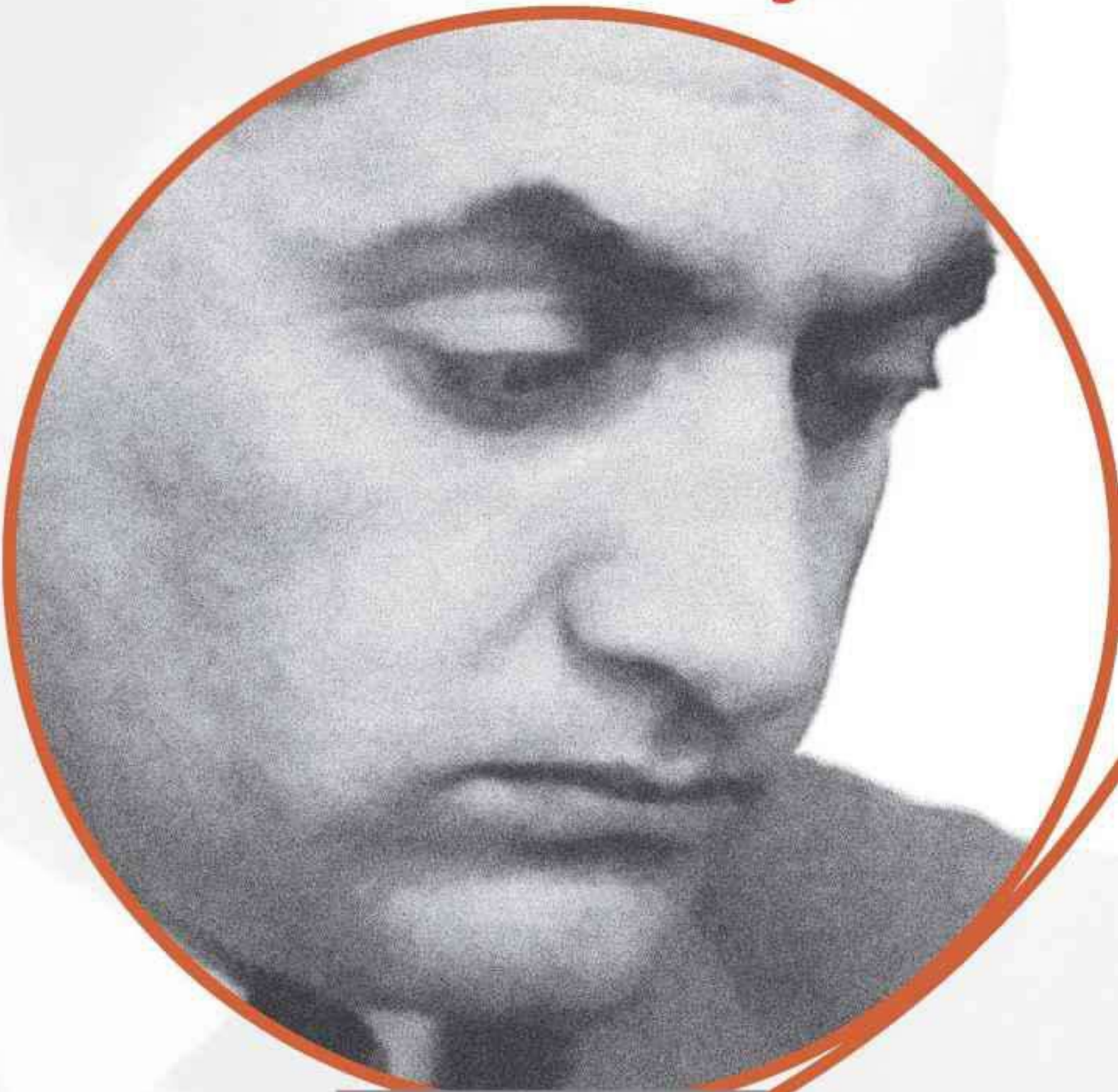
Thomas Engqvist

Stein

move by move



EVERYMAN CHESS

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EVERYMAN CHESS
www.everymanchess.com

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About the Author

Thomas Engqvist is an International Master from Sweden. He has over 30 years' experience as a chess coach, teacher and writer, and has recently worked with players at world championship level in both junior and correspondence chess.

Engqvist was born in 1963 and started to play chess at the SK33 chess club in the small town of Enköping during the autumn of 1976. He earned the International Master title in 1993 when he was 29 years old, after winning an IM tournament in Titograd (Podgorica) 1991 and coming third in the 1992 and 1993 Swedish Championships. He had the chance to become the 1993 Swedish Champion with a victory in his last-round game, but failed despite obtaining a winning position. His highest FIDE rating of 2440 was achieved in 1994.

Engqvist has been a member of one of the strongest clubs in Sweden, SK Rockaden, since 1995. He has played for the first team for more than twenty years and helped them to win the Swedish Team Championship on several occasions, most recently in the 2013/14 season.

As a chess coach he supported Stefan Winge in gaining second place in the World Correspondence Chess Championship in 2012 (Winge, too, narrowly missed out on the title after failing to convert a clear advantage in the crucial final game). He has been a coach at the Peng Cheng chess club in Shenzhen, in the south east of China, where he aided many players, including Zhu Yi who was runner-up in the 2012 World Under-12 Championship. He is currently coaching the nine-year-old American talent, Kirk Ghazarian.

On a creative level, Engqvist refuted one of the former main lines in the Slav Defence, Winawer Counter-Gambit: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 e5 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 Nf3 e4 6 Ne5 f6 7 Qa4+ Nd7 8 Ng4 and now 8 ... Kf7!!, as in M.Wiedenkeller-T.Engqvist, Swedish Championship, Gothenburg 1990. Not long afterwards, the game G.Kasparov-P.Nikolic, Manila 1992, went 4 dxe5 d4 5 Ne4 Qa5+ 6 Bd2 and this became the new main line.

Engqvist's official work is as a teacher at a municipal school. He teaches Swedish as a second language and English. His formal education at University was in comparative film, literature, English and pedagogique. In his spare time he is editor-in-chief of the popular Swedish chess site www.schacksnack.se. This is his second book. His first – Petrosian: Move by Move – made the ECF book of the year shortlist for 2014.

Contents

About the Author
Bibliography
Introduction

1 Early Years
2 The Way to the Top
3 The Strongest Period
4 Setbacks and Bad Luck
5 The Final Years

Index of Complete Games

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Introduction

He who takes risks can lose, he who doesn't however will lose for sure. – Savielly Tartakower (1887-1956)

The main motivation behind this book is that a great and naturally talented player like the Ukrainian grandmaster Leonid Zakharovich Stein (1934-1973) deserves more attention in the English-speaking world than the two books which have been written about him so far. The two that exist about Stein were well written and popular but have, unfortunately, been out of print for several years. Those are Leonid Stein: Master of Risk Strategy by the Soviet grandmaster Eduard Gufeld and master Efim Lazarev, and the work by the English grandmaster Raymond Keene, Leonid Stein: Master of Attack. The former is actually an updated version of the book in the famous "Black" series which sold an unbelievable 75,000 copies. The latter was reprinted as a paperback from the original in 1976.

There are two other books which contain some games and information about Stein, as well as an article "The interrupted game of Leonid Stein", co-authored by Adrian Mikhalchishin and Victor Kart, published in New in Chess #2/1995, which has some concrete information not to be found elsewhere. The books are Garry Kasparov on My Great Predecessors, Part III and Colin Crouch's The Great Attackers: Learn from Kasparov, Tal and Stein. The former concentrates on the most important high-level games of his career, while the latter examines games from his final years, 1972-73.

When listening to an interview with the Israeli grandmaster Ilya Smirin, during the Olympiad in Tromsø 2014, he mentioned two players who had been especially important for him: Mikhail Tal and Leonid Stein. One reason many young players probably do not know Stein's games, and maybe do not even know his name, is because of his untimely demise at the very young age of 38. Many chess fans are familiar with Viswanathan Anand's rapid play but do not know that Stein played even more quickly. The press even called him the "computer", based on the idea that his head contained a high-speed electronic machine due to his speed and depth in calculating variations.

My first contact with Stein's incredibly interesting games, at least on a regular basis, was in 1989 when I was a professional chess player and studied players like Stein, Tal and Petrosian in depth. The databases were not so well developed during those days, so the best way to become acquainted with Stein's games was via Keene's book, Leonid Stein: Master of Attack. I remember how I tried to guess his moves before I checked the ones he actually played. Sometimes the moves were incomprehensible, so I sensed that he was a very profound player indeed. As well as being entertaining, playing through and studying his games, it was also clear from the outset that there was something to learn and benefit from investigating them more deeply. Sometimes a single game could last for several hours by practising in this patient manner, like a normal tournament game.

I discovered the other book, Leonid Stein: Master of Risk Strategy, somewhat later in life. Gufeld and Lazarev were closely acquainted with Stein, both as a person and as a player, so it complements Keene's book by its more personal approach, the broader choice of games (not just attacking games), the biographical material, as well as the many anecdotes.

The main purpose of this third book about Stein is to introduce you to sixty games, thirty with White and thirty with Black, many which have not been annotated before – to give you, as closely as it is possible, an all-round picture of this naturally gifted player. The main

games are all victories by Stein, but there are others in the annotations. In going through them, it is intended that you try to guess his moves, move by move, in roughly the same way as I once did. The carefully selected games are presented in chronological order, year by year, making it easier to trace his chess development from youth to a more mature age. I believe this is the correct approach to study. I hope you will thus be able to understand and appreciate this great player's ability and thinking.

Regarding the practice of presenting games in chronological order, Mark Taimanov suggests in his autobiography, Taimanov's Selected Games, that arranging a player's games in this way is according to a formal principle that conceals the writer's beliefs. Note, though, that the method of presenting games according to your beliefs, or thematically, requires that you actually annotate your own games. When you study a profound player I am convinced it is far easier to understand them in depth by following their development and studying their games year by year, from the beginning to the end. Furthermore, by going through the book, step by step, it is much easier to appreciate the turning points, when Stein's style changed. Although, he was primarily an attacker in his youth, he became a more complete and versatile player as his chess matured; eventually he did not mind technical or positional play if it was what a game required.

The overall aim of this book is that you, the reader, should learn Stein's profound ideas, by studying his model games, and assimilate them in order to be able later to implement them in your own games. I am sure it will make you a better chess player if you undertake this task seriously by answering the questions one by one. However, since it will take some time to go through the entire book if you do your work diligently, I will offer a short-cut to what I think are the ten most commendable games. Of course, this is a highly subjective list. After having played through all sixty games, you would very probably choose ten completely different ones. Nevertheless, here are mine:

To start with there are Stein's 'immortal' games, of which in my opinion he played two. The 'officially' immortal one is Game 11 (Krogius-Stein), but I regard Game 21 (Gligoric-Stein) as immortal as well. Interestingly, Kasparov makes a comparison with A.McDonnell-L.De Labourdonnais, London (4th match, 16th game) 1834, which is itself 'immortal' due to the final position where three black pawns are positioned in a row on f2, e2 and d2. Krogius-Stein is another game you should never forget after being made acquainted with it, and it has all the excitement to be expected from such a game. Note that Stein had the black pieces in both these games, in which he played his celebrated King's Indian Defence in ultra-dynamic fashion. This opening fit Stein like hand in glove, because it enabled him to display his strong force of imagination and dynamic thinking to the outmost.

My other eight recommended games are (in numerical order) as follows:

Game 19 (Bisguier-Stein) is very interesting because one feels strongly that Stein wanted to win very much – to that end he managed, in a very subtle way, to force Bisguier, who probably was happy with a draw, to go for an attack. Stein's king seemed to be in a dangerous position, and the journalists even thought he was lost at one point. Of course there was a lot of psychology going on in this game.

Game 20 (Stein-Yanofsky) is notable for Stein's ability to manoeuvre on both sides of the board in the spirit of J.R.Capablanca-K.Treybal, Carlsbad 1929 – especially because it was not his normal style to play prolonged manoeuvrings in the manner of Petrosian. (Actually, it was not Capablanca's normal style either, but that is another story.)

Game 29 (Bronstein-Stein) is a nice positional game where Stein managed to win through subtle means – in particular, by exploiting a small advantage consisting of greater control of the dark squares in a rather blocked and unusual position.

Game 45 (Stein-Rodriguez Gonzales) is reminiscent of R.Réti-A.Rubinstein, Carlsbad 1923. Stein played an excellent and instructive game according to the hypermodern school of thought, presumably influenced by Réti. At this time he read many chess books, so I think it is very likely he knew about Réti's contributions to the chess world.

Game 46 (Damjanovic-Stein) is a good example of the exchange sacrifice, and one can sense the influence of Petrosian, who most probably would have played in the same fashion. It is not so strange one can feel magnetism from Petrosian; after all, his weight of character, both as a person and as the reigning world champion (1963-69) must have affected Stein in various ways.

Game 50 (Nikitin-Stein) is a good demonstration of luring the opponent into complications where Stein himself felt like a fish in water.

Game 53 (Stein-Barcza) is a King's Indian Attack, and one can again sense Petrosian's influence: Stein played passively, even harmlessly (and therefore provocatively), in the opening, whereas he was normally an active player. The rook manoeuvre on the second rank is reminiscent of Petrosian's handling of rooks too.

Game 56 (Stein-Parma) shows the strategic risk Stein was often willing to undertake for the sole purpose of increasing the tension. This trait was his main signature and it is very well illustrated by this game. As Tartakower once said: "He who takes risks can lose, he who doesn't however will lose for sure." According to Gufeld and Lazarev, Stein especially liked this aphorism, and many of his games prove this as well.

Naturally, plenty of the other fifty games in this book can be strongly recommended too, but this 'top ten' highlights different facets of Stein's play in a more rapid way.

A Short Biography

It is always helpful to have some biographical knowledge before studying a player in detail, in order to have a better understanding of what sort of person they were on a personal level. If you are interested in a more extended biography I strongly recommend Gufeld and Lazarev's book, Leonid Stein: Master of Risk Strategy; the one you now hold in your hands emphasizes his games rather than his life, which is rather presented in snapshots.

Leonid Stein was born on November 12th, 1934, in a small village in Kamenets-Podolsk in the west of the Ukraine. His Jewish family had four members: his father Zakhar Lazarevich, his mother Charna Abovna, his four-years-older sister Frima, and himself. His father tragically died of typhus in 1942, at the young age of 36, so like many other famous chess players (Botvinnik, Fischer, Korchnoi, Petrosian, Spassky and Kasparov), Stein grew up without a father to love and support him in his early years. After the second world war the remaining family settled in Lvov.

Stein was acquainted with the game when he was ten years old and quickly became one of the best players at school. His chess took a more serious turn when he was admitted to the Lvov Palace of Pioneers chess club; he was then thirteen years old. Here he attended lectures by the well-known master Alexey Sokolsky (1908-69), who had a short but fruitful activity at the Lvov chess club. Sokolsky was considered one of the best Soviet chess teachers and was Stein's first mentor. Unfortunately, he soon moved to Minsk to work as a teacher and to coach grandmaster Isaac Boleslavsky (1919-77), a decision which must have slowed down Stein's chess development considerably, since he was not fond of reading chess books at that time.

Later on, Efim Geller (1925-98) became Stein's other mentor. Stein showed Sokolsky and Geller all the games he had played after national championships and their advice was of

course invaluable. Geller influenced Stein to change his repertoire and to play the Ruy Lopez and the King's Indian Defence. Incidentally, Stein had a very bad score against Geller throughout his career: he only managed to win one game out of fifteen meetings. In a 1962 interview in Kiev, after his performance at the Stockholm Interzonal, Stein answered the question "Whom do you consider your coach?" as follows: "Since my youth I have been fascinated with the games of Alexander Alekhine. As much as I can, I try to imitate the style of that unparalleled virtuoso of attack." In real life Stein never had an actual coach, only mentors.

Compared with other great players, Stein's chess development was rather slow. It was only in the 1960s that things started to happen. This is the period of his life when he developed interests outside of chess, such as philosophy and psychology (Freud!), and graduated in journalism at Lvov University. There is no question that in his case this must have been beneficial for his chess. Stein became interested in reading chess books for the first time; whereas, earlier, he did not have the mentality to sit at home and work on chess by himself.

In the 28th Soviet Championship in 1961, Stein surprised everybody by ending up among the prize winners. After the 1962 Interzonal in Stockholm, he married Lillya and they eventually had a daughter named Alia. Further successes followed rapidly and this sudden catch-up effect is what Gufeld and Lazarev call "the riddle of Stein". Why was his development so slow compared with other great players from the same generation, such as Korchnoi, Tal and Spassky? They were all established grandmasters several years before 1960, whereas Stein became a GM much later in 1962. In the years that followed, he achieved the incredible feat of winning the USSR Championship three times: in 1963, 1965 and 1966. This triple crown proved that Stein was of world championship calibre. He also emerged as the winner, in 1967 and 1971, of two super-strong tournaments in Moscow. In 1973, just as Stein was aiming to become a world championship candidate at the Petropolis Interzonal in Brazil, he unexpectedly died at the early age of 38.

The demise of this great player was a shock to the chess world. Adrian Mikhalchishin and Victor Kart explained what happened: "He was in the central chess club in Moscow on the eve of the USSR team's departure to the European Championship in England, and according to people who saw him there, he was in excellent form, cracking a lot of jokes. (...) The night before the departure, at six in the morning, he got a headache and was taken to the first-aid post of the Rossia Hotel; there was, of course, no doctor. There was a nurse and she gave him some tablets, but the pain refused to go away. Then instead of calling for help, she decided to give him an injection ... and a few minutes later grandmaster Stein was no more. The injection was obviously not what was required; even at this elementary level the Soviet health sector had once again demonstrated its utter uselessness."

The reigning world champion at that time, Bobby Fischer, wired a telegram to Moscow: "I am stunned by the premature death of Leonid Stein – the remarkable international grandmaster and good friend. I express my condolences to his family and to all chess brotherhood. Sincerely, Bobby Fischer."

Stein's record against the world champions of the 1960s – Tal, Botvinnik, Petrosian and Spassky – was 8-5 in his favour, with 32 draws. Against the 1970s champions, his record was rather worse: one draw out of two games vs. Fischer, and three draws out of five vs. Karpov. Nevertheless, when Karpov was introduced to Stein for the first time in his life by his coach Semyon Furman, he later recalled: "I watched with interest how they approached the position in their different ways: Furman endeavoured to give generalizing evaluations, while Stein 'fired out' a machine-gun-like stream of variations. He had a fantastic talent!" And Kasparov tells the story that, during the tournament in Baku 1980, Gufeld whispered in his ear: "You know, in 1973, Stein was stronger than Karpov!" The chess world may well have missed out on a world championship match

in 1978 between Karpov and Stein.

Stein's Style

As a rule, I rarely avoid losing at least one game. It is because of my character. As style goes, I am more of a tactician than a positional player. I like, as they say, to have fun over the board. – Leonid Stein (1971)

I believe I have my own style. – Leonid Stein (1973)

In the early 1950s, the coach Yuri Sakharov participated in the USSR Championship semi-final at Lvov. After a few rounds he noted that Stein, one of the demonstration board boys, almost always picked up games played by Simagin, Mikenas, Ragozin, Kopaev, the so-called romantic players who were fond of an attacking and combinative style. The reason being that this was the style to which Stein was most attracted. Sakharov, who was the future coach of the All-Ukrainian team, gave him a really good piece of advice: "For the sake of variety, would you demonstrate the games of Flohr, Aronin and Konstantinopolsky?" Stein answered: "There is no fun watching their games. They are somewhat dry, not to say boring." To this expected reply Sakharov said: "Try to look closely, and you will also notice something of interest in them. Pay attention to how skilfully they conduct strategic manoeuvring, how elegantly they defend their positions. You yourself will have to, whether you like it or not, not only attack and make combinations. It seems that you have no skills of doing anything else." Stein was grateful for the advice, and since Sakharov eventually won the tournament he must have known what he was talking about. His point was that Stein had to focus and develop the weaker sides of his game in order to become a more versatile player.

As we will see when we examine Stein's games, we can trace this overall development in his style. At the beginning of his career he played aggressively, even impulsively, whereas later on he managed to control himself and occasionally played technical chess in a positional style. Nevertheless, as Keene has observed: "Despite his having a high level of technical competence in all phases of the game, Stein can hardly be described as a 'universal player'". It is certainly true that Stein is not universal in the manner of Spassky, Keres or Alekhine (after his match with Capablanca), who were able to view the course of the game from various angles on a more consistent basis. A genuine search for chess truth or objectivity is less discernible in the games of Stein. The "early" romantic Stein was even called "a new Tal".

However, as noted by Gufeld and Lazarev: "Tal used to conscientiously violate the basic principles of the game in order to create favourable positions for himself. Stein tried to play sound chess. He would risk only when he did not see any other way of winning." For instance, Colin Crouch related that, compared with Tal, Stein made relatively few sacrifices: "Even in his wild and complicated win against Smyslov, he is creating serious imbalances without giving up material" (see Game 57); while Robert Wade wrote about Stein's 'immortal' game as follows: "It epitomizes Stein's forthright style which, if it does not come up to Tal's standard in liquidity of combination, matches it for ferocity and determination." Kasparov said that the game against Krogius was Stein's calling card. "It proclaimed to the world that, following Bronstein and Tal, another subverter of the strict positional truths of the Botvinnik era had arrived into the chess arena."

Where Stein was similar to Tal was in his willingness to take risks in the arena of calculation. In practice this meant that variations might be refuted later in the post mortem analysis but never during the game. This is actually a pragmatic approach according to Petrosian's definition: "when a chess player for the sake of the result (win, draw) offers an incorrect sacrifice or performs other manoeuvres of analogous character, leading the opponent into error, and serving an unwarranted gain. In this case victory or draw is not the result of disclosing the truth in chess."

It is striking how Stein sometimes chose a practical move, rather than spend a little more time on finding the most decisive continuation – as, for instance, in Game 37 (vs. Westman)

where he overlooked a beautiful combination leading to mate. The approach of playing for the point rather than for beauty or truth is more that of a sportsman than an artist. Someone like Bronstein would certainly have preferred to win in more artistic fashion. Another example is Game 8 (vs. Nei), where Stein missed a study-like conclusion in a rook ending, opting instead for a pragmatic move. (He still won both games easily.) For Stein chess seems to have been both art and sport. In an interview in Belgrade 1970, Stein said: "Chess is art. It has much in common with sports." As Gufeld and Lazarev expressed: "The urge for winning electrified him more than chasing the magic bird of beauty."

On the other hand, as noted already, it is possible to trace a slight influence from Petrosian as well, perhaps not so strange considering that he was one of the top Soviet grandmasters and won the world championship title in 1963. He may have indirectly inspired Stein to broaden his play with new strategic and psychological insights. Stein certainly made some positional exchange sacrifices in the spirit of Petrosian. Game 10 (vs. Levin) is a primitive example showing the exchange sacrifice for the purpose of simplification; more interesting is Game 32 (vs. Ståhlberg), which might actually be by Petrosian, who liked to sacrifice for dark-square domination. (If you are not familiar with Polugaevsky-Petrosian, USSR Championship, Moscow 1983 – Game 59 in Petrosian: Move by Move – you should look it up.) Game 46 (vs. Damjanovic), where the sacrifice (at move 18) gave Stein the superior pawn structure, is also very characteristic since it was never necessary in the first place. He had other, more natural – and stronger – continuations. What these games have in common is that time is a less important factor, which definitely hints at influences from Petrosian or his games.

One particular personal trait of Stein's is his feeling for when to relinquish the fianchettoed g7-bishop in the Sicilian Defence. In Games 15 and 58 (vs. Georgescu and Minic) he plays the surprising 16 ... Bxc3!? and 13 ... Bxd4!? respectively, trading the bishop for a white knight. In both cases the exchange was far from mandatory but a very creative solution, showing great practical strength in that it must have been quite a surprise for his opponent.

Stein's stumbling block in his 'romantic' days, and even in the early 1960s, was in demonstrating the necessary technique to win. For instance, against Miroslav Filip at the 1962 Stockholm Interzonal, he failed to convert a huge advantage due to poor technique and even lost on time in, by then, a clearly inferior position. In those days Stein's game was more one-sided, and if he was unable to get an attack on the king, which was his favourite target, he generally played at a slightly lower standard. The attacking games in this collection are represented primarily by Games 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 18, 34, 37, 58 and 60.

Later on in his career Stein did not shun positions demanding technique, as can be seen by Game 40 (vs. Kholmov) where Stein played the Ruy Lopez Exchange. His inspiration for this surprising choice was probably Fischer's success with the variation, though the famous psychological game Em.Lasker-Capablanca, St Petersburg 1914, comes to mind as well. In fact there are many games where Stein wins on technique alone. The most clear-cut examples are Games 20, 26, 31, 33, 36, 38, 40, 41, 44, 47, 48, 49 and 53 – along with Games 16, 25, 29, 45, 52 and 55, where the emphasis is on dark-square domination.

Another prime example (not included in this collection) is when Stein played straight for the endgame with the white pieces against Yuri Averbakh in the 1970 USSR Championship. At the time, Averbakh (now the world's oldest grandmaster) was regarded as the greatest endgame specialist in the world. The original Russian edition of his classic series on the

endgame had a worldwide reputation; even Fischer used them during his 1972 world championship match. So we can definitely conclude that Stein's style had changed in the direction of greater completeness.

Finally, we should again take note of Game 57 (vs. Smyslov), which shows that "Stein's creative work was generally greatly influenced by the traditions of the Russian School of Chess starting with Chigorin and Alekhine." The moves 5 Qe2 and 10 h4 are particularly telling, the former deriving from Chigorin's prototype King's Indian Attack (with 2 Qe2) against the French. Mikhail Chigorin (1850-1908) also outlined the general concepts to play for a win with the black pieces, and Stein was surely familiar with his words: "A possible combination lies hidden in each position, and each combination proceeds from a position. Everything depends on the specific situation on the board and the ability to grasp it." The latter move 10 h4 may have been an inspiration from Alekhine who liked to push the h-pawn early on several occasions. One famous example is the game A.Alekhine-A.Rubinstein, The Hague 1921, where the h-pawn laid the foundation for enemy weaknesses on the kingside.

Stein and Chess Psychology

I am attracted to the struggle and to the psychological aspects of the game. – Leonid Stein (1970)

The above quotation could easily have been by Emanuel Lasker, so one can feel a certain affinity with the second world champion.

Regarding the start of the game, Stein was normally very easy to prepare against since he had the same weakness as Fischer: a limited opening repertoire. Fischer had to widen his repertoire before playing Spassky for the world championship in 1972; similarly, Stein had to find something else to play in addition to his favourite King's Indian and Sicilian.

Interestingly, Stein also surprised Spassky by bringing out the Grünfeld in a game in the 1964 USSR Championship play-off (not in this collection). In the tournament bulletin grandmaster Vladimir Simagin noted (after the moves 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5): "A startling decision. The 'clan' of the King's Indian aficionados are visibly diminishing. Already Stein refuses to play it. In the given game the choice of the opening appeared to be an unpleasant psychological surprise for the opponent." In the '70s Stein played Alekhine's Defence on several occasions as well, so he had already expanded his repertoire with the black pieces against White's two main opening moves. It is a pity the chess world was not to witness his development further.

As already noted, calculated creative risk was one of Stein's main traits; it can also be regarded as a psychological element in the spirit of Lasker since it increases the tension in the game and puts more pressure on the opponent. The essence of the creative risk in Stein's mind was to make the position more complicated for himself but above all for his opponent; in that way he managed to increase the value of each move. There are several good examples of this concept; if I had to single one out I would mention Game 17 (vs. Teschner), where Stein complicated the position so much that he made serious errors himself. Nevertheless, he won in the end, so his strategy was successful. The 'immortal' Games 11 and 21 also belong to this category, as well as Game 56 (vs. Parma) mentioned earlier.

Stein's play in the Game 19 (vs Bisquier) reminds me of a reverse psychological tactic (provoking or forcing the opponent into an ending) Emanuel Lasker used with the black pieces against Joseph Henry Blackburne, in London (7th matchgame) 1892. Blackburne, who was a feared attacking player, succumbed to Lasker relatively easily after Lasker had cleverly forced the exchange of queens early in the game. Blackburne turned out to be helpless after this rudimentary psychological idea. Conversely, due the tournament situation, Stein needed to beat Bisguier and for that purpose provoked him into an attack on the king. Stein conducted a cold-blooded, ingenious defence and emerged the winner.

Another game worth mentioning (which is not published in this volume) is the miniature

L.Ljubojevic-L.Stein, Las Palmas 1973, where Ljubojevic played Larsen's Opening, 1 b3. Stein wrote the following comments in the Sportivnaya Gazeta (Sports Newspaper): "Ljubojevic still loses presence of mind in non-standard positions. If one dares to start the game with b2-b3 [giving the opponent all the options in the world], one should be ready for the King's Indian. The Yugoslav, unfamiliar with these transformations, missed a typical King's Indian stroke already on the 11th move, after which everything was over." The game went 1 b3 e5 2 Bb2 d6 (cleverly preparing a King's Indian set-up) 3 e3 Nf6 4 c4 g6 5 d4 Bg7 6 Nc3 exd4 7 Qxd4 0-0 8 Nc3 Nbd7 9 Be2 Nc5 10 Rd1? Ng4! 11 Qd2?? Nxf2! with a deadly fork. In fact White is already lost since 12 Kxf2 is answered by 12 ... Bxc3 and 13 ... Ne4+, although Ljubojevic continued until move 25. The reason he resigned so late was perhaps that he was truly shocked by this blitz attack.

Keene named Stein's ability to win quickly against formidable opponents "the hammer of Thor". This may be regarded as a psychological concept as well, because Stein was prepared for creativity and fighting for the initiative from the very start of the game, and mentally even before the game. Many of his opponents were unready for such play and suddenly felt the power of the hammer, literally in their head, by which time it was often too late – as for example, in Games 12, 18, 35 and 58 in this book.

Stein's Contributions to Chess

He was a practical player, albeit an outstandingly successful one, who made no great new discoveries in the rarefied realms of chess strategy. – Raymond Keene (1948-)

Stein did not contribute very much to the theory of the opening phase since he was a natural player and a great improviser. In practice, that meant he avoided theoretical duels with concrete, forced variations on the whole, and rather concentrated on opening schemes and the broad sweep of ideas. For instance, openings like the King's Indian Attack, English and Catalan suit his style perfectly.

Regarding endgames, Stein had a chance to create a study in Game 8 (vs. Nei), but instead played a pragmatic move and thus missed an extraordinary conclusion (at move 46).

The current world champion Magnus Carlsen seemingly prefers the middlegame to the two other, far more well-mapped phases of the game. It seems that Stein belongs to the same category of player, even though the opening and the endgame were not so deeply investigated in those days, the main sources being Informator and Averbakh's endgame books, as opposed to today's databases and computers.

The general contribution by Stein and other giants like Tal and Spassky, who were the representative generation after Botvinnik and Smyslov, was that they considerably expanded the dynamic understanding of the game. Kasparov writes: "[The three musketeers changed] our impressions of the correlation of the material and quality of position, of situations with disrupted material and strategic balance – and created the grounds for the emergence of modern, ultra-dynamic chess. (...) With this trio intuition played the main role! Fischer revered rules, whereas for them it was exceptions, paradoxes." (my italics)

I hope that readers will pick up on the many insights I have discovered while studying Stein and which I want to share with you. I wish you a happy and exciting adventure, playing through and diligently studying Stein's games. I ask you to stop after every single question, exercise and diagram, because it is particularly at these moments that there is something to be learnt, by comparing your own ideas with those of the great grandmaster. This is the key to future success. I am sure that a consistent study of Stein's games will increase your playing strength, enrich your games, and put your opponents at a serious disadvantage if they have not read this book.

Now let us turn to the first game and follow this great player in his footsteps. The games will naturally speak for themselves; but while you study them, traces from Stein's ideas should appear in your own chess – it is as simple as that.

Thomas Engqvist,

Sweden,
November 2015

Acknowledgments
I am grateful to John Emms and Byron Jacobs for giving me the opportunity to write another chess book about one of my favourite players. And without the faithful support of my beloved wife Jun, the book would never have become a reality. The editor Jonathan Tait did a really great job! For one thing he discovered a draw in the complicated rook ending between L.Stein-D.M.Ciric, game 31, which I overlooked myself.
I must also mention the two invaluable books about Stein, written by Raymond Keene and Eduard Gufeld and Efim Lazarev. Without those excellent works this book would have been quite different and maybe not even written. After all, it was Keene's which made me interested in Stein's games in the first place; and when I later obtained Gufeld and Lazarev's I learnt more about his personal life, as well as appreciating the many insightful annotations of the authors. Of course, the material on Stein by Kasparov and Crouch, and the article by Mikhalchishin and Kart, have been useful reference tools too, but the first two books have been my main influence.

Chapter One
Early Years

Unfortunately, only one game has survived from Stein's days as a junior competitor. The main contributing factor is that he did not collect his own games.

At the age of 17, Stein was still only a first category player while his opponent, Efim Lazarev (1933-), was a candidate for the title Master of Sport. He later co-authored the book Leonid Stein: Master of Risk Strategy with GM Eduard Gufeld. Lazarev has no title from FIDE; he is registered at fide.com with an Elo rating of 2428 but has not played a recorded game for decades.

Game 1
E.Lazarev-L.Stein
Ukrainian Junior Championship, Kharkov 1951
French Defence

1 e4 e6

Question: Why was the opening baptized the French Defence?

Answer: It got its name from a correspondence game between players in London and Paris in 1834, which the Paris team won after starting with this move. This opening was not really Stein's cup of tea; in his later career he preferred the Sicilian Defence, which was more suited to his natural tactical abilities and quest for the initiative.

2 d4 d5 3 Nd2

Question: What are the pros and cons of this awkward-looking move?

Answer: 3 Nd2 is the ingenious invention of Dr. Siegbert Tarrasch (1862-1934), which avoids a pin on the knight with 3 ... Bb4 while maintaining the tension in the centre. The drawback is that the c1-bishop is temporarily shut in.

3 ... Nf6

Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian (1929-84) normally preferred 3 ... c5 4 exd5 exd5, because he felt very much at home with the isolated queen's pawn. In Tarrasch's view a player should seek mobility for his pieces in the early part of the game, even if his pawn formation is compromised.

4 e5

Since 4 Bg5 is not possible, this is the logical move, releasing the pressure on the e4-pawn and increasing White's space advantage. The natural alternative 4 Bd3 is answered by the strong central thrust 4 ... c5, when 5 e5 Nfd7 transposes to the main line.

4 ... Nfd7 5 Bd3

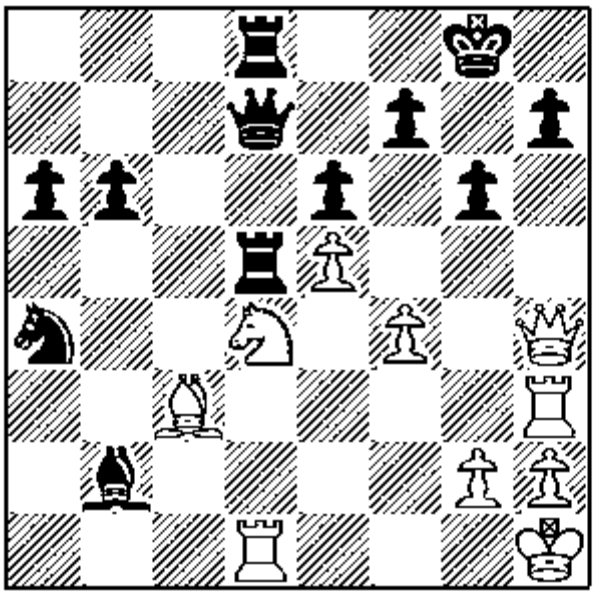
The game Y.Sakharov-E.Geller, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1960, introduced the remarkable set-up 5 c3 c5 6 f4 Nc6 7 Ndf3 Qb6 8 g3!? cxd4 9 cxd4 Bb4+ 10 Kf2, followed by Kg2, where White makes eleven moves with only one piece developed. Stein plays this himself in Game 20.

5 ... c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ne2 cxd4

It is normally good to exchange on d4 when the b1-knight is developed elsewhere, whereas with the knight back on b1 the central exchange would only help it to reach its ideal

destination at c3.

8 cxd4



Question: How might Black proceed from here?

8 ... Nb6

A passive variation, albeit fully playable.

Answer: The main variation for the French devotee is 8 ... f6 9 exf6 Nxf6 10 Nf3 Bd6 11 0-0 0-0 12 Bf4 Bxf4 13 Nxf4 Ne4 and if now 14 Ne2, the exchange sacrifice 14 ... Rxf3 15 gxf3 Ng5 is possible with interesting play, but this had not yet been discovered in 1951.

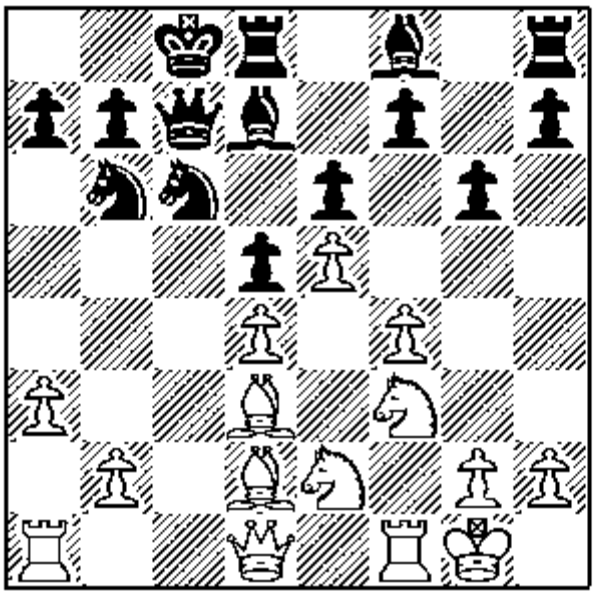
9 0-0 Bd7 10 f4

In A.Koblencs-G.Ravinsky, Leningrad 1949, White initiated queenside play with 10 a3 a5 11 b3 a4 12 b4 Rc8 13 Bb2 Be7 14 Ng3 g6 15 Rc1 with no more than a minimal advantage. In fact Black is perfectly alright with the strong a4-pawn preventing the white knight from reaching the outpost c5 via b3.

10 ... g6 11 Nf3 Qc7

A.Matanovic-R.Wade, Saltsjöbaden Interzonal 1952, saw 11 ... h5 12 Kh1 Nb4 13 Bb1 Bb5 14 Rg1 Bxe2 15 Qxe2 Qc7 16 a3, when the space advantage and bishop pair gave White a clear advantage.

12 a3 0-0-0 13 Bd2



Exercise: Can you suggest a reasonable continuation for Black?

Answer: Kasparov has advised that it is useful to safeguard the king with moves such as Kh1 (or Kb1 on the queenside) before starting any tactical operation when playing against the Sicilian Defence. Of course the same general rule can be applied here with the open c-file.

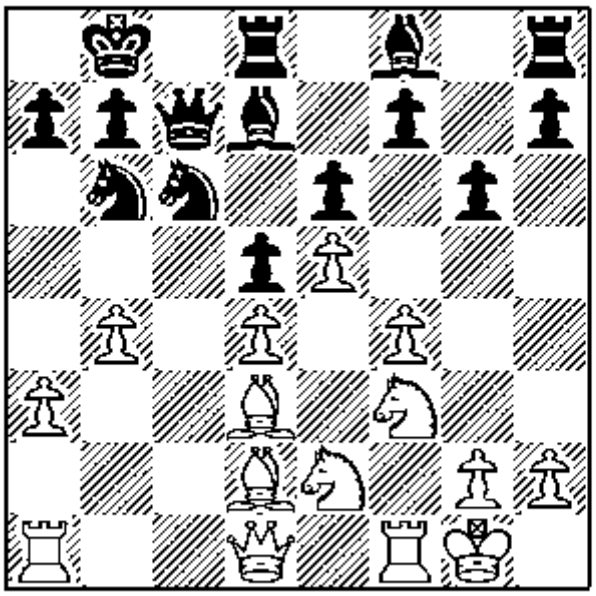
13 ... Kb8

Question: What is the problem with the more active move 13 ... Nc4 - ?

Answer: After 14 Bxc4 dxc4 15 Rc1 Ne7 16 Ng5 Be8 17 b3, White's pressure on c4 is too strong.

14 b4?!

14 Rc1 is the more sensible course, and only then b2-b4.



Exercise: What is the drawback of this instant pawn advance?

Answer: 14 ... Nc4!

Of course! Black wants to exploit the weakened c4-square.

15 Bxc4?!

A strategic error. It is better to trade the bad bishop on d2 rather than the good one. This could have been done by 15 Qb3 Ne7 16 Rfc1 Nxd2 17 Nxd2 Qb6 18 Nf3 with a slight advantage.

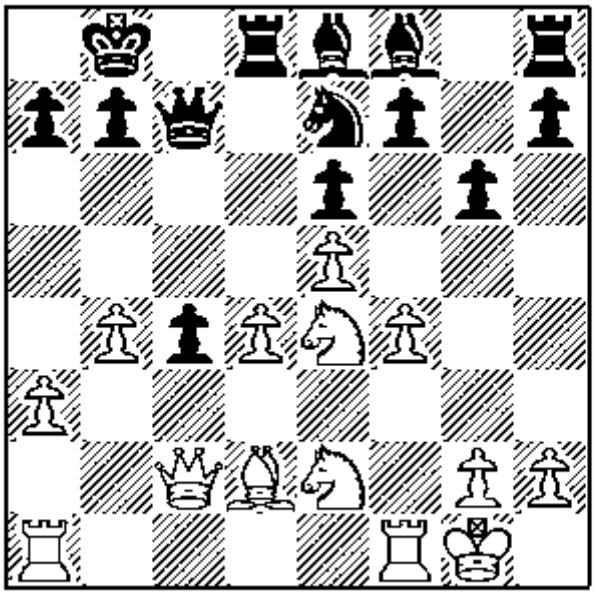
Note that 15 b5?! N6a5 16 Bxa5 Nxa5 is the wrong way of parting with the d2-bishop, since Black's knight is actually well placed, aiming at the c4-square.

15 ... dxc4 16 Qc2 Ne7

Black can be happy having secured the bishop pair, as well as the squares d5 and f5 for the minor pieces.

17 Ng5 Be8 18 Ne4?!

It is more advisable to increase the space advantage on the queenside with 18 a4 and 19 b5.



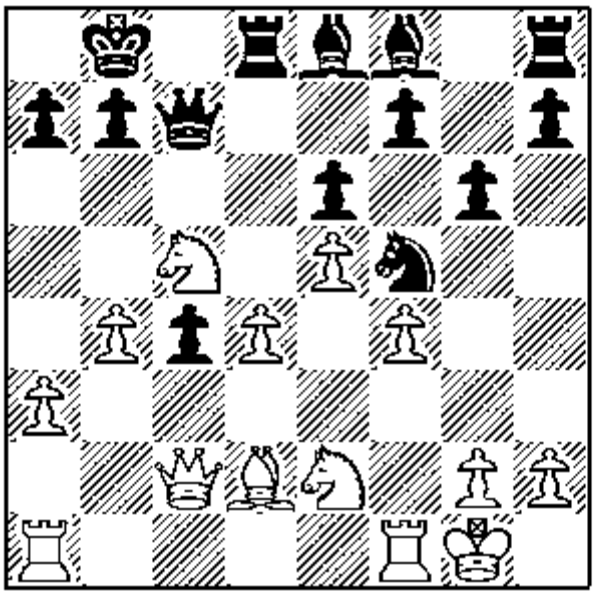
Exercise: How does Black gain the initiative?

Answer: 18 ... Nf5

White has not played the most precise moves, so Black successfully takes over the game.

19 Nc5?!

It is better to put pressure on the c4-pawn with 19 Rfc1 Rc8 (not 19 ... Nxd4? 20 Nxd4 Rxd4 due to 21 Be3 Rd8 22 Qe2 with a slight advantage) 20 a4 Bc6 (otherwise the e8-bishop becomes "dead" after the further b4-b5) 21 Nf6, though 21 ... Bg7! 22 Qxc4 Bxf6 23 exf6 Qd7! gives Black good compensation for the sacrificed pawn thanks to strong control of the light squares.



Exercise: Should Black take the d4-pawn or is there a stronger continuation?

19 ... Nxd4?!

This materialistic approach is not the best, the reason being simply that Black plays on the dark squares instead of the light squares where White truly has weaknesses.

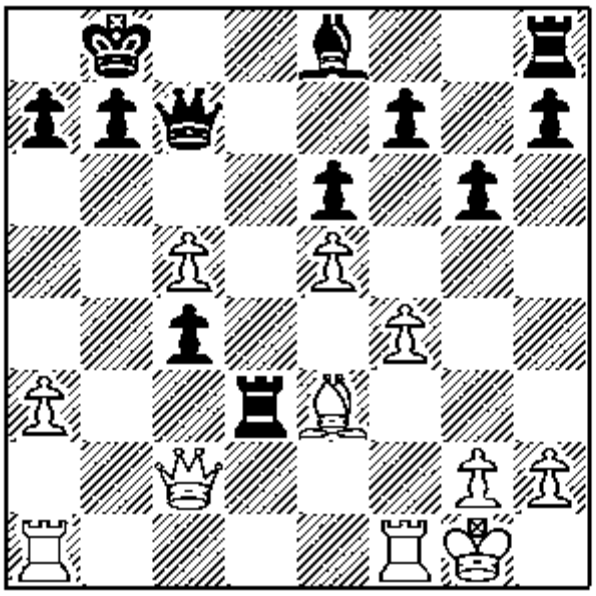
Answer: There are three other strong candidate moves:

a) 19 ... Bc6, activating the passively placed bishop on e8, looks logical. After 20 Qxc4 Bxc5 21 bxc5 (or 21 Qxc5 Qd7, planning ... Bb5xe2 and capturing on d4 with a solid advantage due to White's passive dark-squared bishop) 21 ... Qd7, White cannot prevent ... Nxd4 next move with a clearly preferable position for Black.

b) 19 ... Qc6, planning ... Qd5 and ... Bc6, is more than annoying for White.

c) 19 ... Bxc5 is a third good alternative, removing the defender of some light squares immediately. After 20 bxc5 (20 dxc5 Bc6 is weaker, as Black can improve his position further with ... Rd3 and ... h7-h5-h4 to provoke additional weaknesses in the white kingside) 20 ... Qc6!, Black plans to place the bishop behind the queen with pressure on the long light diagonal bearing down on the white king.

20 Nxd4 Rxd4 21 Be3 Bxc5 22 bxc5 Rd3



Exercise: Now look at the position from White's perspective and ask yourself: what is the best continuation?

23 Qf2??

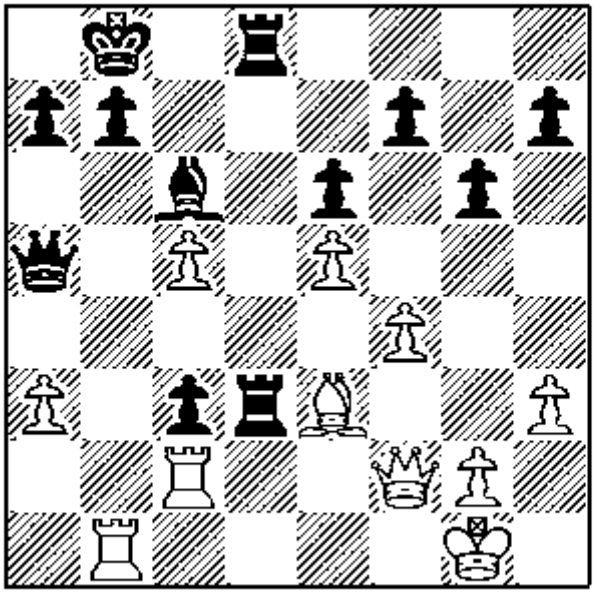
This loses a pawn and, with it, the position and the game. Moreover, the c4-pawn is very strong because of the outposts it creates at d3 and b3.

Answer: It is necessary to create material equilibrium with 23 Qxc4!, the tactical point being 23 ... Rxe3?! 24 Kf2! traps the rook. Remember that the king actually is like a small queen (or octopus) in its movements, in that both pieces move in the same way in all directions, if not so far. Here Black can maintain material equality by playing 24 ... Bb5! 25 Qxb5 Re4 26 g3 Rd4 27 Rad1 Rhd8 28 Rxd4 Rxd4 with a slight edge. However, 23 ... Qd8 24 Rfe1 Bc6 secures a large strategic advantage. White is weaker on the light squares than Black is on the dark squares. The consequence is that Black is virtually a piece up!

23 ... Bc6 24 Rfc1 Rhd8 25 h3

25 Rxc4? loses immediately to 25 ... Rd1+ due to the weakness of the back rank.

25 ... c3 26 Rab1 Qa5 27 Rc2



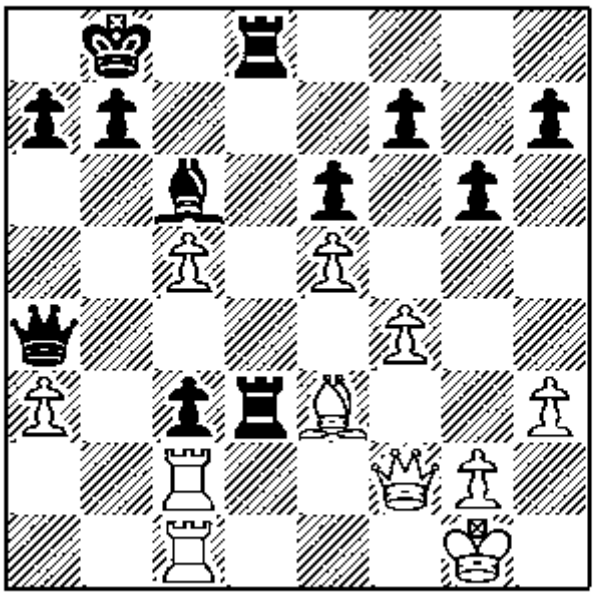
Exercise (combination alert): How does Black force matters?

27 ... Qa4

This is the second best move. Stein seems to be content with his grip on the light squares.

Answer: Possibly he played too fast, according to his habit, and overlooked 27 ... Be4! which wins material by force: 28 Rb4 (or 28 Rcc1 Rd2 29 Bxd2 cxd2 30 Rd1 Bxb1) 28 ... Rd1+ 29 Kh2 Bxc2.

28 Rbc1



Exercise: How does Black win most efficiently?

Answer: 28 ... Qxa3!

The most brutal; Stein plans to win with the passed a-pawn.

The alternative is to continue focusing on the weak light squares and exchange a pair of rooks to create more weaknesses in the white position; for example, 28 ... Rd1+ 29 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 30 Kh2 Rd3 31 Bc1 is surely winning for Black. But why prolong things with a lot of further manoeuvring? One important quality in chess is to know when to decide the game!

29 Kh2 Qb4 30 Re1 a5 31 Qf1 a4 32 Rce2 h5

Stein is not in any hurry and indirectly communicates to his opponent that he is enjoying the position.

33 Rb1 Qc4 34 Qc1?

This is equivalent to resigning.

34 ... Rd1 0-1

White loses a queen for a rook or a whole rook for nothing. Surprisingly the game had ended within half an hour.

Gufeld and Lazarev comment that Stein's games were stunning: "He made his moves with jet-like speed!" He normally spent just fifteen to twenty minutes a game, and one of his defeated opponents said: "At the board he sees everything!" However, another experienced coach offered a cautionary note, saying that "Stein's abilities of lightning fast 'vision' and calculation of variations were not always supported with the art of correctly evaluating the positions."

This tournament was Stein's debut at the Ukrainian Junior Championship. He came fourth,

with five wins, two losses and three draws, whereas his opponent Lazarev tied for first with Rotstein.

Stein was invited to the 1955 Armed Forces Championship where the Russian Federation Champion, Anatoly Lutikov, was one of his rivals. Stein lost their individual encounter but nevertheless finished in joint first place with Lutikov on 13½/18. He then won the deciding match for the Champion's title by the convincing 3½-1½ score. Unfortunately, none of those games are available, so here is a different one, a characteristic example of how Stein played at this time.

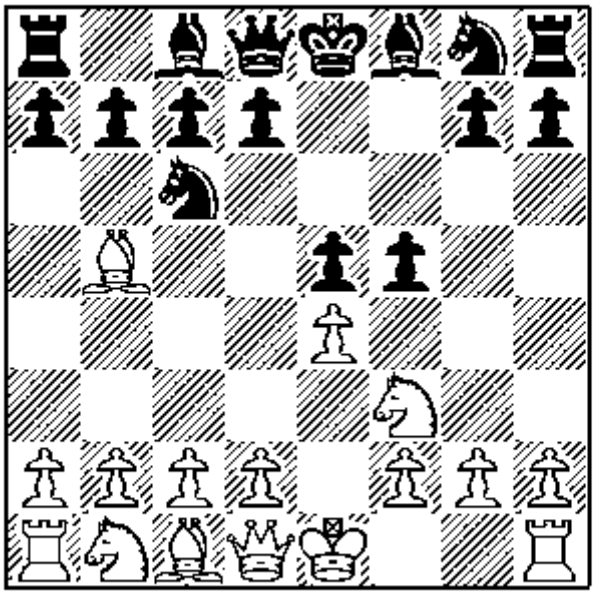
His opponent, Victor Ljublinsky (1918-1982), was a strong Russian master with a peak estimated rating of 2549, according to Chessmetrics, and ranked 68th in the world in 1945.

Game 2
V.Ljublinsky-L.Stein
USSR Armed Forces Championship, Moscow 1955
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5

This move was a recommendation of the Spanish priest Ruy Lopez de Segura in the 16th century. In some countries the opening is called The Spanish Opening after his homeland.

3 ... f5



Question: What is the name of this variation and what are the main ideas?

Answer: The Russian master Carl Friedrich Jaenisch (1813-72), professor of mechanics at the Railway Institute, analysed this counter-attack and presented his analyses in the magazine Palaméde in 1847. Around 20 years later the German lawyer Adolf Schliemann (1817-72) recommended a similar way of playing. The Jaenisch Gambit (or Schliemann Defence) is logical in the sense that White has already developed his light-squared bishop to b5 rather than to c4. It was played regularly by the Bulgarian GM Ventzislav Inkiov (1956-) and, more recently, has featured in the repertoire of world-class Azeri GM Teimour Radjabov (1987-).

One can compare this with Philidor's 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 f5, which may be regarded as the starting-point of modern opening theory. The main idea in both variations is to exchange the black f-pawn for the white e-pawn and obtain a central majority of two pawns versus one. Another benefit is the half-open f-file which help to active the king's rook. This method is not

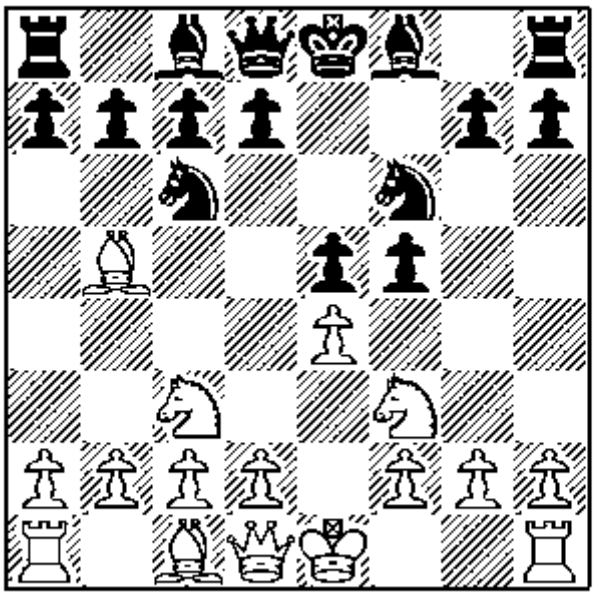
without venom and shows that the French chess player and composer Francois-André Danican Philidor (1726-95) understood the essentials of fundamental opening strategy and certainly was way ahead of his time.

Question: What is regarded by theory as White's strongest response?

Answer: The game move, first played by Johann Berger (1845-1933) and later analysed by Eduard Dyckhoff (1880-1949), is considered best.

4 Nc3! Nf6?

The normal continuation is 4 ... fxe4 5 Nxe4 and then 5 ... Nf6 or 5 ... d5 (followed by 6 Nxe5 dxe4 7 Nxc6 Qg5 or 7 ... Qd5), which lead to forced and sharp variations demanding a lot of theoretical knowledge and a good feeling for the arising positions. Interestingly, Ljublinsky later championed 4 ... Bb4?! in correspondence games.



Question: What is the problem with Stein's move?

5 Bxc6?

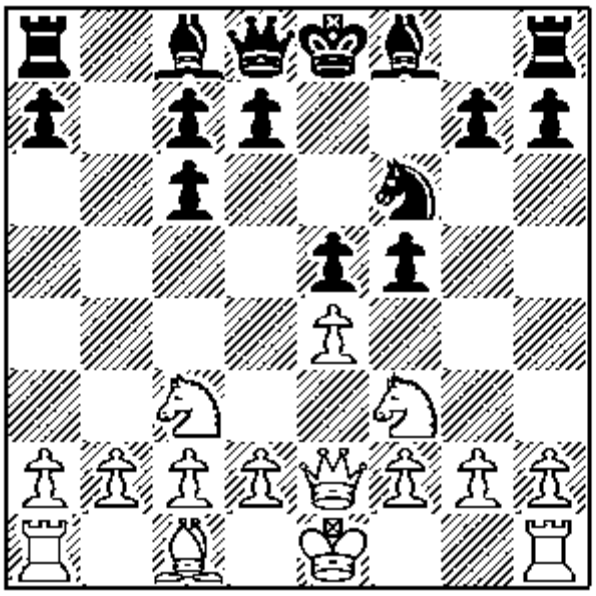
Answer: 5 exf5! is the critical reply, showing why it is so important to capture the e4-pawn before developing the king's knight. The game J.R.Capablanca-F.Marshall, New York (12th matchgame) 1909 – the match in which Capablanca for the first time proved he was of world championship calibre – continued 5 ... e4 6 Nh4 (6 Ng5 d5 7 d3 is also good) 6 ... d5 7 d3 Be7 8 dxe4 dxe4 9 Qxd8+ Bxd8 10 Bg5 0-0 11 0-0-0 Ne5 12 h3 a6 13 Ba4 c5 14 Bf4 with a clear extra pawn as well as a clear advantage.

5 ... bxc6

The alternative 5 ... dxc6 is also good, contributing to the development of the c8-bishop and black queen, but Stein recaptures towards the centre as he wants to create a preponderance of pawns there.

6 Qe2

If White accepts the gambit with 6 exf5, then 6 ... e4 7 Qe2 Qe7 8 Nh4 a5, intending ... Ba6, gives Black sufficient compensation.



Exercise: How should Black continue?

6 ... d5?

This pawn thrust in the centre is too aggressive.

Answer: It is better to follow Philidor's general advice and exchange the f-pawn for White's e-pawn. A likely continuation is 6 ... fxe4 7 Nxe4 (7 Nxe5 is met by 7 ... Qe7) 7 ... d5 8 Neg5 Bd6 9 Nxe5 0-0 with good play for the pawn. Black has the bishop pair and is ahead in development. Paul Morphy (1837-84), who was the first expert of the open game, would certainly be happy with such a position.

7 exf5

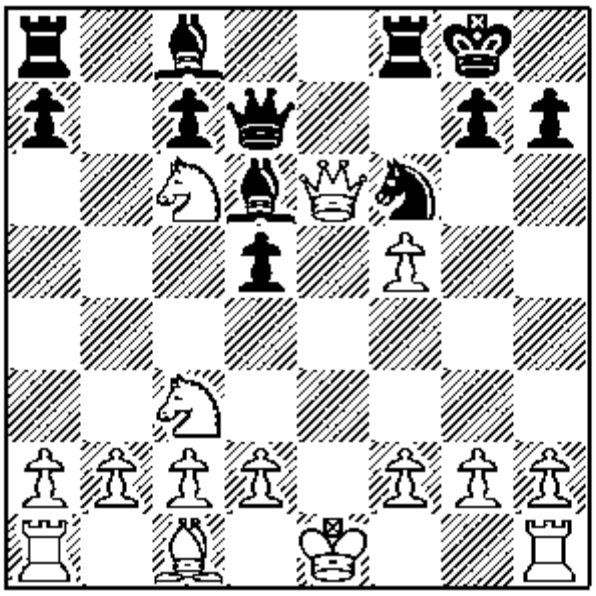
7 exd5 is another critical continuation. One plausible line then is 7 ... e4 (Stein would most probably have played this nearly forced move, though we can never be certain as he was not yet a mature player) 8 dxc6 Bc5 9 0-0 Qe7 10 Nh4! Bb6 (a consolidating move; 10 ... g5? fails to 11 d4, of course) 11 d3 with a slight advantage to White.

7 ... Bd6 8 Nxe5 0-0 9 Nxc6?!

Too greedy. It was better to complete development with 9 0-0 and, after 9 ... Re8, secure the knight with 10 d4 Bxf5 11 Bf4, when White has a healthy extra pawn.

9 ... Qd7 10 Qe6+

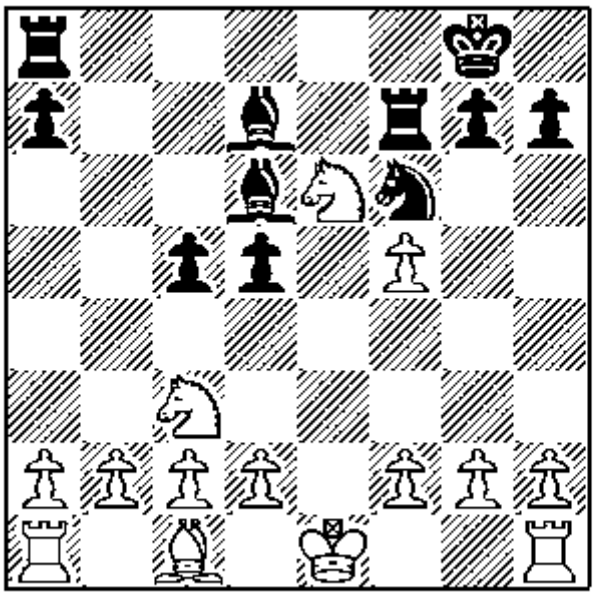
It is useless to manoeuvre the knight to e6 with 10 Nd4 Re8 11 Ne6 because of 11 ... g6 12 g4 d4! (after the natural 12 ... Qf7? 13 d4 Bxe6 14 fxe6 Rxe6 15 Be3 it is unclear whether Black has sufficient compensation) 13 Ne4 Nxe4 14 Qxe4 Rb8, threatening ... Bb7, and White has serious problems.



Exercise (calculation): How should Black react to the check?

10 ... Kh8

Answer: 10 ... Rf7 is more active and therefore the principled move, due to the fact that Black wants to keep his king on g8 so as not to lose a move in the coming endgame, and it will be easier to place the rooks in an attacking position by doubling them. All the same, it is hard to prove that it is better than Stein's calmer choice: 11 Nd4 (11 Qxd7? plays into Black's hands: 11 ... Bxd7 12 Nd4 Re8+ 13 Kf1 Rfe7 and wins, showing one of the benefits of 10 ... Rf7) 11 ... c5 12 Qxd7 Bxd7 13 Ne6



and now the natural 13 ... Re8 gives Black no more than an equal game after 14 0-0 Ng4 15 h3 Nh2 16 Rd1 Rxf5 17 Nxc5! Nf3+ (or 17 ... Bxc5 18 d4 Bd6 19 f4! Nf3+ 20 gxf3 Rh5 with enough compensation for the pawns) 18 gxf3 Rg5+ 19 Kh1 Bxh3 20 d4 Bg2+ 21 Kg1 Rg6 and the game will end in a draw by perpetual.

Instead, the continuation 13 ... d4!? 14 Ne2 Nd5 is interesting. After 15 d3 (15 g4?! allows 15 ... Nb4 16 Kd1 d3 17 cxd3 Nxd3 with a slight advantage) 15 ... Nb4 16 Kd1, the position seems to be balanced as the following variation proves: 16 ... Rxf5 (or 16 ... Bxe6 17 fxe6

Rxf2 18 Bd2 Re8 19 Bxb4 Rxe6 20 Nxd4 cxd4 21 Bxd6 Rxd6 and the active rooks give Black enough compensation for the pawns) 17 Ng5 Rxf2 18 Ne4 Raf8 19 Nxf2 (not 19 Nxd6?? Bg4 20 Re1 Rxe2 21 Rxe2 Rf2 and Black wins) 19 ... Rxf2 20 h3 Bc6 21 Bd2 Bxg2 22 Be1 Rf7 23 Rg1 Nd5 with dynamic equilibrium.

Note that the obvious 10 ... Qxe6+? is a mistake because of 11 fxe6 Bxe6 12 d4, when Black has difficulties proving enough compensation for the two sacrificed pawns.

11 Qxd7

The exchange of queens is obviously forced due to the threats of ... Qxc6 and ... Re8.

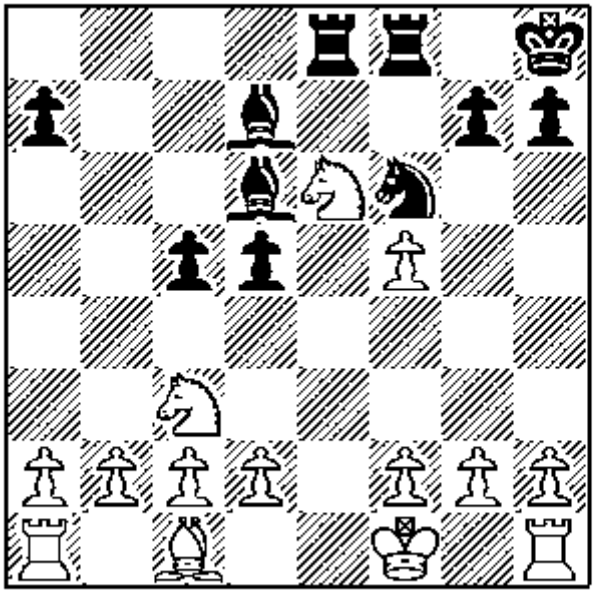
11 ... Bxd7 12 Nd4

Again, this is the only reasonable move. After the awkward-looking 12 Na5??, the white pieces lose co-ordination with fatal consequences: 12 ... Rae8+ 13 Kf1 Ng4 etc.

12 ... Rae8+ 13 Kf1

13 Nce2 looks a bit dangerous because of the pin of the knight, but it is perfectly playable, as we see when digging a little deeper into the position and checking the concrete variations. The most plausible line is 13 ... c5 14 Nf3 Bxf5 15 d3 c4 16 Be3 cxd3 17 Ned4 Bg6, when Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn with good counterplay and an active position.

13 ... c5 14 Ne6



Exercise: White has to give a pawn back but wants Black to give up one of his bishops. Is Black forced to comply?

Answer: Objectively speaking, it is best to surrender the bishop pair immediately here, so that new avenues are opened for a direct assault on the white position with Black's remaining active pieces.

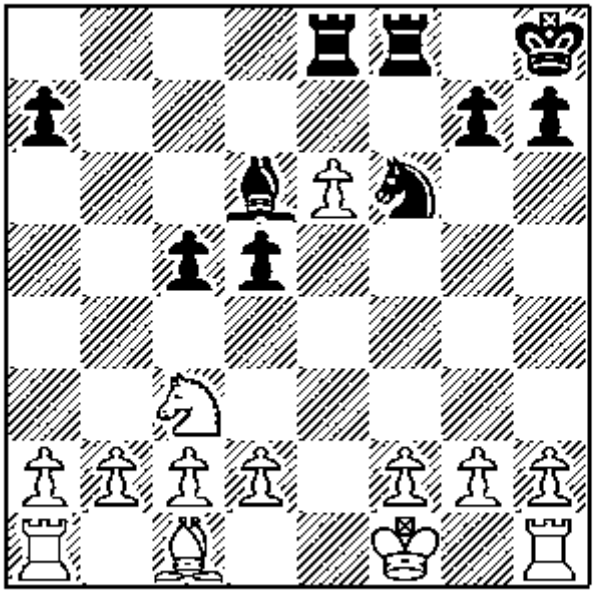
14 ... Bxe6!

The alternative was 14 ... d4!?, when the greedy 15 Nxf8 Bxf5 leads to an equal position after 16 Ne4! Bxe4 17 d3 Bd5 18 Nxh7 Kxh7 19 b3 Ng4. Black will win the pawn on h2 and then have a knight and a bishop for a rook and two pawns with a more active game.

If instead 15 Nd1, then 15 ... Rf7!? (or 15 ... Bxe6 16 fxe6 Rxe6 17 g3 Ng4 and Black's active pieces, which in essence give him an advantage in time, ensures him enough compensation for the two pawns; note that 18 h3?? runs into 18 ... Nxf2! and wins) 16 d3 Ng4 17 h3 Nh2+! (after 17 ... Rxf5?! 18 Nxd4 Nh2+ 19 Rxh2 cxd4 20 f4! Rxf4+ 21 Bxf4 Bxf4 22

Kg1 Bxh2+ 23 Kxh2 Re2 24 Rc1 Bc6 25 Kg1 Rxg2+ 26 Kf1 Rg3 27 Nf2, White is perhaps slightly on top) 18 Rxh2 (not 18 Kg1? Rxf5) 18 ... Bxh2 19 Nxc5 Rfe7 20 Ne6 (or 20 Bd2 Bf4!) 20 ... Bxe6 21 fxe6 Rxe6 22 Bd2 Bf4 23 Bb4 Bd6 24 Bd2 Bf4 forces a draw by repetition.

15 fxe6



Question: And now, how should Black continue?

Answer: It is a matter of taste.

15 ... Ng4

Black can also play 15 ... Rxe6 first, when a plausible continuation is 16 d3 Ng4 17 f3 Nxh2+ 18 Kf2 Ng4+ 19 Kf1 Nh2+, leading to a draw by threefold repetition.

16 f3 Rxe6 17 Nxd5

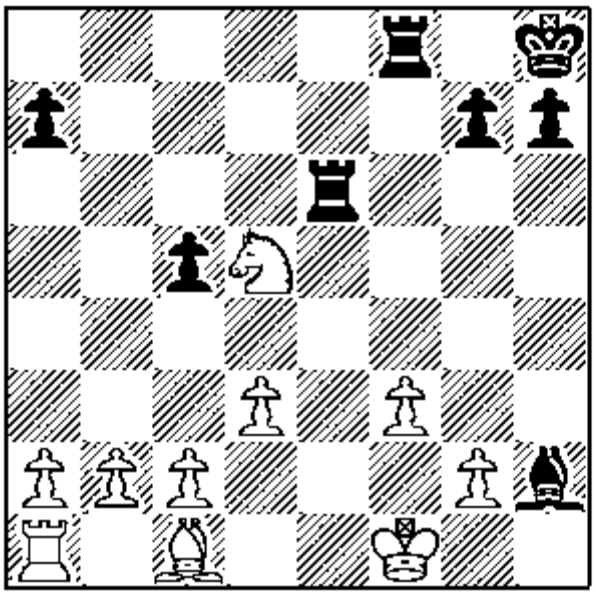
17 d3 transposes to the previous note.

17 ... Nxh2+ 18 Rxh2?

Here 18 Kf2, threatening to drop the knight back to e3, practically forces 18 ... Ng4+ 19 Kf1 Nh2+ 20 Kf2 Ng4+ with another draw by repetition. Ljublinsky apparently wanted to win the game and was prepared to take risks to achieve the desired victory. Sometimes to play for a win is the same thing as to play for a loss!

18 ... Bxh2 19 d3?

It is vital to leave the pawn on d2 to secure the e3-square for the white knight and thereby black the e-file from enemy intrusion. 19 Kf2 is still better, controlling the g3-square.



Exercise: What is the problem with White's move?

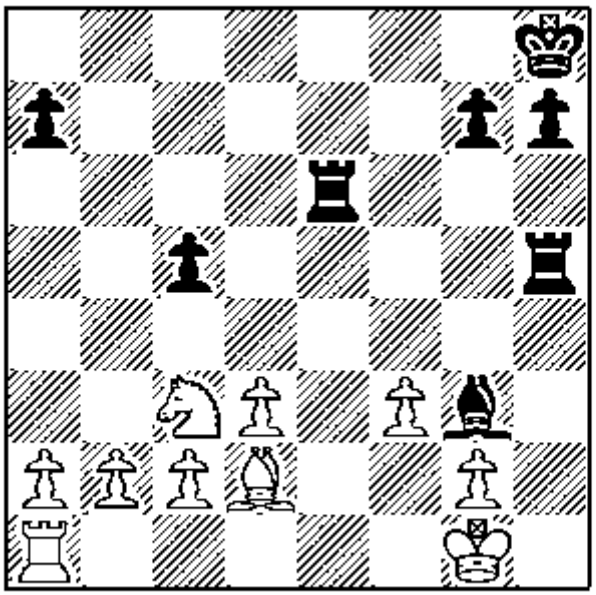
Answer: 19 ... Bg3

Now Black not only threatens mate on e1, the rook manoeuvre ... Rf5-h5 is also very annoying for White.

20 Bd2 Rf5 21 Nc3

White has to play this to control the e2-square against invasion. 21 Ne3 is no longer safe due to 21 ... Rfe5! 22 Nc4 Rh5 23 Kg1 Re2 24 Rd1 Rh2 25 Ne3 h5, when Black has penetrated with his pieces and threatens ... h5-h4-h3 as well as ... Bf4.

21 ... Rh5 22 Kg1



Exercise: How does Black continue from here?

Answer: Black uses the e5-square as a pivot for a beautiful and decisive manoeuvre.

22 ... Be5! 23 g4 Rh3 24 Ne4

If White defends the f3-pawn with 24 Rf1, the forced line 24 ... Bxc3 25 Bxc3 Re2 26 Rf2 Rh1+ 27 Kg2 Rh2+ 28 Kxh2 Rxf2+ 29 Kg3 Rxc2 gives Black a decisive advantage.

24 ... Rxf3 25 Kg2 Rf8 26 Rh1

White's best defence is 26 Nxc5, forcing Black to decide whether to go for the g-pawn or c-pawn with his e6-rook. Play might continue 26 ... Rc6 (going the other way with 26 ... Rg6 27 g5 Bxb2 28 Rb1 Bd4 29 Ne4 Rb6 also gives Black good chances) 27 Nd7 Bxb2 (note that when White loses his b2-pawn, he loses the central pawn of his entire queenside structure, and Black attains further targets at c2 and a2) 28 Rb1 Rxc2 29 Nxf8 Rxd2+ 30 Kf3 Rxd3+ 31 Ke4 (not 31 Ke2? Rg3 32 Kf2 Rxg4! 33 Kf3 Rb4 and wins) 31 ... Rd2 and Black has good winning chances in a practical game. The bishop is far superior to the knight with pawns on both sides of the board.

26 ... Rg6

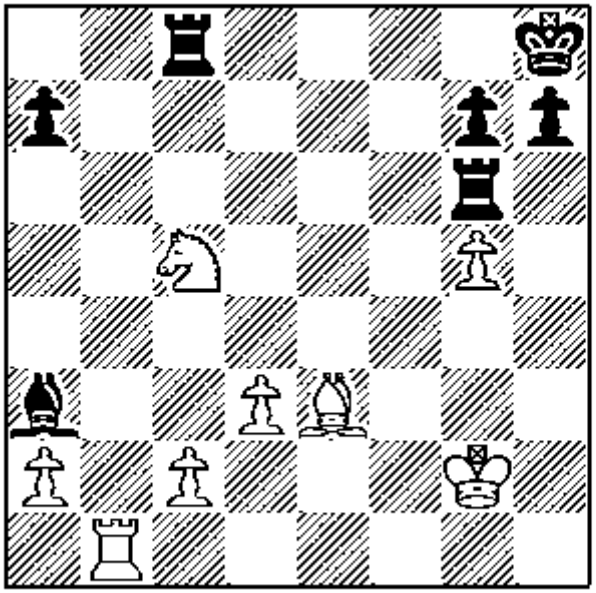
The immediate 26 ... Bxb2 is also good, preventing the knight on e4 from moving because of the check on e2 winning the bishop, while 27 Be3 is answered by 27 ... Bd4.

27 g5 Bxb2 28 Nxc5?!

28 Rb1 is more stubborn; the rook has nothing to do on the h-file anyway.

28 ... Rc8 29 Rb1 Ba3 30 Be3?

Here 30 Ne4 was necessary. Black still wins after 30 ... Rb6 31 Rxb6 axb6 32 c4 (or 32 c3 b5!) 32 ... Rd8 33 Be3 Rxd3 34 Bxb6 Kg8, but at least it prolongs the game considerably.



Exercise (calculation): What is the most decisive continuation?

30 ... Kg8?

Answer: Surprisingly, Stein overlooks the simple 30 ... Bxc5 31 Bxc5 Rxg5+, followed by 32 ... Rgxc5. A reasonable guess is that he played too quickly – this was both a strength and a weakness when he was young – and only saw the suicidal 31 ... Rxc5?? 32 Rb8+, when Black falls for the typical back rank mate.

31 d4 Rb6 32 Rf1 Rb2 33 Rf2 Rxa2

Remember that the foundation for this manoeuvre with the rook was the preliminary 27 ... Bxb2 which split White's pawns and rendered moves like b2-b3 non-existent.

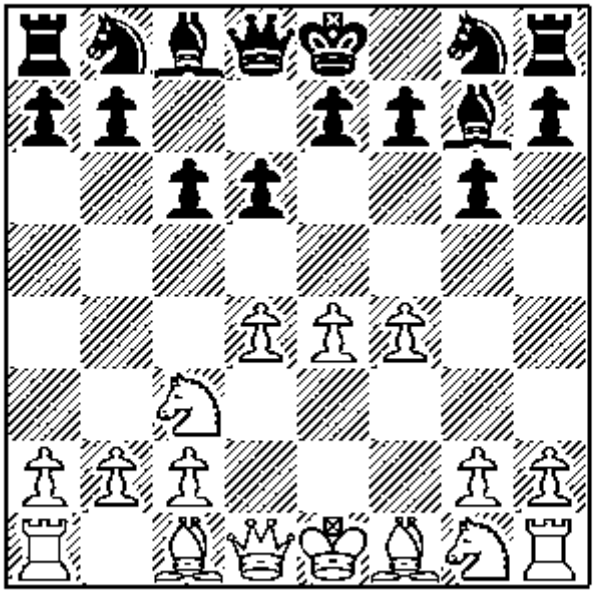
34 Rd2 Bc1 0-1

A reasonably good game, showing Stein's willingness to sacrifice material for activity already when he was a young player. This was a trait he kept all his life, though he naturally developed other aspects of the game, such as playing quiet positional chess. Remember the early important advice he got from Sakharov!

Jacob Yukhtman (1935-85) was born in the USSR, moved to Israel in 1972 and soon to the United States where he lived until his final days. Yukhtman was a very strong player, ranked 41st in the world with an estimated rating of 2622 in 1960, according to Chessmetrics, though he had no international title. His most famous game is when he beat Tal in a Göring Gambit (1 e4 e5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 Nxc3 Nc6 5 Nf3) in the USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959. He was a very good blitz player who gave the one minute vs. five minutes odds even against grandmasters. I wonder how many people have heard about him. The chess world is full of such forgotten chess players who deserve their share of attention.

Game 3
L.Stein-J.Yukhtman
Moscow 1956
Modern Defence

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 c6



Question: How to develop the kingside?

Answer: 5 Be2

It seems Stein that does not want to allow the pin after 5 Nf3 Bg4, though this is a perfectly viable variation for White: 6 Be3 Qb6 7 Qd2 Bxf3 8 gxf3 Nd7 9 0-0-0 Qa5 10 Kb1, when Black usually chooses between 10 ... 0-0-0 and the sharper 10 ... b5.

5 ... Qb6 6 e5 Na6

Exploiting the weak f5-square with 6 ... Nh6 is more logical. This is the price White has to pay for an early e4-e5.

7 a3

While this looks unnecessarily cautious, the idea is to wait as long as possible before developing the g1-knight, in order to prevent Black from playing the c8-bishop to g4.

7 ... dxe5

7 ... Nh6 is still the natural move.

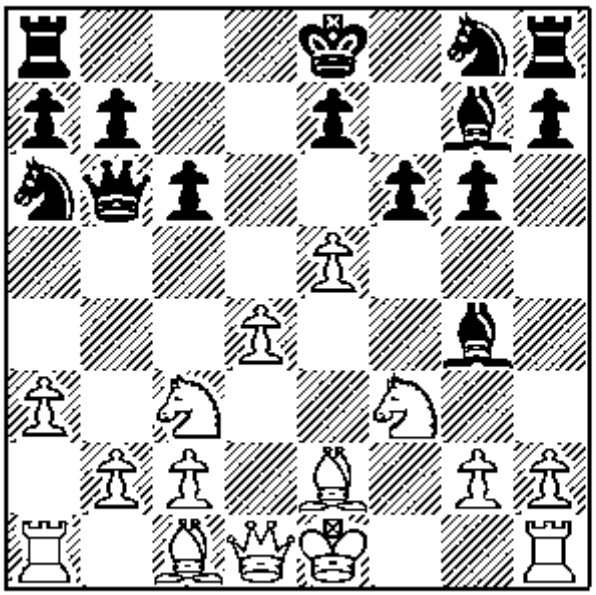
8 fxe5

Now the bishop on c1 controls the whole c1-h6 diagonal instead of only c1-f4.

8 ... f6

Attacking the pawn centre before White has completed development.

9 Nf3 Bg4



Exercise: The pressure on the e5-pawn is now very strong. What should White do?

Answer: 10 Na4!

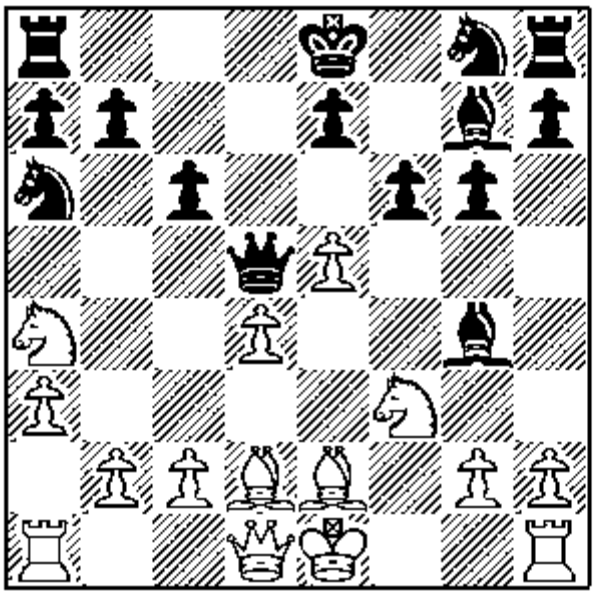
This is clearly the best move. 10 exf6 Nxf6 only helps Black's development and should be avoided if possible.

10 ... Qa5+

After 10 ... Qd8 11 Bxa6 Qa5+ 12 c3 Qxa6, White wins a valuable tempo with 13 Nc5. The knight is then well placed in the centre and White can enjoy a solid and stable advantage.

11 Bd2 Qd5

Not 11 ... Qxa4?? 12 b3 and the queen is trapped.



Exercise: How should White play to secure the advantage?

12 c4

Very aggressive but not the best.

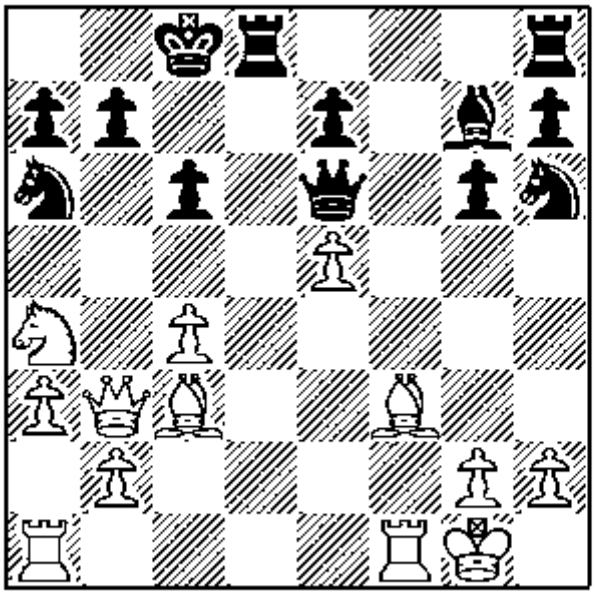
Answer: The knight on a4 is now in a questionable position, so the best continuation is 12 Nc3! (not yet 12 Bxa6? bxa6, when Black has strong counterplay against the centre) 12 ... Qd7 13 Bxa6 bxa6 14 h3 with a clear advantage.

12 ... Qd7 13 Bc3

13 Bf4, controlling the centre, looks more logical.

13 ... Nh6 14 Qb3 fxe5 15 dxe5 Bxf3 16 Bxf3 0-0-0 17 0-0 Qe6

Here 17 ... Nf5 is more precise, intending 18 ... Nd4, or if 18 Rad1 then 18 ... Qe6.



Exercise: Can you suggest a continuation for White?

18 Kh1?

This prophylactic move is too passive. There is actually no reason to move the king to the corner since there are no immediate threats on the a7-g1 diagonal.

Answer: The queen is misplaced on b3 and must make room for the b-pawn to storm Black's king, so 18 Qc2! suggests itself as much stronger. It also contains a trap: 18 ... Qxc4?? 19 Be2 and Black's position collapses after the inevitable 20 Bxa6. Instead, 18 ... Nf5, intending ... Nd4 again, is now easily met by the queen centralization 19 Qe4, when White has a comfortable position and good attacking chances with a later b2-b4-b5.

18 ... Nf5 19 Qc2

One move too late! Chess is about timing, as Bobby Fischer used to say.

19 ... Nd4 20 Qe4 Qxe5 21 Qg4+ Kb8

On 21 ... Qf5?!, White should avoid the exchange of queens and answer 22 Qg3 with reasonable play for the pawn.

22 Rae1 Qc7 23 Be4 Bf6 24 b4

The pawn deficit is not of great issue in this type of position; the initiative is the most important factor. White's queenside pawn storm looks more dangerous than Black's ideas of ... g6-g5 and ... h7-h5.

24 ... Qd7

The development 24 ... Rhf8, followed by ... Be5 or ... g6-g5, looks more to the point.

25 Qg3+ Qc7

This may have been a silent draw offer but only gives Stein the psychological advantage! 25 ... Qd6 was better.

26 Qe3 Qd7

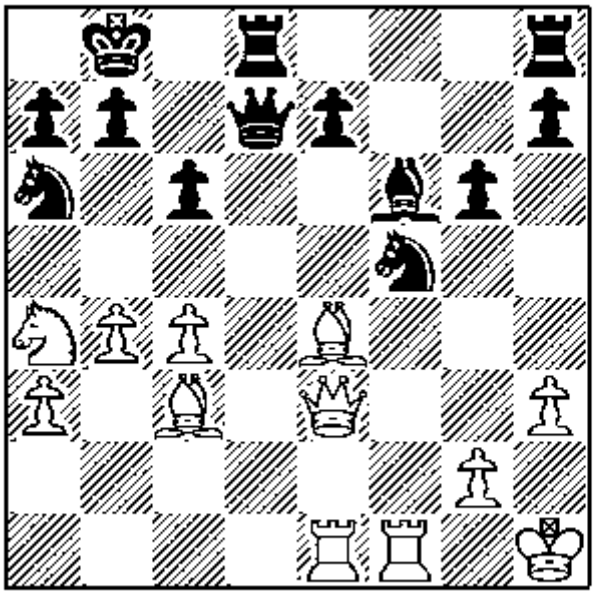
It is not altogether clear what Black is up to, so Stein plays a waiting move to see what he is doing.

27 h3

Maybe Yukhtman was hoping for the natural 27 Rd1, which looks stronger, having planned 27 ... Nf5 28 Qf3 (not 28 Bxf5? Qxd1 29 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 30 Be1 gxf5 and Black has a big advantage) 28 ... Qe6 29 Bxf5 gxf5 with an approximately even position.

27 ... Nf5?

But this is now a mistake. 27 ... Qe6 is better.



Exercise: What is the problem with Black's move?

Answer: It leads to his pawn structure being wrecked.

28 Bxf5 gxf5 29 Bxf6

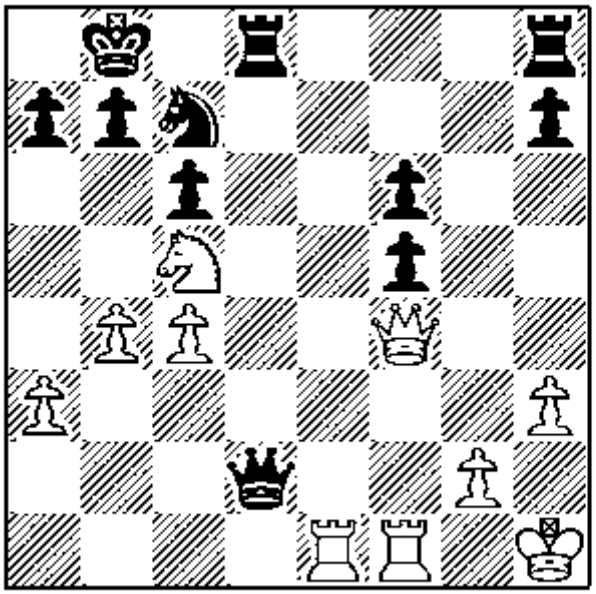
Stein prefers to keep the queens on the board than enter the solid variation 29 Qf4+ Ka8 30 Qxf5 Qxf5 31 Rxf5 Rd3 32 Rf3 Rxf3 33 gxf3 with some chances in the endgame due to the strong rook at e1.

29 ... exf6 30 Qf4+ Nc7

Now the white knight returns to the game with strong effect. 30 ... Ka8 was better, and after 31 Qxf5, White has only a slight advantage thanks to his one fewer pawn islands and more active rook.

31 Nc5 Qd2

After 31 ... Qf7 32 Qxf5 Qxc4 33 Qxf6, White has a strong initiative.



Exercise: How does White continue?

Answer: 32 Re7

This looks the simplest, though 32 Qxf5 Rhg8 33 Qf3 is also good.

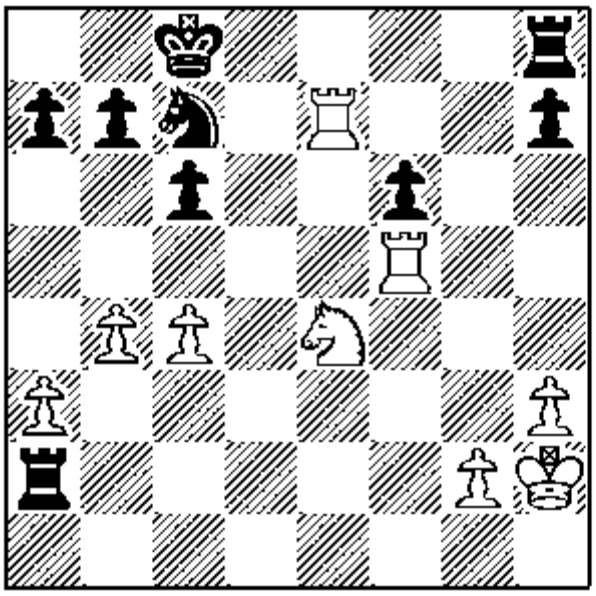
32 ... Qxf4 33 Rxf4 Kc8

Avoiding the knight check on d7.

34 Rxf5 Rd1+ 35 Kh2 Rd2

35 ... Rg8, trying to pressurize g2, would also be answered by 36 Ne4.

36 Ne4 Ra2



37 Nd6+

There are many other wins here; for instance, 37 Rxf6 Rg8 38 Rf2 Rxa3 39 Rff7 Ne8 40 Rxe8+ Rxe8 41 Nd6+ Kd8 42 Nxb7+ Kc8 43 Nd6+ Kd8 44 Nxe8 Kxe8 45 Rxh7 or 37 Nxf6 Rxa3 38 Rg5!.

37 ... Kb8 38 Rg7

Preventing Black from playing his rook to g8.

38 ... Ne6?

Now it is mate in six! Then again, 38 ... Rxa3 39 Rxf6 is not much fun either for Black.

39 Rxb7+ Ka8 40 Ra5 1-0

Black has only a few spite checks so it is better to resign.

Three grandmasters, seven masters and eight candidate masters participated in the 26th Ukrainian Championship in Kiev, in the late spring of 1957. This was actually the first time Stein played for a master norm. 10 points out of 17 was the stipulation.

Mark Usachyi was one of the strongest Ukrainian masters, with a marked positional style, and a member of the republic's All-Star team. Usachyi was on 6/9, and Stein wanted very much to win.

Game 4
M.Usachyi-L.Stein
Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1957
Dutch Defence

1 d4 f5

The only recorded game where Stein played the Dutch Defence. The reasons were twofold: He wanted to avoid preparation and he had already lost two games with this opening.

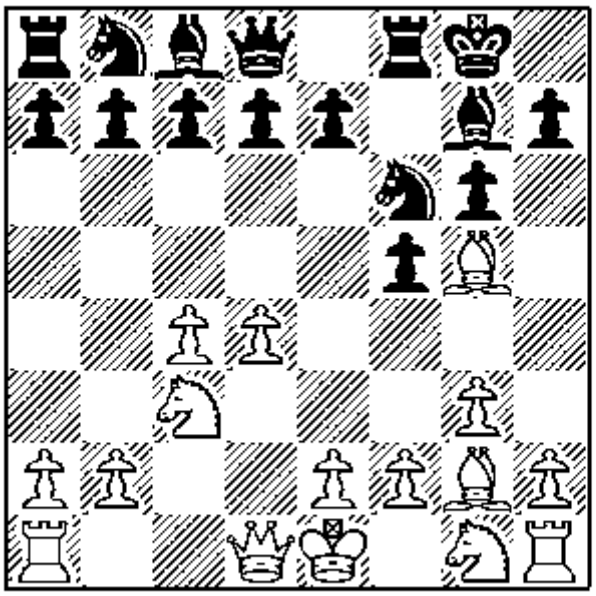
2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6

It is logical that Stein chose the Leningrad Variation since it is a hybrid of the Dutch and the King's Indian Defence. The normal strategic aim for a King's Indian player is to obtain the pleasant set-up with pawns on e5 and f5. In the Leningrad, the f-pawn is already on f5, so if the e-pawn manages to advance two steps Black's main positional goal is achieved. Presumably Stein thought the opening too original in the sense of positional orientation to

make it part of his repertoire.

4 g3 Bg7 5 Bg2 0-0 6 Bg5

It would be interesting to know what variation Stein would have chosen after the main moves 6 Nf3 d6 7 0-0. Would he have played 7 ... c6, 7 ... Nc6, or even the modern 7 ... Qe8 - ? My guess is the first suggestion.



Question: How may Black continue?

Answer: 6 ... c6

The expected move is 6 ... d6, but the early ... c7-c6 gives Black's queen the additional possibility of developing to b6, exploiting the fact that the c1-bishop has already developed, leaving the white queenside slightly weakened.

7 Qd2

White's creates a battering ram on the c1-h6 diagonal, intending eventually to play for an exchange of dark-squared bishops, weakening the black king's position even further.

7 ... d6 8 Rd1

White's idea is clearly to deter Black from playing his desired ... e7-e5, at least temporarily.

8 ... Qc7

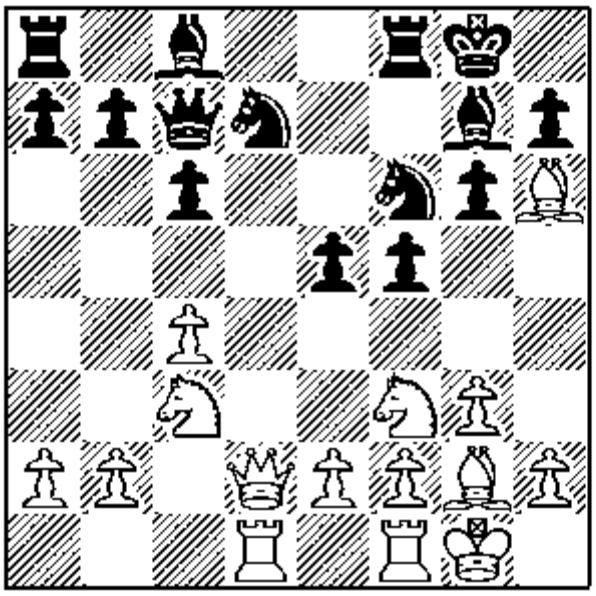
Question: Is it possible to play 9 d5, to stop ... e7-e5 once and for all?

Answer: In that case 9 ... Nbd7, targeting the e5- and c5-squares, assures Black a comfortable and active game. After 10 Nf3 Nc5, with the positional threat of bringing one of the knights to e4, Black is fine.

9 Nf3 Nbd7

The immediate 9 ... e5 is an interesting option, planning to answer 10 d5 c5 11 Bxf6 Bxf6 12 Ng5 with 12 ... e4!, while 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 Qd6 Qxd6 12 Rxd6 e4 gives Black a good game.

10 0-0 e5 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 Bh6



Question: Is the immediate 12 ... e4 playable?

Answer: Yes, and after 13 Bf4 Qb6 14 Ng5 Re8!, Black is fine.

12 ... Bxh6 13 Qxh6 e4 14 Nd4 Ne5 15 Qc1

The white queen was alone on h6, doing nothing useful, whereas now it protects the c4-pawn, albeit indirectly.

15 ... Bd7

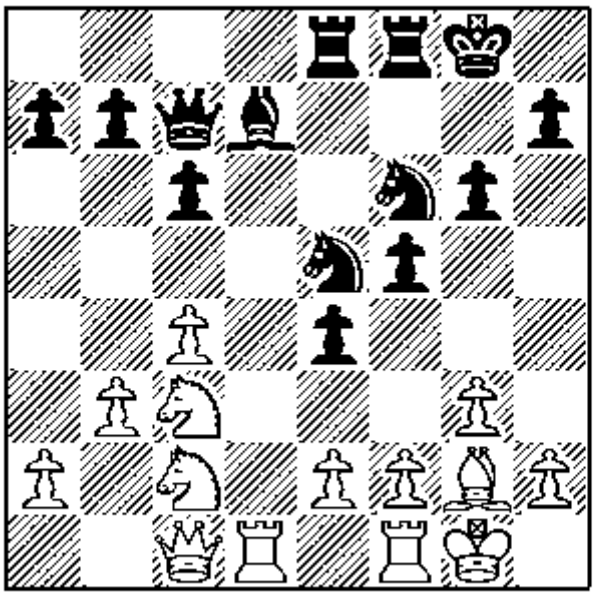
Of course 15 ... Nxc4 is met by 16 Nxe4 with an edge for White.

16 b3 Rae8

Black's position is now fully developed and he also enjoys some space advantage.

17 Nc2

Either 17 f3 or 17 Qa3 is more disturbing for Black.



Exercise: How can Black exploit his greater number of pieces on the kingside?

Answer: 17 ... Nh5

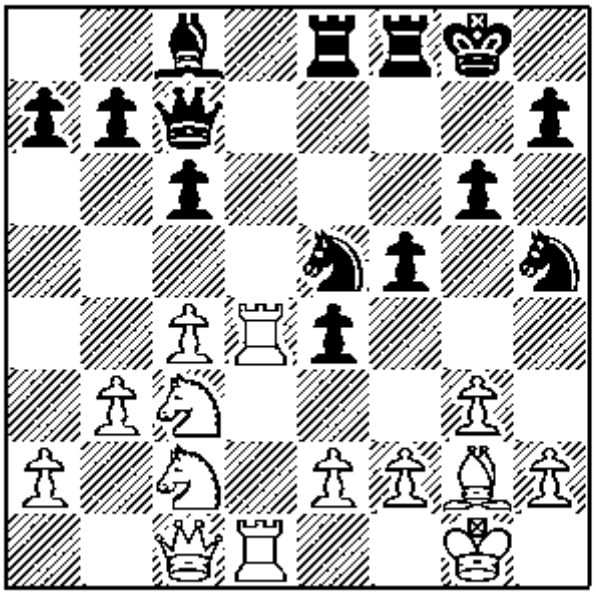
At this moment Stein starts to show his talent for attacking play. The reader will soon be more aware of that.

A diversion on the queenside with 17 ... b5 was probably not according to his taste; especially as 18 cxb5 cxb5 19 Nb4, followed by occupying d5 with one of the knights, only results in a simplified position.

18 Rd4

White intends to double rooks on the d-file even though there are no real targets there – the black bishop will just step back to c8. Apparently Usachyi's idea is simply to solve the development of the f1-rook.

18 ... Bc8 19 Rfd1



Exercise: Can you find a strong move with one of Black's knights?

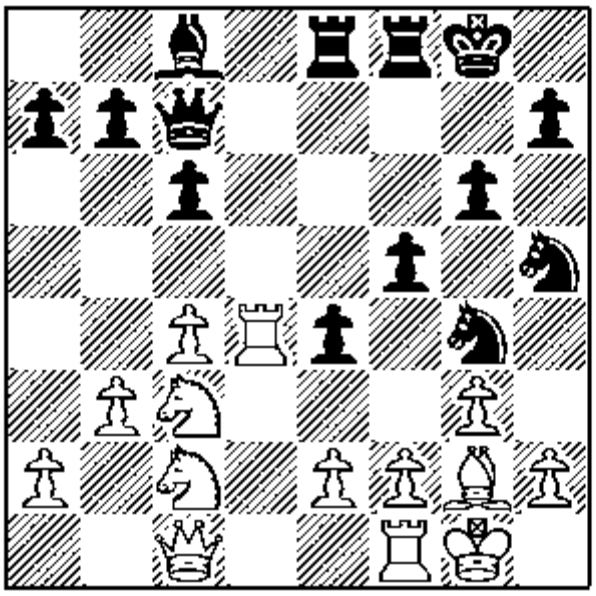
Answer: 19 ... Ng4!

It is impressing how well and aggressive Stein plays with his knights. Alternatively, 19 ... Ng7 is a natural move, planning to centralize the knight on e6, but Stein prefers the aggressive option, exercising pressure on both f2 and h2.

20 Rf1

Stepping back with the rook is unnecessarily passive. Now the psychological advantage is definitely on Stein's side who gets a couple of moves for free. Instead, 20 f4 stops Black's dream of an attack effectively.

Note that the natural 20 Ne3 could have been answered by a spectacular knight sacrifice: 20 ... Nxh2! (20 ... Nxf2 21 Kxf2 f4 22 gxf4 Qxf4+ 23 Ke1! is less clear) 21 Kxh2 f4 22 Nf1 fxg3+ 23 Nxg3 (not 23 fxg3? Rxf1! with the cruel idea 24 Rxf1 Qxg3+ 25 Kh1 Bh3 26 Rg1 Qh4! and wins) 23 ... Rxf2, although after 24 Rd6! Qe7 25 Nxh5 Qh4+ 26 Kg1, Black cannot achieve more than a draw however he attacks the white king.



Exercise: Can Stein profit from his psychological advantage?

Answer: 20 ... f4!?

This move may not be objectively the best but it is probably strongest psychologically, and it is a good example of the calculated risk Stein was fond of when trying to win games. We should embrace and learn from such psychological ideas, for the purpose of emulating them in our own games.

21 Nxe4

After 21 Rxe4? fxg3 22 hxg3 Nxg3! 23 fxg3 Qxg3 24 Rxf8+ Rxf8 25 Rxg4 Qf2+ 26 Kh2 Bxg4, Black has strong pressure.

21 ... c5!

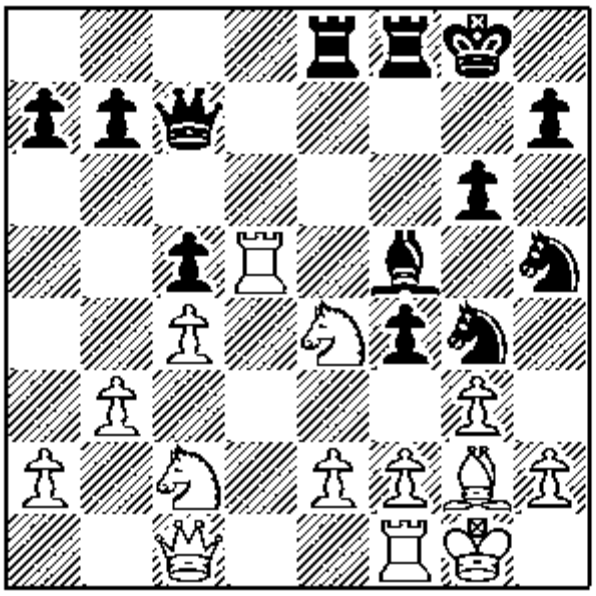
Separating the white rook from the defence of the centralized knight, so that Black can attack this knight and weaken the g3-pawn.

22 Rd5

The critical test was 22 Rd3!, covering the third rank, when 22 ... Bf5 can be met by 23 Nd6!. After 23 ... Rxe2 24 Nxf5 gxf5 25 Bf3 Re7 26 Rfd1, White has a comfortable advantage.

22 ... Bf5!?

Stein continues to take risks, as 22 ... Rxe4 23 Bxe4 fxg3 24 fxg3 Nxg3 25 Rxf8+ Kxf8 26 hxg3 Qxg3+ 27 Bg2 Qf2+ is only a draw.



23 Rxc5?

The variation 23 Nd6! Rxe2 24 Nxf5 gxf5 25 Rd3!, even a tempo down, still gives White chances of coming out on top.

23 ... Qe7

Now White has to sacrifice the exchange and the game turns in Black's favour.

24 Rxf5 gxf5 25 Nc3 fxg3 26 hxg3

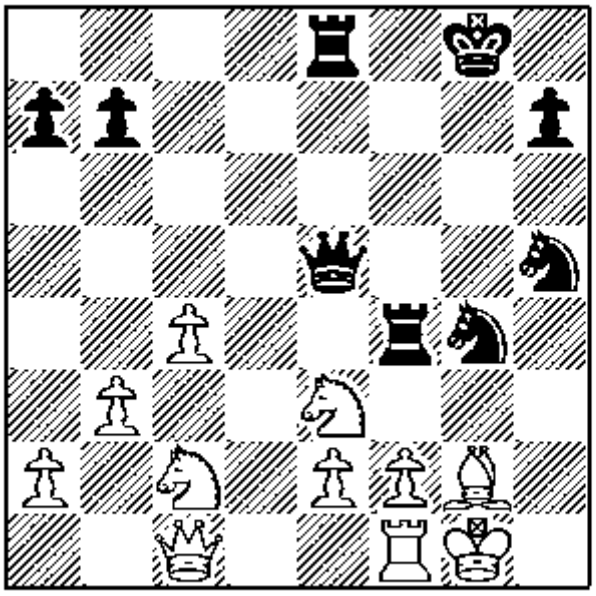
The other recapture 26 fxg3 would be met the same way.

26 ... f4 27 Nd5 Qe5 28 gxf4 Rxf4!

Marginally stronger than 28 ... Nxf4 29 Nxf4 Rxf4 30 Ne3 Re6, which also wins for Black.

29 Nde3

29 Nxf4 Nxf4 and mate in nine moves is not an improvement.



Exercise: How does Black decide the game?

Answer: By uncovering the queen against h2.

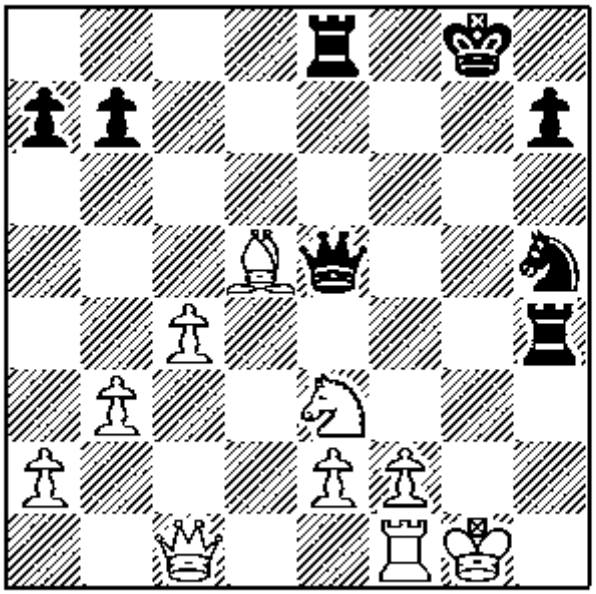
29 ... Re4

29 ... Rd4 would work too, but not 29 ... Nxe3?? 30 Qxe3, when Black cannot avoid the exchange of queens with an equal game.

30 Nxg4 Rxg4 31 Ne3

The attempted defence with 31 e3, intending 31 ... Rh4? 32 f4!, is demolished by 31 ... Rxg2+! 32 Kxg2 Qg5+ 33 Kh2 (or 33 Kf3 Qf5+ 34 Ke2 Nf4+ etc) 33 ... Re4! 34 f4 Qg3+ 35 Kh1 Qh3+ 36 Kg1 Re7 37 Kf2 Rg7 and Black has a decisive attack.

31 ... Rh4 32 Bd5+



Exercise: Where does Black place the king?

Answer: Either way on the back rank.

32 ... Kh8

Alternatively, 32 ... Kf8 33 Rd1 Qh2+ 34 Kf1 Nf4 35 Qa3+ Re7 36 Ke1 Qg1+ 37 Kd2 Qxf2 38 Qxa7 Qxe2+ wins as well; but not 32 ... Kg7? 33 Qa1 Nf4 34 Re1, since 34 ... Nxd5? fails to 35 Nf5+.

33 Qa1 Nf4 34 Re1

Or 34 Qxe5+ Rxe5 and if now 35 Bf3 Rg5+ 36 Ng2, Black has the neat 36 ... Rxg2+ 37 Bxg2 Nxe2 mate.

34 ... Nxd5 0-1

Stein was placed tenth in the tournament with five wins, three draws and seven losses; obviously he was not happy with the result. With four rounds to go, he needed 3½ points and was Black against GM Efim Geller. The witty GM Salo Flohr, who had beaten Stein the previous round, tried to cheer him up: "Don't take it so close to your heart young man, you will gain a lot of victories if you play as you have done in the first half of the game with me. Besides, mind you, shortened last names have become fashionable in chess. Recently grandmaster Lilienthal complained to me of not being simply Tal. I believe that soon Bronstein will also regret that he is not a Stein."

What happened was that Stein did beat Geller, but then lost to Zurakhov and ended with two draws in the final rounds.

1958 was the year when Stein started to say: “That’s it, I quit chess!” He entered a mechanical technical school – and then left and resumed his job as a coach, which he left as well and began a job as a metal worker assembler. It is only recorded that he played one event that year, in the second Ukrainian Spartakiad in Kirovohrad, where he scored four wins and three draws on the second board, but no games are to be found.

Next year, in 1959, Stein said: “I’d like to make one last attempt. There will be a Ukrainian championship semi-final in Kharkov. Maybe I will make it to the final once again. There will be a master’s norm there.” Stein played in the tournament and shared 5th-8th place. After this rather serious setback, he declared: “Now I have made a final decision, I quit chess! Enough is enough! Everything is clear. I will soon be a quarter of a century old, and a master’s norm is far away as the stars. This is my last tournament!” However, by pure luck two players withdrew from the final in Kiev and a telegram was sent to Stein inviting him to play.

In the fifth round he met Alexander Kostiuchenko (1930-), who was awarded the Soviet Master of Sport title the year prior to this game. According to Chessmetrics, he was ranked 164th in the world in 1961 with a highest estimated rating of 2509.

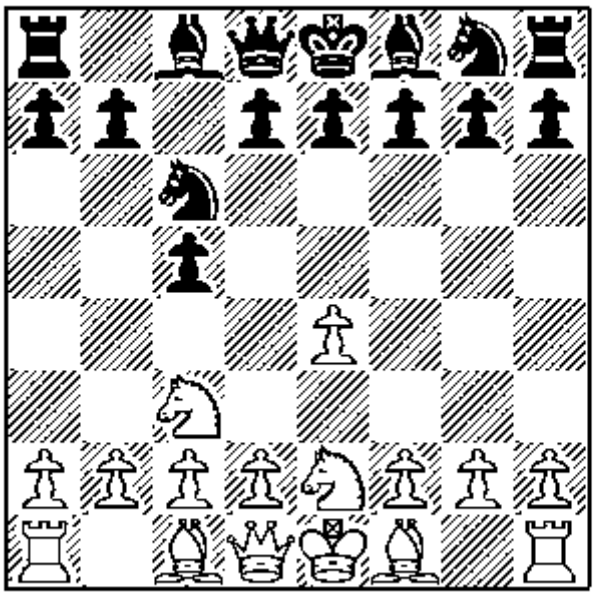
Game 5
A.Kostiuchenko-L.Stein
Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1959
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5

Question: Are you familiar with what Philidor said about the Sicilian Defence?

Answer: In 1777, Philidor wrote: “A very good [opening] to try the strength of an adversary with whose skill you are unacquainted.” During the 19th century the opening gained a better reputation after De Labourdonnais used it successfully during his matches with McDonnell in 1834.

2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Nge2

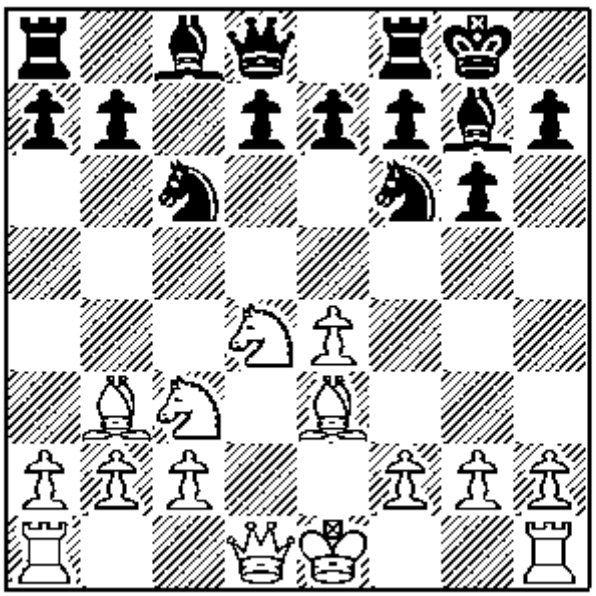


Question: Should Black allow 4 d4 or not?

Answer: 3 ... g6

Stein prefers to enter a Dragon Variation than try to exploit White's move order and prevent d2-d4. Objectively, 3 ... e5 is probably the strongest move at Black's disposal and was the choice in R.J.Fischer-B.Spassky, Belgrade (19th matchgame) 1992, which continued 4 Nd5 Nge7 5 Nec3 Nxd5 6 Nxd5 (if 6 exd5 then 6 ... Nd4!) 6 ... Be7 7 g3 d6 8 Bg2 h5 9 h4 (after 9 h3 h4 10 g4 Bg5!, White has the inferior light-squared bishop) and now the best continuation is 9 ... Bg4! (rather than 9 ... Be6, when White's bishop controls d5) 10 f3 (or 10 Bf3 Nd4!) 10 ... Be6 11 d3 Qd7 12 Be3 Bd8!, followed by ... Ne7, with an equal game according to Nataf.

4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bc4 0-0 8 Bb3



Exercise: Suggest a continuation for Black!

Answer: 8 ... e6

Black aims for greater activity than usual by playing ... d7-d5 next move. The other continuations 8 ... Qa5 or 8 ... a5 lead to a completely different kind of game.

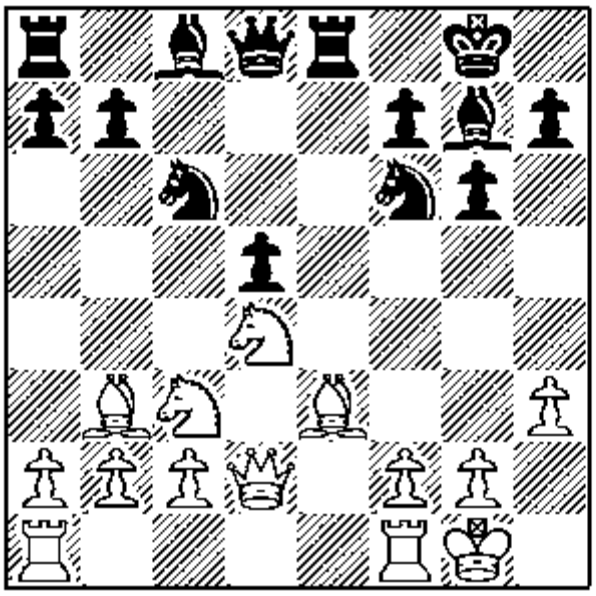
9 0-0 d5 10 exd5 exd5 11 h3

L.Yudasin-H.Spangenberg, Moscow Olympiad 1994, continued 11 f3 Re8 12 Bf2 (after 12 Qd2 Na5 and ... Nc4, Black gets the advantage of the bishop pair) 12 ... a6 (12 ... Na5!?) 13 Nxc6 bxc6 14 Na4 Bf5! with an equal position.

11 ... Re8

Yudasin's suggestion of 11 ... Na5, planning ... Nxb3 and ... Ne4, exploits the fact that the knight on e4 cannot easily be driven away by f2-f3 because of the resulting weakness of the g3-square. This move may have been Black's best option.

12 Qd2



Exercise: How should Black continue? Think carefully!

Answer: 12 ... Be6!?

Interestingly, Stein avoids 12 ... Na5. It seems he thinks that the bishop on b3 is not so great after all and so declines to expend time exchanging it.

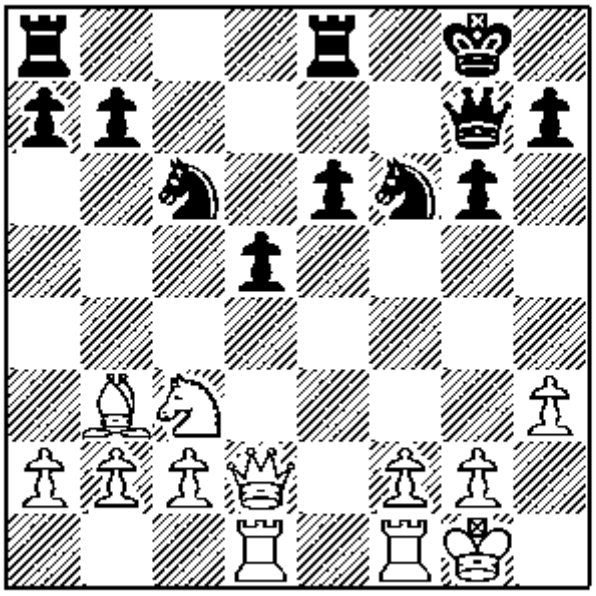
13 Rad1 Qd7

Stein's true intention is to sacrifice on h3, which practically forces White to exchange the annoying e6-bishop.

14 Nxe6 fxe6 15 Bh6?!

Development with 15 Rfe1 looks more sensible.

15 ... Bxh6 16 Qxh6 Qg7 17 Qd2

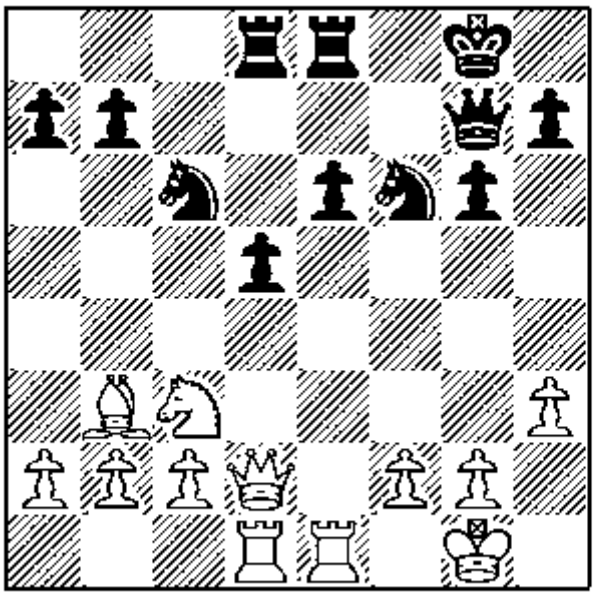


Question: What are the best locations for the black rooks?

Answer: 17 ... Rad8

Black has an "absolute centre", to use Max Euwe's terminology in his famous books about the middlegame, and here rooks are generally best placed behind the centre to support it. On the other hand, Black has the semi-open c- and f-files as well. In such a position your dream is to have four major pieces!

18 Rfe1



Question: Where to put the black queen – on the c-file or the f-file?

Answer: This is not an easy problem to solve. Stein's solution is very interesting.

18 ... Qf8!?

From here the queen not only has potential on the f-file, it can also use the c-file after ... Qc5 at the right moment.

19 Ba4

It is more in White's interest to activate the knight with 19 Nb5 and Nd4, when he has slight pressure on Black's centre.

19 ... Kg7!

A good move, covering the potential weak squares at f6 and h6.

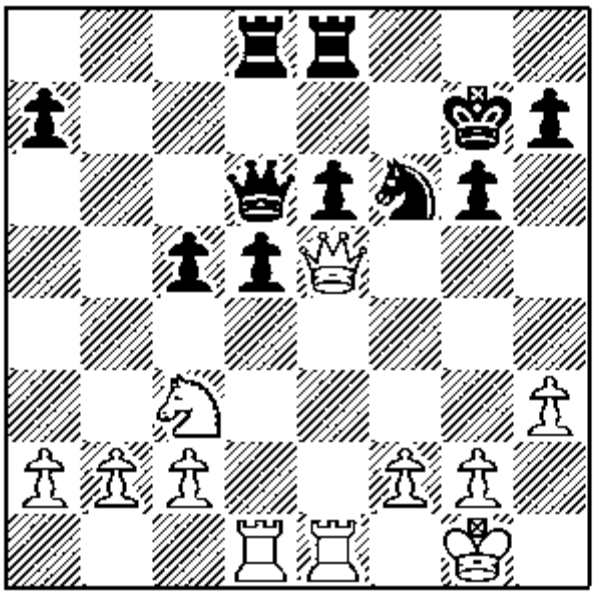
20 Bxc6 bxc6

Stein did not bother about the b3-bishop earlier in the game, and now it turns out that White bothers about the strong c6-knight! However, the resulting exchange is only to Black's advantage, since both ... e6-e5 and ... c6-c5 are in the air and White can only prevent one of these expansions.

21 Qd4

21 Na4 hinders ... c6-c5 but not ... e6-e5.

21 ... c5 22 Qe5 Qd6



The strong white queen must be exchanged.

23 Qxd6

23 f4 is more precise. Now Black's harmony increases.

23 ... Rxd6 24 Ne4?!

It is obvious that White's plan is to trade pieces to come closer a draw, but this is normally a losing strategy as Capablanca, an expert in exchanges, showed in his games. Instead, 24 b3, making a triangle on the queenside, is the normal move to avoid pressure on the b2-pawn, as is the case when the pawns stay in a straight line. With this structure the b-pawn is fully defended and the semi-open b-file becomes less valuable.

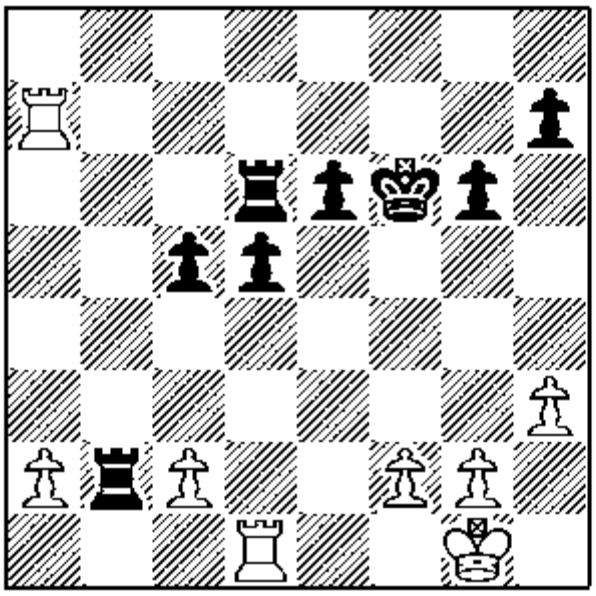
24 ... Nxe4 25 Rxe4 Rb8

Presumably Stein did not care for White's active rook after 25 ... Rb6 26 Rxd5 exd5 27 Rxe8 Rxb2 28 Re5.

26 Ra4?

After the natural 26 b3, Stein would probably have continued 26 ... Rbb6 27 Ra4 Ra6 28 Rxa6 Rxa6 29 a4 Kf6 with the more active position.

26 ... Rxb2 27 Rxa7+ Kf6



Exercise: Here I ask the reader to take the other side for a moment (and for objectivity!) and try to decide how White might defend the c2-pawn.

28 c4?

Answer: The awkward 28 Rc1 is probably the most tenable move, even though it breaks the fundamental rule that you should play actively with the rooks at all cost, particularly in double rook endings.

28 ... Rc2

Now it is practically all over because of Black's two connected pawns in the centre.

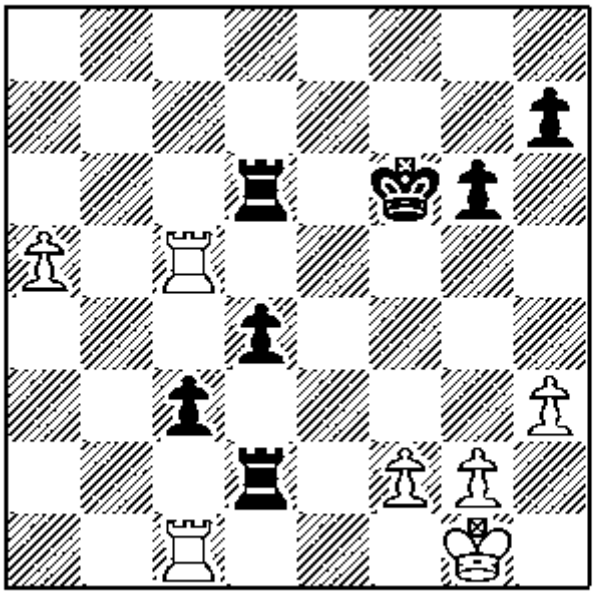
29 cxd5

29 Rxh7 Rxc4 is much the same.

29 ... exd5 30 a4

After 30 Rxh7 d4, followed by ... d4-d3 and ... c5-c4, Black's pawns are unstoppable.

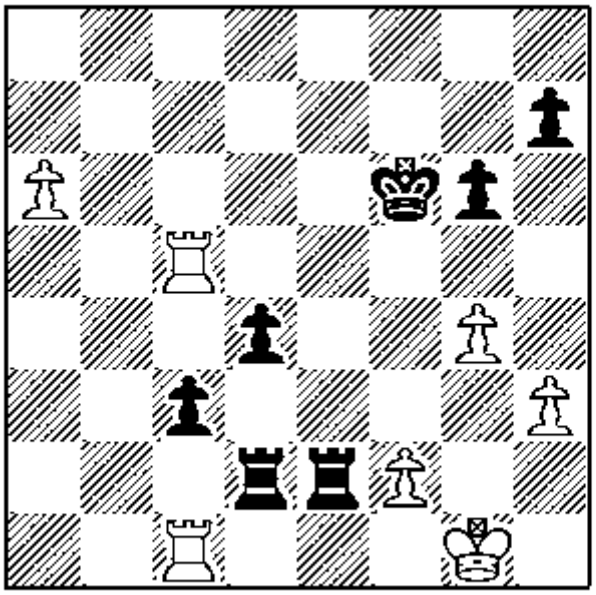
30 ... c4 31 a5 c3 32 Rc7 Rd2 33 Rc1 d4 34 Rc5



Exercise: White has temporarily stopped the passed pawns, so how does Black continue to make progress?

Answer: Two rooks on the seventh rank will decide according to the principle of two weaknesses.

34 ... Re6 35 g4 Ree2 36 a6



Question: How does Black win most convincingly?

36 ... Ra2?!

Answer: The natural 36 ... Rxf2! is best, with the likely continuation 37 a7 Rg2+ 38 Kh1 (if 38 Kf1 then 38 ... Rdf2+ 39 Ke1 d3 leads to mate in ten) 38 ... Rh2+ 39 Kg1 Rdg2+ 40 Kf1 Ra2 41 Kg1 Rhg2+ 42 Kh1 (or 42 Kf1 Raf2+ etc) 42 ... Rgd2 43 Rc7 Ke5 and Black wins easily.

37 Rd5 Red2?

This second mistake gives White a chance. 37 ... Rxf2 should still win after 38 Rxd4 Rg2+ 39 Kf1 Rh2 40 Kg1 Rxh3, but 37 ... Ra4! followed by 38 ... Re5 looks even more precise.

38 Rd6+??

White might have saved the game with 38 Re1!; for example, 38 ... Rxf2 39 g5+! Kg7 40 Rxd4 Rg2+ 41 Kh1 Rh2+ 42 Kg1 Rag2+ 43 Kf1 Rxg5 44 a7 Ra5 45 Rd7+ Kh6 46 Kg1 Rd2 (or 46 ... Rxh3 47 Ree7) 47 Rxd2 cxd2 48 Rd1 Rxa7 49 Rxd2 with an easy draw.

38 ... Ke5 39 Rc6 c2 40 Kg2 d3 41 Re1+ Re2 0-1

Stein made good use of the central pawns in this game. In the spirit of Philidor, he tried to queen one of the pawns. It was notable that he did not play the tempting 12 ... Na5, showing the centre "a clean pair of heels". Instead, he gave full attention to the matters of centralization. Later on, Stein's technique was far from perfect, but double rook endings are not easy to play, especially if there is little time on the clock. The reader should study some of Capablanca's endings, since he was a true master of handling two rooks.

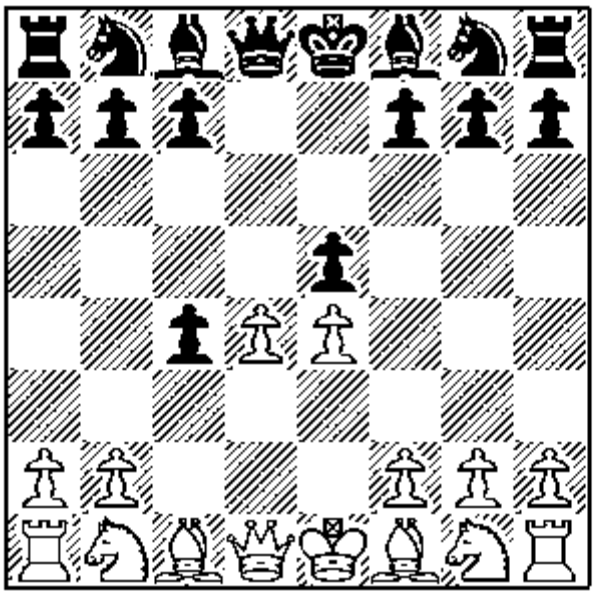
Game 6
L.Stein-S.Kwiatkowski
Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1959
Queen's Gambit Accepted

According to Chessmetrics, Kwiatkowski was ranked 203rd in the world in January 1960 and achieved his highest estimated rating of 2492 later that year.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4

The most logical, critical and sharpest response to the solid Queen's Gambit Accepted.

3 ... e5



Question: What is White's best continuation?

Answer: 4 Nf3!

This is actually the only good move at White's disposal. The alternatives are certainly less attractive:

a) 4 dxe5?! Qxd1+ 5 Kxd1 Nc6 6 f4 Bg4+! gives Black more than sufficient compensation for the pawn; 6 ... f6!? is interesting too.

b) It is too soon to expand in the centre: after 4 d5?! Nf6 5 Nc3 b5!, it is Black who has the initiative!

c) The ultra-aggressive 4 Bxc4?! Qxd4 5 Qb3?! Qxe4+ 6 Be3 Qg6 7 Nf3 Nc6 does not offer White enough for the two sacrificed pawns.

4 ... exd4

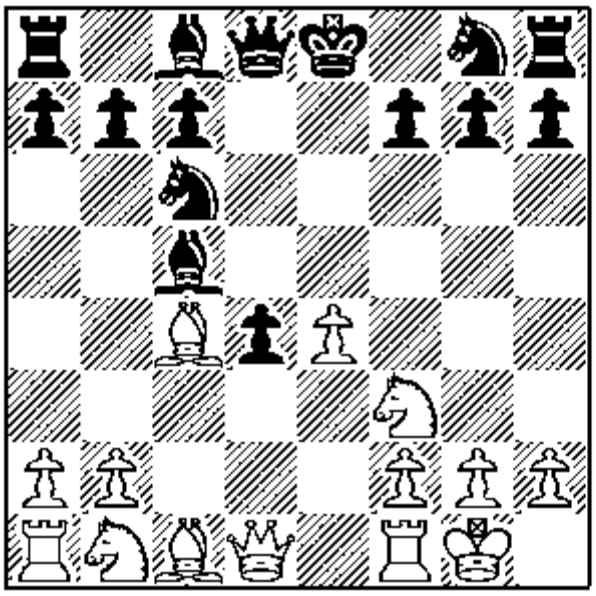
Question: How did Stein proceed in this position?

Answer: 5 Bxc4!

An attacking genius like Stein would not enter such variations as 5 Qxd4 Qxd4 6 Nxd4 Nf6 7 Nc3 Bc5! 8 Ndb5 (or 8 Be3 Ng4) 8 ... Na6 9 Bf4 Be6! 10 Nxc7+ (or 10 Bxc7 Ke7!? with an equal game) 10 ... Nxc7 11 Bxc7 0-0 and ½-½ Z.Azmaiparashvili-T.V.Petrosian, USSR Championship, Moscow 1983. The natural 5 Nxd4?! is even worse, as after 5 ... Bc5 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Nc3 0-0, Black is already slightly better.

5 ... Nc6 6 0-0 Bc5

The main variation is 6 ... Be6, when White can continue putting pressure on the sacrificed d4-pawn with 7 Bb5 Bc5 8 Nbd2 Nge7 9 Nb3 and so forth.



Exercise: Suggest a continuation for White!

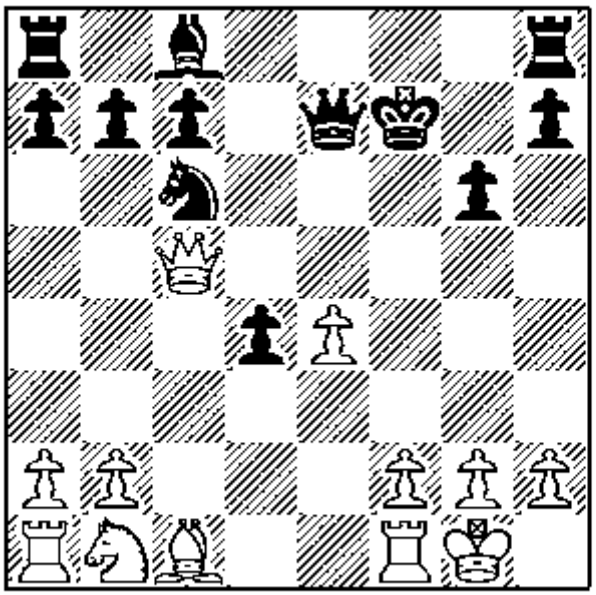
Answer: 7 Ng5!?

Perhaps 7 Qb3 Qe7 8 e5, followed by 9 Bg5, was more precise, but in those days Stein was an eager attacking player.

7 ... Nh6 8 Nxf7!

A standard combination which was well known and played in Morphy's heyday.

8 ... Nxf7 9 Bxf7+ Kxf7 10 Qh5+ g6 11 Qxc5 Qe7



Exercise: Should White exchange queens or leave them on the board?

12 Qc2!?

Answer: For a player with an aggressive style it is naturally tempting to keep the queens, particularly given Black's slightly weakened kingside. It is unclear how much Stein analysed the variation 12 Qxe7+ Nxe7 13 Bf4 c5 14 Rc1 b6 15 b4!, but Black is perfectly fine after 15 ... cxb4 16 Rc7 Rd8 17 Nd2 Be6 18 Nf3 Ke8 and his defensive task would probably have

been easier from a practical point of view. So, even if the played move is not objectively the strongest, it is probably the best psychologically!

12 ... Be6

Here 12 ... Re8 looks more to the point, exercising pressure on the white centre and preparing artificial castling with ... Kg8 (or ... Kg7). After 13 Nd2, Black can also consider the irritating 13 ... Nb4.

13 f4 Rad8

Again, 13 ... Nb4 looks tempting for Black, when Stein's plan may have been to play 14 Qf2 Bc4 15 Rd1 c5 16 Nd2 Bxa2 17 f5 with reasonable good attacking chances.

14 f5

White's idea is simply to disrupt the pawn cover protecting Black's king.

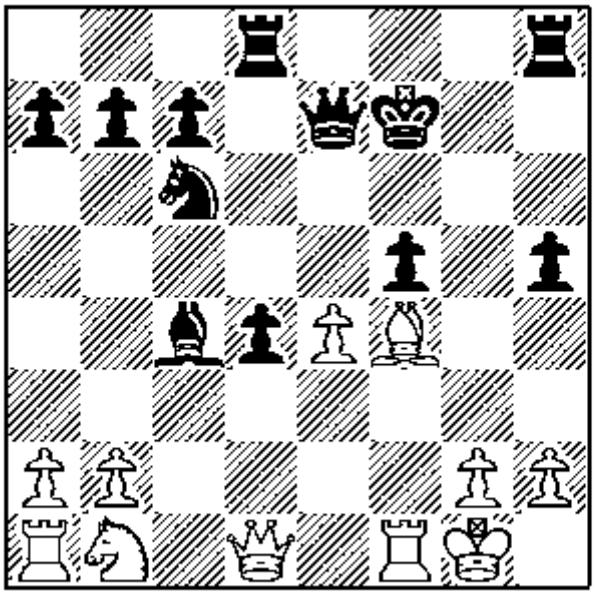
14 ... gxf5 15 Qd1!?

With this original retreat, Stein continues his strategy of provoking Black's kingside pawns forward. The queen move is striking given the distance it has already travelled in the game: from d1 to h5-c5-c2 and now back to d1.

The developing 15 Bf4 is good too, with a balanced but complicated game, but Stein's move is more creative.

15 ... h5 16 Bf4 Bc4?

This is a mistake. The further advance 16 ... h4, planning to undermine the white kingside with 17 ... h3, was the correct continuation.



Exercise: How does White exploit Black's error?

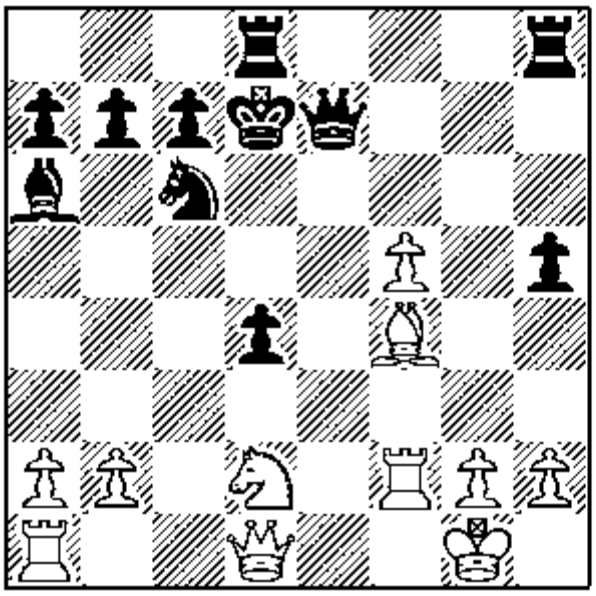
17 Rf2?!

Answer: Surprisingly, Stein must have neglected to notice that Black's last move left the f5-pawn undefended. After 17 Bg5!, the game is over. Two sample lines: 17 ... Qxg5 (or 17 ... Qxe4 18 Nd2 and White wins material) 18 Rxf5+ Qxf5 19 exf5 Bd5 20 Nd2 Rdg8 21 Nf3 and White is winning.

17 ... Ke8

The black king tries to escape to the queenside via d7 and c8.

18 Nd2 Ba6 19 exf5 Kd7



Exercise: How can White best follow up his previous play?

20 Nf3

Answer: 20 Rc1! Kc8 21 f6 Qe6 (or 21 ... Qb4 22 Ne4) 22 b4 Rh7 23 Nb3 is an even more efficient way of deciding the game with the knight.

20 ... Qb4?

Better is 20 ... Qe4 21 Ng5 Qxf5 22 Bd2 Qg6, forcing White to find 23 Qb3!, since 23 Nf7 allows Black to put up some resistance with 23 ... Bc4 24 Nxh8 Rxh8 25 Qf3 Be6.

21 a3

21 Ne5+ Nxe5 22 Bxe5 Rhe8 23 Bf6 is another way to win.

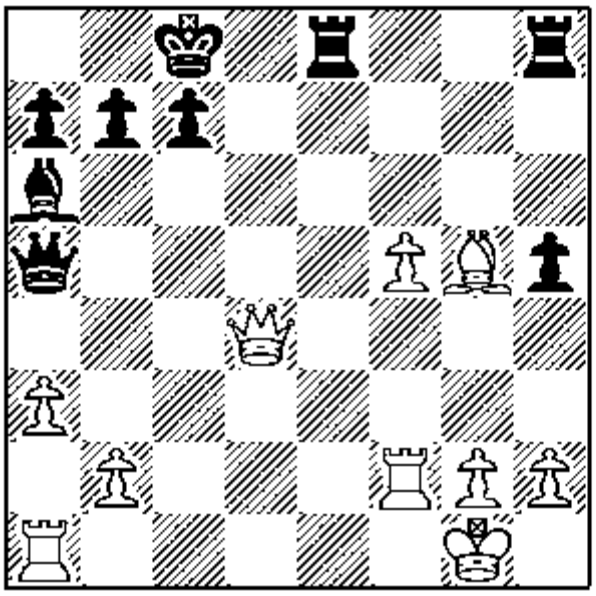
21 ... Qa5?!

Defending the d-pawn with 21 ... Qc5 is more tenacious, when White has to find 22 Rc1 Qd5 and then the original 23 a4!!, followed by 24 b4, which leads to a quick win. The immediate 23 b4 is less precise due to 23 ... Bc4 24 Nd2 b5.

22 Bg5 Rde8 23 Nxd4

Black's position falls apart, starting with the centre pawn.

23 ... Nxd4 24 Qxd4+ Kc8



Exercise: What is White's smoothest win?

25 h3

A quiet human move in a won position, safeguarding the first rank (... Re1+ was in the air), and typical of Stein's pragmatic play.

Answer: Objectively, the very active 25 Be7! was strongest, preparing the road for f6-f7-f8Q. Moves which attack and defend at the same time, so-called multi-functional moves, are usually the best.

25 ... b6 26 b4

Again, 26 Be7! was strong. Possibly Stein was playing too quickly here. He would surely have found this idea with greater focus and reflection.

26 ... Qa4 27 Rc1 Rh7 28 Rfc2 Rd7 29 Qf4 Re1+ 30 Rxe1 Qxc2 31 Qf3 1-0

There is nothing to be done against the deadly double threat of 32 Re8+ or 32 Qa8 mate, since 31 ... c6 is answered by 32 Rc1, so Black resigned.

Game 7
A.Bannik-L.Stein
Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1959
King's Indian Defence

Anatoly Bannik (1921-2012) was a strong player in the 1950s, rated 33rd in the world, according to Chessmetrics, with a highest estimated rating of 2640.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Nf3 0-0 5 g3

Question: What is the main idea behind this set-up?

Answer: To minimize Black's attacking chances against the white king. It is a wise choice by Bannik against an attacking player of Stein's skill.

5 ... d6

The King's Indian Defence was a relatively new opening in the 1950s and got its popularity in connection with the famous candidates tournament in Zürich 1953, where as many as 25% of the games featured this dynamic system.

6 Bg2 Nc6

This active deployment of the knight started to become popular in the 1960s. Black wants to provoke d4-d5 and later exploit the centre pawns with an attack. See Game 50, for example, where White takes up the challenge and plays 7 d5 in a near identical position (with Nc3 replaced by 0-0).

7 0-0 Bd7

This is not even mentioned in the ground-breaking two-volume Grandmaster Repertoire: 1 d4 by GM Boris Avrukh. To modern eyes Stein's move probably seems too passive. However, the idea is pretty common and certainly playable. Black wants to follow up with ... Qc8 and ... Bh3, exchanging the strong white bishop at g2.

More active moves, if Black wants to develop the bishop at this stage, are 7 ... Bf5 (as played today by leading King's Indian experts, Ilya Smirin and Emil Sutovsky) and 7 ... Bg4 (which has been played by several strong grandmasters, such as Mark Taimanov and Dragoljub Velimirovic). However, more popular is the standard 7 ... e5; while the logical counter-attack with 7 ... a6 is the main line, followed by ... Rb8 and ... b7-b5, attacking the undefended c4-pawn, the weakest point in White's position, whose bishop which normally defends it is otherwise actively located on the long light diagonal.

8 h3

Aiming to prevent Black's intended manoeuvre. Instead, J.Smejkal-D.S.Goodman, Dortmund 1977, continued with the mirror move 8 Bd2!? and then 8 ... Qc8?! 9 d5 Na5 10 b3 c5 11 e4 gave White a slight advantage. Black's set-up with ... Bd7 and ... Qc8 looks ineffective here, so 8 Bd2!? does in effect hinder this plan.

8 ... Qc8 9 Kh2 e5 10 dxe5!

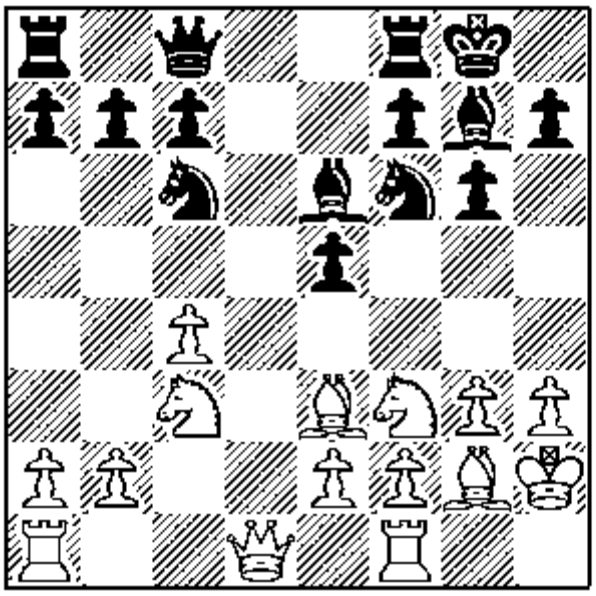
The best reply. 10 d5 is answered by 10 ... Nd4!, exploiting the fact that White cannot take twice with 11 Nxd4 exd4 12 Qxd4?? because of 12 ... Ng4+, winning the queen. From d4 the knight disturbs White's harmony and has several options, including the exchange on f3 in the near future, as well as the manoeuvre ... Nf5, using the d4-square as a pivot.

10 ... dxe5

The drawback of 10 ... Nxe5 11 Nxe5 dxe5 is that White's g2-bishop then exercises strong influence on the queenside. If, after 12 Qb3, Black plays to neutralize it with 12 ... c6, a hole is created on d6, and White has the slightly freer position after 13 Be3.

11 Be3 Be6!?

The preliminary 11 ... h6 is a decent alternative, preparing to mirror White's kingside formation.



Exercise: What is the potential problem with Stein's move?

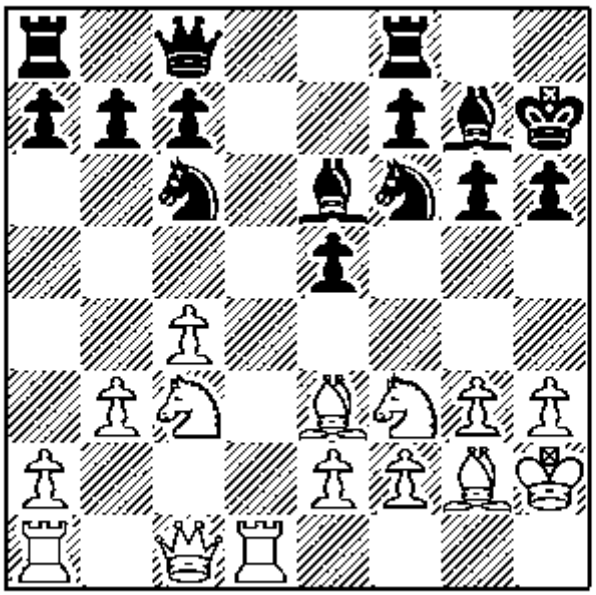
12 b3

Answer: White has the interesting option 12 Ng5!? Bxc4 13 Qa4 Be6 14 Nxe6 Qxe6 15 Rfd1 with positional pressure on the diagonals and the files, though Black seems to get enough counterplay after 15 ... Nd4!. We do not know if the players were aware of this possibility because the game took a quieter course.

12 ... h6 13 Qc1 Kh7

Black can also consider the unconventional 13 ... g5 14 Rd1 Bf5, which seems fully playable. Nowadays, it is very common to play actively like this, exploiting the capacity of the wing pawns; but back then this concept was not in fashion at all since it was regarded as breaking classical principles and too weakening.

14 Rd1



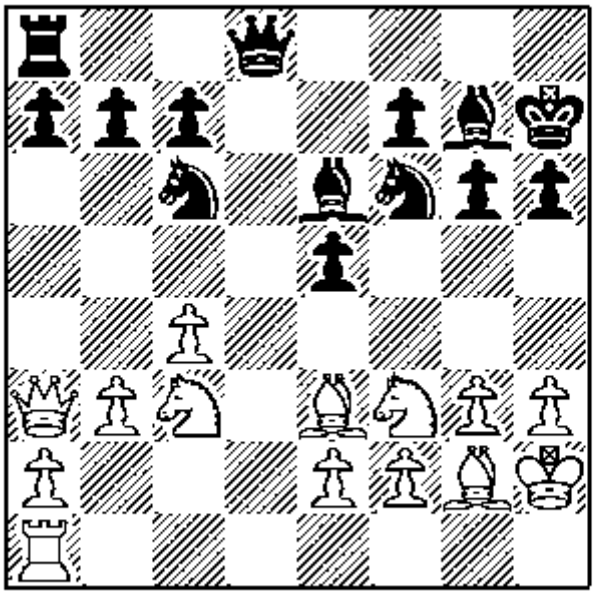
Exercise: What now for Black?

14 ... Rd8

A centralizing move, challenging White on the d-file. However, control of the open file, in connection with the outpost at d5, is not so dangerous when Black has no weaknesses.

Answer: The normal plan is 14 ... Nd7, followed by ... f7-f5. I guess a player like Alekhine would prefer this so as to avoid further exchanges which effectively remove the dynamics from the game.

15 Rxd8 Qxd8 16 Qa3



Exercise: Suggest a continuation for Black!

16 ... Qf8?!

It is the 17th round of the tournament and you get the feeling Black wants to exchange pieces and go home.

Answer: A more dynamic solution like 16 ... Nd7 17 Rd1 f5 has less sting now (because the f8-rook has disappeared) but is still an option. Alternatively, if one draws inspiration from Richard Réti (1889-1929), then 16 ... Qh8!? might be considered, utilizing the fact that ... Kh7 has cleared the last rank for subtle manoeuvres.

17 Bc5?!

Better is 17 Qxf8 Bxf8 18 Ne1, followed by Nd3, with a solid, albeit small advantage.

17 ... Qe8

Here again 17 ... Qh8!? deserves serious attention, but Stein does not seem to play chess in the fashion of Petrosian or Réti.

18 Rd1 Rd8 19 Rxd8 Qxd8 20 Qc1

Of course not 20 Bxa7?? b6 and the bishop is shut out of the game. An instructive variation is 21 Nb5 e4 22 Ng1 (after 22 Ne1 Qd2, the knight is trapped on the back rank) 22 ... h5!, followed by ... h5-h4. Black's position is strategically won since the trapped bishop is unable to join the battle on the dark squares.

20 ... Nd7 21 Ba3

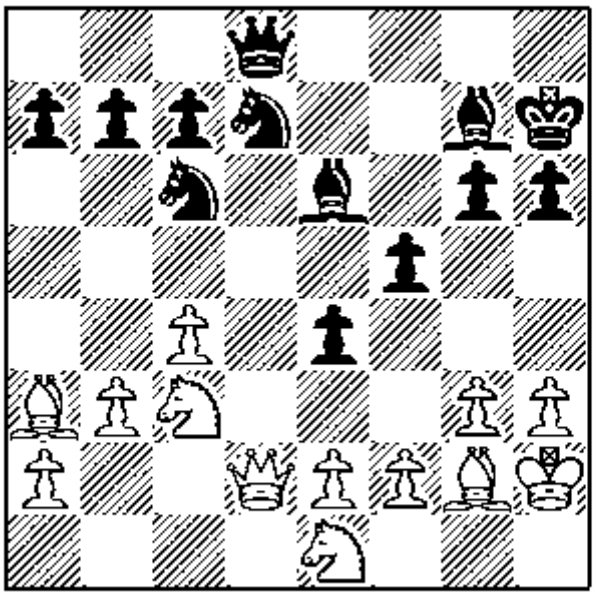
It is not clear what the bishop is doing on the empty a3-f8 diagonal. The flexible retreat 21 Be3 is therefore slightly more accurate.

21 ... f5 22 Qd2

White's position gets worse if he tries to prevent ... e5-e4 with 22 e4, because of the

typical thrust 22 ... f4! 23 gxf4 exf4 24 Nd5 g5 and Black's control of the e5-square secures him a good game.

22 ... e4 23 Ne1



Exercise: What is Black's most consistent move?

23 ... Qf6

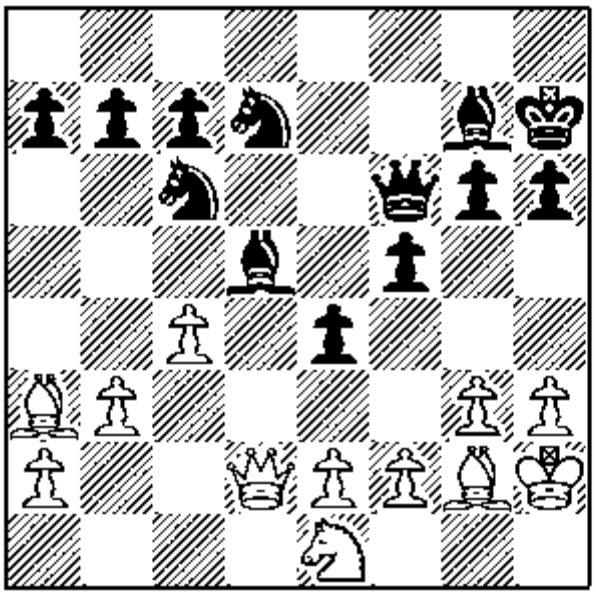
Answer: 23 ... h5!, followed by ... h5-h4, is the most consistent continuation, utilizing the spearhead at e4 to gain a strong grip on the kingside. Note that 24 h4 merely weakens the g4-square and Black can exploit it immediately by playing 24 ... Nde5! 25 Qxd8 Nxd8 with a positional advantage.

24 Nd5

It was better to attack the tactical weakness on c7 immediately with 24 Nb5 Qd8 25 f3 a6 26 Nc3 exf3 27 exf3, even if 27 ... f4! 28 gxf4 Nd4 gives Black good piece play for the pawn.

Alternatively, Black might try the imaginative 24 ... Nb6!?, but if White finds 25 f3 (rather than 25 Nxc7 Bxc4! 26 Ne8 Qc3 27 Qd1 Bh8! 28 Nc2 Bg8!, when Black has a slight advantage because of more space and mobility; while after 26 bxc4?? Nxc4 27 Qc1 Nxa3 28 Qxa3 Qe5 29 Na8 Qb8, the knight is trapped in the corner – an amusing variation!) 25 ... Qe5 26 f4, the c7-pawn will fall.

24 ... Bxd5



Question: A classical problem – should White recapture with the piece or the pawn?

25 cxd5??

Answer: It is necessary to keep the pawn structure intact with 25 Qxd5. Even so, after 25 Qxd5 Nb6 26 Qd1 Qd4 27 Qxd4 Nxd4, Black threatens the e2-pawn and the annoying pawn rush ... a7-a5-a4.

25 ... Qd4!

White would clearly prefer the pawn to be back on c4, because now it just becomes a target for the black pieces.

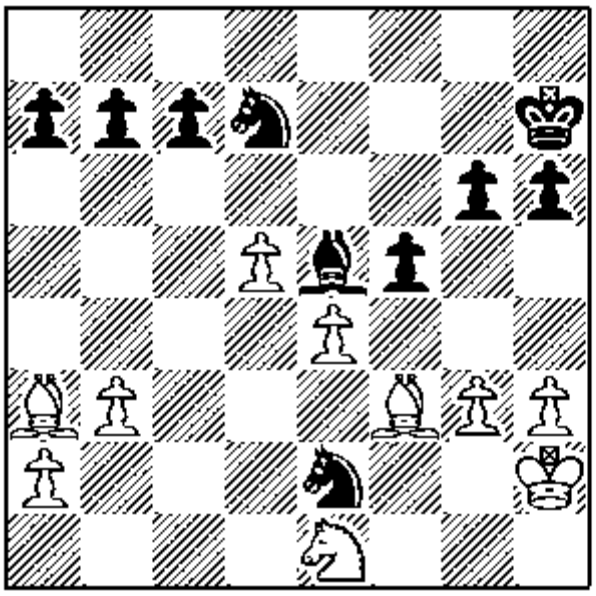
26 Qxd4 Nxd4 27 f3?!

This only weakens the g3-pawn, but nothing offered much hope of salvation:

a) 27 e3 Nb5 28 Nc2 Ne5, followed by ... Nd3 and ... Nc3, puts pressure on White's pawn weaknesses at f2, d5 and a2.

b) 27 Bf1 Nb5 28 Nc2 Nxa3 29 Nxa3 Nf6 wins the d5-pawn and 30 Nb5? Nxd5 31 Nxa7? does not help, since 31 ... Bd4 picks up the f2-pawn.

27 ... Nxe2 28 fxe4 Be5 29 Bf3



Exercise: Should Black take on g3 with the bishop or the knight?

Answer: 29 ... Bxg3+

The other recapture 29 ... Nxg3 30 exf5 Nxf5+ gives Black an extra pawn on the kingside and is certainly enough for a win, but the game move wins two pawns in a more open battle.

30 Kg2 Bxe1 31 Bxe2 fxe4 32 d6 cxd6 33 Bxd6 Bc3

The long diagonal is the best location for the bishop.

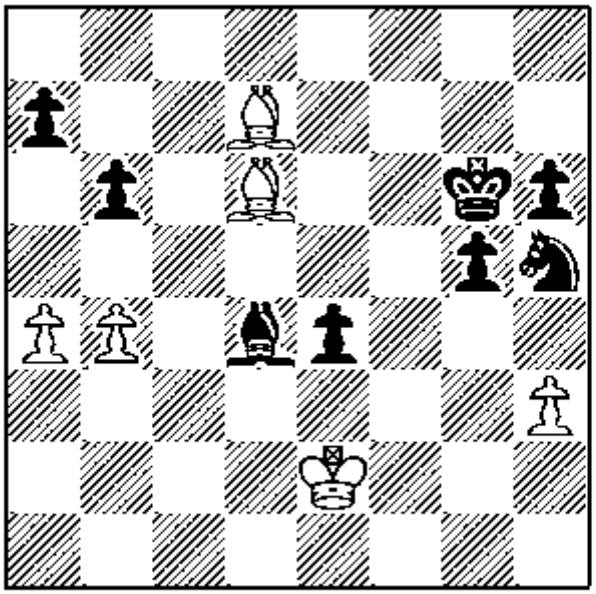
34 Bc4 Nf6

Black has consolidated his position, so he can prepare to realize the pawn majority.

35 Kf2 Bd4+ 36 Ke2 b6

With this move the two tactical weaknesses b7 and a7 become one, stationed at a7.

37 b4 g5 38 Be6 Kg6 39 a4 Nh5 40 Bd7



Exercise: Can Black allow opposite-coloured bishops after 40 ... Nf4+ - ?

40 ... Nf4+ 41 Kf1

Answer: In fact 41 Bxf4 gxf4 wins pretty easily because White cannot prevent ... f4-f3, followed by ... Kg5-f4 and the further ... e4-e3 decides.

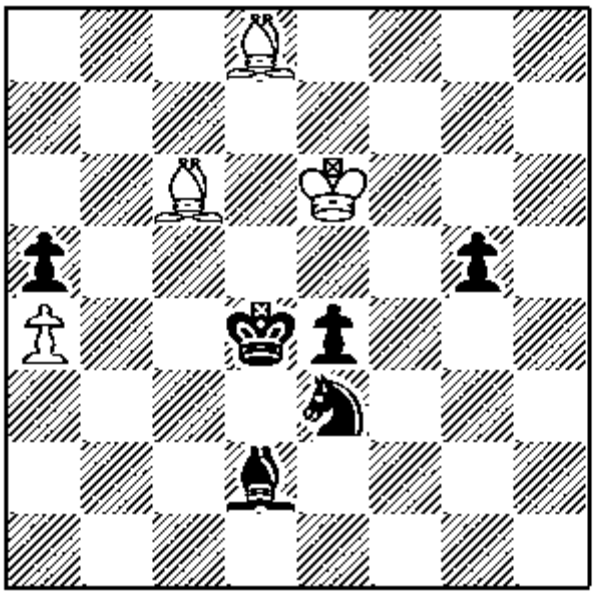
41 ... Kf6

Not yet 41 ... e3?, as this would grant White a good moment to enter a stage with opposite-coloured bishops. After 42 Bxf4 gxf4 43 Ke2, the black pawns are easily blockaded on the light squares.

42 Bb8 a5 43 bxa5 bxa5 44 Bc7 Bc3 45 h4 Ne6 46 hxg5+ hxg5 47 Bb6 Ke5 48 Kg2 Nf4+ 49 Kg3 Be1+ 50 Kg4 Nd5 51 Bd8 Bd2 52 Bc6

52 Bxg5? loses immediately to 52 ... Bxg5 53 Kxg5 e3 54 Bb5 Nc3.

52 ... Kd4 53 Kf5 Ne3+ 54 Ke6



Exercise: How should Black continue?

54 ... Ng2?

A serious error which might have thrown the win away.

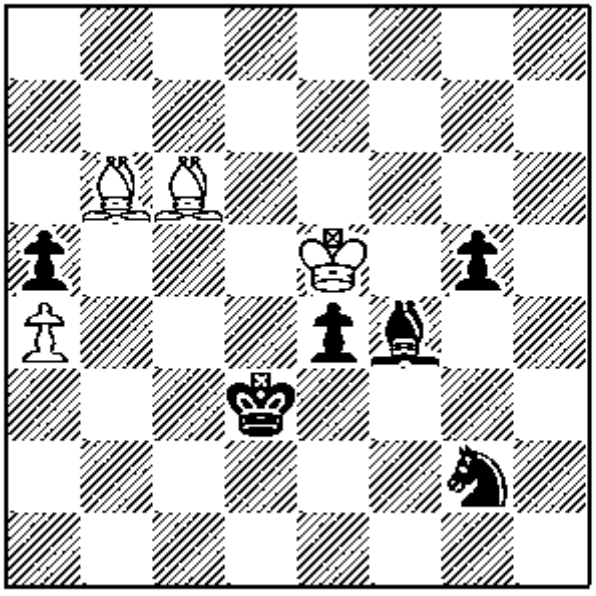
Answer: It is not so easy to calculate all the bishop checks after a long tournament and a long game, but winning is actually rather straightforward: 54 ... g4! 55 Bf6+ (or 55 Bb6+ Kd3 56 Bb5+ Kc2 57 Bc6 Kb3 58 Bxe4 Kxa4) 55 ... Kd3 56 Bb5+ Kc2 57 Bc6 g3 58 Bxe4+ Kb3 59 Bg5 Kxa4 with a technical win.

55 Bb6+

Even 55 Kf5!? Ne3+ (not 55 ... e3? 56 Bxg2 e2 57 Bb6+, followed by 58 Bf2, or 55 ... Nh4+? 56 Kg4 e3 57 Bxg5 with a draw) 56 Kxg5 (not 56 Ke6?, which allows Black to play 56 ... g4! again) 56 ... Nc4+ 57 Kf5 e3 58 Bf3 Nd6+ 59 Ke6 Ne4 60 Kd7 gives White chances to hold.

55 ... Kd3 56 Ke5 Bf4+

The other check is no better, as after 56 ... Bc3+ 57 Kf5 Ne3+ 58 Bxe3! Kxe3 59 Kxg5 Kd3 60 Bb5+, the e-pawn is easily stopped.



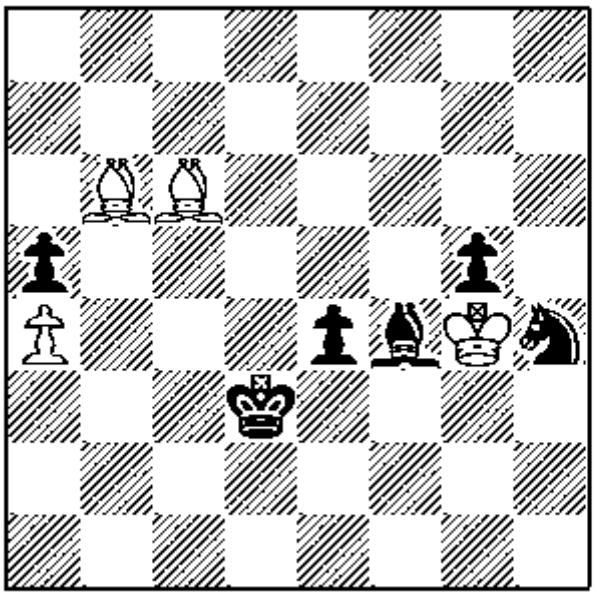
Exercise: Where should White put his king?

57 Kf5?

This natural move, by which the king rushes back to the defence via the light squares, turns out to be a fatal mistake.

Answer: Stepping away again with 57 Ke6! was correct, when Black has nothing better than to repeat the position with 57 ... Bd2.

57 ... Nh4+ 58 Kg4



Question: What is the optimal square for the black bishop?

Answer: 58 ... Bd2

A perfect location, where the bishop defends two pawns and supports the e-pawn all the way down to the magical queening square e1.

59 Bb5+ Kc2 60 Be2?

This makes things easy for Black. On e2 the bishop prevents ... Kd1 for the time being but is unable to maintain its position. White could have put up more resistance with 60 Bc4!, intending 60 ... Kd1?! 61 Bb3+ and forcing Black to play very precisely. For example, 60 ... Ng2! 61 Bd5 Kd3 62 Bc6 Nf4 63 Bc7 Ne6 64 Bb6 Nd4 65 Bxd4 (or 65 Bd7 Bc3 66 Bxd4 Bxd4 67 Bf5 Be3 etc) 65 ... Kxd4 66 Bd7 Bf4 67 Bf5 e3! 68 Kf3 Kc3 69 Ke2 Kb4 70 Bd7 g4! 71 Bxg4 Kxa4 and White cannot stop both pawns.

60 ... Ng2 61 Bd8 Nf4 62 Bb5 e3 63 Bxg5

Or 63 Kf3 g4+! with an easy win.

63 ... e2 64 Bh4 Nd3 65 Kf3 e1Q 66 Bxe1 Nxe1+ 0-1

A long and tough struggle where, apart from one serious mistake, Stein showed decent technique in a far from easy endgame.

Stein came third in the 1959 Ukrainian Championship, behind GM Geller and master Yuri Nikolaevsky, with eight wins, two losses and eleven draws, surpassing the master norm by 1½ points. He also qualified for the USSR Championship semi-final.

Later in the year, he played in the USSR Spartakiad in Moscow, alongside great players

like Botvinnik, Bronstein, Keres, Korchnoi, Petrosian, Smyslov, Spassky, Tal, and many others. This was the first time Stein was physically close to all these giants. He played very well, probably inspired by the surroundings, scoring three wins and three draws, and his Ukrainian team won the bronze medal. After this achievement the following was written in the Shakhmaty za 1958-1959 yearbook: “Great hopes have been pinned on young master Stein and not in vain. (...) Not only did he attain serious sporting results, he also demonstrated a number of commendable creative achievements. In his original games one feels his desire to impose his own combat tactics on his opponents from the very first moves.”

In the USSR Championship semi-final in Tallinn, Stein tied for third with the Estonian Iivo Nei. Had it not been for the unfair rule that one could not “skip” a title (to become a GM one first had to be an IM), he would have been a Grandmaster.

Iivo Nei (1931-) became an International Master in 1964, when he was ranked 21st in the world with an estimated rating of 2667, according to Chessmetrics. Nei certainly belongs to the category of players, like Yukhtman, never to have received the official recognition they deserved. Nei, along with Efim Geller and Nikolai Krogius, was second to Boris Spassky during his world championship match against Bobby Fischer in 1972. He co-authored with Robert Byrne the excellent book Both Sides of the Chessboard about this match.

There follows the first game from a four-game match which was to decide who would qualify for the USSR Championship, together with Spassky and Alexey Suetin.

Game 8
L.Stein-I.Nei
USSR Championship semi-final (play-off), Moscow 1959
Réti Opening

1 Nf3 d5 2 d3 Nf6 3 g3

Stein liked to play the King’s Indian with both colours early in his career.

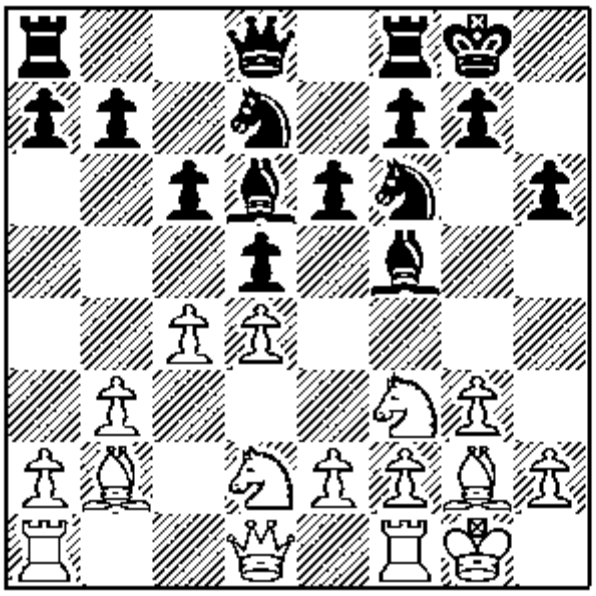
3 ... c6 4 Bg2 Bf5 5 Nbd2 e6 6 c4

Basically, when White plays c2-c4 it is a Réti, whereas e2-e4 makes it a King’s Indian Attack.

6 ... Nbd7 7 0-0 h6 8 b3 Bc5 9 Bb2 0-0 10 d4

As a matter of fact, because of this new placement of the white d-pawn, a kind of Slav Defence has arisen with both sides having ‘wasted’ a move.

10 ... Bd6



Exercise (calculation): What is the most principled move? And is it playable?

Answer: 11 Ne5

Occupying the central outpost while opening up the long diagonal for the g2-bishop, though it required some calculation.

11 ... Bxe5?

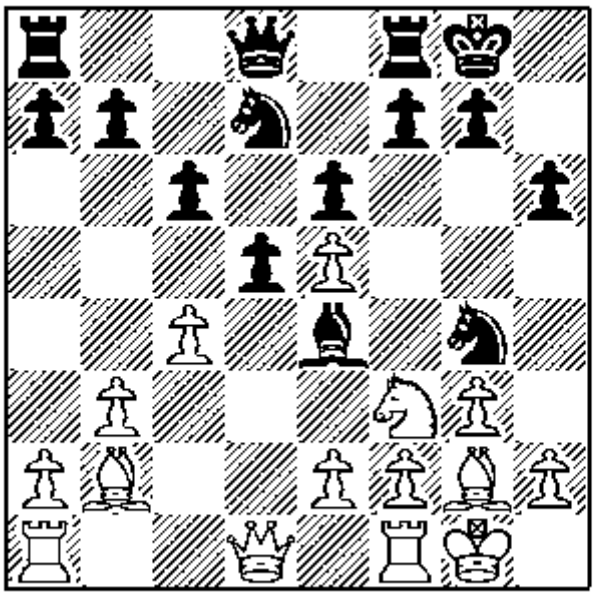
Black falls into White's subtle trap and loses the bishop pair. Either of the standard moves 11 ... Qe7 or 11 ... a5 is better.

12 dxe5

Question: What is the problem with Black's exchange on e5?

Answer: White gets the bishop pair and a space advantage.

12 ... Ng4 13 Nf3 Be4



Question: What is the tactical justification to White's play? Does Black not win a pawn now?

Answer: No, he only wins a pawn temporarily; Stein has seen deeper than his opponent.

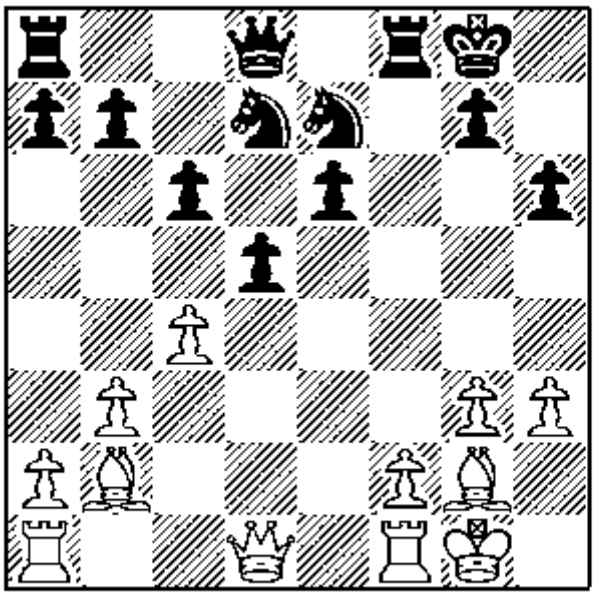
14 h3 Bxf3 15 exf3 Ngxe5 16 f4 Ng6 17 f5!

The key move, which had to be foreseen when 11 Ne5 was played.

17 ... Ne7

After 17 ... exf5 18 cxd5 Ne7 19 dxc6 bxc6 (or 19 ... Nxc6 20 Qd3 and Black is unable to defend the f5-pawn in a suitable way) 20 Re1, White has more than enough compensation for the pawn. Black's problems stem from the fact that the bishop pair is far superior to his knights on an open board, and his scattered pawns will come easily under attack from White's long-distance forces.

18 fxe6 fxe6



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

19 Qe2

Answer: 19 Re1! is the most precise move, preventing 19 ... e5 because of 20 cxd5 etc.

19 ... e5

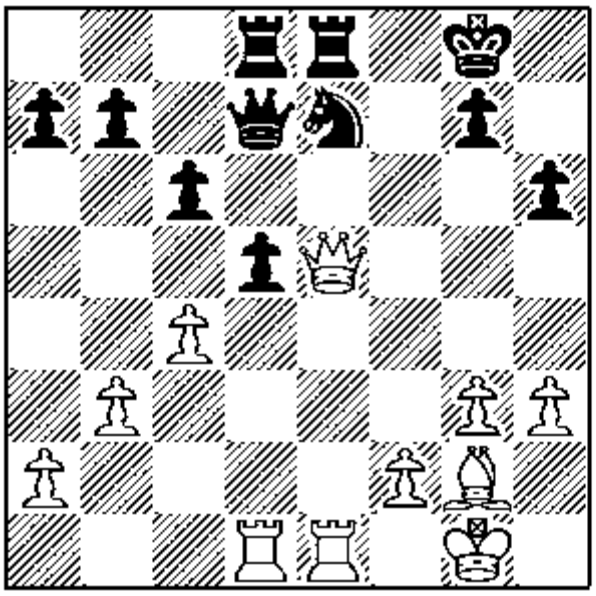
Black exploits the fact that there is less pressure on the d5-pawn.

20 Bxe5 Nxe5 21 Qxe5 Qd7

21 ... dxc4!?, to prevent White from taking on d5, could be met by 22 Rad1 Qe8 23 Rfe1 Ng6 24 Qc5 and if 24 ... Qf7 then 25 Bf1! is strong.

22 Rad1 Rad8 23 Rfe1 Rfe8

The other possibility, 23 ... Rf7, does not improve Black's position on account of 24 Qd4 b6 25 cxd5 Nxd5 26 b4 b5 27 Qc5, followed by Re5.



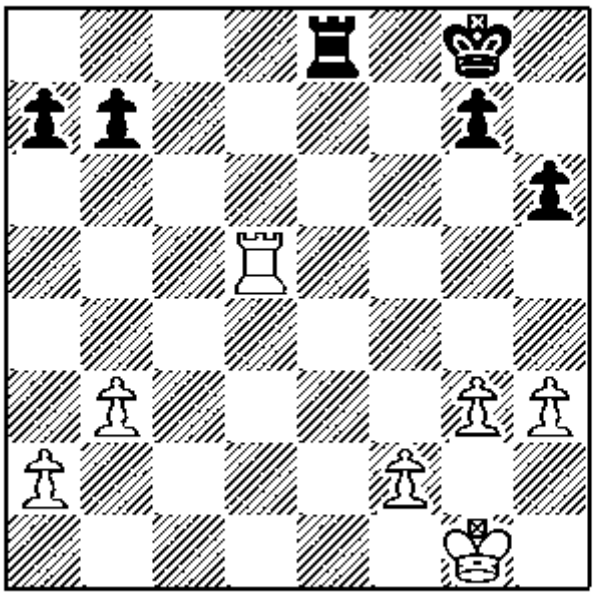
Exercise: How does White benefit from his positional pressure?

Answer: 24 cxd5 Nxd5

Forced; 24 ... cxd5? leads to disaster after 25 Rc1 Rc8 26 Rxc8 Qxc8 27 Bxd5+ Kh8 28 Bf7 etc.

25 Bxd5+ cxd5 26 Qxd5+ Qxd5 27 Rxe8+ Rxe8 28 Rxd5

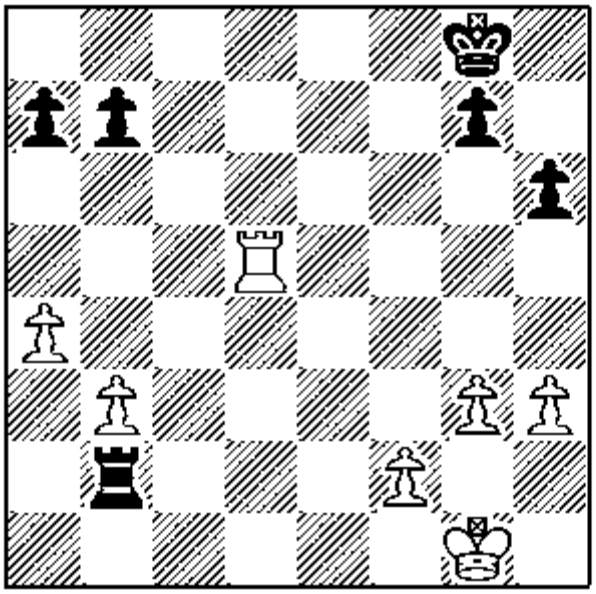
One of the most common rook endgames in practice is with an extra pawn on one side of the board and the position otherwise symmetrical. Understanding this typical ending is of vital importance and yet, surprisingly, it is difficult to find this particular scenario in any book about endgames. John Nunn made some investigations for his Secrets of Practical Chess, but that was with three pawns on the queenside, rather than two, which probably increases the winning chances.



Question: Can White win this endgame?

Answer: White has good chances of converting his extra pawn. Firstly, he has an active rook, which is normally a requirement when exploiting a small material advantage; and secondly, it is easier to exploit a material advantage when there are pawns on both wings. If all the pawns on the queenside are removed, the position is virtually a dead draw.

28 ... Re2 29 a4 Rb2



Question: Should White play the rook to d3 or b5?

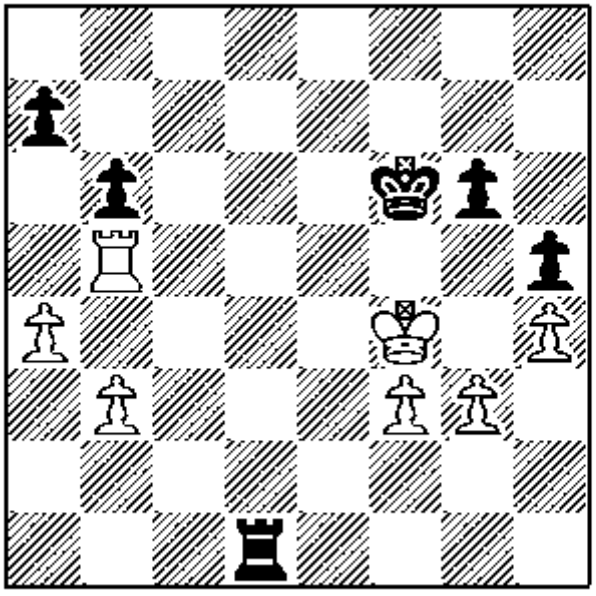
Answer: 30 Rd3!

This is generally the right location for the rook because, from here, it can also defend the kingside should White decide to send his king to the other flank. However, 30 Rb5 b6 31 Kg2 is not bad either; in fact the rook lands up on b5 for a while later in the game.

30 ... b6 31 Kg2 Kf7 32 h4 h5 33 Kf3 Kf6 34 Rc3 Kf5 35 Rd3 g6 36 Rd5+ Kf6

The black king will just stand here ready to halt the white pawn majority.

37 Rb5 Ra2 38 Ke3 Rb2 39 f3 Rb1 40 Kf4 Rd1



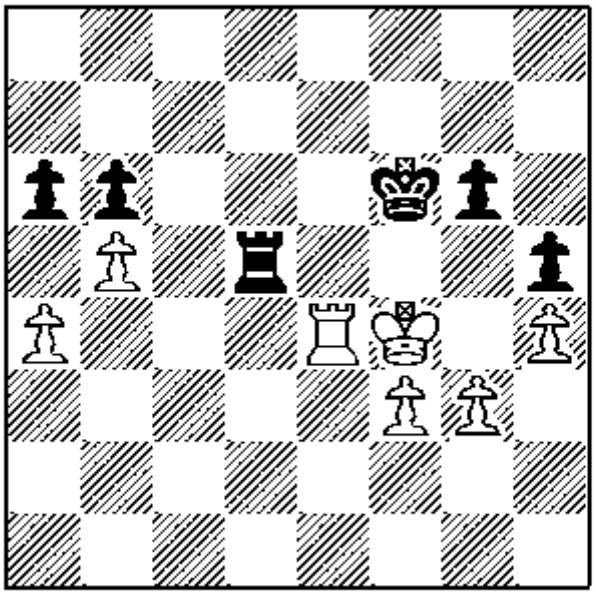
Exercise: What is White's best continuation?

Answer: 41 Re5!

Having made some progress on the kingside, Stein understands that the correct location for his rook is back on the third or fourth rank, depending on the position of his white queenside pawns.

41 ... Rd3 42 Re3 Rd4+ 43 Re4 Rd3 44 b4! Rd5 45 b5 a6?

A mistaken attempt to reduce the queenside pawns. 45 ... Rf5+ 46 Ke3 Rc5 is more stubborn.



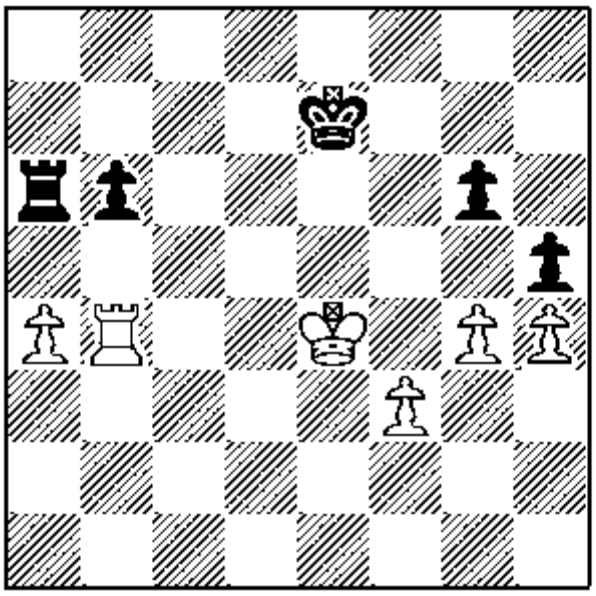
Exercise: White to play and win. (Warning: This is both difficult and very beautiful!)

46 bxa6

This is good enough – when Black captures on a6 with the rook its location will be too passive for a successful defence. However, Stein had an extraordinary beautiful win, which he may have overlooked.

Answer: 46 Rc4!! axb5 47 Rc6+ Kf7 48 Ke4! Rf5 (not 48 ... Rc5? 49 Rxc5 bxc5 50 a5 and the pawn queens) 49 g4 hxg4 50 fxg4 and White picks up both b-pawns.

46 ... Ra5 47 Rb4 Rxa6 48 Ke4 Ke6 49 g4 Ke7



50 g5?!

Unnecessarily subtle; by fixing the g6-pawn a new weakness has been created as a future target, after which Stein intends the typical plan of transferring the king to the queenside. Instead, 50 gxh5 gxh5 51 Kf5 looks much simpler.

50 ... Ra5 51 Kd3 Rf5?

51 ... Kf7 is a better defence, holding on to the g-pawn and hoping to activate the rook; for example, 52 Kc3 Rf5 53 f4 Rc5+ 54 Rc4 (or 54 Kb3 Rc1!) 54 ... Ra5 55 Kb4 Rf5 and it is not clear how White makes progress.

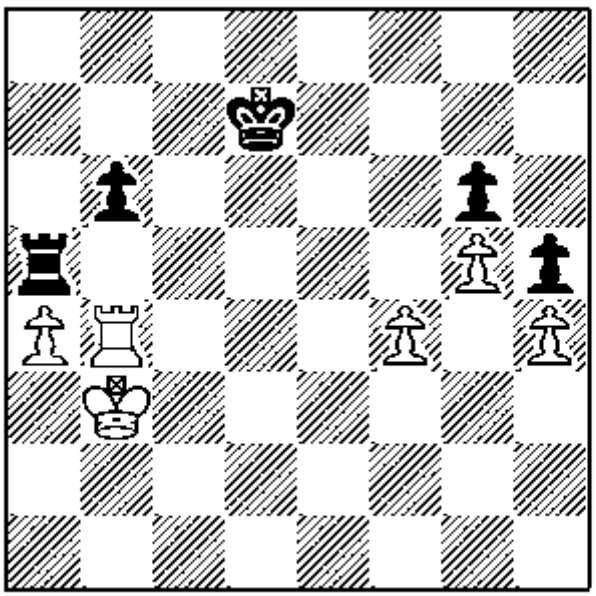
52 Ke3?!

Simply 52 Rxb6! is winning for White, but Stein continues with his own plan.

52 ... Ra5 53 f4 Kd7?

It was not too late for 53 ... Kf7.

54 Kd3 Kc7 55 Kc3 Kd7 56 Kb3



56 ... Rf5

Perhaps Nei intended 56 ... Kc6 here and only noticed now that 57 Rb5! is decisive; for

example, 57 ... Rxb5 (57 ... Ra8 58 f5 is equally hopeless) 58 axb5+ Kd5 (58 ... Kxb5 59 f5 wins easily) 59 f5! gxf5 60 Kc2 f4 61 Kc3! Ke5 62 Kd3 Kf5 63 Kd4! etc.

57 Rxb6 Rxf4 58 a5 Rxh4 59 a6 Rh1 60 Rxg6 Kc7 61 Rg7+ Kb8 62 g6 1-0

With this victory Stein took a 1-0 lead in the match and followed with a draw in the next game, which meant he needed only to split the points in the remaining two. Surprisingly, he lost both games and did not qualify for the final after all.

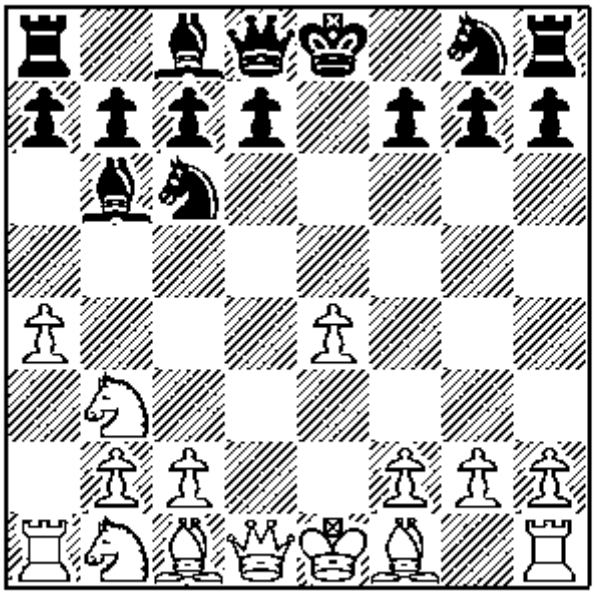
Game 9
A.Berenstein-L.Stein
Ukrainian Championship semi-final, Kiev 1960
Scotch Game

Alexander Berenstein (1946-) was ranked 363rd in the world with an estimated rating of 2405 in 1960, according to Chessmetrics.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nb3

This move has been considered harmless for a long time, though it has recently become quite popular again. The main line is 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4 and now 7 ... b6 is an important variation.

5 ... Bb6 6 a4



Question: Should Black advance the a-pawn one step or two?

Answer: The smaller move is the usual choice.

6 ... a6

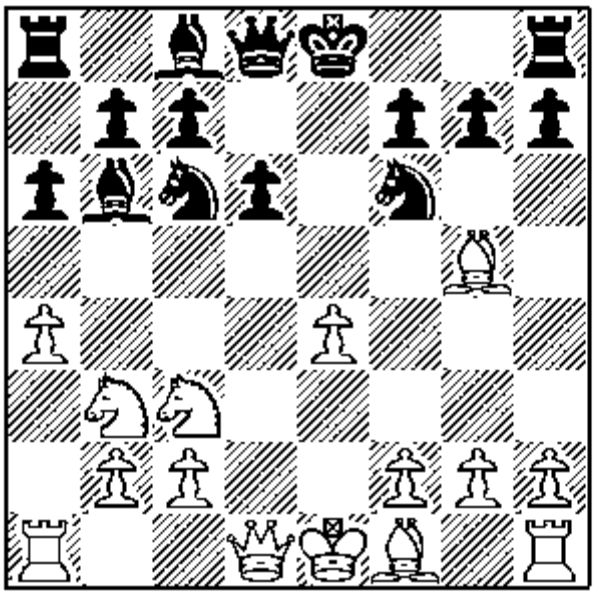
Nevertheless, 6 ... a5 is interesting, supporting an outpost on b4. After 7 Nc3 Nb4 (fighting for the d5-square), play could proceed as follows: 8 Bc4 d6 9 0-0 Nf6 10 Bg5 h6 11 Bh4 0-0 with an equal game according to GM Viktor Bologan in his excellent opening book Black Weapons in the Open Games. Black does not need to worry about Nd5 in this position, so the pin is effectively harmless.

7 Nc3 Nf6

7 ... d6 8 Nd5 Ba7, followed by ... Nge7 or ... Nf6, is another option.

8 Bg5 d6

The pin is not as dangerous as it looks.



Exercise: What would happen after the tempting 9 Nd5 - ?

Answer: White falls for an opening trap: 9 Nd5? Bxf2+! 10 Ke2 (or 10 Kxf2 Nxe4+ and 11 ... Nxg5) 10 ... Nxe4!!, when 11 Bxd8 leads to a pretty mate in five moves: 11 ... Bg4+ 12 Kd3 Ne5+! 13 Kxe4 f5+ 14 Kf4 Ng6+ 15 Kg5 Bh4 – a rare and beautiful mate.

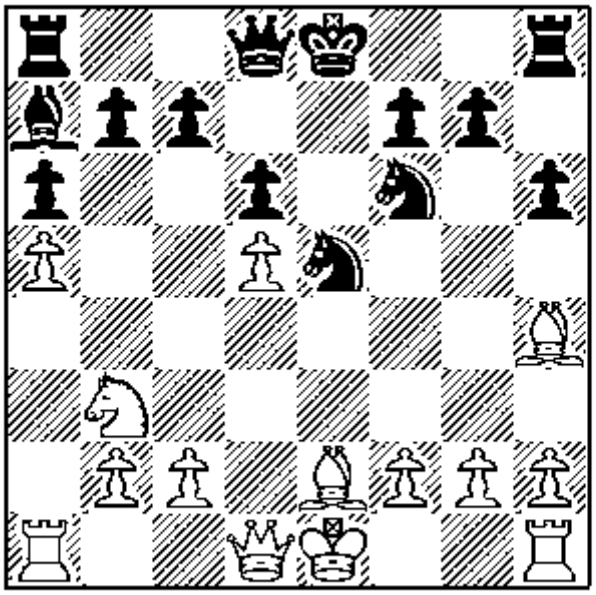
9 Be2 h6 10 Bh4 Be6

This is another way of controlling the important d5-square.

11 Nd5

Castling short is very risky given that Black is yet to commit his own kind. For example, after 11 a5 Ba7 12 0-0 g5! 13 Bg3 h5!, Black had a clear advantage in G.Agzamov-A.Ivanov, Lvov 1974.

11 ... Bxd5 12 exd5 Ne5 13 a5 Ba7

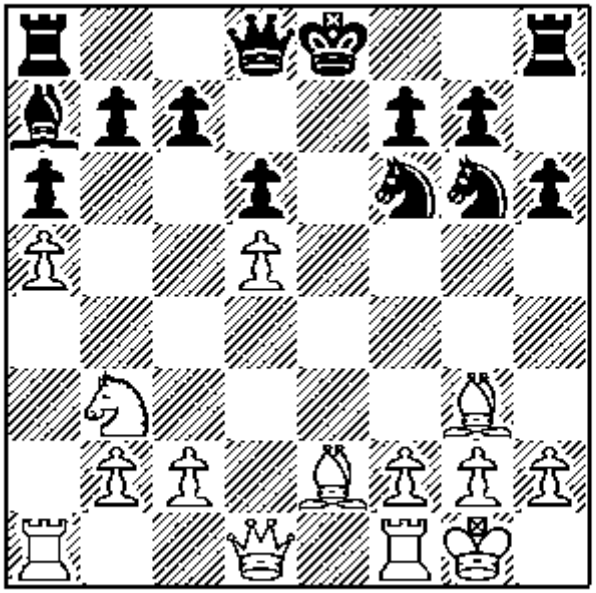


Question: How would you evaluate this position?

Answer: White has managed to establish a grip with the d5- and a5-pawn; nevertheless Black has the slightly preferable position because of his better-placed minor pieces.

14 0-0 Ng6 15 Bg3

The exchange 15 Bxf6 Qxf6 relinquishes the dark squares but is perhaps the best option anyway, followed by 16 c3. One can always ask the question what the bishop actually is doing on g3.



Question: How should Black continue? Aggressively or positionally?

Answer: 15 ... h5!

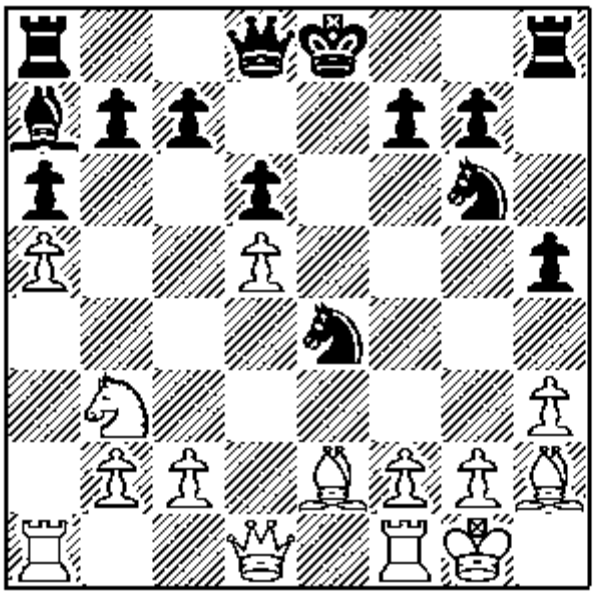
This is Stein in a nutshell, exploiting the rather immobile g3-bishop as a target for his own plans. With attacking prospect available, he does not care about positional continuations, such as 15 ... Ne4 or 15 ... 0-0, followed by 16 ... Re8.

16 h3

The natural move. The rook lift 16 Ra4, controlling the fourth rank, is worth considering, but 16 ... Qd7 17 Rb4 h4 18 Bf4 h3 19 g3 Nxf4 20 Rxf4 0-0-0 21 Bd3 Kb8 leads to an approximately equal position. After 22 Bf5, Black has the original manoeuvre 22 ... Qe8 23 Re1 Qg8, followed by ... g7-g6. The rook is actually misplaced at f4, while immediately activating the other one with 24 Re7? is met by 24 ... Re8 with a clear advantage to Black.

16 ... Ne4 17 Bh2?!

The bishop has no future here, biting on the hard granite block of pawns at d6 and c7. More active is 17 Qd3 Nxg3 18 Qxg3 and White hangs on.



Exercise (calculation): Where to develop the black queen? Analyse the different options.

Answer: 17 ... Qh4!

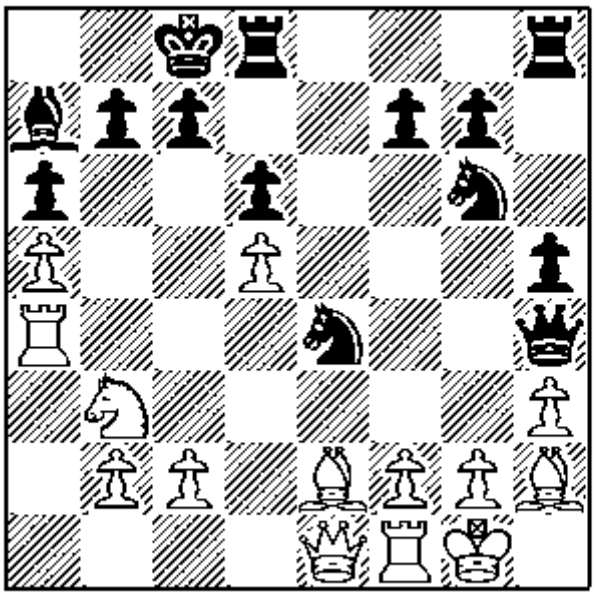
Definitely the strongest move. Instead, 17 ... Qg5 is answered by 18 Ra4! Nf6 19 Rb4 0-0-0 20 Bxa6! bxa6 21 Qd3 with full compensation for the sacrificed piece; and 17 ... Qf6 looks better than it is – the problem is that after 18 Bd3! Nxf2 19 Qe2+, followed by 20 Rxf2, Black's king is in the open.

18 Qe1

Notice that 18 Ra4? now loses material to the finesse 18 ... Nxf2!.

18 ... 0-0-0 19 Ra4

This unusual pin on the fourth rank gives rise to some interesting complications, as we shall see.

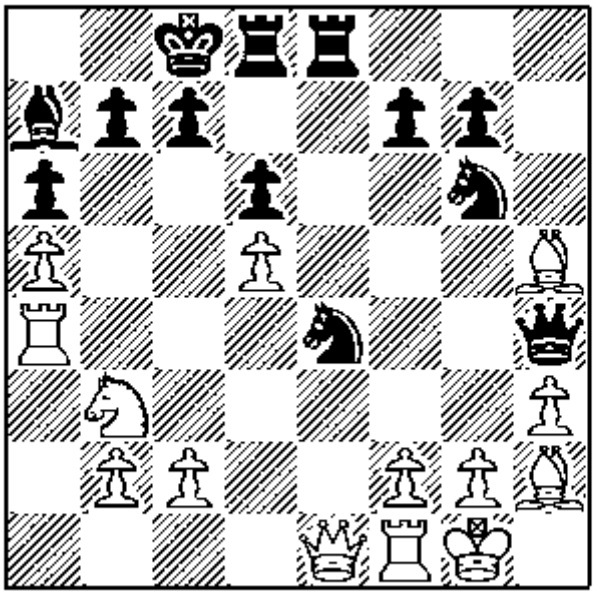


Exercise: How ought Black to continue?

Answer: 19 ... Rhe8!

A necessary reinforcement; the position is not yet ripe for a combination. Notice that 19 ... Nxf2?? fails to 20 Rxh4 Nd3+ 21 Kh1 Nxe1 22 Rc4! and the knight is trapped; whereas after the rook move, 20 Nd2 can be answered by 20 ... Nxf2! 21 Rxh4 Nd3+ 22 Kh1 Nxe1 since the e2-bishop is also hanging, even if 23 Re4 Nxc2 24 Bxh5 gives White reasonably good play for the pawn.

20 Bxh5



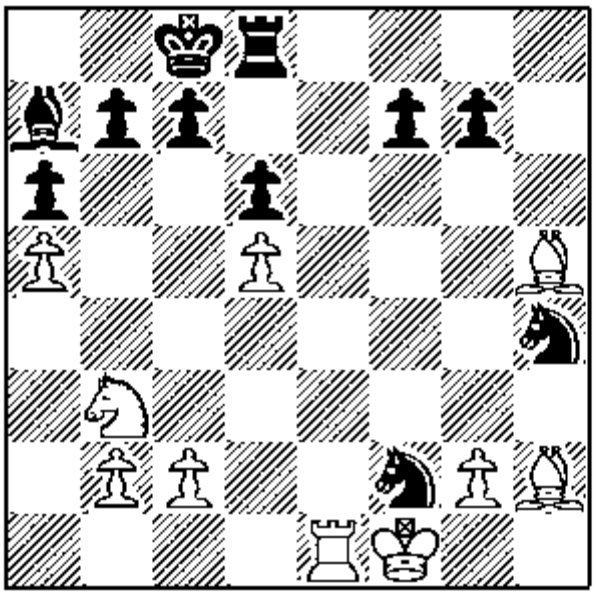
Exercise: What happens if Black sacrifices the knight on f2 here? (Warning: This is difficult!)

Answer: Let us see:

20 ... Nxf2! 21 Rxh4 Nxh3+!

Here 21 ... Nd3+? leads to a forced draw: 22 Kh1 Rxe1 (not 22 ... Nxe1?? 23 Rc4 and the knight is trapped again) 23 Rxe1 Nf2+ (still not 23 ... Nxe1? 24 Rc4) 24 Kg1 Ng4+ (24 ... Nxh4? is met by 25 Kf1!) 25 Kh1 Nf2+ with perpetual check.

22 Kh1 Rxe1 23 Rxe1 Nf2+ 24 Kg1 Nxh4 25 Kf1



After this forced variation we can take stock and conclude that Black has an extra pawn.

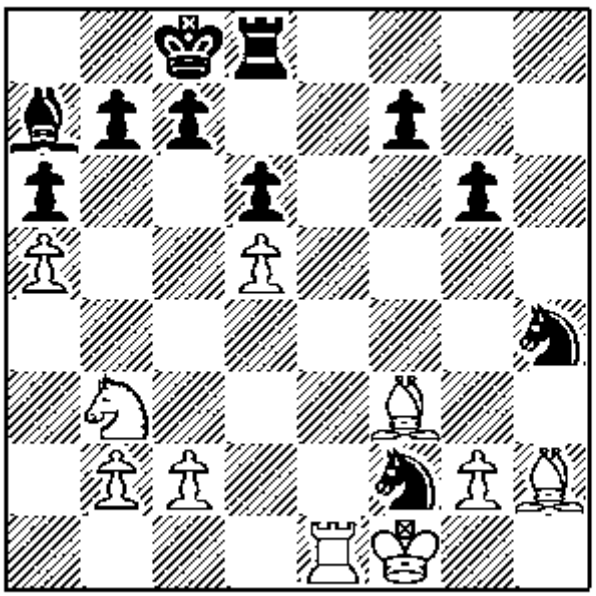
Exercise: What are the logical options for Black?

Answer: 25 ... g6

If 25 ... Rh8 26 Bxf7 Rf8, and if 27 Re8+ Rxe8 28 Bxe8, then 28 ... Nd1 wins the b2-pawn.

26 Bf3

White has more drawing chances after 26 Bg3 Nf5 27 Bxf2 Bxf2 28 Bxg6! fxg6 29 Kxf2, although 29 ... Rf8 30 Kg1 Kd7 sees the white king cut out of action, while Black can follow up with ... Ne7, putting pressure on the d5-pawn, and is at least slightly better.



Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation? (Warning: This is difficult!)

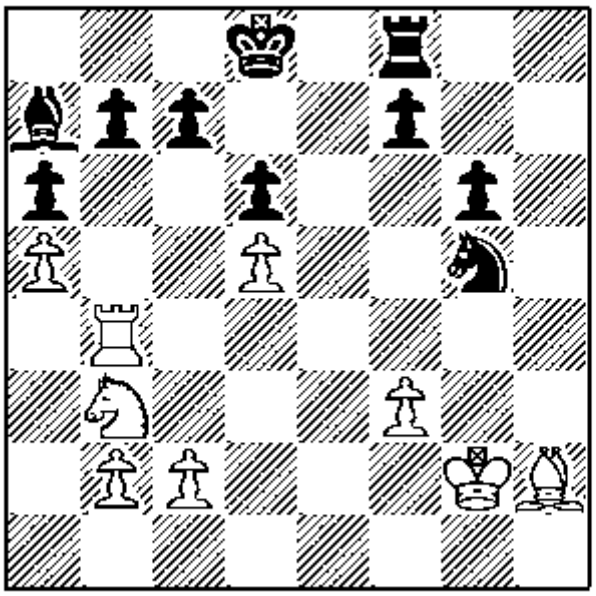
26 ... Nxf3

Answer: The best move is 26 ... Nf5!, threatening the decisive 27 ... Rh8 28 Bf4 g5!. If White replies 27 g3, then 27 ... Ne3+ 28 Rxe3 (not 28 Kxf2? Nxc2+ 29 Kf1 Nxe1 30 Kxe1 Rh8 and the bishop falls) 28 ... Bxe3 29 Bg1 Nd1 30 Bxd1 Bxg1 31 Kxg1 Re8 32 Kf2 Re4! leaves Black with good winning chances because of the weaknesses on a5 and b2 after the further ... Ra4-a2. Admittedly, this surprising continuation, involving the dynamic relation of rook vs. two minor pieces, is not easy to foresee.

27 gxf3 Nh3 28 Re7 Rf8 29 Kg2 Kd8 30 Re4?

More stubborn is 30 Re1 Ng5 31 Bf4 f6 32 Bxg5 fxg5 and then 33 Re4, followed by Nd4.

30 ... Ng5 31 Rb4



Exercise: What is Black's best move?

31 ... Kc8

Good enough for a slow win.

Answer: But 31 ... Re8! is the most forcing, when 32 Rxb7 loses to 32 ... Re2+ 33 Kf1 (or 33 Kg3 Bf2+) 33 ... Rf2+ 34 Ke1 Nxf3+ 35 Kd1 Be3 36 Bg3 Rg2 37 Rb8+ Kd7 38 Be1 Nxe1 39 Kxe1 Rxc2 and so forth.

32 Rc4 Kd7 33 Rb4 b5?!

As mentioned before, activation of the worst piece with 33 ... Re8! is indicated.

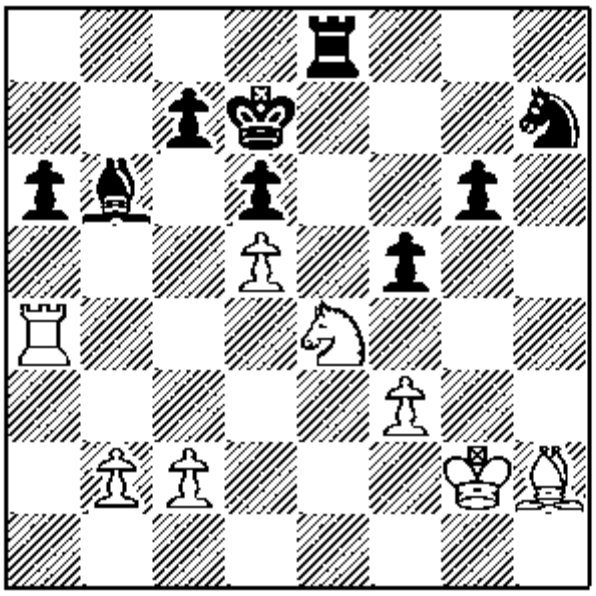
34 axb6 Bxb6 35 Nd2 Re8 36 Ne4 Nh7?!

The most precise continuation is 36 ... a5! 37 Rc4 (or 37 Rxb6 Rxe4!) 37 ... Nh7, followed by ... f7-f5.

37 Ra4?

White should have tried 37 Bg3 with the clever idea 37 ... f5 38 Nxd6 Re2+ 39 Kf1 Rxc2 40 Nc4 Bd4, when Black has only a slight advantage. This is why it was important to drive the white rook away from b4 first with 36 ... a5!. Perhaps both players missed these possibilities in mutual time pressure.

37 ... f5



Now the victory is without any doubt, as Black's extra pawn comes to the fore.

38 Nc3 Nf6

Here 38 ... Re1! 39 Rh4 (or 39 Rxa6 Rc1) 39 ... Nf6 40 Rh6 Rc1 41 Rxg6 Rxc2+ 42 Kh3 Bd4 is even more convincing.

39 Bg3

White covers the important e1-square.

39 ... g5 40 Bf2 Bxf2

The stabilizing 40 ... a5 is a good technical move.

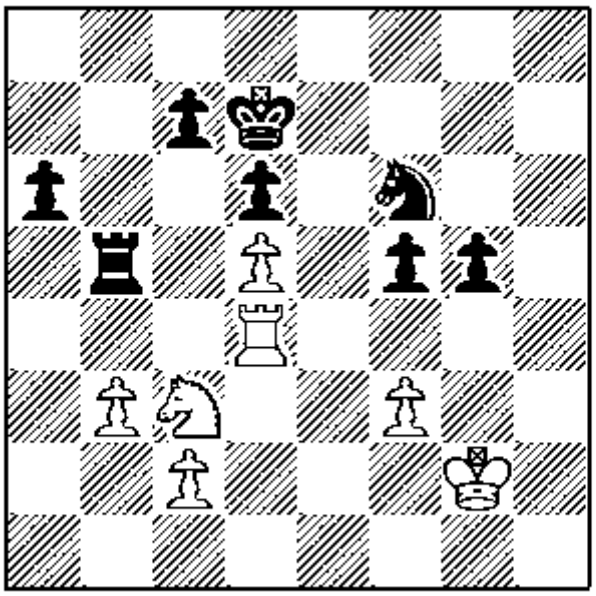
41 Kxf2 Rh8 42 Kg2

It is better to move the king out of reach of the enemy knight with 42 Kg1.

42 ... Nh5 43 Ne2 Rb8 44 b3

If 44 b4 Nf6 45 c4 then 45 ... Rh8! 46 Rxa6 Rh4 47 f4 gxf4 48 Kf3 Ne4 49 Nxf4 Nd2+ and Black should win.

44 ... Rb5 45 Rd4 Nf6 46 Nc3



Exercise: Black to play and win!

Answer: 46 ... Rc5 47 Rd3

Or 47 Rc4 Nxd5 48 Rxc5 Nf4+, followed by 49 ... dxc5.

47 ... Rxc3! 48 Rxc3 Nxd5 0-1

The rook has no safe squares, so White resigned. After studying this game the feeling is that Stein, like Chigorin before him, was very comfortable with knights!

Game 10
L.Stein-M.Levin
Ukrainian Championship semi-final, Kiev 1960
Semi-Slav Defence

Mikhail Levin (1923-) was a strong player, ranked 111st in the world in 1959, according to Chessmetrics, with a highest estimated rating of 2549.

1 d4 e6 2 c4 d5 3 Nc3 c6 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bxf6

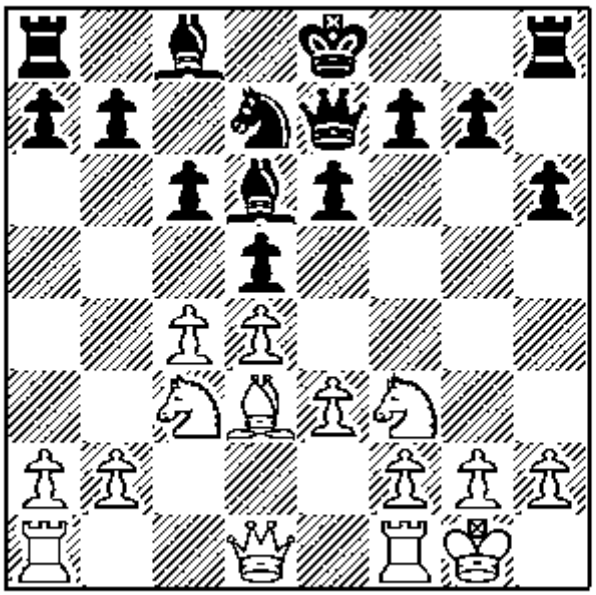
Avoiding the overwhelming complications arising after 6 Bh4 dxc4 7 e4 g5 8 Bg3 b5. This is actually one of Stein's trademarks: he did not generally enter the heavy main lines.

6 ... Qxf6 7 e3 Nd7 8 Bd3 Bd6

8 ... dxc4 9 Bxc4 g6 10 0-0 Bg7 is the preferred set-up nowadays.

9 0-0 Qe7

The queen is misplaced on f6, obstructing the knight, so Black retreats it one step.



As the c4-pawn is slightly stronger than the c6-pawn, White theoretically has more territory in the larger central area of the board.

Question: How does White exploit this slight space advantage?

Answer: 10 Re1

A quiet developing move which suits the requirements of the position. White builds up slowly before embarking on the pawn break e3-e4. It is easy to know what to do but more difficult to know when to do it.

The immediate 10 e4 is premature since White is not ready to profit from any line openings; after 10 ... dxc4 11 Bxc4 e5, Black has already equalized. White can try 12 d5, but

it is not easy to maintain the tension between the d5- and c6-pawns. N.Renman-V.Spasov, Eksjö 1981, continued 12 ... 0-0 13 h3 Rd8 14 Rc1 Nf8 15 Qc2 Qf6 16 Nh2 Ng6 and now White felt obliged to play 17 dxc6 bxc6 18 Ne2 with an approximately even game.

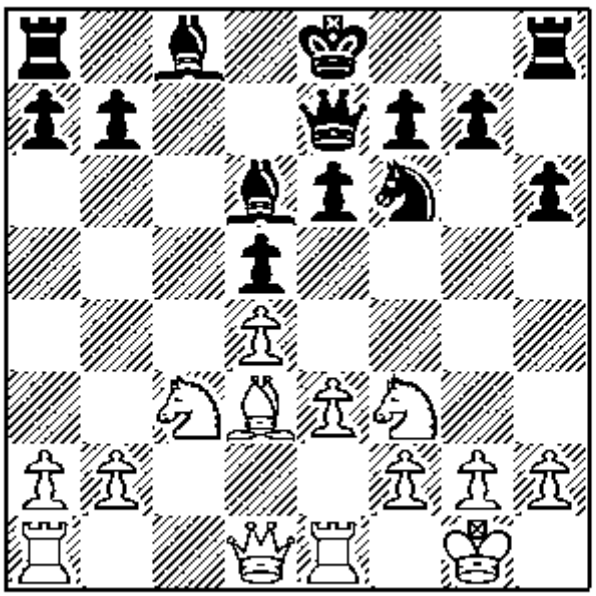
The idea of expanding with 10 c5 Bc7, followed by 11 e4 dxe4 12 Bxe4 0-0 13 b4 Rd8 14 Re1 Nf6 15 Bc2 b6 16 Ba4! Bb7 17 Qe2 a5 18 a3 as in L.Polugaevsky-H.Mecking, Lucerne (1st matchgame) 1977, shuts the b7-bishop out of the game. Nevertheless, Black is fine after 18 ... Ra7! (V.Bagirov), whose position is not as passive as it looks, and Black can decide when the time is ripe to release the tension on the queenside.

10 ... Nf6

MegaBase gives the erroneous move order 10 ... Nb6??, when 11 c5 would just win a piece.

11 cxd5 cxd5

If 11 ... exd5, White can immediately open the position, in the spirit of Morphy, with 12 e4! dxe4 13 Bxe4 (13 Nxe4 0-0 is nothing special) 13 ... Nxe4 (better than 13 ... Be6 14 d5! cxd5 15 Nxd5 Nxd5 16 Bxd5 0-0 17 Bxe6 fxe6, when Black has the same pawn structure but less counterplay) 14 Rxe4 Be6 and then 15 d5! cxd5 16 Nxd5 Qd7 17 Nd4 (after 17 Rd4 Rd8 18 Nc3 Qc6!, Black is absolutely fine) 17 ... 0-0 18 Nxe6 fxe6 19 Ne3 with the superior structure, though it seems that Black's pieces are enough active to compensate; for example, 19 ... Qc6! 20 Rc4 Qb6 21 Qc2 Be5.



Exercise: Suggest a continuation for White!

Answer: 12 Bb5+

One can understand that Stein was uninterested in 12 e4 dxe4 13 Nxe4 Nxe4 14 Bxe4 0-0 15 Ne5 Rb8 16 Qh5 Rd8, since Black's position seems to be without any tangible weaknesses.

12 ... Bd7 13 Bxd7+ Nxd7

13 ... Qxd7?! 14 Ne5 gives White the initiative.

14 Qb3 Nf6

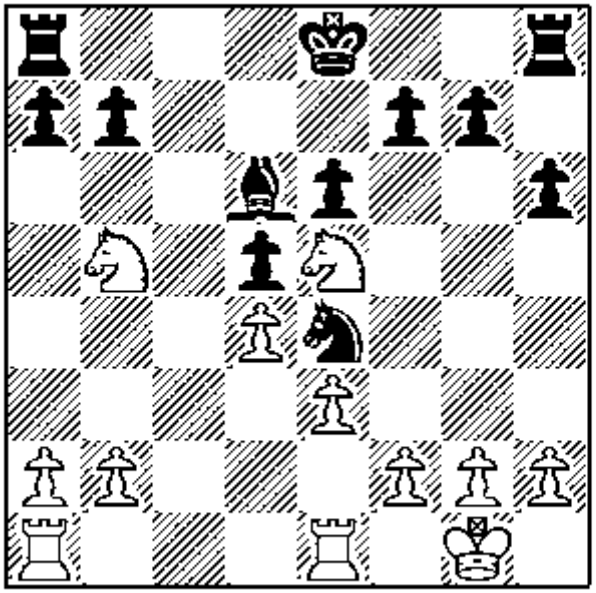
If Black wants an equal game then exchanging the c3-knight after 14 ... Bb4 is the safest course.

15 Qb5+ Qd7 16 Ne5 Qxb5

Taking the e5-knight is more passive, since 16 ... Bxe5 17 dxe5 Ne4? fails to 18 Nxe4! dxe4 (or 18 ... Qxb5? 19 Nd6+) 19 Qb4 and White wins a pawn with advantage. Black would have to play 17 ... Ng8 18 Qxd7+ Kxd7 19 Rad1 Ne7 20 e4 Rhd8 (20 ... Kc6 21 Rd3 sees Black's pieces awkwardly placed) 21 exd5 Nxd5 22 Nxd5 exd5 23 Rxd5+ Ke6 24 Rb5 and hope to draw the rook endgame a pawn down.

17 Nxb5 Ne4

Safer is 17 ... Bb4 18 Rec1 0-0 19 Nd3 Ba5 20 Nd6 Rab8 21 Nc5 Bb4 22 a3 Bxc5 23 dxc5, when White has a slight advantage due to the queenside pawn majority, but the strong d6-knight can be challenged by a timely ... Ne8, so Black's drawing chances must be regarded as promising.

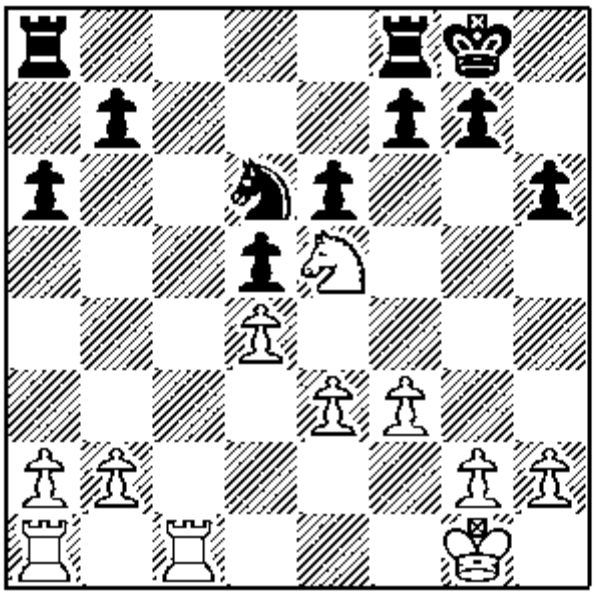


Exercise: How should White continue?

Answer: 18 Rec1

The most forcing move; 18 f3 is answered by 18 ... a6, when 19 Nxd6+ Nxd6 20 Rec1 0-0 transposes to the game, but Black has options apart from castling in this case.

18 ... 0-0 19 f3 a6 20 Nxd6 Nxd6



Exercise: What is White's most precise continuation?

Answer: 21 Nd7! Rfd8 22 Nb6

The plan is to seize the only open file while the c8-square is controlled by the white knight.

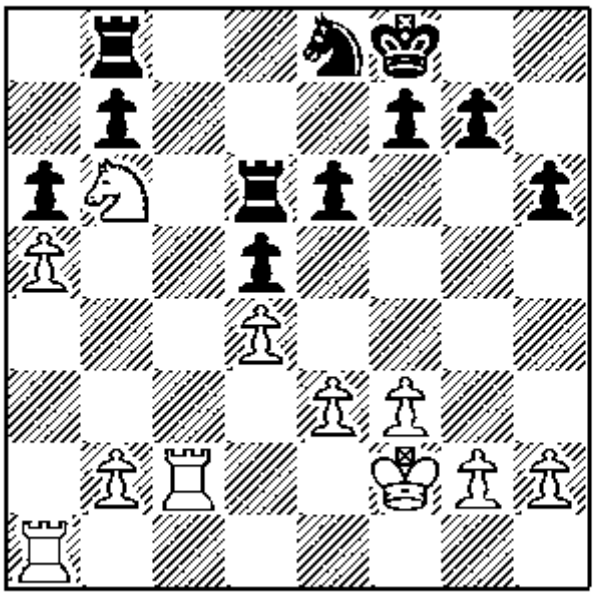
22 ... Rab8 23 Kf2 Kf8

The irritating knight could be dislodged with 23 ... Nc8, but White would still have the slightly preferable position after 24 Na4 Nd6 due to his greater control of dark squares: b6, c7 and c5. A quiet continuation like 25 b3 removes Black's own knight outpost at c4 and secures White's plus.

24 Rc2

The less accurate 24 Rc7?! Nb5! 25 Rc2 Na7 only improves Black's defensive possibilities.

24 ... Ne8 25 a4 Rd6 26 a5



White consolidates his control of the dark squares, at the cost of surrendering a light-square post on b5 for Black's knight, where it conveniently protects the c7-square against invasion. Levin sets about its occupation immediately.

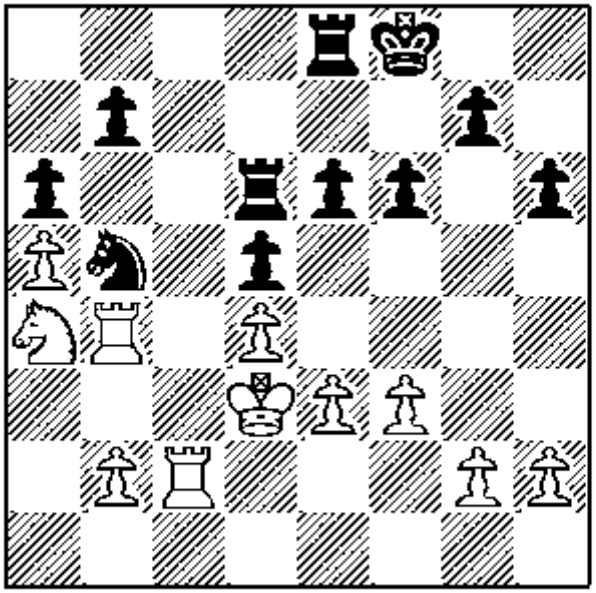
26 ... Rdd8 27 Ra4 Nd6 28 Ke2 Nb5 29 Kd3 Rd6

Having solidified his defences, Black can do little else but wait to see whether White can increase the pressure significantly, always a dangerous situation for the defender.

30 Rb4

Vacating the a4-square for the knight.

30 ... Re8 31 Na4 f6



Exercise (planning): How can White try to break through Black's apparently safe position?

Answer: 32 Rc5!

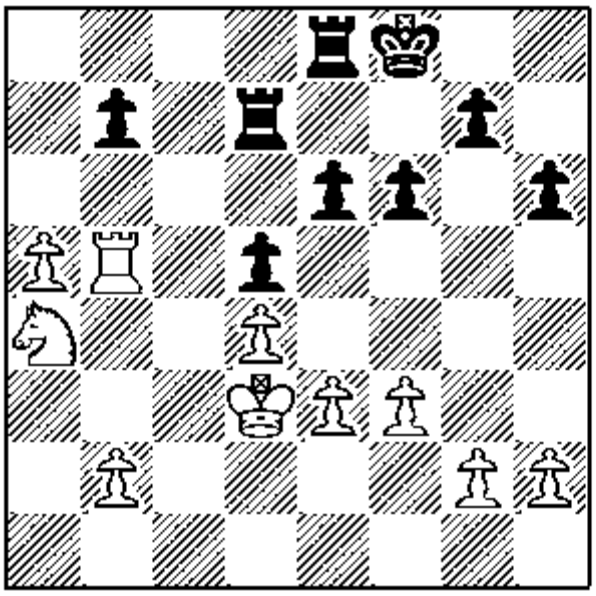
Stein prepares a forceful solution. Instead, the obvious 32 Nc5 would be answered by 32 ... Re7 and it is unclear how White can make progress, unless he manages somehow to create another target on the kingside by advancing his pawns there.

A quieter option was 32 Nc3!, forcing the exchange of knights with 32 ... Nxc3 33 bxc3. In the resulting position Black's only visible weakness is at b7, which can be defended after 33 ... Rd7 34 Rcb2 Ree7, but White can use his central preponderance with 35 e4 and 36 c4 to increase his space advantage. White has good winning chances in such a double rook ending where activity is the most vital factor.

32 ... Rd7

Question: What on earth is Stein up to?

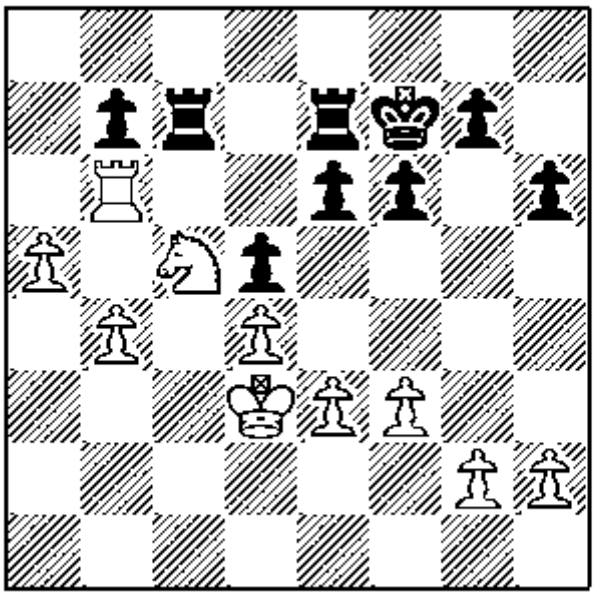
Answer: 33 Rcxb5! axb5 34 Rxb5



Exercise (positional evaluation): What are the pros and cons of White's exchange sacrifice?

Answer: The pros are that White's pieces are more active compared with Black's. The immediate threats are an attack on the b7- and (to a certain extent) the e6-pawns with Nc5. White also has a queenside pawn majority, which is potentially very dangerous with Black's king away on the other flank. The only con, that White is the exchange down, seems to mean nothing here. The power of the black rooks is reduced due to the lack of open lines and enemy weaknesses.

34 ... Rc7 35 Nc5 Ree7 36 Rb6 Kf7 37 b4



Exercise: What is White's fundamental plan?

Answer: If left alone White will simply advance his queenside pawns: b4-b5, a5-a6 and, after an exchange of pawns on a6, follow with Rb7, a6-a7 etc, so Black must do something quickly.

37 ... e5

Black's only available try for activity. The drawback is that it creates a new weakness on d5.

38 b5

White could also attack the d-pawn at once with 38 Rd6, picking it up while keeping all the good features of his position.

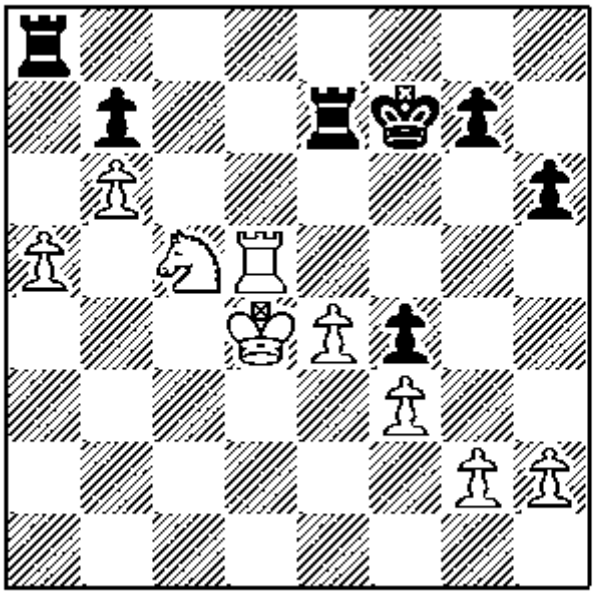
38 ... f5 39 Rd6 f4

Black tries to the upmost to create some kind of counterplay; unfortunately, it amounts to nothing after Stein's simple and logical play.

40 Rxd5 exd4 41 e4

A typically human move, avoiding checks and any remote chance of counterplay. As a matter of fact, 41 exd4 Re3+ 42 Kc4 Re2 43 b6 Rce7 44 Re5! wins easily; after 44 ... R2xe5 45 dxe5, the lever a5-a6 decides the game, and otherwise the b7-pawn falls.

41 ... Re8 42 b6 Rce7 43 Kxd4 Ra8



Exercise (combination alert): Can you find the study-like win?

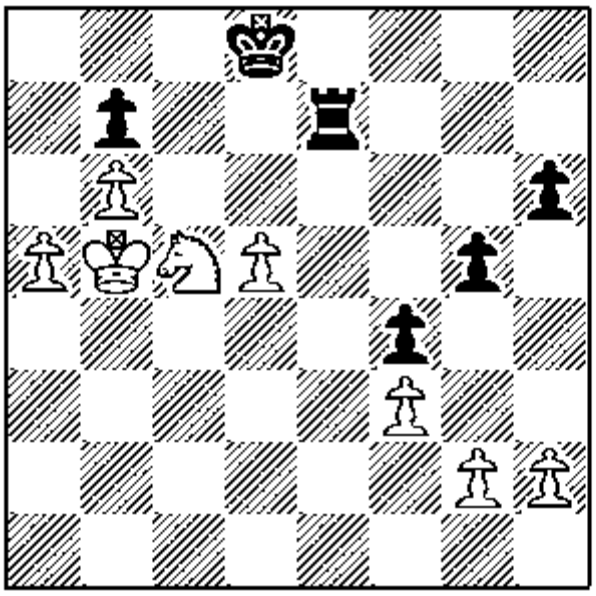
Answer: 44 Nd3

The direct 44 a6! bxa6 45 Nd7, followed by b6-b7, is the simplest win – if you spot the idea that is. Black can find no salvation in a rook endgame because White's rook and king are too active; for example, 45 ... Ree8 46 b7 Rab8 47 Nxb8 Rxb8 48 Rd7+ Kf6 49 Kc5 and so forth.

44 ... Ke8 45 Kc4

Black hoped for 45 Nxf4?! Rd7, picking up the a5-pawn. Actually, even this is good for White after 46 Ne6 Rxa5 47 Nxg7+ Kd8 48 Ne6+ Ke7 49 Nf4 Rb5 50 Rxd7+ Kxd7 51 Nd5 Rb2 52 g4 Rxh2 53 Ke5, followed by f3-f4 etc, but that is another story.

45 ... g5 46 Kb5 Rd8 47 Nc5 Rxd5 48 exd5 Kd8



49 a6

Stein opts for the prosaic finish; alternatively, the more spectacular 49 Nxb7+! Rxb7 50 a6 wins easily too.

49 ... bxa6+ 50 Kc6 1-0

A game that showed Stein could also play positional exchange sacrifices in the spirit of Petrosian.

The following game made Stein famous as it was covered by numerous chess magazines. It is regarded as Stein's "Immortal Game". His opponent, Nikolai Krogius (1930-), is mostly famous for his excellent book Psychology in Chess, which advises on how to prepare for competitive play. His own peak was in 1967 when he was ranked 18th in the world. Despite the fact that Krogius was a pretty decent player, who competed in several USSR Championship finals, his individual score against Stein was a devastating 0/6!

Game 11
N.Krogius-L.Stein
Russia-Ukraine match, Kiev 1960
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 0-0

Stein quite often ventured this slightly unusual move order – Fischer did too – as an alternative to the immediate and more flexible 4 ... d6. In most instances it makes no difference, since White generally ignores it (as here) and Black plays ... d7-d6 anyway.

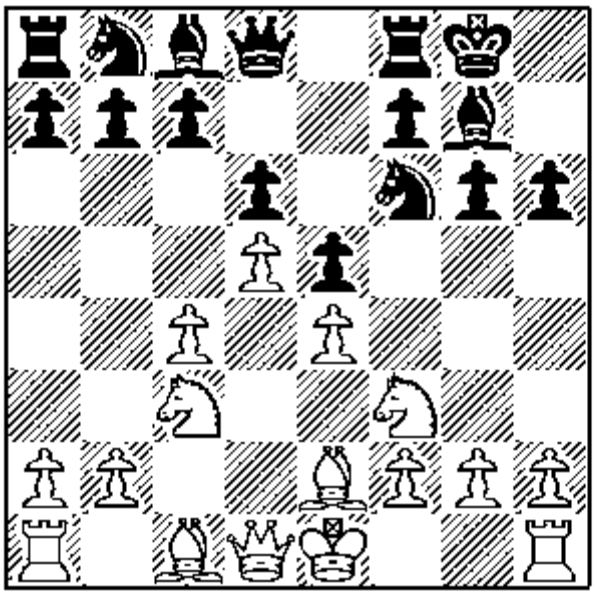
5 Be2

5 e5 would be a good move if backed up with more development, but in this situation the big centre cannot be maintained. After 5 ... Ne8 6 f4 d6 7 Be3, Black can destroy it in two ways: 7 ... dxe5 (or 7 ... c5 8 dxc5 Nc6, as in R.Letelier Martner-R.J.Fischer, Leipzig Olympiad 1960, and here Fischer gave 9 Nf3 Bg4 10 Be2 as best) 8 dxe5 (or 8 fxe5 c5) 8 ... Qxd1+ 9 Rxd1 f6 and after the exchange on f6, White's original central preponderance has only led to an open position with active piece play for Black.

5 ... d6 6 Nf3 e5 7 d5

In the main line of the Classical, White castles here; the text initiates Petrosian's system.

7 ... h6!?



Question: Is this move playable?

Answer: It prevents White's intended Bg5 and Nfd2, the main aim of which is to make it harder for Black to achieve the liberating ... f7-f5. The question is whether 7 ... h6 should be regarded as too slow and passive. The position looks blocked enough in the centre for the moment, but if White somehow manages to open it relatively early with c4-c5 or f2-f4, Black's move, which does not contribute to development, can turn out to be a waste of time.

In later games, Stein mostly preferred 7 ... a5! which is regarded as the most precise continuation nowadays. The main idea is to slow down the white attack on the queenside, while preparing ... Na6-c5 with the outpost already secured against b2-b4. It is useful to remember that the knight on c5 and the bishop on g7 are regarded as the key pieces in this system.

8 0-0

8 Bd2 is an interesting move, which actually prevents Black's idea of 8 ... Nh7 because the annoying 9 Qc1 practically forces 9 ... h5, and with the pawn placed at h5 the main thrust ... f7-f5 is less appealing. Alternatively, Keene recommends 8 Nd2, while Gufeld thinks 8 h3 should be played.

8 ... Nh7 9 Ne1 Nd7

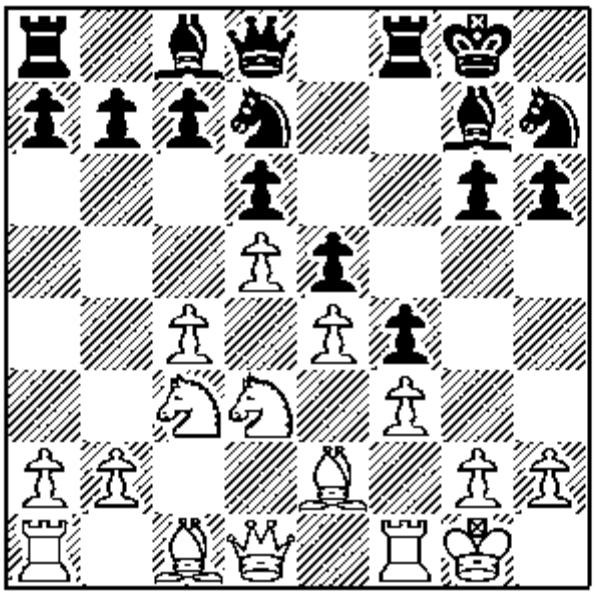
Boleslavsky (who, like Stein, Bronstein, Geller and Konstantinopolsky, was part of a Ukrainian King's Indian school) noted that 9 ... f5 is met by 10 exf5 gxf5 11 f4 with a slight advantage to White.

10 Nd3 f5 11 f3

In this position 11 exf5 gxf5 12 f4 would give Black an extra tempo because 12 ... e4 hits the knight on d3.

11 ... f4

After this move there is no return; Black goes all out for a kingside attack and abandons the pressure on the centre. White's only way to obtain counterplay is by opening lines on the opposite wing as quickly as possible.



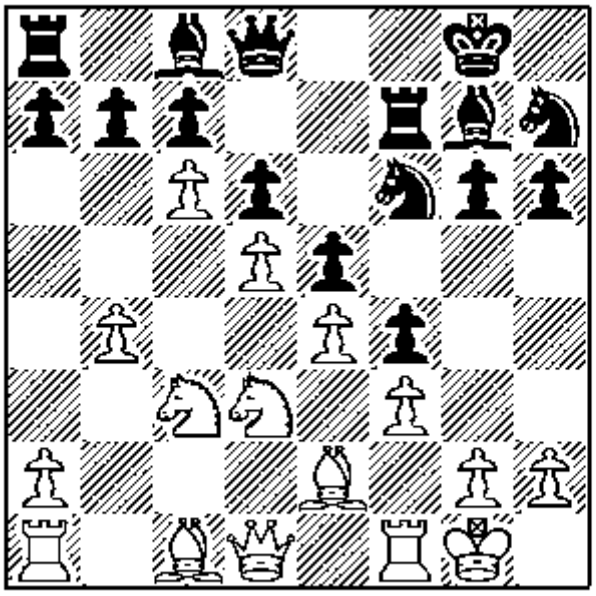
12 b4 Rf7

A standard manoeuvre in the King's Indian. Black makes room for the bishop to drop back to f8, where it participates in the defence of the crucial c5- and d6-squares, while the rook can swing across to g7, supporting a future ... g6-g5-g4 and ... Ng5.

13 c5

White has already established contact with the base of the enemy pawn chain, whereas Black's g-pawn has to go through a lot of preparatory steps to reach its main goal.

13 ... Ndf6 14 c6



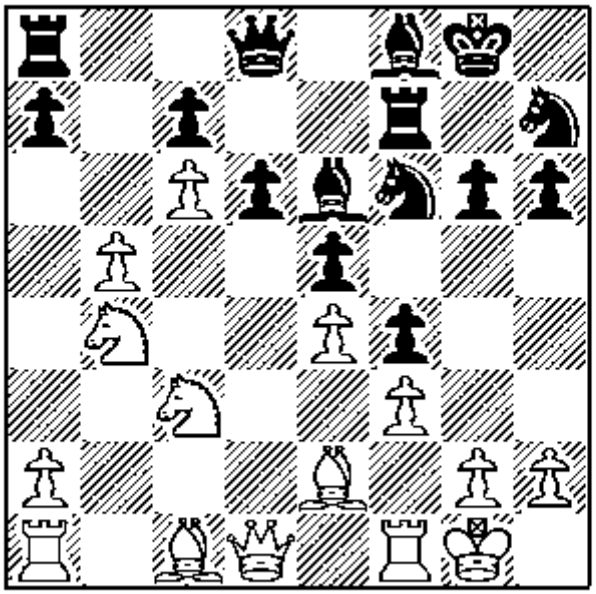
Question: What is wrong with 14 ... b6 for Black?

Answer: The main problem is that it leaves the queen's bishop without a good square available, which means the queen's rook cannot develop either. Black's game is therefore limited in terms of dynamics – i.e. it has less energy – even if the bishop may have some undefined influence on the c8-h3 diagonal.

14 ... bxc6 15 dxc6 Be6

A good square for the bishop, but Black had to pay for it by giving up control of the central d5-square.

16 b5 Bf8 17 Nb4



Question: How does Black handle this situation?

Answer: In My Great Predecessors Part III, Kasparov writes: "If Black does not undertake something extraordinary, his position will quickly become critical."

17 ... d5!

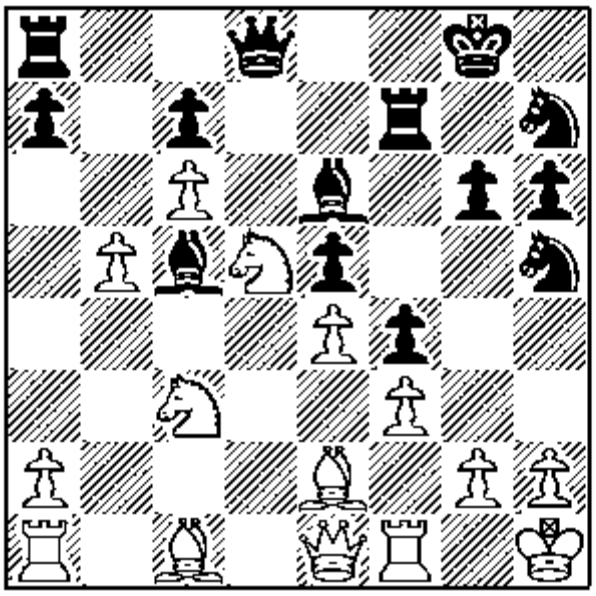
Strategically and tactically speaking this is Black's only chance to get some counterplay. Other continuations hold little promise for success, since White was threatening to occupy d5 and play for the general exchanges of the knights and light-squared bishops.

18 Nbxd5

Kasparov gives 18 exd5!? Bc5+ 19 Kh1 Bf5 20 Nd3 Bd4 21 Bb2 and if Black tries a direct assault with 21 ... Nh5, White is saved by 22 Ne4 Bxe4 23 fxe4 Ng3+ 24 hxg3 fxg3 25 Bg4 with a winning position.

18 ... Bc5+ 19 Kh1 Nh5 20 Qe1

The only move, otherwise Black wins immediately with 20 ... Ng3+ 21 hxg3 fxg3, followed by ... Qh4, checkmating the white king.



Exercise: And now? It looks like Black's attack has come to a standstill. How to continue?

Answer: 20 ... Ng3+!

Stein makes one "impossible" move after another. First the "impossible" 17 ... d5 and now this extraordinary sacrifice. But as Kasparov expressed: "it is here that Stein's wild imagination, comparable with Tal's combinative enlightenment, displays itself. As regards the degree of risk in this game, the Lvov player perhaps even surpassed the 'Riga magician'."

21 hxg3 Qg5 22 g4 h5 23 g3

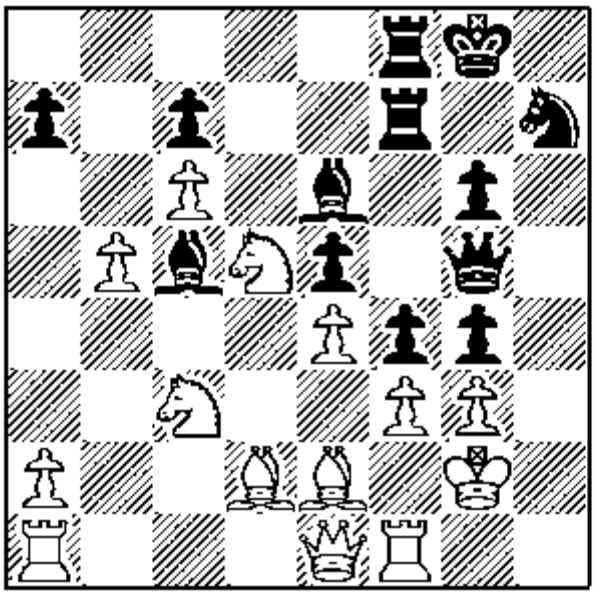
The white king needs some air on g2 so that it will not be mated on the h-file. Otherwise Black captures on g4 and plays the pawn to g3 himself.

23 ... hxg4 24 Kg2 Raf8

If this was the position Stein foresaw in his mind, it certainly proved he was bold! Black has brought all his forces (except the c7- and a7-pawns) to the attack against White's king.

25 Bd2?

Gufeld and Lazarev suggest 25 Rh1 as an improvement; indeed, after 25 ... Bd4 26 Rb1 Nf6 27 Rh4!, White has good winning chances.



Question: What is Black's best continuation?

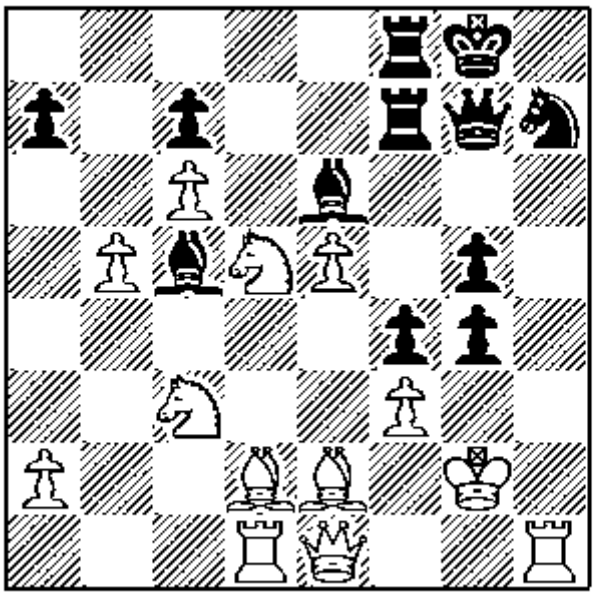
25 ... Qh6?

Answer: Correct is 25 ... gxf3+ 26 Rxf3 (or 26 Bxf3 Bg4!) 26 ... Qg4! 27 Qh1 Ng5 28 Rxf4 Qh3+ 29 Qxh3 Bxh3+ 30 Kh2 exf4 31 gxf4 Be6 with a roughly equal position.

26 Rh1

Here Kasparov gives the incredible variation 26 fxg4 Ng5 27 Rh1 Qg7 28 Bd1!? and if 28 ... f3+ 29 Kf1 Qh7 then 30 Rh4! Bxg4 31 Be3! f2 32 Rxh7 fxe1Q+ 33 Kxe1 Rf1+ 34 Kd2 Bxe3+ 35 Nxe3 Kxh7 36 Nxg4 and White wins.

26 ... Qg7 27 gxf4 exf4 28 Rd1 g5 29 e5!



Exercise (calculation): What should Black do now?

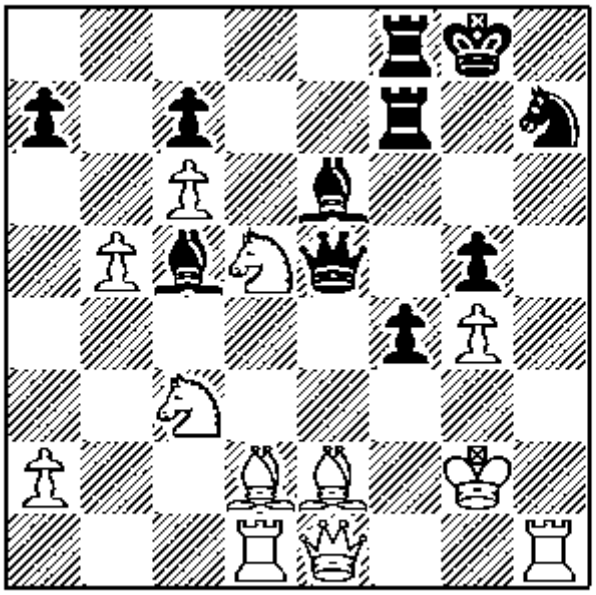
29 ... Qxe5?

The engines have become even stronger since Kasparov wrote about this game in 2004; they now show this move to be a mistake (see the next note).

Answer: The inhumanly correct continuation is 29 ... gxf3+ 30 Bxf3 g4 31 Be4 f3+ 32 Kg3 (or 32 Kf1 g3! 33 Bxh7+ Qxh7 34 Qxg3+ Rg7 35 Ne7+ Bxe7 36 Rxh7 Bc4+! 37 Kf2 Bc5+ 38 Be3 Bxe3+ 39 Kxe3 Rxg3 40 Ne4 Kxh7 41 Nxg3 and the position should end in a draw) 32 ... Ng5! 33 Bf4! Nh3 34 Nf6+ Rxf6 35 exf6 Qxf6 36 Nd5! Bxd5 37 Bxd5+ Kg7 38 Qe5 (not 38 Be5? Bd6! and Black wins) 38 ... Nxf4 39 Qxf6+ Rxf6 40 Kxg4 Ne2 and the position is about equal, despite White being the exchange up.

30 fxg4?

30 Bd3! gxf3+ 31 Kf1 is the critical variation, where White just seems to be winning.



Exercise: How does Black exploit White's mistake?

Answer: 30 ... Qxe2+!!

Not 30 ... Bxd5+? 31 Nxd5 Qxd5+ 32 Bf3 Qxa2 33 Rxh7! Rxh7 (or 33 ... Kxh7 34 Qe5) 34 Qe5 and White has a decisive attack with his pieces. Another mistake is 30 ... f3+? 31 Bxf3 Qxe1 32 Bxe1 Rxf3 33 Ne4 and White is winning with the double threat 34 Nxc5 and 34 Rxh7.

31 Qxe2

The alternative capture was safer: 31 Nxe2! Bxd5+ 32 Kf1 Bxh1 (not 32 ... f3? due to 33 Nd4! Bxd4 34 Be3 f2 35 Qb4 Bxh1 36 Qxd4 and White is better) 33 Bb4 f3 34 Bxc5 fxe2+ 35 Kxe2, and now after 35 ... Re8+ 36 Be3 Bf3+ 37 Kd3, "the queen should be able to help White withstand Black's onslaught" (Kasparov), while 35 ... Bf3+ 36 Kd3 Rd8+ 37 Bd4 Bxd1 38 Qxd1 Rf4 39 Qb3+ Kf8 40 Qa3+ Ke8 41 Qxa7 also looks pretty drawish.

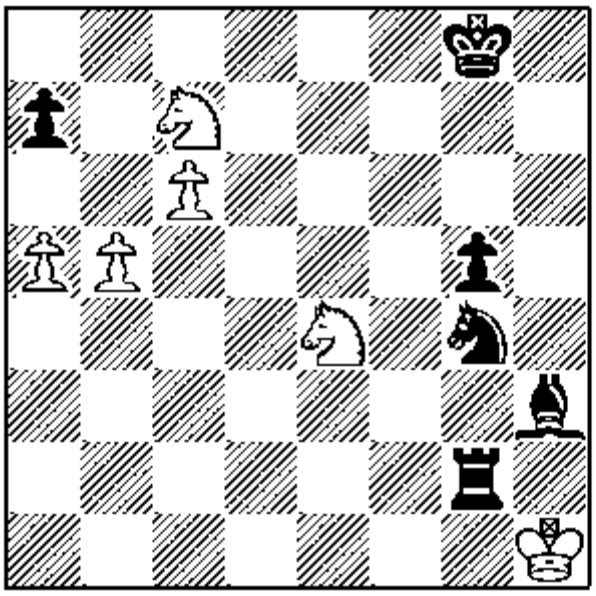
31 ... f3+ 32 Qxf3 Rxf3 33 Rhf1?

The final mistake. White had to play 33 Be1! Bxg4 34 Ne4, when Kasparov gives a long forcing line which leads to a draw, although Black might have the upper hand in practice.

33 ... Bxg4

Now the game is practically over. White cannot avoid further material losses.

34 Ne4 Bh3+ 35 Kh2 Rxf1 36 Rxf1 Bxf1 37 Nxc5 Rf2+ 38 Kg1 Rxd2 39 Nxc7 Bh3 40 a4 Rg2+ 41 Kh1 Nf6 42 a5 Ng4 43 Ne4



Exercise: Black to play and mate in four.

43 ... Re2 0-1

The human move, after which Krogius resigned due to the threat of ... Re1 mate. Nevertheless, it is not the answer to our puzzle since White could prolong the game with some silly knight checks.

Answer: The solution is to play 43 ... Kh8! first, after which mate follows in three moves; for example, 44 b6 Re2 45 Ng3 Re1+ 46 Nf1 Rxf1 mate.

Game 12
L.Stein-I.Lentschiner
Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1960
Sicilian Defence

According to Chessmetrics, I.Lentschiner was ranked 331st in the world in 1960 with an estimated rating of 2430.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4

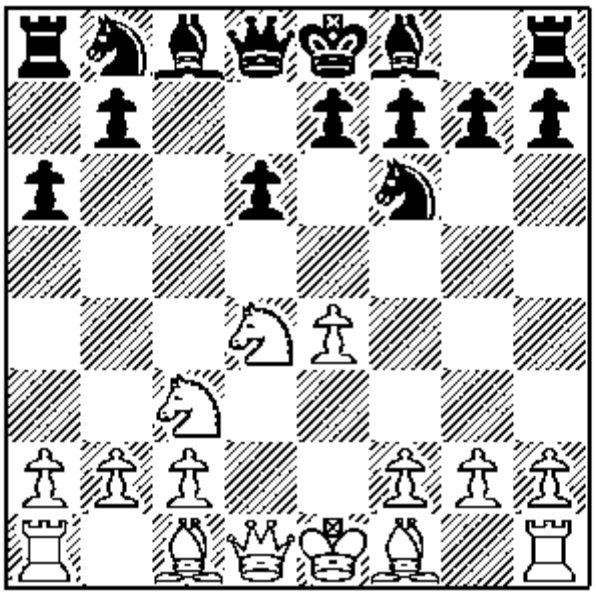
Question: Is Black forced to exchange on d4?

Answer: Not absolutely. Another move order, albeit of small practical value, is 3 ... Nf6 which can gain a few seconds on the clock before the opponent decides upon 4 Nc3 cxd4 5 Nxd4, returning to the main lines. The other possibilities, 4 dxc5 Nxe4 5 cxd6 Nc6! (as in V.Anand-V.Ivanchuk, Linares 1998) and 4 Bb5+ Nbd7 (transposing to the Moscow variation 3 Bb5+ Nd7 4 d4 Nf6), are both fine for Black.

4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3

Via this move order White has the alternative option of 5 f3, planning to steam-roll Black's position from a Maróczy Bind formation after c2-c4. The reason this is rarely seen is that Black can easily avoid it by playing 5 ... e5 and a quick ... d6-d5 with immediate equality. Nevertheless, if you are at all worried about this continuation (or 4 Qxd4 perhaps), there is always the sidestep at move three!

5 ... a6



Question: What is this fashionable opening called and why?

Answer: It is named after the Polish-born GM Mieczyslaw Najdorf, later known as Miguel Najdorf (1910-97), who did much to popularize the variation, playing it consistently from the late 1940s onwards. Other names for this enterprising system have been the Argentine Variation – Najdorf remained in Buenos Aires after the Chess Olympiad at the outbreak of the second world war in 1939, and was soon regarded as the best player from South America – as well as the Hague Variation and Modern Paulsen.

The Najdorf is initiated by the useful non-committal move ... a7-a6, taking control of the b5-square and preparing ... b7-b5, while waiting to see where White intends to place one of his bishops. Only when that fundamental question is settled will Black decide upon the destination of his e7-pawn. Unless White sets up to prevent it, the thematic Najdorf move is ... e7-e5, now that the disruptive response Bb5+ is no longer possible.

6 Bg5

White discourages ... e7-e5 by increasing his control over the d5-square. For a long time this was regarded as the most dangerous move, but nowadays it has been superseded by the English Attack, which is 6 Be3 in conjunction with f2-f3 (sometimes the other way round) and usually Qd2 and 0-0-0. Characteristic for this variation is that the bishop is still undeveloped at f1, in order to save time for the pawn thrust g2-g4-g5 on the kingside. This set-up started to become popular in the late 1980s, when GMs Chandler, Nunn and Short began to play it successfully on a regular basis.

6 ... e6 7 f4

The sharpest continuation, which came to prominence at the 1955 Gothenburg Interzonal, where it was played by Geller, Keres and Spassky.

7 ... Be7

GM Lubomir Ftacnik (1957-), in his outstanding work Grandmaster Repertoire: The Sicilian Defence, recommended the quirky 7 ... h6!?, which he thinks is underrated.

8 Qf3 Qc7

Black prevents a possible Bc4 before continuing with ... Nbd7.

At Gothenburg 8 ... h6 9 Bh4 g5 was played simultaneously in round fourteen by Najdorf, Oscar Panno and Herman Pilnik (against Keres, Geller and Spassky, respectively). The

Argentines lost all three games quickly after 10 fxg5 Nfd7 and now the explosive attack 11 Nxe6 fxe6 12 Qh5+ Kf8 13 Bb5!.

9 Bd3

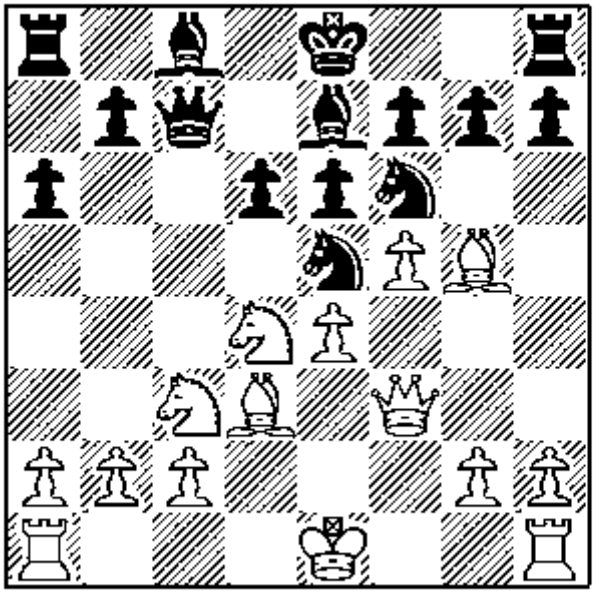
9 0-0-0 is more flexible, keeping options open for different ways of attacking Black. For instance, after the usual 9 ... Nbd7, White can play 10 Bd3 in any case, but 10 g4 is regarded as more critical, while 10 Qg3 and 10 Be2 are playable too.

9 ... Nbd7 10 f5

After this somewhat risky and impatient move the game takes an independent course, with the king still left on e1 for a while. Instead, 10 0-0-0 transposes to one of the main lines in the previous note.

10 ... Ne5

P.H.Clarke comments in 100 Soviet Chess Miniatures: "also playable is 10 ... e5 11 Nde2 b5 and 12 ... Bb7, for the gap left at d5 is not easily exploited and Black's game is otherwise sound." Another flexible alternative is 10 ... 0-0, intending 11 fxe6?! Ne5, when accepting the pawn gift leads to slight problems for White after 12 exf7+ Rxf7 13 Qe2 Qc5.



Exercise: On which square does the white queen belong?

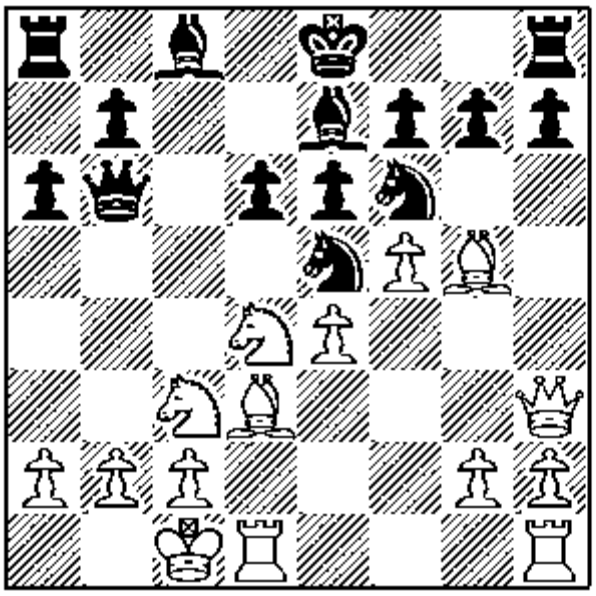
11 Qh3

On the surface it seems logical to place the queen here: safeguarding the g5-bishop against ... h7-h6 for the time being (due the pin on the h-file), preparing a possible pawn storm with g2-g4, while increasing the pressure on the e6-pawn – and if that falls, White automatically secures the d5-square for his knight. But none of these factors is particularly relevant: the pawn storm is too slow, and Nxe6 is never a real threat because of the resulting pin on the white knight.

Answer: 11 Qg3 looks more to the point with some latent pressure on the g7-pawn. Black will very likely castle short, and then the queen has a good position eyeing the king on g8.

11 ... Qb6?!

Black plays very concretely to win material but has underestimated White's attacking potential. The straightforward 11 ... 0-0, followed by ... b7-b5, is the correct continuation, increasing the energy inherent in Black's position.



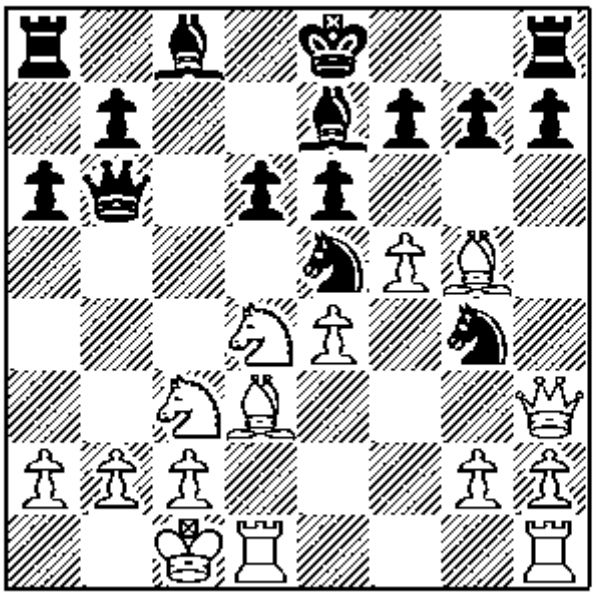
Exercise: How does White meet the threats to b2 and d4?

Answer: 12 0-0-0

Defending both – the rook protects d4 indirectly thanks to the discovered attack after 13 Bb5+. Note that 12 Nb3? would have been a bad mistake, as after 12 ... Nfg4! White is in serious trouble on the dark squares.

12 ... Nfg4??

The definite turning point. Lentschiner goes for the same idea as in the previous note, but Stein has worked it out more accurately. Again 12 ... 0-0 was the right move, when Black has a fully playable position.



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Answer: 13 Bxe7!

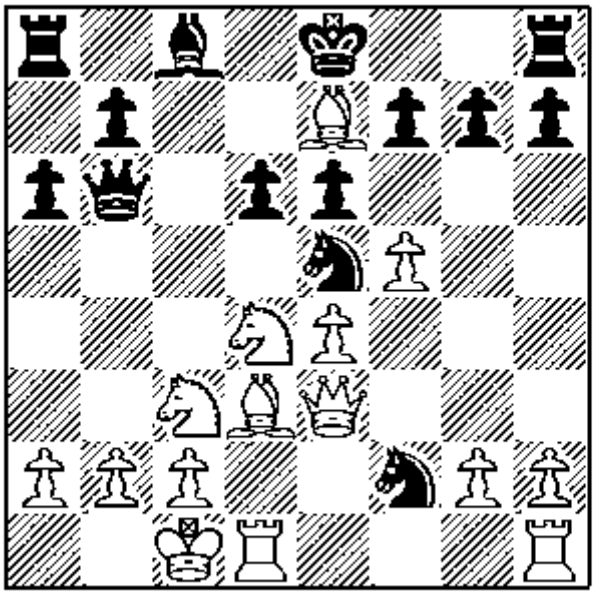
Much weaker are:

a) 13 Bh4 Bxh4 14 Qxh4 0-0 and Black wins material. The d4-knight is en prise and cannot move because of the fork with ... Nf2. The defending 15 Be2 loses the exchange to 15 ... Ne3 16 Rd2 N3c4 etc, while after 15 Nce2 Ne3 16 Rdg1 Qc5 17 Kb1 exf5, Black has an extra pawn and a clear advantage.

b) 13 Qh4 Bxg5+ 14 Qxg5 0-0 also leads to a flourishing position for Black, who does not need to worry about 15 h3 Nf2 16 f6 because of 16 ... Ng6 17 fxg7 Re8.

13 ... Nf2

13 ... Kxe7 was hardly Black's intention, as after 14 Be2, he can no longer play 14 ... Nf2 because of 15 Qh4+, so he would have to withdraw his knights one by one; for example, 14 ... Nf6 15 g4 Nc6 16 Nb3 and with g4-g5 to follow, Black would be crushed.



Exercise: What is White's best move?

Answer: 14 Qe3!

The strongest move, leading to the prettiest win. Actually, the simple 14 Qg3 is good too, as after 14 ... Nfxd3+ 15 Rxd3! Nxd3+ 16 cxd3 (not 16 Qxd3? Kxe7 with an equal game) 16 ... Qxd4 (or 16 ... Kxe7 17 Qxg7) 17 Bxd6, Black is in terrible trouble with weak dark squares, no development, and his king stuck in the middle.

14 ... Nxd1

Black has nothing better:

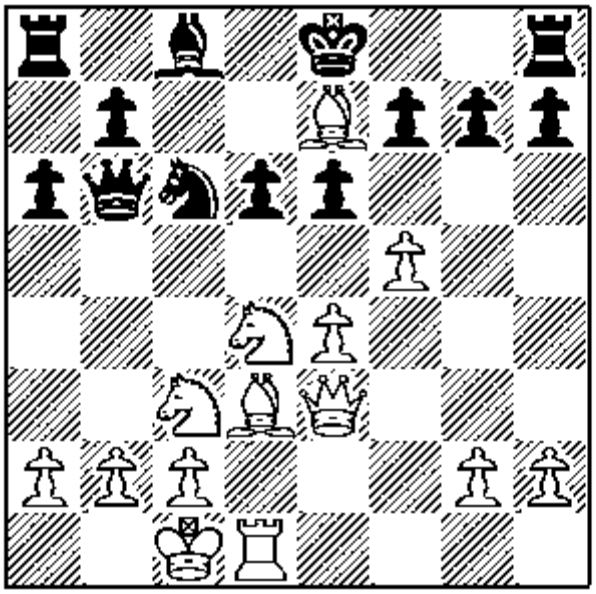
a) 14 ... Nfxd3+ 15 cxd3 Nc6 fails to 16 f6! with a decisive advantage; for example, 16 ... Qxd4 17 Qxd4 Nxd4 18 fxg7 Rg8 19 Bxd6 leaves White two pawns up, since 19 ... Rxg7 loses even more material to 20 Be5.

b) 14 ... Nxh1 is answered by 15 Be2!, when the e7-bishop is virtually untouchable, since 15 ... Kxe7 is met by 16 fxe6!, threatening Nd5+, or if 16 ... fxe6 then 17 Nf5+ wins the queen. The squares d5 and f5 are key for the white knights, whereas Black's e6-pawn, often the foundation of his defences in the Sicilian, fails to cover them adequately because of his tactical weaknesses.

15 Rxd1 Nc6

Black tries his last shot and forks the e7-bishop and d4-knight which is pinned to the white

queen. Note that 15 ... Kxe7 is again unplayable due to 16 fxe6! fxe6 17 Nf5+ etc.



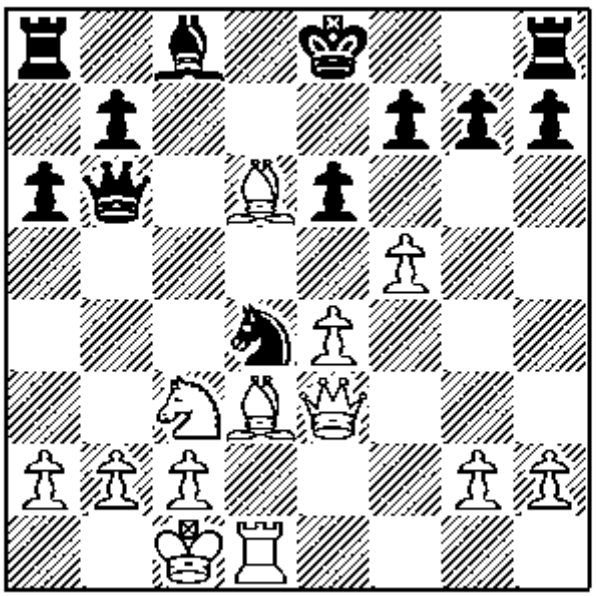
Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Answer: 16 Bxd6!

The simplest and the best winning move.

16 ... Nxd4

16 ... Qxd4 17 Qg3! leaves the black queen awkwardly placed in the centre of the board, which is under White's control. Then 17 ... Qf6 18 Rf1 Qd4 (18 ... e5 surrenders the d5-square; after 19 Bc5, followed by Nd5, White is winning) 19 Bb5!! threatens the decisive Be5, and 19 ... axb5 20 Nxb5 wins quickly too.



Exercise: Black has a new double threat of ... Qxd6 and ... Nb3+. How can White handle it?

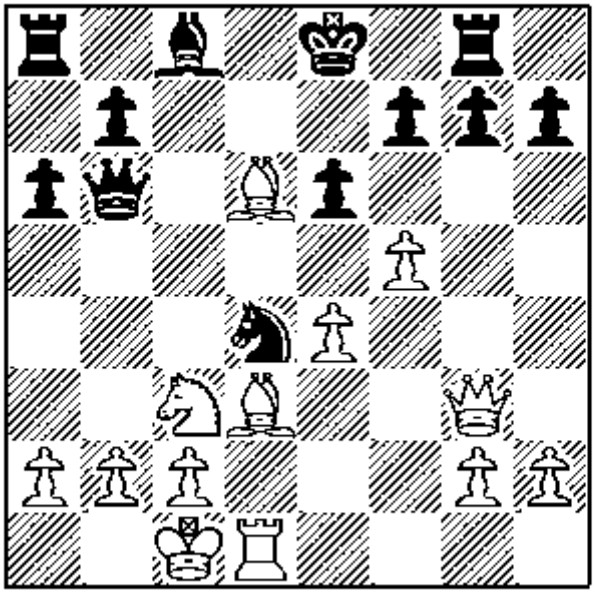
Answer: 17 Qg3

The practical and logical move. The machines opt instead for 17 Bb5+! axb5 18 Rxd4,

threatening Qg5 and wins, while 18 ... h6 is met by 19 Nd5! exd5 20 exd5+ Be6 21 dxe6 f6 22 Bc5! and Black can resign with his king stuck in the middle; after 22 ... Qxc5 23 Rd8+ Kxd8 24 Qxc5, Black's undeveloped rooks are powerless to defend his weaknesses.

17 ... Rg8

The attempt to castle queenside after 17 ... Bd7 is thwarted by the accurate 18 Bc7!. Then after 18 ... Qc5 19 Qxg7 Rf8 20 Qg3, White is in complete control.

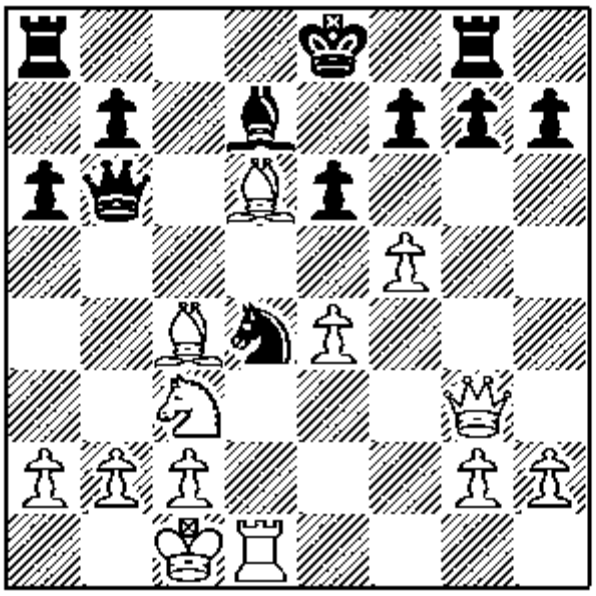


Exercise: How does White improve his position further?

Answer: 18 Bc4

A good classical move, improving the light-squared bishop as well as the rook. Komodo 8 thinks that 18 b4!? is optimal but this is not a human move. We are taught not to weaken the king's position unnecessarily and in this situation White can win without such drastic measures. Actually, this illustrates the fact that using computers can be dangerous for players' development, especially when they are at the level of needing to absorb classical ideas (such as protect your king), rather than esoteric exceptions to the rule (as is the case with 18 b4 here).

18 ... Bd7



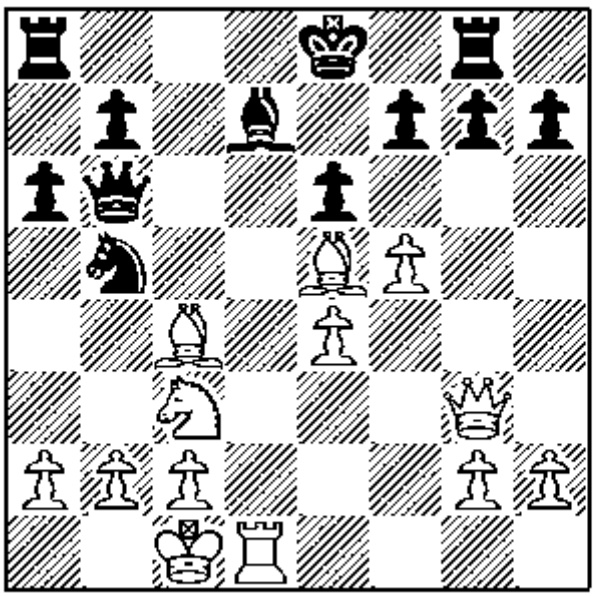
Exercise: The reader is once again welcome to decide upon the most appropriate move ...

Answer: 19 Be5

Stein wants to drive the knight from its central position and open the road for the rook. By the way, this is another instance where it might be better to turn off the computer, since mine suggested 19 a4, intending a4-a5; such concrete chess is hard to teach to students.

19 ... Nb5

19 ... Nc6 is met by 20 Bc7! Qc5 21 Bd6! (Clarke's 21 f6 Qxc4 22 Qd6 Bc8 23 Qd8+! Nxd8 24 Rxd8 mate is a pretty variation; 23 Qe7+! also works, but Black has a resource in 22 ... gxf6! 23 Qxd7+ Kf8, when his king finds a safe refuge at g7 and White is worse) 21 ... Qxc4 (or 21 ... Qa5 22 fxe6 fxe6 23 Nd5! exd5 24 exd5 with a decisive attack) 22 b3 and the black queen is trapped in the middle of the board!



Exercise: What is the normal method of exploiting a lead in development?

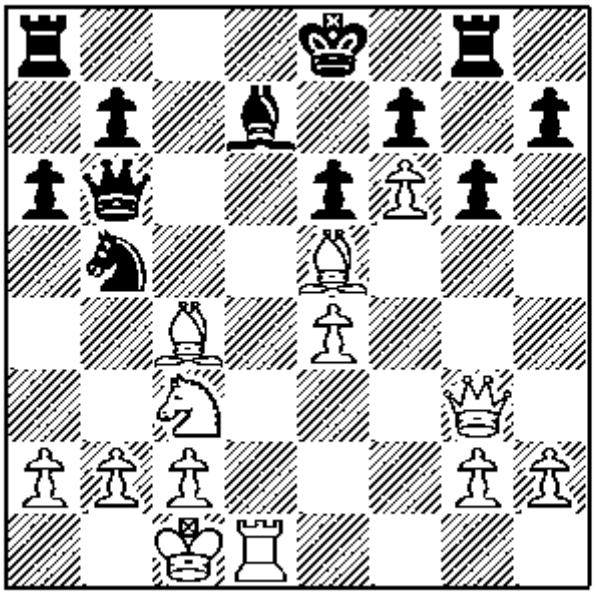
20 f6?

Surprisingly, Stein gives his opponent a chance to lock up the position.

Answer: As Morphy taught us, when we are ahead in development the best way to make this count is by opening the game up. Here 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 Na4 Qc6 22 Qg5!, threatening Qh5+, is the most convincing continuation. After 22 ... g6 (22 ... Qxc4 loses quickly to 23 Qh5+ g6 24 Qxh7 etc) 23 Bd5! (it is interesting that the key in this type of position is to sacrifice the light-squared bishop, though the manoeuvring 23 Qh4 Rf8 24 Qxh7 0-0-0 25 Qe7 Rfe8 26 Qb4 also wins) 23 ... exd5 24 exd5 Qc8 25 d6 Qd8 26 Bf6, Black's king and queen are in deep trouble.

20 ... g6?

It is vital to exchange knights before pushing the g-pawn. After 20 ... Nxc3 21 Bxc3 (21 Qxc3 gxf6! 22 Bxf6 Bc6 is not clear either) 21 ... g6, White still has the initiative and a clear advantage, but actually winning is far more complicated, as can be seen by the variation 22 Bd4 Qc6 23 Be2 0-0-0 24 Rd3 Qc7, when ... Bc6 closes the c-file.



Exercise: How to punish Black's error?

Answer: 21 Na4! Qa5

21 ... Qc6 loses to 22 Bxb5 axb5 (or similarly 22 ... Qxb5 23 Qa3! 0-0-0 24 Qd6 and mates) 23 Qa3! (showing the point of Stein's 20th move) 23 ... 0-0-0 24 Nb6+! Qxb6 25 Qa8 mate.

22 Bxb5 axb5

Otherwise White decides with the long queen move to a3.

23 Qd3

23 Bc7! is even stronger, with mate in eight according to the machines; e.g. 23 ... Qb4 24 Qd3 etc, or 23 ... Qa6 24 Qa3 again.

23 ... 0-0-0

One can understand Black's unwillingness to prolong the game with 23 ... Qd8, since 24 Nb6! Bc6 25 Nxa8 Qxd3 26 Rxd3 leads to mate in five anyway.

24 Qd6 1-0

A nice miniature showing Stein's preference for the exchange sacrifice when he obtained a durable initiative as compensation.

Incidentally, Stein had begun the tournament with 7/9, but then lost to Arkady Novopashin (in a fascinating game with queen vs. two knights and a bishop) and blundered against Yuri Sakharov in the last round, which meant a play-off between them to determine first place. After four games the score was tied at 2-2, but Stein had learnt his lesson from the match with Nei and won the next two to take the title.

Game 13
L.Stein-V.Cherbak
Avantgard Society Championship, Kiev 1960
King's Indian Attack

According to Chessmetrics, V.P.Cherbak was ranked 394th in the world in 1961, reaching his highest estimated rating of 2401 the following year.

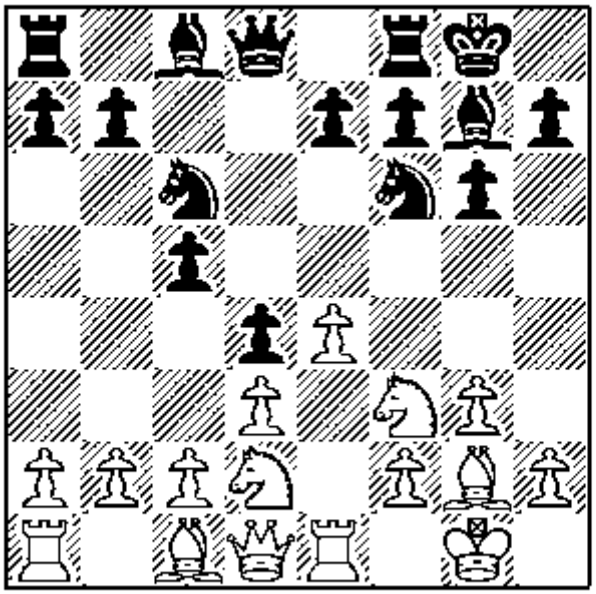
1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 Bg2 Bg7 4 0-0 0-0 5 d3 d5 6 Nbd2 c5 7 e4

The King's Indian was one of Stein's favourite set-ups with both White and Black. According to Gufeld and Lazarev he played such positions with "Swiss time-piece precision". For instance, the databases record that Stein played six games against this particular formation with ... Bg7, all of which he won.

7 ... Nc6 8 Re1

The other main move here, 8 c3, features in Game 49, together with 8 exd5.

8 ... d4



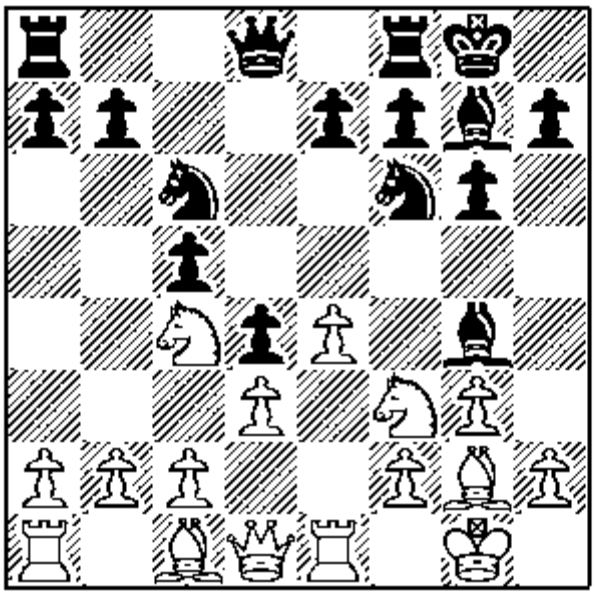
Question: How to exploit the hole at c4?

9 Nc4

Answer: The preparatory move 9 a4, safeguarding the c4-square, is a good option. It seems that Stein wanted his opponent to go for ... b7-b5.

9 ... Bg4

Intending to play ... b7-b5 next move. The immediate 9 ... b5 is perfectly alright, as the following variation shows: 10 Nce5 Nxe5 11 Nxe5 Bb7 12 a4 a6 and Black has a qualitative pawn majority on the queenside. On the other hand, the b7-bishop shoots its arrows on granite, so the position should be evaluated as about equal.



Question: How would you continue as White?

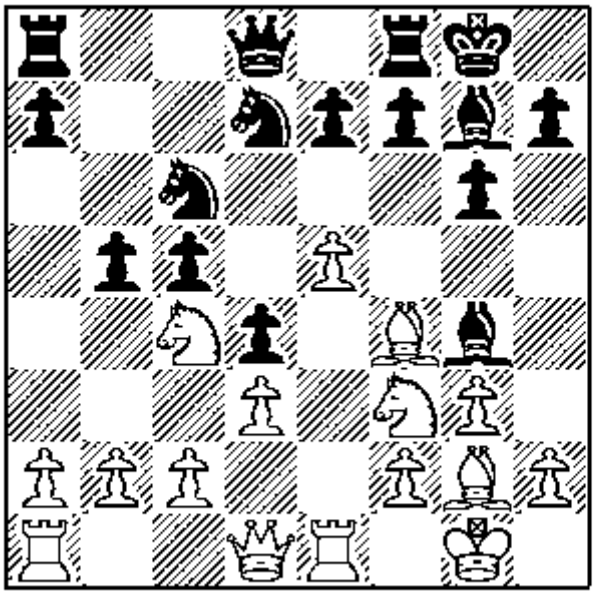
Answer: 10 e5!?

Stein is in a fighting mood in this game and plays for the initiative. Normal continuations are 10 h3 Bxf3 11 Qxf3 e5 (not 11 ... b5?? 12 e5! and White wins material) 12 a4, or just 10 a4, consolidating the c4-knight.

10 ... Nd7

It looks more natural to centralize with 10 ... Nd5. White could continue 11 h3 (here 11 a4 Qd7 gives Black full control of the c8-h3 diagonal) 11 ... Bf5 12 Qe2 and if 12 ... b5 then calmly retreat with 13 Ncd2, reaching a typical 'coiled spring' formation. White has flexible knights which can put pressure on Black's position via Nb3, Ne4 or Nh4, while the bishop's diagonals are opened at same time.

11 Bf4 b5

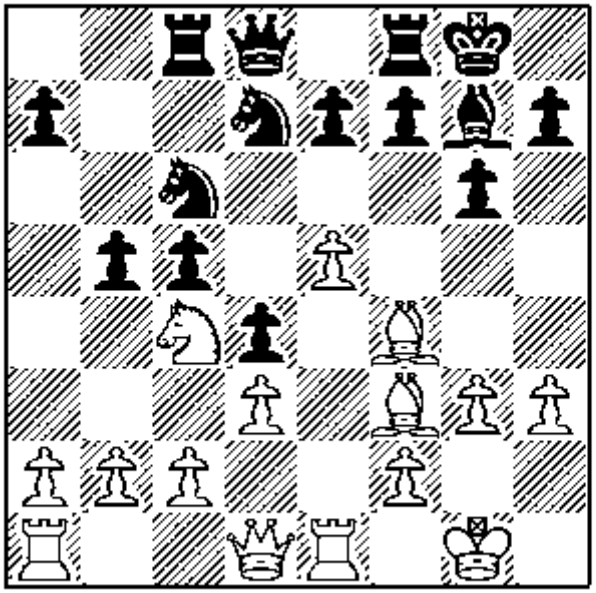


Exercise: How does White reply to the threat to his knight?

Answer: 12 h3

Again Stein chooses the sharpest, though not necessarily the best continuation. More solid is 12 Ncd2 Ncxe5 13 h3 Nxf3+ (or 13 ... Bxf3 14 Nxf3 Nc6 15 a4 a6 16 axb5 axb5 17 Rxa8 Qxa8 18 Ng5 with good piece play for the sacrificed pawn) 14 Nxf3 e5! (otherwise White will win the exchange down the long diagonal) 15 hxg4 exf4 16 gxf4 with an even position.

12 ... Bxf3 13 Bxf3 Rc8



Exercise: And what to do now?

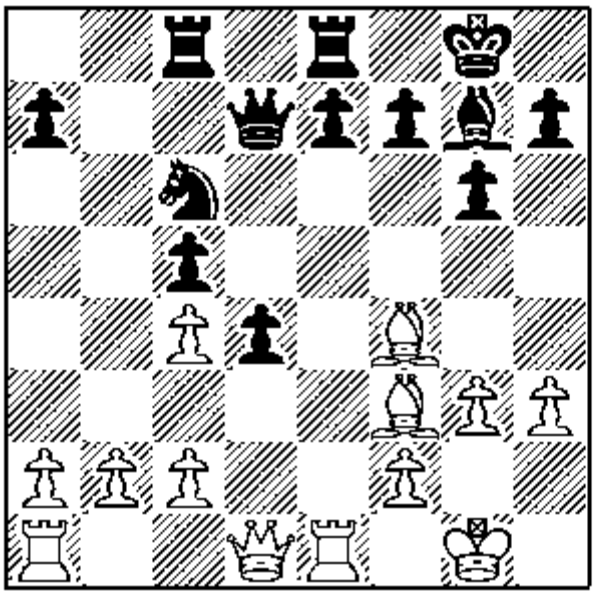
Answer: 14 e6

In this game we see the risk-taking side of Stein. The quieter continuation 14 Bxc6 Rxc6 15 Nd2 Nb6 16 Qf3 would be inconsistent with his state of mind.

14 ... bxc4

After 14 ... fxe6? 15 Rxe6, White threats the knight on c6 with good play.

15 exd7 Qxd7 16 dxc4 Rfe8



Question: Which side stands better?

Answer: Black's position is absolutely to be preferred. There is no way for White to stop the preponderance of black pawns running through in the centre. It is interesting to see how Stein's creative and imaginative mind deals with this problem.

17 h4

Stein already reckons that Black would like to play ... e7-e5 and ... f7-f5, but then g6 will be weakened so why not attack it immediately? If Petrosian defended his weak points before they were attacked, Stein attacked strong points before they were weakened! This is a very interesting concept indeed.

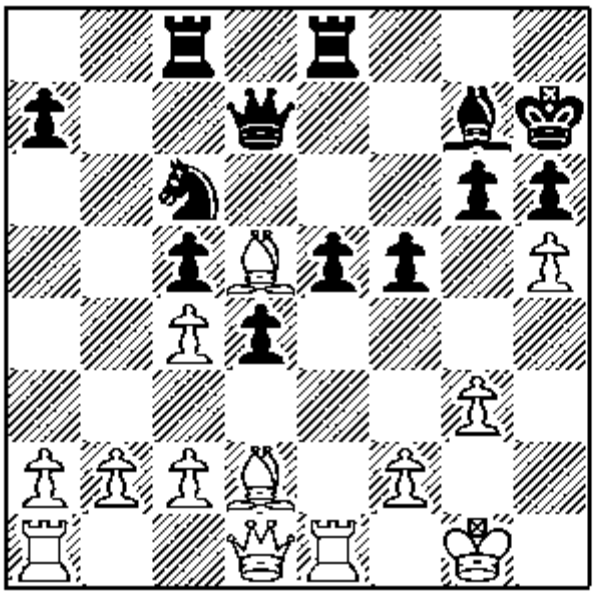
17 ... e5 18 Bg5

Stein tries to provoke as many weaknesses as possible on the kingside.

18 ... h6 19 Bd2 f5 20 Bd5+ Kh7

It is better to place the king on a dark square with 20 ... Kh8, so that it will be out of the reach of, especially, White's centralized bishop.

21 h5



Question: How should Black defend against the positional threat of capturing on g6?

21 ... Ne7?

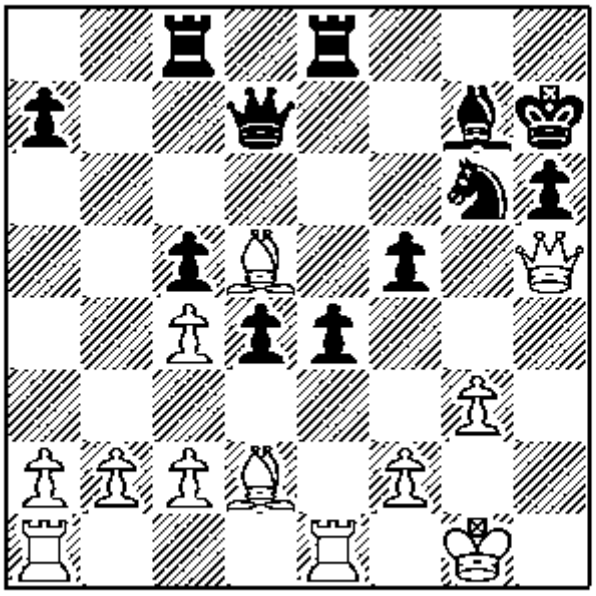
Answer: Cherbak must have seen ghosts; otherwise he would have played the natural 21 ... g5. Then 22 f3 is too slow, since 22 ... Ne7 23 Bf7 Rf8 24 Bg6+ Nxg6 25 hxg6+ Kxg6 is winning for Black. Instead, 22 g4 is White's only shot, but this is answered by 22 ... e4 23 gxf5 Qxf5 24 Qe2 e3! 25 fxe3 dxe3 26 Bc3 (or 26 Bxe3 Nd4 27 Qd3 Qxd3 28 cxd3 Nc2 29 Be4+ Kh8) 26 ... Nd4 27 Bxd4 Bxd4 and Black has much better chances.

22 hxg6+ Nxg6

22 ... Kxg6!?, keeping the pressure on d5 and preventing the white queen from entering h5, leads to a different kind of game. After 23 Bg2, Black could switch his knight to f6 (via g8) where it would have an excellent placement.

23 Qh5 e4

Black has an "absolute centre" on the fifth rank which counterbalances the power of White's bishop pair.



Exercise: How does White continue in this intricate position?

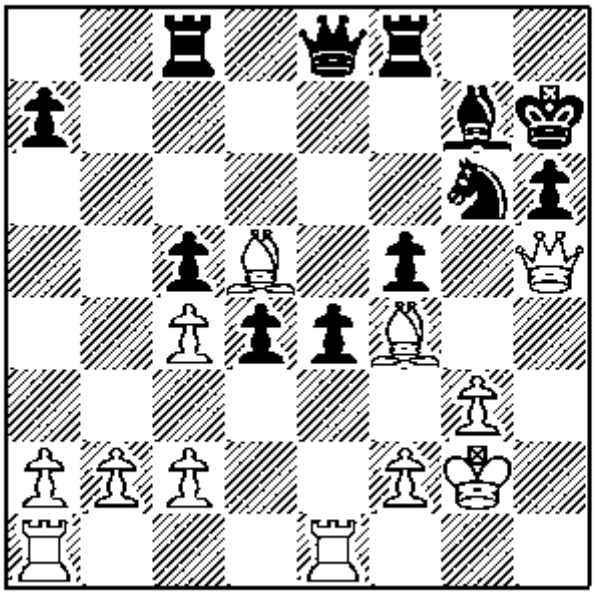
Answer: 24 Bf4!

A clever move, avoiding the plausible exchange sacrifice after 24 Kg2 Re5! 25 Bf4 (or 25 Rh1 e3! 26 fxe3 f4 27 Qh3 Qxh3+ 28 Rxh3 fxe3) 25 ... Rxd5 26 cxd5 Qxd5 with a strong centralized position.

24 ... Rf8

24 ... Nxf4 25 gxf4 is nothing special, as Black has difficulties exploiting the g-file. It may even turn out to be risky because the d5-bishop must be regarded as stronger than the g7-bishop in this position.

25 Kg2 Qe8

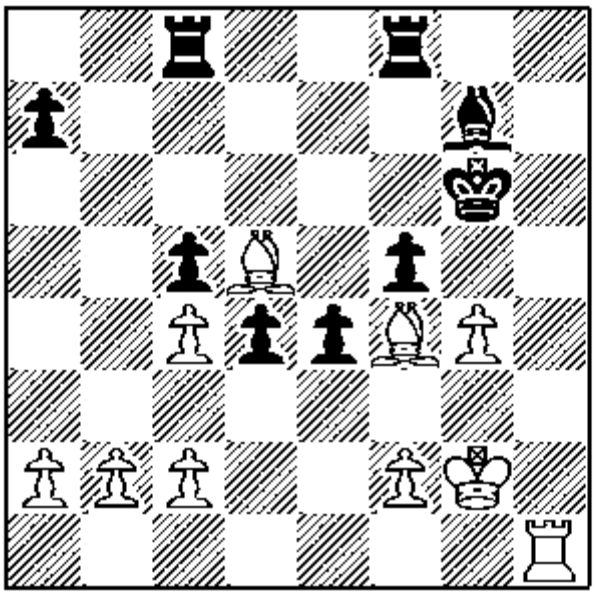


Exercise (combination alert): Can you find Stein's next few moves?

Answer: 26 Bxh6! Nf4+

Alternatively, 26 ... Bxh6 27 Rh1 Nf4+ 28 gxf4 Qxh5 29 Rxh5 Kg6 30 Rh4 leads to an equal game, but Black was perfectly justified in accepting the sacrifice.

27 Bxf4+ Qxh5 28 Rh1 Qxh1+ 29 Rxh1+ Kg6 30 g4



Stein's combination may have cost the exchange for a pawn, but he has regained the initiative.

30 ... Rcd8

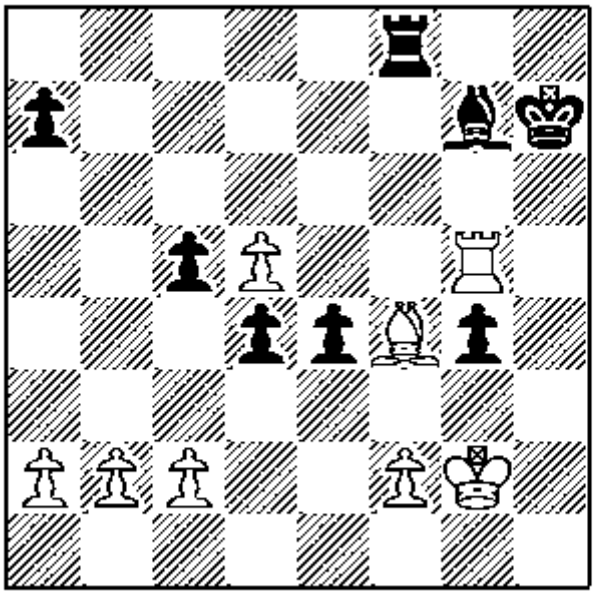
The safer course is 30 ... Rh8 31 Be6 Rxh1 32 Bxf5+ Kf7 33 Kxh1 Re8, when White has two pawns for the exchange and the game looks pretty drawish.

31 Rh5 Rxd5

Here 31 ... d3 seems to lead to a draw as well; for example, 32 Rg5+ Kf6 33 cxd3 exd3 34 Be3 f4 35 Bxf4 Bh6 36 Rf5+ Kg6 37 Rxf8 Bxf8 38 Kf3 and so forth.

32 cxd5 fxg4 33 Rg5+ Kh7?

The king should naturally go towards the centre: 33 ... Kf7!, when a likely variation is 34 Rxg4 d3 35 Be3 dxc2 36 Rxe4 Bxb2 37 Rc4 Bd4 38 Rxc2 Rd8 39 Bxd4 cxd4 40 Kf3 Rxd5 41 Ke4 d3 42 Rd2 Ra5 43 Kxd3 Ra4 and Black should still draw.



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Answer: 34 Bd6!

Instead, 34 Rxg4 Rd8 35 d6 (not 35 Rg5? Bf6! and Black wins the d-pawn for nothing) 35 ... Bf8 36 b3 Bxd6 37 Bxd6 Rxd6 38 Rxe4 leads to a rook ending with an extra pawn. Stein's choice is more convincing.

34 ... Rc8 35 Be7 d3 36 cxd3 exd3 37 d6 d2 38 Rh5+ Kg6 39 Rh1 Bxb2?

Bringing the king across with 39 ... Rh8 40 Rd1 Kf7 41 Rxd2 Ke6 is a better defence, though the position is now difficult for Black after 42 Bg5.

40 d7 Rh8 41 Rd1

The forcing variation 41 Rxh8 d1Q 42 d8Q Qf3+ 43 Kg1 Bxh8 44 Qxh8 Qd1+ 45 Kh2 g3+ 46 Kg2! gxf2 47 Qf6+ wins for White, but there are always tricks with queens on the board. Stein's play is both convincing enough and more practical.

41 ... Bc3?!

Losing a whole rook, although 41 ... Bf6 42 d8Q Rxd8 43 Bxd8 Bxd8 44 Rxd2 only results in a position where Black will suffer for longer.

42 d8Q Rxd8 43 Bxd8 Kf5 44 Kf1 c4 45 Ke2 Ke4 46 Bg5 1-0

Stein won the championship outright on 10½/15, with eight wins, one loss and five draws.

Chapter Two
The Way to the Top

The 28th USSR Championship was Stein's first meeting over the board with the really great players, gathered in one and the same tournament. Players such as Yuri Averbakh, David Bronstein, Efim Geller, Viktor Korchnoi, Tigran Petrosian, Lev Polugaevsky, Vasily Smyslov, Boris Spassky, Mark Taimanov and many others, all of whom achieved well-deserved fame in the chess world. In his autobiography, Chess is My Life, Viktor Korchnoi writes the following about Stein's incredible performance in this event, which actually was a qualifier for the world championship: "The sensation of the tournament was the success of the young master, Stein. Playing for the first time in the USSR Championship, he ended up among the prize winners. A player of enormous talent, he managed to demonstrate this in his very first appearances, as if sensing that his chess career would not be a long one."

Game 14
L.Stein-D.Bronstein
USSR Championship, Moscow 1961
Modern Defence

1 e4 d6

If one plays for a win with the black pieces a good device is to go for a flank opening where one temporarily cedes the centre to the opponent in the hope of attacking it later. Obviously, it is not without risk, giving White the advantage in terrain and a great freedom of choice regarding plans.

2 d4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Be3 c6

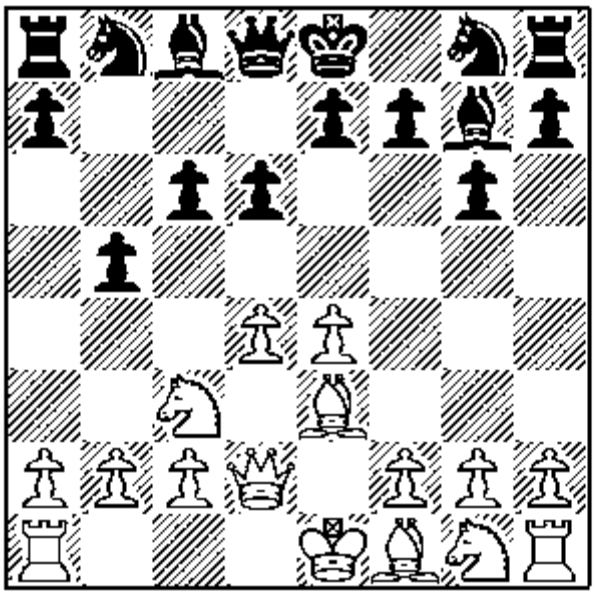
Nowadays 4 ... a6 is more popular. One of the points is that, after an eventual ... b7-b5 and ... Bb7, the bishop is unobstructed on the long diagonal with direct pressure on the e4-pawn.

5 Qd2

This is the most aggressive set-up against the system chosen by Bronstein, which was to be expected from an attacking player like Stein. The main ideas are to prepare queenside castling and, if the opportunity arises, exchange Black's potent dark-squared bishop with Bh6.

5 ... b5

With the black pieces in Game 16, Stein opted for 5 ... Qa5 here.



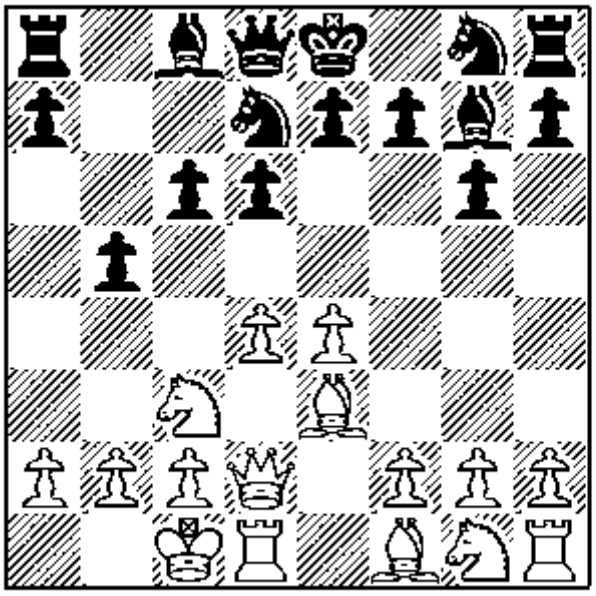
Exercise: How might White continue?

Answer: Stein plays according to his characteristic style of an almost elemental force, of directness or primitiveness, not at all concealing his true intentions from the opponent.

6 0-0-0

Other good moves are 6 f3, consolidating the centre; 6 a4, forcing Black to declare his intentions on the queenside; and the aggressive 6 h4. It is interesting that Stein prefers to keep maximum flexibility with the wing pawns, because it is the pawn configuration itself which reveals the plan more specifically.

6 ... Nd7



Exercise: Should White go for an attack or consolidate his position?

Answer: 7 Kb1

Stein unhurriedly completes his queenside organization by moving the king off the c1-h6

diagonal and defending the a-pawn. Such prophylactic moves are the cornerstone of good attacking play.

Another aggressive player, the uncompromising Belarussian GM Viktor Kupreichik (1949-) – "the Monster from Minsk" – went for an immediate breakthrough in the centre with the brave pawn sacrifice 7 e5!? and obtained good attacking chances after Black blocked the centre with 7 ... d5? 8 h4 Nb6 9 h5 in V.Kupreichik-Sv.Pedersen, World Student Team Championship, Teesside 1974. The most vigorous reply is 7 ... dxe5! (after 7 ... b4?! 8 Ne4 Qa5 9 exd6 Qxa2 10 Qxb4 Rb8 11 Qa3 Qxa3 12 bxa3, White's game is slightly preferable) 8 dxe5! (better than 8 d5 Bb7 9 dxc6 Bxc6 10 Bxb5 Bxb5 11 Nxb5 Ngf6 and Black is fine) 8 ... Bxe5 9 Nf3 Bg7 10 Ne4, although White has enough compensation with his lead in development.

7 ... Nb6

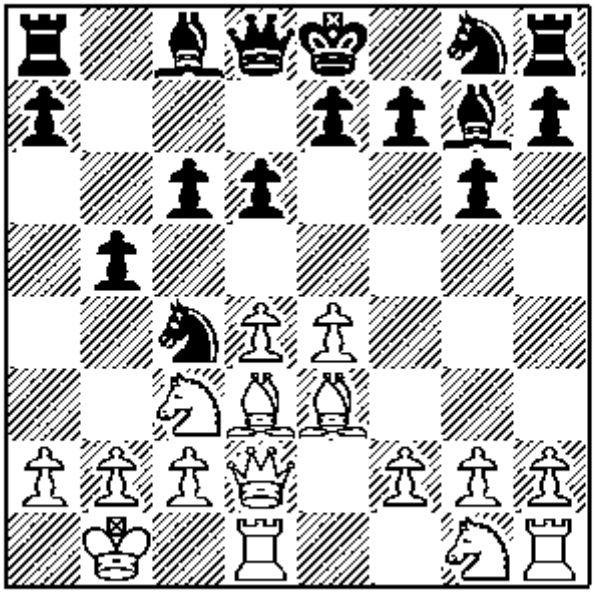
Bronstein follows in the footsteps of the first positional player in history, Francois-André Danican Philidor, who was of the opinion that the pieces should perform their duties behind the pawns. Minev's recommendation of 7 ... Qa5!? followed by ... b5-b4 and maybe ... c6-c5 certainly deserves attention.

8 Bd3 a5

Bronstein continues to play in the spirit of Philidor and gives priority to the pawns rather than the pieces.

Instead, 8 ... Nf6 is the most sensible move and probably what Morphy would have played, since he gave the highest priority to the development of the pieces. Presumably Bronstein did not want to give Stein the option of 9 Bh6, as after 9 ... 0-0 (or 9 ... Bxh6 10 Qxh6 Ng4 11 Qf4) 10 Bxg7 Kxg7 11 e5 dxe5 12 dxe5 Nfd5 13 Nge2 Nb4 14 Qf4, White has the better chances with his strong e5-pawn and obvious plan of h2-h4-h5. The only way for Black to stop this is by playing h7-h5, thereby weakening the g5-square.

Superficially, 8 ... Nc4 looks good, but for a "Philidor ring" to be effective two pawns should defend the knight and here the pawn at d5 is lacking.



Exercise: Why was not Stein afraid of this knight jump?

Answer: After 9 Bxc4 bxc4, Black has a half-open b-file and the bishop pair, but White still holds an advantage. After the

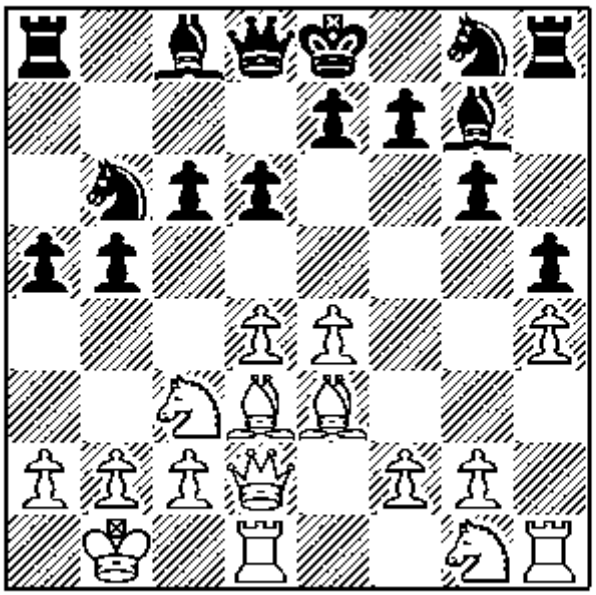
further moves 10 Qe2 Ba6 (instead, 10 ... Be6 is met by 11 Nf3! with the twin threats of Ng5 and d4-d5 winning the c4-pawn; 10 ... d5 11 Nf3 also gives White the more comfortable position: the b-file is not dangerous because the b2-square is easily covered, so White's strong centralization is more important) 11 e5! Rb8 12 Qf3!, preparing Nge2, White does not need to be afraid of the attack on the b-file with 12 ... Qb6 13 b3 cxb3 14 axb3 Bc4 because of the ingenious defence 15 Kc1! Bxb3 16 cxb3 Qxb3 17 Kd2! Qb2+ 18 Kd3! and White's king is safe with a won position – a variation the first official world champion, Wilhelm Steinitz (1836-1900), would certainly approve of, since he believed the king can take care of itself.

9 h4

Philidor's maxim that pawn mobility is the most important factor is certainly true for closed positions, but what about those that can open up very quickly? For instance, 9 e5!? suggests itself here, limiting the activity of the g8-knight. After 9 ... dxe5? (9 ... d5 is the sensible course) 10 dxe5, White's advantage has increased in the newly open position; even more so if Black takes the e-pawn, since 10 ... Bxe5? 11 Nf3 is winning for White already. One illustrative variation is 11 ... Bg7 12 Be4 Qxd2 13 Rxd2 Bxc3 14 Bxc6+ (not 14 bxc3? Nd5 and White has only a slight advantage) 14 ... Bd7 15 Rxd7! Nxd7 16 Bxa8, when the twin threats of b2xc3 and Bc6 decide the game.

9 ... h5

Bronstein continues to withhold 9 ... Nf6, in order to deter 10 Bh6. However, there is no need here because, after the instant exchange 10 ... Bxh6! (not 10 ... 0-0? 11 Bxg7 Kxg7 12 h5 Nxh5 13 e5! and White has a strong attack) 11 Qxh6 b4 12 Nce2 Ng4 13 Qg7 (or 13 Qf4 e5! and the g4-knight is secure) 13 ... Kd7, Black is fine. The king will find shelter at c7 later on.



Exercise: Where should White develop his king's knight?

Answer: 10 Nh3

A logical follow-up to h2-h4. The knight cannot be developed to e2 because the other knight is trapped after ... b5-b4. The reason Stein does not develop it to f3 is because he wants to consolidate the centre with a timely f2-f3.

10 ... b4?!

The drawback to this move is that the option of ... Nc4 disappears. 10 ... Nf6 or 10 ... Rb8 are therefore more flexible continuations.

11 Ne2 Bxh3?

Bronstein exchanges his long-range capable bishop for a knight on the rim and thus makes

Stein's game far easier. It is still better to develop with 11 ... Nf6 and reserve the c8-bishop a possibly brighter future, even though it is unclear what kind of future that might be. There may have been a psychological reason for the swap since Stein was notorious for his skill with knights.

12 Rxh3 e6

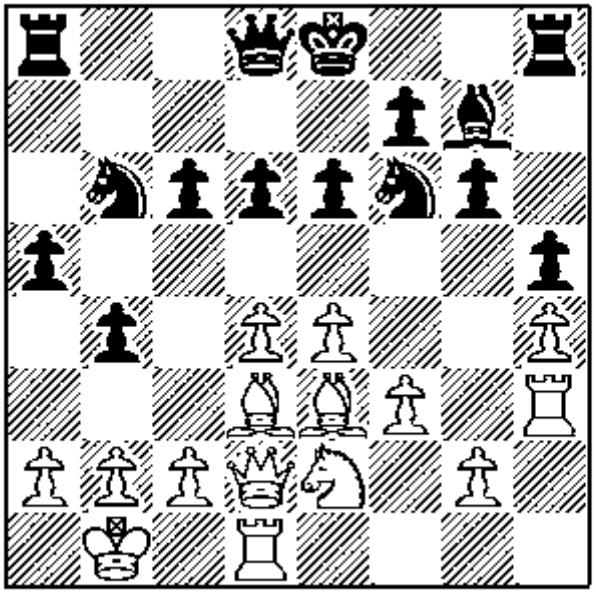
This was Black's idea, getting rid of the light-squared bishop before closing the c8-h3 diagonal and placing his pawn on the e6-square, on the "fortified" third rank to borrow an expression from Bronstein in his classic The Modern Chess Self-Tutor.

13 f3

Stage-by-stage Stein improves his position. For the moment he can enjoy the bishop pair and the space advantage conferred by his solid classical centre.

13 ... Nf6

At last this natural move is played, one reason being to hamper the advance g2-g4 as much as possible. For instance, if instead 13 ... Ne7 then 14 g4! is strong, practically ruling out kingside castling for Black.

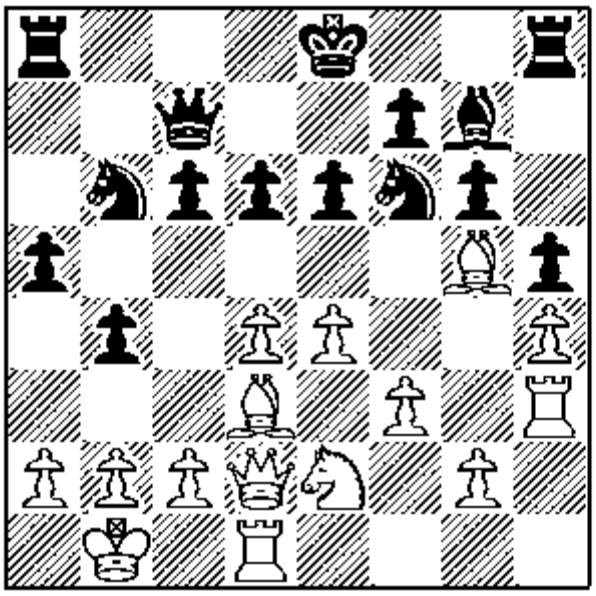


Exercise: White has a clear positional advantage. What is the most logical continuation?

Answer: 14 Bg5

The sign of an attacking player and the elemental force we referred to earlier. The immediate threat is e4-e5, though that is easily parried. A more positional player would probably have tried to open the c-file after 14 Rc1 and c2-c3 (or the other way round), so as to have a clear target to concentrate on, despite the increased risk to White's king.

14 ... Qc7



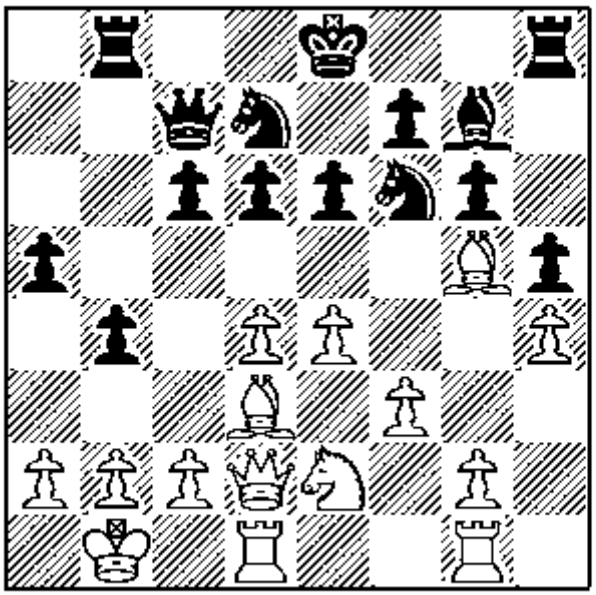
Exercise: How can White put more energy into the game?

15 Rhh1

Stein quietly prepares Rhg1, followed by g2-g4.

Answer: It is actually possible to play 15 g4! immediately. The tactical justification is that 15 ... hxg4?! 16 fxg4 Nxg4?? runs into 17 Qf4 and White breaks through. For example, 17 ... f5 (or 17 ... Nh6 18 h5 f6 19 Bxf6 Rf8 20 e5 and wins) 18 exf5 gxf5 19 Bxf5 exf5 20 Qxf5 Qd7 21 Qg6+ Qf7 22 Qxd6 Qd7 23 Qg6+ Qf7 24 Qxc6+, when everything falls apart on the sixth rank. An original and sharp variation.

15 ... Nbd7 16 Rhg1 Rb8



In The Modern Chess Self-Tutor Bronstein mentions that chess is not simply a system but a confrontational system. This position is very illustrative for the concept of conflicting ideas. White is ready to play g2-g4, while Black's plans consist of ... a5-a4 and b4-b3.

17 g4 c5?

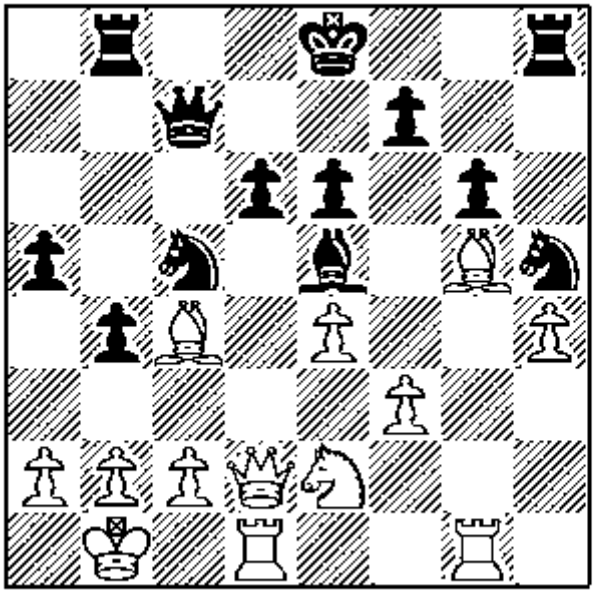
Black should insert 17 ... hxg4! 18 fxg4 before playing 18 ... c5. The obvious difference is that, after 19 dxc5 Nxc5, the e4-pawn comes under attack.

18 gxh5 Nxh5 19 dxc5 Nxc5 20 Bc4

White's e-pawn is solidly defended, so "Fischer's hammer", the bishop on c4, becomes a force to be reckoned with.

20 ... Be5

Black must defend the d6-pawn which is part of his small centre. 20 ... Nxe4?? 21 fxe4 Qxc4 22 Qxd6 loses on the spot.



Exercise: How does White defend against threat of ... Nxe4 - ?

Answer: 21 b3!

The strongest move. It looks dangerous to open the long dark diagonal, but a weakness is only a weakness if it can be exploited. Defending the e-pawn with 21 Qe3? allows 21 ... Bxb2! 22 Kxb2 Na4+ 23 Kb3 Nc5+ 24 Kb2 Na4+ and it is a draw by perpetual.

21 ... 0-0 22 Qe3 a4

The knight sally 22 ... Na4 does not improve Black's position. After 23 f4 Bg7 24 f5 Nb2 25 fxg6 Nxc4 26 bxc4 Qxc4 27 Bh6, the pressure on the g-file secures White a clear advantage.

23 f4 Bg7

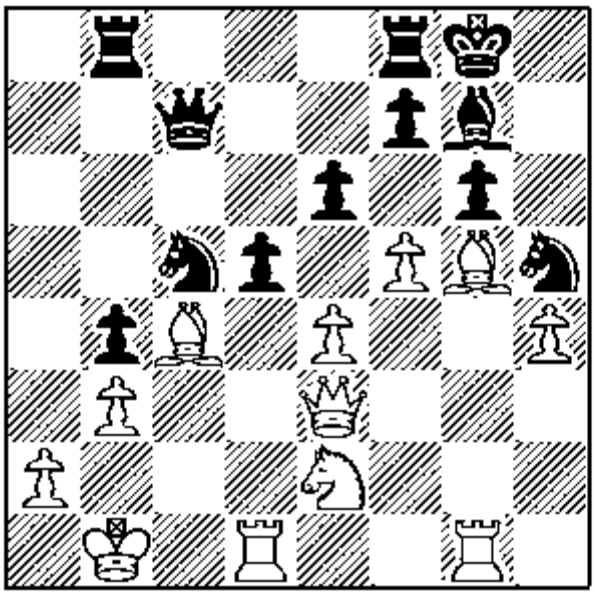
23 ... axb3 is naturally answered by 24 cxb3, rather than the suicidal 24 fxe5?? bxc2+ 25 Kxc2 Nd7 and Black wins.

24 f5

Bypassing what Bronstein calls the "equator" (the imaginary narrow line that separates the fourth and fifth ranks). White has established contact with the fortified rank represented by the e6-pawn which is the key to a successful defence for Black.

24 ... axb3 25 cxb3 d5

Attempting to deflect the coming white attack with Bh6 and f5xg6, smashing through on the g-file. If Black tries to attack on the a-file with 25 ... Ra8 26 Bh6 Qa7, White responds 27 a4! bxa3 28 Bxg7 Nxg7 29 fxg6 Qb7 30 gxf7+ Rxf7 31 Ka2 with a winning position. White's king is now perfectly safe, whereas Black's king is doomed, seriously exposed on the open files, while h4-h5 and Rxd6 are serious threats.



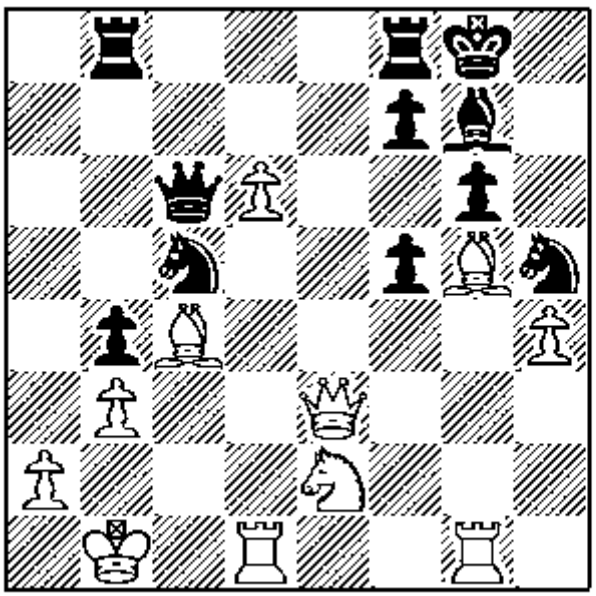
Exercise: How does White decide the game?

Answer: 26 exd5 exf5 27 d6

Alternatively, White can play 27 Be7 first, followed by 27 ... Ne4 28 d6 Qa5 29 Rxg6. Black's last shot is 29 ... Qe5 (29 ... Ra8 is met by 30 a4 again), but White has the strong retort 30 Qd4 Qxd4 31 Nxd4! (better than 31 Rxd4 Kh7) 31 ... Nc3+ 32 Kc2 Nxd1 33 Kxd1 Kh7 34 Rg5 Bxd4 35 Rxh5+ Kg7 36 Rg5+ Kh7 37 Rxf5, reaching a technically won position.

27 ... Qc6?!

Instead, 27 ... Qa7 offers Black a few more chances, but the counterplay on the a-file is not enough. For example, 28 Be7 Ra8 29 Nc1 (here 29 a4?! bxa3 30 Ka2 Na6 is less clear) 29 ... Qa3 30 Rd2 Ne4 31 Rxg6 Nc3+ 32 Kc2 Nxa2, and now White wins with 33 Rd4!, parrying both ... Qb2+ and ... Qxc1+.



Exercise: White wins, but how?

Answer: 28 Be7

This is still the most convincing move. The f8-rook and g6-pawn are threatened and Black cannot defend them both.

28 ... Kh7 29 Nd4 Qd7

29 ... Bxd4 30 Rxd4 mirrors the earlier unprovoked exchange at h3 and removes any remaining hopes Black may have had of threatening something on the long diagonal.

30 Nf3

White intends to harass the black king with all his pieces.

30 ... f4?

In time pressure Bronstein overlooks that the c5-knight is hanging. 30 ... Ne4 was necessary, though it does not help after 31 Ng5+ Nxg5 32 hxg5, when Black's position is indefensible.

31 Qxc5 Rfc8 32 Ng5+ Kg8 33 Bxf7+ Kh8 34 Be6 Rxc5 35 Bxd7 1-0

This was not Stein's only important victory in the tournament; he also beat such strong grandmasters as Petrosian, Geller and Spassky. His defeat of Petrosian, the eventual winner, in the sixth round made the audience especially sit up. In fact this was Petrosian's only loss.

Stein eventually finished in third place on 12/19 (the same score as Geller), behind Korchnoi in second on 13. Petrosian, who came first with 13½, made the following remark about Stein's play: "I wish that the young master would expand his creative amplitude to diversify his openings systems (especially for Black)"; while Geller said: "Stein is a capable master who magnificently navigates in the complicated positions on the board. He knows his drawbacks very well and will try to get rid of them."

Stein's bronze medal secured him not just fame, but also a GM norm and, most significant of all, the right to play in the Interzonal tournament for the world championship in Stockholm.

The international tournament in Bucharest was not so strong due to a lack of grandmasters participants. One of the competitors was Vasile Georgescu (1936-), who was ranked 292nd in the world in 1968 with a highest estimated rating of 2459 the same year, according to Chessmetrics.

Game 15
V.Georgescu-L.Stein
Bucharest 1961
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6

As GM Ftacnik wrote in Grandmaster Repertoire: The Sicilian Defence: "The unparalleled popularity of the Sicilian has led to the creation of an entire chess galaxy that is too vast for even the best and brightest minds to comprehend fully. Each player chooses his Kan, Sveshnikov, Dragon or other pet variation, around which he creates his own Sicilian World." There is no question that Stein's own expertise lay in the domains of the Najdorf Variation, and he did not shy away from the "win-win" situation, which is the soul of the opening. In those days it was also the favourite weapon of Bobby Fischer, who employed it whenever he had the opportunity and who naturally influenced his peers.

6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Be7 8 Qf3 Qc7 9 0-0-0

Stein opted for 9 Bd3 as White in Game 12.

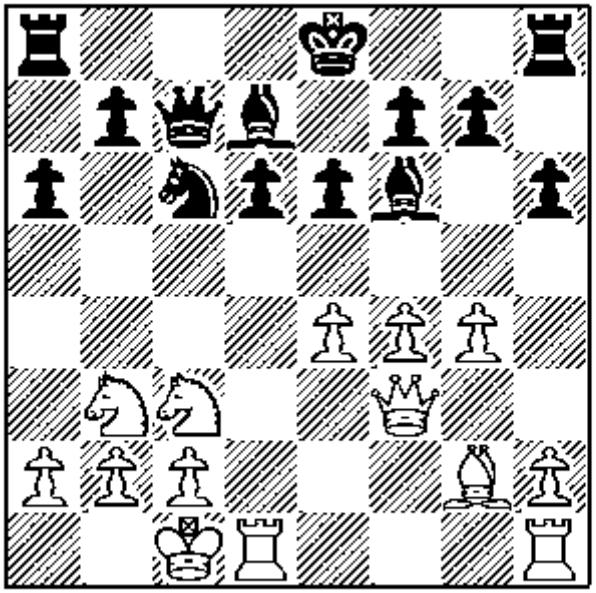
9 ... h6

Fischer almost always stuck to the main line with 9 ... Nbd7.

10 Bxf6

After 10 Bh4 Nbd7, Ftacnik gives the following hair-raising variation not for the chicken-hearted: 11 Be2 b5 12 e5 Bb7 13 exf6 Bxf3 14 Bxf3 d5 and now 15 Nxe6!? fxe6 16 Bh5+ g6! 17 Bxg6+ Kf8 18 fxe7+ Kg7 19 Bg3 b4! 20 f5 Qc4! 21 fxe6 bxc3 22 exd7 Kxg6! with a roughly equal position!

10 ... Bxf6 11 g4 Nc6 12 Nb3 Bd7 13 Bg2



Question: How does Black proceed with his development?

Answer: 13 ... 0-0-0

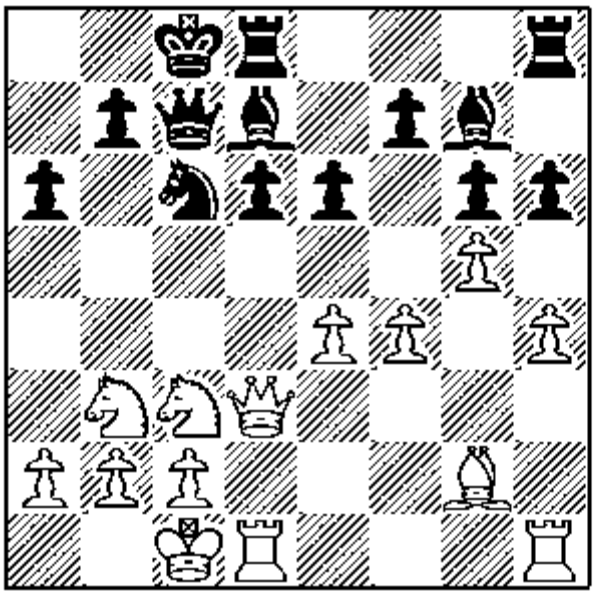
There is another interesting idea in 13 ... Rc8, threatening 14 ... Nb4. White can counter this with 14 Kb1, but after 14 ... Ne7 15 Nd4 Ng6, preventing h2-h4, Black's position is nevertheless to be preferred. He can continue ... 0-0 and ... Rfd8 with excellent future prospects.

14 h4 g6

Stein shows his preference for keeping the bishop on the long dark diagonal, in the spirit of the Dragon which he occasionally played as well.

15 g5 Bg7 16 Qd3

White tries to exploit the fact that the d6-pawn lacks some protection. Black does not transfer the bishop to g7 for free.



Exercise: How does Black take care of his d-pawn?

Answer: 16 ... Bxc3!?

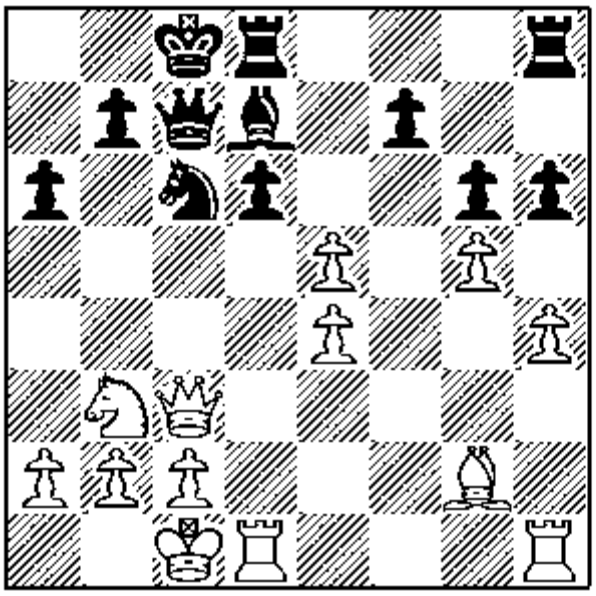
A really surprising decision; having spent time positioning his bishop on the long diagonal, Black suddenly gets rid of it! Clearly, a solid but passive move like 16 ... Be8 was not to Stein's taste.

Black could consider 16 ... Na5 17 Qxd6 Nxb3+ 18 axb3 Qxd6 19 Rxd6 hxg5 20 fxg5 (or 20 hxg5 Rxh1+ 21 Bxh1 Rh8 22 Rd1 Bc6) 20 ... Be5 21 Rd3 a5 with good compensation for the sacrificed pawn; the bishop on e5 is a superb centralized minor piece. Presumably Stein did not like the idea of exchanging the passive b3-bishop either (cf Game 5 where Stein avoided ... Na5xb3 in similar fashion).

17 Qxc3 e5

This is the idea. Without his knight at c3, White cannot exploit the hole on d5 in the normal manner.

18 fxe5



Question: Should Black take back with the pawn or the knight?

Answer: 18 ... Nxe5!

The best recapture; Black obtains a strongpoint at e5 for his knight which also defends the backward f7-pawn. Instead, 18 ... dxe5 is fully playable but leads to a more passive arrangement of the black pieces after 19 Rdf1 Be8, since 19 ... Be6 would be met by 20 Bh3.

19 Rxd6?

It is better to avoid the exchange of queens with 19 Qd2.

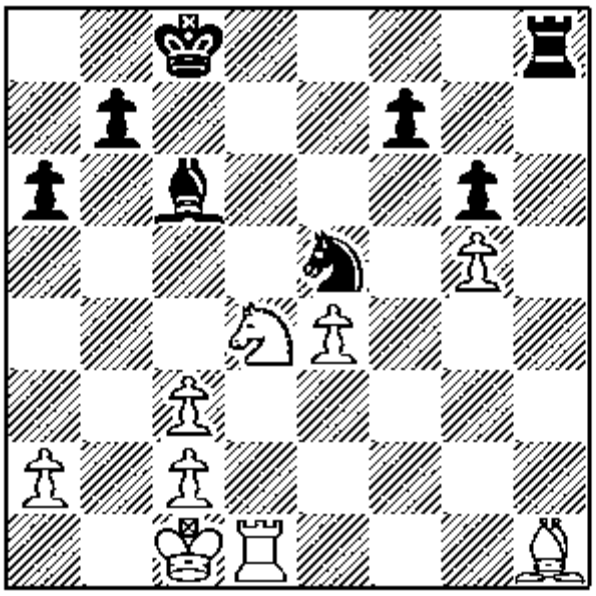
19 ... Qxc3 20 bxc3 hxg5 21 Rd5

21 hxg5 is worse, due to 21 ... Rxh1+ 22 Bxh1 Rh8 23 Rd1 Rh3 and the active rook will collect some pawns.

21 ... Rde8 22 hxg5 Rxh1+ 23 Bxh1 Bc6 24 Rd1 Rh8

With his more active pieces Black has more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Another problem for White is his four pawn islands as compared with Black's two.

25 Nd4



Question: What is the optimal square for the black rook?

Answer: 25 ... Rh3

Threatening to take on c3 as well as play ... Rg3, picking up the g5-pawn.

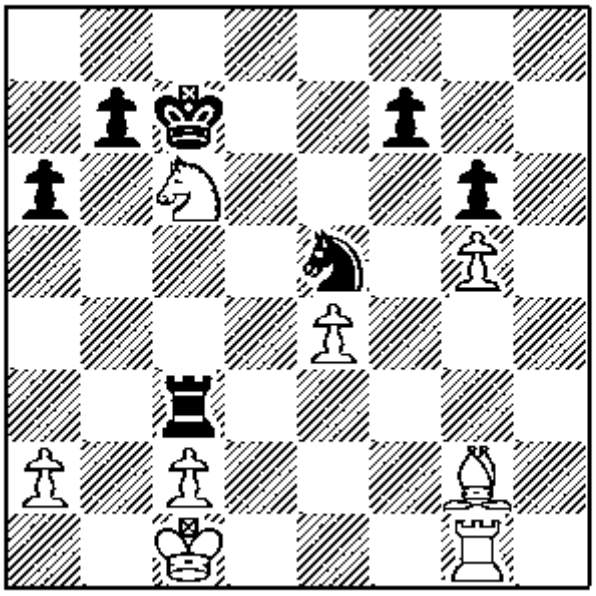
26 Rg1

Perhaps White's best try is 26 Nxc6 bxc6 (not 26 ... Nxc6?! because of the strong 27 e5! Nxe5 28 Re1 with serious drawing chances) 27 Bg2 Rxc3 28 Bf1 a5 29 Bd3, though he still faces a tough time after 29 ... Nf3 30 e5 Nxe5 31 Kb2 Rc5 32 Be2 Rd5 and so on.

26 ... Rxc3 27 Bg2 Kc7

Here 27 ... Rg3 was simpler, and if 28 Ne2 then 28 ... Re3 29 Kd2 Nc4+ and the e4-pawn falls.

28 Nxc6



Question: How does Black recapture on c6?

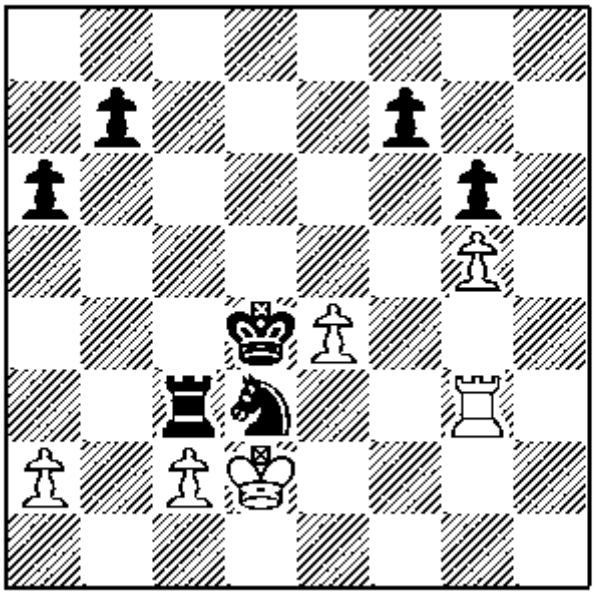
Answer: 28 ... Kxc6!

Of course. The black king heads for the unprotected dark squares on the a7-g1 diagonal.

29 Bf1 Kc5 30 Bd3

White has a sense of humour!

30 ... Nxd3+ 31 Kd2 Kd4 32 Rg3



Question: How does Black finish the game?

Answer: 32 ... Nc5! 0-1

The threat of ... Nxe4+ allows the knight out of the pin. 32 ... Nf2! was equally good.

Going back to Black's 16th move, the unexpected surrender of his strong bishop shows that Stein was far from a stiff and dogmatic player!

Game 16
C.Radovici-L.Stein
Bucharest 1961
Modern Defence

The Rumanian IM Corvin Radovici (1933-) was ranked 98th in the world in 1959, according to Chessmetrics, with a highest estimated rating of 2557.

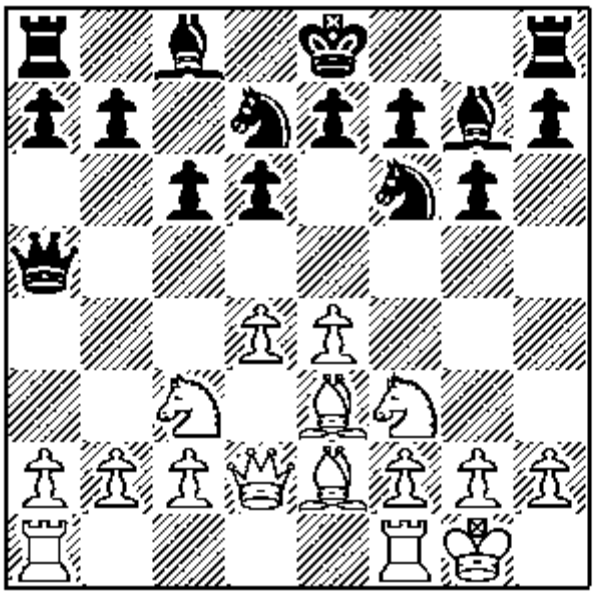
1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Be3 c6 5 Qd2 Qa5

See Game 14 for the more consistent 5 ... b5, played by Bronstein.

6 Nf3

Sharper is 6 Bd3 (or 6 f4 immediately) 6 ... Nd7 7 f4; for example, 7 ... Ngf6 8 Nf3 0-0 9 h3 e5 10 0-0 exd4 11 Bxd4 b5 12 a3 a6 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 Ne8 15 b4 Qc7 16 Rae1 Bb7 17 Ne4 and White had a big advantage in J.Timman-J.Delemarre, Wijk aan Zee (3rd matchgame) 1995.

6 ... Nd7 7 Be2 Ngf6 8 0-0

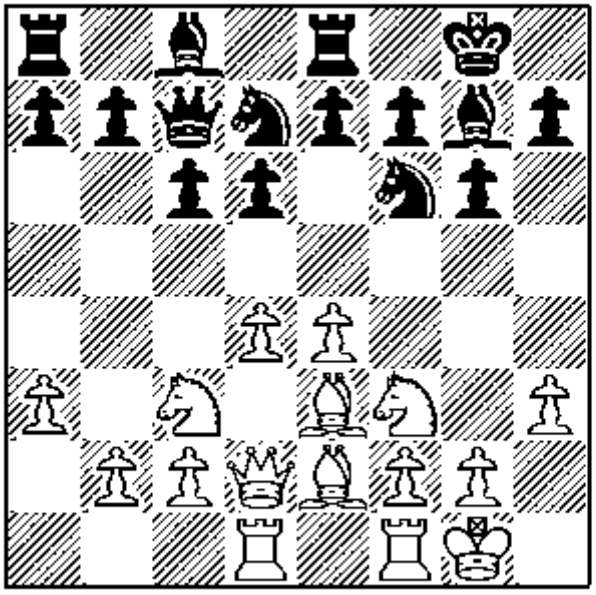


Exercise: How should Black continue?

Answer: 8 ... 0-0

Harassing the dark-squared bishop with 8 ... Ng4 9 Bf4 e5 is risky because of the tactical possibility 10 Nb5! Qxd2 11 Nxd6+ Ke7 12 Nxc8+ Raxc8 13 Bxd2 exd4 14 Rad1, when White's position is to be preferred due to the bishop pair in a fairly open position.

9 h3 Re8 10 a3 Qc7 11 Rad1



Exercise: How does Black solve the problems with his development?

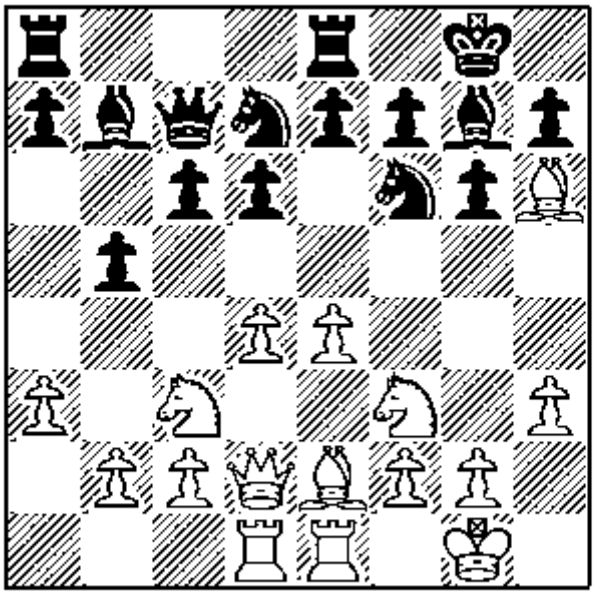
Answer: 11 ... b5!

This is the correct approach, giving the bishop an outlet on b7 and preparing the further ... a7-a5 and ... b5-b4. Black's target is the e4-pawn.

12 Rfe1 Bb7

12 ... a5 would probably have been answered by 13 b4.

13 Bh6



Question: Suggest Black's best continuation!

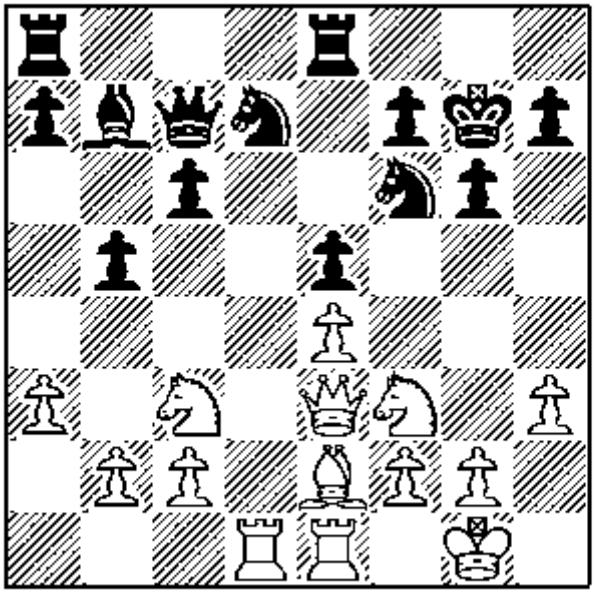
Answer: 13 ... e5

The logical move, seizing space in the centre and preventing e4-e5 once and for all; whereas a continuation like 13 ... a5 would allow 14 e5 dxe5 15 dxe5 Nxe5 16 Nxe5 Qxe5 17 Bxb5, scattering Black's pawns into three islands and giving White a slight advantage.

14 Bxg7?!

14 dxe5 dxe5 15 Nh4!, threatening 16 Nf5!, is more efficient. After 15 ... Bxh6 16 Qxh6 a5 17 b4, Black's position is solid, but White has a slight initiative due to the enduring pressure on the dark squares. Notice that 17 ... Nf8, intending ... Ne6, allows 18 Nf5! again.

14 ... Kxg7 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 Qe3



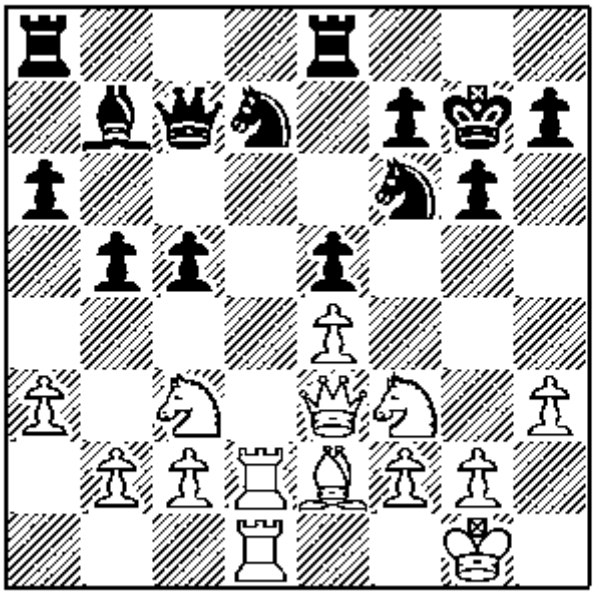
Question: Should Black advance his a-pawn one step or two?

Answer: 16 ... a6

Preparing to push the c-pawn to c5, activating Black's qualitative majority and putting fire on the e4-pawn. Presumably Stein considered the position after 16 ... a5 17 b4 to be too static for his taste.

17 Rd2 c5 18 Red1

18 Nd5 achieves nothing after 18 ... Bxd5! 19 exd5 c4!. The passed d-pawn is not dangerous, and Black can use the d6- and c5-squares as pivot points for manoeuvring, as the great chess thinker Aron Nimzowitsch (1886-1935) taught.



Exercise: And now? How does Black continue?

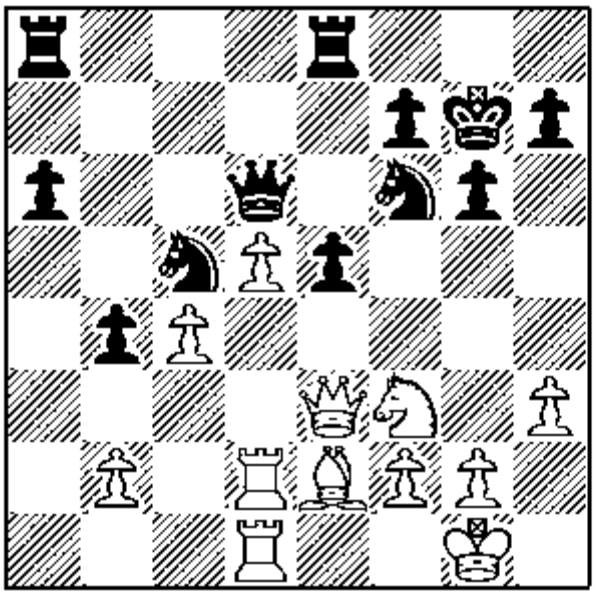
Answer: 18 ... b4

Of course! We already know that centralization of the white knight with Nd5 is in Black's interests.

19 axb4 cxb4 20 Nd5 Bxd5!

It will soon become apparent that the knight pair is actually stronger than the combination of knight and bishop here.

21 exd5 Qd6 22 c4 Nc5



Question: Why is Black's position to be preferred?

Answer: When there is no balanced control of light and dark squares we have a case of monochromy (to use a famous expression from Hans Kmoch's Pawn Power in Chess), which in itself is a serious weakness. Here White lacks sufficient influence of the dark squares, and his bishop is rather ineffective on the opposite colour. Another factor in Black's favour is that his a- and b-pawns constitute an effective majority, whereas White's c- and d-pawns are solidly blockaded.

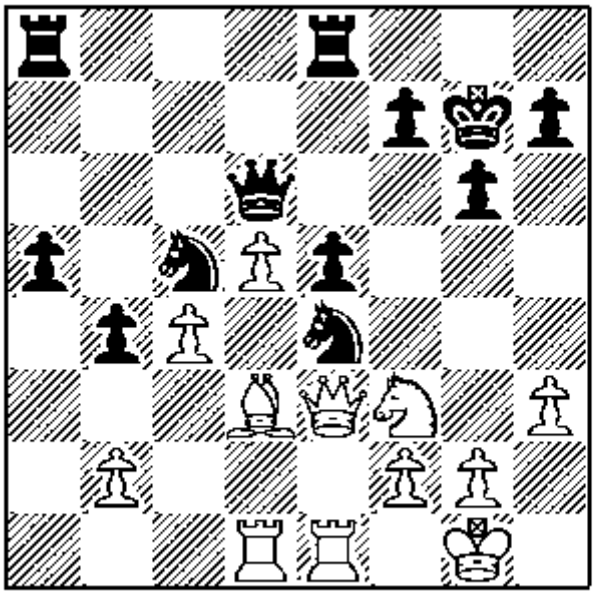
23 Re1 Nfe4?!

Black should just play 23 ... a5, followed by 24 ... a4, and then decide whether to play the f6-knight to d7 or e4.

24 Rdd1 a5

Perhaps Stein was diverted by the possibility of expanding on the kingside as well with 24 ... f5. This is probably playable if 25 Bd3 is met by 25 ... f4 26 Qc1 Nf6, but it seems unnecessary to weaken the e5-pawn.

25 Bd3



Exercise: How should Black defend against the threat to his e4-knight?

Answer: 25 ... Nf6!?

Stein was probably regretting his 23rd move a little. Instead:

a) 25 ... f5?! is met by 26 Bxe4 Nxe4 27 g4! and with ideas like 28 gxf5 gxf5 29 Nh4 looming, Black must be careful.

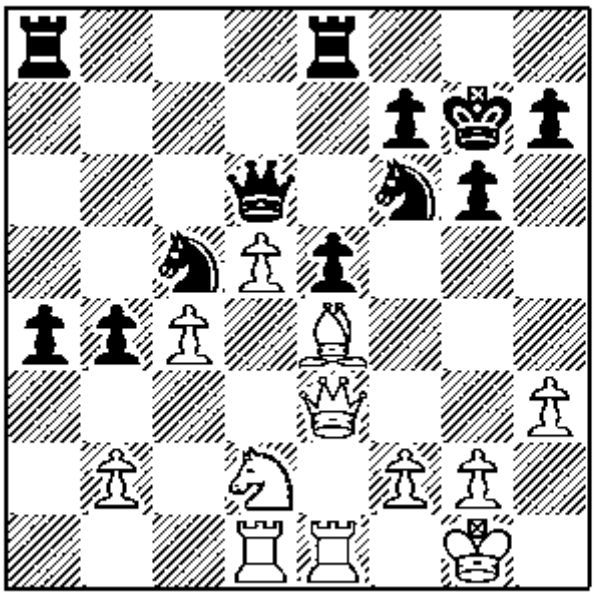
b) 25 ... Nxd3 seems illogical because it exchanges White's bad bishop; on the other hand, it removes a superfluous knight – two knights cannot stand on c5 anyway, so this may have been Black's best option. After 26 Qxd3 Nc5 (26 ... f5? runs into the strong exchange sacrifice 27 Rxe4! fxe4 28 Qxe4, when 28 ... a4 29 c5! Qxc5 30 d6 a3 31 Ng5! Qa7 32 d7 Re7 33 bxa3 bxa3 34 Qxa8 Qxa8 35 d8Q Qxd8 36 Rxd8 e4 37 h4 gives White good winning chances, and 30 ... Rf8 31 Kh2! offers more than enough compensation too) 27 Qd2 Nb3 28 Qe3 a4 29 g4!, followed by g4-g5, White has counterplay against the e5-pawn. The position is in a state of dynamic balance.

26 Nd2?!

White's last chance lies in the pretty and forcing variation 26 Nxe5! Nfd7 27 Qh6+! Kxh6 28 Nxf7+ Kg7 29 Nxd6 Rxe1+ 30 Rxe1 Nxd3 31 Re7+ Kf6 32 Rxd7 (not 32 Re6+? Kg5) 32 ... a4 33 f4! (both players may have missed this strong move, threatening mate on f7) 33 ... Nxf4 34 Rf7+ Ke5 35 Nb5 a3 36 bxa3 bxa3 37 Re7+ Kf6 38 Re1 a2 39 Ra1 Nd3 and although Black has the more active position, he is probably not winning.

26 ... a4 27 Be4

White's prospects do not look bright after 27 Ra1 e4 28 Bb1 Nfd7 29 Nxe4 Nxe4 30 Bxe4 f5 31 Qd4+ Qf6 32 Qxf6+ Kxf6 33 Bc2 Rxe1+ 34 Rxe1 Nc5, when Black has a clear strategic advantage.



Question: Which pawn move should Black play?

Answer: 27 ... h5!?

Presumably Stein did not want to commit himself to 27 ... a3 just yet, but it looks as if Black has excellent chances to create further weaknesses. For example, after 28 b3 (trying to block the position) 28 ... Nfd7 29 g4 (or 29 Bc2 e4!) 29 ... a2, White already has to attend to

the a2-pawn and his own b3-pawn, and soon more weaknesses will arise on the kingside where Black plans a breakthrough with ... f7-f5.

28 f3?!

White has more chances of holding after 28 Ra1 a3 29 bxa3 Rxa3 30 Rxa3 bxa3 31 Bc2 a2 32 Ra1 Ra8 33 Nb3, and if 33 ... Nfd7 34 Nc1 Nb6 35 Nb3 Ncd7 then 36 c5! Nxc5 37 Qxc5 Qxc5 38 Nxc5 Rc8 39 Na4 Rxc2 40 Nxb6 Rb2 41 Kh2 Rxb6 42 Rxa2 with a technically drawn rook ending.

28 ... h4

Now we have a case of serious monochromy on the kingside.

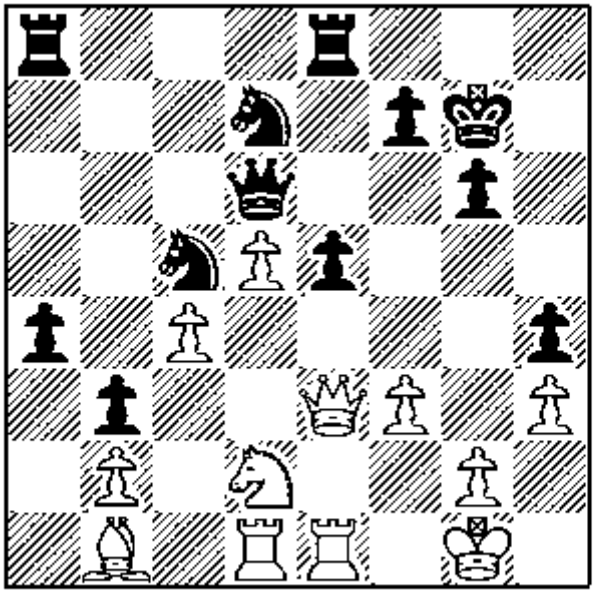
29 Bc2

It seems Radovici did not want to take the bait of the h-pawn with 29 Qf2 Nh5 30 Qxh4, since Black has really good play after 30 ... Nf4 31 Nf1 Rh8, followed at last by ... a4-a3.

29 ... b3

29 ... Nh5, followed by ... Nf4, looks good too.

30 Bb1 Nfd7



31 Ne4?!

It is better to preface this move by 31 Qf2, eyeing the h4-pawn as well as the a7-g1 diagonal.

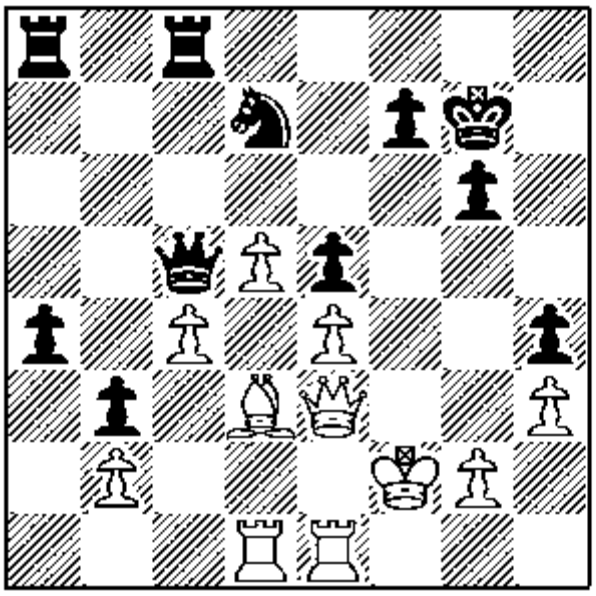
31 ... Nxe4 32 fxe4?

Keeping the queens on the board with 32 Qxe4 leaves White more able to fight on.

32 ... Rec8

The immediate 32 ... Qc5 reduces White's counterplay to a minimum.

33 Bd3 Qc5 34 Kf2



Exercise: How does Black exploit his positional advantages?

Answer: 34 ... f5

Alternatively, the long-planned breakthrough with 34 ... a3! 35 bxa3 Rxa3 practically gives Black an extra pawn and is another method realizing his overwhelming advantage.

35 Ke2 f4 36 Qxc5 Nxc5 37 Ra1 Kf6 0-1

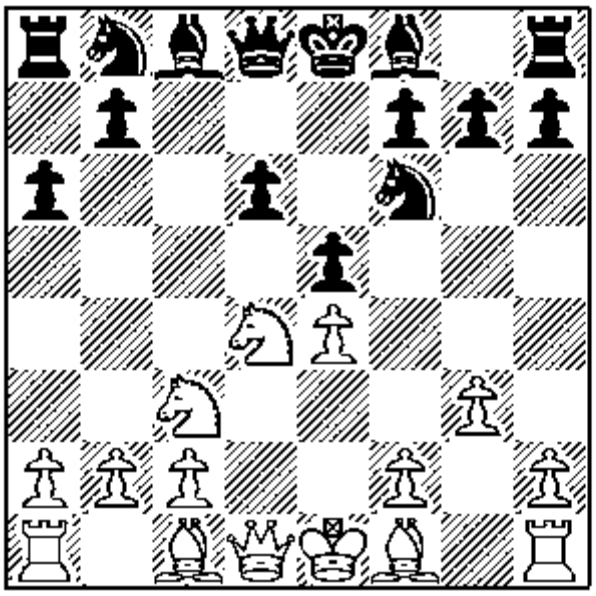
Did Radovici lose on time here or had he just had enough? Either way, White has been positionally outplayed, with Stein giving a good demonstration of how to exploit a dark square complex.

Stein won the tournament in Bucharest, scoring 9/12 with seven wins, one loss and four draws. The loss came in the first round against Gheorghe Mititelu (1934-2009) where Stein took one too many chances with the black pieces. His uncompromising play did not always work.

Stein began the Stockholm Interzonal with a meagre 2½/7 but fought back to score an amazing 11/14 in the remaining rounds and finish in joint sixth place behind Fischer, Geller, Petrosian, Korchnoi and Filip. We will look at four of Stein's wins, beginning with his eighth game in round nine of the tournament. (In the first round Stein was free and could walk around and study his future rivals.) His opponent was the German IM Rudolf Teschner (1922-2006), whose highest estimated rating of 2633 came in 1968; he was awarded a complimentary GM title by FIDE in 1992.

Game 17
R.Teschner-L.Stein
Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 g3 e5



At the cost of leaving the d5-square unguarded, Black drives the centralized white knight to a less promising position. This is actually the fundamental idea behind the Najdorf, to force the knight away after preventing the bishop check on b5. Instead, 6 ... e6, entering a Scheveningen set-up with solid development, is a logical option considering the weakened c4-square in the middlegame.

7 Nde2

The main move. The aim is to bring the e2-knight to the kingside after moves like h2-h3, g3-g4 and Ng3, where it will be more active. Incidentally, Fischer's 6 h3 is currently quite popular, the plan being to play g2-g4 in one step, followed by Bg2, and gain a tempo over the comparatively slower 6 g3.

The alternative 7 Nb3 has the advantage that, in contrast to the text, it is not obstructing any white pieces. The downside is that the knight itself has hardly any active prospects.

7 ... Be6

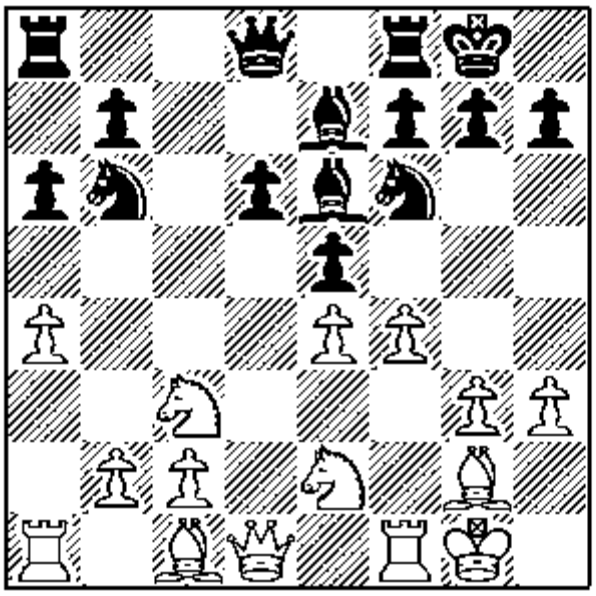
A quick 7 ... b5 is Black's most popular option today, gaining counterplay on the queenside.

8 Bg2 Be7

Note that 8 ... b5 at this moment allows the tactical response 9 Nf4!. After 9 ... exf4 10 e5, the fianchettoed bishop shows its teeth down the long light diagonal, all the way to the undefended a8-rook.

9 0-0 0-0 10 h3 Nbd7 11 a4 Nb6 12 f4

Instead, 12 a5?! Nc4 gives Black no problems. We can see that the c4-square is an asset for Black, so the critical continuation is 12 b3, when Black would like to play 12 ... d5 13 a5 d4, but 14 axb6 dxc3 15 Nxc3 Rc8 (or 15 ... Qxb6 16 Be3 Qc7 17 Nd5!) 16 Nd5! gives White a positional advantage after either 16 ... Bc5 17 c4 or 16 ... Bxd5 17 exd5.



Exercise: How does Black continue his piece play?

12 ... Bd7

Stein plans to deploy his minor pieces according to the scheme ... Bc6 and ... Nbd7-c5 with pressure on the e4-pawn.

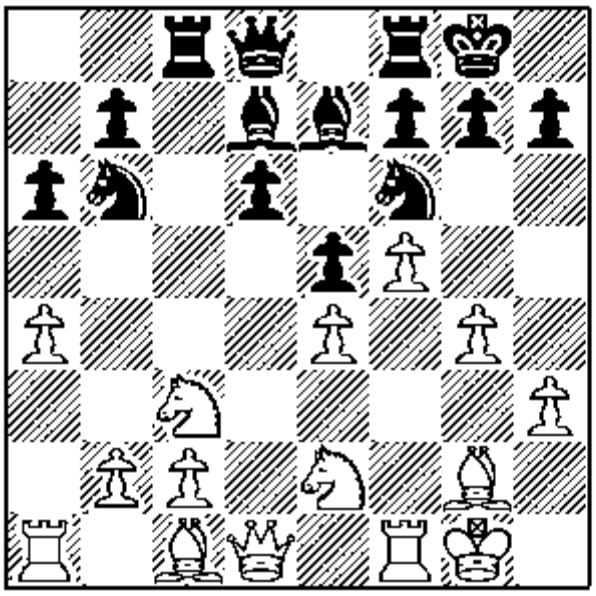
Answer: However, this is a good moment to utilize the weak c4-square as a pivot for manoeuvring with 12 ... Nc4! 13 Kh2 Rc8 14 b3 Na5 and then consider, depending on circumstances, whether to place the knight on c6 or c5 (after ... b7-b6 and ... Nb7).

In contrast, exchanging the passive e2-knight with 12 ... Bc4 13 b3 Bxe2 14 Nxe2 seems illogical. After 14 ... Nbd7 15 a5 Nc5 16 c4!, White can answer 16 ... Ncxe4 by 17 Qc2 Nc5 18 g4! with a strong initiative.

13 f5

Again 13 b3 is more flexible, taking the c4-square from Black's pieces once and for all.

13 ... Rc8 14 g4



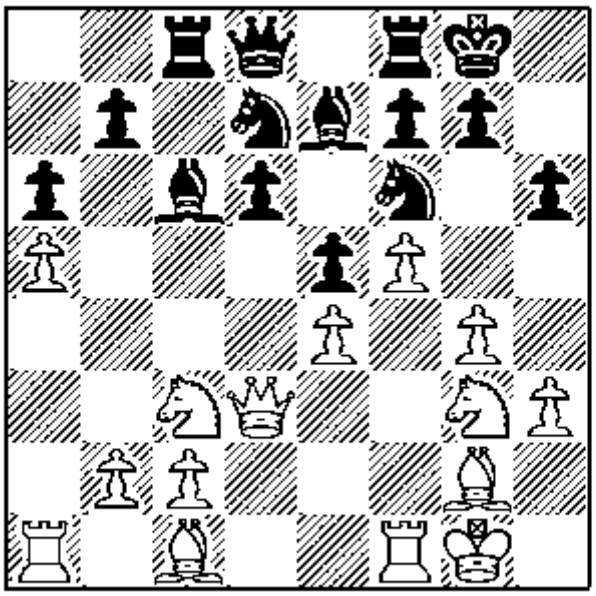
Exercise: How does Black meet the coming pawn storm?

Answer: 14 ... h6

The simplest defence, halting White's kingside pawns for a while.

15 Qd3 Bc6 16 a5 Nbd7 17 Ng3

Here 17 b4 prevents the black knight from occupying c5, but after 17 ... Nh7, followed by ... Bh4, ... Ndf6 and ... Ng5, all Black's minor pieces are ideally placed on the other side.



Exercise: What is the best practical move for Black?

Answer: 17 ... b5!

In practical terms it is easier for White to go wrong now than after 17 ... Nc5 18 Qe2 b5 19 axb6 Qxb6, followed by ... Qb4 or ... Qb7. The difference from the game continuation is that it is obvious that White must move the king, since 20 Be3? allows 20 ... Qxb2 21 Qd2 Qb6 and Black is a safe pawn up.

18 axb6 Qxb6+ 19 Be3

This move is certainly more tempting here.

19 ... Nc5

Now 19 ... Qxb2?? just loses the queen to 20 Rfb1.

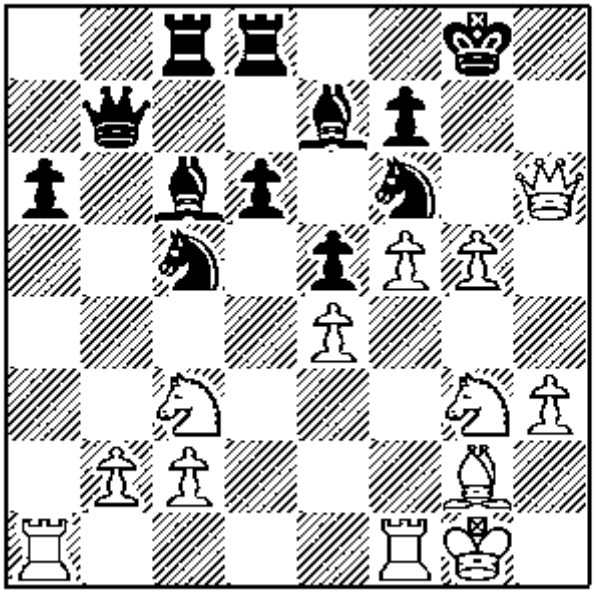
20 Qd2 Qb7 21 Bxh6 gxh6

Instead, 21 ... Nfxe4 leads to equality but also to a much more boring position after 22 Ncxe4 Nxe4 23 Nxe4 Bxe4 24 f6 Bxf6 25 Rxf6 gxf6 26 Qf2 Kh7 27 Bxe4+ Qxe4 28 Bxf8 Rxf8 and so forth.

22 Qxh6 Rfd8

After 22 ... Qxb2, White can force a draw with 23 Qg5+ Kh8 24 Qh6+ etc, unless Black wants to defend a clearly worse position after 24 ... Nh7? 25 f6 Bxf6 26 Nh5 Rg8 27 Nxf6 Rg7 28 Ncd5.

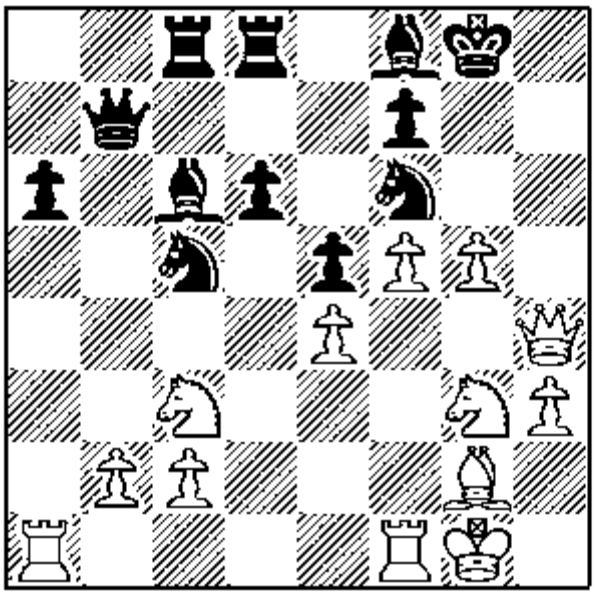
23 g5



Exercise: What is Black's best move?

Answer: 23 ... Bf8! 24 Qh4

Not 24 Qxf6?? Nd7! and the queen is trapped.



Exercise: What is Black's best move in this highly complicated position?

24 ... Ne8??

Answer: The strongest continuation is 24 ... Qxb2, since 25 gxf6?? looks better than it actually is: after 25 ... Qxc3 26 Qg5+ Kh7 27 Qh5+ Bh6 28 Qxf7+ Kh8 29 Qh5 Qe3+ 30 Kh1 Qg5, Black consolidates the extra piece and wins. Instead, White has to play 25 Nge2 (or 25 Nce2) 25 ... Nfxe4 26 Nxe4 Bxe4 27 g6! fxg6 28 fxg6 Rd7 29 Bxe4 Nxe4 30 Qxe4 Qxc2, when the position is about equal.

25 f6?

Teschner missed a direct win with the natural attacking thrust 25 g6! Bg7 (or 25 ... f6 26 b4 and the knight is trapped – it cannot go back to the second rank because of mate on h7) 26 Qh7+ Kf8 and only now 27 f6! Nxf6 (or 27 ... Bxf6 28 Nh5) 28 Rxf6 Bxf6 29 Rf1, when Black can resign.

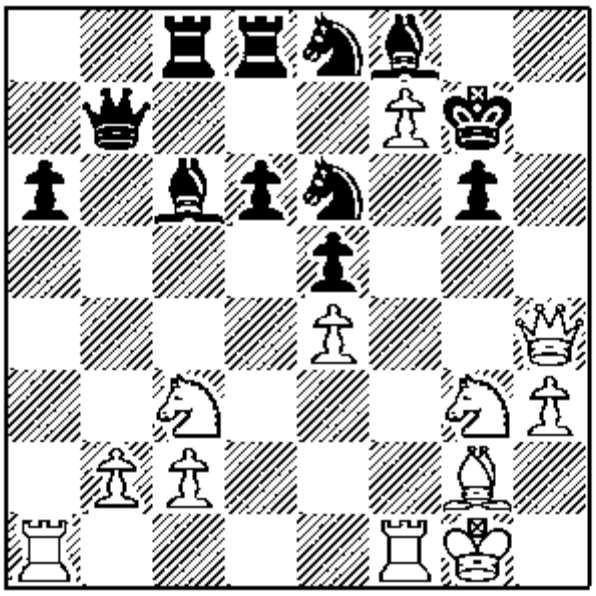
25 ... Ne6?

Here 25 ... Rd7 26 Qg4 Ne6 is a better defence, although White keeps a clear advantage after 27 Nge2.

26 g6

This pawn push is still strong, even though Black is better prepared for it. Another option is 26 Nd5!, improving White's position before playing g5-g6. Meanwhile Black has no counterplay; 26 ... Bxd5 is no good because of 27 exd5 Nf4 (or 27 ... Nc5 28 b4) 28 Be4 and White breaks through on the kingside.

26 ... fxg6 27 f7+ Kg7



28 Nh5+

Again, the key move is 28 Nd5!, keeping options of both Nh5+ and Nf5+, as well as Ra3, intending to swing the rook into the action. If Black tries 28 ... Bxd5, then 29 Nh5+! gxh5 30 Qg3+ Kh6 31 exd5 Qe7 (not 31 ... Nc5? 32 fxe8Q Rxe8 33 Rf6+ Kh7 34 Qg6+ Kh8 35 Rf7 and wins) 32 fxe8Q Rxe8 33 dxe6 Qxe6 (or 33 ... Qg5 34 Qd3) 34 Qe3+ Kg7 35 Be4 leaves White totally dominant.

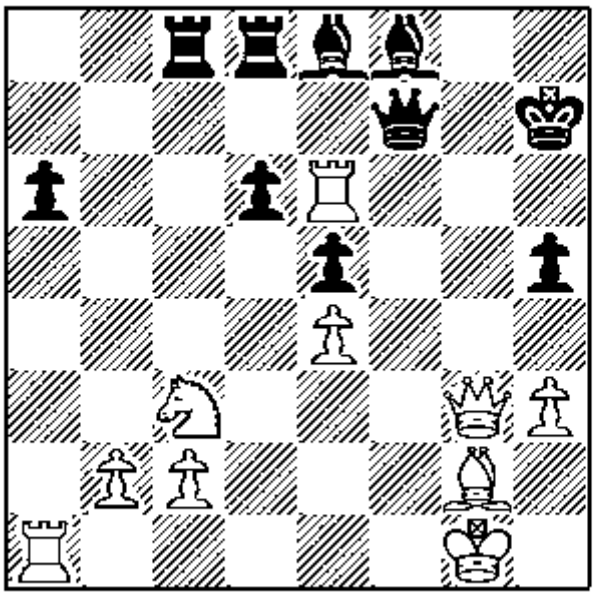
28 ... gxh5 29 Qg3+??

This was the last chance for 29 Nd5!.

29 ... Kh6 30 fxe8Q

It is too late for 30 Nd5, which is now answered by the superb defensive resource 30 ... Be7! and it is Black who wins! Chess is about timing.

30 ... Bxe8 31 Rf6+ Kh7 32 Rxe6 Qf7



The white rook is trapped, so Black wins the exchange.

33 Rxe8 Rxe8 34 Nd5 Qg6

34 ... Bh6! is more active, with possibilities of ... Rg8, but Stein probably wanted to avoid any more complications, such as after 35 Qh4, even if Black is objectively winning.

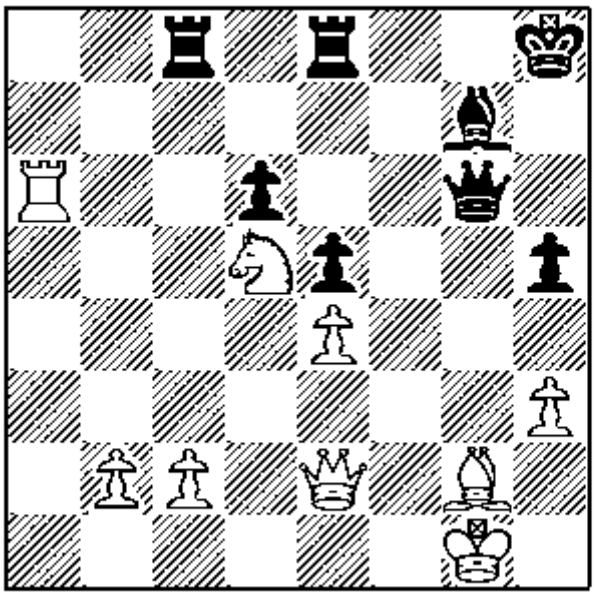
35 Qf2

35 Qxg6+ Kxg6 36 c3 is not such an inspiring continuation after having had a strong attack on Black's king, but it is probably the most stubborn sequence.

35 ... Bg7

The immediate 35 ... Kh8 is more precise, followed by 36 ... Bh6.

36 Qe2 Kh8 37 Rxa6



Exercise: How does Black activate his rooks?

Answer: 37 ... Ra8! 38 Ne7 Qg5 39 Nd5

Teschner must have realized that 39 Nf5 is answered by 39 ... Rxa6 40 Qxa6 Qc1+ 41 Qf1 (or 41 Kh2 Be3!) 41 ... Qxc2 with a technically won position for Black, but this is a better choice than putting the knight back on d5.

39 ... Bh6!

Now all Black's pieces are active and victory is close.

40 h4 Qc1+ 41 Kh2 Rxa6 42 Qxa6 Bf4+ 0-1

Stein complicated the game so much that he went wrong himself and was lost after his 24th move, though he managed to win all the same.

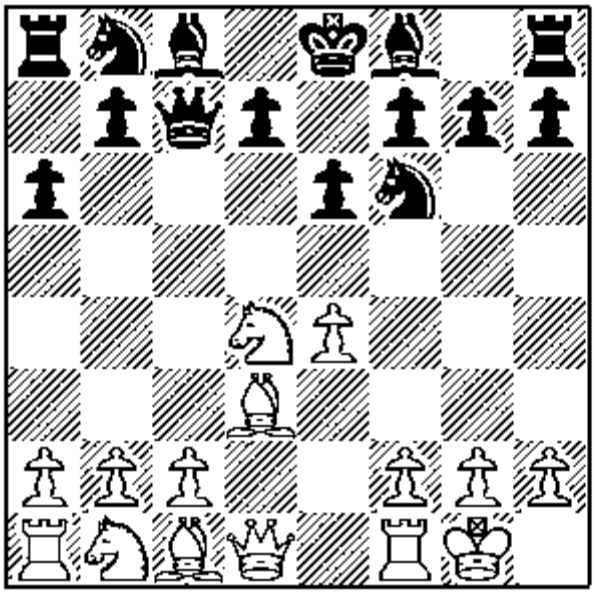
Stein won again in round eleven to reach 50% with 5/10. In the twelfth round he faced the "Hungarian Botvinnik" Lajos Portisch (1937-) who was in the leading group. Chessmetrics ranks Portisch at 46th in the all-time players list (one place and one point above Stein, incidentally) with a highest estimated rating of 2746. In May 2014, he played an exhibition match against the new Hungarian super-GM Richárd Rapport, entitled "Clash of Generations".

Game 18
L.Stein-L.Portisch
Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6

This is the Kan variation, a relatively calm branch of the Sicilian Defence.

5 Bd3 Nf6 6 0-0 Qc7



Question: How might White continue?

Answer: 7 Nd2!?

A slightly unusual continuation where White opts for f2-f4 rather than c2-c4. The main move is 7 Qe2, followed by 8 c4, preventing Black from pushing his d-pawn to d5.

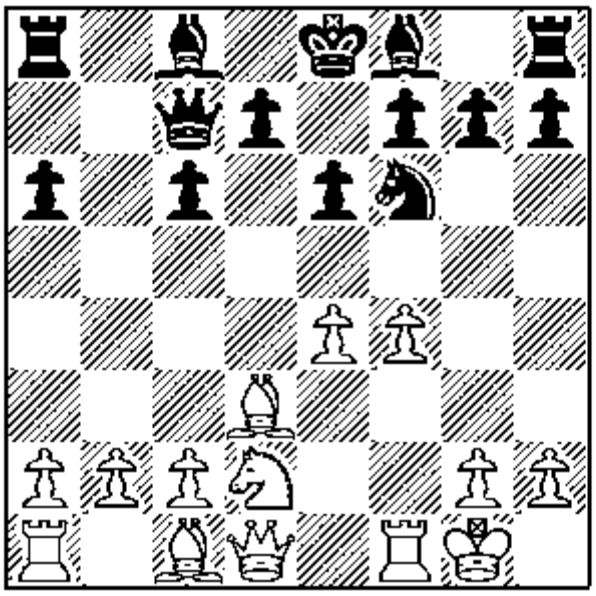
7 ... Nc6

The liberating move 7 ... d5 can be met by 8 Qe2 after all; for example, 8 ... dxe4 9 Nxe4 Nbd7 10 c4 (10 Nxf6+ Nxf6 11 Nf5, followed by g2-g3 and Bf4, also comes into consideration) 10 ... Be7 11 b3 Nxe4 12 Bxe4 with a slight advantage for White in Am.Rodriguez-An.Fernandes, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990.

8 Nxc6 bxc6

In this position it is mainly preference whether one captures towards the centre (as in the game) or away from it with 8 ... dxc6, when 9 f4 e5! prevents White from playing e4-e5.

9 f4



Exercise: How does Black continue most conveniently?

9 ... Bc5+

This check helps White's king reach a safer spot in the corner, but it is not without venom as we shall soon see. Stein called this move "an imaginary win of a tempo."

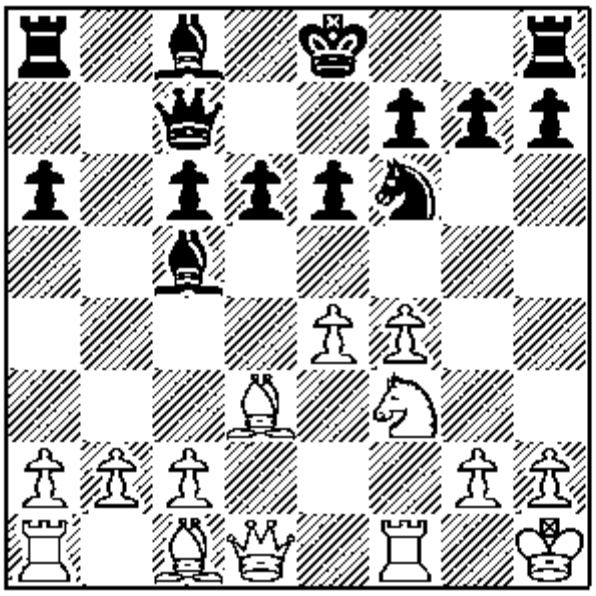
Answer: Objectively speaking, 9 ... d5 is more natural, saving a possible check for a later moment and keeping the bishop's options open. It may be better placed more flexibly on e7 where it shoots arrows on both sides of the board; for example, 10 Qe2 Be7 11 b3 0-0 12 Bb2 a5 with dynamic equilibrium.

10 Kh1 d6

Black opts for a small centre, but this seems slightly passive. 10 ... d5 is still the logical and active move, when play may continue 11 e5 Nd7 12 Qg4 g6, followed by moves such as ... a6-a5, ... Be7 and ... Nc5.

11 Nf3?

With the threat of e4-e5, but there is a downside to committing the knight here. 11 Qe2 is more flexible.



Exercise: Surprisingly, Stein's natural move is a positional mistake, why?

11 ... e5?

Portisch prevents the white e-pawn from advancing, but at the cost of weakening his own pawn structure.

Answer: He could have exploited Stein's previous move with the strong and logical retort 11 ... Ng4! 12 Qe2 Qa7! and if 13 h3 then 13 ... Nf2+ 14 Kh2 a5!, which rules out b2-b4, disrupts White's own plans, and gives Black a pleasant position. This is what may be called an active defence. The knight on f2 is very disturbing, and has options of ... Ng4+ again (in conjunction with ... h7-h5) or ... Nxd3, securing the bishop pair.

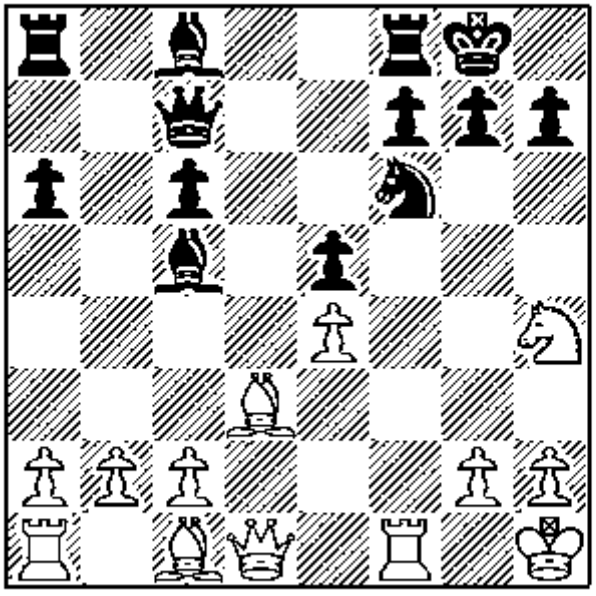
12 fxe5

12 Qe1! is more poisonous, with ideas like b2-b4 and f4xe5, followed by Qg3.

12 ... dxe5

As Stein himself noted here: "The opening stage of the development finished explicitly in White's favour – he has a better pawn structure and good prospects for an attack."

13 Nh4 0-0



Exercise: How does White continue most actively?

Answer: 14 Nf5

The knight on f5 is not as strong as it looks, since Black can remove it any time with ... Bxf5, so it is not worth more than the slight advantage of a bishop pair. As V.Panov said: "One should have the patience of an angel to leave the knight at such a commanding height."

Perhaps Stein did not find the (pseudo-)sacrifice 14 Rxf6 appealing after 14 ... Be7! (grabbing the exchange with 14 ... gxf6 15 Bh6 Re8 16 Qf3 Bf8 17 Bxf8 Rxf8 18 Qxf6 gives White more than enough compensation; Rf1 is coming next) 15 Rf1 Bxh4 16 Qh5 Qe7, though White still has a slight initiative.

14 ... Be6

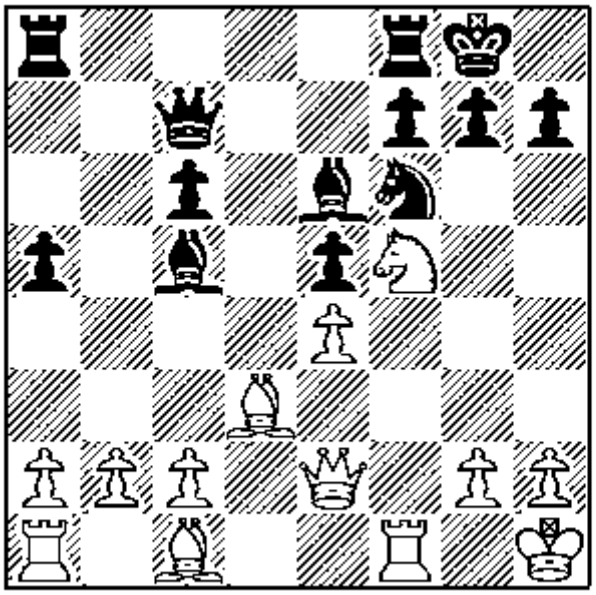
Actually, the immediate exchange 14 ... Bxf5 15 Rxf5 is fine if followed up by 15 ... Ne8. After 16 Qg4 Qe7 17 Bc4 Kh8 and ... Nd6, Black has no problems. Otherwise, 14 ... a5 or 14 ... Ne8 are more useful moves, maintaining the option to take on f5 in one move instead of two.

15 Qe2

15 Qe1 and Qg3 is a typical manoeuvre, eyeing the centre diagonally and the kingside vertically.

15 ... a5

A useful move, aiming to get rid of the isolated pawn and generate some queenside pressure after ... a5-a4 and ... Rab8, or even sometimes ... a4-a3.



Question: White has a clever move at his disposal; can you see it?

Answer: 16 Bc4!?

The main idea behind this prophylactic, and partly psychological, move is to prevent Black from securing his position by ... Ne8 and ... f7-f6.

Most "normal" players would no doubt opt to develop with 16 Bg5 Ne8 17 Rad1, but it turns out that after 17 ... f6 18 Bc4 Qf7 19 Bxe6 Qxe6, Black's defence is easy to handle. After all, what future does the g5-bishop have? Defending the b2-pawn with 20 Bc1 is too

passive a function, while 20 Be3 Bxe3 21 Qxe3 g6 gives White some small problems with his knight.

16 ... Kh8?

Despite the loss of tempo on ... Be6, this was a good moment to exchange the "Kasparov knight" with 16 ... Bxf5 17 Rxf5 and play 17 ... Ne8 followed by 18 ... Nd6.

17 Bg5 Nd7

Stein thought that this move was the decisive mistake. Instead:

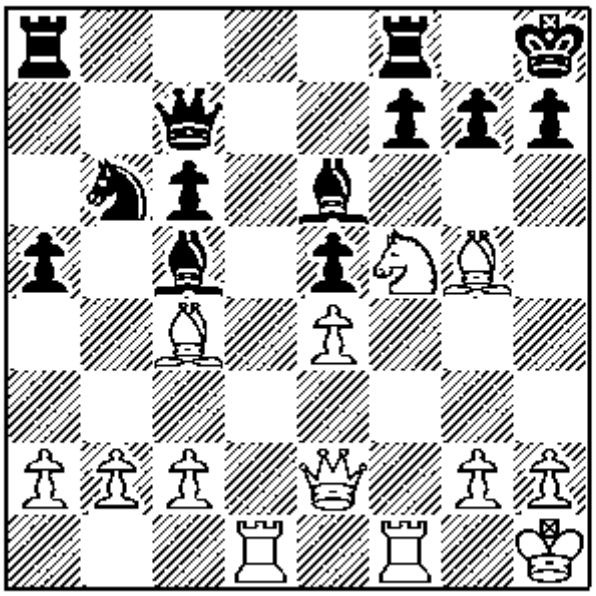
a) 17 ... Ne8? is now a mistake due to 18 Bxe6 fxe6 19 Qc4! Nd6 20 Qxc5 exf5 (or 20 ... Nxe4 21 Qe7 Qxe7 22 Nxe7 Nxg5 23 Rxf8+ Rxf8 24 Nxc6 Rc8 25 Nxa5 Rxc2 26 b4 with good winning chances) 21 exf5 Nxf5 22 Rae1 and with the superior pawn structure, strong major pieces, and bishop versus knight, White's advantage is clear.

b) 17 ... Ng8 was Stein's recommendation, but 18 Bxe6 fxe6 19 Nh4 still leaves White with the healthier pawn structure and more active pieces, securing a steady, slight advantage.

c) 17 ... Bxf5 18 Rxf5 Ne8 is again playable, if less appealing as on the previous move. After 19 Rf3 Be7 (not 19 ... f6?! 20 Rh3! fxg5?? 21 Rxh7+! and mates) 20 Bd2 Nd6 21 Rh3 g6 22 Rf1, White has definite positional pressure.

18 Rad1 Nb6?

Portisch really had to play 18 ... Bxf5 this time, despite the fact that it can now be answered by 19 exf5! (rather than 19 Rxf5?! Nb6, followed by ... f7-f6, and Black has solved his problems), when 19 ... Nb6?! 20 f6! drives an annoying wedge into Black's kingside, who faces a tough time after 20 ... g6 21 Be3 with his position literally cut into two pieces; while 19 ... f6 gives White a wonderful bishop outpost at e6.



Exercise (combination alert): What has Black overlooked with his last move?

Answer: 19 Nxg7!!

A very nice riposte, exploiting White's superiority in forces on the kingside.

19 ... Bxc4

19 ... Kxg7 leads to forced mate after 20 Bf6+ Kg6 (or 20 ... Kg8 21 Qd2! Rfb8 22 Qh6 Bf8 23 Qg5+ and mate next move) 21 Bxe6 fxe6 22 Qg4+ Kf7 23 Qh5+ Kg8 24 Qg5+ Kf7 25 Be7+ etc; and 19 ... Nxc4 20 Bf6! Kg8 21 Nxe6 fxe6 22 Qg4+ Kf7 23 Qh5+ wins in the same

way.

20 Bf6!

The main point of this beautiful combination. 20 ... Bxe2 is answered by 21 Nf5+ Kg8 22 Nh6 mate.

20 ... Be7

20 ... Nd7 fails to 21 Rxd7 Qxd7 22 Ne6+ Kg8 23 Qg4 mate, or if 21 ... Be7 then 22 Qf3 or 22 Qf2 leads to mate.

21 Qf3 1-0

Black will last for at most nine moves before he is mated; for instance, 21 ... Kg8 is mate in five beginning with 22 Ne8!. It is better to resign than be humiliated in such fashion.

This fascinating attacking game was awarded with the Interzonal's first beauty prize and was thereafter published all over the world. It is to be found in the Anthology of Chess Beauty (edited by Belov, Shakarov, Tsaturian & Vilensky), a collection of the prize-winning games in chess tournaments and matches from 1876 to 1995.

Following two draws in his next two games, Stein faced the US grandmaster Arthur Bisguier (1929-) in round fifteen. In his prime Bisguier was regarded as a "highly original grandmaster, and it's his imaginative chess that distinguishes his legacy." Interestingly, Larry Evans called Bisguier the "greatest natural player" in the 1963 US Championship, and that was the year after this game when he met another extremely gifted natural player.

Game 19
A.Bisguier-L.Stein
Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Queen's Pawn Opening

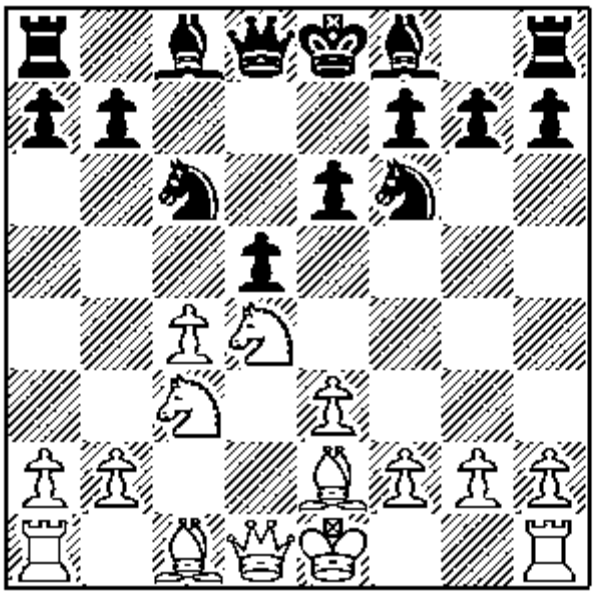
1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 c5 3 c4

3 d5 would have entered the battlefield of the Modern Benoni. Now the game takes on a more positional course with fewer forced theoretical variations, which can also arise via the English Opening.

3 ... cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 e3

A playable, albeit rather passive move, informing the opponent that the c1-bishop will most likely develop to b2. Such a non-theoretical but nonetheless sound move is typical of a so-called "natural" player. The normal continuations 5 Nc3 or 5 g3 put more pressure on the important d5-square and keep options open for the c1-bishop.

5 ... d5 6 Nc3 Nc6 7 Be2



Question: Where to develop the f8-bishop? There are four available squares.

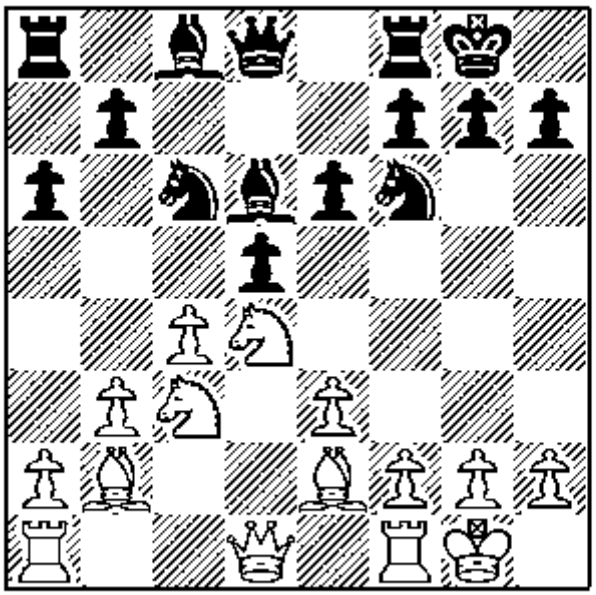
Answer: 7 ... Bd6

In fact all four developing moves – 7 ... Bb4, 7 ... Bc5, 7 ... Bd6 and 7 ... Be7 – are fully playable, but Stein's move seems the most logical given that White is planning to place his king on g1. The d6-bishop will then have some pressure on the tactical weakness at h2.

8 0-0 0-0 9 b3 a6

Black prepares to develop queen to c7 and does not want to be disturbed by a white knight at b5. Such apparently innocent moves are part of a strong build-up. Black actually reduces the activity of both white knights a little bit.

10 Bb2



Exercise: How may Black continue?

Answer: 10 ... Nxd4!?

The immediate 10 ... Qc7 is perfectly good, even though the queen is wrong-footed after 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 h3 (or 12 g3), followed by Rc1 with a slightly uncomfortable X-ray on the c-file. Either way Black will probably have to spend a tempo shifting the queen to the safer e7-square at some stage.

11 Qxd4 Qc7 12 Qh4

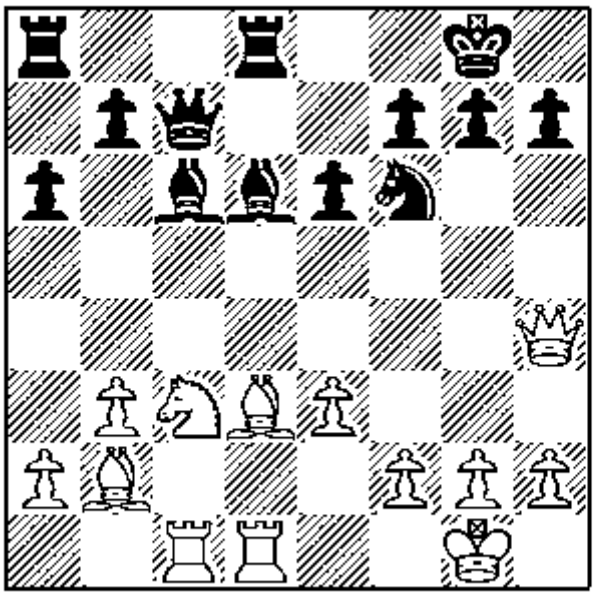
Stein's strategy is very interesting: it seems he wants to provoke Bisguier into playing more aggressively than he otherwise intended. But of course, who would move a pawn on the kingside to protect h2 when this queen shift is available.

12 ... dxc4 13 Bxc4 Rd8 14 Rfd1

14 Rac1 practically forces 14 ... Qe7 at once, since 14 ... Be7 15 Ne4! and 14 ... Bd7 15 Ne2! Bc6 16 Bxf6 gxf6 17 Nd4 are good for White.

14 ... Bd7 15 Rac1 Bc6 16 Bd3

16 Ne2 is less effective now, as Black can play 16 ... Qe7 17 Nd4 (or 17 Bd3 h6) 17 ... Be8, followed by ... Rac8 and ... h7-h6 with a harmonious position.



Exercise: How does Black continue?

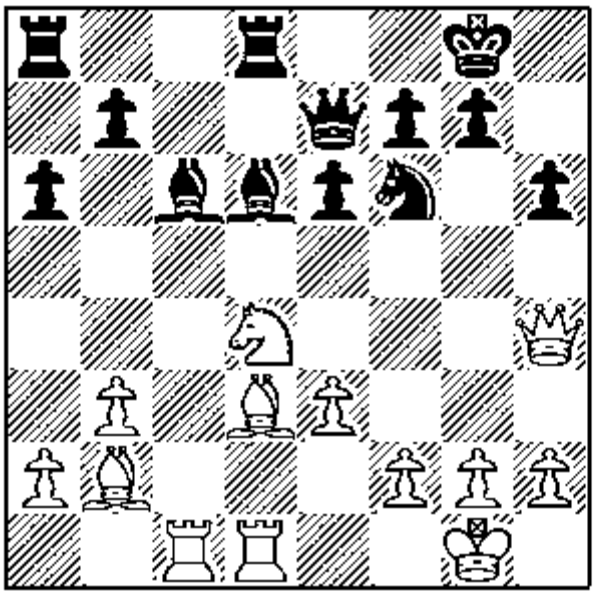
16 ... Qe7?!

Answer: 16 ... h6 17 Ne2 Qe7 is the correct move order. The text allows a strong positional response.

17 Ne2?!

Bisguier had the chance for 17 Na4!, targeting the tactical weaknesses on the kingside (h7) and the queenside (b6). After 17 ... h6 (not 17 ... Bxa4? due to 18 Bxf6 Qxf6 19 Qxh7+ Kf8 20 bxa4 Ke7 21 Qe4 with good winning chances) 18 Nb6 Rab8 19 Nc4 Bc5 (or 19 ... Bc7 20 Ne5, intending 20 ... Bb5 21 Ng4!, forces 20 ... Bxe5 21 Bxe5 Rbc8 22 Qg3, when White has the bishop pair in a fairly open position) 20 Be5 Rbc8 21 Na5 Bb5 22 Bxf6 gxf6 (not 22 ... Qxf6?? 23 Qxf6 gxf6 24 Nxb7 Rxd3 25 Rxd3 Bxd3 26 Rxc5 and wins) 23 Nc4 Kg7, White can take a draw by repetition with 24 Qg4+ Kf8 25 Qh4 etc, if that is what he wants.

17 ... h6 18 Nd4



Question: Where should Black move the c6-bishop?

Answer: 18 ... Be8!?

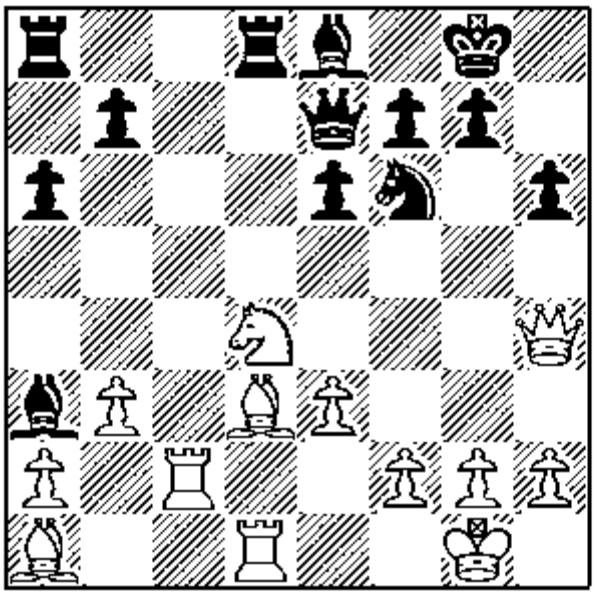
This looks a bit passive but Stein has a specific idea in mind. Otherwise, 18 ... Bd7 is the normal move. 18 ... Bd5 is also possible – despite appearances the bishop is not quite stable on d5. After 19 f3 (not 19 e4?? Nxe4 and the queen is hanging on h4) 19 ... b6 20 Nc6 Bxc6 21 Rxc6, Black can attack the weak e3-pawn with 21 ... Bc5.

19 Rc2

White wants to keep his dark-squared bishop and so avoids its potential exchange after ... Ba3. At the same time he creates the options of doubling rooks on either the d-file or the c-file. Placing one of the rooks on the second rank like this is a useful device to remember. It happens many times in the games of Petrosian and Karpov.

19 ... Ba3 20 Ba1?

An automatic move in such situation, but 20 Bc3 was both correct and more active, with ideas of Ba5.



Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation? (Warning: This is difficult!)

Answer: 20 ... Rd7?

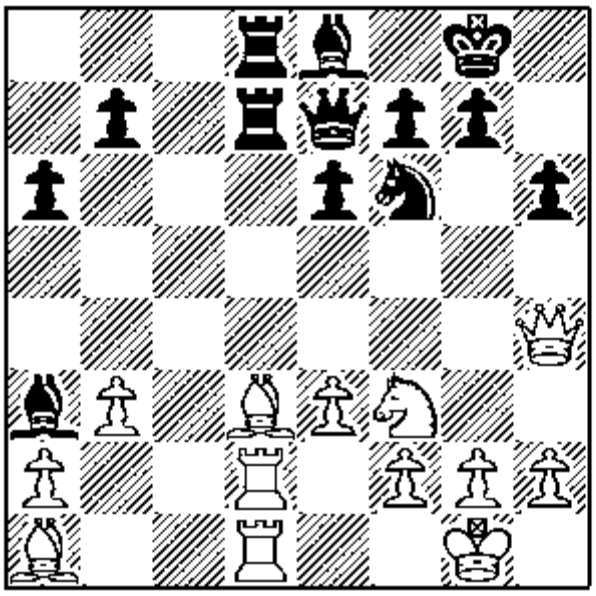
Both players apparently overlooked the strength of 20 ... e5!, exploiting the undefended rook on d1. After 21 Nf5 (both 21 Nf3 and 21 Ne2 run into 21 ... e4! and Black wins material) 21 ... Qe6 22 e4 (or 22 Rcd2 Rxd3!) 22 ... Bb5 23 Qg3 g6 24 Nxh6+ Kg7 25 Nf5+ Kf8, White is in great difficulties. The pressure on the d-file is huge and the knight is hanging on f5. Notice that if White's bishop was on c3, he would have the defence 23 Rcd2, whereas here that just loses to 23 ... Bb4!.

21 Nf3

Preventing ... e6-e5. Another possibility is 21 f4 Rad8 22 Qg3 with balanced prospects.

21 ... Rad8 22 Rcd2!?

Alternatively, White might centralize with Ne5 or Bd4 or both. One possible variation is 22 Ne5 Rd5 23 Bd4 (23 e4?! is met by the surprising 23 ... Qb4! with the back rank trap 24 Rc4?? Rxd3! 25 Nxd3 Rxd3! and Black gets two minor pieces for a rook) 23 ... Bb5 with an approximately equal position.



Exercise: How does Black continue?

Answer: 22 ... Bb4!?

Once again Stein provokes White's queen into the attack, avoiding the simplifications inherent in the line 22 ... Nd5 23 Qxe7 Nxe7 24 Ne5 Rd5 25 e4 Rc5 26 Bf1 Rxd2 27 Rxd2.

23 Bxf6

This capture is an inevitable consequence of the sequence 22 Rcd2 Bb4 which were by no means forced moves. Whether Bisguier liked it or not, he now had to attack.

23 ... gxf6

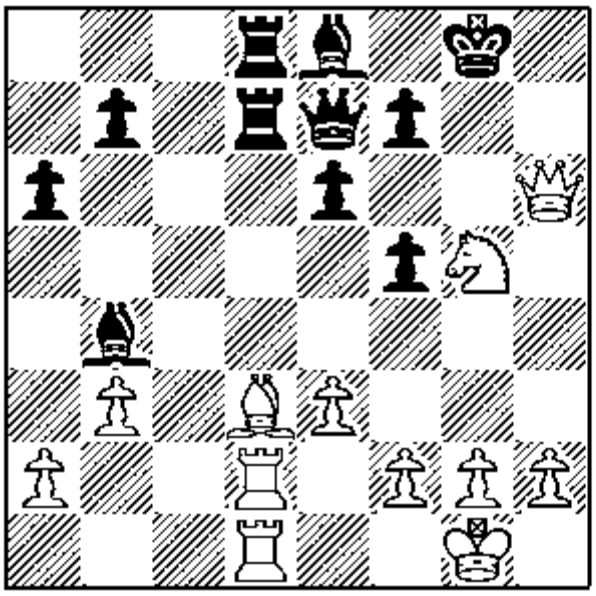
Obviously Black cannot recapture with the queen because of the hanging bishop on b4.

24 Qxh6

At the time journalists were quickly claiming that "Stein has seriously blundered and is losing the game."

24 ... f5 25 Ng5

Not 25 Ne5? Bxd2 26 Rxd2 (or 26 Nxd7 Bc3) 26 ... Rd5 27 Ng4 Rxd3 28 Nf6+ Qxf6 29 Qxf6 Rxd2 and Black has too much for the queen, while 30 h4 (planning h4-h5-h6 and mates) fails to 30 ... R8d5! 31 h5 f4! 32 h6? (or 32 Qxf4 Rd1+ 33 Kh2 Rxh5+) 32 ... Rd1+ 33 Kh2 Rh5+ and White gets mated.



