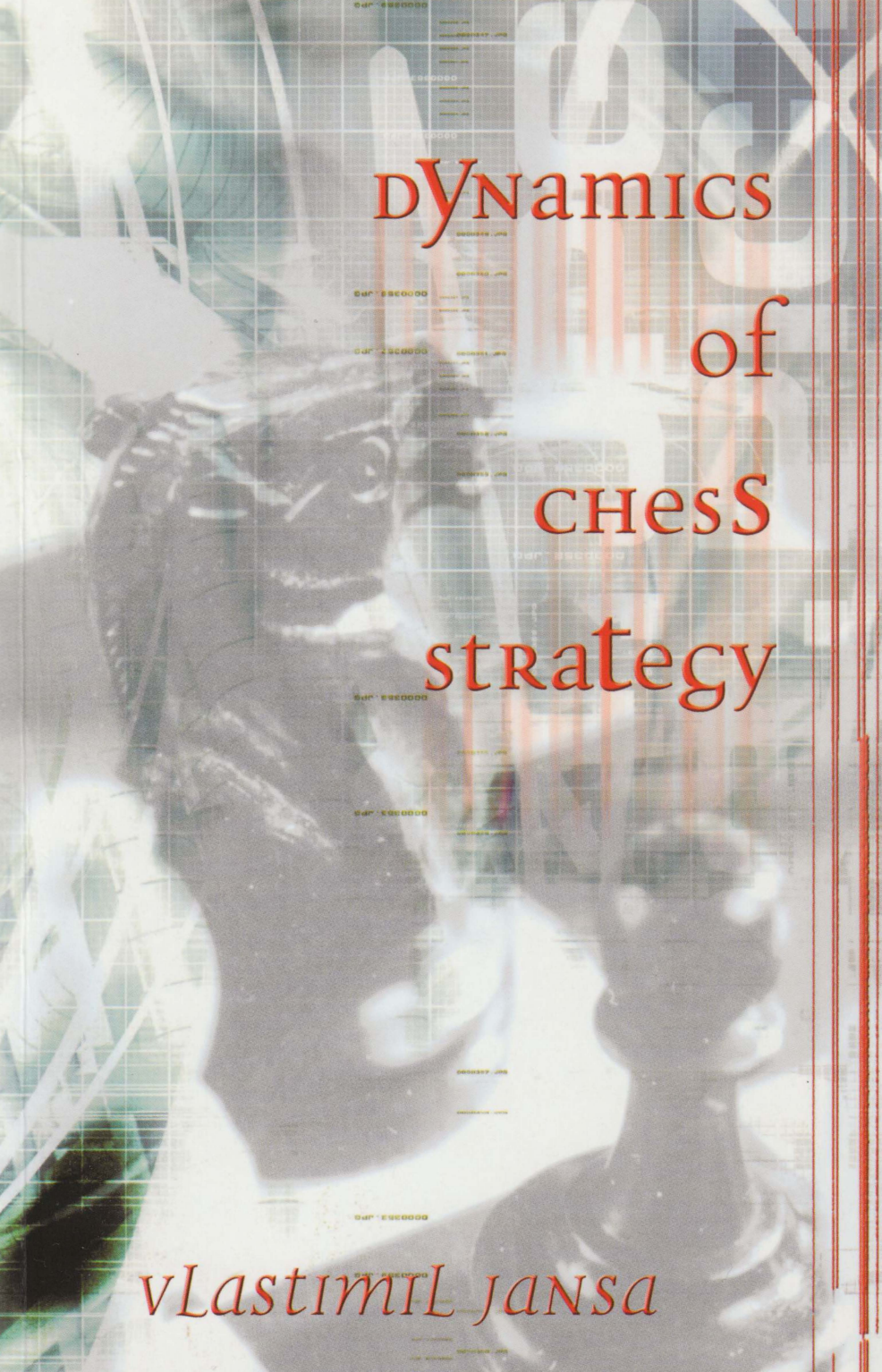


Dynamics of Chess Strategy

Vlastimil Jansa

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translated by Karel Kopicka

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A BATSFORD CHESS BOOK

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Introduction

What does 'dynamics of chess strategy' really mean and what does it consist of? How can we use it in our play and how can we control it with our minds? These are very exacting questions which I am going to try to answer in this book.

This doesn't only mean the individual specific solutions of various situations in chess openings – no, not by a long way. I would like to point out that it is neither exact calculation of variations nor extensive knowledge of opening theory that plays the most important role in decision-making. Conclusions are drawn more or less from conceptual strategic measures, created as a consequence of many effects present on the board in specific situations; also, an important part of the decision-making comes from an ability to be flexible enough to change one's plans if the opponent's reply or tiny changes in the character of the position demand this. In no case will I highlight isolated strategic principles, e.g. battle for the centre and space, rapid and correct development of pieces or healthy pawn structure; my reasoning is not focused on complicated positional mechanisms, e.g. a systematic struggle against the isolated pawn or how and when some piece should be exchanged. I will particularly try to explain the links between all important positional phenomena and, especially, their state of flux! Yes, goal-oriented systematic play is a must – however, the art of adjusting one's 'navigation' due to resulting changes and differences is important as well. Indeed, your actions may be compared to that of a captain of a ship or a pilot... Even a good footballer will only become exceptional if he is able to use his brilliant technique at a particular moment and as a precise reaction to events on the ground.

You may ask where the technique of evaluating situations on the chessboard is concealed. I would say that primarily it lies in the analytical-synthetic ability of all chess players, in their capacity to put together a large number of tiny details and peculiarities of respective openings or positions in order to create an integrated concept of a satisfactory further plan of play. In other words, the never-ending seeking and finding of a strategic balance in every decision.

After all, the exceptional ability of the analytical-synthetic thinking and imagination of certain prominent chess players was noticed by some psychologists many years ago. Using contemporary language, we could say that the issue is defined as an intensive specific programming activity aimed at the relationships and events taking place on the 64 squares...

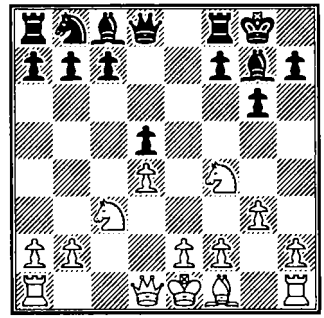
In addition, chess has seen extensive development in the field of dynamics, especially recently; every change or novelty needs a new approach and flexibility of thought. Positional criteria which have only just been recognised may get a new impulse – a static assessment will not do since strategy is in continuous motion, full of internal dynamics. And though all the notoriously known constants, e.g. good/bad bishop, pawn structure, development, are always present, these should not outshine the other components and one should have a sense of the ever-increasing role played by the general coordination of forces. This sense seems to be the most important clue in the maze of possibilities – any chess player without such a sense might be likened to a blind person looking for the right way at a major and busy road junction.

Yefim Geller, who died several years ago, seemed to be an outstanding representative of such dynamic strategy. I met him many times over the board, many times we analysed together, many times we discussed chess problems and, of course, I learned a great deal about chess from him. The principle of dynamic strategy has always been very appealing to me because it has been part of my own persona; using this principle I have sometimes even succeeded in outplaying the world's best players. The effort of searching for what are sometimes 'millimetre-size' dynamic deviations is fascinating and very exciting. A strategic advantage alone is not enough to bring home the point – the way to victory involves many other tricky mysteries and pitfalls...

I am not the one to speak about such mysteries and pitfalls, however, I can tell you enough about the ways and means of dynamic strategic reasoning, one of the most important parts of chess thinking. And it is this complicated and beautiful area that is the theme of our book.

I would like to demonstrate the importance of such reasoning by the following example from the game Kovačević-Jansa, Amsterdam 1973:

After the initial moves of the Grünfeld defence **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♗g5 ♘e4 6 cxd5 ♘xg5 7 ♘xg5 e6 8 ♘h3?! exd5 9 ♘f4 0-0 10 g3**, the following position was reached.



You should first think about it, consider what you would play as Black, who is to move, and only then read the following lines.

Just like you, I might consider various moves which at first sight seem logical, e.g. 10...♘c6 11 e3 ♖e8, but what to play after 12 ♗e2? Or, 10...c5 11 dxc5 d4 12 ♘e4 followed by 13 ♗g2. Nobody can be satisfied with the passive move 10...c6 because the two bishops prompt the strategic feeling that one should open the position and not block it! The correct decision can

only be made, however, after you find and fully appreciate the strength of the inconspicuous-looking **10...♖e8!** which, being the only appropriate move, leaves you with a feeling of full satisfaction. Only 10...♖e8 harmoniously fulfils all the preconditions necessary to carry out a favourable opening of the position after **11 e3 c5! 12 dxc5 d4** or **11 ♗g2 ♘c6! 12 e3 ♘xd4** or **12 0-0 ♘xd4 13 ♘fxd5 c6 14 ♘f4 ♗g4** (which occurred in the game) with a clear advantage to Black.

Selection of a suitable plan, sometimes from the very opening, is a somewhat more complicated challenge. Nevertheless, even here a similarly dynamic, independent way of reasoning may be more effective than an encyclopaedic specific knowledge of previous games. Such knowledge, without the dynamic strategic 'radar' mentioned above, often has a negative effect on a player. And vice versa: if you master this strategic way of reasoning, you will make great strides. You will start opening your games systematically and gain a superior understanding of positions; you will not be afraid of the opponent's knowledge and novelties, the dynamics of the position will continually have a telling effect on the dynamics of your thinking! You will simply become a wiser master of the chessboard and definitely have a much clearer idea of the respective opening or be able to recognise any weak points of a variation.

Do you think all this is too difficult? Try it anyway. It is worth it! In fact it is a dream of every chess player to separate the healthy 'wheat' from the vast 'chaff' of variations, to distinguish the 'muscle' from something that is non-essential. It was Robert Fischer who once brought such an exacting dream to life; neither Karpov nor Kasparov, Anand nor Kramnik could do without it. Even the youngest World Champion (from the historical point of view) Ponomariov follows this principle. Such a dream is also dealt with in these pages. This book contains my reflections on a number of modern openings, reflections which have so far found many adherents; this bolsters my awareness of the correctness of the method. However, be careful! Under no circumstances should you consider my recommendations to be the only right formula. On the contrary: you should be critical and if you really like some of the methods, think about refining them further. After all, dynamics on the chessboard always need the dynamics of your thinking!

It is not my intention to dissect the whole range of openings; I will, more or less, deal with the self-contained components that are typical for the dynamic concept of play both because of its guiding idea and also the necessary strategic changes depending on the opponent's replies. I will attempt to hold a dialogue with you, a series of questions and answers in which we will co-operate to discover the sometimes concealed and many times precarious chess truth. Often I will stand by my subjective conviction, but do not be afraid: the theme mostly consists of ideas in openings that I am well acquainted with. In my long career as a grandmaster, as well as a trainer and writer, I have been trying to stress the mutual link of the most principal

ideas by means of necessary methodological explanation. Do not forget: events on the chessboard are by no means accidental, on the contrary: everything is linked with everything and the dynamics involved in selecting a correct strategic plan reflects, delicately but also accurately, your dynamic thinking abilities!

The material in this book has for the most part been divided up into the respective openings. The content of the respective chapters centres on the following topics:

Dynamics in the game: opening strategy.

Dynamic strategic decisions during transition from the opening to the middlegame or to the endgame.

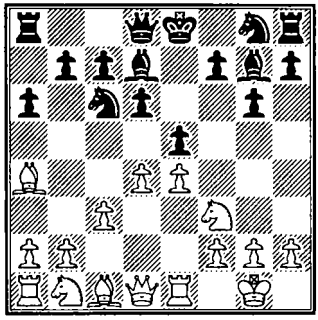
Continuous testing of your abilities in the evaluation of the situations and changes on the chessboard.

1 Spanish Opening

A. Steinitz's delicacies

Just as the Spanish (or, if you like, Latin-American) tango is one of the most difficult but also one of the most charming dances, the Spanish Opening presents opportunities for the most complicated but also the most fantastic strategic and tactical manoeuvres. In both cases the prerequisite is an accurate rhythm, first, a slow, wait-and-see type, then, at the right moment, a rapid one with surprising turns... An average dancer does not have the gusto for it – nor does a chess player without a sufficient sense of dynamics! No wonder that the correct treatment of the 'Spanish' is an essential weapon in the armoury of many of the world's leading grandmasters. I must say that it is precisely the nooks and crannies of the mysterious Spanish that I find so very appealing, as is the satisfaction of making new discoveries after seeking and finding a perfect and fascinating harmony of the pieces on the board.

All efforts of an ignoramus are exhausting; therefore, it is necessary to realise and 'feel' the importance of every move. Let us take the example of the well-known Steinitz variation: **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 d6 5 c3 ♗d7 6 d4 g6 7 0-0 ♗g7 8 ♖e1!**



The exclamation mark can only be understood by those who realise the main point of this, sometimes automatic, 'Spanish' move. Actually, its point here also lies in the fact that it prevents the natural developing move 8...♘f6. Then could follow 9 ♗xc6! ♗xc6 10 dxe5 – and Black has certain problems. You may individually evaluate Black's compensation after the practically forced continuation 10...♘xe4 11 exd6 0-0 12 dxc7 ♕xc7. However, after 13 ♗e3 Black probably does not have full compensation for the pawn. Less courageous persons might also try 12 ♗f4 ♘xd6 13 ♘d4 with a slight edge for White.

After 8 ♖e1, White leaves the opponent at a crossroads:

1. The development of the knight on f6 can be prepared by means of 8...b5 9 ♗b3 ♘f6 but then the

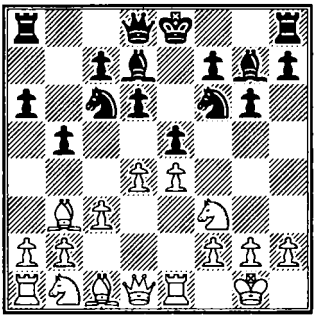
weakened queenside pawns may play an important role.

2. Black often plays 8...♕e7 9 ♘bd2 ♘f6 but the black queen is not well placed on the same file as White's e1-rook.

3. Therefore, Black chooses to develop his knight on the more passive e7 square, which also makes room for new ideas.

Every Black response on this intersection has its pros and cons. Our task is to try to detect the cons and find an adequate plan. Let us consider our three opportunities:

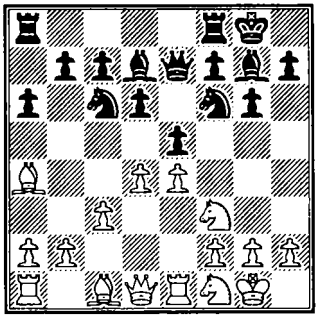
1. **8...b5 9 ♗b3 ♘f6**



Black solves the development of his knight in the simplest way by going to f6, however his weakened queenside pawn structure encourages White to try further active play. The epicentre should be the important d5 square over which a battle will be fought. The usual Spanish manoeuvre 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♘f1 (11 h3 ♖e8) could result in a loss of control of the d5-square after 11...♖e8 12 ♘g3 ♘a5 13 ♗c2 c5.

At first sight, there seems to be a possibility of developing the bishop to g5, but you will primarily face a problem in the continuation 10 ♗g5 h6 11 ♗h4 0-0 12 ♘bd2 exd4!?, when 13 cxd4? is effectively a pawn sacrifice after g5-g4... It is true that White maintains a slight edge after the correct 13 ♘xd4 (Aseev – Malanyuk, 1992) but to some extent the simple 12...♖e8 thwarts White's plan. A further transfer of the d2-knight to e3, via f1, is hardly feasible without a prior exchange on e5. But is White's potential activity then enough to play for a win? I think that this question may, to a certain degree, be answered a little later when we examine the game Jansa – Darga.

2. **8...♕e7 9 ♘bd2 ♘f6 10 ♘f1 0-0**



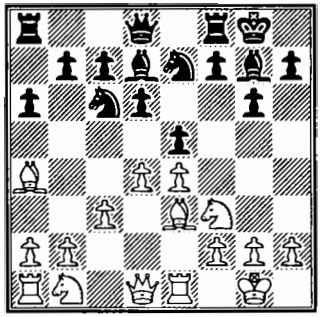
White has two basic plans here:

A. – to continue in 'Spanish' style with moves like 11 h3 followed by 12 ♘g3, ♗c2, ♗e3. However it is not so easy here to expose some weak point in Black's compact position.

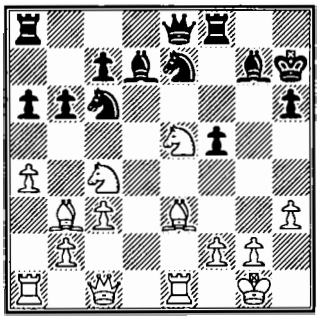
Therefore, the plan of developing the bishop on g5 seems to be more active:

B. – 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗h4 with the intention of immediately exploiting the d5-square after a subsequent ♘e3. Black usually reacts with a counter-threat 12...♕e8 (with the intention of 13...♘xd4 but also removing the queen from the unpleasant pin). However, after 13 ♗c2 (interesting is 13 ♗b3!? with a trap: 13...♘a5? 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 ♘xe5! winning a pawn, Stefansson – Karlsson, 1992) White maintains the tension in the centre and also the initiative associated with the transfer of the f1-knight to d5.

3. **8...♘ge7 9 ♗e3 0-0**

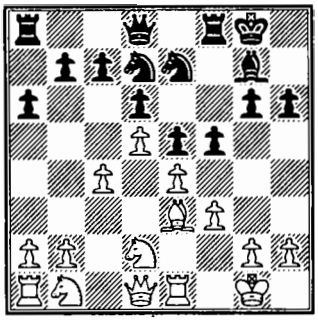


Former World Champion, Boris Spassky, used to be a proponent of this system for Black. His idea consisted of **10 ♘bd2 ♕e8!?** with the threat ♘xd4!. Though he lost a prestigious game against Anatoly Karpov (in Bugojno 1986) it could be said that the reason for his defeat did not lie in the opening but in a tactical miscalculation: **11 ♗b3 b6 12 dxe5 dxe5** – later Spassky played 12...♘xe5 – **13 ♘c4 ♔h8 14 ♕c1 ♗g4 15 ♘g5! h6 16 h3 ♗d7 17 ♘f3 ♔h7 18 a4** Instead of the quiet 18...a5, Boris roused himself: **18...f5?** and Karpov immediately countered **19 exf5 gxf5 20 ♘fxe5!**



20...♘xe5 21 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 22 ♗xh6 ♗d6 23 ♕g5!± and Black's position was cracking up.

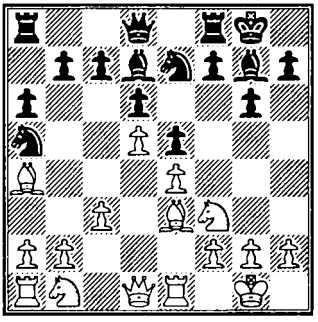
I think that a somewhat different positional approach could have been even more unpleasant for Spassky: **10 d5 ♘b8 11 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 12 c4 h6 13 ♘fd2!**, a trap set in fact by Judith Polgar in their 1993 Budapest match. White prevents Black's pawn activity on the kingside **13...f5 14 f3**



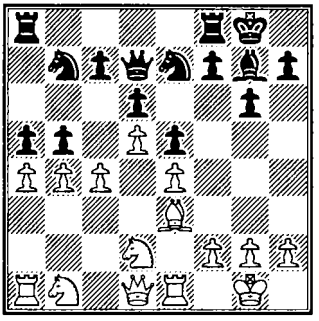
and concentrates on operations on the other flank. In fact, we have a King's Indian setup, the only difference being the absence of the white-squared bishops – but such a

detail undoubtedly plays into White's hands! A whole series of games has been played in like fashion and where Black was reduced to a noticeably passive role.

I employed the move **10 d5** in a game against the Austrian master H.Rolletschek in the Austrian league in 1997. My opponent thought several minutes and then played **10...♘a5?!**.



After the game, my opponent, who reminded me of a likeable, rather scatterbrained mathematician, explained 'I saw this idea in a game of Kamsky'. But I think he had got a little confused mentioning Kamsky's name: later on, I found a game S.Polgar – Gata Kamsky, New Delhi 1990 in my database: **8 ♖e1 ♘ge7 9 d5 ♘a5!?** – now it is different, the white bishop is still on c1 – **10 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 11 ♘bd2 b5 12 b4 ♘b7 13 a4 0-0 14 c4 c5** with chances for both sides. Nevertheless, my opponent's intention was refuted very convincingly: **11 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 12 ♘fd2! b5 13 b4 ♘b7 14 c4** (can you see or 'feel' the difference in the way the white pieces are placed?) **14...a5 15 a4!** ±



(15 bxa5 would only lead to a small edge but this pawn with its 'neck and neck tango' is a true delicacy! If either the black a- or b-pawns move, the white pawn will get to b5, totally paralysing the entire queenside and leaving White with a great advantage. The surprised opponent tries to stir up complications but White is in full control of the situation.) **15...f5 16 f3 c6 17 dxc6 ♘xc6 18 cxb5 ♘xb4 19 ♘c4!** (An important tempo: the threat of a 'fork' leads to control of the key d5 square and thus to full command of the entire chessboard...) **19...♕e6 20 ♘b6 ♖ad8 21 ♘c3 ♖f7 22 ♘cd5 ♘xd5 23 ♘xd5 ♖c8 24 ♖c1 ♖ff8?** (...to cap it all, Black 'cooperates'; however, from the positional point of view, his situation was lost anyway.) **25 ♘c7! ♕f7 26 b6 ♘f6 27 ♕d5 ♕xd5 28 ♘xd5 ♖b8 29 ♖c6 ♗d8 30 ♖ec1 ♗h4 31 g3 f4 32 gxf4 exf4 33 ♗d4 ♔f7?! 34 ♖c7+ ♔e6** (The cooperation leads to a selfmate...) **35 ♖xh7 ♗d8 36 ♖cc7** and **Black resigned**.

A correct plan and its consistent implementation is one of the most important parts of a modern chess player's weaponry. Not chance but

regular development, not the opponent's gross failure but our previous goal-directed play – flavoured with a logical final attack! Only in this case do we get true representation of real quality and of a player's strength.

Every player appreciating the aesthetics of chess dreams about games where a single main strategical plan is carried through without distraction to a successful conclusion; these should go hand in hand with the competitive aspects of chess. Such a course is very difficult because our opponent usually has his own plan, his own strategy and intentions – which are very different from ours. A flawless game won by somebody probably does not exist, a mistake must creep into the game somewhere. Neither Fischer nor Karpov, Kasparov, Anand, Kramnik could ever create their strategic 'evergreens' without some shortcomings of their opponents even if their mistakes were somtimes only of the 'millimetre' variety ...

Nevertheless, chess logic is in many cases surprisingly profound! 'Imagine you play a tense game, both you and your opponent have different plans. Your opponent makes, in your opinion, an incorrect move, you want to demonstrate it to him but the situation intensifies. If you are right, your strategic intentions move into tactical gear as if you had cast a spell – what a joy to watch and think about! However, you should not hesitate, the wheels may easily turn against you! The opponent puts up resourceful resistance and sets pitfalls, but the steely logic of your development, enhanced by your correct moves, wins inexorably through in the end. Sometimes the beautiful dream comes true.'

Try to analyse and experience one of my games. My opponent was German grandmaster Klaus Darga and we played exactly the same variation of the Spanish seen above. In the dialogue with you, there will be several key questions which bothered me during the game; try to answer these questions! You will get a certain number of points for the right answers – the total sum should determine the level of your abilities, knowledge and, maybe, even the quality of your concentration.

V. Jansa – K. Darga
Germany 1990

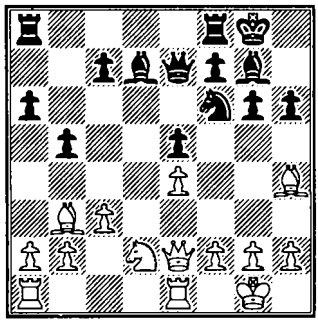
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 c3 a6 5 ♗a4 d6 6 d4 ♗d7 7 0-0 ♗g7 8 ♖e1 b5

Black chooses the first of the possibilities analysed above.

9 ♗b3 ♘f6 10 dxe5

As I mentioned, maintaining the tension in the centre by means of 10 ♗g5 or 10 ♘bd2 has its own specific characteristics.

10...♘xe5 11 ♘xe5 dxe5 12 ♗g5 0-0 13 ♘d2 h6 14 ♗h4 ♕e7 15 ♕e2



Also, 15 ♘f1 at once could have been considered.

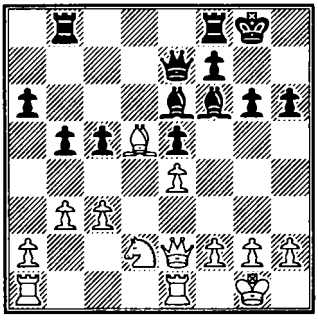
15...c5

Otherwise Black will hardly get any counterplay and the ♗b3 will be very strong. If Black had played his idea in a different order (15...♗e6 16 ♘f1 c5), it would have resulted in chronic strategic drawbacks after 17 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 18 ♗xf6! with a further ♘e3-d5. Also after the game continuation everything will focus on the key d5 square.

16 ♗d5 ♖ab8 17 ♗xf6

Otherwise 17...g5.

17...♗xf6 18 b3! ♗e6



Question:

It seems that after 19 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 20 ♘f1 White gains the advantage due to the transfer of his knight to d5. Is that right? If it is not right, why?

Answer:

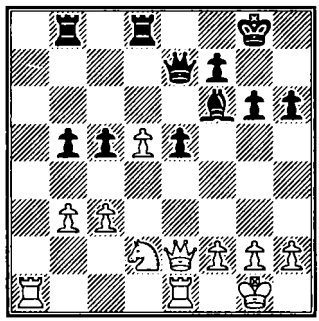
You may have chosen the positive answer (0 points) after the calculation that following 20...♗g5 21 ♘e3 ♗xe3 22 ♕xe3 comes a double attack (1 point). But, only those who are careful have found, as I also did, that Black has an important 'intermezzo' 20...♕c6! at his disposal and only after 21 f3 should he play 21...♗g5 (another 2 points).

Certainly, White could also play 19 c4 with a slight advantage but I wanted to open the a-file first.

19 a4 ♖fd8 20 axb5 ♗xd5?

This is precisely the important moment that I was speaking about in the introduction. The opponent makes a move which I consider incorrect, however, you may only put the question mark here if you prove you are right both in the game and later in the post-mortem. Grandmaster Darga has always belonged to those exquisite positional players. However, he admitted that this exchange had been his only serious mistake – but also a decisive one! This will be confirmed by the following strategic and tactical cooperation of the white pieces – Black's intention, namely f7-f5 and e5-e4, can only be refuted by energetic measures. Better was 20...axb5 21 c4, with only a minimum edge for White.

21 exd5 axb5



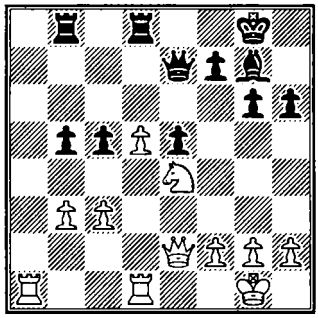
Question:

How can White cast doubt on the previous exchange on d5?

Answer:

It is necessary to play energetically – Black would not be worse after 22 c4 (0 points) since 22...bxc4 23 bxc4 ♗g7 followed by f5 would offer counterplay. The only right move is the active 22 ♘e4! (3 points) after which White maintains the initiative. Naturally, he must use simple tactics which have to be foreseen: 22...♖xd5? 23 ♕f3!, winning the exchange.

22 ♘e4! ♗g7 23 ♖ed1



Logically, the last, least active piece is included in the play with the aim of maximum coordination of all forces; however, another question emerges.

Question:

How should White react to the counter-measure 23...f5?

Answer:

If you can see that the critical 23...f5 would be refuted by 24 d6 ♕f8 25 ♘xc5 ♖xd6 26 ♘d7!± you will get another two points. I admit that at this moment any misgivings I had about the situation on the board were dispelled and I was able to find the following moves easily and quickly. I believe that you will be able to bring the game to a successful end with me. The further course of the game resembles a guided missile which can only be diverted from the target by a very exceptional event...

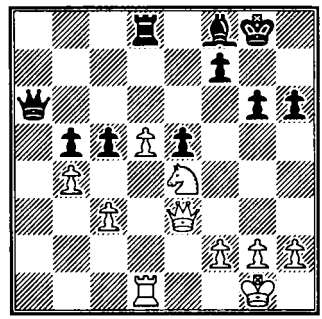
23...♕c7 24 ♖a6! ♖b6

Again, 24...f5 is not possible, this time due to 25 ♖c6 ♕f7 26 ♘d6 and 27 ♘xb5.

25 ♖xb6 ♕xb6 26 ♕e3! ♗f8

26...♖c8 27 b4 ♗f8 28 d6 ± and c5 is easy prey.

27 b4 ♕a6!



Black imaginatively looks for his chance.

Question:

Will you take on c5 with the knight or with the pawn?

Answer:

After 28 ♘xc5? (0 points) you would have had an unpleasant

shock: 28...♖xd5. Certainly, 28 bxc5± is right (1 point) since then 28...♖xd5? is well met by 29 ♘f6+.

28 bxc5 f5 29 ♘d6 e4

After 29...♗xd6 30 cxd6 ♕xd6 31 ♕xh6 ♔f7 32 h4± the win should not be far away.

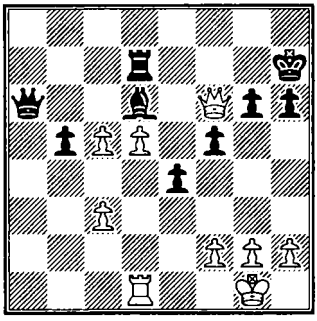
30 ♕g3! ♔h7 31 ♕h4!

Combinational knight jumps were also attractive but seemed to me somewhat dangerous: 31 ♘xf5 ♖xd5 or 31 ♘xe4 ♖c8. The penetration of the queen should be decisive.

31...♖d7

If 31...g5 then 32 ♕h5 ♗xd6 33 ♕f7+ ♔h8 34 ♕f6+ and 35 ♕xd8 winning.

32 ♕f6 ♗xd6



Question:

The white queen controls the board. Nevertheless – what is the point? Will Black win the pawn back?

Answer:

No, he will not. The last subtlety lies in the move 33 ♕e6!. The pieces are marvellously concerted. After 33...♗xh2+ 34 ♔xh2 ♕xe6 35 dxe6 ♖xd1 the white e-pawn runs. 33...♖d8 is met with a queen dance: 34 ♕f7+ ♔h8 35 ♕f6+. Finally, 33...♖e7 34 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 35 cxd6 ♖d7 36 ♖b1 leads to a won rook endgame...

If you realised all that, you get a final 2 points for this game.

33 ♕e6! ♕c8 34 cxd6 ♕d8 35 ♖a1 and **Black resigned**.

35...♖xd6 36 ♖a7+ ♔h8 loses to 37 ♕e5+ and otherwise 36 ♖a6 is decisive.

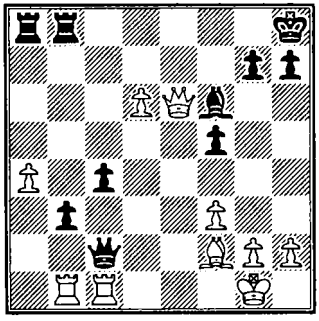
Precious harmony is always linked to maximum efficiency!

The unforgettable grandmaster Paul Keres was a great connoisseur of the Steinitz Variation of the Spanish. I had the opportunity to meet this great player in several games; also, we had many discussions. He always made a great impression on me: Keres continually radiated with enormous erudition, objectivity, order and equanimity in his manners, both on the chessboard and off it. During our games I always had a feeling that I was playing against somebody who knew everything about chess. Paul Keres also had some kind of hidden dynamic instinct that I repeatedly mention in this book. All attempts at activity by his opponents were usually eliminated by his fantastic foresight, a continuous magical prophylaxis; on the other hand, his chessboard operations were based on clear logic and deep calculation. In 1961, during my first outing for Czechoslovakia at the European Team Championship in Oberhausen, I was playing a very tough game on board four as Black

against future World Champion Petrosian. In this game I had to submit to enormous 'positional massage', however, I could not miss the opportunity to watch the interesting scenario developing right next to me, on board three, in a game between 17-year old V.Hort and the 'crown prince' of the chess throne, Paul Keres. It was the same Steinitz Variation that had led to a critical sharp position in which Keres, playing Black, was on the move. The subsequent fascinating events and the course of the game are deeply implanted in my memory. There were six moves left to the time control; for the first of them Keres consumed nearly eight of his remaining ten minutes! However, that move was worth it: an excellent queen sacrifice opened the way for the passed pawns!

Nevertheless, this solution was very courageous since White had his own counter-chances. Vlasti Hort was on tenterhooks but what happened next was a tremendous surprise... All of a sudden, there was a bang in the playing-hall as White lost control of his tilting chair... Literally, something happened that is, under normal circumstances, just a figure of speech – he was so surprised that he fell off his chair! Even though the position remained unclear and tense, this had no effect at all on Keres who had calculated everything up to the winning end and as far back as when he made the sacrifice; the subsequent moves followed quickly and accurately. I admired not only his brilliant calculation but, perhaps even more, his perfect coolness – untouched by the events around him, he not only executed the remaining moves on the board but also wrote them down on his score sheet, as usual, using the full notation (despite being in time-pressure). Many an experienced grandmaster's hand would have at least been shaking in such a position, a queen down, let alone being able to record the moves...

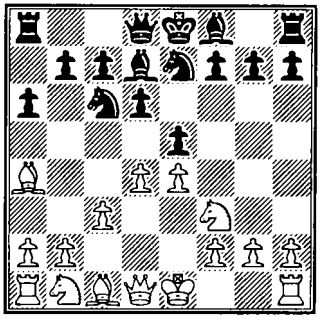
This is what happened on the chessboard in Oberhausen. In the following position



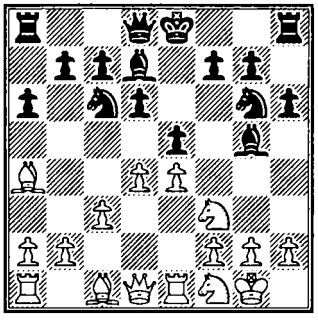
there followed **35...♕xc1+!! 36 ♖xc1 b2 37 ♖b1 c3 38 ♕e2 ♖xa4! 39 d7 h6 40 ♕e8+ ♔h7 41 d8=♕ ♖xd8 42 ♕xa4 ♖d2 43 ♖xb2 cxb2 44 ♕b3 ♖d8 45 ♕c2 ♖b8 46 ♖b1 g6 47 g4 ♖a8 48 ♔g2 ♖a1 49 ♕c2 b1=♕ 50 ♕c7+ ♗g7 51 ♗d4 ♕f1+ 52 ♔g3 f4+ 53 ♔xf4 ♕c1+ 0 : 1**

The following variation would not be complete without mentioning Keres; it was namely Keres who promoted the line, which enjoyed great popularity under his guidance:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 d6 5 c3 ♗d7 6 d4 ♘ge7

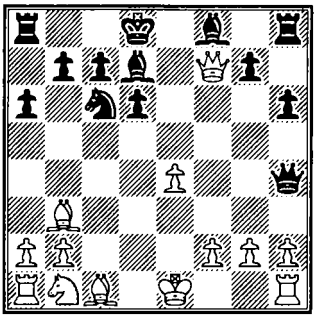


Black plans to reinforce the e5 square by means of ♘g6 and only then wants to play ♗e7. In a series of masterly games Keres devised and carried out another positional manoeuvre: h7-h6 followed by ♗e7-g5! In the position arising after **7 0-0 ♘g6 8 ♖e1 ♗e7 9 ♘bd2 h6 10 ♘f1 ♗g5!** White's efforts to gain an advantage were of no avail.

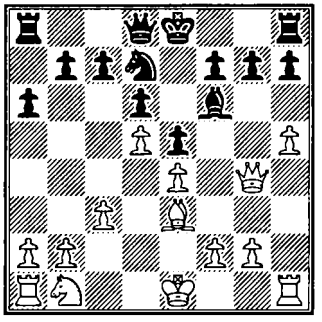


Or, 8 ♗e3 ♗e7 9 ♘bd2 and again 9...h6! 10 ♘bd2 ♗g5 – which solves the otherwise unpleasant problem of the Black's dark-squared bishop.

White also tried a plan to attack the weak f7 square: **7 ♗b3** and if **7...h6**, then **8 ♘h4**. So far, theory has not settled on the evaluation of a sharp and challenging reaction by Black: **8...exd4 9 cxd4 ♘xd4!? 10 ♕xd4 ♘c6 11 ♕d5 ♕xh4 12 ♕xf7+ ♔d8**

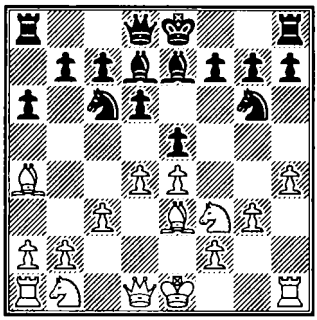


Naturally the ♘e7-g6 manoeuvre incited White to try the advance of the h-pawn and thereby postpone castling: **7 ♗e3 ♘g6** (7...g6 8 0-0 ♗g7 9 d5! transposes play to the known positions of the previous section – under even more advantageous conditions for White) **8 h4!? ♗e7 9 h5** However, will White gain anything real after **9...♘h4 10 ♘xh4 ♗xh4 11 d5 ♘b8 12 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 13 ♕g4 ♗f6?**



White is, thanks to his spatial advantage, a little better, but the simplification and his solid entrenchment offer Black good prospects of full equalisation.

And, again, we are back at the dynamic concept of all the details of the opening strategy! In 1994, before my game against German player A.Zude, I found out that my opponent, as Black, used this 'Keres' variation practically without exception. The possibility of advancing the h-pawn after **7 ♗e3 ♘g6 8 h4** had occurred to me some time before; however, the idea **8...♗e7 9 g3!?**



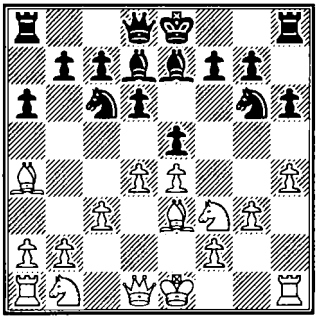
was inspired not only by similar reactions in other openings... but also my former experience at soccer!

No, do not laugh! Such associations are not so exceptional. Recently I have read an outstanding paper by Grandmaster Y.Averbakh dealing with the endgame where, in a series of textbook examples, the author finds a similarity between the endgame and... the ice-hockey body-check! I really do not know whether this endgame specialist (he is over eighty now!) used to play hockey – however, he must have watched it. Averbakh's simile seemed quite fitting to me! Back to my inspiration at that very moment – such inspiration is based on subconscious positional reactions of some of the world's top goalkeepers! Let us take, for example, the Arsenal/England goalkeeper David Seaman, phenomenal Ivo Viktor, my contemporary and long-term goalkeeper of the Czechoslovak national team, or, using an ice-hockey example, Dominik Hašek, an invincible barrier for the best NHL forward players. All these excellent goalkeepers have something in common: exquisite orientation and perfect control of the area around the goal. Many times they faced players rushing forwards – they were always able to take their place so that an effective shot, pass or dribble would be a difficult task for their opponents. Some may find this rather peculiar but it is right! Such a 'small move', 9 g3!?, reminds me of the goalkeeper's imperceptible side-step, a small but important strategic cover of space. And it becomes an important dynamic element both on the pitch and the 64 squares!

Back to the chessboard. The 9 g3 move must be a more exacting continuation than 9 h5. It takes the f4 and h4 squares under control, the g6-knight has 'shorter legs' now. However, there is a rule of give and take! White, on the other hand, weakens the white squares of his kingside... And, again, the balance: which is more weighty? Always it depends on the strategic sense which can only be defined with difficulty; I would say that the right side is, after all, a little bit heavier, therefore, I ultimately chose this continuation. You can now go through the game with me and share my experiences; moreover, by means of test questions you can take an active part in the strategic combat.

V. Jansa – A. Zude
Germany 1994

1. **9...h6**



This is a solid but also passive response. On the other hand, it is an understandable reaction by Black to the 9 g3 surprise. Later on, we will be dealing with 9...h5 which was played in another test game Topalov – Yusupov; also, we will consider the possibilities after the impassive 9...0-0 and will not forget Black's counterplay beginning with 9...exd4 or an immediate 9...b5.

10 ♘bd2 ♗f6 11 d5!

An appropriate moment for the blockade – at least this is what it appeared to me during the game and it appears to me now. Why? Well, Black weakens the cover of the d6- and c5-squares (after White's next c3-c4) and the position of the bishop on f6 holds up Black's only counterplay by f7-f5... Sufficient arguments, aren't they?

11...♘b8 12 c4 c5!

A reasonable response, otherwise White's activity develops all by itself after the advance c4-c5.

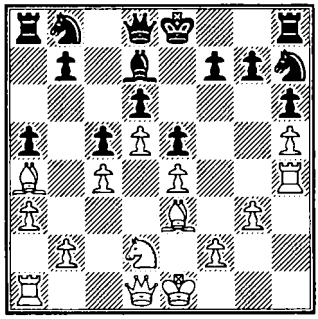
13 a3 a5

Black gambles on long-term defence. On the other hand, 13...b5?! 14 ♗c2 followed by 15 b4± would have played into White's hands.

14 h5?!

Another alternative, maybe more accurate, consisted of maintaining the 'status quo' on the kingside and launching an immediate offensive on the other flank.

14...♘f8 15 ♘h4 ♗xh4 16 ♖xh4 ♘h7



At this moment I had the unpleasant feeling that I had slipped off the right track somewhere during the previous few moves. Nevertheless, it was necessary to play on and do as well as I could!

Question:

Will you recommend that White play:

17 ♖g4, 17 b4 or **17 f4** ?

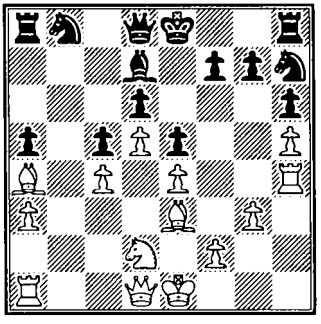
Substantiate your decision!

Answer:

You must have easily found that 17 ♖g4? (0 points) would be simply useless. After a brisk 17...♘f6, the

trek of the rook, 18 ♖xg7??, would be over and mean suicide after 18...♔f8. You might have contemplated 17 f4 (1 point). Its disadvantage lies in the unclear opening of the position in the centre after 17...exf4 18 ♗xf4, after which Black can even afford 18...0-0 19 ♗xd7 ♘xd7! 20 ♗xd6 ♖e8 with excellent compensation for the pawn. Only an immediate operation on the queenside is appropriate, i.e. 17 b4! (2 points). If you supported your assessment by a nice variation with subsequent penetration of the white pieces, 17...axb4 18 axb4 cxb4 19 ♗b6! ♕c8 20 c5! dxc5 21 ♘c4±, you may add another point. This variation and the possibility of 18...b6 19 ♗b5! with full control of the a-file gave me the impulse to decide on 17 b4...

17 b4! b6 18 bxc5 bxc5



Question:

The presence of the a-pawns on the a-file plays into White's hands because the a5-weakness is the only possible target for attack by the white pieces in the endgame. But, since it is necessary to play over the whole chessboard, how should White resolve the situation on the kingside? It is a difficult strategic task, what would you recommend to White? It should be a conceptual measure, a clear plan you cannot do without in such type of positions!

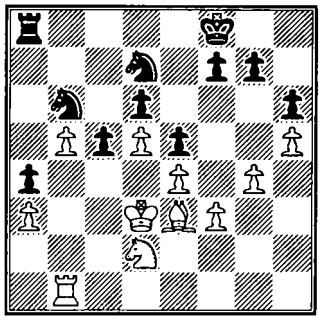
Answer:

White should primarily prevent the opponent's counterplay associated with the f7-f5 advance. Therefore, the premature 19 ♖b1?! (0 points) cannot be recommended since 19...0-0 will follow and the f7-f5 advance cannot be prevented. However, hasty activity like 19 f4?! (0 points) is also harmful because, after 19...exf4 20 ♗xf4 0-0!, the white pieces (including the king) are poorly coordinated and there would be nothing for Black to complain about. The only proper strategy for White lies in the blockade of the kingside! As soon as you realise this important fact, you will find the way the key role is played by the blocking advance g3-g4. Since it may not be performed without prior withdrawal of the h4-rook, then...? Yes, only those who retreated the h4-rook gain three points, their considerations corresponding to those of mine during the game.

19 ♖h1! 0-0 20 g4! ♗xa4 21 ♕xa4 ♕d7

Black believed he might hold the endgame after exchanging the active white queen which controls several important squares.

22 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 23 ♔e2 ♖fb8 24 ♖ab1 a4 25 f3 ♔f8 26 ♖b5 ♖xb5 27 cxb5 ♘b6 28 ♔d3 ♘f6 29 ♖b1 ♘fd7



This is the position Black was thinking of. It seems that the knight pair creates an unassailable fortress. However, this is an illusion, there is a breach in the fortress – and maybe even a hole!

Question:

What is the Achilles' heel of the black position which will help White to penetrate Black's defensive wall? Suggest the right method for White!

Answer:

The f5 square is the weak point of the black position – and, on the other hand, an excellent strategic height for the white knight! From this square, the knight will be able to observe both weaknesses in the black pawn structure: d6 and g7. The knight will soon become a commanding officer over all events on the entire chessboard. Such a strategic impulse should not be missed and you may only add another two points to your account if you found the manoeuvre 30 ♘f1! followed by ♘g3-f5.

30 ♘f1! ♘c8 31 ♘g3 ♘db6

Black has not enough time to cover the f5-square since 31...♘e7 opens the way for the b-pawn: 32 b6 ♖b8 33 b7 followed by a decisive redeployment of the white forces by means of ♔c4, ♗d2-a5-c7.

32 ♘f5 ♔g8 33 ♗d2

Before White starts the final assault on the g-file, he removes the black rook from the a5-square.

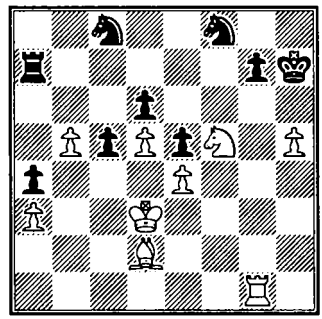
33...♖a7 34 f4 f6 35 fxe5 fxe5 36 ♖g1! ♘d7

Black cannot hold all the important squares and his ranks are left in chaos. After 36...♔h7 37 g5 hxg5 38 ♖xg5 ♖d7, 39 ♖g6 and 40 ♗a5 is decisive.

37 g5 hxg5 38 ♖xg5 ♘f8 39 ♖g1

Intending 40 ♗h6.

39...♔h7



40 b6!

...and still this pawn thrust! After 40...♖b7, 41 ♗a5 will follow with a subsequent 'blitz' march of the white king via c4; if the desperate 41...g6, then 42 hxg6+ ♘xg6 43 ♖h1+ ♔g8 44 ♖h6. With the loss of the d6-pawn, the cornerstone of the black position, the defensive wall collapses like a house of cards.

40...♘xb6 41 ♘xd6 ♘fd7 42 ♘c3 c4+ 43 ♔e3 ♘f6 44 ♘xe5 ♖e7

45 ♔d4 ♘xh5 46 ♘f5 ♖f7 47 ♘e3 ♘f4 48 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 49 ♖b1 ♘d7 50 ♘c4 ♘f6 51 ♖e1 g5 52 d6 ♔g7 53 ♘e5 ♖f2 54 ♘d3 and **Black resigned** (at last).

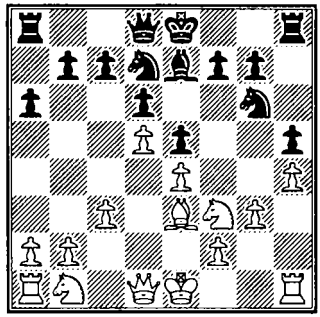
Based on my practice, I still have important advice to give to those inclined to similar conceptual, strategic 'warfare' as seen in the previous game and to those who strive for really logical and compact games. Many times you may succeed in outplaying your opponent in a similar way, bringing him 'to his knees', when it seems that you have already carried out all the important things on the chessboard... But your opponent does not give up and fights back desperately, clutching at straws. It is a dangerous moment and you should not be overconfident because even the simplest technical processes need accuracy and attention! I know what I am talking about, for precisely such inattentive moments bring cruel reversals and falls. Such falls are very similar to those of inattentive mountaineers who, after strenuously reaching the peak with all their might and main, slip, due to gross negligence during their apparently straightforward descent...

Our next test game also has clear positional contours. The only difference lies in the fact that its principal events occurred primarily on the kingside.

V. Topalov – A. Yusupov
Novgorod 1995

2. **9...h5** (This position was, in fact, reached by transposition of moves: 8 h4 h5 9 g3 ♗e7. The Bulgarian grandmaster again decides on a blockade after which the g6-knight will visibly fall into an 'offside' position and the h5-pawn will represent only shabby protection of the kingside.

10 d5 ♘b8 11 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7



Question:

The following moves for White come into consideration: 12 ♘bd2, 12 ♘fd2 and 12 c4. Which of them do you prefer and why?

Answer:

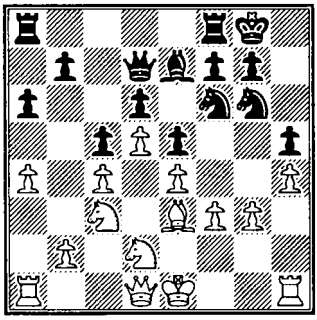
It is clear that White's plan should consist of an active advance on the queenside with the c- and b-pawns in order to secure as much space as possible. However, the control of events on the other side is also important! White would lose the dynamic coordination of his pieces if he played the dull 12 ♘bd2? (0 points). Then, 12...♘f6 might have followed and the unpleasant positional threat 13...♘g4 could only have been parried with the ugly 13 ♘h2. Some may have liked 12 c4 followed by 13 ♘c3 (1 point). However, again: how to react to 12...♘f6 with an attack on both e4 and g4? For example, after 13 ♘c3

♘g4 14 ♗d2 ♕d7 and f7-f5, the resulting position is unnecessarily unclear for White. Only 12 ♘fd2! (3 points) is the right continuation. Do you remember the same move in the previous variation, in the game J.Polgar – B.Spassky? This time, White has the assurance of both access squares e4 and g4 after 12...♘f6 13 f3±. Grandmaster Topalov had precisely this in mind in the game.

12 ♘fd2! ♘f6 13 f3 0-0 14 c4 c5!

Otherwise White's initiative develops of its own accord: ♘c3, b4, ♘b3...

15 ♘c3 ♕d7 16 a4



Question:

In this situation, grandmaster Yusupov blocked the queenside by playing 16...a5.

Do you consider this solution:

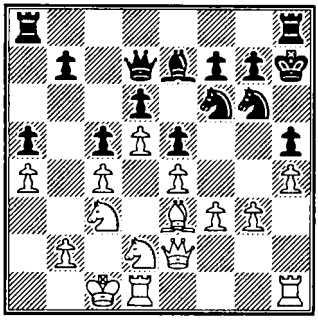
1. Wrong from the conceptual point of view, give reasons!

2. The opposite, correct from the strategic point of view – why?

Answer:

A brief question but a complicated answer. Similarly, as on the chessboard, there are often numerous strategic pitfalls during the course of the game! The response is not as simple as it might seem at first sight. This time even such a master of positional play, as Arthur Yusupov undoubtedly is, stumbled. Once and for all the blockade promotes White's active attempts on the queenside while simultaneously depriving Black of all possibilities of counterplay. White can then focus on the development of activity on the other side of the board, improving the position of his pieces and preparing the advance of the f- or g-pawn. And do not forget! White's king may, without any problems, retire under the safe blockade created by this very move 16...a5? (0 points). Naturally, even after other moves, White, who controls the somewhat larger area, would have stood better. Nevertheless, on the way to success he would have had to overcome some dynamic trickiness which potentially lies in the uncrystallised character of the situation on both sides. After all, on uneven ground you may sprain your ankle more easily than on a smooth tarmac road! Those who criticised the decision of the famous grandmaster deserve a full 3 points! Only one thing is to be added: what should Black actually have done? Strictly speaking, any other move maintaining the flexibility of the position was better than 16...a5, the most convenient probably being 16...b6 or 16...♗d8!?.

16...a5? 17 ♕e2 ♔h7 18 0-0-0 ♖h8



Question:

The advance of the f- or g-pawns was prepared by an excellent redeployment of the white pieces. Can you find the same key manoeuvre as White did? I am sure you will learn much from coordination of the activity of the pieces – which squares are the right ones for them?

Answer:

If you were thinking hard about the problems, you could not miss a certain square – yes, if the white knight occupies f5, the subsequent pawn breakthrough will only be a matter of time. The route utilises the e3 square, however, there is a bishop on e3! But this is precisely the point of the manoeuvring problem... The key route starts with the initial 19 ♘f1! (3 points) followed by 20 ♗d2 and 21 ♘e3. Note that everything is O.K.! As we stated above, this manoeuvre is enabled by the previous blockade.

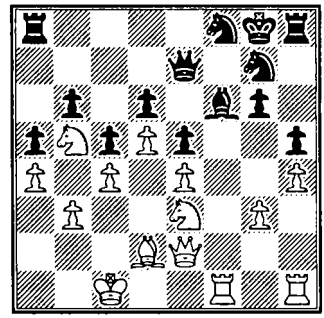
19 ♘f1! ♔g8 20 ♗d2 ♘e8 21 ♘e3 ♘f8

It is not easy to give Black, who is struggling for space, any helpful hints. He tries to cover the above-mentioned f5-square, however he just has to make some other spatial concessions.

22 b3 g6?! 23 f4 ♗f6 24 ♖df1 ♕e7 25 f5! ♘g7 26 ♘b5

White's pressure is continually mounting and everything leans towards a blow at some sensitive point of Black's eroded defence. It is not clear where the blow will occur – this makes resistance even more complicated. Topalov considered 26...♘d7 to be the only possibility, maybe still giving some hope.

26...b6?! 27 fxg6 fxg6



28 g4!

The second breakthrough comes and this time the consequences are devastating. The threat is 29 g5, while upon 28...hxg4 29 ♘xg4 ♗xh4, 30 ♘h6+ is decisive. After the game continuation a blow will rock the foundations of the black position...

28...♗xh4 29 ♘xd6!

Just as in the previous game, the key pawn on d6 falls and the black defence quickly collapses.

29...♕xd6 30 ♖xh4 ♘d7 31 gxh5 ♖xh5 32 ♖xh5 ♘xh5 33 ♘f5! and **Black resigned** because after

33...♕c7 the white knight would easily expose the rest of the black fortification: 34 ♘e7+ ♔g7 35 ♘xg6 ♔xg6 36 ♕g4+ +-.

In both test games you may have seen a similar strategic scenario:

A. Limitation of the opponent's piece activity by means of a nifty pawn 'sidestep' h4 and g3.

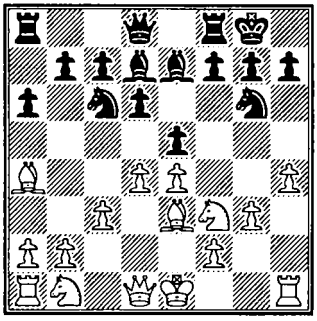
B. Spatial gains, active full-board strategy.

C. Blunting of all Black's counter-chances and subsequent 'single goal play'.

D. Final attack and fall of the defensive centre of the black position – the key foundation stone on d6 – with a quick end.

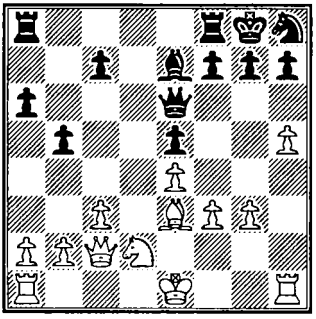
A few further short remarks on other Black's replies after 8 h4 ♗e7 9 g3:

3. **9...0-0**



Black allows his knight to be driven to the corner but how can White exploit it? I think that it was German grandmaster R.Lau, for several years my team-mate in the Austrian team Austria Wien, who hit the nail right on the head. In his game against Gretarsson of Iceland, played in the Velden 1996 tournament, he responded simply and logically by exchanging in the centre. The h8 knight is far away from the scene of battle and its absence will be felt on the open d-file...

10 h5 ♘h8 11 dxe5! ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xa4 13 ♕xa4 dxe5 14 ♘d2 b5 15 ♕c2 ♕c8 16 f3 ♕e6



17 g4!

This motif is well-known to us: without f7-f5 the black position lacks any spark.

17...f6 18 ♕b3!

Some may think that the exchange of queens is a less forceful continuation, however, I may convince those who question it by my question: 'Which of the black pieces is best placed?' Yes, it is the queen and so it must be eliminated!

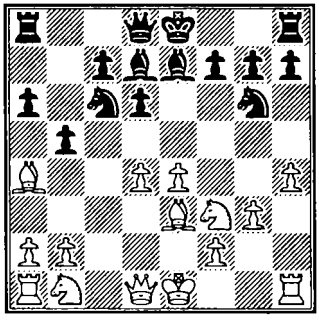
18...♔f7 19 ♔e2 c5 20 ♕xe6+ ♔xe6 21 c4! ♖ab8 22 ♖ac1

with a clear edge for White in a simple endgame, in which the target – the weak c5 pawn – also seems to be a motif of his play.

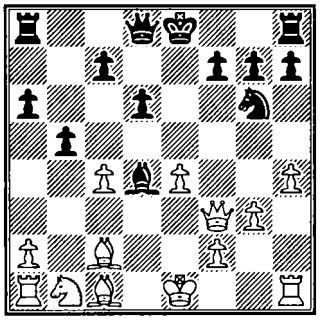
As you can see, if Black waits passively he is doomed to gloomy defence and White has enough resources at his disposal to 'turn the screws'. Therefore, some advocates of Black's system prefer the complications linked to b7-b5 and an exchange on d4. Do Black's counter-chances represent sufficient compensation for the surrender of the centre to White? I would not say so but, in any case, the strictly strategic combat moves over to treacherous tactical ground...

4. **9...exd4!? 10 cxd4 b5**

Or 9...b5 and 10...cxd4.



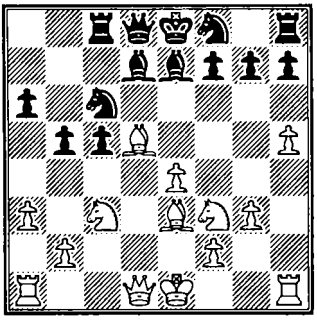
The usual Spanish question: 'Where to put it?', this time referring to the bishop. After 11 ♗b3?!, Black, utilising the knight manoeuvre 11...♘a5 12 ♗c2 ♘c4, gains time to generate activity: 13 ♗c1 ♗g4. In a game N.Borge – D.Lobshanidze, Ubeda 1998, this activity was crowned with surprising tactics: 14 b3?! ♗f6! 15 bxc4 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♗xd4 opening the long diagonal.



On the other hand, knight jumps are not so efficient after the better

11 ♗c2!? ♘b4 12 h5 ♘f8 13 ♗b3

After 13...♗g4, the continuation 14 h6 g6 15 ♘c3 looks good for White. In a game F.Nijboer – S.Safin, Istanbul 2000, Black's counterplay was based on a pawn advance in the centre: **13...c5 14 a3 ♘c6**, however, after **15 ♘d5 ♖c8 16 dxc5 dxc5 17 ♘c3** White's position was, without any doubt, more agreeable.



Conclusion: White's concept, started with 8 h4!? and 9 g3!?, undoubtedly thwarts Black's plans. It leads to exacting positional 'full-board' play, in which White

has a spatial advantage. It is a modern, very dynamic concept. There is only a single question left: 'How would Paul Keres, father and great connoisseur of the system, have reacted playing Black?'

B. Professorial variation

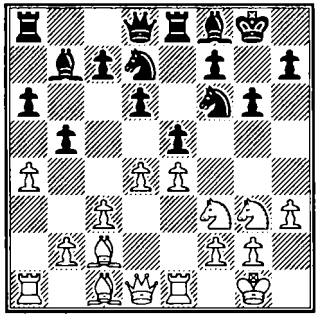
The finesses of the Spanish – a genuine positional pearl in the hierarchy of the various opening systems – has always appealed to me very much. I have always remembered Capablanca's profoundly true saying: 'The Spanish is the touchstone of positional abilities!' I liked to play the Spanish as both White and Black, even against such titans of the 64 squares as grandmasters Tal, Smyslov, Keres or Geller. Sometimes I was quite successful. The Czech grandmaster Smejkal was also one such opponent, a world-class player for whom the corners of the mysterious Spanish were not so dark. He scored many points playing the black pieces in this strategically exacting opening.

In 1972, the Championship of Czechoslovakia was played in the North-Moravian city of Třinec. Both Smejkal and I were among the favourites of the tournament and our individual game played an important role in the battle for first place. On the eve of our game I took a long walk through the darkened streets of Třinec and thought about how I could combat the Breyer Variation of the Spanish – the variation which used to be the principal cornerstone of Smejkal's opening repertoire against 1 e4. And, that very evening, I hit upon an idea which I used the next day ...

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘b8 10 d4 ♘bd7 11 ♘bd2 ♗b7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 ♘f1

Not even the most gigantic computer monster knows whether this classic Spanish transfer is better than the immediate **13 a4** (... and now either 13...♗f8 14 ♗d3 c6 or 13...c5). Besides, as we will see, both possibilities may flow into one another. In any case chess experts have various opinions and possible technical problems with the microprocessors may only be eliminated with human help...

13...♗f8 14 ♘g3 g6 15 a4!?



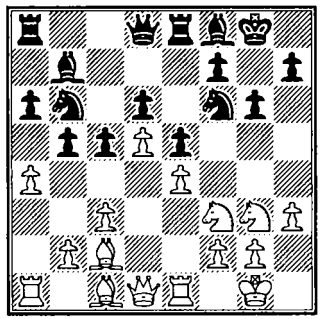
Yes, that evening idea of Třinec begins with this 15th move. White focuses on the b5 square and, due to the threat of another attack on that square, invites Black to make the 15...c5 advance; then a blocking move 16 d5 will follow, deadening the activity of the b7-bishop and combining active play over the whole board. This was the framework of my strategic reasoning. Today it seems to be quite primitive and simple but then it represented a new method in this variation! I was quite proud of it because 15 a4 soon became the

principal weapon against the Breyer Variation!

However, the game against Smejkal resulted in a bitter disappointment for me. After the planned **15...c5 16 d5** I really did reach a promising position but in the mutually tense time-pressure I spoilt the game and in the end lost. The variation became part of our chess-lives: usually, I played this variation as White, Jan Smejkal, on the other hand, tried to seek refinements of Black's system. As we will see later, our opinions on some details of this complicated position have been continually changing. I will try to give you information on the most important events which, in my opinion, have occurred in the past thirty years in this very complicated variation. Certainly my account will consist only of the most important things since material relating to the variation would fill a separate book. Within several years much of it would become obsolete, so another book would have to be published... After all, several generations have contributed to the development of the ideas and, with new generations, always something new is introduced. World Champions Spassky, Karpov and Tal, excellent grandmasters like Portisch, Nunn, Kavalek, Belyavsky, Smejkal, naturally 'Professor' Geller and many others – they all used to play this variation. Of the contemporary generation of top grandmasters, Anand, Adams, Topalov, Piket, and even the youngest World Champion Ponomariov, play it, to name but a few. I am very glad that I could get my irons heated and, as you will see from the following text, this dynamic iron is still hot... As usual, at some important points you will have the opportunity to compare your abilities with the grandmasters' interventions and, maybe, extend your strategic-tactical sight in the backwaters of the complicated positional combat.

1. **15...c5 16 d5**

A. **16...♘b6?!**



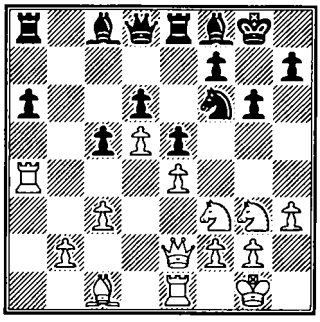
Black hurriedly tries to resolve the situation on the queenside. He will succeed, however, at the cost of a weakening of his pawn chain. In the blocked position it will pay off for White to exchange his bishop for the knight – he will then be rewarded by boring holes in the otherwise compact black pawn rock.

17 ♕e2!

A consistent continuation, targeting the b5-pawn. Both 17 a5 ♘c4 18 b4 and 17 b3 are not as strong.

17...♘xa4 18 ♗xa4 bxa4 19 ♖xa4 ♗c8!?

Preparing future counterplay by means of f7-f5 but also a doubling of rooks on the critical b-file.



How can White most appropriately attack the black weaknesses? The two following plans come into consideration:

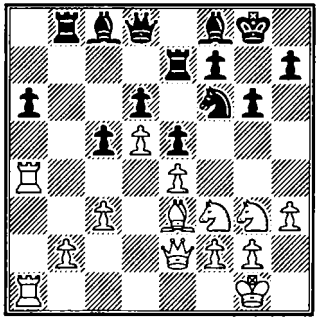
a) Gradual preparation of the advance of the b and c-pawns (as, for example, Karpov used to do): 20 b3 ♖b8 21 ♖a3 ♖e7!? 22 c4 ♖eb7 23 ♕c2 ♘e8 24 ♗d2 ♘g7 25 ♘h2 f5, Karpov – Smejkal, Moscow 1977.

b) Preparation of the knight manoeuvre ♘f3-d2-c4 (as, for example, Anand later did).

20 ♗e3!?

In case of an immediate transfer of the knight to d2 White must take into account the unpleasant ♗h6!.

20...♖b8 21 ♖ea1 ♖e7



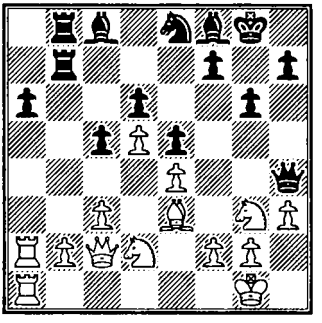
Question:

It is easy to plan something, however, the implementation of the plan is more complicated! How can White prepare the earth-shaking transfer ♘f3-d2-c4?

Answer:

The objective may sometimes be reached through patience and modesty. It is necessary to protect the b2-pawn. White's moves 22 ♖4a2 ♖eb7 23 ♕c2! (2 points for you) are only seemingly passive – they prepare the above-mentioned key manoeuvre. In an Anand – Piket game (Monaco 2000), however, Black did not hang around but launched an offensive...

22 ♖4a2 ♖eb7 23 ♕c2! ♘e8 24 ♘d2 ♕h4!



Question:

Black prevents tooth and nail the above-mentioned manoeuvre. After 25 ♘c4?, 25...f5! would follow; in addition, Piket intends to support his f-pawn advance by the knight manoeuvre ♘e8-g7. Is White better, anyway? How should he react?

Answer:

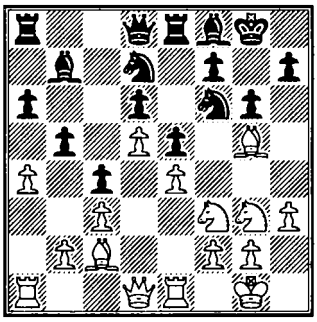
White still has the slightly better prospects (1 point), however, he must continue to be patient. If you chose, as Anand did, another preparatory move 25 ♖b1! you have hit the mark and you may add another 2 points. This quiet move also draws attention to the weakness on a6: if Black continues 25...♖b5, White may choose 26 ♖a4, 26 b4!? or even 26 c4.

25 ♖b1! ♘g7 26 ♖xa6 ♖xb2 27 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 28 ♕xb2 ♗xa6 29 ♕b6! ♗d3 30 c4 f5 31 ♘f3 ♕e7 32 ♕b3 fxe4 33 ♘g5 ♘f5 34 ♘3xe4 ♗xe4 35 ♘xe4 and, thanks to this strongly positioned knight and despite the extensive simplification, White had chances of a win.

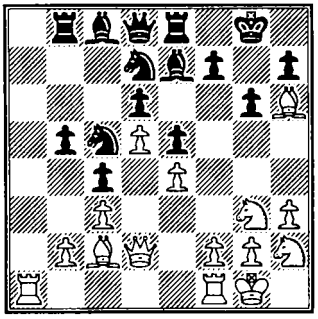
B. **16...c4**

Possibly the best reply. In case of a passive and worthless response (e.g., 16...♗g7) White could implement the plan aimed at the b5-pawn: 17 b3! followed by ♕e2 and ♗d3.

17 ♗g5!

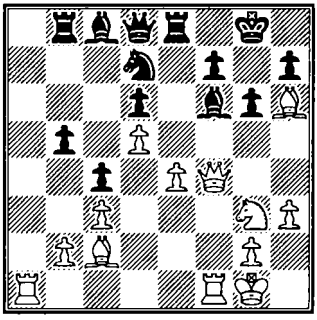


Only this accurate development points my distant 'Třinec idea' in the right direction. I must admit that my idea of that evening did not reach such positional heights. In the above-mentioned game against Smejkal 'only' 17 ♗e3 was played. The bishop stands more actively on g5 and will return to e3 only after 17...h6. In the following course of the game, White may gain a tempo due to the move ♕d2 and, most importantly, this little weakness enhances his attacking prospects on the kingside. The key plan then consists of preparation of the f2-f4 advance. Should Black ignore the bishop on g5, White will take control of the c1–h6 diagonal by means of 18 ♕d2, again with the idea of further opening the blocked position by f2-f4. Black's troubles may be illustrated by the course of a Kavalek – Spassky game, Montreal 1979: **17...♘c5?! 18 ♕d2 ♗e7 19 ♗h6 ♘fd7** (the more cautious 19...♖b8 was probably better) **20 ♘h2! ♖b8 21 ♖f1 ♗c8 22 axb5 axb5**



and now, instead of the half-hearted 23 ♔h1?! ♗f8, Luboš Kavalek could have given the former World Champion hell by the strong **23 ♘g4!** – at least as was indicated by later analysis. This is based on a quick f2-f4 advance and

subsequent covering of the vacated e5-square. The situation after **23...♘f6** (otherwise 24 f4 might have been even more effective) **24 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 25 f4 exf4 26 ♕xf4 ♘d7**



does not look bad for Black, however, appearances can be deceptive...

Question:

It is clear that White cannot take on d6 due to ♗e5. Black is ready to occupy the key square e5 and this would mean a transfer from defence to activity. However, White is to move and...

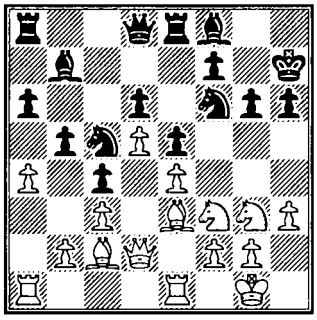
Answer:

...will flatly thwart Black's dreams of a blockade by the typical central breakthrough **27 e5!** (2 points). With this move White vacates the important attacking e4-square for his knight after both 27...♖xe5 28 ♘e4 and 27...dxe5 28 ♕f3 followed by ♘e4, in each case with a strong initiative. Remember this breakthrough! The pawn sacrifice, blockade of the e5-square and, on the other hand, opening of the white-squared diagonal with a triumphant knight on e4 is frequently an important motif in active white play in many openings!

