

Angus Dunnington



# Winning with the **Catalan**

Explains the secrets of the Catalan structure



# **Winning With the Catalan**

**Angus Dunnington**

**B. T. Batsford Ltd, *London***

**First published 1997  
© Angus Dunnington 1997**

**ISBN 0 7134 8021 1**

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.  
A catalogue record for this book is  
available from the British Library.**

**All rights reserved. No part of this book may be  
reproduced, by any means, without prior permission  
of the publisher.**

**Edited by Graham Burgess and typeset by Petra Nunn for  
Gambit Publications Ltd, London**

**Printed in Great Britain by  
Redwood Books, Trowbridge, Wilts  
for the publishers,  
B. T. Batsford Ltd,  
583 Fulham Road,  
London SW6 5BY**

***To Gary Lane, our Best Man***

**A BATSFORD CHESS BOOK  
*Editorial Panel:* Mark Dvoretsky, Jon Speelman  
*Commissioning Editor:* Paul Lamford  
*General Manager:* David Cummings**

# Contents

Symbols	5
Introduction	6
<b>Part 1: Open Catalan: 4...dxc4 5 ♖f3</b>	
<b>1 Open Catalan: 5...c5</b>	18
Game 1: Piket-Van der Sterren, Dutch Ch 1984	18
Game 2: Dunnington-Richardson, England 1997	27
Game 3: Hovde-Groiss, European Corr. Ch 1984-90	35
<b>2 Open Catalan: 5...b5</b>	42
Game 4: Kengis-Meister, Togliatti 1985	42
<b>3 Open Catalan: 5...a6</b>	48
Game 5: Krasenkov-Kaidanov, Gausdal 1991	48
Game 6: Vladimirov-Thorhallsson, Gausdal 1991	58
<b>4 Open Catalan: 5...♗c6</b>	63
Game 7: Flear-Marciano, Toulouse 1996	63
<b>5 Open Catalan: 5...♘d7</b>	71
Game 8: Petursson-Zso.Polgar, Århus 1993	71
<b>6 Open Catalan: 5...♗bd7</b>	78
Game 9: Monin-Vul, Kecskemet 1992	78
<b>7 5...♘e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖c2 a6: Introduction and 8 a4</b>	86
Game 10: Khalifman-Lautier, Biel Z 1993	87
Game 11: Marin-Gomez Esteban, Seville 1992	92
Game 12: Kramnik-Piket, Dortmund 1995	95
Game 13: Hübner-Siegel, Germany 1994	102
<b>8 5...♘e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖c2 a6: 8 ♖xc4</b>	107
Game 14: Ribli-Karpov, Amsterdam 1980	107
Game 15: Permiakov-Berzinš, Latvian Ch 1994	110
Game 16: Ribli-Speelman, Moscow OL 1994	112

## 4 Contents

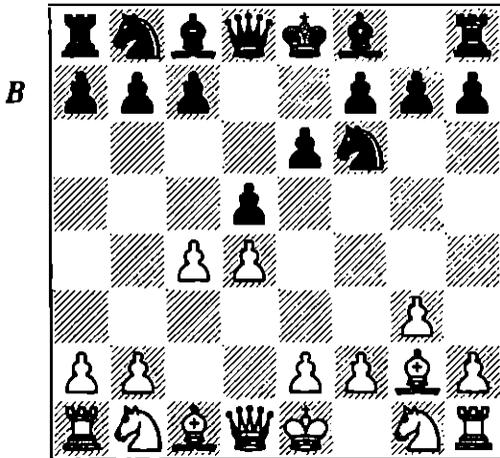
Game 17: Heine Nielsen-J.Kristensen, Års 1995	117
Game 18: Ca.Hansen-S.Petersen, Denmark 1990	119
Game 19: Illescas-Epishin, Madrid 1995	122
Game 20: Andersson-Petursson, Reggio Emilia 1989	127
<b>Part 2: Closed Catalan: 4...♗e7 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 0-0</b>	
<b>9 Closed Catalan: Introduction and lines with e4xd5</b>	131
Game 21: Cifuentes-Sosonko, Dutch Ch 1992	131
Game 22: Umanskaya-Ilinsky, Russia 1995	137
<b>10 Closed Catalan: Black plays ...d5xe4</b>	141
Game 23: Salov-Spassky, France 1994	141
<b>11 Closed Catalan: White plays e4-e5</b>	146
Game 24: Orlov-Tal, New York 1990	146
<b>12 Closed Catalan: Black plays an early ...b7-b5</b>	150
Game 25: Rajković-Colović, Cetinje 1993	150
Index of Variations	155

# Symbols

<b>+</b>	<b>Check</b>
<b>++</b>	<b>Double Check</b>
<b>#</b>	<b>Mate</b>
<b>!</b>	<b>Good move</b>
<b>!!</b>	<b>Excellent move</b>
<b>?</b>	<b>Bad move</b>
<b>??</b>	<b>Blunder</b>
<b>!?</b>	<b>Interesting move</b>
<b>?!</b>	<b>Dubious move</b>
<b>1-0</b>	<b>White wins</b>
<b>0-1</b>	<b>Black wins</b>
<b>1/2-1/2</b>	<b>Draw</b>
<b>Ch</b>	<b>Championship</b>
<b>tt</b>	<b>Team tournament</b>
<b>OL</b>	<b>Olympiad</b>
<b>Z</b>	<b>Zonal</b>
<b>IZ</b>	<b>Interzonal</b>
<b>Ct</b>	<b>Candidates event</b>
<b>Wch</b>	<b>World championship</b>
<b>Cht</b>	<b>Team championship</b>
<b>Echt</b>	<b>European team championship</b>
<b>Wcht</b>	<b>World team championship</b>
<b>jr</b>	<b>Junior event</b>
<b>wom</b>	<b>Women's event</b>
<b>rp</b>	<b>Rapid game</b>
<b>corr.</b>	<b>Postal game</b>
<b>(<i>n</i>)</b>	<b><i>n</i>th match game</b>
<b>(<i>D</i>)</b>	<b>Diagram follows</b>

# Introduction

The Catalan Opening begins 1 d4  
♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♖g2 (*D*).



Throughout this book the diagram position will be used as a starting point at which Black chooses one of two major options:

1. 4...dxc4 – the Open Catalan;
2. 4...♗e7 – the Closed Catalan.

Of course the order of the opening moves is quite flexible – the sequence above, for example, is not the only route to the diagram position. It is significant that 1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 d5 3 ♖g2 c5 4 0-0 e6 5 d4 ♘c6 6 c4 dxc4 leads (eventually) to an early position from Games 1-3, while 1 c4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘f3 c6 4 ♗c2 ♘f6 5 g3 is a popular route to the Closed Catalan. In fact, the reader will notice that I have not standardised the initial moves of the games (unless the investigation of alternatives or of similar lines dictates otherwise). This is to accentuate the versatility of the

Catalan, and to cater for those players who may not necessarily open the game with 1 d4 (the Catalan has overlaps with the Réti, Queen's Gambit, Slav and Queen's Indian, for instance).

With such a flexible move-order it is hardly surprising that the Catalan is rich in possibilities. There is something for everybody – White can play in true gambit style, hoping to turn a development lead into an initiative that can become decisive, maintain the tension and operate in several sectors of the board in a complex middlegame, or endeavour to steer the game to a favourable ending which can be very uncomfortable for Black.

A key piece is White's light-squared bishop – the 'Catalan' bishop. The logic behind the fianchetto is clear – White wants to put his opponent's queenside under pressure at the earliest opportunity in order to frustrate his development. How Black addresses this problem contributes in some way to the subsequent nature of the game. Black often tries to restrict the participation of the g2-bishop, a strategy that often backfires because the time and resources could have been used more constructively. Moreover, unlike those 'hypermodern' openings that combine the fianchetto of the

light-squared bishop with holding back the centre pawns, the Catalan sees White staking a claim for the centre with d2-d4 and c2-c4, thus guaranteeing some kind of influence in the most important part of the board. Consequently White enjoys enough space – and the harmony which this brings – to develop effectively and fluidly, without having to worry about achieving instant activity for his bishop.

In the Open Catalan the scope of this piece is increased by the opening of the long h1-a8 diagonal after ...d5xc4. In the Closed Catalan, characterized by Black's refusal to capture the c4-pawn and by the erection of a defensive barrier in the centre, White develops his forces in such a way as to facilitate another challenge on the fortified d5-pawn with an eventual e2-e4 (e.g. 4...♖e7 5 ♖f3 0-0 6 0-0 ♗bd7 7 ♛c2 c6 8 b3 b6 9 ♗d1 followed by ♗b1-d2, e2-e4, etc.), when the Catalan bishop is ready to come to life.

This book focuses on a selection of variations and recommendations for White which are designed to provide the reader with a working understanding of the Catalan. I have concentrated on specific variations rather than making an ultimately futile attempt to cover every aspect of the opening, but in advocating this or that particular line I have tried to cater for all styles. Hopefully those of you who are attracted to the Catalan by the prospect of grinding out masterful victories in long endings will also be converted to the more

complex variations, and vice versa. This is a necessity anyway, as one must always be prepared for tactics, slow positional struggles, drawish variations, etc.

In the Open Catalan we deal exclusively with 5 ♖f3 because I believe the rather simplistic 5 ♛a4+ to be insufficient for an advantage if Black replies 5...♗d7.

Most of the 25 main games in the rest of the book are annotated in considerable depth, and I do not want the Introduction to snowball, so I will limit myself to offering just a few practical examples which feature typical Catalan characteristics:

## White's space advantage

In most openings White tends to use the advantage of having the first move to win more territory than his opponent. Usually Black can live with this, and sometimes he even invites White to grab more than a fair share of the board (e.g. Alekhine's Defence, 1 e4 ♖f6, or the Modern Defence, 1 e4 g6) with the intention of a timely counter against White's (hopefully) over-extended forces. But there is a thin line between what is and what is not acceptable for the second player and, in the case of the Catalan, the balance between the use of pieces and pawns is such that White can fight for an advantage without real fear of creating weaknesses.

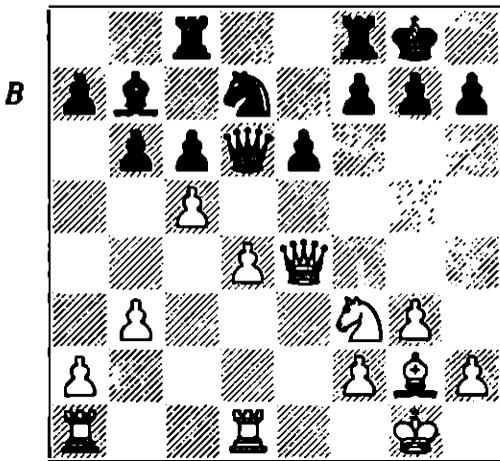
Here are a couple of examples of how 'normal' play from Black can lead to White's ostensibly harmless

## 8 Introduction

space advantage being transformed to something far more troublesome:

The position below arises from the Closed Catalan, Black choosing to post his light-squared bishop on b7 (instead of the more active a6) and meet the eventual e2-e4 by ...d5xe4. Despite being a somewhat predictable, passive approach, it has been seen in many games and is very popular at club level. For more about this line see Salov-Spassky, Game 23.

After the moves 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2 0-0 6 0-0 ♘bd7 7 ♛c2 c6 8 b3 b6 9 ♖d1 ♙b7 10 ♘c3 ♜c8 11 e4 dxe4 ♘xe4, **Portisch-Radulov, Moscow Echt 1977** is one of many games from past and present which continue 12...♘xe4 13 ♛xe4 ♛c7 14 ♙f4! ♙d6 15 ♙xd6 ♛xd6 16 c5! (D).

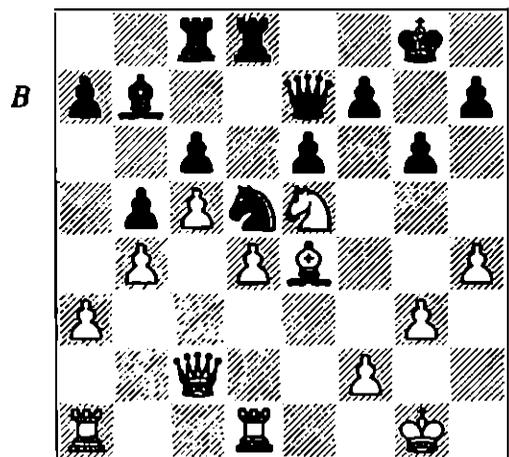


This thematic thrust is designed to deprive Black's bishop of any freedom (given the time Black would defend the bishop and push his own pawn to c5). Now 16...bxc5 17 dxc5 ♘xc5 runs into 18 ♛b4 ♛e7 19 ♜ac1, so Black played 16...♛e7.

Apart from the fact that Black is rather cramped on the queenside

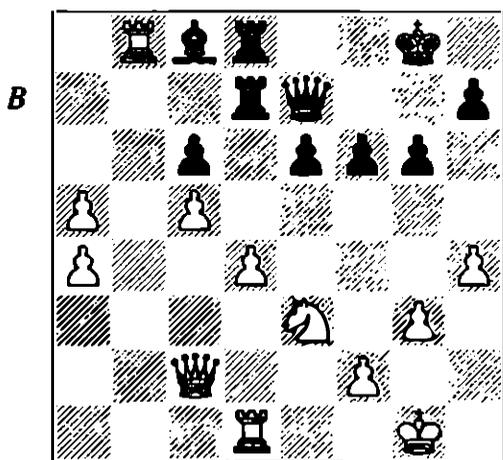
there is the added problem that he is unable to generate some sort of counterplay by expanding in another area of the board – White has the e5-square in his grasp so ...e6-e5 is ruled out, and the fianchetto means that White, not Black, has the potential to advance on the kingside. These factors combine to give White a space advantage on the queenside, in the centre and – at some point in the future – on the kingside. Waiting for White to march his army forward on all fronts is not a pleasant prospect but, for some reason, this position is by no means rare (even at master level).

In this particular game there followed 17 b4 ♜fd8 18 ♛c2 ♘f6 19 ♘e5 ♘d5 (it soon becomes evident that the knight is merely sitting pretty on d5) 20 a3 b5 (accentuating the sorry plight of his bishop, but Black cannot allow the enemy knight to land on d6 via c4) 21 ♙e4 g6 22 h4 (D).



Note the difference between the two bishops. White's stands majestic on e4, the perfect Catalan bishop! Teaming up with the queen to exert

pressure on the b1-h7 diagonal has induced Black to put yet another pawn on a light square (21...h6 would have given White free access to the diagonal). Black must still keep an eye on his c6-pawn as well as consider the implications of ♖e4xd5. Moreover, g2 is now free for White's king in preparation for a rook to come to the h-file to begin a dangerous kingside attack with h4-h5, etc. In other words, after a patient build-up of forces from his opponent, Black now faces the prospect of coming under fire on both flanks – hence the coming necessary but ultimately futile queenside counter: 22...a5 23 bxa5 ♖a8 24 a4! (White's domination affords him the luxury of aggression in any area of the board) 24...b4 25 ♖xd5! (being able to surrender the wonderful bishop is indicative of White's control – the black bishop is no match for the knight) 25...♗xd5 26 ♖ab1 f6 27 ♘g4 ♖ad8 28 ♖xb4 ♖c8 29 ♘e3 ♖5d7 30 ♖b8 (D)



From the first diagram (after 16 c5) Black's chief problem has been the crippling effect of the c5-pawn,

which has deprived Black of the use of d6 – a key square which is right in the heart of his half of the board. The next move is one final attempt to undermine White's hold over this critical square but, ironically, the c5-pawn has even more to contribute: 30...e5 31 d5! cxd5 32 c6 ♖d6 33 c7 ♖f8 34 ♖xd5 f5 35 ♗c5 ♖e6 36 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 37 ♖xc8! ♖xc8 38 ♖d8+ ♖e8 39 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 40 ♘d5 1-0. A fitting finish, with the powerful knight and the annoying c-pawn earning the full point.

The whole game went according to plan for White. He prevented the traditional 'freeing' advance ...c6-c5 in the most uncompromising fashion – by occupying the c5-square himself. At first glance this seems like a positional error, for not only does White voluntarily create a backward d4-pawn (on a semi-open file), he also presents Black with an ostensibly perfect outpost for the knight on d5. Perhaps it is this factor which is responsible for seducing so many players into this kind of position. However, unfortunately for Black, all he can look forward to is passivity, while the extra space White gains on the queenside with c4-c5 has a kind of mushroom effect, spreading to other areas of the board.

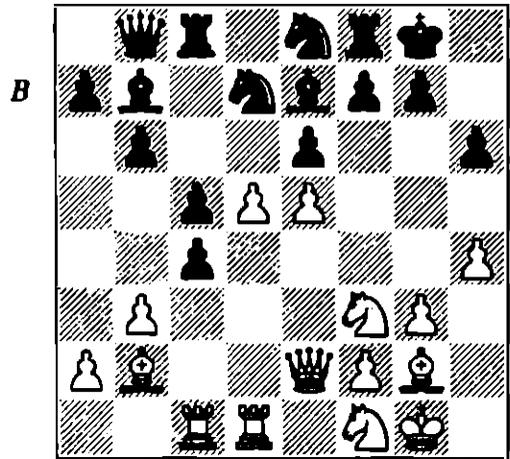
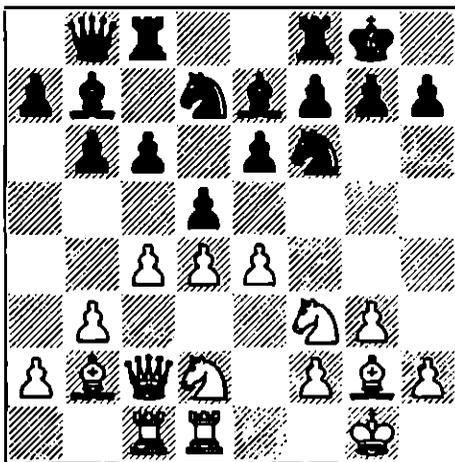
## Open lines

Now we see a more brutal use of White's extra space, this time on the other flank. Sometimes in the Closed Catalan both sides postpone any pawn captures or advances in the

## 10 Introduction

centre until development is completed. The game **Marin-J.Horvath, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1993** illustrates that this can be a risky approach from Black's point of view. Incidentally, the opening moves of this game feature a little 'shadow-boxing', which is not unusual in some lines: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2 ♙b4+ (this attempt to disorganize White's pieces is discussed later in the Introduction) 5 ♙d2 ♙e7 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 0-0 c6 8 ♚c2 ♘bd7 9 ♙f4 ♘h5 10 ♙c1 ♘hf6 11 b3 b6 12 ♜d1 ♙a6 13 ♘bd2 ♜c8 14 e4 ♙b7 15 ♙b2 ♚c7 16 ♜ac1 ♚b8 (D)

17 e5! ♘e8 18 h4 h6 (19 ♘g5 was threatened) 19 ♘f1 c5!?! (Black seeks immediate counterplay in the centre rather than waiting for the build-up to grow out of control, e.g. 19...♘c7 20 ♘e3 ♜fe8 21 ♚e2 ♚a8 22 ♘h2!, when White continues expansion with f2-f4-f5) 20 ♚e2 dxc4 21 d5!! (D)

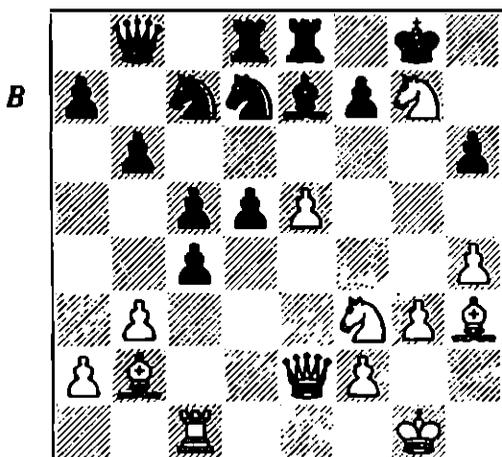


The repositioning of the black queen from d8 to b8 serves to remove the queen from the d-file and defend the b7-bishop. However, these are preparations for a future opening up of the position after ...d5xe4, therefore an obvious way for White to cut across his opponent's plan is to avoid this central capture by pushing the e-pawn. Moreover, the subsequent territorial superiority offers White an opportunity to concentrate on a kingside offensive.

Much stronger than the automatic 21 ♚xc4, which is only good for equality. White aims to bring yet another piece within striking range of Black's kingside by clearing the long diagonal for the dark-squared bishop.

The game went 21...♙xd5 22 ♜xd5! (material is just one of many factors that form the chess equation – here activity and the initiative are far more important) 22...exd5 23 ♙h3 (23 e6?! ♘df6 24 exf7+ ♜xf7 25 ♘e5 ♚d6! is fine for Black, whereas Marin's choice simply relocates the bishop on a promising new diagonal while maintaining the tension and keeping Black under control) 23...♜d8 (23...♜c7 24 ♘e3) 24 ♘e3 (again White improves a piece instead of pushing the e-pawn; after 24 e6 ♘df6 25 ♘e5 ♚d6 matters are

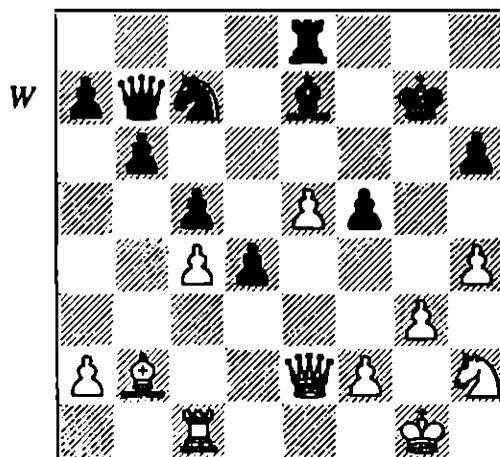
no longer clear) 24...♖c7 25 ♖f5  
 ♜fe8 26 ♖xg7! (D)



Another entirely logical sacrifice which, after a brief examination of the layout of the pieces, is not really a surprise. White's queen and minor pieces have immediate access to the kingside. Black's army, on the other hand, is huddled together on the first two ranks, and the queen is way out on the wrong side of the board. Even if White does not have a decisive attack he should be able to force a healthy return on his investment...

26...♖xg7 27 ♖xd7 d4 (Black judges correctly the importance of the a1-h8 diagonal – the following two variations support this opinion and highlight the justification of 21 d5!! and 22 ♜xd5: 27...♜xd7 28 e6+ ♖f6 29 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 30 ♜e5+ ♖e7 31 exd7+ ♖xd7 32 ♜f5+, or 27...♜f8 28 e6+ f6 29 ♖e5!? {29 ♖h2!?!} 29...fxe5 30 ♖xe5+ ♖f6 31 e7 ♜xd7 32 ♜g4+ ♖f7 33 ♖xf6) 28 ♖xe8 ♜xe8 29 bxc4 ♜b7 30 ♖h2 f5 (D).

Now White played 31 exf6+?, when 31...♖xf6 32 ♜g4+ ♖h8 33 ♜h5 ♖g7 34 ♜f1 ♜e4 35 ♖g4 ♜e6! 36 f3 ♜g6! led to an unclear ending.



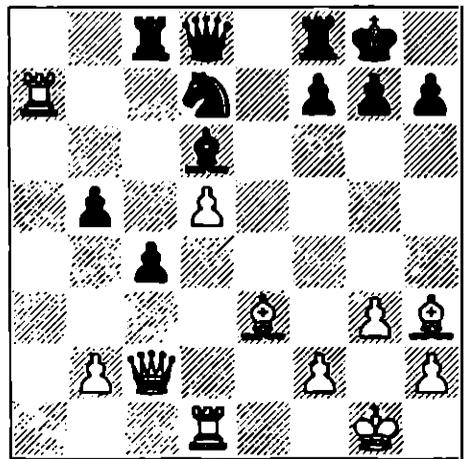
However, the diagram position is still very good for White, and with correct play he can maintain the momentum of the offensive which started with White's exploitation of a space advantage. Once again the dark-squared bishop is a key piece, and Black's problems on the kingside are by no means over after 31 ♜e1!, when the threat of ♖b2-c1, menacingly lining up on another diagonal, is difficult to meet. White is clearly better thanks to his opponent's terrible weaknesses on f6, f5, g6, h5 and h6.

Of course, in this example the white attack was not a sudden Tal-like sacrificial masterpiece culminating in a deadly king-hunt. Such games are seen less frequently than chess columnists and authors (myself included) would have you believe, and they usually require one or two poor moves from a helpful victim. Instead Black (a Hungarian GM) was guilty only of being slightly passive and of losing a little time with his light-squared bishop and his queen, yet this resulted in sustained pressure from White in the form of active minor pieces and open lines.

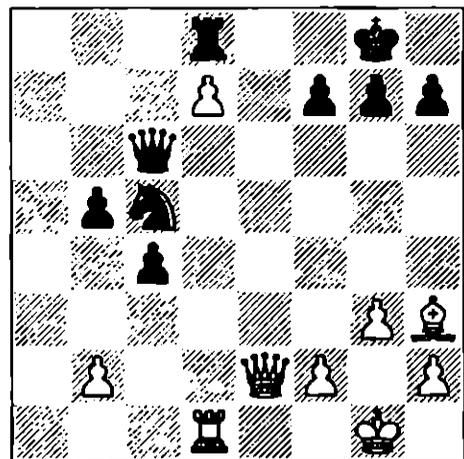
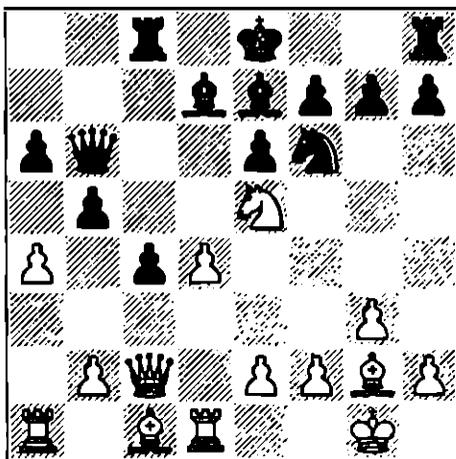
## White's d-pawn

The position in the diagram below arose in the game **Bogdanovski-Raičević, Pula 1990**, after the moves 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♔g2 dxc4 5 ♖f3 c5 6 0-0 ♖bd7 (6...♖c6 is the main line – see Games 1-3) 7 ♖a3 ♖b6 (7...cxd4 8 ♖xc4 ♔c5 9 ♖xd4 ♖b6 {9...0-0 10 ♖b3 ♔e7 11 ♔e3 a5 12 a4 puts Black's queenside under fire, Bogdanovski-Karaklajić, Yugoslav Ch 1991} 10 ♖xb6 ♔xb6 11 ♖b5! worked out well for White in the game Tal-Danov, Moscow 1972: 11...♔xf2+ 12 ♔xf2 ♖b6+ 13 ♖d4 e5 14 e3 exd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖e6 16 ♔d2 ♔d7 17 ♔b4 ♔c6 18 ♖ad1, and Black's king was stranded) 8 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 9 ♖a4+ ♔d7 10 ♖xc4 ♖c8 11 ♖e5 b5 12 ♖d3 c4 13 ♖c2 ♖b6 14 ♖d1 ♔e7 15 a4 a6 (D).

the board. The knight sits safely on e5, contributing to the power of the Catalan bishop by covering the c6-square, and the rook bolsters the d-pawn. In fact, with a 2-1 majority in the centre, White's most natural plan should involve these pawns. The game continued: 16 e4 0-0 17 d5 exd5 18 exd5 ♔d6 19 ♔e3 ♖c7 20 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♖a7 ♖d8 23 ♔h3 (D).



23...♖c7 24 ♖a6 ♖c5 25 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 26 ♔f4 ♖d8 27 ♔xc7 ♖xc7 28 d6 ♖c6 (28...♖d8 29 ♖f5) 29 d7 ♖d8 30 ♖e2 (D)



A second black pawn has arrived on c4, and Black has succeeded in providing it with maximum support. Meanwhile, apart from the useful a2-a4, which adds to White's armoury the possibility of opening the a-file (...b5xa4 meets with ♖e5xd7), White has been busy in the centre of

30...♖e6 (30...♔f8 is better, when 31 ♖h5!? keeps White on top) 31 ♖e5! ♖f8 32 ♖e7 ♖f6 33 ♖e1

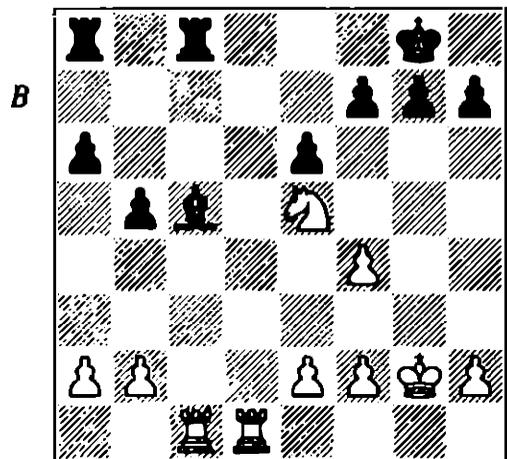
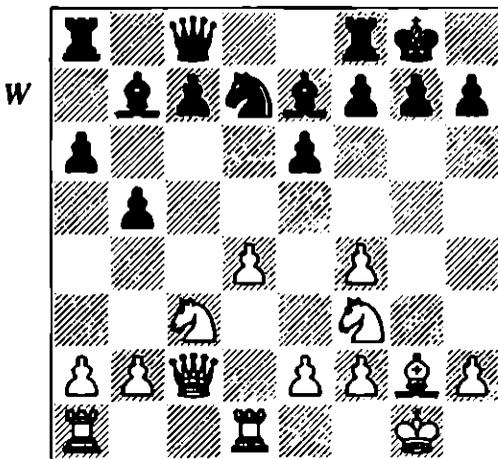
$\text{♞xd7}$  (one final try – otherwise the white rook will come to e8 – hoping for 34  $\text{♙xd7? ♜xe7}$  35  $\text{♞xe7 ♚f8}$  34  $\text{♜xd7! 1-0}$ ).

## Typical ending

In Portisch-Radulov White's torture treatment left him with a good knight against a terrible bishop. In the next example we see the great Karpov struggling on the wrong side of a Catalan ending, and again White's remaining minor piece is a knight and Black is left with a bishop. But this time the (dark-squared) bishop controls a lot of squares and could only be described as 'good'.

The diagram position was reached after thirteen moves in the game Ribli-Karpov, *Amsterdam 1980 (D)*.

is the traditional ...c7-c5 break, with which Black hopes to reduce his opponent's influence in the centre and subsequently steer the game to equality. White has a pawn on f4 because he parked his bishop there to attack the c7-pawn, prompting Black to solve the problem with ... $\text{♞f6-d5xf4}$ . As Black is in no position to exploit the potential weaknesses created by the recapture on f4, White is free to turn the front f-pawn to his advantage – extra cover of the e5-square. The game continued 14  $\text{♞e4!}$ , aiming to clamp down on the position and inviting Black to react with 14...c5 (thematic but maybe not best in this specific situation), in turn inducing the following sequence of exchanges: 15  $\text{dxc5 ♞xc5}$  16  $\text{♞xc5 ♜xc5}$  17  $\text{♜xc5 ♙xc5}$  18  $\text{♞ac1 ♞fc8}$  19  $\text{♞e5! ♙xg2}$  20  $\text{♚xg2 (D)}$ .



The opening twenty moves are discussed in detail in Game 14, while here we concentrate on the rest of the game, 'rewinding' to the fourteenth move in order to see just how quick the transition from opening to ending can be.

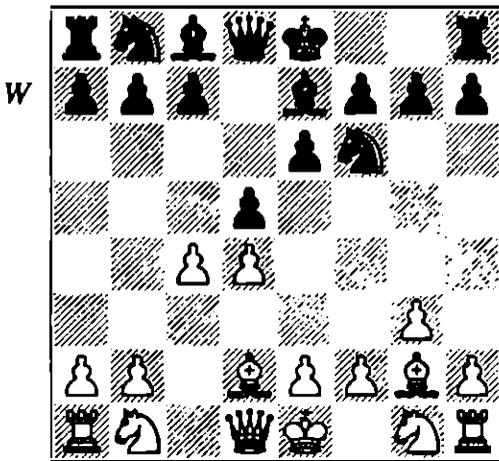
A brief examination of the pawns tells us that a natural plan for Black

Only seven more moves have been played since the previous diagram, yet the nature of the game has changed completely, a transformation which is seen frequently in the Catalan. Many players (especially if playing against Karpov!) would shake hands and split the point in this



the latter tends to give Black interesting options involving ...d5xc4, e.g. (5 ♖d2) 5...♗c6 (not 5...dxc4?? 6 ♚a4+) 6 ♗f3 dxc4 7 0-0 ♙xd2+ 8 ♗xd2 ♜b8 followed by ...b7-b5.

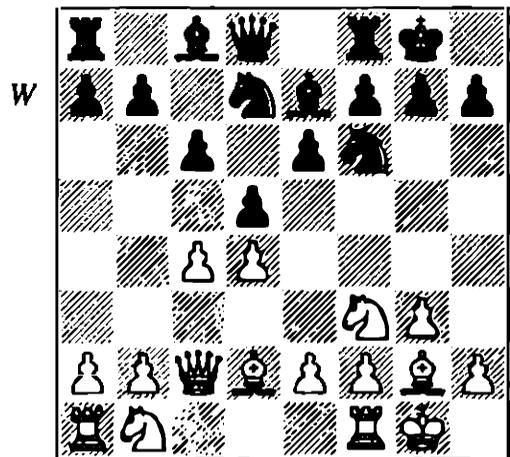
An examination of the position after 4...♙b4+ 5 ♙d2 ♙e7 (*D*) should help us see why Black has 'wasted' a tempo.



Time is only one of many factors in chess. Another – equally important – part of the game is the harmony of the pieces, and it is the coordination of the white pieces which Black is hoping to disrupt by tempting the bishop to d2. This square is often used by the queen's knight to support the e2-e4 advance or as a stepping-stone to b3 or c4, for example. The bishop also obstructs the defence of the d4-pawn, and in certain positions (e.g. the Closed Catalan) the appropriate post for the bishop is on b2.

Nevertheless, apart from confusing some opponents, there is little else for Black to gain from this idea. If necessary White can simply return the tempo when the time comes to put the bishop on f4 or g5 and, in

some cases, White may even profit from the gift by bringing a rook to the c-file or by relocating the bishop on c3 in favourable circumstances. Occasionally the bishop is fine on d2 (after 4...♙b4+ 5 ♙d2 ♙e7 6 ♗f3 dxc4 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♗c2 a6 9 ♗xc4 b5 10 ♗c2, for example, White's extra move is useful), but for us the bishop is most inconveniently placed here in the Closed Catalan, which is examined in Part 2 of this book. For example, here is the position after the moves (1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2 ♙b4+ 5 ♙d2 ♙e7) 6 ♗f3 0-0 7 0-0 ♗bd7 8 ♗c2 c6 (*D*):



The bishop hinders White's usual method of development, so we have to find an alternative. One way to try to avoid 'correcting' the play thus far is 9 b3 b6 10 ♙c3, e.g. 10...♙b7 11 ♗bd2 c5 12 dxc5 ♗xc5, when White can line up on the a1-h8 diagonal with 13 ♗b2!, an option which is not available to White with the normal move-order.

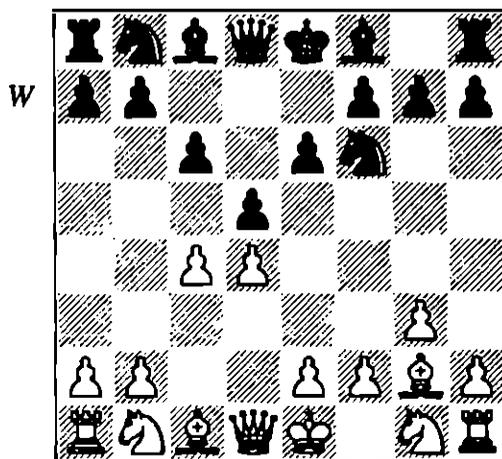
Moreover, an interesting idea to spoil Black's fun was seen in the game **Believsky-Azmaiparashvili, Amsterdam OHRA 1990: 1 d4 ♗f6 2**

c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♖g2 ♖b4+ 5 ♗d2 ♗e7 (5...♗xd2+ is not a good idea once ...d7-d5 has been played, for the absence of the dark-squared bishops clearly helps White, who can be happy to continue along normal lines as though nothing has happened), and now White played 6 ♗c3!?, preparing for fluid development with extra support of the centre and influence on the a1-h8 diagonal. Black's 6...b6 then met with the new 7 ♜h3!?, and after 7...♗b7 8 0-0 ♜c8 (8...0-0 9 ♜f4 ♜bd7 10 ♜d2 is also good for White) 9 cxd5 ♗xd5 (9...exd5 10 ♜f4 0-0 11 b4 and White clamps down on the queenside) 10 ♜f4 ♗xg2 11 ♜xg2 0-0 12 ♜d2 ♜b7+ 13 f3 ♜g4 14 ♜c4 ♜c6 15 h3! (15 b3? b5) 15...♜xc4 16 hxg4 White emerged on the more comfortable side of a complicated position. The changes to the pawn structure on the kingside provide cover for White's king (meanwhile the h-file is open for the use of the rooks – if so desired) and White's pieces are more harmoniously placed.