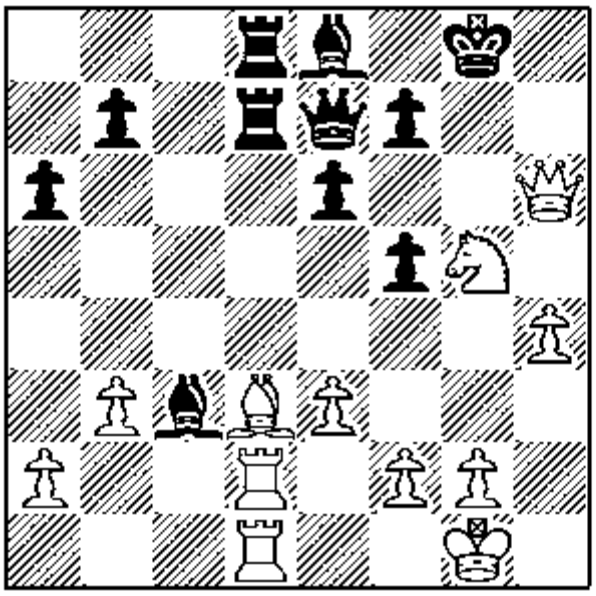
Exercise: So who is right about this position? Is it lost, won or equal?

Answer: 25 ... Bc3!

Of course Stein was very familiar with the resources of the King's Indian (or Dragon) bishop! And note that this is not only a defensive move. The Austrian grandmaster Valeri Beim asks in his wonderful book, How to Play Dynamic Chess, what exactly Bisguier might have overlooked. Beim speculates that Bisguier missed this bishop move and only reckoned with 25 ... f6? 26 Bc4! Rxd2 27 Bxe6+, when it is mate in three.

26 h4??

The losing move. He had to play 26 Qh7+ Kf8 27 Qh6+ Bg7 28 Qh4!, when the strongest continuation for Black (according to the master Oleg Moiseev) is 28 ... Qc5! (not 28 ... Bc3? again because of 29 Bf1! Rxd2 30 Rxd2 and if 30 ... Rxd2?? then 31 Nh7+ wins) 29 Qg3!, intending 29 ... Rxd3 (29 ... Qe5!? also seems to lead to a draw after 30 f4 Qc3 31 e4 fxe4 32 Nxe4 Qc7 33 Ng5 Rd4 34 Nh7+ etc) 30 Rxd3 Rxd3 31 Nh7+ Kg8 (not 31 ... Ke7?? 32 Qg5+ and White wins) 32 Nf6+ Kf8 33 Nh7+ with a draw by repetition.



Exercise: How does Black win?

Answer: 26 ... Qf6!

This was the second point behind Black's previous move. Now White's attack is over and the pressure on the d-file will decide.

27 Qh7+

After 27 Qxf6 Bxf6, the return of the bishop to c3 decides the game.

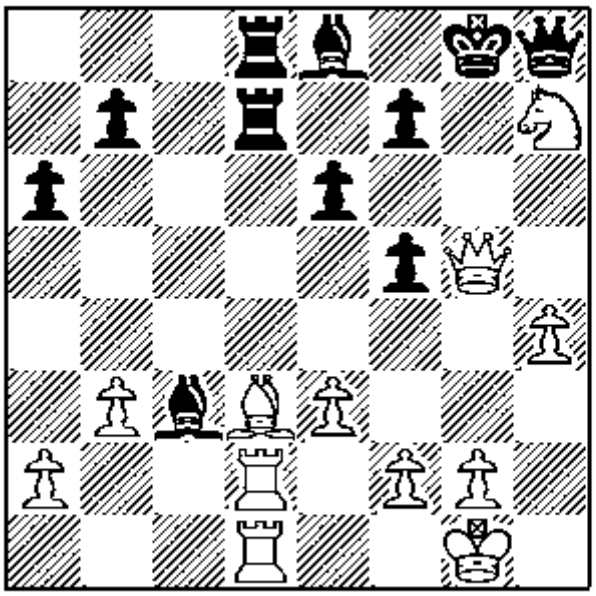
27 ... Kf8 28 Qh5 Qh8!

Black just has to avoid the knight fork on h7 to win the game so 28 ... Qg7 and 28 ... Ke7 work as well, but Stein's move is the most beautiful, utilizing the geometry of the board to its fullest effect.

29 Nh7+

Or 29 Qxh8+ Bxh8 and White cannot prevent the long move ... Bc3 winning material.

29 ... Kg8 30 Qg5+



Exercise: How does Black wrap things up?

Answer: 30 ... Qg7

He just has to avoid 30 ... Kxh7?? (or 30 ... Bg7?? 31 Nf6+ Kf8 32 Nxd7+ and wins) 31 Bxf5+! exf5 32 Qxf5+ Kg7 33 Rxd7 Rxd7 (or 33 ... Bxd7 34 Qg5+ Kh7 35 Qh5+ with perpetual) 34 Qg4+ Kf8 35 Rxd7 Bxd7 36 Qxd7, when White has three pawns for the bishop and an active queen, so the position should be a draw.

31 Rc2 Qxg5 32 Nxg5 Rxd3 0-1

In My Great Predecessors, Kasparov writes: "Leonid demonstrated his unusual vision of the board, his ability to find latent resources in a position literally out of nothing."

The following game (played in round twenty) made a really deep impression on me the first time I studied it, one beautiful day in the spring of 1989. Stein's opponent, Daniel Yanofsky (1925-2000), became Canada's first grandmaster in 1964. He won his first (of eight) Canadian Championship in 1941 when he was just 16 years old, though he was never a professional chess player. He served in the Royal Canadian Navy during World War II (1944-46) and graduated with a law degree in 1951.

Game 20
L.Stein-D.Yanofsky
Stockholm Interzonal 1962
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2

Stein varied between 3 Nd2 and 3 Nc3 when the French Defence was on the agenda. It is unusual to have both third moves in one's repertoire, since they lead to vastly different types of game. Players normally give preference to one or other move; for instance, Fischer always played 3 Nc3 (apart from one game with 3 Nd2, which he lost). The reason may have been that Stein was not an opening specialist and, at the same time, did not want his opponents to be able to prepare in depth, thus putting more emphasis on improvisation.

3 ... Nf6

This is an old variation, first played as early as the 19th century.

Another solid system is 3 ... c5 4 exd5 Qxd5 5 Ngf3 cxd4 6 Bc4 Qd6 7 0-0 Nf6 8 Nb3 Nc6 9 Nbxd4 Nxd4 10 Nxd4 a6 with good chances for equality. Instead, L.Stein-W.Uhlmann, Moscow 1967, saw 10 ... Be7 11 b3 a6 12 Bb2 0-0 13 Qf3 Qc7 14 Rfe1 b5 15 Bd3 (not 15 Qxa8? Bb7 16 Qxf8+ Bxf8 17 Be2 e5 and Black is on top) 15 ... Bb7 16 Qh3 g6? (this pawn move on the kingside is too weakening; 16 ... Rad8 is better) 17 a4! (the tempting 17 Qh6?! is met by 17 ... Nh5, intending ... Qf4; but not 17 ... Ng4?? because of the pretty stroke 18 Nf5! and wins) 17 ... bxa4 18 Rxa4 Nh5 19 Nxe6! fxe6 20 Qxe6+ Rf7 21 Bc4 Qf4?? (21 ... Bf8 is the only move, when White keeps the advantage with 22 Be5 Qe7 23 Qxe7 Bxe7 24 Bc3 Bf8 25 g4 Ng7 26 Bxf7+ Kxf7 27 Rf4+ Kg8 28 Bb4 and so forth) 22 Qxf7+ Qxf7 23 Rxe7 1-0. According to the bulletin, Stein spent only 35 minutes for the entire game. He won this exceptionally strong tournament in convincing style, a point ahead of his rivals.

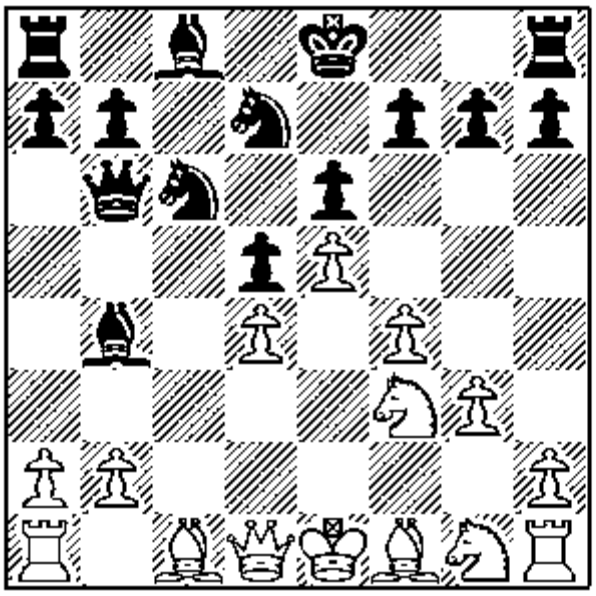
4 e5 Nfd7

In L.Stein-V.Bagirov, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963, Black tried 4 ... Ng8!?, with the aim of exploiting the weak f5-square. After the further moves 5 Bd3 c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ne2 Bd7 8 0-0 Qc7 9 Nf3 c4 10 Bc2 h6 11 Re1 0-0-0 12 b3, White had a clear advantage.

5 f4

In later games Stein opted for 5 Bd3. We saw him on the other side of this variation back in Game 1.

5 ... c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ndf3 Qb6 8 g3 cxd4 9 cxd4 Bb4+



Question: How does White react to the check?

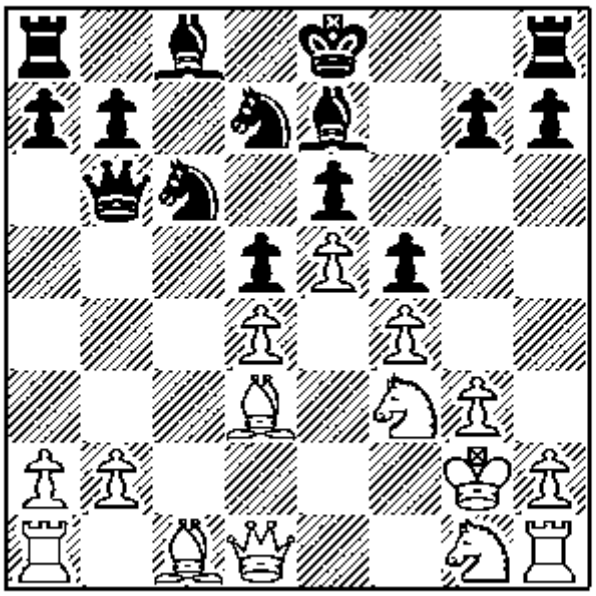
Answer: 10 Kf2

White's plan is to conduct an artificial "free castling" by moving the king to g2 as quickly as possible. This is forced in any case, since blocking the check with 10 Bd2? just loses the d4-pawn.

10 ... f6

The other way of attacking the centre is with Leonid Kaplun's idea 10 ... g5!?, intending 11 fxg5 Ndxe5 12 Nxe5 Nxe5 13 Kg2 Nc6 14 Nf3 Bf8!, though after 15 b3 Bg7 16 Bb2 Bd7 17 Rc1 h6 18 Qd2, as in B.Gruzmann-I.Glek, correspondence 1986, White may still have a slight advantage.

11 Kg2 Be7 12 Bd3 f5



Question: What is White's main plan when the centre is blocked?

Answer: After development is completed, White will concentrate on the break h2-h3 and g3-g4 to generate play on the kingside.

13 Ne2 Qd8

Question: Why this move?

Answer: The queen is misplaced on b6 and makes room for the knight instead.

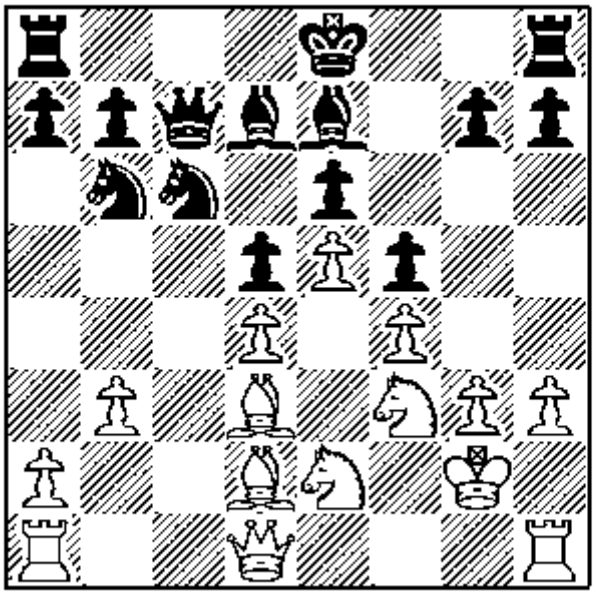
14 Bd2

The e1-a5 diagonal is the only one White's 'bad' bishop can work on at the moment. In the long run, after White has played h2-h3 and g3-g4, it may find employment on the kingside.

14 ... Nb6 15 b3

A concept favoured by Karpov. With this little pawn move the b6-knight is literally put to sleep.

15 ... Bd7 16 h3 Qc7



It is becoming obvious that Black is playing a kind of waiting game, hoping his position will be impermeable, but that is not so. White can always open lines on the kingside at a suitable moment. Keene recommends the more active 16 ... a5!.

17 g4 g6 18 Rc1 Ba3 19 Rc2 Qd8 20 Be1 Be7

Black must prevent White from establishing pressure on the h4-d8 diagonal.

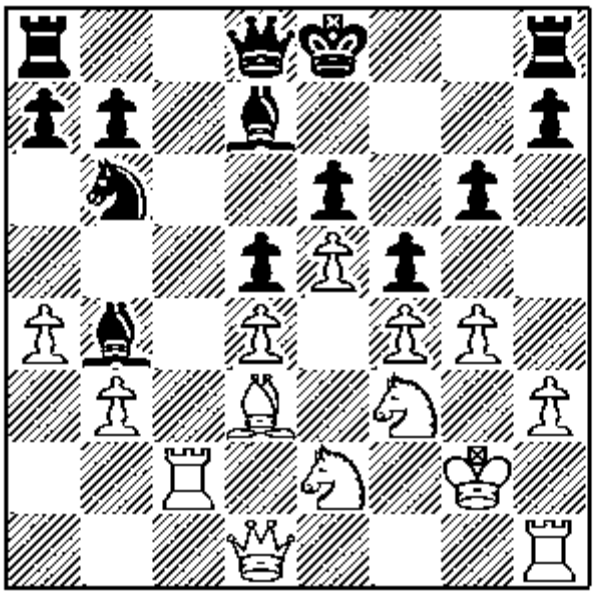
21 a4

Adopting a give and take strategy. White enjoys a certain amount of space on the queenside at the cost of giving Black the b4-square, though that is a very small concession in this kind of position.

21 ... Nb4?!

It is not clear why Black is in such a hurry to play this move. 21 ... Rc8 is more flexible, keeping ... Nb4, as well as other options, for the future.

22 Bxb4 Bxb4



Exercise: Suggest concretely how White should continue!

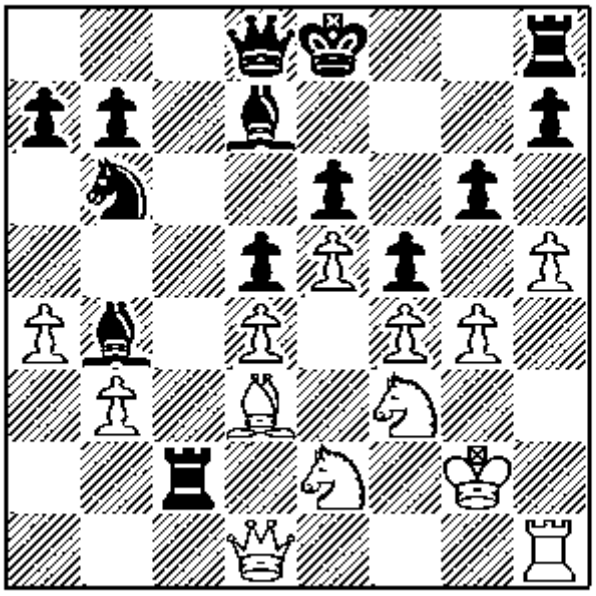
23 h4

Answer: This is actually a good moment to release the tension with 23 gxf5 gxf5 (or if 23 ... exf5 then 24 h4, intending h4-h5) 24 Ng3, followed by Nh5, Kh2, Rg1 and so forth. 24 ... h5 is answered by 25 Ng5 h4 26 Nh5, threatening Nf6+ which cannot be prevented (since 26 ... Be7?? 27 Ng7+ wins the pawn on e6 with a deadly royal fork).

23 ... Rc8

23 ... fxg4? leads to a total collapse after 24 Ng5 and h4-h5 next move.

24 h5 Rxc2



Question: How should White recapture the rook?

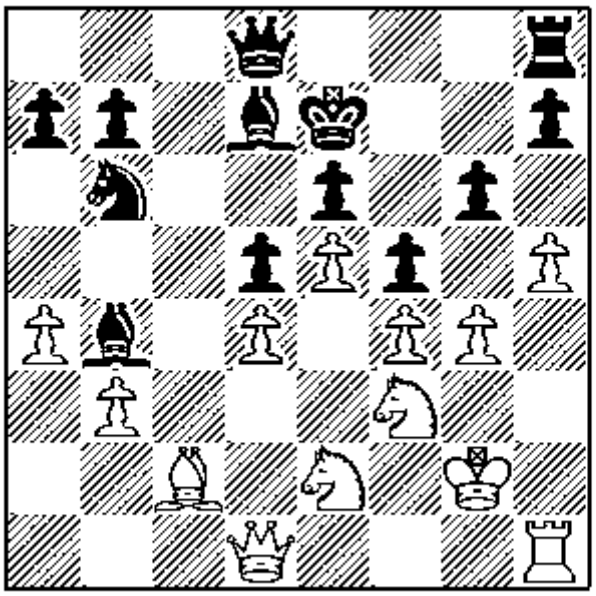
25 Bxc2?!

Answer: 25 Qxc2 is the natural and strongest move, when 25 ... Ke7 can be met by 26 Ng5! and the knight cannot be driven back because 26 ... h6? loses immediately to 27 Nxe6! Bxe6 28 hxg6 and the white infantry charge down the board. 26

... fxg4? is no good either, due to the extraordinary move 27 Bb5!, which exchanges White's good bishop for Black's bad one but, more importantly, opens the queen's path to g6 with a devastating effect on Black's weak points on the kingside.

25 ... Ke7

The best way to counter the threat of h5xg6.



Exercise: How should White proceed now?

26 Ne1

Planning to manoeuvre the knight to c5 via d3, but moving the knight from f3 lessens the pressure on the kingside somewhat.

Answer: It is better to play 26 Nc1 with the same purpose, leaving the other knight on the kingside where it gives White some important attacking options. If Stein was concerned about 26 ... fxg4 27 Ng5 h6, there was no need since 28 hxg6 hxg5 29 Nd3 is winning for White; for example, after 29 ... a5 30 Qxg4 Rxh1 31 Qxg5+! Ke8 32 Qxd8+ Kxd8 33 g7, a new queen appears on the board.

26 ... Kf7

With no knight check on g5, this is an excellent square for the black king.

27 Nd3 Be7 28 Ng3

Clearly, this knight would have been more effectively placed on f3.

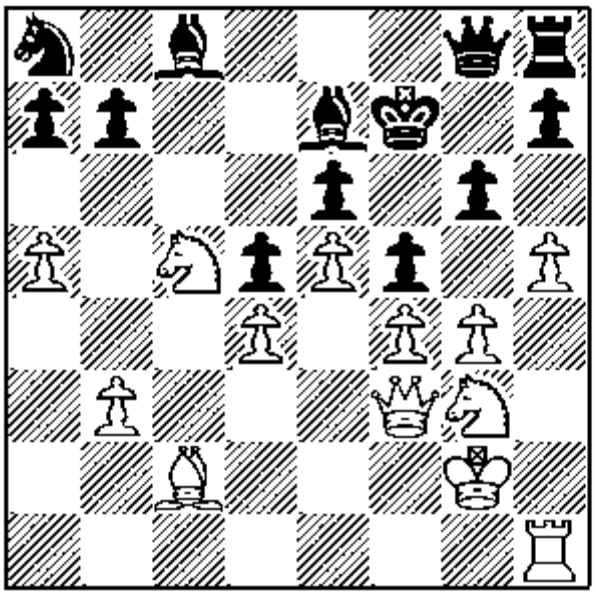
28 ... Qg8?!

The X-ray move 28 ... Bc6 is more disturbing for White, with the tactical idea of ... Nc4!, while preventing 29 Nc5? due to 29 ... Bxc5 30 dxc5 d4+.

29 Nc5 Bc8

29 ... Bxc5 30 dxc5 Nc8 is better, though White still has an edge after 31 b4 Ne7 32 Qd4!.

30 a5 Na8 31 Qf3



31 ... Nc7?!

Black should drive the strong knight away with 31 ... b6 32 axb6 axb6 33 Na4 and then play 33 ... Bd7.

32 Bd3 Ke8 33 b4 a6

Too passive, and Black will be punished.

34 Kf2

Getting out of the X-ray on the g-file.

34 ... Qf8 35 g5

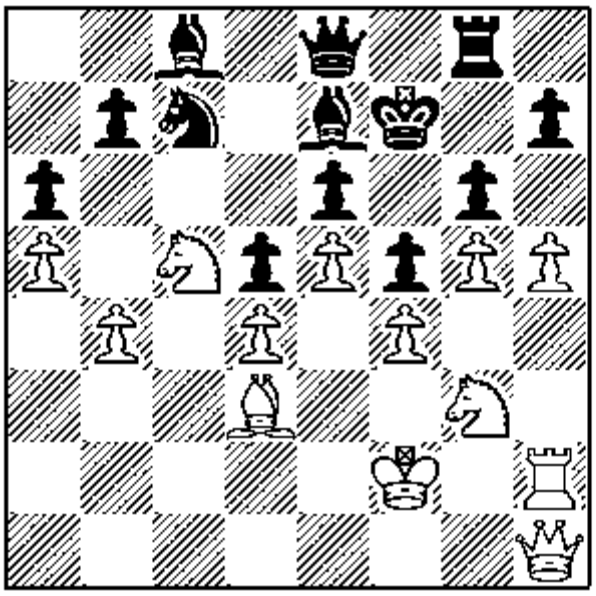
The black queen has followed the white king to the f-file, so Stein shuts it down. The front is getting smaller and smaller on the kingside, but White only needs one file for a breakthrough.

35 ... Kf7 36 Rh2

Preparing to double on the h-file with the queen behind the rook. Rather than maintain Black's presence there by protecting the rook with 36 ... Kg7, Yanofsky abandons the file at once.

36 ... Rg8 37 Qh1 Qe8?

Strictly speaking, 37 ... Ke8 is necessary.



Exercise: White now has a forced win. Can you see how?

38 Ne2?

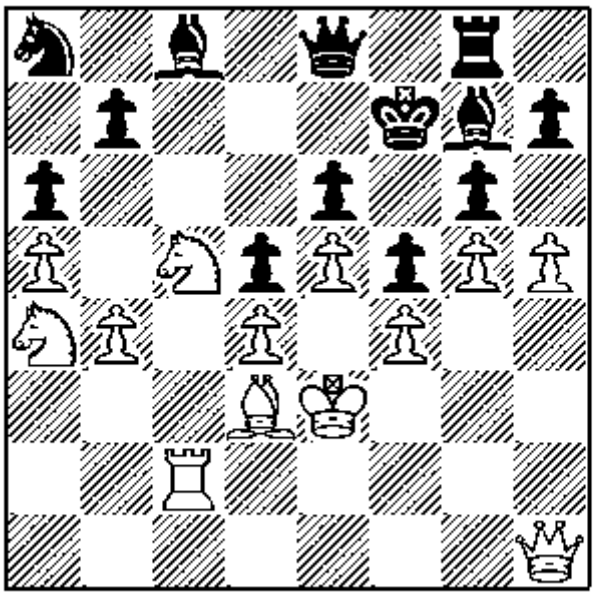
Euwe said that "An opponent who keeps manoeuvring nags like a persistent toothache" – except that here, surprisingly, White could have won at once.

Answer: Stein missed a direct win with 38 hxg6+ hxg6 39 Rh7+ Rg7 40 Rh8 Bf8 41 Qh6!, when the knight on g3 is actually in a good position, threatening the decisive Nh5! next move.

38 ... Bf8 39 Nc3 Bg7 40 Ke3

White has two lines of communication (the first and second ranks) so is able to regroup quickly and easily. In comparison, Black's severe lack of space make it difficult for him to reorganize at all.

40 ... Qc6 41 N3a4 Na8 42 Rc2 Qe8

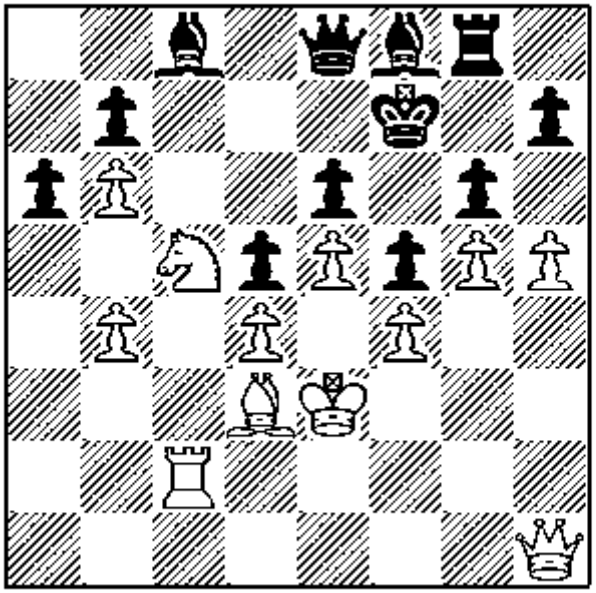


Question: How can White come closer the win?

Answer: 43 Nb6!

It seems strange to exchange Black's knight in the corner, but after the exchange White will have a deadly outpost on c7 for his rook.

43 ... Nxb6 44 axb6 Bf8



Question: Do you see White's next move?

Answer: 45 Nxb7!

White opens a second front, in accordance with the well-known "principle of two weaknesses".

45 ... Bxb7 46 Rc7+ Be7 47 Rxb7 Rg7 48 Rc7

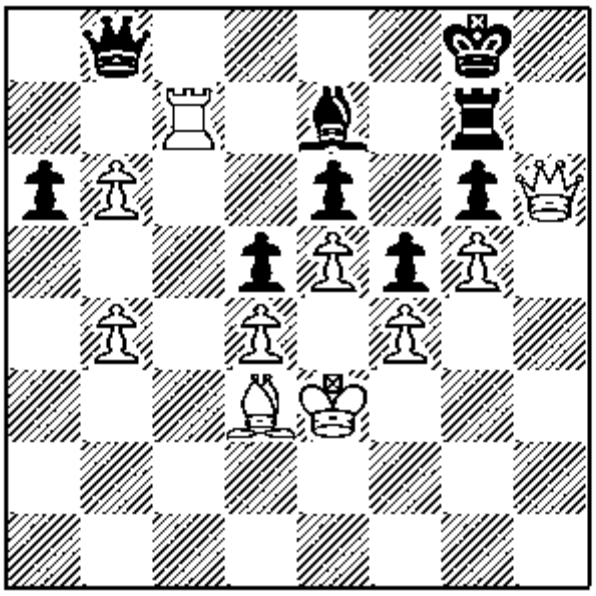
The engines prefer to win on the queenside after 48 h6 Rg8 49 Qc1 etc.

48 ... Qb8 49 hxg6+ hxg6 50 Qh6

White penetrates on the original flank.

50 ... Kg8

50 ... Qxb6 51 Rxe7+ wins a piece.



Exercise (calculation): How does White conclude the game?

Answer: 51 Rxe7! Rxe7 52 Qxg6+ Kf8

52 ... Kh8 53 Qf6+ Rg7 54 g6! is another fitting end. Black has virtually no moves, since 54 ... Qxb6 gets mated by 55 Qf8+ Rg8 56 Qh6.

53 Qf6+ 1-0

This game is very interesting to study because it shows Stein's ability to manoeuvre patiently by using the whole board, even if it was only something he (like Capablanca) did out of necessity.

Stein won again in the penultimate round, taking him to 13½ points, and a tenth win in his final game (against Olafsson) would have given him an automatic place in the Candidates tournament in Curacao. Unfortunately, Stein blundered and lost that game, and although he won the sixth-place play-off match against Benko and Gligoric – achieving, in the process, the GM title at last – it was nevertheless Benko who went through. Stein was the fourth Soviet player to qualify and, according to the FIDE "rule of three", only three from each Federation were allowed. Bad luck!

From 1956 to 1979, matches between the USSR and Yugoslavia were an almost annual event. Three days before the 1962 match it was officially announced that Stein had been awarded the title of International Grandmaster. The following complicated and exciting game is far from faultless but was still regarded as the most interesting of the match. I think the reader will agree while slowly going through the game to its grande finale.

Stein played the Yugoslav grandmaster Svetozar Gligoric (1923-2012) nine times between 1961 and 1967 and scored a phenomenal 7½/9, only slightly diminished by the fact that Gligoric (according to his excellent book, I Play Against Pieces) regarded 1956-59 as his own peak period.

Game 21
S.Gligoric-L.Stein
USSR-Yugoslavia match, Lvov 1962
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 0-0

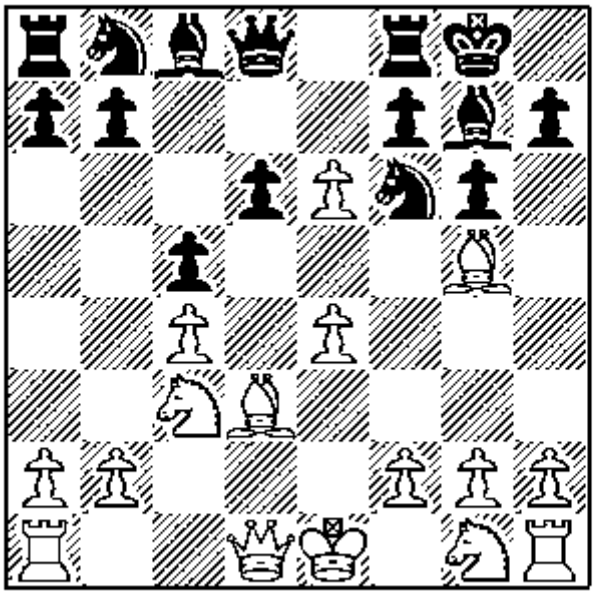
Once again Stein defers ... d7-d6 for a move or two.

5 Bg5 c5 6 d5 d6 7 Bd3

Stein's slightly unorthodox move order has had some effect. Here 7 Be2 would transpose to a main line of the Averbakh System, but Gligoric was successful on the Black side of this position, which may have influenced his decision to avoid it as White. Not that there's anything wrong with 7 Bd3.

7 ... e6 8 dxe6

With this exchange of pawns, which avoids the Benoni-type positions arising after ... e6xd5, the game takes on a very specific character. Nevertheless, 8 Qd2!? is probably objectively stronger, intending 8 ... exd5 9 exd5, when White has a clear-cut plan in Nge2, 0-0 and f2-f4-f5 (as recommended by Gufeld and Lazarev); whereas 9 Nxd5 Be6 10 Ne2 Bxd5! (before 11 Nec3 reinforces the knight) 11 exd5 (or 11 cxd5 c4!) 11 ... Nbd7 12 0-0 Ne5 saw Black equalize already and go on to win a miniature in La.Szabo-R.J.Fischer, Leipzig Olympiad 1960.



Question: How to recapture on e6?

Answer: 8 ... fxe6

This natural recapture gives Black a more compact centre, control over d5 and a half-open f-file. Not a bad profit from a single move!

Alternatively, 8 ... Bxe6 accelerates Black's development but leaves an outpost at d5 for the white knight. T.V.Petrosian-Sa.Velickovic, Vrsac 1981, continued 9 f4?! (Petrosian later gave 9 Nge2 as better, while Gufeld and Lazarev go for 9 Qd2! again) 9 ... Nc6 10 Nf3 Qb6 11 Qc1 (those of you who have read Petrosian: Move by Move know that Petrosian made these mysterious queen moves from time to time; the idea is to make room for the knight on d2, but White's queen on c1 does not harmonize with the aggressive pawn centre he has established) 11 ... Qa6 12 Nd2 Ng4 and Black had a definite advantage, though Petrosian won anyway.

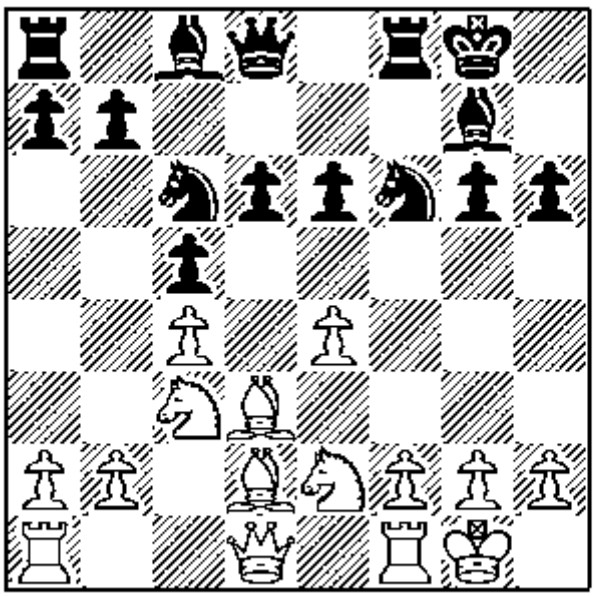
9 Nge2 Nc6 10 0-0 h6

The most direct way of removing the pin. If the bishop retreats on the h4-d8 diagonal, Black is happy after 11 Bh4 g5 12 Bg3 Nh5, followed by ... Nxg3 or even ... Nf4 with full

control of the dark squares.

Taimanov suggested the alternative method 10 ... Ne5, followed by ... Nf7, but White enjoys a comfortable edge after the natural moves 11 f4 Nf7 (not 11 ... Nxd3? 12 Qxd3 and Black has problems with the weak d6-pawn) 12 Bh4, according to Notkin. Another option is 10 ... Rf7 and ... Qf8, preparing counterplay on the dark squares, but this looks rather passive. Such recommendations might have been considered by Petrosian, but not by Stein who was a considerable more active player.

11 Bd2

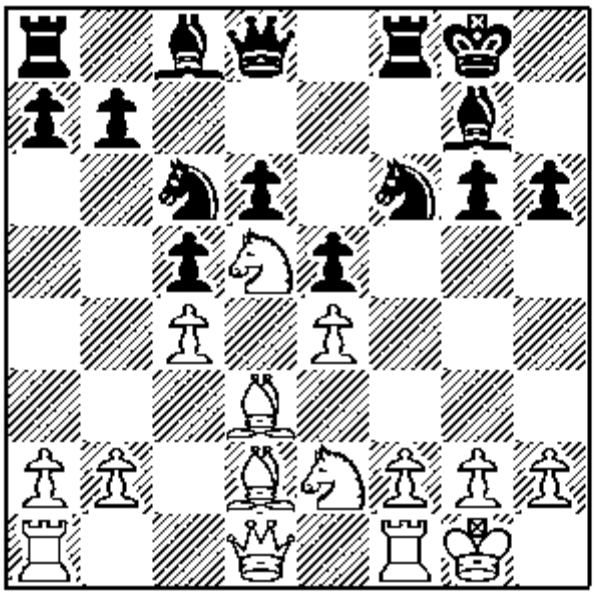


Exercise: How does Black continue?

Answer: 11 ... e5!?

A striking concept. The natural and expected move is 11 ... Ne5, when 12 Bf4, threatening Bxe5, can be met by 12 ... Nh5; for example, 13 Bc1 g5! 14 f4 gxf4 15 Nxf4 Nxd3 16 Qxd3 Bd4+ 17 Kh1 Qh4 and Black has a fine position. Stein's choice of variation is not objectively better than 11 ... Ne5, but it leads to more complicated play and shows once again that calculated risk was part of his game.

12 Nd5



Exercise: What is Black's next move and the main idea behind his set-up?

Answer: 12 ... Nd4

If we compare both sides' positions in the centre Black has a pawn on d6, while the corresponding white pawn is located on f2. This is advantageous for Black in the sense that, when White exchanges on d4, Black will establish a passed pawn on that square; whereas after Black exchanges on d5, White's resulting pawn will be blocked. On the other hand, White has the only central pawn break in f2-f4, which he quickly plays.

13 Nxd4

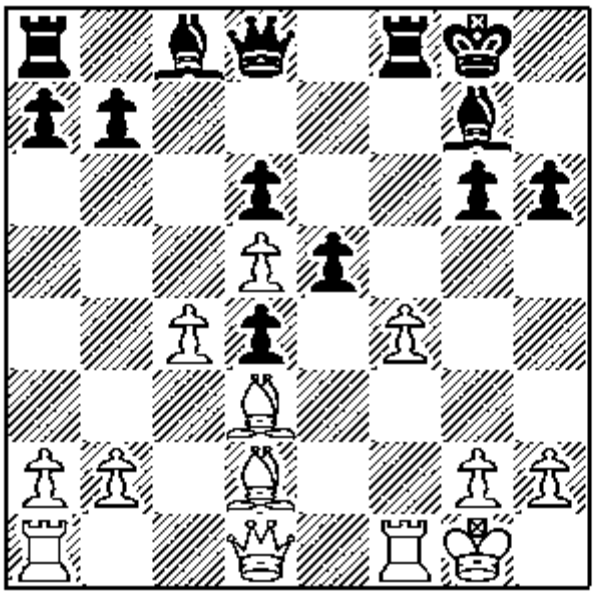
Black's knight is so strong that White must exchange it sooner or later. Nimzowitsch used to say that centralized pieces have a tendency to be exchanged. If White leaves it alone and tries 13 b4 instead, Black is fine after 13 ... Nxd5 14 cxd5 Bg4 15 f3 Bxf3! 16 gxf3 Nxf3+ 17 Rxf3 Rxf3 18 Nc1 Qf6 19 bxc5 Rf8 with the deadly threat of ... Rf2 followed by ... Qh4.

13 ... cxd4

Okay, Black now has a passed pawn, but it is heavily blockaded for the moment, with one blockader on d3 and two reserves on d2 and d1.

14 f4 Nxd5 15 exd5?!

It is better to recapture to the centre with 15 cxd5. After 15 ... Qe7 16 Qb3, White enjoys a slight advantage because the aggressive f-pawn gives him more active possibilities, whereas Black's related pawn sits passively on d6.



Question: White has some pressure on the b1-h7 diagonal. How can Black solve this easily?

Answer: 15 ... Bf5 16 Qc2 Qd7

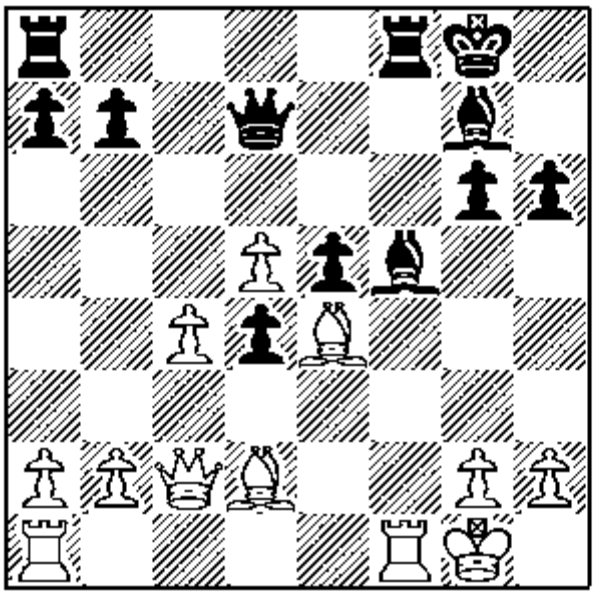
Black's positional threat is to exchange on d3 and then play ... Qf5, when ... e5-e4 is unstoppable.

17 fxe5

White might also try 17 Rae1 and if 17 ... Bxd3 18 Qxd3 Qf5 then 19 Re4, threatening f4xe5.

17 ... dxe5 18 Be4

By exchanging on e5 White's has turned his d5-pawn into a passed pawn, but now both of Black's centre pawns are passed, even if they are securely blockaded for the moment. The main motivation for playing 15 exd5 was to secure the e4-square. This is what Gligoric said about the position: "Stein was a formidable tactician and ready for games with the highest and longest lasting tension. If I entered such a position with a bunch of passed pawns on both sides, I must have believed that I had an advantage because of my control over the light squares."



Exercise: How does Black continue?

Answer: 18 ... Rf6!

Stein certainly knew how to play with his rooks in the most efficient manner! Black's logical plan is to double or even triple on the f-file, in the spirit of Alekhine's cannon where the queen is placed behind the rook pair. As Gligoric wrote: "Stein's move illustrates that things were not as simple as that which I wrote after my 18th move."

The natural continuation 18 ... Rac8 19 b3 b5 is rather pointless, as after 20 Rac1 bxc4 21 bxc4 Bxe4 22 Qxe4 Rxf1+ 23 Rxf1! Qd6 24 Rc1, White now has two passed pawns as well and his pieces are qualitatively better than their black counterparts.

19 Rf3!

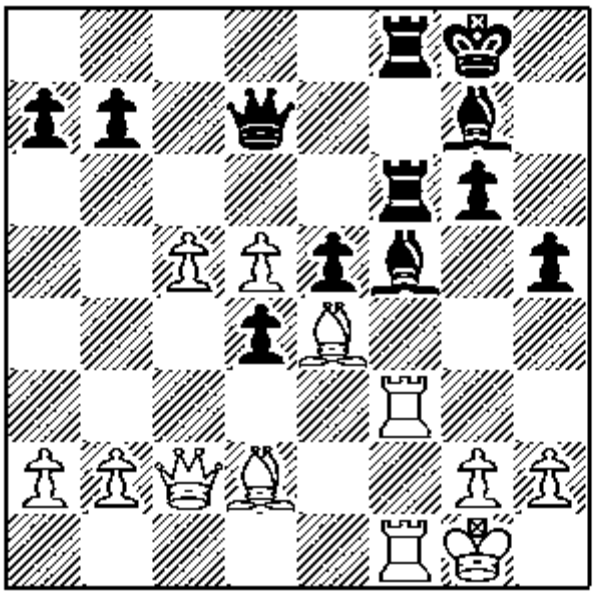
White follows suit and tensions arise both on the f-file and between the light-squared bishops.

19 ... Raf8 20 Raf1 h5

In this position it is of no use playing 20 ... Qc8, with the future plan of tripling major pieces, because White has already defended against an intrusion on the f-file by securing his rook at f3.

21 c5

White plays the most principled continuation, advancing his pawn majority. 21 Bg5 leads to an even position after 21 ... Bxe4 22 Qxe4 Rxf3 23 Rxf3 Rf5.



Exercise: What is Black's most active reply?

Answer: 21 ... Qb5!

A beautiful move, utilizing the potential in the d4-pawn. Black's threat is to win material with 22 ... d3!.

22 Bxf5

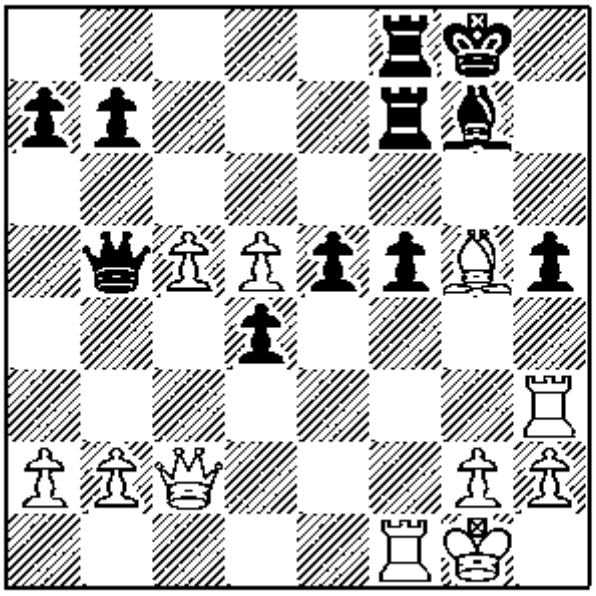
Here 22 a4 Bxe4 23 Qxe4 Rxf3 24 Rxf3 leads to equality again. It does not even matter which of three pawns Black takes with his queen, the position is surprisingly dead level anyway. There is no question that Gligoric wanted to win this game too!

22 ... gxf5 23 Bg5

Of course not 23 Rxf5?? d3 and Black wins.

23 ... R6f7 24 Rh3

24 a4 Qe8 only helps Black's queen to a better defensive post.



The position has become very sharp and, objectively, it is in White's favour. His

immediate threat is Qd1 and Qxh5 with a decisive attack. On the other hand, this kind of risky chess, weakening the king for a central pawn mass, is exactly the imbalance Stein wants – a complicated game where both players can go wrong!

Exercise (calculation of variations): What is Black's strongest continuation?

Answer: 24 ... Qe8?

This is not the sort of position where you can afford the luxury of passive moves. The direct 24 ... e4 25 Qd1 d3 is therefore better, even if it looks risky. For example, after 26 Qxh5 Bd4+ 27 Kh1 Qd7 28 Bh6 Rh7 29 Qg5+ Bg7 30 d6 (or 30 Bxg7 Qxg7 31 Qf4 Qf6) 30 ... Qd8 31 Qf4 Qf6 32 Bg5 Qe6, it is difficult to see how White can capitalize on his sole advantage, the more vulnerable black king.

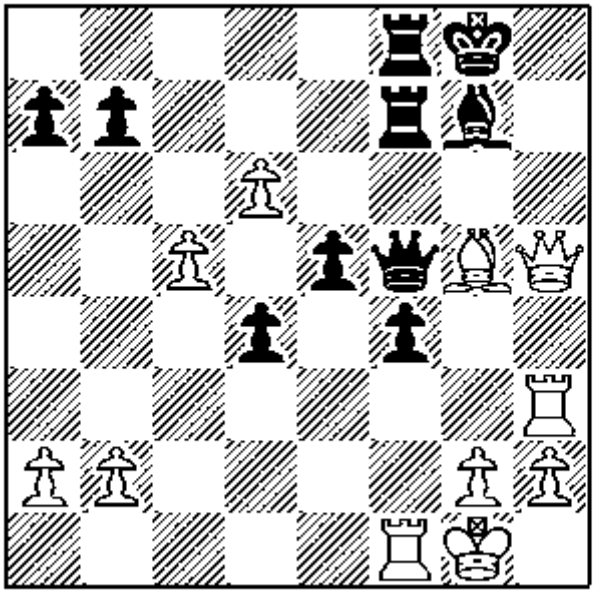
25 d6?!

25 Qb3, followed by 26 d6, is more precise, preventing Black from posting his queen strongly at e6.

25 ... Qe6! 26 Qd1 f4

Gligoric's suggestion of 26 ... Qg6 fails to 27 Be7! and White wins material, either directly or after Qb3 and d6-d7.

27 Qxh5 Qf5



28 g4?

Here, too, 28 Be7! is very strong. After 28 ... Qxh5 29 Rxh5 Re8 30 Kf2! e4 (or 30 ... Rexe7 31 dxe7 Rxe7 32 Kf3, intending Ke4, or 32 ... e4+ 33 Kxf4 and White is winning) 31 Ke1!, the white pawns are more dangerous. The bishop on e7 cuts Black's lines of communication, while White can calmly improve with moves like Rd5 or b2-b4-b5 etc.

28 ... Qe4

This is not the black queen's only safe square on the b1-h7 diagonal. 28 ... Qc2 is also possible, when 29 Rf2 Qb1+ 30 Rf1 Qc2 leads to a draw by repetition, but of course Stein was not interested in that.

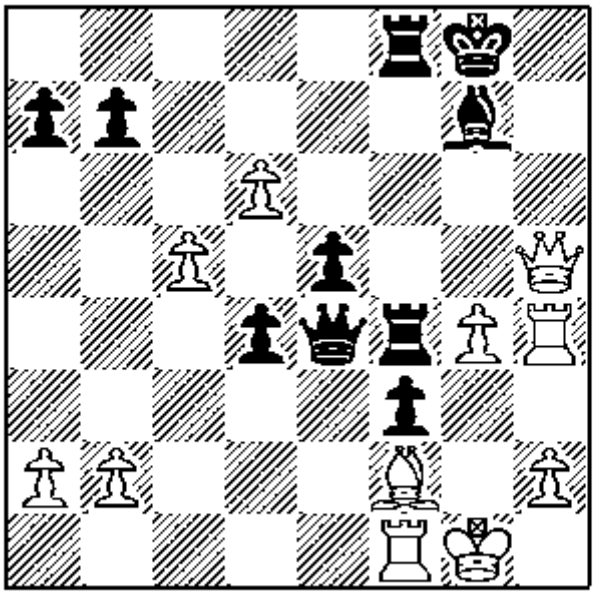
29 Bh4

Now 29 Be7?? leads to an immediate disaster after 29 ... f3! 30 Bxf8 f2+ 31 Rxf2 Qe1+ and mates.

29 ... f3 30 Bf2

Preventing the black pawn from advancing to f2 once and for all.

30 ... Rf4 31 Rh4



Exercise: How should Black continue?

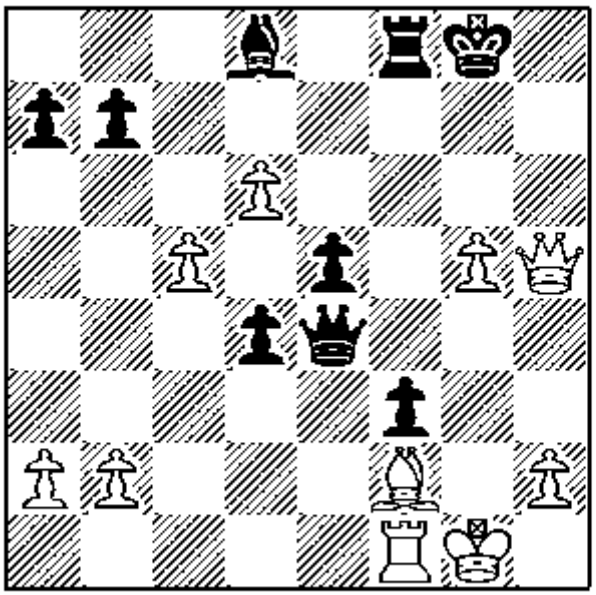
31 ... Bf6??

Answer: 31 ... R8f7 is correct, giving the king an escape square on f8. Black can safely answer 32 Re1 with 32 ... Qd5 (but not 32 ... Qc2?? 33 d7!).

32 g5??

Surprisingly, Gligoric misses another chance to win the game: 32 Re1! (found by Mr. Bob Long) 32 ... Qc2 33 d7!, when there is little Black can do about the decisive plan of Rh3 and g4-g5-g6 etc. If 33 ... Bxh4 34 Qxh4 Qg6 (or 34 ... Re4 35 Rf1 and the d-pawn promotes) 35 h3 Qf6, then 36 Qh5 e4 37 Qd5+ and White wins.

32 ... Rxh4 33 Bxh4 Bd8 34 Bf2

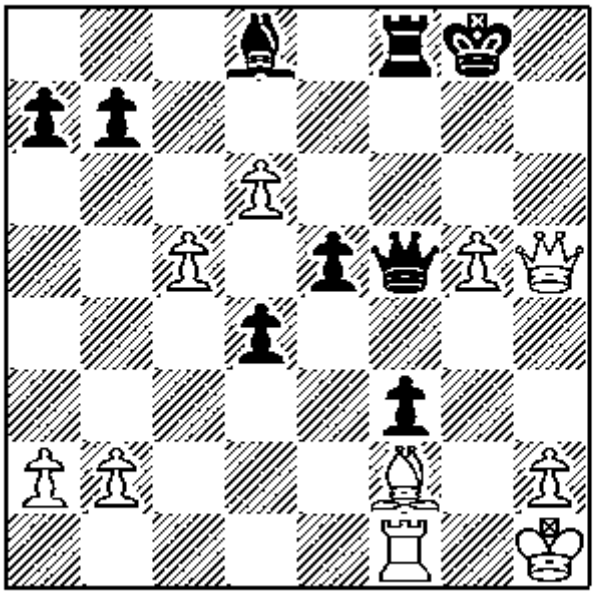


Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation?

Answer: 34 ... Qf5!

Here 34 ... Rf7?, threatening ... Bxg5, is a mistake due to 35 g6 Rg7 36 Bg3! Rxg6 37 Qxf3 Qxf3 38 Rxf3 and White is winning since he has the opposing passed pawns under control.

35 Kh1



Exercise: What should Black play now?

35 ... Kg7??

An inexplicable move, proving how difficult this position is, even for a great player like Stein.

Answer: Black had two routes to an equal position:

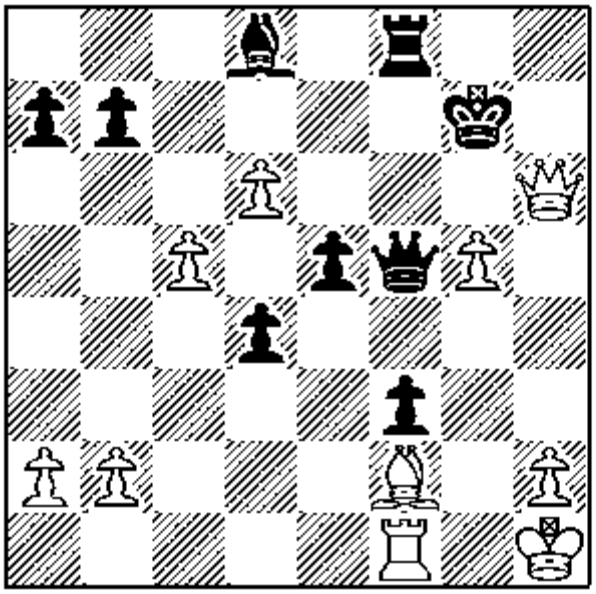
a) 35 ... d3 36 b4 d2 (threatening ... Qd3) 37 Rg1 e4 and now:

a1) 38 Qh6 Rf7 39 g6 Rg7 40 Bd4 (or 40 Qxd2 Rxg6 41 Rxg6+ Qxg6 42 Qd5+ Kf8 43 Bg3 Qf6 44 Qd2 and the position is level) 40 ... Bf6 41 Bxf6 Qxf6 42 Qh3 Rxg6 (or 42 ... f2 43 Qc8+ Qf8 44 Qe6+ etc) 43 Qc8+ Kg7 44 Qd7+ Qf7 45 Rxg6+ Kxg6 46 Qg4+ with perpetual check.

a2) 38 Be3 f2 39 Rf1 (39 Bxf2?? runs into 39 ... e3! with the deadly threat of 40 ... Qe4+) 39 ... a6 40 Rxf2 (or 40 Kg2 Rf7!) 40 ... Qf3+! 41 Qxf3 Rxf3 42 Rxd2 Rxe3 43 h4 and although Black's bishop is without a single square to move to, the position is a technical draw after 43 ... Rh3+ 44 Rh2 Rg3 45 Rg2 Rh3+ and so forth.

b) 35 ... Ba5 is equally good, activating the bishop after 36 a3 Bd2, where it puts pressure on the g5-pawn and threatens, at the right moment, to use the e3-square as an outpost. White can continue to build up his pawn majority with 37 b4, but after 37 ... a6, it is hard for either side to make progress; the position is completely equal. Perhaps the most forcing variation is 38 d7!? Bf4! (not 38 ... Qxd7? 39 g6! and Black is unable to handle all the threats) 39 Rg1 Qxd7 40 g6 Rf6!, preventing White from achieving his goal with 41 g7?? because of 41 ... Rh6 and wins. The bishop manoeuvre from d8-a5-d2 is very interesting, improving Black's position while securing equality.

36 Qh6+



Exercise: Which of the two king moves is playable?

Answer: 36 ... Kf7

Going back with 36 ... Kg8? loses material after the forced sequence 37 g6 Qd7 38 g7 Qxg7 39 Rg1. Clearly, Black must avoid this at all cost.

37 Rg1 Qg6 38 Qh3 Kg8

So the king has to return after all. It is no better trying to run with 38 ... Ke8, as after 39 b4 a6 (or 39 ... Rf5 40 Qh8+ Kc8 41 h4, followed by Kh2!) 40 Qc8 Rf7 41 Re1 Qf5 42 Qxf5 Rxf5 43 h4, White consolidates his kingside with a technically winning position. The king advances to g4, combined with the pawn pushes a2-a4 and b4-b5, when the queenside pawns will be overwhelming.

39 b4 d3

Or if 39 ... a6 then 40 a4 and 41 b5.

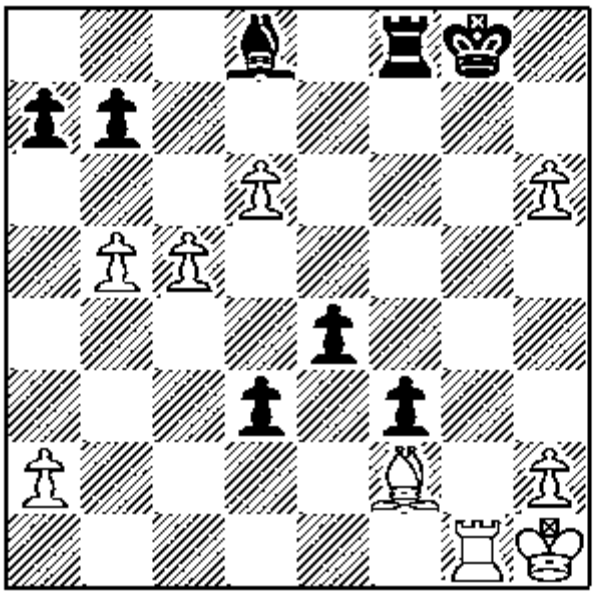
40 b5 e4

Black has improved the placement of his passed pawns which now have the configuration of an upside-down triangle.

41 Qh6??

The key move, but at the wrong moment. Instead, 41 c6! bxc6 42 bxc6 e3 (or 42 ... Qxd6 43 g6 Qc7 44 g7 etc) and only now 43 Qh6! is winning for White, who is then able to capture safely on e3. The immediate 43 Bxe3? is answered by 43 ... f2! 44 Rf1 Qe4+ 45 Qg2 Qxe3 46 c7 Bxc7 47 dxc7 d2 with a draw; for example, 48 Qc6 Qh3 49 Qc4+ Kg7 50 Qd4+ Kg6 51 Qe4+ Kxg5 52 Qg2+ and so on.

41 ... Qxh6 42 gxh6+



Exercise: Once again, where should Black move his king: f7 or h7?

42 ... Kh7??

Answer: "Correct was 42 ... Kf7! getting closer to White's passed pawns." (Gligoric), when the game should be drawn. For example:

a) 43 c6? loses to the pretty variation 43 ... Bb6! 44 d7 bxc6 45 bxc6 e3 46 Bxe3 Bxe3 47 c7 f2 48 Rf1 Rg8 49 Rxf2+ (or 49 h4 Rg1+ 50 Kh2 Rxf1 51 d8Q Rh1+! and mates) 49 ... Bxf2 50 h4 Rg1+ 51 Kh2 Bg3+ 52 Kxg1 Bxc7 with an easy win.

b) 43 h7 Ke6! 44 Rg6+! Kd5 45 Be3 d2 46 Rg1 Rh8 47 Rd1 Kc4! (the h7-pawn will not run away) 48 Rxd2 (not 48 a4? Kd3! 49 Bxd2 Kc2 50 Re1 Kxd2 51 Rxe4 Rxh7 and Black wins) 48 ... Kxb5 49 Rb2+ Kc6 50 Rb4 Rxh7 51 Rxe4 b6 52 cxb6 Bxb6 and after the exchange of bishops, the rook ending is an easy draw.

c) 43 Be3 Ke6 44 h7 f2! (not 44 ... Bf6? 45 Rg4!) 45 Bxf2 Rh8 46 Rg6+ Kf5 47 Rg1 Ke6 with a draw as both sides have to maintain the status quo. Black must prevent c5-c6, so the king must go to e6, while White must control the d3-pawn with the rook.

43 Be3?

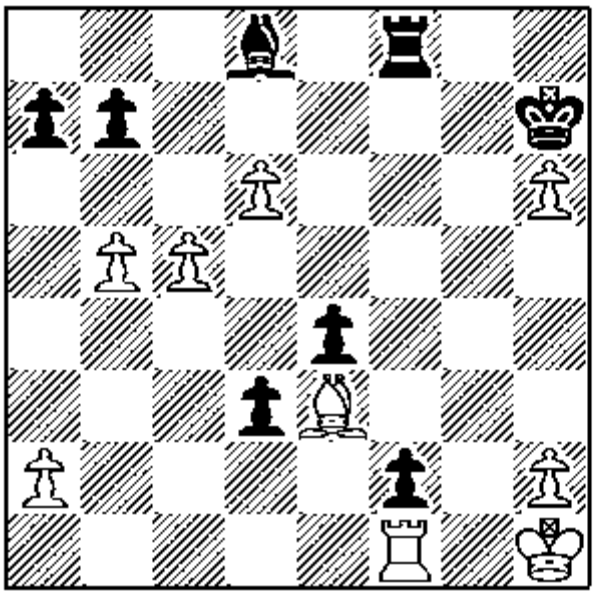
Gligoric: "Although the time control was over I continued to play quickly." Here the game was adjourned and Stein sealed his move.

Again, White can win with the straightforward 43 c6! bxc6 44 bxc6 Rf6 (or 44 ... Bb6 45 Bxb6! axb6 46 d7 f2 47 c7, followed by a deadly promotion) 45 c7 Bxc7 46 dxc7 Rc6 47 Be3 Rxc7 48 Rc1 Rb7 49 Kg1 and Black can do nothing to prevent the regrouping Bd2 and Kf2-e3 with fatal pressure on the base of the pawn chain. This is the main disadvantage having the pawns in this formation, it is easier for the opponent to set up a blockade.

43 ... f2!

Gligoric: "The game was adjourned, and that was Black's very good sealed move. The rest of the game is the result of better home analysis on Stein's side."

44 Rf1



44 ... Ba5!

Gligoric: "The secret of the move, executed at the board, is that none of the two players can be active without being punished for it."

White's adjournment analysis concentrated on 44 ... Rf6?, preventing c5-c6 and establishing two passed pawns on the sixth rank. Then 45 Kg2? leads to a draw after 45 ... Rg6+ 46 Kh3 (not 46 Kxf2?? Bh4 mate) 46 ... Rxh6+ 47 Kg4 Rf6 48 h4 Rg6+ 49 Kf5 b6 50 Kxe4 bxc5 51 Kxd3 Rxd6+ 52 Ke2 a6 53 a4 axb5 54 axb5 Re6 55 Rxf2 Rb6 and so forth. But Gufeld and Lazarev analyse 45 h4!, followed by h4-h5 and Kg2, and White is winning.

45 c6??

White must have forgotten that the b6-square now becomes available.

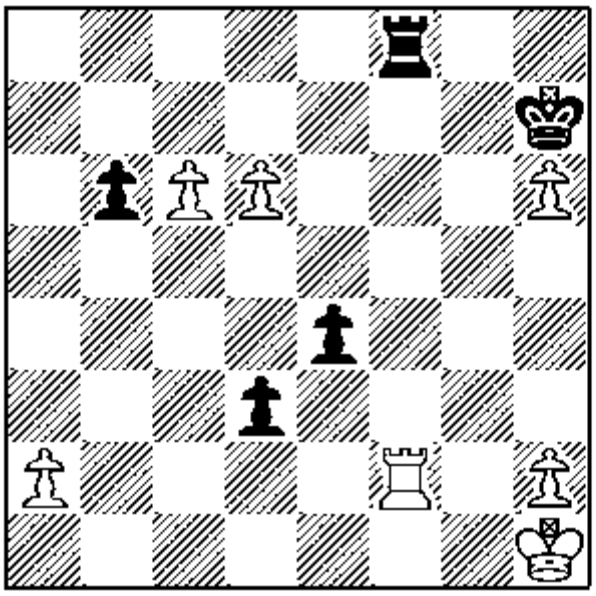
After 45 d7, Gligoric annotates: "The logical continuation was 45 ... Bd8! (45 ... d2? does not work because of 46 Bxd2 Bxd2 47 Rxf2!) 46 Kg2 Rg8+ 47 Kh3 Rf8! with a repetition of moves." After 48 Kg4 Bc7 49 a4 Rf7 50 c6 bxc6 51 bxc6 a5 52 Bg5 Kg6, White cannot improve his position.

However, White might yet have triumphed: 45 Kg2! Be1 (or 45 ... d2 46 Rd1! Rf3 47 Bxf2 Rc3 48 Rxd2 e3 49 Bxe3 Rxe3 50 d7 Bd8 51 Rf2! etc) 46 c6 d2 47 Bxd2 Rg8+ 48 Kh3 Bxd2 49 Rxf2 Bb4 (or 49 ... e3 50 Re2) 50 Rf7+ Kxh6 51 Rf6+ Kg7 52 c7! Bxd6 (or 52 ... Rh8+ 53 Kg4 Ba5 54 Rf2!, followed by Rc2) 53 Rxd6 Rc8 54 Rd7+ Kf6 55 Kg2 and the rook endgame is winning for White.

45 ... bxc6 46 bxc6 Bb6! 47 Bxb6

After 47 c7 Bxe3, Black wins in a familiar way: 48 d7 Rg8! 49 h4 (or 49 Rxf2 Bxf2 50 h4 Rg1+ 51 Kh2 Bg3+ 52 Kxg1 Bxc7 etc) 48 ... Rg1+ 50 Kh2 Rxf1 51 d8Q Rh1+! 52 Kg3 Rg1+ 53 Kh2 Bf4+ (or 53 ... f1N+ 54 Kh3 Rg3 mate) 54 Kh3 f1B mate.

47 ... axb6 48 Rxf2



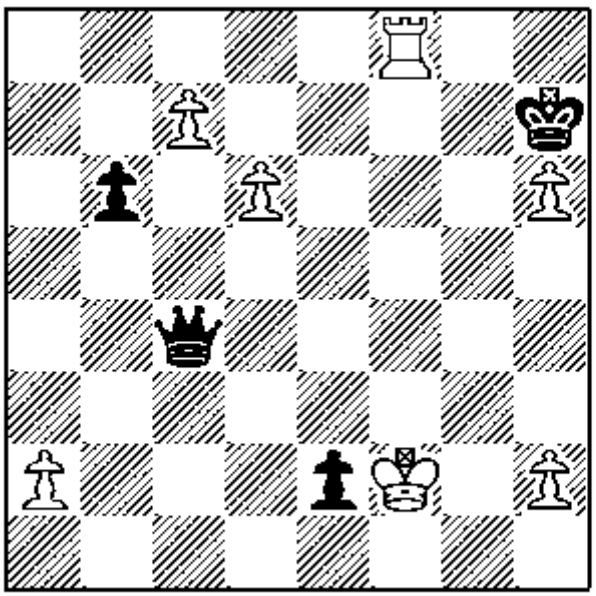
Exercise (combination alert): Black has a surprising move. Can you discover it?

Answer: 48 ... e3!!

"A move of rare beauty," said Averbakh. Gligoric said something similar: "This move is like a chess study. Black is gaining a vital tempo regardless of the lost material."

As a matter of fact the prosaic variation 48 ... Rxf2 49 d7 d2 50 d8Q Rf1+ 51 Kg2 d1Q wins too, but it allows a huge number of checks. Look at this: 52 Qe7+ Kxh6 53 Qe6+ Kg7 54 Qe7+ Rf7 55 Qe5+ Rf6 56 Qe7+ Kg6 57 Qxe4+ Kf7 58 Qh7+ Kf8 59 Qh8+ Ke7 60 Qg7+ Ke6 61 Qg8+ Kf5 62 Qh7+ Rg6+ and Black finally has his check!

49 Rxf8 d2 50 c7 d1Q+ 51 Kg2 Qg4+ 52 Kf1 Qc4+ 53 Kg2 e2 54 Kf2



Question: Can you spot Black's winning move?

Answer: 54 ... Qe6! 55 Ke1 Qxd6 56 Rh8+

White does not have time for 56 c8Q on account of 56 ... Qd1+ 57 Kf2 e1Q+ 58 Kg2 Qg1+

59 Kh3 Qh5 mate, so he sets a final trap.

56 ... Kg6

Avoiding the suicidal 56 ... Kxh8?? 57 c8Q+ Kh7 58 Qc2+ Kxh6 59 Qd2+ and White turns the tables.

57 Rg8+ Kh5 0-1

Despite the errors from both sides, this must be regarded as one of Stein's 'immortal' games.

Stein's overall score in the match was 3½/5 on board six, with three wins, one loss and one draw.

Game 22
I.Birbrager-L.Stein
USSR Championship semi-final, Sverdlovsk 1963
King's Indian Defence

Isaak Birbrager (1935-) was Uzbeki champion in 1963 and 1964. He was ranked 225th in the world in 1968, according to Chessmetrics, with a highest estimated rating of 2483.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 Bg4

The main aim of this variation is to put rapid pressure on the d4-pawn. Its main exponents today are Azeri GMs Gadir Guseinov and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, and the young Spanish GM David Antón Guijarro.

7 0-0

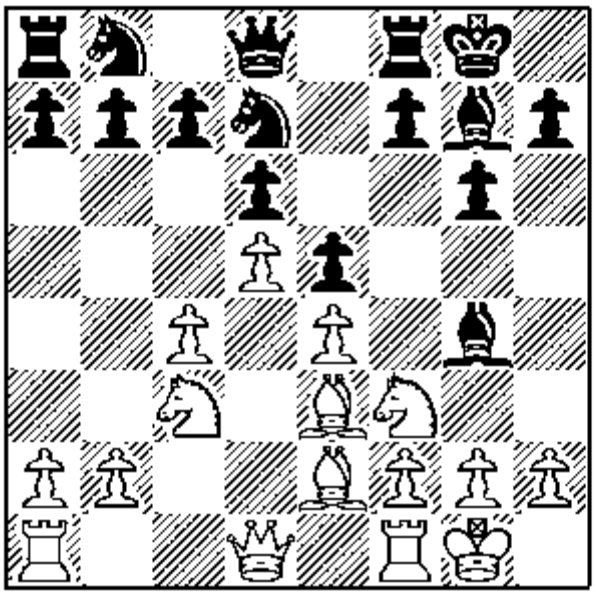
The best way of meeting the pending pressure on the dark squares is by playing 7 Be3 first, after which 7 ... Nfd7 8 Rc1 is regarded as a critical continuation. We will see Stein on the White side of this position in Game 34.

7 ... Nfd7 8 Be3 e5

Here 8 ... c5 and 8 ... Nc6 are the main moves, continuing to attack the d4-pawn without, as yet, closing the long dark diagonal. However, Stein was less averse to blocking the King's Indian bishop.

9 d5

9 dxe5 is more dangerous than it looks, but 9 ... Bxf3 10 Bxf3 dxe5 (the quiet 10 ... Bxe5 is also okay) 11 Qb3 Nc6! (after 11 ... b6 12 Qa4 c6 13 Rad1, Black had serious problems in N.Rossolimo-A.Medina Garcia, Malaga 1970) 12 Qxb7 Nd4 should give Black sufficient compensation for pawn.



Exercise: How does Black continue?

Answer: 9 ... Bxf3

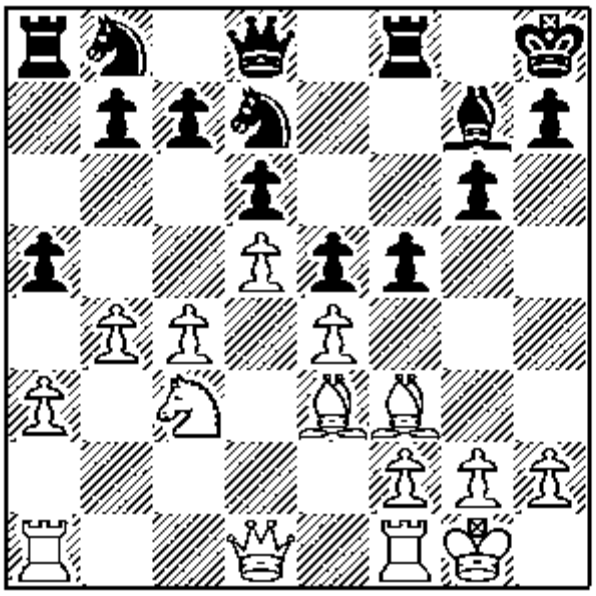
Black is not obliged to take on f3 at once. Another option is 9 ... a5, preparing ... Na6-c5. The drawback is that White can then play 10 Ne1!, offering the light-squared bishop instead while sending the knight to the excellent d3-square. After 10 ... Bxe2 11 Qxe2 f5 12 f3 Na6 (or 12 ... f4 13 Bf2 Bf6 14 Nb5 Na6 15 Nd3 Rf7 16 a3 Bh4 17 Bxh4 Qxh4 18 b4 with the initiative, G.Antunac-U.Andersson, Wijk aan Zee 1970) 13 Nd3 b6 14 a3 Ndc5 15 Bxc5 Nxc5 16 Nxc5 bxc5, White stood slightly better in V.Jansa-R.Marszalek, Zalaegerszeg 1969. The knight must be regarded as superior to the bishop because of the outpost on b5, putting pressure on the c7-pawn.

The immediate 9 ... f5 is worse because of the typical idea 10 Ng5!, when 10 ... f4 (or 10 ... Bxe2 11 Qxe2 Nc5 12 f3, as in M.Pein-N.Giffard, Cannes 1992) 11 Bxg4 Qxg5 12 Bd2 left White with a definite positional advantage in A.Kevitz-A.Denker, New York 1955.

10 Bxf3 f5

With the f3-knight gone, Black does not need to worry about Ng5 anymore, so he can make this thematic break, claiming space on the kingside to balance to White's advantage on the queenside.

11 b4 a5 12 a3 Kh8



Question: Why is it useful to remove the king from the a2-g8 diagonal?

Answer: Firstly, it sidesteps any danger that might arise if White manages to play Qb3 combined with c4-c5-c6. Secondly, another piece might now use the g8-square: either a rook to support an attack down the g-file; or sometimes even a manoeuvre like ... Nf6-g8 and ... Bh6, to release the bishop outside the pawn chain, though for the moment the knight on d7 must help to prevent c4-c5.

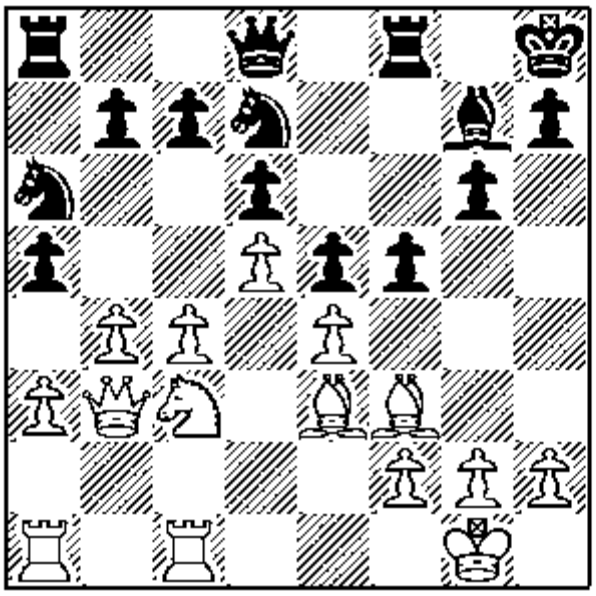
13 Qb3 Na6

Question: Why does Black place the knight on the rim?

Answer: Its main purpose on a6 is to help combat White's planned c4-c5 breakthrough, and this could be further reinforced by ... b7-b6.

14 Rfc1

Taking the a-pawn is a strategic error. After 14 bxa5?! f4 15 Bd2 Nac5 16 Qb4 Nf6, White's queenside intentions have been put to bed, while Black plans the typical kingside pawn storm ... g6-g5-g4, ... h7-h5 and so forth, with the f3-bishop as a target.



Exercise: Can you suggest a good continuation for Black?

Answer: 14 ... Bf6

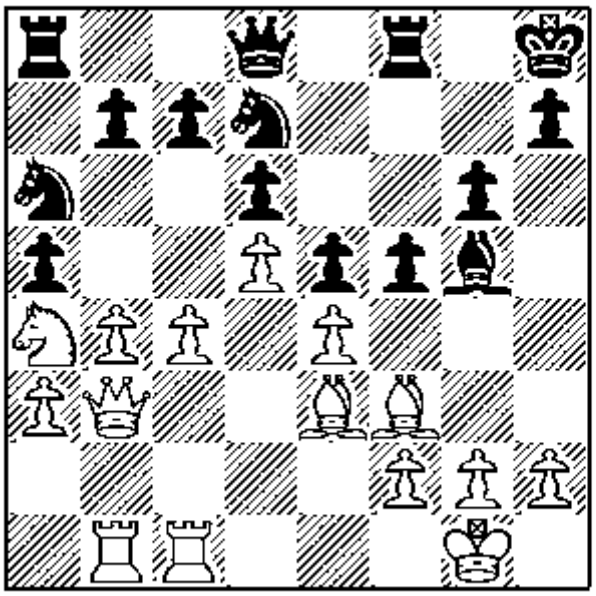
Preparing the exchange of dark-squared bishops via ... Bg5. Another candidate is 14 ... Qh4, which seems more flexible with ideas of ... Bh6 or, again, ... f5-f4, ... g6-g5-g4 etc. So why did Stein not play like this? One reason perhaps was that the position after 15 g3 Qf6 16 Rf1! f4 17 Bd2 was simply not to his taste.

15 Na4

This natural move further promotes the c4-c5 breakthrough, but it also allows Black to achieve his own plan of exchanging bishops. White might do better to disrupt that with the prophylactic 15 Qa4, putting pressure on the d7-knight.

15 ... Bg5 16 Rab1

White cannot play 16 c5 yet, because of 16 ... Bxe3 followed by 17 ... axb4 with advantage, so he safeguards the b4-pawn one more time.



Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation? (Warning: This is difficult!)

16 ... b6?!

Answer: 16 ... Nab8!! looks very paradoxical, but now that c4-c5 can no longer be prevented, Black should recentralize his queen's knight; the king's knight can go back to f6 (after the bishops have been exchanged) where it targets the weak e4-pawn. Two variations show this: 17 c5 (or 17 Bxg5 Qxg5 18 Nc3 Nf6 19 Rc2 Nbd7) 17 ... fxe4 18 Bxe4 axb4 19 Bxg5 Qxg5 20 axb4 Nf6 21 Nc3 Nbd7 with an approximately equal position.

17 Rc3

The rook now stands in the way of the knight's retreat. Another mode of play is to give up all thoughts of c4-c5 and focus on centralization with 17 Bxg5 Qxg5 18 Nc3 Nf6 19 Qc2. Psychologically speaking, it is not easy to change a fundamental plan just like that in a practical game of chess, but if White is too stubborn about his queenside attack, the e4-square will lack sufficient protection.

17 ... Qf6

Alternatively, 17 ... Bf4, followed by ... Qg5, is an interesting attempt to provoke a weakening in the white kingside.

18 exf5

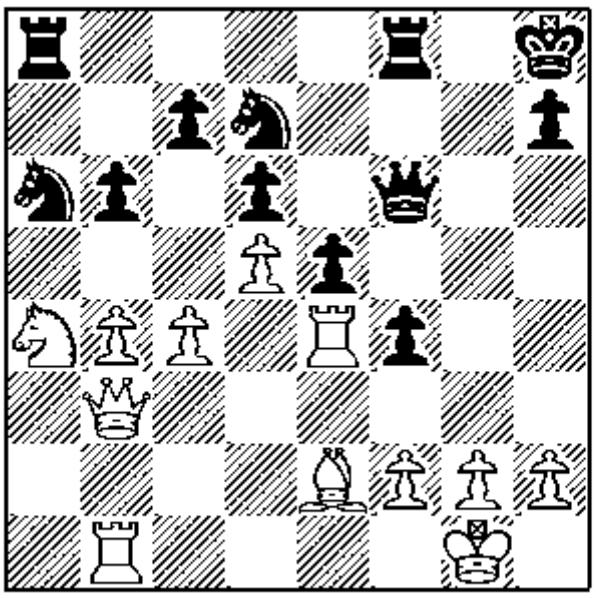
This seems unmotivated since e4 is not yet under any serious pressure. 18 Qc2 looks better.

18 ... Bxe3 19 Rxe3 gxf5 20 Be2

White moves the bishop away before Black hits it with ... e5-e4.

20 ... axb4 21 axb4 f4 22 Re4?

The rook is badly misplaced here. It is not good to use the rook as a blockader as a rule, and in this position ... Nf6 will soon be played. It is difficult to understand why White refrained from the active 22 Rh3, which also justifies his 20th move. After 22 ... Qf5 23 Nc3 Rg8 24 Kh1 (24 Rh5 runs into the surprising 24 ... Rxg2+! 25 Kxg2 f3+ 26 Bxf3 Rg8+ 27 Kf1 Qxf3 28 Rh4 Nxb4! 29 Qxb4 Nc5, when White has to defend carefully to draw) 24 ... Nf6, intending ... e5-e4, the position is still fairly level.

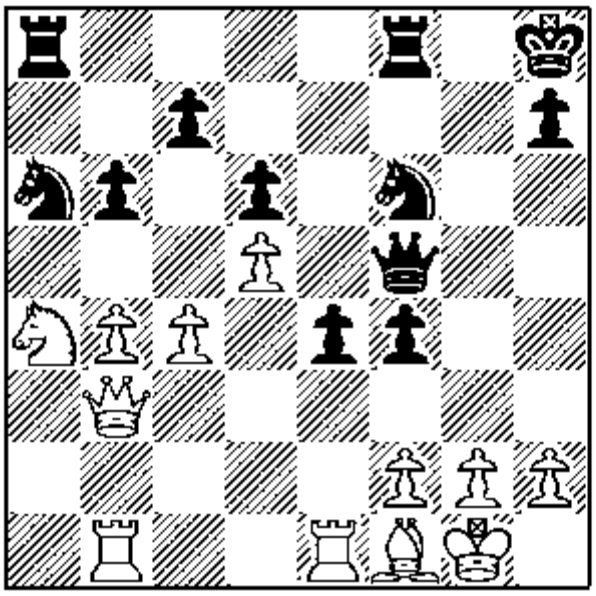


Exercise: How does Black exploit the vulnerable white rook in the most accurate manner?

22 ... Qf5?

Answer: 22 ... Qg6! is stronger, which both attacks the rook and applies pressure down the g-file. After 23 Bd3 Rg8 24 g3, White has been forced to weaken the light squares around his king, and the further 24 ... Qh5 25 Ree1 Nf6 26 Be2 Ng4 27 Bxg4 Rxg4 gives Black a clear advantage.

23 Bd3 Nf6 24 Ree1 e4 25 Bf1



Exercise: Which candidate moves should be considered in this position?

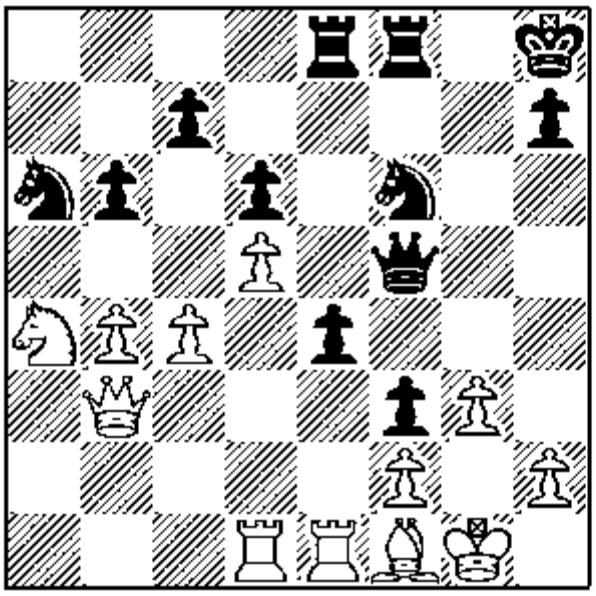
25 ... f3?

Surprisingly, Stein focuses on a light square when there were plenty of dark squares to attack.

Answer: It is more logical to play 25 ... Ng4, with ideas like ... e4-e3 or ... Ne5. One possible variation runs 26 Qb2+ Rf6! 27 Nc3 e3 28 Ne4! (not 28 fxe3? Rg8! and Black's attack is overwhelming; or 28 f3 Ne5, followed by ... Rg8 and ... Nb8, with a clear advantage) 28 ... Qxe4 29 f3 Qe5 30 fxg4 Qxb2 31 Rxb2 Nb8 32 g3 (destroying the pawn phalanx before Black becomes too active) 32 ... Nd7 33 gxf4 Rxf4 34 Rxe3 Rxg4+ 35 Rg2 Rxg2+ 36 Kxg2 Ne5, when Black has a very comfortable position.

The direct 25 ... e3 also targets the weak points in White's position. In particular, 26 fxe3 is answered by the annoying 26 ... f3!, removing the white king's pawn cover; for example, 27 gxf3 (27 Rb2 is uninspiring, due to 27 ... Qg5 28 Nc3 Rg8 29 Qd1 Ng4 30 Qxf3 Qe5 31 Qf4 Qxc3 32 Qd4+ Qxd4 33 exd4 Raf8, followed by ... Nb8, and White's impressive-looking queenside is not enough for the missing piece) 27 ... Rg8+ 28 Bg2 Rxg2+! 29 Kxg2 Rg8+ 30 Kf2 Ne4+ 31 Ke2 Rg2+ 32 Kd1 Nf2+! and although there is a surprising defence here in 33 Kd2! Nxb4! 34 Qb2+ Kg8 35 Kc3! Nbd3 36 Rg1!, after 36 ... Nxb2 37 Rxg2+ Kf7 38 Kxb2 Qxf3 39 Rgg1 Qe2+ 40 Ka3 Ng4 41 Rbf1+ Ke7, White still has to fight for the draw. All the same, this long variation does show how difficult it can be to win a game of chess, especially against endlessly resourceful computer engines.

26 g3 Rae8 27 Rbd1



Exercise: How does Black solve the problem of his stranded knight?

27 ... Nxb4?

A spectacular move, but not the best.

Answer: The natural 27 ... Nb8, followed by ... Nbd7, is stronger, improving that dreadful, misplaced and undefended a6-knight. A plausible continuation like 28 Qc3 Nbd7 29 c5 bxc5 30 bxc5 h5 leads to a distinct advantage to Black.

The inhuman move 27 ... Re5 also leads to a clear advantage, according to the world champion program Komodo 8, but this is less easy to comprehend since it is based on deep and concrete variations.

28 Qxb4 e3!

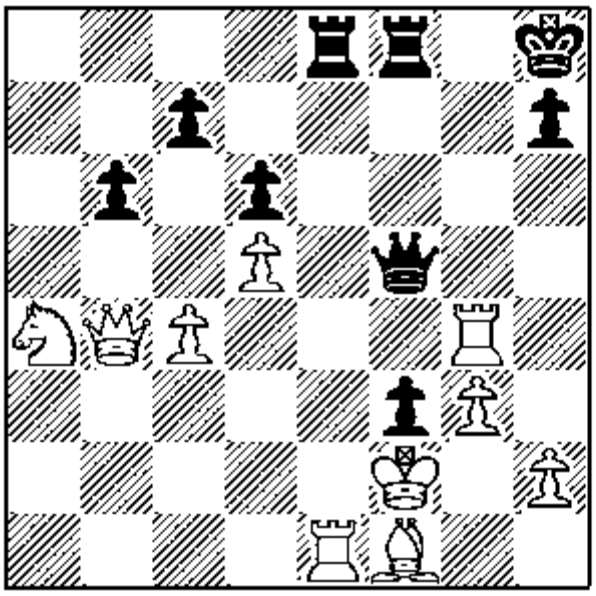
By decoying the white queen from its post on b3, covering the third rank, Black has managed to force his e-pawn through. Now White cannot prevent ... e3-e2 or ... e3xf2+, since 29 fxe3?? f2+ or 29 Rxe3? Rxe3 30 fxe3?? f2+ would win at once. Nevertheless, if White plays correctly he should not have any problems.

29 Rd4??

A fatal error in move order. White plans to defend against 29 ... exf2+ and 30 ... Ng4+ by taking the knight on g4, but he has missed something.

The correct defence is 29 Qc3! (pinning the knight) 29 ... exf2+ (29 ... e2 looks superficially strong, but after 30 Rd3 exf1Q+ 31 Rxf1, the pawn on f3 will fall and it is White who has a clear advantage) 30 Kxf2 Kg8 (threatening ... Ng4+ again) and only now 31 Rd4! (not 31 h3?? Re2+! 32 Bxe2 Ne4+ or 32 Rxe2 fxe2+ 33 Kxe2 Re8+ 34 Kd2 Ne4+ and Black wins the queen), when 31 ... Ng4+? 32 Rxg4+ Qxg4 33 Rxe8 Rxe8 34 Qd2 leaves White on top. Instead, Black has to acquiesce to 31 ... Rxe1 32 Qxe1 (not 32 Kxe1? f2+ 33 Kd1 Re8! 34 Kc1 Re1+ 35 Rd1 Rxd1+ 36 Kxd1 Ng4 with good winning chances) 32 ... Qc2+ 33 Kg1 Qxa4 34 Qe3, when the position is completely equal since the f3-pawn cannot be held.

29 ... exf2+ 30 Kxf2 Ng4+ 31 Rxg4



Exercise: White plans to meet 31 ... Qxg4 with 32 Qc3+. What has he overlooked?

Answer: 31 ... Qc2+! 0-1

White is mated in six or seven moves: 32 Kg1 Qg2+! (the most attractive finish, even if 32 ... f2+ and 33 ... fxe1Q is quicker) 33 Bxg2 f2+ 34 Kh1 fxe1Q+ 35 Qxe1 Rxe1+ 36 Bf1 Rf2! and mates.

Stein was undefeated in the semi-final, with four wins and ten draws, and was placed second, thereby qualifying for the Championship final in Leningrad. We'll look at three games from this event, starting with his win against Osnos in round twelve.

The Russian player Viacheslav Osnos (1935-2009) competed in the USSR Championship six times in a row from 1963-68, with modest results. In this, his first championship he came last with a score of 5/19, but his play subsequently matured and he was eighth in 1965 (with 10/19) and became an International Master the same year. He was one of Viktor Korchnoi's seconds between 1968 and 1974, and was awarded the title of Honoured Trainer of the Russian Federation.

Game 23
V.Osnos-L.Stein
USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963
Benoni Defence

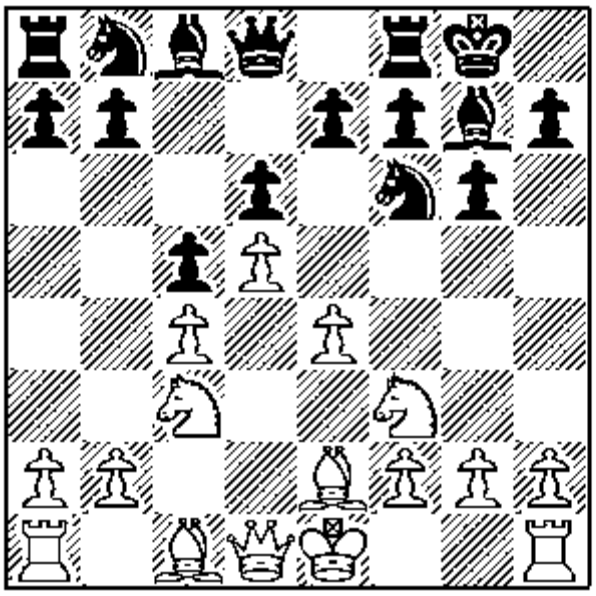
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 d6

The normal move here is 3 ... e6, but Stein hardly ever played that way, presumably because he preferred to avoid the most analysed paths such as 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 Bg7 8 Bb5+ and so forth. Instead, he usually opted to develop with ... d7-d6, ... g7-g6, ... Bg7 and ... 0-0, before deciding what to do with his e-pawn. The main disadvantage with delaying ... e7-e6 is that it allows White other options; for instance, he might recapture on d5 with the e-pawn or take on e6 himself (cf move eight in Game 21).

4 Nc3 g6 5 e4

In the next game we'll see Furman adopt a different formation with 5 Nf3 Bg7 6 g3 0-0 7 Bg2.

5 ... Bg7 6 Be2 0-0 7 Nf3



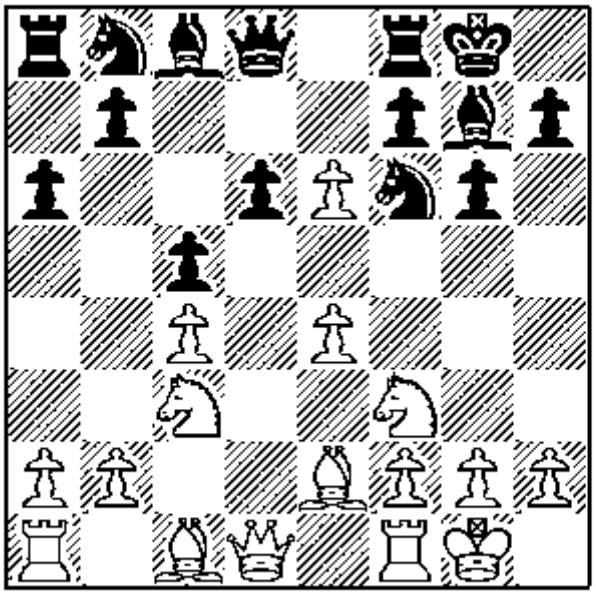
White has chosen a classical set-up for his pieces, while Black has made typical moves in a Benoni, except for not moving the e-pawn. Now, if both sides are amenable, 7 ... e6 8 0-0 exd5 9 cxd5 transposes to a standard line, as in fact occurs in Game 55. This time Stein decided to do something different.

7 ... a6 8 0-0 e5

Stein proposes a structure which Hans Kmoch, in his classic Pawn Power in Chess, calls "Benoni Major". In most cases this is favourable to White thanks to the super pawn on d5 controlling the important c6- and e6-squares, preventing Black from placing minor pieces there. Instead, Black's main idea is to play ... Nh5 and ... Nf4 or ... f7-f5, putting pressure on the e4-pawn.

9 dxe6

White prefers to destroy the Benoni Major and change it to another formation.

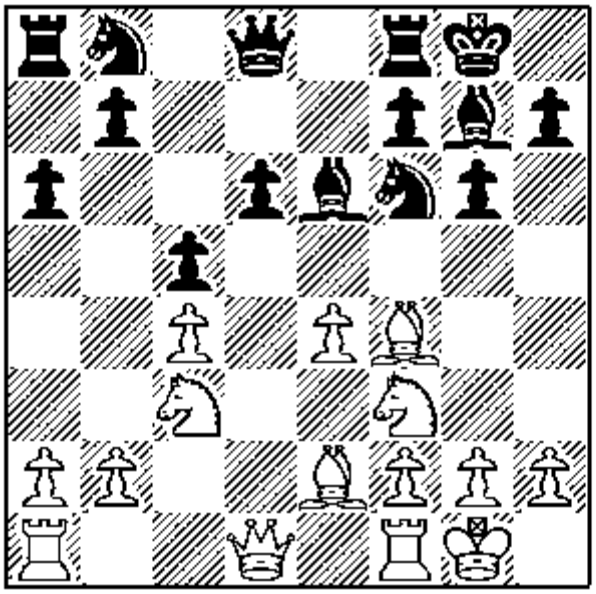


Exercise: Should Black recapture with the pawn or the bishop? Which structure should he strive for?

Answer: 9 ... Bxe6

This is practically forced. The problem with 9 ... fxe6? is that White can ruin Black's pawns with 10 e5 dxe5 11 Qxd8 Rxd8 12 Nxe5, retaining a clear positional advantage.

10 Bf4



Exercise: How should Black respond to the threat to his d6-pawn?

Answer: 10 ... Qb6!?

Faithful to his style Stein chooses the active, more risky continuation. The safer course was to defend the pawn with 10 ... Ne8 11 Qd2 Nc6 12 Rfd1 Qa5, followed by ... Rad8, but this would be quite passive.

11 Bxd6?!

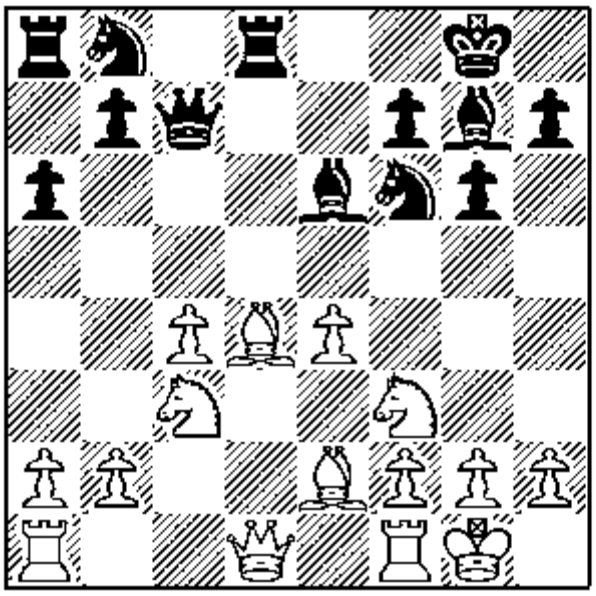
The critical line is 11 Qxd6 Qxb2 (after 11 ... Nc6 12 Qd2, it is questionable whether Black's active piece play is worth a pawn given White's stronghold at d5; for instance, if Black tries to regain the material with 12 ... Qb4 13 Bg5 Bxc4, then 14 a3 Qb3 15 Bxc4 Qxc4 16 Bxf6 Bxf6 17 Nd5 Bg7 18 Nb6 just sees him losing more) 12 Bd2 Nc6 13 Rab1 Qxc3! 14 Bxc3 (14 Qxf8+ Bxf8 15 Bxc3 Nxe4 16 Ba1 is good enough to keep a slight advantage) 14 ... Nxe4 15 Bxg7 Nxd6 16 Bxf8 Kxf8 17 Rfd1 Ke7 and with rook vs. knight and pawn, White has all the winning chances. Such variations, where Black has to fight for a draw, were the risk Stein was taking in concrete terms.

Instead, 11 Na4 Qc6 12 e5 is not as dangerous as it looks. After 12 ... Nh5 13 Be3 dxe5, Black is not worse, as the following variations prove: 14 Ng5! (if 14 Nxc5 Nf4 15 Nxe6, either 15 ... Qxe6, followed by ... Nc6, or 15 ... Nxe6, followed by ... Nd7, is fine for Black) 14 ... Bf5! 15 g4 Nf4 16 Bxf4 Bd7 17 Be3 Qxa4 18 Bxc5 Qxd1 19 Raxd1 Rc8 20 Be3 Bc6 and the position is roughly equal.

11 ... Rd8 12 Bxc5

If 12 e5 Ne8 13 Bxc5 Qc7 14 Bd4 (after 14 Bd6 Nxd6 15 exd6 Rxd6, Black has enough counterplay with two bishops in an open position) 14 ... Nc6 15 Nd5 Bxd5 16 cxd5 Rxd5 17 Bc4 Rdd8 18 e6 Nxd4 19 exf7+ Kh8 20 fxe8Q+ Rxe8 21 Rc1 Rad8, Black's more active pieces should compensate for the pawn deficit.

12 ... Qc7 13 Bd4



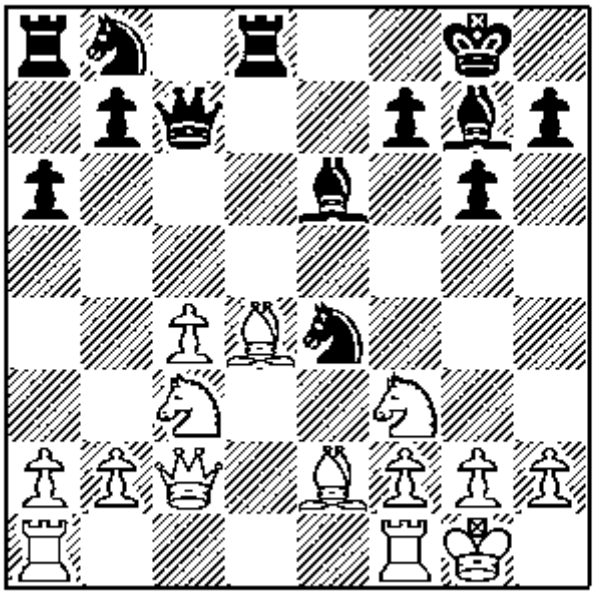
Exercise: An interesting moment – how to continue?

Answer: 13 ... Nxe4

This must be categorized as risky, too, since it is not the best move. However, 13 ... Nc6! would probably just fizzle out to a draw; for example, 14 Nd5 Nxd5 15 cxd5 (or 15 exd5 Bxd4 16 Nxd4 Bxd5 17 Nxc6 Bxc6 18 Qc1 Qa5 19 a3 Rd2 20 Re1 Rad8 with full compensation) 15 ... Bxd4 16 Nxd4 Bxd5 17 Nxc6 (or 17 exd5 Rxd5 18 Rc1 Qf4 and Black regains the material with equality) 17 ... Bxc6 18 Qc2 and Black has sufficient play for the pawn after 18 ... Qf4 19 Bd3 Rd4 20 Rae1 Rad8 21 Re3 Qd6 and so forth.

14 Qc2

White might consider the interesting queen sacrifice 14 Nxe4!? Nc6 15 Nf6+ Bxf6 16 Bxf6 Rxd1 17 Rfxd1 with slight pressure on Black's position.



Exercise: What is the correct move for Black here?

14 ... Nf6?

Another risky move, this time with the purpose of keeping the pieces on the board.

Answer: 14 ... Bxd4 is necessary, even though 15 Nxd4 (after 15 Qxe4 Bxc3 16 bxc3 Nd7 17 Qh4 Nf8, followed by ... Rac8, Black should be okay) 15 ... Rxd4 16 Nxe4 Nc6 (or 16 ... Qe5 17 Ng3 Nc6 18 b3) 17 Ng5 Qe7 18 Nf3 leaves White a safe pawn up.

15 Be5

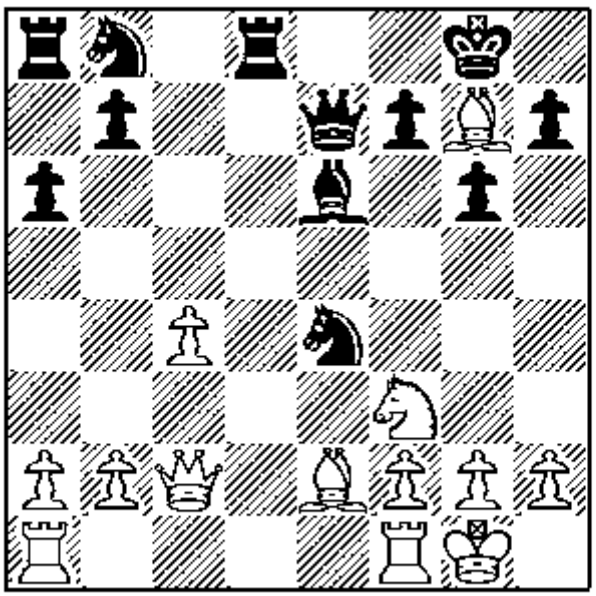
Here 15 Rad1! is stronger, intending 15 ... Nc6 16 Bxf6!, followed by Nd5, and Black is in trouble.

15 ... Qe7 16 Ne4?!

Osnos's strategy is to exchange pieces and exploit the extra pawn, but with this move his advantage diminishes a little. Again, natural development with 16 Rad1 is better; after 16 ... Nc6 17 Bf4 Bf5 18 Qc1, White's game has a bright future.

16 ... Nxe4 17 Bxg7?

White should have inserted 17 Qxe4 Nc6 (or 17 ... Bf5 18 Qe3) 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 19 Qf4, when he retains full control of the game.



Exercise: What has White overlooked?

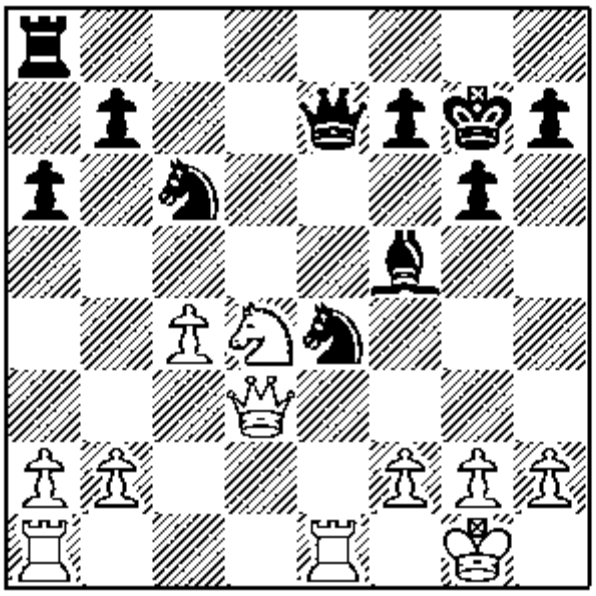
Answer: 17 ... Bf5!

Osnos must have missed this strong intermediary move. The threat of ... Ng3 means there is no time to save the g7-bishop.

18 Bd3 Kxg7 19 Rfe1

Similarly, the endgame after 19 Rae1 Rxd3! 20 Qxd3 Qd6 21 Nd4 Nc6 22 Nxf5+ gxf5 23 Qxd6 Nxd6 should be slightly favourable for Black.

19 ... Rxd3! 20 Qxd3 Nc6 21 Nd4



Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation?

Answer: 21 ... Qc5!

Preventing White from exchanging the strong c6-knight. 21 ... Qf6 22 Nxc6 Qxc6 23 Qd4+ Kg8 is less precise since the knight and bishop co-operate less well than the knight pair.

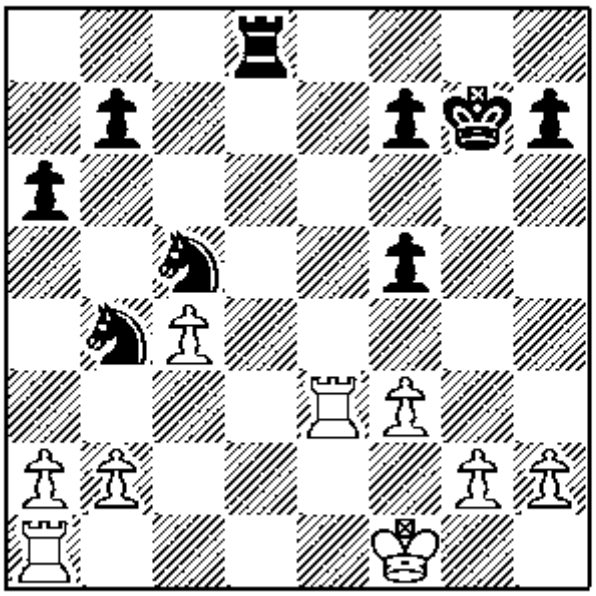
22 Nxf5+

Not 22 Nxc6?? Qxf2+ 23 Kh1 Qxe1+ 24 Rxe1 Nf2+ and Black wins a lot of material.

22 ... gxf5 23 Qe3

White has to enter the endgame, as 23 Qf3 Nd4 gives Black too much activity.

23 ... Qxe3 24 Rxe3 Rd8 25 f3 Nc5 26 Kf1 Nb4



27 Re2

The naïve manoeuvre 27 Re5 b6 28 Rxf5?? loses the exchange after 28 ... Nc2.

27 ... a5 28 b3 Kf6 29 Rb1 Rd4 30 Kf2

Stein probably had the following trap in mind: 30 a3 Nc6 31 b4? axb4 32 axb4 Nxb4! 33

Rxb4 Rd1+ and the knight fork on d3 will decide the issue. Stein's games are full of such tactics where the capacity of the knights comes to the fore.

30 ... a4 31 bxa4 Rxc4 32 a5 Nbd3+ 33 Ke3

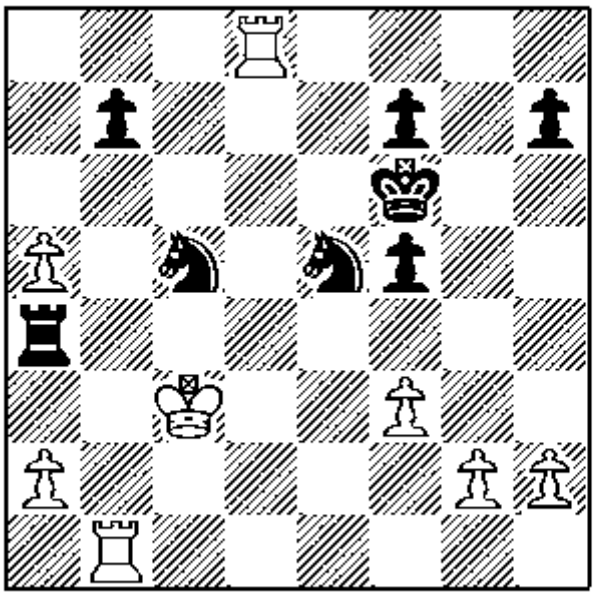
White wants to play actively with his king, even if it means sticking his head in the firing line.

33 ... Ra4 34 Rd2 Ra3 35 Kd4 Ra4+ 36 Kc3

36 Ke3 would be answered by 36 ... f4+ 37 Ke2 Ne5 and if 38 Rb5 Ne6 39 Rxb7 then 39 ... Nc4 40 Rdd7 Rxa2+ 41 Kd1 Ne5, threatening both the g2- and a5-pawns.

36 ... Ne5 37 Rd8?

White's last chance is 37 Rb6+! Ne6! (after 37 ... Nc6 38 a6! Rxa6 39 Rxa6 Nxa6 40 Rd6+ Ke7 41 Rd5 Kf6 42 Rb5, Black's knights are too passive and his pawns too weak to win) 38 Rxb7 Rxa5 39 Rc2, though he still faces a tough task to keep his pieces away from knight forks and rook checks.



Exercise: How should Black continue?

Answer: 37 ... Ke7?!

It is not clear why Stein refrained from the obvious 37 ... Rxa5. One gets the feeling that he took some small risks in won positions as well!

38 Rd5 Rc4+ 39 Kd2

Here 39 Kb2 looks a better option. After 39 ... Ned3+ 40 Ka1 Ke6 41 Rd8, White has an active rook and his king is comparatively safe in the corner; whereas in the actual game, he lost very quickly.

39 ... Ke6 40 Rd8 Ra4 41 Rb6+?

41 Kc3 Rxa5 42 Rbd1 offers more resistance.

41 ... Ke7

With the double threat of ... Kxd8 and ... Nc4+. The game is over.

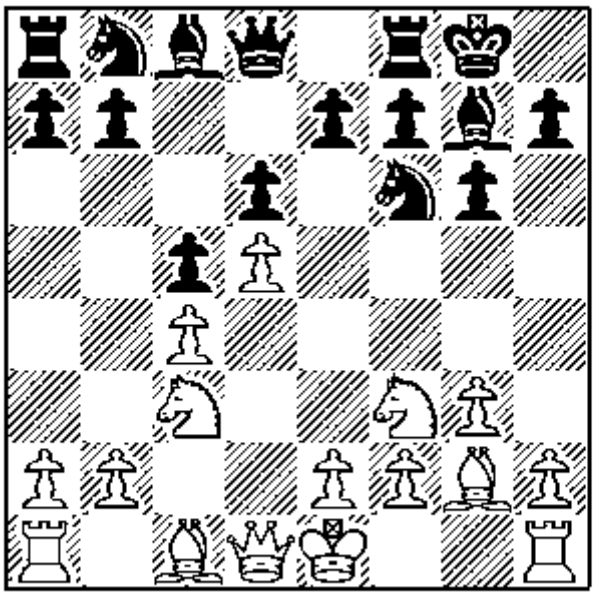
42 Ra8 Nc4+ 0-1

By round fourteen, Stein had recovered from his slow start (eight draws) and was in joint first place on 8½/13. The following win temporarily gave him the outright lead.

His opponent, Semyon Furman (1920-78), became a grandmaster in 1966. In the USSR he was most famous as a successful trainer, in particular of the future world champion Anatoly Karpov. The individual score between Stein and Furman was 4-3 in Stein's favour. On this occasion Furman finished in joint 14th place on 8½/19, 3½ points behind Stein.

Game 24
S.A.Furman-L.Stein
USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963
Benoni Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 d6 4 Nc3 g6 5 Nf3 Bg7 6 g3 0-0 7 Bg2



7 ... Bf5!?

Once again Stein steers away from the main variations.

The usual continuations are 7 ... Na6 8 0-0 Nc7, aiming for ... b7(b6)-b5, or 7 ... e6 8 0-0 exd5 9 cxd5, transposing to a standard Benoni. White's fundamental plan is to achieve the thrust e4-e5, by such means as h2-h3, Rfe1, Nfd2-c4, and Bf4. This formation was a favourite of Viktor Korchnoi's. Fischer actually used to say about Korchnoi: "As soon as he puts a pawn on d5, this guy believes he has a winning position ... "

In the 1966 USSR Championship, Stein in fact played the Benoni main line a couple of times, albeit via the King's Indian. After 9 ... Re8 (or 9 ... a6 first) 10 Nd2 a6 11 a4 Nbd7, Stein developed counterplay with 12 Qc2 Rb8 13 Nc4 Ne5 14 Nxe5 Rxe5 15 a5 b5 16 axb6 Rxb6 (vs. V.Liberzon) and 12 h3 Rb8 13 Nc4 Ne5 14 Na3 Nh5 followed by 15 ... f5 (vs. V.Osnos), winning the first game and drawing the second.

8 Nh4

A critical response, though it is unclear whether it is any better than 8 0-0. Then 8 ... Ne4 9 Nxe4 Bxe4 transposes to B.Larsen-E.Geller, Copenhagen (7th matchgame) 1966, which continued 10 Qb3 (10 Bh3! is also good) 10 ... Nd7 11 Bd2 a6 12 Bc3 Bxc3 13 Qxc3 Bxf3?! (13 ... b5 is more precise) 14 exf3, followed by Rfe1, and White had some pressure on the e-file.

8 ... Bd7

In V.Sokolov-S.Martinovic, Belgrade 1966, Black went back all the way with 8 ... Bc8, leaving room for a knight on d7, though in fact this square was left empty until the bishop returned to it on move 25! After 9 0-0 Na6 10 e4 Nc7 11 a4 e5 12 Bg5 h6 13 Bd2 Nfe8 14

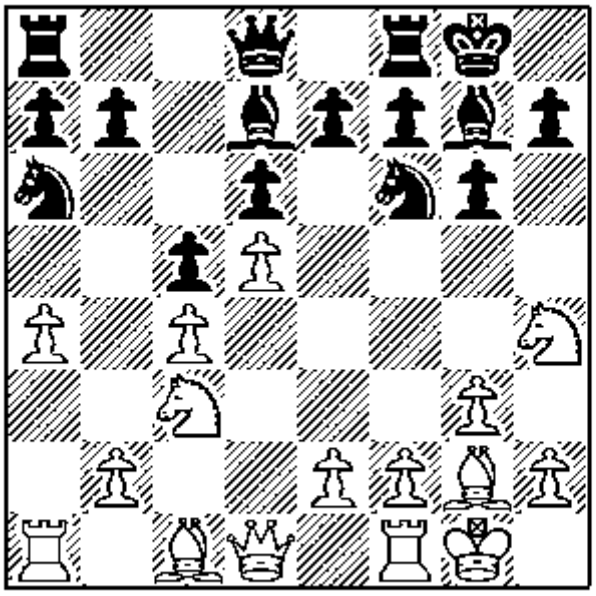
Nf3 Rb8 15 Ne1 f5 16 Nd3, White had a slight advantage which he converted to a win in 34 moves.

9 0-0 Na6

Black's main idea is to place the knight on c7 to support the ... b7-b5 thrust. The drawback to this piece configuration is that it will be easier for White to achieve his breakthrough in the centre with e4-e5, since there is no knight on d7 to prevent it.

10 a4?!

Given that Black is not yet threatening ... b7-b5, this preventative move seems premature. It is more logical to expand in the centre immediately with 10 e4. Then B.Ivkov-Z.Doda, Havana 1965, continued 10 ... Rb8?! (10 ... Nc7 or 10 ... e6 looks more to the point) 11 f4 b5 12 e5! Ne8 13 cxb5 Nac7 (now White's advantage increases; 13 ... Bxb5 14 Nxb5 Rxb5 may have been Black's best option) 14 a4 dxe5 15 fxe5 Bxe5 16 Bh6 Bg7 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Ne4 and White was clearly better.



Question: Why does White weaken the b4-square when the black knight can go there in one move?

Answer: Furman may have considered the knight to be out of play on b4. After all, how is it suppose to protect the centre or the kingside, where the action presumably will take place? Stein's opposing view is that, after the e2-pawn has advanced, the knight will control two key squares in White's camp, c2 and d3, which are only defended by his queen. In essence, the knight is waiting for the queen to leave the vicinity; whereas if the queen has to stay put, we might deduce that it is indirectly controlled by the black knight!

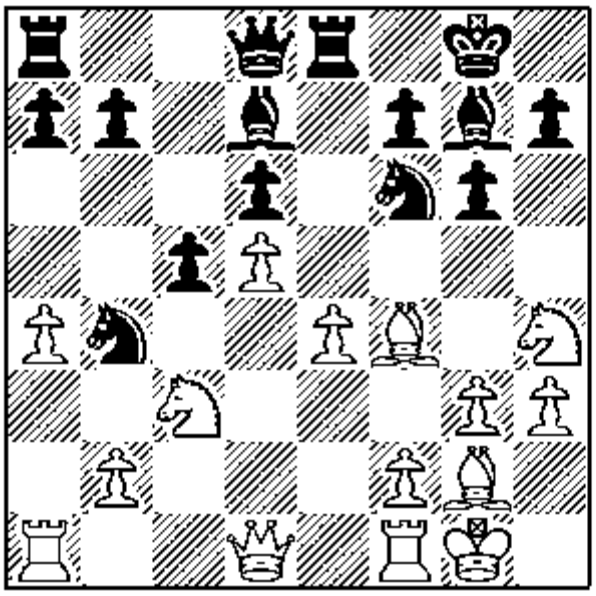
10 ... Nb4 11 e4 e6

The typical move in the Benoni, after which the exchange on d5 will open lines for Black's pieces and improve his position.

12 h3 exd5 13 cxd5

Furman would not have been attracted by 13 exd5. Although it keeps the black c-pawn from advancing and creating an outpost at d3, it also eliminates White's main idea of playing e4-e5 and it is difficult to see another plan for him.

13 ... Re8 14 Bf4



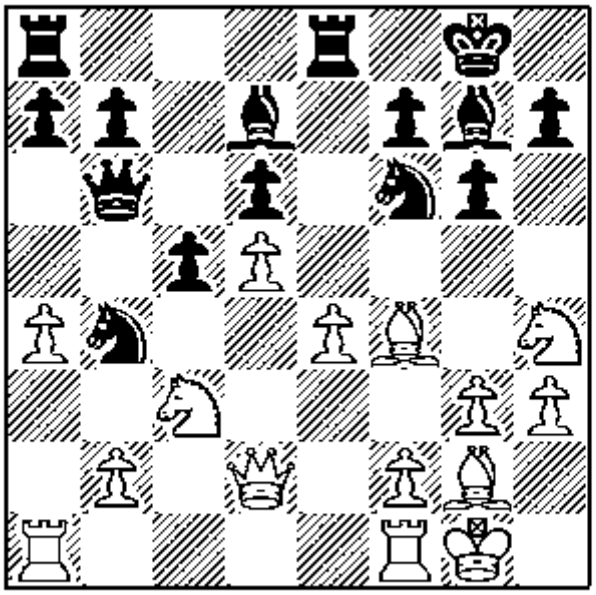
Exercise: How does Black activate his game?

Answer: 14 ... Qb6

The pawn sacrifice 14 ... c4!? is a very interesting alternative. After 15 Bxd6 Nd3 (absolutely not 15 ... Bxa4? 16 Qxa4 Qxd6 17 f4 and White is completely dominant) 16 Ba3 a6, Black has excellent compensation for the pawn.

15 Qd2

15 a5 is answered by 15 ... Qa6, not fearing 16 Re1 Nd3 17 Bf1, as after 17 ... c4 (the fantasy variation 17 ... Nxb2? 18 Qc2 c4 19 Qxb2 Nxe4 20 Rxe4 Rxe4 fails to 21 Bh6!! Bh8 22 Qb4 Ree8 23 Bxc4 b5 24 Bf1 and White has excellent winning chances) 18 Bxd3 cxd3, Black has very good counterplay (the h3-pawn needs defending for a start).



Exercise: How do you think Stein continued?

Answer: 15 ... Re7

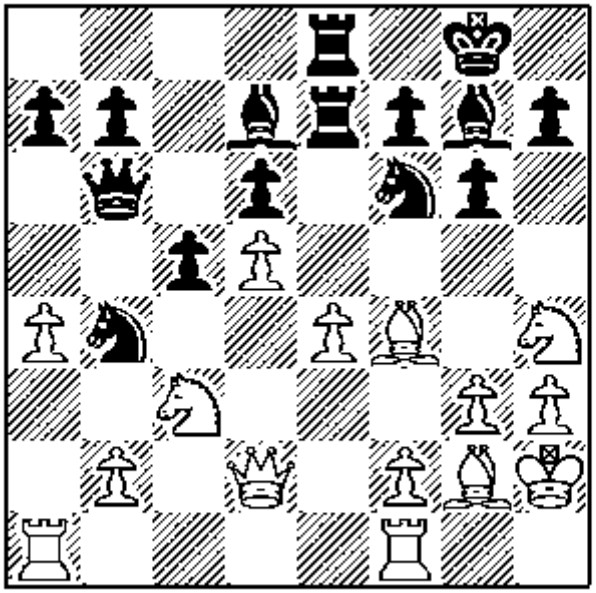
Stein is keen to mobilize the a8-rook and prepares to move it to e8, increasing the pressure on the e-file. This is a very sensible and human decision.

Alternatively, he might have considered 15 ... c4!? again. If then 16 Be3 Qc7 17 Nb5?! Bxb5 18 axb5 (not 18 Qxb4? Ba6 and the e-pawn drops) 18 ... Nd3 19 Rxa7, Black will regain the pawn with advantage after 19 ... Rac8, as White has no convenient way of guarding e4. (20 f3 is met simply by 20 ... Nh5, attacking both g3 and b2.)

16 Kh2?!

This looks a bit slow. It is more expedient to support the centre with 16 Rfe1 and answer 16 ... Rae8 by 17 Rad1.

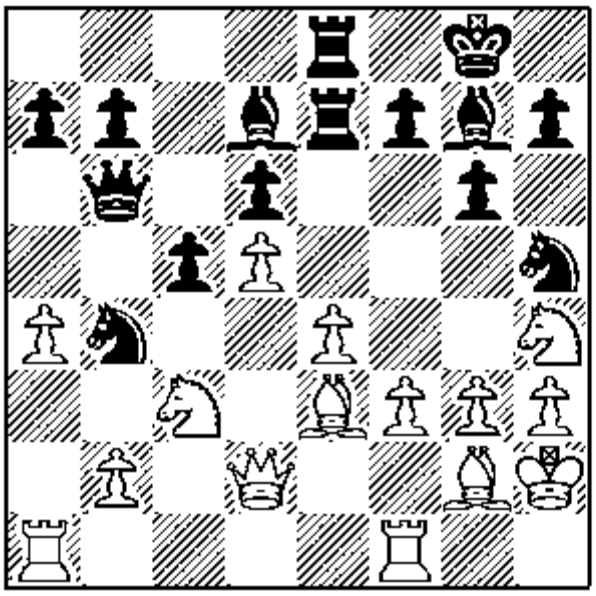
16 ... Rae8



Question: Pretend it is Black's move. What would you play?

Answer: Probably sacrifice the exchange by taking on e4, since Black would have more than enough compensation with his active pieces and the initiative. Furman therefore decides to reinforce the centre, at the cost of weakening his kingside dark squares slightly.

17 f3 Nh5 18 Be3



Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation?

Answer: 18 ... Bf6

Stein is not right on the trigger every time. He may have refrained from the logical 18 ... f5! because of 19 Bg5 f4! 20 gxf4 (not 20 Bxe7?? fxg3 31 Kh1 Rxe7 and White is virtually lost already) 20 ... Rf7 21 f5, but then 21 ... gxf5 22 exf5 c4! 23 a5 Qd4 24 Qxd4 Bxd4, followed by ... Nd3, gives Black a definite edge. However, this variation is not easy to foresee, so Stein is certainly excused.

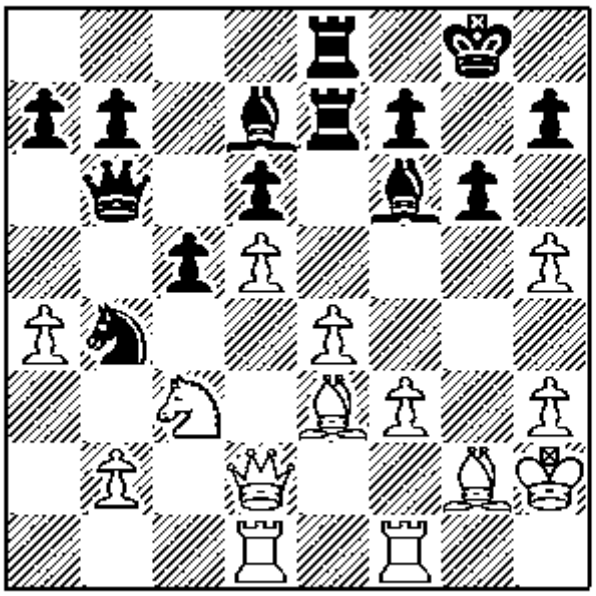
19 g4?!

The correct move is 19 f4 with an equal position. White's damaged kingside after 19 ... Bxh4 20 gxh4 is less relevant, since he has the two bishops and his centre is solid.

19 ... Bxh4 20 gxh5 Bf6

The bishop goes back where it belongs on the long dark diagonal.

21 Rad1



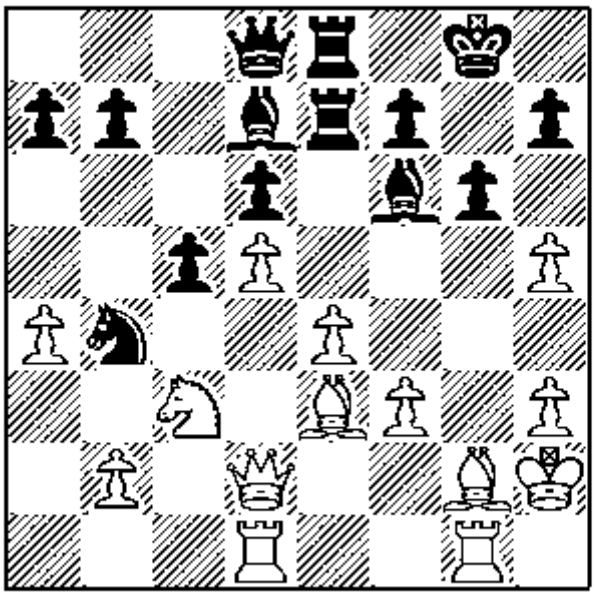
Exercise: What is the best practical choice?

Answer: 21 ... Qd8!

Stein had no doubt seen that activating the rook at once with 21 ... Re5 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 f4 Rh5 would be met by 24 e5 dxe5 25 Ne4 with pressure on the c5-pawn. After the further 25 ... Qd8 26 Bxc5 a5, the position is about equal, though still very complicated.

22 Rg1?

The point of withdrawing the queen to d8 was to answer 22 f4 with 22 ... b6, which makes the e4-e5 push less appealing. Nonetheless, Furman should have preferred this, when White can survive with precise play; for example, 23 e5! Bf5 24 Ne4 Bxe4 25 exf6! Rd7 26 Bxe4 Rxe4 27 f5! Qxf6 28 Rde1 Qe5+ 29 Bf4 Qe8 30 Bg5 Nc2 31 Rxe4 Qxe4 32 Bf6! Ne3 33 Re1 Qf4+ 34 Kh1 Qf3+ with a draw.



Exercise: What does Black play now?

Answer: 22 ... Re5!

Of course Stein now takes the chance to activate the rook.

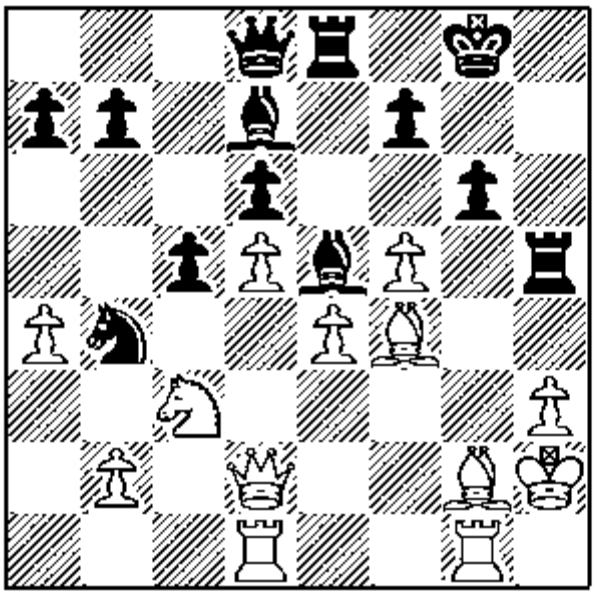
23 hxg6 hxg6 24 f4 Rh5 25 f5?

Too aggressive. 25 e5? is also suicidal due to 25 ... dxe5 26 Bxc5 exf4! 27 Bxb4 f3 with the threat of ... Be5+ and Black is winning. The famous verdict that an attack is best answered by a counter-attack is not true in chess. If you are worse, you must defend your weakest points according to the principles of defence laid out by Steinitz.

Instead, 25 Bf1 is the sensible move, opening a path to g3 for the rook to g3, which clears g1 for the king where it truly belongs. Black's attack is more difficult to carry out once the h3-pawn has been securely defended and the king placed on a safer square.

25 ... Be5+ 26 Bf4

26 Kh1 is answered by 26 ... Qh4, threatening the deadly ... Qg3. The best defence is 27 Rdf1, but Black is still winning after 27 ... gxf5 28 exf5 Kh8 and 29 ... Bxf5.

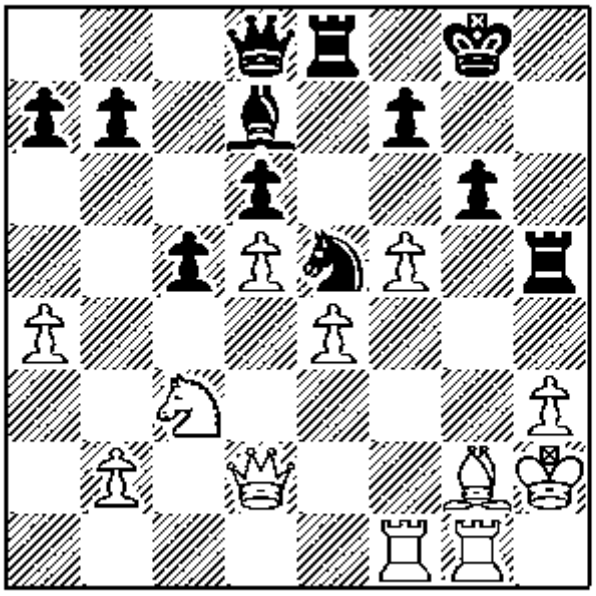


Exercise: Can you find Black's next move?

Answer: 26 ... Nd3!

Stein's concept of placing the knight on b4 finally bears fruit. The white queen is overloaded and cannot cover the crucial squares d3 and f4 simultaneously.

27 Bxe5 Nxe5 28 Rdf1



Exercise: Can you see Black's strongest continuation? (Warning: This is difficult!)

28 ... Qh4?!

A natural move but not the strongest.

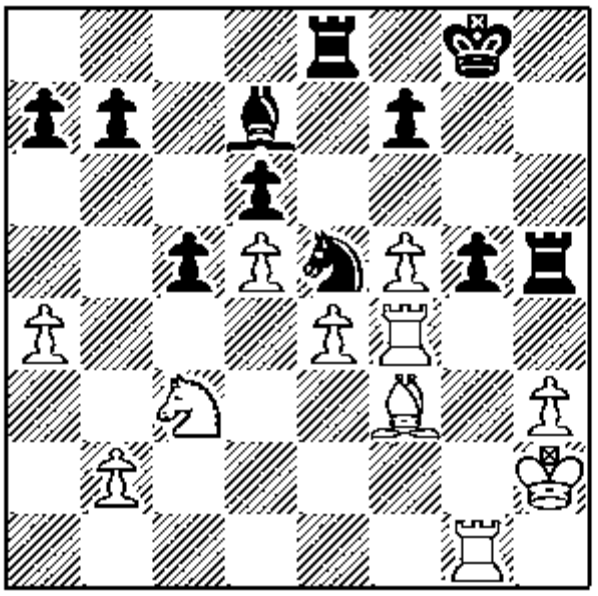
Answer: The spectacular 28 ... Bxf5!!, intending 29 exf5 Ng4+ 30 Kh1 (or 30 Kg3 Qh4+, followed by 31 ... Nh2 mate) 30 ... Re3!, wins on the spot. White cannot prevent the planned rook sacrifice at h3.

29 Qf4 Qxf4+ 30 Rxf4 g5

The game has entered a technical phase where Stein will play for superior control of the

dark squares.

31 Bf3



Exercise: Suggest a way for Black to make progress.

Answer: 31 ... Nxf3+

It may seem illogical to exchange the bad bishop, but Black's idea is to penetrate on the dark squares with his king, so the knight gets out of way first.

Alternatively, 31 ... Kh7!? 32 Bxh5 gxf4 is very interesting. After 33 Rf1 a6 (the weak f-pawn cannot be held: 33 ... Kh6 34 Be2 Kg5 is met by 35 Rg1+ Kf6 36 Rf1 etc) 34 Rxf4 b5 35 axb5 axb5, Black gets dangerous play on the queenside with ... c5-c4 and ... b5-b4, eventually creating a passed pawn with ... c4-c3.

32 Rxf3 Kg7 33 Rgg3

The relevance of this move is not entirely clear. 33 a5 looks more to the point, planning to activate the rook via Ra1-a3-b3. Otherwise, 33 Rg4 is worth a try, overprotecting the e4-pawn while preventing the enemy rook from entering the h4-square in the near future.

33 ... Kf6 34 Kg2 Rh4 35 Kf2 b6

Black prepares to advance the queenside pawn majority with ... a7-a6 and ... b6-b5, whereas the white rooks look rather clumsy on the third rank doing nothing.

36 Re3 a6 37 Kg2

Furman is just waiting, while Stein improves his position with every move.

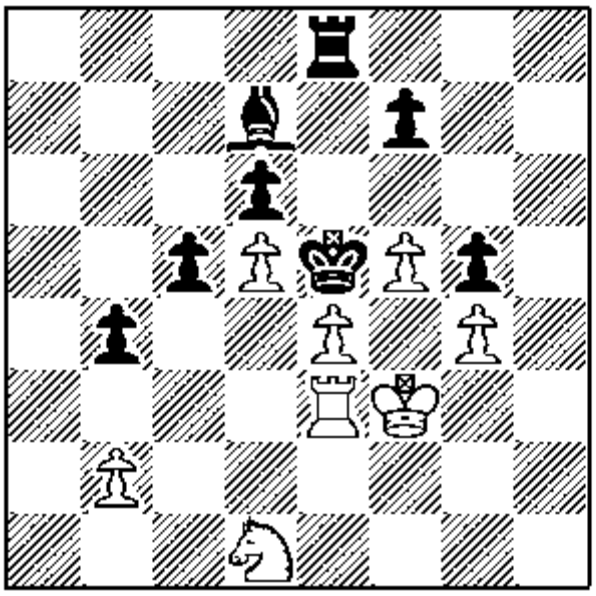
37 ... b5 38 axb5 axb5 39 Rg4

Exchanging one of White's passive rooks does not help him.

39 ... b4 40 Nd1 Rxg4+ 41 hxg4 Ke5

Black's game is strategically winning. All of his pieces are better than White's, and it is just a matter of time before Black has a passer on the c-file.

42 Kf3



Exercise: What is Black's most convincing move?

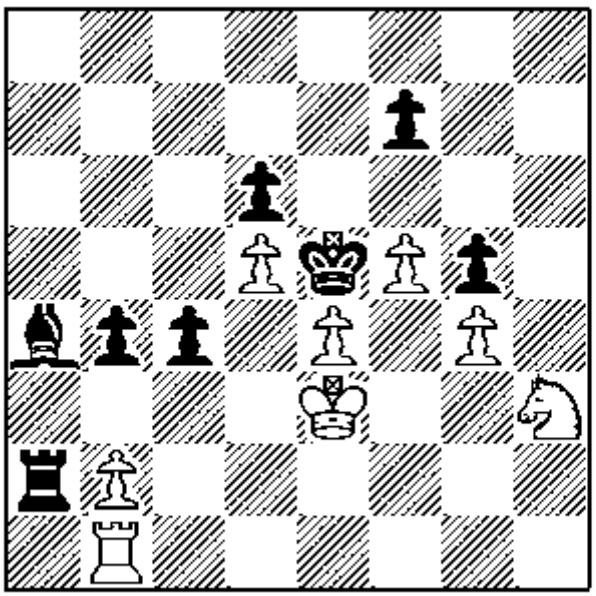
42 ... Bb5

Answer: 42 ... Ba4 43 Nf2 c4 is even more precise.

43 Re1 Ra8 44 Nf2 Ra2 45 Rb1 Ba4

This has been the right post for the bishop all the time. On the a6-f1 diagonal the bishop has no good entry point, whereas on the a4-d1 diagonal ... Bc2 may be an option.

46 Ke3 c4 47 Nh3



Exercise: What is the most resolute continuation?

47 ... Kf6

Stein sensibly defends the g5-pawn, while avoiding the suicidal 47 ... f6?? 48 Ng1, when

mate on f3 cannot be stopped. All the same, there was no real need.

Answer: 47 ... Bc2 48 Rc1 c3! wins directly after 49 bxc3 (or 49 Rxc2 cxb2 50 Rxb2 Rxb2) 49 ... b3, followed by ... b3-b2-b1Q.

48 Kd4?!

Now the previous solution is even stronger. 48 Kd2?! also fails to 48 ... c3+ 49 Kc1 c2 and the rook is trapped. The last chance to resist was with 48 e5+!? Kxe5 (or 48 ... dxe5 49 d6) 49 Nxg5, though Black wins after 49 ... Bc2 in any case.

48 ... Bc2 49 Re1 c3 0-1

By round seventeen, Kholmov, who was having his best ever Championship, had retaken the lead with wins against Taimanov and Zakharov, so the following game was crucial.

Ratmir Kholmov (1925-2006) became a Grandmaster in 1960. He participated in sixteen USSR Championships from 1948-72 and generally finished in the top half. It was difficult even for the world champions to beat him. In the media Kholmov was called "a central defender", though his lively style was characterized by an intuitive combinative talent. A variation of the Ruy Lopez is named after him: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5. 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Be6!?.

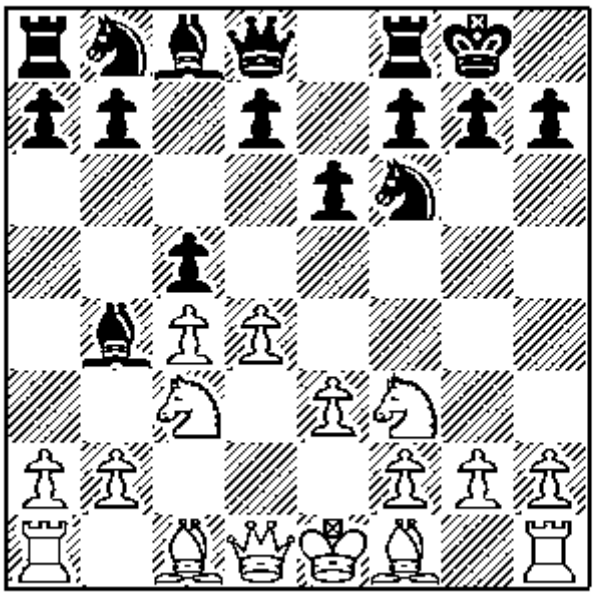
Game 25
L.Stein-R.Kholmov
USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3

The Rubinstein variation with 4 e3 is regarded as one of the most solid against the Nimzo-Indian Defence, and in fact Stein never played anything else.

4 ... 0-0 5 Nf3 c5

The immediate 5 ... d5 is more popular, when 6 Bd3 c5 7 0-0 dxc4 8 Bxc4 transposes to the game.



Exercise: Are there any problems with 6 d5 - ?

Answer: It rather plays into Black's hands, who then has good chances of fighting for the initiative and can select from several equally good continuations:

a) 6 ... exd5 7 cxd5 d6 is similar to a Snake Benoni, where Black's dark-squared bishop has reached the a5-e1 diagonal in one go, rather than via d6 and c7.

b) 6 ... Ne4 7 Qc2 Qf6 8 Bd2 Bxc3 9 Bxc3 Nxc3 10 bxc3 d6 and Black had no problems in I.Csom-P.Dely, Szombathely 1966.

c) 6 ... b5!?, in the spirit of the Blumenfeld Gambit, was seen in V.Hort-E.Geller, Wijk aan Zee 1975. After 7 dxe6 fxe6 8 cxb5 a6, targeting the irritating pawn immediately, Black had sufficient compensation.

6 Be2

Stein chooses a refined placement for his king's bishop, instead of the more usual and straightforward 6 Bd3.

6 ... d5

Believe it or not, Miguel Najdorf thought this was a mistake! According to him, in his book Zürich 1953, the strongest move is 6 ... b6!, as in E.Geller-T.V.Petrosian, Zürich Candidates 1953, which continued 7 0-0 Bb7 8 Qb3 cxd4 9 Qxb4 Nc6 10 Qa3 dxc3 11 Qxc3 Ne4 12 Qc2 f5 with an equal position. As this point Najdorf considered 13 b3, followed by Bb2 and Rad1, to be the best way to develop.

7 0-0

Najdorf's argument was that 7 cxd5 exd5 8 dxc5 Bxc5 enters a Queen's Gambit Accepted with reversed colours and two extra tempi for White. This is a very subtle detail indeed and worth thinking about in similar positions with open "zebra eyes".

7 ... dxc4 8 Bxc4 b6

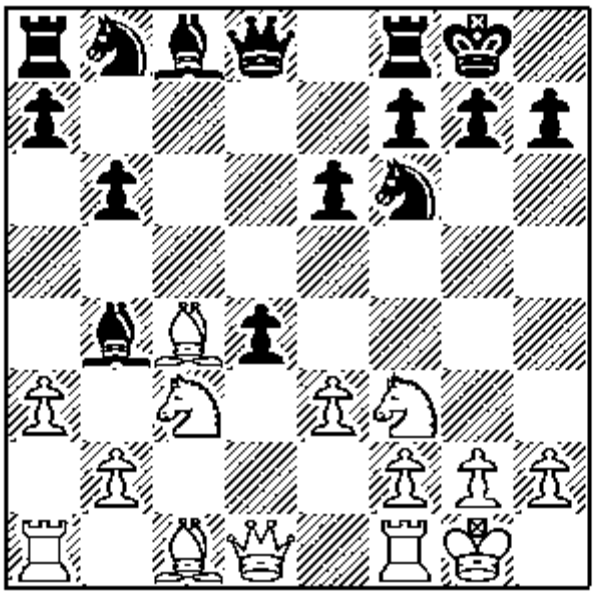
Kholmov aims to solve the problem of his c8-bishop as quickly as possible. Another method is 8 ... Bd7, followed by ... Bc6, which Kholmov had tried before and since. In fact, he played all sorts of moves here, and three different ones in this very event: 8 ... Nbd7 (most often, including in round thirteen against Geller), 8 ... Nc6, 8 ... cxd4, and 8 ... Qe7 (in round fifteen against Taimanov), though never 8 ... b6 again.

9 a3

Another popular set-up is 9 Qe2 Bb7 10 Rd1, which Bronstein had earlier played from both sides.

9 ... cxd4

The alternative 9 ... Bxc3 10 bxc3 gives White the bishop pair while leaving the queens on the board; this is not to everyone's liking. In any case, Kholmov had been successful with the text in a previous game.

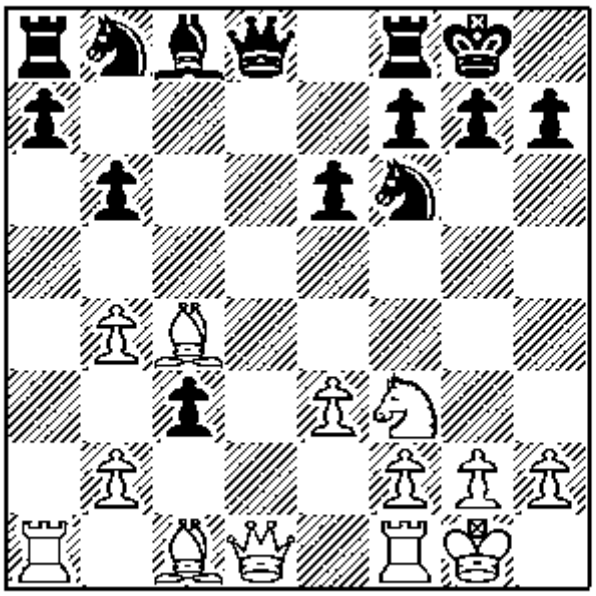


Exercise: Should White recapture on d4 or do something else?

Answer: 10 axb4

Taking the pawn is unconvincing after 10 exd4 Bxc3 (not 10 ... Be7?! 11 d5! with advantage) 11 bxc3 Qc7, as Black has comfortable development with ... Bb7 and quick pressure on the c-file; and 10 Nb5 Be7 does not offer White anything either.

10 ... dxc3



Question: Should White exchange queens or leave them on the board?

Answer: 11 Qxd8

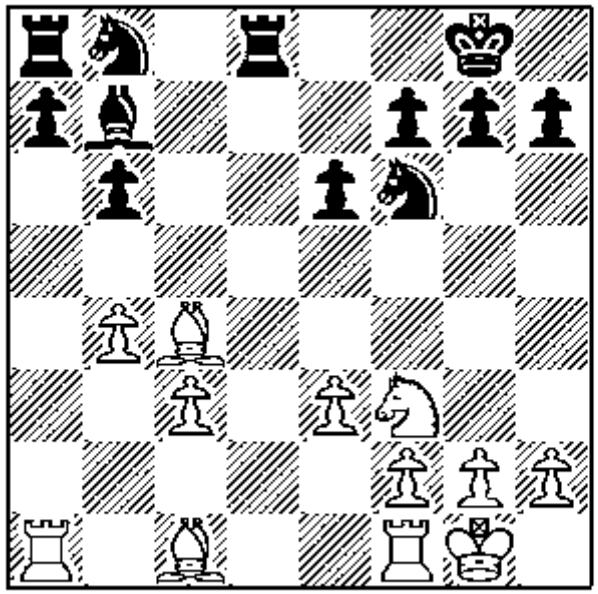
11 bxc3 Qc7 12 Qe2 Bb7 is the sharper, but not stronger line. Here Stein showed he was a versatile player who was willing to go straight into an endgame if he had some advantage to work with.

11 ... Rxd8 12 bxc3

Stein now gets to play with a draw in hand. It is hard to imagine White losing from this position, whereas the bishop pair and asymmetrical queenside pawns provide something to work with in the quest for a concrete advantage.

12 ... Bb7

An interesting idea is 12 ... a5!?, intending 13 Bb2 Ba6!, eliminating White's bishop pair with good chances for equality.



Question: On which square does the c4-bishop belong?

Answer: 13 Be2

This is the best placement for White's light-squared bishop, covering the d3-square while standing safe from attack. In J.Kozma-R.Kholmov, Bucharest 1962, the players actually agreed a draw at this moment; but of course Stein is not going to let Black off so easily.

13 ... Nbd7

L.Portisch-I.R.Johannsson, Havana Olympiad 1966, saw 13 ... Nc6 14 Ba3!? (14 Bb2 is normal) 14 ... a6 15 Rfc1 Ne4 16 Rc2 b5 17 Rac1 Rac8 18 Kf1? (18 c4! at once is correct) 18 ... Ne7? (18 ... Nd6!) 19 c4! bxc4 20 Rxc4 Rxc4 21 Rxc4 Rc8 22 Rxc8+ Nxc8 23 Ne5, reaching a very instructive endgame where Portisch exploited his bishop pair in great fashion. The diligent student is recommended to play through this ending.

14 Rd1 a5 15 Bb2 axb4?!

Black starts to play in a forcing manner and unnecessarily opens the position for the bishop pair. M.Taimanov-E.Eliskases, Cordoba 1960, continued more sensibly 15 ... Rdc8 16 Nd4 Ne5 17 Nb5 and White only had a minimal advantage.

16 cxb4 Rxa1

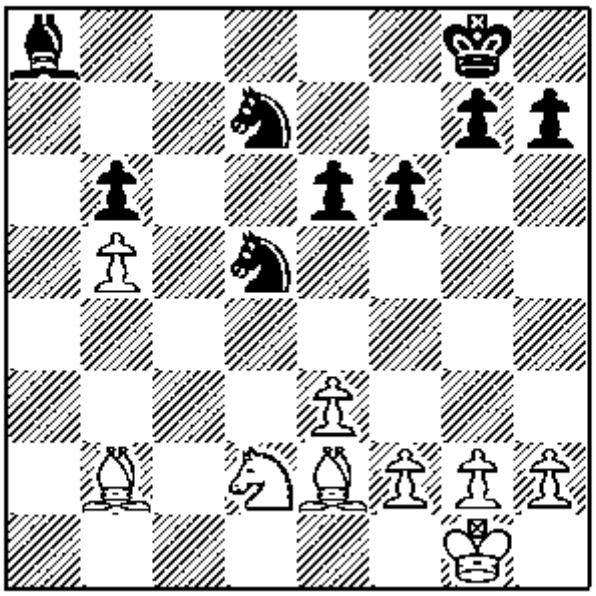
Kholmov seems to think he can hold the draw by exchanging pieces. Stein will prove that it is not so easy to prevent the white bishops from dominating the game.

17 Rxa1 Ra8 18 Rxa8+ Bxa8 19 Nd2 Nd5

If Black continues the strategy of trading pieces with 19 ... Ne4 20 Nxe4 Bxe4, White would improve his position step by step, starting with 21 f3 Bb7 22 e4, building a strong pawn centre.

20 b5 f6

Black removes the pressure against g7 and prepares an outlet for his king.



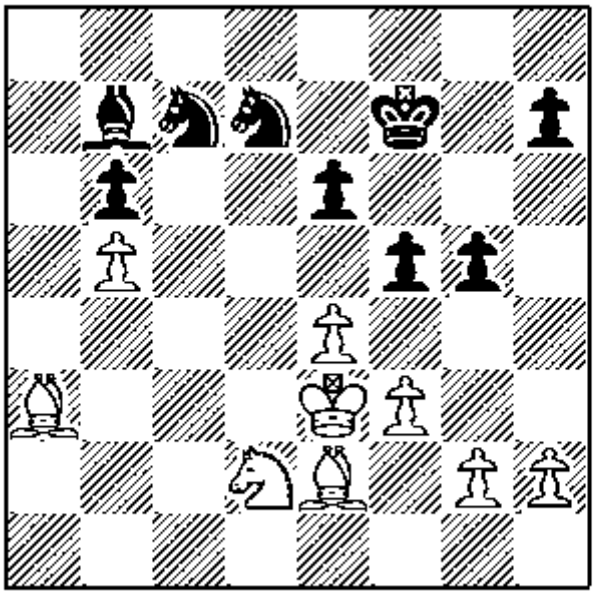
Exercise: How does White continue improving his position?

Answer: 21 e4 Nc7

The pseudo-active 21 ... Nf4 gets Black nowhere after 22 Bf1, moving the bishop out of the range of the black knights, when White can improve his position with f2-f3, Kf2-e3, and so forth.

22 f3 Bb7 23 Kf2 Kf7 24 Ba3 g5 25 Ke3 f5

Planning to close the kingside with ... f5-f4, followed by ... e6-e5.



Question: How should White react?

Answer: 26 g3 Kf6 27 Bd3 fxe4

This weakens Black's kingside, but 27 ... h5 runs into 28 Bb2+ Ke7 29 exf5 exf5 30 Bxf5 Nxb5 31 f4 gxf4+ 32 Kxf4 and White's advantage is so big it is close to winning.

28 Nxe4+ Bxe4 29 Kxe4

White now has what my SK Rockaden clubmate, FM Erik Hedman, calls "a clean bishop pair".

29 ... h6 30 Bc4

Stein's bishops and king are now optimally placed. The next step to improve White's pawn position on the kingside.

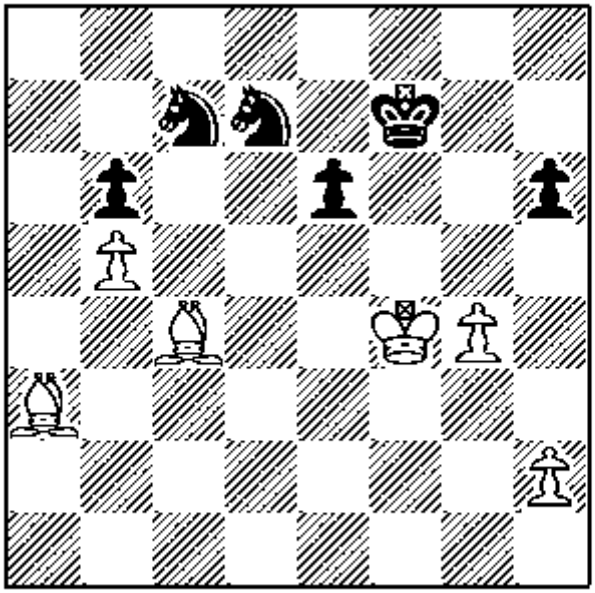
30 ... Ne8 31 f4 gxf4

31 ... g4 would make it more difficult for White to create a passed pawn.

32 Kxf4 Kf7 33 g4

Fixing the h6-pawn as a target.

33 ... Nc7

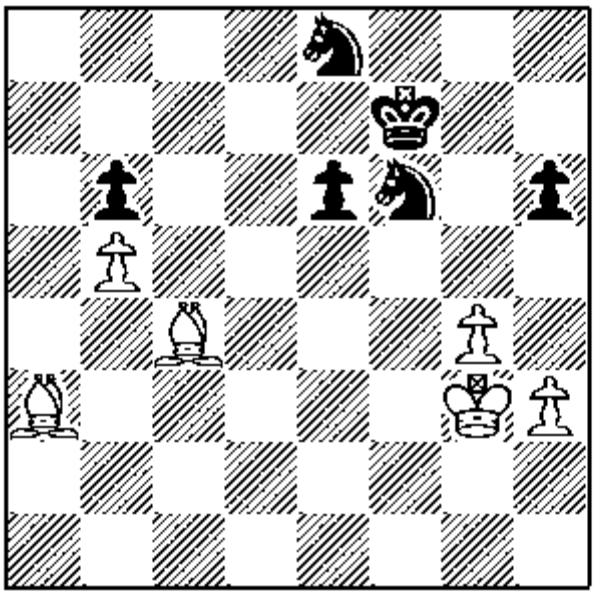


Exercise: How does White exploit the advantages inherent in his position?

Answer: 34 h3!

A quiet move, typical of this kind of endgame where Black is deprived of counterplay. 34 h4 is perfectly good, but Stein is following the principle "do not hurry", making the opponent sweat while disguising his real intentions.

34 ... Ne8 35 Kg3 Ndf6



Exercise: What is White's best move?

Answer: 36 Bc1!

Now we see what Stein is playing for. If White wins the h6-pawn, he will have two connected passed pawns; and Black cannot defend it with 36 ... Ng8 because 37 Be3 wins the b6-pawn instead.

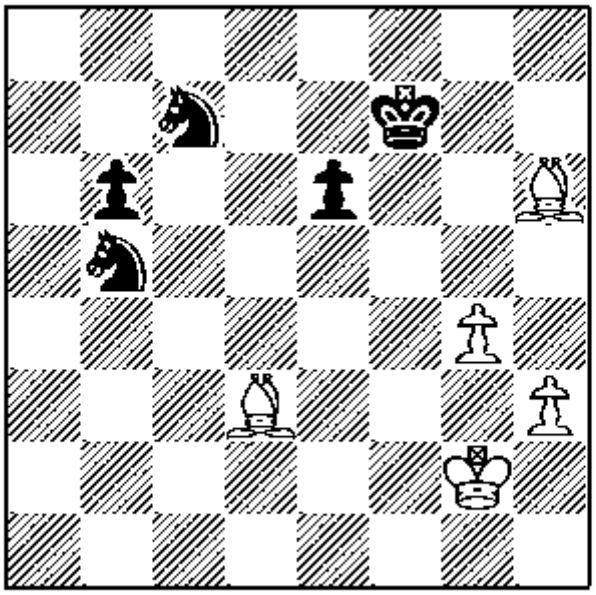
36 ... Ne4+ 37 Kg2

37 Kh4 is more direct but, again, there's no urgency. Stein takes it easy and plays the endgame in his personal, cool way.

37 ... N4d6 38 Bd3 Nc7

If 38 ... Kg7, then 39 Bf4 forces 39 ... Nc8 and Black is completely passive.

39 Bxh6 Ndxb5



Stein has achieved his main goal; the exchange of the b5-pawn for the h6-pawn is very favourable for him. Now the pace of the game is changed as White's passed pawns rush down

the board.

40 h4 Nd4 41 Be3

White's bishops are perfectly placed, supporting the kingside pawns while controlling Black's ineffectual b- and e-pawns.

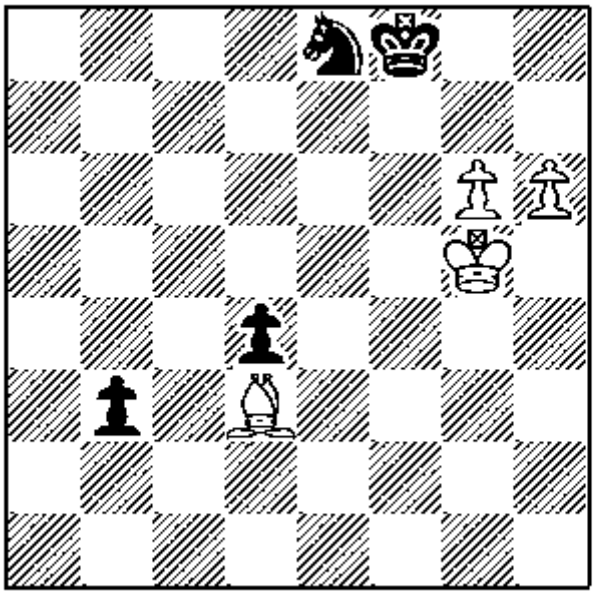
41 ... e5 42 g5 Nce6 43 Kg3 Nc5 44 Bc4+ Kf8 45 Kg4 Nd7 46 h5 b5 47 Bd3

The bishop is back in its ideal location. Note that 47 ... Nc5 fails to the tactical trick 48 Bxb5!.

47 ... b4 48 h6 b3

48 ... Nc5 49 Bc4 b3 50 g6 does not alter the verdict.

49 g6 Nf6+ 50 Kg5 Ne8 51 Bxd4 exd4



Exercise: What is White's simplest win?

Answer: 52 g7+ Nxg7 53 h7 1-0

An excellent positional game, showing that Stein could handle technical endgames as well. He surely listened to the advice he received from Sakharov as a young player.

Stein showed great form in Leningrad. This crucial victory gave him the lead again and, despite losing to Vladimir Bagirov in the final round, Stein tied for first place on 12/19, won the subsequent play-off against Kholmov and Spassky, and became USSR Champion for the first time.

French-born Hungarian and naturalized American, Pal Benko (1928-) became a grandmaster in 1958 and is regarded as a chess legend in his own right. He defeated many of the top players and competed twice in the world championship candidates tournaments, in 1959 and 1962. He is famous for having altruistically ceded his place at the 1970 Palma de Mallorca Interzonal to Fischer who, thanks to this qualification step, was able to go on to become world champion in 1972.

For anyone who wants to study this innovative player, there is an entertaining and instructive book, Pal Benko: My Life, Games and Compositions. Stein also gets his share of attention in this thick volume of 667 pages. The main difference, if we compare the two of them, is that Benko was an innovator in several openings, whereas Stein had a more limited repertoire and was content to improvise over the board, supported by his extraordinary talent. In the eight games between them, from 1962-70, Stein was undefeated with three wins and five draws. Here is one of the wins.

Game 26
P.Benko-L.Stein
Amsterdam Interzonal 1964
Réti Opening

1 g3

Benko has pointed out that it is silly to call this move "the Benko system", just because he began most of his games with it at the 1962 Curacao Candidates tournament. Réti himself played 1 g3 several times in the 1920s, as did Korchnoi in the 1960s, while Larsen used it throughout his career. For that matter, Stein had it in his repertoire as well.

The only drawback, compared with 1 Nf3, is that Black has the extra option of playing 1 ... e5, which avoids the traditional King's Indian Attack; in that case Benko would transpose to the English Opening with 2 c4. On the plus side, 1 g3 can be annoying for players who like to neutralize White's kingside fianchetto with an early ... b7-b6 (or ... b7-b5) and ... Bb7, as the bishop's rapid appearance at g2 prevents this plan.

1 ... d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Bg2 c6

A solid formation designed to limit the activity of the enemy's g2-bishop, though it restricts Black's own b8-knight as well and is a bit passive. Stein preferred ... c7-c5 in Game 59.

4 0-0 Bf5

This set-up is known as Bogoljubow's system, while 4 ... Bg4 initiates Capablanca's system. Which Black chooses is largely a matter of taste as, objectively, they are of equal merit.

5 d3 Nbd7 6 Nbd2 e6 7 Qe1

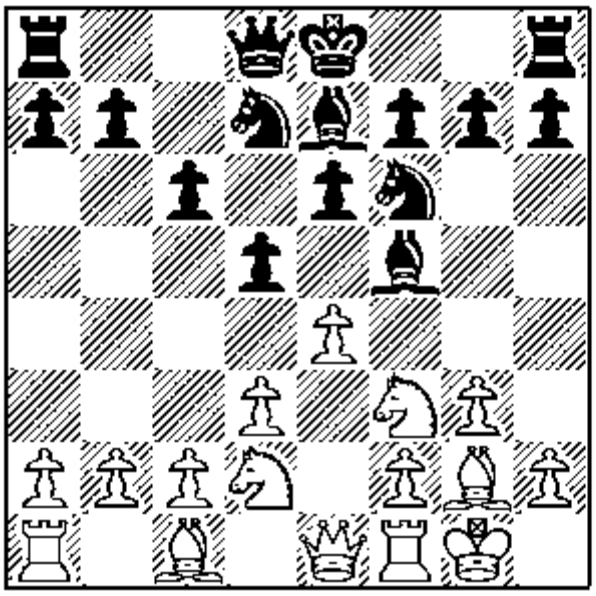
By taking one step to the left, placing the queen on the king's original square, White prepares finally to advance his e-pawn, gaining time on the f5-bishop (showing one drawback to Bogoljubow's system) and with the idea of initiating a dark square strategy.

7 ... Be7

Stein's moves thus far, while perfectly natural, are in fact slightly unusual. Black generally throws in ... h7-h6 at some point to preserve the light-squared bishop from exchange. For example, in Curacao, Benko faced both 7 ... h6 (against Petrosian) and 5 ... h6 (against Geller); but as we will see, Stein is not concerned about losing his bishop.

8 e4

Black is now forced to lose a tempo.

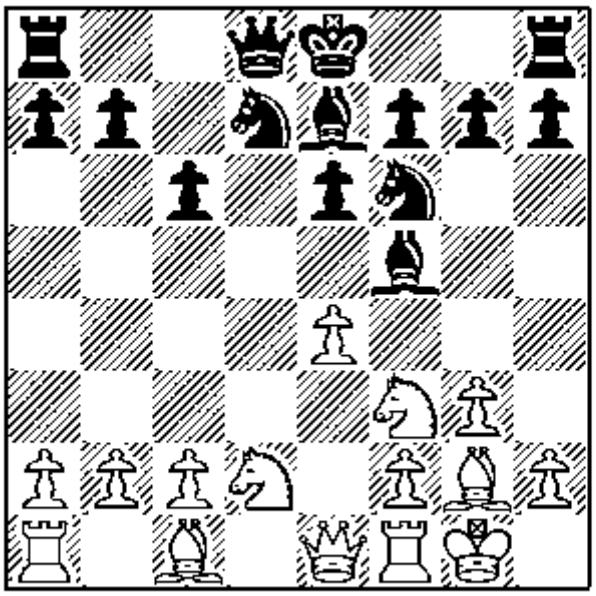


Question: How does Black react?

Answer: 8 ... dxe4

This central exchange is important, even though it trades the d5-pawn for the less valuable d3-pawn, as it increases the freedom of Black's minor pieces. If 8 ... Bg6 at once, Black has two problem pieces and the inferior position after 9 e5 Ng4 10 h3 Nh6 11 g4. Here the g6-bishop bites on the granite of the d3- and c2-pawns, while the h6-knight is corralled by the g4-pawn controlling the f5-square.

9 dxe4



Exercise: Should Black move the bishop to g6 or g4?

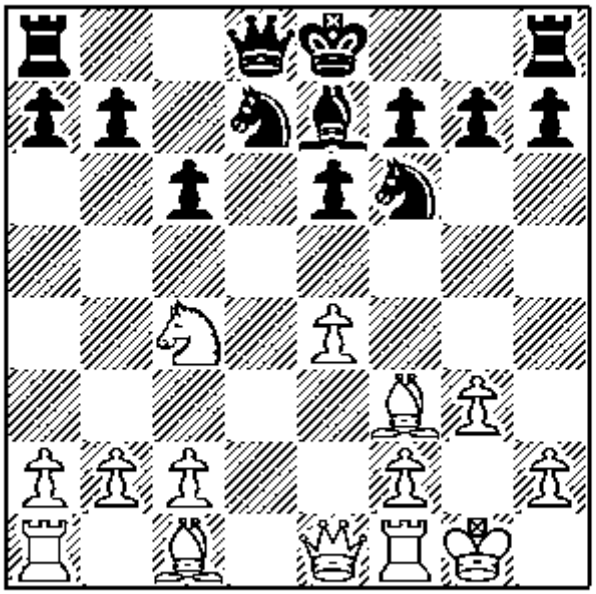
9 ... Bg4!?

With this move Stein essentially transposes to Capablanca's 4 ... Bg4 system a tempo

down – or even two, as Black can sometimes play ... e7-e5 in one go.

Answer: The normal continuation is 9 ... Bg6, in the spirit of controlling the b1-h7 diagonal. There is no need to fear 10 e5 here, since 10 ... Nd5 11 Ne4 (to cover the c2-pawn; not 11 c4?? Nb4 and Black is winning, strategically as well as tactically) 11 ... Nc5 is already equal. Actually, all of Black's minor pieces are now well placed, which is not always easy to achieve in the opening. If all four minor pieces find good squares relatively early in the game, say before a dozen moves have been played, it is an indication that a line is both good and sound. In this case, it clarifies the positive aspects of placing the bishop on the seemingly exposed square at f5.

10 Nc4 Bxf3!? 11 Bxf3



Question: Why did Black voluntarily give away the bishop pair?

Answer: He is hoping that White's bishop at f3 will turn out to be poorly placed. At the moment it is obstructed by the pawn on e4, though we then have to answer the next question ...

11 ... Qc7

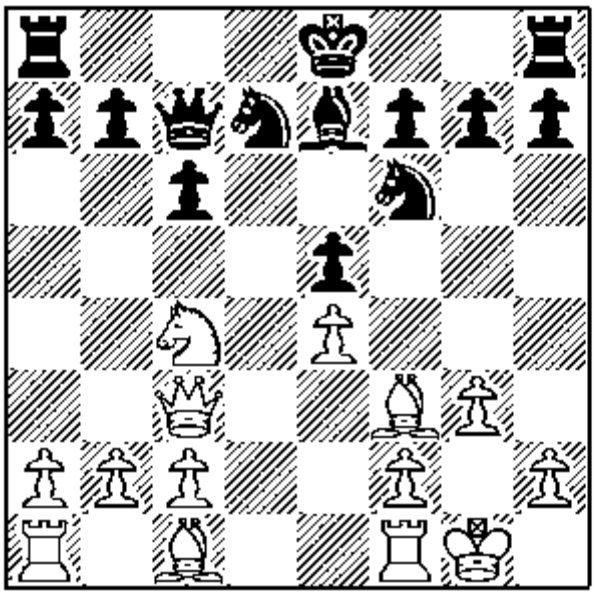
Question: If Black wants to make the white bishop bad, why not fix the e4-pawn at once with 11 ... e5 and play 12 ... Qc7 next move?

Answer: It seems that, by threatening 12 ... Ne5, Stein wanted to encourage his opponent to play 12 e5. Then after 12 ... Nd5, the e-pawn is a tactical weakness due to Black's ideas of ... b7-b5 or ... N5b6.

12 Qc3

Benko prevents ... Ne5 and threatens Bf4, so Black has to push his e-pawn after all.

12 ... e5



13 b4!?

If White wants to exploit Black's last move, which weakened his light squares, he should try 13 Ne3!, threatening both 14 Nf5 and 14 Nd5. If Black responds with 13 ... Nc5 (13 ... 0-0-0 would also be met by 14 b4!), then 14 Nf5 0-0 15 b4! gives White the advantage. Note that 15 ... Ncxe4? loses material after 16 Qe1 Nd6 17 Qxe5 Rfe8 18 Nxg7! Kxg7 19 Qg5+ Kf8 20 Bb2 etc. This last variation shows that Stein took serious risks with his ninth and tenth move.

13 ... 0-0 14 Bb2

14 Ne3? is no longer a strong move, in view of 14 ... a5! with good play for Black.

14 ... Rfe8

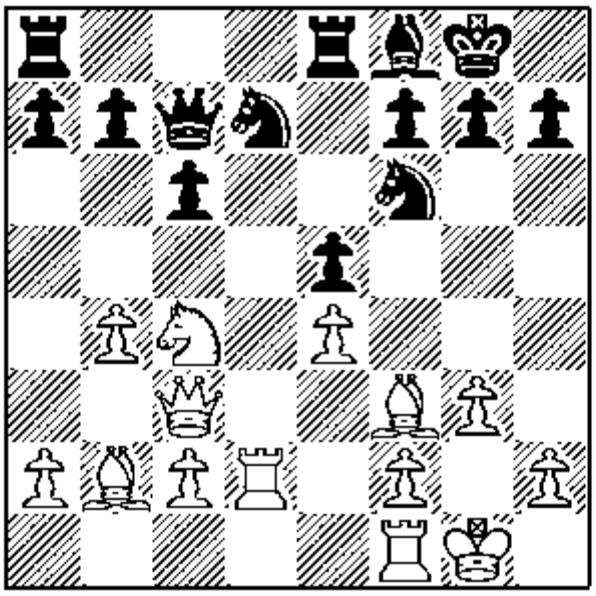
Black defends the e5-pawn indirectly and clears the f8-square for his bishop.

15 Rad1?!

Here 15 a4! looks more efficient, especially compared with what happens in the game. It is not clear what this rook is doing on d1; it would have been more useful behind the a-pawn.

Instead, 15 Nxe5?! is answered by 15 ... Bxb4! 16 Qxb4 Nxe5 17 Bg2 a5, followed by ... b7-b5 with good counterplay. Black has control of the c4-square and pressure on the e4-pawn, which balance the fact that White has the bishop pair in an open position.

15 ... Bf8 16 Rd2?



Exercise: Benko handles his rooks poorly. How can Black exploit the lack of harmony in White's position?

16 ... Nb6

Answer: There is an even stronger continuation in 16 ... b5! 17 Ne3 (the attempt to blockade the black queenside with 17 Na5 does not work if Black finds the amazing sequence 17 ... c5 18 Nb3 a5!!, when 19 Nxa5? fails to 19 ... Nb6 followed by ... Na4 and White's queenside collapses) 17 ... a5 18 Nd5 Qb8 19 Nxf6+ Nxf6 20 bxa5 Qc7 with the superior pawn structure, while the white bishops and rooks have no way into Black's position.

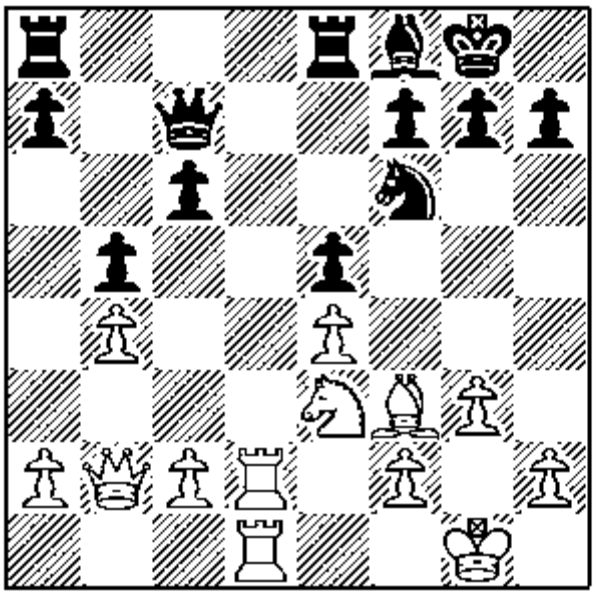
17 Rfd1 Na4

Now we can see the drawback of doubling the rooks on the d-file when there are no entry points. If Benko had appreciated the manoeuvring ability of the d7-knight he would surely have played 15 a4! instead.

18 Qb3 Nxb2

This is an advantageous exchange for Black who now has a marginally better bishop, which puts pressure on weak b4-pawn.

19 Qxb2 b5 20 Ne3

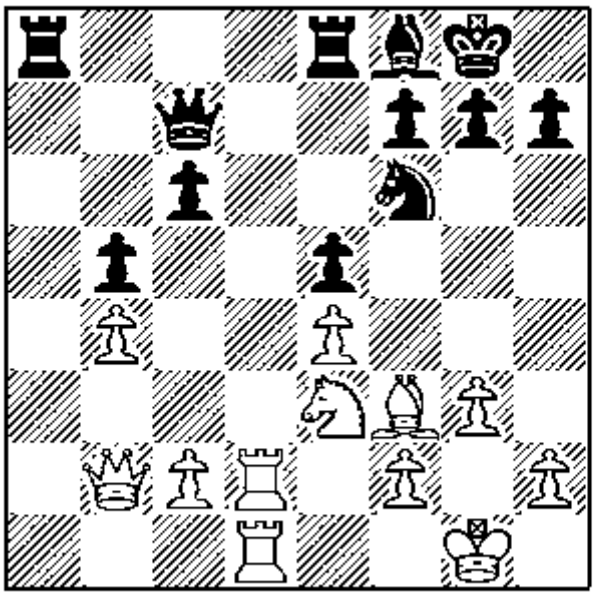


Exercise: How did Stein continue?

Answer: 20 ... a5!

It is tempting to restrict the white knight further with 20 ... g6, but the game would then take a different turn after either 21 c4, threatening 22 cxb5 to gain possession of the d5-square; or 21 Ng4 Qe7 22 Nxf6+ Qxf6 23 Bg4 with equal chances since the white rooks now have access to d7.

21 a3 axb4 22 axb4



Exercise: What is Black's best continuation?

22 ... h5?!

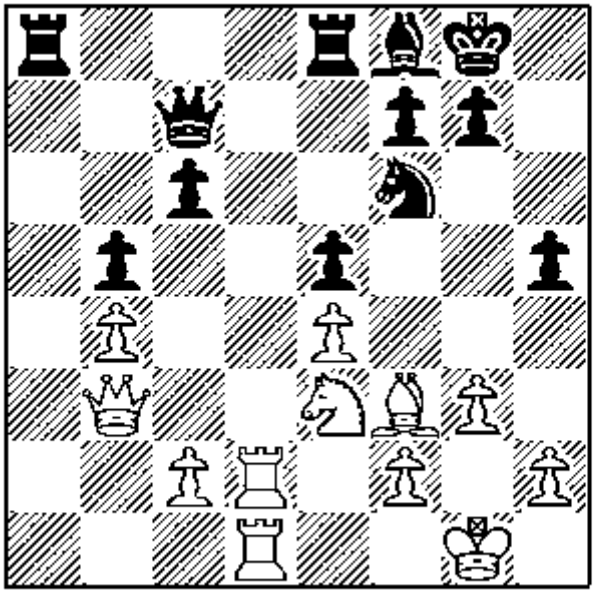
Stein makes the right pawn move, which prevents Ng4 undermining Black's control of d7,

but at the wrong moment. Chess is always about doing the right thing at the right time, making it a difficult game to master.

Answer: It was better to play 22 ... Ra4 first, forcing 23 c3, and only then 23 ... h5. Alternatively, Black might improve the queen's placement with 22 ... Qe7 23 c3 Qe6, and then follow with ... h7-h5 and ... g7-g6, before trying to double rooks on the a-file. In either case, White would probably have to play Ra1 at some stage, when a pair of rooks would be exchanged, releasing the f8-bishop for more active duties (say on the h6-c1 diagonal) now that it is no longer required to cover the d6-square.

23 Qb3?!

The classical a2-g8 diagonal is often a good post for the queen when Black is not in possession of his light-squared bishop, but here Benko's main motivation seems merely a tactical trick. Instead, he should have taken the opportunity to create a queenside target with 23 c4! bxc4 24 Rc2 and 25 Rxc4. Then the weaknesses at b4 and c6 would balance each other out and the position would be completely even.



Exercise: What is Black's most precise move?

23 ... Red8?!

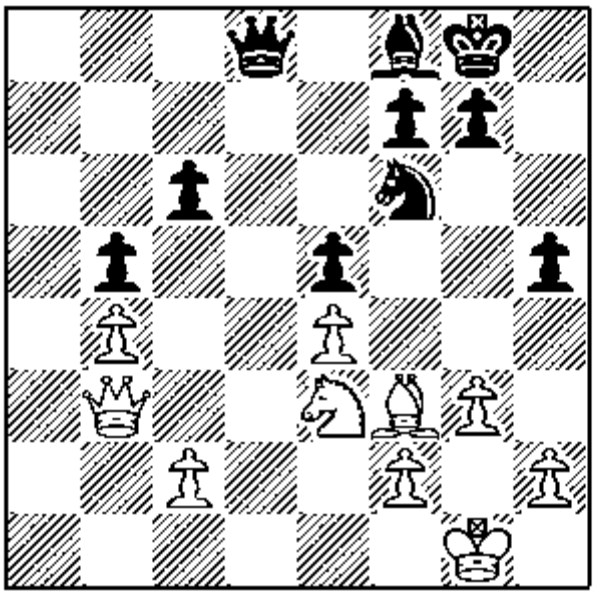
Answer: 23 ... Ra4 is still best, not fearing the cheapo 24 Bxh5 because of 24 ... Qe7! (not 24 ... Nxh5?? 25 Rd7 and wins) 25 Bf3 (or 25 Nf5 Qe6) 25 ... Rxb4 26 Qd3 Qc5 with a slight advantage. Here it is Black's queen which has seized the respective classical diagonal (a7-g1), while at the same time exercising pressure on the c-file.

Again, 23 ... Qe7 24 c3 g6 is a valid alternative.

24 Rxd8

Here 24 c4! would still be good enough for equality.

24 ... Rxd8 25 Rxd8 Qxd8



Question: Make an evaluation by comparing the pieces!

Answer: Black's queen controls the open d-file, making it the superior major piece. Black's bishop is stronger than the white bishop because it can attack the b4-pawn or the knight on e3. Black's knight is also stronger than the white knight because it puts pressure on the e4-pawn. We can therefore deduce that Black has a slight advantage.

It is interesting to see how Stein subsequently exploits his slightly more active pieces. This is a very common situation in chess games and we can learn a lot from the great masters' skill in such positions. How do they utilize an advantage of greater activity? How does Stein do it in this game?

26 Qc3

Now the queen is in the way of either c2-c4 or a stabilizing c2-c3.

26 ... Qd6 27 Nf5 Qe6

27 ... Qxb4? 28 Qxc6 simplifies White's defensive task completely.

28 h4 g6 29 Ne3 Qd6

White's activity was only temporary. Now Black is back in control.

30 Kf1 Be7 31 Ke2 Bf8

The bishop changes its mind and goes back again. If Black tries to bring it to b6 via 31 ... Bd8, White has the chance to oppose the black queen on the d-file with 32 Qd2.

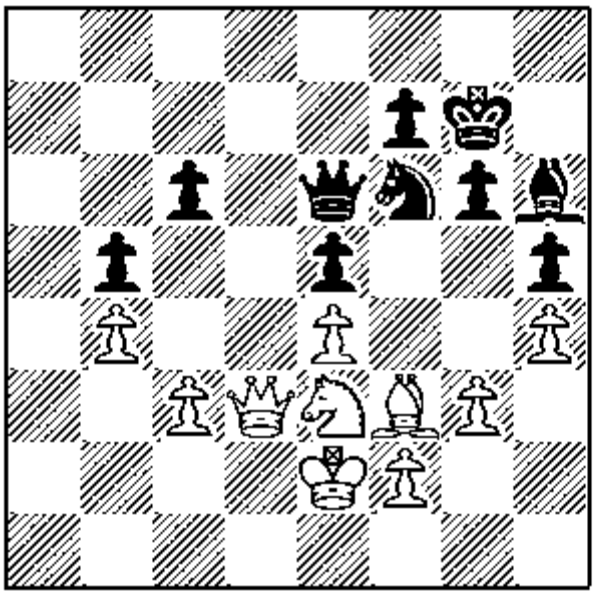
32 Qa1

Benko realizes that the c-pawn belongs on c3 and makes way for it, after which he can challenge for the d-file.

32 ... Bh6 33 c3 Qe6 34 Qd1 Kg7

Notice the patience in Stein's play. He slowly improves his position step by step.

35 Qd3



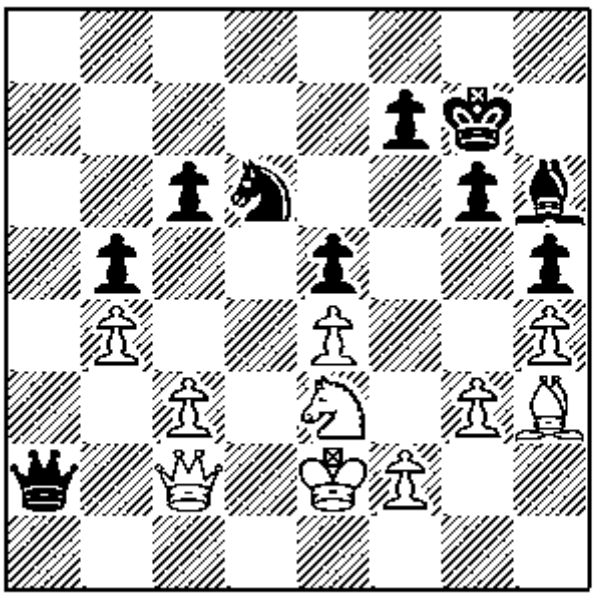
Exercise: Suggest a manoeuvre to improve Black's position further!

Answer: 35 ... Ne8!

The knight stands much better on d6, from where it not only puts pressure on White's e-pawn, it also controls the c4-square and supports (and clears the way for) a future ... f7-f5, when circumstances allow. As mentioned before, everything is about timing.

36 Bg2 Nd6 37 Bh3 Qa2+ 38 Qc2??

In his desire to exchange queens, Benko makes a fatal mistake. 38 Kf3 was necessary with good drawing chances. It is a shame we do not now see how Stein would have played against stronger resistance, but such is practical chess.



Exercise (combination alert): What is the problem with White's defence?

Answer: 38 ... Nxe4!

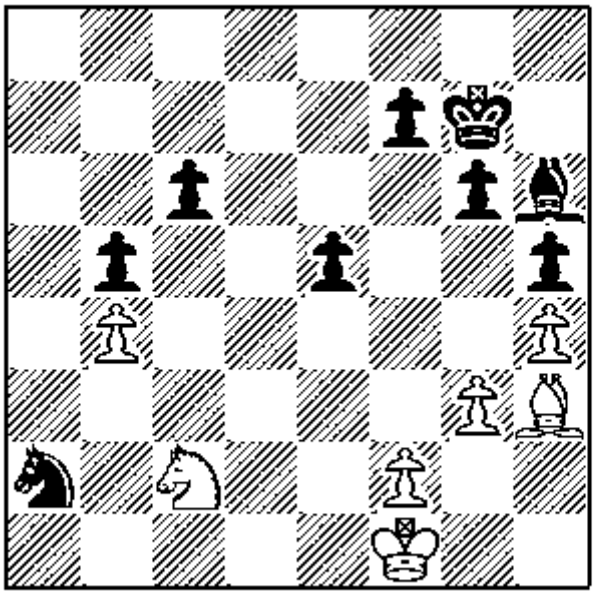
Surprisingly, Benko missed this simple fork combination, winning the e4-pawn. We must

assume that he was very short of time.

39 Qxa2?!

39 Ke1 can be met by the amusing continuation 39 ... Qa1+ 40 Nd1 Nd2! 41 Bg2 Qa8!, followed by 42 ... e4!, and White's game is resignable.

39 ... Nxc3+ 40 Kf1 Nxa2 41 Nc2



Exercise: What is Black's best continuation?

Answer: 41 ... f5

Shutting the white bishop out of play for the moment. Not 41 ... Bd2?, as after 42 Bd7 or 42 Bg2, White gets to eliminate the queenside pawns with very good drawing chances.

42 Bg2 e4 43 f3 Nc3

Keeping White's bishop trapped in its own position.

44 Nd4 Be3 45 Nxc6 Kf6

Black's better pieces, combined with the extra passed pawn, decide the game.

46 fxe4 Nxe4 47 Ke2 Bb6 48 Kd3

48 Bxe4 fxe4 is another way of losing. The black king has several inroads and all White's pawns are on the same colour squares as Black's bishop.

48 ... Nxg3 49 Nb8 Ke7 50 Bc6 f4 51 Nd7

After 51 Bxb5 f3, the pawn is supported to f2 and f1.

51 ... Ba7 52 Nc5 Nf5 53 Bxb5 Nxh4

Black now has three connected passed pawns and the rest is easy.

54 Ke4 Bb8 55 Nd7 Bc7 56 Nc5 g5 57 Nd3 f3 58 Bc6 g4 59 Ke3 Bb6+ 60 Kf4 Kf6 61 Bb5 Bc7+ 62 Ke3 g3 0-1

The American grandmaster Larry Evans (1932-2010) was US Champion five times and represented his country in eight Olympiads from 1950-76. He is famous for his many books, including Vienna 1922 (Evans 1948) and New Ideas in Chess (Pitman 1958). If you have a well-thought-out and alphabetized chess library, you will find his books next to those of Reuben Fine on the bookshelf, followed by Bobby Fischer's My 60 Memorable Games, to which Evans wrote all of the introductions.

Game 27
L.Stein-L.M.Evans

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6

Today, the Berlin Wall with 3 ... Nf6 (the main variation goes 4 0-0 Nxe4 5 d4 Nd6 6 Bxc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 Nf5 8 Qxd8+ Kxd8 and so forth) has almost superseded Morphy's 3 ... a6 as Black's most reliable weapon in the open games. One reason for its popularity at the highest level is that Black can play for three results rather than two. Another practical advantage is that it avoids the Exchange Variation with 3 ... a6 4 Bxc6; Berlin players do not need to worry about the many forcing lines in this by no means harmless system (see Game 40).

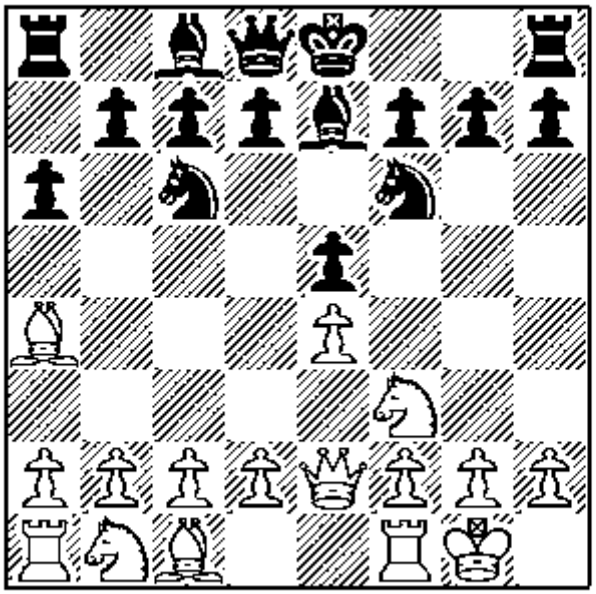
4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7

The Closed Ruy Lopez has a solid reputation, its primary aim being to maintain the e5-pawn for as long as possible, both as a strongpoint and as a pivot for any future action.

Alternatively, 5 ... Nxe4 leads to the Open Defence, advocated by Tarrasch. At first glance, this seems much the same as variation in the previous note, but the similarity is only superficial. In the Berlin Wall, Black answers 5 d4 with 5 ... Nd6, threatening the bishop on b5 and forestalling uncomfortable pins on the e-file. Here, the bishop has already retreated to a4, so 6 d4 Nd6? would make no sense for Black (6 Re1 is less precise because of 6 ... Nc5!); instead, play usually continues 6 ... b5 7 Bb3 d5 8 dxe5 Be6 with a totally different type of game.

6 Re1

This is the main variation, but what happens after the natural 6 Qe2 (the Worrall Attack), planning a more convenient set-up with Rfd1 - ? Actually, Alekhine often did play this way, so let us investigate it a little bit.



Question: The major pieces are well placed on e2 and d1,
so why does White not play like this on a regular basis?

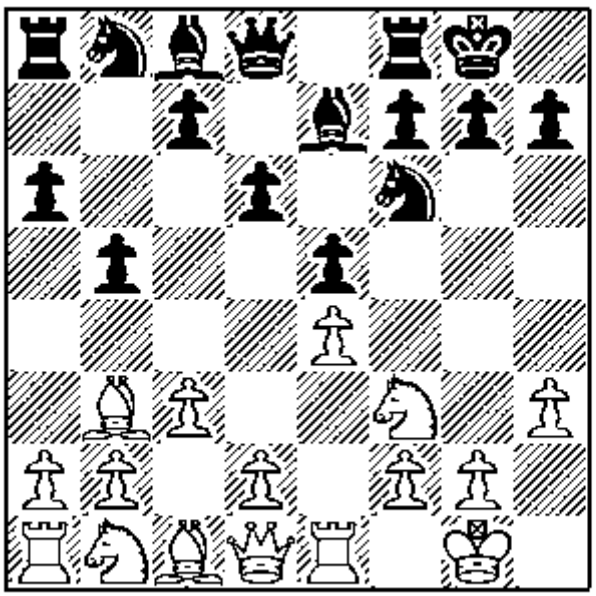
Answer: In this case Black can play in the spirit of the Chigorin variation (6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Na5) with 6 ... b5 7 Bb3 0-0 (7 ... d6 8 a4! puts the b5-pawn under fire, one of the thematic ideas in the Worrall Attack; for instance, after 8 ... Rb8?! 9 axb5 axb5, White has a slight advantage since Black has abandoned the a-file without any compensation) 8 c3 d6 9 Rd1 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Qc7. Here 12 d5 is objectively best, though White's major piece placement is less motivated with a blocked centre, where effective development is less important than manoeuvrings on the flanks. Instead, Alekhine played 12

Bg5, following the idea inherent in this set-up of developing as quickly as possible; but it does not work after 12 ... h6! (stronger than 12 ... Bg4, as in A.Alekhine-P.Keres, Salzburg 1942) 13 Bh4 Nh5 14 Bxe7 Nf4!, when Black secures the slightly better game. The placement of the queen at e2 proves problematic in this line, and even more so after 15 Qe3? cxd4! (this second intermediary move improves on 15 ... Qxe7 from I.Smirin-P.Van der Sterren, Antwerp 1994) 16 cxd4 Nc4! 17 Qb3 Qxe7 with a clear advantage to Black, showing that knights on the edge can sometimes have a rapid and decisive influence on the game.

6 ... b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3

A golden rule in the Ruy Lopez is that ... Bg4 is normally good when the white d-pawn stands at d4 (as in Game 39), but less so when it is located at d2 or d3 because of the lack of central tension. In the latter case, the bishop on g4 creates no pressure on the centre, but is itself a target which White can exploit by manoeuvres such as d2-d3, Nbd2-f1-g3 and h2-h3. In some positions it is even good to play h2-h3 immediately, answering ... Bh5 with g2-g4, followed by Steinitz's famous invention, the knight manoeuvre to g3.

9 ... Nb8



This original regrouping, suggested by the Hungarian champion Gyula Breyer (1893-1921) around 1920, was neglected until the mid '50s. The idea is to redevelop the knight to d7, where it supports the e5-pawn and gives Black's position more stability, while clearing the path for a bishop on b7 to pressurize the e4-pawn. It was actually this variation which made Stein more reluctant to play 1 e4.

The move seems more clever than Chigorin's 9 ... Na5 which is a more delicate system. After all, where is the knight on a5 supposed to go in the near future? There is almost no better plan than rerouting the knight to d7 anyway via the c4- and b6-squares, which takes two moves longer than Breyer's manoeuvre. Yes, Black manages to drive the white bishop to c2 in the process, which should be worth a move, but he is still one tempo down. Another defect with the Chigorin system is that Black must always be careful in case the a5-knight gets shut out of the game almost eternally after such pawn moves as b2-b3 and d4-d5.

10 d3

Stein opts for a conservative continuation, postponing d3-d4 until White's position is more developed. The immediate 10 d4 is the usual move, but Stein had played that twice in Amsterdam already and wanted to avoid any preparation, especially as this was Evans' first (and only) recorded game with the Breyer, so he must have had something in mind.

After 10 d4 Nbd7, the main variation goes 11 Nbd2 Bb7 12 Bc2 Re8 13 Nf1 Bf8 14 Ng3

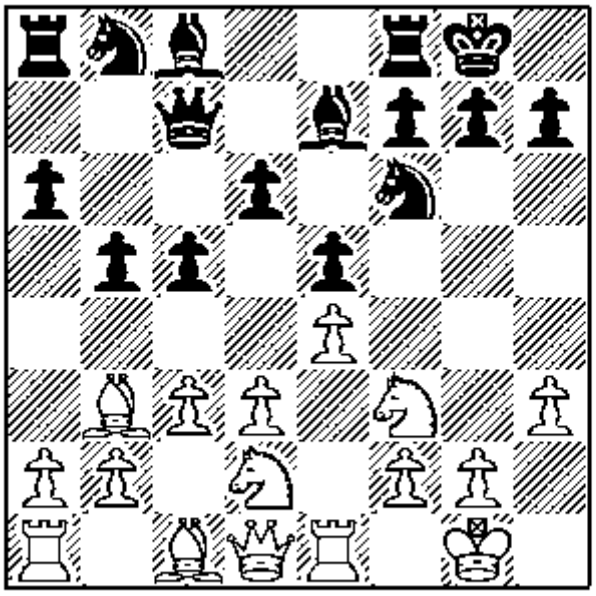
g6 15 a4 Bg7 16 Bd3 c6, and now a recent game saw 17 Be3 Qc7 18 Qd2 exd4 19 cxd4 c5 20 d5 c4 21 Bc2 Rec8 22 axb5 c3? (too optimistic; 22 ... axb5 is necessary) 23 bxc3 Nxd5 24 exd5 Bxc3 25 Qd1 Bxa1 26 Qxa1 axb5 27 Qd4 Qc3 (or 27 ... Qxc2 28 Bh6 f6 29 Re7 Ra4 30 Qe3 and White is close to winning) 28 Ne4 and White won after 65 moves in V.Anand-D.Baramidze, Baden-Baden 2015.

Earlier in the tournament, Stein had tried the sharper 11 Nh4, as advised by Geller and Tal who had analysed it together in Havana in 1963. Gligoric was taken by surprise and thought for 40 minutes before playing 11 ... Nb6. The game continued 12 Nf5?! (the flexible 12 Nd2 is correct, as later played by Fischer) 12 ... Bxf5 13 exf5 exd4 14 cxd4 d5 (14 ... c5! is actually even more critical) 15 Nc3 Re8 16 Qf3 c6 17 Bc2 Bd6 18 Bg5 Nbd7 19 g4, reaching a double-edged position, certainly in accordance with Stein's preferences, who went on to win in 55 moves.

10 ... c5

Given that White has refrained from the normal 10 d4, the natural plan for Black is to seize space on the queenside. Alternatively, Gufeld and Lazarev recommend an early ... a6-a5-a4, driving the white bishop off the a2-g8 diagonal. E.Vasiukov-E.Gufeld, USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1964, saw 10 ... Nbd7 11 Nbd2 a5 12 Nf1 (12 a4 is answered by 12 ... Nc5; and 12 a3 by 12 ... a4 13 Ba2 Nc5 14 Qc2 Be6 with approximate equality in W.Unzicker-S.Reshevsky, Tel Aviv Olympiad 1964) 12 ... a4 13 Bc2 Re8 14 Ng3 g6 15 Bh6 Bf8 16 Qd2 Bg7 17 Rad1 Qe7 with mutual chances.

11 Nbd2 Qc7



Question: How does White continue the build-up of his position?

12 Bc2

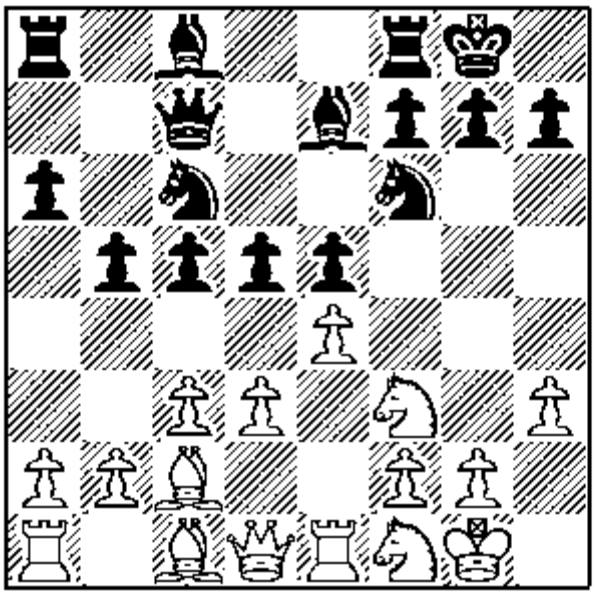
This surrenders control of the d5-square.

Answer: 12 Nf1 is more precise, not fearing 12 ... c4 as after 13 dxc4 bxc4 14 Bc2 and 15 Ne3, White is fine with positional targets at c4, d5 and f5.

12 ... Nc6

When Black does not need to worry about the tempo- and space-gaining d4-d5, the knight is better placed on c6 than d7.

13 Nf1 d5



Question: Why did Stein allow such an easy equalization?

Answer: The position still contains a lot of dynamism. If you look carefully you will notice that, apart from the placement of the light-squared bishop, White's formation resembles a genuine King's Indian Attack. This is exactly the kind of position Stein is looking for, where he can use his talent instead of memorizing a lot of variations (in effect copying ideas from other players).

14 Ne3 dxe4?!

Question: Why is this a dubious option?

Answer: First of all, it releases the tension and exchanges the strong d5-pawn for White's lesser d3-pawn. This means Black loses some future options, such as ... d5-d4 at the right moment, while removing the possibility of White exchanging on d5 himself, when the resulting formation (e5-pawn vs. d3-pawn) constitutes a space advantage for Black. More significantly, it constitutes a crucial loss of time: instead of White having to waste a tempo advancing his d-pawn again at some stage, Black has now wasted one himself.

Principally, Black should look at moves which maintain the tension, so 14 ... Be6 springs to mind. Perhaps Evans did not like the continuation 15 Ng5 d4 16 Nf5 Bxf5 17 exf5, but after 17 ... Rad8, Black's position is actually slightly preferable with annoying ideas like ... c5-c4.

The immediate 14 ... d4?! would be good if not for 15 Nd5, which gives White the initiative. Black needs greater control of d5 before embarking on this space-winning advance. Similarly, Raymond Keene rejects a third option, 14 ... Rd8 15 exd5 Nxd5 16 Nxd5 Rxd5, on account of 17 d4! with the unpleasant threat of Be4.

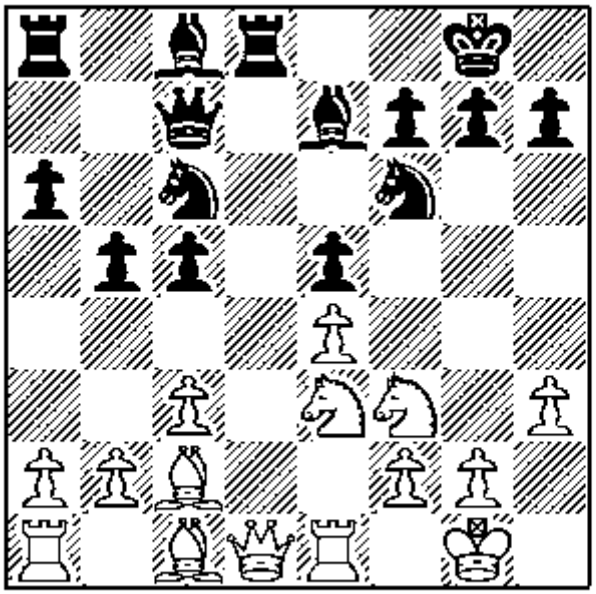
15 dxe4

The exchange in the centre has created the same pawn structure as if White had played d2-d4 and then taken on e5 or c5. In fact, we have transposed to a Chigorin main line (9 ... Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Qc7 12 Nbd2 Nc6 13 dxc5 dxc5 14 Nf1, intending Ne3), except that White is a tempo up since his knight is on e3 already.

15 ... Rd8

Black needs to increase his control of the important d5-square. 15 ... Be6 (with ideas of ...

Rad8, ... c5-c4 and maybe even ... Nd4) does not work because of the standard resource 16 Ng5 Rad8 17 Qe2 and White has the initiative.



Exercise: How does White continue?

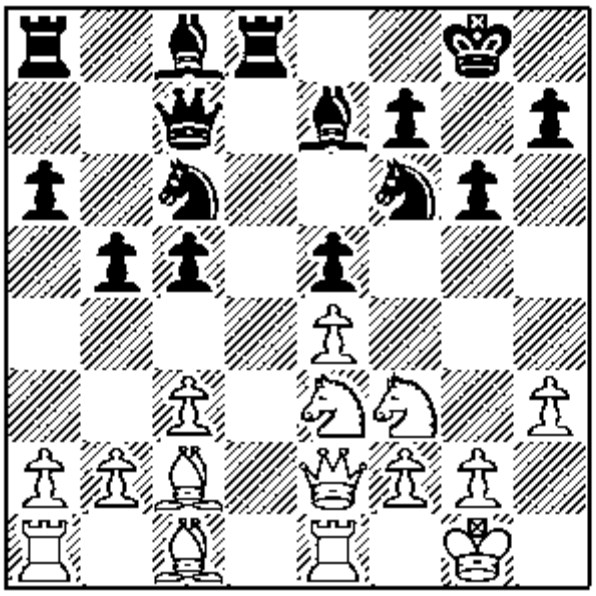
Answer: 16 Qe2

Keene writes that "White has already attained an ideal Lopez piece-configuration with possibilities of aggressive action in all areas of the board – in particular, the squares d5 and f5 beckon invitingly to White's knight while the white bishop pair are positively loaded with potential energy directed towards the black king's field."

A decent alternative is 16 Nd5 Qb7 (16 ... Nxd5 17 exd5 Be6 would be met by 18 Bxh7+! Kxh7 19 Qc2+ f5 20 dxe6 with advantage) 17 Qe2 and White has a slight advantage because of the strong knight at d5, which is for the moment untouchable since 17 ... Nxd5? 18 exd5 Rxd5? runs into the decisive double attack 19 Qe4.