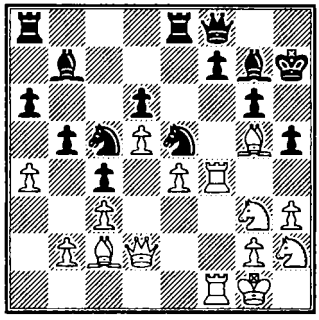
Most often Black first ousts the bishop from g5 and only then places the knight on c5:

17...h6 18 ♗e3 ♘c5 19 ♕d2

B1. **19...♔h7**



Black tries to avoid a further weakening of his position. This solid continuation was heavily tested in the Spassky – Portisch Candidates' match in 1977. The former World Champion tried to break down the gate of the fortress by various moves, but to no avail. He succeeded in opening it only in the 9th game, where the key f2-f4 advance was prepared: **20 ♘h2 ♗g7 21 ♖f1! h5!?** (Otherwise 22 f4 exf4 23 ♖xf4 might have followed.) **22 f3! ♕e7?!** (Later 22...♕c7 was recommended, however, after 23 ♗g5 followed by 24 f4 White gets a dangerous initiative.) **23 ♗g5! ♕f8 24 f4 exf4 25 ♖xf4 ♘fd7 26 ♖af1 ♘e5**

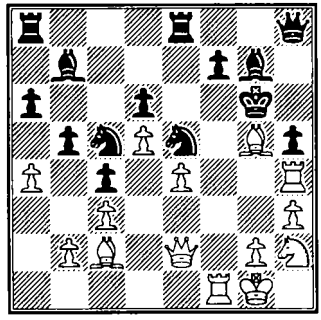


Question:

Portisch, one of the strongest positional players of that time, has succeeded in gaining control of the strategic e5-square and in covering the sensitive f7-pawn. Do you think that the black position is solid enough, yes or no? Do you recommend that White play 27 ♘f3, 27 ♕e2 or another possibility? You should support your assessment by specific variations!

Answer:

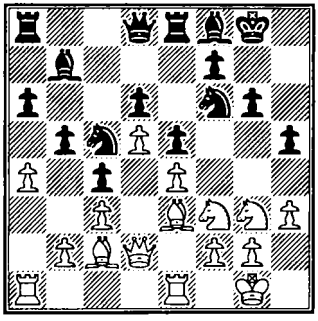
If the pawn had been standing on h7 and the king on g8, there would have been nothing for Black to complain about. However, there is a gap in his fortress now through which the white forces will inevitably get to the black king. No, the black defence is not strong enough (2 points) but how to destroy it? The move 27 ♘f3?! (1 point) deserves the minimum score, after 27...♘cd7 you have not broken through the defence. Only readers who focused on the weak segment on h5 have understood the problems of the black defence. However, not by means of the overly cautious 27 ♕e2? (0 points) because this preparatory move allows Black the consolidating move 27...♗h6! when it will be very difficult for White to attack h5. It is better to prepare the knight sacrifice by means of 27 ♖h4!? (2 points), however, the full quota of 3 points will only be awarded to those who revealed **27 ♘xh5!**. In this case you may attack 'à la Spassky' since this was precisely the continuation of the Spassky – Portisch game: **27...gxh5 28 ♕e2 ♕h8!? 29 ♖h4 ♔g6**



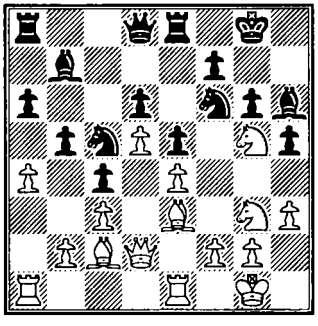
30 ♗d1! f5 31 ♖xf5 ♖f8 32 ♕xh5+ ♕xh5 33 ♗xh5+ ♔h7 34 ♗f7+ ♗h6 35 ♖xh6+ ♔g7 36 ♗f6+ ♔xf7 37 ♗xe5+ ♔e8 38 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 39 ♗xd6+ ♔g7 40 ♘g4 1:0
The finish is not absolutely forced but it is impressive. You will perhaps agree: after 27 ♘xh5 the massacre of the black pieces is inevitable!

After this brutal attacking game, in which Spassky had succeeded in opening the f-file and the black kingside, Black players tended to more frequently advance the pawn to h5, leaving the black king on g8...

B2. **19...h5**

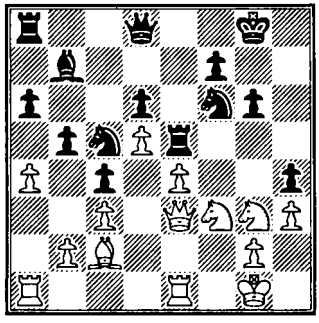


White's first attacking idea was conceived almost immediately: it is based on placing the knight on the newly-vacated g5-square, preparation of the f2-f4 advance, simultaneously covering the e4-pawn and aiming at f7! After **20 ♘g5!?** Black must not react passively, the active defence **20...♗h6!** is the only right continuation.



This possibility has immediately brought a reaction: instead of 19 ♕d2, isn't it better to play 19 ♕c1? After 19 ♕c1, 20...♗h6 would be wrong due to 21 ♗xc5 dxc5 22 ♘xf7! ♗xc1 23 ♘xd8 ± ... Nevertheless, everything is linked with everything! The c1-queen interferes with the coordination of both the rooks and so there are several uncertainties, e.g.: isn't it better to play, after 19 ♕c1, 19...♔h7? Back to 19 ♕d2 h5 20 ♘g5 ♗h6...

Primarily, the consequences of the principal **21 f4!?** should be assessed. You will probably agree that after 21...♗xg5? 22 fxg5 ♘fd7 23 ♖f1 White has enough targets for his attacking plans (f7, h5, f5). White's attacking prospects may also be high in the event of 21...exf4?! 22 ♗xf4 h4 23 ♘f1 ♕b6 24 ♕d4 ♗g7 25 ♕f2. However, how to entangle the mélange of tactical opportunities after the immediate **21...h4!?**. The g3-knight cannot retreat, as then can follow 22...♗xg5 23 fxg5 ♘fxe4, therefore it is necessary to play **22 fxe5! ♖xe5** (22...hxg3? 23 exf6±) **23 ♘f3 ♗xe3 24 ♕xe3**



Question:

Black is to move. In your opinion:

a) His situation is critical and his position is bad.

b) Black has clearly better prospects in the diagram.

c) The position is unclear and approximately equal.

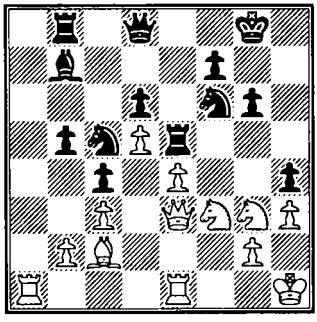
Confirm your opinion with a sufficient calculation of variations!

Answer:

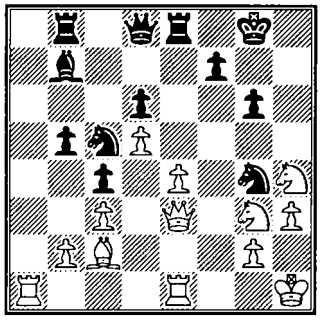
A complicated position and a hard question! Even in this case, the right answer forms an inseparable part of textbooks on modern chess theory. The truth – in the event of accurate play by both sides – is that the position is unclear and roughly equal (3 points)! Let us look at the hidden details: for Black it is undoubtedly wrong to play 24...hxg3? 25 ♘xe5 ±, though also after 24...♖e8? 25 ♘xh4 ♘xd5 26 ♕h6 White's position is excellent. Black should not hesitate and must further sharpen the position: **24...♘xd5!** (1 point). Now 25 ♕h6?! is not effective due to 25... hxg3 26 exd5 ♕xd5 or 26 ♖ad1? ♕f6!-+.

In a Nunn – Belyavsky game, Linares 1988, the English grandmaster played the ambitious 25 ♕d4?! but Black, exploiting the ideal cooperation of his knights, launched a promising counter-offensive: 25...♘e6! 26 ♕d2 ♘df4 27 ♘xe5 ♕g5! 28 ♖e3 dxe5 29 ♘f1 ♖d8. In his analysis Belyavsky gives the more cautious 25 ♕d2!? ♘f6 (25...hxg3? 26 ♘xe5 ♘f6 27 ♖ad1! ♘fxe4 28 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 29 ♕d4 ±) 26 ♘xe5 dxe5 27 ♘f1 ♗xe4 with approximate equality. You did not need to see everything, it was important only to give a realistic judgement on the opportunities of both sides after the correct 24...♘xd5.

As we have learned, the quick operation linked to 20 ♘g5 and 21 f4 does not lead to much if Black responds forcefully. However, the plan with the knight going to g5 should not be rejected so quickly. There are more moderate attempts: 20 ♘g5 ♗h6 21 ♖e2 followed by ♖ae1 or ♖f1 and only then the 'breakthrough' f2-f4. Also, a preparatory removal of the white king from the a7-g1 diagonal should be considered. I used this motif in a game against the Dutch grandmaster Van der Sterren – also a staunch supporter of the Breyer system – in a Danish tournament in Kerteminde 1991: **19 ♔h1!? ♖b8 20 ♕d2 h5 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♘g5 ♗h6** However, there is a difference: after **23 f4 h4 24 fxe5 ♖xe5 25 ♘f3 ♗xe3 26 ♕xe3,**



26...♘xd5 is questionable because of 27 ♕h6! since this time after 27...hxg3 28 ♘xe5 dxe5 29 ♖ad1 Black cannot play 29...♕f6 – due precisely to the previous sidestep of the king! However, the dynamic riddle continues: the position of the white king does not have only advantages – Black played **26...♖e8 27 ♘xh4 ♘g4!**

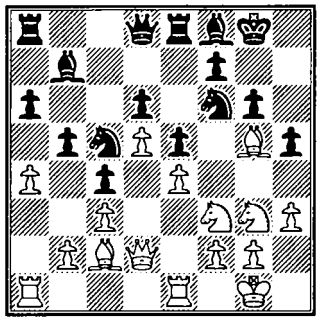


Try to assess whether Black's compensation for the pawn after **28 ♕f4! ♕xh4 29 ♖f1 ♘d7! 30 ♗d1 ♘de5 31 ♗xg4 ♗c8 32 ♗xc8 ♕xf4 33 ♖xf4 ♖exc8** is sufficient! It seems so, at least in the Kerteminde game the extra pawn soon dissolved into a drawish ending.

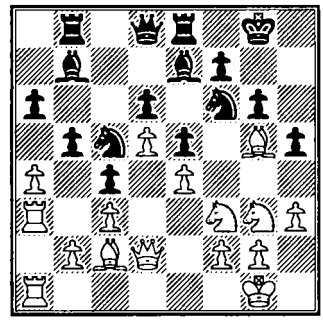
Try to find an adequate solution, to hit the right nail on the head! You may surprise your opponent and reveal some interesting opportunities!

The latest trend in this complicated variation diverged, surprisingly enough, from 20 ♘g5 – and the vacant g5-square was more frequently occupied by the white bishop: **20 ♗g5**

others. In their hands, playing for a minimal, even microscopic edge has become a very dangerous and indeed a highly practical weapon in the most modern tournament conditions. After the logical response **20...♗e7** White does not focus on the f2-f4 advance but rather increases the pressure on the queenside by doubling rooks on the a-file. After **21 ♖a3** Black usually prepares the transfer of his blocked white-squared bishop by means of **21...♖b8**. In a series of games White players then directed their efforts at very distant and imaginary targets with preparatory moves like 22 ♕e3 or even 22 ♗h6, though generally their results were quite modest. After 22 ♕e3 Black makes his defence easier by the bishop exchange 22...♘h7!? 23 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 after which any further attempts to play for a win need a truly bulldog perseverance and immense optimism. The flagging discussion was only revived when Bulgarian star Topalov, in a game against Van der Sterren in the Antwerp tournament 1997, immediately shifted his second rook to the a-file: **22 ♖ea1!?**

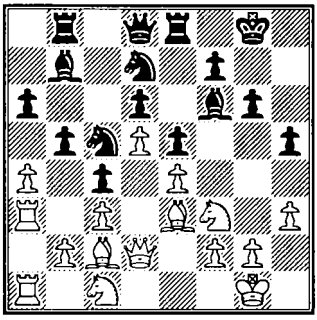


This development is linked to a new wave of grandmasters, above all, Adams, Topalov, Svidler and



The always decorous and decent Dutchman probably did not want to 'argue' with his ambitious opponent

and played the meek and clichéd **22...♘h7?!**. However, White did not exchange his bishop and, after **23 ♗e3 ♗f6**, he had his hands free to make a brilliant transfer: **24 ♘e2! ♘f8 25 ♘c1 ♘fd7**.



Furthermore he focused on active play on the queenside: **26 axb5 axb5 27 b4! cxb3 28 ♘xb3 ♕c7 29 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 30 ♕e2 ♗c8 31 ♖a7 ♕d8 32 ♖1a5±**. This active play brought White a clear positional advantage and, later, also a win.

22 ♖ea1 may arouse some doubts due to the weakening of the e4-pawn. While Van der Sterren's attention was not drawn to this fact at all, by contrast, in a later Adams – Giorgadze game, Groningen 1997, the Georgian grandmaster focused on the e4-pawn immediately and with all his tactical force! But, as we will see, even his decision was wrong. The right method lies in the golden mean, consisting, in the position shown in the last but one diagram, of the unconcerned move: **22...♗c8**. Even if in a Svidler – Piket game, Wijk aan Zee 1999, White retained a slight initiative after **23 axb5 axb5 24 ♖a7 ♖b7 25 ♖a8 ♘fd7 26 ♗e3 ♕c7**, it was not clear what the further plan should be. In the game White transferred his activities to the kingside: 27 ♖f1. An alternative was Topalov's manoeuvre 27 ♘e2 followed by ♘c1 and b2-b4. In this variation, however, White must reckon on the black knight on a4 after 27...♘b6. The chessboard is full of pieces, various opportunities and paths. The opponent who is less prepared and less capable than the other is more prone to slip up somewhere... This generally applies to such complicated crossroads. Nevertheless, let us see Adams' marvellous creative performance. The above-mentioned game Adams – Giorgadze provokes some questions; do you dare to answer them?

22...h4?!

This may be a tempting response but due to its consequences it is superficial and wrong. The move was played in an important game of the qualification tournament of the World Championship by an undoubtedly strong grandmaster; its motif is evident: from the point of view of general strategy, the exchange of the h-pawn for a central pawn cannot be bad business. However, from the dynamic point of view, the evaluation of things is quite different!

23 ♗xh4 ♘fxe4 24 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 25 ♗xe4 ♗xh4 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♖a5! ♗c8

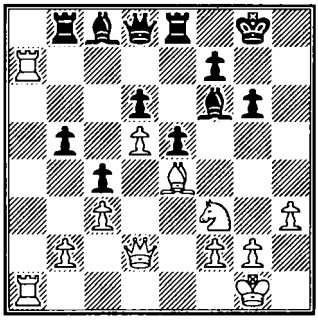
Note that 27...♖a8? cannot be played: 28 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 29 ♖xa8! with material loss.

28 ♖a7

The seventh rank activity plays an important role and it will not be easy for Black to get rid of the troublesome white rook. 28...♖b7

29 ♖xb7 ♗xb7 30 ♖a7 ♗c8 31 ♕h6 would lead to a catastrophe on g6 (31...♖e7 32 ♕xh4 +-). And neither 28...♖e7 nor 28...♔g7 promise much.

28...♗f6



Question:

Giorgadze immediately retreats his bishop to f6 thus preventing the penetration of the white queen: 29 ♕h6? ♗g7. He prepares not only to oust the white rook from the seventh rank but also plans a further mobilisation of his favourable pawn formation by means of ♗f6-g7, f7-f5... These plans seem to be promising, how to react to them? Will you find the right answer and the supporting calculation?

Answer:

White must proceed actively, otherwise the long-term strategic factors would play into the hands of his opponent. The active axis around which the dynamics of White's play will necessarily rotate is represented by the weakened pawn shelter of the black king and the effort to control the important b1-h7 diagonal! The control of the diagonal might only be provisional after the stereotyped and static 29 g4?! (0 points) since after 29...♗g7 30 ♕c2 ♖f8! the spring f7-f5 would be released anyway and would strike with even increased power.

The principal problem for the weakened black king, however, is represented by the advance of the h-pawn: **29 h4!** (3 points); this is precisely the move Adams played. The pawn is naturally poisoned, after 29...♗xh4?, 30 ♕h6 (or 30 ♗xg6 fxg6 31 ♕h6...) would lead Black from rain to storm (30...♗e7 31 ♗xg6 fxg6 32 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 33 ♘g5+-). The further advance of the h-pawn could be hindered by 29...♗g4 but then White would make use of an efficient tactical blow: 30 ♗xg6! fxg6 31 ♕h6 ♗d7 32 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 and any possible discussion might then be ended by 33 ♖1a6! +-. Giorgadze preferred to cover the seventh rank (high time!) and probably cast aside the counterchance 29...♗g7 with a quick f7-f5 due to 30 ♘g5! (30 h5?! f5) and if 30...f5 31 ♗c2 e4 then 32 ♘e6! with an inevitable breakthrough of Black's defensive line. You may add three points for the 29 h4 idea and one point for each of your reactions to 29...♗xh4, 29...♗g4 a 29...♗g7 – a total of a maximum 6 points!

29...♖e7 30 h5! ♗f5

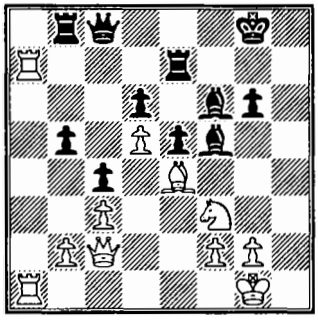
The Georgian grandmaster launches a tough defence of the important diagonal. After 30...gxh5?, 31 ♕h6 ♗g7 32 ♕xh5 would have followed, with decisive control of the white squares. A perceptible white-squared strategy is a distinctive feature of the further course of the game, though.)

31 ♕c2! ♕c8!

There is a quick explanation for this move: 31...♗xe4 32 ♕xe4

gxh5 33 ♕f5 ♖xa7 34 ♖xa7 h4 35 ♘g5! +-. Yes, the consistent implementation of a strategic concept may also result in such drastic finales.

32 hxg6 fxg6



Question:

As I have highlighted several times, the white-squared concept clearly dominates the course of the game. Adams carries out the strategy at the highest level and in a calm manner. However, his calmness is only apparent since there is something hidden there that is perhaps the most valuable thing that outstanding players possess: in addition to the necessary analytical-synthetic abilities, it is the dynamics of thinking which is very important and which commands the pieces into a goal-directed attack. Let us look at the above position and ask: a) What is White concerned with? b) What is the most effective method of carrying it out? Then we can easily detect that the knight has not been sufficiently involved in White's strategy and that our plans may be realised precisely by the transfer of that piece. The necessary pressure will, without any doubt, be increased by the ♘f3-d2-f1-g3 or e3 manoeuvre. But, this is only part of our activity, albeit perhaps the most important one from the strategic point of view. Other active alternatives should also be sought and the technical part of the operation carried out, since this is also important, especially from the practical point of view. And this is precisely the core of my question.

Will you recommend to White:

A. Immediate launch of the above-mentioned manoeuvre by 33 ♘d2.

B. Implementation of the same manoeuvre after the preliminary exchange 33 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 34 ♘d2.

C. Avoidance of simplification; in this case White should first play 33 ♖7a6 and only then 34 ♘d2.

As always, think everything over and support it by calculation!

Answer:

Not an easy task, is it? Even the player of the white pieces failed to solve it. Sometimes even a master may fail to select the right method of implementation. Like some of you no doubt, he went immediately 33 ♘d2?! (1 point). Adams' strategic intuition for 'hunting', at other times perfect, must here have been upset by something unusual. His opponent could have done with it, lifted up his head and countered by means of 33...♖xa7 34 ♖xa7 ♕c5!. The point lies in the unpleasant attack on the f2 square after 35 ♖a6 ♗h4!, the modest 35 ♖a1 will be met with 35...♗h4 again and after 36 ♖f1 ♖f8 37 ♘f3 ♗d8! Black's position would have been active enough. However, Giorgadze was probably thrown off

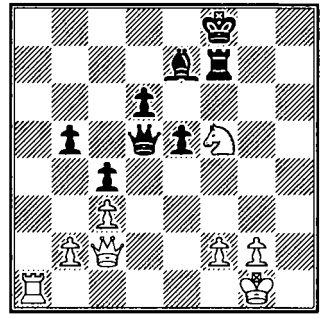
balance due to White's robot-like play and he might have stopped lying in wait for possible inaccuracies so did not take advantage of the exceptional opportunity of counterplay... We say 'exceptional' because White could have continued his spectacular strategy more cautiously: first 33 ♖7a6! (3 points), getting on the right track for the transfer of the knight only after 33...♕d7. This manoeuvre alone, naturally, does not solve the situation, Black can get ready for it, for example by 34...♖f7. Do not forget one of the most important rules of correct positional play, that of attacking several targets simultaneously! In this case, in addition to the white squares, these targets will probably also include the black d6 and b5 pawns. The combined pressure may be started, for example by further 'turning the screws' after 33 ♖7a6 ♕d7 34 ♘d2 ♖f7 35 ♖c6!? followed by 36 ♖aa6. If you were overcautious enough to exchange rooks by 33 ♖xe7 you do not deserve more than 1 point. You should admit that after 33...♗xe7 34 ♘d2 ♕d7 35 ♘f1 ♖f8 Black consolidates too easily and some of the targets are disappearing ...

The key aspect for a correct evaluation lies in Black's counterchance after 33 ♘d2. Whoever was able to notice the link between ♕c5 and ♗h4, gains another two points for his/her observation.

33 ♘d2? ♔f8? 34 ♖7a6

Everything is O.K. again and progress continues; in addition, Black has lost a tempo with the ♔f8 move.

34...♕d7 35 ♘f1! ♖f7 36 ♘g3 ♗e7 37 ♖a7 ♖b7 (Or 37...♕c8 38 ♖1a6 with complete strangulation of the black position.) **38 ♖xb7 ♕xb7 39 ♗xf5 gxf5 40 ♘xf5 ♕xd5**



Question:

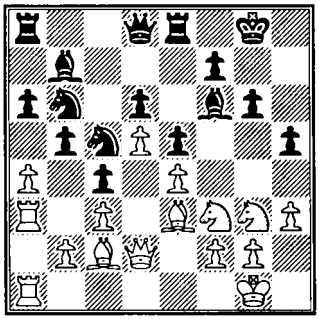
You might like to know that Black had completed the necessary moves before the time control, taken a breather and, with his face in a sweat, he left the chessboard to drink some coffee... However, after he had come back, there was a shocking surprise for him on the chessboard. What kind of surprise was it and what did White play on his 41st move?

Answer:

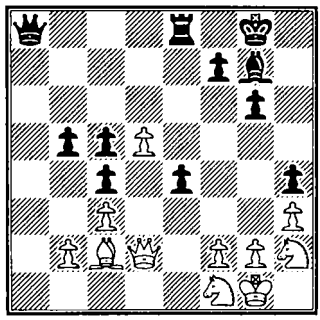
Finally, the incorrect 33...♔f8? rebounded on Black. The weak eighth rank was the motif for the deadly **41 ♕d2!!** (2 points). It was a K.O. after the time limit, a double blow with decisive penetration to the defenceless black king – Black cannot resist that!

41 ... ♕c6 42 ♕h6+ ♔e8 (Also, after 42...♔g8 White has a pleasant selection, e.g. 43 ♕g6+ ♔f8 44 ♖a7 must be sufficient.) **43 ♕e6** and **Black resigned**.

I would like to emphasise again that no way am I trying to present an extensive theoretical analysis – I only want to highlight the most important strategic aspects, the continual and dynamic development of their solutions and evaluations. On his way to winning the World Championship title, in the Moscow knockout tournament in December 2001, Ruslam Ponomariov did not move his rook off the a-file in his game against Kiril Georgiev: instead, after **20 ♗g5 ♗e7 21 ♖a3**, he launched an immediate knight transfer to the queenside: **21...♘fd7 22 ♗e3** (22 ♗xe7?!=) **22...♗f6 23 ♖ea1 ♘b6**



It is also obvious that the following risky continuation was not a result of a hasty impulse but a brand-new view of the situation that had arisen. If it had not been for that, Black would have probably never decided, after **24 axb5 axb5 25 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 26 ♖a5!? h4 27 ♘f1**, on a daring sacrifice **27...♘xd5!? 28 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 29 ♗xc5 dxc5 30 exd5 e4 31 ♘3h2 ♗g7**



After **32 d6 ♕c6 33 ♕f4 f5** ∞ Ponomariov won the game – however the question marks remain...

Whether with the knight or with the bishop on g5, with the pawn on h5 or h6 – there must be enough room for new ideas. Will you try it yourself?

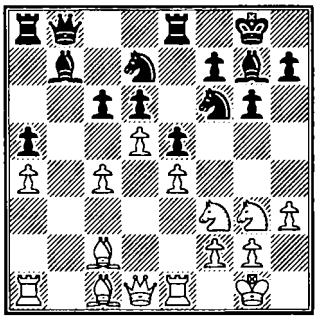
Let us return to the position of the diagram on p.28, after **15 a4** The blockade 15...c5 16 d5 is definitely not the only option, it is also possible to ignore White's actual intentions on the queenside and to continue **15...♗g7**.

2. **15...♗g7?!**

Yes, I dare to put here such punctuation which suggests a suspect move even if in this case the ?! only conveys my personal taste. This taste may change in the future but I personally insist on the original assessment made at the time – the night before the game against Smejkal in Třinec 1972. Grandmaster Jan Smejkal, for whom the 15...c5 16 d5 variation was the staple diet in his tournament menu, states here: '15...c5 might

not be the most accurate reply, however, after the blockade Black is doomed to a long and, for the most part, passive defence'. We can only agree but it is necessary to say that after 15...♗g7 White has two different plans:

A. Using the blocking **16 d5** again he may try to exploit the fact that immediate undermining by 16...c6 is not possible and so he gains the necessary time to complete the pawn chain b3-c4-d5. Though this does not look bad from the strategic point of view, Black also has his positional trumps! These have been revealed recently in some games of several grandmasters, for example, E.Vladimirov, A.Kunte... It is really hard to give preference to White's strategy after **16...♕b8 17 b3 c6 18 c4 bxc4 19 bxc4 a5!**,

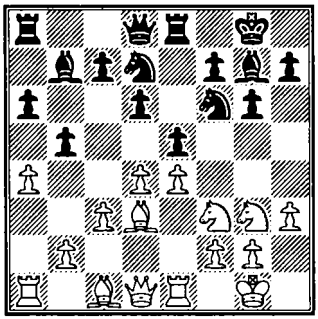


so the issue remains undecided...

B. By an immediate attack of the b5-pawn due to the ♗d3 move, White may force the opponent to play 16...c6 and thus curb activity by the ♗b7. During the further course of the game White will have a spatial advantage but the black position is capable of resistance, especially under a quality positional baton. Nevertheless, I believe that this is the main road to White's edge – and not by accident was it played several times by the Ex-World Champion Anatoly Karpov! Precisely this plan was chosen in one of my games that I would like to present now. It was a game against the same grandmaster Smejkal – the only difference being that we were now nearly 30 years older. I will try to present not only some tricks of the variation chosen but also my immediate feelings and ideas. As usual, you will have the opportunity to answer several test questions...

V. Jansa – J. Smejkal
Czech extra-league,
Prague, December 2001

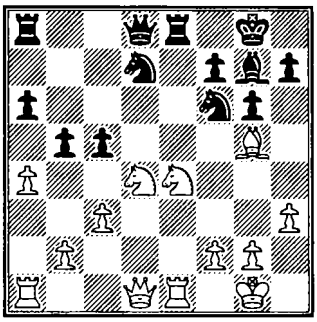
16 ♗d3



16...c6

In 1970, i.e. in days of yore when A. Karpov was a junior but also a strong grandmaster, in a tournament in Caracas the well-known Belgian matador O'Kelly played against him, quite unexpectedly, **16...d5?!**. The future World Champion demonstrated his later well known sense of coordination of all his pieces and went **17 ♗g5!**. Despite a series of exchanges (**17...dxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♘xe4 exd4 20**

♘**xd4**), however, White gained dominance over the centre. The Belgian grandmaster counted on **20...c5**



but his idea had unstable foundations.

Question:

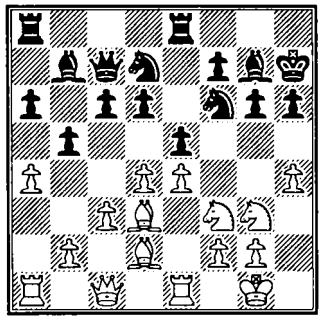
How did White refute the opponent's idea? Answer 'à la Karpov'!

Answer:

Simple but efficient, isn't it? As you will see, this was only a warm-up. I am convinced that nearly all of you will have hit the target: 21 ♗xf6! with the point after 21...♗xf6? 22 ♘c6 ♕c7 23 ♕xd7! +-. Therefore, Black took 21... ♘xf6, but lost a pawn after 22 ♘xc5 ±. Simplicity is a great power – you gain 2 points!

17 ♗g5

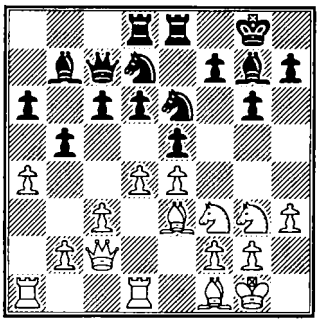
Again the same idea as in the previous chapter, however it comes in a different package. White again provokes Black into weakening his kingside – today it is a fully recognised development and probably White's best chance. After **17...h6 18 ♗d2 ♕c7, 19 ♕c1 ♔h7** proved itself to be the most efficient (a further weakening such as 19...h5 gives Black other troubles after 20 ♗h6 – I only remember that, unlike the previous chapter, White will be more active on the queenside due to the advance of his b-pawn and the transfer of the a1-rook via the second rank). **20 h4!**



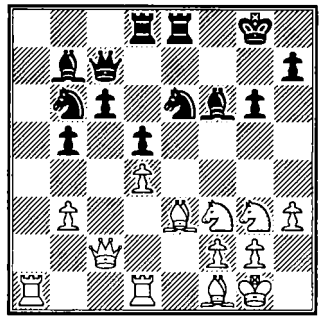
and Black can hardly find any counterplay (20...♘b6 21 b3!) to offset the further advance of the h-pawn as has been confirmed by some grandmaster games. Any unnatural reaction in the centre, e.g. 18...♔h7 19 ♕c2 d5? cannot be recommended at all to Black: after 20 exd5 ♘xd5 the advance 21 h4! ± will be even more effective (Karpov – Kavalek, Tilburg 1979). On the other hand, the transfer of the black queen to f8 suggests itself: 18...♕e7!? 19 ♕c1 (19 ♕c2!?) ♕f8, however then the black queen may be missed on the queenside. Black can also force the bishop away from g5 using the manoeuvre ♘d7-f8-e6 – and this is precisely the plan chosen by my opponent.

17...♕c7 18 ♕d2 ♘f8 19 ♗f1! (Note that this time the 'Spanish' white-squared bishop controls the f1-a6 diagonal, especially the b5

square.) **19...♘e6 20 ♗e3 ♖ad8 21 ♕c2 ♘d7 22 ♖ed1**



The importance, accuracy and connections between the previous moves are very hard to explain. It is more or less positional instinct that plays a role here: White finds sanctuaries for his pieces, we may also call it 'flushing out'. In addition, I found out in my database later that the same position after 22 moves had arisen in a Hráček – Acs game played in the Krynica 1998 Zonal tournament! It is true that the initial order of moves was different: 13 a4 (instead of 13 ♘f1) ♗f8 14 ♗d3 c6 15 ♘f1 g6 16 ♘g3 ♗g7 17 ♗g5 ♕c7 18 ♕d2 ♘f8 19 ♗f1 ♘e6 20 ♗e3 ♘d7 21 ♕c2 ♖ad8 22 ♖ed1... This provides evidence not only of the diffusion of variations in a complicated opening but also of the similarity of choice of those who like to play the Spanish. I have known Zbyněk Hráček, at present one of leading Czech grandmasters, quite long enough to be able to say something like that. He has also been attracted by the strategic profoundness of the delicate 'Spanish' motifs – maybe that is why we chose the same structure in this phase of the game, independently of each other and of state-of-the-art theory. In Zbyněk's game there followed **22...♘b6 23 b3! exd4?! 24 cxd4 d5 25 e5 f6 26 exf6 ♗xf6 27 axb5 axb5**



White has a clear edge due to the passive role of the ♗b7; however, the further course of the game is closely linked to the following question.

Question:

Where should White aim his forces? Suggest the next move for White and a further plan of active play!

Answer:

The c6-pawn represents a permanent weakness, nevertheless it is sufficiently covered by the passive bishop. Therefore, we should leave the queenside as it is and turn our attention to where we have a pawn majority – on the kingside! Logically, the lonesome and shabby pawn pair on g6 and h7 will become the object of our attack. How can we attack them? Of course, using our h-pawn (again)! **28 h4!** (2 points). The correctness of our decision lies in the fact that the advance of the h-pawn will not weaken White's king position too

much, however it will precipitate a crisis in Black's defensive lines (the covering of g6). This probably was Zbyněk Hráček's reasoning and maybe also your reasoning too. In the game there followed: **28...♘d7 29 h5 ♘df8 30 hxg6 hxg6 31 ♖e1 ♕g7 32 ♕d2±** with the initiative and a positional advantage for White since the black king position is bustling with activity! Unfortunately Hráček spoiled the game later but this was not due to the plan of advancing the h-pawn. Only this plan and the 28 h4 move represent the right solution and you may add two points in this case.

With full respect to the skill of the Junior World Champion, the young Hungarian grandmaster Acs does not have as much experience and feel for the Spanish as grandmaster Smejkal. Therefore, the next move in the position of the last but one diagram was, in fact, 'a novelty' – however, I had no idea about that over the board and neither do I think had my opponent.

22...♕b8 23 ♖d2!

The sense of piece harmony is one of the prerequisites of positional play in the Spanish. In this case White intends to increase the pressure on the black position by doubling his rooks. Jan Smejkal reacts very surprisingly at this moment: he surrenders the centre and subsequently forms some kind of 'zonal defence' on the queenside and in the centre of the board. It is a courageous strategic decision demanding extensive experience and positional feeling but Black has sufficient reserves of both in his kit-bag! On the other hand it is true that similar responsible decisions, which are a little bit risky and have negative positional consequences, are not taken with enthusiasm but under the increasing pressure.

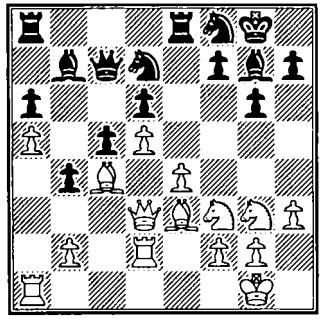
23...exd4!? 24 cxd4 b4 25 a5

An automatic response, a simple rudiment of positional play. White fixes the weakness on a6 and prevents the opponent playing a6-a5.

25...c5 26 d5 ♘ef8 27 ♗c4 ♕c7

It is more appropriate to cover the a6-pawn with the rook than with the queen ...

28 ♕d3 ♖a8



White must now solve a dilemma which from the strategic point of view is not quite clear: how to utilise his indisputable spatial advantage, how to progress? I must admit that at this point I was not sure about the choice of a further active plan. Is it worth preparing a breakthrough by e4-e5 and so force Black to play the ugly but solid f7-f6 or to delay everything and start to probe with the well-known advance h3-h4-h5? That is the question! Anyway, I am aware of the fact that at present I still do not know the answer! Those who can at least make a quick decision must be happy – the one who can find the answer must be even happier!

Nevertheless, next time I would prefer 29 h4!? in the same position.

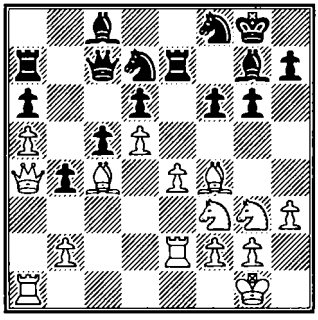
29 ♗f4 ♗c8 30 ♖e2 ♖a7

Prior to the necessary and 'ugly' f7-f6, Black tries to improve things as much as he can. Due to future events I will not reveal at this stage whether 30...f6 followed by ♘e5 was better now.

31 ♕b3!?

The white queen gravitates to the very sensitive c6-square!

31...f6 32 ♕a4 ♖e7



Question:

Concentrate your mind and imagine this position occurring in your own game! Come with me to the vortex of emotions, evaluations and variations!

As White, you are to move; your opponent's flag is slowly rising, you still have about 20 minutes. But your opponent is a strong player against whom you have not scored very well in the past, sometimes you have even lost very promising positions against him. He can concentrate his mind excellently, even under the most difficult conditions. Black has prepared everything for the crucial defence **33...♘e5**, which would also certainly follow after **33 ♕c6**. Can you see, as I did, a tempting opportunity to resolve the situation, some kind of detonation in the very centre of the board: **33 ♗xd6!? ♕xd6 34 ♕c6!?** It is clear that after 34...♕xc6 35 dxc6+ White meets his target and that opening the diagonal for the ♗c4 leads to a very good position for White with even material. However, what would happen after **34...♕b8** ? Certainly **35 d6+**. Black can place his rook on e6 or f7... Let us calculate one move at a time. First, 35...♖e6: 36 ♘f5 immediately crosses our minds – after the only move 36...♔h8, 37 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 38 ♘e7 seems to be promising, Black must go 38...♖a8 and then probably 39 e5 should be played... You know that 'there must be something!' However, the tension is mounting and the minutes are whizzing by... Let us go to the second possibility, **35...♖f7**. Our chess heart is rejoiced by the variation **36 e5 ♘xe5 37 ♖xe5!? fxe5 38 ♘g5**. How to prevent the terrible threat **39 ♕e8?** Maybe, only with **38...♗f5**... But, then the uncompromising **39 ♘xf5 gxf5 40 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 41 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 42 ♕c7+!** is decisive since the passed pawn is out of reach of the black pieces. In addition, we have a 'spare solution': 37 ♘xe5 fxe5 38 ♕e8!. A glance at the clock signals that the remaining time has gone down to 10 minutes, nothing can be read from my opponent's face – it is full of tension, maybe as mine, too... Should the calculation be checked again or should I decide right now? With some bitter time-pressure experience in games against this opponent I want to leave, at all

costs, some time in reserve on the clock. At this moment I feel a psychological superiority and give the combination full credit. The loss of faith brings uncertainty and this may quickly take away even a trace of an advantage!

No, I decide instantly, my hand grabs the bishop and I take the pawn: **33 ♗xd6**...

And now a question for you: after a thorough evaluation of the situation, do you consider:

1. The continuation 33 ♗xd6 was the correct solution and White gained not only the initiative but also an advantage.

2. The combination 33 ♗xd6 was perhaps the correct solution due to psychological and time reasons but leads, in the event of accurate defence, to an advantage for Black.

3. The piece sacrifice was not correct and White should have played something quieter.

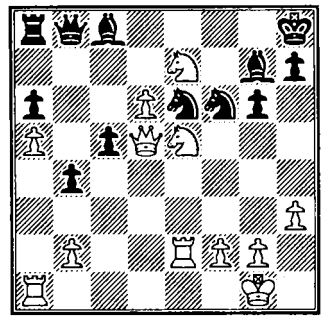
Confirm your reasoning by calculation!

Answer:

I am aware of the fact that this was a suggestive, emotional and hard question. The roots of the correct answer do not only depend on courage or, on the other hand, patience, but also in pure chess truth!

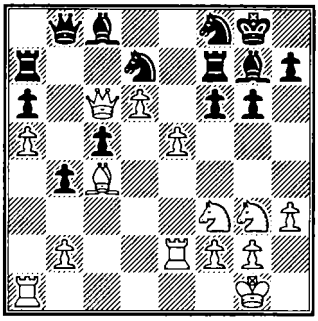
Naturally, during the game I could see only part of the hidden variations, but, at last, the post-mortem confirmed that the sacrifice had been fully justified. The combination, opening the deadly route for the excellent ♗c4, is not an accidental explosion of a terrorist operation but the culminating point of the previous strategic combat. It was a correct solution not only because of the prevailing atmosphere but also from purely objective point of view. Some practitioners may raise objections: why not play quietly? But, after 33 ♕c6 or other moves, Black gets in 33...♘e5 and, even in time-pressure, need not worry about his position. On the other hand, **33 ♗xd6!!** leads not only to the initiative but also to an advantage for White (4 points). Let us compare our results and confirm our calculations after **33...♕xd6 34 ♕c6 ♕b8 35 d6+**:

a) **35...♖e6 36 ♘f5! ♔h8 37 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 38 ♘e7 ♖a8** (the only move) **39 e5! fxe5** (Or 39...♘f4 40 ♖c2 fxe5 41 ♖xc5! ±, 39...f5 40 ♕d5 ♘df8 41 ♘g5 h6 42 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 43 ♕xc5 is also advantageous for White.) **40 ♕d5 ♘f6 41 ♘xe5!!**



Even an ascetic must succumb to temptation of such a variation! Black is lost after the 'emergency' **41...♗h6** due to **42 ♕c4!** since on both **42...♘d4** and 42...♘f4 a mating attack follows: **43 ♕f7!! ♘xe2+ 44 ♔f1** + -.

b) **35...♖f7 36 e5!**



36...♘xe5 (36...fxe5? 37 ♘g5 +-, 36...♗b7 37 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 38 e6+ ±) **37 ♘xe5** (the spectacular 37 ♖xe5!? fxe5 38 ♘g5 with the threat 39 ♕e8 is not so clear due to 38...h6! 39 ♘xf7 ♘e6 and Black can fight back.) **37...fxe5 38 ♕e8!** completely paralysing the black pieces. After the desperate **38...♖b7** (or 38...♕a8) decisive is **39 ♖d2!** with the inevitable advance of the d-pawn.

You can see the gears of the combination engage excellently together. Nevertheless, I could not see all the specific details playing 33 ♗xd6, I only could more or less envisage them... My principal inspiration did not lie in the flag on the opponent's clock (which could be perilous, especially against Smejkal) but in the belief that the sacrifice was fully correct. However, it is true that it may not be possible to escape from the hell fire of the above-mentioned variations with several seconds left. After all, the opponent preferred to return the piece at once...

You get the points not only for your correct answer but also for your precise calculation. I will leave it up to your conscience how much you could see on the board. You may add two points for each of the principal variations, i.e. up to 41 ♘xe5!! in the first variation and up to 38 ♕e8! in the second one, that means a total of four points. In case you were not accurate, deduct one point. Those who answered the questions perfectly and also calculated correctly both the important variations gain the maximum 8 points. In this case these points are well-deserved and may only be awarded to those who showed the necessary imagination and who were fully absorbed by the situation. In the game itself, there followed ...

33 ♗xd6!! ♕xd6 34 ♕c6 ♕xc6

Played after a short deliberation only. For a change, put yourself into Black's shoes. It does not look dangerous, however, White's advantage is therefore confirmed.

35 dxc6+ ♘e6?

...like a groggy boxer in the corner who counts down the seconds that remain to the final bell. But another blow comes... There were some chances of saving the game only after 35...♔h8 36 cxd7 ♗xd7.

36 cxd7 ♗xd7 37 ♘f5! gxf5

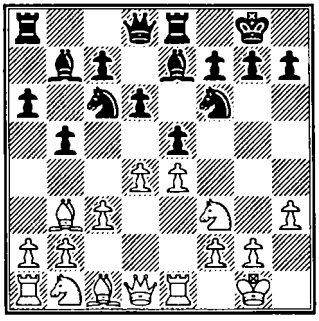
Or 37...♖e8 38 ♘d6 ♖e7 39 e5, paralysing the black position.

38 exf5 ♗b5 39 ♗xe6+ ♔f8 40 ♖c2 ♖ec7 41 ♖d1 ♗h6 (41...c4 42 ♖d4+ -) **42 b3 ♔e7 43 ♗c4 ♗d7 44 ♖e2+ ♔f8 45 ♖d6 ♖c6 46 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 47 ♘e1!** (The transfer of the knight to d3 quickly decides the game.) **47...♗b5 48 ♘d3 ♗xc4 49 bxc4 ♖c7 50 ♖e6 ♔f7 51 ♖xa6 ♘f8 52 ♘f4 1 : 0**

Our analysis of the Breyer system is complete; in the following part we will be dealing with another popular variation of the 'Spanish today'.

C. Blockade as a system

The modern age of the Spanish Opening cannot do without Zaitsev's Variation in which the bishop is developed on b7 and the rook on e8. The basic position of the variation arises after **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8**



In the last twenty-five years this has become the basic pillar of the opening repertoire of many grandmasters. It is natural that I have also been interested in various possibilities and strategic plans in my efforts to storm the black fortress. Usually such efforts have been connected with some modifications of the blocking advance in the centre of the chessboard d4-d5. However, unlike in the Breyer system (in the main variation 15 a4 c5 16 d5...), in this case the blockade does not mean a permanent central barrier which can only be overcome at the expense of high material sacrifices. It is just some kind of a curtain which may (but, sometimes should) be undrawn by Black's prod c7-c6... The consequences of such a prod should then be carefully monitored. In any case the key square d5 will be exposed and consequently the strategic fate of the game depends on the fact whether:

a) White may be able to create sufficient pressure on that central square, bring it under his control and possibly place his bishop or knight on it. In this case he will have an undeniable edge.

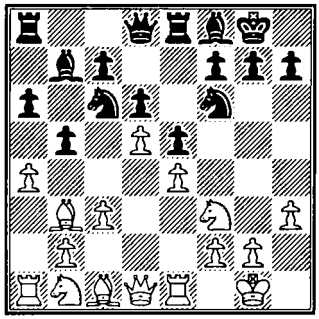
b) Black, utilising his counterattack on the e4 pawn, may be able to tie the white pieces down to protecting it and, at the right moment, free himself by the d6-d5 advance. Should he succeed in this, his chances are usually not worse, on the contrary, such a successful breakthrough often means a turn of events in the course of the game.

After blocking the centre, a consequent dynamic strategic combat occurs. In this combat both parties uncompromisingly take pains to implement their above-mentioned concepts.

Once I believed that in order to achieve an advantage, White, from the very beginning, needs to pursue the well-known and efficient 'two-target' plan: to launch, in this position, his activity aimed at the first target – the b5 pawn by means of a2-a4 – and only then to focus on the centre after its blockade.

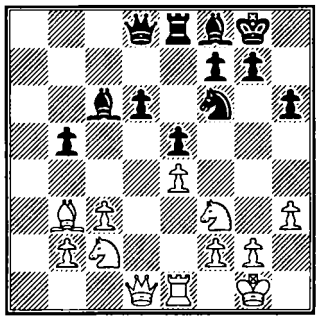
The **11 a4** move was also supported by the possibility of a fruitful development of the knight to

a3 in case of an automatic **11...♗f8?! 12 d5!**



and now:

1. **12...♘b8 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 15 ♘a3! c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♗g5** (the battle for the d5-square begins...) **17...♘bd7 18 ♘c2!** (...and continues with the knight manoeuvre ♘a3-c2-b4) After **18...h6 19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6**



the tense strategic combat culminates in the right solution of the following test question.

Question:

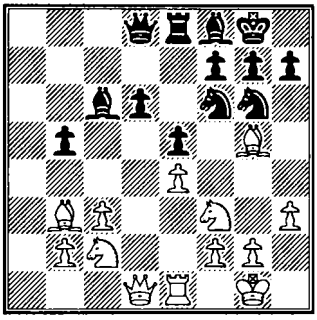
The e4-pawn is attacked. Can White maintain control of the d5-square? If this is the case, indicate how!

Answer:

Strategy and tactics often work hand in glove. This is exactly the case here! The narrow-minded 20 ♘d2? (certainly 0 points) would bring White to the unfavourable alternative b) after 20...d5!. 'Sometimes courage masks great fear', but this saying will certainly not apply to those of you who have accurately assessed the effect of the consistent **20 ♘b4!**. Only if you have diagnosed that after **20...♗xe4?!, 21 ♖xe4! ♘xe4 22 ♕d5** would follow, with a strong attack after **22...♘f6 23 ♕xf7+** and following 24 ♘d5, you gain 2 points! Above all, the following variation is very juicy: **23...♔h7 24 ♘d5 ♗e7 25 ♘g5+! hxg5 26 ♘xf6+** mating. Such a harsh idea was probably hidden in the considerations of the late Rigaer master A.Vitolinsh, who was one of the most talented attacking players on this planet, during his 1979 game against grandmaster Dorfman (you can learn many interesting things about him in an excellent work of fiction by grandmaster Genna Sosonko: *I knew Capablanca*). Black had revealed the trickiness of this moment and retreated his bishop 20...♗b7, however, it was White who controlled the course of the game:

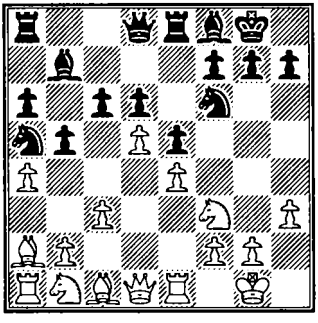
21 ♘d5 ♘xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♕a8 23 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 24 ♕d3±.

2. **12...♘e7 13 ♗g5! ♘g6 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 16 ♘a3! c6 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 ♘c2!**



The same motif as in the previous variation: the knight is uncontrollably heading for b4 and then to d5 in order to occupy this square. We should add that even here 'little tactics' are used after **18...♕a8?! 19 ♗xf6 gxf6 20 ♘b4! ♗xe4 21 ♘d5 ♗xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♕d8 23 ♕b3 ±**.

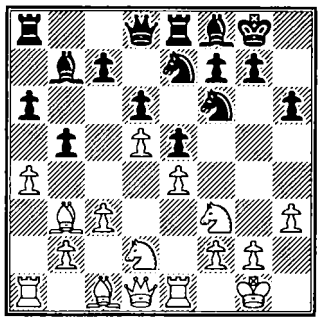
3. **12...♘a5 13 ♗a2 c6**



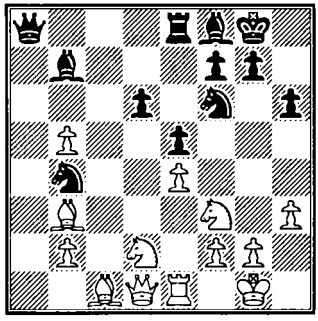
The systematic line **14 ♗g5 cxd5 15 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 16 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♕xd5** brings the white queen to the central square quite early and the question is whether this results in an advantage after the accurate **17...♕e6!** (Karpov). However, the uncertain position of the ♘a5 may be a signal for the well-known **14 ♘a3!?**, which is based on a somewhat different idea here: after **14...cxd5 15 exd5** the attack on the b5-pawn and possible advance b2-b4 may only be parried with the active **15...e4** but after **16 ♘d4!** White's chances are superior.

Supporters of the black system soon revealed that after **11 a4** the reason for Black's problems lie in a future pin and exchange of the guard of the d5-square, the knight on f6, and they started to respect it by replying with the more accurate **11...h6**. Now 12 d5 would be an untimely action, e.g. due to 12...♘a5 13 ♗a2 c6 14 ♘a3 ♕c7!? – White lacks the important opportunity of the move ♗g5 here but also elsewhere: you may easily compare this position with that after 11...♗f8?! 12 d5!.

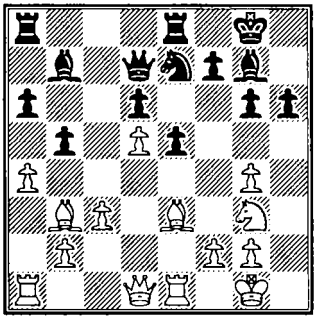
It seemed to me that only after 11...h6 should White play **12 ♘bd2**, again with a blockade after **12...♗f8 13 d5**. Precisely on the theme of such a possibility concerning combined play in the centre and against the b5-pawn, I published a comprehensive article with analysis of all retreats of the black knight and an outline of the principal plans in the chess magazine *Sach – info* about 10 years ago... This article has even become a welcome 'cook-book' for many players, especially of Czechoslovak origin, fighting against this popular Zaitsev Variation. From the very start my view of the correctness of White's method was supported by my own games, one of which was a winning duel against Predrag Nikolić, by that time starting his spectacular career, in the 1982 Esbjerg tournament: **13...♘e7**



14 c4 ♕d7?! 15 ♗c2! c6 16 b3 with a spatial advantage for White. In addition, the ♕d7 is badly positioned... However, Nigel Short and Hungarian players Hazai and Lukacs revealed that after 14 c4 Black can react in a more vigorous manner by **14...c6!** and if **15 dxc6** then not 15...♗xc6? 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 cxb5± (18...♗xb5 19 ♘xf7+) but **15...♘xc6! 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 cxb5 ♘b4** ∓

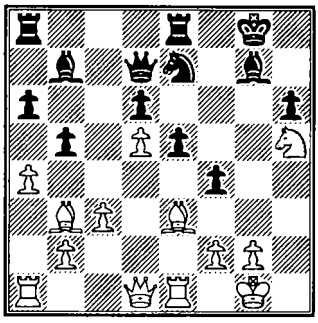


Prior to a game against Hazai in Warsaw 1987 a new idea occurred to me after 13...♘e7: **14 ♘h2** with a further transfer of the knight to g4, since I liked the position after 14...c6 15 dxc6 ♗xc6 16 ♘g4 ♘xg4 17 ♕xg4. I would say that Black should abandon his pretensions in the centre and prefer 14...♘g6. My opponent tried the more cautious **14...♕d7 15 ♘g4 ♘xg4 16 hxg4** but anyway he 'prodded' the white centre with **16...c6**. The interfering black pieces and good control of the f5-square were an inspiration for a new, remarkable idea: not to exchange on c6 but to leave the d5-pawn in its role of a 'thorn' somewhat restricting the sphere of activity of the black pieces. Therefore, **17 ♘f1! cxd5 18 exd5 g6 19 ♘g3 ♗g7 20 ♗e3** occurred.



The Hungarian master followed up in a passive manner: **20...♔h7 21 f3 ♘g8** and soon caught a packet in covering the weakened queenside.

Two years later, in a Prague tournament, Ilinčić of Yugoslavia played a little more aggressively against me. He went **20...f5** and after **21 gxf5 gxf5 22 ♘h5** he could not stop (22...♖f8 23 f4! ± , with the threat 23 ♗xh6!) and carried on **22...f4**.



Question:

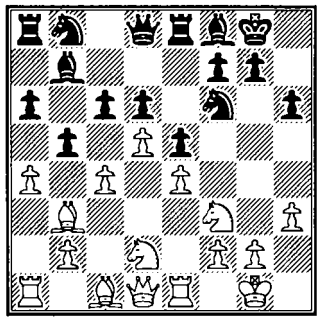
I was left with no other alternative than to show my opponent that his optimism had gone too far. How did I do that?

Answer:

Sometimes the chessboard can be divided into two! The combination **23 ♗xf4 exf4 24 ♖e6!** +- (2 points) must have made the impression of a circular saw cut. In one half of the chessboard there are black pieces in some kind of pell-mell, in the other half there is the abandoned king facing enemy superiority... It must lead to a catastrophe. It did, after **24...♖f8 25 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 26 ♕g4+ ♔f7 27 ♖f6+ Black resigned**. There was no hope in 24...♗xd5 25 ♕g4!, 24...♘xd5 25 ♖g6 or 24...♘f5 25 ♕g4.

Knight retreats to the a-file after 13 d5 may be considered as confirmation of the truth of the saying: 'Springer am Rande bringt nur Schande!' ('The knight on the rim is dim'). This certainly applies to 13...♘a5 14 ♗a2 followed by 15 b4± but Black cannot even rejoice at the more disguised 13...♘a7 14 ♘h2! c6 15 dxc6 ♘xc6 16 ♘g4 with well-known motifs.

The most elastic retreat has always been **13...♘b8**; after the consistent **14 c4 c6**



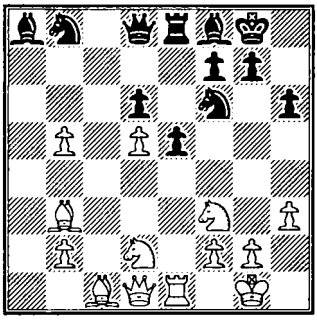
a spectacular pawn entanglement arises on the queenside. White may use several recipes to disentangle it, however, nobody knows which of them is the right one!

a) **15 dxc6?! ♘xc6 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 cxb5 ♘b4 19 ♘c4 d5** ⩲ flows into the above-mentioned 13...♘e7 14 c4 c6 15 dxc6 ♘xc6...

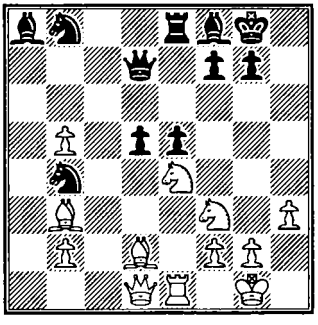
b) **15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 17 dxc6** (This is the method of disentanglement used by Garry Kasparov, who gained an edge after **17...b4?! 18 ♗a4!** ±, however, after the correct 17...bxc4 18 ♘xc4 ♘xc6 Black has nothing to worry about...).

c) **15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 17 cxb5!?** (The recent recipe from the theoretical workshop of Peter Svidler.). While 17...cxb5? 18 ♗c2± with an attack on the b5-pawn is a fully understandable idea, the surrender of the centre after **17...cxd5** seems to be quite contentious, even if the Russian

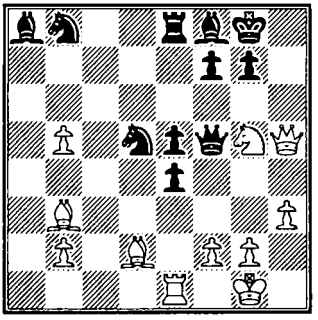
grandmaster has achieved full success with his method! After **18 exd5**,



in a game P.Svidler – Z.Almasi, Dortmund 1998, Black incautiously responded 18... ♘bd7?!, probably underestimating the manoeuvre 19 ♘b1! followed by 20 ♘c3 when White is a healthy pawn up. Not even Grischuk, taking the central pawn **18...♘xd5** in a game against Svidler in a tournament in Crete 2001, scored a better result: after **19 ♘e4** he left his king at the mercy of the fierce white pieces: **19...♘b4?! 20 ♗g5! ♕d7 21 ♗xh6 d5 22 ♗d2!**



There is the threat of ♘fg5 hanging over his position like the sword of Damocles. And the sword struck with full force after 22...♘d3 23 ♘fg5 ♕f5 24 ♖e3! ♘xf2 25 ♕f1+-. The alternative **22...dxe4 23 ♘g5 ♘d5 24 ♕h5 ♕f5**



only apparently helps, since the situation is solved with a surprisingly simple disentanglement.

Question:

What kind of disentanglement am I speaking about?

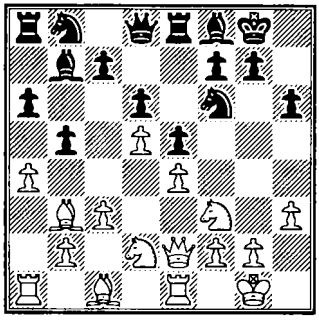
Answer:

25 g4 ♕g6 26 ♕xg6 fxg6 27 ♖a1! ♘b7 28 ♖a7 (2 points) with a decisive edge for White. Other alternatives should not be discussed if you could see this one...

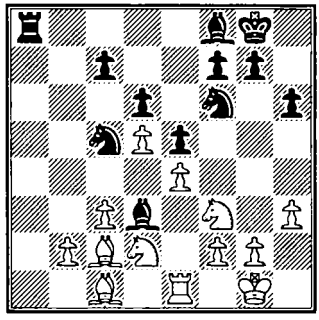
However, it is White's foregoing concept which should be discussed since such a surrender of the centre is debatable. For example, we should deal with another retreat of the d5-knight (19...♘f6!?) or even with some opportunities a move earlier (18...♗xd5!?). I am well aware of the fact that Peter Svidler is a strong player but even if I respect him it does not seem to me that this wild method of

disentangling the pawn cluster is the 'right' recipe...

I admit that the principal inspiration for the 'two-target' method was induced by the idea to immediately attack, after **13...♘b8**, the b5-pawn by means of **14 ♕e2**.



After the seemingly forced 14...c6, Black may be compelled to make positional concessions: 15 dxc6 ♗xc6 16 axb5 since 16...axb5 loses a pawn. Another strategic point lies in 16...♗xb5 17 c4! (17 ♗c4?! had been played before) 17...♗c6 18 ♗a4! a5 19 ♘b1 ! ± followed by ♘c3. I have never had an opportunity to use this idea but others did. However... In 1993 or so I met a chess fan in Bratislava, Slovakia; he said to me: 'Grandmaster, what is your opinion on the pawn sacrifice in the Spanish Opening after 14 ♕e2?'. You know, there are a series of such questions every day, so I excused myself and dropped it from my mind. Shortly afterwards I met grandmaster Karel Mokry and he told me: 'Vlasti, I used your idea of 14 ♕e2 in a game against a master-class opponent and could not believe my own eyes! He did not protect the pawn and played **14...♘bd7!**. Certainly, I accepted the sacrifice: **15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 17 ♕xb5** but, all of a sudden, Black's compensation after 17...♘c5 or 17...♗a6 seemed to me fully sufficient! I preferred to offer a draw at once...' Indeed, a short analysis reveals that after **17...♘c5** (or 17...♗a6 18 ♕a5 ♘c5) **18 ♗c2 ♗a6 19 ♕a5 ♗d3! 20 ♕xa8 ♖xa8**



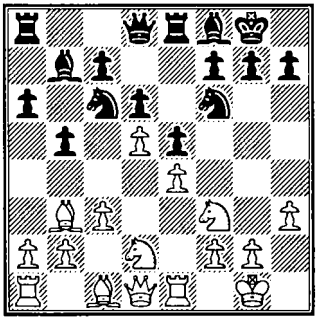
Black has, despite White's compact pawn structure, sufficient compensation for the minimum material sacrifice both in the case of 21 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 22 ♖d1 ♘c5 and 21 b4 ♗xc2 22 bxc5 dxc5 or 22...♘d7.

Nevertheless, such sacrifices are not evident at first sight and it is known that they may be thought up either by a brilliant player or a weak one with a vivid imagination. One year later, in an Austrian league game against my opponent, Hungarian grandmaster Z.Almasi, I simply took a shot in the dark by playing **14 ♕e2**. Unfortunately, an accurate reply was blitzed out: **14...♘bd7!**... Sure, it was not a famous and strong opponent whom I had underestimated: it was a quick and uncontrollable transfer of

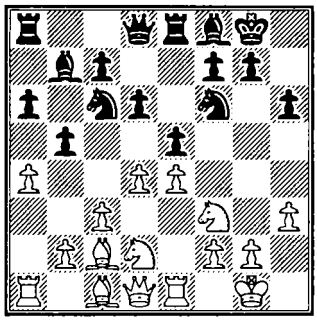
information. Thank heaven the game was a draw in the end.

'Two-target' play – though it sounds good – is sometimes hard to implement. After all, there is an old saying about that: 'If you want to be everywhere, you will get nowhere!' However, it is even harder to reach a decision which is absolutely finite. It is a moment of understanding which was concisely expressed by the commanding admiral on hopelessly sinking aircraft carrier Lexington during the battle of the Coral Sea: 'It's time...'

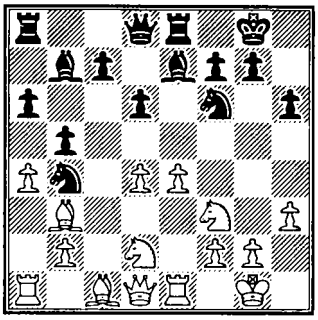
It is less painful to connect the end with something that raises hopes, with something which arises. Recently, the blockade method has gained a new impulse consisting of the central advance d4-d5 without preparing it beforehand with the a-pawn, i.e.: **11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 d5**.



However, right from the start I warn those players who enjoy tactical ploys more than delicate strategic nuances! Such players should rather seek their chances in another popular variation of the Zaitsev system: **12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2!?**.

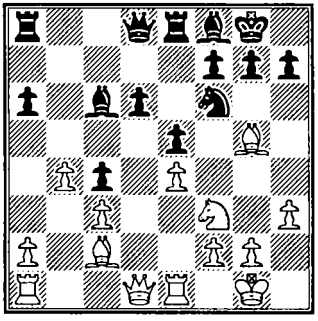


Due to the positional threat 14 d5 with a further reinforcement of the centre by means of b2–b3 and c3-c4, White invites the opponent to enter the slippery path of the main variation after **13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5**. Many of you may remember the unforgettable duels between Kasparov and Karpov; many well-known grandmasters do their superb and courageous pirouettes here, some of them swearing by White's attacking opportunities, some of them, however, believing that Black has considerable counter-chances... It depends on individual taste which direction your navigation will take you at this juncture. If you really decide (before you leave our speculations on the blockade given below) on a combination of a2-a4 followed by ♗b3-c2, I will give you a useful piece of advice. Play first 11 ♘bd2 and, only after 11...♗f8, continue with 12 a4 ♗f8 13 ♗c2 etc. If you 'test' your opponent with an immediate **11 a4** (11...♗f8?! 12 d5! ±), you will also allow, after **11...h6 12 ♘bd2**, the unclear opportunity **12...exd4!? 13 cxd4 ♘b4**.

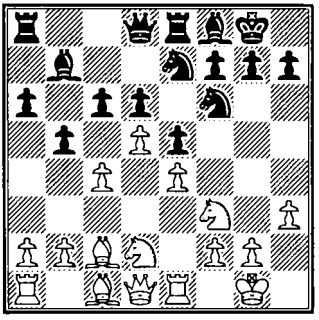


This is, on the other hand, problematic for Black after another move order: 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 exd4?! 13 cxd4 ♘b4 – due to the unpleasant 14 ♘g5.

Nevertheless, let us return to new inspirations after **11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 d5**. In this kind of blockade I would only recommend the retreat **12...♘b8**. Actually, on 12...♘a5?! Black agrees with the apparent positional disadvantage after the simple **13 ♗c2 c6 14 b4 ♘c4 15 ♘xc4 bxc4 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♗g5!**.



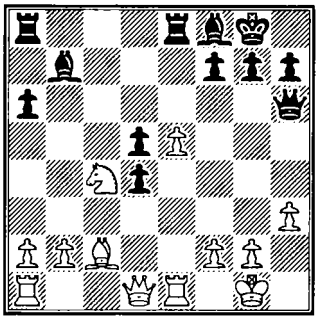
In case of 17...h6 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♗a4 or 19 ♘h2 he will, in addition, face an exhausting defence of the strategically endangered position (the passive ♗f8). The black pieces are not well-positioned after **12...♘e7 13 c4!?** (now this activity looks very good) **13...c6 14 ♗c2±**.

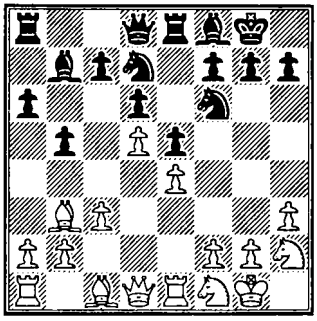


Black is at a crossroads, however, he has no appropriate way out:

a) **14...♘g6 15 b3!** is a narrow path for the black pieces crammed in the back ranks. On the other hand, the white ones have enough space for various activities, White only has to use it!

b) **14...bxc4 15 dxc6 ♘xc6 16 ♘xc4** brings some counter-chances but also a series of weak points in the black camp. After 16...h6 (otherwise again 17 ♗g5 with the d5-square control), the simple development 17 ♗d2 followed by ♖c1, ♗a4 may come, after which White's edge is indisputable. Dutch grandmaster Piket, in his game against Topalov in Amsterdam 1996, tried to becloud the situation in an interesting manner: **16...♘d4!?**. Now, after **17 ♘xd4 exd4**, the careless 18 ♕xd4? would have been met with 18...d5!. However, Topalov had full control of the situation and played **18 ♗g5! d5** (18...h6 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 20 ♘a5±) **19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 20 e5 ♕h6**.





White was satisfied with the endgame occurring after **21 ♘d2 ♗b4 22 ♖e2 ♗xd2 23 ♕xd2 ♕xd2 24 ♖xd2 ♖xe5 25 b4!** but it is a question whether he could not even afford 21 ♘a5!?.

The same approach will not bring so much joy for White after **12...♘b8**, i.e. 13 c4 c6 14 ♗c2. Again, Black's activity is limited by space but this time his piece coordination is much better synchronised: 14...♘bd7 15 b3 ♕c7, possibly g6 and ♗h6... Therefore, White should prefer the knight transfer **13 ♘f1** and prepare to 'undraw the curtain' after c7-c6; then he should watch the bare pot belly of the board, the d5 square, with his eagle eye! For Black, many positional dioptres would have been necessary if he had played an immediate 13...c6?. There might naturally follow 14 dxc6 ♘xc6 15 ♗g5 with a superiority for White. **13...♘bd7** is a possible idea: at this moment a big positional battle is launched, requiring extraordinary awareness from both sides. White's next accurate move possesses profound latent logic: **14 ♘3h2!?**.

Why this move and not the previously almost automatic 14 ♘g3 which exhibits some advantages, too? I liked, for example, the above-mentioned bishop-plan implemented by Zbyněk Hráček in his game against Z.Almasi in the Zonal Tournament in Romania 1995: 14 ♘g3 g6 15 ♘g5!? h6 16 ♗e3 ♘c5 17 ♗c2 c6 18 b4 ♘cd7 19 dxc6 ♗xc6 20 ♕d2 ♔h7 21 ♗b3! ♕e7 22 ♕d3±. However, Black can respond in a more flexible way, e.g.: 15...♗g7 16 ♕d2 (16 ♘h2 h5!) 16...♕e7 17 ♘h2 h5! 18 ♖ad1 ♕f8 != (Piket) or 15...♘c5 16 ♗c2 a5 (Ibragimov).

In any case, after 14 ♘3h2 the white pieces are prepared for the battle of the d5-square in a more mobile manner, considering the anticipated 'prod' c7-c6... The ♘h2 then goes immediately to g4, liquidating the black centre guard – ♘f6, sometimes even the other knight, after the prior exchange ♗c1-g5 x f6. And what about the ♘f1? This knight bides its time and may later intervene via g3 or, sometimes, via e3, directly to d5! In addition, the f3 square may often be useful for the queen. Remember these strategic nuances, we will use

them extensively in the future. Add, subtract, but sometimes also multiply them!

For Black, undrawing the curtain by means of c7-c6 is, sooner or later, a necessary act. But, when should this be done? It is well-known that the right moment has to be found even for a heart operation – and the centre may be compared with the heart of the chessboard! Black, just like a surgeon, is pondering in this situation, whether:

1. He can immediately 'cut': 14...c6.

2. He should prepare the conditions first: 14...♘c5 15 ♗c2 and then 15...c6.

3. He should postpone the operation instead by the active 14...♘c5 15 ♗c2 a5.

4. He should cover the g5- or f5-square prior to surgery in the centre (14...h6 or 14...g6, respectively).

1. **14...c6**

The immediate 'cut' in the centre dictates White's reaction. It must be systematic and must be aimed at control of the centre!

15 dxc6 ♗xc6

Question:

From the point of view of a successful struggle for the d5-square, will you suggest for White:

A. **16 ♘g4**

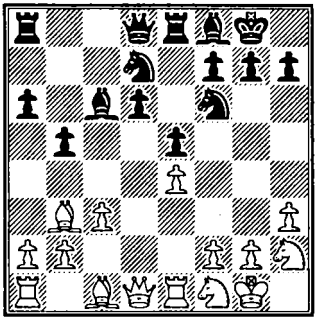
B. **16 ♗g5**

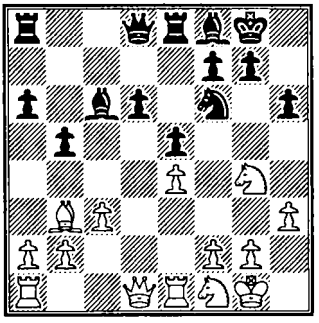
or do you think both the moves are roughly equal? Support your opinion!