Of course this is by no means a fool-proof recipe for White, but it is a promising (and probably unexpected) way to unsettle Black after the bishop check and retreat.

Another fourth move for Black which can have independent significance is 4...c6 (D).

Black can follow up with ...♜b8-d7, ...♗f8-e7 and ...0-0, leading to the Closed Catalan, but putting the bishop on d6 in order to prepare ...e6-e5 is also possible. The simplest reply to 4...c6 is 5 ♜c2 (which fits in



with the Closed Catalan), defending the c4-pawn.

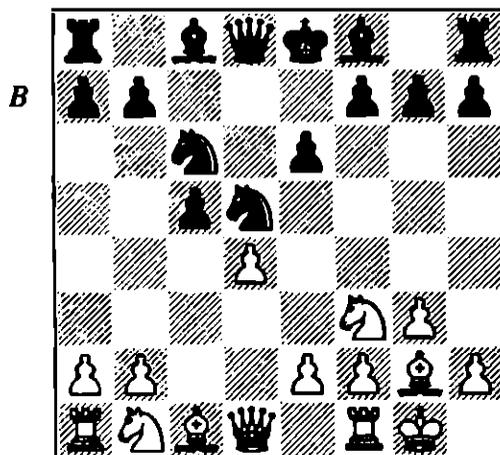
After 5...♜bd7 6 ♜f3 ♗d6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♜bd2 Black is ready to carry out the planned expansion in the centre: 8...e5 (8...♜e7 9 b3 {9 e4} and then 9...♗d8 10 ♗b2 e5 11 cxd5 ♜xd5 12 ♗ad1!, or 9...e5 10 cxd5 e4 11 ♜h4; similarly 8...♗e8 9 b3 e5 10 cxd5 cxd5 {10...♜xd5 11 ♜c4} 11 dxe5 ♜xe5 12 ♗b2). White can then gain the advantage with 9 cxd5 cxd5 (9...♜xd5 10 ♜c4 ♜e7 11 e4 ♜5b6 12 ♜xd6 leaves Black weak on the dark squares) 10 dxe5 ♜xe5 11 ♜xe5 ♗xe5 12 ♜f3, and Black has nothing to compensate for his isolated pawn.

In *Nogueiras-Robatsch, Graz 1984*, Black sought to exploit the specific order of moves with 5...b5 6 c5 (6 cxb5 cxb5 merely invites Black to bring his took to the c-file) 6...e5 7 dxe5 ♜fd7 8 ♜f3 ♜xc5 9 0-0, but he was already falling behind in development. The game went 9...a5 10 ♜c3 ♜ba6 11 ♜d4 ♜b4 12 ♜d1 ♜e6 13 e3 ♜xd4 14 exd4 with a clear advantage to White.

Finally there is 4...c5. As the variation 5 ♜f3 cxd4 6 ♜xd4 e5 is very

complicated and tends to give Black good attacking chances (e.g. 7  $\text{Qf3}$  d4 8 0-0  $\text{Qc6}$  9 e3 d3!?), I recommend 5 cxd5. Then 5...exd5 6  $\text{Qf3}$  transposes directly to the Tarrasch Defence. This leaves 5... $\text{Qxd5}$  6  $\text{Qf3}$   $\text{Qc6}$  (... $\text{Qf8-e7}$  here or on the next move should transpose to 'b' in the note to Black's sixth move in Ci-fuentes-Sosonko, Game 21, while 6...cxd4 7 0-0  $\text{Qc5}$  8  $\text{Qxd4}$  0-0 9  $\text{Qb3}$   $\text{Qb6}$  10  $\text{Qd2}$   $\text{Qc6}$  11  $\text{Qa3}$ ! is good for White) 7 0-0 (D).

With 7... $\text{Qf6}$  Black prevents e2-e4 and puts the d-pawn under pressure. Now White can head for a favourable queenless middlegame with 8 dxc5  $\text{Qxd1}$  9  $\text{Rxd1}$   $\text{Qxc5}$  10  $\text{Qc3}$   $\text{Qd7}$  11  $\text{Qg5}$ ! followed by  $\text{Qg5-e4}$ , but 8  $\text{Qe5}$ ! gives us a position almost identical to that reached



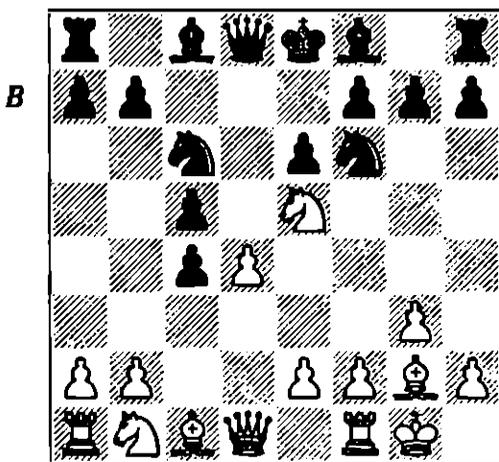
after 7  $\text{Qe5}$  in the game Piket-Van der Sterren, Game 1, the only difference being the disappearance of the black pawn on c4. This obviously favours White, who can choose a continuation in which he no longer has to take the trouble to recapture Black's extra pawn, for example 8... $\text{Qd7}$  9  $\text{Qxc6}$   $\text{Qxc6}$  10  $\text{Qxc6}$ + bxc6 11  $\text{Qa4}$ .

# 1 Open Catalan: 5...c5

This move is quite logical. After removing the c4-pawn Black challenges the d-pawn. We are concerned with 6 0-0  $\text{♞c6}$  (others are insufficient because they give White a free hand in the centre). Then White has 7  $\text{♞e5}$  and 7  $\text{♞a4}$ . The following game deals with the active 7  $\text{♞e5}$ .

Game 1  
**Piket – Van der Sterren**  
*Netherlands Ch 1994*

1 d4  $\text{♞f6}$  2 c4 e6 3  $\text{♞f3}$  d5 4 g3  
 4 ...  $\text{dxc4}$   
 5  $\text{♙g2}$  c5  
 6 0-0  $\text{♞c6}$   
 7  $\text{♞e5}$  (D)

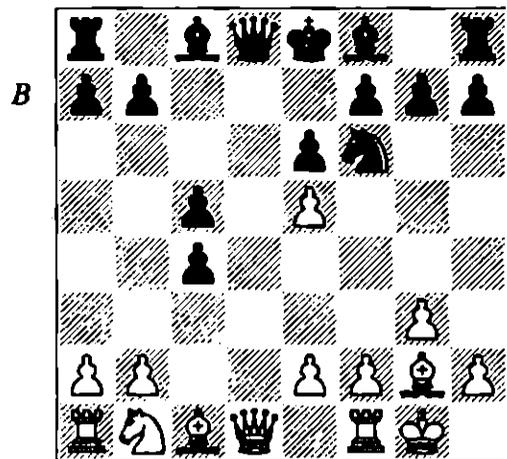


After this aggressive invasion into his opponent's half of the board White must be prepared to continue the game a pawn down if necessary. In some lines White should be content to rely on his positional superiority

rather than surrender these pluses just to level the material.

7 ...  $\text{♙d7}$   
 7... $\text{♞xd4}$ ? loses material to 8 e3 (8... $\text{♞c6}$  9  $\text{♙xc6+}$ , 10  $\text{♞xd8+}$  and 11  $\text{♞xf7+}$ ), while 7... $\text{♞d5}$  and 7... $\text{♞c7}$  invite White to damage the queen-side pawns with 8  $\text{♞xc6}$ .

The only feasible alternative is to deal with the audacious knight by removing it – 7... $\text{♞xe5}$  8 dxe5 (D).



And now:

a) 8... $\text{♞xd1}$  9  $\text{♞xd1}$ :

a1) 9... $\text{♞d5}$  should not be met with 10  $\text{♙xd5}$ ? exd5 11  $\text{♞xd5}$   $\text{♙e6}$  (White's Catalan bishop is a valuable piece). Instead 10  $\text{♞a3}$ ! is dangerous for Black, e.g. 10... $\text{♙d7}$  (10...c3 11 e4! cxb2 12  $\text{♙xb2}$   $\text{♞c7}$  13  $\text{♞c4}$  gives White more than enough for the pawn) 11  $\text{♞xc4}$   $\text{♙b5}$  12 b3 (Neishtadt gives 12  $\text{♞e3}$ !  $\text{♞xe3}$  13  $\text{♙xe3}$   $\text{♞b8}$  14  $\text{♞d2}$ .  $\text{♙e7}$  15 a4! as good for White) 12... $\text{♞d8}$  (12...0-0-0 13

♠a3) 13 ♠b2 ♠e7 14 ♞d6+ ♠xd6 15 exd6 0-0 16 e4, and the soon to be protected passed d6-pawn was a problem for Black in Marosi-Kral, Hungary 1994.

a2) 9...♞d7 is another possibility, when 10 f4 ♞b8 (freeing the b-pawn and avoiding something like 10...♠e7 11 ♞a3 0-0 12 ♠xb7) 11 a4 guarantees excellent chances for White in the queenless middlegame. Either White will regain the pawn with a bind or else attempts to keep it will just make matters worse for Black. Black has tried several moves here without success, e.g. 11...f6 12 exf6 gxf6 13 ♞a3 h5 14 ♞xc4 h4 15 a5 hxg3 16 hxg3 ♞g8 17 ♞a3, or 11...♞b6 12 ♞c3 ♠e7 13 a5 ♞a8 14 ♞b5, etc.

b) 8...♞d5 9 ♞a3!:

b1) In Andersson-Guyot, France 1993, Black played the greedy 9...c3, and Ulf 'the Wolf' turned down the potentially wild 10 ♞c4 b5 in favour of the simple 10 bxc3 ♞xc3 11 ♞c2 ♞d5 12 ♞d1 ♠d7 13 ♞c4, with considerable pressure for the pawn. White's judgement proved correct: 13...♞c8 14 ♠b2 ♠e7 15 ♞d6+ ♠xd6 16 exd6 0-0 17 ♠xd5 exd5 18 ♞xd5 b6 19 ♠xg7! ♞xg7 20 ♞g5+ ♞h8 21 ♞h5, etc.

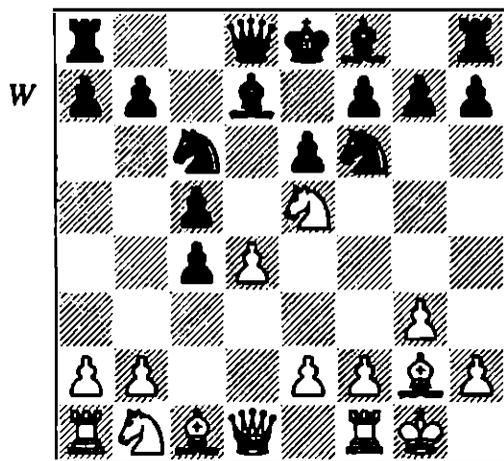
b2) 9...♠d7 10 ♞xc4 ♠c6 is less risky. Petrosian-Panno, Palma de Mallorca 1969, was slightly favourable for White after the continuation 11 a3 ♞c8 12 e4 ♞b6 13 ♞d6+ ♠xd6 14 exd6 ♞c4 15 ♞g4 ♞xd6 (15...♞f6 16 ♞e2!) 16 ♞xg7 ♞d4 17 ♠h6.

c) 8...♞d7 9 f4:

c1) Vukić-Hausner, Banja Luka 1981 went 9...♞c7 10 ♞a3 ♞b6 11 ♞b5 ♞b8 12 ♠e3 ♠d7 13 ♞d6+ ♠xd6 14 exd6 ♞c8 15 ♠f2 0-0 16 e4 ♠c6, and now 17 a4! would have maintained a healthy initiative for the pawn.

c2) 9...♠e7 10 ♞a3 ♞b6 (10...0-0 11 ♞xc4 ♞c7 12 ♠e3 ♞b6 13 ♞d6!? ♞d8 14 ♞c2 with pressure on the c5-pawn) 11 ♞xd8+ ♠xd8 12 ♠e3 ♠e7 13 ♞fc1 and White had the upper hand in Sveshnikov-Arseniev, USSR 1986. After 13...♞b8 14 ♞xc4 ♞xc4 15 ♞xc4 b6 16 b4 0-0 (16...cxb4 17 ♞c7, or 16...♠a6? 17 ♠c6+ ♞f8 18 b5 followed by 19 ♞a4) 17 bxc5 bxc5 18 ♞a4 a6 19 ♞c1 ♞b2 20 ♠f3 White homed in on the c-pawn.

Let us return to the position after 7...♠d7 (D).



8 ♞a3

White sends his other knight into the game, not worrying about restoring material equality. Variations which involve the sacrifice of a pawn or two need to be treated appropriately by the player making the investment (which is exactly how one should think of sacrifices). Usually

White receives immediate compensation in the form of smooth development, space and the greater activity which these factors provide. Rather than allow the fire to burn out prematurely the trick is to nurture these cumulative advantages and generate a lasting initiative which will enable White to keep up the pressure.

You may notice that some of the players on the white side of the game extracts which follow are well-known for their fondness of complicated positions, and it will come as no surprise to learn that Kasparov has taken an interest in this variation.

8 ... cxd4

Not 8...♘xd4? 9 ♖xb7, though two other moves are occasionally seen:

a) In R.Garcia-Esain, Zaragoza 1992, Black thought he could simply ignore the tension in the centre with 8...♗e7, but after 9 ♘xd7 ♙xd7 10 dxc5 ♙xd1 11 ♖xd1 ♗xc5 12 ♘xc4 ♕e7 13 ♗f4 ♖hd8 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♘e5 the c6-pawn was a liability.

b) 8...♘d5 is aimed at reducing the influence of White's Catalan bishop. The game Kakhiani-A.Sokolov, Helsinki 1992, went 9 ♘axc4 ♘xd4 (9...cxd4 10 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 11 ♙xd4 leaves White rather active) 10 ♗e3!. After 10...♘c6 (10...♘e3 11 fxe3 ♘c6 12 ♘xf7) 11 ♗xd5 exd5 12 ♙xd5 ♗e6 13 ♙xd8+ ♘xd8 14 ♖ac1 b6 White should have played 15 ♘d3 ♗e7 16 ♘f4 with an initiative.

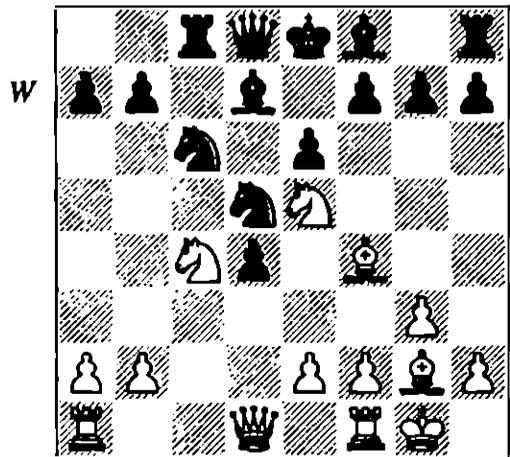
9 ♘axc4 ♗c5

The text forces White to work for an advantage. There are two less

popular alternatives, both tried by Andersson in a match with Kasparov in Belgrade 1985.

a) Kasparov met 9...♖c8 by 10 ♙b3, but three years later in Ljubovjević-Yusupov, Belfort 1988, 10 ♗f4 was played, and it does seem to offer White even better chances of an advantage:

a1) The following position was reached after the natural 10...♘d5 (D).



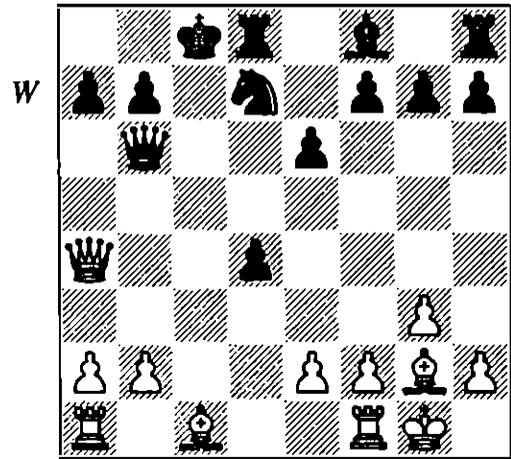
In return for the sacrificed pawn White has a considerable lead in development and active pieces, and Black's king is still in the centre. Consequently White should not be afraid to enter into any complicated sequences because his 'extra' pieces will rule, and Black will be too busy addressing the problem of his retarded development to prevent White from recovering the pawn with interest. Thus: 11 ♘xd7 ♘xf4 (11...♙xd7 12 ♘e5 is better for White thanks to his slightly more harmonious pieces) 12 ♗xc6! bxc6 (12...♖xc6 13 ♘de5) 13 ♘xf8 ♙d5! (13...♘h3+ 14 ♕g2 ♙d5+ 15 e4! ♙xc4 16 ♖c1 ♙b4 17 ♘xe6! fxe6 18 ♙h5+ clearly favours

White) 14 gxf4 ♖xc4 15 ♜c1 ♗d5 16 ♗a4! (16 ♘xe6 fxe6 is equal) 16...g5!? (16...♜xf8 17 ♜fd1 and 16...♙xf8 17 ♜fd1 c5 18 ♜xd4 are not enough for Black) 17 f5! exf5 18 ♜fd1 ♙xf8 19 ♜xd4 ♗e6 20 ♜c5 (20 ♜dc4!? and 20 ♗xa7!? are also good) 20...♙g7 21 ♗a5 and White emerged with a useful initiative.

a) In Lalić-Sonntag, Bad Wörishofen 1989 Black tried 10...b5, but this rash thrust merely adds to Black's problems on the queenside and does nothing to diminish White's pressure in the centre. After 11 ♘xc6 ♙xc6 12 ♙xc6+ ♜xc6 13 ♘e5 ♜c5 14 ♜c1 ♗d5 15 ♗d3 a6 16 b4 the German IM must have been regretting his carelessness already. In fact there was no keeping White out of the self-inflicted weakness on c6, and after 16...♜c3 17 ♜xc3 dxc3 18 ♗xc3 ♙e7 19 ♗c8+ ♙d8 20 ♘c6 0-0 21 ♗xa6 White had safely won a pawn.

b) More recently the game Topalov-Morozevich, Madrid 1996 saw Black produce a dubious novelty after 9...♘xe5 10 ♘xe5 ♗b6 11 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 12 ♗a4. The young Russian decided against the 'dull' but accurate 12...♗b4 13 ♗xb4 ♙xb4 14 ♙xb7 ♜b8 – which is only marginally better for White – in favour of the provocative 12...0-0-0 (*D*).

The continuation provides us with a good illustration of the power of the Catalan bishop on the h1-a8 diagonal. To make matters worse for Black the exchange of his light-squared bishop means that he cannot even make a challenge on the long diagonal, leaving him less able to



defend the potential weakness on b7. We may safely conclude that Black runs the risk of castling into an attack with 12...0-0-0. Play continued: 13 ♜d1 ♙e7?! (13...♙c5 invites 14 ♜d3 and 15 ♜b3, while 13...e5 allows 14 ♗c4+ followed by 15 ♗xf7, so best is 13...♘c5 14 ♗c4 ♗a6 15 ♜xd4 ♗xc4 16 ♜xc4 ♜d1+ 17 ♙f1 ♙d7! 18 ♜c2 {18 b4 ♘a4} 18...♙d6, which limits White to a slight advantage) 14 ♜xd4 ♙c5 (14...♘c5 15 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 16 ♗c2, threatening ♙c1-e3) 15 ♜c4 ♙b8 16 ♙f1!? (also worthy of investigation is 16 ♜c3, when Morozevich gives 16...♙xf2+ 17 ♙h1 {17 ♙f1 ♘c5 18 ♗f4+ ♙a8 19 e3 ♘d3 is unclear} 17...♘c5 18 ♗f4+ e5 19 ♗xf2! ♜d1+ 20 ♙f1 ♘e4 21 ♗xb6 axb6 22 ♜f3 ♜c8 23 ♙f4! ♜xa1 24 ♙xe5+ ♜c7 25 ♜xf7 with a very good ending for White) 16...e5 and now, instead of 17 ♙g5? ♗xb2!, White could have concentrated on the b7-pawn with 17 ♙e3!, for example 17...♙xe3 18 ♜b4! ♗f6 19 ♜xb7+ ♙c8 20 ♜c1+!, or 17...♗xb2 18 ♜cc1 ♙xe3 19 ♜cb1, etc. This leaves 17...f5 18 ♜d1 (18 ♜xc5!? ♘xc5 19 ♗c2) 18...♙xe3 19 ♜b4 ♘c5 20 ♜xb6 ♘xa4 21 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8

22 ♖xb7+ ♔c8 23 fxe3, when Black is struggling to hold on to his pawns.

10 ♗b3

Hitting the b7-pawn, though there seems to be some confusion regarding the validity of this ‘threat’ – see note to White’s 11th move.

10 ... 0-0

10...♗c8 avoids Kasparov’s improvement (next note) and should transpose to the main game, but many players do not bother to defend the b-pawn.

11 ♙f4

A major alternative is 11 ♗xb7, which Kasparov brought back to life in the Human vs Computer challenge match with Deep Blue in Philadelphia 1996. The move first appeared in Vaganian-Serper, Lucerne Wcht 1993, but failed to find much popularity – probably something to do with a few strong annotators mysteriously giving the line “11 ♗xb7? ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♖b8 13 ♗a6?? ♙b5”. Strange. Of course, after 11...♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♖b8, 13 ♗f3 is legal, forced and therefore best. Then 13...♘d5 was dealt a blow in the game Sulava-Dizdarević, Catolica 1993, when White found 14 ♙g5! f6 (14...♗xg5 15 ♘xd7) 15 ♗g4!!, earning a clear advantage after 15...h5 16 ♗h3 fxc5 17 ♙xd5 g4 18 ♗g2. More to the point is 13...♙d6, putting the question to the knight:

a) 14 ♘c4 ♙b5! is roughly equal.

b) 14 ♙f4 ♘d5! (14...♖xb2? 15 ♘c4) 15 ♘g6?? loses to 15...fxg6.

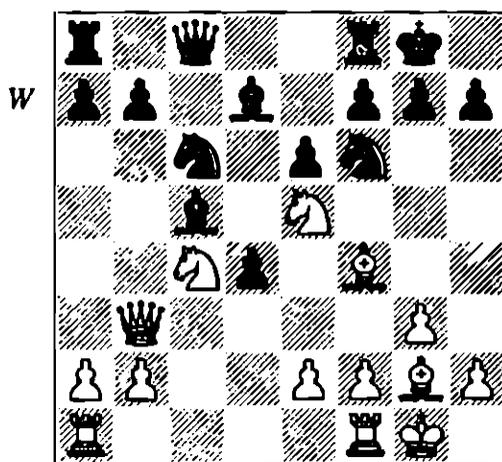
c) Vaganian-Serper continued 14 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 15 ♙g5 ♙e5! 16 ♖ab1

h6 and Black had a comfortable position (16...♗a4 also looks fine for Black).

d) However, in Kasparov-Deep Blue, Philadelphia (2) 1996, the PCA World Champion chose 14 ♘c6!. After 14...♙xc6 15 ♗xc6 e5 16 ♖b1! Black’s best is 16...♗d7, when White’s bishop pair (grip on the light squares) is enough for an edge. Instead the computer played 16...♖b6?! 17 ♗a4 ♗b8, and the clever 18 ♙g5! ♙e7 19 b4! ♙xb4 20 ♙xf6 gxf6 21 ♗d7! left White dominating the light squares. This continued throughout the game, which Kasparov eventually won on the 73rd move to level the score at 1-1 (he went on to take the match 4-2).

Kasparov’s 14 ♘c6! gives White an extra option in the main line, but perhaps the next turn in chess fashion will prompt more players to eliminate this possibility by moving over to 10...♗c8 instead of 10...0-0, so 11 ♙f4 remains the most important continuation anyway. White maintains the tension and prepares to bring his rooks to the centre, still eyeing the b7-pawn.

11 ... ♗c8 (D)



## 12 ♖ac1

12 ♖fd1 is also played. With the text White simply forgets about the d4-pawn and worries Black's queen on the c-file, confident that the build-up of pressure compensates for the sacrificed pawn. Indeed a brief look at the diagram position should be enough to convince us that Black is rather cramped, while White enjoys free and easy movement for his pieces, a useful outpost on the e5-square and significant influence on the b-file, c-file and the h1-a8 diagonal.

## 12 ... ♘d5

Obstructing the Catalan bishop is practically the only plan available to Black since there is not much in the way of choice here. For example, the ostensibly natural 12...♘d8 is not to be recommended, as was demonstrated in Zia Rahman-Norri, Erevan OL 1996: 13 ♘xf7! ♕xf7 14 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 15 ♘e5+ ♖g8 16 ♖xc5 with much the better position for White. Black went from bad to worse, the game ending 16...♘d5 17 ♖fc1 ♘xf4 18 gxf4 ♘d5 19 ♘xc6 bxc6 20 ♖xc6 ♗e8 21 f5 ♖ad8 22 ♖xe6 ♗h5 23 ♖c5 ♗xf5 24 ♖xd5 1-0 (24...♗xd5 25 ♖e8+ ♖f7 26 ♖xd8).

## 13 ♘d3!?

A promising alternative to a tried and tested, lengthy variation which leads to an ending in which accurate defence offers Black good drawing chances. Kharlov-A.Sokolov, St Petersburg Z 1993 is typical: 13 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 14 ♘e5 ♘xe5 15 ♙xe5 (15 ♙xd5!? ♗xd5 16 ♗xd5 exd5 17 ♖xc5 ♘c6 18 ♖xd5 ♖ad8 is equal

according to Morozevich and Yurkov) 15...♙b6! (15...♖ac8 16 ♖cd1 b6 17 ♙xd4 ♗e7 18 ♙xc5 ♖xc5 19 ♙xd5 exd5 20 e3 ♗e4 21 ♘d4 ♗c2 22 ♗b4 ♖fc8 23 ♖fd1 is good for White, Ribli - A.Sokolov, Reykjavik 1988) 16 ♖fd1 (Glek's suggested improvement is 16 ♖cd1 ♘e7 17 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 18 e3, which he evaluates as slightly better for White) 16...♖ac8 17 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 18 ♙xd5 (18 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 19 ♖xd4 ♖c1+ 20 ♘d1? ♘f4! shows that White, too, must be careful) 18...♗xd5! (better than 18...exd5 19 ♙xd4) 19 ♗xd5 exd5 20 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 21 ♖xd4 ♘d8! (21...♖c5 has also been played, allowing White to keep his winning chances alive with 22 b4) 22 e4 ♖f8 23 exd5 ♖e7 24 ♖g2 ♖d6 25 ♖f3 ♖c8 (Tukmakov proposes 25...♖e5 26 ♖e4+ ♖d6 27 ♖e2 ♘d7! 28 ♘d2 ♖e5, and 25...♖e8!?) 26 ♘d2. Now Black played 26...♖e8!! (an important improvement on Tukmakov-A.Sokolov, Biel 1992, which saw 26...♖c5? fail to negate White's advantage after 27 ♖e4 ♖c4+ 28 ♖f5, for example 28...♖c5 29 h4 ♖xd5+ 30 ♖xd5+ ♖xd5 31 h5 h6 32 g4 ♖d4 33 f4 ♖e3 34 g5 ♖f3 35 ♖e5!! ♖g4 36 g6! f5 37 ♖e6 ♖xf4 38 ♖f7). GM Andrei Sokolov has considerable experience with this variation – as you may have noticed from these examples – and his hard work finally brought dividends in 26...♖e8, for 27 ♖f4 meets with 27...♖e5, preventing the advance of White's king. The game actually ended 28 h4 h5 29 f3 f6 30 g4 g5+ 31 ♖g3 hxg4 32 ♖xg4 gxh4 33 ♖xh4 1/2-1/2. At the

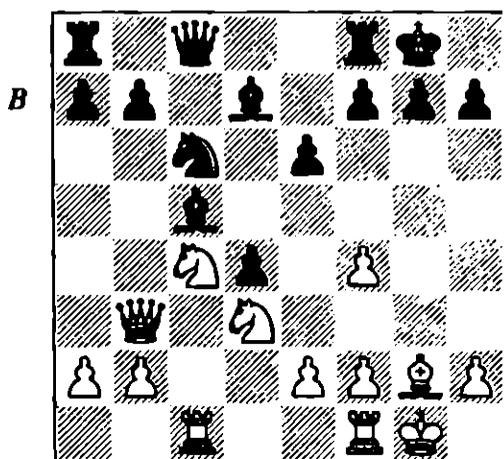
beginning of this note I said that this line is tried and tested – it is not unusual today for the merits of a particular variation to be influenced by improvements in a rook ending! Nevertheless, I would not be surprised to see someone come along with new ideas for White, and the process will start all over again.

Returning to the main game, we find ourselves back in the opening stage, thanks to Piket's preference to keep the pieces on the board – at least for the time being.

13 ... ♖xf4

White's dark-squared bishop covers some key squares on the h2-b8 diagonal, so it makes sense to remove it. The immediate 13...♗e7, for example, gives White the opportunity to plant a knight on d6.

14 gxf4 (D)



This is quite a natural capture in several variations of the Catalan, and here White chooses to take with the pawn even though a knight can come to f4. Black is not in any position to exploit the slight weakening of the pawn cover in front of White's king, and the f4-pawn allows White to

remain in control of the useful e5-square. Meanwhile White's knight is more actively posted on d3, monitoring c5 and e5 (in some cases the b4-square may be significant).

Note that the arrival of the pawn on f4 also rules out ...e6-e5, so now the d4-pawn cannot be defended comfortably, although Piket's play thus far suggests he is less interested in the d-pawn than in play on the c-file.

14 ... ♗e7

15 ♖ce5 ♗c7

As White is ready to double on the c-file, Black prepares to add support to the pinned knight, connecting the rooks in the process. White still manages to create a dangerous initiative in the game, so perhaps Korchnoi's 15...♖ab8!? should be considered. By placing a rook on the same file as White's queen, Black offers to give White a taste of his own medicine in the event of the b-file being opened after a capture on c6. White should continue as he does in the game, turning the screw a little more, rather than impatiently seeking to win back his pawn.

16 ♖c4

On c4 the rook keeps an eye on the d-pawn just in case White is presented with an opportunity to switch plans.

16 ... ♖fc8

Consistent. Others:

a) If Black considers c4 to be the wrong square for the rook he can try 16...♗d6 17 ♗xb7 ♖a5, instigating a series of exchanges from which White emerges with a big lead in the

resulting ending: 18 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 19 ♘xd7 ♘xc4 20 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 21 ♖cl! ♖c8 22 ♘e5 ♘b6 23 ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 24 ♖b7, etc.

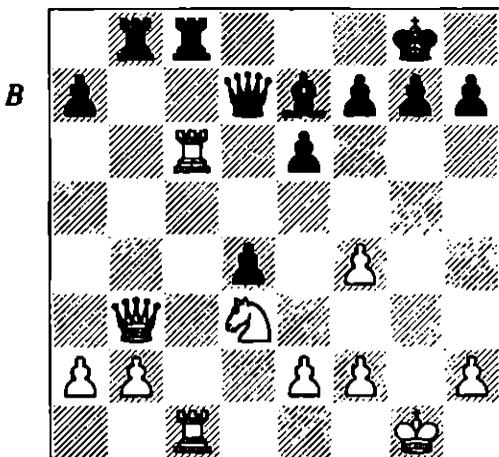
b) Korchnoi's suggested move, 16...♖d6!?, can be answered with 17 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 18 ♖xc6 bxc6 19 ♖xd4 or 17 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 18 ♖xc6 bxc6 19 ♖xd4, when Black's c-pawn is a liability in both cases.

17 ♖fc1

Now all the white pieces play a role in the assault on Black's queenside, so White is ready to reap the rewards of his investment. The b7-pawn needs defending, the d-pawn is weak and the c6-square is attacked by four white pieces (White's queen and d3-knight are also available if necessary). It is clear that Black is unable to retain his extra pawn.

17 ... ♖ab8  
 18 ♘xd7 ♖xd7  
 19 ♖xc6 bxc6  
 20 ♖xc6! (D)

White could have played 20 ♖a4 (threatening the d-pawn) first, but instead he exploits Black's weak back rank in order to provide the queen with a more active post.



20 ... ♖f6

20...♖xb3 21 ♖xc8+ ♖f8 22 axb3 is terrible for Black since the queen and bishop are no match for White's pieces. Nor is 20...♖xc6 21 ♖xb8+ to be recommended.

21 ♖1c5 h6  
 22 ♖c4

It is safe to say that White has taken control of the c-file!

Black's d-pawn is still exposed and the knight could not be better placed than it is on d3, defending the f4-pawn and the b2-pawn as well as covering b4, c5 and e5. Black's passive bishop, on the other hand, is severely restricted.

22 ... ♖xc6  
 23 ♖xc6 a5  
 24 b3!

Fixing another pawn on a dark square (a5) and releasing the knight from its queenside guard duty. With the only useful file belonging to White he simply improves his position in readiness for the ending which will result from inevitable exchanges (Black is under so much pressure that trading off a couple of pieces is the lesser evil).

24 ... ♖b7  
 25 f3!

More fine-tuning. White does not want the enemy queen to come to e4 after ♖c6-c7.

25 ... g6  
 26 ♔f1

This time White nudges his king off the g1-a7 diagonal.

26 ... ♔g7

Black, too, is waiting, but in his case there is little else to do, e.g.

26... ♖b5 27 ♜c5 ♜xc4 28 bxc4!  
 ♜a8 29 a4! ♙d8 30 ♜c6 ♚f8 31 ♜d6  
 ♙f6 32 c5, etc.

27 ♜c7 ♖b6

27... ♖b5 28 ♜xe6.

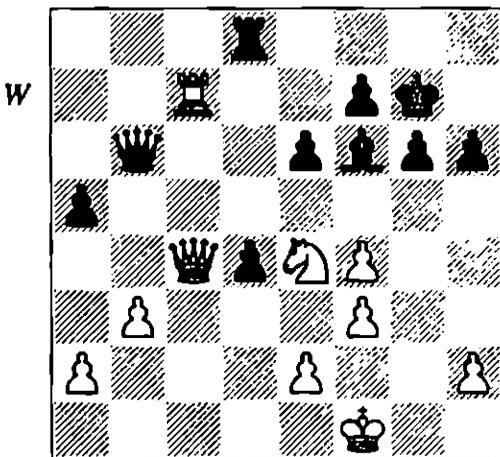
28 ♙c5!

With the king still on g1 White would have to deal with the possibility of ...d4-d3+.

28 ... ♜e8

Not 28... ♜xc7? 29 ♙xe6+.

29 ♙e4 ♜d8 (D)



30 ♜c5

Consistent with White's strategy thus far. Black's weaknesses on a5 and d4, coupled with the relative strengths of the pieces, indicate that White will benefit from an exchange of queens. Black's prospects are rather cheerless, for he can only defend.

Interesting is 30 f5!? gxf5 31 ♙g3 (threatening 32 ♙xf5+ with the point 32...exf5 33 ♜xf7+), when 31... ♜f8 runs into 32 ♙h5+ ♚g6 33 ♙f4+ ♚g5 34 ♜c1 and 31... ♜d5? loses to 32 ♙h5+ ♚g6 33 ♙f4+. Black should play 31... ♚g6!, and after 32 ♙xf5 ♚xf5 33 ♜d3+ ♚e5! 34 ♜xf7 ♙h8! the onus is on White to justify his

piece sacrifice (Black's king seems quite safe on e5).

30 ... ♜xc5

Forced.

31 ♙xc5

Renewing the threat on the e6-pawn.

31 ... ♜d6

32 ♜a7 ♙d8

33 ♙d3!

Heading for e5 to attack the f7-pawn. Black is struggling on both sides of the board and White has a firm grip on the centre. Victory for White should just be a matter of time, though Black's next allows his opponent to remove the last pair of rooks while winning the pawn.

33 ... ♜c6

34 ♜xf7+ ♚xf7

35 ♙e5+ ♚f6

36 ♙xc6

The beginning of the end. White's 'good' knight dominates the 'bad' bishop – a feature not uncommon in Catalan endings.