16 ... g6

Black takes control of the f5-square and blocks the b1-h7 diagonal, which might be opened in conjunction with Nd5.



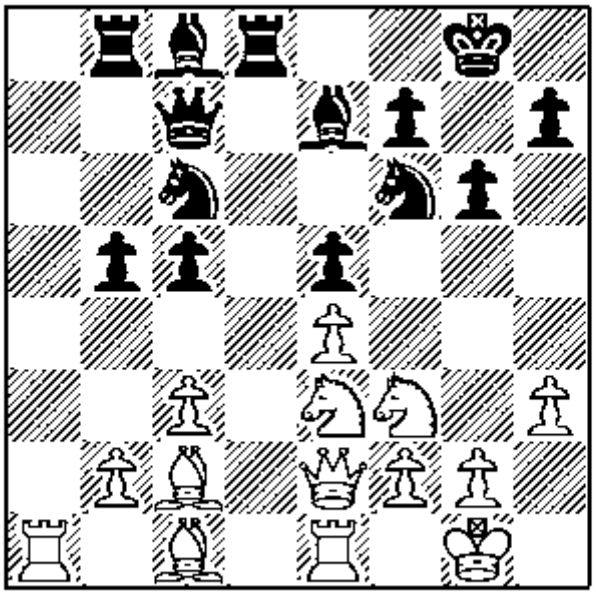
Exercise (calculation): What is White's best move?

17 a4

Answer: Surprisingly, 17 Nd5 still works. The following variation leads to an advantageous ending and is practically forced: 17 ... Nxd5 18 exd5 Rxd5 19 Be4 Rd8 (19 ... Rd6?? 20 Nxe5 Bb7 21 Bf4 is very unpleasant for Black) 20 Bxc6! Qxc6 21 Nxe5 Qb7 22 Nxf7!! Kxf7 23 Qxe7+ Qxe7 24 Rxe7+ Kxe7 25 Bg5+ and White regains the material in a spectacular manner. Black's best response is 25 ... Ke8!, forcing 26 Re1+ Kf7 27 Bxd8 Bxh3 28 Bb6 Be6 (showing why the white rook was better placed in the corner), though after 29 Bxc5 Bxa2 30 Re7+ Kg8 31 Bd4 Bf7 32 g4, White has practical winning chances due to his more active position.

17 ... Rb8 18 axb5 axb5

Notice that White's a1-rook has been developed automatically, even if there are no entry points on the a-file at present.



Exercise: How did Stein continue?

Answer: 19 Ng5!

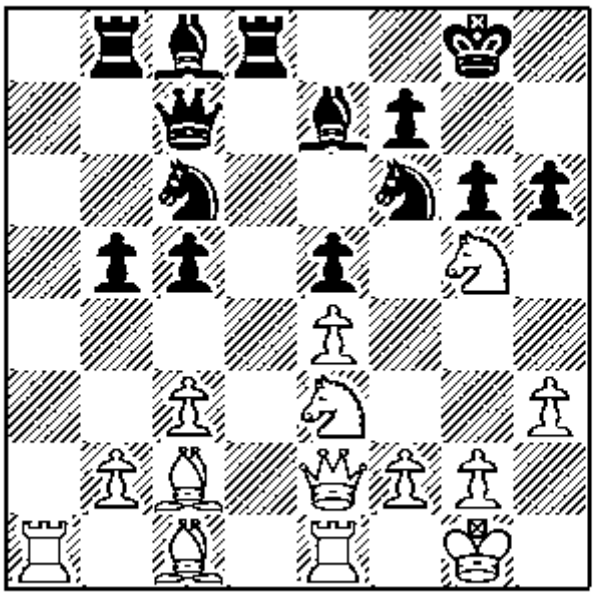
An aggressive and strong move, whose main objective is to provoke weaknesses in the black kingside. If Petrosian was mostly concerned with preventing attacks, Stein was the opposite: he aimed to create preconditions for an attack where none existed before.

The positional 19 Nd5 would again have led to some pressure after 19 ... Nxd5 20 exd5 Rxd5 21 Be4 Rd6 22 Bxc6 Rxc6! (22 ... Qxc6 23 Nxe5 Qb7 24 Nc6! Re6 25 Nxe7+ Qxe7 26 Be3 gives White better prospects; in particular, the a1-rook is ready to penetrate on the a-file if Black develops the bishop to d7) 23 Qxe5 (not 23 Nxe5?? Re6 and Black is on top) 23 ... Rb7 24 Qxc7 Rbxc7 25 Ra8 Bd6 26 Re8+ Kg7 27 Ng5 Re7! 28 Rxe7 Bxe7 29 Ra7 and White has the more active pieces in the endgame. However, Stein was primarily an attacking player and, I would guess, was not so keen on variations with a lot of exchanges, leading at most to a slightly advantageous endgame. That explains Stein's choice of move both here and earlier.

19 ... h6

The apparently solid defence 19 ... Bf8 is met by 20 Qf3 Ne8 21 Nd5 Qb7 and now the a1-rook becomes extraordinary active along the sixth rank after the incredible move 22 Ra6!!, threatening Rxc6. Since Black's queen has to protect the f7-square, the best defence is 22 ... Rd6, but after 23 Rb6 Qd7 24 Rxb8 Nxb8 25 Qe2, Black's co-ordination is very bad indeed.

White also has a good game after 19 ... c4 20 Nd5! Nxd5 21 exd5 Bxg5 (Black has to part with his dark-squared bishop, since 21 ... Rxd5 22 Qf3 wins material) 22 Bxg5 Rxd5 23 Qe3 f5 24 Rad1.



Exercise (calculation): What did Stein play now?

Answer: 20 Nd5!

We have seen this move already, but this time Stein has a creative tactical idea in mind.

20 ... Nxd5

20 ... Qd6 surrenders the dark-squared bishop after 21 Nxe7+ Qxe7, and then 22 Nf3 Kh7 23 Nh2 looks interesting, followed by ideas such as Qe3 and f2-f4, opening up the position for the bishops.

21 exd5 hxg5

Other moves are worse:

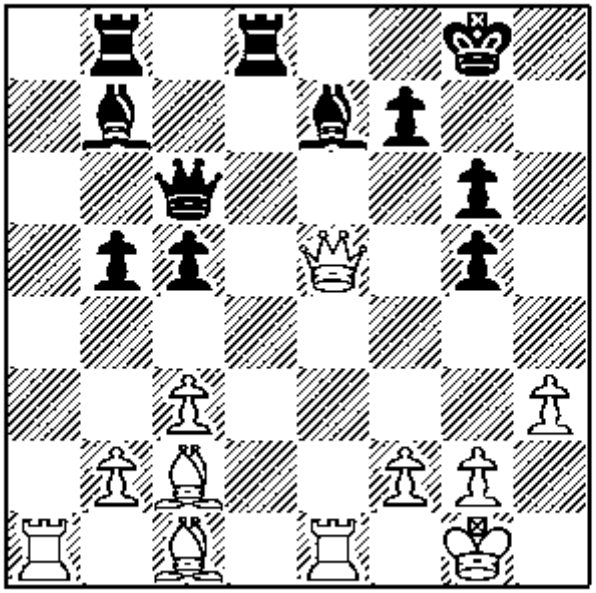
a) 21 ... Bxg5 loses a pawn for no nothing after 22 Bxg5 hxg5 23 dxc6 Qxc6 (or 23 ... Rb6 24 Qxe5 Qxe5 25 Rxe5 Rxc6 26 Ra5 Rd2 27 Be4 etc) 24 Qxe5 Bb7 25 Be4 Qd6 26 Bxb7 Rxb7 27 Qxg5.

b) 21 ... Rxd5? fails to 22 Nxf7! Kxf7 23 Qf3+ Ke6 24 Bxg6 Kd6 25 Be4 Be6 26 Rd1 and wins.

22 dxc6 Qxc6 23 Qxe5

The centralized queen on e5 is like a giant octopus, threatening the rook on b8, the bishop on e7 and the pawn on g5 with its enormous tentacles. Getting a piece to such an influential post is one of the main ideas to strive for if you want to win games on a consistent basis.

23 ... Bb7



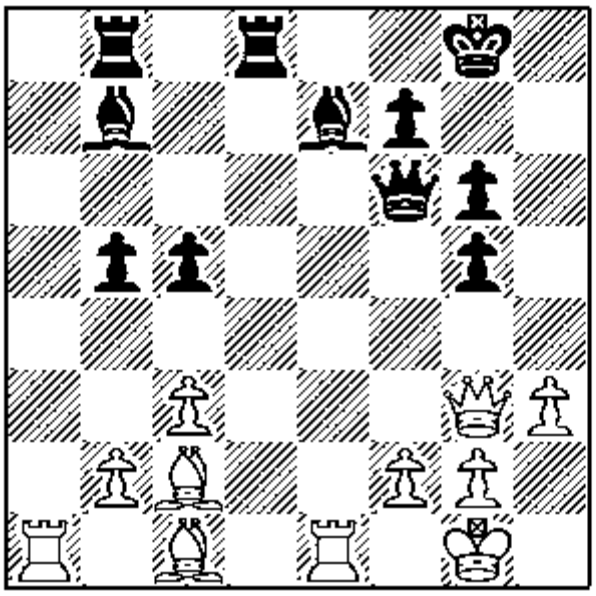
Exercise (calculation): How to defend against the threat of mate while keeping the initiative?

Answer: 24 Qg3

Notice that 24 Be4? is met by 24 ... Qf6! and Black has everything in order. But 24 f3 is also good, intending 24 ... Bf6 25 Qg3 Qd5 (25 ... b4 fails to 26 Bxg5 bxc3 27 bxc3 Bxc3 28 Bxd8 Rxd8 29 Rad1 and White keeps the exchange) 26 Be3!, followed by 27 Rad1 and the g5-pawn falls (again not 26 Be4? due to 26 ... Qd6 and Black holds).

24 ... Qf6

After 24 ... Bd6 25 Qxg5 Re8 26 Bd2, White consolidates his extra pawn very easily and has a strategically won position.



Exercise (calculation): What is White's strongest move? (Warning: This is difficult!)

25 Rxe7!

Stein's move is human and beautiful on a high level.

Answer: Nevertheless, 25 Ra7!! is even stronger, as it makes the idea of Re1xe7 more powerful. It is reminiscent of Petrosian's method of holding back the 'normal' move and playing another one which strengthens and increases the threat, instead of executing it immediately as Stein did in the game. And it is very logical to utilize the a-file, which the rook has controlled for so long. The main line goes 25 ... Re8 26 Rxe7 Qxe7 27 Bxg5 Qe6 (27 ... Qe1+ 28 Kh2 and 27 ... Qe2 28 Bxg6! are no better) 28 Bf4 and White regains the material a pawn to the good.

25 ... Qxe7 26 Bxg5 f6?

In trying to keep the exchange, Black seriously weakens his kingside and his position now deteriorates more quickly. 26 ... Qe6 is more stubborn, but 27 Qh4! Rd6 28 Be7 Re8 (not 28 ... Rc6? 29 Be4 and wins, while 28 ... Rb6? runs into the tricky 29 Bxc5! Qd5 30 Qg3! etc) 29 Bxd6 Qxd6 30 Rd1 is clearly better for White, whose pieces stands excellently and he has an extra pawn for nothing.

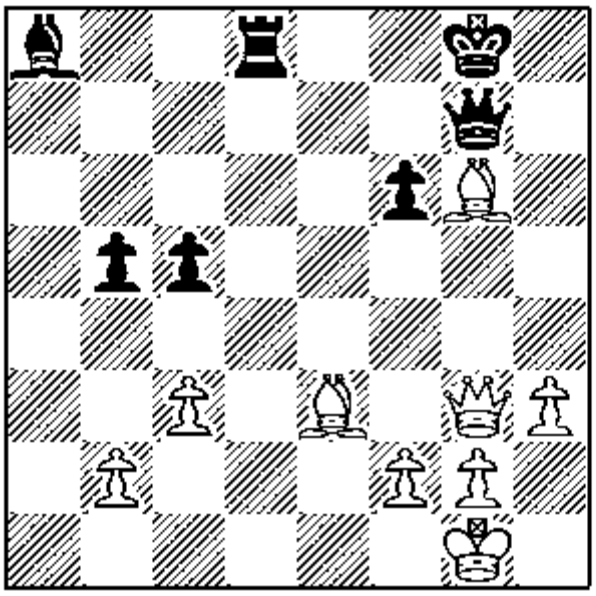
27 Bf4 Ra8

Black must oppose the strong white rook to prevent it from penetrating on the a-file. Instead, 27 ... Rbc8? 28 Bxg6 Qg7 29 Ra7 is devastating, since 29 ... Ra8 30 Bf7+! is a nightmare for Black.

28 Rxa8 Bxa8

28 ... Rxa8 29 Bxg6 Qg7 30 Be3 is much the same.

29 Bxg6 Qg7 30 Be3

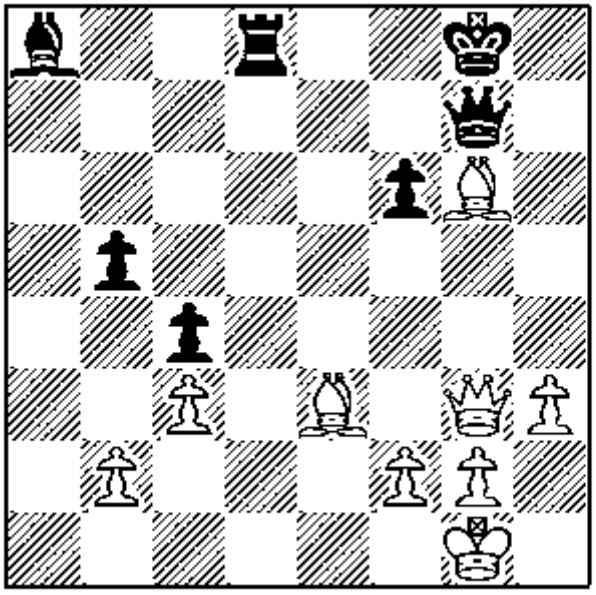


Exercise: Evaluate the position!

Answer: White has two pawns for the exchange, more active pieces and a much safer king. He also threatens the c5-pawn and can rush his passed h-pawn down the board; whereas Black has no counterplay whatsoever, just a meaningless check on the back rank. These advantages are enough to evaluate the position as technically winning for White.

30 ... c4

Keene gives 30 ... Rc8 31 Bh6! Qxh6 32 Bf5+ and White wins easily with two extra pawns.



Exercise (combination alert): Can you see White's decisive move?

Answer: 31 Bf7+!

A beautiful stroke, exploiting the fact that the d8-rook is undefended.

31 ... Kxf7

31 ... Kf8 32 Bc5+ Kxf7 33 Qc7+ comes to the same thing, while 31 ... Kh8 leads to mate

in five: 32 Qh4+ Qh7 33 Qxf6+ Qg7 34 Qxd8+ Kh7 35 Qh4+ Qh6 36 Qxh6 mate.

32 Qc7+ Kg6 33 Qxd8 Bc6 34 Bd4 Qf7 35 Qd6 1-0

After this convincing victory in the 17th round, Stein won his next four games as well. His final score was an outstanding +10 on 16½/23 (with twelve wins, two losses and nine draws), half a point behind the four joint winners. But once again he succumbed to the "rule of three" (together with Bronstein, who was placed sixth). Smyslov, Spassky and Tal all finished ahead of him and took the three permitted Soviet qualifications. So, for the second time, Stein experienced the injustice of this crazy rule, which was abolished at the 1965 FIDE congress in Wiesbaden.

The Ukrainian player Georgy Borisenko (1922-2012) was a true chess lover who devoted all his long life to the game. He was most successful in postal chess at which he became a grandmaster in 1965, after finishing runner-up to Vladimir Zagorovsky in the 4th World Correspondence Championship 1962-65. As a theoretician, Borisenko is famous for the variation 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Nc6 which bears his name.

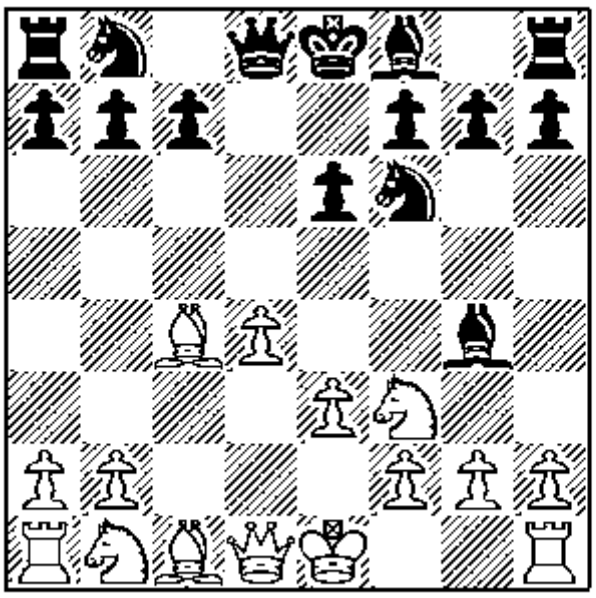
Game 28
G.Borisenko-L.Stein
USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1964
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4

Stein played the Queen's Gambit Accepted three times in serious games, scoring one win and two draws.

3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3

After this move it is more difficult to regain the gambit pawn. White hopes to get compensation from rapid development and a strong pawn centre. Stein's other games with the QGA both saw 4 e3 Bg4 5 Bxc4 e6 and then:



a) 6 h3 Bh5 7 Nc3 a6 8 0-0 Nc6 9 b3 Bd6 10 Bb2 0-0 11 Be2 Re8 12 Rc1 Qe7 13 Ne5 Bxe2 14 Nxc6 Bxd1 15 Nxe7+ Bxe7 16 Rfxd1 c6 with an equal position in D.Bronstein-L.Stein, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963. The game ended in a draw after a few uneventful moves.

b) 6 Qb3!? Bxf3 7 gxf3 Nbd7 8 Rg1 Nb6 9 Be2 g6 10 Bd2 a5 11 Nc3 a4 12 Qc2 a3 13 b3

Bg7 14 Rc1 0-0 15 Ne4 Nxe4 16 fxe4 c6 was also equal in O.C.Quinones-L.Stein, Amsterdam Interzonal 1964. This time the players agreed a draw after 33 moves.

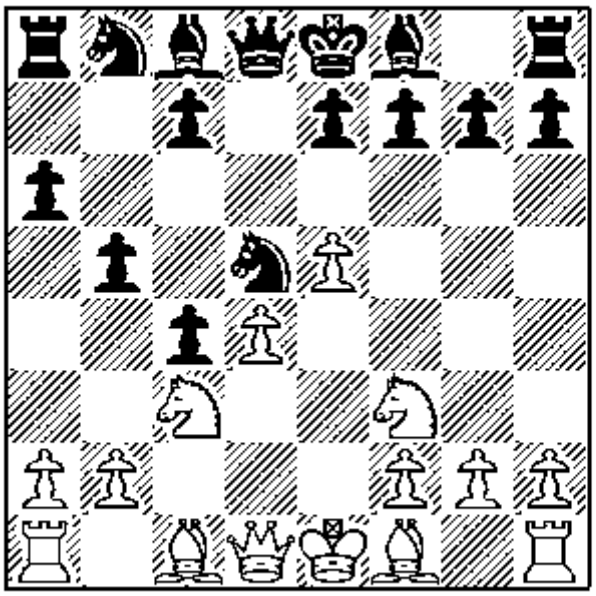
4 ... a6

If Black prefers then 4 ... c6 transposes to the Slav Defence.

5 e4

The critical variation. Quieter moves lead to easy equality for Black; for example, 5 e3 (or 5 a4 Nc6! with an excellent version of Chigorin's Defence) 5 ... b5 6 a4 b4 7 Nb1 e6 8 Bxc4 Bb7 9 0-0 c5 10 b3 cxd4 11 Nxd4 Bd6! 12 Bb2 0-0 13 Nd2 Nbd7 14 Rc1 Qb8 15 h3 Rd8 and Black had no problems in L.Van Wely-V.Anand, Tilburg 1992.

5 ... b5 6 e5 Nd5



7 a4

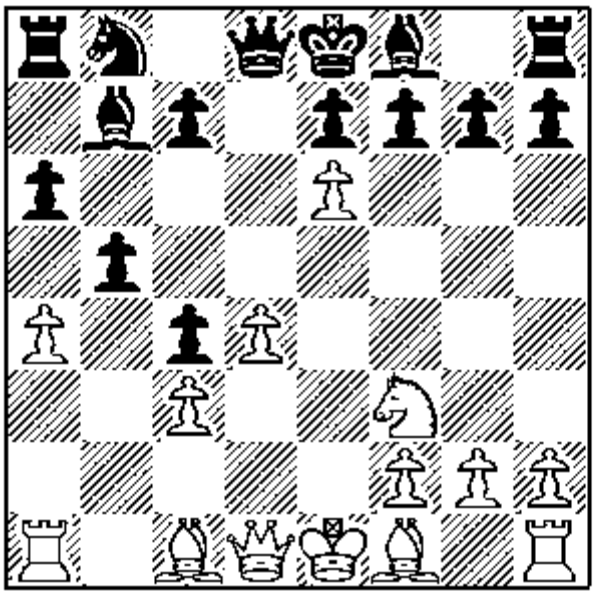
White tries 7 Ng5 occasionally. M.Petursson-V.Zalstman, Reykjavik 1984, continued 7 ... e6 8 Qh5 Qd7 (8 ... Qe7 is another set-up, as in A.Korelov-E.Gufeld, Sverdlovsk 1963) 9 Be2 Bb7 10 Bf3 g6 11 Qg4 b4 12 Nce4 Nc6 13 Be3 h6 14 Nh3 0-0-0, when White still has to prove sufficient compensation for the pawn.

7 ... Nxc3 8 bxc3 Bb7

The alternative is 8 ... Qd5, which defends the a8-rook and prevents White from playing e5-e6; the downside is a certain loss of time as the queen will soon have to move again. After 9 g3 Bb7 10 Bg2 (threatening Nh4) 10 ... Qd7 11 Ba3 g6 12 0-0 Bg7 13 Re1, White has active play and sufficient compensation for the pawn.

9 e6!

A romantic idea originating from Bronstein. Today such a move is played without much thought since it severely disrupts Black's natural development. What White is actually doing is transforming his strong centre into other advantages, not least the weaknesses created in the black position.



Question: How does Black react to this thrust?

Answer: 9 ... fxe6!

After this natural response, the position becomes very complicated. Although Black is two pawns ahead, his pawn formation is wrecked and he has problems with his development and co-ordination.

Alternatively, Black can try 9 ... f6, aiming to win the e6-pawn without damaging his structure, but he will lose a lot more time in the process. For example, 10 Be2 Qd5 (or 10 ... g6 11 0-0 Bd5 12 Ne1!, intending Nc2-b4, while 12 ... Bxe6? fails to 13 axb5 with a clear advantage) 11 0-0 Qxe6 12 Re1 gives White strong play for the two pawns, as demonstrated by 12 ... Qf7 13 Nh4! b4 14 Nf5 a5 15 Bf3 Nc6 16 Nh6! and Black resigned in D.Gormally-J.Granda Zuniga, Douglas 2014.

10 Be2

Bronstein later succeeded with the aggressive 10 Ng5 Qd5 11 Qg4!? (11 Be2 transposes to the game) 11 ... Qf5 12 Qg3 e5 13 Qxe5 Qxe5+ 14 dxe5 Nd7?! 15 Ne6 Rc8 16 axb5 axb5 17 Ra7 in D.Bronstein-I.Chikovani, USSR Team Championship 1967. However, Black can improve with 11 ... h5! 12 Qh3 (or 12 Qxe6 Rh6, while 12 Qf4 is well met by 12 ... e5!) 12 ... Rh6, when the rook is involved in the defence both vertically and horizontally.

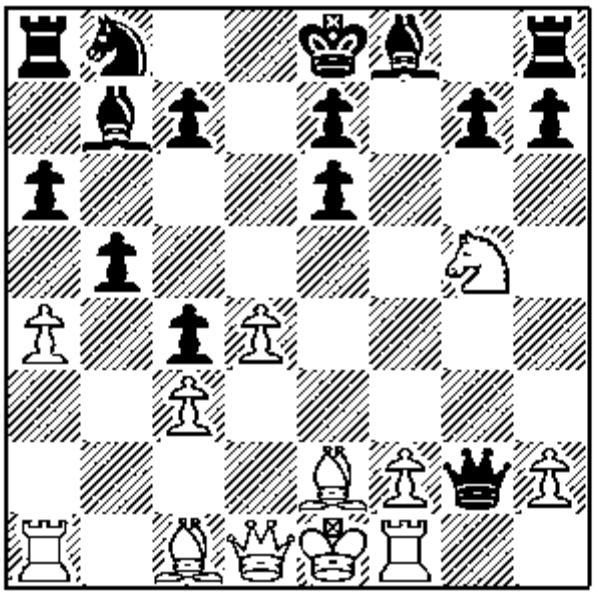
10 ... Qd5 11 Ng5

This was a novelty by Borisenko, which targets the e6-pawn and prepares to harass the black queen, so the play becomes even sharper.

11 ... Qxg2

When Black captures such a pawn it is not the pawn itself which is interesting, but rather the weaknesses arising from its absence, especially White's inability to castle kingside.

12 Rf1



Exercise: What is Black's best move?

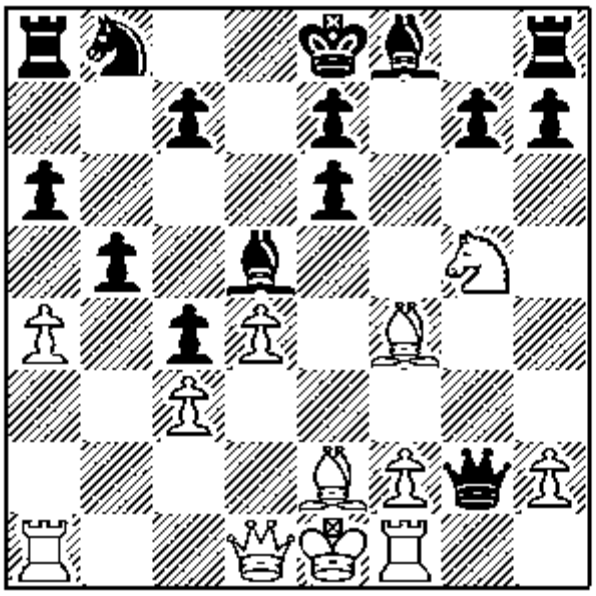
Answer: 12 ... Bd5

Another solution is 12 ... Nd7, giving priority to Black's development and meeting 13 Nxe6 with 13 ... Rc8. Play might continue 14 axb5 axb5 15 Ra7 g6 16 Bf4, when Black has two defences: 16 ... Qc6, defending the c7-pawn; or the more dynamic 16 ... Qe4 17 Nxc7+ Rxc7 18 Bxc7 Bg7 with good compensation for the exchange.

13 Bf4

White is ahead in development so Black must play very precisely. The simplifying 13 axb5 is best answered by 13 ... axb5 14 Rxa8 Bxa8, when Black's pawn surplus is balanced by White's advantage in time. For example, D.Bronstein-V.Ljavdansky, USSR Championship, Kiev 1964, continued 15 Bf4 (the immediate 15 Nxe6 Na6 or 15 Bg4 g6 also leads to dynamic equality) 15 ... g6 16 Nxe6 and now after 16 ... Kf7! 17 Nxc7 Bg7, Black is not worse.

Keene's suggestion of 13 ... Qxh2!? fails to 14 Bf3! (here 14 bxa6 may lead to the following amazing variation: 14 ... Qd6 15 Qa4+ Nd7 16 Bxc4 h6 17 Bf4! Qxf4 18 Bxd5 exd5 19 Qc6 Qxg5 20 Qxa8+ Kf7 21 Qc6 Nb6 22 Qxc7 Nc4 23 Qxc4! dxc4 24 a7 h5 25 a8Q Rh6 with an equal position, since the rook on f1 is just as bad as the bishop on f8) 14 ... Qd6 15 Bxd5 Qxd5 16 Qe2, when Black has problems with the co-ordination of his pieces.



Exercise (calculation): How should Black continue?

13 ... g6?

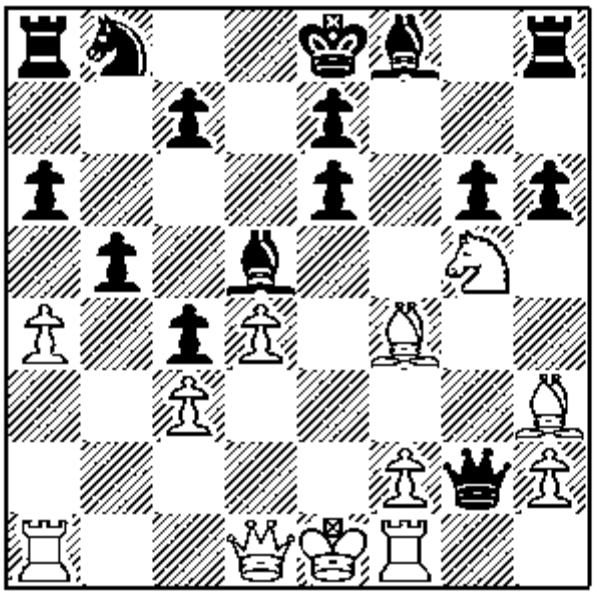
As we will see, Stein is taking huge risks with this move. 13 ... h6? is also a mistake because of 14 Nxe6! (not 14 Bh5+? g6! 15 Bxg6+? due to 15 ... Kd7 16 Nf7 Bg7! 17 Nxh8 b4! and White's centre and position collapses) 14 ... Bxe6 15 Bf3 Qh3 16 axb5! (and not 16 Bxa8? Qxc3+ 17 Bd2 Qxd4 18 axb5 Qe5+ 19 Be3 axb5, when Black's position is clearly to be preferred) 16 ... Ra7 17 b6 cxb6 18 Bxb8! Rd7 19 Rg1! and White's advantage is beyond doubt. His bishops and rooks are extremely active; whereas if you look at Black's kingside pieces, White is almost playing with an extra bishop and rook!

Answer: The precise solution is far from obvious: 13 ... b4! 14 Bg4 (or 14 cxb4 e5! 15 dxe5 e6 and after 16 Bh5+ g6 17 Ke2! gxh5 18 Rg1 Qxg1 19 Qxg1 Nc6, Black has quite enough for the queen) 14 ... h6 15 Bh3 and now it is a matter of taste whether you prefer 15 ... Qxg5 16 Bxg5 hxg5 17 Bg4 Nc6 (as in L.Polugaevsky-La.Szabo, Budapest 1965) or 15 ... Qxf1+ 16 Bxf1 hxg5 17 Bxc7 Nc6!. In either case Black has the slightly better chances.

14 Bg4!

Threatening Bh3, and Black cannot prevent the loss of his queen. Instead, 14 axb5 is answered by the cold-blooded 14 ... Bh6! 15 Nxe6 Kf7! 16 Bxh6 Kxe6 with dynamic equality.

14 ... h6 15 Bh3



Exercise: Should Black give up his queen for the f1-rook or the g5-knight?

Answer: 15 ... Qxf1+

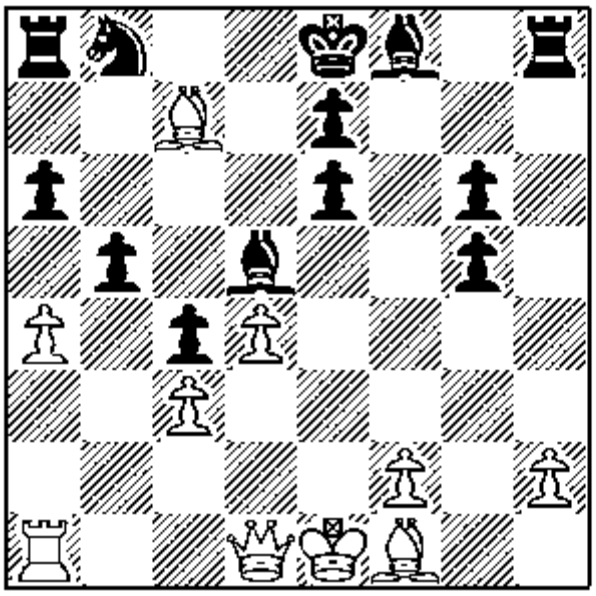
Here 15 ... Qxg5 16 Bxg5 hxg5 17 Bg4 is clearly advantageous for White. Compared with Polugaevsky-Szabo above, Black has swapped ... b5-b4 for ... g7-g6, which reduces his counterplay considerably. White threatens a4xb5 and 17 ... b4 is now too slow after 18 Qe2 (not 18 cxb4? Nc6 19 b5 Nb4 20 Be2 Bg7, threatening ... Bxd4, and 21 Qd2 is met by the amusing 21 ... c3 22 Qxc3 Bxd4! etc) 18 ... Kf7 19 f4 and White is winning.

16 Bxf1 hxg5

One of Stein's trademarks is that he did not mind sacrificing material in the interest of unbalancing the position and fighting for the initiative. Remember that it was White who set things going by sacrificing two pawns, whereas now it is suddenly Black who makes sacrifices. This is of tremendous psychological and practical value, and is one reason why Stein was such a dangerous opponent.

17 Bxc7?

Borisenko goes wrong. It is more important to hold the centre than to grab the c7-pawn, so 17 Be5! was correct. Only after 17 ... Rh6 (or if 17 ... Rh4, then 18 axb5 axb5 19 Rxa8 Bxa8 20 Qb1! forks the b5- and g6-pawns) 18 axb5 axb5 19 Rxa8 Bxa8 should White play 20 Bxc7, when 20 ... Nd7 21 Qa1 Be4 22 Qa6 is easily winning. Both black pawns on b5 and c4 will fall, liberating the f1-bishop and giving White a decisive passed c-pawn.



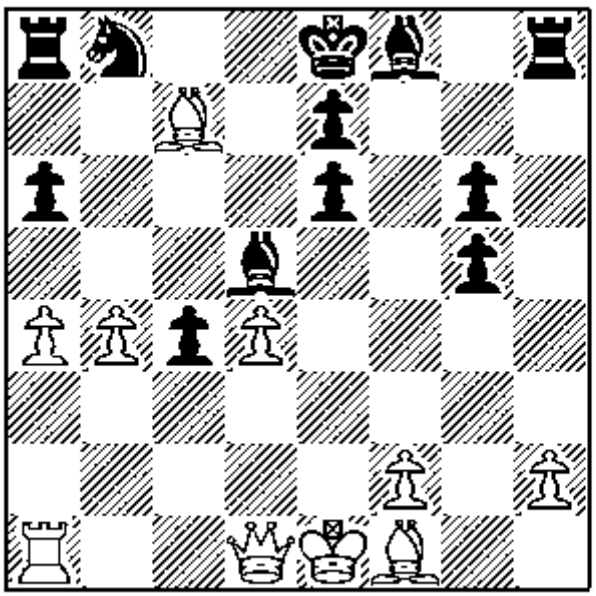
Exercise: How does Black exploit White's inaccuracy?

Answer: 17 ... b4!

Yes, of course. The idea is to undermine the white centre and attack the d4-pawn.

18 cxb4?!

A second mistake, after which White loses his advantage. He should have played 18 Qg4, intending 18 ... bxc3 19 Bg2 Nc6 20 Kf1! with strong pressure. If Black tries 18 ... Nd7! instead, then 19 Bxc4! Bxc4 20 Qe4! threatens both Qxg6 mate and Qxa8+. There is only one defence: 20 ... Nb6!, leading to the relatively forced line 21 Bxb6 Bd5 22 Qxg6+ Kd7 23 cxb4 Rc8 24 Bc5 Rxh2 25 Ra3 where White has all the chances.



Exercise (calculation): How should Black proceed with his plan?

Answer: 18 ... Rh4

18 ... Bg7? is less accurate, due to 19 Qc2 Bxd4 20 Rd1 Rh4 21 f3! and White is winning.

Black's set-up falls apart when he is prevented from using the e4-square as a pivot.

19 b5

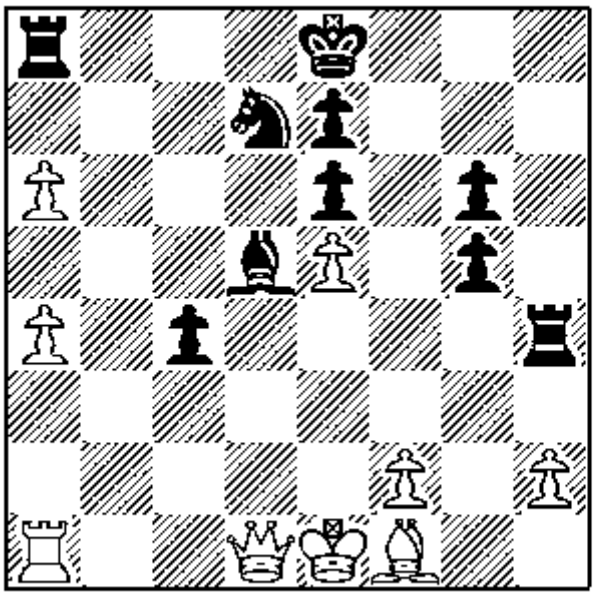
Preventing the knight from occupying its most active square at c6. Not 19 Qc2? Re4+ 20 Be2 Nc6 and Black takes over the game.

19 ... Bg7 20 Be5?

With this further error White loses control of the game completely. His best option is to establish a passed pawn with 20 b6, when Black has to find 20 ... Kd7!, preparing ... Nc6 (not 20 ... Nc6?? 21 b7 and wins). If White plays for material with b6-b7 in any case, Black gains strong counterplay in the centre; for example, 21 Rb1?! Nc6 22 b7 Re4+ 23 Be2 Rf8 24 b8Q Rxb8 25 Rxb8 (or 25 Bxb8 Nxd4) 25 ... Kxc7 26 Rg8 Bf6 and Black is certainly not worse.

20 ... Bxe5 21 dxe5 Nd7 22 bxa6

After 22 Rb1? Nxe5 23 Be2 Rxh2, White's position quickly falls apart. One illustrative variation is 24 Kd2 Rd8 25 Kc3 Rh3+ 26 Kb4 axb5 27 axb5 c3! 28 Bf1 c2! 29 Qxc2 Rh4+ and Black wins material by force.

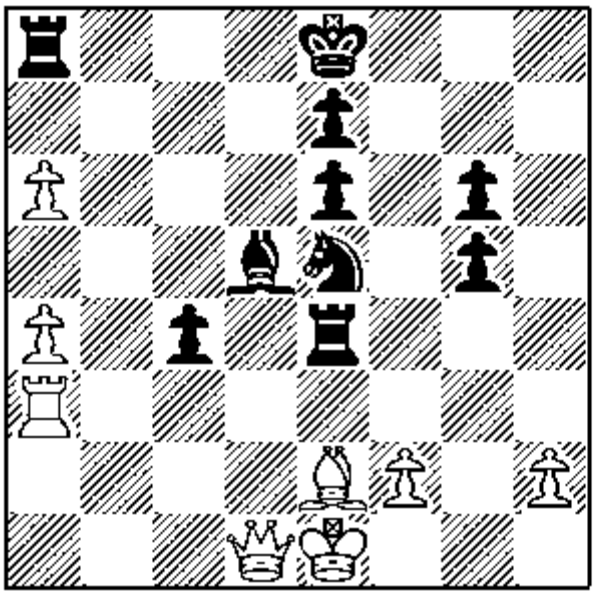


Exercise: What is Black's strongest move?

Answer: 22 ... Re4+?

When in doubt over which move to play, a good thumb of rule is to go for the one you are certain must be played anyway. Consequently, 22 ... Nxe5 is correct, maintaining flexibility with the h4-rook which might still move to e4 or else to h2, depending on the concrete situation. One plausible variation is 23 Be2 Rxa6 24 Ra3 Rxh2 25 Qd4 Nc6 26 Qe3 Ra8 with a clear advantage for Black, whose king king has a very safe spot on d7.

23 Be2 Nxe5 24 Ra3



Exercise (calculation): What is Black's best move now?

Answer: 24 ... Nc6!

Presumably Stein rejected 24 ... Nd3+ because of the exchange sacrifice 25 Rxd3! cxd3 26 Qxd3, and if 26 ... Rb8 then 27 f3! Rxa4 28 Qb5+ with an easy draw. Black can prepare ... Rb8 with 26 ... Kf7!, but a draw is still the most likely result after 27 a5 Rb8 28 f3 Ra4 29 a7 Ra8 30 Qe3 Rxa5 31 Qxg5 R8xa7 32 Qf4+, as his king has difficulty finding cover: 32 ... Ke8 is met by 33 Qb8+ Kd7 34 Bb5+ Bc6 35 Bxc6+ Kxc6 36 Qc8+ and so on, while 32 ... Kg7 33 Bd3 will not help Black win the game.

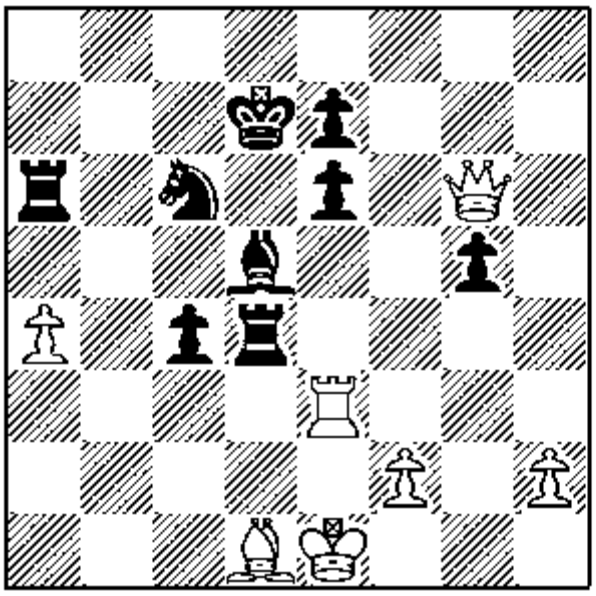
25 Re3 Rd4

The most active square for the rook. Instead, 25 ... Rf4 26 Qb1 Rxa6 27 Qxg6+ Kd7 28 Bd1 Rf5 allows Black to defend the g5-pawn, with ideas of ... Ne5 or ... Nb4, but there's no obvious way forward after, for instance, 29 Bc2 Ne5 30 Qg7 Nf3+ 31 Kd1.

26 Qb1 Rxa6 27 Qxg6+

The immediate 27 Bd1 is slightly more profound, defending the a4-pawn while keeping White's options open. The weak g6-pawn will not run away.

27 ... Kd7 28 Bd1



28 ... Rb6

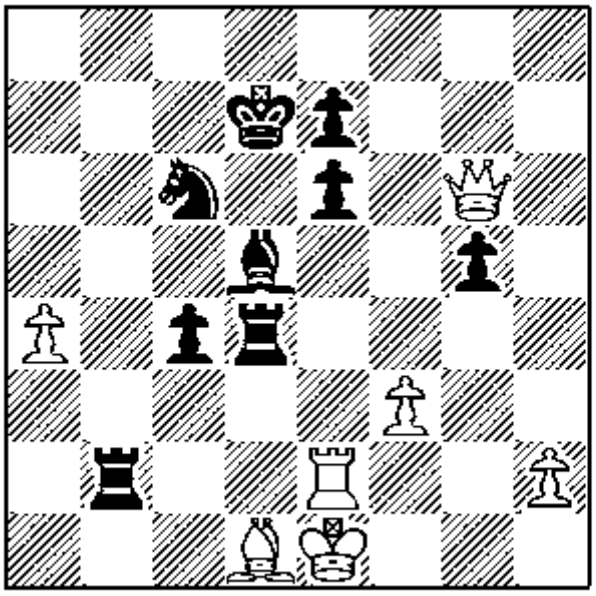
Activating the other rook. Black gains little from 28 ... Nb4 29 Qg7 Nd3+ 30 Kd2.

29 f3??

In time trouble, Borisenko makes a final mistake which seriously weakens the second rank and obstructs his bishop. White might still defend after 29 h3!, preparing Bg4 to attack the e6-pawn; for example, 29 ... Rb2 (or 29 ... Kd6 30 Bg4 Ne5 31 Rxe5! Kxe5 32 Qg7+ Ke4 33 Qg6+ with a draw) 30 Bg4 Nd8 31 Qxg5 Rb1+ 32 Ke2 and so forth. Now it is all very easy.

29 ... Rb2 30 Re2

White could set a last trap with 30 a5!?, hoping for 30 ... Nxa5?? 31 Ba4+ Nc6 32 Bxc6+ Kxc6 33 Qe8+ and perpetual check, but simply 30 ... Rdd2 wins.



Exercise (combination alert): How can Black decide the game?

Answer: 30 ... Rxd1+!

Actually, 30 ... c3! was good enough as well.

31 Kxd1 Bxf3 32 Qxe6+ Kc7 33 Kc1 Rxe2 34 Qxc4 Rxh2 35 a5 Rh4 36 Qc5 e5 37 Qb6+ Kd6 0-1

One can only agree with Raymond Keene, who wrote: "A wonderfully energetic game by Stein."

David Bronstein (1924-2006) is one of the most imaginative, fearless and technically skilled grandmasters in history. He was especially influential on the chess élite during the 1950s, at which time he was of the opinion that no theory of openings existed. For Bronstein chess was first and foremost an art where he implemented creative improvisation and aesthetic perception, rather than seeing it as a cruel field of battle. But Bronstein was not just an improviser at the board, he also prepared physically, psychologically and technically. By training systematically he developed such great stamina that he was able to play long games without relaxing for even a minute.

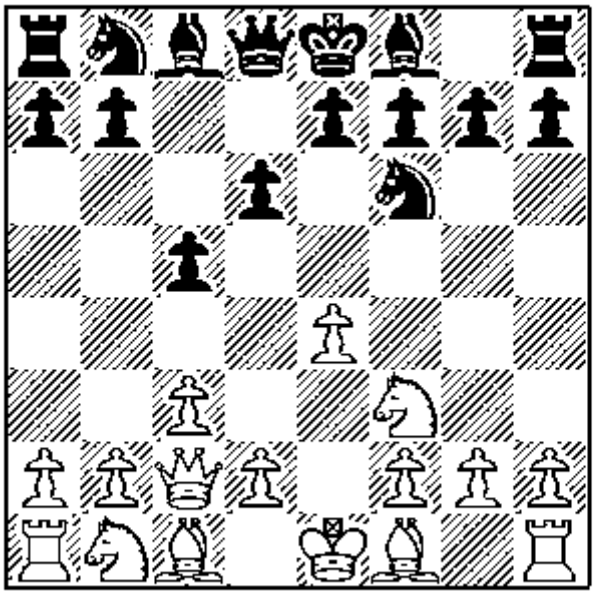
I strongly recommend B.S.Vainstein's book, David Bronstein: Chess Improviser (Pergamon 1983), where you can learn more about his original ideas. I had the honour to meet and play this chess giant myself a few times and he is probably the most creative player I have ever faced. Someone else who comes to mind, talking about fantasy and creativity, is the English GM Julian Hodgson – but that is another story.

Game 29
D.Bronstein-L.Stein
USSR Championship, Kiev 1964
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 c3

Probably an improvisation at the board, with the aim of avoiding open battles in the Sicilian where Stein was considered to be in his element, though Bronstein had in fact played 3 c3 before. The Swedish team made this variation their secret weapon at the 1952 Helsingfors Olympiad, where Gösta Stoltz crushed Larry Evans, so it is not as harmless as it looks!

3 ... Nf6 4 Qc2



Exercise: What is the most effective way to stop White from playing 5 d4 - ?

Answer: 4 ... Qc7!

This is the best move, X-raying White's queen down the c-file and preventing his main plan of creating a classical centre with d2-d4. Bronstein had only faced 4 ... Nc6 before (vs. Suetin in 1958 and Smyslov in 1961), while in Stoltz-Evans Black continued passively with 4 ... e6 and obtained a slightly inferior position after 5 d4 Qc7 6 dxc5! dxc5 7 Bg5, when White had easy development. Stoltz won in 39 moves.

5 Bb5+

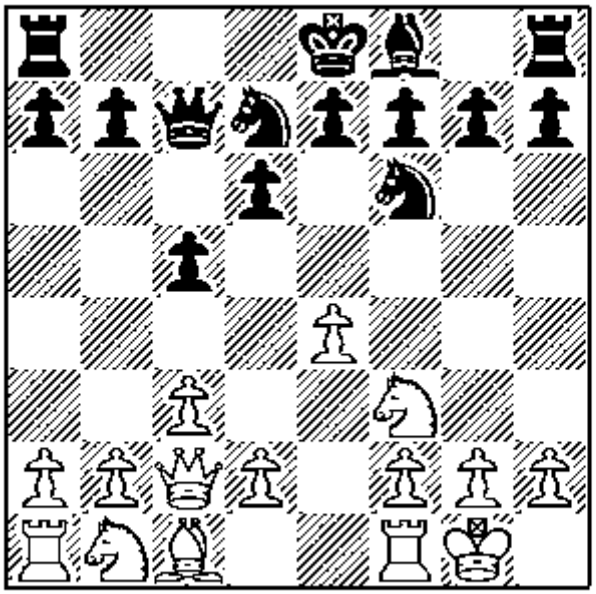
Since White cannot play actively in the centre, Bronstein instead plans to exchange light-squared bishops and then place the central pawns on light squares.

5 ... Bd7

5 ... Nbd7 is a serious alternative, refusing to allow the exchange of bishops. We do not know what Bronstein had in mind, but for mere mortals a set-up like 6 0-0 a6 7 Be2 and d2-d3 is possible, maintaining flexibility, and a later d3-d4 is not completely ruled out.

Of course 5 ... Nc6?! just plays into White's hands, who now has 6 d4 after all with the initiative.

6 Bxd7+ Nbxd7 7 0-0



Question: Should Black develop his bishop to g7 or e7?

Answer: 7 ... e6

In this position it seems sensible to develop the bishop to e7 so that it has influence on both sides of the board. If Black plays 7 ... g6 and ... Bg7, the bishop has less contact with its own queenside, only gazing down a long diagonal which, at the moment, is restricted by the white pawns on b2 and c3. He would need to carry out something like ... Rb8, ... b7-b5, ... a7-a5 and ... b5-b4 to justify its placement.

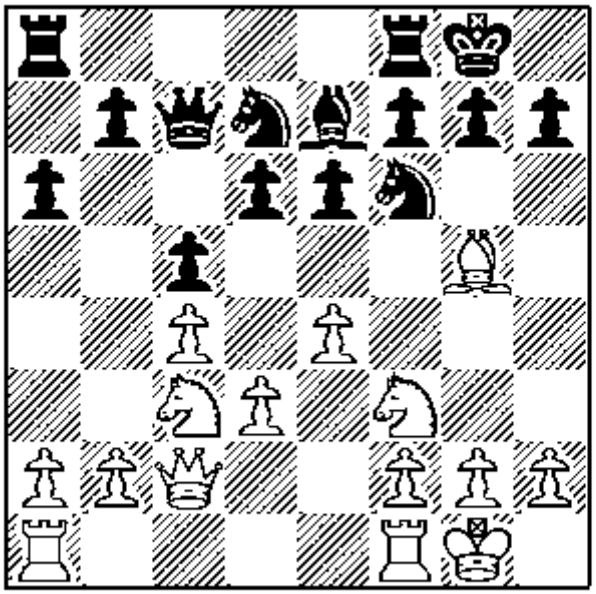
According to Lasker's principles you should aim for co-operation between your pieces and maintain maximum flexibility in your position; in this respect Stein's move looks more logical. As a King's Indian devotee, Stein clearly liked to fianchetto his bishop at g7, but only when conditions were right, for instance a weaker d4-square.

8 c4

After exchanging bishops Bronstein proceeds with his plan of placing his pawns on light

squares. This limits the action of Black's remaining bishop somewhat, due to the fixed pawn at c5.

8 ... Be7 9 Nc3 0-0 10 d3 a6 11 Bg5



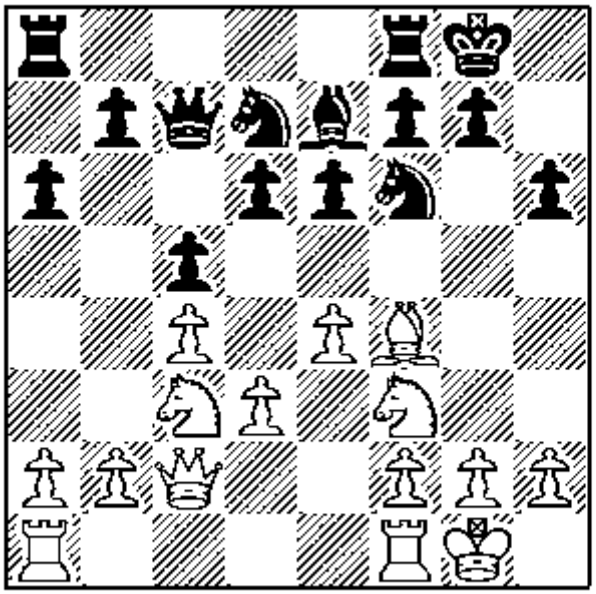
Exercise: How does Black continue? (The move you suggest may be an indication of your style.)

Answer: 11 ... h6

Stein asks the bishop a question: What does it want to do?

A slower, manoeuvring move like 11 ... Nb8, intending ... Nc6, might be preferred by great strategic players such as Petrosian or Flohr, but it would probably not accord with Stein's personality and more active style. Objectively, the mini-plan of placing the knight on its best square is equally playable.

12 Bf4



Question: Now suggest a reasonable plan for Black!

Answer: 12 ... Rab8

Steinitz would probably approve of this plan since it is in accordance with his theories: that when you have a solid centre you should start a flank attack with your pawns. Here Stein prepares to follow up with ... b7-b5.

Another interesting idea is 12 ... Ng4!?, aiming for the c6-square via ... Ne5 and channelling the game into other more or less unknown directions. Of course, this manoeuvring knight could be exchanged on e5 in the meantime with all its pros and cons.

13 h3 b5 14 b3 b4 15 Ne2

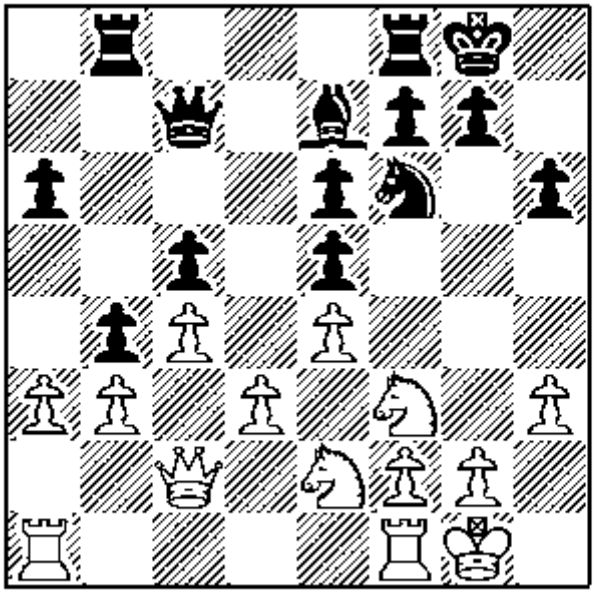
15 Na4 is worthy of consideration, but when there are two good moves you can only choose one. The one you choose is a normally an indication of your style.

15 ... Ne5 16 Bxe5!?

A compromising continuation, which prevents the knight from reaching c6 at the cost of radically altering the pawn structure and giving Black the semi-open d-file. Normally knights are stronger in closed and blocked positions but here the white knights lack outposts, while the black bishop should be regarded as double-edged rather than bad.

On the other hand, if White withdraws with 16 Nd2, preparing Be3 and f2-f4, Black can answer 16 ... Nc6 17 Be3 a5 18 f4 (or 18 d4 e5! and the knight invades at d4) 18 ... a4, followed by doubling rooks on the a-file.

16 ... dxe5 17 a3



Exercise: How does Black defend against the threat of a3xb4 and Rxa6 - ?

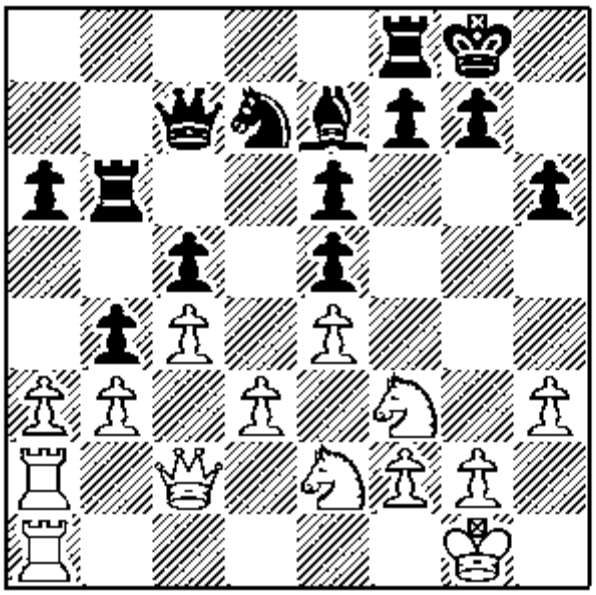
Answer: 17 ... Rb6!

This is better than the natural-looking 17 ... a5, since Black does not want to play ... a5xb4 in any case, and the a-pawn is more easily defended where it is.

18 Ra2

The exchange 18 axb4 cxb4 improves the e7-bishop considerably, which can now reach the classical a7-g1 diagonal via ... Bc5 and have more influence on the game, both in the central sector and the dark squares around the white king.

18 ... Nd7 19 Rfa1



Exercise: White has renewed his threat from the previous Exercise. How does Black respond this time?

Answer: 19 ... Rd8!

Defending the a6-pawn indirectly, as 20 axb4 cxb4 21 Rxa6? Rxa6 22 Rxa6 stumbles into 22 ... Nc5, threatening ... Nxa6 and ... Rxd3.

20 Nc1

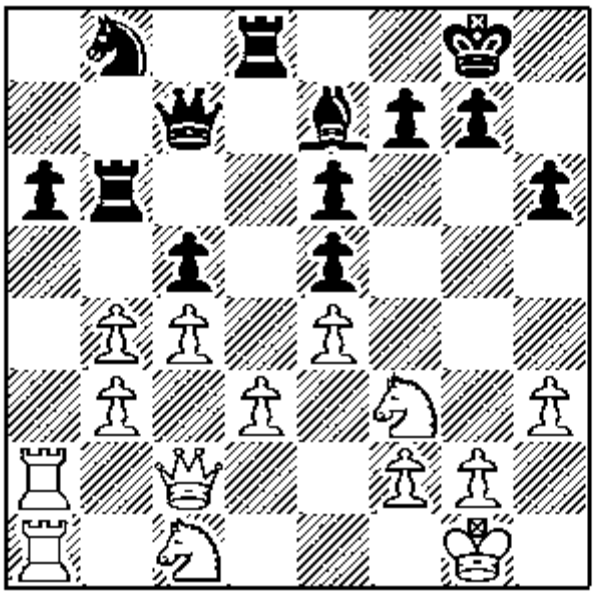
White adheres to the principle of economy developed by Steinitz and defends the weakest points in his position, d3 and b3, with the smallest possible unit, in this case a knight. Stein follows suit with his next move.

20 ... Nb8

It is interesting that Stein continually allows White to block the position on the queenside with a3-a4, when he could remove this option by taking on a3 himself. The moves not played are also an important key when we try to understand a great player's mind.

21 axb4

Actually, 21 a4? would be a grave error here because of 21 ... Rbd6, when White's rooks are severely misplaced and cannot be easily repositioned because the c1-knight is stuck defending the d3-pawn. In the meantime, Black can consider opening and attacking on the kingside where he would have more pieces available.



Exercise: What should Black play now? There are several candidate moves. Can you see them all?

Answer: 21 ... Rxb4

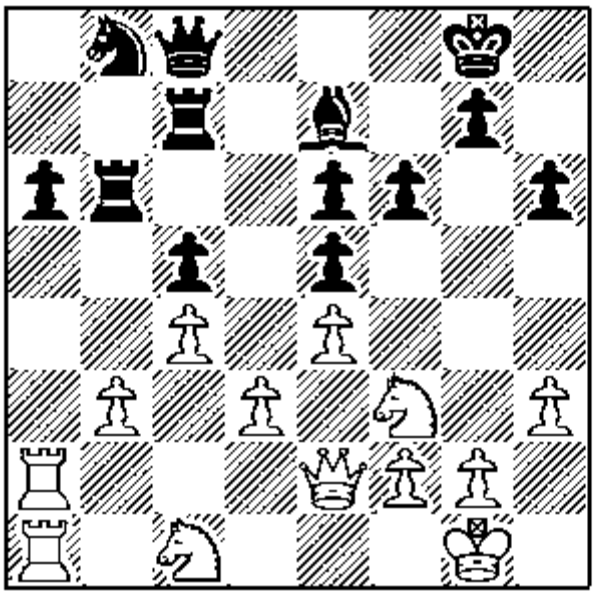
With this recapture, Black ensures that the white b- and d-pawns remain backward on half-open files controlled by his rooks.

Alternatively, 21 ... cxb4 looks logical, planning ... Bc5 as per our previous comments, but Stein probably rejected it because of the imaginative response 22 d4! exd4 23 Nd3, when White has good compensation for the pawn. The black bishop is quite bad in this position, while the white knight on d3 has an excellent outpost. This is chess on a high level, where two deep and creative players clash with each other.

Stein may also have considered a sacrifice of his own: 21 ... Nc6!? 22 bxc5 Bxc5, which I think Bronstein would have played as Black, if given the chance. This time the bishop is a strong piece, controlling the dark squares, and giving Black good compensation for the pawn.

22 Qc3 f6 23 Ra3 Rb6 24 Qb2 Qc8 25 Qa2 Rd7 26 Ra5 Rdb7 27 Qe2 Rc7 28 R5a2

Both sides have engaged in "tacking" (as Nimzowitsch called it) over the past few moves, but Stein's has been to more purpose and he is now ready to return to concrete operations.



Exercise: Does Black have an active move available?

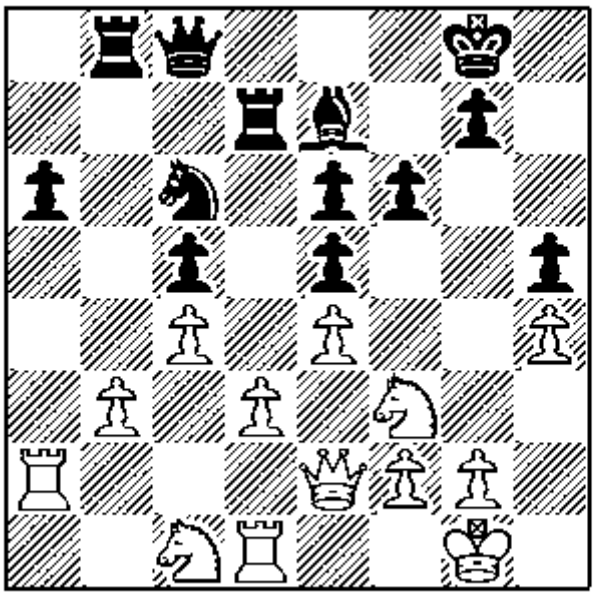
Answer: 28 ... Nc6!

With the weak a6-pawn now defended by the major pieces, Black can reactivate the knight to its most promising square.

29 Rd2 Rd7 30 Rd1 Rb8 31 h4 h5

Preventing White from continuing with h4-h5 and Nh4-g6, as well as fixing the h4-pawn as a potential weakness.

32 Ra2



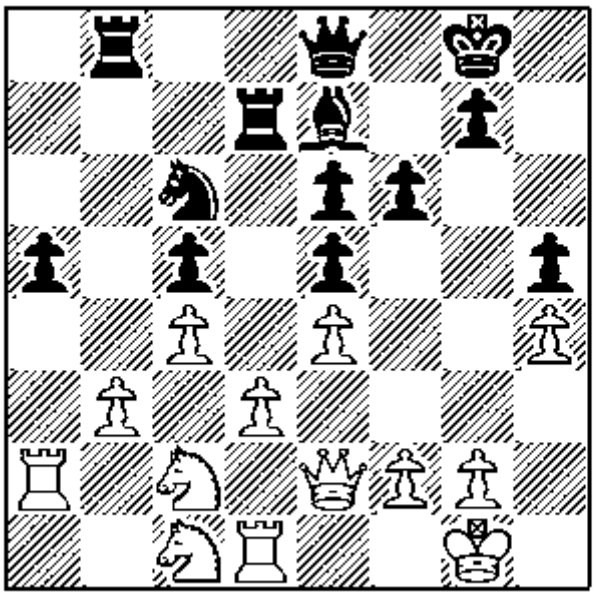
Exercise: How can Black improve his position further?

Answer: 32 ... a5!

With the knight having finally made it c6, Black resumes his “economical defence” by advancing the a-pawn under its protection.

33 Ne1 Qe8 34 Nc2

White has secured the queenside with his knights: one defends the b3- and d3-pawns, the other covers the b4- and d4-squares against the opposing knight on c6.



Exercise: So, what is Black’s strongest continuation?

34 ... g6?!

It is obviously correct for Black to play on the kingside, but this passive move unnecessarily takes the g6-square away from his queen.

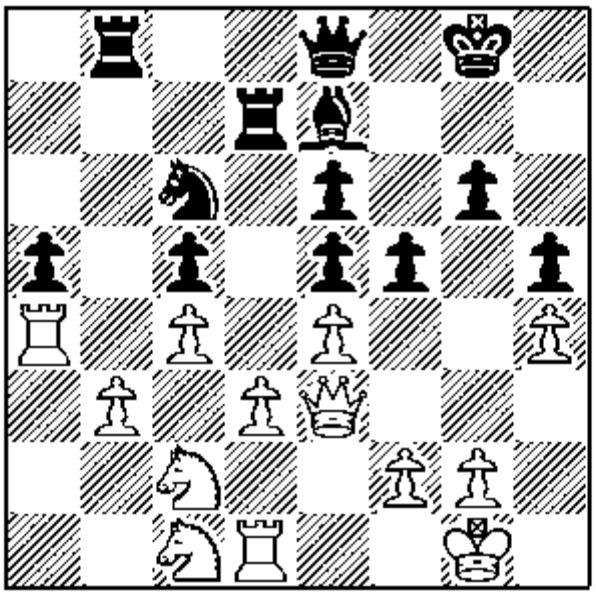
Answer: 34 ... f5! is more resolute, threatening the pawn on h4. After 35 Qf3 (the most active defence; 35 g3 only weakens White’s kingside, and 35 ... Qg6 36 Kh2 f4, followed by ... Rbf8, ... Bd8 and ... Rdf7 will lead to an inevitable breakthrough) 35 ... Qg6 36 exf5 exf5 37 Ne3 Bxh4! (removing the h-pawn allows Black to seize the h6-c1 diagonal with his bishop, whereas after 37 ... Nd4, White just defends the pawn with 38 Qh3) 38 Qxf5 (or 38 Nxf5 Bg5 39 Qe4 Rf8 40 Ng3 Qf6! with a clear advantage; Black threatens 41 ... Nb4, while 41 Nxh5?? fails to 41 ... Qh6, forking both knights) 38 ... Qxf5 39 Nxf5 Bg5 40 Ne3 (White must protect the key c1-knight) 40 ... Kf7, Black has a clear advantage with his more active pieces and extra terrain; and he can easily improve his position, whereas White cannot do anything except defend his weak points.

Alternatively, Black could play 34 ... Qg6 first, intending 35 ... f5! next move.

35 Ra4

It is not clear what the rook is doing here. 35 Qe3 immediately looks more to the point, controlling the c1-h6 diagonal (if only temporarily) and keeping an eye on the c5-pawn.

35 ... f5 36 Qe3



Exercise: How did Stein proceed?

Answer: 36 ... Qf8

Defending the c5-pawn frees the bishop to take on h4 for nothing. There is no need to allow White's queen any freedom after 36 ... Bxh4 37 Qxc5, even if 37 ... Rc8 is clearly in Black's favour too.

37 exf5

37 Qh3 is met by 37 ... Qf6 with the twin threats of ... Qxh4 and ... f5xe4. These can only be parried by 38 exf5 exf5 39 g3, after which 39 ... Bd8! releases Black's knight from its duty of defending the a5-pawn, and the further ... Bc7 increases the harmony between his rooks. Black has a clear advantage and can prepare, at leisure, one of two decisive pawn breaks: ... e5-e4 or ... f5-f4.

37 ... exf5 38 g3 Rbd8

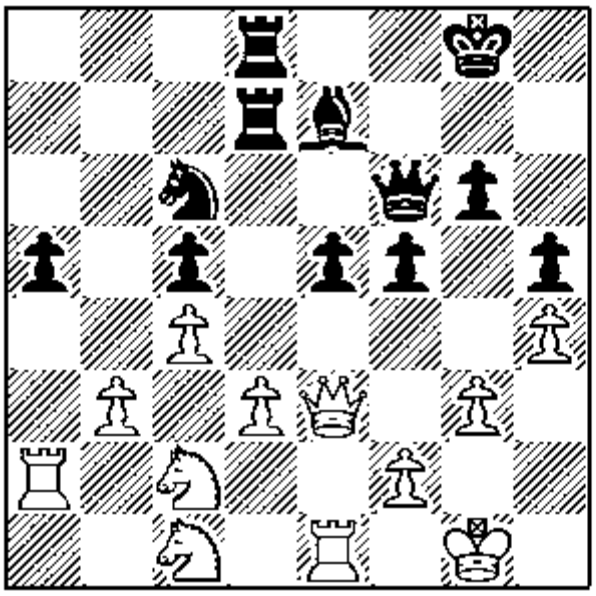
Here 38 ... Qf6! looks stronger, preparing both ... f5-f4 and ... Rf8, without releasing the pressure on b3 just yet.

39 Re1?!

White should take the chance for 39 Ne2, planning Nc3-d5, exploiting the fact that Black's rook has left the b-file.

39 ... Qf6 40 Ra2

The rook was doing nothing on a4, whereas here it may help to defend the second rank.

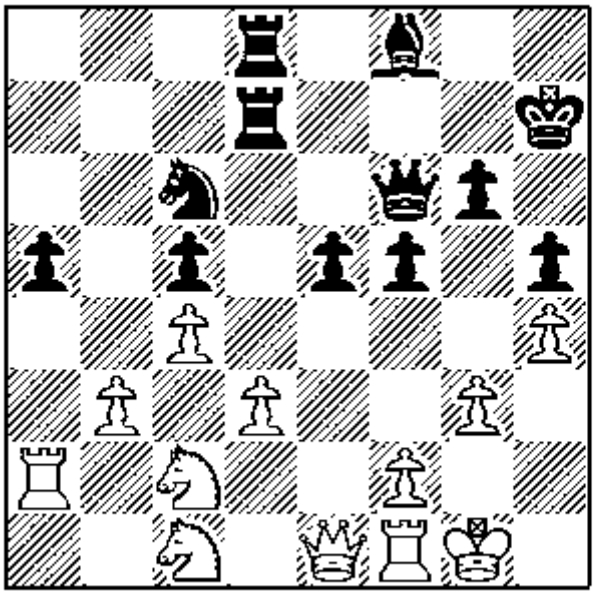


Question: How can Black improve his worst-placed piece?

Answer: 40 ... Bf8!

The bishop heads for the h6-c1 diagonal, after ... Kh7 and ... Bh6, where it will threaten White's key defensive knight.

41 Rf1 Kh7 42 Qe1



Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation?

Answer: 42 ... f4!

Even better than 42 ... Bh6, when 43 Ne3 provides a temporary defence, although 43 ... Nb4 44 Rxa5 f4 is still very good for Black.

43 Qe4 f3

A pawn wedge in the enemy position like this has almost the same value as a minor piece.

43 ... Rf7 44 Ne2 Bh6 also leads to a strategically winning position.

44 Rd1 Bh6 45 Ne1

45 Ne3?? is now impossible as 45 ... Rd4 traps the white queen in the middle of the board. Stein's next move creates the same threat by defending the f3-pawn.

45 ... Rf7 46 Nc2

There is nothing better.

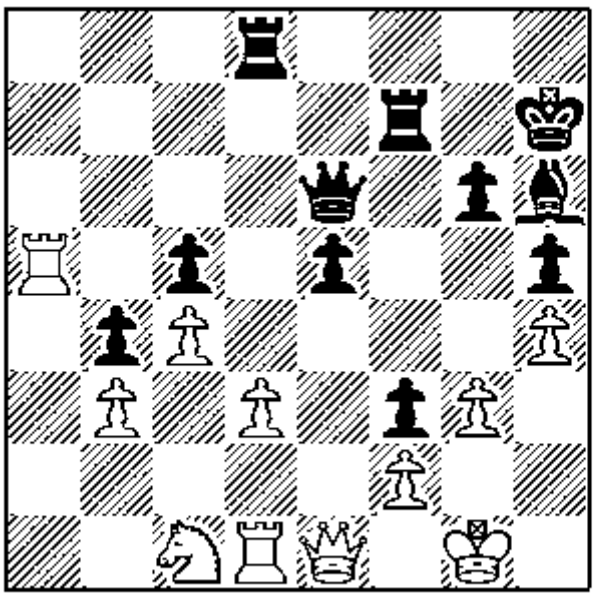
46 ... Qe6

Threatening to win at once with ... Qh3, while 47 Kh2 leads to a pretty finish after 47 ... Rf4! 48 gxf4 Qg4 49 Ne3 Bxf4+ and White must give up his queen to avoid mate in three.

47 Qe1 Nb4!

Black could still play 47 ... Qh3, forcing 48 Qf1 Qxf1+ 49 Kxf1 Bxc1 50 Rxc1 Rxd3 and wins, but Stein's continuation is even stronger.

48 Nxb4 axb4 49 Ra5



Question: How does Black decide the game?

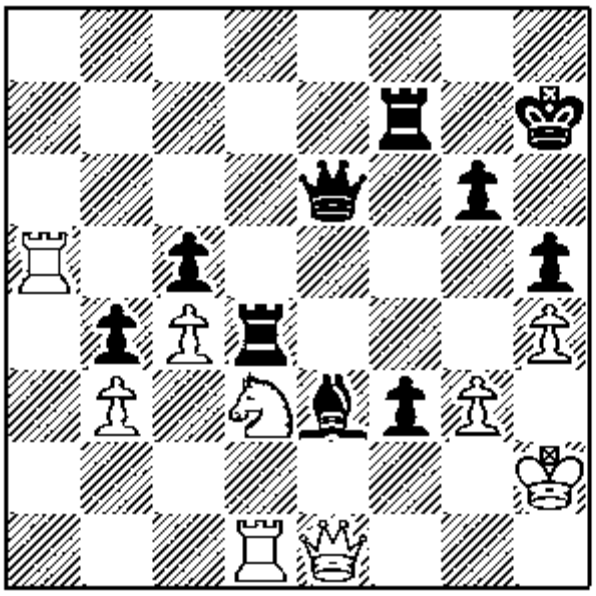
Answer: 49 ... e4!

The final breakthrough, preparing the deadly ... e4-e3.

50 Kh2 e3! 51 fxe3 Bxe3 52 d4

White's game is completely lost; Bronstein probably only played on for the pleasure of the audience.

52 ... Rxd4 53 Nd3



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and mate in eleven!

Answer: 53 ... Re4?!

Surprisingly, Stein missed the relatively simple combination 53 ... Rxd3! 54 Rxd3 Bg1+! 55 Qxg1 Qe2+ 56 Kh1 f2 and wins. Black only needs to see this far – it is the computer that declares mate in seven here.

54 Qf1 Bd4 55 Nxc5 Bxc5 56 Rxc5 Re2+ 0-1

The 1964 USSR Championship was Korchnoi's tournament, who won convincingly with 15/19, two points ahead of Bronstein in second. Stein was fourth on 12, with seven wins, two losses and ten draws. One reason for this setback may have been tiredness; Stein had just returned from the Tel Aviv Olympiad, and nobody else played in both events. Or perhaps, with so many friends in Kiev, he lost a little focus.

Chapter Three
The Strongest Period

If the years 1907-12 are regarded as Rubinstein's peak, then Stein's peak was from March 1965 to June 1967. During this period he competed in nine major tournaments, finishing first four times (including the 1965 and 1966 USSR Championships) and second the other five. His least favourable result was a tie for second with Petrosian.

This chapter features eight games from these events, together with another four played in team competitions, in which Stein represented either the Soviet Union or the Ukraine.

Game 30
F.Vasconcellos-L.Stein
Rio de Janeiro 1965
King's Indian Defence

The Brazilian Fernando de Almeida Vasconcellos (1919-96) is not a famous player, and his highest ranking was 337th, according to Chessmetrics. But he wrote two chess books: Theory and Practice of the Budapest Gambit (1966) and Notes for a History of Chess (1991), and there is quite a lot of information about Vasconcellos in the commentary at chessgames.com, for anyone interested in his contributions to the chess world.

1 d4

One of Vasconcellos's original opening suggestions was 1 Nf3 d5 2 a4!?, with the idea 2 ... c5 3 e4!?, entering a Budapest Gambit with the useful extra move a2-a4. If instead 2 ... Nf6 then 3 b4, or similarly 1 ... Nf6 2 a4!? g6 3 b4.

1 ... Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 0-0 5 f3

The Sämisch is considered by many experts to be the most dangerous attempt to refute the King's Indian. Tigran Petrosian was one of its great exponents and he is the player to study if you want to learn more about this sharp variation.

5 ... d6 6 Be3

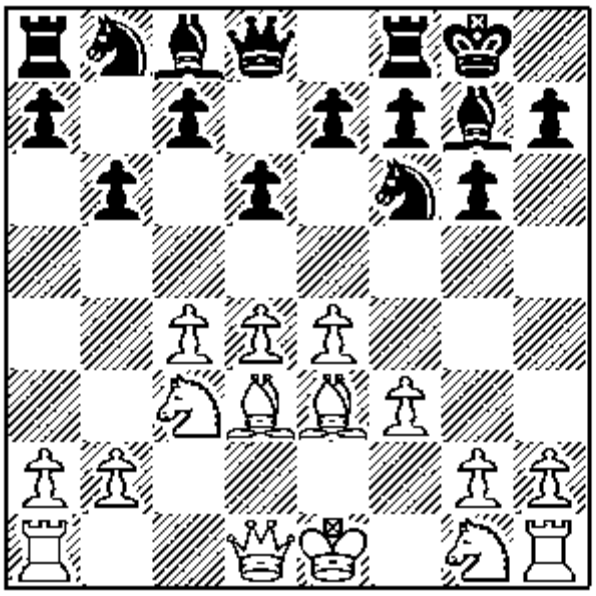
White plays for the consolidation of his centre and prepares Qd2 at the same time.

Alternatively, 6 Bg5 is designed against 6 ... e5?? because of the tactical trap 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 Qxd8 Rxd8 9 Bxf6 (or 9 Nd5) 9 ... Bxf6 10 Nd5 and White wins material. Instead, Black generally plays ... c7-c5, either immediately or after 6 ... a6 and 7 ... Nbd7.

6 ... b6

Stein's favourite move which he played in a dozen games for a +2 score, though he tried other moves as well; for example, 6 ... Nc6 7 Nge2 a6 8 Qd2 Rb8 9 Rd1 b5 versus Botvinnik at the 1963 USSR Spartakiad, where the outcome was a draw.

7 Bd3



Question: How does Black continue the play?

Answer: 7 ... Bb7

As well as being an obvious developing move, 7 Bd3 prevents Black from playing 7 ... c5? due to 8 e5! followed by Be4, winning the exchange. After 8 ... Ne8 9 Be4 Nc7 10 Bxa8 Nxa8 11 Nge2 cxd4 12 Nxd4 dxe5 13 Nb3, White had a slight advantage in D.Bronstein-A.Lutikov, USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959, but Black eventually drew. However, White can play more strongly; for example, 13 Nbd5!, attacking the a7-pawn while threatening the exchange of queens, or by inserting 11 exd6 before 12 Nge2.

Instead, 7 ... a6 prepares ... c7-c5 by giving the rook an escape square on a7 and is a decent option, but Stein had lost with this to Polugaevsky in the 1961 USSR Championship and never played it again.

The downside to the text is that, whenever d4-d5 is played, Black's bishop is rather misplaced. Stein eventually switched to 7 ... e5, as in Game 51 of this collection.

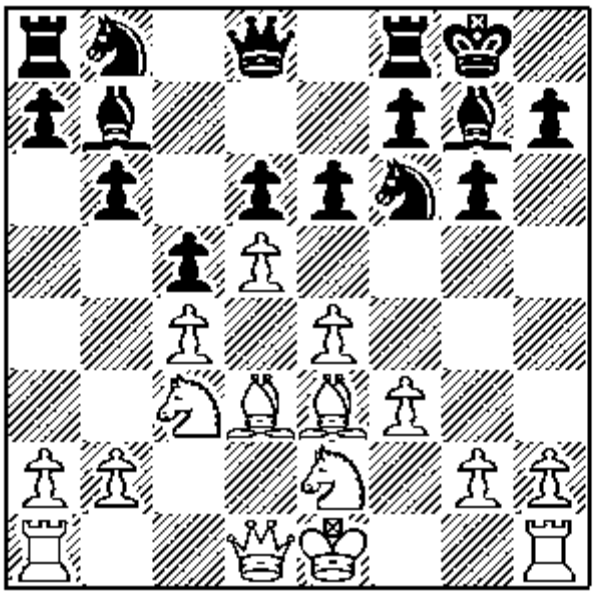
8 Nge2

The first Bulgarian grandmaster, Milko Bobotsov (1931-2000), preferred 8 Nh3 here. For example, M.Bobotsov-S.Tatai, Athens 1968, continued 8 ... c5 9 d5 e6 10 0-0 exd5 11 cxd5 Ba6 12 Nf2 with a slight edge to White, who has a strong centre with supporting minor pieces located on good squares.

8 ... c5 9 d5

M.Botvinnik-L.Stein, USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1964, saw 9 0-0 Nc6 10 Bc2 e5 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 Bg5 h6 13 Bh4 Nd4 14 Nd5 Nxd5?! (a surprising queen sacrifice, typical of Stein's inventive style, but the idea does not work in this situation; the simple 14 ... Qd6 was correct) 15 Bxd8 Ne3 16 Qd3 Raxd8 17 Qxe3 Nxc2 18 Qc3 Nxa1 19 Rxa1, when Botvinnik had the better chances and went on to win in 33 moves.

9 ... e6



10 Qd2

T.Ghitescu-R.J.Fischer, Rovinj/Zagreb 1970, proceeded more precisely: 10 0-0 exd5 11 exd5 (playing against the b7-bishop) 11 ... Nbd7 12 Bg5 h6 13 Bh4 Ne5 14 f4 Nxd3 15 Qxd3 (if the queen had been developed to d2 as in the main game, White would have lost a tempo here) 15 ... Qd7 16 Bxf6 Bxf6 17 f5 g5 18 Qh3. Black seems in a bit of trouble here, as if he defends the h-pawn with the king then 19 Ne4 follows with advantage. Fischer came up with an excellent positional pawn sacrifice, activating the f6-bishop on its strongest square: 18 ... Be5! 19 Qxh6 f6 20 Rf3 Qh7 21 Qxh7+ Kxh7 and Black probably has enough compensation for the pawn. Fischer won in 47 moves.

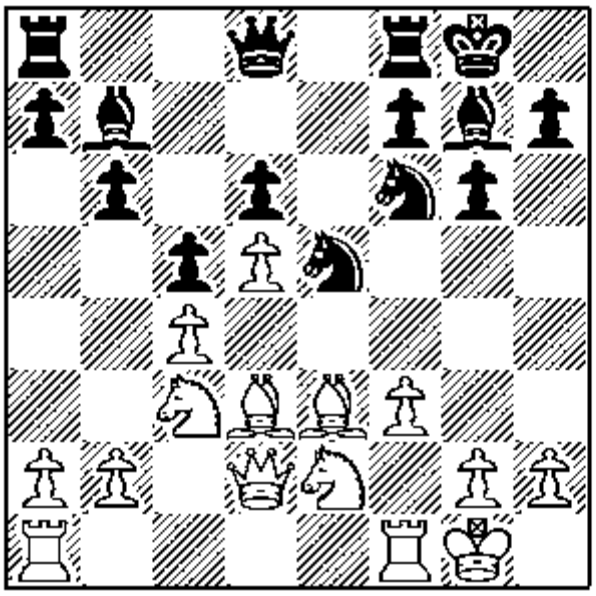
10 ... exd5 11 exd5

11 cxd5 gives Black chances to liberate his light-squared bishop via a6 later on, which is exactly what happened in J.Durao-S.Gligoric, Praia da Rocha 1969: 11 ... Nbd7 12 0-0 Ne5 13 Ng3 Nxd3 14 Qxd3 Re8 15 Qd2 Ba6. After the further moves 16 Rfe1 Nd7 17 Bg5 Qc7 18 Bh6 Bd4+ 19 Kh1 Ne5, Black's other minor pieces reached tremendous positions as well and he went on to win in just twelve more moves.

11 ... Nbd7 12 0-0

The careful 12 Bc2 saves the bishop from exchange. G.Kuzmin-A.Haik, Reggio Emilia 1976/77, continued 12 ... Re8 13 Bg5 a6 14 a4 Ne5 15 b3 and now 15 ... h6! 16 Bxh6 Nxd5! was best, when the greedy 17 Bxg7? Qh4+! only gives White problems; e.g., 18 Kf1?! Ne3+! 19 Qxe3?? Ng4! and wins.

12 ... Ne5



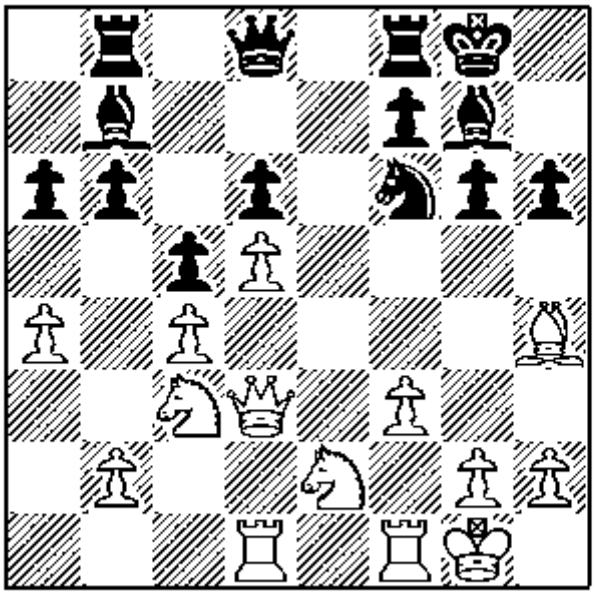
Question: What are the pros and cons of Black's position?

Answer: Black has managed to secure the bishop pair, since the c4-pawn would drop off if White retreats his bishop now. On the other hand, Black's own light-squared bishop is shut out of the game by the strong pawns at c4 and d5.

13 Rad1 a6 14 a4 Rb8 15 Bg5 Nxd3

MegaBase has the (almost certainly) erroneous move order 15 ... h6? 16 Bh4? etc, which just gives White a pawn for nothing after 16 Bxh6 Nxd3 17 Bxg7. It is difficult to believe that both players would have overlooked this trivial line.

16 Qxd3 h6 17 Bh4



Exercise: How can Black solve the problem of his light-squared bishop?

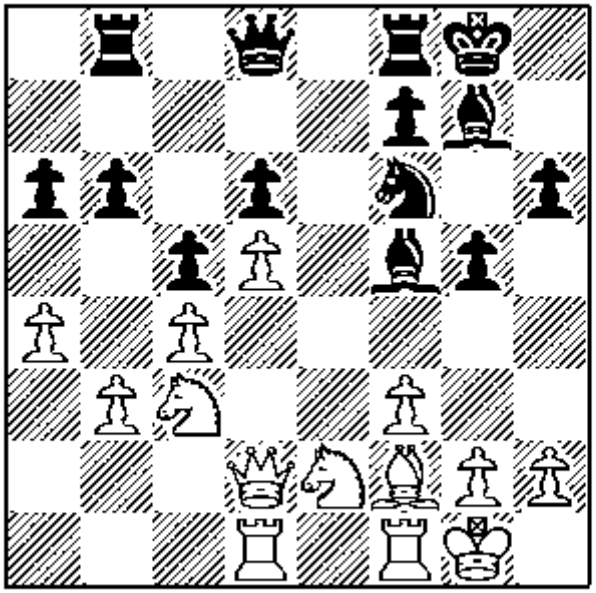
Answer: 17 ... Bc8!

The best diagonal for the bishop where it can be developed to f5. This also gives Black the option of swinging his b8-rook along the second rank via b7 to e7.

18 b3

White opts to consolidate the c4-pawn. He could keep the enemy bishop out of f5 by playing g2-g4, but this would weaken the kingside and Black has other ways to proceed, such as ... Re8 and ... Rb7-e7 as just mentioned; or ... Qc7 and ... Nd7, intending ... Ne5 or ... f7-f5; or another plan we will see shortly.

18 ... Bf5 19 Qd2 g5 20 Bf2



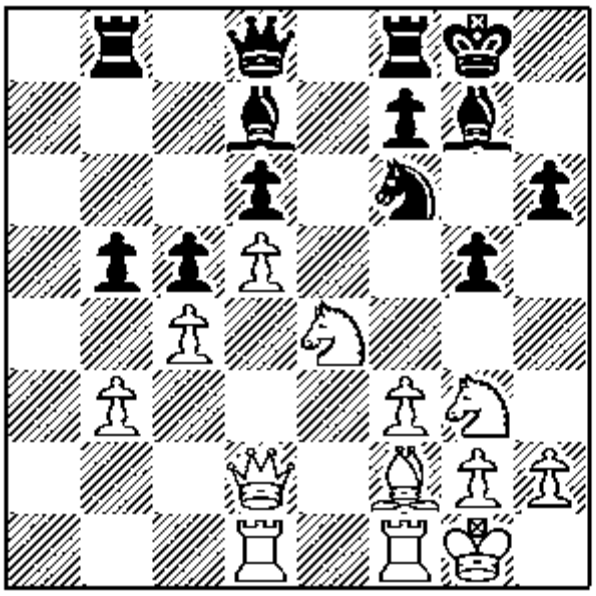
Exercise: At this point Stein moved the f5-bishop again, but where to?

Answer: 20 ... Bd7!?

The expected moves are 20 ... Bg6 and 20 ... Bh7, but Stein seems to have reasoned that the bishop is doing nothing on the b1-h7 diagonal, whereas on d7 it has the clear purpose of supporting the ... b6-b5 break. The only drawback is that the f6-knight's natural manoeuvring square is obstructed, but as things turn out, this does not matter.

21 Ng3 b5 22 axb5 axb5 23 Nce4?

The critical line was 23 Nxb5 (23 cxb5 is answered strongly by 23 ... Ne8 and ... Nc7) 23 ... Bxb5 24 cxb5 Rxb5 25 Nf5 Rxb3 26 Qc2 Rb8 27 Bg3 Ne8 28 Rfe1 Rb2 29 Qa4, when White's superior activity gives him more than enough compensation for the pawn.



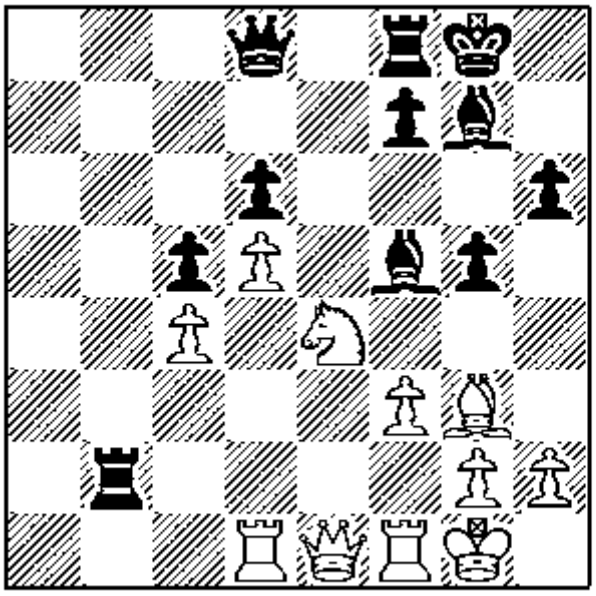
Exercise (calculation): What is Black's most precise continuation?

23 ... bxc4?

Answer: 23 ... Nxe4 24 Nxe4 bxc4 25 bxc4 is the right way to reach the position in the game. After the text, White can avoid this position and go for 24 Nxd6 cxb3 25 Ndf5 with sufficient compensation.

24 bxc4? Nxe4 25 Nxe4

25 fxe4 does not alter the assessment that Black is slightly better after activation of his major pieces with 25 ... Rb2 26 Qd3 Qa5.



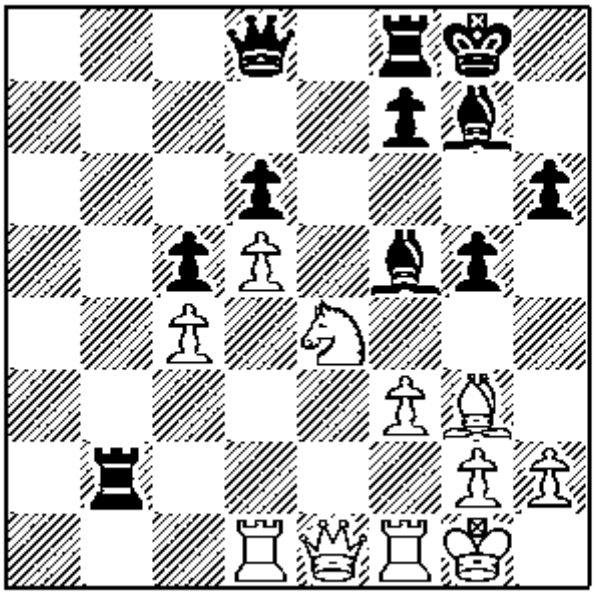
Exercise (calculation): How does Black defend the d6-pawn?

Answer: 25 ... Bf5

The natural solution. The alternative 25 ... Rb2 26 Qd3 Ba4 27 Rc1 f5 is good too, activating Black's game while driving the enemy knight away.

26 Bg3 Rb2 27 Qe1

If 27 Qc1 then 27 ... Rb6 is best, simply defending the d-pawn. 27 ... Bxe4 28 fxe4 Re2 29 Rde1 does not get Black anywhere.



Exercise: What is Black's best move this time?

27 ... Rb6?!

A surprisingly passive choice from Stein, who normally went for the most active move available.

Answer: 27 ... Re8 looks more logical, pinning the knight and keeping the rook on b2. Why did not Stein play this way? Perhaps he was concerned about 28 Rb1 (not 28 Rd2? Rxd2 29 Qxd2 Bxe4 30 fxe4 Rxe4 and White has lost a pawn for no compensation whatsoever, since 31 Qd3 Bd4+ 32 Kh1 Re3 33 Qf5 Qe7 34 Bxd6? Qxd6 35 Qxf7+ Kh8 leaves him with nothing) 28 ... Ra2 29 Bxd6!? Bxe4? 30 Rb8! and White escapes with a draw, but the calm retreat 29 ... Bc8! solves this problem, when White has no defence to the threat of ... f7-f5, winning a piece. So it seems Stein could have kept his rook on the seventh rank with advantage.

28 Qe2?!

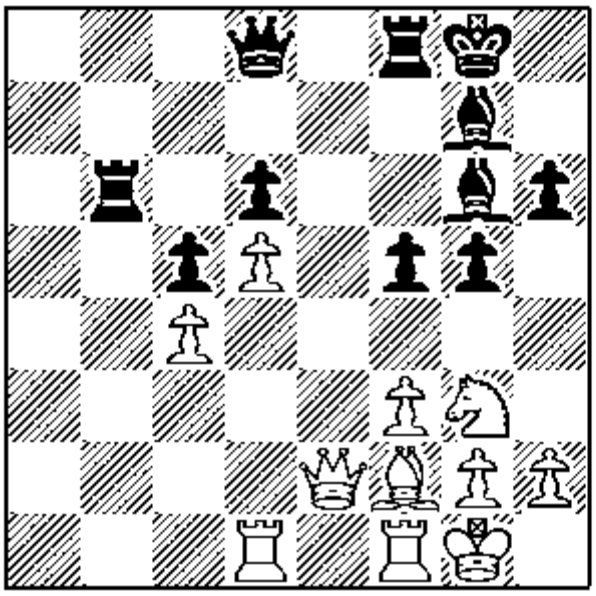
This is too slow – it reflects White's choice at move ten, where he risked losing a tempo with Qd2, followed by Qxd3 a few moves later.

It was better to change the character of the game immediately with 28 h4 Re8 29 hxg5 Bxe4 (if 29 ... hxg5 then 30 Qe3 can be played in one move) 30 fxe4 Qxg5 31 Qf2 Qg6 and now 32 e5! Bxe5 (or 32 ... Rb3 33 Bh2) 33 Bxe5 Rxe5 34 Ra1, when White has active counterplay and good drawing chances.

28 ... Bg6

Stein follows principles elaborated by Steinitz: that when you have the bishop pair, you should first take away the outposts from the enemy knight, in this case with ... f7-f5.

29 Bf2 f5 30 Ng3



Question: How does Black continue Steinitz's plan of exploiting the bishop pair?

Answer: The next step is to drive the knight to an even more unfavourable position.

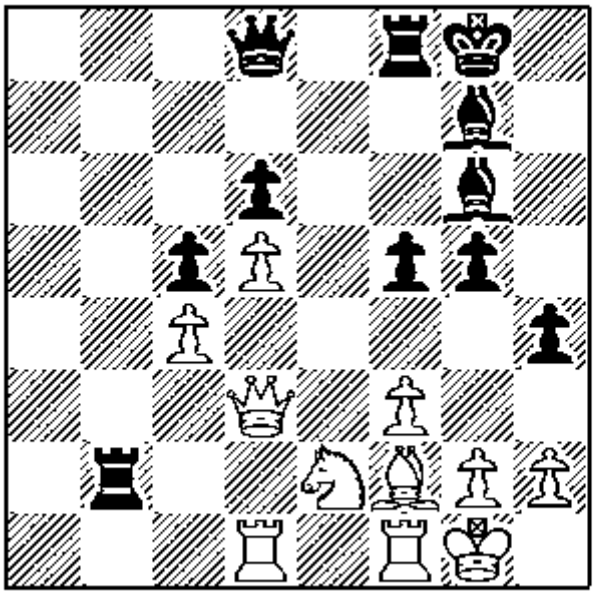
30 ... h5!

Rook pawns are especially suited for the task of driving knights back to the first or second rank, where their work rate is reduced to only half capacity.

31 Qd2?

Another time-wasting queen move. 31 Rfe1 h4 32 Nf1 was a better defensive set-up, though Black keeps a clear advantage after 32 ... Bc3!.

31 ... h4 32 Ne2 Rb2 33 Qd3



Exercise: What is Black's strongest move?

33 ... Kh7?!

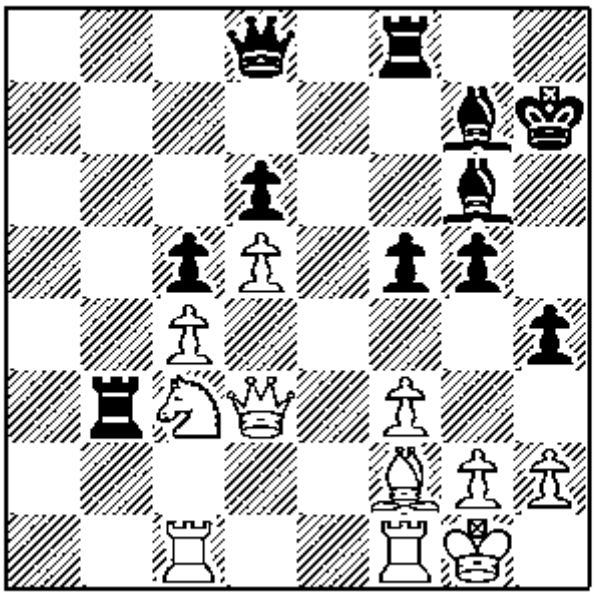
Stein defends the bishop and threatens the decisive ... f5-f4.

Answer: However, 33 ... Qe8! is a more powerful execution of the same idea. For example, 34 Nc3 (or 34 Nc1 f4 35 Qa3 Qa8 36 Qxa8 Rxa8 and Black's pieces are completely dominant) 34 ... f4 (34 ... Rb3 35 Rc1 Qe5 36 Be1 Ra8 and ... Raa3 also wins) 35 Ne4 Bxe4 36 Qxe4 (if 36 fxe4 g4! 37 Bxh4 Qh5 38 Be1 Bd4+ 39 Kh1 Rf7, the attack with the major pieces, both vertically and horizontally, will decide) 36 ... Qxe4 37 fxe4 Re8 38 Rfe1 Rc2 and Black wins either the c4- or e4-pawn.

34 Nc3?!

White plans to answer ... f5-f4 with Ne4, but Stein quickly puts a stop to that. It was mandatory to halt the black f-pawn with 34 f4. After 34 ... Qe7 35 Rfe1 Qe4! 36 fxg5 Re8 37 Nc1 Qf4 38 Qf3 Rxe1+ 39 Rxe1 Qxc4, Black has a winning position, but these subtle queen moves might be hard to find in a practical game.

34 ... Rb3 35 Rc1



Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation?

35 ... Re8

Answer: 35 ... Qa5! 36 Be1 Re8 wins immediately, as illustrated by 37 Bd2 (or 37 Nb5 Qxb5!) 37 ... f4 38 Ne4 Rxd3 39 Bxa5 Bxe4 40 fxe4 Bd4+ 41 Kh1 Rxe4 and White is busted.

36 Rfe1 Rxe1+ 37 Bxe1 Qe7 38 Qd2 f4 39 Bf2 Qe5

The pressure on the c3-knight is murderous.

40 Be1?!

40 Nb5 allows 40 ... Rb2, which leads to a forced loss of a pawn: 41 Qe1 Re2 42 Qf1 Qb2 43 Re1 Rd2 44 Rd1 Bd3 45 Rxd2 Qxd2 46 Qe1 Qxe1+ 47 Bxe1 Bxc4 48 Nxd6 Bxd5 and Black should win. Nevertheless, this line offers White more hope than the text.

40 ... h3!

Breaking up the white kingside.

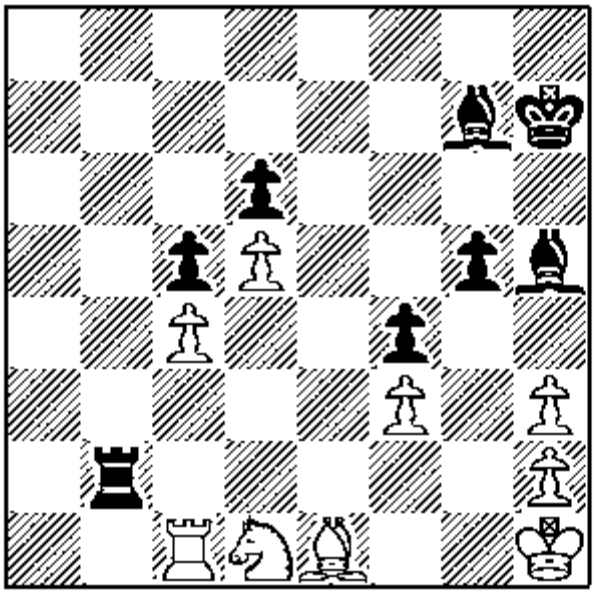
41 gxh3 Qd4+ 42 Kh1

After 42 Qxd4?! Bxd4+, White's king is in deep trouble: 43 Kf1 (43 Kg2 Rb2+ and 43 Kh1 Bh5 are even faster) 43 ... Bd3+ 44 Kg2 Rb2+ 45 Kh1 Bf1 and Black wins.

42 ... Qxd2

42 ... Qxc4 43 Kg2 Qb4 is another way to win.

43 Bxd2 Rb2 44 Be1 Bh5 45 Nd1



Question: Can you suggest Stein's next move?

Answer: 45 ... Bd4!

Stronger than the prosaic 45 ... Bxf3+ 46 Kg1 Rg2+ (or 46 ... Bd4+ 47 Bf2) 47 Kf1 Rxh2, when 48 Nf2 prolongs the game for a few moves.

46 Bf2

46 Nxb2 allows 46 ... Bxf3 and the bishop pair are happy to deliver this economical mate.

46 ... Bxf2 47 Kg2 Be3+! 48 Nxb2 Bxc1 0-1

A good game, showing Stein's technical ability with the bishop pair. Even more striking was his leisurely play with the major pieces – in particular, his queen which sat quietly on its original square until move 37.

Stein finished second in Rio de Janeiro with four wins and three draws. Averbakh came first with six wins, dropping just one half-point against Stein (and he might have won that game as well).

In 1965, the traditional USSR-Yugoslavia match took place in Vrnjacka Banja; Stein played on board three and scored four wins, one loss and no draws. His opponent in the fourth game was the Serbian grandmaster, Dragoljub Ciric (1935-2014), whose highest FIDE rating of 2490 was recorded in 1971, while Chessmetrics estimate his rating at 2640 in 1968.

Ciric reported for television many times on chess, where his comments revealed great knowledge of the game. His performance at the 1966 Havana Olympiad stands unique in that he managed, as the second reserve in the team, to score a perfect 8/8; and in those games he made bold ventures into complicated combinations at least ten moves deep.

Game 31
L.Stein-D.M.Ciric
USSR-Yugoslavia match, Vrnjacka Banja 1965
Caro-Kann Defence

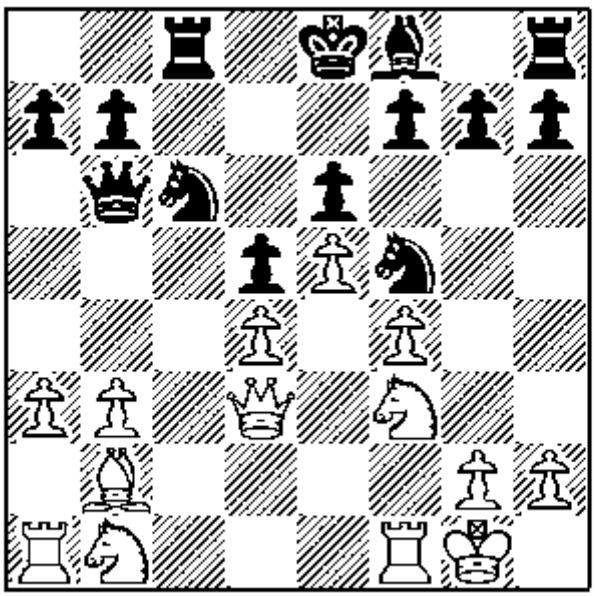
1 e4 c6

Question: Are you familiar with the history of this nowadays popular move?

Answer: The first time this opening was analysed properly was in the eighth decade of the 19th century by the Viennese master Marcus Kann (1820-86), who won a brilliant game against Mieses in Hamburg 1885 (see below), and the English master Horatio Caro (1862-1920), who spent most of his chess career in Berlin. Their recommendations were published in the German magazine Brüderschaft in 1886; and hence its name, the Caro-Kann Defence.

2 d4 d5 3 Nc3

The aforementioned game, J.Mieses-M.Kann, Hamburg 1985, saw 3 e5 Bf5 4 Bd3 (this is hardly ever played any more; Nigel Short's 4 Nf3 and 5 Be2 is by far the most popular variation today) 4 ... Bxd3 5 Qxd3 e6 6 f4 (6 Nc3 is slightly more testing, and if 6 ... Qb6 7 Nge2 Qa6?! then 8 Qh3 leaves the black queen slightly misplaced) 6 ... c5 7 c3 Nc6 8 Nf3 Qb6 9 0-0 Nh6 10 b3 cxd4 11 cxd4 Nf5 12 Bb2 Rc8 13 a3?? (13 Rc1 prevents the following neat combination)



13 ... Ncxd4! 14 Nxd4 Bc5 15 Rd1 Nxd4 16 Bxd4 Bxd4+ 17 Qxd4 Rc1! and White resigned.

3 ... dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ exf6

This is the original Caro-Kann system, as seen in H.Pillsbury-H.Caro, Vienna 1898. Its current foremost exponent is the Serbian GM Igor Miladinovic.

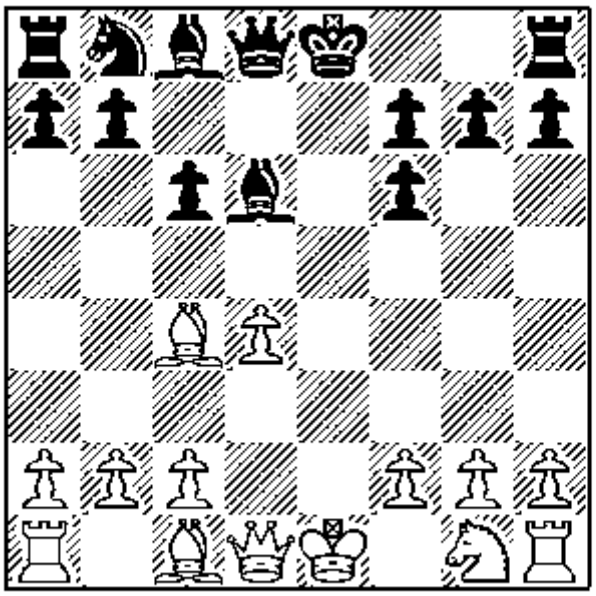
6 Bc4

This was the main line back then. Nowadays, 6 c3 (as recommended by Nimzowitsch in 1930) is currently regarded as the most flexible and critical variation; then after 6 ... Bd6 7 Bd3 0-0 8 Qc2 Re8+ 9 Ne2, Black has three equally good moves: 9 ... g6, 9 ... h6, and Konstantinopolsky's 9 ... Kh8!?, all leading to sharp and interesting play.

Instead, a recent game, Hou Yifan-Ba.Jobava, Wijk aan Zee 2015, saw the unusual 6 ... Qd5!? (the basic idea is to prevent White from setting up a queen and bishop battery on the b1-h7 diagonal) 7 Nf3 Bd6 8 Be2 0-0 9 0-0 Bc7 10 h3 (to prevent Black setting up and charging his own battery with ... Qd6 and ... Bg4) 10 ... Bf5 11 Re1 Nd7 12 Nh4 Be4 13 g3 Rfe8 14 c4 Qa5 15 Bd2 Qb6 16 Bc3 Rad8 17 Bg4 Nf8 18 Re3 and now Black should have played 18 ... g6, followed by ... f6-f5, setting the kingside pawns in motion, which is the main idea of the whole system. There is no need to fear 19 c5, which only makes it harder for White to exploit his queenside pawn majority; after 19 ... Qa6, intending 20 Be2 b5, Black's position is fine.

6 ... Bd6

In the 1970s it was discovered that 6 ... Qe7+ is an annoying reply and 6 Bc4 rather lost its popularity. For example, after 7 Qe2 (7 Be2 is fully playable, but then 7 ... Qc7 transposes to quieter 6 Be2 lines where Black has satisfactory prospects) 7 ... Be6 (or 7 ... Bg4, as in L.Stein-U.Andersson, Las Palmas 1973) 8 Bb3, Black's best move is probably 8 ... a5, intending ... a5-a4, or 9 Bf4 Nd7 10 Bxe6 Qxe6 11 0-0-0 Nb6 and the position is nearly equal.



Question: What is the best way to exploit Black's last move?

Answer: 7 Qe2+!

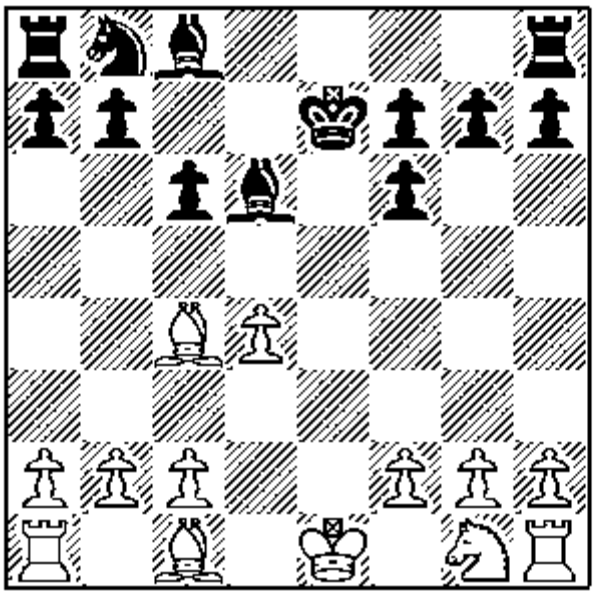
This time White plays the annoying check, forcing Black to make concessions.

7 ... Qe7

Instead, 7 ... Be7 is perhaps the most logical response, keeping the queens on the board, which is in Black's interest considering the white pawn majority on the queenside. The obvious drawback is that the bishop will lose another tempo when it returns to the more active d6-square in the near future.

Alternatively, 7 ... Kf8!? plans to castle by hand with ... h7-h5, ... g7-g6 and ... Kg7. In this case Black again avoids the exchange of queens and manages to mobilize his kingside pawns in the process. However, the strong 8 Qh5! blocks the h-pawn and threatens to win the game in one move; even after 8 ... g6 9 Bh6+ Kg8 10 Qf3 Bf8 11 Bxf8 Kxf8 12 Ne2, White can claim a slight advantage. All the same, Black does not need to play ... h7-h5, and the king can still go to g7 at the most convenient moment.

8 Qxe7+ Kxe7



Question: What is the general problem with Black's position?

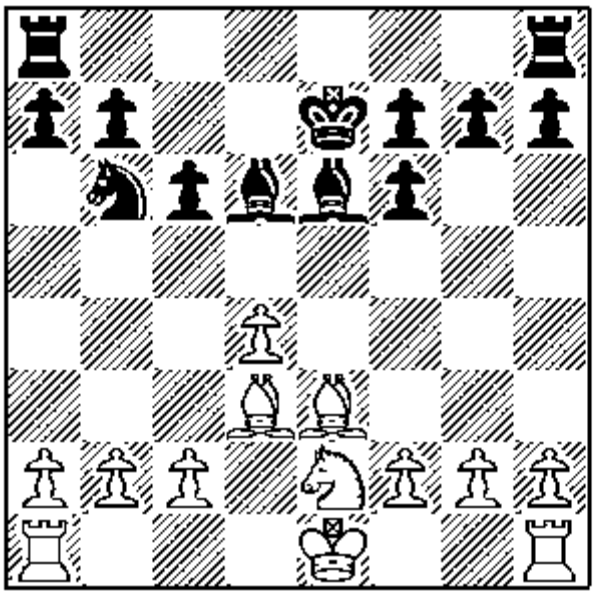
Answer: The problem is mainly a psychological one. In such positions, as is often said, Black is playing for one result (a draw), whereas White is playing for two (a win or a draw). On a purely technical level, it is true that White has a theoretically winning pawn ending, but it is not easy to exchange all the pieces and at the same time keep the pawn structure intact. (For instance, in a knight ending an exchange of knights on e6 would dissolve Black's doubled pawns.) In any case, there is a huge gap between theory and practice, and this position is a good example. I have not yet seen a game where this procedure actually occurred. The same applies the Exchange Lopez variation 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6 5 d4 exd4 6 Qxd4 Qxd4 9 Nxd4, where an equivalent pawn structure arises on the queenside.

9 Be3

9 Ne2 is slightly more flexible, keeping the option of exchanging dark-squared bishops with Bf4. Even so, the majority of games end in draws; for example, 9 ... Be6 10 Bd3 Nd7 11 Bf4 Rhe8 (after 11 ... Nb6?! 12 Bxd6+ Kxd6 13 b3 Kc7 14 c4 Rad8 15 Kd2, followed by Kc3, White was slightly better in M.Matulovic-V.Smyslov, Siegen Olympiad 1970) 12 0-0-0 f5 13 Rhe1 Nf6 14 Bxd6+ Kxd6 15 Nf4 Bd7 16 Bc4 Re4! 17 Nd3 (not 17 Rxe4 fxe4! 18 Bxf7?! Rf8 19 Bb3 Ng4 with the advantage) 17 ... Rxd4 18 Bxf7 Rf8 was level in J.Klovans-R.Kholmov, USSR Team Championship 1966; Black in fact managed to win this one – and in a pawn ending!

9 ... Be6 10 Bd3 Nd7 11 Ne2 Nb6

11 ... c5? is a typical mistake, and either 12 0-0-0 or 12 Be4 gives White a big advantage. As a rule, Black should be cautious about trading the Caro-Kann pawn for the d4-pawn when he has doubled f-pawns, because it only increases the strength of White's queenside majority.



Exercise: Can you find a logical move at White's disposal?

Answer: 12 Bf4

Stein plays this natural move despite the fact that it has cost him a tempo. The question then is, why did he not play 9 Ne2 first and then Bf4 in one move? Perhaps he felt that Bf4 was premature before the knight had gone to b6, or perhaps that it was unimportant. This is not a position where a tempo here or there counts for very much.

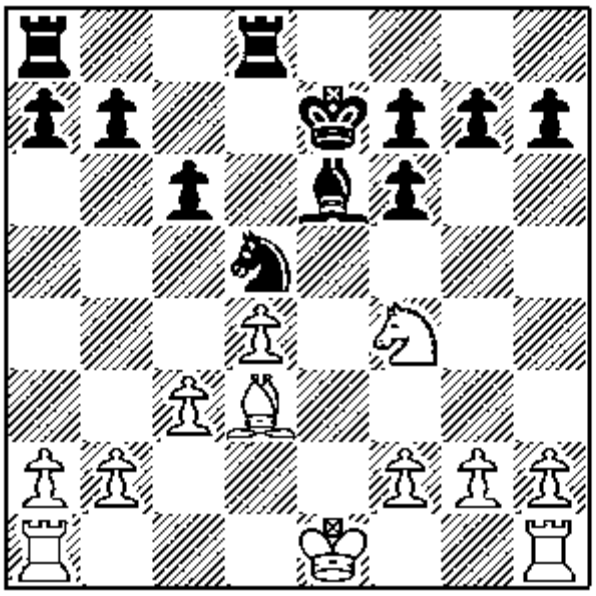
The alternative 12 Nf4, aiming to secure the bishop pair with Nxe6, is answered by 12 ... Bc4 13 0-0-0 Rhd8, followed by ... Kf8, and the position is about equal.

12 ... Bxf4 13 Nxf4 Rhd8!

Ciric is not worried about h7 being vulnerable after Nxe6 and ... f7xe6, since the pawn is poisoned.

14 c3 Nd5

Black misses a chance to play more actively: 14 ... c5! 15 dxc5 (or 15 Ne2 f5!, followed by ... Kf6) 15 ... Na4 16 0-0-0 Bxa2 with an even position. Note that 16 Nxe6 fxe6 17 Bxh7? would be a mistake because of 17 ... f5, when the bishop loses contact with its own army and risks being trapped by ... Rh8 etc; and 18 ... Nxb2 is threatened as well, since 19 Rb1 fails to 19 ... Nd3+.



Question: Would you take on d5 or e6 in this position?

Answer: 15 Nxd5+

Bobby Fischer would presumably have played 15 Nxe6!? fxe6 16 0-0-0 here, aiming for his favourite ending consisting of rook and bishop vs. rook and knight. This kind of transforming one advantage (superior pawn structure) into another (bishop vs. knight with pawns on both sides) was typical of the universe in Fischer's mind. (This time 16 Bxh7?? just loses the bishop after 16 ... f5 and 17 ... Rh8, followed by ... Rh6, ... Kf6 or ... Nf4.)

15 ... cxd5?!

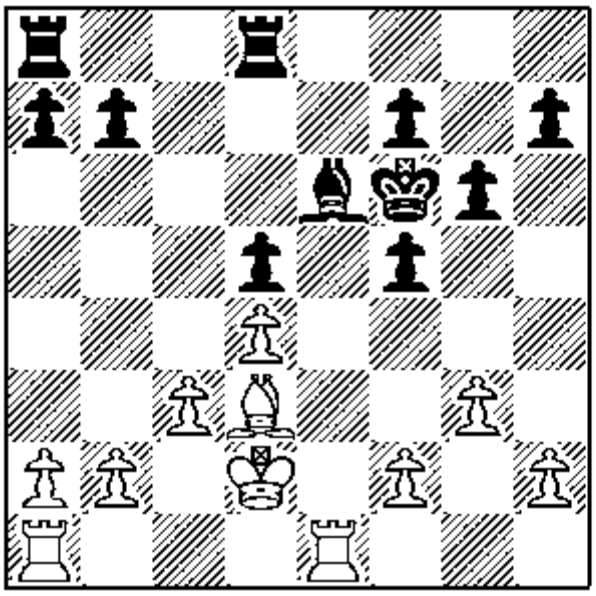
It is more logical to recapture with a piece than compromise Black's pawn structure even further. A few months later, A.Bradvarevic-D.Ciric, Yugoslav Championship, Titograd 1965, finished 15 ... Rxd5 16 0-0-0 Kf8 ½-½, since White's advantage is negligible, though I doubt Stein would have agreed to a draw quite so easily.

After the text, the e6-bishop becomes a purely defensive piece with no active possibilities whatsoever. It is instructive to watch how Stein maintains his small advantage for the rest of the game, probing for ways to increase it, while Black has the unenviable task of trying to keep him out.

16 Kd2 g6 17 Rhe1 f5

Preparing to place the king more actively on f6, consolidating his kingside defences. Ciric does not care that his bishop now looks even worse, since he has no intention of moving it.

18 g3 Kf6



Exercise: What is the best location for the white bishop?

Answer: 19 Bf1! Rd6 20 Bg2

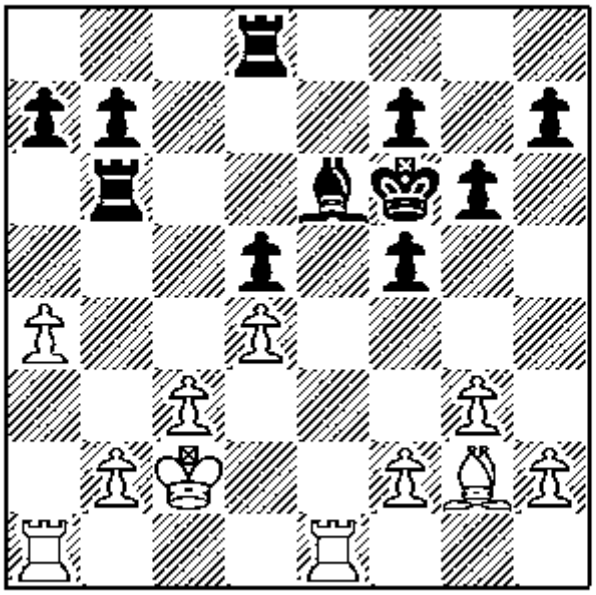
The bishop now exerts pressure on the weakest point in Black's position, the d5-pawn. Although White cannot win the pawn, forcing his opponent to protect it ensures that White will have relatively more freedom for his own pieces.

20 ... Rad8 21 a4

With Black's pieces tied down to the defence of the d5-pawn, White tries to create other weaknesses. It is normally impossible to win a game by putting pressure on one weakness alone, so White must create another by opening new avenues elsewhere.

21 ... Rb6 22 Kc2

Here 22 Ra2 a5 23 f4 looks more precise, setting the f5-pawn in stone, but Stein does not want to commit himself on the kingside just yet and so takes a practical risk, perhaps reasoning that Black is unlikely suddenly to switch from passive to active defence.



Exercise: How could Black now solve his problems?

22 ... a5?!

This prevents White from grabbing more space with a4-a5, but by continuing to play solidly Ciric misses another chance.

Answer: After 22 ... f4! (getting rid of the doubled f-pawn) 23 a5 (or 23 gxf4 Kf5) 23 ... Bf5+ 24 Kc1 Re6!, Black should have little difficult in drawing.

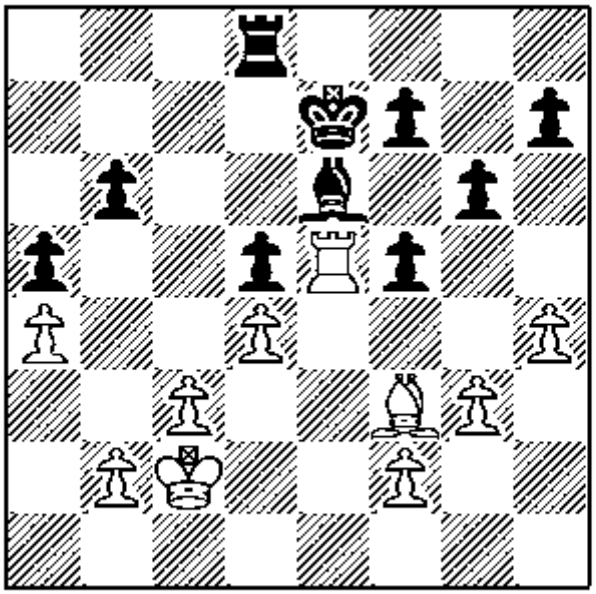
23 Re5 Rdd6 24 h4

Another useful pawn move, which increases White's control of the dark squares and makes ready to advance again at a suitable moment. We might have expected Ciric to block this one as well with 24 ... h5, but he seems content to sit and wait while Stein tries to improve his position.

24 ... Rd8 25 Bf3 Kg7 26 Ra3 Kf8 27 Rb3

White exchanges his passive rook for Black's active one, removing the slight pressure on the b2-pawn.

27 ... Rxb3 28 Kxb3 Ke7 29 Kc2 b6



Exercise (planning): What is White's plan to try and make progress?

Answer: 30 Be2!

Stein realizes that b2-b4 is the most important break, but how should it be prepared? He intends to transfer the bishop to b5 where it defends the a4-pawn, negating the exchange on b4 in conjunction with ... Ra8. Meanwhile the e5-rook can be transferred to b1 via e1 where it will support the break b2-b4.

30 ... Kd6 31 Bb5 Rg8

This non-move is like saying to White: Show me how you will improve your position!

Opposing bishops with 31 ... Bd7? gives White more chances in the rook ending after 32 Bxd7 Rxd7 (not 32 ... Kxd7? 33 Rxd5+) 33 Re8, penetrating into the heart of Black's position. Note that the pawn endgame arising after 33 ... Re7? 34 Rxe7 Kxe7 35 c4! is totally winning for White, who essentially has an extra passed d-pawn. This is exactly the kind of

ending White is dreaming of after 5 ... exf6.

32 Re1 Rc8

Again 32 ... Bd7? 33 Bxd7 Kxd7 is a strategic mistake, even without entry points for the rook. White cannot be prevented from establishing a passed d-pawn after Kd3, b2-b3 and c3-c4 with good winning chances in the rook ending.

33 Kd2 Rc7 34 Rb1 Ra7 35 Ra1

Changing one's mind is the dominant player's prerogative. Stein holds off advancing the b-pawn for the time being. He was probably deterred from playing 35 b4 because of 35 ... Bd7! which is strong here, since White no longer has the option of b2-b3 and c3-c4, while the rook endings look pretty drawish. For example, 36 Bxd7 Kxd7 37 h5! axb4 38 Rxb4 Kc6 39 h6! Re7 40 c4 dxc4 41 Rxc4+ Kd7 42 Rb4 Kc6 43 d5+ Kxd5 44 Rxb6 f4! 45 a5 fxg3 46 fxg3 f5 47 a6 Rc7! 48 Rb7 Kc6! leads to a draw. If White swaps rooks and sends the king to g7, Black makes his own queen with ... g6-g5 and ... f5-f4.

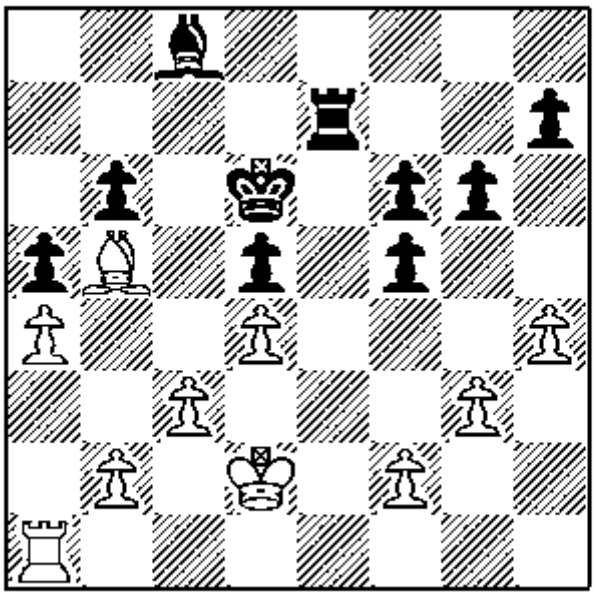
35 ... Re7 36 Ra3!?

Stein's manoeuvring is reminiscent of Tarrasch's "cat-and-mouse-play", which is a psychological technique employed in positions where the opponent cannot undertake anything. The underlying idea is to convince him of his helplessness. Its effectiveness is seen right here as Ciric makes an unnecessary slight weakening.

36 ... f6?!

If Black wanted to push an f-pawn then 36 ... f4! was again available. After 37 gxf4 Bg4 (intending ... Re4) 38 Bd3 Re6 (intending ... Rf6), White's queenside play is too slow to succeed; for example, 39 Rb3 (or 39 b4 Rf6) 39 ... Kc6 40 Rb5 Rf6 41 b4 (or 41 Ke3 Re6+) 41 ... axb4 42 c4 Rxf4 43 cxd5+ Kc7 44 d6+ Kxd6 45 Rxb6+ Kc7 46 Rxb4 Rxf2+ and so on.

37 Ra1 Bc8



Exercise: How can White add more poison to his manoeuvres?

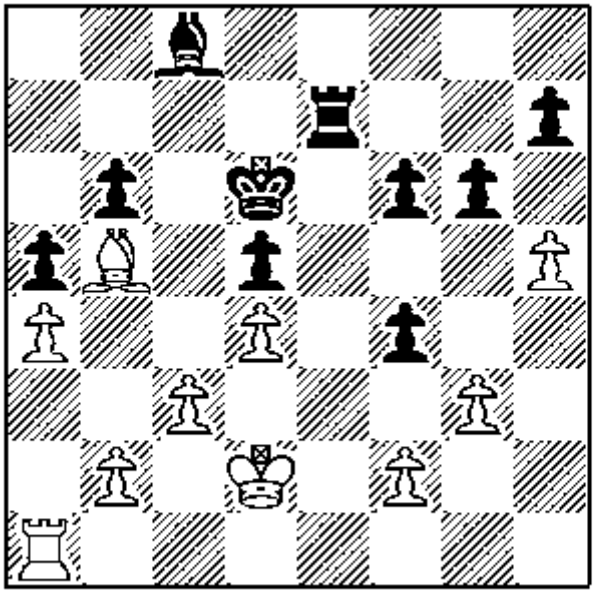
Answer: 38 h5!

Stein plays to open new avenues of attack on the kingside, in the hope of creating a second weakness in Black's position, to stretch his defences. Black's first 'weakness' is his constant need to watch over White's queenside pawn majority.

38 ... f4

If Black tries to keep the kingside closed with 38 ... g5?, new weaknesses arise on f5 and h7. White fixes the h-pawn with 39 h6! and then plays Bd3, b2-b3, Re1 and c3-c4, mobilizing his pawns. Note too that Black would have to cede the e-file since the bishop ending is hopeless.

With the text Ciric plays to eradicate his doubled pawns at last, but I wonder whether he considered wrecking them further: 38 ... gxh5!? 39 Rh1 f4! is an interesting defence, when play could continue 40 gxf4 (after 40 Rxh5?! fxg3 41 fxg3 Rg7 42 Rh6 Rg6! 43 Rxh7 Rxg3, Black has good counterplay) 40 ... Bg4 41 Bd3 f5 42 Rh2! Kc7 (not 42 ... Rf7? 43 Be2! and White wins the rook ending) 43 f3 Bxf3 44 Bxf5 Rg7! (44 ... Rf7?! 45 Ke3 Bd1 46 Be6 Re7 47 f5 leaves Black passive) 45 Ke3 Bd1 46 Bc2 Bxc2 47 Rxc2 Rg3+ 48 Kf2 h4 49 Re2 Rg4 50 Re5 Kd6 51 f5 Re4! 52 f6 Rf4+ 53 Ke3 Rxf6 54 Rh5 Re6+ 55 Kd3 h6 56 Rxh4 Rg6 and Black should hold, even if White has a nominal advantage with his superior pawn structure and more active rook.

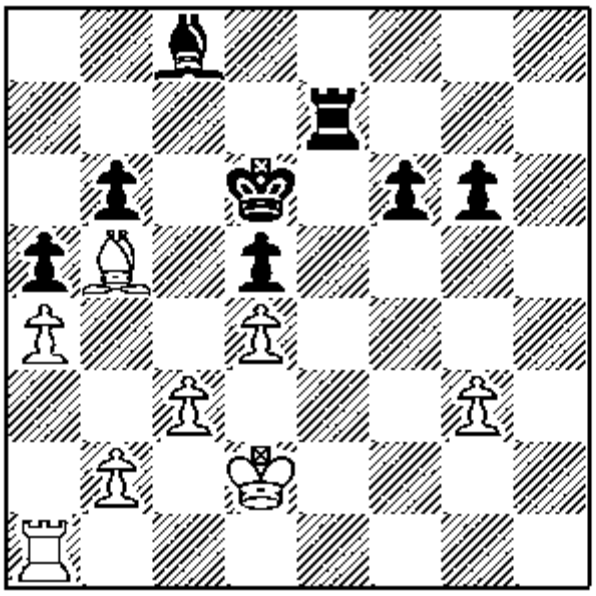


Exercise: How does White deal with this pawn break?

Answer: 39 hxg6

Not 39 gxf4? Re4 and White's winning chances are non-existent, as can be seen by 40 hxg6 hxg6 41 Rg1 Rxf4 42 Rxg6 Rxf2+ and so forth.

39 ... fxg3 40 fxg3 hxg6

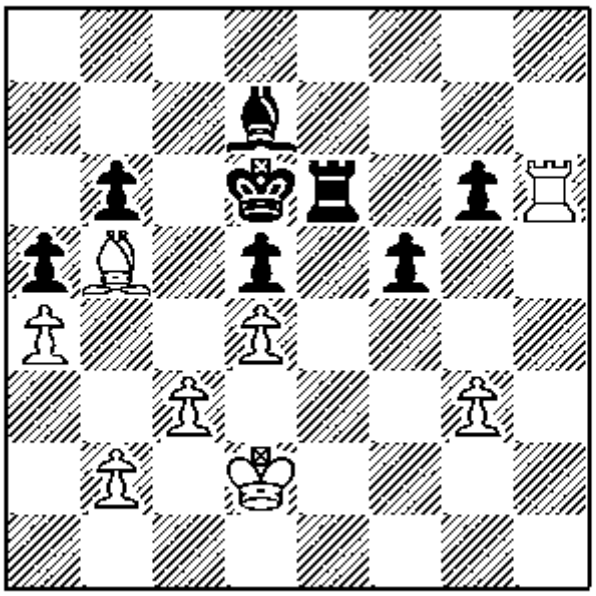


Exercise: How does White play with his rook?

Answer: 41 Rf1

Stein wants to provoke a defence of the f6-pawn before penetrating on the open file. Otherwise 41 Rh1, followed by 42 Rh8, is logical and dangerous. White can attack the black pawns on g6, f6, d5 and b6 from the rear, in combination with a queenside pawn break. For example, after 41 ... g5 (reducing the target slightly) 42 Rh8 Be6 43 b3!, followed by c3-c4, Black's resources look meagre.

41 ... f5 42 Rh1 Bd7 43 Rh6 Re6



Exercise: What is White's strongest move?

Answer: 44 b3!

Exchanging with 44 Bxd7?! Kxd7 would be a positional mistake because it is not clear how White can make progress. Black has a simple defence by playing ... Kc6-d6-c6, back and

forth. With the text White keeps control of the important c6-square, fixing the b6-pawn, and moments of "zugzwang" may appear as a result. At least Stein puts his opponent under maximal pressure, and that is the most important thing if one wants to win chess games.

44 ... Bc6?!

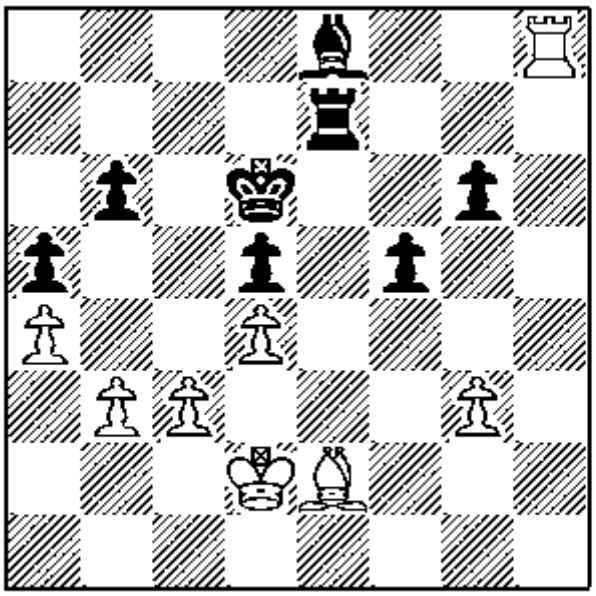
Black could have traded bishops himself, as the rook ending after 44 ... Bxb5 45 axb5 Kd7 46 Kd3 Kd6 47 c4 dxc4+ 48 bxc4 a4! is actually a forced draw, though it would be difficult to foresee all the following variations over the board: 49 Rh7 (or 49 Rh8 Re1 50 Ra8 Rd1+! 51 Kc3 Rc1+ 52 Kb4 Rb1+ 53 Ka3 Ra1+ 54 Kb2 Rd1 and the active rook holds the draw) 49 ... Re7! 50 c5+ bxc5 51 dxc5+ Ke6 52 Rh8 (52 Rxe7+?? Kxe7 even wins for Black!) 52 ... Kd5 53 c6 Kc5 54 Rb8 a3 55 Kc2 Re2+ 56 Kb3 Re3+ 57 Ka2 Kb4 58 Rd8 (not 58 c7?? Re2+ 59 Ka1 Kb3 and mates) 58 ... Re2+ with a draw by perpetual.

45 Be2!

Now that the a4-pawn is protected, Stein naturally avoids the exchange of bishops for the moment. The position is not so easy for Black to handle, because White might suddenly return the bishop to b5 if it seems favourable to do so. In particular, once the rook reaches its most active square, Black must think carefully before entering any pure rook ending.

45 ... Be8 46 Rh8! Re7?!

A more precise defence is 46 ... Ke7!, and if 47 Bb5 then 47 ... Bf7!, when Black covers all his pawn weaknesses and even can prepare counterplay with ... g6-g5 and ... f5-f4.



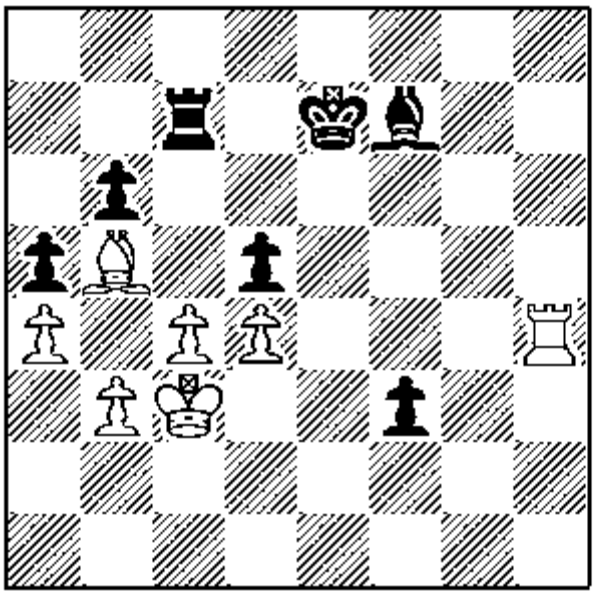
Exercise (calculation): Where does White play the bishop?

Answer: 47 Bf3!?

Stein decides that the bishop belongs on the h1-a8 diagonal for the time being. He probably realized that Bb5 is strong under the right circumstances, but preferred to delay showing his hand, trying to improve his position in other ways first.

Instead, 47 Bb5 Bxb5? 48 axb5 leads to a winning rook endgame; one plausible line is 48 ... Re4 49 Rd8+ Ke6 50 Rb8 Rg4 51 Rxb6+ Kd7 52 Rf6 Rxg3 53 b6 and White's pawns are far more dangerous. But it is less clear whether White can win after after 47 ... Bf7!, even though his advantage is obvious. Some illustrative variations support this conclusion: 48 Rc8 Rb7 49 Rd8+ Ke7 50 Rh8 g5! (Black must seek counterplay on the other wing) 51 c4 Rc7 52

Kd3 f4! 53 gxf4 gxf4 54 Rh4 Bg6+ 55 Kd2! (or 55 Kc3 f3!) 55 ... Bf7! (not now 55 ... f3? due to 56 cxd5! f2 57 Ke2 or 56 ... Rc2+ 57 Ke1 and wins; d5-d6+ combined with Rh6 is the decisive idea, while the black f-pawn can go nowhere) 56 Kc3 f3 and now:



a) 57 Rf4 Bh5 58 Kd2 dxc4 59 bxc4 Rc8 60 Rh4 Bg6 (60 ... f2? loses the pawn to 61 Re4+ and 62 Rf4 etc) 61 Ke3 Rf8 62 Kf2 Bd3 63 Rh6 Rf6! 64 Rxf6 Kxf6 65 Kxf3 Ke6 and it is hard to see how White can convert his extra pawn.

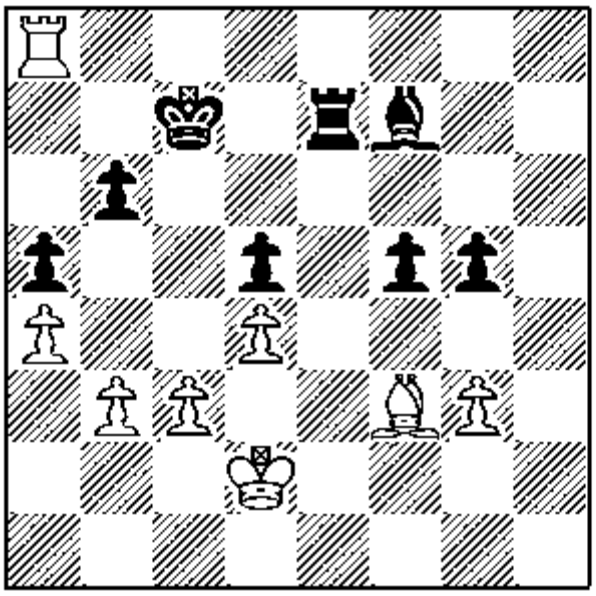
b) 57 Rh3 dxc4 58 bxc4 Bd5 59 Rh7+ (not 59 Kd3? f2 60 Ke2 Bxc4+) 59 ... Bf7 60 Kd3 Kf6 61 Rh3 Bg6+ 62 Ke3 Re7+ 63 Kxf3 Re4 64 d5 (64 Rh6 leads to a draw in a study-like manner: 64 ... Rxd4 65 Be8 Ke7 66 Bxg6 Rxc4 and White cannot defend the a4-pawn) 64 ... Ke5 and again Black has good chances to hold, with or without the rooks.

47 ... Bf7 48 Rd8+

Stein disrupts Black's pieces as much as he can before embarking on a concrete plan.

48 ... Kc7 49 Ra8 g5

After 49 ... Kb7, Stein would probably have reverted to the plan of 50 Rf8 Kc7 51 Be2, followed by Bb5.



Exercise: How does White continue?

Answer: 50 b4!

White makes his long-awaited break on the queenside, with the intention of either obtaining a passed a-pawn or creating a pawn weakness at a5.

50 ... axb4

After 50 ... Kb7, the white rook shows its quality: 51 Rf8 (threatening 52 Rxf7!) 51 ... Kc7 52 bxa5 bxa5 53 Ra8 Kb6 54 Rb8+ Rb7 (or 54 ... Kc6 55 Rb5) 55 Rc8 Rc7 (or 55 ... Rd7 56 Rc5, intending 57 Rb5+ Ka6 58 Be2!) 56 Rd8, winning the d5-pawn.

51 cxb4 f4

Black does better to play 51 ... Be6, and if 52 a5 Kb7 53 Rd8 bxa5 54 bxa5, then 54 ... f4! (not 54 ... Ka6? 55 Bxd5 Kxa5 56 Bxe6 Rxe6 57 Rd5+ Kb4 58 Rxf5 Kc4 59 d5 Rd6 60 Ke3 Rxd5 61 Ke4! Rd4+ 62 Kf3 and the rook ending is a theoretical win) 55 gxf4 gxf4, when the reduced number of pawns increases the likelihood of a draw; for example, 56 Rd6 (or 56 Bxd5?! Kc7) 56 ... Ka7 57 Rb6 Bg8 58 Rf6 Rf7 59 Rd6 Re7! 60 Bxd5 Bxd5 61 Rxd5 Rf7 and Black holds easily.

52 gxf4 gxf4 53 Rf8

Swapping rooks with 53 Ra7+ Kd6 54 Rxe7 Kxe7 leads to a draw. There are too few pawns left for there to be any winning chances in the bishop endgame.

53 ... Kd6 54 Be2

Stein returns the bishop to the f1-a6 diagonal so it can support the a-pawn to a6.

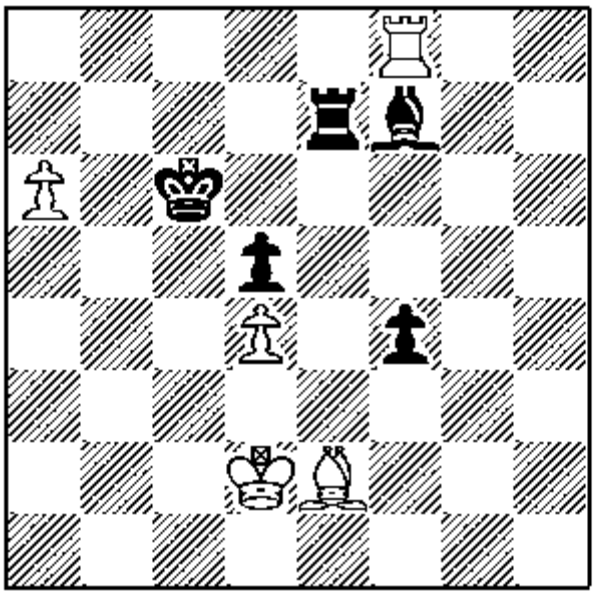
54 ... Be6?

I must confess to not understanding this move which leaves the f-pawn en prise, nor why Stein did not take it with 55 Rxf4 (and if 55 ... Ra7 then 56 Bb5). Perhaps the database is in error again and Black repeated differently on moves 54 and 56.

55 a5? bxa5 56 bxa5 Bf7?

If the game did reach this position, then 56 ... Rf7 was best; for example, 57 Ra8 Rc7! 58 Rh8 (or 58 a6 Rc8! 59 Rxc8 Bxc8 with a drawn bishop ending) 58 ... Bf5 59 Rh6+ Ke7 60 Bd3 (to stop ... Rc2+ and ... Ra2) 60 ... Bxd3 61 Kxd3 Rc8 with a drawn rook endgame.

57 a6 Kc6



Exercise: What is White's best move?

Answer: 58 Rb8!

Cutting the black king off from the blockading a7-square, and threatening the deadly 59 Bb5+.

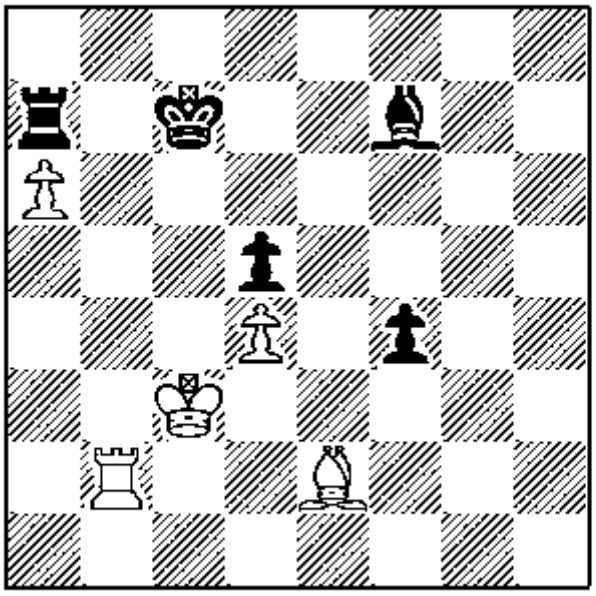
58 ... Ra7

The only move to avoid immediate loss. 58 ... Rc7?? fails to 59 Bb5+ Kd6 60 Rb6+ Ke7 61 Rb7 Kd6 62 a7 Rxb7 63 a8Q Rxb5 64 Qa6+ and wins.

59 Kc3

Now 59 Bb5+ is answered by 59 ... Kc7 60 Rh8 Kb6.

59 ... Kc7 60 Rb2



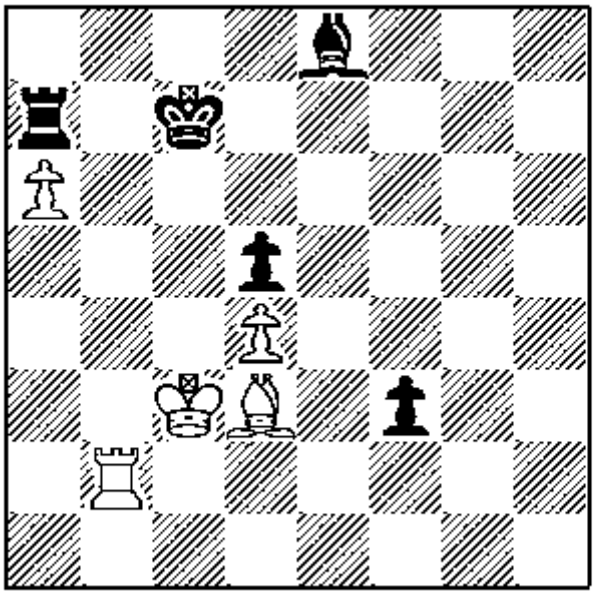
Exercise (planning): What is White's plan for the next few moves?

Answer: To relocate the bishop on the f1-a6 diagonal, bring the king up to b4, and swing the rook to the kingside, after which Black's position is in danger of falling apart.

60 ... f3

Black must do something.

61 Bd3 Be8



Exercise (calculation): Can you see the study-like continuation? (Warning: This is difficult!)

62 Rh2?

Stein ignores the capture of the f-pawn, as the direct 62 Rf2? Kb6 63 Rxf3 leads to a draw after 63 ... Bb5. One typical variation runs 64 Rf6+ Ka5 65 Rd6 Bxd3 66 Kxd3 Rh7! (66 ... Rxa6 67 Rxd5+ Kb4! also draws) 67 Rxd5+ (or 67 Ke3 Rf7) 67 ... Kxa6 68 Rc5 Kb6 69 Rc1 Rc7 and the black king gets across in front of the pawn.

Answer: However, the ingenious 62 Bf1!! wins the f-pawn safely, since 62 ... Bc6 (or 62 ... Bd7 63 Kb4 Kb6 64 Rb3!) 63 Rf2 Kb6 64 Rxf3 Bb5? (Black should bring the rook out again) 65 Kb4! Bxf1 66 Rxf1 leads to a winning rook ending in study-like fashion. White threatens 67 Rf6+, followed by Kc5, and Black cannot take the a-pawn because 66 ... Rxa6 (or 66 ... Kxa6 67 Ra1+ etc) 67 Rf6+ Kb7 68 Rxa6 Kxa6 69 Kc5 Kb7 70 Kxd5 Kc7 71 Ke6 is a trivial win.

62 ... Kb6 63 Rh6+ Ka5 64 Rd6

Stein manages to prevent the equalizing ... Bb5 for the time being.

64 ... Rd7

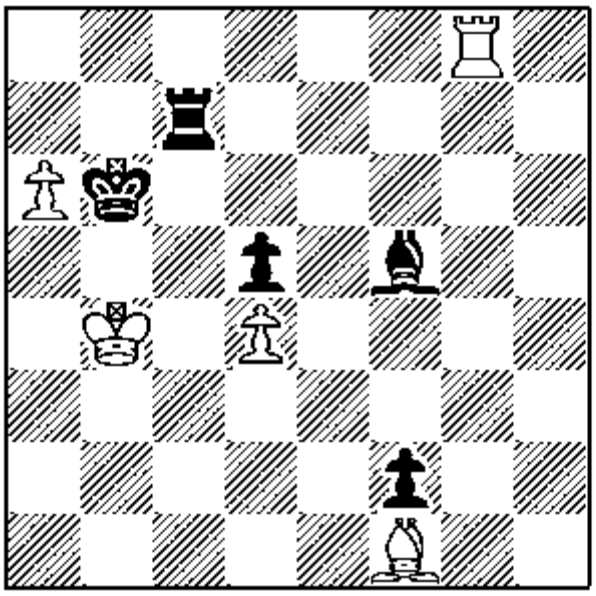
Another defence is 64 ... Rc7+ 65 Kd2 Bc6 66 Ke3 Kb4!, intending 67 Kxf3?! Kc3 and draws.

65 Rc6 f2 66 Rc8 Bg6 67 Bf1 Kb6 68 Kb4

68 Rg8 leads to a forced draw after 68 ... Rc7+ 69 Kd2 Rc2+ 70 Ke3 Rc3+! 71 Kxf2 Bd3 72 Bg2 Bc4 73 Rg6+ Ka7 74 Rd6 Rd3 and the pawns will fall like apples in October.

68 ... Rc7 69 Rg8 Bf5?!

69 ... Bh5 is simpler, when White is out of ideas and the game ends in a draw.



Exercise: How can White exploit the position of the black bishop?

Answer: 70 Rf8 Rc1

Otherwise the f-pawn will just fall.

71 Rf6+! Ka7 72 Rf7+!

Ciric must have forgotten about these checks which drive his king to the back rank.

72 ... Ka8

Or 72 ... Kb8 73 Bg2, which amounts to the same thing (73 ... f1Q?? 74 a7+ Ka8 75 Bxd5+ and mates), but not 72 ... Kb6?? 73 a7 and Black loses the bishop.

73 Bg2

After this tactical trick, Black has no time to queen his pawn (73 ... f1Q?? 74 Bxd5+ etc), so he must surrender to a rook ending a pawn down, albeit one that is theoretically drawn.

73 ... Be4 74 Bxe4 dxe4 75 Rxf2 Re1?!

This move, planning a quick ... e4-e3-e2 followed by a rook check, is easily parried and makes Black's defensive task more difficult.

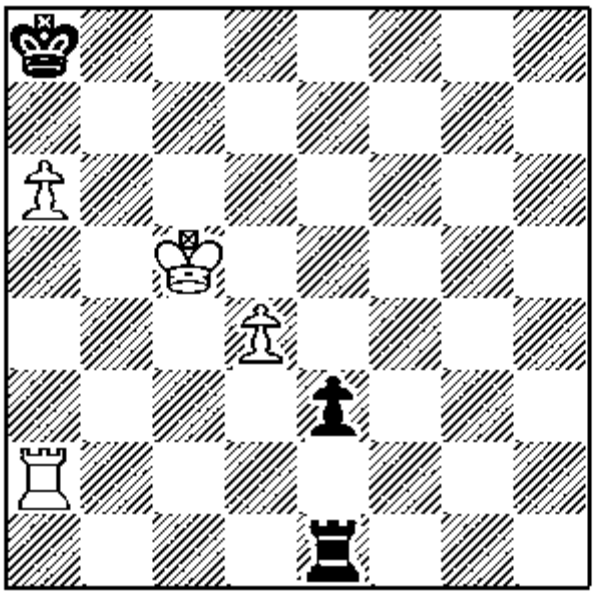
It is better to play for immediate simplification with 75 ... Rc6! 76 Kb5 (or 76 Re2 Rxa6 77 Rxe4 Kb7 with an easy draw) 76 ... Rd6 77 Kc5 Rxa6 78 Rb2 e3 79 d5 e2 80 Rxe2 Kb7 81 Re7+ (if 81 d6 Ra5+ or 81 Re6 Ra1) 81 ... Kc8, followed by ... Kd8, reaching the famous Philidor position which every beginner knows.

76 Kc5

White hides his king behind the d-pawn and then looks to advance it, while his rook keeps an eye on the enemy e-pawn along the second rank.

76 ... e3 77 Ra2

77 Rc2 stops the checks on the c-file, but Black can draw as long as he finds 77 ... Kb8!, intending 78 d5 Kc7 or 78 Kc6 Ra1.



Exercise: Black is on a narrow path but can still draw. What should he play?

77 ... Rc1+??

Ciric finally makes a fatal mistake. 77 ... e2?? is no better due to 78 Rc2! Kb8 (or 78 ... Ka7 79 d5 Kxa6 80 Kc6 Ka5 81 d6 etc) 79 d5 Ra1 (or 79 ... Kc7 80 a7 Ra1 81 Rxe2) 80 Rxe2 Rxa6 81 Re6! and White wins the rook ending.

Answer: Black can still have save himself after 77 ... Ka7! 78 d5 (or 78 Kd6 Rd1 79 d5 Rd2 80 Rb3 e2 81 Re3 Kxa6 etc) 78 ... Rc1+ 79 Kd6 Rd1 80 Re2 Kxa6, since this rook endgame is drawn; for example, 81 Kc6 (similarly 81 Ke6 Kb6 82 d6 Rh1! or just 81 Rxe3 Kb7!) 81 ... Rc1+ 82 Kd7 Kb6 83 d6 Rh1! 84 Rxe3 Rh7+ 85 Re7 Rh6 with a book draw.

78 Kd5!

Notice that 78 Kd6?? would let Black off again: 78 ... Rd1 79 d5 Rd2 80 Ra3 e2 81 Re3 Ka7 and draws.

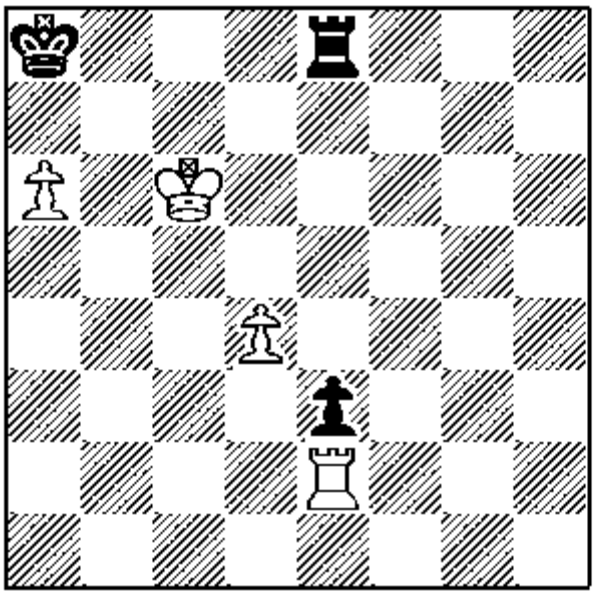
78 ... Rc8

Unfortunately, 78 ... Ka7 now fails to 79 Ke4!, and if 79 ... e2 80 Rxe2 Kxa6 then 81 Rb2! cuts the black king off and wins.

79 Re2 Re8

After 79 ... Ka7, White has another instructive win: 80 Rxe3 Kxa6 81 Rb3 Rd8+ (or 81 ... Ka5 82 Ke6) 82 Kc6! and the pawn advances safely since 82 ... Rxd4 83 Ra3+ mates.

80 Kc6

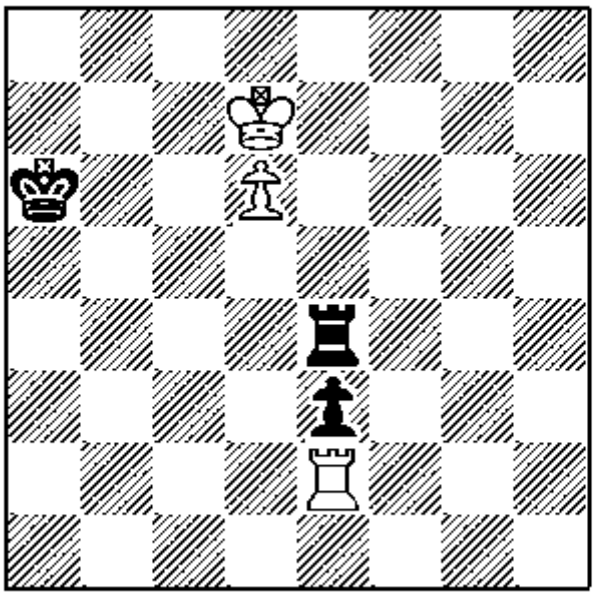


It is noteworthy that, despite having the passive rook, this is an easy win for White. The main reason is the perfect co-operation between his king and d-pawn, whereas Black's king is stuck in the corner.

80 ... Re6+ 81 Kc7

Or just 81 Kd7 Rxa6 82 d5 Ra3 83 d6 and Black can do nothing to prevent the white pawn from going home.

81 ... Re7+ 82 Kd6 Re4 83 d5 Ka7 84 Kc6 Rc4+ 85 Kd7 Re4 86 d6 Kxa6



Exercise: How does Stein finish things off?

Answer: 87 Kc6!

Only this way. After 87 Kc7?? Kb5! 88 d7 Rc4+, Black escapes with a draw.

87 ... Rc4+ 88 Kd5 Rc3 89 d7 Kb7 90 Kd6 1-0

A very instructive game, albeit not without mistakes, showing Stein's unhurried style and positional technique. After Ciric made a dubious decision at move 15, Stein exploited his

permanent advantages of greater activity and superior pawn structure to put pressure on his opponent for the rest of the game.

In the international tournament at the USSR Central Chess Club in Yerevan, Stein scored 8½/15, with five wins, one loss and seven draws, and shared second place with Petrosian, a point behind Korchnoi. The following win came in round three.

The strongest Swedish grandmaster, before the dominant era of Ulf Andersson, was Anders Gideon Ståhlberg (1908-67). He became Sweden's first professional player in the 1930s, and beat Nimzowitsch 5-3 in a match in 1934. His most successful year was 1947/48, when he won several major tournaments in Argentina, though he had to wait until 1950 before he got the grandmaster title. He is considered to have been one of the top ten players in the world during this period of his life. Ståhlberg is also famous for having been the chief arbiter in five world championship matches from 1957-63. He wrote many chess books, the most popular of which is Chess and Chess Masters (Bell 1955).

Game 32
G.Ståhlberg-L.Stein
Yerevan 1965
King's Indian Defence

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 g6 3 d4 Bg7 4 e4 0-0 5 Be2

A flexible move, keeping options of three systems: the Classical with 6 Nf3, the Averbakh with 6 Bg5, and the Four Pawns Attack with 6 f4.

5 ... d6 6 f4

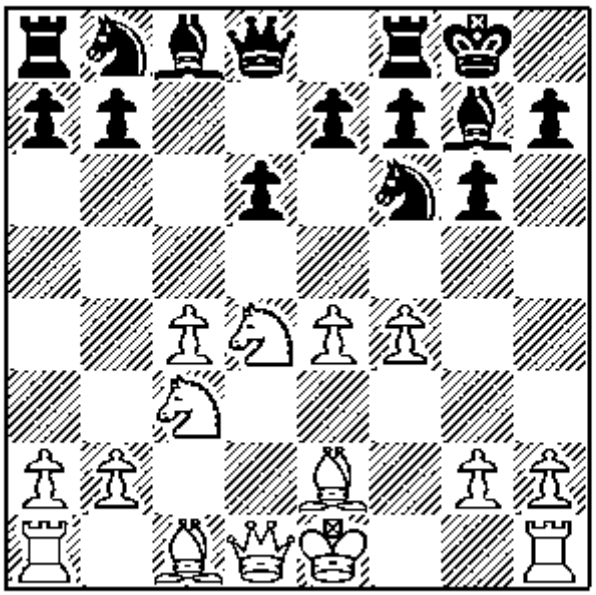
Ståhlberg chooses, at least temporarily, the most aggressive and risky variation. The obvious drawback of making four big pawn moves so early is that White is neglecting his piece development, which means that his impressive-looking centre does not have much support and, consequently, can be more easily attacked by the second player.

6 ... c5 7 Nf3

Faithful to his style Ståhlberg opts to play it in positional fashion, rather than enter the sharp Benoni-type lines after 7 d5 e6 8 Nf3 exd5 9 cxd5.

7 ... cxd4 8 Nxd4

We now have a position characteristic of the "Maróczy Bind" where the f2-pawn already is aggressively placed on f4**.**



Exercise: To which of the three available squares does Black develop the b8-knight?

Answer: 8 ... Na6

Stein plans to transfer the knight to c5 with pressure on the e4-pawn. 8 ... Nbd7 is also playable with the same idea. It leads to more fighting positions than the main variation 8 ... Nc6 which, after 9 Be3, can be pretty dull. For example:

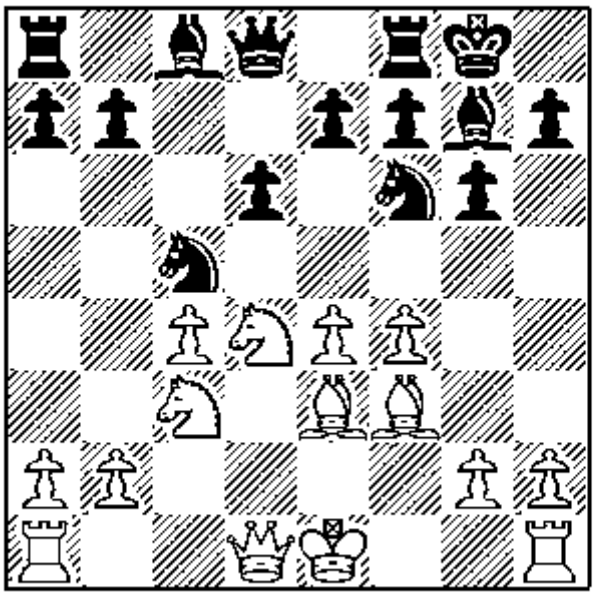
a) 9 ... e5 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 fxe5 dxe5 12 Bc5 (12 0-0 Qe7 13 Qa4 or 13 Qe1 is a better try for an advantage) 12 ... Re8 13 Qxd8 Rxd8 14 0-0 Rd2 15 Rad1 Rxd1 16 Rxd1 Be6 17 Bd6 Ng4 18 Bc5 Nf6 19 Bd6 and a draw was agreed in W.Uhlmann-R.J.Fischer, Varna Olympiad 1962.

b) 9 ... Nxd4 10 Bxd4 e5 11 fxe5 dxe5 12 Bc5 Re8 13 Qxd8 Rxd8 14 Rd1 Rxd1+ 15 Kxd1 Be6 16 b3 Nd7 17 Be3 Nb8! 18 Nd5 Nc6 19 Kc2 Nd4+ 20 Bxd4 exd4 21 Nc7 Rd8 22 Nxe6 fxe6 with another draw in M.Tal-T.V.Petrosian, Portoroz Interzonal 1958.

9 Be3

Even the natural 9 0-0 seems to equalize for Black after 9 ... Nc5 10 Bf3 e5! (Keene's 10 ... Qb6!? can be met by 11 Be3 Qxb2 12 Ndb5 Ng4! 13 Bxg4 Bxg4 14 Qxg4 a6 15 Rab1 Qc2 16 Rbc1 Qd3 17 Bxc5 dxc5 18 Rf3 Qxc4 19 Na3 with advantage, although Black has some compensation owing to the unstable white knights) 11 Ndb5 Be6! 12 Nxd6 Ne8 13 Be3 Qxd6 14 Qxd6 Nxd6 15 Bxc5 Rfd8, when White cannot hold on to his extra pawn, so position is about equal.

9 ... Nc5 10 Bf3



Exercise: Suggest one of the four candidate moves available to Black.

Answer: Black has several reasonable candidates, all connected with the ... e7-e5 break. The question is whether Black should play it immediately or prepare it first?

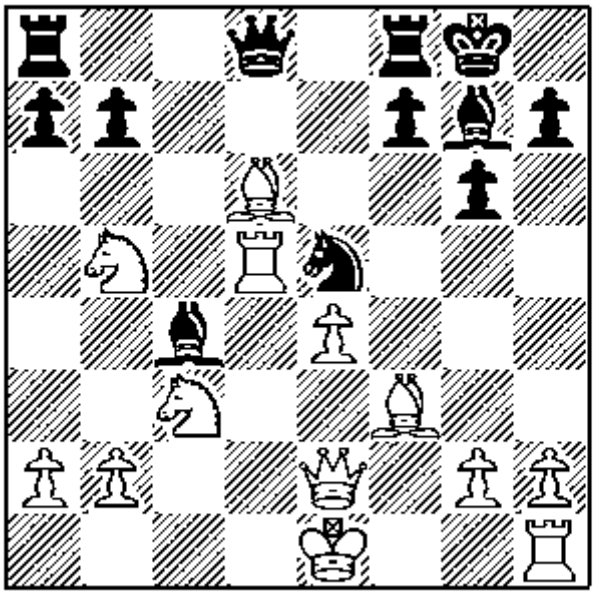
10 ... Bh6!?

This unconventional move is obviously a preparation for ... e7-e5. It is played in the spirit of Alekhine's concrete approach to opening problems and desire to attack with the black pieces. This is in accordance with Stein's mood, as he certainly wants to play for a win.

Alternatively:

a) 10 ... Nfd7 11 Nde2 Nb6?! (11 ... g5!? is a very interesting possibility) 12 b3 e5 was played in A.Bisguier-R.Byrne, Lincoln USA 1969, and now the simple 13 0-0 keeps a clear advantage.

b) 10 ... e5! at once may be the best move, and if 11 Ndb5 then 11 ... exf4! 12 Bxf4 Be6 13 Qe2 (13 Bxd6? fails to the explosion 13 ... Nfxe4! and wins, while 13 Nxd6 is answered by 13 ... Ne8! with a clear advantage) 13 ... Nfd7 14 Bxd6 Ne5 15 Rd1 (or 15 0-0-0 Qg5+) 15 ... Ncd3+ (15 ... Qh4+!? 16 g3 Qg5 offers Black compensation for the pawn and is a way of avoiding the drawish tendency of the main variation) 16 Rxd3 Bxc4 17 Rd5!! (an unbelievable move, but the only one to secure White an equal game)



17 ... Bxe2 18 Bxe5 Bxf3 (here 18 ... Qa5 19 Nd4 Qb4 20 Ndxe2 Bxe5 21 Rxe5 Qxb2 22 Rb5 Qa3 23 Rb3 Qc5 24 Rb5 Qa3 25 Rb3 repeats for a draw if both sides are happy with that) 19 Rxd8 Rfxd8 20 Bxg7 Bxg2 21 Rg1 Kxg7 (21 ... Bxe4 does not change the assessment after the forced 22 Bf6 Rd3 23 Ke2 Bf5 24 Nc7 Rc8 25 N3d5 Kf8 26 Be7+ Kg7 27 Bf6+ Kf8, when White can claim a draw by perpetual – which only proves that the variations are good for Black!) 22 Rxg2 reaches a balanced endgame with two knights for rook and pawn. Even equal positions can contain a lot of interesting play!

c) 10 ... Re8!? is also fully playable and a more quiet and useful way of preparing ... e7-e5.

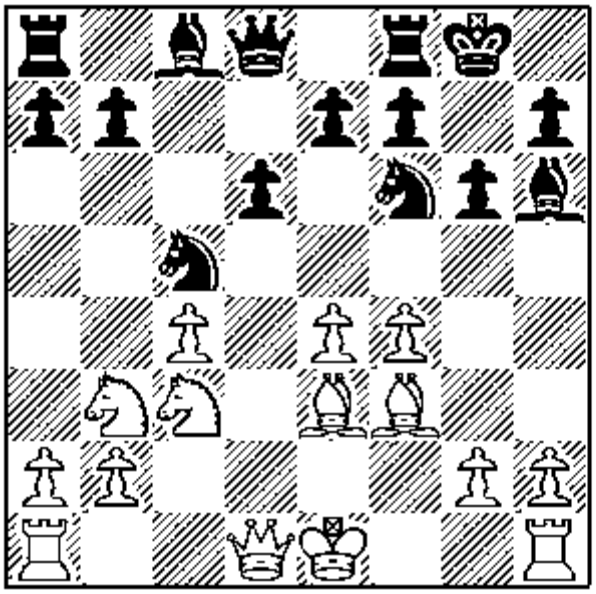
11 Nb3

The white knight is not really doing anything on d4, so Ståhlberg decides to get rid of the annoying c5-knight once and for all.

It seems logical to defend the indirectly targeted e3-bishop with 11 Qd2, but Black is fine after 11 ... e5 12 Nde2 (not 12 fxe5? Bxe3 13 Qxe3 dxe5 14 Nc6 Nd3+ 15 Ke2 bxc6 16 Qxd3 Qa5 and White has problems with his king and weak dark squares) 12 ... exf4 13 Bxf4! Bxf4 14 Nxf4 Ncxe4 15 Nxe4 Nxe4 16 Bxe4 Re8 17 0-0 Rxe4, and if 18 Nd5 Re5 19 Qh6 then 19 ... f5, followed by ... Qf8.

White probably does best to follow Golden Rule #3 from Daniel King's excellent How to Win at Chess and castle as quickly as possible. After 11 0-0 e5 12 Ndb5 Ne6! 13 Qxd6 a6 14 Bb6 Qd7 15 Qa3 Qc6 16 Bf2 Nxf4 17 Nd6, White enjoys a slight advantage in a fairly

complicated position with several pieces on both sides placed on rather unconventional squares.



Exercise: Should Black play ... e7-e5 now or throw in ... Nxb3 first?

Answer: 11 ... e5!

This is clearly best. 11 ... Nxb3?! is less precise as it does not utilize the knight to its fullest potential (compare this with the note to White's next move). After 12 axb3 e5 13 Qd2 Ng4 14 Bxg4 Bxg4 15 f5! Bxe3 16 Qxe3 gxf5 17 Qg3 Kh8 18 h3 Bh5 19 exf5 f6 20 Qe3, White has the more compact pawn structure and a steady advantage.

12 Nxc5

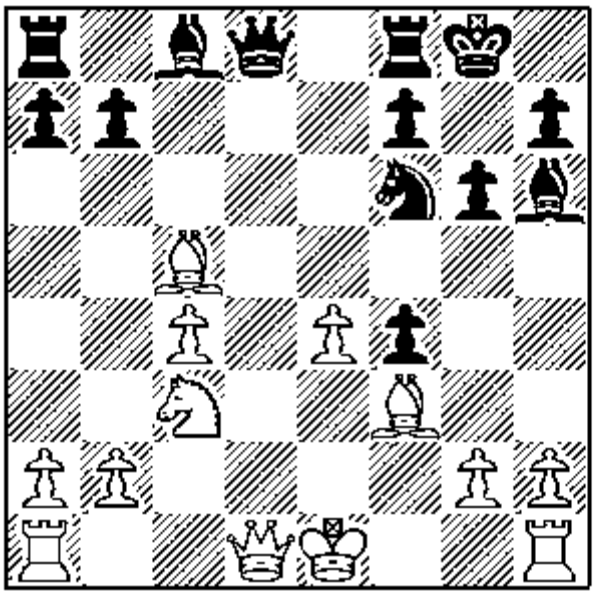
Note that White cannot play 12 Qd2 here in view of 12 ... exf4!, when 13 Bxf4?? loses straight away to 13 ... Bxf4 14 Qxf4 Nd3+ etc.

12 ... exf4

This intermediary move is the main point of 11 ... e5.

13 Bf2 dxc5 14 Bxc5

Boleslavsky's recommendation 14 Qxd8 Rxd8 15 Bxc5 is harmless after the simple 15 ... Bg7, when the dark-squared bishop is back on its strongest diagonal. Black can then set up with ... Be6, ... Nd7, ... g6-g5 and so forth.



Exercise: What is the most enterprising continuation?

Answer: 14 ... Nd7!?

This is exactly the kind of risky move to be expected from Stein! Then again, even Petrosian may have chosen it, since he too had a penchant for exchange sacrifices, especially when they involved the domination of a specific colour complex as is the case here. Petrosian once gave the following very important advice: "Do not be hypnotized by the relative force of a rook. The decision comes from an actual evaluation of forces and positional factors."

Anyway, the less dynamic 14 ... Ng4 does not make sense for a player like Stein, as it was not part of his normal methodology. Such a trite and routine move would definitely make it more difficult to beat a player of Ståhlberg's calibre, who had a reputation for high-level technique and solidity. It is probable that the following variation would have arisen: 15 Qxd8 (there is no reason to part with the bishop pair, since Black is fine after 15 Bxg4 Qh4+ 16 Bf2 Qxg4 17 0-0 Qxd1 18 Raxd1 Bg4 and so forth) 15 ... Rxd8 16 Nd5 Bg7 17 0-0-0 Be6 18 b3 and White has a small advantage due to of the strong centralized knight.

Note that 14 ... Re8?? does not save material, in view of 15 Qxd8 Rxd8 16 Be7 and Black loses a piece instead.

15 Bxf8!?

This materialistic response is not without risk either, since White's control of the dark squares will be significantly reduced. More solid perhaps is 15 Bd6 Qh4+ 16 g3 Qf6 17 c5 fxg3 18 hxg3 Bg7 19 0-0 with complicated play.

15 ... Qh4+ 16 Kd2

The white king heads for the queenside where it should be relatively safe. Less safe is 16 g3? fxg3 17 Be7 Qxe7 18 hxg3 Bg7 19 Nd5 Qg5, when Black's complete control of the dark squares gives Black him compensation, if not more.

On the surface, it is hard to suggest a move like 16 Kf1 which shuts in the h1-rook, but it seems a worthy alternative when you check the concrete variations. For example, after 16 ... Bxf8 17 Qe1 Qh6 18 e5 Qg7 19 e6 Ne5 20 exf7+ Kh8 21 Rd1 Bf5 22 Qe2, all of White's pieces are very strong (okay, apart from the h1-rook) and the threat of Bxb7 is in the air now that the b2-pawn is protected. If Black continues 22 ... Nxf3 23 Qxf3 Qxf7, White has the

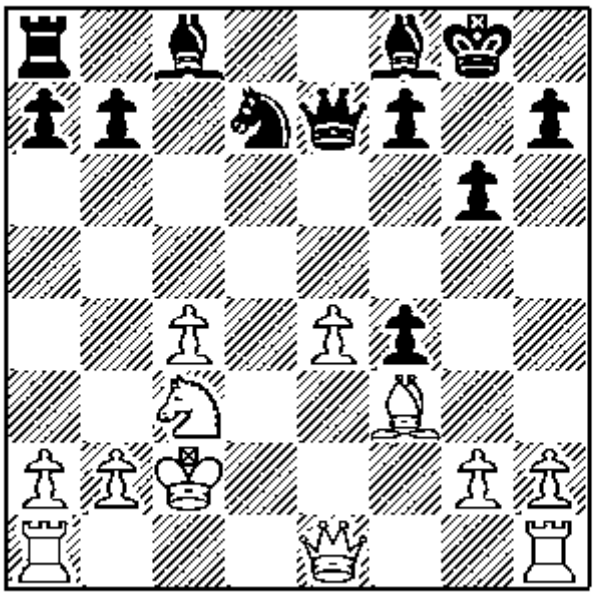
strong 24 h3! Qxc4+ 25 Kg1, followed by Kh2, moving the king into safety, connecting the rooks, and giving rise to a very interesting situation; one wonders whether Black's bishop pair can handle it.

16 ... Bxf8 17 Qe1

17 Kc2 is more flexible; this is going to be played anyway, so why not at once? Perhaps Ståhlberg wanted to enjoy the unconventional position of his king for one more move.

17 ... Qe7 18 Kc2

The immediate 18 Nd5 centralizes and activates the knight, but then 18 ... Qc5! sees Black's queen take up a tremendous post, leaving e5 for the knight. Note that the superficial 18 ... Qe5? 19 Kc2 Bg7 leads to a clear advantage for White after 20 Qc3 Qd6 21 Qb4 Nc5 22 Rad1, followed by 23 Kb1.



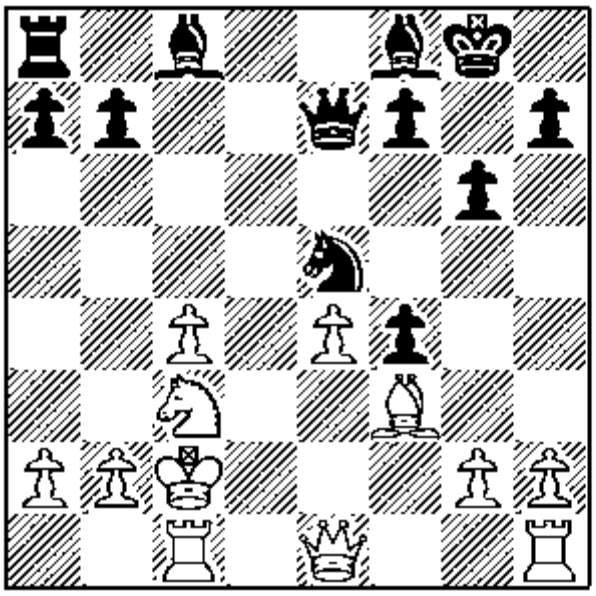
Exercise: Where does the black knight belong?

Answer: 18 ... Ne5

As in the game, 18 ... Nb6 is answered by the pawn sacrifice 19 Rc1! Nxc4 (mandatory here, even though it opens the c-file for the white rook, as otherwise it is difficult to explain the knight's position on b6) 20 Nd5 Qc5 21 Kb1 and with his king quite safe, White looks to enjoy a slight advantage. Nevertheless, after the further moves 21 ... Be6 22 Nf6+ Kh8 23 Qc3 Bg7 24 Be2 Na3+! 25 Qxa3 Qxa3 26 bxa3 Bxf6, Black seems to have sufficient compensation for the slight material deficit. One must always look deep enough into the tree to see its branches.

19 Rc1!

Defending the c-pawn with 19 b3?! is both dangerous and inconsistent, as the weakening of the queenside dark squares is not so fortunate for the white king. After 19 ... Be6, followed by ... Bg7 and ... Rc8, a sacrifice on c4 already seems very attractive for Black, and an aggressive continuation like 20 Nd5 Bxd5 21 exd5 Bg7 does not solve White's problems.



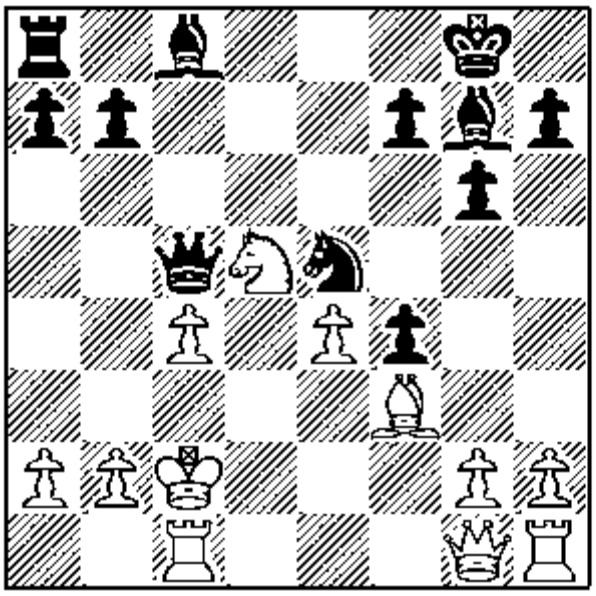
Exercise: How should Black respond to this clever move?

Answer: 19 ... Bg7

Stein continues as nothing has happened, ignoring the opportunity to catch up in material with 19 ... Nxc4!. As we saw above via 18 ... Nb6 19 Rc1 Nxc4, this seems to be okay for Black. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the complicated variations arising from this move are not easy to analyse or assess. For practical and perhaps psychological reasons (why open a file for White's rook and make him happy?), Stein opted for a more human solution.

20 Nd5 Qc5 21 Qg1!

Ståhlberg puts Black under tremendous pressure by finding the best move several times. The text is stronger than forcing the exchange of queens with 21 Qb4 (of course not 21 b3? Qa3 and the white king is extremely vulnerable) 21 ... Qxb4 22 Nxb4, as after 22 ... Nxc4 23 b3 Ne3+ 24 Kd2 a5 25 Nd5 (or 25 Nd3 Bh6) 25 ... Nxd5 26 exd5 Bf8 27 Rc7! Bb4+! 28 Ke2 Bd6 29 Rhc1 Bxc7 30 Rxc7 Bf5 31 Rxb7 Kg7, Black has good drawing chances.



Exercise: What is Black's best continuation?

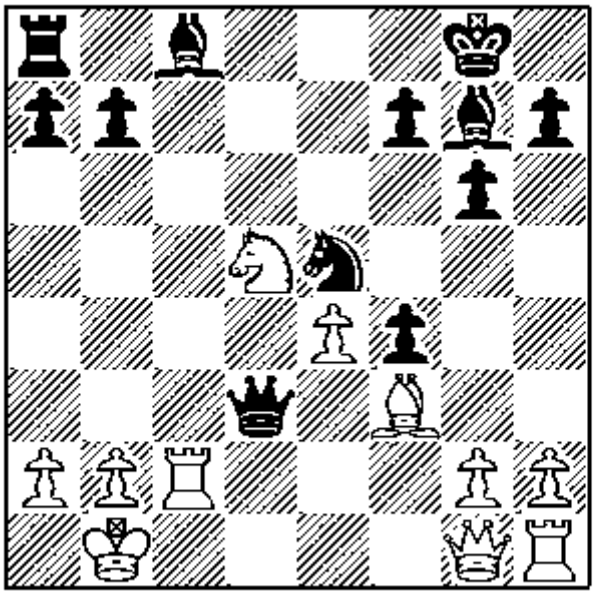
21 ... Qxc4+

Stein relents and takes the pawn after all.

Answer: Objectively, the best try is 21 ... Qa5!, which forces White to find 22 Be2! (after 22 Kb1 Nd3 23 Rc2 Be6 24 Qd1 Bxd5 25 Qxd3 Be6 26 Rd1 Be5, Black should have enough for the exchange) 22 ... Bg4 23 Qe1 Qc5 (not 23 ... Qxa2?! 24 Ra1 Qxa1 25 Qxa1 Bxe2 26 Nxf4 Bxc4 27 Qa3 and White has too much material) 24 Kb1 Qd4 25 Bxg4 Nxg4 26 Qc3! Qxe4+ 27 Qc2 Qe5 28 Rhe1 Ne3 29 Qb3 in order to keep the advantage. For example, 29 ... Rd8 (the incredible 29 ... Nxc4!? fails to 30 Qxb7! Qxb2+ 31 Qxb2 Nxb2 32 Rc8+! Rxc8 33 Ne7+ Kf8 34 Nxc8 with good winning chances) 30 Nxe3 fxe3 31 Rxe3 Qxh2 32 Re2 (32 Qxb7?? Rb8 is suicidal) 32 ... Qc7 33 g4! and by controlling Black's kingside pawns, White keeps the upper hand.

22 Kb1 Qd3+ 23 Rc2

23 Ka1? is a grave mistake due to 23 ... Nc4 and White has to return the exchange, leaving Black in charge of the game.



Exercise: How did Stein continue?

Answer: 23 ... Be6

It makes no sense to seize the bishop pair with 23 ... Nxf3 24 gxf3, since Black's knight is the superior piece and the further 24 ... Qxf3?? loses to 25 Ne7+, while after 24 ... Be6 25 Qd1, White consolidates his advantage.

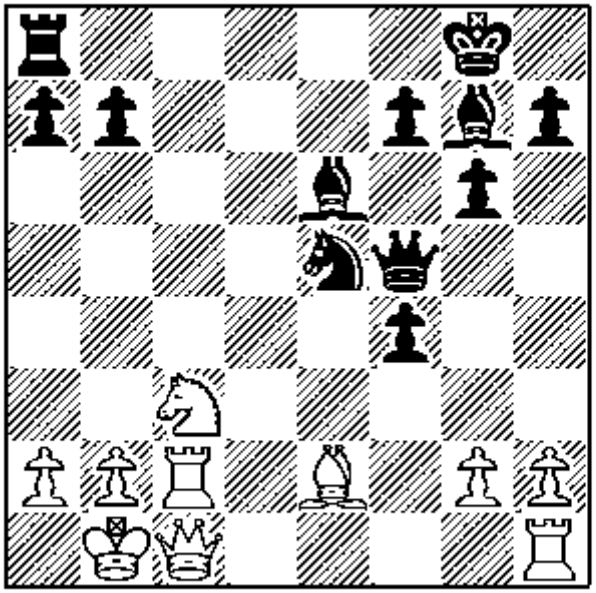
24 Be2??

After finding so many not-so-easy moves, Ståhlberg makes an unbelievable mistake. 24 Nc7?? is ruled out by 24 ... Bxa2+ 25 Kxa2 Qxc2 26 Nxa8 Nd3 and White is mated, but he had several ways to keep a clear advantage, such as 24 Qf2, 24 Qf1 or 24 Qd1. One can only speculate as to the cause of this suicidal move; perhaps Ståhlberg thought he was winning the black queen and forgot that it can now take the e-pawn.

24 ... Qxe4

White's position collapses when the e4-pawn, and consequently the outpost on d5, is lost, especially since he still has unresolved issues with his king.

25 Nc3 Qf5 26 Qc1



Exercise: What is Black's most efficient move?

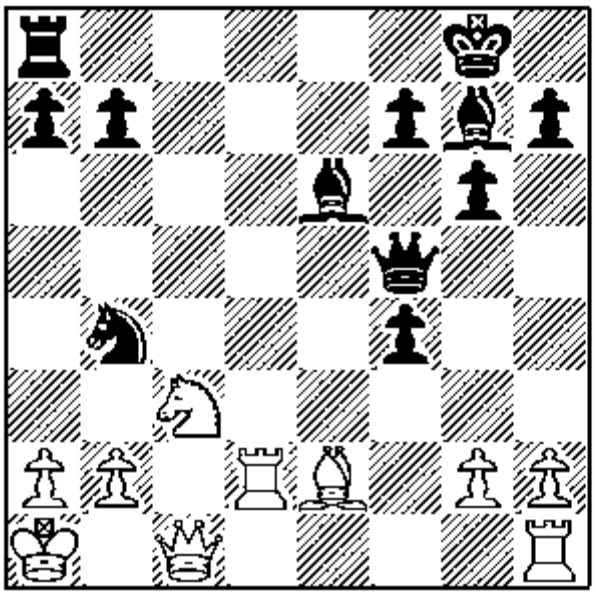
Answer: 26 ... Nc6!

The knight heads for b4 or d4.

27 Ka1

27 Rf1 Nb4 is equally hopeless.

27 ... Nb4 28 Rd2



Exercise (combination alert): How can Black exploit the favourable conditions in the most forcing way?

Answer: 28 ... Nxa2!

The simple 28 ... Qa5 29 a3 Rc8 also wins easily.

29 Nxa2 Qa5

A decisive double attack on a2 and d2, since in order to defend the knight White has to give up the rook.

30 Bc4 Bxc4 31 Qxc4 Qxd2

Black is now three pawns up and the game is definitely decided.

32 Rb1

The h1-rook has a really sad life in this game.

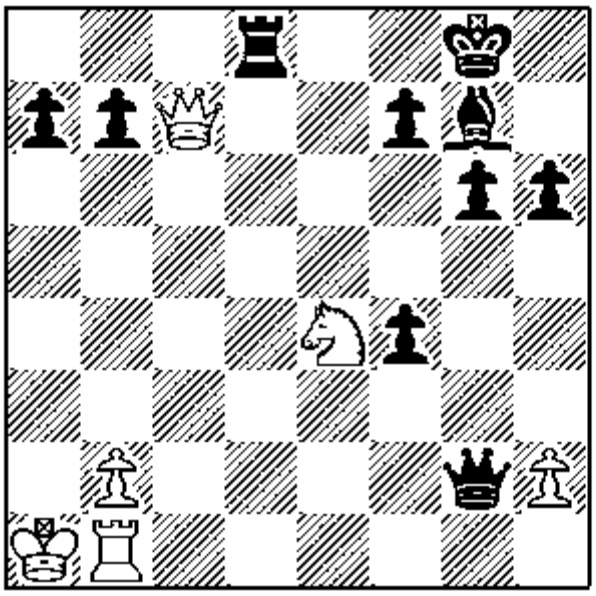
32 ... Rd8 33 Nc3 Qxg2

Pawn number four!

34 Ne4 h6

White's last hope is that Black will get carried away and fall for something like 34 ... Rd1?? 35 Qc8+! (not 35 Rxd1?? Qxb2 mate) 35 ... Bf8 36 Nf6+ Kg7 37 Rxd1. Stein's quiet move eliminates any such nonsense.

35 Qc7



Exercise: What is Black's most precise winning move?

Answer: 35 ... Rd3!

Not 35 ... Rd1?! 36 Qxb7, which prolongs the game unnecessarily, but 35 ... Bxb2+! 36 Rxb2 Rd1+ is equally good: after 37 Rb1 (or 37 Ka2 Qxe4) 37 ... Rxb1+ 38 Kxb1 Qxe4+, White has all the reasons in the world to resign.

36 Ka2

There is no defence to the twin threats of 36 ... Ra3 mate and 36 ... Qxe4, since 36 Nc3 fails to 36 ... Qc2!, threatening the beautiful 37 ... Qa4+! 38 Nxa4 Ra3 mate, as well as 37… Rxc3.

36 ... Qxe4 0-1

At Tallinn in 1965, Stein won the USSR Championship for the second time in his life, scoring 14/20, ahead of Polugaevsky on 13½ and Taimanov on 13. The main contributory factor in Stein's victory was his mammoth score of 9/10 against players in the bottom half, including a win against Korchnoi, the defending champion. In total, Stein won ten games, drew eight, and lost only one to Yuri Sakharov who finished in seventh place.

Stein's opponent in the next game, Evgeni Vasiukov (1933-), became a grandmaster in 1961 and has remained an active player into his eighties. Most recently, he participated in the European Seniors (65+) Championship in Eretria, where he finished third on 6½/9.

In their individual encounters from 1962-72, Vasiukov never managed to beat Stein, despite the fact that this period comprised his own peak as a player, reaching the rank of 11th in the world in 1962, according to Chessmetrics. From seven games, Vasiukov only managed to get three draws.

Game 33
L.Stein-E.Vasiukov
USSR Championship, Tallinn 1965
English Opening

1 c4

The English Opening (or the Staunton Opening – or Sicilian Attack, as it is sometimes

called) originates from the match between Howard Staunton and Pierre Saint Amant in 1843, which Staunton won 13-8. This match is associated with the English school which started the development of the closed game in chess history. As an opening move 1 c4 suited Stein like hand in glove, since he was a connoisseur of the Sicilian Defence with the black pieces.

1 ... e5

It is funny that Staunton, in his Chess-Player's Handbook, wrote that 1 c4 "may be adopted with perfect security", adding that "White would get a fine game if Black were to reply 1 ... e5." Of course this is the logical and classical move, and was considered the best by the third world champion, Alexander Alekhine (1892-1946).

2 Nc3 Nc6

Here 2 ... Nf6 and a quick ... d7-d5 gives the game an Open Sicilian character, whereas now the game will be of a Closed type, leading to more manoeuvring.

3 g3 g6 4 Bg2

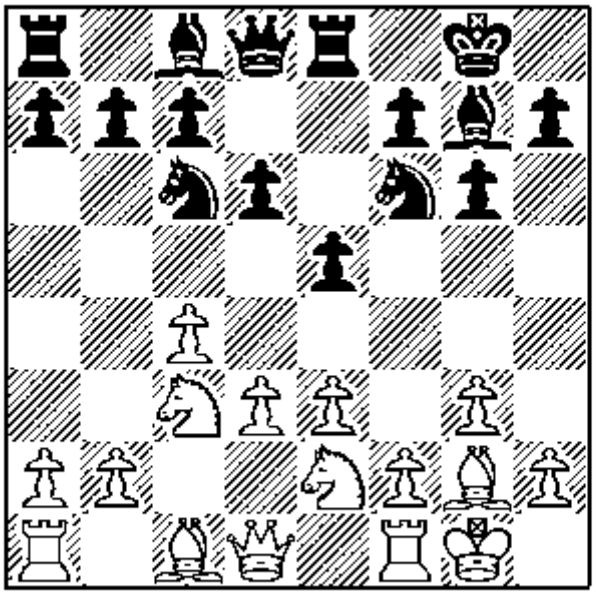
White's control of the important d5-square is now very stable and facilitates several different plans.

4 ... Bg7 5 d3 d6 6 e3

This is the set-up recommended by Staunton, planning Nge2, after which White can consider various options, such as d3-d4, f2-f4, or queenside expansion with Rb1 and b2-b4.

6 ... Nf6 7 Nge2 0-0 8 0-0 Re8

Instead, M.Tal-B.Gulko, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1974, saw 8 ... Rb8 9 Rb1 a6 10 b4 Ne7 11 a4 d5 12 cxd5 Nfxd5 13 b5 axb5 14 axb5 Ra8 15 Qc2 Be6 16 Ne4 with a slight advantage to White.



Exercise: How does White proceed?

Answer: 9 f4!?

This unusual move is strategically risky, considering the weakening of the e3-square, but of course Stein did not mind a calculated risk. There is a Russian saying that he who does not take risks will not drink champagne!

The most common plan in this position is to start a pawn storm with 9 Rb1 and b2-b4-b5, maybe followed up by a2-a4-a5-a6, extending the scope of the fianchettoed bishop on g2.

M.Kaposztas-Z.Almasi, Hungarian Team Championship 1994, continued 9 ... Be6 10 Nd5 (... d6-d5 must be prevented) 10 ... Qd7 11 b4 h5! (more active than 11 ... Rab8 or 11 ... Nd8) 12 b5 Nd8 and the position is about equal.

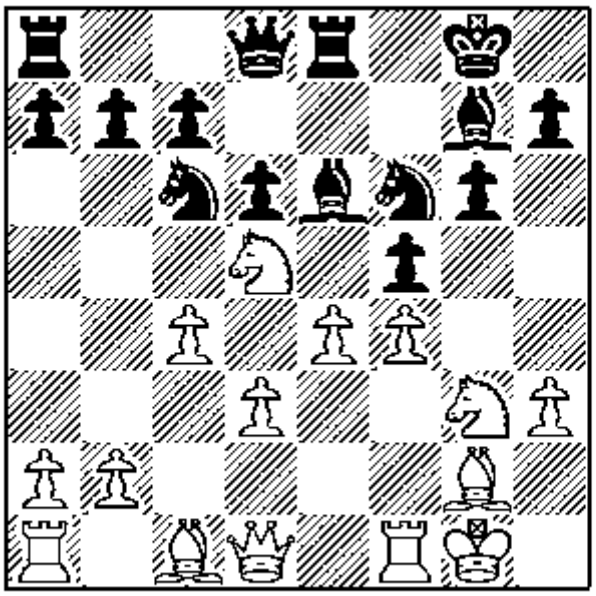
9 ... exf4 10 gxf4 Ng4

Possibly 10 ... Nh5 a more precise way to exploit the weaknesses in White's position. Black plans ... Bg4 and ... Qd7, and if White is provoked into playing h2-h3, it will in turn weaken the g3-square controlled by the knight at h5.

11 e4 f5

Vasiukov shows one purpose behind his last move. The direct 11 ... Qh4?! is met by 12 h3 Nf6 13 Rf3 or 13 Qe1 and Black's venture comes to nothing. Instead, 11 ... Nd4 is slightly more poisonous, containing the threat of 12 ... Qh4 13 h3 Nh6 and it is difficult to defend the h3-pawn in a convenient way. White can play 12 h3 Nxe2+ 13 Nxe2, but Black's position is comfortable after 13 ... Nf6 and ... Nh5 again.

12 h3 Nf6 13 Ng3 Be6 14 Nd5



14 ... Qd7

Black is consistent with his set-up. Otherwise 14 ... Nd4 15 Ne3 fxe4 16 dxe4 c5 is a valid alternative.

15 Kh2 Nd4 16 Bd2

Stein wants to keep the e3-square for the knight and therefore refrains from 16 Be3.

16 ... c6

Stabilizing the d4-knight with 16 ... c5 is still a serious option.

17 Ne3

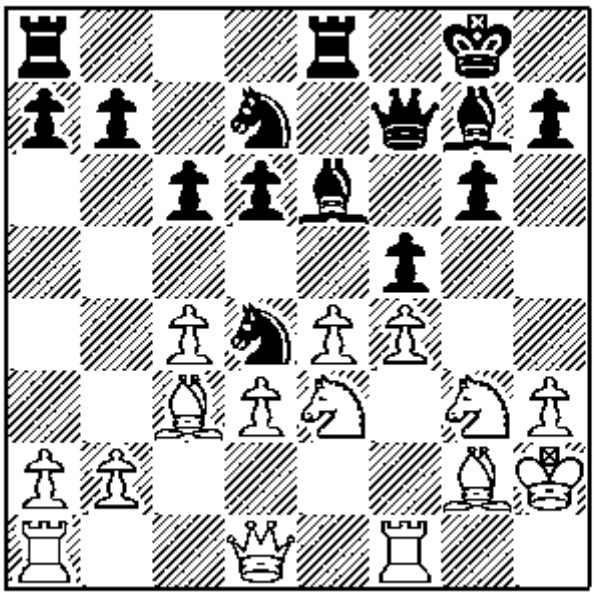
The knight is definitely useful on e3, putting pressure on f5 while defending the c4-pawn after a possible ... f5xe4, d3xe4.

17 ... Qf7?!

Black evacuates d7 for the f6-knight, but this is not the most active continuation. Instead, a typical device with a knight located on g3 (or b3) is to harass it with a rook's pawn (as we saw in Game 30). Black could therefore have tried 17 ... h5! 18 Bc3 h4 and if 19 Ne2 (not 19 Bxd4? hxg3+ 20 Kxg3? Nh5+ or 20 Kg1 Ng4!, winning material), then aim for the weak g3-square again with 19 ... Nxe2 20 Qxe2 Nh5. After the further 21 Qf2 Ng3 22 Rg1 Rf8, White

has problems with the f4-pawn.

18 Bc3 Nd7



Exercise: How does White deal with the centralized d4-knight?

Answer: 19 Qd2

Stein postpones the decision for the moment, preferring to complete his development first. More direct is 19 Nc2 Nxc2 (19 ... c5?! 20 Bxd4 cxd4 disrupts Black's pawn chain, and after 21 Qd2!, White's bishop on g2 is stronger than the one on g7) 20 Qxc2 with a tiny advantage to White in view of his space advantage.

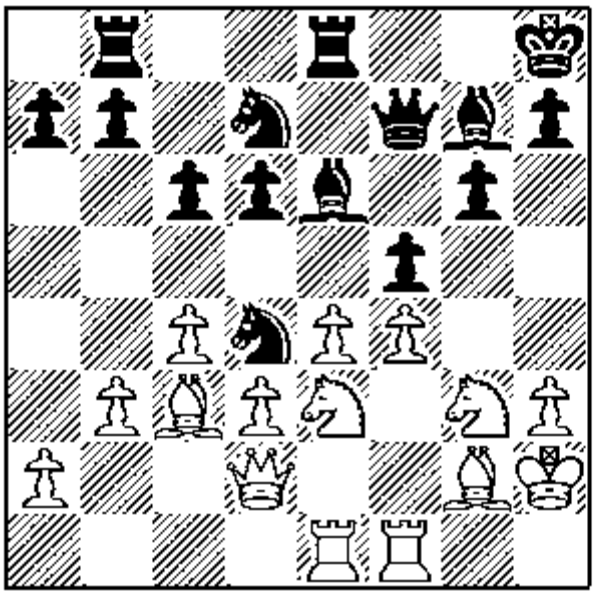
19 ... Rab8

Black intends to support the d4-knight with ... c6-c5 after all, and first avoids the possibility of e4xf5, followed by Bxb7.

20 Rae1 Kh8

A typical move in this kind of set-up which is strongly reminiscent of a Leningrad Dutch, with the obvious difference that White's d-pawn is still back on d3.

