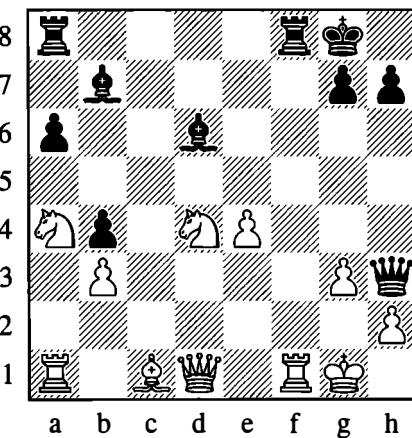
The sacrifice has to be accepted.

22. $\mathbb{Q}e6?$ loses to 22... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{B}xf8+$.

22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$ gives Black a clear advantage.

22... $\mathbb{B}h3$

White is a whole piece up, but the two black bishops are directed towards his king, and he is facing threats of 23... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and 23... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$.



23. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$

The start of an unfortunate sequence of four substandard moves. Let's look at the alternatives:

23. $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ is also unsatisfactory: 23... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{B}a2$ (24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 25. $\mathbb{B}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4+$) 24... $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}f3$ and Black is winning.

23. $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ with a slight advantage for Black.

23. $\mathbb{B}a2!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xf8+$ $\mathbb{B}xf8$ 25. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{B}xf2$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}xh2+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ with equality.

23. $\mathbb{B}xf8+$ $\mathbb{B}xf8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ with a balanced position.

The strongest continuation is:

23. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3!?$

This sacrifice does not work here, but nor does anything else. For example: 23... $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 24. $\mathbb{B}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and White has a decisive advantage.

24. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$

White successfully covers everything. I am sure that it was precisely this move (rather than 23. $\mathbb{W}e2$) which escaped the reckoning of both contenders.

24. $\mathbb{B}hg3?$ would lose: 24... $\mathbb{W}xg3+$ 25. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{B}xf1+$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{B}f8+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}e1+$ –

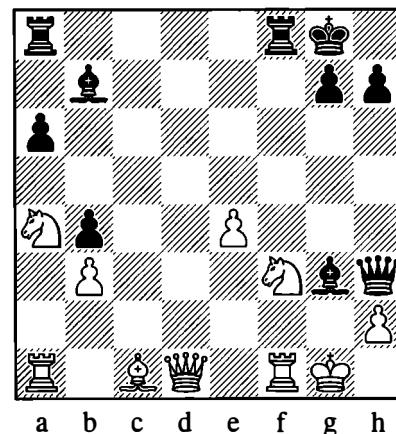
24... $\mathbb{B}f5$

24... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xg3+$ –

25. $\mathbb{B}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xh2$ $\mathbb{W}g4+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 28. $\mathbb{W}e5$

White is winning.

23... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$



24. $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$

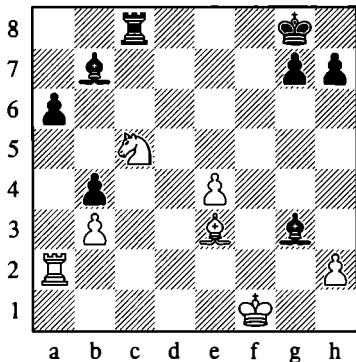
Even worse is 24. $\mathbb{B}hg3?$ $\mathbb{W}xg3+$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and Black wins.

Slightly more reasonable is: 24. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8!$
 25. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5! \mp$

And finally, the best defensive try is 24. $\mathbb{W}e2!$
 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 25. $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xg2\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}c6$, when Black's advantage is kept to a minimum.

24...♝xf3! 25.♝xf3?

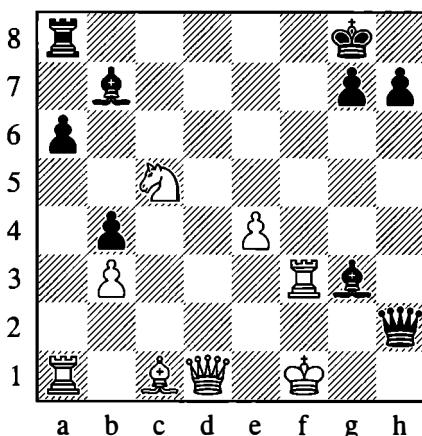
Again, White had a better defence: 25. $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{E}xf1\uparrow$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $\mathbb{W}xf1\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



28... ♕f4! ♦

25... ♜xh2† 26. ♔f1

Black is a rook down, but his attack is tremendous.

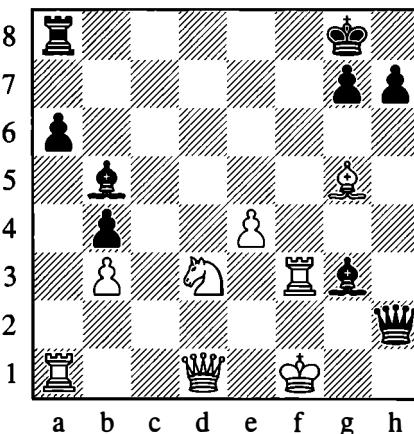


26... $\text{Qc}6!$ 27. $\text{Qg}5?$

After the fourth error in a row (disregarding the absolutely forced 26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$), White is completely lost.

The machine recommends 27...a5, which at least slows down Black's progress, although it cannot ultimately save White.

27... ♕b5† 28. ♔d3



28... $\mathbb{E}e8!$ 29. $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{W}h1+$

Even more clinical is 29...~~xd3†~~! with mate in four.

30.♔e2 ♕xe4† 31.♔d2 ♕g2† 32.♔c1 ♕xa2
 33.♕xg3 ♕a1† 34.♔c2 ♕c3† 35.♔b1 ♕d4
 0–1

Post-game reflections

It is often said that the best form of defence is a counterattack, and it certainly proved true in this game. Kasparov looked to be on the way towards catching the black king in the centre, and even though Kramnik's piece sacrifice was not strictly correct, it was good enough to make his opponent uncomfortable. There is a lesson in "playing the man, not the board" here, as Kasparov is a lot less happy defending than attacking, and it showed in this game.

Chapter 9

The Semi-Closed Games

Blumenfeld Gambit

What is the object of playing a gambit opening? ... To acquire a reputation of being a dashing player at the cost of losing a game – Siegbert Tarrasch

We begin with a classic example of heroic sacrificial play, which won a brilliancy prize and made the Blumenfeld Gambit popular. I have taken the liberty of inserting a few comments by Alekhine himself.

Siegbert Tarrasch – Alexander Alekhine

Bad Pistyan 1922

Points to look for in this game:

- Black launches a venomous attack – 18... $\mathbb{W}g5!$
- Driving a wedge through the centre of the board – 21...d4! and 22...d3
- Sacrifices to smash open the kingside – 24... $\mathbb{Q}g3\#!$, 29... $\mathbb{Q}g3\#!$ and 34... $\mathbb{Q}xh3!$

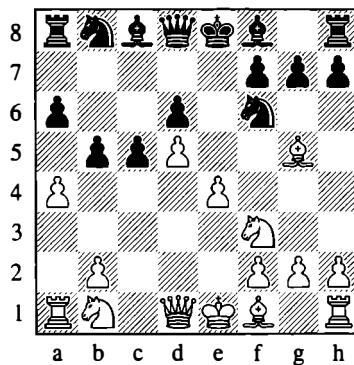
1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5

“With the intention of introducing into the practice of international tournaments the interesting gambit suggested by Blumenfeld. It

has since been proved that the move 4...b5 is unfavourable to Black, if White declines the gambit.” – Alekhine.

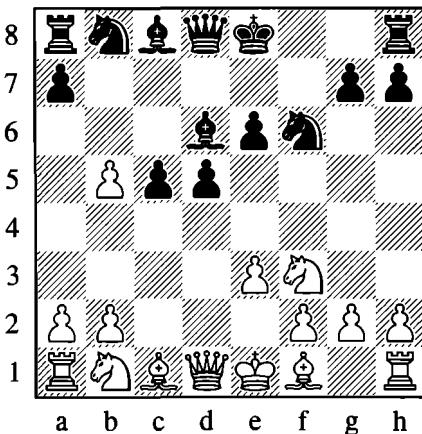
4.d5 b5 5.dxe6

For a long time, 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ was considered best for White, but not all modern analysts agree. An example of how play may unfold is: 5...exd5 6.cxd5 d6 7.e4 a6 8.a4



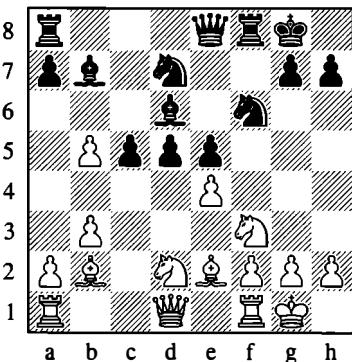
8... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 11. $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12.bxa6 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xa2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18.0–0 $\mathbb{E}a8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}b2$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 22. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}a1$ ½–½
Jobava – Ghaem Maghami, Istanbul 2004.

5...fxe6 6.cxb5 d5 7.e3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$



8.♘c3

The following game showed a better approach: 8.♗e2 0–0 9.0–0 ♘bd7 10.♗bd2 ♘b7 11.b3 ♜e8 12.♗b2 e5 13.e4! Offering to return the pawn in order to ruin Black's central structure.



12...dxe4?! (13...d4±) 14.♗h4 ♜c7 15.♗c1 ♜d8 16.b4 ♘d5 17.bxc5 ♘xc5 18.♗xc5 ♜b6 19.♗xe4 ♘f4 20.♗c4† ♜h8 21.♗g4 h5 22.♗g5 ♜xc5 23.♗xe5 ♘d7 24.♗h6# Karpov – Lobron, Walldorf (rapid) 1997.

8...0–0 9.♗e2

The paradoxical 9.e4! may be good. For example: 9...♜c7 10.♗e2 d4 11.e5 ♘g4 12.♗g5 ♜e8 13.♗e4 ♘d7 14.b4! ♘dxe5 15.♗xe5 ♘xe5 16.♘xc5 ♜g6 17.f4±

9...♗b7 10.b3

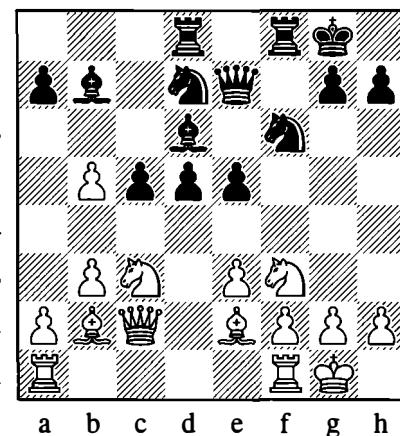
The alternative is 10.0–0, which is liable to lead to the same set-up by transposition.

10...♗bd7 11.♗b2 ♜e7

"Black has finished his development and prepares the advance of his e-pawn. This will inconvenience the opponent even further and Black will organize a strong attack against the white king." – Alekhine.

12.0–0 ♜ad8 13.♗c2 e5!

Having centralized all his forces, Alekhine mobilizes his central pawn mass.



14.♗fe1

"With the intention of protecting the h2-square with the knight (♘d2-f1). From now on, White defends himself in the best way. Yet his position is already weakened, due to the strategic mistake in the opening – giving up the centre in exchange for a pawn of little value." – Alekhine.

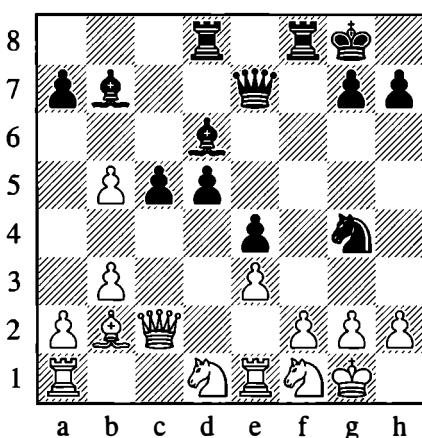
Of his assets, Alekhine fails to mention the f-file, which is crucial in this gambit and plays a role in all the attacking variations. Let me stress his point that White playing the best moves "from now on" is not enough, the problems having been generated before. It is important to play good moves throughout the whole game.

For some time I believed that the text move was wrong, and that White could still defend. I looked at other moves (such as 14.♕a4 or 14.♕d2), trying very hard to make them work. At the beginning, the programs are very optimistic about White's chances, but then the evaluations show downturns in all lines. The best that we (that is, me guided by the machine) could manage is: 14.♕a4 e4 15.♕g5 ♕e5 16.♖ad1 ♜c8 17.b6 and here the programs "see" equality, but who can believe that?

14...e4 15.♕d2 ♕e5 16.♕d1?

16.h3 was mandatory, even though it weakens the kingside.

16...♕fg4! 17.♗xg4 ♕xg4 18.♕f1



18...♕g5!

"The correct continuation of the attack. White had protected the squares f2 and h2, but g2 is still vulnerable. And so it is against this point that Black will direct his attack, by ...♕h6-f5-h4." – Alekhine.

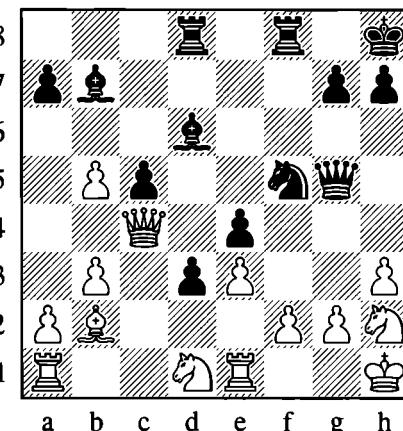
19.h3 ♕h6 20.♗h1 ♕f5 21.♗h2 d4!

21...♗h4 22.♗g1† is not yet decisive, so Alekhine advances in the centre, while also increasing the influence of the b7-bishop.

22.♗c1

White cannot take the pawn: 22.exd4 e3! 23.♗xe3 (or 23.♗g1 ♜g3!) 23...♗xe3 24.fxe3 ♜g3 25.♗f1 ♜xf1† 26.♗xf1 ♜h2#

22...d3 23.♗c4† ♜h8 24.♗b2



24...♗g3†!

Offering a sacrifice that cannot be accepted.

25.♗g1

After 25.fxg3? ♜xg3 White will be mated.

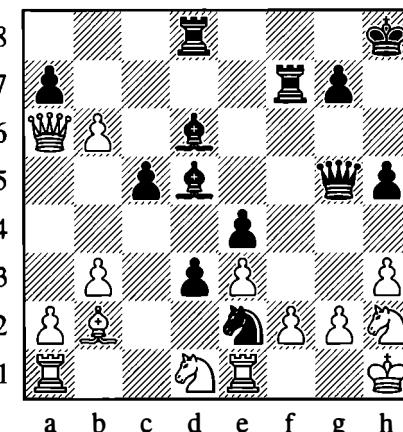
25...♗d5

Driving the queen away from the centre.

26.♗a4 ♕e2† 27.♗h1 ♜f7 28.♗a6 h5

White has no way of freeing himself on the kingside, so Black has time to strengthen his position before embarking on the final assault.

29.b6



29...Qg3†!

Visiting the g3-square for a second time. Once again White cannot dare capture it on account of the ensuing unstoppable mating threats.

30.Qg1 axb6 31.Wxb6 d2 32.Qf1 Qxf1

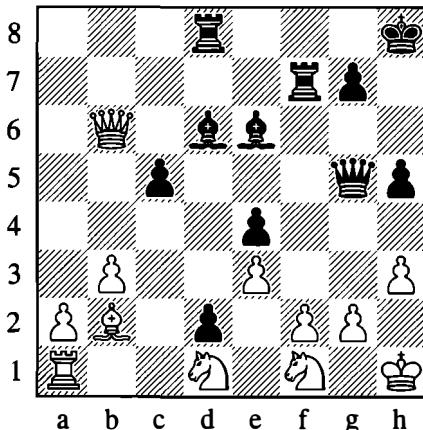
Winning the exchange is largely irrelevant. Alekhine's motivation was to eliminate an important defensive piece while driving the enemy king to a more exposed square in the process.

33.Qxf1 Qe6!

After playing a supporting role for most of the game, the bishop finally joins in the attack with decisive effect.

34.Qh1

After 34.Wc6, Alekhine points out a nice finish: 34...Qf3! 35.Wxe4 Qd5 36.Wa4 Wxg2†! 37.Qxg2 Qg3† 38.Qh2 Qg2† 39.Qh1 Qh2† 40.Qg1 Qh1#

**34...Qxh3!**

With this final sacrifice Black bludgeons his way through the kingside. The rest is easy.

**35.gxh3 Qf3 36.Qg3 h4 37.Qf6 Wxf6
38.Qxe4 Qxh3†**

White resigns, as 39.Qg1 Qh2† wins the queen, while 39.Qg2 Wf3† leads to mate.

Post-game reflections

When analysing this classic game I found it interesting to observe the way that modern computers validate Black's play, as discussed in the notes to move 14. At that stage of the game the machines strongly prefer White, but with some human guidance the evaluation steadily comes down.

Although Alekhine's sacrificial play makes a strong impression, it is important to remember that his attack did not just appear out of nowhere, and it was only made possible by his powerful pawn centre, which enabled him to bring several pieces to the danger zone. The timely advance of the d-pawn also played a key role in disrupting White's pieces and adding extra force to Black's kingside threats. This game may be approaching a century in age, but it remains one of the best ever examples of a long-term positional sacrifice subsequently leading to a mating attack.

The next game proves that playing the Blumenfeld is not always a bed of roses. Some of the annotations below are inspired by the comments of GM Alexander Baburin from his *Chess Today* online magazine.

All that matters on the chessboard is good moves
– Bobby Fischer

Igor Naumkin – Alexander Shabalov

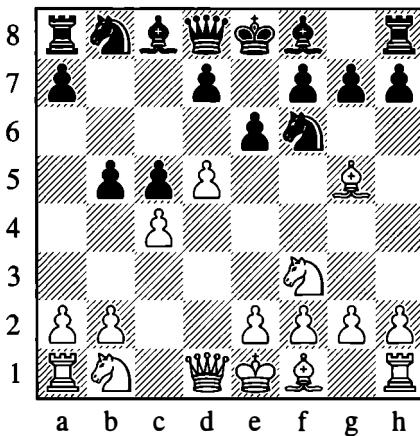
USSR Championship (semi-final), Riga 1988

Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ Black loses valuable time – 5...bxc4?! and 6...Wb6?
- ◆ Black takes pawns but loses too much time – 7...Wxb2 and 10...Qxe4?
- ◆ A crude but effective attack to decide the game – 12.Wh5!

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 c5 4.d5 b5 5.♕g5

As Alekhine mentioned, White can decline the pawn offer, and the text move is the most popular way to do so. It is invariably given an exclamation mark in annotations, but I have broken this custom, because the dispute is still going on.

**5...bxc4?!**

As a consequence of this, Black will lose the development race, which, as proved by many games in this book, is still the most frequent reason for catastrophe.

The alternatives are:

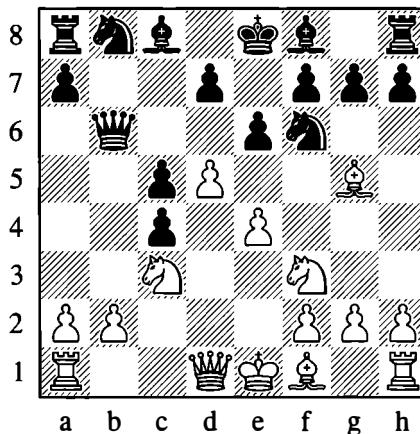
5...h6?! 6.♕xf6 ♜xf6 7.♗c3 b4 8.♗b5 ♜d8
9.e4 g5 10.e5 ♜g7 11.h3 ♜b7 12.♗a4 a5
13.0–0–0+— Azmaiparashvili–Miroshnichenko,
Kallithea 2009.

5...♜a5† 6.♗c3 ♜e4 7.♗d2 ♜xd2 8.♗xd2 b4
9.♗ce4 f5 10.♗g5 ♜e7 11.♗gf3 ♜f6 12.♗b3
0–0 13.e4 ♜e8 14.e5 ♜xe5 15.♗xe5 exd5∞
Kaidanov – Robson, US Championship 2010.

5...exd5 6.cxd5 h6 (an example with 6...d6 was given in the note to the 5th move in the previous game) 7.♗xf6 ♜xf6 8.e4 ♜xb2
9.♗bd2 c4 10.♗b1 ♜xa2 11.♗xb5 c3 12.♗c4
a5∞ Gelfand – Vallejo Pons, Leon 2010.

6.♗c3 ♜b6? 7.e4!

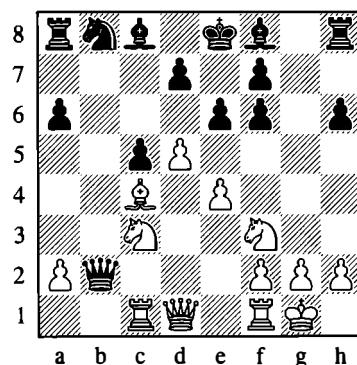
“This is the most energetic reply to 6...♜b6 – White simply ignores Black’s threat!” – Baburin.

**7...♜xb2**

There is a reason why queen trips in the opening, for the sake of pawns, are seldom recommended by manuals.

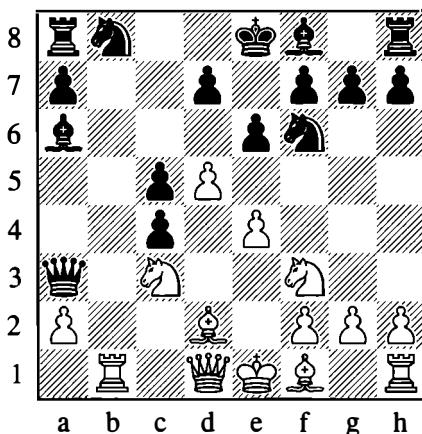
8.♗d2!

This seems strongest, although the alternative is also not bad: 8.♗c1 h6 9.♗xf6 gxsf6 10.♗xc4 a6 11.0–0±



11...♜b6 12.♗d2 e5 13.♗b1 ♜c7 14.d6 ♜xd6
15.♗d5 ♜c6 16.♗c4 ♜c7 17.f4 ♜h7 18.fxe5
fxe5 19.♗h5+— d6 20.♗b6 ♜d7 21.♗xf7†
♗d8 22.♗d5 ♜a7 23.♗g6 ♜h8 24.♗xf8† 1–0
Barlov – Martinez, Ponferrada 1997.

8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 9. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a3$



10. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$

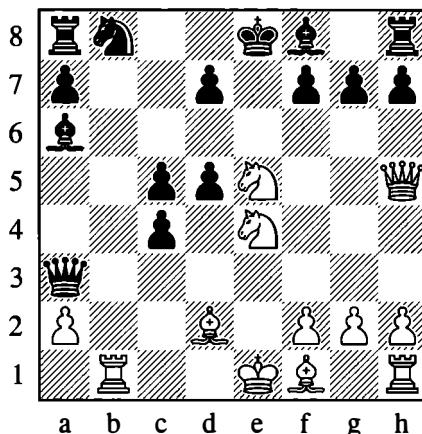
When behind in development it is dangerous to attempt such sacrifices, as the activity of the opponent's pieces may decide the game before the pawn mass can have an influence.

"Black had to settle for 10... $\mathbb{W}a5$ though after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $exd5$ 13. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15.0–0 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ White got an overwhelming position in the game Benjamin – Hebert, USA 1980."

– Baburin.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $exd5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}h5!+$

Simple and crushing. Black limps on for a few more moves but his position is completely hopeless.



12... $g6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
15... $gxh5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa3+–$

16. $\mathbb{W}g4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f4\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d1$
 $\mathbb{W}a4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$

1–0

Post-game reflections

Here we saw another example of the most elemental of positional sacrifices, where White gave up a couple of pawns to obtain a huge lead in development and attacking chances. Black tried giving up a piece for a mobile pawn mass, but in doing so he fell even further behind in development and he was deservedly crushed.

Unhappy with the new methods used by White against the Blumenfeld, several players, including Dmitri Gurevich, Albut and Dzindzichashvili, have tried the move order 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a6, which waits for White to play 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ before Black continues 4...c5 5.d5 b5. The following game transposes into this line.

Ferenc Peredy – Mihai Suba

Balaguer 2005

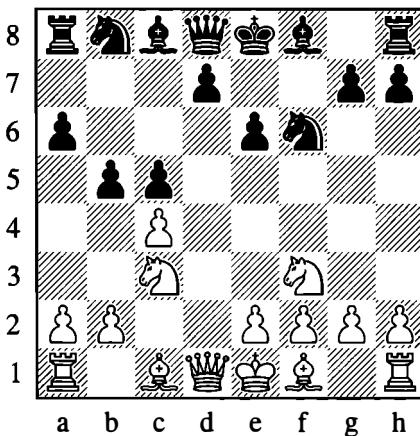
Points to look for in this game:

- Declining the gambit and playing for development – see 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$, both in the notes
- White should defend by gaining space on the kingside – 28.f4! in the notes
- A defensive exchange sacrifice – 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd3!$ in the note to move 28

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 5.d5
5.e4 $cxd4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ transposes to a sharp variation of the Sicilian Paulsen.

5...b5 6.dxe6

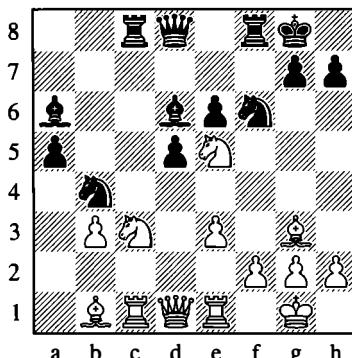
In my database, there were no games with White accepting the gambit. Even my best (and very greedy) chess engines much prefer 6.♗g5, and that has been most popular in practice, in similar fashion to the “normal” Blumenfeld.

6...fxe6**7.cxb5**

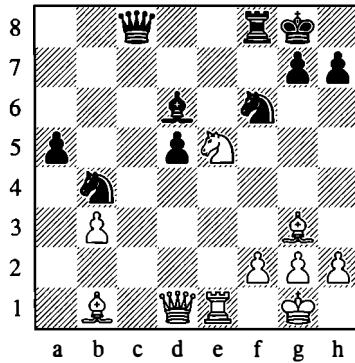
This greedy move can be improved upon:

7.e4 b4 8.e5 bxc3 9.exf6 ♘b7 10.f7† ♖xf7
11.♘e2 cxb2 12.♘xb2 ♖a5† 13.♘f1 and White keeps a slight advantage.

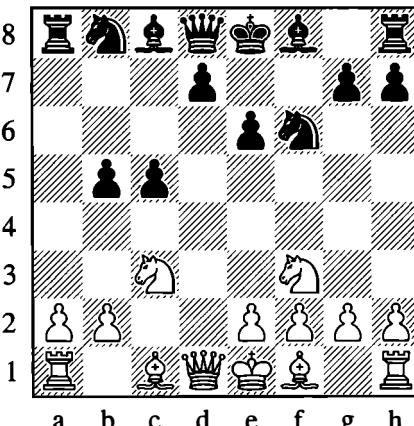
7.♗g5?! is even more interesting: 7...♘e7 8.e3 bxc4 9.♘xc4 d5 10.♘d3 ♗c6 11.♘c1 c4 12.♘b1 ♗b8 13.b3 cxb3 14.axb3 ♗b4 (14...♘a3!?) 15.♘f4 ♘d6 16.♘e5 0–0 17.0–0 a5 18.♗e1 ♘a6 19.♗g3 ♗c8=



20.e4 ♘b7 21.exd5 ♘xd5? Repeatedly negligent play will lead an experienced grandmaster into trouble. (The right way to maintain equality is 21...♗bx d5.) 22.♗xd5 exd5? (22...♗bx d5±) 23.♗xc8 ♖xc8



24.♗g6!+– ♗e8 25.♗xd6 hxg6 26.♗xg6 ♗xe1†
27.♖xe1 ♖g4 28.♗b1 ♖f7 29.♗e7† 1–0
Caravan – Nevednichy, Calimanesti 1997.

7...axb5**8.♗xb5**

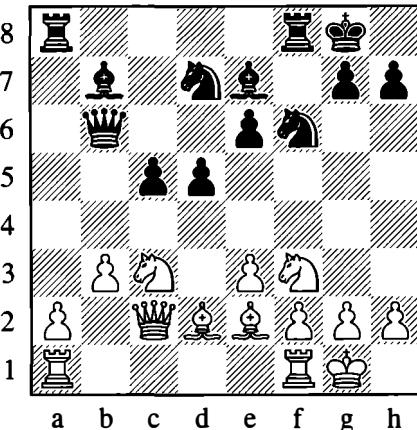
The less materialistic alternative 8.e4 b4 9.♗b5 ♘e7 10.♗f4 0–0 11.♘c7 ♖e8 12.♘d6 ♘xd6 13.♘xd6 ♖h5 is highly unclear.

8...♖a5† 9.♗c3 ♘b7 10.e3 ♘e7 11.♘d2 ♖b6 12.b3

Just losing time. White should complete his

development with 13.♔e2 0–0 14.0–0.

12...0–0 13.♔e2 d5 14.0–0 ♔bd7 15.♕c2?!



15...♔h8

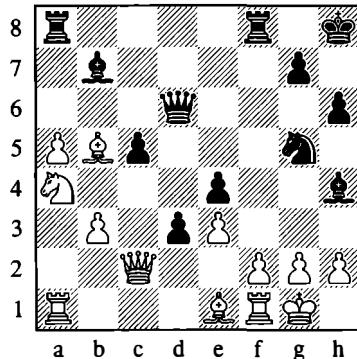
As my intention was to advance the central pawns (beginning with ...e5), I thought my move was very clever, avoiding any future counterplay on the a2-g8 diagonal. But looking again, I wonder if it was also a loss of time.

However, the immediate attempt to seize the initiative only leads to simplifications. For example: 15...d4 16.exd4 cxd4 17.♔b5! ♔xf3 18.gxf3 ♕ac8 19.♔b2 e5 20.♔acl ♔e4! 21.♔xc8 ♕xc8 22.♔c4† ♕xc4 23.bxc4 ♕g6† 24.♔h1 ♕f7 25.fxe4 ♕f3† 26.♔g1 ♕g4† with perpetual check.

16.♔a4

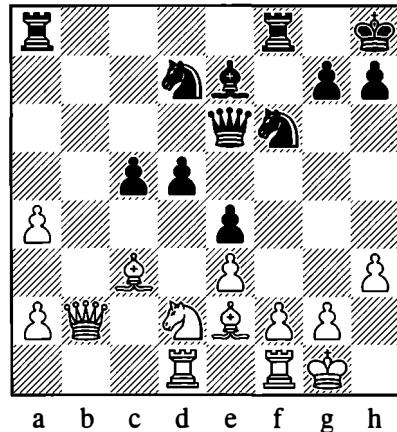
The knight loses its fighting potential here. Facing the unpleasant pawn stroll ...e5-e4, it is not easy for White to find a coherent plan, and from now on he is just “making moves”.

But if White plays more aggressively, it can backfire: 16.a4 e5 17.a5 (17.♗fc1 may be more circumspect) 17...♕c6 18.♔g5 h6 19.♔f3 e4 20.♔h4 ♔h7 21.♔b5 ♕d6 22.♔xd7 ♕xh4 23.♔b5 ♔g5 24.♔e1 d4 25.♔a4 d3



26.♕xc5 (26.♔b2 ♕f5 27.♔h1 ♔f3 28.gxf3 ♕f6 29.♔c3 exf3 30.♔xf6 gxf6 31.♗g1 ♕h5 32.♗g3 ♕xg3 33.♔xf6† ♕g7† is what I got from the programs, but who plays like that?) 26...♕f6 27.♔d4 ♔f3† 28.gxf3 ♕xf3 and Black wins easily.

16...♕d6 17.♔c3 e5† 18.♔ad1 e4 19.♔d2 ♕e6 20.♔b2 ♕c6 21.h3 ♕xa4 22.bxa4



22...♗fb8

Leaving the promising f-file just to attract the bishop to b5 is not the best. More to the point are 22...♕xa4 or 22...♔b6!.

23.♔b5 c4

Cutting off the white bishop from the theatre of operations and establishing strong support for a knight on d3.

24.♘c2

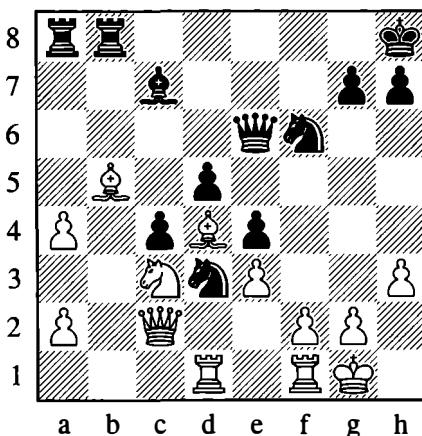
After 24.♗xd7 ♗xd7, White will begin losing pawns.

24...♝c5 25.♗d4 ♜d3 26.♗b1! ♗d6 27.♗c3

Owing to Black's slow play, White has succeeded in untangling his pieces and manoeuvring them onto more reliable squares. Now apart from the powerful knight on d3, White's only problem is his lack of space on the kingside.

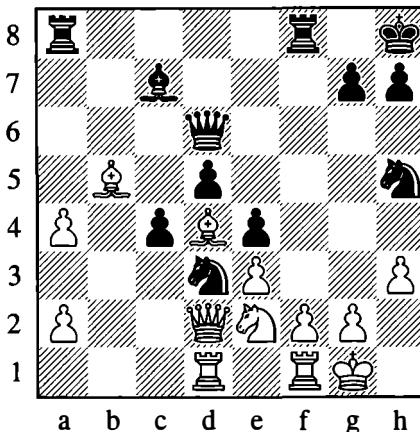
27...♚c7

The temptation to go for a mating attack is always there, but probably better is: 27...♝c8 28.f4 exf3 29.♗xf3 ♗e5 30.♗xd3 cxd3 31.♗xd3±

**28.♗e2?**

After this "natural" move, the result is no longer in doubt.

It was necessary to try: 28.f4! exf3 29.♗xf3 ♗d6 30.g3 ♗b6 31.♗xf6 gxg6 32.♗xd3! (again we see this leitmotif of White's defence) 32...cxd3 33.♗xd3 ♗d8 34.♗e2 ♗e5 35.♗g2 ♗ac8 36.♗b3 and White's position seems playable.

28...♗f8 29.♗c3 ♜h5! 30.♗d2 ♗d6

Finally, the mating mechanism is assembled, forcing the fatal weakening of the f3-square.

**31.g3 ♗f3 32.♗f4 ♜hxg3 33.exf4 ♗e6
34.♔e5 ♗xe5 35.fxe5 ♗xh3 36.♗g5 e3!
0–1**

Post-game reflections

Although my own play was not on the same level as Alekhine's against Tarrasch, I was able to use some of the lessons gleaned from the maestro's virtuoso performance. In simple terms, Black was able to build a lethal kingside attack, which was only made possible by his central domination. Throughout the game White's extra pawn had no impact on the play, and the final attack was unspectacular but highly effective.

Bogo-Indian Defence

Nimzo-Indian players need alternative defences against 3.♗f3, 3.e3 and 3.g3. Besides the ever-solid Queen's Gambit Declined and the Queen's Indian, they can answer 3...♝b4†, which can lead to either a light- or dark-squared strategy, depending on White's reply. In the event of 4.♗d2, Black will normally place his pawns on the dark squares (...d7-d6, ...e6-e5). On the other hand, after 4.♗d2 b6,

the control of the a8-h1 diagonal is the key to equilibrium.

The tactician knows what to do when there is something to do; whereas the strategist knows what to do when there is nothing to do – Gerald Abrahams

Garry Kasparov – Artur Yusupov

USSR Championship, Frunze 1981

Points to look for in this game:

- Provocative opening play from Black – 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!?
- A pawn sacrifice to fight for the initiative – 19... $\mathbb{W}f2$!
- Careful regrouping is needed – 27... $\mathbb{W}e7$ and 30... $b5$!? in the notes

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 5.g3

In Bazna 2007, Mecking surprised me with 5. $\mathbb{W}c2$ when best is probably: 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd2\uparrow$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}bx2$ (If 6. $\mathbb{W}xd2$, Black's extra tempo with the a-pawn when compared with an immediate exchange on d2, should be useful.) 6...d6 7.e4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.e5!? $\mathbb{dxe5}$ 9. $\mathbb{dxe5}$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11.a3 a4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ f5 14.exf6 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xc3\uparrow$ 17.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ with equality, Korchnoi – Larsen, Las Palmas 1981.

5...0-0

5...d6 is covered in the next game.

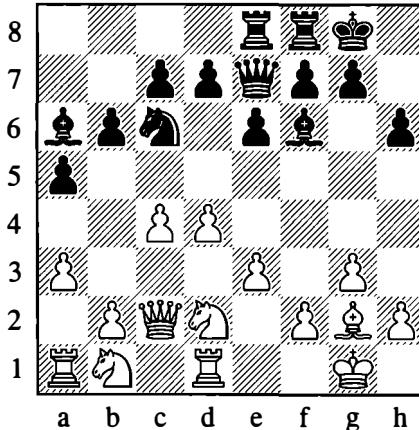
6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ b6 7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$!?

A very strange move, renouncing a central battle. Any of 8...d5, 8...c5 or 8...c6 should provide a better defence.

9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$! $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.a3 h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13.e3 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$!?

Another strange move, which over crowds a sector of the board. 13... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 14.b3 g6 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ seems more natural.

14. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$



14...g5

This is overambitious, but psychologically it worked, as White took it seriously. Most players would play simply 14...g6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$.

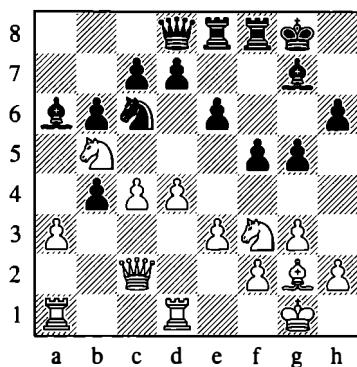
15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Black is preparing ...f5-f4, a plan which does not involve big threats and can be ignored for the moment.

16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 17.f4?

An impulsive reaction against the aforementioned plan.

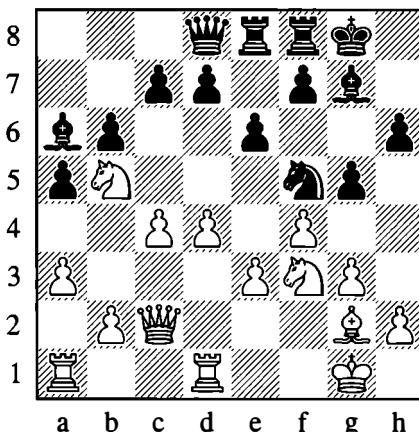
White's play should be in the centre and on the queenside, taking advantage of the unnatural placing of the two black minor pieces: 17.b4 f5 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ axb4



19.♘a4! ♜b7 20.axb4 f4 21.exf4 gxf4 22.♗a3±

17...♝e7 18.♞f3 ♚f5

Black could also get an edge with: 18...d5 19.a4 ♚f5 20.♗e1 gxf4 21.gxf4 c6 22.♘a3 ♜e7±

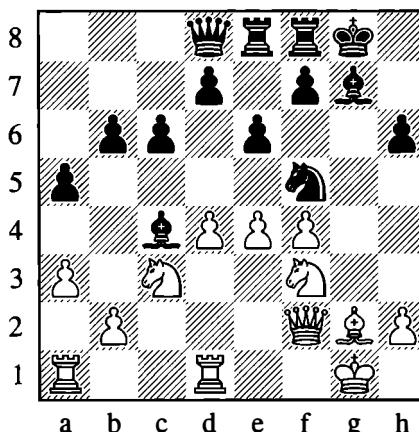


19.♘f2!

Faced with the predictable deterioration of his position, Kasparov decides to give up a pawn for some initiative.

19.♘e2 gxf4 20.exf4 c6 21.g4 cxb5 22.cxb5 ♜xb5 23.♘xb5 ♜e3 24.♗d3 ♜d5 25.f5 ♜f4 26.♗d2 d5± is not very inspiring for White.

19...c6 20.♞c3 gxf4 21.gx f4 ♜xc4 22.e4



22...♝d6

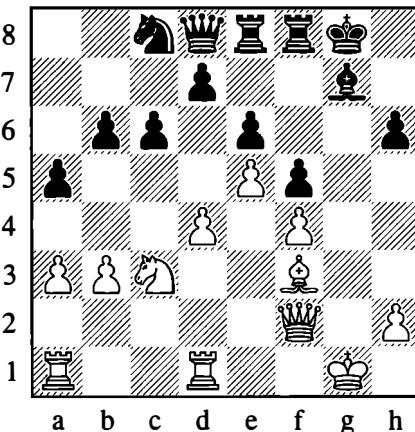
It looks as if Artur had a bet that he would play more unnatural moves in a single game than he did in the rest of his career!

The simpler approach is: 22...♝e7 23.♗h1 ♜c7±

23.♞e5 f5

This indicates a bit of panic when facing the kingside attack. Better is: 23...♝e7 24.♗h1 ♜h8 25.♗ac1 ♜a6 26.d5 c5±

24.♞xc4 ♜xc4 25.b3 ♜d6 26.e5 ♜c8 27.♞f3

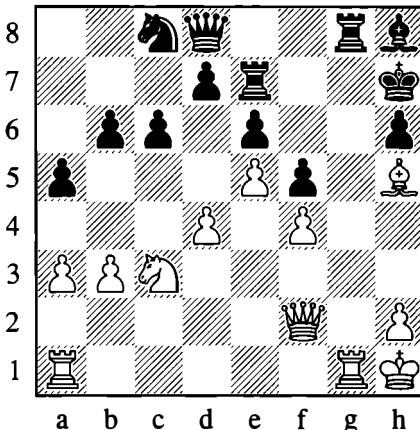


27...♗h7

Unravelling the pieces was the number one priority, and after that Black can activate the knight. This could have been achieved with 27...♝e7! 28.♗h1 ♜h7 29.♗h5 ♜d8 30.♗g1 ♜g8 31.♗g3 ♜h8 (threatening 32...♜xe5) 32.♗f3 ♜a7 33.a4 d5 34.♗d3 c5 and Black is doing fine.

28.♗h5 ♜e7 29.♗h1 ♜g8 30.♗g1 ♜h8?!

Yusupov again tries to solve the problems in a most unnatural way, and he will run head-first into Kasparov's exuberant imagination. Better is 30...b5!? trying to activate the knight.



Garry has succeeded in rustling up some play on the kingside. How can White increase the pressure? See the continuation on page 312.

Before the endgame, the gods have placed the middlegame – Siegbert Tarrasch

But you may ask: “What about the opening, then?”

Alexander Beliavsky – Mihai Suba

Kings Tournament, Bazna 2007

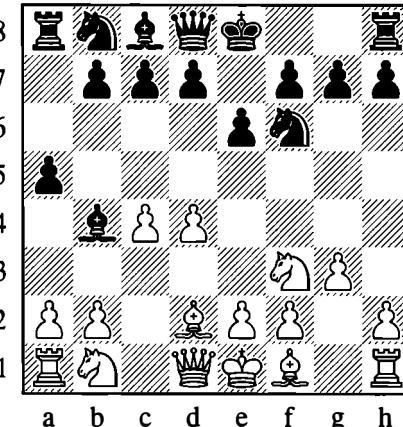
Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ A sacrifice out of nowhere – 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$? 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ in the notes
- ♦ A thematic exchange sacrifice – 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$! in the note to move 12
- ♦ Black misses a strong opportunity – 17...c6! in the notes

The sacrifice of a pawn in this game happens quite late on, and the position fits well in the final chapter on endgame sacrifices. Nevertheless, the opening and middlegame phases of the game are also instructive. Although not played in the game, there are several unusual sham and true sacrifices lurking in the background. As I indicated in the introduction, I do not

differentiate greatly between sacrifices actually played and potential ones.

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 5.g3



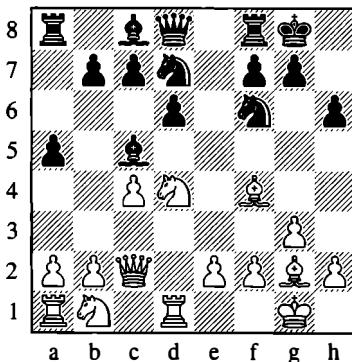
5...d6

If Black wants to carry out a plan with ...d6 and ...e5, he must start it immediately. Otherwise, the d2-bishop will break free from the pin in time, and the black bishop will be in trouble.

6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 7.0–0 e5 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ exd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0–0 11.a3

A very natural continuation is:

11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$



Here I had spotted an unbalancing sacrifice: 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

12... $\mathbb{W}e7$ was played in Grablaukas – Hellsten, Pula 1997. Although Black won in

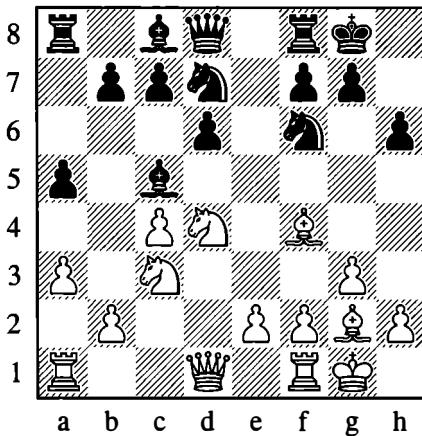
44 moves, I didn't find the game convincing.
13.h3 ♜xf2 14.♗xf2 ♜f6 15.♗d2 g5

I would be quite happy with this outcome, and especially with its psychological value.

16.♘c3

16.e3 gx f4 17.gxf4 ♜e5 18.b3 ♜h4† 19.♗f1
♕xd4 20.♗xd4 ♜c6†
16...gx f4 17.♗xf4 ♜xf4† 18.gxf4 ♜f6 19.♗a4
♕a7 20.e3 ♜e8=

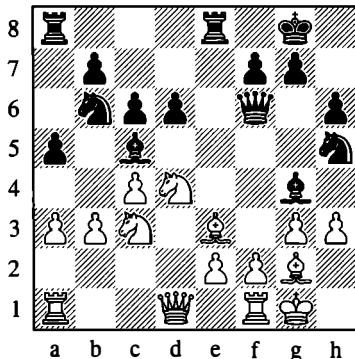
11...♘c5 12.♘c3



12...a4!?

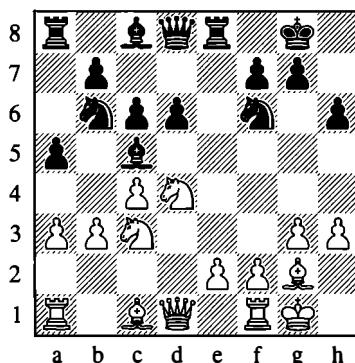
An interesting move and a novelty, played as a result of my ignorance! Had I anticipated Beliavsky's 11th move, I could have prepared one of the interesting sacrifices below.

12...♗e8 13.♗db5 ♜b6 14.b3 ♜h5 15.♗c1 c6
16.♗d4 ♜f6
16...♗g4!? 17.h3 ♜f6 18.♗e3



18...♗xe3?! This exchange sacrifice calls out to be played. (18...♗d7?! led to an eventual win for White in Manor – Kogan, Tel Aviv 1997.) 19.fxe3 ♜e5 20.♗d3 ♜d7 21.g4 ♜g3
22.♗f4 h5 23.♗f2 g5 24.♗f3 h4∞

17.h3

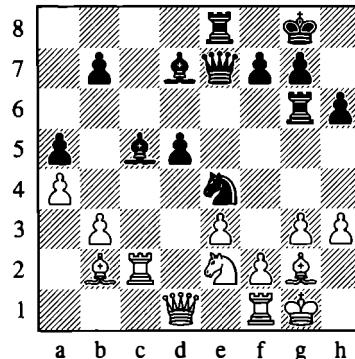


17...d5!

Initiating complications which are by no means unfavourable to Black.

18.cxd5 ♜bxd5 19.♗xd5 cxd5 20.♗b2 ♜e4
Black can opt for a less risky approach:
20...♗d7 21.e3 ♜c8 (or 21...♗e4 22.♗h5
♗g5=) 22.♗c1 ♜e4 23.♗h5 ♜f6 24.♗f3
♗e4 25.♗f5 ♜f8 26.♗xc8 ♜xc8 27.♗c1
♗d8 28.♗d1 ♜e6 29.♗d4 ♜d7=

21.♗c1 ♜e7 22.e3 ♜d7 23.a4 ♜a6!? 24.♗c2
♗g6 25.♗e2



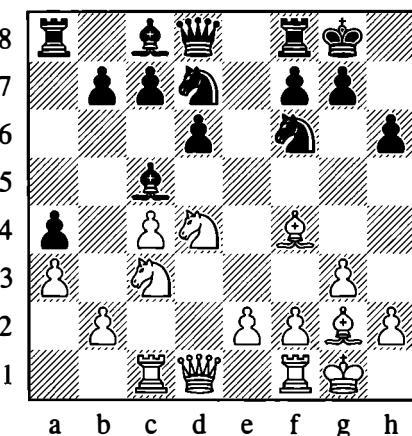
25...♗f5!

This can generate some wild tactics.
The more passive 25...♗d6? gave White an edge in Ulibin – Savon, Chelyabinsk 1991.

26. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

26. $\mathbb{W}xd5?$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3!$ 27. $\mathbb{B}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xf5$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 29. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\#$ 30. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2\#$
31. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{B}xg2\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{B}xe2\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 $\mathbb{B}xb2$ 34. $\mathbb{B}b5$ g6 35. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 36. $\mathbb{B}b5$ g5=+
26... $\mathbb{B}xg3!$ 27. $fxg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$
29. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 31. $\mathbb{B}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$
32. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}h2=$

13. $\mathbb{B}c1$



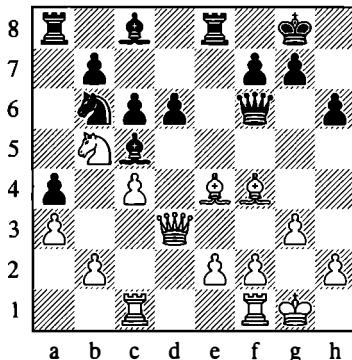
13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

13... $\mathbb{W}e8$ is also interesting.

14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$

17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{B}e7$

Very timid. Black misses a nice combination:
17... $c6!$



18. $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$

The alternatives are worse:

18. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ (or 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{B}xf4\#$)
19... $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$
18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$
 $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}h4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 24. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{W}e6\#$
18... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{B}xa8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xf1$ $\mathbb{W}xb2\#$

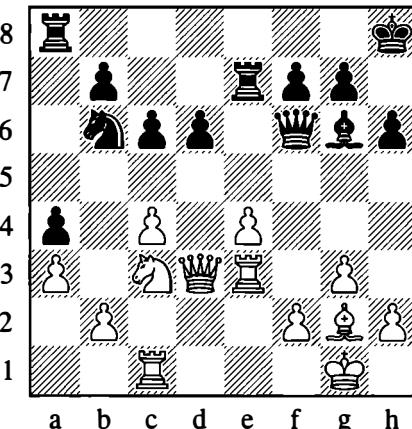
18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8?!$

White was threatening 19. $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$
20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$, but this is not a good reason for Black
to lose time. Much better is: 18... $\mathbb{W}d4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
g5 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ c6 22. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 23. e4
 $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$

19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 20. e4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 21. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ c6 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

Here I was too obsessed with simplifying
and missed the chance to claim a plus with
22... $\mathbb{W}e6$.

23. $\mathbb{B}xe3$



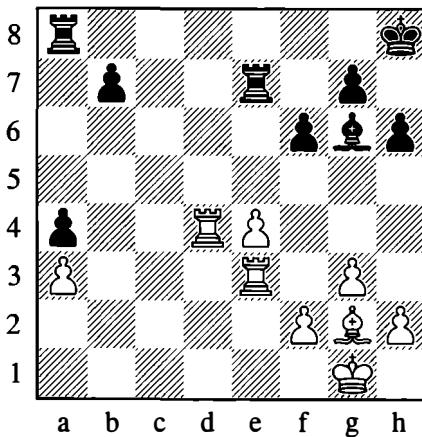
23... $d5?!$

After 23... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Black's position is still
slightly preferable.

24. $cx d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $cx d5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xd5$
 $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 27. $\mathbb{B}d1$ f6 28. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$

Slightly better than 28... $\mathbb{W}b5$ 29. $\mathbb{B}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e8$
30. $\mathbb{W}b4\pm$.

29.♗xd4



With some colourless play, Black has conceded his opponent a slight advantage. What would you play now? See the continuation of this endgame on page 355.

Dutch Defence

Commenting on his fantastic game against Bogoljubow from Hastings 1922, where he answered 1.d4 with 1...f5, Alekhine said, “A risky defence, which I very rarely used in tournaments. In this game though, I had to play at any price for a win in order to get the first prize. Therefore, I had to take a risk.”

My personal experience also tells me that all variations of the Dutch are difficult to uphold against energetic play by White. As an attempt to get an unbalanced game from the very beginning, I would recommend this defence only to very experienced players.

Mihai Suba – Daniel Rivera Kuzawka

Mondariz 2000

Points to look for in this game:

- Black embarks on a pawn sacrifice – 13...exd4?! 14.exd4 f4

- But White counters with an exchange sacrifice – 17.♘d2!
- Black commits hara-kiri – 18...♝g4?

1.♘f3 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.0–0 ♘g7 5.c4 d6 6.d4 0–0 7.♗b3!?

A slightly offbeat move which poses some interesting problems to the defender.

7...♝e4

The only move with a positive score in this position is 7...♝c6?.

8.♘c3 c6

Again 8...♝c6 is more to the point.

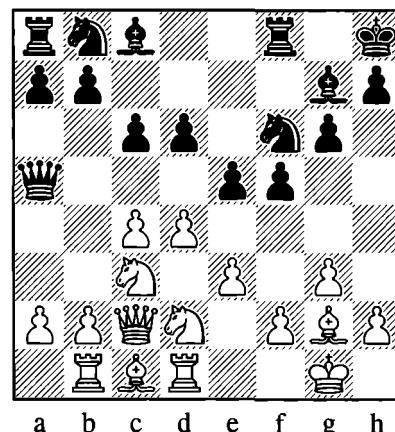
9.e3 ♘h8 10.♗d1 ♘a5 11.♘d2 ♘f6

A loss of time. Better is 11...♝c3 12.♗xc3 ♘xc3 13.bxc3 ♘d7 14.a4, although my preference still leans towards White.

12.♗c2 e5?!

Black is behind in development and doomed to lose more time with his queen. In such cases, engaging in central actions is not recommended. Instead 12...♝e6 is not too bad for Black.

13.♗b1



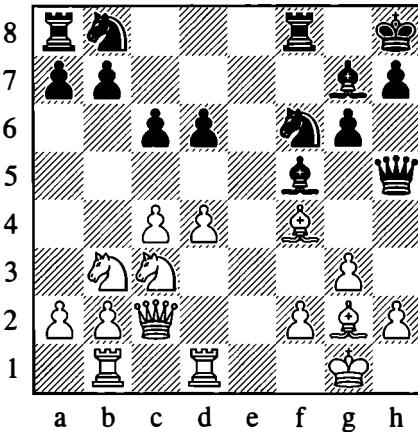
White is a little better; the main plan is 14.b4 followed by b5 and ♘a3.

13...exd4?!

This abandoning of the centre can only be explained by Black's sacrificial follow-up.

14.exd4 f4 15.Qb3 Wh5

Transferring the queen to the kingside must have been part of Black's scheme. Nevertheless a slight improvement is: 15...Wb4!?. 16.Qxf4 Qf5 17.Wc1 Qxb1 18.Qxb1 Qbd7 19.Wc3 a5 20.Wxb4 axb4 21.Qxd6 Wxa2 22.Qxb4 Wfa8 23.Qa3±

16.Qxf4 Qf5**17.Wd2!**

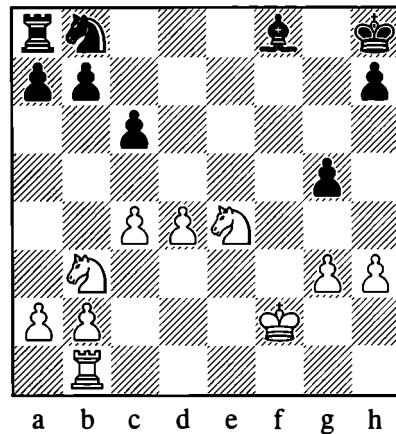
17.Qe4 is not easy to refute, but it is hardly worth contemplating this move as the exchange sacrifice is so self-evidently strong. In return for the small material investment White keeps one extra pawn and a considerable lead in development. Black will also have to worry about the weak pawn on d6.

17...Qxb1 18.Qxb1 Qg4?

Black launches into an attack with two pieces against an entire white army. It is no wonder that his action has fatal consequences.

After the more realistic 18...Qbd7 19.Wd1 Wxd1† 20.Qxd1± Black still has reasonable chances to defend.

19.h3 Qxf2 20.Wxf2 g5 21.Qf3 Wf7 22.Qxd6 Wxf3 23.Qxf8 Wxf2† 24.Qxf2 Qxf8 25.Qe4



In addition to being a pawn up, White has all the trumps you could imagine in this endgame: better development, the better king, better mobility, a good pawn centre and the initiative.

25...h6 26.Qbc5

Also good is 26.Qe3 Qa6 27.Qa5 Wb8 28.a3+- . We leave the rest without diagrams and comments, as it is quite straightforward.

26...b6 27.Qe6 Qd7 28.Qe3 Qe7 29.Qf1 Qg8 30.d5 cxd5 31.cxd5 Qc8 32.d6 Qf8 33.Qxf8 Qxf8 34.Qf2 Qd7 35.Qf6† Qxf6 36.Qxf6 Qg7 37.d7 Qd8 38.Qd6 h5 39.Qe4 Qf7 40.Qe5 Qe7 41.Qe6†
1-0

Post-game reflections

Black seemed to be determined to carry out an attack using only half of his army. Although this kind of policy may seem outrageously optimistic, it can actually work well in certain variations of the Dutch, and even in the above game Black could still have maintained an acceptable position even after having made several "exotic" moves. White's exchange

sacrifice provided a convincing antidote against the kingside demonstration, and Black should have gone into defensive mode but instead his stubbornness in attacking at all costs proved to be his undoing.

Grünfeld Defence

Alexander Tolush – Mikhail Botvinnik

USSR Championship, Leningrad 1939

Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ A powerful exchange sacrifice – 11... $\mathbb{W}xd5!$
- ◆ White falters under pressure – 13. $\mathbb{W}d2?$ and 14. $\mathbb{E}d1?$
- ◆ A simple combination to decide the game – 23... $\mathbb{Q}xa2!$

In the following game, Tolush introduces a new idea, designed to surprise Botvinnik. But a counter-surprise changes his role from hunter to hunted.

**1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 4. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e3
0–0 6. $\mathbb{E}c1$ c5**

Less active alternatives are 6...c6 or 6...dxc4 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ c6.

7.dxc5

7.cxd5? would be a bad mistake due to 7...cxd4 8. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xd5??$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\ddagger$.

7... $\mathbb{W}a5$

7...dxc4?! 8. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ leads to a queenless middlegame, where White enjoys both a lead in development and an extra pawn.

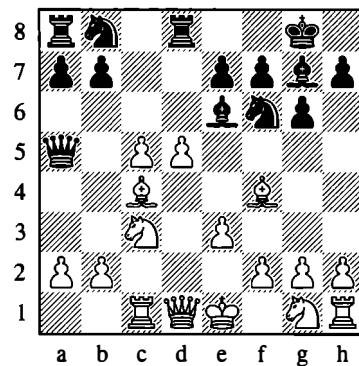
However, 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6??$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is an interesting alternative.

8.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$

8... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ favours White.

9. $\mathbb{W}d2?!$

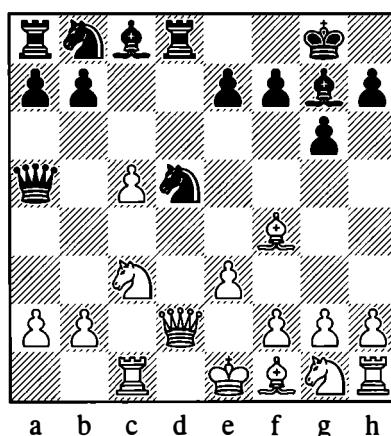
White does better to return his extra pawns with the following line: 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$



10.b4! $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ Black does not have quite enough for the exchange and must fight for equality.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

It looks as if White is going to be crushed in no time at all, but matters are not so simple.

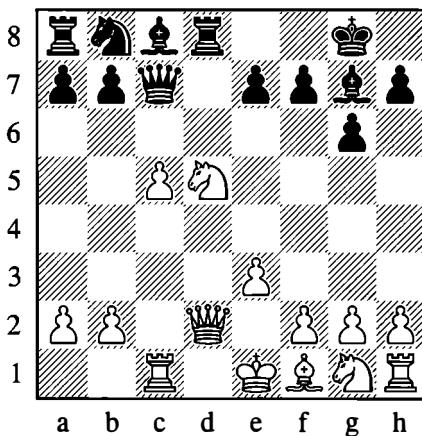


10. $\mathbb{Q}c7!$

Tolush had based his preparation on this paradoxical trick.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\ddagger$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5\ddagger$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ gives Black a clear advantage.

10... $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 11. $\mathfrak{Q}xd5$



In his preparation, Tolush may have assumed that Black would be forced to reply 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$, when play continues: 12. $\mathfrak{R}d1$ $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ (12...e6? 13. $\mathfrak{Q}c7!+$) 13. $\mathbb{W}c1$ (13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathfrak{Q}d4!$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 14. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 15. $\mathfrak{Q}ec3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 16. $\mathfrak{Q}xc3$ (16. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ f6 17. $\mathfrak{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathfrak{Q}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 18. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 19.0-0 with equality. But that is not the case...

11... $\mathfrak{R}xd5!$

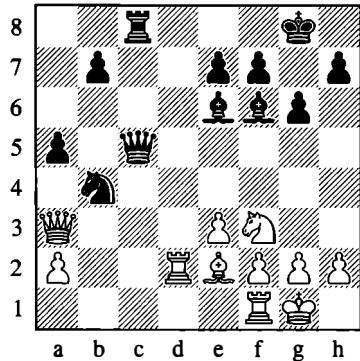
This exchange sacrifice, probably also “homemade”, is justified by White’s underdeveloped kingside. It promises Black at least a draw.

12. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$

More ambitious than: 12... $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 14. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 16.bxa3 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 17. $\mathfrak{R}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 18. $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$ Black’s compensation includes his lead in development, the two bishops, and the weakness of the white a-pawn.

13. $\mathbb{W}d2?$

The surprise brings dividends; White misses 13. $\mathfrak{W}d3!$ (with the idea of 14. $\mathbb{W}a3$). For example: 13... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 14. $\mathfrak{R}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ a5 17. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathfrak{Q}b4$ 18. $\mathfrak{R}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 19.0-0 $\mathfrak{R}c8=$



White has completed his development, but Black still has ample compensation with his two bishops and strong queenside pressure, and a draw seems the likely result. It may not have been easy for White to accept such a conclusion, having been the exchange and a pawn up.

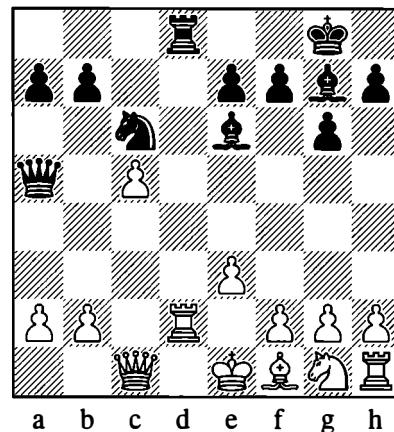
13... $\mathfrak{Q}c6!$ 14. $\mathfrak{R}d1?$

A second mistake turns White’s position from inferior to untenable.

White had to try: 14. $\mathfrak{R}c3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15. $\mathfrak{R}a3$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 16. $\mathfrak{Q}d3$ $\mathfrak{R}d8$ 17. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathfrak{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19.0-0 $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 20. $\mathfrak{W}xb2$ $\mathfrak{Q}xb2$ 21. $\mathfrak{R}xa7!$

14... $\mathfrak{R}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 16. $\mathfrak{R}d2$

Black has a huge lead in development, but he must decide how best to exploit this before White brings his kingside pieces into play.



16...♝d5!

Not only winning back a pawn, but also transferring the avenue of attack from the d-file to the c-file.

17.♛e2 ♞xc5 18.♛c3 ♞xc3

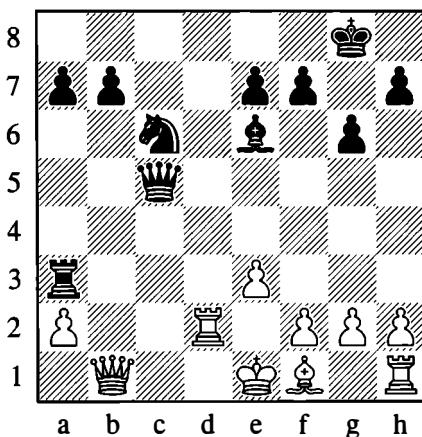
Black also gets a strong attack with 18...♝b4 or 18...♞f5.

19.bxc3 ♞xc3 20.♗b2 ♞a3

And here, 20...♞f5 and 20...♛e5 are good alternatives.

21.♗b5 ♜c3 22.♗b2 ♜c5 23.♗b1

Grabbing pawns will only quicken the decision: 23.♗xb7 ♜c1† 24.♔e2 ♜c4† 25.♔f3 ♜xd2 26.♗xc4 ♛e5† 27.♗g3 ♜xe3†!–+

**23...♝xa2! 24.♝xa2 ♜a5†**

Botvinnik's energetic play has yielded him a material advantage to go with his initiative. The rest is purely routine and does not require any comment.

25.♝d2 ♜a1 26.♝d3 ♜xb1† 27.♝xb1 ♛e5
28.♔e2 ♜b5† 29.♝d3 ♛xd3 30.♝xd3 a5
31.♝hd1 ♜c4 32.♝f3 b5 33.♝d7 a4 34.♝a7
b4 35.♝d8† ♛g7 36.♝da8 a3 37.g3 ♜b5
0–1

Post-game reflections

This was a sharp tactical battle, typical of the Grünfeld Defence. White played the opening riskily, but his clever 10.♝c7! kept him in the game. Black could have gone for an equalizing line, but Botvinnik preferred to raise the stakes with the promising exchange sacrifice 11...♝xd5!, which gave him a strong initiative for the material. Tolush could have kept himself in the game with 13.♗d3! or 14.♝c3, but he failed to adapt to the new set of circumstances on the board – not an uncommon reaction by players confronted with an unexpected sacrifice.

Most chess players are like Oscar Wilde – they can resist everything but temptation!

Mikhail Tal – Zbigniew Szymczak

Lublin 1974

Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ White launches his attack – 18.♝h5!
- ◆ A sacrifice to get to the king – 32.♝xd6!
- ◆ Finishing the game in style – 37.♝h5!!

This game holds special memories for me. It was the first tournament I played abroad and my first encounter with that genius of the board known as the Wizard from Riga. People said that Tal would wait for his opponent to get tired and short of time, and then play one of these “Tal sacrifices”, half-correct as they might be. This time it did not happen that way. Tal’s sacrifice was absolutely correct; indeed, it was winning almost by force. Then in the ensuing play Tal made several mistakes, but the young Polish player missed his drawing chances. This is proof that Tal did not calculate everything, and most of his sacrifices may be considered intuitive.

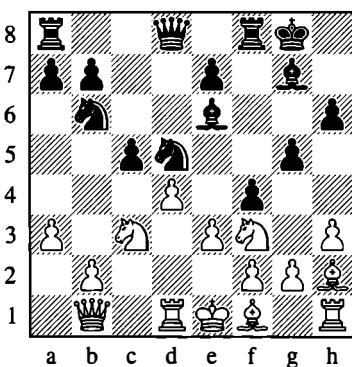
When he prepared or played a combination, Tal became very excited. Walking away from the table, he always needed to share his thoughts with somebody, even during the game. My game in the third round was decided unusually quickly, and I was available to listen to his excited confessions. Therefore, I “knew” most of the moves he played before anyone else did! The young Kasparov was of a similar ilk, but he spoke the variations so quickly that it was very difficult to follow him.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. $c4$ $g6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $d5$ 4. $cx d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
5. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$
0–0

Another approach is:
8... $h6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{E}d1$

I was trying to imitate Tal by playing this way in Suba – Mikhalchishin, Lugano 1987, but my attempt failed miserably!

11...0–0 12. $h3$
 12. $d5!$ is more critical.
12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $f5$ 14. $e3$ $g5$ 15. $a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$
16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $f4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2?$ $c5?$

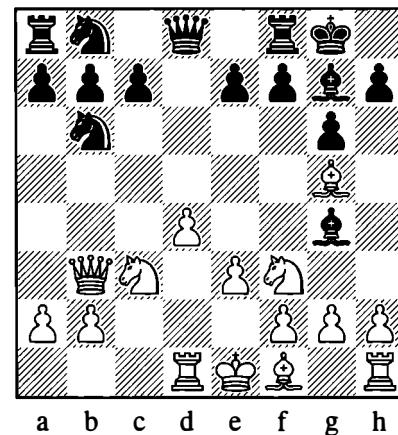


This move was a bluff...

18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 ...which I believed!
 Taking the pawn gives White an edge:
 18. $dxc5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e8$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 22. 0–0±
18... $fxe3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 21. $fxe3?$
 21. $\mathbb{E}f1$ was my last chance to make a fight of it.

21... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ –+
 And Black soon won.

9. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10. $e3$



10... $a5?!$

This move has little point. Better is
10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$ or any developing move.

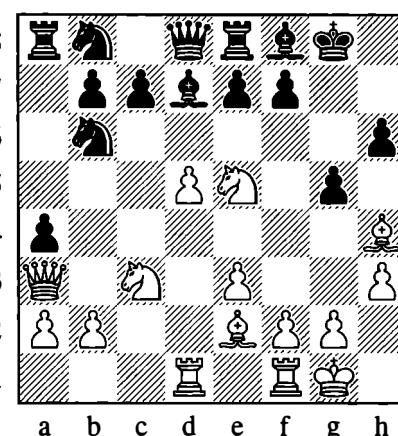
11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $h6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $a4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black is already in some trouble, and should seriously think of setting up a passive defence with
14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $c6\pm$.

15. $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. 0–0± $\mathbb{Q}f8?$

The Polish player could not resist the temptation to line up his bishop with the white queen on the a3-f8 diagonal.

17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $g5?$

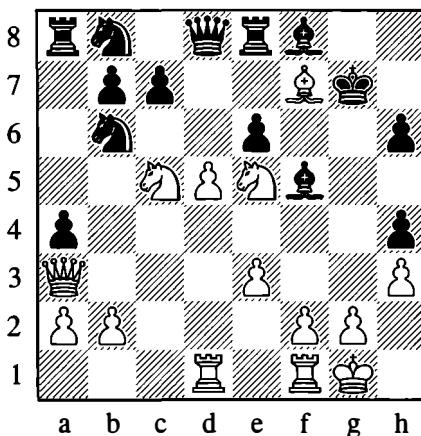


18.♗h5!

Oops! Where did that bishop come from?

18...gxh4 19.♗xf7† ♗g7 20.♘e4?

Tal can also make mistakes! The simple 20.♗b4 gives White a decisive advantage. For example: 20...e6 21.♗e4 ♗f6 22.dxe6 ♜e7 (22...♜xe6 23.♗g4†) 23.♗xd7 ♜8xd7 24.♗g4† ♗g5 25.exd7 ♗xg4 26.hxg4+– But Misha was looking for mate.

20...♚f5 21.♘c5 e6**22.dxe6**

Again, White has a better option: 22.♗xe8 ♗xe8 23.dxe6 ♜h7 24.♗c3 ♜xc5 25.♗xc5 ♘a6 26.♗c3±

22...♗f6 23.♗c3 ♜xc5

Best, as 23...♜d6 is met by 24.f4 ♜e7 25.♘xb7 ♜xe5 26.fxe5 ♗g5 27.♗xf5 ♗xf5 28.♗d6 ♗g5 29.♗e8† ♜xe8 30.♗xe8 with a clear advantage to White.

24.♗xe8 ♘a6

24...♚d6? allows 25.♗xd6! cxd6 26.♗c7† winning.

25.♗f7 ♜b4

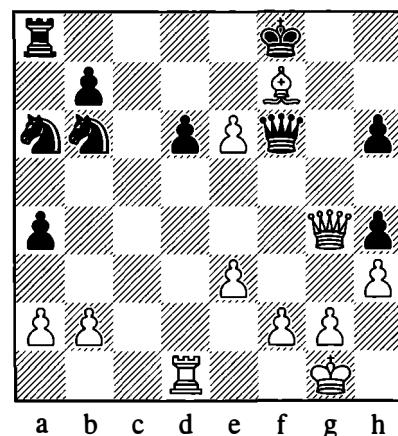
Safest is 25...♜d6 26.♘f3 ♗xc3 27.bxc3 ♘c5 28.♘xh4 with approximate equality.

26.♗d4 ♜c5 27.♗f4 ♜d6! 28.♗xd6 cxd6**29.♘g4 ♗xg4 30.♗xg4†**

Misha can still be reasonably happy with his position; he has two pawns for a piece, and the black king is not exactly safe. I believe that Tal always assigned considerable value to this detail.

30...♗f8

After 30...♗g5 31.♗d4†, White wins the b6-knight.