The remaining moves of the game were: 36... ♙b6 37 ♚e1 ♚f5 38 ♚d2 ♚xf4 39 ♚d3 e5 40 ♙e7! e4+ (another way for the game to end could be 40... ♚g5 41 ♙d5 ♙c5 42 ♚c4 ♙d6 43 a4 ♚h4 {43...e4 44 f4+} 44 b4 axb4 45 a5 ♚h3 46 a6 ♙b8 47 ♙xb4 ♙a7 48 ♙c6 ♙b6 49 ♚b5, etc.) 41 fxe4 ♚g5 42 e5 ♙c5 43 ♙c6 ♚f5 44 ♚c4 1-0.

An interesting game. It is not yet clear whether White has insufficient winning chances in the ending discussed in the note to White's 13th move (has Sokolov had the last word?). Whatever the upshot, Piket's

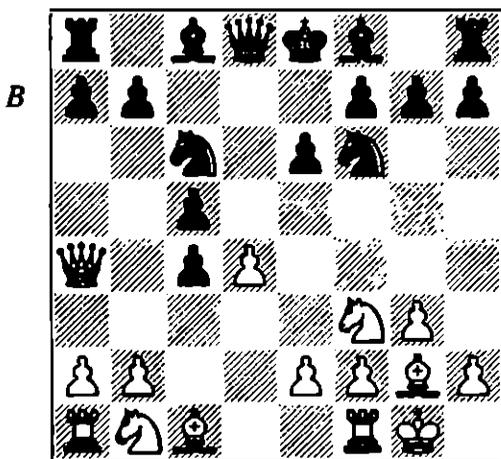
tension-building approach looks effective. White has a menacing initiative in the early middlegame and it is scarcely noticeable that Black has an extra pawn. This is exactly how these positions should be played.

Now we turn to 7 ♖a4, which retains the tension and is seen more frequently than 7 ♘e5. White aims to tidy up in the centre and rely on his development advantage in the middlegame. Black has two ways to deal with the pressure on the c6-knight – break the pin with 7...♙d7, or ignore it altogether with 7...cxd4.

First the more sober option:

Game 2  
**Dunnington – Richardson**  
*England 1997*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 d5 4 g3 dxc4  
 5 ♙g2 c5 6 0-0 ♘c6  
 7 ♖a4 (D)



7 ... ♙d7

7...cxd4 is examined in the next main game. Others:

a) 7...♙e7 ignores the potential pressure on the queen's knight. A

logical reply is 8 ♘e5, when both 8...0-0 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 dxc5, Pomarpuig, Malaga 1964, and 8...♙d7 9 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 10 dxc5 are clearly better for White.

b) 7...♘d7 was first seen in the game O'Kelly-Euwe, New York 1951, and after 8 dxc5 ♙xc5 9 ♖xc4 0-0 10 ♘c3 a6 11 ♘e4 ♙e7 12 ♙e3 ♘b6 13 ♖b3 ♘d5 14 ♗fd1 ♖c7 Black achieved equality. It makes more sense not to post the dark-squared bishop on e3, where it can easily become a target. I. Almasi-B. Lengyel, Budapest 1993 favoured White after 12 ♙d2 h6 13 ♗fd1 ♖b6 14 ♙c3 ♖c7 15 ♗ac1 ♘b6 16 ♖b3 ♘d5 17 ♙e5 ♖d8 18 ♘c3. Another possibility is 11 ♗d1, when 11...♖b6 12 ♘e4 ♙e7 13 b3 ♘f6 14 ♙b2 ♘xe4 15 ♖xe4 f6 16 ♘d4 accentuated White's influence over the h1-a8 diagonal in Bischoff-Sonntag, Bundesliga 1987. The main problem with 7...♘d7 is that it does nothing to address Black's usual development problem.

c) 7...♖a5 is a natural enough offer to exchange queens, which enjoys greater popularity at club level than in international practice. Black judges that White must lose time with his queen if he is to avoid a premature exchange, but eventually the black queen becomes exposed on a5, as was demonstrated in the game Hübner-Doghri, Erevan OL 1996: 8 ♖xc4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 10 ♖xd4 ♙c5 11 ♖c4 (11 ♖h4) 11...0-0 12 ♘c3 e5 13 ♙g5 ♙e7 14 ♗fc1! h6 15 ♙e3 ♗d8 (this makes matters worse for Black by depriving the queen of a

retreat square) 16 a3 ♖d6 17 b4 ♗d8 18 ♘b5 ♕e6 19 ♗c7 ♖d7 20 ♗xd8+ ♕xd8 21 ♕xa7, etc.

8 ♗xc4

I prefer this to the messy alternative 8 dxc5, when 8...♘a5 (8...♘e5!?) gives the game a completely different character and White must tread carefully.

The simple 8 ♗xc4 threatens 9 dxc5 and consequently forces Black to make a decision regarding the centre. The clearing of lines that results from ...c5xd4 or d4xc5 leaves White with pressure on both the h1-a8 diagonal and the d-file. The other option open to Black is to keep the position as closed as possible with a timely ...b7-b5 and ...c5-c4, giving White the opportunity to erect a strong centre.

8 ... b5

Black exploits the 'exposed' position of his opponent's queen in order to expand on the queenside. The major alternative is 8...cxd4, when 9 ♘xd4 ♖c8 10 ♘c3 brings us to a cross-roads:

a) 10...♗a5 poses White no problems:

a1) 11 ♖d1 ♕e7 (11...♗b4 12 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 13 ♘db5! ♖e7 14 a3 ♕xc3 15 ♘xc3 ♖hd8 16 ♕f4 and 11...♗c5 12 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 13 ♘db5 do not alter the assessment) 12 ♘b3 clearly favours White, for example 12...♗c7 (Black should avoid the continuation 12...♗b4 13 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 14 ♘b5 ♖e7 15 a3) 13 ♕g5 (13 ♕f4 e5 14 ♕g5 ♕e6 15 ♗a4 and 13 ♘b5 ♗b8 14 ♘c5 are also good for an advantage) 13...a6 (13...0-0? 14 ♘b5!)

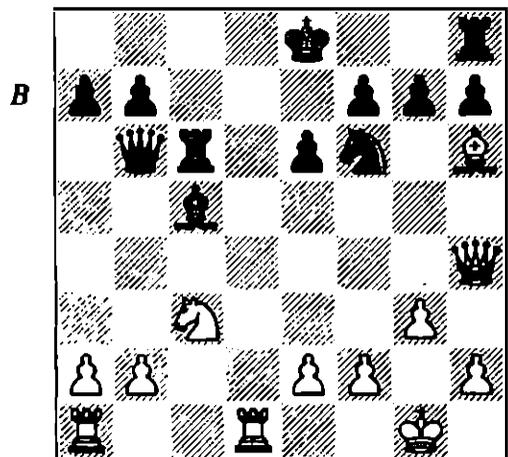
14 ♖ac1 and White is dangerously active.

a2) Equally effective is 11 ♕d2, viz. 11...♗c5 12 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 13 ♘b3 ♕d6 14 ♖fd1 ♖e7 15 ♘b5 ♕b8 16 ♘c5, Sakharov-Borisenko, USSR 1971, or 11...♗b4 12 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 13 ♘b3, when White benefits more from the queen exchange.

b) 10...♗b6 is intended to frustrate White's development by aiming at the b2-pawn, but in Ribli-Prandstetter, Warsaw Z 1979, White simply carried on regardless: 11 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 12 ♕e3!. Now the 'threatened' 12...♗xb2 is weak in view of 13 ♖ab1 ♗c2 (13...♗a3 14 ♘b5) 14 ♖fc1 followed by 15 ♘b5, so the game continued 12...♗b4 13 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 14 ♕xa7 ♕xc3 15 bxc3 ♕xg2 16 ♖xg2 ♖xc3 17 ♖fb1! ♖c7 18 ♖b2 and White had a small but enduring advantage.

c) Perhaps the most natural continuation for Black is 10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♕c5 12 ♗h4 ♕c6, challenging the Catalan bishop before castling. 13 ♖d1! and now:

c1) The game Portisch-Radulov, Buenos Aires OL 1978 went 13...♗b6 14 ♕xc6+ ♖xc6 15 ♕h6!! (D).



A witty, prepared improvement on 15  $\text{♙g5}$   $\text{♙e7}$  16  $\text{♖e4}$   $\text{♗xe4}$  17  $\text{♙xe7}$   $\text{♜xf2+}$  18  $\text{♜h1}$  f6 19  $\text{♜g4}$   $\text{♜e1+!}$  20  $\text{♜g2}$   $\text{♜f2+}$  (which leads to a draw), 15  $\text{♙h6}$  must have come as quite a shock to Radulov. As so often happens when someone has the dubious pleasure of being the first player to be on the receiving end of such a dangerous move, Radulov soon found himself with a terrible position after 15... $\text{gxf6}$  (15... $\text{♙xf2+}$  16  $\text{♜g2}$  0-0 17  $\text{♙xg7}$   $\text{♜xg7}$  18  $\text{♜g5+}$   $\text{♜h8}$  19  $\text{♜xf6+}$  and 20  $\text{♜xf2}$ ) 16  $\text{♜xf6}$  0-0 17  $\text{♖e4}$ . Black's broken kingside was the telling factor: 17... $\text{♜b4}$  18  $\text{♜e5}$   $\text{♙e7}$  19 a3!  $\text{♜b6}$  20  $\text{♖d7}$   $\text{♙g5}$  21 b3! (21 h4 f6 and 21  $\text{♖xg5}$   $\text{♖c5}$  are less accurate; now White threatens to bring his queen back to b2 before hitting the bishop with h2-h4) 21... $\text{♜xb3}$  22  $\text{♖xg5}$   $\text{hxg5}$  23  $\text{♜xg5+}$   $\text{♜h8}$  24  $\text{♖ad1!}$  (24  $\text{♜f6+}$   $\text{♜g8}$  25  $\text{♖d4}$   $\text{♖c4}$ ) 24... $\text{♜c2}$  25  $\text{♜f6+}$   $\text{♜g8}$  26  $\text{♖d4!}$   $\text{♜g6}$  (this time 26... $\text{♖c4}$  loses to 27  $\text{♜xf7!}$ ) 27  $\text{♜f3}$  h5 28  $\text{♜xb7}$  and White won.

Days after this game, in the last round of the Olympiad, Ribli (Portisch's team-mate) was also allowed to play 15  $\text{♙h6}$ , the victim on this occasion being Ljubojević. The famous Yugoslav GM tried 15... $\text{♙f8}$ , but 16  $\text{♖d2}$  e5 17  $\text{♙e3}$  could not have encouraged him. Black trails behind in development, the d5-square is weak, his queen and rook are poorly placed and White – whose forces enjoy more harmony – is about to double on the d-file. After 17... $\text{♜a6}$  18  $\text{♖ad1}$   $\text{♙e7}$  19  $\text{♜g5!}$  0-0 20  $\text{♜xe5}$  Black had nothing to show for the

pawn (20... $\text{♙b4}$  21  $\text{♖d8}$   $\text{♖c8}$  22  $\text{♖xc8}$   $\text{♖xc8}$  23  $\text{♜d4!}$ ). Black was not so generous in Quinn-Kelly, Dublin 1995, defending the e5-pawn with 17... $\text{♜a5}$ . There followed 18 a3 a6 19  $\text{♜g5!}$  h6 20  $\text{♜f5}$   $\text{♙e7}$  21  $\text{♖ad1}$  0-0 22  $\text{♖d5}$   $\text{♖xd5}$  23  $\text{♖xd5}$   $\text{♜a4}$  24  $\text{♜d7}$  with a clear advantage to White.

As a trainer at Olympiads for the teams of Botswana and Nigeria I can appreciate that Ljubo was probably too busy sightseeing and enjoying himself to study dozens of games from the previous rounds. However, what is surprising is the number of players who have fallen into this trap in the many years since Buenos Aires 1978! Hulak-Šahović (another Yugoslav GM!), Yugoslavia 1985, is another such example at international level. This time Black also chose 15... $\text{♙f8}$ , but after 16  $\text{♖d2}$  he did not present White with an outpost on d5 (16...e5), offering instead 16...a6 with the aim of regrouping the queen and rook. This did not affect the result: 17  $\text{♖ad1}$   $\text{♖c8}$  18 e4  $\text{♜c7}$  19 e5!  $\text{♖g8}$  (19... $\text{♜xe5}$  20  $\text{♜a4+}$ ) 20  $\text{♙g5}$   $\text{♖e7}$  21  $\text{♜a4+!}$   $\text{♖c6}$  22  $\text{♖e4}$  h6 (22... $\text{♜xe5}$  23  $\text{♖d8+}$  mates) 23  $\text{♙f6}$   $\text{♖g8}$  24 a3  $\text{♙e7}$  25  $\text{♙xe7}$   $\text{♜xe7}$  26  $\text{♜c4}$  1-0.

Before turning to a 13th move alternative for Black let us briefly look at (14  $\text{♙xc6+}$ ) 14... $\text{♜xc6}$ . This was tried in Quinn-Palmer, Dublin Z 1993, when White demonstrated that 15  $\text{♙h6!}$  is equally effective with the queen on c6: 15... $\text{♙f8}$  16  $\text{♖ac1}$   $\text{♖d8}$  (losing a pawn, but the threat of a discovered attack on the queen looks

decisive) 18 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 19 ♕g5 ♕e7 20 ♖d4+ ♖d7 21 ♗xa7 ♔e8 22 ♗a8+ and White won.

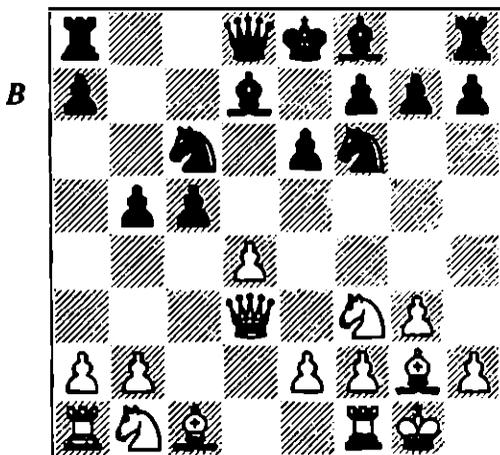
c2) On account of the problems Black has in the examples in 'c1' the move 13...♗a5 was introduced.

c21) The idea behind putting the queen on a5 was illustrated in the game Csom-Peters, Hastings 1978/9, when White insisted on continuing the hitherto successful theme with 14 ♕h6. After 14...0-0! 15 ♕xc6 ♖xc6 16 ♕xg7 Black threw a spanner in the works: 16...♕xf2+! 17 ♔xf2 ♔xg7 with no serious problems for the second player, since g5 is defended and Black threatens to swing his queen over to h5.

c22) More to the point is 14 ♕d2. White gained a slightly better ending in Ftačnik-Peters, Hastings 1980/1: 14...♕e7 15 ♘d5! ♘xd5 16 ♗xe7+ ♘xe7 17 ♕xa5 ♕xg2 (17...0-0 18 ♕b4 ♖fe8 19 e4 allows White to keep the bishop pair) 18 ♔xg2 ♘c6 19 ♕c3 f6 20 b4 a6 21 a4 ♘e7 22 ♕e1 and the bishop enjoys more freedom than the knight.

9 ♗d3 (D)

9 ♗xb5? runs into 9...♘xd4 followed by 10...♕b5.

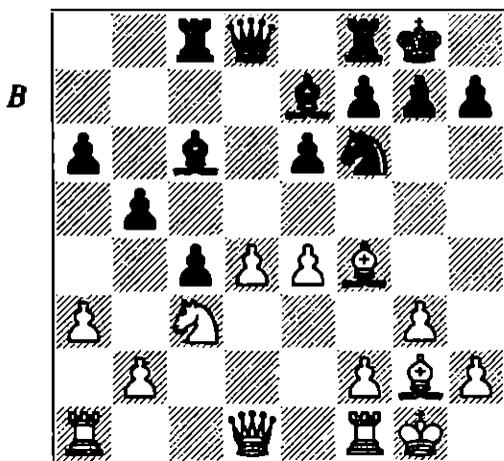


9 ... ♖c8

Inviting White to open lines. If Black does not feel comfortable with this, the main alternative is 9...c4, practically surrendering the centre in return for chances of counterplay on the queenside. White then has two sensible squares for the queen:

a) 10 ♗c2 leaves the d1-square free for the rook, and on c2 the queen supports the central thrust e2-e4. This is perfectly playable, but unless White plays the committal a2-a3 (which weakens the b3-square) he can expect to lose another tempo with his queen sooner or later when Black, after completing his development, is able to go on the offensive with ...♘c6-b4(-d3). The prospect of an enemy knight planting itself on d3 (after e2-e4) should be taken seriously. In the game Hausner-Klovans, Pardubice 1994, White failed to do this, overestimating his kingside attacking chances: 10...♖c8 (depriving White of a pin on the h1-a8 diagonal) 11 e4 ♕e7 (the immediate 11...♘b4 12 ♗e2 ♘d3 13 ♘e5! ♘xc1 14 ♖xc1 merely helps White) 12 ♖d1 0-0 13 ♘c3 (13 ♗e2 ♘b4 14 ♘e5!, defending d3, was seen in Vukić-Pfleger, Ybbs 1968, when White emerged with a clear advantage after 14...♗a5 15 ♕g5 ♕e8 16 ♘c3 h6 17 ♕e3 ♘c6 18 a4!) 13...♘b4 14 ♗e2 ♘d3 15 ♕g5 b4. Now Hausner continued with his aggressive but faulty plan, turning an unpleasant position into disaster in only a few moves: 16 e5 bxc3 17 exf6 gxf6 18 ♕h6 cxb2 19 ♘e5 fxe5 20 ♗g4+ ♕g5 21 ♖ab1 f5! 22 ♗xg5+ ♗xg5 23 ♕xg5 e4 0-1.

b) 10 ♖d1 is more versatile. Black cannot realistically hope to prevent the advance of the e-pawn, so there is no need for White to hurry. The fact that the queen is not exposed on d1 leaves White with time to try something else if he so desires, and one such example in reply to the normal 10...♞c8 is 11 ♘e5, which offers White excellent chances of generating an initiative. The continuation 11...♜xc5 12 dxc5 ♜g4 13 ♖d4 h5 14 h3 ♙c5 15 ♗f4 ♜h6 16 ♜c3 is very good for White due to the threatened 17 ♘e4, so Black may as well play 11...♙e7, when Csom-Hort, Zagreb 1972 continued 12 ♜c3 a6 13 ♙f4 0-0 14 a3 ♙e8 (after 14...♜a5 15 e4 ♜b3 16 ♞b1 ♙e8 17 ♙e3 White's command of the centre is impressive) 15 ♜xc6 ♙xc6 16 e4 (D).



White's fluid pawn centre and space advantage outweigh Black's chain of pawns on the queenside, and the constant threat of White marching his (effectively passed) d-pawn down the board makes life difficult for the defender.

The diagram position is the kind that Black wants to avoid when he

plays 9...♞c8, which retains the option of pushing the c-pawn in more favorable circumstances if White reacts inaccurately.

10 dxc5 ♙xc5  
11 ♜c3

Now Black must deal with the attack on his b-pawn.

11 ... b4

Solving the problem by moving the target, and giving White a turn to make a decision. Others:

a) The main alternative for Black is 11...♜b4, when all three squares available to the queen have been used:

a1) 12 ♖b1 leads to an unclear position after 12...♙c6 13 a3 ♜bd5 14 ♘e5 ♜xc3, e.g. 15 bxc3 ♙xg2 16 ♖xb5+ ♙e7 17 ♙xg2 ♖d5+ 18 ♜f3 ♘e4!, or 15 ♙xc6+ ♞xc6 16 bxc3 ♞b6 17 ♜d3 ♙e7 18 ♙e3.

a2) ♖d1 ♙c6 13 ♙g5 ♖xd1 14 ♞fxd1 is slightly better for White according to Inkiöv.

a3) My favourite is the odd-looking 12 ♖d2!?, as seen in Vladimirov-de la Villa, Marchena 1990. Vladimirov has had some experience with this variation, so the choice of d2 for the queen – probably the fruits of home preparation – must be taken seriously. In the game White's idea was revealed after 12...♖b6 13 ♘e5 ♞d8 14 a3 ♜c6 15 ♜d3 0-0, when 16 ♖g5 saw the queen spring into action on the kingside: 16...e5 17 ♜xc5 (avoiding 17 ♜xe5? ♜xe5 18 ♖xe5, which leaves White open to captures on f2 combined with ...♜f6-g4) 17...♖xc5 18 ♖h4! ♙e6 19 ♙g5 and White was well on top

(his lead was decisive after 19...♖d4? 20 ♗e3!).

b) In Barbero-Zichichi, San Bernardino 1988, Black ignored the threat to his b-pawn and castled into safety (or so he thought) with 11...0-0, the tactical justification being that 12 ♖xb5? ♗b4 13 ♛c4 ♗xf2+ wins for Black. Instead Barbero played 12 ♗g5, and after 12...♗b4 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 produced the new 14 ♛d2!, improving on the old 14 ♛e4 and threatening to send the queen over to h6. The game continued 14...♗c6 (14...♗g7 15 a3 ♗a6 16 ♖ad1, and the poor a6-knight and the weak b5-pawn leave Black struggling) 15 ♛h6 ♖e8! 16 ♖ad1 ♗f8! 17 ♛h5 ♛e7, when 18 a3! would have given White a clear plus, for example 18...♗a6 19 ♖xb5!, 18...♗d5? 19 ♗d4 ♖xc3 20 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 21 ♗xc6 ♖xd1 22 ♗xe8, or 18...♗xf3? 19 ♗xf3 ♖c5 20 ♛g4+, etc.

c) 11...a6, despite being a sensible-looking move, is rather passive, allowing White to develop smoothly with 12 ♗g5. Then the pin on the h4-d8 diagonal combined with White's planned build-up on the d-file practically forces Black to make some sort of compromise. A.Petrosian-Marjanović, Erevan 1989 is a good example of the problems Black can face: 12...♗b4 13 ♛d2 (13 ♛d1 ♗c6 14 a3 ♗bd5 15 ♗e5 gives White an initiative) 13...h6 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 (or 14...♛xf6 15 a3 ♗c6 16 ♗e4 ♛e7 17 b4) 15 a3 ♗c6 16 ♗e4 ♗e7 17 ♖ac1 ♗f8 18 ♖fd1 ♗b8 19 ♖xc8 ♛xc8 20 ♖c1 ♛d8 21 ♗c5 ♗c8 22 ♛c3 and Black was beginning to pay

for structural weaknesses on both sides of the board.

12 ♗e4

GM Andrei Sokolov has shown that 12 ♗b5 achieves no more than approximate equality: 12...0-0 13 ♗e3 ♗xe3 14 ♛xe3 ♗e7! 15 ♗d6 (an attempt to improve on Yusupov-A.Sokolov, Riga Ct (2) 1986, which also gave White nothing after 15 ♖fd1 ♗ed5 16 ♛d3 ♛b6 17 ♗bd4 h6!) 15...♖c7 16 ♗e5 ♗c6! 17 ♖xc6 ♛xd6 18 ♗xe7+ ♛xe7 19 ♖fc1 ♖fc8 20 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 21 a3 1/2-1/2 Ehlvest-A.Sokolov, Belfort 1988. If the knight is not dangerous once it arrives on d6, then there is little reason for 12 ♗b5. The text removes the f6-knight, which is a key defensive piece.

12 ... ♗xe4  
13 ♛xe4 ♛e7

Smagin's addition to the three existing moves:

a) 13...♛b6?! 14 ♛g4 0-0 15 ♗h6 ♗d4 16 ♖ad1! f5 17 ♛h4 ♗f6 18 ♗g5 ♖cd8 19 ♗xf6 gxf6 20 ♖d6 and Black is under pressure, D.Pau-nović-Baquero, Belgrade GMA 1988.

b) In Gulko-Renet, Clichy 1986 Black provided his light-squared bishop with room to manoeuvre: 13...♗e7 14 ♗e5! ♗b5 15 ♗e3 ♛b6 16 ♗xc5 ♖xc5. After 17 ♖ad1! (17 a4 bxa3 18 bxa3 ♛c7 19 ♗d3 ♗xd3 20 ♛xd3 with equality, Bronstein-A.Sokolov, Moscow 1983) 17...0-0 18 ♗d7 ♗xd7 19 ♖xd7 ♗d5 20 ♛d3 ♗f6 21 ♖b7 ♛a5 22 a3! ♗d5 23 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 24 axb4 ♛a4 25 ♛e3 a6 White had a slight endgame advantage.

c) After 13...0-0, 14 ♖g5?! f5 15 ♗c4 ♕d4 works out well for Black, therefore White should play the simple 14 ♜d1, when 14...♗e7 15 ♙g5! f6 16 ♙e3 is enough for an advantage on account of Black's loose queenside and inferior pieces. White turned his attentions to the kingside in Fominykh-Ruban, Voronezh 1988, endeavouring to win the game with his g-pawn(!). Instead of 15 ♙g5, which forces the uncomfortable reply 15...f6, White played 15 ♙f4, and after 15...h6 16 ♜ac1 ♜fd8 he lashed out with 17 g4, which was then followed by the bizarre finish 17...♙e8 18 g5 ♜xd1+ 19 ♜xd1 e5 20 ♙c1 ♜d8 21 ♜e1 ♕d4 22 gxh6 f5! 23 ♗b1 ♕xf3+ 24 exf3 ♙xf2+ 0-1.

Fominykh's oddity is a warning. This is most definitely *not* the way to play this variation for White, who should be looking to his better-placed pieces and superior pawn structure for help, rather than embarking on unjustified kingside attacks. One of Black's problems in these lines is the lack of pawn breaks due to the symmetrical nature of the positions. Consequently White is less worried about annoying counterplay, and he can use this factor to frustrate his opponent.

#### 14 ♙g5!?

An interesting new idea which forces 14...f6, thus creating a weakness on e6.

a) Stohl's recommendation 14 ♙e3 is worth investigating since Black has the option of transposing to this note in the main game.

a1) After 14...♙xe3 15 ♗xe3 White is slightly better, though without the weakness on e6 Black has much less to worry about than in the main game.

a2) Stohl gives 14...f5 (transposing to 14 ♙g5 f6 15 ♙e3 f5), assessing the position after 15 ♗d3 ♙xe3 16 ♗xe3 e5 17 a3!? as slightly in White's favour in view of his pull on the queenside. This does seem to offer White reasonable chances of generating something from the pressure, but at least White must be on the lookout for ...e5-e4 (or ...f5-f4) here, whereas in the main game (with Black's pawns on e6 and f6) he enjoys more freedom.

b) Stohl-Smagin, Prague 1992 went 14 ♜d1 e5! 15 ♙e3 f5 (Black wants to avoid drifting into a passive position, as simply completing development with 15...♙xe3 16 ♗xe3 0-0 leads to a better game for White after 17 ♜ac1) 16 ♗d3 ♙xe3! (not 16...e4? 17 ♙xc5 exd3 18 ♙xe7, when White emerges with an extra pawn – 18...dxe2 loses to 19 ♜xd7) 17 ♗xe3:

b1) Smagin chose the ambitious 17...e4?!, but this gave White the d4-square and with it a comfortable advantage: 18 ♕d4 ♕e5 (18...0-0 19 a3!, when the variation 19...a5 20 ♗b3+ ♖h8 21 axb4 axb4 22 ♕xc6 ♙xc6 23 ♜d4 is one illustration of how Black has helped his opponent by pushing the e-pawn) 19 ♗b3! a5 (19...♗c5 20 ♕e6 ♗e7 21 ♕f4) 20 ♗d5 ♜c5 (20...♗c5 21 ♕e6! ♗xd5 22 ♕xg7+ {22 ♜xd5} 22...♖e7 23 ♜xd5) 21 ♗a8+ ♜c8 (21...♙c8 22

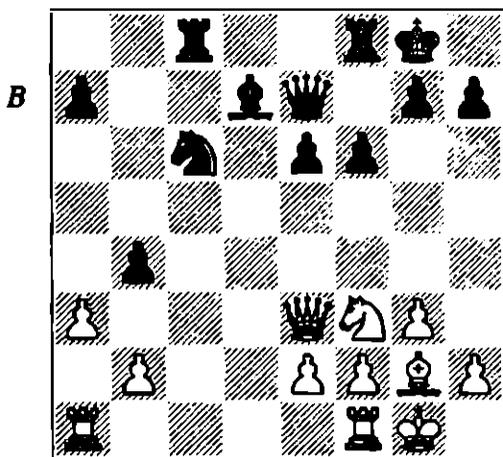
♠xf5) 22 ♖xa5 with a safe extra pawn for White.

b2) White has nothing more than a level game after 17...0-0!, e.g. 18 ♖ac1 e4 19 ♘d4 ♘xd4 20 ♖xd4 ♙e6. White can try 18 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 19 f4, but Black is able to steer the game to equality with ease: 19...♖c5 20 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 21 fxe5 ♙e6 22 ♖d6 ♖xe5 23 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 24 ♙d5 ♖fe8 25 a3 bxa3 26 ♖xa3 ♖f8 27 ♙xe6 ♖xe6, etc.

14 ... ♙f6  
15 ♙e3 ♙xe3

Perhaps Black should prefer 15...f5, transposing to 'a' in the note to White's 14th move.

16 ♖xe3 0-0  
17 a3!? (D)



Despite the symmetrical nature of the position White has a definite edge. His queen is more active, the king's rook can come to d1 to take aim at the cumbersome bishop and the other rook is well-placed on the a-file. As well as his bishop Black has to worry about the pawns on a7 and e6, while maintaining a pawn on b4 with 17...a5 could also prove difficult later when White opens the

h1-a8 diagonal for his Catalan bishop and piles on the pressure with his major pieces.

17 ... ♖b8

Black is not prepared to open the a-file for his opponent, e.g. 17...bxa3 18 ♖xa3 ♖b8 19 ♘d4!? ♘xd4 20 ♖xd4 ♖b4 21 ♖d2 and the b2-pawn will outlive the a7-pawn.

18 ♖fd1

Introducing the idea of a timely trade on d7 followed by ♖e3xe6+.

18 ... ♖fd8  
19 axb4 ♖xb4  
20 ♘h4!

Threatening 21 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 22 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23 ♖xe6+.

20 ... ♖bb8

20...e5? loses to 21 ♙d5+, e.g. 21...♖f8 22 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 23 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24 ♖c5+, or 21...♖h8 22 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 23 ♖c5!, etc.

21 ♖a6

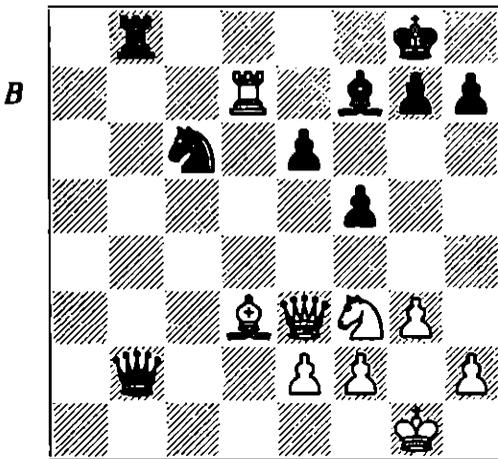
Highlighting the weaknesses on a7, c6, d7 and e6.

21 ... ♙e8  
22 ♖xd8 ♘xd8  
23 ♖xa7 ♖b4  
24 ♙d5 ♙f7  
25 ♙e4 ♖xb2  
26 ♖d7

Setting up ♙e4xh7+.

27 ... ♙f5  
27 ♙d3 ♘c6  
28 ♘f3 (D)

The material situation is level and only the kingside pawns remain, yet a brief examination of the position reveals that Black is in trouble. Apart from the immediate threat of 29 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 30 ♘g5+, Black is faced with other problems: White's rook is



34 ♖xc6 ♖b2  
35 ♖c1??

Whoops. White is afraid of demons. 35 ♘d4 ♖b1+ 36 ♔g2 ♙e4+ is no better than my blunder, but the simple 35 ♖f1 is fine, e.g. 35... ♖b1+ 36 ♔g2 ♖b2 37 ♖c5 ♙e4 38 ♖e5 ♖xe2 39 ♖e8+ ♖f7 40 ♖xe4.

35 ... ♖xe2  
... 1/2-1/2, 70.

particularly menacing on the 7th rank; the e5-square – and d4, which can be used by White’s knight to hit e6 – is about to fall into White’s hands once the knight is evicted from c6; ♙d3-c4xe6 is coming; and White has another option involving g3-g4, stepping up a gear to chip away at Black’s flimsy kingside.

28 ... ♗b6

Hoping to calm the waters with a challenge to White’s influential queen.

29 ♗xb6 ♖xb6  
30 ♖d6

White has a decisive advantage. White’s remaining minute with which to reach the time control (move 40) should be enough in this position, since Black is tied up.

30 ... ♙e8  
31 ♖xe6

31 ♘e5 is also winning, keeping the grip firmly in place. A possible follow-up is 31... ♖f8 32 ♖xe6 g6 33 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 34 ♘xc6, etc.

31 ... ♙d7  
32 ♖d6 ♖b7  
33 ♙xf5

Or 33 ♙c4+ ♖f8 34 ♙d5.  
33 ... ♙xf5

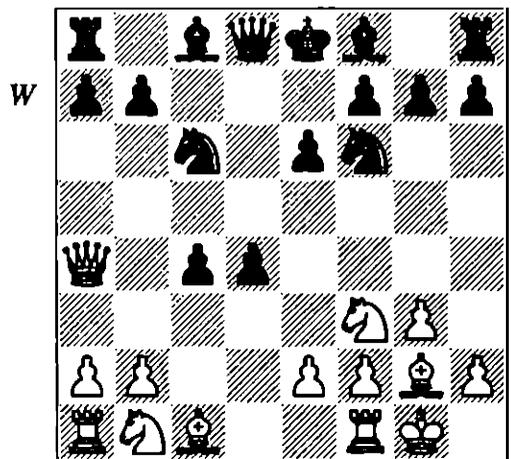
With 7...cxd4 the game takes on a completely different character, as Black intends to give up his queen for rook and bishop.

### Game 3

Hovde – Groiss

EU corr. Ch 1984-90

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 d4 dxc4  
5 ♙g2 c5 6 0-0 ♘c6 7 ♗a4 cxd4 (D)



8 ♘xd4 ♗xd4

Black has little choice but to go along with White, because 8... ♙d7 9 ♘xc6 ♗b6 (9... ♙xc6 10 ♙xc6+ bxc6 11 ♗xc6+ ♘d7 12 ♗xc4) runs into 10 ♙e3!, e.g. 10... ♙xc6 (10... ♙c5 11 ♙xc5 ♗xc5 12 ♗b4, or 10... ♗xb2 11 ♗xc4! bxc6 {11... ♗xa1 12 ♙d4})

12 ♖xc6 ♜d8 13 ♖xa7) 11 ♜xc4 ♜c7 12 ♜c3, and Black has lost too much time.

9 ♖xc6+ ♜d7

Black does not quite receive sufficient compensation for the exchange after 9...bxc6 10 ♜xc6+ ♜d7 11 ♜xa8 ♖c5:

a) Then Emma-Szmetan, Argentina 1973 continued 12 ♖e3!? ♖xe3 13 fxe3 0-0 14 ♜c3 ♖a6 15 ♜f3 ♖b7 16 ♜f4 e5. Now White did not fall for 17 ♜xe5 ♜h3 and ...♜f6-g4, but after 17 ♜f5 ♜c6 18 e4 ♖c8 19 ♜f2 ♖h3 20 ♜fd1 ♜b7 he should have played 21 ♜d2!, intending to meet 21...♜g4 22 ♜c5 ♜c8 with 23 ♜ad1!

b) Less drastic than 12 ♖e3 is 12 ♜c3. Then 12...0-0 13 ♜d1 ♜c7 14 ♜f3 ♖b7 15 ♖f4! was played in Christiansen-Lhagva, Lucerne OL 1982. The game became very complicated, with Black having the rare opportunity of play on the Catalan diagonal: 15...♜b6 (15...e5 16 ♖xe5) 16 e4 ♜xe4 (16...♖b4 17 ♖e5 ♖xc3 18 bxc3, e.g. 18...♜xe4 19 ♜ab1) 17 ♜xe4 f5 18 b4! (directed against Black's pressure on the f2-pawn) 18...♖d4 (White emerges with the better game after either 18...♜xb4 19 ♜db1! ♖xe4 20 ♜xb4 ♖xf3 21 ♜xc4 or 18...♖b4 19 ♜e2 followed by ♜e2xc4, and 18...cxb3 19 ♜xb3 removes the queens) 19 ♖c7! ♜xc7 20 ♜xd4 fxe4 (20...♖xe4 21 ♜c3) 21 ♜e2 e3! 22 ♜xe3 e5 (22...♜c6 23 f3 ♜xf3 24 ♜xf3! ♜xf3 25 ♜d8+ ♜f7 26 ♜f1) 23 ♜dd1 ♖f3 24 ♜e1! e4 (24...♜c8 25 ♜xe5 ♜h3 26 ♜e6+). Now 25 ♜ac1! is an improvement

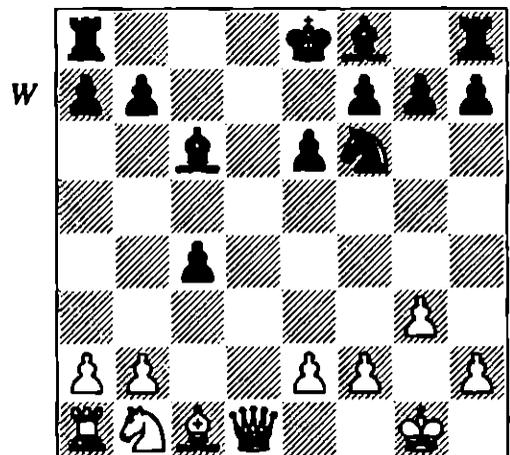
suggested by Christiansen himself. White threatens to capture the c-pawn with the queen (with check) in order to meet the arrival of the enemy queen on h3 with ♜c4-f1. If 25...♜d7 26 ♜c3 ♜c8 White has 27 ♜e3!, introducing the possibility of returning the exchange on f3 with a big lead in the queen and rook ending.