21 b3



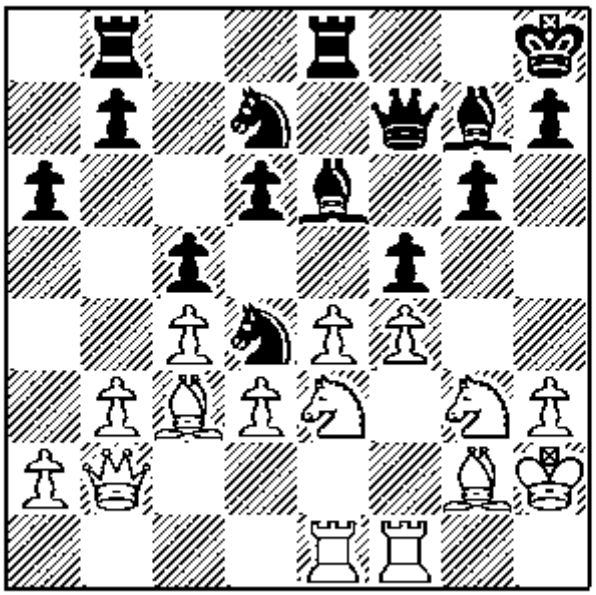
Question: What is the idea behind this move?

Answer: Stein plans to increase pressure with Qb2, followed by Nc2 or Ne2, when the centralized knight must declare its intentions.

21 ... a6

Vasiukov probably had ideas of playing ... b7-b5, but somehow this plan never materializes. Instead, 21 ... Nc5 would have prevented Qb2 but not have solved Black's problems after 22 b4 Na4 23 Ba1.

22 Qb2 c5



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Answer: 23 Ne2?!

A logical and consistent move, but not the best.

The strongest continuation is, slightly surprisingly, to release the tension in the centre with

23 exf5! gxf5, which White can then exploit by playing 24 Nc2! Nxc2 (the variation 24 ... Nc6? 25 Nh5! Bxc3 26 Qxc3+ Kg8 27 Rg1 demonstrates the dangers for Black: the natural recapture 23 ... gxf5 weakened the h5-square and opened the g-file for White's rooks) 25 Qxc2 Bxc3 26 Qxc3+ Qg7 27 Qxg7+ Kxg7 28 Rg1 and can improve his position further with h3-h4, followed by Bh3 or Nh5, applying strong pressure. Even when the queens are exchanged the negative features of Black's position, such as the unstable bishop, open g-file, and weaknesses at h5 and f5 give White good winning chances.

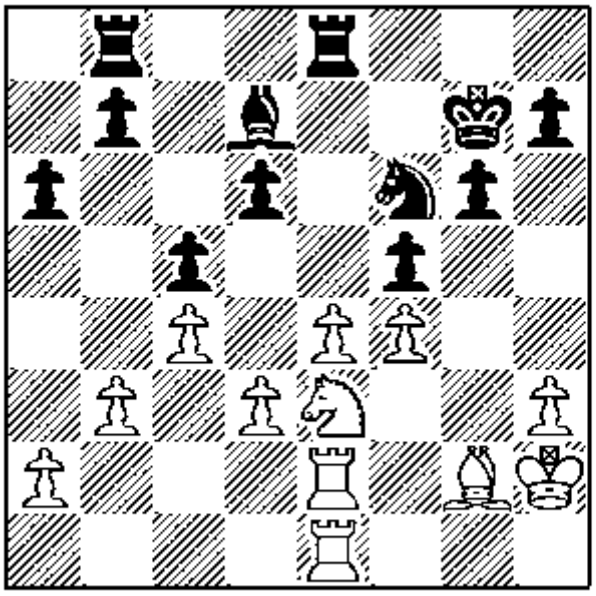
The immediate 23 Nc2 is answered by 23 ... Nxc2 24 Qxc2 Bxc3 25 Qxc3+ Nf6 26 e5 (or 26 exf5 Bxf5!) 26 ... dxe5 27 fxe5 Nd7 28 Ne4, followed by Nd6, and White has "only" a slight advantage.

23 ... Nxe2 24 Bxg7+ Qxg7 25 Qxg7+ Kxg7 26 Rxe2 Nf6

The position has now been greatly simplified and Black is close to equality.

27 Rfe1 Bd7?!

Vasiukov retreats his bishop out of potential trouble on the e-file; but it was better to play 27 ... fxe4 28 dxe4 Bf7, and if 29 Ng4 then 29 ... Nh5 30 Rf2 b5 generates counterplay against the white pawns.



Exercise: How does White proceed?

Answer: 28 Nd5

White's centre is now a source of strength rather than a weakness. His next move is likely to be e4-e5, when all the energy inherent in his position will be released.

28 ... fxe4

28 ... Nxd5 29 cxd5 Bb5 prevents White from playing e4-e5 just yet, but after 30 Rd2 Kf6 31 a4 Bd7 32 Rde2, White's main goal is nevertheless unstoppable.

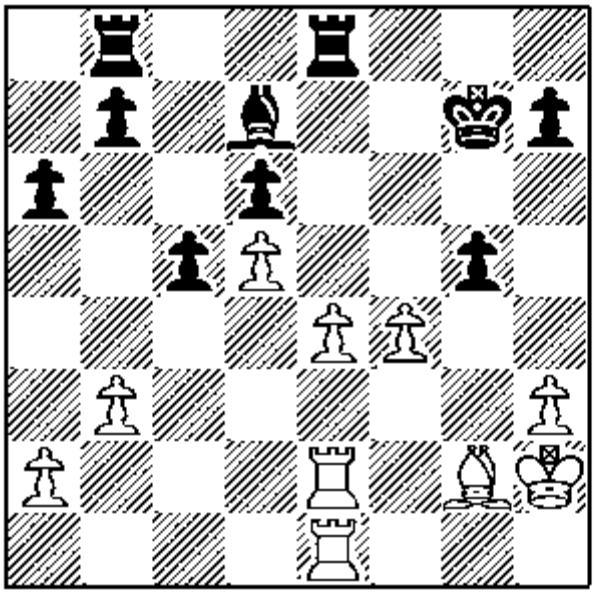
29 dxe4

Another favourable pawn structure arises after 29 Nxf6 Kxf6 30 dxe4, when Black has a weakness at d6.

29 ... Nxd5 30 cxd5 g5?!

Vasiukov tries to prevent e4-e5 once and for all, but this has its own drawbacks. It is better

to accept the inevitable and play 30 ... Kf7 31 e5 Bf5, when Black is only slightly worse.



Exercise: What is the problem with Black's move?

Answer: 31 fxg5

First of all, it loses a pawn! Secondly, it fails in its objective as 31 e5 is still possible, when 31 ... gxf4 32 e6 Bb5 33 Re4 leaves White in control.

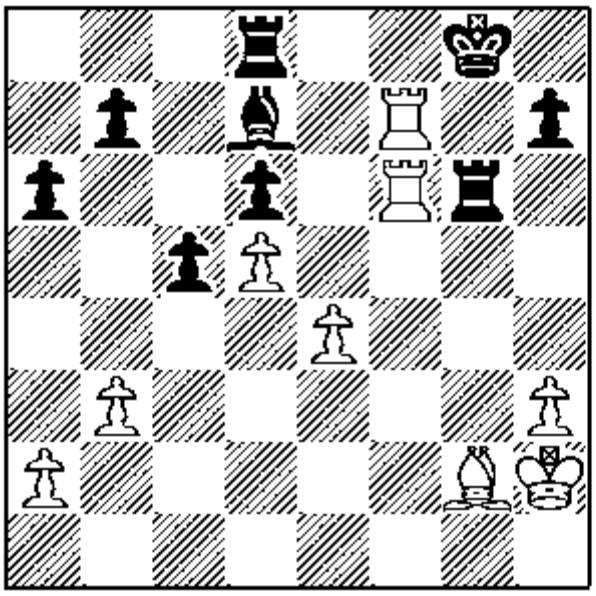
31 ... Re5 32 Rf2?!

Stein returns his extra pawn in order to break through on the f-file, but this seems less clear cut than keeping it with 32 h4. If Black tries 32 ... Rf8 33 Kg3 h6 34 gxh6+ Kxh6, then 35 Rf2! eliminates his counterplay and there is no doubt that White has a clear advantage with his extra pawn.

32 ... Rxg5 33 Ref1 Rd8

If instead 33 ... Be8, then 34 Rf6 Rg6 (or 34 ... Rd8 35 Re6) 35 R6f5! b5 36 e5 dxe5 37 Rxe5 Bf7 38 Re7 Rf6 39 Rc7 and White picks up a pawn with some winning chances.

34 Rf7+ Kg8 35 R1f6 Rg6



Exercise: How does White continue now?

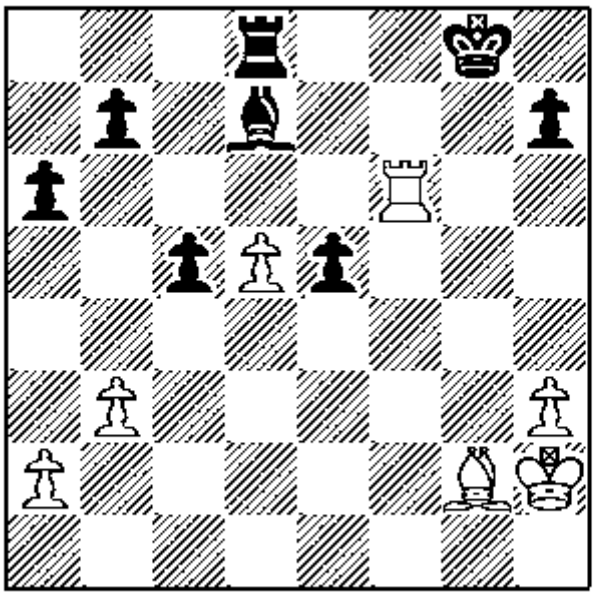
Answer: 36 e5

Stein finally makes his pawn break. After 36 Rxg6+ hxg6 37 Rf6 Be8 38 Kg3 Bf7 39 Kf4 Kg7 40 Kg5 b5 or 36 Rf3 Rg7 37 R7f6 Rg6 38 Rg3 Rxg3 39 Kxg3 Bc8 40 Kf4 Kg7 41 Kg5 b5, Black has sufficient counterplay.

36 ... Rxf6?!

There is no need to give the white rook freedom on the sixth rank. 36 ... dxe5 is simpler; then if White forces the exchange of two rooks with 37 Be4 Rxf6 38 Rxf6, Black can avoid the annoying pin in the game and get a draw after 38 ... Be8! 39 Rb6 Bg6! 40 Bxg6 hxg6 41 Rxb7 Rxd5. Control of the seventh rank is of no importance in this position, where Black has an extra passed pawn on e5.

37 Rxf6 dxe5



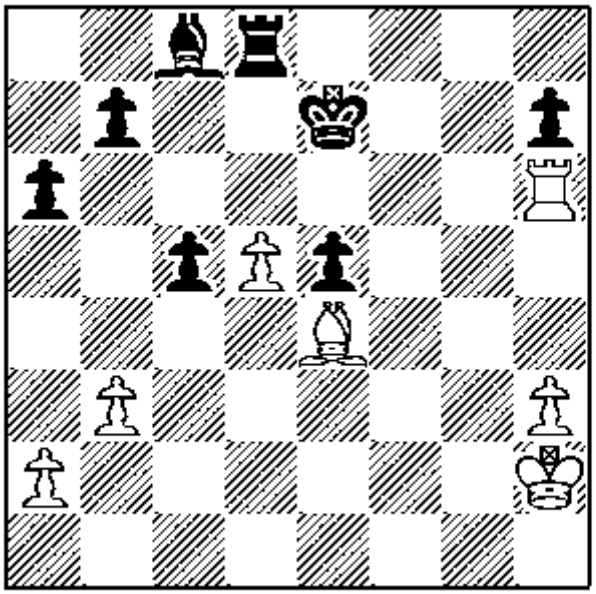
Question: How can White maintain some winning chances?

Answer: 38 Rd6!

Yes, of course. The pin limits Black's options.

38 ... Kf8 39 Be4 Ke7 40 Rh6 Bc8?

Too passive. Black should play for immediate counterplay after 40 ... b5! and ... c5-c4, when the likely result would be a draw; for example, 41 Rxh7+ Kf6! 42 Rh5! (not 42 Rh6+? Kg5 43 Rxa6 Kf4 and Black's passed pawns, supported by his king, are very dangerous) 42 ... c4 43 bxc4 bxc4 44 h4 c3 45 Rh6+ Ke7 46 d6+ Kf7 47 Rh7+ Kf6 (or 47 ... Kg8 48 Re7) 48 Rh6+ Kg7 49 Rh7+ etc.



Exercise: What is White's best move?

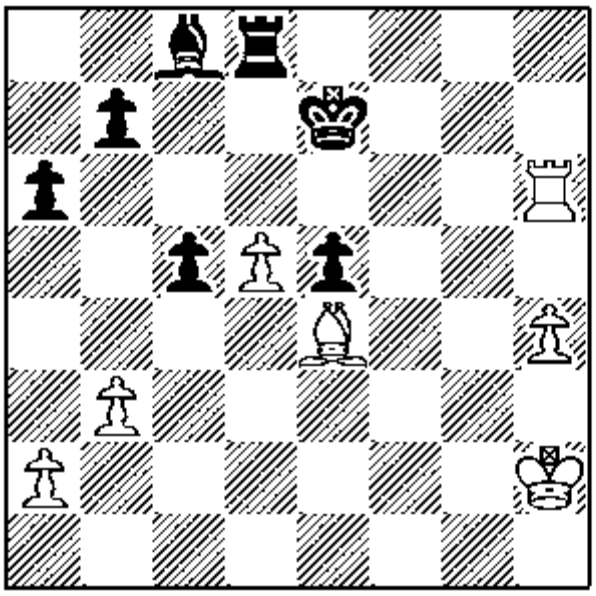
Answer: 41 Rxh7+?

This is the wrong moment to pick up the pawn. It is necessary to play 41 h4! first in order to preserve true winning chances.

41 ... Kd6?

The wrong way. Black should again aim for activity with 41 ... Kf6, intending ... Kg5-f4. Then 42 h4 Bf5! equalizes immediately, so White has to play 42 Rh5 first, after which Black can defend with 42 ... Rg8! 43 h4 Rg4 44 Rh6+ Kg7 45 Rh7+ Kf6 46 Bf3 Rd4 47 Kg3 Rd3 and should manage to hold.

42 Rh6+ Ke7 43 h4



White now has two powerful passed pawns supported by his far more active pieces, which is obviously too much for Black's army to handle. It is always dangerous to play passively against a strong opponent like Stein!

43 ... Kf7

It is too late for 43 ... b5; White continues 44 h5 Rf8 45 Kg3 c4 46 bxc4 bxc4 47 Rc6 with total domination.

44 Kg3

The direct 44 h5 is also possible, and if 44 ... Rg8 then 45 Rg6 Rxg6 46 Bxg6+ Kf6 47 Kg3 with a winning bishop ending. Presumably Stein preferred to centralize his king before making exchanges.

44 ... Rg8+ 45 Kf3 a5

Belatedly activating the rook with 45 ... Rg1 is no improvement: 46 h5 Rf1+ 47 Ke2 Ra1 48 Rh7+ Kf6 49 h6 Rxa2+ 50 Ke3 Rh2 51 Rh8 and the h-pawn promotes quickly.

46 h5 a4 47 Rh7+ Kf6 48 h6 axb3 49 axb3 Rg4 50 Rh8 Rf4+ 51 Ke3 1-0

Stein's next major tournament was again in South America. At the Mar del Plata international, he finished second on 10½/15, half a point behind Smyslov. The following two games are from rounds five and seven.

Jorge Rubinetti (1945-) never obtained the GM title, but he was Argentine Champion four times (in 1971, 1982, 1988 and 1991) and represented his country at the Olympiads on nine occasions (from 1968-92). According to Chessmetrics, he was ranked 178th in the world in 1970, while his highest estimated rating of 2537 came much later in 1991. Rubinetti retired from serious chess in 2005.

Game 34
L.Stein-J.Rubinetti
Mar del Plata 1966
King's Indian Defence

1 c4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 d4 d6 4 e4 Nf6 5 Be2 0-0 6 Nf3

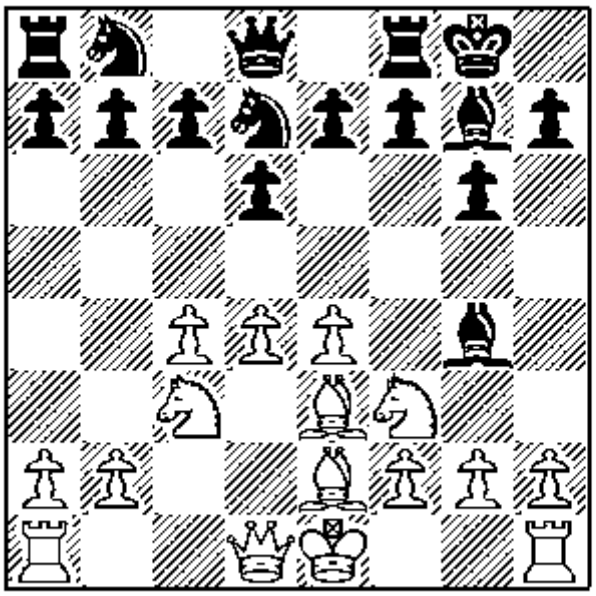
By transposition from an English Opening, we have reached a Classical King's Indian.

6 ... Bg4

In Mar del Plata one might have expected the Mar del Plata Variation: 6 ... e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8

d5 Ne7, which can perhaps be considered the main line of the King's Indian; but on this occasion Rubinetti opts for a sideline with the aim of putting pressure on the weak point in White's centre, the d4-pawn. Actually, if you remember, Stein played 6 ... Bg4 himself in Game 22, so it will be interesting to see how he handles the variation from the white side.

7 Be3 Nfd7



Exercise: What is the most critical continuation against Black's set-up?

Answer: 8 Rc1

A dual-purpose move, securing White's queenside against possible damage after 8 ... c5 9 d5 Bxc3+, while preparing for an eventual c4-c5 break if Black plays as in the game. The simple 8 0-0 transposes to Game 22, which continued similarly 8 ... e5 9 d5 Bxf3 10 Bxf3 f5.

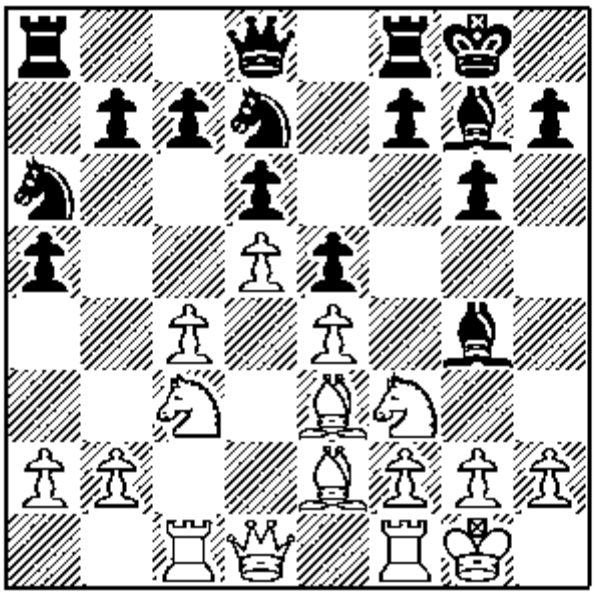
Another continuation which has its devotees is 8 Ng1 Bxe2 9 Ngxe2. At the cost of a little time, White reduces the pressure on d4 to insignificant and thereby negates Black's plans. In Informator #27, a young Kasparov even attaches an exclamation mark to the eighth move.

8 ... e5

The Azeri GMs prefer 8 ... c5 here. Objectively, White must be slightly better after 9 d5, but Black can find reasonable counterplay with, for example, 9 ... Na6 10 0-0 Nc7 11 h3 Bxf3 12 Bxf3 a6 13 a4 Re8 14 Be2 e6 15 Qd2 exd5 16 exd5 Qh4 (V.Neverov-S.Mamedyarov, FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004) or 9 ... a6 10 a4 b5 11 cxb5 axb5 12 axb5 Nb6 13 0-0 N8d7 14 Qb3 Ra5 15 Ra1 Qa8 (L.Van Wely-G.Guseinov, Baku 2007).

9 d5 Bxf3

Instead, 9 ... a5 10 0-0 Na6 is normal, which may be regarded as the tabiya position for the whole 8 Rc1 line. Many moves have been tried here and it is not clear which is best:

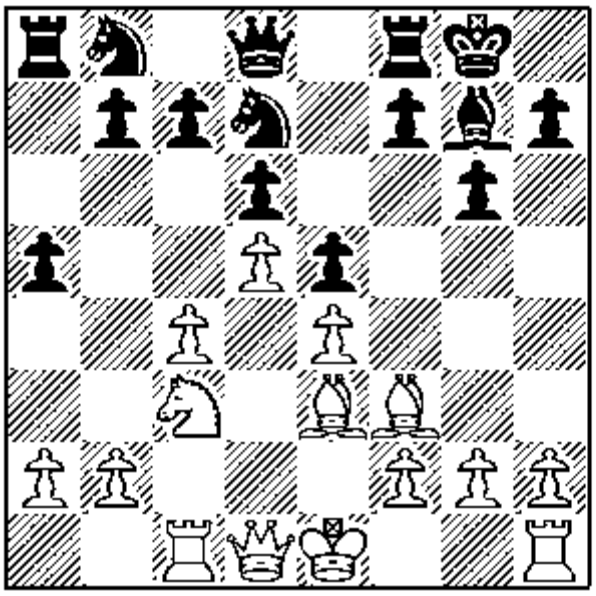


a) 11 Ne1 (the exchange of bishops diminishes the traditional pawn storm with ... f7-f5-f4 and ... g6-g5 etc, since Black lacks control of the light squares) 11 ... Bxe2 12 Qxe2 f5 13 f3 and now the Spanish GM Antón Guijarro has tried 13 ... Qh4!? 14 Nd3 Bh6 15 Bf2 Qh5 16 Rce1 b6 17 a3 Nac5 18 Nxc5 Nxc5 19 exf5 gxf5 20 Qc2 a4! 21 Bxc5 bxc5 22 Nxa4 Kh8, followed by ... Rg8 with a strong attack for the pawn, D.Schlecht-D.Anton Guijarro, Deizisau 2013.

b) 11 Nd2 Bxe2 12 Qxe2 f5 (or 12 ... Qe7 13 Rb1 f5 14 f3 Bf6 15 a3 f4 with a balanced game in B.Jansson-U.Andersson, Raach 1969) 13 f3 Bf6 (again 13 ... Qh4!? comes into consideration) 14 a3 f4 15 Bf2 Bh4 16 Rb1 Bxf2+ 17 Qxf2 g5 with mutual chances, W.Golz-J.Bednarski, Zinnowitz 1964.

c) 11 b3!? Bxf3 12 Bxf3 f5 13 a3 Bf6 14 Rb1 Bg5 15 Bxg5 Qxg5 16 b4 with a slight advantage. The knight on a6 is outside play. T.V.Petrosian-R.Nicevski, Rovinj/Zagreb 1970. Actually, if this is the intended plan, White might as well start with 10 a3, as in O.Panno-J.Rubinetti, Rio Hondo 1966 (two months later), which continued 10 ... Na6 11 Rb1 Bxf3 12 Bxf3 f5 13 b4 Qh4 14 h3 f4 15 Bd2 h5 16 Qe2 and Black's position lacked prospects.

10 Bxf3 a5



Question: Should White go for an attack on the kingside? If so, explain why and how.

Answer: 11 h4!

Stein naturally takes the opportunity to attack – the centre is blocked and he can exploit the fact that he has not yet castled, activating the h1-rook on its original square. The circumstances are, in other words, perfect for the pawn break h2-h4-h5. Actually, going back to the previous Exercise, White quite often plays 8 h4!? as well.

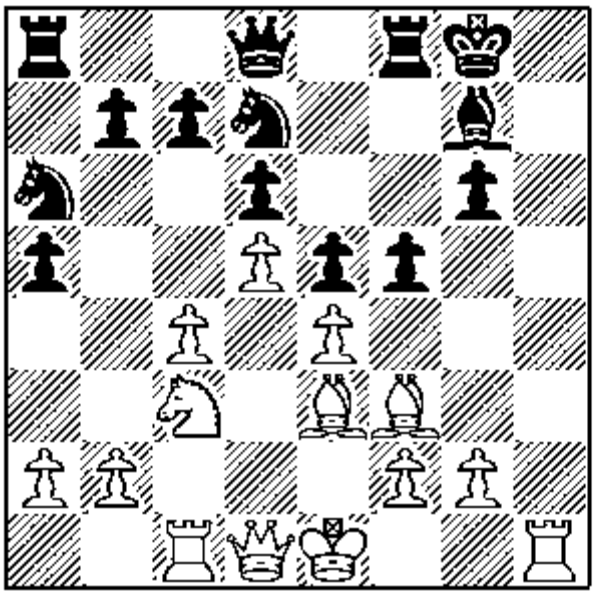
11 ... f5

Black follows the classical advice from Steinitz that a wing attack should be met by a counterstroke in the centre. However, the fact that White's centre is fully protected makes Black's move far less effective.

12 h5 Na6

Another scheme is 12 ... f4 13 Bd2 Nc5, where Black develops the king's knight to c5 and the queen's knight to d7, instead of the other way round. The most direct response is 14 hxg6 (ignoring the threat of ... Nd3+) 14 ... hxg6 (not 14 ... Nd3+?! 15 Kf1 Nxc1?! 16 gxh7+ Kh8 17 Bxc1, when Black has lost a bunch of pawns; the light-squared bishop will go to f5, the queen along the d1-h5 diagonal, after which g2-g3, releasing the c1-bishop, will probably decide the game) 15 Bg4 Nbd7 16 Na4! Nd3+ (otherwise the c1-rook joins the attack via c3 and h3) 17 Kf1 Nxc1 18 Be6+ Rf7 19 Bxc1 and White holds the positional trumps.

13 hxg6 hxg6



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

14 Ke2!?

This move is given an an exclamation mark in Informator #1. It is a very interesting idea but not necessarily the strongest.

Answer: A more forcing continuation is 14 exf5 gxf5 15 Bh5!, threatening Bg6 and Qh5. Now 15 ... f4?! only results in further weaknesses which can be exploited by 16 Qg4! (threatening Qe6+ and mates) 16 ... Rf6 17 Bd2 Nac5 18 Bg6! Qe7 (18 ... e4 19 Bxe4 Qe7 is parried by the simple withdrawal 20 Qe2) 19 Ne4 Nxe4 20 Bxe4 Nc5 21 Bb1 with a clear advantage. If instead 15 ... Qf6, White continues 16 g4! f4 17 Ne4 Qe7 18 Bd2 Nac5 19 Bg6! Nxe4 (or 19 ... Nd3+ 20 Kf1 Nxc1 21 g5!) 20 Bxe4 Nc5 21 Bh7+ Kf7 22 Kf1 and Black has a tough time dealing with the light square weaknesses in his position.

14 ... f4

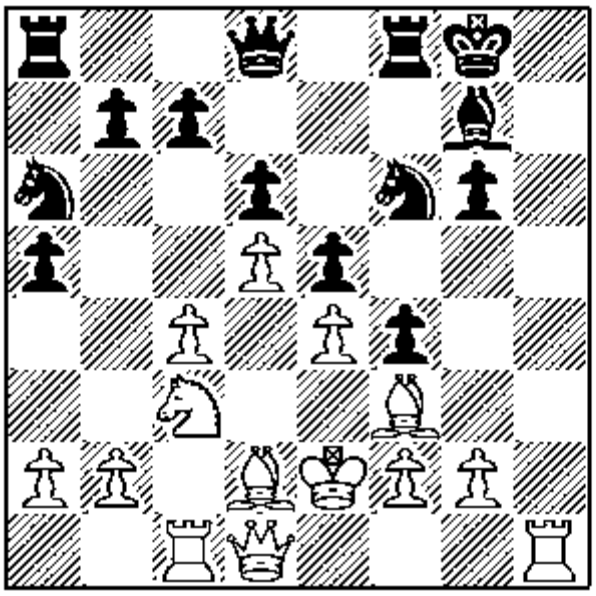
It is normally in Black's interest to block the centre since a fluid pawn position makes it easier for White to exploit any weaknesses, as we saw in the previous note. Given the location of the white king, however, it makes more sense to leave the centre open as otherwise he will be very safe on e2.

Instead, 14 ... Qe7 could again be answered by 15 exf5 gxf5 (15 ... e4? 16 Nxe4 gxf5 17 Ng3 f4 fails to 18 Qc2 Nf6 19 Nf5 Qe5 20 Nh6+ Bxh6 21 Rxh6 Kf7 22 Qg6+ Ke7 23 Bh5 with the deadly threat of Qg7+) 16 Bh5! and if Black rushes his pawns forward with 16 ... f4 (or 16 ... Qf6?! 17 g4! f4 18 Ne4 etc) 16 ... f4 17 Bd2 (obviously Qg4 is not possible here) 17 ... e4, there will be a boomerang effect after 18 Bg6 Nac5 19 Bh7+ Kf7 20 Bxf4 Nd3 21 Be3 Nxc1+ 22 Qxc1, when the extra exchange is of little comfort to Black, who has lost the harmony in his position.

But after 14 ... Nac5, the idea of 15 exf5 gxf5 16 Bh5 is less effective because White does not have control of e4. In particular, he can no longer rely on 17 g4 f4 18 Ne4, so Black simply answers 16 ... Qf6, when the position is rather unclear with the white king awkwardly placed.

15 Bd2 Nf6

It looks more natural to centralize the a6-knight with 15 ... Nac5, except that White can challenge it with 16 Na4 and increase the harmony in his position at the same time. The c1-rook and d2-bishop have more air to breathe without the c3-knight in the way.



Exercise (planning): How should White continue at this critical stage?

Answer: 16 g3!

When Stein had to choose between playing on the kingside or the queenside, he invariably preferred the former.

In this instance, it may indeed be stronger than the standard 16 Na4. Then White threatens Bxa5, as well as the typical queenside expansion a2-a3, b2-b4 and eventually c4-c5, but Black can develop his own play on the other side: 16 ... Qd7 17 a3 (not 17 Bxa5?? Nb8 and White loses a piece on the a-file) 17 ... g5 (threatening to trap the bishop with ... g5-g4) 18 Ke1 (the king has to go back again, since 18 Kd3?? loses to 18 ... Qxa4! etc) 18 ... b6! (to pre-empt c4-c5; the space-gaining 18 ... g4?! 19 Be2 looks good on the surface but allows White to play for both c4-c5 and Rh4) 19 Bh5! (threatening Bg6 is a theme in this type of position where Black is missing the light-squared bishop) 19 ... Nxh5 (not 19 ... Nxe4? as White can then manoeuvre his bishop to the dream e6-square: 20 Bg4 Qe8 21 Qc2 Nf6 22 Be6+ Rf7 23 Qg6 Kf8 24 Bxf7 Qxf7 25 Qxg5 with a material advantage and a winning position) 20 Rxh5 Bf6 21 Rh6 Qf7 (preventing Qh5) 22 Qg4 Kg7 23 Rh1 Qe8! (the white queen must be challenged) 24 b3 Qc8 25 Qxc8 Rfxc8 26 f3 Nc5 (before White can engineer b3-b4) 27 Nxc5 dxc5 and although White is nominally better, he has few real winning chances.

White is also unlikely to make progress on the kingside without changing the pawn structure. For instance, 16 Qg1 looks too artificial after 16 ... Qd7! (stronger than 16 ... g5 17 Qh2, when 17 ... g4?? loses to 18 Bxg4 Nxg4 19 Qh7+ Kf7 20 Qh5+ etc) 17 Qh2 Kf7 (still not 17 ... g5? due to the familiar 18 Bh5 with advantage) 18 Qh3 Qxh3 19 Rxh3 Rh8 20 Rch1 Rxh3 21 Rxh3 Ke7 and Black is finally ready for the long awaited ... g6-g5.

16 ... g5?

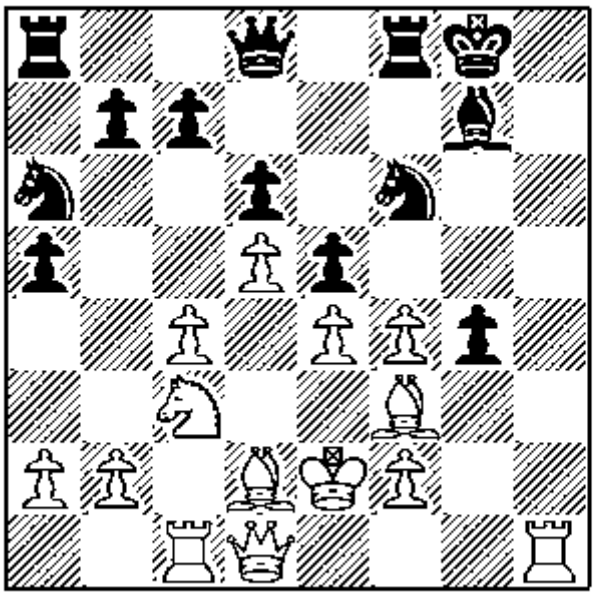
This routine move fails to secure Black's position.

a) 16 ... Nc5 does not solve his problems either after 17 gxf4 (alternatively, 17 Qg1 Qe8 transposes to line 'b', which is also good for White) 17 ... exf4 18 Qc2, followed by Rcg1. For example, 18 ... Nfd7 is answered by the strong 19 Na4! Nxa4 20 Qxa4 Bxb2 21 Rcg1 and White has strong pressure with his combined rooks and light-squared bishop.

b) 16 ... Qe8! is a more subtle defence. This time White should play 17 Qg1! (rather than 17 gxf4 exf4 18 Qc2, since 18 ... Nd7 and if 19 Bg4 then 19 ... Nb4! leads to a balanced position) 17 ... Nc5 18 Qg2!, followed again by Rcg1. One illuminating variation is 18 ... c6 19 Rcg1 cxd5 20 gxf4 dxe4 21 Bh5!! (it is amazing how often we witness this bishop go to the rim with such devastating effect!) 21 ... Nxh5 22 Rxh5 exf4 23 Qxg6 Qxg6 24 Rxg6 and White has the advantage with his menacing rooks on the fifth and sixth ranks. Nevertheless, this was probably Black's best try.

17 gxf4 g4

Unfortunately, 17 ... gxf4? just opens the floodgates for White's major pieces: 18 Qg1 Kf7 19 Qg5 Rg8 20 Bg4! Nc5 21 Rcg1 and Black is in dire straits. 17 ... exf4? 18 Qg1 is even worse, since 18 ... Re8 19 Qxg5 Nxe4 fails to 20 Qxg7+!! Kxg7 21 Nxe4 and the exposed king is helpless against White's remaining army.



Exercise: How does White react to this move?

18 Bg2?

Stein misses a more powerful and beautiful opportunity, which virtually wins by force.

Answer: 18 Bxg4! Nxg4 19 Qg1 leads to such strong pressure that Black is unable to hold the position, due in no small part to his two passive pieces on the a-file which cannot contribute to the defence. For example, 19 ... Nf6 (or if 19 ... Qd7 then 20 f5! Nf6 21 Bh6 should lead to a breakthrough, if not on the g-file then on the h-file; one typical variation is 21 ... Nc5 22 Qg6 Rae8 23 Rcg1 Re7 24 f3, followed by 25 Bxg7 Rxg7 26 Qh6 and wins) 20 fxe5 (now 20 f5?! is less effective after 20 ... Rf7 21 Qg6 Kf8) 20 ... dxe5 21 Qg3! Rf7 22 Rcg1 Nc5 (22 ... Kf8 loses to 23 f4! exf4 24 Bxf4 Qe7 25 Bh6!, eliminating the key defensive bishop; after

25 ... Bxh6 26 Rxh6 Ke8 27 Rh8+ Rf8 28 Qg6+ Qf7 29 Rxf8+ Kxf8 30 Qh6+ Ke8 31 Rg7 Qf8 32 Qg6+ Kd8 33 Rf7, Black is busted) 23 Bh6 Ncxe4 (or 23 ... Qf8 24 Qh3 and White can build decisive threats with Rg6 or Be3, threatening Qh8 mate) 24 Nxe4 Nxe4 25 Qxg7+! Rxg7 26 Rxg7+ Kf8 (26 ... Kh8 27 Rgg1 leads to mate) 27 Rhg1 and White wins.

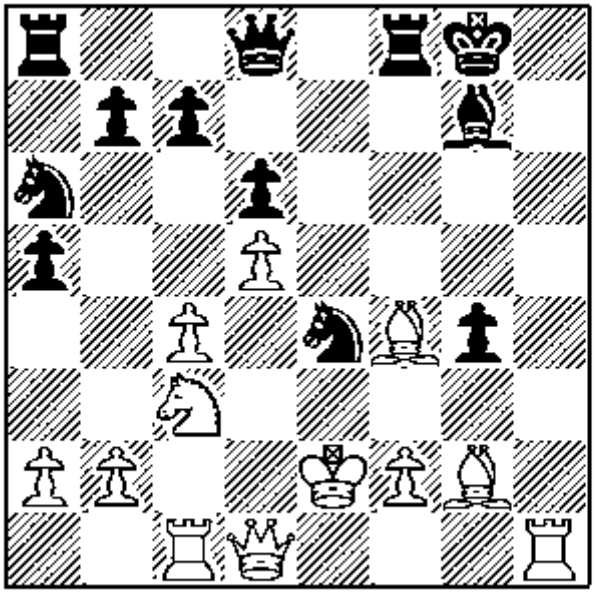
18 ... exf4!

After his unexpected reprieve, Rubinetti fights back. Not 18 ... Nc5?, which leads to a strategically lost position a pawn down after 19 f5, followed by Be3, Qd2 and Rcg1 and so forth.

19 Bxf4 Nxe4!

Black has to take now or not at all. 19 ... Nc5 would be met by 20 Be3, incidentally threatening e4-e5, and if 20 ... Qe7 21 Qc2 Rae8 22 Rcg1 Ncxe4? then 23 Bxe4 Nxe4 24 Rxg4 and wins.

The recommendation in Informator, 19 ... Qe8, with the concise evaluation of "unclear", is not entirely correct. After 20 Be3 Nc5 21 Qc2 again, planning Rcg1 and Kd1, White is a pawn up without any visible compensation for Black.

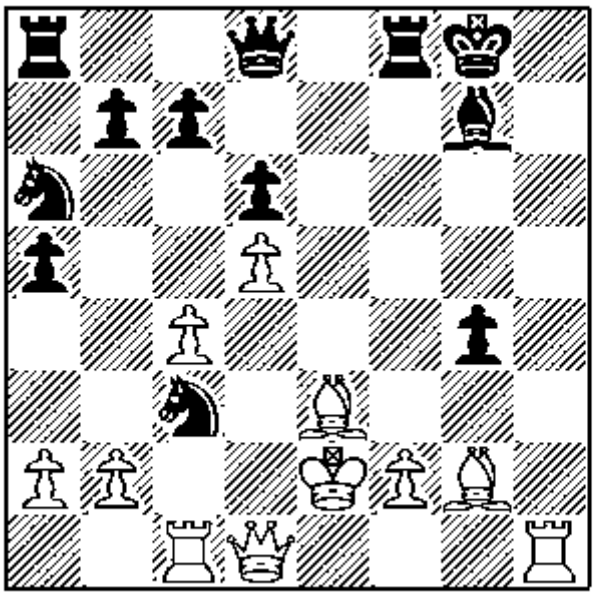


Exercise: What is the correct move?

Answer: 20 Be3

White needs this bishop. Both 20 Bxe4? Rxf4 and 20 Nxe4? Rxf4 are clearly favourable for Black, due to the pronounced dark square weaknesses in White's position.

20 ... Nxc3+



Question: Glance at the position; is it better to recapture with the pawn or the rook?

Answer: 21 bxc3

The natural move, supporting the option of Bd4 at some stage; but 21 Rxc3!? is playable as well, with the purpose of using the rook along the third rank. Of course capturing the rook with 21 ... Bxc3? 22 bxc3 is a mistake, as Black is defenceless against the coming attack from White's bishop pair and major pieces. Better is 21 ... Qf6 with a slight advantage to White after 22 Kd2.

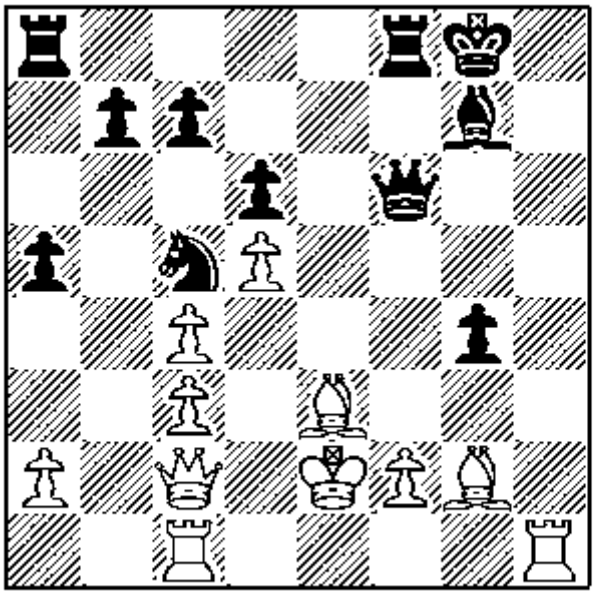
21 ... Nc5 22 Qc2 Qf6??

Black commits a grave error. It is necessary to play 22 ... Rf7! and then:

a) The tempting 23 Qh7+? Kf8 24 Bh6 Qf6 25 Qh8+ Ke7 26 Qxa8 loses to 26 ... Bxh6! 27 Rce1 Kd7! 28 Kd1 Rf8 29 Qxa5 Qf5, when the white king is in deep trouble; but not 26 ... Qxf2+? 27 Kd1 Qxg2 28 Bg5+ Bf6 29 Re1+ Ne4 30 Bxf6+ Kxf6 (or 30 ... Rxf6 31 Rc2 Qf3+ 32 Kc1) 31 Qh8+ Kf5 32 Rc2 Qf3+ 33 Kc1 and White is clearly better.

b) 23 Rh5 Qf6 24 Be4! can be met by 24 ... Kf8 (24 ... Nxe4 25 Qxe4 Qf3+ 26 Qxf3 gxf3+ 27 Kd3 is strategically undesirable for Black) 25 Rf5 (if 25 Bg6 Re8 26 Bxf7 then 26 ... Rxe3+! 27 fxe3 Qf3+ draws) 25 ... Qe7 26 Rxf7+ Qxf7 27 Rg1 Re8 28 Rxg4 Nxe4 29 Rxe4 Rxe4 30 Qxe4 Bxc3, although 31 Qg4 may offer White something in the endgame due to his more active pieces.

c) 23 Qg6 is presumably the move Rubinetti was afraid of, with threats of Qxg4 and Bd4 (as well as 24 Rh8+), but at least after 23 ... Qf6 (23 ... Qd7 24 Rh5 Qa4? 25 Bd4! would be very dangerous) 24 Qxg4 Re8 25 Kd1 Kf8 (or 25 ... Na4!? 26 Bd4 Qf4 27 Qg6 Re5!) 26 Bd4 Nd3! 27 Rc2 Ne5, Black is still fighting.



Exercise: Do you see the conclusion of the game?

Answer: 23 Qh7+ Kf7 24 Rh6! Qe5

24 ... Qe7 loses to 25 Qg6+ Kg8 26 Rch1 and Rh8 mate; Black only has some spite checks before the inevitable defeat.

25 Rh5 Qe7 26 Rg5 1-0

Despite missing – or, more likely, underestimating – 18 Bxg4! etc, Stein showed his eagerness to attack throughout this game, as was clear from moves such as 11 h4!, 14 Ke2!?,

and especially 16 g3!.

Many people may not even have heard of the Czech-born Argentine IM Jorge (Jiri) Pelikán (1906-84), who was really strong in his heyday. According to Chessmetrics, he was ranked 26th in the world in 1945, with an estimated rating of 2620 in 1946. He is most famous for his contributions to the Sicilian Defence, in particular 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5, which is known as the Pelikán Variation. Of course, after 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5, it is transformed to the Chelyabinsk Variation; and after the further 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5, it is the Sveshnikov – such are the subtleties regarding the names of this system and its subsystems!

Game 35
L.Stein-Jo.Pelikán
Mar del Plata 1966
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5

Pelikán played different Sicilians in different rounds of this tournament, as well the French Defence. In round twelve, he drew against Reshevsky with the Fort Knox variation: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bd7.

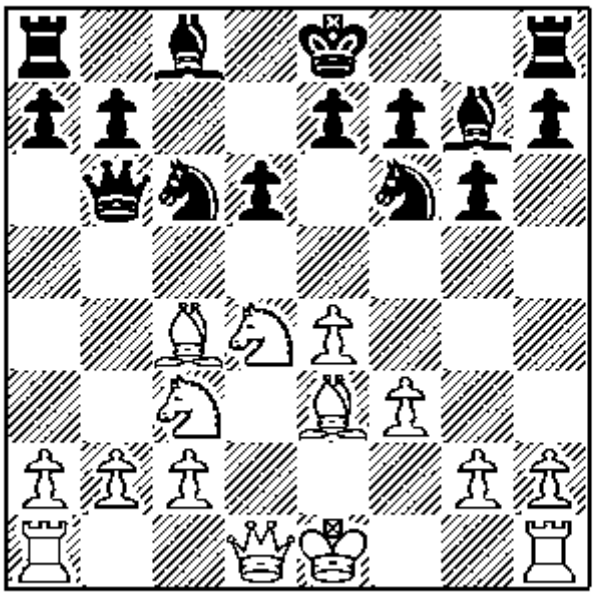
2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6

Avoiding his own variation on this occasion, in favour of the Accelerated Dragon, which was one of Bent Larsen's favourite openings. I cannot resist relating one of Larsen's illuminating comments (to his game vs. Geller in Monaco 1967): "It is a common belief that grandmasters know everything, but that is not really true. However, in most cases they are wise enough to avoid sharp theoretical lines which they do not know very well. To know means more than to have glanced at an article in a chess magazine, it means to have studied the problems yourself."

5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bc4 d6 8 f3

I wonder whether Black was already regretting his choice of opening. Stein has headed straight down the sharpest possible lines, with which he had experience from both sides, whereas there are no records of Pelikán having ever played it before. His next move avoids the huge complexities of the Yugoslav Attack after 8 ... 0-0 9 Qd2, but lands him in even more difficulties.

8 ... Qb6?!



Exercise (calculation): How does White meet the threat of 9 ... Qxb2 - ? Calculate as far as you think is necessary.

Answer: 9 Nf5!

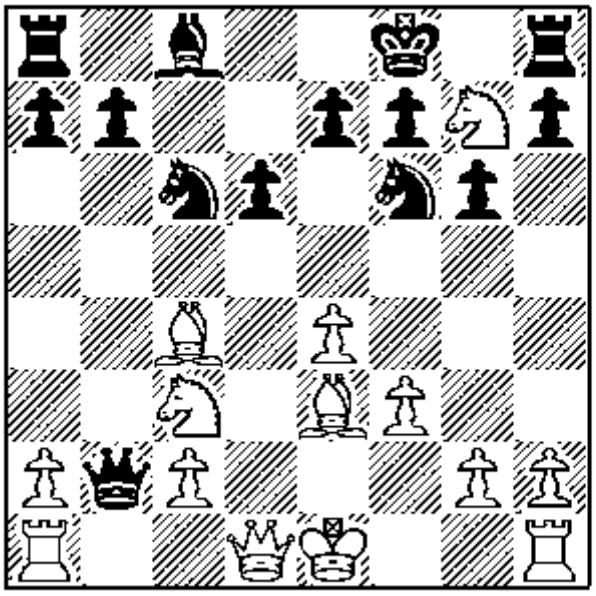
Other candidate moves give Black no problems whatsoever:

a) 9 Bb3 Nxe4! shows one of the points behind 8 ... Qb6, when White has to find 10 Nf5 Bxc3+ 11 bxc3 Nxc3 (or 11 ... Qa5 12 fxe4 gxf5 13 0-0 and if 13 ... Qxc3? then 14 Bxf7+! with a strong attack) 12 Qd2! Qa5 13 Nd4 e5 14 Nxc6 bxc6 15 0-0 d5 16 f4 with sufficient compensation for the pawns.

b) 9 Bb5 gets nowhere after 9 ... Qc7. A.Bykhovsky-L.Stein, USSR Championship, Tallinn 1965, continued 10 Nd5 Nxd5 11 exd5 a6! (R.Maric's suggestion of 11 ... Bxd4?? is a fatal error due to 12 Qxd4! 0-0 13 Qc3!, winning the c6-knight, and 13 ... Qa5 14 Qxa5 Nxa5 15 b4 does not change this fact) 12 Bxc6+ bxc6 13 Nxc6 (or 13 dxc6 e5) 13 ... Bb7 14 Bd4 Bxd4 15 Qxd4 0-0 16 0-0-0 Bxc6 17 dxc6 Qxc6 and despite the kings having castled on opposite sides, the position is about equal. Stein played on for another 70 moves, but to no avail.

c) 9 Ncb5 is also harmless, as long as Black replies 9 ... Qa5+!. A.Kunte-B.Macieja, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, continued 10 c3 0-0 11 0-0 a6 12 Na3 Qc7! 13 Bb3 Na5 and Black was fine.

9 ... Qxb2 10 Nxg7+ Kf8



Exercise: How does White proceed from here?

Answer: 11 Nd5!

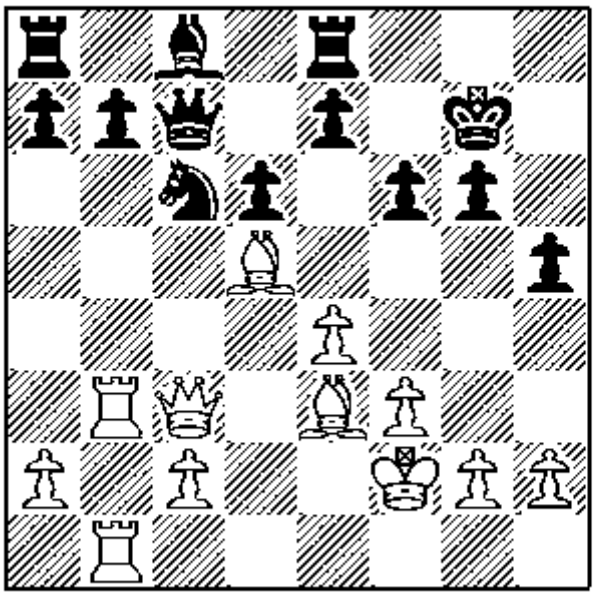
Once again, other moves do not achieve anything:

a) 11 Bd2?! is too passive. A.Planinec-A.Deze, Yugoslavia 1970, continued 11 ... Kxg7 12 0-0 Qb6+ 13 Kh1 Ne5 14 Rb1 Qc5 15 Bd5 Nc4 16 Rb5 Qc7 17 Bg5 Nb6 18 Qd4 Bd7 19 Rb3 Bc6, when Black had a minimal advantage and even went on to win after 20 f4? Bxd5 21 Nxd5 Nbxd5 22 exd5 Rhc8?! (22 ... h6! is stronger, preventing f4-f5) 23 f5 Qc4 24 Qa1 Qxd5 25 Re3?? (25 Bxf6+ exf6 26 fxg6 Qe5 27 gxh7 was correct) 25 ... Rxc2 26 Rg1 Qxf5 0-1.

b) 11 Kd2?! Kxg7 12 a3 is a crazy attempt to trap the queen. The simplest way to meet the threat of Ra2 is by playing 12 ... Na5 13 Qe2 Be6 14 Bxe6 Rhc8! (a beautiful intermediary move; not 14 ... fxe6?? 15 Ra2 Nb3+ 16 Kd3 and the queen is caught behind the enemy lines) 15 Bxc8 Rxc8 and now 16 Qd3 is necessary, with a balanced position. Instead, L.Bárczay-R.Cosulich, Reggio Emilia 1970/71, finished 16 Ra2? Qxc3+ 17 Kd1 Nc4 18 Bd2 Nb2+ (18 ... Qe5! is very good for Black, who has a pawn and a strong initiative for the exchange) 19 Ke1 Qe5 and the players agreed a draw, although Black is still better here.

11 ... Kxg7?!

Stein reached this position again in two later games, both of which saw the stronger 11 ... Nxd5! 12 Bxd5 (not 12 exd5? Qc3+ or 12 Qxd5? Qxa1+ 13 Kf2 Qf6! 14 Bh6 Kg8 15 Ne8 Qd4+ and Black is better) 12 ... Kxg7, and then 13 Rb1 Qc3+ (13 ... Qa3?! 14 Qd2 h5 15 0-0 Qa5 16 Qf2 Qc7 17 f4 f6 18 f5! gave White a clear advantage in L.Stein-P.Ostojic, Hastings 1967/68, although the game was drawn in 58 moves) 14 Kf2 Qa5 15 Rb3 h5 16 Qa1+ f6 17 Rhb1 Qc7 18 Qc3 Re8 was L.Stein-V.Kupreichik, USSR Championship, Moscow 1969, where White has sufficient play for the pawn (despite Petrosian's negative assessment in Informator #8).



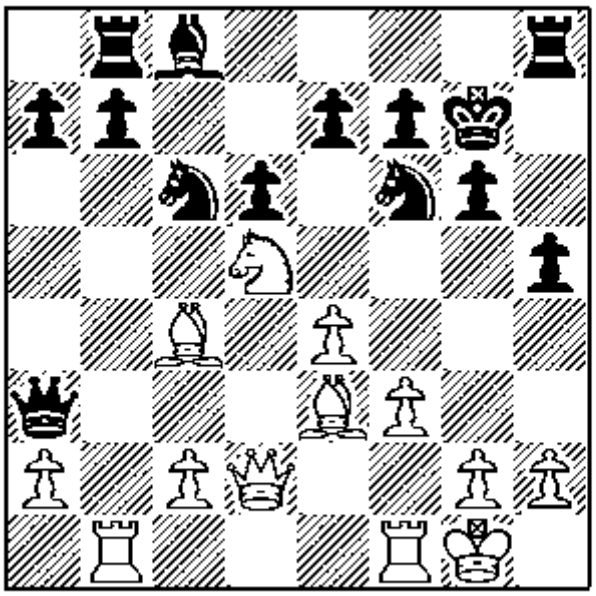
The game continued 19 f4 e6 20 Bc4? (after 20 Bd4! exd5 21 Bxf6+ Kf7 22 exd5 Qa5 23 dxc6 Qxc3 24 Rxc3! Kxf6 25 cxb7 Rb8 26 bxc8Q Rexc8 27 Rxc8 Rxc8 28 Rb2 Rc3, Black is now a pawn down but should be able to hold the rook endgame with his active position) 20 ... Na5 (Petrosian's 20 ... b6! probably is good for Black) 21 Bb5 Re7 22 Ra3 Qxc3 23 Rxc3 b6 24 Rd1 Nb7 25 e5! fxe5 26 fxe5 dxe5 27 Bg5 Nc5?? (this loses; 27 ... Rf7+ 28 Rf3 Rf5! was necessary) 28 Bc6 Rf7+ 29 Rf3 Rxf3+ 30 gxf3 Bb7 (or 30 ... Rb8 31 Rd8 with a fatal bind; White threatens Be7-d6 or the simple f3-f4) 31 Bxb7 and Black resigned in a few more moves.

12 Rb1 Qa3 13 Qd2 h5

As it happens, Stein was following one of his own games as Black. In D.Bronstein-L.Stein, USSR Championship, Tallinn 1965, he played the inferior 13 ... Rd8? 14 Rb3 Qa5 15 Bh6+ Kh8 (not 15 ... Kg8?? 16 Nxe7+ Kh8 17 Nxc6 Qxd2+ 18 Kxd2 bxc6 19 Bxf7 and White wins) 16 Nxf6 Qxd2+ 17 Bxd2 exf6 18 Bxf7 and White has a clear advantage in the ending, though Stein managed to hold the draw.

14 0-0 Rb8?

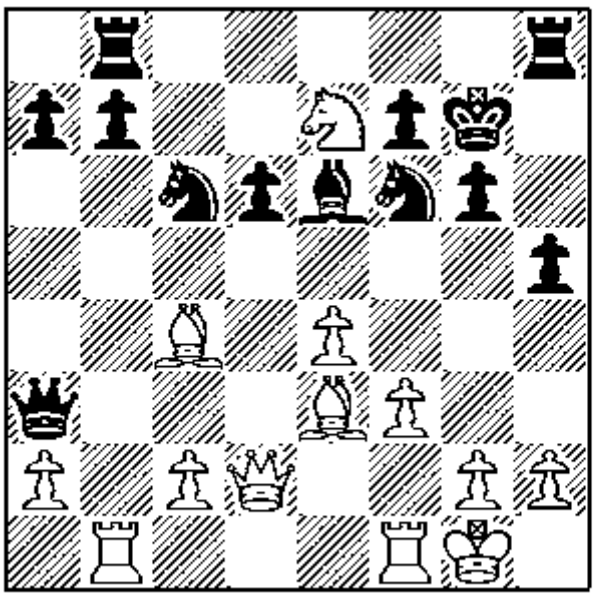
Overlooking the threat. Instead, Geller recommended 14 ... Qa5 15 c3 Nxd5 16 exd5 Ne5, but then 17 Bd4 f6 18 Rfe1 gives White the better chances; Swedish GM Thomas Ernst had two goes at defending this as Black and lost both times. Gufeld and Lazarev suggest 14 ... Be6, which may be the strongest move, although White has more than enough compensation after 15 c3 (but not 15 Rxb7? Na5).



Exercise (combination alert): Can you spot the combination?

Answer: 15 Nxe7! Be6

15 ... Nxe7 loses the queen after 16 Rb3 Qa4 (or similarly 16 ... Qxa2 17 Bd4!) 17 Bb5 Qxa2 18 Bd4, followed by 19 Ra1. Or if 18 ... Be6 then 19 Bxf6+ Kxf6 20 Qc3+ and wins.



Exercise: How does White continue?

Answer: 16 Nd5

White has eliminated the very important e7-pawn, the key to Black's defence, and now focuses on the less stable f6-knight. Another good continuation is 16 Nxc6 bxc6 17 Bxe6 fxe6 18 Rb3 Rxb3 19 axb3, when Black has too many weaknesses to survive.

16 ... Na5?

16 ... Qa5 17 c3 Ne5 is better, though 18 Bd4! still makes Black's position look pretty hopeless in the long run.

17 Bd4!

The logical follow-up. 17 Qd4 Bxd5 18 Bxd5 Qc5 19 g4! would win as well.

17 ... Nxc4 18 Qg5! Ne5 19 Qxf6+ Kh6 20 f4

Winning a piece; the black knight cannot move because of mate at g7.

20 ... Rhe8 21 Qg5+ 1-0

White forces the king to a less convenient square before capturing the knight, so Black resigned. Of course 21 fxe5 Bxd5 22 exd6 was also good, when 22 ... Rxe4 allows an attractive king hunt: 23 Qg7+ Kg5 24 Bf6+ Kg4 25 Qh6! Qe3+ 26 Qxe3 Rxe3 27 Rb4+ Be4 28 Rxe4+! Rxe4 29 h3+ Kg3 30 Rf3 mate.

Back in the USSR, Stein achieved another second place, this time in Kislovodsk, on 7½/11 with seven wins, three losses and one draw, behind Geller on 8½. The following game was played in the third round.

At the time of this game, Anatoly Lutikov (1933-89) was untitled and yet was ranked 24th in the world, according to Chessmetrics. He was awarded the IM title in 1967 and became a grandmaster in 1974. Lutikov was known for his unpredictable play in the openings, particularly with the black pieces, where he tried virtually every defence going at one time or another. A variation of the Spanish Opening is named after him: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 and now 9 Bc2!?.

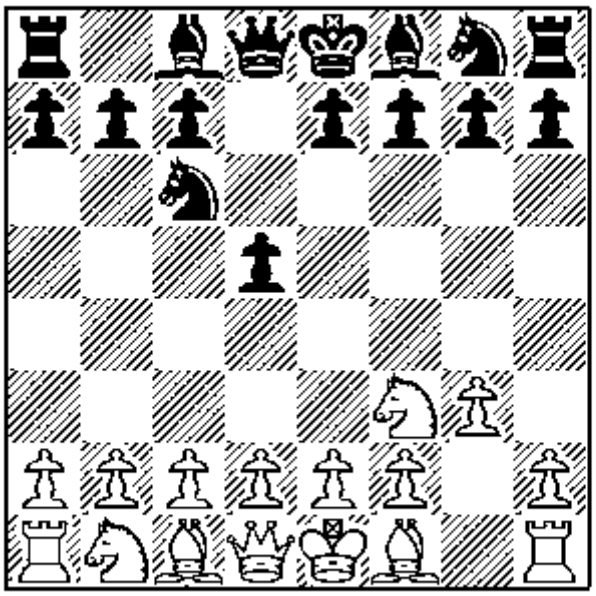
In serious competition Stein played Lutikov on seven occasions from 1961-71 and was undefeated with five wins and two draws.

Game 36
L.Stein-A.Lutikov
Kislovodsk 1966
Réti Opening

1 Nf3 d5 2 g3

Stein sets up quietly, not interested in seeing what Lutikov has in mind this time. Nor was he fond of playing in the spirit of Nimzowitsch, fighting for the e5-square with a move such as 2 b3. He preferred to play like Réti and put pressure on the d5-pawn. To this end White fianchettoes the light-squared bishop and plays a timely c2-c4.

2 ... Nc6!?



Exercise: Lutikov's reply is a little unusual in this position. How does White continue?

3 Bg2

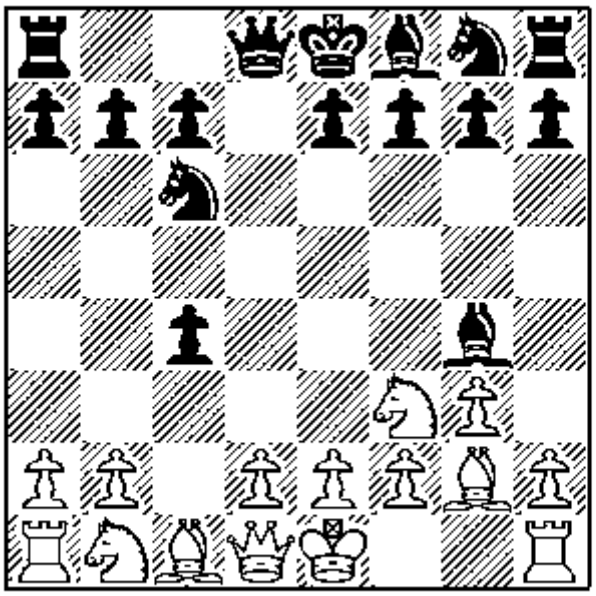
Answer: The most principled move is 3 d4, which prevents ... e7-e5 and enters the domain of Chigorin's Defence; for example, 3 ... Bg4 4 Bg2 Qd7 5 c4!? dxc4 (5 ... e6 is more solid) 6 d5 Bxf3 7 Bxf3 Ne5 8 Bg2 e6 9 Nc3 (or 9 Qd4 Nc6 10 Qxc4, aiming for a slight advantage based on the bishop pair in an open position) 9 ... 0-0-0 10 0-0?! (again 10 Qd4 is better, intending 10 ... Nc6 11 Qxc4 exd5 12 Qxd5 Qxd5 13 Bxd5 Nd4 14 Kf1 Ne6 15 Bc4 with the two bishops and some pressure on the Italian diagonal) 10 ... Nf6 11 Bf4 Ng6 12 Bg5 with compensation for the pawn, if no more than that in V.Tukmakov-A.Raetsky, Bled 1997.

3 ... Bg4

The critical response is of course 3 ... e5, when 4 d3 leads to a reversed Pirc Defence where Black has already equalized. Lutikov prefers to give his opponent another chance to play d2-d4, which Stein again rejects.

4 c4 dxc4

Stein would have welcomed 4 ... d4 5 b4!, which gives White a strong initiative. Note that 5 ... Nxb4? is a mistake on account of 6 Ne5! Bd7 7 Qb3 c5 8 a3 Nc6 9 Qxb7, winning material with a clear advantage.



Exercise: How does White recapture the c4-pawn?

Answer: 5 Na3!

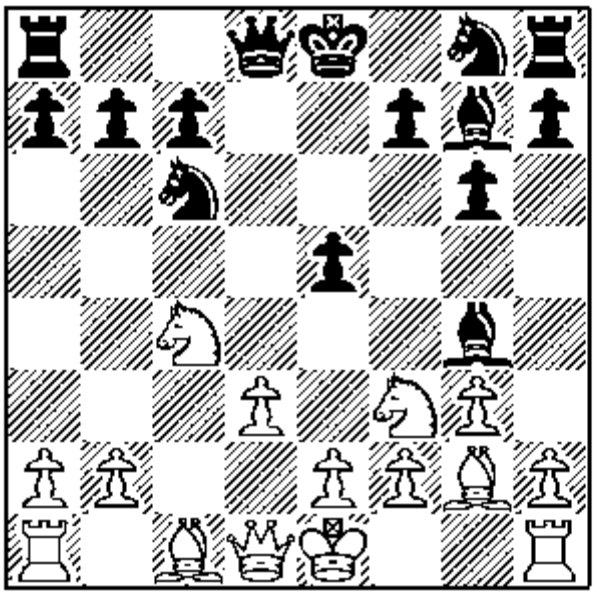
The strongest move, developing another minor piece, which is on its way to become centralized after Nxc4. The seemingly natural 5 Qa4 is less good, as Black simply continues 5 ... Qd7 6 Qxc4 e5 with good control of the centre. It is not at all clear what the queen is doing on c4 in that position. The standard advice not to introduce the queen too early in the game is certainly valid here.

5 ... g6?!

This is a bit extravagant when the simple and logical 5 ... e5 6 Nxc4 f6 is available. It seems Lutikov has decided to avoid classical chess, or has he?

6 Nxc4 Bg7 7 d3 e5

7 ... Nf6 looks more consistent, after which the simple 8 0-0 is best. There is nothing to be gained from 8 Nfe5 Nxe5 9 Nxe5 Bc8, followed by ... 0-0 and ... Nd7 and/or ... c7-c6.



Exercise: Black mixes a hypermodern approach (attacking the centre with pieces) with a classical (occupation of the centre with a pawn). Is it possible to exploit this?

Answer: 8 Bd2

Stein blocks the d-file before Black plays 8 ... e4!? 9 dxe4 Qxd1, and aims to bring the bishop to the long diagonal with pressure on the e5-pawn. The only drawback with placing it on c3 is that it is very easy for a black knight to reach the d5-square and threaten to exchange it.

Alternatively, 8 Qa4 is more active and puts the centre under pressure immediately. Black would have to find 8 ... Qd7 (8 ... Bd7 is met by 9 Na5 Nxa5 10 Qxa5 Bc6 11 0-0, and if 11 ... f6 then 12 b3 Ne7 13 Ba3 0-0 14 e4!, followed by Rfd1 and d3-d4 at an appropriate moment) 9 Be3 (now 9 Na5 Nxa5 10 Qxa5 f6 is harmless; or if 9 Ne3 then 9 ... Bxf3! 10 Bxf3 Nge7 11 Nc2 0-0-0! with dynamic equilibrium) 9 ... Nge7 10 Bc5 a6 11 Bxe7 e4!! (this incredible riposte, as from another planet, might be played by a genius like Shirov or Ivanchuk; not 11 ... b5? 12 Nfxe5! Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Bxe5 14 Qe4 Qd4 15 Bb4! with a technically won position) 12 dxe4 Qxe7 13 Ne3 Be6 14 Nd5 (or 14 0-0 0-0-0) 14 ... Bxd5 15 exd5 Qb4+ 16 Qxb4 Nxb4 17 Rd1 Nxa2 and the position is close to equal.

8 ... Nge7 9 Rc1

Apart from bringing the rook to the half-open file, this gives White the option of b2-b4 which Lutikov decides to prevent. Note that 9 Bc3?! at this moment is strongly answered by 9 ... Nd5!, and if 10 Nfxe5 then 10 ... Nxc3 11 Bxc6+ bxc6 12 bxc3 Qd5 13 f3 Bxe5 14 Nxe5 Qxe5 15 fxg4 Qxc3+ 16 Kf2 with an even position.

9 ... a5

9 ... 0-0 looks more to the point, and if 10 b4 then 10 ... Rb8, freeing the c6-knight, though play can get quite complicated; for example, 11 b5 Nd4 12 Ncxe5!? Bxe5 13 Nxe5 Bxe2 14 Qa4 Nef5! 15 Qc4 Qe7 16 f4 Bf3! 17 Kf2 (or 17 Bb4 Qe8) 17 ... Bxg2 18 Kxg2 c6 19 bxc6 (or 19 Bb4 Ne3+) 19 ... Nxc6 with equality.

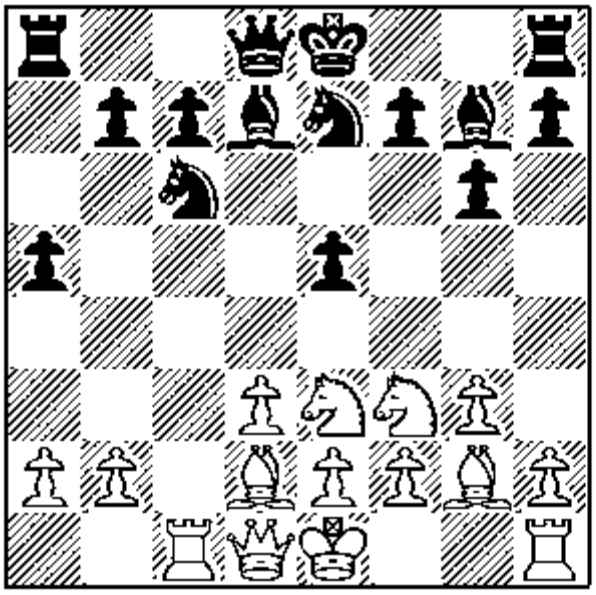
10 Ne3

White's compact array of minor pieces increases the harmony in his position. Lasker once said, in his classic Manual of Chess, that co-operation between the pieces has a value in the

same way we attach points to them. However, this area of chess is less investigated and the chess world is still missing the hypothetical book Secrets of Chess Harmony.

10 ... Bd7

10 ... Be6 would be met by 11 Ng5 and if 11 ... Bxa2 then 12 Qa4!.



Exercise: How does White continue in the most aggressive way?

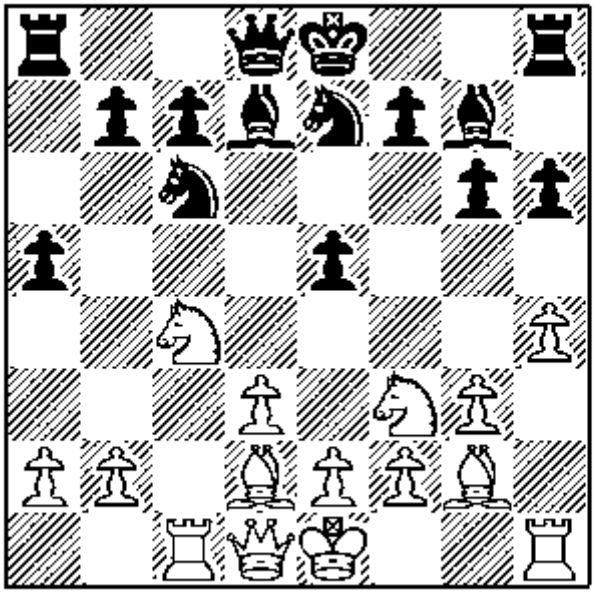
Answer: 11 h4!

The strongest move, as well as a typical attacking one in Stein's style, with the threat of a further h4-h5 at some point (much later, as it turns out). 11 0-0 is playable, but does not pose Black as many difficult questions.

11 ... h6

This is both the classical and the best reaction. Now 12 h5 can be met 12 ... g5, as Black has sufficient piece control of the f5-square.

12 Nc4

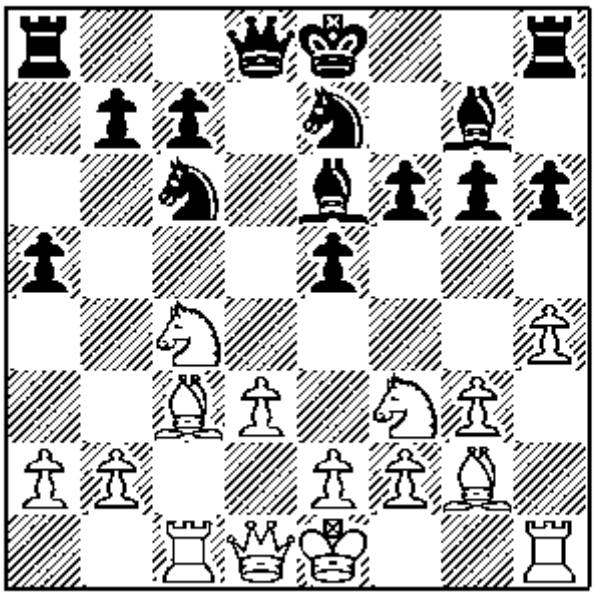


Question: What is the purpose of putting the knight back on c4?

Answer: White is renewing the pressure on the e5-pawn, with the aim of forcing a further weakening of the kingside with ... f7-f6. Note that Black should not repeat as well, as after 12 ... Bg4 13 Bc3 f6, his bishop belongs on the a2-g8 diagonal.

12 ... Be6 13 Bc3 f6

The mini-plan is achieved. Vladimir Sokolov's suggestion of 13 ... Bd5!? would have left the long diagonal open, but perhaps Lutikov did not want to get embroiled in lines like 14 0-0 0-0 15 Bxe5 Nxe5 16 Ncxe5 Bxa2 17 b3 or 15 Ncxe5!? Bxe5 16 e4!.



Exercise: How does White continue now?

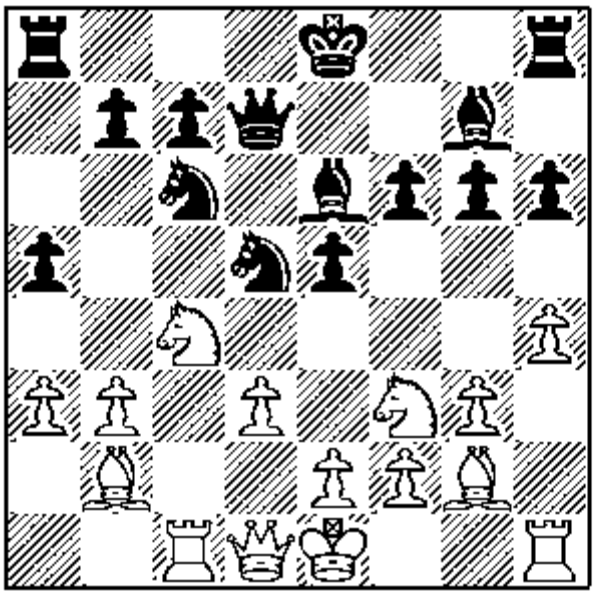
Answer: 14 b3

Securing the c4-knight means that White does not need to worry about the pawn thrust ... e5-e4.

14 ... Nd5 15 Bb2

This was the other idea of 14 b3. The bishop retreats to its normal fianchetto position where it is less exposed to the enemy forces, particularly the knights.

15 ... Qd7 16 a3



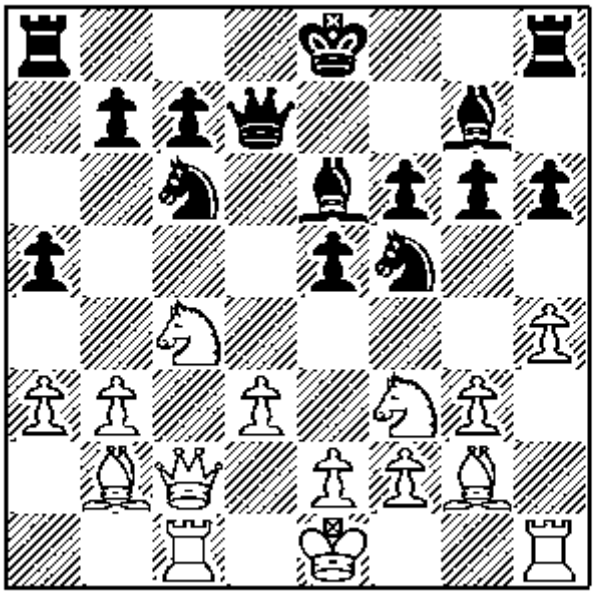
Question: What is the point of this humble-looking move?

Answer: The position resembles a kind of reversed Sicilian. As there, this little a-pawn move is really useful, limiting the activity of the enemy knights and preparing a stable place for the queen on the c-file.

16 ... Nde7

Seeing that the knight has no real future on d5, Lutikov swings it back round to f5 for strong control of the important d4-square; but he has now lost two moves with ... Ne7-d5-e7 and should have thought about this set-up earlier. Here 16 ... 0-0 seems more natural, connecting the rooks and maintaining flexibility in Black's position.

17 Qc2 Nf5



Exercise: What is White's next mini-plan?

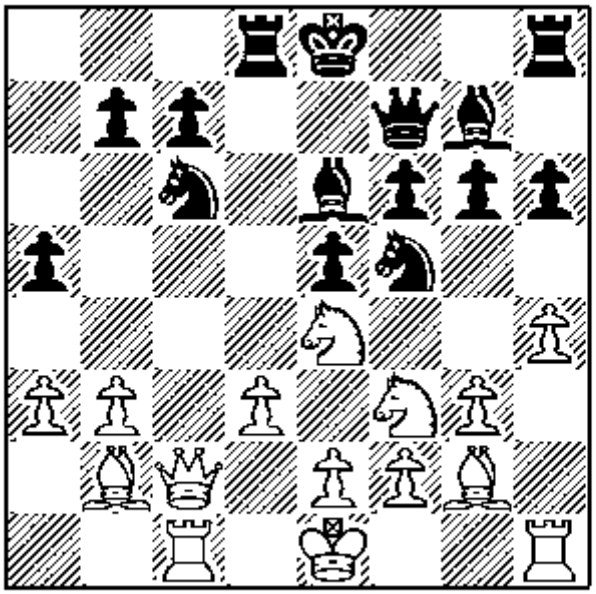
18 Ncd2

Answer: White prepares Ne4-c5, exploiting the half-open c-file in the typical manner for this Sicilianesque position. There is no question that Stein enjoys such a set-up with both colours!

18 ... Rd8?

The immediate 18 ... Qf7! is more stubborn, putting pressure on b3 and preventing White's fundamental plan. Presumably Lutikov did not like such tactical possibilities as 19 Nxe5!? Nxe5 (or 19 ... fxe5 20 Bxc6+ bxc6 21 Qxc6+ Ke7 22 Qxc7+ Bd7 23 Qc5+ Nd6 24 Nc4 Qe6 25 Nb6) 20 d4 Ng4 21 Bxb7 Rd8 22 Bc6+ Kf8 23 h5! with sufficient compensation for the sacrificed piece; whereas 23 e4?! stumbles to 23 ... Nxd4! 24 Qc5+ Kg8 25 Bxd4 Bf8 26 Qc3 Bxa3 27 0-0 Bxc1 28 Rxc1 Kh7 and Black may be able to consolidate his extra exchange.

19 Ne4 Qf7



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Answer: 20 b4

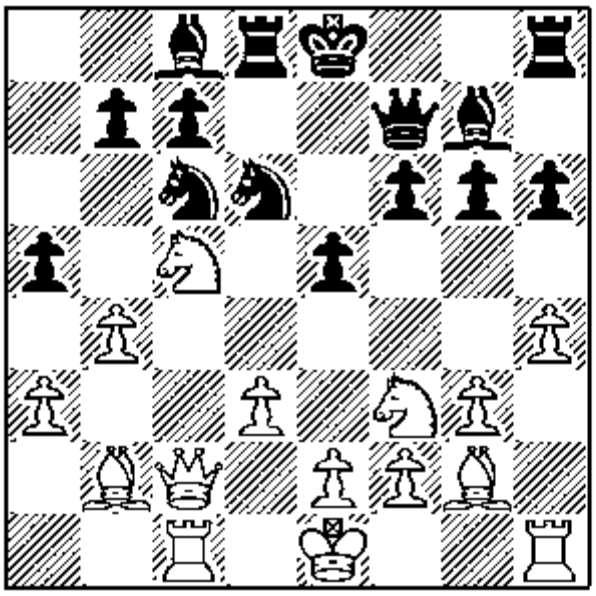
Stein's choice of move is good enough to keep the initiative. Otherwise he might still have continued 20 Nc5, practically forcing the sequence 20 ... Bc8 21 h5 g5 22 Nd2 Nfe7, and now 23 Na6!! (another move which might be by Shirov – remember his unbelievable ... Bh3!!) 23 ... Rd7 (not 23 ... bxa6? 24 Bxc6+ Nxc6 25 Qxc6+ Rd7 26 f4! and White has all the play) 24 b4! bxa6 25 Bxc6 Nxc6 26 Qxc6 axb4 27 axb4 0-0 28 g4! with a slight advantage.

20 ... Nd6

Inserting 20 ... axb4 21 axb4 before 21 ... Nd6 22 Nc5 Bc8 is more accurate.

21 Nc5 Bc8

Now 21 ... axb4 is refuted by 22 Nxb7! and White wins material.

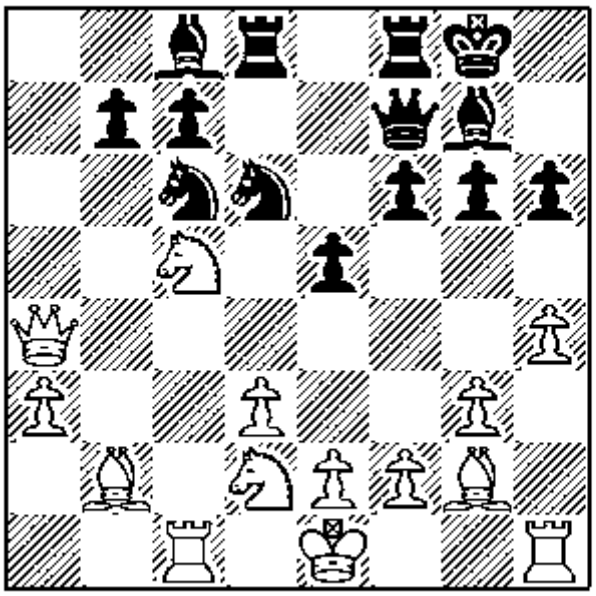


Exercise: How does White proceed now?

Answer: 22 bxa5

Another idea is to ignore the black a-pawn and fix the kingside with 22 h5 g5, so that the g7-bishop cannot be activated on the h6-c1 diagonal after a timely ... h6-h5, and then open the long light diagonal with 23 Nd2, intending as before 23 ... axb4 24 Nxb7! Bxb7 25 Bxc6+ Bxc6 26 Qxc6+, when White has an extra pawn and a clear advantage.

22 ... Nxa5 23 Qa4+ Nc6 24 Nd2 0-0



Exercise: What is White's strongest move?

25 Nxb7

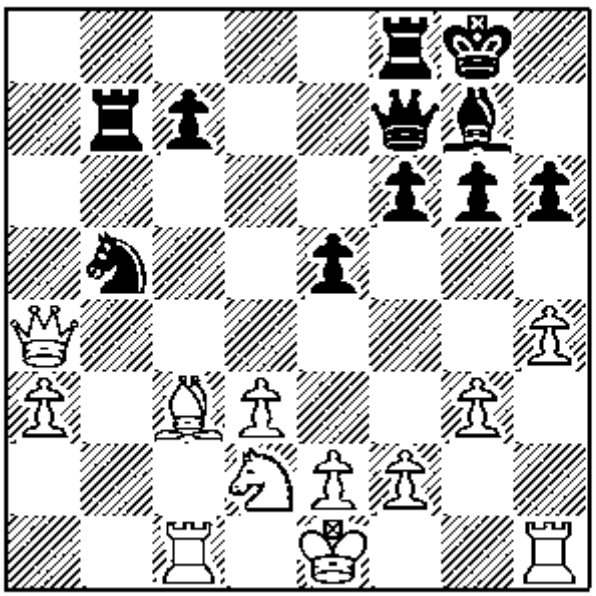
Answer: 25 Bxc6! bxc6 26 Qxc6 looks very strong indeed, with the simple plan of advancing the a-pawn. Why did not Stein enter this line? Probably he did not like the resulting light square weaknesses, though it is not clear how Black can profit

from this concretely.

25 ... Bxb7 26 Bxc6 Rb8

The alternative is to place the rooks on the open files with 26 ... Ra8 27 Qc2 Rfb8. In this case White plays 28 0-0 and answers 28 ... Ra6 with 29 Bxb7 Rxb7 30 Ra1, when he holds a definite advantage owing to the fact that Black is a pawn down and still has a passive bishop. Any attempt at central expansion with ... f6-f5 will be promptly stopped by the strong e2-e4!.

27 Bxb7 Rxb7 28 Bc3 Nb5

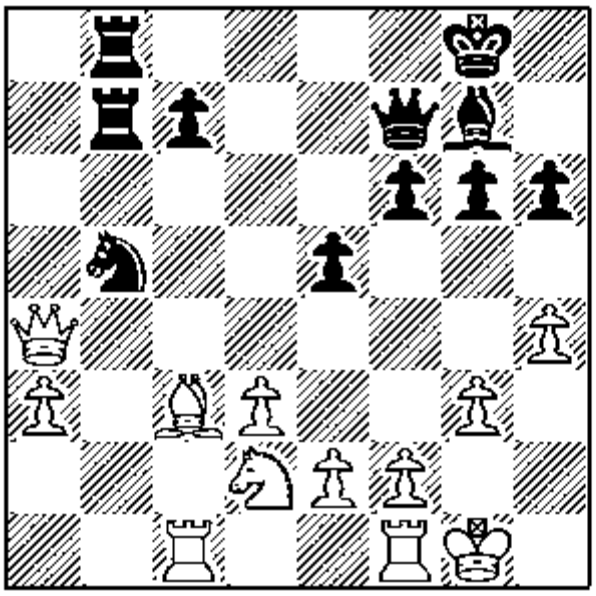


Exercise: How to proceed after this?

29 0-0

Answer: It was actually Bronstein who once mentioned in his writings the upmost importance of centralizing the strongest piece on the board. Here Stein had the chance to bring the octopus to the middle again with 29 Qe4! (cf Game 27), when the queen threatens the b7-rook as well as the strategically powerful thrust h4-h5, weakening the f5-square. Although Black can stop both after 29 ... Nd6 30 Qf3 h5, White continues 31 Bb4 and has a strategically won position. He will complete development by castling and then place a major piece on c6, applying pressure on the weakest points in Black's position.

29 ... Rfb8



Exercise: How does White continue here?

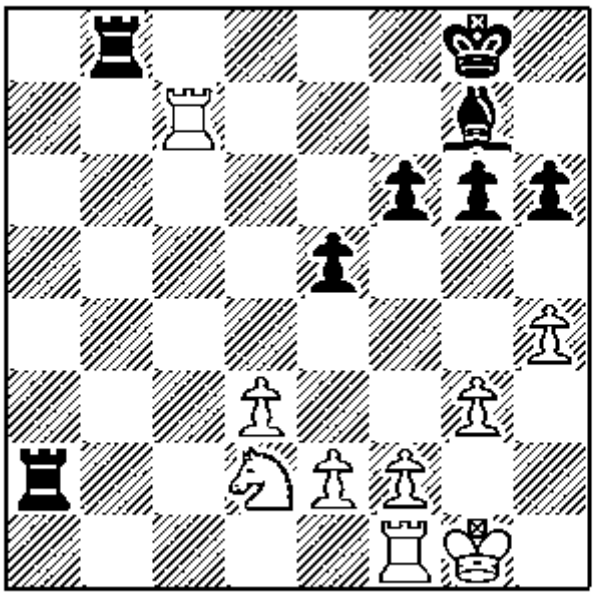
Answer: 30 Bb4

This is the natural and solid move, maintaining White's advantage. However, it is interesting to note that 30 Qe4!? is still strong despite the fact that it gives the a3-pawn away. After 30 ... Nxa3 (or 30 ... f5 31 Qe3) 31 f4! exf4 (or 31 ... f5 32 Qg2) 32 Qxf4. White's pieces co-operate excellently, giving him an undisputed advantage, since the black pieces do not harmonize at all.

30 ... Ra7 31 Qc2 Nxa3

31 ... Nd4 32 Qd1 Bf8 33 Bxf8 Kxf8 does not improve Black's chances after 34 e3, intending a3-a4 or 34 ... Ne6 35 Rc3.

32 Bxa3 Rxa3 33 Qxc7 Qxc7 34 Rxc7 Ra2



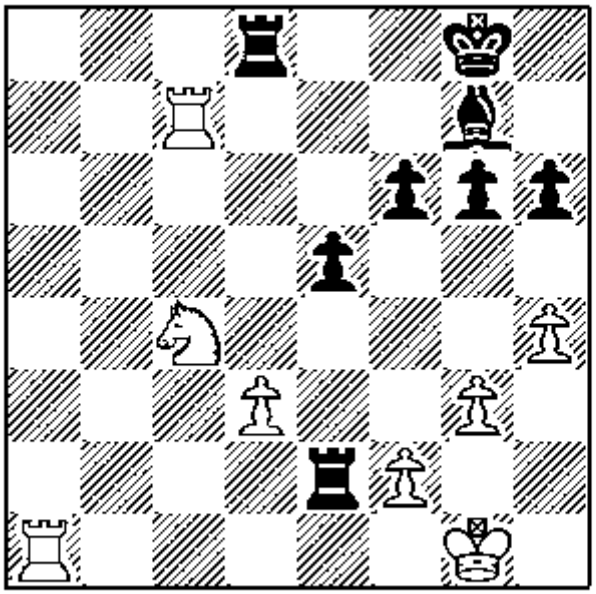
Exercise: It seems Black has counterplay. Is this true? Suggest White's strongest move.

35 Nc4

Answer: The strongest move is 35 Ne4!, putting pressure on the f6-pawn. After 35 ... Rxe2 (not 35 ... f5 36 Nc3 Rc2 37 Nd5! Rxe2? 38 Ne7+ Kh7 39 h5! and wins) 36 Ra1, Black's bishop is stuck behind and defending the bulwark, unless he goes for 36 ... f5 37 Raa7 Bh8 38 Nc5 e4 39 Nd7 Re8 40 Ra6, in which case he is unable to hold the sixth rank.

35 ... Rxe2 36 Ra1 Rd8?

The best defence is 36 ... e4, which leads to a symmetrical three pawns each after 37 Raa7 Bf8 38 dxe4 Rxe4 39 Ne3 Rd8 40 Rc6 Be7, but White can disrupt them with 41 h5! gxh5 42 Nf5 and has winning chances even with so few pawns left on the board. His rooks are significantly stronger and the knight excels superbly on the smaller chessboard. This is a typical case where the knight is clearly superior to the bishop, which prefers play on both sides of the board to be able to exploit its long range capabilities.



Exercise: How does White secure a decisive advantage?

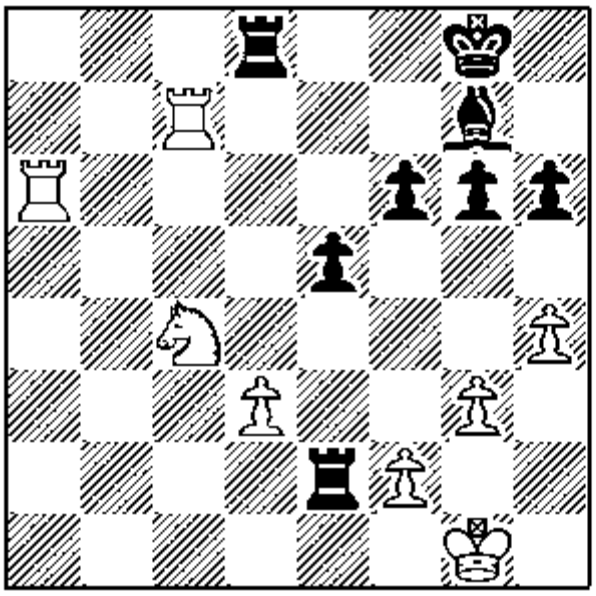
Answer: 37 Raa7

Two rooks on the seventh are one of Nimzowitsch's "elements" in his celebrated book My System. He wrote about "The five special cases in the 7th Rank" and is one of the very few authors who made a deep investigation of this highly important theme.

37 ... Bf8 38 Ra6!

This is the key idea. Black's real vulnerability is the sixth rank rather than the seventh.

38 ... Bg7



Exercise: What is the simplest way to play on Black's weaknesses?

Answer: 39 h5

Stein finally advances his h-pawn again, preparing an outpost at f5 for his knight. Another option is 39 Nd6, followed by Ne4 to attack the black kingside; for example, 39 ... Rb2 40 Ne4 Rf8 41 Raa7 Bh8 42 Nd6! f5 43 Nf7 Bg7 44 Ng5! Bh8 45 Rc6 Bf6 46 Nh7 and wins, but this is a computer variation. After Stein's move, the win is just "a matter of technique".

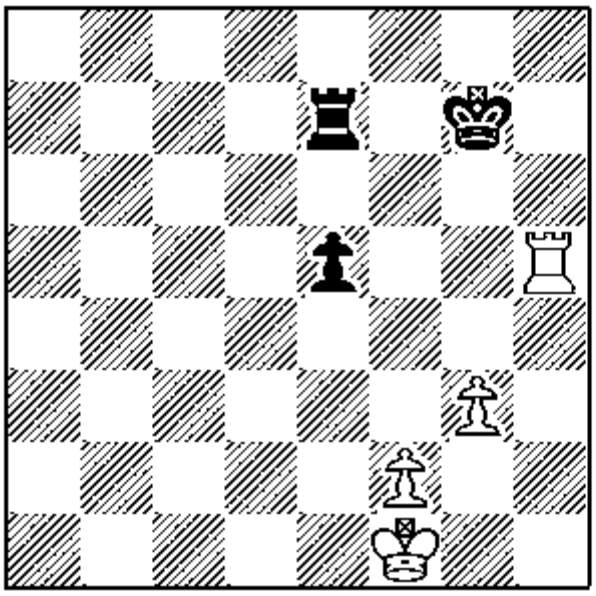
39 ... gxh5 40 Ne3 Rd2 41 Nf5 Bf8 42 Rxf6

Black's position now collapses.

42 ... R2xd3 43 Nxh6+ Bxh6 44 Rg6+! Kf8 45 Rxh6 R3d7 46 Rxd7 Rxd7 47 Rxh5 Re7?!

The most tenacious defence is 47 ... Rd5! 48 Rh7 Kg8 49 Ra7 Rd1+ 50 Kg2 e4, when White cannot win the e-pawn without losing one of his own. Instead, the way to make progress is by slowly advancing the king and passed g-pawn, using the f-pawn as a shield: 51 Ra2! Re1 (otherwise 52 Re2 wins easily) 52 Kh3 Kf7 53 Kg4 Kf6 54 Kf4 Kg6 55 g4 (getting going; not 55 Ra4? Re2! and draws) 55 ... Kf6 56 g5+ Kg6 57 Rb2! (a waiting move) 57 ... Rg1 (there is nothing better) 58 Rb6+ Kg7 59 Kf5 Rg2 60 Rb2! (back again) 60 ... Kf7 61 g6+ Kg7 (61 ... Rxg6 loses the rook) 62 Rb7+ Kf8 and now 63 f4! exf3 64 Kf6 Ke8 65 Re7+! Kd8 (or 65 ... Kf8 66 g7+ Rxg7 67 Rxg7 f2 68 Rf7+ and 69 Kg6 etc) 66 Re5 f2 67 Rf5 Ke8 68 g7 with zugzwang. While this may seem long-winded and difficult, it is really quite straightforward and all in a day's work for a player like Stein.

48 Kf1 Kg7



Exercise: What is White's best move in this rook ending?

Answer: 49 Rf5! Kg6 50 g4

The black king is cut off from the e-pawn, which will fall after White approaches it with the king.

50 ... e4 51 Ke2 Ra7 52 Ke3 Ra4 53 Re5 1-0

The Olympiad in Havana was the greatest chess team event in the world to that date, with 52 nations taking part (only West Germany was missing) and 38 grandmasters and 50 international masters. Stein's individual score was seven wins, one loss and four draws. Here are two of the wins.

In the Soviet Union's first qualifying match vs. Sweden, Stein played on board three; the reigning world champion Petrosian was on top board, with the challenger Spassky on two and Polugaevsky on four. A tough team! (Korchnoi and Tal were "on the bench".) Stein's opponent, Jan Erik Westman was, according to Chessmetrics, ranked 431st in the world and achieved his highest estimated rating of 2399 in October 1968.

Game 37
L.Stein-J.E.Westman
Havana Olympiad 1966
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Bg5

Though not so common nowadays, this variation is very sharp and aims at a kingside attack.

5 ... h6

The best move, forcing White to determine the position of his bishop. After 5 ... 0-0 6 Qd2, White controls the c1-h6 diagonal and has a stronger and more flexible bishop than in the game.

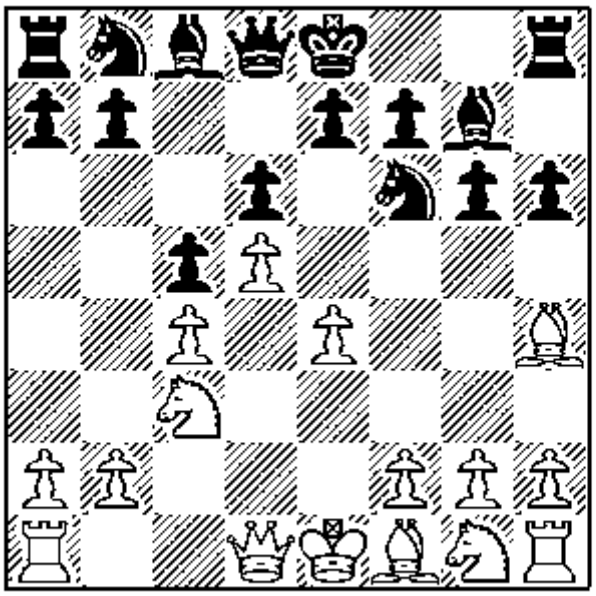
6 Bh4

After this normal retreat White's dark squares in the centre and on the queenside are slightly weakened. 6 Be3 Ng4 7 Bc1 e5 8 d5 f5 leads to a different type of game.

6 ... c5

The simple 6 ... 0-0 does not give White the right to a swift central attack; for example, after 7 f4 c5 8 e5? Nh5 9 dxc5 Nxf4, White's centre is wiped out.

7 d5



7 ... 0-0

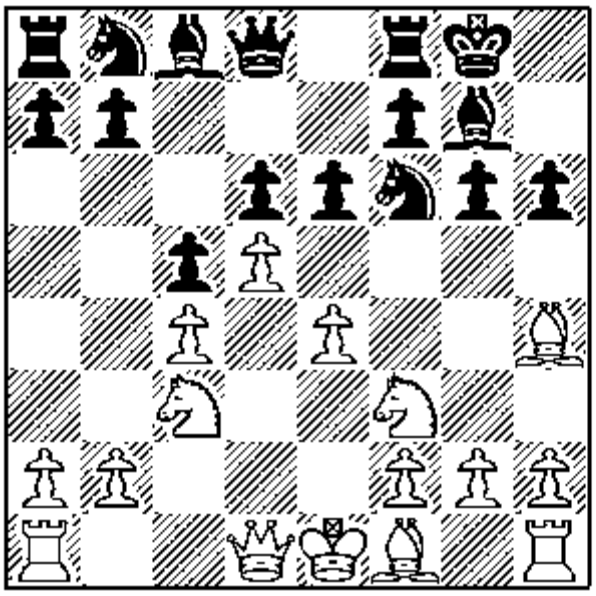
In his book, The Application of Chess Theory, Geller calls this a waiting move. Instead, 7 ... Qa5 is more consistent, exploiting the fact that White's dark-squared bishop is located on the other side of the board. Stein had actually played this himself (Y.Nikolaevsky-L.Stein, Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1962) and faced it as White the previous month (L.Stein-E.Geller, USSR Team Championship, Moscow 1966). The latter game continued 8 Bd3 (8 Qd2 is more solid, although the fact that the a1-rook is unprotected means that Black can prepare for ... a7-a6 and ... b7-b5 without having to worry about the typical rejoinder a2-a4) 8 ... g5 9 Bg3 Nxe4! 10 Bxe4 Bxc3+ 11 bxc3 Qxc3+ 12 Kf1 f5 13 Ne2? (13 Rc1 or 13 h4 should have been played) 13 ... Qf6 14 Bc2 f4, when Black is clearly better and Geller went on to win after just nine more moves. It would be interesting to know what improvement Stein had discovered in this variation.

8 Nf3

Another scheme of development is 8 Bd3 e6 9 Nge2, when M.Vokac-J.Gdanski, Dortmund 1990, continued 9 ... exd5 10 exd5 Nbd7 11 f4 a6 12 a4 g5! 13 fxg5 Ng4 14 Qd2 Nde5 15 Ne4 and now 15 ... Qe7! is correct with exciting play. For instance, 16 h3 is met by 16 ... Nxd3+ 17 Qxd3 Re8!, when White's best is 18 Nf6+ Bxf6 19 gxf6 Qe5 20 hxg4 Bxg4 21 0-0 Bxe2 22 Qh3 Qd4+! 23 Rf2 and the position is about equal.

8 ... e6

Hunting the bishop down with 8 ... g5 9 Bg3 Nh5 is the principled continuation, enabling counterplay on the dark squares after a subsequent ... Nxg3.



Exercise: What is White's most logical move?

Answer: 9 Nd2!

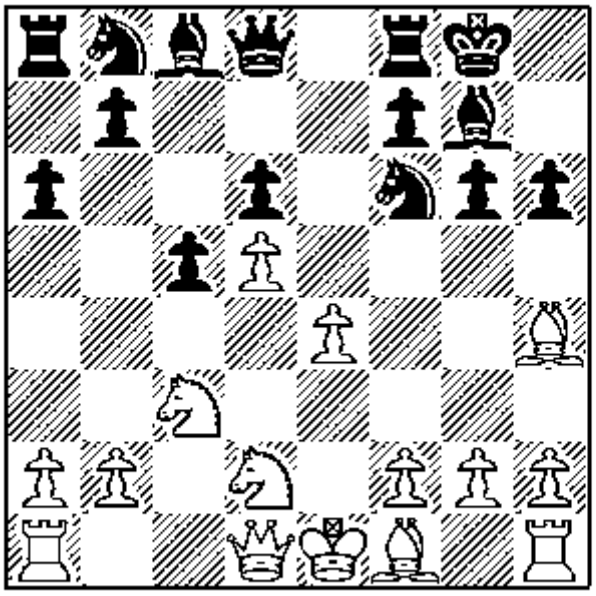
Question: Why this move rather than developing the f1-bishop?

Answer: The knight manoeuvre serves two purposes: firstly, the possibility of ... g6-g5 and ... Nh5 is now prevented; secondly, in the event of ... e6xd5, White will have a good square for his knight at c4 after c4xd5.

9 ... exd5 10 cxd5

White can be happy with his set-up, whose main benefit is that it effectively minimizes the active possibilities Black is hoping for from the King's Indian – or Benoni, to which we have now transposed. In his meagre comments in Informator #2, Gligoric even assessed this position as winning for White. Of course that is an exaggeration.

10 ... a6



Exercise: How does White react to Black's plan of expansion with ... b7-b5 - ?

Answer: 11 a4

The standard and the best reply, preventing ... b7-b5 and securing the c4-outpost for the d2-knight.

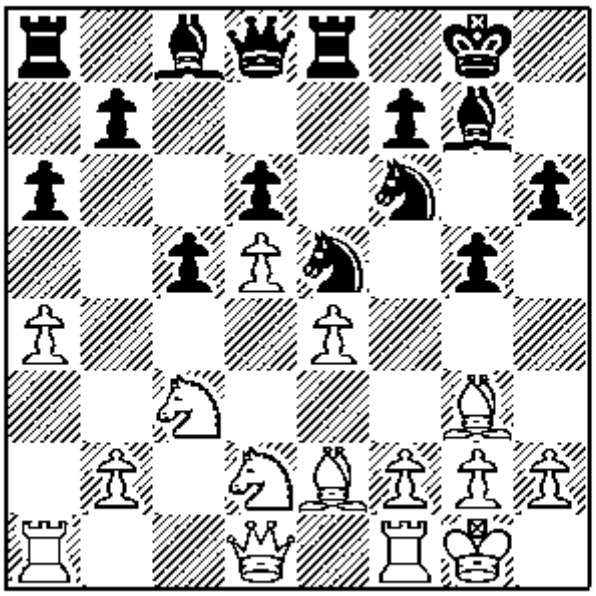
Alternatively, White could allow ... b7-b5 in order to attack it later. A plausible line is 11 Be2 b5 12 Qc2 Re8 13 0-0 Nbd7 and now 14 a4! is a priyome (typical idea) for this kind of position, showing that ... b7-b5 is not without risk because White can put more firepower on b5 than Black can defend it. However, in this position there is a tactical flaw since Black can reply 14 ... b4 15 Nd1 g5 16 Bg3 Nxd5, exploiting the fact that the e2-bishop is undefended. After 17 Nc4 Nf4 18 Bxf4 gxf4 19 Nxd6 Re6 20 Nf5, the position is equal. Such tactical variations are very typical of the Benoni Defence!

11 ... Re8 12 Be2 Nbd7 13 0-0 g5

Other common continuations are 13 ... Qc7 and 13 ... Rb8. It is hard to evaluate which of these three moves is the best. The main difference is that, in the game, f2-f4 is an important pawn break, whereas the other two allow White to increase his space advantage undisturbed.

14 Bg3 Ne5

Instead, 14 ... Qc7 15 Qc2 Ne5 16 Bxe5 Rxe5 17 Nc4 Re8 18 f4 was clearly better for White in E.Geller-E.Mnatsakanian, USSR 1959. The more direct 15 Nc4, intending 15 ... Ne5 16 Bxe5 dxe5 17 a5, also gives White a very promising position. The superb knight on c4 fulfils multiple functions: supporting the passed d-pawn, controlling the b6-square, and putting pressure on the e5-pawn. The f5-square is another potential knight outpost, if White manages to exchange the light-squared bishops; and it is hard to foresee any future activity for Black's dark-squared bishop, which is imprisoned by several pawns.



Exercise: How does White proceed at this particular moment?

Answer: 15 f4!

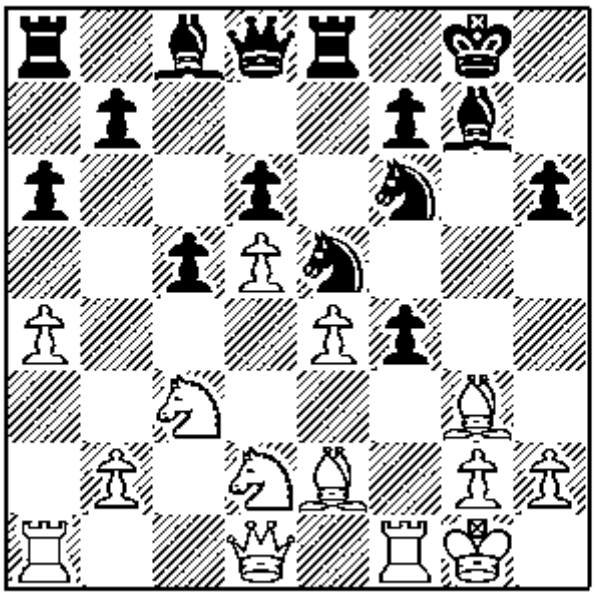
Consistent with his style, Stein wastes no time before attacking.

Of White's other possibilities, 15 a5 is a useful move, but in that case Black might interfere with f2-f4 by playing 15 ... Ng6. Similarly, 15 Qc2 was met by 15 ... b6 in

L.Polugaevsky-A.Lutikov, USSR 1958, which continued 16 Rab1 Ra7 17 b4 Rae7? 18 bxc5 bxc5 19 a5! Nfd7 20 Nd1 Nf6 (if 20 ... Qxa5 then 21 Ne3 Nf8 22 Ndc4) 21 Rb6 Ned7 22 Rxd6 with a clear advantage; but 17 ... cxb4! 18 Rxb4 Rc7 was the critical test of White's plan: ... Nfd7, ... Bb7, ... Qe7, ... Rec8, ... Ng6 and ... Qd8 is an ideal set-up for Black. Such variations show that Stein probably did the right thing in going for f2-f4 at once.

15 ... gxf4

Actually, 15 ... Ng6!? is still a very interesting continuation, when 16 fxg5 hxg5 exchanges the white f-pawn for the h6-pawn, rather than the g5-pawn. Then 17 a5! looks like the strongest reply, as 17 Qc2 Ng4! and 17 Bh5 Nf4! 18 Bxf4 gxf4 19 Rxf4?! Bh6! both seem fine for Black, while 17 Nc4 can be met by the exchange sacrifice 17 ... Rxe4! 18 Nxe4 Nxe4 19 Qd3 f5 20 Bh5 Nxg3 21 Qxg3 Ne5, followed by ... Qf6 or ... f5-f4 with a decent position.



Question: Should White recapture with the bishop or the rook?

Answer: 16 Bxf4

The normal and natural move. 16 Rxf4!? is playable, but the rook is clumsily placed on f4. Pressure on the f-file with Qf1 is not realistic at this stage, nor on the h4-d8 diagonal due to the response ... Ng6.

16 ... Qe7

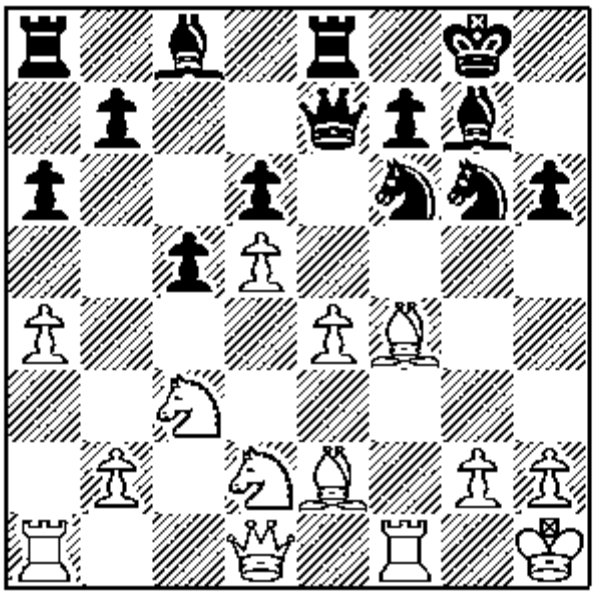
A good consolidating development, overprotecting the e5-knight while making Black's kingside a bit more compact.

17 Kh1

A prophylactic move, tucking the king away in the corner and off the g1-a7 diagonal; maybe the black bishop will come to d4 with check at a crucial moment. Strictly speaking, this is not absolutely necessary; all the same, it is a good habit to undertake useful precautions before attacking your opponent.

17 ... Ng6

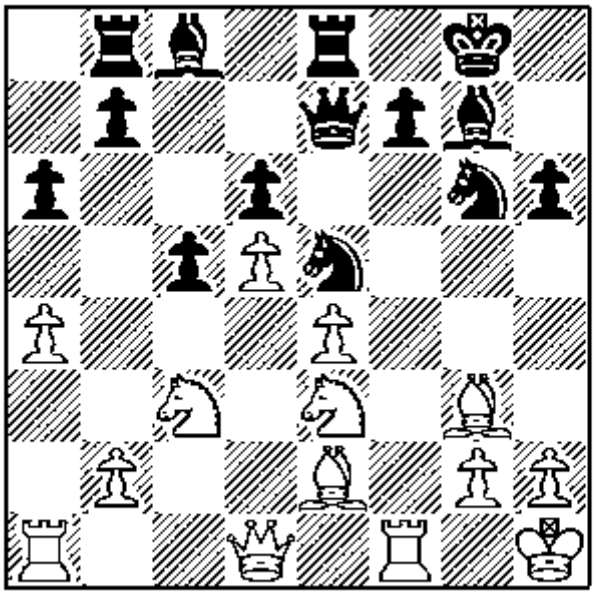
Black plans to reorganize his cavalry so that the f6-knight, which is currently not doing very much, takes over the job of blockading on e5.



Question: What is the drawback to Black's move order?

Answer: Retreating from e5 allows White's d2-knight to manoeuvre smoothly towards the positional weakness at f5 via c4 and e3. Black could achieve the same set-up by switching the f6-knight to g6, when White would have to use his other one as well: 17 ... Nfd7 (or 17 ... Nh7) 18 Qe1 Nf8 19 Nd1 Nfg6 20 Bg3, followed by 21 Ne3. If we compare these variations, it is marginally better for White to have knights on c3 and e3 than on d2 and e3.

18 Bg3 Nd7 19 Nc4 Nde5 20 Ne3 Rb8



Exercise: How does White continue? (Warning: This is difficult!)

Answer: 21 Rb1

White prepares b2-b4, in the spirit of Polugaevsky-Lutikov, hoping to exploit the weak square at b6. In effect White is playing across the whole board.

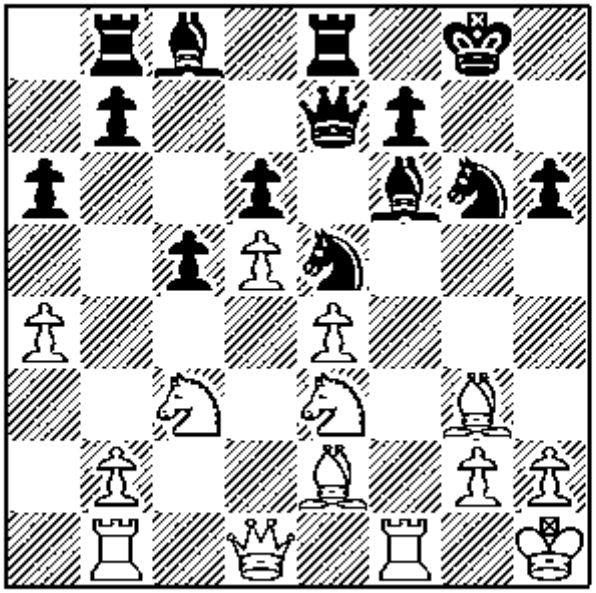
Stein prefers to suppress 21 Nf5 for the moment. This is a typical psychological idea frequently seen in Petrosian's games, according to the concept formulated by Nimzowitsch

that the threat is stronger than its execution. Now Black has to reckon with both b2-b4 and Nf5. All the same, after 21 Nf5 Bxf5 22 exf5 Nf8 23 a5, White obviously has the advantage with the bishop pair and more activity and space.

A third option may be even better, and that is to improve the placement of the queen with 21 Qe1!, followed by 22 Qf2. Then Black also has to reckon with 22 Nf5 Bxf5 23 exf5 Nf8 24 Bh4, reactivating the g3-bishop.

21 ... Bf6

Westman wants to bring his own dark-squared bishop into the game on the h6-c1 diagonal by placing it on g5.

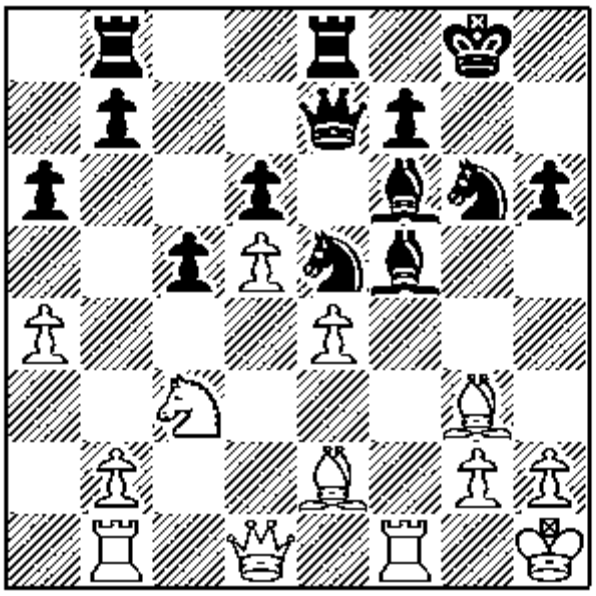


Exercise: What did Stein play now?

Answer: 22 Nf5

Continuing as planned with 22 b4 is good too. Stein perhaps did not like 22 ... c4, exploiting the fact that the c3-knight is unprotected (i.e. 23 Nxc4?? Nxc4 24 Bxc4 Bxc3 and White loses a piece), though 23 b5 keeps a clear advantage, artificially isolating the c4-pawn.

22 ... Bxf5



Question: Intuitively, what is the best recapture and why?

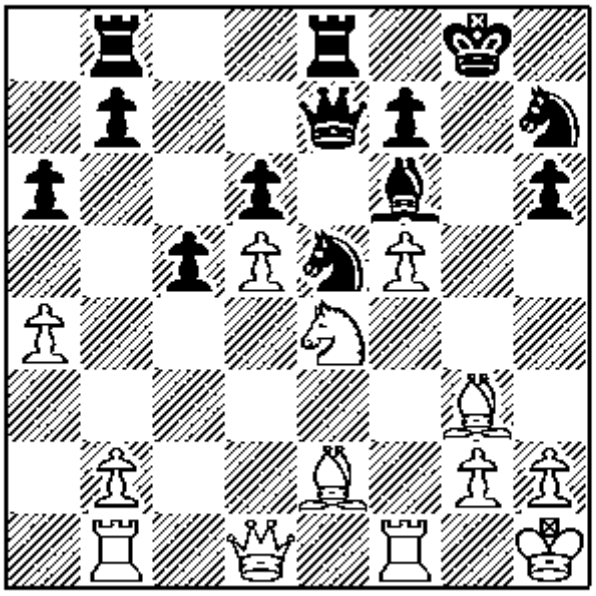
Answer: 23 exf5

Definitely the best, forcing the black knight behind its own lines, vacating the e4-square for White's other knight and increasing his space advantage. The downside is that the f-file is obstructed, but one cannot have everything for free in chess! 23 Rxf5?!, on the other hand, leaves the f-file open but that is all; the e5-knight covers the f7-point very well, so White would have to find other avenues to try to increase his advantage.

23 ... Nf8 24 Ne4

When the c3-knight is centralized like this, it normally means White has a good position. Very often its function on c3 is purely defensive, protecting the centre and preventing the counter-attack ... b7-b5; whereas now it has the potential to become an attacking piece!

24 ... Nh7



Exercise: Black naturally wants to exchange his passive knight for the strong white knight after ... Ng5. How can White deal with this plan?

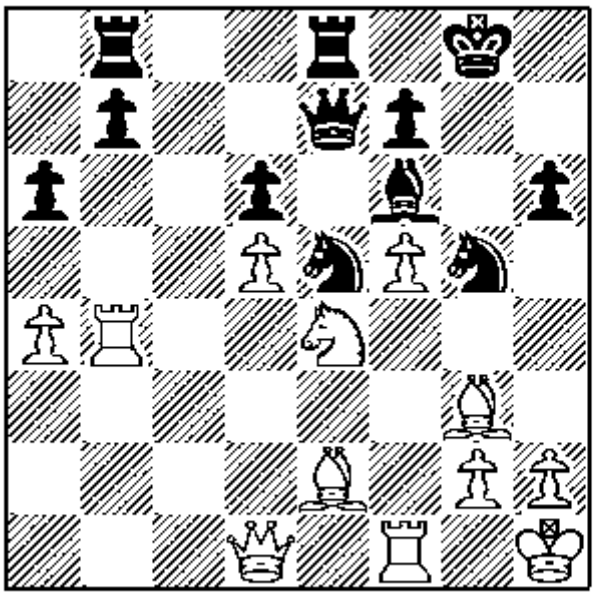
Answer: 25 b4

Stein accelerates his play on the queenside. Another, more positional approach is 25 Qd2, intending to answer 25 ... Ng5 with 26 Nf2!. Generally, it is advisable to avoid exchanges when in possession of more space than the opponent. (Remember Tarrasch's famous games with this theme, such as S.Tarrasch-G.Marco, Vienna 1898.) After the further moves 26 ... b5 27 axb5 axb5 28 Rbe1, White has a strong centralized position which can be improved by b2-b3, h2-h4 and Qd2-f4 and so forth.

25 ... cxb4?

The major turning point in the game; this exchange only helps White activate his b1-rook. Instead, 25 ... c4 is again met by 26 b5, but this was Black's best option; whereas 25 ... Ng5 26 Nxf6+ Qxf6 27 bxc5 Ne4 28 Be1 dxc5 29 Qc1 is clearly better for White, whose pieces will be mobilized step by step and there is not much Black can do about it.

26 Rxb4 Ng5



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Answer: 27 Nxf6+!

The strongest and the simplest. From now on Black will be eternally weak on the dark squares.

27 ... Qxf6

Exercise: And what now?

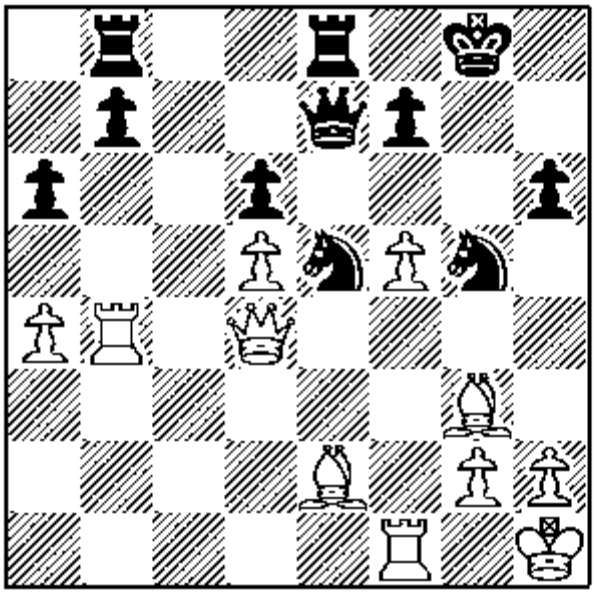
28 Qd4?

This time centralizing the octopus is not the best.

Answer: The nice retreat 28 Bf2! exploits the capacity of the bishop to the fullest. The idea is simply Ba7, followed by Rxb7, if necessary prepared by Qb1, which looks very convincing. Bronstein used to say that the main point in chess is to win one pawn on the queenside.

28 ... Qe7??

It is not clear what might have induced Westman to play this, except perhaps time trouble. 28 ... Nd7 puts up a more stubborn fight, when either 29 Qg4 Qc3 30 Bf3 or 29 Bd3 Qxd4 30 Rxd4 Ne5 31 Bb1 keeps a slight, if reduced advantage for White.



Exercise: What is the problem with Black's last move?

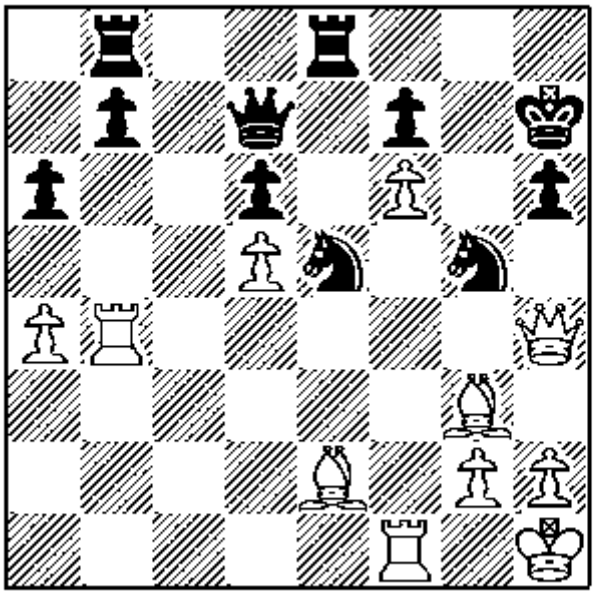
Answer: 29 f6

This pawn wedge drives deep into Black territory and decides the game. Such a powerful pawn has the same value as a piece!

29 ... Qd7?!

Now Black has no defence on the kingside. 29 ... Qf8 prolongs the game but still loses after 30 h4 Nh7 31 Qd2, followed by Bf4.

30 Qh4 Kh7



Exercise (combination alert): What is the most effective win?

31 Bxe5

This is only the second best move.

Answer: Surprisingly, Stein missed a beautiful mate in four with 31 Qxh6+! Kxh6 32 Rh4+ Kg6 33 Bh5+ Kh7 34 Bxf7 mate. There can be only one reason: he played too quickly.

31 ... Rxe5 32 Bd3+ 1-0

It is mate in seven so Westman resigned. Actually, 32 Qxh6+! would have worked here as well.

In the Swedish magazine Tidskrift för Schack #10/1966, there is a report of this game with the caption: "Jan-Erik is the victim of Stein's brutal kingside attack." Yes, he was one of many opponents who succumbed to Stein's attacking play.

Stein mostly played on board four in Havana, but in the match against the comparative minnows, Monaco, he played on board two. His opponent Pol Donne was ranked 450th in the world, according to Chessmetrics, with a highest estimated rating of 2383 achieved in December 1966.

Game 38
P.Donne-L.Stein
Havana Olympiad 1966
Wade Defence

1 Nf3 d6

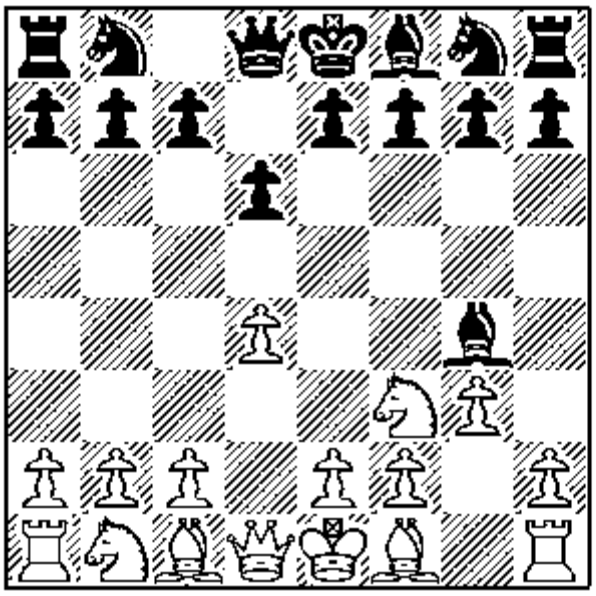
Objectively, 1 ... d5 is probably the strongest move, the reason being that the main lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined are slightly less critical with the knight on f3, as long as Black has this in his repertoire of course. Stein seeks a more dynamic and complicated fight, heading for the Wade Defence, the main purpose of which is to exploit the early knight development by playing the bishop to g4 as quickly as possible.

2 d4

Alternatively, 2 e4 could have led to a Sicilian after 2 ... c5, but that occurs in less than 2% of games with 1 ... d6. In any case, if Black wants a Wade Defence he plays 2 ... Bg4. For example, H.J.Hecht-R.Wade, England-West Germany match, Cheltenham 1971, continued 3 Bc4 e6 4 h3 Bxf3 5 Qxf3 Nc6 6 Bb5 Nge7 7 c4 a6 8 Ba4 d5 9 exd5 exd5 10 0-0 dxc4 11 Re1 Qd7 12 Na3?! (better 12 Bxc6 Qxc6 13 Qxc6+ bxc6 14 Na3 with a slight advantage) 12 ... 0-0-0 13 Qxf7?! (and here 13 Nxc4 is equal; note that 13 ... b5?? fails to 14 Ne5!, since 14 ... Nxe5? allows mate in one) 13 ... b5 14 Bd1 Nf5 15 Qxd7+ Kxd7, when White has some compensation for the pawn; nevertheless, Black won in 51 moves.

2 ... Bg4 3 g3

Both players are conducting the opening in a rather unorthodox way. The main variations involve occupying the centre with either 3 e4, when 3 ... Nf6 transposes to a sort of Pirc Defence (Stein had played this way three times before); or else 3 c4 with a sort of Old Indian Defence (which was Stein's choice on the White side in a later game against Lutikov).



Exercise: How did Stein continue?

Answer: 3 ... Bxf3 4 exf3 d5!?

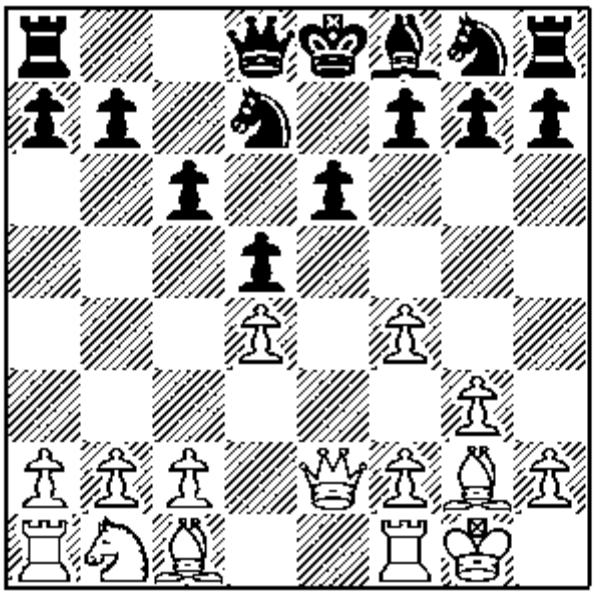
Stein follows the precepts of the Trompowsky Opening, 1 d4 Nf6 2 Bg5, specifically the line 2 ... g6 3 Bxf6 exf6 – except that, in this reversed variation he is two moves down! (White already has d2-d4 and it is his turn as well.) Presumably Stein reasons that the position is relatively closed, so a couple of tempi should not be taken too seriously. Black intends a triangle formation in the centre with pawns on d5, e6 and c6 to shut out White's light-squared bishop.

L.Polugaevsky-A.Miles, Biel 1990, continued more flexibly with 4 ... e6 5 f4 c6 6 Bg2 g6 7 Nd2 Bg7 8 c3 Nd7 9 a4 Ne7 10 0-0 (after 10 a5 0-0 11 a6?! b5, White merely has a weak a-pawn, according to Miles) 10 ... 0-0 11 Re1 Qc7 12 Nf3 Rac8 13 Bd2 Rfd8 14 Qc2 and only now did Black strike back in the centre with 14 ... c5. Chances are equal, though the true fighter Miles managed to win in 56 moves.

5 Bg2

It looks more logical to strive for the opening of more lines, commencing with 5 c4.

5 ... e6 6 0-0 Nd7 7 Qe2 c6 8 f4

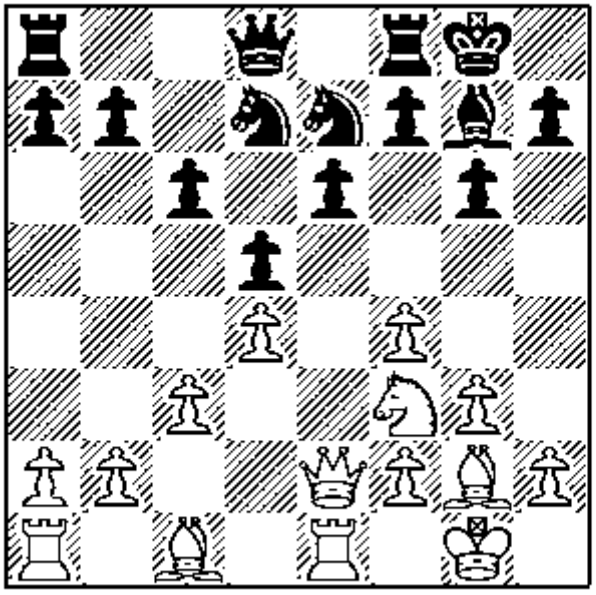


Exercise: How does Black defend against the advancing f-pawn?

Answer: 8 ... Ne7

Obviously it is very important to stop f4-f5 which would liberate the c1-bishop and help White get rid of his doubled pawns, as well as undermine Black's centre. As Stein intends to fianchetto his dark-squared bishop, 8 ... Ne7 is the most flexible choice. Compare this with 8 ... Nh6, when Black is almost forced to place it on f5 sooner or later.

9 Nd2 g6 10 Nf3 Bg7 11 c3 0-0 12 Re1

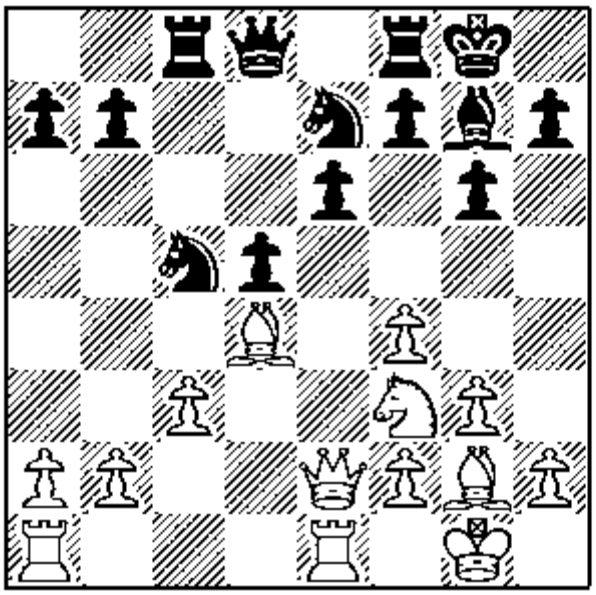


Exercise: How can Black make use of his flexible position?

Answer: 12 ... c5!

A good move, putting pressure on the d4-pawn as well as releasing c6 as a possible square for the e7-knight.

13 dxc5 Nxc5 14 Be3 Rc8 15 Bd4



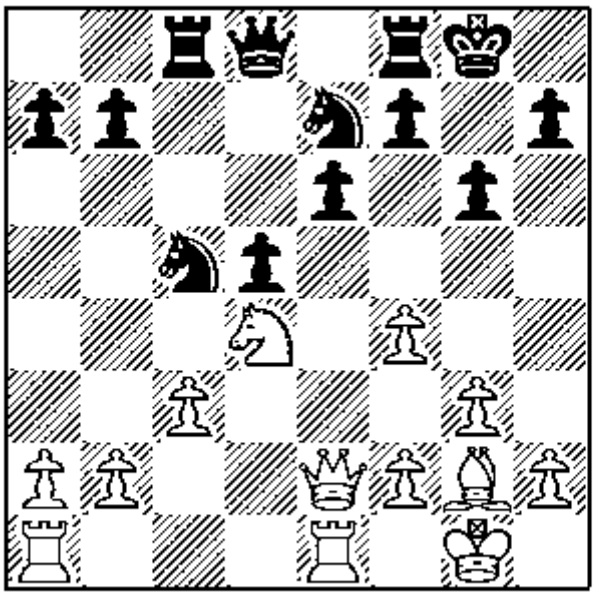
Exercise: What is Black's most precise response?

15 ... Bxd4

Answer: Actually, 15 ... Nf5! (after all) 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 is more accurate, when the black knights have good potential for effective manoeuvrability. Black can aim for ... Nd6, ... Qb6 and ... Rfd8 with a harmonious set-up.

16 Nxd4

16 cxd4?! only makes White's position less compact, with an isolated d-pawn and three islands to Black's two. Then 16 ... Ne4, followed by ... Nd6, gives Black the slightly better game, since White's g2-bishop bites on granite.



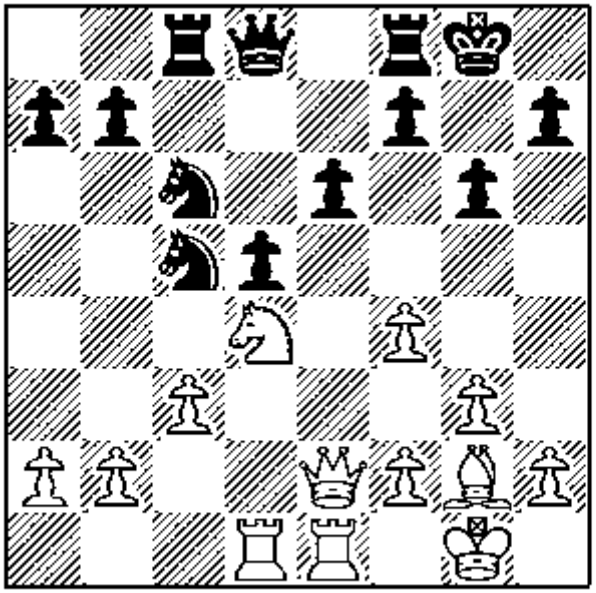
Question: It is standard advice to try and exchange passive pieces for the opponent's active ones. Which specific piece do we want to exchange and how do we do it?

Answer: 16 ... Nc6

Black benefits from the trade of his e7-knight for the centralized knight on d4. The question is how to do it in the most correct manner. Stein's move is the most natural solution, though 16 ... Nf5 17 Nxf5 gxf5 is fully playable too: 18 c4?! does not work due to 18 ... dxc4 and if 19 Qxc4?? then 19 ... Nd3; while after 18 Rad1 Qf6, White still cannot play c3-c4 because of the pressure on the b2-pawn, so Black can aim for ... a7-a6 and ... b7-b5 with equality.

The exchange of queens with 16 ... Qb6 and ... Qa6 would also be worthwhile, since the queen at e2 must be regarded as slightly more active than the queen at d8. The problem is that White can easily avoid it; for example, by 17 Rad1 Qa6 18 Qe3!, which leaves the black queen slightly misplaced, and 18 ... Qxa2?? loses on the spot to 19 Ra1 Qc4 (or 19 ... Qxb2 20 Reb1) 20 Bf1.

17 Rad1



Exercise: It is time to develop the queen. What location is the best?

Answer: 17 ... Qf6

Going the other way with 17 ... Qb6 leaves the kingside undefended, which White can instantly exploit by the surprising 18 f5! exf5 19 Bxd5 with a slight advantage due to his queenside pawn majority and more centralized pieces. Instead, 18 ... gxf5? runs into 19 Bxd5! exd5 (or 19 ... Nxd4 20 cxd4 exd5 21 dxc5 Rxc5 22 Qe5 and White has a clear advantage in the major piece ending where the king's safety is the number one factor) 20 Nxf5 Kh8 21 Qh5 Nb8 22 Rxd5 Qg6 23 Qd1, when White has an undisputed advantage. All of his pieces are very actively placed, whereas Black's have lost their co-ordination and his material superiority is only temporary as he is powerless against the threat of Ne7 next move.

18 Nxc6

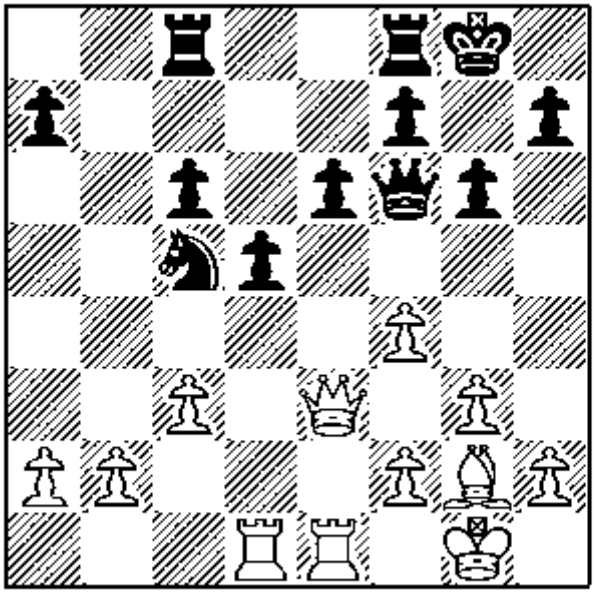
This is exactly what Black wants. If the knights are to be exchanged it is far better, from White's perspective, that this takes place on e5 in order to eliminate the doubled pawns. Hence White should play 18 Nf3 and then recentralize the knight with 19 Ne5. The main principle is only to agree to exchanges beneficial to oneself, as the great Capablanca did.

Exercise: How does Black recapture?

Answer: 18 ... bxc6

After this the g2-bishop is further cemented in because c3-c4 now has no power at all. Instead, 18 ... Rxc6? is a strategic mistake due to 19 c4 Rb6 20 Qe3! followed by 21 cxd5 and Black has a headache. In fact even 20 b3 is good, as after 20 ... dxc4 21 Qxc4, White dominates the centre with a clear advantage.

19 Qe3



Exercise: What is Black's strongest move?

Answer: 19 ... Na4!

Black moves the en prise knight to put pressure on the weak b2-pawn. White cannot simply play 20 b3 as the c3-pawn would hang. The position is now completely equal.

20 Qd4??

Or was. There is no reason to give the pawn away. Patient defence with 20 Qd2 Rb8 21 Rb1 is indicated, when White has nothing to fear. The knight is not stronger than the white bishop because it lacks an effective outpost and will soon be driven back to b6.

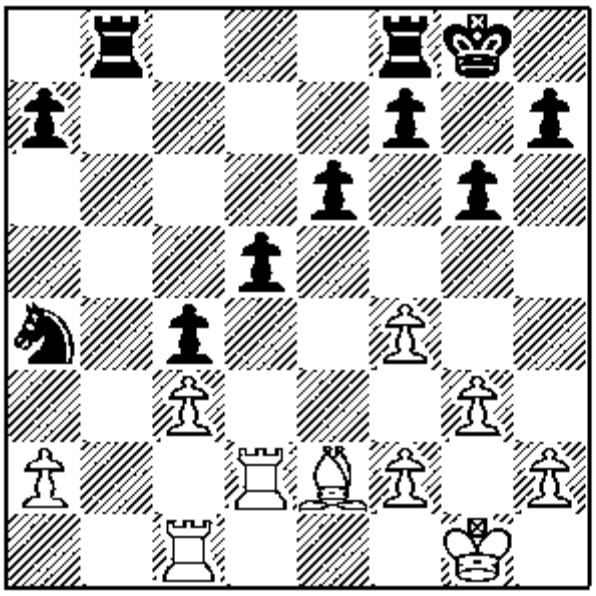
20 ... Qxd4 21 Rxd4 Nxb2

The game is over when you win a wing pawn, as Bronstein used to say. This is what chess is all about, to attack pawn weaknesses which lack natural protection. The really bad thing about losing the b2-pawn is that White now has two further pawn weaknesses at a2 and c3. Note that the knight cannot be trapped (which Donne perhaps thought) because ... c6-c5 will drive the white rook from the fourth rank.

22 Bf1 Rb8 23 Rb1 c5 24 Rd2 Na4 25 Rc1 c4

Fixing the weak pawn (on c3) as a target, as Nimzowitsch advised.

26 Be2



Exercise (planning): What is the most appropriate plan to decide the game?

Answer: 26 ... Rb6

Black aims simply to double rooks on the b-file and swap them off, leaving the c3-pawn virtually indefensible.

27 Bd1 Nc5 28 Be2 Rfb8 29 f5

Desperation!

29 ... Rb1

Obviously 29 ... gxf5 and 29 ... Rb2 are good moves too.

30 Rxb1 Rxb1+ 31 Kg2 Rc1 0-1

The f5-pawn is irrelevant; after the one on c3 falls, Black will have two deadly, connected passed pawns.

A good game by Stein, even if his opponent made it easy for him with his 20th move.

In the Ukrainian Spartakiad, which took place in December before the USSR Championship, Stein played on top board and achieved five wins and two draws. Here is one of the wins. Nothing appears to be known about his opponent.

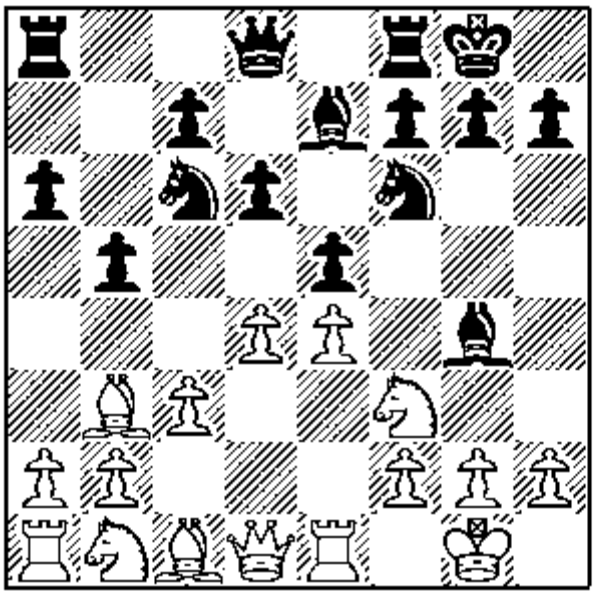
Game 39
L.Stein-Gershberg
Ukrainian Spartakiad, Dnipropetrovsk 1966
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4

This thrust a frequently choice of the six-time British Champion Frederick Yates (1884-1932), after whom the variation is sometimes named. White brings the battle to the centre without wasting time on 9 h3.

9 ... Bg4

The critical response to White's set-up. As a rule this is a strong move in the Ruy Lopez when White has placed the pawn on d4, because the pin exerts pressure on the centre, forcing White to react accordingly.



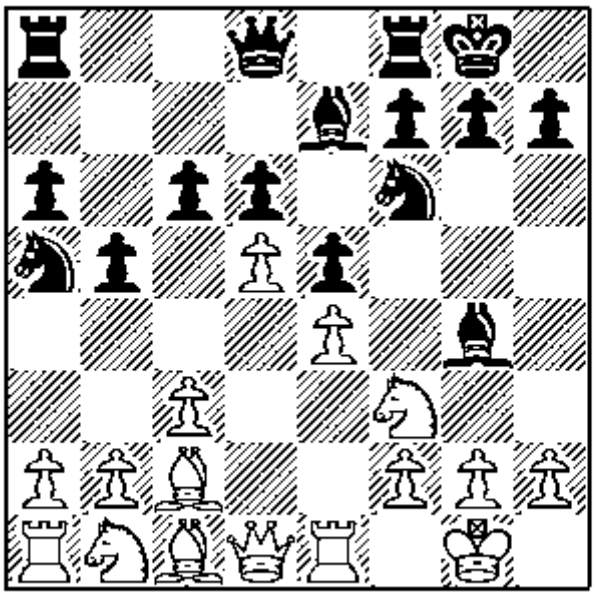
Exercise: How does White deal with the attack on the d-pawn?

Answer: 10 d5

Stein opted for this resolute continuation, blockading the centre and securing a space advantage, in all nine of his games with this line.

Yates' own preference was 10 Be3, keeping the centre more fluid, which is the topical choice in today's top-level chess. The famous game R.J.Fischer-V.Korchnoi, Stockholm Interzonal 1962, continued 10 ... exd4 (not 10 ... Nxe4? because of the fork 11 Bd5, which is the tactical justification of White's move, when the forced sequence 11 ... Qd7 12 Bxe4 d5 13 Bxh7+ Kxh7 14 dxe5 leaves White a pawn up; if 14 ... Qf5 then 15 Nd4! Nxd4 16 Qxd4 or 15 ... Qg6 16 f3 Bh3 17 Qc2 with a safe advantage) 11 cxd4 Na5 12 Bc2 Nc4 13 Bc1 c5 14 b3 Na5 (14 ... Nb6 is the safest route to equality) 15 d5!, preventing the a5-knight from returning to the vital sectors of the board.

10 ... Na5 11 Bc2 c6



Exercise: Again, how does White deal with the attack on the d-pawn?

Answer: 12 h3

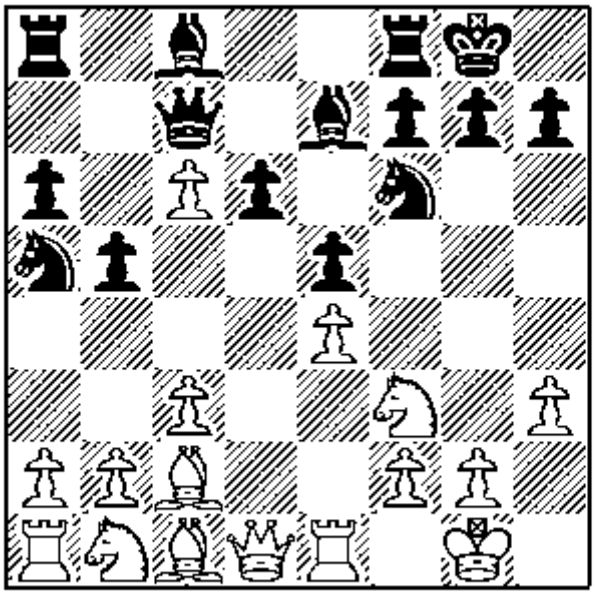
Stein later switched to playing 12 dxc6 first, but this is less precise since the absence of the d5-pawn allows Black's bishop to retreat to e6. L.Stein-E.Geller, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1971, continued 12 ... Qc7 13 Nbd2 Qxc6 14 h3 Be6 15 Ng5 (if 15 Nf1 then 15 ... Nc4) 15 ... Bd7 16 Qe2 h6 17 Ngf3 Rfc8 18 Nf1 Be6 19 Bd3 Nb7 20 Ng3 Nc5 21 Bc2 Bf8 and Black was slightly better.

12 ... Bc8

Not 12 ... Bd7?! which runs into the tactical finesse 13 Nxe5! dxe5 14 d6 and White gains the bishop pair with a slight advantage.

Perhaps one reason for Stein's change of heart was an earlier loss to Geller after 12 ... Bxf3 13 Qxf3 cxd5 14 exd5 (Yates also lost twice to Rubinstein from this position) 14 ... Rc8 (the main line is 14 ... Nc4 15 Nf1 Nb6 with pressure on the d5-pawn) 15 Nd2 g6?! 16 Bd3 (White can improve with 16 b4! Nc4 17 Nxc4 Rxc4 18 a4, as in L.Vogt-E.Geller, Dortmund 1991) 16 ... Nh5 17 a4 f5 18 axb5! e4 19 Nxe4?! (19 Bxe4! was the right piece to sacrifice) 19 ... fxe4 20 Qxe4 Nb3 21 Rxa6 Nxc1 22 Rxc1 Bh4 23 Rc2 Rc7 24 g3 Bxg3 25 fxg3 Qg5?? (25 ... Re7! 26 Qd4 Re1+ 27 Kh2 Qg5 28 g4 Nf4 29 Rf2 Qh4 30 Rxf4 leads to a draw) 26 g4?? (returning the favour; 26 h4! Qxg3 27 Rg2 wins for White) 26 ... Re7! 27 Qd4 Qh4 and Black had a decisive attack in L.Stein-E.Geller, Kislovodsk 1966, a game which effectively decided first place.

13 dxc6 Qc7



Exercise (planning): Suggest a continuation for White.

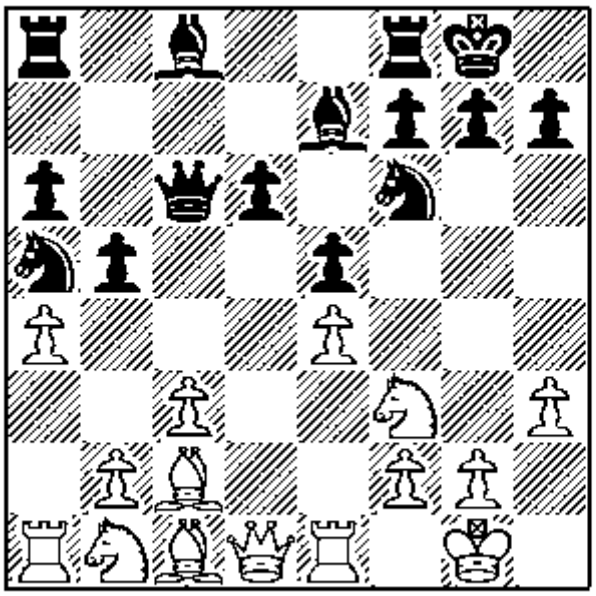
Answer: 14 a4

This move is logical with the knight still on b1, leaving the option of putting more fire on the b5-pawn with Na3. Instead, J.Timman-B.Spassky, Montreal 1979, saw 14 Nbd2 Qxc6 15 Nf1 Nc4 16 Ng3 Re8 and only then 17 a4, but it is difficult to increase the pressure on the b5-pawn with the knights placed on the opposite wing. The game continued 17 ... Bb7 18 Bd3

Bf8 19 Qe2 d5 20 axb5 axb5 21 Rxa8 Bxa8 22 exd5 Nxd5 23 Nf5 and the game soon ended in a draw. Note that Black's strongly centralized knights limit the effects of 23 b3?!. After 23 ... Nd6 or 23 ... Nxc3 24 Qc2 Nd6 25 Bxh7+ Kh8, Black's position is more harmonious than White's.

14 ... Qxc6

Another option is 14 ... b4 15 cxb4 Nxc6 16 Bd2 Qb7! and Black won back the pawn with at least equality in V.Malaniuk-V.Smyslov, USSR Championship, Moscow 1988.



Exercise: So, what is the best square for the b1-knight?

Answer: 15 Nbd2

Presumably Stein did not like 15 Na3 because of 15 ... Nc4!, when Black gets to exchange his offside knight. L.Ljubojevic-N.Short, Amsterdam 1988, continued 16 Bd3 Nxa3 17 Rxa3 Be6 18 Qe2 bxa4 19 Bc2 Rfc8 20 Rxa4 and now rather than 20 ... h6?!, which allows 21 Nh4! and Nf5 with a slight initiative, Black should have played 20 ... a5! after which he has no problems whatsoever.

15 ... Be6

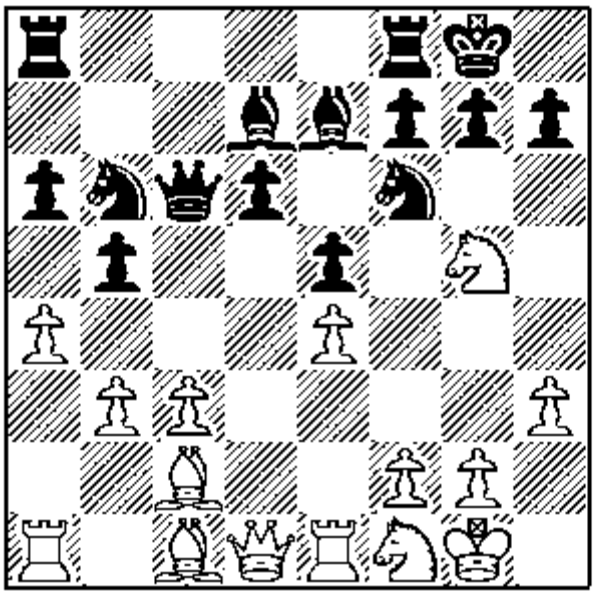
Now 15 ... Nc4 is answered by 16 Nf1, avoiding exchanges and maintaining the tension in the position.

16 Ng5 Bd7 17 Nf1 Nc4?!

Although it looks natural to centralize the knight, it is actually better to wait with this and see whether there are any possibilities to exploit the half-open c-file with ... b5-b4 at some point. For instance, after 17 ... h6 18 Nf3 Be6 19 Ng3 Rfc8, Black already begins to threaten ... b5-b4, and if White takes precautions against it with a move like 20 Re2, the harmony in his position will be disturbed.

18 b3 Nb6?!

Black should admit his mistake and put the knight back on a5.



Exercise: What is the problem with Gershberg's move?

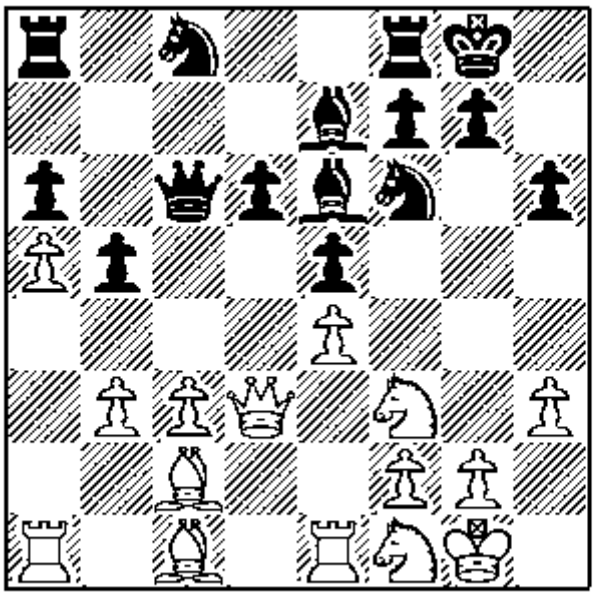
Answer: 19 a5

Now the knight has to withdraw to a rather passive square on the back rank.

19 ... Nc8 20 Qd3!

The most active way of defending the c3-pawn.

20 ... h6 21 Nf3 Be6



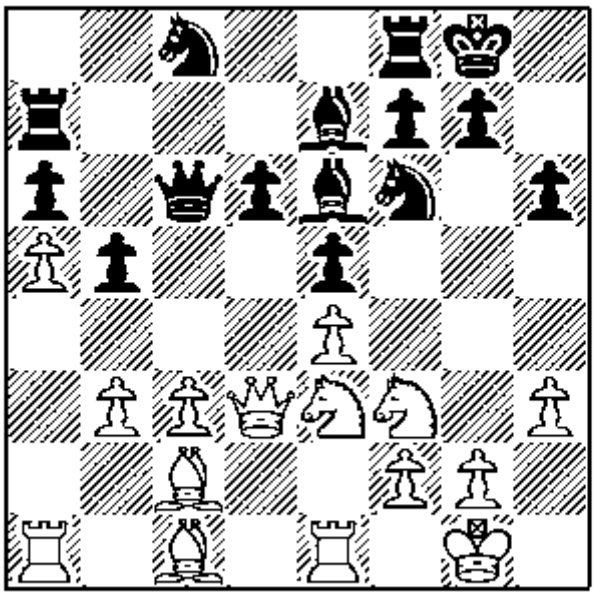
Exercise: Where does the f1-knight want to go?

Answer: 22 Ne3

22 Ng3 would allow Black to solve the problem of his problem knight with 22 ... Bd8! and ... Ne7, giving it the important function of covering the d5- and f5-squares; whereas now 22 ... Bd8 can be strongly answered by 23 c4!, followed by Nd5 at the right moment.

22 ... Ra7

The rook cannot move along the back rank with the c8-knight in the way, so it accesses the second rank instead.



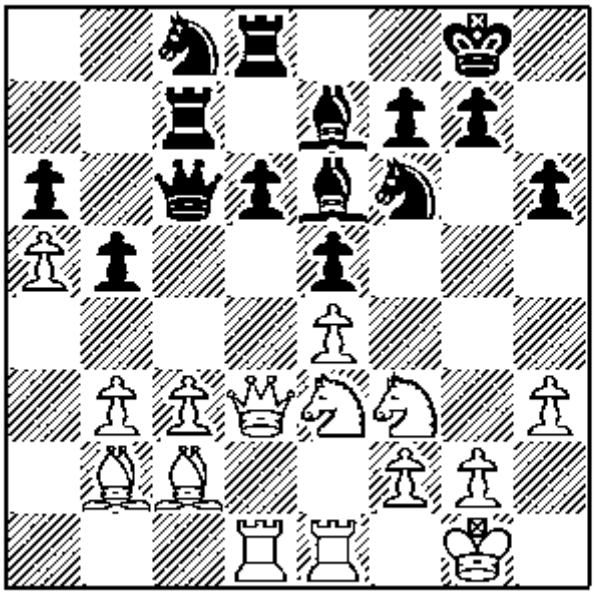
Exercise (planning): How can White deal with the coming pressure on the c3-pawn? Suggest a set-up a few moves ahead.

Answer: 23 Bb2

Stein prefers calm development before deciding on a definite plan. This is a practical decision, and Karpov too would probably have played in a similar manner.

A more concrete approach (and therefore less practical) is 23 c4 Rc7 (after 23 ... bxc4?! 24 bxc4 Rc7 25 Nd2, followed by Nd5, White is clearly on top) 24 Nd2 with a comfortable edge.

23 ... Rc7 24 Rad1 Rd8



Exercise: White's development is complete; how did Stein proceed?

Answer: 25 Nd5 Bxd5

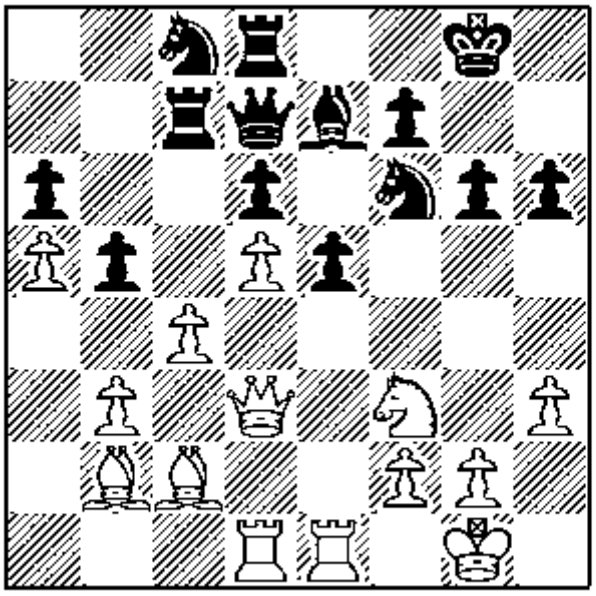
Black is practically forced to exchange the powerful knight and give White the luxury of the bishop pair. After the passive 25 ... Rcd7, White simply improves his position with 26 c4.

26 exd5 Qd7?!

Either 26 ... Qb7 or 26 ... Qc5 was better, preventing c3-c4 which opens more avenues into Black's slightly disorientated position.

27 c4 g6

Closing the b1-h7 diagonal before White breaks through with Nd2 and f2-f4, or even 28 Nxe5 dxe5 29 Bxe5.



Exercise: How does White start a strong attack?

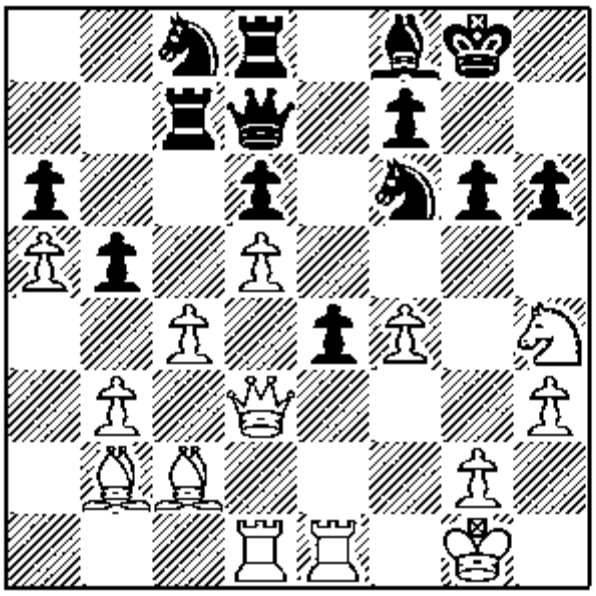
Answer: 28 Nh4!

This is clearly the strongest move since it has a dual purpose: threatening a knight sacrifice on g6 as well as the decisive break f2-f4, opening up the long dark diagonal.

28 ... Bf8

This defends against the threat to g6 but not the pawn thrust. Black is actually powerless against the coming assault and we can only admire Stein's attacking technique.

29 f4 e4



Exercise (combination alert): Can you see the most decisive follow-up?

Answer: 30 Rxe4! Nxe4

Here 30 ... Bg7 is more stubborn, but then Black is just a pawn down for nothing.

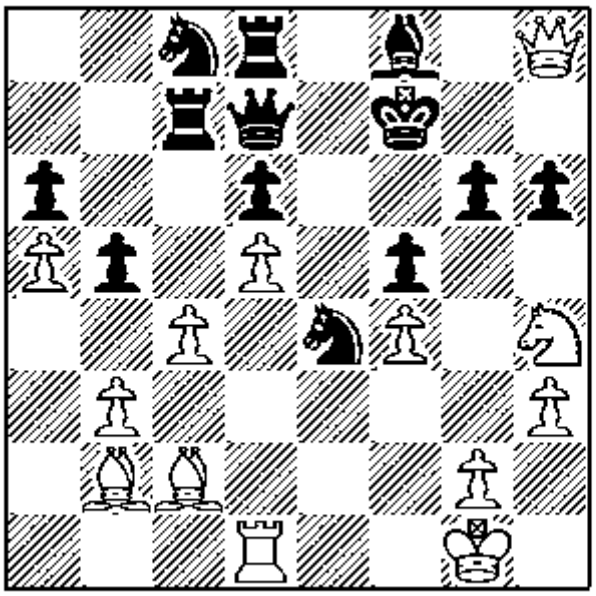
31 Qd4!

This intermediary move, forcing the black f-pawn to move with further weaknesses, is the main point of the sacrifice.

31 ... f5?!

Black tries to hang onto his material gains. Objectively, preventing the intrusion on the long dark diagonal with 31 ... f6 is stronger, though 32 Bxe4 Bg7 33 Bxg6 f5 34 Qd2 Bxb2 35 Qxb2 still gives White a devastating attack after, for example, 35 ... Qg7 (or 35 ... bxc4 36 Nxf5) 36 Qe2 Qf6 37 Qh5 Ne7 38 Re1 bxc4 39 bxc4 Qd4+ 40 Kh1 Qxf4 41 Bf7+ Kh8 42 Re6 and so on.

32 Qh8+ Kf7



Exercise (calculation): What is White's most convincing win?

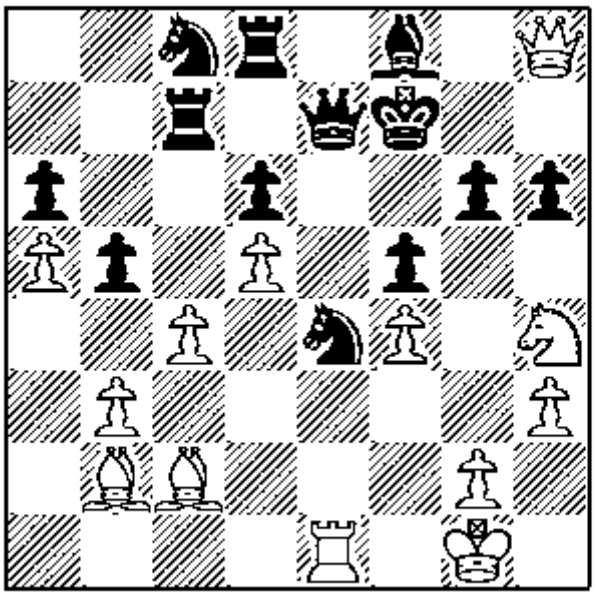
33 Re1?!

This time the execution is stronger than the threat.

Answer: 33 Bxe4! fxe4 (the 'fork' 33 ... Qe7 loses to 34 Nxg6! Qxe4 35 Qh7+ Ke8 36 Qxc7 etc) 34 Re1 is crushing since there is no good way to defend the e4-pawn: 34 ... Qe7 (34 ... Re8? 35 Qh7+ mates at once) 35 Nxg6! Kxg6 36 f5+, when 36 ... Kxf5 37 Qg8!! (37 Rxe4! also wins) and 36 ... Kh5 37 Qd4!! (37 Bf6! also wins) 37 ... Qe5 38 Qd1+ both lead to forced mate (such quiet moves in the middle of a combination were typical of the great Akiba Rubinstein); 36 ... Kf7 37 f6 Qd7 38 Qh7+ Ke8 39 Qxe4+ Ne7 40 Qg6 is mate again; while 36 ... Kg5 loses the queen after 37 Bf6+! Qxf6 38 h4+ Kxf5 39 Rf1+.

33 ... Qe7?

The last hope was 33 ... bxc4, so that 34 Bxe4 can be met by 34 ... c3!, while after 34 bxc4?? Rxc4 35 Bd3 Rb4, Black controls the e4-square and even wins, and 34 Qh7+? Ke8 35 Qxg6+ Qf7 36 Qxf5 Qxf5 37 Nxf5 Ne7 leads to an equal game. Instead, White has to find 34 Bd4!! (threatening Bxe4 again, now that the dark-squared bishop cannot be blocked) 34 ... Qe7 35 Nxg6! (still not 35 Bxe4?! due to 35 ... Qxh4!) 35 ... Kxg6 and then 36 Bxe4 fxe4 37 f5+ wins in exactly the same manner as after 33 Bxe4! above (except for 37 ... Kh5 38 Bf6!, since 38 Qd4 is impossible).



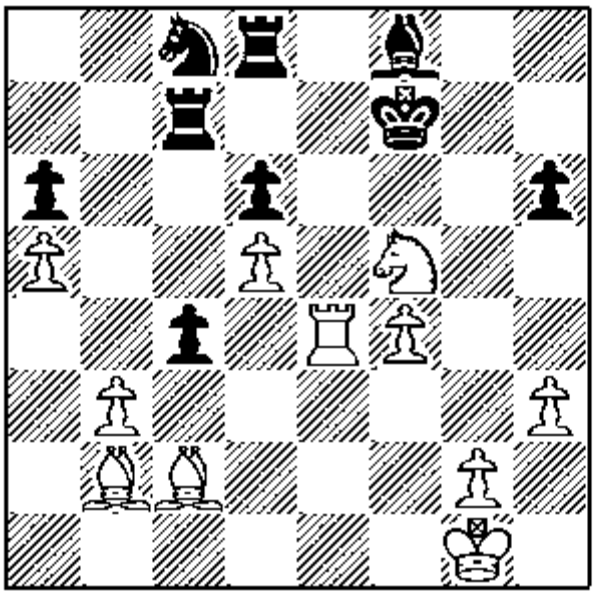
Exercise (calculation): How can White decide the game?

34 Qh7+

This pragmatic move is good enough to win, since White ends up with three pawns for the exchange, plus a significantly more active position; but there is prettier solution along lines we have seen before.

Answer: 34 Nxg6! Kxg6 35 Bxe4 Kf7!? (35 ... fxe4 36 f5+ transposes to 33 Bxe4! etc) 36 Qxf5 (threatening Qh5+) 36 ... Qf7 (or 36 ... Rdd7 37 Qh5+ Kd8 38 Bf6!) 37 Bf3+ Re7 38 Bh5 Rxe1+ 39 Kf2 Re7 40 Bf6! Qxh5 41 Qxh5+ Kd7 52 Bxe7, followed by 53 cxb5, when Black's three uncoordinated pieces are helpless against White's queen and passed pawns.

34 ... Ke8 35 Qxg6+ Qf7 36 Qxf5 Qxf5 37 Nxf5 Kf7 38 Rxe4 bxc4



Exercise: How to recapture the c4-pawn?

Answer: 39 Rxc4

Either way should win – or even not at all, since 39 Nd4 looks strong too. After the other recapture, 39 bxc4, active defence with 39 ... Re8 40 Rxe8 Kxe8 41 Bd3 Rb7 42 Bd4 Rb3 43 Be2 Ra3 fails to 44 Bh5+ Kd8 45 Ng7! Bxg7 (not 45 ... Rxa5? 46 Ne6+ Ke7 47 f5 and the f8-bishop is no more) 46 Bxg7 Rxa5 47 f5 Nb6 48 Bxh6 Nxc4 49 f6 Ne5 50 f7 Nxf7 51 Bxf7, when the bishops and kingside pawns will beat the rook and a-pawn.

39 ... Rc5

After 39 ... Rxc4 40 bxc4 Ne7 41 Bd4 Nxf5 42 Bxf5 Rb8 43 Be6+ Ke8 44 Bb6, Black is unable to activate his rook, while the kingside pawns will march down the board.

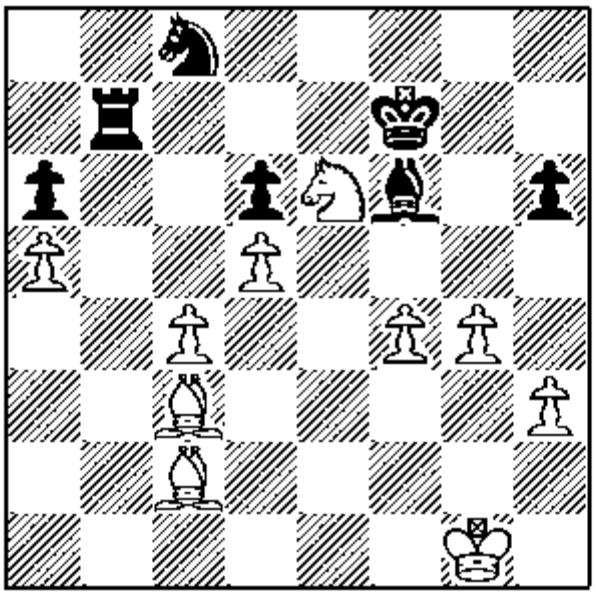
40 Nd4

White sets up the major threat of Ne6. Simplification with 40 Rxc5 dxc5 41 Bd3 Nd6 42 Nxd6+ Bxd6 (or 42 ... Rxd6 43 Be5) 43 g3 would also win, but on general principles it makes sense to keep Black's forces restricted and let him feel the hopelessness of his position.

40 ... Rd7 41 Ne6 Rxc4 42 bxc4 Be7 43 g4

The many pawns in White's possession are clearly too much for the black army – the rook does not even have an entry square on the open b-file.

43 ... Rb7 44 Bc3 Bf6



Exercise: White has a neat continuation; can you see it?

Answer: 45 g5! hxg5

45 ... Bxc3 allows 46 Nd8+ and 47 Nxb7, when White is just three pawns up.

46 fxg5 Be7 47 Bh7

Threatening to promote the g-pawn. Otherwise, White could just march the h-pawn down the board.

47 ... Ke8 48 Bg6+ Kd7 49 Bc2 Bd8?

A final error in a losing position.

50 Ba4+ 1-0

White wins the house after 50 ... Ke7 51 Bf6+ Kf7 52 Nxd8+, so Gershberg resigned.

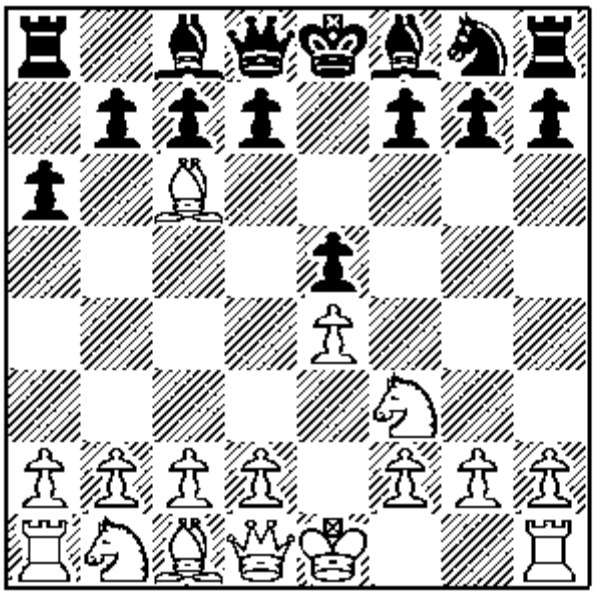
After the Spartakiad came the USSR Championship, which Stein won again, retaining his title from thirteen months before; in fact it was his third victory in a short span of only four years. This time his score was 13/20 with eight wins, two losses and ten draws; Geller was second on 12½ (despite winning their individual game), while Gipslis, Korchnoi and Taimanov shared third with 12 points.

The chief arbiter of the championship, Lev Abramov wrote about Stein's admirable achievement as follows in the final bulletin: "Only a very strong grandmaster can take first place in the USSR Championship. In order to win three championships out of the last four one is obviously an outstanding chess player. It is not by chance that besides Stein, only Botvinnik had succeeded in achieving this."

Here is a win from the twelfth round against Ratmir Kholmov, who we met in Game 25.

Game 40
L.Stein-R.Kholmov
USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1966
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6



This is the only serious game on record where Stein played the Exchange Variation. Presumably he was inspired by Fischer's success with it (3/3 against Portisch, Gligoric and Jimenez) at the Havana Olympiad earlier that same year. Fischer even put an exclamation mark after 4 Bxc6, and 4 ... dxc6 5 0-0 was promptly dubbed the "Fischer Variation". One of the benefits of the exchange is that the position becomes strategically unbalanced at a rather early stage of the game, while rendering 3 ... a6 virtually a non-move.

4 ... dxc6

4 ... bxc6 is not popular, as the last two moves have then contributed nothing to Black's development. One way to exploit this is 5 0-0 d6 6 d4 exd4 7 Nxd4 Bd7 (after 7 ... c5!? 8 Nc6 Qd7 9 Na5, the c8-bishop is a little embarrassed) 8 Re1 c5 9 Nf3 and White was slightly better in J.R.Capablanca-F.Marshall, New York (8th matchgame) 1909. Actually, 9 Nf5! was even stronger, since 9 ... g6 can be met by 10 Bd2!, intending 10 ... gxf5? 11 Bc3 and Black has no defence on the long dark diagonal as 11 ... f6? loses to 12 Qh5+ Ke7 13 exf5+ etc; but not 11 exf5+? Be7 12 Bc3 f6, when the king has an escape square on f8.

5 0-0

There is no point in playing 5 Nxe5?! just yet, as after 5 ... Qd4!, Black regains the pawn at once and remains with the bishop pair. But now White does threaten to take the pawn, so Black must to decide how to defend it. This method of playing was favoured by, variously, the German master Emil Schallopp, the American Neil Bernstein and the Dutch IM Johan Barendregt.

Instead, E.Gufeld-L.Stein, Toth Memorial, Kecskemet 1968, continued in a more old-fashioned way: 5 Nc3 f6 6 d4 exd4 7 Qxd4 Qxd4 8 Nxd4 Bd7 9 Bf4 0-0-0 10 0-0-0 Ne7 11 f3 Ng6 12 Bg3 Bd6 13 Bxd6 cxd6 14 Nde2 Kc7 15 Rd2 Rhe8 16 Rhd1 Bc8 17 b3 Ne5 18 Nf4 g6 19 Nd3 and a draw was agreed.

5 ... Bg4

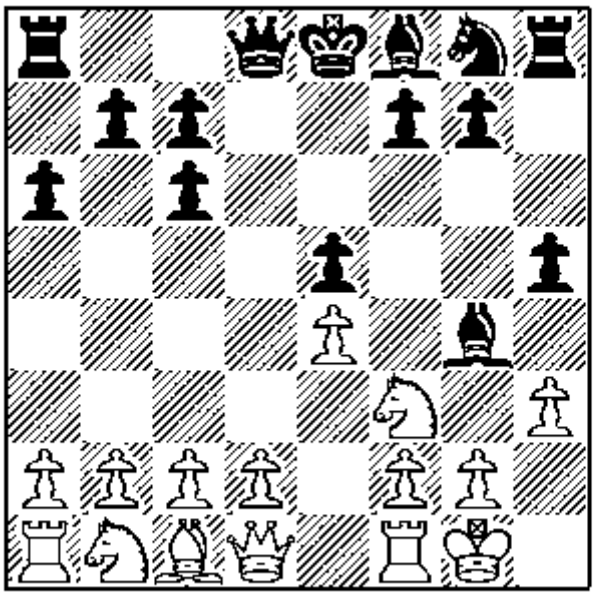
The most ambitious and aggressive choice, its only downside being that Black will very likely lose the bishop pair. Other options are 5 ... Bd6, 5 ... Qd6 and 5 ... Qf6; as well as 5 ... Be6, 5 ... Be7 and 5 ... Ne7, which 'defend' the pawn by blocking the e-file and so enabling 6 Nxe5 Qd4 once more.

From the other side, Stein opted again for 5 ... f6, which is regarded as the most solid

response. V.Savon-L.Stein, Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1971, continued 6 d4 Bg4 7 c3 Bd6 8 Be3 Qd7 9 h3 exd4 10 Bxd4 Be6? (a strangely passive move from Stein, considering the options available – Black should not release the pin; better is either 10 ... Bh5 with equal chances or even the spectacular 10 ... Bxh3!? 11 gxh3 Qxh3 intending 12 Re1 0-0-0 with full compensation, if not more, for the sacrificed piece) 11 e5! fxe5 12 Nxe5 Bxe5 (12 ... Qe7 13 Qh5+ Bf7 14 Nxf7 Qxf7 15 Qg4 is also good for White with pressure against g7 and on the open e-file) 13 Qh5+ Qf7 14 Qxe5 Nf6 15 Re1 Kd7 16 Nd2 Rae8 17 Nf3 Qg6 18 Nh4 Qf7 19 Nf3 Qg6 and the players agreed a draw, though in fact White is still better here, as will be clear after 20 Qh2! Kc8 21 Ne5, followed by c3-c4, Re3 and Rae1 with strong centralization.

6 h3 h5

This is the main idea behind Black's set-up.



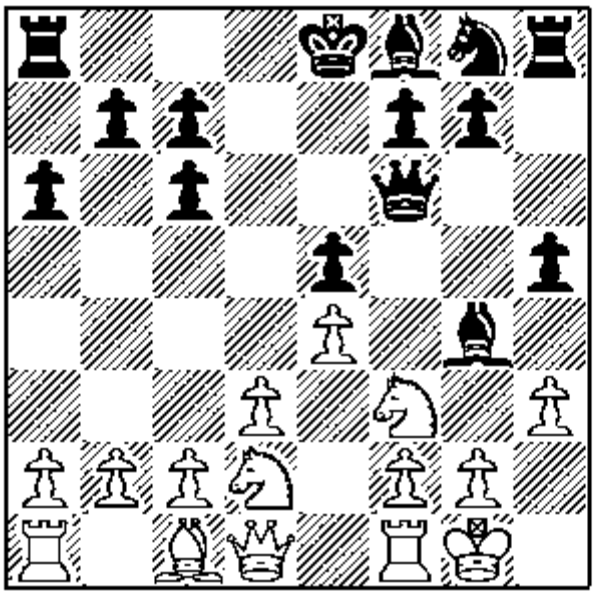
Exercise: What is now White's strongest continuation?

7 c3

The theory of this variation was not so well developed in those days, and Stein did not play the strongest move.

First of all, it should be pointed out that taking the bishop with 7 hxg4? hxg4 only gives Black serious play on the h-file. The likely continuation then is 8 d3 (White must return the piece since 8 Nh2?? Qh4 wins at once) 8 ... gxf3 9 Qxf3 Qh4 10 Qh3 Qxh3 11 gxh3 Rxh3 and Black emerges with an extra pawn.

Answer: 7 d3 is the correct continuation. In My 60 Memorable Games, Fischer analyses 7 ... Qf6 8 Nbd2 (8 Be3 Bxf3 9 Qxf3 Qxf3 10 gxf3 is a currently topical line) and now:



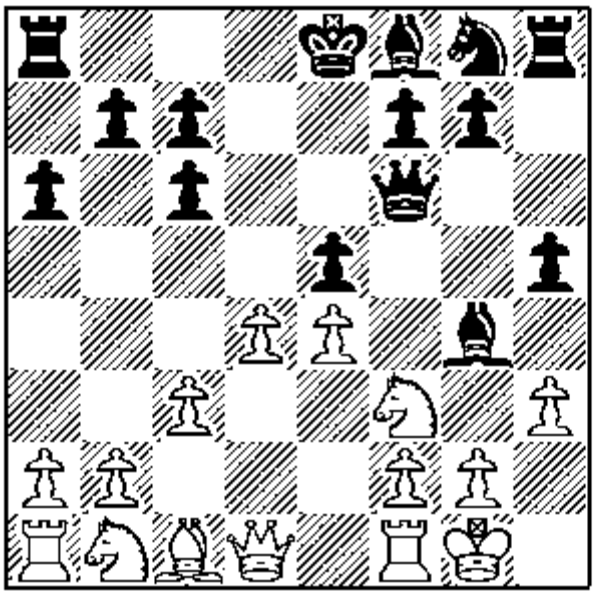
a) 8 ... g5 9 Nc4 (here 9 b3!? is interesting, avoiding doubled f-pawns) 9 ... Bxf3 10 Qxf3 Qxf3 11 gxf3 f6 12 h4 gxh4 13 f4 "with promising play for the pawn". D.Valerga-E.Matsuura, Vicente Lopez 2001, continued 13 ... exf4 (or 13 ... b5!? 14 Ne3!) 14 Bxf4 0-0-0 15 Kh2 Bh6 16 Bxh6 Nxh6 17 f3 Rhg8 18 Ne3 Rg5 and now 19 Kh3! is the strongest, using the king offensively in the endgame.

b) 8 ... Ne7 9 Re1 Ng6 10 d4 Bd6 (10 ... Nf4!? 11 hxg4 hxg4 12 g3 gxf3 13 Qxf3 Ne6 14 dxe5 Qxe5 15 Qf5 is another critical line) 11 hxg4 hxg4 12 Nh2 Rxh2! 13 Qxg4! Rh4 14 Qf5 "and White is slightly better". Play has mostly continued 14 ... Rf4 15 Qxf6 Rxf6 16 Nf3 Re6 17 dxe5 Nxe5 18 Nxe5 Bxe5, when the computers say "equal", though White clearly has all the chances with the undamaged pawn majority.

7 ... Qf6

Today, the following forced drawing variation is well known: 7 ... Qd3! 8 hxg4 (or 8 Re1 Bxf3 9 Qxf3 Qxf3 10 gxf3 0-0-0 11 Kf1 Ne7 12 Ke2 Ng6 13 d3 Be7 and Black has no problems, in view of the weaknesses in White's position) 8 ... hxg4 9 Nxe5 Bd6! 10 Nxd3 (or 10 Nxg4 Nf6!) 10 ... Bh2+ with perpetual check.

8 d4!



At the time, USSR coach Aleksandrs Koblencs wrote in Shakhmaty v SSSR: “One should give Stein’s courage its due! In such an important game he made up his mind to give away a pawn, although this sacrifice was full of risk.”

8 ... Bxf3

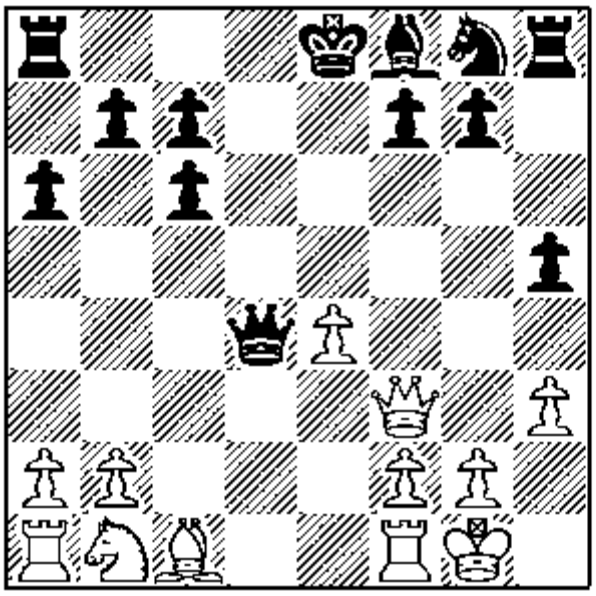
In W.Pietzsch-Z.Mestrovic, Sarajevo 1967, Black went for quick development with 8 ... Bd6 9 Nbd2 Ne7 10 Qb3 0-0-0 11 dxe5 Bxe5 12 Nxe5 Qxe5, but he might have run into slight trouble if, instead of 13 Re1, White had continued 13 Nc4! Qf6 14 Be3 Be6 15 Qb4 Bxc4 16 Qxc4 Ng6 17 f4 with bishop vs. knight and a healthy pawn majority.

9 Qxf3 exd4

Probably 9 ... Qxf3 10 gxf3 exd4 11 cxd4 0-0-0 is more precise, and if 12 Be3 then 12 ... g5!, intending 13 Bxg5 Rxd4 14 Nc3 Be7 15 Be3 Rc4!, followed by ... Bf6 and ... Ne7 with counterplay, while 16 f4? is answered by 16 ... Bb4! 17 f3 Bxc3 18 bxc3 c5 with a slight advantage. The text gives White the option of 10 Qg3!?, though Stein does not avail himself of it.

10 cxd4 Qxd4!?

A brave decision from Kholmov as well, who accepts the pawn and the challenge. Nobody since has cared to do so over the board. Instead, 10 ... Qxf3 11 gxf3 0-0-0 transposes to the previous note, or Black can play 10 ... 0-0-0 immediately.



Question: What is White's most principled reply?

Answer: 11 Nc3

This simple developing move is rather like Morphy's 9 Nc3 in the old main line of the Evans Gambit (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 b4 Bxb4 5 c3 Ba5 6 0-0 d6 7 d4 exd4 8 cxd4 Bb6). The revolution was that, instead of forcing the pace with a move like Anderssen's 9 d5, Morphy just developed with the purpose of preparing an attack on a larger scale utilizing all his pieces, including the a1-rook. Stein's move is certainly reminiscent of this historical moment.

Another possibility is 11 Rd1 Qf6 12 Bf4.

11 ... Bd6

11 ... 0-0-0 would be inconsistent as 12 Qxf7 regains the pawn with advantage; while Petrosian's suggestion of 11 ... Qf6!?, intending 12 Bf4 g5 (when 13 Bxc7 Qxf3 14 gxf3 is about equal), is met by 12 Qg3! Qe7 (12 ... Bd6?? fails to 13 e5! h4 14 Qh2 Qxe5 15 Qxe5 Bxe5 16 Re1 and wins) 13 Rd1 and the black king is stuck in the centre.

12 Bf4 Bxf4

Kholmov is consistent in his desire to hang on to the pawn. As Taimanov writes in The Soviet Championships: "A less bold player might have preferred to surrender his booty by 12 ... 0-0-0 13 Bxd6 cxd6 14 Qxf7 Qf6, thus increasing the harmony of his pieces".

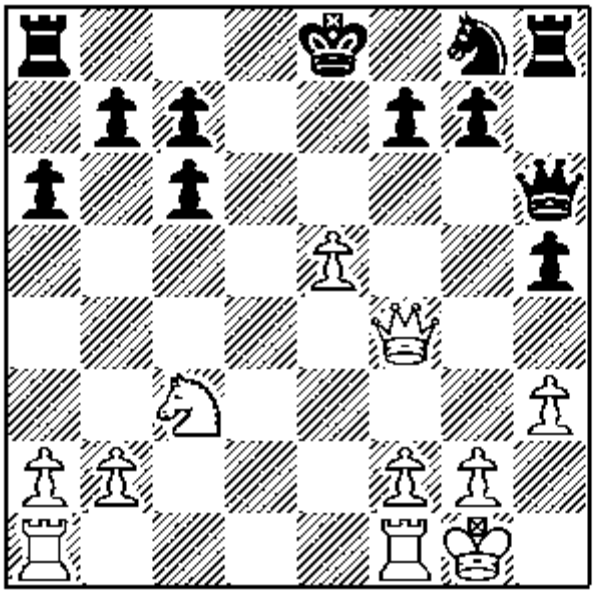
Another possibility is 12 ... g5 13 Bxg5 (or 13 Rad1 Qf6 14 Bxd6 Qxf3 15 gxf3 cxd6 16 Rxd6 Rh6 and so on) 13 ... Qe5! (the point) 14 Qg3 Qxg3 15 fxg3 Bxg3 16 e5 h4 17 Bf4 Rh5 18 Bxg3 hxg3 19 Rae1 Ke7 20 Re3 Rg5 21 Ne2 Rd8 with an equal endgame.

13 Qxf4 Qd6

The only good way to defend the c7-pawn.

14 e5 Qh6?!

The main drawback to putting the queen here is that the knight cannot use this square. Centralizing with 14 ... Qe6 is better; presumably Kholmov rejected this on account of 15 Ne4, followed by Nc5 or Ng5, but 15 ... Ne7 (not 15 ... b6?? 16 Ng5 Qg6 17 e6! and wins) 16 Nc5 Qh6 17 Qxh6 (or 17 Qd4 Rd8 18 Qe4 b6 19 Nxa6 Nd5 and castles) 17 ... Rxh6 18 Nxb7 Rb8 19 Nc5 Rxb2 20 Nxa6 Nd5 is safe enough.



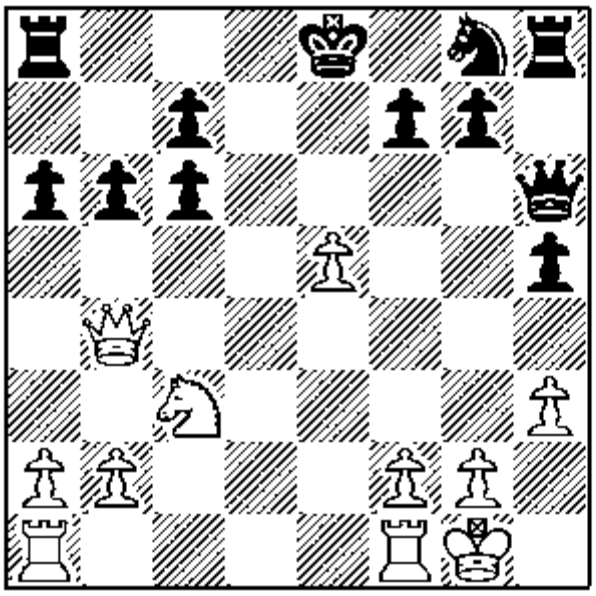
Exercise: What is the best way to exploit Black's inaccuracy?

Answer: 15 Qb4!

Avoiding the exchange of queens with gain of time.

15 ... b6

After 15 ... 0-0-0?, the white knight is obviously coming to c5, though not immediately: Petrosian's 16 Na4 is easily met by 16 ... Qd2!, when it is not possible for White to organize an attack; while Taimanov's 16 Ne4 also looks more dangerous than it is: after 16 ... Qg6! 17 Nc5 b6 18 Nxa6 Nh6, Black should survive the queenside onslaught; for example, 19 Rac1 Nf5 20 Rc4 Rhe8 21 Rfc1 Rxe5 22 Rxc6 Rd1+! 23 Kh2 Rxc1! 24 Rxg6 Ree1! and Black is not worse. The correct continuation is 16 Rfd1! Re8 and then 17 Ne4 Ne7 18 Nc5 b6 19 Qc4! bxc5 20 Qxa6+ Kb8 21 Rd3 Nd5 22 Rb3+ Nb6 (not 22 ... Nb4? 23 a3 and Black is mated in five moves) 23 a4 Rxe5 24 a5 Rhe8 25 axb6 Re1+ 26 Rxe1 Rxe1+ 27 Kh2 Qf4+ 28 Rg3 cxb6 29 Qxb6+ Kc8 30 Qxc6+ Kd8 31 Qd5+ Ke8 32 Qxh5 Qxf2 33 Rf3 and White is clearly better.



Exercise: How does White continue in the spirit of Morphy?

16 f4?!

Answer: The best way to exploit a lead in development is to open the position up, which White can do with 16 e6!. This kind of pawn sacrifice was characteristic of Morphy. Compare the position arising after only six moves in J.Schulten-P.Morphy, New York (blindfold match) 1857: 1 e4 e5 2 f4 d5 3 exd5 e4 4 Nc3 Nf6 5 d3 Bb4 6 Bd2 e3! – Morphy probably sacrificed this pawn for the sole purpose of opening the e-file, without any exact calculation.

Here 16 e6! fxe6 17 Rfe1 Ne7 18 Qc4 puts strong pressure on the black position; for example, 18 ... b5 (if 18 ... Kd7 19 Rad1+ Nd5 then 20 Ne2 and 21 Nd4; or 18 ... Kf7 19 Ne4, followed by h3-h4) 19 Qb3 Kf7 20 Ne4 and White has the twin threats of Nc5 and h3-h4, followed by Ng5+, which cannot be successfully parried.

16 ... a5 17 Qa3

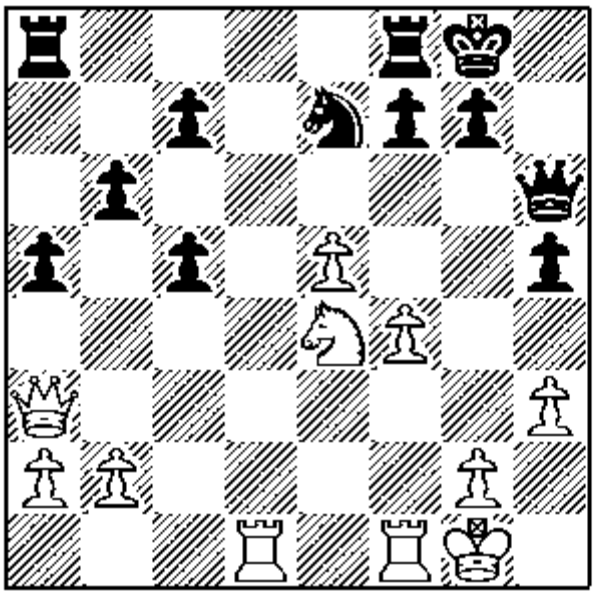
Keeping control of the a3-f8 and preventing Black from castling short, who can only solve this problem by weakening the queenside light squares slightly.

17 ... Ne7 18 Rad1 c5 19 Ne4

Stein is not interested in regaining the pawn with 19 Nb5, as this would mean giving up the initiative entirely after 19 ... 0-0! 20 Nxc7 Rad8 21 Qf3 Nf5.

19 ... 0-0

Securing the d7-square first with 19 ... Qc6 allows White a strong attack on the other side after 20 Ng5! 0-0 21 f5 and a clear advantage.



Exercise: How should White proceed?

20 Rd7

Taking possession of the seventh rank is perhaps not the most incisive course.

Answer: Advancing the kingside pawn majority in the spirit of Philidor with 20 f5! looks stronger. One illustrative variation is 20 ... Rad8 21 Rde1 Nd5 22 f6! (not 22 Qg3? because of 22 ... h4! and Black takes over the game) 22 ... Rfe8 23 fxg7 Rxe5 24 Qf3 f5 25 Ng3 Rxe1 (or 25 ... Ne3 26 Nxh5 Rde8 27 Rf2, followed by Rfe2) 26 Rxe1 Qf4 27 Qxf4 Nxf4 28 Nxf5 Kf7 29 Re4 Ng6 30 b3 Kf6 31 g4, when the strong combination of g7-pawn and f5-knight will be a constant problem for Black.

20 ... Nf5 21 Ng5!

If White restores the material balance with 21 Rxc7 straight away, then 21 ... Rad8 gives Black counterplay according to Taimanov, whereas now 21 ... Rad8?? loses to 22 Nxf7!.

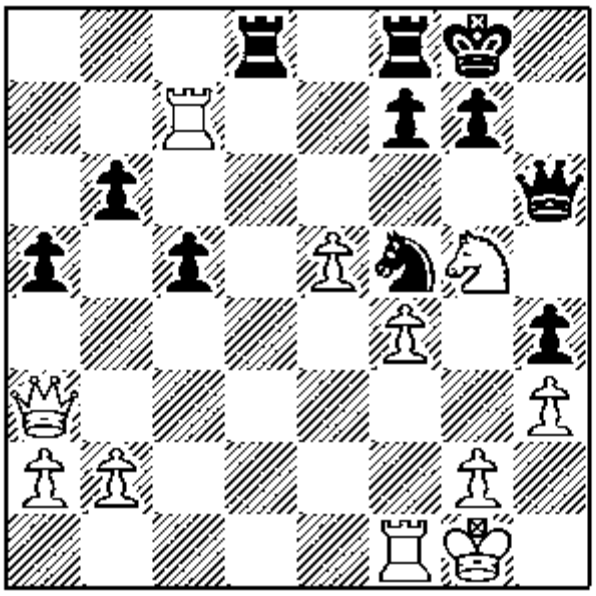
21 ... h4

Trying to hang on to material with 21 ... Qc6 would be risky after 22 Qd3! c4 (not 22 ... g6? 23 e6! fxe6 24 Rd1, threatening both Qc3 and g2-g4) 23 Qxf5 g6 24 Qf6 Qxd7 25 e6! fxe6 26 Qxg6+ Qg7 27 Qxe6+ Kh8 28 Qxc4 and White has all the chances, in view of his strong knight and the exposed black king.

22 Rxc7

White finally recovers his pawn. Another way is 22 Qd3 Nd4 23 Rxc7, but Stein has a different idea in mind.

22 ... Rad8



Exercise: What is White's strongest move?

Answer: 23 Qf3!

This is an excellent post for the white queen, creating threats of Rc6 at an appropriate moment, embarrassing the black queen.

23 ... Nd4

The knight hurries to take control of the c6-square – unnecessarily, since 24 Rc6? can be met by 24 ... Nd4! at the moment, so Black might well play 23 ... Qg6 instead. But not 23 ... Rd2?? 24 Rc6 Nd4, which fails to 25 Rxh6 Nxf3+ 26 Nxf3 and White wins material. This is one of the clever tactical points of 23 Qf3.

24 Qg4 Rde8

True to his own style Kholmov is not willing to passively await his doom like a sitting duck. With this move he both prevents f4-f5 and prepares ... f7-f6.

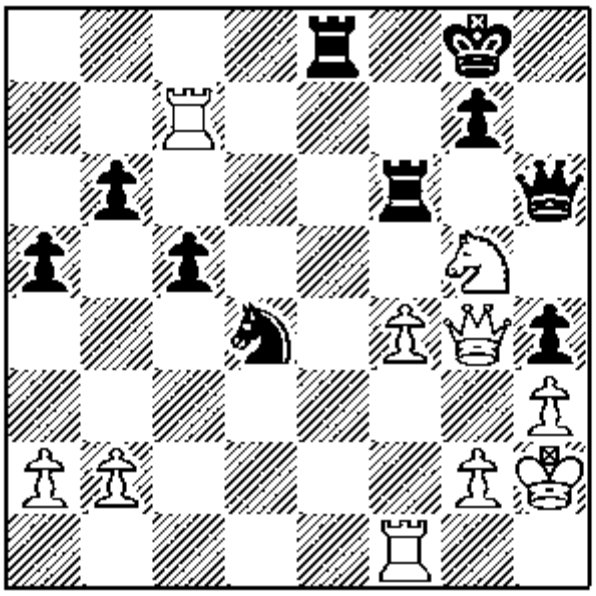
There is little else active to be done; for instance, 24 ... a4 allows 25 f5 and if 25 ... Ne2+ 26 Kh2 Ng3, then 27 Rf4! threatens either f5-f6 or e5-e6. Although Black can reduce the pressure with 27 ... Rd4, White nonetheless has a clear advantage after 28 Rxd4 cxd4 29 Rc1!, preventing ... Nf1+ and ... Ne3.

25 Kh2

A useful prophylactic move, avoiding a future knight check on e2.

25 ... f6 26 exf6 Rxf6

26 ... Qxf6? loses a pawn to 27 Qxh4, also threatening mate on h7.



Exercise: What is White's strongest move?

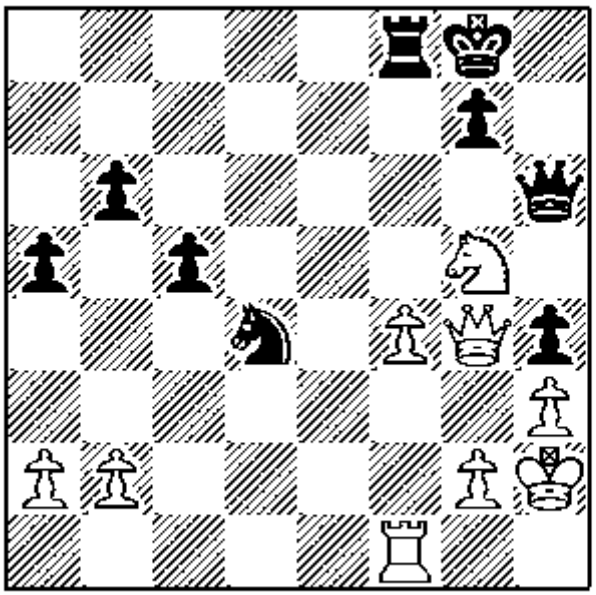
Answer: 27 Rc8!

Although it seems strange to exchange the rook on the seventh, by doing so White gains control of the open file where is able to activate his other one, while Black is left with his passive rook on the f-file.

27 ... Rxc8

Black cannot maintain a rook on the e-file with 27 ... Rff8?? because of 28 Rxe8 Rxe8 29 Qd7! and White wins by force: 29 ... Qg6 (both 29 ... Qh5 30 Qd5+ Ne6 31 Re1 and 29 ... Rf8 30 Qd5+ Kh8 31 Nf7+ win material too) 30 f5 Qh5 31 Qd5+ Kh8 32 f6 Ne6 (or 32 ... gxf6 33 Nf7+) 33 Qd7! etc.