31.♗d1

I was following the game closely, and I thought that White's attack was coming to an end. When Misha walked away from the board, I told him that I did not like his position anymore and he answered, "But I do!" Of course, I was wrong and Tal was right. Objectively, the position may be equal or even slightly preferable for Black, but I didn't consider the human factor, which Tal always did! It was so easy for an opponent to forget about safety and fall into one of Tal's devilish traps.

31...♗c8

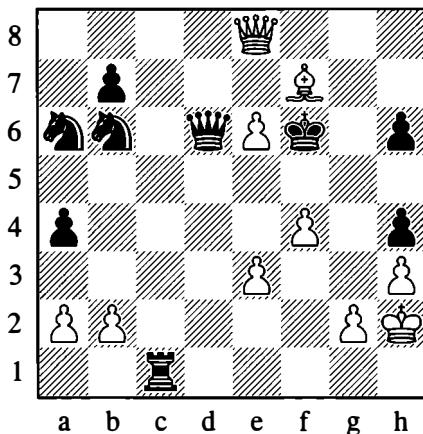
31...♗e7! is a much better defence. For example: 32.♗h5 d5 (32...♗h8 33.♗d4 a3 34.bxa3 ♗f8 35.♗f7 ♘c5 36.♗f4 ♗a1†

37.♗h2 ♕e5 38.♗g1=) 33.♗d4 ♕g5 34.♗d1 ♕e5 35.♗f3 ♖c5 and although White has fair compensation for the piece, Black may be just a shade better.

32.♗xd6!

It looks like White has blundered a rook, but Tal has seen further.

32...♗c1† 33.♗h2 ♕e5† 34.f4 ♕xd6
35.♕g8† ♔e7 36.♕e8† ♔f6



37.♗h5!!

An incredible position; a rook and a piece up, Black is helpless!

37...♕xe6

Nor does 37...♕c7 help, in view of 38.e7!.

38.♕f8†

1–0

Post-game reflections

In some ways this was a typical Tal game. His first 18.♗h5! sacrifice should have been winning almost by force, but it turned into more of a positional sacrifice after he failed to find the most incisive continuation. Later Black got right back in the game, but he failed to cope with Tal's continuous

pressure and eventually allowed a decisive combination. The final 37.♗h5!! was a beautiful finishing blow, especially as it echoed the earlier bishop move with which he first launched his attack almost twenty moves before.

"This brat has some future!"

In 1992, the big surprise of the Palma de Mallorca Open was a seventeen-year-old Bulgarian IM, who led the whole tournament until the last round. Tukmakov offered him a draw before the game, which for Topalov would have meant clear first place. I remembered that I had been in a similar situation in the last round of the GMA rapid tournament in Murcia a couple of years before, also against Tukmakov, except that a draw was not enough for me to win the tournament. I refused, and Tukmakov won the game and the tournament. On this occasion, when the boy refused such an experienced grandmaster, who outranked him by 70 points, and then went for a theoretical but risky piece sacrifice, my thoughts were... as expressed in the motto.

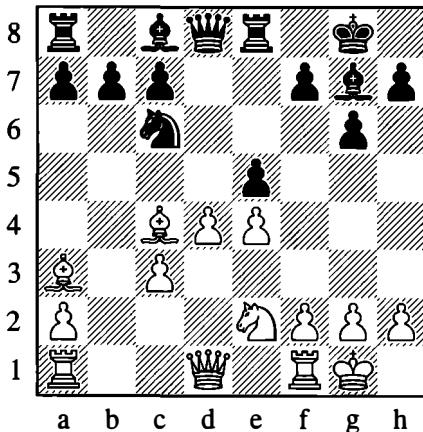
Veselin Topalov – Vladimir Tukmakov

Palma de Mallorca 1992

Points to look for in this game:

- An interesting though unnecessary sacrifice – 11.♗xf7†?!
- Exchanging the right pieces – 15.♗c1! in the notes
- Black takes over – 15...♗g4!

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5
5.e4 ♜xc3 6.bxc3 ♛g7 7.♗c4 0–0 8.♗e2
♜c6 9.0–0 e5 10.♗a3 ♜e8

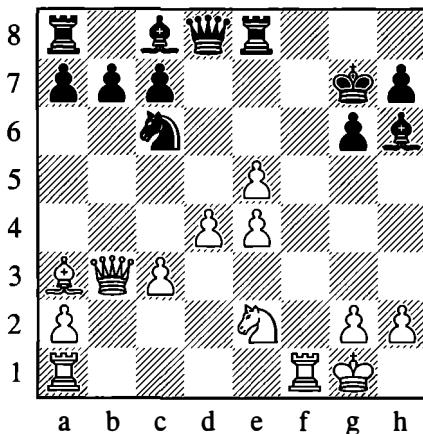


11.♕xf7??

The sacrifice on f7 is a curious weakness of Topalov's. In this book alone there are three of them.

Most players would prefer 11.d5 ♜a5 12.♖d3 with a small plus for White.

11...♝xf7 12.♗b3† ♜f6 13.f4 ♜h6 14.fxe5† ♜g7



15.♗f6?

An uninspired move. The rook may look nice being close to the black king, but in reality it is doing nothing.

The right plan was 15.♕c1!. It is always useful

to upset the coordinated play of the opponent's two bishops, and when material down this becomes quite essential! Furthermore, how else can White make use of Black's weakened dark squares? Play may continue: 15...♜xc1 16.♝axc1 ♜a5 17.♗f7† ♜h6 18.h4 ♜e7 19.♗f4† ♜g7 20.h5 gxh5 21.e6 ♜xe6 22.♗e5† ♜g8 23.♗xa5 ♜c4 24.♗f2 b5 25.♗f4 with a level game.

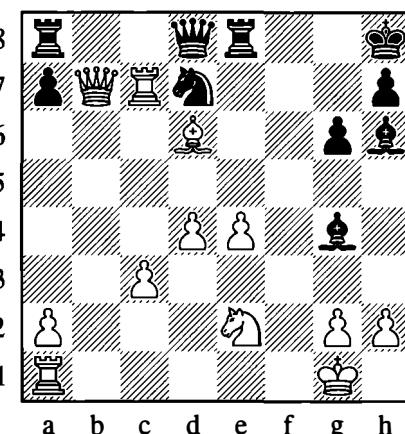
15...♝g4!

Now White is in real trouble, as if he moves his knight then ...♞xd4! will be crushing.

16.♗f7† ♜h8 17.♗xb7 ♜xe5

This is the simplest way to avoid problems, but objectively 17...♝g8! is even stronger.

18.♗xc7 ♜d7 19.♗d6



19...♝c8?!

After 19...♝b8 Black wins immediately, for example: 20.♗xa7 ♜b2 21.♗f4 ♜h4 22.d5 ♜xe4 23.♗f1 ♜b1++

20.♗g3 ♜xc7 21.♗xc7 ♜g5 22.h3 ♜e3† 23.♗h2 ♜xc3 24.♗f1 ♜e6 25.d5 ♜g8 26.♗f4 ♜xf4 27.♗xf4 ♜f6 28.♗a6 ♜g7 29.♗xa7 ♜f7 30.♗e2 ♜e5 31.♗g1 ♜e7 32.♗d4 ♜xd4† 33.♗xd4 ♜xe4

0–1

In my database it says 33... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0–1, but since that move would lose immediately to 34. $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$, I reckon that it was actually the rook that captured.

Post-game reflections

Every now and again in this book, I have included a game, such as the above, to remind the reader (and myself!) that not every colourful intuitive sacrifice will end happily. There is much to admire about the young Topalov's combative attitude. His decision to refuse a draw and play ultra-aggressively may have cost him first prize in that one particular tournament, but it was that same fighting spirit that brought him one of the most monumental tournament performances of all time when he won the World Championship in San Luis 2005. As for the game itself, it highlighted the need to follow up a sacrifice vigorously, as after White's error on move 15 the game became largely one-sided.

Teimour Radjabov – Alexei Shirov

Kings Tournament, Bazna 2009

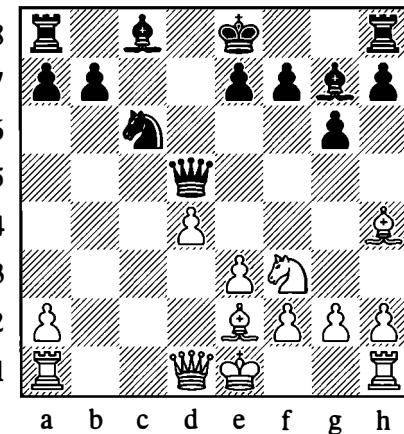
Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ Black gets himself into trouble – 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ and 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$
- ♦ A strong exchange sacrifice – 22. $\mathbb{B}b5!$ and 23.d5!
- ♦ White misses his chances – 25.e7! and 30. $\mathbb{B}b2!$ in the notes

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

The once popular line 5.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 6.h4 gives White nothing but problems after 6... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ when Black has an active position plus the two bishops.

5...c5 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 8.e3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ cxd4 11.cxd4

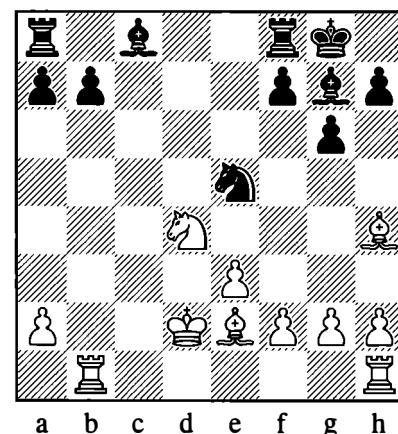


11...e5

Shirov is playing a line with a dubious reputation.

More frequently played is 11...0–0 12.0–0 e5 13.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}a5$, still with a slight advantage for White.

12.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{B}ab1!$ 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$



16... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

A dubious novelty in an already inferior position.

Most natural seems 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 18. $\mathbb{B}hc1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 20. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $a5$, reaching a slightly worse position which Beliavsky has managed to draw twice.

17. $\mathbb{B}hc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Giving up this bishop is not something to take lightly, but it is already difficult to suggest anything fully satisfactory for Black.

18. $exd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

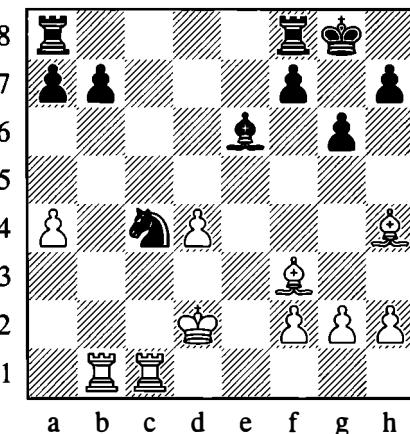
This was Shirov's idea – the knight is headed for d5.

19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $a4!!$

Not bad, but the simple 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 22. $\mathbb{B}al$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 26. $d5$ leaves White a clear pawn up.

20... $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$

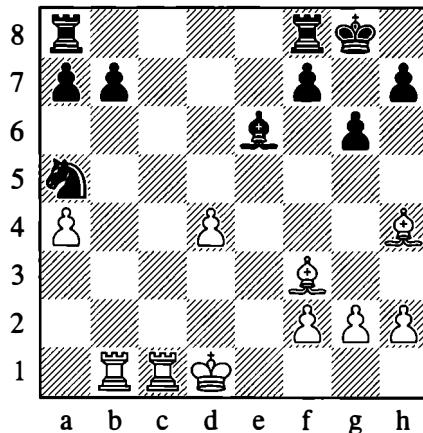
Perhaps 20... $f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 22. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 24. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ gives more drawing chances.



21. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$

Not 21. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$, when Black wins an important tempo.

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



22. $\mathbb{B}b5!$

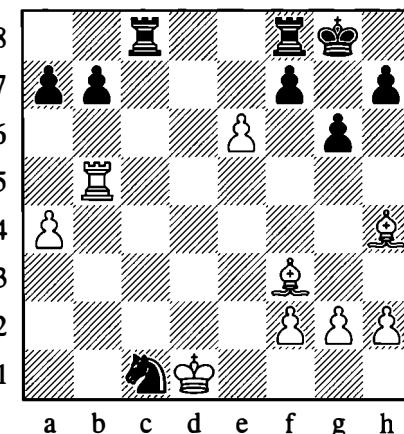
This move, which implies an exchange sacrifice, is more appetizing than 22. $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $b6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, although here too White has an advantage.

22... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 23. $d5!$

Technically this is the moment where the sacrifice takes place, but Radjabov had certainly planned it on the previous move, as there is no other logical idea for White.

23... $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 24. $dx e6$ $\mathbb{B}ac8!$

Remarkable cold-bloodedness by Shirov, and indeed the only chance to defend.



25. $\mathbb{Q}xb7?$

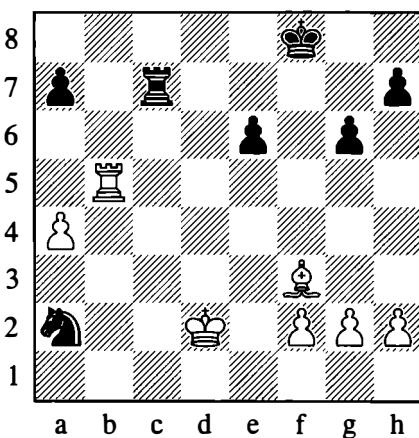
This move throws away most of White's advantage. It should be noted that both contenders were already short of time, especially Black.

White should play: 25.e7! $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 28.a5 f6 29. $\mathbb{E}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 30. $\mathbb{E}b7$ $\mathbb{E}c4$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ $\mathbb{E}d4\uparrow$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}xd6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{E}xe7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ and the a-pawn will cost Black a rook.

25... $\mathbb{E}c4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{E}xe6$

26... $\mathbb{Q}a2!$ is probably better, for example: 27. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}xe6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 29.a5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}b4$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}b7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{E}xb7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ and it should end in a draw.

27. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$



30. $\mathbb{Q}b3?$

Missing 30. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}d7\uparrow$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 32. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{E}c7?$ (32... $\mathbb{Q}d5\uparrow$ is essential although after 33. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ Black faces a difficult endgame after either recapture) 33. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xc2$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 38.f4 and White wins the pawn endgame.

30... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 31.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 32.a6 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 33. $\mathbb{E}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 34. $\mathbb{E}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 35. $\mathbb{E}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ e5 37. $\mathbb{Q}e6$
½-½

Post-game reflections

Despite the early queen exchange, White had no intention of agreeing a quick draw, and Black never came close to equalizing from the opening. White's exchange sacrifice put him firmly in control, until his subsequent errors spoiled the win. Time trouble played a role, and it seems that the difficult psychological process of choosing between more than one promising continuation took its toll on Radjabov.

King's Indian Defence

The variations of this opening are so numerous and different in character that is difficult to group them under a single heading; at least two subdivisions must be made.

In variations with an open centre, Black makes up for his lack of space with strong piece pressure, the Indian bishop generally playing a very important role. It is usual to involve the wing pawns in the fight. The a-pawn advances to secure the knight's position on c5, and/or to open the a-file. The h-pawn may also march forward to weaken the white king position.

In variations where the centre is blocked, the qualitative majorities of both sides will advance, leading to a real race between attacks. I will offer the reader an example of a thematic positional game from each of these two broad categories.

Vladimir Tukmakov – Leonid Yurtaev

USSR Championship (semi-final), Riga 1988

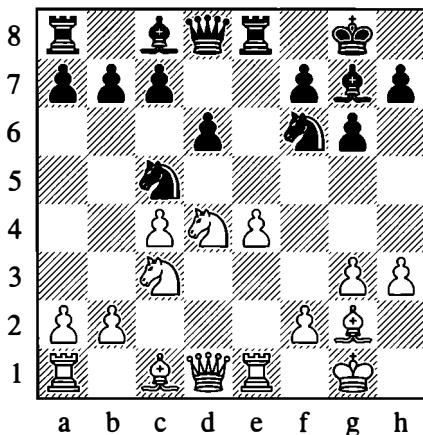
Points to look for in this game:

- Move order subtleties – 17...h4! and 19.e5! in the notes
- An intuitive piece sacrifice – 21...h4!
- A modest but deadly queen move – 25... $\mathbb{W}f5!$

The player of the black pieces died at a relatively young age in 2011. Mikhail Golubev wrote in *Chess Today*: "Leonid Yurtaev was an exceptionally gifted tactician who defeated many world-famous players in individual games such as Tal, Ivanchuk, Morozevich, the very young Kasparov and Aronian. He developed many special lines in the openings."

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4.g3 0-0 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$
 d6 6.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 8.e4 exd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}el$

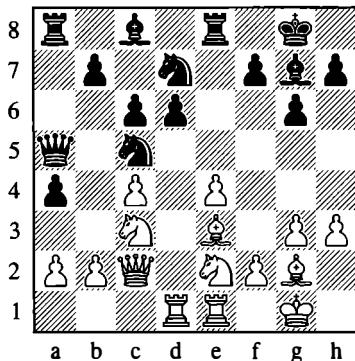
A standard position in the King's Indian.



11...d7

Most common is 11...a5, when White may continue:

a) 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c6 13. $\mathbb{H}e3$ a4 14. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$
 15. $\mathbb{Q}de2$ $\mathbb{W}a5!=$



This position first arose in Smyslov – Ciocaltea, Bucharest 1953. The reader is invited to check for himself what happens if White now takes on d6.

b) 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ c6
 15. $\mathbb{B}bd1$ $\mathbb{W}b6!$?! 16. f4 $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$!)
 17...a4 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c1$
 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$?! (20... $\mathbb{W}a5$) 21. a3 $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xc1$
 23. $\mathbb{B}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 24. $\mathbb{B}cd1$ $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ Tukmakov –
 Suba, Decin 1977.

c) 12. $\mathbb{Q}db5!$ is the most effective option, keeping an edge for White.

12.♗b1!? h6

"In Aseev – Yurtaev, Barnaul 1988, Leonid introduced his famous idea 12... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}h2$ $\mathbb{E}e5$, preparing ... $\mathbb{W}h5$." – Golubev.

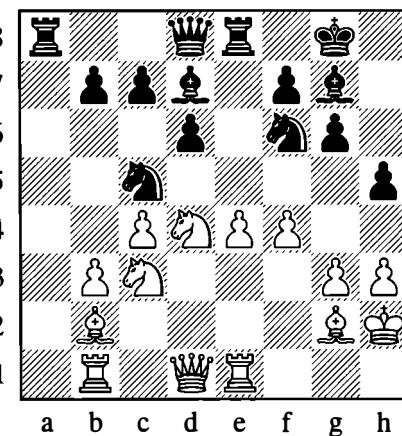
13. h2?!

It is not evident that the king is any better placed here than on g1. White should prefer 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ or 13.b3.

13...a5 14.f4

Preparing a breakthrough in the centre to activate his light-squared bishop.

14...a4 15.b4 axb3 16.axb3 h5 17.Qb2



17...c6?!

The accurate choice of move order is one of my favourite themes, be it in the opening, a middlegame plan or a complex combination.

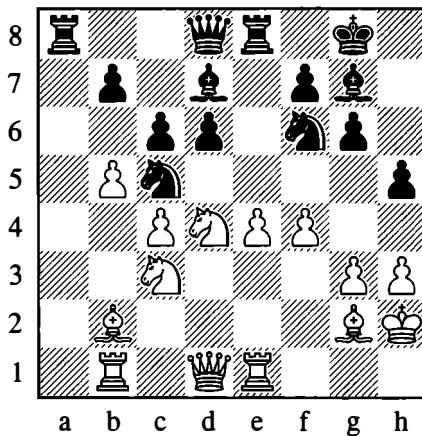
Black would have been better playing 17...h4! 18.g4, and only then 18...c6. The difference here is that if White continues 19.b4 ♜a6 20.e5 dxe5 21.fxe5, as in the note to White's 19th move below, then Black has the reply 21...♝c7! which gives him a good game.

18.b4! ♜a6

18...♜e6 19.♝f3! is good for White.

19.b5?!

Now it is White who gets confused by matters of move order. The correct way is: 19.e5! dxe5 20.fxe5 ♜h7 21.b5±

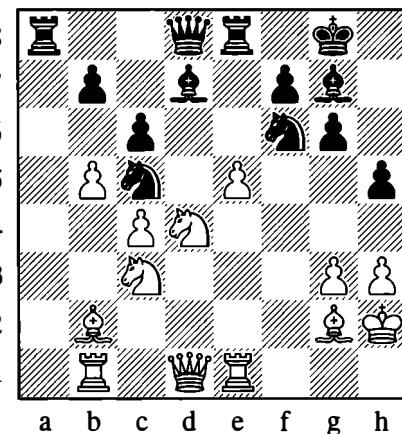
19...♝c5**20.e5?**

Yet again the move order betrays Vladimir. White could still claim an edge with 20.bxc6! bxc6, and then 21.e5 dxe5 22.♝xc6±.

20...dxe5 21.fxe5?!

It is safer to exchange rooks with 21.♝xe5 ♜xe5 22.fxe5 and now 22...h4?! is less harmful: 23.exf6 hxg3† 24.♝h1 ♜xf6 25.♝ce2 ♜f2

26.♛g1 ♜d3 27.♛xf2 gxg2 28.♝c3 c5 29.♝f3 ♜e6 30.♝xg7 ♜xg7 31.♝f1=

**21...h4!**

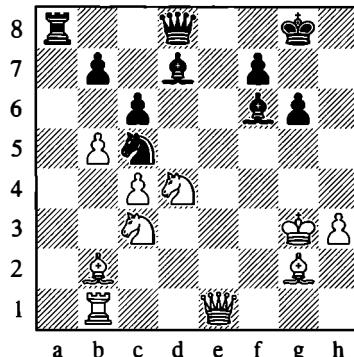
An inspired piece sacrifice, based on Black's domination over all the dark squares on the kingside. Black's pieces are also cooperating well, whilst White's queenside pieces, apart from protecting each other, cannot help much with the defence of their king.

22.exf6?!

White would have been better off rejecting the gift by 22.bxc6 hxg3† 23.♝g1 with good drawing chances. For example: 23...bxc6 24.♝xc6 ♜xc6 25.♛xd8 ♜axd8 26.♝xc6 ♜fd7 27.♝e4 ♜xe5 28.♝xe8 ♜f3† 29.♝h1 ♜xe1 30.♝xf7† ♜xf7 31.♝g5†=

22...hxg3† 23.♝h1

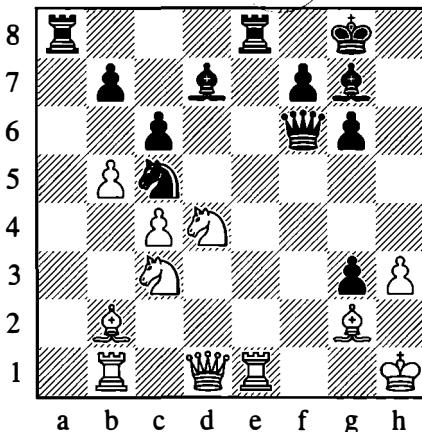
23.♝xg3?! ♜xe1 24.♛xe1 ♜xf6 is losing outright for White, for instance:



25. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3\#$
 28. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}h2\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$

23... $\mathbb{W}xf6$

Black has launched a dangerous assault. It is not clear how White can avoid losing material.



24. $\mathbb{E}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xe8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$

More resistance is offered by: 25. $bxc6$ $bxc6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}f2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 28. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{E}e3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $g5!$ Controlling the f4-square. 34. $\mathbb{E}d1$ (34. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}h2\#$) 34... $c5$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ Even here, Black has a clear advantage.

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

Black's attack has been focused almost entirely on the dark squares, but now for a brief moment he switches his attention to a light square, d3, which will then act as a lethal springboard for the knight to hit the dark-square targets of b2 and f2.

26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

26. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ cannot save the game either:
 26... $\mathbb{E}xe2!$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$
 29. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xb1\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xf1\#$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$
 32. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 33. $bxc6$ $bxc6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3\#$
 35. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}e4+$

26... $\mathbb{E}e3$

White's last move covered the sensitive d3-square but allowed a deadly fork, so with nothing more to play for, he resigned.

0-1

Post-game reflections

Apart from the obvious points regarding the counterattacking potential and dark-square strategy associated with the King's Indian, I found the move order subtleties between moves 17-20 an especially fascinating aspect of this game. The events of these few moves constituted the most critical moments of the battle. First Black made the mistake of holding back from the accurate 17... $h4!$, but White missed two chances to seize the advantage. His punishment was swift and quite deserved, as the subsequent 21... $h4!$ came with even greater force, and the game was over in just five more moves.

Boris Gelfand – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu

Kings Tournament, Bazna 2009

Points to look for in this game:

- An important intermezzo – 14... $e3!$ in the note to move 10
- An outstanding positional sacrifice – 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!!$
- Black misses the best follow-up – 26... $\mathbb{Q}xg2!$ in the notes

1. $d4$ $d6$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $g6$ 3. $c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4. $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $e5$ 7. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $a5$

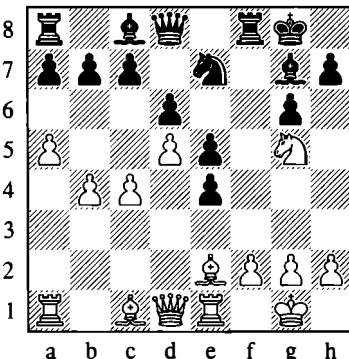
There is no need to rush with this typical move.

Black often plays:

10... $f5$ 11. $a4$

The main line of 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$, which has Radjabov as one of its main defenders, is still lacking a definite assessment.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12.a5 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



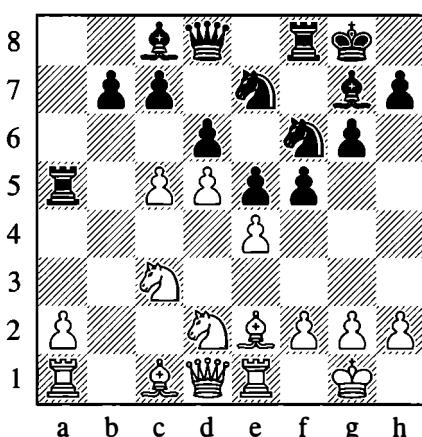
14...e3!

In Suba – Berbatov, Albacete 2008, Black missed this very important intermediate move, and after 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ he got the worse of it and eventually lost.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 19. dxе6 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 20. c5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

Black should hold this position.

11.bxa5 f5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.c5 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$



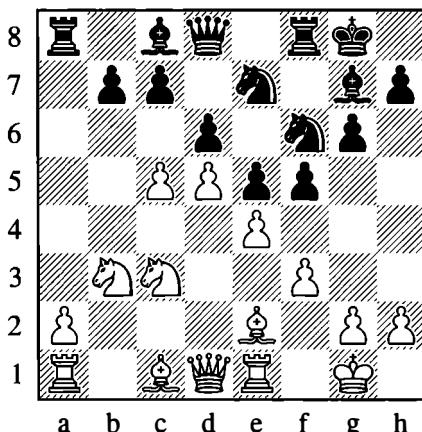
14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

This novelty does not seem best. The more

natural 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ has been played several times.

14... $\mathbb{E}a8$ 15. f3

White cuts off his third rank communication with the kingside. Although not really a mistake, given the variation and the stage of the game, it is somewhat undesirable for White.



15...f4

This limits White's space on the kingside and will be followed by the g- and h-pawns strolling towards the enemy base. The logic behind this action was called by Nimzowitsch a "qualitative majority". I would prefer to describe it in more simple terms as a more mobile group of pawns.

Another plan for Black here begins with 15... $\mathbb{Q}h5$.

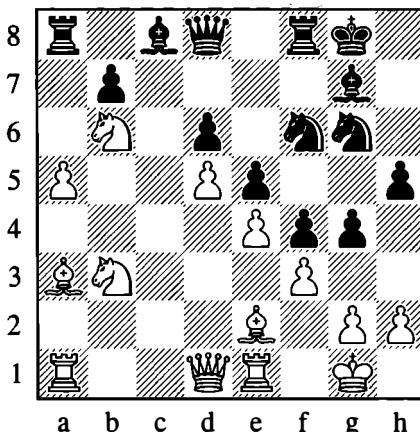
16.a4 g5 17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ h5 18.a5 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ g4

Typically for the "closed" variations of the King Indian, Black has a plentiful concentration of troops near to the white king, while White has to drive a lot of his forces towards the queenside, trying to use his superiority on that wing. Outnumbering White's resources on the kingside may provide

Black with chances of crushing victories. Such chances could be the main explanation for the popularity of an apparently clumsy defence.

21.♘b6

It seems that White has arrived first, but...



21...♗xe4!!

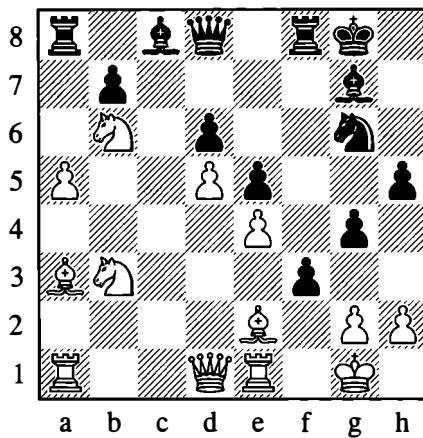
An exceptional move by the Romanian player, turning the game into a sea of tactics. The direct threats are 22...♘c3 and 22...♗h4.

The sacrifice aims to activate the black pieces, while effecting a radical change in the dynamics of the position. We may discard some of our admiration for this sacrifice on the grounds that Black was forced to take extreme action, because “normal” moves such as 21...♗b8 are strategically unacceptable. On the other hand, we may redirect our admiration towards Dieter, who had probably seen the idea some way in advance.

22.fxe4

After 22.♗b1 ♗h4 23.♗xe4 ♘f5 24.♗c4 gxf3 25.♗xf3 ♘xa5 26.♗xa5 ♘xb6† 27.♗h1 e4 28.♗xh5 ♘xal 29.♗xal ♘xa5, Black has the initiative.

22...f3



23.♗f1

The alternatives are:

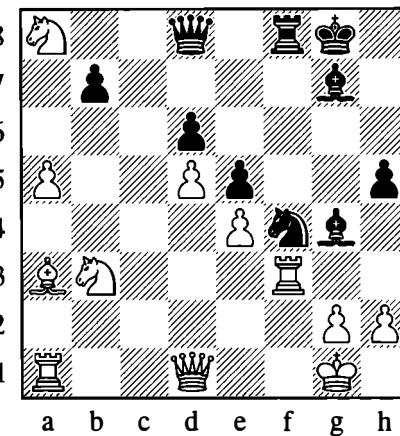
23.♘xa8? f2† 24.♗h1 g3 25.♗d3 ♘f4
26.♗xg3 ♘xe2 and Black wins.

23.gxf3?! ♘h4 24.♗d2 ♘f4 25.♗f1 g3 26.♗e2 ♘xa5 27.♗bc4 ♘h6 28.♗xa5 ♘xe2† 29.♗xe2 ♘e3† 30.♗h1 ♘f2 and White has to give up his queen.

23...♘f4

Dieter also considered the powerful-looking 23...♗g5 24.♗c4 ♘f4, but after 25.♗xd6 fxe2 26.♗xf4 exf4 27.♗e7! White's superiority is obvious.

24.♗xf3 gxf3 25.♗xf3 ♘g4 26.♗xa8



26... $\mathbb{W}xa8?$

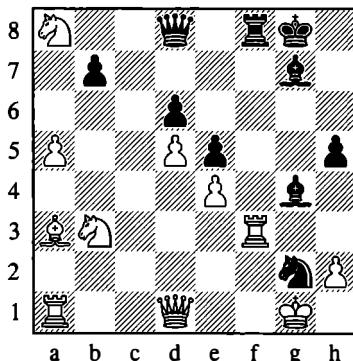
Top chess today is very much calculation-driven, and it is obvious that man can no longer compete with computer programs in such tasks. However, the impossibility of calculating all the consequences of a heavy material loss does not mean that one should not sacrifice. As mentioned in the note to Black's 21st move, the contrary is the case: sometimes there is no acceptable alternative to sacrificing.

Black had two significant alternatives here:

26... $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$ is playable, though not best:
 27. $\mathbb{B}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 29. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}f4$
 30. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 31. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 32. $\mathbb{B}c1$ (32.d6
 $\mathbb{W}c2$ 33. $\mathbb{B}ed3$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$ 34.d7 $\mathbb{B}e1\#$ 35. $\mathbb{B}xe1$
 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 36. $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{B}f6$) 32... $\mathbb{W}b5$ and Black has a reasonable game.

The strongest move is:

26... $\mathbb{Q}xg2!$



27. $\mathbb{B}xf8\#$ $\mathbb{B}xf8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 29. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h4!$
 29... $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 30. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}a7\#$ 31. $\mathbb{B}h1$ $\mathbb{W}a6$
 32. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{B}h6$ 33. $\mathbb{B}xf4$ $\mathbb{B}xf4$ 34. $\mathbb{W}g2$ and
 White is better.

30. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

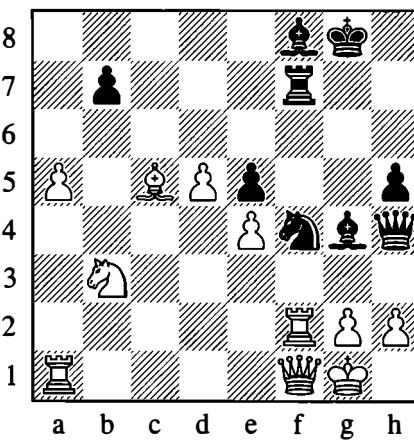
30. $\mathbb{B}xf4$ $\mathbb{B}xf4$ 31. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{W}h3$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}e3\#$
 33. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}cb5$ $\mathbb{B}h3$
 and Black has sufficient compensation for the piece.

30. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$ 31. $\mathbb{B}g2$ (31. $\mathbb{B}h1?$ $\mathbb{B}f3\#$
 32. $\mathbb{B}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}e1\#$ 33. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{W}g1\#$ 34. $\mathbb{B}xh3$
 $\mathbb{W}g4\#)$ 31... $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ 32. $\mathbb{B}g1$ (32. $\mathbb{B}h1?$ $\mathbb{B}f3\#-$)
 30... $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$

30... $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$ 31. $\mathbb{B}g2$
 31. $\mathbb{B}h1$ $\mathbb{B}xd4$ 32. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 33. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{B}e7$
 with compensation for the exchange.
 31... $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ 32. $\mathbb{B}h1$ $\mathbb{W}h3$ 33. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e6$
 $\mathbb{B}h6$

Again, Black has adequate compensation for the exchange. In all the variations given above (and many others I analysed), my personal impression is that the only player who risks losing is White.

27. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 28. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 29. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{B}f8$
 30. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{W}h$



This is too late; White now has no problems defending.

31. $\mathbb{B}h1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 32. $\mathbb{B}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}g3\#$ 33. $\mathbb{B}g1$ $\mathbb{B}xc5\#$
 34. $\mathbb{B}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 35. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{B}xe2$ 36. $\mathbb{B}f2$

The price paid for the white queen has been too high.

1–0

Post-game reflections

In this game we saw two outstanding players crossing swords over a complex and fashionable

opening variation. It looked as though White was gradually imposing his positional strategy, but after an inspired intuitive sacrifice on move 21, Black took over the initiative, shattering the shell around White's king and immersing the board in a cauldron of tactics. Gelfand showed tremendous resolve in finding the best defensive moves, and unfortunately for Nisipeanu, who may have been psychologically handicapped by being a whole rook down, he faltered near the end. The harsh reality of chess is that sometimes it is not enough to find a fantastic idea – you must also follow it up with extreme precision and vigour.

Chapter 10

The Modern Benoni

This defence is specially cherished by the author, as it also was by Tal, Kapengut, Psakhis and even Fischer. In his comments for ChessBase, GM Stohl calls me “the great Benoni devotee” and for many Spanish players I am “Father Benoni”. In this opening, Black cannot afford to hand the initiative to his opponent; therefore, he must oftentimes forget the nominal value of a pawn or the disparity between a rook and a minor piece.

There are two types of sacrifices, the correct ones and mine – Mikhail Tal

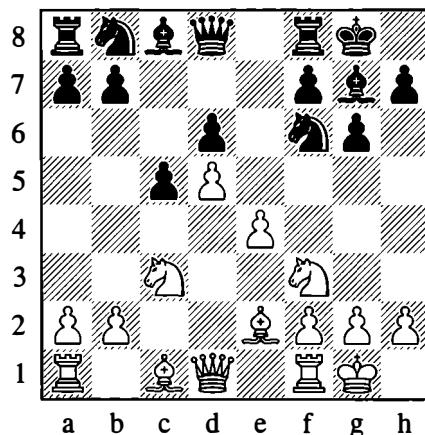
Vladimir Tukmakov – Mikhail Tal

USSR Championship, Moscow 1969

Points to look for in this game:

- A dynamic piece sacrifice – 16...f5!
17.exf5 ♕xf5!
- Mixing in play on the queenside – 19...b5!
- White collapses under pressure – 26.♕fc1?
and 27.b3?

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5
d6 6.e4 g6 7.♘f3 ♘g7 8.♗e2 0–0 9.0–0



9...♝e8

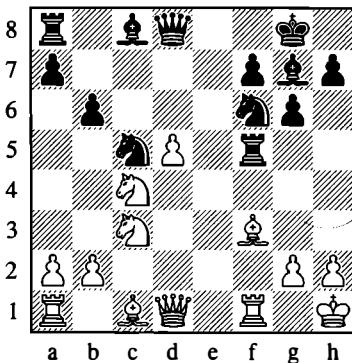
This is the classical way to play this position, but nowadays 9...a6 10.a4 ♘g4 is preferred. Exchanging one minor piece, especially his light-squared bishop for a knight that might be en route to c4, is a big success for Black in the Modern Benoni. For more details about this variation, see the game Lputian – Suba on page 222.

10.♘d2!

With a more refined move order in the opening, White can almost force this position, denying Black the better option mentioned in the previous note.

10...♝bd7 11.f3

A solid approach. More aggressive is: 11.f4 c4 12.♗h1 ♝c5 13.e5 dxe5 14.fxe5 ♜xe5 15.♗xc4 ♜f5 16.♗f3 b6!

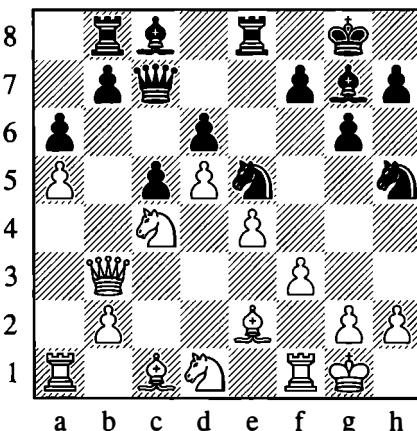


Black has enough counterplay. At this point it becomes clear why Black abstained from including the moves ...a6, a2-a4; with the bishop unable to go to a6, the position would be quite bad for Black.

11...a6 12.a4 ♜c7 13.♗b3

This move is curious, to say the least.

After 13.♗c4 ♜b6 14.♗e3 ♜d7 15.a5 ♜c4 Griffiths – Miles, Birmingham 1972, White can keep an edge with: 16.♗h1! ♜h5 17.♗c4 b5 18.axb6 ♜xb6 19.g4 ♜xc4 20.♗xc4 ♜f6 21.♗xa6±

13...♝e5 14.a5 ♜b8 15.♗d1 ♜h5 16.♗c4**16...f5! 17.exf5 ♜xf5!**

17...gxsf5 is playable, but the more dynamic text move is much more in Tal's style. It also involves the sacrifice of a piece, which would have demanded a balance of calculation and intuition.

18.g4

White should accept the challenge, otherwise Black will have a beautiful position at no material cost.

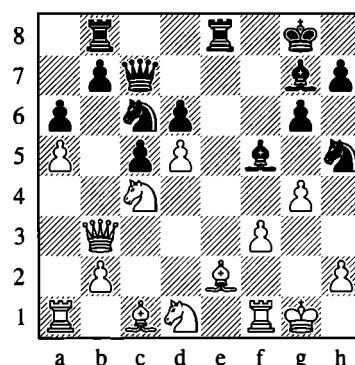
18...♝xc4

There were two other interesting possibilities:

18...♝xg4?? 19.fxg4 ♜xe2 20.♗f3 ♜d4† 21.♕e3 ♜d3 22.♗xd4 ♜xc4 23.gxh5 cxh4 24.♗c1 ♜e5 25.♗f6 ♜d7! This will result in a drawn double rook ending!

The black knight can also make a most surprising retreat:

18...♞c6??



19.dxc6

19.♗b6? ♜xb6 20.♗xb6 ♜d4 21.♕c4 ♜xf3†! 22.♗xf3 ♜xg4 23.♗f1 ♜h3†

19...♜xe2

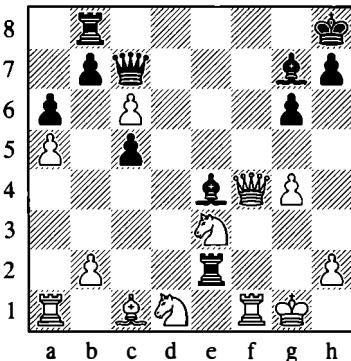
White is unable to do much damage with the discovered check.

20.♗ce3† d5!

Decoying the queen.

21.♗xd5† ♜h8 22.f4

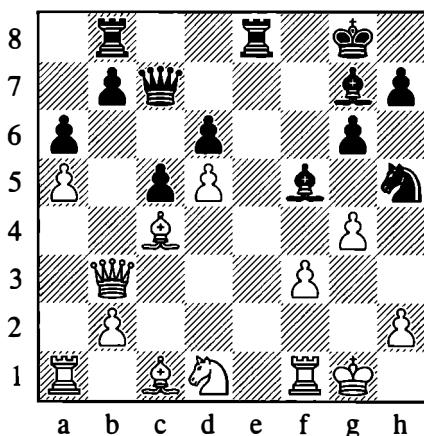
22. $\mathbb{Q}g2?$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ is strong.
22... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf4$



24... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f2$
25. $\mathbb{W}xc7??$ $\mathbb{Q}g2\uparrow$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3\uparrow$ is mating.
25... $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e1\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f2=$

Neither side can avoid the move repetition.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$



19... $b5!$

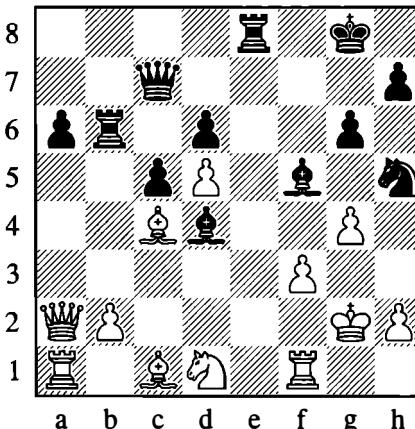
Tal finds the perfect moment to open the queenside and bring his other rook into play.

20. $a xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}a2$

21. $\mathbb{W}a3?!$ would have given White the possibility of defending along the third rank, although 21... $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ still gives Black a dangerous initiative.

21... $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

Even worse is 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}bb8$, when White is a piece up but his forces are severely disorganized. Black's advantage is probably decisive.



22... $\mathbb{W}g7?!$

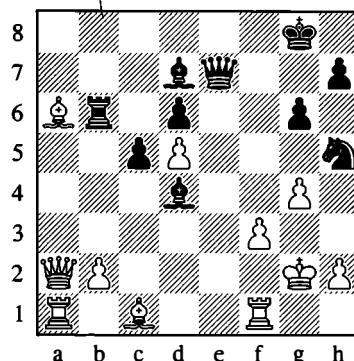
Black has a strong alternative in 22... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ and if 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ then the attack is tremendous. This is quite typical for the Benoni, when most white pieces have been attracted to the queenside for "strategic reasons".

23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Again, Black could play 23... $\mathbb{Q}c8$, and after 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ I think anybody would prefer to have the black pieces.

24. $\mathbb{Q}d2?!$

After 24. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ the best Black can do is: 24... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\uparrow$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$

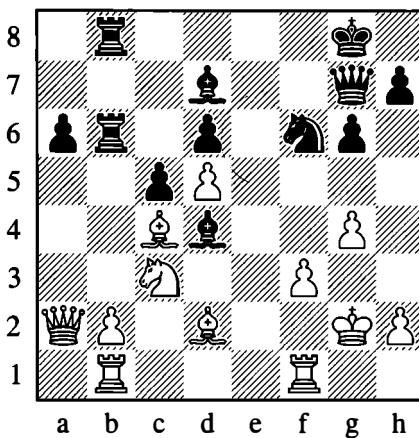


26... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$! 27.fxg4 $\mathbb{W}e4\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$
 29. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}e3\uparrow$ with perpetual check.

24...g6b8

This move gives Black a favourable position, but he could have obtained a more significant advantage with 24... $\mathbb{W}f6$!, aiming to bring the knight to f4.

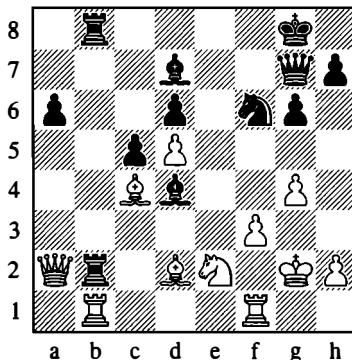
25. tabl 4 f6



26. gfc1?

Abandoning the king, which now has to confront the black army alone. This is a blunder which should lose immediately.

Moreover, White misses a never-to-be-repeated bargain – the opportunity to trade his pathetically out-of-play queen for two rooks by: 26. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ $\mathbb{B}xb2$



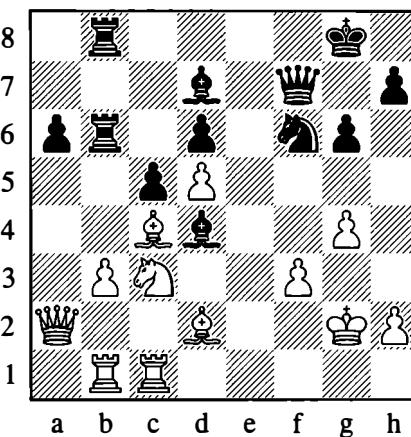
27. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ $\mathbb{B}xa2$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xb8\uparrow$ $\mathfrak{Q}e8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xa2$
 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 31. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathfrak{Q}f8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h6\uparrow$ $\mathfrak{Q}f7$
33. $\mathbb{E}b7\uparrow$ and White has excellent chances to draw.

26... $\mathbb{W}f7$

Oddly, Misha did not play 26... $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$; 27.fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4-$ +, leaving the white king at his mercy.

27.b3?

27. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ is a better defence, but Tal is already comfortably in the driving seat.



27... ♜xg4!

White will not be given another chance.

28. $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{Q}e5$

White resigned without bothering to check out 29.♔e2 ♔b5 30.♔h6 ♔d3, when Black's advantage is crushing.

0-1

Post-game reflections

Looking at this game, it is easy to see why Tal was one of the most fearsome Benoni players in all of chess history. The Modern Benoni is positively brimming with dynamic potential, and once the pawn break 16...f5! appeared on the board, Black's whole position sprang to life.

helped by the subsequent 19...b5!. It is hard to guess the extent to which Tal was relying on calculation versus intuition, but it is obvious that both these skills must be developed to a high level by anyone wishing to emulate this style of playing.

Jamais deux sans trois – old French adage

Nathan Birnboim – Mihai Suba

Malta Olympiad 1980

Points to look for in this game:

- Instigating favourable tactics – 11.Qd2 Qc7 12.Qc4 b5! in the notes
- White misses a promising continuation – 15.Qf4! in the notes
- An intuitive exchange sacrifice – 15...Qxe4!

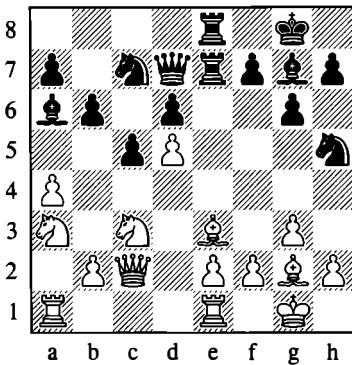
The aforementioned motto of this game means “never two without three” and may apply to some life events (such as marriage, for example), but not to the exchange sacrifice in a single game, for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, the idea that a material concession may imply further material concessions, in order to sustain the initial one, should be present in the minds of all players who venture into such risky business. Hopefully, the balance of dynamic assets has been severely upset by the first sacrifice and the law of conservation will not function for some time.

1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.Qc3 g6 7.Qg2 Qg7 8.Qf3 0-0 9.0-0 Qa6 10.h3?

This move, a favourite of Korchnoi's, is easy to understand: White prepares 11.e4 without having to reckon with 11...Qg4. Its drawback is the loss of time and the weakening of the structure around the white king, as you will see in the note to White's 11th move.

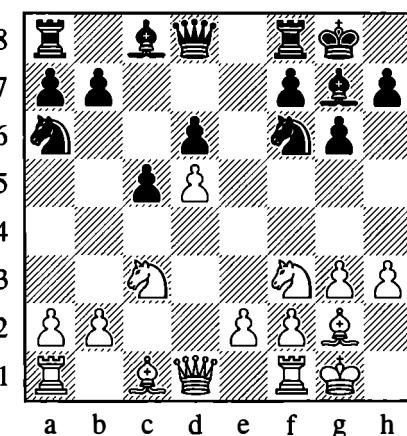
Let's take a look at the alternatives:

10.Qf4 appears the most active move, but such activity probably offers nothing, for example: 10...Qc7 11.a4 Qe8 12.Qd2 Qh5 13.Qe3 b6 14.Qc4 Qa6 15.Qa3 Qd7 16.Qc2 Qe7 17.Qfe1 Qae8



White is gradually being hamstrung. 18.Qf3 Qf6 19.Qf4 h6 20.Qad1 g5 21.Qc1 Qg4 22.b3 Qe5 23.Qg2 f5 24.Qb2 g4 25.Qb1 h5 26.Qc2 h4 27.Qe3 Qf8 28.Qf1 Qe8 Due to Black's striking superiority, White could only await the *coup de grâce* in Birnboim – Beersheba 1986.

The best option for White seems to be 10.Qd2. For example: 10...Qc7 11.Qc4 Qf8 (Topalov prefers 11...Qh5!) 12.a4 b6 13.Qd2 Qa6 14.b3 f5 15.Qc1 Qd7 16.Qh6 Qxh6 17.Qxh6 Qf6 and the position looks equal, although Black went on to win in Haba – Bacrot, Germany 2009.



10...♝e8!

The popularity of 10.h3 decreased drastically when this logical answer became popular. What is curious is that Korchnoi still attached an exclamation mark to 10.h3 in one of his latest books.

One of Korchnoi's many crushing victories against Tal continued: 10...♝c7?! 11.e4 ♐d7 12.♝e1 ♐e8 13.♛g5 ♛f6 14.♛e3 ♜b8 15.a4 a6 16.♛f1 ♜e7 17.♞d2 ♐c7 18.f4 b5 19.e5 dxe5 20.♞de4 ♜d8 21.♞xf6† ♜xf6 22.d6 ♐e6 23.fxe5 with an obvious advantage for White, Korchnoi – Tal, USSR Championship 1962.

11.♝e1

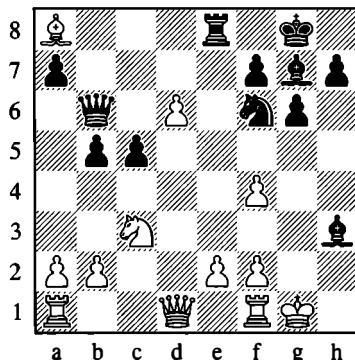
The strength of Black's 10th move is based on the continuation:

11.♞d2 ♐c7 12.♞c4 b5! 13.♞xd6

If White does not sacrifice the knight, his prospects are also dim. For example: 13.♞a5 b4 14.♞a4 ♐cxd5 15.♞c6 ♜c7 16.♞xd5 ♐xd5 17.♛xd5 ♜b7 and Black regains his piece, with a winning advantage.

13...♛xd6 14.♛f4 ♜b6 15.d6 ♐e6 16.♛xa8 ♐xf4 17.gxf4 ♜xh3

Black's attack is too strong, as shown by the following lines.



18.♛g2

In Kaidanov – O. Foisor, Moscow 1987, the Romanian player was following my analysis and playing quickly. White smelled a rat,

and so preferred 18.♛f3!, which allowed him to resist for 61 moves. However, giving back the exchange, with the d6-pawn practically lost and an unhealthy kingside pawn structure, is clearly not an opening success for the first player.

18...♛xg2 19.♛xg2 ♜c6† 20.♛g1 b4 21.♛a4 ♜d7

Also good are 21...♜f8 or 21...c4.

22.e3 ♜h3 23.d7 ♜d8 24.f3 ♜g3† 25.♛h1 ♜xd7 26.♛e2 ♜d5

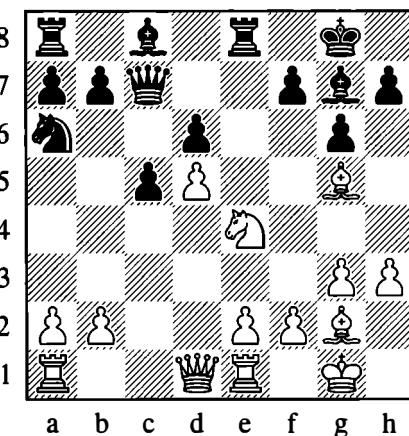
Black soon won in Kiss – Lazarev, Austria 1994.

11...♞e4 12.♞xe4 ♜xe4 13.♛g5 ♜c7?!

Today I would go for the much safer 13...♜f8, while 13...♜a5 also deserves attention.

14.♞d2 ♜e8 15.♞e4?!

A better try is 15.♛f4! ♜d8 16.♛c1 ♜b8 17.♞e4 f5 18.♛g5 h6 19.♛e6 ♜xe6 20.dxe6 g5 21.♛d2 ♜e7 22.♛d5 ♜c7 23.e4 ♜f8 24.♛c2 ♜xe4 25.♛xe4 ♜e5 26.♛ad1 ♜f6 27.♛e3 ♜xe6 28.♛d5 and White has definite compensation for the pawn.

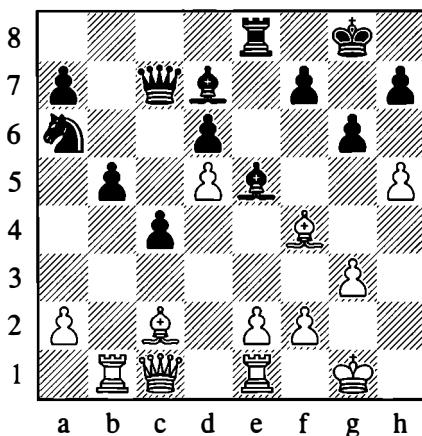
**15...♜xe4!**

The programs do not like true sacrifices as much as humans.

They suggest 15...♜xh3 16.♛f6† ♜xf6 17.♛xf6

$\mathbb{W}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$, but then... they quickly switch which side they prefer!

16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18. $h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c1$ c4 20.h5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b5 22. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



23... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Stronger was 23... $\mathbb{W}c5!$ 24.e4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2\#$.

24. $\mathbb{W}a3$

Of course, I was just testing my opponent and would not have repeated three times, which is yet another counter-example to the French saying. Surprisingly, it is White who avoids the repetition, relying on his kingside attack; a risky decision, looking at the mass of black pawns on the queenside. The problem of making use of folk wisdom (for example, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush") is knowing what parts of it apply, and when!

24... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f3$ a5 26.h6 $\mathbb{Q}h8$

The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 335.

A small leak will sink a great ship – Benjamin Franklin

In the following game, the "leak" took the form of an oversight in Big Vik's home laboratory.

Viktor Korchnoi – Mihai Suba

Beersheba 1984

Points to look for in this game:

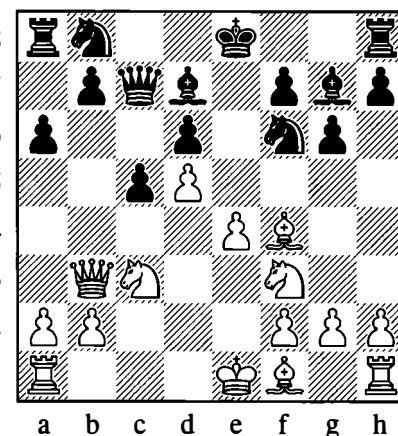
- Improving on Black's opening – 8...b5! in the notes
- A bad decision by White – 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd6?$
- A remarkable retreat – 13... $\mathbb{Q}c8!!$

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a6 8.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g7?$

Although this brought me success in the present game, there is no doubt that 8...b5! is a better move. See my game against Mihailovs at the end of the chapter on page 227.

9. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

Paskhis considers the position after 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b4\#$ as equal, based on a game he drew. But the general opinion is that the resulting position favours White.



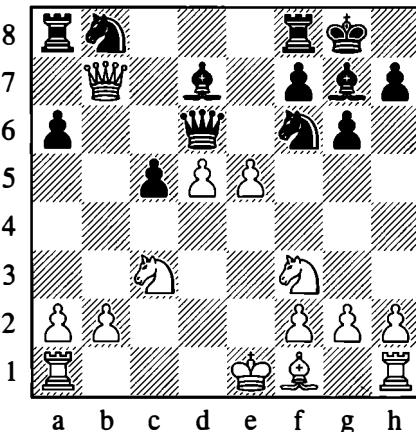
11. $\mathbb{Q}xd6?$

A sham piece sacrifice, deflecting the queen from the defence of b7; White will then pick

up the a8-rook. It is odd that a player who was so nearly World Champion goes chasing material before castling. Better is 11.e5!±.

11... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 0–0 13.e5

This looks much stronger than 13. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}b6$, when Black has a powerful attack.

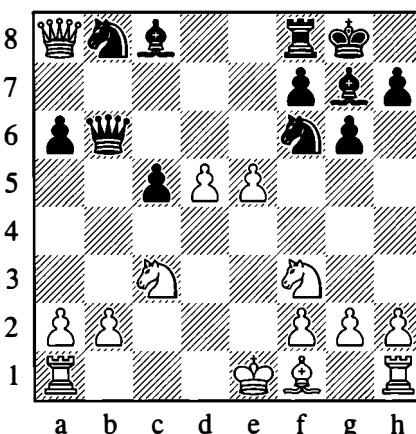


13... $\mathbb{Q}c8!!$

After this extraordinary move, Black is better in all variations. Of course I wasn't sure of that when I played 10... $\mathbb{W}c7$ and allowed 11. $\mathbb{W}xd6$. I was just seduced by the many delightful possibilities arising for Black after the text move.

14. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}b6!$

This is the point.

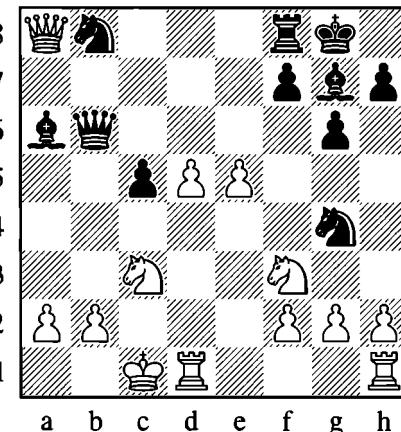


15. $\mathbb{Q}xa6?!$

Insuring the queen against being trapped, but... equivalent to resigning.

The reader is invited to analyse the more critical tries, 15.exf6 $\mathbb{W}xb2$ and 15.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 16.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$



White's position is lost. In addition to two pieces for a rook, Black also has a tremendous attack. I won't comment on the remainder of the game, as it was fully analysed in my book *Dynamic Chess Strategy*.

17.d6 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$
 23. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}b5$
 26. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 27.axb3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 29. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$
 0–1

Post-game reflections

In this game Black found success by giving up a rook and two pawns for a mere bishop, in return for a big lead in development and decoying the white queen into the corner. The remaining black pieces had a devastating charge of potential energy ready to turn into kinetic energy, and even "Viktor the Terrible" could not find a way out of the mess.

Smbat Lputian – Mihai Suba

European Team Championship, Debrecen 1992

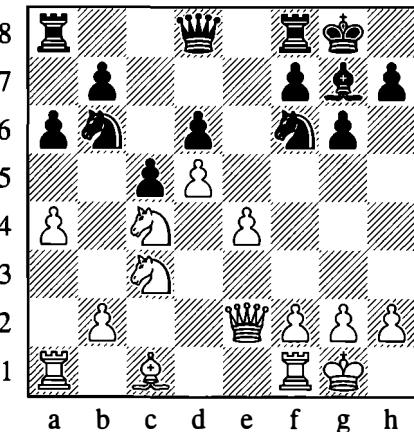
Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ Slightly overambitious play from Black – 19... $\mathbb{W}h4$?
- ◆ An interesting pawn sacrifice – 22...f5!?
- ◆ White misses the best defence – 28. $\mathbb{Q}e3$! in the notes

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 4.d5 d6 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 6.cxd5 g6 7.e4 a6 8.a4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10.0–0

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12.0–0 0–0 transposes to the game.

10...0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$



14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is a slight improvement although Black should still be okay after 14... $\mathbb{W}e7$, for instance 15.a5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 19.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 20.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21.exd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with equality.

14... $\mathbb{B}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$!?

Preventing $\mathbb{Q}f4$ but placing the knight far from the centre of action.

Even worse is 15... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$? 16. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ b5 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ b4, and now the strong pawn sacrifice 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$! bxc3 19.f3 cxb2 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ gives White excellent positional compensation.

Probably Black should opt for the modest 15... $\mathbb{W}e7$ and fight for a draw. For example: 16.f3 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 17.a5 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ f5! 24.exf5 gxf5 25. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ (25. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ =) 25... $\mathbb{W}f7$ with approximately equality.

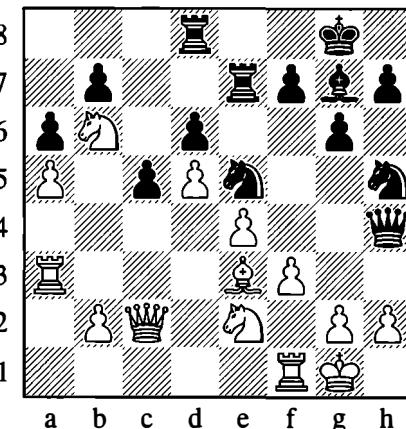
16.a5

After 16.g4?! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17.h3 h5 the white king's shield becomes fragile.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$!?

The temptation to attack the king can hardly be resisted. Black wants to prove how ineffective the knight is on b6. But White is well situated for defending the kingside without any help from that knight. Again, 19... $\mathbb{W}e7$ is more advisable.

20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$! $\mathbb{Q}bd8$ 21.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



22...f5!?

A best-chance sacrifice; Black gives up a pawn to activate his rooks.

23.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}de8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 25.fxg6 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$,

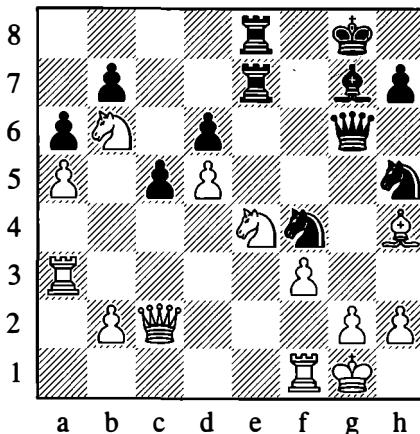
26.♕c3 ♔gf4 27.♔e4 ♕g6 28.♔h4?!

This leads to some difficulties and will require White's subsequent play to be precise.

28.♔g3?? ♔d4†–+ is much worse.

28.g3? is also insufficient: 28...♔h3† 29.♔g2 ♔g5 30.♔c4 ♔xe4 31.fxe4 ♔f4† 32.♔h1 ♔xd5 33.♔f3 ♕xe4†

28.♔e3! is the best defence. It is then Black who must play accurately to hold the balance. For example: 28...♔f8 29.♔d1 ♔h6 30.♔xf4 ♔xf4 31.g3 ♔fe8 32.♔h1 ♔e5 33.♔c4 ♔f6 34.♔b3 ♔xe4 35.♔xe4 ♔h6 36.♔xe5 ♔xe5 37.♔g4† ♔h8 38.♔g1 ♔e2 39.♔h4 ♕xh4 40.gxh4 ♔e7=



The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 300.

Self-criticism is acceptable only when public criticism is denied – paraphrasing Nimzowitsch

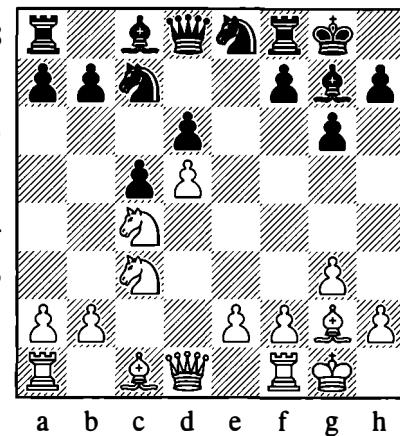
Evgeny Gleizerov – Mihai Suba

Mondariz 2000

Points to look for in this game:

- Overenthusiastic play from Black – 13...f5?!
- A costly mistake – 17...♔b5?
- Tactical alertness from White – 19.♔xc5!

1.d4 ♔f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♔c3 g6 7.♔f3 ♔g7 8.♔g2 0–0 9.0–0 ♔a6 10.♔d2 ♔c7 11.♔c4 ♔fe8

**12.♔f4**

This cheeky move, instead of the standard 12.a4, is quite annoying for Benoni players. It keeps an eye on d6, limiting Black's play, and if Black does not immediately reply ...g5, White may take control of the c1-h6 diagonal by ♕d2.

12...b6

Probably best. 12...f5 has given good results in practice, but it is better to delay it until White plays a2-a4.

It should also be noted that the immediate 12...b5?! is well met by 13.♔a5 when the knight is eyeing the juicy outpost on c6.

13.♔c1 f5?!

Safer is 13... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14.b3 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15.a4 f5 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$, and Black cannot complain.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2!!$

The Russian player is half-bluffing by allowing Black to advance on the queenside.

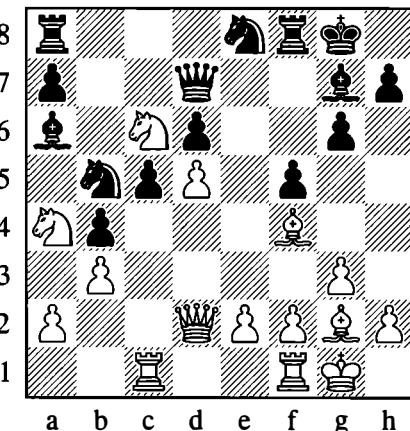
14.a4± should have been given higher priority, as it is not at all clear what Black would then do.

14... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15.b3 b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5?$

Black should have anticipated the attack on his queen with 17... $\mathbb{W}d7!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$, when the position is almost balanced.

18. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

The black queen has no good squares. After 18... $\mathbb{W}f6$ White can win the exchange by 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e7$, or he may choose to sacrifice his rook: 19. $\mathbb{E}xc5!$ dxc5 (19... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3\#$ 23.fxg3 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf1\#$) 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 22.d6 and Black cannot avoid heavy material losses.



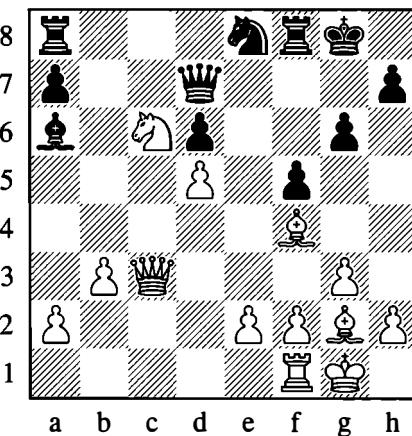
19. $\mathbb{E}xc5!$

This is not really a sacrifice, as White gets at least material equality in all variations. Still, the move is so visually striking that I felt it warranted a place in the book.

19... $\mathbb{Q}c3$

The offer cannot be accepted: 19...dxc5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e3\#$

20. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ bxc3 21. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc3$



White's rook "sacrifice" led to a forced sequence of exchanges, resulting in the present position. White presently has two pawns for the exchange, and his position is absolutely dominant. He will be able to create a strong passed pawn on the queenside, and the bishop pair and potential attack along the a1-h8 diagonal only add to Black's problems. The remainder of the game is less important so I will leave it without comments.

22... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 24.b4 a6 25.a4 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}b3$ h6 28. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 30.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 31. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 32. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 33.b5 axb5 34.axb5 $\mathbb{E}a8$ 35. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 36.b6 $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 37. $\mathbb{E}c4$ h5 38.h4 $\mathbb{W}f8$ 39. $\mathbb{E}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 40. $\mathbb{E}a7$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{E}xa7$ 42.bxa7 $\mathbb{W}f7$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

1-0

Post-game reflections

The disaster that occurred in this game is similar to that from my game against Sznajik (see page 298), with the small difference that here

I was the victim rather than the executioner. “Father Benoni” was given a tough lesson after overlooking the possibility of a rook offering itself for capture to a lowly pawn.

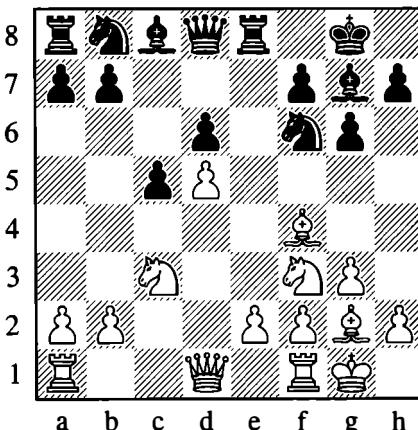
Pavel Eljanov – Veselin Topalov

Wijk aan Zee 2008

Points to look for in this game:

- Black allows his own bishop to be trapped – 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$?
- Missing a good chance – 23... $\mathbb{Q}d3!$!
- Black exchanges the wrong piece – 25... $\mathbb{Q}xg4?$

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 7.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0–0 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



10... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$

Perhaps dissatisfied with the more theoretical 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, Topalov carves a new theoretical path with a move that had almost never previously been played in the position.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is well answered by 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

After 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ a6 12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14.e4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}cl$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 16.b3 h6 17.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$

18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ Black has all his pieces on good squares and thus can be quite satisfied.

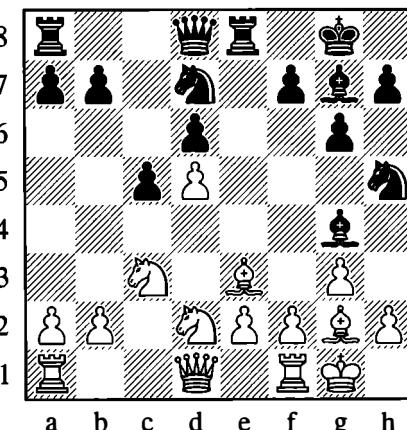
11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$

Does this lose a piece, as many might think? There is a fine distinction – Black is not losing a piece, but sacrificing it!

The alternatives cannot bring Black any joy:

12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14.bxc3 b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7\pm$

12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14.bxc3 b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16.a4 a6 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18.h3 White is able to keep Black's activity under control and has the better long-term prospects. For example: 18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ f6 21.e4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22.axb5 axb5 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c4 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}eb1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xal$ f5 27. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$



13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xh3!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 15.fxg3

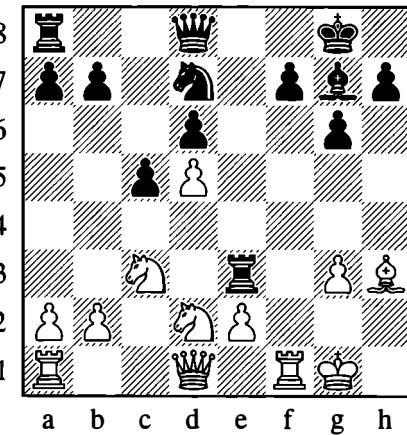
15. $\mathbb{Q}e1?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3!$ 16.fxg3 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is dangerous only to White.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

Commenting on this game for ChessBase, GM Marin says: “A long time ago, I learned from GM Mihai Suba that in the Benoni it is not so important how good your position is objectively; the essential thing is to have ‘some’ play.”

I would say that about a last-chance (or desperation) sacrifice, but not in general. I don't think that Marin considers the Benoni to be so bad; after all, he plays it himself. It is only Psakhis who confessed to me that "the Benoni is hopeless", although he also plays it, and adds "but I win all the games!"

I don't remember ever inciting rebellion against the objective evaluation of a position, which in my view is of paramount importance; or if I did, it was not meant seriously. What I repeatedly say is that more than in other openings, Black must do his utmost to avoid White holding a sustainable initiative; and this, of course, includes being willing to sacrifice. Topalov's piece sacrifice in this game is quite interesting and I am on his side. I believe that here White should not overestimate his chances, as Black has *almost* enough compensation.



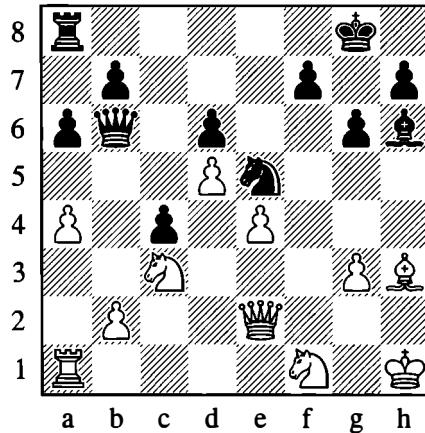
16.♗f3 ♜d4

Keeping the rooks on with 16...♝e7 might be slightly better.