Despite the complexity of the exchange sacrifice, 9...bxc6 remains unpopular. White has enough pieces with which to parry the threats and the onus is on Black to avoid simplification into a poor ending. Moreover, the queen sacrifice in the main line seems more interesting from a practical point of view, even if best play gives White slightly the better game (and who does not like to sacrifice his queen occasionally?).

10 ♜d1! ♜xd1+

Black parts with his queen because 10...♖xc6 11 ♜xc6+ bxc6 (or 11...♜d7 12 ♜xd7 bxc6 13 ♜d4) 12 ♜xd4 gives White a safe advantage – after ♜d4xc4 Black's c6-pawn is weak, as is the c5-square, which White may try to use for his pieces.

11 ♜xd1 ♖xc6 (D)



In the diagram position White has a small material lead (the c-pawn cannot be defended without a price) but Black is without structural weaknesses. If the defender is able to post his pieces effectively he has reasonable chances of erecting a barrier which White will find difficult to break down. As for White, he must make the most of his queen if he is to have any winning chances, which means he must be active – or threatening to be – on both sides of the board, as well as switching operations from dark squares to light squares, etc.

If Black does adopt this super-solid, ‘come and get me’ strategy, then it is clear that the most he can realistically hope for is a draw, and even to achieve the half-point he may have to endure hours of unpleasant probing from White’s queen. An alternative, aggressive approach for Black is to throw the h-pawn down the board, a perfectly logical course of action now that all of White’s pieces (except the king) are still in their starting positions on the queenside.

12 ♖d2!

Over the years this has come to be regarded as White’s most reliable move. Against 12 ♛c2 the recommended reply is 12...♙e7, simply giving up the c-pawn and refusing to be drawn into such a line as 12...b5 13 a4 ♙e4 (13...a6 14 b3) 14 ♛c3 a6 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♜xa8+ ♙xa8 17 ♛a5 ♙c6 18 ♛c7.

12 ... h5

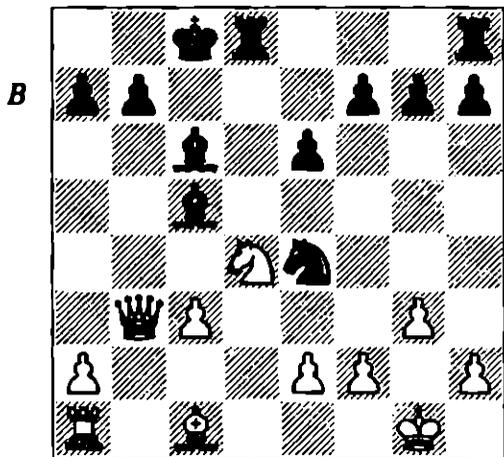
Others:

a) 12...b5 is the first part of the aforementioned ‘drawing’ plan. After 13 a4 a6?! 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♜xa8+ ♙xa8 16 ♖xc4! (with the idea 16...bxc4 17 ♛a4+) the opening of the queenside has helped White, and if Black plays 14...♙xb5 there was no need for 13...a6 in the first place. Therefore in most top-level games, play continues 13...♙e7 14 axb5 ♙xb5 15 ♖xc4 0-0 (Black should avoid 15...♙xc4? 16 ♛a4+ because his light-squared bishop is a powerful, unchallenged piece in this variation) 16 b3, with a slight, long-term advantage to White. It must be said, however, that Andersson – playing Black – held Kasparov to a draw in Nikšić 1983, though not everyone has the confidence and technique required to cope with the versatile queen.

One aggressive plan adopted by White is the launching of a kingside offensive (often with f2-f3, g3-g4 and h2-h4) with the aim of creating weaknesses around the black king. This explains another use of 12...h5 – Black puts a stop to a potentially annoying pawn storm from his opponent by striking first with a kingside thrust of his own.

b) 12...c3 is a ‘spoiling’ move which is also quite popular. The point is that if Black is going to have to give up his c-pawn he may as well isolate White’s queenside pawns. Now 13 ♖f3! has been suggested, e.g. 13...♜d8 14 ♛b3 cxb2 15 ♙xb2 and White has activated his forces. However, the simple 13 bxc3 has proved effective, when after 13...0-0-0

14 ♖b3 ♔c5 White can improve upon 15 h3 h5 – which is best assessed as unclear – with 15 ♘f3!. This was first seen in the important and interesting game H.Olafsson-Hjartarson, Reykjavik 1984. Play continued: 15...♗e4 16 ♘d4! (D).



16...♗xd4 (Black throws more wood on the fire, because 16...♔xd4 17 cxd4 ♗xd4 18 ♔e3/b2, 16...e5? 17 ♘xc6 ♔xf2+ 18 ♖g2 bxc6 19 ♗a4 and the less obvious 16...♔d5 17 ♗c2 e5 18 ♔e3! are all clearly better for White) 17 cxd4 ♔xd4 18 ♗b1 ♔xf2+ (18...♘xf2? 19 ♔e3) 19 ♖f1 h5 (19...♗d8 20 ♗c2! ♗d5 21 ♗b3! and ...♗d5-f5 can then be answered with ♗b3-f3) 20 ♔f4 (White was also winning after 20 ♔e3 h4 21 g4 ♔g3 22 ♗c1! ♔xh2 23 ♗xc6+ bxc6 24 ♗a4 in Hjartarson-Hardarson, Neskaupsstadur 1984) 20...g5 (20...h4? runs into 21 ♗c1! with the threat of 22 ♗xc6+ bxc6 23 ♗b8+, but a lesser evil is 20...e5 21 ♔e3!, when White has a clear advantage and the f7-pawn is a new weakness) 21 ♔xg5! h4 22 g4 ♔xh4 23 ♗b2! f6 24 ♔xh4 ♗xh4 25 ♗c1! ♖c7 (25...♗xh2 26 ♗xc6+ bxc6 27

♗c2!) 26 ♗a3! and White's lead has grown to decisive proportions. The remaining moves were: 26...♘d6 (preventing 27 ♗e7+) 27 ♗g3! ♗h5 28 ♗d1 ♔d5 29 ♗g7+ ♖c6 30 ♗c1+ ♔c4 (30...♘c4 31 e4) 31 ♗g4 ♗f5+ 32 ♖e1 b5 33 h4 e5 34 h5 ♗f4 35 ♗g2+ ♖b6 36 h6 ♗e4 37 h7 ♗h4 38 h8 ♗ 1-0. Notice how White's queen was used to full effect throughout.

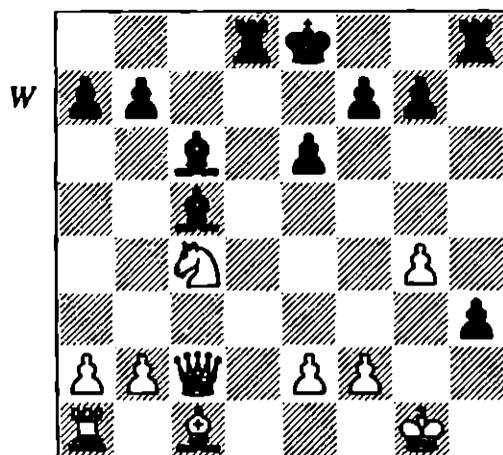
c) 12...♔e7?! is too passive, e.g. 13 ♘xc4 0-0 14 b3 ♗fd8 15 ♗e1 ♗ac8 16 ♔a3 when White can look to build on his advantage with f2-f3 and e2-e4.

### 13 h3

White allows the enemy h-pawn to march one step further instead of handing over the useful g4-square with 13 h4.

### 13 ... ♗d8

In the game Polovodin-Kiselev, USSR 1982 Black chose to insert 13...h4 14 g4 before bringing his rook to the d-file. After 14...♗d8 15 ♗c2 ♔c5 16 ♘xc4 the prospect of White consolidating (e.g. ♔c1-e3) prompted Black to concentrate all his efforts on his ambitious h-pawn with 16...♘g4 17 hxg4 h3 (D).



Black's latest material investment leaves him with a rook for a queen, but his raking bishops and king's rook combine to make the h-pawn White's biggest cause for concern. After 18 ♖h2 ♜d4 19 f3 ♝xg4 the game reached boiling point (20 fxg4 is not possible in view of 20...♙g1+ 21 ♖xg1 h2+ and 22...h1♗), but following a calm defence White realized his advantage: 20 ♘e3 ♙d6+ 21 ♖h1 ♜g3 22 ♙d2 h2 23 ♝f1 (Black's attack has run out of steam) 23...g5 24 ♗c3 ♜g8 25 ♙e1 ♝h3 26 ♗d4! ♙e7 27 ♘g4 f5 28 ♘f6+ ♙xf6 29 ♗xf6 ♙d5 30 ♙b4 ♝h7 31 ♜d1! ♝gg7 (31...g4 32 ♝xd5) 32 ♗f8+ ♖d7 33 e4 1-0.

14 ♗c2 ♙c5  
15 ♘xc4 ♘e4  
16 ♘e3

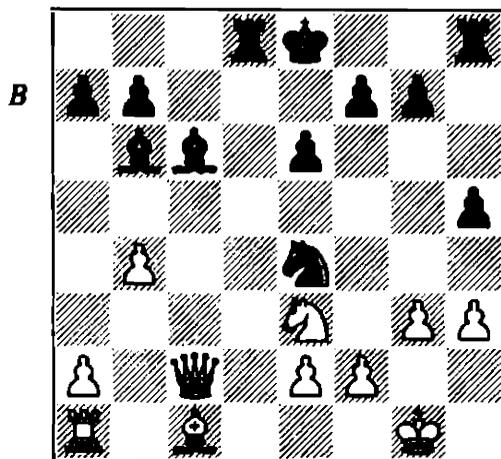
Of course White cannot afford to be careless with Black's pieces looking so menacing. 16 ♙e3?, for example, runs into 16...♙xe3 17 ♘xe3 ♜d2.

16 ... ♙b6  
17 b4! (D)

Until this theoretical novelty the game had been following Rotariu-Heilemann, corr. 1984-7. Then White played 17 a4, but five moves later had to resign: 17...h4 18 g4 ♘g5 19 a5 ♙c7 20 ♘g2 ♘xh3+ 21 ♖f1 ♘xf2! 22 ♙g5 (22 ♖xf2 ♙g3+ and 23...h3 does not save White) 22...♘xg4! 0-1.

17 ... ♙d4

Jokel-Wolf, corr. 1989 saw the first outing of 17...h4!?. According to Hovde White should reply 18 b5 ♙d5 19 g4 and continue with ♖g1-f1



and ♘e3xd5 with a clear advantage. However, 19...0-0 20 ♖f1? f5! is dangerous, e.g. 21 gxf5 ♘d6! 22 fxe6 ♙xe6 23 ♖g2 ♘c4!, so White needs to find another plan in reply to 19...0-0. The right way forward is 20 ♘d1 (intending to challenge Black's strong dark-squared bishop with ♙c1-e3). Jokel-Wolf continued 20...♝c8 21 ♗b2 (21 ♗d3? ♘g3 – threatening 22...♙c4 – is terrible for White), when after 21...♘xf2!? 22 ♘xf2 f5, Wolf's recommendation 23 ♗a3! and ♙c1-e3 keeps Black at bay and offers good prospects of eventually turning the tide with the queen. Instead 23 g5 f4 is exactly what Black is looking for, e.g. 24 ♙d2 ♝f5 25 ♝c1 ♝xg5+ 26 ♖f1 ♙g2+ 27 ♖e1 ♝d8, and the rooks and bishops continue to menace.

18 b5! ♙d5

Better than 18...♙xb5?! 19 ♗xe4 ♙xa1 20 ♗b1!.

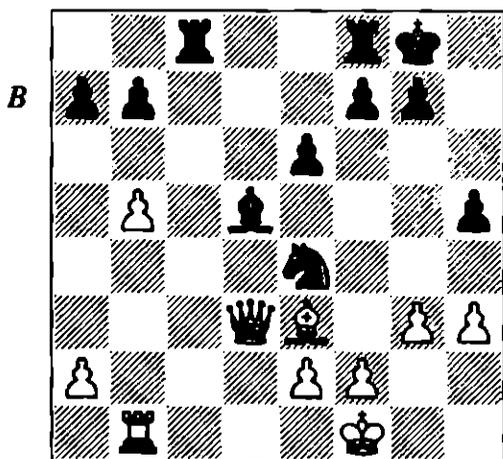
19 ♝b1 0-0!

Again Black should not be enticed into chasing White's remaining rook: 19...♘c3? 20 ♘xd5 ♘xb1 21 ♙g5! f6 22 ♗g6+ ♖f8 23 ♘xf6!, etc.

20 ♖f1 ♝c8

21 ♖d3      ♙xe3  
22 ♙xe3 (D)

24 ♖xc8      ♖xc8  
25 ♙d2!



After a fairly lengthy period of having to deal with Black's army of pieces (a feature of this particular line), White is finally free to give his opponent something to worry about. Now Black has problems with his knight.

25 ...      ♗c1  
26 ♖a3      ♗b3  
27 ♙e3

Seeing the end of his opponent's dark-squared bishop is good news for White, although the exchange of the knight means that the light-squared bishop cannot be challenged – unless White is prepared to give up his rook for it, which means wiping out his material advantage. Therefore, if White has any hopes of trying for the win he must concentrate on making inroads on the dark squares while depriving his opponent of anything too dangerous on the light squares.

Compared with the wonderful outpost on e4 the b3-square is terrible. Even if White just had the upper hand initially, his task has been made considerably less complicated by his opponent's decision to send a knight (a slow piece) over to capture a pawn on the queenside.

22 ...      ♗c3

27 ...      a5

Hitting the a2-pawn, but perhaps Black's knight sally is not sufficiently energetic, and bringing the knight back from the edge of the board will take time.

Practically forcing White to give up his remaining queenside pawn.

22...♖c3!/? activates the rook and merits attention. Following 23 ♖d4 ♖c2 24 ♖c1 White emerges with the better game after 24...♖xa2 25 ♙f4! (threatening f2-f3 followed by ♙f4-e5), but maintaining the pressure with 24...♖fc8 is less clear.

28 bxa6      bxa6  
29 f3!

White is in no hurry to begin an attack on the king because Black is ill-equipped to defend on the dark squares. This leaves White with time to provide his own king with some breathing space while simultaneously shutting out the enemy bishop. Unnecessary and careless is 29 ♖xa6?, when 29...♖a8 highlights the usefulness of f2-f3 because without this move White is faced with the prospect of a deadly back-rank check. After 30 ♙a7 ♗d4 31 ♖d3 Black has 31...♗xe2! 32 ♙e3 ♖c8 33 ♖a6 ♖a8, etc.

23 ♖c1      ♗xa2

29 ...      a5  
30 ♖a4      e5?!

Too loosening. More stubborn is 30...♖c8, when White plays the safe 31 ♖f2 and then makes progress with g3-g4 (or h3-h4, g3-g4) to chip away at Black's kingside.

- 31 ♜b5 ♘e6  
 32 ♜xe5 ♘h3+  
 33 ♖f2 ♘e6

33...a4 at least creates a diversion from White's planned assault on the other flank.

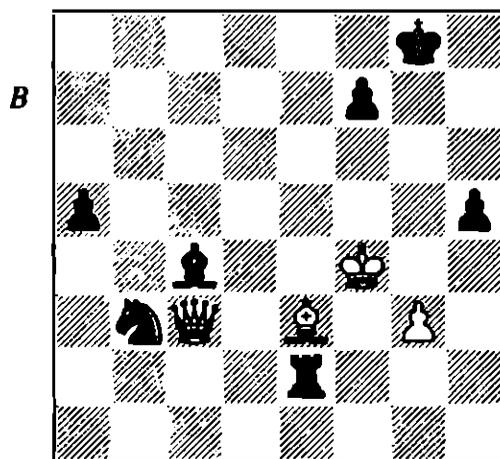
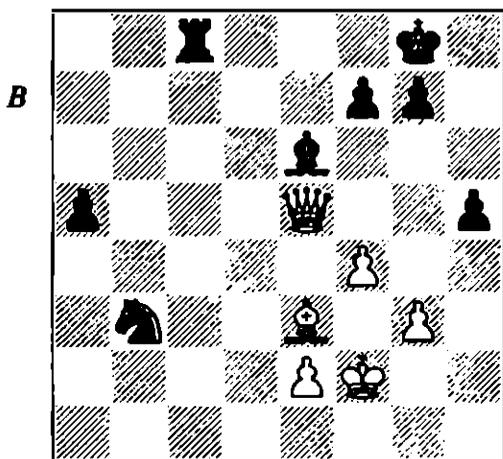
- 34 f4! (D)

- 37 ♘b6! ♖c6 38 ♜d7 ♘b5 39 ♜d5!  
 a3 40 ♜xb3! (40 ♜xb5? ♖xb6! 41 ♜xb6 a2) 40...♖xb6 41 ♜xa3.

- 35 f5 ♘c4  
 36 f6 ♖xe2+  
 37 ♖f3 ♘d2+?

Black is still in the game after 37...gxf6 38 ♜xf6 ♖f8 39 ♘g5, but now his king is in terrible trouble.

- 38 ♖f4 gxf6  
 39 ♜xf6 ♘b3  
 40 ♜c3! (D)



The pawn is heading for f6 to break open the defences in front of Black's king.

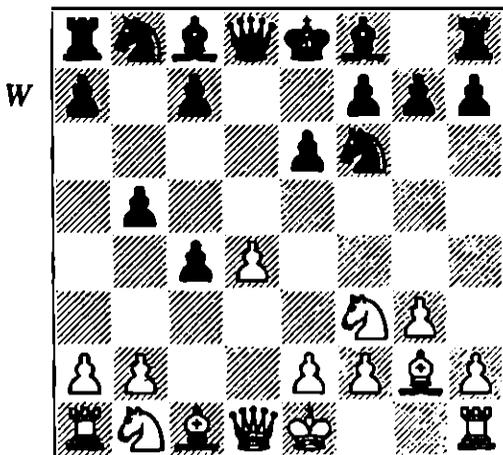
- 34 ... ♖c2

34...g6 35 f5 is winning for White (♘e3-h6 is coming), but the alternative 34...♘c4 requires investigation. Only the most accurate play is enough to bring White victory: 35 ♜xh5 a4 36 ♜g4 ♖c7 (36...♖c6 37 ♜d7 ♘b5 38 ♜b7 a3 39 ♜xb5 a2 40 ♜xc6 a1 ♜ 41 ♜c8+ ♖h7 42 ♜c2+)

1-0

After 40...♘e6 the white king simply marches forward to contribute to the attack on its opposite number, e.g. 41 ♖g5 a4 (41...♖h7 42 ♜d3+) 42 ♖h6 ♖f8 43 ♘g5 (43 ♜d3) 43...♖e8 44 ♜c6+. Notice in the final position that all of Black's pieces except the a5-pawn are on light squares, while White's occupy dark squares – a fitting end to White's thematic middlegame.

## 2 Open Catalan: 5...b5



By far the most stubborn move available to Black, 5...b5 defends the c4-pawn and expands on the queenside, but at the same time leaves Black more vulnerable on the very diagonal of the Catalan bishop. Moreover, by taking the c4-pawn Black has already surrendered the centre to some extent, so another move spent on the queenside does nothing to limit White's development lead and occupation of the centre. Consequently White tends to generate a powerful initiative with energetic play. Not surprisingly, despite the fact that there is no 'refutation' of 5...b5, the early thrust of the b-pawn does not enjoy much popularity in international practice these days, being seen much more frequently at club level, where Black is in less danger of suffering for his greed.

It should be noted that there are similarities with lines arising from 5...a6 and a quick ...b7-b5; in fact it

is possible to transpose from one to the other in certain positions. One thing which you can be sure of – 5...b5 will always lead to exciting chess...

Game 4  
Kengis – Meister  
Togliatti 1985

1 ♖f3 d5 2 c4 e6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 g3 dxc4  
5 ♗g2

5 ... b5

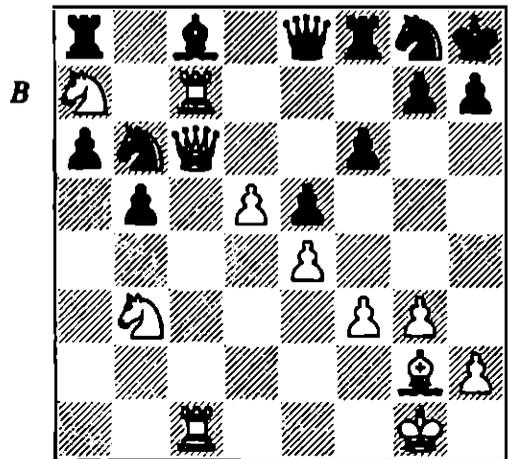
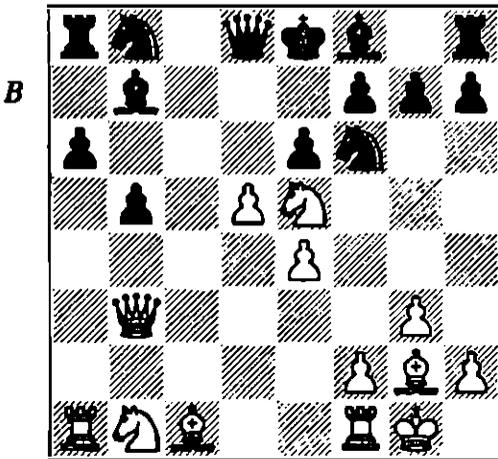
6 a4 c6

7 axb5

7 ♘e5 ♘d5 transposes after 8 axb5, but White has another important approach in 8 0-0 ♗b7 9 b3. Incidentally, instead of 8...♗b7 Black has 8...a6, leading to the note to Black's 8th move in Krasenkov-Kaidanov, Game 5, which features 5...a6.

Agzamov-Foisor, Sochi 1985 continued (7 ♘e5 ♘d5 8 0-0 ♗b7 9 b3) 9...cxb3 10 axb5 (for 10 ♜xb3 a6 11 ♘c3 see 'b' in the note to Black's 9th move in Vladimirov-Thorhallsson, Game 6) 10...cxb5 11 ♜xb3 a6 12 e4 ♘f6 13 d5! (D).

A typical energetic Catalan position. White strikes while the iron is hot, using his significant lead in development to break open the centre and trouble Black's uncastled king. Black's queenside pawns are going nowhere and, at the moment, the



white pawn majority is menacing (Black needs to keep a lookout for  $\text{d}e5\text{xf}7$ , for example). There are several candidate moves for Black in the diagram position, yet all but one are insufficient:

a)  $13... \text{Wb}6$  was Foisor's choice, when there followed  $14 \text{d}c4 \text{W}c7$  ( $14... \text{Wd}4$  is a waste of time in view of  $15 \text{R}a4!$ , e.g.  $15... \text{Wc}5$   $16 \text{d}a5$ , or  $15... \text{Wa}7$   $16 \text{e}3 \text{e}c5$   $17 \text{d}d6+$   $\text{e}e7$   $18 \text{d}xb5$ )  $15 \text{d}a5 \text{e}e5$   $16 \text{e}e3 \text{e}d6$   $17 \text{R}c1 \text{W}e7$   $18 \text{f}3!$  with a terrible position for Black. In fact White's domination soon brought the desired result:  $18... \text{Wd}7$  (White was threatening to intensify the grip with  $\text{e}g2$ - $\text{h}3$ )  $19 \text{e}c5 \text{e}xc5+$   $20 \text{R}xc5 \text{e}c8$   $21 \text{W}c3$   $0-0$   $22 \text{R}c7 \text{W}e8$   $23 \text{d}d2 \text{d}bd7$   $24 \text{d}c6 \text{e}h8$   $25 \text{d}b3 \text{d}g8$   $26 \text{R}c1 \text{f}6$   $27 \text{d}a7 \text{d}b6$   $28 \text{W}c6$  (D).

A wonderful illustration of the Catalan's power!

b)  $13... \text{exd}5$   $14 \text{exd}5$ :

b1)  $14... \text{e}d5$  is asking for trouble. The old continuation runs  $15 \text{e}d5 \text{W}xd5$   $16 \text{W}c2$ , when Black can put out the fire with  $16... \text{e}e7$   $17 \text{W}c8+$   $\text{W}d8$   $18 \text{W}b7 \text{W}d5$   $19 \text{W}c8+$   $\text{W}d8$ . However,  $15 \text{W}e3!$  looks very uncomfortable for Black.

b2)  $14... \text{e}d6$  was seen in Nesis-Zelinsky, USSR corr. Ch 1975-6. White simply planted his knight on c6:  $15 \text{d}c6 \text{W}b6$   $16 \text{R}e1+$   $\text{e}f8$   $17 \text{e}a3 \text{b}4$   $18 \text{d}d2 \text{W}b5$  ( $18... \text{a}5$   $19 \text{d}c4 \text{W}c7$   $20 \text{d}xd6 \text{W}xd6$   $21 \text{d}xb4$ )  $19 \text{d}xb4 \text{e}g8$   $20 \text{d}c6$ , etc.

b3)  $13... \text{d}bd7$  would be OK for Black were it not for the aforementioned  $14 \text{d}xf7!$ . Rather than put his king through the inevitable suffering which results from  $14... \text{e}xf7$   $15 \text{d}xe6+$ , Black came out fighting in Shereshevsky-Polikarpov, Minsk 1980:  $14... \text{d}c5$   $15 \text{d}xd8 \text{d}xb3$   $16 \text{d}xb7 \text{d}xa1$ . However, after  $17 \text{d}xe6$  (threatening  $\text{e}4$ - $\text{e}5$  followed by  $\text{d}b7$ - $\text{d}6+$ )  $17... \text{R}b8$   $18 \text{e}e5 \text{d}g4$   $19 \text{h}3!$  White's initiative had not been tamed, e.g.  $19... \text{d}xe5$   $20 \text{e}b2$ , or  $19... \text{d}h6$   $20 \text{d}d6+$  (with the points  $20... \text{e}e7$   $21 \text{e}d5$  and  $20... \text{e}d8$   $21 \text{R}d1 \text{e}c7$   $22 \text{e}g5$ ).

b4)  $13... \text{e}d6$  also permits  $14 \text{d}xf7!?$ . White could not resist the offer in Tashkov-Kurtenkov, Bulgarian Ch 1981, and after the complex sequence  $14... \text{e}xf7$   $15 \text{d}xe6+$   $\text{e}e8$   $16 \text{e}e5 \text{e}xg2$   $17 \text{exf}6 \text{e}xf1$   $18 \text{fxg}7 \text{W}f6$   $19 \text{e}b2 \text{e}e5$   $20 \text{gxh}8 \text{W}+$   $\text{W}xh8$   $21 \text{W}d5 \text{e}xb2$   $22 \text{W}xa8 \text{e}xa1$   $23$

♖xb8+ he had the better of the ending (23...♔e7 24 ♖b7+ ♔xe6 – forced – 25 ♖xa6+ and 26 ♔xf1). Very entertaining, but the simple 14 ♘c4 keeps White ahead without any risk.

b5) According to Agzamov Black's best is 13...♙c5, when 14 dxe6 fxe6 15 ♖xe6+ ♖e7 16 ♖xe7+ ♙xe7 17 ♘c3 is evaluated as being favourable to White, who must remain active if he is to keep Black's passed queenside pawns at bay.

Believe it or not 7 axb5 produces play which is far more complex than the examples given above! White is intent on punishing Black for his gestures on the queenside, and is interested only in open lines for his pieces.

7 ...            cxb5  
8 ♘e5            ♘d5  
9 ♘c3            ♙b4

The only way for Black to deal with the attack on his b-pawn, because 9...b4? fails to 10 ♖a4+ ♙d7 11 ♘xd7 followed by 12 ♘xd5, and the flashy 9...♙b7?! 10 ♘xb5 ♘c3 is not as good as it appears – 11 bxc3 ♙xg2 12 ♖g1 ♙d5 13 ♖a4.

10 0-0            ♙xc3

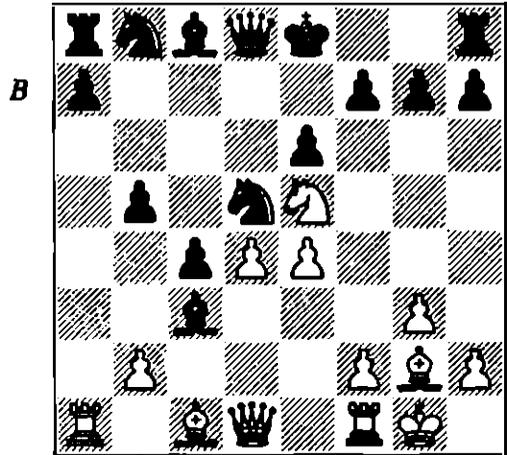
10...f6 meets with the thematic 11 e4!, e.g. 11...♘xc3 12 ♖h5+ g6 13 ♘xg6 ♘e2+ 14 ♖xe2 hxg6 15 e5.

11 e4! (D)

Boris Gulko's move, which requires careful handling by Black.

11 ...            ♙xb2!

The best of many. Others are less compromising and give White too much freedom to utilize his initiative or occupy the centre:



a) 11...♙xd4 works after 12. exd5 ♙xe5 13 dxe6 ♖xd1 14 ♖xd1 ♙xe6 15 ♙xa8 a6 16 ♙b7 0-0 17 ♙xa6 ♘xa6 18 ♖xa6 b4, Frunko-Matousek, corr. 1982. 12 ♖xd4, on the other hand, is bad for Black, e.g. 12...♖b6 13 ♘f3! ♖xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♘e7 15 e5 ♘d5 16 ♘xb5, when White has a number of threats.

b) 11...♙b4 is even worse: 12 exd5 exd5 13 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 14 ♖h5+ and the d5-pawn falls.

c) Against 11...♘f4 White can play 12 ♙xf4, intending 12...♙xb2 13 ♖b1 ♙xd4 (13...♖xd4 14 ♘xc4, with e4-e5) 14 ♘xc4!, or 12...♙xd4 13 ♘xc4 bxc4 14 e5.

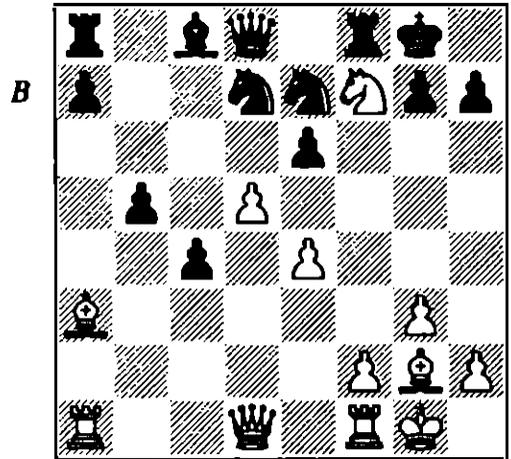
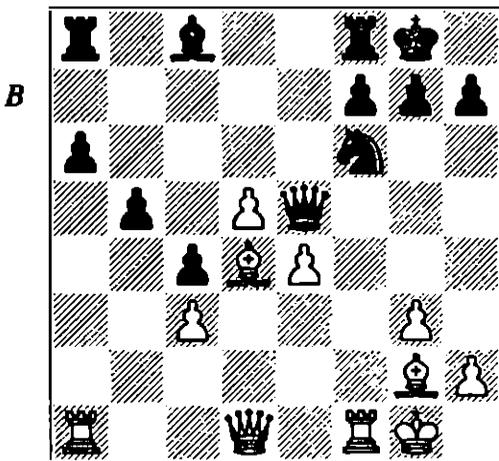
d) Black felt the force of the Catalan bishop in Gulko-Mikhailchishin, USSR 1981, when 11...♘e7 12 bxc3 was followed by 12...f6? 13 ♖h5+! g6 14 ♘xg6 ♘xg6 15 e5, etc. Necessary is 12...0-0, when White has a promising centre, the bishop pair and a good future on the dark squares.

e) 11...♘f6 was played in Kinsman-Bryson, Edinburgh 1996. Their Catalan match (see 'c', note to White's 10th move in Vladimirov-Thorhallsson, Game 6) went thus:

11...♘f6?! 12 bxc3 ♘bd7 (after 12...0-0, 13 ♖g5 h6 14 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘xc4 gives White a clear advantage, while Kinsman gives 13 ♖a3 ♜e8 14 ♘xf7!? ♚xf7 15 e5 ♘d5 16 ♗h5+ ♚g8 17 ♖e4, when Black's pieces are a long way from the defence of the kingside, e.g. 17...g6 18 ♖xg6 hxg6 19 ♗xg6+ ♚h8 20 ♜ae1 ♘xc3 21 ♜e3) 13 ♘c6 ♗c7 14 d5 e5 15 ♖e3 a6 16 f4! 0-0 17 fxe5 ♘xe5 18 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♖d4 (D).

example 14...♜e8 15 dxe6!, or 14...a5 15 dxe6.

a) Therefore, in the game Polovodin-Zhelnin, USSR 1983, Black prevented a queen exchange with 14...♘d7. No prizes for finding White's deadly reply: 15 ♘xf7! (D).

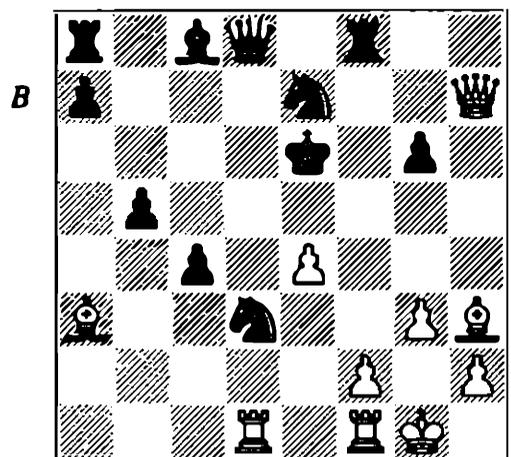


Without committing any serious mistakes Black has found himself in a helpless position. Establishing healthy queenside pawns is irrelevant when White is in total control of the centre. The game ended 19...♗g5 20 e5 ♘g4 21 e6 ♘h6 22 e7 ♜e8 23 d6 ♖d7 24 ♖xa8 ♜xa8 25 ♗f3 1-0.

**12 exd5**

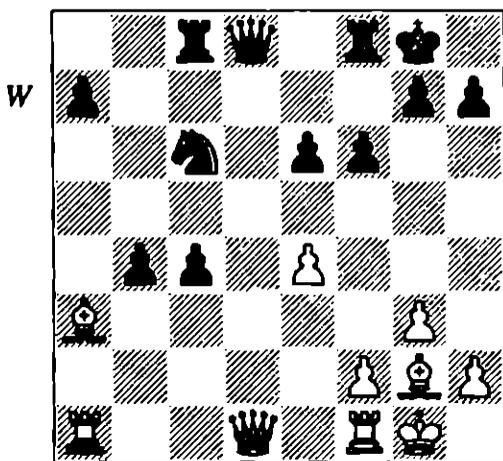
This variation is not for the faint-hearted. The alternative, 12 ♖xb2, is not quite as complicated. Then after 12...♘e7 (12...♘f6 13 ♖a3 leaves the king stranded in the centre) 13 d5 0-0 14 ♖a3 Black needs to make an important decision as White threatens to undermine the defence of the e7-knight by opening the d-file, for

This should be a familiar theme by now, though here the destructive knight sacrifice is more alarming because Black has managed to castle. The game went 15...♚xf7 (15...♜xf7 16 dxe6 ♜f8 17 exd7 ♖xd7 18 ♗d6!) 16 dxe6+ ♚xe6 (16...♚g8 17 exd7 ♖xd7 18 ♗d6) 17 ♗h5 g6 18 ♗xh7 ♘e5 19 ♜ad1 ♘d3 20 ♖h3+ (D).