28 Qxc8+ Rf8 29 Qg4



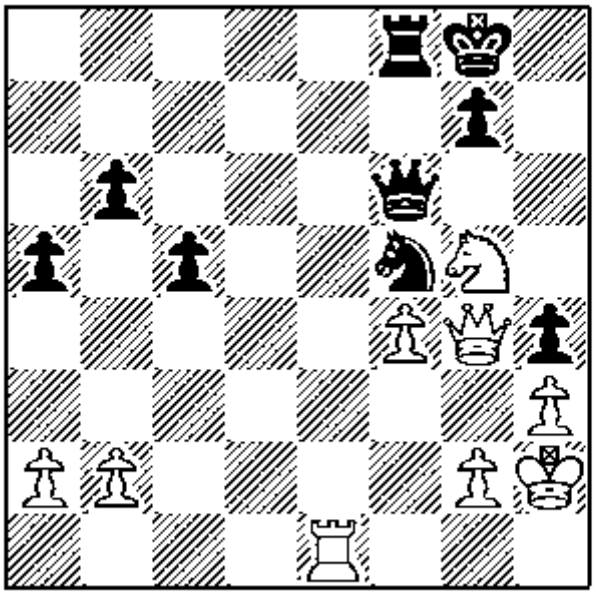
Question: Why does White put the queen back on g4 rather than d7?

Answer: By attacking the h4-pawn White limits the action of the black queen, whereas after 29 Qd7, Black can liberate it at once with either 29 ... Qg6 or 29 ... Qf6.

29 ... Nf5

Returning the knight to f5 is the only way to free up the queen. Note that 29 ... Re8?? loses to 30 Qd7! as before.

30 Re1 Qf6



Exercise (calculation): What is White's most precise continuation?

31 Qh5

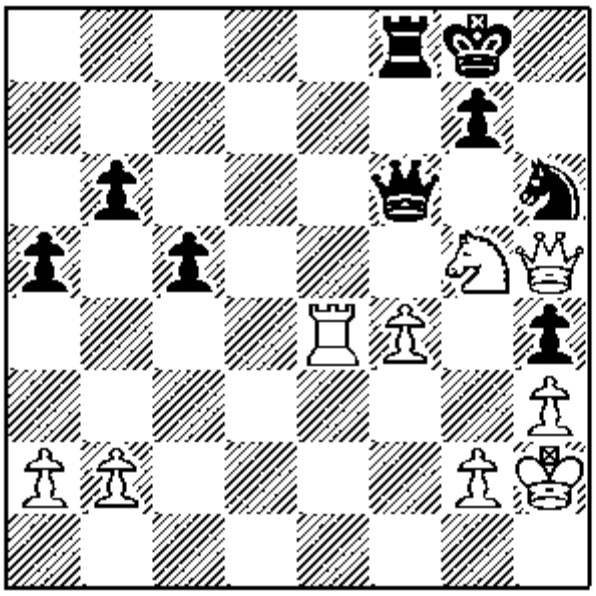
Answer: It is more accurate to activate the rook first with 31 Re6! Qd4 (not 31 ... Qxb2?? 32 Qh5 Nh6 33 Qg6 and Black is soon mated) 32 Re4 Qf6, and then play 33 Qh5 Nh6 (or 33 ... Qh6 34 Qd1 Nd4 35 Qd3 and it is hard for Black to do anything about infiltration on the e-file and a2-g8 diagonal) 34 Qxh4, as the f4-pawn is now defended. If Black tries 34 ... Qxb2, the clever 35 Re5! cuts the queen off from the defence of the kingside, and Ne6 is looming with tremendous threats.

31 ... Nh6

Not 31 ... Qh6? 32 Qf3 Qd6 33 Re5! and White is winning because of his superior activity; the threats of Qb3+ or Qe4 are decisive.

32 Re4

As we have seen, Stein could have had this position and the move as well. All the same, h4 will soon fall, securing White an extra pawn and a clear advantage. Another option is 32 Ne6 Rb8 33 Qd5 Nf7 34 Re2, which leaves White in complete control, though it is not obvious what he does next.



32 ... b5?!

This just weakens the queenside pawns, which White can exploit after 33 Ne6! Rc8 34 Qd5 Qf7 (or 34 ... Nf7 35 f5, followed by 36 Rg4) 35 Re5 with unbearable pressure. The immediate 32 ... Qf5 was better; whereas 32 ... Qxb2?? is suicidal due to 33 Qg6.

33 b3?! Qf5 34 Qxh4

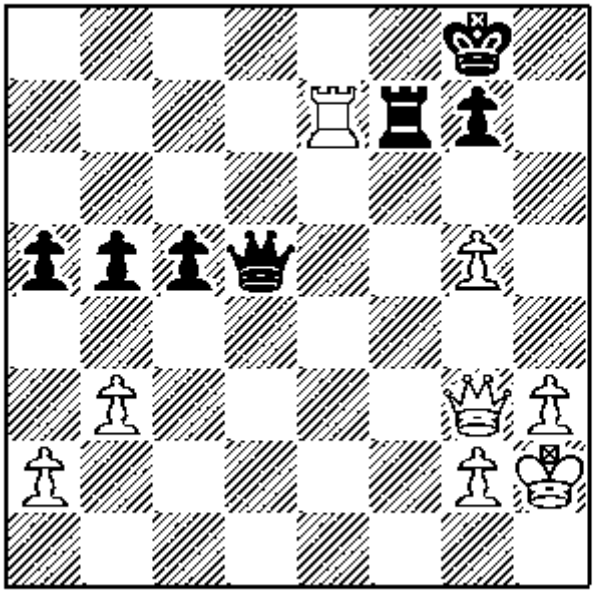
Stein has finally picked up the pawn but must show merciless technique in order to win. One small mercy is that Black can at least force the exchange of his passive knight for the gigantic steed on g5.

34 ... Nf7 35 Re7 Nxg5 36 fxg5 Qd5 37 Qg3

Of course not 37 g6?? Qd6+ 38 Kg1 Qxg6 and Black has equalized.

37 ... Rf7?

Here 37 ... a4 38 bxa4 bxa4 39 g6 Qc6 40 Rc7 Qd5 41 Ra7 Qc6 is perhaps Black's best try, although after the further sequence 42 Qg4 c4 43 Qd4! Qxg6 44 Qxc4+ Kh7 45 Qh4+ Kg8 46 Rxa4, White is now two pawns up.



Exercise: What has Black overlooked?

Answer: 38 g6!

Not really a difficult move to find from either side, but when under pressure for a long time and approaching the time control, even strong grandmasters can miss these things.

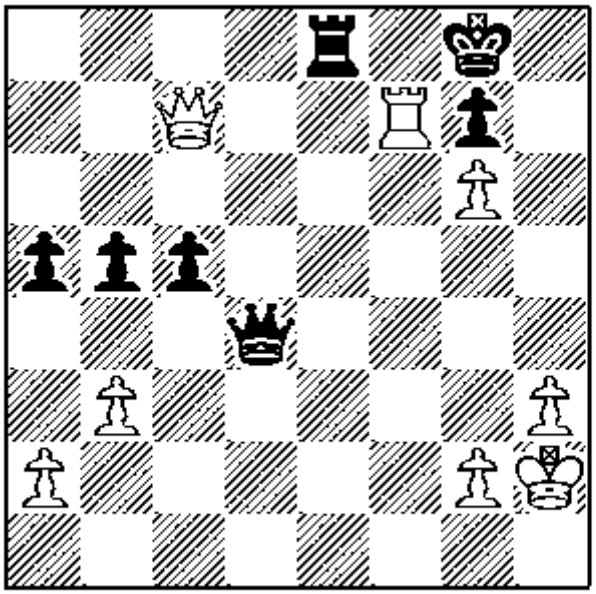
38 ... Rf8

38 ... Rxe7 39 Qb8+ is an unusual variation of the "back rank mate" theme.

39 Qc7 Qd4 40 Rf7

Stein naturally exploits the outpost on f7 to the fullest.

40 ... Re8



Exercise: Kholmov just allowed a mate in five. Can you see it?

41 Rf4

Answer: 41 Rf5! is what the perfectionist or computer would play!

41 ... Qe5 42 Qf7+ Kh8 43 Kh1! 1-0

A nice move to conclude the game; the threats of Rh4+ or Qf8+ are decisive.

The final tournament of Stein's amazing run was at Sarajevo in March. Here Stein scored seven wins, one loss and seven draws to finish on 10½15 and share first place with Borislav Ivkov. The following game is from the sixth round.

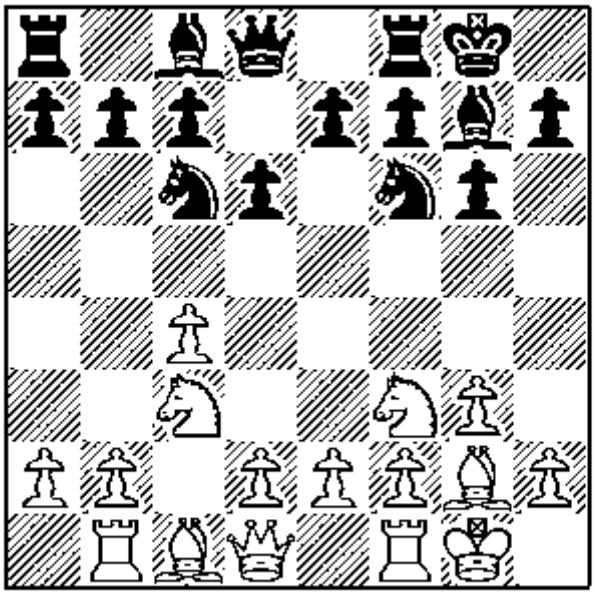
Milan Vukic (1942-) became a grandmaster in 1974. He took a degree in law but preferred to remain a chess trainer at the Nikica Pavlic chess club in Banja Luka. Vukic is famous for his very quick reflexes and is almost never in time-trouble, which is both his strength and weakness, that latter occurring when he relies too much on his quick mind and sometimes overlooks something. He is an incurable optimist who never loses heart and almost always plays to the end, even when there are no realistic chances of winning, such as symmetrical rook endings with three pawns each on the kingside.

Game 41
L.Stein-M.Vukic
Sarajevo 1967
English Opening

1 c4

Stein switched between 1 e4, 1 c4 and 1 Nf3 in Sarajevo. In this game he perhaps wanted to avoid a theoretical battle in Vukic's then favourite Caro-Kann Defence.

1 ... Nf6 2 Nc3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 0-0 Nc6 7 Rb1



Question: Why does White set up this way?

Answer: The main idea is to start the typical plan of a flank attack on the queenside with b2-b4-b5, to increase the control of the light squares in the spirit of the English Opening.

Instead, 7 d4 enters a regular King's Indian Defence, but Stein probably wanted to avoid that as well on this occasion, despite playing it with both colours (we saw him on the black side in Game 7), since the former Yugoslav players had a good reputation of handling such tactical and theoretical variations. In fact, Vukic had already scored 1½/2 at Sarajevo on the white side of this position, in rounds three and five.

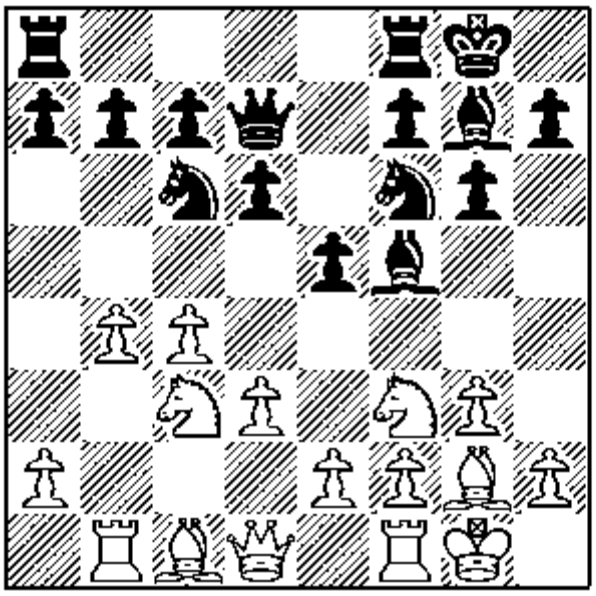
7 ... e5

Black often prefers 7 ... a5 8 a3 to be included, or else try to disturb White's plan completely with 7 ... d5!?, but of course there is nothing wrong with the text.

8 b4 Bf5

At this stage 8 ... e4 seems to be a mistake in view of 9 Ng5, winning the e4-pawn. Although it is not quite that simple, White does obtain a slight advantage after 9 ... e3 (or 9 ... Ng4 10 Ngxe4 f5 11 b5! Nd4 12 e3 Ne6 13 f3 Ne5 14 f4 Nxc4 15 Ng5 Nxg5 16 fxg5) 10 fxe3 Ng4 11 Nge4 Nce5 12 h3 f5 13 hxg4 fxe4 14 Rxf8+ Qxf8 15 g5 Bf5 16 Nxe4 Ng4 17 Qe1.

9 d3 Qd7



Exercise: Black has lined up his queen and bishop with the clear plan of ... Bh3. How does White react?

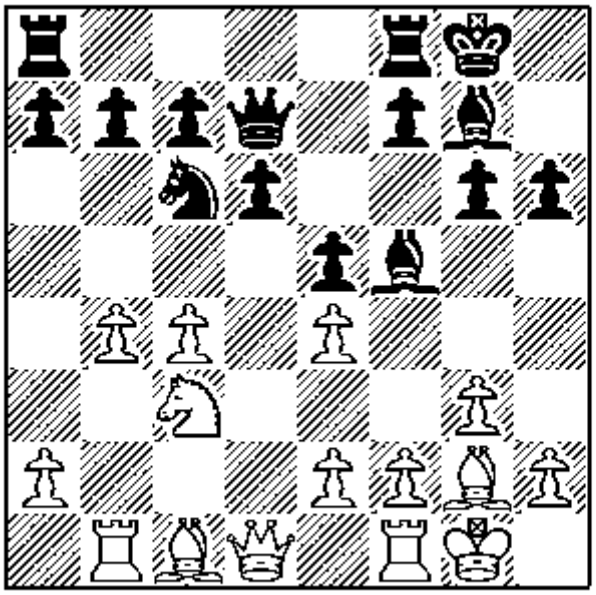
Answer: 10 Ng5

Stein holds back b4-b5 for now; the pawn advance will not disappear and it is better to play it at a more suitable moment. Here 10 b5 is answered by 10 ... Nd8, and if then 11 Ng5, Black has the break 11 ... a6 12 a4 axb5 13 axb5 c6, followed by ... Ne6 with an active position; note that the a8-rook already has a good location.

10 ... h6 11 Nge4

This time 11 b5 would be met by the centralizing 11 ... Nd4.

11 ... Nxe4 12 dxe4!



Question: Why does White recapture with the pawn, blocking the g2-bishop's diagonal, instead of the knight?

Answer: Although 12 Nxe4 looks like the normal move, keeping the pawn structure intact and symmetrical, the knight does not stand particularly well here. It does set up the trick 12 ... Bh3? 13 Bxh6!, winning a pawn, but otherwise the knight is better placed on d5, in which case it needs to go back to c3 again. Furthermore, it seems Black can effectively then prevent b4-b5 by playing 12 ... a6 13 a4 b5, and if 14 axb5 axb5 15 cxb5 Nd4 16 Nc3 Rab8 17 Be3 Nxb5 18 Nxb5 Rxb5 19 Qc1! with the double threat of Bc6 and Bxh6, then simply 19 ... d5! 20 Bxh6 Bxh6 21 Qxh6 Rfb8 and Black soon regains the pawn.

Stein's move is more interesting because it gains a tempo and changes the pawn structure, strengthening White's hold on d5, and his g2-bishop is soon swapped off anyway.

12 ... Bh3

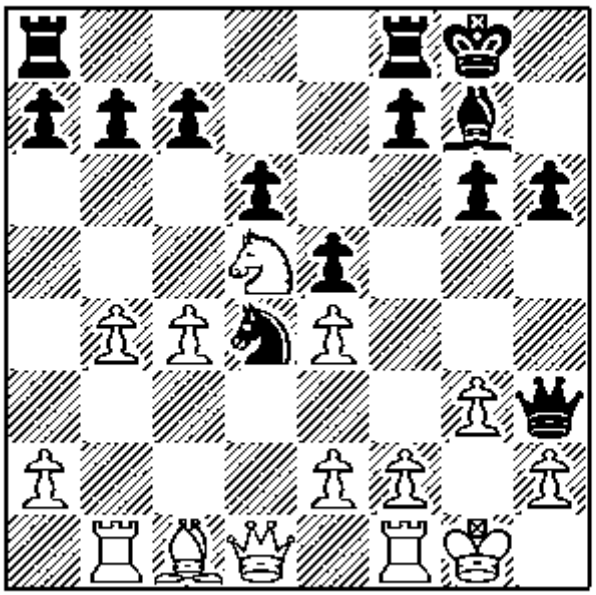
Black is not obliged to exchange light-squared bishops as he has two other squares available; but if we check these, they both seem to give White some kind of advantage:

a) 12 ... Be6 is answered by 13 Nd5, when the natural break ... f7-f5 releases the g2-bishop after e4xf5 (which is one of the points of 12 dxe4!); but if Black does not liberate his game in this way, he will remain on the defensive.

b) 12 ... Bg4, on the other hand, is answered by 13 b5 (13 Nd5 is also good) 13 ... Nd4 (or if 13 ... Na5 14 Qd3 b6, planning ... Nb7, then 15 Nd5 Kh7 16 Be3 and the a5-knight is controlled) 14 f3, forcing the exchange of the bishops after all: 14 ... Bh3 (not 14 ... Be6? 15 e3 Bxc4 16 exd4 exd4 17 Nd5 c6 18 Nf4 Bxf1 19 Bxf1 and White is clearly better) 15 Bxh3 Qxh3 and White enjoys the superior bishop, as can be seen after the further moves 16 Nd5 c6 17 Ne7+ Kh7 18 e3 Qd7 19 exd4 Qxe7 (or 19 ... exd4 20 Bb2 Qxe7 21 Bxd4 Be5! 22 a4 and White has more manoeuvring space for the major pieces) 20 bxc6 bxc6 21 d5 with a positional advantage.

13 Bxh3 Qxh3 14 Nd5 Nd4

Black must be careful: defending the c7-pawn with 14 ... Qd7? runs into 15 Bxh6! again.



Exercise: Can White just take on c7 now?

15 b5?!

Answer: Yes, he can and probably should. 15 Nxc7 does not win a pawn after 15 ... Rac8 16 Nd5 Rxc4, but then 17 Bb2! and Bxd4 secures White a positional advantage, since the d5-knight is significantly stronger than the black bishop.

15 ... Kh7

Instead, 15 ... c6 was quite safe; if Black was afraid of 16 Ne7+ Kh7 17 e3, there was no need as 17 ... Qd7 18 exd4 exd4 19 Nxg6 fxg6, followed by ... c7-c5, is perfectly alright.

16 e3?!

Once again it looks better to simplify with 16 Nxc7 Rac8 17 Nd5 Rxc4 18 Bb2, followed by Bxd4, when White has chances for an advantage due to the superior minor piece, even after 18 ... f5 19 Qd3 f4!? 20 Bxd4 (not 20 Qxc4? due to 20 ... Nxe2+! 21 Qxe2 f3 and White has to give up the queen) 20 ... Rxd4 21 Qf3! fxg3 22 Qxg3, as 22 ... Qxg3 23 fxg3 Rxe4?? fails to 24 Rxf8 Bxf8 25 Nf6+ etc. If Black tries the intermediary 17 ... f5 18 exf5 Rxf5 with the deadly threat of ... Rh5, then 19 f3 Rxc4 20 Ne3 Rh5 21 Rf2 Rc5 22 a4 keeps an edge.

16 ... Ne6

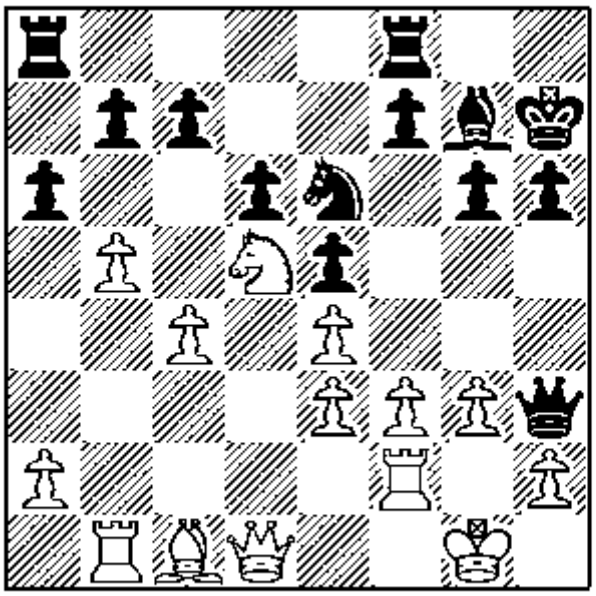
Now the c7-pawn is securely defended.

17 f3

White responds by consolidating his centre and opening a communication line on the second rank.

17 ... a6 18 Rf2?!

White gets nowhere after 18 bxa6?! Rxa6 19 Rxb7 Rxa2 either. It is more natural to create a pawn chain with 18 a4, when 18 ... axb5 19 axb5 Ra2 is easily answered by 20 Bb2.



18 ... b6?!

The drawback to this move is that White's knight is now unassailable from attack by ... c7-c6. Here Vukic missed a good chance to strike at the white position with 18 ... axb5 19 cxb5 (of course not 19 Rxb5?? c6, winning a piece) 19 ... Ng5!, when 20 Nxc7?! Rac8 21 b6 f5 gives Black more than enough compensation for the pawn. The knight has a strong influence on the light squares around the white king, and Black already has the annoying threat of ... f5xe4, while 22 exf5? fails to 22 ... Qxf5!, threatening both ... Nh3+ and the b1-rook.

19 Qf1

The exchange of queens is not strictly necessary, but it is hard for White to attempt anything without it. For example, 19 a4 axb5 20 axb5 f5 (the sacrifice with 20 ... Ng5 is not so good now, as after 21 Nxc7 Ra7 22 Nd5, the b6-pawn is under attack) 21 exf5 Qxf5 22 e4 Qh3 23 Be3 h5 leaves White with little to do.

19 ... Qxf1+

The safest continuation. Protecting the queen with the surprising 19 ... Ng5 is slightly

dubious on account of 20 Nxc7 Ra7 21 Nxa6 f5 22 f4! (forcing the exchange of queens) 22 ... Qxf1+ 23 Kxf1 Nxe4 24 Rc2 and White keeps an extra pawn with a slight advantage and can return his knight to the centre via b4.

20 Kxf1 a5?!

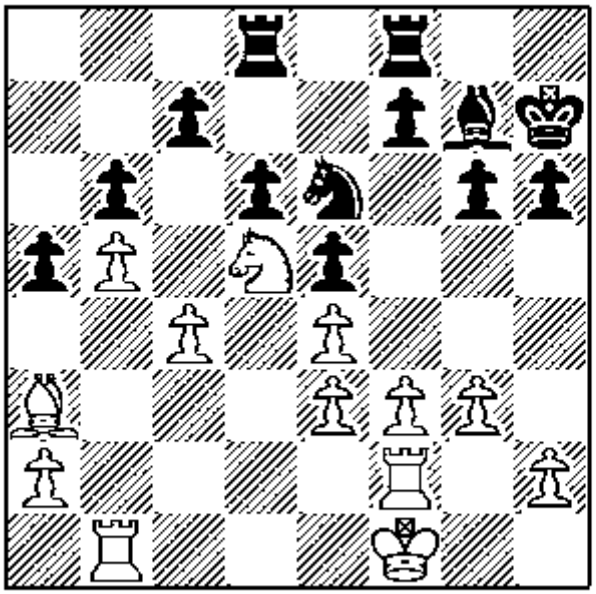
Black seals the queenside and frees his a8-rook from defence of the a6-pawn, but there is no need to do this so soon. It is better to remain flexible and make the the normal break on the kingside with 20 ... f5. After 21 exf5 (White has to capture or be left with a weak pawn at e4) 21 ... gxf5, it is not easy for either player to make progress, and their respective weaknesses at c7 and a2 are easily defended.

21 Ba3

The bishop makes ready to remove the black knight if it appears at c5, while feinting at a possible sacrifice on b6, c7 or d6 should the opportunity arise. Or maybe it is just a psychological ploy, as the breakthrough will come on the other side of the board.

21 ... Rad8?!

Black wastes time defending against the imaginary threat. It was more logical to play 21 ... f5 straight away, when 22 exf5 Rxf5 essentially gives him an extra tempo on the game. Black should welcome the sacrifice 22 Bxd6? cxd6 23 Nxb6, as the simple 23 ... Rad8 24 exf5 gxf5 25 Rd2 Rf7 26 Rbd1 Bf8 then secures the d6-pawn with a clear advantage.



Exercise: How does White continue? Can you suggest a good set-up?

Answer: 22 f4

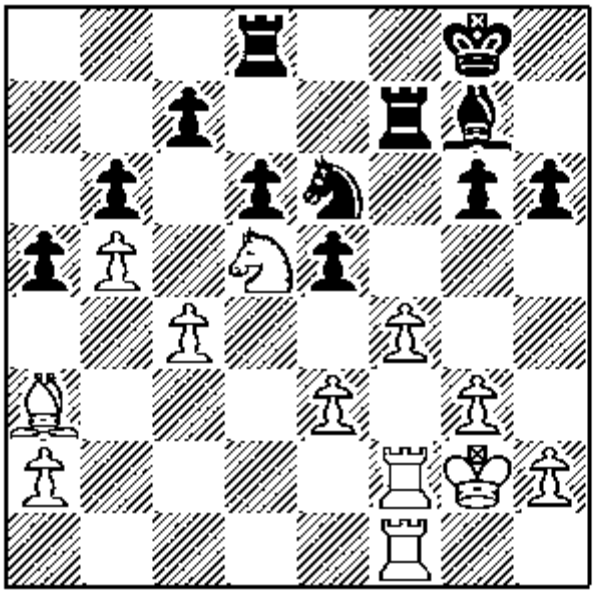
White starts activating his kingside pawns. His plan is to follow up with Kg2 and Rbf1 with pressure on the f-file.

22 ... f5 23 exf5 Rxf5

The other recapture 23 ... gxf5 is not better. One plausible continuation is 24 Ke2 Rde8 25 Rbf1 (forcing Black to declare his intentions with the e-pawn) 25 ... exf4 (or if 25 ... e4 then 26 g4!, when 26 ... fxg4? runs into 27 f5 and Black's position collapses after f5-f6 and Nxc7) 26 gxf4, followed by Rg2 and Rfg1 with positional pressure.

24 Kg2 Rf7 25 Rbf1 Kg8

25 ... Rdf8 is answered by 26 g4, and 26 ... exf4 27 exf4 Bd4 28 Rf3 h5 29 h3 does not keep White from his main objective: returning the bishop to the diagonal c1-h6 and playing for f4-f5.



Exercise: How does White exploit his positional advantage?

Answer: 26 g4!

This is again the strongest continuation. When putting his kingside in motion, White is effectively playing with an extra pawn, as is clearly visible after the further f4-f5, whereas Black's queenside pawns are controlled by White's b5-pawn and d5-knight.

The immediate 26 f5 gxf5 27 Rxf5 Rxf5 28 Rxf5 also leaves White with 2 vs. 1 on the outside files and yields an advantage, but Stein's move gives him more options and f4-f5 cannot be prevented in any case. Remember the threat is normally stronger than its execution!

26 ... Re8 27 f5 gxf5 28 Rxf5

Not 28 gxf5? as after 28 ... Ng5, it is hard for White to make progress. If he tries 29 f6!? Bh8 30 h4 Ne4 31 Nxc7!, Black can reply 31 ... Rc8! (not the suicidal 31 ... Rxc7?? 32 f7+ and wins) 32 Nd5 Rxc4! (and not 32 ... Nxf2? 33 Rxf2 Rxc4 34 Bxd6 Rxh4 35 Be7, which leaves the black bishop in a prison), when White cannot hold the f6-pawn and at the same time parry the threats of ... Nxf2 and ... Ra4. The best continuation is to give up the exchange with 33 Kh3 Nxf2+ 34 Rxf2, which actually leads to a draw by repetition after 34 ... Re4! 35 Rg2+ (not 35 Bxd6? Rd7 36 Be7 Kf7 37 Nxb6 Rd3 and Black's active rooks give him a clear advantage) 35 ... Kh7 36 Rf2 Kg6 37 Ne7+ Kh7 38 Nd5 and so forth.

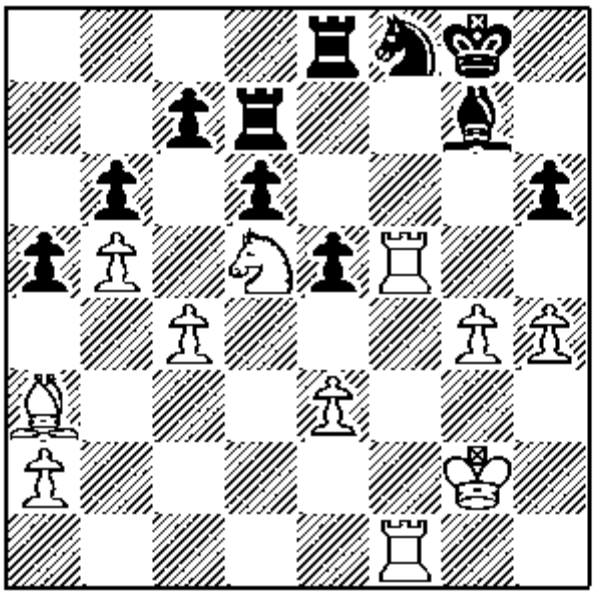
28 ... Rd7

It is in White's general interest to trade as many pieces as possible. If his king manages to infiltrate Black's position, via f5 say, then the pawn ending is a win. From this point of view it is understandable Black avoids as many exchanges as possible, but in any case he cannot swap rooks this time as 28 ... Rxf5?? 29 gxf5 wins easily for White.

29 h4

Stein's clear goal is to create a passed pawn on the kingside. Meanwhile Black is reduced to playing a waiting game while White improves his position step by step.

29 ... Nf8



Exercise: How does White proceed in the most convincing manner?

Answer: 30 e4!

A really cruel move, clearing the c1-h6 diagonal for the bishop, while further restricting Black's forces. He is not even given the chance to open the long (actually useless) diagonal for his own bishop.

30 ... Nh7

The weakness at d4 has no significance whatsoever, as can be seen by the variation 30 ... Ne6 31 Bc1 Nd4 32 Rf6! and the h6-pawn is falling, since 32 ... Kh7 33 Rf7 wins for White.

31 Bc1 Re6 32 Kg3 Rg6 33 h5!

A good positional move, driving the black rook off the g-file and fixing the h6-pawn. The further pawn with g4-g5 will come at an appropriate moment.

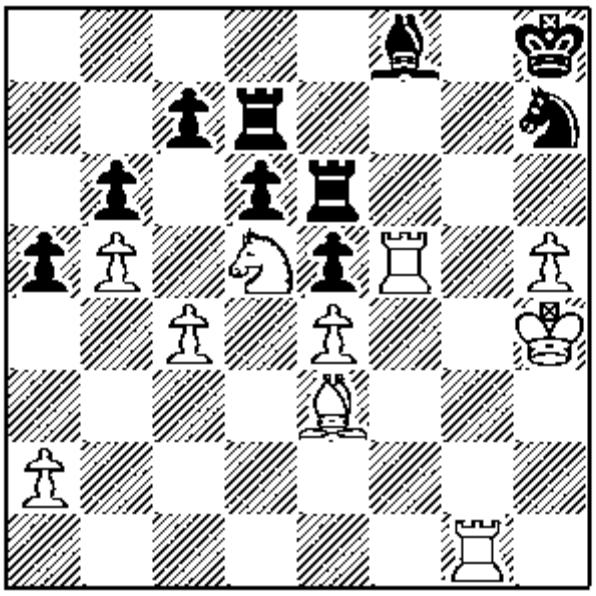
33 ... Re6 34 Kh4

Observe how skilfully Stein activates all his pieces before making the final breakthrough.

34 ... Re8 35 g5 hxg5+ 36 Bxg5 Re6

It is understandable that Black does not want to be suffocated with 36 ... Nxg5 37 Rxg5 Kh7 38 Rgf5 Kg8 (otherwise 39 Rf7 wins) 39 h6 Bh8 40 Kh5 and so on.

37 Be3 Bf8 38 Rg1+ Kh8



Exercise: What is White's best move?

Answer: 39 Rg6!

Stein beautifully utilizes the outpost on g6, created by the h5-pawn, to invade Black's position.

39 ... Re8 40 Bg5

White's pieces are very actively placed indeed. 41 Bf6+ is just one threat.

40 ... Bg7 41 h6 Bf8 42 Kh5 1-0

It is not often that one sees so many optimally placed pieces on the fifth and sixth ranks! Although this game was far from perfect (White's 15th, 16th and 18th moves, for instance, were probably not the best), it nonetheless showed Stein's ability to outplay his opponent in the style of Capablanca.

Chapter Four
Setbacks and Bad Luck

The highlight of 1967 was the Interzonal tournament in Sousse, Tunisia. Of course Stein hoped to continue his run of excellent form and be in full shape for this event, but it was not to be. He never had a coach to help him with such important details as how to be in top condition when it really mattered.

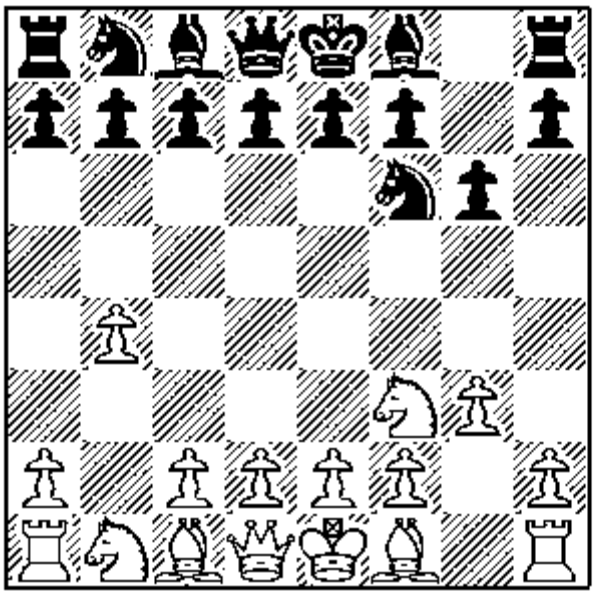
Stein once related how impressed he was by Vasily Smyslov's secrets of sporting longevity. Smyslov had the following to say about that: "Only later did I realize that there was a law of nature according to which man's condition was inevitably regimented by a definite rhythm! I started controlling myself. Now I plan my sporting calendar so that my tournament performances coincide with upbeat periods. When I feel the approach of a slump, that I call 'an airhead period', I try not to play in tournaments. If I have to compete, I do not set myself extremely ambitious goals. I am concerned mostly about not demeaning myself." At the time Stein admitted: "Well, I did not understand it at once either that a chess player was not a machine, capable of functioning in the same mode all the time. Therefore it is important that sporting form not let me down."

Stein's final score in Sousse was 13/21, with nine wins, four losses and eight draws, which was only enough to tie for sixth place. In the end, this was something of a success, since he was trailing in twelfth at the halfway stage. The following game was played in the eighteenth round.

László Bárczay (1936-) was awarded the GM title in 1967 after a gold medal performance of 11/12 (ten wins and two draws) at the 1966 Havana Olympiad, playing as second reserve for the bronze medal-winning Hungarian team. He later became a grandmaster at correspondence chess as well.

Game 42
L.Stein-L.Bárczay
Sousse Interzonal 1967
Delayed Orang-utan

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 b4

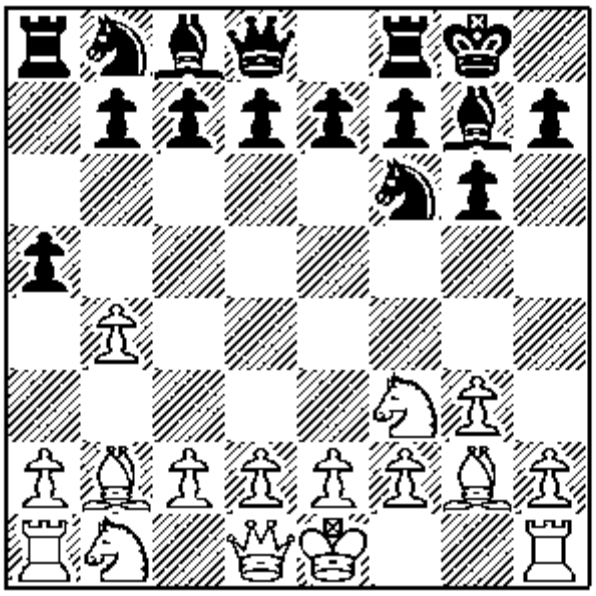


Question: What kind of a move is this?

Answer: It is inspired by the Orang-utan/Polish Opening which features 1 b4 as the first move. Richard Réti (1889-1929) occasionally played a similar variation, 1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 b4, but came to the conclusion that b2-b4 makes the queenside vulnerable to possible counter-attacks and abandoned it in favour of the safer 3 b3. In the game position too, 3 b4 is more risky than 3 b3, but also more ambitious: if Black plays too passively this line can yield White a fierce attack, so it is no surprise that Stein had it in his repertoire (and in fact scored 4/4 with it). Vasily Smyslov favoured 3 b4 here as well, looking for an active game on the queenside, and wrote: "To me this move order seems more advisable than 1 b4. After Black has played 2 ... g6, there is no sense in him advancing his e-pawn, which in my view is the best reply to 1 b4."

3 ... Bg7 4 Bb2 0-0 5 Bg2 a5

In Game 45 Black played 5 ... d6 here, delaying ... a7-a5 until move eight. However, 5 ... c6! is the simplest solution to Black's problems, according to Petrosian. The game T.V.Petrosian-M.Najdorf, Santa Monica 1966, continued 6 0-0 a5 7 a3 axb4 8 axb4 Rxa1 9 Bxa1 Qb6 10 c3 and here Black can choose between 10 ... Qa6, 10 ... d6, and 10 ... d5 (as Najdorf played). This is the critical line, illustrating very well what Réti did not like about the 3 b4 system.



Exercise: How should White react? With 6 a3 or 6 b5 - ?

Answer: 6 a3

The alternative, 6 b5, has the advantage of avoiding simplifications after ... a5xb4, as in Petrosian-Najdorf above; on the other hand, it also weakens the c5-square, which may not have appealed to Stein. From this position G.Barcza-H.Hecht, European Team Championship, Hamburg 1965 continued 6 ... d6 7 d4 Nbd7 8 c4 e5 9 0-0 exd4 10 Nxd4 Re8 11 Qc2 Nc5 12 Nc3 with mutual prospects.

6 ... d6

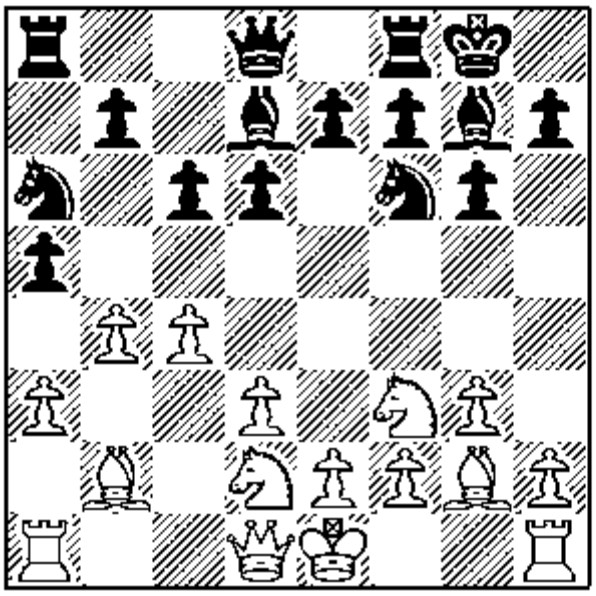
This is the typical move if one wants to play a King's Indian set-up; otherwise 6 ... c6 may transpose to 5 ... c6 lines after 7 0-0 axb4 etc.

7 d3 c6

In his annotations for Informator #4, GM Petar Trifunovic recommended the stronger 7 ... axb4 8 axb4 Rxa1 9 Bxa1 c6 10 Nbd2 Na6 with equality, or Black could play 10 ... Qb6 again. Either way, the b4-pawn remains a slight liability and White will probably have to defend it with c2-c3 sooner or later, making the a1-bishop passive.

8 Nbd2 Na6 9 c4 Bd7

Threatening to take twice on b4. At this moment 9 ... axb4 10 axb4 is less troublesome for White; the b-pawn cannot be captured because of the pin on the a-file, and 10 ... Qb6 can be met by 11 Bd4! since 11 ... Qxb4?? loses the queen to 12 Ra4.



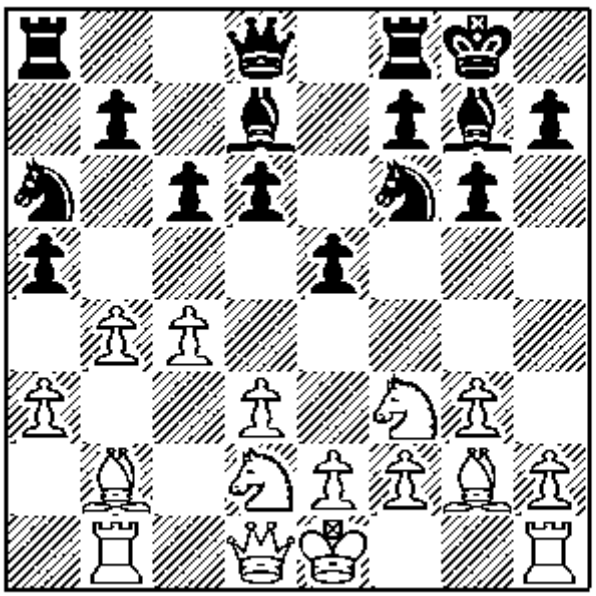
Exercise: How does White parry the threat to the b4-pawn?

Answer: 10 Rb1

This move is most in the spirit of the English Opening. White indirectly defends the b4-pawn and places the rook on its correct square.

10 ... e5

Black continues to develop his King's Indian formation. Another possibility is 10 ... axb4 11 axb4 b5, challenging White on the queenside; while Trifunovic recommends the quieter set-up 11 ... Nc7 12 0-0 Qc8 with an equal position.



Exercise: Is there any way to interfere with Black's build-up
or should White just continue with his own development?

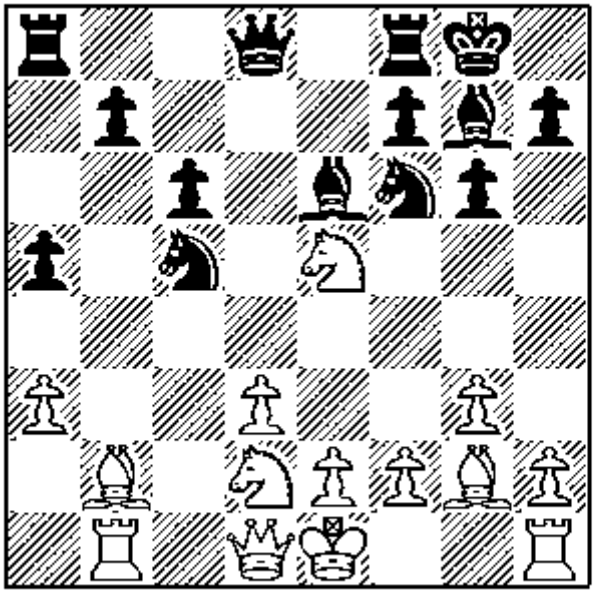
Answer: 11 c5!

Stein wants to disrupt the central structure and reach an open game where piece activity will be of paramount importance.

11 ... dxc5?

The intermediary 11 ... axb4 12 axb4 was necessary and only then 12 ... dxc5 13 bxc5 Nxc5. The difference from the game is that Black controls the open a-file and can exploit it, after 14 Nxe5 Be6 15 0-0, with either 15 ... Ra2 or 15 ... Na4, when his activity secures him an equal game. White might try 12 cxd6!? instead, but after 12 ... bxa3 13 Bxa3 Qa5 14 Bb2 (or 14 Ra1 e4!) 13 ... Ne8 15 0-0 Nxd6, the best he can hope for is to regain the pawn; for example, 16 Ra1 Qb5 17 Ba3 Nb4 18 Nc4! Nf5! 19 Qd2 c5 20 Nfxe5 Be6 with equality.

12 bxc5 Nxc5 13 Nxe5 Be6



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

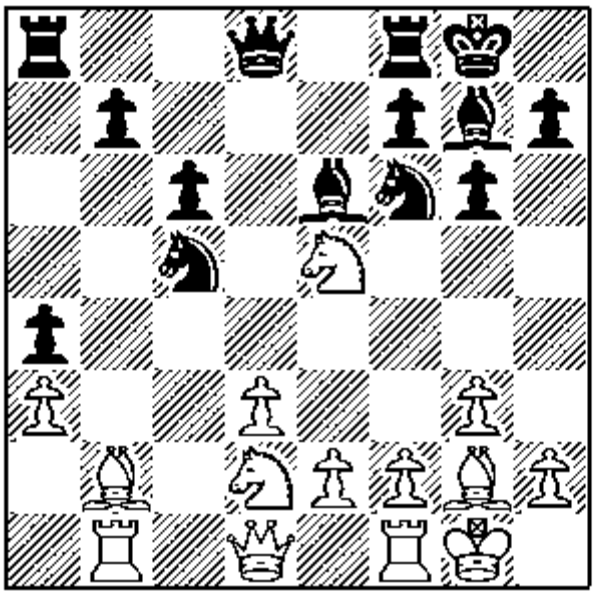
14 0-0?

This natural development is too slow. It is well-known advice that one should only castle when there is nothing better, since the move in itself is usually passive by nature.

Answer: The correct approach is to attack the c5-knight immediately with 14 Qc2! before Black can create an outpost at b3. Perhaps Stein relaxed after having eradicated Black's centre pawns, but chess is never an easy game. Even with a winning position one must never lose concentration.

14 ... a4!

Black has now secured his outpost and White must adapt to the situation and reorganize his forces.



Exercise: To start with, where should White move the e5-knight?

Answer: 15 Nef3!

A good move, heading for the d4-square, and clearing the way for the dark-squared bishop to work more effectively on the long dark diagonal. Instead, 15 Nec4 gains more control over the b3-square, but has the drawback that the c5-knight for the moment is immune against an attack on the c-file.

15 ... Bd5?!

Black pre-empts Nd4 by opposing light-squared bishops, but it is better to strengthen the position with 15 ... Qe7 immediately, when 16 Nd4 can be answered by 16 ... Ba2! 17 Ra1 Bd5 and if 18 e4?! then 18 ... Nxd3! 19 exd5 Nxb2 20 Qc2 Nxd5 21 Qxb2 Rad8!, regaining the piece in due course due to the pin on the d4-knight.

16 Qc1 Qe7

There is no point in playing 16 ... Nb3? just yet, as after 17 Nxb3 axb3 (or 17 ... Bxb3 18 Nd4) 18 e4 Be6 19 Nd4 Qd7 20 Nxe6 Qxe6 21 d4!, the b3-pawn is a permanent weakness.

17 Bd4

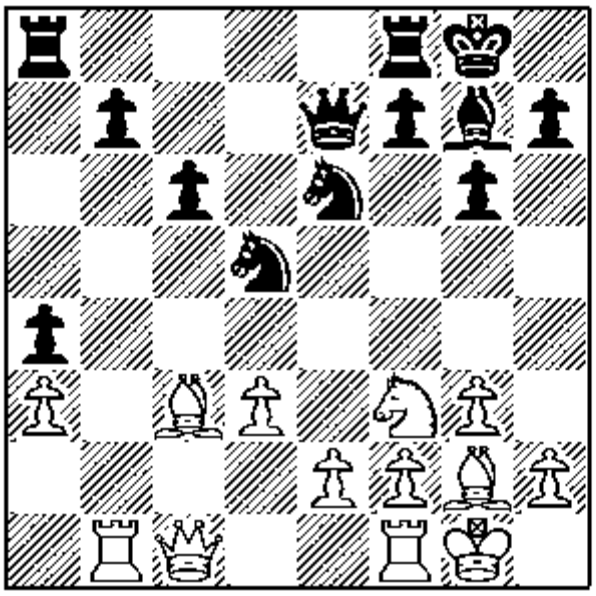
The immediate 17 Bc3 is also good and if 17 ... Nb3 (not 17 ... Qxe2? 18 Bxf6 Nxd3 19 Qc3 and White wins a piece) 18 Nxb3 Bxb3, then 19 Nd2! Qxe2 20 Nxb3 axb3 21 Rxb3 Rfd8 (or 21 ... Qxd3 22 Qb2 with tremendous pressure) 22 Rxb7 Qxd3 23 Qb2 with decent winning chances.

17 ... Ne6 18 Bc3 Bxf3?!

There is no reason to give the bishop pair away so light-heartedly. Trifunovic's one move suggestion 18 ... c5 fails to 19 e4 Bc6 20 Ne5 and if 20 ... Be8 then 21 f4 with a huge advantage. It is better to maintain the tension with 18 ... Rfd8, aiming for pressure against the d-pawn after 19 e4 (19 Rd1 is more precise with an edge) 19 ... Bb3 20 d4 Ne8, when the position is about equal.

19 Nxf3 Nd5?!

For some reason Bárczay avoids the development of his f8-rook and strives for an unmotivated exchange of dark-squared bishops.



Question: What is the drawback to Black's move?

Answer: The knight is not stable on d5 and will soon be driven back.

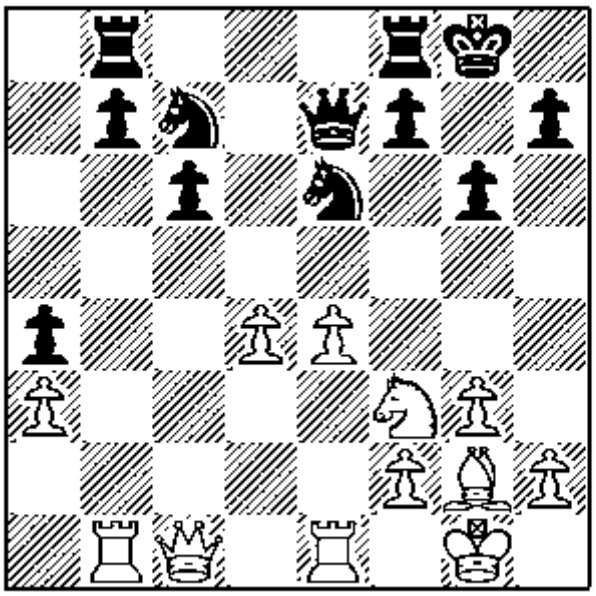
20 Bxg7 Nxg7 21 Re1

White prepares to advance the centre pawns and create an absolute classical centre.

21 ... Rab8

Trifunovic's 21 ... Ra7 keeps hold of both the b7- and a4-pawns but does not solve Black's positional problems after 22 d4, followed by e2-e4, preparing to create a dangerous passed pawn with d4-d5.

22 d4 Ne6 23 e4 Ndc7



Exercise: Can you spot Black's weakness and the move which emphasizes it?

Answer: 24 Rb4!

Rather than preparing d4-d5 here, Stein aims simply to win the weak a-pawn.

24 ... c5

It does not help to attack the d4-pawn with 24 ... Rfd8 25 Rxa4 Nb5, as after 26 Qb2 Qd6 (or 26 ... Ra8 27 Rxa8 Rxa8 28 d5) 27 Rd1, followed by Bf1, White holds the position together and stays a clear pawn up.

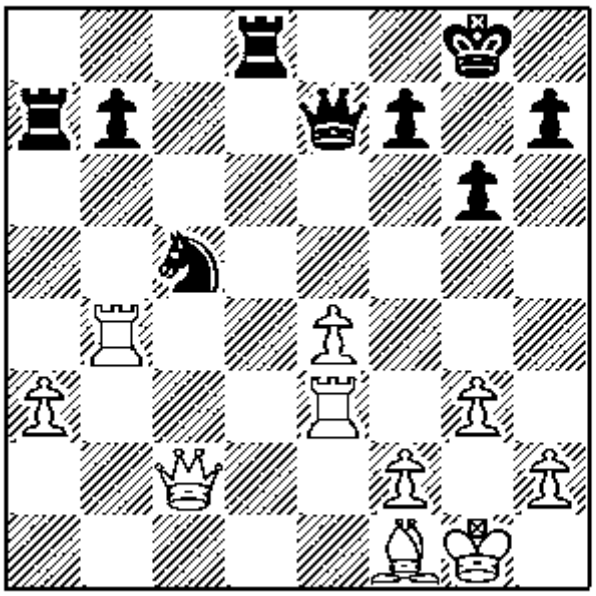
25 Rxa4 Nxd4 26 Nxd4 cxd4 27 Rxd4 Ne6 28 Rb4 Rfc8

Why help the white queen to a better square? 28 ... Rfd8 looks more to the point.

29 Qb2 Nc5 30 Bf1 Rd8 31 Qc2 Ra8

Now 31 ... Rbc8 is answered by 32 Rc4 and White remains in control of the position.

32 Re3 Ra7



Exercise: What is White's strongest move?

Answer: 33 Bc4

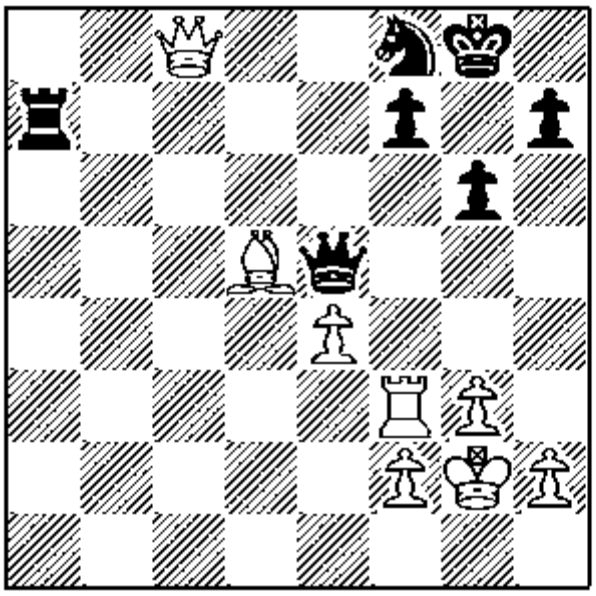
The bishop, which once stood on g2, has now developed into a formidable force on the classical a2-g8 diagonal.

33 ... Ne6 34 Bd5 Rxa3?

Black should utilize the versatility of his knight with the more stubborn 34 ... Nc7 35 Bb3 (35 Bxb7? Rxa3 misplaces the bishop and makes it significantly harder for White to win with all the pawns on one side) 35 ... b5, although White is still strategically winning after 36 Qb2.

35 Rxb7 Ra1+ 36 Kg2 Rd7 37 Qc8+ Nf8 38 Reb3 Ra7 39 Rxa7 Rxa7 40 Rf3 Qe5?

At the time control, Bárczay makes a final mistake.



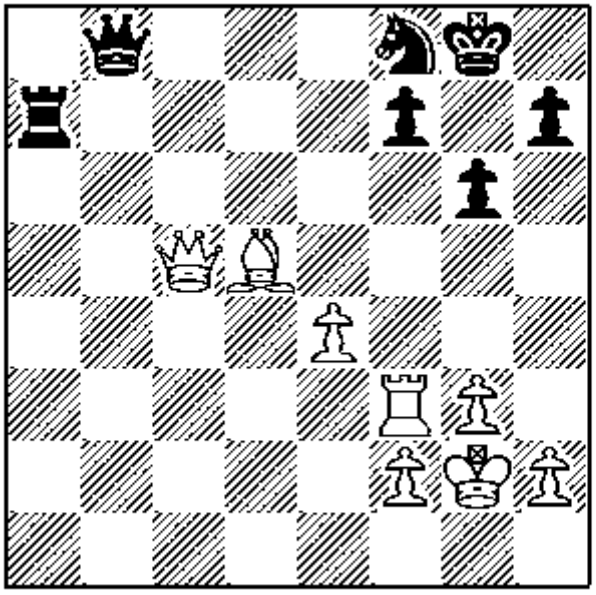
Exercise: What was wrong with Black's move?

Answer: 41 Qc5!

A decisive repositioning, which threatens both the rook and queen (after Bxf7+). Black should have played 40 ... Qd6.

41 ... Qb8

There is nothing better: 41 ... Qa1 is met by 42 e5! and e5-e6, while 41 ... Re7 fails to 42 Rxf7! Qxd5 43 Rxf8+.



Exercise (combination alert): How does White decide the game?

Answer: 42 Rxf7! Rxf7 43 Qe7 1-0

A score of 5½/7 in the final rounds was sufficient to lift Stein into joint sixth place with Hort and Reshevsky. This trio then had to play off for the last candidate vacancy. Given that

Stein was at the peak of his powers, he was regarded as the favourite; Hort was considered too young, being just 23 years of age, and Reshevsky too old at 56.

As it turned out, the play-off failed to decide anything as all three players scored four points. In fact there were only two decisive games, Stein and Hort beating each other once (Stein's win is examined in Game 43 below). Reshevsky drew all eight but still managed to qualify for the candidates' matches, due to his superior tie-break score in the main tournament, whereas Stein's wins had all come against the lower half of the field. This was really bad luck for Stein who had experienced this state of affairs more than once. Then again, there would probably not have been a play-off, had Fischer not withdrawn when leading on 8½/10.

Vlastimil Hort (1944-) has been a grandmaster since 1965 and was the strongest Czech player of his generation, winning the Czechoslovakian Championship five times in the 1970s. In 1985 he left his homeland and settled in Germany, going on to win the West German Championship twice, as well as the first reunified Championship in 1991. Hort is famous for the instructive book The Best Move (1980), which he wrote in collaboration with another Czech grandmaster, Vlastimil Jansa (1942-). He has also produced a DVD for ChessBase entitled Facing the World Champions, where he relates anecdotes and stories from his rich chess life. In his prime Hort was regarded as a steady and strong positional player. He was actually a rather uncomfortable opponent for Stein, who played him on nine occasions and only managed to beat him once (the game below), with six draws and two losses.

Game 43
L.Stein-V.Hort
Sousse Interzonal (play-off) 1968
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d3

In Game 31 Stein's choice was the classical 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3, but his speciality was the King's Indian Attack (KIA), reflecting his devotion to the King's Indian Defence with the black pieces. However, the reader should note that the KIA and KID are subtly different from each other because of White's extra tempo and are essentially separate openings. In its reversed form, the KIA is a flexible system where one must show a high level of manoeuvring in the opening, as well as in the middlegame. Apart from the Caro-Kann, it can also be used against the French (1 e4 e6 2 d3 or Chigorin's 1 e4 e6 2 Qe2) and certain lines of the Sicilian Defence (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d3). Another famous KIA exponent was the great Bobby Fischer, who liked to bring it out from time to time.

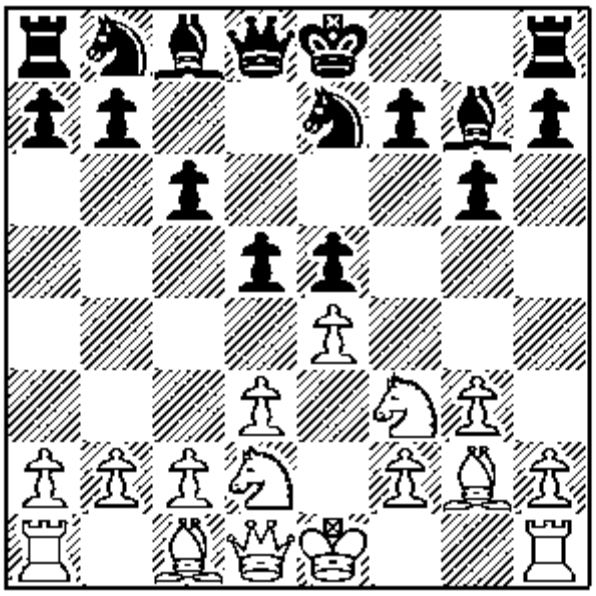
2 ... d5 3 Nd2 g6

Nowadays the most popular and straightforward set-up is 3 ... e5 4 Ngf3 Bd6 5 g3 Nf6 6 Bg2 0-0 7 0-0, when Black must make the fundamental choice whether to play ... Nbd7 or ... Bg4, and with or without ... Re8. Here 7 ... Nbd7 in fact transposes to Game 53.

4 g3 Bg7 5 Bg2 e5

Hort deviates from their game in the Interzonal itself, which saw 5 ... Nf6 6 e5 Ng4 7 d4 h5 8 Ne2 Na6 9 c3 Nc7 10 Nf3 Nh6 11 h3 and White was better, though Stein later misplayed the ending and lost.

6 Ngf3 Ne7



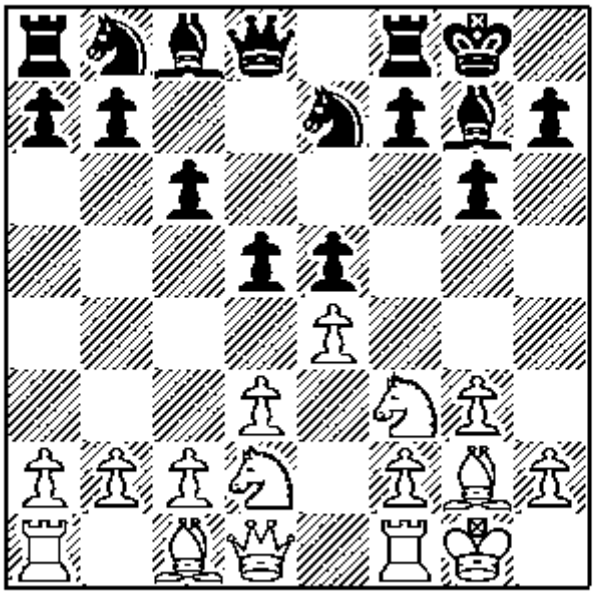
Question: What are the drawbacks and benefits of Black's chosen formation?

Answer: It is obviously a drawback for the knight to be on the relatively passive e7-square, rather than f6, but the seemingly powerful bishop on g7 has its downside too: compared with the more flexible location at d6, it will not be able to participate in any potential future struggle on the queenside. On the other hand, the main point is to play in the spirit of Philidor (the pieces behind the pawns) and it will be easier to execute the advance ... f7-f5.

7 0-0

White's set-up is characteristic of the KIA and was played many times by Stein, with four examples in this collection. From the games in MegaBase, he scored an enormous 23½/28 against reasonably strong opposition, which included 10/12 against the Caro-Kann, with only one loss: to Hort in the fourth game of the play-off.

7 ... 0-0

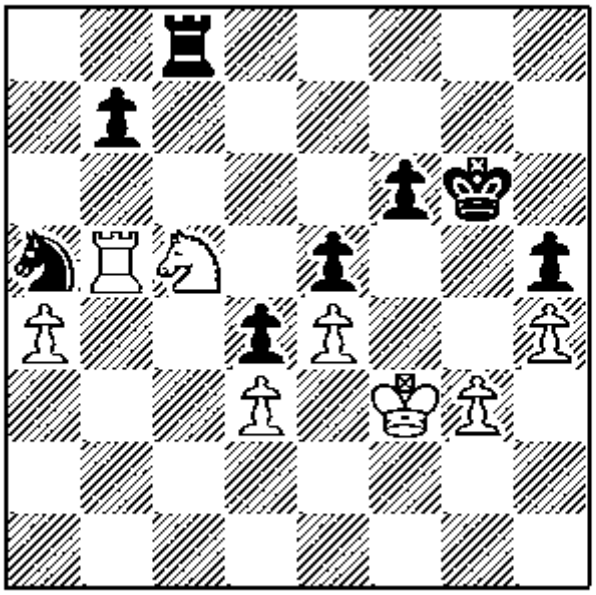


Exercise: How does White normally continue?

Answer: 8 c3

The problem with playing this move at an early stage is that Black immediately gets a target at d3 to concentrate his pieces on.

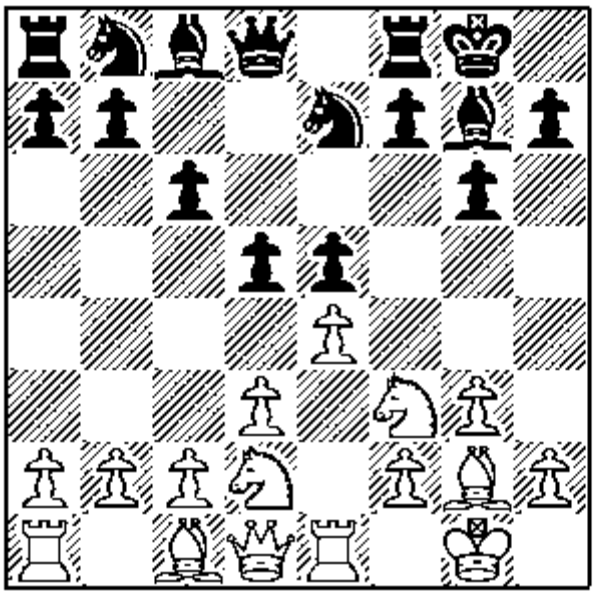
In their fourth game, Stein switched to 8 b4 but did not achieve anything special after 8 ... a5 9 bxa5 Qxa5 10 Bb2 d4 11 a4 Qc7 12 c3 dxc3 13 Bxc3 Rd8 14 Nc4 Be6 15 Ne3 h6 and was slowly outplayed by Hort. Nevertheless, he was not put off from repeating this line in five later games. For instance, L.Stein-G.Khodos, USSR Championship semi-final, Kiev 1969, followed the same path to move ten before diverging with 10 ... Qc7 11 Qe2 d4 12 c3 c5 13 cxd4 cxd4 14 a4 Nbc6 15 Ba3 Rd8 16 Rfb1 Na5 17 Rb5 Ra6 18 Rc1 Nec6 19 Qf1 f6 20 Bh3 Bf8 21 Bxf8 Rxf8 22 Nc4 Nxc4 23 Rxc4 (objectively the position is equal, but Stein won after some inaccuracies from his opponent) 23 ... Ra7?! (23 ... Bxh3 24 Qxh3 Rf7 is more accurate) 24 Nd2 Bxh3 25 Qxh3 Qc8 26 Qxc8 Rxc8 27 Nb3 Rca8 28 Nc5 Na5 29 Rcb4 Rc8 30 Nd7 Kg7 31 Rc5 Rxc5? (correct is 31 ... Nc6 with only a slight advantage to White) 32 Nxc5 (compare both sides' pieces and it is clear that Black is too passive to be able to conduct a successful defence) 32 ... Ra8 (32 ... Kf7 does not help either after 33 Rb6!) 33 Rb5! g5 34 Kg2 g4 35 h3 h5 36 f3 gxf3+ 37 Kxf3 Kg6 38 h4 Rc8



Exercise: White to play and win!

Answer: 39 Nd7! (not 39 Rxa5?? b6 40 Rb5 bxc5 or 39 Nxb7?? Nxb7 40 Rxb7 Rc2! and 41 ... Rd2 with a draw) 39 ... Rc7 40 Nxe5+ fxe5 41 Rxa5 Rc3 (or 41 ... Kf6 42 Rb5) 42 Rxe5 Rxd3+ 43 Kf4 Ra3 44 a5 d3 45 Rg5+ Kh6 46 Rb5 1-0.

It is interesting that Stein refrained from the more flexible 8 Re1, putting immediate pressure on the e5-pawn, which is not so easy to deal with and Black must make a minor concession.



a) 8 ... Bg4 9 h3 forces Black to surrender the bishop pair.

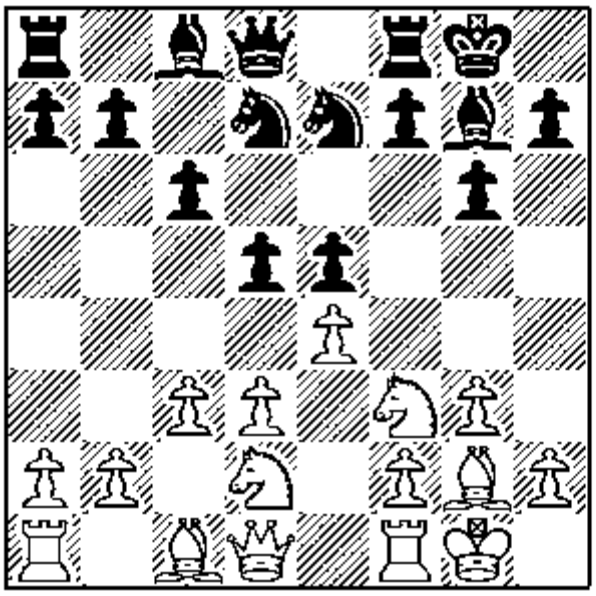
b) 8 ... d4 cedes the c4-square to the white knight. S.Movsesian-M.Panarin, Russian Team Championship 2010, consequently saw 9 Nc4!? (9 a4 gives Black time to adjust with 9 ... c5! 10 Nc4 Nec6!, reaching the correct central structure versus the KIA) 9 ... Qc7 10 c3 b5 11 Na3 dxc3 12 bxc3 and White had a slight advantage. Black does better to play 9 ... b5! at once, the tactical point being that 10 Ncxe5 f6 traps the knight, even if 11 Nxg6 hxg6 12 c3 dxc3 13 bxc3 and a2-a4 does offer White some compensation. Instead, 10 Na3 a6 11 c3 c5 leaves the white knight sidelined; while 10 Ncd2, with the standard plan of a2-a4, Nb3 and Bd2, does not work due to 10 ... a5! 11 a4 Nd7 followed by ... Nb6 with good play for Black. Note that 12 Nb3 is answered by 12 ... Nb6 13 axb5 a4 and Black has the edge.

c) 8 ... Nd7 temporarily blocks the c8-bishop. L.Bruzon Batista-V.Gonzalez Vidal, Cuban Championship, Santa Clara 2000, continued 9 b4 (after 9 b3 d4 10 Bb2 b5 11 c3 c5 12 Rc1 Bb7 13 cxd4 cxd4 14 Bh3 Nc6, Black was fine in R.J.Fischer-V.Hort, Siegen Olympiad 1970) 9 ... a5 10 bxa5 Qxa5 11 Bb2 d4 12 a4 Qc7 13 c3 c5 14 cxd4 and now 14 ... exd4! was the correct recapture with a balanced game.

d) 8 ... Qc7 is a flexible and solid move. L.Oll-P.K.Wells, Antwerp 1996, proceeded with 9 c3 a5 10 b3 b6 11 Qc2 Rd8 12 Bb2 Ba6?! (12 ... Na6 gives equal play) 13 d4! and White had a slight advantage, since the misplaced a6-bishop shoots its arrows on empty squares.

Back to the main game:

8 ... Nd7



Exercise: Black clearly intends to plant his knight on c5. How does White deal with this?

Answer: 9 b4!

Stein plays the strongest move and seems to say to his opponent that it will not be so easy to attack the d3-pawn after all. The ability to play well positionally is actually the ability to organize the chess pieces in the most effective manner.

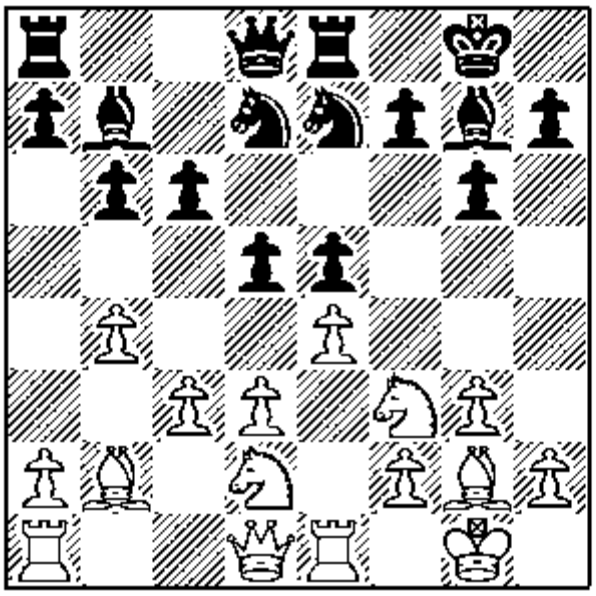
9 ... b6

Having blocked the c8-h3 diagonal with his knight, Black prepares to develop his c8-bishop in a different direction.

10 Bb2 Bb7

The active-looking 10 ... Ba6?! only misplaces the bishop. After 11 Qc2, Black cannot increase the pressure on d3, while White has the neutralizing possibilities Rfe1 or even c3-c4, making the a6-bishop useless. Another drawback is that it obstructs the a7-pawn – Philidor would not be happy, considering his still valid opinion that the pawns are the soul of chess – which may want to move to a5, activating the a8-rook.

11 Re1 Re8

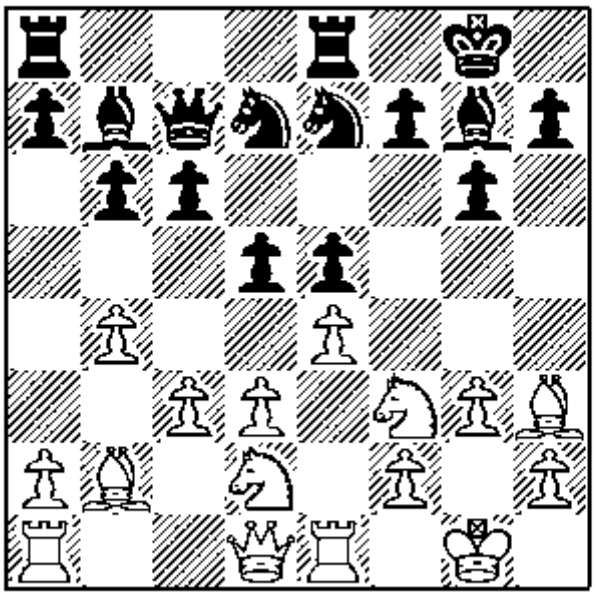


Exercise: Should White continue his development
or is there something more concrete to focus on?

Answer: 12 Bh3!?

This slightly unexpected move, putting the d7-knight under direct threat, is interesting because it increases the pressure on the e5-pawn and forces the second player to pay attention. The advantage, compared with the normal 12 Qc2 which I suspect most players would choose at this moment, is that Stein puts more psychological pressure on his opponent. The move itself is not objectively stronger but it activates the light-squared bishop and utilizes its potential to the outmost. Why should it only be placed at g2? A great player always considers the effectiveness of outlets like h3 and f1; such flexible thinking enables the bishop to be active on three diagonals instead of only one, at least indirectly.

12 ... Qc7



Exercise: What happens now?

Answer: 13 exd5!?

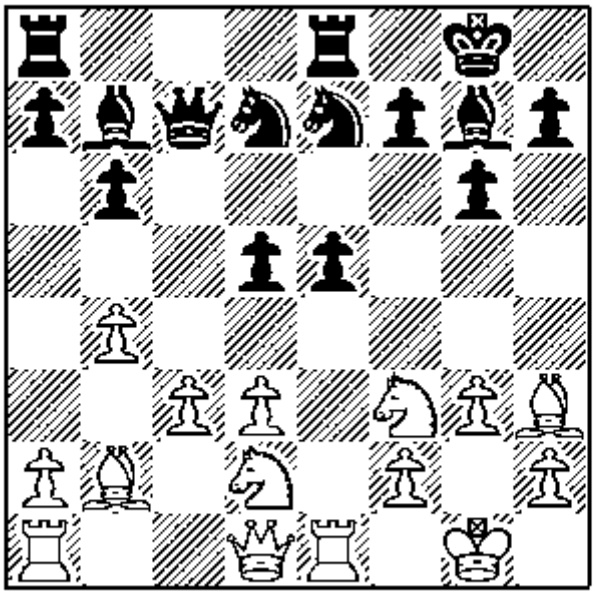
A typically practical decision by Stein in his quest to complicate the game. Compare this with Game 53 (against Barcza), where he made the same exchange in a rather untimely manner, presumably in order to avoid a symmetrical position.

Otherwise, 13 a4 is a natural option, intending a4-a5 to increase the space advantage on the queenside, while 13 ... a5 is answered by 14 Nb3, hoping for 14 ... axb4?! 15 cxb4, after which a4-a5 either establishes a passed pawn or an outpost at a5.

13 ... cxd5

One of the practical advantages of taking on d5 is that it gave Hort two relatively equal ways to recapture, forcing him to choose between them. Stein had the ability to play the moves toughest to deal with at the board. Rather than slow manoeuvring like Petrosian, Stein instead prefers active moves which are difficult to handle correctly in the heat of the battle.

After 13 ... Nxd5, White can return the bishop to g2 and follow up with a timely a2-a3 and c3-c4, driving the black knight from its central outpost. If 14 a3 immediately, then 14 ... c5! is strong with pressure on the long light diagonal. The absence of the g2-bishop is felt here, while 15 c4 is answered by 15 ... Ne7 and ... Nf5, targeting the weak square at d4.



Exercise: And now?

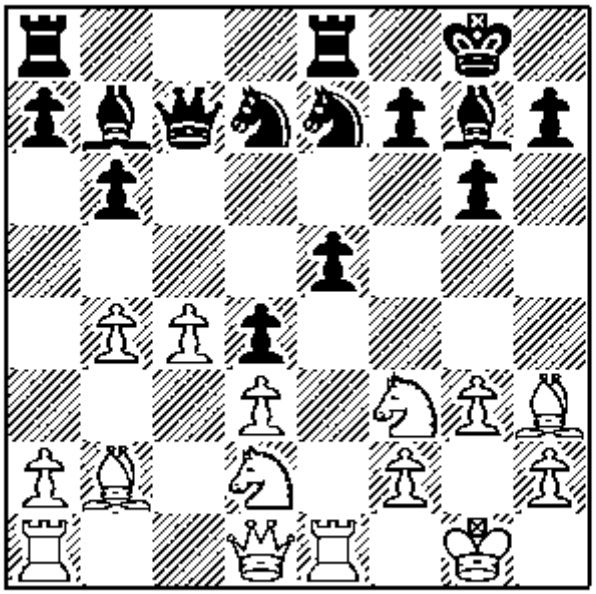
Answer: 14 c4

If White accepts the gift with 14 Bxd7 Qxd7 15 Nxe5, then 15 ... Bxe5 16 Rxe5 Nc6 17 Rxe8+ Rxe8 gives Black good compensation, according to Hort in Informator #5. Stein understandably rejects this line, because then Black has all the activity, for the small price of a single pawn. It looks almost like a position from the Marshall in the Ruy Lopez, where White makes a similar weakening with g2-g3, inviting a black queen to land at h3. This might be okay for a player who is fond of snapping pawns and defending, but not for someone like Stein, who prefers to be on the side with the initiative or the attack.

Another option is 15 ... Qf5, practically forcing 16 d4, after which Black can increase his

grip on the weakened light squares by manoeuvring the knight to d6 with 16 ... Qc8 and ... Nf5-d6. The direct 16 ... Nc8 allows White to oppose queens with 17 Qf3, though even then Black looks fine after 17 ... Qxf3 18 Nexf3 Nd6.

14 ... d4



Structurally, the position now resembles a reversed Benoni (even if some pieces are unusually placed, particularly the white bishops). As we've already seen (for example, in Games 23 and 24), Stein is happy in such positions because there are a lot of dynamic chances for both players to exploit.

Exercise: How does White continue?

Answer: 15 Rc1

Preparing the future break c4-c5. Taking the pawn with 15 Bxd7?! Qxd7 16 Nxe5 is worse now because of 16 ... Qf5! 17 Nef3 Nc6! (better than 17 ... Qxd3?! 18 Qb3, when Black must agree to an exchange of queens if he does not want to sacrifice the d4-pawn) 18 Ne4 (or 18 Qb3 Nxb4!) 18 ... Nxb4! 19 Nxd4 Qh3! 20 Qb3 Na6 21 f3 Red8 22 Ne2 Bxe4, followed by ... Nc5 with advantage to Black due to the weakness at d3.

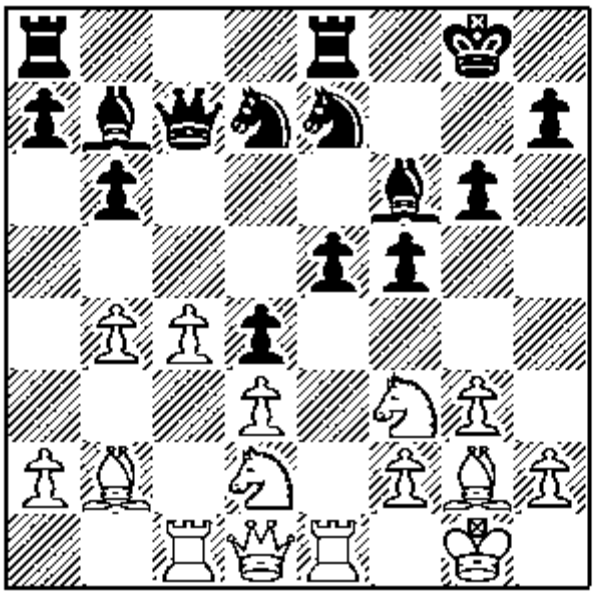
15 ... f5

Black cuts off the h3-bishop and prepares ... e5-e4 at the right moment.

16 Bg2

The bishop naturally does not belong at h3 anymore.

16 ... Bf6



Exercise: Black makes ready for ... g6-g5-g4 with a strong grip on the kingside. What can Stein do about that?

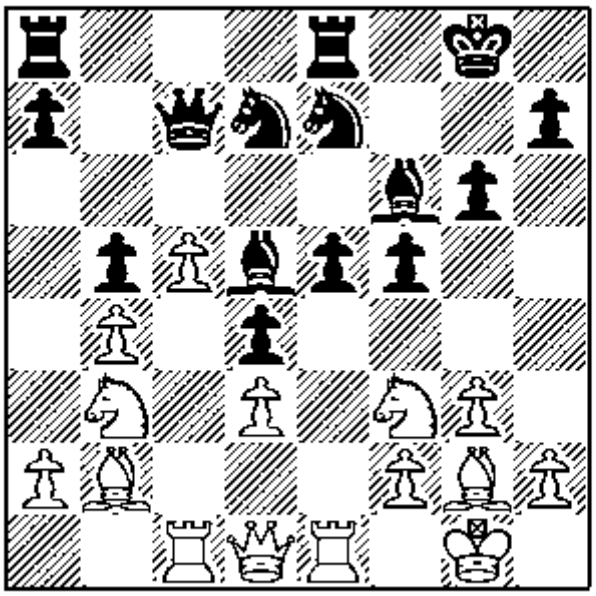
Answer: 17 c5!

This is the only way for White to fight for the initiative, but inserting the prophylactic 17 h4!? first was an alternative. If Black persists in his own plan with 17 ... h6, then after 18 c5! b5 (as in the game), White can initiate the imaginative sequence 19 h5! g5 20 g4 fxg4 21 c6! Bxc6 (or 21 ... Nxc6 22 Nh2) 22 Nxd4 exd4 23 Rxe7! Rxe7 24 Bxc6 Qd8 25 Bxa8 Qxa8 26 Qxg4 with the better chances.

17 ... b5

Hort prefers to keep the white pieces out of the the c4-square. Blockading the c-file with 17 ... bxc5 18 bxc5 Bc6 would allow the knight to jump all the way to d6, though the position remains in dynamic equilibrium after 19 Nc4 Rab8 20 Nd6 Rf8.

18 Nb3 Bd5?!



Exercise: What is White's strongest reply?

19 a4?!

Answer: 19 Na5! is the best move, and then:

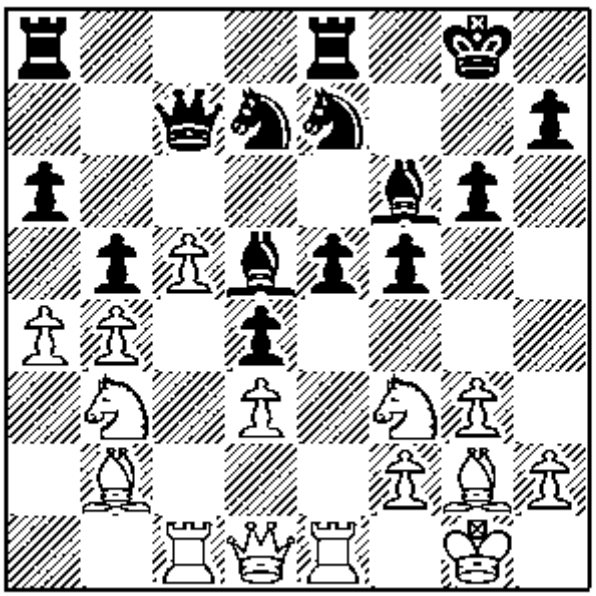
a) 19 ... Bxa2 20 Nxe5! Nxe5 (if 20 ... Bxe5 21 Bxa8 Rxa8 22 Qe2 Bd5 then 23 c6! Nxc6 24 Nxc6 Bxc6 25 f4 wins for White) 21 Bxd4!! (such a move, which gives White a clear advantage in all lines, is easy to overlook; whereas after 21 Bxa8? Rxa8 22 Bxd4 Bd5, the deadly threat of ... Nf3+ forces 23 Bxe5 Bxe5, leaving Black with a very strong centralized bishop pair) . 21 ... Bd5 (or 21 ... Nd5 22 Qd2 Nxb4 23 Bxe5, followed by 24 Qxb4 and wins) 22 Bxe5 Bxe5 23 d4 Bxg2 24 Kxg2 and White's advancing d-pawn will regain the material and more due to Black's clumsily placed pieces.

b) 19 ... Nc6 is met by the incredible blow 20 Nxd4!!, when the main variation runs 20 ... Bxg2 21 Nxb5 Qb8 22 a4 Nxa5 23 Kxg2 a6 24 bxa5 axb5 25 c6 and Black must leave the knight to be taken, since 25 ... Nf8?? 26 Qb3+ Kh8 27 axb5 gives White a decisive array of passed pawns.

Such variations indicate that Black should have played 18 ... Nc6, denying the white knight free access to the a5-square.

19 ... a6

Taking the pawn is also playable: 19 ... bxa4 20 Na5 Nc6 21 Qxa4 Nxa5 22 Qxa5 Qxa5 23 bxa5 Rac8 24 Ba3 and now 24 ... Bg7! gives Black sufficient compensation for the pawn, reflecting the comments to White's 12th move. The g7-square is perfect for the bishop, which has options to move to either f8 or h6, depending on circumstances.



Exercise: How does White proceed?

Answer: 20 Na5

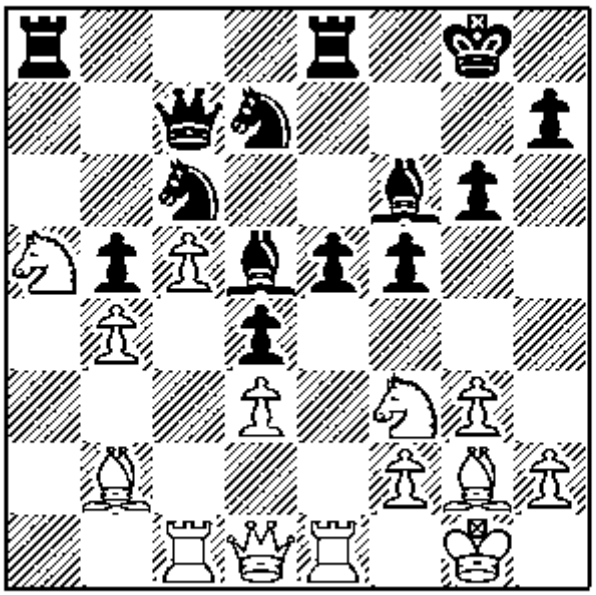
This is not as effective as on the previous move. An interesting alternative is 20 c6!?, giving White the option of using either c5 or a5 as an outpost, depending on Black's mode of play. If 20 ... Nb6 (20 ... Nxc6 is naturally met by 21 Na5 Qd6 22 Nxc6 Bxc6 23 Rxc6 Qxc6 24 Nxd4 Qd6 25 Bxa8 Rxa8 26 Qb3+ and White has the more active position) 21 Nc5 Qd6

22 a5 Na4 23 Nxa4 bxa4, then 24 Rc5! targets the d5-bishop and indirectly the e5-pawn on the fifth rank with a slight advantage; for example, 24 ... Rac8 (or 24 ... Bxc6?! 25 Nxe5! Bxg2 26 Nc4 Qb8 27 Kxg2 Qxb4 28 Ba3 and everything is covered) 25 Qxa4 Bxc6 26 Qa3 and so on.

20 ... Nc6

Hort's one move suggestion 20 ... Rad8 is actually a grave mistake due to 21 axb5 axb5 22 Nxd4! exd4 (or 22 ... Bxg2 23 Ne6) 23 Rxe7! Rxe7 24 Bxd5+, followed by 25 Nc6 and wins.

21 axb5 axb5



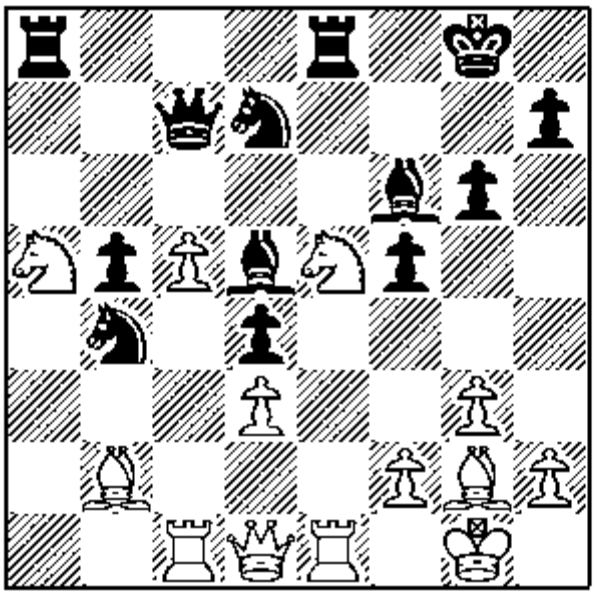
Exercise (combination alert): What is White's next move?

22 Nxe5?!

Answer: We have actually seen this position before (in note 'b' to 19 Na5!), except that here the a-pawns have been exchanged, so the correct move 22 Nxd4!! is only good enough for equality: 22 ... Bxg2 23 Nxb5 Qb8 24 Qb3+ (there is no a2-a4 this time) 24 ... Kh8 25 Nxc6 Bxc6 (or 25 ... Qxb5 26 Nxe5 Nxe5 27 Bxe5 Rxe5 28 Rxe5 Bxe5 29 Kxg2 etc) 26 Nd6 Rf8 27 f4 and the three active pawns give White sufficient compensation for the missing bishop.

22 ... Nxb4?

In Informator, Hort analysed 22 ... Rxe5! 23 Bxd5+ Rxd5 24 Qb3 Nxb4, when 25 c6? Ne5! and 25 Qxb4?! Qxa5 26 Qb3? Qa2 are both winning for Black. A better defence is 25 Ba3! Qxa5 26 Bxb4 Qa2 27 Qxa2 Rxa2 28 c6 Kf7! 29 c7 Nb6 30 c8Q Nxc8 31 Rxc8, when White has some drawing chances with his active pieces despite being a pawn down. A telling variation is 31 ... Rd7 32 Rf8+ Kg7 33 Rb8 Rb2 34 Rxb5 Be7 35 Re6! Bxb4 (or 35 ... Rxb4 36 Rxe7+ etc) 36 Reb6 Rd2 37 Rxb4 Rxd3 38 Rb7 Rxb7 39 Rxb7+ Kf6 40 Rxh7 with a draw.

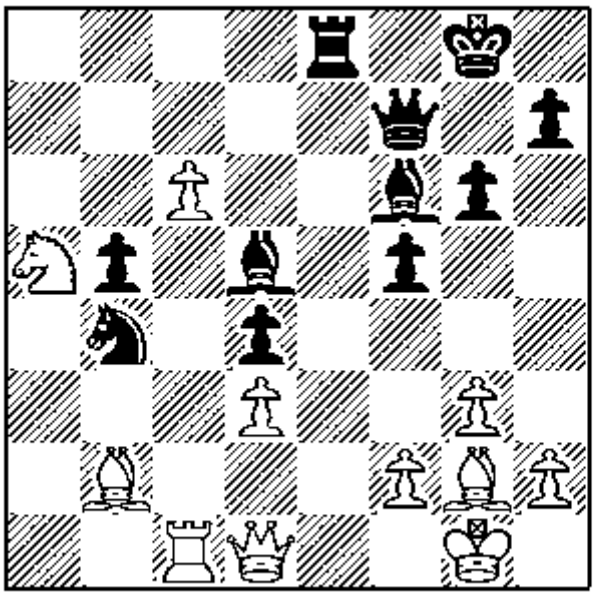


Exercise: How does White exploit Black's mistake?

Answer: 23 Nxd7 Qxd7 24 c6!

This is the key move. From now on the passed c-pawn is a source of great power.

24 ... Qf7 25 Rxe8+ Rxe8



Exercise: What is the most accurate continuation?

26 Nb7!?

Answer: Objectively, 26 Bxd5! Nxd5 27 Rc5 Nc7 28 Nb3 is correct, when White is slightly better as he is more active. The passed pawn on c6 is certainly the pride of his position. On the hand, Stein's move sets Black an immediate problem: how to defend against the threat of Nd6 - ?

26 ... Be5?

In seeking to control both d4 and d6, Hort goes the wrong way. The correct defence was 26 ... Be7!, when the c6-pawn is not a source a power anymore. Black threatens 27 ... Bxg2

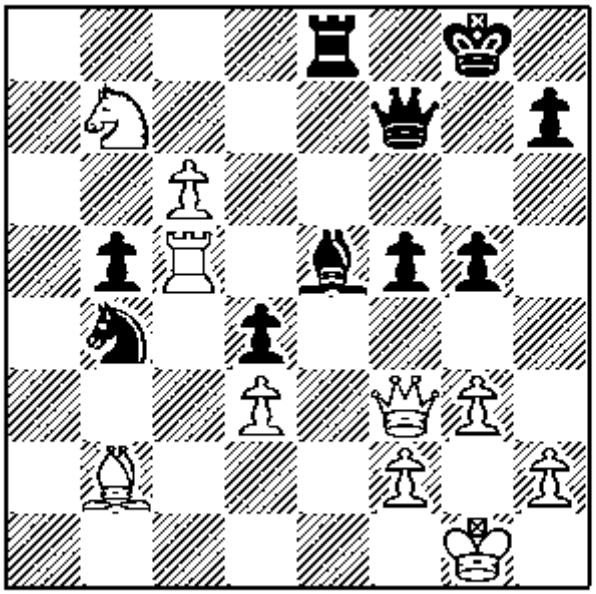
28 Kxg2 Qd5+ and wins, as well as the simple 27 ... Rc8. What is to be done? The best solution is actually to commit suicide with the c-pawn by playing 27 c7 Rc8 28 Nd8 Bxd8 29 cxd8Q+ Rxd8 30 Rc5 Bxg2 31 Kxg2 reaching an equal position. If Black tries to hold on to the extra pawn with 31 ... Rd5, then 32 Rc8+ Kg7 33 Qe2 Qb7 (or 33 ... Qd7 34 Re8) 34 Rb8! Qxb8 35 Qe7+ leads to perpetual check.

27 Bxd5 Qxd5

Not 27 ... Nxd5? due to 28 Bxd4! Bxd4 29 Nd6 Qe6 30 Nxe8 Qxe8 31 c7 Nb6 32 Qf3 and Black is barbequed by the pawn on the seventh rank in combination with his unstable minor pieces and exposed king.

28 Rc5 Qf7 29 Qf3 g5?!

Black can put up tougher resistance with 29 ... Qb3 30 c7 Bxc7 31 Rxc7 Qxb2 32 Nd6 Rb8, although after 33 Nxf5! Qa1+ (not 33 ... gxf5? 34 Qxf5 and mates) 34 Kg2 Qa8 35 Ne7+ Kh8 36 Nc6 Rf8 37 Qe4 Nxc6 38 Rxc6, White still has good winning chances in the major piece ending.



Exercise: White has a winning position, but how to win most effectively?

30 c7?!

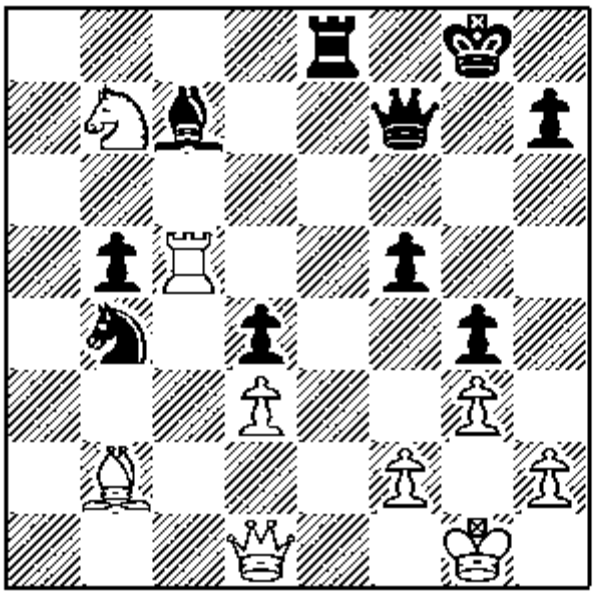
Answer: The key idea is 30 Nd8, when Black has nothing better than 30 ... Qe7 (both 30 ... Rxd8?! 31 Rxe5 Rf8 32 c7! Qxc7 33 Rxf5 Rxf5 34 Qxf5 and 30 ... Qf6?! 31 Rxb5 Rxd8 32 Rxb4 makes White's task easier) 31 Qxf5 Nxc6 32 Rxc6 Qxd8 33 Re6 Bg7 34 Rxe8+ Qxe8 35 Qxg5, which leaves him a pawn down.

If this is not clear enough, White can strengthen his hand by inserting 30 h3! h5 (30 ... Qb3? 31 Qh5 wins at once) 31 Nd8!, when 31 ... Qe7? 32 Qxf5 Nxc6 33 Rxc6 Qxd8 fails to 34 Qg6+ Bg7 35 Bxd4! etc, and 31 ... Qf6 32 Rxb5 Rxd8 33 Rxb4 g4 34 hxg4 hxg4 35 Qh1! is almost as decisive.

30 ... g4

The exchange 30 ... Bxc7 31 Rxf5 is clearly in White's favour, who is strategically winning after 31 ... Qg6 32 g4!.

31 Qd1 Bxc7



Exercise: What is White's best move now?

32 Qd2?!

Answer: Simply taking the d-pawn with 32 Bxd4! is more convincing, followed by Rxb5 with a clear plus. Note that 32 Rxb5? instantly is a mistake due to 32 ... Nc6! and Black consolidates his centre.

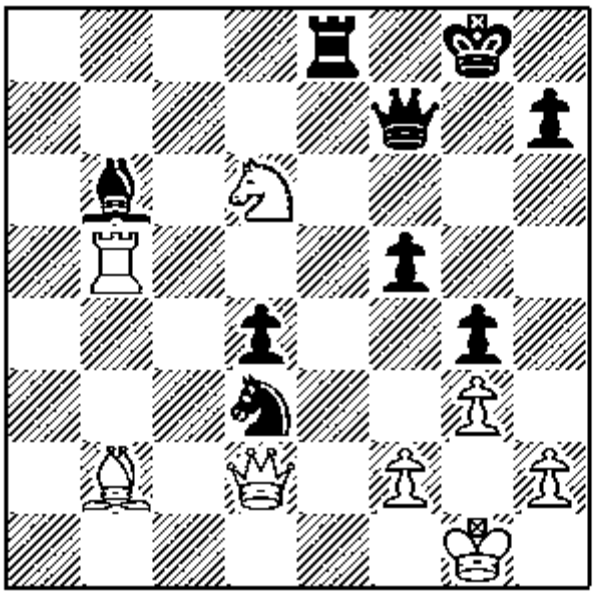
32 ... Bb6?

The final mistake. Hort noted later that 32 ... Be5 is better. Indeed so; although 33 Qxb4 Qxb7 34 Rxb5 Qc7 35 Qb3+ (not 35 Rb7?! Qc2!, threatening ... Qd1+ etc, and 36 Qb3+ Qxb3 37 Rxb3 Kf7 is a draw) 35 ... Qf7 36 Qd5 wins a pawn for White, then 36 ... Qxd5 37 Rxd5 Kf7 38 Bxd4 Bxd4 39 Rxd4 Re1+ 40 Kg2 Rd1 gives Black good drawing chances in the rook ending.

33 Rxb5 Nxd3

33 ... Qxb7 loses to 34 Bxd4! (not 34 Qxb4? Qf3! 35 Qc4+ Kg7 36 Bxd4+ Bxd4 37 Qxd4+ Kg6 38 Rb6+ Kh5 and White must defend the back rank) 34 ... Qe7 35 Re5 Qf7 (or 35 ... Qd8 36 Bxb6) 36 Qg5+ etc.

34 Nd6



The game is over.

34 ... Qd7 35 Qg5+ Kh8 36 Qf6+ Kg8 37 Qg5+ Kh8 38 Nxe8 Qxe8 39 Qxf5 Ne5 40 Rxb6

Getting rid of the knight with 40 Rxe5 is actually the fastest way to win.

40 ... Nf3+ 41 Kg2 Qa8 42 Qf6+ Kg8 43 Qe6+ Kh8 44 Qc6 1-0

After the disappointment of the Interzonal, Stein renewed his impressive tournament run, coming joint first at Hastings 1967/68, followed by clear first at the Toth Memorial in Kecskemet. In the latter event he was undefeated, scoring nine wins and six draws, and finished 2½ points ahead of Gufeld in second on 9½/15. Stein in fact drew with the six players placed 2nd-7th and beat everyone else. This is reminiscent of Flohr's tournament strategy of drawing with the strong players and beating the weaker ones, something that worked quite well for him, except at Nottingham in 1936, where it did not work at all.

Game 44
B.Malich-L.Stein
Toth Memorial, Kecskemet 1968
Torre Attack

Burkhard Malich (1936-) was born in Schweidnitz, at the time part of Germany but which reverted to Polish rule in 1945. Malich was East German Champion twice (in 1957 and 1973) and was awarded the GM title in 1975, but his main profession was as a university lecturer in Byzantine history, which he taught at Halle-Wittenberg until 2001.

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 Bg5

This initiates a very solid system named after the Mexican player Carlos Torre Repetto (1905-78), who had several impressive victories during the mid 1920s with the same set-up. In actuality Torre's games mostly featured 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 Bg5, whereas after 2 ... g6 he favoured 3 Nc3!? d5 4 Bf4.

3 ... Bg7 4 Nbd2 c5

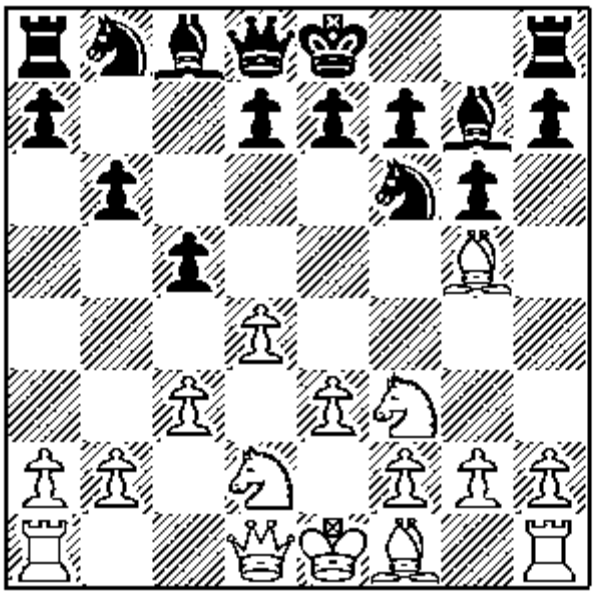
An interesting alternative is 4 ... c6, intending 5 e4 d5 6 Bd3 (or 6 e5 Ne4) 6 ... h6 7 Bxf6 exf6! 8 c3 0-0 9 0-0 dxe4 10 Nxe4 f5 11 Ned2 c5 and Black opened the position up for his bishop pair with a good game in T.Engqvist-E.Rozentalis, Stockholm 2006.

5 e3

Sometimes White opts for the simplifying 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 Ne4 Bxd4 7 Nxd4 cxd4 8 Qxd4 0-0, after which N.Spirodonov-G.Kasparov, European Team Championship, Skara 1980, continued 9 c4 Nc6 10 Qd2 d6 11 Nc3 Be6 12 e4 Qb6!, and here 13 Be2 Nd4 14 0-0 Rac8

15 b3 would have been equal, according to Kasparov.

5 ... b6 6 c3



6 ... Bb7

The immediate 6 ... 0-0, keeping the option of exchanging bishops on a6, appears to be an error due to 7 Bxf6 Bxf6 8 Ne4 Bg7 9 dxc5, but it is not. After the surprising 9 ... Na6! 10 cxb6 axb6, followed by ... d7-d5, Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn, with greater space and the bishop pair as counterbalancing factors. Chess is a truly fascinating and rich game!

7 a4 0-0 8 Bd3

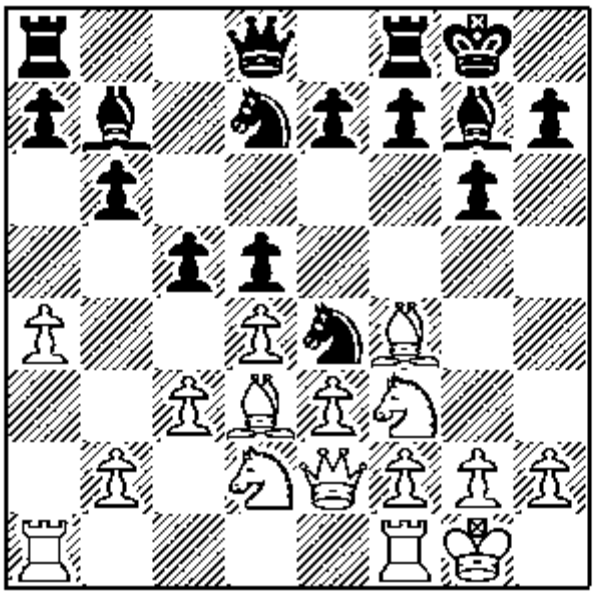
Here looks 8 a5 more consequent, hoping for 8 ... bxa5?! 9 dxc5!, followed by Nb3 with the slightly better prospects, but Black simply plays 8 ... Na6 and White still has to decide where to place the light-squared bishop. As a general rule it is better to develop the pieces before embarking on wing operations; indeed, the f1-bishop usually goes to d3 on the previous move.

8 ... d5 9 0-0 Ne4

This centralizing move signifies that it is the second player who first takes the initiative in this game.

10 Bf4 Nd7 11 Qe2

Planning to exchange light-squared bishops himself with Ba6 at some point.



Exercise: How does Black continue?

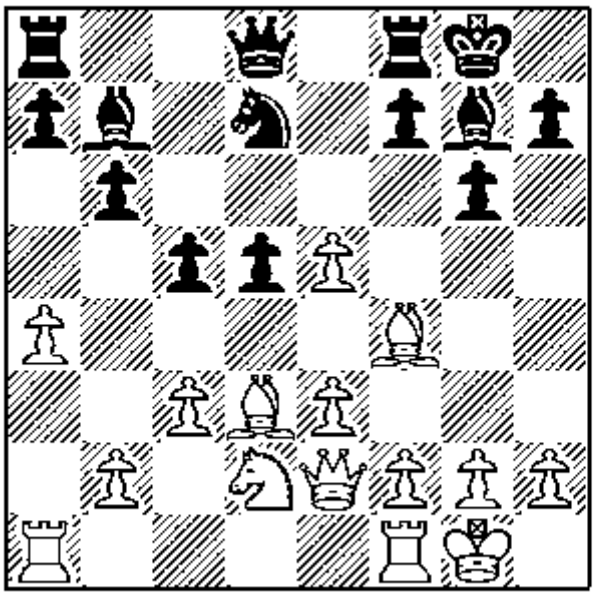
Answer: 11 ... Nxd2!

This exchange, in the spirit of Capablanca, is the best move. Although it seems illogical to exchange a strong knight for a passive one, in this way Black is able to enforce the desirable break ... e7-e5, securing a space advantage.

12 Nxd2

12 Qxd2 loses a tempo and invites either 12 ... f6 and ... e7-e5, or 12 ... Nf6 followed by ... Ne4 again.

12 ... e5! 13 dxe5

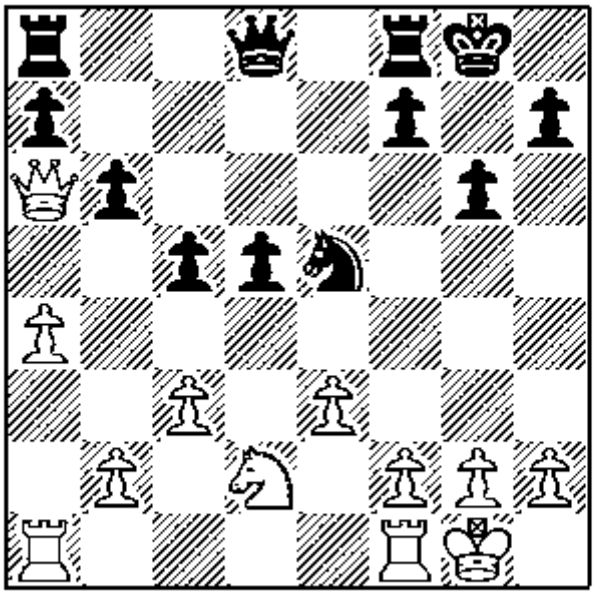


Question: Should Black take on e5 with the knight or the bishop? Justify your answer.

Answer: 13 ... Bxe5!?

Stein continues to strives for the initiative. The normal move 13 ... Nxe5 would be answered by 14 Ba6 with an equal game, while 13 ... c4!? 14 Bc2 Nxe5 15 Nf3 Nxf3+ 16 Qxf3 also offers mutual prospects.

14 Bxe5 Nxe5 15 Ba6 Bxa6 16 Qxa6



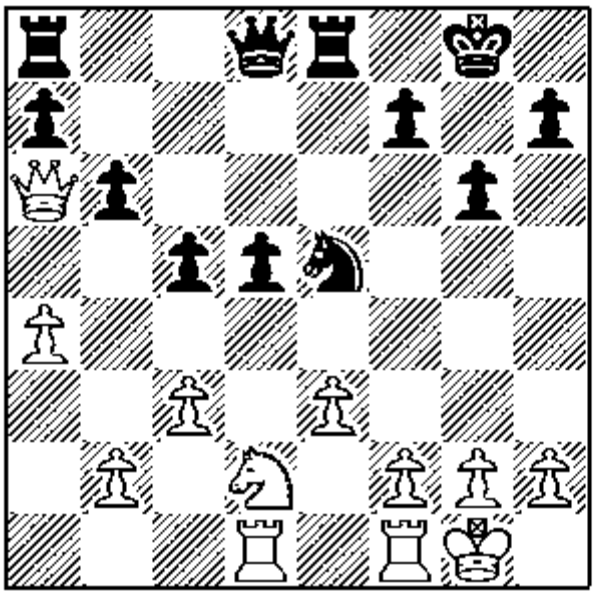
Question: Why did Stein aim for this position, rather than keep the dark-squared bishops on the board?

Answer: Presumably he did not like that the prospects of the g7-bishop are limited by the b2/c3 pawn duo. The opposing dark-squared bishop may also have been useful on the h2-b8 diagonal in connection with a queenside attack by a4-a5.

16 ... Re8

Black has a space advantage arising from his c- and d-pawns both being two squares forward, which is normally the privilege of the first player. The reason for this "table turn" is that Stein made the crucial e-pawn break first, so Malich is now in effect playing with the black pieces!

17 Rad1



Question: Should Black continue to develop his major pieces or cross the equator?

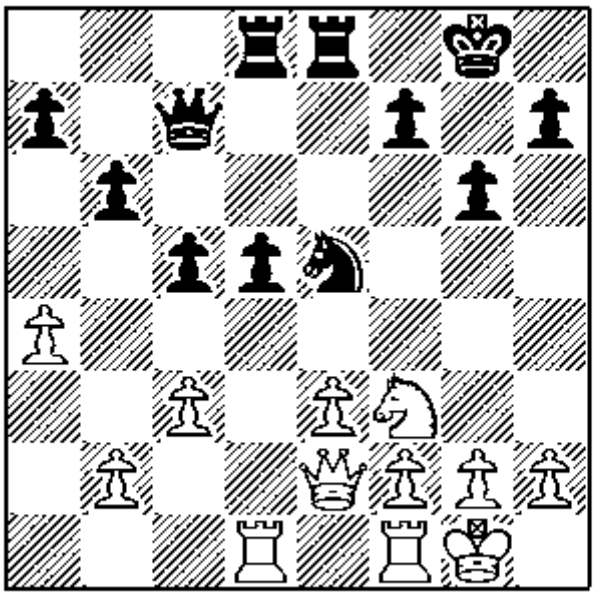
Answer: 17 ... Qc7

Creating an outpost at d3 with 17 ... c4 is fully playable since the attempt to destroy it leaves Black slightly better after 18 b3 (or 18 e4 Re7 19 h3 Rc7) 18 ... Qc8 19 Qb5 Qe6. Nonetheless, Stein's choice looks more logical, improving the position of the major pieces, while the possibility of ... c5-c4 will continue to bother White. The threat is stronger than its execution!

18 Qe2 Rad8

Black's pieces are fully mobilized, so now is a good moment to start thinking about taking the fight into enemy territory.

19 Nf3



Exercise: How should Black meet the challenge to his knight?

Answer: 19 ... Ng4!

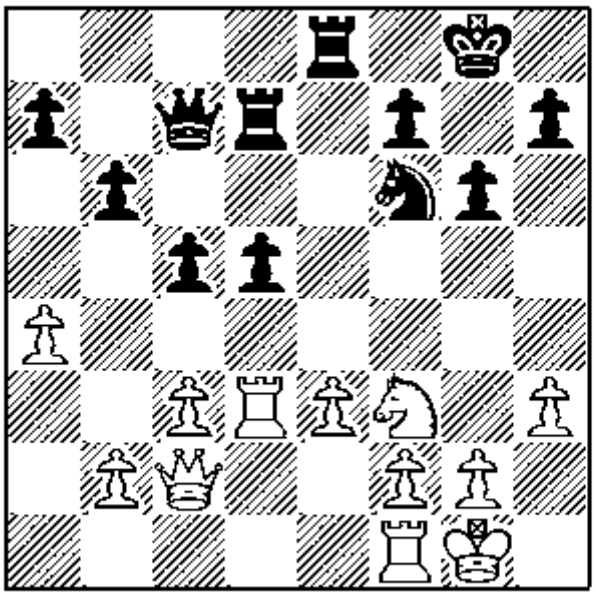
Black's knight is the superior piece, as will be clearly visible when it is placed on the strong outpost e4.

20 h3

Why help the black knight to a better square? White's dug-out is solid enough as can be seen after 20 Rd3 d4? (better is 20 ... Nf6 21 Rfd1 Re7, followed by ... Red7, overprotecting the d5-pawn and preparing the positionally desirable ... Ne4 and ... f7-f5) 21 cxd4 cxd4 22 h3 (now this move is necessary) 22 ... Ne5 23 Rxd4 Nxf3+ 24 Qxf3 Rxd4 25 exd4 Qd7 26 d5 Rd8 27 Rd1 Qxa4 28 d6 and White has a dangerous passed pawn.

20 ... Nf6 21 Qc2 Rd7 22 Rd3

If White targets the strong d5-pawn with 22 c4, Black will have chances to conquer the d-file after 22 ... Red8, threatening ... d5xc4. Then 23 cxd5 Nxd5 gives the knight a very favourable observation point at b4; while after 23 b3, Black can either centralize his pieces with 23 ... Rd6, followed by ... Qe7 and ... Ne4, or go for mass exchanges with 23 ... dxc4 24 bxc4 Rxd1 25 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 26 Qxd1 Ne4 27 Qd3 Qe7 28 Nd2 Nxd2 29 Qxd2 Qe4, trying to exploit his more compact pawn position; though in the latter case the position is a fairly certain draw: 30 Qd7 Qxc4 31 Qxa7 Qe6 32 a5 bxa5 33 Qa8+ Kg7 34 Qxa5 and so on.

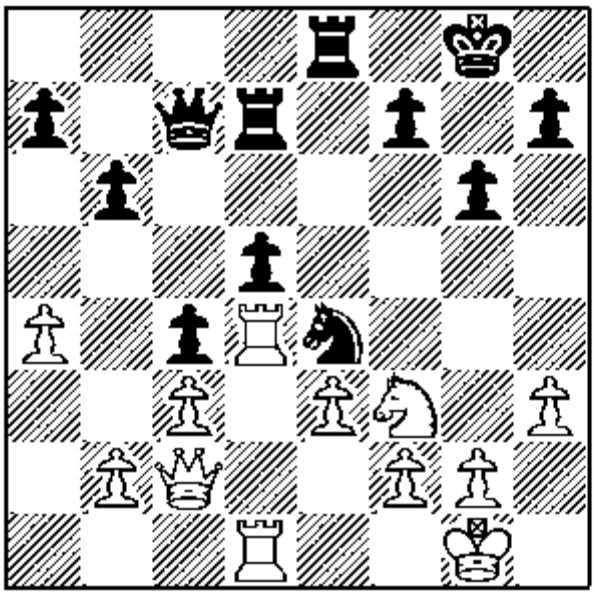


Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation now?

Answer: 22 ... c4!

Clearly the best move, securing two additional outposts for the knight at c5 and d3, and with tempo. Although it also cedes the d4-square, this is a give-and-take strategy where Black gains more than he loses. It has echoes of Petrosian's startling 17 ... c4!! in the seventh game of his 1966 World Championship match with Spassky (in a conventional Torre Attack with 2 ... e6). Petrosian's move was a more complicated version of what we see here, but if you are unfamiliar with this idea I strongly recommend that you read Petrosian: Move by Move and check Game 34.

23 Rd4 Ne4 24 Rfd1



Exercise: How does Black proceed?

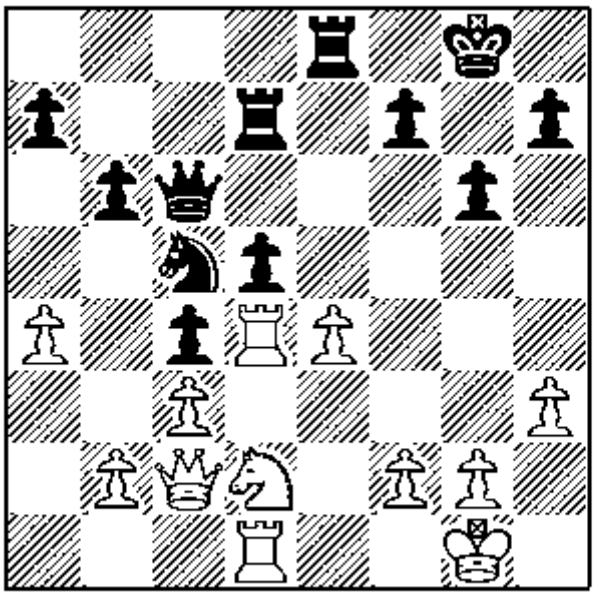
Answer: 24 ... Qc6!

It is vital to put instant pressure on the a4-pawn. After the automatic 24 ... Red8, White can solve his problems with 25 Nd2 Nc5 26 b4! Ne6 27 Rh4 a5 28 b5 and it is difficult to see how Black can make progress with the queenside blocked.

25 Nd2 Nc5 26 e4

Now 26 b4?! is met by 26 ... Qxa4, and although White can complicate matters with 27 Qb1!?, after 27 ... Nd3! (27 ... Ne6 28 Ne4! is less clear) 28 b5 Nc5! 29 Nxc4 dxc4 30 Rxc7 Nxd7 31 Rxd7 a5! and ... Qb3, Black obtains a very favourable ending.

If White instead attacks the head of the pawn chain with 26 b3, Black can secure an edge with 26 ... Ne6! (the pawn snatch 26 ... cxb3? 27 Nxb3 Nxa4 runs into 28 Na5! bxa5 29 Qxa4 Qxa4 30 Rxa4 and the double rook ending is a fairly easy draw) 27 Rh4 cxb3 28 Nxb3 Rc8 due to his more harmonious position; the h4-rook stands out particularly as misplaced.



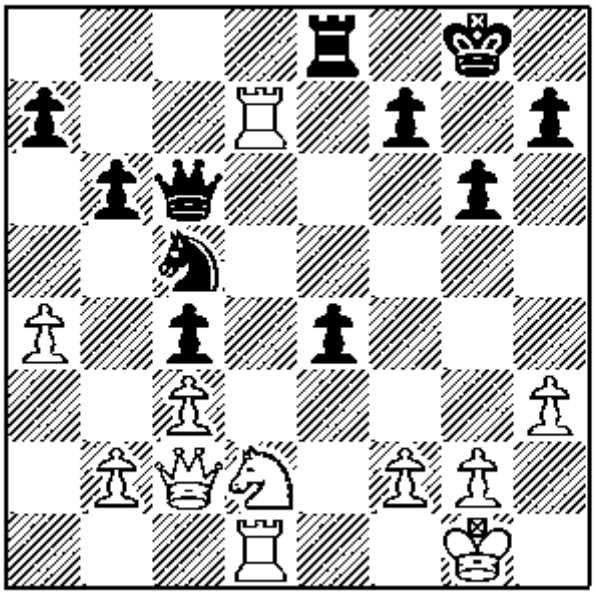
Exercise (calculation): How to recapture the e4-pawn? Calculate the necessary variations.

Answer: 26 ... dxe4

The alternative 26 ... Nxe4?! leads to too many exchanges: 27 Nxc4 (or even 27 Nxe4 Rxe4 28 Rxe4 dxe4 29 Rxd7 Qxd7 30 Qxe4 Qxa4 31 Qe7 with good drawing chances, as it is hard for Black to protect the king's house and the queenside pawns simultaneously) 27 ... Rde7 28 Ne3 Nxf2 29 Nxd5 Nxd1 30 Nxe7+ Rxe7 31 Qxd1 with an approximately equal position.

27 Rxd7

If White abandons the d-file for one moment with 27 Rxc4??, he is immediately punished by 27 ... Red8 and the pin on the d-file is deadly. Taking the other way is also a mistake: 27 Nxc4? Rxd4 28 Rxd4?! (or 28 cxd4 Nd3 with a clear advantage) 28 ... Ne6 29 Rxe4 f5 30 Rh4 g5! (even cautious players who care about a safe kingside must sometimes move the protecting pawns; in this case the reward is a piece) 31 Rh6 (or 31 Ne5 Qc7) 31 ... Qxc4 32 Qxf5 Re7 and Black should win.



Question: Black again has a choice of recaptures; which should he play?

Answer: 27 ... Nxd7

Actually, both are good, since 27 ... Qxd7 28 Nxc4 (28 Nxe4? loses a pawn after 28 ... Qf5 29 f3 Nxe4 etc) 28 ... Qc6 transposes to the game. This is better than 28 ... Qxa4 29 Qxa4 Nxa4 30 Ra1 b5 31 Nd6 Re6 32 Nxb5 Nxb2 33 Rxa7 and White has good drawing chances, albeit from a slightly inferior position.

28 Nxc4

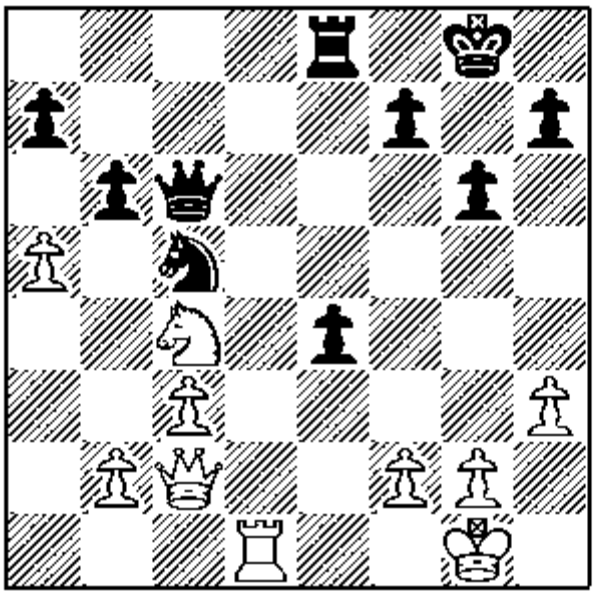
Naturally 28 Nxe4?? Rxe4 29 Rxd7 is a huge mistake due to the intermezzo 29 ... Re1+ 30 Kh2 Qxd7 and wins.

28 ... Nc5

The cool manner in which Stein handles this game is striking.

29 a5?!

Defending the knight with 29 b3 is more solid and it keeps the pawn chain tight together. Then 29 ... Nxa4?! leads to a forced draw after 30 Nd6 Rd8 31 bxa4 Rxd6 32 Rxd6 Qxd6 33 Qxe4; while 29 ... Nd3 can be answered by 30 Nb2 Nf4 31 Nc4 and Ne3, though Black remains slightly better due to his more active knight.

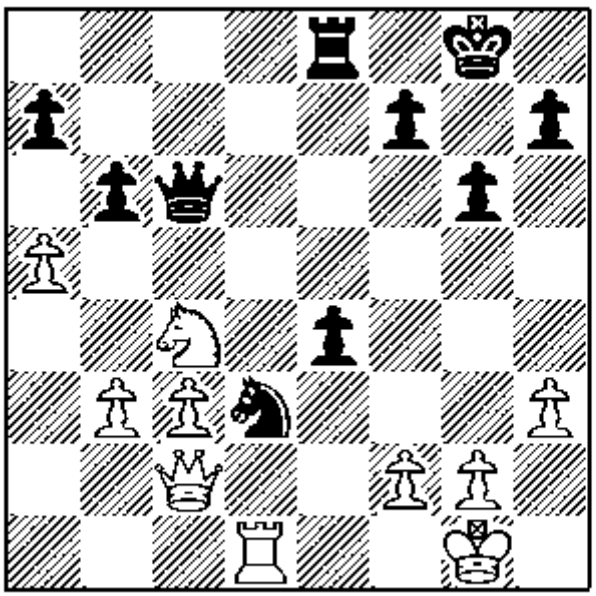


Exercise: How can Black exploit White's aggressive pawn move?

Answer: 29 ... Nd3

Yes, of course. If the white knight moves Black captures the a-pawn, so the next move suggests itself automatically.

30 b3



Exercise: Where should Black put his rook?

Answer: 30 ... Re6!?

This move really proves what a genius Stein was. The e6-square is not at all the normal

post for the rook, but he went beyond such obvious moves. One idea is to be able to use the rook along the third rank, where it defends the b6-pawn one more time and can co-operate with the d3-knight after ... Rf6 to put pressure on f2.

So why did he refrain from the natural and logical 30 ... Rc8, planning ... b6-b5 with tremendous pressure on the weak c3-pawn? There is only one plausible answer: he did not consider this to offer any serious winning chances. After something like 31 Qd2 b5 32 Nb2 Nxb2 33 Qxb2 Qxc3 34 Rd8+ Kg7 35 Qxc3+ Rxc3 36 Ra8 Rxb3 37 Rxa7, the situation will soon be clarified on the queenside, and with four pawns vs. three remaining on the kingside, the endgame is a theoretical draw. Sometimes it is best in a practical sense to refrain from the objectively strongest continuation, so as not to make it easy for the opponent. This is an area of chess psychology: using the pieces to the maximum in order to test the opponent's limits and technique.

31 axb6 axb6 32 Nb2

It is unclear what route Stein would have chosen after 32 Ne3. Would he have played for a minority attack with 32 ... b5, activate his pieces with 32 ... Rf6 and provoke f2-f3, or perhaps even initiate a majority attack with 32 ... f5 - ?

32 ... Nf4

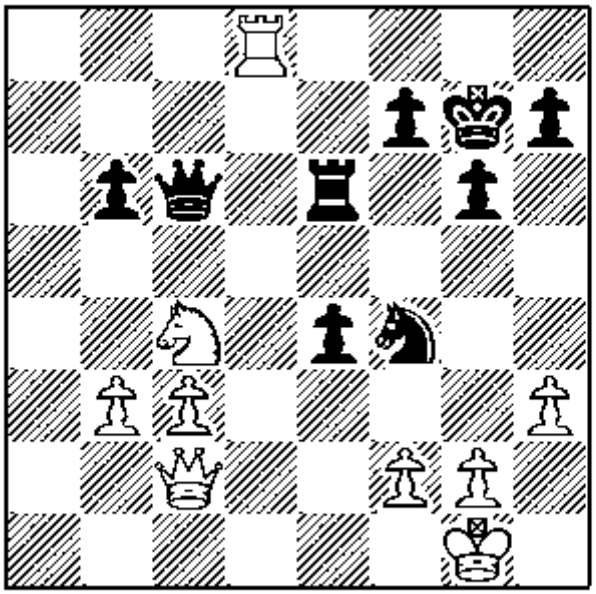
32 ... Rd6 is answered by 33 c4!, intending 34 Nxd3 exd3 35 Qc3, and not the suicidal 33 Nxd3? exd3 34 Rxd3?? Qe4 35 Rd2 Qe1+, when Black wins the rook and the game.

33 Rd8+?

The rook is needed on the first rank. Returning the knight to the centre with 33 Nc4 and 34 Ne3 is the correct treatment, as in the note with 29 b3 above.

33 ... Kg7 34 Nc4?

One move later, this is now a mistake. 34 Qd2 is better, but then 34 ... Rf6 shields the black king with multiple threats, such as ... Qc5-g5 with a devastating attack, or 35 Nc4 (or 35 Qe3 Qxc3!) 35 ... Nd3 36 Qe3 b5 37 Nd2 Nxf2 and Black wins a pawn.



Exercise (combination alert): How to decide the game in Black's favour?

Answer: 34 ... Nxg2!

Black's knight is tremendously versatile. Not long ago it was attacking f2; now it is g2.

35 Qd2

35 Kxg2? loses immediately to 35 ... e3+ and ... e3-e2, when White has to give up the rook.

35 ... Nh4

The trouble with losing a pawn is very often not just the pawn itself but the squares its duty was to protect. Here the f3-square is an irreparable weakness.

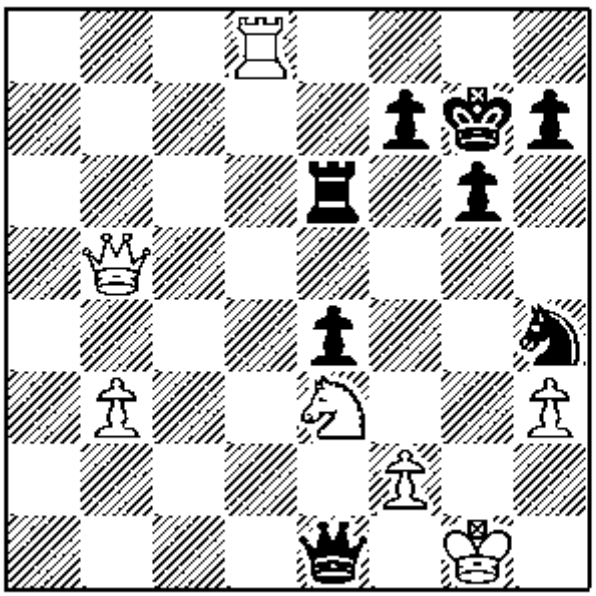
36 Qd5 b5

Now the legitimate weakness on c3 falls as well.

37 Ne3

There is no salvation in 37 Qxc6 Rxc6 38 Nd6 Rxc3, when Black remains two pawns up.

37 ... Qxc3 38 Qxb5 Qe1+



39 Qf1

Apparently 39 Nf1 e3 40 fxe3 Rf6 leads to a forced mate in seven moves.

39 ... Nf3+

The dynamic knight has ended its dance by landing at f3 like a butterfly on a flower with decisive effect.

40 Kg2 Qxf1+ 41 Nxf1 Rb6 42 Ng3 f5 43 Rd7+ Kh6 44 Nf1 Rxb3 45 Ne3 Rb1

Threatening mate in one.

46 Kg3 Ne5 47 Rd1 Rb3 0-1

The sixth Capablanca Memorial in Havana 1968 was won by Ratmir Kholmov on 12/14. Stein shared second place with Alexey Suetin (1926-2001) on 11½, undefeated with nine wins and five draws, and 3½ points ahead of the rest of the field. His opponent in the next game was placed tenth and scored five points.

Game 45
L.Stein-J.Rodriguez Gonzales
Capablanca Memorial, Havana 1968
Delayed Orang-utan

Jesus Rodriguez Gonzales (1939-95) was a Cuban IM and three-time Cuban Champion. According to Chessmetrics, he was ranked 193rd in the world in 1967 with a highest estimated rating of 2502.

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 b4

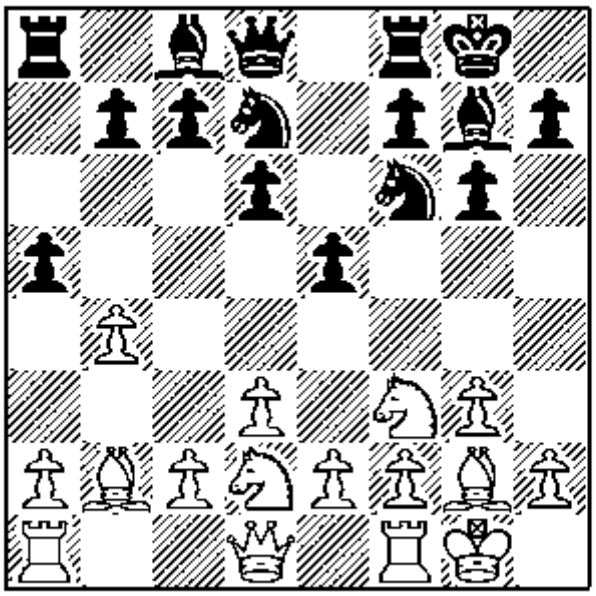
This is actually an ideal way to play the Orang-utan, as it avoids the critical 1 b4 e5 2 Bb2 Bxb4 3 Bxe5 Nf6 with good development for Black.

3 ... Bg7 4 Bb2 0-0 5 Bg2 d6

We saw 5 ... a5 in Game 42, but as we mentioned there the most critical response to White's set-up is 5 ... c6 (preventing b4-b5), followed by ... a7-a5 and ... Qb6, making the b4-pawn a target.

6 d3 Nbd7 7 Nbd2 e5 8 0-0 a5

Ivkov recommended centralization with 8 ... Re8 in Informator #6, while Keene regards 8 ... Nh5 as more logical than inaugurating play on the queenside, thereby encouraging White in that sector of the board.



Exercise: Should White defend the pawn or move one step forward?

Answer: 9 a3

The obvious downside to 9 b5 is that it relinquishes the c5-square for a black knight. It is not to everyone's taste to give and take squares like this, and Stein prefers to maintain his pawn on b4.

9 ... Nb6!

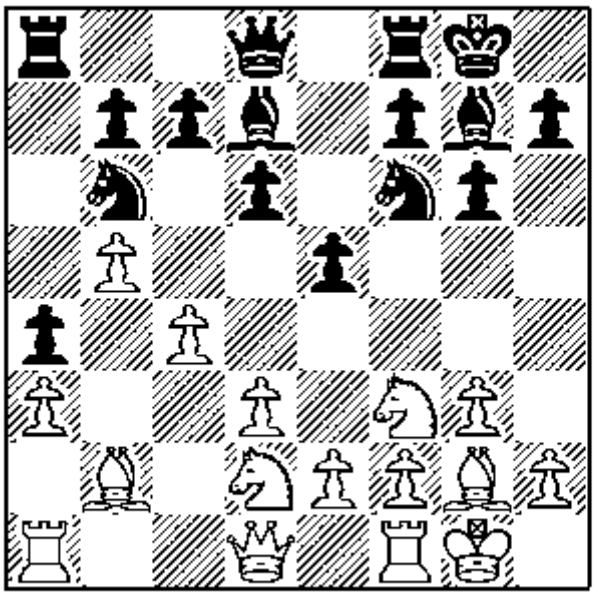
A good move, showing another defect of the white set-up, the weakness of the a4-square. The same positional idea was seen in T.V.Petrosian-B.Spassky, World Championship (22nd matchgame), Moscow 1966: 1 d4 b5 2 e4 Bb7 3 f3 a6 4 Be3 e6 5 Nd2! Nf6 6 c3 Be7 7 Bd3 d6 8 a4 c6 9 Ne2 Nbd7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Ng3 Re8 12 axb5 axb5 13 Rxa8 Qxa8 14 Qc2 Bf8 and now 15 b4! Qb8 16 Nb3, creating an outpost at a5 which is very annoying for Black. This game is probably the strategic refutation of the Polish Defence. The manoeuvre Nd2-b3, with a possible later Na5, is a useful one to remember when someone plays too aggressively with the b-pawn. Of course the same can apply on the kingside with the g-pawn.

10 c4 Bd7?!

It is better to exchange with 10 ... axb4 11 axb4 and only then play 11 ... Bd7. If White continues as in the game, Black achieves harmony between his pieces after 12 b5 Rxa1 13 Bxa1 Qe7 14 Bc3 Ra8 15 Qc2 Bc8, intending ... Nfd7, and cannot complain. After all, it is Black who is in command of the only open file.

11 b5 a4

Understandably Rodriguez wants to secure his a-pawn, as well as the a4-square, and not allow White to play a3-a4 himself, followed by Bc3 and Nb3.



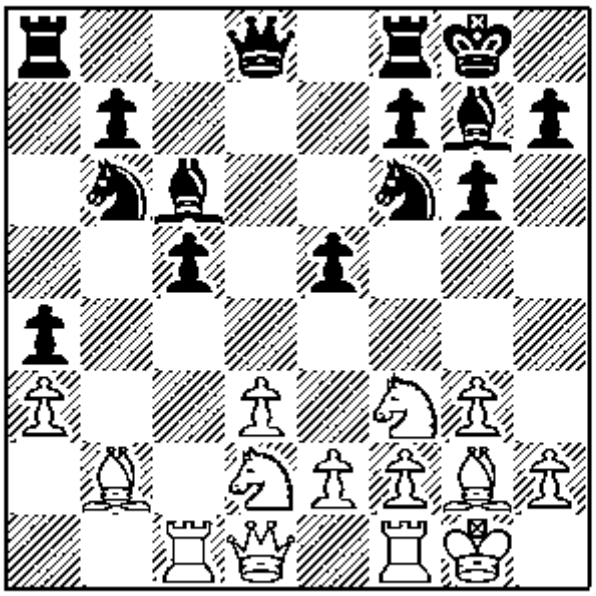
Exercise: What is White's strongest reply?

12 Rc1

A logical move, preparing the break-up of Black's pawn centre with c4-c5.

Answer: However, it is possible to play 12 c5! at once with strong effect. After 12 ... dxc5 (if 12 ... Nc8 then 13 b6! and Black's c7/d6/e5 pawn chain crumbles) 13 Nxe5, White has the initiative and can focus on the weaknesses at b7 and c5.

12 ... c5 13 bxc6 Bxc6 14 c5 dxc5



Exercise: Should White capture on c5 or e5?

Answer: 15 Rxc5!

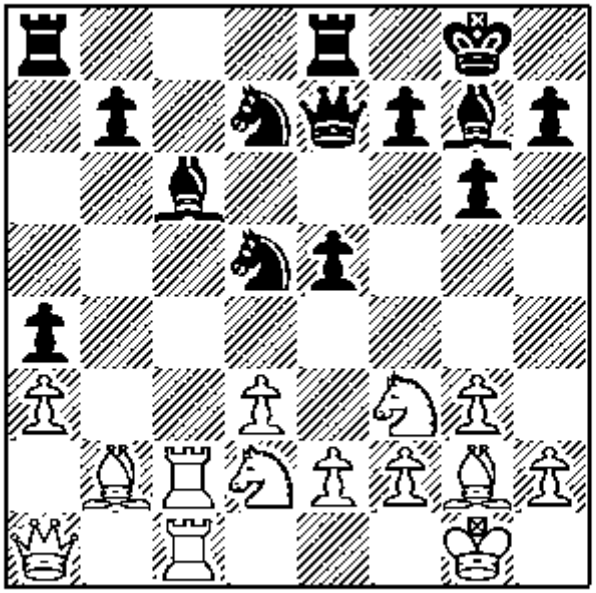
Stein prefers to eliminate the c5-pawn, keeping the game in a hypermodern style, where he can continue to put pressure on the black centre with his pieces.

Taking the e-pawn with 15 Nxe5 leads to simplification after 15 ... Bxg2 16 Kxg2, when the c-pawn is rather easily defended with 16 ... Rc8. Likewise, 15 Bxe5?! Nbd7 is not problematic for Black, since if 16 Bd6 Re8 17 Bxc5, then 17 ... Nxc5 18 Rxc5 Qe7 forks the rook and e2-pawn and regains the material at once.

15 ... Nfd7 16 Rc2

White prepares a standard Réti set-up with Qa1 and Rfc1, putting pressure on the black centre.

16 ... Qe7 17 Qa1 Rfe8 18 Rfc1 Nd5

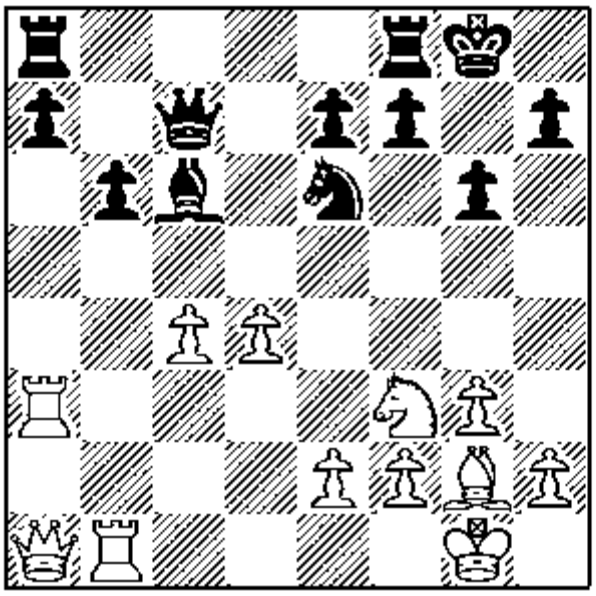


Exercise (planning): Here Stein played according to a plan outlined in R.Réti-A.Rubinstein, Carlsbad 1923. Are you familiar with this plan?

Answer: 19 e4! Nc7 20 d4

These central pawn moves express a concept known as “the hypermodern paradox”, as coined by Reuben Fine (1914-93) in his book, The World’s Great Chess Games, defining it as follows: “If you occupy the center immediately, the pawns soon become weakened, and the opponent will then be able to occupy it. This means though that is is not occupation that is bad, it is in many cases immediate occupation.”

The famous Réti-Rubinstein game where this idea originates went 1 Nf3 d5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 c4 d4 (4 ... c6 is safer) 5 d3 Bg7 6 b4! 0-0 7 Nbd2 c5 8 Nb3! cxb4 9 Bb2 (not yet 9 Nbxd4? due to 9 ... e5!, followed by ... e5-e4) 9 ... Nc6 10 Nbxd4 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b6 12 a3 Bb7 13 Bb2 bxa3 14 Rxa3 Qc7 15 Qa1 Ne8 16 Bxg7 Nxg7 17 0-0 (it is usual to delay castling with a dynamic centre) 17 ... Ne6 18 Rb1 Bc6 19 d4!



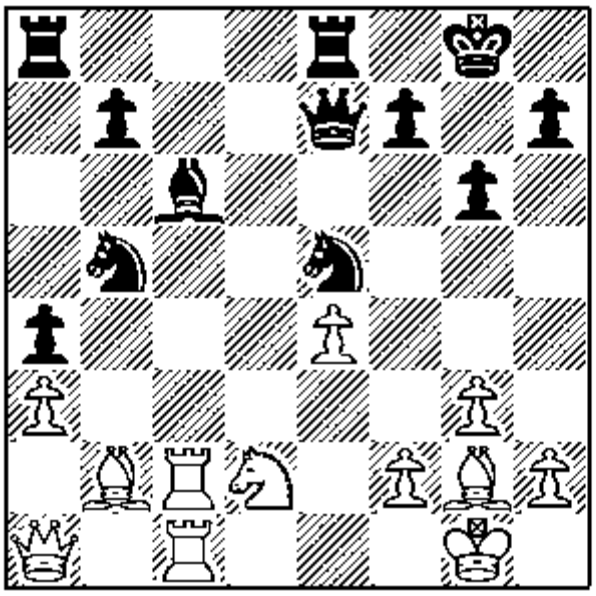
The hypermodern paradox! Réti first controlled the smaller centre with his pieces and then conquered the whole centre with his pawns – in other words, starts off in a hypermodern style and then changes strategy and plays classically. The game continued 19 ... Be4 (note that 19 ... Bxf3? 20 Bxf3 Rad8 is not possible because the a7-pawn hangs) 20 Rd1 a5 (20 ... Qxc4? 21 Nd2 wins a piece) 21 d5! Nc5 (now 21 ... Bxf3 22 Bxf3 Nc5 fails to 23 d6, winning material) 22 Nd4 Bxg2 23 Kxg2 Rfd8 24 Nc6 Rd6 25 Re3 Re8 26 Qe5! f6 27 Qb2 e5 28 Qb5 Kf7 29 Rb1 Nd7 30 f3! Rc8 (not 30 ... Nb8? due to 31 c5! Rxd5 32 Nxb8 Rxb8 33 Qb3! and wins) 31 Rd3! e4 (still not 31 ... Nb8? 32 c5! since White's last move defended the d5-pawn) 32 fxe4 Ne5 33 Qxb6! Nxc6 34 c5! (a nice zwischenzug) 34 ... Rd7 35 dxc6 Rxd3 36 Qxc7+ Rxc7 37 exd3 Rxc6 38 Rb7+ Ke8 39 d4 (once more the hypermodern paradox!) 39 ... Ra6 40 Rb6! Ra8 (the pawn endgame after 40 ... Rxb6 is lost: 41 cxb6 Kd8 42 e5 fxe5 43 fxe5 a4 44 e6 a3 45 b7 Kc7 46 e7 and so forth) 41 Rxf6 a4 42 Rf2 a3 43 Ra2 Kd7 44 d5 g5 45 Kf3 Ra4 46 Ke3 h5 47 h4 gxh4 48 gxh4 Ke7 49 Kf4 Kd7 50 Kf5 1-0.

20 ... exd4 21 Nxd4

Paradoxically White is now the one with a strong-looking e-pawn on his fourth rank, whereas just three moves ago it was Black. The difference is that White's pieces are far more active, so the centre pawn is a source of strength rather than a weakness. Moreover, Black is now forced to surrender his fianchettoed bishop, allowing White to dominate the long dark diagonal.

21 ... Bxd4 22 Bxd4 Nb5 23 Bb2 Ne5?

Too hasty. Black still has things more-or-less in hand if he plays 23 ... Rad8! 24 Nf1 (or 24 Nc4 Nc5 25 Bf6 Nb3) 24 ... Ne5! 25 Ne3 Nd3!, when the strong knight at d3 controls the events on the board, as can be seen after 26 Ng4 (if 26 Bh8 then 26 ... Ne5 again, or 26 Bf6 Qxa3) 26 ... Nxb2 27 Qxb2 Nd4 with an equal game.



Exercise: How does White exploit Black's last move?

Answer: 24 Nc4!

White's goal is to remove all obstacles on the a1-h8 diagonal; but not 24 f4? with the same aim, due to 24 ... Nd3 25 Bh8 (or 25 Bf6 Qd6 26 Rd1 Nxa3) 25 ... Qf8 26 Rd1 Rad8 and Black is better.

24 ... Nxc4

Now 24 ... Nd3 does not solve Black's problems after 25 Bf6 and 26 Rcd1, while 24 ... Nd7 25 Rd1 is also very difficult.

25 Rxc4 Nd6?!

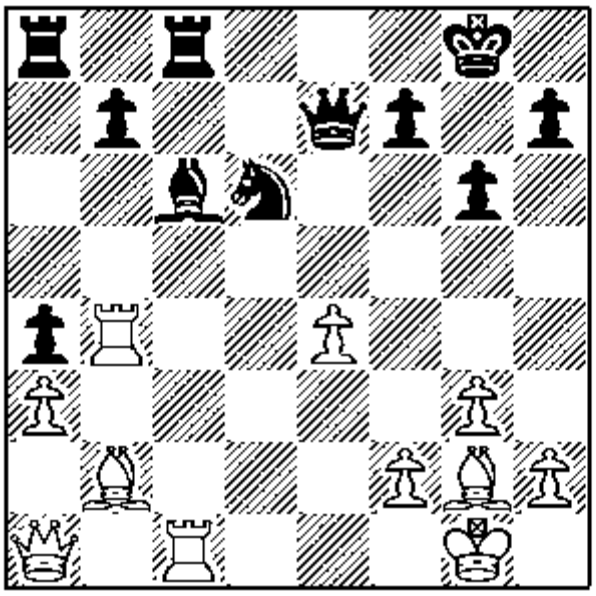
A better set-up is 25 ... Qf8, safeguarding the queen and kingside and keeping options with the knight. Black now threatens to win the e-pawn after ... Nd6, while the natural 26 Rb4 can be met by 26 ... Rad8 and ... Nc7-e6, playing a waiting game.

26 Rb4

A very solid place for the rook, where it defends the e4-pawn and also puts pressure on both queenside pawns.

26 ... Rec8

It is not possible to capture on e4 here because of the deadly pin after Re1. Instead, Black clears e8 for his knight to defend the kingside dark squares.



Exercise: How does White improve his position?

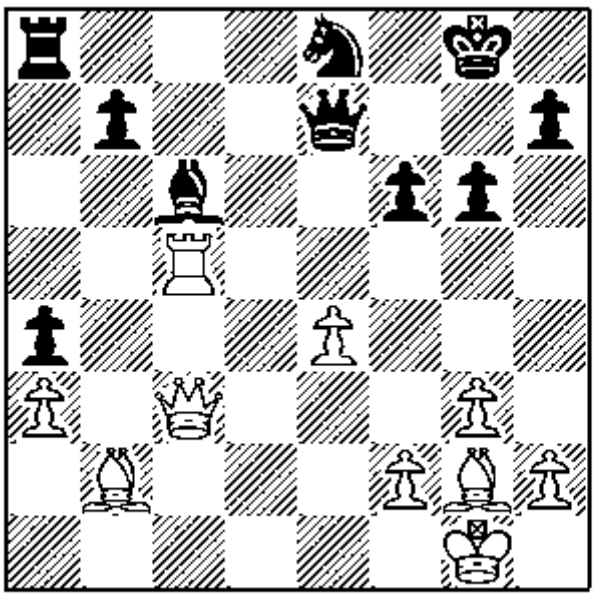
Answer: 27 Rc5!

Stein performs splendidly with his rooks! Such a move is typical for the hypermodern approach. The main idea is to vacate the c1-square for the white queen where it can be directed either to h6 or c3, while 27 ... Nxe4?? fails to 28 Re5. But note that 28 Bh8 Ne8 29 Re5 is not a threat, as Black has the defence 29 ... Qf8, followed by ... f7-f6 or ... Ng7.

27 ... Ne8 28 Qc1 Bd7

Black opts for the fundamental defensive plan of exchanging as many enemy active pieces as possible.

29 Rbc4 Rxc5 30 Rxc5 Bc6 31 Qc3 f6



Exercise: What is White's most convincing continuation?

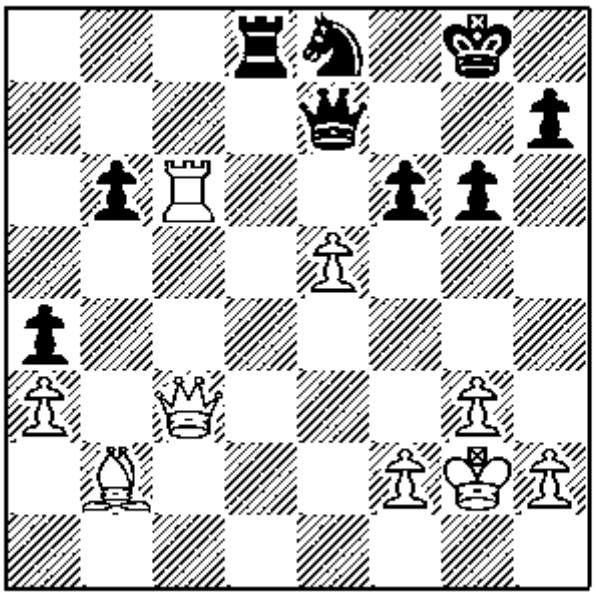
Answer: 32 e5!

Yes, of course! This single move opens both long diagonals with decisive effect, and the exchange of light-squared bishops will emphasize Black's queenside pawn weaknesses.

32 ... Bxg2 33 Kxg2 b6

This weakens the sixth rank, but 33 ... Ra6 does not change the assessment of the position, as after the centralizing 34 Qd4!, the a6-rook is unable to move due to the pressure on the a4-pawn; for example, 34 ... Re6 35 exf6 Nxf6 36 Rc8+ Kf7 37 Qxa4 and White wins.

34 Rc6 Rd8



Exercise: What is White's most effective win?

35 Rxb6

Answer: White can make things simpler by playing 35 Qc4+! (not 35 exf6?! due to 35 ... Qe4+ 36 Qf3 Qxf3+ 37 Kxf3 Rd6, which increases Black's hopes of a draw) 35 ... Qf7 36 e6 Qe7 37 Bc3 Nd6 (or if 37 ... Kg7 then 38 Rxb6 and so on) 38 Bxf6! Nxc4 (or 38 ... Qxf6 39 Rxd6!) 39 Bxe7 with an easy win.

35 ... fxe5?!

Black should strive for an exchange of queens with 35 ... Qxe5 36 Qxe5 fxe5, even though the endgame remains very tough after either 37 Bxe5 Rd3 38 Rb7 or 37 Rb4 Rd5 38 Rxa4.

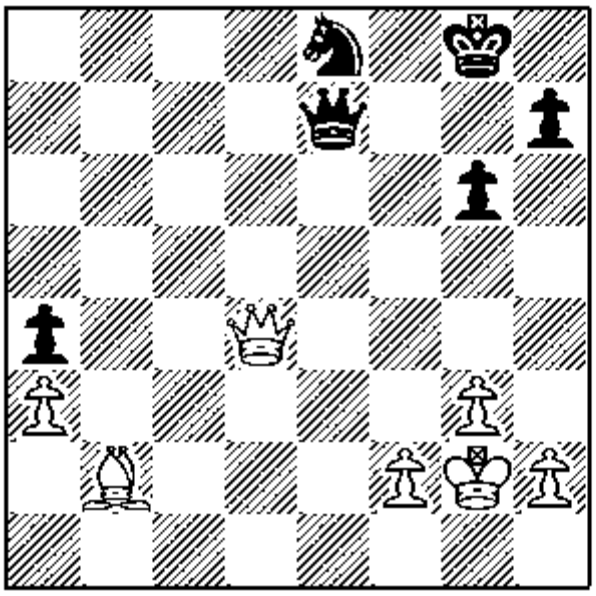
36 Rb4!

A calm move, typical of Stein's style. Black's defence is more difficult with queens on the board, so there is no need to agree to an exchange.

36 ... Rd4

Since Black must lose a pawn anyway, he continues his strategy of swapping as many pieces as possible.

37 Rxd4 exd4 38 Qxd4

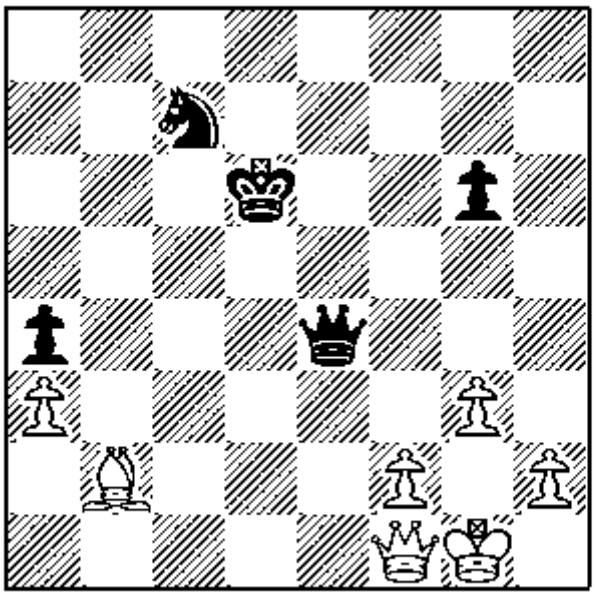


The rest of the game is very illustrative of the principle of two weaknesses, in this case Black's vulnerable king and a-pawn.

38 ... Qb7+ 39 Kg1 Kf7 40 Qh8

The game has had the long dark diagonal as the main theme for many moves. White now reaches the summit by invading the corner square, and can expect some further rewards. Black's queen centralization on the light squares is only a symbolic revenge.

40 ... Qe4 41 Qxh7+ Ke6 42 Qh3+ Kd6 43 Qf1 Nc7



Exercise: What is the most effective way to decide the game?

Answer: 44 Qd1+!

Focusing on the weakness at a4.

44 ... Nd5 45 h4

The immediate 45 Bd4 is perfectly good, but Stein is not in any hurry; in fact, by making a small improvement, he is virtually telling his opponent to resign!

45 ... Ke6 46 Bd4 Kf5 47 Qxa4 1-0

The level of this game from White's perspective was as instructive as Réti-Rubinstein, both being model examples for understanding hypermodern concepts. Incidentally, Fine's The World's Great Chess Games is well worth the investment too.

As his next international tournament in Tallinn, Stein was again undefeated and this time took first place on 10½/13, with eight wins and five draws. Keres and Nei shared second place on 9 points.

The modest Mato Damjanovic (1927-2011) became the second Croatian grandmaster in 1964 and twice represented Yugoslavia in international team events, winning an individual silver medal as first reserve at the 1960 Leipzig Olympiad. In the 1960s and '70s Damjanovic participated in hundreds of events and, in between, played thousands of unofficial games, it is said for twenty-four hours at a time without showing any signs of fatigue. For him chess was the most important thing in the world, something almost sacred and, typically, he made a distinction between people who play chess and those who do not.

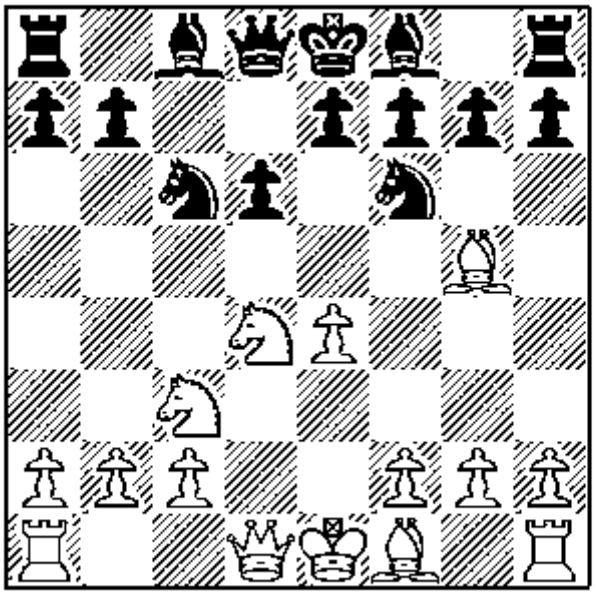
Game 46
M.Damjanovic-L.Stein
Tallinn 1969
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6

The Classical Sicilian is a very sound system, emphasizing development over structure and maintaining flexibility with the pawn formation. My fellow Swedish IMs Lars-Åke Schneider and Lars Degerman were very fond of it in their heydays.

6 Bg5

The Richter-Rauzer, which this move initiates, is regarded as one of the critical lines, discouraging Black from playing ... e7-e5.



Question: How does Black continue?

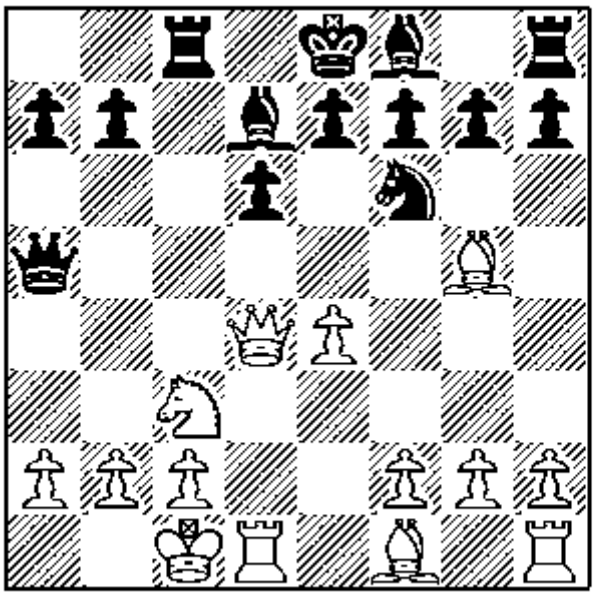
Answer: 6 ... Bd7

Stein keeps his opponent guessing as to the future placement of his pawns. Instead, 6 ... e6 7 Qd2, followed by 8 0-0-0, leads to a genuine Rauzer Attack, but Stein never played this

way as Black.

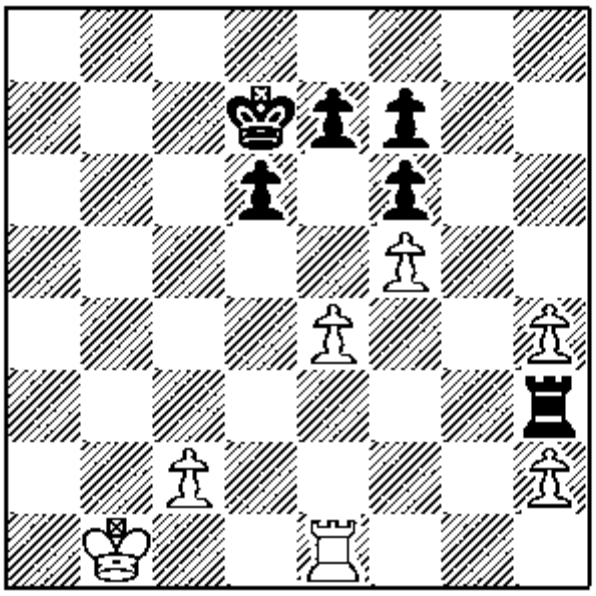
7 Nb3

White hopes to exploit his space advantage by avoiding piece exchanges, which are normally in Black's interest; the more pieces that are swapped off the less valuable the space advantage will become. The main variation allows more exchanges, as can be seen after 7 Qd2 Rc8 8 0-0-0 Nxd4 9 Qxd4 Qa5



10 f4 Rxc3!? (an enterprising exchange sacrifice) 11 bxc3 (11 Qxc3? Qxc3 12 bxc3 Nxe4 is good for Black) 11 ... e5. For example, Th.Ernst-Wang Zili, Belgrade 1988, continued 12 Qb4 Qxb4 13 cxb4 Nxe4 14 Bh4 g5 15 fxg5 Be7 16 Re1 Nxg5 17 Re3 Ne6 18 Bxe7 Kxe7 19 Bd3 Nc7 and Black had sufficient compensation with his compact position in the middle of the board; the game ended in a draw after 54 moves but it was White who had to work for it.

Another of Stein's games in Tallinn saw instead 10 Bxf6?! gxf6 11 f4 Bg7 (or 11 ... Qc5 at once) 12 Kb1 Qc5 13 f5 Qxd4 14 Rxd4 h5 15 Bb5 Bxb5 16 Nxb5 a6 17 Nc3 Bh6 18 Rb4?! (Gufeld recommends 18 Nd5 here or on the next move with an equal game) 18 ... b5 19 a4?! Bd2! 20 axb5 axb5 21 Rxb5 Bxc3 22 bxc3 Rg8! 23 g3 Rg4 (maybe this rook manoeuvre was overlooked by White who now has to accept that he has the inferior pawn structure) 24 Re1 Rxc3 25 Rb8+ Kd7 26 Rh8 h4 27 Rxh4? (27 Kb2 is correct with good drawing chances after either 27 ... Rf3 28 Ra8, followed by 29 Ra7+, or 27 ... Rc5 28 Rxh4 Rxh4 29 gxh4 and Black's rook is less active than in the game) 27 ... Rxh4 28 gxh4 Rh3



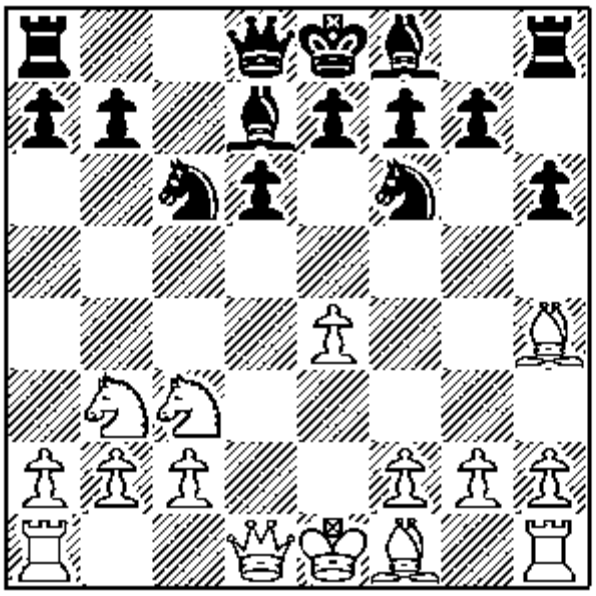
(the rook ending is tough for White; his rook and king are passively placed and his split pawns are much weaker than the solid black mass) 29 Re2 Kc6 30 Kc1 Kc5 31 Kd2? (31 c3! is the last chance to keep the black king out of the centre, and setting a trap at the same time: 31 ... Rxc3+?? 32 Rc2 and the h4-pawn decides the game) 31 ... Kd4 32 h5 Rxh5 33 c3+ (too late; the king is too strong in the middle of the board) 33 ... Ke5 34 Ke3 Rh3+ 35 Kd2 Rf3 36 Kc2 Rf4 37 Kd3 Rh4 (zugzwang!) 38 Rg2 Rxe4 39 Rg7 Kxf5 40 Rxf7 d5 41 Rh7 e5 42 h4 Rg4 0-1 La.Szabo-L.Stein, Tallinn 1969. A good game by Stein, demonstrating the strength of the compact d6/e7/f7/f6 pawn formation in all its different phases.

7 ... h6

The very interesting player GM Jonathan Speelman tried a Najdorf-inspired structure with 7 ... a6 8 f4 e6 in a few games during the 1980s, although the c8-bishop should be on b7 and the b8-knight on d7 to resemble a true Najdorf.

8 Bh4

Most games continue 8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 f4 or 9 Qh5 – obviously Stein did not mind this; after all, he has the bishop pair, a beautiful wall of pawns to protect the king, and can enjoy two semi-open files for his rooks. This is exactly the kind of game Stein wants in order to display his imagination in a dynamic situation.



Question: What is Black's next move?

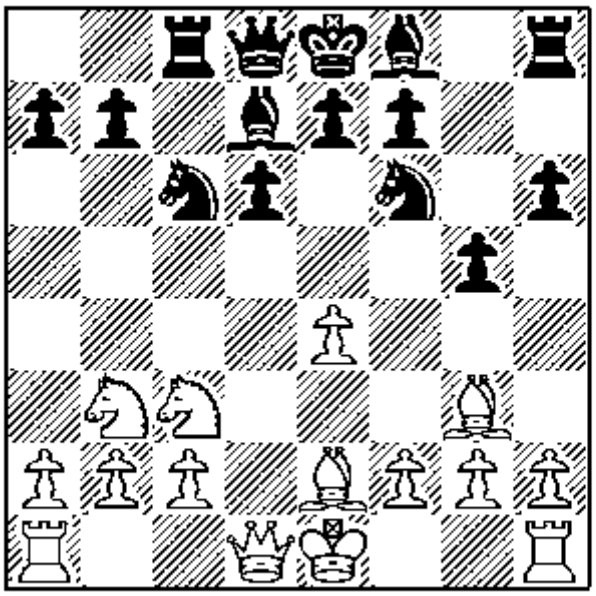
Answer: 8 ... Rc8

Stein gives White the chance both to worry about ... g7-g5 as well as regret not having exchanged on f6. This is chess at a high psychological level, showing how you steal thinking time from your opponent by creating figments in their imagination. Normal humans would play something like 8 ... g5 9 Bg3 Bg7 10 h4 g4 11 h5 Qb6 with mutual chances, as in L.Mikhaletz-Ma.Pavlov, Alushta 2013.

9 Be2

If White tries to prevent ... g7-g5 with 9 f4, Black can play it in the spirit of a kingside Benko Gambit: 9 ... g5! 10 fxg5 hxg5 11 Bxg5 with good compensation after either 11 ... Bg7 or 11 ... Nh5; in particular, the e5-square is an excellent outpost for the knight.

9 ... g5 10 Bg3

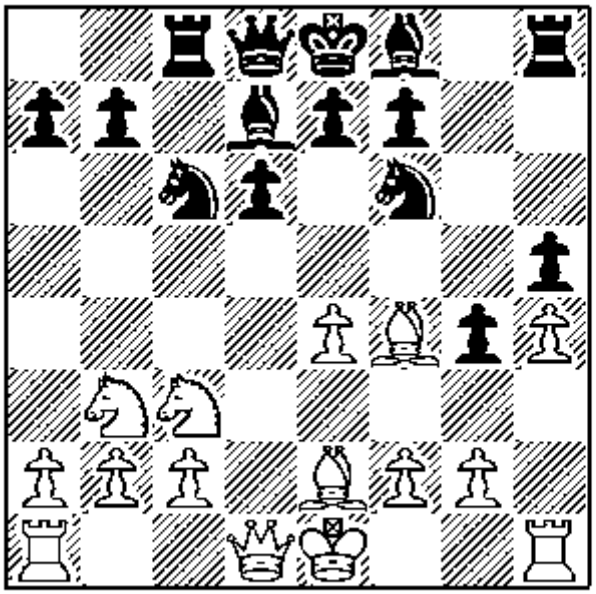


Exercise: What did Stein play here?

Answer: 10 ... h5

Stein is in an aggressive mood, wanting to seize space on the kingside and make it less appealing for White to castle on that side. A more modest way of playing is 10 ... Bg7, waiting to see where White intends to place his king before undertaking any concrete action with the wing pawns. On the other hand, the game move is clever because his bishop may also land on the h6-c1 diagonal, seriously weakened by the excursion of White's c1-bishop which itself quickly returns to it.

11 h4 g4 12 Bf4



Exercise: How should Black proceed?

Answer: 12 ... Ne5!?

A logical, if slightly risky move, in the style of Stein, increasing the harmony in Black's position. Both the c8-rook and the d7-bishop have more scope and will more directly influence the game. 12 ... Bg7 and 12 ... Na5 were other reasonably good candidate moves.

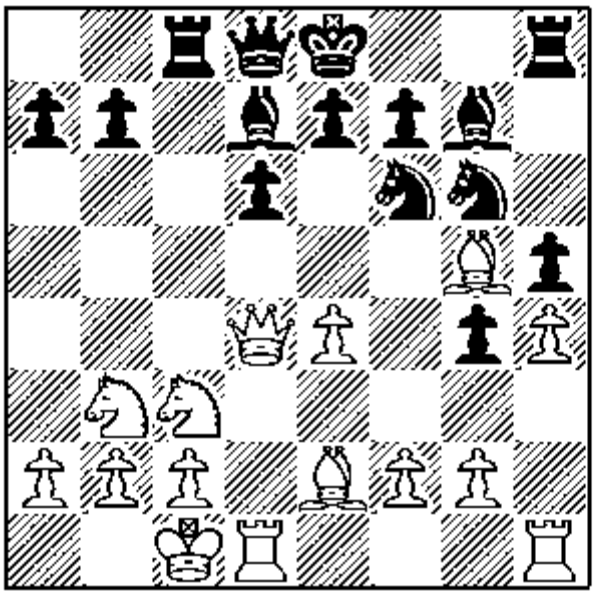
However, from a strategic point of view it is desirable to exchange bishops with 12 ... Bh6, emphasizing the weaknesses of the dark squares after 13 Qd2 Bxf4 14 Qxf4 Ne5, followed by ... Qb6 with equal play; or 13 Bxh6 Rxh6 14 Qd2 Rg6 and Black is perfectly alright with his king protected by the d-, e- and f-pawns.

13 Qd4!

13 Bxe5? is a strategic error, as 13 ... dxe5 and 14 ... Bh6 gives Black total control of the dark squares.

13 ... Ng6 14 Bg5 Bg7 15 0-0-0

White must be careful here: 15 Qxa7? runs into the classical exchange sac 15 ... Rxc3! 16 bxc3 Nxe4 with a slight advantage for Black after the forced sequence 17 Nd4 Nxc3 18 Bd3 0-0; while the tempting 15 Nd5?, aiming to ruin Black's pawn structure, backfires after 15 ... Nxd5! 16 Qxg7 (16 Qxd5 Rxc2 just wins) 16 ... Nf6 17 Bxf6 exf6 and White has serious problems with his queen in view of ... Ke7, ... Qb6 and ... Rcg8.



Exercise: How should Black react to the placement of the white majesty?

Answer: 15 ... a5!

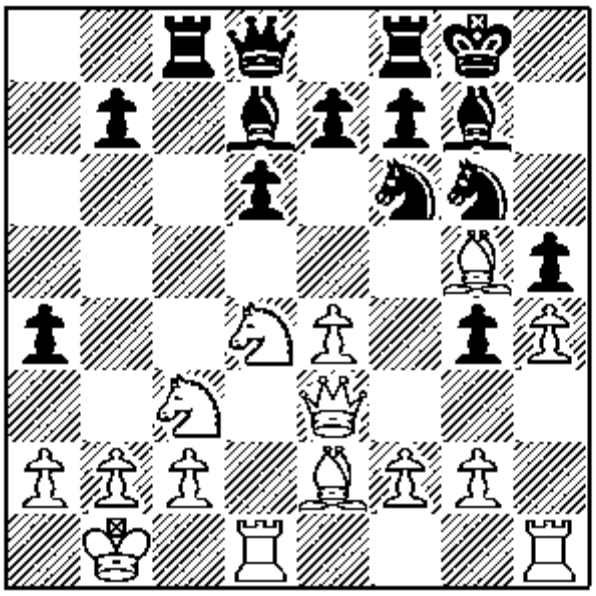
The straightforward 15 ... 0-0 is answered by 16 Qe3, when White appears to have a harmonious set-up. Nevertheless, Black can upset it with 16 ... Rxc3!? 17 bxc3 (after 17 Qxc3 Nxe4 18 Qe3 Nxg5 19 hxg5 h4, the strong bishop pair offers good compensation) 17 ... Qc7 18 f3 Rc8, when the position resembles a Dragon Variation except that White does not have the traditional kingside attack, so chances are roughly equal.

Stein's choice discourages 16 Qe3?! because of the irritating 16 ... a4 17 Nd4 a3.

16 Kb1 0-0 17 Qe3

White wisely removes the queen from the long diagonal. The decentralizing 17 Nb5, exploiting the weak b5-square, is met either by 17 ... Bc6!, intending 18 Na7?! Bxe4 19 Nxc8 Qxc8 with threats at c2 and g2, or else 17 ... Nh7!? 18 Qe3 Nxg5 19 hxg5 a4 (not 19 ... h4?! 20 a4!) 20 N3d4 Qb6! 21 Rxh5 Qc5! and Black has more than sufficient compensation for the sacrificed h-pawn.

17 ... a4 18 Nd4



Exercise: What is Black's strongest attacking idea?

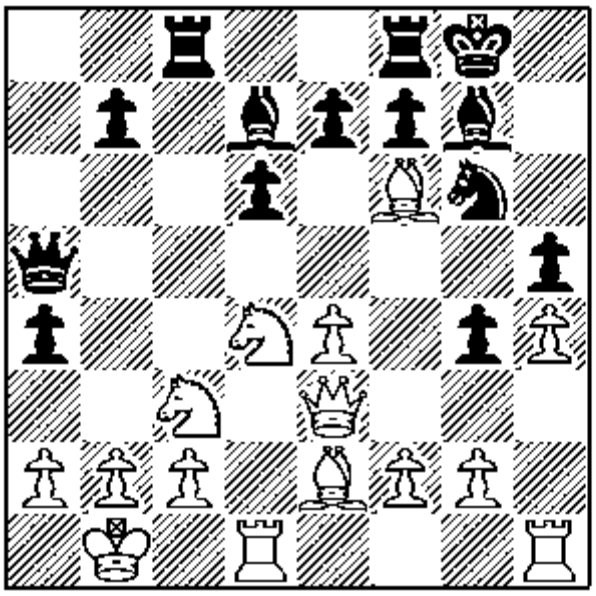
18 ... Qa5?!

This is another example of the strategic risk Stein employed in his games from time to time. It is not clear why he stayed away from a natural continuation based on ... a4-a3.

Answer: He might have played 18 ... a3 immediately, with the plausible variation 19 Nf5 Bxf5 20 exf5 Ne5 21 Bxf6 Bxf6 22 Ne4 axb2 and the intruder at b2 actually works as additional pawn cover for the white king. The position is in dynamic equilibrium, perhaps with a very slight preference for Black.

Or he could have inserted 18 ... Qb6 19 Bxf6 (avoiding 19 a3 Rxc3! 20 Qxc3 Nxe4 21 Qe3 d5 22 Nb5 Qc6 with a good game for Black) 19 ... a3! (an important intermediary move; both 19 ... Bxf6?! 20 Nd5 and 19 ... Rxc3 20 Qxc3 Bxf6 21 Qe3 a3 22 b3 Rc8 23 c3 are better for White) 20 b3 (or 20 Bb5 Bxf6 21 Nd5 Bxd4 22 Nxb6 Bxe3 23 Nxd7 Bxf2 24 Nxf8 Kxf8 and Black is fine) 20 ... Qc5 21 Nd5 Qc5 22 Nxf6+ exf6, when the vulnerable queenside dark squares give Black sufficient play; for example, 23 f3 Rfe8 24 fxg4 Rxe4! 25 Qxe4 Qc3 26 Kc1 Qa1+ 26 Kd2 Qc3+ 27 Kc1 with a draw.

19 Bxf6



Exercise: What is the correct move?

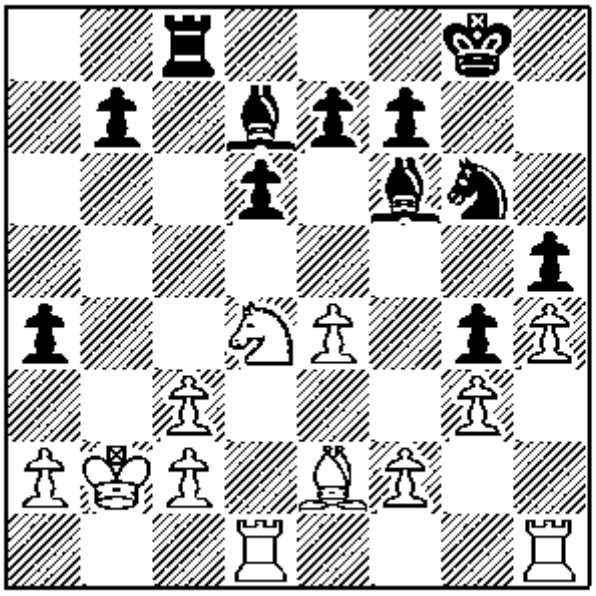
Answer: 19 ... Rxc3

This is virtually forced since 19 ... Bxf6? allows the knight raid 20 Nd5, and if 20 ... Bg7 or 20 ... Bh8 then 21 Nf5 puts Black at a serious disadvantage.

20 Qxc3

Naturally, it is safer to exchange the queens; whereas after 20 bxc3? Bxf6 and ... Rc8, White again has problems protecting the dark squares around his king.

20 ... Qxc3 21 bxc3 Bxf6 22 g3 Rc8 23 Kb2



Question: Stein's sedate, more positional choice of continuation is striking considering the strong options available at move 18. So what is he up to?

Answer: White's pawn structure is ruined on the queenside, while on the kingside he has only the break f2-f3 to work with. The question is whether this is achievable under favourable conditions? Play through Stein's game against Szabo in the

notes to White's seventh move, and the reader will understand that Stein loved to play endings where his opponent had a scattered pawn formation.

23 ... Ne5

This is designed to prevent the liberating moves f2-f3 or f2-f4, when exchanges on f3 would expose the weakness at c3. Another option is 23 ... Rc5, intending 24 f4 gxf3 25 Bxf3 a3+ 26 Kb3 Be6+ 27 Nxe6 Rxc3+ 28 Ka4 Rxf3 and Black is not worse.

24 a3?!

Understandably, Damjanovic wants to prevent ... a4-a3+, but it is not really necessary.

Instead, 24 Rb1! is critical for the assessment of the exchange sacrifice, aiming to exploit the weaknesses on the b-file, which would be less dangerous if the black a-pawn were back on a7 or a6. Then 24 ... a3+?! is answered by 25 Kc1! and both the b7- and a3-pawns risk becoming weak. Black can try 25 ... Nc6 (25 ... Rxc3 26 Rxb7 is good for White) 26 Rd1 Nxd4 (26 ... Na5 27 Bb5 increases Black's problems) 27 cxd4 Bc6 (the immediate 27 ... Ba4 28 Rd2 Bxd4 29 Rxb7 is to White's advantage, since 29 ... Bxf2? loses to 30 Bxg4 Rxc2+ 31 Rxc2 Bxc2 32 Kxc2 hxg4 33 Rb3 Bc5 34 Kd3 and so forth), but White has 28 e5! dxe5 29 d5 Ba4 30 Rd2 with good winning chances. The best defence is 24 ... Nc6! 25 Rhd1 Nd8!, followed by the strong manoeuvre ... Ne6-c5, though White still looks to be slightly better.

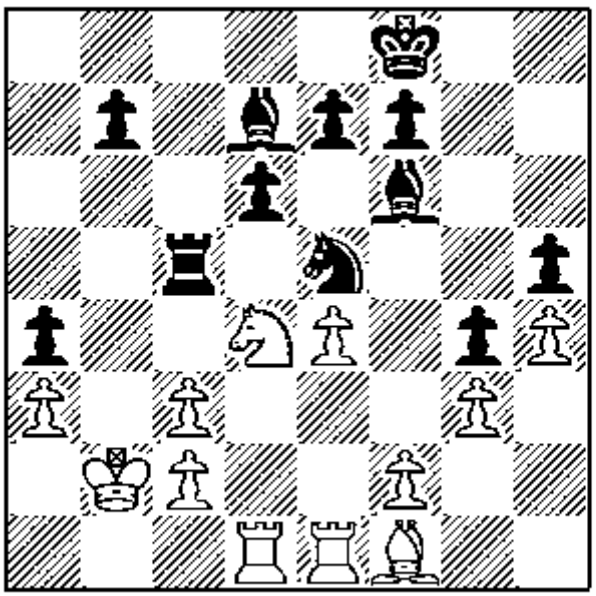
24 ... Rc5

This is an excellent outpost for the rook and increases the harmony in Black's position. Now a move such as ... Nc6 does not block the rook on the c-file.

25 Rhe1?!

Together with his next move, this prepares a rather passive defence. 25 Rd2!, followed by 26 Rb1, would place the rooks more actively.

25 ... Kf8 26 Bf1?!



Exercise: How can Black improve his position?

Answer: 26 ... e6!

By setting up a so-called small centre, Black opens up new avenues for the king and the dark-squared bishop, which may be developed to a5 via d8.

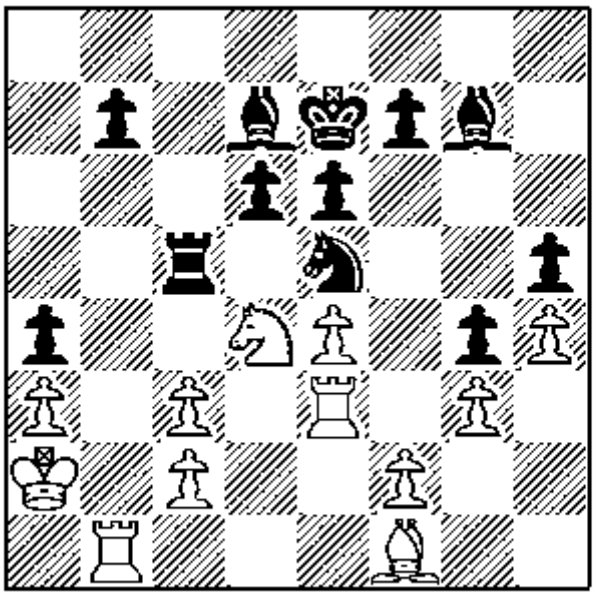
27 Re3 Ke7

Stein refrains from 27 ... Bd8 and prefers to bring it to the h6-c1 diagonal later. Although placing the bishop on a5 might restrict White to defence of the c3-pawn, it is not clear how Black can increase the pressure further.

28 Ka2

White finally clears the path for the white rook on the b-file.

28 ... Bg7 29 Rb1



Exercise: How to react to the threat of Rxb7 - ?

29 ... Bc8?

Answer: As a last resort Black has the active solution 29 ... Nc6! 30 Rxb7 Nxd4 31 cxd4 Bxd4 32 Re2 e5 with mutual chances.

30 Nb5?

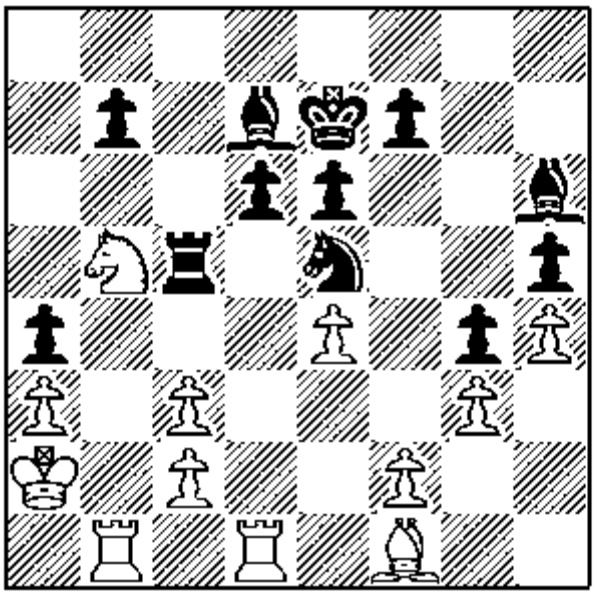
White's direct threat of Na7 cannot be realized; 30 Rb4 Bh6! 31 Re2 (or 31 Re1 Bd2) 31 ... Rxc3 32 Rxa4 Bd7 33 Rb4 Nf3 was also okay for Black. The critical line is to mobilize the bishop with 30 Bb5! Bh6 31 Re2 Rxc3 32 Bxa4, when White has a pronounced advantage.

30 ... Bh6?!

It is better to admit the mistake immediately with 30 ... Bd7 and, after 31 Nd4, revert to the correct 31 ... Nc6! with counterplay.

31 Ree1 Bd7 32 Red1

Preventing ... Bd2. If instead 32 Nd4 Bd2 33 Red1 Bxc3 34 Rxb7, Black has defensive resources after 34 ... Kf6!.



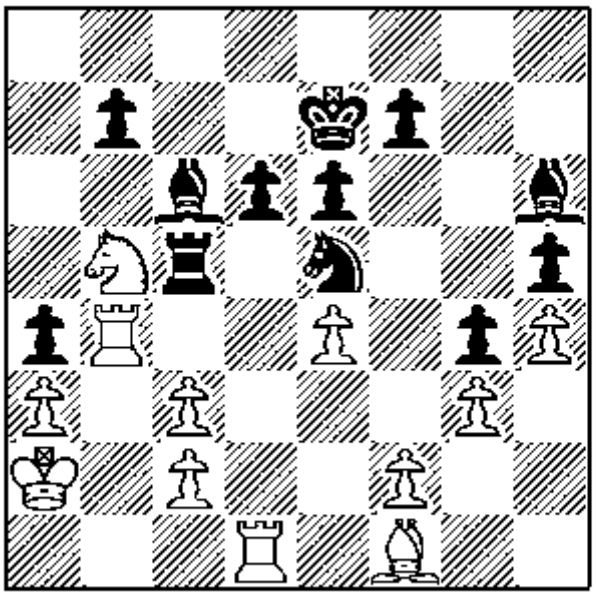
Exercise: Suggest a continuation for Black!

Answer: 32 ... Bc6

Another idea is 32 ... Nf3, threatening ... Nd2, and clearing the long dark diagonal. White replies 33 Bd3 Bg7 34 c4 and 35 Rb4 with the slightly better prospects.

33 Rb4

The more direct 33 Nxd6 Rxc3 34 Rb2, followed perhaps by 35 Bb5 to exchange the c6-bishop, should secure an edge.



Exercise: What is Black's best move?

Answer: 33 ... Nf3?

It is better to play 33 ... Bg7, maintaining options with the knight. White's trickiest

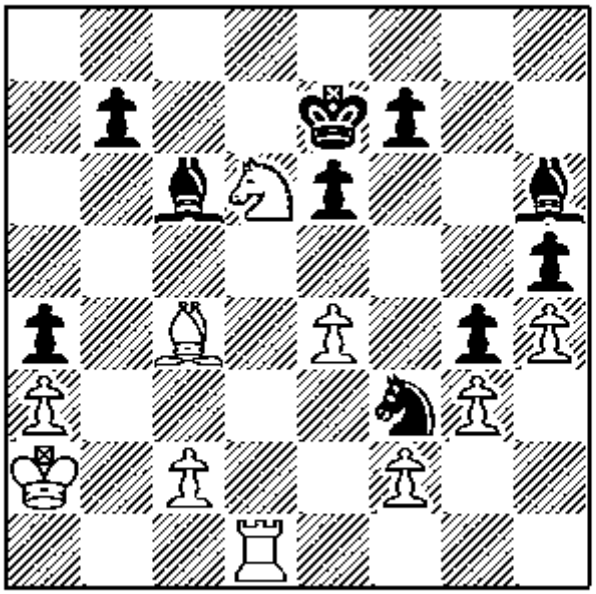
response is 34 c4! (34 Nxd6? Rxc3 35 Rb2 Rf3 and ... Nd7 gives Black good counterplay) 34 ... Bxe4 35 Nxd6 Bf3 36 Rd2 Bh6 37 Rd4, but 37 ... Rc7, defending the b7-pawn, secures an equal game. Black has tremendously active pieces, and if 38 Rxa4 then 38 ... Nc6 39 Rd3 Ne5 40 Rd4 Nc6 is a draw.

34 Nxd6 Rxc3 35 Rc4?

Damjanovic misses 35 Nc8+! Kf8 (not 35 ... Kf6?? 36 Kb2! Rc5 37 Na7, when Nxc6 and Rxa4 decides the game; while 35 ... Ke8? is answered by 36 Rc4! Rxc4 37 Bxc4, since 37 ... Bxe4?? runs into the fork 38 Nd6+ etc) 36 Rd8+ Kg7 37 Kb2 Rc5 38 Ne7 Bd2 39 Nxc6 Bc3+ 40 Kc1 bxc6 41 Rd1! (after 41 Rxa4 Be1, the white pawns fall like dominos) 41 ... Bxb4 (not now 41 ... Be1? 42 Rxe1 Nxe1 43 Bc4! and the a4-pawn falls, leaving White with a dangerous outside passed pawn) 42 axb4 Re5 43 c4! Rxe4 44 Kb2 Ne5 45 Kc3, followed by b4-b5 with excellent winning chances.

35 ... Rxc4 36 Bxc4?

This time 36 Nc8+ leads to equality after 36 ... Kf6 37 Bxc4 Bxe4 or 37 ... Nd2. Alternatively, he could play 36 Nxc4, when Black has to find the extraordinarily strong 36 ... Bg7!!. If White foolishly tries to hold on to the e-pawn with 37 Bd3?! then 37 ... Bc3 leaves his pieces with hardly any squares.



Question: What is the problem with White's recapture?

Answer: 36 ... Nd2 37 e5?

Once more the best chance is 37 Nc8+ Kd7 38 Na7 (38 Nb6+? loses to 38 ... Kc7 39 Na8+ Kb8 40 Nb6 Nxe4, which threatens everything: ... Nc3+, ... Nxf2, or the quiet ... Bg7 followed by the knight check) 38 ... Bxe4 39 Bb5+ Kd6 40 Bxa4, though Black should still win after 40 ... Bf3 followed by ... Ne4.

37 ... Bf3 38 Rxd2

Presumably White, likely in time trouble, overlooked 38 Re1 Nxc4 39 Nxc4 Bd5 (R.Maric), winning the knight.

38 ... Bxd2 39 Bd3 Be1 0-1

This was a far from perfect game but still one which showed Stein's preference for the positional exchange sacrifice; in this case the destruction of the opponent's pawn structure

gave Black lasting compensation.

After Tallinn came another USSR Championship semi-final, where Stein was once more undefeated, securing first place on 12/17 with seven wins and ten draws.

The Russian player Vitaly Tseshkovsky (1944-2011) became a grandmaster in 1975 and was USSR Champion on two occasions: first in 1978, together with Tal; in 1986 he won outright. Tseshkovsky was ranked 7th in the world in 1976, according to Chessmetrics; and as late as 2005 he achieved his highest, very respectable, official Elo rating of 2600.

Game 47
L.Stein-V.Tseshkovsky
USSR Championship semi-final, Kiev 1969
Double Fianchetto

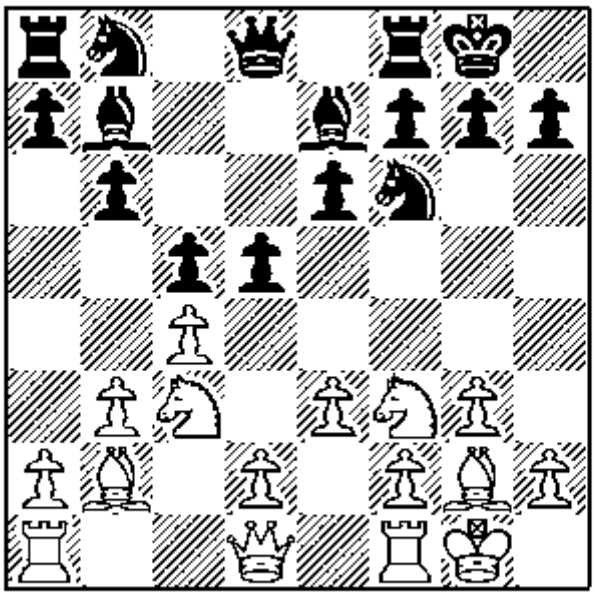
1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 b6

Tseshkovsky plays according to the solid Queen's Indian Defence, which was a major part of his repertoire at the time. In the genuine QID, the white d-pawn is already on d4, so the e4-square usually falls into Black's hands; with the pawn still on d2, this system is slightly less motivated. Not that there is anything wrong with Black's position of course.

3 g3

Stein does not want to give Black undisputed control of the long light diagonal and so prepares to oppose the enemy bishop, which will very likely be exchanged at some time in the future.

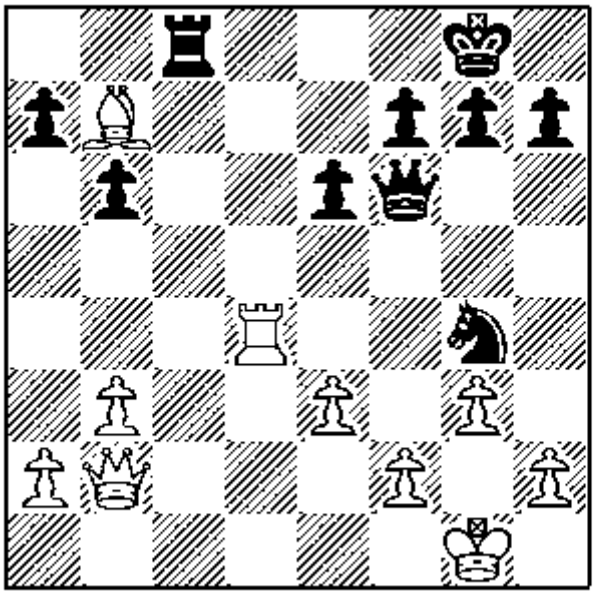
3 ... Bb7 4 Bg2 e6 5 0-0 Be7 6 b3 0-0 7 Bb2 c5 8 Nc3 d5 9 e3



Question: What is White planning with this set-up?

Answer: White plans a step by step build-up with moves such as Qe2, d2-d3, Rfd1 and Rac1. This kind of play has also been favoured by the strong positional Hungarian GM István Csom (1940-) and the Swedish GM Lars Karlsson (1955-).

9 cxd5 Nxd5 10 Nxd5 Bxd5 leads to a more simplified game, an instructive example being I.Csom-J.Tompa, Kecskemet 1979, which continued 11 Qc2 Nd7 12 Rac1 Rc8 13 Qb1 Bf6 14 Rfd1 Bxb2 15 Qxb2 Qf6 16 d4 Rfd8 17 Rd2 Bxf3 18 Bxf3 cxd4 19 Rxc8 Rxc8 20 Rxd4 Ne5 21 Bb7 Ng4! 22 e3?? (necessary is 22 Bf3, and if 22 ... Ne5 23 Bg2 Ng4 then 24 e3 – compare this with the game!)



Exercise (combination alert): What did White overlook?

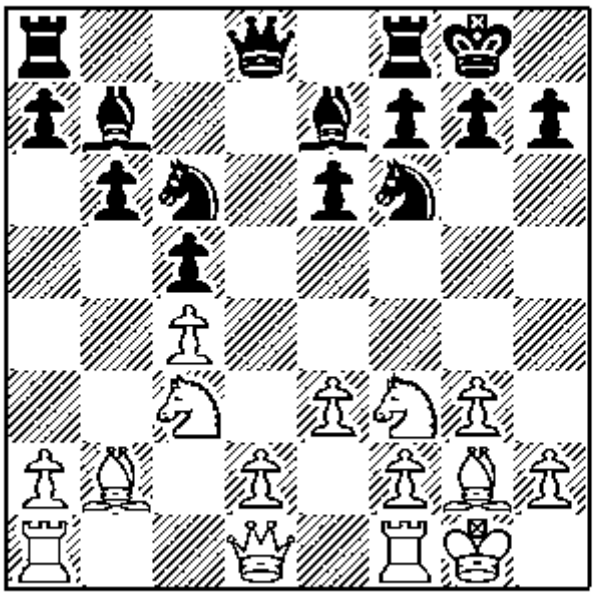
Answer: 22 ... Rc1+! 23 Kg2 (or 23 Qxc1 Qxf2+ 24 Kh1 Qxh2 mate) 23 ... Nxe3+! 24 Kh3 (or 24 fxe3 Qf1 mate) 24 ... Rc2 and Black wins. The game concluded 25 Qa1 e5 26 Rh4 Qxf2 27 Qh1 g5 28 Re4 Qf5+ 29 g4 Qf2 0-1.

9 ... dxc4

This leads to an asymmetrical pawn structure and is regarded as the main line. 9 ... Nbd7 and 9 ... Nc6 have also been played in many grandmaster games; whereas the tempting thrust 9 ... d4? actually loses the pawn after 10 exd4 cxd4 11 Nb5 d3 12 Ne5! Qc8 (or 12 ... Bxg2 13 Kxg2, followed by Qf3) 13 Nd4!, preventing ... Nc6 and preparing Nxd3.

10 bxc4 Nc6

Seeking equality with a couple of exchanges is not completely wrong. N.Sulava-T.Engqvist, Hamburg 1980, saw 10 ... Ne4!? 11 Ne5 Nxc3 12 Bxc3 Bxg2 13 Kxg2 Qc7 14 f4 Nc6 15 Qf3 and now I should have played 15 ... Nxe5, which was more precise than 15 ... Rac8.



Exercise: How should White proceed?

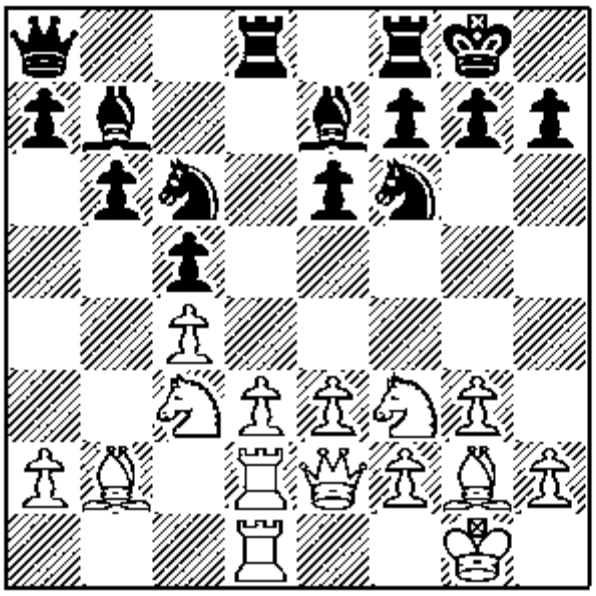
11 d3

Answer: 11 Qe2 is more flexible, keeping options with the d-pawn to move one step, two steps or no steps at all according to circumstance. I.Csom-T.V.Petrosian, Biel Interzonal 1976, continued 11 ... Rc8 12 Rfd1 (another idea is 12 Rad1, when an ingenious plan credited to IM Alisa Galliamova involves Ne1, f2-f4 and g3-g4-g5, followed by Rf3-h3 and Ne4 with attacking chances on the kingside) 12 ... Na5 13 Rab1 Nd7 14 d3 a6 15 Ba1 Qc7 16 Bh3 Qc6 17 Bg2 Qc7 and the game was drawn by repetition.

11 ... Qd7

The queen normally goes to c7 in this line, or occasionally to a8 after 11 ... Rc8 and ... Rc7. Here Tseshkovsky takes a more convoluted route to the latter square, losing a tempo for no reason.

12 Qe2 Rad8 13 Rfd1 Qc8 14 Rd2 Qa8 15 Rad1



Question: What is the idea behind this move?

Answer: Stein reinforces the d-pawn in the spirit of Nimzowitsch, who regarded such a pawn a strongpoint and thus worthy of overprotection. With a small but secure centre White's main weapons are prophylaxis and the art of manoeuvring behind the lines, awaiting the right moment to go on the offensive.

15 ... Na5

Exercise: Suggest a move for White!

Answer: 16 h3

According to English GM Nigel Short's theory, this looks like a typical "toilet move". When a chess player has to use the facilities, instead of falling into deep thought about the position, he or she makes a neutral move which does not disturb the equilibrium. More seriously, Stein continues to consolidate and wait, as will be confirmed by his next move.

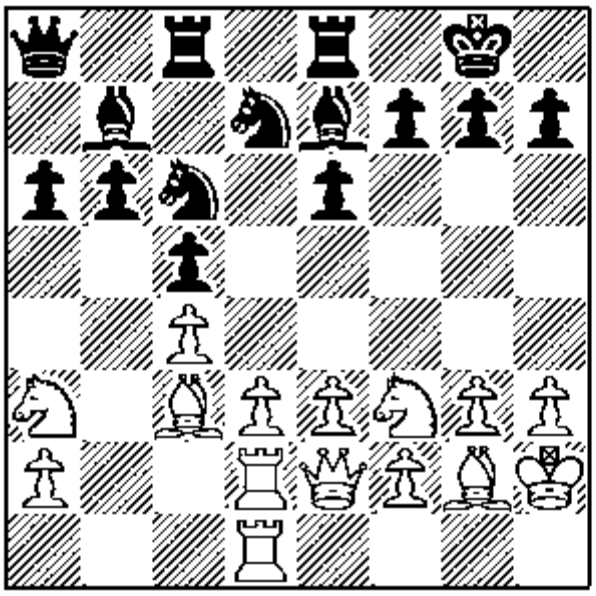
16 ... Nd7

Pushing forward with 16 ... e5, hoping for ... e5-e4, only gives White the advantage after 17 e4, followed by Nd5, whereas it is less easy for Black to utilize the corresponding hole at d4, and his e5-pawn needs defending for a start.