**17.♗xe3 ♜xe3† 18.♗h1 ♜e5 19.♗f1 ♜h6
20.e4 a6 21.a4 ♜b6**

The alternatives 21...c4 22.b3 ♜a5 23.♗c2 ♜e8 or 21...♜a5 are a bit more elastic.

22.♗e2 c4



23.♗h2?!

23.a5 is better.

23...♝g7

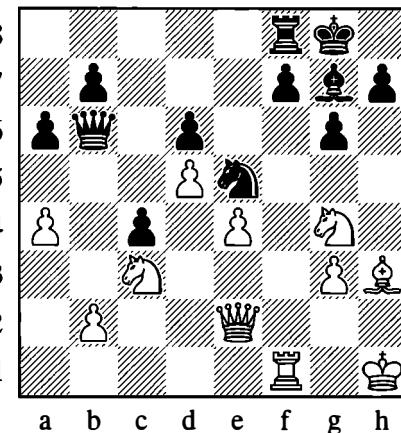
White's inaccurate move gave Black a golden opportunity to take over the initiative with: 23...♝d3! 24.♗g4 ♜g7 25.♗f1 ♜xb2 26.♗f6† ♜h8 27.♗xb2 ♜xb2 28.♗g4 ♜d3 29.♗g2 ♜e5 30.♗d1 ♜c8†

24.♗f1 ♜f8?!

This overprotection of f7 is hard to understand. Again, 24...♝d3! should be played, when White has nothing better than transposing to the previous note with 25.♗g4.

25.♗g4

We have reached a pivotal moment in the game.



25...Qxg4?

“After exchanging this knight, Black will be left without counterplay.” – Marin.

25...Qd3 is a better try, for example 26.Qf6† Qxf6 27.Qxf6 Wb3 and White has to look for the draw: 28.Wd2 (not 28.Qe6 b5; nor 28.Qxd6 Qxb2 29.Wd2 Qxa4 30.Qxa4 Wxg3 31.Wh2 We1† 32.Wg1 We4† 33.Qg2 We5 34.Qb6 Wh5† 35.Wh2 Wd1† 36.Wg1 Wxa4 and Black is close to winning) 28...b5 29.axb5 axb5 30.Qf1 b4 31.Qd1 Qe5 32.Qe3 Qa8 33.Qf5 gxsf5 34.Wg5† Qf8 35.Wh6†=

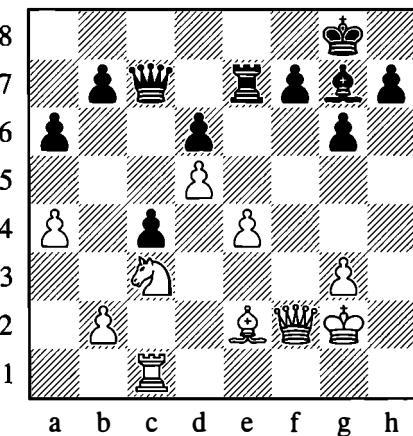
26.Qxg4 Wc5

Slightly better is: 26...Wb4 27.Wd2 h5 28.Qh3 We8 29.Qg2±

27.Qg2 We8!?

Black gradually drifts into more severe difficulties. 27...h5 28.Qh3 Qe5 29.Qf3 Qg7 30.Wf1 Wc7± was better.

28.Wf2 Wc7 29.Qe2 We7 30.Qc1±



White is now firmly in control, and Eljanov steadily realized his advantage. The remaining moves can pass without comment.

30...h5 31.Qc2 We5 32.Qf3 We7 33.a5 Qf6 34.Qf1 Qg7 35.Qe2 Qg5 36.Qxc4 Qxb2

37.Qd4 Qa1 38.Qa4 Qc3 39.We3 Qb2 40.Qb4 Qa1 41.Qb1 Qxd4 42.Wxd4† Qe5 43.Qg2 h4 44.Qh1 hxg3 45.Wd2 g5 46.Wc3 1–0

Post-game reflections

Topalov's piece sacrifice was a lovely idea, even if it was prepared at home (which seems likely). Black obtained two pawns for a piece, but he had no real attacking chances and his compensation was entirely comprised of positional features such as his superior pawn structure, better bishop, outpost square on e5, and his mobile queenside pawn majority. Eljanov deserves credit for reacting as well as he did, and the game remained in a state of approximate equality until Topalov made a series of errors between moves 23-27. This game reminds us once again that a strong defender can continue to make life difficult even after being hit by a troublesome sacrifice, and in such cases the result will be decided by who can better adapt to the changing situation and maintain their resolve until the bitter end.

Spoilt for choice – genial English expression

Jurijs Mihailovs – Mihai Suba

Pamplona 2009

Points to look for in this game:

- A forced but strong piece sacrifice – 13...Qxd6!
- (Over-?) Energetic development from Black – 17...Qg4!?
- Black misses his chances – 23...cx b3!, 26...Wxa4!, 28...Qa3 and 30...Qb8!

1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 e6 3.Qf3 c5 4.d5 d6

A refinement in the move order, devised by the author a long time ago. Its purpose is to limit White's options. In general, such details

in the opening should be studied by all players interested in the respective opening, and adopted or discarded according not only to their preferences, but also to the *inclusion* and *exclusion* capacity of the specific move order. In our case, Murey's variation, 4...exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4, be it good or bad, simply cannot be played, so we get an exclusion. Compared with the main line, there are no notable additional possibilities for White. That means we do not need to worry about any inclusion; in other words, the exclusion is free of charge.

5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 6.cxd5 g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a6 8.e4 b5!

Improving on my game against Korchnoi, as featured earlier in the chapter.

9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

Black takes a concrete approach to the opening, putting the bishop on an unusual square in order to avoid any mishaps along the e-file.

10. e5?!

It is accepted by experts that this move gives White at best some drawing chances, and at worst serious headaches.

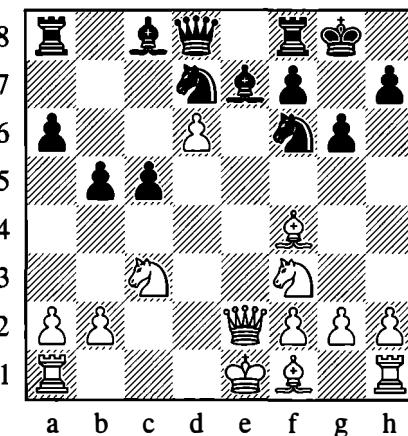
The modern treatment of the variation is 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$, continuing development in the belief that White is a tempo up compared with other variations (based on the loss of time Black will inevitably have to incur while transferring his bishop back to the desirable g7-square). The problem of tempos, and not only in Modern Benoni, is very delicate. Here the tempo ($\mathbb{W}c2$) is not very well used, and the mobilization of the pawn majority with ...b5 signifies a great success for Black. Besides, in the opening phase the bishop can be useful on e7, protecting the chronic weakness on d6 and allowing a mostly pain-free plan of development.

10...dxe5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4?!$

A questionable novelty, instead of the well-trodden road which starts with long castling.

12...0-0 13. d6

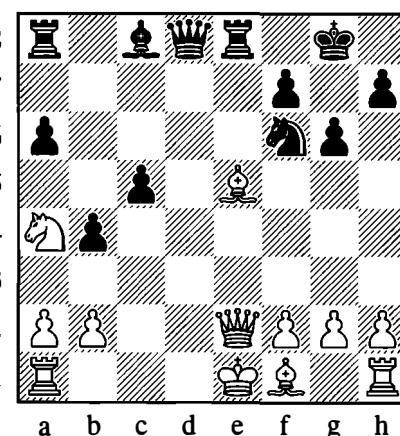
In for a penny, in for a pound! This move provokes a forced sacrifice.



13... $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$

Leading to a forced sequence.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ b4! 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



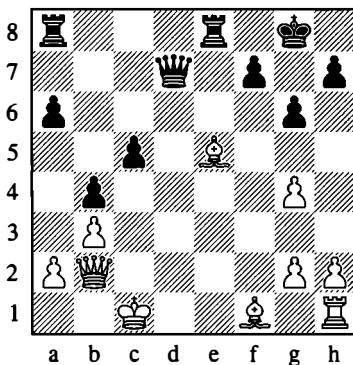
17... $\mathbb{Q}g4?!$

An ingenious move, in Morphy's style, maximizing the dynamic potential of the black pieces. It would be harsh to criticize the text move, as it should win. However, other

moves may reach the goal in quicker or simpler fashion. For example: 17... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (18...f6 is not bad either) 19.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}g5$ 20.h4 $\mathbb{W}g3\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xe5\uparrow$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 23.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ and Black's advantage lies somewhere between clear and decisive.

18.f3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19.0–0–0 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 20.b3

In the post mortem, Mihailovs suggested 20.fxg4 $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 21.b3 $\mathbb{W}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b2$, but the white king is too exposed:

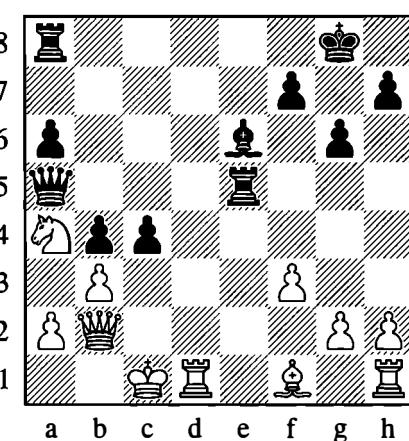


23... $\mathbb{Q}xe5\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 27. $\mathbb{W}b8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c3\uparrow$ and Black simply wins.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ c4!

Equally strong is 22... $\mathbb{Q}e1\uparrow$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\uparrow$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ c4–+.

23. $\mathbb{Q}d1$



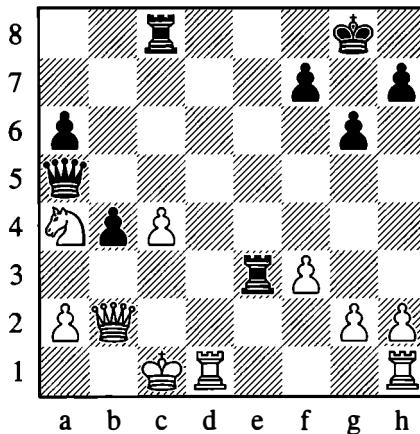
23... $\mathbb{Q}c8?$

Here I began to slow down. Yermolinsky has written about how the *trends* in a game can alter, and this seems to be the case here.

The correct approach is 23... $\mathbb{Q}xb3!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (25. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\uparrow$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}g5\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e3!–+$) 25... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and Black is winning, for instance: 28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5\uparrow$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xc8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}e6–+$

24. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 25.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Here I had calculated that 25... $\mathbb{W}xa4??$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 27.c5?? b3 28. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b2 \uparrow would be winning. But then I realized that in this sequence there is the improvement 27. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$, when it is White who wins.



26. $\mathbb{W}f2?$

In time pressure, Mihailovs misses a chance for salvation: 26. $\mathbb{W}c2!$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c1=$

26... $\mathbb{Q}a3$

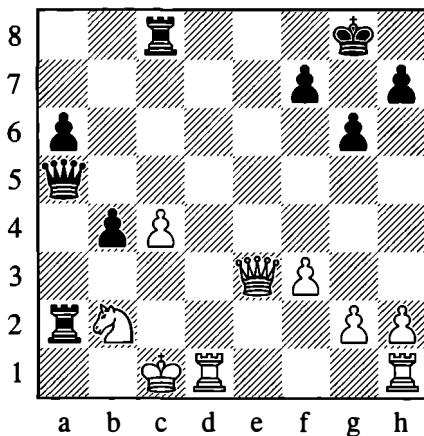
This should be winning, but much clearer is: 26... $\mathbb{W}xa4!$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ Compared with the variation on Black's previous move, the difference is that White does not control the a1-square. 28.c5 b3 29. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b2 \uparrow –+

27.♕b2?!

White has a better defence in 27.♔c2 ♜xa4 28.♔d5, although Black should triumph in the resulting rook ending: 28...♜xd5 29.cxd5 ♜xc2† 30.♔xc2 ♜xa2† 31.♔b3 ♜d2 32.♔a1 ♜xd5 33.♔xa6 ♜d3† 34.♔c2 ♜c3† 35.♔b2 (35.♔d2 ♜a3) 35...♜e3+–

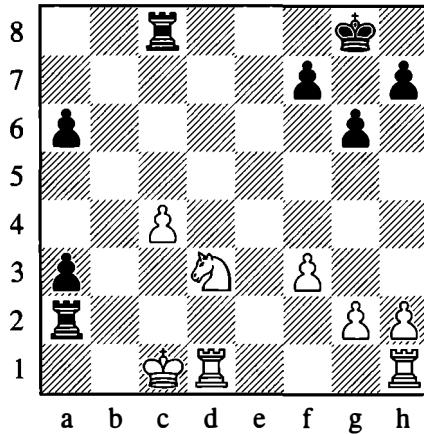
27...♜xa2 28.♔e3

When you see what I played here, in the full heat of Black's attack, you won't believe your eyes.

**28...♛a3?**

My only explanation is that I often find myself inhibited by the opponent's time pressure.

28...♜a3 wins easily: 29.♔d2 ♜a1†! (29...♜c3† 30.♔b1 b3 31.♔d3 ♜d8 32.♔b2 ♜cxd3 33.♔xd3 ♜xd3 also wins, but more slowly) 30.♔c2 b3†! and White can resign.

29.♛xa3 bxa3 30.♔d3**30...♜xc4†??**

Missing one final chance for the win which could still be ensured by: 30...♜b8! 31.♔hf1 ♜e2 32.♔f2 a2+–

31.♔b1 ♜xg2 32.h4 h5 33.f4

The endgame that has resulted is quite an easy draw for White and I won't bother you with the moves that followed. The game is important for theory, and the motto can be added as a new psychological or strategic concept to one's knowledge.

... ½-½

Post-game reflections

In choosing the motto for this game, I hesitated between "spoilt for choice" and the slightly different French one: *l'embarras du choix*. Both of them make a good excuse for my failings in this game, which even included miscounting the pawns at the end! Hopefully by showcasing this slightly embarrassing example I will help the reader to avoid making the same mistakes in a winning position.

Chapter 11

The Nimzo-Indian Defence

As one of Black's most popular defences against 1.d4, this opening provides an extensive range of lines featuring positional sacrifices. I have chosen to focus on some of the modern variations although the games themselves are a few decades old in some cases.

Zdenko Kozul – Johann Hjartarson

Belgrade 1989

Points to look for in this game:

- White gets himself into trouble – 8.e4?!, 9.bxc3?! and 10.0–0–0?!
- A pretty pawn sacrifice – 14...d5!
- Black misses a win, but White returns the favour – 16...Qxd6? and 20.Qd5??

1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 e6 3.Qc3 Qb4 4.Qc2 0–0

5.Qg5

This is something of a sideline. 5.a3 is the main move, and 5.e4 can be found later in the chapter on page 236.

5...c5 6.dxc5

If White is feeling more ambitious than 6.d5?! is interesting.

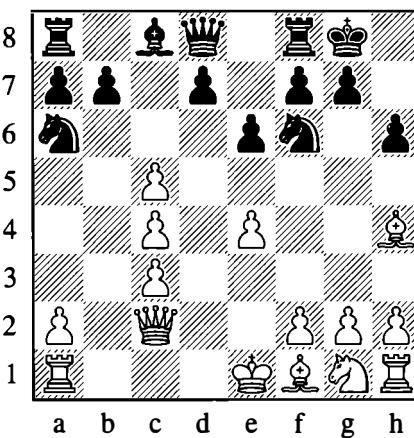
6...h6

More usual is 6...Qa6 7.a3 Qxc3† 8.Qxc3 Qxc5 9.f3?! Qfe4!?

7.Qh4 Qa6 8.e4?! Qxc3† 9.bxc3?!

Coming from a strong GM, this move is inexplicable, as it does irreparable damage to his pawn structure.

9.Qxc3 should be preferred, although Black keeps an edge after either 9...Qxe4 or 9...g5 10.Qg3 Qxe4.

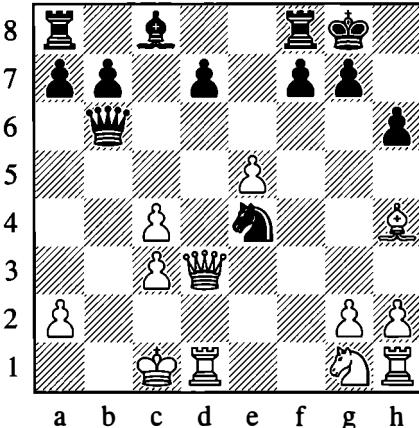


9...e5! 10.0–0–0?! Qxc5 11.f4

Something has gone terribly wrong with the opening, and White tries to create complications at all costs. Unfortunately for

him, such an approach is liable to hasten the finish.

11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}fxe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3\#$
14. $\mathbb{W}xd3$



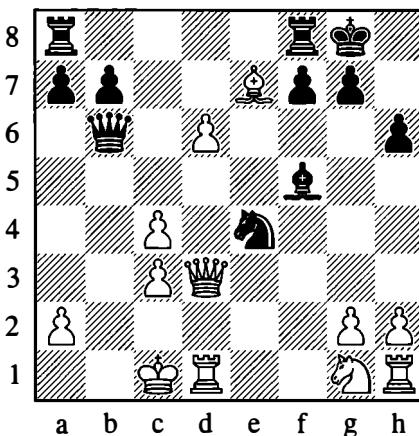
14...d5!

This sacrifice to accelerate development is Black's strongest option, although he could also get a clear advantage with quiet play: 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$

15.exd6

I won't attach any symbol to this move, because at this point White is lost anyway. In such positions, all moves look like blunders, for example: 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}a6+$

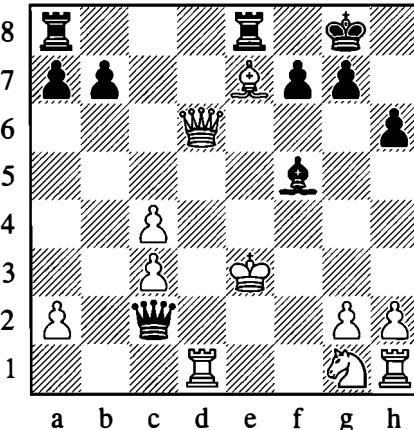
15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e7$



16... $\mathbb{Q}xd6?$

Throwing away most of the advantage. Instead 16... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ should win.

17. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}b1\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c2\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}fe8$



20. $\mathbb{Q}d5??$

Another inexplicable move, after which White is lost.

20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 25.c5 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ and White maintains drawing possibilities.

20... $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ b6 24. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}e2\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$
0-1

Post-game reflections

Although this game featured numerous errors, it also contained plenty of instructive elements. It looks as though White was keen to play aggressively and dynamically, but in an effort to do so, he made too many concessions in terms of his pawn structure and exposed king. Later he paid the price, as Black retorted with a dynamic pawn sacrifice which brought him a decisive initiative and a subsequent victory, despite the slip on move 16.

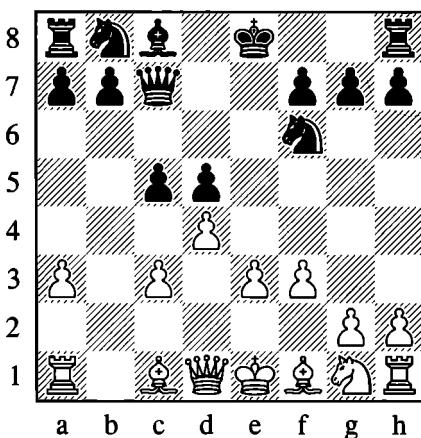
Peter Wells – Mihai Suba

London 1991

Points to look for in this game:

- A refinement in the opening – 8... $\mathbb{W}c7!$
- The wrong piece sacrifice – 17... $\mathbb{Q}e4!?$
- Black breaks through after a tough battle – 34... $\mathbb{Q}xe3!$

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4.f3 d5 5.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3 $\mathbb{W}c7!$

**9. $\mathbb{B}a2$**

The “intermediate” move played by Black is intended to dissuade White from the $\mathbb{Q}d3$, $\mathbb{Q}e2$ formation, which became famous as a result of the model game Botvinnik – Capablanca, AVRO 1938.

Nevertheless, 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3!?$ is possible, for example: 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 $\mathbb{W}c3\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xal$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}a2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ The only move to release the queen from its cage. 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ dxc4 17.e4 and the strong centre together with the two bishops would provide interesting compensation for the exchange.

9...cxd4

This is probably the most exact, although 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is also playable: 10.g4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ h6 (12...0–0–0 13.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 15.0–0–0 \pm Shirov – Lerner, Lvov 1990) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0–0–0 14.0–0 g5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{fxe6}\pm$ G. Giorgadze – Lerner, Lvov 1990.

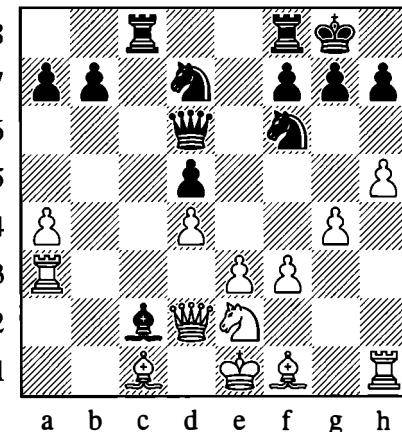
10.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13.a4!?

13.h4 is not dangerous for Black: 13... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14.h5 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 16. $\mathbb{E}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4\mp$

13...0–0 14.h4 $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}a3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$

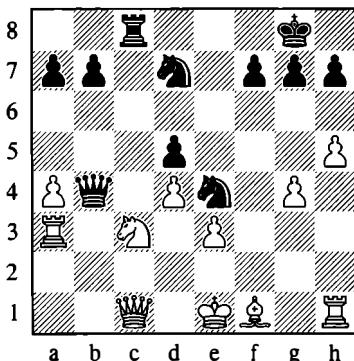
Black must avoid the careless 15... $\mathbb{E}fe8!?$ 16.h5 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6?$ 18. $\mathbb{E}c3$ when he loses a piece.

16.h5 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$

**17... $\mathbb{Q}e4!?$**

The curious (lack of) development of the white pieces was asking for a combinative solution, but I chose the wrong one!

The right solution is: 17... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 18.fxe4 (a lot worse is 18. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}a1$ h6 21.fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}df6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xe2\uparrow$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{E}xc1\uparrow$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{E}xc1\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{E}xd1\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\uparrow$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8–+$) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{E}xc1\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}b4\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}c8\mp$



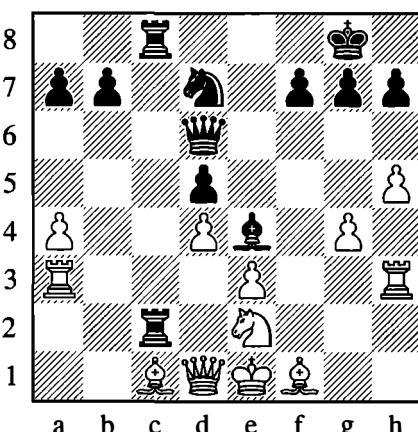
For the missing exchange, Black will have a pawn and a continuing attack.

My sacrifice in the game, which can be classified as energizing, also speculates on the poor development of White's pieces. Though not best, it is not so bad, and with correct play it should lead to equality.

18.fxe4 ♖xe4 19.♖h3

Worse is 19.♖g1?! ♖c2 20.♗d1 ♖fc8 21.♗a1 ♖h2, and Black threatens ...♖xe2†.

19...♖c2 20.♗d1 ♖fc8



21.♗a1

Or 21.♗b3 ♖xe2†! 22.♔xe2 ♖c2† and Black wins material.

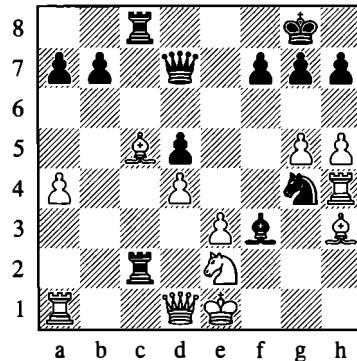
21... ♖f6 22.♔a3

The "ugly" 22.♗h4 is met by 22...♗f3! with a decisive advantage.

However, White can hold with 22.♗f4 ♖xg4 23.♗d2.

22...♗c7 23.♗c1

23.♗h4 is again dubious: 23...♗d7 24.♔h3 ♗f3 25.g5 ♖g4 26.♗c5

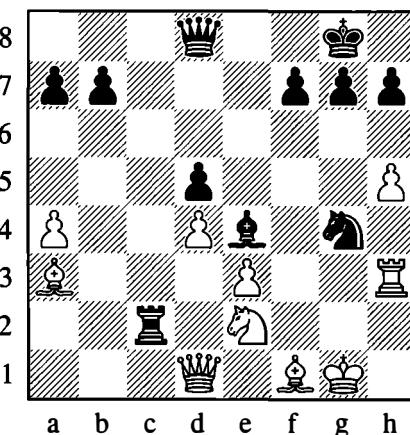


26...♗b2! Taking on e2 would cost Black too many pieces for the queen. 27.♗d3 ♖c7 28.♗xg4 ♖xe2 29.♔xe2 ♖g3† 30.♗f1 ♖xh4 31.♗e1 ♖g5 32.♗d6 ♖f6† 33.♗f4 ♖cc2†

23...♗a5† 24.♗f2 ♖xg4† 25.♗g1 ♖d8??

Preparing to deploy the queen on the other wing, 25...♗8c4 was another sensible move.

26.♗xc2 ♖xc2



27.♗e1

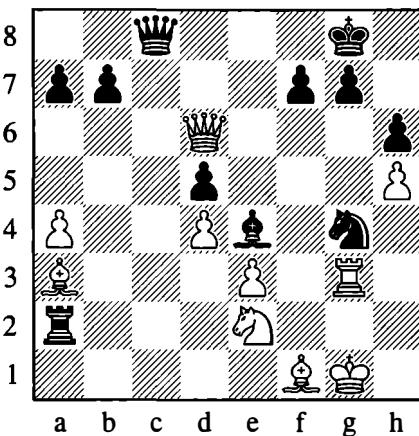
27.♔c1? is much worse: 27...♗g5 28.♗e1 (28.♗g3? ♗h4 with an immediate decision) 28..h6 29.♕g3 ♘f6† and Black threatens ...♔f5.

27...♝a2 28.♗g3

White's best is 28.♔c1 ♗g5 29.♗g3 h6 30.♕c3 ♜c2 31.♕xe4 dxe4 32.♔a3 ♜f2 33.♔g2 ♜a2∞.

28...♗c8 29.♗d6!?

The sharp variation 29.♔c5 ♜a1 may lead to a draw: 30.♗h4 f5 31.h6! b6 32.♗b4 ♔d3 33.♔c3 ♜xf1† 34.♔xf1 ♗xc3 35.♗b8† ♔f7 36.♗xa7† ♔e8 37.♗xg4 ♔xe2† 38.♗xe2 ♗c2†=

29...h6 30.♗g3**30...♗f5!?**

30...♝a1! would have put White in trouble.

31.♘f4!?

The errors are becoming more frequent as we were both left with little time.

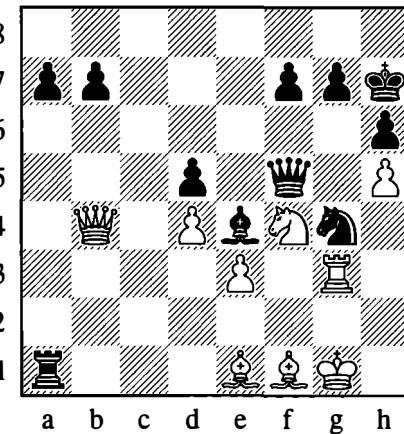
Here White could have escaped with 31.♗f4! ♗xa3 32.♗xg4 ♗xg4 33.♗xg4, when he has some advantage in the endgame.

31...♘h7 32.♔b4 ♗xa4?!

After 32...♝a1! Black wins quickly.

33.♔e1?

White returns the compliment. With 33.♔a3 he could temporarily keep the black rook out of play.

33...♝a1 34.♗b4**34...♕xe3!**

This is enough to win, but even stronger is 34...♗g5! 35.♔h3 ♗h4.

35.♗xe3 ♗xf4 36.♗c3 ♜b1 37.♔g3?!

Of course, this is an acute time-pressure blunder, but White's game is lost anyway. For example: 37.♔g2 ♗xg2 38.♗xg2 ♗g4† 39.♔f2 ♗xh5 40.♗d3† ♗g6 and Black has five(!) pawns for a piece in a quiet endgame.

37...♗xf1†

0–1

Post-game reflections

This was an extremely tense and difficult game for both players. I am pleased to have come up with the idea of giving up a piece for positional pressure with 17...♞e4!?, despite the fact that subsequent analysis proved 17...♞e4! to be an even stronger method of carrying out the same

idea. Later both sides committed a number of inaccuracies, which caused the game to lose a bit of its artistic merit, although these imperfections also happen to reflect quite accurately the gritty reality of competitive play.

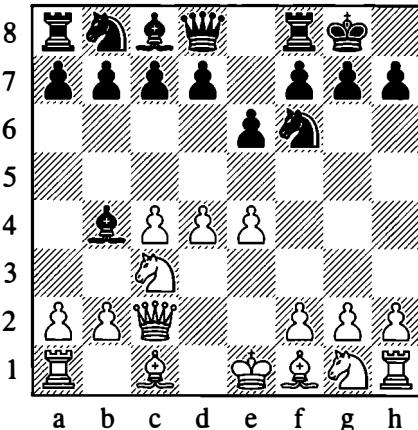
Ivan Ivanisevic – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu

European Championship, Istanbul 2003

Points to look for in this game:

- A slightly sub-par sacrifice – 10.0–0?! in the notes
- Activating the knights – 11... $\mathbb{Q}g6$?! and 12... $\mathbb{Q}h5$
- An impressive double pawn sacrifice – 13...b5?! 14.cxb5 c4!

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0–0
5.e4



5...d6!

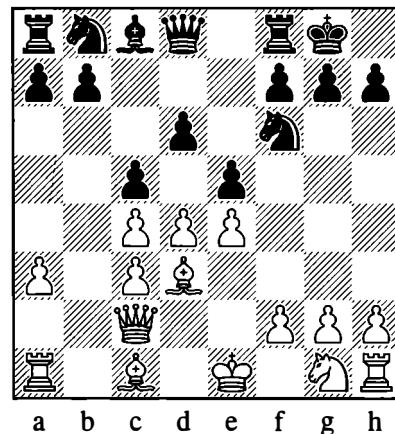
I believe this is the best move here. Other possibilities are 5...c5, 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and 5...d5. The last of these appears most frequently in my database, but that is because in the past it was believed to give at least equality. More recently, a slight advantage for White has been found in all variations. The first two alternatives have proved quite unsatisfactory.

6.a3

White has nothing better, because Black's intended 6...e5 can be played even against 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 7.bxc3 e5 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ c5?!

8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ and 8... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ are decent alternatives.



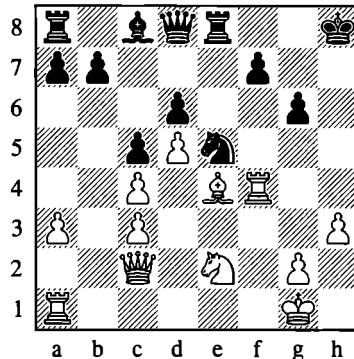
9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White may also advance the d-pawn:

9.d5

This hinders the transfer of the queen's knight to g6. It must go there via f8 (after ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$), so Black is unable to aim for a quick ...f5. However, Black can still construct a strong defensive set-up against White's plans.

9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}g6$
13.f4? exf4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$?!
14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$
14... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ g6#



White has succeeded in creating some imbalance on the kingside, but he is far from having any real attacking chances as the knight on e5 is just too strong.

19.♘af1 f5

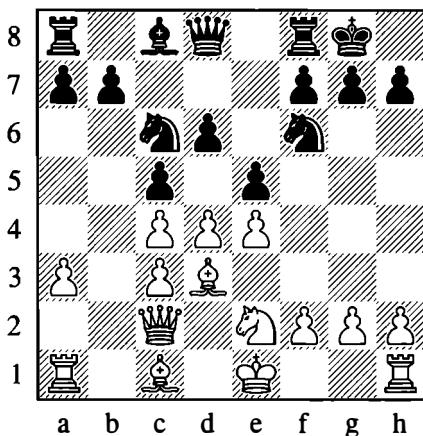
Best is 19...♗g5!.

And 19...♗g8 is not bad either.

20.♗d3 ♗e7 21.♗f2 ♗d7 22.♗f4 ♗g5 23.g4?! ♗g8!?

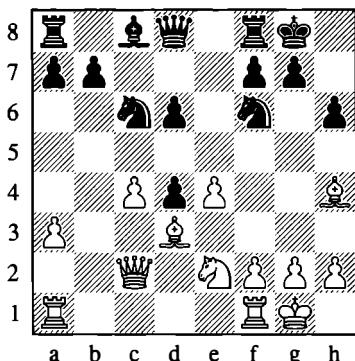
White's kingside play was effectively neutralized, and Black eventually won an endgame in Cebalo – Suba, Courmayeur 2011.

9...♘c6



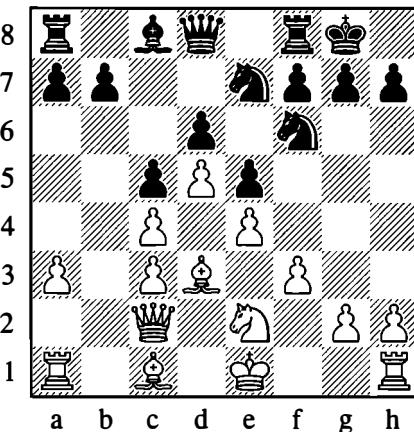
10.d5

In an earlier game, Ivanisevic had played: 10.0–0?! exd4 11.cxd4 cxd4 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗h4



Black could now play 13...g5! (instead of 13...♗e5?! 14.♗xd4± Ivanisevic – Barlov, Belgrade 1999) 14.♗g3 ♘h5, when White's compensation for the pawn is questionable.

10...♗e7 11.f3



11...♗g6!?

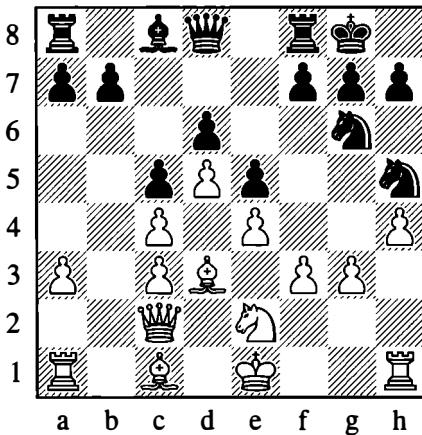
I find this move very natural, but a few others had been tried previously:

Back in the good old days, Ragozin played too passively with 11...♗d7?! and after 12.h4 ♘b6 13.g4 f6 14.♗g3 ♘f7 15.g5 he came under attack, eventually losing in Capablanca – Ragozin, Moscow 1935.

A slightly more recent game continued: 11...h6?! 12.h4 ♘h7 13.g4 ♘g6 14.h5 ♘h8 15.♗g3 f6 16.♗f2 ♘f7 Black succeeded in creating an impregnable blockade and drew in 53 moves, Astrom – Hillarp Persson, Sweden 2000.

12.h4 ♘h5 13.g3!

Thwarting any counterplay based on occupying the f4-square, and preparing ♘e3 and ♗d2 followed by further advances on the kingside. What should Black do now, to avoid being caught in a vice?



13...b5?! **14.cxb5 c4!**

The interesting feature of the first pawn sacrifice is that a second one immediately follows. White is forced to accept both offers.

15.Qxc4 f5

This is Black's idea; the seemingly stupid knights on the rim now become dangerous weapons, while the white king is caught in the centre. No exclamation mark dangles from this move, but I would gladly attach a dollar or pound sign, as Dieter paid two pawns to make this break! Let's see if it's worth it.

16.Qg5

Other variations also give Black a lot of play:

16.Qe3?! **Qxg3 17.Qg5 Qc7 18.Qxg3 Qxc4** and the balance is already inclining towards Black.

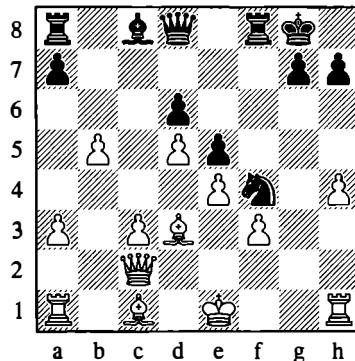
16.exf5 Qxf5 17.Qd3 Qxd3 18.Qxd3 e4! 19.fxe4 Qe5 20.Qc2 Qf3†

White's strongest continuation looks to be:

16.Qd3! f4 17.gxf4

After **17.g4 Qg3 18.Qh2 Qxh4 19.Qg1 a6 20.c4 axb5 21.cxb5 Qxf3†! 22.Qxf3 Qxg4 23.Qd2 Qa5**, White cannot be happy.

17...Qgxf4 18.Qxf4 Qxf4

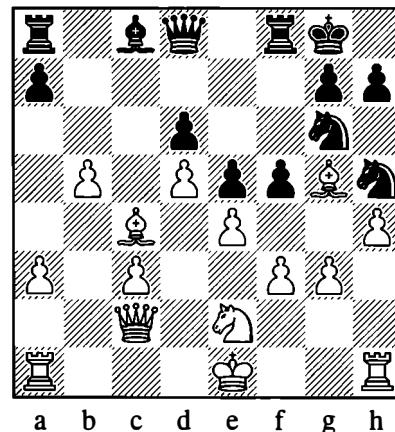


Black does not have full compensation for the two pawns, yet he has active play against his opponent's unsafe king. The material advantage is unlikely to make itself felt soon, and any result is possible.

For example:

19.Qf1 Qh5 20.Qg2 a6! 21.c4 axb5 22.cxb5 Qa5† 23.Qd2 Qc7 24.Qe3 Qg3 25.Qg1 Qxf1 26.Qxf1 Qc4† 27.Qf2 Qxb5

White's extra pawn is of little use.



The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 304.

The next game was contested between two leading programs, whose identities I will leave anonymous.

Program X – Program Y

Thematic game 2009

Points to look for in this game:

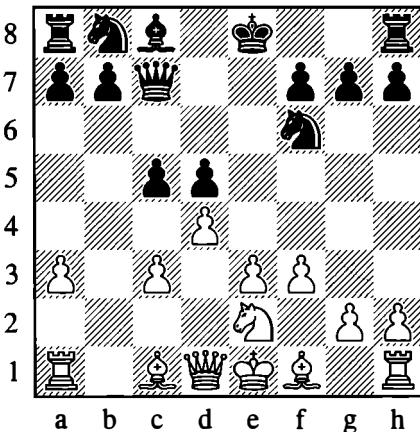
- ◆ A characteristically anti-positional “computer move” – 11.dxc5?!
- ◆ A positional piece sacrifice – 25... \mathbb{Q} xg4!
- ◆ Finishing in style with a rook sacrifice – 28... \mathbb{R} xg4!

1.d4 \mathbb{Q} f6 2.c4 e6 3. \mathbb{Q} c3 \mathbb{Q} b4 4.f3 d5 5.a3 \mathbb{Q} xc3† 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3 \mathbb{W} c7

The opening is related to the game Wells – Suba, given on page 233. The reason for arranging this computer game was that I wanted to investigate the following move:

9. \mathbb{Q} e2

Some games played in recent years made me have second thoughts about 9...0–0 10.g4?!, and I wanted to investigate a different approach for Black.



9... \mathbb{Q} c6?!

I believe this to be Black's best reply to the move order played by White. The main idea is to delay castling and keep the option of parking the king on the queenside. I had already used this move once in 1994 (see the next note for

details) but I wanted to investigate it more deeply using modern hardware.

I asked my old friend IM Dumitru Ghizdavu for help, and he organized a match on a strong computer (my best one was broken), between two leading programs, and kept me informed. The programs' play actually starts after these first nine moves which were imposed upon them. The present game gave me an interesting answer to some of my worries, and it is reproduced courtesy of Dumitru.

10.g4?!

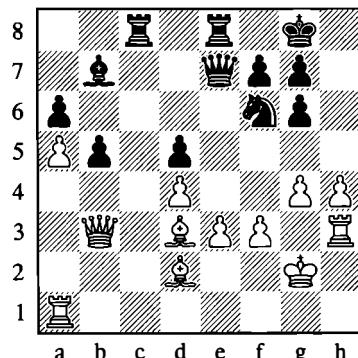
This can only be good against 9...0–0, when it combines gain of space with a direct attack on the king. In the given position, the plan of expanding on the kingside loses some of its bite.

The alternatives are:

10. \mathbb{Q} f4 0–0

The programs like 10...c4!.

11. \mathbb{Q} d3 \mathbb{E} e8 12.0–0 \mathbb{Q} e7 13.g4 cxd4 14.cxd4 \mathbb{Q} g6 15. \mathbb{Q} xg6 hxg6 16. \mathbb{Q} d2 \mathbb{Q} d7 17. \mathbb{Q} g2 \mathbb{E} ac8 18.h3 \mathbb{Q} c6 19.h4 \mathbb{W} d7 20.a4 a6 21. \mathbb{Q} h1 \mathbb{W} e7 22. \mathbb{W} b3 b5 23.a5 \mathbb{Q} b7 24. \mathbb{Q} h3



24... \mathbb{Q} c4!

This sacrifice brings to mind the 11th game of the Spassky – Petrosian World Championship match from 1969.

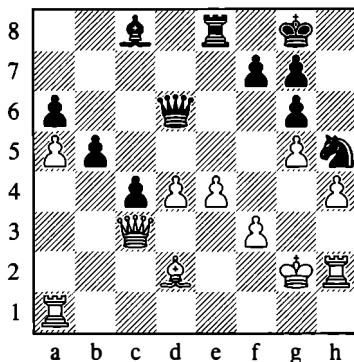
25.g5

A further weakening of the light squares.

25...♞h5

The knight may look out of play here, but... we are not yet in an endgame. In the middlegame, any piece close to the opposite king is unlikely to be "out of play".

26.♕xc4 dxc4 27.♗c3 ♖d6 28.e4 ♔c8 29.♗h2



29...b4! 30.♗xc4

30.♗e3 ♔d7 31.e5 ♖b8 32.♗b1 b3 33.♗hh1 ♔e6 34.♗hc1 ♔d5 35.♗h2 ♖a7 36.♗b2 ♖d7 37.♗c3 ♖f5 38.♗cl ♖d8 39.♗d2 ♔e6 40.f4 ♔d5 41.♗c1 ♖g4 42.♗f2 ♔h7! 43.♗c3 ♖h8 44.♗b1 ♖g8 45.♗h3 ♔e6 46.♗f3 ♖f5 47.♗b2 c3 48.♗xc3 ♞xf4+–
30...♖g3† 31.♔h1 ♖xf3† 32.♔g1 ♔h3 33.♔e1 ♖g4†

0–1 Gallego Jimenez – Suba, Cala Galdana 1994.

10.dxc5?! (Some programs like this move – some others don't!) 10...0–0 11.♘f4 ♖a5 12.♗b3?! ♖xc5 13.♗e2 ♔d7 (13...♗e8?) 14.♗f2 ♘a5 15.♗b4 ♗ac8 (15...♗c7) 16.♗d1 ♗fe8 17.♗a2 ♘c4 (17...♗c7?) 18.♗d4 ♘b6 19.♗d2 ♔a4 20.♗b2 ♖xb4? 21.axb4 (21.♗xb4!) 21...a6 22.b5 ♘c4? 23.♗xc4± Volkov – Istratescu, Korinthos 2002.

10...h6 11.dxc5?!

The program must have found something

appealing about this move, but it is hard to imagine any human playing this way, and the subsequent course of the game confirms this intuitive verdict.

Against 11.h4, Black can play 11...♗d7 and castle long.

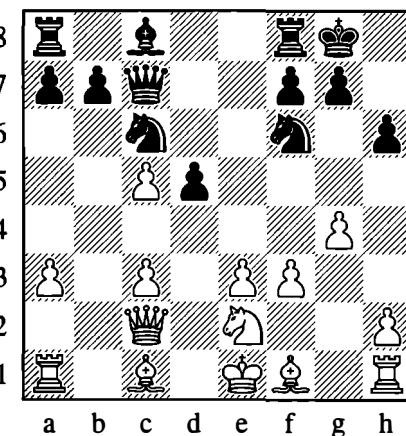
11.♗a2?! was played in a recent game Volkov – Alekseev, Taganrog 2011, which was drawn in 23 moves.

11...0–0

Thanks to White's abandonment of the centre on the previous move, he does not have any real chance of a successful kingside attack, so it is now safe for Black to castle short.

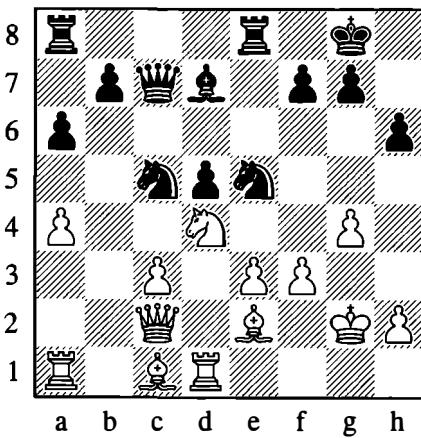
12.♗c2

This move is hardly understandable, even by other programs. Perhaps it is a prophylactic defence of c3 combined with the "dream" of exchanging the doubled pawn by c3-c4.



12...♘e5 13.♗d4 ♗e8 14.♗e2 ♗fd7 15.0–0 ♖xc5 16.♗d1 ♔d7 17.a4 a6 18.♗g2

This latest move by White is another difficult one to understand. If the king is to move, then it should be to h1.



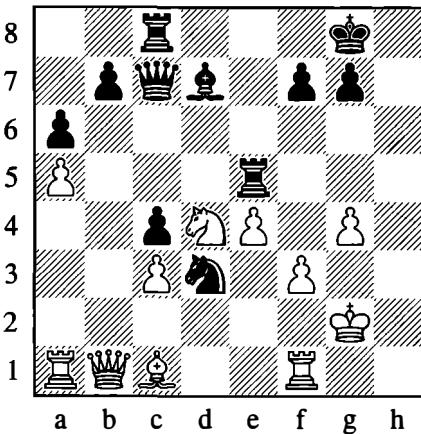
18...Bac8 19.a5 Qc4

Other programs prefer 19...Wd8, heading to h4.

20.Qxc4

Practically forced, as 20.e4 Qxa5 21.exd5 Qab3 is good for Black. For example: 22.Ba3 Qxc1 23.Wxc1 b5 24.Ba2 Qa4 25.c4 b4 26.Bc2 Qc5 27.Bb2 a5†

20...dxc4 21.e4 Qd3 22.Bf1 h5 23.h3 Be5 24.Wb1 hxg4 25.hxg4

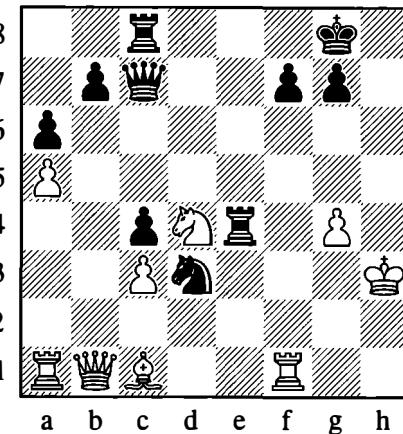


25...Qxg4!

The loose position of the white king was just asking for punishment. Of course the program did not calculate this right to the

end, but merely evaluated that it led to a bigger advantage than other moves. For an average human player, it would be fair to call it an intuitive sacrifice.

26.fxg4 Bxe4 27.Qh3

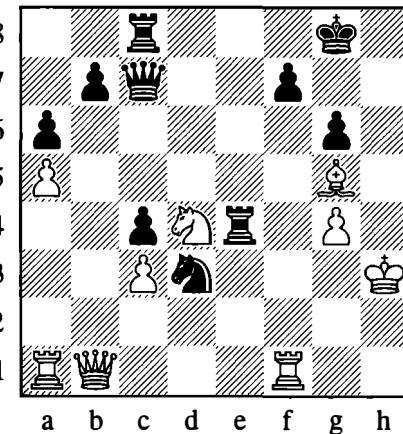


27...g6!

There are other good continuations of the attack, the most natural being 27...Wd7, but the move played is the strongest. The idea is simply 28...Qg7 and 29...Bh8†.

28.Qg5

Or 28.Bh6 Wd7 29.Wd1 Bc5 30.Qg3 g5 31.Wf3 Bf4 32.We2 Be5 and Black wins.



28...♝xg4!

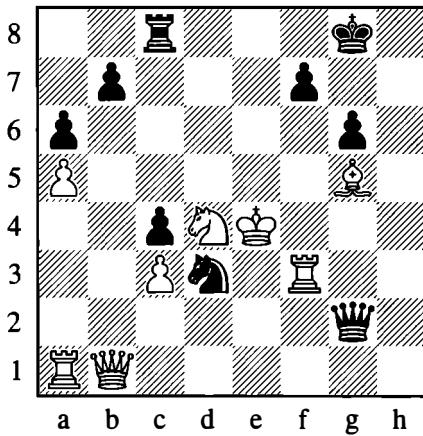
The program does not “see” this follow-up sacrifice quickly (it was initially 10th in its list of candidate moves), indicating that it was certainly not considered at the time of the first sacrifice. As happens in real games, the possibility was just there for Black to grab as an extra reward for “boldness”.

29.♛xg4 ♜h2

The point, threatening 30...♞e5 mate.

30.♚f3

Trying 30.♚f4 during analysis, I was informed that it allows mate in ten, starting with 30...f5†. I automatically said “Sorry!”

30...♜h3† 31.♛e4 ♜g2† 32.♚f3**32...♜c5!**

Again with a threat of mate in one.

33.♚f4

After 33.♚f6 ♜f2† 34.♚f4 g5† the knight will ride on the same carousel as in the game.

33...♞f2† 34.♚e3 ♜g4† 35.♚e4 ♜f6† 36.♚e3 ♜d5† 37.♚e4 ♜xc3†

Describing the end of a chess game as “study-like” has become a rampant cliché in chess literature, but as a means of characterizing the set-up and execution of this game-winning knight tour I would not consider it out of place. Of course the machine has no sense of artistic value in chess, and is merely spitting out the moves which lead to victory in the shortest time.

38.♚e3 ♜xb1 39.♝xb1 ♜xa5 40.♝b1 ♜a3† 41.♚e4 ♜xf3

0–1

Post-game reflections

This was one of the most impressive computer games I have ever seen. With hindsight we can say that White’s 11.dxc5?! was a mistake, but the move must still have had some redeeming features for a strong program to play it. Although Black was an equally soulless calculating monster, it did seem to play with a good deal more “humanity”, making decisions that could be readily explained and understood by imperfect protein-based machines. The piece sacrifice on move 25 was a case in point, and the subsequent rook sacrifice three moves later shows that when you do everything else right, these “lucky” moves have a tendency to crop up out of nowhere.

Chapter 12

The Queen's Indian Defence

I approached this chapter in a slightly different way from the others, in order to pay a kind of tribute to the undisputed master of the Queen's Indian, the twelfth World Champion Anatoly Karpov. I picked out three of Karpov's lesser-known games on the black side of the Queen's Indian involving some kind of material sacrifice from one side or the other. The chapter ends with one game from recent elite grandmaster praxis, followed by a final humble effort from the author.

The King is a fighting piece. Use it! – Wilhelm Steinitz

Walter Browne – Anatoly Karpov

Las Palmas 1977

Points to look for in this game:

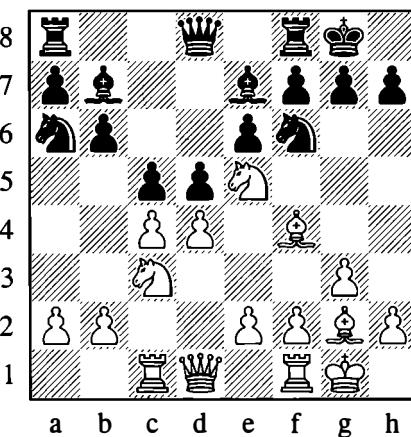
- White finds a strong sacrifice – 24.♕xb6!
- A missed opportunity – 27.♗xd5! in the notes
- An unlikely blunder – 33...♝c2??

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.d4 b6 4.g3 ♘b7 5.♗g2 ♘e7 6.0–0 0–0 7.♘c3 d5

Tolya avoids the well-trodden 7...♘e4, perhaps hoping for a more full-blooded game.

8.♘e5 ♘a6 9.♗f4 c5 10.♗c1

White has good chances to claim an edge with a more concrete approach: 10.cxd5 exd5 11.dxc5 ♘xc5 (11...bxc5 12.♘c4!±) 12.♘b5 ♘e6 13.♗e3 a6 14.♘d4 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♘c5 16.♗c1 ♗e7 17.e3 ♗ac8 18.♗a4 ♗fe8 19.♘d3 ♘e4 20.♗f4 b5 21.♗d1 ♘d6 22.♗xc8 ♘xc8 23.♗g4 ♗g5 24.♗xg5 ♘xg5 25.♗xd5± Wojtkiewicz – Eismont, Katowice 1993.

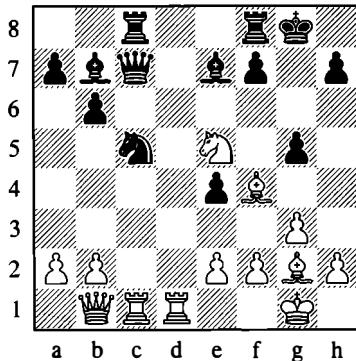


10...♘e4

The alternatives are not very lively, for example: 10...cxd5 11.♗xd4 ♘c5 12.♗d1 ♗e7 13.cxd5 exd5 14.♘d3 ♘fd8±

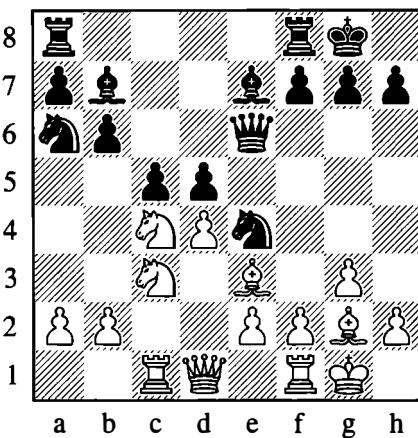
11.cxd5 exd5 12.♗e3

12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 13. $dxc5$ looks quite promising, based on the following tactical point: 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $g5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$



17. $\mathbb{E}d7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xc7$ $\mathbb{E}xc7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g6! \pm$

12... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$

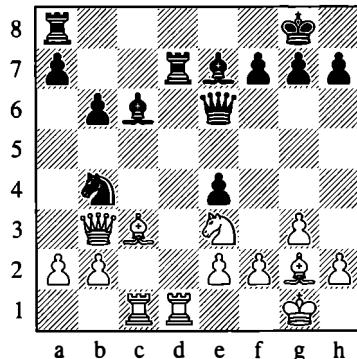


14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?!$

The unconventional 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?!$ $dxe4$ 15. $d5$ looks to be a better try.

14... $dxe4$ 15. $dxc5$

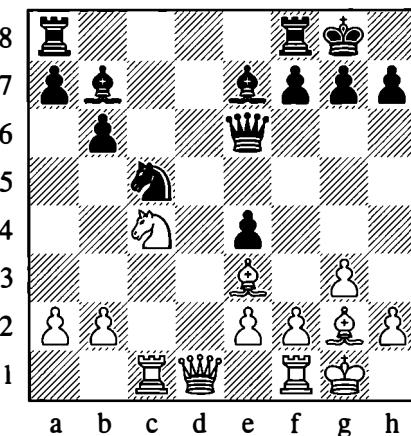
15. $\mathbb{W}a4$ also fails to solve White's problems: 15... $cxd4$ 16. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ It would be a stretch to label this a positional sacrifice, as Black has the initiative and White is merely losing a pawn in the way that offers the best chances to salvage the game.



20... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $fxe6$ The doubled pawns give White a degree of compensation. 22. $\mathbb{E}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mp$

15... $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mp$

Black has a more pleasant position and White must fight for equality.



16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 18. $b3$ $f5$ 19. $\mathbb{E}c2$

19. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ immediately is a slight improvement.

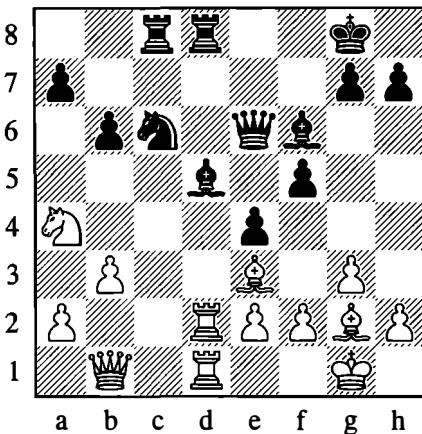
19... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Black has a clear space advantage, so Karpov is correct to avoid simplification.

21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 22. $\mathbb{E}cd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

This allows White an interesting opportunity.

Black could retain an edge with: 23... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6 \mp$



24.♕xb6!

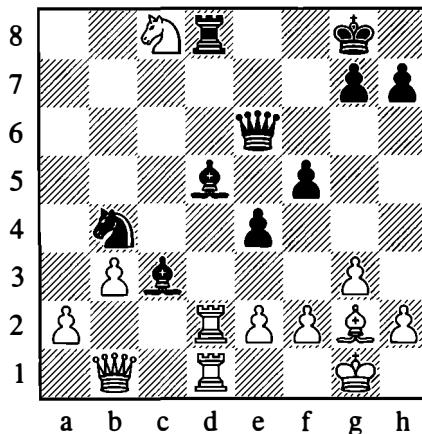
This visually striking move is not really a sacrifice, as White soon restores approximate material equality.

24...axb6 25.♕xb6 ♜b4?!

It looks as though Karpov slightly misjudged the ensuing complications.

25...♜e7 is more solid: 26.♕xc8 ♜xc8 27.e3 h5 28.♕f1 h4∞

26.♕xc8 ♜c3

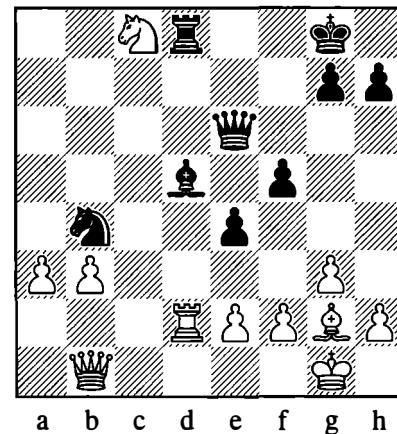


27.a3?!

White misses his chance to claim some advantage with a sacrifice of sorts: 27.♖xd5! ♜xd5 (27...♜xd5 28.♕a7 ♜d7 29.♕xe4

fxe4 30.♕xe4 ♜xa7 31.♖xd5 ♜f8 32.♕f5±) 28.♖xd5 ♜xd5 29.♕d1 ♜f6 30.♕d2 g6 31.e3 ♜xe3 32.♕xe3 ♜xc8 33.♕a7 ♜d8 34.♕f1±

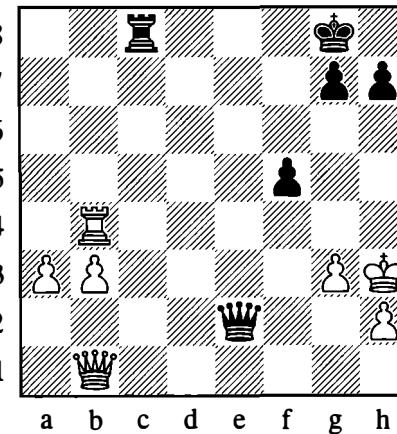
27...♜xd2 28.♖xd2



28...e3?!

Simple equality may be achieved by 28...♜a6 29.♕a7 ♜b6 30.♕c8 ♜e6, but Karpov is playing for more. The text move leads to a position where Black is a pawn down but is compensated by the vulnerability of the enemy king.

29.♖d4 exf2† 30.♕xf2 ♜xc8 31.♖xb4 ♜xg2 32.♕xg2 ♜xe2† 33.♕h3



33...♜c2??

Who could possibly resist playing this move? Not even the World Champion when he was nearing the height of his powers. Possibly Browne's chronic "time-trouble disease" induced Karpov to lose his legendary cold-bloodedness and concentration.

33... $\mathbb{E}c5!$ would maintain the equilibrium by covering the d5-square against checks, defending f5, and hinting at a possible rook swing along the fifth rank.

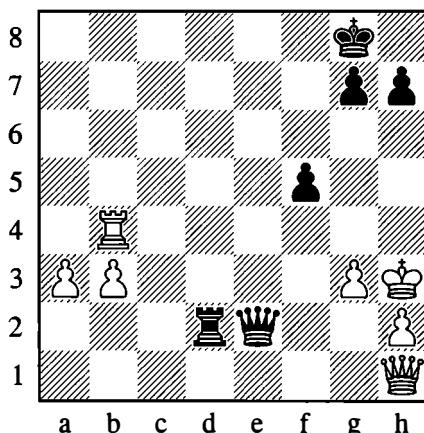
34. $\mathbb{W}h1!$

Combining defence with counterattack.

34... $\mathbb{E}d2!$

In this desperate situation, Karpov's move offers the best practical chance.

It is too late for Black to make amends for his mistake. For example: 34... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 35. $\mathbb{E}b6!$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ (35... $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 36. $\mathbb{W}d5\#$ wins) 36. $\mathbb{W}d1+-$



35. $\mathbb{E}b8\#??$

This "payback" blunder, probably also as a result of time pressure³, misses the chance to force a winning endgame and runs into a quick loss!

Correct is 35. $\mathbb{W}a8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$, and now 36. $\mathbb{W}a7\#$ or 36. $\mathbb{W}b7\#$ both win.

35... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 36. $\mathbb{E}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ 37. $\mathbb{W}c6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$
38. $\mathbb{W}h1$ $\mathbb{W}g4\#!$

A simple queen sacrifice to force mate on the next move.

0–1

Post-game reflections

This slightly scrappy game was notable for its various sacrificial motifs, including Browne's 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb6!$, the improvement 27. $\mathbb{E}xd5!$, and later Karpov's 28...e3!?. It is ironic that Karpov's late blunder probably won the game for him by inducing Browne's counter-blunder. As the old adage has it: "The best players are always the luckiest."

Bojan Kurajica – Anatoly Karpov

Bugojno 1980

Points to look for in this game:

- ◆ Creative and strong play in the opening – 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$
- ◆ Black plays a promising sacrifice – 16...cxd4!
- ◆ But he misses the best follow-up – 17...b5! in the notes

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6 4.g3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 5.b3 d5
6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ dxc4 7. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

White accepts a misplacing of his king in order to obtain a large pawn centre.

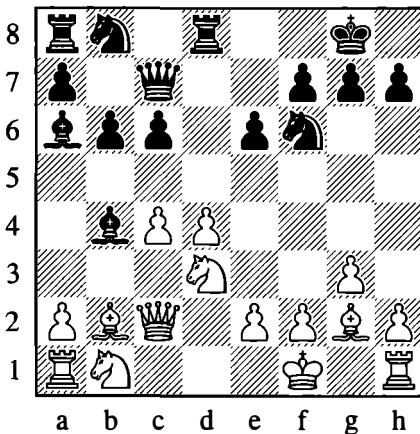
8...c6 9.bxc4 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Either 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ or 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$ seems more logical.

11... $\mathbb{E}d8$

Black can also play 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, with the idea of ...c5.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



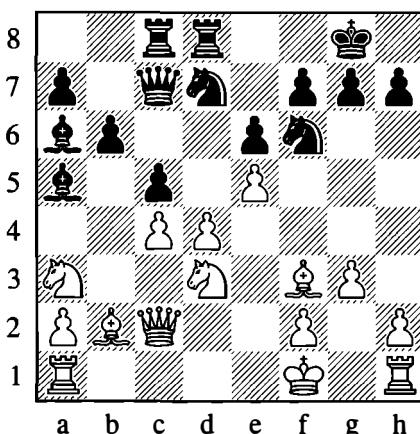
12...Qa5!

Preventing normal development by 13.Qd2.

13.Qa3 Qbd7 14.Qf3 Qac8

Black has already mobilized all his pieces and is ready to strike while White is still struggling to make arrangements for his king.

15.e4 c5 16.e5



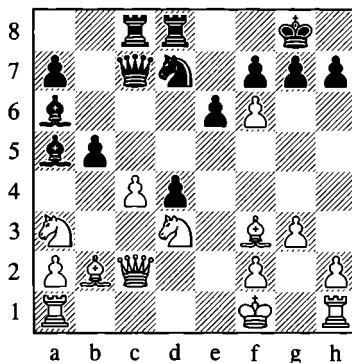
16...cxd4!

16...Qd5!? is another interesting pseudo-sacrifice, after which Black soon recoups the material: 17.cxd5 cxd4 18.Qxc7 Qxd3† 19.Qg2 Qxc7 20.Qxd4 exd5 21.Qhd1 Qa6 22.Qab1 Qc3 23.Qb5 Qxb5 24.Qxb5 Qxe5†

17.exf6 Qxf6

With this move, Black turns the sacrifice into a true one.

However, he would have done better to go for a sham sacrifice with 17...b5!, which enables him to regain the material and obtain an advantage by force:

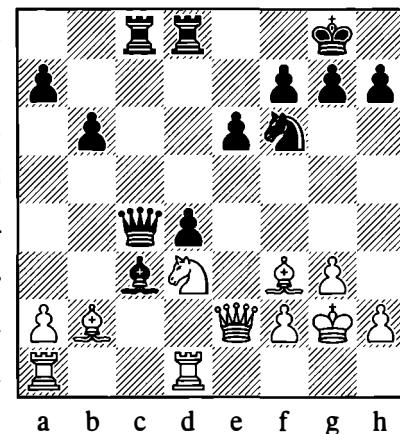


18.cxb5 (18.c5 b4 19.Qc4 Qxc5→) 18...Qxc2 19.Qxc2 Qxb5 20.Qxd4 Qxd3† 21.Qg2 Qe5 22.Qf5 Qxf5 23.Qxe5 Qc5 24.Qf4 gxf6+

18.Qe2 Qxc4

18...Qc3! is more accurate.

19.Qxc4 Qxc4 20.Qg2 Qc3 21.Qhd1



White consolidates his position. His worries are behind him now, as in this middlegame position three pawns are hardly better than a piece.

21...Qd7

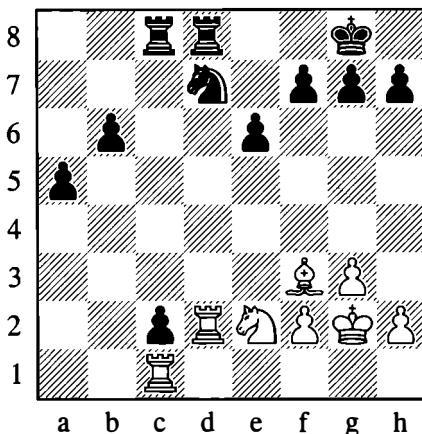
Either 21...Qd5 or 21...b5 would be better.

22.Qab1 a5 23.Qf4!?

White should take time for 23.a3!.

23...Wxa2 24.Qxc3 Wxe2 25.Qxe2 dxc3

26.Qbc1 c2 27.Qd2



27...Qf8

Slightly better is: 27...g6!? 28.Qdxc2 Qxc2 29.Qxc2 Qe5±

28.Qcxc2

Karpov did not feel he could achieve anything by continuing this minimally better endgame, so he took a draw.

½-½

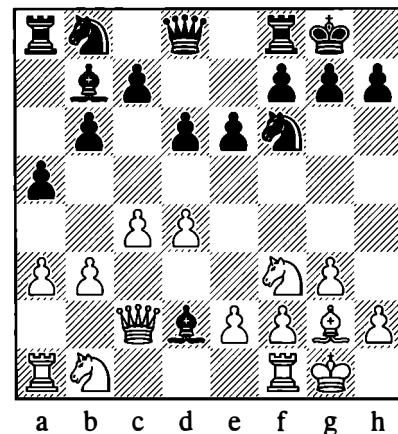
Post-game reflections

This short game had some interesting moments. Karpov found exactly the right idea in 16...cxd4! to open the centre for his superior pieces, but then missed some opportunities to make more of his advantage, the clearest example being on the very next move when 17...b5! would have made it almost impossible for White to survive.

Julio Granda Zuniga – Anatoly Karpov

Madrid 1992

1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 e6 3.Qf3 b6 4.g3 Wa6 5.b3
Wb7 6.Qg2 Wb4† 7.Qd2 a5 8.0-0-0-0-0-9.Wc2
d6 10.a3 Qxd2



11.Qbx d2

In the Queen's Indian, it is obvious that the white queen's knight is much better placed on c3 rather than d2. Yet in my database, although the diagram position has arisen in fourteen games at relatively high level, no one has played 11.Wxd2 or, even better, 11.Qfxd2!. No doubt controlling the e4-square and avoiding the exchange of light-squared bishops are motivating factors for many players. Still, I cannot help but wonder if the dogmatic counting of tempos is still the norm for even the best players.

Here is an illustrative line after my preferred continuation: 11.Qfxd2! Wxg2 12.Qxg2 c5 13.Qf3 cxd4 14.Qxd4 d5 15.Qd1 Qbd7 16.cxd5 Wc8 17.Wb2 exd5 18.Qc3±

11...Qbd7

The most frequent answer, but not necessarily the best. There are sensible reasons for choosing several other moves including 11...We7, 11...Qc6 and 11...c5.

12.e4

This is fair enough, although some programs suggest 12.Qb1!, trying to correct the previous human auto-response!

12...e5 13.Qf1 Qe8 14.Qad1

Not again! I'm sorry, but my machine is going crazy; now all the programs are asking for 14.Qb1!.

14...exd4 15.Qxd4 Qc5 16.f3

16.b4? Qe6 17.Q2f3 Qxd4 18.Qxd4±

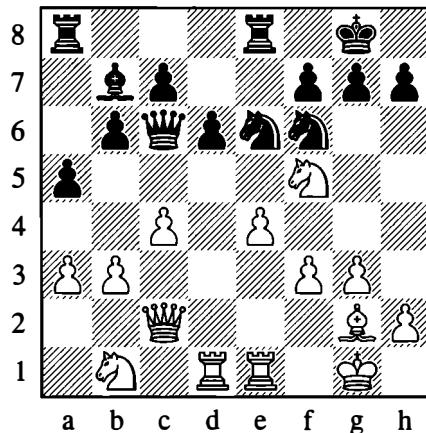
16...Qe6 17.Qf5

17.Qxe6 fxe6 18.Qb1 e5 19.Qh3 Qf8
20.Qc3 Qc8 21.Qxc8 Qxc8 22.Qg2 Qf7
23.Qd5 Qe6 24.Qf1=

17.Qf1!? is another way to try to improve the d2-knight.

17...Qd7 18.Qb1

Finally!

18...Qc6**19.a4?!**

This aims to prevent any counterplay on the queenside and free White's hands. But the question is: "To do what?" The downside is that the weakness of b3 and the outpost on c5 become permanent features of the landscape.

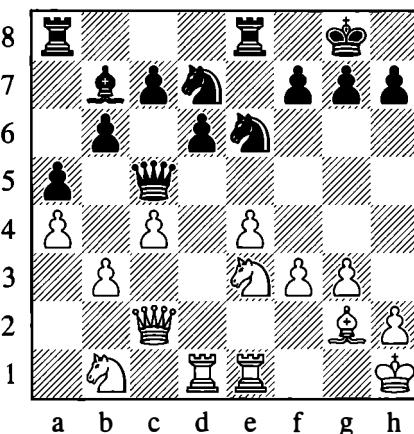
It is safer to play: 19.Qe3 Qc5 20.Qb2 b5
21.cxb5 Qxb5 22.Qc3 Qc5 23.Qf1 Qab8
24.Qc4 Qc6 25.Qg2 Qd4=

19...Qc5† 20.Qe3

Slightly better is 20.Qh1 g6 21.Qe3, when the weakness of f6 might prove useful to White.

20...Qd7 21.Qh1

21.Qc3! is better, though Black still has ample resources. For example: 21...Qad8 22.Qh1 h5 23.Qb2 h4 24.Qcd5 c6 25.Qf5 Qe5 26.f4 cxd5 27.cxd5 Qg4 28.Qe2 g6 29.Qxh4 Qc8 30.dxe6 Qxe6 31.Qde1 Qb4 32.Qd2 Qxd2 33.Qxd2 Qc3=

**21...Qb4!?**

Although the black queen is short of squares, she has considerable annoyance value and should not be in any real danger of being trapped.

22.Qd2 Qdc5 23.Qb1 Qad8 24.h4

24.Qd5 Qxd5 25.cxd5 Qd4 26.Qa2 b5?

24...Qa6 25.Qh2

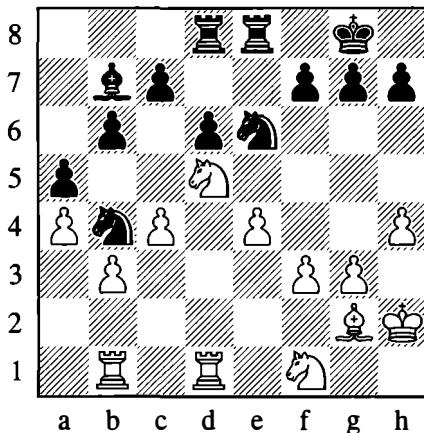
The immediate 25.Qdf1 may be slightly better.