I will leave you to confirm that Black is ready to resign.

b) As is often the case, and this line is no exception, Black does not have to allow such carnage. Nevertheless, from our point of view, it is still entertaining to put the opponent under so much pressure, leaving him to find the 'only' moves and avoid disaster. Here Black has **14...f6!**, suggested by Polovodin and Fedorov. Having invested two pawns in the attack, it is now White's turn to stay alert and, fortunately, the obvious move is also the strongest: **15 d6!** (Black is better after **15 dxc6 dxc6 16 dxc6 ♖xd1 17 ♜fxd1 ♞e8 18 e5 d5) 15...dxc6 16 dxc6 dxc6 17 d7! b4!** (active defence is imperative; **17...♙xd7 18 ♙xf8 ♚xf8** is tempting, but **19 e5!** shatters any illusions Black may have of consolidating) **18 dxc8 ♜ ♞xc8 (D)**.



Thus far we have been treated to the fruits of GM Oll's labour. He evaluates this position as unclear, which is fair enough! White has an extra piece, for which Black has three connected passed pawns, but the two bishops have the potential to get into the game effectively, and Black is vulnerable on the a-file and

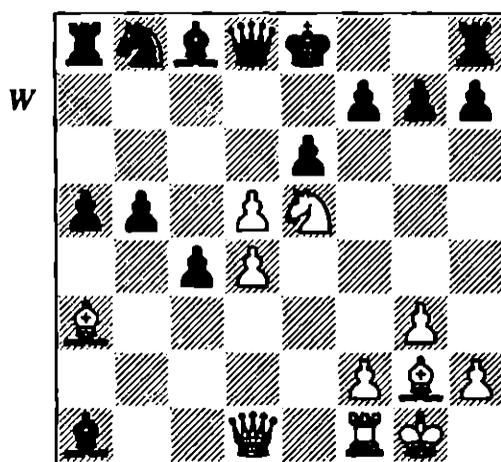
the e6-pawn is weak. Perhaps the fact that titled players have shown little enthusiasm to take up the black side is significant, though I would be surprised if White can ultimately do better than simplification to an only slightly favourable ending.

I prefer the wild **12 exd5**, to which we now return:

**12 ... ♙xa1**  
**13 ♙a3!**

Depriving Black's king of an escape route. Now **13...exd5 14 ♜h5 g6 15 ♜f3!** would be very unpleasant for Black, e.g. **15...♙e6 16 dxf7! ♙xf7 17 ♞e1+** (**16...♞f8 17 ♞e1! ♚d7 18 ♞xe6**), or **15...f6 16 ♞e1!** – Chernin. Therefore Black's next is practically forced:

**13 ... a5! (D)**



Apart from the threat of **...b5-b4**, shutting out White's annoying bishop, Black now has the possibility to defend along his third rank with **...♞a8-a6**. Now a whole rook down (plus a couple of pawns), White must decide how to continue.

**14 dxe6!**

This improves on **14 ♜g4**, when Black should play **14...b4 (14...g6 15**

$\text{♞xa1 ♞a6 16 ♞f4 f6 17 ♞h6}$  is interesting, but this did not prevent the players from agreeing a draw in Glek-Oll, Tallinn 1986) 15  $\text{♞xg7 ♞f8 16 ♞xa1 ♞a6!}$  (not to be recommended is 16...bxa3, which brought misery in Chernin-Yudasin, USSR 1984: 17  $\text{dxe6 ♞xe6 \{17...♞a7}$  is met by 18  $\text{exf7+ ♞axf7 19 ♞xf7}$  and then 19... $\text{♞e7 20 ♞e5}$  or 19... $\text{♞xf7 20 ♞e1+ ♞e7 21 ♞g8+ ♞d7 22 ♞h3+}$ ) 18  $\text{♞xa8 ♞xd4 19 ♞b1 ♞d7 20 ♞c6 ♞d6? \{20...a2\} 21 ♞xd7+$   $\text{♞xd7 22 ♞xc4 ♞c5 23 ♞b8+ ♞c8 24 ♞xc8+ 1-0}$ ). Then after 17  $\text{♞c1 exd5 18 ♞h6}$  Black defends with 18... $\text{♞e7!}$ , e.g. 19  $\text{♞e1 ♞e6}$ .

Of course time will tell, but at least 14  $\text{dxe6}$  keeps up the momentum while simultaneously regaining some material.

14 ...  $\text{♞xe6}$   
15  $\text{♞xa8 ♞xd4?}$

Losing. There are two improvements.

a) 15...b4!, after which Kengis offers two moves:

a1) 16  $\text{♞a4+}$  presents Black with an opportunity to go wrong:

a11) 16... $\text{♞d7?}$  fails to 17  $\text{♞xd7}$ , e.g. 17... $\text{♞xd7 18 ♞e1+ ♞f8 19 ♞xb4+ ♞g8 20 ♞c6}$ , or 17... $\text{♞xd4 18 ♞e5+ ♞f8 19 ♞c6 ♞xa8 20 ♞xb4+ ♞g8 21 ♞d1! ♞f6 22 ♞e7+ ♞xe7 23 ♞xe7 ♞d5 24 ♞xd5}$ , etc.

a12) The unlikely 16... $\text{♞e7!}$  saves Black, for example 17  $\text{♞xb4+ axb4 18 ♞xb4+ ♞f6 19 ♞xa1 ♞xd4 20 ♞e1 g6 21 ♞f3}$  and White still has an attack, though Black's extra pawn

will be a problem if Black emerges unscathed.

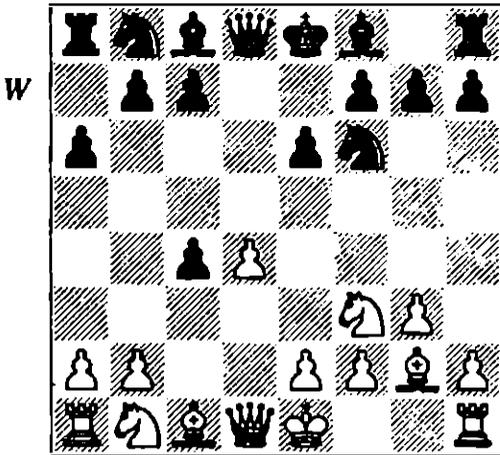
a2) I prefer 16  $\text{♞xa1!?$  0-0 (16...bxa3? 17  $\text{d5! ♞h3 18 ♞c6!}$ ) 17  $\text{♞c1}$ , when White has enough firepower to get the most from his extra piece (the dark-squared bishop), not forgetting the d-pawn.

b) Also possible is 15... $\text{♞xd4}$ , which is much better than capturing on d4 with the bishop because here Black forces the exchange of queens on his own terms. After 16  $\text{♞xa1 ♞xa1 17 ♞xa1 b4 18 ♞c1 0-0 19 ♞xa5 ♞d8!}$  the game is far from over. Now Black has only two pawns for the piece, and again the dark-squared bishop can operate without fear of being challenged. White should be able to keep the passed pawns under control, but whether he subsequently has enough freedom to go on the offensive is another matter.

In the game Black did not get the chance to test the potential of his queenside pawns. The remaining moves were:

16	$\text{♞c6}$	$\text{♞xf2+}$
17	$\text{♞xf2}$	$\text{♞c7}$
17... $\text{♞b6+ 18 ♞g2 ♞xc6 19 ♞d6 ♞d7 20 ♞d1}$	and White wins.	
18	$\text{♞d6!}$	$\text{♞b6+}$
19	$\text{♞d4}$	$\text{♞xd4+}$
20	$\text{♞xd4}$	$\text{b4}$
21	$\text{♞a1!}$	$\text{♞d7}$
22	$\text{♞f4}$	$\text{♞c8}$
23	$\text{♞b7}$	$\text{♞d8}$
24	$\text{♞xa5}$	$\text{♞e8}$
25	$\text{♞xe6}$	$\text{fxe6}$
26	$\text{♞b5}$	$\text{1-0}$

# 3 Open Catalan: 5...a6



A versatile move, 5...a6 prepares ...b7-b5 in order to defend the extra pawn on c4 or simply expand on the queenside, depending on the circumstances. This is more versatile than 5...b5 – if not quite as exciting – and is a popular choice against the Catalan at every level of competition. Again I remind you of the similarities and transpositional possibilities with this and 5...b5.

## Game 5 Krasenkov – Kaidanov Gausdal 1991

1 c4 e6 2 d4 f3 d5 3 d4 f6 4 g3 dxc4  
5 g2

5 ... a6  
6 0-0 b5

Introducing complications by insisting on keeping the pawn, thus forcing/inviting White to generate an initiative. Black has one very important alternative:

6...c5 7 dxc5 ♖xd1 8 ♜xd1 ♙xc5 leads to a difficult game for Black after 9 ♘e5. Razuvaev-Geller, USSR 1988 continued 9...♘bd7 10 ♘xc4 ♜a7 11 ♘c3 b5 12 ♘d6+ ♚e7 13 ♘ce4 with a clear advantage to White.

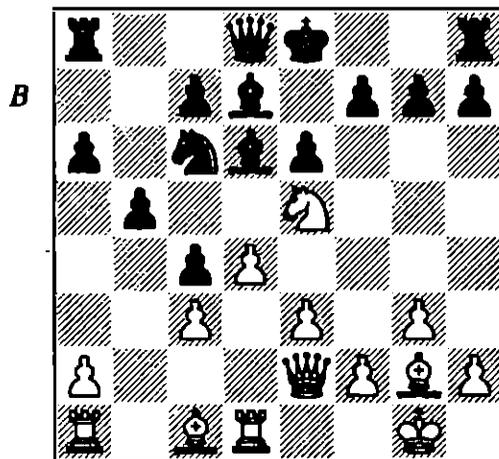
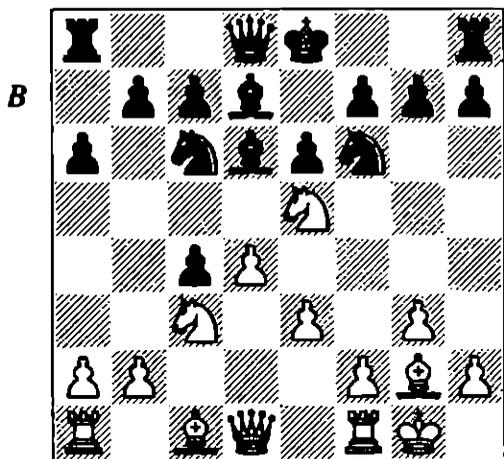
The major alternative is the sober 6...♘c6 (sometimes the order of moves is 5...♘c6 6 0-0 a6, but we intend to meet 5...♘c6 with the uncompromising 6 ♗a4 – see Flear-Marciano, Game 7 – as after 6 0-0 Black can avoid 6...a6 in favour of 6...♜b8, when it is not clear how White should continue). My favourite reply to 6...♘c6 is 7 e3, concentrating on the centre – which Black is neglecting in his efforts to hold on to the pawn. Then:

a) 7...♙d7 is the most popular of Black's options:

a1) 8 ♘c3, and now:

a11) 8...♙d6 was played in Tiben-sky-Haba, Czechoslovakia 1991, and White now found an interesting idea which avoids the established theory. Instead of 9 ♗e2 b5 10 ♜d1 0-0 11 e4 e5 with an approximately equal position, White unleashed his bishop with 9 ♘e5! (D).

The game continued 9...♙xe5 (or 9...♘xe5 10 dxe5 ♙xe5 11 ♙xb7 ♜a7 12 ♙g2, when White has enough for the pawn) 10 dxe5 ♘xe5 11 ♙xb7 ♜b8 12 ♙g2 (White prefers to keep

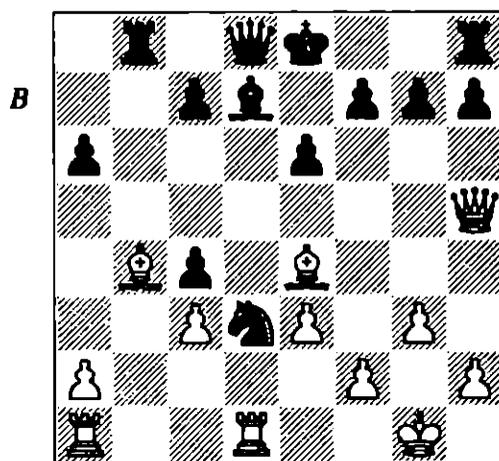


the bishop on the long diagonal rather than grab a pawn with 12 ♜xa6, although this does look quite promising, e.g. 12...♜c6 13 ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 14 ♜d1+ ♜e7 15 b3, etc.). Now Haba gives 12...0-0 13 ♖d4! ♜d3 14 ♖xc4 and then 14...♜xc1 15 ♜fxc1 ♜xb2 and 14...♜b5 15 ♜xb5 axb5 16 ♖c2, evaluating both as slightly in White's favour.

a12) 8...♜d5 also met with a new move in the game Khalifman-A.Petrosian, Moscow 1987: 9 ♖e2! (both 9 e4 ♜xc3 10 bxc3 ♜e7 and 9 ♜d2 ♜xc3 10 bxc3 b5 11 a4 ♜b8 12 ♖g4 g6! lead to a dynamically balanced game) 9...♜xc3 10 bxc3 ♜d6 (10...♜e7 11 a4! ♜a5 12 ♜e5 gives White the better chances) 11 ♜d1 (11 ♖xc4 is not possible at the moment in view of 11...♜a5 12 ♖e2/d3 ♜b5) 11...b5 12 ♜e5! (D).

Instigating complications, the result of which requires an accurate evaluation. Black chose 12...♜xe5 (after 12...♜xe5 13 dxe5 ♜xe5 14 ♜a3!, 14...♜xc3 15 ♜xd7! wins, so 14...♜b8 is necessary, with a difficult defensive task ahead for Black) 13 dxe5 ♜xe5 (otherwise White dominates), forcing his opponent to find

the most active response in 14 ♖h5! (14 ♜xa8 ♖xa8 simply hands over the long diagonal, while 14 ♜a3 ♜c8 15 ♖h5 ♖f6 gives Black an edge) 14...♜d3 15 ♜a3! (piling on the pressure; again 15 ♜xa8 is an insult to the Catalan bishop, e.g. 15...♖xa8 16 ♜a3 ♖d5!, and the knight is too strong) 15...♜b8! (15...♜c8? 16 ♜e4!) 16 ♜e4 b4! 17 ♜xb4 (D).



Thus far Black has succeeded in limiting his disadvantage, and now 17...♜b5! was necessary, even though after 18 ♖g4 (18 ♖e2 c5 19 ♜a3 0-0 20 ♜xd3 cxd3 21 ♖xd3 ♖a5! is equal) 18...♖g5 (18...♜g5 19 ♖h4 c5 20 ♜a5!) 19 ♖xg5 ♜xg5 20 ♜xd3 cxd3 White can maintain excellent winning chances with 21 c4! (21

$\text{Rxd3 Rd5!}$ ), for example  $21... \text{Qc6}$   
 $22 \text{ f4!}$ .

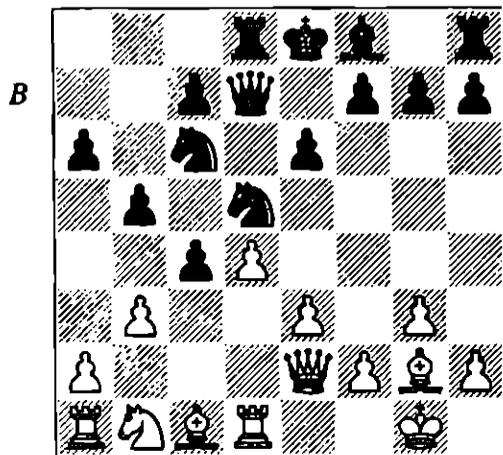
Instead in the game Black went wrong, playing  $17... \text{Qxb4?}$ , when White was able to exploit his opponent's lack of development and weak c-pawns:  $18 \text{ cxb4 Rb5}$  ( $18... \text{Rxb4?}$   
 $19 \text{ Qc6}$ ;  $18... \text{We7}$   $19 \text{ We5! 0-0}$   $20$   
 $\text{Wxc7 Rfd8}$   $21 \text{ Rac1}$ )  $19 \text{ We2 Wb8?!}$   
 ( $19... \text{We7}$   $20 \text{ a3 0-0}$   $21 \text{ Wxc4}$  is the lesser evil)  $20 \text{ a3 c5}$   $21 \text{ Wxc4 Wc7}$   
 ( $21... \text{cxb4}$   $22 \text{ Wd4}$ )  $22 \text{ Rac1}$  and White won a pawn and, soon, the game.

Note that  $\text{Qf3-e5}$  did not only open the long diagonal for White's light-squared bishop, but the subsequent trade on e5 cleared the d-file for White's rook, which proved equally uncomfortable for Black. Another important feature of this game was Black's stranded king (after  $\text{Qc1-a3}$ ), illustrating the potential problems associated with neglecting the centre and development in the struggle to provide support for the c4-pawn.

a2) Continuing the theme, the aggressive  $\text{Qf3-e5}$  has also been tried after White's other reply to  $7... \text{Qd7}$ , namely  $8 \text{ We2}$ . After  $8... \text{b5}$  we have:

a21) In the game Polugaevsky-Panchenko, Sochi 1981,  $9 \text{ Rd1 Qe7}$   
 $10 \text{ b3!? cxb3}$   $11 \text{ axb3 0-0}$   $12 \text{ e4}$  resulted in White having typical Catalan compensation for the pawn in the form of open lines and a fluid centre (one idea is  $\text{d4-d5 e6xd5, e4-e5}$ , etc.).

a22) However, Toshkov-L.Spasov, Albena 1985 continued  $9 \text{ Qe5!?$   
 $\text{Qd5}$   $10 \text{ Qxd7 Wxd7}$   $11 \text{ Rd1 Rd8}$ , and now came  $12 \text{ b3!}$  (D).



The removal of his light-squared bishop makes the position after  $12... \text{cxb3}$   $13 \text{ axb3}$  more uncomfortable for Black, so  $12... \text{c3}$  is the most sensible course. Then  $13 \text{ Qxd5 exd5}$   $14 \text{ Qxc3}$  is at least slightly better for White, who has options involving a queenside strike with  $\text{a2-a4}$ , occupation of the c-file and expansion in the centre with  $\text{e3-e4}$ .

It is really quite logical that  $\text{Qf3-e5}$  can be an effective response to Black's queenside play in these examples. Accurate defence should limit White to an edge, but the more harmonious nature of White's development tends to offer more in practice.

b)  $7... \text{Rb8}$  takes the rook off the long diagonal in order to take the sting out of  $\text{Qf3-e5}$  as a reply to  $... \text{b7-b5}$ . The recommended antidote is  $8 \text{ Qfd2!?$  (tying down Black's b-pawn to the defence of the knight):

b1) Carlhammar-L.-Å.Schneider, Swedish Ch 1991 saw Black try to rejuvenate  $8... \text{e5}$  with  $9 \text{ Qxc6+ bxc6}$   
 $10 \text{ dxe5 Qg4}$   $11 \text{ Qxc4 Qe6}$  (the old  $11... \text{Wxd1}$   $12 \text{ Rxd1 Qe6}$   $13 \text{ Qbd2}$   
 $\text{Rd8}$   $14 \text{ b3! Qxc4}$   $15 \text{ bxc4}$  is good for White, e.g.  $15... \text{Qxe5}$   $16 \text{ Qb2}$

♖xd2 17 ♙xe5, or 15...♙b4 16 ♖b1 ♙c3 17 ♖b3 ♙a5 18 f4), but after 12 ♖bd2 ♗d5 13 b3 White was still better.

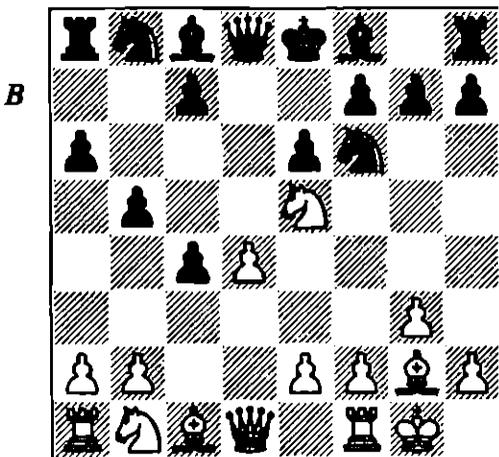
b2) 8...♗d7 9 ♖xc4 b5 10 ♖cd2 (10 ♖e5!?) 10...e5 11 ♖b3 ♙d6 12 ♖c3 leaves Black's position rather loose.

b3) 8...♖a5 does not defend the c4-pawn because after 9 ♗a4+ c6 10 ♖xc4, 10...b5 meets with 11 ♗xa5, while 10...♖xc4 11 ♗xc4 gives White an easy game.

b4) 8...♖a7?! manages to force through ...b7-b5 at the cost of a certain amount of time and the knight being poorly posted. Polugaevsky-Portisch, Amsterdam 1981 went 9 ♖xc4 b5 10 ♖e5 c5 (10...♙b7 11 ♙xb7 ♖xb7 12 a4! strikes at the weak queenside pawns, guaranteeing White an advantage) 11 ♙c6+ ♙d7 (11...♖d7 12 dxc5 ♙xc5 13 ♙xd7+ ♙xd7 14 ♖xf7! ♖xf7 15 ♗h5+ and 16 ♗xc5) 12 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 13 ♙g2 ♙e7 14 a4!, and White dominated. Note the power of the Catalan bishop here.

Now let us focus our attention back on 6...b5:

7 ♖e5 (D)



The result of Black's insistence on keeping the gambit pawn is the opening of the h1-a8 diagonal for the Catalan bishop. If Black is not careful he may end up in charge of a few squares on the queenside only to find the rest of the board belonging to White.

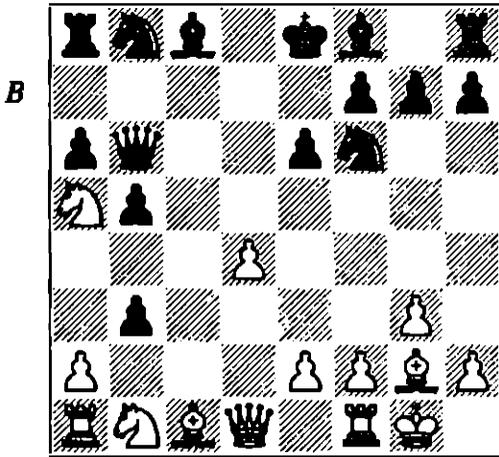
7 ... ♖d5

7...♖a7 is a little too passive and 8 a4! leaves the rook in trouble on the a-file. However, there is another way in which Black has tried to negate White's control of the long diagonal, and this is by offering a pawn sacrifice of his own with 7...c6. Then White should choose the third of the following replies:

a) The natural reaction, 8 ♖xc6, fits in nicely with Black's plan, for example 8...♗b6 9 ♖e5 (9 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 helps Black) 9...♙b7 10 a4 (or 10 ♙xb7 and 11 a4) 10...♙xg2 11 ♖xg2 ♗b7+ 12 ♖g1 ♖bd7 and then 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8+ ♗xa8 15 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 16 ♙f4 ♙b4 with an equal position, Cebalo-Sveshnikov, Athens 1983, or 13 b3!? cxb3 14 axb5 ♗xb5 15 ♖c3 ♗b7 16 ♖b1 ♖b8 17 ♙f4 ♙d6 18 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 19 ♙xd6 1/2-1/2 Razuvaev-Novikov, Volgodonsk 1983.

b) In Vanheste-Mednis, Amsterdam 1988, White ignored the offer and stepped up the pressure on the enemy pawn mass with 8 a4?!. This is the right idea but the wrong execution, and after 8...♙b7 9 ♖c3 ♗c8 10 e4 ♖bd7 11 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 12 e5 ♖d5 13 ♖xd5 cxd5 Black had a solid position and a useful extra pawn.

c) Correct is **8 b3!**, designed to combine the desirable aims of 'a' and 'b' – capturing the c6-pawn and undermining Black's queenside structure. This is possible because the forced **8...cxb3** is then met with **9 dxc6!** **Wb6** **10 a5!** (*D*).

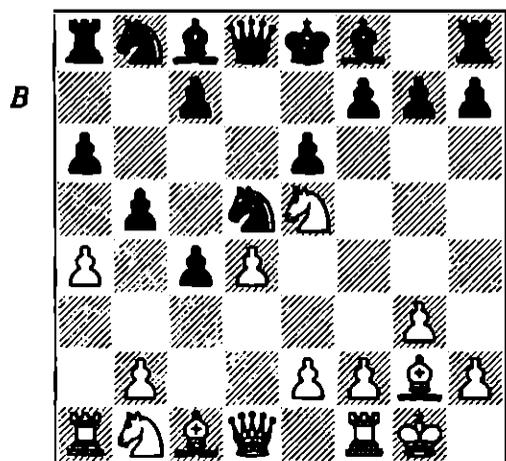


White's clever 8th move has provided the roaming knight with an effective retreat square on b3, from where the knight can support both the centre as well as a timely a2-a4. After **10...Ra7** **11 dxb3** the game Krasenkov-Kohlweyer, Ostend 1990 saw Black bring his rook to the centre with **11...Rd7** (worse are **11...e7** **12 e4** **0-0** **13 e3** **Rd7** **14 d1d2** **Wd8** **15 a4!** **bx a4** **16 Rxa4** **e b7** **17 a5** when White has excellent play, Razuvaev-M.Gurevich, Riga 1985, and **11...e b7?!** **12 d5!** **Wc7** **13 e3** **Ra8** **14 dxe6** **fxe6** **15 e xb7** **Wxb7** **16 d d4**, Lingnau-Thesing, Bundesliga 1993). The game continued **12 e4!** **e b7** **13 Re1** (**13 We2!?**) **13...e7** **14 e5** **d d5** **15 Wg4** **g6?!** (**15...cf8** **16 e g5** clearly favours White, but at least h6 and f6 are not weak) **16 e h6** **d b4** **17 e xb7** **Wxb7** (**17...d c2?** **18 e e4** **d xe1** **19 d1d2**) **18 Re2** **d8c6**

**19 d c3** **Wb6** **20 Rd2** and White had a decisive advantage: **20...a5** **21 e4** **a4** **22 d bc5** **Rd8** (**22...Rxd4** **23 Rxd4** **d xd4** **24 d f6+** **e xf6** **25 W xd4**, or **22...Rd5** **23 d xe6!** **f xe6** **24 W xe6** **d d8** **25 d f6** **R xd4** **26 e e3**, etc.) **23 d xe6!** **f xe6** **24 W xe6** **d d5** (**24...Rxd4** **25 d f6+** **d d8** **26 e e3**) **25 d d6+** **R xd6** **26 exd6** **1-0**.

**8 a4** (*D*)

Striking the queenside before Black consolidates, this thematic thrust is now established as being the most difficult to meet (having taken over from **8 d c3**). White wastes no time challenging the b5-pawn, generating pressure on the a-file. Note that **8 e4** **d f6** **9 a4** **e b7** transposes and rules out **8 a4 c6**, though an examination of the next note demonstrates that Black's extra option is nothing to be afraid of.



**8 ... e b7**

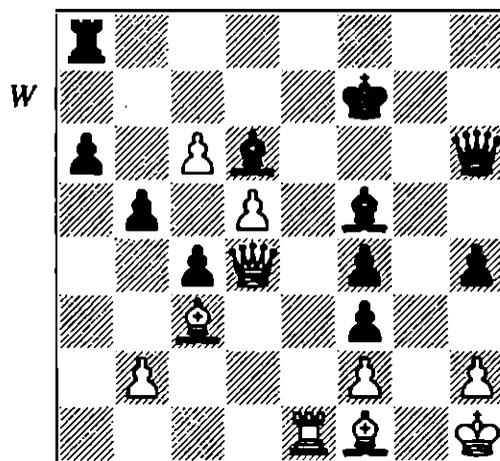
Bolstering the pawns with **8...c6** is possible, presenting White with the option of taking on b5 before striving to open the game for his better-developed pieces:

a) In Kaidanov-Am.Rodriguez, Lucerne Wcht 1993 White went for

an immediate attack in the centre: 9 e4 d6 (on 9...d6, 10 d5! is good: 10...cxd5/exd5 11 a5, or 10...c7 11 f4! g5 12 e3 xa4 13 xc4 cxd5 14 exd5 b7 15 xa4! with a strong attack, Onat-Kirov, Pernik 1976) 10 d5! c7! (10...cxd5 11 exd5 exd5 12 axb5 e7 13 c3 b7 14 bxa6 0-0 15 a7 a6 16 xc4 was clearly better for White in Zaichik-I.Ivanov, Beltsy 1979, and 10...exd5 11 exd5 xc6) 11 xc6 xc6 12 dxc6 xc6 13 axb5 axb5, and instead of 14 xa8 xa8 15 c3 b8 with an unclear position, White first played 14 e5! d5 15 exd5 exd5, obtaining an advantage after 16 xa8 xa8 17 c3 due to the threat to restore material equilibrium with a lead in development. Using the d4-d5 advance (even with black pawns on c6 and e6) to prise open the position for the Catalan bishop is a possibility we should always be looking for in these positions.

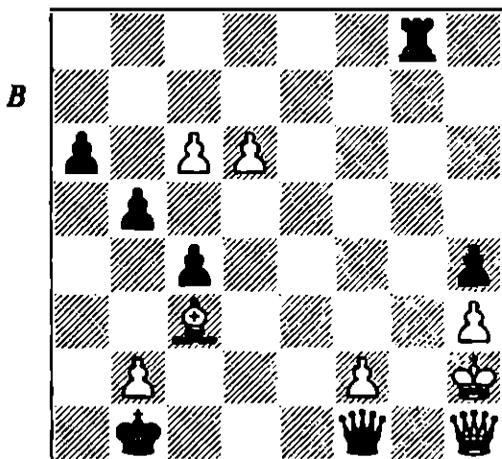
b) Heck-Zude, Germany 1994 tested the continuation 9 axb5 cxb5 10 c3 b7 11 xc6 exd5 12 e4 d6 13 exd5 0-0, which has been evaluated by Neishtadt as producing complicated play with chances for both sides. White's doubled, isolated d-pawns seem quite harmless compared with Black's queenside pawns, but the weakness of the c6-square is a crucial factor, as was demonstrated in the game: 14 d2 f6 15 c6 c7 16 f3 f7 17 fe1 c8 18 f4 xc6 (otherwise the trade of dark-squared bishops will give White control of the e7-square) 19 dxc6 b4 20 ed1 g5 21 e3 d6 22 d5. Now

White's advanced queenside pawns are as dangerous as they look, hence Black's attempt to distract his opponent with a pawn storm on the other flank: 22...h5 23 e4 f5 24 d4 f4 25 d2 f3 26 c3 g6 27 f1 h4 28 e1 h6 29 g4 f4 30 e4 xg4 31 xf4 gxf4 32 e1 f7 33 h1 f5 (D).



Notice that Black's queenside pawns have not moved since they assumed this same pose early in the opening. In fact they remain motionless for the rest of this entertaining game! This is due in no small part to the fact that Black has been too busy addressing the problem of White's passed pawns, which came to life after the removal of the enormous knight on c6. The remaining moves were 34 e5! g5 (34...xe5 35 xe5 frees the d-pawn) 35 h3 xe5 36 xe5 g6 37 g7+ h5 38 xf5 xf5 39 e5! g4 (or 39...xe5 40 xe5 e8 41 c3) 40 h3+ g5 41 g7+ h5 42 d6 b1+ 43 h2 f1 44 f7+ (the start of a forced, decisive series of checks) 44...g5 45 f6+ f5 46 g7+ e4 47 e6+ d3 48 f5+ d2 49

♙c3+ ♚c1 50 ♜xf4+ ♚b1 51 ♜xf3 ♜g8 52 ♜h1! (D).



An unusual final position: 1-0.

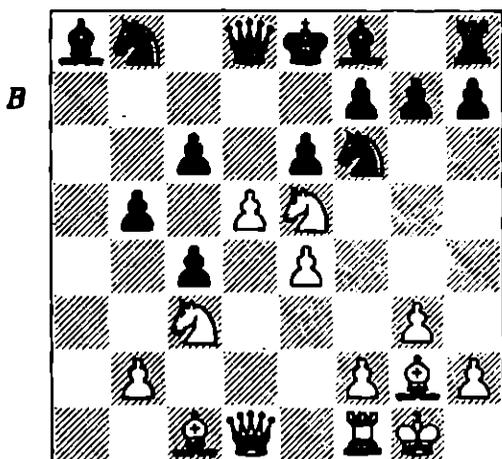
9 axb5

9 e4 ♘f6 10 axb5 axb5 11 ♖xa8 transposes. An important and interesting alternative is 9 b3, which features in the next main game.

9 ... axb5  
10 ♖xa8 ♙xa8  
11 e4 ♘f6  
12 ♘c3 c6

Not an attractive move to play, perhaps, but 12...b4 is dubious on account of 13 ♜a4+ ♘bd7 14 ♘b5!.

13 d5! (D)



This energetic treatment of the position has replaced 13 ♙g5 as

White's best hope of making something of his development lead. It is imperative that White does not give his opponent any time with which to consolidate, and the 'traditional' d4-d5 throws enough wood on the fire to cut across Black's plan of containment. Note that all the black pieces except the f6-knight are on the back rank and the king is still in the centre.

13 ... ♙e7

Of course White is prepared for any captures on d5. After 13...cxd5 White has ♘c3xb5 (perhaps after 14 exd5), while 13..exd5 14 exd5 ♘xd5 leaves the h5-square free for the queen (e.g. 15 ♜h5 and then 15...g6 16 ♘xg6 fxg6 17 ♜e5+, or 15...♜f6 16 ♘xc6).

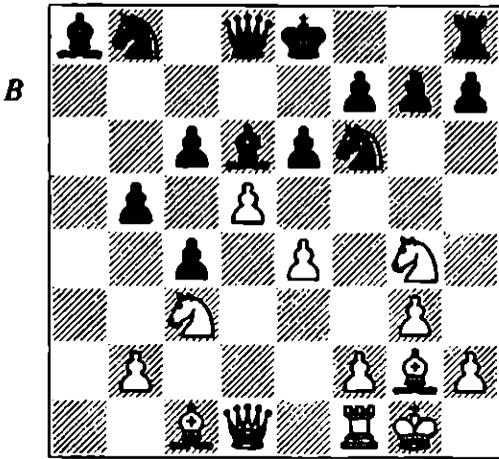
If Black can do nothing about the unwelcome d-pawn, then he may as well bring out his dark-squared bishop and accept whatever inconvenience White has in store for him.

13...♙d6 is also possible:

a) It was first seen in Ulybin-Antunes, Bayamo 1991. White played the natural 14 ♙f4 and was rewarded with an excellent position after 14...exd5? (14...g5? 15 dxe6! fxe6 16 ♘xc6! is no improvement, but Ulybin's careful 14...♜c7!? certainly is, and 14...b4 is worth a try) 15 exd5 cxd5 16 ♜a1! ♙xe5 (16...♙b7 17 ♜a7, or 16...♘c6 17 ♘xc6 ♙xc6 18 ♜a6) 17 ♙xe5 ♘c6 18 ♙c7! ♜xc7 19 ♜xa8+.

b) Perhaps not satisfied with 14 ♙f4, de la Villa found 14 ♘g4! (D).

This move was tested in Romero-Antunes, Havana Capablanca mem 1991. White seeks to undermine



Black's influence over e4 and d5 by challenging the f6-knight and vacates the e5-square in preparation for a timely e4-e5. The diagram position has a number of pitfalls which Black should avoid: 14...0-0? runs into 15 e5 or 15 dxe6 fxe6 16 ♖xf6+, 14...cxd5 15 ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 fails to 16 ♖xb5 ♙e5 17 f4, 14...♖xg4 15 ♜xg4 ♜f6 16 dxe6 fxe6 17 ♜d1! ♙c7 18 e5! is terrible for Black and 14...♙e7 15 ♖xf6+ (15 dxe6 ♜xd1 16 ♖xf6+ gxf6!) 15...♙xf6 16 dxe6 fxe6 17 ♜g4 is clearly better for White. Finally, 14...e5 avoids some nasty tactics but simply invites 15 ♙g5 with an unpleasant pin. Thus Black countered on the other flank with 14...b4: 15 ♖xf6+ gxf6 (15...♜xf6? is worse due to 16 ♖a4 16 dxc6) 16 ♜a4?! (16 ♖b1! followed by ♖b1-d2 is sufficient for an advantage on account of Black's broken pawns) 16...♙b7? (returning the favour, whereas 16...bxc3 17 ♜xa8 cxb2! 18 ♙xb2 cxd5 19 exd5 e5! 20 ♜a4+ ♖d7 21 ♜xc4 would have kept White's lead to a minimum) 17 e5! bxc3 18 exd6 ♜xd6 19 dxe6 fxe6 20 bxc3 ♜f7 21 ♜d1 ♜e7 22 ♜xc4 ♜d8 23 ♜e1! and White's two bishops,

command of the dark squares and pressure on the weak e6-pawn proved effective.