17 Kh2 Rfe8

In hindsight, 17 ... a6 is a reasonable option, which hinders White's forthcoming regrouping of the pieces on the queenside.

18 Nb5 Rc8 19 Bc3 a6 20 Na3 Nc6

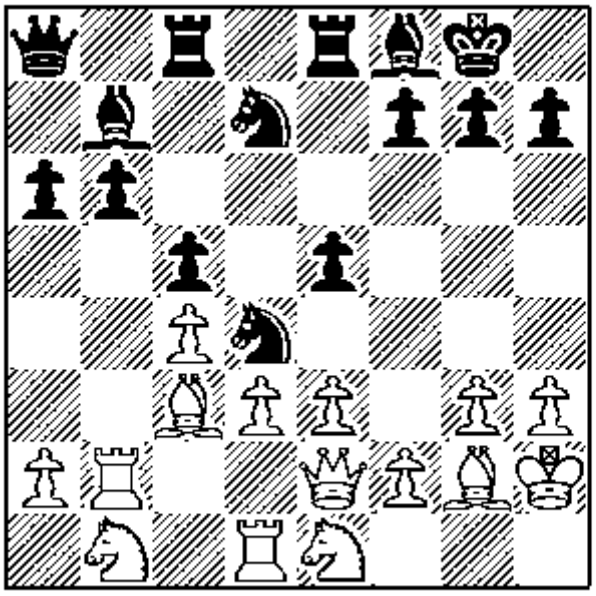


Exercise: How should White continue?

Answer: 21 Rb2

By putting pressure on the weak b6-pawn, White restricts the mobility of the d7-knight.

21 ... Bf8 22 Ne1 e5 23 Nb1 Nd4



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Answer: 24 exd4!

Stein takes the opportunity to alter the pawn structure. Simply maintaining the small centre with the placid 24 Qf1 does not lead to anything substantial after 24 ... Bxg2 25 Qxg2 Nc6 26 Nd2 Rcd8.

24 ... exd4

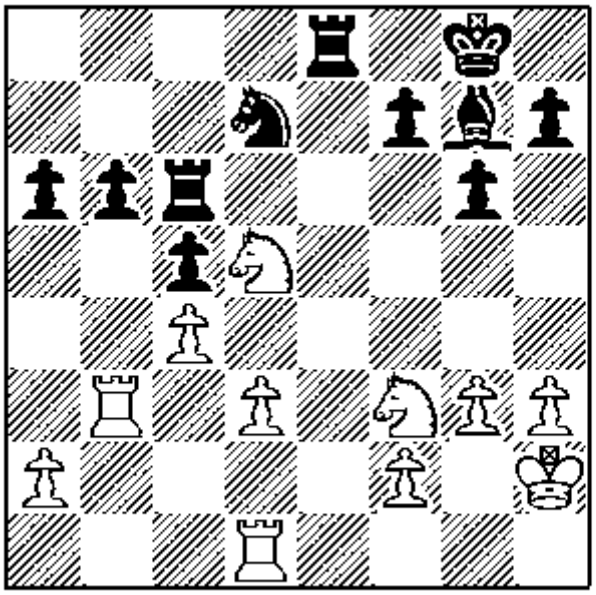
Not 24 ... Bxg2? due to 25 d5 and the bishop is trapped.

25 Bxb7 Qxb7 26 Qf3 Qxf3 27 Nxf3 dxc3 28 Nxc3 g6

Another set-up is 28 ... Be7 29 Nd5 Bd8, when Black can cover the b6-pawn as many times as is necessary.

29 Nd5 Bg7 30 Rb3 Rc6?

Tseshkovsky misses the chance to activate his rooks with 30 ... Re2 31 Rd2 (or 31 Kg2 Rce8! 32 a4 Ra2 33 Nxb6 Nxb6 34 Rxb6 Ree2) 31 ... Rce8, and if 32 Nxb6 then 32 ... Ne5! (or 32 ... Nxb6 33 Rxb6 Bc3!) 33 Rxe2 Nxf3+ 34 Kg2 Rxe2 35 Kxf3 Rxa2 and the endgame is completely equal.



Exercise: How can White improve his position?

Answer: 31 Kg2!

An important move, making his position slightly more compact, while meeting the concrete demands of the position. Now 31 ... Re2 has no effect, since after 32 Kf1, the rook must return down the e-file to guard the e7-square.

31 ... h6

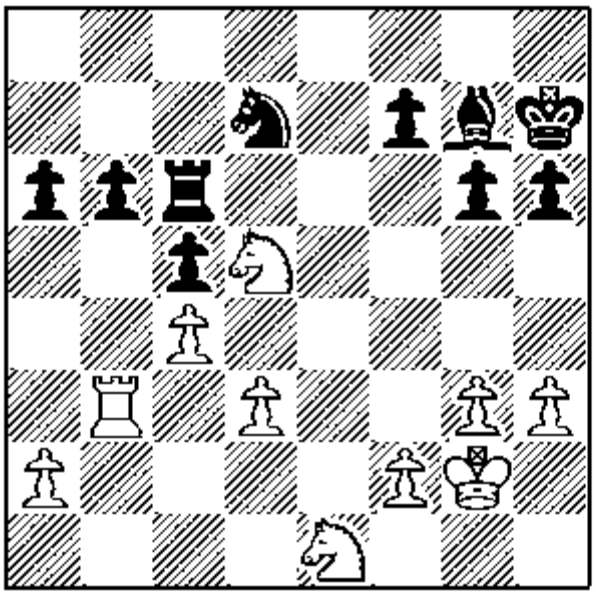
Exercise: Suggest a good move for White!

Answer: 32 Re1

It is not a bad idea to exchange the comparatively passive white rook for Black's active one.

Another option is 32 a4, squashing the b6-pawn's "lust to expand" before putting pressure on it with both rooks. If 32 Rdb1 immediately, Black has 32 ... b5! 33 cxb5 axb5 34 Rxb5 Rd6 35 Nf4 g5 (sowing one of the points of ... h7-h6) 36 Nh5 Rxd3 with an even position.

32 ... Rxe1 33 Nxe1 Kh7



Exercise: White has many interesting options here. Which one to choose?

Answer: 34 Nf3!

This is a clever practical decision, improving the knight slightly and increasing the chances of Black making a concession. Importantly, Stein takes no steps to prevent ... b6-b5.

The normal choice would be 34 a4, according to Nimzowitsch's principles of prophylaxis that liberating moves should be prevented. So why did Stein play as he did? Especially as it is not altogether clear where the f3-knight can go to. I believe Stein was simply waiting, giving Black the opportunity to go wrong with ... b6-b5, which is not as good as it looks. Another possibility was 34 Nc2, but that move is perhaps less opaque.

Earlier on, we saw other waiting moves, such as 16 h3 and 17 Kh2, so it is evident that Stein is showing a lot of patience in this game, playing in the spirit of Petrosian as it were. He may have also considered it quite likely that Tseshkovsky, a naturally active player, would be tempted to play as he does. This is certainly psychology on a high level!

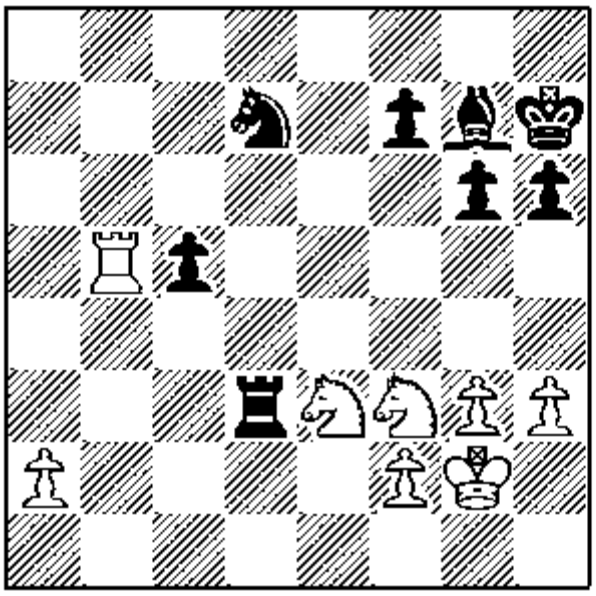
34 ... b5?!

This is doubtless what Stein was hoping for. Now he gets a distant passed pawn by force. The patient 34 ... Re6 is better, when the rook is well placed both vertically, controlling the e-file, and horizontally, defending the b6-pawn. But in that case White would probably play 35 a4 after all, when Black's 'chance' for ... b6-b5 has gone.

35 cxb5 axb5 36 Rxb5 Rd6

36 ... Ra6 37 Rb7 only makes things worse for Black.

37 Ne3 Rxd3



Exercise: Evaluate the position and suggest a continuation.

Answer: White's a2-pawn must be regarded as more dangerous than its counterpart at c5, as the latter is more easily blockaded. In addition, White's rook is stronger than Black's because of the available targets on the seventh rank: the d7-knight as well as the f7-pawn. So White definitely has the advantage here. As for continuations ...

38 Rb7

Here 38 a4!? Ra3 39 Rb7 Nf6 40 Rxf7 Rxa4 41 Ne5! is an interesting alternative. Although White no longer has the passed a-pawn, his rook is exceptionally strong on the seventh rank in conjunction with the raiding knights; for example, 41 ... Ne4 42 Re7! Rd4 43 N3g4! h5 (not 43 ... Ra4? 44 Nd7! and Black's position collapses immediately) 44 Nf3 Rb4 45 Rxe4 hxg4 46 hxg4 and White has good winning chances.

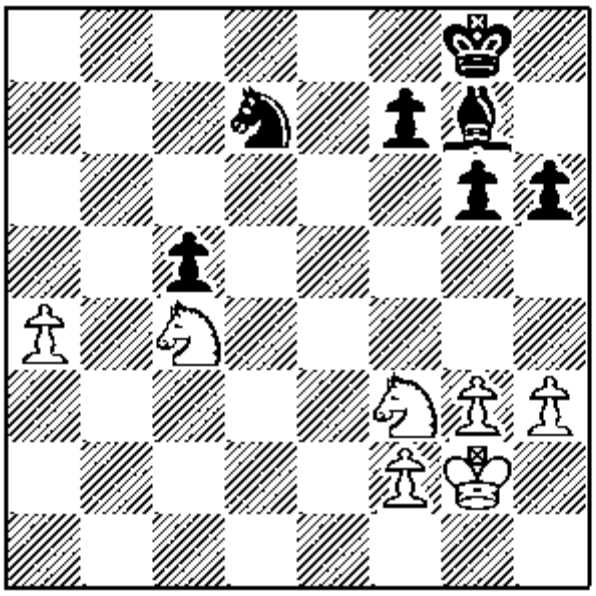
38 ... Kg8

38 ... f5 would weaken the second rank. After 39 a4 Nf6 40 Nc4, White's blockading knight at c4 is relatively stable and supports the passed a-pawn, whereas Black's big problem is that his bishop cannot participate effectively.

39 a4 Nf8 40 Nc4 Rd7

Removing the rooks at once does not reduce the pressure. It is more logical to disrupt the blockader with 40 ... Rc3, when 41 Nce5 (after 41 Nfd2 Rc2 42 a5 Ra2 43 Rb3 Ne6 44 Ra3 Rxa3 45 Nxa3 Nc7, Black's position is defensible as the white knights are now poorly placed) 41 ... Ra3 42 Rxf7 Rxa4 43 Rc7 Ra5 44 Nc4 Rb5 leaves Black definitely worse, but White would require excellent technique to win, because a straightforward continuation like 45 Nd6 Rb6 46 Ne4 Ne6 47 Rc8+ Kf7 48 Nxc5 Nxc5 49 Rxc5 Ke6 gives Black reasonable drawing chances.

41 Rxd7 Nxd7



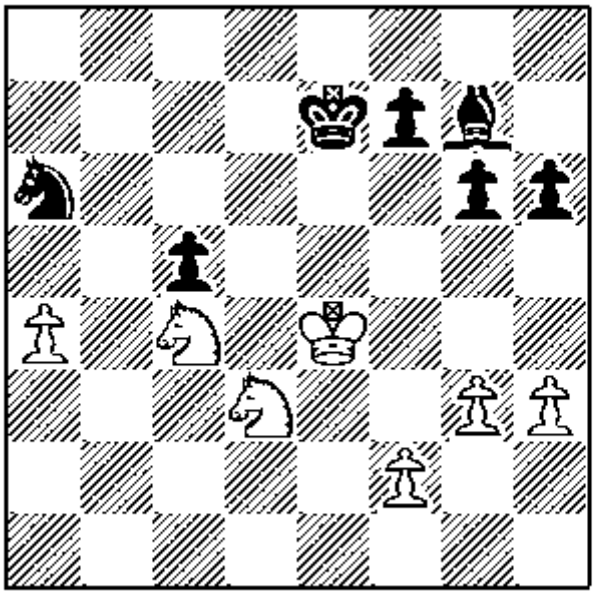
Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

42 Ne1

Stein brings the knight back and round to attack the c5-pawn, but sending it forward was even stronger ...

Answer: 42 a5! Nb8 43 Nfe5! (clearing the way for the king) 43 ... Bxe5 (not 43 ... Kf8?? due to 44 Nd7+! Nxd7 45 a6 and the pawn is transformed to a girl, while 43 ... Na6 44 Kf3 Kf8 45 Ke4 leads to the loss of the c5-pawn) 44 Nxe5 Kf8 45 Kf3 Ke7 46 Ke4 Ke6 47 f4 wins for White, due to the pressure on the f- and g-pawns in combination with the threat of Kd3-c4. Black's best try is 47 ... f5+ 48 Kd3 Kd5, when 49 Nxg6?! Nc6! removes the dangerous a-pawn, but after 49 Ke3! g5 50 Nf3! gxf4 (or 50 ... g4 51 hxg4 hxg4 52 Nd2!) 51 gxf4 h5 52 Nh4 Ke6 53 Kd2!, Black cannot hold his position.

42 ... Nb8 43 Nd3 Na6 44 Kf3 Kf8 45 Ke4 Ke7

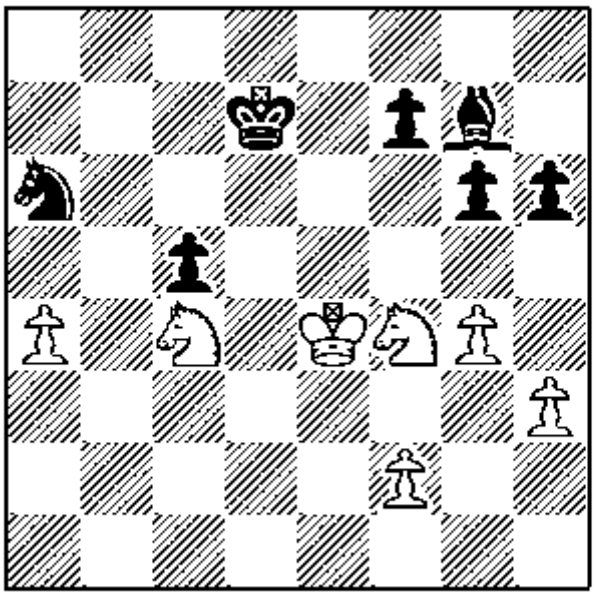


Exercise: Is 46 Kd5 a good move or a bad move?

46 g4?!

Answer: 46 Kd5! is the most straightforward win. After 46 ... Nb4+ 47 Nxb4 cxb4 and now the key 48 Na5!, White's will place the kingside pawns on light squares and then manoeuvre to capture the b4-pawn, while preventing the enemy king from causing any trouble. For example, 48 ... Kd7 (or 48 ... Bc3 49 f3 Be1 50 g4 and the white pawns are no longer targets) 49 Kc4 Bf8 (or similarly 49 ... Bc3 50 g4) 50 g4 Kc7 51 Kb5! (keeping the black king out of b6) 51 ... Be7 52 Nb3 Bd6 53 Nc1 Kb7 54 f3 Kc7 55 Nd3 b3 56 Kc4 and White finally picks up the b-pawn with excellent winning chances.

46 ... Ke6 47 Nf4+ Kd7



Exercise: What is White's strongest move here?

48 Kd5?!

Too direct now, as the king cannot maintain its active placement at d5.

Answer: 48 h4! was stronger, followed by h4-h5, creating more weak squares in the black position. In particular, f5 will soon become available to White's pieces.

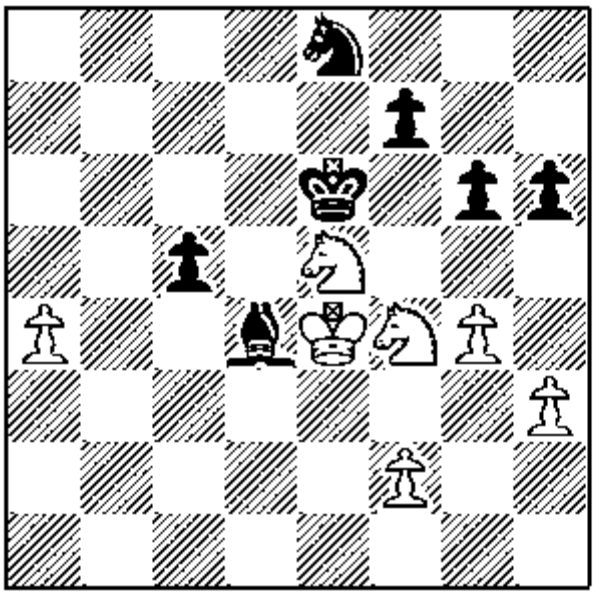
48 ... Bd4 49 Nd3 Nc7+ 50 Ke4 Ne8

The natural 50 ... Ke6 may be met by 51 Nf4+ Kd7 52 f3 and if 52 ... Kc6 then 53 Na5+! Kd7 (or 53 ... Kb6 54 Nb3) 54 Ne2 Bg7 55 f4 with a clear advantage.

51 Nce5+ Ke6

Exchanging the knight first with 51 ... Bxe5?! 52 Nxe5+ Ke6 sets different technical obstacles, but ones White may more easily overcome due to his strong asset of the outside passed pawn. For example, after 53 Nc4! (surprisingly, 53 f4 Nf6+ 54 Kf3 Nd5 55 h4 g5 56 Nd3 gxh4 57 Nxc5+ Kd6 58 Nd3 Kc7 59 Kg2 Kb6 60 Kh3 Ka5 61 Kxh4 Kxa4 only leads to a draw despite Black's king being outside play, as his centralized knight is so tremendous) 53 ... f5+ (it is in Black's interest to exchange as many pawns as possible, so this move is logical) 54 gxf5+ gxf5+ 55 Kf4 Nf6 56 Ne3 Nh5+ (56 ... Nd5+ 57 Nxd5 Kxd5 leads to a lost queen ending after 58 a5 Kc6 59 Ke5! Kb5 60 Kd5 c4 61 Kd4 Kb4 62 a6 c3 63 a7 c2 64 a8Q c1Q 65 Qf8+ Ka4 66 Qxf5, since the h6-pawn will soon fall as well) 57 Kf3 Ng7 58 a5 Kd7 59 Kf4 Kc6 60 Ke5 (not 60 Nxf5? Nxf5 61 Kxf5 Kb5 62 Ke4 Kxa5 63 f4 Kb5 64 f5 Kc6 and draws) Kb5 61 h4! Kxa5 62 Kf6 f4 63 Nd5 Ne8+ 64 Kg6, followed by Kxh6, and the new outside passed pawn will decide the game.

52 Nf4+



52 ... Ke7??

An inexplicable error, unless it was due to time trouble; Black loses both a pawn and his key defensive bishop. 52 ... Kf6 was forced, and if 53 Nf3 Bxf2 54 Nd3 Bg3 55 Kd5 then 55 ... c4! 56 Kxc4 Bc7, when Black has good hopes of a draw by eliminating kingside pawns with ... h7-h5 and sacrificing a piece for the a-pawn.

53 Nc6+ 1-0

It was instructive to see how, with patient play, Stein developed winning chances in a quiet position, even if he did not perhaps exploit them in the most precise way.

The IBM tournament in Amsterdam was a setback for Stein who was placed joint fourth with Damjanovic. Stein scored 9/15, with five wins, two losses (to Darga and Ree) and eight draws. Portisch won the tournament with 11½ points.

Christiaan (Kick) Langeweg (1937-) became an International Master in 1962, after winning the first IBM tournament the previous year. Together with Jan Timman, Gert Ligterink and Hans Ree, he was regarded as one of the most talented young players from the Netherlands in the 1960s and '70s.

Game 48
L.Stein-K.Langeweg
IBM Tournament, Amsterdam 1969
Queen's Indian Defence

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 d4 b6

The Queen's Indian Defence (once known as the Sämisch Defence) is a complementary opening to the Nimzo-Indian. The main idea is to gain control over the central e4-square. Actually, this position rarely featured in Stein's practice. From the game move order, he more often played 3 g3, while via the direct route 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6, he usually opted for 3 Nc3 allowing 3 ... Bb4. As it happens, we soon transpose to a sort of Nimzo-Indian anyway.

4 Bg5

This is the only game on record where Stein tried this natural move, pinning the f6-knight. Against Tal in 1966, he had opted for 4 g3.

4 ... Bb7 5 e3 Bb4+

In those days this variation was relatively unexplored and Langeweg heads for a position from which he had previously had success. It is not clear who is controlling events here. Was Stein improvising or trying to lure his opponent into a prepared novelty by adopting a roundabout move order?

More in the spirit of the Queen's Indian is 5 ... Be7 6 Nc3 Ne4! (after 6 ... 0-0 7 Bd3, it is significantly harder for Black to liberate himself) 7 Nxe4 Bxe4 8 Bxe7 Qxe7 with equality. For example, 9 Bd3 (or 9 Nd2 Bb7 10 Be2 Qg5 11 Bf3 Bxf3 12 Qxf3 Nc6 13 Qg3 Qxg3 14 hxg3 Ke7 with a level endgame, E.Bogoljubow-J.R.Capablanca, Bad Kissingen 1928) 9 ... Bb7 10 0-0 d6 11 Re1 Nd7 12 e4 0-0 and Black was fine in A.Ribera Arnal-J.R.Capablanca, Barcelona 1929, as the power of the white centre is reduced by the exchange of four minor pieces. Capablanca went on to win both games.

6 Nc3

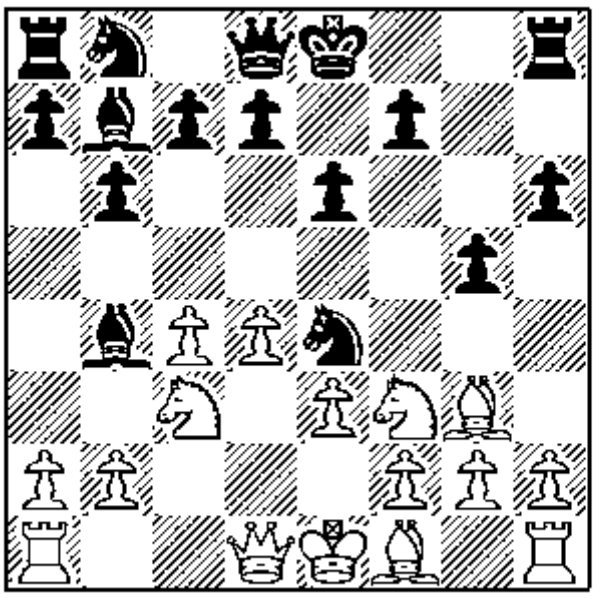
The Queen's Indian has now become a Nimzo-Indian, so we have a hybrid of these two defences.

6 ... h6 7 Bh4 g5

The logical follow-up, and following Langeweg's earlier game. A calmer approach is 7 ... Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 d6, intending ... Nbd7, ... Qe7 and ... e6-e5.

Another option is 7 ... c5!? 8 Bd3 cxd4 (8 ... Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 d6 is still possible) 9 exd4 Bxf3 10 Qxf3 Nc6 11 Qe3 Be7 as in S.Schweber-P.Keres, Tel Aviv Olympiad 1964, but here White might try 12 d5! (rather than 12 0-0 or Schweber's 12 Bg3) 12 ... Nb4 13 Bb1 Nfxd5 14 cxd5 Bxh4 15 a3 Na6 16 dxe6 dxe6 17 Bd3 Nc5 (or 17 ... Nc7 18 Be4) 18 Bb5+ Kf8 19 0-0 with a strong initiative and more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

8 Bg3 Ne4



9 Nd2!?

True to his style Stein goes for a less explored and more enterprising variation involving a pawn sacrifice. Whether this was thought up over the board or devised at home we do not know. Instead, 9 Qc2 Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 d6 11 Bd3 is the traditional set-up, when Black won with 11 ... f5 in A.N.Zaitsev-K.Langeweg, Sochi 1967. Stein may well have known this game as it was published in Informator #4. Alternatively, Black can play 11 ... Nxg3 and was later again successful in I.Farago-K.Langeweg, Malta Olympiad 1980.

9 ... Nxc3

Accepting the gift is obviously the critical reply. In G.Kasparov-A.Miles, Dubai Olympiad 1986, Black played more passively – and more originally – with 9 ... Nxg3 10 hxg3 Bf8!? and here Kasparov recommends 11 Qa4!?, followed by 0-0-0, Kb1 and Rc1, planning an attack with c4-c5 and Ba6 if Black places his king on the queenside. Also interesting is 11 g4 Bg7 12 Nde4, logically exploiting the weak h5-square.

10 bxc3 Bxc3 11 Rc1 Bb4

Relinquishing the bishop pair with 11 ... Bxd2+?! 12 Qxd2 must be considered a positional mistake because of the two pawn breaks c4-c5 and h2-h4 at White's disposal, with pressure on the weakened dark squares in Black's camp.

The strongest continuation is perhaps 11 ... Ba5 12 h4 Rg8, as in C.Crouch-P.Harikrishna, London 2001, although after 13 Qh5 "White has sufficient compensation for the pawn", according to Kasparov.

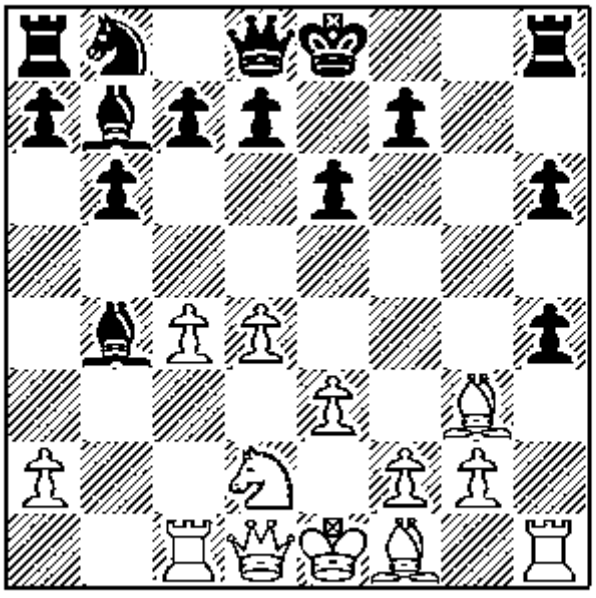
12 h4

The point of the sacrifice; White exploits the drawback of ... g7-g5 by utilizing the energy stored in the h1-rook. Significantly, Black cannot just push past with ... g5-g4 as the white queen controls that square.

12 ... gxh4

Kasparov criticized this move, giving 12 ... Rg8 as "more solid". This may be answered by 13 Qc2!?, threatening Qh7 and provoking 13 ... f5, when 14 hxg5 hxg5 15 Rh7 gives White good compensation with the active rook. Alternatively, Suetin suggests 13 hxg5 hxg5 14 Bd3!? (not yet 14 Rh7?! due to 14 ... Be4! driving the rook back, after which 15 ... Bg6 consolidates the kingside) 14 ... Bxg2 15 Rh7 with reasonable play for the two pawns.

Instead, H.Schüssler-J.Arnason, Reykjavik 1986, saw the extraordinary sacrifice 12 ... Nc6 13 d5 Qe7!? 14 dxc6 dxc6, when Black has two pawns for the piece and a long-term initiative against the white king in the centre. The game continued 15 Be5 0-0-0 16 Bc3 (not 16 Bxh8? Rxd2 17 Qxd2 Bxd2+ 18 Kxd2 Qd8+ 19 Bd4? e5! or 19 Kc2 Qxh8 20 hxg5 h5 21 Be2 h4 and Black's position is preferable) 16 ... Bxc3 17 Rxc3 c5 18 hxg5 hxg5 19 Rxh8 Rxh8 20 e4 f5 and although White must have the advantage here, he was unable to convert it and even went on to lose.



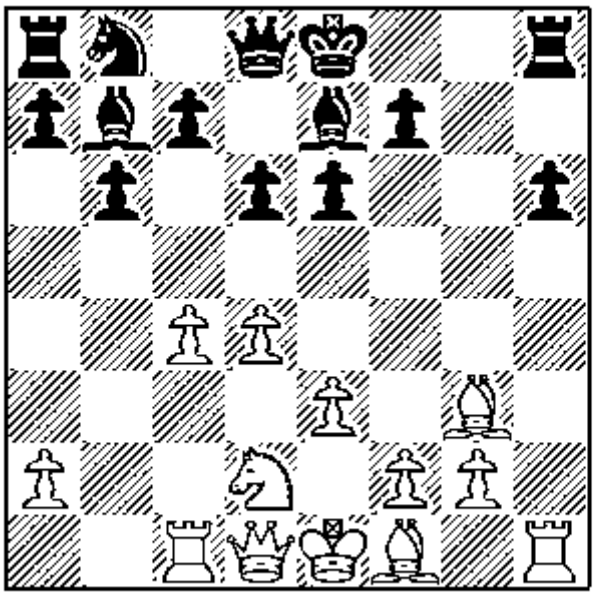
Exercise: Should White recapture with the bishop or the rook?

13 Bxh4

Kasparov disapproved of this move, reasoning that "the bishop at g3 is on its optimal square, and the rook must be brought into battle."

Answer: Consequently, G.Kasparov-J.Timman, Hilversum (2nd matchgame) 1985, saw 13 Rxh4! Bd6 (after 13 ... Be7 14 Rh5, the rook is active on both the file and the rank, so 14 ... d6 can now be answered by 15 c5! dxc5 16 dxc5 Bxc5 17 Rhxc5 bxc5 18 Rxc5 "with excellent compensation for the exchange and a pawn", according to Kasparov) 14 Qg4 Bxg3 (or 14 ... Qe7 15 Bxd6! cxd6 16 Qg3, intending c4-c5, as in S.Agdestein-F.Hellers, Gausdal 1987) 15 Qxg3 Nc6?! (but if 15 ... Na6 then 16 c5! again) 16 d5! Ne7 17 Bd3 with strong play for White who won in 35 moves.

13 ... Be7 14 Bg3 d6



Exercise: How does White continue now?

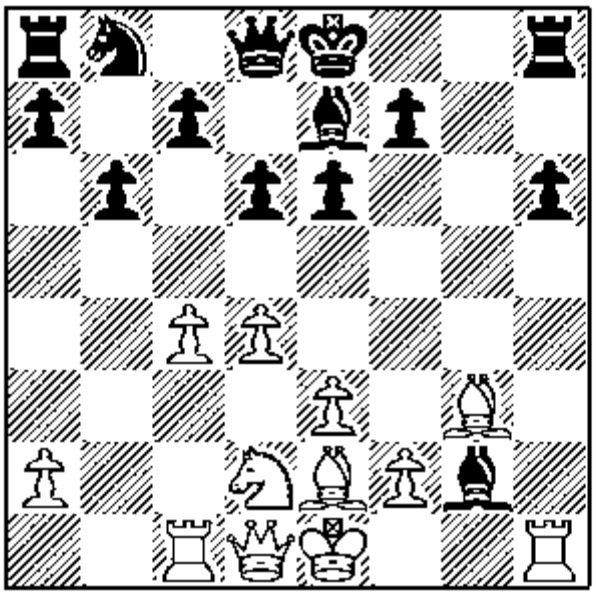
Answer: 15 Be2!?

A very cool move; Stein continues as if nothing has happened and even offers a second pawn, trusting to the fundamental strength of his position.

An interesting alternative is to play the energetic 15 c5!? anyway, opening up new avenues for the white pieces. After 15 ... dxc5 16 dxc5 Bxc5 17 Qa4+ Bc6 18 Bb5 (18 Qf4!? might keep more tension in the position) 18 ... Qd7 19 Bxc6 Qxc6 20 Qxc6+ Nxc6 21 Ne4, White had sufficient compensation for the pawns in L.Lenic-R.Markus, Nova Gorica 2005, though no more than that.

15 ... Bxg2

Vladimir Sokolov recommended 15 ... Nd7!? in Informator #9, but White can count on an edge after 16 Bf3. It is not clear if and where the black king can find a safe spot, and for the moment Black has problems with piece co-ordination, while the isolated h6-pawn is nothing to be proud of either.



Exercise: Where should White put the h1-rook?

Answer: 16 Rh2

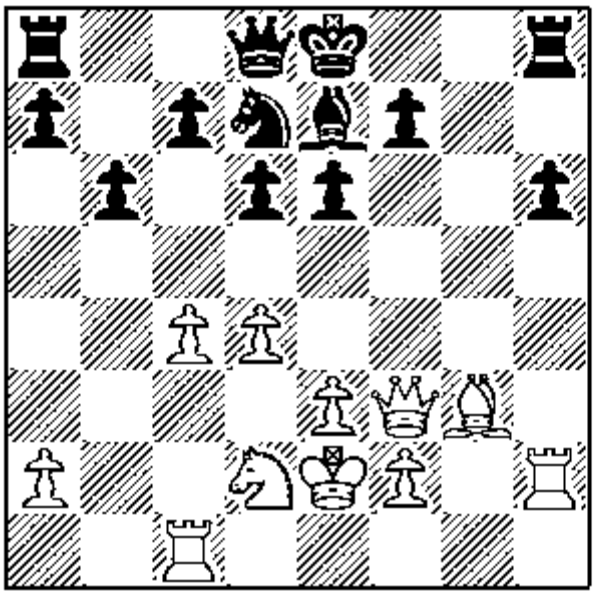
The active 16 Rh5 also suggests itself, when the rook again works effectively on the h-file and the fifth rank. After 16 ... Bb7 (otherwise 17 f3 shuts the bishop in), White can proceed positionally with 17 Bf3 as in the game, or else go for the explosive continuation 17 c5, intending 17 ... dxc5 18 dxc5 Bxc5 and then 19 Bf3 Qc8 20 Qa4+ Nd7 21 Ne4 with more than enough piece play to compensate even for three pawns.

16 ... Bb7 17 Bf3 Bxf3

It is logical for Black to exchange pieces, given that he is two pawns up; the downside is that White now gets control of the long light diagonal for free. On the other hand, if Black keeps the tension with 17 ... Qc8, his position remains very cramped.

18 Qxf3 Nd7 19 Ke2

The king does not need a royal fortress on the wings because he already has one in the centre of the board. At the moment he is shielded by a defensive wall of four pawns!



19 ... Rb8!

The best and most active move, preparing the break ... b6-b5. If Black prefers to sit tight, he can try 19 ... Nf6 20 Rch1 h5. White can increase the pressure with 21 Bh4 Nd7! (otherwise 22 Bxf6 Bxf6 23 Ne4 is strong) 22 Ne4, but Black's position is solid enough to withstand the it, as can be seen by the following variation: 22 ... Qc8 23 Bxe7 Kxe7 24 Rxh5 Rf8! (the key move in Black's defence) 25 Qf4 Qa6! 26 Nd2 Rae8 and Black's compact position is safe. 27 Qh4+ is answered by 27 ... f6 28 Rg1 Rf7 29 Rh7 Ref8, securing the seventh rank. The position is in a dynamic balance, and 30 Rgg7 Rxg7 31 Rxg7+ Rf7 32 Rxf7+ Kxf7 33 Qh7+ Ke8 34 Qg6+ Kd8 35 Qg8+ Ke7 with perpetual check is a logical conclusion.

20 Rch1 Bf8

Black hangs on to his material plus but pays the price in the form of a disorganized and passive position. It is not to everyone's taste to play this way. The consistent move, for which the position is really screaming, is 20 ... b5!. White can count on sufficient compensation for one pawn after 21 Rxh6 Rxh6 (or 21 ... Rf8 22 d5!) 22 Rxh6 Nf8 23 c5! due to his more active pieces; nevertheless, this was Black's most principled course.

21 Qc6

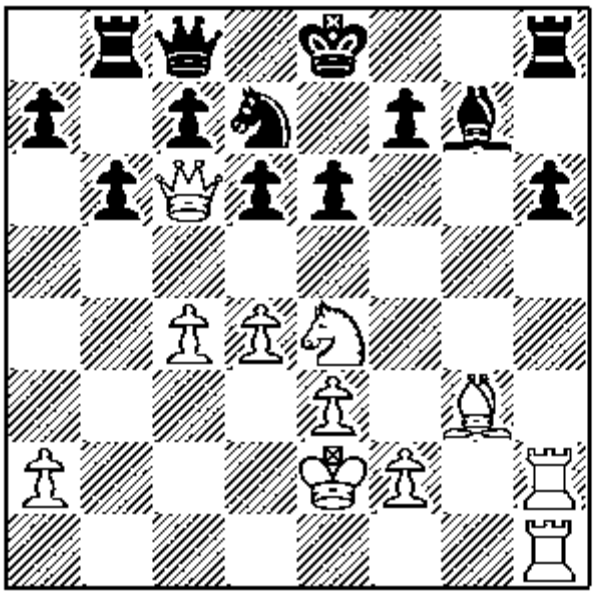
A very strong post for the queen, exploiting the hole on c6 created by the exchange of light-squared bishops.

21 ... Qc8?

Langeweg continues his passive and risky strategy. It was still correct to play the desirable 21 ... b5!, which is justified by 22 cxb5 Rb6! 23 Qc4 d5 24 Qc2 (or 24 Qd3 c5!) 24 ... Rxb5 25 Bxc7 Qc8 and Black gradually unravels. White's best response is 22 Bh4 Be7 23 c5 Bxh4 24 Rxh4 Ke7 25 Rxh6 (25 Nb3 d5! 26 Na5 Qc8 leaves the position in dynamic equilibrium) 25 ... Rxh6 26 Rxh6 dxc5 27 Nb3!, dreaming of placing the knight at c6, but Black can generate counterplay with 27 ... c4 28 Na5 Qg8! 29 Qe4 (or 29 Qxc7 Qg4+ 30 Kd2 Rb6 31 Nc6+ Rxc6 32 Qxc6 Qf5 and draws) 29 ... Rb6 30 Nc6+ Kd6 31 Nxa7 Qb8!, when the a7-knight is trapped (the black queen is unbelievably mobile on the back rank!, so White is forced to take perpetual check with 32 Qf4+ Ke7 33 Qh4+ Kd6 34 Qf4+ etc.

22 Ne4 Bg7

The only move to protect both the f6-square and h6-pawn. Stepping forward with 22 ... Ke7? does not work due to 23 Bh4+ f6 24 Nxf6! Nxf6 25 Qf3, since the natural 25 ... Bg7? runs into 26 Rg2 Qf8 27 Rhg1 Rg8 28 Rxg7+! Rxg7 29 Qxf6+! Qxf6 30 Rxg7+ and wins – a variation which demonstrates White's great co-ordination.

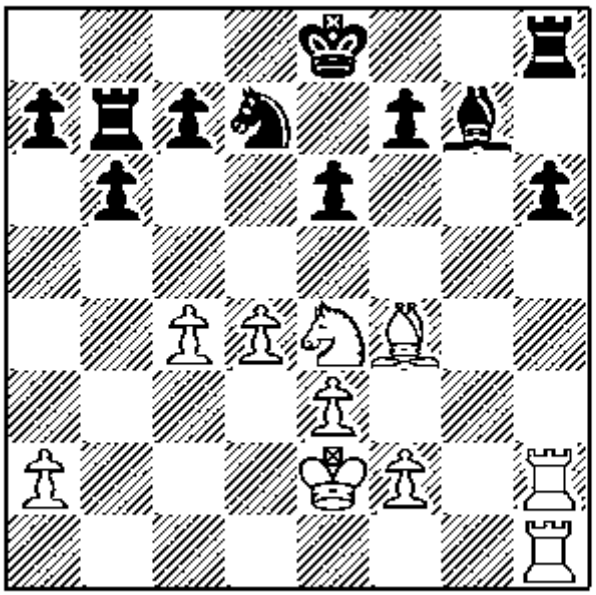


Question: Black has covered the f6-square but now has another weak spot. Which one?

Answer: 23 Bxd6

A simple combination, exploiting the fact that the bishop is taboo due to the knight fork. Presumably this was foreseen by Black who is now able to secure the exchange of queens.

23 ... Qb7 24 Qxb7 Rxb7 25 Bf4



Exercise: Make an evaluation of the position.

Who stands better and why? What is White's mini-plan?

Answer: White has the more comfortable position, if only slightly. After winning the d6-pawn, he now has four vs. three in the larger central area and can regain his other missing pawn any time he chooses. White's immediate plan, therefore, is to try and win the h6-pawn in the most favourable conditions possible.

25 ... Ke7

Instead, 25 ... f5 forces the knight to declare its intentions. Then 26 Ng5 (26 Ng3!? is a worthwhile option) 26 ... Nf8 27 Nf3 looks promising for White, but 27 ... c5 offers Black good drawing chances, as 28 Bxh6 Bxh6 29 Rxh6 Rxh6 30 Rxh6 Rh7 31 Rxh7 Nxh7 looks like a holdable knight ending; for example, 32 Ne5 Nf6 33 Nd3 (or 33 Nc6 a6) 33 ... Ne4 34 f3 Nd6 with counter-pressure on the c4-pawn.

26 Rg2

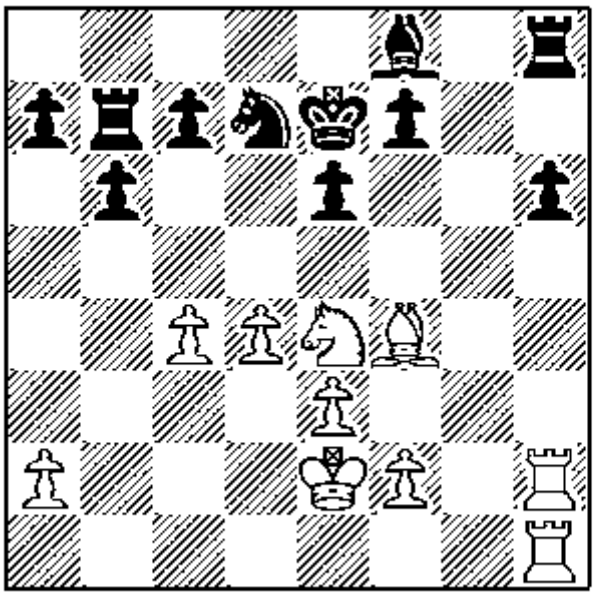
The immediate 26 Bxh6 Bxh6 27 Rxh6 Rxh6 28 Rxh6 is answered by 28 ... b5 29 c5 Rb8, when Black's queenside pawns will secure him counterplay, or if 30 f4 then 30 ... Rg8 31 f5 exf5 32 Nc3 Nf6! 33 Nxb5 Nd5 34 Kf3 (or 34 Ra6 Rg3) 34 ... Rg6! 35 Rxg6 fxg6 36 Nxa7 Kd7 37 Nb5 Kc6 38 a4 g5 with good drawing chances.

26 ... Bf8

If Black tries to exchange knights with 26 ... Nf6, White has the strong reply 27 f3! (rather than 27 Be5 Nxe4 28 Bxg7 Rh7 29 Bxh6 Kd7 30 Kd3 Nd6, when Black's position is quite solid) 27 ... Nxe4 28 fxe4 Rh7 29 Rh5, aiming to squeeze the opponent to death after Kd3, a2-a4, Rgh2 and so forth. White does not necessarily need to win the h6-pawn; he can try to induce weaknesses in other areas of the board, elaborating with different pawn moves such as a4-a5-a6, c4-c5, d4-d5, or maybe even e4-e5 followed by e3-e4 and only then d4-d5, while successively improving the position of his king.

27 Rgh2

An interesting moment.



27 ... Rg8!?

Question: Why did Black not repeat the position with 27 ... Bg7 - ?

Answer: This is not at all clear. Perhaps Langeweg did not like 28 Rg2 Bf8 29 d5!? e5 30 Bg3 f6 (not 30 ... f5? which only weakens Black's position: after 31 Nd2 Rh7 32 Rh5 Rf7 33 Nf3, he has trouble holding on to his centre pawns) 31 f4 exf4 32 Bxf4 Kf7 33 Rf2 with the neat threat of Nxf6!, although 33 ... Rg8 and if 34 Bxh6 then 34 ... Rh8! 35 Rfh2 Bxh6 36 Rxh6 Rxh6 37 Rxh6 Kg7!, followed by 38 ... Rb8, looks safe enough.

Returning to the game:

Question: Should White take the h6-pawn or do something else?

Answer: 28 Bxh6

This is a good moment to capture the pawn. White only needs to agree to one piece exchange and can keep both his rooks to probe Black's position and continually annoy him.

28 ... Bxh6 29 Rxh6 c6?

It is not necessary to weaken the d6-square, since the plan of d4-d5, followed by d5xe6, securing an "eternal" knight at e4, is not really so dangerous. Instead, 29 ... Rbb8 30 d5 Rg7 31 R1h5 (or 31 f4 Rbg8 32 dxe6 fxe6 33 Kf3 Rf8!) 31 ... Rbg8 leads to a stronger defensive set-up than in the game. Black can consider opposing rooks with ... Rg6 or even sending his own on the offensive with ... Rg1-a1.

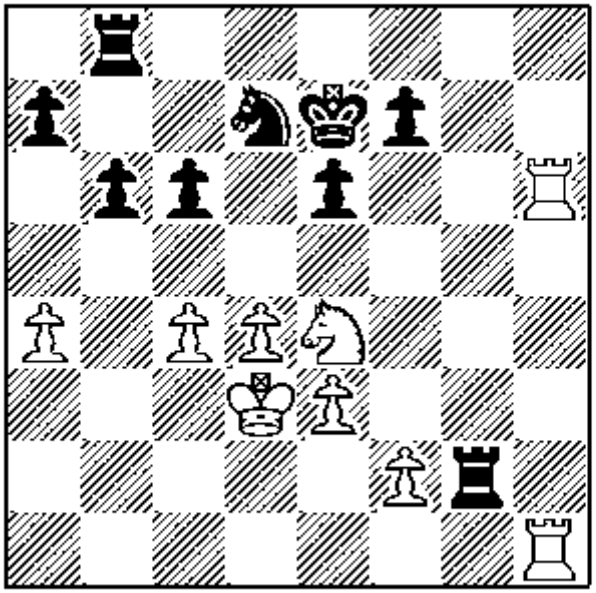
30 Kd3

One variation which demonstrates the drawback of Black's last move is 30 f4! Rg2+? 31 Kf3 Rxa2?, which leaves him completely busted after 32 f5 (threatening 33 fxe6 fxe6 34 Rh8 and 35 R1h7 mate) 32 ... exf5 33 Nd6! Rb8 34 Nxf5+ Kd8 35 Rxc6 and the game is over.

30 ... Rbb8 31 a4

Removing the pawn from the second rank and introducing the idea of opening the a-file with a4-a5xb6, followed by Ra1.

31 ... Rg2



Exercise: How should White proceed?

Answer: 32 Ke2

Stein plays according to the principle "do not hurry", defending the f2-pawn with the king and freeing the knight to go elsewhere.

Presumably he did not consider the obvious pawn moves, 32 a5 or 32 f4, to offer White any serious winning chances. For example, 32 a5 (or 32 f4 Rbg8) 32 ... bxa5 33 Ra1 f5! 34 Rh7+ (or 34 Nc3 Rxf2 35 Rxa5 Rbb2, threatening mate on d2) 34 ... Kd8 35 Nc5 Nxc5+ 36 dxc5 Rxf2 37 Kd4 (or 37 Rxa5 Rbb2 again) 37 ... Rd2+ 38 Ke5 Rb3 39 Rxa5 Rd7! 40 Rxd7+

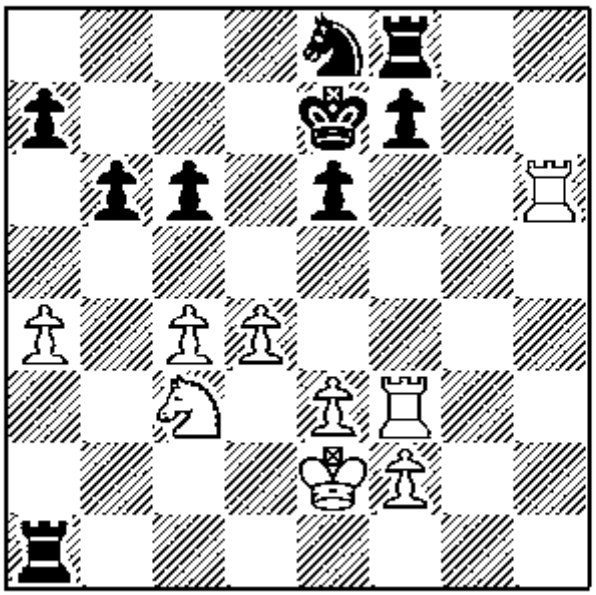
Kxd7 41 Rxa7+ Kd8 42 Kxe6 Rxe3+ 43 Kxf5 Rc3 44 Ke6 Rxc4 45 Kd6 Kc8 46 Kxc6 Kb8 47 Rh7 Rc1 and so forth.

32 ... Rbg8 33 R1h3

Stein refrains once more from 33 a5, which would be met by 33 ... Rg1, and tries a rook lift to f3, forcing Black to pay attention to the f7-pawn, even if this idea should not prove troublesome for Black either.

33 ... Rg1 34 Rf3 Ra1 35 Rh7 Rf8 36 Nc3 Nf6 37 Rh6 Ne8?!

Returning the knight to d7 was correct.



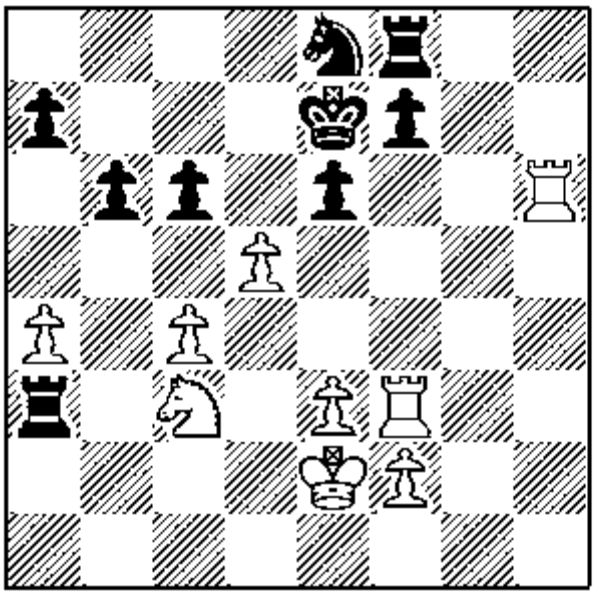
Question: What is White's best move?

Answer: 38 d5!

Chess is about timing, and this is the right moment for this central pawn push. Note that 37 ... Nd7 would have deterred this move on account of 38 ... Ne5!.

38 ... Ra3?

One weak move follows another. Instead, after 38 ... Nd6 39 dxe6 f6! 40 Rf4 Kxe6, Black's pieces are active enough for a draw.



Exercise: What is the problem with Black's last move?

Answer: 39 e4!

Langeweg must have overlooked this move, which defends the knight laterally, and threatens to capture on c6 or e6 with the d5-pawn and then win the a3-rook with Nd5+.

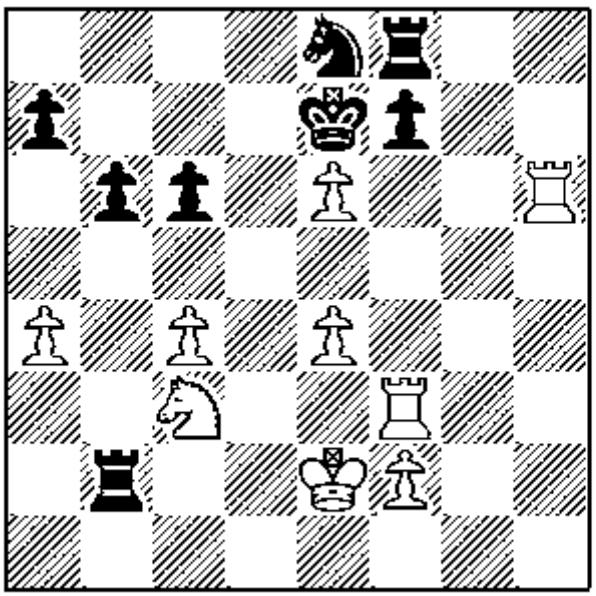
39 ... Rb3

Giving up the exchange after 39 ... Nd6 40 dxc6 Rxc3 41 Rxc3 Nxe4 42 Rd3 Nc5 43 Rd4 Rc8 fails to 44 Rf4!, followed by Rh7 with good winning chances.

40 dxe6

40 dxc6 Rb2+ 41 Kd3 Nc7 42 Nb5 is good for White too.

40 ... Rb2+



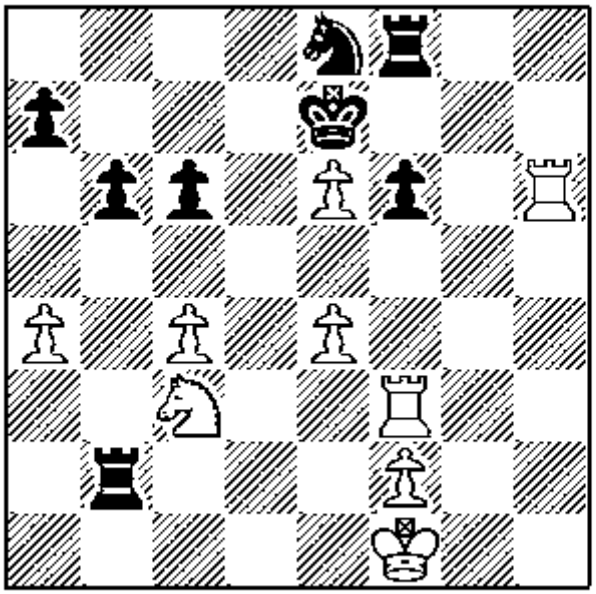
Exercise (calculation): What is the best king move? Think carefully about the variations!

Answer: 41 Kf1?!

An instructive mistake. In his wonderful Self-Tutor, Bronstein writes as follows: "What is difficult is to see a knight from afar, when this piece is only preparing for a deep raid into your defensive lines." So the lesson to learn is: Observe the knight's movements before it is too late! Here 41 Ke1 is more precise, in order to avoid a future check at d2.

41 ... f6?

Black must play 41 ... Nd6, when 42 exf7 can be met by 42 ... Nxc4!, threatening ... Nd2+, so there is no time for 43 Rxc6. This was why 41 Ke1 was correct. White does better with 42 c5! bxc5 43 exf7 Nc4, though he then has to find 44 Rf5! to keep an advantage.



Exercise: Can you spot White's winning move?

Answer: 42 e5! Rc2 1-0

Langeweg resigned without waiting for 43 Ne4 and so on. 42 ... Kxe6 43 exf6 was no better, since Black cannot recapture on f6 without losing a piece; otherwise White threatens f6-f7+, while 43 ... Kf7 is met by 44 Ne4 again.

Stein may not have followed up his (prepared?) pawn sacrifice in the opening with complete precision, but it gave him the initiative for the entire game, and that proved enough in the end.

September/October saw Stein's first appearance in the the USSR Championship since his third victory in 1966. This time he made too many draws (sixteen!) and his score of 13/22, with five wins and one loss (to Smyslov), was only good enough for sixth place. Petrosian, who had recently lost the world championship to Spassky, won the event with 14 points after a play-off with Polugaevsky.

According to Cafferty and Taimanov, during the last four years of his life Stein was not as consistent in the Soviet Championships as he had been in the mid '60s. This event was also the USSR Zonal, but Stein missed qualification by the narrowest of margins and now had to wait another three years for the next chance to enter the world championship cycle. As Gufeld and Lazarev wrote, "Stein had to comfort himself with a well-known aphorism: 'Chess

refines man, for it is full of disappointments.’”

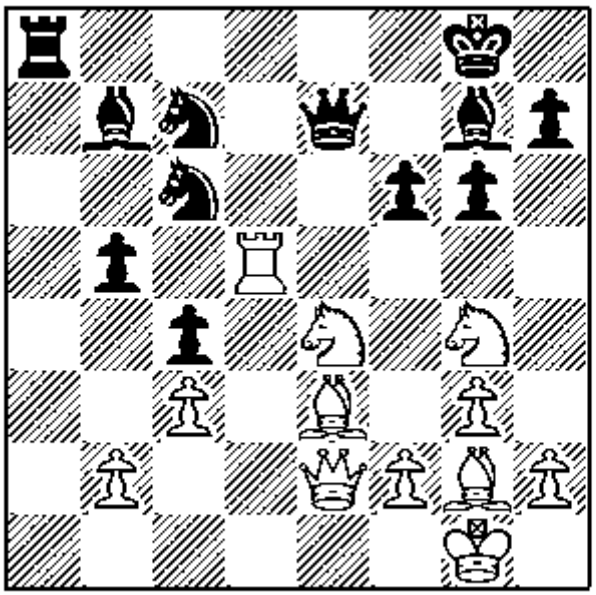
Samuel Zhukhovitsky (1916-), gained the international master title in 1967 when he was 50 years old, and is now the world’s oldest IM, though his last recorded competition is the Russian Seniors Championship in July 2002. According to Chessmetrics, Zhukhovitsky was ranked 56th in the world in 1969 with an estimated rating of 2617.

Game 49
L.Stein-S.Zhukhovitsky
USSR Championship, Moscow 1969
King’s Indian Attack

1 Nf3 d5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 0-0 Bg7 5 d3 0-0 6 Nbd2 c5 7 e4 Nc6 8 c3

In Game 13 Stein played 8 Re1 here. The main idea of the text is to create a pawn chain in the middle of the board with e4-e5 and d3-d4.

In a later game, L.Stein-O.Moiseev, USSR Championship, Riga 1970, Stein elected to release the tension with 8 exd5. Play continued 8 ... Nxd5 9 Nc4 b6 10 a4 Bb7 11 a5 Rb8 (11 ... b5 is met by 12 a6!) 12 axb6 axb6 13 c3 b5 14 Ne3 Nc7 15 Qe2 Qd7 16 Rd1 Ra8 (here 16 ... Rfd8 gave Black an edge in B.Schmidt-L.Ftacnik, Baden Baden 1987, who in effect has the white pieces and, after the further moves ... e7-e5 and ... f7-f5, enjoys the space advantage which is normally the privilege of the first player) 17 Rxa8 Rxa8 18 Ng5 e6? (either 18 ... Na5 or 18 ... f5 is correct, when Black may still be slightly better) 19 Ne4 Qe7 20 Ng4! f6 (now 20 ... f5? is a strategic loss after 21 Bg5 Qf8 22 Ngf6+ Bxf6 23 Nxf6+ with complete domination on the dark squares) 21 Be3 Na6 22 d4 c4? (even 22 ... cxd4 23 cxd4 leaves Black with problems; in particular, how to answer the threat to the b5-pawn) 23 d5! exd5 24 Rxd5 Nc7



Exercise (combination alert): Do you spot the winning combination?

Answer: Here Stein missed 25 Rd7! and if 25 ... Ra1+ (or 25 ... Qxd7 26 Ngxf6+) 26 Bf1 Qxe4 then 27 Rxg7+! Kxg7 (or 27 ... Kf8 28 Bc5+) 28 Bh6+, winning the queen.

Instead, the game concluded 25 Rd1?! Ne8? (25 ... h5 26 Nc5 Nd4!? was the best try) 26 Nc5 h5 27 Nxb7 (27 Rd7 also wins) 27 ... Qxb7 28 Nh6+ Kh7 29 Nf5!? (29 Be4 is more direct) 29 ... Rc8 30 Be4 Qf7 31 Nd6 Nxd6 32 Rxd6 (or 32 Qxh5+! Kg8 33 Bxg6 Qc7 34

Rxd6! Qxd6 35 Bc5 and the queen cannot move because of mate at h7) 32 ... Ne5 33 Qxh5+ Kg8 34 Qd1 Qe7 35 Qd5+ Kh7 36 Re6 Qd8 37 Rxe5! (a beautiful exchange sacrifice) 37 ... fxe5 38 Qe6 Rc7 (38 ... Qe8 is met by 39 Qh3+ Kg8 40 Bd5+ Kf8 41 Qh7 and Black has no effective defence) 39 Bb6 Qd1+ 40 Kg2 Rd7 41 Bxg6+ 1-0.

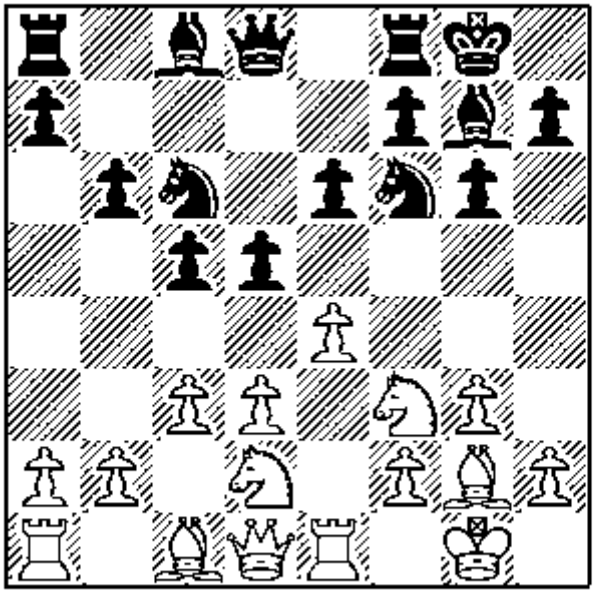
8 ... e6

It is funny about move orders: according to the Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings (ECO) we have now transposed to a French Defence (C00), even though Black nearly always puts the bishop on e7 in those positions. Indeed, 8 ... e6 looks slightly odd here, even if Korchnoi twice played this way; instead, 8 ... e5, 8 ... d4 or 8 ... dxe4 are more active continuations, disturbing White's intentions in the centre.

9 Re1

The immediate 9 e5 Nd7 10 d4 is playable too, but Stein's move is more flexible, keeping the opponent wondering which plan White will eventually choose.

9 ... b6



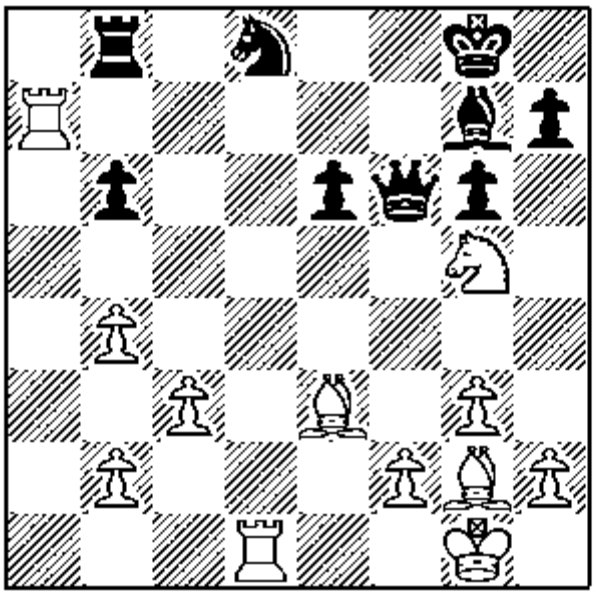
Question: What is White's most principled continuation?

Answer: 10 e5

It is now or never. There is no more time to wait for this crucial pawn push because Black could have changed the situation in the centre on his previous move and would certainly do so if given another chance.

10 ... Nd7 11 d4 Qc7

Stein had reached this position before against his early mentor, Alexey Sokolsky, in the USSR Championship semi-final at Odessa 1960. That game continued 11 ... f6 12 exf6 Qxf6 13 Nb3! (the correct move, securing an edge; Sokolsky expected 13 Qe2 and intended 13 ... Bb7 14 Qxe6+ Qxe6 15 Rxe6 cxd4 with equality) 13 ... Ba6?! (but if 13 ... c4 then 14 Bg5!) 14 Be3 Bc4? 15 dxc5 Bxb3 16 axb3 (Black's bishop manoeuvre was most unfortunate and he is already lost) 16 ... Nxc5 17 Ng5 Rfe8 18 b4 Nb7 19 Bxd5! Rad8 (19 ... exd5 leads to a forced loss: 20 Qxd5+ Kh8 21 Nf7+ Kg8 22 Nh6+ Kh8 23 Bg5 Rxe1+ 24 Rxe1 Qf8 25 Nf7+ Kg8 26 Ne5+ Kh8 27 Qxc6 etc) 20 Bxc6! Rxd1 21 Rexd1 Rb8 22 Rxa7 Nd8 23 Bg2

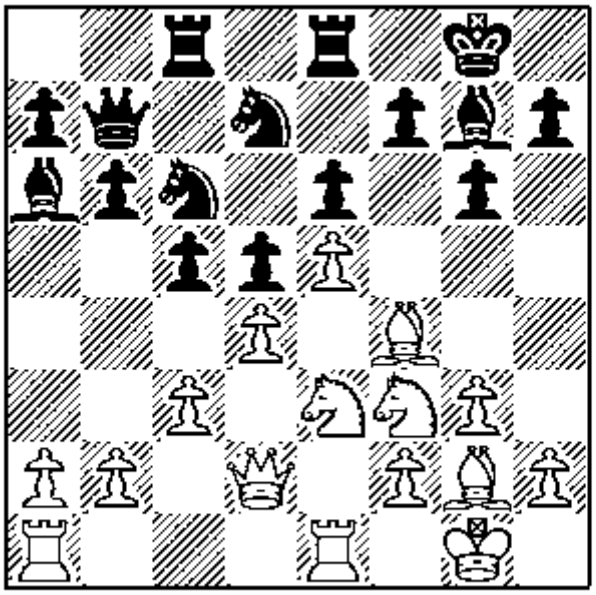


(White has a slight material plus with rook, bishop and two pawns for the queen, but it is the activity of his pieces which makes his advantage decisive) 23 ... h6 24 Ne4 Qf5 25 Rdd7 Be5 26 Bxh6 Nc6 27 Rg7+ (the deflection 27 g4! wins immediately: 27 ... Qxg4 28 Rg7+ Bxg7 29 Rxg7+ Kh8 30 Nf6 Qd1+ 31 Bf1, when the suicidal 31 ... Qg4+ is the only way to avoid immediate mate) 27 ... Bxg7 28 Rxg7+ Kh8 29 Rc7 Qe5 30 Bf4 Qf5 31 Rxc6 (Black could have resigned here) 31 ... Rd8 32 h4 b5 33 Rc7 e5 34 Bg5 Rd7 35 g4 Qxg4 36 Rc5 Qe2 37 Rxe5 Qxb2 38 Bf6+ Kg8 39 Ng5 Qc1+ 40 Bf1 Rf7 41 Nxf7 Kxf7 42 Bg5 Qxc3 43 Rxb5 Qa1 44 Rb6 Qd4 45 Rf6+ 1-0.

12 Nf1 Ba6 13 Bf4 Rac8 14 Ne3 Qb7

Just in case, Black removes the queen from the f4-bishop's X-ray and thereby avoids the potential threat of Nxd5, followed by e5-e6.

15 Qd2 Rfe8?



Exercise: What is the problem with Black's last move?

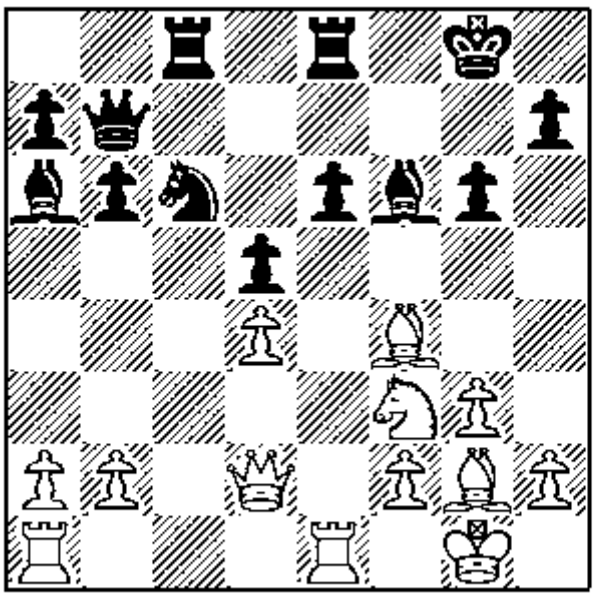
Answer: 16 Ng4

White now has a clear grip on the kingside dark squares. Black should have prevented this with 15 ... h5, despite the obvious weakening.

16 ... cxd4

Now 16 ... h5 only results in tremendous activity for White's pieces after 17 Nh6+ Kf8 18 Bg5!, freeing the f4-square for the queen.

17 cxd4 f6 18 exf6 Nxf6 19 Nxf6+ Bxf6



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

20 Bh3

A very direct move, hitting the weakest point in Black's position, but not necessarily the best.

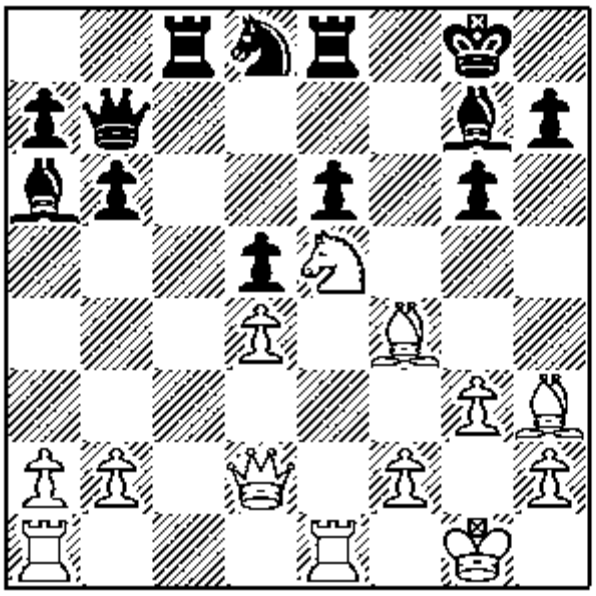
Answer: Inserting 20 h4! is more accurate. The h4-pawn accentuates White's control of the dark squares and at some moment h4-h5 may be an option, adding pressure to g6. Players like Magnus Carlsen or Bent Larsen would never miss such an opportunity to utilize the latent energy of the h-pawn. In essence Stein for the moment "sacrifices" that energy, preferring to increase his advantage solely by using the pieces, up to a certain point that is.

20 ... Nd8 21 Ne5

Stein prefers to blockade the e6-pawn in the spirit of Nimzowitsch. The alternative is to continue to attack it with 21 Ng5. The two methods – to blockade the pawn, or apply maximum pressure to try and win it – are reminiscent of those connected with an isolated queen's pawn. The latter strategy is actually regarded as more modern, whereas blockading is the old-fashioned way of dealing with isolated or, as here, backward pawns.

21 ... Bg7

This passive move seems to have no object other than avoiding a future Ng4 from gaining a tempo on the bishop. Black might achieve the same thing more actively with 21 ... Qg7, when Ng4 is prevented by the latent pressure on the d4-pawn.



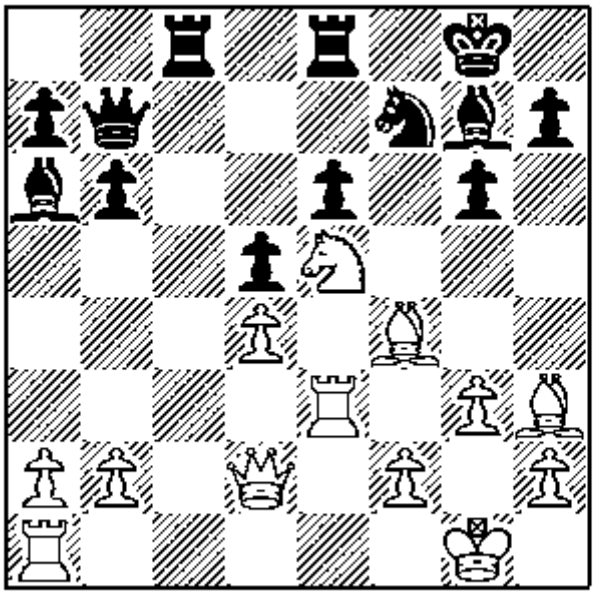
Exercise: How does White exploit his positional advantage most precisely?

22 Re3

Stein prepares to double his rooks on the e-file, overprotecting the e5-outpost, as well as increasing the pressure on the e6-pawn behind it.

Answer: However, it is stronger to utilize the available resources on the c-file with 22 Rac1!, which emphasizes Black's weaknesses. In fact, after 22 ... Nc6 23 Nxc6 Rxc6 24 Qe3 or 22 ... Rxc1 23 Rxc1 Nf7 24 Nf3, the pressure on Black's position is unbearable; and if he tries to repair the lack of harmony by connecting his rooks with 22 ... Nf7, then after 23 Rxc8 Qxc8 24 Nxf7 Kxf7 25 Rc1 Qd8 26 Qe3 Bc8 27 Be5 Bxe5 28 Qxe5, Black is left without any constructive moves, while White can decisively improve his position step by step.

22 ... Nf7



Question: Should White withdraw his knight or allow it to be exchanged?

Answer: 23 Nxf7

Retreating to f3 results in a position where White's knight is slightly stronger than its counterpart, so in principle the exchange should be rejected. On the other hand, Black's f7-knight is an important defensive piece and exchanging it will make it easier to exploit the weak dark squares in his position. All in all, the choice may be regarded as a matter of taste; by simplifying Stein plays in the manner of Capablanca who would certainly have gone for the exchange.

23 ... Qxf7 24 Rae1 Rc6 25 Rc3

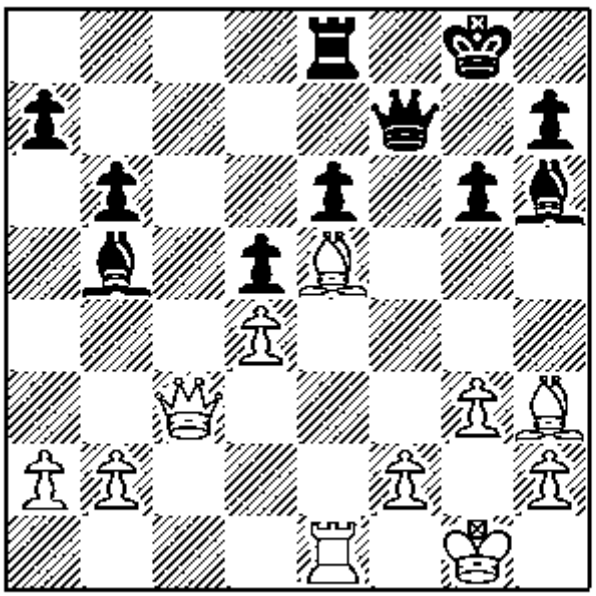
The e6-pawn is securely defended, and the a6-bishop can drop back to c8 as well if required, so Stein switches his attention to the important c-file.

25 ... Rxc3

Black cannot oppose the c3-rook with 25 ... Rec8 because of 26 Qe3 and the e6-pawn falls after all.

26 Qxc3 Bb5 27 Be5 Bh6

Wisely avoiding the exchange of dark-squared bishops which would emphasize the weaknesses in his position even further.



Exercise: What is the best way for White to improve his position?

Answer: 28 Bg4!

This humble bishop move places it on a more flexible square while clearing the way for the h-pawn to advance.

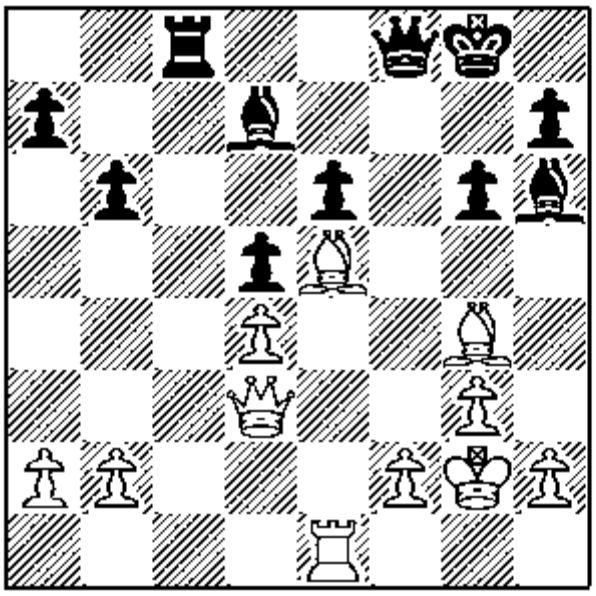
28 ... Bd7

Philidor used to say that the 'bad' bishop is very strong in defence, and this is certainly true here. White has no chance of winning based solely on the weak e6-pawn and e5-square. Stein must show all his manoeuvring skill and produce a new weakness.

29 Qd3

White has for the moment lost the battle of the c-file: the black rook is coming to c8 and 29 Qc7 gets nowhere after 29 ... Bb5. So Stein abandons the file and places the queen on a more useful square.

29 ... Rc8 30 Kg2 Qf8



Exercise: How should White proceed?

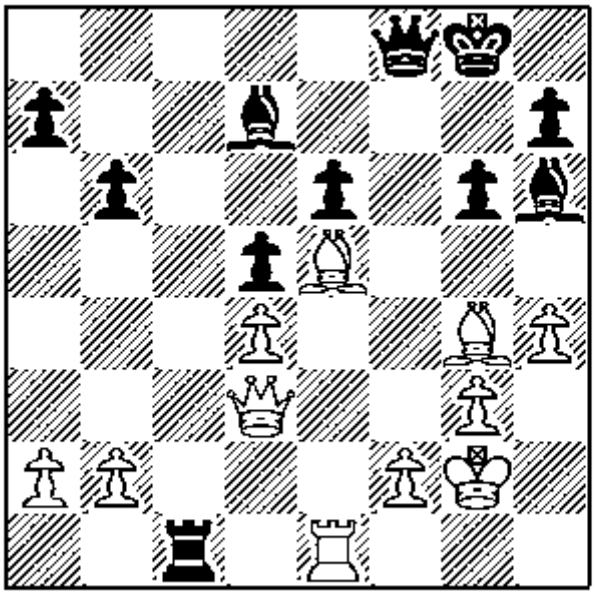
31 h4

Stein has shown great patience over this long-anticipated move.

Answer: All the same, it might be further refined by waiting one more move and playing 31 Qa6! Ra8 (31 ... Rc2?! leads to a strategically lost position for Black after 32 Re2 Rxe2 33 Bxe2 Qa8 34 h4, followed by h4-h5) and only now, when the black rook is outside play, go for 32 h4 with a distinct advantage to White.

31 ... Rc1?

A definite mistake. Black should accept that the queen is slightly misplaced and return it to f7 where it belongs, covering the weaknesses at e6 and g6.



Exercise: How can White exploit Black's error?

32 Re2?

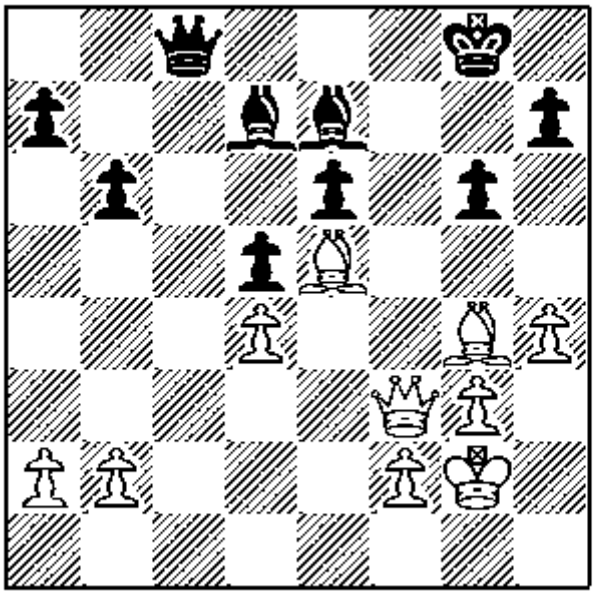
Answer: The simplest way is 32 Rxc1 Bxc1 33 Qa6 (even stronger than 33 Qc3 Bh6 34 Qc7) 33 ... Qa8 34 Qa3!, when the threatened incursion at e7 forces Black to surrender the a7-pawn in any case.

32 ... Qe8 33 Rc2 Rxc2 34 Qxc2 Qc8

Now Black manages to prolong the game by opposing the white queen on the c-file.

35 Qe2 Bf8 36 Qf3 Be7

Black plays well manoeuvring the bishop from h6, where it was doing nothing, to f8 and e7 where it defends against the queen invasion at f6.



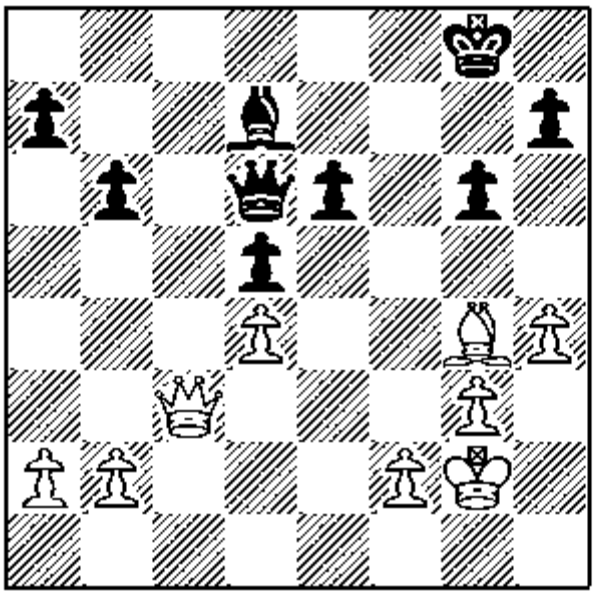
Exercise (planning): What are the main objectives for White?

Answer: One good mini-plan is to play h4-h5 at the right moment. If White manages to exchange the h4-pawn for the h7-pawn a new pawn weakness arises on g6. Another is to trade dark-squared bishops, which will emphasize the holes in Black's position. The best plan, of course, is to combine both of these positionally desirable ideas.

37 Bf6 Qf8

It looks more natural to avoid the exchange of bishops with 37 ... Bf8, but White replies 38 Qe3, intending h4-h5, and if 38 ... Kf7 (or 38 ... Bd6 39 h5 Kf7 40 Be5) 39 Be5 Kg8, then 40 Qg5! forces the exchange after all. If instead 37 ... Bd6 38 Qe3 Qe8, White plays 39 Qg5!, planning h4-h5 and Be2-d3 with strong pressure against g6.

38 Bxe7 Qxe7 39 Qc3 Qd6



Question: What is the best square for the white queen?

Answer: 40 Qe3!

Black cannot prevent the queen's intrusion at g5 (its appearance on e5 would be even worse), and the dark-squared weaknesses begin to tell.

40 ... Kg7 41 Qg5 Bb5 42 Qe3 Bd7 43 h5!

White's mini-goals have been achieved: the dark-squared bishops have been exchanged, and now Black cannot prevent the creation of yet another pawn weakness.

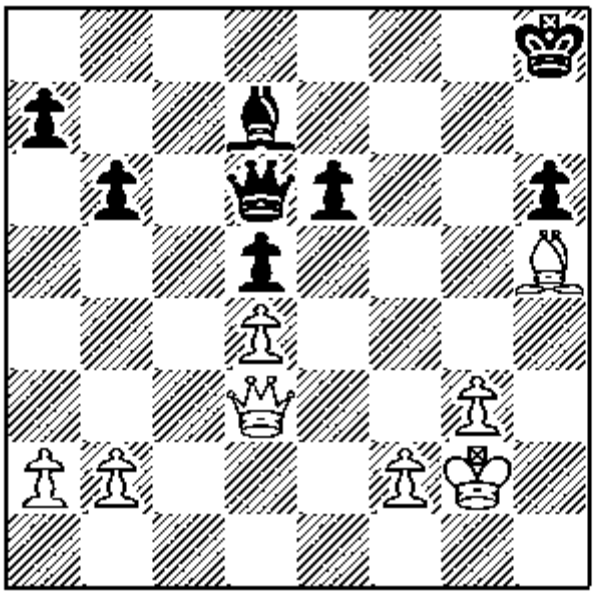
43 ... h6?

It is better to play 43 ... a5 and give White the choice between 44 hxg6 hxg6 45 Be2, followed by Bd3 and g3-g4-g5, fixing the weakness at g6 while strengthening the control of the dark squares; and 44 h6+!?. Presumably Black did not like the latter option and therefore prevented it, but the resulting damage to his position is even more serious, as Stein duly demonstrates.

44 hxg6 Kxg6 45 Qd3+ Kg7 46 Bh5

Thanks to his opponent's mistaken ... h7-h6, White has been given a whole new avenue of attack on the kingside light squares, especially g6 and f7.

46 ... Kh8



Question: What is the most effective queen move for White?

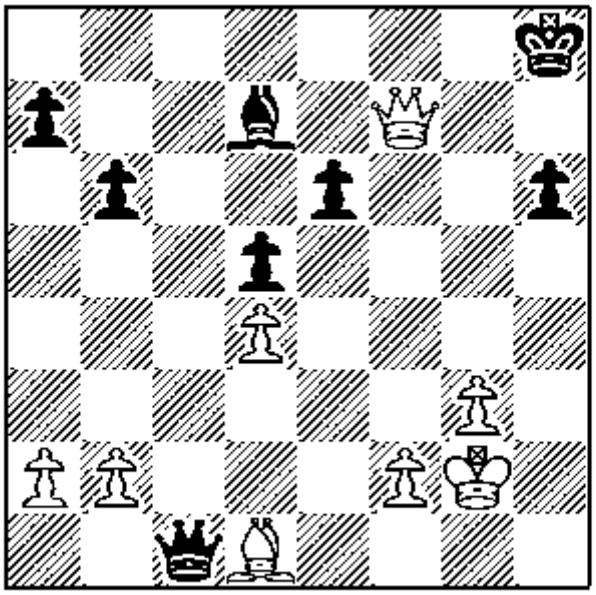
Answer: 47 Qf3!

The direct 47 Qg6?! is answered by 47 ... Qf8 and Black defends the most important invasion squares.

47 ... Qe7 48 Qf4!

Stein uses the full capacity of the queen. From the excellent f4-square it works in three different directions with menacing threats to Black's position.

48 ... Qg5 49 Qf8+ Kh7 50 Bd1! Qc1 51 Qf7+ Kh8



Exercise (combination alert): How did Stein conclude the game?

Answer: 52 Bh5 1-0

This calm move forces immediate resignation since Black must sacrifice his queen to

prevent Bg6 and Qh7 mate. Another, more spectacular finish is 52 Qf6+ Kh7 53 Qe7+ Kg6 (otherwise 53 ... Kg8 54 Qd8+ wins the bishop with check) 54 Bh5+! Kxh5 55 Qf7+ Kg5 56 f4+ Kg4 57 Qg6 mate.

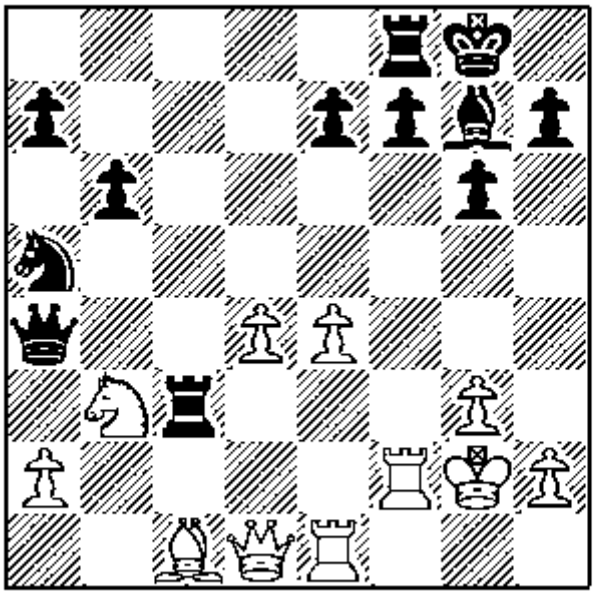
A good positional win by Stein, showing his manoeuvring skill.

In the 1969 USSR Team Championship, Stein played on top board for the Ukrainian team and scored four wins and four draws. His opponent in the next game, IM and FIDE Senior Trainer Aleksander Nikitin (1935-) is most famous for his collaboration with Garry Kasparov as his coach and second in several matches. He is co-author with Kasparov on probably the best book ever about the Sicilian Defence (with the possible exception of those by Lev Polugaevsky), Sicilian: ... e6 and ... d6 Systems.

Game 50
A.S.Nikitin-L.Stein
USSR Team Championship, Grozny 1969
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 Bg7

Occasionally Stein opted for a Slav/Grünfeld set-up with ... c7-c6 and ... d7-d5, which may lead to a symmetrical position if White exchanges on d5. For example, D.Marovic-L.Stein, Yugoslavia-USSR match, Yerevan 1971, saw 3 ... c6 4 Bg2 d5 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 Nf3 Bg7 7 0-0 0-0 and continued 8 Nc3 Ne4 (Stein avoids the symmetry after 8 ... Nc6, as White is first to occupy the centre with 9 Ne5, yielding him a slight initiative) 9 e3 Nxc3 10 bxc3 Nc6 11 Nd2 Be6 12 Nb3 b6 (this little pawn move effectively kills the knight on b3) 13 Ba3 Qd7 14 Rc1 Rfd8 15 Re1 Rac8 16 f3 Bh3 17 e4? (it is better to push the c-pawn first: 17 c4 dxc4 18 Bxh3 Qxh3 19 Rxc4 and Black is only slightly on top) 17 ... Bxg2 18 Kxg2 dxe4 19 fxe4 Ne5! (White must have overlooked this move) 20 Rc2 (after 20 dxe5 Qa4 and ... Qxa3, White has too many pawn weaknesses to cover) 20 ... Nc4 21 Bc1 Qa4 (here or on the next move 21 ... e5 is another strong idea; Stein ignores the centre for the time being and focuses solely on the queenside) 22 Qf3 Na5 23 Rf2 Rf8 24 Qd1 (24 Nxa5 Qxa5 also wins a pawn) 24 ... Rxc3

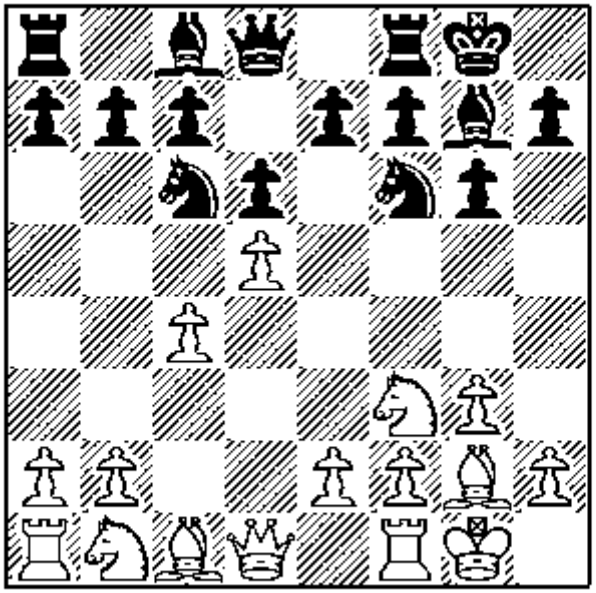


(Stein's strategy has been successful: c4 has been controlled, c3 conquered, and d4 weakened) 25 Nxa5 Qxd1 26 Rxd1 bxa5 (Black's pawn plus has been slightly degraded but he keeps an edge) 27 Bb2 Rc4 28 e5 f6 29 exf6 Rxf6 30 Rxf6 Bxf6 31 Rd2 Ra4 (the rook is

optimally placed here, firing heavily at the a2- and d4-pawns, and the king is about to assist its colleagues) 32 a3 (now White's bishop is far less happy than Black's) 32 ... Kf7 33 Kf3 Ke6 34 Ke4 Rc4 35 h4 Kd6 36 h5 gxh5 (the position is quite original with two sets of doubled rook's pawns on the same ranks!) 37 Rh2 h4! (a strong pawn sacrifice, preparing the following small combination) 38 gxh4 Bxd4! 39 Rd2 e5 40 Bxd4 Ke6 41 h5 Rxd4+ 42 Rxd4 exd4 43 a4 Kf6 44 Kxd4 Kg5 45 Ke5 Kxh5 46 Kf5 a6 0-1. A good strategic game by Stein, showing how to exploit weaknesses in the white queenside.

4 Bg2 0-0 5 Nf3 d6 6 0-0 Nc6 7 d5

White plays in the spirit of Alekhine's Defence (1 e4 Nf6 2 e5), accepting the challenge offered by Black's slightly provocative knight move.



Question: Where should Black put the knight?

Answer: 7 ... Na5

There are four available moves and the one chosen by Stein is by far the best because here the knight attacks the tactical weakness at c4. Instead:

a) 7 ... Nb8, as in the classical games A.Alekhine-G.A.Thomas, Carlsbad 1923 and A.Alekhine-E.Znosko Borovsky, Paris 1925, is playable but a little passive. The main idea is to bring the knight to c5 via d7 or a6, reminiscent of 2 ... Ng8 in Alekhine's Defence, sometimes played by Petrosian and Flohr, where the idea is to exploit the f5-square.

b) 7 ... Nb4 also aims for c5 but is less flexible than 7 ... Nb8, since Black has only one square (a6) available for this manoeuvre.

c) 7 ... Ne5 is probably the most risky choice, as after 8 Nxe5 dxe5, Black's g7-bishop is obstructed and White has a queenside pawn majority to mobilize. Alb.Becker-G.Heinrich, Frankfurt 1938, continued 9 Nc3 Bd7 10 Qb3 Rb8 11 Qa3 a6 12 b4 Re8 13 Rd1 Qc8 14 c5 with a slight advantage to White, whose queenside pawns are certainly menacing.

8 Nfd2

Knights are tricky! The idea is apparently to develop the b1-knight to c3, but after 8 Nbd2 it would have been developed to f3 immediately! All the same, Black has no problems after 8 ... c5, followed by ... Rb8 and ... b7-b5; nor after 8 Qa4!? c5 9 Bd2 b6 10 Bc3 Bd7 11 Qc2 Nxc4!? 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 Qxc4 Bxb2, while 8 b3?? Nxd5! wins material.

8 ... c6

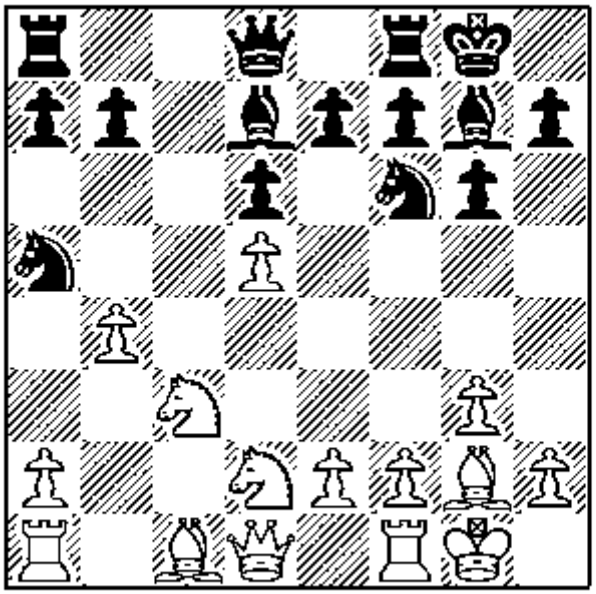
Of course the traditional plan of 8 ... c5, followed queenside activity with ... a7-a6, ... Rb8 and ... b7-b5, is viable too.

9 Nc3

An interesting alternative is 9 Na3!? reinforcing White's grip on the c4-pawn/square. The knight can later make its way to the centre via c2.

9 ... cxd5 10 cxd5 Bd7 11 b4?!

I.Bondarevsky-L.Stein, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963, continued more solidly with 11 Nb3, but Stein managed to get a slight advantage after 11 ... Rc8 12 Nxa5 Qxa5 13 Be3 Rc4 14 Bd4 Rfc8 15 e3 Ne8 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Qd2 Nf6 18 Rfe1 b5 19 a3 Qb6, followed by ... a7-a5. Similarly, 11 Rb1 Rc8 12 Nde4 Nxe4 13 Nxe4 Nc4 14 b3 Ne5 15 Be3 Qa5 16 a4 Ng4 17 Bg5 Rfe8 18 h3 Nf6! 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 20 Nxf6+ exf6 also gave Black the edge in V.Smyslov-Y.Balashov, Moscow 1971, though it was not enough to win either game.



Exercise: What is Black's best response?

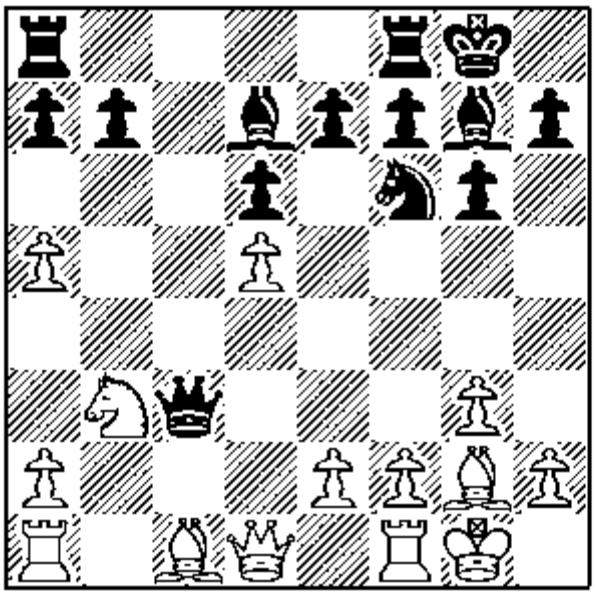
Answer: 11 ... Qc7!

More precise than either 11 ... Ng4, which gives White counterplay after 12 bxa5 Bxc3 13 Rb1 Qxa5 14 Ne4!, or 11 ... Rc8 12 bxa5 Rxc3 13 Bb2 Rc5 14 Nb3 Rc4 15 Bd4, when Black must think about how to defend the a7-pawn.

12 bxa5?!

12 Bb2 is better, though 12 ... Nc4 13 Nxc4 Qxc4 14 Rb1 (or 14 a3 a5!) 14 ... Rfc8 still gives Black the more comfortable game, who is in possession of the c4-square and has the evident plan of transferring the knight to that square via g4 and e5.

12 ... Qxc3 13 Nb3



Question: Which rook should be developed to c8 and why?

Answer: 13 ... Rfc8

As a rule it is correct to move the king's rook to the c-file when there is nothing for it to do on e8 or d8. In this kind of position the a8-rook is likely to be more useful on the queenside (defending the a7-pawn, for instance) than the f8-rook would be in the centre.

14 Be3

Exercise: How to continue?

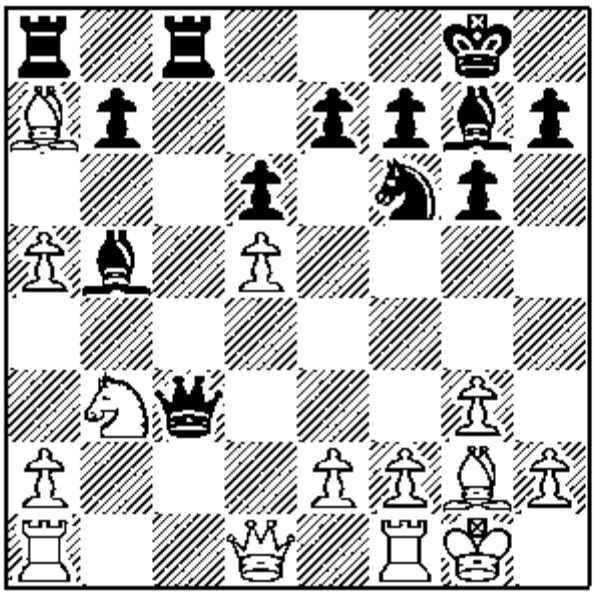
Answer: 14 ... Bb5!?

A more cautious player would probably play 14 ... Qb4, withdrawing the queen from its exposed post at c3 where it soon will be harassed by either Rc1 or Bd4.

An aggressively-inclined one might prefer 14 ... Ng4, intending 15 Bd4 (not 15 Rc1? Nxe3) 15 ... Bxd4 16 Qxd4 (not 16 Nxd4? Qxa5) 16 ... Qxd4 17 Nxd4 Rc4 18 e3 Rac8 with full control of the only open file.

Stein, on the other hand, opts for a third continuation – an incredible move, which allows White a tempting combination.

15 Bxa7!



Exercise: What is going on? Did Stein overlook this? Suggest a reply!

Answer: 15 ... Rxa7

Objectively speaking, it is not necessary to play like this. Black has many other options which involve the queen targeting the weakness at e2; for instance, 15 ... Qc2 16 Bb6 (not 16 Qxc2?! Rxc2 17 Nd4? Bxe2 18 Nxc2 Bxf1 19 Kxf1 Rxa7 and Black is clearly better) 16 ... Bxe2 17 Qxc2 Rxc2 18 Rfc1 Rc4! leaves Black with a tiny edge. The calm 15 ... Nd7 is also good, increasing the harmony in Black's position; White's extra doubled pawn on the a-file is of minor importance, compared with the activity of the black pieces.

16 Rc1 Qxc1 17 Nxc1 Rxa5

This position must have been foreseen by Stein when he played 14 ... Bb5!?. Although Black only has rook and bishop for the queen, he does not stand worse as it is hard for the queen to attack anything. This kind of play is typical of Stein, who sometimes took calculated risks in order to confuse the opponent and upset the normal course of the game. Psychology on a high level.

18 Qd2 Ra4 19 Qe3

White tries to find targets for the queen, but Black has no problems protecting them.

19 ... Kf8

Here 19 ... Rac4 20 Nd3 Kf8 is slightly more precise, as it prevents White's next move.

20 Qb3!

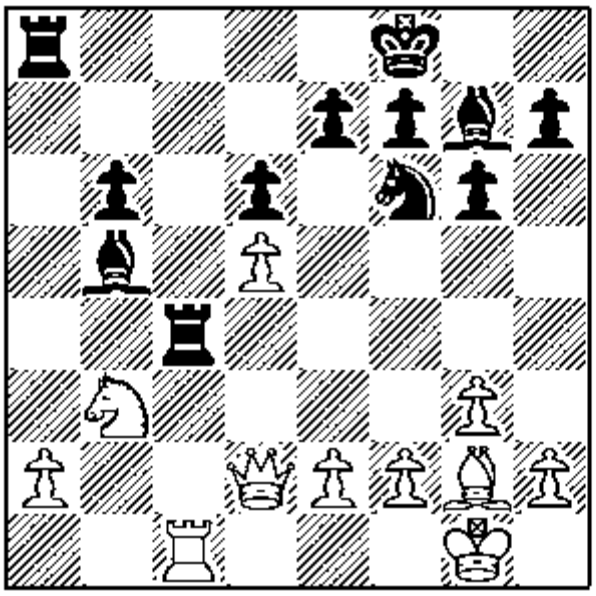
20 Qb6 is answered by 20 ... Ba6, when all Black's pawns are defended.

20 ... Ra5 21 Qb4 b6 22 Nb3 Rc4

The only move to avoid loss of material.

23 Qd2 Ra8 24 Rc1

24 Rb1 hits the loose units at b5 and b6, but again this is easily dealt with. Black plays 24 ... Nd7 25 Nc1 Ba4 with a balanced position.



Exercise: What is Black's strongest move?

Answer: 24 ... Ne4!

The threat of ... Nc3 virtually secures the bishop pair for Black. 24 ... Rca4 does not lead to anything substantial after 25 Rc2 and only helps White to regroup his pieces. Then 25 ... Ne4 26 Bxe4 Rxe4 is answered by 27 Qc1!, forcing the exchange of a pair of rooks which makes White's defensive task easier. Compare this with the game.

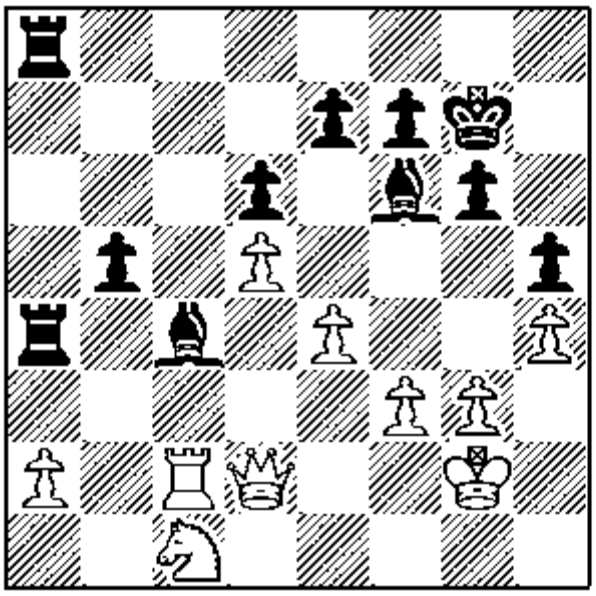
25 Bxe4

Avoiding the exchange with 25 Qe3 Nc3 just creates more headaches for White, whose pawns are under strong pressure.

25 ... Rxe4 26 e3 Rea4 27 Rc2 Bc4

Black improves his position little by little, whereas it is difficult for White to do anything effective.

28 Kg2 Bf6 29 f3 Kg7 30 e4 h5 31 h4 b5 32 Nc1



Question: Can Black activate his pieces even more?

Answer: 32 ... Ra3!

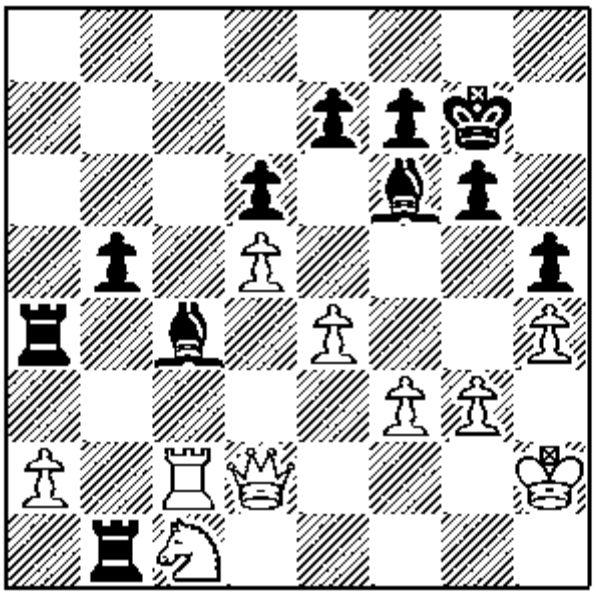
A strong move, putting pressure on the sixth rank and preparing a future ... R8a4. The real value of a file lies in the opportunities it provides to exploit the ranks.

33 Qf2 R8a4 34 Kh2

Preventing the intrusion of the black rook with 34 Qd2 looks more stubborn, but after 34 ... Kh7!, followed by ... Bg7-h6 (or even ... Bd4!, when the bishop cannot be taken because of ... Bf1+ etc), Black either invades e3 with rook or bishop, or provokes the further weakening f3-f4, after which ... f7-f5 will undermine the white centre.

34 ... Rb4 35 Qd2 Rb1 36 Kg2 Ra4 37 Kh2?

The surprising 37 Ne2!, giving up the a2-pawn, seems to be the best defence. After 37 ... Rxa2 38 Rxa2 Bxa2 39 Qxa2 Rb2 40 Qa3 Rxe2+ 41 Kh3, White has managed to exchange a lot of pieces and has definite drawing chances, despite the dangerous-looking passed b-pawn, as he can create counterplay by activating his qualitative pawn majority with f3-f4 and e4-e5. For example, 41 ... Rc2 (or 41 ... Rb2 42 Qd3 b4 43 Qc4 Bc3 44 f4! Rb1 45 Qc7 Rc1 46 Qxe7 b3 47 e5! b2 48 Qf6+ with perpetual check) 42 f4! Rc4 43 e5! dxe5 44 fxe5 Bxe5 45 Qxe7 Bf6 46 Qb7 b4 47 d6 Rd4 48 d7 b3 49 Qxb3 Rxd7 50 Qe3 and it not clear how the black forces might co-ordinate to win the g3-pawn. After all, Black must protect his king, as well as the tactical weakness at f7, so the position seems to be a draw.



Exercise: What is Black's strongest move?

37 ... Rab4?

Stein has the right idea, preparing the exchange of the c2-rook, but does not find the best way.

Answer: The correct course was the extraordinary 37 ... Bf1!!, intending to remove the key defender with ... Rc4! and then play the other rook to b2. If White exchanges on c4, Black can choose between ... b5xc4, stalemating the knight with the newly created passed pawn, or ... Bxc4, when the bishop pair and the rook will prove to be too mighty a force for White's queen and passive knight. For example, 38 Qf2 Rc4! 39 Rxc4 Bxc4 40 Qe3 Rb2+ 41 Kh1 Rc2, threatens ... Rc3 and wins; or if 38 Kg1 then 38 ... Rd4! 39 Qe1 (otherwise ... Rd1 wins) 39 ... Rc4! 40 Rxc4 Bxc4 and so forth. White's best is 38 Qe3, but after 38 ... Rc4 39 Rxc4 bxc4!, Black's position has been dramatically improved.

38 Nd3?

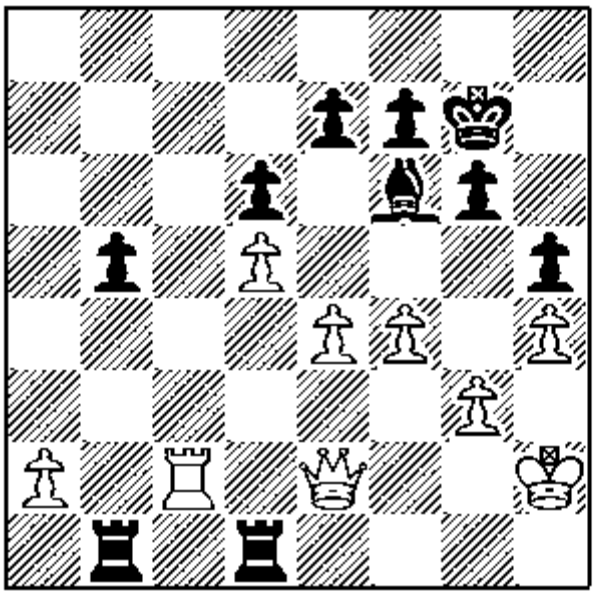
Again, it was better to surrender the a2-pawn. After 38 Ne2! R1b2 39 Nc3! Rxc2 40 Qxc2 Bxa2 41 Qxa2 Bxc3 42 Qa7, White can rely on the same counterplay as before with f3-f4 and e4-e5. This central breakthrough disrupts Black's winning plan of pushing the b-pawn by destroying the harmony in Black's position. If this seems unlikely at a cursory glance, turn on the computer and try to make progress as Black. Chess is not an easy game!

38 ... Bxd3

One advantage of the bishop pair is that it is easier to force exchanges. At this moment removing the knight enables Black to place both his rooks on the first rank.

39 Qxd3 Rd4 40 Qe2 Rdd1 41 f4

White's king desperately needs an escape square at f3 to avoid a loss on the spot, but this does not not help.



Exercise (combination alert): Can you see the decisive combination?

41 ... Bd4

After this natural move, Black's pieces are in perfect alignment, but it is not the strongest.

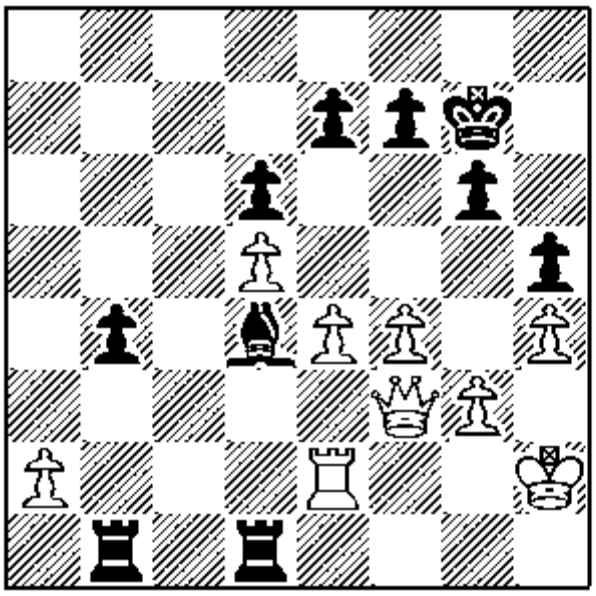
Answer: The beautiful solution runs 41 ... Rh1+! 42 Kg2 Rbg1+ 43 Kf3 (more prosaically, 43 Kf2 Bc3! threatens to consume all the kingside pawns after 44 ... Be1+, and 44 Rxc3 Rh2+ 45 Kxg1 Rxe2 gives Black a winning rook endgame) 43 ... Bxh4!! 44 gxh4 Rh3+ 45 Kf2 Rgh1! and Black wins. Stein perhaps overlooked the key quiet move. Akiba Rubinstein (1880-1961) was famous for his ability to see such moves, either in the middle or at the end of a combination. As with Stein, Bronstein, Keres and Korchnoi, Rubinstein too must be regarded as one of the best players never to become world champion.

42 Qf3 b4

Having missed the ramifications of the earlier combination, Stein aims to decide the game in a purely positional manner.

43 Re2?

Giving Black another chance to conclude the game quickly. It was better to try and hide the king with 43 Kh3 and Rh2, though Black still has a forced win: 43 ... Rh1+ 44 Rh2 Rxh2+ 45 Kxh2 Rb2+ 46 Kh3 (or 46 Kh1 Rxa2) 46 ... Bg1! 47 g4 (after 47 Qh1 Rh2+ 48 Qxh2 Bxh2 49 Kxh2 f5!, the pawn ending is winning for Black; for example, 50 exf5 gxf5 51 Kg2 Kf7 52 Kf3 e6 and the passed d-pawn is practically an extra one, or 50 e5 Kf8 51 Kg2 Ke8 52 Kf3 Kd7 53 Ke3 Kc7 54 Kd4 Kb6 55 Kc4 Ka5 and the king breaks through via a4 or b5) 47 ... Rh2+ 48 Kg3 Rxa2 49 Qf1 Bf2+ 50 Kh3 b3 and Black wins with the b-pawn, as White does not have the necessary counterplay here.



Exercise: How does Black profit from White's mistake?

43 ... Rbc1?

Stein continues to play positionally and lets his opponent back into the game.

Answer: The way forward here is to force the white king to the more exposed f3-square, which can be achieved by 43 ... Rf1! 44 Qd3 (44 Qg2 Rg1 45 Qf3 Rbf1 46 Qd3 Rh1+ comes to the same thing) 44 ... Rh1+ 45 Kg2 Rbg1+ 46 Kf3 and now after 46 ... Rd1 47 Qb3 Rhg1!, when there is no way White can liberate himself from the grip created by the black forces. The immediate threat is 48 ... Rdf1+ and mates, while 48 e5 Bc5! (threatening 49 ... Rdf1+ 50 Ke4 f5+! etc) 49 Rc2 Rdf1+ 50 Ke4 Re1+ 51 Kf3 Re3+! leads to another winning rook endgame for Black.

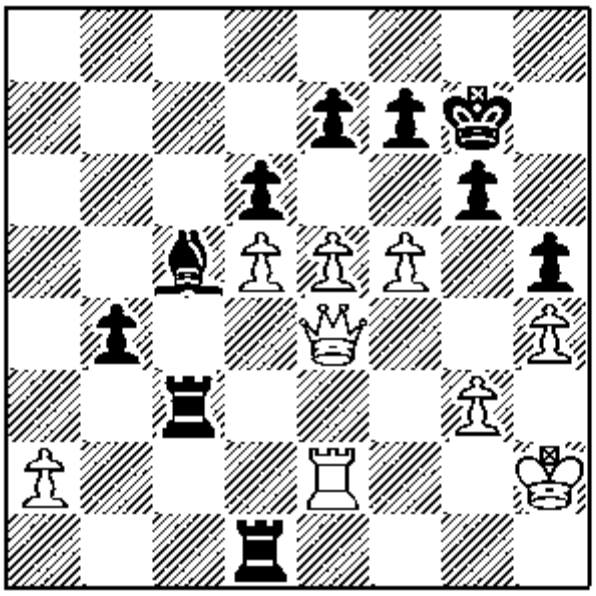
44 e5!

Nikitin seizes on his chance.

44 ... Rc3 45 Qe4 Bc5

Black can try 45 ... Bg1+!? 46 Kh3 Bc5, hoping for 47 f5? Rdd3 48 f6+ exf6 49 exf6+ Kh7 50 Qe8? Rxg3+ 51 Kh2 Rh3+ 52 Kg2 Rcg3+ 53 Kf1 Rh1 mate, but he has no obvious way to proceed if White just returns the king to the safer square with 47 Kh2.

46 f5!



46 ... Rd4

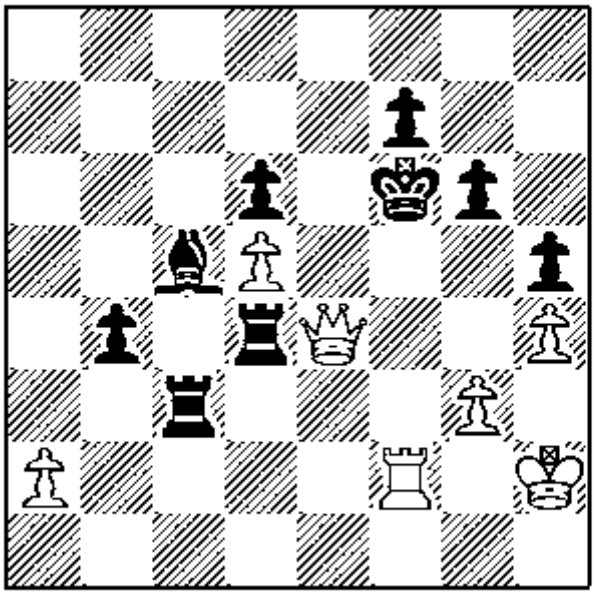
With the king on h2, 46 ... Rdd3 fails to 47 f6+ exf6 48 exf6+ Kxf6 (not 48 ... Kh7?? 49 Qe8 and Black gets mated) 49 Qf4+ Kg7 50 Re7 Rc2+ 51 Kh3 Rf2 52 Rxf7+ and draws.

47 f6+ exf6

Black gets nowhere after 47 ... Kf8 48 fxe7+ Ke8 49 Qb1 dxe5 50 Qf1 either.

48 exf6+ Kxf6 49 Rf2+??

Nikitin goes wrong just as salvation is at hand. After 49 Qe7+! Kg7 50 Re6 Rd2+ (not 50 ... Rf3?? 51 Rxg6+! Kxg6 52 Qg5+ Kh7 53 Qxh5+ Kg7 54 Qxf3 and White wins) 51 Kh3 Rf2, he can save himself with 52 Rxg6+! Kxg6 53 Qg5+ Kh7 54 Qxh5+ Kg7 55 Qg5+ Kf8 56 Qd8+ and it is a draw by perpetual check.



Question: What did Nikitin overlook?

Answer: 49 ... Kg7 50 Qe7 Rxh4+!

Black's only defence, but it leads to a clearly won position.

51 Qxh4?!

51 gxh4 Bxf2, followed by ... Bg3+ would take Black longer to win.

51 ... Bxf2 52 Qxb4 Bxg3+ 53 Kg2 Be5 54 a4 Rc2+ 55 Kf3 g5 0-1

Black's pawn mass is much more menacing than the solitary a-pawn, so White resigned.

A far from perfect game, but very instructive nonetheless for the positional queen sacrifice.

The international tournament in Caracas was won by Lubomir Kavalek on 13/17, despite losing to Stein who was joint second with Oscar Panno a point behind. In the fifth round Stein surprisingly lost to William Addison on the white side a Slav Defence, after trying too hard to create winning chances. The next game was played in the first round.

The Ecuadorian player Olavo Yepez Obando (1937-) gained the IM title in 1969. He won his National Championship in 1962, represented Ecuador on top board at three Olympiads, and was ranked 259th in the world in 1969, according to Chessmetrics. His brother Trotsky Augusto was also a strong player.

Game 51
O.Yepez Obando-L.Stein
Caracas 1970
King's Indian Defence

1 c4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 d4 Nf6 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 Be3 b6

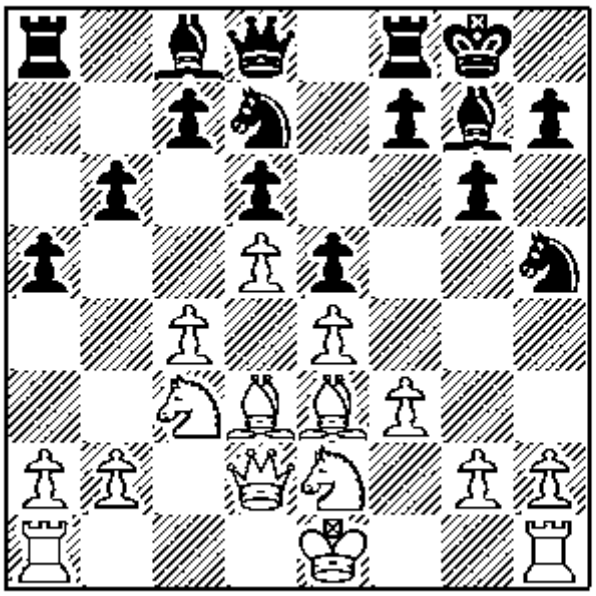
Stein's favourite move against the Sämisch. In the next game, he even defers castling and plays ... b7-b6 on move five.

7 Bd3 e5

In Game 30 Stein played 7 ... Bb7 here, but he later came to prefer the text.

8 Nge2

The alternative is to block the centre immediately with 8 d5, when two of Stein's games saw 8 ... Nh5 9 Nge2 Nd7 10 Qd2 a5 and now:

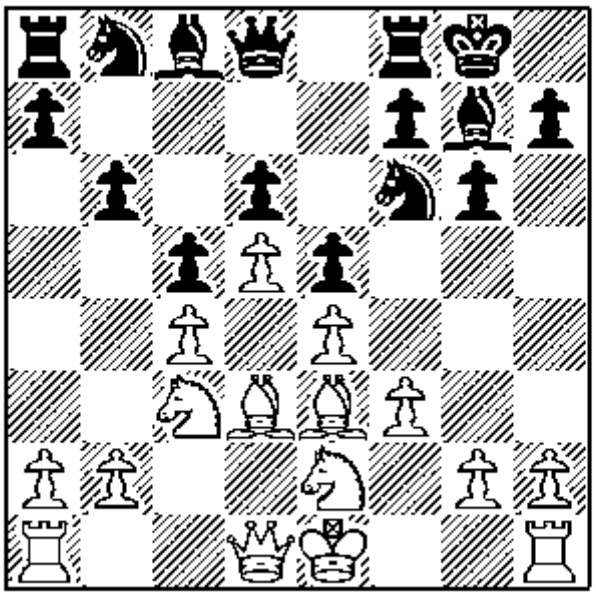


a) 11 Bc2 Nc5 12 g4 Nf4! (such active moves, sacrificing a pawn, are at the heart of the King's Indian; Black can already be very satisfied with his position) 13 Nxf4 exf4 14 Bxf4 Ba6 15 h4 (not 15 b3?? Qf6) 15 ... Bxc4 16 Bh6 Bxh6 17 Qxh6 b5 18 h5 Qe7 19 Qe3? (19 b3 keeps the game level) 19 ... b4 20 Nd1 c6? (here 20 ... Qe5! is stronger, activating the queen

on the long dark diagonal, and if 21 f4 then the original 21 ... Qh8!! leaves Black clearly better: his queen is now safe from the white pawns and ... Bxd5 is threatened) 21 dxc6 Rac8 22 Qd4 Bb5 23 Ne3 Bxc6 24 Rd1 (24 Bb3 Qe5 is equal) 24 ... Ne6! 25 Qd2 (White perhaps missed that 25 Qxd6 is met by 25 ... Qf6!, when 26 hxg6 Qxf3 27 Nf5! Qxh1+ 28 Kf2 Qh3 29 Rd3! Qh1 30 Rd1 leads to a draw by repetition) 25 ... Qf6 26 hxg6 hxg6? (surprisingly, this natural recapture is incorrect; 26 ... Qxf3! 27 gxh7+ Kh8 28 Rf1 Ng5! keeps the game in dynamic equilibrium) 27 Kf2 Rfd8? (the definite turning point; after 27 ... Ng5! 28 Nf5 Rfe8, Black is only slightly worse) 28 Nf5! (after this strong sacrifice White's attack is unstoppable) 28 ... gxf5 29 gxf5 Bd7 30 Rdg1+ Ng7 31 Bb3 a4 32 Bd5 b3 33 axb3 axb3 34 Bxb3 Kf8 35 Rh8+ Ke7 36 Rh6 Ne8 37 Rxf6 Nxf6 38 Rg7 Be8 39 Qd4 Rc5 40 f4 Nh5 and Black resigned in H.Ree-L.Stein, Amsterdam 1969.

b) 11 0-0-0 a4 12 Bc2 a3 13 b4 Nf4! (even unprompted Stein sends his knight forward, proving that he understood how to play the King's Indian; today it is well known that White should not allow the knight to reach the f4-square, even if he wins a pawn, as the dark-squared bishop and control of the e5-square will give Black more than enough compensation) 14 g3 Nxe2+ 15 Qxe2 f5 16 g4 fxg4 17 fxg4 Rf4!? (it is interesting how often Stein uses the square f4 as a pivot for his pieces) 18 h3 (of course 18 Bxf4? exf4 is out of the question: the bishop is murderous on the long dark diagonal and gives Black a strategically won game) 18 ... Nf8 19 Qd2 Bd7 20 Ne2 Rf3 21 Ng1 Rf7 22 Rh2 Ba4 23 Rf2 Bxc2 24 Kxc2 Rf4? (Stein is a risk taker and wants to stay faithful to the spirit of the King's Indian, but this time he oversteps the limit – offering the exchange again is really more than Black's position can bear) 25 Bxf4 exf4 26 Qxf4 Qe8 27 Rd3 b5 28 c5 Ra4 29 e5 Bxe5 30 Re3 and a draw was agreed in V.Tukmakov-L.Stein, USSR Championship, Moscow 1969, though White is winning here; for example, 30 ... Qe7 (if 30 ... Nd7 31 Nf3 or 30 ... Ra8 31 Qe4 and Nf3 next move) 31 Ne2! Nd7 32 Nc3 and White will slowly consolidate.

8 ... c5 9 d5



Question: Where should Black put the f6-knight?

Answer: 9 ... Ne8

Stein retreats, clearing the way for the traditional King's Indian ... f7-f5 break. This looks

rather passive compared with ... Nh5-f4, but perhaps he felt that manoeuvre to be less effective with Black already committed to ... c7-c5 (in the previous note he played ... a7-a5, leaving options of ... Nc5).

H.Ree-F.Olafsson, Wijk aan Zee 1969, saw 9 ... Nbd7 10 Qd2 Nh5 11 0-0-0 a6 12 Kb1 b5 13 cxb5 Nf4 14 Nxf4 exf4 15 Bxf4 Ne5, when 16 Bxe5 Bxe5 17 f4 Bd4 18 Rhe1 would have given White a strong and centralized position. Instead, the game continued 16 bxa6? (this allows Black very easy play) 16 ... Nxd3 17 Qxd3 Bxa6 18 Qd2 Bc4 19 Bh6 Bxh6 20 Qxh6 Qa5 21 Kc2 and now, rather than 21 ... Qb4? 22 Ra1, Black should have played 21 ... Rfb8 with the idea that 22 Ra1?? runs into the amazing 22 ... Bd3+!! 23 Kxd3 Rxb2 and wins, since the white king is actually trapped on d3.

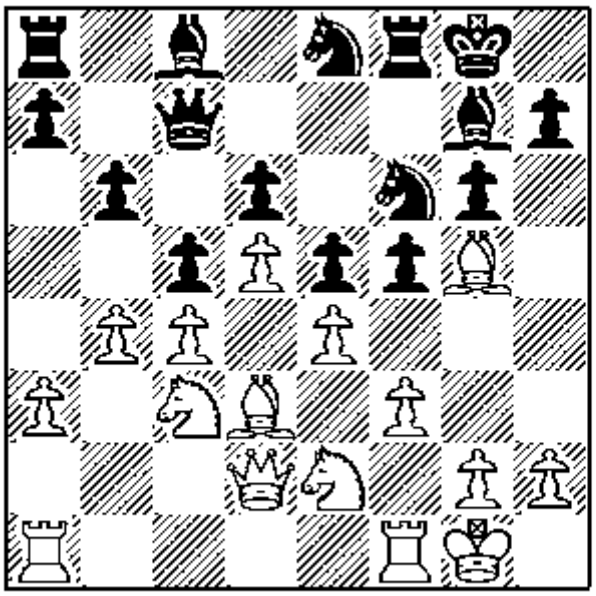
10 Qd2 f5 11 a3

White should throw in 11 exf5! gxf5, so that the e4-square will come under his control if Black plays ... f5-f4. Meanwhile White can castle short and generate play on the queenside with the standard a2-a3 and b2-b4.

11 ... Nd7

For the moment Stein is uninterested in 11 ... f4 12 Bf2 Nd7, since the white king has not yet committed itself. This is typical thinking from an attacking player, aiming to shape the overall plan according to the opponent's king placement. The disadvantage with holding back here is that White keeps the important option of e4xf5; this is the strategic risk Stein is taking.

12 b4 Ndf6 13 Bg5 Qc7 14 0-0



Exercise: Should Black play 14 ... f4 or 14 ... Nh5 - ?

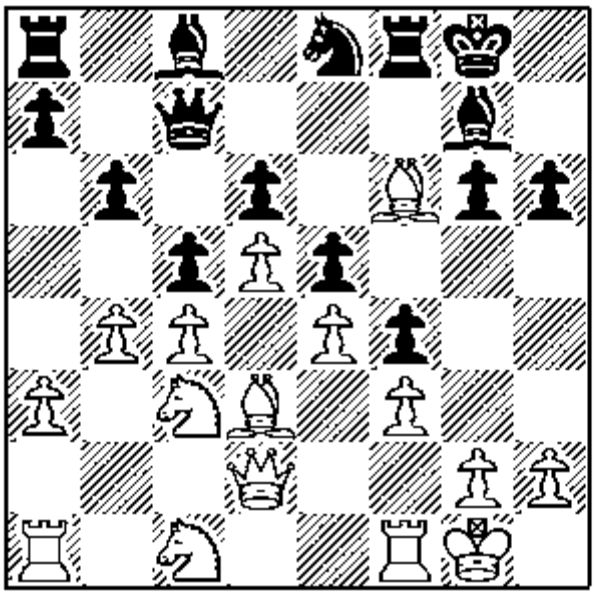
Answer: 14 ... f4!

Stein is happy to play this crucial move now that White has castled short. 14 ... Nh5 would be rather pointless, since the normal follow up ... Nf4 loses a pawn without any compensation.

15 Nc1 h6 16 Bxf6?!

Presumably White did not want to give Black free tempi with his g-pawn, but after 16 Bh4 g5 17 Bf2 (or 17 Be1) 17 ... g4 18 Kh1, the position is in a state of dynamic equilibrium. This is the logical continuation and the preferable course, whereas the text move risks losing

control of the dark squares. Black's g7-bishop is not as bad as it looks, and should be regarded as "lurking" behind the pawn chain in the same fashion as the c8-bishop in the French Defence. In other words, it may become dangerous in the future.



Question: How does Black recapture?

Answer: 16 ... Bxf6!

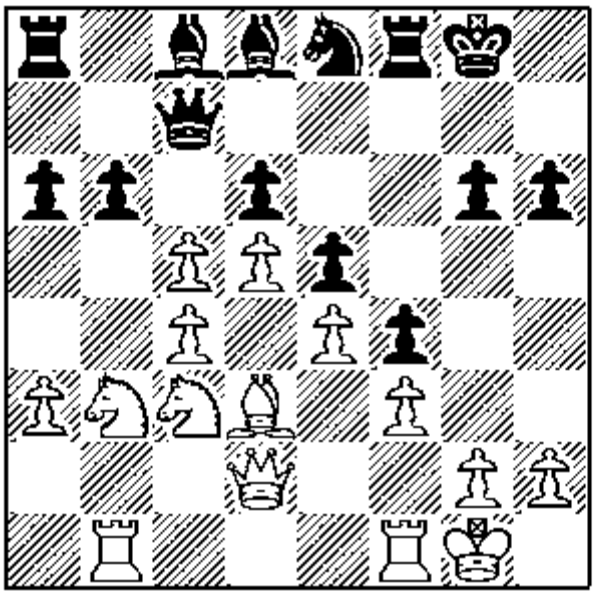
With this move Stein already begins the bishop's regrouping. I recommend that the reader follow the movements of this piece carefully for the rest of the game. The alternative was 16 ... Nxf6, when Black ignores the g7-bishop for the time being and focuses more on a traditional attacking set-up with ... g6-g5-g4, after preparations such as ... Rf7, ... Bf8, ... Rg7 and so forth.

17 Nb3 Bd8!

This is the main point of recapturing with the bishop, whose optimal placement is actually at d8 as will soon be clear. Here it not only controls the d8-h4 diagonal, it is also ready on the d8-a5 diagonal if and when White exchanges on c5.

18 Rab1 a6 19 bxc5

White probably has to play this sooner or later, in order to generate some play on the b-file and counter Black's attacking chances on the kingside.



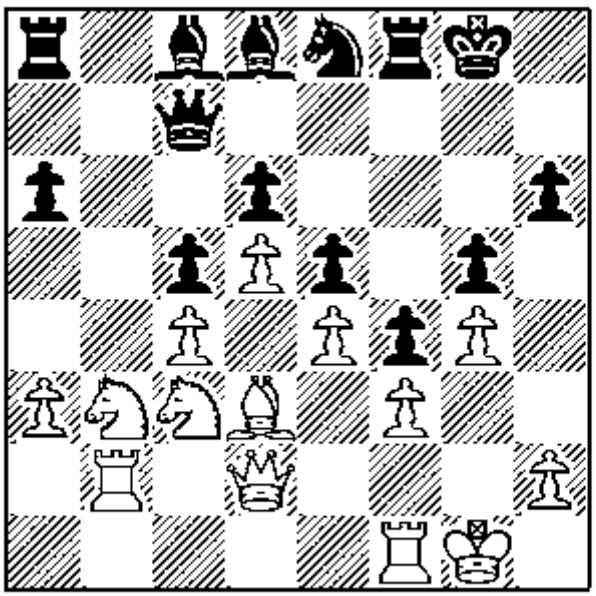
Question: How should Black recapture this time?

Answer: 19 ... bxc5!

The natural follow-up to his 17th move. Taking the other way makes the e8-knight happier, but then White can look to undermine the queenside with a3-a4-a5, even as a piece sacrifice; for example, 19 ... dxc5 20 a4 Nd6 21 a5!? (21 Qf2 is more circumspect) 21 ... b5 22 cxb5 c4 23 b6 Qf7 24 Nc5 cxd3 25 N3a4 with good compensation.

20 Rb2 g5 21 g4?

21 Rfb1 is more consistent, rather than weakening the kingside where Black already has the advantage.



Exercise: How does Black proceed here?

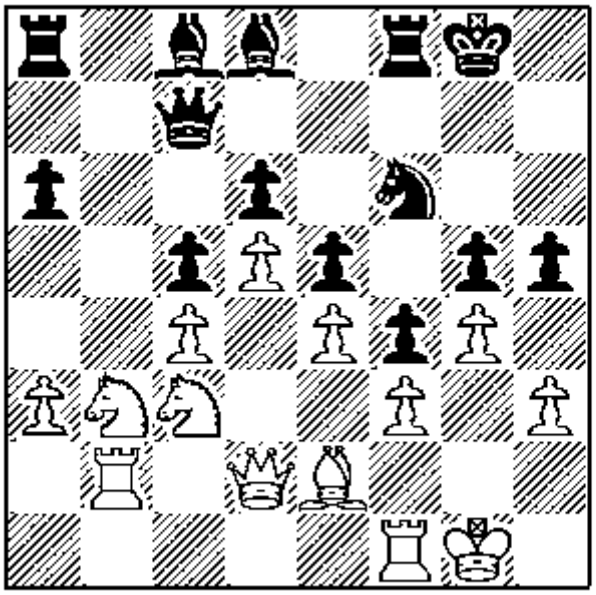
Answer: 21 ... h5

This is the most direct move, immediately attacking the g4-pawn; alternatively, Black

might play 21 ... Qh7 first. Challenging White on the b-file with 21 ... Rb8 looks sensible too, except that Stein has other plans for his queen's rook.

22 h3 Nf6 23 Be2

If the situation becomes too uncomfortable for the white king he can, as a last resource, try to flee to the other side of the board, but this costs a lot of time and allows the attacker to build up his position unhindered. At the moment the king trek does not succeed due to 23 Kf2 hxg4 24 hxg4 Bxg4! 25 fxg4 Nxg4+ 26 Ke1 Qh7! 27 Rg1 Qh3 (or 27 ... f3 28 Rxg4 f2+) 28 Bf1 Qh4+ 29 Kd1 f3 30 Kc2 Rb8 and so forth. Although White's king has managed to escape to the queenside, the price has been a total disorder of his army and Black indisputably has very good winning chances.



Exercise: How to increase the pressure?

Answer: 23 ... Ra7

Preparing to swing across to the kingside. The immediate 23 ... Qh7 looks more natural, with options of ... Kg7 and ... Rh8. One important point is that 24 Kf2?? now fails completely to 24 ... hxg4 25 hxg4 Qh4+ 26 Kg2 Qg3+ 27 Kh1 Kg7 and ... Rh8 or, more enjoyably, 27 ... Ra7 and ... Rh7.

24 Kg2?!

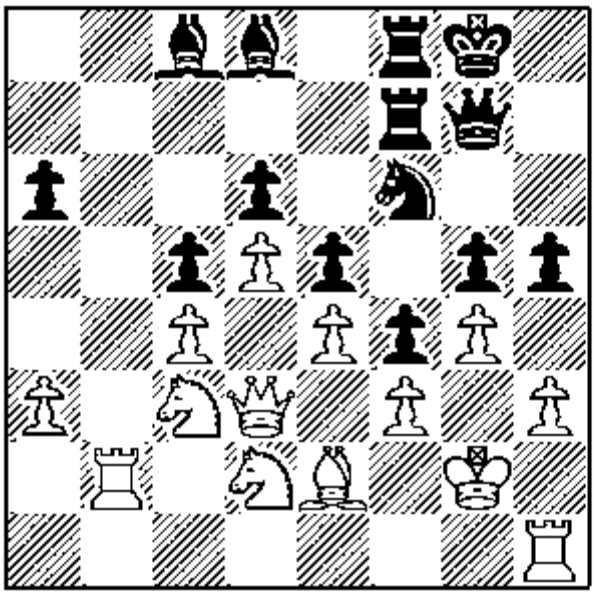
Having prevented the sacrifice at g4, White should have run with 24 Kf2, followed by Ke1-d1-c2, with a defensible, if slightly inferior position.

24 ... Qh7 25 Rh1 Raf7

A standard plan when possessing a space advantage in a semi-blocked position, as Black has here on the kingside, is to triple the major pieces on the critical file, seeing that the opponent cannot do likewise. In this instance Black might place the queen behind the rooks on the h-file with 25 ... Qh8, followed by ... Rh7-h6 and ... Rf7-h7, but White's defensive measures seem sufficient at the moment: 26 Rbb1 Rh7 27 Rbg1 Rff7 and now after 28 Nd1! Rh6 29 Nf2 Rfh7 30 Qc3 hxg4 31 fxg4!, there is no clear way for Black to break through (but not 31 hxg4?? Rh2+ 32 Rxh2 Rxh2+ 33 Kf1 Qh4 and Black wins; e.g. 34 Qe1 Bxg4! 35 fxg4 Nxe4 36 Nxe4 Qh3+ and mates). So Stein puts off utilizing the h-file and seeks to test White's

defences in other ways.

26 Qd3 Qg7 27 Nd2



Exercise: How does Black continue?

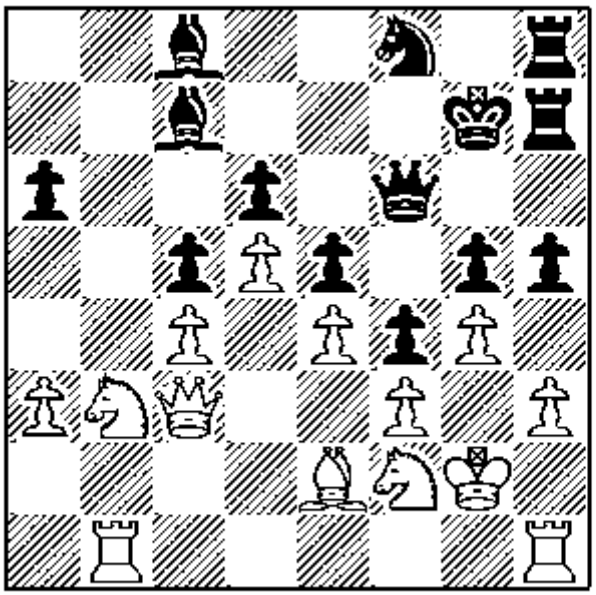
Answer: 27 ... Ba5!

The dark-squared bishop finally finds some targets for its arrows. The tactical point is that 28 Nb3 fails to 28 ... Bxc3 29 Qxc3 hxg4 30 hxg4 Bxg4! 31 fxg4 Nxe4 32 Qd3 Ng3 with the twin threats of ... Nxh1 and ... Nxe2, followed by ... f4-f3+, winning.

28 Rb8 Nd7 29 Rbb1 Qf6 30 Nd1 Rh7 31 Nf2 Kg7 32 Bd1 Rfh8 33 Be2 Nf8 34 Nb3 Bc7

So the bishop's activity was only temporary. White's position is indeed not easy to crack.

35 Qc3



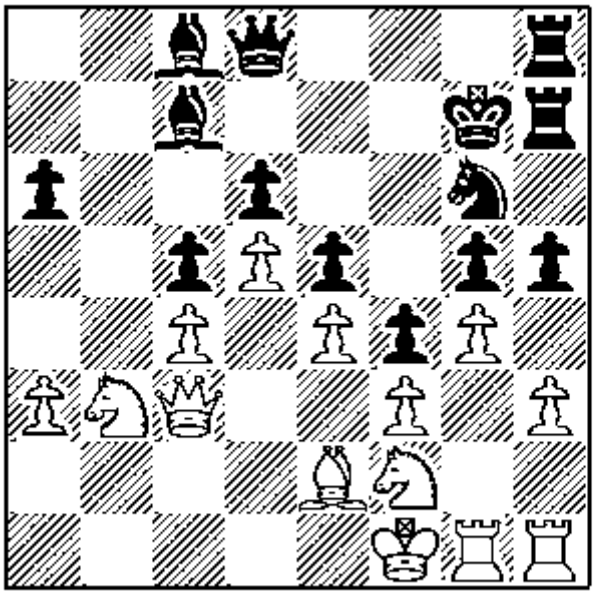
Question: White intends Na5 with some activity

on the queenside. How can Black counter this mini-plan?

Answer: 35 ... Qd8! 36 Rbg1?!

Taking the first steps towards a king trek, which was now totally the wrong plan. White had already manoeuvred his pieces for maximum defensive potential, and he will find it far more difficult to meet an organized attack on the queenside.

36 ... Ng6 37 Kf1?!



Exercise: How can Black seek to exploit the disharmony in White's position?

Answer: 37 ... a5! 38 Nc1?

White cannot afford to surrender more terrain on the queenside. 38 a4! was necessary as a last resort, with the idea of 38 ... Bd7 39 Bd1! and if 39 ... Bxa4 then 40 Nxc5! Bd7 (forced) 41 Nxd7 Qxd7 42 c5! dxc5 43 Qc4 Rb8 44 Nd3, followed by Ba4, effecting a strong blockade. However, Black can also threaten the a-pawn with the queen: 38 ... Qe8 39 Nxa5 (or 39 Bd1 Qxa4 40 Nxc5 Qa2) 39 ... Qxa4 40 Nc6 Bd7, when White's task is obviously more difficult.

38 ... Bd7

Now a3-a4 is prevented and Black can follow with ... a5-a4, or indeed play 38 ... a4 first which comes to the same thing.

39 Bd1 a4 40 Ke2

In a bad position there are only bad moves.

40 ... Ba5

The bishop returns to the fray. It is interesting to compare its placement now with its position after White exchanged on f6. Now the bishop is not bad or double-edged, it is simply good, due to the fact that it is impossible for the enemy pieces to challenge its control of the important a5-e1 diagonal.

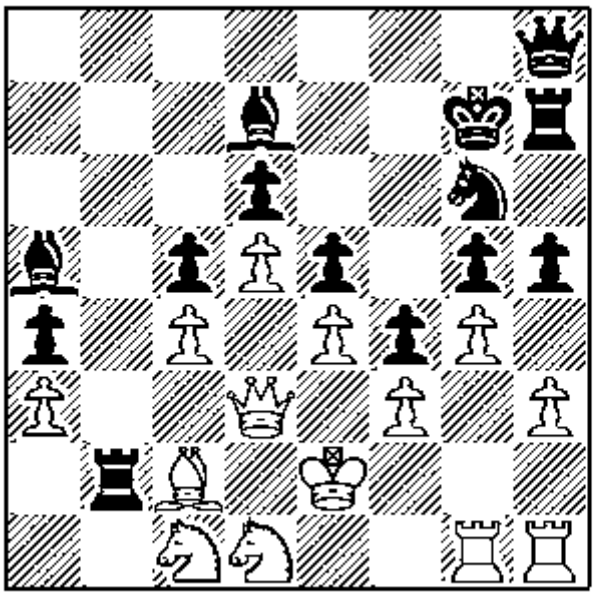
41 Qb2 Qa8 42 Qc2 Rb8 43 Qd3

White's idea is to "lure" the rook to b2 in order to threaten it at some future moment. If he seeks to maximize control of that square with 43 Nfd3, then Black makes inroads with 43 ... Qb7 and ... Qb1. Actually, the latter plan is very strong in any case, but Stein prefers a

"whole board" strategy and soon induces a mistake.

43 ... Rb2+ 44 Bc2 Qh8 45 Nd1?

Either 45 Kf1 or 45 Kd1 offers tougher resistance.



Exercise (combination alert): How does Black decide the game?

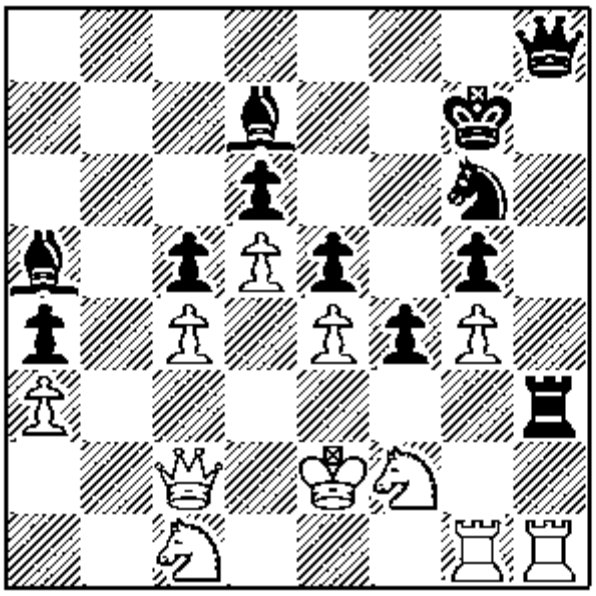
Answer: 45 ... Rxc2+!

Another, more dramatic win is 45 ... hxg4! 46 Nxb2 Rxh3 47 Rxh3 Qxh3 and there is no way for White to meet the menacing kingside threats, since his three minor pieces are completely out of play and may just as well be removed from the board.

46 Qxc2 hxg4 47 fxg4

Even offering the knight with 47 Nf2 g3 48 Ncd3 does not solve White's problems, as he can do nothing while Black prepares a decisive breakthrough; for example, 48 ... Nh4! 49 Qb2 (or 49 Nd1 Nxf3! at once) 49 ... Kg6 50 Qb1 (or 50 Qc2 Nxf3! 51 Kxh3 Rxh3! 52 Nxh3 Bg4+! 53 Kg2 f3+ etc) 50 ... Rf7! 51 Qb2 g2 52 Rh2 Qh5 53 Ng4 Nxf3! and so on. It is worth studying this position with the computer to see how many attacking resources Black has available.

47 ... Rxh3 48 Nf2



Exercise: How to continue?

Answer: 48 ... Re3+

The explosive 48 ... Bxg4+ wins as well, but Stein's choice is the cleanest, trusting that his superior placed forces will ensure the victory.

49 Kd1

Going the other way with 49 Kf1 fails to 49 ... Re1+ 50 Kg2 Nh4+ 51 Rxh4 Qxh4 52 Rxe1 Qg3+ 53 Kh1 (or 53 Kf1 f3 54 Nfd3 Bxg4 and ... Bh3+ is fatal) 53 ... Bxe1 54 Ncd3 Bxf2 55 Nxf2 Qxa3 and the a-pawn will decide the game.

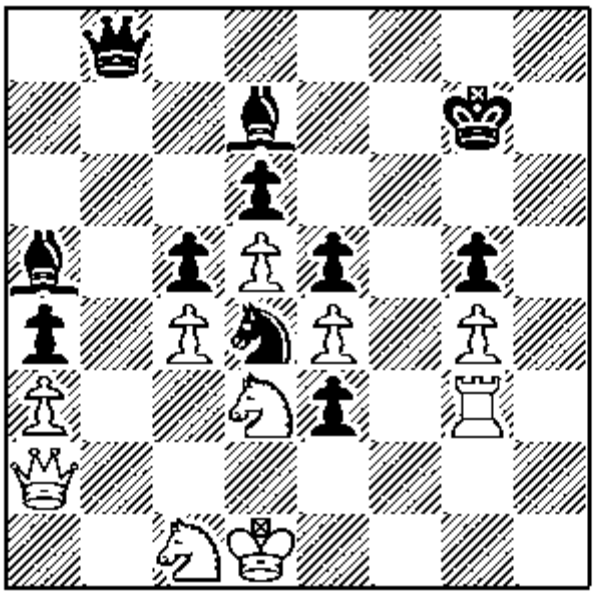
49 ... Qb8 50 Rh3

White tries the most primitive of defensive plans, that of exchanging the attacker's active pieces, but to no avail.

50 ... Nh4 51 Rxe3 fxe3 52 Nfd3 Nf3 53 Rg3 Nd4

Who would believe that this knight would reach such a beautiful square considering its position at move nine?

54 Qa2



Exercise: How does Stein end the game?

Answer: 54 ... Bd2! 0-1

A brilliant concluding move, cutting off the enemy queen from the other side of the board. 54 ... Qh8 is less precise, as 55 Qg2 allows White to hold out a little bit longer, whereas now there is no defence to the threats of ... Qh8 or ... Qf8, or even ... Qc8 and ... Bxg4+.

An impressive game from Stein's perspective, even if his opponent did not play very well. Most remarkable was Black's ingenious manoeuvres with the dark-squared bishop. Stein knew exactly how to activate this piece after the exchange on f6, and it even finished things off with a decisive interference on d2. After studying this game one will never be too afraid of locking a bishop behind a pawn chain because, as we have just seen, even blocked positions contain a lot of dynamism.

Chapter Five
The Final Years

After coming third in the 1970 USSR Championship in Riga (won by Korchnoi), Stein's next tournament was in Tallinn where he finished fourth behind Keres, Tal and Bronstein, scoring 10/15 with seven wins, two losses and six draws. The following game was played in the sixth round.

Dr. Anthony Saidy (1937-) gained the IM title in 1969 when he tied for second place at the grandmaster tournament in Venice. He is probably most well-known for his book, The Battle of Chess Ideas, which actually is a "sequel" to the famous books by Réti, Modern Ideas in Chess (1923) and Masters of the Chess Board (1933).

Game 52
A.Saidy-L.Stein
Tallinn 1971
King's Indian Defence

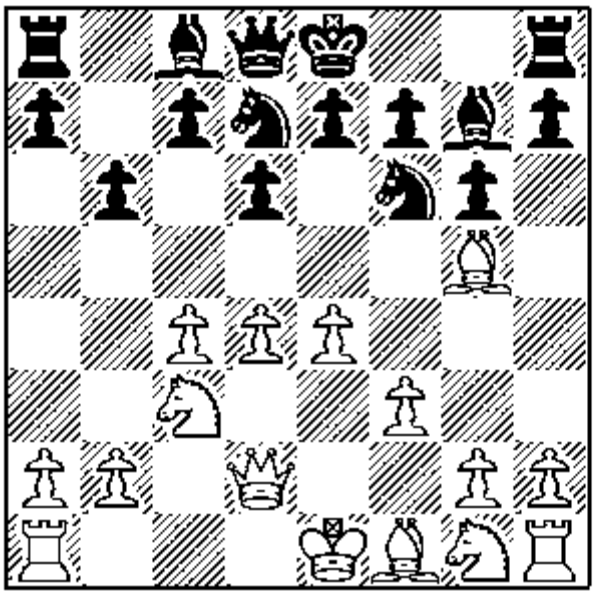
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 b6!?

Stein decides he can do without castling for the time being and plays his favourite move straight away, keeping his options open for other possibilities. In the aforementioned book by Saidy, "The Hypermodern Revolt" was represented by Nimzowitsch, Réti, Alekhine, and the Ukrainian émigré Efim Bogoljubow (1889-1952). According to them every position should be treated as an individual creative challenge. Stein's last move is certainly in accordance with this notion.

6 Bg5

Instead, H.Ree-L.Stein, Amsterdam 1969, saw 6 Bd3 e5 (not 6 ... c5?? since 7 e5! and Be4 wins the rook in the corner; while 6 ... Bb7 7 Nge2 c5 8 d5 Nbd7 9 b3 a6 10 a4 0-0 11 Bg5 gave White an edge due to his space advantage in F.Gheorghiu-D.Root, Lone Pine 1980) 7 d5 Nh5 8 Nge2 0-0 9 Be3 Nd7 10 Qd2 a5, which we examined (by transposition) in the notes to the previous game.

6 ... Nbd7 7 Qd2



Question: How should Black attack the d4-pawn?

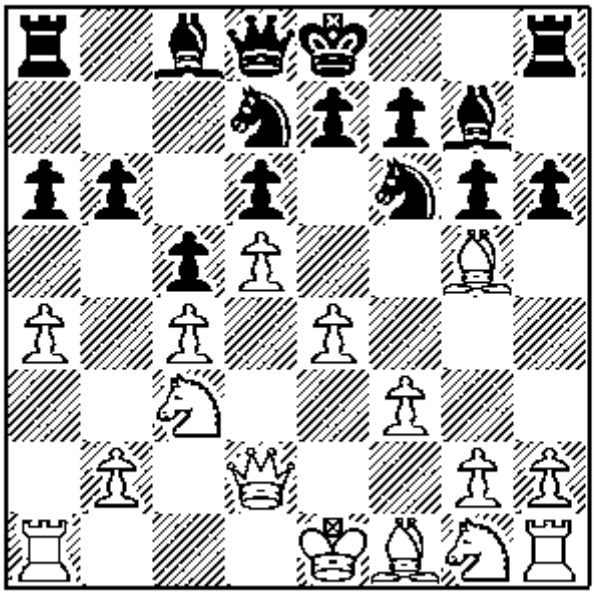
Answer: 7 ... c5!

The correct continuation, leaving the long diagonal open for the g7-bishop in the spirit of the Benoni. The alternative thrust 7 ... e5?! is less accurate here; A.Yusupov-Hi.Karner, USSR 1981, continued 8 Nge2 (Yusupov later gave 8 d5 as better) 8 ... a5 9 d5 Nc5 10 0-0-0 Bd7 11 h4 h6 12 Be3 h5 13 Bg5 with a slight advantage to White, who went on to win in 39 moves.

8 d5 a6 9 a4?!

White wants to prevent ... b6-b5 once and for all, but 9 Nh3 looks more to the point, intending 10 Nf2 with a more harmonious development than in the game. Exchanging the dark-squared bishops after 9 Bh6 also deserves serious attention.

9 ... h6



Question: What are the pros and cons of Black's last move?

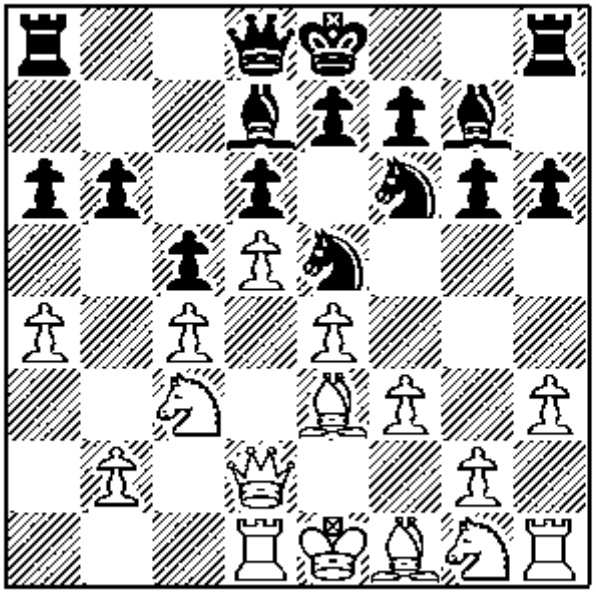
Answer: On the positive side, it secures the g7-bishop from exchange by Bh6. The downside is that, as long as White maintains control of the c1-h6 diagonal, Black will be unable to castle for some time. Note that the artificial ... Kf8-g8-h7 is too slow in this type of position.

10 Be3 Ne5

After this centralization the g1-knight is unable to go to move (unless White supports the c4-pawn with b2-b3 first, weakening the long diagonal). This is according to the fundamental law of chess of restricting the mobility of the enemy pieces.

11 Rd1 Bd7 12 h3?!

The natural continuation nonetheless is 12 b3, followed by Nge2.



Exercise: What is the best way to meet White's threat of f3-f4, trapping the e5-knight?

12 ... g5?!

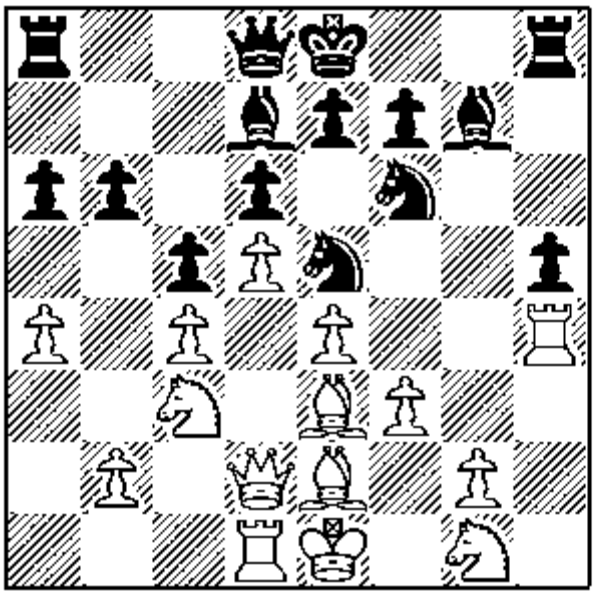
This looks like the logical move, but it is not the strongest.

Answer: The most accurate course is actually 12 ... Nh5!, followed by ... g6-g5. The tactical point is that 13 f4? is met by 13 ... Ng3 14 fxe5 (not 14 Rh2? Nxf1 15 Kxf1 Nxc4 and wins) 14 ... Nxh1 15 Bf4 dxe5 16 Bh2 f5 and Black's position is preferable.

13 h4

The most challenging response, even if it renders white king's future uncertain. Otherwise either 13 Bd3, followed by Nge2, or 13 f4 gxf4 14 Bxf4 would maintain equality.

13 ... gxh4 14 Rxh4 h5 15 Be2



Exercise: Should Black go for development or manoeuvring?

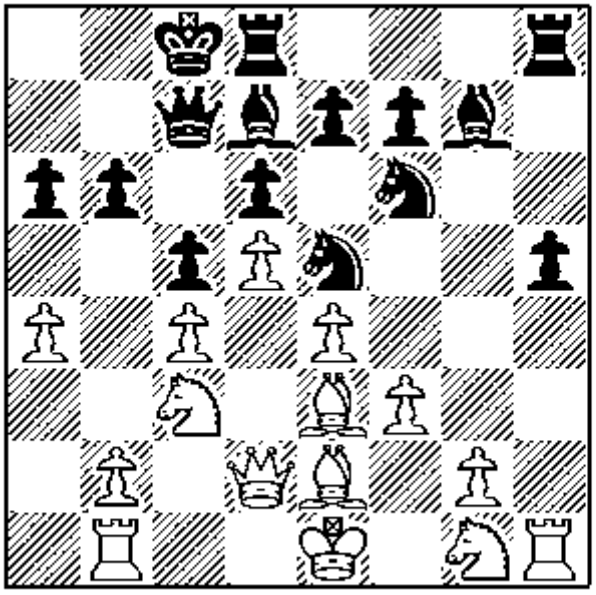
Answer: 15 ... Qc7

Stein plays for development and prepares castling on the queenside. There is nothing wrong with this, but according to Steinitz's principles in closed positions, Black should aim to manoeuvre his pieces and put them on the right squares. One appealing idea is to aim for a grip on the kingside with 15 ... Ng6 and ... h5-h4, and then exploit the weak g3-square by ... Nh5-g3. This last variation would most probably be Steinitz's choice, as he was very keen on playing against weak squares.

16 Rh1

Here 16 g3 would prevent any future ideas of ... h5-h4. This shadowboxing, with Saidy declining to play g2-g3 and Stein declining to play ... h5-h4, continues for some time.

16 ... 0-0-0 17 Rb1



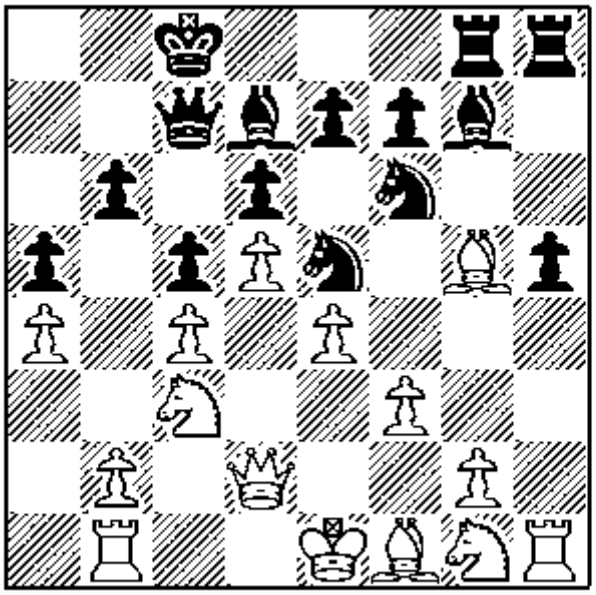
Exercise: How does Black react to White's plan of b2-b4?

Answer: 17 ... a5!

This important move prevents White's counterplay on the queenside (or should do – see the penultimate note). Instead, 17 ... h4? 18 b4 Nh5 would be a definite mistake here on account of 19 f4! (even 19 Rxh4 Bf6 20 Rxh5! Rxh5 21 a5 cxb4 22 Bxb6 looks quite dangerous; the initiative is the most important factor in this kind of position) 19 ... Ng4 20 Bxg4 Bxg4 21 Rxh4 Bd7 22 a5! with a strong attack; for example, 22 ... cxb4 23 Rxb4 bxa5 24 Rb1 Ng3 25 Rxh8 Rxh8 26 Qd3 and White has a clear advantage.

18 Bg5 Rdg8 19 Bf1

It is strange to develop the bishop to e2 and then to move it back to f1, even if the relatively closed nature of the position means that time is not of the highest priority. Presumably White was concerned about pressure down the g-file, apart from just seeking to develop his g1-knight, or he might have played 19 Nh3, followed by Nf2. He probably did not like the look of 19 f4 Ng6 20 Nf3 Ng4, when a black knight establishes itself on a strong outpost.



Exercise (planning): Suggest a plan for Black.

Answer: 19 ... Qd8!

The queen was not doing anything at c7, so Stein switches it to f8, where it supports the exchange of bishops with ... Bh6. If this scheme is successful it will be easier for Black to occupy the weak dark squares in the white position.

20 b3

Question: What would you expect Black to play next?

Answer: 20 ... Ng6

Interestingly, Stein does not continue with 20 ... Qf8 at once. Perhaps he was influenced by Petrosian's psychological technique of not playing the move the opponent anticipates. With the text he increases Black's possibilities; in particular, White must now think about ... h5-h4

again – and should hurry to prevent it with 21 g3, which also gives him the option of Bh3.

21 Nce2? Qf8?!

It was better to play 21 ... h4! first, ruling out the knight manoeuvre in the next note. This idea is actually more important than preparing ... Bh6.

22 Be3?!

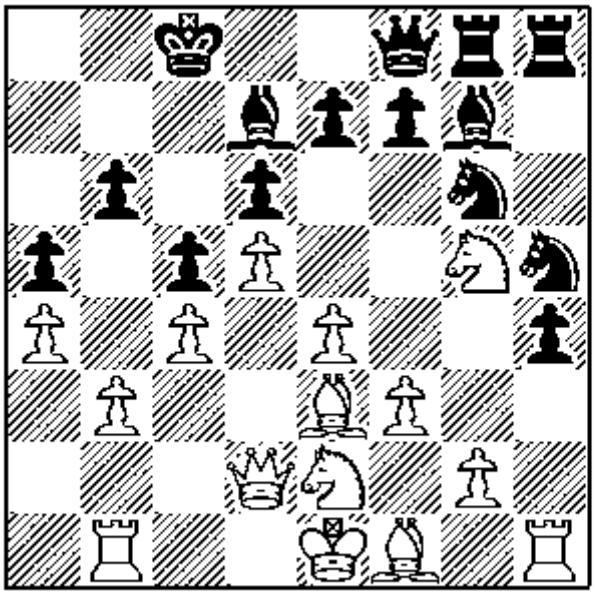
White prepares to meet 22 ... Bh6 with 23 Nf4, when the consequent exchange of bishops will also reduce Black's firepower. However, 22 Ng3 was a more logical route to the same aim, as 22 ... Bh6 23 Bxh6 Rxh6 24 Nf5 Bxf5 25 exf5 Ne5 leaves Black only slightly better.

22 ... h4!

See the comment to Black's 21st move.

23 Nh3 Nh5 24 Ng5

White finds another way to obstruct the trade of dark-squared bishops, but this one has a serious drawback.



Exercise: How can Black solve the problem with his queen?

Answer: 24 ... Bf6!

An excellent move, evacuating the g7-square for the queen with pressure both down the long dark diagonal and against the vulnerable g5-knight.

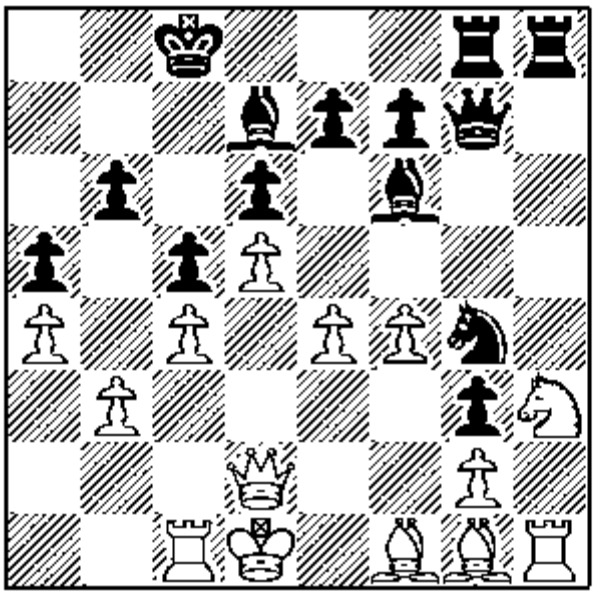
25 Rc1?! Qg7 26 Kd1

White tries the long king trek (it is not clear what his last move was for), hoping to escape to a2 where it would be relatively safe.

26 ... Ne5 27 Nh3 Ng3 28 Nxg3 hxg3

Now the threat is to capture on h3 and follow with ... g3-g2, so White has to react quickly.

29 f4 Ng4 30 Bg1



Exercise: How does Black proceed?

Answer: 30 ... Bb2!

This intermediary move avoids any difficulties with 30 ... Bd4 31 Kc2.

31 Rc2

Now Black finally achieves his desired exchange; but 31 Rb1 was no better, as 31 ... Bc3 32 Qd3 Bb4 then establishes the bishop on another powerful square.

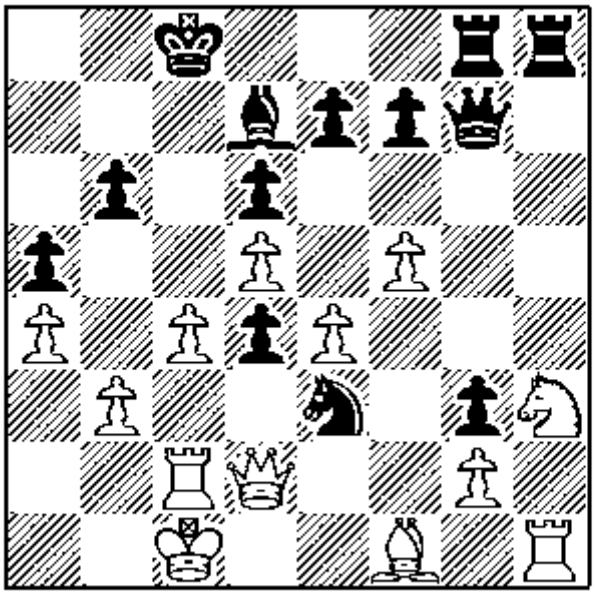
31 ... Bd4 32 Bxd4 cxd4

The simple 32 ... Qxd4 33 Qxd4 cxd4 and 34 ... Ne3, also leads to a winning position.

33 Kc1 Ne3

The threats of ... Nxc2 and ... Bxh3, followed by ... g3-g2, decides the game. White elects to prevent the second of these by closing the d7-h3 diagonal.

34 f5



Exercise: What should Black play now?

34 ... Rxh3?

A miscalculation which might have complicated his victory.

Answer: Black should just take the rook, or else insert 34 ... Rh4! 35 Bd3 e6, which improves his position even further.

35 gxh3?

Both players missed 35 Rxh3! Nxf1 36 Qd3, when 36 ... Ne3? is met by 37 c5! dxc5 38 Qa6+ Kc7 39 Qa7+ Kd6 (not 39 ... Kd8?? 40 Qxb6+ Ke8 41 Qb8+ etc) 40 Qxb6+ Ke5 41 Qc7+ Kxe4 42 Rh4+ Kxf5 43 Qxd7+ Kf6 34 Re4 and Black may even stand worse. He would have to find 36 ... Qg5+! (an important zwischenzug) 37 Kb2 Ne3 38 c5! dxc5 39 Qa6+ Kc7 40 Qa7+ Kd6 41 Qxb6+ Ke5 42 Rxc5 (not 42 Qc7+? Kxe4 as White no longer has the crucial rook check) 42 ... Nxg2 43 d6+ Kf4, when he may still be winning, but obviously this is far more messy.

35 ... Nxc2 36 c5

Desperation, seeing that Black wins easily after 36 Kxc2 g2 or 36 Qxc2 d3! 37 Bxd3 g2 38 Rg1 Qa1+ 39 Qb1 Qd4 40 Kd2 Rg3.

36 ... g2 37 Ba6+ Kb8 38 Rg1 Nb4 39 c6 0-1

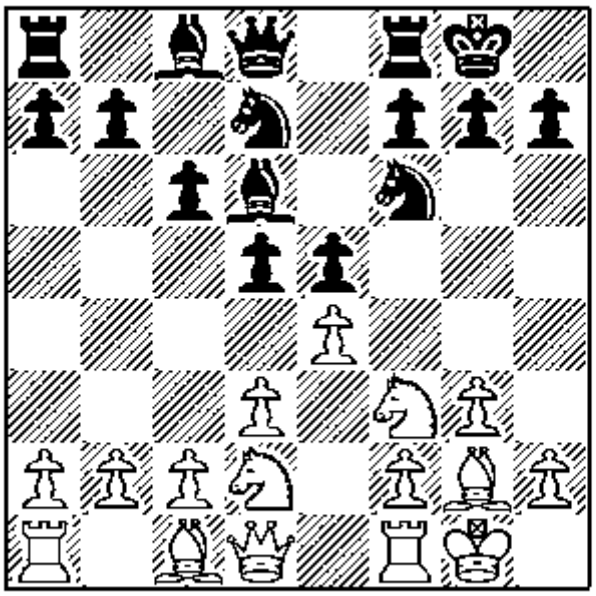
In the eleventh round Stein faced the Hungarian grandmaster Gedeon Barcza (1911-86), who was his country's champion on eight occasions and a very experienced GM, holding the title since 1954. Watch how Stein, with apparently simple and innocent moves, dismantles him.

Game 53
L.Stein-G.Barcza
Tallinn 1971
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d3 e5 3 g3

Barcza's other recorded games from this position all saw the critical 3 Nf3, which practically forces ... d7-d6 sooner or later. The text allows Black to be more active in the centre, but as we already know, Stein is more than happy with a King's Indian Attack formation.

3 ... d5 4 Nd2 Nf6 5 Ngf3 Nbd7 6 Bg2 Bd6 7 0-0 0-0



Question: Suggest a continuation for White!

Answer: 8 exd5

This unexpected move signals Stein's desire to win this game. The main motivation to release the tension in the centre at once is to make the position more complicated and not give Barcza the option of a symmetrical position by taking on e4 himself at an appropriate moment. Instead, 8 Re1 is the normal move to reach the tabiya position for this system.

8 ... cxd5

This is the logical recapture, even though Black's knight is not at b8 anymore and so cannot be easily developed to c6. Apart from maintaining the classical centre, the main purpose is to control the knight at d2 and make it less valuable. 8 ... Nxd5!? would give White the initiative after 9 Nc4, based on the slight instability of Black's d6-bishop and e5-pawn.

9 Re1

The natural follow-up is 9 c4, trying to create room in the centre for the d2-knight, but Stein prefers to go his own way.

9 ... Re8 10 Nf1

This knight manoeuvre is reminiscent of the Closed Ruy Lopez where White also wants to play Bg5, followed by Ne3, putting pressure on d5.

10 ... h6

It is a good idea to limit the action of the bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal. It does not possess any good square when the g5-square is not available. This is accordance with the most important law of chess, as explained in the excellent book Find the Right Plan with Anatoly Karpov (co-authored with Anatoly Matsukevich).

11 Bd2 a5

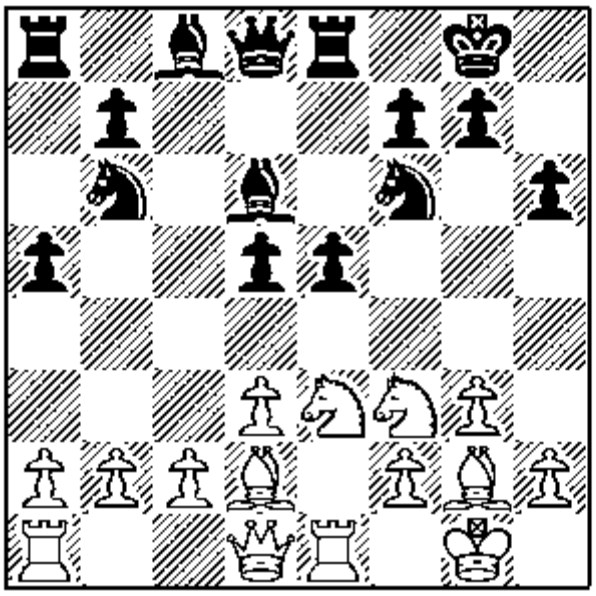
Black hopes to induce some weaknesses in the white queenside, but Stein is not so easily provoked and continues with his calm development.

12 Ne3

An excellent square, eying the d5-pawn and f5-square.

12 ... Nb6

The critical line is 12 ... Bc5! 13 Nh4 e4 14 Nhf5 Nb6 15 dxe4 (after 15 d4 Bf8, Black's e4-pawn is a strong asset) 15 ... Nxe4 16 Bxe4 Rxe4 17 Bc3 Na4! 18 Qd3 Nxc3 19 Qxc3 Qf8, when Black has a favourable position, as the bishop pair is more significant than the isolated d-pawn.



Exercise: How may White proceed?

Answer: 13 Re2!?

An extraordinary cool move; one gets the impression that White is under the influence of Tigran Petrosian, who used to play provocative waiting chess in this manner. Here Stein refrains from the more active 13 d4 e4 14 Ne5, after which 14 ... Bxe5 15 dxe5 Rxe5 16 Bc3 offers White good play for the pawn.

13 ... d4

Black seizes more space, forcing the white knight back.

14 Nf1 Nbd5

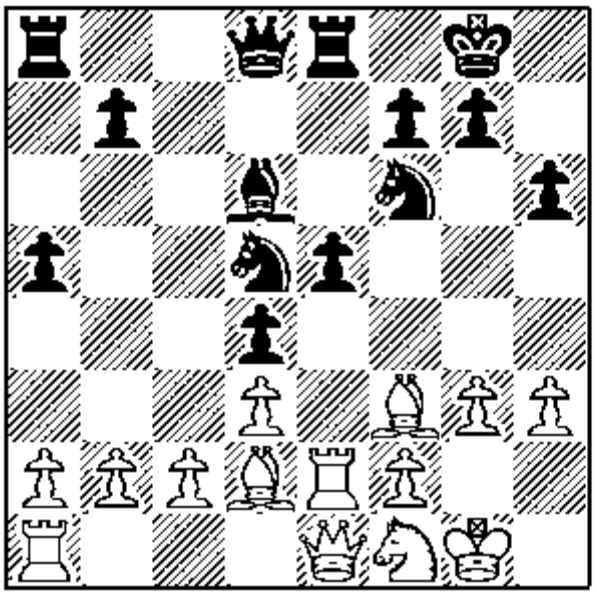
The natural development 14 ... Bf5 seems better, when 15 Qe1 is pointless after 15 ... Nbd7, so White might continue his arcane manoeuvres with 15 Be1!?, planning c2-c3 or N1d2 again.

15 Qe1 Bg4

The pressure on e5 is the main theme in this system. Black chooses to meet it by pinning the f3-knight at the cost of surrendering the bishop pair. Instead, 15 ... Qc7 allows 16 Nxd4, as the e-pawn is now pinned; but 15 ... Re7 is a more subtle defence, when 16 Nxe5? loses material after 16 ... Qe8 17 f4 Bg4.

16 h3 Bxf3 17 Bxf3

The pressure on the e-pawn has been relieved but so too has White's cramped position, who can now extend his strategy to the light squares.



17 ... Qc8 18 c4 dxc3

Black is not obliged to capture; 18 ... Ne7, followed by ... Nc6. is just as good and more forcing.

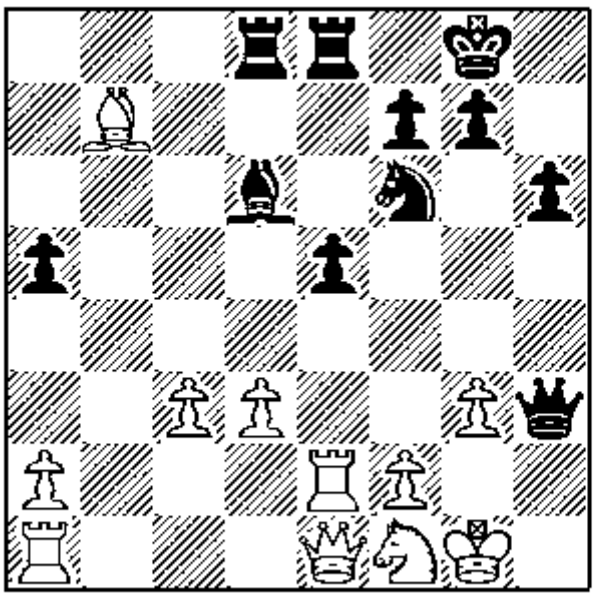
19 Bxc3

Not 19 bxc3? Qxh3 and White loses a pawn for nothing, since 20 c4 runs into the blitz attack 20 ... Nf4! 21 Re3 Ng4!, creating severe problems on the kingside.

19 ... Nxc3

After 19 ... Qxh3 20 Bxe5 Bxe5 21 Rxe5 Rxe5 22 Qxe5 Re8 23 Qd4 Qf5 24 Kg2 Nb4 25 Ne3! Qxd3 26 Rd1, White has sufficient play for the pawn.

20 bxc3 Qxh3 21 Bxb7 Rad8



Question: What are the best locations for the white rooks?

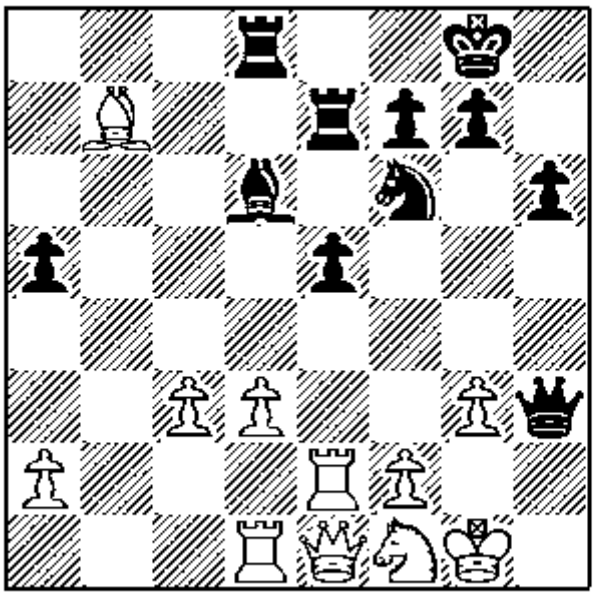
Answer: This is extremely difficult to answer. Clearly one should go to the d-file and the other to the b-file, but the question as to whether b1 and d2 is better than d1 and b2, or vice versa, seems almost of a philosophical nature. Let us see

how Stein solved this intricate problem.

22 Rd1

22 Rb1 Qf5 23 Rd2 is the other option.

22 ... Re7



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

23 Bg2

The bishop surely belongs on this safe square, but there is another option which is not so easy to spot for humans who normally want to preserve the so-called King's Indian bishop, many players' favourite piece.

Answer: If you "kill your darlings" in this specific position, you will probably find the objectively strongest move 23 d4! intending 23 ... exd4 (or 23 ... Rxb7 24 dxe5 and Black has to fight for equality) 24 Rxe7 Bxe7 25 Qxe7 Rd7 26 Bc8 Qxf1+ 27 Kxf1 Rxe7 28 cxd4, when White has a passed pawn combined with rook and bishop vs. rook and knight.

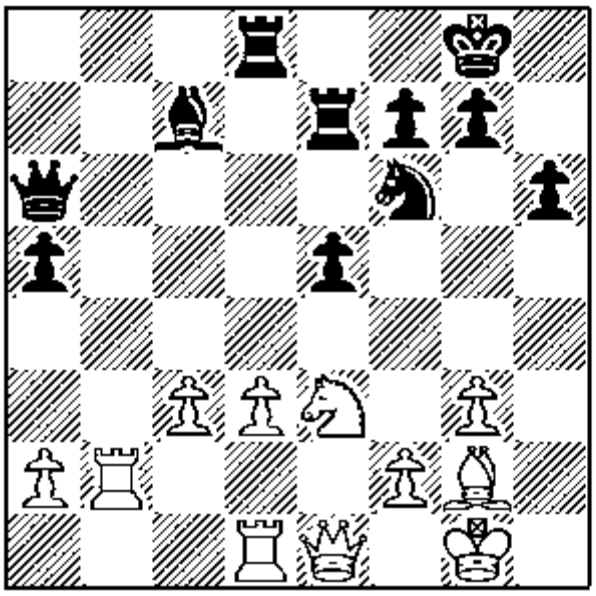
23 ... Qc8 24 Ne3 Bc7

Keeping guard of the e5- and a5-pawns; but occupying the classical a7-g1 diagonal with 24 ... Bc5 is a more active option, as 25 Nc4 can be met by 25 ... e4! 26 Bxe4 Nxe4 27 Rxe4 Bxf2+! 28 Kxf2 Qf5+ 29 Kg2 (or 29 Ke3 Qg5+) 29 ... Rxe4 30 dxe4 Rxd1 31 Qxd1 Qxe4+ and 32 ... Qxc4 with a draw.

25 Rb2

A white rook finally reaches the b-file, also preventing Black from switching his bishop to the other diagonal with ... Bb6. (Actually, 25 ... Bb8, followed by 26 ... Ba7, is still his most precise continuation.) Again, 25 Nc4 would be answered by 25 ... e4.

25 ... Qa6



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Answer: 26 Nc4?!

Stein should have opted for 26 c4!, creating outposts on b5 and d5, and if 26 ... Bb6 then 27 Rdb1 forces the unstable black bishop to declare its intentions, not an easy decision. Note that 27 ... Ba7? would lose material after 28 Bb7!.

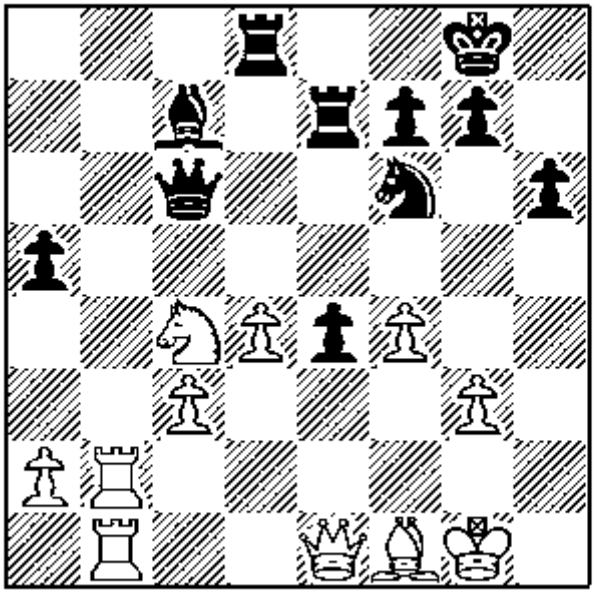
26 ... e4! 27 Bf1 Qc6 28 Rdb1 Nh7?!

Threatening ... Ng5, which White must prevent at all cost, but 28 ... Ng4! would give him more trouble, with ideas like ... Qg6 and ... e4-e3 at the right moment.

29 f4!

Exploiting the fact that Black's king's rook is undefended. Now 29 ... Qg6 30 Rg2! Nf6 would lead to an equal and complicated game; instead, play continued:

29 ... Nf6 30 d4!



At long last this long-awaited move appears on the board.

30 ... Nd5 31 Ne3

Following Nimzowitsch's famous formula which says that criminals must be blockaded! 30 ... Ng4 would have met with the same reply.

31 ... Qg6

Exchanging knights with 31 ... Nxe3 32 Qxe3 leads to a tiny advantage to White due to his active rooks and mobile centre pawns; on the other hand, Black's king more secure.

32 Rg2

Using the second rank as a springboard for the rooks is reminiscent of Petrosian's chess.

32 ... h5?

Barcza begins to go astray and moves the wrong rook's pawn. It is too optimistic to hope for success with the ... h5-h4 break. Black should be content with 32 ... a4, increasing the scope of his bishop a little.

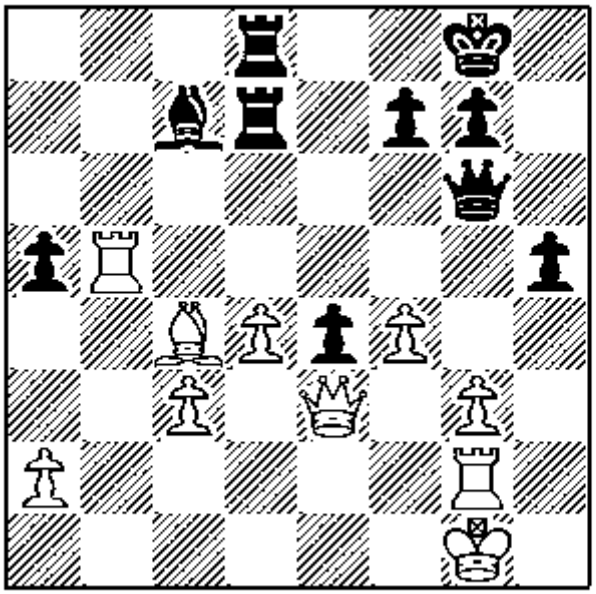
33 Rb5 Red7?

The safest course is 33 ... Nxe3 34 Qxe3 Qh6, followed by ... g7-g6 and ... f7-f5. Now Black is completely wrong-footed and his position quickly deteriorates.

34 Bc4 Nxe3

34 ... Nb6 35 Rg5 Qf6 36 Bb5 pinpoints the deficiencies of 32 ... h5?. Most of Black's pieces are on the wrong squares.

35 Qxe3



35 ... Bb6?!

This looks like the sort of move one makes in serious time trouble. As we will see, there is not even a threat. But 35 ... Rb8 36 Rg5 Qc6 37 Rc5 Qg6 38 Bb5 Re7 39 Rg5 Qh6 40 Rh2 g6 41 Rhxh5 Qxh5 42 Rxh5 gxh5 43 Qe2 e3 44 Bd3 illustrates the hopeless state of Black's position. Rooks and a dark-squared bishop are the most clumsy defenders he can have at his disposal here.

36 Rh2 Rxd4 37 Rxb6

White wins a piece and the rest is easy. Stein was never going to fall for 37 cxd4?? Bxd4, even with his flag hanging.

37 ... Qxb6 38 cxd4 Qxd4 39 Qxd4 Rxd4 40 Rc2 g6 41 Kf2 Rd1 42 Bb3 Rd7 43 Ke3 Rd3+ 44 Kxe4 Rxg3 45 Rc7 h4 46 Bxf7+ Kh8 47 Ke5 1-0

A well-conducted positional game by Stein, proving he was quite capable of playing chess

in the style of Petrosian.

The international tournament in Vrnjacka Banja 1971 was won by Rafael Vaganian. Stein came third on 9½/15 with five wins, one loss and nine draws.

The Serbian grandmaster Dragutin Sahovic (1941-2005) was a professional chess player who won nearly 100 tournaments in his career. He is most famous for his ingenious co-invention, with Aleksandar Matanovic, of the systematization of all openings by ECO codes, from A00-E99. Many chess players think more about these specific codes than about the names of the openings, especially the so-called Informator generation.

Game 54
L.Stein-D.Sahovic
Vrnjacka Banja 1971
King's Indian Defence

1 c4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 d4 d6 4 e4 Nf6 5 Be2

Stein quite often used this flexible move order, which keeps the opponent guessing for a moment as to whether White will continue with 6 Nf3, 6 f4 or 6 Bg5.

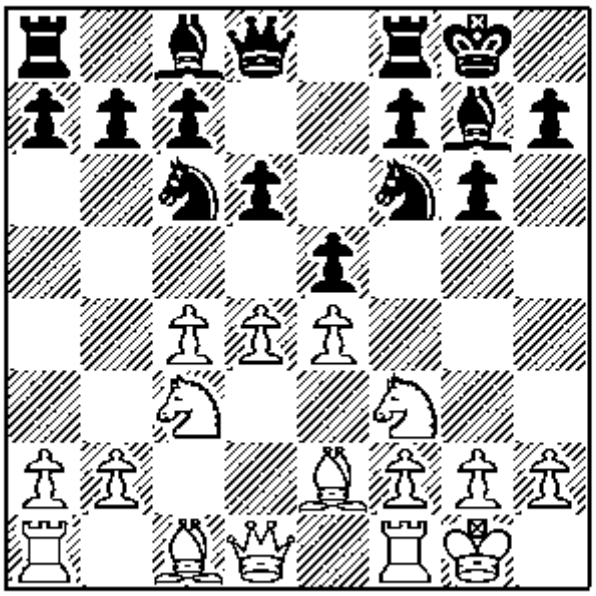
5 ... 0-0 6 Nf3

It is always interesting to see what system a player goes for when confronted with his "own" defence. Stein generally chose either the Fianchetto Variation or, as here, the Classical.

6 ... e5 7 0-0

From the other side, Stein faced 7 d5 in Game 11.

7 ... Nc6



8 d5

If White wants to maintain the tension in the centre there is 8 Be3, a one-time favourite of English GM Tony Miles (1955-2001). Alexei Shirov, on the other hand, regards this move as inferior when coupled with short castling on the basis that White needs the option of castling long, in connection with d4-d5, as is the case with 7 Be3. After 8 ... Re8 9 dxe5 (here 9 d5 Nd4! is a well-known equalizer and often leads to a quick draw, as in S.Reshevsky-M.Najdorf, Zürich Candidates 1953, which concluded 10 Nxd4 exd4 11 Bxd4 Nxe4 12 Bxg7 Kxg7 13 Nxe4 Rxe4 14 Qc2 Re8 ½-½) 9 ... dxe5 10 h3, the Greek GM Vassilios Kotronias

offered the following illuminating thoughts: “This position is a bit uncomfortable for Black because the knight on c6 prevents him from efficiently controlling the d5-square. However, with accurate play he should be able to reach equality.”

8 ... Ne7

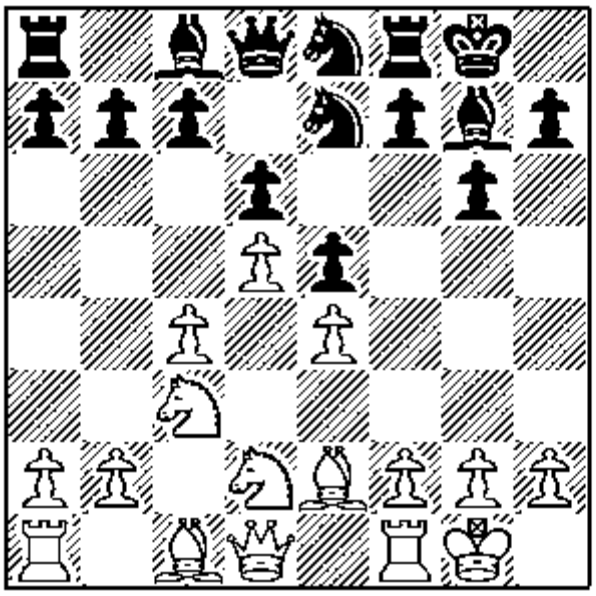
This position was the primary theme of a junior training camp I attended at the end of the 1970s. There I was taught by the coach from Uppsala, Peter Karlsson, that the main moves were 9 Ne1, 9 Nd2, 9 b4 and 9 Bd2. Nowadays, the variation is much more than that and theory runs incredibly deep. I strongly recommend studying the chapter on King’s Indian motifs in Taimanov’s Selected Games, before you try to learn a lot of moves by heart. Taimanov was one of the true experts of this variation and invented several important ideas.

9 Nd2

This was Stein’s preferred choice, except in one game where he successfully tried the Bayonet Attack with 9 b4, which is very popular today. L.Stein-E.Gufeld, USSR Team Championship 1969, continued 9 ... Nh5 (the strongest move, immediately focusing on the kingside) 10 g3 (10 Re1 is the modern interpretation) 10 ... f5 11 Ng5 Nf6 12 f3 f4 13 c5 fxg3 14 hxg3 Nh5? (instead, 14 ... h6 15 Ne6 Bxe6 16 dxe6 d5! 17 exd5 Nfxd5 18 Nxd5 Nxd5 19 Bc4 c6 led to dynamic equilibrium in M.Taimanov-I.Bilek, USSR-Hungary match, Leningrad 1957) 15 Qe1? (surprisingly, the best move is 15 Kh2! with a clear advantage, as Black’s kingside counterplay has come to a standstill) 15 ... Nf4? (far too optimistic; after 15 ... dxc5 16 bxc5 h6 17 Ne6 Bxe6 18 dxe6 Nxg3! 19 Qxg3 Qd4+ and ... Qxc3, the position is equal again) 16 gxf4 exf4 17 Rf2? (here 17 Rb1! is stronger, with the idea 17 ... Nxd5 18 Qh4 h6 19 Bc4 and wins) 17 ... Bd4? (both players misassessed 17 ... Nxd5, which in fact gives Black good counterplay after 18 Nxd5 Qxg5+ 19 Rg2 Qh6!, threatening both ... Bxa1 and ... Bd4+) 18 Kh1 Nf5 19 exf5 Qxg5 20 Rg2 Qxf5 (the spectacular 20 ... Qh5+? 21 Rh2 Rxf5, threatening the deadly ... Qxh2+, ... Rh5+ and ... Bh3+, is refuted by 23 Bxf4!) 21 Bd2 Bd7 22 Ne4 Rae8 23 Rc1 Re5 (23 ... Rxe4 24 fxe4 Qxe4 25 Qh4 Be5 is a better try, although Black is fighting against the wind) 24 Qh4 (White’s extra and strong knight begins to tell) 24 ... dxc5 25 bxc5 Kh8 26 Rc4 Ba1 27 Qe1 Bb2 28 Qb1 (a cruel fate for Gufeld’s favourite piece) 28 ... Bb5 29 Qxb2 Bxc4 30 Bxc4 1-0.

9 ... Ne8

In three other games from the 1970s Stein’s opponents replied with 9 ... c5, which was regarded as the strongest move in those days; the first edition of ECO (1978) even gave it an exclamation mark. Nowadays, 9 ... a5 is regarded as the main variation.



Exercise: What is White's most principled move?

Answer: 10 b4

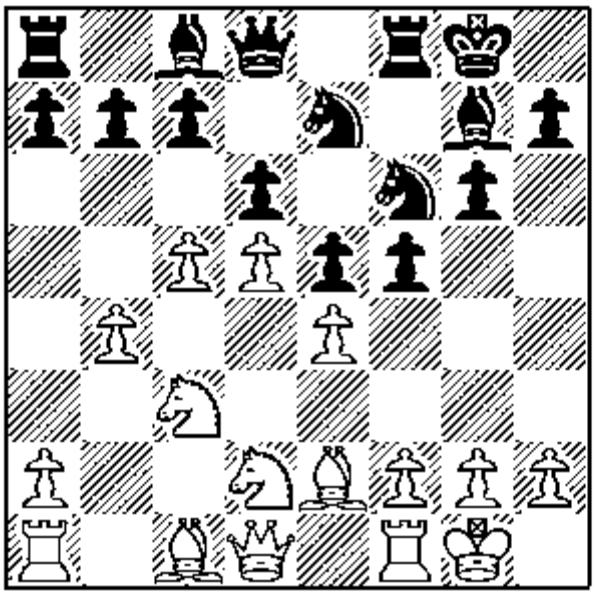
White now has a stronger version of the Bayonet Attack, since Black's knight is placed more passively at e8.

10 ... f5

The logical move, implying that Black should not be distracted by White's ambitions on the queenside. In principle Black would prefer to avoid ... a7-a5 since it uses time that might be more valuably spent on his own kingside attack. Nevertheless, it is a valid and more cautious alternative; for example, J.Smejkal-J.S.Fischer, Leipzig 1977, saw 10 ... a5 11 bxa5 Rxa5 12 a4 f5 13 Ba3 and now, rather than 13 ... Kh8? 14 c5! when White realized his advantage in only 27 moves, 13 ... b6 was correct, intending to meet the standard manoeuvre 14 Bb4 Ra8 15 a5 with 15 ... c5!.

11 c5 Nf6

Again 11 ... a5 comes into consideration. M.Taimanov-F.Portisch, Zalaegerszeg 1969, continued 12 Ba3 axb4 (playing for ... Nf5-d4 is safer: 12 ... fxe4 13 Ndxe4 Nf5 14 bxa5 Rxa5 15 Bb4 Ra8, followed by 16 ... Nd4 with a reasonable position in W.Lombardy-D.Yanofsky, Siegen Olympiad 1970) 13 Bxb4 dxc5 (the last chance for 13 ... fxe4! 14 Ndxe4 Nf5 etc) 14 Bxc5 b6 15 Bb4 Nd6 16 Nc4 fxe4 17 Nxd6 cxd6 18 Nxe4 and White had a slight advantage owing to the pawn weakness at d6.



Exercise: How does White proceed?

Answer: 12 f3

By supporting his centre with the f-pawn White eliminates the idea of ... f5xe4 and ... Nf5-d4 practically forever.

12 ... f4

According to Nimzowitschian precepts Black changes his focus from the e4-pawn to one nearer the base of the chain, in this case the f3-pawn. Since all the other links depend on this important pawn, Black plans the undermining ... g6-g5, ... h7-h5 and ... g5-g4.

13 Nc4

The knight is placed behind the infantry, as Philidor taught several generations of chess players.

13 ... g5 14 Qb3

This was new at the time. The queen vacates the back rank, supports the queenside pawns and hopes to make the black king feel uncomfortable by eyeing him along the a2-g8 diagonal. Previously 14 a4 and 14 Ba3 had been played, which remain the most popular here.

14 ... Ng6

The natural move, building up the kingside pressure. If Black goes for immediate confrontation with 14 ... g4, White replies 15 cxd6 cxd6 16 Nb5 gxf3 17 Bxf3 Ne8 18 a4 with the slightly more favourable position.

15 Ba3

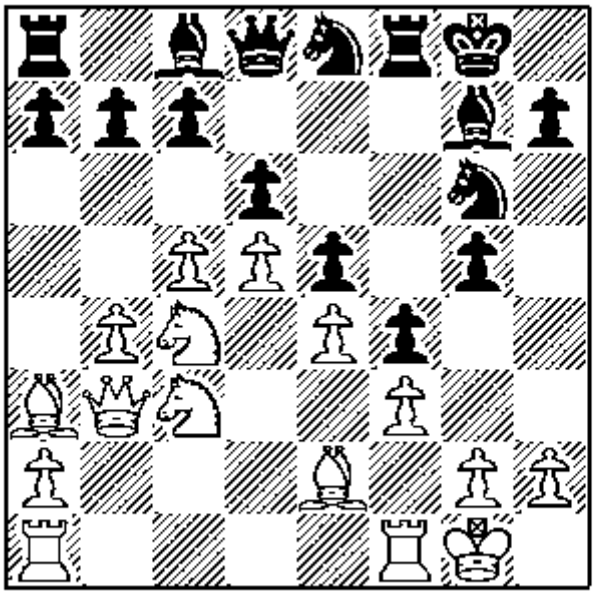
There is no need to use the a-pawn initially to create weaknesses in the black queenside. White's plan is the clear-cut b4-b5-b6, attacking the base of the chain at c7.

15 ... Ne8?!

Too passive; the d6-pawn does not require support at this precise moment, and now ... g5-g4 is more difficult to carry out.

Instead, Vladimir Sokolov recommended 15 ... Rf7 as more accurate in Informator #12, allowing the bishop to take on the defensive role after 16 cxd6 cxd6 17 b5 Bf8, which also clears the g7-square for the rook. Alternatively, 15 ... h5 was suggested by Ftacnik, but this looks more risky as 16 b5 dxc5 17 Bxc5 Rf7 18 Rad1 gives White good preconditions for a

timely central breakthrough with d5-d6.

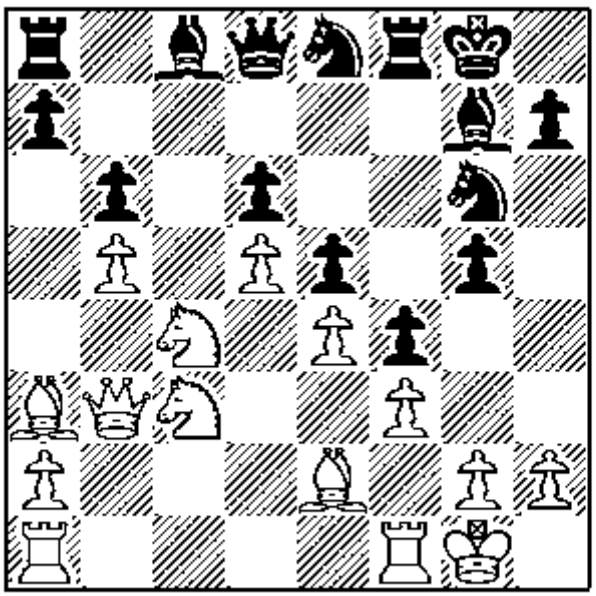


Exercise: How does White continue the queenside attack?