25...Qc5 26.Qdf1 Qb4 27.Qd2 Qd4

An endgame with a minimal advantage (or even without it!) – that's the chef's speciality. The more so against a dangerous player who likes complex positions and is an ace with the intuitive sacrifice. "Where is the sacrifice in this dull game, then?" the reader might ask. Just a minute!

28.♗xd4 ♗xd4 29.♗ed1 ♗e6 30.♗d5?!

Better is 30.♗d2 ♗c5 31.♗c2 ♗xc2 32.♗xc2 g6 33.♗c3 ♗e5 34.♗e3 ♗g7 35.♗g1 ♗de8 36.♗e1 f6 37.♗f2 and White has good chances to hold.



30...f5!

Here it is – the long-awaited break! Don't concern yourself with your own pawns, only your opponent's!

31.exf5?!

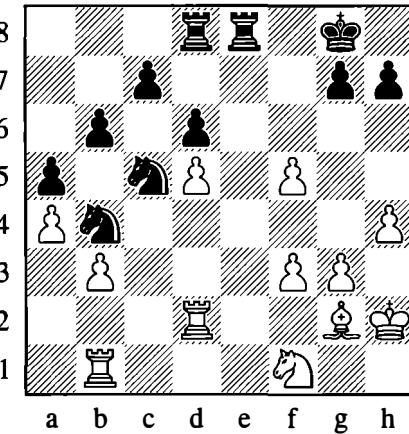
A better way to take the pawn is 31.♗xb4 axb4 32.exf5, but Black still has excellent play: 32...♗c5 33.g4 (33.♗d2 h5 34.g4 d5!) 33...♗e2 34.♗g3 ♗de8†

31...♗xd5 32.cxd5

White could have considered declining the sacrifice and keeping his queenside structure intact with 32.fxe6 ♗xe6, although he is struggling here too as ...d6-d5 is coming.

32...♗c5 33.♗d2

Maybe White could have defended better over the next few moves, but his position is unpleasant regardless of how he plays.



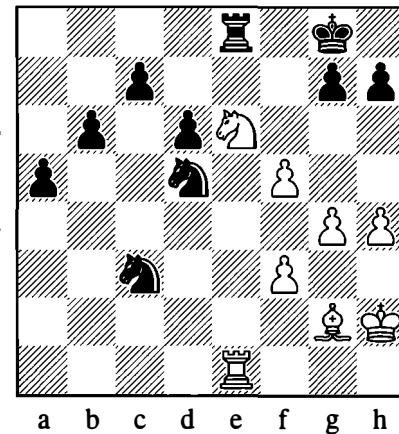
33...♗e7!

Karpov calmly improves his pieces and prepares the final invasion.

34.g4 ♗de8 35.♗g3 ♗e3→

To paraphrase Steinitz – a pawn is not worth this much trouble.

**36.♗e4 ♗xb3 37.♗dd1 ♗c5 38.♗g5 ♗xa4
39.♗e6 ♗c3 40.♗e1 ♗xe1 41.♗xe1 ♗bx d5**



In just ten moves, the pawn investment has been recovered with 200% net profit; considering the unusual number of passed

pawns on the queenside, you might even say 400%. White decided enough was enough.
0–1

Post-game reflections

I noticed two particularly prevalent themes in this game. The first was White's failure to find a useful role for his queen's knight. Several times it was noted that this piece could have been rerouted via b1 to c3, but by the time Granda Zuniga went about executing this manoeuvre, it was too late and the knight had to come back to the undesirable d2-square in order to defend the b3-pawn. Later the knight went to f1 and did nothing for several moves. Only at the very end of the game did the knight find a strong outpost on e6, but by that time White's position was already hopeless.

The other major theme was the weakening of White's queenside pawns with 19.a4?!. Of course Granda Zuniga is a formidable player who understood perfectly well that he was leaving some weaknesses, but he obviously thought it would be worth making this concession in order to stabilize the queenside and strive for active play elsewhere. It was instructive to see how Karpov eventually exploited this weakening and eliminated all three of White's queenside pawns, using a positional pawn sacrifice as a tool to put the plan in motion.

Vladimir Kramnik – Levon Aronian

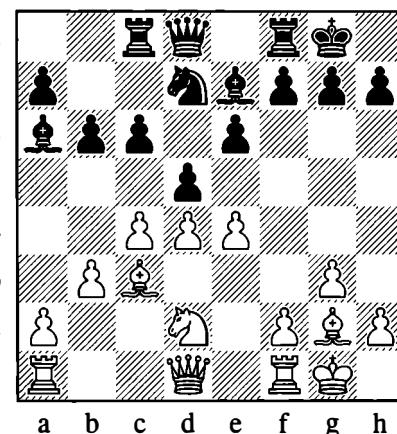
Mexico City 2007

Points to look for in this game:

- A strong novelty connected with an exchange sacrifice – 17... $\mathbb{W}d5$!?
- An interesting queen sacrifice – 17... $\mathbb{W}d5$! in the notes
- Black accepts the offer too early – 19... $\mathbb{Q}xe1$?

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6 4.g3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 5.b3
 $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$
 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0 12.0–0
 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13.e4

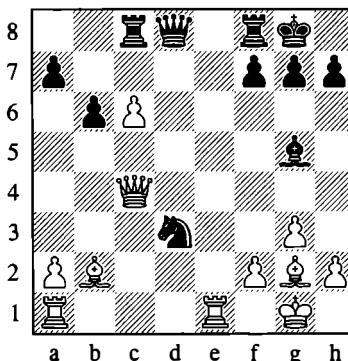
The players are following one of the most heavily investigated theoretical variations of the Queen's Indian.



13...dxe4

13...b5 is another serious move.

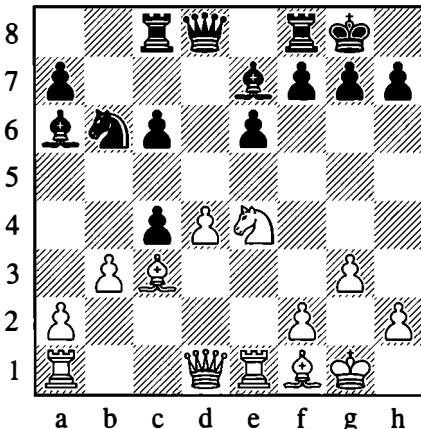
However, the most theoretical line is: 13...c5 14.exd5 exd5 15.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 16.c6 cxb3 17. $\mathbb{Q}el$ b2 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$



More than fifty games have been played from this position. The general scheme is that White will sacrifice the exchange and retain a slight edge, as his powerful bishops and passed c-pawn

provide at least enough compensation, although most high-level games have ended in draws.

14.♕xe4 b5 15.♗e1 bxc4 16.♗f1 ♖b6



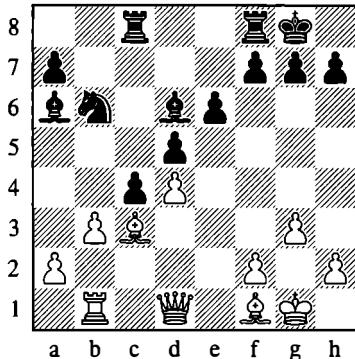
In this very position, a draw was agreed in Aronian – Nakamura, Stepanekert 2005. It seems Aronian was sufficiently convinced by Black's play to repeat it himself, but Kramnik is ready to take up the challenge from White's side.

17.♖b1!

This Nimzowitschian, mysterious rook move is the result of expert preparation.

17...♕d5

GM Mihail Marin, who is a keen positional sacrificer himself, points out the following offering of the black queen: 17...♕d5!?, 18.♗c5 ♕xc5 19.♗e5 ♕d6 20.♗xd5 cxd5∞



He continues with the rhetorical question: "Does White have any winning chances here?!"

Of course, this would be much better than the way the game turns out, but I think the compensation symbol is an exaggeration here. Until *Chess Informant* and *ChessBase* elaborate a more refined symbol, denoting "with not quite enough compensation", let us just agree that Marin's idea is a best-chance sacrifice. In absolute value, it is perhaps the equivalent of the alternative defence at move 19 that is mentioned below. However, the reader may understand Marin's enthusiasm: a queen sacrifice, muddying the opponent's plans, always comes with extra psychological value.

18.♗a1

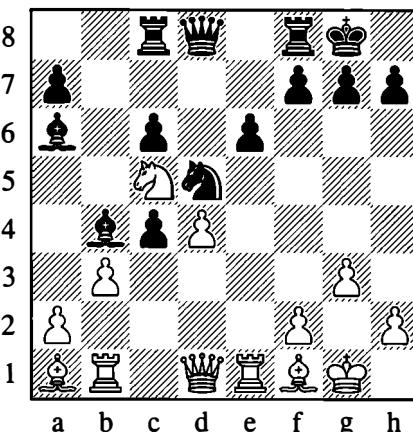
Now you can see that 17.♗b1 had a double aim, to provide a flight square for the bishop and to prevent ...♕b6.

18...♗b4

A subsequent game continued 18...♗b8 19.bxc4 with a stable edge to White, who eventually won in Ponomarev – Pivinsky, corr. 2008.

19.♗c5!

White is already temporarily a pawn down, and now he offers an exchange in order to target the bishop on a6.



19...♝xe1?

Black should defer accepting the gift:
 19...♛a5 20.bxc4 ♜xe1 21.♝xe1 ♛xe1
 22.♝xe1 ♜c7 23.♝c3 ♜cd8 24.♝c1 ♜c8
 25.♝a5 ♜a6 26.♝xd8 ♜xd8 27.♝b3 (27.♝xa6
 ♜xa6 gives drawing chances) 27...♝d7 28.f4
 ♜e8 29.♝f2 c5 30.d5±

20.♝xe1

The bishop on a6 is trapped and so White will emerge with two bishops against a rook. In view of Kramnik’s customary precision, Black’s position may already be considered lost.

20...cx_b3 21.♝xa6 bxa2 22.♝b2 ♜c7
 23.♝xa2 ♜xa6 24.♝xa6 ♜d7 25.♝c3 f6
 26.♝c5 ♜f7 27.♝c3 ♜b7 28.♝c4 ♜d7
 29.♝g2 ♜h8 30.♝xc6 ♜b7 31.♝g2 h6
 32.d5 ♜b8 33.dxe6 ♜e7 34.♝b4 ♜ec7 35.e7
 1–0

Post-game reflections

This game was won primarily in Kramnik’s home laboratory. Like a few of the other games in the book, it stretched the definition of the term “sacrifice”, as in most variations White ended up at least regaining his material. Still, the way White calmly left his rook hanging on e1 makes a strong visual impression, and even such a strong player as Aronian failed to cope with the problems put in front of him.

A pawn is worth a little trouble – Steinitz

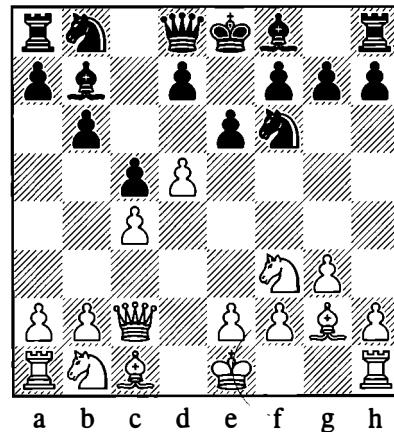
Petar Arnaudov – Mihai Suba

Arvier 2010

Points to look for in this game:

- An interesting reply to a dangerous gambit – 11...a6!?
- A spectacular piece offer – 17.♝d6!! in the note to move 13
- Returning material to good effect – 24...d5!

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.♝f3 b6 4.g3 ♜a6 5.♝c2
 ♜b7 6.♝g2 c5 7.d5!!



This pawn sacrifice has become extremely fashionable, especially at the elite level. In return for the pawn, White obtains a lead in development and some pressure along the d-file.

7...exd5 8.cxd5 ♜xd5

Some years ago Black used to take with the bishop, but White had exceptional results, so players have switched to the knight recapture, which seems to me more natural.

9.0–0 ♜c7

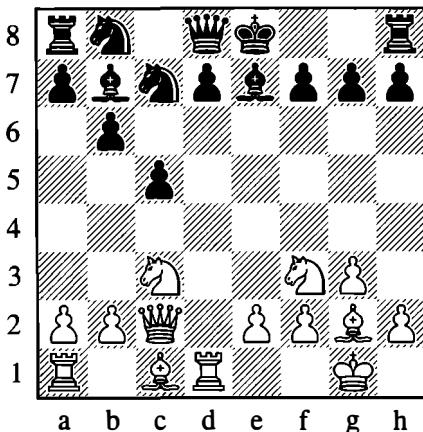
Most frequently played, by far, is 9...♜e7, but I believe that the text move is safer.

Statistically, it also has the better results.

10.♘c3

The alternatives are 10.♗d1 and 10.e4.

10...♝e7 11.♗d1



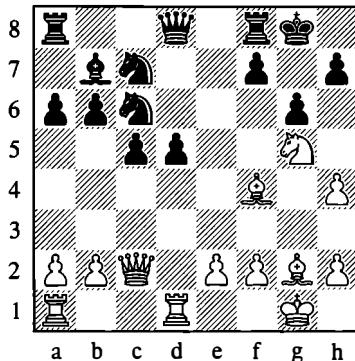
11...a6!?

When playing this, I thought my idea was original, but I later found another game in the database. By giving a square to the rook, Black ensures that he will not lose the exchange to any combinations based on ♘f3-g5.

12.♗f5

This was a novelty. In the earlier game Khmelniker – Sulskis, Dresden 2007, the advantage passed back and forth across the board like a ball:

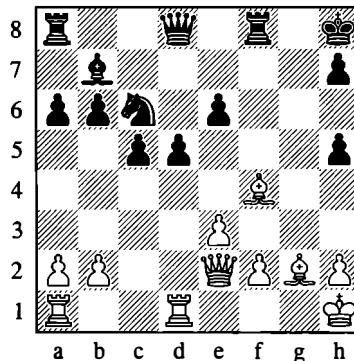
12.♗e4 d5 13.♗h4 ♖xh4 14.gxh4 ♘c6
15.♖f4 0–0 16.♗g5 g6



17.h5!?

Too optimistic.

Better is: 17.e3 ♘e7 18.♗e4 ♘f5 19.♖xc7 ♖xc7 20.♗f6† ♖g7 21.♗xd5 ♖xd5 22.♖xd5 ♗ad8 23.♗c3† f6 24.h5 ♖c8 25.♗b3 ♗d6 26.♗g2 ♗fd8 27.hxg6 hxg6 28.♗xd6 ♗xd6 29.♗d1 c4 30.♗c2 b5†
17...♝e6 18.♗xe6 fxe6 19.e3
19.♖h6! ♗f5 20.hxg6 ♖f6 21.gxh7† ♖h8
22.♖d2 ♗xf2 23.♗d3 ♘d4 24.♖c3 ♗xe2
25.♖h1 ♗e5 26.♗f1 ♖g7†
19...gxh5† 20.♗h1 ♖h8 21.♗e2



21...♗xf4!?

21...h4†

22.exf4 ♖f6 23.♗xh5 ♖xf4 24.♗d3 ♘d4
25.♗h3 ♖f5 26.♗h4 ♗g8?

26...♗e8 was necessary.

27.♗g3

27.♗e7!±

27...♗f8 28.♗e1 ♖f6 29.♗h5?! ♘f5

29...♖c6! was better.

30.♗h3 ♗f7 31.a4 c4 32.♗e2 ♘d4 33.♗h5 ♘f5

33...♖c6†

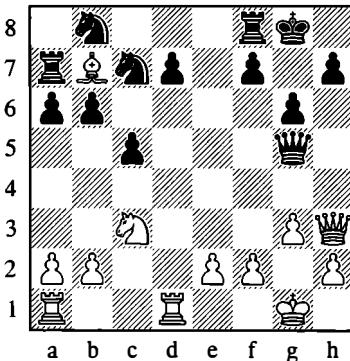
34.♗e2 ♘d4 35.♗h5

½–½ The ping-pong has finished.

12...0–0 13.♖f4

White has a more dangerous alternative:

13.♗g5! g6 14.♗h3 ♖xg5 15.♗xg5 ♖xg5
16.♗xb7 ♗a7



17. $\mathbb{Q}d6!! \mathbb{Q}e6$

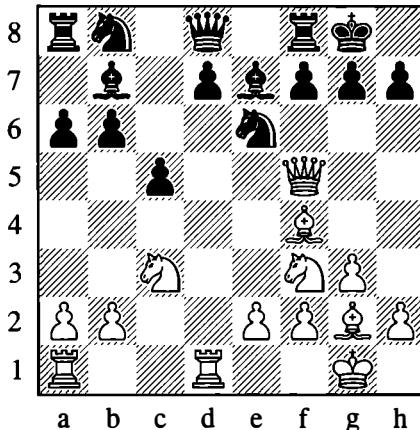
17... $\mathbb{Q}xb7?$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4+-$

18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

After 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb6 \mathbb{W}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5 d6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}g7$ the bishop on b7 has somehow strayed, and White is likely to lose material.
18... $b5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $f4 \mathbb{W}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2 c4$
22. $e4 f6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{W}c5\mathbb{t}$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b6$
 $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd7 \mathbb{W}d6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$
 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$

Black has emerged with equality.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$



14. $\mathbb{Q}d6??$

After this White will struggle to prove his compensation. Instead he should have taken a convenient route to equality: 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xf4 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{Q}a7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g4 d6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h4 g6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5 \mathbb{W}b8$ (20... $\mathbb{W}c7$

21. $\mathbb{Q}xe7 \mathbb{W}xe7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e4$ should also end in a draw, but may be slightly more troublesome for Black) 21. $\mathbb{Q}h6\mathbb{t} \mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f5\mathbb{t} \mathbb{Q}g8=$

14... $\mathbb{Q}a7$

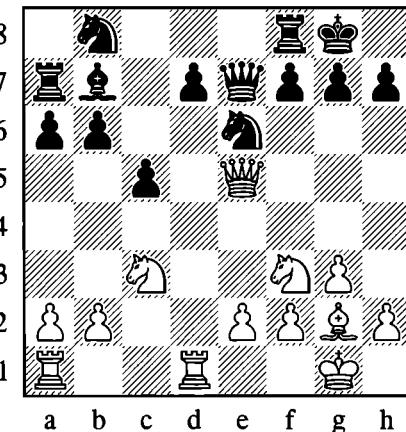
All tricks on the diagonal are over! 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ was natural and good, but I wanted to preserve the possibility of ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$. Not to mention the d7-weakness, which now benefits from X-ray protection!

15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

The idea that White may restore material equality with 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb8 \mathbb{W}xb8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ is an optical illusion, as after 16... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ White loses the exchange without adequate compensation.

15... $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e5?!$

Better is 16. $e3 g6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e5 b5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd5 \mathbb{Q}c6\bar{}$.



16... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d5$

After 18. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}ed4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\mathbb{t}$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}xe7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ White is left with very little compensation for the pawn.

18... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h5?!$

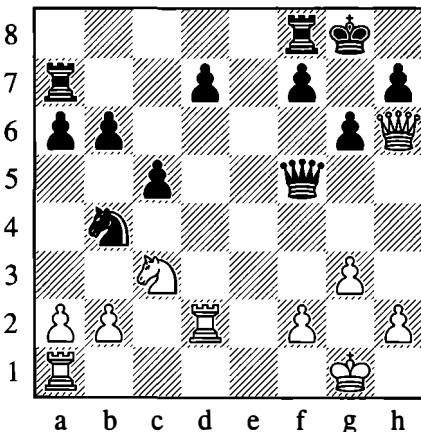
Here 19. $\mathbb{W}d6$ is slightly better than before. For example: 19... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6 \mathbb{Q}b8$ 21. $e3$ $c4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2 b5$ 23. $a3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{Q}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c5 \mathbb{Q}cc7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}b8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ with

reasonable drawing chances. But White seems unaware of the danger.

19...Qd4 20.Qe4!?

Threatening mate in one, but aggravating White's problems. Best is 20.Qd2=.

**20...g6 21.Wh6 Qxe2† 22.Qxe2 Wxe4
23.Qc3 Wf5 24.Qd2**



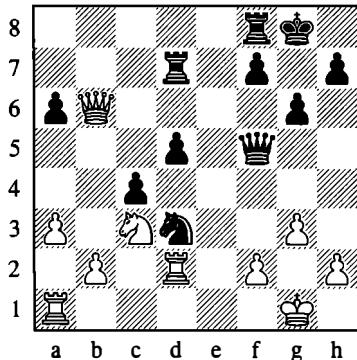
24...d5!

Black is eager to give back one of the pawns, to eliminate White's potential domination over d5, and to open the door for the laughable a7-rook. I intended it as a simplification sacrifice. But as we shall see, I was too modest – it could have turned into a tremendous attack.

25.a3 d4!?

The machine suggests another way to give back a pawn, much stronger than my desired simplification:

25...Qd3! 26.We3 c4 27.Wxb6 Qd7



28.Qf1

**28.Wxa6?! d4 29.Qa2 Qe5=+
28.Qe2 Qg7 29.Wxa6 d4 30.Qa2 We8
31.Qxe8 Wxf2† 32.Qh1 Wf3† 33.Qg1
Qf2=+**

28...d4 29.Qd1

Neither 29.Qe2 We4 nor 29.Qa2 c3!
30.bxc3 Qe5 can save White.

29...Wf3

White is helpless against ...We8 followed by
...Qe1.

26.axb4 dxc3 27.bxc3

Black is a clear pawn up and eventually won a rook endgame, of which I will spare the boring details.

...0-1

Post-game reflections

White's opening gambit gives him decent play for a pawn, and we saw in the notes to moves 13 and 14 that he could have at least achieved a dynamic balance or an outright draw in one way or another. Although Black's play also contained some imperfections, it showed quite well how the defending side with the extra material may neutralize the opposing initiative and then take over with the help of a counter-sacrifice to activate the pieces. It would have been more satisfying to win with the aggressive continuation noted at move 25, but my more modest simplifying plan also proved sufficient in the end.

Chapter 13

Flank Openings

The English Opening

Rafael Vaganian – Albin Planinc

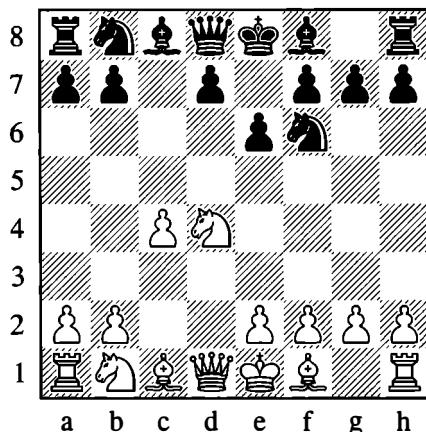
Hastings 1974

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ White goes for a risky pawn grab – 11.cxd5?!
- ♦ A powerful rook sacrifice – 19... $\mathbb{R}f5$!
- ♦ Using the full scope of the board – 21... $\mathbb{Q}a1$!

The following miniature is a drastic punishment for neglecting basic rules. Rufik can by no means be considered a pawn grabber, but anybody can have a bad day.

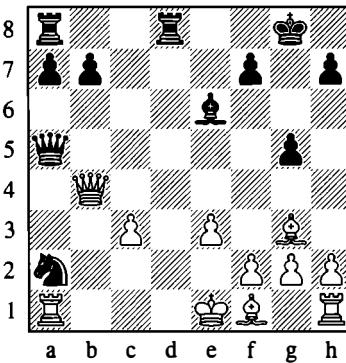
1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e6



The opening has transposed into one of the main lines of the Symmetrical English.

5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$

In the 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ line, I have suffered a similar disaster: 6. $\mathbb{Q}db5$ d5 7.cxd5 exd5 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 18.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e4??$ (19. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xc3\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e5\uparrow$) 19... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b4$

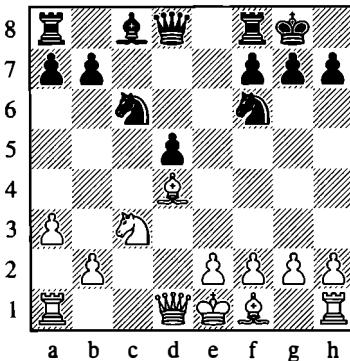


20... $\mathbb{E}d1\uparrow!!$ 0-1 Suba – Portisch, Thessaloniki (ol) 1984.⁴

6. $\mathbb{Q}db5$ 0-0 7.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ d5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

An interesting plan is to keep the d-pawn blocked with:

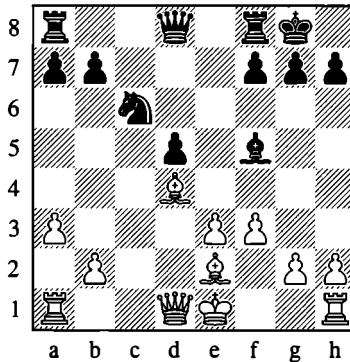
9.cxd5 exd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$



11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Black's move is not bad, but he can also try to take advantage of White's lack in development more directly: 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 12.e3 (worse is 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13.e3 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 14.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 15.fxg3 $\mathbb{W}xd4\#$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ d4 16. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 17.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ and Black has a draw by perpetual, if he wants.

12.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

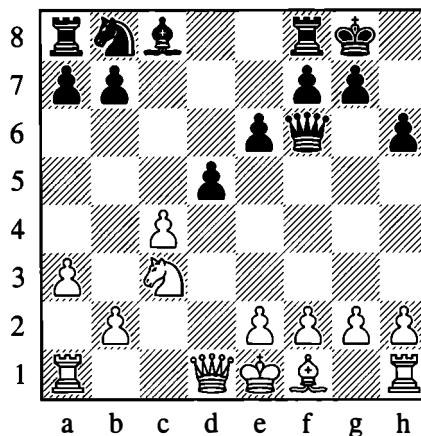


15... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Black does not benefit from preventing castling: 15... $\mathbb{Q}h4\#$? 16.g3 $\mathbb{W}h3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h6$ 20.h4± Lenic – Cvitan, Nova Gorica 2006.

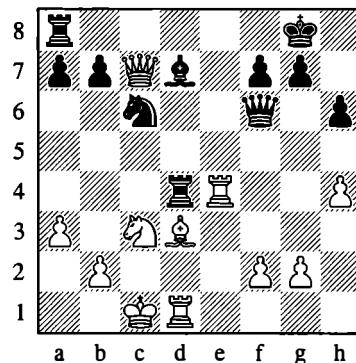
16.0–0 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}ec8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h6#

9...h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$



11.cxd5?

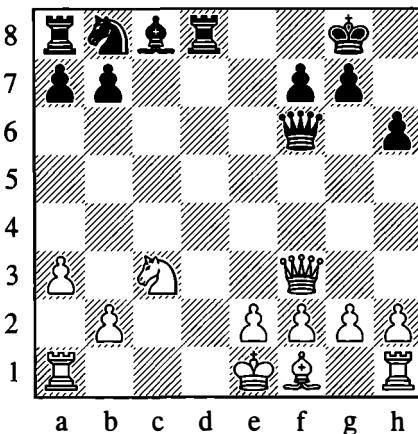
White does better to refrain from taking the pawn: 11.e3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 12.cxd5 exd5 13. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 14.h4 $\mathbb{W}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f4$ d4 18.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$



21... $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$? (21... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}c6\#$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ bxc6 25. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 28.g3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6=$) 22. $\mathbb{W}xc8\#$ 1–0 F. Olafsson – Tal, Moscow 1971.

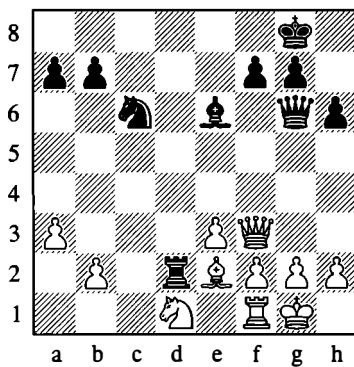
11...exd5 12. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f3$

Black is a pawn down, but his superior development gives him obvious compensation and the game continuation demonstrates the correctness of his decision.



13...Bb6

Also good is: 13...Bg6 14.Bd1 Qxd1† 15.Qxd1 Nc6 16.e3 Qe6 17.Qe2 Qd8 18.0–0 Qd2



19.Qc3 Bxb2 20.Qb5 Qc2 21.Qxc6 bxc6
22.Qxc6 Bd3 23.Qa8† Bh7 24.Qd1 Qc4
25.Qe1 Qd5 26.Qxa7 Qe4 27.f3 Qxg2† 0–1
Kaminsky – Kapengut, Orel 1974.

14.Bd1

Perhaps White should have considered keeping this defensive piece on the board with 14.Bb1 Nc6 15.e3.

14...Bxd1† 15.Qxd1 Nc6 16.Qe3?!

16.e3 is well met by 16...Qe6 intending ...Qd8-d2.

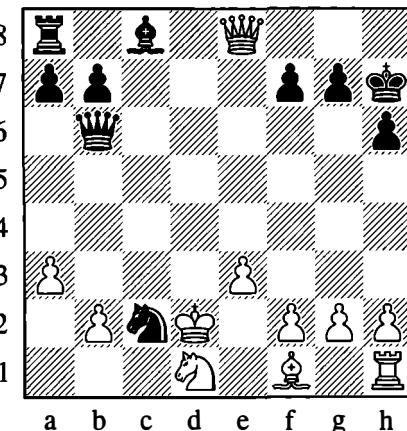
16.Qc3?! may have been the best chance, as after 16...Qe6 17.e3 Qc8 18.Qe2 there are no convincing discovered attacks, although

Black should have enough activity to regain his pawn and maintain the balance in one way or another.

16...Nd4!

Planning jumps on his opponent's mistake and drives ahead with his cavalry.

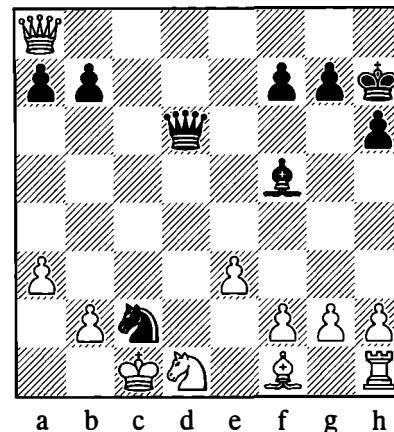
17.Qe8† Bh7 18.e3 Nc2† 19.Qd2



19...Rf5!

Black ups the ante by throwing a rook onto the fire, decoying the white queen into the corner at the same time. Black will only have three attacking pieces remaining, but they are more than capable of hurting the white king.

20.Qxa8 Qd6† 21.Qc1



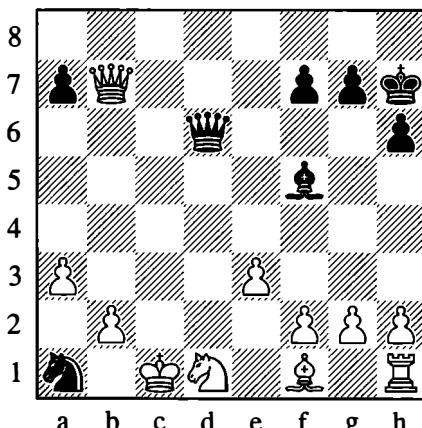
21...Qa1!

This elegant attacking move creates an odd kind of symmetry against the white queen on a8.

22.Qxb7??

Losing immediately, although White is already walking a tightrope and his chances would remain worse even with best play:
 22.Qc4 Wc7 23.Qc3 Wxc4 24.Wd8 Qb3†
 25.Qd1 Kg4† 26.Qe2 Ke4 27.Qe1 Kb1†
 28.Wd1 Wxb2 29.Qd4 (29.Wd5??) 29...Qxd4
 30.Wxd4 Wc1† 31.Wd1 Wa3†

After the move played Planinc gets a chance to end the game in style.



22...Wc7†!

0–1

Post-game reflections

I doubt that anyone familiar with Rufik Vaganian's playing style would be surprised to learn that he was involved in the above game. What would almost definitely raise an eyebrow or two is the revelation that the Armenian attacking maestro was on the wrong side of the board, falling victim to a sacrificial attack of which he himself would surely have been proud. Vaganian is renowned for his highly developed

intuition and feel for the dynamics of a chess game, so it is surprising to see him succumb to the vice of materialism. Of course it should not be forgotten that the game took place nearly forty years ago, and perhaps the lessons learned from this painful early experience played a role in helping Rufik to become one of the most feared attacking players in the world.

A Chess game is divided into three stages: the first, when you hope you have the advantage, the second when you believe you have an advantage, and the third... when you know you're going to lose! – Savielly Tartakower

Mihai Suba – Viktor Korchnoi

World Team Championship, Lucerne 1985

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ White fails to play the best move order – 16.bxc6! in the notes
- ♦ A positional queen sacrifice – 20.Wxg7†! in the note to move 18
- ♦ A best-chance sacrifice for the initiative – 20.Qc1!

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qc6 3.Qc3 g6 4.Qg2 Qg7
 5.Qb1 f5 6.d3 Qf6 7.e3 0–0 8.Qge2 d6 9.b4
 a6**

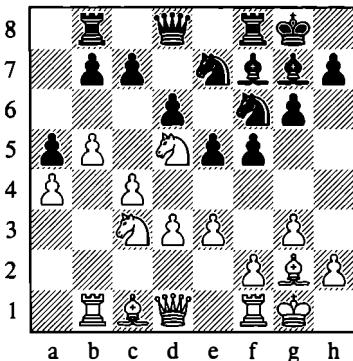
Most often played here is 9...Qe7.

10.a4 a5

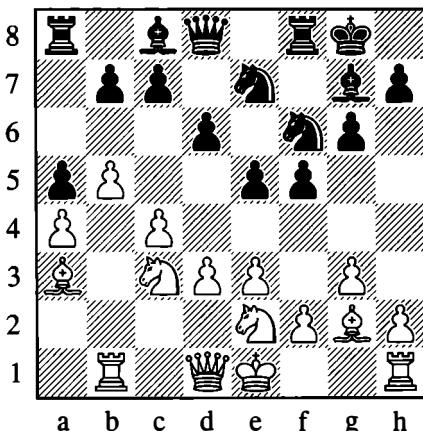
Arguably better is: 10...Qe7 11.Wb3 c6 12.a5 Qe6 13.Qa4 We8 14.f4 Qd7 (14...e4) 15.0–0 Qf6 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.e4 (17.Qec3) 17...fxe4 18.Qxe4 Qf5 19.Qg2 Wd8 20.Qac3 Qg5 21.Qf3 (21.Qe4) 21...Qxc1 22.Qxc1 Qf6 23.Qcf1 Qd4 24.Qxd4 Wxd4† 25.Qh1 Qg4 26.Qe2 Wa7 27.h3 Qxf3 28.Qxf3 e4! 29.dxe4 Qe5= Suba – Kindermann, Beersheba 1984.

11.b5 ♜e7 12.♗a3

A comedy of errors occurred in another game: 12.0–0 ♜b8 13.♗d5 ♛e6 14.♗ec3 ♛f7



15.f4?! ♜exd5 16.♗xd5 ♜d7?! (16...exf4)
17.♗b2?! (17.fxe5±) 17...c6 18.♗c3 ♜c7
19.♗h1 ♜c5?! (19...e4) 20.d4?! (20.fxe5 dxe5
21.♗a3 ♜d6 22.♗e2±) 20...exd4?! (20...♗d7)
21.exd4 ♜d7 22.d5 c5 23.g4?! fxg4?
(23...♗b6) 24.♗e4 ♜b6?! 25.♗xg7 ♜xg7
26.♗d2 h5 27.♗xa5± and White soon won
in Franco Ocampos – Durao, Dos Hermanas
1998.

**12...♝f7 13.♗d2**

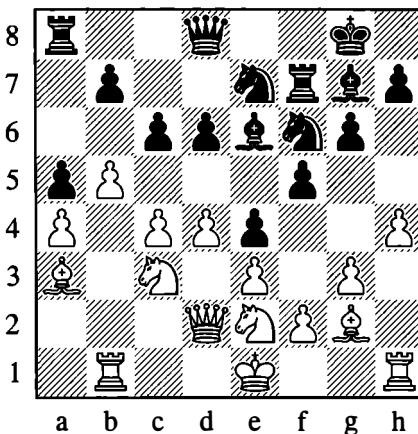
Or 13.0–0 ♜b8 14.d4 e4 15.b6 c6 16.d5±.

13...c6 14.d4

Also good is: 14.0–0 ♜e6 15.bxc6 bxc6
16.f4±

14...e4 15.h4!?

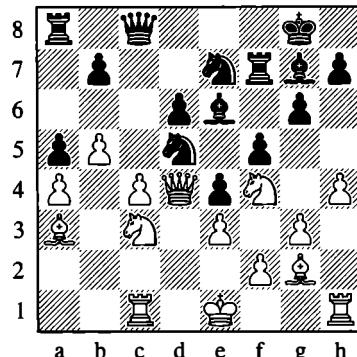
White begins to play with great expectations.
15.0–0 g5 16.f3± is a modest achievement,
and besides, I don't like damaged structures!

15...♝e6**16.d5?!**

A regrettable slip in the move order. More accurate is: 16.bxc6! ♜xc4 (16...bxc6? 17.d5
cxd5 18.♗f4 ♜c8 19.cxd5 ♜fxd5 20.♗cxd5
♗xd5 21.♗xd5 ♜xd5 22.♗xd5+–) 17.cxb7
♜b8 18.♗f4± and White has a steady
advantage, without any risk.

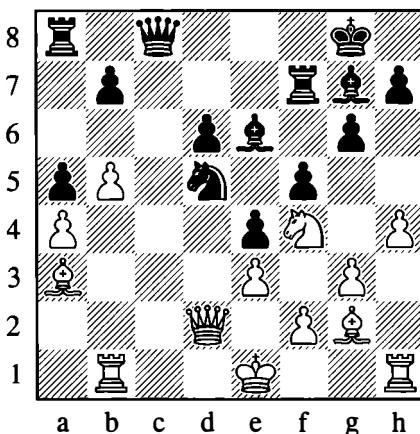
16...cxd5 17.♗f4 ♜c8 18.cxd5

18.♗c1! could lead to an incredible queen
sacrifice: 18...d4 19.♗xd4 ♜fd5



20.♗xg7†! ♜xg7 21.cxd5 ♜d7 22.♗xe4±

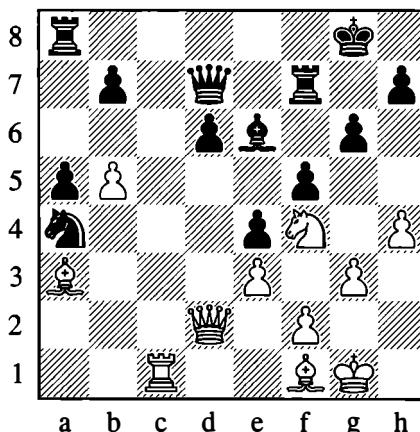
18...Qxd5 19.Qxd5 Qxd5



20.Qc1!

An exchange sacrifice is the best chance here. In the event of 20.Qxd5 Qxd5 21.Qc1 Qe6 22.0–0, White would be a pawn down in a bad position. Better to invest some extra material in order to get some attacking chances in return.

**20...Qc3 21.Qxc3 Qxc3 22.0–0 Qxa4
23.Qc1 Qd7 24.Qf1**



The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 282.

You need not play well – just help your opponent to play badly – Genrikh Chepukaitis

James Plaskett – Tony Miles

Lugano 1986

1.c4 e5 2.e3 d6 3.Qc3 g6 4.g3 Qg7 5.Qg2 Qe7 6.d4 0–0 7.Qge2 Qd7

Although sometimes played, this move is not entirely consistent with 5...Qe7, after which the normal plan is 7...exd4 followed by ...Qbc6 and ...Qf5.

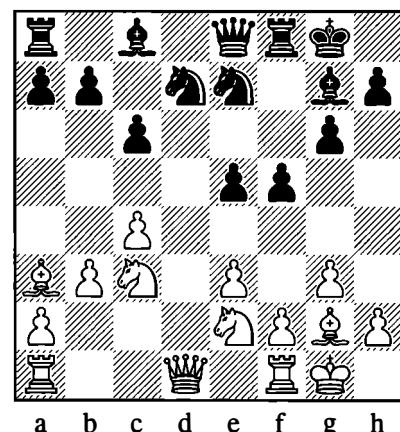
Another option for Black is 7...c6.

8.0–0 f5

Here too, 8...exd4 looks adequate. Advancing the kingside pawns leads nowhere.

9.dxe5! dxe5 10.b3 c6 11.Qa3 Qe8

White has clear play along the d-file and the a3–f8 diagonal, while most of the black pieces have nowhere to go. Better is 11...e4, or even 11...f4!?



12.f4!

Preventing ...f4 forever and diminishing the effect of ...e4 (by controlling the e5-square).

12...e4 13.Qd6 Qf7 14.Qad1 Qf8 15.Qd2?!

White is trapping his own queen. Better is 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ or 15. $\mathbb{W}d8$, with a small advantage for White in either case.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

Threatening $\mathbb{Q}xe4$.

16... $g5!!$

A good idea, but carried out with the wrong move order.

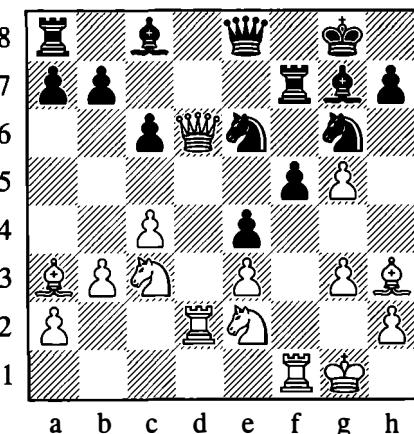
16... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $g5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21. $bxc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ is good for Black.

17. $f \times g$

White picks up the gauntlet.

17. $\mathbb{Q}dd1!!?$ is not at all bad, but such a move would have been psychologically difficult to make.

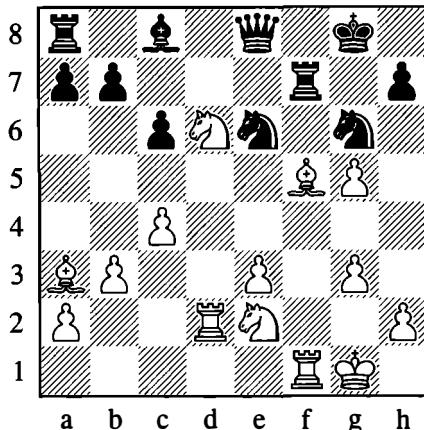
17... $\mathbb{Q}g6$



18. $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$

Fighting for the initiative with the help of a queen sacrifice. White could have avoided material losses with 18. $\mathbb{W}b4?!$, but after 18... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ Black is in control.

18... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$



20... $\mathbb{W}d8$

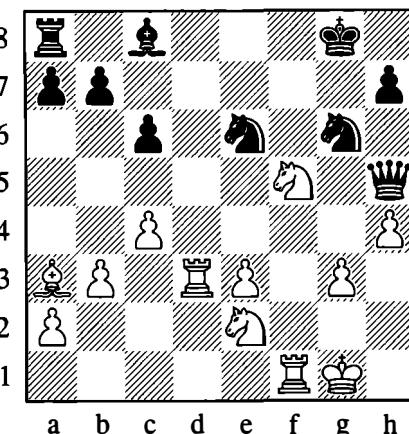
20... $\mathbb{W}e7?!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ is unclear.

21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5?$

The decisive error. After the correct 22... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b2\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f7\uparrow$ the game ends in perpetual check. Presumably Miles saw this but thought he could play for a win.

23. $h4$ $\mathbb{W}h5$

23... $\mathbb{Q}xh4?!$ also fails to save the game: 24. $\mathbb{Q}e7\uparrow$ (24. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{W}a5!$ is not so clear) 24... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 25. $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b2\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ Black is hopelessly tied up and White will soon win, for instance with $\mathbb{Q}f4-d3$.



24.g4!

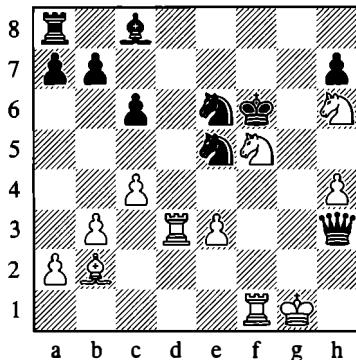
Luring the queen to a poor square.

24... $\mathbb{W}xg4\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}eg3$ $\mathbb{W}h3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

27. $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$

The most convincing route to victory is:

27. $\mathbb{Q}gf5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}b2\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

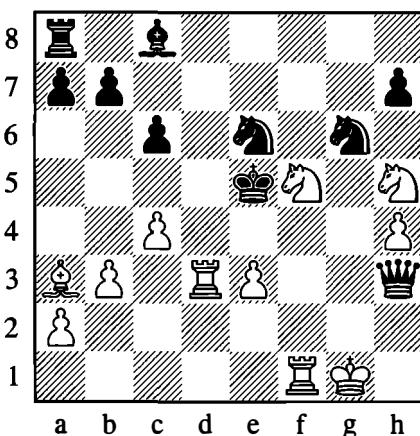


29.e4! $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\#$ and White emerges with an extra piece.

27... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$

Black avoids repeating moves. Presumably his motivation was not to play for a win, but rather to avoid suffering the fate seen in the previous note after 27... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}gf5\#$ etc.

28. $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

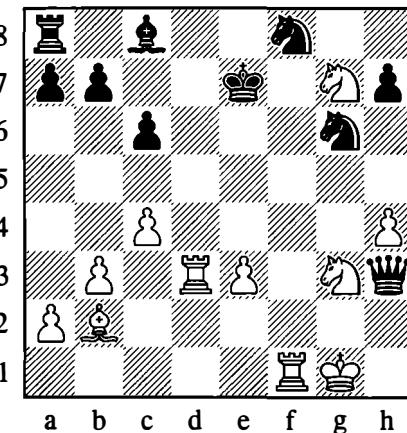
**29. $\mathbb{Q}fg3!$**

With this final accurate move Plaskett covers the escape square on e4 and sets up a multitude of mating motifs.

29... $\mathbb{Q}ef8$

Black's last chance to prolong the game was to sacrifice his queen with 29... $\mathbb{W}xf1\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}ef8$. White's extra pawn and positional advantage should be enough for victory, but some work would remain.

30. $\mathbb{Q}b2\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$



32. $\mathbb{Q}a3\#$

Black resigned as it is mate next move.

1–0

Post-game reflections

This game was all about momentum and forward motion. White began brightly but then faced a crisis as his queen became short of squares, which became especially apparent after 16...g5?! appeared on the board. At that point Plaskett was at a crossroads, and had to decide between retreating his queen and sacrificing her for the initiative. He chose the second option, his pieces surged forwards with renewed energy, and Miles was unable to cope. White hardly made any 'retreating' moves during the whole

game, the only exceptions being to execute a capture or to create a direct threat.

What is the easiest thing to do?

"Give advice to others."

What is the most difficult thing to do?

"Know yourself." – Thales of Miletus

Ian Rogers – Mihai Suba

Szirak 1986

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ A strong pawn sacrifice – 8.0–0!
- ♦ Wasting too much time – 13...h6?
- ♦ A final blunder – 17... $\mathbb{W}g5??$

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 4.g3 cxd4 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}b6!?$

This move is designed to disrupt White's development by creating threats before he can castle.

6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

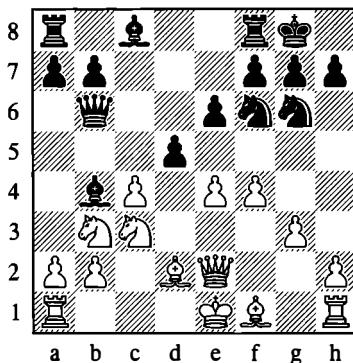
I have also faced:

6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

With 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10.0–0

Granda could reach the main game by transposition; but everybody knows that Julio's opening knowledge was never outstanding – or so he pretends.

8.. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0–0 11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12.e4 d5!



13.cxd5 exd5 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16.bxc3
16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}e3\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ looks risky for White, but may be quite playable.

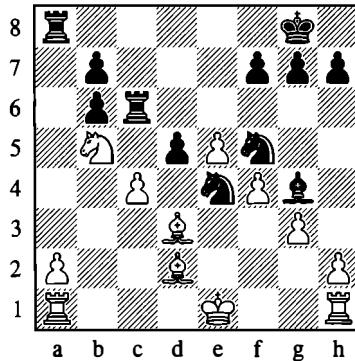
16... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$

Keeping queens on with 17... $\mathbb{W}c7$ also gives Black an edge.

18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

19... $\mathbb{W}c5\#$

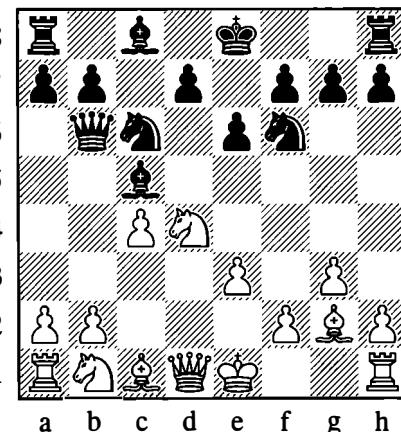
20. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 21. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{E}c6$ 22.c4



22... $\mathbb{E}h6\#$

Granda Zuniga – Suba, Zaragoza 1995.

6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$



8.0–0!

This pawn sacrifice was introduced by Nogueiras.

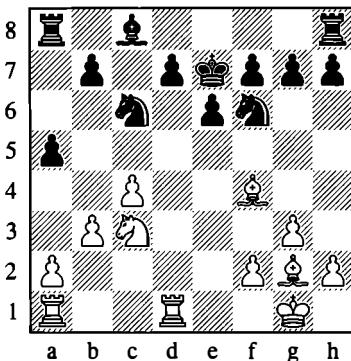
The alternatives can lead to difficulties for White, for instance:

8. $\mathbb{Q}b3?$ $\mathbb{B}b4\#$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ d5 11. cxd5 $\mathbb{W}a6$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}bx5\#$ Sosonko – Suba, Tunis 1985) 9... d5 10. cxd5= $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Mi. Tseitlin – Suba, Pernik 1976.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c2?$ d5 9. cxd5 exd5 10. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 14. g4 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ Flear – Suba, Szirak 1986.

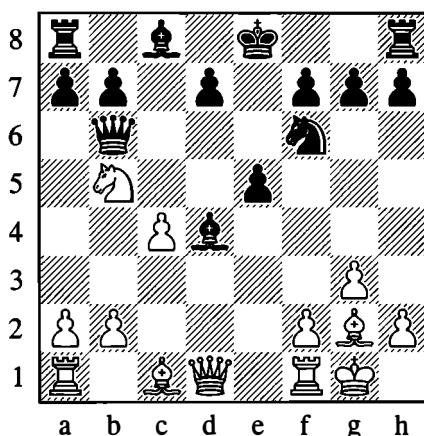
8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Taking the other way seems less appetizing:
8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9. exd4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. b3 a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}d2$ f6 16. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5??$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 1–0 Nogueiras – Rodriguez Cespedes, Cienfuegos 1986; after 17...fxe5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7!$ Black's defences are destroyed.

9. exd4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

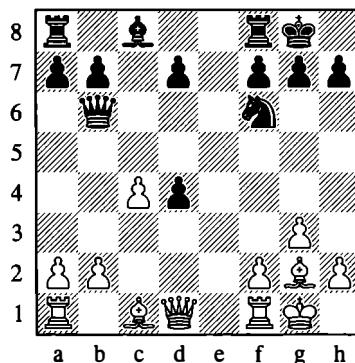


11... $\mathbb{Q}c5?!$

Losing time is always a risky business, but I wanted to keep the extra pawn and with it some winning chances.

The alternative is:

11... 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4



13. b3

Most of the games to reach this position have ended in a draw.

Curiously, nobody has tried: 13. $\mathbb{E}e1!$ d5 14. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (or 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$) 15. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ 13... d5 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ dxc4 15. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

This is a dead draw, but the alternative capture does not offer much either: 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ (15... $\mathbb{W}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ [16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b2\pm$] 17. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ bxc4 18. bxc4 \pm) 16. bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (16... $\mathbb{E}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3!\pm$) 17. c5 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 20. $\mathbb{E}fxd1$ gxf6 21. $\mathbb{E}dc1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ and White's small advantage is likely to evaporate.

15... cxb3 16. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 17. axb3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}ax1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 20. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xb3$ $\mathbb{E}xb7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 23. $\mathbb{E}b5$

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Nogueiras – Psakhis, Szirak 1986.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

The programs like 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3?!$.

12... 0–0 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h6?

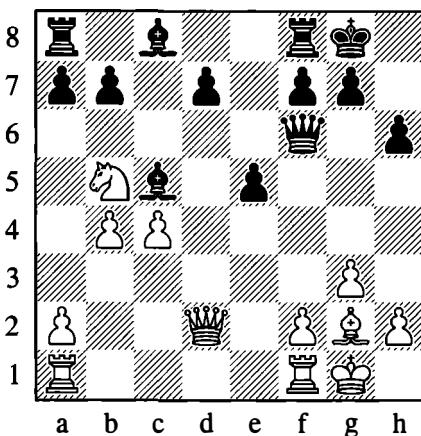
I simply lost sight of White's main threat, to play b2-b4; a terrible lapse, which leads to a bad position, to say the least.

The best move might be 13...a5!. I was certainly having a bad day, and wrongly discarded this due to 14.♕xf6 ♕xf6 15.♘c7, thinking that if I avoided the repetition, White would take his pawn back. But 15...♝b8 16.♕xa5?? runs into the obvious 16...♝b6.

Instead White may meet 13...a5! with 14.♘c3 a4 15.♗ad1 h6 16.♕xf6 ♕xf6 17.♘e4 ♕b6 18.♘xc5 ♕xc5 19.♕d6 ♜a5. Although White is a pawn down, he is unlikely to lose; but, of course, neither is Black.

Even after the simpler 13...a6 14.♘c3 ♔d4 15.♗ac1 d5 16.c5 ♕c6 17.♕xf6 ♕xf6 18.♘e2 ♜f5 19.♘xd4 exd4 20.♔xd5 ♜ab8 Black seems likely to equalize.

14.♕xf6 ♕xf6 15.b4

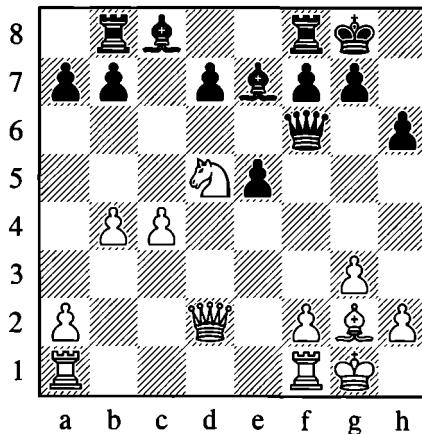


15...♘e7?!

I was so taken aback by the reversal of my hopes that I could not switch my mind to putting up maximum resistance.

A better attempt at a defence is: 15...♔d4 16.♘xd4 exd4 17.♗ad1 d6 18.♕xd4 ♕xd4 19.♕xd4 ♔e6±

16.♘c7 ♘b8 17.♘d5



17...♕g5??

Black could still struggle on with 17...♕e6 18.f4 ♔d8. Instead, I crowned my efforts with the loss of a piece.

18.f4 exf4 19.♕xf4!

Faced with the loss of a piece after 19...d6 20.h4 ♕xf4 21.♘xe7†, I resigned.

1–0

Post-game reflections

This was certainly not one of my better games, but at least it had some instructional value in showing how not to react to a positional pawn sacrifice by one's opponent. My play was overambitious, I failed to consider my opponent's ideas, and Ian did everything that was needed to punish me.

Mihai Suba – Evgeniy Solozhenkin

Berga 1993

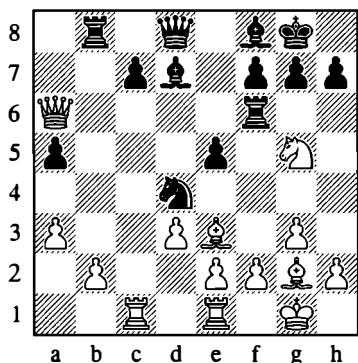
Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ Black plays too ambitiously – 18...a5?
- ♦ A strong manoeuvre – 18...♘a7! in the notes
- ♦ A shock for Black – 19.♘eg5!

This game, as well as some instruction, may give the reader a good demonstration of how volatile the concepts of combination and sacrifice are.

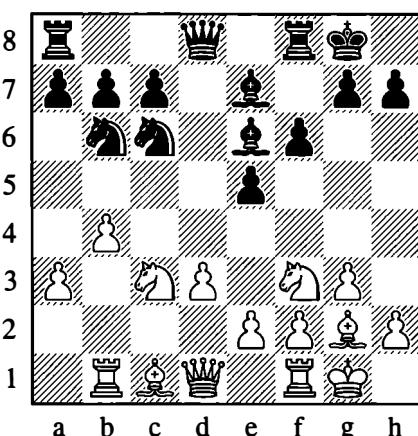
1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 0–0

Another line is: 8...a5 9.d3 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}cl$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ (some annotators recommend 14... $\mathbb{W}c8!?$) 15. $\mathbb{W}b3! \pm$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (15... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ g6 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5!+–$) 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$



19. $\mathbb{W}xa5!$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe5!+–$ Suba – Mestel, Beersheba 1984.

9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ f6 11.d3



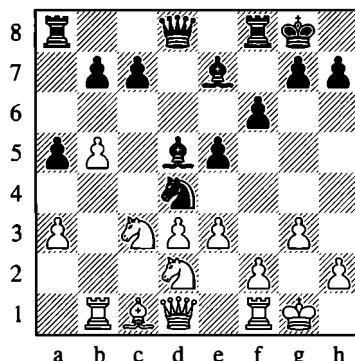
11... $\mathbb{W}d7$

Quite logical and solid.

Another possibility for Black featured in a later game between the same players:

11...a5 12.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

A well-known pitfall is: 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15.e3



Black unexpectedly loses a piece. This has occurred in quite a few games, including Suba – S. Garcia, Malaga 2001.

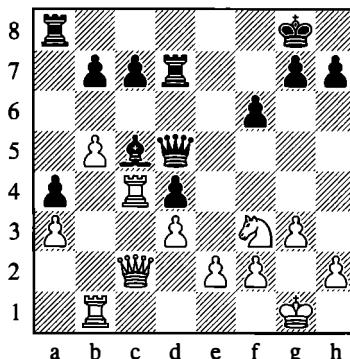
14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Or 14. $\mathbb{Q}de4!?$ f5 15.e3±.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

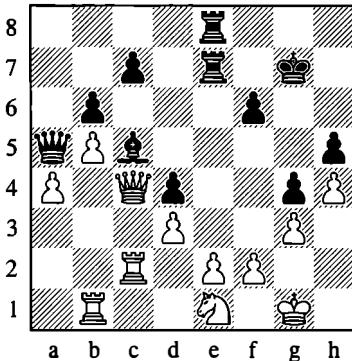
I'll give the following game in full, as it is quite interesting and was elected "Game of the Month" in France.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5! \pm$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$
18. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8!?$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c2$



White is going to win a pawn. Is this a manoeuvre with backstage tactics, or a combination without a sacrifice?

23... $b6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xa4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $g5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
 27. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ 28. $a4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 29. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $h5$ 30. $h4$ $g4$
 31. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}de7$



32. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$

This sham sacrifice ensures that White will prevail.

32... $\mathbb{E}xe2$

Or 32... $\mathbb{E}d6$ 33. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}xe2$ 34. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{E}xe2$
 35. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$.

33. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{E}xe2$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}f4+-$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$
 36. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$

36. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ is even stronger.

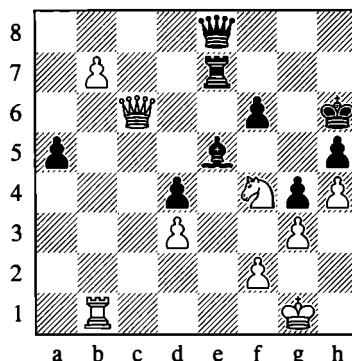
36... $\mathbb{W}a7$ 37. $\mathbb{W}g8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e6$

38. $\mathbb{W}f7!$ $\mathbb{E}f5$ 39. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ leads to a quick mate.

38... $\mathbb{W}h7$ 39. $\mathbb{W}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 40. $\mathbb{W}c1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f4\uparrow$
 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 42. $a5$

Or 42. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 43. $\mathbb{E}c1+-$.

42... $bxa5$ 43. $\mathbb{W}c8$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 44. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 45. $b6$ $\mathbb{W}h8$
 46. $b7$ $\mathbb{W}e8$

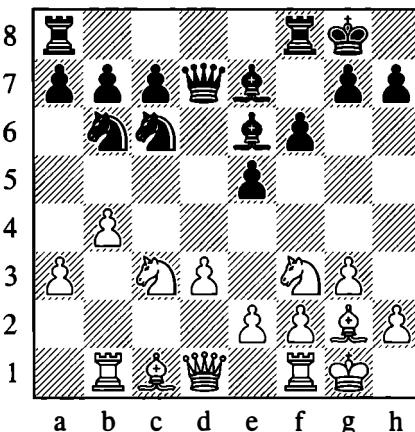


47. $b8=\mathbb{Q}!$

This is just for fun, of course; 47. $\mathbb{W}c8$ is a simple win.

47... $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ 48. $\mathbb{W}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 49. $\mathbb{E}xb8$ $\mathbb{E}e1\uparrow$
 50. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xb8$ 51. $\mathbb{W}f7\uparrow$

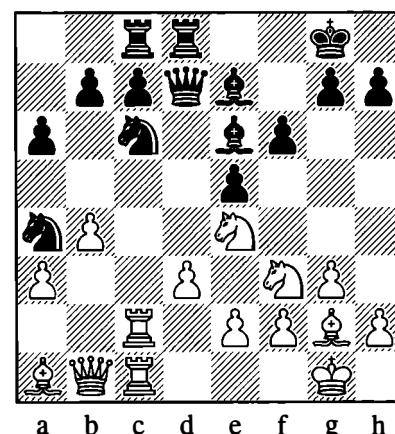
1–0 Suba – Solozhenkin, Avoine 1996.



12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{E}b2$

White often places his queen on c2 here, but I decided to go for a different kind of regrouping.

13... $a6$ 14. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b1$
 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 17. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}a1$

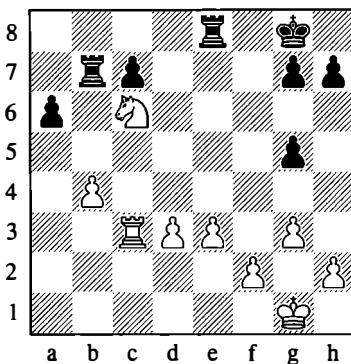


18... $a5?$

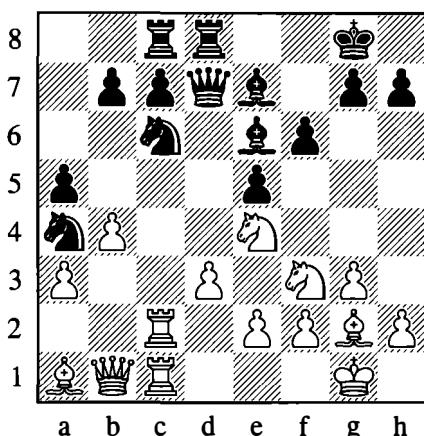
I was very proud of this game, which received the tournament's brilliancy prize,

and considered it an instructive example of coordinating and breathing energy into all the pieces, even within a restricted space. But my complacency ended when an infernal program found the improvement 18... $\mathbb{Q}a7!$, continuing with 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5 \mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20.bxc5 $\mathbb{B}b8\#$.

There is little that can be done to put that right, apart from trying once more the heroic sacrifice of the game: 19. $\mathbb{Q}eg5$ $\mathbb{fxg}5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{We}8$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}bc3$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{B}xe8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{B}xb7$ 29.e3



This time, the combination is not so effective, and from the diagram position there is an argument between my three strongest chess engines: one reckons on a slight advantage for White, another holds the opposite view, while the most peaceful sees dead equality. Perhaps it all comes down to GM Veingold's joke, "This is a better draw for you!"



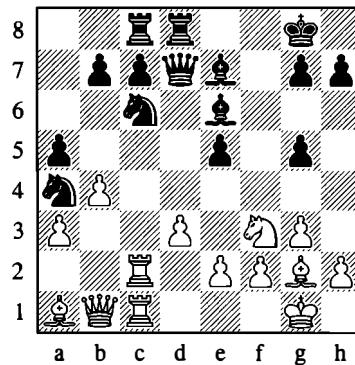
19. $\mathbb{Q}eg5!$

My opponent believed he was forcing 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5 \mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20.bxc5 $\mathbb{B}b8\#$, so this came as a big surprise!

Against best defence, this combination swaps off some pieces and should end up in material equality, but with a small positional advantage for White. But on the way, I spotted how to get two pieces for a rook and I changed my mind, and so the sacrifice became a sham one, resulting in material gain. Once again the reader may appreciate the limited relevance of classification, as the small material gain in one variation was equivalent to the positional gain in the other one.

19... $\mathbb{axb}4$

Accepting the Trojan Horse would have been disastrous: 19... $\mathbb{fxg}5?$

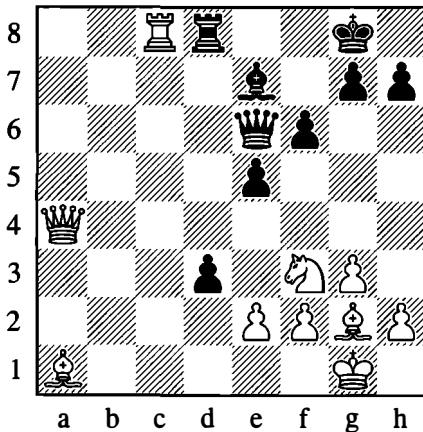


20. $\mathbb{B}xc6!$ bxc6 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{We}8$ (21... $\mathbb{Wd}6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xc6$) 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Wf}8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xa4+-$ and the threat of 24. $\mathbb{B}b3$ is too strong.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{axb}4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 22. $\mathbb{B}c4!!$

When I initiated the combination I only considered 22. $\mathbb{B}xc7$, correctly evaluating it as being better for White. You should listen to your first impulse sometimes!

22...c5 23. $\mathbb{Wb}3$ b5 24. $\mathbb{B}xb4$ c4 25. $\mathbb{B}xc4$ bxc4 26. $\mathbb{Wxa4}$ cxd3 27. $\mathbb{B}xc8$



27... $\mathbb{R}xc8$

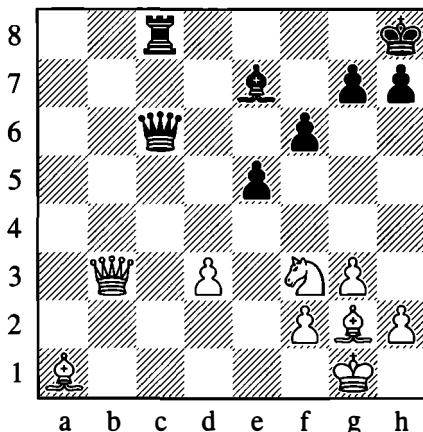
27... $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 28.exd3 $\mathbb{R}xd3\pm$ nets Black a pawn, but also allows a better regrouping of White's forces beginning with the accurate 29. $\mathbb{Q}h3$!

28.exd3 $\mathbb{W}c6$

28... $\mathbb{R}c1\uparrow$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{R}d1$ 32. $\mathbb{W}e8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 33. $\mathbb{W}e6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 34. $\mathbb{W}c8$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 36. $\mathbb{W}a8$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 37. $\mathbb{W}e8$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 38. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{R}c1\pm$

29. $\mathbb{W}b3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Slightly better is 29... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $fxe5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}e8\pm$.



The opening phase of the game is over; for further adventures in the middlegame go to page 321.

If you don't know what else to do, push a rook pawn – Bent Larsen

Mihai Suba – Jesus De la Villa Garcia

Zaragoza 1995

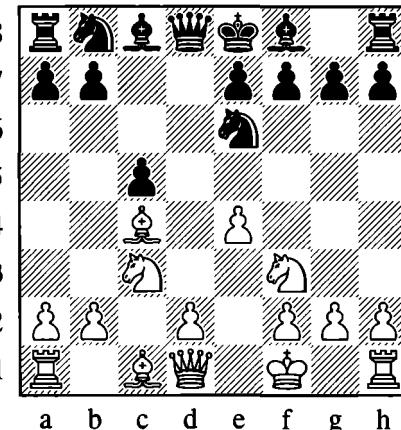
Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ Black commits a strategic error – 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$?
- ♦ Launching a strong attack – 13.h4!
- ♦ Prophylaxis to prepare a mating attack – 23. $\mathbb{R}e1$!

This was one of the strongest opens that I won in Spain. All fifty participants were rated over 2350, and my victims included the three players over 2600.

In this game itself, there is not a great deal in terms of intuitive sacrifices, as leaving the a-pawn to be taken can hardly be considered as such. I have essentially used it as a base for making references to many true sacrifices that were played (or could have been played) in other games.

1.c4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5.e4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\uparrow$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4\uparrow$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$



9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

White threatens 10.♗f3. My opponent is an expert in modern theory, but I just wanted to check his memory of older variations, to see whether he knew my devastating victory against Sax (Hastings 1983) and the right defence found by Bohm and reinforced by Timman (against Larsen at Bugojno 1984).

Of course, better than the text move is the well known pawn sacrifice 9.b4!.

9...♝c6?

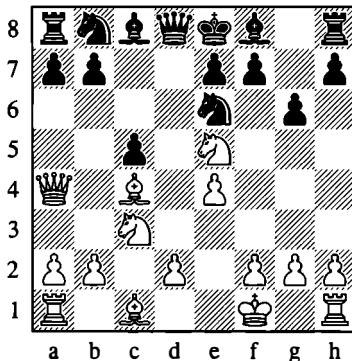
Strategically speaking, this is a gross mistake, but curiously it can be found in a handful of games, notably Suba – Bukic, Tuzla 1981, Hoelzl – Sax, Balatonbereny 1985, and Piket – Ljubojevic, Monaco 2002. Of all these offenders, the best alibi is Ljubo's: he could not see the drawbacks of such a defence... because it was a blindfold game!

The best reply is:

9...g6!

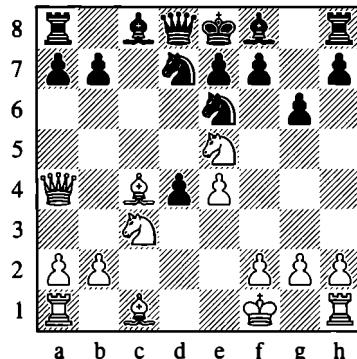
Bohm rendered White's last move impracticable (as a winning attempt) with this retort. I would have continued:

10.♗a4†



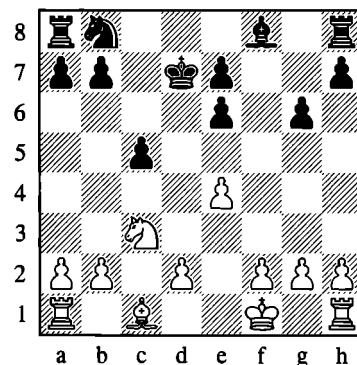
10...♝d7

If my opponent had passed the first exam, my second hope was that he would trip up with the "natural" answer 10...♝d7?, which allows: 11.d4! cxd4



12.♝xf7! (much simpler and better than 12.♝b5 ♛g7?! [either 12...♝b6 or 12...a6 would prevent White's sacrifice] 13.♝xf7 ♝xf7 14.♛xe6† ♝xe6 15.♝b3† ♝f6 16.♝f3† ♝e6 17.♝b3† ♝f6 18.h4 h6 19.♜g5† hxg5 20.hxg5† ♝xg5 21.♝g3† ♝f6 22.♝f4† ♝e6 23.♝xh8 ♛xh8 24.♝c7† ♜xc7 25.♝xc7± Miles – Hort, London [6] 1983) 12...♝xf7 13.♝xe6† ♝xe6 14.♝xd4+–

11.♝xd7 ♜xd7 12.♝xe6 fxe6 13.♝xd7† ♝xd7

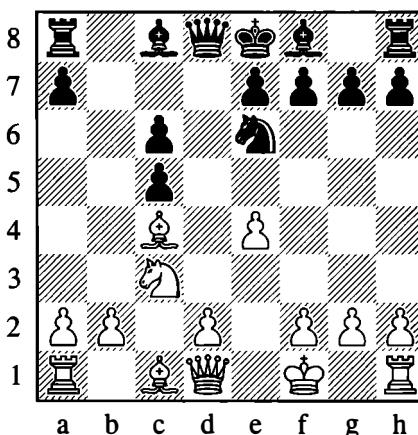


14.d3

An attempt to rejuvenate the line occurred in Vallejo Pons – Fernandez Romero, Dos Hermanas 2002: 14.e5 ♛g7 15.♝e4 b6 16.f4 ♜f8 17.d4 ♜c6 18.g3 ♜xd4 19.♝g2 and the obstruction sacrifice had locked in the black bishop for the price of a pawn. White eventually won the game in 50 moves. Unfortunately, this variation has a hole: 15...♝c6! 16.f4 ♜f8 17.d4 cxd4 18.♝e2 ♜d5 19.♝d3 ♜d7–+ with the idea of 20...♛xe5.

14... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}hc1$
 $\mathbb{E}hf8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19.h3 h5 20. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$
21. $\mathbb{E}d1$ e5 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{E}xf4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g5
Ree – Bohm, Hilversum 1983.