Answer:

If you had spared your bishops and, just like Napoleon in his battle of Austerlitz, stormed out first with your cavalry by 16 ♘g4, you unfortunately did not give yourself the best chance of success. The battlefield is different now, note that after 16...♘xg4 17 hxg4 ♘b6! it will not be long before Black makes the d6-d5 break with marvellous play.

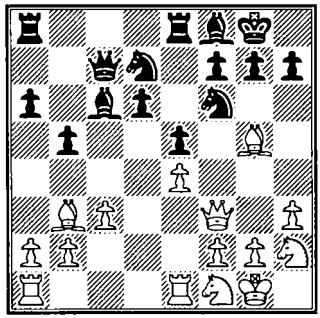
On the other hand, only **16 ♗g5!** (2 points) is the right move, not only fighting for the d5-square but also restraining the opponent's team of horses. Certainly the moves are not equal. Black fell into White's plans like a lamb to the slaughter in a game Degraeve – Sonntag, Germany 2001, when he played **16...h6?**. An exchanging operation **17 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 18 ♘g4!** followed.





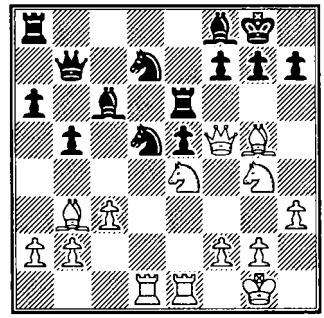
It was not difficult to calculate a small tactical intermezzo: 18...♘xe4? 19 ♕f3! d5 20 ♖xe4 +-; after **18...♘xg4 19 ♕xg4 ♗d7 20 ♕f3 ♗e6 21 ♘e3 ♖b8 22 ♖ad1** the course of the game resulted in distinct control of the d5-square and a clear advantage for the French grandmaster. He was able to foresee the battle ahead and thus, from the strategic point of view, can be compared with his above-mentioned countryman, a famous commander.

White's task is more difficult after 16 ♗g5 ♕c7. In several games White continued **17 ♕f3**,



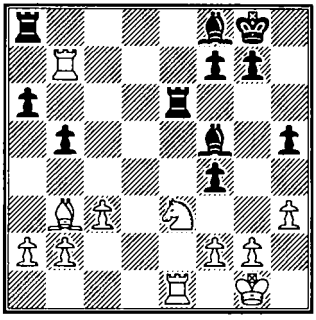
which, in connection with a further ♘g4, looks promising and has also gained satisfactory results. However, the results may be influenced by the fact that Black players have not noticed **17...a5!?** which, after a further a5-a4, practically forces the retreat of the ♗b3, controlling the d5-square. After **18 ♘g4 a4 19 ♗xf6**, Nigel Short gives **19...axb3! 20 ♘h6+ ♔h8 21 ♘xf7+ ♔g8** as an example of an unclear continuation. It remains to ask whether 17 ♕f3 is really the best that White has at his disposal. I would say that also **17 ♘g3** should be considered. After **17...a5, 18 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 19 ♘g4 ♘xg4 20 hxg4** might follow; the key-square d5 remains under piece control and after 17...♕b7, 18 ♕f3 can follow with transition to a variation which will be handled later – and which will be applauded.

Actually, the games Short – Belyavsky, Groningen 1997, and Kovačević – Gligorić, Yugoslavia 1997, continued identically: **17 ♕f3 ♕b7 18 ♘g3 d5?! 19 ♘g4! dxe4 20 ♕f5 ♘d5 21 ♘xe4 ♖e6 22 ♖ad1**.



In both cases, Black has paid dearly for his liberation with d6-d5: the white pieces are concentrated in the centre and on the kingside and threatening a decisive attack. Belyavsky went **22...h5 23 ♘e3 ♘f4!?** (If 23...♘e7, then 24 ♕xf7+!! ♔xf7 25 ♘d6+ ♔g6 26 ♘xb7 might cause a situation in which much is 'hanging'.)

24 ♕xf4 ♗xe4 25 ♖xd7! ♗xf5 26 ♖xb7 exf4



Question:

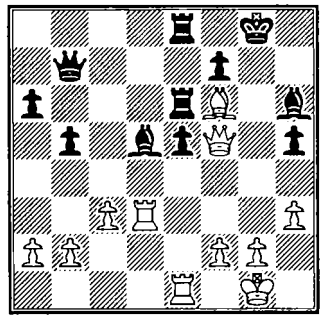
Belyavsky intended to continue his tough resistance the exchange down after **27 ♗xe6 ♗xe6** with a further ♗xa2. However, a surprising K.O. followed with an immediate resignation by Black. What is the move with which Short decided the game?

Answer:

Complicated strategic reflections will be replaced with fresh tactics but do not forget that again this is only the climax of the preceding concept. Right: **27 ♖xf7!** (1 point) breaks Black's resistance since after both 27...♔xf7 28 ♘xf5 ♖ae8 29 ♘d4 and 27...fxe3 28 ♖xf5 Black loses a piece.

Question:

In the position of the last but one diagram one-time strongest Yugoslav grandmaster and Candidates' Tournaments participant Svetozar Gligorić decided otherwise as Black: prior to the anticipated battle in the centre and on the kingside he first brought into play his last passive piece, the a8-rook, by playing **22...♖ae8**. His young grandmaster opponent and countryman understood very well that in this position, which is full of dynamics, only a maximum cooperation of pieces can convert the attacking potential of the white pieces into a full point and he proceeded to find an adequate and logical continuation: **23 ♖d3!** with a transfer of the rook to the g-file. In this game, too, Black's counterplay disappeared due to White's active tactical ingenuity: **23...h5 24 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 25 ♘gf6+ ♘xf6 26 ♘xf6+ gxf6 27 ♗xf6** The renowned veteran tried to find an escape for his king **27...♗h6**.



However, a merciless blow followed, crowning the previous excellent strategy and tactics of the young player of the white pieces.

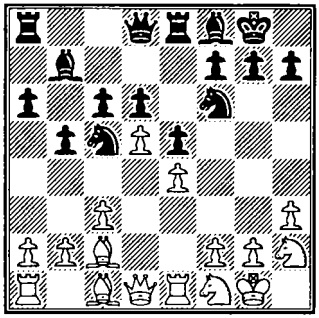
How did White continue his attack and what was the decisive blow?

Answer:

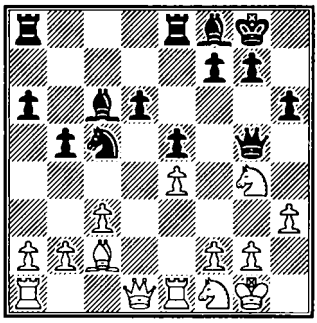
Everyone will agree that only **28 ♖xe5!** (2 points) leads to Rome. The tactical motif of deflection crowns an excellently played game, after 28...♖xe5, 29 ♖g3+ ♔f8 30 ♕h7 +- is decisive; in addition, the ♗d5 is hanging... There is a point after **28...♗e4**, namely **29 ♖xe6!** (an additional 1 point), since 29...fxe6 is not sufficient due to 30 ♖g3+ ♔f8 31 ♗g7+. An elegant finale would

then follow after **29...♗xf5 30 ♖xe8+ ♔h7** (30...♗f8 31 ♖xf8+) **31 ♖g3 ♘g4 32 hxg4 ♘f4 33 gxh5! 1: 0**

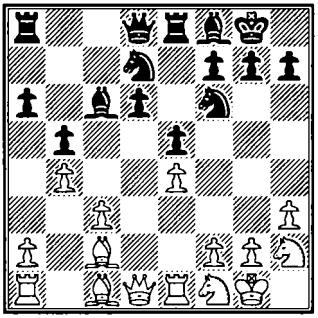
2. **14...♘c5 15 ♗c2 c6**



Again, the white centre collapses but also the arch-important strategic d5-square will now be exposed. Some kind of chess 'battle of Midway' will now take place: it is necessary to concentrate on all the fine points associated with it and which together form an overall impression of the correct further management of the battle. With the immediate experience of 14...c6 in mind, the idea of **16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♗g5** now also suggests itself. White will surely gain control over the key d5-square, but... after **17...h6 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♘g4 ♕g5**

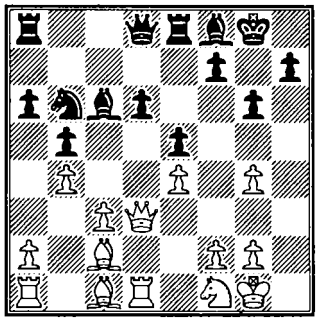


Black achieves dark-squared counterplay and the ♘c5 is sufficiently active. After a possible later b2-b4, the knight may quickly transfer its activity to the kingside. Therefore it is desirable for White to eliminate the active role of the black knight and, prior to the clearance of the centre, to insert **16 b4!** and, only after **16...♘cd7**, exchange **17 dxc6 ♗xc6**. In the following position

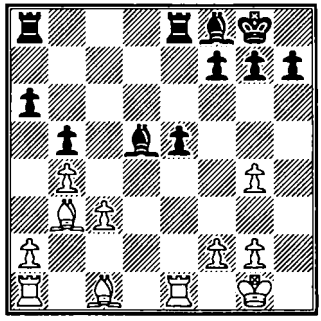


White should then decide how to continue the strategic combat in the centre: 18 ♘g4 or 18 ♗g5? Do you remember the similar question in the previous variation? In this situation, too, positional logic requires the ♘f6 to be pinned even if some slight changes in the deployment of the forces (the position of the white-squared bishop on c2 instead of b3 and additional move b2-b4...) make the decision more difficult. At the beginning, such decision-making was not unequivocal even for such a 'Spanish virtuoso' as Michael Adams undoubtedly is: in a game against Belyavsky in the European Championship at Leon 2001 he played, surprisingly enough, the more questionable, from the positional point of view, **18 ♘g4?!**. He may have been lured by the

opportunity to prevent the liberating d6-d5 after **18...♘xg4 19 hxg4 ♘b6 20 ♕d3 g6 21 ♖d1**.

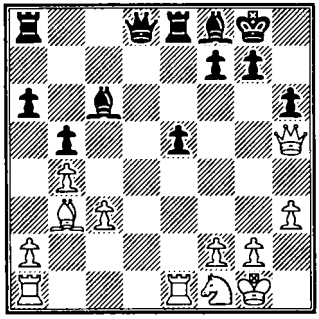


It is true that after 21...d5?! would have come the strong reply 22 ♘e3! ±, however, the disorder of the white forces also offers Black other opportunities. One of them was used by Alexander Belyavsky in the above-mentioned game: 21...♕c7 22 ♕f3 ♗d7!? 23 ♗b3 ♗e6 24 ♗g5 a5! with sufficient counterplay for Black. In the equal endgame arising after **20 ♘e3 d5 21 exd5 ♘xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 24 ♗b3**



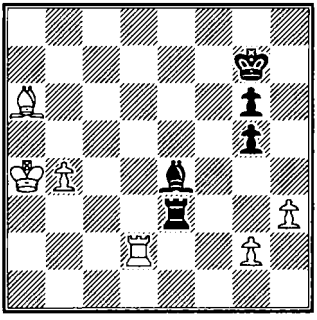
only Kasparov managed to gain a slight edge in his game against Ivanchuk, Linares 1998, although even in this case the draw barrier was not crossed.

I would say that from a fundamental point of view the continuation **18 ♗g5!** is a more suitable alternative. White intends to remove both potential guards of the key d5-square, the knight pair: the first by exchanging it for the bishop, the second after a further ♘h2-g4! There is a simple but striking example of Black's effort to carry out the liberating d6-d5: M.Adams (having quickly found the right path!) – R. Ponomariov, Linares 2002: **18...h6 19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘g4 ♘xg4 21 ♕xg4 d5!?**. Black's problems may be demonstrated after **22 exd5 ♕xd5 23 ♗b3 ♕d8 24 ♕h5!**.

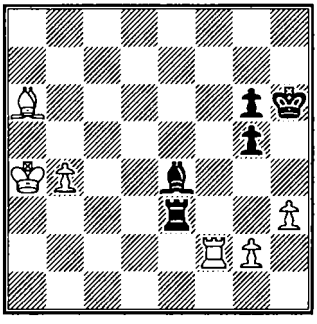


The e5 and f7 pawns may only be covered simultaneously with 24...♕c7, however, 25 ♘e3 can then follow with the main threat 26 ♘g4 e4 27 ♕g6! +-. I dare to say that the winning cooperation of the white queen, bishop and knight can only be disturbed by some miraculous defensive operation. The youngest World Champion did not believe in such a miracle and without any hesitation immediately surrendered a pawn. **24...♖a7 25 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 26 ♕xe5** and sought to save himself in the endgame arising after **26...♕g5 27 ♕xg5 hxg5**.

However, this was a hard task against Adams who proved himself a good technician. The game was safely converted into a win for White, maybe even 'too safely': **28 ♘e3 g6 29 ♖d1 ♖c7 30 ♔f1! ♔g7 31 ♔e2 ♗e7 32 ♗d5 ♗d7 33 ♖d3 ♘f6 34 c4 bxc4 35 ♗xc4 ♗c8 36 a3± ♗b2 37 ♔d2 f5 38 ♔c2 ♗xa3!? 39 ♖xa3 f4 40 ♔b3 fxe3 41 fxe3 ♖e7 42 ♔a4! ♖e5 43 ♖d3 ♗f5 44 ♖d2 ♖xe3 45 ♗xa6 ♗e4**



46 ♖f2 ♔h6



47 ♗f1 and White won on the 76th move. As an exception I have quoted the course of the game because we should realise the dynamic opportunities that are hidden in such a seemingly simple endgame; this endgame is also related to the following test question, which may be quite difficult but also instructive for some readers.

Question:

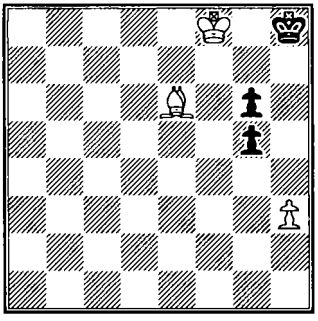
A. Do you think that in the position of the last but one diagram White could, instead of 46 ♖f2, successfully advance his passed pawn **46 b5** or might that have been a drawish error?

B. In the position of the previous diagram, could White win after an exchange of rooks, **47 ♖e2**?

Answer:

You may have found that in both cases identical endgames arise but the most important thing is to evaluate such an endgame properly. You may have had no problems with the secondary and relatively easy variation: in the case of *A* it was, for example, the following possibility: **46 b5** ♗d3? 47 ♖xd3! ♖xd3 48 b6 (1 point) with an easy win, but how to cope with Black's defence after **46...♖g3?** Nothing else remains other than to advance the pawn 47 b6 but how should the situation after 47...♖xg2 48 ♖xg2 ♗xg2 49 b7 ♗xb7 50 ♗xb7 be assessed? White is a bishop up, but isn't it nullified by the black h8-corner? The same result occurs in the case of *B* after **47 ♖e2 ♖xe2** (or 47...♗c6+ 48 b5 ♖xe2 49 bxc6 ♖c2 50 ♔b5 ♖xg2 51 c7, Black cannot play 50...g4 due to 51 hxg4 ♔g5 52 ♔b6 ♔xg4 53 c7 ♔g3 54 ♗b7, winning – 2 points!) **48 ♗xe2 ♗xg2 49 ♗g4 ♔g7 50 b5 ♔f6 51 b6 ♔e7 52 ♔a5 ♔d6 53 ♔a6** and after the further 54 b7 the same situation as in *A* arises!

'Do you know you could play 47 ♖e2,' Kasparov said to Adams after the game was over, 'you could get into an endgame of a bishop and h-pawn against a pair of the g-pawns. I got precisely this type of endgame in my game against Nigel Short in Belgrade 1989. Nigel was very surprised there was a way to win.' Really, the 'wrong corner' is not wrong anymore when there are g-pawns on the board. Anyway, let us try to continue our last variation: **53...♔c6 54 ♔a7 ♔d6 55 b7 ♗xb7 56 ♔xb7 ♔e7 57 ♔c7**... White easily enforces a position with white king on f8, white bishop on e6 and black king in the corner, which he cannot leave.



If the black king stays directly on h8, ♗g8 is decisive since Black must advance the pawn: g5-g4 If the black king stands on h7, a ♗d5 tempo is sufficient for the win, since after ♔h8 follows again ♗g8 and after ♔h6 White penetrates with his king to g8, his black counterpart will be driven out of the corner and White wins easily. Adams did not object to such reasoning; he was satisfied that even the approach he had chosen led to a slower but sure win.

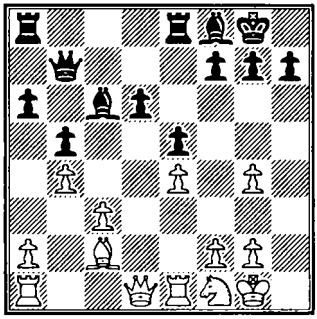
Nevertheless, similar knowledge and decisions sometimes play a fatal role in the result of the game and therefore our test points will be awarded. Those of you who have revealed all the above-mentioned finesses of the fight between the bishop and the pawns may add an additional 4 points. If you hesitated and failed to assess the situation correctly either in variation *A* or *B*, you gain only half, i.e. 2 points. And do not forget: exact knowledge always facilitates flexibility and dynamics of your reasoning and decision-making – be it the opening, middlegame or endgame.

Black, for his part, is certainly not obliged to react to 18 ♗g5 by an effort to clear the situation by 18...h6

A. ...especially if he realises that the accelerated advance d6-d5 does not bring only sunny sides but also problems (see the game Adams – Ponomariov)... The positional threat 19 ♘g4 may also be met by a queen move to get out of the pin or (in a less logical manner) by 18...♗e7. In all those cases Black tends to advance d6-d5, but White is able to prevent this by means of the above-mentioned mechanism and may get control of the 'operating lever' on the central d5 square. Will such control be a reliable and efficient way of obtaining the advantage or will it lead White into an impasse? This is precisely what I will try to answer on the following pages.

B. **18...♕c7 19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘g4 ♘xg4** (Black can defend more stubbornly in the battle for the centre if he transfers the other knight to b6 via 20...♘d7!?. However, in this case the loss of

time will allow White to deploy his pieces in a sufficiently active scenario – ♕f3, ♘g3, ♖ad1, ♗b3, with the order depending on White's taste and preferences – and to gain a promising initiative.) **21 hxg4 ♕b7**.



Question:

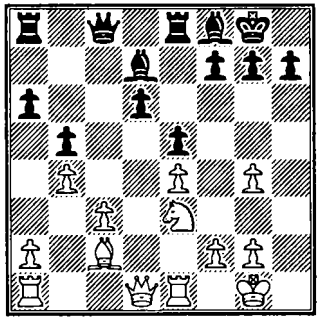
Which move helps White best coordinate his efforts to control the centre? In this case, does the issue consist of the most suitable defence of the e4-pawn, while at the same time preventing the liberating d6-d5?

Will you recommend for White: *1.* **22 ♕f3**, *2.* **22 ♕d3**, or *3.* **22 ♘e3?**

Answer:

The answer comes under the basic ABC of strategic thinking. It is somewhat reminiscent of the initial questions of various TV quiz shows (e.g., 'Who wants to be a millionaire?'), but even there you will get, after the easy questions, more difficult ones which can win you a decent prize. Here also the reward for your correct answer will be quite modest, in case of 22 ♕f3? you will not even gain a single point since after 22...d5 White would not fulfil the basic positional requirement. The tactically ingenious solution 22 ♘e3!? with the idea of continuing, after 22...♗xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♕xe4, with 24 ♘d5 winning the exchange, deserves 1 point but not more since after 24...♕c4 25 ♘b6 ♕xc3 the situation is not clear, despite Black's modest possibility 22...♖ad8 and if only then 23 ♕d3, Black can play 23...g6 followed by ♗h6 and White will not get to play the key-move 24 ♗b3... From the above-mentioned it follows that the right answer is **22 ♕d3!** (2 points). This move prevents Black from liberating himself by d6-d5 and also prepares 23 ♗b3 with full control of all important central white squares. In a game A.Delchev – N.Levar, Belisce 1999, the Bulgarian grandmaster simply and quickly took the initiative after **22...♖ac8 23 ♗b3 ♗d7?! 24 ♘e3 ♗e6 25 ♘d5 ♖c6 26 a4!** ±.

C. **18...♕c8!?** (A somewhat peculiar 'sidestep' of the black queen. Its idea consists of a later transfer of the ♗d7 with gain of tempo and a dubious capture on c3.) **19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘g4 ♘xg4 21 hxg4 ♗d7 22 ♘e3**



22...♕xc3?! 23 ♘d5 ♕c6 24 ♗b3 ♕b7 The queen runs away frantically; Black has covered everything on the queenside but White will open Pandora's box on the other side: **25 g5! ♗e6 26 ♖e3 ♖ec8 27 ♕h5** with a strong attack for White in the game Z.Almasi – E.Bacrot, Szeged 2000. Later A.Belyavsky repeated the 'pawn hunt' in a Bundesliga game against my friend, grandmaster Zbyněk Hráček; he inserted first **22...♖a7!?** and only after **23 ♗b3** captured the pawn **23...♕xc3**. The game followed 24 ♘d5 ♕c8 25 ♘b6?! ♕d8 26 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 27 ♗d5 with approximate equality. Nevertheless, even here White could demand more from the active position, which was confirmed by Zbyněk himself when we spoke about it. There are several ideas, e.g. 25 ♖c1 ♕d8 26 a4!?, and perhaps another, quite active continuation...

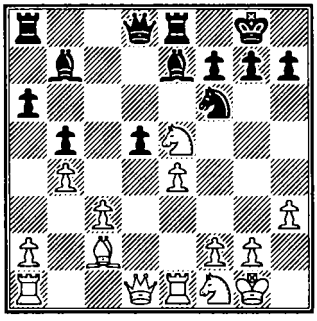
D. **18...♗e7?!**

This is probably the least successful attempt. Black would like to play d6-d5 again but after the logical exchange on f6, followed by ♘g4, the ♗e7 will cramp the black forces.

19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘g4 d5?!

I could not believe my own eyes when I saw this reply in a game Jansa – Štoček, Prague 2002. The e5-pawn is hanging with a tempo and Black obviously lacks something in compensation for the bishop pair. My opponent, Jiří Štoček, belongs to a new generation of Czech grandmasters but, due to his more profound conception, he is a clear supporter of classical vision of the strategic movement on the chessboard. In this case it was obvious to him that after 20...♘xg4 21 ♕xg4 (or even 21 hxg4) with a further 22 ♗b3 he will be under long-term positional pressure; with this in mind and also perhaps on account of some previous, similarly unpleasant games against me, Štoček made a decision linked to a doubtful pawn sacrifice. I know that an important role in his chess education is played by Alekhine's work. This genius of the 64 squares used to ask his opponents during the analysis: 'Was haben Sie gegen zwei Läufer?' (i.e. 'What do you have against the bishop pair?'). In this case the bishop pair will rather represent a reason to apply the brake rather than to step on the gas. At least it gives some hope – it is clear that Black is struggling for mere positional survival.

21 ♘xe5 ♗b7



...which may be documented by the simple **22 exd5**. Black can only struggle for a draw in an endgame after **22...♕xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 24 ♗e4** (also, 24 ♗b3± is possible) **24...♗f6 25 f4 ♗xe5 26 fxe5 ♖a7 27 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 28 a4** and White's chances for a win are not lower than Black's chances for a draw. However, try to put yourself in White's shoes in your analysis, i.e.

my role during the game! Of course, in my primary reasoning I assessed the pros and cons of the endgame but soon found another, very tempting tactical possibility: **22 ♘xf7** and if **22...♔xf7** then **23 e5**... Simple calculation revealed that the only reasonable answer is 23...♘e4 since, after 23...♘g8, 24 ♕h5+ regaining the piece would be decisive. If Black tries to save himself by returning the piece by 23...♔g8, this would give White a decisive positional advantage after 24 exf6 ♗xf6 25 ♕d3, as well as the pawn. But, how to proceed after **23...♘e4** ? A quiet 24 f3? is not appropriate due to ♕b6+ but another sacrifice **24 ♖xe4 dxe4 25 ♗b3+** is possible since 25...♔f8 cannot be played because of 26 ♕h5 and the position arising after 26...♗d5 27 ♖d1 or 27 e6 should be assessed as giving White a decisive edge. Therefore, Black must advance his king, **25...♔g6**, and after **26 ♕g4+ ♔h6**... Surely everyone must now be attracted to finding various ways to 'wring the black king's neck'. First, a motif **27 ♘g3 g6 28 ♖d1 ♕b6 29 ♖d6!** occurred to me, with a beautiful finale after **29...♗xd6 30 ♘f5+! gxf5 31 ♕h4+ ♔g7 32 ♕f6 mate**! It looks great, the same motif may be employed after 28...♕c8 29 ♖d7 ♗c6: again 30 ♘f5+! gxf5 31 ♖d6+! ♗xd6 32 ♕h4+ or 28...♕c7 29 ♘f5+ and 30 ♖d6+ ... And after 28...♗c8, 29 ♕xe4 is enough, the ♖a8 is hanging... The possibilities for White associated with 22 ♘xf7 seem so attractive that it is hard to resist the temptation. Still, a short check of the consequences of the sacrifice and a comparison with the results of a 'simple' 22 exd5 are in order. The endgame is reeking of sweat but the double sacrifice directs the course of the game to a garden in bloom and full of enticing scents... A cursory look at the clock, my opponent had spent a great deal of time calculating the previous pawn sacrifice – even in this sense I have an edge. Then my decision is unambiguous and I take the position by storm – with a sacrifice of the knight on f7.

Question:

You are in my shoes at the chessboard with the position shown in the previous diagram. The result of the game is very important for the outcome of the team match. You should decide, after thorough consideration and calculation, on:

22 exd5 or **22 ♘xf7?** Needless to say, you should support your decision by corresponding rationale.

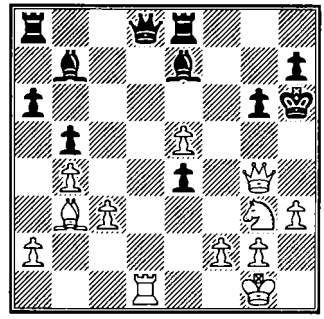
Answer:

This is one of the most difficult questions I ask in this book!

However, the never-ending battle between chess poetry and prose, between pragmatism and creative zest, should not be the prevailing clue for your decision over the board. The beauty of chess is primarily based on its objective accuracy, some kind of perfection in our decision-making. Such perfection is sometimes a matter of our personal taste – as is precisely this example! Nevertheless I will try to measure it, as I did during the game. We are continually haunted with such complicated comparisons and we try to put them on the pharmaceutical scales even if our personal intuition tips the scales in the other direction... Something

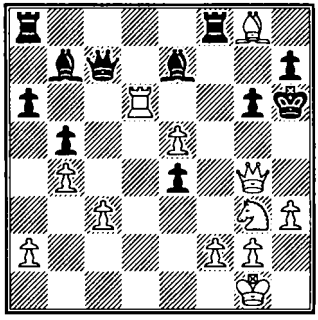
similar was expressed by Patrick White, an Australian writer. He said: 'It is impossible to achieve perfection but it is our duty to try...'

In this case everyone deserves points for his/her opinion – some more, some less. Those who have come to a conclusion that 'after 22 exd5 White is a pawn up in the endgame and has good chances to win while 22 ♘xf7 leads to an unnecessarily chaotic tactical struggle with unclear consequences' are probably chess pragmatists respecting the well-known saying: 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'. However, their remuneration equals only the price of one bird, which means 2 points in our test... Those of you who set out with me to seek a more valuable prey may have found that it is not a fantasy but a quite specific target. They will get double remuneration, i.e. 4 points, since 22 ♘xf7 leads to a clear advantage for White. But be careful! There are pitfalls in our path which should be identified. I took a correct personal decision in having played 22 ♘xf7! but could not wrap up the work which had been started so well. Let us begin our considerations, assessments and possibilities after **22 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 23 e5**, you may gain additional points for accurate guidance but also for mistakes revealed. You must have found that the course of play inevitably heads towards the above-mentioned position after **23...♘e4 24 ♖xe4! dxe4 25 ♗b3+ ♔g6 26 ♕g4+ ♔h6 27 ♘g3** (nothing will be changed after 27 ♖d1 ♕c7 28 ♘g3 since the greedy 28 ♗f7? may be confuted by the simple 28...♕xe5) **27...g6 28 ♖d1**.



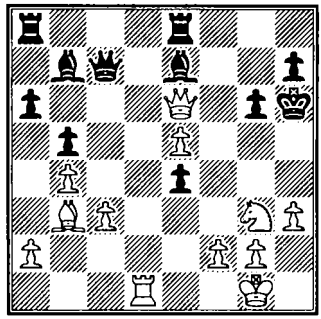
Logically, this position was also reached in the Jansa-Štoček game. You will certainly agree with my previous calculation leading to a nice mate after 28...♕b6 29 ♖d6! ♗xd6 30 ♘f5+! or, in the reverse order, 28...♕c8 29 ♖d7 ♗c6 30 ♘f5+! gxf5 31 ♖d6+! ♗xd6 32 ♕h4+ ♔g6 33 ♕f6+ ♔h5 34 ♗d1(f7) mate; there are no doubts about 28...♗c8 29 ♕xe4±. You may have stopped before seeing the clearly best answer, **28...♕c7**. My opponent, naturally, played this move; only now the most significant and trickiest part of my question begins. My optimism was enhanced by the sorry sight of my opponent who was visibly taken by surprise and looking rather desolate. To tell the truth, at this moment I did not have any doubts about the winning finale, I considered the game 'finished business'. But, alas!, I had already put down the above-mentioned 29 ♘f5+?? on my score sheet, only now to realise my serious mistake: after 29...gxf5 30 ♖d6+, Black takes the rook with his queen and not with his bishop (1 additional point for you!). Nothing remained other than to start concentrating again but my earlier self-confidence was gone. All of a

sudden, no smooth win for White can be seen even if the decisive combination is undoubtedly somewhere in the wind! Nervousness and shock caused by the gross oversight had overtaken me but still I am convinced that I am on the right track. Unfortunately it is murky. What if we reverse the order of tactics and play **29 ♖d6!?** first (1 point)? The threat is 30 ♘f5 mate, after 29...♗xd6, 30 ♘f5+ and 31 ♕h4+ may follow. Also, another sacrifice very much appealed to me: 29...♔g7 30 ♘f5+ ♔h8 31 ♖xg6! and the white attack should come through again... But, after **29...♖f8** there is very dense fog, I must admit that at the chessboard I could not see how to continue. A promising direction was only found later by Fritz, managed by IGM M.Vokáč, commentator of the game: it found the fantastic **30 ♗g8!** and this discovery deserves a diagram!



This is a breathtaking idea, Black cannot take any of the white pieces: 30...♗xd6 due to 31 ♕h4+, 30...♖xg8 31 ♘f5 mate, the threat is 31 ♕h5+!. However, Black can fight back after **30...♔g7!** and if **31 ♖d7** then **31...♕b6** (31...♕xe5 32 ♕h4! ±) **32 ♗xh7 ♕xf2+ 33 ♔h2 ♔xh7**...

The most accurate continuation of the attack was, however, probably **29 ♕e6!** (2 points)

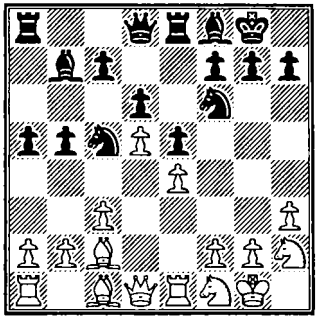


and it is principally this continuation that should confirm the correctness of the decision on the 22nd move. Compare the results of your calculation with the following variations: 29...♗c8 30 ♘f5+ ♔g5 (30...♔h5 31 ♘g7+ and 32 ♘xe8 +-) 31 h4+ ♔g4 32 f3+ exf3 33 ♖d4+ -, 29...♖ad8 30 ♘f5+ ♔h5 31 ♖d6!! ♗xd6 32 ♗d1+ mating, **29...♔g7! 30 ♖d7 ♕c6 31 ♖xe7+ ♔h8** (31...♖xe7 32 ♕xe7+ ♔h8 33 e6+-) **32 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 33 ♕f7±**, since after **33...e3** the move **34 f3** with threats of 35 e6 or 35 ♘e4 holds a clear advantage.

Sometimes a personal failure cannot be satisfactorily explained even after an interval of time has elapsed. Certainly, I could see the opportunity 29 ♕e6 but, despite that, after long thought, there followed something absolutely incomprehensible: 29 ♖d7? (0 points) 29...♕xe5 30 ♖xb7, which unexpectedly changed the whole situation on the board. Such a turn of events may just play into the hands of those combinational sceptics who would have preferred

the bird in the hand on the 22nd move. Nevertheless, I dare to say that similar moves to 22 ♘xf7! represent not only a great temptation but also an obligation for every dynamically thinking chessplayer!

3. **14...♘c5 15 ♗c2 a5**

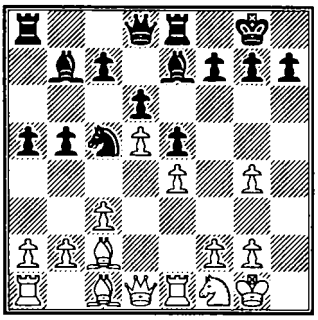


Black first consolidates the position of his c5-knight and only then intends to break in the centre with the c7-c6 advance. However, not every intention comes up roses – its cons may also be found!

In this case it is the weakened b5-pawn which should attract White's attention. And, not only this pawn but also the entire complex of white squares on the queenside! In short, the strategy shifts a little bit, this time to the queenside, but events should be controlled over the whole board. I think that logical development may be demonstrated by the following possibilities and examples:

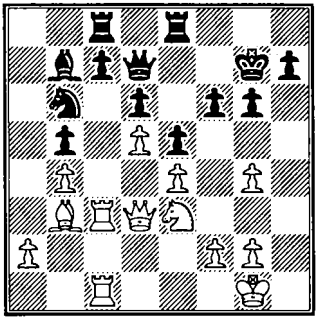
Adams – E. Bacrot
Leon 2001

16 ♘g4 ♘xg4 17 hxg4 ♗e7



It is easy to understand that Black wants to revive the bishop via g5. Bacrot had tried this move previously in his match against Almasi. There also Black had certain positional problems after 18 ♗e3!?. After 18...♗g5, White's plan is quite clear: 19 ♗xc5 dxc5 20 a4! with the above-mentioned white-squared initiative. And after 18... c6?, White would aim at b5 by means of 19 ♕e2... Adams prefers another, maybe even more efficient method consisting of direct play against the b5-pawn.

18 ♘e3!? ♗g5 19 b4! axb4 20 cxb4 ♘a4 21 ♕d3 ♕d7 22 ♘f5 ♗xc1 23 ♖axc1± ♘b6 24 ♗b3 f6?! (24...g6 25 ♘h6+ ♔g7 26 g5) **25 ♖c3 g6 26 ♘e3 ♔g7 27 ♖ec1 ♖ac8**



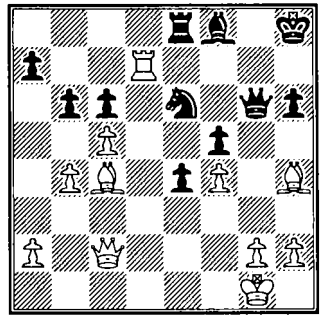
Question:

White launched an attack on weak points in Black's position, the b5 and c7-pawns. Black covered them and so it is necessary to increase the pressure and look for other means of access! With his next move, the English grandmaster directed his efforts very accurately and presented Black with a problem that was hard to solve. Can you find the sensitive Achilles' heel of Black's defence?

Answer:

Merely attacking the c7-pawn by 28 ♕c2?! (0 points) leads, after 28...♖e7, to an impasse. It is necessary to seek new opportunities, new files... and new diagonals for our pieces. In this case our principal challenge is to find a diagonal. Using an excellent bishop transfer **28 ♗d1!** (3 points), Adams found how to unblock this piece. Black will not only face 29 ♗e2 with a new attack on b5 but primarily the deadly 29 g5! followed by ♗g4!. Bacrot must have been fully thrown off balance since he reacted 28... c6? 29 dxc6 ♖xc6 (29... ♗xc6 30 g5!+-) and after 30 ♕xb5 White, a pawn up, had a winning position. Even **28...h6** would not have helped since **29 g5!** might been the reply with Black's defensive line totally damaged after 29... h5 30 gxf6+ ♔xf6 31 ♗e2 c6 32 dxc6 ♗xc6 33 f4! ± (Adams). The only reasonable move was perhaps **28...♖f8** but after **29 g5 f5 30 exf5 gxf5 31 ♗e2** White has an edge because **31... c6 32 dxc6 ♗xc6** (a little combination) **33 ♘xf5+! ♖xf5 34 ♖xc6** leads to the win of an important pawn. Such manoeuvres give the bishops a lot of power due to their capacity for surprise as an unexpected change of diagonals may not easily be noticed on the board.

In this connection may I recall a striking moment in one of my games played against the Ex-World Champion, Vassily Smyslov, who was, apart from other things, an extraordinarily keen coordinator of perfect piece cooperation. The game was played in the Rubinstein Memorial at Polanica Zdroj in 1968. In this game my position was not O.K. from the very start; the main troubles were caused by the white bishop on h4 which prevented Black opposing with a rook from the d8 square. Nevertheless, in the following position,



I had hopes of counterplay after I had just played 29...b6. Besides that, we both had little time (I had eight minutes and my opponent ten minutes left until the time control)... I gave my great opponent a fleeting look – his face signalled concentration and tension but also a hint of uncertainty. Unfortunately, the uncertainty lasted only several minutes and was slowly replaced with serenity and a contented, perhaps even cunning smile... 'What the devil can he see,' I was

telling myself, 'what could it be?' The chills down my spine were soon suspended by the answer on the board: **30 ♗e1!** Yes, this is exactly the manoeuvre which, due to a diagonal change, will improve not only the position of the black-squared bishop but at the same time the entire strength of the white position! I realised that the verdict on the result of the game had probably returned. Still I certainly tried: **30...bxc5 31 ♗c3+ ♔g8 32 bxc5 ♗xc5+ 33 ♔h1 ♖e7** but Smyslov was absolutely clear about matters on the chessboard and after **34 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 35 ♕a4! ♔f8 36 ♕xa7 ♘d8 37 ♕d7 ♕g4 38 ♗e5** the dominant position of all the white pieces did not allow any reasonable resistance.

V.Jansa – I.Ibragimov
Fürth 1991

16 ♘g4 ♗e7!?

This is a little bit more accurate than 16...♘xg4. We will soon see why...

17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18 ♗e3!?

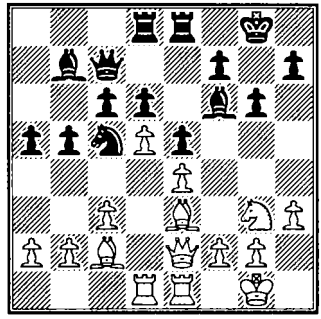
The 'à la Adams' continuation, i.e. 18 ♘e3 ♗g5 19 b4 axb4 20 cxb4 ♘a4 21 ♕d3 ♕d7 22 ♘f5, is not very effective now since after 22...♗xc1 23 ♖xc1 ♘b6 24 ♗b3 the different pawn structure enables Black to play an immediate 24... g6 without any fear.

Each similar detail should be recorded in one's mind and adequately responded to. The bishop move seemed to me to more accurately correspond to the strategic direction. Certainly, after 18...♗g5?, the point is again 19 ♗xc5 dxc5 20 a4! ±.

18... c6 19 ♕e2! ♕c7

After 19... cxd5 20 exd5 the b5-pawn could cause Black unpleasant troubles.

20 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 21 ♘g3 g6



Question:

Both sides have economically deployed their forces over the entire chessboard but what is going on? White is to move, which plan would you recommend to him?

Do you consider the situation is:

A. equal

B. advantageous for White

C. more pleasant for Black?

Answer:

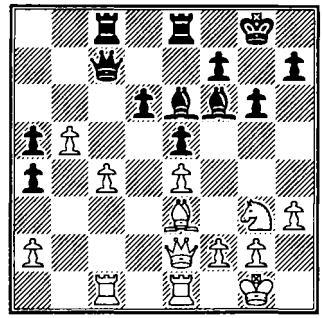
An appropriate consideration requires not only your feel for the position but also a specific operation and a plan! The position is advantageous for White (2 points) but this assessment is conditioned by the active play on the queenside. The premature exchange 22 dxc6?! (0 points) would represent a wrong decision since after 22...♗xc6 the b7-square will become vacant for the queen and the e6-square will be ready for the knight. The other

exchange 22 ♗xc5 dxc5 leads to an interesting positional combat but only if it is linked to 23 c4!? (1 point); if 23...cxd5 then 24 exd5 with nice opportunities for White. I was considering this move, too, but then I found the enterprising **22 b4!** (3 points) and firstly variations linked to this active move and I said to myself: 'This is it!' Let us analyse together the retreats of the knight as I saw them during the game.

22...♘d7 23 dxc6 ♗xc6 24 ♗b3... White controls the d5-square, Black has weaknesses on d6 and b5. After **24... a4 25 ♗d5 ♗xd5 26 ♖d5 ♕xc3 27 ♖xb5** and White's advantage is clear.

22...♘a6 Such a passive retreat does not need to be overly calculated. Some quiet moves may be sufficient but also **23 a4!** may be considered; after **23...axb4** there is a 'fork' **24 dxc6** and **25 axb5**...

A key to the decision is represented by **22...♘a4** but after **23 ♗xa4 bxa4 24 dxc6** followed by 25 b5 the position looks promising for White. The adventurous pawn loot **24... ♕xc6 25 b5 ♕xc3 26 ♖c1** should not be good for Black; this was, after all, confirmed by a short post-mortem analysis. However, my opponent, the likeable Russian grandmaster Ibragimov, could only choose from a limited number of replies; after long consideration he chose the last of the above-mentioned possibilities 22...♘a4 and on the 24th move he captured **24...♗xc6** in order to transfer his bishop to e6 after **25 b5**: **25...♗d7 26 c4 ♗e6 27 ♖c1 ♖c8**



Another accurate move, **28 ♖c3!**, underlined White's advantage; due to the doubled pawn on the a-file White is practically a pawn up. The c-file pin prevents 28...♗xc4? due to 29 ♕c2 because the excuse 29...♗d3 fails: after 30 ♖xc7 ♗xc2 31 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 32 ♖c1+- followed by b6-b7 Black would fall out of the frying pan into the fire.

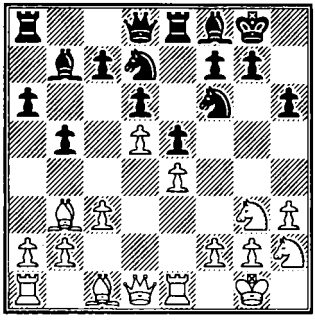
The game took the following course: **28...♕b7 29 ♖ec1 ♗h4 30 ♕d3 ♕d7 31 ♘f1 f5 32 f3 f4** and now instead of 33 ♗f2?! ♗xf2+ 34 ♔xf2 ♕a7+ 35 ♔e1 ♕b6! with needless complications White should have played the *zwischenzug* **33 ♗b6!** and only after **33...♖b8** (33...♗d8 34 ♗f2±), **34 ♗f2** when Black might not have enough time to organise counterplay against the c-pawn: **34...♗xf2+ 35 ♔xf2 ♕a7+ 36 ♔e1 ♕b6 37 ♕c2±**.

4. Black prevents any activity and plays a prophylactic

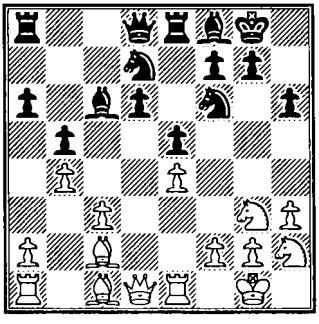
a) **14... h6** in order to cover the g5-square

b) **14... g6** in order to cover the f5-square.

In the first case, after **14...h6** a quiet **15 ♘g3** suggests itself.



If 15... c6 then 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘g4 can only help White strategically since after 17...♘xg4 18 hxg4 both 18...♘f6 19 g5 hxg5 20 ♗xg5 and 18...♘b6 19 g5! hxg5 20 ♕h5 are not attractive for Black. First **15...♘c5 16 ♗c2** and only then 16...c6 comes into consideration. After the familiar **17 b4 ♘cd7 18 dxc6 ♗xc6**,



Black has prevented the ♘f6 pin but at a high price: the presence of the ♘g3 allows White simple control of the d5-square by means of **19 ♗b3**. The interesting positional duel may continue after **19...♘b6** (19... a5 20 a3) **20 ♘g4±**.

After **14...g6, 15 ♘g4!** (15 ♘g3 h5!?) with a spatial advantage for White might be an adequate reaction; Black's basic counterplay, linked to c7-c6, will entail even higher positional risk than in the previous variations.

Summary:

The 'blocking variation' 12 d5, linked primarily to the knight manoeuvre 14 ♘3h2, confronts Black with considerable positional problems. It seems that the necessary 'surgical cut' c7-c6 should be performed with an extraordinarily delicate sense. You may ask, 'When and how?'. I really do not know – you may have understood from the preceding text that in this case I side with the white strip and that I have tried to prepare plans for White. Note that these plans set into motion an accurately adjusted strategic rhythm which must – in order to be precise and successful – keep moving like the most precise instrument. I also expect that not everyone may agree with my conclusions or that White's advantage may not seem insignificant to them. Some time ago I recommended this variation to my friend, talented grandmaster Alberto David. He got very interested in the variation, however, on the next day, before a game which should take such a course, he told me: 'You know, White's game is not much to my liking, I would prefer to play a variation with **12 ♗c2 h6 13 a4**...'

After **13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5** the over-the-board dialogue is quite different – and much sharper. In similar cases the most convenient commentary of the situation may be that of the Roman orator Propertius: 'All things are not equally suitable for everyone.'

D. Spanish bishops...

Careful treatment of the light-squared bishop is an absolute must for anybody who is trying, as White, to find the correct delicate strategic fibres in virtually every complicated and interesting variation of the Spanish. But, what about Black? For many decades his problem mostly consisted of the passive role of his black-squared bishop, modestly developed on e7 and patiently waiting for employment as the game developed... Yes, I would say that positional patience used to be one of the strongest features of the style displayed by such 'Spanish classicists' as Keres or (later) Karpov; among Czech grandmasters the heavy Spanish burden was for many years best carried by Jan Smejkal ...

Tremendous dynamics in the development of theory, information and opinions on various strategic problems themselves, associated with more active play, significantly change the global view and assessment of some variations which for decades were considered casual and, sometimes, even inferior. Such a renaissance can be seen, for example, in various systems in which Black develops his bishop not on e7 but actively on c5, as if to say: 'I can afford this, but no passivity at any price!' Chess fashion catches on, such variations are played not only by the most courageous and optimistic grandmasters of the world's elite but also by other players: masters, master-candidates and many chess-club amateurs... Several theoretical essays and books have been written and I feel I cannot evade the new theme since I think I have something to say about it that could be of interest to you. Again, do not expect me to present some kind of striking refutation of Black's concept, my ideas will include – as usual – an attempt to suggest some themes for your strategic contemplation.

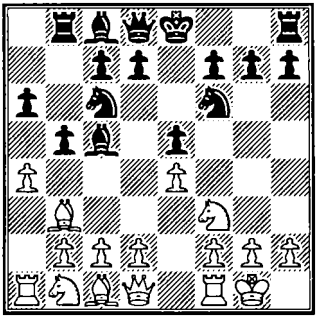
... and Shirov's "fata Morgana"

Many years ago, Alexei Shirov, then a rising star in the chess firmament, played in a traditional tournament in Gausdal, Norway. He did not score an excellent result, on the contrary; however, I remember a very interesting ending in his game against American grandmaster Ivanov. The chessboard, on which a complicated endgame was being played out, was surrounded by several famous grandmasters watching, with open surprise, the machine-like and unprecedentedly rapid play of the blond lanky boy whose gaze seemed to focus on the board only fleetingly. For most of the time his eyes were fixed on the wall behind his opponent, on the battlefield which had been created in his mind only... Yes, the present-day Shirov is the same, only... '...he is no longer just an uncompromising attacker,' Garry Kasparov adds with due credit. However, fantastic calculation is still his strongest weapon, I have had the opportunity to face it myself twice: once in Kertenminde, Denmark, and later in Berlin. In both cases my position was quite good, however, a slight inaccuracy was enough to fall under the wheels of an express train which had been set in motion by the mistake. I could only see a flashing warning light on the wall later on...

In recent years Alexei Shirov has several times climbed nearly to the peak of the chess Olympus, his play has become more versatile and abundant, being noticeably enriched with positional elements of the highest quality. Several times he needed only to make a small step but he stumbled just before the finish. Actually, sometimes a proverbial 'fata Morgana' sneaks into his extraordinarily rich fantasy, the images of which he creates and then mysteriously watches in his opponent's background on the walls of world tournaments – unfortunately this sometimes happens at the most decisive moment of the tournament.

I regarded as an illusion Shirov's adherence to the following variation in which Black develops his bishop to c5:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗c5 7 a4 ♖b8

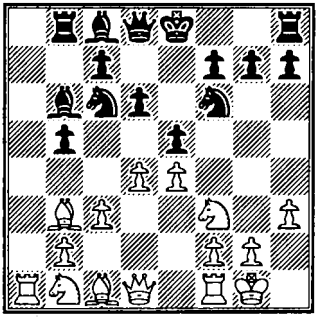


Such a voluntary surrender of the a-file into the hands of his opponent is undoubtedly a risky and, from the positional point of view, an unsound decision. The truth is that many times Black suffers from the passive role of his bishop after 7...♗b7 8 d3, which was demonstrated in many games at the highest level. The game continuation leaves (after a future d7-d6) the opportunity for both routes to remain open for the white-squared bishop. With respect to positional principles, you may think this is nevertheless worth trying in one or two games; nevertheless, Shirov, as if fascinated with something, has tried the 'dubious' variation with 7...♖b8 many times, sometimes even at the most important moments of his career! This 'fata Morgana' seems to be a contributory factor in his elimination in a World Championship semi-final match against Anand in 1997; shortly afterwards he missed an outright individual tournament victory due to a loss against Svidler in the penultimate round of the Linares tournament after excellent play during the whole course of the competition!

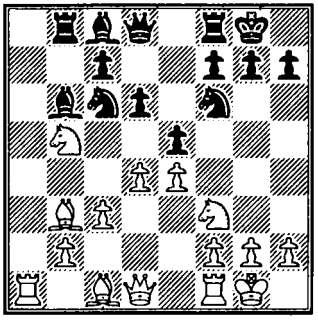
I cannot say that the variation is definitely wrong. After all, a number of subsequent proponents of the 7...♖b8 idea maintain a quite different position. Despite that I believe that the positional deficit of voluntarily surrendering the a-file can only scarcely be healed by means of future tactics. In view of the enormous amount of games played and filed, I do not want to compete with numerous theoretical essays evaluating every inch of terrain under examination. That would be incompatible with the principles of independent and consistent dynamic reasoning prevailing in this book and, possibly, making it different from other books. I will only point in the direction of the basic concept of White's play which unequivocally

revealed one of the 'fata Morganas' of the black system...

8 c3 (From the point of view of our plan it is not so important when the exchange on b5 is made. It is possible to play 8 axb5 axb5 first and only then 9 c3.) **8...d6 9 d4 ♗b6 10 axb5 axb5 11 h3!?**

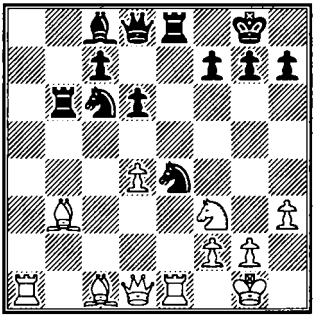


This is a prophylactic move forming the cornerstone of our further reasoning. It should be mentioned, however, that at the present time White usually plays the uncompromising **11 ♘a3 0-0 12 ♘xb5!?**.

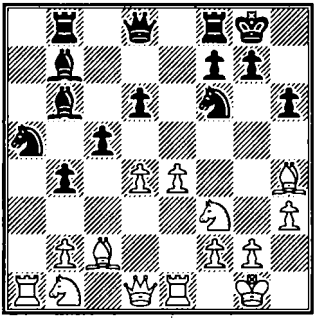


Is Black's compensation for the pawn, after 12...♗g4 (or 12...exd4 13 cxd4 ♗g4), sufficient?

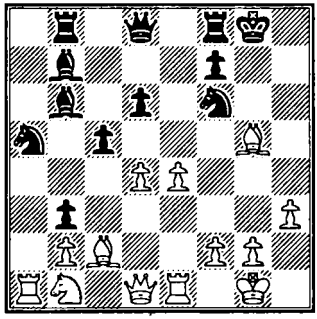
I do not know; there are dramatic discussions on this theme in practice. But let us follow our plan which does not allow the ♘f3 pin and is constructed on the solid foundations of the centre: **11 h3 0-0 12 ♖e1 ♗b7** (The continuation 12...♖e8 13 ♘a3 b4 14 ♘c4 bxc3 15 bxc3 exd4 is hardly acceptable due to 16 ♘xb6 ♖xb6 17 cxd4 ♘xe4



18 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 19 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 20 ♘g5+ ♔g8 21 ♘xe4 and Black later paid for the weakened position of his king, Anand – Piket, Wijk 1998) **13 ♘a3 exd4!?** (Otherwise Black will be left passive: 13...b4? 14 ♘c4. He will compensate for his loss of the centre by chasing the white pieces away now from the queenside ... Will it be sufficient?) **14 cxd4 ♘a5 15 ♗c2 b4 16 ♘b1 c5 17 ♗g5 h6 18 ♗h4**



Black responds with a vigorous operation against the opponent's pawn centre – it cannot be presented better! Also, it is quite clear who devised this plan. Right, the situation first occurred in a Topalov – Shirov game, rapid chess tournament, Madrid 1997. In fact, Black forces White to sacrifice a piece: **18...g5?!** (19 ♗g3? b3 and White loses his power-house on e4.) **19 ♘xg5 hxg5 20 ♗xg5 b3**.



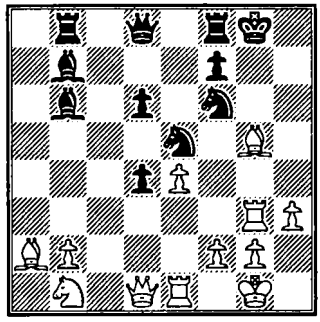
The Bulgarian grandmaster played **21 ♗d3** and after **21...c4!** the position was quite unclear. No wonder that Shirov has become an expert on selecting openings for many young players; the course of his game against Topalov also inspired IM D.Gross when he was preparing for our individual encounter in the Extra-League team competition of the Czech Republic. The game had reached the position shown in the above diagram and, after approximately a half-hour think, I found a way to thoroughly upset Black's plan. Will you try to find it with me?

Question:

I did not like the continuation 21 ♗d3 very much due to 21...c4 22 ♗f1 ♘c6 attacking the pawn on d4. I felt like taking a third pawn for the sacrificed piece: **21 ♗xb3** Yes, but what should I play after **21...cxd4**, the attack of the queen on the third rank can be easily parried: 22 ♕f3 ♔g7. The ♗b3 is then hanging unpleasantly and, after 23 ♗c2 ♘c6 (c4) Black quickly consolidates as he also does after 22 ♗c2 ♘c4... Unfortunately, the isolated white queen and the ♗g5 are simply not enough to overcome the black king's position. If only I could include another piece in the attack! Wait...! It is possible and it is very nice! My chess heart rejoices at this possibility and beats rapidly – yes, this is it, without any doubt! Only a short check followed and after that 21 ♗xb3 cxd4 and... that move. Which move is it and why?

Answer:

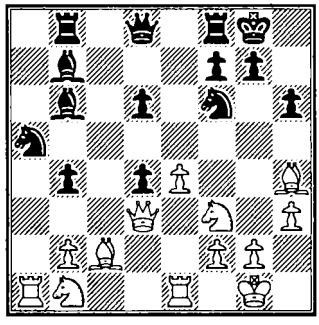
You hit the right nail on the head and have a good sense of initiative if you found, along with me, a beautiful transfer of a rook via the third rank: **22 ♖a3!** (3 points). The rook will quickly join the attack after the further ♗b3-a2, the white bishop blocking the entry of the black knight via c4! The game followed **22...♘c6 23 ♗a2! ♘e5 24 ♖g3**.



In a desperate situation Black hastened his fate after the weak 24...♘g6? 25 ♖f3 ♔g7 26 ♘d2 with a completely won position for White. Grandmaster Zbyněk Hráček, sitting at the next board, watched the course of the game with extraordinary interest. No wonder, because a week later he was due to play Shirov in a Bundesliga match. A big surprise: Shirov's 'fata Morgana' indeed followed and Hráček again employed the entire variation of Shirov's game versus Topalov. Zbyněk, naturally, felt fine and consumed only several minutes for his first twenty moves. After 22 ♖a3! Alexei shook his head extensively but he could not find any miracle leading to salvation. Only in the above position he continued more tenaciously **24...♔h7**, however, his defensive ingenuity was not enough to save the game: **25 f4 ♘ed7 26 e5 d3+ 27 ♔h1 dxe5 28 fxe5 ♖e8 29 exf6 ♖xe1+ 30 ♕xe1 ♕e8 31 ♗e3! ♘xf6 32 ♕f2 ♕c6 33 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 34 ♕f5+ ♔h8 35 ♕g5 1 : 0** Hráček gained a valuable scalp which gives no less joy also to me...

However, Shirov did not give up and shortly afterwards at the Wijk aan Zee tournament played the variation again, this time against Anand! He may have been lucky because the Indian super-grandmaster was dead exhausted after the World Championship cycle (or he may have relied upon the latest database information?). In any case White's play in this game was a long way from the prestigious level expected of the 'Tiger of Madras'. Instead of 18...g5?, Shirov played the indisputably better **18...cxd4**, the simple point being a beautiful black position after 19 ♘xd4?! g5 20 ♘g3 b3! winning the pawn on e4. Anand's reaction bore no resemblance at all to the alert tiger: **19 ♘bd2?! ♖e8 20 ♖a4?! ♗c6 21 ♖a1** (21 ♖xb4? d3...) but it was at least enough to draw.

Some time early in 1998 I spent several days with Hráček and some other friends in a lodge situated in Harrachov in the Giant Mountains. During the day we did skiing (our unforgettable experiences are, however, nearly all connected with football) and in the evening we concentrated on chess. I remember that we also racked our brains over this variation. Once Zbyněk came and said: 'I fell on the piste today and it seems to me that after this the penny dropped.' He continued over the board: 'After **18...cxd4**, 19 ♕d3!? might be interesting.' Analysis, doubts and speculations follow, but it is true: following **19 ♕d3**

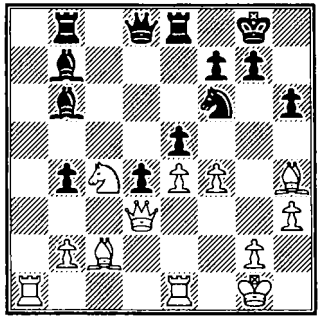


Black's defence is not simple at all, not only in view of the threat 20 e5...

After both 19...g5 20 ♘xg5 or 19...b3 20 ♗xb3 g5 21 ♘xg5 and 19...♖e8 20 ♘bd2 Black faces

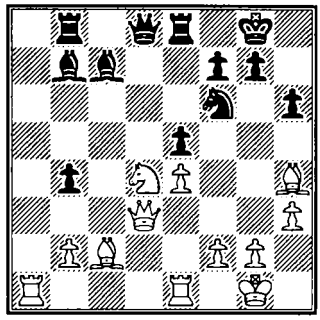
enormous problems. No doubt that the situation after 19 ♕d3!? remains a sharp and unclear matter. '...and we may not know everything, after all. Keep going and hold on!' (Horatius)

My friend Hráček also followed the same rule in his game against Bulgarian grandmaster Kiril Georgiev in a Bundesliga match at the end of 1998, by playing this 'Harrachov' variation. After 19 ♕d3, Georgiev replied **19...♖e8 20 ♘bd2 ♘c6** and, after **21 ♘c4**, he blocked the position with **21...♘e5**. This was just an introduction to a practically forced exchange sacrifice: after **22 ♘fxe5 dxe5 23 f4!**



23...♘c7 24 fxe5 ♖xe5!? 25 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 26 ♗b3 ♕b6 27 ♗xf6 gxf6 Black at least kept himself afloat but he was not far short of drowning ...

As far as I know, recently the variation has only been played in a P.Konguvel – S.Ganguly game, Goodricke open 2001, in which after **21 ♘c4** Black continued **21...♘c7**. In my opinion, the critical situation of the game arose after **22 ♘xd4 ♘e5 23 ♘xe5 dxe5**.



White played superficially: 24 ♘b5? ♕xd3 25 ♗xd3 ♗b6 26 ♗xf6 gxf6 27 ♖ad1 ♖ed8 28 ♔f1? ♖xd3! 29 ♖xd3 ♗a6 and Black won. Instead of such disgrace he could, after **24 ♘f5!**, transfer into an undoubtedly advantageous end-game.

After the Anand – Shirov game, Wijk aan Zee 1998, White's plan has been surprisingly quickly abandoned. Even in this case, however, it may be more or less due to the dictates of fashion, which presently favours different complications: **7 a4 ♖b8 8 c3 d6 9 d4 ♗b6 10 ♘a3** (Or, even 10 a5!? ♗a7 11 ♗e3...) **10...0-0 11 axb5 axb5 12 ♘xb5 ♗g4**... Why? I really do not know, after all: 'People readily believe what they want to believe.' (Caesar)

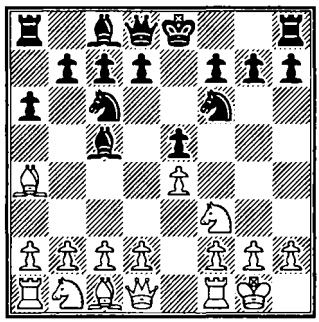
The Likeable Professor

During the drawing of lots at the traditional Owens Corning Wrexham tournament in 1998 a pleasant atmosphere prevailed in the local town hall; this atmosphere has always been generated by the organisers of the tournament, Mike Hughes and his friends. I enjoyed

meeting the likeable Eugene Martinovsky, formerly champion of Macedonia, latterly a neat silver-haired Chicago Professor, who was travelling round the tournaments of America and Europe. 'You play the Spanish excellently, you always get the better position regardless of who you are playing,' the Professor told me just before the drawing of lots. I was not sure whether he was being serious, but in the very first round when I least needed such flattery we sat down to our individual encounter... Naturally I was playing White! Under such circumstances, the Spanish was virtually obligatory...

V.Jansa – E.Martinovsky
Wrexham 1998

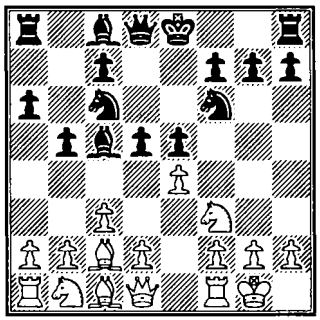
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗c5



Yes, this is why I present the game here. Black again develops his bishop on c5, this time, however, b7-b5 comes later. What is the difference? White cannot aim at b5 as last time but this delay brings White another opportunity which should be utilised. Again we focus on an energetic plan and its corresponding dynamic implementation. Note: just a small change in the move order brings another plan and other issues to the board! However, only timely identification of what is important can help us get further orientated.

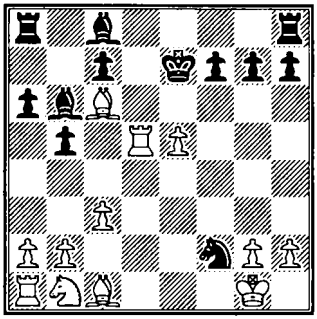
6 c3 b5 7 ♗c2!?

This is the difference which may be turned to White's advantage. The bishop covers the pawn on e4 and White can more comfortably build a centre and gradually develop his queenside pieces. At present, an unnatural response in the centre, **7...d5?!**,



has gained popularity, surprisingly also among grandmasters of the world elite. At first sight it looks a dubious move, the precariousness of which might have been best documented in the following game: after a long, mutually forced variation, there comes an engagement that is clearly favourable for White: P.Svidler – A.Grischuk, Biel 2001: **8 d4 dxe4 9**

♘xe5 ♘xe5 10 dxe5 ♕xd1 11 ♖xd1 ♘g4 12 ♗xe4 ♘xf2 13 ♗c6+ ♔e7 14 ♖d5! ♗b6



15 ♗g5+! (The continuation 15 ♗xa8 ♘d3+ 16 ♔f1 ♘xc1 17 ♘a3 ♗e6 18 ♖xc1 ♖xa8 is unclear, the black bishops are very active.) **15...f6** (15...♔e6? 16 ♖d4+-) **16 exf6+ gxf6 17 ♗h4 ♘g4+ 18 ♔h1 ♖b8 19 ♘d2** and White has an edge due to the insecure position of the black king.

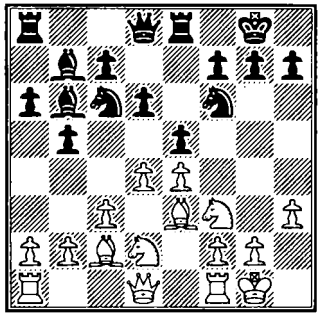
7...d6 8 d4

Along with some other players I previously believed that after 8 b4 ♗b6 9 a4 Black again had problems on b5, but he can successfully dodge these with 9...♗g4 10 axb5 axb5 11 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 12 ♘a3 ♘d8!.

8...♗b6 9 h3

White cannot do without this classic Spanish move. If you play d2-d4 you should not allow the pin of the ♘f3! Otherwise the promising centre can collapse... this is especially true in case of development of the black bishop to c5.

9...0-0 10 ♗e3 ♗b7 11 ♘bd2 ♖e8



Question:

This time a difficult strategic consideration is linked to the situation on the chessboard. First I will tell you what my immediate feelings at the board were:

The blockade **12 d5** leads to damage of the black pawns after the following **13 ♗xb6 cxb6**. Is this a wise solution?

Isn't it better for White to maintain the tension in the centre and thereby also the space for further operations? However, it is not a simple task, primarily due to the sensitivity of the pawn on e4 after 12...exd4 13 cxd4 ♘b4. Therefore, the prophylactic **12 a3** suggests itself... Black may then try to exploit the loss of time and uncertain position of the ♗e3 by means of a blow in the centre **12...d5!?**, and if **13 dxe5** then **13...♗xe3** – how should the consequences then be assessed? The opponent's counter-chances may be rendered harmless, to some extent, by **12 ♖e1**, another typical 'Spanish' move, but what should White play upon **12...exd4 13 cxd4 ♘b4** ? I will try to evaluate the gambit variation, beginning with **14 ♗b1**: this is tempting since it is hard

to give up the bishop in the open position. After 14...♘xe4?, 15 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 16 ♗g5! ♗xf3 17 ♗xd8 +- seems to be O.K., but it may be a distressing and rather hazardous path after **14...♗xe4 15 ♘xe4 ♘xe4**... I remain several minutes on the distressing path but cannot find anything. Then I deal with the idea of giving up the Spanish bishop after 14 d5 but all of a sudden another opportunity springs to mind...

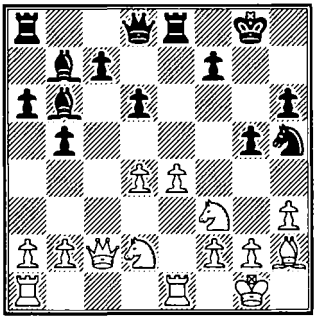
You are to move as White. Will you decide on **12 d5**, **12 a3** or **12 ♖e1**? Do not forget to substantiate this decision!

Answer:

That was a bit steep, you may say. Take it easy, the position on the board is hard to solve even for grandmasters. Some of you may have chosen the comfortable **12 d5?!** (1 point) **12...♘e7 13 ♗xb6 cxb6** but did not find any tangible advantage. They could not because White now has a blocked bishop due to his pawn structure. He can only make more room for himself by means of a2-a4 or c3-c4 after which the black pawns adjust themselves again...

Those who chose **12 a3** (2 points) were closer to the truth. However, frankly: have you found anything conclusive against the above-mentioned **12...d5** ? For example, after **13 dxe5 ♗xe3 14 exf6, 14...♗xd2 15 ♘xd2 ♕xf6 16 exd5 ♘e7 17 ♘e4 ♕e5** could follow and Black will win the pawn back without any problems...

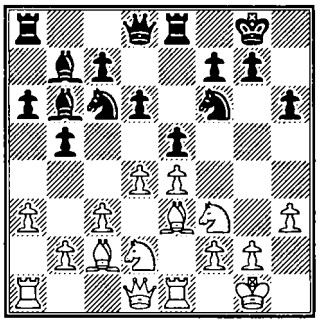
Strategically, the most flexible possibility lies in **12 ♖e1!** (3 points). This is the continuation I chose in the game. In order to explain it completely, I can give the rest of my reasoning on **12...exd4 13 cxd4 ♘b4**... Now, 14 ♗b1?! would really have been a risky solution due to ♗xe4; White gains nothing after 14 d5?!, Black's most remarkable reply probably being the active 14...♘xc2 15 ♕xc2 c6 16 dxc6 ♖c8 with strong counterplay on the long diagonal. My decision was supported by **14 ♗g5!** since this move does not compromise the pawn centre and after **14...♘xc2 15 ♕xc2** the loss of the white-squared bishop will be counter-balanced by the quick vacation of the d1-square for the queen's rook. I think that, by playing 14 ♗g5, White has concluded a good contract, hasn't he? You may add another 2 points for the same conclusion. My opponent went **15...h6 16 ♗h4 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘h5 18 ♗h2**.



Black has freed himself from the unpleasant pin at the cost of a serious weakening, but only after his next move did Mr. Martinovsky – otherwise an always likeable companion – became a likeable opponent! After **18...♕f6 19 e5** the position would have been more unclear. 18...♘f4? 19 ♗xf4 gxf4 20 e5! dxe5 21 dxe5 (With a double threat: 22 ♘e4 and 22 ♕f5.)

21...♔h8 22 ♕f5 and White has a big advantage.

It is common knowledge that a single extra move (a tempo) is of enormous importance. Not only in defence or in attack but also in prophylaxis! Note how important the ♖e1 and a2-a3 moves are in the position of the last but one diagram. They should be played at the same time – but unfortunately that is not legal. However, as you may see from the 14 ♗g5 possibility, the black walls also need reinforcement. And this is exactly the sequence which is demanded by dynamics in our strategic consideration. 'Nothing is so difficult that it cannot be ascertained by investigation.' (Terentius). However, even here we have: give and take! O.K., only after **12 ♖e1 h6** (the above-mentioned minor reinforcement) can White play the useful little **13 a3!**. In this case we make really important progress in our thinking: first prophylaxis, only then a specific plan! However, which plan should follow after a handy reinforcement of the position: **12 ♖e1 h6 13 a3**, what to play for?



White should probably start an operation on the queenside (after a further b2-b4) but be careful! For example in a game, D.Navara – D.Gross, Prague 2001, followed: **13...♘b8 14 ♕b1 ♘bd7 15 b4 ♘f8** and now, instead of the complicated 16 a4?! ♘g6 17 c4?! exd4, the simple but efficient **16 dxe5 dxe5 17 c4** provided White with pressure and initiative. In a game J.Nunn – J.Hector, Oxford 1998, Black was afraid of the d4-d5 advance and, after **12 ♖e1**, played **12...♖b8 13 a3 h6** I do not know why the otherwise accurate John Nunn rejected the gain of space after 14 b4 (14...♘a7 15 ♕b1!) and went on to the e-file which is occupied by a black rook: **14 ♕e2** but in this case it paid off! His opponent, nearly always excellently equipped with tactics, obviously slid on the slippery ground: 14...d5? 15 ♘xe5 dxe4 16 ♘g4! with clear advantage to White. However Black could provoke uncertainty on the e-file e.g. by means of **14...exd4!? 15 cxd4 ♘a5** (GM Wedberg).