Returning to the main game, on e7 the bishop cannot fall victim to the opening of the d-file or to tricks involving e4-e5.

**14 dxe6!**

Consistent. White wants to saddle his opponent with a weak pawn on e6, but the exchange also leaves Black's light-squared bishop locked in by the c6-pawn. Whereas Black is not ready to begin to use his 3-1 queenside pawn majority, White is well-placed to become active on the kingside (where he, too, has a majority).

14	...	fxe6
15	♜e2	0-0
16	♙h3	♜e8

White can pile so much pressure on the e6-pawn that Black does not bother defending it with 16...♜c8, after which two moves have been played:

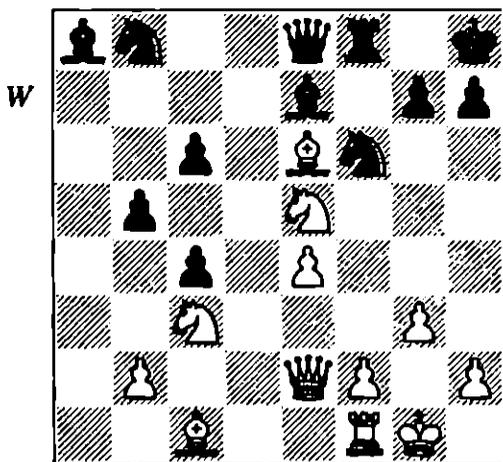
a) In Bareev-Novikov, USSR 1986, after 17 ♜d1 ♜e8 18 ♖f3 ♖a6 19 ♖g5, Black should have played 19...♖c7!?, resulting in an unclear position after 20 ♙f4 h6 21 ♙xc7 hxg5 22 ♙e5. Instead 19...♖c5?! 20 ♙e3 h6 21 ♙xc5 turned out well for White, e.g. 21...♙xc5 (21...hxg5 22 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 23 e5) 22 ♙xe6+ ♜xe6 23 ♖xe6 ♜xe6 24 ♜d8+ ♜f7 25 e5! (25 ♜xa8 b4) 25...♙b7 26 exf6.

b) Zilbershtein-Novikov, Blagoveshchensk 1988 featured an improvement for White in the shape of the novelty 17 ♖f3!, sending the knight on its way to g5 immediately

without spending time bringing the rook to the d-file (thus depriving Black of ...♖f8-e8). The offer of a draw (by three-fold repetition) which followed the sequence 17...♘a6 18 ♘g5 ♘c7 19 ♗f4 ♘fe8 20 ♗g4 ♘f6 21 ♗e2 ♘fe8 22 ♗g4 ♘f6 was justifiably refused with 23 ♗xe6+!, which enabled White to regain the pawn and simplify to a favourable ending.

16...♗e8 defends the f7-square in anticipation of White's bishop arriving on e6. 16...♖h8 is also seen, transposing to the text after 17 ♗xe6 ♗e8.

17 ♗xe6+ ♖h8 (D)



The inevitable removal of the e6-pawn has left White in command on the kingside and in the centre. The white pieces are active, Black's are passive, White's pawn majority is fluid (the e-pawn is already passed), Black is hampered by his doubled c-pawns. In a way White is fortunate in that he can expect – and consequently prepare for – ...c6-c5, as this is the only way for Black to liberate his light-squared bishop.

18 ♗f5!?

One of Krasenkov's many contributions to opening theory. Previously 18 ♗d1 had been White's choice:

a) 18...c5 19 ♗f4! ♘c6 20 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 21 ♗h3 ♗g6 22 ♘d5 ♗d8 23 ♘xf6 ♗xf6 24 ♗f5 ♗f7 25 ♗d6 with a clearly better position for White, Glek-Novikov, Blagoveshchensk 1988.

b) Black rejected ...c6-c5 in favour of 18...♗b7 in the game Danailov-S.Maksimović, Cannes 1990, leaving the c5-square free for her knight. Although such a plan keeps the queenside pawns intact it gives White time to send his pieces into enemy territory: 19 ♗f4 ♘a6 20 ♘d7! ♘xd7 21 ♗xd7 ♗f7 22 e5 ♘c5 23 e6 and the difference between the two pawn configurations is clear. The game ended 23...♗g6 24 ♗d6 ♗xd6 25 ♗xd6 ♘xd7 26 ♗xd7 ♗c8 27 e7 ♗e8 28 ♗d8 h6 29 ♘e4 ♗g4 30 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 31 ♗xe8+ ♖h7 32 ♗d8 1-0.

Krasenkov's 18 ♗f5!?! is rather more provocative than 18 ♗d1. Allowing the bishop to remain on f5 means that extra protection is now provided for the e-pawn, so Black is invited to consider hitting the bishop with ...g7-g6, which would leave the h6-square vulnerable. Another point behind the retreat is that White no longer has to consider the consequences of a discovered attack from the queen.

18 ... c5

Not wanting to be completely dominated, Black liberates his own light-squared bishop. Unfortunately for him the price for this is the newly

weakened b5-pawn. Black should not take the bait and be tempted into 18...g6? 19 ♖h3 on account of the prospect of White's other bishop taking up residence on h6. However, 18...♗d6 comes to mind, though White has with a clear advantage after 19 ♘g4 ♘d5 20 ♞d1!.

19 ♗f4

White increases his influence in the centre of the board, successfully continuing the strategy to which he has adhered throughout the opening – following up the sacrifice of a pawn on the queenside (and Black's subsequent endeavours to maintain the material lead) with aggressive play in the centre and an eye on the kingside. Black's band of queenside pawns lacks the support necessary to create problems for White.

19 ... ♘c6?!

A risky venture in a difficult position. Black's desire to do something is understandable, and he can be forgiven for missing the power of his opponent's 25th move. In answer to 19...b4, Krasenkov offers 20 ♞a1! ♘c6 21 ♘b5 ♘xe5 22 ♘c7 ♜c6 23 ♗xe5 with a big lead. Another feasible course of action for Black is 19...♘b5, which should be met with the menacing and strong 20 ♜g4!. Then 20...♘xf4 21 gxf4 forces 21...♞f6 (due to the threat of ♘e5-g6+), when 22 ♞a1 followed by an invasion on a7 is decisive. In these lines where Black's light-squared bishop finds itself on a8 after an exchange of rooks, the possibility of attacking this piece later in the game – either with the remaining rook or

with the queen – is an important feature of these variations with ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5.

20 ♘xb5!

Krasenkov has seen that he will emerge from the following series of exchanges with a won ending.

20 ... ♘xe5

21 ♘c7 ♜c6

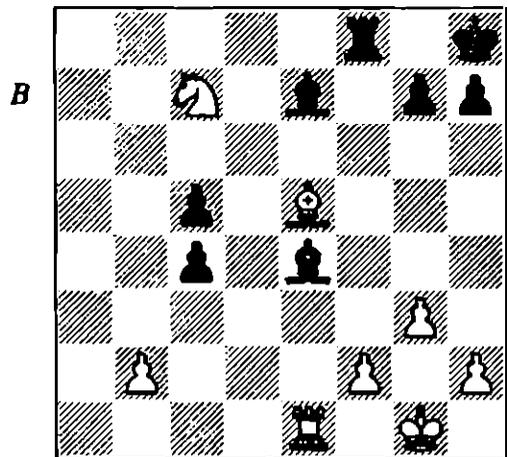
22 ♗xe5 ♘xe4

22...g6 23 ♗e6 ♜xe4 24 ♜xe4 ♗xe4 25 ♗xc4 and Black has nothing to compensate for the loss of a pawn.

23 ♗xe4 ♜xe4

24 ♜xe4 ♗xe4

25 ♞e1! (D)



The winning blow.

25 ... ♗d3

26 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7

27 ♞xe7+ ♔g6

27...♞f7 28 ♘e6+! ♔f6 29 ♞xf7+ ♔xf7 30 ♘xc5, etc.

28 ♘e8

Not 28 ♘e6?? ♔f6 29 ♘xf8 ♔xe7. Avoiding such disasters is all that should concern White on his way to victory.

The game ended: 28...♞f5 29 g4 ♞f7 30 ♞xf7 ♔xf7 31 ♘c7 ♔e7 32

f4 ♖d6 33 ♜b5+ ♖d5 34 ♜f2 ♜e4 35 f5 ♜e5 (35...♜f4 36 f6 ♙g6 37 ♜d6) 36 ♜g3 ♙e4 37 ♜h4 ♙c6 38 ♜a3 ♖d4 39 ♜g5 c3 40 f6! 1-0 (40...♙e8 41 ♜b5+ ♙xb5 42 bxc3+ ♜xc3 43 f7).

White can also put the question to the c4-pawn with 9 b3 before deciding about the capture a4xb5:

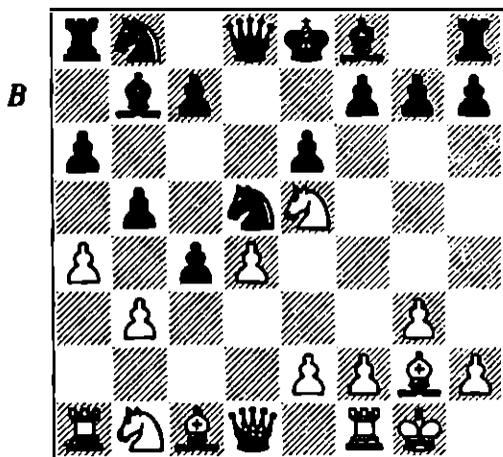
### Game 6

Vladimirov – Thorhallsson

*Gausdal 1991*

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜f3 d5 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♙g2 a6 6 0-0 b5 7 ♜e5 ♜d5 8 a4 ♙b7

9 b3 (D)



Here White makes a second strike against Black's queenside pawns instead of concentrating on exploiting his grip on the centre. With the c4-pawn challenged, Black must either advance the pawn or trade on b3. The former offers the better chances.

9 ... c3

Only nine moves have been played and already Black has been given a protected passed pawn right

in the heart of White's camp! Designed to create serious problems for White on the queenside, this annoying advance seems stronger than 9...cxb3, which permits White to proceed with his plan of making inroads on the queenside while Black is still poorly developed.

After 9...cxb3 there are two continuations available to White – trade rooks on the a-file (which, hopefully, can be used later), or keep the rooks on the board (for the time being, at least) in order to use the d-file, perhaps.

a) In Romanishin-Marjanović, Erevan 1989, White was attracted to the idea of forcing Black's light-squared bishop into the corner: 10 axb5 axb5 11 ♙xa8 ♙xa8 12 ♜xb3 c6 13 ♜c3 (13 e4 ♜f6 14 d5 cxd5 15 ♜xb5+ ♜bd7 16 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 17 ♜b8+ ♜d8 18 ♜b5+ ♜d7 1/2-1/2 Popchev-Velikov, Vrnjačka Banja 1985) and now Black played the reasonable-looking 13...♙e7? (13...♜xc3 is obviously wrong because White's Catalan bishop then reigns, but 13...♜d7 is perfectly playable, leading to a position with chances for both sides after 14 ♜e4 ♙e7). However, this led to a dangerous initiative for White thanks to the powerful queen, and after 14 ♜xd5 exd5 15 ♜a2! ♙b7 16 ♜a7 the effectiveness of play down the a-file was about to be demonstrated. The game went 16...♜c7 17 ♙f4 ♙d6 18 ♙c1 ♜e7 19 ♙a1! ♙c8 (19...0-0 20 ♜b6 and 21 ♙a7) 20 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 21 ♙a7+ ♜d7 (21...♙d7 22 ♙h3 ♙d8 23 ♙xd7 ♜xd7 24 ♜xc6+) 22 ♜xc6+

♖e6 23 ♗h3+ f5 24 ♗xf5+ ♖xf5 25 ♗xd6 ♖e6 26 ♗b4 and White soon won.

b) 10 ♗xb3 retains the tension.

b1) Gelfand-Riemersma, Arnhem 1987 saw White try a new move after 10...♘c6. Gelfand played 11 ♗d1 (11 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 12 axb5!? axb5 13 ♗xa8 ♗xa8 14 e4 ♘f6 15 d5!? gives White a promising attack according to Gelfand and Kapengut), and now things started to become rather complicated: 11...♗d6! 12 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 13 e4 bxa4! 14 ♗f3 ♘e7 (14...♘b4!? 15 ♗c3 ♗d7 16 e5 ♗e7 17 ♗xa8 ♗xa8 with an unclear position) 15 ♗g4 0-0? (15...♘g6 is much better, when White should step up the pressure with 16 d5) 16 e5 f5 (16...♗b4 17 ♗xc6 and 18 ♗xh6) 17 exd6! fxg4 18 dxe7 ♗xe7 19 ♗xc6 – the black queen is no match for the three minor pieces.

b2) 10...c6 (now we have a transposition to Kengis-Meister, Game 4 – 5...b5) 11 ♘c3 and now:

b21) 11...♗e7 12 ♘xd5 exd5 13 e4 0-0 14 exd5 cxd5 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♗xa8 ♗xa8 17 ♗xb5 and Black found it difficult to develop his queenside pieces without losing the d-pawn, Vanheste-Van Gisbergen, Enschede 1991.

b22) The game Albur-T.Taylor, Reykjavik 1984 is also interesting: 11...♘d7 12 ♘xd5 exd5 (12...♘xe5 13 ♘c3 ♗xd4 {13...♘g6 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♗xa8 followed by ♘c3xb5, or 13...♘d7 14 ♗f4 b4 15 a5 with sufficient compensation} 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♗xa8+ ♗xa8 16 ♘xb5 leaves Black severely underdeveloped) 13

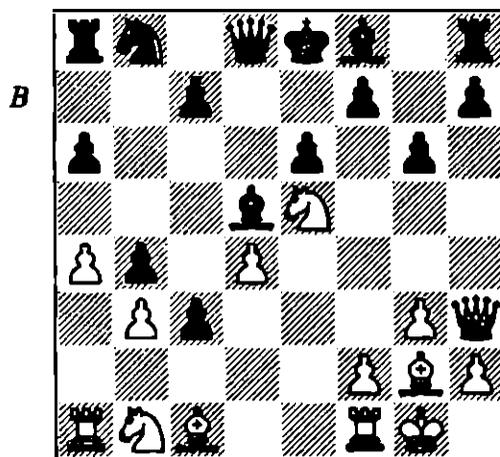
e4! ♘xe5 14 exd5! cxd5 15 dxe5 ♗c5 (Black hopes to complete his development by returning the pawn) 16 axb5 0-0 17 b6! ♗d4 (taking on b6 runs into ♗a1-b1) 18 ♗b2 ♗xb2 19 ♗xb2 ♗c8 20 ♗fc1 ♗d7 21 ♗d4 and White had a significant advantage.

Incidentally, 9...f6 is good for White after 10 bxc4! and either 10...bxc4 11 ♘xc4, or 10...fxe5 11 cxd5 exd5 12 e4!.

### 10 axb5

The game actually went 10 e4 ♘f6 11 axb5 axb5 12 ♗xa8 ♗xa8, but the position after Black's 12th move is usually reached by first making exchanges on the queenside. I prefer the 10 e4 move-order to 10 axb5 because by hitting the knight first White does not have to contend with the possibility discussed in the note to Black's 12th move in the main game.

However, 10 e4 does invite Black to cheekily ignore the attack on his knight and immediately imprison the b1-knight before the a-file has been opened, locking the queenside with 10...b4. Then we have 11 exd5 ♗xd5, when White's best is 12 ♗h5! g6 13 ♗h3! (D).



White has a piece for two pawns but his queen's knight is trapped, so at some point he will have to return the material by capturing on c3. Therefore other factors must be taken into consideration when evaluating the diagram position. First, when the white knight has finally been exchanged for Black's two queenside pawns White will have the c-file and Black the b-file, which looks like a fair deal. An important feature of the position is the h1-a8 diagonal: Black's queen is ready to come to d5 and White's queen also has access to the long diagonal. As is so often the case in this variation Black's king is still in the centre, so he should be careful about its safety – something which White does not have to worry about. Consequently, what may be a balanced game in theory offers White better chances in practice.

a) The game Romero-Izeta, Andorra Z 1987 soon came to life. With 13...c5?! Black neglected his development, and after 14 ♔g5! ♖xg5 15 ♕xc3! bxc3 16 ♔xd5 ♖a7 (16...exd5 17 ♗c8+) White kept up the momentum: 17 ♔xe6 fxe6 18 ♗xe6+ ♗e7 19 ♗c4 ♗f6 20 ♖ae1 ♔e7 21 ♖e4 ♖f8 22 ♕g4 ♗f5 23 dxc5 ♕c6 24 b4 with excellent winning chances for White.

b) In Buturin-Novikov, USSR 1986, Black did tend to his kingside, but 13...♔g7 placed the bishop on the wrong diagonal. 14 ♕xc3! bxc3 15 ♔a3! was the correct reaction, Black's king still being vulnerable after 15...♔f8 16 ♔xf8 ♖xf8 17

♖ac1 ♖a7 18 ♖xc3 ♔xg2 19 ♗xg2 ♗xd4 20 ♖e3 ♔e7 21 ♗h3.

c) We are left with the more prudent 13...♔e7, which was played in Kinsman-Bryson, Edinburgh 1988. The h6-square beckons, so 14 ♔h6 makes sense. Then Black had to find something to distract his opponent, resulting in an exchange of queens after 14...♔xg2 15 ♗xg2 ♗d5 16 ♗xd5 exd5. The position after 17 ♖e1 a5 has been assessed as equal, and in the game 18 ♕xc3 bxc3 19 ♖ac1 f6 20 ♕g4 ♔f7 21 ♖xc3 ♖c8 22 ♖f3 ♕d7 23 ♔d2 ♔d6 24 ♕e3 c6 25 g4 ♕f8 soon led to a draw. Instead of 24 ♕e3, perhaps 24 ♔g5!?

is a good try for more, White aiming to profit from his concentration of forces on the kingside, for example 24...♔e7 (24..f5 25 ♕e3 c6 26 g4) 25 ♕h6+ ♔f8 26 ♕g8!? ♔b4 27 ♕xf6 ♔xe1 28 ♕xd7+ ♔g8 (28...♔g7 29 ♔f6+ ♔g8 30 ♔e5 followed by ♕d7-f6+, or 28...♔e8 29 ♕f6+) 29 ♕f6+ ♔g7 30 ♖e3 ♔b4 31 ♕xd5 and White has two pawns for the exchange and his pieces remain active.

10	...	axb5
11	♖xa8	♔xa8
12	e4	♕f6

12...b4!? is a worthy alternative. In fact this idea seems more effective following the simplification on the a-file than it does in the note to White's 10th move. 13 exd5 ♔xd5 and now:

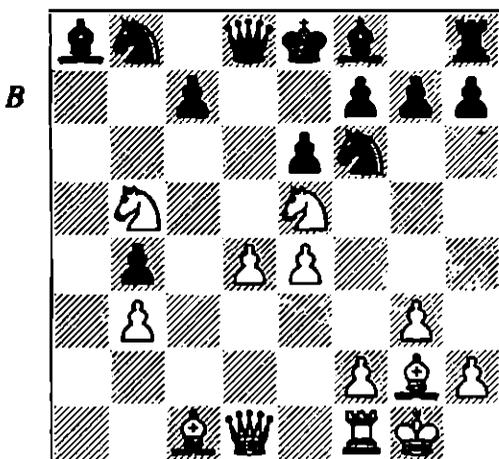
a) White steered the game to equality in Rogers-Chandler, Wellington (2) 1986: 14 ♔e3 ♔e7 15 ♔xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♗c2 ♔f6 17 ♕xc3 bxc3 18 ♗xc3 ♔xe5 19 dxe5 ♕c6

20 f4 0-0 21 ♖c1 ♕e7 22 ♗c5 ♖e8  
23 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 24 ♛c5 and a draw  
was soon agreed.

b) If G.Kuzmin-Novikov, Khar-  
kov 1985 is anything to go by, then a  
draw is a fair result, for here White  
was demolished: 14 ♗xd5 ♛xd5 15  
♗e3 ♗d6 16 ♛g4 0-0 17 ♖c1?! (17  
♗h6 ♗xe5 18 dxe5 ♛xe5 19 ♛xb4!?  
gxh6 20 ♕xc3 ♕c6 is only slightly  
better for Black) 17...♗xe5 18 dxe5  
♕c6! and Black had a clear advan-  
tage. Things went from bad to worse  
for White after 19 ♗h6 ♛xe5 20  
♗e3 ♛d5 21 ♗h6 ♛d4 22 ♗f4 ♛e4!  
23 f3 ♛d4+ 24 ♖h1 e5 25 ♗g5 h6!,  
when White resigned rather than  
play 26 ♛xd4 exd4 27 ♗f4 ♕a5 28  
♗xc7 ♕xb3, etc. Novikov himself  
came to White's support and sug-  
gested 15 ♛g4 as an active replace-  
ment for 15 ♗e3, judging the position  
after 15...♕c6 16 ♕xc6 ♛xc6 to be  
unclear. However, even this is noth-  
ing special for White, suggesting  
that 10 e4 is a better try.

13 ♕xc3 b4

14 ♕b5!?! (D)



the others available to the knight.  
Perhaps the move went unnoticed  
for such a long time because this  
course involves a sacrifice but, with  
only one piece developed and his  
king nowhere near ready to castle  
into safety, Black is in store for con-  
siderable punishment.

14 ... c6

Black invites his opponent to jus-  
tify the new idea.

One advantage of 14 ♕b5 can be  
seen in the variation 14...♗xe4? 15  
♗xe4 ♕xe4 16 ♛f3 ♕f6 17 ♕c6!,  
when the pressure against c7 gives  
White a clear lead. 14...♗d6 should  
be met with 15 ♛e2, when White's  
superior pieces, pawns and extra  
space provide a comfortable cush-  
ion.

15 d5

White, of course, is content to  
give up a knight, putting his faith in  
the passive, uncoordinated set-up of  
Black's pieces. The thematic d4-d5  
often heralds the beginning of an of-  
fensive in several variations of the  
Catalan, and the advance should  
come as no surprise after the pre-  
paratory ♕f3-e5 and e2-e4.

15 ... cxb5

A piece is a piece, and 15...cxd5  
16 ♛c2 merely gives the b5-knight a  
menacing role.

16 dxe6 fxe6?

This leads to a clear advantage to  
White, as does 16...♗e7? 17 exf7+  
♖f8 18 ♛xd8+ ♗xd8 19 ♗e3, when  
Black's extra piece is irrelevant and  
White is in control. Vladimirov of-  
fers an improved version of this line,  
suggesting that White has sufficient

Lputian's novelty, the point being  
that b5 is a more active square than

compensation after 16...♖xd1 17 exf7+ ♔e7 18 ♜xd1. It is not easy for Black to find a way out of the bind (taking the e4-pawn opens the e-file for White to set up a discovered check), while White threatens to improve his position further, for example ♙c1-g5 followed by ♜d1-a1.

17 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8  
 18 ♘f7+ ♔e8  
 19 ♘xh8

White is an exchange up but his knight is trapped. However, this is still a useful piece, for Black is occupied with capturing it at some point, leaving White free to threaten to put his long-range rook to good use on the queenside.

19 ... ♙c5

After 19...♙xe4 (19...♘xe4? 20 ♜e1) 20 ♙b2 the bishop's presence on the a1-h8 diagonal indirectly

helps the white knight, and ♜f1-a1 is coming.

20 ♙e3! ♙xe3

21 fxe3 ♙xe4

21...♘bd7 runs into 22 e5! ♙xg2 23 exf6! ♙xf1 24 fxg7 ♘f6 25 ♔xf1, e.g. 25...♘g8 26 g4 ♔e7 27 g5, followed by h2-h4-h5-h6, g5-g6.

22 ♜xf6!

The final, decisive simplification.

22 ... gxf6

23 ♙xe4 ♔f8

Or 23...f5 24 ♙d3 ♔f8 25 ♙xb5 ♔g7 26 e4! and White brings his king over to d4.

24 ♙xh7 f5

24...♔g7 25 ♙d3 is also winning for White.

The game ended: 25 ♙g6 ♘d7 26 ♙h5 ♔g7 27 ♘g6 ♔h6 28 ♘f4 e5 29 ♙e8 ♘f6 30 ♙xb5 exf4 31 exf4 ♔g6 32 ♙d3 ♘d5 33 ♔f2 ♔f6 34 h3 ♘c7 35 ♔e3 1-0.

# 4 Open Catalan: 5...♞c6

At first glance the development of the knight on c6 looks wrong since the c7-pawn is obstructed, and ...c7-c5 often plays an important part in Black's fight against his opponent's control of the centre. However, the idea here is to forego the thrust of the c-pawn in favour of a timely ...♞a8-b8 followed by ...b7-b5 to defend the c4-pawn. Black will continue according to how White tries to prevent this, and the knight often proves to be well-placed on c6 – for example, a2-a4 weakens the squares b4 and b3, thus inviting ...♞c6-a5/b4.

In order for White to remain in the driving seat I recommend 6 ♛a4, which practically forces Black into a different kind of game entirely from the one he would like.

Incidentally, some players prefer 5...a6 and then 6...♞c6, an order of moves which is covered in Krasenkov-Kaidanov, Game 5, note to Black's 6th move.

## Game 7

G.Flear – Marciano

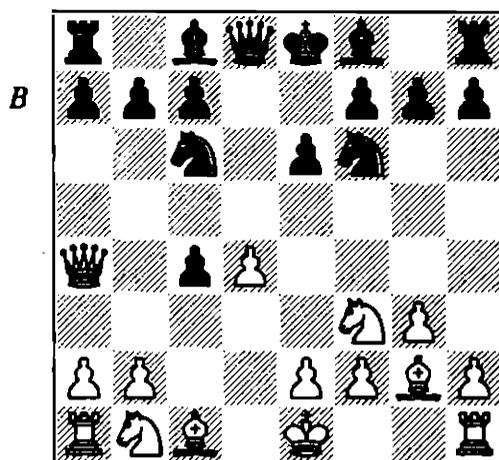
Toulouse 1996

1 d4 ♞f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♞f3 dxc4  
5 ♜g2

5 ... ♞c6

6 ♛a4 (D)

This simple move presents Black with less in the way of choice than



does the equally popular 6 0-0. If White is allowed to take the c4-pawn at leisure his centre and space advantage will leave him well in control, so it is essential for Black to seek fluid development and to avoid drifting into a passive position.

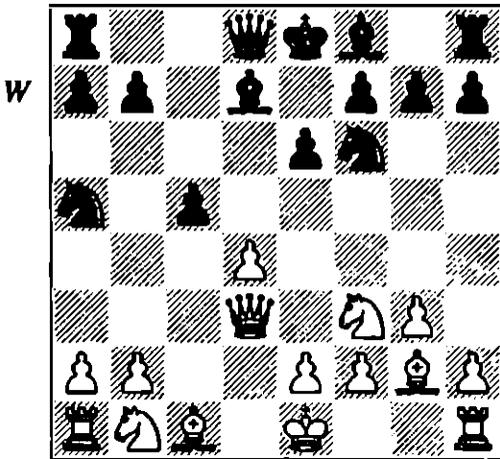
6 ... ♜b4+

Developing a piece and (temporarily) preventing the capture of the c4-pawn. Alternatives:

a) 6...♛d5 is interesting, and worked out well for Black in Bukić-Cvetković, Portorož 1971, when 7 0-0 (7 ♞c3 ♜b4) 7...♜d7 8 ♞c3 ♛h5 9 ♛xc4 ♜d6 10 e4 e5 11 dxe5?! is met by 11...♞g4!, forcing 12 h3 (12 exd6? ♞ce5) 12...♞gxe5 13 ♞xe5 ♞xe5 14 ♛e2 (14 ♛d5 ♜xh3!, followed by 15 f4? ♜c5+) 14...♛xe2 15 ♞xe2 ♜b5 16 ♞e1 ♞d3 and Black was in control. An improvement is 11 d5, which is slightly better for White, as is 10 ♞b5 followed by ♞b5xd6+ and ♜c1-f4.

b) 6...♟d7 7 ♜xc4 ♟b6 8 ♜d3 gives White an edge.

c) The idea behind 6...♟d7 is to activate the queenside pieces and challenge the d4-pawn after 7 ♜xc4 ♟a5 (7...♟e7 simply loses a tempo after ...c7-c5, d4xc5 ♟e7xc5, while abandoning the ...c7-c5 break is too passive) 8 ♜d3 c5 (*D*).



Then 9 0-0 ♞c8 10 ♟c3 (10 dxc5 ♟xc5 11 ♟e5 0-0 12 ♟g5 ♟c6 13 ♜xd8 ♞fxd8 14 ♟xc6 ♟xc6 15 ♟c3 is a recommendation of Minev) 10...♟c6 11 ♞d1, when Black must decide what to do with the centre pawns (11...♟e7 12 e4):

c1) 11...c4 ignores the d-pawn altogether; considering White's doubled major pieces on the d-file this seems to be asking for trouble. The game Ftačnik-Lechtynsky, Czechoslovakia 1979, went 12 ♜c2 (threatening 13 e4) 12...♟b4 13 d5! (an aggressive attempt to improve on 13 ♟g5 0-0 14 e4 ♟xc3 15 ♟xf6 ♜xf6 16 bxc3, which left White with a useful centre in Spiridonov-Taimanov, Bulgaria 1974) 13...exd5 14 e4 ♟xc3 15 exd5 (15 bxc3!? ♟xe4 16 ♟a3) 15...♟xd5 (15...♟xd5 16 bxc3

{ 16 ♜xc3 0-0 17 ♟g5} 16...0-0 17 ♟g5 g6 18 ♟xd5 ♟xd5 19 ♟e4) 16 bxc3 0-0 17 ♟g5 g6 18 ♟e4 (threatening 19 ♟a3) 18...♜e7 19 ♟g5. After the brief flurry of exchanges 19...f6! (19...♜e5? 20 f4 and 21 ♞xd5, etc.) 20 ♞xd5! ♟xd5 (20...fxg5 21 ♞xa5 b6 22 ♞a4!) 21 ♟xf6+ ♞xf6 22 ♟xd5+ ♟g7 23 ♟xf6+ (maintaining some of the tension with 23 ♜d2 looks good) 23...♟xf6 (23...♜xf6 24 ♞e1 keeps White on top) White could have activated his queen with 24 ♜d2!, threatening to bring the rook to the e-file (Black's knight still sits on the edge of the board).

c2) 11...cxd4 is less ambitious but at least deprives White of attacking in the centre. Dizdarević-Vuković, Yugoslavia 1990, saw White produce a theoretical novelty after 12 ♟xd4 ♟xg2 13 ♟xg2 ♟c5 (13...a6 14 ♜f3! favours White) 14 ♜b5+ ♜d7!. Instead of the old 15 ♜xa5, which is good enough only for equality (15...♟xd4, and Black can escape the pin on the d-file with a check on c6), he found 15 ♟e3! (15 ♜xd7+ ♟xd7 16 ♟e4 also seems like a good try for advantage). This logical developing move practically forces 15...♜xb5, when 16 ♟dxb5! a6 17 ♟xc5 ♞xc5 18 b4! ♞c6 19 bxa5 axb5 20 ♟xb5 brings about an ending which is not particularly pleasant for Black.

7 ♟d2!

Blocking the check with the knight (on d2 or c3) puts Black under less pressure than the text – which threatens ♟d2xb4 – and thus permits

the second player to keep his extra pawn after 7...♟d5.

7 ... ♟d5  
8 ♙xb4

8 ♚b5 is an interesting alternative, investing a further tempo to approach the c4-pawn around Black's awkward bishop. White must be prepared to remain a pawn down in return for compensation in the form of an overall territorial superiority (see 'a').

a) Romanishin-Dokhoian, Bad Godesberg 1994 went 8...♙xd2+ 9 ♟bx d2 c3 (9...♟b6 10 ♟xc4 ♚d5 11 ♚xd5 exd5 12 ♟cd2 leads to a queenless middlegame in which the c-file is more useful than the e-file) 10 bxc3 ♟xc3 11 ♚d3 ♟d5. Black has made several knight moves and White's queen has also been busy, but from here on Black has to be satisfied with a rather cramped position. After 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♜ac1 ♚e7 14 e4 ♟b6 15 ♞fd1, the natural 15...e5 seems to lose more than it gains, e.g. 16 d5 ♟b4 17 ♚b3 ♙g4 18 h3 (18 d6?! ♚xd6 19 ♟c4 ♚e7 20 ♟cxe5 ♙e6) 18...♙xf3 19 ♟xf3 ♟a6 20 ♚c3 ♞fe8 21 ♙f1! ♟a4 22 ♚e3 ♟6c5 23 ♙b5 ♞ec8 24 ♚a3. Instead of 15...e5 Dokhoian played 15...♞d8 16 ♟b3 ♙d7 (16...♟xd4? 17 ♟bx d4 e5 loses to 18 ♟c6) with a complicated struggle ahead.

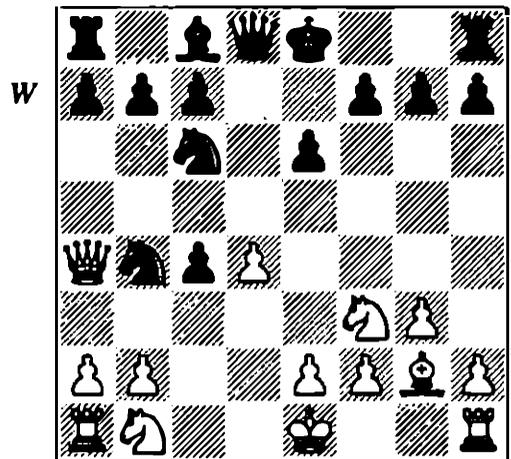
b) With 8...0-0 Black wastes no time choosing to let the pawn go, now that White's queen will take one more move to make the capture.

b1) In Fominykh-Plachetka, Rimavska Sobota 1991, 9 ♚xc4 was soon followed by equality thanks to

the thematic 9...♟b6 10 ♚d3 e5. After 11 ♙xb4 ♟xb4 12 ♚d2 ♟c6 13 dxe5 ♚e7 14 0-0 ♟xe5 15 ♟xe5 ♚xe5 16 ♟c3 c6 17 ♞fd1 ♙e6 White had nothing.

b2) Romanishin-Brodsky, Nikolaev Z 1995 was more interesting. The artificial 9 ♙c3 still met with 9...e5, introducing the complicated sequence 10 dxe5 ♙e6 11 0-0 a6 12 ♚a4 ♙f5 13 ♟h4 ♙xb1 14 ♞axb1 ♙xc3 15 ♚xc4 ♙xe5 16 ♙xd5. Now, instead of 16...♚f6?! 17 ♙xc6 bxc6 18 b3, with a serious structural advantage to White, Black should have played 16...♟a5!, e.g. 17 ♚e4 ♙f6 18 b4 c6, etc.

8 ... ♟xb4 (D)



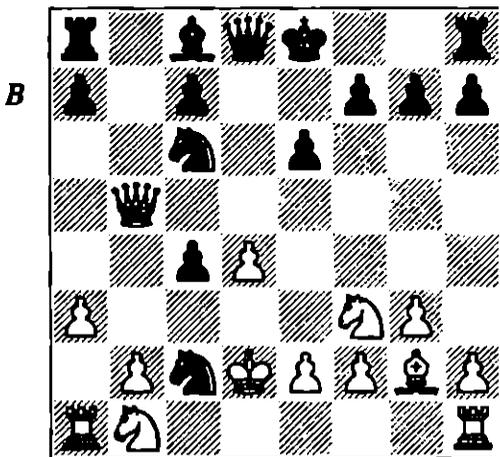
Already we find ourselves at a major branching point. Depending on White's next move, the game should either reach a quite specific ending or become terribly messy.