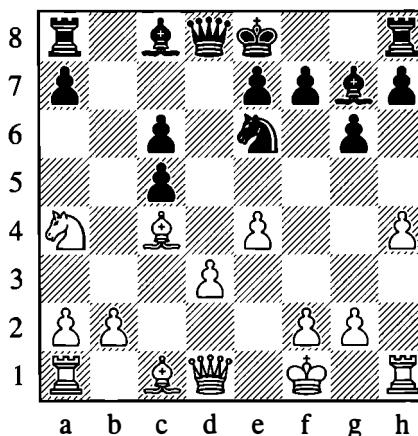
10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6



11. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$

The right move order. After 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e5 13. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ Black succeeded in equalizing in Volzhin – Vakhidov, Abu Dhabi 2001.

11...g6 12.d3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13.h4!



This advance of the rook's pawn has three different ideas, depending on the answer:

1) If 13...h6, White will gain a tempo after $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and $\mathbb{W}d2$.

2) In the event of 13...h5, the black king is weakened and if Black tries for counterplay with ...f5, White is assured of a nice outpost on g5.

3) In all other cases, White can push the h-pawn again and say “Thank you!”

13... $\mathbb{W}d6$

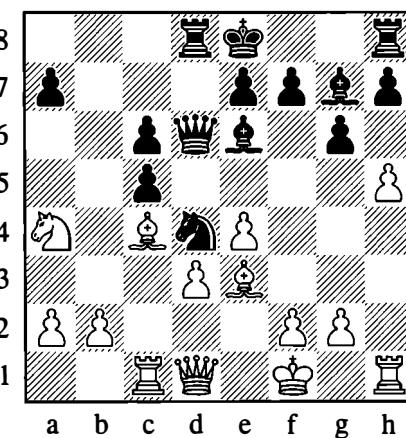
So it was “Thank you!”, although I couldn't say it out loud because it's prohibited by the rules – how uneducated all rulers are!

Against 13...h5, which seems the most reasonable of the three options above, White just wins the weak pawn. For example: 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\pm$ However, faced with a choice between losing a pawn and being mated, Jesus Maria opted for the latter!

14.h5

Now the undeveloped rook on h1 gets fantastic play... on its own file.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$



17.b3

White could opt for simplifications with 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$

20.♗b1 ♖c2 21.♗xc2 ♗xc2 22.♔c1, when he keeps a significant advantage in the endgame. But understandably, I hoped for more.

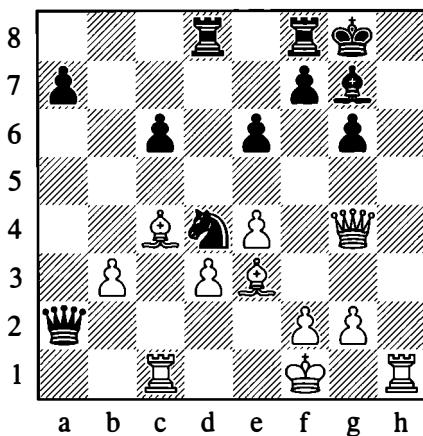
**17...0-0 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♕xc5 ♖xc5
20.♖xe6 ♖a3 21.♗c4 ♖xa2**

Black has recovered his pawn, but now his queen is far from the kingside, where her consort is in need of defence.

22.♗g4!

The signal for a tremendous attack; White threatens 23.♗xg6.

22...e6



23.♗e1!

Preparing to threaten mate without allowing a check on e2.

23...♝fe8

23...♝c2 doesn't help either: 24.♔c5! ♖xe1 (24...♖a5 25.b4!) 25.♗h4 and mate is inevitable.

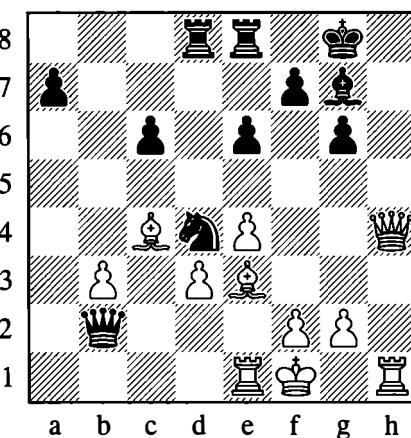
To avoid mate, Black must play 23...♖a5 24.♗h4 ♖h5, but after 25.♗xh5 gxh5 26.♗xh5 ♜c2 27.♗c1 ♜xe3† 28.fxe3 ♜d7 29.♗e2 ♜fd8 30.♗c5 ♜c7 31.d4 ♔f8 32.♗g5† ♔g7 33.♗f1 White has a decisive advantage.

24.♗h4

The threat is obvious: 25.♔g5 followed by 26.♔f6.

24...♖b2

Still hoping to resist for a few more moves after 25.♔g5 ♜c2.



25.♔c1!

After this zwischenzug, the black queen cannot simultaneously control the two diagonals a1-h8 and a3-f8. 25...♖a2 26.♔g5 is crushing, so Black resigned.

1-0

Post-game reflections

As I mentioned in the introductory comments, this game did not feature any true sacrifices, although the games in the accompanying notes offered plenty of relevant subject matter. The game did feature a sacrifice of sorts, as Black allowed his queenside pawn structure to be ruined. No doubt he was hoping to obtain compensation in the form of active piece play, but this turned out to be an illusion. The exploitation of Black's error took on a rather unexpected form, as White used the c-pawns as something of a distraction in order to facilitate the more serious business of checkmating the enemy king, and the plan worked to perfection.

The Hedgehog

This modern defence looked unplayable just fifty years ago. Its acceptance today signifies one stepping stone towards a better chess understanding.

The two games in this section have the same player as Black and reach an identical position after 11 moves. From there, the variation splits into two very different speculative sacrifices. One possible reason for my choice of these two games is that I'm running out of mottos, and the following one fits them both!

Castle early and often – Rob Sillars

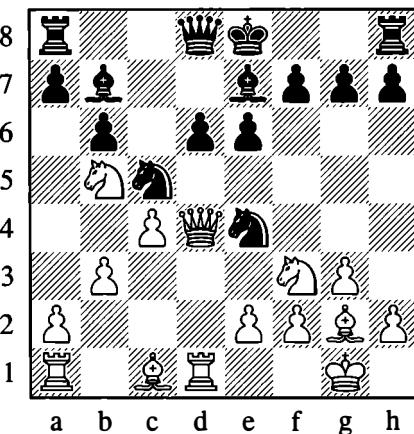
Ulf Andersson – Alon Greenfeld

Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988

Points to look for in this game:

- ♦ White seizes a tactical opportunity – 12.b4!
- ♦ Black falters under pressure – 14...bxc5?
- ♦ White breaks through – 19.Qxf7!

1.c4 Qf6 2.Qf3 c5 3.Qc3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.Qg2
 ♕b7 6.0–0 ♔e7 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qxd4 d6 9.b3
 ♘bd7 10.Qb5 ♘c5 11.Qd1 ♘fe4



The same position had been reached a couple of times prior to this game, and Black was able to hold a draw on both occasions. This time however, White found a way to pose serious problems.

12.b4!

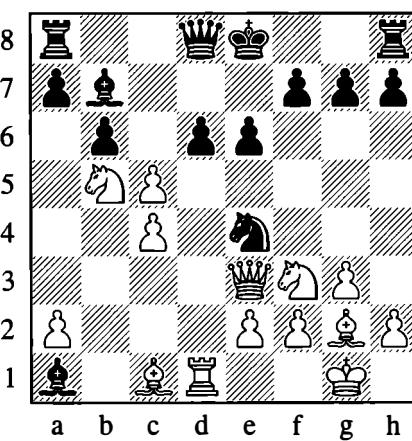
Initiating favourable complications. In fact this is not the only promising continuation, as we will see in the next game.

12...Qf6?

How many times can one hear that running after material before finishing development is a risky business?

Black should keep calm and play: 12...a6!
 13.bxc5 bxc5 14.Qxd6† ♕xd6 15.Qxd6 Qxd6
 16.Qd2 ♘xg2 17.Qxg2 0–0±

13.Qe3 ♘xa1 14.bxc5



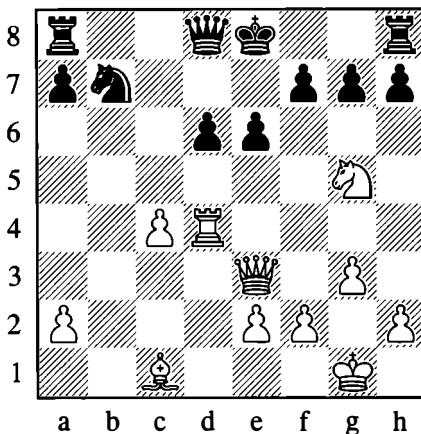
14...bxc5?

Also bad is: 14...0–0? 15.Qg5! ♘xf2 16.Qxf2
 ♘xg2 17.Qxg2 h6 18.Qe4 a6 19.Qbx d6 bxc5
 20.Qe3 ♘d4 21.Qxd4 cxd4 22.Qxd4 ♕a5
 23.Qf3 ♕xa2 24.Qf6† ♘h8 25.Qxf7† 1–0
 W. Schmidt – Zaichik, Polanica Zdroj 1989.

Under the circumstances, the best defence is 14...d5. For example: 15.Qa3 bxc5 (15...Qf6

16.cxd5 ♜xd5 17.♘e5 ♜xe5 18.♕xe4+–) 16.cxd5 a6 17.♘c7† ♜xc7 18.♗xe4 ♜f6 19.♗a4† ♜d7 20.♗xd7† ♜xd7 21.dxe6†±

15.♘g5 ♜d4 16.♘xd4 cxd4 17.♗xd4 ♘c5 18.♗xb7 ♘xb7



19.♘xf7!

The sting in the tail of the combination. White gets a pawn for the sacrificed exchange, and more importantly, the safety of the black king is severely compromised.

19...♗xf7 20.♗f3† ♜g8

The rook on h8 is pathetic and White is effectively playing a piece up. It is no wonder that the game is soon over.

21.♗xb7 ♘b8 22.♗e4 ♘f7 23.♗a3 ♘f6
24.♗xd6 ♘b1† 25.♗g2 ♘e8 26.♗e5 ♘f5
27.♗e3 g5 28.h4 h6 29.g4

1–0

Post-game reflections

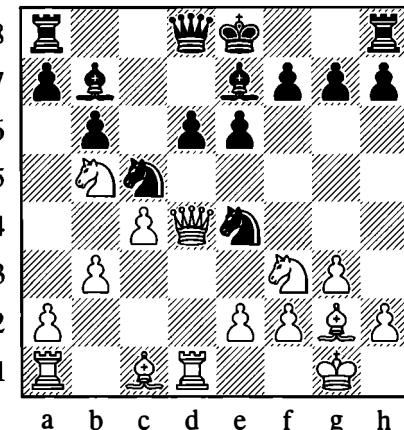
Ulf Andersson is justifiably revered as a master strategist and endgame technician, but here he proved that he was far from a slouch in other areas, and the way he exploited his dynamic advantages in this game would be the envy of any great attacking player.

Surprisingly Greenfeld was not to be deterred, and a couple of years later he followed the same path again.

Viktor Korchnoi – Alon Greenfeld

Beersheba 1990

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.♘f3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♜b7 6.0–0 ♜e7 7.b3 d6 8.d4 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♘bd7 10.♗b5 ♘c5 11.♗d1 ♘fe4



In 1988 I was on the panel of the “Beat the Masters” series in *Pergamon Chess*, when the editor Paul Lamford offered the above position for debate. To my shame, I suggested the insipid 12.♗e3. On the same panel, my imaginative friend Jim Plaskett analysed the sacrifice presented below. Perhaps Korchnoi got his hands on Plaskett’s analysis.

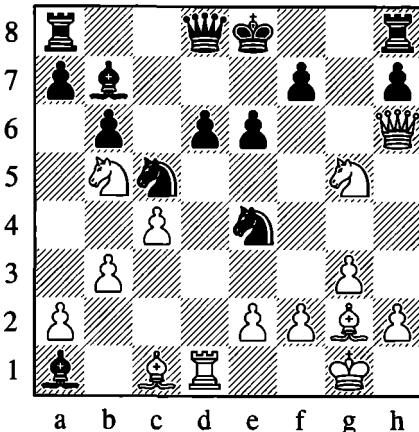
12.♗xg7!

In absolute value, this might not be better than Andersson’s 12.b4!, but the intricacies of this rook sacrifice are a lot more complex.

12...♜f6 13.♗h6 ♜xa1 14.♘g5!

Plaskett believed that this move led to a forced win, meaning that the rook sacrifice was not “speculative”. But it turns out that against best defence White can achieve only an

edge, as was the case with Andersson's sacrifice in the previous game. Nevertheless, perfect defence is very difficult to find over the board, and so a speculative sacrifice, as well as having psychological value, gives a serious plus to the attacker due to its depth.



14... $\mathbb{Q}e5?$!

The best defence is: 14... $\mathbb{W}f6$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xh6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$

15.b4!?

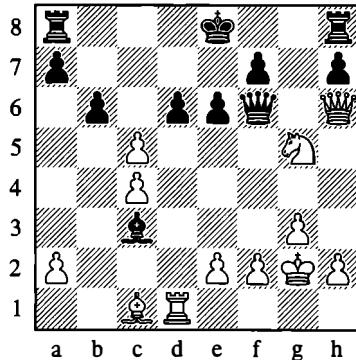
Also interesting here is: 15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (15... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\pm$) 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20.c6 b5 21.c7 $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 1–0 Petursson – Akesson, Stockholm 1991.

15... $\mathbb{W}f6$

Alternatives are no better. It would be possible to fill several pages covering the numerous branches, but I will limit myself to a couple of illustrative lines:

15... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17.bxc5 d5 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 19.cxd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 20.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4+-$

15... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$



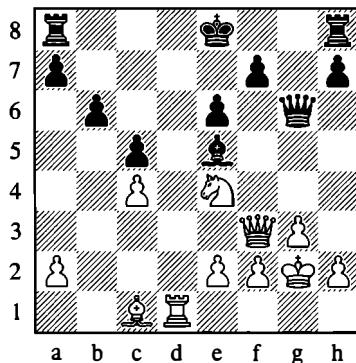
19. $\mathbb{W}h5!$

This improves on 19. $\mathbb{W}xf6$, though that should also suffice: 19... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22.c6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}hc8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d7\uparrow$ and White had a winning endgame in Tsesarsky – Greenfeld, Givatayim 1997, although he later went wrong and lost. I cannot imagine what tempted Alon to venture again into this mess.

19... $dxc5$

19... $\mathbb{W}f5$ 20.cxd6 0–0 21.g4 $\mathbb{W}g6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xg6\uparrow$ $hxg6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 24.f4+–

20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$



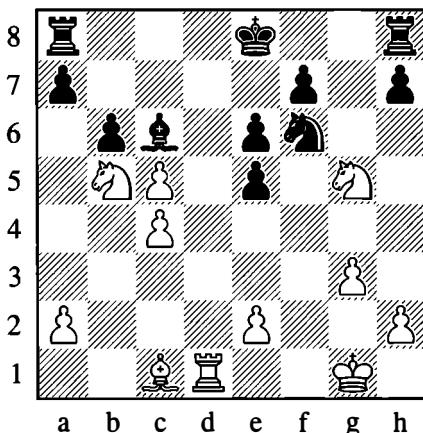
22. $\mathbb{Q}d6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5\uparrow$!

White wins.

16. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17.f4!

Even without queens on the board, Black still faces a barrage of tactics.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18. $fxe5$ $dxe5$ 19. $bxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$



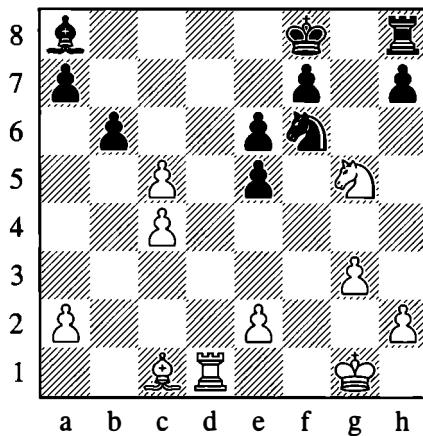
20. $\mathbb{Q}c7\ddagger$

The other knight check is stronger: 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6\ddagger$! $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}dx7$ $h6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 26. $cxd6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 27. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 28. $h4+-$

20... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

More tenacious, though still on the edge of the precipice is: 20... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $b5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $b4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $a5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and Black can struggle on.

21. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$



22. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

22. $\mathbb{Q}d8\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 24. $cxb6$ $axb6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ wins more simply, but Big Vik's move is good enough.

22... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $bxc5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $h6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $e5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\ddagger$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

1-0

Post-game reflections

One must admire Alon Greenfeld's tenacity in defending the honour of an opening line he must have wanted to believe in, and his perseverance paid off when he beat Tsesarsky in 1997 (after yet again falling into serious trouble in the opening), as mentioned in the note to move 15. Still, there comes a time when a player must "Abandon ship!" and quit trying to rescue the Titanic. Korchnoi's rook sacrifice has been used successfully in several other games, and the original sacrifice became established theory. Nowadays Hedgehog experts stay well away from this particular variation, and even Alon Greenfeld seems to have given it up at last.

Chapter 14

Pawn Sacrifices

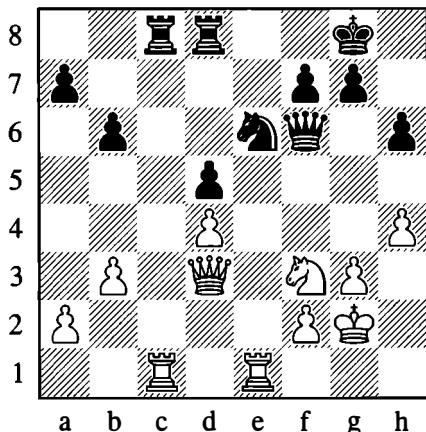
Unlike the sacrifices related to opening set-ups, in the middlegame we will use a classification based on the material given up. The main themes or aims will also be headlined at the start of each game.

Simplifying to a favourable endgame

Beware hidden rocks beneath a calm surface! – Sailors' saying

Tigran Petrosian – Lajos Portisch

Palma de Mallorca (13) 1974



Material is equal and the structure symmetrical. White enjoys slightly more space,

but Black can hold the equilibrium with, for example, 20... $\mathbb{W}e7$?! 21. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}e8$. Instead, Black is seduced by a combination, meant either to win a pawn or take over the initiative. But to his surprise, instead of troubling the opponent, he troubles only himself.

20... $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}f4$?

What is this – a trap, or a sham sacrifice by Black?

22. $\mathbb{g}xf4$!

The answer turns out to be a true sacrifice by White! In fact he has little choice, as both 22. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ and 22. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ would give Black an unpleasant initiative.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xf4\#$ 23. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 24. $\mathbb{E}c3$

As a result of Black's "combination", White has activated his king and rook, and has the possibility of invading the seventh rank, while the black knight has problems returning to base. The more we look at the position, the more we can see that White's true sacrifice was an ideal counter to Black's sham sacrifice.

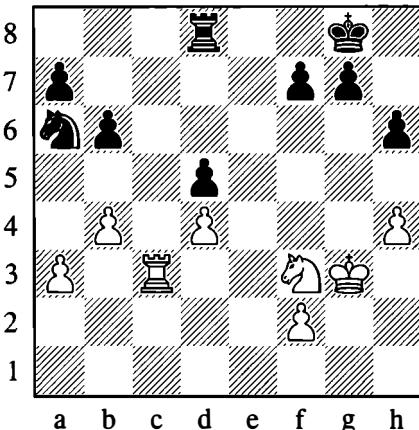
24... $\mathbb{Q}b4$?

The position has become unbalanced and "normal" moves do not work the way they

should. The curious 24... $\mathbb{Q}b2!$ does not seem to give White anything better than 25. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 26. $\mathbb{E}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ with equality.

25.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 26.b4!

Preparing to gain additional space on the queenside and force the knight back, thus allowing the rook to invade on c7.



26... $\mathbb{Q}b8?$

This voluntary retreat does not help. Two alternatives were analysed by Petrosian:

26... $\mathbb{E}d7?$! is the best chance to activate the knight. For example: 27. $\mathbb{E}c8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 28.b5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\pm$

Another possibility is: 26... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 27.b5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}c7$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 29. $\mathbb{E}c8$ $\mathbb{E}b7\pm$

27. $\mathbb{E}c7$ a5

Or 27...a6 28. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ with mounting pressure.

28.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ h5

Black is already in serious trouble. For example, 29...f6 30.h5± or 29... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$! 30. $\mathbb{E}b7$ $\mathbb{E}d6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$.

30. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Exchanging the knights would help White's king to penetrate: 30... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe5+-$

31. $\mathbb{E}b7$ f6 32. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}d6?!$

The rook is useless here, but even the better 33... $\mathbb{E}e8$ should lose: 34. $\mathbb{E}xb6$ $\mathbb{E}e1$ 35. $\mathbb{E}b8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 36.b6+–

34. $\mathbb{E}xb6$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 35. $\mathbb{E}b8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 36. $\mathbb{E}a8$ $\mathbb{E}e1$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 38.b6 $\mathbb{E}b1$ 39.b7 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 40. $\mathbb{E}xa5$ 1–0

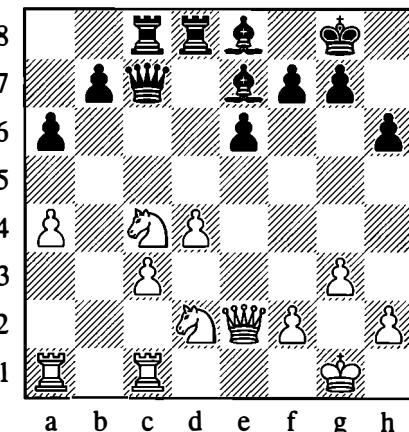
Post-game reflections

Most real sacrifices take place in positions with more pieces on the board, but this example showed that the concept of positional compensation can be quite real even when just a few pieces remain on the board. Tarrasch famously remarked that “if one piece stands badly then the whole position is bad”, and the troubled black knight was a perfect example of what he meant.

Simplifying to a drawish endgame

Mihai Suba – Julio Granda Zuniga

Benidorm 2009



This is the position we reached after 23 moves. Black is obviously better, due to his two bishops and superior pawn structure. All his pieces are well placed to meet any plan by

White. The correct move here is 24. $\mathbb{W}e3$, just waiting to see what happens, but I'm not that sort of patient guy!

24. $\mathbb{B}ab1?$

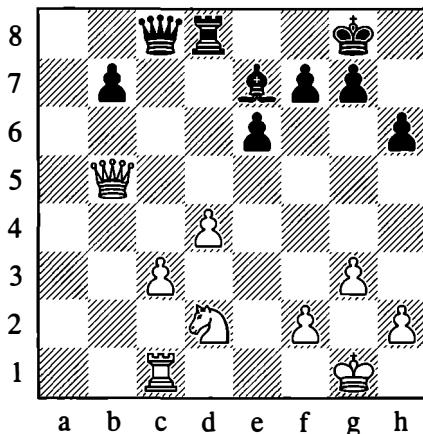
Offering a pawn in an attempt to ease the suffering.

24... $\mathbb{Q}xa4?$

The “intuitive” Granda swallows the bait!

After 24... $b5$! 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $bxa4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{B}xb1$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xb1$ $a3$ Black would have a nearly decisive advantage.

25. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xb5$ $axb5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$
28. $\mathbb{W}xb5$



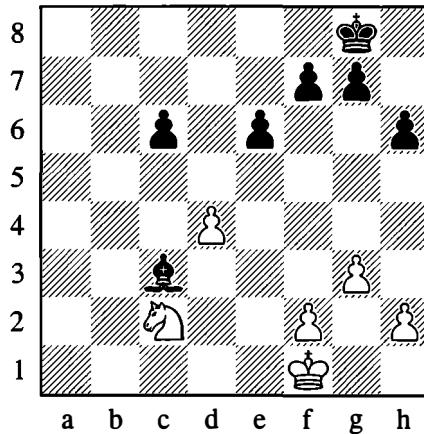
28... $\mathbb{B}xd4$

This is the explanation of the previous sequence. Granda *assumed* that being a pawn up, combined with the strong bishop, would be enough to win easily.

29. $cxd4$ $\mathbb{W}xc1\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 31. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $bxc6$
32. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

33. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ proves a false friend after 34... $c5$!

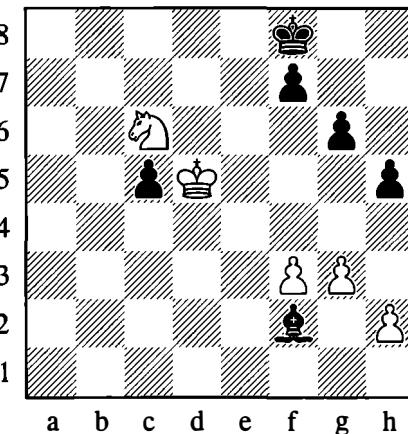
33. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



34... $e5$

In this way, Black obtains a passed pawn on the c-file. Otherwise he would soon be forced to exchange his c-pawn for White's d-pawn and play with four pawns against three on the same side, but such endgames are generally drawn. Now, though, White has plenty of time to get his king to the centre and establish a blockade.

35. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $c5$
38. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 40. $f3$ $h5$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}c4$
 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $g6$



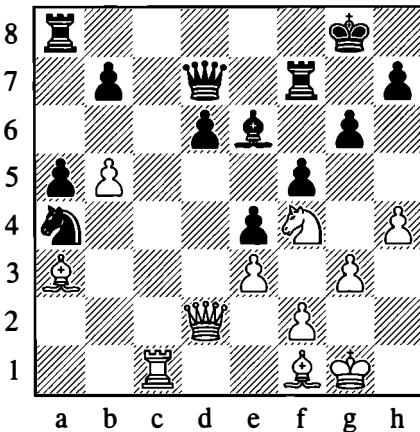
See the continuation of this endgame on page 357.

Adding fuel to the fire

Mihai Suba – Viktor Korchnoi

World Team Championship, Lucerne 1985

We continue this game from page 262.



White is already the exchange and two pawns down. But don't worry – there is some compensation for that! The black king's position is not at all safe, and the knight on a4 may easily fall into an ambush. On the other hand, if that knight should move, White may get the desired line-up of bishop on b2 and queen on d4. In the meantime, Black has to find a defence against the immediate threat of 25.Qxe6 followed by 26.Qc4.

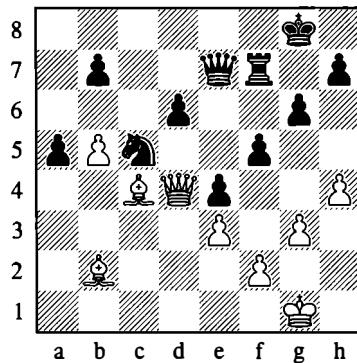
24...Bc8?!

Black could maintain his advantage with 24...Qc5!?. If White continues with 30.Qc3 (intending 31.Qb2), then Black can defend the long diagonal either with 30...Ba8 followed by ...Bf6, or with 30...h6 and ...Qh7.

25.Qxc8† Bxc8 26.Qxd6

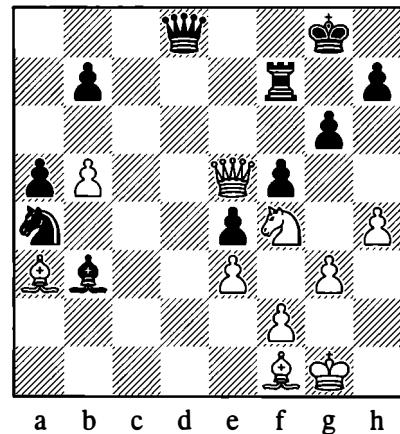
By removing this last bulwark, White increases his already considerable superiority on the dark squares.

White had the option of forcing a draw by: 26.Qxe6 Bxe6 27.Qd4 Qc5 28.Qc4 Qe7 29.Qb2 Qe5 30.Qd2 Qe7 31.Qd4=



But I felt that, even the exchange and a pawn down, my position was good, and I wanted to play on.

26...Qb3 27.Qe5 Qd8



28.b6!

White was already a lot of material down, so... in for a penny, in for a pound! This pawn sacrifice is necessary to activate the white bishop.

28...Qxb6 29.Qb5

Here too, White has some drawing variations: 29.Qe8† Qg7 30.Qe5† Qf6 31.Qxa5 Qh6 32.Qb5 Qd1 33.Qe8 Qb6 34.Qe6 Qa4

35.♕g8 ♕d7 36.♔d6 ♔d1 37.♕g5 (37.♕e8
♗h5 38.♕f4† ♗h6 39.♕e6=) 37...♗g7
38.♕d5 ♘g4 39.♕e6 ♘e7=

But with the text move, I hoped to dislodge the knight, and then complete the line-up on the long diagonal with ♘b2.

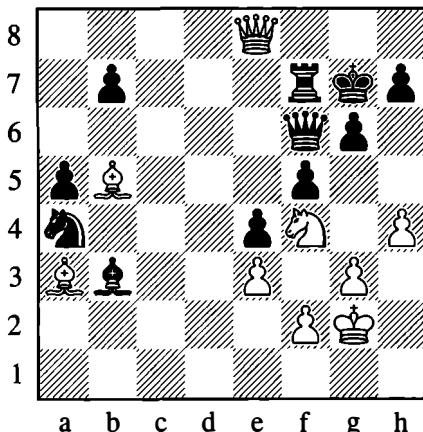
29...♗f6 30.♕e8†

For the third time, I eschewed a drawing possibility: 30.♕b8† ♗g7 31.♔d6 ♘e7 (31...♗h6? 32.♕e6+-) 32.♕d8 ♘f7 33.♕b8=

30...♗g7

My opponent was convinced that I was playing coffee-house chess. He didn't want a draw either, otherwise he would have played the safer 30...♗f8 31.♔xf8 ♘xf8 32.♕e5=.

31.♘g2

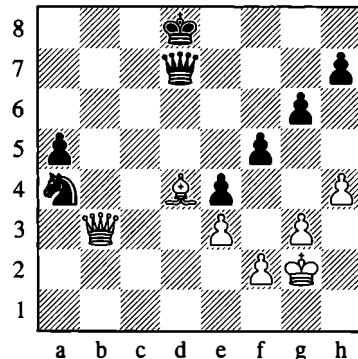


31...♗b6

The alternatives are disastrous:

31...♔d1? loses instantly to 32.♘c4.

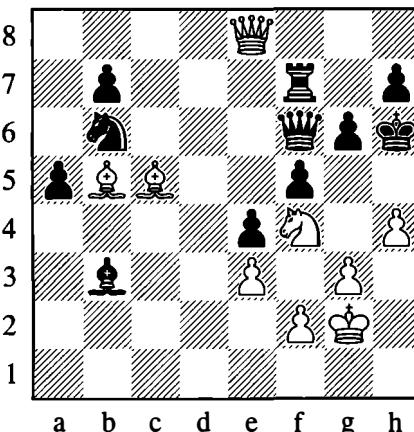
31...♘c3?! needs a more laborious approach:
32.♔b2 ♘f8 33.♕d7† ♗g8 34.♕xb7 ♘f7
35.♔d7 ♘a4 36.♔d4 ♘d8 37.♕b5 ♘xd7
38.♕xb3† ♗f8 39.♕e6† ♗e7 40.♕xd8
♘xd8



With his stray knight, Black cannot resist the combined attack of queen and bishop. The winning line might continue: 41.♕b8† ♘c8 42.♕e5 ♘d7 43.♕xa5† ♘c8 (43...♗e7 44.♕a6 is similar) 44.♕a6† ♘d8 45.♔f6† ♘c7 46.♔e5† ♘d8 47.♔f4 ♘d1 48.♕a8† ♘d7 49.♕b7† ♘e8 50.♕xh7+-

32.♔c5 ♘h6?!

By this point, Viktor was in acute time pressure. Giving back the exchange was still good: 32...♗f8 33.♔xf8† ♘xf8 34.♕e5† ♘f6 35.♕c7† ♘h6 36.♘e2 a4 37.♕f4† ♘g7 38.♕c7† ♘f7 39.♘c3=



33.♔d4?

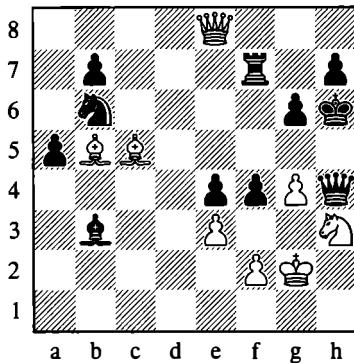
I always felt certain that this was my decisive mistake, but I was not sure about the right continuation. I found the answer twenty years on, with the help of a program, of course.

33.♕h3??

I considered this during the game, but rejected it for reasons explained in the next note.

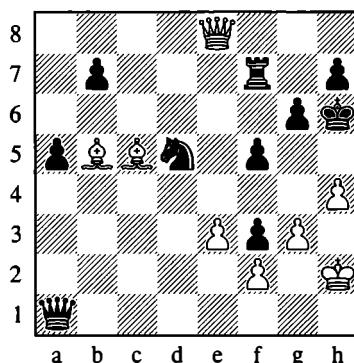
33....♝d1!

I mistakenly thought that 33...f4? was the refutation, overlooking 34.g4! ♜xh4



35.♗f8†!! ♜g7 36.♗xf4† g5 37.♗f6† ♜g6
38.♗f8#

34.♕g5 ♜f3† 35.♔h3 ♜a1 36.♕xf3 exf3
37.♔h2 ♔d5!
Or 37...♗f6 38.♔d4 ♜e7 39.♔xb6=.



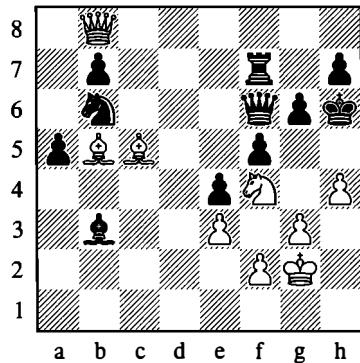
38.g4!

Not 38.♗xf7 ♔f6=.

38...♗g7 39.♔d4 ♜f8 40.g5† ♔h5 41.♗e5
♗d8 42.♗g3 ♔xe3! 43.fxe3 ♜c7 44.♔a4=

Believe it or not, the strongest move was actually:

33.♗b8!!

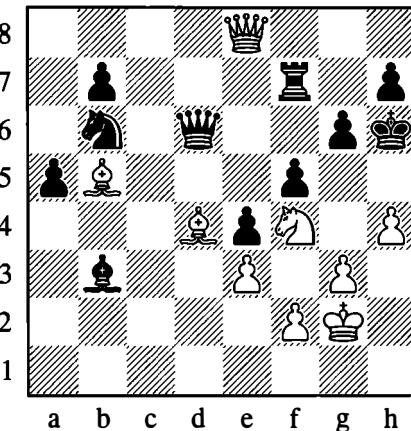


33...♝d1!

This is probably the only move to lead to a draw. Other continuations leave Black in trouble:

- a) 33...♜c4? 34.♜xc4 ♜xc4 35.♕d5 ♜e5
36.♗d8+–
- b) 33...♛c4? 34.♕d5 ♜e5 35.♗d8+–
- c) 33...♔d7? 34.♔xd7 ♜xd7 35.♔f8† ♜g7
36.♔h3 ♜h5 37.♔xg7 ♜xg7 38.♗d8 g5
39.♗xa5+–
- d) 33...a4 34.♔d4 ♜f8 35.♗xb7 ♜f7 36.♗a6
♗d6 37.♔xb6 ♜f6 38.♔c5 ♜xa6 39.♔xa6
♔g7 40.♔d4 a3 41.♔b7 ♜f7 42.♔d5† ♜xd5
43.♔xf6†
- 34.♔d4 ♜f3† 35.♔h2 ♜e7 36.♔xb6 ♜f8
37.♗a7 ♜c8 38.♔d4 ♜c1 39.♗g2 f4 40.♗xa5
fxg3† 41.fxg3 ♜c7 42.♗b4 ♜c2 43.♔f1 ♜f7
44.♔e5 ♜h5 45.♔f4 ♜g4 46.♗d4=

33...♗d6



34.♕h3?

Too late! The last chance was 34.♗h8 ♖f8
35.♗e5 ♖e7 36.♗b8†. Now the game is over.

34...♝f8! 35.♗e5 ♜xe8 36.♗xd6 ♜c8 37.♗g5

♗g7 38.g4 a4 39.gxf5

0–1

Post-game reflections

This was a true fighting game, with both players spurning drawing opportunities in the pursuit of victory. Having misplayed the early middlegame (as shown in the previous chapter), White's material sacrifices brought about an unclear situation, and the subsequent pawn sacrifice 28.b6! helped to increase his initiative by activating another attacking piece. For a while it looked like any result was possible, but finally I succumbed and lost out to the living legend.

Chapter 15

Exchange Sacrifices

A sacrifice of the exchange happens when one player exchanges a rook for a minor piece of his opponent. Such a procedure, when voluntary, is frequently used to ruin the opponent's pawn structure, especially next to his king. For instance, in many Sicilians, Black plays ... $\mathbb{E}xc3$. The exchange sacrifice is also frequently used to establish a minor piece on a strong square (possibly threatening the opponent's king). But as well as these exchange sacrifices associated with attacking the opponent's king, there are many other types. You may employ an exchange sacrifice to improve your own pawn structure (for instance to create two connected passed pawns, or even just one strong passed pawn); to gain time for development; to take over (or avoid losing) the initiative; to neutralize the opponent's initiative; to create a strong blockade, etc.

The exchange sacrifice has its own particular features. In the early phase of the middlegame the board can be densely populated, and the rook may not be as effective as a well-placed knight or a raking bishop. Because of this, the exchange sacrifice often occurs between the 20th and 30th moves. The relative importance of the pieces can vary greatly when compared with the standard value in points, and by sacrificing you are taking advantage of this

fluctuation of values which affects most pieces during the progress of the game. Another use of the exchange sacrifice is to amplify the influence of your minor pieces, by eliminating the opposition of the corresponding pieces of the other side.

In this book, we shall focus especially on those sacrifices pursuing long-term positional objectives. Tigran Petrosian, the World Champion between 1963 and 1969, was well known for his creative use of this weapon. Once, when asked about his favourite piece, half joking, half seriously, he answered: "The rook, because I can sacrifice it for minor pieces!"

Positional (or intuitive) exchange sacrifices are those where the direct material compensation does not exceed one or two pawns, and where an attack cannot be proved to be winning within the game situation, even if it might be predicted that it is. A sharp distinction between a true and a sham exchange sacrifice is even more difficult. For instance, 22. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ in the game Suba – Sznajik (see page 298), can hardly be called a true sacrifice with respect to material, because White gets two pawns immediately. It is positional, as it destroys the opponent's structure, including an ominous

weakening of the enemy king, and ensures the active bishop pair. It does not need too much explanation or calculation; you can see with the naked eye that this is a winning combination.

The value of the exchange

The advantage of the exchange is something known by all chess players, and its intricacies have been the subject of theoretical debates for over a century. Siegbert Tarrasch estimated its value at one and a half pawns in the endgame, but not for the opening or first part of the middlegame. That is generally accepted today, but other theoreticians, such as Jacob Sarratt, Howard Staunton and Jose Capablanca, thought that the exchange is worth approximately two pawns. Tigran Petrosian's opinion was that one pawn is the correct value. Wilhelm Steinitz said that the rook is a worth slightly more than a knight and two pawns, but slightly less than a bishop and two pawns. Cecil Purdy said that the value also depends on the number of pawns left on the board. Statistical research by computer establishes the average value as $1\frac{3}{4}$ pawns, but only $1\frac{1}{4}$ pawns if the player with the minor piece has the two bishops. Adding the better cooperation of the rook with the bishops, many Soviet theoreticians believed that, in active positions, rook and two bishops outperform two rooks and a knight. Hans Berliner sets the difference between rook and knight at 1.9 pawns and the difference between rook and bishop at 1.77 pawns.

In practice, one pawn may be sufficient compensation for the loss of exchange, while two pawns almost always are.

Who is right?

First of all, we do not have half pawns, never mind quarters. And Berliner's value is too precise to be true! We are not interested in average values. During his life, a chess player

may play hundreds or thousands of games, while statistical values stabilize after millions of samples. The weight of the exchange depends very much on the phase of the game and the character of the position.

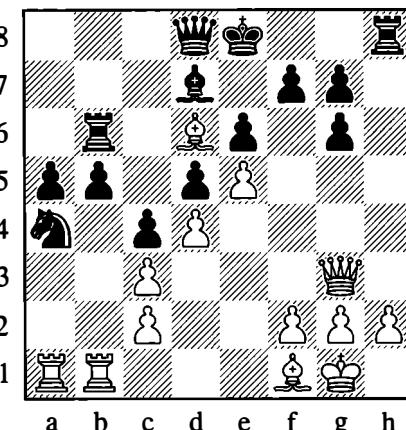
In the endgame, it tends to go up, except in cases when there are no pawns; but there are various known positions (and perhaps others unknown) where rook and pawn do not win against a minor piece. There was a rumour in the past that rook and bishop win against bishop and knight, even without pawns, given the condition that the bishops are opposite-coloured. This is confirmed today by the Nalimov tablebases.

In the middlegame, other things being equal, the advantage of the exchange is normally sufficient to win the game. In closed and stable positions, the value of the exchange diminishes. Petrosian should have said: "In the positions that I play habitually, the exchange is not worth more than a pawn."

The following position gives a good example of an exchange sacrifice with the purpose of simplifying to a winning endgame.

Alexander Tolush – Mikhail Botvinnik

USSR Championship, Moscow 1945



21... $\mathbb{B}xd6$!

Botvinnik commented “Without his good bishop, White cannot prevent the exploitation of Black’s pawn superiority on the queenside.”

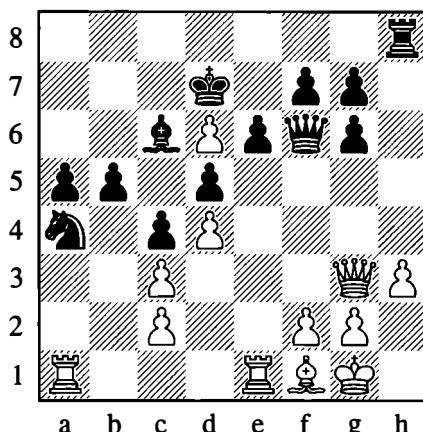
In this position, the exchange sacrifice improves Black’s pawn structure, while damaging the opponent’s. It also facilitates the exchange of the queens, leaving the opponent without counterplay; therefore it will best fit into the simplifying type. How logical and easy chess seems at the hands of Botvinnik! We should consider it a positional sacrifice, but not really a pure one. Although it doesn’t win any additional material, Black is already a pawn up and the resulting d6-pawn does not have much to say in the following fight. Some readers might think, “On the contrary, it’s a *negative* pawn.” And they would be right.

22. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}c6$! 23.h3 $\mathbb{B}d7$!

The meticulous Botvinnik becomes an artist when he annotates: “Also possible is 23... $\mathbb{W}h4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $gxf6$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xa4$ $bxa4$ 27. $\mathbb{B}b8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xh8$ $a3-$ +.”

24. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}g3$

Understandably, Tolush does not exchange queens, but he cannot avoid it for long.



26... $\mathbb{B}h4$!

“With this manoeuvre Black parries the transfer of the white rook to f3 and, in addition, prepares to advance his pawn to b4, which, in conjunction with the attack on the d-pawn, becomes decisive.” – Botvinnik.

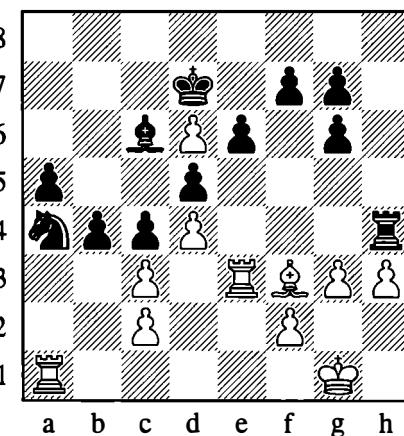
27. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{W}f4$

Not 27... $\mathbb{W}f4$? 28. $\mathbb{B}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 29. $\mathbb{B}xf7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 30. $fxg3$.

28. $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 29. $\mathbb{B}f3$ b4! 30. $\mathbb{W}xh4$ $\mathbb{B}xh4$

31.g3?!

A more resilient defence was 31.cxb4 axb4 32. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}xd4$ 33. $\mathbb{B}xb4\uparrow$.



31... $\mathbb{B}h8$!

Botvinnik does not waste time on the irrelevant h3-pawn, and instead hurries his rook back towards the queenside where it will support the queenside pawns. The rest is easy and doesn’t require comments.

32.cxb4 axb4 33. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 34.h4 $\mathbb{B}b7$ 35. $\mathbb{B}h2$ $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 36.g4 $\mathbb{B}c3$ 37. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{B}b5$! 38. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{B}a7$ 39.h5 g5 40. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}a2$ 41. $\mathbb{B}e2$

This last move was sealed, but Tolush didn’t find any saving resources, and resigned without resuming play.

0–1

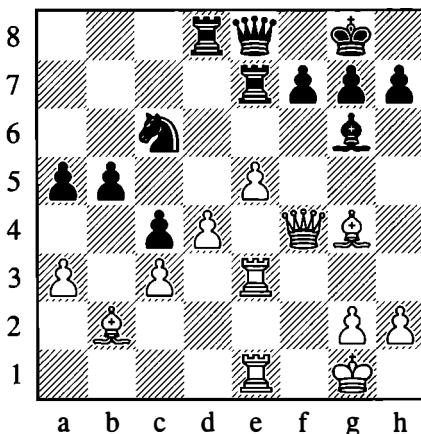
Post-game reflections

The logic of Botvinnik's exchange sacrifice in this game was crystal clear. Still, the way he organized his position afterwards was deeply impressive. 23... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ was a fine move, and later the ... $\mathbb{E}h4-f4$ manoeuvre was a splendid way to combine prophylaxis along the f-file with lateral pressure against the d4-pawn. White had one chance to offer further resistance on move 31, and once he missed it the game was as good as over.

The next example is one of the most frequently quoted in manuals when it comes to positional sacrifices and the blockade; therefore I shall not insist on analysing the play too deeply. Great chess authors like Bronstein, Tal and Petrosian himself, did not spare time or ink explaining it. I shall just let the reader know that Petrosian was the youngest participant in the Candidates tournament in Zürich 1953, and that Tigran Vartanovich had somewhere confessed that his first chess book was one by Nimzowitsch.

Samuel Reshevsky – Tigran Petrosian

Zurich 1953



25... $\mathbb{E}e6!$

"This representative position, one of the most well-known, became didactic" – Petrosian.

"Smart play by Reshevsky and the iron logic of Petrosian made this game one of the jewels of the tournament in Switzerland. Black needs to block the white pawns in the centre by $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and $\mathbb{Q}d5$. The pawn which appears on e6 will strengthen the d5-square, while the bishop, in the absence of its white counterpart, becomes stronger too." – Bronstein.

26.a4!

Many commentators suggested 26.h4 as an alternative, with the possible continuation 26... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 27.h5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 28. $\mathbb{E}g3$, but they consistently avoided giving an evaluation. I think that Reshevsky's move, aiming to fracture Black's pawn majority and possibly revive the b2-bishop, is the most appropriate in this position.

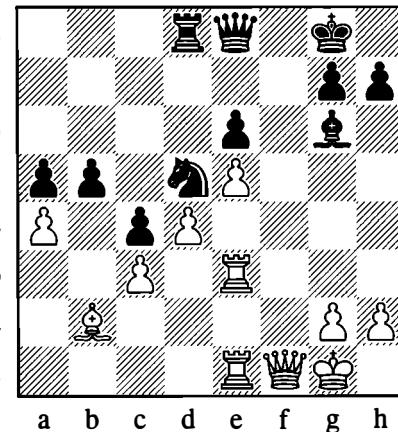
26... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

White has nothing better than accepting the offer, as the knight is heading for d5 regardless.

27...fxe6 28. $\mathbb{W}f1$

Safer than 28. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 29. $\mathbb{E}f3$ b4.

28... $\mathbb{Q}d5$



The knight justifies all the money of the investment, and White must be careful. Even the greediest programs today acknowledge

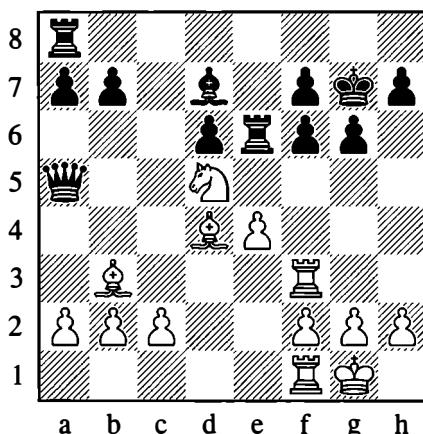
the equality on the board. I do not wish to spend time recycling the many other insightful comments that have been made on this famous game, so I will end the coverage here. The game ended in a draw after 41 moves.

Post-game reflections

There is not much more to say about this game, as Petrosian's exchange sacrifice and the magnificent black knight on d5 speak for themselves. Credit should also go to Reshevsky for adapting to the situation and doing what was needed to draw the game, rather than becoming yet another victim of the Tiger's favourite weapon.

Rashid Nezhmetdinov – Oleg Chernikov

Rostov-on-Don 1962

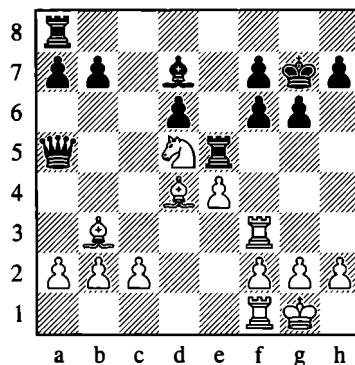


We continue this game from page 122. You may remember that White made a spectacular sacrifice of queen for two pieces in the opening.

As with the other games included in this section, we are not too concerned with the winner's brilliant play, preferring to focus on the exchange sacrifices which could have saved a difficult position, but remained backstage.

19... $\mathbb{Q}b5$

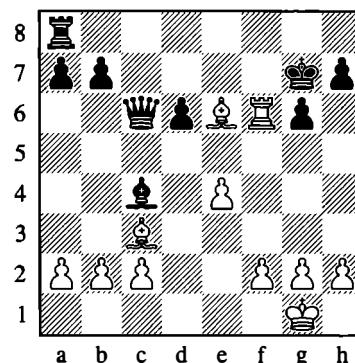
Black's aim in this position should not be to win the exchange, but to sacrifice it for any of the three white minor pieces which are collaborating in a devilish manner. With this in mind, it is better to play: 19... $\mathbb{E}e5!$



20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ and 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ are both met by 20... $\mathbb{Q}e6$) 20... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}ed3$ $\mathbb{W}b6=$

20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$

It is more accurate to play 20... $\mathbb{W}a6$, when I analysed the following line: 21. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ Black has a huge material advantage but his king is in considerable danger. The correct result should be a draw as follows:

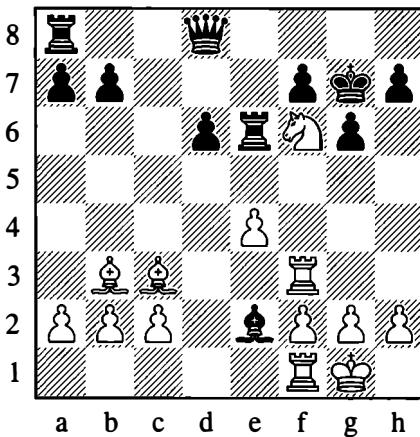


25. $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 27.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28.f4#

$\mathbb{E}xf4$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 32. $\mathbb{E}h4\#$ $\mathbb{W}h5=$

21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}e2?$

Black can still hold with 21... $\mathbb{E}c8$, for example: 22. $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 25. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}xc3$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}a3$
28. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 29. $\mathbb{E}d7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and
White has to take the perpetual check.

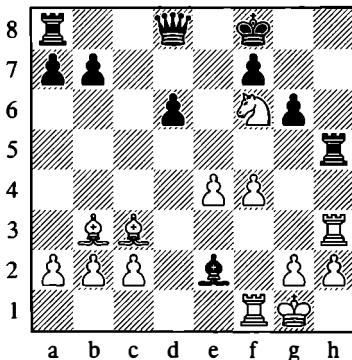


22. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$! $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}h3$

White is not immune from going wrong. Here he misses an outright win: 23. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$! $\mathbb{Q}f8$
24. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{E}xf6$ 25. $\mathbb{E}h8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$
27. $\mathbb{E}e1+-$

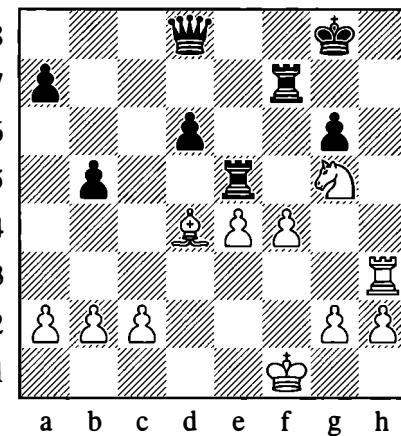
23... $\mathbb{E}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{F}4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1?$

After this, White's advantage once more becomes decisive. The last chance was:
24... $\mathbb{E}h5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$



26. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 27. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $gxh5$ 28. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$
29. $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 30. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 31. $h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$

25. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $b5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{E}xf7$



29. $\mathbb{E}h8\#$!

White finishes this brave and somewhat speculative game in grand style.

29... $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xe4$
32. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{E}xf4\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e2$
1-0

Post-game reflections

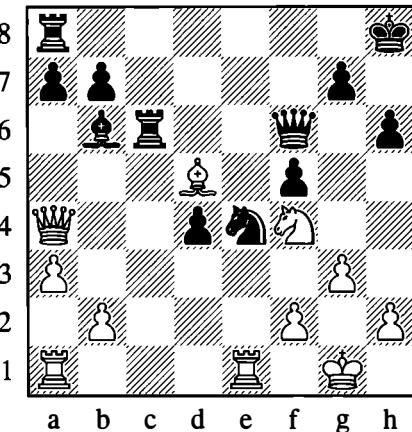
This rather wild game contained numerous inaccuracies, which reflects the difficulty of handling positions with such an irrational material distribution. Often the best way to extinguish the opponent's initiative is to return a portion of the material that has been sacrificed, and we saw a clear example of that on move 19.

Lajos Portisch – Vasily Smyslov

Moscow 1967

We join the game at move 29. Earlier White had given up a pawn for questionable play,

and his position remained somewhat worse. Faithful to his style of always attacking things, Portisch has just played 29.♕a2-d5?! By contrast, I am quite sure that Nimzowitsch would have played 29.♗d3! in a fraction of a second, after which White's position would not have been so bad.



29...d3!

As in the first game in this chapter, the aim of the exchange sacrifice is to simplify to a better endgame. This time however, a few more tactics are involved.

30.♗xc6

30.♗xd3 is well met by 30...♝d6 31.♗xe4 ♜xe4 32.♗xe4 ♜xd3 33.♗xd3 ♜xf2† when Black will have an extra pawn in the ending.

30...♜xf2† 31.♗h1

After 31.♗g2 ♜xe1 Black threatens ...♜xb2†.

31...♝xc6?!

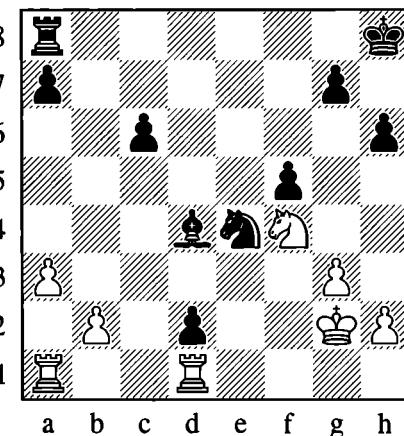
Much stronger is 31...♝c5!, for example: 32.♗e6 ♜xb2 33.♗d1 ♜xe6 34.♗xd3 ♜f6 35.♗a2 ♜d8 36.♗xf2 bxc6 37.♗f1 ♜d4 38.♗e2 ♜g5+–

But Vasily Vasilyevich could not betray his true love – the endgame.

32.♗xc6 bxc6 33.♗ed1?!

A passed pawn on the seventh is worth more than a mere exchange, so White should play 33.♗xd3 ♜xe1 34.♗xe1 ♜d8† and try to hold the endgame a pawn down.

33...d2 34.♗g2 ♜d4



35.♗ab1?!

Portisch doesn't want to give back the exchange; he probably intends to do so later. But "later" never comes! Better is 35.♗a2†.

35...♜b8 36.♗e2 ♜xb2 37.♗f3 ♜b3† 38.♗f4 ♜d6 39.♗xd2

Probably in time pressure, White allows a mate. 39.h4 c5 40.♗xd2 (40.h5 ♜c4) 40...g5† is also hopeless.

39...g5#

Post-game reflections

Sometimes when you have a slight material advantage, the best way to convert it is... sacrificing it back! In the above case, Black sacrificed an exchange in order to turn his extra passed d-pawn into a monster, supported by his well centralized minor pieces. Just as with so many examples throughout the book, White could have eased his defensive task by

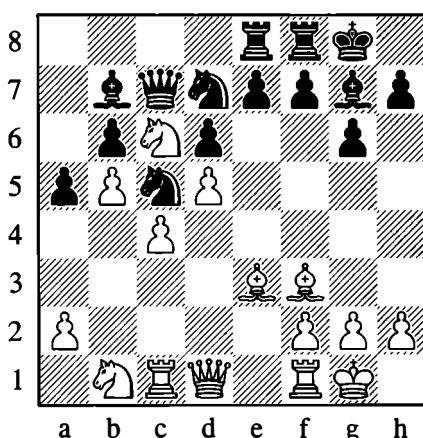
throwing away the metaphorical hot potato of the extra material, but the moment passed and he quickly collapsed.

“I’m better, I don’t see how you can win!” – Romanian chess idiom

Lajos Portisch – Tigran Petrosian

San Antonio 1972

The theme of the sacrifice in this game will be the radical change of the position, featuring obstruction, improving the pawn structure and blockade. As a treat, I have inserted some of Petrosian’s own comments, including an insight into the psychology of the game.



Petrosian makes the following evaluation: “White has an obvious positional advantage. Black has a backward pawn on e7, White has a strong knight on c6. The usual method for White is to organize rook pressure along the e-file, to force ...e6/e5. After exchanging on e6, Black will then have other problems. Without hurrying, White can increase his positional advantage through positional transformations.”

It would be interesting to understand what *positional transformations* means for Petrosian. The true strength of the “Tiger of Yerevan”,

also known by the nickname “Iron Tigran”, resided in manoeuvring and prophylactic play. In these areas his abilities exceeded even those of Capablanca and Nimzowitsch.

Next he explains: “The natural order of moves would be 24. $\mathbb{E}e1$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}f4$ or $\mathbb{Q}g5$, depending on Black’s reaction, in order to exert lasting pressure, which could increase with every step.”

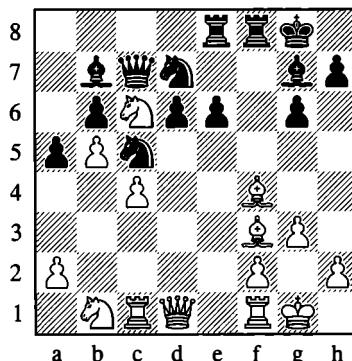
To add more dramatic character to his situation, Petrosian is exaggerating the static factors and disregarding dynamic ones. In fact the e-pawn will advance in any case, and the knight on c6 is both strong and weak at the same time. It is strongly protected, but not very close to the theatre of war.

Here are some possible continuations:

24. $\mathbb{E}e1$ e5 25. $dxe6$ $fxe6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 30. $h3$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}c2\pm$

24. $\mathbb{W}d2$ e5 25. $dxe6$ $fxe6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ This attempt to put pressure on the d6-pawn fails. 26... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g3?$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ with excellent play for Black.

24.g3 e6 25. $dxe6$ $fxe6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f4?!$

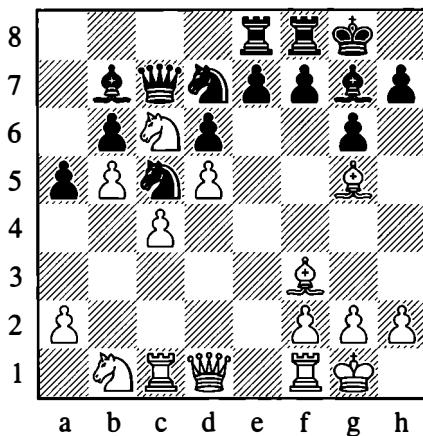


26... $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$ Another true exchange sacrifice, this time with an aggressive character. 27. $gx f4$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 30. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}dc5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}cd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}g7$

34. $\mathbb{W}c3$ e5 35. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{B}f5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{B}xf4$ Black's advantage is nearly winning.

24. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

"Now Black could have played 24... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, 24... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ or even 24... $\mathbb{Q}b8$, to protect his pawn. Certainly Black cannot dream about 24... f6. But after White's inaccuracy, I was fascinated by the possibility of 24... e5. If White takes en passant, Black recaptures with the rook and plays the other rook to e8. He has a strong bishop on g7, while his knights are also good." – Petrosian.



24...e5!?

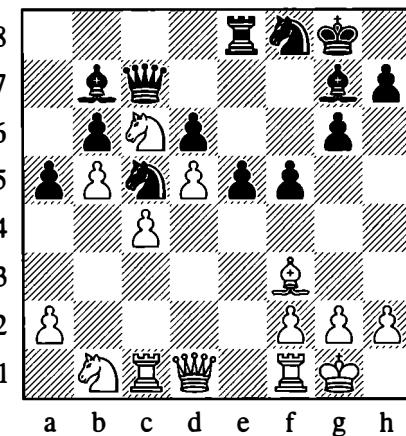
Petrosian trusts his intuition. He described the reaction: "Portisch thought for about ten minutes, staring at me fixedly, while I kept a poker-face. He could not decide whether it was a blunder or a sacrifice."

25. $\mathbb{Q}e7$

The alternative is: 25. $dxe6$ $fxe6$! (25... $\mathbb{B}xe6$, as suggested by Petrosian, is actually bad after either 26. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ or 26. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 27. $bxc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 26. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 30. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}f5$ 31. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 34. $f3$ $d5$ 35. $cxd5$ $exd5$ 36. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $d4=$

25... $\mathbb{f}5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$

About the text move, I would mention that 26... $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ or 26... $\mathbb{B}xf8$ are slightly more logical. The former would save a couple of tempos, compared with the game.



"Within two moves, the position has changed radically. White has a rook for a minor piece, but is lacking active play: all the files are closed, and rooks are effective only when they perform on open files. The troublesome pawn is on e5, not e7 anymore, and so the white knight (on c6) makes for a pretty picture, but nothing else. It may transpire that Black will have more pieces involved in the action than White. Disgracefully, I failed to win this game, despite the fact that Black, without doubt, has the more promising play." – Petrosian.

I may add that for practical purposes Black is a pawn up, because the white pawn on c4 is useless, while Black's *candidate* pawn (that is, the one with no opposing pawn on the file) is mobile and dangerous. In order to play for a win, Petrosian has to form a plan involving a concentration of forces on the kingside and the advance of the e- and f-pawns.

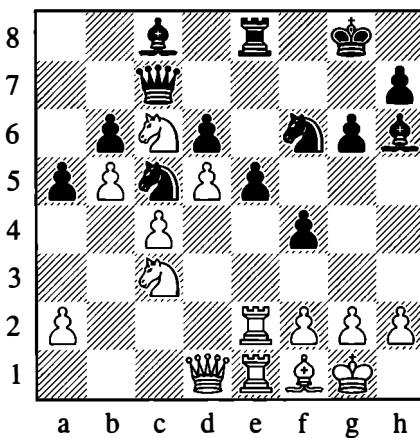
In theory, I would like to agree with Petrosian's evaluation above, but it is easier said than done. Even correcting the minor inaccuracy on the 26th move and trying out the most reasonable sequences, I could not

find any sustainable idea for playing for a win. Needless to say, the stubborn programs did not cooperate at all, and kept answering back “ \pm ”, probably by virtue of believing in the same moral of “I’m better...” as we did!

27.♕e2 ♜h6 28.♗c2 ♜c8 29.♗c3 ♜fd7 30.♗e1 ♜f6 31.♗f1 f4 32.♗ce2?

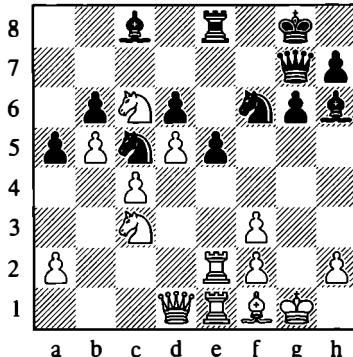
After this careless move, it seems that Petrosian has a golden chance to play for a win.

The correct answer was 32.f3!, when any attempt to make progress by Black will liberate the white rooks.



32...♝f8

Missing the chance:
32...f3! 33.gxf3 ♜g7!



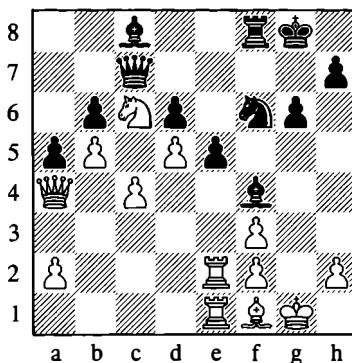
34.♝e3

White has to move the rook in order to answer ...♜f4 with ♜e2.

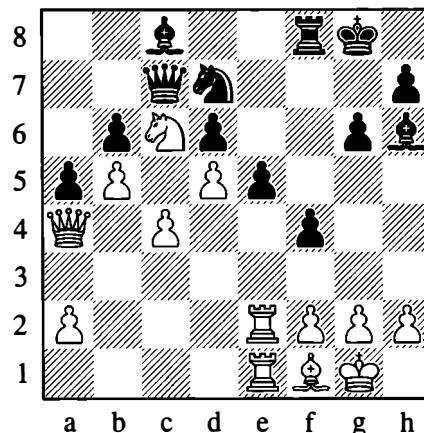
The alternative is clearly worse: 34.♗b2 ♜f5 35.♗g2 ♜d3 36.♗be2 ♜f4 37.♗e4 ♜xe4 38.fxe4 ♜xe1 39.♗xe1 ♜d7 40.♗d3 ♜h6 41.h3 ♜f8 42.♗d1 ♜h8 43.a4 ♜g8 44.♗a3 g5 45.♗f1 g4 46.hxg4 ♜xg4 47.♗d3 ♜c8+ 34...♜xe4 35.fxe3 ♜h6 36.♗d2 ♜d7 37.♗e2 ♜f8 38.♗f2 ♜h3 39.♗xh3 ♜xh3 40.♗e2 ♜h5 41.♗b1 e4 42.f4 ♜d3 43.♗f1 g5!†

33.♛a4 ♜xa4 34.♝xa4 ♜d7

Advancing the f-pawn is not the same as before: 34...f3?! 35.gxf3 ♜f4



36.c5! and White has enough counterplay.



35.♗e7† ♜h8 36.♗xc8 ♜xc8

Once the light-squared bishop is eliminated White has nothing to worry about, and now

I agree with the programs that he really is slightly better.

37. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ 38. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 39. h3

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

"Finally, after the game, he [Portisch] told me he had concluded 'it was a blunder'. That's why he took the exchange and got the worst of it. How many players would not take the exchange?" – Petrosian.

Post-game reflections

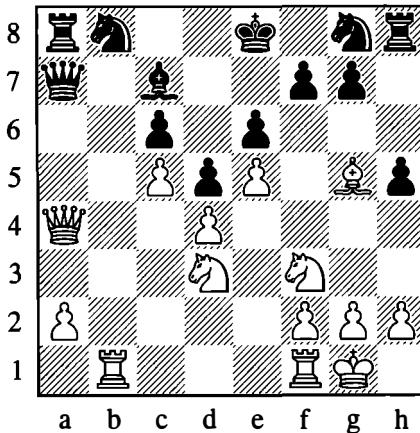
As with other games given in this book, where Petrosian sacrificed the exchange for defensive purposes, we may notice his complacency having just turned around an ugly position, and an insufficient motivation to harvest the whole point. Indeed, had he seized his opportunity with 32...f3! the result may well have been different. At the same time his "disgraceful" (to use his terminology) inability to win the game came with some extenuating circumstances, as although Black's superiority in the position after move 26 may have been "without doubt", it was also without proof. Belief in it may reflect the motto quoted at the start of the game.

A plan is made for a few moves only, not for the whole game – Reuben Fine

Efim Geller – Anatoly Karpov

USSR Championship, Moscow 1976

Black has played the opening very badly, neglecting his development, and in addition he is a pawn down. (Karpov chose to experiment with the French Defence, and made several ill-fated decisions.) Black has just played 20... $\mathbb{Q}a5-c7$, offering the exchange of queens, and he hopes that the closed character of the position will help him hold the game. An unpleasant surprise awaits him.



21. $\mathbb{B}xb8\#!$

Instead of going for a technical realization of the material advantage, Efim Petrovich puts all his money on the dynamic advantage.

It is true that he will have two pawns and the initiative for the exchange, but one may argue that one of those pawns was already his.

It is unlikely that Geller had calculated all the variations below to the very last details; a large share of work had been done by his outstanding "tactical intuition".

21... $\mathbb{W}xb8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc6\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathfrak{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{B}a7$

The alternatives are no more promising:

23... $\mathfrak{Q}e7?$ 24. $\mathfrak{Q}xe6\#$ $fxe6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 26. $\mathfrak{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}g8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 30. $\mathfrak{Q}f5\#$

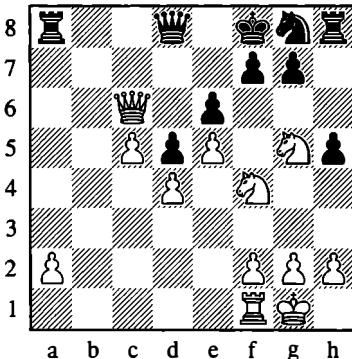
23... $\mathbb{B}xa2?$ 24. $\mathfrak{Q}xe6\#$ $fxe6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}f5\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}f6$ (26... $\mathbb{W}f7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c8\#$) 27. $exf6$ $g6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ and White has a huge advantage.

23... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

The only reasonable defence, but it is also doomed to fail.

24. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 25. $\mathfrak{Q}g5$

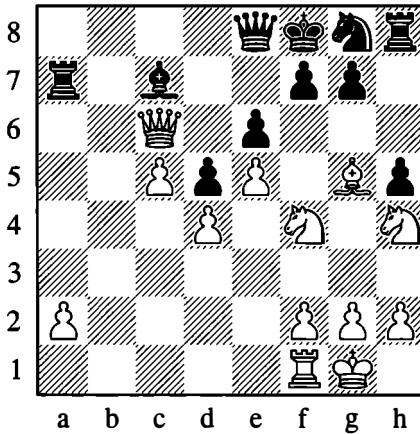
Now Black is helpless against the sacrifices on e6 or g6.



25...Qh6

The most direct and natural way to try to defend against the looming sacrifices.

25...Qe8 26.Qfxe6† fxe6 27.Qxe6† Qf7
28.Qg5† Qf8 29.Qxd5 Qe7 (29...g6 30.Qe6† Qe7 31.Qb1 Qa7 32.Qd6† Qf7 33.Qb8+–)
30.Qf3† Qg8 31.Qb3† Qf8 32.Qe6†
25...Qe7 leads to a prosaic endgame:
26.Qgxe6† fxe6 27.Qxe6† Qg8 28.Qxd8
Qxc6 29.Qxc6 Qf7 30.Qb1 Qhc8 31.Qb7†
Qf8 32.Qb4+–



25...Qxe6!!

This beautiful sham queen sacrifice leads by force to a winning endgame.

25...fxe6 26.Qhg6† Qxg6

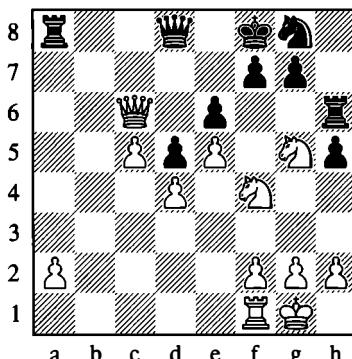
26...Qf7? 27.Qxh8† Qf8 28.Qfg6†+–

27.Qxg6† Qe8 28.Qxh8 Qa4 29.Qd1 Qe7
30.Qxe7 Qxe7 31.Qg6† Qf7 32.Qf4?!

Played a bit hastily, probably due to time pressure.

A simpler route to victory is 32.Qh4! Qxe5
33.dxe5 Qxh4 34.f4!, because the pawn endgame after 34...Qxf4 35.Qf1 is easily won.

32...Qxe5 33.dxe5 Qxf4



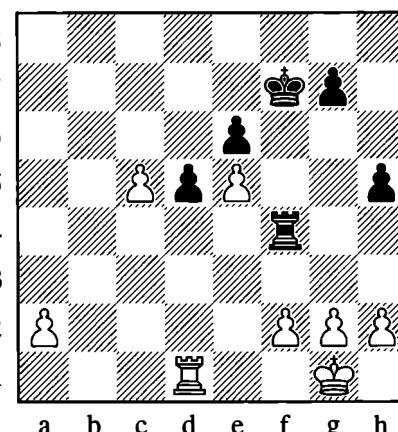
26.Qg6†!! Qxg6 27.Qh7† Qe7 28.Qb1 Qa7
29.Qd6† Qxd6 30.exd6† Qd7 31.Qb8 Qc6
31...Qf6 32.Qf8† Qc6 33.Qb6#

32.Qf8

Threatening mate in one.
32...Qb7 33.Qc8†+–

24.Qh4! Qe8

24...Qe7 would make little difference:
25.Qxe6† fxe6 26.Qxe6 Qd8 27.Qxe7† Qxe7
28.Qg6† Qe8 29.Qc6† Qd8 30.Qxh8+–



34.♕c1! ♔e8 35.c6 ♕d8 36.c7† ♔c8 37.g3 ♕a4

Against 37...♔f5, Geller demonstrated an elegant win: 38.f4 g5 39.a4! gxf4 40.a5 fxe3 41.a6! gxh2† 42.♔h1 ♔f2 43.♔a1+–

38.♕c6 ♕xa2 39.♕xe6 g5 40.♕d6 ♕d2 41.e6 ♕xc7 42.e7

Now the forced 42...♕e2 43.♕xd5 ♕xe7 44.♕xg5 leads to a trivial endgame, so Karpov resigned.