Evaluation of the Spanish test

In the tests you could theoretically gain more than 100 points but even if you can score a little less than 100 points I appreciate your performance. The questions were extraordinarily difficult. You may also be proud if you gained 75 points. You also possess some sense of the fine points of the Spanish if you gained an honest and exacting 55 points.

2 Grünfeld Defence

The Grünfeld Indian Defence is an opening which is very convenient for dynamically thinking players. For many years I have enjoyed it and have always been excited to find new ideas in eternally vivid corners of this very sensitive opening. I would like to say some words by way of introduction in order to highlight the specific dynamic sensitivity of every decision, every move, and every intention.

This opening cannot be learned by heart; it should be understood in its strategic-tactical complex; a player should feel its dynamic assets and then drift with the waves of harmony of activity and defence, and initiative at the expense of positional concessions or even material sacrifices. In essence this behaviour is quite natural, full of dynamics and sense of appropriate positional changes and accurate strategic intentions. The chess player seeks the natural path like a wild sylvan stream whose flow unfailingly finds the most appropriate way to the source... I do not recommend this opening to those who rather have a liking for long-term static positional characteristics or those who do not object to tenacious defence of slightly worse positions and are able to wait many hours for their opportunity in quiet waters and in the shade of the opponent's activities... Such players should play tough classical systems and focus on the compactness of their own positions. This opinion is based on my extensive pedagogical experience. Those players sometimes say at the close of my lectures: 'I liked your analysis of the variation in the Grünfeld – I tried to do what you said several times but my results were meagre...' No wonder, chess is not exempt from the rule stating that not everything may be paired even if at first sight it looks excellent! Strictly speaking, people have different tastes – this is something that was also said by Yefim Geller: 'Everyone must find their own soapbox on the chessboard...'

The following chapter is devoted to those who try to seek some kind of continuous motion of ideas in chess and also to those who in their hearts like the Grünfeld. Let me introduce it by a short citation from a story written by Czech writer Karel Klostermann, a perfect connoisseur of the beautiful Šumava mountains, their natural relationship and specific traits: '... nothing endures, everything changes, everything rushes at breakneck speed, there is no waiting, no recognition, no mercy!' The dynamics of the various controversial issues in this opening often depend on the choice of a continuation that enables active counterplay to necessarily harass White.

You will find out that the roles of 'Mrs. Mode' and respect for famous names are overvalued and that a comic role is played by bare game results, negatively influenced by late blunders or time pressure in the assessment of some variations. Naturally, there are some dynamic elements in such assessments – however, not the dynamics I am talking about in this book.

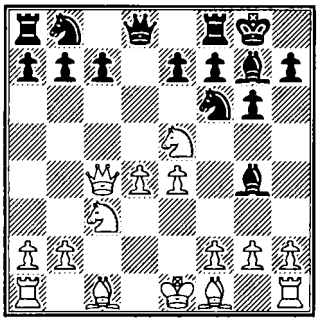
I would like to recommend to you the following considerations: to concentrate primarily on the dynamic elements of the arising positions and to forget the above-mentioned circumstances. The questions test your ability to orientate, especially in the field of strategy and tactics. In this respect the Grünfeld Defence is very sensitive! Sometimes you may feel like a tightrope walker. If you manage to control all aspects of your balance, you may reach the destination. The leading idea is always the most important thing and every next step should be accurately and sensitively made with this idea in mind. I am aware of the fact that this is not easy at all since such a dynamic method of thinking also needs some feeling of harmony and continuous activity. This is not conceivable without automatic control of the tactical methods of play – both strategic and tactical principles – at a sufficient level. Again, a comparison with play on the football pitch: an outstanding football player automatically gets possession of the ball and can then focus on his next course of action; similarly the chess master should not clumsily and in a detached way think about basic principles on the board but handle them with a natural ease and in compliance with further dynamic development! The resemblance is not purely coincidental. I used to play football as a junior for the once famous club Dukla Prague. For several years one of my team-mates on the right half of the pitch was František Jílek, later a well-known league player and international. I remember the joy I experienced by our team-work on the green playing field; František, in addition to his excellent footwork, had a gift from God: he was endowed with excellent foresight and creative ability to react accurately and dynamically to any change!

Let us start with an instructive example from my own practice, illustrating the importance of the above-mentioned pedagogic-methodical aspects.

In the sixth round of the nine-round well cast 'Wichern Open' in Hamburg 1995 I played as Black against Georgian GM G.Giorgadze. During my morning preparation I found out that he liked to play the system 4 ♘f3 and 5 ♕b3 against the Grünfeld; he then usually followed up with an extraordinary knight move, which, in my opinion, disrupts the logical development of the complicated variation. Despite the surprising course of his games it was clear that this was not a good idea for White and I considered the most active response to it. 'This is it,' I told myself after I had found it. And as early as that afternoon it would be revealed whether or not I had really found the Achilles' heel of my opponent's 'false concept'...

G.Giorgadze – V.Jansa

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3 dxc4 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 ♗g4 8 ♘e5



This is the questionable knight jump I was talking about. White moves his knight for the second time, before completing his development. This cannot be O.K.! Nevertheless, Giorgadze's previous opponents and even 'theory' replied schematically **8...♗e6 9 d5 ♗c8** For example, in the game G.Giorgadze – V.Epishin, Bamaul 1988, followed: 10 ♗e2 a6 11 ♗f4 b5 12 ♕c5 ♘e8 13 0-0 ♗xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♘d7 15 ♕d4 ♘xe5 16 ♕xe5 ♕d6 17 ♕g5 f5 18 ♗f3 ♘f6 19 ♖ae1 fxe4 20 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 21 ♖xe4 ♖f7 22 ♖fe1 ♔f8 23 ♕h6+ ♔g8 24 ♕e3 ♗b7 25 ♖e6 ♕b4 26 d6 ♗xf3 27 dxe7 ♖e8 28 gxf3 ♕xb2 29 ♕c5 ♕d2 30 ♕xc7 ♕xf3 31 ♕c6 ♕xf2+ 32 ♔h1 ♔f7 33 ♖6e2 1:0 Here, the knight move paid off for White, but why does Black have to retreat with his bishop: the bishop is covered!?

8...♘c6!?

This was my morning recipe. The lead in development and activity of the black pieces must compensate for the damaged pawn structure. Taking the bishop is completely out of the question since after 9 ♘xg4? ♘xg4 10 d5 ♘d4 11 ♕a4 (11 ♗d3? ♘e5) 11...e6 Black's attack may already be decisive. After the game my opponent explained: 'I have never seriously considered 8...♘c6; as far as I know some woman played some game on this theme somewhere.' I was quite surprised at hearing such a comment; besides, what would the reaction of his compatriots, those famous Georgian women-chessplayers, be?

9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 ♗e3

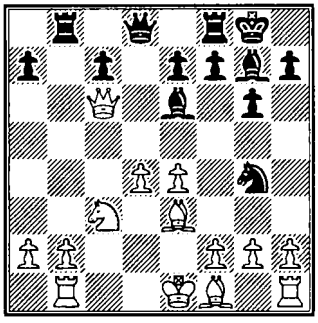
Probably the most appropriate response. We will consider 10 e5 later on.

After 10 f3 ♗e6 11 ♕a4 ♘d7 12 ♗e3 ♘b6 13 ♕xc6 ♗xd4 Black's stock prices are undoubtedly high (15 ♖d1? ♗d7!).

10...♖b8 11 ♖b1

White has justifiably abandoned 11 f3 due to 11...♖xb2! 12 fxg4 ♘xg4 13 ♗g1 e5 and if 14 0-0-0 then 14...♕b8 with the deadly threat 15...♗h6+.

11...♗e6!? 12 ♕xc6 ♘g4



After long thought Giorgadze finds an interesting opportunity for consolidation, however it is clear that White has wrongly evaluated the 8...♘c6 move. The most

reasonable idea now consisted of the completion of his development by 13 ♗e2, having faith in the king's safety after 13...♘xe3 14 fxe3 ♗h6 15 ♔f2. Black could equalise the material: 13...♗xd4 14 ♗xd4 (14 ♗xg4? ♖b6! ∓) ♕xd4 15 ♗xg4 (15 0-0 ♕d6) ♗xg4 16 0-0 ♕d6 and if 17 ♘d5!? then 17...♗e6. Despite the early stage of play, it is only Black who can dictate the tempo of the further course of the game while White is left trying to defend himself.

13 ♕c5!? ♕d6!

Despite the pawn sacrifice, the queen exchange is quite logical. Count with me: how many moves have been made by the white queen and how many moves by the black one?

14 ♕xd6 exd6

Naturally with the spine-chilling threat 15...c5. White keeps his cool and will find the only defensive moves – this is an indication of a high-level player's potential and his Elo-rating.

15 ♔d2! f5! 16 d5

Black would also have had a clear edge after 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 ♗d3 ♗xd3 18 ♔xd3 ♘xf2+.

16...♗d7 17 ♗d3 fxe4

Now 17...f4 is problematic because of 18 ♗xa7 ♖b7 19 f3.

18 ♘xe4 ♘xe3 19 fxe3 ♗xb2 20 ♖hf1 ♖xf1 21 ♗xf1 ♗f5?!

Black could have retained a small advantage after 21...♖b6 but it might not have been sufficient to gain the full point. Besides, the time on the clock has been ticking away very quickly...

22 ♗d3 Draw.

The Grünfeld Defence has always been a basic weapon of Czech (and Slovak) grandmasters. Our whole generation, among others Hort, Smejkal, Kaválek, used to open their games with it. Later it was played by Ftáčnik and Štohl, even later by, for example, Oral but also by the most talented player of the contemporary era, David Navara, whose development and preparation is closely monitored by me from the 'trainer's bench'. That means that 'Grünfeld' has been part of the basic chess education in our region. This opening has even gained popularity in Czech women's chess, e.g. Petra Krupková has picked up something from the mysteries of the Grünfeld Defence, perhaps due to my modest contribution... Nevertheless, women's chess has its own specifics and sometimes it is lacking the men's discipline and consistency, necessary for putting forward promising ideas.

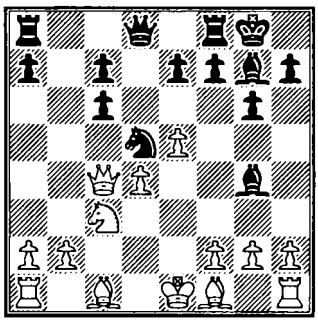
During one of our sessions, Petra Krupková and I analysed the opening of the Giorgadze – Jansa game. At the European Team Championship in Batumi in 1999 there was an unexpected opportunity to apply the idea in a match against Germany, in a game against the best German women-player K.Kachiani. She used the same dubious recipe as her former countryman: 8 ♘e5?! Naturally, 8...♘c6! followed. After 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 White played 10 e5?!. Later I read the following commentary written by the captain of the Czech team: '...Petra Krupková remembered the recommendation of Vlastimil Jansa, however, she did not deal with it in her analysis and, besides, in the meantime theory has moved on.

Therefore Petra lost; I found the right reaction only in the evening.'

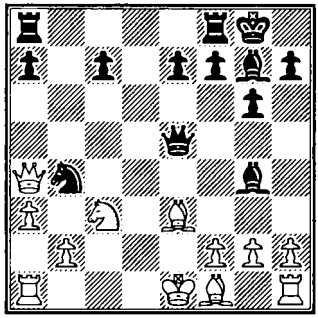
In this commentary is concealed a quite different approach to solving the problematic issues. I have always believed in the strength of an idea and its dynamic development, I trust in its strategic impact. Any subsequent calculation of variations should only be a confirmation of correctness of the original judgment, not quite the contrary! It is natural that analysis is sometimes a necessary supplement, however, we should try to outweigh it with a strong idea and a healthy feeling! You cannot analyse every possibility like a programmed Fritz computer. White's advance was suspect from the very beginning due to the neglected development and this should be proven directly at the board!

In the game occurred:

K.Kachiani – P.Krupková: **8 ♘e5 ♘c6 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 e5?! ♘d5**



11 ♕xc6?! (White shows courage; it does not matter whether she follows her own analysis or some published one. It is more or less improvisation and thus the backward development should tell. Dutch GM J.Piket, in his game against Riemersma in Rotterdam 1997, played the more careful and modest 11 ♗e2. Even here, however, Black reached a promising active position after 11...♘b6 12 ♕xc6 ♕xd4 13 ♗e3 ♕b4 14 ♗xg4 ♕xg4 15 f4 f6!∓) **11...♘b4 12 ♕a4 ♕xd4 13 a3** (after 13 ♗e3, 13...♗d7! 14 ♕b3 ♗e6 15 ♕a4 ♘d3+ can follow with an edge for Black.) **13...♕xe5+ 14 ♗e3**.



Question:

The position shown in the diagram is the theme of the test question for you. Black followed with 14...f5. Do you think that 14...f5 reveals the seamy side of White's previous advance?

Or, the move is a mistake – why?

In this case you should suggest another move and give possibilities!

Answer:

The move is a mistake, even a gross error in a very promising position. Certainly, Black cannot retreat the knight because the ♗g4 is 'hanging' but 14...f5? (0 points also for you) cannot represent the right solution even at first sight. Specifically, after 15 axb4 f4 16 ♕b3+ ♔h8 (16...♗e6 17 ♗c4) 17 ♖a5! White wins. This was precisely White's reaction in the

game. On the other hand, **14...a5!** (4 points) fully corresponds to the dynamic needs of the position. Black would have had excellent prospects after both **15 axb4 axb4 16 ♕xa8 bxc3** and **15 ♖c1 ♗h6!** You may object: 'It is only a matter of exact calculation and, sometimes, an accidental tactical chance!' Not at all! In this case the right method, though the only one, is a logical conclusion of the previous accurate and dynamic assessment of the situation. Many of you must know the tempting and challenging feeling: '...there must be something here!' It is true that in similar situations our right but also wrong decisions have fatal importance for the following course of the games...

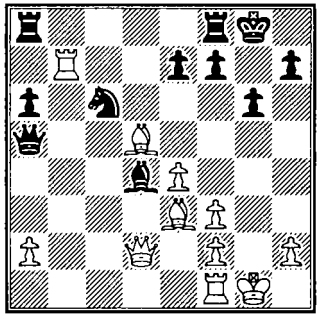
Similar moves to 8...♘c6 enable Black to take over the initiative even in the early stage of the game, in other cases they might at least result in counterplay with scarcely predictable consequences. However, I take the liberty to repeat: the precise hit of the strategic target is the most principal condition in this complex opening – this is rarely seen in another opening. Only after you realise this, will the Grünfeld Defence become a formidable weapon in your hands. Do you know that a series of my famous GM-opponents, playing White and opening the game virtually automatically with the d4 and c4 pawns, have started the game with some restraints, sometimes using lateral parallel paths? Isn't this caution, maybe even concern, evidence of the enormous vitality of this dynamic opening which cannot be knocked down by vast information or the most powerful brains of the world's strongest chess players? Let us try to pass through the labyrinth of possibilities which are offered by some variations frequently played in top world competitions by the strongest grandmasters. Let us stop in those situations that deserve attention precisely from the point of view of extraordinarily sensitive dynamics while creating the proper strategic plan. You may even be surprised by the principal attitude and sometimes also uncompromising criticism of other plans, even if its author was a player known worldwide. Everything is based on my conviction only: you can decide yourself whether to accept this opinion or not. However, try to give reasons in addition to your feelings. I do not think I must always be right – rather I am able to anticipate something. It may also be possible that: 'Those ideas must be interesting, and look healthy,' as my long-time friend Emil Sutovsky, European Champion 2001, told me.

A. A mysterious variation

Preparation of special variations and novelties is an inseparable part of home-cooking when top class players choose their menu. Every newly introduced line becomes not only a visiting card of the author but also an exacting challenge for the opponent who tries, within the limited time, to tackle or even refute it.

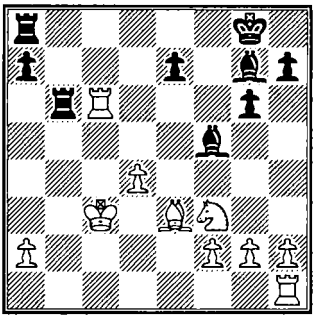
Such a tricky problem was prepared by GM Vladimir Kramnik for all proponents of the Grünfeld Defence. In the second game of his London 2000 match against Kasparov, after the anticipated opening moves **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6**

bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3 c5, he surprisingly essayed, instead of the often previously played and most likely 8 ♖b1, the 'old-fashioned' **8 ♗e3 ♕a5 9 ♕d2**... Kasparov played **9...♗g4?! 10 ♖b1 a6**, a continuation which proved to be successful in one of his previous games against the American Yermolinsky but Kramnik had prepared a perfect response: **11 ♖xb7! ♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♘c6 13 ♗c4!** After the further **13...0-0 14 0-0 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♗xd4! 16 ♗d5!±**



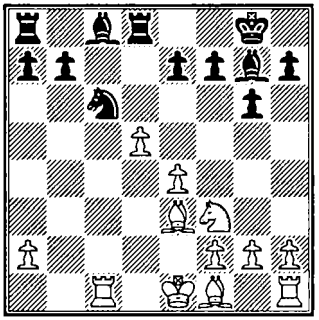
White gained the initiative and, later on, the whole point.

Using this variation, Kramnik also scored 100% in games played later against the Hungarian Leko and the Dutchman Van Wely in Wijk aan Zee early in 2001. In both cases his opponents continued **9...♘c6 10 ♖c1 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 12 ♔xd2 0-0** – an option which might be called the 'Czechoslovak Variation' since a series of games had been played by Smejkal, Ftáčnik and me as far back as over twenty years ago. The accurate move order forces the white king to take up an unstable position in the centre of the board where, despite the exchange of queens, it might be subject to a counterattack by the black pieces. Important evidence of this was provided by the then popular variation: **13 ♗b5 f5! 14 exf5 ♗xf5 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 ♖xc6 ♖fb8!** and if **17 ♔c3** then **17...♖b6** with sufficient initiative for the sacrificed pawn.



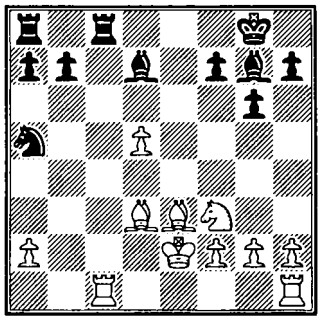
Definitely it is not Black who has problems, there is no reason why he should... The author of the bold idea to advance the f-pawn is GM Smejkal, an outstanding connoisseur of Black's counterplay in various corners of the dynamic Grünfeld Defence!

Personally, I have not considered Kramnik's **13 d5 ♖d8 14 ♔e1**



a dangerous continuation either. The retreat of the white king, closing in the ♖h1, must be enough for Black to launch sufficient

counterplay, regardless of the white pawn power in the centre, which may be, by the way, considered a sign of both strength and weakness. Or am I mistaken? I was very curious how this position would be handled by the contemporary world ace Kramnik and his opponents. However, I have to state that the most important line is still full of mystery. Kramnik played both games excellently but each of his otherwise strong opponents put up a poor show as if they only borrowed this opening for a single game... In any case they missed the imaginary and continuously moving strategic target by many centimetres. Leko was given a hard time after the pre-prepared but passive 14...♘e5?! 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 f4 ♗d6 16 ♔f2 e5 17 ♗c5! exf4 18 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 19 ♔f3 with advantage to White in the centre, Van Wely played the more frequently employed **14...♘a5 15 ♗g5 ♗d7 16 ♗d3 ♖dc8 17 ♔e2 e6** but after **18 ♗e3!? exd5 19 exd5**

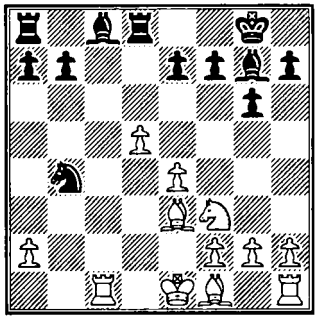


19...b6 20 ♗a6 ♖d8 21 ♖hd1 ♗c8? he also stood worse.

Popular openings of the top world players usually attract attention quickly but in this case I can only uncomprehendingly shake my head. The only epicentre remaining is the surprising 14...♘a5 with various minor improvements for both sides, mostly with a minimum edge for White, the most prestigious climax probably being a Kramnik – Kasparov game, Astana 2001, which ended in a draw after 30 moves. Both White and Black have tried, after 14...♘a5, various moves: 21...♗a4, 19...a6 or 19...b5, possibly 15 ♗d3 ♗d7 16 ♔e2 e6 17 ♖c5 or even 15 ♗d2 b6 16 ♗b4... Only an interesting idea of Emil Sutovsky, 14...♘a5 15 ♗g5 ♗d7 16 ♗d3 f5!?, generates some excitement...

An undisputed problem for Black lies in the 'offside' position of the ♘a5, even if this might only be temporary. The passive ♘a5 undoubtedly gives White chances for the advantage in the future struggle. I dare to say, however, that Black has no need to play like this! As far back as twenty years ago, in a game Keene – Jansa, Esbjerg 1981, I continued, in my opinion, more promisingly and actively

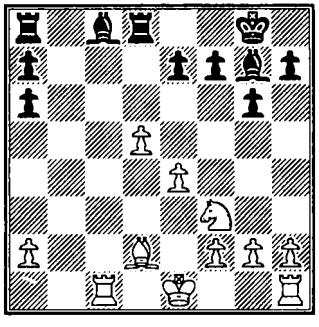
14...♘b4!



Since then I have considered this move, involving the black knight in an immediate operation, to be the most appropriate continuation in

this position. Black should not have the slightest problems then! But why has nobody played this move against Kramnik so far? I really do not know... In the Esbjerg game the English GM then decided, after the best (as we will see later) **15 ♗d2 ♘a6** (but not 15...a5? 16 a3±), to postpone the exchange on a6 and play **16 ♗b5** first; he exchanged only after the logical **16...e6 17 ♗xa6 bxa6 18 ♗a5!?** The game followed **18...♖d6!?** (18...♖d7 19 dxe6, however also interesting is 18...♖e8 19 d6 ♗d7.) **19 ♗c7 ♖d7 20 dxe6 fxe6 21 ♗f4 a5!** with full compensation for the damaged pawn structure – the white king does not feel too good at all.

Nevertheless, Kramnik's series of victories made an impression and his method of play against the Grünfeld Defence found immediate successors. Two of my opponents in various European team competitions have lost no time in choosing Kramnik's variation against me! And, indeed, in all those games the same response followed without any hesitation: 14...♘b4!. My opponents, Bulgarian GM Balinov (Austria 2001) and Frenchman Renaze (Nancy 2001), were thinking and thinking, but, frankly, they have not come up with much. They have even got into trouble, one of them after **15 ♗d2 ♘a6 16 ♗xa6 bxa6 17 ♗a5 ♖d7 18 ♔e2?!** (Even after the rather better 18 ♘d2 f5! 19 f3 fxe4 20 fxe4 e6!, Atalik – Karr, Cappelle La Grande 2000, it is only Black who can think about an edge.) **18... f5! 19 ♖hd1 fxe4 20 ♘g5 ♗h6 21 h4 ♗b7**... Even the other opponent had to fight for his life after 17 ♗c3?! f5 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♖c7 ♖d7 20 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 21 exf5 ♖b8! with an advantageous endgame for Black. German IM Sonntag did not achieve much here either: at an Echternach 2002 tournament, I took the liberty to conceive, after 17 ♗a5, an interesting anagram: first **17...♖d6!?** and only after **18 ♗c7 ♖d7**. The game continued **19 ♔e2 f5! 20 exf5 gxf5** and White was a pawn down in a hard rook endgame after **21 ♖hd1 ♗b7 22 ♗e5 ♖xd5 23 ♗xg7 ♖xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♔xg7 25 ♖d7 ♗xf3+ 26 ♔xf3 ♔f6**. The endgame is difficult for White because after the further 27...♖c8 Black threatens to transfer his rook to the a-file (via c3 or c5)... As you can see, Black, using his pawn forays f7-f5 or e7-e6, always reliably opens the position and accesses roads leading to the insecure position of the white king in the centre. The same idea was shown in a duel Banikas – Kalod, Menorca 1996: 17 ♗a5 ♖d7 18 ♗c3?! ♖c7 19 ♗b2 ♖xc1+ 20 ♗xc1 f5! 21 exf5 ♗xf5 22 ♔e2 ♗e4, and White had problems again. I think that after **15 ♗d2 ♘a6 16 ♗xa6?! bxa6**



it is White who rather should think about equalising!

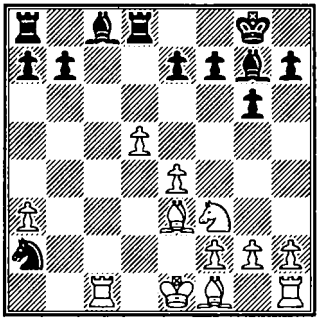
I drew the attention of my charges both in Prague and in Luxembourg,

where I am active as a national trainer, to the active opportunity 14...♘b4. Behold, the whole variation reveals an interesting aspect. However, the chess world is still waiting for the proverbial 'ace up the sleeve' to boost White's game. Even Kramnik, who has revitalised White's concept, may be lacking it?

In any case, this ace was not shown by Ex-World Champion Karpov during his simultaneous exhibition in Prague. One of his opponents was IM David Navara (then 16), who had shown his ability at the European Championship in Leon in November 2001, surpassing his GM-norm by 1½ points on second board. Later on he played very well at the Bled Olympiad in 2002. We analysed 15...♘b4 together and it seemed that even the Ex-World Champion had not been able to refute it – albeit in a simultaneous game only. The game was Karpov's only loss, but it was quite convincing:

A.Karpov – D.Navara
Simultaneous exhibition in Prague, February 2, 2001

14...♘b4! 15 a3?! ♘a2!

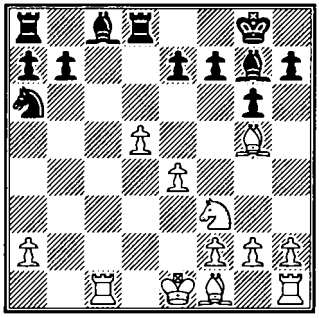


(This is, of course, the main point of the previous move. The black knight heads for c3 with tempo and will immediately attack the white centre from there!) **16 ♖c7 ♘c3 17 ♗d3** (17 ♖xe7 ♗f6 followed by ♘xe4) **17...f5! 18 exf5 ♘xd5 19 ♗c4 ♗xf5 20 ♔e2** (The white king creates a problem in this variation since it is deprived of castling. It is not accidental that Karpov, affected by the hustle and bustle of the simultaneous exhibition, originally intended to play 20 0-0, which is, however, against the rules...) **20...♔f8 21 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 22 ♖d1 ♖xd1 23 ♔xd1 b6 24 ♗g5** (After 24 ♔e2 David intended 24...♗b2! 25 a4 ♗a3.) **24...♖d8+ 25 ♔e2 ♖d7 26 ♖c8+ ♔f7 27 ♗f4 ♖d2+ 28 ♔xd2 ♗xc8 29 ♗b8 a6 30 ♗a7 b5 31 ♗d4 ♗xd4 32 ♘xd4 ♔f6 33 h4 ♗b7 34 g3 ♔e5 35 ♔d3 ♔d5 36 f4 ♗c8!** (A pawn up in the endgame, bishop v knight is usually a decisive factor. After the following check the black king penetrates to one of the flanks and the game will be over.) **37 ♘b3 ♗f5+ 38 ♔c3 ♔e4 39 ♘c5+ ♔f3 40 ♘xa6 ♔xg3 41 ♘c7 ♔xh4 42 ♘xb5 ♔g3 43 a4 h5 44 a5 h4** and **White resigned** since the black passed pawn cannot be stopped while the white one is easily contained by the ♗e4.

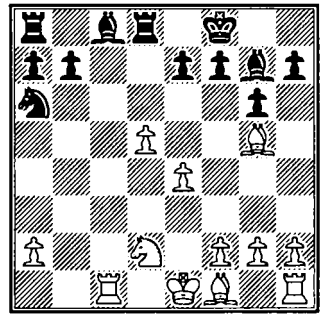
White's situation, arising after 15 a3?! ♘a2! 16 ♖c7 ♘c3 17 ♗d3 f5, is critical not only from the point of view of the simultaneous performance but also objectively. The passivity of the white rook on h1 makes tactical ploys advantageous for Black. For instance, in the game Neverov – Konopka, Pardubice 2001, was played: **18 ♗c4 ♔f8!? 19 exf5 ♗xf5 20 ♘d4 ♖ac8! 21 ♖xc8 ♗xc8**

22 ♘e2 b5 23 ♗b3 ♘xd5 24 ♗xa7 ♗b7∓.

What should White play after 14...♘b4, then? 15 ♗c4? cannot be considered since 15...b5! 16 ♗xb5 ♘xa2 is clearly advantageous for Black. As the most appropriate seems to be the well-known **15 ♗d2 ♘a6** and now **16 ♗g5!?**,



the same foray used by Kramnik after 14...♘a5. What do you think, which position is more active for the black knight? Black does not have much trouble with the ♘a5, besides he may, after 14...♘a5 15 ♗g5, continue 15...♗d7 without taking any notice of the pawn on e7... Nevertheless such reasoning seems to be much more complex since the knight can reach the centre by 'a single jump', i.e. ♘c5 after the preparatory b6 or ♘b4, and thus have the potential to endanger the white king and his entourage. White, for his part, can exchange the knight ♗xa6, however, this move not only weakens the opponent's pawns but also completely surrenders the white squares. On the other hand, the only role of the knight placed on the a5-square lies in the comfortable monitoring of events in the centre, isn't that too small? What is more important, after all? Make a calculation and sum everything up! Will you prefer dynamics, i.e. certain danger of rushing water, to the safety of stagnant water? If this is the case, try to flow through some dangerous channels of the variation with me! Undoubtedly the basic critical situation arises after **15 ♗d2 ♘a6 16 ♗g5 ♔f8**. Based on my lectures, some young Luxembourg chess-players have introduced the Grünfeld Defence into their repertoires; they like the ideas associated with active counterplay and try to use these in practice – sometimes they are already successful, sometimes they are lacking experience and do not have the necessary grasp, especially in games against strong players... In a game against my charge Claude Wagener at the Istanbul Olympiad in 2000, Greek GM H.Banikas, as White, played in this critical situation **17 ♘d2**.



You cannot imagine how I suffered in my role as captain of the Luxembourg national team, when looking at **17...h6?! 18 ♗e3 ♗d7?**, a weak and fully inadequate response, which, after the obvious **19 ♖b1,** landed the black position immediately in dire straits. I

explained to Claude how he should have continued, however, I could not have anticipated that I would use my own recommendation so soon!

Early in 2001 I met GM Zbyněk Hráček over the board in a game in the Czech Extra-League. Usually, he starts his game as White with 1 e4 but this time he could have prepared Kramnik's recipe against the Grünfeld Defence. Our duel begun at 17 ♘d2 and again a dynamic moment of truth had arrived...

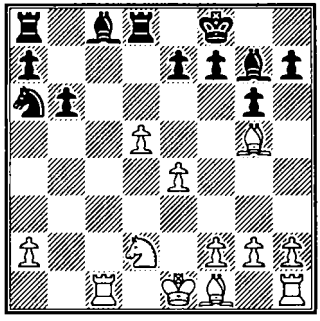
Question:

What do you think, which move did I recommend in Istanbul and use myself a little later in my game against Zbynik Hráèek? Needless to say, it is undeniably the most promising continuation for Black!

The answer is the course of the game:

Z.Hráček – V.Jansa:

17...b6!



Only so the knight can re-enter the game and, at the same time, so that the queenside can be developed. Black makes use of two circumstances: White cannot play 18 ♖xc8?? due to his weak first rank and 18 ♗xa6? ♗xa6 19 ♖c7 is not dangerous either since after 19...♖dc8! 20 ♗xe7+ ♔e8 21 ♗d6 ♖xc7 22 ♗xc7 ♖c8 23 d6 ♗e5 24 ♔d1 ♔d7 Black wins the pawn back with an edge in the endgame. Therefore, White should play quite modestly. If you decided on 17...b6 and supported it by approximately the same amount of calculation as this, you may add 3 points to your account.

18 ♗b5 ♘c5?!

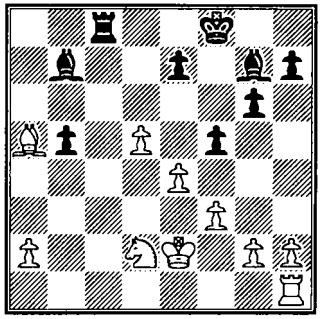
A seemingly clear continuation: after 19 ♗e3, 19...♗d7! can follow, also, 19...a6 is threatened...

Nevertheless, it may not be best! As we concluded in the post-mortem, the simple **18...♗b7!** might have been more accurate, since it retains the opportunity of placing the knight not only on c5 but also on b4. For example, after **19 ♔e2 ♖ac8 20 ♗e3**... Do you sense, like me, that it is only White who will have problems? What about those who sometimes prefer long variations to a handy dynamic idea at an appropriate moment?

19 ♔e2 ♗b7 20 ♗e3! a6 21 ♗xc5

The preliminary 18...♘c5 has led to the danger of a positional threat represented by an unpleasant blockade: 21...bxc5? 22 ♗c4±. Nevertheless, even here Black has a dynamic excuse at hand; he might have also stood the test after the trickier 21 ♗c6!? ♗xc6 22 dxc6 ♘a4!?.

21...axb5! 22 ♗xb6 ♖dc8 23 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 24 ♗a5! f5! 25 f3



Question:

In the position shown in the diagram White offered a draw. Do you think that:

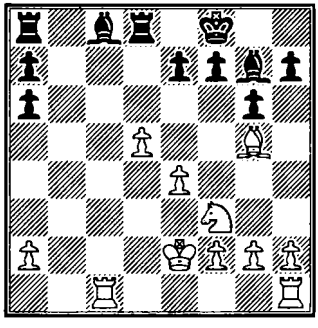
a) It was a sound decision because, in spite of the fact that White is a pawn up, his chances are not higher than those of the opponent – why?

b) Black does not have full compensation for the pawn and therefore White should not have offered the draw – give reasons for your opinion!

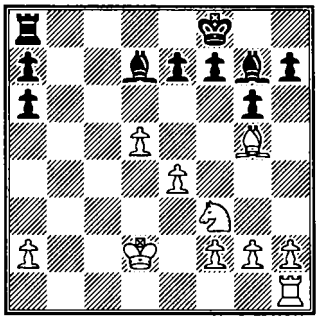
Answer:

This time the answer is not easy at all and needs true mastery in assessing it as well as an idea for further calculation. GM Hráček offered a draw not because of 25...♖a8? 26 ♘b3± but due to his misgivings linked to another pawn sacrifice **25...♖c2**; if 26 a3 then 26...b4!. The black bishops then begin to play at full capacity and the situation of the white king after both 27 ♗xb4 ♗a6+ 28 ♔d1 ♖a2 and 28 ♔f2 (28 ♔e3 f4+!) ♗d4+ 29 ♔g3 ♗e3 is not enviable at all. In the position after 25...♖c2 White has by no means an advantage and, by offering a draw, he did not spoil his chances. After all, he planned **26 ♗b4!? ♖xa2 27 ♖b1**, which could have led to a draw anyway... Just like Zbyněk, I did not have much time so I accepted the offer and we both gained a half-point. Those who were too optimistic in the assessment of White's chances and did not realise the dynamics of the position do not get any points, those of you who were unbiased like Zbyněk Hráček, gain 2 points. A further two points for those who linked their calculation to the important 26...b4!. Frankly, Black might otherwise have problems proving his compensation for the pawn...

I found out with certain satisfaction that our mutual game has inspired GM Hráček, a real 'gourmet' in strategic combat, to use the variation... playing Black! I was not surprised by his approval of the 14...♘b4 idea but was astonished by his courage to launch into the 'Grünfeld', an opening he had never used in his grandmaster practice before! In any case, several months later in Greece, in a game at the European Cup competition, Hráček enjoyed the position of our game after **16...♔f8** as Black. His opponent, Danish GM P.H.Nielsen, continued, instead of 17 ♘d2, with the exchange **17 ♗xa6 bxa6**, the game continuing **18 ♔e2!?**.



Naturally here too Black cannot hesitate: he fulfilled his task with **18...h6 19 ♗f4 f5 20 exf5 g5! 21 ♗e3 ♖xd5 22 g4 e6!** and there was no sign of an advantage for White. The doubled pawns on the a-file are not a strong element at all but we have to assess these only in connection with dynamic counter-balance, which is here represented by the strong bishop pair and active attack on the white centre; in addition, White has problems with the delayed development of the ♖h1. The necessary condition is the right timing of the counterplay! This condition was not fulfilled by Black in the game V.Malakhatko – Y.Kruppa, Ukraine 2001: **18 ♖c7 ♖d7 19 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 20 ♔d2**



20...♖c8 21 ♖c1 ♖xc1 22 ♔xc1 ♗b5?! 23 ♔c2 f5 24 exf5 ♗c4 25 fxg6 hxg6 26 a3 ♗d5 27 ♗e3±. On the other hand, if Black had played e.g. 22...f5 or 22...e6, he would have had no problems.

Again, instead of an extensive analysis, which may sometimes be misleading and limited, I focused on an explanation and expression of the dynamics in the strategic considerations, belief in the harmony and correctness of a revealed idea. Its strength may cause movement of what is seemingly immovable; it is important to have such an idea and believe in it!

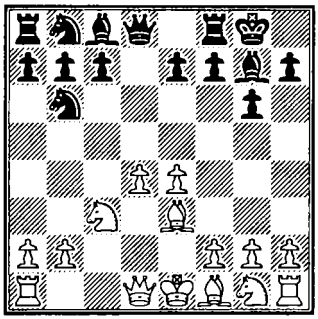
B. Late funeral

Modern opening strategy is full of dynamic elements and changes almost at every move. There are players who are not able to think up much; they closely monitor even the slightest movement in their favourite variation and enter their games equipped with a perfect map which has, however, been drawn by somebody else. It is hard to object in some way to this method, thoroughness is an inseparable part of chess, but I recommend such a map be rather more informative than strictly descriptive... After all, creativity in combination with independent thinking belongs to the most valuable things that can be found in chess.

I repeat again and again: correct play in the opening and a proper selection of a plan during the transition to the middlegame depends much more on a sound feeling and a leading idea – i.e. general strategy – than on accurate calculation or extensive knowledge, which should only support or enhance such a feeling – and even sometimes reject it. If the boot is on the other foot, I feel sorry for such a player and yet at the same time admire him. I can admire him for the enormous involvement and extensive diligence he applies to solving each bigger problem; I feel sorry for him since he continuously feels some kind of strategic uncertainty following him around at the chessboard...

The selection of a plan also depends on many circumstances which are not immediately linked to the chessboard but which play an important role in our decision-making... Yes, whether we slept well before the game or if we are in a good mood! I can remember a nice summer day in 1995 when I was playing in a tournament in Gausdal, Norway. These tournaments, held for many years by Mr. Arnold Eikrem, a brilliant man and a spiritual force in Norwegian and Scandinavian chess, was among my favourite events. Not only because I succeeded in winning some of them but also, possibly, more importantly because for the most part I felt better in Hoifjellshotel of Gausdal, a mountain hotel in the middle of an enchanting mountain ridge called 'Peer Gynt', than anywhere else... On that summer day I came, as usual, to the pleasant sun-lit playing room and exchanged greetings with Otto von Ibenfeldt, the inseparable arbiter of those tournaments, who was always generous with his good humour. Otto used to be naval officer and knew a lot of stories and jokes. I sit down at the chessboard and shake hands with my opponent who is the Israeli master R.Shabtai and not very familiar to me. There is a beautiful summer day outside, blue sky without any clouds, an undulating ridge of surrounding hills of Peer Gynt on the horizon, and directly in front of the windows the lush green carpet of a short-cut lawn... The colours are smooth and go well together and this invites harmony on the 64 squares!

The Israeli player opens the game with **1 d4**; after a short consideration and a glance at the sunny environment I decide on my favourite 'Grünfeld': **1...♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5** My opponent obviously expected this because he plays quickly **4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♗d2 ♗g7 6 e4 ♘b6 7 ♗e3 0-0**.



I have always been filled with scepticism towards such-like variations which are somewhat artificial. White has lost a tempo and this should be sufficient to encourage emphatic counterplay from Black! However, White moves first and so can sometimes afford such a loss of time. Nevertheless, it is clear even at first sight that there will be no problem for Black!

The only important thing is proper 'timing' of Black's counterplay against the white centre. Let us repeat the 'multiplication table' of the Grünfeld Defence:

a) After the white knight develops, pin it immediately by ♗g4.

b) Only then attack the white centre with ♘c6.

c) In case White hesitates with the natural development ♘f3 and prefers to prepare it (h3, ♗e2 etc), you should not worry about d4-d5 after ♘c6, as the white centre is not sufficiently covered! If White remains passive, do not forget the

opportunity of a blow from the side by means of f7-f5.

Question:

Also, the following question is a part of the multiplication table:

In the position shown in the last diagram, how should Black react to:

A. **8 ♘f3**

B. **8 ♗e2**

C. **8 h3**

D. **8 f4**

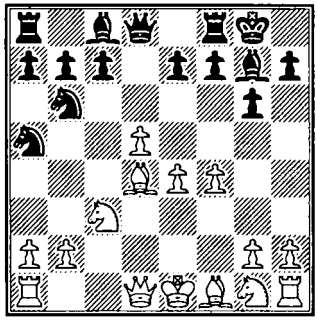
and, of course, why?

Answer:

This time the requirements for a correct answer were not very high, especially if you followed the previous instructions. After 8 ♘f3, it is clear: 8...♗g4 and only after the possible further 9 ♗e2, should 9...♘c6 follow. After 8 ♗e2 the move order is reversed: first 8...♘c6 (no worries about 9 d5 ♘e5) 9 ♘f3 ♗g4. Should White lose time with 8 h3, we can play 8...♘c6 first and if 9 ♘f3, 9...f5! seems to be sound, after both 10 e5 f4 and 10 exf5 ♗xf5... There is no cliché in this position: some may like 9...e5 10 d5 ♘e7, nevertheless we should admit, that 9...f5 is more active! The same foray of the f-pawn may also be launched on the previous move: 8 h3 f5!?. Solving this riddle, it is necessary to realise that only ideas of active counterplay should be considered, the loss of a tempo ♗d2-e3 should simply be exploited! What a difference to another course of a game which surprisingly occurred even at the highest level of competition: **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3 d5?** (Without ♘c3 this is simply wrong and leads to the surrender of the centre into White's hands – this is no 'Grünfeld'!) **4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘b6 6 h3! ♗g7 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 ♗e3±**. Did you notice? White is an important tempo up and this fact provides for a comfortable advantage!

Various transitions from one variation of the opening to another are quite frequent and our decision may be supported by quick orientation. This is the case of possibility *D*, 8 f4!? Those of you who are more experienced may have noticed the similarity to another rare variation which is often inspired by 'Anti-Grünfeld' efforts: **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 f3!? d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘b6 6 ♘c3 ♗g7** (In comparison to the previous note, there is a small but important difference in the position: White has voluntarily played f2-f3...) **7 ♗e3 0-0 8 f4!?**

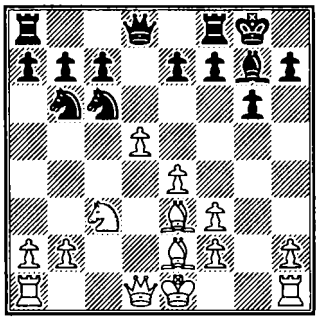
In both cases, however, the reaction in the same situation has been the same: **8...♘c6** If 9 ♘f3? then naturally 9...♗g4. There are extensive disputes on the chessboards of various tournaments especially after **9 d5 ♘a5 10 ♗d4**.



It seems that Black can launch fully sufficient counterplay (why not?) after both **10...e5!? 11 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 12 fxe5 ♕e7** and, more complicated, **10...♗g4!? 11 ♕d3 e5**...

How do you recapitulate your considerations and responses? If you hit the target in all four cases, you may add 4 points. You should know yourself where you hesitated or were even incorrect... If you wrongly calculated anything in any of the *A – D* answers you should subtract one point from the grand total.

After this small exercise, let us return to the game R.Shabtai – V.Jansa, Gausdal 1995: **8 ♗e2 ♘c6 9 ♘f3 ♗g4 10 d5 ♗xf3 11 gxf3**.



Also, **11 ♗xf3 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 ♘ec4 13 ♗c1** is sometimes played but you should consider yourself whether the retreating bishop pair and rather tardy development can bring White any advantage. An excellent example of the active opportunities for Black is the further course of the game I.Sokolov – E.Sutovsky, Hastings 2000:

13...c6 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 ♕c2 ♕d4! 16 0-0 ♖fd8 17 ♖b1 ♘a3! 18 bxa3 ♕xc3 19 ♕xc3 ♗xc3 20 ♗a6 c5 21 ♗f4 ♗d2! 22 ♗e5 c4! 23 ♗b7 f6 24 ♗c7 ♖d7! 25 ♗xa8 ♖xc7 26 ♗d5+ ♘xd5 27 exd5 c3 ∓.

Question:

A question is again hidden in the position shown in the last diagram:

The black knight is attacked. Where should he retreat? Will you retreat to

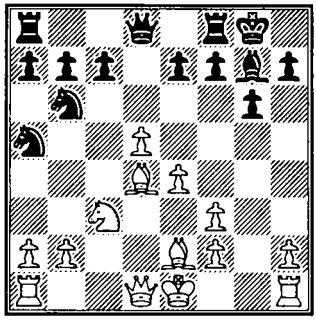
A. **e5** – why?

B. **a5** – why?

Answer:

Those who preferred the move towards the centre 11...♘e5? (0 points), were wrong! They may be right assessing other examples of activities of pieces in the centre but this time the most important role of Black's counterplay is played by the c4-square. Do you agree that after 11...♘e5? the simple 12 ♕b3! with further occupation of the d-file by the rook might follow which should bring White a clear spatial advantage? On the other hand, the knight jump to the edge of the board is correct: 11...♘a5 (2 points). Black is not discredited by this knight at all: the knight aims at c4, prevents the white queen being actively developed on b3 and does not prevent him from further 'undermining' the centre with c7-c6! Sufficient reasons, aren't they? They were sufficient not only for me but also for the majority of other players who got to this position in their practice.

11...♘a5 12 ♗d4



However, let us come back to that beautiful day in Gausdal and to the position of my game against the Israeli master. The essential finding: White's clear strategic disadvantages – weak black squares, insecure position of the king, problematic pawn structure – all this seemed to me much more important than his advantages, consisting of a certain spatial superiority and tactical chances linked to the position of the ♘a5 on the edge of the chessboard. However, how should all this be combined to formulate an appropriate and immediate response for Black? The first ideas are represented by the pawn forays 12...e5 and 12...c5...

But, alas, 12...e5? does not come into consideration; despite its transient effect, it perfectly and completely voluntarily cuts the ♗g7 out of all activities. A short assessment of this possibility followed: 13 ♗c5 ♖e8 14 ♗b5 c6 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 ♗a6± and I definitely gave up the idea. Interesting seems to be 12...c5, but just a moment! I have seen something similar somewhere. In a game of Peter Svidler at a World Junior Championship which I attended in the role of a trainer. After 13 ♗xc5? it works out: 13...♘ac4! 14 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 15 ♕e2 ♘xb2! 16 ♕xb2 ♕c7 17 ♗b4 a5∓. But what if White is not tricked and plays 13 ♗xg7? Isn't this second pawn foray only a misleading clue and some kind of a superficial smack into water? The black strategy is essentially linked to the 'undermining' of the white centre with c7-c6! In this case, though, the c-pawn has moved too far. But, how the devil can we carry that out since 12...c6? would cost a piece after 13 b4 ♘ac4 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 16 ♕d4+? If, only... A new idea is born and I like it more and more. One more short calculation which supports the positive feeling and I got it! Prior to executing the move on the chessboard, I glance out of the window at the small peak overlooking the Gausdal green carpet. It seems to me as if I have mounted it, and I look around... Such a key vantage point will soon be occupied on the board by the strongest black piece – a perfect strategic idea is here!

Question:

Have you climbed to that strategic height with me? What move will you recommend to Black?

Answer:

If you have read the previous text thoroughly and have become absorbed by the position, you could not have made a mistake. Only **12...♕d6!** fulfils the above-mentioned 'general' duties. From d6 the black queen controls the most important black squares, prevents White from playing b2-b4 and prepares the 'undermining' of the white centre by means of c7-c6 (or even e7-e6). You can add another 3

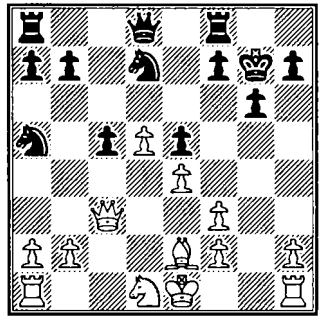
points for such a 'perfect multi-functional move'.

After 12...♕d6, my opponent in this 'Gausdal' game thought a long time and reacted by transferring to the endgame: **13 ♘b5!? ♕b4+ 14 ♕d2?!**; in this case the endgame is obviously bad for White. During the game I saw that only one 'unclear' position can be reached by White by means of another simplification: 14 ♗c3!? ♗xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♕c5 16 ♕d4. Nevertheless, even then after 16...♕xd4 17 cxd4 c6 18 dxc6 bxc6 and further operations against the d4 pawn, the black position seems to be more active. Five years later this was confirmed by the game S.Sergejenko – K.Sakajev, Smolensk 2000: 19 ♘a3?! (It was better to retreat into the centre, 19 ♘c3...) 19...♖fd8 20 0-0-0 ♘a4 21 ♖d3 c5! 22 d5 c4 23 ♖e3 ♖ab8 24 ♖d1 ♖b2 25 ♖d2 c3 26 ♖c2 ♖db8∓.

14...♕xd2+ 15 ♔xd2 c6 16 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 17 dxc6 ♘xc6 (Also, an intermediate-check 17...♖fd8+ does not look bad.) **18 ♖hd1 f5! 19 ♔e1 ♖ac8 20 ♘d4 ♔f6 ∓** and Black's edge was real. White's reaction in this game did not present any challenge to 12...♕d6, nevertheless the subsequent development of tournament practice over the next few years seemed (at least for me) to be a big surprise... But it may also have been a lesson for the many diligent users of 'all-knowing' databases. Though a magnificent information service, I would like to mention a drawback brought by continually developing computer technology. It is hollow statistical data, often highlighting results only and neglecting the content. The further course of the Gausdal game was not so logical and demonstrative, I spoiled my excellent position and lost the game in the end! Black's idea appeared in the databases, but unfortunately with a result that is, without any doubt, repulsive for many readers: 1:0!

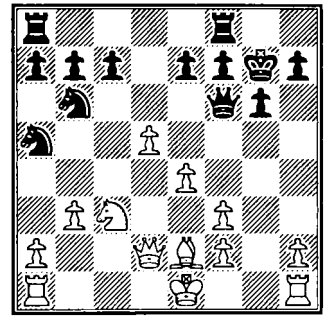
Just imagine: for many years, this important and excellent idea, vividly described above, has not found any followers despite the fact that the dubious variation has become a serious weapon for White, even in the world's elite tournaments! The reason is unbelievably simple, nevertheless I was not able to explain sensibly the multiple strategic lapsus of many world-class grandmasters...

Actually, in a series of games the players of the black pieces primarily continued with the superficial **12...c5?!** This was also played in two principal games, I.Sokolov – Atalik, New York 1997, and Korchnoi – J.Polgar, Dos Hermanas 1999. In the first game Black escaped relatively untouched and even gained counterplay after **13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♕c2 e5 15 ♘d1! ♘d7** 16 ♘e3?! c4! but the No.1 chess queen, on the other hand, was confronted with clever preparation. The powerhouse Victor Korchnoi actually played the excellent **16 ♕c3!**.



Both 17 ♗b5 and 17 f4 may be troublesome for Black now, in addition 16...c4 is this time suspect due to 17 b4! cxb3 18 axb3 b6 19 b4±. The positional disadvantage could not, however, even be averted by Judith's modest **16...a6** since the activity in the centre **17 f4! f6 18 f5 g5 19 h4 h6 20 ♘e3** soon resulted in a kingside attack. 'Victor The Terrible' was applauded for his concept and play in many chess magazines but this applause seemed to me, beginning from the 12th move, rather a delusion...

How is this possible? Several outstanding players, both as White and Black, copy something that is nonsense! Is their strategic assessment of the situation superficial or is it me who is wrong? No, I am not wrong, I say during my long consideration of the same problem in a game against Frenchman Munschi in a team match for French club Vandeouvre in 1999. Under the outstanding organisational work of the tireless Vincent Moret, aided by the potential of young players, that club qualified, step by step, for the highest levels of the French chess league. At a training session for the team I suggested precisely 12...♕d6 since it is a key continuation in a popular variation. My opponent had thoroughly studied the variation including the sophisticated method of Korchnoi, however, after **12...♕d6!** he thought for a long time and then carefully played **13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♕d2 ♕f6!** (Against the threat of 13 ♘b5 and again preparing a critical attack against the exposed white centre...) **15 b3!?**.



Try to think with me again! It is a prerequisite to 'undermine' the white centre by means of c7-c6 or e7-e6, which are both hanging in the air; it is also a matter of the next test question:

Question:

You play Black and are to move. Will you prefer

A. The immediate **15...c6**

B. The preparatory **15...♖ad8**

C. The preparatory **15...♖fd8**

Support your decision!

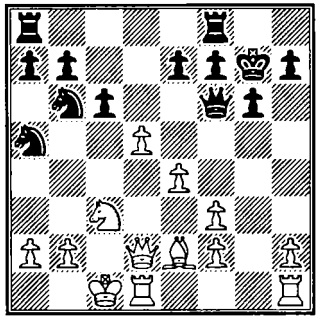
Answer:

Impatience often spoils the results even in cases of correct decisions! The immediate 15...c6?! (0 points) is, without preparation, a premature solution because 16 ♖d1 could follow and the exposed position of the ♘a5 has suddenly become a hindrance to all active attempts. The main threat consists of a jump of the ♘c3 and, after 16...cxd5 17 exd5, additionally 18 ♘e4 with a tempo. Therefore it is necessary to prepare everything by placing a rook on d8 and even if White moves his rook from a1 we can play e7-e6 and the ♘a5 will potentially have a

beautiful retreat square on c6 at his disposal. This is all clear, however a dilemma still remains: which of the rooks should occupy the d-file? This is precisely the issue I was thinking of at this moment... At last I opted for 15...♖ad8, considering primarily the possibility of a quick employment of the other rook after the inevitable further e7-e6. The game continued 16 ♖c1 (The attempt to transfer the white queen to c5 does not work either due to 16 ♕e3 e6! 17 ♕c5 ♘ac4!) 16...e6! and Black had the initiative. After 17 ♘b5, the above-mentioned 17...♘c6 18 ♘xc7 exd5 19 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 20 exd5 ♘d4 with a splendid position for Black might follow. Those of you who bet on the other rook move 15...♖fd8 reacted in the same manner as Black in the game Arlandi – Konopka, Mitropa Cup 1999. IM Michal Konopka belongs to those wholehearted proponents of the Grünfeld Defence and always carefully monitors everything that 'flashes' in this opening. If I am right it was he who first followed my Gausdal idea 12...♕d6. Later he said on this theme: 'I decided to try the idea of 12...♕d6. It cannot be bad if Vlasti Jansa played it! Even if he lost the database game, the opening is not the culprit!' I have already got used to my staunch followers in the paths of the openings; especially in the Czech Republic and Luxembourg, the countries where my chess activities are greater than anywhere else. If we may compare the fighting strategy of the opening with the military one, I sometimes feel myself in the position of Jan of Luxembourg, monitoring many European battlefields from his horse...

Nevertheless, back to our question. The 15...♖fd8 move is not bad either but it is not fully accurate! In the Arlandi – Konopka game there followed 16 ♖c1 e6 17 ♘b5 ♘c6 18 ♘xc7 ♖ac8 and White succeeded in reducing the opponent's pressure by 19 ♘e8+ ♖xe8 20 dxc6. Even then Black had a small edge but, frankly, isn't it a pity? Not only because of the original 'author's' intention but also on account of purely unbiased reasons. Those who played 15...♖ad8 are awarded three points, those who preferred 15...♖fd8 get only two points.

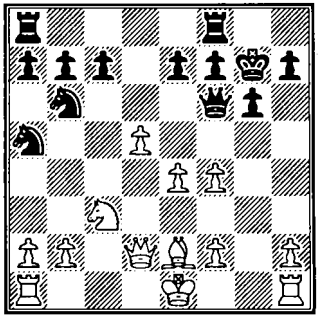
In the second half of the year the watergate of **12...♕d6** yielded to pressure from other masters and grandmasters. It was clear that the disadvantages of White's position were understood by many outstanding explorers of the 64 squares. Black had the joyful task of finding a technical reaction to **13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♕d2 ♕f6 15 0-0-0** and now **15...c6!**.



Both in the game Mceshvili – Ftáčnik, Batumi 1999: 16 ♕d4 ♕xd4 17 ♖xd4 cxd5 18 ♘xd5 ♖ac8+ 19 ♔b1 ♘c6 20 ♖d2 ♖fd8 21 ♖hd1 ♘xd5 22 exd5 ♘e5 23 d6

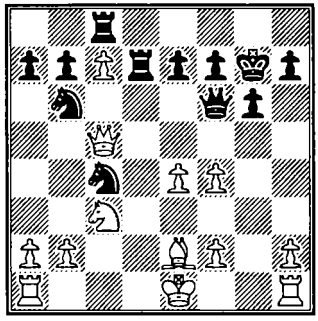
e6!∓ and Gazarek – Konopka, Pardubice 1999: 16 ♕e3 ♘ac4 17 ♕d4 cxd5 18 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 19 ♘xd5+ ♘xd5 20 ♖xd5 ♘b6 21 ♖b5 ♖fd8 22 ♖d1 ♖ac8+ 23 ♔b1 ♖xd1+ 24 ♗xd1 e5!∓ White's pawn structure, recklessly disrupted in the opening, finally rebounded on him.

Late that year at the World Championship in Las Vegas 12...♕d6 was played by one of the world's top players, A.Shirov. It occurred in a game against Ivan Sokolov. Only a strange course of this duel: **15 f4**



15...♘ac4?! 16 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 17 ♕e2 ♘b6 18 ♕e3 ♘c4 19 ♕e2, draw, induced me to write a theoretical article (*Československý Šach*, 2000, 1). Why strange? Several years ago in Gausdal it seemed to me that Black's chances were more than equal and this intuitive feeling was not changed by this game. Somebody may object: 'No wonder – Black made a smooth draw against a strong opponent, that's not bad!' However, the point is that the whole variation is a complete strategic failure for White and it is namely White who will fall into a disadvantageous position within several moves! Besides that, Shirov is a very combative player – in this case the tactics of the knockout system must have played a role.

In that article, without giving any specific variations, I recommended that Black continue fighting in the position shown in the diagram; I certainly could not imagine how quickly the truth came to light! Two days after the magazine had come out, on 16th January 2000, I watched the course of the tournament at Wijk aan Zee on the Internet and suddenly I could see a game Korchnoi – Kasparov on the screen, with full analysis of the above-mentioned variation! In the critical position after 15 f4, Garry Kasparov played an immediate **15...c6!** which received the brusque comment: 'Stronger than 16...♘ac4. The white position might easily disintegrate!' Kasparov's following dynamic play fully confirms this statement: **16 dxc6** (16 e5 ♕f5 does not help White either, after both 17 ♗d3 ♕h3 and 17 d6 exd6 18 exd6 c5!, which was shown by an avalanche of analyses and some later games.) **16...♖fd8! 17 ♕e3 ♘ac4! 18 ♕c5 ♖ac8 19 c7 ♖d7.**

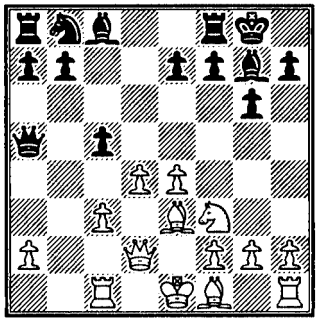


It is clear that White's game hovers in the balance and may easily 'disintegrate'.

It seems strange to me today: even before the variation was born, its funeral had already been decided. And it is not accidental that the last nail in its long prepared coffin was hammered in by Kasparov!

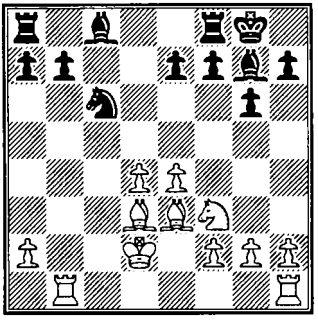
C. No castling in the Exchange Variation!

You may have noticed that in some variations of the Grünfeld Defence correct counterplay for Black is linked to a quick and immediate attack on White's pawn centre. Sometimes it is even necessary to postpone castling to make the whole operation sufficiently effective, i.e. to delay a move that is sometimes played quite mechanically in the opening, prior to the selection of a future plan. Sometimes it may be forced by a dynamic and rapid course of events. If, for example, in a variation analysed elsewhere in this book: **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3 c5 8 ♗e3 ♕a5 9 ♕d2**, Black gave himself 'a breather' and continued, instead of the immediate 9...♘c6, with **9...0-0?!** first, he would not obtain after **10 ♖c1**



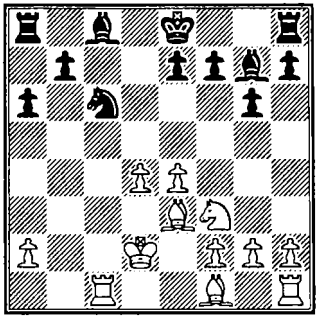
the desired counterplay. Then 10...♘c6? is obviously too late due to 11 d5±; what is the difference in the exchange of queens after 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕xd2+? Primarily in the fact that White recaptures with the knight: 12 ♘xd2 and prevents the double-edged wandering of the king into the main battlefield in the centre of the chessboard. Such 'trifles', based on proper move order, are also very important for struggle in the openings!

This idea, highlighting Black's quick operation, was fully recognised by all proponents of the 'Grünfeld' as far back as twenty years ago. It is natural that players of the white pieces tried to find how to improve their plans and how to disrupt Black's plan. Soon **9...♘c6 10 ♖b1!?** became a popular refinement, with the intention of continuing, after **10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 12 ♔xd2 0-0**, with the mobilisation of forces by **13 ♗d3**±).



Can you see the difference? If the rook was standing on c1, a quick reaction might follow on the same move: 13...♖d8 14 d5 ♘b4 15 ♗c4(b1) e6∓ with an inevitable break-up of White's pawn centre; however, with the rook on b1 the

knight must be placed in seclusion... Not everyone wants to sacrifice material at the very beginning of the game: 10 ♖b1 0-0!? 11 ♖b5 cxd4 12 ♖xa5 dxe3 13 ♕xe3 ♘xa5 with interesting chances for Black... but only for a draw! Also, 10...b6 is not very appealing, particularly because of 11 ♗b5 ♗d7 12 d5! ♗xc3 13 dxc6 ♗xd2+ 14 ♗xd2 and White has sufficient compensation for the queen. Only the solid **10...a6** remains, White then changes his rhythm again: **11 ♖c1** with the threat 12 d5. Logically, again an endgame arises. **11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 13 ♔xd2**, where Black has a7-a6.



It is up to Black to fully realise both the disadvantages and advantages of such a tiny change in the pawn structure! The disadvantage lies in the weakening of the b6-square, on the other hand, Black controls the b5-square and prevents ♗b5. Both the future plan behind Black's play and the answer to the following test question should be based on this assessment!

Question:

Will you recommend for Black in the position of the above diagram:

A. **13...0-0**

B. **13...e6**

C. **13...f5**

You should be able to explain the reasons for your choice!

Answer:

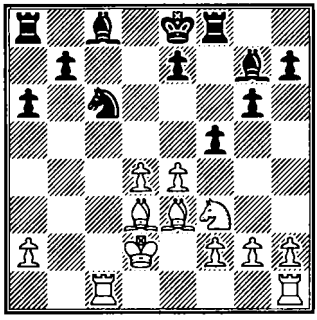
Automatic castling 13...0-0?! could play into the opponent's hands and would not pay due attention to the above-mentioned disadvantage (0 points). This can be confirmed by the simple variations 14 d5 ♖d8 15 ♔e1 ♘a5? 16 ♗b6+ – or 15...♘b4? 16 ♗d2 a5 17 a3±. Nothing remains other than to retreat to e5 but after the exchange and subsequent f2-f4 White has comfortable play in the centre.

The continuation 13...e6 is not bad and gives Black good prospects of equalising (2 points).

Then White only achieves equal play if he advances in the centre 14 d5 exd5 15 exd5 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 (Ftáčnik – Jansa, Bratislava 1983); after the more restrained 14 ♗d3 0-0 15 ♔e2 or 15 ♖c4 White has microscopically better prospects. The fact is that Black's aspirations are not much higher either...

The third possibility **13...f5!?** naturally does not offer better play for Black but it may best correspond to the situation and the dynamic nature of the position (3 points); it may also contribute to more dramatic events. It was precisely this active move that had ended a long theoretical discussion and the popularity of this variation with White players then sank. After 14 e5 ♗e6 15 ♗c4 ♗xc4 16 ♖xc4 Black has nothing to complain of regarding the pawn structure in the

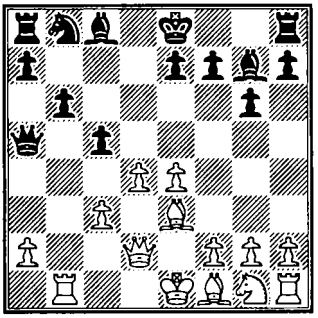
centre, however, he should play carefully with respect to the blockade of the white squares! In the game I.Khenkin – V.Jansa, Fuerth 2002, I was not careful at all: after 16...h6 17 ♖b1 ♖d8 18 ♔e2, I incautiously played 18...♔f7? (Much better was the simple 18...0-0 19 g3 ♖d7! with the intention 20...e6.) and my opponent seized his chance to unblock the position: 19 e6+! ♔xe6 20 ♖xb7 ♖d6 21 ♗f4!± . After 14 exf5 ♗xf5 15 ♖c5 ♗g4! (Hort – Ftáčnik, Novi Sad 1990) Black's position was excellent; his only crossroads occurs after **14 ♗d3**. Then sharp play may occur: 14...0-0 15 d5 ♘b4!? 16 ♗c4 fxe4 17 d6+ e6 18 ♘g5 ♘d5 19 ♘xe4 b6 (Agdestein – Ftáčnik, Gjovik 1993) White's efforts definitely came to a halt after the game Yusupov – Kasparov, Reykjavik 1998. In this game Kasparov decided to play on without castling: **14...♖f8!?**,



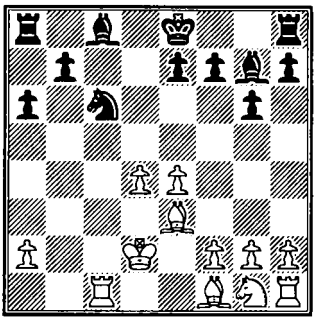
thus eliminating the active 15 d5 due to 15...♘b4 16 ♗c4 fxe4 17 ♘g5 ♗f5 with excellent play. White played 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 ♖c5 ♖d8, however, he gave up all his hopes of any advantage (17 ♗xa6 ♘xd4=).

The dynamic character of the Grünfeld Defence compels both sides to make specific considerations at every move. This is perhaps why this lively opening belonged in the weaponry of Fischer, who used to play in a very agile way, and later Kasparov. Delaying the seemingly logical castling also became the basic motif of Garry Kasparov's idea in the following variation which at one time enjoyed great popularity:

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗e3 c5 8 ♕d2 ♕a5 9 ♖b1 b6



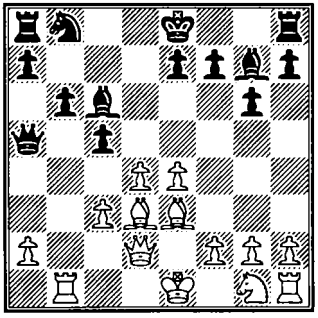
This continuation is completely O.K. here; in comparison to the above analysis the knights ♘f3 and ♘c6 are not developed which means the pin by ♗b5 is not possible... Naturally, Black can also play 9...a6, however, it is necessary to closely monitor the movement of the imaginary dynamic pendulum! After **10 ♖c1 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 12 ♔xd2** 0-0?! 13 ♘f3 Black is doomed to notoriously unpleasant passivity. Therefore, **12...♘c6!** is better



and if 13 ♘f3 then 13...f5!? as we said above. After 13 d5 ♘d4 a new situation arises but you must agree that Black has solved the issue of the proper placement of his knight!

Back to **9...b6** and to Kasparov. The strategic concept of some top world grandmasters was based on the popular check **10 ♗b5+ ♗d7** with a subsequent retreat to d3 or e2. Sometimes this concept proved to be successful but that was mainly due to minor inaccuracies in the opponents' play. Black can only succeed if he again utilises the dynamic coordination of the developed pieces in a certain manner. After 11 ♗d3 his reply is simple and natural: 11...♘c6 and if 12 ♘e2 Black does not have to worry about d4-d5 because his knight could then get to the excellent e5-square (or even 12...0-0 13 dxc5 ♘e5!)! If 12 ♘f3, 12...0-0 13 ♖c1 e6!? might follow (Tunik – Atalik, Budapest 1992) since after the breakthrough 14 d5 exd5 15 exd5 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 the bishop, enticed to d7 due to ♗b5+, stands well on this square.

It is more complicated to find the dynamic relationship after **11 ♗e2**. Active players may not be satisfied with the unpleasant, albeit only marginally worse endgame after 11...♘c6 12 ♘f3 0-0 13 ♖c1 cxd4 (13...♗g4 14 d5 ♖ad8 15 0-0±, Epishin – Leko, Moscow 1995) 14 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 15 ♔xd2 e6 16 ♗b5 (Karpov – Gulko, Moscow 1992), or the more frequently played 14...♖fc8 15 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 16 ♔d2 b5 17 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 18 ♖c1 ♘c4+ 19 ♗xc4 bxc4 20 ♔c3!±. An immediate attack on e4 suggests itself: **11...♗c6**, however, how should Black continue after **12 ♗d3**?



In the game Epishin – I. Sokolov, Biel 1993, White launched a promising initiative after the 'normal' 12...0-0?! 13 ♘e2! e6 14 h4!.

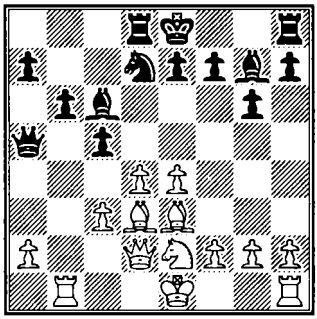
An adequate reaction for Black in the diagram position comes from the home preparation of Garry Kasparov; he used it at the Tilburg tournament in 1997 in his game against Shaked Tal, World Junior Champion. Immediately after the game Kasparov expressed doubts as to whether it might have been better to save the novelty and use it in a game against Karpov... but this does not relate to the content of the game itself. However, Black's dynamic approach is the subject of our next test question:

Question:

What do you think, how can Black complicate White's activity in the centre and gain full counterplay?