9 0-0

Perhaps justifiably, White rejects the messy option, settling for the more sober prospect of a slight edge in the ending.

a) The risk-takers will find 9 a3 tempting, although Black tends to

benefit most from the ensuing fireworks. The fun starts after **9...b5 10 ♖xb5** (but not **10 ♖d1? ♟d5 11 e4 ♟b6 12 ♟c3 a6**, and Black's extra pawn forms part of a dangerous queenside majority, Osmanbegović-Mrdja, Cannes 1995) **10...♟c2+ 11 ♔d2!** (much better than **11 ♔d1**, for reasons which will soon become apparent, while **11 ♔f1** does not attack the knight and gave Black time for **11...♟d7** in Bogdanovski-Dorfman, Cannes 1990: **12 ♞a2 ♟2xd4 13 ♟xd4 ♟xd4 14 ♖c5 ♟b3 15 ♖xc4 ♞b8**, etc.) and now Black can play (*D*):



a1) Here **11...♟d7!?** invites the trade of three pieces for White's queen. Thought to be a good deal for White, it was put to the test in Chetverik-Grabliauskas, St Martin 1996: **12 ♔xc2** (this capture was not available to Bogdanovski after **11 ♔f1**) **12...♟xd4+ 13 ♟xd4 ♟xb5 14 ♟xb5 ♞b8 15 ♟c6+ ♔f8 16 ♟1c3 ♖e7 17 ♞hd1 ♖c5**, and now **18 ♟f3 ♞xb5** (**18...a6 19 ♟d4 ♖b6 20 b4! cxb3+ 21 ♔b2**) **19 ♞d8+ ♔e7 20 ♞xh8 ♞b3** would have been equal according to Chetverik.

a2) **11...♟xa1** is seen more often, followed by the forced **12 ♖xc6+ ♟d7 13 ♖xc4**:

a21) **13...♞b8** is the old move, which turned out well for White in the game Zilbershtein-Raetsky, Voronezh 1988: **14 b4 c5 15 ♟c3** (15 ♖c3 cxb4 16 axb4 a5 17 ♖xa1 axb4 18 ♟e5 favours White) **15...cxd4 16 ♟e4 ♟b5 17 ♖a2 d3 18 ♞xa1 dxe2+ 19 ♔e1 0-0 20 ♖d2 ♖b6 21 ♖e3 ♞fd8 22 ♖xb6 ♞xb6 23 ♟c3 ♟a6 24 ♟g1!**, etc.

a22) Now **13...c5** has taken over. After **14 ♖a2 ♖a5+**, Dizdarević-Mitkov, Yugoslav Ch 1991 continued **15 b4!** (better than **15 ♟c3 cxd4 16 ♟xd4 ♞d8 17 ♞xa1 e5 18 ♟b3 ♖b6 19 ♔c2 ♖xf2** { **19...♟e6 20 ♞d1 ♖xf2** } **20 ♟e4 ♞c8**) **15...cxb4 16 ♖xa1 ♞c8 17 ♟e5 ♟b5 18 a4! 0-0 19 ♟e4! ♞fd8 20 ♔e3 f6 21 ♟f3 f5 22 ♟d3 ♟xd3 23 exd3** with an unclear position.

b) **9 ♟e5** has also been tried:

b1) In Stajčić-Luther, Kecskemet 1993, the position after **9...0-0 10 ♟xc6** (10 ♟xc6 ♟xc6 11 ♟xc6 allows **11...♖xd4!?**, while **11 e3 e5** is fine for Black) **10...♟xc6 11 ♟xc6 bxc6 12 ♖xc4 ♞b8! 13 0-0 ♞xb2 14 ♟c3 ♖d6 15 ♞ab1 ♞b6** was very similar to that in the main game, the only difference being that Black's queen stands on d6 and the b6-square has not been weakened by ...a7-a6.

b2) **9...♟d7** is interesting. Vakhidov-Ziatdinov, Tashkent 1987 illustrated how easily White can drift into trouble: **10 ♟a3?** (10 0-0 makes much more sense) **10...♟d3+! 11 ♟xd3**

(11 exd3 ♟xe5 and 12...♟xd3+) 11...cxd3 12 e3 d2+! 13 ♟xd2 e5 14 d5 ♟e7 15 ♜e4 0-0 and the exposed white king was a cause for concern.

Returning to calmer waters, 9 0-0 is the first part of a long-term strategy directed at crippling Black's queenside pawn structure by exchanges on c6. Black goes along with this because – apart from remaining a pawn up – he hopes to exploit the subsequent opening of the b-file.

9 ... ♜b8

In this particular game Black actually played 9...a6, but I have inverted these moves in order to include the note to Black's 10th move.

10 ♟c3 a6

If Black is not satisfied with the continuation in the main game he can avoid any damage to his queenside pawns with 10...♟d7, which was first seen in Romanishin-Aleksandrov, Pula 1990. For the next few moves all the action could be found on the queenside: 11 a3 b5 12 ♟xb5 ♟d5 (12...a6 13 ♟c3 ♟xd4 should be met with 14 ♜a5!, e.g. 14...♟b3 15 ♜e5 f6 16 ♜e4 {16 ♜h5+!? g6 17 ♜h6} 16...♟xa1 17 axb4 ♟b3 18 ♜xc4) 13 ♟c3 (13 e4!? ♟ce7 14 exd5 ♟xb5 15 ♜xa7 exd5 is slightly better for White) 13...♜xb2 14 ♜xc4 ♟a5 15 ♜d3 ♜b3 16 ♜fc1. After 16...c5 17 ♜d2! c4 (17...♜b8? 18 ♟xd5 ♟b3 19 ♜e3 and the e6-pawn is pinned) 18 ♟e5 ♟xc3 19 ♜xc3 ♟b5 (again 19...♜b8? 20 ♟xc4 ♟b3 falls short, this time to 21 ♟d6+ ♟e7 {21...♟f8 22 ♜f4} 22 ♜xb3 ♜xb3

23 ♜g5+ f6 24 ♜c5 ♟f8 25 ♜xa7 and White is in control) 20 a4 the black king was about to come under fire. The game lasted just over a dozen more moves: 20...♟a6 21 ♜xb3 ♟xb3 {21...cxb3 22 ♟c6 ♟xc6 23 ♟xc6+ ♟f8 24 ♜b4+} 22 ♟c6+ ♟f8 23 ♜b4+ ♟g8 24 ♜d1 h5 {24...♜f8 25 ♜c3} 25 d5!) 21 axb5 fxe5 22 ♟c6+! ♟xc6 23 bxc6 ♜xc3 (23...♜xd4 24 ♜xd4 exd4 25 ♜xc4) 24 ♜xc3 ♜xd4 25 ♜a3! ♟f7 (or 25...♜f8 26 c7 ♜xf2+ 27 ♟h1 ♟d7 28 ♜d1+, etc.) 26 e3 ♜d3 (26...♜b6 27 ♜xa7+ ♜xa7 28 ♜xa7+ ♟f6 29 ♜a4 e4 30 ♜xc4 ♜c8 {30...♟e5 31 ♜d4} 31 ♟g2 ♟e5 32 c7) 27 ♜xa7+ ♟f6 28 ♜b7 c3 29 ♜a7 ♜g8 30 ♜f7+ ♟g5 31 h4+ ♟g4 32 ♟g2 ♜e2 33 ♜a4+ 1-0.

11 ♟e5

Consistent with the plan to undermine Black's queenside, White gives his bishop a better view of the h1-a8 diagonal and brings to three the number of his pieces which are focused on c6. Others fail to deliver any chances of an advantage:

a) 11 a3 did nothing to trouble Black in Kaidanov-Bykhovsky, New York 1990: 11...b5 12 ♜d1 ♟d5 13 ♟e4 0-0 14 ♜c2 f5 15 ♟c3 ♟b7 16 ♜fd1 ♟a5 17 ♜e1 ♟b3 18 ♜ad1 ♜f6 19 e3 ♟xc3 20 bxc3 ♟e4 and Black's control of the light squares proved significant.

b) In Romanishin-Sosonko, Polanica Zdroj 1993, there followed 11 ♜ac1?! 0-0 12 ♜a3, and now Black refrained from pushing his b-pawn two squares immediately in favour of adding protection to the c5-square

with 12...b6!, resulting in an advantage for the second player after 13 ♖fd1 (13 ♖e4 a5, intending to meet 14 ♖xc4 by 14...♗a6) 13...♗e7! 14 ♖b1 b5 15 b3 cxb3 16 axb3 ♖d8 17 ♖c3 h6! 18 ♖e4 e5! 19 dxe5 (19 ♖xe5 ♖xd4) 19...♗f5.

11 ... 0-0

11...♗xd4 12 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 13 ♗xc6+ bxc6 14 ♗xc6+ ♗d7 15 ♗xc4 is excellent for White (the prospect of a rook coming to the d-file prevents Black from capturing on b2).

12 ♖xc6 ♖xc6

13 ♗xc6 bxc6

14 ♗xc4!

After 14 ♗xc6 Black should reject 14...♖xb2 15 ♗xc4 in favour of 14...♗xd4, when practice has shown that White does not have enough for an advantage. D.Gurevich-Wojtkiewicz, Geneva 1996 is typical: 15 ♖fd1 ♗e5 (15...♗b6 16 ♗xc4 ♗xb2 17 ♖ab1) 16 ♖d2 ♖b4 17 ♖c1 ♗b7 18 ♗d7 ♗c5 19 a3 ♖b3 20 ♖cc2 h6 21 ♗d4 ♗xd4 22 ♖xd4 ♖b8 23 f3 ♗d5, etc.

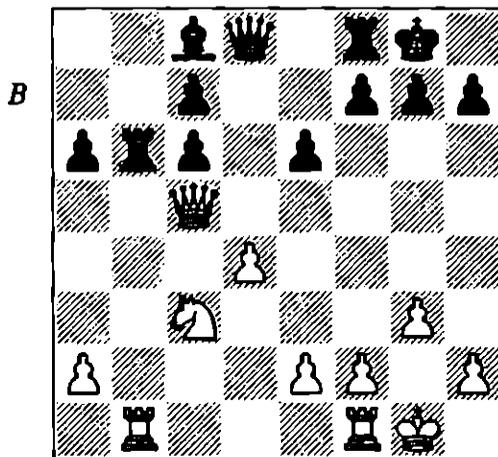
14 ... ♖xb2

15 ♖ab1 ♖b6

Correctly refusing to surrender the b-file, and offering the helpless pawns on a6 and c6 some much-needed protection.

16 ♗c5 (D)

Black's extra pawn is not particularly relevant here. Apart from the broken queenside pawns there is the problem of the bishop, which is yet to make a contribution to the game and has little future at the moment. Thanks to 16 ♗c5 the black queen is also short of a reasonable



post – the e7-square is unavailable and 16...♗d6? is now out of the question because the b6-rook will no longer be defended after 17 ♗xd6 cxd6. The good news for Black is the solidity of his compact position – if White is to generate an edge which is sufficient to press for more, then the middlegame (and subsequent endgame) must be negotiated adeptly. This means exploiting the slight but significant weaknesses in the black queenside to the full. A good start is a2-a4-a5, evicting the rook and consequently subjecting the enemy pawns to more pressure.

16 ... h6

Preparing to challenge White's dominant queen with ...♗d8-g5.

17 ♖fd1

After the immediate 17 a4 Black can halt the a-pawn with 17...a5 as the d4-pawn is defended only by the queen. This was seen in Romanishin-Bönsch, Berlin 1990. White then played 18 ♖fd1, but Black remained active: 18...♗a6 19 e3 (19 ♗xa5 ♖xb1, and Black regains the pawn, e.g. 20 ♖xb1 ♗xd4 21 ♗xa6 ♗xc3) 19...♗g5! 20 ♖xb6 ♗xc5 21 dxc5 cxb6 22 cxb6 ♖b8 23 ♖b1 ♗d3

24 ♖b2 ♕f8 with a completely equal ending.

By supporting the d4-pawn White renews the positional threat of pushing his a-pawn – hence Black’s next move.

17 ... ♖g5?!

Flear considers this natural move to be imprecise, and I tend to agree with him. 17...♙d7 is thought to be Black’s best, accepting (at least for the moment) a poor post for the bishop in order to bring the queen into the game along the back rank. In Stummer-Luther, Kecskemet 1993, this plan worked well for Black: 18 a4 ♖b8! 19 a5 ♖b2 (the point) 20 ♖a3 (20 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 21 ♖b1 is worth a try) 20...♖xb1 21 ♖xb1 ♖a7, and now 22 ♖b4?! presented Black with an opportunity to finally liberate his bishop by returning the extra pawn – after 22...c5! 23 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 24 dxc5 ♙c6 Black was suddenly in charge. C.Horvath-Luther, Budapest 1991 saw the less obliging 22 ♖c5 ♖xc5 23 dxc5 ♙c8. The game did not last much longer, the players agreeing to split the point after 24 ♖b8 e5 25 f4 exf4 26 gxf4 ♙e6 27 ♖b7 ♖d8 28 ♖xc7 ♖d4 29 e4 ♖c4. However, Black’s position is quite uncomfortable after 23...♙c8, suggesting that White should approach the ending with more patience because his opponent is too cramped to do anything active (...♖f8-d8-d4 is impossible while White has ♖b1-b8). Horvath’s 24 ♖b8 seems to waste a move and 25 f4 is certainly not relevant. A more positive strategy is to keep the position closed and

bring the king to the centre before turning to Black’s weak queenside pawns; the versatile knight has a wonderful outpost available on b4.

18 ♖xb6 cxb6

19 ♖xb6 e5

Black’s plan to give the bishop more freedom at the cost of returning the extra pawn does not appear to have improved his chances of equality since the pawns on a6 and c6 are still weak and White’s grip on the dark squares has not really diminished. White, on the other hand, is fortunate not to have any weaknesses which Black can try to exploit.

20 h4

White uses this ‘free’ move to give his king more breathing space, depriving Black of the opportunity to plant the bishop on h3. Flear has suggested 20 ♖c5! as a promising alternative, though White is also doing well in the game.

20 ... ♖f6

21 dxe5 ♖xe5

22 ♖d8 ♖xd8

Not 22...♖xc3?? 23 ♖xf8+ (and if 23...♕xf8 then 24 ♖d8#).

23 ♖xd8+ ♕h7

24 ♖xc8 ♖xc3

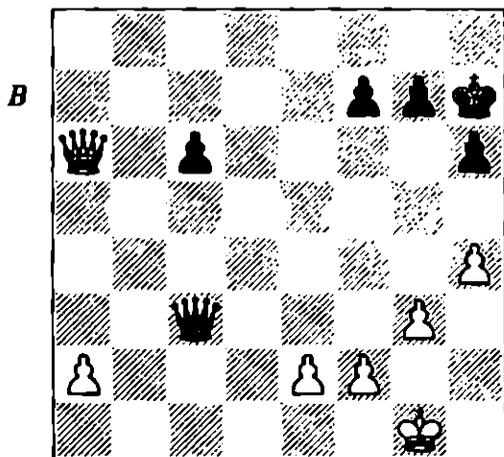
25 ♖xa6 (D)

White has emerged with a material lead of one pawn, which is significant in that Black has to avoid exchanging queens into a helpless pawn ending.

25 ... ♖c1+

26 ♕g2 c5

Black’s only practical chance is to push his own passed pawn in the hope of distracting White.



27 a4 c4  
 28 a5 c3  
 29 ♖d3+ g6  
 30 a6 c2  
 31 h5?

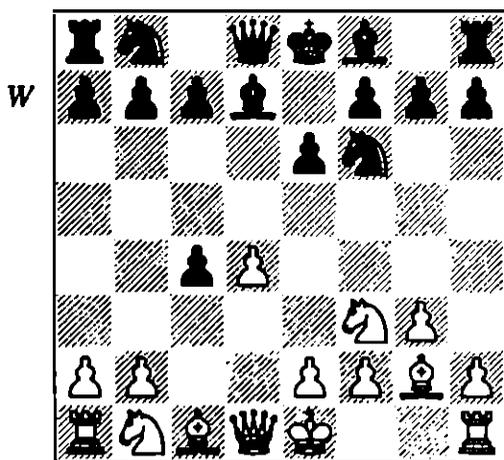
Unfortunately for White this tempting advance is only good

enough to draw here, but Flear could have ended a well-played game with a full point by first playing 31 ♖c4!. Only after 31...♔g8 (31...♔g7 32 ♖c3+ and 33 a7) does White advance the h-pawn: 32 h5! (threatening h5xg6 followed by ♖c4xf7+) 32...g5 (32...gxh5 comes to the same thing) 33 ♖c8+ ♔h7 (33...♔g7 34 ♖c3+ and 35 a7) 34 a7 and Black can resign because the clearing of the b1-h7 diagonal means that after, for example, 34...♖a1 White simply takes on c2 with check.

31 ... ♖d1!  
 32 hxg6+ fxg6  
 33 a7 c1♖

1/2-1/2

# 5 Open Catalan: 5...♖d7



This move has grown in popularity fairly recently after being championed by Korchnoi. The plan is simple – Black intends to challenge White’s light-squared bishop by ...♖d7-c6 instead of ...b7-b6 and ...♖c8-b7 (which can leave the c6-square weak).

I like the forcing 6 ♖e5, as 6 ♗c2 ♖c6 transposes to 5 ♗a4+ ♖d7 6 ♗xc4, a variation which I think presents Black with no problems, and 6 ♖bd2 ♖b4 (intending to meet 7 ♗c2 with 7...♖b5!?) offers Black excellent chances of equality.

6 ♖e5 requires White to forget about the sacrificed pawn for a while and to concentrate instead on chipping away at those light squares in Black’s camp which are weakened by the exchange of the d7-bishop. Combine this with a well-timed advance of the centre pawns, and Black may not be prepared for the opening up of the position.

Game 8  
Petursson – Zso.Polgar  
Århus 1993

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 ♖f6 4 g3 dxc4  
5 ♖g2

5 ... ♖d7

6 ♖e5 ♖c6

Black is passive after 6...♖c6 7  
♖xc4.

7 ♖xc6 ♖xc6

8 0-0 ♗d7

Defending c6 in anticipation of  
...b7-b5.

9 e3 ♖b8

The b8-square is a good place for the rook now that Black has decided to support her c4-pawn with ...b7-b5 (otherwise White recaptures and emerges with a better game thanks to the bishop pair and grip on the light squares). With the rook on a8 there may be problems with pins on the h1-a8 diagonal and on the a-file (after a2-a4 and ...a7-a6).

10 ♗e2 b5

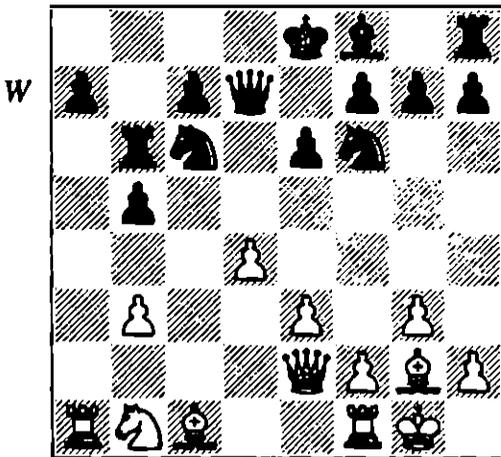
11 b3!

The only consistent follow-up. White concentrates on the weaknesses in Black’s queenside (a7, a6, b5, c6), confident that after Black’s next move, which is practically forced, the open lines will present White with the opportunity to regain the sacrificed pawn with a slight advantage.

11 ...            **cxb3**

Here we see another use of 9...♜b8 – the b5-pawn is defended.

12 **axb3**            ♜b6 (D)



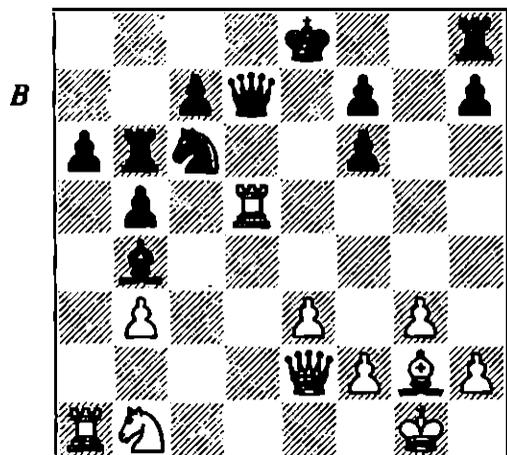
The point of Black's opening play. Black accepts that there is no sensible way to keep the extra pawn, so she sets about propping up her queenside before continuing with the development of the kingside pieces. The diagram position is important because 12...♜b6 threatens – albeit at the cost of a few moves – to leave Black's queenside intact after 13...a6. Consequently White must now make a crucial decision: part with the influential Catalan bishop in order to win back the pawn, or make the sacrifice permanent and rely on his more active pieces and lead in development to provide sufficient compensation.

As we shall see, White should emerge with an advantage whichever option he chooses (one is just more complicated than the other).

13 **♜d1**

In the majority of games at international level White has preferred to ignore the pawn in favour of a lasting

initiative. White's plan in the main game is based on expanding in the centre with e3-e4, trying to exploit Black's somewhat limited influence in this area of the board. The text simply offers the d-pawn extra protection in preparation for this advance (placing the rook on the same file as Black's queen may also prove useful), but 13 ♙b2 serves the same purpose and should transpose, since the moves ♜f1-d1, ♙c1-b2, ♘b1-c3 and e3-e4 all fit in with the overall strategy. After 13 ♙b2 Black can make use of the b4-square for the bishop, 13...♙b4, much as in the next note. This was first tried in the game Tukmakov-Sanchez Guirado, Benidorm 1993, and again White took the opportunity to push his d-pawn: 14 ♜d1 (14 ♙xc6 ♜xc6 15 ♜xa7 0-0 16 ♜c1 ♜d5 17 ♜c2 {17 ♜axc7 ♜xb3 with an equal position} 17...c5 18 dxc5 ♜c6 is only a little better for White according to Tukmakov) 14...a6 (14...0-0 transposes to Gleizerov-C.Horvath, above) 15 d5!? exd5 16 ♙xf6 gxf6 17 ♜xd5! (taking with the rook is more active than 17 ♙xd5, which is far from clear after 17...0-0) with this position (D):



The game continued 17...♚e6 18 ♖d2 ♜e7!? (18...♗e7 19 ♜d3! 0-0 20 ♜c1, and White has more than enough for a pawn) 19 ♜d1 ♜d8 20 ♚h5! (the queen does seem powerful on h5 after the doubling of Black's f-pawns; d5, f7, f6, f5 and d5 are all weaknesses) 20...♜bb8 21 ♗e4! ♜xd5 (21...♗e5 allows 22 ♖xf6!, e.g. 22...♜xf6 23 ♚h4+) 22 ♜xd5 ♜d8 23 ♜f5! (White should keep up the pressure on his opponent's damaged kingside; 23 ♖c5 ♔xc5 24 ♜xc5 ♗e5! 25 ♜xc7+ ♜d7 favours Black, who can concentrate on using his queenside pawn majority now that the e4-knight has gone). Now Black should grab the opportunity to get rid of the remaining pair of rooks with 23...♜d1+! 24 ♚xd1 ♚xf5, when 25 g4 ♚e6 26 ♖g3 leaves White sufficient play for the pawn; instead 23...♚xb3? 24 ♔f3! leaves Black's kingside seriously short of defence (24...♔c3 25 ♜c5).

After the alternative continuation 13 ♔xc6 ♚xc6 14 ♜xa7 the character of the game is completely different, with White content to exchange pieces and simplify to an ending in which Black's queenside pawns are targets (White's superior pawn structure also affords him good control of the centre).

a) In the game Krasenkov-Kelčević, Wattens 1989, which saw 13 ♔xc6 for the first time, Black eliminated White's unwelcome rook with 14...♜a6. After 15 ♜xa6 ♚xa6 16 ♔b2 Black's kingside was still undeveloped, while White was ready to generate more pressure on the other

side of the board. The game continued 16...♔e7 (very good for White is 16...♚b7 17 ♜c1 ♔d6 18 ♗a3! b4 19 ♖c4, when his centre pawns are about to spring into action with f2-f3 and e3-e4) 17 ♜c1 ♚b7 18 ♗a3! c6 (Krasenkov gives 18...♔xa3 19 ♔xa3 b4 20 ♔b2 0-0 21 f3 with a clear advantage to White) 19 ♚c2! ♜d7, with a difficult game for Black (e3-e4 is coming).

b) Black concentrated on development in Stohl-Zsu.Polgar, Rimavska Sobota 1991. After 14...♔d6 15 ♔a3 ♔xa3 (15...b4 merely hands over the c4-square) 16 ♗xa3 0-0 17 ♚c2 ♚xc2 18 ♖xc2 ♗d5 19 ♜fa1 ♜c6 20 ♗a3 ♖c3 21 ♜g2! g6 22 ♜c1 ♜b8 23 ♖bl b4 24 ♜a2! Black soon had to part with a pawn (25 ♜ac2 is threatened, and 24...♗xa2 25 ♜xc6 ♜b7 26 ♜c2 ♜a7 27 ♜f3 does not help Black).

Although 13 ♔xc6 gives White reasonable chances to press for the full point, keeping the light-squared bishop on the board and retaining the tension is more appealing to most players as Black must tread carefully.

13 ... a6

In Gleizerov-C.Horvath, Budapest 1989, Black played 13...♔b4 with the idea of depriving White of extra influence in the centre by removing the knight should it come to c3. However, by opening lines with a timely d4-d5 it is White who strikes first in the struggle for the centre, as was demonstrated in the game: 14 ♔b2 0-0 15 d5!? exd5 (15...♖xd5 16 e4) 16 ♔xf6 gxf6 17 ♜xd5 ♚e6 18 ♚h5! and White's domination of the

light squares allowed him to operate almost unchallenged.

14 ♖c3

If 14 ♙b2 then 14...♙e7 transposes after 15 ♖c3 (15 d5? exd5 16 ♙xf6 ♙xf6), while 14...♙b4 15 d5!? was dealt with in the previous note (Tukmakov-Sanchez Guirado).

14 ... ♙e7

15 ♙b2

15 d5?! is inaccurate here – after 15...exd5 16 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 17 ♖xd5 (17 ♙xd5 ♙f6!) 17...♗e6 Black's kingside pawns are intact, so White has little to show for the sacrificed pawn.

15 ... ♖b4

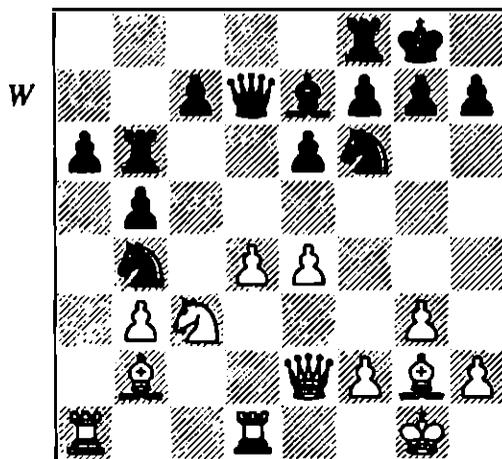
Putting the knight on a reasonable outpost and adding support to the important d5-square. 15...0-0 16 e4 transposes to J.Horvath-Haba, Prague 1989. Then 16...♖b4 brings us back to the main game, but Black tried 16...♖e8. After 17 e5 ♖d5 18 ♖xd5 exd5 19 f4 ♖b4 20 ♖dc1 ♖d8 21 ♙f3! White's space advantage, mobile kingside pawn majority and active pieces were beginning to tell (♙f3-g4 is threatened). Black's problems in this game were caused by his having to recapture on d5 with the e-pawn – hence 15...♖b4, which keeps an eye on a possible d4-d5 and leaves Black ready to occupy the d5-square in the event of e4-e5.

16 e4

With every piece now in play the next logical step for White is to expand in the centre.

16 ... 0-0 (D)

The middlegame phase has begun, so it is time to make some sort



of evaluation of the position in order to establish whether White has enough compensation for a pawn. A brief scan of the pawn configurations points to White's formidable centre pawns, which control c5, d5 and e5 and also threaten to enter enemy territory if the opportunity arises (at the moment it is d4-d5, opening lines, which looks more dangerous than e4-e5). White's pieces, too, are well-placed – one rook has a clear view of the a6-pawn, the other supports the menacing d-pawn, the bishops have excellent prospects on the long diagonals (the light-squared bishop will never even be challenged) and the queen and knight control some key squares.

Black does not enjoy such space and activity, but she does still have an extra pawn. There are two 'ideal' strategies for the defender in situations such as this: weather the storm and emerge with the material lead intact, or find the right moment to return the pawn in the hope of nullifying the aggressor's initiative.

Theoretically, perhaps, the game is balanced, but the defensive task tends to be harder to carry out in

practice. Incidentally, the diagram position is well-known, and White's next is new.

### 17 ♗h3

In Smejkal-Zsu.Polgar, Polanica Zdroj 1991, White charged his king-side pawns forward. This ultra-aggressive plan is rather loosening, and after 17 h4 ♖a8 (Black can find counterplay only on the queenside) 18 g4 ♕e8 19 g5 a5 20 ♗h3 – with the idea of d4-d5 – the game was becoming complex.

The committal 17 d5!?! is best answered by 17...e5 – when the partly closed centre inhibits White's forces – rather than 17...exd5?! 18 e5. However, Petursson's 17 f4!?! is a logical alternative, clamping down on the centre and ruling out ...e6-e5 as a reply to d4-d5.

With the text White gives the d4-d5 thrust more punch by pinning the e6-pawn to Black's queen.

### 17 ... ♔e8?!

A perfectly understandable reaction considering the pressure the queen is coming under on the d-file and the h3-c8 diagonal. Black telegraphs her intention to break out with ...c7-c5. Nevertheless, spending much of the game doomed to relative passivity is often obligatory after accepting a sacrifice or holding on to an extra pawn, though it is true that such a course is not to everyone's taste.

Petursson has suggested 17...c6 as a possible improvement. Then White could consider 18 ♗c1!?! with the idea of bringing the bishop round to e3 to practically force the retreat of

the b6-rook, which in turn undermines the defence of the a-pawn. Another option is to continue along the same lines of the game with 18 ♖a2 ♕xa2 19 ♖xa2, again giving Black no respite in view of the pressure down the a-file. While these continuations are uncomfortable for Black, White must try to derive a definite advantage from his initiative.

### 18 ♖a2

Black's b4-knight protects the a-pawn and the d5-square, so the time has come for it to be eliminated.

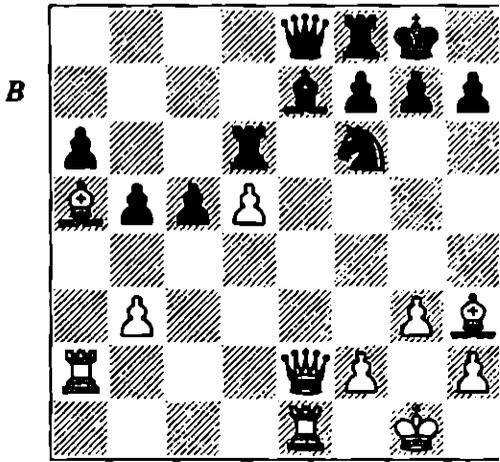
18 ...	♕d7
19 ♗c3	♕xa2
20 ♖xa2	c5?

All according to plan. On the surface this pawn break is the most natural choice available – Black has a queenside pawn majority – but it is doomed thanks to the layout of the pieces. Unfortunately for Black the queen causes her more problems on e8 than it would have done on d7.

The other 'obvious' candidate is 20...c6, which doubles Black's influence on the d5-square but still does nothing to prevent the thematic push. Then after 21 d5! cxd5 22 exd5 Black should accept that White has the better game and play 22...♕b8 (Petursson), instead of 22...exd5? 23 ♖e1!, etc.

21 d5	exd5
22 exd5	♕f6
23 ♗a5	♖d6
24 ♖e1!! (D)	

White has made sure that Black's extra queenside pawn has no bearing on the game whatsoever. The real battle is taking place in the middle of



the board. White's major pieces are ready to dominate the centre files and his bishops control the key squares d7 and d8, and the dark-squared bishop threatens to come to c7 to evict the blocking rook. This gives the passed d-pawn even more significance, and Black is not helped by being so cramped. All these ingredients combine to create an initiative of decisive proportions.

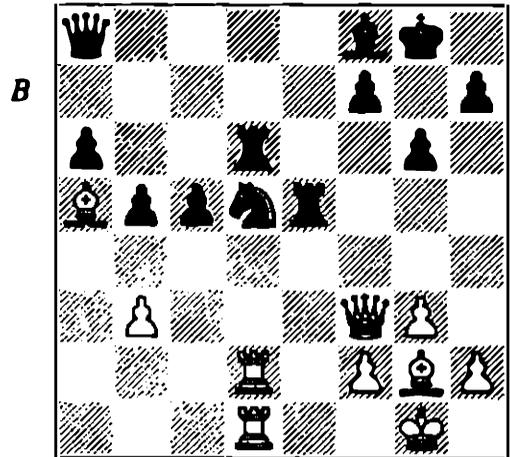
24 ... ♘xd5

24...♗b8 fails to 25 ♗xe7 ♖e8 26 ♙c7!, when White wins too much material. Trying to untangle with 24...♙d8 only leads to Black being forced to respond to 25 ♗f3 with 25...♙e7. Then White has 26 ♙c7! ♖xd5 27 ♖ae2 with a winning position. With this in mind, Black grabs the potentially game-winning pawn in the hope of being able to weather the storm (at least White cannot afford to slip now that he is two pawns down).

25 ♖d2 b4

Isolating the dark-squared bishop, although White should be quite content to leave it on a5 anyway. Critical is 25...♗a8, which is best answered with 26 ♗e5!, tying down Black's

bishop and threatening to switch to the d-file with ♖e1-d1 to create a new, decisive pin. Then could follow 26...♖e8 27 ♖ed1 ♙f8 28 ♗f5 g6 29 ♗f3 ♖e5 30 ♙g2 (D).



Black's knight is the victim of two deadly pins, from which there is no escape. Chasing the queen away with 30...♖f5 31 ♗e4 ♖e6 32 ♗c2 ♖d6 is futile in view of 33 ♖xd5! ♖fxd5 34 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 35 ♗e2!, when the a5-bishop prevents Black from lifting the pin, for example 35...c4 36 bxc4 bxc4 37 ♗f3 c3 38 ♙xc3 ♗c8 (38...♗c6 39 ♙d2) 39 ♗f6, etc.

Another try is 25...♗c6. Again Black lifts the pin on the e-file only to walk into another: 26 ♙g2! ♙f6 (26...♙d8 27 ♙xd8 ♖dxd8 28 ♗d1) 27 ♖xd5! ♖xd5 28 ♗f3 ♙d8 29 ♙c3.

26 ♗f3 ♗c6  
27 ♙g2 ♖e6  
28 ♗d1!

Not 28 ♖ed1? ♗b5. Dropping the other rook back to d1, 28 ♖dd1, is possible but not as strong as the text – after 28...♙d8 29 ♙xd8 ♖xd8 30 ♖e3! (30 ♖e2? ♖de8! 31 ♖ed2 ♗e7) 30...c4! (30...♖ed6 31 ♖ed3,

for example 31...♗e7? 32 ♖xd6  
 ♖xd6 33 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 34 ♗a8+) 31  
 bxc4 ♗xc4 32 ♖ed3 White is clearly  
 better but not necessarily winning.

28 ... ♗b5

After 28...♖xe1+ 29 ♗xe1 ♗e6  
 30 ♖e2 ♗d6 31 ♔xd5 (31 ♖e5 ♗f4)  
 31...♗xd5 32 ♖xe7 ♗xb3 33 ♔b6  
 ♗c4 34 ♖e5 White is still in control.

29 ♔xd5 ♗xa5

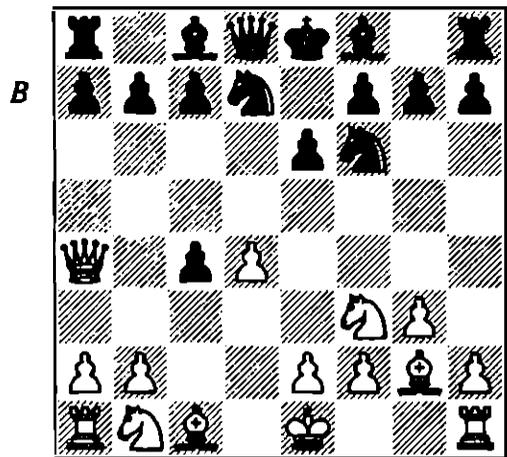
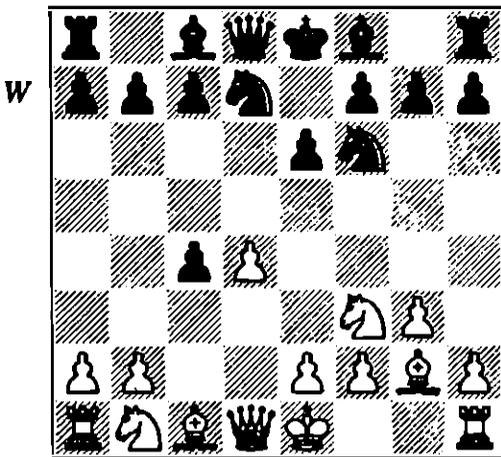
30 ♔xe6 fxe6

31 ♖d7! ♔f6

32 ♗d6!