1–0

Post-game reflections

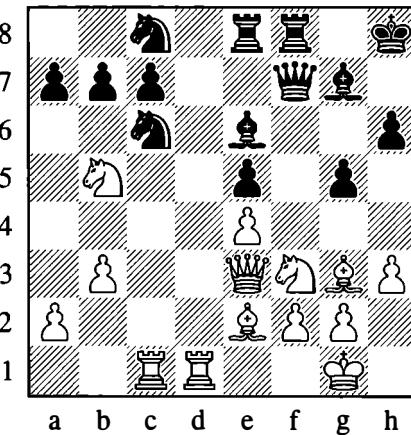
In this game Geller gave a quite masterful demonstration of how to win a won game. After just twenty moves he had obtained a bigger advantage than one could dream possible against a reigning World Champion, but the expectation of success brings with it considerable pressure. Having already won a pawn, it would have been tempting for him to play patiently with a view to converting his material advantage in the endgame. Perhaps this approach would have sufficed, but it would also have given Karpov the chance to put his legendary defensive skills to use. Instead of following this path Geller struck quickly, and made the most of his dynamic advantages. Simply put, he played the best moves!

There is a school of thought which states that when you have a winning position, you should strive to avoid taking risks, even if it means playing technically substandard moves. “Better to win slowly but surely, rather than jeopardize victory with a risky attempt to win quickly!” This is fine in some situations, but we should also take care not to grant our opponents too much breathing space. If you find yourself undecided about which approach to take, then you are probably better off playing the move you believe to be objectively strongest. Geller certainly did not regret it here.

The theme of the next game is destroying the king’s shelter. The strategic errors in the opening, which led Black to this disaster, are explained in my book *Dynamic Chess Strategy*.

Mihai Suba – Aleksander Sznajpik

Warsaw 1987



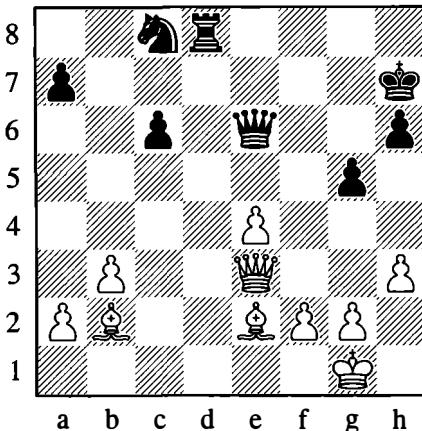
I suggest that the reader look at the above position, with all pieces on the board. And now look at the diagram after the 28th move. The metamorphosis is impressive; it took only half a dozen moves to complete the harvest, and everything was almost forced!

22.♕xc6!

This exchange sacrifice initiates the combination. For an experienced player it comes naturally to the hand (being like the sacrifice on c3 in the Sicilian). Never mind that it is not against a king that has castled long; the damage produced can be compared with that of a bomb.

22...bxc6 23.♕xe5 ♔xe5 24.♕xe5† ♔h7 25.♕xc7 ♕d8 26.♕xd8 ♕xd8 27.♕xe6 ♕xe6 28.♕b2

The sequence has resulted in a winning position. The rest is simple technique.



28... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$

Black cannot do anything active. For example: 30... $\mathbb{Q}d2?$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 32. $\mathbb{W}b8\#$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e6\#+-$

31. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 32. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 33. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 34.a4
 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 36. $\mathbb{W}d4$ h5 37. $\mathbb{W}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$

38. $\mathbb{Q}f5$

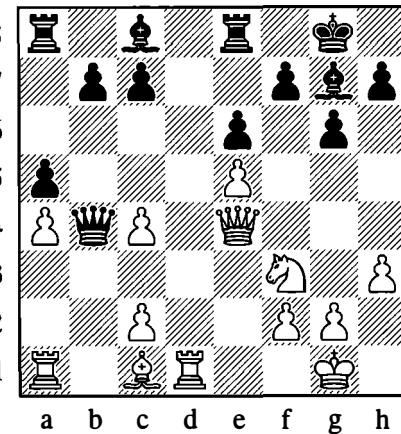
1–0

Post-game reflections

We can argue against calling 22. $\mathbb{B}xc6!$ a positional or intuitive sacrifice, because although the final consequences could not be calculated, they were easy to predict. It certainly was not a pure sacrifice, as White got two pawns for the exchange in all variations. Add on the positional extras: Black's exposed king, his ruined pawn structure, and a galloping white initiative supported by two strong bishops. Furthermore, it requires a minimum of basic calculation, and so we already have more than enough reason for all educated players to play it. Following Kasparov's terminology, we may call this type of sacrifice an erudition sacrifice; but as erudition varies widely amongst chess players, many will consider it a positional sacrifice.

Nigel Short – Jan Timman

Tilburg 1991



We continue this game from page 65. We left the game here, because this position on the board has little to do with the opening. We should just regard it as a difficult position for Black, and see how it was defended and how it should have been. In exchange for his ruined pawn structure, White has a significant advantage in space and development. The weakened squares around the black monarch call for infiltration, while the bishop on c8 is unlikely to come into play in the near future.

20... $\mathbb{W}c5$

Too slow; Black should be willing to take drastic measures to stay in the game. A positional exchange sacrifice could help him complete the mobilization of all his forces: 20...h6! This improves Black's control over the chronically weakened dark squares on the kingside. 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (21. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{W}e7=$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ b6 25. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ The better pawn structure and the two bishops offer Black very reasonable compensation. Even the stingiest programs give White only a slight plus.

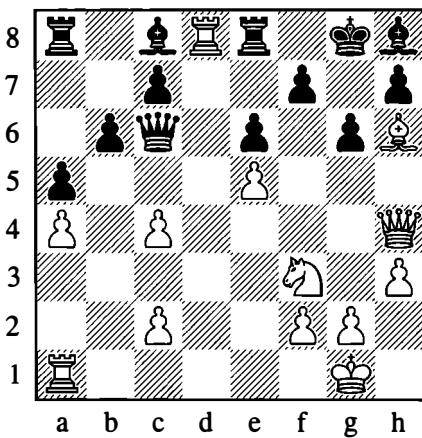
21. $\mathbb{W}h4$ b6 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c6!$

This is the only reasonable answer. 22... $\mathbb{W}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 24. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is as bad as it looks for Black.

23. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Or 23... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and White's pressure is increasing.

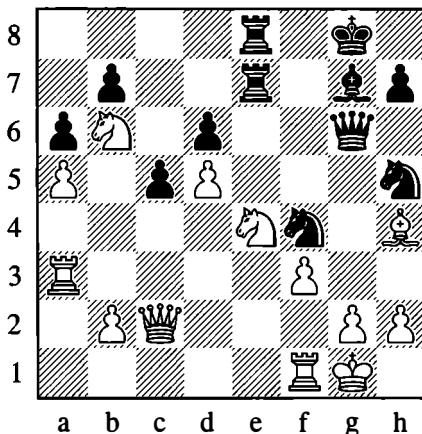
24. $\mathbb{Q}d8!$



For further adventures in this middlegame, go to page 325.

Smbat Lputian – Mihai Suba

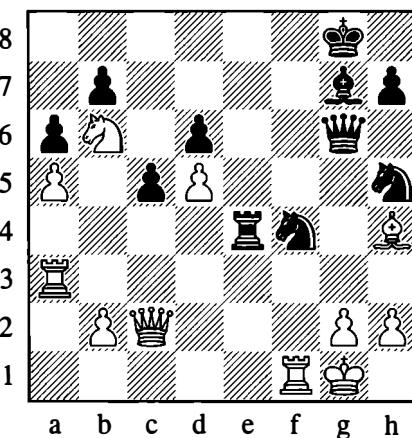
European Team Championship, Debrecen 1992



We continue this game from page 223.

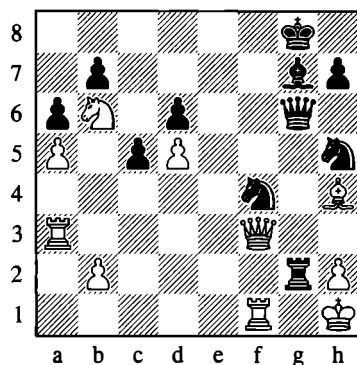
28... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Black has recovered the pawn, but given up the exchange. He does not appear to have a threat, because against ... $\mathbb{W}g4$ (intending ... $\mathbb{Q}e2$), White can sacrifice his queen with $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and get a draw. But when you are the exchange up, it is not easy to accept that going for a draw may be advisable. And after a lot of calculation without finding a way to an advantage, variations can become confused in one's mind, which can lead to one playing the worst move of all.



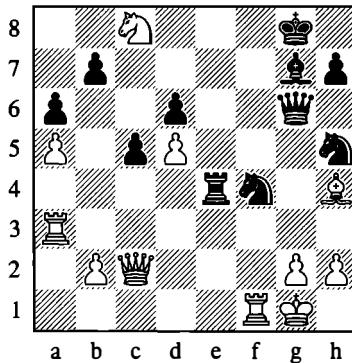
30. $\mathbb{Q}af3?$

In the tournament bulletin, 30. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ is marked as the only move (which, within human comprehension, it may be). I was prepared to meet it with 30... $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ 31. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 32. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ (threatening 33... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ or 33... $\mathbb{W}c2$), and I felt quite happy.



But analysing further shows that White can force a draw: 33.♕e3! ♜d4 34.♕e1 ♜c2 35.♕e8† ♜g7 36.♕e7† with perpetual check.

However, the best defence was found by the machine: 30.♘c8! It is a curiosity that a knight, situated so far away, may help the defence.



30...♘xd5 (In the event of 30...♝g4, White is prepared to give up his queen with 31.♛xe4, this time with advantage.) 31.♕a4! ♜d4† 32.♕xd4! ♜xd4 31.♜b3± and Black has to play very carefully.

30...♘e2† 31.♗h1 ♘d4

As easy as that, Black wins back the exchange while preserving a big advantage.

32.♗f2 ♘xf3 33.gxf3 ♜d4! 34.♗g1

Or 34.fxe4 ♜xf2 35.♗xf2 ♜xe4† 36.♗g1 ♘f4+. The rest is simple.

34...♗xf2 35.♗xg6† hxg6 36.♗xf2 ♜e2
37.♗g2 ♜xb2 38.♘c4 ♜b4 39.♘xd6 c4
40.♗e3 ♘f6
0–1

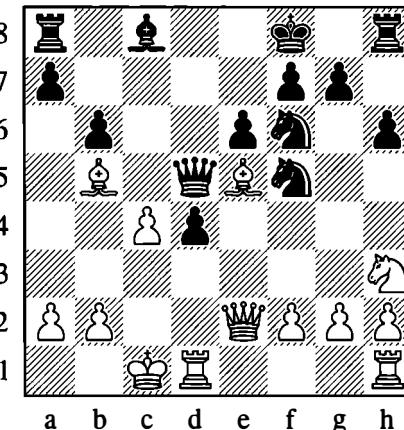
Post-game reflections

Black's exchange sacrifice was a natural step which requires little explanation. The key moment came at move 30 when White went astray, but the surprising 30.♘c8! would have

given him chances for the advantage. The move looks rather obscure, but when you consider that Black lacked a direct threat, the principle of improving the worst-placed piece makes perfect sense.

Alexei Shirov – Vassily Ivanchuk

Linares 1998



We continue this game from page 97.

18...♜c5!?

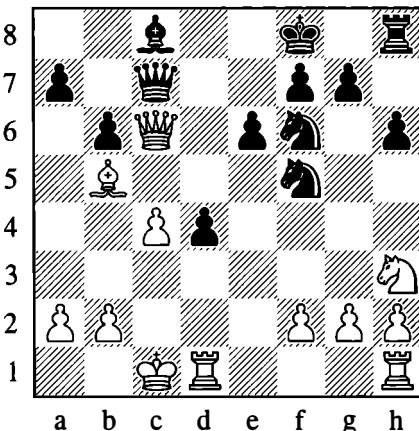
Tempting Shirov to go for the rook in the corner.

Also possible is: 18...♜xg2 19.♘f4 (19.♕d3 ♜d7†) 19...♜b7 20.♗hg1 ♜d7 21.♗xd7 ♜xd7 22.♗xg7 ♜xg7 23.♗h5† ♜f8 24.♗xf6 ♜c6 25.♗xd4 ♜d8 26.♗c5† ♜g7 27.♗h5† ♜h7 28.♗g1 ♜hg8 29.♗f6† ♜h8 30.♗xg8 ♜xc5 31.♗f6 ♜d4 32.♗h5 ♜c8 33.♗g4 ♜d6 34.b3 b5 35.♗g3 bxc4 36.♗xc4 ♜f4† 37.♗b1 ♜xc4 38.bxc4 ♜g8 and in spite of Black's small advantage in structure, the most probable outcome is a draw.

19.♗f3

Accepting the offer. The alternative was 19.♗f4 ♜b7, with a complex position in which Black's chances are at least not worse.

19... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c6$



21... $\mathbb{W}b8!$

Much better than exchanging. Black now threatens to win a piece with ...a6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

22. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}a3\ddagger$

The best chance is 23. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\ddagger$.

23... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 24. $\mathbb{B}3$ $g5$

24...e5?! might be better.

25. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ e5

25... $\mathbb{W}c7\text{?}$ is judged the most precise by the programs, but I am not so sure. If White is able to gain activity, as he does in the note to move 28 below, the queen may be poorly placed on c7.

26. $\mathbb{E}he1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$

Black has a strong grip on the position. Lacking open files, the white rooks are no better than the minor pieces, while the knight on h3 does not adorn White's scenery.

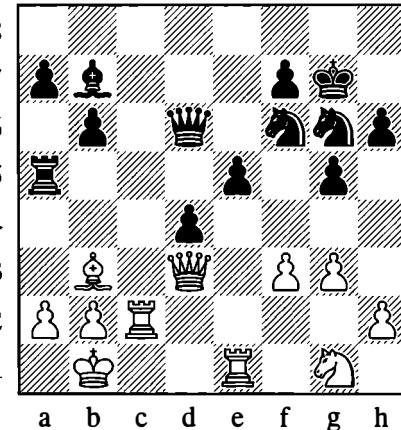
28. $\mathbb{E}d2?$

The last possibility to make waves was 28.f4! $exf4$ 29.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 30. $\mathbb{E}e7\ddagger$ with the threat of 31. $\mathbb{W}d3$.

28... $\mathbb{E}c8$

Now Black completely takes over.

29. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}xc4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{E}c5$ 31.g3 $\mathbb{E}a5!$
32. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 34. $\mathbb{E}c2$



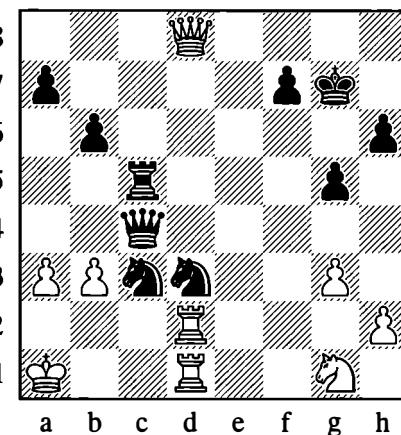
34...e4!

Black's position was winning anyway; this is just the execution.

35. $\mathbb{W}c4$

35.fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is murderous.

35... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 36. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 37. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 39.fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 40.a3 $\mathbb{W}b5$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ d3 42. $\mathbb{E}cc1$ d2 43. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 44. $\mathbb{E}cxd2$ $\mathbb{E}c5$ 45. $\mathbb{W}d8$ $\mathbb{W}c4\ddagger$ 46.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c3\ddagger$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}a1$



47...♝a5!

A nice finish by Chucky.

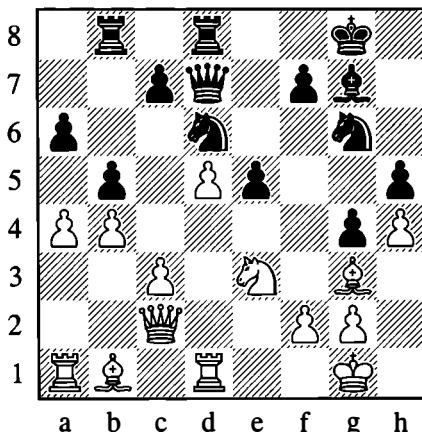
0–1

Post-game reflections

This was a true heavyweight battle between two of the greatest and most original players in modern chess. It is quite easy to see the logic behind Ivanchuk's exchange sacrifice, but the way he kept control in such a tense position was highly impressive. Even so, Shirov had a brief window of opportunity with 28.f4!, a pawn sacrifice which would have given him real counterplay. Alas he missed his chance and Chucky broke through mercilessly.

Alexey Dreev – Gata Kamsky

Pavlodar 1987



We continue this game from page 33. White has just played 28.♝a2-b1, taking control of f5 and preparing a rook invasion along the a-file.

28...♝a8?!

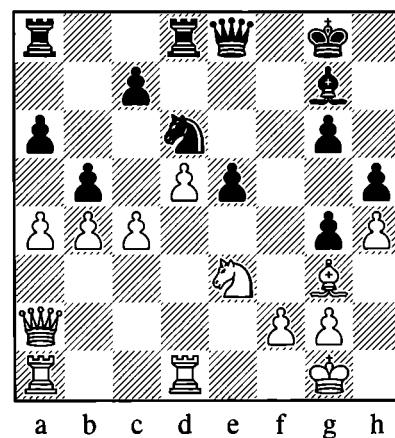
Kamsky begins to go astray. 28...e4! was mandatory, for example: 29.axb5 axb5 30.♝a6 ♜e8=

29.♛a2 ♜e8

29...e4 was still best, but Gata prefers to abandon his structure on the kingside instead of conceding the a-file.

30.♝xg6! fxg6 31.c4

The tension is increasing and White has a nice initiative.



31...♛f7?

This latest error turns Black's position from inferior yet tenable, to losing outright.

The correct defence was: 31...♝e4 32.d6! cxd6 33.♝d5±

32.axb5 ♜e4 33.bxa6 ♜c3 34.♛a3 ♜xd1 35.♝xd1

White has been allowed to *win two pawns for the exchange* (this is the correct way of putting it, according to Rudolf Spielmann), along with positional advantages which soon lead to Black's ruin. White now has a substantial and well-advanced infantry on the queenside, while the mutilated black majority on the kingside does not offer enough counterplay. The rest is quite simple and does not require any comment.

35...♛f6 36.b5 g5 37.hxg5 ♜xg5 38.d6 h4 39.♝xh4 ♜xh4 40.dxc7 ♜f8 41.g3 ♜f6 42.♝d2 ♜h8 43.♛d6 ♜f3 44.♛d5 ♜f6

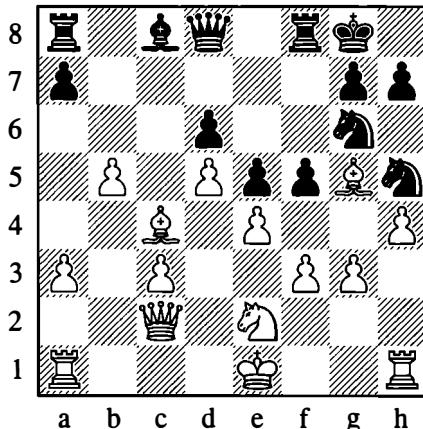
45.f3 e4 46.♗h2† ♜h6 47.f4 ♜a1† 48.♗d1
 ♜c3 49.♗d2 ♜xd2 50.♗xd2 ♜g7 51.b6
 ♜c3 52.♗d7 ♜b4 53.b7 ♜ae8 54.a7 ♜c5
 55.b8=♕ ♜xe3† 56.♔f1
 1–0

Post-game reflections

What happened in this game barely counts as an exchange sacrifice, but it was nonetheless interesting to see how Kamsky, a rising star at the time of the game, could allow himself to fall into such a desperate situation. The concluding part of this game was so one-sided, it is easy to forget that Black was actually doing rather well earlier, and a quick flick back to page 33 will remind us that he could have obtained the better chances with the courageous 26...bxa4!.

Ivan Ivanisevic – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu

European Championship, Istanbul 2003

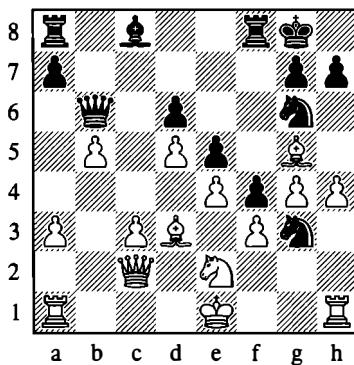


We continue this game from page 238. We shall see that the Serbian player missed the chance to save his wobbling position with an exchange sacrifice at one point.

16...Wb6 17.exf5?!

After this, White is in real danger. His best option was:

17.♔d3! f4! 18.g4 ♜g3



19.♗h2

This seems most circumspect.

19.♗g1? ♜xe2 20.♔xe2 ♜e3†+–

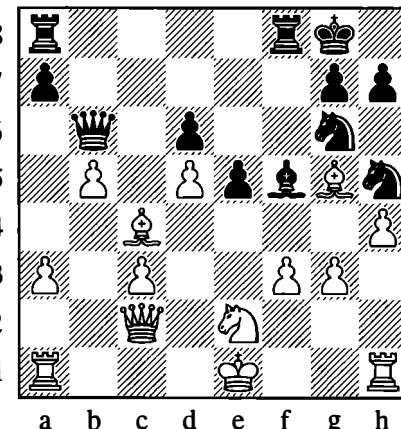
19.♗h3 h5!†

19.♗xg3 fxg3 20.♗g2 is possible, although after 20...♗f4 21.♔xf4 ♜xf4 22.♗f1 ♜xg4 23.♗d2 ♜h5 24.♗xg3 Black has enough play for the pawns.

19...♜xe2 20.♔xe2 ♜g1† 21.♔f1 ♜e3†
 22.♔e2 ♜g1†

With a draw by repetition.

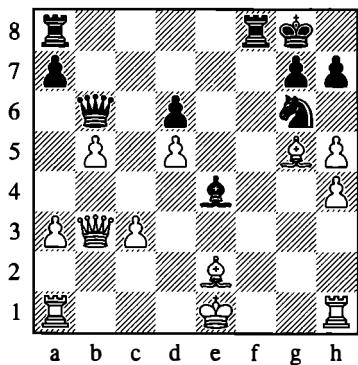
17...♗xf5



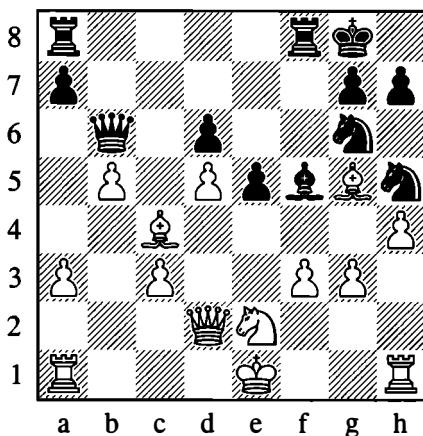
18.♗d2?

Also bad is 18.♔d3? ♜xd3 19.♗xd3 e4 20.fxe4 ♜e5 21.♗e3 ♜f3† 22.♔d1 ♜xb5 and Black has a decisive attack.

White's last chance to stay in the game was:
 18. $\mathbb{W}b3!$ e4 19. g4 exf3 20. gxh5 fxe2 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$
 (not 21. hxg6? $\mathbb{Q}c2-$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}e4$



22. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 24. hxg6 $\mathbb{W}xh4$
 25. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 26. gxh7† $\mathbb{W}xh7\#$ The exchange sacrifice has quietened things down.



18...e4!

After this break, Black's initiative takes on alarming proportions; the full potential of his pieces is unleashed. The disharmony and lack of coordination in White's camp is crying to heaven.

19.f4

Shutting off his own bishop from the defence. White, with good reason, believed that keeping the e-file closed and maintaining control over e5 was imperative.

The alternatives are appalling too: 19. $\mathbb{W}d4?$! exf3! or 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ or 19. g4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$. In all cases, Black has a decisive advantage.

19... $\mathbb{B}ac8$

White's position is already beyond repair.

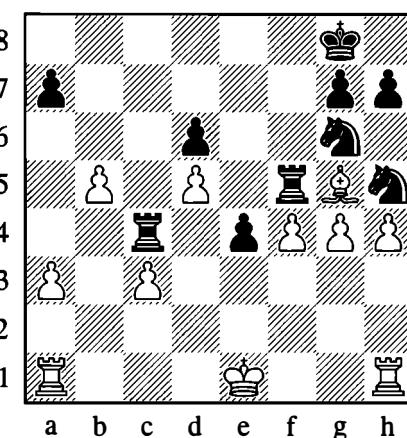
20. $\mathbb{W}d4$

If the c4-bishop retreats, then 20...h6 finishes off the life of the intruder on g5.

20... $\mathbb{W}xd4?$

Even stronger is 20... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}xc4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 23. g4



23... $\mathbb{B}xg5!$

Ensuring a decisive material advantage.

24. $\mathbb{B}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}hf4$ 25. a4 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ 26. a5

White's last chance is his potential passed pawn.

26... $\mathbb{B}c2$ 27. b6

This leads to a quick mate. White could have postponed the execution of his sentence by:
 27. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{B}b2$ 28. b6 axb6 29. a6 (29. $\mathbb{B}e1$ bxa5)
 29...e3 30. $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{B}d2\#$ 31. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 32. $\mathbb{B}xd3$
 $\mathbb{B}xd3$ 33. $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{B}xd3$ 34. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{B}b5\#$ 35. $\mathbb{B}c2$
 $\mathbb{B}c5\#$ 36. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{B}c8-$

27...Qg2†

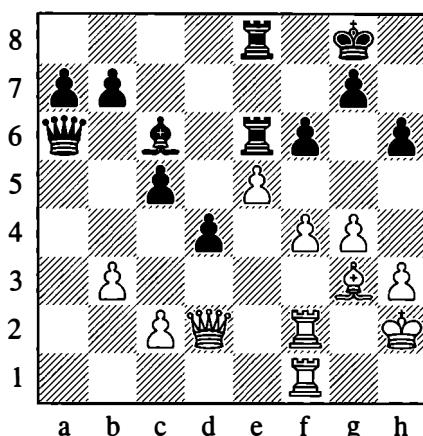
After 28.Qf1 Qe3† 29.Qe1 Qf4, three different mates in one are threatened, so White called it a day.

0–1**Post-game reflections**

In the earlier part of this game (coverage of which began on page 236) we saw Black executing a double pawn sacrifice with 13...b5!? and 14...c4!. The plan was especially striking as it allowed White to straighten out his doubled c-pawns, which are traditionally thought of as a weakness to be targeted in the endgame. On this occasion Nisipeanu's dynamic interpretation of the position was quite in order, as Black had to free his pieces in order to avoid being swamped. White seized a great deal of space early in the game, but once Black succeeded in carrying out the ...f5 break, White must have been wishing he could have moved a few of his pawns back to their starting positions. Although his position was objectively still sound, it was not easy to contain Black's initiative and the middlegame turned out to be rather one-sided.

Michael Deleva – Mihai Suba

France 2010



Black's queen, which had strayed to a2, must come back into play, so my last move was 27...Wb2-a6. I could have taken on e5 first, but I was fascinated by a possible exchange sacrifice.

28.f5

White must play his only trump, otherwise the queen returns to d5 via b6 and d8, when Black would be a pawn up with a dominant position.

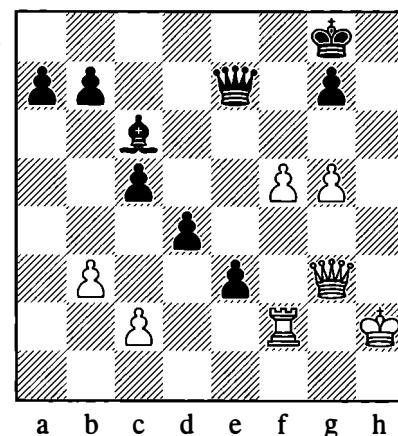
28...Bxe5

Of course, Black wins two extra pawns in return for the exchange. With the added bonus of a safer king, his chances should be higher.

29.Qxe5 Bxe5 30.Qe1 Wb6!

The queen gets back just in the nick of time to support Black's central majority.

31.Bxe5 Wc7! 32.Wf4 fxe5 33.Wg3 We7
34.h4 e4 35.g5 hxg5 36.hxg5 e3

**37.Wb8†?**

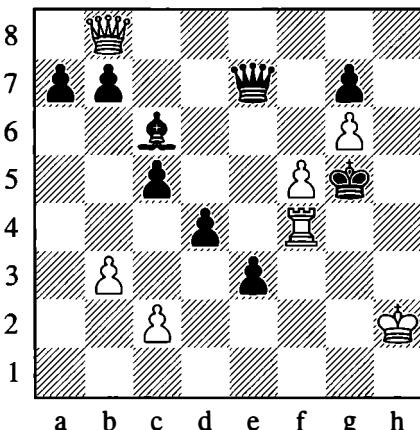
White can resist more stubbornly: 37.Qf1!
Qe8 38.Wb8 e2 39.Qe1 We3 40.Wg3 We4
41.Qg1 a5 42.g6 Wxf5 43.Bxe2 Wxg6†

37...Qh7

This looks risky, whereas 37...Wf8 38.Wxf8†

$\mathbb{Q}xf8$ is an easy win. But on this occasion, my calculation was precise.

38.g6† $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 39. $\mathbb{E}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$



40.f6

Against 40. $\mathbb{E}f1$ Black can win by transferring his king to the queenside: 40... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 41. $\mathbb{W}h8$ $\mathbb{W}e5†$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 43. $\mathbb{W}h4†$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 44. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ a5 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, ...b6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ -b4-c3.

40...e2! 41. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{W}e3$

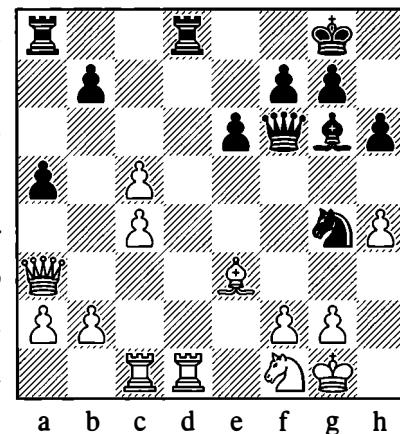
0–1

Post-game reflections

The exchange sacrifice in this game was not such a big deal, as Black had two extra pawns thrown into the bargain. It was more important to ensure the possibility of advancing the central pawn majority with 30... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ and 31... $\mathbb{W}c7!$, postponing the capture of the enemy rook in order to bring the queen into an ideal supporting position. Such small nuances can often make the difference between success and failure.

Teimour Radjabov – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu

Kings Tournament, Medias 2011



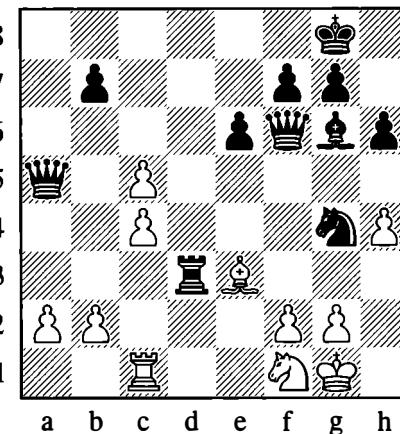
We continue this game from page 99. In exchange for the pawn offered in the opening, Black enjoys a very active position.

26. $\mathbb{E}xd8†$

“Pawn grabbing” happens even at the highest level! Black is already attacking and a sense of danger should prevent White giving up the d-file.

The equilibrium could be maintained by 26. $\mathbb{E}d6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xh4=$.

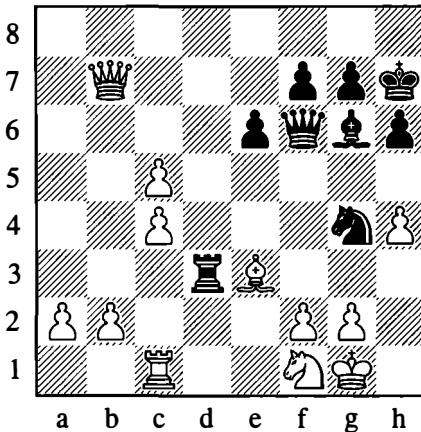
26... $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ $\mathbb{E}d3$



28.♔a8†

28.♔e1! ♖xb2 is already slightly better for Black, but probably tenable. For example:
29.a4 ♔e4 30.a5 ♔xe3 31.♕xe3 ♖e5 32.♗d1
♖xc5 33.♗xd3 ♕xd3 34.♕c3 ♔e4 35.♕d2†

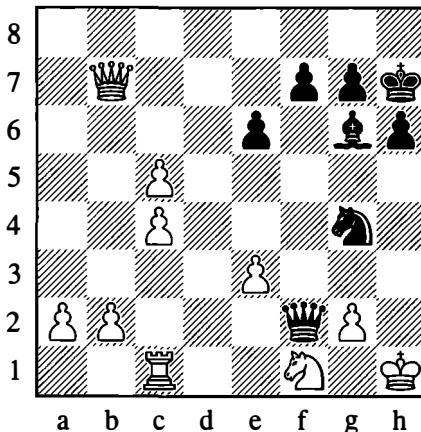
28...♗h7 29.♖xb7



29...♗xe3

A draw-in-the-pocket sacrifice. Sadly, the Romanian player was in time pressure, so he was unable to find the complicated path to victory.

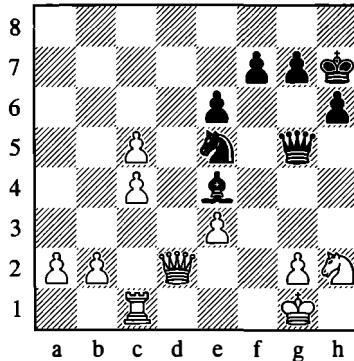
**30.♗xe3 ♖f2† 31.♗h1 ♖xh4† 32.♗g1 ♖f2†
33.♗h1**



33...♗h4†

A nice, though not obvious, win was available:

33...♕e5! 34.♕h2 ♖h4 35.♗g1
35.♕c7 ♕g4 36.♕f4 h5 37.♗g1 e5+–
35...♔e4 36.♗b4 ♖g5 37.♗d2



37...♕xg2 38.♕xg2

Other moves are even worse, for example:

38.♗c3 ♔h3† 39.♗h1 ♖g6 40.e4 ♖xe4†
41.♗g1 ♖g6† 42.♗h1 ♖b1† 43.♗c1 ♖e4†
44.♗g1 ♖g6† 45.♗h1 ♕d3 46.♗f1 ♖e4†
47.♗g1 ♔xf1 48.♗xf1 ♖g4† 49.♗h1
♖xc4+–
38...♖xe3† 39.♗f2 ♖g5† 40.♗h1 ♖xc1†
41.♗f1 ♖xc4 42.b3 ♖d5† 43.♗g1 ♕d3
44.♗e3 ♕xc5

And Black must win.

34.♗g1

½–½

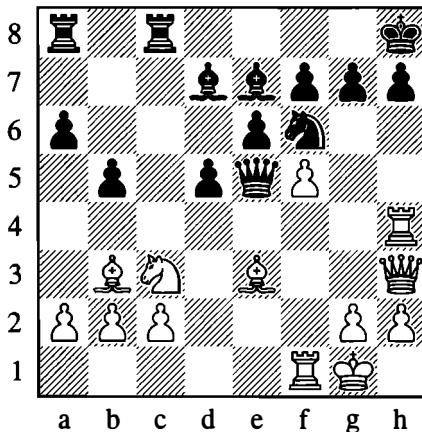
Post-game reflections

Black's earlier pawn sacrifice was quite profound, and the way he built up a winning attack against a world-class opponent was impressive.

The end of the game was a bit anticlimactic, but it highlights the practical value of a draw-in-the-pocket sacrifice; after all, a draw is still better than a loss.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov – Boris Gelfand

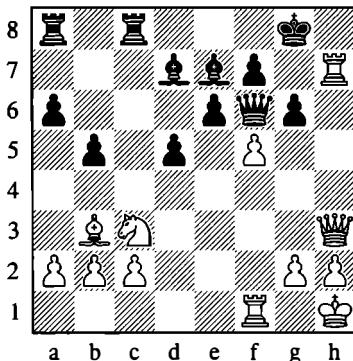
Candidates (3), Kazan 2011



We continue this game from page 157. I am sorry about splitting such a superb game, but I felt I had to bow to the requirements of my book.

20.♔h1

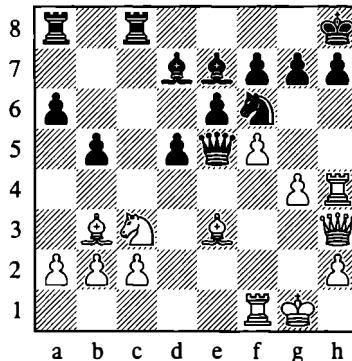
The direct attack by 20.♕g5 is not so dangerous: 20...♗g8! 21.♖xf6 ♗xf6 22.♗xh7 g6 23.♔h1



23...♗xc3 24.bxc3 ♖c6 25.♗d3! gxh5 (not 25...♗xh7? 26.fxg6† fxg6 [26...♗xg6?? 27.♗xf7†+–] 27.♗xf6 ♖xf6†) 26.♗h3 ♖c8 with good compensation for the exchange.

Another attempt to break through Black's

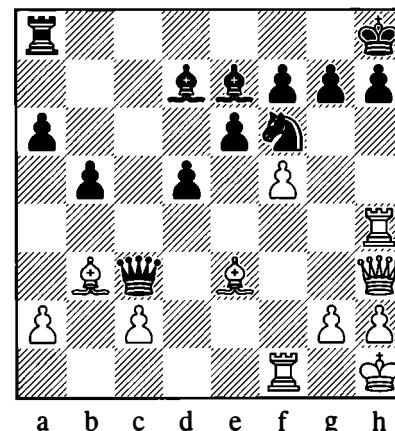
defence is 20.g4, but this should also end unsuccessfully:



20...♗xe3†! 21.♗xe3 ♖c5 22.♗xc5 ♖xc5 23.g5 ♖g8 24.fxe6 ♖xe6 25.a4 ♖e7 26.axb5 axb5 and Black has some chances of turning his extra pawn to good account.

20...♗xc3!

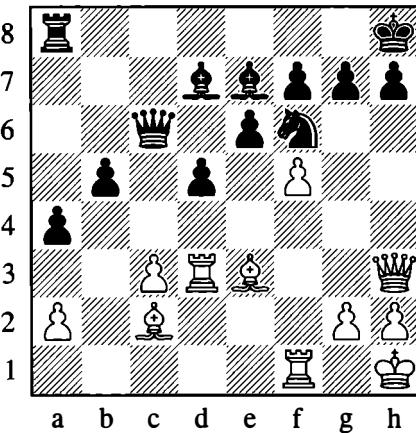
This erudition sacrifice not only simplifies the position and makes it difficult for White to use his kingside pawns, but also pins the bishop for several moves, thus reducing White's attacking pretensions.

21.bxc3 ♖xc3**22.♗d4**

White is still obsessed by attacking, and will send his pieces round in circles, finally ending up in worse positions.

It was high time to start fighting for the half point with: 22.♕d4 ♜xh3 23.♕xh3 a5 24.fxe6 fxe6 25.c3 e5 26.♕xe5 ♜xh3 27.gxh3†

22...a5 23.♕d3 ♜c6 24.c3 a4 25.♕c2



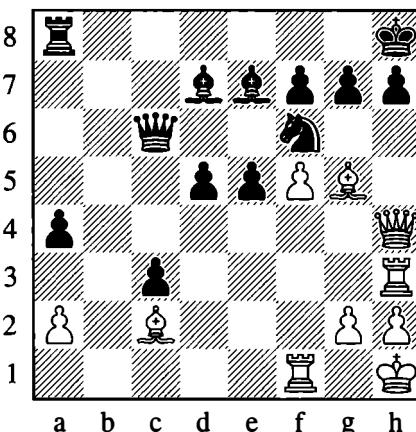
25...e5!

Black builds an ideal centre. Now White's attacking options are drastically reduced and the pawn on f5 looks pathetic.

26.♕g5 b4 27.♗h4 bxc3

Having more than one attractive choice is an encouraging sign. Equally good is 27...♘c8.

28.♗h3



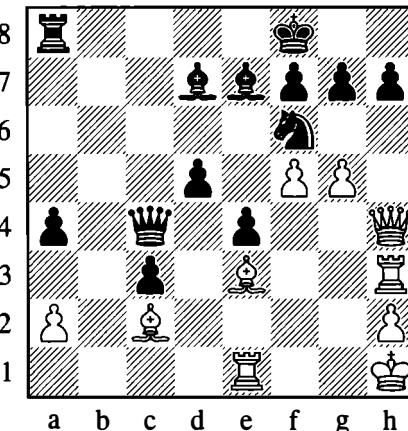
28...♗g8!

Cold-bloodedness is needed in the Sicilian!

29.♗e1

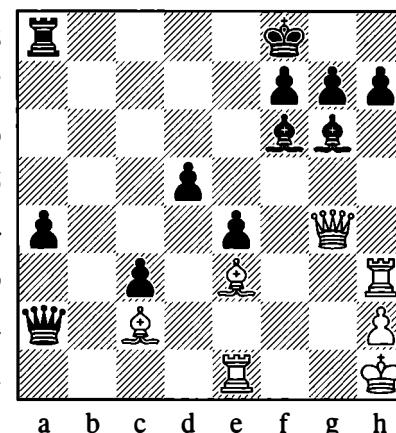
29.♗e1 d4 30.♗xe5 ♜b5! is not better.

29...e4 30.g4 ♔f8 31.♗e3 ♜c4 32.g5



32...♗xf5! 33.gxf6 ♔xf6 34.♗h5 ♗g6 35.♗g4 ♜xa2

Six pawns for a rook; that's quite enough to form an execution squad! Moreover, every white piece seems to be situated on the wrong square, and can do no good, be it against the black king's fortress or to stop the advance of the unusual pawn platoon. I really cannot imagine how this position feels from White's side. From Black's point of view, this game, which helped Gelfand to get through to the Candidates semi-final, looks perfect.



36.♔b1 ♜c4 37.♗g2 a3 38.♔a2 ♜c6 39.♗g3
♝b8
0–1

Post-game reflections

This extraordinary battle featured several sacrifices involving different balances of material. Earlier White went for a “best-chance” sacrifice with 18.e5!, giving up the first of many foot-soldiers. Gelfand expertly kept control of the position, and giving up the exchange on c3 followed by the knight on f6 felt merely like a natural part of the process. The final position with six pawns versus a rook was a spectacular end to a superb game. Ever since exchanging with ...cxd4 in the opening, Black did not lose another pawn for the entire game.

Chapter 16

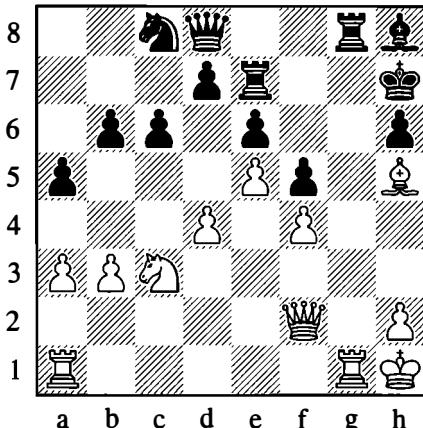
Minor Piece Sacrifices

Giving up a minor piece is quite a different proposition from sacrificing an exchange. The latter can almost be a routine decision for some players, and the decision can often be justified by relatively minor compensating factors such as a single extra pawn, a strong piece outpost, damaging the enemy pawn structure and so on. A deficit of a whole minor piece, on the other hand, will more often than not prove fatal if the side with the extra piece can coordinate his position sensibly. If one is to invest such a sizeable chunk of material, one must demand an appropriate level of compensation.

We shall start with an original piece sacrifice by the young Kasparov.

Garry Kasparov – Artur Yusupov

USSR Championship, Frunze 1981



We continue this game from page 192. In return for the sacrificed pawn, Garry has succeeded in rustling up some play on the kingside. But Yusupov is ready to exchange rooks, so quick actions are required.

31.♘e4!

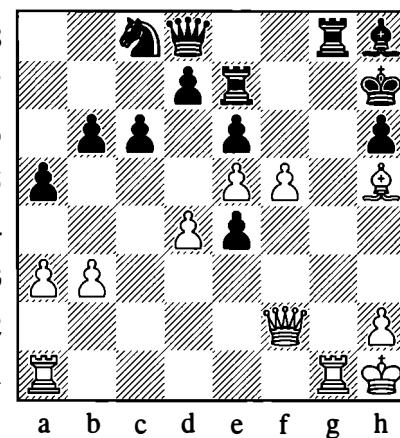
Sacrificing the knight in order to drive a pawn wedge deep into the heart of Black's kingside.

31...fxe4

The threat of ♘f6† means that Black has no choice but to take the knight.

32.f5

The liberated f-pawn now becomes a massive strength.

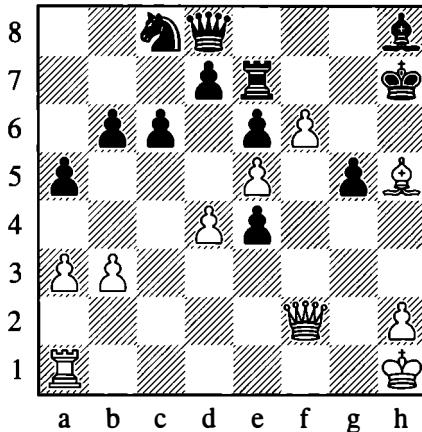


32...♝g5

After 32...♝xg1† 33.♝xg1 ♜g7, Black is crushed by 34.♝g6† ♜g8 35.f6+–

The best defence is 32...♛f8! 33.f6 ♜xf6, and after either 34.♛xf6 ♜eg7 or 34.exf6 ♜eg7! Black can fight on.

33.♝xg5 hxg5 34.f6



34...♝h6

Other moves are equally hopeless, for instance 34...♝e8 35.♛e2+– or 34...♛f8 35.fxe7+–.

35.fxe7 ♛xe7 36.♝f7 d6 37.♝f1 g4 38.♝xe6 ♛xe6 39.♝h4† ♜g7

1–0

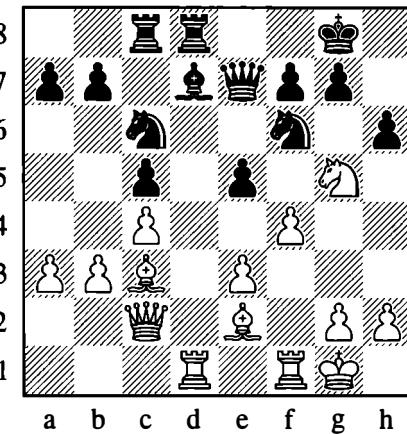
Post-game reflections

This was a clear case where White's sacrifice was obviously worth the material, as the pawn on f6 was more damaging to the defence than the c3-knight could ever have been. Following this logic, it is hardly surprising that Yusupov's only defensive chance involved giving up his bishop to weaken the deadly pawn chain, as mentioned in the note to move 32.

The only difference between me and a madman is that I am not mad – Salvador Dali

Mihai Suba – Aldo Zadrima

Lucerne Olympiad 1982



I have acquired the habit of reviewing some of my most exciting old games with new programs, to find out whether my sacrifices were sound. And I always find myself wondering, according to the program's verdict, how I could have played so well or so badly.

This game was annotated in my book *Dynamic Chess Strategy*, but even in the latest edition I failed to point out the correct defence. Black has just played 16...h6.

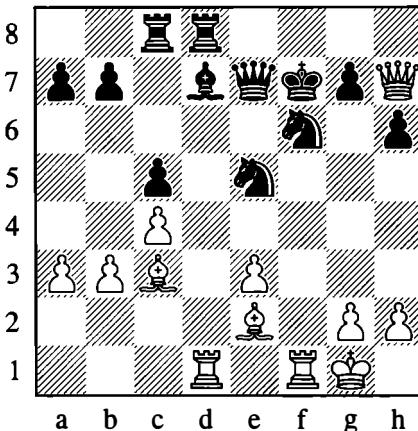
17.♝xf7?!

The machine recommends 17.♝e4±, but after 17...♝xe4 18.♛xe4 exf4, White's two bishops and general activity are balanced by Black's better pawn structure.

17...♝xf7 18.fxe5 ♛xe5 19.♛h7?!

Previously, I have awarded this spectacular move an exclamation mark, but I feel obliged to tone down the award, as I now know that it doesn't win by force.

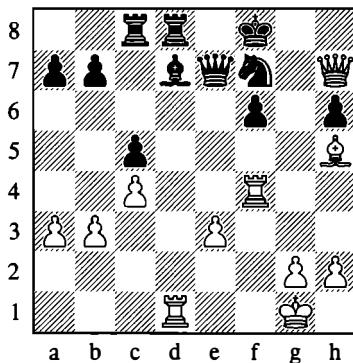
Also interesting is 19. $\mathbb{E}d5!$? $\mathfrak{Q}eg4!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\#$ 22. $\mathfrak{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}e2$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h4$, and White's small plus is probably not enough.



19...Qg4?

The only defence is:

19... $\mathfrak{Q}f8!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathfrak{Q}f7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 22. $\mathbb{E}f4$ 22. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{E}d1\#$ 25. $\mathfrak{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}d2\#$ 26. $\mathfrak{Q}g1=$



22...Qg4!

Or 22... $\mathbb{W}xe3\#$ 23. $\mathfrak{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}df1$ $\mathbb{E}d6$ 25. $h3$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 26. $\mathbb{E}e4$ $\mathbb{W}g3$ 27. $\mathbb{E}g4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 28. $\mathbb{E}g8\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}e7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}g7$ $a5$ 30. $a4$ $\mathbb{W}e3$ 31. $\mathbb{W}f8\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}d7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 33. $\mathbb{W}xf7\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 34. $\mathbb{W}f8$ $\mathbb{E}cd7$ 35. $\mathbb{E}g6$ $\mathfrak{Q}b6$ 36. $\mathbb{E}gxg6$ $\mathbb{E}xf6$ 37. $\mathbb{W}xf6\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}a7$ 38. $\mathbb{W}f3\pm$.

23. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\#$ 24. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 26. $h3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}f1\pm$

White remains on top, but Black should be able to hold with careful play.

20. $\mathbb{E}xf6\#$! $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xf6\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}xf6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e4$

Here the Albanian player had a long think... and resigned. The reader is invited to check for himself whether this was a correct decision.

1-0

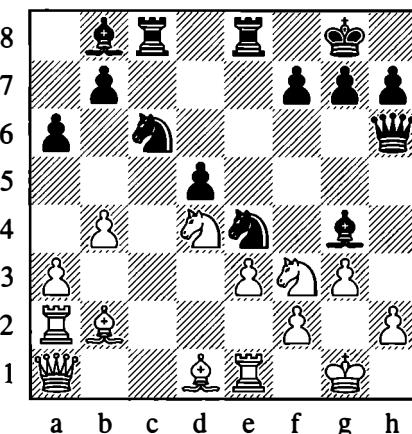
Post-game reflections

During the game I was unable to foresee all the consequences of 17. $\mathfrak{Q}xf7\?!$, but some calculation blended with intuition told me it was the correct decision. It certainly worked well in the game, and modern computers confirm the validity of the sacrifice, while also pointing out some sophisticated defensive resources that would have enabled Black to hold the position.

One of these modest little moves may be more embarrassing to your opponent than the biggest threat – Siegbert Tarrasch

Tony Miles – Mihai Suba

Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984



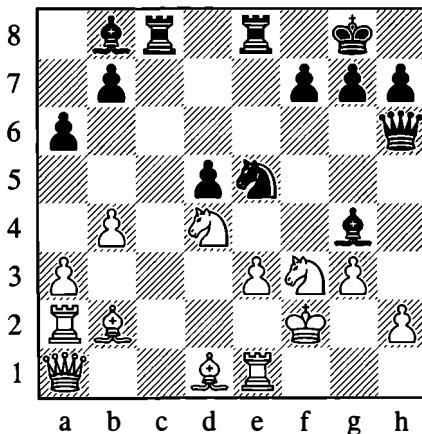
At this Olympiad I scored well on first board. Notwithstanding a disaster against

Portisch (see page 257), in addition to this game I managed wins against Petursson, Kiril Georgiev and Timman.

A glance at the diagram reveals another typical isolated queen pawn position, similar to several games presented in the Panov Attack section, with colours reversed of course. Black plays a sacrifice to dismantle the shelter of the white king, the attack being facilitated by the white pieces being piled up in the left-hand corner.

20...Qxf2! 21.Qxf2 Qe5!

This is one of those little *infiltration* moves, with a quiet appearance but a terrible strength.

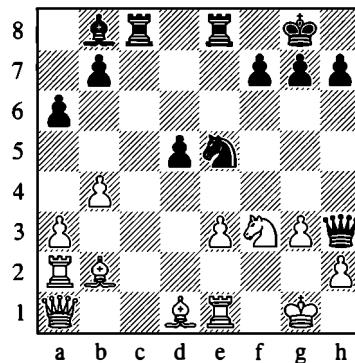


22.Qb1

After this move, Black has it too easy. At such critical moments, panic is not a good ally, but rather an enemy that can be worse than the bad position itself! Of course, there is some justification for panic here, as in many variations White can quickly be mated:

22.Qe2 can be answered with the “modest little move” 22...Ra7!, and White is facing impending disaster.

22.Qg2 Wh3† 23.Qg1 Qxf3 24.Qxf3 (24.Qxf3 Qxf3† 25.Qxf3 Qc2)



24...Bc2! and White can resign.

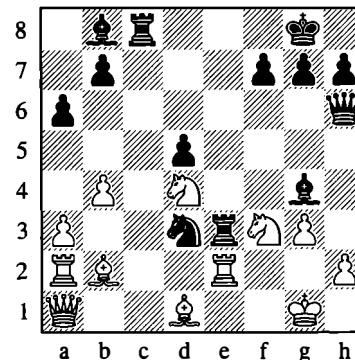
22.Qg1

This is what I most feared during the game, considering it the only reasonable defence, and it seems I was right.

22...Qd3 23.Qe2

23.Qc3 Qxe1 24.Qxe1 Bxe3 25.Qd2 Ra7
26.Qh1 Bce8 27.Qxe3 Bxe3 28.Qg2 Be4
29.Qb3 Bc4+–

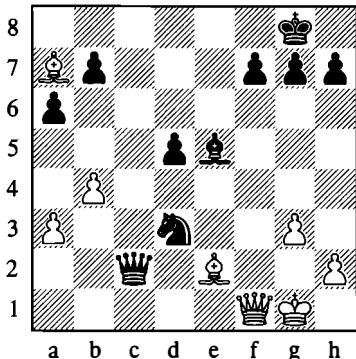
23...Bxe3



I saw this position in my mind’s eye and I was happy with it. Objectively, White is now lost, even with best defence, but who knows what might have happened in the actual game, with so many pieces still on the board? 24.Qc3! Bxf3! 25.Qxf3 Bxf3 26.Qd4! Wh3!

Both sides are having to find accurate moves. Here is the rest of my analysis.

27.Bac2 Qxe2 28.Bxc8† Wxc8 29.Qxe2 Wc2
30.Wf1 We5 31.Qa7

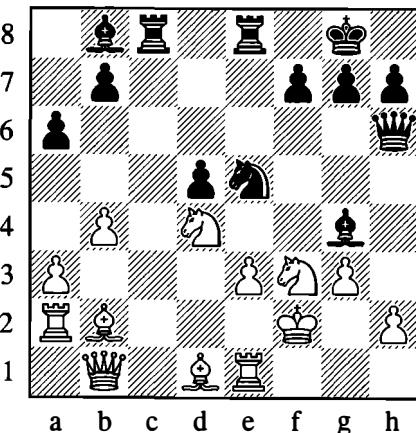


31... $\mathbb{Q}c1!$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d4 33. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

The endgame after 34... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ d3 36. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ (36. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$) 36... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d2 38. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ f5 is simply lost for White.

34...h6 35. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d1\#$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}g1\#$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}c2$
 39. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d1!$ wins.

39... $\mathbb{W}e1$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}e6\#$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}e5\#$



22... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

The other recapture is no better: 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xh2\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xel$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ wins easily.

24.. $\mathbb{W}xh2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}xg3\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}g2\#$
 27. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e4\#$

0-1

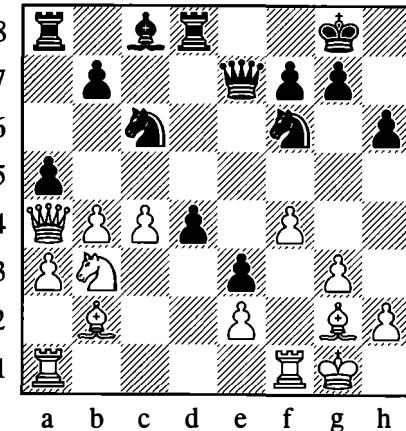
Post-game reflections

Once again computer analysis confirmed the correctness of the knight sacrifice. Here the verdict was more clear-cut, and even with perfect defence White's position was objectively beyond repair. White's biggest problems came from an inability to involve his major pieces in the defence – a consequence of a previous ill-fated decision to post his rook on a2 and queen on a1. There is a time and a place for "hypermodern" development, but this was clearly not it.

A new idea comes suddenly and in a rather intuitive way. But intuition is nothing but the outcome of earlier intellectual experience. – Albert Einstein

Chris Ward – Mihai Suba

British Championship, Eastbourne 1990



There now follows a piece sacrifice for the initiative. It is certainly a true sacrifice, although subsequent exhaustive checking by programs has confirmed its soundness.

19... $\mathbb{Q}h3!!$

Reading this move in the tournament bulletin, GM Julian Hodgson thought it was

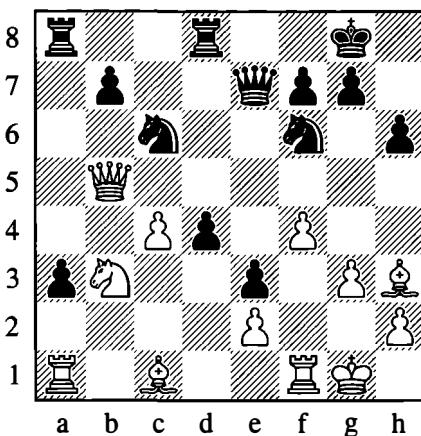
a misprint, or so he told me. Twenty years on, my strongest engines “acknowledge” my move as best, their evaluation being “small advantage for Black”.

20.♕xh3

Declining the sacrifice is worse: 20.b5 ♕xg2 21.♕xg2 ♖e4† 22.♔g1 ♖c2! This move and the next are the result of assisted analysis, and I cannot swear I would have found them over the board. (However, the simple 22...♝e7 offers Black a clear plus.) 23.bxc6 ♖xe2! and Black has a decisive advantage.

20...axb4 21.♗b5 bxa3 22.♗c1

22.♗xa3 does not equalize: 22...♝xa3 23.♗xa3 ♖xa3 24.♗xb7 d3 25.exd3 ♖b4 26.♗c1 ♖xd3 27.♗e2 ♖a2 28.♗f3 ♖e8 with a clear advantage for Black.



22...♝e4?!

Tempting, but not best. I am playing the right moves, but in the wrong order!

Much stronger is 22...d3! 23.exd3 e2 24.♗e1 ♖xd3 25.♗d2 ♖ad8 26.♗a4 ♘e4—+.

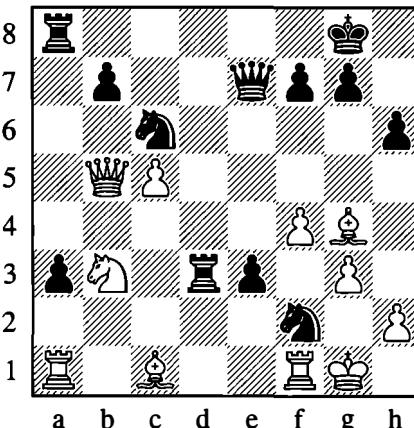
23.♗g4 d3

Here too, Black can improve: 23...a2! 24.♗b2 ♖f2 25.♗f3 d3 26.♗xf2 exf2† 27.♗xf2 dxе2 28.♗e1 ♖d1 29.♗xe2 ♖d7 30.♗g2 ♖b1†

24.exd3

24.♗xe3? ♖xg3!—+

24...♝xd3 25.c5 ♖f2!



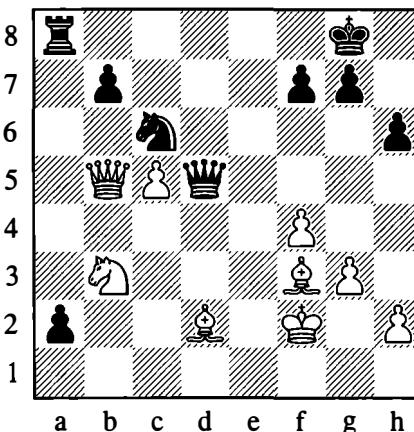
26.♗xf2

White could make things more difficult by 26.♗f5, but Black can still maintain a nearly winning advantage: 26...♝ad8! 27.♗e1 ♖d1 28.♗xa3 ♖xa1†

26...exf2† 27.♗xf2 ♖e4! 28.♗a2 ♖d5! 29.♗d2 ♖xd2†

This is just for the sake of artistry; simpler is 29...♝xb3.

30.♗xd2 a2 31.♗f3



31... $\mathbb{W}xf3\#!$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ a1= \mathbb{W}

A simple but pleasing combination to end the game.

33. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}h1\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$

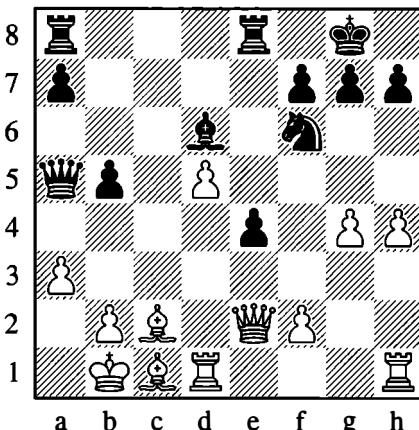
0–1

Post-game reflections

This game was awarded the tournament's brilliancy prize. Inevitably the programs have uncovered some errors, but it is pleasing to see that the initial sacrifice was not only fundamentally sound, but also the strongest continuation available. Although Black's victory was mostly based on his domination of the centre, it seemed fitting that the passed a-pawn, which accelerated to the a3-square as a direct result of the piece sacrifice, was able to bring about White's resignation after finally achieving its long-awaited promotion to a queen.

Viktor Korchnoi – Laura Tamborini

Legnano 1986



We have a typical situation for opposite castling, with White having just played the bayonet charge 25.g2-g4. Who will arrive first?

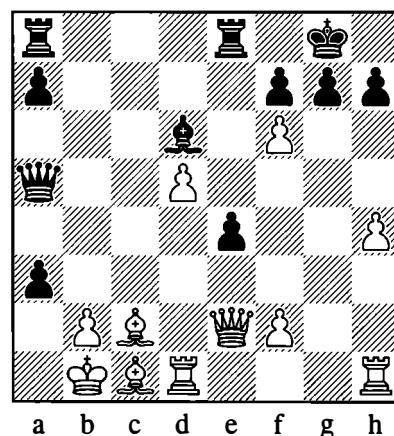
25... $b4$ 26.g5?

Korchnoi underestimates the force of his opponent's counterattack. 26.axb4 followed by $\mathbb{E}h3$ would have kept the position unclear.

26... $bxa3!$

Black sacrifices the knight in order to gain time and denude the white king of its pawn cover.

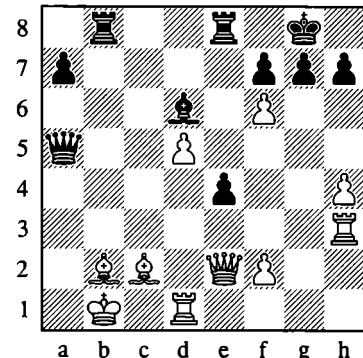
27.gxf6



27... $\mathbb{E}ab8?!$

Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, you almost missed your glory!

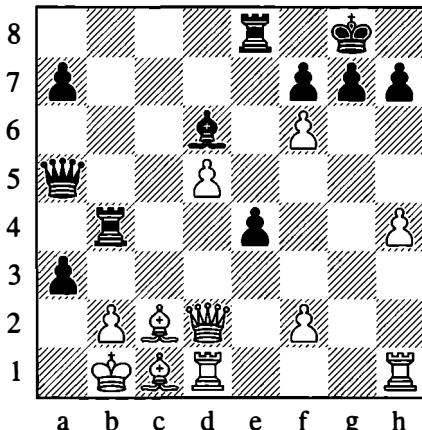
The quickest route to victory was 27...axb2 28. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 29. $\mathbb{E}h3$



29... $\mathbb{B}xb2\text{!}$ 30. $\mathbb{B}xb2$ $\mathbb{B}b8\text{!}$ 31. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{B}b4$
 32. $\mathbb{B}b3$ $\mathbb{W}a1\text{!}$ 33. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}c8\text{!+}$

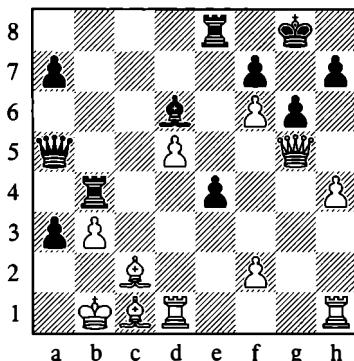
28. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b4$

Despite the previous inaccuracy, Black still has a huge attack.



29. $\mathbb{E}hg1$

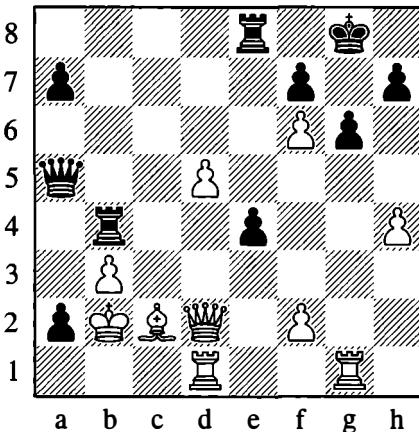
The other way of attacking g7 does not help either: 29. $\mathbb{W}g5$ g6 30.b3



30...e3!! A spectacular obstruction sacrifice.
 31. $\mathbb{E}he1$ (31.fxe3 $\mathbb{B}xb3\text{!}$ 32. $\mathbb{B}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}c3\text{!+}$)
 31...a2 ! 32. $\mathbb{B}a1$ e2 33. $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}e5\text{!}$ 34. $\mathbb{B}b2$
 $\mathbb{B}xb2\text{!}$ 35. $\mathbb{B}xb2$ $\mathbb{B}xh4$ 36. $\mathbb{B}a1$ h6 --

29...g6 30.b3 a2 ! 31. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{B}e5\text{!}$ 32. $\mathbb{B}b2$
 $\mathbb{B}xb2\text{!}$ 33. $\mathbb{B}xb2$

Finally, a sham sacrifice ends the show.



33...a1= $\mathbb{W}\text{!}$ 34. $\mathbb{B}xa1$ $\mathbb{B}xb3\text{!}$

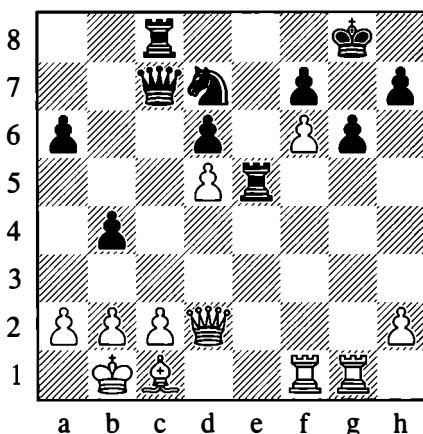
0–1

Post-game reflections

Black's piece sacrifice in this game was not "only" a piece sacrifice, as the move $gx6$ also opened the g-file towards Black's king. It was essential for her to have the dark-squared bishop on hand to guard against the mating threats on g7. The difference between the respective attacks was that Black had a more robust defensive pawn formation, and by playing ...g6 she was able to repel all the immediate mating threats. White on the other hand had no proper antidote to the threats along the open b-file, and his extra bishop provided scant consolation.

Boo Garcia Parado – Mihai Suba

Orense 2000



29.♕h6?

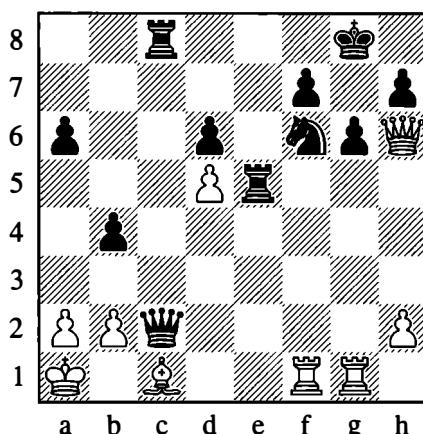
This forces Black to sacrifice his knight, but in return Black will gain time for his counterattack.

Much better is: 29.♗g2 ♕d8 30.♕xb4 ♜c5±

29...♝xc2†?

The wrong move order. 29...♞xf6! 30.♝xf6 ♜xc2†--+ would transpose to the game, but without giving White an additional chance – an example of the “exclusion principle” described on page 228.

30.♔a1 ♔xf6



31.♝xf6?

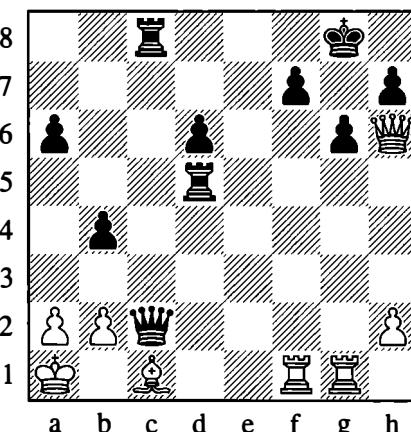
White can take advantage of Black’s inaccurate move order with: 31.♗f4! ♕f5 (31...♝f5? 32.♝xf5+–) 32.♗d2! (32.♝xf5 is met by 32...♝xc1†! 33.♝xc1 ♜xf5 and the ending is okay for Black) 32...♛e4 33.♝xf5 ♜xd2 34.♝xe5 dxe5 35.♝xd2 ♜d8 36.♝xb4 ♜xd5±

31...♝xd5

Now Black is back on track.

32.♝f1

The rook sacrifice does not work: 32.♝xf7 ♜xf7 33.♝xh7† ♜e8+–



32...♝a5!

Black now has an assortment of mating threats, and the rest is easy.

33.♗f4 ♜b3 34.a3 bxa3 35.bxa3 ♜xa3†
36.♔xa3 ♜xa3† 37.♔b1 ♜b8† 38.♔c2
♚b2† 39.♔d1 ♜d3†
0–1

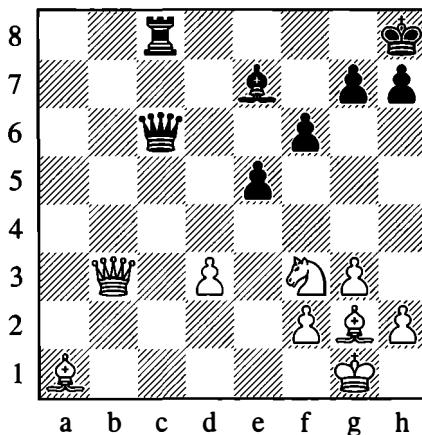
Post-game reflections

In this game the correctness of the (admittedly forced) knight sacrifice was never in doubt, but the devil is in the details and the move order nuances noted at moves 29 and 31 could

so easily have transformed the whole landscape of the game. When you have two seemingly equal routes to the same target position, always pay special attention to any additional possibilities connected with either move order.

Mihai Suba – Evgeniy Solozhenkin

Berga 1993



We continue this game from page 271. Earlier White offered a sham piece sacrifice, and after the complications died down we have been left with a position where White has two pieces for a rook, but his first rank is weak and his dark-squared bishop misplaced.

30.♗xe5!?

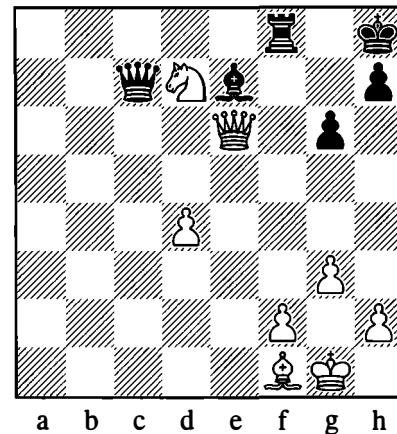
When one is material up, giving it back should also be considered a sacrifice. This speculative positional sacrifice, born of the natural impulse to keep the initiative, once again levels the material count.