Answer:

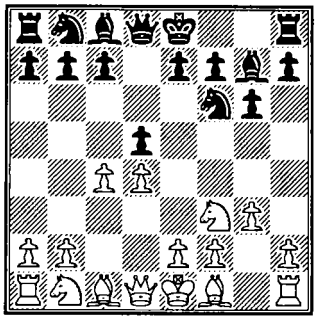
This time I gave you enough hints in the previous text; besides, simple theoretical knowledge is enough to answer the question properly. This is reflected in the possible gain of 2 points if your consideration or theoretical knowledge are right. The clue lies in the utilisation of the white pieces on the d-file. Instead of 12...0-0?!, Kasparov played **12...♘d7** first and after **13 ♘e2 ♖d8!**.



Another point lies in the fact that Black has saved himself the e7-e6 move, after 14 d5 might now come 14...♘e5!; there is also a trump after 14 0-0?! cxd4 15 cxd4 ♕xd2 16 ♗xd2 ♘c5!∓. Kasparov's young opponent continued **14 f3** but after **14...0-0** (only now!) he could not cope with the unknown situation: **15 h4 h5 16 ♗g5 ♖fe8 17 ♖c1 ♗b7 18 d5? ♘e5 19 ♗b1 ♘c4 20 ♕f4?? ♗e5 0:1** The idea of quick mobilisation on the d-file has naturally found immediate followers (e.g., Epishin – Ftáčnik, Germany 1998: 14 h4 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♘c5! 16 ♕xa5 bxa5 17 ♗b5 ♗xb5 18 ♖xb5 ♘xe4 =.) Without any doubt, postponement of castling in the interests of quick counterplay by means of 12...♘d7 followed by ♖d8 is again an accurate hit of the bull's eye of the strategic target!

D. No castling, even in case of the fianchetto!

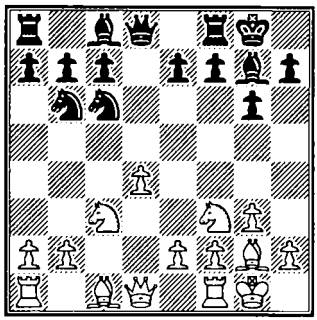
In some cases the postponement of castling and accelerated development of other pieces with immediate pressure on the white centre became even the leading strategic idea, in tune with our 'philosophy' of aiming to play the variation in maximal dynamic manner. However, be careful! It is always necessary to have real grounds to play like this; superficial play without getting the king out of the centre by castling may sometimes result in catastrophic consequences. Never forget that castling is part of basic mobilisation and that this principle can only be violated in exceptional circumstances; in such cases we have to support our decision by a specific approach and clear justification. Such justification may probably be found in the following method of play and Black's considerations when solving the problems in a known position arising after the following initial moves: **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3 ♗g7 4 g3 d5**.



This position is well known to all who like to 'fianchetto' the ♗g2 and to all proponents of the Grünfeld Defence. This 'stock' situation may also be described and explained in a different manner than usual; even in such hackneyed positions there may be found something new, interesting and inspiring! Do you not believe it? I will try to convince you in the following text; I would say that some of you may realise the existence of a certain coherence that was unknown before and will try to use it in practice. In a way it will be some kind of instruction on how to play with the black pieces. I am fully competent to sign this prescription as if I were a physician prescribing, in compliance with the diagnosis and based on my best knowledge and conscience, some drugs for a patient. And, since the drugs often become active only if the patient actively cooperates, my chess prescription will only succeed in cases of those of you who will not only understand and accept it but who will also try to develop it independently in a creative manner. It is, I think, a good prescription but in no case is it a universal drug for everybody!

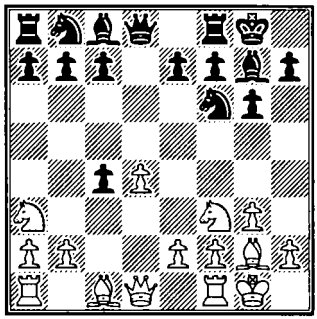
In the above position the games usually quickly continue: **5 ♗g2 0-0** and now either

A. **6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 0-0 ♘b6 8 ♘c3 ♘c6**



or

B. **6 0-0 dxc4 7 ♘a3**

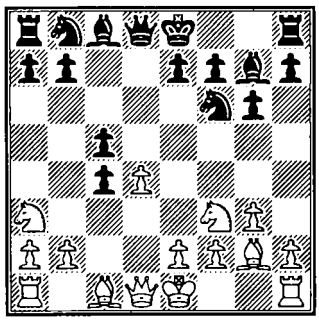


In the case of the first alternative White usually chooses either 9 e3 when Black's contemporary possibilities are 9...e5 or 9...♖e8, or 9 d5 ♘a5 10 e4 or 10 ♕c2!?. In the case of the alternative *B* Black usually reacts 7...♘c6 8 ♘xc4 ♗e6, 7...c3 8 bxc3 c5 or 7...♘a6 8 ♘xc4 ♗e6. Theoretical recommendations quickly change and intertwine with one another, often the players start the game with a feeling that their knowledge is 'half a move' better

than that of their opponents. No wonder that the overall diagnosis usually is: White has slightly better prospects upon accurate play. Chess magazines and theory books are filled with various analyses but let us try to look at the situation from another point of view: Black will attack the white centre before castling! Let us start from the beginning:

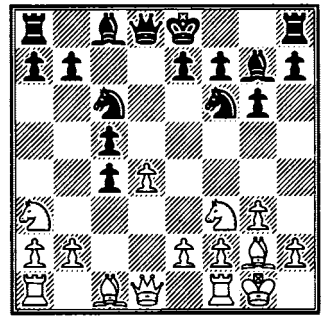
After **5 ♗g2** Black will react, instead of 5...0-0, with the immediate **5...dxc4**.

After **6 ♘a3** Black has an additional response at his disposal which is not bad at all: **6...c5!?**.



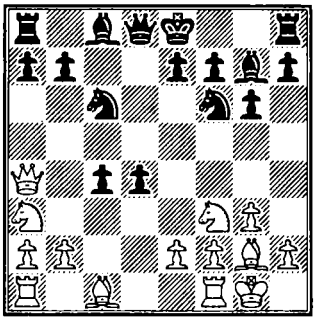
Note that in case of a position with both sides castling (5...0-0 6 0-0) 8 dxc5! might follow and the subsequent play on the queenside will most probably be under the baton of the unpleasantly active 'Catalan' ♗g2. After all, this has been known for a long time, e.g. 8...♘a6 9 c6! bxc6 10 ♘xc4±, Puc – Božić, Belgrade 1948, or 8...♕xd1 9 ♖xd1 c3 10 ♘b5!±, Barcza – Teschner, Reggio Emilia 1963. Also, 8...♕a5!? 9 ♕d4 seems to be advantageous for White, in a word, it is as if Black were short of breath in the battle for the centre... However, in the position without the two sides castling 7 dxc5? is simply prohibited due to 7...♕xd1+ 8 ♔xd1 ♘e4 and the white king is staggering in the centre and gets in the way of the white pieces. The most reasonable move for White is probably 7 0-0 since after 7 ♘xc4 ♘c6 nothing is changed in the assessment of 8 dxc5?! ♕xd1+; also, Black easily neutralises the attempt 8 ♕a4 cxd4 9 ♘fe5 ♗d7 (Debnar – Navara, Pardubice 2001). On the other hand, an interesting attempt to fight for the initiative may be represented by **7 ♕a4+!?**, even if after 7...♘c6 double-edged consequences may occur, both after 8 ♘e5 ♘d7!? 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 ♘xc4 0-0 11 ♗xc6 ♖b8, P.Nikolić – Tkachiev, Rapid 1994, and after 8 dxc5 c3!? 9 ♘b5 ♘d5. If White plays 8 0-0, it leads, with change of move order, to our next considerations.

After **7 0-0** Black may intensify the immediate pressure on the white centre: **7...♘c6**.



This is the position reached in all my own games which commenced with this variation (5...dxc4 6 ♘a3 c5). All my opponents played the same move here: 8 dxc5. I considered this move to be nearly obligatory, how should White

otherwise react to the attack on the d4 pawn? After **8 ♕a4, 8...cxd4** might follow



and the usual combination 9 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 10 ♗xc6+ can be easily refuted by 10...♗d7, if 11 ♖d1 then 11...♗xc6 12 ♕xc6+ bxc6 13 ♖xd4 c3! and it is only White who can have positional problems. However, even 10...bxc6!? 11 ♕xc6+ ♕d7 12 ♕xa8 0-0 seems to be promising...

Only when I was preparing this text was I very surprised by something which is concealed in the position and which forced me to radically change my view on the situation arising after 8 ♕a4.

Question:

What do you think, what kind of surprise is it?

1. Is 8...cxd4 really such an easy solution and has Black nothing to be worried about?

2. White can gain an advantage after 8...cxd4, how?

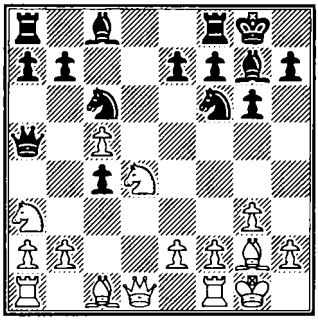
Answer:

The puzzle may be solved by the discovery that after 8...cxd4? (0 points) White gains the advantage after 9 ♘xd4 but, upon 9...♕xd4, he does not hurry to regain the material by 10 ♗xc6+? but inserts 10 ♖d1! first (2 points). The black queen has, in fact, no appropriate square of retreat (10...♕b6? 11 ♘xc4 ♕c7 12 ♗f4 +-, 10...♕c5 11 ♗e3 + -). In the game Murdzia – Schmidt, Poland 1996, nothing remained other than to play the nasty 10...♕g4. Only then 11 ♗xc6+ ♘d7 12 ♘xc4! ♕e6 occurred and now, instead of 13 ♗f3, White could have conclusively triumphed over his opponent: 13 ♗d5 ♕xe2 14 ♗g5 with irrefutable threats. No, 8...cxd4 is not an easy solution at all...

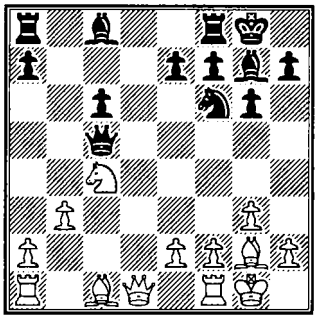
How should Black react to 8 ♕a4 then? Try to unravel this small brain-teaser, which may be solved in a dynamic manner, yourself; you can become active participants in the outlined creative process! There are plenty of moves to choose from: 8...0-0, 8...♗d7, 8...♘d7, maybe even something else... Keep in mind that only a profound consideration and analysis can confirm the viability of Black's entire leading idea.

In any case, not only my existing GM-opponents but also for example Anatoly Karpov continued, after 7...♘c6, with the above-mentioned and logical **8 dxc5**. Black, following his idea of quick mobilisation, responds **8...♕a5**. After 9 ♘xc4 then 9...♕xc5 10 b3 ♕h5 may come without the slightest hesitation about the black position. The transfer of the queen to h5 followed by ♗h3 is a dynamic part of the strategy started with 6...c5. Should White struggle for initiative, he

must immediately try to launch active play on the long diagonal: **9 ♘d4!** After that a generous response should follow: **9...0-0!**.



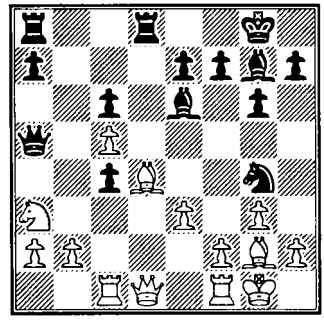
After the impertinent **10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♗xc6** Black's main argument will be, in my opinion, the simple 11...♖b8! rather than the unnatural 11...♗h3 12 ♗xa8 ♖xa8, perhaps with compensation, though. After **11...♖b8**, however, Black intends to develop his initiative easily with a further ♕xc5; if **12 ♗f4** then not 12...♖xb2 13 ♘xc4 but again **12...♕xc5!**. Hardly anybody would like to defend the white position after **13 ♗xb8 ♕xc6** since upon **14 ♗xa7 ♗h3 15 f3** Black can use another attacking trump **15...c3! 16 bxc3 ♖a8∓**. A positional player might say: 'The weak pawn on c6 is enough to achieve the advantage, White is not obliged to take it at once.' That might be true but White has certain problems in completing his development. In my opinion Black can use the time presented for sufficient counter-measures. Such a situation arises after **10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♘xc4 ♕xc5 12 b3**.



Anatoly Karpov believed White had a small edge in his game against Yugoslav GM Popović in Belgrade in 1996. The Yugoslav player continued, just like some other players, with **12...♘d5**, which suggests itself, and probably did complain about his solution later since the game followed: 13 ♗a3 ♕b5 14 ♖c1 ♗g4 15 h3 ♗e6 16 e4?! ♘c3 17 ♕c2 ♗xc4 18 bxc4 ♕xc4 19 ♖fe1 and White only had counter-balancing compensation for the sacrificed pawn. It is astonishing that Karpov did not choose the patient 16 ♕d2 even if then after 16...♖fd8 17 ♖fd1 ♖d7! 18 ♕e1 a5 Black has nothing to worry about either. The same position (only with an immediate 14...♗e6) occurred in the game Wojtkiewicz – Schmidt, Krynica 1997, with a quick draw. I believe that in the position shown in the above diagram Black also has at his disposal his original intention **12...♕h5!?** followed by ♗h3, which easily and distinctly solves the situation. Hardly anybody will like the adventure beginning with 13 ♗xc6?! since after, for instance, 13...♗g4! White struggles for life. After **13 ♗b2 ♗h3** White should take into account the danger of the attack with ♘g4. In the game

Dydyshko – Jansa, Prague 2002, the Belarusian GM continued reasonably with exchanges: 14 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♖c1 and after 16...♖ad8 17 ♕c2 ♖d5 18 ♕e4, however, this was only enough for approximately equal play after 18...♖fd8 19 ♕g2 ♕e6 20 ♖fe1 ♗d4!? 21 e3 ♗b6=.

I must admit that in the game Marin – Jansa, Andorra 2000, I was very surprised by an unexpected move by the Romanian GM in the last but one diagram position: **10 ♗e3!?**. At first sight this is a risky move and to tell the truth at first I could not believe my own eyes... However, on the other side of the chessboard there was sitting my old acquaintance and also a very solid and strong opponent! What would he do after the obvious **10...♘g4** ? I see, his intention is clear: **11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♗d4** (After 12 ♘xc4 the reply 12...♕a6 13 ♖c1 ♗e6 with an excellent position for Black seems to be conclusive enough; some time ago I had also inspired David Navara to play the whole system and he managed to confuse several opponents in this variation thanks to clever play. He also reached the position arising after 13...♗e6 in a game of the World Junior Championship in Athens 2001. I was surprised he could only make a lucky draw in this game, Gagunashvili – Navara. 'I realised at once my error after I had hastily taken on e3 after 14 ♕c2 since 15 ♘xe3 ♕xa2 16 b4± followed', David comments on the situation and quickly demonstrates the much better move 14...♕xa2 after which it is rather White who has problems in maintaining equality. This time his hand was quicker than the idea...) **12...♖d8 13 e3** The point is 13...e5? 14 ♗c3±, nevertheless White's behaviour on the d-file seems to be, even at first sight, a quite risky decision, e.g. on account of the handy insertion 13...c3!?, after which White maintains the tension only by 14 ♕b3! with approximately equal chances within the hodge-podge of various alternatives. However, during the game, I preferred **13...♗e6** which I played after some hesitation. Marin continued with the only reasonable move **14 ♖c1** (After 14 ♗xc6, 14...♖ac8 might follow, with more acceptable consequences for Black after both 15 ♗g2 ♖xc5 and 15 ♕a4 ♕xa4 16 ♗xa4 ♗xd4.)



Question:

The critical situation shown in the above diagram has arisen. I can remember that I was quite satisfied with the development of the game and tried to make a choice between one of the following possibilities: **14...♖ab8** and **14...♘e5**. Which of these would you prefer?

It is another test question and I give you advance warning that it is very tricky and therefore you should thoroughly support your decision. I must say I liked both the moves but in the end I decided on 14...♖ab8 since the variations 15 ♗xc6 c3 16

♖xc3 ♖xb2 or 15 ♘xc4 ♕xa2 looked attractive for Black. However, 14...♘e5 also seems to be promising but what should I play after 15 ♕e2? After the straightforward 15...♘d3, 16 ♖xc4 should be calculated... Try to assess the situation properly and make a decision, sit down at the chessboard as if it were real game, use a chess clock, concentrate yourself and make your selection within twenty minutes at the latest! Then compare the result of your considerations with the following answer!

Answer:

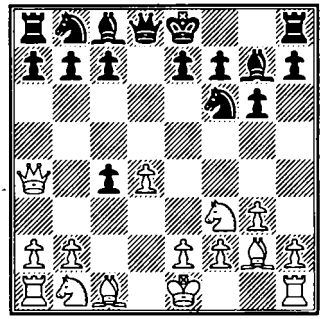
This consideration required strategic-tactical observation of a high level and I did not cope with it properly. GM Marin outplayed me tactically in the following variation:

14...♖ab8?! 15 ♘xc4 ♕xa2 16 b3! This is the move which I completely overlooked, did it escape your notice, too? The pawn can be taken neither with the rook 16...♖xb3?? 17 ♖a1+ – nor with the queen: 16...♕xb3? 17 ♕xb3 ♖xb3 18 ♘a5±. The black pieces lack coordination after 16...♗xc4 17 ♖xc4 e5 18 ♖a4 ♕xb3 19 ♕xb3 ♖xb3 20 ♗a1±. Nothing remained other than to fish in troubled waters: 16...♕a6 17 ♖a1 ♕b5 18 ♖xa7 ♗xc4 19 bxc4 ♕xc4 but obviously it was only a struggle to stay alive. If I had suspected 16 b3! before I played 13...♗e6, I would have probably preferred the trouble-free 13...c3.

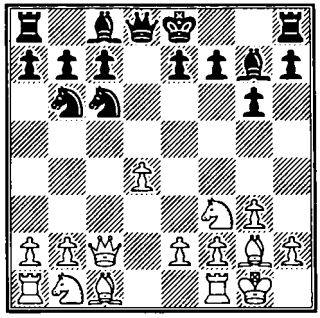
The second possibility **14...♘e5** was better but only if you did not expect to play, after 15 ♕e2, 15...♘d3. By sacrificing the exchange 17 ♖xc4! ♗xc4 18 ♘xc4 ♕xa2 19 ♕xd3 e5 20 ♘d6! White would get a strong initiative. The entire task was in fact some kind of an anagram. Only after **15 ♕e2** should Black probably play **15...♖ab8!?**. The transfer to a position with opposite bishops after 16 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 17 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 18 ♕xc4 ♖xb2 19 ♗xc6 ♕xa2 would lead rather to a slight edge for Black. My opponent's intention was to play this, however, the dynamic tension may still be maintained by **16 ♖c2!?** with chances for both sides. If you opted for 14...♘e5, you may add two points; those of you who revealed the specific drawbacks of 14...♖ab8 (16 b3!) will be awarded an additional two points.

In case you were tricked like me in the game and thought that after 14...♖ab8 Black's position was excellent, you will only be awarded a single point – this point is, in fact, it is some kind of reward for your optimism, not for your mistake which did not get to the core of the truth...

Let us return to the situation immediately after **5...dxc4**. Instead of 6 ♘a3, White can regain the pawn by means of **6 ♕a4+**.

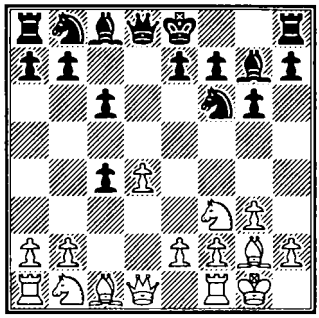


Even here Black's response to the excursion of the opponent's queen should not be the automatic and static 6...♘bd7, 6...♗d7 or 6...c6 since, after a subsequent 7 ♕xc4, he would have to struggle against White's spatial advantage. An adequate response is again motivated by the dynamics of events, i.e. **6...♘fd7!** with a quick attack on the wandering white queen and at the same time aiming at the pawn on d4! After **7 0-0 ♘c6 8 ♕xc4 ♘b6 9 ♕c2**

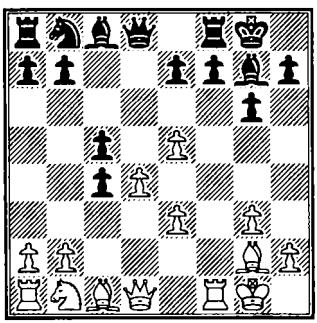


Black has a relatively pleasant choice: he may play 9...♘xd4 10 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 11 ♕xc7 ♕c4= (e.g. Hübner – Kempinski, Pula 1997) or 9...0-0 10 ♖d1 ♗f5!? 11 e4 ♗g4 12 d5 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♘d4 14 ♕d3 with chances for both sides (e.g. Grabarczyk – Jansa, Germany 1995).

White may also postpone all other operations and continue easily **6 0-0**. However, in this case he must reckon on the same easy answer of his opponent (6...0-0) with transition to usual positions arising after 7 ♘a3 (but with castling on both sides) but also with the double-edged **6...c6!**.

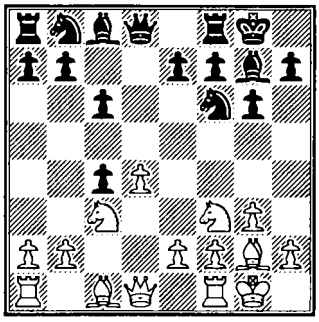


As we will see, with his 'easy' castling, White has slid on thin and unpredictable gambit ice! It is not easy to regain the pawn on c4, after 7 ♘a3. 7...b5 8 ♘e5 ♘d5 might follow, the same as after 7 ♕c2. The timid 7 a4 outflanks the pawn, however, at a cost of a serious weakening of the queenside. Using simple means, Black will reach a pleasant position: 7...0-0 8 ♘a3 ♘a6! 9 ♘xc4 ♗e6 10 b3 c5 11 ♗b2 ♖c8 12 ♖c1 ♗d5∓ A.Petrosjan – Ibragimov, Kazan 1997. White can also attack the pawn with his other knight: **7 ♘e5** but then the centre is weakened and Black may utilise this fact with **7...♘g4!**. The consistent **8 f4?!** might meet strong counterplay by the black pieces: **8...0-0 9 e3 ♘xe5 10 fxe5 c5!**

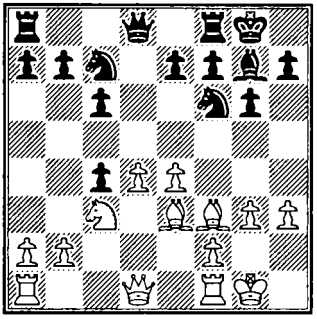


11 ♘a3 ♘c6 12 ♘xc4 cxd4 13 ♗xc6 bxc6 14 exd4 ♗a6 15 b3 c5!∓ Nikolić – Anand, Munich (blitz) 1994.

The mosaic of White's possibilities may be completed with a clear gambit continuation **7 ♘c3**. Only now Black puts away his king, too: **7...0-0**, after which another critical position arises.



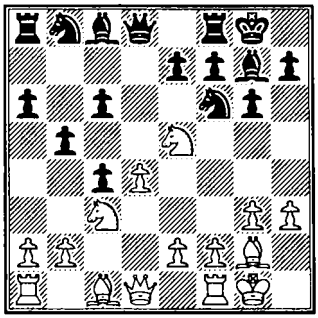
It is clear that White will seek compensation in the strong centre after a quick e2-e4. Even here, however, an accurate and dynamic reaction by Black may make White's efforts problematic, again 'Grünfeld' mechanisms of timely counterplay will play a role! You can find various games with various attempts on both sides. I will try to reveal which are, in my opinion, the most important what should be known and respected. Let us begin with the immediate **8 e4**, Black should not hesitate to pin the knight by **8...♗g4** and launch counterplay in the centre, especially by means of the vigorous advance e7-e5!. After 9 ♗e3, everything is simple: 9...♘bd7 with a quick e7-e5 since after 10 e5 the black knight has the strong d5-square at his disposal... However, after **9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3** Black's reaction will be more complicated. After 10...♘bd7?! White would be jubilant: 11 e5!. The pawn on d4 ties down the white queen for a while and this detail allows for another manoeuvre of the black knight: **10...♘a6 11 ♗e3 ♘c7!**.



The unusual position of the ♘c7 is surprisingly excellent, fulfilling two important duties: *1.* After attacking with 12 ♕e2, 12...b5 is possible when the knight covers all important squares. *2.* After the preparatory **12 a4** comes a key counter-blow in the centre: **12...e5!**, this time its point being different – 13 dxe5 ♘d7 and the black knight controls the important e6-square again. In the game Vallejo Pons – Z.Almasi, Pamplona 2000, the young Spanish master therefore continued (after 12...e5) **13 ♗e2** but again the vigorous **13...♘g4! 14 hxg4 exd4 15 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 16 ♗xc4 ♕f6 17 ♖c1 ♖ae8∓** brought Almasi a reward for his excellent strategy – a promising initiative on the black squares. 'There is something useful in all things, even if sometimes it may be hidden,' the wise Cicero once said. The most fiendish puzzle is to find the

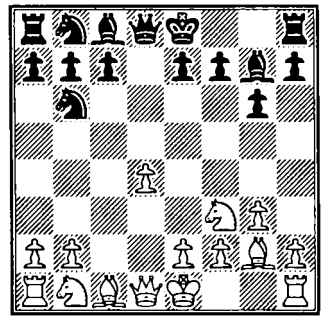
imaginary point of intersection of all that is useful and all that is hidden...

In his Candidates' match against Anand in 1994 Oleg Romanishin tried to prepare the e2-e4 advance by means of **8 h3?!** In the third game of the match Anand found an excellent recipe how to resist. It is obvious that Black should use the times gained to stabilise the pawns on his queenside but how can this be done best and in its most flexible form? After the immediate 8...b5 the long diagonal will dangerously open... Anand's reply solves everything at the right time and the right place: **8...b5! 9 ♘e5 a6!**.



Black utilises the fact that after taking on c6 White's 'preparatory' h3-pawn is hanging, he simultaneously covers the threat 10 ♘xb5 and after the possible 10 a4 b4 the white knight cannot, again because of the h3-pawn, step on e4... If 11 ♘a2 then 11...a5 12 ♘xc4 ♗e6 13 b3 ♗d5 and the black position seems to be active enough. Therefore, Romanishin preferred to occupy the centre **10 e4 ♗b7 11 ♖e1** but it was quickly broken up thanks to Anand's accurate and timely reaction: **11...♘bd7 12 ♘xd7 ♘xd7! 13 e5 e6 14 ♘e4 c5!! 15 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 16 ♗xb7 ♖a7∓**.

As may be concluded from the previous text, the 'castling-free' concept of Black's play after 5 ♗g2 dxc4 seems to be quite sound and White can hardly find a gap in which to develop an initiative or gain any advantage. But how should Black react to the immediate entanglement in the centre 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 and only then 6 ♗g2 ? For those who like to be consistent but also for those who are looking for detailed refinements and enjoy their advantages, a further continuation of the same motif will be given here. Even here the principal idea of Black's play lies in the postponement of castling. Let us examine which surprising and not always usual possibilities may occur. The first crossroads will be represented by the position arising after **5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♗g2 ♘b6**.



White has two basic developing sequences:

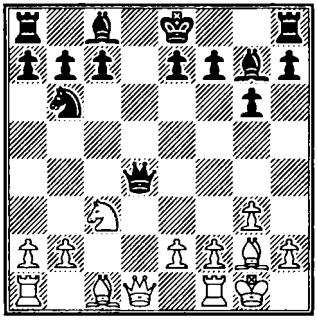
A. the automatic **7 0-0**,

B. first **7 ♘c3**;

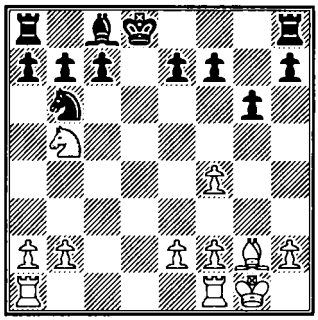
in both cases Black can immediately play 7...♘c6. The immediate attack on the white

centre brings its first indisputable achievement: in any case it eliminates the variation utilising the d4-d5 advance (7 0-0 0-0 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 9 d5 or 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 0-0 ♘c6 9 d5), which represents, in my opinion, the most active opportunity for White in this situation. If Black chooses an accurate move order, White is usually forced to play the modest e2-e3 and Black can choose... Only then may he transfer to castling, however, White has already played the restricting e2-e3; or, he may focus on detailed differences and solve the position of his king even later. I will deal with those various dynamic differences, but be careful! Sometimes it will be like a dangerous slalom negotiating difficult positional turns and requiring not only a continuous overall strategic feeling but also patience with regard to possible hazards as a result of the unknown terrain!

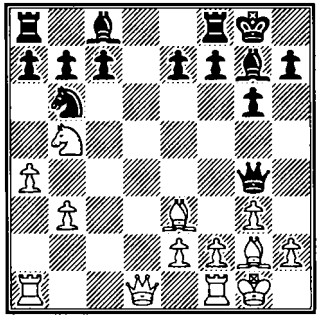
A. **7 0-0 ♘c6 8 e3** If White tries to transfer to explored systems with 8 ♘c3, he will meet an 'impudent' reply: **8...♘xd4! 9 ♘xd4 ♕xd4**.



White cannot count on more than equal chances in case of the gambit **10 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 11 ♘b5 ♗e5 12 ♗f4 ♗xf4 13 gxf4 ♔d8!?**

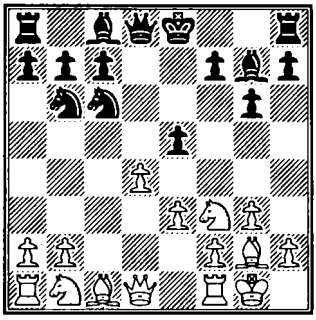


(13...0-0 14 ♘xc7 ♖b8 =) or, maybe the most reasonable, 10 ♘b5 ♕c4! 11 ♕b3! 0-0 12 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 13 ♘xc7 ♖b8 =. On the other hand, after the formerly recommended **11 a4?! 0-0 12 b3 ♕g4 13 ♗e3**



White is probably on the road to ruin. In fact Kasparov showed White the road to hell in his game against P.Nikolić at the Wijk aan Zee 2000 tournament: 13...♗e6! 14 ♘xc7 ♖ad8 (Sound dynamics again – prior to taking the exchange Black develops his remaining forces.) 15 ♕b1 ♗xa1 16 ♕xa1 ♗xb3 17 a5 ♘c4 18 ♗h6 ♕d4∓.

8...e5



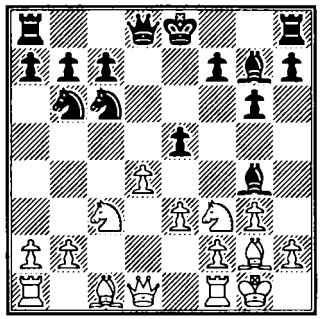
Black can, if he wishes, transpose to the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings* variation D76 after 8...0-0 9 ♘c3. Should you decide to do so, I would recommend that you try the flexible continuation 9...♖e8!?, introduced by GM Hort nearly 40 years ago, rather than 9...e5. Naturally, over several decades the theory of 9...♖e8 has come through many somersaults and cartwheels as is common in cases of all interesting ideas; you should acquaint yourself with them. However, let us deal with the position shown above.

9 ♘c3

In the endgame after 9 dxe5 ♕xd1 10 ♖xd1 ♘xe5 11 ♘d4 c6 the chances of both sides are probably equal. After all, even Botvinnik once assessed the situation the same way.

9...♗g4!?

After 9...0-0 Black does not play in the way of our considerations and traverses to theoretically known waters which are, after all, rather more favourable for White, after both 10 d5 ♘e7 and 10...♘a5... Black may try 9...exd4 10 exd4 0-0, at least in the game Eingorn – Ftáčnik, Germany 1998, Black maintained the balance by an exemplary blockade of the d5-square: 11 ♗g5 f6 12 ♗e3 ♘e7! 13 ♖e1 c6 14 ♘e4 ♘bd5=, however, isn't it possible to play more actively with 9...♗g4 ?

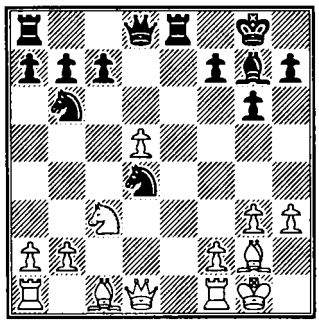


Question:

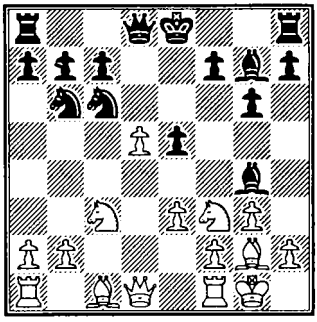
White may decide on the blockade 10 d5 or play with the bishop pair after 10 h3. Which of the two possibilities do you prefer? Support your decision by considerations and calculations! This question belongs to our test, too.

Answer:

World Champion Alekhine liked the bishops and could use them with bravura. However, it is probable that even the great Alekhine himself would not have liked the passivity of the white-squared bishop after **10 h3?! ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 exd4 12 exd4 0-0 13 d5 ♘d4 14 ♗g2 ♖e8!**.



I am aware of the fact that its substantiation is neither unequivocal nor at all easy but White cannot have the feeling of a soundly played opening. In the game K.Urban – V.Jansa, Germany 2000, my opponent, a Polish IM, was not pessimistic at all in evaluating his prospects in this position, however, he soon changed his opinion: 15 ♗f4?! ♘c4 16 b3 g5! 17 ♗d2 ♘d6 18 ♕h5 h6 19 h4 gxh4 20 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 21 ♕xh6 ♘4f5 22 ♕f4 hxg3 23 fxg3 ♕f6 24 ♖ac1 ♕g7! 25 ♖f3 ♖e7∓. In the game Janjgava – Mikhalchishin, 1987, White took better care of his centre, continuing **15 h4 ♘c4 16 b3 ♘d6 17 ♗g5** but even here the Ukrainian – at present Slovenian – GM easily coordinated his active pieces: 17...♕d7 18 ♖c1 h6 19 ♗f4 ♖e7 20 ♕d2 ♔h7 21 ♖ce1 ♖ae8 again with an initiative for Black. You do not deserve more than 1 point for your decision 10 h3?!, the continuation **10 d5** (2 points) is, without any doubt, more active and better. Thus we get to the following position which is a starting point for another question for you:

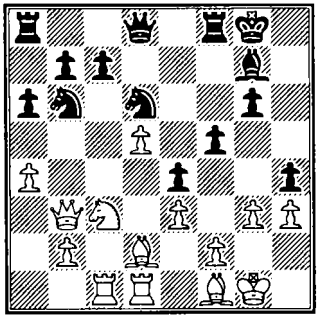


Question:

Will you retreat your knight to: *1.* **a5**, *2.* **e7**, or will you embroil yourself in complications beginning with e5-e4, thus: *3.* **10...e4** ? Support your decision properly!

Answer:

If Black's concept, which began with 8...e5 and 9...♗g4 without castling, should make sense (I believe it should), the only correct reaction is the third possibility 10...e4!? (3 points). Both retreats of the knight (1 point) in this position suffer from a big strategic disadvantage. In this case White can do without the usual move e3-e4; he continues without blockading the centre, with an immediate 11 h3, and gains a slight but clear edge. The game, Ivanchuk – I. Sokolov, Reggio Emilia 1988, may serve as an instructive example: 10...♘e7 11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 0-0 13 ♕b3 ♘f5 14 ♖d1 ♘d6 15 ♗d2 f5 16 ♖ac1 e4 17 ♗e2 a6 18 a4 h5 19 ♗f1! h4

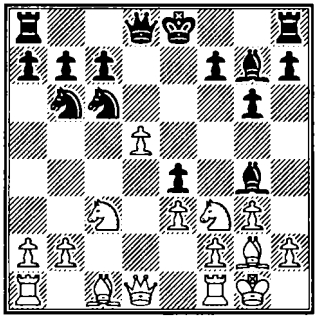


20 ♘e2! hxg3 21 fxg3 ♘d7 22 ♘f4±.

On the other hand, **10...e4** represents an interesting tactical challenge.

A then practically unknown position arises; it seems that in this position Black's counter-chances

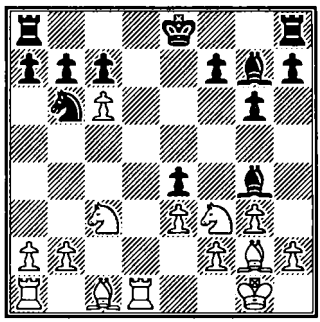
may serve as an example of dynamic balance.



Let us try to monitor the unknown terrain and disentangle at least some threads from the cluster of inscrutable variations.

11 ♘xe4 ♕xd5 12 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 looks quite good for Black even if the course of one of Kasparov's games in simultaneous chess (Barcelona 1988, with the little-known player J.Juanpera playing White) has shown not only the merits of the black position but also the quite unsuccessful reaction of White: 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 0-0-0! 15 ♘c5 b6 16 ♘b3 a5! 17 e4?! ♘db4 18 ♗g5 a4! 19 ♗xd8 ♖xd8∓.

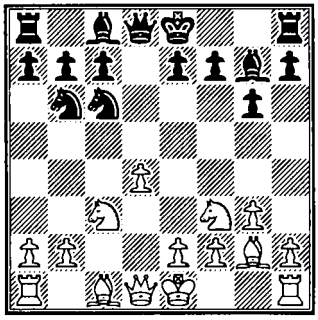
More likely, **11 dxc6 ♕xd1 12 ♖xd1** will be scrutinised.



Which piece should now take on f3? I think that in the game Rodriguez Talavera – De la Villa, Sevilla 1989, Black did not play prudently enough when he decided on 12...exf3?!. The game continued 13 cxb7 ♖b8 14 ♗f1 ♖xb7 15 ♗a6 ♖b8 16 e4± since only the white bishop seems to be active if we compare the light-squared ones. However, the prices of Black's stocks are more favourable after **12...♗xf3 13 cxb7 ♖b8 14 ♗xf3 exf3 15 e4 ♘c4!**; I am sure this possibility will be met in practice – maybe in your games!?

The order of moves after 6...♘b6 plays an important role and has its own specifics. Now we can deal with the other alternative in which White develops his knight to c3 prior to castling.

B. **7 ♘c3 ♘c6**

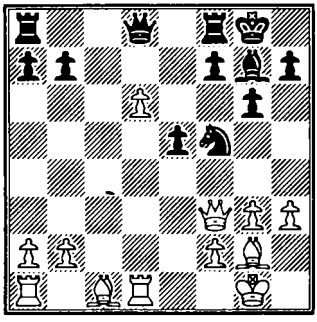


You should primarily note that even here Black does not allow his opponent to advance the d-pawn. However, there may be bold people who are obsessed with the bishop pair and who would play 8 d5?!. The main problem might arise just after 8...♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♕xd5. It is hard for White to prevent Black transposing into the endgame... We

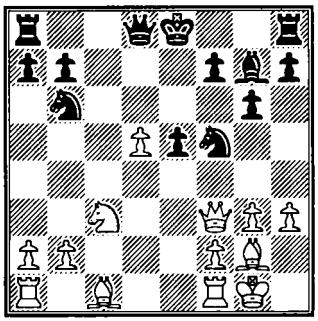
have already dealt with 8 0-0 ♘xd4!; the gambit-like 8 ♗f4 is a stand-alone variation but it does not make the spine chill at all. Black can launch a simple counter-operation: 8...0-0 9 0-0 ♘xd4 10 ♘xd4 e5 =. That leaves only a modest protection of the pawn on d4.

8 e3

Now again it is matter of taste whether Black returns to 8...0-0 or wanders off the beaten track. For those who like something extraordinary I can offer a modest but strategically justifiable idea. It occurred to me in connection with my duel long ago with Bosnian GM Milan Vukić at a tournament in Bor 1985. The game continued **8...0-0 9 0-0 e5?! 10 d5 ♘e7 11 e4 ♗g4 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 c6 14 ♖d1 cxd5 15 ♘xd5 ♘bxd5 16 exd5 ♘f5**; now my opponent 'unblocked' the position: **17 d6!**



and gained an unpleasant initiative. Experience is a wonderful teacher – in this case it helped to create the following idea. This idea is closely linked to the 'castling-free' concept, i.e. with an immediate 8...e5. The previous precipitate development of the knight to c3 allows for the 9 d5 advance in this position. (We have already analysed the position after 9 0-0, when dealing with another move order: **7 0-0 ♘c6 8 e3 e5 9 ♘c3** giving Black the opportunity to play 9...♗g4 10 d5 e4!? but now another situation occurs...) After **9...♘e7 10 e4** Black, unlike the position with both sides having castled, can exploit the strategic point and manage to establish the important blockade in the centre: **10...♗g4** (After 10...c6?! 11 d6 ♘g8 12 b3 probably nobody would bet on the black position.) **11 h3** (11 0-0 c6, 11 a4 c6, 12 ♕b3 c6...) **11...♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 c6 13 0-0 cxd5 14 exd5** (14 ♘xd5 ♘bxd5 16 exd5 ♘f5!) **14...♘f5** and the fact that the white rook has not yet occupied the d-file devalues Vukić's d5-d6 move despite the fact that Black has not castled yet – this will be played when the time is right, after the centre is stabilised!



Some of you may say: 'Bully for you, the position you have reached is no big deal for Black!' You are right, it is only a relatively small success but I would say it is quite important from the strategic point of view! After all: 'Even small things help the big ones!' (Horatius).

Evaluation of your point scores

30 and more points is an excellent result. But even if you scored at least 20 points, you can expect achievements in the dynamic Grünfeld Defence. Others may have received a lesson – or, this opening is simply not right for them.

3 Recommendations for appropriate opening of the game

No doubt a delicate strategic sense is much more important for the opening of a game than an extensive knowledge of specific variations. Specific variations should only come out of the process of a fully filled 'strategic bellows', constantly being pumped with fresh ideas and moves. It is hard to play without this kind of imaginary hub; such play would be full of chaos and randomness. I can remember many players – even outstanding ones – who would say on such occasions: '...it is possible to play both this and this' but they are obviously lacking the above-mentioned 'strategic radar' in their thinking. They may compensate for this serious drawback by immense effort and ingenuity in strategically inferior positions – however, it is a dangerous path, only occasionally leading to success. The following part of the book will not be devoted to 'the only suitable recommendations' for individual openings; it should rather serve as a communication of my own opinions supported by long-term grandmaster practice and training activity aimed at various classes of players – from the youngest and not fully mature right up to the highest, grandmaster class. This communication is based on the depth of my level of strategic understanding linked to individual openings and in the belief that any systematic play is an inseparable part of the weaponry of every player. I am aware of the fact that it is practically impossible to find the truth over the chessboard right at the beginning of the game but I do know that we should prefer to follow our intuitive judgement to a fleeting absolute truth which is often unavailable... 'It is a mistake to believe everything but it is also a mistake to believe nothing' (Seneca).

However, be careful! The quality of the 'strategic bellows' and its content also depends on its flexibility, i.e. on our ability to adapt to all circumstances and changes which may occur from time to time. That means, they depend on the dynamics of our thinking again! However, the principal idea and the intended objective should be the golden thread of your play. In short, your play should be dynamic and conceptual... maybe similar to Andre Agassi's play on the tennis court. The idea and its dynamic implementation in practice will be the main topic of my recommendations and considerations.

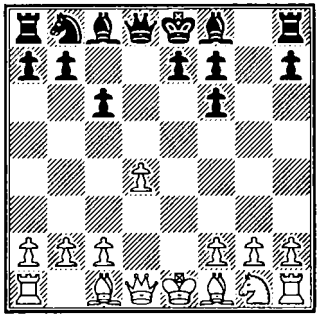
A. Consistent struggle against impaired pawn structures

Some openings, including the most fashionable ones, are characterised, from Black's side, with a considerable degree of

indifference towards the pawn structure, as if Black is saying: '...what do I care for it, hidden tactics will decide everything anyway!' Tastes differ, the belief in 'Swiss cheese' pawns, e.g. in the Sveshnikov Variation in the Sicilian, is continually rising, nevertheless I would like to hint at some active and efficient methods and opportunities for White in the struggle against such structures which are, from the positional point of view, unsound.

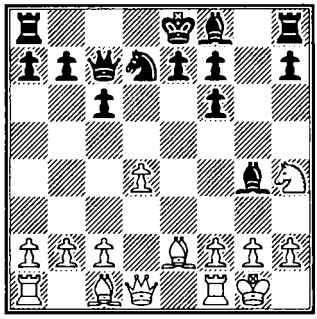
1. Caro-Kann with gxf6

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘f6?! 5 ♘xf6+ gxf6



A strategically dubious system based on the tactical skill of Black who will be playing with a damaged kingside pawn structure. Such risky play, from the positional point of view, requires extensive experience and tactical ingenuity. In Czechia this system was enthusiastically promoted by the eccentric IM Karel Opočenský, but also cultivated by the respected grandmaster and theoretician Luděk Pachman; later on, surprisingly enough, it used to be employed by the otherwise strategically 'clean' grandmaster Zbyněk Hráček... However, he stopped playing this system after our 1994 game! Here I introduced a counter-measure into practice that had been known to me many years prior to the game. The idea matured in some duels with Opočenský but also in games against former leading Yugoslav grandmaster Dragoljub Čirić, another staunch supporter of the 5...gxf6 variation. White's counter-measure consists of the following plan:

1. After **6 ♘f3 ♗g4 7 ♗e2 ♕c7 8 0-0 ♘d7 9 ♘h4!**,



White:

A. first exchanges the white-squared bishops due to the unexpected sally with the knight

B. stabilises the kingside after g2-g3

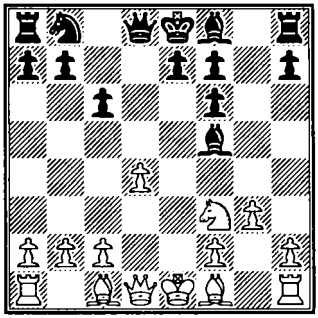
C. will, after Black's anticipated 0-0-0, implement a pawn breakthrough in the centre by c2-c4 and d4-d5

D. will gain important positional advantages (an attack on the black king, sometimes even the f5-square for the knight).

2. After **6 ♘f3 ♗f5**, White:

A. either tries to exchange the bishops by **7 ♗d3**; this time, however, Black has **7...♗g6** at his disposal.

B. continues with development of the bishop on the long diagonal after **7 g3!?**



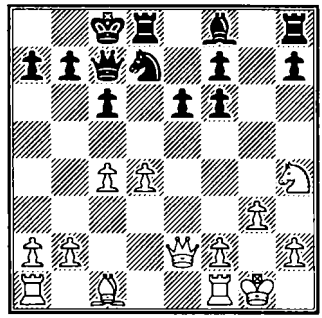
followed by ♗g2, 0-0, c4 and d5, or possibly some other active exploitation of this diagonal. Black should try to disrupt his opponent's plan by 7...♕d5!? with the idea of 8 c3 ♘d7 9 ♗g2 ♕c4!?, however, even here it is not roses all the way.

Let us return to the above-mentioned game Jansa – Hráček, played as far back as 1994 in Prague. The plan used in this game, in my opinion, is of lasting importance...

6 ♘f3 ♗g4 7 ♗e2 ♕c7 8 0-0 ♘d7 9 ♘h4!

The first part of the above-mentioned positional plan lies in this exchanging manoeuvre. On the other hand, complicated tactical skirmishes (not so disadvantageous for Black) might occur after e.g. 9 c4 0-0-0 10 h3?! ♗h5 11 ♕a4 ♔b8 12 ♗e3 e6 13 b4 f5!. Tactics seem to be a trump for Black in this variation, note that sometimes the automatically played h2-h3 only plays into Black's hands... and it does not fit into our plan at all!

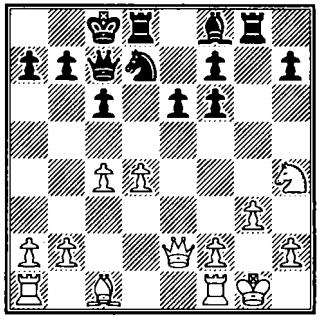
9...♗xe2 10 ♕xe2 e6 11 c4 0-0-0 12 g3!



The second part includes this versatile preparatory move which stabilises the position of the white king, covers the f4-square (possibly for the c1-bishop) and the h4-knight. Nevertheless, the task of this knight on the periphery of the board consists of its link to the d4-d5 breakthrough!

12...♖g8

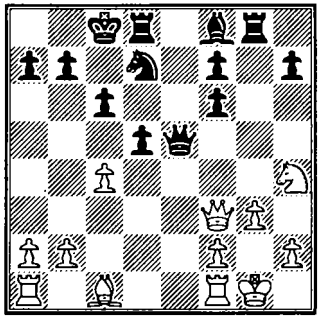
After 12...h5 White can choose either the instant 13 d5 or the preparatory 13 ♗e3!? (Jansa – Čirić, Niš 1979 and Jansa – Skembris, Bor 1983); the latter possibility creates comfortable preconditions for White's advantage. On the other hand, 12...♖g8 requires a consistent reaction by White since 13 ♗e3? would allow Black to launch quick counterplay by 13...f5! threatening a further advance of the f-pawn. It might be added that in case of 12...♗d6 Black must also reckon on White advancing after 13 c5 and 14 b4...



13 d5! ♕e5

Strictly speaking, the only reasonable answer, which is, however, insufficient. Black will not succeed (at least for now) in exchanging queens and the insecure position of the black king in connection with his permanently damaged pawn structure represent convincing arguments for White's active strategy!

14 ♕f3 exd5



Question:

In the game Jansa – Hráček, Prague 1994, I continued: **15 cxd5 ♕xd5 16 ♕xd5 cxd5 17 ♗e3** Do you think that:

A. This continuation is an adequate way of resolving the situation.

B. There was a stronger alternative: 15 ♗f4

Support your opinion with logical thinking and calculation!

Answer:

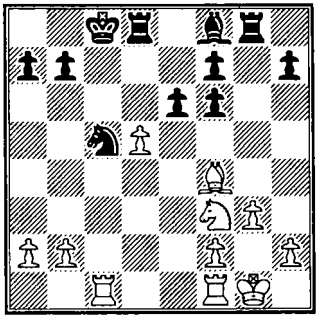
After **15 ♗f4**, Black wanted to play 15...♕e4 – after all, even the most enthusiastic defender would not feel like defending his position after 15...♕xb2, e.g. 16 cxd5 c5 17 d6. However, thought transfer does exist! Still, after **15...♕e4** the simple **16 cxd5 ♕xf3 17 ♘xf3** could follow. After the only reasonable **17...c5** Black, with his heavily damaged pawn structure remains on the verge of positional catastrophe. Naturally, 15 ♗f4! was stronger (3 points). Nevertheless, even after my continuation **15 cxd5?! ♕xd5 16 ♕xd5 cxd5 17 ♗e3** I succeeded in gaining a clear advantage after **17...b6** (I calculated rather 17...♔b8 18 ♖fd1 ♘e5 19 ♖ac1 ♘c6, although even here 20 ♘f5! gives White more than sufficient compensation for the quite unnecessarily sacrificed pawn.) **18 ♖ac1+ ♔b7 19 ♖fd1 ♗c5** (Or 19...♘e5 20 ♖c2 ♘c6 20 ♘f5 and Black actually has no moves...) **20 ♘f5! ♗xe3 21 ♘xe3±**. The 'lame' f6-f7-h7 pawn structure guarantees an easy advantage for White in the endgame. The fact that White could afford such a 'luxury' only supports the entire plan started with 9 ♘h4! Those who have not chosen the objectively best 15 ♗f4! will gain at least 1 point. In a way, they also were right ...

If Black takes with the other pawn 14...cxd5, it leads to similar problems: 15 ♗f4 ♕e4 (or 15...♕d4 16 ♖fd1±, played as long

ago as the game Matanović – Čirić in 1962!) 16 cxd5.

Question:

In a game Jansa – Sandhu, Austria 1999, my opponent tried to find refuge from his endangered position and played, after **16...♕xf3 17 ♖ac1+ ♘c5 18 ♘xf3**,



18...♖xd5

His intention consisted of the idea of playing, after **19 b4**, **19...♖f5**. Do you think that:

A. It was the only opportunity to reverse the course of the game – in the arising complications Black is not worse.

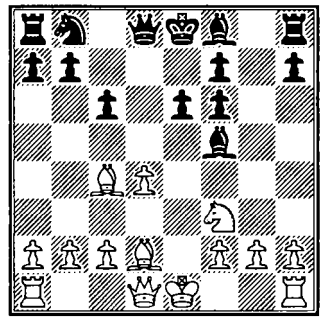
B. 18...♖xd5 was an irreparable mistake in a worse position and Black loses.

Answer:

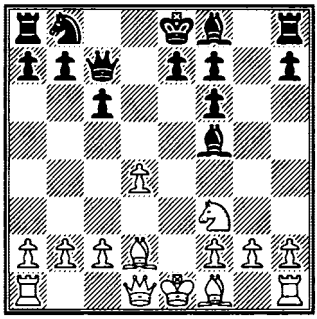
Indeed, there are no easy miracles on the chessboard. To diagnose the position properly, you probably did not need to use much of your tactical know-how to find that after **18...♖xd5** Black loses (1 point). After **19 b4 ♖f5** there is a simple refutation: **20 ♔h1!** and if **20...e5** then **21 ♘h4** (1 point) with a big material advantage for White. It was not a difficult task for me to solve during the game, I only had to assess the position after the one reasonable move, **18...a5** I was fully satisfied with the following variation: **19 a3** (19 d6?! b6) **19...a4 20 dxe6 fxe6 21 ♗e3 b6** (21...♖d5 22 ♖c4 b5 23 ♖xc5+ ♗xc5 24 ♖c1) **22 ♖c4!** winning a pawn.

2. Scandinavian Opening

The ability to think dynamically in opening strategy may also be illustrated by a mastery of transferring experience and ideas from one opening to another. Seemingly incoherent courses of the game may sometimes have much in common. And sometimes a simple comparison brings new experience, surprising findings and thoughts! Let us take our previous considerations on the theme of the pawn structure created in the Caro-Kann defence after 5...gxf6. In which opening can be found something similar? Yes, in one of the principal variations of the Scandinavian, namely **1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♕xd5 3 ♘c3 ♕a5 4 d4 ♘f6 5 ♘f3 ♗f5 6 ♗d2 c6** (or 5...c6 6 ♗d2 ♗f5...) **7 ♗c4 e6 8 ♘d5 ♕d8 9 ♘xf6+ gxf6?!**.

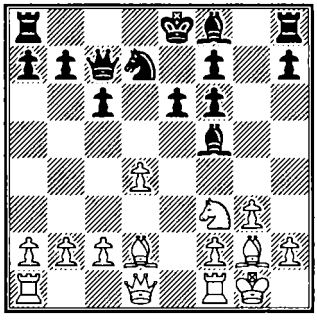


A similar position may also arise after **7 ♘e4 ♕c7 8 ♘xf6+ gxf6**.



Let us compare the positions of the last two diagrams and think over the tiny differences! At first sight, the position in the first of them may seem more advantageous for White since when he plays ♗c4 in the other position, Black is an important development tempo ♕c7 ahead. Fortunately, chess is not mathematics... Actually, the white bishop is not well placed on c4, it more or less reminds us of a growling dog that can neither run nor bite... The black pawn structure b7-c6-e6-e7-f6 represents some kind of a dog-collar and a muzzle. There were many attempts to overcome it, however, in experienced hands it becomes a granite wall. It also resists clever attempts consisting of manoeuvres starting in the positions on p.132, e.g.: 10 c3 ♘d7 11 ♘h4 ♗g6 12 ♕f3 ♕c7 13 ♕h3!? with the threat 14 ♘xg6. This forces 13...♗g7, however, as has been shown in practice, it is not easy to exploit the absence of the bishop on the f8-a3 diagonal.

Let us follow our Caro-Kann considerations after **1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘f6 5 ♘xf6+ gxf6 6 ♘f3**. Let us polish them up, especially after **6...♗f5!**. We seriously thought about **7 g3** with the further development of the white-squared bishop to the long diagonal, however, 7...♕d5 was rather annoying... There is a striking similarity with the position in the previous diagram, what about trying 9 g3 here – with his queen on c7, Black cannot oppose with ♕d5! Yes, this is an idea! After **9 g3 e6 10 ♗g2 ♘d7 11 0-0**,



the hidden white-squared bishop might become instead a 'rocket base' for later operations on the long diagonal, utilising, for example, c2-c4 and d4-d5 or b2-b4-b5, and certainly not an enraged pinscher barking from the c4 square...

Question:

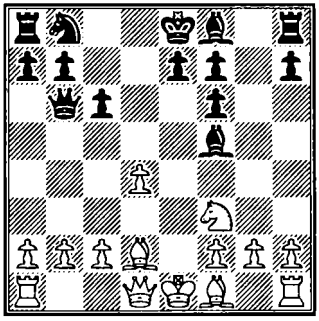
The danger on the diagonal was also felt by my opponent in a game Jansa – Wallinger, Fürth 2001. However, he fell out of the frying pan into the fire since he continued **11...♗e4?! 12 ♖e1 f5?**. He forgot about another tactical danger which immediately decided the game. What did Black overlook?

Answer:

This time the question is quite clear and only a sharp response will bring points for you. Black's idea was unequivocally refuted by the following blitz attack: **13 ♘g5! ♗xg2 14 ♖xe6+!** (2 points) since **14...fxe6** leads to mate or queen loss after **15 ♕h5+** and also 14...♗e7 15 ♕h5 is hopeless... Surprisingly, I found in my database that the same combinational finale occurred in a game De Firmian – Owen, Las Vegas 1995!

This coincidence indicates that such an idea in the Scandinavian has also attracted other grandmasters in addition to De Firmian, for instance I.Glek or O.Korneyev; surely I do not intend to have it patented. However, I would like to harmonise it with the above-mentioned Caro-Kann plan and hint at some contact surfaces and further possibilities for its development. Similar ideas may become a basis for various concepts in various openings. Let us stay with the Scandinavian and formulate a basic concept of our play in this opening as well as other 'side' variations.

For instance, the situation arising after **7 ♘e4 ♕b6!? 8 ♘xf6+ gxf6** demands a somewhat different scenario of play.



Igor Glek swears by the pawn sacrifice 9 ♗c4!?, however, the active 9 b4! seems to be promising for White. Only after 9...e5, 10 ♗c4 will he make a consistent impact in the open position. After 9...e6 10 a3! followed by c2-c4 the black queen on b6 will become a target of the attack launched by the white pawns.

If the black bishop is developed on g4 instead of f5, a quite different course of play may occur. While after an immediate 5...♗g4 White's activity seems to be quite clear, i.e. 6 h3 ♗h5 7 g4 ♗g6 8 ♘e5 with the supplementary threat ♘c4, there will be more reasons to think if 5...c6 is played first: if White plays consistently 6 ♗d2, then after 6...♗g4 Black can blunt the similar attempt 7 h3 ♗h5 8 g4 ♗g6 9 ♘e5 with 9...♘bd7. You have enough room for your own considerations and ideas, try to think about these independently!

3. What should be played against the Sveshnikov?

Grandmaster Yevgeny Sveshnikov is, without any doubt, one of the most important innovators in the Sicilian Defence. His renovation of the old Lasker Variation, in which the positional 'holes' in the pawn formation constitute weaknesses in Black's position but also a hidden platform for surprising counter-chances, belongs to the greatest theoretical findings in the last, say, 25 years. Yevgeny has been my friend for a long time and I can fully understand him when he says: 'Many people have taken into account all my old ideas. I enjoy this fact but, on the other hand, many grandmasters earn

considerable amounts of money thanks to those ideas and have no scruples about it.' What to do? Maybe nothing since a 'patent' in chess is only wordplay in the hands of practitioners whose number, unfortunately, prevails...

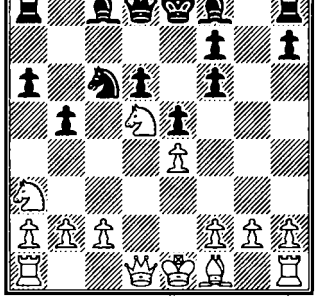
I can remember that the 'birth pangs' of the whole system were enormous; there was flat opposition from the side of the classical strategists. I wish you could see the unconditional contempt on the face of Yefim Geller, a 'professor of strategy', any time he revealed something like this over the board... I must admit that in assessing Black's opportunities in this variation, I belong to the sceptics. You may raise an objection: 'It is a book about dynamic strategy and Black's play in this variation is a perfect example of such strategy!'

Yes – and no! In this case objectivity can only scarcely be found, more important is individual taste. In my opinion Black's imaginative tactics hardly compensate for his long-term weaknesses, even if the right path for White is narrow and often winding through a yawning gap between the rocks where many players fall... It is true that in hardly any other opening are there so many hidden dynamics as in the Sveshnikov Variation of the Sicilian! However, let us look at the entire popular variation from a somewhat more critical point of view than usual, let us try to implement consistent white-squared strategy with the white pieces and assess the respective situations with the sensitive strategic radar which depends on every circumstance and every detail. I am aware of the fact that many ambitious books and essays have been written about this complicated variation but I will try to navigate you consistently to the target using a reiterating basic idea: the method of active play on the white squares, especially where Black – despite any arguments – undoubtedly betrays positional principles in the very opening stages.

The power of the basic idea is not open to doubt; I know that no method can satisfy all who are interested in the issue.

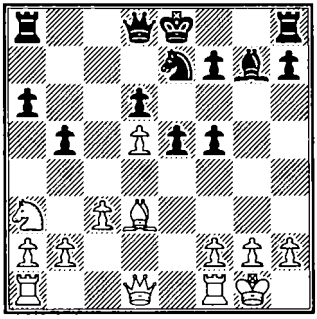
Nevertheless, this method has become some kind of a principle of logic for me and, maybe, even for many of my readers and listeners or charges. One of them told me recently: 'I like White's strategic plan very much and I like to use it in my games. However, its implementation is very exacting from the point of view of the accuracy of every move!' Yes: 'Dura lex – sed lex!' ('Hard law – but a law!') (Ulpianus).

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♗g5 a6 8 ♘a3 b5 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 ♘d5

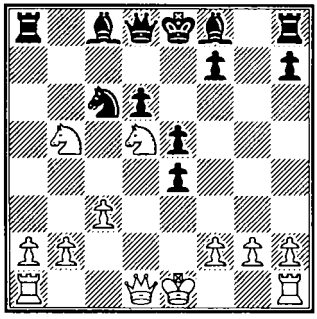


10...f5 (Or 10...♗g7 11 c3 f5 12 exf5 ♗xf5 13 ♘c2... We will

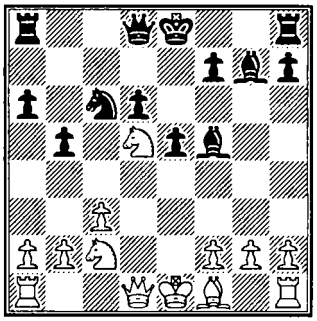
steadfastly follow the above-mentioned method consisting of strict white-squared strategy on the vacant h1-a8 and b1-h7 diagonals. It will undoubtedly evoke feelings of goal-directed play. On the other hand, the trendy attempt 10...f5 **11 ♗d3 ♗e6 12 0-0?!** with a quite different character of position after **12...♗xd5 13 exd5 ♘e7 14 c3 ♗g7**



may be seen in tournaments and then, too often, in the pages of *Chess Informant*. I do not think it is favourable for White, at least from the point of view of our law. This attempt, after all, closes what should have been left open (both long white-squared diagonals) and opens what should have been left closed (black bishop on g7 and its diagonal)... The laws may occasionally change but I do not believe such changes may be so quick and radical. I admit that the facts may be sometimes perceived differently but even if I kill myself I am not able to explain the other viewpoint which differs from mine. Actually, I only follow ancient wisdom in suggesting not to do what we have doubts about and never deal with anything that is against our will (Plinius, Seneca – adapted). Let us return to our original idea and nice, clear instructive play with an open centre!). **11 c3 ♗g7** (The optimistic 11...fxe4?! will bring Black into a clearly disadvantageous situation after 12 ♗xb5! axb5 13 ♘xb5.



In addition to the simple capture of the ♖a8, the threat is 14 ♘bc7+ ♔d7 15 ♕g4+ with mate... Black cannot play 13...♖a7 due to 14 ♘xa7 ♘xa7 15 ♕a4+ ♕d7? 16 ♘f6+, only 13...♗e6 14 ♘bc7+ ♔d7 15 ♘xa8 remains with the continuation 15...♗xd5 16 ♕xd5 ♕xa8. Here both 17 ♕xf7+ and 17 ♕xe4 have many times confirmed White's advantage, also 13...♕g5!? 14 ♘bc7+ ♔d8 15 ♘xa8 ♕xg2 16 ♖f1 may be assessed similarly since 16...♗h3 or 16...♗a6 can always be met by 17 ♘e3± .) **12 exf5 ♗xf5 13 ♘c2**.



Black is now standing at an important crossroads and has, in principle, two basic opportunities:

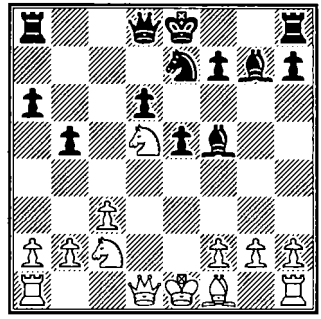
A. Black can try to attack the dominant position of the ♘d5 as quickly as possible.

B. Black does not object to the white wedge on d5 and relies on counter-chances linked to a subsequent f7-f5 or b5-b4.

In both cases Black hovers on the brink of positional death but surprisingly the number of acrobats so disposed seems to be increasing. The tactical ingenuity, which is necessary for such acrobatics, is a greater attraction than the more accurate but also cooler strategic approach.

It is clear that the visible holes in Black's position cannot be sealed, however, it should be said that many proponents of the 'Sveshnikov' brush such objections contemptuously aside or perceive them as only being marginal inside the mass of tactics... On the other hand, it is not an easy task for White to punish the optimistic opponent... Sometimes it may even look as if it is not Black but White who is walking on an imaginary (strategic) tightrope and a single false step means a fall into the depths (of tactics). Nevertheless, I honestly invite interested persons to join our exacting tour in order to recognise all the pitfalls of the set path.

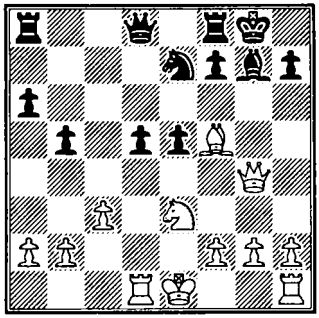
A. Both 13...♘e7 and 13...♗e6 serve the same purpose. The bishop move enjoys more popularity because 13...♘e7 ties Black's hands too early. However, **13...♘e7**



demands absolute accuracy by White during the bombardment of the central squares, i.e. d5, e4 and f5. It seems that **14 ♘xe7** may be a simple solution since after 14...♕xe7? the double attack 15 ♕f3 may follow... However, Black may insert **14...♗xc2!** and **15 ♕xc2 ♕xe7** leads to uncertainty which of the opposite-coloured bishops will play the more important active role. White's shares are not so high, especially if, after **16 ♗d3**, Black plays **16...e4**. Some might consider 14 ♘ce3 a logical answer but, after 14...♗e6, White will have certain problems finding an opportunity to utilise his bishop. He cannot play ♗d3 at once, the insertion 15 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 16 ♗d3 might enable Black to 'unblock' the position by means of 16...d5 and the passive square is not ideal for the bishop. Nothing remains other than fianchoetting the bishop but after 15 g3 Black quickly exchanges 15...♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 0-0 17 ♗g2 f5 and you have a feeling that the white-squared bishop has entered the long diagonal one move later than it should have done. But, this theme will be treated later, during the analysis of 13...♗e6...

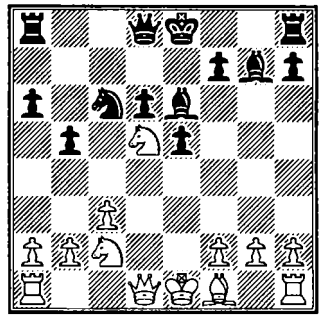
We can reveal the probable right continuation for White by some

kind of method of elimination, namely **14 ♗d3!**. Black can hardly afford another weakening of the pawn chain after 14...e4 15 ♗e2 and even the exchange 14...♗xd3 15 ♕xd3± leaves him with an unequivocal strategic loss. After 14...♗e6, White can maintain the advantageous blockade by playing 15 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 (15...♔xe7?! 16 ♗e4 d5? may only be recommended to suicidal players on account of 16 ♘b4!+ -.) 16 ♗e4±. Black can only cast doubt on his positional disadvantage by means of **14...♘xd5!? 15 ♗xf5 ♘e7**, nevertheless again a consistent advance **16 ♕g4 0-0 17 ♖d1! d5 18 ♘e3**,

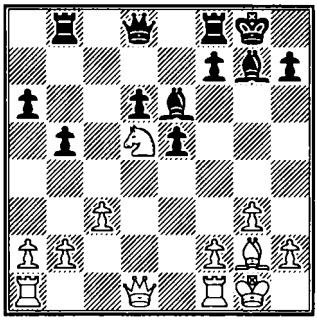


which was for the first time used by the Ukrainian grandmaster in a game Ivanchuk – Kramnik, Novgorod 1994, sets Black problems which can hardly be resolved. Kramnik generously resigned himself to covering the centre (18...♕d6 19 ♗e4±, 18...♖a7) and preferred to sacrifice some material: **18...d4 19 ♗e4 dxe3!?**; however, despite his great playing strength he was not able to conjure up sufficient compensation.

As I mentioned previously, with respect to the pressure on the d5-square, **13...♗e6** is more frequently played.



It may be justified because only after **14 ♘ce3?!** does Black play **14...♘e7!** and White's blockade is not ideal. This is certainly the case after 15 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 16 g3 since Black can play 16...d5! and if 17 ♘xd5 (17 ♗g2 ♖d8) then ♕b7 and White must seek desperate salvation by 18 c4! bxc4 19 ♕a4+ ♔f8 20 ♕a3+ because after 18 ♗g2? 0-0-0! the pin on the d-file would lead to doom. You may object: why not play, after 14...♘e7, **15 g3** first? You are right – but only partially. The role of the white bishop on the long diagonal is also only partial after **15...♘xd5 16 ♘xd5** because the bishop controls everything 'white', but is 'shooting in the back' the perfect knight on d5... Black then simply ignores the pair of 'perfect' minor pieces and pursues his usual play linked to kingside activity. Easier said than done but it should be performed accurately! Let us take the situation several moves later: **16...0-0 17 ♗g2 ♖b8 18 0-0**.



This situation is the theme of our next test question.

Question:

You are playing Black who is to move. Which of the following pawn advances do you prefer:

A. **18...f5**

B. **18...a5**

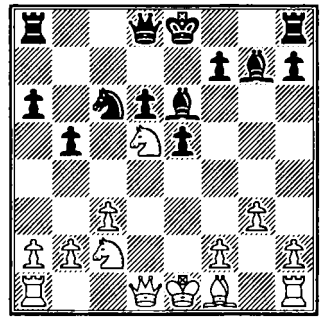
Support your decision if you can!