Answer: 16 b5!?

White's idea is obviously to play b5-b6, but this is easily prevented, leaving the queenside somewhat blocked. The later game J.Kaplan-E.Meyer, USA 1978, deviated here with 16 Rac1, though whether this is an improvement is not at all certain. As will soon become clear, Stein concept is very interesting indeed.

16 ... b6 17 cxd6 cxd6



Exercise: Should White attack or defend?

Answer: 18 Nd1!

A cautious, but nevertheless a strong move. The knight has no function on c3 anymore so its

new mission will be the prevention of ... g5-g4 from the f2-square. To combine attack with defence is the secret to success. If White concentrates solely on his own adventures, going for a quick a4-a5, the following may happen: 18 Bb4 h5 19 a4 g4 20 a5?? g3! (threatening the decisive ... Qh4) 21 h3 Bxh3! 22 gxh3 Qc8 23 Ra2 (or 23 Kg2 Nh4+) 23 ... Qxh3 24 Bd3 Nh4 and ... g3-g2 wins.

18 ... h5 19 Nf2 Rf7

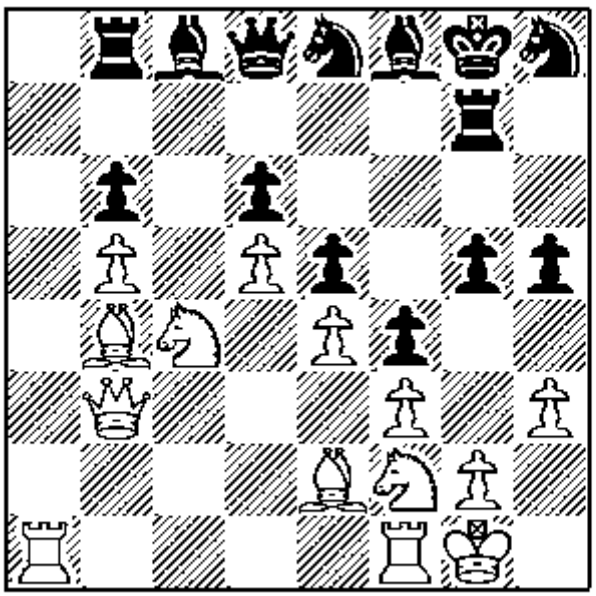
Black's planned set-up involves the moves ... Bf8, ... Rg7, ... Nh4 and finally ... g5-g4, which is slow but effective, so White must act fast on the other wing.

20 Bb4 Bf8 21 a4 Rg7 22 a5 Rb8 23 axb6 axb6 24 h3

The breakthrough ... g5-g4 must be stopped at all cost, even if some dark squares are weakened as a consequence.

24 ... Nh8?!

Sahovic hopes to enforce ... g5-g4 by ... Nf7-h6 and ... Nf6, but this plan is too time consuming. Considerably more active is 24 ... Nh4, followed by ... Nf6 and ... g5-g4. If White counters this with 25 Rfc1 Nf6 26 Qd1, Black has the amazing but typical sacrifice 26 ... g4 27 hxg4 Nxg2!! 28 Kxg2 hxg4 29 fxg4 Nxg4 30 Bxg4 Bxg4 31 Qxg4!? (after 31 Nxg4 Qh4 32 Qh1 Rxg4+ 33 Kf3 Rg3+ 34 Ke2 f3+ 35 Kd3 f2+ 36 Ne3 Qg5 37 Bd2 Bh6, Black has sufficient play for the sacrifice piece) 31 ... Rxg4+ 32 Nxg4 Rb7! (not 32 ... Qh4?? 33 Rg1! and White wins) 33 Rg1 Rg7 34 Kh1 (or 34 Kf3 Qh4 35 Bxd6 Qh3+ 36 Kf2 Qh4+ and draws) 34 ... Qh4+ 35 Nh2 f3 36 Rxg7+ Kxg7 37 Nd2, when the position is in a dynamic balance.



Question: Where should White place the f1-rook?

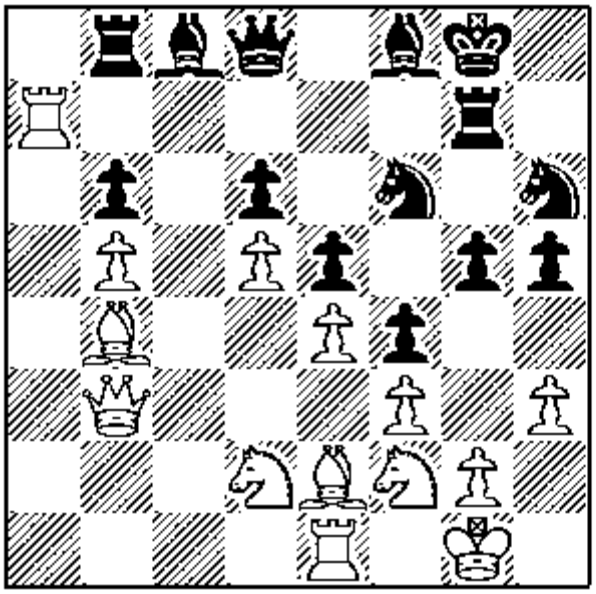
Answer: 25 Rfe1!?

A mysterious move in the spirit of Petrosian. Its benefits, compared with the normal 25 Rfc1, are not entirely clear. Maybe Stein's idea is to overprotect the e4-pawn in case its defenders are distracted by Black's ... g5-g4 - ?

25 ... Nf6 26 Nd2 Nf7 27 Ra7 Nh6?

Black makes his final preparatory move but now never achieves ... g5-g4 after all. He should play 27 ... g4 at once, when a plausible continuation is 28 hxg4 hxg4 29 fxg4 Nxg4 30

Nxg4 Bxg4 31 Bxg4 Rxg4 32 Qh3 Rg7 33 Rc1 and White is only slightly better due to his more active pieces.



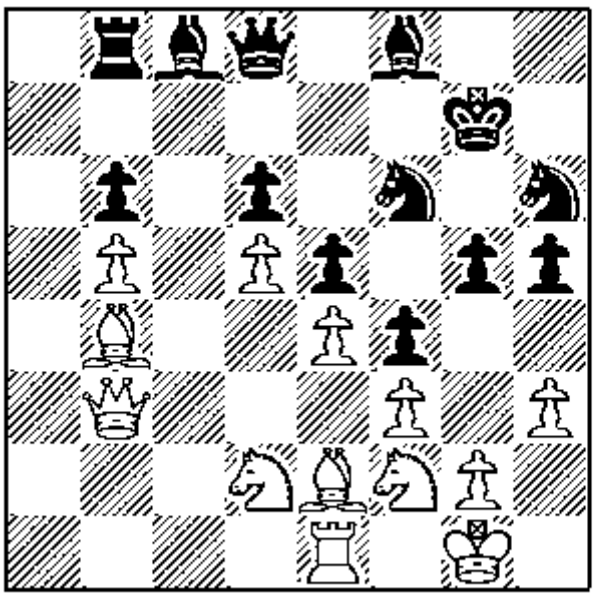
Exercise: Should White exchange the enemy rook or double on the a-file?

Answer: 28 Rxg7+

Exchanging is clearly best. The drawback to 28 Rea1 is that Black can then keep his rook in an aggressive position with 28 ... Rg6!, where it still supports the important ... g5-g4 thrust.

28 ... Kxg7

The bishop is needed at f8 to defend the d6-pawn.



Exercise: How does Stein continue most logically?

Answer: 29 Qa3

From this location the queen utilizes its power as a combined rook and bishop, controlling the a-file and increasing the pressure on the d6-pawn. Other candidate moves are 29 Ra1 or 29 Nc4, but consistent with the layout of the game so far, Stein moves the queen first.

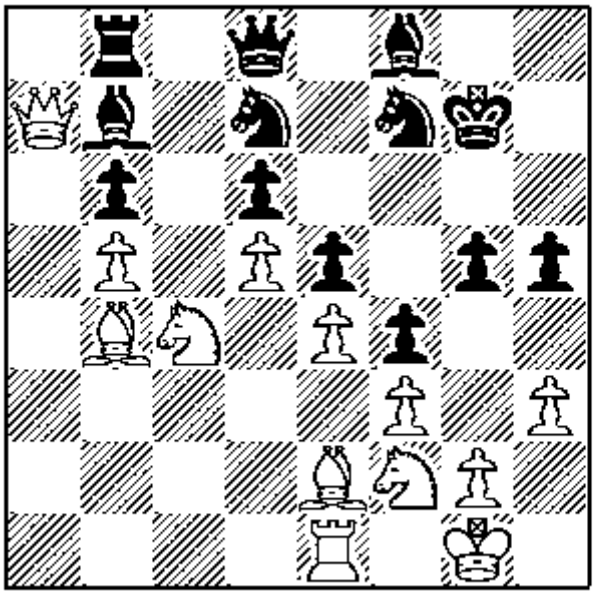
29 ... Nf7 30 Nc4 Bb7

Playing 30 ... Bd7, followed by ... Ra8, leads to the loss of the d6-pawn after 31 Nxd6! Ra8 32 Nxf7 (this intermediary move decides the issue; not 32 Nf5+? Bxf5 33 Bxf8+ Qxf8 34 Qxf8+ Kxf8 35 exf5 Nxd5 with an equal game) 32 ... Rxa3 33 Nxd8 Bxb4 34 Rd1 and White has good winning chances.

31 Qa7

The intrusion into Black's position prevents ... Ra8 for the time being.

31 ... Nd7



Exercise: How does White improve his position?

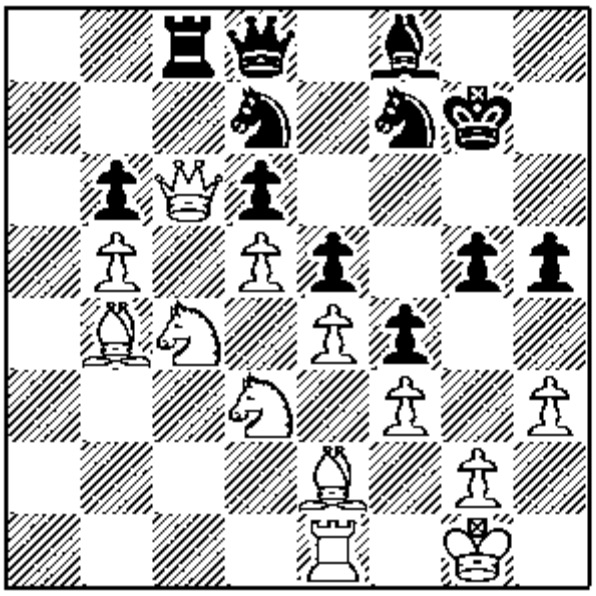
Answer: 32 Nd3??

Now that Black has given up on ... g5-g4, the knight is no longer required on f2 and aims for new targets. However, Stein overlooks a tactical trick. 32 Rd1 is better.

32 ... Ra8??

Both players missed 32 ... Bxd5! 33 exd5 Ra8 34 Qb7 Rb8 35 Qc6 Rc8, when the game is a different story with the e4-pawn gone. White can try 36 Rd1, but after 36 ... Rxc6 37 dxc6 d5 38 Bc3 d4 (not 38 ... dxc4?? 39 Nxe5 and White wins) 39 Ndxe5 Ndxe5 40 Bxd4 Qb8 41 Nxb6 Kh6!, he has no more than sufficient compensation.

33 Qxb7 Rb8 34 Qc6 Rc8

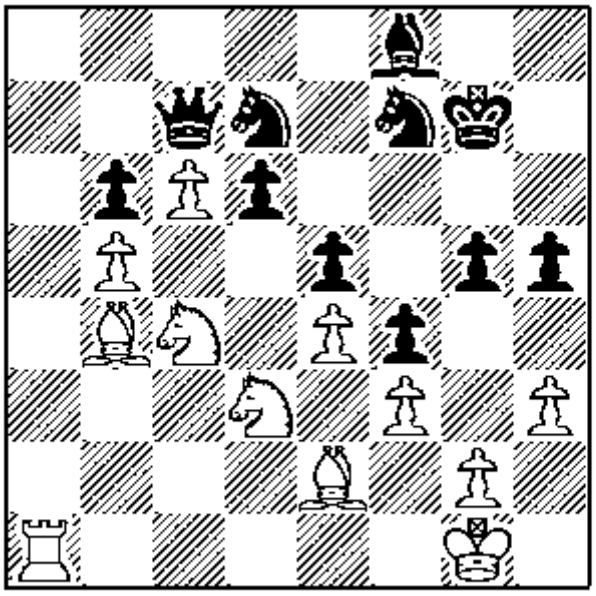


Exercise: What is the strongest move?

Answer: 35 Ra1!

This rook move is not so mysterious after all, it is more of a brutal one. White controls the only open file and prepares infiltration on the seventh rank.

35 ... Rxc6 36 dxc6 Qc7



Exercise: And now?

Answer: 37 Bc3!

Once the knight is planted on d5 we can really talk about centralization!

37 ... Nb8

37 ... Nf6 38 Ra6 is another way for Black to lose.

38 Nb4 Nd8 39 Nd5 Qc8 40 Ncxb6

Stein is not interested in the brutal 40 Ra7+ and lets the other pieces do the work. The rook can rest.

40 ... Qe6 41 c7 1-0

The 1971 USSR Championship was won by the relatively little-known Vladimir Savon on 15/21. Bernard Cafferty, in The Soviet Championships, speculates whether the favourites were hypnotized by the Candidates' matches, where Fischer had beaten both Taimanov and Larsen 6-0, and was about to commence a rout (6½-2½) of Petrosian as well.

Stein began the tournament with wins against Polugaevsky and Taimanov (see the next game), but four defeats in seven rounds (6-12) ended his chances and he finished what was to be his final USSR Championship in joint fifth place, three points behind Savon, with eight wins, five losses and eight draws.

During his productive and interesting life, Mark Taimanov (1926-) has combined two demanding careers, which is quite a feat! He became a grandmaster in 1952, and won the USSR Championship in 1956, but he was also a famous concert pianist. His excellent book, Taimanov's Selected Games, can be recommended to students at all levels. In the introduction, his definition of the abstract word "style" goes like this: "It is well known that every major chess player has his own strictly individual manner of play, his own style. And style, as the great Russian writer Anton Chekhov said, is the man himself. And just as a graphologist can determine character from handwriting, so a chess game discloses the personality of its creator."

So how to characterize Taimanov's style? The grandmaster Grigory Levenfish (1889-1961) defined it as follows: "Taimanov is a deep and versatile player, characterized by a subtle understanding of position, aggressiveness of ideas and accuracy of calculation." Taimanov himself added his propensity for a lively piece struggle and tactical skirmishes, and also his infatuation with analytical processes.

Stein had a very good record against Taimanov, scoring six wins and six draws from 1961-72 and losing only once. For this collection I have chosen a perhaps lesser known game between these formidable players. However, I strongly suggest that you study their battle in the Closed Sicilian at the 1966 USSR Championship in Tbilisi. It is easily available in other sources containing Stein's games.

Game 55
M.Taimanov-L.Stein
USSR Championship, Leningrad 1971
Benoni Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5

The principled continuation, trying to show the seamy side of Black's chosen system.

3 ... g6 4 Nc3 d6 5 e4 Bg7 6 Nf3 0-0 7 Be2 e6

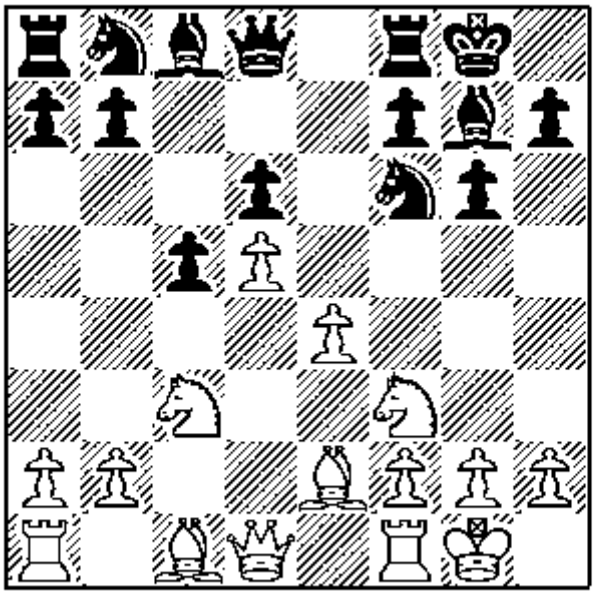
Stein sometimes played 7 ... e5 here, and once even 7 ... a6 8 0-0 e5 (see Game 23). As we have already noted, Black's delay over moving the e-pawn grants White other possibilities, such as 9 exd5 or 8 dxe6, but Taimanov is happy to transpose to a main line.

8 0-0

This is one of the comparatively few instances when Stein played a genuine Modern Benoni. From where does the name Benoni originate? Actually, there is a bit of a confusion in chess literature about this. According to modern books it comes from the Hebrew for "child of (my) sorrow" (Ben-oni); many past writers believed it had been somebody's name;

Albéric O'Kelly remarked that he found a town named Benoni in the Johannesburg area when he visited South Africa; while Edward Winter says there is also a place called Benoni in Malaysia. The confusion goes on!

8 ... exd5 9 cxd5



The asymmetrical pawn structure yields White more space in the centre, but Black has chances with the queenside pawn majority and strong bishop controlling the long dark diagonal. This is actually one of the main tabiyas of the Benoni, where Black can choose between two separate schemes of development.

Question: Are you familiar with the two different systems?

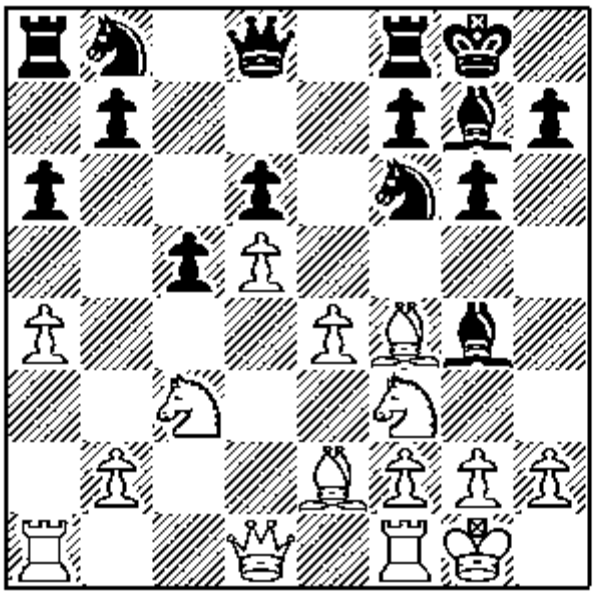
Answer: 9 ... a6

Black plans to follow up with 10 ... Bg4 when, for the relatively cheap price of the bishop pair, his hold on the vital e5-square is increased. More often than not, the text move is inserted first, taking control of b5 as well and giving the a8-rook an outlet, albeit it at the cost of weakening the b6-square.

The alternative set-up with 9 ... Re8 10 Nd2 Nbd7 was not to Stein's liking. When he played 9 ... Re8, he preferred to combine it with ... Na6-c7, aiming directly for the thematic b-pawn break on the queenside.

10 a4 Bg4 11 Bf4

In an earlier game against Tal (see below), the next question did not arise as White played 11 h3 straight away.



Question: What are the pros and cons of 11 ... Re8 and 11 ... Bxf3 respectively?

11 ... Re8

Answer #1: The drawback with the immediate 11 ... Bxf3 12 Bxf3 is that White does not need to waste time on h2-h3 to secure the advantage of the bishop pair. Nevertheless, this mode of play is the usual treatment nowadays, when 12 ... Qe7 13 Re1 Nbd7 is the normal continuation. Note that the disruptive 13 e5!? dxe5 14 d6 can be answered by 14 ... Qe6! here, as the earlier ... a7-a6 safeguards the rook in the corner.

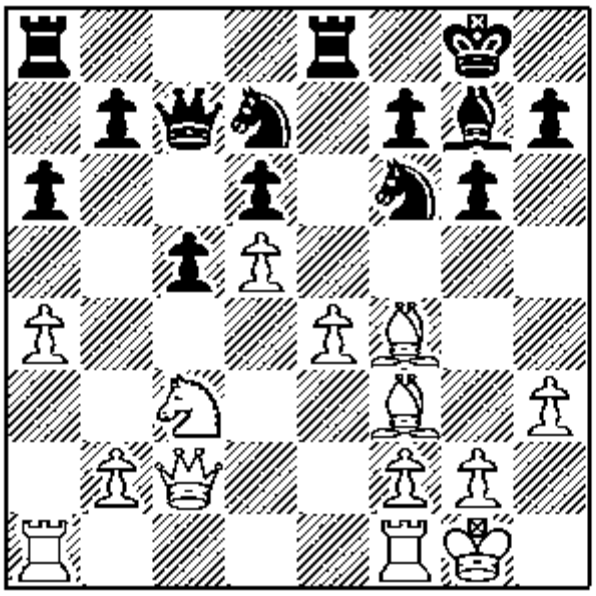
12 Qc2

Answer #2: The downside to Stein's move, on the other hand, is that it allows White the option of 12 Nd2, exchanging instead the light-squared bishops, when Black has to reckon with a strong enemy knight at c4, while his original plan of controlling e5 has been reduced. In L.Portisch-G.Kasparov, Moscow 1981, Black solved these immediate problems after 12 ... Nh5 13 Be3 Bxe2 14 Qxe2 Nd7 15 g4! Nhf6 16 f3 h6 17 Kh1 Ne5 18 Rg1 b5! 19 g5 hxg5 20 Bxg5 and still stood slightly worse, though he eventually managed to draw with a nice combination in 49 moves.

12 ... Qc7

There is no longer any rush to take on f3, since 13 Nd2 Bxe2 14 Nxe2 would now displace White's other knight.

13 h3 Bxf3 14 Bxf3 Nbd7



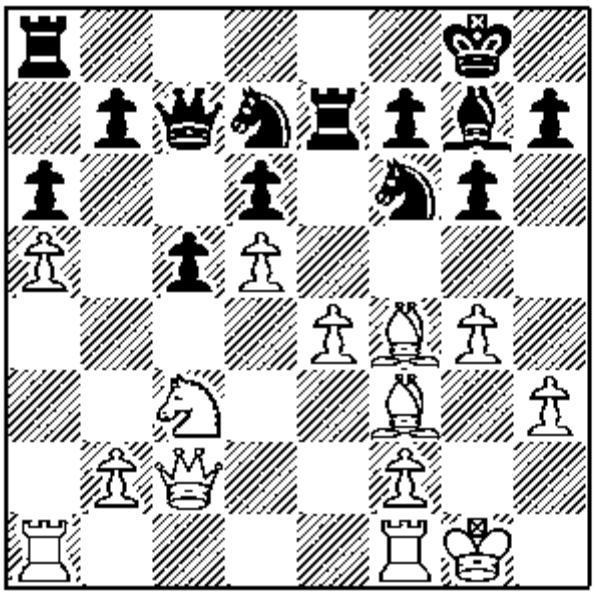
15 a5

M.Tal-L.Stein, USSR Team Cup 1971, which reached the same position by transposition, varied here with 15 Rfe1 Rab8 (stronger is 15 ... c4 with the positional threat of ... Nc5) 16 a5 b5 17 axb6 Rxb6 18 Ra2 Reb8 19 Be2 a5 20 Rea1 Rb4 21 Bc1 Re8 22 Rxa5 Nxe4 and this exciting position is actually clearly better for White if he follows up with 23 Bb5!. Instead, Tal played the inferior 23 Ra8 Nef6 24 R1a7 Rb7 25 Qa4, when Stein remedied the situation with 25 ... Rxa7! 26 Rxa7 Qb8! and managed to draw in 46 moves.

15 ... Re7

This time 15 ... c4 can be answered by 16 Ra4. Then 16 ... Ne5 17 Bxe5 Rxe5 18 Nb1 Rae8 19 Na3 Nxe4 20 Rxc4 Qe7 led to a complicated draw in L.Portisch-G.Kasparov, Tilburg 1981, but White might improve with 17 Be2, and if 17 ... Nfd7 (Kasparov) then 18 Nb1! looks stronger than in the game. One plausible line runs 18 ... Rac8 19 Nd2 c3?! 20 bxc3 Qxc3 21 Qb1! Nc5 22 Ra2 Ned3 23 Bxd3 Qxd3 24 Bxd6 Qxb1 25 Rxb1 Nxe4 26 Nxe4 Rxe4 27 Rxb7 Rd4 28 Ra7 Rxd5 29 Bf4! with good winning chances for White; but not 29 Rxa6?? Rd1+ 30 Kh2 Rxd6! 31 Rxd6 Be5+ and wins.

16 g4?!

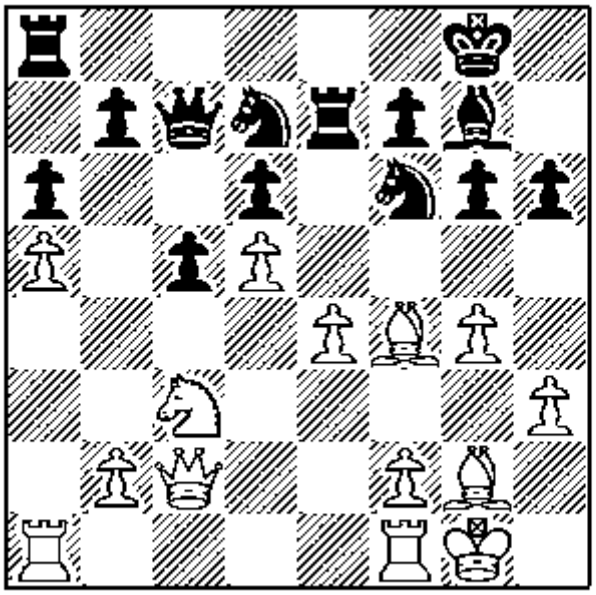


Exercise: What is the downside to this attempt to seize space on the kingside? How does Black react most correctly?

Answer: 16 ... h6!

This not only defends against g4-g5, it also prepares a possible ... g6-g5, taking control of the f4-square which was weakened by White's last move. As a consequence, Black secures the central outpost at e5 for his pieces, which can be used as a pivot for further manoeuvring into White's position.

17 Bg2



Exercise (planning): On which sector of the board should Black focus ? The queenside or the kingside?

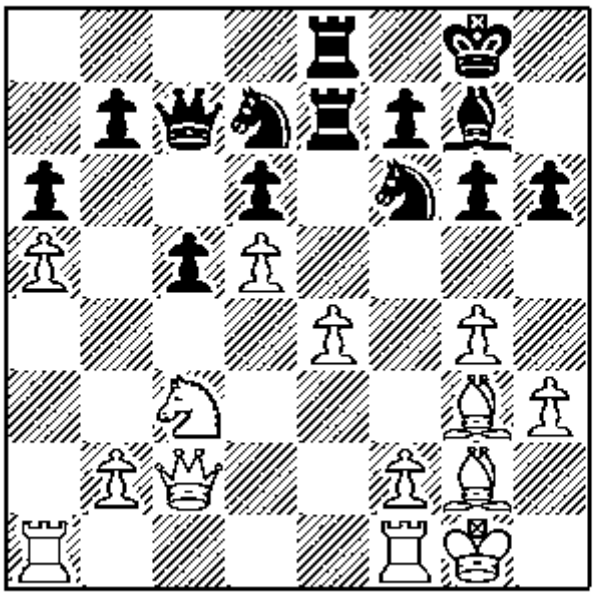
Note that we do not mention the centre, as that should always be an area of focus!

Answer: 17 ... Rae8

With this move Black follows the principles of development and centralization, though an experienced player will realize that Stein is planning something on the kingside. The reason is that, if Black wanted to play on the queenside, say with ... c5-c4 at an appropriate moment, he would aim to support that with ... Rc8.

Another option, therefore, is to leave the rook where it is and play 17 ... Ne5, followed by ... c5-c4. If White responds aggressively with 18 Bg3 c4 19 f4 Nd3 20 e5?!, hoping to exploit the power of the two bishops, Black has the strong reply 20 ... dxe5 21 fxe5 Rxe5! (not 21 ... Nxe5? due to 22 Rxf6! Bxf6 23 Ne4 Bg7 24 d6, forking the queen and rook, and Black has no saving check on the a7-g1 diagonal) 22 Kh1 Qe7, when 23 Bxe5?! Qxe5 leaves White very exposed on the dark squares. He does better to activate the other bishop with 23 d6!, but then 23 ... Qxd6 24 Ra4! Rc8 25 Bxb7 Rcc5! 26 Bxe5 Qxe5! 27 Bxa6 Qe3 leads to similar problems: after 28 Qg2 Ne1!, White cannot hold both the e4-square and h3-pawn, and so must return the exchange with 29 Rxe1 Qxe1+ 30 Qg1 Qe5, leaving Black with a slight advantage due to his safer king. This variation illustrates Black's resources should White try to push him off the board. More circumspect is 20 Kh1 with dynamic equilibrium, following Kasparov's advice that you should safeguard the king before entering an open battle.

18 Bg3



Exercise: How did Stein continue?

Answer: 18 ... Nh7

Here 18 ... g5 looks like the logical and consistent move, securing the e5-square for the knight. The drawback is the resulting weakness at f5 which the c3-knight can occupy quite quickly via e2-g3 or d1-e3. One plausible variation is 19 f4 gxf4 20 Bxf4 Ne5 21 Qd2! (better than 21 Ne2, when 21 ... c4 22 Ng3 Nd3 gives Black some counterplay) 21 ... Kh7 (or 21 ... Nc4 22 Qc1) 22 Kh1 and now either Ne2-g3-f5 or Nd1-e3-f5 cannot be prevented. The seemingly playable 22 ... Ng6 gives up the blockade of the e-pawn, which White can exploit with the "impossible" move 23 e5! Nxe5 (not 23 ... dxe5? 24 d6) 24 g5 hxg5 (the standard defence 24 ... Ng8 is met by the decisive centralization 25 Ne4!, showing one of the main

points of e4-e5) 25 Bxg5 Ned7 26 Ra4! c4 27 Qf4 and the kingside attack is too strong for Black to resist.

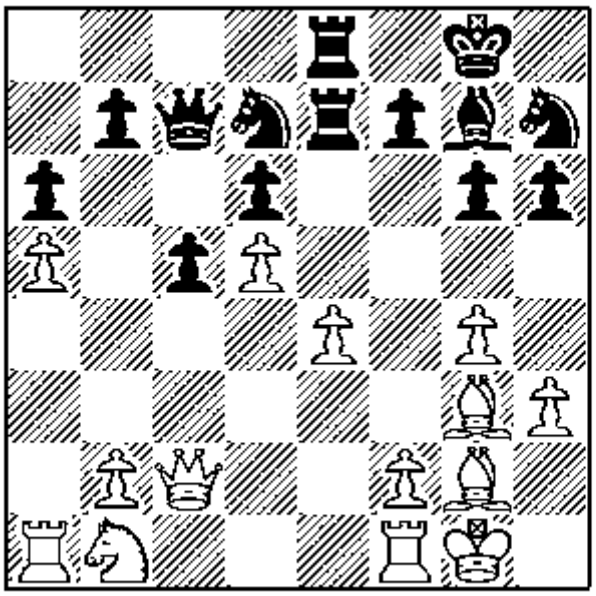
Question: What is the idea behind Black's knight retreat?

Answer: 18 ... Nh7 is both a manoeuvring move, opening up the diagonal for the dark-squared bishop, and a kind of waiting move. Black is hoping that White will show his cards.

19 Nb1?!

One of the moves Stein may have anticipated is 19 f4!?, and probably intended 19 ... Bd4+, followed by ... Nhf6, with pressure on the e4-pawn. After 20 Bf2 (or 20 Kh1 Nhf6 21 Rfe1 b5 22 axb6 Qxb6 with counterplay on the b-file) 20 ... Nhf6 21 Ra4 Bxf2+ 22 Qxf2, White has the advantage in space but Black's position is compact and solid.

White should perhaps reply in kind with 19 Kh1!, concealing for a while his plan of action. In this case the centralizing 19 ... Bd4 can be met by 20 Ne2.



Exercise: What is the drawback to White's last move?

Answer: 19 ... g5!

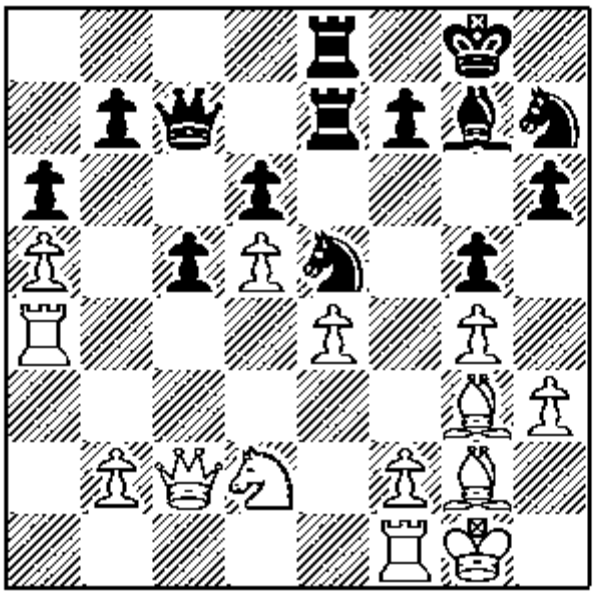
This advance is now more appealing, since the white knight, having just retreated, will take one move longer to reach the hole on f5.

20 Nd2 Ne5

Stein is in time to prevent the manoeuvre Nc4-e3.

21 Ra4

21 Rfc1 is more logical, with ideas of both b2-b4 and Nf1-e3-f5, but Black can himself regroup with 21 ... Qd8 22 Nf1 Nf8 23 Ne3 Nfg6 24 Nf5 Rd7, followed by ... Nf4 with a reasonable position.



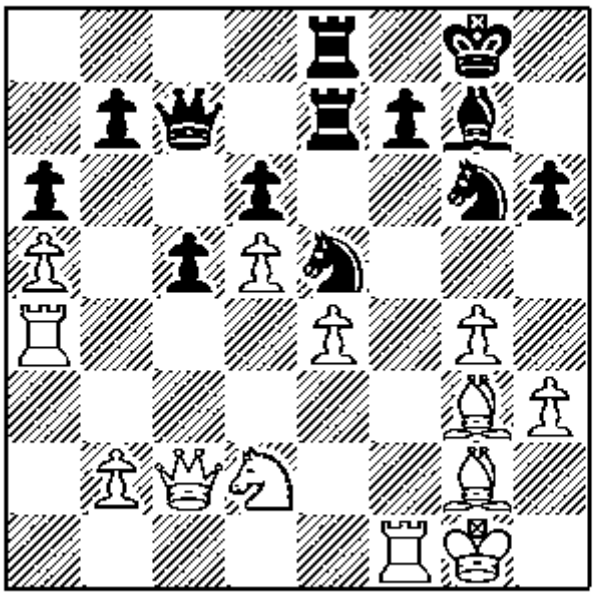
Exercise (planning): Which black piece stands worst and how to improve it?

Answer: 21 ... Nf8

The h7-knight heads for the weak f4-square, via g6, where it will combine with its e5-colleague as an attacking force. Taimanov decides to break with the f-pawn while he still has the chance.

22 f4 gxf4 23 Rxf4 Nfg6 24 Rf1?!

If White still dreams of placing the knight at f5, he should play 24 Rf2, leaving the f1-square free. Presumably Taimanov did not think there was any future in this plan, and preferred to give his rook the freedom of the back rank.



Exercise (planning): It is time for Black to regroup the major pieces – how?

Answer: 24 ... Qd8!

For the moment this humble square is the best place for the strongest piece on the board,

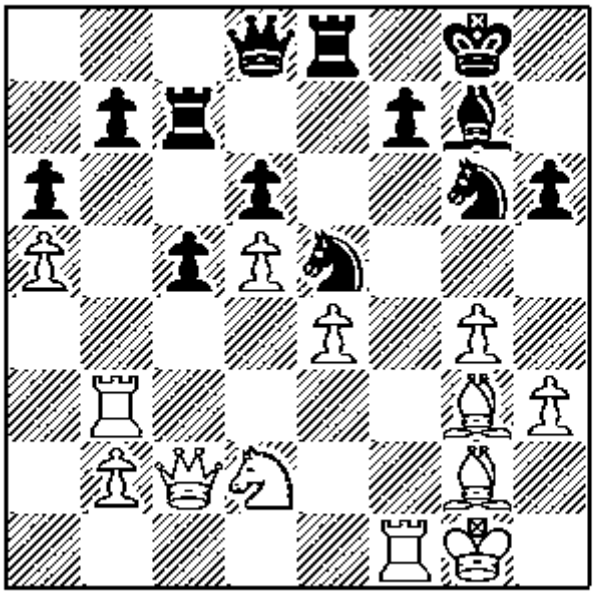
clearing the way for ... Rc7. What Black really wants is to “castle” (change places) his queen and e7-rook, place the other rook on c8, and go for ... c5-c4.

25 Ra3 Rc7

Excellent regrouping by Stein! Now Black has two available aggressive ideas: ... c5-c4, as just mentioned, and ... Nh4 to disturb his opponent when the time is ripe.

26 Rb3

White takes the opportunity to improve his queen’s rook while the pressure on the a5-pawn is temporarily removed. All regroupings require a small price to be paid; nothing is for free in chess.



Exercise: What move would you suggest for Black?

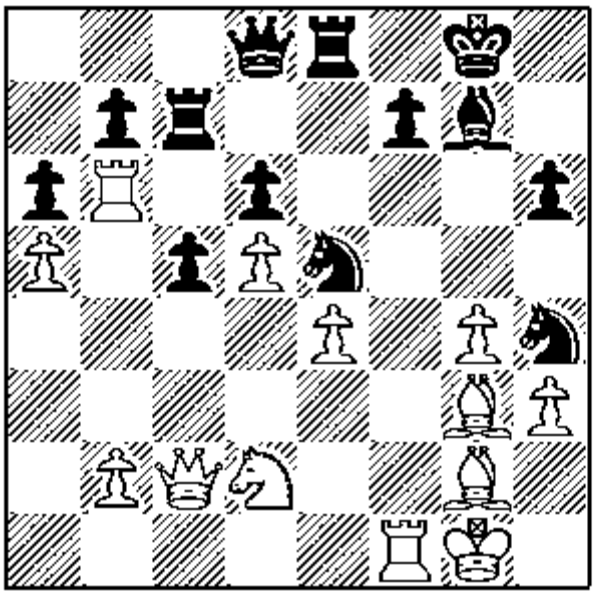
Answer: 26 ... Nh4

Taimanov perhaps wanted to provoke 26 ... c4, when 27 Rc3 leads to mass exchanges after 27 ... Qe7 28 Nxc4 Rxc4 29 Rxc4 Nxc4 30 Qxc4 Bxb2 with a roughly even game. Although Black has one more pawn island than White, his complete control of the e5-square makes his position virtually impregnable.

Instead, 26 ... Qe7 is more subtle, completing the “castling” we referred to earlier and keeping Black’s options open. Petrosian, who was fond of prolonged manoeuvrings, might well have played this way.

27 Rb6

A good outpost for the rook, putting pressure on the weakest point in Black’s set-up: the d6-pawn.



Exercise: How should Black respond?

Answer: 27 ... c4!

Chess is about timing, as Fischer used to say, and this was the right moment to strike. The patient 27 ... Qe7 may seem to increase the harmony in Black's position, making ... c5-c4 look even more dangerous; but as Stein realizes, this is effectively the last chance to advance the c-pawn, as otherwise White can blockade it with 28 b3 and Nc4. After 28 ... Rec8 29 Nc4 Nxc4 30 bxc4 Rd7, Black's position is playable but passive, which is not Stein's cup of tea. He prefers active play whenever the opportunity arises, and this one of these instances.

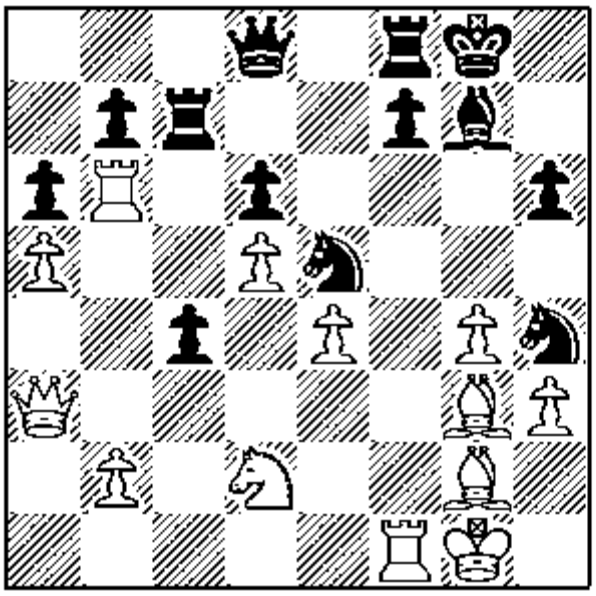
28 Qa4!

Taimanov responds with the most critical move, which threatens 29 Rxd6, overloading the black queen.

28 ... Rf8

The temporarily passive rook is a small price to play for the dynamism Black has injected into his position.

29 Qa3



Exercise (calculation): How does Black defend the d6-pawn? Work out the most important variations!

Answer: 29 ... Rc5!

The most active response but some short forced variations have to be calculated before the moves is played. 29 ... Rd7 is playable but again too passive; the centralizing 30 Qe3 gives White a small advantage. When there is a more active option available, that move should always be played.

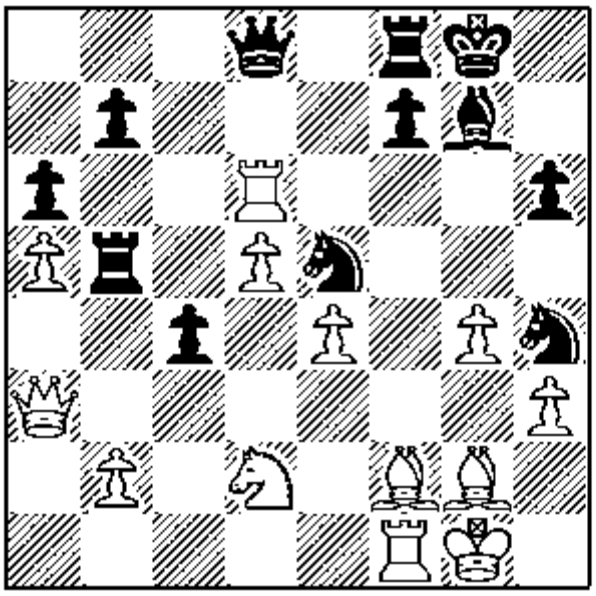
30 Bf2

30 Rxb7 is not dangerous because the b7-pawn means nothing in this kind of position. Black continues 30 ... h5! 31 gxh5 Qg5 with counterplay on the kingside. If White removes the irritating knight with 32 Bxh4, Black's control of the dark squares will be even more accentuated.

30 ... Rb5

This is the point. In the previous note, Black sacrificed the b7-pawn; here it is the d6-pawn which falls.

31 Rxd6



Question: What is going on?

Answer: Although White has won a pawn, Black has gained an active rook at b5, not to mention his strong knights and the bishop lurking on g7.

Exercise: What is Black's best move?

31 ... Qe7

Answer: It is better to lure the white bishop to e3 first in order to take the pressure off the h4-knight. After 31 ... Qg5! 32 Be3 Qe7 and then 33 Rb6 Qxa3 34 bxa3, Black can play 34 ... Rxa5 with advantage. Compare this variation with the game.

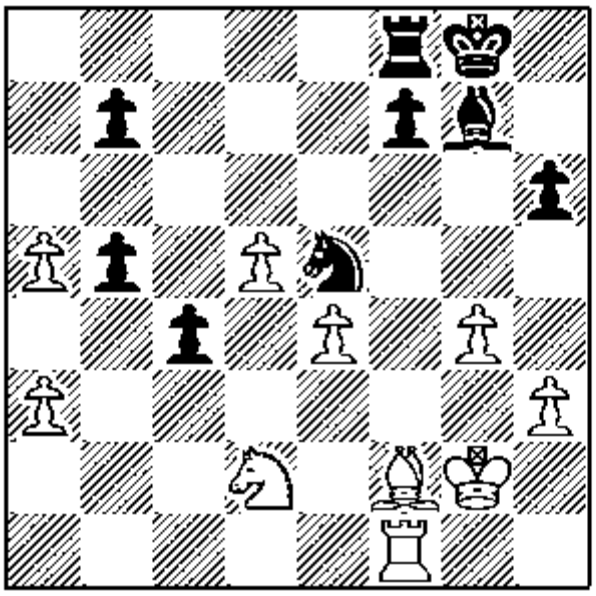
32 Rb6

Having won a pawn, White wants to exchange his clumsily placed rook.

32 ... Qxa3 33 bxa3 Nxg2 34 Rxb5

Taking on g2 first limits Black's possibilities. After 34 Kxg2, he would have to support the passed pawn with 34 ... Rc8 in order to secure equal chances. For example, 35 Rxb5 axb5 36 Nf3 c3 37 Nd4 Nc4! 38 Nxb5 Nd2 39 Rc1 Nb3 40 Rc2 Na1 leads to a draw by repetition.

34 ... axb5 35 Kxg2



Exercise: How did Stein proceed from here?

Answer: 35 ... Ra8

As we saw in the previous note, 35 ... Rc8 is good enough to draw. 35 ... c3 36 Nb3 Nc4 also comes into consideration; but Stein's move is the most precise, luring the white bishop to a more exposed position, while keeping other options open.

36 Bb6

Exercise (calculation): Analyse the next few moves.

Answer: 36 ... Nd7

Another way to attack the bishop is 36 ... c3 37 Nb3 Nc4, when White has to play 38 Bc5 Rc8 (not 38 ... Nxa5? 39 Nxa5 Rxa5 40 Kf3 with good winning chances) 39 d6!, which leads to the following study-like variations: 39 ... Be5 40 d7 Rd8 41 Rd1 c2 42 Rd3 Nxa5!? (or 42 ... Bf6 43 Bb4 Ne5 44 Rc3 Nc4 45 Rd3 Ne5 with an amusing draw by repetition) 43 Nc1 Bb2 44 Bb6 Rxd7 45 Rxd7 Bxc1 46 Bxa5 Bf4! 47 Rd8+ Kh7 48 Rc8 c1Q 49 Rxc1 Bxc1 and the bishop endgame is a draw.

37 Bc7 Bc3

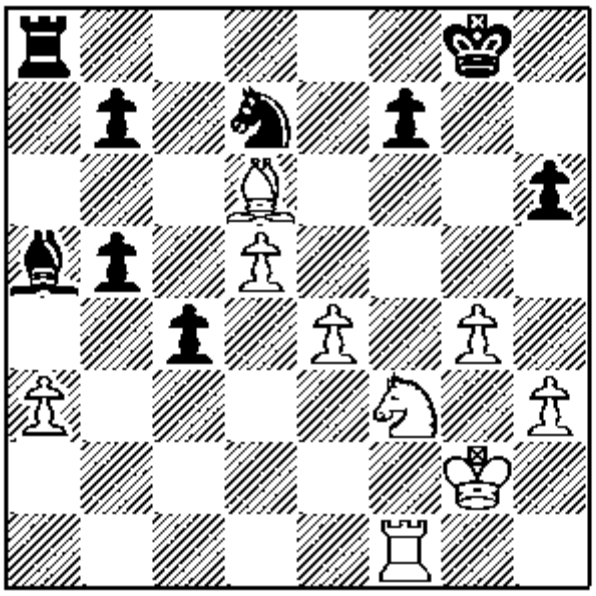
Stein plays to win the front a-pawn. Targeting the one behind with 37 ... Bb2 is neither better nor worse. White can either defend it with 38 Nb1, when 38 ... Rc8 (not 38 ... c3?? 39 Rf2, followed by Rc2 with a clear advantage) 39 d6 Re8 is roughly equal. Or let it go with 38 Rb1 c3 39 Nb3 Bxa3, as after 40 Nd4 b4 41 Nc2, things are nevertheless in order.

38 Nf3

The passive 38 Nb1 is acceptable too, as after 38 ... Bxa5 39 Bxa5 Rxa5, the defensive knight holds up all Black's pawns on the queenside. Play might continue 40 Kf3 f6 41 Ke3 Ra4! 42 Kd4 c3+ 43 Kxc3 (or 43 Kd3 Nc5+) 43 ... Rxe4, when the position is completely equal.

38 ... Bxa5 39 Bd6?!

Here 39 Bxa5 Rxa5 40 Nd4 Rxa3 41 Nxb5 Rb3 42 Nd4 Rb2+ 43 Kg3 (not 43 Rf2? c3) 43 ... b5 44 Ra1 c3 45 Ra7 is the safest road to equality.



Exercise: How does Black continue?

Answer: 39 ... Nf6!

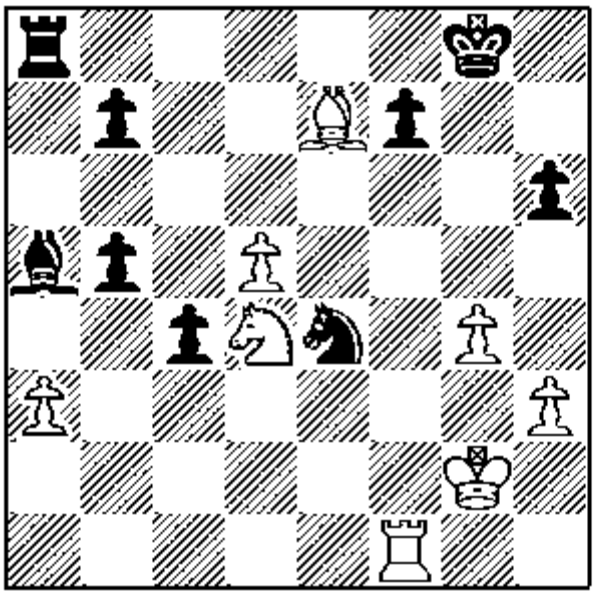
This gives White more practical problems than 39 ... Re8, after which it is not so difficult to find 40 e5 Bc3 (or 40 ... Nb6 41 Bc7) 41 Rb1, swapping the e5-pawn for the b5-pawn with an equal game.

40 Be7?

The first major turning point. White's simplest way of coming closer the draw is 40 Ng5! Nxd5 41 exd5 hxg5 42 Be7 Bd8 (or 42 ... Bd2 43 Rf5 c3 44 Bb4) 43 Bb4 and the value of Black's extra pawn is practically eliminated.

The alternative 40 Nd4 Nxe4 41 Bf4! b4 (41 ... Rd8 42 Nf5 defends the d-pawn effectively) 42 axb4 Bxb4 allows the black rook to become active, which makes things more difficult, though White should be able to hold here. For example, 43 Nf5 Ra2+ 44 Kf3 Nd2+ 45 Bxd2 Rxd2! 46 Nxh6+ Kf8 47 Rb1 Ba3 48 Ra1 Bb2 49 Ra8+ Ke7 50 Nf5+ Kd7 51 Rf8 c3 52 Rxf7+ Kd8 53 Rf8+! (forcing the black king in front of the b-pawn is crucial; 53 Ne3 Rd3 54 Ke4 Rxe3+ 55 Kxe3 c2 56 Rf1 c1Q+ 57 Rxc1 Bxc1+ 58 Ke4 loses to 58 ... Bg5! 59 Kf5 b5 etc) 53 ... Kc7 54 Rf7+! Kb6 55 Ne3 Rd3 56 Ke4 Rxe3+ 57 Kxe3 c2 58 Rf1 c1Q+ 59 Rxc1 Bxc1+ 60 Ke4 Kc5 (now 60 ... Bg5 61 Kf5 secures the draw) 61 h4 Kd6 (or 61 ... b5 62 Ke5 b4 63 d6 Kc6 64 Ke6 Bf4 65 d7 Bc7 66 h5 etc) 62 Kd4 b5 63 Ke4 Bb2 64 g5 b4 65 h5 b3 66 h6 Be5 67 Kd3 Kxd5 68 g6 Ke6 69 g7 Kf7 70 Kd2 and Black has no way to eliminate the white pawns without losing his own b-pawn.

40 ... Nxe4 41 Nd4



Exercise: How should Black react to the threat of Nxb5 - ?

Answer: 41 ... b4!

Again, Black plays to activate his rook. Defending the pawn with 41 ... Nc3? is a mistake due to 42 d6, and if 42 ... Bb6 43 Nc2 Bc5 then 44 Rf5! Ne4 45 Re5 (45 Kf3 is also good enough) 45 ... Bxd6 46 Rxe4 Re8 47 Bxd6 Rxe4 48 Kf3 Re6 49 Bb4 and White has everything under in control.

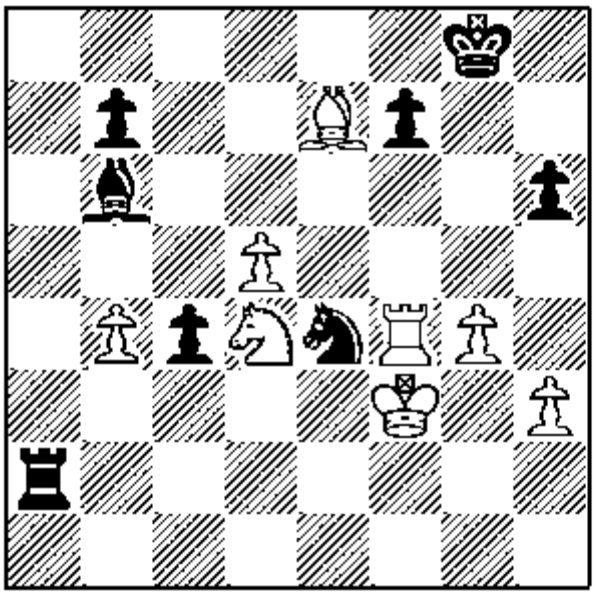
42 axb4

White's situation is not improved by the exchange of bishops. After 42 Bxb4 Bxb4 43 axb4 Ra2+ 44 Kg1 Rd2 45 Nf5 c3 46 Rc1 Kf8, Black is winning.

42 ... Bb6 43 Rf4?!

Now Stein's rook becomes very dangerous on the seventh rank. After 43 Re1, he would have to find 43 ... Nc3! (not 43 ... Ra2+? 44 Re2 and White has no problems anymore) 44 Bc5 Bxc5 45 bxc5 Nxd5, when Black has an healthy extra pawn and good winning chances.

43 ... Ra2+ 44 Kf3



Exercise (calculation): What is Black's most precise move?

Answer: 44 ... Nd2+!

Stein finds the best continuation. Actually, 44 ... Nc3 is good too, since 45 Bc5 Bxc5 46 bxc5 Nxd5 leaves Black a clear pawn up; whereas if White continues optimistically with 45 d6, he loses quickly after 45 ... Rd2 46 d7 Rd3+ 47 Kg2 Nd5.

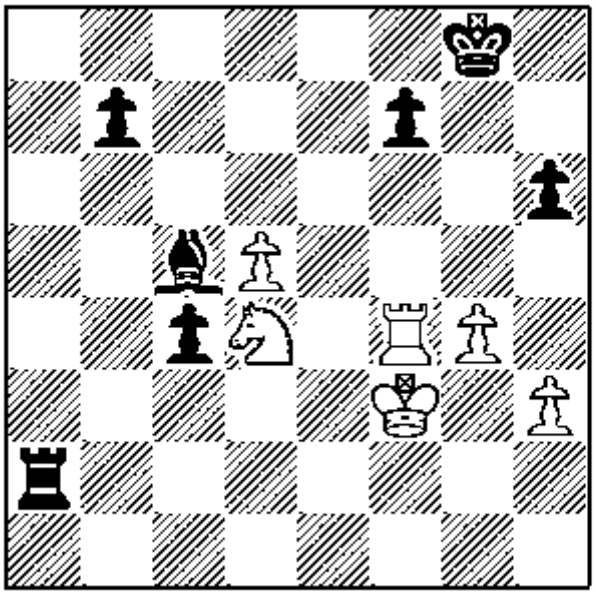
45 Ke3

Forced, as after 45 Kg3? Bxd4! 46 Rxd4 c3 47 d6 c2 48 d7 c1Q 49 d8Q+ Kh7, Black's king is safe, while White's is in deep water.

45 ... Nb3

Black's main threat is actually ... Rd2 rather than ... Nxd4, so White must react accordingly to avoid material loss.

46 Bc5 Nxc5 47 bxc5 Bxc5 48 Kf3



Exercise: What is the best technical move?

48 ... Rb2

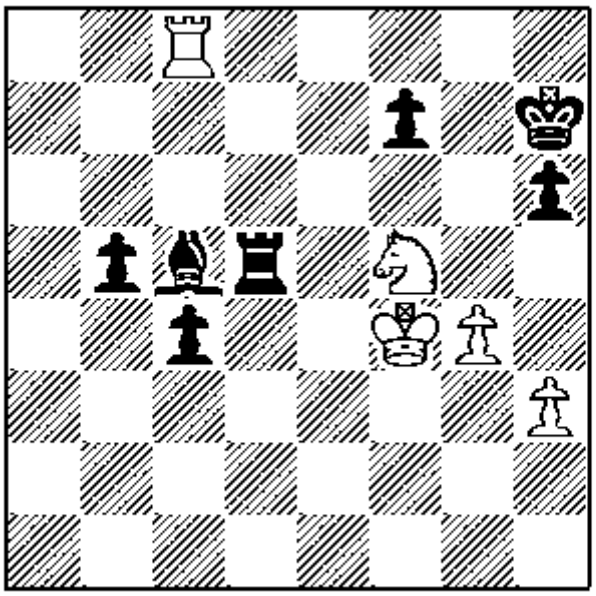
A logical and good move, planning to connect the passed queenside pawns.

Answer: However, 48 ... Rd2! was better, as 49 Nb5 Rb2 50 Nd4 reaches the same position with Black to move, when 50 ... b5 51 Re4 b4 wins easily.

49 Re4 b5 50 Nf5 Rf2+ 51 Kg3 Rd2

After driving the white king further away, Black places the rook behind the enemy passed pawn, which normally is the correct procedure, as recommended by Tarrasch.

52 Re8+ Kh7 53 Rc8 Rxd5 54 Kf4



Exercise (calculation): How to decide the game?

Answer: 54 ... Ba3

The direct 54 ... c3 also wins easily; for example, 55 Ke4 (or 55 Ne3 Bxe3+ 56 Kxe3 b4) 55 ... c2 56 Kxd5 c1Q 57 Rxc5 Qh1+ 58 Ke5 b4 and so on.

55 Rc6 Rc5

The rest is, as they say, "a matter of technique".

56 Rxh6+ Kg8 57 Ra6 c3 58 Nd4 c2

Or 58 ... Rc4 59 Ke5 Rxd4 60 Kxd4 c2 etc.

59 Nxc2 Bc1+ 60 Ne3 Rc3 61 Ra8+ Kg7 0-1

A very powerful demonstration of Black's dark square possibilities in the Modern Benoni.

In the Alekhine Memorial the following month, Stein was rather more successful, tying for first place with Karpov on 11/17. Both players were unbeaten in this super-tournament, winning five games and drawing twelve. The Chief Arbiter, Alexander Kotov, wrote the following in Shakmaty v SSSR: "We have somewhat become used to the fact that sometimes after a modest start, Stein would go all out and would snatch the victory just before the finish line. Here his tournament tactic was completely changed. What was it: fatigue or a sober evaluation of the possibilities? Most likely, it was the 'wisdom of age,' an original

restructuring and search for less dangerous paths. Still Stein remains a chess player of the highest class. At the Memorial we often observed his drastically altered creative endeavours, as well. More than once he saw through the most difficult endgames until the winning end, for instance, against Bronstein. He skilfully conducted defence and attacking play, the game against Gheorghiu may serve as an example." Gufeld and Lazarev suggest that Stein showed another facet of his play: "different, less romantic and much more practical."

Bruno Parma was born in Ljubljana in 1941. He became an IM by winning the 1961 World Junior Championship in The Hague, and gained the grandmaster title two years later. He was the third Slovenian GM after Milan Vidmar (1885-1962) and Vasja Pirc (1907-80). Parma represented the Yugoslav team eight times in the Chess Olympiads. During his prime he was regarded as one of the best defensive players in the world, and with his peaceable frame of mind, he made many draws. His attacks are regarded as less effective, but he is not to be underestimated. Sometimes he is like an inactive volcano just waiting to erupt.

Game 56
L.Stein-B.Parma
Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1971
Tarrasch Defence

1 c4

England's equivalent to Russia's Chigorin – Howard Staunton (1810-74) – opened with 1 c4 six times against Pierre Charles Fournier de Saint-Amant (1800-72) in their famous match of 1843. Staunton wrote the following about the first move: "This way of opening the game, although not usual, is perfectly safe." If we go further back in bygone days, it had an even worse reputation. According to Ruy Lopez in the 16th century 1 c4 was so bad that no player of any skill would adopt it. Today, it is regarded as a flexible opening and is used many times used for its subtle move orders and transpositions. For instance, we have already seen four King's Indian Defence games that began with 1 c4.

1 ... c5

Together with 1 ... e5 (see Game 33), the Symmetrical Defence is one of the most logical replies.

2 Nf3

Staunton preferred 2 Nc3, emphasizing the light squares. Stein move keeps the option of an early d2-d4, opening the position and staking out space.

2 ... Nc6 3 Nc3

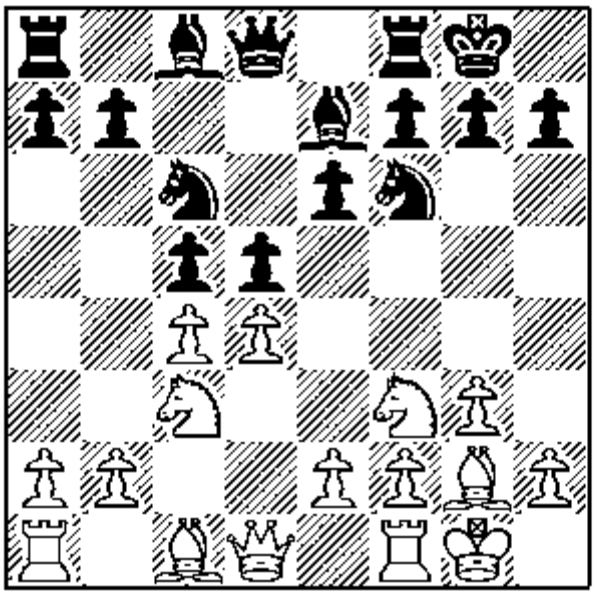
Here 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 leads to a half-open/half-closed game where White has to deal with a multitude of reasonable Black systems.

3 ... Nf6

A good alternative is 3 ... e5, followed by ... g7-g6 and ... Bg7, which represents the Botvinnik formation. One interesting line is 4 e3 Nf6 5 d4 cxd4 6 exd4 e4 7 Ne5 Bb4 8 Be2 Qa5 9 Nxc6 dxc6 10 Bd2 0-0 11 0-0 Re8 12 a3 Bxc3 13 Bxc3 Qg5 14 Qc1 Qg6 15 Qf4 with approximately equal chances in Mi.Marin-S.Movsesian, European Cup, Neum 2000.

4 g3 e6 5 Bg2 Be7 6 0-0 0-0 7 d4 d5

With this move we can safely say that the opening has transformed from the English Opening to the Queen's Gambit.



Question: What is the theoretically correct move?

8 dxc5

Answer: 8 exd5 is considered to be more precise, when Black can choose between 8 ... exd5, reaching a genuine Tarrasch Defence (where 9 dxc5 Bxc5 transposes to the game), or 8 ... Nxd5 with a fianchetto version of the Semi-Tarrasch.

8 ... Bxc5

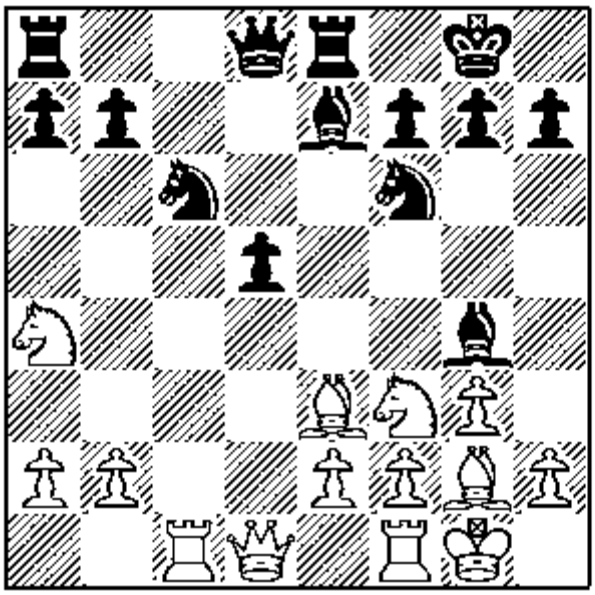
Instead, 8 ... d4!? 9 Na4 e5 is perhaps the real test of White's move order. The best course seems to be 10 b4! e4 11 Nd2 e3!? (or 11 ... Nxb4 12 Nxe4 Bf5 13 Nxf6+ Bxf6 14 Bf4 Qd7 15 Qb3, followed by Rad1) 12 fxe3 Nxb4 (or 12 ... dxe3 13 Nb3!) 13 Nf3! dxe3 14 Qxd8 Rxd8 15 Ne5! and White enjoys the slightly better prospects.

9 cxd5 exd5 10 Na4 Be7

The standard retreat, though the alternatives are quite playable. 10 ... Bd6 11 Be3 Re8 12 Rc1 can be compared with the game; while 10 ... Bb6 is met by 11 b3 and Bb2. L.Stein-P.Keres, USSR Team Championship 1966, continued 11 ... Bf5 12 Bb2 Be4 13 Nxb6 axb6 14 Qd2 Qe7 15 Rfc1 Rfe8 16 Qf4 with an edge. Note that there is no need to play 11 Nxb6 at once, because White gains tempi if the bishop moves away.

11 Be3 Re8 12 Rc1 Bg4

If Black tries to activate the dark-squared bishop first by the preliminary 12 ... Ne4, then 13 Nd4 Bd7 14 Nc3 Nxc3 15 Rxc3 Bf6 16 Re1 gives White a comfortable edge, as in V.Hort-S.Gligoric, Ljubljana/Portoroz 1977.



Exercise: How should White continue?

Answer: 13 h3

This move, putting the question to the bishop, is typical of Stein. (See, for example, Game 46 where he played the far from obligatory 7 ... h6.) By clarifying the situation, he makes it easier to construct a suitable plan, depending on the reply.

In an earlier game, Parma had drawn quite easily after 13 Nc5 Bxc5 (Sam Collins prefers 13 ... Qb6! in The Tarrasch Defence: Move By Move) 14 Rxc5 (14 Bxc5 is more testing) 14 ... Qd7 15 Re1 Rac8, as in La.Szabo-B.Parma, Palma de Mallorca 1969.

Alternatively, S.Reshevsky-B.Ivkov, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970, continued 13 Bc5 Ne4 14 Bxe7 Qxe7 15 h3 (not 15 Qxd5? due to 15 ... Rad8 16 Qc4 Bxf3, followed by ... Nd2) 15 ... Bxf3 (after 15 ... Bh5 16 Qxd5 Nf6 17 Qc5! Qxe2 18 Rfe1 Qd3 19 Red1 Qa6 20 Nc3, White's more centralized pieces give him an edge) 16 exf3! Nf6 17 f4 Rac8 18 Re1 Qxe1+ 19 Qxe1 Rxe1+ 20 Rxe1 with a slight advantage for White, who won a very interesting endgame in 83 moves.

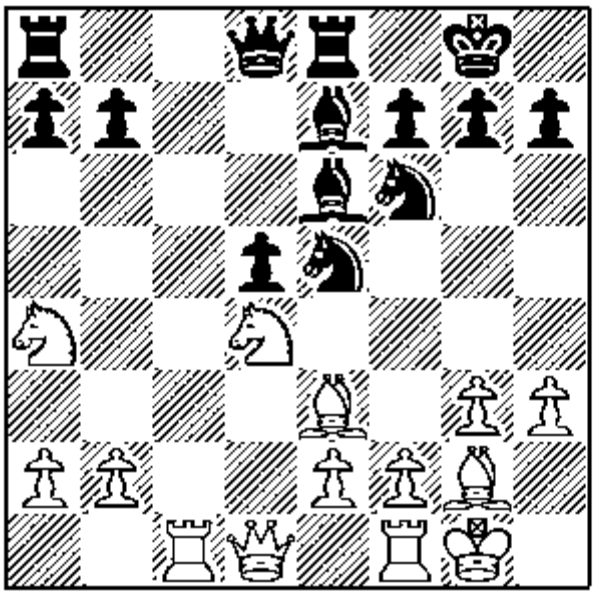
13 ... Be6

"A solid position aimed at maintaining the security of the d5-pawn is the one and only right course, and it must ever be remembered that the Be6 belongs to the d5-pawn as does a nurse to a suckling child!" – Aron Nimzowitsch in My System. This is in keeping with his concept of overprotection, but today 13 ... Be6 is generally considered too passive.

Instead, S.Gligoric-Garcia Padron, Montilla 1977, continued 13 ... Bxf3! (a third option, 13 ... Bh5, leaves the bishop slightly misplaced, having no contact with either the d5-pawn or the queenside) 14 Bxf3 Qd7 15 Bg2 d4 16 Bg5 (not 16 Bxc6?! bxc6 17 Bxd4 Qxh3 18 Bxf6 Bxf6 19 Rxc6, since 19 ... h5! and ... h5-h4 gives Black a dangerous initiative for the pawn) 16 ... Ne4 17 Bxe7 Qxe7 with mutual chances. In this position it is difficult for White to attack the key defender at c6 which defends the isolated d4-pawn. Compare this with the famous game Em.Lasker-S.Tarrasch, St Petersburg 1914, when Lasker managed to undermine the black d4-pawn by attacking the defending minor pieces.

14 Nd4 Ne5

The immediate 14 ... Nxd4 is more circumspect, preventing White from securing the bishop pair by taking on e6 (as, for example, after 14 ... Qd7). V.Mikhalevski-A.Lauber, Benidorm 2008, continued 15 Bxd4 Ne4 16 Nc3 Rc8 17 Qd3 Nxc3 18 Rxc3 Qd7 19 Rfc1 b6 with a nearly equal game, which ended peacefully in a draw after 36 moves.



Exercise: How to anticipate the threat of ... Nc4 - ?

15 b3?!

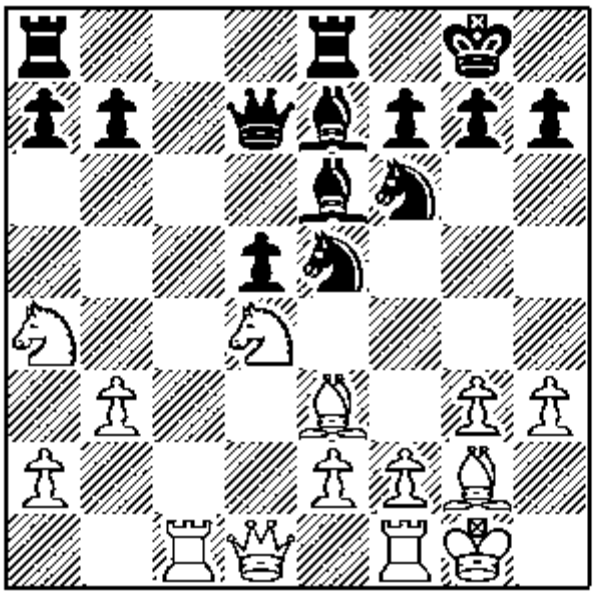
This move is unnecessary and weakens the dark squares on the queenside.

Answer: A more active solution is 15 Nxe6 fxe6 16 Nc5 Bxc5 17 Bxc5, playing for two bishops vs. two knights. Or here 17 Rxc5, intending 17 ... Nc4 18 Bd4 e5? 19 Bc3 Nb6 20 Qb3, when White's pieces shoot arrows at the black centre in hypermodern fashion.

15 ... Qd7

The attempt to exploit b2-b3 directly with 15 ... Ba3 is answered by 16 Rc2 where the rook stands safely. If Black tries 16 ... Nc6 17 Nc5 (not 17 Nxc6?! bxc6 18 Rxc6 Qd7 and the h3-pawn will fall) 17 ... Nxd4 18 Bxd4 Bf5 19 Rd2, the threat of Bxf6 means there is no time for 19 ... Bb4, while after 19 ... Bxc5 (to lessen the influence of the enemy pieces) 20 Bxc5 Qa5 21 Bd4 Ne4 22 Rc2 Qa6 (22 ... Ng5? fails to 23 Rc5) 23 g4! Bg6 24 e3, White enjoys a slight advantage.

The most precise continuation is probably 15 ... Bd7, keeping the light-squared bishop and aiming to exchange the other one after 16 Nc5 (or 16 Nc3 Qa5) 16 ... Bxc5 17 Rxc5 Ne4! 18 Rc2 (not 18 Rxd5? Nc3) 18 ... Qe7, when Black's position is far from easy to crack, with two beautiful knights to compensate for the isolani.

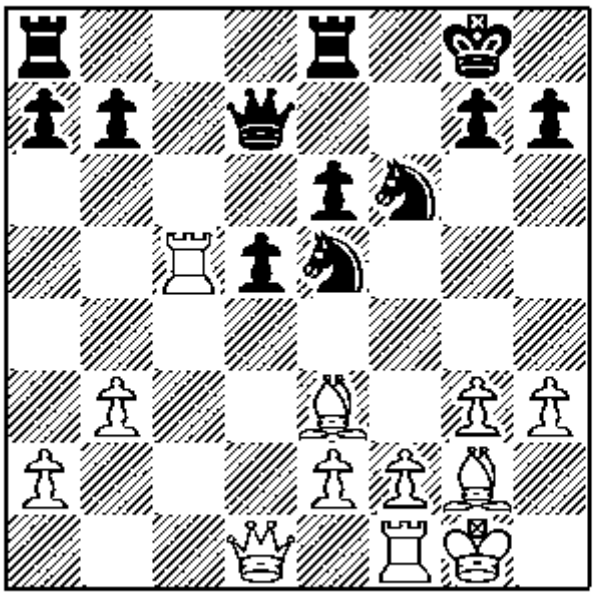


Exercise (calculation): An interesting moment. Should White content himself with the bishop pair after 16 Nxe6, or go for material with 16 f4 - ?

Answer: 16 Nxe6!

It is possible to gain a material advantage by force with 16 f4!? Nc6 17 Rxc6! bxc6 18 f5, trapping the e6-bishop. After 18 ... c5 19 fxe6 fxe6 20 Nf3 Rac8, White has bishop and knight for rook and pawn. On the other hand, Black now has a strong and compact centre, so White is no more than slightly better here, and his position may not be easy to handle over the board. It is understandable that Stein went for the more straightforward line. Nimzowitsch once said that if there is a choice between a solid variation with a slight advantage and one that is not so clear, you should invariably go for the former.

16 ... fxe6 17 Nc5 Bxc5 18 Rxc5



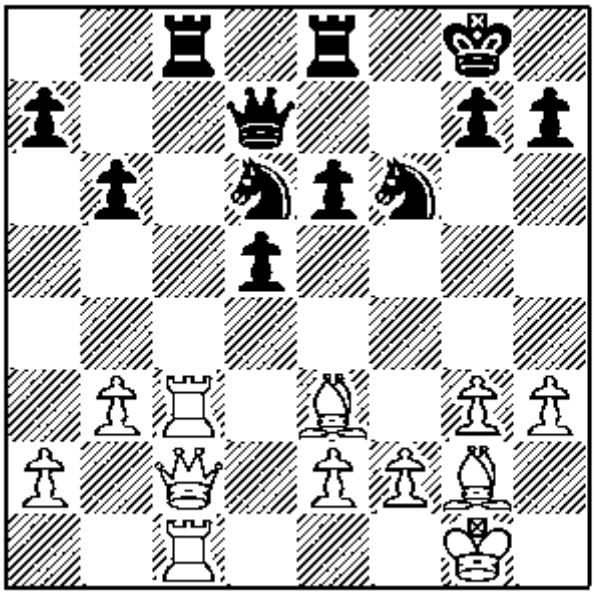
Question: What has happened to the position in the last three moves?

Answer: It has certainly changed radically. White has gained the bishop pair vs. the knight pair. He still has two pawn islands to Black's three, but the f7-pawn has moved to e6, which gives White a strong future e2-e4 break. With the rook already standing on c5, he is also prepared to double, or even triple, the major pieces on the important c-file.

18 ... b6?!

Both Stein and Parma have broken the general rule formulated by Steinitz: do not move the queenside pawns unnecessarily and create weaknesses which may be exploited by the opponent. Either 18 ... Nc6, or first 18 ... Qf7 and then ... Nc6, seems more appropriate, maximizing the flexibility of Black's game.

19 Rc3 Nf7 20 Qc2 Rac8 21 Rc1 Nd6



Exercise: Black has managed to oppose major pieces on the c-file; how does White continue?

Answer: 22 Bf4

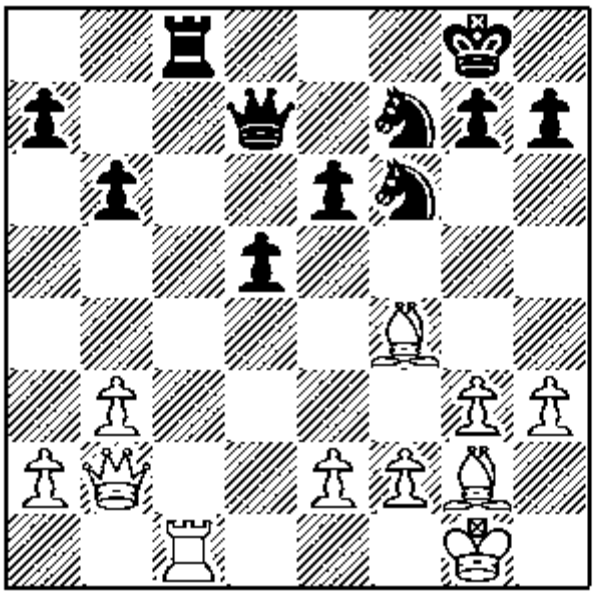
Stein improves his position step by step, preparing centralization with Be5. It is difficult for Black to find an antidote. 22 Bd4, with the same purpose, is also good.

22 ... Rxc3

Note that 22 ... e5? just loses the pawn after 23 Bxe5!. The pressure on the c-file is inexorable.

23 Qxc3 Rc8 24 Qb2 Nf7!?

The logical course is 24 ... Rxc1+ 25 Qxc1 Qc8, when White has to decide whether to exchange queens at once or wait for a more favourable moment; but presumably Parma did not fancy defending the pure minor piece ending.



Question: What is a possible drawback to Black's move?

Answer: 25 Rd1!?

Stein apparently believes that keeping the rook will give him more winning chances, and this may be true in a practical game. The immediate threat is e2-e4 which Black obviously must prevent. However, 25 Rd1 is actually the first step in a strategically risky plan where White voluntarily surrenders the c-file.

25 ... Qe7 26 g4

Stein's idea is to turn his attention to the kingside in order to try and disrupt Black's currently harmonious defensive units.

26 ... h6

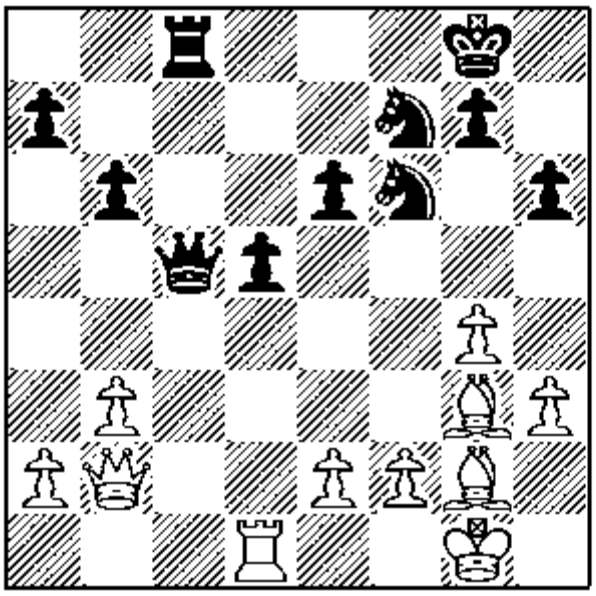
The tempting 26 ... e5 27 Bg3 d4 merely weakens the black pawn centre and makes it easier to attack, either with 28 f4 immediately or after the preparatory 28 Qd2, which gives White the option of e2-e3 as well.

27 Bg3?!

This is the moment when Stein definitely abandons the c-file, as the rook can no longer return to c1. Objectively better is 27 Be3, keeping both wings under observation.

27 ... Qc5!

Now Black is in command of the only open file and prepares ... Qc2.



Exercise: How can White anticipate Black's idea?

Answer: 28 Rf1

White wants to avoid an exchange of queens after ... Qc2 and therefore moves the rook from its undefended position on d1. The alternative was 28 Re1 Qc2 (28 ... Qxc3 29 Qxc3 Rxc3 allows White to break with 30 e4; even so Black is probably okay) 29 Qa3 Qd2 30 Kf1, when 30 ... a5 (or 30 ... Ng5!?) 31 Qa7 Rc1 32 f3 e5 leaves the position in dynamic equilibrium.

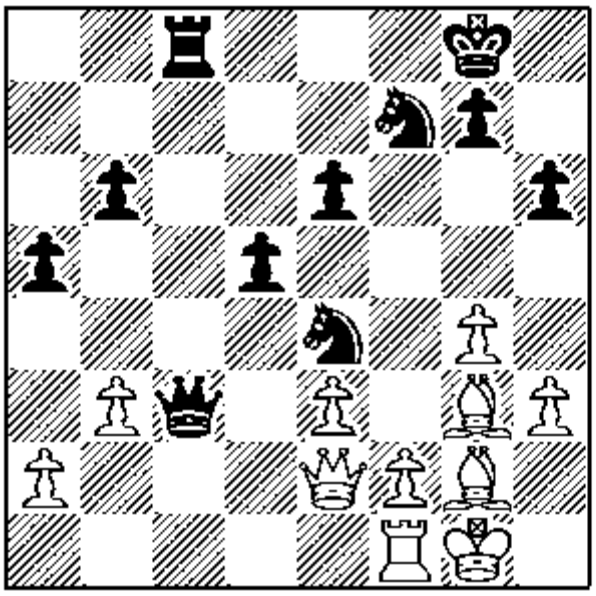
28 ... a5?!

Black safeguards the a7-pawn before advancing his queen, but it was stronger to proceed the other way round: 28 ... Qc2! 29 Qa3 a5 30 e3 (not 30 Qe7? Qxe2) 30 ... Ne4, when White has to find the extraordinary sequence 31 Bf4! e5 32 Bg3! Nxg3 33 fxg3 Qc5 34 b4!!, vacating the b3-square for the queen to exercise strong pressure on the d5-pawn. A likely continuation is 34 ... axb4 (34 ... Qxb4? 35 Qxb4 axb4 36 Bxd5 only means trouble for Black) 35 Qb3 Rd8 (or 35 ... e4 36 Bxe4!) 36 Rd1 d4 37 Rf1 Rd7 38 exd4 Qxd4+ (or 38 ... exd4 39 Rf5) 39 Kh2 and White has sufficient compensation for the pawn due to his dominance on the light squares.

29 e3 Qc3

Now 29 ... Qc2 is answered by 30 Qd4 Rc6 31 Qa4 with a balanced game.

30 Qe2 Ne4



Exercise: How should White react here?

31 Bh2?

This natural retreat is actually a mistake. In this position, rather than preserve the bishop pair, it is more important to eliminate, or at least dominate, one of the knights.

Answer: White should either play the simple 31 Bxe4 dxe4, followed by 32 Qa6 or 32 Qb5 with counterplay; or the more subtle 31 Bf4!? (trying to dominate the f7-knight) 31 ... e5 (31 ... g5?! 32 Bh2 Qc2 33 Qa6 is worse for Black, as ... Ng5 is no longer available – see the next note) 32 Bh2 Qc2 and then 33 Qa6 or 33 Qb5 again.

31 ... Qc6?

For no clear reason Parma rejects 31 ... Qc2, which was the logical and consistent move. Then 32 Qa6 is met by the knight raid 32 ... Nd2 33 Re1 Ng5! 34 Qe2 (there is nothing better) 34 ... Qxa2 and Black starts to pick up pawns. White might have to resort to 32 Qxc2 Rxc2 33 Bxe4 dxe4 34 a4 and try and hold the rook and minor piece endgame.

32 h4 Nf6?!

More active is 32 ... Nc3 33 Qc2 b5, followed by ... b5-b4, with pressure on the a2-pawn.

33 Bf4

Stein wants a lot from a single move. He both prepares g4-g5 and tries to provoke ... e6-e5, hoping that it will loosen Black's centre. 33 Bg3 and 33 f3 are more cautious and placid, but these moves are not according to Stein's active, slightly risky style.

33 ... Qc2?!

Black should accept the challenge with 33 ... e5. Perhaps he was worried about lines like 34 Bg3 Qe6 35 f4!? or even 34 g5!? Ne4 35 Bh2 hxg5 36 hxg5 Nexg5 37 Qg4, but Black is in no real trouble.

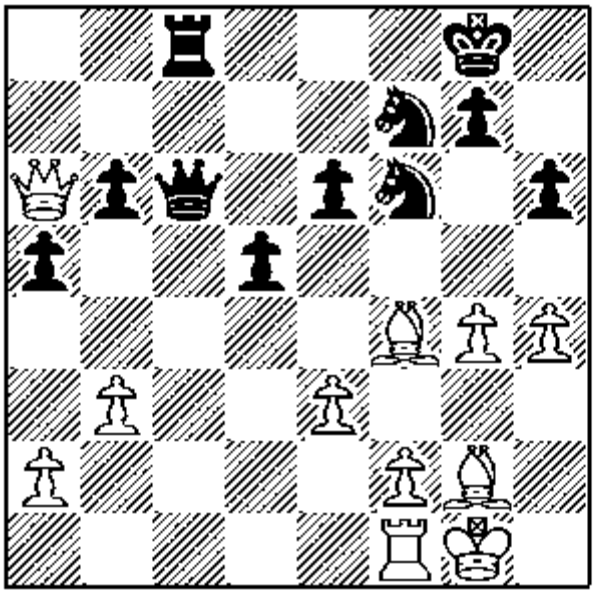
34 Qa6

Having asserted some control over the black knights, White's queen raid is stronger now.

34 ... Qc6

The black queen goes back again. Instead, 34 ... e5?! 35 Bg3 secures a slight advantage by threatening both Qxb6 and g5-g6, harassing the black knights; while 34 ... Nxg4? 35 Qxb6, attacking the e6- and a5-pawns, is clearly to White's advantage. After 35 ... e5 36 Bg3 Nf6 (36 ... Qc5 fails to 37 Qe6 Nf6 38 Bxe5 Re8 39 Bd4!, keeping the pawn for nothing) 37 Qxa5

d4 38 Bh3, White's raking bishops are too powerful and he has an extra pawn as well.



Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Answer: 35 e4!

Notice that this long-awaited breakthrough opens up the f4-c1 diagonal, so Black has to reckon with Rc1 again.

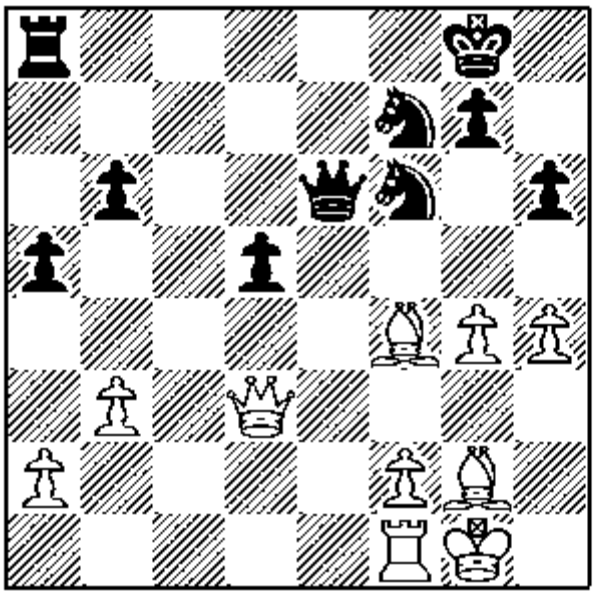
35 ... Ra8?

It is worth saying once more: chess is about timing – and this move is mistimed. Of course not 35 ... dxe4?? since 36 Rc1 wins easily, and at first sight 35 ... Nxe4! 36 Bxe4 looks much the same (36 ... dxe4?? 37 Rc1 etc); but here Black can use 36 ... Ra8! as an intermediary move which solves his problems. After 37 Qe2 dxe4 38 Re1 e5 or 37 Bxd5 exd5 38 Qd3 Re8, the position is about equal.

36 exd5 exd5

The verdict is not changed by 36 ... Nxd5, creating an outpost for the knight, as after either 37 Qd3 or 37 Qc4, White's advantage is beyond doubt. The bishop at g2 is particularly strong.

37 Qd3 Qe6



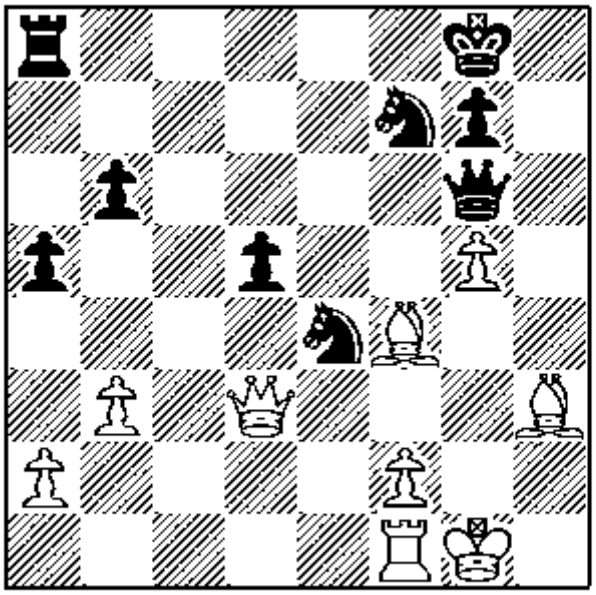
Exercise: Should White continue aggressively with 38 g3, or calmly with 38 f3 - ?

Answer: 38 g5!

When Stein has the choice between an aggressive move and a quiet move (such as 38 f3), he invariably chooses the former. In any case, given that White has already played the offensive moves g3-g4 and h2-h4, and is in the possession of the bishop pair in a rather open position, he is almost obliged to expand their horizons with this logical follow-up.

38 ... hxg5 39 hxg5 Ne4 40 Bh3 Qg6??

As so often happens, a player blunders at the time control. The only way to stay in the game is 40 ... Qc6 41 Rc1 Nc5, although White keeps a clear advantage with his long-range pieces. For example, 42 Qf5! (threatening g5-g6; but not 42 g6? due to 42 ... Nxd3 43 gxf7+ Kxf7 44 Rxc6 Nxf4 with advantage to Black) 42 ... g6 43 Qc2 Re8 44 Rd1 Re4 45 Bg3 Nxg5 46 Bg2 and so on.



Exercise: How to capitalize on Black's mistake?

41 Qxd5?!

Answer: Stein's move is good enough, but 41 f3! was much stronger, exploiting the self-pin on the e4-knight, when 41 ... Nfxg5 (the only spanner left to throw) 42 Qxd5+ wins decisive material in all variations: 42 ... Nf7+ 43 Bg2, or 42 ... Ne6+ 43 Kh2, or 42 ... Kh7 43 Bf5. The game would have been significantly shorter after this continuation.

41 ... Rd8 42 Qe6 Qxe6 43 Bxe6 Kf8 44 Bc4?!

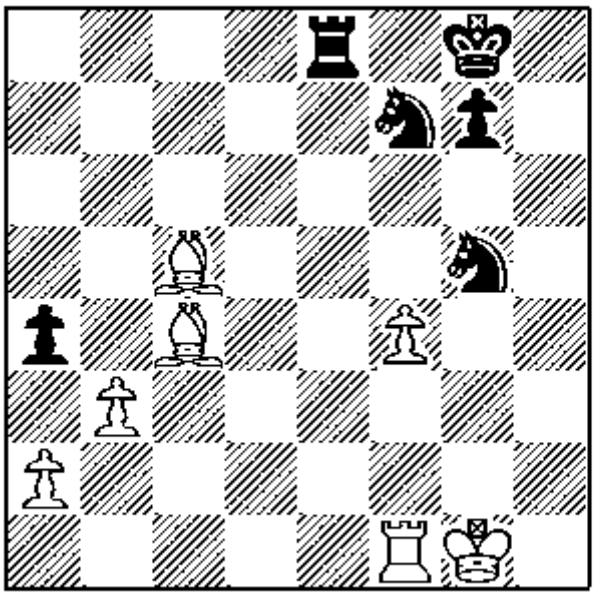
Here 44 Bc7 Rd2 45 f4 Rxa2 46 Bxb6 is more convincing, when the bishop pair dominates the whole board. The text allows 44 ... Nd2 45 Rc1 Nxg5!, activating the knights, when Black can put up more defence.

44 ... Re8? 45 Be3 Nexg5

Defending the b-pawn with 45 ... Rb8 only results in a lost position on the kingside instead.

46 Bxb6 a4 47 Bc5+ Kg8 48 f4!

Stein utilizes all his forces except the king, who seems happy to watch events unfold from a distant vantage point.



48 ... Ne4 49 Re1 axb3 50 axb3 g5

Black's only hope is to exchange off as many pawns as he can, striving for the impossible defence. Kotov analyses 50 ... Nf6 51 Rxe8+! Nxe8 52 f5! and Black can hardly move without losing material; meanwhile the b-pawn goes through.

51 Bd5 Nf6

Equivalent to resigning, but if Black elects to save the pawn with 51 ... Rc8 52 Be7 Nc3 53 Bc4 gxf4, then 54 Bf6 Na2 55 Re7 Rf8 56 Rb7 puts his entire army under lock and key. Naturally, no one wants to experience such a humiliating variation.

52 Rxe8+ Nxe8 53 fxg5 Kg7 54 Bxf7 1-0

A really good fighting game, showing Stein's ability to take positional risks to increase his winning (and losing) chances.

In the 1972 USSR Team Championship, Stein played on board two for the Ukraine (Vladimir Savon, as the reigning USSR Champion, could hardly be denied top board) and

scored two wins, one loss (to Karpov) and five draws. The following game was Stein's only victory against Smyslov in serious games. They played each other on ten occasions, and the score was 5-5 with a win each and eight draws.

Vasily Smyslov (1921-2010) became a grandmaster in 1950 and world champion in 1957, defeating Mikhail Botvinnik (1911-95) by 12½-9 (but losing a return match a year later). The main reason for Smyslov's victory was his great endgame skill. In his youth he was mostly influenced by Tarrasch and Nimzowitsch. As a personality he had a placid disposition and chose his words carefully, making few enemies as well as few close friends. Like Taimanov, he was very skilful in the musical arena and was a great singer. Smyslov remained an active and strong grandmaster well into his seventies, winning the inaugural World Senior Championship in 1991, and finally retiring in 2001 at the age of eighty.

Game 57
L.Stein-V.Smyslov
USSR Team Championship, Moscow 1972
English Opening

1 c4 Nf6

A flexible move, maintaining options of either ... e7-e5 or ... c7-c5, as well as the ability to head into any type of Indian Defence should White decide to play d2-d4.

2 Nc3 e6 3 Nf3

Another continuation more in the spirit of the English is 3 e4 – the Mikenas-Carls Variation, which eliminates the Queen's Gambit as an option for Black (3 ... d5 is met by either 4 e5 or 4 cxd5 exd5 5 e5).

3 ... b6

Black sets up in the fashion of the Queen's Indian Defence. Other options are:

a) 3 ... Bb4, the Nimzo-English, inspired by the Nimzo-Indian Defence.

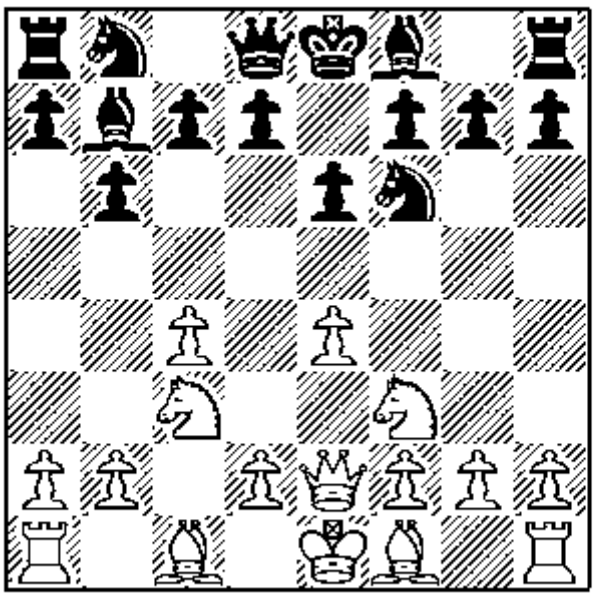
b) 3 ... d5, transposing to the Queen's Gambit Declined.

c) 3 ... c5, reverting to the ... e7-e6 systems after 1 ... c5.

4 e4

This is definitely the critical response to Black's attempted Queen's Indian. The fact that the d2-pawn is still at home, and able to control the e4-square, means that Black's set-up is slightly less justified, though it remains perfectly sound.

4 ... Bb7 5 Qe2!?



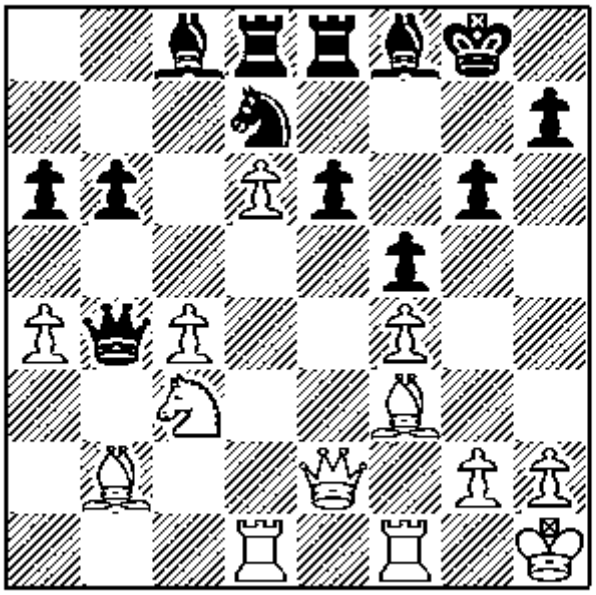
This strange, ultramodern move is reminiscent of Chigorin Variation in the French Defence (1 e4 e6 2 Qe2). Petrosian gave it the "?!" mark in Informator #13; while Hartston and Keene, in their book Karpov-Korchnoi 1974, comment that "White's whole set-up with Qe2 smacks of artificiality."

The first time 5 Qe2 seems to have been played was in L.Portisch-A.Matanovic, Yerevan 1965. As it happens, Stein participated in this tournament as well (see Game 32), and as he was a keen observer of other games, he may very well have got the inspiration there. One player who became quite enamoured of this awkward-looking queen move was Viktor Korchnoi, who used it on several occasions in the '70s and '80s (and indeed beat Petrosian with it).

Question: What is the idea of the move?

Answer: White plans e4-e5 without allowing the black knight to e4, which would have been the case after the immediate 5 e5. It also, like the Chigorin French, aims to prevent the liberating ... d7-d5, at least in the early part of the game.

Apart from the solid 5 d3, which Smyslov played himself, another option is Hübner's and Romanishin's move 5 Bd3, planning e4-e5, as well as Bc2 followed by d2-d4, and is regarded as the most critical test to Black's opening choice. L.Polugaevsky-T.V.Petrosian, Kislovodsk 1982, continued 5 ... d6 (5 ... c5 6 0-0 d6 7 Bc2 e5 clamps down on the d4-square; however, after 8 b4!? Nc6 9 Ba4 or 8 ... cxb4 9 Nd5, followed by d2-d4, White can count on a lasting initiative) 6 Bc2 c5 7 d4 cxd4 8 Nxd4 a6 9 b3 Be7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Bb2 Nc6 (11 ... Nbd7 avoids Polugaevsky's battery with queen and bishops; instead, White will continue 12 f4, followed by Qe2, Rad1 and Kh1 with another strong and active set-up) 12 Nxc6 Bxc6 13 Qd3! (notice the latent pressure on the two diagonals towards the black king: White to move plays Nd5! – check this! – what is happening?) 13 ... g6 (Black blocks the b1-h7 pressure, but opens another avenue for the b2-bishop; not 13 ... b5?! 14 Nd5! and White was clearly better in K.Spraggett-I.V.Ivanov, Quebec 1983) 14 a4 Qc7 15 f4 Rad8 16 Qe2 Rfe8 17 Rad1 Bb7 18 Kh1 Qc5? (after 18 ... Nd7, White only has a slight advantage, according to Polugaevsky) 19 e5! Nd7?? (19 ... dxe5 20 fxe5 Nd7 21 Be4 Qc7 has at least prevented White from taking on d6) 20 Be4! Bc8 21 exd6 Bf8 (21 ... Bxd6 runs into 22 Bxg6! hxg6 23 Ne4 and wins) 22 Bf3 f5 23 b4! Qxb4



Exercise (combination alert): What is White's strongest move?

Answer: 24 Nd5! Qc5 (24 ... exd5 25 Bxd5+ is mate next move) 25 Nc7 (trapping the e8-rook, or if 25 ... Bxd6 then 26 Nxe6! wins) 25 ... Nb8 26 Nxe8 Rxe8 27 Qd3 1-0 (at the end 27 Rd5! Qb4 28 Qe5 is more spectacular). A very instructive game, showing how dangerous the bishops can be when standing next to each other on adjacent diagonals, pointing at the opponent's king.

5 ... Bb4

According to MegaBase, this game was the first time this move was played. Instead, Portisch-Matanovic saw 5 ... c5 6 e5 Ng8 7 d4 cxd4 (7 ... Bxf3?! 8 Qxf3 Nc6 9 d5! Nxe5 10 Qg3 d6 11 Bf4 Ng6 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 0-0-0 gave White strong play for the pawn in V.Korchnoi-T.V.Petrosian, 3rd matchgame, Odessa 1974) 8 Nxd4 Nc6 9 Nxc6 (here 9 Ndb5!? a6 10 Nd6+ Bxd6 11 exd6 is an interesting option, as in L.Ftacnik-T.Petric, Czech League 2006) 9 ... Bxc6 10 Bd2 Ne7 11 0-0-0 Qc7 12 Kb1 Nf5 with an equal game.

6 e5 Ng8

Black's opening is in the spirit of Alekhine's Defence (1 e4 Nf6), where Black provokes the e4-pawn to advance with gain of tempo so as to be able to attack it with an early ... d7-d6. On this occasion, the black bishop on the long light diagonal increases in strength as well.

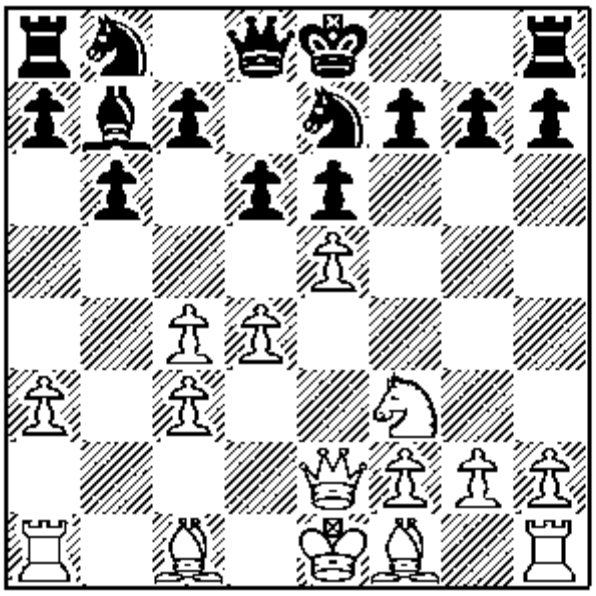
7 d4 d6

Team Karpov subsequently developed 7 ... Ne7! as the most reliable variation, keeping options with the d-pawn. V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov, Candidates final (3rd matchgame), Moscow 1974, continued 8 Bd2 0-0 and now 9 0-0-0?! d5!, attacking the c4-pawn, gave Black a slightly preferable position. Four games later, Korchnoi tried 8 Qd3!? d5 9 exd6 cxd6 10 a3 Bxc3+ 11 Qxc3 0-0 12 b4 Nd7 13 Be2 Rc8 14 0-0 Ba6 15 Qb3 and now 15 ... d5 yet again left Black standing well.

8 a3

The most aggressive option, in the spirit of the Sämisch Nimzo-Indian. The first game of the Korchnoi-Karpov match saw 8 Bd2 dxe5 (8 ... Ne7 looks better here too) 9 dxe5 Na6 10 0-0-0 Qe7 11 g3 0-0-0 12 Bg2 Nc5 13 Bg5 f6 14 Rxd8+ Qxd8 15 Rd1 Qe8 16 exf6 gxf6 17 Bd2 Ne7 18 Ne4!, when White had a slight advantage. All three games were drawn, incidentally.

8 ... Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 Ne7



Exercise: How did Stein proceed?

Answer: 10 h4!?

A risky move like this fits Stein like hand in glove. It seems that White has broken almost all the classical rules of chess; how can he get away with it? In fact, Black has broken some classical rules too by playing in a rather hypermodern fashion, and has the problem that his required pressure on the centre is not very strong here. According to Steinitz's principles, when the centre is solid enough, it is vital to attack quickly on the flank in order to create weaknesses. This position may be regarded as a borderline case of that principle.

Seeing a move like 10 h4, you cannot help thinking about the famous game A.Alekhine-A.Rubinstein, The Hague 1921, where the h-pawn laid the foundation for a dark square control on the kingside: 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 a6 4 c5!? Nc6 5 Bf4 Nge7 6 Nc3 Ng6 7 Be3 b6 8 cxb6 axb6 9 h4! Bd6 10 h5 Nge7 11 h6 g6 12 Bg5 0-0 13 Bf6 and so forth. The classically disposed Rubinstein may well have been confused after this sequence. Compare this situation with the current game! Smyslov had many similarities with Rubinstein, and Stein wanted to be sure they were playing his type of game, rather than Smyslov's. Check Stein's loss to Smyslov at the 1969 USSR Championship and you will understand the kind of game Stein was keen to avoid at all cost.

10 ... Nd7 11 h5!

White goes all in!

11 ... Bxf3

The most solid response is 11 ... h6, as suggested by Petrosian. In that case Black does not need to worry about h5-h6 anymore, weakening his dark squares, and can focus on the centre with moves such as ... Bxf3. If White elects logically to reinforce the centre with 12 Bf4, Black has the Morphy-like continuation 12 ... 0-0! and if 13 exd6 cxd6 14 Bxd6 then 14 ... e5!!, offering another pawn to open the game and exploit his lead in development (remember Schulten-Morphy, mentioned in the notes to Game 40). Almost no matter what White plays, whether he takes on e5 or not, Black will follow with ... Re8 and ... Nf5 or ... Nc6, depending on circumstances. For example, 15 0-0-0 (or 15 dxe5 Re8 16 0-0-0 Nf5 17 Qd3 Nxd6 18 Qxd6 Bxf3 19 gxf3 Nxe5 and so on; while 15 Bxe5 Re8 16 0-0-0 Nc6 17 Qd2 Ncxe5 18 dxe5

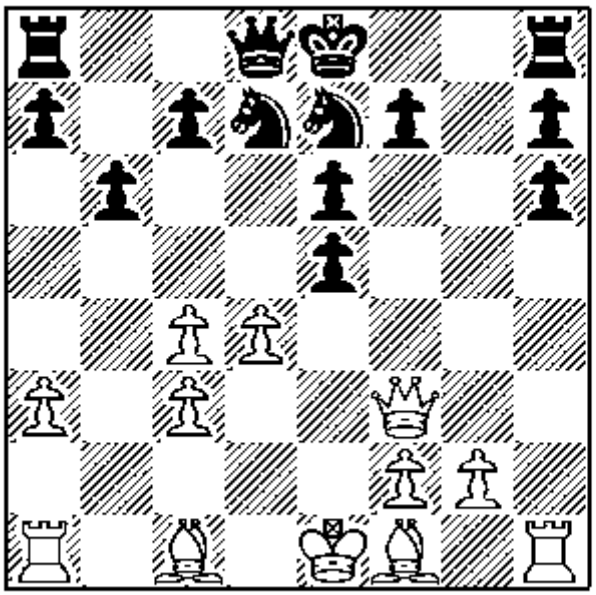
Qe7! 19 Qxd7 Qxa3+ is a draw) 15 ... Re8 16 Qc2 exd4 17 cxd4 Rc8 18 Kb1 b5 19 c5 Nf5! with sufficient counterplay for the sacrificed pawn.

12 Qxf3 dxe5 13 h6

There were a lot of people watching this game, trying to figure out what was going on. Actually, sacrificing a pawn at a later stage in the opening is much more clever than going for a gambit after only a few moves, because then the position is not matured.

13 ... gxh6?

Stein called such positions "Athenian ruins". Petrosian assessed 13 ... g6 14 dxe5 as clearly better for White, but this was preferable to the text. After 14 ... c6 (not 14 ... Nxe5?? 15 Qf6, winning material) 15 Bg5 Qc7 16 Qe2!, for example, Black at least has the 16 ... b5 break to challenge his opponent's hold on the position and gain some squares for his pieces, even if White keeps a slight advantage with more terrain and the bishop pair.



Exercise: How does White exploit this situation, strategically and tactically?

14 Bxh6

Not 14 dxe5? Nxe5 15 Qf6?, since 15 ... N7g6 defends everything.

Answer: 14 Bd3!, practically forcing 14 ... Ng6, and only then 15 Bxh6 gives White a stronger version of the game. One plausible variation is 15 ... f5 16 Bg5! Qxg5 (not 16 ... Qc8? 17 Qc6 Kf7 18 g4! and wins, or 16 ... e4 17 Bxe4! fxe4 18 Qg4 Nf6 19 Qxe6+ Qe7 20 Qxf6 and so on) 17 Qxa8+ Ke7 18 Qc6 e4 19 Bf1 with a clear advantage to White.

14 ... exd4

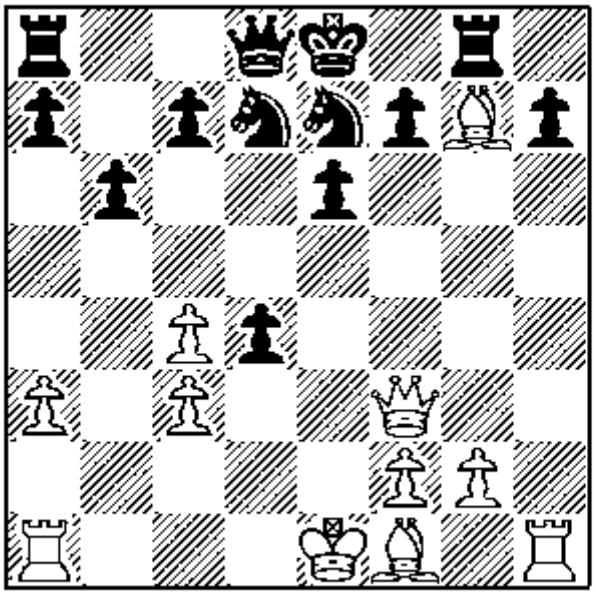
If Black tries the natural 14 ... Nf5, White can choose between simply 15 Bd2, intending 15 ... exd4 16 g4 with advantage; or else 15 Bg5 f6 16 g4!, as suggested by GM Speelman, when 16 ... Nxd4! 17 cxd4 fxg5 18 Rh6 Ke7 19 Qc6 Kf7! 20 Bg2 Kg7 21 Rxe6 Nf8 looks to be Black's strongest continuation, but the surprising 22 0-0-0! Nxe6 23 dxe5! leads to a very favourable endgame for White after the forced 23 ... Qe8 24 Rd7+ Kf8 25 Qxa8 Qxa8 26 Bxa8, despite the tricky black knight. One variation runs 26 ... Nc5 27 Rxc7 Nd3+ 28 Kc2 Nxe5 29 Rxa7 Nxg4 30 Bb7 Nxf2 31 Ra8+ Kg7 32 Rxh8 Kxh8 33 c5! bxc5 34 a4 Ng4 35 a5 Ne5 36 Kc3! and wins.

15 Bg7

Here 15 cxd4 Nf5 16 Rd1 also comes into consideration. If Black replies 16 ... Rc8, to

avoid the tactical trick Bg5, White continues 17 Bd3! Nxh6 (after 17 ... Nxd4 18 Qg3 c5 19 Bg7, White wins the exchange as well as the h-pawn) 18 Rxh6 Qg5 19 Rh5 Qf6 20 Qe3 with good compensation for the pawn.

15 ... Rg8



Exercise: What is White's most accurate continuation?

16 Rxh7?!

Answer: It is better to capture the centre pawn first, when 16 ... Nf5 17 Rxh7 transposes to the game, while avoiding the possibility in the next note.

16 ... Nf5?!

Correct is 16 ... Nf8!, forcing the exchange of the bishop with 17 Bxf8 Rxf8. After 18 Rd1 c5 19 cxd4 cxd4 20 Rh4 (20 Rxd4?! Qxd4 21 Qxa8+ Kd7! 22 Qxf8 Qe4+ is completely equal) 20 ... Rc8! (20 ... Nf5 is met by 21 Re4) 21 Rhxd4 Qc7, Black's compact position is not easy to crack.

17 Bxd4 c5

Now 17 ... Nf8 can be answered by 18 Rh5! (both 18 Qc6+? Ke7 19 Rh3 Nxd4 20 cxd4 Rg4! and 18 Bf6?! Qxf6 19 Qxa8+ Ke7 20 Rh3 Ng3! 21 Qf3 Qe5+ 22 Be2 Nxe2 23 Qxe2 Qxe2+ 24 Kxe2 Rxg2 give Black good drawing chances) 18 ... Nxd4 19 cxd4 Nd7 20 Rh7! Nf6 21 Rh4 and White is clearly better with his more active position. Notice the use of the king's rook to its full potential on the open h-file before being transferred to the semi-open f-file.

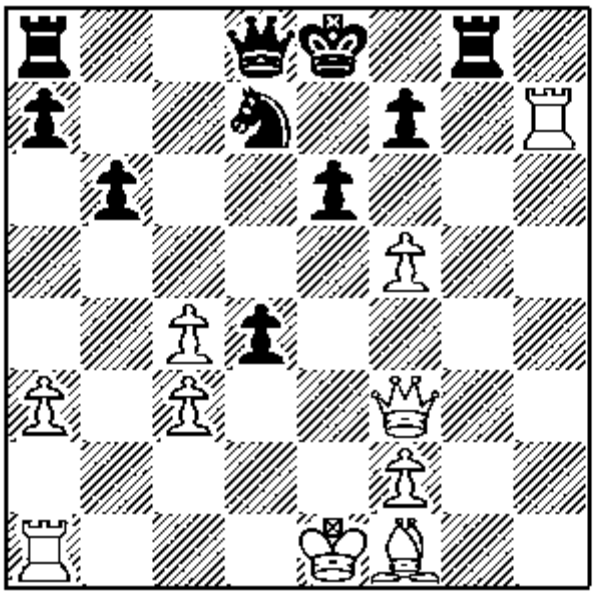
18 g4!

A move in the same attacking spirit as 10 h4.

18 ... cxd4

After 18 ... Nd6 19 Bg7!, Black is under tremendous pressure on the d-file; for example, 19 ... Rc8 20 Qf4! e5 (or 20 ... Qc7 21 0-0-0) 21 Qh6 Ne4 22 Bd3 Ng5 23 Bf5! Nxh7 24 Qxh7 Ke7 25 0-0-0 and wins.

19 gxf5



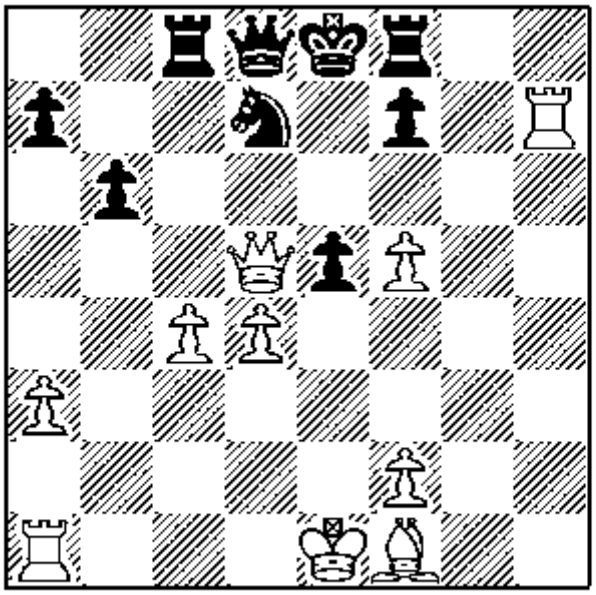
19 ... e5

Black's best chance is probably 19 ... exf5 20 0-0-0 Nf6 21 Rh3 Ne4, although after 22 Kc2!, White's advantage is beyond any doubt. Instead, 19 ... Nf6 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 Rh6 dxc3 is well met by 22 Bd3! Rf8 (or 22 ... Rg1+ 23 Ke2 Rxa1 24 Rxf6) 23 0-0-0 and White wins easily.

Exercise: How does White respond to the active 19 ... Ne5 - ?

Answer: Stein intended 20 Qe4 dxc3 21 Ra2! and wins. The natural 21 Rd1? is a serious mistake on account of 21 ... c2! 22 Rc1 (22 Rxd8+? Rxd8 23 Qxc2 Nf3+ 24 Ke2 Nd4+ is even worse) 22 ... Qd4! 23 Qxa8+ Ke7 24 Qb7+ Kf6 25 fxe6 and now, as Crouch rightly points out, 25 ... Qc3+ 26 Ke2 Qxc4+ 27 Ke3 Qc3+ 28 Ke2 Qd3+ 29 Ke1 Qxh7 30 exf7 Rf8 is good for Black.

20 Qd5 Rf8 21 cxd4 Rc8



Exercise: What is White's strongest move here?

22 Rd1?

Of course not 22 dxe5?? Rc5, when Black is completely fine. It is obviously correct to move the rook to d1, but there is no need to leave the king in the centre, particularly as White may need the e1-square for his rook.

Answer: The correct move is therefore 22 0-0-0!, as the king is in no danger on the queenside. Then White does threaten 23 dxe5, while 22 ... exd4 23 Re1+ and 22 ... Qg5+ 23 Kb2 Qxf5 24 Bh3 wins on the spot; so Black has nothing better than 22 ... Qe7 23 Rh3 (defending the a3-pawn and threatening d4xe5 again) 23 ... f6, when the queen manoeuvre 24 Qb7 Rb8 25 Qc7, followed by d4xe5 or Be2-h5+, decides the game very easily.

22 ... Qe7?

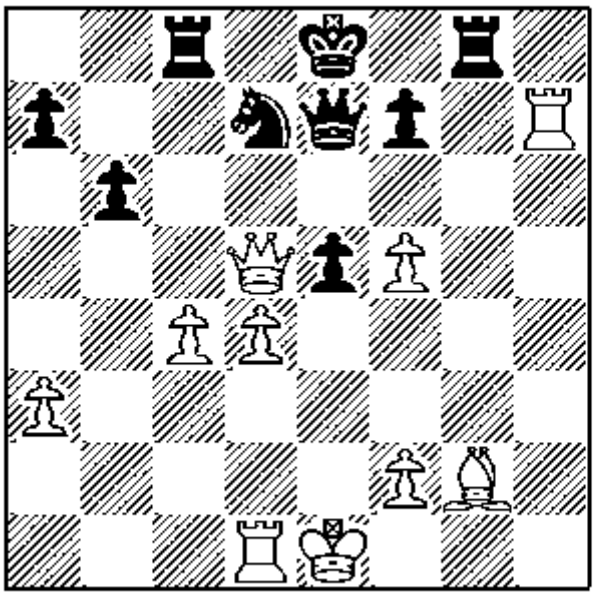
Black can put up a much better defence after 22 ... exd4, with the idea that 23 Rxd4 Nc5! forces the queens off. If White tries 23 Rd2! (threatening the deadly Re2+) 23 ... Qf6 24 Rxd4, intending 24 ... Nc5?! 25 Rd2! Rh8 (the only move) 26 Re2+ Kf8 27 Rxh8+ Qxh8 28 Qd6+ Kg8 29 Re3! and so on, then 24 ... Qc6 achieves the same aim, even if 25 Rh6! Qxd5 26 cxd5 still leaves White with a clear advantage in the endgame.

23 Bg2

Crouch's 23 Be2 is good too, giving the king some cover.

23 ... Rg8

Black also frees the square beside his king. On 23 ... exd4+, Stein obviously planned 24 Kf1 Nf6 25 Qxd4 Nxh7 26 Re1, when the queen and bishop are clearly superior to Black's disorganized forces, while the greedy 23 ... Qxa3+ is well met by 24 c5!.



Exercise: What is White's most convincing continuation?

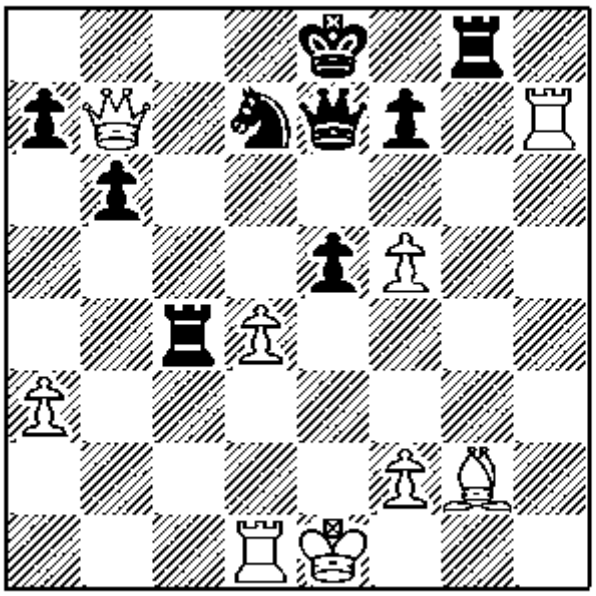
Answer: 24 Qb7!

The most precise. Another option is 24 dxe5, with the spectacular idea 24 ... Nf6 (or 24 ... Qxe5+ 25 Kf1! Qxd5 26 Bxd5 Rf8 27 Bxf7+! Rxf7 28 Re1+ Kf8 29 Rh8+ etc) 25 Qb5+ Kf8 26 e6!! Nxh7 27 Rd7 and wins.

24 ... Rxc4?!

Black is lost anyway, but it is always one's duty to defend as skilfully as possible, to make it more difficult for the opponent to achieve the full point. Here 24 ... exd4+ 25 Kf1 Qc5 offers more resistance, although 26 Qe4+! Kf8 (after 26 ... Qe5 27 Qxe5+ Nxe5 28 Re1,

White wins a piece; and 26 ... Kd8 27 Rxd4 is also game over) 27 Rxf7+! Kxf7 28 Qe6+ Kf8 (or 28 ... Kg7 29 Bd5! Qf8 30 Qg6+ Kh8 31 Qh5+ Kg7 32 Rxd4 and Black has run out of defence) 29 Bd5! (a beautiful intermediary move) 29 ... Rg7 30 f6 wins in any case, as both the knight and g7-rook will fall.

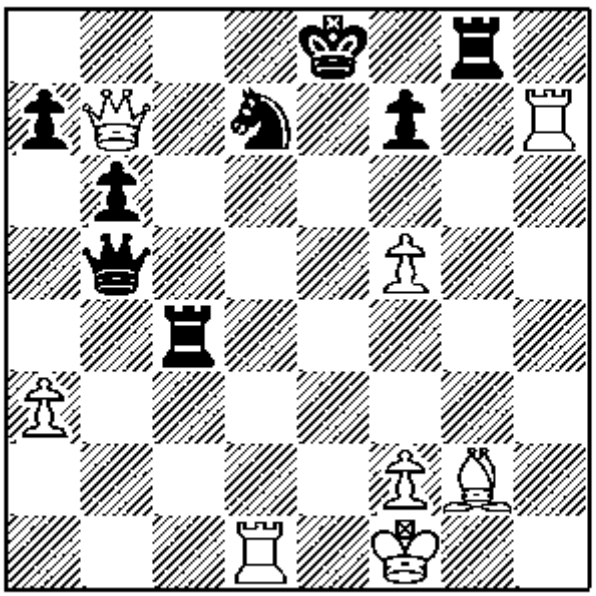


Exercise: Can you spot a way to force immediate resignation?

Answer: 25 dxe5

Surprisingly, Stein overlooks the simple two move sequence 25 Qa8+! Qd8 26 Qd5, winning a rook due to the twin threats at f7 and c4. Very possibly both players were short on time by this stage, as the game has been very complicated from scratch!

25 ... Qxe5+ 26 Kf1 Qb5



Exercise: What is White's strongest move?

27 Kg1

The obvious winning move, which most of us would play in an actual game. However, IM Colin Crouch (1956-2015) unearthed an inhuman solution:

Answer: 27 a4! Rxa4+ 28 Kg1, threatening Qc8+ now that the rook has been deflected from the c-file. Black has nothing better than 28 ... Rag4, after which the computer sorts out the details: 29 Re1+ Kd8 30 Qa8+ Kc7 31 Qxa7+! (not yet 31 Rc1+?? Kd6 32 Rc6+?? Ke5 and Black wins!) 31 ... Kd8 32 Qa8+ Kc7 33 Rc1+ Kd6 and now 34 Rc6+! Ke5 35 Qa1+! Rd4 36 Qe1+ Kxf5 37 Rxf7+ Kg4 38 Qe6+ Kh4 39 Qh3+ Kg5 40 Qh6+ Kg4 41 Bf3 mate. The mobility of the white queen in this variation was striking!

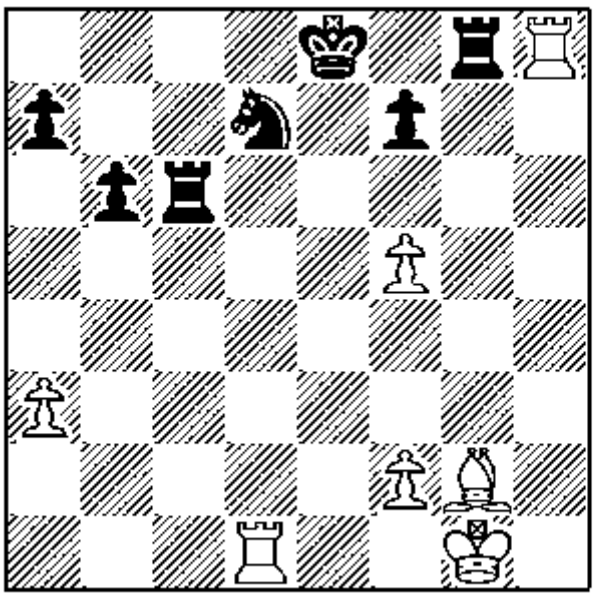
27 ... Qc6

27 ... Rcg4 does not help after 28 Qc8+ Ke7 29 Rxf7+ Kxf7 30 Rxd7+ Qxd7 (or 30 ... Kf6 31 Rd6+ Ke5 32 Qe6+ Kf4 33 Qe3+ and so on) 31 Qxd7+ Kf8 32 f6 Rxg2+ 33 Kf1 and Black must give up a rook on g7 to avoid mate.

28 Qxc6

The immediate 28 Rh8! Qxb7 29 Rxg8+ Ke7 30 Bxb7 wins a whole rook!

28 ... Rxc6 29 Rh8!



A variation on the same tactical theme, though here the net profit is a knight.

29 ... Rcg6

Or just 29 ... Rxh8 30 Bxc6 and wins.

30 fxg6 Rxh8 31 Bc6 Rg8 32 Bxd7+ Ke7 33 Bf5 fxg6 34 Rd7+ Kf6 35 Bd3 Ra8 1-0

Smyslov resigned without waiting for 36 Rd6+, picking up the g6-pawn.

Stein's major triumph of 1972 was at the Zagreb International, where he was the clear winner on 9½/13, with six wins and seven draws. Damjanovic, Hort and Marovic shared second place 1½ points behind. We will look at two games from this event.

Dragoljub Minic (1937-2005) was born in Titograd (now Podgorica) and became an IM in 1964. He was joint Yugoslav Champion in 1962 and represented Yugoslavia at the Olympiads in Varna 1962 (scoring 6½/8) and Siegen 1970 (here an excellent 8½/10), helping them to second and third places respectively. Minic is renowned for his great analytical skill and deep knowledge of the Sicilian Defence. He was awarded an Honorary GM title by FIDE in 1991.

Game 58

D.Minic-L.Stein

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+

Despite his own expertise, it seems Minic did not wish to enter into battle with Stein in the sharp main lines of the Open Sicilian, and opted instead for the "quiet" Moscow Variation. As the game turned out, he probably regretted his decision.

3 ... Bd7

Stein responds with the most logical move. It is in Black's interest to exchange pieces.

4 Bxd7+

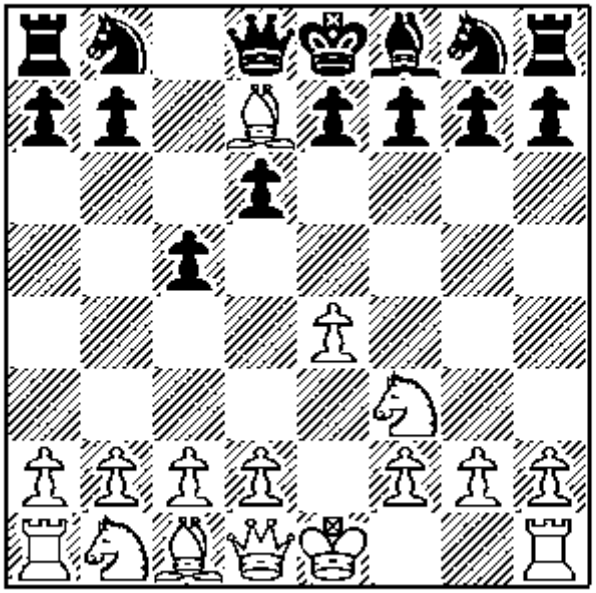
It is also possible to defend the bishop in the manner of the Bogo-Indian Defence, leading to positions that are relatively unexplored:

a) 4 Qe2 as played, for instance, in N.Rossolimo-H.Kramer, Beverwijk 1950.

b) 4 a4, which is a pet line of the Russian GM Konstantin Chernyshov.

c) 4 c4 as played by the Ukrainian GM Oleg Romanishin in the 1970s and '80s.

The third move has actually been quite popular with strong grandmasters over the past couple of years. One game continued 4 ... Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 d4 cxd4 7 Nxd4 Bg7 8 Be3 Nc6 9 f3 0-0 10 0-0 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 Bxb5 12 cxb5 Qa5 13 Qd3 Qb4 14 Rfd1 Rfc8 15 a3 Qb3 16 Qe2 e6?! 17 Rd3, when White had strong pressure on the d-file and won in 48 moves in Hou Yifan-A.Ushenina, FIDE Women's Grand Prix, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014.



Question: Should Black recapture with the knight or the queen?

Answer: 4 ... Qxd7

Stein always played this way against the Moscow Variation, preferring to develop the queen's knight to its most active square. The alternative 4 ... Nxd7 looks comparatively passive, though it is fully playable and may even lead to a Hedgehog position. M.Tal-E.Geller, USSR Championship, Minsk 1979, continued 5 0-0 Ngf6 6 Qe2 e6 7 b3 Be7 8 Bb2 0-0 9 c4 Re8 10 d4 cxd4 11 Nxd4 Qb6 12 Rd1 Nc5 (a good post for the d7-knight which now attacks enemy territory) 13 Nc3 Rad8 and the position is close to equal.

5 c4

Instead, B.Goldenov-L.Stein, USSR Championship semi-final, Sverdlovsk 1963, saw 5 0-

0 Nc6 6 d4 (6 b3!? is a very interesting variation, but that is another story) 6 ... cxd4 7 Nxd4 Nf6 8 Re1 g6 9 Nc3 Bg7 10 Bg5 h6! 11 Bh4 Nxd4 12 Qxd4 0-0 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 e5 Bg7 15 Qd5 e6! 16 Qd3 (after 16 Qxd6?! Qxd6 17 exd6 Rfd8 18 Rad1 Bxc3! 19 bxc3 Rac8 20 Re3 Rc6 21 Red3 Ra6, Black regains the pawn with a slight advantage) 16 ... Rfd8 17 Rad1 Rac8 18 exd6? (exchanging major pieces with 18 Qxd6 Qxd6 19 Rxd6 Rxd6 20 exd6 is better, though after 20 ... Rd8 21 Rd1 Kf8!, White still has to work for a draw) 18 ... Rc6 19 Qe3 Rxd6 20 Rxd6 Qxd6 21 Qxa7? (21 Ne4 Qa6 22 Qb3? fails to 22 ... Qe2!; passive defence with 21 g3 Qb4 22 Rb1 was necessary) 21 ... Qb4 (Black is now winning) 22 Qe3 Qxb2 23 Ne4 Qxc2 24 a3 Rd3 25 Qc1 Qxc1 26 Rxc1 Bb2 0-1 (as another pawn falls).

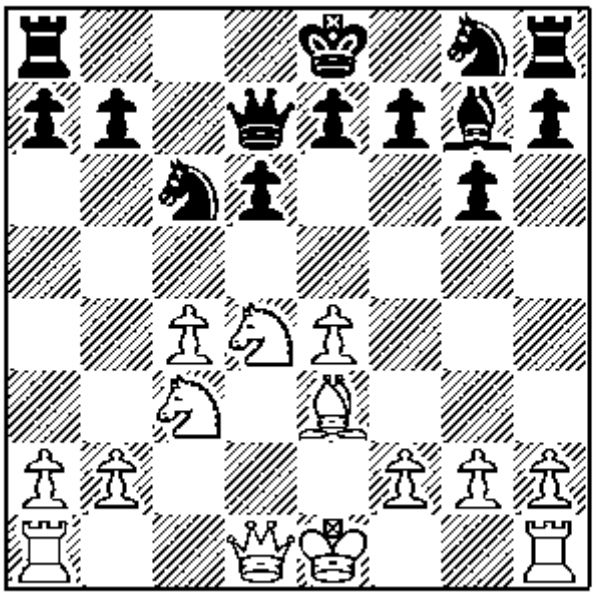
5 ... Nc6

Black can actually win a pawn with 5 ... Qg4? here, but White gets open lines and a huge lead in development. For example, 6 0-0 Qxe4 7 d4 cxd4 8 Nxd4 Nc6 9 Nb5 0-0-0 10 Be3 a6 (or 10 ... Kb8 11 Qa4! a6 12 N5c3 Qh4 13 Nd2, followed by b2-b4-b5) 11 N1c3 Qxc4 12 b3 Qh4 13 Na7+ Kb8 14 Nxc6+ bxc6 15 Qd3 with a clear advantage in Geo.Meier-D.Haroutjunian, European Championship, Plovdiv 2008.

6 Nc3 g6 7 d4

If White wants a space advantage, to utilize the privilege of having started the game, it is necessary to play d2-d4 before Black settles his bishop at g7, controlling and cementing the d4-square for ever with ... Nd4.

7 ... cxd4 8 Nxd4 Bg7 9 Be3



9 ... Nh6

Another approach is 9 ... Nf6 10 f3 0-0 11 0-0 a6 12 a4 Rac8 13 Nde2 (or 13 b3 e6 14 Rc1 Rfd8 15 Qd2 Na5 16 Nce2 Qc7 17 Qa2 was a quick draw in I.V.Platonov-L.Polugaevsky, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1971) 13 ... e6 14 Kh1 Qc7 15 Rb1 Nb4! 16 b3 d5! and Black equalized in R.Van Kampen-Wei Yi, Tromsø Olympiad 2014.

10 f3

White must prevent the knight leap to g4.

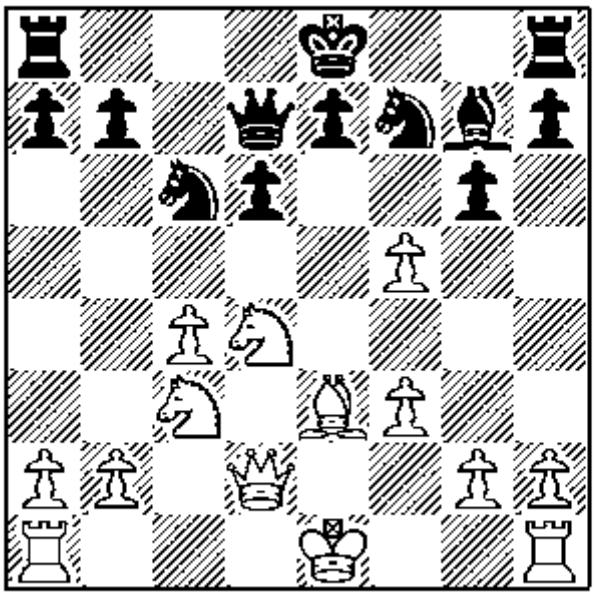
10 ... f5 11 Qd2

Here 11 0-0 transposes to I Nei-B.Spassky, Tallinn 1973, which continued 11 ... fxe4 12 Qd2! (an important intermediary move; after 12 Nxe4 Nf5 13 Nxf5 gxf5 14 Nc3, Black can

disrupt the white queenside with 14 ... Bxc3! 15 bxc3, when 15 ... Qe6 is level according to Keres) 12 ... Nf7 (now 12 ... Nf5 13 Nxf5 gxf5 14 fxe4 is better for White) 13 Nxe4 0-0 14 Rad1 and the players agreed a draw, though White probably still has a slight advantage.

11 ... Nf7 12 exf5

Now 12 0-0 allows 12 ... f4 13 Bf2 0-0 and Black has secured the e5-square for his minor pieces.



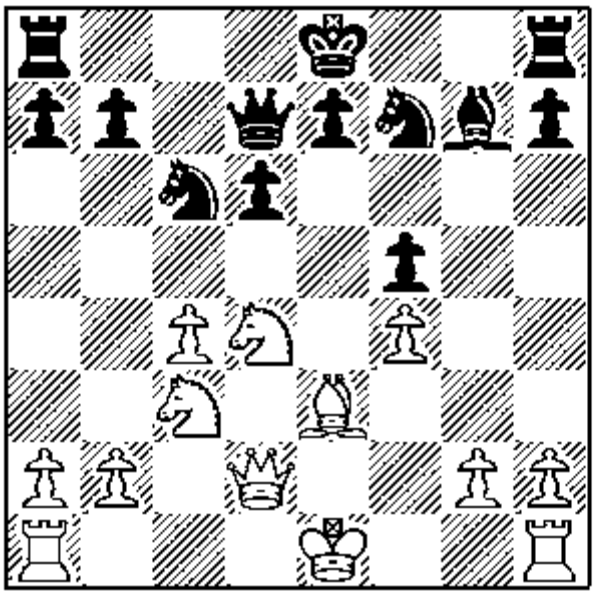
12 ... gxf5

Exercise (calculation): What is the problem with 12 ... Nfe5 - ?

Answer: The double knight raid 13 Ne6 Bf6 14 Nd5 is very strong; for example, 14 ... Nxc4 (or 14 ... Kf7 15 Nxf6 exf6 16 b3) 15 Qe2 Nxe3 16 Qxe3 Kf7 17 Qb3! gxf5 18 Ndf4! with a clear advantage. Congratulations if you saw this whole variation.

13 f4

White prevents ... f5-f4 once and for all.



Exercise: Are there any active possibilities for Black, connected with the king at e1, or does he have to be satisfied with castling?

Answer: 13 ... Bxd4!?

An interesting unconventional way to change the pattern of the game. Stein wants to avoid a possible squeeze after 13 ... 0-0 14 0-0 Rae8 15 Rad1, when White is slightly better. (Remarkably, MegaBase has only two games that reached this position, and Minic played in both, once as White and once as Black; they were both drawn.) Maybe the best idea is to activate the f8-rook with 14 ... Nh6!? 15 h3 Rf6, followed by ... Rg6 and later ... Kh8 and ... Rg8. Such a set-up may give Black chances to create counterplay on the half-open g-file. Stein no doubt considered this, but preferred his own move as leading to more original and concrete play.

14 Bxd4 Qe6+

By a clever exchange Stein has managed to prevent White from castling.

15 Kf2?

A few months later, this position arose again in V.Hort-U.Andersson, Skopje Olympiad 1972. Hort improved with 15 Kd1! and won quickly after 15 ... Rg8 16 Nd5 Kd7? 17 Re1 Qg6 18 g3 Rae8 19 Bc3 Nfd8?! 20 b4! Ne6 21 Kc2 Qf7 22 Rad1 Nc7 23 b5 Nd8 24 Nxe7! 1-0.

Black's best try may be 16 ... 0-0-0! (not 16 ... Qe4?? due to 17 Nf6+! exf6 18 Re1, winning the queen) 17 Bxa7 (Hort's intended 17 Re1 Qg6 18 Nxe7+ Nxe7 19 Rxe7 is well met by 19 ... Ne5!) 17 ... Qe4 (threatening both ... Rxg2 and ... Nxa7; of course not 17 ... Nxa7??, as 18 Qa5! wins on the spot) 18 Re1 Qxg2, though White keeps the advantage after 19 Bb6 Rde8 20 b4 and so forth.

15 ... Rg8 16 b3

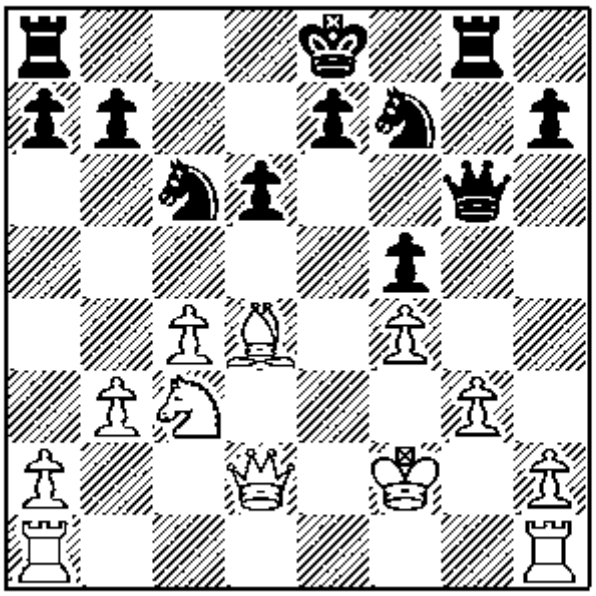
The best way to defend the c4-pawn. The active 16 Nd5?? fails to 16 ... Qe4, threatening both d4 and g2 with an instant win. Note that 17 Nf6+ exf6 18 Rhe1 does not work here because of 18 ... Rxg2+, illustrating why it was better to place the king on d1.

16 ... Qg6

Hort's suggestion of 16 ... Nh6 can be answered by 17 h3, since 17 ... Qg6 meets with the

cold-blooded defence 18 Rh2! and White keeps a slight advantage. Instead, Black should complete development with 17 ... 0-0-0, when chances remain balanced.

17 g3



Exercise (calculation): Should Black play for an immediate attack
or castle first? Support your conclusion with the necessary variations.

17 ... Nh6?!

The most aggressive continuation, but not the strongest if White responds correctly.

Answer: It is better to complete development with 17 ... 0-0-0, connecting the rooks, in order to engage all the pieces in the battle, following the principles of Morphy. Presumably Stein did not like the fact that he would have to defend for a while after 18 Nb5 and then:

a) 18 ... Nxd4 19 Nxa7+ (or 19 Qxd4 a6 and Black is fine) 19 ... Kb8 20 Qxd4 wins a pawn, but after 20 ... e5! 21 Qb6 d5! 22 Qxg6 hxg6 23 Nb5 dxc4, the game is even. White cannot recapture as 24 bxc4?? Rd2+ gives Black a clear advantage, and 25 Ke3? even leads to a forced mate: 25 ... Rgd8 26 fxe5 R8d3+ 27 Kf4 Rf2 mate.

b) 18 ... Kb8 19 Qe3! a6! (after 19 ... Nxd4 20 Qxd4, Black has to weaken the light squares with 20 ... b6, when 21 Qd5! e6?? loses instantly to 22 Qc6 Rc8 23 Qd7 etc) 20 Ba7+ Kc8 (not 20 ... Ka8?? 21 Nc7 mate) 21 Bb6 and now 21 ... Nfe5!!, followed by ... Ng4, secures Black good counterplay. The knight is taboo because of 22 fxe5?? f4! and Black is breaking through on the kingside. An extraordinary variation!

c) 18 ... d5 is yet another option, activating the d8-rook on the central file. Black can again count on equal play after 19 Nxa7+ (not 19 Bxa7? dxc4 29 Qe3 Nh6!) 19 ... Nxa7 20 Bxa7 Nd6!, followed by ... Ne4+.

18 Rhe1?

At the moment the h1-rook was better where it was, defending the h2-pawn. White had two ways to play for an advantage:

a) 18 Kg2 is suggested by Hort, when 18 ... 0-0-0 19 Rhe1 Ng4 20 Bg1 reorganizes White's defences, after which he can proceed to attack the queenside with ideas such as Nd5 and b3-b4. It may be better to send the black king the other way with 18 ... Ng4 19 Nd5 Kf7, and try to survive in lines like 20 Rae1 e5!? 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 Bb2 Nxh2 23 Qd3 Ng4 24 Rhf1

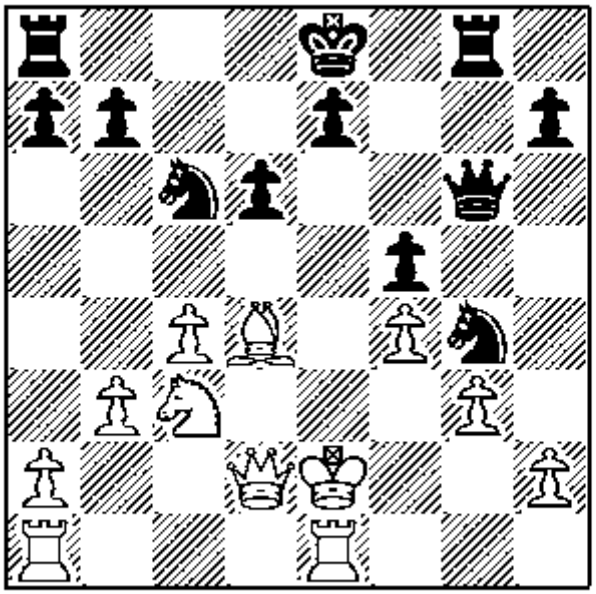
Kg7 and so forth, though White obviously has a dangerous initiative.

b) 18 Nd5 is also good, since 18 ... 0-0-0?! runs into 19 Bxa7!, exploiting the fact that the c6-knight has to protect e7, while 19 ... e6 20 Bb6! Ng4+ 21 Kg2 Rd7 (not 21 ... Nxh2? 22 Qc3! and White wins material) 22 Rae1! exd5 23 cxd5 Nxh2 (the c6-knight still cannot move, as it must cover the c-file and prevent a decisive queen intrusion at a5) 24 Bf2 Ng4 25 Re6 gives White good winning chances.

In this line, too, Black probably has to play 18 ... Ng4+ 19 Kg2 Kf7 (19 ... 0-0-0?! allows 20 Bxa7! e6 21 Bb6! as before, while 19 ... Nxh2? 20 Bf2 wins material again) 20 Rae1, reaching the same position as in note 'a'.

18 ... Ng4+ 19 Ke2??

This is a catastrophic mistake. 19 Kg1? is no good either, as 19 ... Nxh2! 20 Qxh2 Nxd4 sees Black clearly on top. The only move was 19 Kg2! again, when 19 ... Nxh2 20 Bf2 Ng4 21 Nd5 still leaves everything to play for.



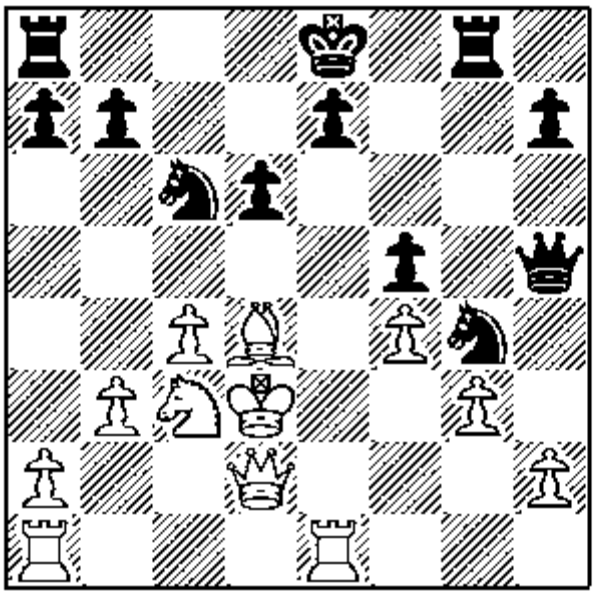
Exercise: How does Black exploit White's blunder?

Answer: 19 ... Qh5!

With decisive threats of discovered check and against the h2-pawn which the white rook was only recently protecting. Actually, 19 ... Nxh2! may be even more crushing, threatening both ... Qg4+ and ... Qxg3. White is defenceless.

20 Kd3?

Minic makes it easy. 20 Nd5 is comparatively best, though White is obviously lost after 20 ... Qxh2+! 21 Kd1 Qxd2+ 22 Kxd2 Nxd4 23 Rxe7+ Kf8. After all, White is a knight down and, even with his rook on the seventh, he cannot pick up enough pawns before Black activates his pieces. But there was always a chance Stein might have been tempted by 20 ... Nxh2+?! 21 Kd3 Rxg3+?, when White can put up surprising resistance with 22 Re3 Rxe3+ 23 Bxe3 Nf3 24 Qg2 0-0-0 25 Rh1 e6! 26 Bf2 (not 26 Rxh5? Ne1+) 26 ... Qf7 27 Nc3 and so on.



Exercise: Can you envisage the forced mate in six moves?

Answer: 20 ... Nb4+ 0-1

White resigned in view of the inevitable 21 Ke2 Nxh2+ 22 Kf2 Qf3+ 23 Kg1 Rxg3+ (or 23 ... Qxg3+ 24 Kh1 Qf3+! 25 Kxh2 Qh5 mate) 24 Kxh2 Rh3+ 25 Kg1 Rh1 mate.

The Croatian player Srdjan Marangunic (1943-) was awarded the IM title in 1971. The pinnacle of his career came in 1977 when he shared first place in the Yugoslav Championship with Ljubomir Ljubojevic, and was ranked 31st in the world according to Chessmetrics. Marangunic is still an active player in Croatia, with an Elo rating of 2354. In the book, Yugoslav Chess Triumphs, he is represented by a fine win with the white pieces against Vladimir Tukmakov at Zagreb 1971.

Game 59
S.Marangunic-L.Stein
Zagreb 1972
Grünfeld Defence

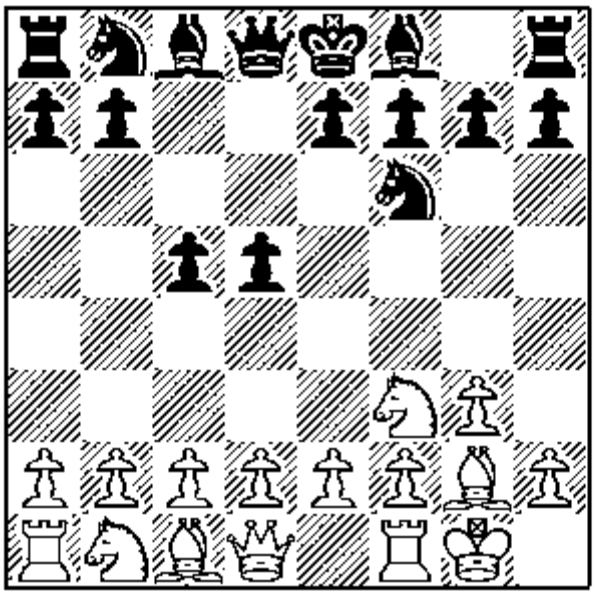
1 g3

Marangunic likes to fianchetto the light-squared bishop early, thereby avoiding the main theoretical battles. As this is pretty much Stein's strategy with the white pieces as well, it is interesting to see how Stein handles the black side.

1 ... d5 2 Nf3

Apparently Marangunic does not want to allow 2 Bg2 e5 in this game, with a nice classical centre for the second player, despite the fact that he regularly plays both the Pirc and the Modern with the black pieces.

2 ... c5 3 Bg2 Nf6 4 0-0



4 ... g6

Stein is content with the strong pawn centre located at d5 and c5. If Black plays for ... e7-e5 as well after 4 ... Nc6, it would probably be answered by 5 d4, offering a reversed Grünfeld Defence. If Black takes up the challenge with 5 ... cxd4 6 Nxd4 e5, then 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 c4 gives White a pretty decent game with strong pressure on the d5-pawn, as in R.Réti-J.Davidson, Scheveningen 1923; the careful 5 ... e6 is Black's usual response.

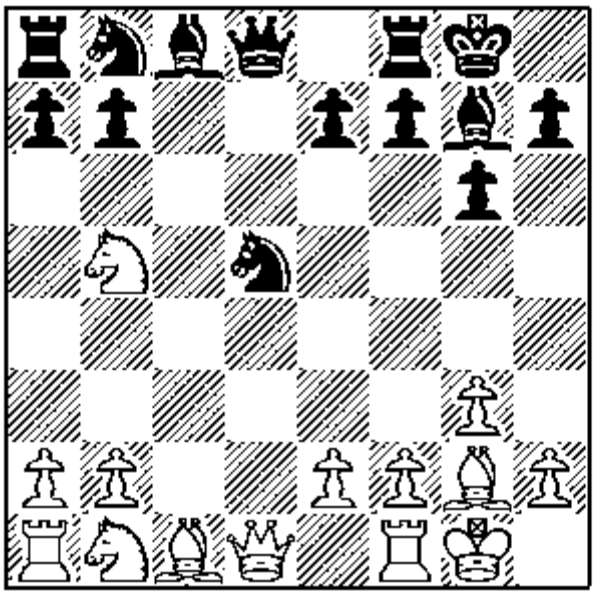
5 d4 cxd4 6 Nxd4 Bg7 7 c4 0-0 8 cxd5 Nxd5

By a roundabout route we have reached a variation of the actual Grünfeld Defence. The two sides' positions are currently identical, so Black must be careful to abandon the symmetry at the right time.

9 Nb5

The main variation is 9 Nc3 Nxc3 10 bxc3, after which 10 ... Nc6! is the simplest solution, copying White's play again. J.R.Capablanca-V.Petrovs, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939, continued 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Be3 (12 Bxc6 is answered by 12 ... Bh3 with equality and a draw next move in T.V.Petrosian-V.Korchnoi, 7th matchgame, Moscow 1971) 12 ... Bxc3 13 Rc1 Qa5 14 Qb3 and now Black should play 14 ... Bb4 intending 15 Bh6 (after 15 Bxc6 Be6, the white queen has trouble finding a safe square) 15 ... Rd8 16 Qb2 e5 17 Bg5 Rd4! with a roughly equal game.

Black can run into difficulties if he plays too passively. La.Szabo-A.Kotov, Saltsjöbaden Interzonal 1948, saw 10 ... a6 11 Ba3 Qc7 12 Qb3 Re8 13 Rab1 Nd7 and now Ståhlberg recommended 14 Rfd1, when the lead in development gives White the edge, with all his pieces positioned actively. The structural weakness will be of minor importance as long as White can transform the temporary temporal advantage into a more stable one.



Exercise: How does Black meet the threat to his d5-knight?

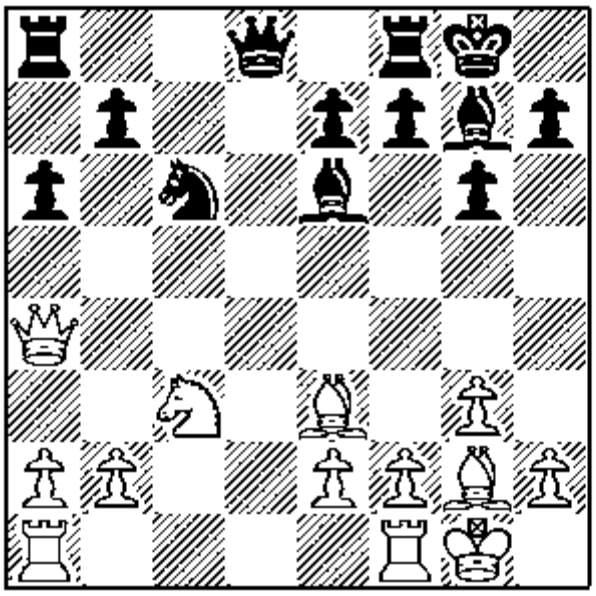
Answer: 9 ... a6

Stein typically goes for the active, counter-attacking continuation. Simply defending the knight with 9 ... Be6 is okay too. A.Goganov-P.Svidler, Russian Championship, Nizhny Novgorod 2013, continued 10 Nd4 Bc8 11 Nb5 Be6 12 Bxd5 (12 Nd4 Bc8 would be a draw by repetition) 12 ... Bxd5 13 N1c3 Bxc3 (or 13 ... e6, followed by ... Nb8-c6 with active play) 14 Nxc3 Be6 15 Bh6 Qxd1 16 Rfxd1 Rc8 17 Nd5 Nc6 18 Rac1 Rd8 19 Nc7 Rxd1+ 20 Rxd1 Rd8 21 Rxd8+ Nxd8 22 Nxe6 Nxe6 23 Bd2 Nd4 with a level endgame.

10 N5c3

There is no mileage in taking the knight. For example, after 10 Bxd5 axb5 11 Qb3 Nc6 12 Be3 Qd6 or 10 Qxd5 Qxd5 11 Bxd5 axb5 12 Nc3 b4, Black is very active and the front b-pawn is more of a strength than a weakness. Similarly, 10 N1c3 axb5 11 Nxd5 Nc6 12 Bg5 Bxb2 13 Rb1 Bg7 14 Nxe7+ Nxe7 was agreed drawn in U.Andersson-A.Karpov, Hastings 1971/72; the position is completely equal, as can be seen after 15 Qxd8 Rxd8 16 Bxe7 Re8 17 Bc5 Rxa2 18 Rxb5 and so on.

10 ... Nxc3 11 Nxc3 Nc6 12 Be3 Be6 13 Qa4



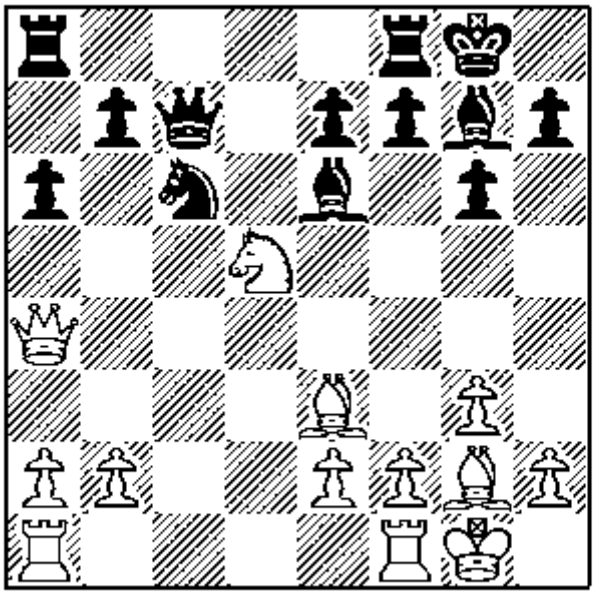
Exercise: Black cannot hold the (near) symmetry any longer, so how to continue?

Answer: 13 ... Qc7

The novelty 13 ... b5 deserves attention. After 14 Qf4! Rc8, followed by ... Qa5, Black can generate queenside counterplay; e.g., 15 Rfd1 Qa5 16 Rac1 Nb4! 17 a3 Na2 18 Nxa2 Bxa2 and so forth.

14 Nd5

In V.Tkachiev-I.Kurnosov, Kazan 2005, White preferred 14 Rac1 Rac8 (14 ... Rad8 looks better here) 15 Nd5 and obtained a winning position after 15 ... Bxd5 16 Bxd5 Bxb2 17 Rc2 Qe5?? (correct is 17 ... Bf6 18 Rfc1 with just an edge for White) 18 Qb3, which he duly converted in 35 moves.



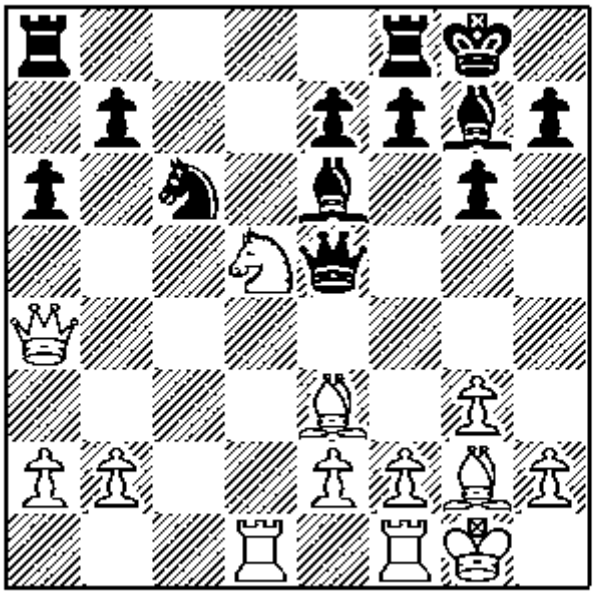
Question: Should Black take the knight or move his queen?

Answer: 14 ... Qe5!

Centralizing the queen is the best option. In C.Guimard-H.Pilnik, Buenos Aires 1948, Black played less incisively: 14 ... Bxd5 15 Bxd5 Rad8 16 Bxc6 bxc6 17 Rac1 Rc8 18 Qxa6?! (18 b3! leaves White with a clear structural advantage; he can then manoeuvre his pieces towards both pawn weaknesses, whereas Black must resort to passive defence) 18 ... Bxb2 19 Rc2 Bf6 20 Rfc1?! (here 20 Bb6! Qe5 21 a4 is stronger, as White's a-pawn is more dangerous than Black's c-pawn) 20 ... Ra8 21 Qxc6 Qxc6 22 Rxc6 Rxa2 and a draw was agreed.

15 Rad1

The knight manoeuvre 15 Nf4? Bf5 16 Nd3 is erroneous, as 16 ... Qb5! gives Black the better game, though White still managed to draw in D.Zagorskis-M.Neubauer, Dresden Olympiad 2008.



Exercise: How should Black continue?

15 ... Qxb2?!

Here we have it again: the calculated risk. Although this is not objectively the strongest move, it unbalances the play and offers Black greater chances of winning, albeit at greater risk of losing.

Answer: The normal continuation is 15 ... Rad8, forcing the knight from its dominant post in the centre. A likely follow-up then is 16 Nf4 Bf5 17 b3 Qb2 with equality, as Black has some pressure on the seventh rank and good control of the d4-square.

16 Nc7 Qxa2

Black must continue his "gamble". Moving the a8-rook is too passive, as can be seen after 16 ... Rad8 17 Nxe6 Rxd1 (or 17 ... fxe6 18 Rb1 Qxe2 19 Rxb7) 18 Rxd1 fxe6 19 Qc4 and White is clearly better.

17 Qxa2 Bxa2 18 Nxa8 Rxa8 19 Rd2?!

Why help the bishop to a better square? More direct is 19 Rd7 Rb8 20 Rc1 and White eliminates his pawn deficit after 20 ... Bf6 (or 20 ... a5 21 Bxc6 bxc6 22 Rxc6 a4 23 Ra6 Bb3 24 Rxe7 and White has everything under control) 21 Bxc6 bxc6 22 Rxc6 Be6 23 Ra7, followed by Rxa6, leaving him the exchange up. Perhaps Marangunic felt that this endgame

would be difficult to win and was trying to improve on it, but this is a risky strategy as well.

19 ... Bc4 20 Rb1 Bb5

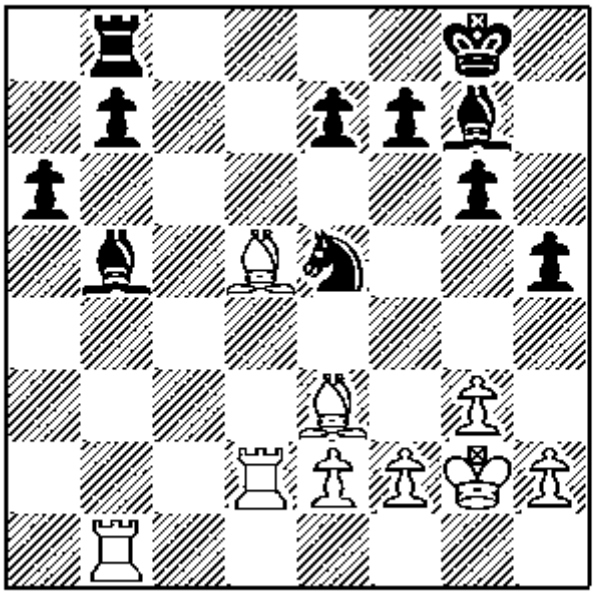
The bishop is now in an excellent position, even if it means Black cannot advance his queenside pawns for the time being.

21 Bf3 Rb8 22 Kg2 h5

Both players improve their positions little by little.

23 Be4 Ne5 24 Bd5?!

The best way to forestall ... Nc4 is to double rooks with 24 Rbd1, and in view of Rd8+, it is hard to see anything other than 24 ... Nc6 again, in order to defend the back rank.



Exercise: How can Black exploit White's error?

Answer: 24 ... e6

Now the white bishop has to abandon the long diagonal.

25 Ba2 Rc8

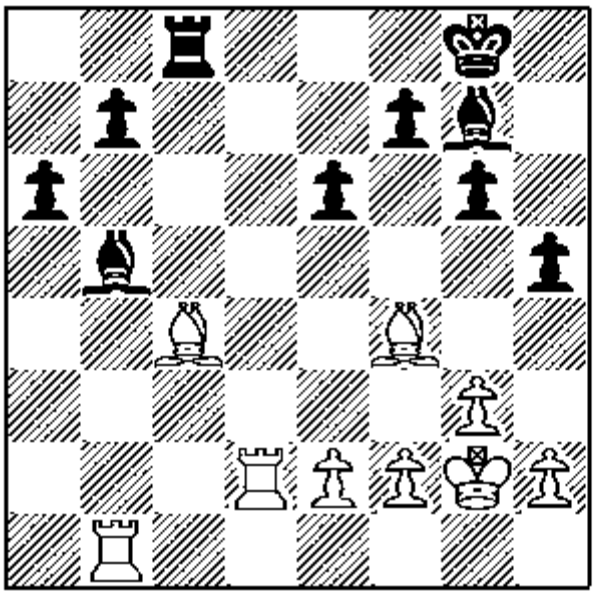
The immediate 25 ... Nc4 is also good, forcing 26 Bxc4 (not 26 Rd3?? Nxe3+ 27 Rxe3 Bd4 28 Reb3 Bc4 29 Ra3 Bxe2 and Black wins another pawn) 26 ... Bxc4 27 Bb6! (to stop the enemy pawns from advancing) 27 ... Bd5+ 28 f3 f5, followed by ... Ra8 with a slight advantage.

26 Bf4?!

At this point 26 f3 is a more useful move.

26 ... Nc4 27 Bxc4

Retreating the rook with 27 Rdd1 is answered by 27 ... Na3 28 Rbc1 Bc6+! 29 Kg1 (not 29 f3? Bb2 and Black regains the exchange, as 30 Rc5? fails to 30 ... Bxf3+) 29 ... a5 (after 29 ... Bb2 30 Rc5 b6 31 Rg5 Kh7 32 Be5 Ba4 33 Bxb2 Bxd1 34 Bxa3 Rc2 35 Bb3 f6 36 Bxc2 Bxc2 37 Rc5! bxc5 38 Bxc5, White escapes to a drawn opposite-coloured bishop ending; but not 31 ... Bf6?? 32 Rxg6+ fxg6 33 Bxe6+ and wins) 30 Rd3 Nb5, when Black's position is slightly preferable.



Question: Should Black recapture with the rook or the bishop?

27 ... Bxc4?!

Answer: 27 ... Rxc4 is better, when Black's active pieces secure him a slight advantage.

28 Rxb7! Bd5+

Playing 28 ... Bc3 is no improvement because of 29 Rc7! Rxc7 30 Rd8+ Kg7 31 Bxc7 Bxe2 32 Rc8 and a draw is the most likely outcome.

29 Rxd5 exd5 30 Ra7

Although White is now a pawn down, his active rook gives him fully enough compensation.

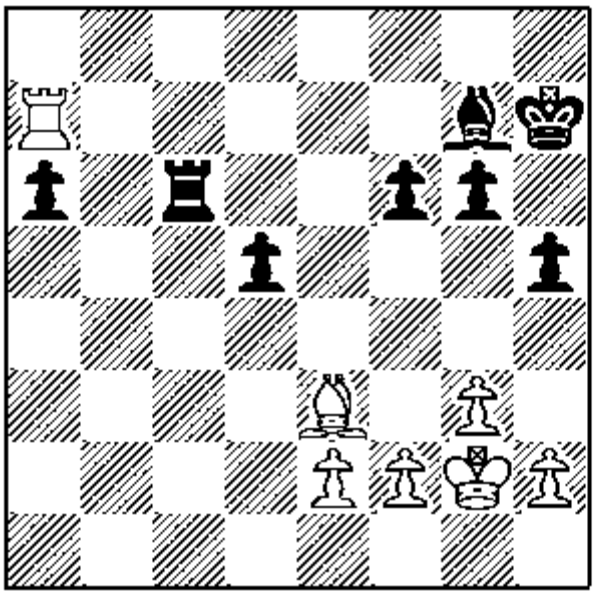
30 ... Rc6

Bringing the rook in front of the pawn with 30 ... Rc2 31 Kf3 Ra2 is met by 32 Ra8+ Kh7 33 Ra7 f6 34 Rd7 Ra5 (or 34 ... g5 35 Bc7 g4+ 36 Ke3) 35 Bc7 Rb5 36 Bd8 Kh6 37 h4! and there is not much Black can do to avoid the inevitable result.

31 Ra8+

Another drawing method is 31 Rd7 a5 (31 ... d4 32 Rd8+ Kh7 33 Rd7 is rather easy) 32 Rxd5 Ra6 33 Rd8+ Kh7 34 Bc1 a4 35 Ba3 and Black has no way of opposing the enemy bishop and removing the blockade.

31 ... Kh7 32 Ra7 f6 33 Be3



Exercise: What can Black do to improve his position?

Answer: 33 ... g5

This seems to be the only possibility, giving Black some room for manoeuvring on the kingside.

34 Bd4

A more irritating move is 34 f4!, threatening to exchange on g5 or meet 34 ... Kg6 with 35 f5+ Kh7 36 Bd4, boxing Black in on the kingside.

34 ... Kg6 35 e3?!

It was vital to play 35 Ra8! and prevent Black from activating his bishop.

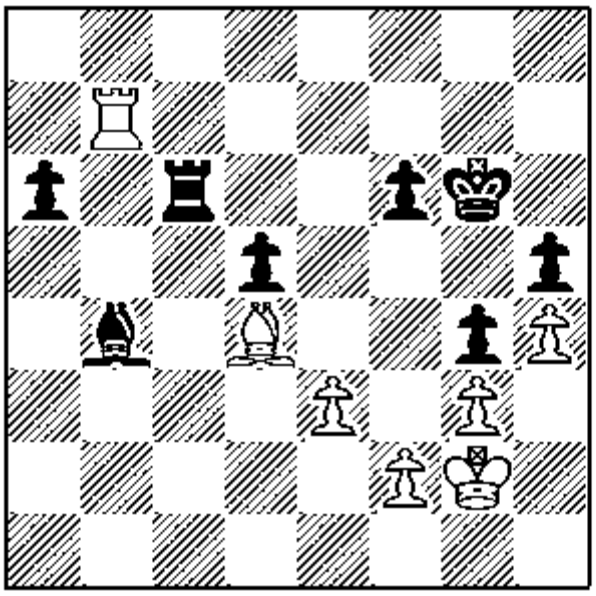
35 ... Bf8

Of course! The bishop will be excellently placed on b4, protected by the further ... a6-a5.

36 h3

White has unnecessarily allowed Black too much freedom on the kingside.

36 ... g4 37 h4 Bb4 38 Rb7



Exercise: How should Black proceed?

Answer: 38 ... a5

An alternative is 38 ... Bc5, since Black has excellent winning chances in the rook endgame after 39 Bxc5 Rxc5.

39 Rb5

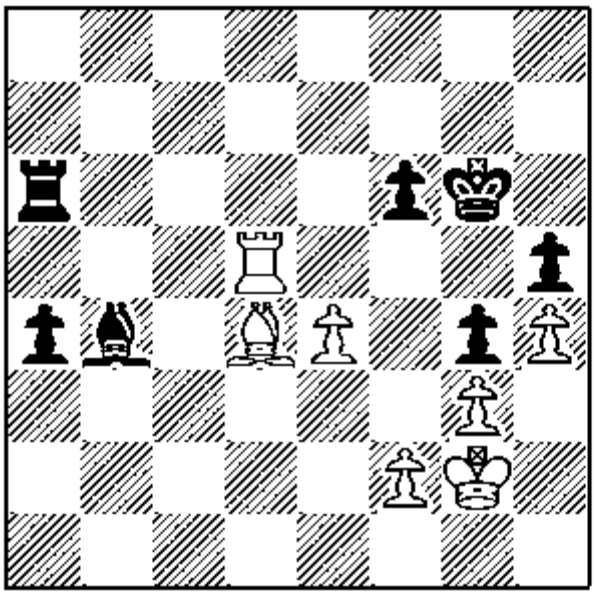
If White puts his rook behind the pawn with 39 Ra7, Black attacks the weak f2-point with 39 ... Rc2, threatening ... Be1. Counter-attacking at f6 does not help, as after 40 Ra6 Kf5 41 Rxf6+ Ke4, White cannot cover both f2 and the black a-pawn. One illustrative variation is 42 Bb6 Kd3 43 Rf5 a4 44 Rxd5+ Kc4 45 Rxh5 a3 46 Rh8 a2 47 Bd4 Bc3 48 Rc8+ Kb3 49 Rb8+ Ka3 50 Ra8+ Kb2 51 Rb8+ Kc1 52 Ra8 Bxd4 53 exd4 Kb1 and Black wins.

39 ... Ra6 40 Rxd5

If White prevaricates with 40 f3, Black simply plays 40 ... Bf8, followed by ... a5-a4 and so on.

40 ... a4 41 e4

After 41 f4, the most precise move is 41 ... Ra5! with a winning position; for example, 42 Rd7 a3 43 e4 f5 (43 ... a2?? 44 f5+ Kh6 45 Be3 mate would be embarrassing) 44 Rb7 Bc5! 45 Bxc5 Rxc5 46 exf5+ Kxf5 47 Ra7 Rc2+ 48 Kf1 a2, followed by ... Rc1+ etc.



Exercise: What is Black's simplest win?

41 ... a3

Answer: 41 ... Rd6! forces an immediate exchange of rooks, and the bishop ending is easily won; for instance, 42 f4 Rxd5 43 exd5 a3 44 Kf1 Kf5 45 Ke2 a2 46 Kd3 Bc5 47 Bb2 Bf2 and White loses his kingside pawns.

42 e5 Ra5! 43 Rd8 0-1

Marangunic resigned without waiting for the obvious 43 ... fxe5.

Stein's last individual tournament was at Las Palmas 1973, where he finished joint first with Petrosian on 9½/15, with four wins and eleven draws. Games from this event can be easily found in other books. After Las Palmas, they both returned to Moscow to compete in a special match tournament, comprising of two USSR "senior" teams and one "youth" team (led by Karpov). Stein played on board seven for USSR1 and scored 3/4, with two draws against Gufeld and two wins against Sveshnikov.

Evgeny Sveshnikov (1950-) became an IM in 1975 and a GM two years later. He is most famous for his contributions to opening theory, particular in the Sicilian Defence, where he popularized 2 c3 as White (see the next game) and developed, together with Gennadi Timoshchenko, the dynamic defence 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 as Black, which now bears his name. Sveshnikov himself relates the story that, at the Central Chess Club in Moscow in 1976, Petrosian laughed at the fact that players could not get anywhere as White against the Sveshnikov. Petrosian said: "You mean they can't exploit the d5-square? Maybe it is time I started playing 1 e4 myself!" The world champion Anatoly Karpov also considered 5 ... e5 to be inferior. Nevertheless, at USSR Championship that year, no one dared to open with the king's pawn against Sveshnikov.

Game 60
E.Sveshnikov-L.Stein
USSR Match Tournament, Moscow 1973
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5

According to Sveshnikov, this is the best move at Black's disposal.

2 c3

Sveshnikov has written a monograph on this system, which was played in earlier times by

Alapin and Nimzowitsch. Today, Rumanian GM Levente Vajda is perhaps its most faithful supporter, though many top grandmasters have it in their repertoire as well. From the other side, Sveshnikov believes that 2 ... Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 is the best reply; one of his main lines goes 4 d4 cxd4 5 cxd4 d6 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 Bc4 Nb6 8 Bb5 dxe5 9 Nxe5 Bd7 10 Nxd7 Qxd7 11 Nc3 e6 12 Qg4 and dynamic equality reigns on the board.

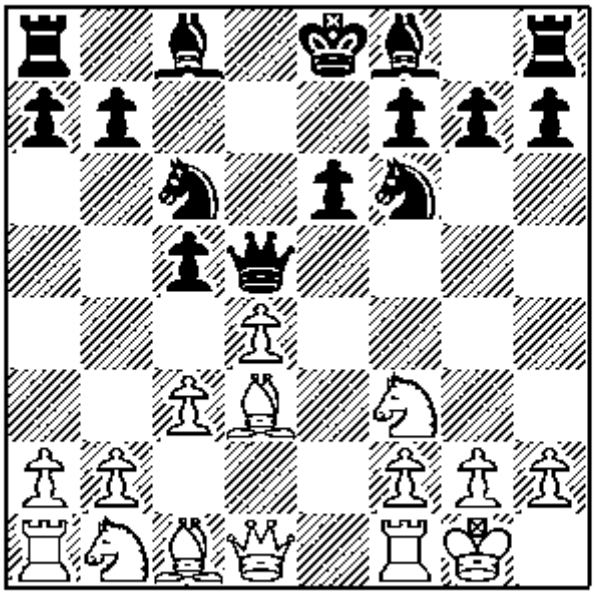
2 ... d5 3 exd5 Qxd5

Black exploits the fact that his queen cannot be immediately attacked by the b1-knight because the c3-pawn is in the way.

4 d4 e6

This is a fairly solid choice. Stein is not interested in developing the c8-bishop just yet with 4 ... Nf6 5 Nf3 Bg4, perhaps inviting 6 Nbd2!? as in E.Sveshnikov-V.Belikov, Russian Championship, Elista 1995 (and many other games). Or perhaps he had Bronstein's words in his head: "I wish to give one piece of advice, to the queen's bishop: don't hurry either to come into play, or to draw routine conclusion." If the reader is not sure what Bronstein is referring to then play through, for instance, R.J.Fischer-D.Bronstein, Herzog Novi (blitz) 1970, and pay special attention to the c8-bishop.

5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bd3 Nf6 7 0-0

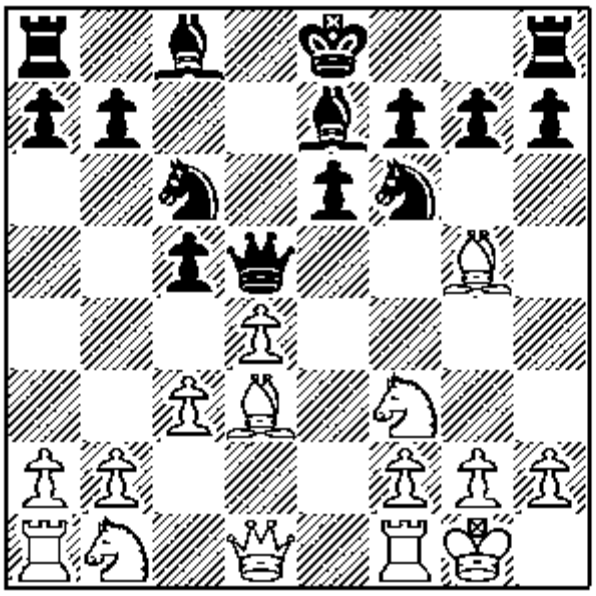


Exercise: Should Black take on d4 or maintain the tension in the centre?

Answer: 7 ... Be7

This allows White the additional possibility of c3-c4. On the other hand, 7 ... cxd4 8 cxd4 simplifies White's development by giving his knight the c3-square from where it can attack the black queen. Ma.Tseitlin-V.Chuchelov, European Cup, Budapest 1996, continued 8 ... Be7 9 Nc3 Qd6 (the full retreat 9 ... Qd8 is also acceptable) 10 Be3 0-0 11 a3 (preventing the manoeuvre ... Nb4-d5) 11 ... b6 12 Qe2 Bb7 13 Rad1 Rfd8 14 Bb1 Rac8 15 Bg5 h6 16 Bh4 Qf4!? with an unclear position.

8 Bg5?



Exercise: This is most probably an oversight. What did White forget?

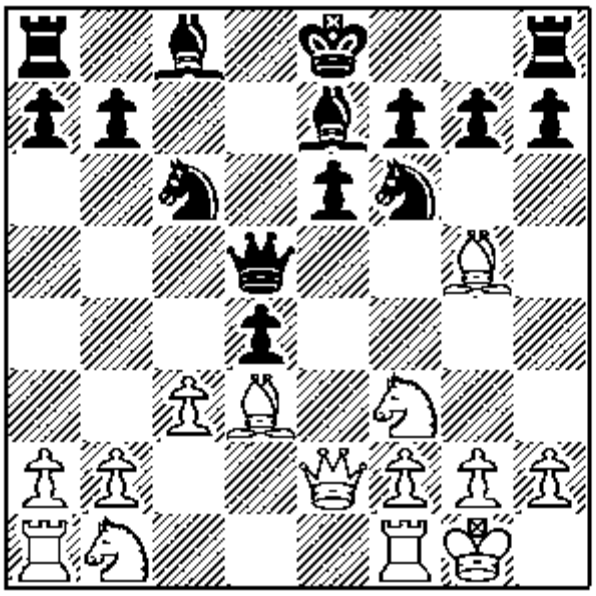
In a later game Sveshnikov switched to 8 c4, when 8 ... Qd8 9 dxc5 Nd7 10 a3 Nxc5 11 Bc2 Qxd1 12 Rxd1 gave him a slightly superior queenless middlegame in E.Sveshnikov-O.Averkin, USSR Championship, Moscow 1973. Instead, 8 ... Qh5 is more active; for example, 9 Be2 0-0 10 Ne5 Qh4 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 dxc5 Bxc5 and Black had good piece play in Man.Hermann-P.Ostermeyer, West German Championship, Bad Neuenahr 1984.

8 ... cxd4

Answer: Sveshnikov seems to have forgotten that the g5-bishop lacks protection if Black captures twice on d4; i.e. 9 cxd4?! Nxd4 10 Nxd4?! Qxg5 with an extra pawn (but not the beginner's trap 10 ... Qxd4?? 11 Bb5+, winning the queen).

9 Qe2?!

White's strongest continuation at this point is to play in the style of Morphy and just develop the pieces: 9 Re1 0-0 (9 ... dxc3 would be very greedy) 10 cxd4 Nxd4 11 Ne5, followed by Nc3, and the game is still on. Note that White could restore material equilibrium here with 11 Bxh7+ Kxh7 12 Qxd4, but Black still has an edge after 12 ... Qxd4 13 Nxd4 b6 due to the bishop pair and the fact that the e-pawn is superior to the h-pawn.



Exercise: How ought Black to continue?

Answer: 9 ... h6

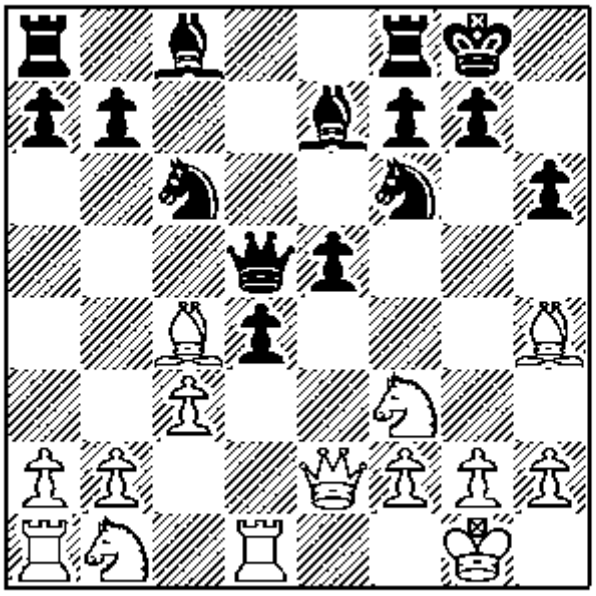
Stein wants the g5-bishop to clarify its intentions before he completes his development. The natural 9 ... 0-0 is also good; neither 10 Bc4 Qd6 nor 10 Rd1 e5 solves White's problem of being a pawn down.

10 Bh4

White can regain the pawn after 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 Be4 Qd6 12 Bxc6+ bxc6 13 cxd4, since 13 ... Bxd4? fails to 14 Rd1 c5 15 Nxd4 cxd4 16 Qe4 with an equal game; but 13 ... c5! 14 dxc5 Qxc5 15 Nc3 Bb7 16 Ne4 Bxe4 17 Qxe4 0-0 keeps a comfortable edge for Black due to the monster bishop at f6.

10 ... 0-0 11 Rd1 e5 12 Bc4

12 Nbd2 is answered by 12 ... Bg4.



Exercise: Where should Black move the queen?

Answer: 12 ... Qd6

The usual retreat square in this variation; but 12 ... Qa5!? is a very interesting alternative, intending 13 cxd4?! e4! 14 Ne1 Bg4 15 f3 exf3 16 gxf3 (or 16 Nxf3 Rad8 with tremendous pressure) 16 ... Bh3 17 Nc3 Rad8 18 Nc2 Qh5 19 Bg3 Rfe8 with a clear advantage. Consequently. White should prefer 13 b4 Qc7 14 b5 e4! 15 bxc6 exf3 16 gxf3 bxc6 17 Bg3, when Black is only slightly better.

13 h3

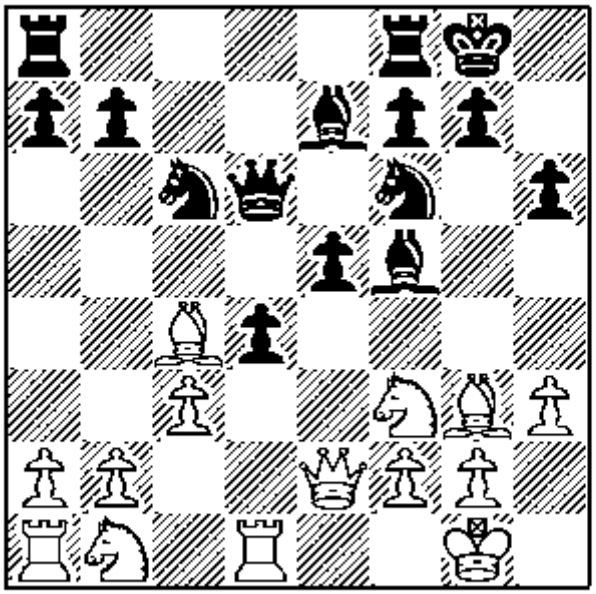
White wants to play Bg3, but takes control of g4 first, since the immediate 13 Bg3 is met by 13 ... Bg4 with a very annoying pin, difficult to break.

13 ... Bf5!

A good square for the bishop. There is no need to oppose the harmless counterpart with 13 ... Be6, even if this is a reasonable option as well.

14 Bg3?

This planned move is now a mistake. White should try to increase the pressure on the centre with 14 Bb5, when Black's best continuation looks to be 14 ... Rfe8 (another option is 14 ... Nd5 15 Bxc6 Nf4! 16 Qxe5 Qxe5 17 Nxe5 Bxh4 and the bishop pair secures a slight advantage) 15 Bxc6 Qxc6 16 Nxe5 (or 16 cxd4 exd4 17 Nxd4 Bc5 18 Nxc6 Rxe2 19 Nc3 Rc2! 20 Nd4 Bxd4 21 Rxd4 g5 22 Bg3 Rxb2 with an extra pawn in the endgame) 16 ... d3! 17 Nxc6 (or 17 Qf3 Qe6) 17 ... dxe2 18 Nxe7+ Rxe7 19 Re1 Rd8 20 Na3 g5 21 Bg3 Bd3 and Black is certainly better with the protected passed pawn disrupting White's position.



Exercise: How does Black exploit White's error?

Answer: 14 ... Ne4!

Yes, of course. This centralizing move practically decides the game in Black's favour.

15 Bh2 Qg6

A perfect spot for the black queen, X-raying the white king and threatening ... Bxh3.

16 Nxe5

There is nothing better. 16 Kh1 Bc5 (with the deadly threat ... d4-d3) 17 Bg1 is not

inspiring. Black calmly answers the small threat of Nh4 with 17 ... Qf6, followed by ... Nd6.

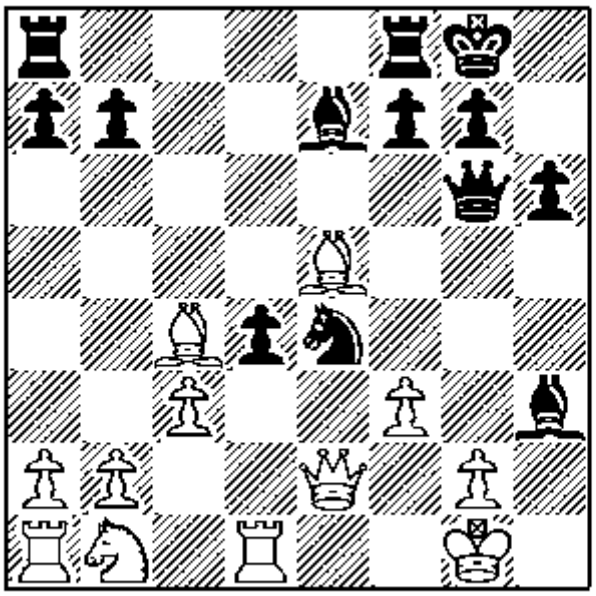
16 ... Nxe5 17 Bxe5

White manages to eliminate the black pawn centre, but now the problems move to the kingside.

17 ... Bxh3

Gufeld's suggestion of 17 ... Bh4!? is also good; for example, 18 f3 (or 18 Bxd4 Bxh3 19 Qf1 Rad8 with a very strong attack; the immediate threat is ... Rxd4, while 20 Bd3 Bf5! 21 Bxe4 Bxe4 offers only a brief respite) 18 ... Bf2+ 19 Kh1 Ng3+ 20 Bxg3 Qxg3 21 Qf1 Be3 22 Qe1 (otherwise 22 ... Bf4 23 Qg1 Bxh3! wins) 22 ... Qf4 23 cxd4 Bxd4 24 Qd2 Be3 25 Qe2 Rae8 26 Nc3 and now 26 ... Bb6 27 Nd5 Rxe2 28 Nxf4 Rxb2 gives Black an extra pawn and the bishop pair with excellent winning chances.

18 f3



Exercise: How does Black proceed most effectively?

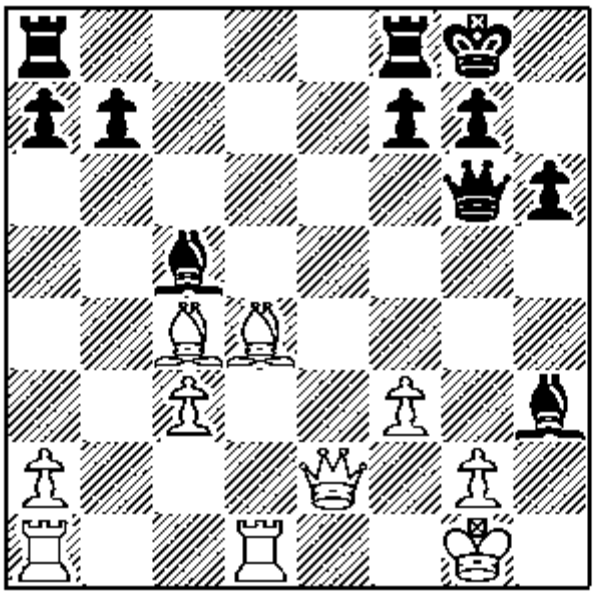
Answer: 18 ... dxc3! 19 Nxc3

White cannot play 19 fxe4? because of 19 ... Bc5+!, exploiting the newly opened classical diagonal, followed by ... Bg4 and wins; while 20 Bd4 is answered by 20 ... Bxg2! 21 Qxg2 Bxd4+ 22 Rxd4 Qxg2+ 23 Kxg2 cxb2 and a new girl will be born.

19 ... Bc5+

The direct 19 ... Nxc3 20 bxc3 Rfe8 is stronger, with pressure on the e-file, and the e7-bishop may prefer to go somewhere else.

20 Bd4 Nxc3 21 bxc3



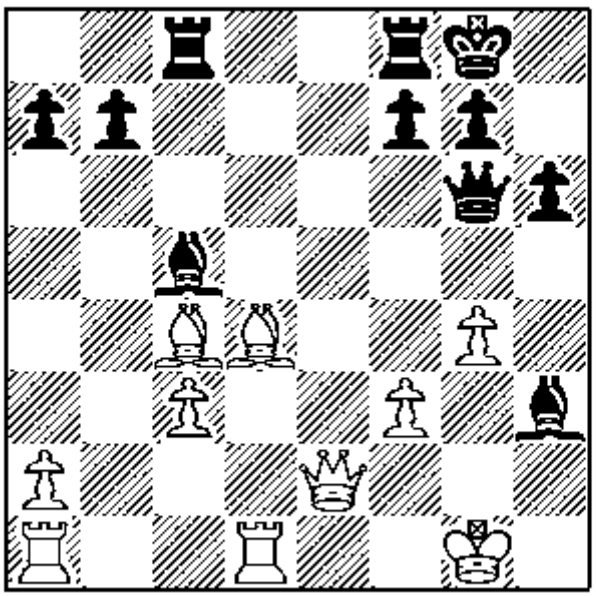
Question: Which black rook would you develop, and to which square?

Answer: 21 ... Rac8!

This is good technique. The weaknesses are on the c-file, not the e-file. Instead, 21 ... Rfe8 now shoots its arrows at nothing after 22 Qf2, and why help the queen withdraw to a more useful square?

22 g4?

Trying to trap the h3-bishop is futile. It is better to play 22 Qf2 anyway and adopt a passive set-up like 22 ... b6 23 Rac1 in the hope of prolonging the game and making it as tough as possible for the opponent to win.



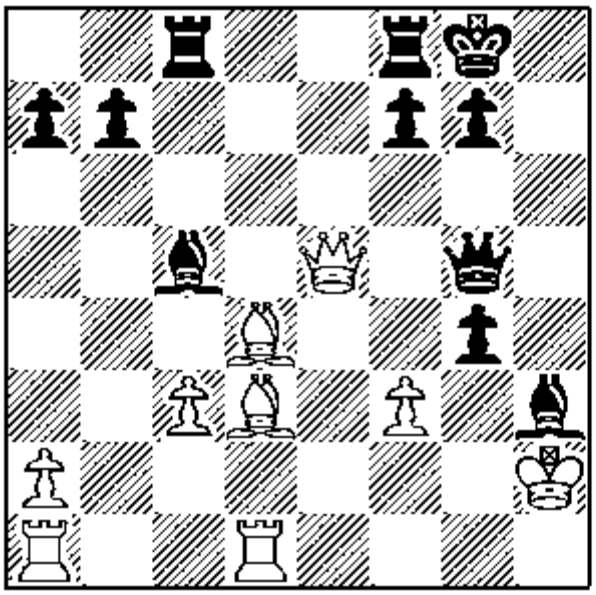
Exercise: How does Black refute the attempt to imprison his bishop?

Answer: 22 ... h5! 23 Bd3 Qg5 24 Kh2

Instead, 24 Qd2 is nicely dealt with by 24 ... Qe5!, and if 25 Qf2 then 25 ... Bxd4 26 cxd4

Qf4 and so on.

24 ... hxg4 25 Qe5



Exercise: What is Black's strongest move?

25 ... Qxe5+

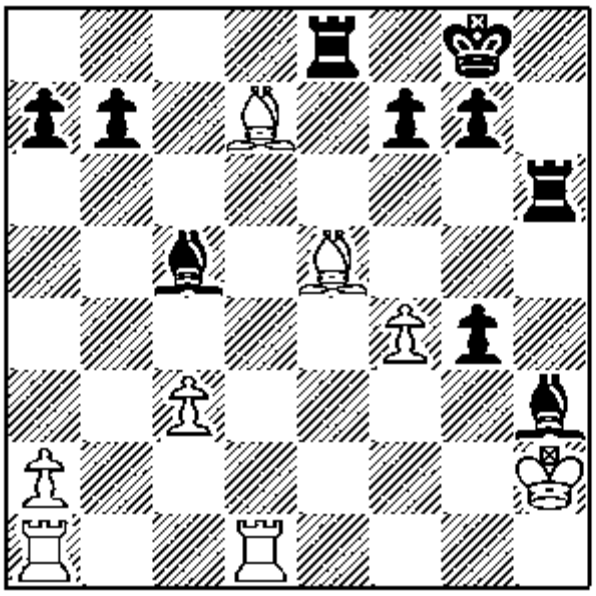
Answer: Stein's move is good enough for a win, but 25 ... Qh6! is more decisive, with the tactical point 26 Bxc5 Rxc5! 27 Qxc5 Qf4+ and White is mated.

26 Bxe5 Rfe8 27 Bf5 Rc6 28 f4 Rh6?!

The computer demonstrates a spectacular win here: 28 ... f6! 29 Bd7 Rb6! 30 Bxe8 Rb2+ 31 Kg3 g5! (threatening ... Rg2 mate) 32 fxg5 fxg5 33 Rg1 (the only move) 33 ... Bf2+ 34 Kh2 Bd4+ 35 Kh1 Bxe5, when Black has a winning attack with the rook and bishops; the immediate threats are ... Rh2 mate and ... Bxc3, while after 36 Rgc1 Bg2+ 37 Kg1 Be4, there is no good defence to the creeping 38 ... Bh2+ 39.Kf1 Bg2+ 40.Ke1 Bg3+ 41.Kd1 Bf3 mate.

29 Bd7?

White can prolong the game considerably by playing 29 Kg3 f6 30 Bd4 (after 30 Bd7 fxe5! 31 Bxe8 exf4+ 32 Kxf4 Rf6+ 33 Ke5 g3, Black wins with the g-pawn) 30 ... Re2 31 Bxg4! Rg2+ 32 Kf3 Rxg4 33 Bxc5 Rhh4 34 Be3 Bg2+ 35 Ke2 Be4 36 Rf1 and so forth, though he is still losing of course.



Exercise: Black has a quick win! What is it?

Answer: 29 ... Bf2 0-1

Black mates in at most four moves with 30 ... Bf1+ (even against 30 Rd6 or 30 Bxg7), so White resigned.

This was the last move Stein played in his last serious game on April 29th, 1973. As Gufeld and Lazarev wrote: “This game takes a special mood to replay. It is hard to believe that we will never see Leonid Stein over the board again.”

Stein had planned to prepare for the Petropolis Interzonal in Brazil together with the Kharkov grandmaster, Vladimir Savon, but unfortunately this was not to be.

Index of Complete Games

Bannik.A-Stein.L, Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1959
Benko.P-Stein.L, Amsterdam Interzonal 1964
Berenstein.A-Stein.L, Ukrainian Championship semi-final, Kiev 1960
Birbrager.I-Stein.L, USSR Championship semi-final, Sverdlovsk 1963
Bisguier.A-Stein.L, Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Borisenko.G-Stein.L, USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1964
Bronstein.D-Stein.L, USSR Championship, Kiev 1964
Damjanovic.M-Stein.L, Tallinn 1969
Donne.P-Stein.L, Havana Olympiad 1966
Furman.A-Stein.L, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963
Georgescu.V-Stein.L, Bucharest 1961
Gligoric.S-Stein.L, USSR-Yugoslavia match, Lvov 1962
Kostiuchenko.A-Stein.L, Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1959
Krogius.N-Stein.L, Russia-Ukraine match, Kiev 1960
Lazarev.E-Stein.L, Ukrainian Junior Championship, Kharkov 1951
Ljublinsky.V-Stein.L, USSR Armed Forces Championship, Moscow 1955
Malich.B-Stein.L, Toth Memorial, Kecskemet 1968
Marangunic.S-Stein.L, Zagreb 1972
Minic.D-Stein.L, Zagreb 1972
Nikitin.A.S-Stein.L, USSR Team Championship, Grozny 1969
Osnos.V-Stein.L, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963
Radovici.C-Stein.L, Bucharest 1961
Saidy.A-Stein.L, Tallinn 1971
Ståhlberg.G-Stein.L, Yerevan 1965
Stein.L-Gershberg, Ukrainian Spartakiad, Dnipropetrovsk 1966
Stein.L-Barcza.G, Tallinn 1971
Stein.L-Bárczay.L, Sousse Interzonal 1967
Stein.L-Bronstein.D, USSR Championship, Moscow 1961
Stein.L-Cherbak.V, Avantgard Society Championship, Kiev 1960
Stein.L-Ciric.D.M, USSR-Yugoslavia match, Vrnjacka Banja 1965
Stein.L-Evans.L, Amsterdam Interzonal 1964
Stein.L-Hort.V, Sousse Interzonal (play-off) 1968
Stein.L-Kholmov.R, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963
Stein.L-Kholmov.R, USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1966
Stein.L-Kwiatkowski.S, Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1959
Stein.L-Langeweg.K, IBM Tournament, Amsterdam 1969
Stein.L-Lentschiner.I, Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1960
Stein.L-Levin.M, Ukrainian Championship semi-final, Kiev 1960
Stein.L-Lutikov.A, Kislovodsk 1966
Stein.L-Nei.I, USSR Championship semi-final (play-off), Moscow 1959

Stein.L-Parma.B, Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1971
Stein.L-Pelikán.Jo, Mar del Plata 1966
Stein.L-Portisch.L, Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Stein.L-Rodriguez Gonzales.R, Capablanca Memorial, Havana 1968
Stein.L-Rubinetti.J, Mar del Plata 1966
Stein.L-Sahovic.D, Vrnjacka Banja 1971
Stein.L-Smyslov.V, USSR Team Championship, Moscow 1972
Stein.L-Tseshkovsky.V, USSR Championship semi-final, Kiev 1969
Stein.L-Vasiukov.E, USSR Championship, Tallinn 1965
Stein.L-Vukic.M, Sarajevo 1967
Stein.L-Westman.J, Havana Olympiad 1966
Stein.L-Yanofsky.D, Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Stein.L-Yukhtman.J, Moscow 1956
Stein.L-Zhukhovitsky.S, USSR Championship, Moscow 1969
Sveshnikov.E-Stein.L, USSR Match Tournament, Moscow 1973
Taimanov.M-Stein.L, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1971
Teschner.R-Stein.L, Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Usachyi.M-Stein.L, Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1957
Vasconcellos.F-Stein.L, Rio de Janeiro 1965
Yepez Obando.O-Stein.L, Caracas 1970