Objectively, the best chance of winning may be offered by 30.♗h3!? ♜a8 31.♗b2, based on 31...♝xf3? 32.♗g2+–.

30...fxe5 31.♗xe5 ♜c1† 32.♗f1 g6 33.♗e6

34.♗d4 ♜f8 35.♗d7

Or 35.♗c4±.



35...♝d8??

Black should defend with 35..♜e8 36.♗e5 ♜f8, when White would have to try 37.♗c4± as above. However, it seems likely that the game should end in a draw, because of the possibility of reaching an endgame in which the opposite-coloured bishops neutralize the extra two pawns.

36.♗xe7 ♜xd7

36...♝xd7 37.♗f8 is mate.

37.♗f6†

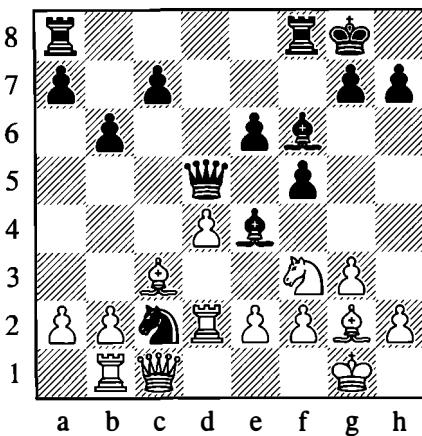
1–0

Post-game reflections

This game received the tournament's brilliancy prize, so with hindsight the decision to sacrifice the bishop on e5 was a correct one, even if it was not strictly the most accurate route to victory. Black's defensive task was certainly unpleasant, and the toxic combination of an exposed king and a ticking clock proved his undoing.

Mihai Suba – Andrei Arghirescu

Eforie Nord 2011



This game of mine, against a first category player, was played in a small tournament at the Romanian seaside. I have just attacked the knight with 17... $\mathbb{Q}d1-d2$.

17...f4!

In danger of losing a piece, my young opponent finds an excellent resource based on the possibility of ... $\mathbb{W}f5$, with threats against the white rooks as well as along the f-file.

18.g4?

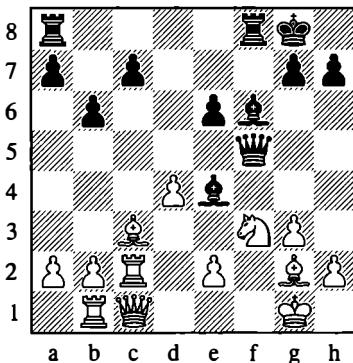
I am complicating my life. It is better to take the knight:

18. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$!?

This is an interesting gamble.

The alternative 18... $\mathbb{W}f5$ 19.g4! $\mathbb{W}xg4$ 20.b4 offers White a clear advantage.

19.fxg3 $\mathbb{W}f5$

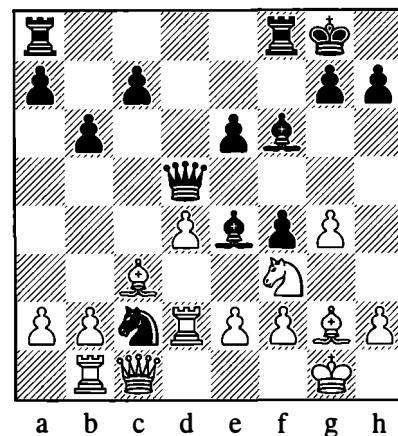


20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$!

To be honest, this is the move that I missed, having been hypnotized by the possibility of 20... $\mathbb{Q}e1??$ $\mathbb{W}f2\#$!! 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ (21. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}f1\#$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ mate!

20... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 21.e4!

And White should win.



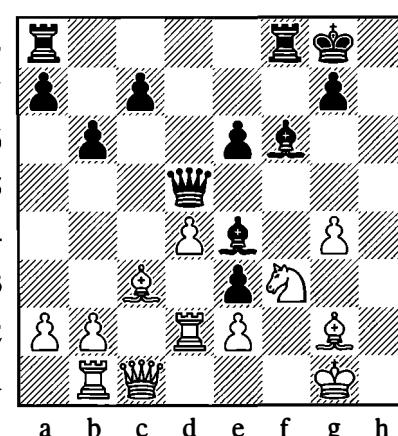
18...h5!

Suddenly things are starting to become unpleasant on the kingside.

19.h3?!

Another uninspired defence. Better is: 19.g5! $\mathbb{Q}e3$! 20.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$

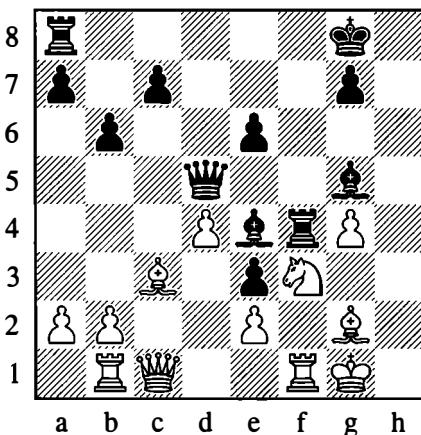
19...hxg4 20.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 21.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$



22.♗d1?!

And here an improvement is 22.♗d3, when White can still hope to fight for a win.

22...♗g5 23.♗f1 ♗f4

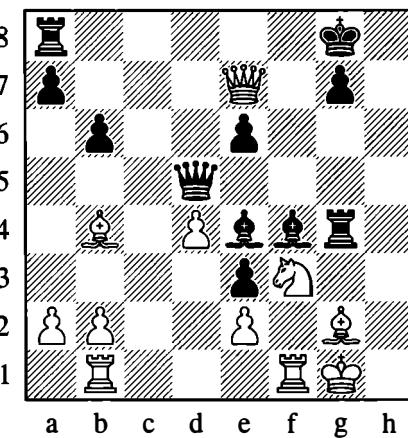


24.♗b4?

White's position has already deteriorated severely, and with this move it gets even worse. The purpose of clearing the c-file is to bring the white queen over to help the defence on the kingside. But in fact it is a losing move, giving the attack another tempo.

A draw was still there to be had: 24.♕xg5 ♘xg5 25.♗xf4 ♘xf4 26.♗xe4 ♘f2† 27.♔h1 ♘h4† with perpetual check.

24...♗xg4 25.♗xc7 ♔f4! 26.♗e7



26...♘h5?

In time pressure, Arghirescu misses a win: 26...♘f5 27.♕h4 This is the move I was counting on, but after 27...♗xg2†! 28.♗xg2 ♘h3 mate is unavoidable.

27.♗xe6† ♔h8 28.♗xe4 ♘xg2†!

Winning the queen by 28...♔h2† would cost too many pieces. The exchange sacrifice forces a draw.

29.♗xg2 ♘g4† 30.♗h1 ♘h3†

Forcing a perpetual check.

½–½

Post-game reflections

Having included several of my own victories in this chapter, I also wanted to give an example of the hunter becoming the hunted. On this occasion, after I obtained a near-decisive advantage soon after the opening, my much lower rated opponent found an excellent way to obtain practical attacking chances. In trying to play "safely" with 18.g4? I only made matters worse, when accurate calculation would have provided the refutation of Black's play. From that point on the momentum was with my opponent, and I was fortunate to escape with a draw.

Chapter 17

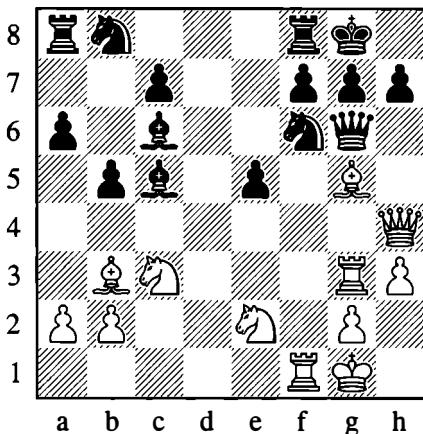
Queen Sacrifices

In a way the title of this chapter is slightly misleading, as most queen “sacrifices” involve exchanging Her Majesty for one or more enemy pieces of a lower combined value. Nevertheless, losing the service of the most powerful piece is not something to take lightly. The present chapter contains examples of both attacking and defensive queen sacrifices, arranged according to the value of the enemy piece(s) for which the queen is being exchanged.

Queen for Rook and Minor Piece

Emil Diemer – Schuppler

Villingen 1937



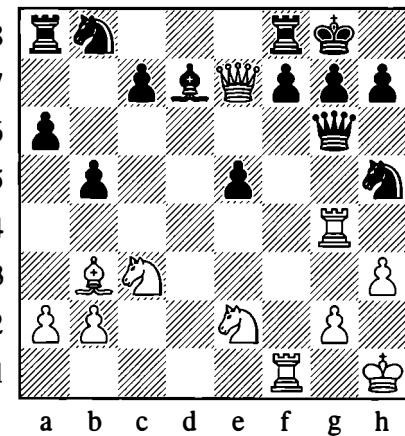
We continue this game from page 167.

19.♕h1 ♜h5 20.♝g4 ♜d7 21.♚e7

21.♚e3?! was another promising idea.

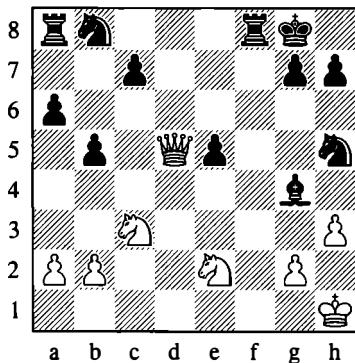
21...♛xe7 22.♝xe7

Black's position has become critical.

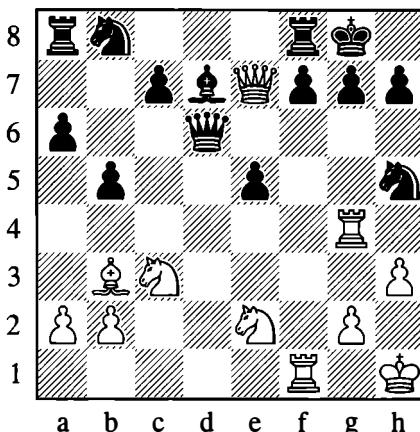


22...♛d6?

The only chance to save the game is with a last-chance or desperation queen sacrifice: 22...♛xg4 23.♝xf7† (23.♝xf7 leads to the same thing) 23...♛xf7 24.♝xf7 ♛xf7 25.♛d8† ♜f8 26.♛d5†



26... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ (27. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ is level) 27...c6 28. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 29.g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6\pm$



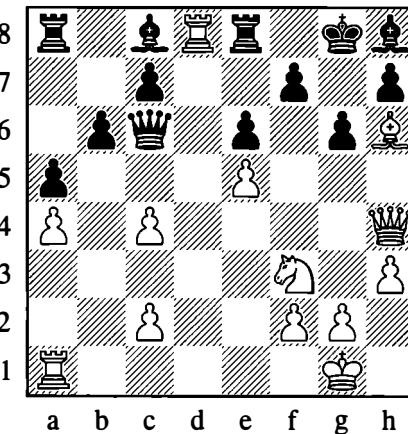
23. $\mathbb{B}xf7!$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 24. $\mathbb{B}fxg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 25. $\mathbb{B}g8\#$ $\mathbb{B}xg8$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xg8\#$

Post-game reflections

This game began with a highly questionable double pawn sacrifice from White, but Black seemed to get confused by the unusual situation on the board and he allowed White's initiative to gather considerable momentum. Even after he went astray, Black could have obtained excellent chances of survival by sacrificing his queen to eliminate most of White's attacking forces.

Nigel Short – Jan Timman

Tilburg 1991

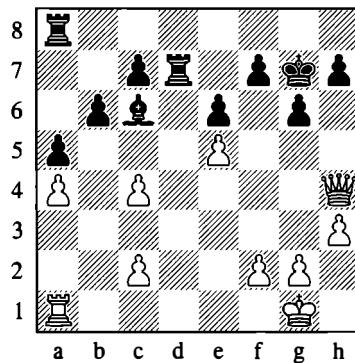


We continue this game from page 300.

24... $\mathbb{Q}b7?$

After this commonplace move, Black is reduced to hopeless passivity.

For an active defence, Black had to resort to a last-chance queen sacrifice: 24... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{B}exd8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$



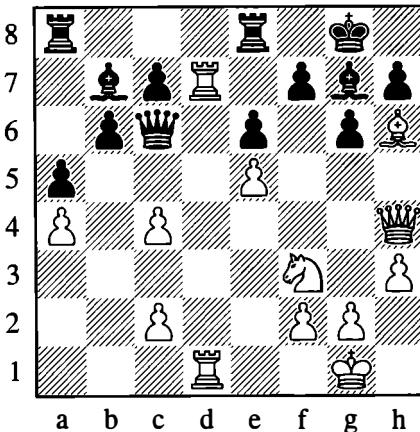
Although White is better, Black can still hope to draw.

25. $\mathbb{B}ad1$

This comes with the deadly threat of 26. $\mathbb{W}e7\#$.

25...♝g7 26.♝d7!

Keeping Black horribly tied up.



26...♝f8

26...♛e4 loses to 27.♝xf7!, while 26...♝xh6 27.♝xh6 is also bad, with White threatening 28.♝xf7! once again.

27.♝xg7 ♘xg7 28.♝d4 ♘ae8 29.♛f6† ♘g5 30.h4

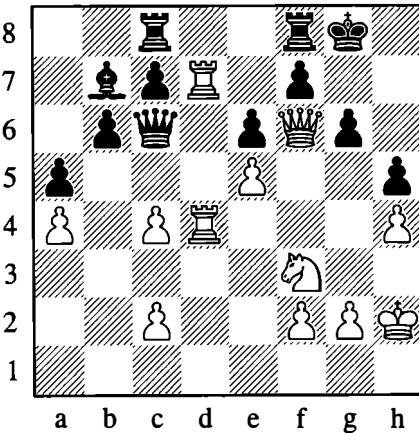
Trading the dark-squared bishops has left the surroundings of the black king terribly weak. The Romanian player Giurumia has compared a complex of such *ill* squares, which tend to *contaminate* more and more squares in the region, to body cells touched by cancer.

30...h5

Black cannot allow h5-h6 and must weaken his king's defences even more; a demonstration of the above-mentioned *contamination*.

31.♚h2 ♘c8

Black must remain passive, since 31...♝c8 allows White to win in Romantic style: 32.g4! hxg4 (or 32...♝xd7 33.gxh5+) 33.♝g5! ♘xd7 34.h5! with a crushing attack.



GM Ian Rogers describes the situation in the above diagram: "Now White has a fine attacking position but the immobility of his knight on f3 prevents an immediate knockout. However Short finds a phenomenal idea – to use his king as part of the mating attack."

32.♝g3! ♘ce8 33.♝f4 ♘c8 34.♝g5

The only way to prevent the white king penetrating to h6 is for Black to play 34...♝h7, but then 35.♝xf7† decides.

1-0

Post-game reflections

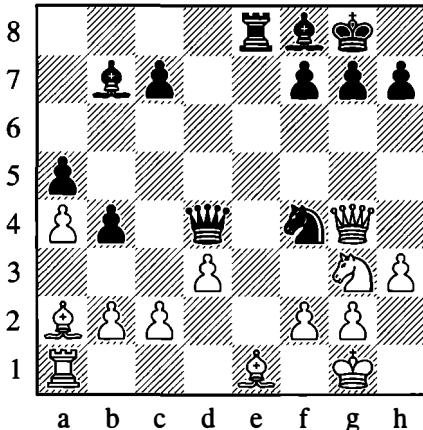
This game has deservedly received considerable attention in the chess media, and it also had an impact on opening theory as nobody wanted to venture down the same line and risk suffering the same fate as Timman. However, without taking anything away from Short's achievement, it would seem fair to say that Black's situation for most of the game was nowhere near as bad as it may have appeared. In three separate chapters we have seen how different types of positional sacrifices could have eased the defensive burden. Had Timman favoured the pawn sacrifice on move 16, exchange sacrifice on move 20, or queen sacrifice on move 24, the result may have been different – although in that case the chess

world would also have been deprived of one of the most memorable climactic attacking manoeuvres of modern times.

Queen for Two Minor Pieces

Ivan Cheparinov – David Navara

European Team Championships, Crete 2007



We continue this game from page 38.

23...Qf5!?

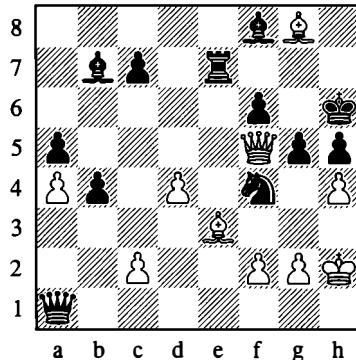
It is difficult to resist playing this apparently very promising move, but in reality it is a mistake leading to a bad position. White can ensure a slight advantage by the less obvious 23.Qe4! W e5 24.Qd2.

23...h5! 24.Qh6†

It looks as if the young Bulgarian star is going to win brilliantly, but the defence still has many resources. The alternative is not appetizing, but with hindsight we can see that it was the lesser evil: 24.Qxd4 hxg4 25.hxg4 Qxg2 26.Qd2 Qc5 27.Qb3 Qb6 28.c4 Qh4†.

24...Qh7 25.Wf5† Qxh6 26.Qd2 Qd6!

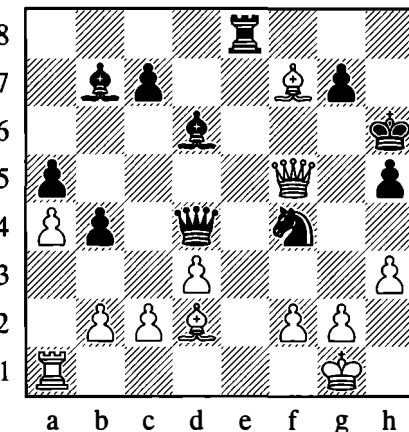
Much better than the more obvious: 26...g5 27.h4 f6 28.Qg8 Ee7 29.Qe3 We5 (not 29...Wxb2 30.d4!! Wxa1† 31.Qh2+–)



30.hxg5 fxg5 31.Wxf8† Wg7 32.Wxg7† Exg7
33.Qc4 Qxg2 34.Qc5†

27.Qxf7

This looks serious, attacking the rook and at the same time threatening mate on g6. Is there any salvation for Black?



27...Wxf2†!!

Launching a counterattack.

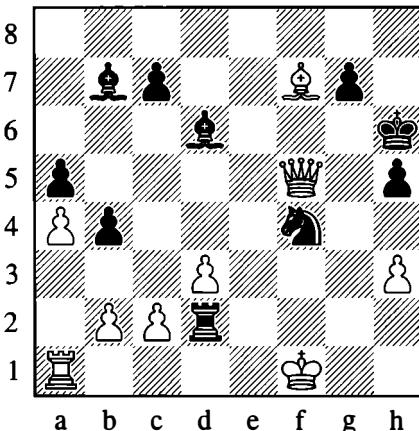
28.Qxf2 Ee2† 29.Qg1 Exg2†?

Missing the win which could be secured by 29...Exd2 30.Ee1 g6 31.Ee6 Exg2† 32.Qf1 Eg3 33.Qxg6 Qc8 34.Qf7† Qxe6 35.Wf6† Qh7.

This indicates that Black's sacrifice was intuitive. Looking at the diagram position, some would say that it is a forced sacrifice, but

Navara certainly saw the possibility in advance, no later than when he played 26... $\mathbb{Q}d6$.

30. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}xd2$



31. $\mathbb{Q}g8\#$

White doesn't take advantage of his opponent's slip. Keeping one's composure with 31.h4 should lead to a draw. For example: 31... $\mathbb{E}h2$ 32. $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 33. $\mathbb{W}d8$ $\mathbb{E}h1\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}h2\#$ =

31... $\mathbb{Q}g2\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}e2\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$
34. $\mathbb{W}h7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 35. $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{E}h2\#$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3\#$!

It is mate in two more moves.

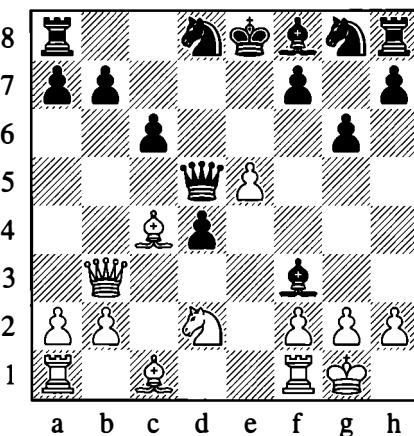
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Post-game reflections

Two bishops, a knight and a rook make for a deadly attacking combination. This game featured sacrifices and counter-sacrifices on both sides: first Navara gave up a pawn, then Cheparinov gambled a knight, before Navara finally threw his queen onto the flames. The final intuitive sacrifice led to a situation where concrete tactics were of paramount importance, and Black was able to force mate after both sides committed an inaccuracy.

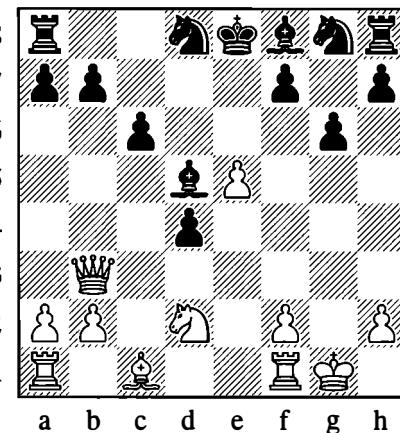
Constantin Lupulescu – Mihai Suba

Eforie Nord 2007



We continue this game from page 40. Following the "normal" 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ White would have ample compensation for the sacrificed pawn – a lead in development, attacking prospects along the central files, the bishop pair, etc. For this reason I opted for a sacrifice to change the flow of the game.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xg2!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



An interesting queen sacrifice. Black has two minor pieces and two pawns in exchange for the queen. From the point of view of positional compensation, the white king's position is

seriously weakened and Black has nice squares for his knights on e6 and f5. Black needs only a few developing moves before he can start showing his teeth.

15.♕d3 ♕e6 16.♘f3

After 16.♘e4 ♔xe4 17.♔xe4 ♕e7 I still like Black's position, though not as much as in the game.

16...c5!

Exchanging with 16...♗xf3 17.♗xf3 ♕e7 is also playable here, but mobilizing the central pawns was more tempting. At this point, I was thinking of more than a draw, and perhaps I was right!

17.♗g5

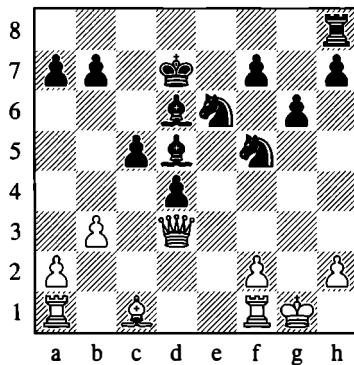
It is White who is looking for exchanges, before Black coordinates his forces.

17...a6?

A lamentable loss of time. Black should not care about the b7-pawn:

17...♕e7 18.♗xe6

Or 18.♗e4 0–0–0! 19.♗d6† ♜xd6 20.exd6 ♘f5 21.d7† ♘xd7 22.b3 ♔d6.



We have an unheard-of material imbalance: three minor pieces and three pawns for queen and rook! I believe that Black is better here, and even some programs share my opinion.

18...fxe6 19.♔b5†?

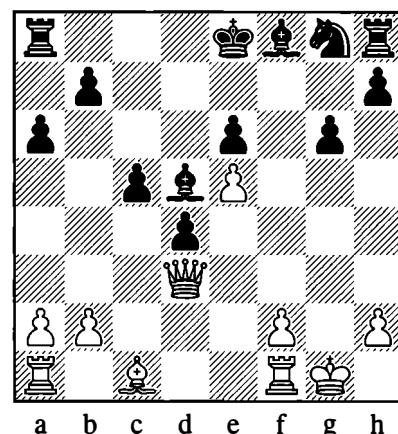
19.♔g5!=

19...♘c6 20.♗xb7 ♘xe5 21.♔b5† ♔c6

22.♗e2 ♘f3† 23.♔g2 ♘d7

Black has a decisive advantage.

18.♘xe6 fxe6



19.b4!

Undermining the central pawns. Now Black has to be careful.

19...♕e7 20.bxc5

This move came with a draw proposal, which I accepted. The decision seems correct for both sides. For example: 20...♘f5 21.♔b2 (or 21.♔a3 ♔h6) 21...♘xc5 22.♔a3 b6 23.♗ac1 ♘c8 24.♗c2 ♘h4 25.♗fc1 ♘f3† 26.♔f1 0–0 27.♔xc5 bxc5 28.♗xc5 ♘cd8=½–½

Post-game reflections

This game was awarded a special prize for the brave queen sacrifice. It was not an especially hard decision, as without it White's initiative, which he obtained with the help of an earlier pawn sacrifice, would have been hard to stop. It is ironic that after having the fortitude to give up my most powerful piece, I faltered on move 17 due to my fear of losing a single pawn, and

thus lost a good deal of the momentum I had been gathering. Fortunately my position was able to withstand this inaccuracy and a draw was a fair outcome.

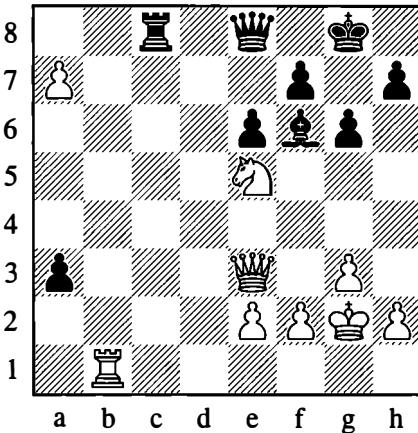
Queen for a Pawn

The sacrifice of the queen for a mere pawn only occurs in special circumstances, typically when one or both sides have pawns nearing promotion.

The drama in the following game begins with a sham knight sacrifice, which is wisely declined. White continues with a second sacrifice, this time of his queen for a pawn. This offer is more positional; the outcome lies somewhere between a win and a draw, and we may also consider it a *draw-in-the-pocket* sacrifice. But the machine, instead of this true and spectacular sacrifice, “spots” a cheaper sham sacrifice, which involves only the loss of the exchange. This leads to a curious position with four queens on the board, where Black is doomed to heavy losses after a few checks.

Mihai Suba – Margeir Petursson

Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984

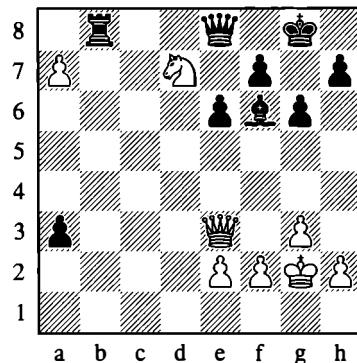


This position arose after the move 27...a3

and is very sharp. Which of the two passed pawns will cross the line first?

28.♕d7!

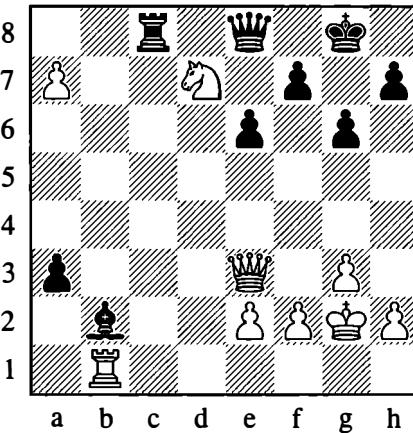
This is the proper move order for White's promotion combination. White should not be tempted by 28.♗b8? ♗xb8 29.♕d7.



This may look promising, but it is a false trail. 29...♗g7 30.axb8=♕ ♕xb8 31.♕xb8 a2 and White will be a queen up only for a moment.

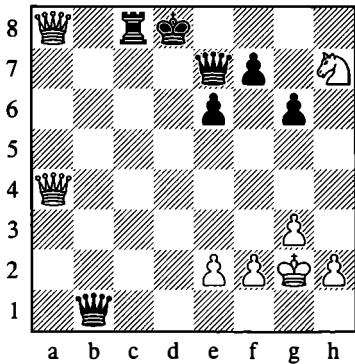
28...♗b2

Taking the cheeky knight by 28...♗xd7 loses to: 29.♗b8 a2 30.a8=♕ ♕xb8 31.♕xb8† ♗g7 32.♕a3 ♕d5† 33.f3 ♗h6 34.♕af8† ♗g7 35.♕f4† and mate is imminent.



29.♕xa3!

Sacrificing the queen for a pawn, this deflects the bishop from the defence of the f6-square and opens the b-file. It can be viewed as a true sacrifice, as I could not calculate all the consequences to a clear win, though I was not risking anything. The infernal program had to spoil my pleasure by pointing out a simpler combination (an exchange sacrifice), which wins outright. So I had to remove one of the exclamation marks from my move and award it to the machine: 29... $\mathbb{B}xb2!$ axb2 30. $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 31. $\mathbb{W}a3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (or 32... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 33. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ b1= \mathbb{W} 34. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 35.e4 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 36. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 37.h4+–) 33. $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 34.a8= \mathbb{W} b1= \mathbb{W}

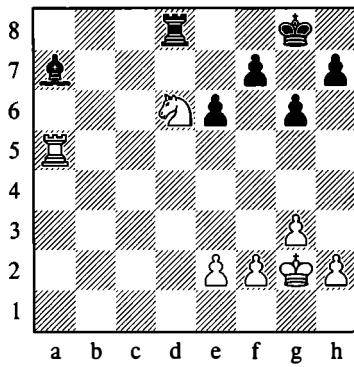


35. $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 36. $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}c7$ 37. $\mathbb{W}f6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}e7$
38. $\mathbb{W}xe7\uparrow$ +–

29... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Slightly better is:

30... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{B}a8$ 32. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$
But even here, White should win.
33. $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 35. $\mathbb{B}a5$ $\mathbb{B}d8$

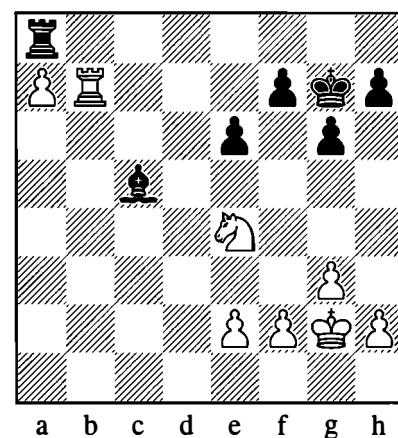


36. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\uparrow$

The tempting 36. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ (36... $\mathbb{B}a8$ 37. $\mathbb{B}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is an easy win)
37. $\mathbb{B}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ leaves White a whole piece up, but it is not clear how he makes use of it.
36... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 37. $\mathbb{B}xa7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 38. $\mathbb{B}e7$ $\mathbb{B}d6$ 39.g4!
White has a winning rook endgame.

**31. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{B}a8$ 32. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
34. $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

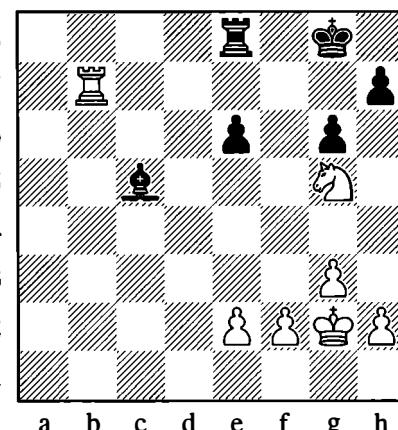
The frolicsome knight continues to inconvenience Black.



34... $\mathbb{Q}xa7$

After 34... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 35. $\mathbb{B}b4$ e5 36.e3 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ 37. $\mathbb{B}a4$, White will win in similar fashion to the note to Black's 30th move above.

35. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{B}e8$



38.h4! h6

38...h5 39.♕c7 (intending ♕c6 next) 39...♚e7
40.♛xe6 ♔d6 41.♕g7† ♔h8 42.♕xg6+–

39.♕f7 ♔f8 40.♕e5 g5 41.hxg5 hxg5

42.♕f3 ♕e7 43.♕b5

1–0

Post-game reflections

Endgames can be highly tactical in nature, especially when one or more of the players has an advanced passed pawn and/or an unsafe king. All of the above was true of this game, where true and sham sacrifices abounded. It is hard to draw any general guiding conclusions from such a concrete endgame, other than to say that if you are contemplating giving up your queen for a pawn, you'd better be sure of what you're doing!

Chapter 18

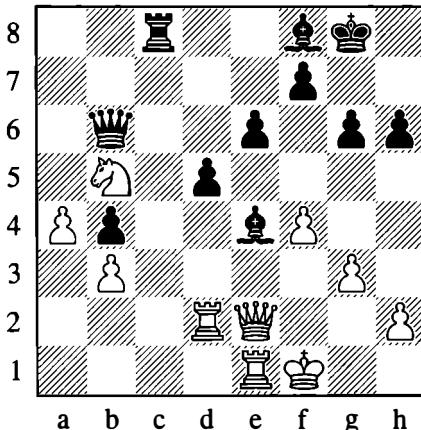
Other Sacrifices

Double Exchange Sacrifices

Three of the games featured earlier in the book have something special in store: a second exchange sacrifice.

Octavio Troianescu – Tigran Petrosian

Bucharest 1953



We continue this game from page 48.

35...Bc3!

The rook threatens to infiltrate to f3, and offers itself as a sacrifice to create a mighty passed c-pawn.

36.Qxc3

If you are looking for a good alternative for White, you will be disappointed. Also bad is 36.Qd4 Qc5 37.Qed1 Qxd4 38.Qxd4 Qf3+.

36...Bxc3 37.Qc2

Returning one exchange is forced, but this does not alleviate White's problems.

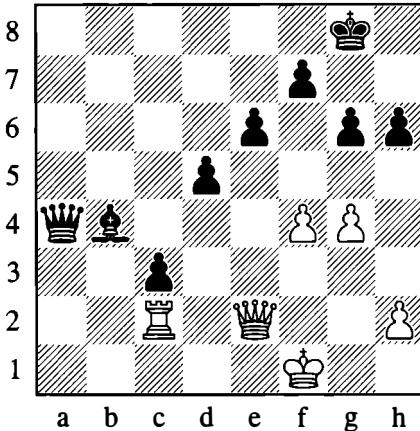
37...Wxb3 38.Qec1 Qb4!

Black can take on c2 any time he wishes, so instead of rushing, he waits for White to weaken his kingside further.

39.g4 Qxc2 40.Qxc2

40.Qxc2 is even worse: 40...Wc4† 41.Qg2 Wxf4+

40...Wxa4



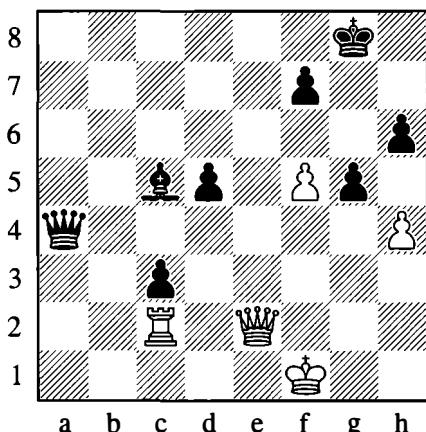
Here the game was adjourned. Black already has three pawns for the exchange and the precarious position of the white king makes further concessions imminent.

41.f5 exf5 42.gxf5 g5 43.h4

This is a sort of hara-kiri, but White's position was already desperate.

43... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$

Threatening to harass the white king.



44.hxg5

44... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$ $\mathbb{W}a1\#$ 45. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xe1\#$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4-$

44... $\mathbb{W}f4\#$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

Heading the other way is no better:
45. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}g3\#$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ (or 49. $\mathbb{W}g2$ d4!) 49... $\mathbb{W}h3\#$ 50. $\mathbb{W}g2\#$ 51. $\mathbb{W}g2\#$ Black has an easy win.

45... $\mathbb{W}g3\#$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}g1\#$ 47. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xe1\#$

Simplifying to a winning endgame. The rest is easy.

48. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ hxg5 49. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 50. $\mathbb{B}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 52. $\mathbb{B}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 53. $\mathbb{B}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f6 55. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 56. $\mathbb{B}c4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 57. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ g4

After 58. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 59. $\mathbb{B}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$, the c-pawn will cost White his rook.

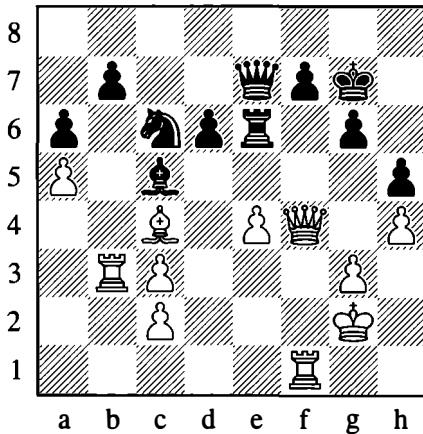
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Post-game reflections

Petrosian's second exchange sacrifice of the game was really a sham sacrifice, as it was obvious that the passed c-pawn was going to force White to give back at least one exchange. Nevertheless it was a pleasingly thematic continuation of his earlier play, and the way in which the b4-pawn captured towards the centre was fully consistent with the previous exchange sacrifice which enabled Black to dominate the central squares.

Bent Larsen – Ulf Andersson

Manila 1974

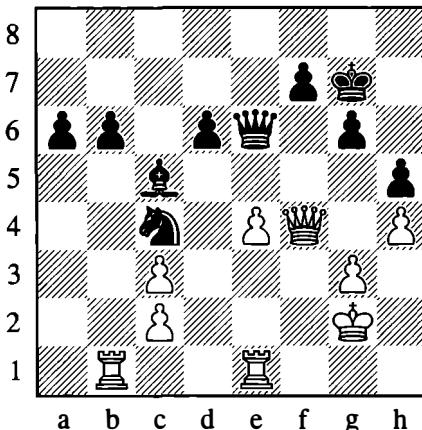


We continue this game from page 127. White has just played 43. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ -c4.

43... $\mathbb{Q}xa5$

It is hardly appropriate to attach an exclamation mark to this move, it being quite forced. Andersson's merit lay in anticipating the possibility and correctly evaluating the outcome.

44. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 45. $\mathbb{B}bb1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 46. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ b6



Simple arithmetic does not function here. Although White is two exchanges up, in return for just one pawn, White's rooks have no play and the game is heading towards a positional draw. Ask Ulf or me which side we prefer and you will hear "Black" in unison.

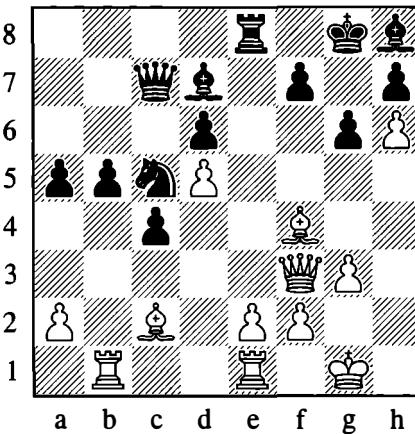
47.♗g5 ♜e5 48.♗d2 a5 49.♗d5 ♗g4
50.♗d1 ♗d7
 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Post-game reflections

Black's exchange sacrifices in this game were fully justified by several factors. His minor pieces benefited from stable outpost squares in the centre, and the white rooks lacked purpose on any of the available open files. Black's first exchange sacrifice damaged White's queenside structure, and the second enabled him to pick up the a-pawn, leaving himself with an important passed pawn. In the final phase of the game it was Black who had chances to play for a win, but Ulf must have decided he would be risking too much.

Nathan Birnboim – Mihai Suba

Malta Olympiad 1980



We continue this game from page 220.

27.g4!?

Too optimistic. (Just between you and me, this is the most frequent cause of defeat in games played between players of comparable strength.) Instead, 27.e4 b4 28.♔g5 ♜e5 29.♕f6 ♜c8 30.♕xe5 ♜xe5 31.♕f6 ♜f8 32.f4 ♜h5 33.e5 ♜xh6 34.♕d8† ♔g7 35.♕f6† would lead to a result not wanted by either player – a draw!

27...b4 28.♔g5

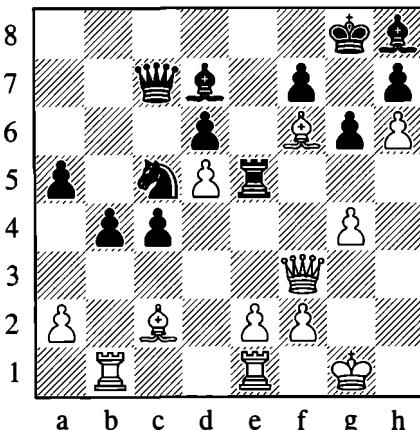
With the obvious threat of ♔f6. In fact, the position is not as dangerous for Black as it seems; it just requires precision in defence.

28...♜e5

I was charmed by the possibility of sacrificing another exchange; such things do not occur every day!

29.♕f6

29.♕f4 would have induced me to find a different approach. After repeating with 29...♜e8 30.♕g5, Black could go for 30..♜c3 31.♔h1 ♜xe1 32.♔xe1 f6 33.♕xf6 ♜xg4 34.♕xg6 ♜f8 35.♕d4 hxg6 36.♕xg4 c3†.



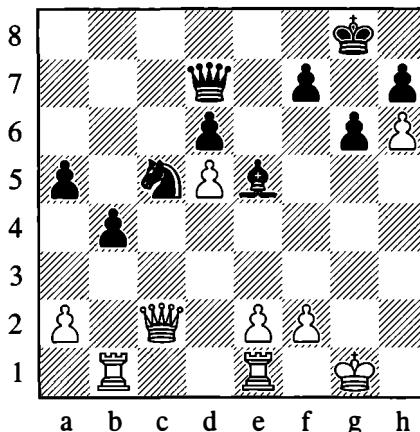
29...♝xg4!

This is the only answer, but a good enough one.

30.♛f4 ♛f5 31.♝xe5

31.♝xh8 ♛xh8 32.e4 does not bring the desired result, due to 32...♛e7!.

31...♝xe5 32.♛xc4 ♛xc2 33.♛xc2 ♛d7



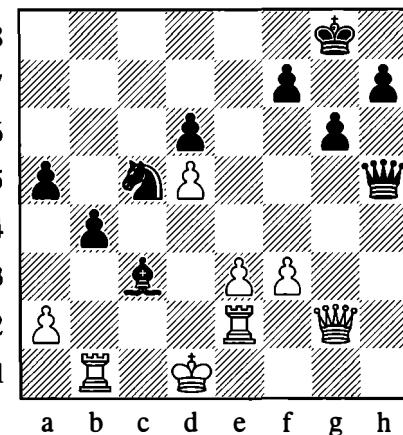
The fireworks have finished. White is two exchanges up for just one pawn, but he is doomed to lose another, his beloved h6-pawn. When I show this position to my Benoni-loving students, I ask “Suppose you were playing with the white pieces, where would you like your king to be?” The smartest ones answer “Nowhere!” This, together with the

potential passed pawn on the queenside and the excellent outposts for Black’s minor pieces, makes White’s position unenviable and possibly untenable. Even my material-hungry programs prefer Black.

34.e3 ♛g4† 35.♚f1 ♛h3† 36.♚e2 ♛h5† 37.f3 ♛h2†!

An important intermediate check, not only edging a move closer to the time control, but also ensuring that the rooks remain sluggish.

38.♚d1 ♛xh6 39.♛g2 ♛c3 40.♚e2 ♛h5

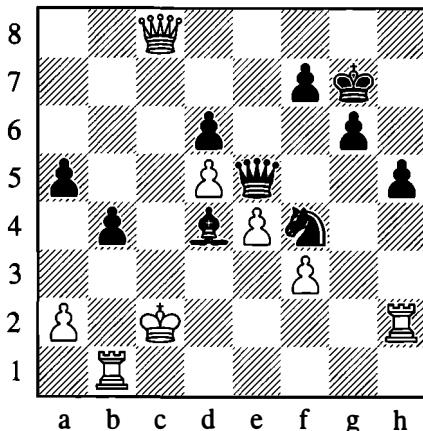


41.e4

The sealed move. 41.f4 ♛f5 42.e4 ♛xf4 is no great improvement, although it may slow down Black’s penetration. In such middlegame set-ups, the rooks are, to say the least, no better than the minor pieces. All the files are closed and the black monarch, unlike its white rival, is very safe. The game was played in the good old days, with a rate of 16 moves per hour and adjournment after 40 moves. Whilst other team-mates were suspicious about the outcome, GM Victor Ciocaltea liked my position and offered to help with the adjournment analysis. Every time that I extended my hand to grab a protected rook with one of my minor pieces, he slapped it and berated me: “In this game you won’t take any exchange!”

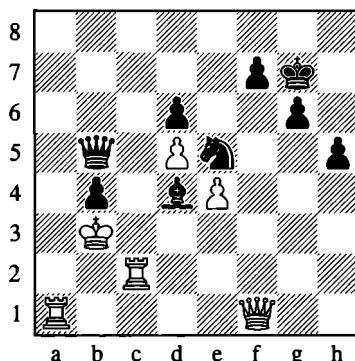
41... $\mathbb{W}e5$ 42. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 44. $\mathbb{E}h2$
 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 45. $\mathbb{W}g4$ h5 46. $\mathbb{W}c8\#$
Or 46. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$.

46... $\mathbb{Q}g7$



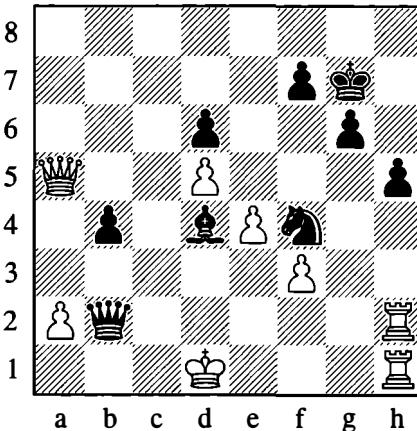
47. $\mathbb{E}bh1$

Slightly better is 47. $\mathbb{W}c4$ but White's position should eventually crack anyway. For example: 47... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 48. $\mathbb{E}hh1$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 49. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 50. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 51. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 53. $\mathbb{E}he1$ $\mathbb{W}g2$ 54. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 55.a3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 56.axb4 axb4 57. $\mathbb{E}g2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 58. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 59. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 60. $\mathbb{E}a1$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 61. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 62. $\mathbb{W}f1$



62... $\mathbb{Q}d3!+$

47... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c3$ 49. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 50. $\mathbb{W}xa5$
 $\mathbb{W}a1\#$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}b2\#$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}d1$



52... $\mathbb{Q}g2$

With this last move, I was doubly at fault; firstly I was breaking Ciocalte's orders, and secondly I was falling short of the standards of the strong programs which I use today, still unborn at the time. After all, 52... $\mathbb{W}b1\#$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3\#$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d3\#$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ h4! is only four moves short of mate. Yet, after my "mistake", White immediately resigned.

0–1

Post-game reflections

This example had several points in common with the previous Larsen – Andersson game. Black's bishop and knight were at least a match for White's two rooks, for a number of reasons. Once again, the minor pieces both had access to at least one stable outpost. In both games Black had at least one extra pawn, and a solid structure with no major weaknesses for the rooks to attack. We can also observe that Black's unopposed bishop enabled him to achieve a general domination over the dark squares. In the Birnboim – Suba game, White's unsafe king made his problems much more acute, whereas in the previous game Larsen was able to regroup and persuade his opponent to take a draw.

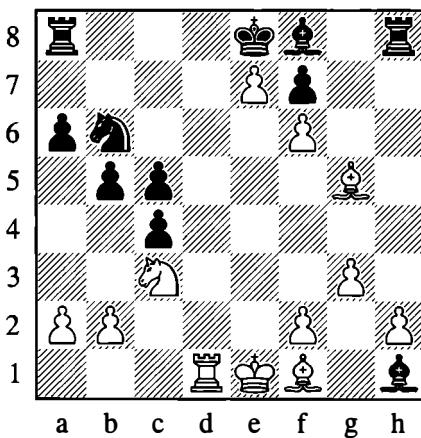
Another interesting point is that in both games White had no minor pieces remaining, and

thus he had no way to challenge the actions of Black's bishop and knight. If the minor piece count had been, say, 3–1 in Black's favour instead of 2–0, then White may have been able to utilize his one minor piece to counter those of his opponent. This last point is a bit abstract, but still worth keeping in mind.

Rook Sacrifices

Lev Polugaevsky – Eugenio Torre

Moscow 1981



We continue this game from page 176. Black has just played 16...a6.

17.h4!!

This was an important novelty at the time, committing White to playing a rook down for the foreseeable future. This extraordinary idea was one of Polugaevsky's many contributions to theory in a wide range of openings and position types.

17... $\mathbb{Q}h6$

In a later game, Black tried to improve with 17...b4, but without success: 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$! $bxc3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $cxb2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $c3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 22. $fxe7$ $f6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc5†$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h3†$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}he8†$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e3†$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

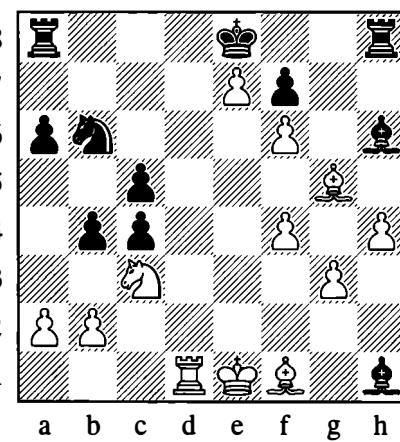
28. $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ – and White went on to win in Starke – Essing, Germany 1991.

18.f4!

This is the point. The rook on h8 will remain a spectator for many moves.

18...b4

Black's queenside majority is harmless, due to the doubled pawns.



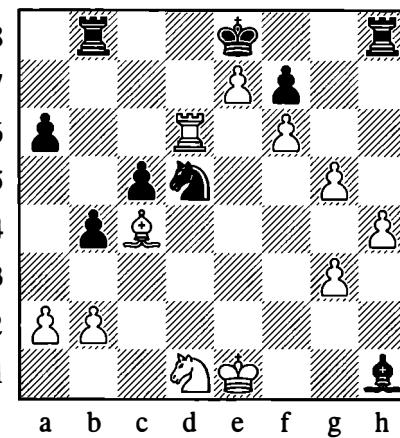
19. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$

White is not only a rook behind, he is also quite content to exchange pieces.

19... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 21. $f\text{x}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

Black finds the best defensive plan.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$



22...Qxe7! 23.fxe7 Qxe7

Black has wisely returned some material in order to relieve himself of the crippling pawn wedge, thus liberating his king and the h8-rook.

24.Qf6! Qh8 25.Qe3 Qe4 26.Qxa6†

The game has returned to “normal”. White has two pawns for the exchange and a dominating position; with good play he should win. We shall stop here, as the rest of the game was not of the same high standard. In time pressure, both players made mistakes. The Filipino could have drawn at one point, but he eventually lost on time on move 40.

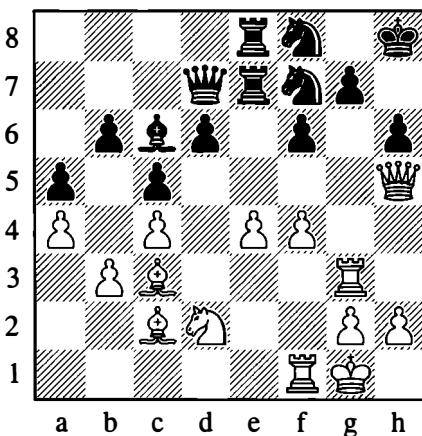
...1–0

Post-game reflections

Sacrificing a rook is not something to take lightly, but in the above example the logic was crystal-clear, as White’s magnificent g3-h4-g5-f6-e7 pawn wedge had the effect of paralysing the king on e8 and keeping the rook on h8 locked in a cage. The plan proved so effective that Black had no choice but to give back a piece on move 22, but this was still not enough to solve his problems. Polugaevsky’s idea has stood the test of time and no one follows this opening path with Black nowadays.

Mihai Suba – David Pardo Simon

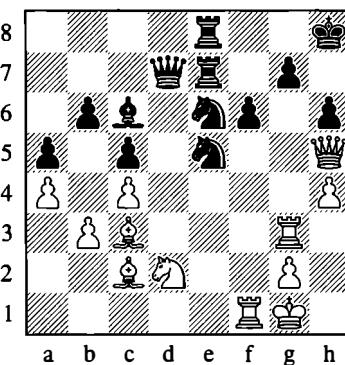
Roquetas de Mar 2009



Black’s position is under great strain. White has a lot more space and his two bishops are pointing towards the opponent’s king. His only weakness, the e4-pawn, is well enough protected and Black cannot contemplate an exchange sacrifice there, as it would be practically for nothing. Moreover, the black cavalry must remain where it is, as any knight move would be met by e4-e5, with a decisive attack. As it is, Black’s set-up looks quite solid against any of White’s breaks. The secret of Black’s defensive strength is the base of the pawn-chain on g7, which I decided to eliminate, even at the cost of a rook. Black has no counterplay at all and can only be a spectator to White’s preparations.

29.h4 Qa8

As mentioned above, Black cannot activate his knight: 29...Qe6? 30.e5 dxe5 (30...fxe5 31.Wg6+–) 31.fxe5 Qxe5 (31...Qd4 32.Wg6)



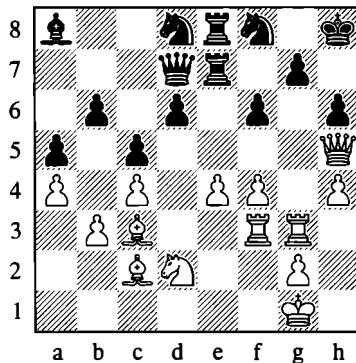
32.Qxf6! gxf6 33.Wxh6† Wh7 34.Wxf6† Wg7 35.Wh6† Kg8 36.Wh7† Kf7 37.Qxe5 and White wins.

30.Qf3

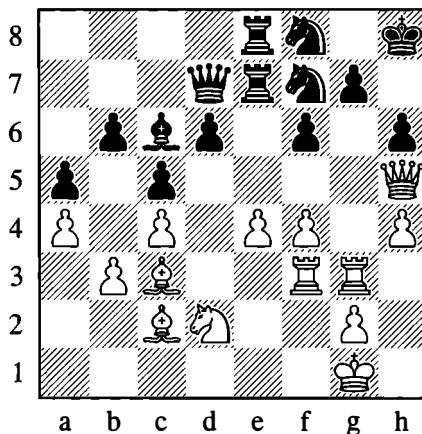
The other rook gets ready to replace the hero on the g-file.

30...Qc6

This is the equivalent of resignation, but even the best defence is unlikely to save the game: 30...Qd8!



31.e5! $\mathbb{R}xf3$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $fxe5$ 33. $fxe5$ $dxe5$
 34. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 35. $\mathbb{B}xg7$ $\mathbb{B}xg7$ 36. $\mathbb{W}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$
 37. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}de6$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 39. $\mathbb{W}a8$ $\mathbb{W}f6$
 40. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$
 43. $\mathbb{W}b7\uparrow+$ –



31... $\mathbb{B}xg7$!

Having made the necessary preparations, I decided that there was no reason to wait.

31... $\mathbb{B}xg7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}g3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Black has no choice as he needs to prevent the bishop on c2 from joining in the attack.

34. $fxe5$

Understandably, I was happy to take some material back. The most clinical is 34. $\mathbb{Q}f3$. For example: 34... $\mathbb{Q}eg6$ 35.f5 $\mathbb{B}g7$ 36. $fxg6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}h2\uparrow+$ – and the knight heads for h6.

34... $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 35. $\mathbb{B}g5\uparrow?$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$

Desperation, but 35... $\mathbb{B}8e6$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 38. $\mathbb{B}xg6$ $\mathbb{B}xg6$ 39. $\mathbb{W}xg6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\uparrow+$ – is also hopeless.

36. $\mathbb{B}d5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 37.cxd5

1–0

Post-game reflections

This was a pretty straightforward rook sacrifice, and it was easy to see that White could regain a good portion of the material within a few short moves. Nevertheless I was pleased to have found this attacking plan, which targeted the base of Black's pawn chain and the bastion of his whole kingside. Once it was destroyed Black's position crumbled to dust, and a rook was a small price to pay for such an achievement.

Two Minor Pieces for Rook and Pawn

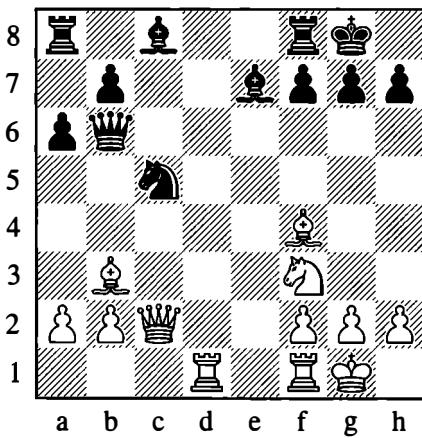
This particular material balance is a huge topic in itself, and my present publisher has already produced an entire book exploring the subject. In this brief section I will limit myself to a brief historical foray.

Rudolf Spielmann made the following remarks: "This sacrifice of bishop and knight for rook and pawn is quantitatively small; mathematically speaking the difference is only half a pawn... Of course the two pieces are better, especially when the majority of other pieces are still on the board. Knight and bishop are better for attacking than rook and pawn."

On the next page we shall look at one of Spielmann's own examples.

Rudolf Spielmann – Baldur Hoenlinger

Vienna 1933

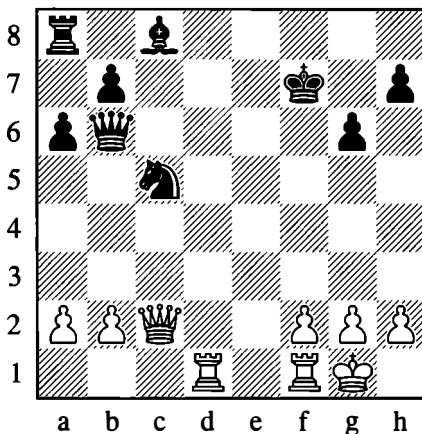


White has a significant lead in development, but just one move from Black (such as ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$) will remedy this. How can White maintain the initiative?

17. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $g6$

And now for the main idea.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xf7! \mathbb{Q}xf7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$



21. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

Spielmann writes: "The culmination of the combination. The knight must retreat either to d7 or e6. In any case, it obstructs the bishop,

which in turn obstructs the rook... Thus the capture of f7 reveals itself as an obstructive sacrifice."

21... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

21... $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$ is worse, and after 22. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $g5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ White is winning.

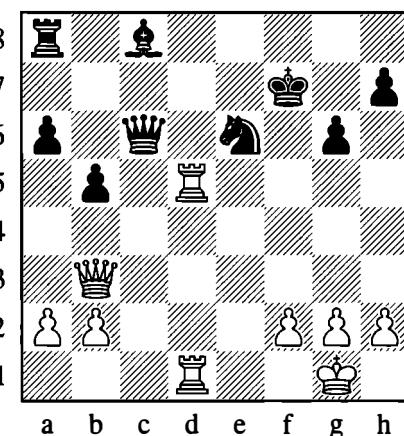
22. $\mathbb{Q}fd1\pm$

Also good is 22. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$, taking immediate control of the weakened dark squares.

22... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $b5?$

This advance, cherishing hopes of developing the queenside, only accelerates Black's demise. When the opponent has the initiative, creating new targets is not advisable.

Black should sit tight with 23... $\mathbb{W}c7\pm$ and wait for a better moment to play ... $b5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}a7$.



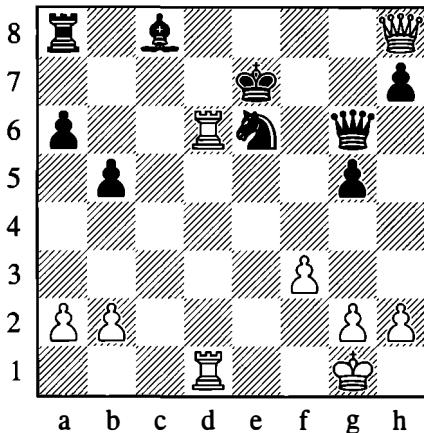
24. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 25. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}h8$

This is good enough, although the machine prefers 26. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ or even 26. $h4$. But for simple mortals, those moves are less intelligible.

26... $g5$

26... $\mathbb{W}xg2\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\#$

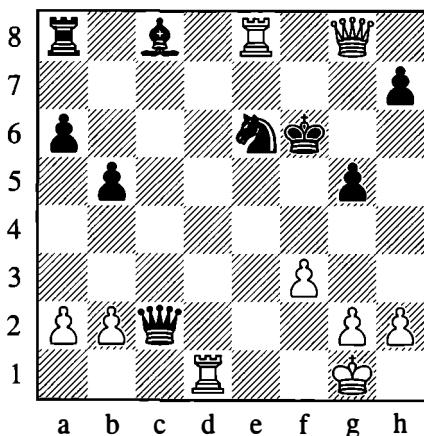
27. $f3$ $\mathbb{W}g6$



28.♖d8! ♜c2

Also hopeless is 28...♜xd8 29.♕xd8† ♔f7 30.♕d5† and White picks up the rook.

29.♖e8† ♔f7 30.♗g8† ♔f6



31.♖e1

Here Spielmann complains of an aesthetic flaw, as he missed a mate in five: 31.♖f8† ♜xf8 32.♕xf8† ♔g6 33.♖d6† ♔e6 34.♖xe6† ♔h5 35.♕h6#

31...♗c6 32.h4 h6

After 32...gxh4 33.f4 the mating net is closing.

33.h5

1–0

Post-game reflections

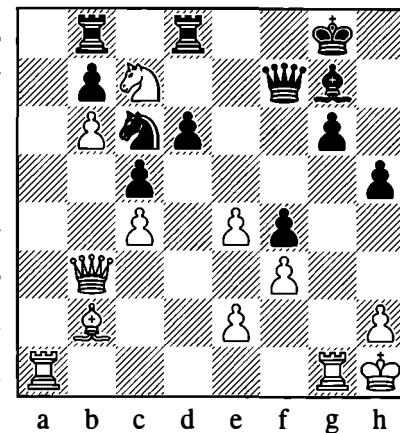
As I mentioned before, “rook against two minor pieces” is a huge topic. The above example provides quite a good illustration of a promising sacrifice, as White gained one pawn and, more importantly, disrupted the coordination of the enemy forces for several moves. In contrast to the first few games featuring double exchange sacrifices, here the rooks enjoyed several open files and had plenty of scope to roam the full length and width of the board. And finally, having the safer king is never a bad thing of course.

Two Rooks for Queen and Pawn

This is stretching the definition of a “sacrifice”, and it would be more accurate to speak of an unbalancing exchanging operation. It could be argued that in a stable position, without a multitude of targets for the queen, the two rooks are likely to have the upper hand. In the following example I felt that the situation on the board would favour a queen, so I decided to transform the position.

Mihai Suba – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu

Sovata 1998



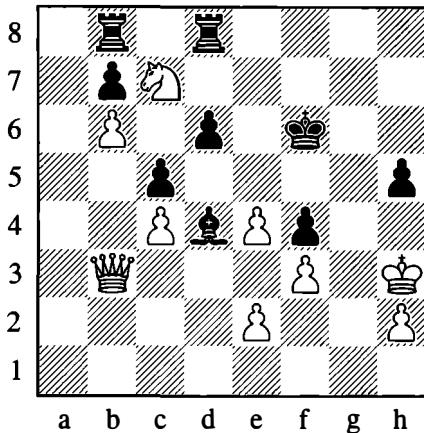
30.♗xg6! ♖xg6 31.♗g1 ♖xg1† 32.♔xg1 ♖d4 33.♕xd4 ♖xd4†

The presence of minor pieces adds to the tension, as both the bishop and knight have the potential to become quite influential.

34.♘g2 ♔f7 35.♗h3!

The white king is quite safe here, while the knight and the queen keep the black rooks at bay. White's queen and knight cooperate very well, especially with the partially blocked pawn structure, and White's advantage should be decisive. The problem is to find and implement a suitable plan to realize this advantage.

35...♖f6



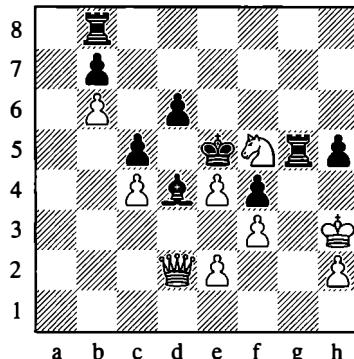
36.♗b1

I was relaxing after the previous tough play and did not try to find anything decisive here. I felt absolutely safe, but I was wrong to, and later, when I became aware of the danger, I panicked.

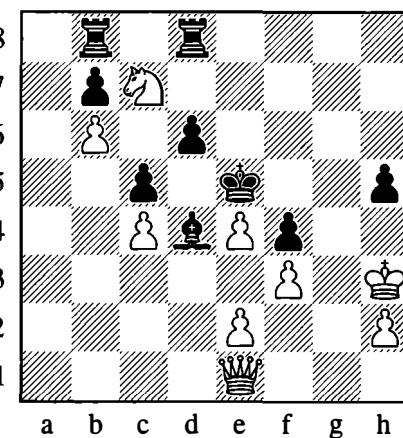
White should immediately go into action with: 36.♕d5† ♖e5 37.e3! ♖xe3 (37...fxe3 38.f4†! ♖xe4? 39.♗c2† ♖f3 40.♗g2#) 38.♕xe3 fxe3 39.♗c3† ♖e6 40.♗xe3+–

36...♗e5 37.♗e1

Once again, 37.♗d5 is strong: 37...♗g8 38.♗e7 ♗g1 39.♗a2 ♗a1 40.♗d2 ♗g1 41.♗f5 ♗g5



42.♕xd6! ♕xd6 43.♗xf4† ♗e5 44.♗f7+–

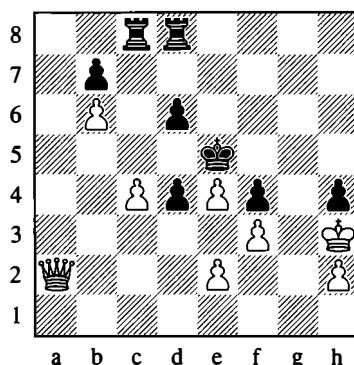


37...h4!

Only now did I smell a rat. I realized that Black might have a threat at some point, namely ...♗g8 and ...♗g3†.

38.♗d5

Better is: 38.♗b1 ♗bc8 39.♗b5 ♗f2 40.♗a2 ♗d4 41.♗xd4 cxd4



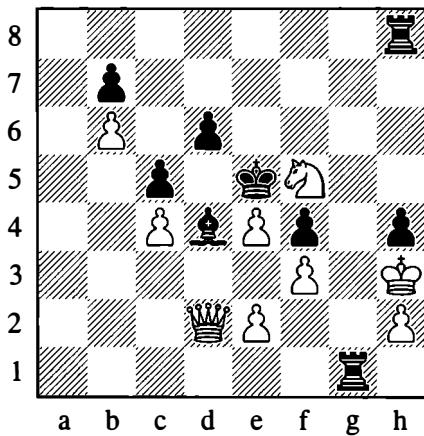
42.c5! d5 43. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 44.c6+–

38... $\mathbb{E}g8$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Even here, White can still win: 39. $\mathbb{W}d2!$ $\mathbb{E}bf8$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{E}g5$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 43. $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 44. $\mathbb{W}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 45. $\mathbb{W}a8\#$ –

39... $\mathbb{E}g1$ 40. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{E}h8$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$

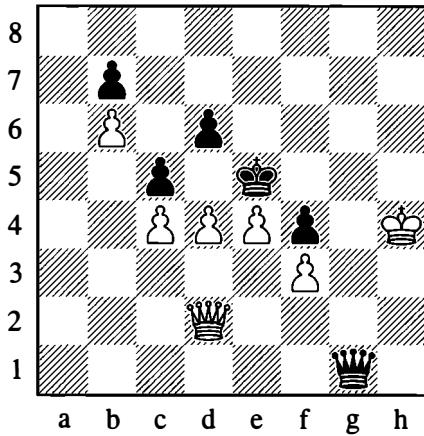
White could still play on with 41. $\mathbb{Q}d5$.



41... $\mathbb{E}g3\#$!

This strong temporary sacrifice leads to a forced draw.

**42.hxg3 hxg3# 43. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{E}xh4\#$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ g2
45.e3 g1= \mathbb{W} 46.cxd4#**



46...cxd4

Weaker is 46... $\mathbb{W}xd4?$ 47. $\mathbb{W}g2!$ and White could still play for a win. For example: 47... $\mathbb{W}xc4??$ 48. $\mathbb{W}g7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 49. $\mathbb{W}g8\#$ –

After the game move, the passed d-pawn is too strong and White has to force a draw by 47. $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 49. $\mathbb{W}h7\#$.

½–½

Post-game reflections

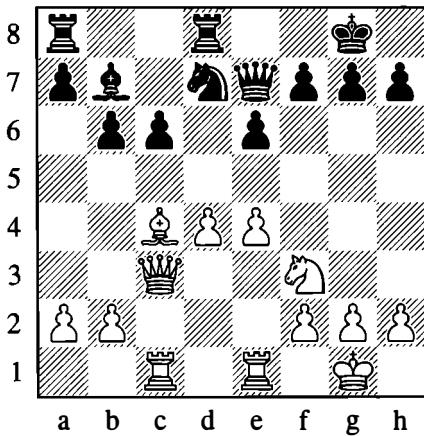
As I mentioned before, the exchanging of two rooks for a queen and pawn can hardly be defined as a sacrifice, but in the above game it led to an obscure and fascinating endgame. White had numerous opportunities to capitalize on his advantage, but my opponent adapted to the new situation more effectively than I did, and his sham rook sacrifice was an excellent idea which brought him a well deserved share of the point.

Chapter 19

Endgame Sacrifices

Frank Marshall – Jose Raul Capablanca

New York 1918



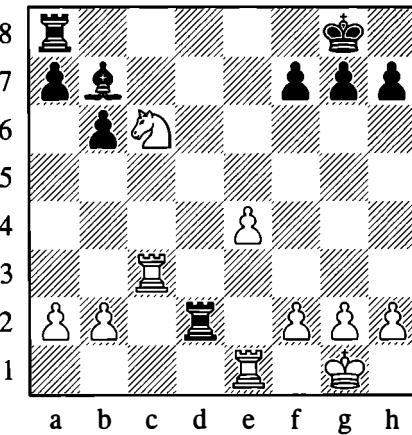
White's position is preferable, and Marshall decides to go on the offensive.

15.d5! $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16.dxe6 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$
18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

A better choice is: 18.b4 $\mathbb{W}e7$ (18... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ threatens to trap the queen, and after 19...f6 20.e5! White has a strong initiative.) 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ g6 20. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ Although the machine evaluates this position as equal, I still prefer White.

18... $\mathbb{W}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}d2$

Capablanca correctly judged that his active rook would provide full compensation for being a pawn down in the ending.



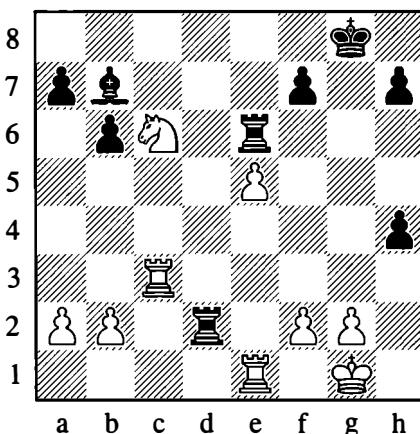
21. $\mathbb{E}b1?$

From a modern perspective, this passive rook move is simply unacceptable. It was time to think about a draw. For instance: 21.a3 $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 22. $\mathbb{E}d1$ g6 23.h4 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}b3$ 25. $\mathbb{E}d7$ $\mathbb{E}xa3$ 26. $\mathbb{E}cc7=$

21... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 22.e5? g5! 23.h4?

After the superior 23. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ Black is still better, but White could at least put up a fight.

23...gxh4 24.Qe1 Qe6



25.Qec1

The knight cannot move, as 25...Qg6 would be decisive. White is almost paralysed and the rest is simple.

25...Qg7 26.b4 b5 27.a3 Qg6 28.Qf1 Qa2
 29.Qg1 h3 30.g3 a6 31.e6 Qxe6 32.g4
 Qh6 33.f3 Qd6 34.Qe7 Qdd2 35.Qf5†
 Qf6 36.Qh4 Qe5 37.Qf5 Qg2† 38.Qf1 h2
 39.f4† Qxf4
 0–1

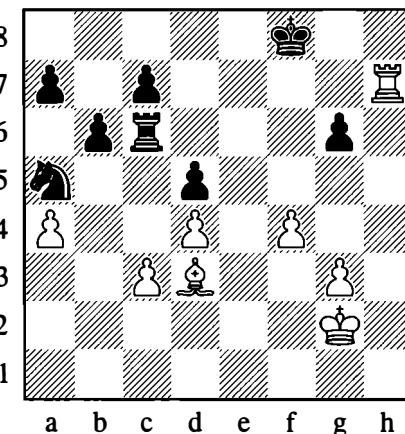
Post-game reflections

Comparing the positions at moves 15 and 25, it scarcely seems possible that things could have gone so wrong for White in the space of a mere ten moves. Evidently Marshall failed to evaluate the position correctly following Black's pawn sacrifice, and he paid the price. Based on the above game, it would be reasonable to conclude that, in simplified positions, a dominant rook on the seventh rank should be enough to compensate for a one-pawn deficit.

The next example is one of Capablanca's most famous endgames. This time he already has his rook on the seventh rank, and his goal will be to improve his other pieces, especially his king.

Jose Raul Capablanca – Savielly Tartakower

New York 1924



The position is quite simplified, but from this point both sides play it with a lack of precision, especially Black!