Answer:

Prior to the start of the operation on the kingside, Black cannot allow the opponent's pieces any opportunity to operate full blast. Such an opportunity is represented by 18...f5? (0 points) since the strong reply 19 ♘b4! can follow and the threats of 20 ♘c6 and 20 ♘xa6 force Black to play 20...♖b6. In the Jansa – Schmittdiel game, Gausdal 1990, a quick positional disentanglement followed since after 21 ♗d5 ♕d7 White struck while the iron was hot: 22 a4! ±; after that my opponent lost his nerve with 22...a5? since he totally underestimated the role of the 'fork' after 23 ♗xe6+ ♕xe6 24 ♘d5. The originally planned 24...♖c6 may be refuted with 25 ♘e7+! (25 axb5? ♖c5) 25...♕xe7 26 ♕d5+, therefore nothing remains other than to continue a pawn down: 24...♖b7 25 axb5 (25...♖xb5? 26 ♘c7) +- . Remember this piece anagram, it may come in handy in this variation! This oversight deprived the German grandmaster of a point and it will also deprive you of some points – those of you who showed impatience by playing 18...f5? On the other hand, you may add 2 points if you played 18...a5 and an additional 1 point if you envisaged the favourable transformation of white pieces after the inaccurate 18...f5? 19 ♘b4 ♖b6 20 ♘d5.

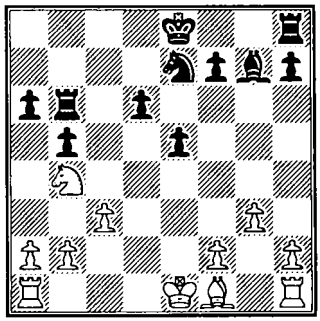
The best method for Black after 13...♗e6 14 ♘ce3 can thus be deduced from the above: 14...♘e7 15 g3 ♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 0-0 17 ♗g2 a5!? 18 0-0 ♖b8 or even 18...f5!? with chances for both sides, which has been sufficiently confirmed by extensive practice.

Since White did not like 'shooting his knight in the back', the immediate **14 g3!?** was tried.



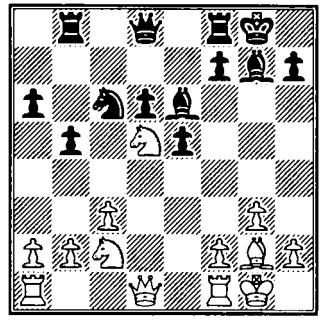
In this case, a similar idea 14...♘e7?! could lead to a more important role of the white bishop after 15 ♗g2 ♘xd5 16 ♗xd5. After the further ♘e3 or ♘b4 the white

blockade of the centre is much more effective! An effort to clarify the situation in the centre, e.g. **14...♗xd5?! 15 ♕xd5 ♘e7**, may be refuted with the active **16 ♕b7!**. Black has no choice and must hope for a draw after the queen exchange: **16...♕b8** But, after **17 ♕xb8+ ♖xb8 18 ♘b4!**, **18...♖b6** is forced (18...a5? 19 ♘a6 and 20 ♗xb5+ ±); on the other hand, White's choice is pleasant.



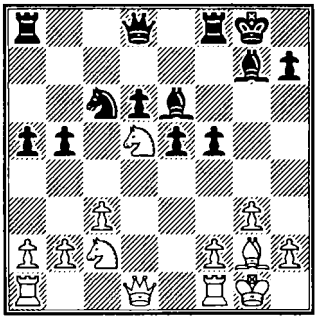
He may play the tactical **19 a4!? a5 20 ♗xb5+ ♖xb5 21 axb5 axb4 22 ♖a7!** and the active rook with the passed b-pawn represents more than simple compensation for Black's minor pieces (e.g. as in a game Van der Wiel – De Vreught, Amsterdam 1996), or the strictly positional 19 0-0-0 a5 20 ♘d5 ♘xd5 21 ♖xd5 b4 22 ♗b5+ ♔e7 23 c4± (Hráček – Zezulkin, Prague 1998). In case of 14 g3 Black should forget about an immediate attack against the d5-square...

In the game Short – Illescas Cordoba, Madrid 1995, Black nevertheless decided to launch such an attack after **14...0-0 15 ♗g2 ♖b8 16 0-0**,



when he played the proverbial **16...♘e7?**. Again he should not have done it! Similarly, as in the test question, a perfect exploitation of the complex of weak white squares in the opponent's position followed: **17 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 18 ♘b4! ♖b6 19 f4 f5 20 ♗d5! a5 21 ♗xe6+ ♕xe6 22 ♘d5 ♖b7** (We already know the blow after 22...♖c6? 23 ♘e7+!) **23 ♕d2 ♔h8 24 a3!** with full domination of the white pieces over the d-file after the further ♖ad1 and ♘e3. In the same year and in the same position as shown in the above diagram, Nigel Short even succeeded in outplaying Vladimir Kramnik in an instructive way! It was in the Novgorod 1995 tournament: 16...♕d7?! 17 a4! b4!? (17...bxa4 18 ♖xa4 a5 19 ♖c4±) 18 ♘cxb4 ♘xb4 19 cxb4! ♗xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♖xb4 21 b3 and, due to the qualitatively different duties of the opposite bishops, White had a clear edge. No wonder that later (e.g., in the Linares 2000 tournament in a game against Leko) Kramnik played more carefully and correctly 16...a5!?. He even played this move as far back as 1994 in a game against Short (successfully) and thus started a generally recommended reaction by Black, which, after

years of practice, has been forged in the following way: **14 g3 0-0 15 ♗g2 a5 16 0-0 f5**.



In this situation White now has a series of strategic opportunities and plans at his disposal. They all require accuracy and readiness from both sides. Some of these plans are given below:

1. **17 ♕h5** with a further doubling of rooks on the d-file or a blockade after ♘ce3 and f2-f4, and possibly after e5-e4 preparing a g3-g4 breakthrough. Black reacts with an operation on the b-file: b5-b4 and a rook penetration: ♖b8-b2 or via b5-c5.

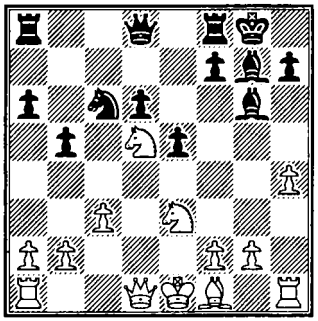
2. **17 ♖e1** with the threat 18 ♘f4. Black's best reaction is then 17...♖c8 (this is the reason why the early ♖b8 move should be postponed...)

3. **17 ♕e2** ♖b8; now 18 ♘a3 does not offer much due to ♘a7, but again there are possibilities of doubling rooks on the d-file or playing b2-b3 first...

4. Prophylaxis by **17 a3!?** and a further combination of the above-mentioned plans in which pressure on the d-file will be their most principal part ...

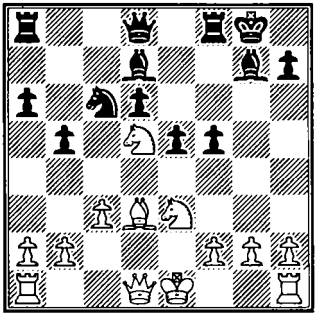
So, you can see it is a powerful bellows, pumping through various thoughts and plans! Using it, try to 'pump up' your brain convolutions – you will not regret it when later playing a game! Black, for his part, needs a high degree of ingenuity and steady nerves in order to avert the strategic fiasco in his, without any doubt, endangered position. Despite this, there are surprisingly many proponents of the black tightrope walk – it seems as if everyone wants to be as courageous as an acrobat. I think that the situation on the board needs a similarly high level of tactical-positional acrobatics, otherwise Black is lost...

B. Black may also ignore the ♘d5 and complete his development: **13...0-0**. The logical course **14 ♘ce3 ♗e6** leads to the first big crossroads (it should be mentioned, though, that there are two other possibilities. In the first case **14...♗g6** White aims (mostly successfully) at the insecure position of the ♗g6 by means of 15 h4!.



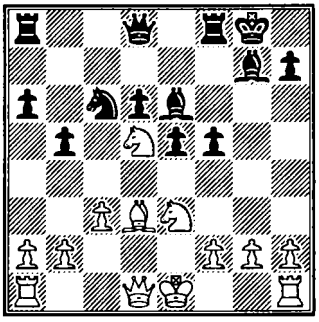
In the second case, **14...♗d7** the passive retreat has some proponents and certain substantiation since the

bishop may feel, after 15 ♗d3 f5, more secure. However, regardless of its relatively good practical results, it is hard to believe that 14...♗d7 solves all Black's problems... White often reacts aggressively if he plays, after **15 ♗d3 f5** –

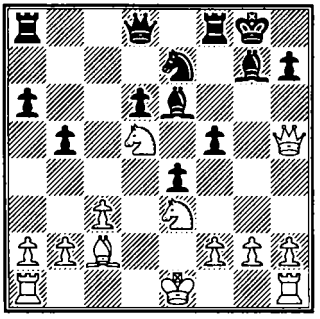


16 ♕h5?! e4 with unclear consequences. I would say that the prophylactic **16 ♗c2!?** is a better reply; if 16...e4 then 17 f4±. Nevertheless I recommend taking both the less frequently used retreats into consideration, naturally with the help of analysis of previously played games...)

15 ♗d3 f5

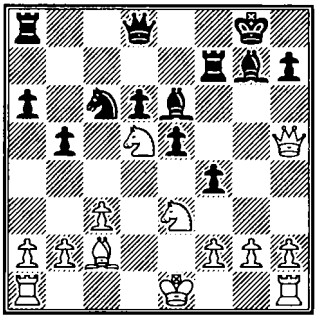


Initially here the super-active **16 ♕h5** was played, which radically prevents the advance of the black f-pawn. Black has more possibilities but, from the point of view of the battle for the centre, **16...e4 17 ♗c2 ♘e7!** seems to be the most logical.



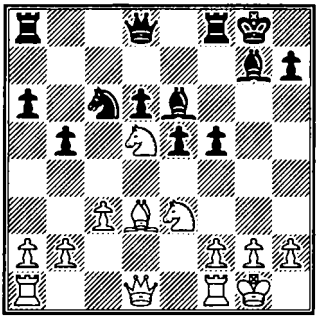
Grandmaster's Kramnik seal on this continuation seems to be the best recommendation. White can hardly find any advantage after either 18 ♘f4 ♗f7 19 ♗b3 d5! or 18 ♗b3 ♔h8. Hungarian grandmaster Leko also actively coped with 18 ♖d1: 18...b4! 19 0-0 bxc3 20 bxc3 ♔h8 with approximate equality in his game against Ponomariov in Yerevan 2001.

Several years ago Topalov and Short came up with the continuation **16 ♗c2** and scored several victories. The idea of this move lay in some balance of the role of the white bishop which controls not only the b1-h7 diagonal but is also ready to take up a position on b3. In addition, White prevents e5-e4... However, theory is always grey, subsequent modern practice reveals a sufficient drawback! This time, Black can advance his second central pawn: **16...f4!** and after the seemingly strong **17 ♕h5**, the cool **17...♖f7!** may follow.



Not even the best chess players, including both the above-mentioned prominent grandmasters, succeeded in finding more than an interesting repetition of moves after **18 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 19 ♗f5 ♕e8! 20 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 21 ♕g4! ♕h6! 22 ♘f5 ♕e6 23 ♘fe3 ♕h6** and so on. A number of prestigious duels have been played with these moves and it seems like a definitive creative end for the 16 ♗c2 variation...

Let us summarise: after 16 ♕h5, 16...e4 may follow, after 16 ♗c2, on the other hand, 16...f4. But, isn't White acting too rashly, shouldn't he complete his development first and castle his king to safety? It is not an exceptional situation and, with respect to the natural sense of dynamics of positional play, **16 0-0!** should really follow.



On account of contemporary practice, this logical continuation deserves our special attention... but, let us start from the very beginning! Let us try first to see what might happen if the black e- and f-pawns remain on the fifth rank:

A. The immediate operation against the d5-square 16...♘e7? will bring Black an unpleasant surprise! Give it some thought prior to reading the following text!

Question:

This is part of our test, the question is clear: how can you prove that Black has made a mistake?

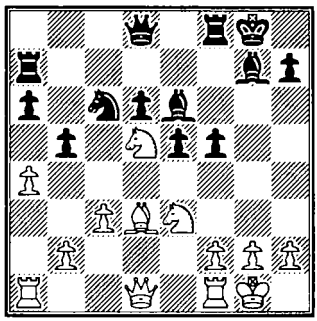
Answer:

16...♘e7? is a gross error because Black loses a very important pawn. After **17 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 18 ♗(♘)xf5!** (2 points) Black cannot take twice on f5 due to the queen check from d5. A simple blow, surprisingly overlooked by some famous players – I hope you have not joined them...

B. Black waits: **16...♖a7**, **16...♖b8** or **16...♔h8**

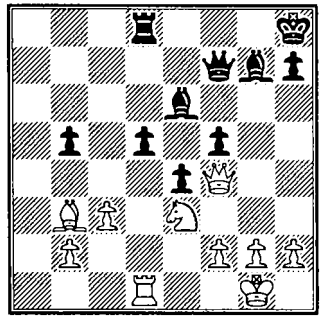
Of these possibilities, the rook transfer via the seventh rank is mostly employed, especially after 17 ♕h5 ♖af7 since Svidler's 18 g4?! is too risky because of 18...e4 19 ♗c2 ♘e5!.

However, **16...♖a7** should be evaluated in connection with another plan for White. The 'floating' position of the black rook prompts White to play actively on the queenside: **17 a4!**



and the popular reply **17...♘e7!?** (17...b4!? allows White use of the important c4-square in the following variation: 18 ♕h5! e4 19 ♘f4 ♗f7 20 ♗c4±) is more a case of making a virtue out of necessity than being a fully-fledged variation. White should gain the edge after either taking the pawn and following up with an exchange sacrifice **18 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♗xb5!? d5 21 ♖a6! f4 22 ♖xe6!** or making the positional queen sacrifice: **20 ♗c2!? d5 21 ♗b3 f4 22 ♘xd5 ♖d7 23 ♘b4 ♖xd1 24 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 25 ♖axd1** with quite pleasant compensation (Topalov – Leko, Istanbul 2000). There may even be another continuation in this undoubtedly advantageous position for White...

Some time ago, I familiarised the youngest Czech grandmaster David Navara with various alternatives of consistent play on the white squares in the Sveshnikov Variation. In his hands the strategic concepts have quickly been replenished with extraordinary practical and tactical impetuousity – and woe betide anyone who gets in his way! At the Olympiad in Bled 2002, one of his opponents, Danish grandmaster S.B.Hansen, opposed him in this variation. Hansen tried to square the circle and 'improve the unimprovable', and, after **17 a4 ♘e7 18 ♘xe7+**, he took with the queen: **18...♕xe7**. There followed **19 axb5 axb5 20 ♖xa7 ♕xa7** and David did not allow any complications such as **21 ♗xb5 ♕c5!?** but preferred to continue the goal-directed white-square concept: **21 ♗c2!? d5 22 ♗b3 ♖d8 23 ♕f3!? ♕f7 24 ♖d1 e4 25 ♕f4 ♔h8**.



Question:

White has used a kind of 'positional pliers' to hem in his opponent. Having played 25...♔h8, Black has prepared himself for possible counterplay linked to the b5-b4 advance. Consider all pros and cons and determine whether:

1. White's edge is big.

2. White's edge is small.

3. Black has sufficient counter-chances and his prospects are not worse.

Which move or plan will you recommend for White, who is to move?

Answer:

I am sorry, this time the question was a little bit tricky. However, not for those of you who like to drink

from the cup of tactics! This time you did not need to get to the bottom to find that 25...♔h8? was a gross error and White has a big advantage (2 points). Yes, due to the weakened eighth rank, Black loses an important pawn: 26 ♗xd5! (26...♗xd5 27 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 28 ♕b8+! – an additional 2 points). For those of you who missed the d5-blow, still some consolation: 17-year David Navara, otherwise an extraordinarily sharp and reliable tactician, was fascinated by his strictly strategic perspective and overlooked this relatively simple tactical solution! He was fully focused on turning the positional screws, continued to block the opponent's counter-chances with 26 ♘c2?! and was only slightly better. Nevertheless, even then (after a great adventure) he succeeded in winning the game in the end. For similar reasoning to 26 ♘c2 you will be awarded 1 point. Naturally, this does not apply to those of you who noticed neither the tactical nor the strategic advantages of the white position...

As for less expressive waiting moves like 16...♖b8 or 16...♔h8, I would like to stress White's duty to correctly and dynamically use and time the following possibilities:

1. A queen raid on h5,

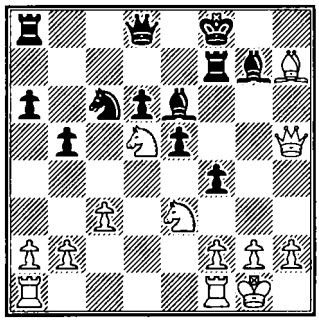
2. Activity on the queenside with a2-a4,

3. Blockade of the centre by f2-f4 with further play against Black's d- and f-pawns,

4. A waiting plan deploying the bishop on c2 with a possible subsequent transfer to a side diagonal.

Turn your mind to all of that and at the right moment try to perceive any drawbacks in Black's position and then choose an appropriate plan! Do not forget that in all cases there are pros and cons and that you should weigh up the account. It should be said that to the final total must be added points for possession of the initiative...

C. The advance of the f-pawn **16...f4?!** may not be O.K. here since after **17 ♕h5** White has in fact managed, in comparison to the variation 16 ♗c2 and its subsequent drawish continuation, to castle and this should be sufficient to gain the advantage. I had to solve this seemingly simple task in the game Jansa – Salai, Prague 1996 'It cannot be good here,' I tell myself; the forced **17...♖f7 18 ♗xh7+ ♔f8** then followed.



However, to find something tangible in this position, which should be in White's favour, is not easy at all. My opponent probably misinterpreted my hesitation and offered a draw! Try to calculate with me: after 19 ♗f5 the well-known 19...♕e8! might follow. Try to suggest something better than 20 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 21 ♕g4 ♕h6 22 ♘f5 ♕e6 23 ♘fe3 ♕h6

with repetition of moves! I am considering both 23 ♘c2 e4 and 23 ♘b6 ♖d8: the result is 'unclear'.

'This cannot be normal,' I continued my reasoning. Try to continue with me now! In the position of the diagram there is a tempting alternative **19 ♗g6**, actually the continuation 19...fxe3 20 fxe3! emphasises the significance of White having castled and, after the further 20...♖a7 21 e4!, Black is completely tied up! However, what should I play after **19...♖aa7**, Black does not have to hurry with taking on e3. After **20 ♗f5**, the chronically known excuse comes: 20...♕e8... But, wait a minute! After 19...♖aa7... the necessary idea is here! A final quick check and the riddle is solved.

Question:

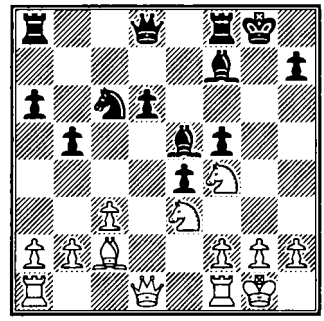
The outlined answer, which is hidden in the position, is the subject matter of the next test. Have you succeeded in solving it with me?

Answer:

If you noticed with me that after 19...♖aa7 20 ♗f5!! ♕e8 21 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 22 ♕g4! the c8-square is suddenly fatally weakened (22...♕h6? 23 ♕c8+) and that the Achilles' heel of Black's position is represented by the eighth rank, you can add a full 5 points to your account!

In the game an excellent bishop manoeuvre, whose idea and finesse were hard to uncover due to its illogicality, followed: **19 ♗g6! ♖aa7 20 ♗f5!**. Not all tempi have the same significance! My opponent fully realised the point of this manoeuvre and decided to fish in the troubled waters of tactics: **20...♖xf5!? 21 ♘xf5 ♗xd5 22 ♖fd1 ♗f7 23 ♕h7** (However, not 23 ♕g4? ♗e6!) **23...♗g8 24 ♕g6 ♕e8** Black is short of breath mainly because 24...♖d7 cannot be played due to 25 ♖xd6!. **25 ♕xd6+ ♔f7 26 ♕d5+ ♔f6 27 ♕e4 ♗e6 28 ♖d6 ♘d8 29 ♖e1! ♘f7 30 ♖b6** (A decisive jump of the white knight to d4 or even h4 cannot be prevented.) **30...♗f8 31 ♘d4** and **Black resigned**.

D. However, it is the advance of Black's e-pawn which plays the most important role for the assessment of the entire variation. There is no confusion about the fact that after 16...e4 17 ♗c2? f4 Black's position would be nice, but a critical situation occurs after a necessary insertion: **17 ♘f4 ♗f7** and only then **18 ♗c2**. Both material (19 ♘xf5) and positional (19 ♗b3!) threats force Black to start an immediate operation: **18...♗e5**.



I considered the position shown in the diagram to be crucial as long ago as 1996 when the first attempts with 16 0-0 were being made. In an article I then invited the readers to think over White's next move since

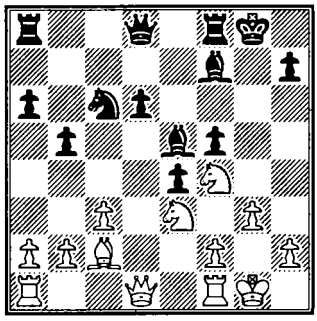
I considered it unusual and important...

Time passed and the entire variation became very popular; it even reached the world elite, occurring in the opening repertoires of the best grandmasters in the world, e.g. Anand, Topalov, Svidler as White, Kramnik, Van Wely and others as Black. Naturally I monitored its development closely but my original intention in the position shown in the above diagram remained unused. The theoretical clashes focused on the continuation **19 ♘fd5 ♕g5** (19...f4 20 ♘g4±) **20 f4 exf3 21 ♕xf3 ♗h5** (Anand – Kramnik, Linares 1998) and now, instead of 22 ♕f2, White should play the active 22 ♕h3 f4 23 ♘c7!? (Kramnik) or insert an exchange sacrifice: 22 ♖xf3 ♗h5 (Topalov – Van Wely, Wijk 1999). Needless to say, in order to carry out reconnaissance of the tactical ground, the strongest chess programs were used in the analyses with results 'sometimes clear, but often cloudy from both sides of chessboard'. Sometimes the d5-square was occupied by the other knight 19 ♘ed5 and even 19 ♘h3 occurred in grandmaster practice. Late in 2001 I encountered my namesake, grandmaster Vlastimil Babula, in a Czech Extra-league team match game (along with Hort and me, Babula is already the third grandmaster of the same first name!).

Recently, Vlasti Babula has belonged not only to the strongest Czech grandmasters but also to the unrelenting proponents of the 'Sveshnikov Sicilian'; just prior to our game he crushed grandmaster Sergey Movsesian in excellent style in a sharp duel. Movsesian, faithful to his great tactical potential, at first tried to flash his sabre but this time his opponent's weapons were better sharpened. I was convinced that the 'holes' in the black position should be treated in a different manner. Therefore, in my duel against Babula I used the ancient positional idea; you may review what happened. In many aspects the foundations of the idea are reminiscent of a solid and hard stone on which a very well sharpened scythe has had no effect on impact...

Let us return to the position in the previous diagram; along with my commentary on the course of the game Vlastimil Jansa – Vlastimil Babula, which was played on December 16, 2001, I will present an ancient mystery to you.

19 g3!?



The blockade of the black squares is conditioned by a difficult assessment of the pawn structure after the exchange on f4, The white pawn plays the role of a scapegoat on this square in order to reach higher levels! Such higher levels are represented by the following elements:

a) The open g-file will become an ideal playground for the ♖f1 and

will suddenly create dangerous threats against the black king;

b) The f4 pawn takes the active e5-square from the black knight;

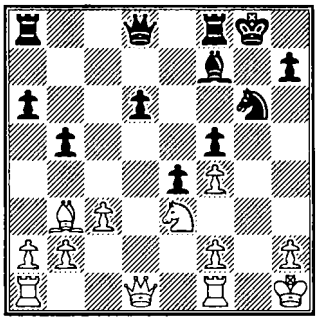
c) The pawn, along with the ♘e3, blocks the otherwise dangerous e and f pawn-pair;

d) The situation in the centre of the chessboard, especially after the forthcoming exchange of white-squared bishops upon ♗b3, will become very sensitive for Black and especially his d6 and f5 pawns.

Naturally, such positive elements are not gratis: it is necessary to put on the other scale not only the objective weakness of the f4-pawn, which may be attacked with the black queen... Also, it is necessary to thoroughly evaluate the weakened position of the white king. The preservation of the ♗e5 should even be considered. Nevertheless I believe that the strategic assets of 19 g3 prevail. This game represents a complicated example of dynamic strategy, this time challenging my opponent Vlasti Babula. Actually, as he said after our game, he had not been greatly surprised: 'I read your articles before and anticipated what would happen so I was quite prepared. To be honest, I believed in the black position – now I do not believe in it so much!'

Relatively quickly, my opponent played **19...♘e7?!** which, in my opinion, was not the strongest reply. Black concentrates on transferring the knight to g6 and attacking f4 but, as will soon be illustrated, this will take much time. I do not intend to quote full variations, I will leave everything to future developments and individual understanding of the needs of the position – certainly the right direction will only be established by practice. I can only add that I saw the following comment somewhere: 19...♗xf4 20 gxf4 ♕f6=. However, how does Black then react to 21 ♗b3 followed by ♔h1? This question may be much more difficult to answer...

20 ♗b3! (The first accord of the white strategy...) **20...♗xf4 21 gxf4 ♘g6 22 ♔h1!**



(...and this is the second! In the post-mortem my opponent criticised his next move and suggested 22...♘xf4 23 ♖g1+ ♘g6.)

Question:

Do you consider **22...♘xf4** an opportunity leading to:

1. An advantage for Black

2. A win for White

3. Unclear play with chances for both sides?

Answer:

During the game I planned, after 23 ♖g1+ ♘g6, the active 24 ♕h5!

but we were both surprised in the post mortem that in fact Black was immediately lost! I do hope that the statement claiming a win for White after 22...♘xf4? (2 points) will not be surprising for you either! It is correct, after 24 ♕h5 the terrible 25 ♖xg6+ is threatened; this could also follow after 24...♗xb3, e.g.: 25...hxg6 26 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 27 ♕h6+ ♔g8 28 ♖g1+ ♔f7 29 ♖g7+ ♔e8 30 axb3 ♕f6 31 ♖g6 and so on. Nothing is changed by 24...d5 due to 25 ♗xd5!. Even 24...♕f6 will not prevent Black from tragedy because again 25 ♖xg6+! hxg6 26 ♖g1 can follow. After 26...♔g7 Black's defence will be destroyed by 27 ♘xf5+ and after 26...d5, the above-mentioned 27 ♗xd5! is decisive.

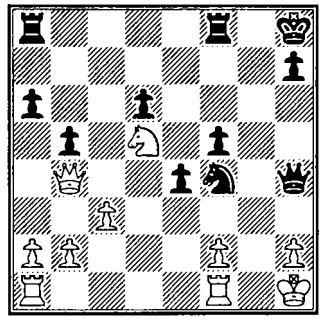
The accurate implementation of the attack, leading to a win for White, especially after 24...♕f6, will bring you an additional 3 points.

22...♗xb3 23 ♕xb3+ ♔h8 24 ♘d5! ♕h4 25 ♕b4!

The looming white dominance of the centre, based on the cooperation of the queen and the knight, represents a perfect result of the strategy which started with the 19 g3 blockade. Black is already under heavy pressure so he decides to seek consolation for his suffering by capturing a pawn. After all, the planned journey of the knight will now be complete – Black could not, however, have imagined that it would be so dangerous...

25...♘xf4!?

In fact, a desperate decision and a gauntlet thrown down to White – and, at this moment, to you, too.



Question

What do you think:

1. Should White take up the gauntlet and continue, after **26 ♕d4+ ♔g8**:

A. Chasing the black king from the corner to the battlefield with **27 ♘xf4 ♕xf4 28 ♖g1+** and why?

B. With piece centralisation despite the lost pawn, play **27 ♖g1+ ♘g6**, and why?

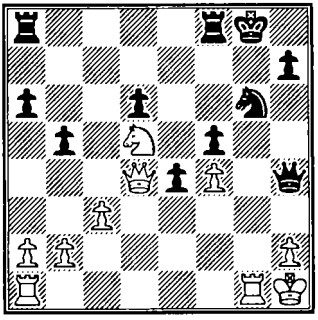
2. Should White prefer to level the material after **26 ♕xd6** ?

Answer:

After **25...♘xf4** I analysed precisely the three above-mentioned possibilities. In fact, I was seriously dealing with the first two only since the cowardly 26 ♕xd6? is not just a clear betrayal of strategic principles but also a gross error. Among other things, 26...♘d3 could have followed and it is only Black who has concrete threats... We should choose, after **26 ♕d4+ ♔g8**, between 27 ♘xf4, which at first sight looks attractive, and 27 ♖g1+... No, any systematically gained strategic advantage cannot be so easily converted into (an illusory) direct attack! Besides, the

black king might feel O.K. in the centre after 27 ♘xf4? ♕xf4 28 ♖g1+ ♔f7 29 ♖g7+ ♔e6. Only those who decided, along with me, on **27 ♖g1+** may be justifiably awarded with 3 points. However, a definite inspiration for such a selection lies only in the following important 28th move. There was nothing more to solve after I had seen it. If you envisaged it, you can have an additional 2 points!

26 ♕d4+ ♔g8 27 ♖g1+ ♘g6 28 f4!



The role of blockader will simply be taken over by a substitute! The f4-pawn reinforces the concrete foundations of the white strategy and establishes support points on g5 and g3 for the white rooks; in addition, Black remains without any counterplay.

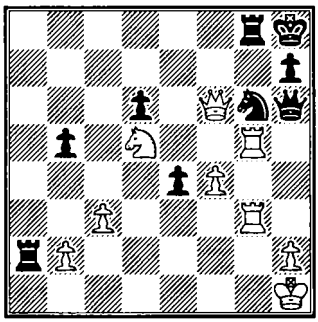
If you count it up: roughly ±.

28...♖f7 29 ♖g5 ♖af8

The f8-square is prohibited to the black king. The spectacular possibility 29...♔f8 30 ♖ag1 ♖c8 31 ♕h8+! ♘xh8 32 ♖g8 mate only documents the problems of the black pieces.

30 ♖ag1 ♕h3 (Otherwise 31 ♖1g3 followed by ♕e3 and ♖h3 may follow.) **31 ♖5g3 ♕h4 32 ♖g5** (Many times I have spoiled similarly promising positions in time pressure... That is why I try to gain time before the time control is reached.) **32...♕h3 33 ♖5g3 ♕h4 34 ♕e3** (I was totally captivated with the strategic climax after the further ♖g5 and ♖1g3, however, the more prosaic 34 ♕b6 could have been played here, too.) **34...♖g7?** (Making things easy for White. The queen should have retreated: 34...♕d8, however, even then Black's expectations of saving the game are not high. For example, 35 ♖g5, planning h2-h4-h5 or first 35 b3!? and 36 c4, could follow, Black might have then vainly sought consolidation.)

35 ♖g5 ♖ff7 36 ♖1g3 ♕h6 37 ♕b6! (The white queen will now ravage and plunder the black house without any restraint! The blocked windows and doors prevent the enclosed cluster of black pieces on the other side of the board continuing resistance now...) **37...♔h8 38 ♕xa6 ♖a7 39 ♕c8+♖g8 40 ♕xf5 ♖xa2 41 ♕f6+**



41...♖g7 (even after 41...♕g7 the same blow might have followed: 42 ♖xg6! hxg6 43 ♕h4+.) **42 ♖xg6!** and **Black resigned** (42...hxg6 43 ♕f8+ ♔h7 44 ♘f6 mate!).

'It was a well-deserved loss,' was the objective statement of my disappointed opponent and namesake Vlastimil after the game. Can you believe that such self-contained games with a strategic idea in the opening make chess very interesting for me even as I turn sixty?

After such lectures, as for example this one on the 'Sveshnikov', are over, the listeners and readers, visibly full of worries, often ask: 'I like to play this opening as Black, how can I react to something like that, does any defensive recipe exist?' Oh yes, it does, but it is necessary to set another 'hard law'!

In short, it is necessary to invent a 'counter-measure' or an antidote... This reminds me of a nice story. Some time ago my garden was ravaged by moles. I did not know what to do so I decided to ask my friend George, who was a practical man and a sort of Jack-of-all-trades: 'George, will you give me some instructions on what I should use against the terrible moles and, in particular, where I can get it?' My knowledgable friend gave me a list of names and addresses of several specialised shops. I decided to visit the largest one but alas! The shop assistant offered me a series of products, from smelly (naturally for the mole) balls to modern electric or even electronic devices! This left me confused and I was not able to decide... Again, I went back to George and asked him: 'What do you think, which of the products is the most effective?' My friend thought for a moment and then answered briskly: 'How the devil should I know – do you think I am a mole!?'

This may be similar to the variations played on the 64 squares. Either you put yourself in the mole's place, I mean the mole creating the 'Sveshnikov disorder' on the board, and feel the reaction yourself or you can wait and see what the cleverest of the grandmaster-moles will do with it...

B. Turkey shoot

The title is quite well known from sports columns, it describes a discipline in which the decisive criterion of success lies in aiming accurately at a dynamic movement. Correct play in many openings which are filled with dynamic ideas comes from the same approach: an accurate, far-sighted plan depending on the movement of the opponent's pieces. Sometimes this is the way we have to think from the initial moves of the game; believe me, precisely this strategically sensitive dynamic method of thinking is more valuable in similar situations than encyclopaedic and unimaginative knowledge of games in an opening. As an illustrative example of this may serve a trendy variation of the Pirc defence, characterised by rapid development of the white bishop to e3. It is a variation which I have successfully used many times in practice, a variation, whose principles and intentions have been willingly accepted by many others...

Try to understand and find the most fundamental essentials of this variation; only then will you produce meaningful variations! After all: 'The intent comes first and is more powerful than the speech of the speaker.' (Celsus)

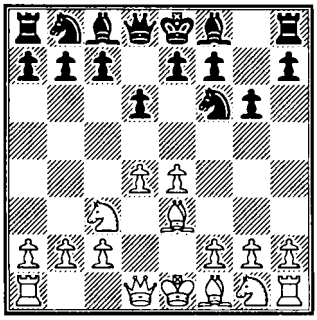
Initially it is necessary to become aware of the most principal

drawback of the otherwise flexible system for Black in the Pirc defence: this is, without any doubt, the surrender of the centre into the opponent's hands. White has, after the moves **1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6**, a convincing argument for two basic active plans:

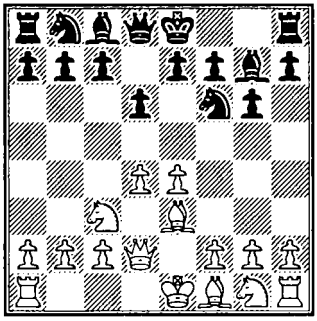
1. After the exchange of the black-squared bishops via the h6 square, to exploit the weakness of the kingside – aided by his enduring advantage in space there – for an attack against the black king. In most cases utilising the advance of the g and h pawns...

2. To increase his advantage in the centre with the f2-f4 advance first and only then to start active operations...

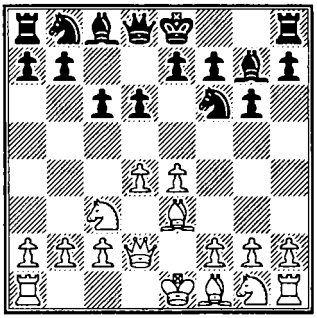
Naturally, Black cannot wait and sit on his hands! Plan No. 1. used to be introduced by the following moves: **4 f3 ♗g7 5 ♗e3** with the intention of 6 ♕d2, 7 ♗h6, queenside castling and an attack with the g and h pawns. However, this optimistic scenario for White may be upset by timely and effective counterplay by Black, characterised by a pawn attack on the other side of the board with 5...c6 (or even an earlier 4...c6!? without ♗g7), 6...b5 and furthermore, depending on circumstances, ♘bd7, ♕a5, ♘b6... In short, White's attacking scenario is met by Black's own active plan on the queenside, which is efficient enough! As for plan No. 2, after **4 f4**, Black often uses his c-pawn as an 'antidote', especially in the following form: **4...♗g7 5 ♘f3 c5!?** which represents an unclear and unresolved part of the theory and practice of this opening. The above-mentioned plans and reactions to them play very important roles in understanding various strategic nuances after **4 ♗e3**, a continuation we will deal with on the following pages.



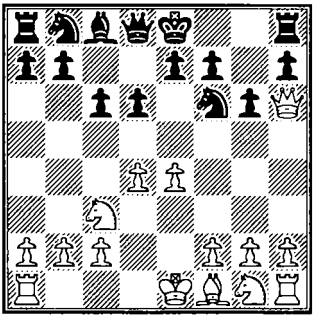
First it should be noted that White – unlike when he plays 4 f3 – is not worrying about 4...♘g4. He can play 5 ♗g5, then the black knight has nothing to do on g4 and often vainly returns to f6. On the other hand, the white bishop is well positioned on g5... If we count it up: White is then one tempo up and even if this tempo may be best used on different terrain, the loss of time also makes this terrain quite dangerous for Black. At the same time, White prepares the known battery ♗e3, ♕d2 with the intention of exchanging the black-squared bishops on h6: if **4...♗g7** then **5 ♕d2**.



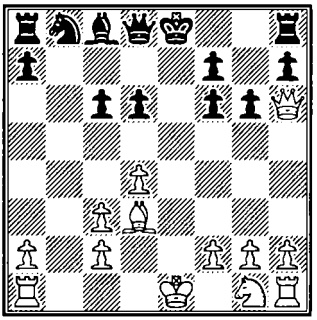
Again, White does not take the possibility 5...♘g4 6 ♗g5 too seriously, it could have similar consequences as in the previous comment. After 5...0-0 White need not hesitate: naturally, he plays 6 ♗h6 followed by queenside castling and a further advance of the h-pawn. Black can hardly resist his opponent's uncompromising and goal-directed attack! That is why Black postpones his decision on the placement of his king and prefers to prepare for counterplay, playing the known **5...c6**.



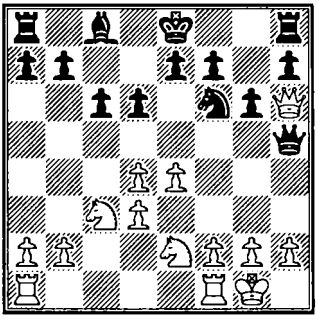
I would say that even then the consistent 6 ♗h6 is a logical and correct continuation of the started concept. Nevertheless, while writing this text I found in my database that many white players are at a loss after 5...c6 and prefer other possibilities, e.g. 6 ♘f3, 6 f3 or 6 h3... It is hard to persuade anybody about my unambiguous feelings in favour of 6 ♗h6. Instead, I would like to quote Caesar, one of the most memorable historical leaders: 'We willingly believe what we want to believe, hoping that others will also think what we are thinking.' Any hesitation in exchanging the black-squared bishops might lead to a loss of the important strategic thread for correct conduct of the game! Therefore we should believe in the immediate **6 ♗h6** and the consequences after **6...♗xh6 7 ♕xh6**.



These consequences may be easily assessed in White's favour after the relatively weaker **7...b5? 8 e5! b4 9 exf6 bxc3 10 bxc3 exf6 11 ♗d3±** when the board is divided into two parts by the peculiar pawn structure; Black then has problems in finding a shelter for his king and is also losing the battle for space on the queenside. At least, this is what I felt in my two games played with White...



There is a more appropriate introduction to Black's counterplay, without any doubt it is **7...♕a5!?**, especially if you find that after 8 0-0-0?! ♗e6 Black has quite good prospects. In this situation, the white king may be better placed on the other side of the board, which means that **8 ♗d3!?** is probably better – the position of the white king will be also decided by Black's advance! Due to the weaknesses around his king, activity in the centre should not then be recommended for him: 8...e5 9 ♘ge2; however, if he transfers his knight to b4: **8...♘a6 9 ♘ge2 ♘b4** (which is played quite often), **10 0-0** must be the right answer. In a series of games Black tried to find an opportunity to safeguard his king by **10...♘xd3 11 cxd3 ♕h5**.



Here again you should test your strategic skills!

Question:

Would you prefer to look for an advantage for White after:

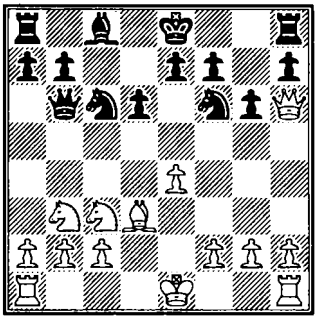
A. Exchange of the queens 12 ♕xh5 and why?

B. Retreat of the queen, e.g. 12 ♕d2 and why?

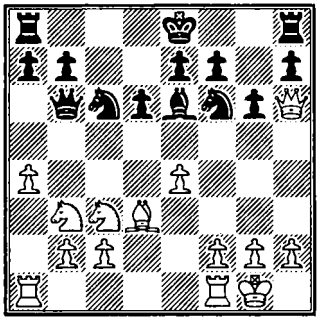
Answer:

This time you did not need any special delicate strategic radar! By exchanging queens 12 ♕xh5? ♘xh5 (0 points), White would voluntarily abandon his important motif for further play: an attack against the black king! After 12 ♕d2 (2 points), the black king can castle 12...0-0, however, he will not rest in peace there. White will launch an attack by means of the f-pawn advance 13 f4 with the intention of 14 f5 – if 13...d5 then simply 14 e5. Note that the position of the black queen on h5 is only seemingly active, it is rather an attacking target for the white knight after a future ♘g3... On the other hand, after an exchange of queens the black king could take a breather.

The main problem for Black after 8 ♗d3 lies in his lack of any counterplay. He may try to find some counterplay by attacking the opponent's centre with an advance of his c-pawn: **8...c5!?**. Indeed, a hasty blockade 9 d5? c4! 10 ♗xc4 ♘xe4 would only play into Black's hands, but White may react simply and better with the development **9 ♘ge2**. After **9...cxd4 10 ♘xd4** Black should probably play **10...♘c6**. White has probably nothing better than **11 ♘b3**. As in the previous variation, 11...♕h5?! seems to be a dubious attempt, the black royal couple will face problems again! This time most probably after 12 ♕e3 0-0 13 f3!? with a subsequent 14 h4. The retreat **11...♕b6** must be more reasonable.



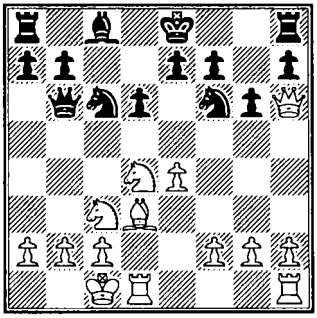
What to do with the white king now? Some may like daylight robbery 12 0-0-0 ♕xf2?! 13 ♖hf1 followed by 14 ♖xf6 and 15 ♘d5 (13...♘g4? 14 ♕g7 ♕e3+ 15 ♔b1 ♖f8 16 ♘d5 + -), however, is there any sensible active plan for White after the impassive response 12...♗e6 (for instance 13 ♖d2 0-0-0)? Do not forget the strategic drawback of the black position: Black cannot choose a shelter for his king! While 12 ♘d5?! is probably premature due to 12...♘xd5 13 exd5 ♘b4, 12 a4? would be, on the other hand, a gross error because White is not covering the threat 12...♕xf2+!... Nevertheless, this funny variation may bring us to the right path: **12 0-0** (on the other side from the opponent!) **12...♗e6 13 a4!?** – 'Strike while the iron is hot!'.



So far nobody has played this but it is a blooming marvellous continuation! It uncompromisingly puts pressure on Black's Achilles' heel – not only the future shelter of the king but also the position of the queen! Is b3 hanging? O.K., but it is clear that after **13...♗xb3 14 cxb3 ♕xb3 15 a5** (or 15 ♖fc1 or even something else...) White's compensation is fully sufficient since the black pieces (especially rooks!) have not been coordinated at all yet.

I will never forget one of many Bundesliga games I played in Germany for the SC Forchheim team (in the 2001-2 season this pleasant and lively Bavarian club even qualified for the Premier Bundesliga!). My opponent, H.Hoffman (the game was played in 1997), replied to my every move in the opening in a flash... There was a shocking climax after **8...c5 9 ♘ge2 cxd4 10 ♘xd4**: my opponent, without any hesitation, continued at 'blitz' tempo with **10...♕b6?!**. My god, I told myself, what kind of an opponent is this? He is not following basic strategic principles! First he moves twice with the same pawn and now twice with his queen! A short glance at the list of players – no, it is not a mistake, my opponent really does play on first board, in full compliance with the Code of Play... However, his 'double' moves do not comply with the positional code at all. O.K., it may be a provocation against long castling – this can be the only explanation for Black's suspect moves. He probably cherishes no hope of the knight retreating to b3, since then the 'childish' 11...♕xf2+ could follow... I replied briskly and

clearly **11 0-0-0** and again, without any hesitation, followed **11...♘c6**.



After the game my opponent surprisingly explained everything: 'I was only trying to follow the *ChessBase Magazine* recommendation!' I really did not know about this 'recommendation' and was just following quite simple reasoning, plain common sense in order to disrupt Black's undoubtedly dubious play. Try it with me!

Question:

White must solve, in a most efficient manner, the current problem: 'What to do about the ♘d4?' Will you recommend to him:

A. The pin **12 ♗b5**?

B. The exchange **12 ♘xc6** and why?

C. A retreat – where?

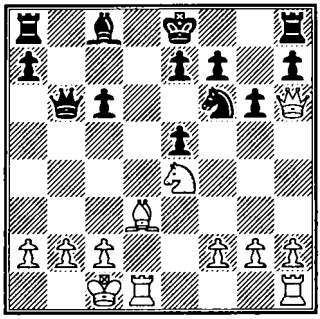
Answer:

The adherents and theoreticians have probably dealt easily with the questions. The course of the above-mentioned game made it easy prey for publication, only several punctuation marks to appraise the previous moves were added... However, the question was particularly designed for those who had not known the game and also for those who knew or guessed that similar vital decisions had to be taken, in most cases, without assistance of theoretical knowledge, which is not always to hand. So let us go back to my feelings and considerations while I pondered the future course of play.

First and foremost, White should exploit appropriately the previous loss of time in Black's development! Such misdemeanours must be punished quickly and uncompromisingly. It follows from the above-mentioned that no lazy retreat of the knight can lead to success, wherever it might be directed! Black cannot, after 12 ♘b3?! or 12 ♘de2?! (in both cases 1 point), take the poisoned pawn 12...♕xf2? due to 13 ♖hf1 followed by 14 ♖xf6 and 15 ♘d5, however, he will quietly complete his neglected development by 12...♗e6. Those of you who opted for the **12 ♗b5** pin do not need to be ashamed since some grandmasters and masters have played such a move here, too. But what is there to play against **12...♗d7** ? The seemingly active 13 ♘d5?! gains nothing because after 13...♘xd5 14 exd5 ♘xd4 15 ♕g7 ♖f8 (15...0-0-0) 16 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 17 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 18 ♖xd4 Black succeeds in exchanging the most important pieces. Better is **13 ♕e3** (2 points) but it cannot be called a forceful exploitation of the above-mentioned drawbacks of Black's position. It may be a difficult task to prove any advantage for White after, for example, **13...0-0-0**. On the other hand, a pretty collapse could be seen in this situation: 14 ♘d5 ♘xd5 15 exd5

♘e5 16 ♗xd7+?! (16 f4 or 16 ♗e2 probably leads to a microscopic advantage.) 16...♖xd7 17 f4? ♕xb2+! -+. However, White should play more actively and vigorously! In the position depicted in the diagram the simple 12 ♘xc6 suggests itself... The exchange avoids any loss of time but, after 12...bxc6, the black centre will be strengthened, the b-file will be opened for the ♖b8 counterplay and, last but not least, the f2-pawn is hanging again... After 13 f4 White is not far removed from an attack in the centre but also Black's counterplay comes to life, e.g. by 13...♖b8 14 b3 ♘g4.

Where is the truth? Black may even be right, his approach may have only apparently been careless, there may be some exceptions to the basic rules of positional play... Oh no – the truth is that it is hard to find the exact point for the punishment. You may feel you are on the right path but the turkey runs... There must be something flashing in front of you so that you can aim at it at the right moment! Yes, it is hidden here, I said to myself when this right moment came... and I pulled the trigger! If you 'pulled the trigger' at the same moment: **12 ♘xc6! bxc6 13 e5! dxe5 14 ♘e4!**,

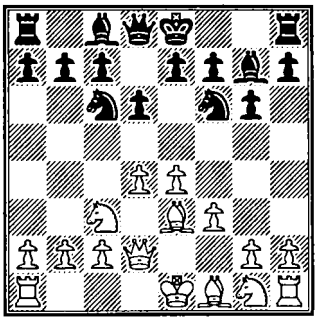


you hit the target and deserve 4 points. The temporary pawn sacrifice reveals in an ideal way the drawbacks of the black position. Prior to the completion of Black's development White gets the pawn back along with permanent and active play against the remaining weaknesses in the black position. In the game Jansa – Hoffman there followed: **14...♗e6** (Nothing changes with 14...♖b8 15 b3.) **15 ♕g7** (But not 15 ♘xf6+? exf6 16 ♕g7 because of 16...♔e7.) **15...0-0-0 16 ♘xf6 exf6 17 ♕xf6 ♖he8 18 ♖he1** and now, instead of the stubborn 18...♕a5 19 a3 ♖d5 20 ♖e3±, Black committed a quick 'hara-kiri': **18...♘g4? 19 f3 e4 20 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 21 ♗a6+! ♕xa6 22 ♖xd8+ ♔b7 23 ♕xf7+ ♔b6 24 fxe4 1:0**

'Opportunity presents itself with difficulties but is easily lost.' (Publilius Syrus)

The advantage of the **4 ♗e3** system lies in its diversity and its flexibility in formulating a plan. It may represent an advantage only if you can perceive the possible drawbacks of each one of the possible replies of your opponent. For example, after **4...♗g7 5 ♕d2**, Black may try to upset White's plans by means of **5...♘c6**. White, for his part, has a series of possibilities (6 d5, 6 ♘f3, 6 h3 but not 6 0-0-0? due to 6...♘g4), the most efficient, however, probably being **6 f3!?**.

Why do I think that? I proceed from the principal idea of our strategic plan which is based on the exchange of the black-squared bishops and subsequent attack of the g and h pawns...



Why right now 6 f3 and not earlier? Do not forget that by playing 5...♘c6, Black induced important changes on the board! Which changes do I have in mind?

1. Due to the attack on the d4-pawn, the ♗h6 thrust must be prepared first.

2. By playing 5...♘c6, however, Black has made his counterplay against the future position of the white king after queenside castling more difficult. As we noted before, Black's counterattack may best be launched by means of c7-c6, b7-b5, ♕a5... The ♘c6 obviously hinders this plan.

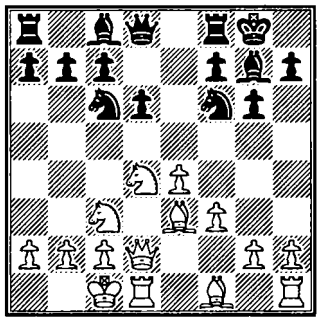
Thus the 6 f3 move, played precisely here, perfectly fulfils its preparatory role:

1. It parries the positional threat 6...♘g4 and prepares 7 0-0-0.

2. After queenside castling White plans the well-known attacking scenario: ♗h6 – pawns to g4 and h4...

Naturally, Black cannot sit on his hands, but I dare to say that after his apt 6th move, White has an edge. The effort to launch a counterattack by 6...a6 7 0-0-0 b5 lacks coordination and thus any effect, both after 8 ♗h6 ♗xh6 9 ♕xh6 b4 10 ♘d5 and 9...e5 10 d5. My Prague contemporary and, later on, repeated US Champion GM Luboš Kaválek, used to try to defend the black defensive walls by means of the modest 7...e6. Luboš's ideas have always been full of shrewdness: in this case, after 8 ♗h6, 8...♗xh6 9 ♕xh6 ♕e7 followed by ♗d7 and 0-0-0 might follow. However, even Kaválek himself was not able to perform magic tricks in such a restricted area: White, naturally, is better... And, in case of the weaker 8...0-0? 9 h4!, Black is asking for trouble.

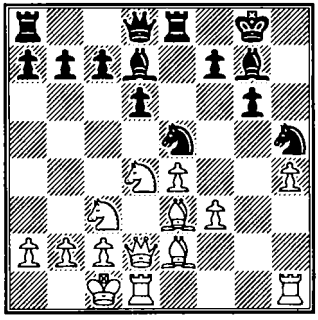
Even the advance in the centre **6...e5** may not sufficiently change the diagnosis. I would like to hint at a tiny but important detail. I would say that – is a more accurate response than the blockade 7 d5 ♘e7 (7...♘d4!?). White, for his part, can postpone the blockade of the centre or may pursue his attacking activities even without it. After **7...0-0 8 0-0-0 exd4 9 ♘xd4**



Black cannot find any suitable recipe against the above-mentioned operation aimed at the position of his king. At least, this is the indication of frequent catastrophes occurring on this dangerous terrain in extensive tournament practice. The attacking potential of White's

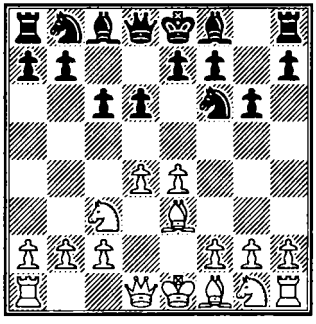
position may be demonstrated at least by a single example:

D.Navara – H.Kallio, Leon 2001: **9...♖e8?!** (Even in case of the more frequently used 9...♘xd4 10 ♗xd4 ♗e6 11 g4!? c5 12 ♗e3 ♕a5 or 11 ♗e3!? Black would not have any feeling of sufficient counterplay.) **10 g4 ♗d7 11 h4 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 h5** (Otherwise this square would be occupied by the white pawn...) **13 gxh5 ♘xh5**



14 ♗g5! (Prior to the decisive f3-f4 attack, White excludes any chance for his opponent to launch an operation on the long diagonal.) **14...f6 15 ♗e3 a6 16 ♖hg1 c5 17 ♘b3 c4 18 ♘d4 b5 19 f4 b4 20 fxe5 bxc3 21 ♕xc3 fxe5 22 ♖xg6! exd4 23 ♗xd4** and **White won**.

Instead of 4...♗g7, many theoreticians recommend **4...c6**.



It is as if Black is saying: 'If you want to exchange the black-squared bishops, O.K., but only with a loss of a tempo! My bishop will stay on f8 and meanwhile I will give you a fright on the other side of the board!' Black, however, should be consistent in the further course of the game, at least with regard to the delayed development of the ♗f8. For example, after 5 ♕d2 b5 6 ♗d3 ♘bd7 7 ♘f3 he should play 7...e5 or, even earlier, 5...♘bd7 and 6...e5. However, as we have already found out, nearly every move brings some pros and cons; the same applies to 4...c6. Even here the dynamic method of thinking may be applied. Will you try it? Again: which changes and plans, advantages and disadvantages are brought about by the 4...c6 move?

1. It prevents White's immediate plan linked to ♕d2 and ♗h6. The tempo-saving in the position of the black bishop is then, without any doubt, of great significance.

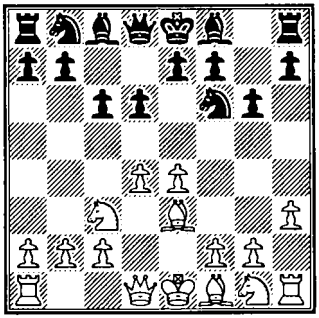
2. Black quickly prepares his queenside activity b7-b5, possibly opening an exit for the black queen.

What are disadvantages of this move?

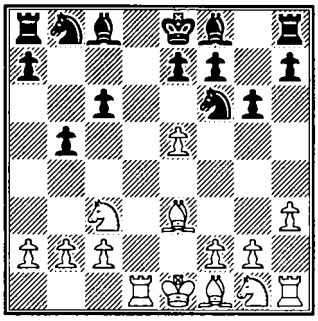
1. It prepares the above-mentioned counterplay but relatively soon excludes other possibilities which are characteristic for the opening.

2. It primarily resigns himself to the c7-c5 advance or to ♘c6 followed by e7-e5 – in other words, adequate reactions against White's attacking plans, mostly connected with the effort to gain a pawn majority in the centre after f2-f4.

Summing up the pros and cons of 4...c6, the strategic task for White is clear and understandable: White should probably abandon his intention to exchange the bishops, prevent Black from b7-b5 activity but also accurately plan the above-mentioned domination of the centre! Jointly with Russian grandmaster E.Sveshnikov, I solved this challenge and riddle accurately. Only seldom does a modest pawn move conceal so much of substance. The answer lies in the invisible response: **5 h3!**

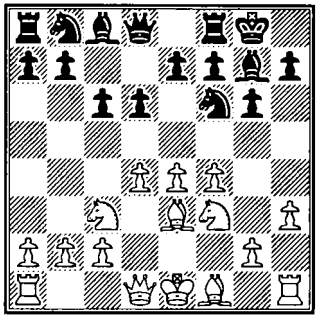


Any possible optimism by Black, expressed by the active move **5...b5?!**, will quickly disappear after the vigorous answer **6 e5!**. Having played 5 h3, White has taken away the g4-square from the black knight, while the possible endgame after **6...dxe5 7 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 8 ♖xd1** is quite unpleasant for Black, precisely due to the unfortunate b7-b5. Any further effort to create complications in the bad position might lead Black into a completely hopeless situation. The game E.Sveshnikov – J.Přibyl, Lvov 1983, is reminiscent of a game of cat and mouse:

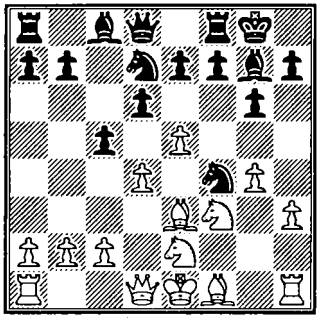


8...b4? 9 exf6 bxc3 10 ♗d4! ♗h6? 11 fxe7 ♗d2+ 12 ♔e2 ♖g8 13 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 14 ♖d8+ ♔xe7 15 ♖xg8 ♗a6+ 16 ♔f3 +-. A similar course was taken in the game V.Jansa – M.Schlosser, Münster 1992: 8...♘fd7 9 f4 ♗g7 10 ♘f3 f6? 11 e6 ♘f8 12 ♘xb5! ♘xe6 13 ♘xa7 ♗b7 14 ♗c4 ♘c7 15 ♔f2 ♘d5 16 ♘xc6 + -. The 6...♘fd7 retreat may be seen as a loss of space; among other continuations, 7 exd6 exd6 8 d5! favours White.

Some may take a breath: 'O.K., I do not like 5...b5, but after 5 h3 the attack on the h-file will no longer be threatened.' And, unconcerned, they play **5...♗g7**. Precisely at this moment Black, for the most part, misses another, somewhat masked idea of 5 h3 since now **6 f4!** can follow and all of a sudden Black has problems maintaining the balance in the centre. The neurotic 6...b5?! will, because of 7 e5, only create havoc among his pieces because the endgame arising after 7...dxe5 8 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 9 ♖xd1 is not easy for Black, e.g. 9...♘h5 10 ♘ge2 g5!? 11 g3 b4 12 ♘b5! ♘a6 13 ♗g2 ♗b7 14 ♘d4± (V.Jansa – Dr.H.Pfleger, Germany 1989). If **6...0-0** then simply **7 ♘f3**.



And after **7...♘bd7**, **8 e5** comes just in time. The black position does not represent a tragedy, e.g. after 8...dxe5 9 dxe5 ♘d5 10 ♘xd5 cxd5 11 ♗d3, but White has undoubtedly taken over the strategic initiative. If Black does not want to accept his passive lot and plays hazardously and inappropriately for the situation: 8...♘h5?!, he may be left even worse after the simple answer 9 ♘e2. My friend of long standing in many Scandinavian tournaments, Danish player Carsten Hoi, definitely could not have imagined his favourite Pirc defence in such a catastrophic form as it appeared in one of our individual encounters after 8...♗h8 9 g4 ♘g7 10 ♗g2 (Gausdal 1991). The always ingenious Mikhail Gurevich tried in a game against Short (Wijk aan Zee 1990) to conjure up something by means of **8...c5!? 9 g4 ♘xf4**.



However, Nigel Short did not let him draw a rabbit out of the magic hat and kept Black's tactical efforts in the centre under strict control!

Question:

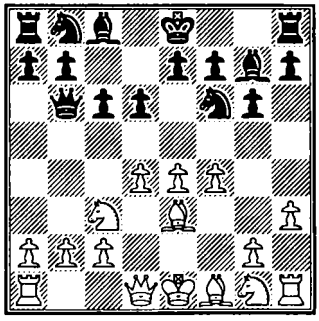
What do you think, which piece took the ♘f4 and, in particular, why?

Answer:

The bishop move 10 ♗xf4?! is only seemingly good. The 'magic rabbit' might have then popped up into Black's hands... in the form of dangerous compensation for the piece: 10...cxd4 11 exd6 (11 ♕xd4?? dxe5 -+) 11...e5!. In such a situation the piece cooperation should be controlled, no miracle should then occur. Yes, Nigel Short played **10 ♘xf4!**. However, you may only add 3 points under one condition: if you have controlled the operation in the 'magic hat' as tightly as White did during the calculation of the following conclusive variation: **10...cxd4 11 ♘xd4 dxe5 12 ♘de6! fxe6 13 ♘xe6 ♕a5+ 14 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 15 ♔xd2 ♖f6 16 ♘c7 ♖b8 17 ♗xa7** and White wins. It should be noted that Black preferred 11...♘xe5 but after 12 c3 ♗d7 13 ♗e2 his two pawns represented only meagre compensation for the piece.

Later on, furnished with knowledge of White's plans, Romanian GM M.Marin devised a 'novelty' **6...♕b6?!**.

I simply cannot help it, I am surprised by the persistence of the otherwise positionally circumspect Marin in using this, at first sight, suspect foray.

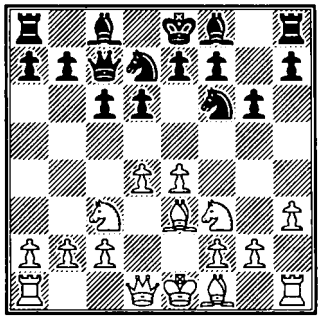


I admit that the gambit-like 7 ♕d2!? ♕xb2 8 ♖b1 ♕a3 9 ♗d3 0-0 10 ♘ge2, which was used by me in our individual game, may not be attractive for everybody and may inspire Black to undertake detailed analyses. However, why should White look for an advantage in a thorny bush when he can simply walk on grass: **7 ♕c1!** (covering b2 but also e3). The usefulness of the position of the ♕b6 can hardly be proven by the eccentric 7...♘h5?! 8 ♘ge2 f5 9 e5 0-0 10 ♖g1± (Z.Hráček – M.Marin, Krynica 1998). The later played 7...0-0 8 ♗d3 ♘a6!? or even 7...♕a5 is more significant, however, even in those cases Black's counterplay is not fully-fledged.

At the present time it is no mystery that after 5 h3 Black should immediately prepare for a challenging battle in the centre, therefore the ♗f8 development should again be postponed. This time in favour of **5...♘bd7**, a sort of double prophylaxis. White is then at a crossroads:

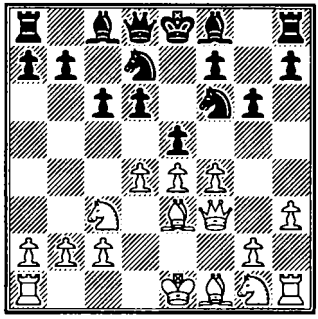
a) he may re-orientate to a strictly positional combat after 6 ♘f3 or

b) he may uncompromisingly follow his original idea after 6 f4. I must admit that I am more or less a supporter of alternative *b)*. After **6 ♘f3** the black position cannot stand 6...♗g7? 7 e5±; somebody playing White might also like 6...e5 7 a4. However, a very flexible and functional mechanism of play for Black was introduced by Slovak GM Lubomír Ftáčnik who tried in several games to control the situation in the centre by means of **6...♕c7!?**.

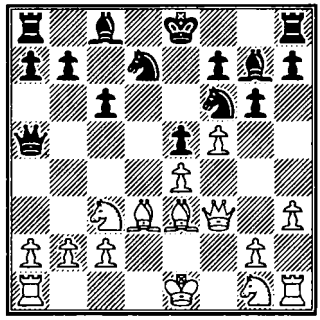


Only after **7 a4 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 b6!? 10 ♘d2** (10 ♕d2 ♗b7 11 ♗h6 a6 and b6-b5) comes **10...e5** since after **11 dxe5** Black maintains the positional dynamics by taking with the knight **11...♘xe5!** (12 f4 ♘ed7 13 ♘c4 d5 ∞, N.Short – L.Ftáčnik, Novi Sad 1990).

It is true that **6 f4!?** primarily attracts attention due to the subsequent uncommon attacking line-up of the white pieces: **6...e5** (Or 6...♕a5 7 ♗d3 e5. The continuation 7...c5 8 ♘ge2 c4!? 9 ♗xc4 ♘xe4 10 0-0 ♘df6 11 ♗b5+ ±, E.Sveshnikov – Belyavsky, Bled 2001 was good enough for one game only.). The introductory move to White's allurement consists of the interesting **7 ♕f3!?**.



In due time, White employs his queen in attacking operations. His intention is to use its power after the further ♗d3 and ♘ge2, if he had played 7 ♗d3 first, ♕b6 might have followed. After 7 ♕f3 (or 6...♕a5 7 ♗d3 e5 8 ♕f3!?) Black does not have too many opportunities of counterplay, a critical situation probably arises (also in case of a possible change of move order) after **7...♕a5** (7...♗g7 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 f5...; 7...b5 8 ♗d3...) **8 ♗d3 ♗g7 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 f5!**.



This advance of the f-pawn is the point of the preceding ♕f3. In the position some basic finesses are concealed; without knowledge of these fine points the whole variation would only be a knife in a child's hands! Let us summarise them within the following test question.

Question:

Put yourself in White's shoes. How would you react to:

10...0-0

10...gxf5

10...♘c5

10...b5

How do you assess these black moves and your opportunities after each of them? In your assessment, be a real strategic sovereign of the chessboard!

Answer:

Castling by Black **10...0-0?** may be boldly called a suicide attempt since after **11 g4** (or even 11 ♘ge2) the white attack develops all by itself. Neither is ...gxf5?, weakening the white squares, much better since the opponent gains a clear positional advantage after 11 ♕xf5 (but not 11 exf5? e4! 12 ♗xe4 0-0 and Black takes control of the whole board...). The game S.Movsesian – L.Ftáčnik, Hamburg 1997, followed 11...b5 12 ♘ge2 b4 13 ♘b1 ♘b6 14 ♕f2±, there are too many weaknesses in the black position. Much more difficult is to distinguish the consequences of two remaining moves, however, both of them represent a much better solution for Black than the first two. After **10...♘c5** the answer is obvious: **11 g4**, Black then has nothing better than **11...gxf5 12 gxf5 ♗f8!?** (12...♘xd3+ 13 cxd3 b5 14 ♘ge2 b4 15 ♘d1 ♗a6 16 ♘c1! is an easier way for White to gain the advantage, as shown by E.Sveshnikov in one of his games.) **13 ♘ge2 b5 14 0-0** (14 ♔f2!?, 14 ♘c1!?) **14...b4 15 ♘d1 ♗a6 15 ♘f2 0-0-0 16 ♘c1±** V.Jansa – I.Ibragimov, Germany 2001.

10...b5!? may be a more dangerous continuation. White should then be careful of his move order and coordination of his further development. An immediate **11 g4?!** suggests itself but it is precisely here that White should be more patient! This impatience rebounded on A.Kharlov when his opponent V.Labok (Podolsk 1992) exploited the time gained for quick and effective counterplay: **11...b4 12 ♘d1 gxf5 13 gxf5 b3+! 14 ♘c3** (otherwise 14...♕xa2!) **14...bxc2 15 ♘ge2 ♖b8!** and Black has the initiative. What went wrong? Maybe 11 g4 was a little hasty, White should have developed his knight first **11 ♘ge2** – after 11...gxf5, 12 ♕xf5 is still a strong reply. After **11...b4 12 ♘d1 b3+ 13 ♘dc3 bxc2 14 ♗xc2** the white pieces are obviously better prepared for any battle. I think that most of you are not confused by the first two possibilities, the considerations were somewhat more complicated in case of 10...♘c5 and 10...b5. In case you have found everything that is important, you may use the described recipe in your next game and play White without any problems. For an accurate and full strategic diagnosis you may add a full 4 points. One point should be subtracted if you did not notice the importance of the move order after 10...b5. Similar 'finesses' are, after all, part of the dynamic development of this entire interesting variation!

I do believe that this analysis will also serve as an inspiration for those who so far have found themselves unable to deal with the 'Pirc'.

'Prudence is to know what should be asked for and what should be avoided' (Cicero).

C. Like a big child...

For many years, my French friend Mr. Leoni used to come to see me. Although he had not taken part in tournaments for a long time, he was still interested in chess events. He subscribed to *New in Chess*, *Die Schachwoche*, *Chess Informant* and so on; they were as much essential reading to him as the popular *Herald Tribune*. Mr. Leoni was an employee of the UN and used to travel all over the world. Sometimes he called me from Argentina, Tashkent or New York and made a chess appointment because he also used to travel to Prague quite often. He could not miss any opportunity to visit a big chess tournament, no matter whether it was in Buenos Aires, London or Prague. Here in Prague we met each other for the first time on the occasion of the Prague '90 tournament, which was held in the Intercontinental hotel. The top Czech players would also see him at various championships of the country since he used to visit these regularly and passionately.

He was a man in his sixties, with a face of a diplomat; he used to visit chess tournaments in a way that other people visit concerts, not sporting events: he tried to understand chess as other people understand music and its tones.

Any time he came to see me, he wanted to look at my recent games, certainly with due explanation. 'You know, I can feel that your games are filled with a goal-directed strategy and I can understand that only if you explain it to me. I cannot understand it from other comments and games. It is just as if I was playing against you,' he said, eagerly sitting down to the chessboard...

He loved to ask questions relating to the right plan, move, conceptual understanding of chess operations.

Any time when he could not find something I tried to give him a clue but he was merciless with himself: 'Let me think!'. He only gave up after after truly being unable to find what to do. 'I really cannot solve it, it is very complicated for me,' and then he added sadly: 'Probably I am not able to learn something like this, it may be beyond me.' On the other hand, any time he managed to get to the bottom of something he was full of childish glee and his infinitely blissful smile of understanding was undoubtedly also a reward for me. Despite Mr. Leoni's age, his attitude to chess reminded me of that of a child: he was curious and eager to discover everything he had not discovered yet. He retained his qualities till the very end – he died several years ago. The following chess commentary has also been written in the memory of Mr. Leoni. I believe that this is the type of commentary that Mr. Leoni would like to listen to. I hope that goes not only for Mr. Leoni but for many of you, too...

1. Ideas against ♕b6

The Sicilian Defence, **1 e4 c5**, and accurate knowledge are closely linked. It is a daring deed to play the 'Dragon', 'Najdorf' or 'Rauzer' without specific state-of-the-art knowledge and only with the help of strategic feeling. Such an enthusiast may be fully compared to a self-confident but rather foolish driver with his car speeding at 100 km per hour rushing into blind corners covered in mist while he can only see the continuous white line in the middle of the road...

However, the 'Sicilian' attracts admirers not only on account of the labyrinth of variations (such examples are more or less very sad) but, in particular, on account of the vast creative potential contained within it. It is not by chance that Garry Kasparov plays it as both White and Black; it is not by chance that for many years it has been correctly said that Kasparov will only be beaten by somebody who finds the right key to his 'Sicilian fortress'. Capablanca once said that the Spanish Opening is a touchstone of one's abilities in positional play. It should be added that it is precisely the 'Sicilian' that has the rare quality of being not only flexible and dynamic but also providing a strategically complex view of various fine points of play. I am talking particularly about the 'open battle' in the Sicilian. I have always been sorry for those players employing, as White, the closed variation or such moves as for example 2 c3 to the exclusion of the open game. This may be practical but also it is a mechanism which voluntarily prevents them reaching the stars. There is much they are robbing themselves of. Besides that, they are like pupils who have coped with the multiplication tables but will not dare to pick up logarithms...

I would say that there are some prerequisites for successful play in the opening (and especially in the Sicilian):

a) Sense of strategy and tactics in the opening of the game.

b) Specific knowledge of variations and games.

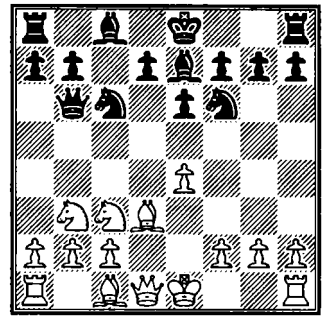
c) New ideas.

These prerequisites cannot be separated from each other but item *b)* (knowledge of variations) is by far the most extensive 'stuff' filling chess books and magazines. This may be due to the fact that it is the 'simplest' part, which can be easily and quickly recorded by unimaginative automatons. But let us talk about opportunities in the Sicilian a little differently...

Let us close the theory books, forget our databases, let us demonstrate our sense and ideas and follow only the important white line in the middle of the road. But not in a mist. You should play and think with me! The relationship between the author and the reader or, if you like, between a coach and a charge, can be best developed using this method. Needless to say, the conceptual communication must contain both 'strategic head' and 'tactical heel'.

Let us take first a very fashionable system of Black's defence, linked to the early development of the black queen on b6. It may be found in various forms, e.g.: 2...♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕b6, 2...e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕b6, it may also be played a little bit later: 4...a6 5 ♘c3 b5 6 ♗d3 ♕b6 or 2...♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗g5 and so on.

Very frequently played is a position arising, from various move orders, after **2...♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕b6 5 ♘b3** (Undoubtedly the most logical retreat of the attacked knight...) **5...♘f6 6 ♘c3 e6 7 ♗d3** (...and, in this situation, undoubtedly the most logical development of the white bishop.) **7...♗e7**.



This is a well-known position, occurring regularly in tournaments of various levels of play; I have had the opportunity to evaluate it in full detail several times (as White). We will be following the course of the game V.Jansa – M.Vokáč, played at Bohdaneč in 1997. I would say that my opponent, GM Marek Vokáč, comes under the category of imaginative tactician rather than profound strategist. It is not accidental that the black development used to be one of his most frequently played systems and it is not accidental that it disappeared after this game ... I want you to understand some details and logic of the further course of the game, forget the theory now and rather 'listen', ask questions and, also, try to answer them!

Question:

What has Black done to his opponent but also to himself by the move 4...♕b6?

Answer:

He has driven the white knight from the centre. On the other hand, he has 'put the brake on' his b-pawn which usually serves to promote

active operations for Black on the queenside (a7-a6 and b7-b5).

Question:

Which satisfactory plan will you choose for White in the above diagram position?

Answer:

a) Surely ♗e3, f4, ♕f3 with kingside (or even queenside) castling and g2-g4-g5! This may be your simple answer. And, from your point of view, you are right. After all, many very well played games have taken this course. Right, mutually very well played games! Do not forget that Black has very good counter-chances after the clear-cut 8 ♗e3 ♕c7 9 f4 d6 10 ♕f3 a6 followed by b7-b5 or 11 a4 b6, always with unclear consequences.

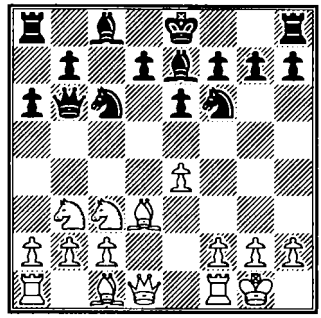
b) White waits with any attack on the opponent's queen but intends to exploit the queen's not very useful position (without b7-b5 Black has no counterplay at all...) to disguise his activities, including an advance in the centre. I personally consider this reasoning to be correct logically, however, it is necessary to combine various strategic changes depending on each(!) of the opponent's future moves!

At this moment you find yourself at a crossroads and you should decide what to play. However, this decision must become a law for you in the following course of play! I myself chose category *b)* (certainly my previous experience played a role) – maybe due to the fact that this solution was strategically interesting and exacting...

8 0-0 0-0

Again a move which is natural only at first sight. Let us analyse other possibilities, their pros and cons, from the strategic point of view.

1. **8...a6**



This move has a single small advantage but also a big disadvantage. Its pro consists in its immediate preparation of a queenside operation and the following variation: 9 ♗g5?! h6 10 ♗h4 ♘xe4!?.

Question:

What disadvantage of 8...a6 we are speaking of?

Answer:

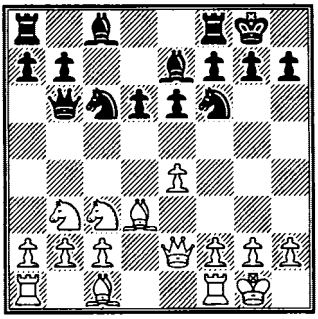
The disadvantage of 8...a6 lies in the weakening of the b6-square (what a change!). White may proceed 9 a4! ♕c7 (or 9...0-0 10 a5) 10 a5 followed by 11 ♗e3 (only now!) and a perfect favourable blockade of Black's queenside. The pressure of white pieces may then be focussed there (e.g., by employing the ♘c3-a4 manoeuvre). However, a change in move order, 9 ♗e3?! ♕c7 10 a4, leaves White without a desirable result

after 10...b6. If you aimed at the right target, add another 2 points to your account!

2. **8...d6**

The difference between this move and 8...0-0 is not great... Only, after 9 ♕e2 Black could think about early activity on the queenside: 9...♕c7!? 10 f4 a6. An adequate response by White may consist of 11 ♗d2 b5 12 ♖ae1 b4 13 ♘d1... with a concentration of his forces in the centre and preparation for e4-e5.

9 ♕e2 d6



Question:

Having played 9 ♕e2, White has clearly indicated his intention. Which plan does he consider and how can the ♗c1 contribute to it?

Answer:

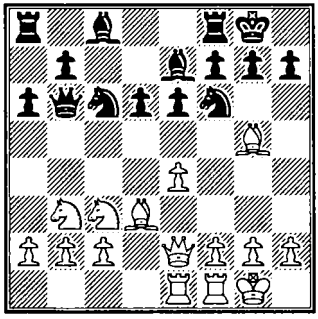
White naturally intends to break through the centre and prepares the e4-e5 advance!

You may ask: 'Where shall I put it?', I mean the black-squared bishop. Only those who are inconsistent would place it on e3 because, in playing 9 ♕e2, White gave sufficient notice of his intentions and, after 10 ♗e3?, this bishop would only present an obstruction. Its active assistance may best be perceived by the other white pieces if it stood on g5 (2 points) but the even more reserved 10 ♗d2!? (also 2 points) has its merits.

10 ♗g5!? a6

It is very evident that Black is quite experienced in this opening. He only prepares b7-b5 now when the most principal positional danger, consisting of a2-a4, has passed. This move could naturally be played even now, however, it would reveal a significant drawback: White has already started another plan and does not want to return with his bishop to e3. Also, note that Black is keeping his queen on b6 as long as possible to prevent White from playing f2-f4.

11 ♖ae1!



Question:

As I said before, the operations on the chessboard are focussing on the e4-e5 advance, therefore e1 is the best square for the queen's rook. And why right now and not after previous 11 ♔h1 and 12 f4?

Answer:

White cannot really do without f2-f4, that is why the safe 11 ♔h1 suggests itself; however, it is superficial! Black can utilise the loss of time 11 ♔h1?! to launch timely counterplay: 11...♕c7 12 f4 b5. Without ♖ae1, White cannot achieve e4-e5 and therefore he plays it as soon as possible; the king move, on the other hand, may prove unnecessary. The point is represented by a detail: in the variation 11 ♖ae1 ♕c7?! 12 f4 b5 13 e5± White gains a full tempo. Also, further stubbornness by Black, represented by 11...♗d7 12 ♔h1 (only now...) 12...♕c7 13 f4±, may also be questionable. It is waste of words talking about loss of a tempo in the Sicilian. The delicate understanding and distinguishing the quality of both moves will bring you two points and, also, an inspiration to resolve a similar situation in your own practice.

11...♘e5

Queenside counterplay seems to be useless: Black fully realises this and rightly concentrates on defence. He exchanges the dangerous bishop first, he could also play 11...♘b4. The passive 11...♘d7 would lead to spatial problems after 12 ♕h5!.

Note the ambiguous role of the ♕b6: she prevents the f2-f4 advance until the last moment but gets in the way of the b-pawn...

12 ♔h1

White is also short of breath but only after his initiative has been decided (after 11...♘e5 a timely e4-e5 breakthrough cannot be prevented).

12...♘xd3 13 cxd3 ♕d8

From the point of view of the further course of the game it makes no difference if the queen is placed on d8 or c7, however, on c7 there might be additional problems after ♖c1. The ♗e7 should be covered since after 13...♗d7 14 f4 the threat of 15 e5 is deadly.

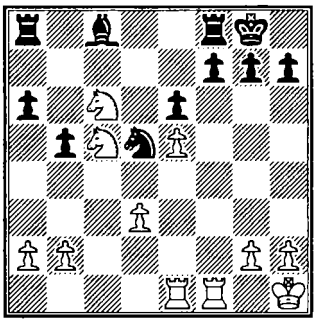
14 f4 b5 15 e5 ♘e8 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 17 ♘d4! dxe5

After 17...♗b7? 18 f5 White's initiative would result in a dangerous attack. Black may find the best defensive solutions in the future play, he reminds us of an experienced defender in football under pressure of the opponent's forwards. Nevertheless, the spatial advantage will now be converted into an advantageous endgame.

18 ♕xe5 ♕d6! 19 ♘e4 ♕xe5 20 fxe5 ♘c7

The trouble with the ♗c8 development may best be demonstrated by the fact that Black cannot play 20...♗b7 21 ♘c5 ♗d5 because of 22 ♘d7+ -.

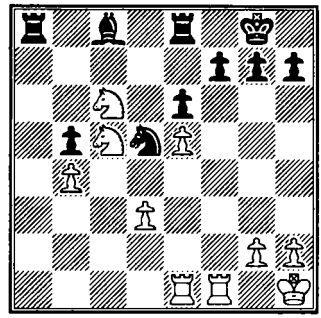
21 ♘c5 ♘d5 22 ♘c6!



This is the position I was heading for after the queen exchange since the team of horses comprehensively paralyses the black forces. At this moment I assumed the position to

be nearly won but... it is very difficult to shoot the decisive 'goal'. Yes, the course of the game may be compared with the extra time of a football match where the first team to score a goal wins. The opposing team seems tied down to defence but they fight back, kick the ball out and you are not able to score... God forbid that a single forward of the opposing team gets possession of one of these desperate kicks and races away to score a goal themself. It may be a tragedy and it is well known to me from both the pitch and the chessboard. I remember a chess philosopher, international master Emil Richter, who commented on similar situations on the chessboard as follows: 'Look, a carefree football player!' I am not sure whether he was completely right but to some extent he surely was. You may know the feeling that your opponent is not racking his brains over the technique of his play, you succeed in putting him under pressure but you cannot find the decisive blow. You become impatient, however, sometimes time-trouble comes, together with an irreparable blunder – and the stubborn opponent scores the full point! It is all the same for the tournament table and Elo-rating: it is as broad as it is long. The currently analysed game did not contain such a cruel scenario, however, the target was not met – expressed in football jargon, the score was 0:0. What important things occurred in the game later? In the position shown in the diagram the threat was 23 b4: the black pieces would have no moves then, therefore:

22...a5 23 a3 ♖e8 24 b4 axb4 25 axb4



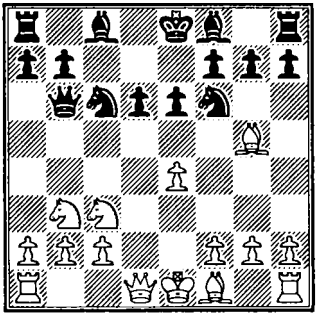
It seems that the game is over. After 25...♘e7 Black will be lost if White chooses the right move order 26 ♖a1! ♖xa1 27 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 28 ♖xa1. Also, after 25...♖a2 26 ♖a1 the white rook would easily complete the destruction started by two knights. However, my tough opponent finds an excellent defensive 'chute'.

25...♗a6! 26 ♖a1?! (26 ♖c1!? ♖ec8 27 ♘b3 ♖c7 28 ♖c5±) **26...♖ec8 27 ♘d4 ♘xb4 28 ♘db3 ♖c6 29 ♖a5 ♖d8 30 d4?!**

30 ♔g1 would still maintain a slight edge for White. To be honest, my clear sky has become overcast during several recent moves and the rest of the game has completely lost any methodical interest (after time-pressure the game resulted in a draw in 56 moves).

I believe that the example demonstratively reveals not only various fine points of accurate strategy in this opening but also occasional pitfalls of such active play. Such pitfalls also include the fact that the opponent is subjected to our pressure but sometimes his only moves are forced... Is it always a success? I do not know, however '...live on your own crops!' (Persius)

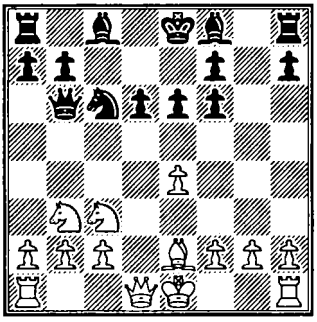
The black queen comes to b6 in various situations but always with the same intent – to dislodge the white knight from its central position on d4. Nevertheless each of these variations has its own tiny accompanying differences and it is necessary to understand them (again, in a dynamic form)! For example.: **2...♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗g5** and now **6...♕b6**. After **7 ♘b3 e6**



White has the following possibilities:

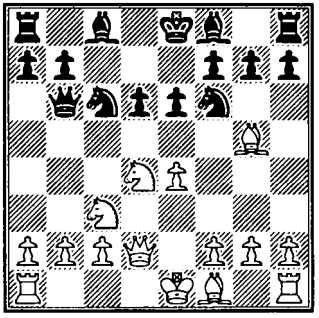
a) to follow his above-mentioned plan 8 ♗d3, ♕e2 and so on, or

b) to damage the opponent's pawn structure after **8 ♗xf6 gxf6**. Then, **9 ♗e2** is a possibility,



with a clear strategic target: to place the bishop on h5 and pursue a further active plan f2-f4-f5!

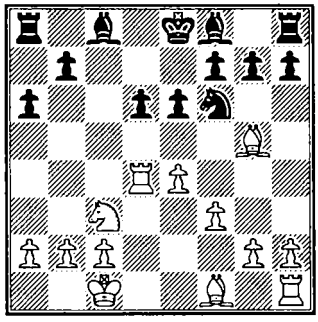
This may be a reason why some players prefer to postpone ♕b6 by a single move, i.e. **6 ♗g5 e6 7 ♕d2 ♕b6!?**.



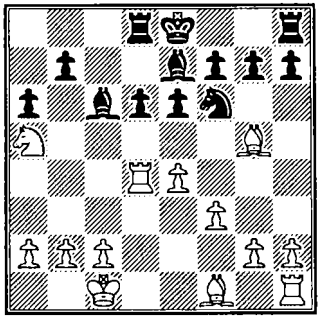
Note that after 8 ♘b3 a6 both of White's preceding plans are quite devalued by the clumsy position of the ♕d2. After 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 ♗e2 Black may successfully respond 10...h5 and after 9 ♗d3 ♗e7 the e4-e5 advance is suddenly a long way off...

White players therefore choose another active opportunity, namely 8 0-0-0 ♗e7 9 f3 with the further advance of the g and h pawns (after ♗g5-e3). The black b and a pawns, however, react in the same manner (after ♕b6-c7); mutual tactically ingenuous attacks on both kings are then launched – who comes first, wins. Direct transfer from the opening to the endgame is usually not the ideal solution for White in the Sicilian, however, here it might be seriously considered, i.e. **8 0-0-0!?**. The more so if even G.Kasparov played this way in a game against Georgian player M.Mchedilishvili during his victorious campaign at the Chess

Olympiad in Bled 2002. However, is White's dish served up after **8...♕xd4 9 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 10 ♖xd4 a6 11 f3** spicy enough?

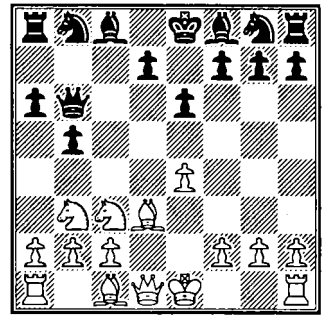


It depends on the seasoning! Kasparov got to the heart of the matter brilliantly, using a knight manoeuvre: **11...♗d7 12 ♘a4! ♗c6 13 ♘b6 ♖d8 14 ♘c4 ♗e7 15 ♘a5!**.

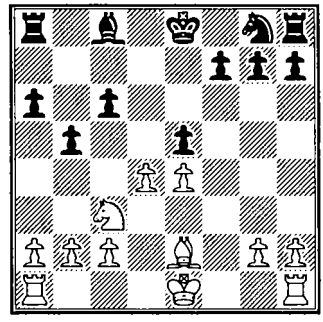


Four moves of the knight only... and White has a clear edge! The right selection of seasoning is not only dependent on taste, it also depends on delicate instinct!

The queen's foray after a preceding b7-b5 has its own specifics, especially after **2...e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♘c3 b5 6 ♗d3 ♕b6 7 ♘b3**.



However, there are lengthy discussions on the interesting **7 ♗e3 ♗c5 8 ♗e2!? ♘c6 9 ♘xc6 ♗xe3 10 fxe3 dxc6 11 ♕d4 ♕xd4 12 exd4 e5!?**.



It seems that in the position shown in the last but one diagram Black has successfully solved the former problem: his queen does not clog the advance of the b-pawn and he may focus on the speedy development of his minor pieces. However, it is not so easy!

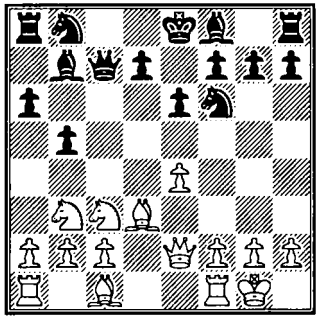
Question:

What should Black take care of? What will you recommend to him? What will you play after 7...♗b7?

Answer:

Several questions aimed at the same issue. Yes, Black's current problem lies in a sensitive deployment of his forces on the queenside. After 7...♗b7?, the strong 8 a4! (2 points) might follow; this represents a positional threat in the position in the diagram. 8...bxa4 leads to a disintegration of the pawn structure and a weakening but after 8...b4 the insertion 9 a5!± may follow with a further 10 ♘a4 and penetration to b6. Black should show patience and first retreat his queen 7...♕c7! (1 point).

What should we recommend to White after **7...♕c7** ? Probably a similar plan as described above. The plan should again naturally take into account the special conditions represented by the mobile b-pawn and a quick development of the bishop to b7. After **8 0-0 ♗b7 9 ♕e2** Black, in playing **9...♘f6,**



need not worry about 10 e5 due to 10...b4 11 exf6 bxc3 12 fxg7 ♗xg7 controlling all the events on each of the most important diagonals. The bishop moves should not be recommended now, after 10 ♗g5 Black reacts with emphatic pressure on the black squares: 10...b4 11 ♘d1 ♗d6, and if 12 f4 then h6!. After 10 ♗d2 Black is O.K. with counterplay in the centre: 10...b4 11 ♘d1 d5! 12 e5 ♘e4 because 13 ♗e1 is too slow because of 13...♕xe5 14 f3 ♗d6!. Therefore, an adequate response for White in the above position may consist of **10 f4!**. The e4-e5 advance is hanging over Black's head like a Sword of Damocles and **10...b4 11 ♘d1 d5 12 e5 ♘e4 13 ♘f2! ♘xf2 14 ♕xf2 g6 15 ♗e3** turned out to be too favourable for White in the game S.Movsesian – A.Kveinys, France 2002.

As we can see, White's plan, characterised by consistent play in the centre after ♗d3, ♕e2, f4..., is an active response to several variations where the ♕b6 move is tried. It may also become a surprising inspiration for play in other systems of the Sicilian; at least this was the case in some of my games and also in some games of my readers who liked to play it.

For example, shortly before completing the text of this book I played the following game in which I again tried the above-mentioned recipe... After all, often it depends more on your conviction than some 'undetectable truth' in the dangerous variations! Especially in still unexplored and ever-expanding labyrinths of the Sicilian, similar dynamic ideas seem to be the proverbial salt, which is, as a Czech proverb says, more precious than gold...

This is to say that in many complicated variations of the Sicilian an absolutely correct method cannot be determined, and, besides: 'An opinion weighs more than the truth'. (Ulpianus) Naturally, I mean your own opinion...

V. Jansa – V. Babula
Prague 2003

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♘c3 b5 6 ♗d3 ♗b7 7 0-0 ♗c5!? 8 ♘b3 ♗e7

In this case the cost of dislodging the knight lies in the bishop's moves: is it better or worse for Black? Playing White, we will follow the same striking strategy, which should be effective enough even in this, slightly different case! Therefore:

9 ♕e2

Vacating the escape d1-square for the knight and simultaneously supporting e4-e5...

9...b4 10 ♘d1 ♘c6 11 f4 d6

...and Black patiently prepares the completion of his kingside development. The time should be utilised! Where? Surely on the other side, where Black's position is compromised by the precipitate b5-b4...

12 a3! ♘f6

...after 12...a5 13 ♗b5! ♘f6 14 ♘d4 the black position would resemble a mined bridge before the inevitable explosion...

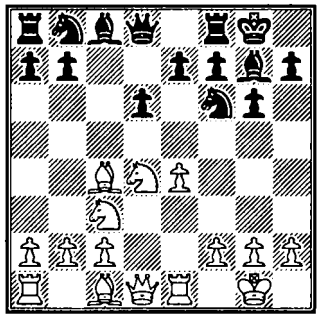
13 axb4 ♘xb4 14 ♘a5!

...sometimes even a knight on the edge properly completes the across-the-board strategy. From the blockading a5-square it controls the activity on the queenside and, to certain extent, the whole board. White's advantage is not great but it is a sufficient basis for other active possibilities and plans.

2. Dragon recipe

The Dragon Variation is also used by many proponents of the Sicilian. It is based on a dynamic understanding of various possibilities along the main diagonal a1-h8; at present, extensive knowledge of the most widespread Rauzer system is a must: **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3** Not everyone likes mutual theoretical out-trumping in endless variations, not everyone likes the classical methods after 6 ♗e2. The following text represents some kind of a digested strategic recipe for which a thorough explanation will be necessary in the near future. I will appreciate your contribution...

The system at issue employs the ♗c4 development in conjunction with kingside castling: **6 ♗c4 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖e1** (following the course of the game V.Jansa – M.Jírovský, Kolín 2002.

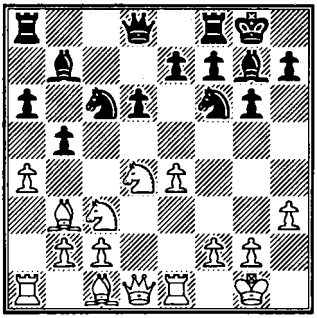


This situation cannot do without a little instruction:

1. Formerly 8 h3 was considered a must: after 8...♘c6 White comfortably covered the centre with 9 ♗e3.

2. However, Black has found out that the development of the knight may be postponed. Therefore, Black probably plays better with **8...a6!? 9 ♗b3 b5**. The 'wasted' tempo h3

allows Black counterplay with impunity: **10 ♖e1 ♗b7 11 a4 ♘c6!**,



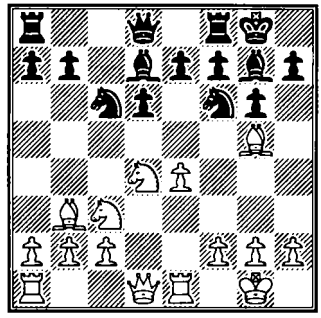
equalising. Some time ago Alexander Khalifman played this against me but also, many years ago, ...Miloš Jírovský!

3. Everything develops, so this variation develops too. Is it necessary for White to cover the centre with ♗e3 and the pawn on h3? No, it is not. It is enough to put the rook on e1 and control the tactical threat on e4... Only later White thinks about where the black-squared bishop will be placed, the g5-square may be recommended...

4. It should be added that after 8 ♖e1 the answer 8...a6 9 ♗b3 b5 does not hit home: 10 a4! b4 11 ♘d5 a5 12 ♗g5 with a clear edge for White. In general, jumping to d5 with the knight in a position with ♖e1 forms an efficient basis for White's strategic plans.

8...♘c6 9 ♗b3 ♗g4!?

Black tries to exploit the fact that White has not covered the g4-square. Another attempt lies in 9...♕b6 but White reacts comfortably with 10 ♗e3 and both 10...♘g4 11 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 12 ♗d4 and 10...♘xe4 11 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 12 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 13 ♗g5 might not bring Black any good. What should White play after **9...♗d7** ? Probably **10 ♗g5**,



and if 10...♖c8 then maybe even 11 ♘xc6!? followed by 12 ♕d2 If 10...h6 then, naturally, 11 ♗h4...

10 ♕d3

10 f3 would only indicate a basic misunderstanding of the requirements of the position.

10...♘xd4

I saw the following variation in a game of the imaginative Swedish GM Hector: 10...♘e5?! 11 ♕f1! followed by h3, f4, ♗e3, ♕f2 and an advantage to White.

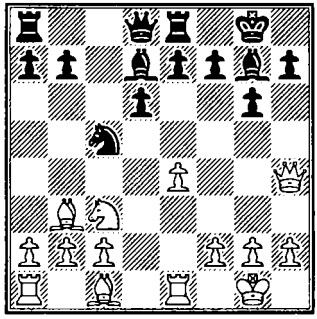
11 ♕xd4 ♘d7 12 ♕d3 ♘c5 13 ♕g3 ♗d7

Another opportunity consisted of 13...♗e6; even then 14 ♕h4 would follow.

14 ♕h4!

The exchanges in the centre have brought the white queen logically to this attacking position. From here the queen aims at e7 but also supports the exchange of the black-squared bishops via the h6-square and subsequent active play in the centre.

14...♖e8



Question:

You are considering two possibilities: 15 ♗h6 and 15 ♗g5 Which of them will you prefer and why?

Answer:

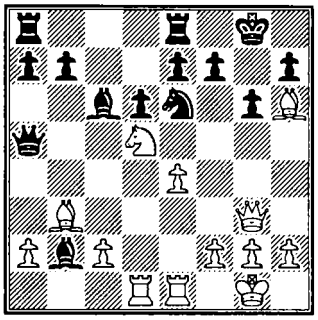
It is hard to compare. The consistent 15 ♗h6 ♗f6 16 ♗g5 with a quick ♖ad1 and an initiative on the d and e files (3 points) leads to a slight edge; on the other hand, 15 ♗g5 creates an attractive direct threat 16 ♘d5 which may only be parried with another knight jump. 15 ♗h6 is, however, a more practical continuation. After a little hesitation I chose 15 ♗g5 (2 points) but now I would rectify myself...

15 ♗g5 ♘e6! 16 ♗h6 ♗f6 17 ♕g3 ♕a5 18 ♘d5!

Naturally White cannot hesitate with the pawn sacrifice. After 18 ♖ad1 Black could consolidate with 18...♕h5.

18...♗xb2 19 ♖ad1 ♗c6

Even after the immediate escape from the 'scene of the crime', 19... ♗h8 20 f4 or 19...♗g7 20 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 21 e5, White would have had a strong attack. Therefore, Black would like to exchange the opponent's strong knight first and gain the f6-square for the retreat of his bishop. But time is money...



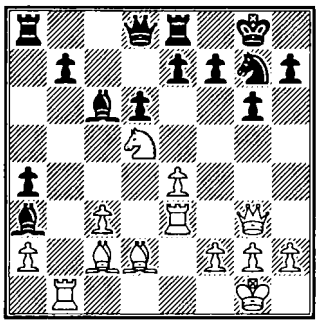
20 ♗d2!

Shortly before the game I had a complicated but interesting vascular operation. I may have drawn some lessons for the 64-square operations from it: in any case, the long a1-h8 diagonal represents a 'coronary artery' for the black king. As long as the bishop is on this diagonal, blood is pulsating there and the king is alive. If it clogs up, it is over...

20...♕d8 21 c3 a5 22 ♖b1 ♗a3 23 ♖e3!

Increasing the attacking potential, the black king is really struggling for air and fights back desperately. The threat is primarily the deadly transfer to the h-file.

23...a4 24 ♗c2 ♘g7

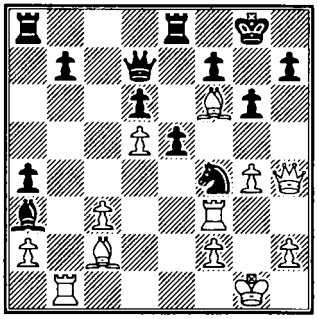


Question:

White played 25 ♖f3. Do you consider this move:

A. an inappropriate delay – White should have preferred an uncompromising attack by the direct 25 ♕h4 and 26 ♖h3 or

B. an important coordination of white forces prior to the final attack?



Answer:

All things come to those who are patient, even in case of a direct attack! Prior to the final attack, it is necessary to coordinate all the forces, in this case to unblock the bishop's path by means of the correct 25 ♖f3! (2 points). On the other hand, 25 ♕h4? (0 points) would have been premature because Black could then revive himself after 25...♗xd5 26 ♖h3 (26 exd5 ♘h5) 26...♘h5 27 exd5 e5!.

25 ♖f3! ♘h5 26 ♕h4 ♗xd5 27 exd5 e5

A desperate attempt to get a 'bypass' but it is too late...

28 ♗g5 ♕d7

The life of the black king will be over after 28...f6 29 ♖xf6! ♘xf6 30 ♗xf6 ♕d7 31 ♗xg6 ♖f8 32 ♗xh7+! ♕xh7 33 ♕g5+ ♔f7 34 ♖xb7+.

29 g4 ♘f4?

Only 29...f6 represented the last tiny chance. During the game I considered 30 gxh5 fxg5 31 ♕xg5 e4 32 ♖g3 to be sufficiently strong.

30 ♗f6

Question:

How will you complete the game after:

A. **30...♘xd5**

B. **30...h5**

Answer:

Just a test of multiplication tables at the end. You must have seen both 30...♘xd5 31 ♕xh7+! (1 point) and 30...h5 31 ♖xf4 exf4 32 ♗f5! (1 point); the latter occurred in the game – with a definite finale.

'What recipe is this, a more or less successful game only,' some sceptical readers may say. However, the perceptive ones may sit up. After all: 'The rudiments of all things are imperceptible.' (Cicero)

3. Consistency first

In the French defence there is a strategic disadvantage for Black: the white-squared bishop is often shut in within the black pawn structure. If it remains isolated a clear positional malady may develop in the black position. The well-known position of the Tarrasch system

arising after **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 ♗d3 c5 6 c3 ♘c6 7 ♘e2 cxd4 8 cxd4 f6 9 exf6 ♘xf6 10 0-0 ♗d6 11 ♘f3** has been thoroughly analysed and many times described. Nevertheless I will try to indicate clearly and comprehensibly White's further attempts to gain the edge and to suggest lucidly his undoubtedly basic and most appropriate plan. The basic plan, even a law, lies in the consistent pursuit of the exchange of the black-squared bishop as quickly as possible, thus exchanging the most actively placed minor piece in the black position! You will assess, compare and see: 'A prudent man will certainly create his own good fortune.' (Plautus)

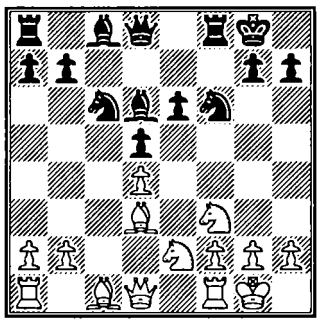
Black, for his part, has three possibilities:

a) **11...0-0**

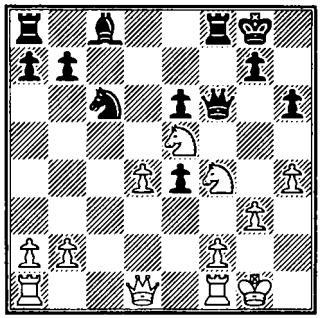
b) **11...♕b6**

c) **11...♕c7**

a) **11...0-0**

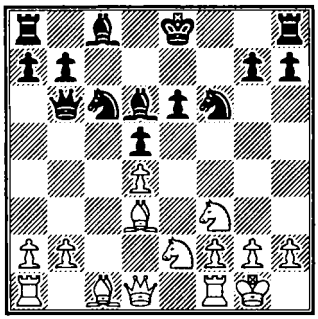


Here the exchanging method suggests itself: **12 ♗f4** Black can only seek complications in **12...♗xf4 13 ♘xf4 ♘e4**, however, both 14 ♕c1 and the more complicated **14 g3!? ♕f6 15 h4 h6 16 ♗xe4 dxe4 17 ♘e5!**



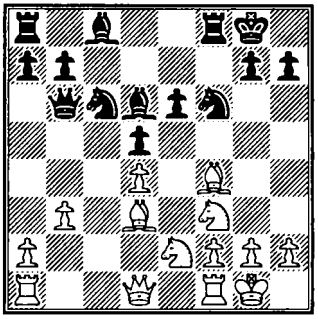
17...♖d8 18 ♘xc6 bxc6 19 ♕a4!? have given White a strategic initiative in contemporary practice.

b) **11...♕b6**



From many possible moves I have only chosen the one which is, from our point of view, the most principal: **12 b3!?** (The immediate 12 ♗f4 is linked to complications arising after 12...♗xf4 13 ♘xf4 ♕xb2 14 ♖e1 0-0.) The pawn move is not linked to a comfortable yet passive fianchetto but again with the following exchanging manoeuvre of the bishop: **12...0-0 13 ♗f4!**.

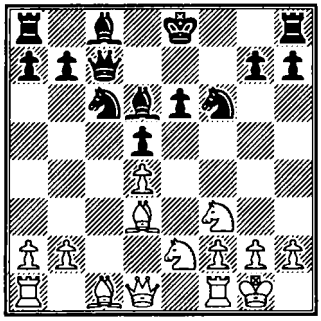
Slovene GM Dražen Sermek, a refined connoisseur of the Tarrasch system, told me after one of the Olympic matches in Bled 2002: 'I used to play 13 ♗b2 but I have grown wiser...'



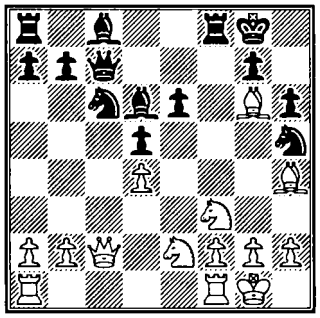
Here, after 13...♗xf4 14 ♘xf4 ♘e4, probably 15 ♘e2 (15 g3?! ♘xd4 16 ♗xe4 dxe4 =) will be the most accurate response (15...♖xf3!? 16 gxf3 ♘g5 17 f4 ♘f3+ 18 ♔g2 ♘fxd4 19 ♖e1±). Black may avoid the exchange by means of a 'little combination' 13...♘xd4!? 14 ♘fxd4 e5 but the bishop pair in the centre after 15 ♗e3 exd4 16 ♗xd4 is a sufficiently strong weapon for White.

The immediate **12...e5** remains; however, even then White succeeds, after 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♖b1 0-0 16 ♗f4, in exchanging the bishops and gains a small but steady advantage.

c) **11...♕c7**



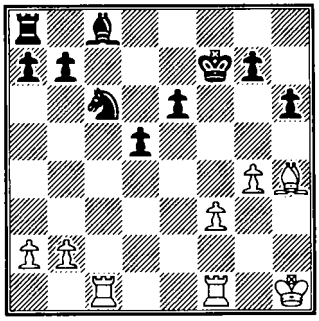
Immediately avoiding the exchange. What cannot be done directly will be done by an indirect route via g3! **12 ♗g5 0-0 13 ♗h4! ♘h5!?** (Tooth and nail... Black again thwarts the plan. 13...e5 14 dxe5 ♘xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗g3±) **14 ♕c2! h6** (14...g6 ends in a catastrophe: 15 ♗xg6! hxg6 16 ♕xg6+ ♘g7 17 ♘g5 + -) **15 ♗g6** (...by fair means or foul: **15...♘f4 16 ♘xf4 ♗xf4 17 ♗g3±** but Black remains stubborn!



15...♖xf3!?

In this connection I recall an evening at the Under-18 Junior World Championship in the Spanish city of Oropesa del Mar in 2000. I was analysing games of the Luxembourg youths when a clearly emotional David Navara appeared behind the door. I knew he had been playing an important game against a favourite of the tournament, GM Vallejo Pons. 'I won!', David joyfully announced and quickly showed the entire game. The immediate analysis has left a great impression on 'my' Luxembourgers and also on me... and I do hope it also will on you. Precisely the above-mentioned variation was played. Naturally, the exchange sacrifice was very well known to David and me, however, the simplicity in surmounting all pitfalls

laid by his experienced opponent in the prepared variation was surprising: **16 gxf3 ♗xh2+ 17 ♔h1 ♘f4 18 ♘g3 ♗xg3** (Later on, Russian GM E.Gleizerov came up with the quite unbelievable 18...♕b6!? but there might be a 'hole' in his fantasy: 19 ♖ad1 ♘xd4 20 ♕a4 ♘xg6 21 ♕e8+! ♔h7 22 ♘h5 with an irresistible attack for White.) **19 fxg3 ♘xg6 20 ♕xg6 ♕f7 21 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 22 g4 ♘xd4 23 ♖ac1 ♘c6.**



Question:

Black has two pawns for the exchange. If he succeeds in getting his rook quickly into play he will be O.K. What will you recommend to White, who is to move?

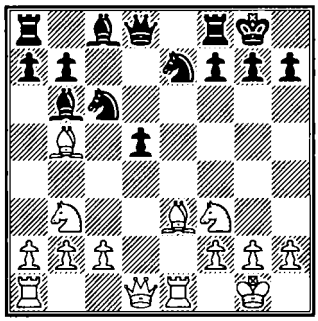
Answer:

'Let us try to use time, for time passes quickly.' (Ovidius)

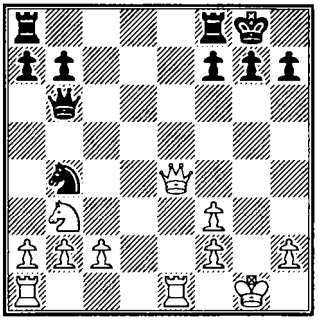
Yes, White must use the time which he has at his disposal, to penetrate to the seventh rank. Even at the cost of a third pawn! The only right move is **24 b4!** and, after **24...a6, 25 a4!** (3 points). This was also played by Navara in the game. The variation 25...♗d7 26 b5 axb5 27 axb5 ♘a5 28 ♖c7 ♔e8 29 b6 and 30 ♖a1 seems to be hopeless, Black therefore preferred taking **25...♘xb4**, however, the rook remained passive until the end of the game: **26 ♖c7+ ♔g8 27 g5! h5 28 ♖fc1 ♘c6 29 g6! d4 30 ♗g3 d3** (30...e5 31 ♗xe5+ -) **31 ♖d1 e5 32 ♖xd3 ♗f5 33 ♖b3 ♘d4 34 ♖bxb7 ♘e6 35 ♖e7 e4 36 ♗e5 e3 37 ♔g2 ♖c8 38 ♖xg7+ ♘xg7 39 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 40 ♖f7+ 1:0**

White should also pursue the same strategic target – the exchange of the black-squared bishops – in another branch of the Tarrasch Variation: **3 ♘d2 c5 4 ♘gf3 ♘c6 5 exd5 exd5 6 ♗b5 ♗d6 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 0-0 ♘e7 9 ♘b3**

White's reaction suggests itself especially after **9...♗b6**: **10 ♖e1 0-0 11 ♗e3!**.

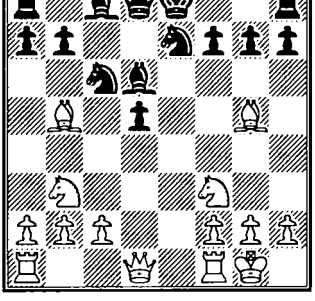


If Black does not want to reconcile himself to the isolated pawn in its passive form, he mainly decides on the following pawn sacrifice: **11...♗g4!? 12 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 13 ♗xc6 ♘xc6 14 ♕xd5 ♘b4 15 ♕e4 ♗xf3 16 gxf3.**



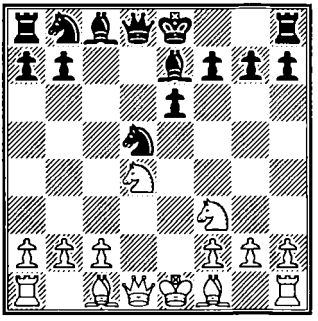
However, the compensation for the pawn is not enough, White should not react timidly but actively! After both 16...♖ad8 17 ♖ad1! (17 ♖e2 ♖d6 ∞) 17...♖xd1 18 ♖xd1 ♘xa2 19 ♖d7! and 16...a5 17 ♖ad1! a4 18 ♘c1 ♖a5 19 f4 ± V.Jansa – A.Berelovich, Germany 2003.

In my opinion, better is **9...♗d6**; the same plan then requires a higher degree of patience: the target may quickly be achieved by the direct 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 ♕d4!? 0-0 12 ♗f4 ♘f5 13 ♕d2 but only at the cost of straightening out the opponent's pawn structure. Therefore, frequently a more complicated manoeuvre **10 ♗g5!?**



is played here, also followed by ♗h4-g3, however, in this case (with the black bishop placed on d6) other methods of combating the isolated pawn come into consideration, too.

Quite another crossroads of the Tarrasch Variation arises after **3...c5 4 ♘gf3 ♘f6 5 exd5 ♘xd5 6 ♘b3 cxd4 7 ♘bxd4 ♗e7**.

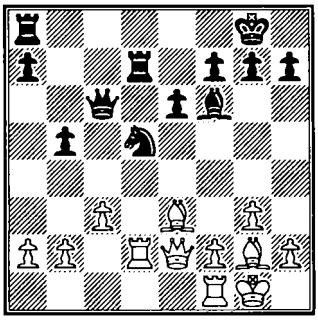


Which direction will you choose? Do not play the role of a blind man who, with white stick in hand, does not know how and which way to proceed; decide unequivocally and then steadfastly walk on the path you have chosen! Your decision is closely linked to the direction of the development of the white-squared bishop. If you move the bishop to d3, your plans will be linked to opportunities on the kingside, if you decide on the g3 and ♗g2 fianchetto, you will play in the centre and on the queenside. And then already:

'Enjoy your fate!' (Horatius)

For a long time I enjoyed my fate during a game against Victor Korchnoi at the Nice Olympiad 1974. The game itself was full of experience and emotion which cannot be forgotten even after a long time. I chose **8 g3!?** and still I

am convinced that this is the most promising continuation here. After **8...0-0 9 ♗g2 ♗d7 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 12 ♘e5 ♕c7 13 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 14 ♕e2** I had a pleasant position and was in a good mood, which is always important! On the other hand, Korchnoi told me after the game was over: 'I did not know what I should be playing for' – the truth is that he entangled himself in small problems in his slightly worse position. The game followed: **14...b5 15 ♗e3 ♗f6 16 ♖ad1 ♖fc8 17 c3 ♖c7 18 ♖d2 ♖d7?!**.



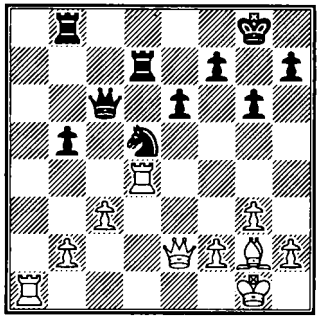
Question:

Black's last move was not accurate, better was 18...♖d8. Why?

Answer:

Playing **18...♖d7?!**, Black lost control of the c-file and allowed White to extend his initiative to the queenside by **19 a4!** (2 points) **a6 20 ♖a1!** (an additional 2 points). White thus gains full control of the a-file.

20...♖b8 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♗d4 ♗xd4 23 ♖xd4 g6



Question:

Black could also alleviate the problem of his eighth rank by 23...h6. Both pawn moves have their pros and cons. What was the con of 23...g6?

Answer:

The disadvantage lies in the weakening of the h6-square, where a white pawn immediately aims: 24 h4! (2 points).

Black naturally did not want to prevent the pawn advance by the symmetrical 24...h5. This would be O.K. in the endgame but here 25 g4 might have followed with an attack. However, it was necessary to stop the pawn advance by all means. The only tolerable solution consisted of 24...h6.

24 h4! ♕c7?! 25 ♗xd5! (25 h5?! ♘f6...) **25...♖xd5 26 ♖xd5 exd5 27 h5 ♕d6 28 h6**

The agile h-pawn has become an excellent trump. Besides, Black was short of time and decided to get rid of this painful thorn in his flesh...

28...g5 29 ♕d2 ♕xh6 30 ♕xd5

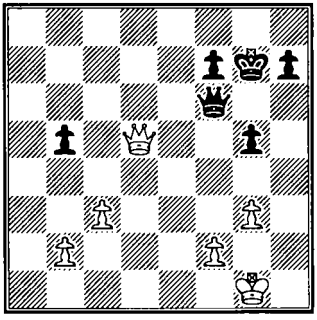
...however, at what price? The black queen stands desperately in a corner while the white one controls

everything splendidly from a vantage point in the centre of the board!

30...♕f6 31 ♖a8!

Also, 31 ♖a5 was not bad but I did not want to give my opponent the slightest chance, in this case 31...h6 32 ♖xb5 ♖d8.

31...♖xa8 32 ♕xa8+ ♔g7 33 ♕d5!



The active queen counts for so much! I remember that over the following moves 'Victor the Terrible' several times unwillingly 'played the piano' in his time-pressure, in other words he did not know which piece to grab...

33...b4 34 cxb4 h5 35 b5 h4 36 ♕c5

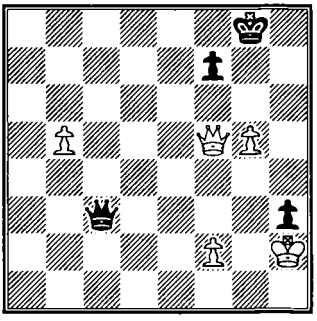
With the threat of 37 ♕c3...

36...♔h7 37 g4!

Now again 38 ♕f5+; it is some kind of instructive 'ping-pong', with my opponent desperately returning blows while on the ground. And, what an opponent!

37...♕xb2 38 ♕xg5 h3 39 ♕f5+ ♔g7 40 ♔h2 ♕c3

Having played his last control move (after 5 hours of play there was a time control, then the games were adjourned and resumed only on the next day ...), Korchnoi miraculously beat the almost vertical flag just a second before it could fall. You will certainly understand that I felt great now. It was a rare exception to get Korchnoi on the ropes. White's position is won, especially after **41 g5** – another exchanging check on f6 is threatened. Black responded **41...♔g8**



but as he told me later, he wanted to resign the hopeless position... my God, why didn't he do that! The course of the following events shows clearly how close chess heaven and hell may be.

There were still 20 minutes left to the time control; I did not know whether I should a) play on or b) seal the move (at the time this used to be part of the procedure in case of adjourned games). Or, would my opponent resign? With the exception of natural disasters, loss of concentration is the worse thing that can happen to a chess player. After pointless roaming around and looking over the chessboard, I decided just before the time-control to play something – anything – it didn't matter... Black should resign.

Question:

What do you think? Which of the following moves did I play in the game?

A. **42 f3**

B. **42 ♕f6**

C. **42 g6**

In other words: which of them throws the win away?

Answer:

You may have easily and quickly found that after both 42 f3 and 42 g6 White wins, in case of 42 g6 the win is even quicker: 42...fxg6 43 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 44 ♕d6+ ♔f7 45 ♕f4+ with a queen exchange on e3 or g3. If you found that **42 ♕f6??** was a gross error, you will be awarded 1 point since I just lost half a point... Victor Lvovich, naturally jubilant, immediately played **42...♕c7+!**

For me this check was something like getting punched: White inevitably loses the b-pawn (43 ♔xh3 ♕d7+ or 43 f4 ♕c2+). Instead of an excellent win in a well-played game – a rotten draw, instead of heaven – the unbearable hell of a self-reproaching night. 'If fate wants to destroy somebody, it makes a fool of him.' (Publilius Syrus). However, fate may be capricious. Later that year I met Korchnoi at a tournament in Hastings. After an exciting game in mutual time pressure the control flag fell on my clock. Neither of us knew at this moment how many moves we had made... Only a precise reconstruction revealed the joyous news for me – my flag had fallen only on the 41st move! My great opponent resigned at last... 'Fortune both spins and destroys using the same finger.' (Statius)

Point rating:

If, in this chapter, you scored 55 or more points, your strategic abilities are at a high level. However, 40 points should be sufficient to indicate a decent opening of your games. Those who did not test their abilities may have learned something, or even amused themselves...

You may have noticed that in the previous dynamic account dealing with the correct opening of the game I deliberately supported a single side of the board, either White or Black – not both at a time. It was also deliberate from the methodological point of view – it can be difficult to express the strength of an idea or to outline a proper plan, especially if such a plan is accompanied by a belief in its correctness. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that there is an opponent on the other side of the board, who would like to challenge your ideas and, on the other hand, exert his own will... We must admit that chess is not only a beautiful strategic game but also a relentless sporting duel! To a large degree, awareness of what can be achieved is an important factor, too: 'Since you cannot achieve what you want, you should want what you can achieve.' (Terentius)

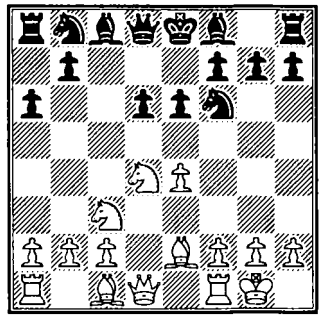
In this final chapter I will try to put myself in the shoes of a fan supporting teams on both sides. Maybe I can afford that, since I used to play passionately both in the white and black strips on this ground...

D. The Mysterious 'Scheveningen' Sicilian

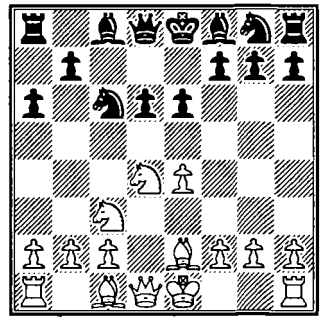
The characteristic, very flexible pawn structure of the classical Scheveningen variation, primarily determined by the black central pawn pair on d6 and e6, anticipates a series of opportunities and future plans. Along with other dynamic positional factors, e.g. semi-open files, continuous tension linked to various active advances by White in the centre and on the kingside, there are possibilities for Black consisting of various central counter-blows on the queenside; all this makes the Scheveningen variation a very dynamic and meaningful opening. How many miscellaneous ideas may be seen here!

There are not many openings requiring such perfect and sensitive strategic-tactical cooperation, using knowledge and various ideas! This statement is based on many years of experience, playing both White and Black, and reflects all the pleasant feelings I have always had when I succeeded in perceiving the ideal principle of the situation that had arisen and 'hit the right nail on the head', but also those feelings that arose when things did not come off, when the idea slipped through my fingers...

Again I will abandon the encyclopaedic knowledge of existing games, again I will lay stress on the strategic feeling and dynamics of thinking over each move and plan. We will deal with the basic position which is characterised by the development of the bishop to e2 and kingside castling by White, i.e. with one of the most popular systems in the Sicilian in the late 20th century. It arises frequently both in the Najdorf variation: **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 e6 7 0-0** and in the classical Scheveningen variation: **5...e6 6 ♗e2 a6 7 0-0**.



There may also be some modifications due to transposition from the Paulsen variation: **2...e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6** (or even 4...a6 5 ♘c3 d6!? 6 ♗e2...) **5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 d6!?**.



However, the black knight is already placed on c6 – as we will see later, this fact cannot prevent a dynamic development of stimulating ideas ...

It does not matter at all that chess fashion is at present more or less orientated towards the English attack (♗e3, f3 and hurrah g2-g4...) against nearly everything that seems to be classical in the Sicilian. This attack is used against the Najdorf, Scheveningen, even against the Paulsen variation where any such plan might have been, until recently, subject to mockery and criticism... It is fascinating that not only top grandmasters but also ordinary club-players, sometimes desiring quick activity and sometimes only tuning in to fashion, avidly plunge into the obscurity of the English attack.

This does not mean at all that the variation with the development ♗e2 loses its interest. There is always something unclear and unrevealed that many players return to. However, the dynamic changes and laws should be understood, not only from the point of view of strategy and tactics but also from that of the time of the development of ideas. I will try to explain this on the following pages. You can try this again with me, it will be a school about the right opening of the game and even the understanding of something unknown and mysterious for many of you... The Scheveningen motifs will also be accompanied by an independent test of your abilities and observations.

Based on long-term practice and strategic sense of the possible and dynamically changing further course of events on the board, first I offer the following set of basic strategic rules and habits, from the point of view of both sides, i.e. both White and Black. Believe it or not but following those rules will surely pay off, however, the respective details are mutually linked to some kind of logical thread. The better your understanding of the rules and regulations, the more accurate and better plan you can conjure up on the chessboard! Our ideas will start from the position shown in the last but one diagram.

Strategic ABC of the 'Classical Scheveningen with ♗e2'

A. Important principles for correct play by White:

1. Attack in the centre and on the kingside

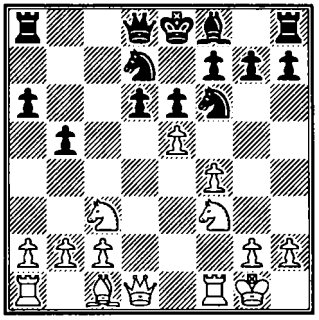
a) Enforcement of the e4-e5 advance with a subsequent utilisation of central space for further active play.

b) The g2-g4-g5 advance, possibly f4-f5 with a subsequent direct attack on the black king, most frequently on the h and f files.

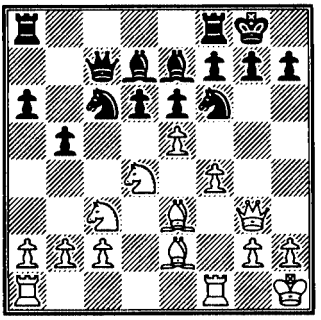
Question: When should the attack be based on e4-e5 and when should White utilise the flank attack g2-g4-g5?

Answer: The e4-e5 breakthrough is usually efficient in the following cases:

a) If Black tries quickly to mobilise the queenside forces, e.g. **7...♘bd7 8 f4 b5**, then White should play vigorously **9 ♗f3 ♗b7 10 e5! ♗xf3 11 ♘xf3** and has better prospects in this sharp position.

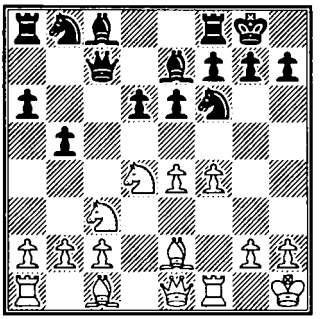


b) If Black, on the other hand, waits with his counterplay on the queenside, e.g. **7...♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♔h1 ♕c7 10 ♕e1 ♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♗d7?! 12 ♕g3 b5**, now the energetic **13 e5!** may be played again.

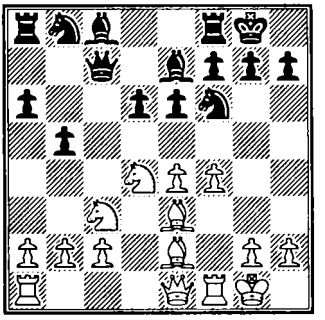


This will provide an initiative for White, crowned with a remarkable point after **13...dxe5 14 fxe5 ♘xe5 15 ♖xf6! ♗xf6 16 ♗f4** followed by ♘f3.

c) In the e4-e5 advance, an important role is played by White's black-squared bishop. Compare the situation after **7...♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♔h1 ♕c7 10 ♕e1 b5**



with the possibility **9 ♗e3 ♕c7 10 ♕e1 b5**.

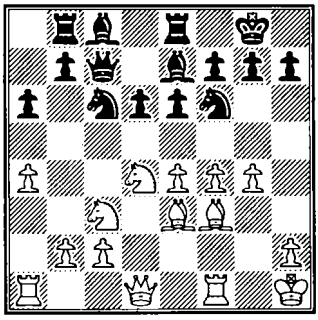


In the first case, 11 ♗f3 ♗b7 12 e5 is fully logical due to the following active involvement of the ♗c1 in the play, e.g. 12...dxe5 (we will deal with the flexible retreat 12...♘e8 later...) 13 fxe5 ♘fd7 14 ♕g3 ♔h8 15 ♗f4... Should White be equally aggressive in the above diagram, i.e. 11 ♗f3 ♗b7 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘fd7, the white ♗e3 plays the role of a pilgrim who is only seeking the right direction and is rather in the way.

The g2-g4-g5 advance is efficient in the following situations:

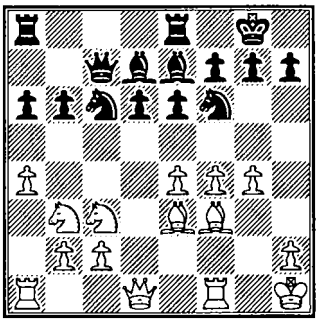
a) If Black's counter-operation in the centre using d6-d5 or e6-e5 (usually after a prior ♘xd4) is questionable and White has certain

measures how to react to it. To serve as an example we have the following variation, which is very popular and which will be handled in the following text: **7...♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♔h1 ♕c7 10 a4 ♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♖e8 12 ♗f3 ♖b8 13 g4!?**.

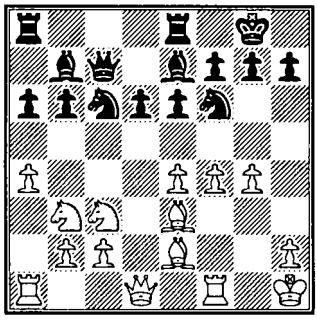


13...♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 e5 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♗a7 ♖a8 17 g5! – otherwise Black would be fine...

b) If the natural d7-square for the ♘f6 is occupied by another piece, usually by the bishop or the other knight. There may be the same example as above, only after **12 ♗f3** Black follows **12...♗d7** and now, after **13 ♘b3 b6** (otherwise a4-a5), **14 g4!** may follow.

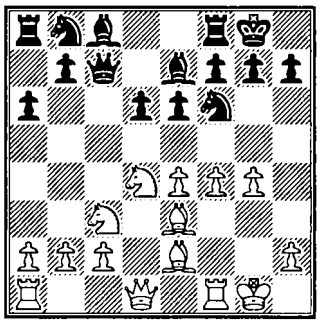


Black can hardly find anything better than **14...♗c8!** (a retreat) **15 g5 ♘d7** with complicated play in which White has slightly better prospects. A similar plan implemented one move earlier is not so strong: **12 ♘b3?! b6 13 g4 ♗b7**



– the d7-square is free. I used to meet a similar method of play in several games against less experienced opponents. After **14 g5 ♘d7 15 ♗f3 ♗f8** I sometimes used the time for a typical operation utilising the ♘a5 move; if ♘xa5 bxa5 then later ♖ab8, ♗a8 with beautiful play on the queenside and in the centre, which is full of dynamite!

c) White exploits the fact that his opponent delays the development of the queenside: **7...♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♗e3 ♕c7** (with the idea of employing the bishop on the long diagonal as soon as possible after 10 ♕e1 b5 or 10 a4 b6...) **10 g4!?**.



After 10...b5? or 10...♘c6?! White beats the 'helter skelter' 11 g5 ♘fd7 12 f5! and Black cannot do without an appreciable weakening of the centre, thereby losing necessary defensive control, e.g. 10...♘c6 11 g5 ♘d7 12 f5 ♘de5 13 f6± or 12...♘xd4 13 ♕xd4 ♖e8 14 fxe6 fxe6 15 ♗h5 g6 16 ♘d5!±. Black should rather react in an experienced and flexible manner, **10...♖e8!?** (with the intention 11 g5 ♘fd7 12 f5 ♗f8...). This move has some advantages but, due to the backward development, also hidden weaknesses. Also, an adequate response for Black to 10 g4 may be the counter-blow in the centre **10...d5!?**. After both 11 exd5 ♘xd5 12 ♘xd5 exd5 and 11 e5 ♘e4 Black's counter-chances may be sufficient to achieve a dynamic balance.

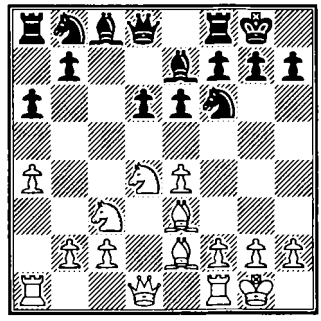
2. How, when and where should the ♗c1 be developed?

An important question in White's strategic concept. Strictly speaking, the following rules should be observed:

a) After ♘b8-c6, naturally ♗c1-e3 should follow.

b) In case Black postpones the development of the ♘b8, it is sometimes reasonable to postpone the development of the ♗c1 too. Why? Well, I have already given a partial answer above: in case of quick e4-e5 the bishop may find active things to do on the c1-h6 diagonal.

c) If White plays ♗c1-e3 before the opponent's ♘b8-c6 and Black occupies the long diagonal with his ♗c8 (after b7-b5, or b6 in case of a2-a4), he should then rather follow a plan with the advance of the g- or f-pawn, possibly with both (see the alternative *1c)*. The bishop hinders the e4-e5 advance, therefore its premature development often reduces White's active possibilities! An exception may lie in a proper order of moves, e.g. **7...♗e7 8 a4 0-0 9 ♗e3!?**.



Then, the answer **9...♘c6** is practically forced because 9...b6?! 10 ♗f3! leads to a positional advantage for White (10...♗b7? 11 e5!± or 10...♖a7? 11 a5!± seems to be obvious, and so all that is left is the 'emergency' 10...♘fd7, however, even here after 11 e5 d5 12 ♗f4 White's position is more comfortable...).

Question:

What should White play after **9...♕c7** ?

Answer:

Naturally, White should block the queenside 10 a5! (2 points). It is precisely this that is the point of the move order. After both 10...♘c6 and 10...♘bd7, 11 ♘b3 confirms a

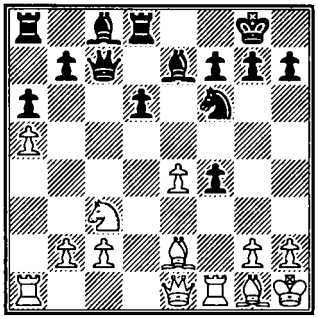
small but clear positional advantage for White. As for 10 f4 (just transposing to usual positions), you may add a single point but for any other move (e.g. 10 ♘b3? b6!) you will not get anything... You may ask: 'Why not immediately 9 a5 – instead of 9 ♗e3?' In this case Black may quickly untie himself by means of 9...♘c6 10 ♘b3 b5! 11 axb6 ♕xb6, this time with chances on the queenside for both sides.

3. How should the a2-a4 move be understood and used?

a) Unequivocally as prophylaxis against Black's counterplay and a means of acquiring space on the queenside.

b) With the intention of blocking the queenside by a4-a5, e.g. in the *2c)* alternative. It should be stressed again, however, that the a4-a5 advance should only be played at a proper moment. For example, in the situation arising after 7...♗e7 8 a4, if Black follows 8...0-0, White should play, as mentioned above, 9 ♗e3 ♕c7?! 10 a5!, in case of 8...♕c7 then 9 a5! can come at once (the black queen has already moved and the b7-b5 advance loses an important tempo): 9...♘c6 10 ♘b3± or 9...♘bd7 10 ♗e3 0-0 11 ♗b3 ♖d8 12 ♕d4!?± Jansa – Smeets, Germany 2002. Sometimes the attack on the weak b6-square reveals disharmony in the deployment of the black pieces:

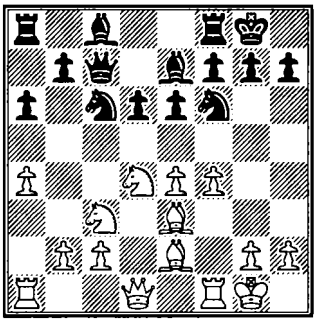
7...♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♔h1 ♕c7 10 a4 ♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♖d8?! 12 ♕e1 ♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 e5 14 ♗g1!? exf4 15 a5!?±.



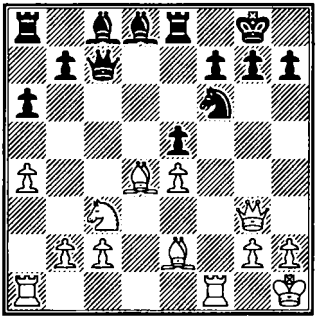
4. Dynamic control of the centre, some kind of a continuous battle for the centre of the board.

a) White should watch out for the opponent's counter-chances linked to the advance d6-d5 or e6-e5. He should only allow these if they are unfavourable for Black.

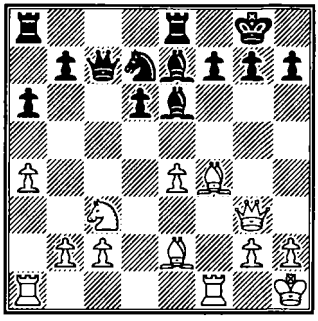
b) White should pay attention to the crucial entanglement in the centre characterised by the exchanging manoeuvre ♘xd4-♗xd4 -e5-♗e3-exf4-♗xf4-♗e6 with a further ♘d7-e5. If Black can implement this transfer of the knight, he usually gets a marvellous position! Namely this key strategic idea is the principal axis and a propelling force in one of the basic variations of the whole system: **7...♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♔h1 ♕c7 10 a4 ♘c6 11 ♗e3** or **8 a4 0-0 9 ♗e3 ♘c6 10 f4 ♕c7**.



White continues **11 ♔h1** since the immediate transfer of his queen 11 ♕e1 would allow the opponent to play the above-mentioned 11...♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 e5. Both 13 ♗e3 exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♗e6 15 ♕g3 ♘d7 (16 ♗h6 ♕c5+ 17 ♔h1 ♕e5 =) and 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 ♕g3 ♖e8!? 15 ♔h1 ♗d8! cause Black no problems. On the other hand, after 11 ♔h1 the same plan 11...♘xd4 is not very sound due to 12 ♕xd4! and if 12...e5 then 13 ♕d2 exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♗e6 15 ♖a(f)d1± and Black cannot achieve the important ♘d7-e5 due to the weakness of the pawn on d6... Therefore, here Black usually continues **11...♖e8** (the less accurate 11...♖d8 has already been mentioned above; I may just add that the ♖d8 has only some advantages, e.g. in case of 12 ♗f3?! ♘e5!, but there are not so many merits after 12 ♕e1 or even 12 ♗d3!?). The prophylactic 11...♖e8 again downgrades the attacking transfer of the queen **12 ♕e1** since the well-known **12...♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 e5 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♕g3 ♗d8!**

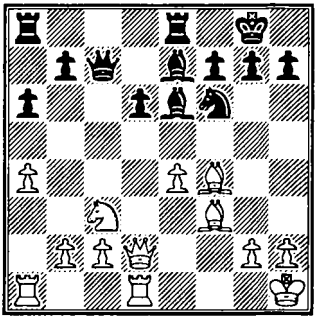


or **14 ♗e3 exf4 15 ♗xf4 ♗e6 16 ♕g3 ♘d7!**

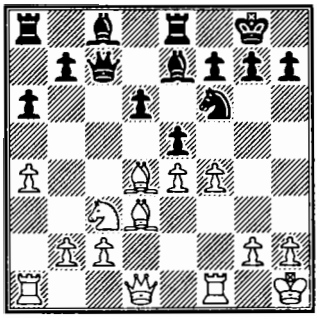


can be played, in both cases with comfortable play for Black.

Therefore, White charges his queen to control the d-file, which is mostly connected with the improvement of his bishop's position: 12 ♗f3 or 12 ♗d3. In case of **12 ♗f3**, the positional drawbacks of the exchanging manoeuvre **12...♘xd4 13 ♕xd4 e5 14 ♕d2 exf4 15 ♗xf4 ♗e6 16 ♖fd1±**



are quite obvious and thus Black seeks other useful moves within his limited space (12...♗d7, 12...♖b8, 12...♘a5, 12...♗f8 – see below). However, the continuation **12 ♗d3** may provoke Black to launch an immediate operation in the centre: **12...♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 e5,**



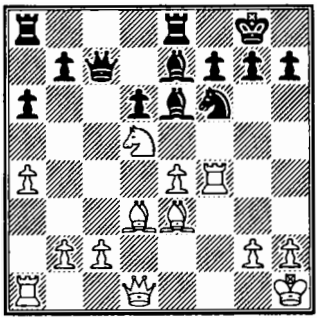
with the intention of playing, after 14 ♗e3, the well-known exf4-♗e6-♘d7!

Question:

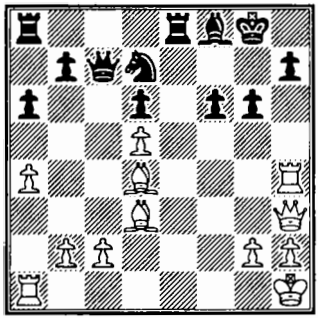
What is the drawback of Black's exchanging operation shown in the above diagram?

Answer:

The solution is based on the changes due to the modification of the position of the white-squared ♗d3, because a surprising attacking potential is hidden there! After **14 ♗e3 exf4**, the surprising **15 ♖xf4! ♗e6 16 ♘d5!** (3 points)



can follow and any quiet transfer of the black forces is out of question. After that, 16...♘xd5? 17 exd5 ♗xd5 18 ♕h5 immediately loses, however, also the other exchange 16...♗xd5 17 exd5 leads to serious problems for Black (17...♘d7? 18 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 19 ♕h5+ ♔g8 20 ♕xf7+ ♔h7 21 ♗d4 and White wins). This is a frequent mistake also in grandmaster practice! Even Lev Polugaevsky, one of the greatest 'Sicilian' connoisseurs, was once tricked like this (in a game against Tseshkovsky in the Sochi tournament). In a game of mine at the Hamburg tournament in 1999, the well-known Ukrainian GM K.Lerner was also trapped here. Both Polugaevsky and Lerner played the 'emergency' 16...♗xd5 17 exd5 ♗d8 but could not save their games after 18 ♗d4. Also, other prominent grandmasters have found themselves in this position. At the Bled Olympiad in 2002 I could not believe my eyes watching a grandmaster duel Ye Jingchuan – S.Movsesian. This went: **16...♗xd5 17 exd5 g6 18 ♕f3 ♘d7 19 ♗d4 f6 20 ♖h4! ♗f8 21 ♕h3** I was watching the same position that I had once reached in my game against GM Martinović at a tournament in Yugoslavia as long ago as 1982!



I considered my opponent's position very bad. Martinović played **21...♘e5** and you will certainly find the winning move which decided the game...

Question:

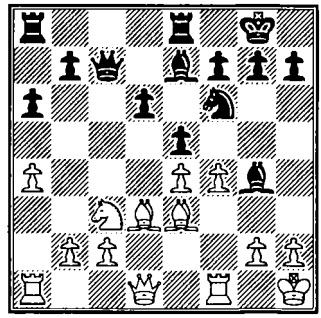
Which move do I mean?