31.g4

31.Qd7! is probably the best continuation.

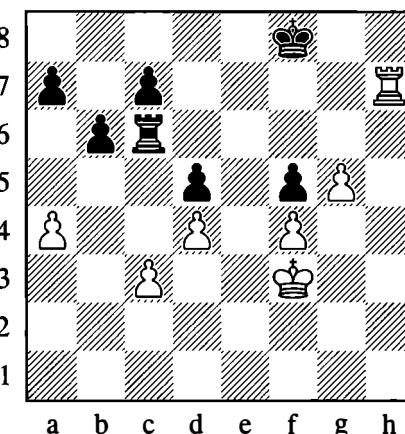
31...Qc4

A more active defence is 31...Qb3! intending 32.Qc1.

32.g5 Qe3† 33.Qf3 Qf5?

After this, Black's game is untenable; the last chance was 33...Qd1!.

34.Qxf5 gxh5



This position can be found in many endgame books. The ideas are well known and easy to understand, so I won't interfere with superfluous comments.

35.♔g3! ♜xc3† 36.♔h4 ♜f3 37.g6 ♜xf4†
 38.♔g5 ♜e4 39.♔f6 ♔g8 40.♔g7† ♔h8
 41.♔xc7 ♜e8 42.♔xh5 ♜e4 43.♔f6 ♜f4†
 44.♔e5 ♜g4 45.g7† ♔g8 46.♔xa7 ♜gl
 47.♔xd5 ♜c1 48.♔d6 ♜c2 49.d5 ♜c1
 50.♔c7 ♜a1 51.♔c6 ♜xa4 52.d6

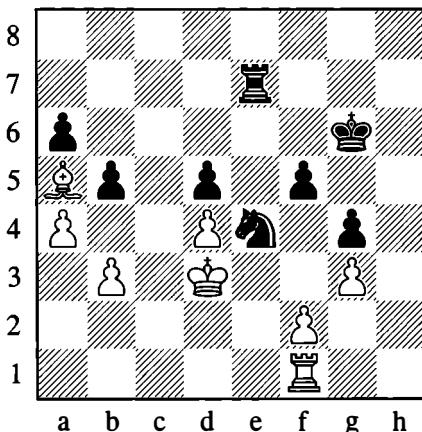
1–0

Post-game reflections

I was in two minds about including such a well-known example in this book; indeed this is why I refrained from commenting on the final phase, as I had nothing new to say about it. Nevertheless the game remains one of the purest examples showing that an active king can trump a material advantage.

Stefano Rosselli del Turco – Akiba Rubinstein

Baden-Baden 1925

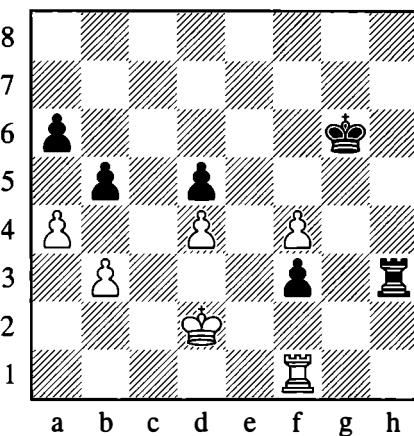


The great Akiba has been trying for some time to squeeze something out of his slightly better endgame. The following pawn sacrifice is his last chance.

55...f4!

Clearing the f5-square for the king and, less obviously, the third rank for the rook.

56.gxf4 ♜h7 57.♔d2 ♛xd2 58.♔xd2 ♜h3
 59.f3 gxh3



60.♔f2?

A bad mistake. 60.axb5 axb5 61.♔e3 f2† 62.♔xf2 ♜xb3 63.♔e1 must lead to a draw.

60...♔f5 61.♔e3 ♔g4 62.b4

Rook moves would allow 62...f2† winning, and 62.f5 ♔xf5 is also losing for White as the pawn ending is hopeless.

62...♜h1 63.f5 ♜e1† 64.♔d3 ♜e4

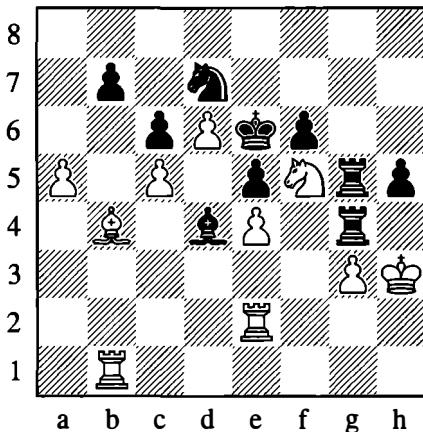
0–1

Post-game reflections

This short example showed how a temporary pawn sacrifice can be used to increase the scope of one's pieces, in an attempt to stretch the defences. It had the desired effect, as White blundered and allowed the enemy king to take up a dominating position. Just like the previous game, this example confirms that in rook and pawn endgames, the combination of an active rook, active king and an advanced passed pawn can spell disaster for the defender.

Tigran Petrosian – Boris Spassky

World Championship, Moscow (24) 1966



This position is from the last game of the match. Trailing by a point, Spassky could no longer win the title of World Champion, but success in this game would achieve an honourable 12–12 result, while scoring a psychological trump for the future. It is his turn to play as Black. What would you do?

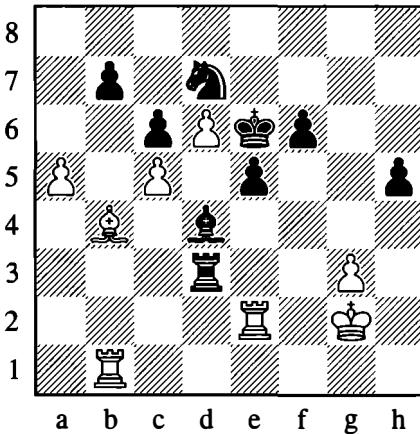
65... $\mathbb{E}xe4!?$

An interesting concept. After being in a difficult situation for most of the game, Spassky had then missed a chance to seize the advantage, before reaching the current level position. Objectively, this exchange sacrifice is not particularly good; but Black, with a pawn for the exchange, a strong centre and a good blockade, does not risk much either. Possibly, with his typical sense of humour, Boris just wanted to break Petrosian's patent over the positional exchange sacrifice!

66. $\mathbb{E}xe4 \mathbb{E}xf5$ 67. $\mathbb{E}e2 \mathbb{E}f3?$

67... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 68. $\mathbb{E}c2 e4$ would have been good enough to draw.

68. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{E}d3$



69. $\mathbb{E}d2$

Better is 69. $\mathbb{E}a2!$ (intending $\mathbb{E}a3$) and Black can easily find himself in trouble. For example: 69... $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$ 70. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{Q}xc5$ 71. $\mathbb{E}xb7!+-$

69... $\mathbb{E}e3$ 70. $\mathbb{E}a2 f5$ 71. $\mathbb{Q}el \mathbb{Q}xc5$ 72. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{E}b3$

In the official bulletin of the match, this move was given an exclamation mark. But 72... $\mathbb{E}d3!$ is actually stronger. For example: 73. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{E}xd4$ 74. $\mathbb{E}xb7 \mathbb{Q}xb7$ 75.a6 $\mathbb{E}g4\#$

73. $\mathbb{E}xb3 \mathbb{Q}xb3$ 74. $\mathbb{E}a3 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 75. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}xd4$

76. $\mathbb{E}f3 d3$ 77. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

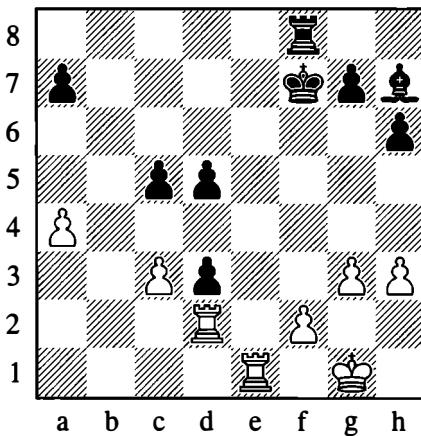
$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Post-game reflections

The exchange sacrifice was a reasonable choice in this complex ending. Black had enough activity, but perhaps influenced by the match situation and the desire to level the scores, he overestimated his chances and risked losing the game, before getting a chance to fight for the advantage near the end. Optimism, realism, caution, and the intangible, intuitive instinct of when to “push our luck” to extract the maximum from the position – these are all factors that weigh heavily on the mind of a chess player at the critical moments of a game.

Bent Larsen – Tigran Petrosian

Havana Olympiad 1966



We continue this game from page 80. In the last few moves, the situation has radically changed. It is now White who must play well to avoid losing. Although White is still the exchange for a pawn up, Black's central pawns represent a real danger.

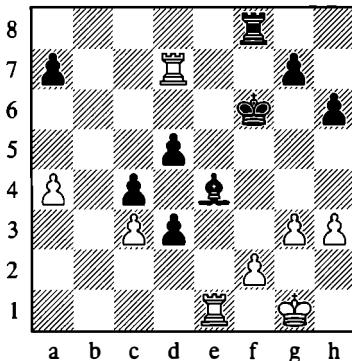
37... $\mathbb{E}b$ 2

Both the bulletin and Petrosian attach a question mark to this move. But it is actually the only way to get counterplay.

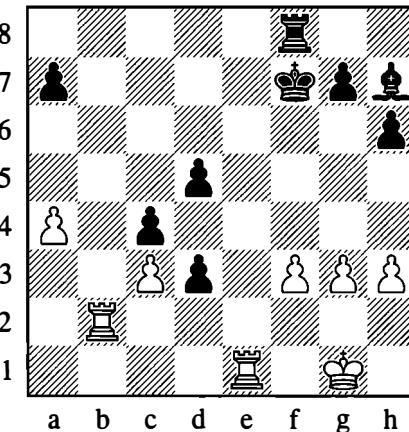
37... $\mathbb{E}e$ 5 is answered by 37... $\mathbb{E}e$ 8!, based on 38. $\mathbb{E}xd5?$ $\mathbb{E}e1\uparrow$ 39. $\mathbb{E}h2 \mathbb{E}e4+$.

37...c4! 38.f3?

After this, the game is lost. Better is 38. $\mathbb{E}b$ 7+ $\mathbb{E}f$ 6 39. $\mathbb{E}d$ 7 $\mathbb{E}e$ 4



40.f4 $\mathbb{E}b$ 8 41. $\mathbb{E}d$ 6+ $\mathbb{E}f$ 7 42. $\mathbb{E}f$ 2 $\mathbb{E}b$ 2+ 43. $\mathbb{E}e$ 3 d2 44. $\mathbb{E}d$ 1 $\mathbb{E}c$ 2 45. $\mathbb{E}xd$ 2 $\mathbb{E}xc$ 3+ 46. $\mathbb{E}d$ 4 $\mathbb{E}xg$ 3 47. $\mathbb{E}b$ 2 c3 48. $\mathbb{E}b$ 7+ $\mathbb{E}g$ 8 49. $\mathbb{E}xa$ 7 c2 50. $\mathbb{E}c$ 6 with drawing chances.

**38...d4! 39. $\mathbb{E}c$ 1**

39.cxd4 c3 40. $\mathbb{E}b$ 7+ $\mathbb{E}g$ 8 41. $\mathbb{E}c$ 7 d2 42. $\mathbb{E}d$ 1 $\mathbb{E}xf$ 3 wins comfortably.

39... $\mathbb{E}e$ 6!

The king will provide the two passed pawns with all the support they need. The rooks are lousy blockaders, and the rest is straightforward.

40. $\mathbb{E}f$ 2 $\mathbb{E}e$ 4 41.f4 $\mathbb{E}e$ 8 42.g4 $\mathbb{E}c$ 6 43. $\mathbb{E}e$ 1+ $\mathbb{E}d$ 5 44. $\mathbb{E}xe$ 8 $\mathbb{E}xe$ 8 45.cxd4 c3 46. $\mathbb{E}b$ 8 d2 47. $\mathbb{E}d$ 8+ $\mathbb{E}c$ 4 48. $\mathbb{E}c$ 8+ $\mathbb{E}d$ 3

0–1

Post-game reflections

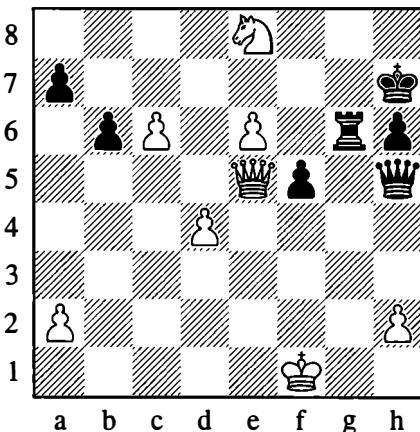
Over the course of this game Black's position went from almost losing at the time when he first sacrificed the exchange (see page 77) to winning with a triumphant march of his mighty pawns. The way Petrosian advanced and secured his pawns on light squares ran contrary to conventional teachings about "positioning the pawns on the opposite-coloured squares to one's bishop". Nevertheless it was justified by several positional factors. Firstly, putting

the pawns on the light squares made it easier for Black to defend them. Secondly, Black had the ...d5-d4 push at his disposal, as a means of destroying the blocker on c3. And finally, to repeat the point made in the previous note, rooks are poor blockers, and Petrosian saw that he would have little trouble ousting the white rooks from c3 and d2. If White had, say, a dark-squared bishop instead of a rook, then it is safe to assume that Black would have advanced his pawns in an altogether different way.

No one ever won a game by resigning –
Tartakower

Mihai Suba – Sticlaru

Bucharest 1968



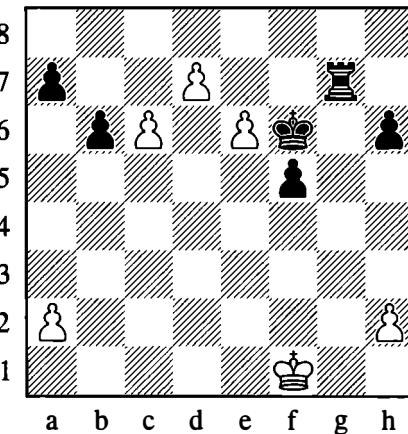
This example is from a relatively low-level game, when both my opponent and I were barely first category players. The position is recalled from memory, and of the earlier part of the game I can only remember that it was a King's Indian and that my opponent accepted an exchange sacrifice on c6 which he should have declined. Faced with a strong attack, I have to simplify immediately.

1. $\mathbb{W}g7\#!$

Not 1. $\mathbb{Q}f6\# \mathbb{Q}xf6$ followed by a perpetual check.

1... $\mathbb{B}xg7$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}f6\# \mathbb{Q}g6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}xh5 \mathbb{Q}xh5$ 4. d5 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 5. d6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. d7?

A careless blunder, perhaps due to euphoria at my imminent victory. Instead, 6.c7 was winning easily.



An instant after playing this impulsive move, I saw its drawback and thought White was losing. My opponent, for his part, was so convinced of an unavoidable loss that he did not check the consequences of my move; he just resigned and put his signature on the scoresheet.

1–0

Post-game reflections

As soon as the game ended, the devil in me could not refrain from saying "You have been lost since you accepted my exchange sacrifice, but you did not resign. Why are you giving up now, when you are winning?"

"Are you joking?" he answered. "How could I be winning?"

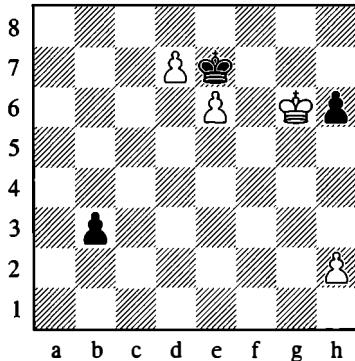
"By taking on d7, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$."

"Just a minute," he said, "I do not resign, then."

After he realized that such an option was against the rules, we started to look at the pawn endgame:

6... $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$

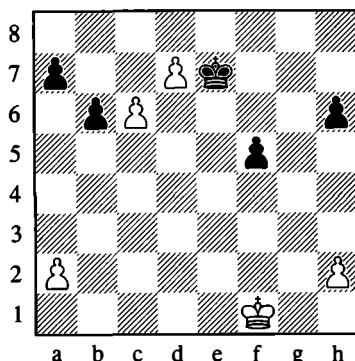
We initially thought that this was losing, and so we went back and analysed: 7.cxd7?! $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ b5 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a5 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ a4 12. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ b3 13.axb3 axb3



14.d8= $\mathbb{W}\dagger$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ b2 16.e7 \dagger $\mathbb{Q}c7$
 17.e8= \mathbb{W} b1= \mathbb{W} 18. $\mathbb{W}e5\dagger$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19.h4
 $\mathbb{W}b3\dagger$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ This line ends up in a draw. Having analysed this far we both felt a bit less disturbed, and we said our goodbyes.

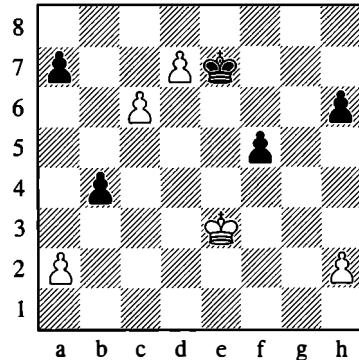
Later I looked at the position with some club-mates (“conclubines” according to the Romanian/Brazilian IM Sorin Segal), and found the win for White.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



8. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ b5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b4

Or 9...a5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ f4 11. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ f3 12. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ f2 13. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ f1= \mathbb{W} 14.d8= $\mathbb{W}\dagger$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d5\dagger$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b7+-$.



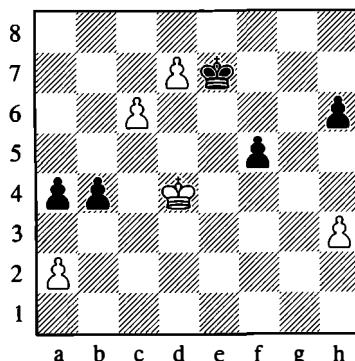
10.h3!!

This zugzwang move does the trick, as it forces Black to lose control of the b6-square. In my earlier calculation, I considered only 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4??$ when after 10...a5 White is lost!

10...a5

10...h5 11.h4 does not change anything.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ a4



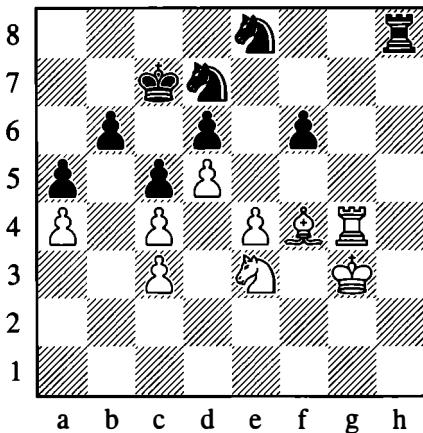
12. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ b3 13.axb3 axb3 14. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ b2 15. $\mathbb{Q}c7$
 b1= \mathbb{W} 16.d8= $\mathbb{W}\dagger$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d5\dagger$

White must win the queen endgame. Unfortunately I never met Mr. Sticlaru again, to relieve him of the burden of that premature resignation.

In order to improve your game, you must study the endgame before everything else, for whereas the endings can be studied and mastered by themselves, the middle game and the opening must be studied in relation to the endgame
 – Jose Raul Capablanca

Vlastimil Hort – Mihai Suba

Tunis Interzonal 1985



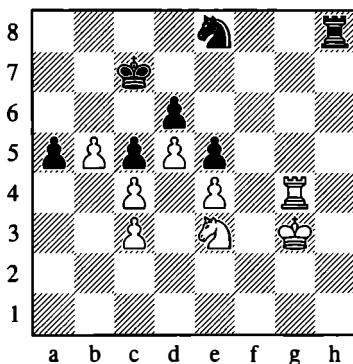
In this position the game was adjourned (for the second time) and I had to write down the sealed move. I didn't see how White could make progress, yet my passivity smelled bad. So I decided to activate one of my knights.

58...b5!

The exclamation mark is awarded for bravery only. One of the general principles of choosing a sealed move was to avoid changing the pawn structure, and my second, IM Sergiu Grünberg, nearly killed me when he found out what I had done! The strong programs of today give equality in all variations after 58... $\mathbb{Q}e5$, but I discarded this move for some reason.

59.cxb5

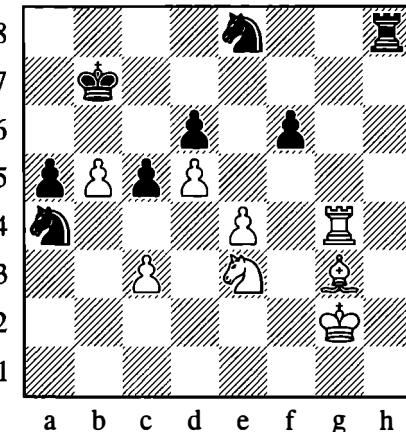
59.axb5?! $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 60. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $fxe5\bar{=}$



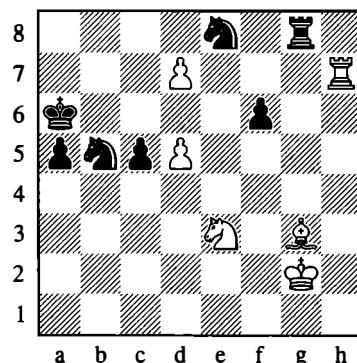
Black's passed a-pawn provides more than enough compensation for White's extra c-pawn.

59... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 60. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 61. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$

Black restores material parity and the resulting endgame, despite being tactically volatile, is equal.

**62. $\mathbb{Q}c4$**

62.c5?! is critical but does not change the result: 62... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 63.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 64. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 65. $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 66.d7



Black can keep the dangerous-looking d-pawn under control. For example: 66... $\mathbb{Q}ed6$ 67. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 68. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 69. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 70. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 71. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 72. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 73. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 74.d8= \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 75. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 76. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c4=$

62... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 63. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 64. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ a4
 65. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 66. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 67. $\mathbb{Q}g8$ $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$
 68. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 69. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 70. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}ed6$
 ½–½

Post-game reflections

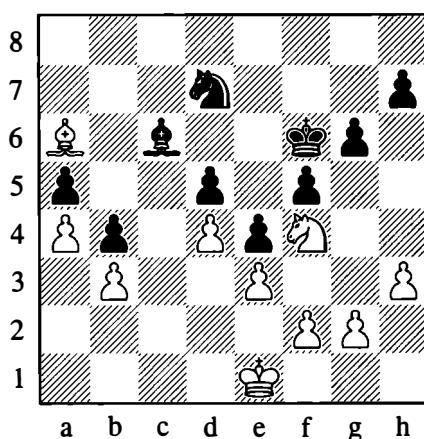
After we signed the scoresheets for the draw, Vlastimil told me that he noticed the possibility of 58...b5 during his adjournment analysis, but he could not believe that I would write down such a sealed move. It certainly went against the conventional wisdom, but on the other hand it came as a big surprise to my opponent for this very reason. Perhaps most of all, the move itself was a good one; not necessarily better than the quieter alternative, but good nonetheless, and the game reached its rightful conclusion after accurate play on both sides.

The next three examples feature different types of positional pawn sacrifices for defensive purposes.

An expert is a person who can spot a mistake, immediately after committing it. – Bridge players' definition

Mihai Suba – Vladimir Malakhov

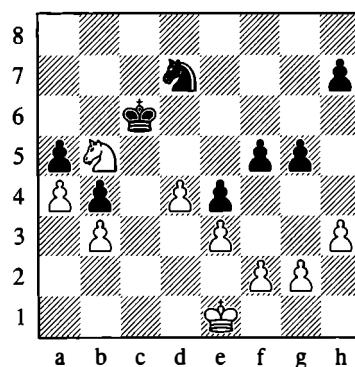
Sanxenxo 2004



Reading some comments on the 2010 Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk, I noticed a remark about Malakhov's impeccable endgame technique, which brought to mind this game from a Spanish Team Championship. After quite a dull beginning we arrived at the diagram position, at which point my opponent suddenly became aggressive, probably based on my time pressure. This involved an involuntary pawn sacrifice. Oddly enough, he could have turned his blunder into a positional sacrifice and obtained a draw. When he failed to do that, we landed in a very interesting bishop vs. knight endgame.

33...g5? 34. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4?$

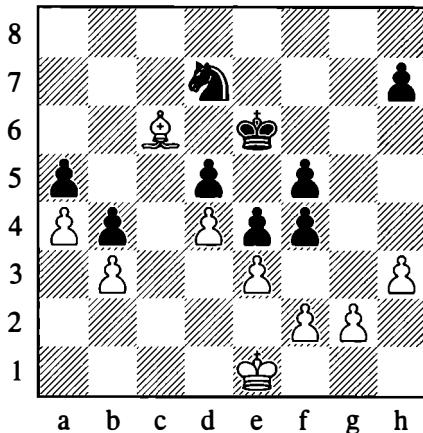
At first I thought that my opponent, instead of offering a draw, was just forcing it with a positional pawn sacrifice. He could put my knight in constraints and establish a drawing bind: 34... $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xb5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$



Black will continue with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$, with a dead draw.

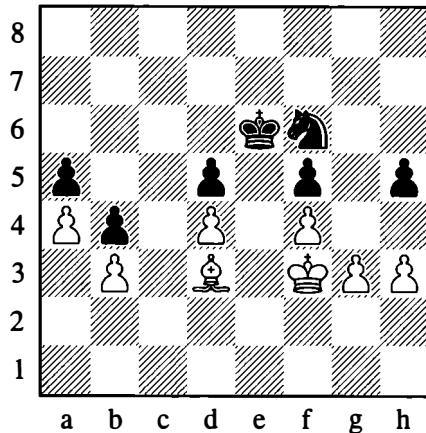
But then, seeing his grimaces and hearing some rich, self-addressed, low-voiced Russian cursing, I understood that he hadn't sacrificed the pawn, but had blundered it, and I realized I might get winning chances!

35. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$



36.exf4!

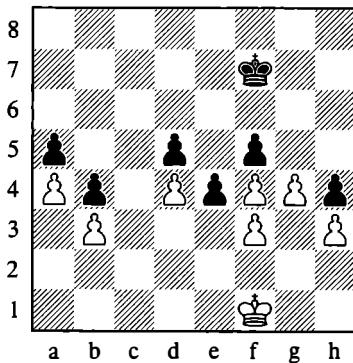
Not having the time to calculate, I trusted my opponent and avoided the pawn ending. Fortunately, this was the right decision, as it turns out to be a draw due to the lack of entry points for the white king: 36.♕xd7† ♔xd7 37.exf4 h5 38.g3 h4 39.g4 ♔e7 40.♔f1 ♔f7 41.f3



49.♔c2!

This zugzwang trick forces Black to allow g3-g4, breaking open a front on the kingside.

49...♕g8 50.g4 hxg4† 51.hxg4 fxg4† 52.♔xg4 ♕e7 53.♔g5 ♕c6 54.f5† ♔f7 55.♔d1 ♕xd4 56.f6 ♕e6† 57.♔f5 ♕c5 58.♔e5

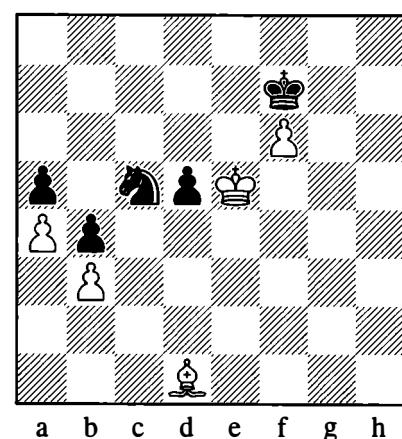


Now 41...e3! draws (but 41...exf3? 42.gxf5! wins for White).

36...♕f6 37.♔e2 h5 38.♔e3 ♔d6 39.♔b5 ♔e6 40.g3 ♔e7 41.♔e2 ♔e6 42.f3 exf3 43.♔xf3 ♔e7 44.♔e2 ♔e6 45.♔d3 ♔g8

Black is quite limited in his choice. For example, 45...♔e4 loses to 46.g4!.

46.♔a6 ♔d7 47.♔d3 ♔e6 48.♔f3 ♔f6



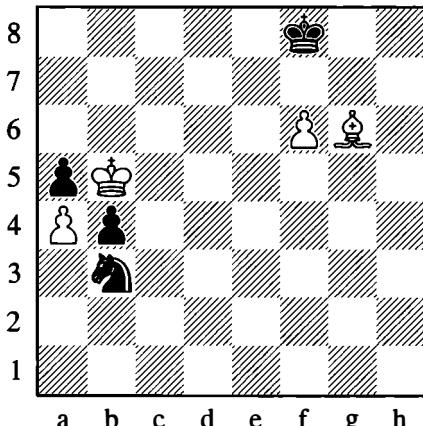
58...♔e4

Capturing the f-pawn does not solve Black's problems: 58...♔d7† 59.♔xd5 ♔xf6 60.♔d6 ♔e5 61.♔c7 ♔e6 62.♔b6 ♔d6 63.♔xa5 ♔c5 64.♔a6+–

59.♔h5† ♔f8 60.♔f3 ♔f7 61.♔h5† ♔f8 62.♔g6 ♔d2 63.♔xd5 ♔xb3 64.♔c4 ♔d2†

65.♔b5 ♔b3

After 65...b3 66.♔xa5 b2 67.♔b5 b1=♕† 68.♔xb1 ♔xb1 69.a5, the a-pawn is triumphant.

**66.♔b6!**

Once again, Black is put in zugzwang.

66...♔g8 67.♔e4 ♔f8 68.♔d5 ♔d2 69.♔xa5 b3 70.♔b4 b2 71.♔a2 ♔e4
71...b1=♕† 72.♔xb1 ♔xb1 73.a5+–

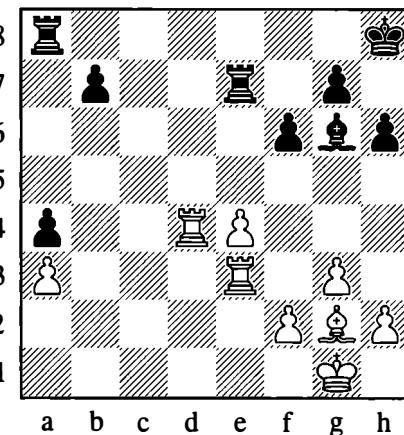
72.a5 ♔d6 73.a6 ♔c8 74.♔c3 b1=♕
75.♔xb1 ♔f7 76.♔e4 ♔xf6 77.♔b7
1–0

Post-game reflections

The last part of this game illustrated the gradual exploitation of an extra pawn, but the early part of the endgame – specifically the note to move 34 – showed how a blunder could have been salvaged and turned into a positional sacrifice to draw the game. We all commit tactical oversights from time to time; next time it happens to you, try to remain calm and find a way to make the best of the situation. If you are lucky, the position may not be as bad as it first appears!

Alexander Beliavsky – Mihai Suba

Kings Tournament, Bazna 2007



We continue this game from page 195, where our verdict was that it is slightly better for White. Some readers may ask, “Why is White better?”

Well, there are several reasons. Firstly, White has the better pawn structure; effectively he has fewer pawn islands, because the separated pawns at a4 and b7 cannot be considered as a single island. Furthermore, I believe in a rule stated by Nimzowitsch, which is little heeded even by strong grandmasters, that a pawn majority involving a large number of pawns is more valuable than one with fewer (here, White’s 4–3 majority is stronger than Black’s 2–1 majority). Black’s rooks are passive, having to defend the weak pawns on the queenside, while the white rooks are well placed. Finally, White has the potential to create a strong central passed pawn.

29...♝c8!

Offering a pawn to activate my pieces, instead of opting for passive resistance with 29...♝e8 30.♝c3 ♛c6 31.f3 ♛ae8 32.♝f1, when White can build on his small advantage with moves such as ♛f2, g4, ♜b4 and ♛b5.

30.♝xa4 ♚c1†

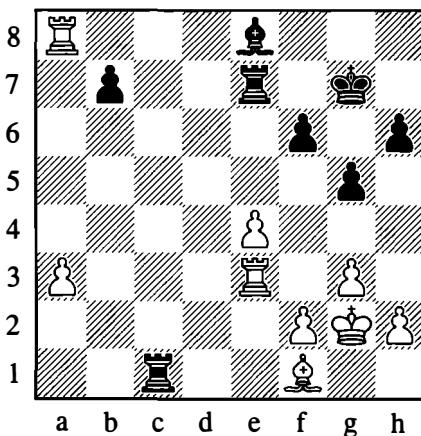
Possibly 30... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ is more precise. For example: 31. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{E}c1\uparrow$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 33.h4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 34.f3 $\mathbb{E}d7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}d2\uparrow$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}a2$ 37.f4 f5 38.exf5 $\mathbb{E}h1$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{E}h2\uparrow$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}h1\uparrow$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f2=$

31. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 32. $\mathbb{E}a8$

32. $\mathbb{B}b4$ may have been better.

32...g5 33. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

By contrast with the previous variation, I've lost a couple of tempos, but my king and pawns are better placed.



34. $\mathbb{E}d8?$

This allows Black to obtain promising counterplay. It was worth considering the "anti-positional" 34.g4?! to stabilize the kingside.

34... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 35.f3 f5!

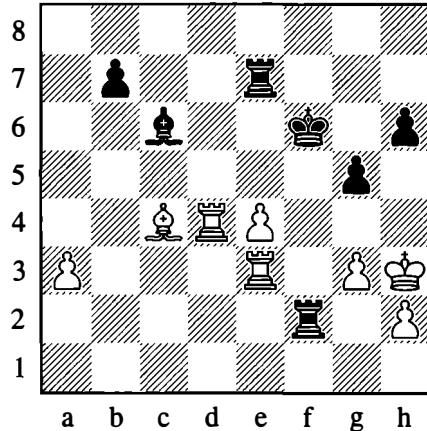
Now White's position starts to become tricky, although objectively he is still okay.

36. $\mathbb{E}d4$ $\mathbb{E}c2\uparrow$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ fxe4 38.fxe4 $\mathbb{E}c1$

39. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}c2\uparrow$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}a2$

40... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}a2$ is a dead draw, but I had already begun to like my position. White's king is very insecure whilst his black counterpart may come to e5.

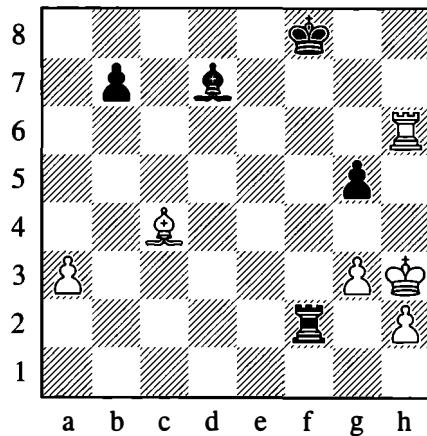
41. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}c4?!$ $\mathbb{E}f2$



43.e5†?!

This time returning the pawn does not help. It was better to bring the bishop back to e2.

43... $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 44. $\mathbb{E}d6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 45. $\mathbb{E}e6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{E}xe6$
46. $\mathbb{E}xe6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 47. $\mathbb{E}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\uparrow$



48.g4

A sad move to make, but 48... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ loses the exchange without any particular compensation.

48... $\mathbb{E}f3\uparrow?$

After 48... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! the dire situation of the white king means that Black is simply winning.

49. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}xa3$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

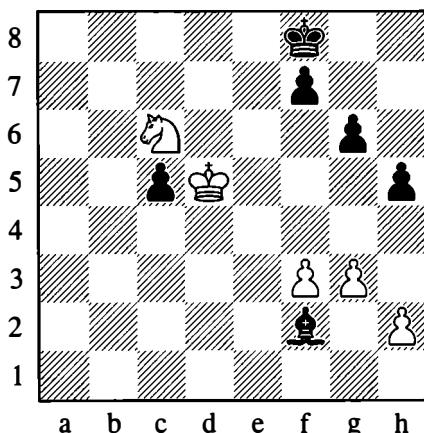
$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Post-game reflections

This game showed how a well-timed pawn sacrifice can turn a passive and slightly worse position into an active one with promising counterplay, not unlike the Marshall – Capablanca encounter at the start of the chapter. In this case too, White failed to adapt to the new situation on the board, although sadly my own endgame technique was not at the same level as the Cuban genius.

Mihai Suba – Julio Granda Zuniga

Benidorm 2009



We continue this game from page 281.

43.g4!

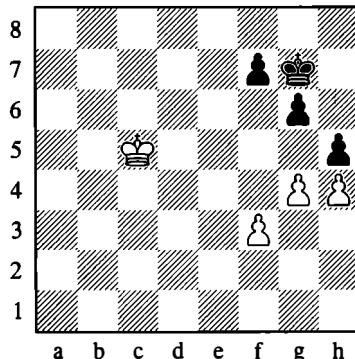
This advance meets a couple of basic necessities in such endgames. It places the pawns on light squares and it reduces their number – fewer pawns means fewer weaknesses to worry about, and fewer potential queens for the opponent.

43... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g1$ 46.h4

This time a pawn moves to a dark square, having to defend against the black king penetrating via g5. This pawn will be lost later, but in exchange for the c5-pawn.

46... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 47.gxh5

White must avoid: 47. $\mathbb{Q}xc5??$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$



48...g5!–+ This typical trick had helped me to win at least two previous games, so I was not going to fall for it here.

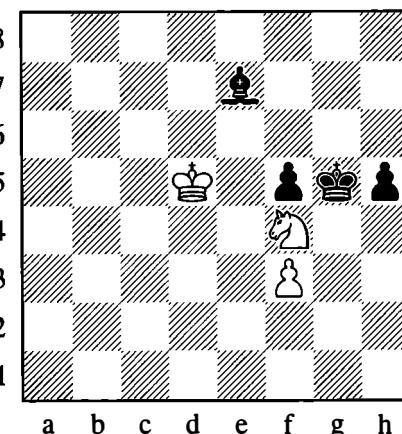
47...gxh5 48. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5 52. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

White is now close to a draw, especially considering that Black has the wrong combination of bishop and rook's pawn. If the white king can make it back to g2, then he can happily sacrifice his knight for the f-pawn. Black's only chance is to infiltrate with his king, but he does not have quite enough time.

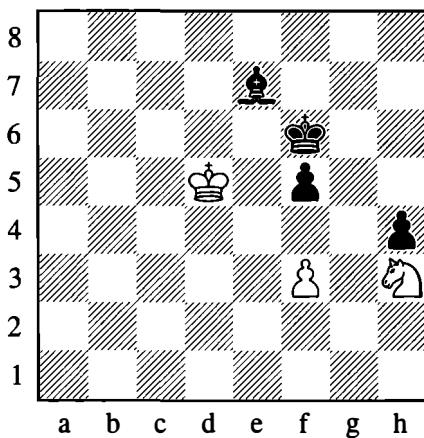
53... $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$

Similar is 53... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 56. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ h4 57. $\mathbb{Q}h3=$, reaching the same fortress as in the game.

54. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$



55.♕e6+! ♖h4 56.♕g7 ♖g5 57.♕e6+ ♖f6
58.♕f4 h4 59.♕h3



Finally, the fortress has been achieved. Julio plays a few more moves out of inertia.

59...♗d8 60.♕f4 ♗c7 61.♕h3 ♗g3 62.♕g1
½-½

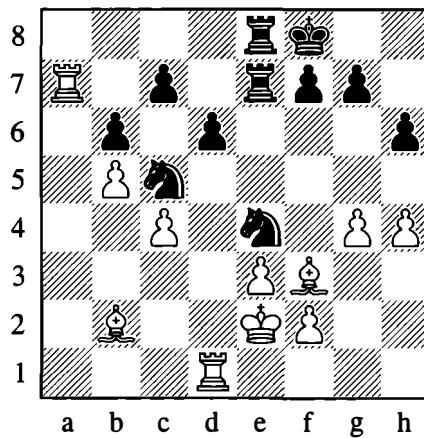
Post-game reflections

A glance back at the relevant part of Chapter 14 will remind us of just how unappealing White's position was in the middlegame. The pawn-down endgame was a mercy, and I was narrowly able to hold a draw. Being able to recognize the difference between a hopeless endgame a pawn down, and one which offers realistic drawing chances, is an important ability for any player, and on this occasion it enabled me to salvage a welcome half point.

In the final example of the chapter and the book, we will see a splendid example of an aggressive pawn sacrifice in a simplified position.

Vladimir Kramnik – Mikhail Ulibin

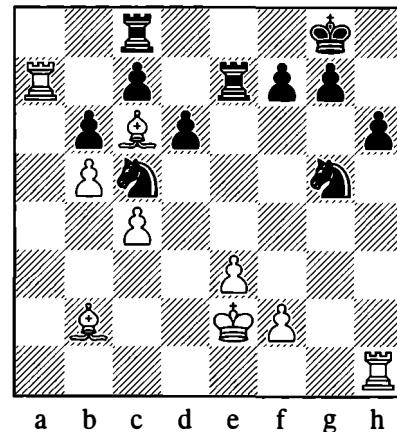
Chalkidiki 1992



36.g5!

Well played! The pawn sacrifice is even more praiseworthy as White could have maintained his advantage by quiet play. For example: 36.♗g2 ♜c8 37.f3 ♜f6 38.♗d1 ♜e6 39.♗d2±

36...hxg5 37.hxg5 ♜xg5 38.♗c6 ♜c8
39.♗h1 ♜g8



40.♗aa1!

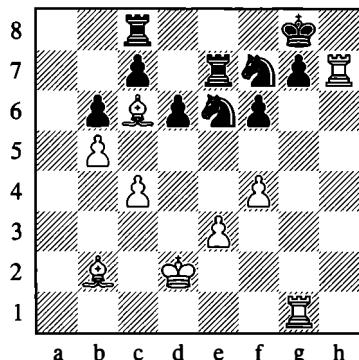
"Bringing the second rook into the kingside attack decides the game." – Kramnik.

40...♗ce6

Other defences are no better:

40... $\mathbb{Q}ge6$ 41. $\mathbb{B}ag1$ f5 42. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 43. $\mathbb{B}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 44. $\mathbb{B}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 45. $\mathbb{B}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 46. $\mathbb{B}h6$ $\mathbb{B}f7$
 47.f4 $\mathbb{B}f8$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}e1+-$

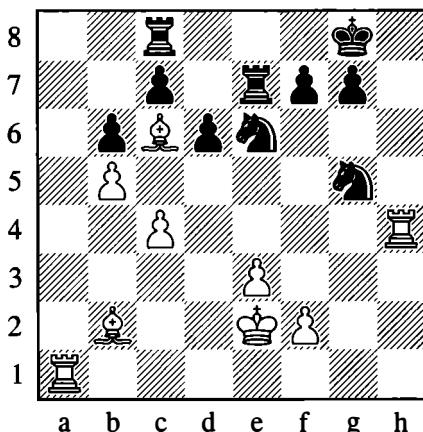
40...f6 41.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 42. $\mathbb{B}ag1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 43. $\mathbb{B}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
 44. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$



45. $\mathbb{B}hxg7\#$! $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+-$

41. $\mathbb{B}h4$

Preventing a check on f4 and preparing a possible doubling on the h-file.

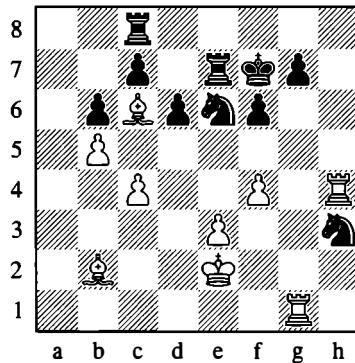


41...f6

41...f5 also fails to save the game: 42. $\mathbb{B}g1$
 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 44. $\mathbb{B}h6$ $\mathbb{B}ce8$ 45. $\mathbb{B}gg6$ $\mathbb{B}f8$
 46. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}ff7$ 47. $\mathbb{B}xe6\#$

42. $\mathbb{B}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

After 43.f4 Black has the unexpected 43... $\mathbb{Q}h3!$, although even this is losing:



44. $\mathbb{B}g3!$ $\mathbb{Q}hxg4\#$ (44... $\mathbb{Q}exf4\#$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}d2$)
 45. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}d5\#+-$

43... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 44. $\mathbb{B}h8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 45.f4 $\mathbb{Q}ge6$

45... $\mathbb{Q}gh7$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}g8$ would have made no difference.

46. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

All roads lead to Rome, for instance 46. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 47. $\mathbb{B}xg7$ wins as well.

46...f5 47. $\mathbb{B}g6!$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 48. $\mathbb{B}xg7$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$
 1-0

Post-game reflections

It is not often that we see a line-opening pawn sacrifice followed by a kingside attack in the endgame, but in the above example the pair of rooks supported by two mighty bishops proved to be a winning combination. Black's biggest problem was that his knights lacked an effective outpost from which to defend, counterattack, or exchange the enemy bishops. His rooks were similarly ineffective, and a massacre ensued.

Appendix

End Notes

1) Romanian Opening or Napoleon I against Madame de Remusat (adapted and translated from an article I wrote for a Romanian magazine several years ago)

I am keen to post this wordy homage to the 1. $\mathcal{Q}c3$ opening. It is full of polemics and the reader may just skip it, without prejudice, if he wishes. It might have a chauvinistic touch, as an answer to those who, a few months before I wrote it, had tried to steal my Seniors' World Champion title. However, for those who wish to play this opening, a few associations might be of interest. The word *Dunst* is a German noun, meaning anything which can emerge from a cooking pot apart from the meal itself: steam, smoke, reek and the like. Yet the danger does not come from the frying pan, but from the Dunst surname. It could become popular on account of the actress Kirsten Dunst, who has made it into the list of the "top eleven women whose kiss is worth going to jail for". Another use of the word comes in the phrase "zacusca la dunst" – a Transylvanian-Romanian hors d'oeuvre; some gourmands would even go to the kitchens for it!

Taking advantage of the language of Shakespeare (and the less discreet Fischer variation), the Anglo-Americans would like to

have a monopoly on chess names. But in most of the world, chess players do not respect this, and everybody (even leading US players, most of them of Soviet origin) says Volga Gambit (not Benko), Spanish (not Ruy Lopez), etc. There are more exceptions in other domains, for example in music, where the Brits reject the initiative. Consider the English horn, which they call "French horn", as if it were a dead cat, only good for being thrown over the Channel. It *dunsts*.

Returning to our opening, 1. $\mathcal{Q}c3$ was thoroughly studied, practised and taught systematically by the late Gheorghe Alexandrescu (Uncle Gica), former champion of Romania, who with old-style modesty and patriotism called it the "Romanian Opening". Many of his students (for example, Chiricuta, Zara, Segal) used his ideas in international encounters and popularized them. Your author played 1. $\mathcal{Q}c3$ to get one of his first victories against a GM, and has played it quite a few times since. It is one thing to play rare moves as a part of a strategy or system, and quite another to play them out of extravagance, as did the amateur who frequented Manhattan Chess Club in the 1950s. Finding games which Mr. Dunst won after opening with 1. $\mathcal{Q}c3$! was not easy; but the same could be

said with respect to other openings. Our man started many more games with other bizarre moves, such as 1.Øa3, 1.e3 and, with Black, 1...Øa6. Why not assign his honoured name to one of these openings? It *dunsts!*

The Dutch, for their part, noticed the gap, and called this opening after their Van Geet fellow, who practised it with more perseverance, but still little success. Both these players came after Uncle Gica. They were weaker players and did not create any school. I would mention that one of the few sources in English that accepts the name “Romanian Opening” is *Wikipedia*.

The ideas of Master Alexandrescu were clear: in case Black answers it by 1...e5, then after 2.Øf3 and 3.d4 White transposes into favourable variations of the Scotch or Philidor; if 1...d5, then 2.e4, and we either enter a mainline of the French or Caro-Kann, or a secondary variation of the Scandinavian or Alekhine. The advance 2...d4 seems a bit anti-positional to some strategists, because it clarifies the structure too early. Those who do not like offering space to the opponent may answer 1...d5 with 2.d4, transposing to the Veresov. After 1...c5 2.e4 Øc6 3.Øge2 Black might get tangled in a “Chameleon”, which interchanges some variations of the Sicilian at will. Often Black finds himself playing something he doesn’t know or doesn’t like, or both. GM Rogers (a very practical player) put it succinctly: “White’s opening is meant to force a transposition to a variation which might not be familiar to the opponent.” Spanish champion Bellon Lopez, after our game in Bucharest 1978, learned many details of this opening in the post mortem, and then used it as his main weapon with White for many years.

If we are to follow a strict chronology, the inspiration to Uncle Gica for this *overture* came from Napoleon I, because the first game starting with this cavalry charge was that of

the Emperor against Madame de Remusat at Malmaison 1804. One of those two players must have had an elephant’s memory, as that game is nothing more than a mirror copy of a previous encounter of Bonaparte with the beautiful lady (at Café de la Régence, Paris 1802). History says that she tried (at any price) to obtain a pardon for her brother, but did not succeed. It also says that they had only one encounter, which conflicts with the two games in the database. A painting from that epoch (one may find it reproduced on the ChessBase website) shows the two heroes at a chess board. The lady exhibits a décolletage to be envied, even by her present-day great-granddaughters. Maybe a list of the “top eleven women whose kiss is worth going to jail for” was also available at that time, and that’s the real reason why Albion sent Bonaparte to Saint Helena. Perhaps we should give the French the benefit of the doubt (as to whether the Emperor kissed the lady or not). Nowadays, of course, the Eurostar may quickly bring anybody from Paris to Waterloo (Station), without the headache of reckoning how many steps there are *de sublime aux ridicule*.

2) I have never been a good rating manager! In 1982 I qualified as a reserve for the Candidates, together with Tal and Spassky, and ahead of Petrosian, Larsen and Timman, with my lifetime lowest rating – 2430. Now I was playing first board for Romania in the World Team Championship, contested between the first five teams of the previous Olympiad. Fifth place in both events was the best result ever for our men’s team. Nobody expected this from us, especially after the premature loss of Ciocaltea in 1983. Although I came third in the Interzonal in 1982, due to my low rating no organizers invited me to any strong tournaments in that period. I had to win the Dortmund Open in 1982 to get

the right to play in the closed tournament in 1983 – which I also won! At that time, after Fischer's withdrawal from chess, all the stars of the Occident looked fragile to me (including Larsen, Timman and Miles). In Lucerne, without an unfortunate swing in my game against Korchnoi (see page 282), I would have won the gold medal on Board 1.

3) Walter Browne's frequent time trouble is proverbial; at such moments he behaved as if possessed. Although this conduct was involuntary, it could have a deeply disturbing influence on many opponents. I think that either the FIDE rules of ethics were very loose (and still are) when compared with other games, or their application was (and still is) extremely tolerant. Newer rules express privileges to "time-trouble blitzers", unacceptably treating a

vice as a virtue. Long ago, Alekhine said that blaming time pressure is a similar excuse to a lawbreaker saying that he was drunk when he committed the crime. I would hope that the practice of adding time increments per move will end all excuses and privileges, and also improve other issues related to the time control.

4) Playing on first board, I had been performing well at the 1984 Thessaloniki Olympiad, and having played in all the matches, I was very tired. The previous day I had told the captain (Emmanuel Reicher) that I wanted a rest day and he agreed, only to change his mind the next morning: "We are playing against Hungary and I cannot select the team without you. I promise that you won't play more than 14 games here!"

Game Index

Chapter 1 – The Open Games

Garry Kasparov – Viswanathan Anand	14
Albert Becker – Imre Korody Keresztfely	19
Jacob Murey – Boris Nikitinyh	22
Pablo Atars – Hans Tomson	24
Vassily Ivanchuk – Evgeny Bareev	26
Veselin Topalov – Vladimir Kramnik	28
Alexey Dreev – Gata Kamsky	31/303
David Bronstein – Ernst Rojahn	34

Chapter 2 – The Ruy Lopez

Ivan Cheparinov – David Navara	36/327
Constantin Lupulescu – Mihai Suba	38/328
Oskar Piotrowski – Jerzy Sokolow	40
Nikola Padevsky – Hrvoje Messing	42
Jose Gutierrez Castillo – Luis Bronstein	44

Chapter 3 – The Semi-Open Games

Octavio Troianescu – Tigran Petrosian	46/333
Amador Rodriguez Cespedes – Tomislav Rakic	48
Michael Yeo – A Erdal-Smith	50
Ariel Mengarini – Eric Schiller	52
Robert Fischer – William Addison	53

Chapter 4 – Alekhine's Defence

Thomas Casper – Heckert	56
Albin Planinc – Vlatko Kovacevic	58
Juan Bellon Lopez – Vlatko Kovacevic	60
Nigel Short – Jan Timman	64/299/325
Oleg Korneev – Mihai Suba	66
Veselin Topalov – Magnus Carlsen	70

Chapter 5 – The French Defence

Ludek Pachman – Eckert	74
Bent Larsen – Tigran Petrosian	76/349
Yuri Shabanov – Eduard Mnatsakanian	80

Mikhail Tal – Wolfgang Uhlmann
 Robert Fischer – Bent Larsen
 Jose Hedman Senarega – Oleg Romanishin
 Nils Nilsson – Henrik Sorensen

Chapter 6 – The Caro-Kann Defence

Janis Klovans – Felix Levin
 Alexei Shirov – Vassily Ivanchuk
 Teimour Radjabov – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu
 Lajos Portisch – Tigran Petrosian
 Mihai Suba – Petar Velikov
 Mihai Suba – Tigran Petrosian
 Alexander Morozevich – Artashes Minasian
 Ralf Christ – Igor Berezovsky
 Vassily Ivanchuk – Alexander Beliavsky

Chapter 7 – The Sicilian Defence

Dunaev – Tigran Petrosian
 Rashid Nezhmetdinov – Oleg Chernikov
 Robert Fischer – Efim Geller
 Bent Larsen – Ulf Andersson
 Eric Lobron – Mihai Suba
 Krisztian Kerek – Mircea Parligras
 Rafael Rodriguez Lopez – Mihai Suba
 Manuel Perez Candelario – Mihai Suba
 Viktor Bologan – Ye Jiangchuan
 Viktor Bologan – Mihai Suba
 Kim Pilgaard – Konstantin Chernyshov
 Sergey Karjakin – Viswanathan Anand
 Vassily Ivanchuk – Teimour Radjabov
 Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu – Teimour Radjabov
 Shakhriyar Mamedyarov – Boris Gelfand
 Mihai Suba – Vladimir Okhotnik
 Alexei Shirov – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu

Chapter 8 – The Closed Games

Emil Diemer – Schuppler
 Vlad-Victor Barnaure – Jose Roca Galarza
 Lajos Portisch – Paul Keres
 Lev Polugaevsky – Eugenio Torre
 Garry Kasparov – Vladimir Kramnik

Chapter 9 – The Semi-Closed Games

Siegbert Tarrasch – Alexander Alekhine	181
Igor Naumkin – Alexander Shabalov	184
Ferenc Peredy – Mihai Suba	186
Garry Kasparov – Artur Yusupov	190/312
Alexander Beliavsky – Mihai Suba	192/355
Mihai Suba – Daniel Rivera Kuzawka	195
Alexander Tolush – Mikhail Botvinnik	197
Mikhail Tal – Zbigniew Szymczak	199
Veselin Topalov – Vladimir Tukmakov	202
Teimour Radjabov – Alexei Shirov	204
Vladimir Tukmakov – Leonid Yurtaev	206
Boris Gelfand – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	209

Chapter 10 – The Modern Benoni

Vladimir Tukmakov – Mikhail Tal	214
Nathan Birnboim – Mihai Suba	218/335
Viktor Korchnoi – Mihai Suba	220
Smbat Lputian – Mihai Suba	222/300
Evgeny Gleizerov – Mihai Suba	223
Pavel Eljanov – Veselin Topalov	225
Jurijs Mihailovs – Mihai Suba	227

Chapter 11 – The Nimzo-Indian Defence

Zdenko Kozul – Johann Hjartarson	231
Peter Wells – Mihai Suba	233
Ivan Ivanisevic – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	236/304
Program X – Program Y	239

Chapter 12 – The Queen's Indian Defence

Walter Browne – Anatoly Karpov	243
Bojan Kurajica – Anatoly Karpov	246
Julio Granda Zuniga – Anatoly Karpov	248
Vladimir Kramnik – Levon Aronian	251
Petar Arnaudov – Mihai Suba	253

Chapter 13 – Flank Openings

Rafael Vaganian – Albin Planinc	257
Mihai Suba – Viktor Korchnoi	260/282

James Plaskett – Tony Miles	262
Ian Rogers – Mihai Suba	265
Mihai Suba – Evgeniy Solozhenkin	267/321
Mihai Suba – Jesus De la Villa Garcia	271
Ulf Andersson – Alon Greenfeld	275
Viktor Korchnoi – Alon Greenfeld	276

Chapter 14 – Pawn Sacrifices

Tigran Petrosian – Lajos Portisch	279
Mihai Suba – Julio Granda Zuniga	280/357
Mihai Suba – Viktor Korchnoi	260/282

Chapter 15 – Exchange Sacrifices

Alexander Tolush – Mikhail Botvinnik	287
Samuel Reshevsky – Tigran Petrosian	289
Rashid Nezhmetdinov – Oleg Chernikov	121/290
Lajos Portisch – Vasily Smyslov	291
Lajos Portisch – Tigran Petrosian	293
Efim Geller – Anatoly Karpov	296
Mihai Suba – Aleksander Sznajik	298
Nigel Short – Jan Timman	64/299/325
Smbat Lputian – Mihai Suba	222/300
Alexei Shirov – Vassily Ivanchuk	93/301
Alexey Dreev – Gata Kamsky	31/303
Ivan Ivanisevic – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	236/304
Michael Deleva – Mihai Suba	306
Teimour Radjabov – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	97/307
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov – Boris Gelfand	155/309

Chapter 16 – Minor Piece Sacrifices

Garry Kasparov – Artur Yusupov	190/312
Mihai Suba – Aldo Zadrima	313
Tony Miles – Mihai Suba	314
Chris Ward – Mihai Suba	316
Viktor Korchnoi – Laura Tamborini	318
Boo Garcia Parado – Mihai Suba	320
Mihai Suba – Evgeniy Solozhenkin	267/321
Mihai Suba – Andrei Arghirescu	322

Chapter 17 – Queen Sacrifices

Emil Dierner – Schuppler	165/324
Nigel Short – Jan Timman	64/299/325
Ivan Cheparinov – David Navara	36/327
Constantin Lupulescu – Mihai Suba	38/328
Mihai Suba – Margeir Petursson	330

Chapter 18 – Other Sacrifices

Octavio Troianescu – Tigran Petrosian	46/333
Bent Larsen – Ulf Andersson	125/334
Nathan Birnboim – Mihai Suba	218/335
Lev Polugaevsky – Eugenio Torre	176/338
Mihai Suba – David Pardo Simon	339
Rudolf Spielmann – Baldur Hoenlinger	341
Mihai Suba – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	342

Chapter 19 – Endgame Sacrifices

Frank Marshall – Jose Raul Capablanca	345
Jose Raul Capablanca – Savielly Tartakower	346
Stefano Rosselli del Turco – Akiba Rubinstein	347
Tigran Petrosian – Boris Spassky	348
Bent Larsen – Tigran Petrosian	76/349
Mihai Suba – Sticlaru	350
Vlastimil Hort – Mihai Suba	352
Mihai Suba – Vladimir Malakhov	353
Alexander Beliavsky – Mihai Suba	192/355
Mihai Suba – Julio Granda Zuniga	280/357
Vladimir Kramnik – Mikhail Ulibin	358

Name Index

A

Abrahams 190
Addison 53
Adla 65, 132
Akesson 277
Albin 74
Alburt 61, 186
Alekchine 33, 74, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185,
 189, 195, 362
Alekseev 240
Alexandrescu 360, 361
Alley 56
Anand 10, 14, 18, 19, 20, 94, 149, 151, 162
Andersson 125, 126, 275, 276, 277, 334,
 337
Antal 144
Arghirescu 322, 323
Arizmendi 115
Arnaudov 253
Aronian 150, 207, 251, 252, 253
Aseev 207
Astrom 237
Atars 24
Azmaiparashvili 185

B

Baburin 184, 185, 186
Bacrot 218
Badillo 13
Bakhtadze 94
Balashov 136
Bareev 26, 27, 28, 102, 114, 115
Barlov 185, 237
Barnaure 167
Becker 19
Bekemann 15
Belavsky 6, 113, 114, 117, 158, 192, 193,
 205, 355
Bellon Lopez 20, 60, 166, 361
Benjamin 186
Berbatov 210
Berezovsky 111

Berliner 287
Birnboim 218, 335, 337
Blatny 29
Bogoljubow 195
Bohm 272, 273
Bologan 138, 140, 142, 144
Botvinnik 99, 113, 197, 199, 233, 287, 288,
 289

Bronstein,D. 34, 44, 289
Bronstein,L. 44
Browne 243, 246, 362
Bukic 272
Byron 93

C

Caesar 91
Capablanca 233, 237, 287, 293, 345, 346,
 351, 357
Caravan 187
Carlsen 22, 70, 73
Carson 14
Casper 56
Cebalo 237
Che Guevara 74
Cheparinov 36, 327, 328
Chepukaitis 262
Chernikov 121, 290
Chernyshov 138, 145, 146
Chiricuta 360
Christ 111
Churchill 102
Ciocaltea 207, 336, 337, 361
Cvitanić 258

D

Dali 313
De Firmian 92
Degraeve 17
Dela Villa Garcia 271
Deleva 306
De Remusat 360, 361
Diemer 165, 324

Domenech 61
 Dominguez 114
 Donsen 60
 Dreev 31, 177, 303
 Dubinsky 114
 Dunaev 118, 120
 Dunst,K. 360
 Dunst,T. 360
 Durao 261
 Dzagnidze 169
 Dzindzichashvili 186

E

Eckert 74
 Einstein 316
 Eismont 243
 Eliot 58
 Eljanov 225, 227
 Erdal-Smith 50
 Ermenkov 158
 Essing 338
 Evans 14

F

Fernandez Romero 272
 Fernando 132
 Fine 5, 13, 15, 296
 Fischer 7, 15, 33, 53, 54, 55, 58, 83, 84, 85,
 86, 122, 124, 125, 184, 214, 360, 362
 Flear 266
 Foisor 219
 Franco Ocampos 261
 Franklin 220

G

Galarza 167
 Gallego Jimenez 240
 Garcia 268
 Garcia Parado 320
 Gelfand 150, 155, 156, 185, 209, 213, 309,
 310, 311
 Geller 122, 124, 125, 296, 298
 Georgiev 315
 Ghaem Maghami 181

Ghinda 127, 145
 Ghizdavu 239
 Giorgadze 233
 Gleizerov 169, 223
 Golubev 131, 143, 207
 Gonzales de la Torre 158
 Grabliauskas 192
 Granda Zuniga 248, 251, 265, 280, 357
 Greenfeld 275, 276, 277, 278
 Griffiths 215
 Grischuk 37
 Gross 132
 Groszpeter 58
 Grünberg 352
 Gufeld 158
 Gurevich,D. 186
 Gutierrez Castillo 44

H

Haba 218
 Haila 177
 Hane 36
 Hansen,L.B. 169
 Harikrishna 116
 Hebert 186
 Heckert 56
 Hellsten 192
 Hillarp Persson 50, 237
 Hiram 24
 Hjartarson 231
 Hodgson 316
 Hoelzl 272
 Hoenlinger 341
 Holler 61
 Hort 272, 352
 Horvath,C. 61
 Hübner 6, 167

I

Illescas 152
 Iordachescu 98
 Istratescu 131, 240
 Ivanchuk 26, 28, 93, 98, 113, 114, 117, 119,
 143, 152, 153, 207, 301, 303

Ivanisevic 236, 237, 304

J

Jakovenko 114

Jobava 181

K

Kaidanov 185, 219

Kalod 143

Kaminsky 259

Kamsky 26, 31, 32, 106, 303, 304

Kapengut 214, 259

Karjakin 37, 149

Karpov 106, 127, 182, 243, 244, 245, 246,
248, 250, 251, 296, 298

Kasparov 7, 10, 14, 15, 18, 19, 33, 94, 127,
149, 152, 156, 167, 176, 177, 178,
180, 190, 191, 200, 207, 299, 312

Kerek 130

Keres 127, 173

Keresztsely 19

Kharitonov 131

Khmelniker 254

Kindermann 127, 260

Kiss 219

Klovans 91

Kogan 193

Kondratiev 6, 9

Korchnoi 68, 190, 218, 219, 220, 228, 260,
276, 278, 282, 318, 362

Kornev 66, 69

Kovacevic 20, 58, 59, 60, 75

Kozul 231

Kramnik 28, 134, 167, 176, 180, 251, 252,
253, 358

Kuijf 113

Kurajica 246

Kurnosov 39

Kuyindzhi 61

L

Lamford 276

L'Ami 114

Larsen 33, 76, 77, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 102,

125, 126, 190, 271, 272, 334, 337,
349, 361, 362

Lasker 142, 165

Lazarev 219

Leko 37, 94

Lenic 258

Lerner 233

Levin 91

Ljubojevic 272

Lobron 127, 129, 182

Lputian 214, 222, 300

Lupulescu 38, 328

M

Malakhov 353

Malaniuk 168

Mamedyarov 155, 156, 309

Manor 193

Marin 150, 225, 226, 227, 252

Marshall 345, 346, 357

Martinez 185

Marttinen 177

Matsuura 103

Maus 46

Mecking 60, 190

Mengarini 52

Messing 42

Mestel 268

Miettinen 15

Mihailovs 220, 227, 229

Mikhailchishin 6, 200

Miles 215, 262, 263, 264, 272, 314

Minasian 108, 111

Miroshnichenko 185

Mnatsakanian 80

Molina 103

Moon 76

Morozevich 108, 109, 111, 156, 207

Morphy 165, 228

Muir 169

Murariu 116

Murey 22, 24, 124, 228

Murphy 13

N

Nakamura 22, 107, 252
 Napier 93
 Napoleon 360, 361
 Naumkin 184
 Navara 36, 37, 327, 328
 Nazarenus 114
 Nevednichy 187
 Nezhmetdinov 121, 290
 Nielsen 114
 Nikitinyh 22
 Nikolic,M. 123
 Nilsson 88
 Nimzowitsch 11, 33, 66, 99, 142, 210, 223,
 289, 292, 293, 355
 Nisipeanu 61, 97, 98, 130, 153, 161, 162,
 164, 209, 213, 236, 304, 306, 307,
 342
 Nogueiras 265, 266
 Nunn 95

O

O'Brien 106
 Ochoa de Echaguen 134
 Okhotnik 157, 159
 Olafsson,F. 258
 Onischuk 37
 Oppenheimer 38
 Orsag 132

P

Pachman 74
 Padevsky 42
 Pardo Simon 339
 Parligras 130, 132
 Paturi 42
 Pavlov 106, 145
 Peredy 186
 Perez Candelario 136, 158
 Perez Garcia 103
 Petkov 17
 Petrosian 7, 46, 47, 76, 77, 78, 79, 99, 100,
 101, 102, 106, 107, 118, 119, 120,

121, 239, 279, 280, 286, 287, 289,
 290, 293, 294, 295, 296, 333, 334,
 348, 349, 350, 361
 Petursson 277, 315, 330
 Philidor 155
 Piket 272
 Pilgaard 138, 145
 Piotrowski 40
 Planinc 58, 60, 257, 259, 260
 Plaskett 262, 264, 276
 Polgar 114, 162
 Polugaevsky 176, 338, 339
 Portisch 99, 101, 102, 173, 174, 175, 257,
 279, 291, 292, 293, 294, 296, 315
 Psakhis 136, 144, 214, 220, 226, 266
 Purdy 287

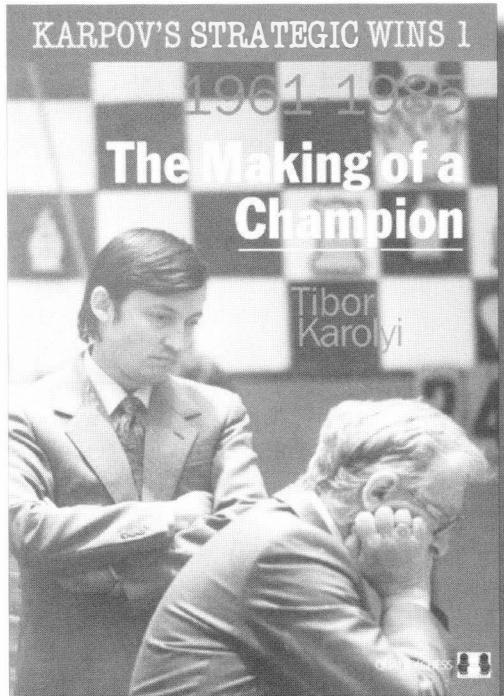
R

Radjabov 97, 98, 152, 153, 155, 204, 205,
 206, 210, 307
 Ragozin 237
 Rakic 48
 Ravi 87
 Ree 273
 Reicher 362
 Reshevsky 289, 290
 Richter 6
 Rivera Kuzawka 195
 Robson 144, 185
 Rodriguez Cespedes 48, 66, 266
 Rodriguez Guerrero 40
 Rodriguez Lopez 131, 133, 134
 Rogers 265, 326, 361
 Rojahn 34, 44
 Romanishin 86, 88, 119
 Rosito 64
 Rosselli del Turco 347
 Rowe 40
 Rubinstein 347
 Rublevsky 143

S

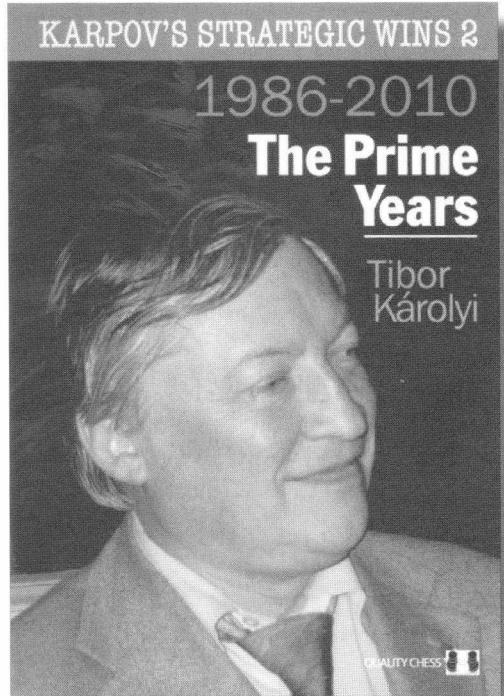
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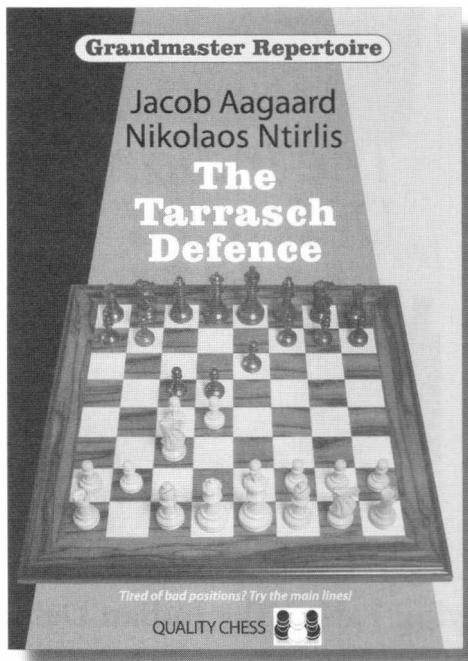
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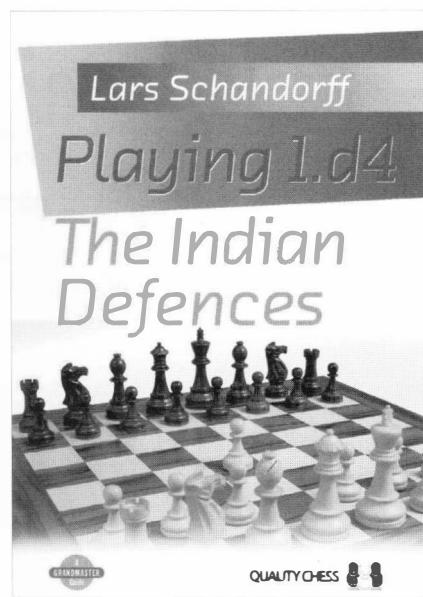
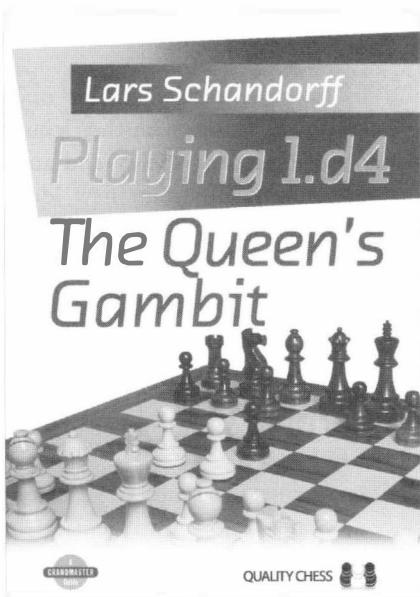
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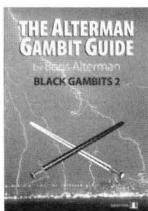
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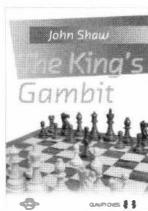
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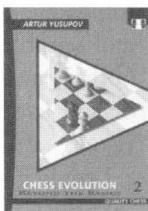
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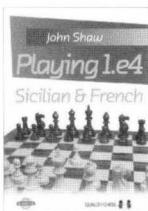
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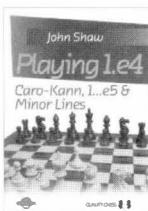
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