Answer:

To solve this puzzle, it was not necessary to carry out long calculations. The right diagonals and lines should only be revealed! The ♘e5 must naturally be removed first: **22 ♗xe5** After 22...♖xe5 23 ♗xg6! hxg6 24 ♖h8+ ♔f7 25 ♕h7+ everything is clear because either the queen or the ♖a8 is hanging. Also simple is **22...fxe5 23 ♗xg6** and the f-file is deadly. The only complication lies in 22...dxe5 23 d6! (2 points). The pawn is taboo: 23...♗xd6 24 ♗xg6! or 23...♕xd6 24 ♗c4+. Therefore, Black played **23...♕g7** but **24 ♗xg6!** only enhanced my joy at the opened lines and diagonals... After 24...hxg6 geometrical motifs like 25 ♕b3+ ♕f7 26 ♖h8+ might have decided. The game followed **24...♕xg6 25 ♖g4** with a winning position.

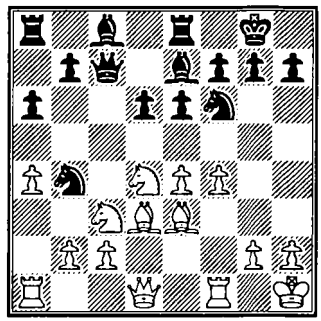
Naturally, Sergey Movsesian, with his exceptional tactical ability, must have realised some of these motifs, however, he did not like the problems occurring even after 21...♖e7. The game finally ended in a dramatic draw after the unclear piece sacrifice 22 ♗xg6!? but both players must have felt that the black position was dubious even after the game...

As for the continuation 12 ♗d3 ♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 e5, I still have something to add here... It was Lev Polugaevsky who, in one of his later games, played, after 14 ♗e3, first 14...♗g4!?.



The idea of this insertion is to deprive the white queen of the h5-square and thus devalue the possible ♘d5 foray... Nevertheless, the loss of tempo after both 15 ♕e1 exf4 16 ♗xf4 ♗e6 17 e5!? and 15 ♕d2 exf4 16 ♖xf4 ♗e6 17 ♖af1 brings some minor inconveniences for Black.

At present, the pendulum, selecting Black's proper reply after **12 ♗d3**, stopped, unequivocally and justifiably, at **12...♘b4!**.



Black immediately aims at the dangerous ♗d3 and does not worry about the blockade 13 a5 ♗d7 – if 14 ♘f3 then 14...♖ac8 (15 ♗b6

♕b8) first and only then ♗c6. The quality of this continuation may best be expressed by the fact that it was successfully played by Garry Kasparov in a series of games, its theoretical introduction consisting of several instructive games in his World Championship title match against Anand in New York 1995. At the Bled Olympiad 2002 he technically outplayed the German No. 1, GM Lutz. After all, Lev Polugaevsky used to play 12...♘b4, too (e.g. at the Interzonal Tournament in Biel 1985 against me) and then 13 ♕f3 b6!.

5. To maintain favourable positional tension on the board, to avoid exchanges at appropriate moments.

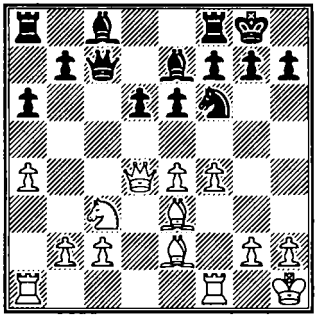
The exchange of knights ♘xd4 is often a delicate moment even in those cases when it is not only connected with a further e6-e5 but also with a quick placement of the ♗c8 on the long a8-h1 diagonal. Nearly always it is true that:

a) You should not voluntarily retreat the ♘d4 from the centre (mostly to b3) if Black is able to mobilise his white-squared bishop immediately.

b) On the other hand, you should avoid such an exchange at a proper moment (usually after the opponent's ♗c8-d7).

I have already mentioned one of the important reasons (occupation of the escape square on d7) when I explained the difference between diagrams Nos. 8 and 9. I can only add: after 12 ♗f3, Black not only is able to complete his development by playing 12...♗d7 (not just here but also elsewhere after ♗c8-d7) but can also prepare a pleasant simplification ♘xd4 followed by ♗c6! Remember: that is why the knight should only retreat now!

You may object: why does Black not exchange the ♘d4 first and only then transfer his bishop to c6 via d7? For example: **7...♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♔h1 ♕c7 10 a4 ♘c6 11 ♗e3** and now **11...♘xd4 12 ♕xd4!** (12 ♗xd4?! e5! 13 ♗e3 exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♗e6=)

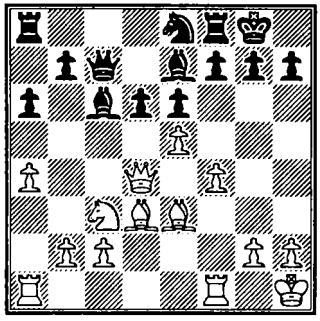


12...♗d7

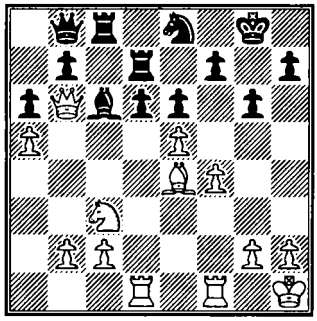
12...e5 13 ♕d3 exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♗e6 15 ♖ad1± – we are already familiar with this pressure against d6; here, in addition, a further favourable redeployment of white forces after the further 16 ♕g3 may follow...

13 e5!

The first stage of White's active response, the black knight must take up a passive role on e8.) We will now follow the instructive course of the game Dolmatov – Plaskett, Groningen 1978/79, a junior game of that time; however, White's play already showed the strength of a GM! **13...♘e8 14 ♗d3 ♗c6**



15 ♗f2! (An inconspicuous but profoundly elaborate move which firmly maintains the e5 wedge and thus keeps control of his indisputable spatial advantage. On the other hand, a straightforward continuation such as 15 ♘e4 ♖d8! 16 ♕c3 ♖c8! or 15 a5 ♖d8! 16 ♕c4 ♕b8 suffers from the advanced and rather uncertain position of the white queen.) **15...♖d8 16 ♕e3 g6 17 a5 ♘g7 18 ♕e2! ♖d7 19 ♗b6 ♕b8 20 ♕e3 ♗d8 21 ♗a7 ♕a8 22 ♗b6 ♗xb6 23 ♕xb6 ♕b8 24 ♗e4 ♖c8 25 ♖ad1 ♘e8.**



Question:

The preceding course was accompanied by positional play of the highest quality from both sides. White has maintained his spatial advantage but how should he follow this up? Black has succeeded in mobilising his ♖f8 and his position seems to be flexible enough. White played **26 ♕b4** now. Do you think that this was:

1. An inconsistent and weak move, losing White's advantage.

2. An excellent move, which fits in with the dynamics of the position.

3. An average move which cannot change much.

Before you try to assess properly the move 26 ♕b4, think over the following possible replies by Black:

a) **26...dxe5**

b) **26...♗xe4**

c) **26...d5**

d) **26...♕c7**

and express your opinion about each of them!

Answer:

This move may be an unsolvable puzzle for some of you, however, for more advanced readers it is an excellent example of positional thinking with foresight. Yes, 26 ♕b4!! is an excellent move (3 points) which solves perfectly the situation from the dynamic point of view. Above all, multiple prophylaxis, which is an inseparable part of thinking in similar situations, is concealed in it. What does it consist of? Briefly: *1.* In this situation there is no direct and clear way to the target. *2.* Which defensive opportunities does Black have at his disposal? *3.* Which move can dispose of these opportunities for Black? If you find out that statement No. 1 is right, than 2 and 3 should follow. Only in this way can you reach the really wise solution, however surprising it

might be – as in this example! This may be confirmed by the accurate reactions given against Black's opportunities: *a)* **26...dxe5?!** 27 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 28 fxe5 ♕xe5?! 29 ♕e7! (1 point) with a decisive attack; *b)* **26...♗xe4** 27 ♘xe4 d5 (after 27...♖xc2 28 exd6 the passed pawn will guarantee an advantage for White) 28 c4!! ± (2 points) ♖xc4 29 ♕xc4 dxc4 30 ♖xd7 *c)* **26...d5** 27 ♗d3 with a small but clear edge for White (1 point). *d)* **26...♕c7** 27 ♗xc6 followed by 28 ♘a4! and infiltration of the knight to b6 (2 points). It was namely possibility *d)* that was chosen by Black in the game.

'A wise man certainly creates his own fate.' The wisest of you would have followed precisely White's track and may add 9 points to your account!

The game Dolmatov – Plaskett continued: **26...♕c7 27 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 28 ♘a4! ♘c7 29 c4!**± (29 ♘b6? ♘d5) **29...dxe5 30 ♘b6 ♖xd1 31 ♖xd1 ♖e8 32 fxe5 ♔g7 33 ♕d6! ♖b8 34 ♕xc6 bxc6 35 ♖d7 ♘e8** (35...♘a8 36 c5 +-) **36 g4! g5 37 b4 ♔g6 38 ♖e7 ♖d8 39 b5! cxb5 40 cxb5 axb5 41 a6 b4 42 a6 1 : 0** White's strategic baton delicately and accurately controlled the chessboard!

B. Strategic instructions for Black

1. Counterplay for Black on the queenside and any possible appropriate operation in the centre is essential.

a) The advance of the b-pawn, exploitation of the semi-open c-file. Sometimes the e4-pawn is the target of active considerations (GM Mark Taimanov, who has played the Sicilian intensively for the whole of his long and rich chess career, used to joke: 'After 1 e4 c5 the advanced white pawn represents an enduring weakness and long-term target for Black's attack!'). As in other variations of the Sicilian, this is sometimes at the expense of an exchange sacrifice on c3.

b) A counter-blow in the centre with d6-d5 or e6-e5 (often after the prior exchange ♘xd4).

2. Black should take into account and have under control two basic possible attacking plans for White:

a) An advance in the centre e4-e5 with a future attack against the black king.

b) An advance of the g and f pawns. This attack on the kingside should be parried either by an active response in the centre or by transposition to a typically flexible defence. Such defence is characterised by the following deployment: ♖f8-e8, ♘f6-d7, possibly ♗e7-f8. Do not forget that after the attacking advance of the white g5 and f5 pawns it is necessary in good time to reinforce properly the defensive walls, in particular the most sensitive points e6, f7! The appropriate and timely installation of this delicate 'Scheveningen bumper' belongs to the essential prerequisites of every practitioner of the Sicilian defence!

3. The ♘xd4 exchange should be linked to:

a) An appropriate transfer of black forces along the above-mentioned axis: e5-exf4-♗e6-♘d7-♘e5, sometimes, at the end, even ♘e8 and then ♗f6 (♗g5).

b) A precipitate development of the white-squared bishop on the long diagonal, either after a successive b7-b5 and ♗c8-b7, or ♗d7-c6 if the bishop was placed on d7 before the exchange.

4. The development of the ♘b8 at the right time becomes an important and very dynamic factor! Not only does it leave your opponent in doubt but flexible timing of Black's queenside development can be adjusted to arising circumstances:

a) If White has already placed his bishop on e3, Black should then first fianchetto his ♗b7 and attack the pawn on e4. Why? Because the logical response – the breakthrough e4-e5 in the centre – will become very questionable for White (the bishop is improperly positioned on e3, see the last diagram on p.187). As we already know, in this case we have to be well prepared for the 'bayonet' attack of the white g-pawn.

b) Also, if White leaves his bishop on c1 Black may consider a quick placement of the white-squared bishop on the long diagonal even in the position with the ♘b8 (playing b7-b5 or possibly b7-b6 in case of a2-a4). Here our strategy is more risky, we have to reckon on a quick e4-e5 advance. If this is the case, we should provide for the ♘f6 retreat (sometimes after a prior pawn exchange on e5, ♘fd7 may come, sometimes an immediate ♘f6-e8 is more flexible...). A similar intersection may be found for the development of the ♘b8 after ♗c8-b7: sometimes the knight jumps to d7 and sometimes to c6. It depends on the circumstances, however, sometimes also experience and individual taste are important factors.

5. In this system the black queen is usually placed on c7. However, sometimes her dynamic activity may be utilised... even when she is on her original d8-square! This approach may serve as some kind of an 'independent philosophy' of the dynamic Scheveningen variation from Black's point of view. Do you not believe it? You may evaluate it after you have read the whole paper!

You may have noticed that, among other things, I try to highlight some kind of dynamic dependence between the development of the ♗c1 and that of its black c8-colleague, suitability/ unsuitability of the breakthrough in the centre, linkage of pros and cons on both sides into an adequate decision. 'Prudence is knowing what should be demanded and what should be avoided.' (Cicero). You might also become a more prudent supporter of the system with the aim of playing it as flexibly as possible! At the beginning, it will bring you minor successes only, however, you may enjoy them. Then, step-by-step, you might pick up an understanding of hitherto unknown mysteries. In this variation, but also in other variations of the Sicilian defence, the relationship of the bishops, closely connected with the accurate move order in the battle for the centre, seems to be very important. Prudence will reduce the demand for specific theoretical knowledge, improve your understanding and increase the quality of your independent thinking!

An illustrative example to help understand the above-mentioned might be the older game V.Smyslov – V.Hort, Interzonal Tournament, Petropolis 1973. I have chosen this example for its instructive value, not for its theoretical worth since both players have always belonged to the distinct supporters of independent thinking and have never liked long theoretical variations. The player of the white pieces is an Ex-World Champion whose every move on the chessboard has always been a test of maximum harmony of everything that is going on. His opponent is GM Vlastimil Hort, at the time of the game one of the strongest players in the world and co-author with me of an earlier chess book. Hort's principal trademark has always been excellent practical play, brightness and flexible adaptability to various openings and ideas. How did the opponents deal with the suggested strategic fine points and how will you deal with them in the accompanying 'mini-test'? Let us carefully follow the course of the game:

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗e2 ♗e7 7 0-0 a6 8 f4 0-0 9 ♗e3

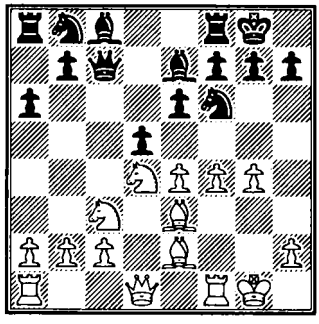
In compliance with our 'theory', White in fact abandons the plan consisting of the e4-e5 breakthrough even at this early stage. Black reacts actively in an effort to develop his ♗c8 as quickly as possible...

9...♕c7

Naturally, Black cannot play the immediate 9...b5? due to 10 e5 and ♗f3, now the 'fianchetto' is prepared...

10 a4

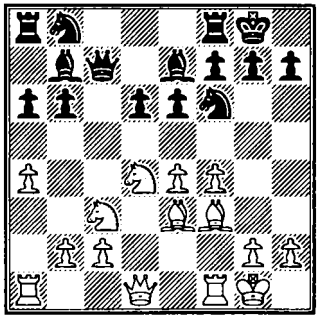
After both 10 ♔h1 and 10 ♕e1, 10...b5 may be played in full comfort. 10 ♗f3 prevents the opponent's intentions and forces Black to play ♘c6 but at the same time eliminates his own attacking prospects. However, **10 g4!?** remains a critical continuation; after that, Black should be very careful (see the comments to the first diagram on p.188). After both 10...b5? 11 g5 ♘fd7 12 f5± and 10...♘c6?! 11 g5 ♘d7 12 f5 Black simply cannot manage to adjust his above-mentioned 'Scheveningen bumper'. He only manages to do that after an immediate 10...♖e8!? 11 g5 ♘fd7 12 f5 ♗f8; interesting is also **10...d5!?**.

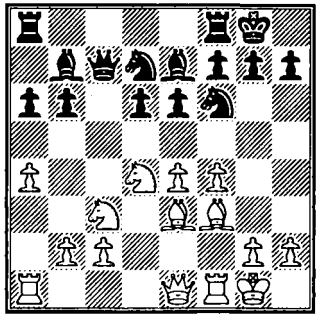


10...b6!

Black naturally could, after 10...♘c6, transpose to what is perhaps the most frequently played scheme of the whole variation. But why do that, in the position with ♗e3 a quick development of the ♗c8 is to be preferred!

11 ♗f3 ♗b7





12 ♕e1

'You should not do what you have doubts about.' (Plinius)

Vassily Smyslov is very similar to the Roman philosopher and writer: he has never been a proponent of activities with dubious results. And particularly to such results would lead both 12 e5?! dxe5 13 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 14 fxe5 ♘fd7 (15 ♕h5 ♘c6 16 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 17 ♖f3!? g6 18 ♕h6 f5! 19 exf6 ♗xf6 20 ♗f2 ♘e5 21 ♖h3 ♖a7! and Black controls the whole board, Hübner – Tal, Wijk aan Zee 1988) and 12 g4 ♘c6 13 g5 ♘d7 (14 ♘de2!? ♖fe8 15 ♗g2 ♗f8 – the above-mentioned 'bumper' – 16 h4 ♘c5 17 ♘g3 ♖ad8 18 ♕e2 d5! 19 exd5 ♘b4!...with activity at the right time, Stefansson – Shipov, Knockout World Championship 1999). Another possibility lies in 12 ♕e2 – then 12...♘c6 is rather to be recommended (13 ♕c4 ♖fc8!? – Štohl). Also 12 f5 may sometimes occur. From the positional point of view, there is nothing Black need complain about after 12...e5 13 ♘de2 ♘bd7 (14 g4 h6 15 h4 ♘h7! 16 ♕e1 ♕d8 17 ♗f2 ♖c8 or 14 ♘g3 ♖ac8 14 ♖f2 ♕c4! Lutz – Gelfand, Cap d'Agde 1994).

12...♘bd7

Where should the knight be placed? 12...♘c6 is simpler but the game move conceals more dynamics. However, it is necessary to know how to handle it!

Question:

You have just played 12...♘bd7 How will you react to White's two basic plans:

1. **13 ♕g3** with the intention e4-e5?

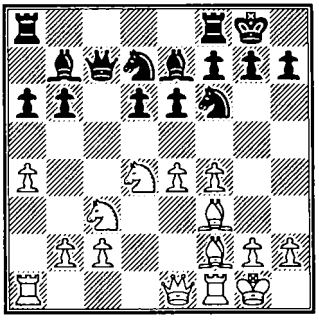
2. **13 g4** with a flank attack?

Answer:

In both cases Black should react actively! I expect that you appropriately focused on the weakened e4-square (a consequence of the quick ♗e3 development...)! After 13 ♕g3?!, 13...♘c5! unequivocally follows; if 14 e5 then 14...dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘fe4! (2 points) with favourable simplification. Naturally, after 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 17 ♗xe4 (17 ♕g4? ♕xe5) ♗xe4 it is necessary to see a move ahead: 18 ♗h6 ♗g6... Also, after 13 g4 an active reaction in the centre is required. I would say that again Black should play 13...♘c5 first and only after the retreat 14 ♗f2 (14

♗d2) may he continue 14...d5! (2 points) 15 e5 ♘fe4. Slightly less efficient is the immediate 13...d5!? (1 point).

As I said, Vassily Vasilyevich has always been a very attentive coordinator and far-sighted strategist. Therefore he never tries to accelerate events on the chessboard; here he played the cunning **13 ♗f2!?**.



Question:

White has retained both attacking plans at his disposal: e4-e5 and g2-g4 should both be considered by Black. 'Right, now it is necessary to find some common antidote, otherwise I will be reduced to unfavourable passivity,' may have thought Vlastimil Hort, playing Black and to move. Try to find it with him, however I would like to draw your attention to the fact that it is not easy at all and that it needs the highest degree of concentration! Only after you explore the whole situation, should you suggest an adequate reaction for Black!

Answer:

White's previous moves commanded respect by the very fact that they had been played by the Ex-World Champion himself. The concept of his play (♗e3-f2, ♕e1) was not so awe-inspiring, however it is very complicated and exacting to find any gap or weak point in it. It is obvious that something should be primarily undertaken against the advance g2-g4-g5. Black is justifiably reluctant to play an immediate 13...e5 due to 14 ♘f5, even if 14...♖fe8 (1 point) maintains some dynamics in the position. Therefore, first 13...♖fe8 (1 point) may be considered with the idea of playing, only after 14 g4, 14...e5 15 ♘f5 d5! and Black has excellent opportunities on the e-file. However, after 13...♖fe8 14 e5! would come and the knight has no appropriate retreat (14...dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘d5 16 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 e6!). 13...♘c5 (1 point) has its pros in case of 14 g4 d5!, however, there is a certain con: the ♘c5 does not feel secure due to the opponent's b2-b4 (e.g., after 14 e5). These considerations led Vlastimil Hort to **13...♖ac8** (1 point); only after **14 g4** (14 e5 ♘e8 with a flexible position) did he play **14...♘c5 15 g5 ♘fd7**. It seems that the heavy battery on the c-file makes the ♘c5 untouchable. Nevertheless, appearances are deceptive, especially if your opponent is Vassily Smyslov! Thus, **16 ♖d1!** followed and the notion that the knight is untouchable is brushed away, 17 b4 seems to be an imminent threat (17...♘b3 18 ♘de2 +-)! Nothing remained other than to sound the retreat: **16...♘b8** The manoeuvres of both black knights have consumed much time and White has succeeded in exploiting this (despite the previous dull opening of the game ...) to redeploy

his forces into an attacking formation and with dangerous fire-power: **17 ♗e3 ♘c6 18 ♕g3 ♖fe8 19 ♗g2 ♗f8 20 ♖f2 ♕d7?! 21 ♘f3! ♘b4 22 ♘e5 ♕c7 23 ♘g4** with an attack for White.

It cannot be said that in this game Black succeeded in finding the nerve centre – the strategic point of intersection of all pros and cons in the deployment of both white and black pieces. It is probable that most of you did not succeed either... However, there is an ideal solution of all the tasks! It consists of the masterly **13...g6!** (3 points). This move, recommended by the well-known Russian trainer Dvoretsky in one of his books, seems to fully satisfy both the defensive and counterattacking ambitions of Black. It takes the f5-square from the white knight while intending e6-e5, e.g. **14 g4 e5 15 ♘de2 ♘c5!** and Black is completely O.K. Also, 13...g6 comes in handy after 14 e5 ♘e8 since the g7-square will be available. In addition, the f4-f5 advance will remain just a dream for White...

Let us summarise under various categories the above-mentioned strategic instructions for White and Black in a mutually correct and dynamic handling of this opening.

A. White develops his activity without prophylaxis on the queenside (without a2-a4).

B. Systems employing a2-a4.

C. Black chooses an economic concept with his queen positioned on d8 and fully utilises various dynamic opportunities linked to a large radius of action.

A. 7...♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♔h1 – without a future a2-a4

White keeps fully open the possibility of the e4-e5 advance. 9 ♗e3 limits White's plans after 9...♕c7 to the uncompromising 10 g4 d5!? (10...♖e8!?). In case of 10 ♕e1 b5! or 10 a4 b6! Black successfully solves the problem of a proper timing of his development.

9...♕c7

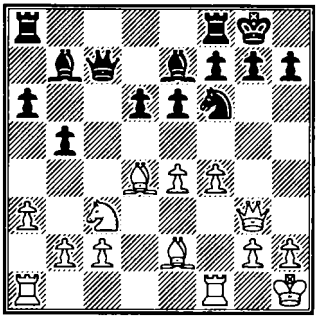
Also, 9...♘c6 with a quite different 'philosophy', dealt with under *C*, may be considered.

10 ♕e1

White unequivocally elects for the plan utilising the e4-e5 breakthrough (after a further ♕g3). For many years, this method of play and move order was one of the most heavily analysed in the Sicilian defence. We will deal with the situation arising after 10 a4 (popular only later but until now...) under *B*. I might just mention here that Black, in addition to the most frequently played 10...♘c6, has at his disposal 10...b6!? with immediate play on the diagonal, even if here this entails slightly higher risk...

10...b5!?

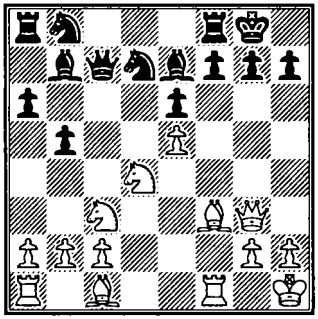
Again, this is a more active recipe than the older **10...♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♘xd4** (we have already mentioned 11...♗d7?! 12 ♕g3 b5 13 e5!) **12 ♗xd4 b5 13 a3 ♗b7 14 ♕g3**, which is overflowing with variations.



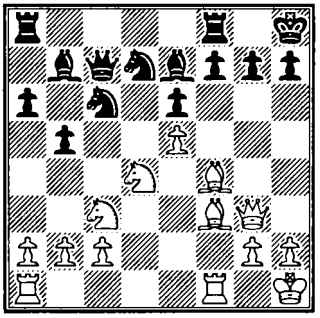
Note the differences under *C* in case of a more dynamic version by Black! Here 14...g6? is not a good move at all: after 15 f5! White has a strong attack. Black mostly links his counterplay to patient preparation of the advance b5-b4: **14...♗c6 15 ♖ae1 ♕b7 16 ♗d3 b4**. After both 17 axb4 ♕xb4 18 ♘e2 and 17 ♘d1!? a complicated, much played and analysed position arises in which White has somewhat better chances due to his attacking chances on the kingside.

11 ♗f3 ♗b7 12 e5

1. 12...dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘fd7 14 ♕g3



Can you see the advantage in the deployment of the white pieces in comparison to the previous position of the ♗e3? Nevertheless, Black's defensive possibilities should not be underestimated here. The key position seems to arise after **14...♔h8** (also, Ftáčnik's 14...♗xf3 15 ♘xf3 f5!? looks interesting) **15 ♗f4 ♘c6**.



At first sight, the forays of the knights to d5 and f5 seem to be promising... While 16 ♘f5?! exf5 17 e6 ♘de5 18 ♘d5 ♕d8 leads to nowhere, the other opportunity **16 ♘d5 exd5 17 ♘f5** has already lured several grandmasters.

Question:

Do you think that in the latter variation after 17 ♘f5 White's position is:

a) better,

b) unclear,

c) lost?

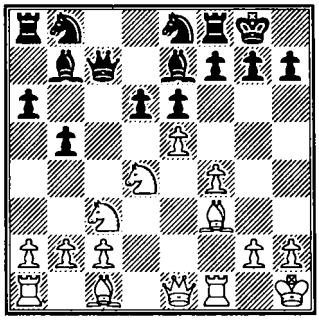
Answer:

This unnatural 'combination' first occurred in the game Gufeld – Polugaevsky as far back as 1961 in Moscow. White should not have to do this. The Sicilian 'Lion' reacted confidently with **17...g5!** and won the game in several moves. It is interesting that even later

several strong attackers were trapped in the same attacking pitfall, the latest being the otherwise tactically aware GM Gallagher in his game against David Navara at the European Championship in Leon, 2001. After 17...g5! he was thinking for a long time but it is really too late... He continued **18 ♗xd5**, but after **18...♘d4!** lost a piece. The 16 ♘d5? sacrifice is not correct and White is lost (2 points). 'One is permitted to fight violence with violence.' (Ulpianus)

In the above diagram position White should not be too greedy and settle for a small spatial advantage, the best way being probably **16 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘e4**

2. 12...♘e8!?



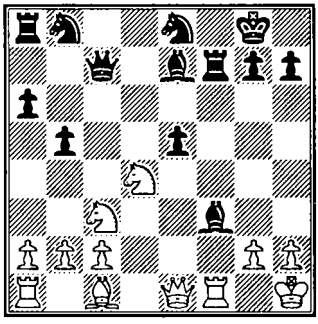
This retreat evokes memories of the famous Pupp hotel in Carlsbad, late in 1978. In this lovely balneal environment a qualification match Czechoslovakia – Switzerland for the European Team Championship finals was played. My opponent was IM Lombard; in the game, which was played in one of the beautiful hotel rooms, he retreated to e8 with his knight instead of the then automatically played 12...dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘fd7. He was not the first to do so but I did not know that at the time. I can only remember that this move seemed to me very passive... I could not expect that my opponent had picked the move up from watching it at the Olympiad which had been held in Buenos Aires shortly before our game. By a strange coincidence our national team did not take part there which meant that Lombard could see the Buenos Aires games but I could not. Contemporary modern electronic devices enable a flash transfer of ideas (confirming, by the way, Cicero's 'There is nothing quicker than an idea' – an ancient quotation unfortunately taken out of context!); however, such devices did not exist at all then. Nothing remained other than my own head, chess philosophy and common sense. Even at first sight on the board this common sense dictated the course of action: Black should be punished for such passivity! That aggressive consideration resulted in the immediate advance 13 f5!? – a move which had not been played at the Olympiad. After about 15-minutes hesitation the somewhat fearful Swiss went like an 'lamb to the slaughter': 13...dxe5 14 fxe6 exd4? and only after 15 ♘d5 did his face turn pale. Black must give up the captured piece which results in a clear disadvantage. I cannot boast about the further course of the game because I could only make a draw after a such a good start to the game...

Nevertheless, the 12...♘e8 move soon become a focus of discussion, even at the highest level; Garry Kasparov has introduced this move into his black repertoire, Anatoly Karpov, on the other hand, has picked up the variation as White.

'The world follows the examples of kings' (Claudianus), however, some games of other excellent players also served as a motivation, among them those of Romanian GM Suba who would probably die for the black position; also, Slovak GMs Ftáčnik and Štohl and many other players contributed to a rapid development of the variation. It has become my long-term weapon... especially playing Black!

What is the key to the popularity of the seemingly passive retreat **12...♘e8**? It is the dynamic flexibility of Black's defensive position! If White reacts in a quiet manner, Black quickly transfers his ♘b8 to c4, while sufficiently protecting the kingside with the defensive duo ♖f8, ♘e8. For example: 13 ♕g3 ♘d7 14 a3 ♘b6! 15 ♘e4 ♖d8! 16 c3 ♘c4 and White has problems with the development of the ♗c1... How should Black react to **13 f5**? Many years of practice have offered several defensive opportunities:

1. **13...dxe5 14 fxe6 ♗xf3! 15 exf7+ ♖xf7** (Suba)

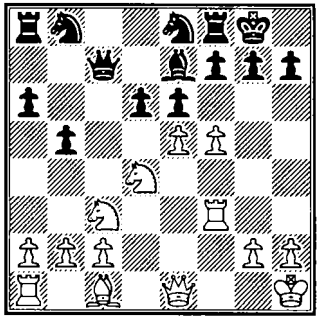


16 ♘xf3 ♘d7 17 ♗g5 ♗f8 = (e.g. Karpov – Kasparov, Moscow 1985).

2. **13...♗xf3 14 ♘xf3** and now either 14...b4 15 f6! gxf6 16 exd6 ♗xd6 17 ♘e4 with an initiative for the pawn or 14...exf5!? and a similar diagnosis.

The first recipe, in particular, seems to be a sufficiently solid guarantee of Black's defensive abilities; as for the second, I can give here a strange example from my own practice:

In Münster 1992, one of my opponents was the young German master Norbert Lücke, a graduate from the well-known chess secondary school in Altensteig. He played, as White, **13 f5** and what happened? A common 'slip of the hand': **13...♗xf3** – really, I originally had the idea to take on e5! However, the 'mistake' unexpectedly paid off! Instead of 14 ♘xf3, which suggested itself, my opponent thought for a long while and unexpectedly captured the bishop with the rook. **14 ♖xf3**



I looked at my opponent searchingly and realised that he not only reminded me of the principal character in the well-known Paul Newman film 'Cool Hand Luke', but also that the expression on his face had an adventurous streak. Now it was important to find out whether his moves really were an

adventure or just an interesting and dangerous possibility.

Question:

Do you think that **14 ♖xf3** leads to:

1. unclear complications,

2. a lost position for White,

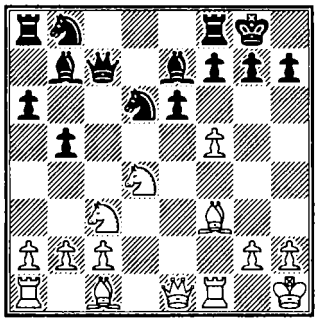
3. a promising attack for White?

Answer:

'In a single moment quick death or joyful victory may come.' (Horatius)

The moment is fatal and does not tolerate any hesitation. White played adventurously but did not fully realize that after the obvious **14...dxe5 15 fxe6 exd4**, **16 ♘d5** is far from having have the strength as in my game against Lombard. He may have overlooked that **16...♕d8 17 exf7+ ♖xf7 18 ♕e6** is refuted by the simple **18...♘f6** and White can quit. In the emergency he tried an interesting but quite transparent trick **17 ♗g5!? ♗xg5 18 e7** (18...♗xe7? 19 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 20 ♕e4 with a double attack: both to a8... and also 20 ♕xh7+!). Certainly, after the simplest **18...♕xd5 19 exf8=♕+ ♔xf8** the board was full of black pieces and White, sadly shaking his head (...what a terrible game I played!) stopped the clock and held out his hand. With absolute certainty it may be said that 14 ♖xf3? leads to a lost position for White (2 points).

Years of employing the move **12...♘e8** in practical play have led to other surprises. In 1993, at a tournament in Italy, my opponent, Bosnian IM S.Nurkić, played unexpectedly and not very comprehensibly **13 exd6?!**. I must admit that this move was quite a pleasant shock for me. If it was not an IM who was sitting on the other side of the board, I would think 'All right, a bungler!' Yet I think that this is one of the weakest moves, voluntarily making an attacking piece out of the passive ♘e8; a few tactical chances will not be sufficient compensation. Later I found that in some games Black recaptured 13...♗xd6. I do not know why... Nevertheless, after **13...♘xd6** the attacking **14 f5** again came.



Question:

The position requires attacking the white knight with the bishop from f6. Which of the following possibilities do you prefer?

1. an immediate **14...♗f6**,

2. first **14...♗xf3 15 ♖xf3** and only then **15...♗f6**?

Support your decision by variations!

Answer:

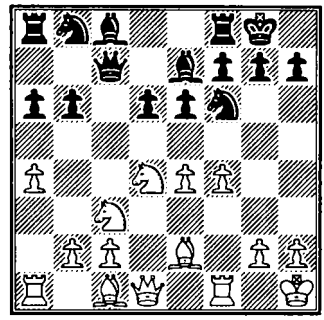
I must admit that at first I believed the immediate **14...♗f6?** (0 points). Naturally that was only until the time I found my opponent's tricky idea: all of a

sudden an unexpectedly hard blow would have landed: **15 ♘xe6! fxe6 16 ♕xe6+** and whatever I tried to calculate, everything ended with a fracture of the black position, after both 16...♘f7 17 ♗f4 and 16...♔h8 17 ♗f4... If you found this horror, too, you must have preferred **14...♗xf3** (2 points). This move forces White to take with his rook **15 ♖xf3** and only then comes **15...♗f6** with an unpleasant attack on the knight. The same consideration led to an excellent position after **16 ♗e3 ♘c6!** (16...♗xd4?! 17 ♗xd4 ♘xf5 18 ♖xf5! exf5 19 ♘d5 with compensation for the exchange), in which the black pieces obviously won the battle for the centre.

Black's flexible defensive system linked to the retreat 12...♘e8 has continually been an insurmountable problem for White's active plans ... and the time has come for a more frequent use of prophylaxis on the queenside by means of a2-a4!

B. Systems with a2-a4

Prophylactic play on the queenside should prevent Black from quickly developing his white-squared bishop. However, hardly anybody deals with the details of an accurate and efficient timing of such prevention. The most frequent move order is as follows, beginning with the position in the first diagram on p.185: **7...♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♔h1 ♕c7 10 a4** I would say that from the practical point of view this is not the best solution against White's intentions. Why? Well, in addition to the common 10...♘c6, this move order allows for the opportunity of **10...b6!?**



and, besides, it allows another alternative: 9...♘c6!? 10 ♗e3 ♗d7!? (with the king placed on h1!), which will be dealt with under *C*. I admit that not every player of the white pieces will object to the suggested possibilities, nevertheless, as we will see, Black's chances are no lower than in the main variation. If White decides on the system with a2-a4 he may do so much earlier, on the 8th or, maybe even better, on the 7th move (thus 7 a4 instead of 7 0-0). I think I have already sufficiently explained the reasons in the strategic instructions for the White's play. However, let us now analyse the position in the above diagram. Black should play very accurately here!

1. Variation 10...b6

11 ♗f3

The immediate 11 e5 may also be played since 11...dxe5 12 fxe5 ♕xe5? does not come into consideration because of 13 ♗f4 followed by ♗f3.

11...♗b7 12 e5

Also 12 f5 e5 13 ♘de2 has been played, however, even here after 13...♘bd7 14 g4 h6 Black's position is attractive from the

strategic point of view. After the reserved 12 ♕e2(e1), I take the liberty to recommend the development of the knight to c6!

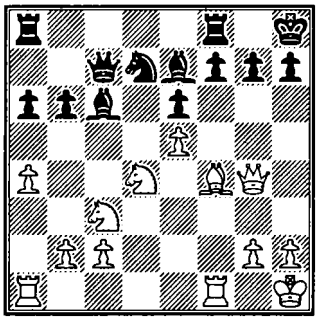
12...dxe5

Again, 12...♘e8 has found its proponents. However, note several differences: the b6-square for the other knight is hopelessly occupied and the white queen has access to h5 or g4 after 13 ♗xb7 without any penalty; also exd6 followed by f4-f5 might also be dangerous.

13 fxe5 ♘fd7

This is probably a critical position and an important crossroads of the 10...b6 variation. White can enter two principal attacking paths, however, each of them has led to 'unknown territory' in existing practice:

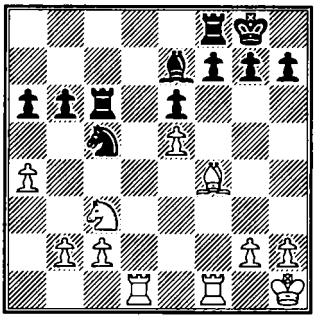
1. **14 ♗f4 ♘c6 15 ♗xc6!? ♗xc6 16 ♕g4 ♔h8** ...



(e.g. in the game Volokitin – Movsesian, Bermuda 2003).

2. **14 ♗xb7** (this is White's most frequent path) **14...♕xb7 15 ♗f4 ♘c6** (15...♗c5!?) **16 ♕f3**

a) **16...♖ac8 17 ♖ad1 ♘c5?!** (the patient 17...♔h8! has proved rather useful) **18 ♘xc6 ♕xc6** (after 18...♖xc6 White gains a dangerous initiative by means of 19 b4! ♘d7 20 ♘e4) **19 ♕xc6 ♖xc6.**



Question:

Assess the consequences of the aggressive continuation 20 b4. Do you think that this move leads to:

1. White's advantage,

2. Black's advantage,

3. unclear play?

Support your opinion by thorough analysis!

Answer:

In the Sicilian defence the endgame does not usually present a principal problem to Black, however, this is an exception! An important role is played by the white rook on d1. To be precise, **20 b4!** leads to an edge for White (3 points). However, it is necessary to see that after **20...♘b3** the clever **21 ♖f3!** could be played (not 21 ♖d3? ♘d4!) and if **21...♖fc8** (21...♗xb4 22 ♘a2) then **22 ♘e4!** (22 ♘b1? ♘a1!) **22...♖c4 23 ♘d6 ♗xd6 24 cxb3 ♖xf4 25 ♖xf4 ♗xe5 26 ♖c4±**. Nothing remains other than the modest retreat **20...♘b7** but then the above-mentioned rook comes into play: **21 ♖d7!** It is obvious that 21...♗xb4? 22 ♘a2

♘c5 23 ♘xb4 loses a piece but even after **21...♖xc3** White should not hesitate over which black piece should be taken... In the game Hernandez – Van Wely, Havana 1995, White spoiled everything since he took the knight 22 ♖xb7?. On the other hand, he would have only been shortly removed from victory after the correct **22 ♖xe7!**. The cooperation of the rooks with the bishop against the knight, jumping around in a limited area, then quintessentially must succeed. **22...♘d8 23 b5!**±, e.g.: 23...♖c4 24 ♖d7! ♖xa4 25 ♗g5 f6 26 gxf6 gxf6 27 ♗h6 ♖e8 28 ♖g7+ ♔h8 29 ♖d1! and now after both 29...axb5 30 g3 and 29...♖h4 30 ♖gd7! White triumphantly grips his opponent in a pair of pliers. A similar fate is also drawing near after 23...axb5 24 axb5 ♖xc2 25 ♖d1 ♖c5 26 ♖d7 ♖d5 27 ♗e3!. Frankly, if you succeeded in avoiding all these pitfalls in your calculation, you may add a full 4 points. In case you missed something important, subtract some points... Those of you who assessed the situation as unclear, may only be awarded a single point – you could not see far enough! Needless to say, in similar situations and during the game your thoughts should be primarily directed at the target by the sense of activity and maximum cooperation of all your pieces!

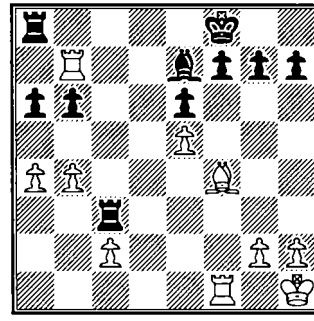
Mainly due to these variations, 17...♘c5 appears a hasty solution, nevertheless new considerations have come and are still coming:

b) **16...♖fc8!? 17 ♖ad1** (17 ♗g3 ♘d8) **17...♘c5?!**

Even here this is untimely and premature! In the game G.Timoschchenko – M.Suba, Romania 1996, Black's original idea consisted of covering the important bishop after 18 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 19 ♕xc6 ♖xc6 20 b4 ♘b7 21 ♖d7 by 21...♔f8.

Question:

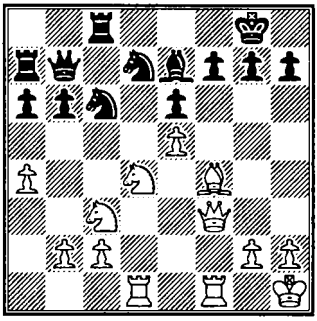
Where did Black's error lie, after the following **22 ♖xb7 ♖xc3** ?



Answer:

Black overlooked a blow, crushing the black defence on the seventh rank: **23 ♗g5!** (2 points). Now the passive 23...♖e8 24 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 25 ♖xb6 still offered small hopes of saving the game but after 23...♗xg5 24 ♖fxf7+ ♔e8 25 ♖xg7 ♗h6 26 ♖ge7+ ♔d8 27 ♖xh7 ♗f8 28 ♖bf7! ♔e8 29 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 30 ♖h8+ everything turned out well for White. You may add a point for this forced and nice variation!

Long-time specialist in the Scheveningen Sicilian, Mihai Suba of Romania, soon realised his mistake and found the correct continuation in several games played later: **16...♖fc8 17 ♖ad1 ♖a7!**.



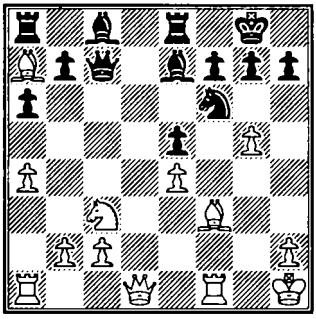
Black was excellently prepared for any development of events and was fully satisfied with the position that had arisen.

'Nobody will become wise by chance only.' (Seneca)

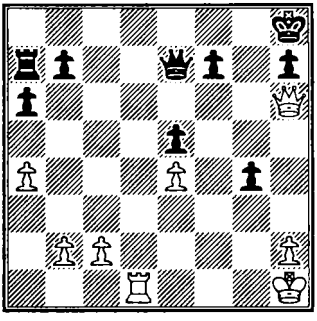
2. Main variation 10...♘c6

Within the limited scope of this book it is foolish to give any advice concerning one of most frequently played variations of the Sicilian defence! In this thoroughly monitored terrain there is a danger that the following Latin quotation will come true: 'I try to be brief but then I become incomprehensible.' (Horatius) I am well aware of such a danger! The ideas given here should be developed within the scope of the instructions for White and Black given in the introduction of this section on the Scheveningen variation. Nevertheless I will add several observations from my practice as both a player and a trainer.

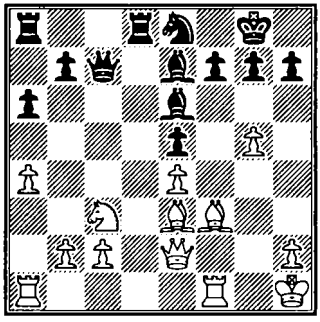
Probably the most questionable position of the whole variation arises after **11 ♗e3 ♖e8 12 ♗f3...** In spite of the fact that this has been played for many years, it still remains an equation with many unknowns. Which of Black's basic opportunities is the right one in this position: 12...♗d7, 12...♖b8, 12...♘a5 or 12...♗f8 ? Kasparov does not know either, but by employing one or two he always arouses general interest in them. Each of these moves has its pros and cons; I myself believed, playing Black, in the flexibility of the wait-and-see move **12...♖b8**, which once upon a time had been devised by Luboš Kaválek – when he was still living in Prague. Nevertheless, at the 1986 Dubai Olympiad Andrei Sokolov tried the completely unknown **13 g4** in a game against me... I can remember that my first impression was 'Is he going crazy?' The first thing I was considering was the natural reaction 13...♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 e5 but I rejected it due to 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♗a7! and if 16...♖a8 then 17 g5!. After long hesitation I decided, in the end, on the routine 'Sicilian bumper': 13...♗f8 14 g5 ♘d7 which, however, could not stand up to my opponent's further goal-directed pressure play (15 ♗g2 followed by ♕h5) and unfortunately I lost the game... After it was over, Yefim Geller, trainer of the Soviet team, rushed to join the analysis and asked me, with that typical creative glint in his eye: 'Why did you not take on d4 after 13 g4?' At that moment it occurred to me: isn't this one of his 'professorial inventions'? In any case, 13 g4! has remained White's most formidable weapon up to now! I have only to add that the continuation **13...♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 e5 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♗a7 ♖a8 17 g5**



has brought Black back to life (17...♖xa7? 18 gxf6 ♗xf6 19 ♘d5 ♕d8 20 ♘xf6+ gxf6 21 ♕c1 ♔h8 22 ♕h6 ♖g8 23 ♗h5! ♗g4 24 ♗xg4 ♖xg4 25 ♖ad1 ♕e7 26 ♖g1 f5 27 ♖xg4 fxg4

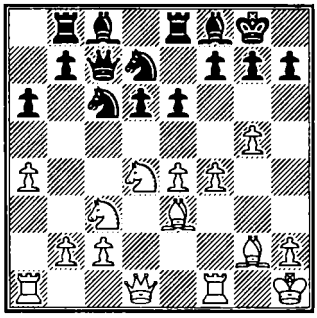


28 ♖d7! ♕e8 29 ♕f6+ ♔g8 30 ♖d8 1:0 Oll – Cvitan, Eupen 1995) in some of Kasparov's games after **17...♖d8 18 ♕e2 ♘e8 19 ♗e3 ♘e8**

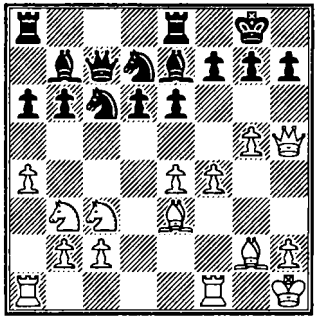


How should White seek some advantage? Should he try the quiet 20 ♕f2 or the more hazardous 20 ♗g4!? ♗c4 21 ♕f2 ? This question has not been fully answered yet...

And what about the 'Sicilian bumper' arising after **13...♗f8 14 g5 ♘d7 15 ♗g2** ?

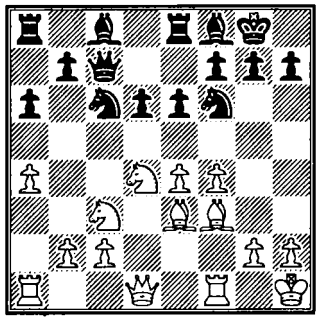


The mechanism of the white attack on the h- and f-files firmly utilises the ♕h5 and ♖f3-h3 axis or, possibly, leads to a doubling of rooks on the f-file. Black has his own chances, too, but how should he work his way through them? Should he start with 15...b6, 15...g6 or 15...♘xd4 ? The black defence has been wounded many times in important games! A similar scenario also occurs after **12...♗d7 13 ♘b3 b6 14 g4 ♗c8 15 g5 ♘d7 16 ♗g2 ♗b7 17 ♕h5**.

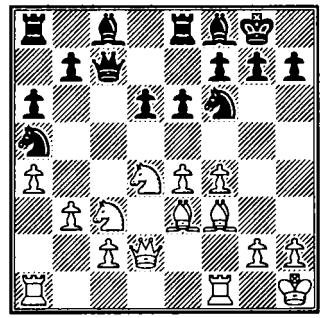


It is not quite clear who may profit from the minor changes in comparison to the previous diagram. Black's counterplay is linked to the key move **17...♘b4** (there is not enough time for 17...♘a5...), by attacking the c2-pawn the knight curbs the activity of one of the white rooks. The course of the game Anand – Kasparov, played in 2000, may serve as an inspiration and a theme of an analysis: 18 ♖f2 g6 19 ♕h3 ♗f8 20 ♖af1 ♗g7 21 ♗d4! e5! 22 fxe5 ♘xe5 23 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 24 ♖xf7 ♖e7! 25 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 26 ♕e3 ♖e8 (26...♘xc2? 27 ♕d3±) 27 ♕xb6 (27 ♕d2!? with the intention 28 ♘c1) 27...♗xc3 28 bxc3 ♗xe4 29 ♕xb4 ♗xg2+ 30 ♔xg2 ♕xg5+ and a draw due to perpetual check.

The idea of **12...♗f8**



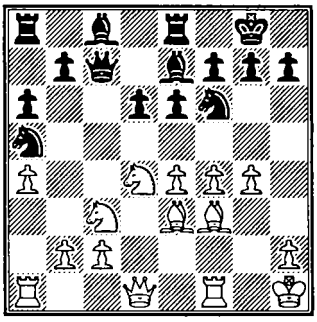
consists, as in the case of 12...♖b8, of wait-and-see tactics. Black will find an appropriate response... perhaps to any reasonable plan of his opponent! In this case, 13 g4 is linked to a clear positional risk after 13...♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 e5, however, some unclear complications may occur: 15 ♗g1!? exf4 16 g5 ♘d7 17 ♘d5... Similar complications may also arise after the interesting attempt: 13 ♘b3 b6 14 a5!? ♘d7!? (14...bxa5 15 e5). After the positional move **13 ♕d2** peace does not reign long on the board either, especially if Black immediately charges the c4-square with **13...♘a5**. If the black knight succeeds in getting there, Black usually achieves active play e.g. after 14 ♕f2 ♘c4 15 ♗c1 e5... I have always thought that the knight should be cut off regardless of the weakening of the position: **14 b3!?**.



Then White is proved right after the unnatural **14...d5?! 15 e5 ♗b4?** (15...♘d7 16 ♘ce2 f6? 17 ♘xe6! Navara – St.Pedersen, Morso 2002) **16 ♘cb5!**, and a further large-scale piece swap 16...♗xd2 17 ♘xc7 ♗xe3 18 exf6 ♗xd4 19 ♖ad1! ♗xf6 20 ♘xe8 leads to a situation in which Black has insufficient compensation for the exchange. Therefore, Black should remain patient, preferring **14...♖b8** followed by 15...b6, which was played against me by an outstanding theoretician GM Igor Štohl in our recent duel in Germany (14...♖b8 15 ♖ad1 b6 16 e5!? dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘d7 18 ♗f4 ♘xe5 19 ♕e3 f6 20 ♘e4! ♗c5! with approximate equality.)

Indian GM Anand recommended meeting the previously played **12...♘a5** in his game against

Topalov in Dortmund 1996 with an immediate **13 g4!?** (13...♘c4 14 ♗c1).

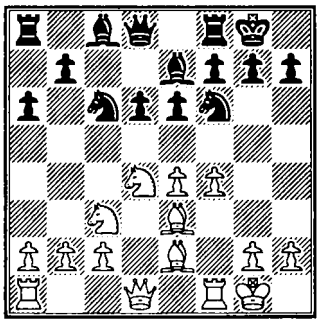


Without any doubt, this is an uncompromising response which may be more troublesome than any other...

'Such things should not be judged by their number but by their importance.' (Cicero). Remember this quotation during your acquisition of knowledge for strategic and dynamic combat in the following final chapter!

C. Economical concept with the black queen placed on d8

We will proceed from this basic position.



This position may arise from different variations: from the 'Najdorf', the 'Scheveningen', but also from the 'Paulsen': **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 d6 7 0-0 ♘f6 8 ♗e3 ♗e7 9 f4 0-0** It is nearly universally available! For several reasons Black keeps his queen on d8 – I will try to explain precisely the interesting reasons for that in the following text.

I myself have tried to clear up various details and connections of this concept, using both my own and others' games, taking part in commentaries and training sessions; in the end, I developed some kind of 'philosophy', a planned method of opening which I willingly returned to in my games and lectures.

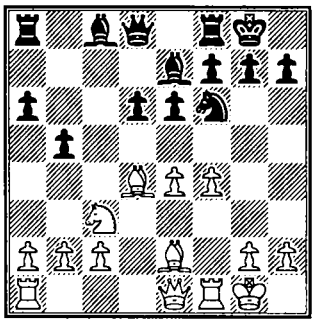
'You may know your thing but it means nothing if others do not know that.' (Persius)

1. White does not play a2-a4

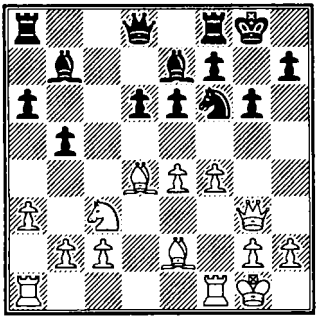
The player of the white pieces says to himself: the opponent has already developed his knight on c6, thus he cannot play a quick b7-b5... and quickly transfers his queen to the attacking square g3:

a) **10 ♕e1**

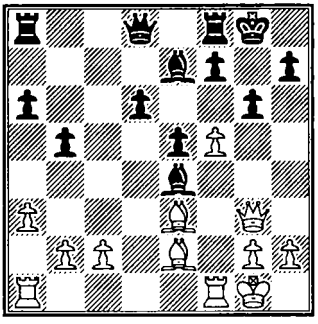
The immediate **10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 b5** follows.



The position shows the first important duty and sphere of activity of the ♕d8: she indirectly aims at the exposed ♗d4 and prevents the otherwise dangerous breakthrough e4-e5 followed by fxe5! White mostly replies **12 a3 ♗b7 13 ♕g3**; then common positions may be reached after 13...♕c7, however, 13...♗c6 14 ♖ae1 ♕d7!? (with the intention of a6-a5) is also interesting. Nevertheless, let us follow our principal idea! This idea lies in **13...g6!?**,

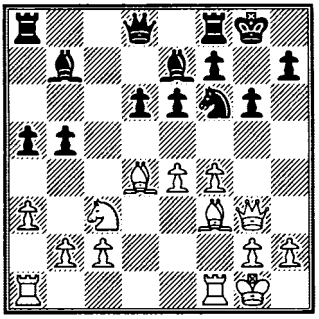


thus in an immediate attack of the e4 pawn. Should the black queen be placed on c7, the same move would mean a road to hell for White's attack after f4-f5, however, this is a different situation. What is the difference? After **14 f5?** Black may in fact take the e4 pawn: **14...e5 15 ♗e3 ♘xe4! 16 ♘xe4 ♗xe4**.



The threat f5-f6, which is otherwise deadly, is safely covered by the battery of the black queen and bishop. This is the second important duty of the queen placed on d8! White has insufficient compensation for his pawn, e.g. the game Agnos – Jansa, Bad Wörishofen 1993, followed 17 ♗h6 ♖e8 18 ♗d3 ♗xd3 19 cxd3 ♗f8 20 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 21 f6 ♖e8! 22 ♕g5 ♖e6 23 ♖f3 ♕f8 ∓.

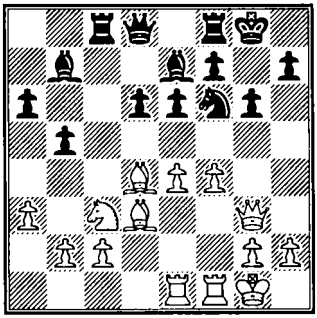
The 'spring' of the black position is also ready to unleash the planned operations after the e4 pawn is covered. After **14 ♗f3** the immediate **14...a5!** can follow.



The exchange of a flank pawn for a central one 15 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 16 ♕e1 f5 is a bargain for Black even if some well-known players try to vainly prove the opposite... Black is fine after 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♗xe5 b4!. I had a very good feeling after the sequel 17 axb4 axb4 18 ♘a4 ♘e4! 19 ♕e1 f5 (Padevsky – Jansa, Yugoslavia 1978).

The dynamic mechanism of Black's counterplay may be started with some complications after **14 ♗d3**. Black can play in a similar manner 14...a5 but then it is hard to react to the quiet 15 ♖ae1 b4 16 axb4 axb4 17 ♘d1. I think that the

conditions for coordinating the black forces may be suitably fulfilled by **14...♖c8!?**. Why such a move just now? You will appreciate its significance after 15 f5 e5 16 ♗e3 ♖xc3! 17 bxc3 ♘xe4 with sufficient compensation for the exchange. But how can Black react to the logical **15 ♖ae1** ?



Question:

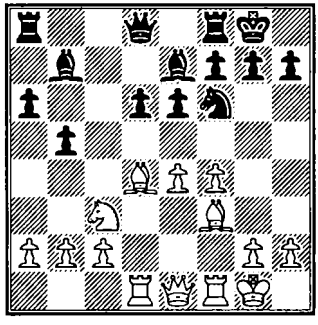
The 16 f5 threat is seriously hanging in the air. Black should take measures. Will you recommend **15...♘d7** or **15...♘h5** and why?

Answer:

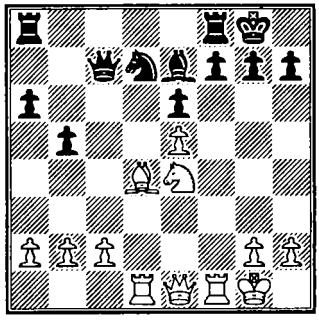
Appearances can be deceptive! The more active **15...♘h5?!** seems to be good at first sight but only if you link it to the tactics after 16 ♕h3? (16 ♕f2, 16 ♕f3) 16...♘xf4! followed by e6-e5. You may add 1 point then but you do not deserve more! In fact, after the accurate retreat **16 ♕e3!** Black can expect serious problems with the coordination of his pieces since both 16...♘xf4? and 16...e5 cannot be played due to 17 ♗b6 and possibly 18 f5. On the other hand, by playing the seemingly modest **15...♘d7!** (3 points), you have hit the bull's eye of the moving strategic target and you have also revealed another duty of the ♕d8. All of a sudden, 16...♗h4 is threatened; Black may use the gain of tempo for a beneficial counter-operation in the centre, known from the previous chapter: **16 ♖e2 e5! 17 fxe5** (17 ♗e3 exf4 18 ♗xf4 ♘e5) **17...dxe5 18 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♕xe5 ♗d6 20 ♕f6 ♕xf6 21 ♖xf6 ♗e5** with an excellent endgame for Black (Marciano – Berend, France 1996).

If White plays, after **14...♖ac8**, the wait-and-see move **15 ♔h1**, only then does Black utilise **15...a5**. This occurred in the game Wolff – Jansa, Gausdal 1988. The American grandmaster thought for a long time..., but could not come up with anything better than the blunting 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♘xb5 ♗xb2 18 ♖ab1 ♗g7 after which there was nothing I could complain of. As I noticed later, my very young opponent probably liked our post-mortem analysis because he had taken the whole concept with ♕d8 over to his own opening repertoire... as Black!

Instead of 12 a3, also the active **12 ♗f3 ♗b7 13 ♖d1** occurs in practice.



Now 13...b4 seems to be a little risky, probably not due to 14 e5 ♗xf3 15 exf6 ♗xf6 16 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 17 ♖xf3 bxc3 =, but because of 14 ♘a4!? ♕a5 15 b3, even if the complications arising after 15...e5!? 16 ♗b6 ♕b5 are quite unclear... However, Black has a solid continuation **13...♕c7** at his disposal (only now because the white rook should rather be placed on e1 in the Sicilian defence!) **14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘d7 16 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 17 ♘e4 ♕c7!**.



This is very important step: the e5 pawn is attacked but, as we will see, the queen is also 'X-raying' the g3-square, which is a natural platform for the white queen.

Question:

In the above diagram position, a famous grandmaster sacrificed the e5 pawn with **18 c3**; the idea lay in his effort to gain at least a slight edge after the little combination **18...♘xe5 19 ♕g3 f6 20 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 21 ♖de1**. Was he right or not and why?

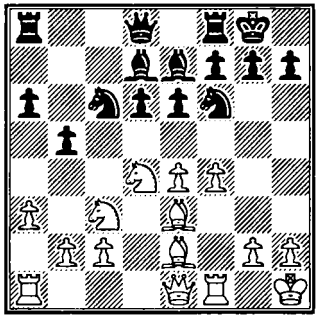
Answer:

No, he was not right at all (1 point)! Black continued **21...♕e7!** (1 point) and White lost the exchange (the h4-square again...). This occurred in the game Geller – A.Sokolov, Reykjavik 1990. You see, even a great grandmaster may slip sometimes!

It is better to play **18 ♕g3 ♖ad8** (18...♕xc2? 19 ♘f6+, Black tries to seize the pawn now, therefore...) ...**19 c3 f5! 20 exf6 ♕xg3** with a problem-free endgame.

b) **10 ♔h1**

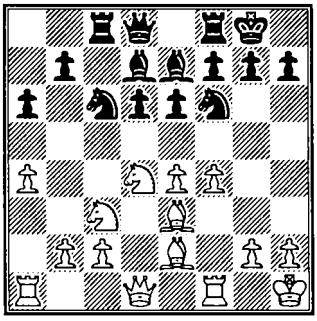
10...♗d7!? Black continues his economical concept with his queen placed on d8! (After 10...♕c7 Black can transpose to 'normal' positions.) **11 ♕e1 b5 12 a3**.



In addition to 12...♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 ♗c6, Black can also try to force a quick b5-b4, this time with the help of either the rook (12...♖b8!?) or the queen (12...♕b8!?). Both possibilities lead to interesting and less explored positions which need frequent use and analyses!

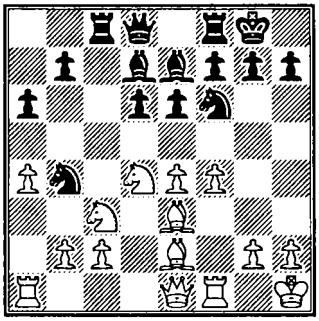
2. System with a2-a4

I would recommend White to play this immediately: 10 a4. If he hesitates **10 ♔h1 ♗d7 11 a4** then **11...♖c8!**

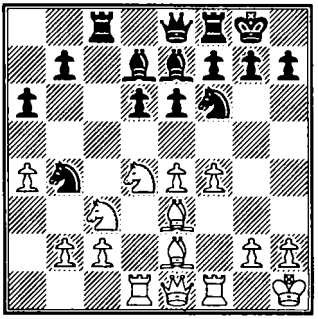


draws a strong wind into the sails of Black's concept again! This ancient idea of Lev Polugaevsky has got new clothes and has become, in my opinion, a very dangerous dynamic weapon! I will give you information on its variety and, at least, on the most important strategic-tactical moments:

a) **12 ♕e1 ♘b4!**



This move aims not only at c2 but also takes under control the ♘c3 and the white centre. The centre collapses after 13 ♕g3 ♖xc3! 14 bxc3 ♘xe4 15 ♕e1 ♘d5, when Black has excellent compensation for the exchange (Jansa – Polugaevsky, Skara 1980). In the position in the diagram Black threatens 13...e5; in addition to 13 ♕g3, White has a defence consisting of **13 ♖d1** (13...e5? 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♘f5 ♘xc2 16 ♕g3±). However, a nifty **13...♕e8!** comes



(can you see which square may also be reached from d8...?). Again, Black threatens 14...e5, the a4 pawn is hanging, after 14 e5, 14...dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘fd5 may follow...

Question:

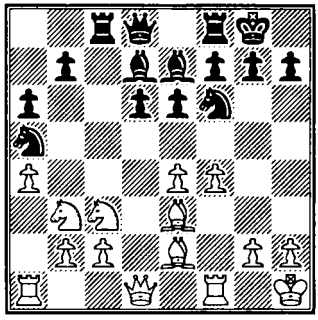
...what will Black play after **14 ♕g3**?

Answer:

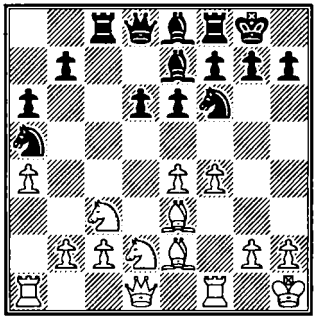
Naturally, the already known combination **14...♖xc3! 15 bxc3 ♘xe4 16 ♕e1 ♘d5** (1 point)!

In the game Ganguly – Kunte, Nagpur 2002, Black's position was then excellent.

b) **12 ♘b3 ♘a5!**



Note that unlike the position with ♕c7 Black can save a tempo in case of the exchange on a5. He is not afraid of 13 e5 since after the flexible 13...♘e8 the black position remains comfortable (14 ♘xa5 ♕xa5 15 ♗f3 ♗c6 16 ♗d4 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♖d8! Geller – Polugaevsky, Tbilisi 1978). For a while Black had problems solving the tension in piece coordination after the retreat of the white knight to cover the c4-square: **13 ♘d2!?** However, it seems that the clever **13...♗e8!** solves everything (the e8-square may be the key-square of this variation...).



A clever multi-purpose move! Black prepares 14...d5 and simultaneously vacates the d7-square for his knight but his position is already very promising. For example, in the game Oll – Zvjagintsev, European Championship 1997, Black quickly gained the initiative on the queenside: 14 ♗d3 d5 15 e5 ♘d7 16 ♘e2 ♘c5...

I think that the above-mentioned concept of play deserves the highest attention!

'The best things occur very rarely.' (Seneca)

Evaluation of the 'Scheveningen' test:

36 points or more – you must be a player of master (grandmaster) class or a native expert on 'Scheveningen', maybe both...

26-36 points – the theme has attracted your interest, only small mistakes have prevented you from mastering it – think over them!

Up to 25 points – if you are too ambitious...you should probably play another opening!

E. Selection of an opening and preparation for an opponent

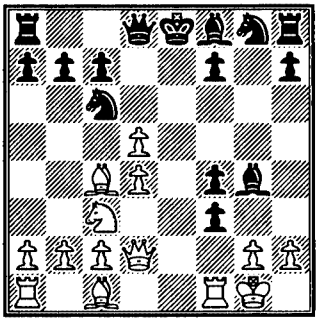
Optimal formation of an opening repertoire and specific preparation for tournaments and individual encounters – this may be a theme which is interesting for many. It is not accidental because it is precisely this area which has been most affected by the unprecedented development of chess information. It is really hard to give advice, from both the material (computer + database + literature) and spiritual point of view ('what' and 'how' to play?).

First of all it should be said that no 'rational' methods exist; the complexity of the issue may best be demonstrated by the fact that 'as many advisors – as many different pieces of advice!' In the background I can see a shadow of the skilled 'Professor' Yefim Geller explaining: 'Everyone must find his/her own way.' 'Thank you,' you may say, 'the grandmasters do not unload their problems on to us.' Nevertheless, they do, but you must not believe in simple recipes!

The first Luxembourg GM Alberto David certainly belongs to the most talented chess players I have ever met, his best qualities lie in his imaginative attacking play and immense ingenuity. You may review this statement in the light of the following brilliant game in which he, then still an unknown master, outclassed the experienced Hungarian grandmaster in only 14 moves!

A. David – J. Pinter
France 1993

1 e4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 f4 exf4 4 ♘f3 g5 5 d4 g4 6 ♗c4!? gxf3 7 0-0 d5 8 exd5 ♗g4 9 ♕d2!



Everything may be found in theoretical manuals. Larsen, for example, 'recommends for Black' 9...♘ce7 10 ♕xf4 ♘h6 but I would not recommend you to play this against Albert! He simply has the position in 'his blood', even if he plays the openings now in a much milder manner and more solidly. Pinter tried another recommendation but he was beaten badly: **9...♘a5?! 10 ♗b5+ c6 11 ♕xf4! ♕d7?! 12 ♕e5+ ♘e7 13 ♘e4! 0-0-0 14 ♗f4 1:0** To what extent was this debacle caused by a weak defence by Black or, on the other hand, by the knowledge and attacking abilities of White? Maybe everything contributed a little, but White's enormous attacking potential was essential...

At the Bled Olympiad in 2002 A.David scored an excellent result, 11 points of 13 games – it was one of the best individual results at the Olympiad! In my position of captain and trainer I enjoyed his play and taking part in his specific preparation for his games. I would say that Alberto has successfully found his own path...

The importance of effective preparation for every single game goes hand in hand with the tournament/information boom. You should never forget that you may also be 'X-rayed' by your future opponent! Thus for an optimal decision on your approach for a future duel, an important role is not only played by the strong and weak points of your opponent, but also by the style of your own play, the volume of your opening repertoire that you are able to use and so on. Strictly speaking, several basic different approaches may be itemised here:

1. A brutal, 'Fischer-like' one, consisting entirely of a personal belief in the objective strength of individual moves, regardless of the opponent.

2. An unpredictable, 'Lasker-like' one, conditioned more or less by the personality of the opponent.

The first approach is orientated towards the battle against the opponent's pieces, the second one is aimed at combatting the way your opponent is thinking...

3. A highly pragmatic approach dominated by experience and knowledge of a specific opening and unwavering belief in it – whoever might be the opponent. For example, for many years I have not seen GM Wolfgang Uhlmann play anything else, after 1 e2-e4, than his favourite French. (It happened once, though. A very long time ago, at a Bad Liebenstein tournament in 1963, Uhlmann actually replied to 1 e4 by pushing the e-pawn one square further – 1...e7-e5?! The Exchange Variation of the Spanish followed but the problems with the doubled pawn led Wolfgang back to the French. After all, he used to play and still does play it with great understanding.)

4. An improvisatory approach, depending on one's current mood. It is an approach which is, at present, typical for absolute amateurs; however, previously this approach used to be utilised even at the highest level. David Bronstein's meditation over his first move, sometimes even lasting one hour, became famous. He was able to play everything and so could afford to do this.

How can we reveal the opponent's weak spots during preparation? Often it is something of which our opponent has practical experience but we say to ourselves: 'This cannot be good...' – it is possible to find weak spots which the opponent himself is not aware of.

Is the opponent's concept of 'his' opening really wrong or are we mistaken? This may only be solved by the game...

I wish you joy and success in your future games. Your strategy may be favourably supported by some of the thoughts described in these pages. And this was precisely the idea of the book.

GM Vlastimil Jansa

This book offers players a fresh approach to opening play, which should not depend merely on memorizing theory or exact calculation of variations but rather on the ability to read each ever-changing situation on the board intelligently, draw the right conclusions and so find an appropriate move on the board. The author has selected three popular openings—the Ruy Lopez, Grünfeld and Scheveningen Sicilian—as his principal 'training ground' to exercise the reader's powers of deduction. By frequently stopping at critical moments to ask pertinent questions, the author encourages the reader to be self-reliant when analysing specific positions. In this way the reader will learn the art of effective thinking at the chessboard, particularly in the opening stages. In this lies the essence of the 'dynamics of chess strategy'. This awareness enables players to put together a large number of tiny details and peculiarities of specific openings to create an integrated concept of a suitable future plan of play. And in this lies the road to mastery.

Vlastimil Jansa has been one of the Czech Republic's leading players. He is a highly experienced grandmaster who has represented his country at Olympic level. Nowadays he spends more of his time training young players with great success.

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