By maintaining the momentum of  
 the initiative White secures the win.  
 Black has two pawns for the ex-  
 change but a weak back rank and a  
 poorly positioned queen leave her  
 king too vulnerable. The remaining  
 moves were: 32...e5 33 ♖c7! ♗a2 34  
 ♗e6+ ♔h8 35 ♖c8 ♔d8 36 ♗f7!  
 1-0.

# 6 Open Catalan: 5...♞bd7



White can answer this move with 6 0-0, 6 ♖bd2 or 6 ♜a4. I recommend 6 ♜a4, aiming to tidy up in the centre by activating the queen, after which White can play to disrupt his opponent's development and generate some pressure on the queenside. The Catalan bishop also has an important role to play.

## Game 9 Monin-Vul Kecskemet 1992

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♗g2  
dxc4 5 ♘f3

5 ... ♞bd7

6 ♜a4 (D)

6 ... a6

The most appropriate reply, fighting for territory on the queenside and testing the efficacy of White's game-plan in this area of the board.

a) The main alternative is 6...♗e7, which is perfectly playable but does

not address the more pressing matters on the queenside. White can exploit his opponent's 'wasted' tempo on the other flank to prevent the ...b7-b5 advance – 7 ♜xc4 0-0 8 0-0 and now:

a1) After 8...♞a6 White has 9 ♜c2!, allowing him to meet 9...b5 with 10 ♘e5.

a11) 9...♞a7 was played in the game Nikolaevsky-Anikaev, Moscow 1972, which saw Black go to great lengths to push his b-pawn. However, 10 ♞d1 b6 11 ♘e5 ♖b8 12 ♘c3 ♘fd7 13 ♘c4 b5 14 ♘d2 ♗b7 15 e4 c5 16 d5 gave White the better game.

a12) 9...c5 makes more sense, e.g. 10 ♞d1 ♞a7 11 ♘c3 b5 12 a4 b4 13 ♘e5! ♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♘d7 15 ♘e4 and White's space advantage is significant, Larsen-Prins, Moscow OL 1956.

a2) The immediate 8...c5 is occasionally seen. Again 9 ♞d1 is the

thematic response, bringing the rook to the d-file now that an exchange of the centre pawns is practically inevitable. 9...♗b6 (9...a6 10 ♗c2 leads us back to 'a2', and 9...cxd4 does not help, for example 10 ♖xd4 ♗b6 11 ♖c3 ♗b4 12 ♗xb4 ♙xb4 13 ♖a4, when Black is still not worry-free in a cramped queenless middlegame) 10 ♖c3 a6 11 e4 cxd4 12 ♖xd4 ♖e5 13 ♗e2 ♙d7 14 ♖b3 ♞fd8 15 ♙e3 ♗c7 16 ♞ac1, etc., Grønn-H.Hunt, Gausdal 1992.

a3) 8...♞b8 supports the ...b7-b5 thrust while simultaneously taking the rook off the long diagonal. Of course White should remain as uncompromising as possible. Thus 9 ♖c3 a6 10 a4! is very good for White, as Black will have difficulties completing his development and the rook may be just as poorly placed on the h2-b8 diagonal if Black wants to push his c-pawn at some stage.

b) With 6...c6 Black surrenders the queenside in order to concentrate on freeing himself with ...e6-e5. There is no need for White to try to prevent this: after 7 ♗xc4 ♙d6 (7...e5? fails to 8 dxe5 ♖xe5 9 ♖xe5 ♗a5+ 10 ♖c3 ♗xe5 11 ♙xc6+) 8 0-0 e5, 9 ♖c3 0-0 10 ♞d1 ♗e7 11 ♗b3 exd4 12 ♖xd4 is one route to advantage for White, while 9 ♗c2 ♗e7 10 ♖c3 0-0 11 ♞d1 h6 12 e4 ♞e8 13 h3 a5 14 ♙e3 is another.

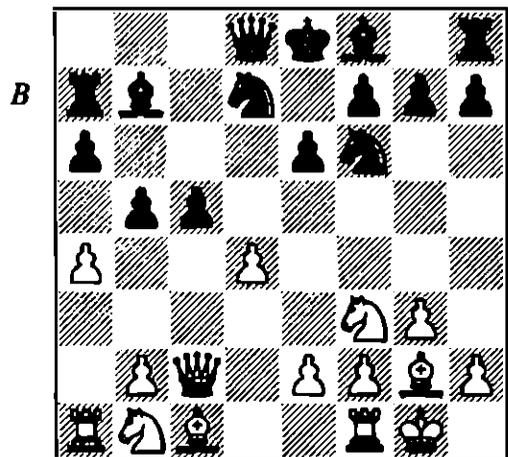
7 ♗xc4            b5  
8 ♗c6

Certainly the most uncompromising reply to the attack on the queen. Retreating to any of the other three squares makes life considerably

easier for Black, who then has no problems with the thematic ...c7-c5 thrust. With the text White stubbornly blockades the c-pawn with his busy queen and puts the question to Black's rook.

8 ...                    ♞b8

8...♞a7 is seen far less frequently, but with best play White must settle for just a slight edge. The point is that 9 ♙f4 can be met with 9...♙b7, when it is not possible for White to capture on c7 as 10 ♗xc7? loses a piece to 10...♗xc7 11 ♙xc7 ♙xf3. Instead the queen must retreat, when 10...c5 gives Black an easy game. White does better with the immediate 9 ♗c2 (or 9 0-0 ♙b7 10 ♗c2) 9...♙b7 10 0-0, content with the fact that the rook is rather awkwardly placed on a7. After 10...c5 11 a4! (D) Black has three ways to deal with the pressure on the a-file:



a) 11...♗a8 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♞xa7 ♗xa7 14 ♖a3 favours White, who can still chip away at Black's queenside (...b5-b4 hands over the useful c4-square).

b) Against 11...♗b6 White can transpose to 'a' with 12 axb5 axb5

13 ♖xa7, or try instead Neishtadt's 12 ♕e3, lining up on the enemy queen and rook. After 12...♗d5 13 dxc5!, the natural 13...♗xe3? begins a series of exchanges from which White emerges with a won position: 14 cxb6! ♗xc2 15 bxa7 ♗xa1 16 ♗e5! ♕xg2 17 ♖xg2 ♗b6 18 a5 ♗a8 19 ♖c1!, etc. This leaves 13...♕xc5 14 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 (14...♗xc5? 15 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 16 axb5, etc.) with a slight pull for White.

c) In S.Garcia-Sveshnikov, Sochi 1974, Black hit the queen before advancing the b-pawn: 11...♕e4 12 ♗d1 b4 13 dxc5 ♗a8 (13...♕xc5 improves, when 14 ♗bd2 followed by attacking the other bishop with ♗d2-b3 seems like White's best chance of retaining an edge) 14 ♕g5 ♕xc5 15 ♗bd2 ♕d5 16 ♖c1. Black, still playing without his king's rook, continues to strive for equality, but the game took a turn for the worse for Black after 16...♗e4? (16...♖c7) 17 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 18 ♖xc5! ♗xc5 19 ♗d6 ♗b3 20 ♖d1 f6 21 ♕e3 ♖e7 22 ♕b6 ♖f7 23 ♗xb4. Also bad for Black is the ostensibly safe 16...♕e7, which invites 17 e4!, e.g. 17...♗xe4 18 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 19 ♕xe7 ♖xe7 20 ♗d4! and White is clearly better, or 17...♕c6 (17...♕b7 18 ♕e3 leaves Black regretting putting the rook on a7) 18 ♗c2 (18...♖c7 19 ♗d4 ♗b8 20 ♕f4).

Returning to the main game, 8...♖b8 simply feels like the correct move. However, even on b8 the rook is not completely out of harm's way.

9 ♕f4!

Again White inconveniences his opponent, this time by attacking the

c-pawn and therefore forcing some kind of concession from Black. The lifeless 9 0-0 merely transposes to a position which is thought to be acceptable to Black after 9...♕b7 10 ♗c2 c5. In J.Benjamin-A.V.Ivanov, New York 1994, White tried 9 ♕g5, and the brief flurry 9...♕b7 10 ♕xf6 ♕b4+ 11 ♗bd2 ♗xf6 12 ♗xc7 ♕xf3 was followed by the players splitting the point.

9 ... ♗d5

Forced.

10 ♕g5 ♕e7

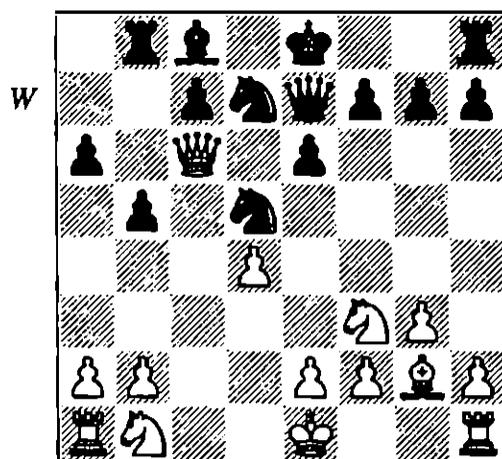
Practically forced, as 10...♗e7 obstructs the f8-bishop and 10...♗f6 loses a whole tempo.

11 ♕xe7

White is happy to make this exchange, which removes a potentially useful defender and diverts the black queen from the defence of the c-pawn – a factor which will soon be significant.

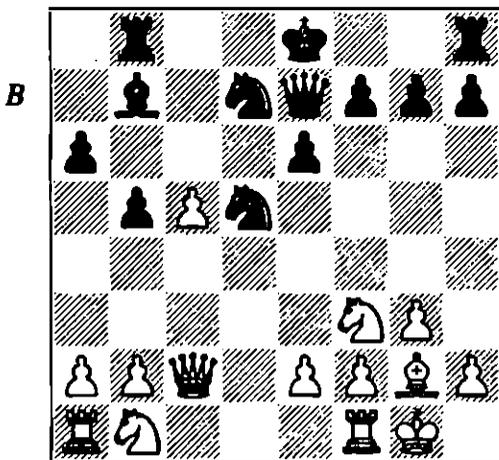
11 ... ♗xe7 (D)

11...♗xe7 12 ♗c2 still leaves Black with problems on the queen-side because he has no time for ...c7-c5 and White will soon clamp down on the c5-square with ♗b1-d2-b3.



## 12 ♟c3!?

A theoretical novelty aimed to improve upon 12 0-0, which tends to lead to an ending in which White's winning chances are minimal and Black can look forward to no more than a draw. Nevertheless, such a continuation will appeal to fans of those Catalan endings which feature symmetrical pawn structures. Moreover, Serper's spoiler (see the note to 12...♟b4) may well take the sting out of 12 ♟c3!?, so the tried and tested 12 0-0 could eventually prove to be the best move after all. After 12...♟b7 13 ♜c2 c5 14 dxc5 (D) we have:



a) 14...♜xc5 was seen in Abramović-Marjanović, Yugoslav Ch 1994, which went 15 ♜xc5 ♟xc5 16 ♜c1 ♜c8 17 ♟e1! with a slight edge to White thanks to the pin on the h1-a8 diagonal. After 17...♟e7 18 ♟d2 ♜hd8 19 ♟e4 ♟xe4 20 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 21 ♟xe4 f5?! 22 ♟g2 a5 23 f4 ♜c7 24 ♟f2 h6 25 a3 g5 26 ♟d3 Black's self-inflicted weakness on e5 had made matters worse.

b) Black can also elect to wait before recapturing on c5, improving

the position of his rook first with 14...♜c8. This was first seen in Andersson-Sunye Neto, Brazil 1981.

b1) The game continued 15 ♟bd2 ♟xc5 16 ♜fc1 (the alternative 16 ♜ac1 makes sense), when the position was already equal according to Kovačević. After 16...0-0 17 ♟e1 ♜fd8 18 ♜b1 Black could have played 18...♟e3 19 ♟xb7 ♜xb7 20 ♟df3 ♟g4 with a slight edge. Instead there followed 18...♜c7 19 ♟e4 ♜dc8 20 ♟xc5 ♜xc5 21 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 with an even game. However, Black then made the mistake of assuming that exchanges would automatically lead to a draw, only to be taught an unpleasant lesson by the king of endings.

b2) Twelve years after the above game White managed to breathe new life into the variation in Abramović-Vujošević, Yugoslavia 1993, when he produced 15 b4!?, an interesting new move which certainly kept Black on his toes: 15...♟xb4 (the tempting 15...♜f6 runs into 16 ♟bd2 ♟xb4 17 ♜b3 ♟d5 18 ♟e4) 16 ♜b2 ♟d5 17 ♜xg7 ♜f6 18 ♜xf6 ♟5xf6! 19 a4! ♜xc5 (19...b4 20 ♟bd2, when 20...♟xc5 21 a5! and 20...♜xc5 21 ♜fb1 a5 22 ♟b3 are both clearly better for White) 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♟bd2 0-0! 22 ♜fb1 ♟xf3 23 ♟xf3 ♟e5 24 ♟g2 ♜b8 and Black must still be careful. White now quickened the pace with 25 ♟b3 ♜c4 26 ♟a5 ♜c2 27 f4 ♟c4 28 ♟c6 ♜b6 29 ♟d4 ♜d2 30 ♟xb5 ♜xe2 31 ♟f1 ♜e4 32 ♟d3, but 32...♟d2! 33 ♜b2 ♟f3+ 34 ♟f2 ♟xh2 35 ♟g2 ♟hg4 36 ♟xe4 ♟xe4 just about kept Black's head above

water, and a dozen moves later the game was drawn after White impatiently tried to exploit his material lead too soon.

Monin's enterprising 12 ♟c3 introduces some interesting possibilities. White's entire strategy thus far has been to trouble his opponent's c-pawn. By undermining its defence – first with ♟c1-f4-g5xe7 and now with a challenge on the d5-knight – White intends to capture the pawn, when the queen on c7 will once again pressure Black's queen's rook.

12 ... ♟b4

The most tempting, interesting and consequently fashionable continuation. Still, White's last move 'closed' the c-file, permitting Black to avoid all the fun by forcing an exchange of queens with 12...♟b7 13 ♟xd5 ♟xc6 14 ♟xe7 ♟xe7, offering good prospects of equality according to Serper:

a) In his notes Vul gave 15 ♟c1 as slightly better for White, and at first glance White's continued pressure on the c-file does look uncomfortable for the second player. Later this assessment was put to the test in Gleizerov-Serper, Moscow 1992. After 15...♟b6 16 0-0 (16 ♟d2 is fine for Black after both 16...♟d8! followed by ...e6-e5, and 16...♟c8!? followed by 17...♟xf3 18 ♟xf3 ♟d6 and ...c7-c5 – Serper) 16...♟c8 17 ♟g5! (clamping down on c5 with 17 b4 invites 17...a5!? or 17...♟d5 18 a3 a5!) 17...♟xg2 18 ♟xg2 ♟d6! 19 e3?! (19 ♟fd1 c5 is equal) 19...c5 20 dxc5 ♟d5! Black had a slight advantage which was eventually

converted. Instead of White's odd 17th move the more appropriate 17 ♟d2 is worth investigating. The knight is aiming for b3, so 17...♟xg2 18 ♟xg2 c5 is forced, when 19 dxc5 ♟xc5 20 ♟b3 ♟xc1 21 ♟xc1 gives White a tiny edge in view of his slightly more active pieces.

b) 15 0-0 was tried in Wojtkiewicz-Kaidanov, New York 1993, the point being to bring the king's rook to c1 in order to leave the other to support the a2-a4 advance. Then the thematic b2-b4 – which failed in 'a' – has more impact as White is ready to meet the undermining ...a6-a5 with b4xa5 followed by a2-a4. No doubt with this in mind, Kaidanov reacted immediately: 15...♟xf3 16 ♟xf3 c5 17 dxc5 ♟xc5 18 ♟fc1 ♟hc8 19 ♟c2 ♟d7 20 ♟ac1 ♟b6. Now 21 ♟xc8 (21 ♟c7+ ♟d8!) 21...♟xc8 22 ♟xc8 ♟xc8 23 ♟b7 allowed White to grab a pawn in return for the bishop being trapped after 23...♟d6 24 ♟xa6 ♟d7, etc. Six moves later a draw was agreed: 25 b3 ♟c6 26 a4 ♟b6 27 ♟xb5 ♟xb5 28 axb5 ♟xb5 29 ♟g2 ♟b4 30 ♟f3 ♟xb3 1/2-1/2.

Incidentally 12...♟xc3 13 ♟xc3 is clearly better for White in view of the weaknesses on c6 and c7.

13 ♟xc7!

Far from obvious. White intends to follow up the coming sacrifice of a rook by bringing his knight to e5, exerting pressure on the b8-rook and on Black's queenside in general. 13 ♟e4 ♟b7 14 ♟b1 achieves nothing more than equality.

13 ... ♟c2+

14 ♟d1!

Believe it or not, 14 ♖d2? loses. After 14...♗xa1 15 ♖e5 (15 ♜xa1 is too slow) 15...♜b4! White is in trouble:

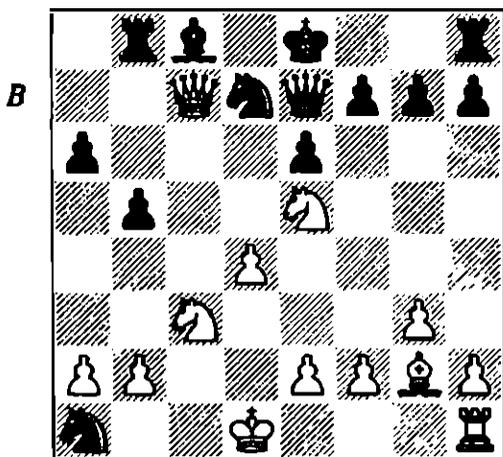
a) 16 ♖xd7 ♜xb2+ 17 ♖d3 ♜c2+ 18 ♖e3 ♙xd7 19 ♜xb8+ ♖e7 20 ♜c7 (20 ♜xh8 ♜xc3+ 21 ♖f4 ♜xd4+) 20...♜c8.

b) 16 ♖c1 0-0 17 ♖xd7 ♙xd7 18 ♜xd7 ♜fd8 19 ♜a7 ♜bc8.

c) 16 ♖c6 ♜xb2+ 17 ♖d3 ♜c2+ 18 ♖e3 ♜xc3+ 19 ♖f4 ♜d2+.

With the king on d1 White deprives his opponent of ...♜(e7-b4)xb2+.

14 ... ♗xa1  
15 ♖e5! (D)



Black has an extra rook in the diagram position, but only one of the several moves available to him keeps him in the game.

15 ... ♜d8!

Black's most accurate defence involves setting himself up for two knight forks!

a) Now 15...♜b4 loses on the spot to 16 ♖c6, threatening both 17 ♜d8# and 17 ♖xb4.

b) 15...f6 16 ♖c6 and after the reply 16...♜f8 (16...♜f7 allows 17

♜d8#) Black's king must remain in the centre.

c) 15...f5 16 ♖xd7! ♙xd7 (or 16...♜xd7 17 ♙c6) 17 ♜xb8+ ♜d8 18 ♜xd8+ ♖xd8 19 ♖c1, etc.

d) 15...b4 16 ♖e4 0-0 17 ♖c6 ♜e8 18 ♖d6.

e) 15...0-0 16 ♖c6 ♜f6 (16...♜e8 17 ♖xb8 b4 18 ♖xd7 bxc3 19 bxc3 with ♖d1-d2 coming) 17 ♖e4 ♜h6 18 ♖xb8.

f) 15...♖xe5 16 ♜xb8 0-0 (if 16...♜d7 17 ♜xe5 b4, then 18 ♖d2! bxc3+ 19 bxc3) 17 ♜xe5 b4 18 ♖d5 ♜d7 19 ♖d2! with a clear advantage.

16 ♜xd8+ ♖xd8  
17 ♖c6+!

Sometimes it is better not to be presented with a couple of similar avenues from which to choose. In this case White has made the correct decision in going for the queen's rook. Less accurate is 17 ♖xf7+?! ♖e7 18 ♖xh8, e.g. 18...b4 19 ♖a4 b3 20 a3 ♖c2 21 e3 ♙b7 22 ♙xb7 ♜xb7 23 ♖d2 ♜c7! (preventing 24 ♖c3), and now White has a knight trapped in enemy territory.

17 ... ♖c7  
18 ♖xb8 ♖xb8

Two other moves have been played in high-level games:

a) Black ignored the invading knight altogether in Wojtkiewicz-S.Ivanov, Slupsk 1992, but this was unnecessarily risky: 18...♖b6?! 19 ♖c6 ♙b7 20 d5 ♙xc6 21 dxc6 b4 22 ♖e4 b3 23 ♖c5, and Black still faced difficulties liberating his knight – around which the rest of the game revolved. The way in which White

refused to give his opponent even the slightest respite is worth further study. The game continued 23...♔d6 24 ♖b7+ ♔c7 25 ♔d2 ♖c2 26 ♔c3 ♖d5+ 27 ♔xd5 exd5 28 ♖c5! a5 29 ♖xb3 ♖b4 30 ♖xa5 ♖xa2+ 31 ♔b3 ♖a8 32 ♖a1 ♖xa5 33 ♖xa2 ♖b5+ 34 ♔c3 ♔xc6 35 ♖a7 d4+ 36 ♔xd4 ♖xb2 37 ♖xf7 ♖xe2 38 ♖xg7 h5 39 ♖h7 1-0.

b) More recently, in the game Illescas-Onishchuk, Wijk aan Zee 1997, Black elected to take on b8 with his knight, perhaps in order to clear the d-file for the rook to hit the d4-pawn. However, on b8 the knight is then two moves away from the useful outpost on b6 (which gives Black more control over the d5-square and introduces the possibility of ...♖b6-c4). After 18...♖xb8 19 ♔d2 ♖d8 20 e3 e5 21 d5 f5 22 ♖xa1 e4 23 ♖c1 ♔d6 24 f3 exf3 25 ♔xf3 White had managed to keep the extra pawn, for which there was no compensation.

Apart from enabling Black to add more support to the d5-square, the text also removes the king from the c-file in anticipation of a time-gaining check from White's rook.

19 ♔d2 ♖b6  
20 ♖xa1 b4!

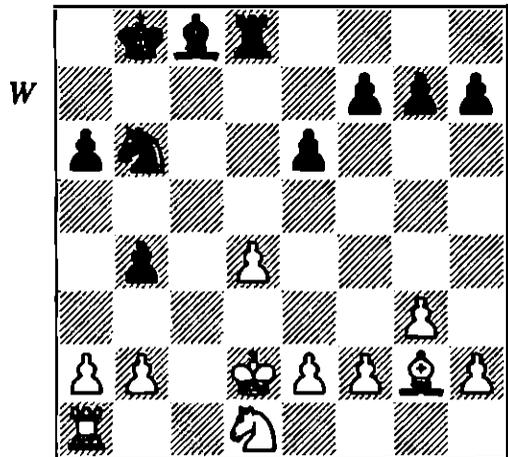
The hasty 20...♖d8? would be a mistake Black can ill afford to make while he is still a pawn down. After 21 e3 White's option to drop his knight back to e2 leaves him with a clear advantage.

21 ♖d1

The only possibility to try for an edge since the otherwise desirable

21 ♖e4 invites 21...♔b7, creating an uncomfortable pin (threatening 22...f5) which guarantees Black an equal position in view of 22 f3 ♖c4+ or 22 ♔f3 ♖d8, etc.

21 ... ♖d8 (D)



22 ♔e3?

Tantamount to a draw offer. There is still considerable life in the game if White exploits the fact that he can choose the circumstances in which the pawn – which cannot be defended – is returned. 22 e3 seems to offer as little as the text after 22...e5, but with 23 b3! exd4 24 e4 White retains the advantage. Then the d-pawn is a weakness rather than a strength, isolated from Black's forces and vulnerable to attack. White's newly created kingside pawn majority is free to advance and his knight can return to the game via b2 (or f2). White's lead is by no means decisive after 22 e3, but it is a definite and promising lead nevertheless. Indeed, Black's defensive task is more arduous here than in the endings arising from the earlier queen exchange prompted by 12...♔b7.

22 ... ♖c4+

23 ♔d3 ♞e5+  
 24 ♔c2

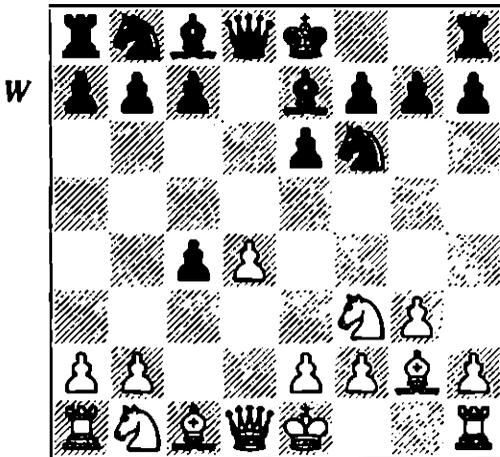
It is possible that when White played 22 ♔e3 he overlooked that the aggressive 24 ♔e4 runs into 24...♞c6 25 e3 ♞xd4! 26 exd4 ♙b7+. As it is, White's error has resulted in his extra pawn being returned without Black having to make

a concession of any kind. Consequently the position is level.

The remaining moves were:

24...♞xd4 25 a3 bxa3 26 ♞xa3 ♙b7 27 ♞b3 ♞d7 28 f4 ♞c7+ 29 ♞c3 ♞g4 30 ♙xb7 ♞xb7 31 ♞xb7+ ♔xb7 32 ♞e4 ♞xh2 33 ♞d6+ ♔c6 34 ♞xf7 ♞f1 35 ♔d3 ♞xg3 36 ♞g5 ♔d6 37 ♞xh7 e5 38 e3 1/2-1/2.

# 7 5...♞e7: Introduction and 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♞c2 a6 8 a4



With 5...♞e7 Black is satisfied with completing the development of his kingside before turning his attentions to the other flank. After 6 0-0 0-0 White has many moves – 7 ♞c2, 7 ♘e5, 7 ♘a3, 7 ♘bd2, etc. In this book we concentrate on the sensible 7 ♞c2, which is considered to be the main line. Note that Black often plays 4...♞e7 5 ♞g2 0-0 6 0-0, and only then captures with 6...dxc4.

After 7 ♞c2 Black almost always plays 7...a6 with the intention of following up with ...b7-b5. Before investigating how the game develops after 8 a4 and 8 ♞xc4, here is a brief round-up of Black's 7th move alternatives:

a) 7...b5? 8 a4 is something to avoid. After 8...c6 9 axb5 Black cannot recapture as 9...cxb5? 10 ♘g5 leaves him unable to block the long diagonal with 10...♘d5 due to the

mate on h7. Thus 8...bxa4 is best, but then Black has nothing to compensate for the weak queenside pawns.

b) 7...c5 aims to liquidate the centre pawns and seek equality, but White is guaranteed a comfortable advantage despite the symmetry of the resulting positions.

b1) 8 ♞xc4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 e5 10 ♘b3 ♘c6 11 ♞e3 ♞e6 12 ♞b5! gives White a typical pull.

b2) 8 dxc5 invites an exchange of queens: 8...♞c7 (8...♞xc5 9 ♞xc4 ♞e7 {9...♞c7 10 ♞e3} 10 ♞f4 ♘c6 11 ♘e5 and White has the more active pieces) 9 ♞xc4 (9 ♘a3 is possible, intending to take on c4 with the knight) 9...♞xc5 10 ♞xc5 ♞xc5, and Black has not necessarily helped himself, e.g. 11 ♘e5 ♘bd7 12 ♘d3 ♞b6/e7 13 ♘c3, or 11 a3 ♘c6 12 b4 ♞e7 13 ♞b2 ♞d7 14 ♘bd2 ♞ac8 15 ♞ac1 ♞fd8 16 ♘b3, Khodos-Krogius, USSR 1967, with a difficult queenless middlegame for Black in both cases.

c) 7...♘bd7 8 ♞xc4 transposes to 'a' in the note to Black's 6th move, Monin-Vul, Game 9.

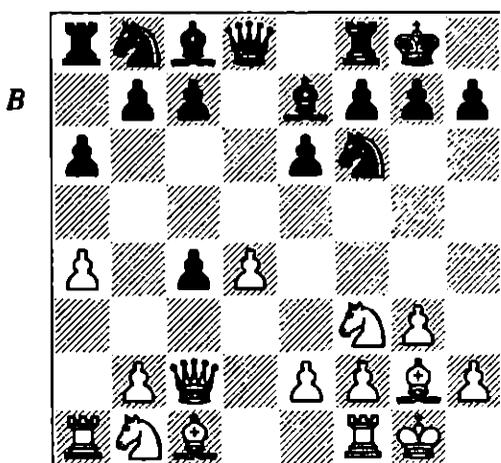
Returning to the main line, White can prevent an immediate ...b7-b5 with 8 a4, or ignore/provoke the 'threat' and simply take on c4. Both courses are completely sound, and as

White's decision is purely a matter of taste, I cover both moves in detail in this book. The problem with a2-a4 is the subsequent weakness of the b4-square, while 8 ♜xc4 (see next chapter) allows Black to expand on the queenside with gain of time.

In this chapter we deal with 8 a4, when Black has 8... ♖d7 (Games 10 and 11), 8... ♘c6 (Game 12) and 8...c5 (Game 13).

Game 10  
Khalifman – Lautier  
Biel IZ 1993

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3  
4 ... ♖e7  
5 ♖g2 0-0  
6 0-0 dxc4  
7 ♜c2 a6  
8 a4 (D)



8 ... ♖d7  
9 ♜xc4 ♖c6  
10 ♖g5 ♖d5

Black finally brings his light-squared bishop into the heart of the board, freeing the c-pawn in the process.

11 ♜d3!

After 11 ♜c2 ♖e4 Black should be able to achieve equality or enough counterplay, depending on where the white queen runs to and how Black subsequently reacts:

a) 12 ♜c1!? is best answered by 12... ♘c6 (rather than 12...c5?! 13 dxc5! ♘bd7 14 ♘c3! which gives White a comfortable advantage). Kotronias then gives 13 e3 ♖b4!? 14 ♘c3 ♖xc3 15 bxc3 ♜d5 16 c4 ♜f5 17 ♖f4 h6 with a complex position.

b) Following 12 ♜d1, on the other hand, 12...c5 does lead to an equal game after either 13 dxc5 ♖xc5 14 ♘c3 ♖c6 (Polugaevsky-Geller, Leningrad 1977) or 13 ♘bd2 ♖c6 14 dxc5 ♖xc5 15 ♜c2 ♘bd7 16 ♖xf6 gxf6, e.g. 17 ♘b3 ♜c8 18 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 19 ♜xc5 ♖xf3 (Timoshchenko-Pigusov, Irkutsk 1983).

11 ... ♖e4

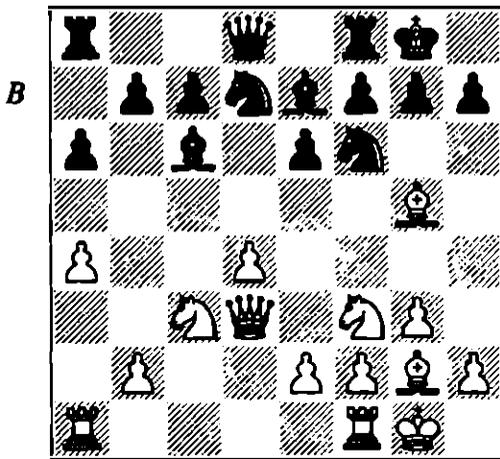
The next main game (Marin-Gomez) deals with 11...c5.

12 ♜e3!?

This is why the queen retreated to d3 – Black does not have the time to play ...c7-c5 because of the indirect attack on his roving bishop, so he contents himself with development.

12 ... ♖c6  
13 ♘c3 ♘bd7  
14 ♜d3 (D)

Now that White has completed his development he is ready to turn his attentions to increasing his authority in the centre with a timely e2-e4 (the reply ...♘d7-c5 must not be overlooked). Already rather cramped, Black is not in a position to hinder White's planned expansion in the centre, so instead he must provide



(too late – Black should limit his losses with 17...♙b7 18 e5 h6 19 exf6 ♙xf3 {or 19...hxg5 20 ♖xg5 ♗xf6 21 ♗h7+ ♕f8 22 ♗h4} 20 ♙xf3 hxg5 21 ♙xa8, or 17...♙xc3 18 bxc3 h6) 18 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 19 ♖a2! (White would also have had this cheeky move, which embarrasses both Black's bishops, in reply to 18...♗xf6), and we have this position (D):

himself with adequate breathing space.

14 ... ♙b4

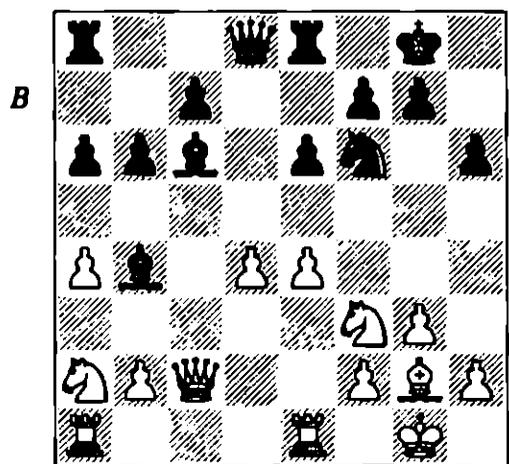
Indirectly covering the e4-square by attacking one of the pieces that defends it.

15 ♖fe1

The new pin on the e1-a5 diagonal is not a problem for White because he has no intention of moving the c3-knight. Moreover, e1 is a natural home for this rook, which is playing an important role in the struggle for the e2-e4 thrust.

15 ... h6

A useful move which guarantees a little more freedom of movement however White responds. 15...♖fe8 transposes to the game Gabriel-Massey, Horgen 1995, in which Black got his timing wrong. The game is interesting as it features a far from obvious yet potentially dangerous possibility which White occasionally has in reply to the thematic idea of ...b7-b6 followed by ...♙c6-b7. Play continued: 16 ♗c2 (not 16 e4 ♙xc3 17 bxc3 ♖c5!) 16...b6?! (16...h6 17 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 18 e4 is preferable, when Black has a playable – if somewhat passive – game) 17 e4 h6?



The game concluded: 19...♙xe1 20 ♗xc6 ♙a5 (20...♗d6!? works out fine after 21 ♗xd6? ♙xf2+! 22 ♕xf2 ♖xe4+ 23 ♕e1 ♖xd6, but 21 ♗c2 is clearly better for White) 21 b4 ♗d7 (21...♙xb4 22 ♖xb4 ♗d6 23 ♗xd6 cxd6 24 e5! and the minor pieces dominate) 22 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 23 bxa5 bxa5 24 ♖c1 ♖b6 25 ♖c5! ♖xa4 26 ♖xa5 ♖b6 27 ♙f1 and Black resigned this hopeless ending.

16 ♙f4

16 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 17 e4 b6 releases the tension prematurely.

16 ... ♖c8

17 ♗c2

The only way to achieve the desired central break, as 17 e4? runs into 17...♖c5.

17 ... ♗b6!

Providing the bishop with a retreat-square as e2-e4 (and with it the prospect of d4-d5) is coming.

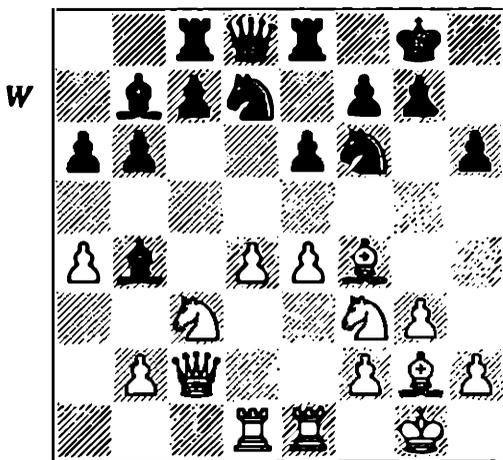
18 e4

18 ♖a2 does not work here because Black has 18...♙xf3, but after 18 e4 the threat is real.

18 ... ♙b7

Perfect timing. Black's light-squared bishop moves for the sixth time, only to arrive at a final destination which could have been reached with a single step! Normally we are punished if one piece is responsible for a third of the first 18 moves, but in this case White's queen has done the same.

19 ♖ad1 ♗e8 (D)



With the 'shadow boxing' over the game is back on track. White enjoys a space advantage and his pieces could hardly be better placed. Consequently White is ready to step up the pressure.

20 ♖e5 ♖xe5

21 ♙xe5

21 dxe5 ♖d7 is unclear. White does better to preserve the mobility of his centre pawns.

21 ... ♖d7

22 ♙f4 ♗e7

More accurate than the immediate 22...c5?! 23 d5 e5 24 ♙e3. After the text Black's queen is ready to occupy the d6-square.

23 ♗e2!?

Finally freeing the c3-knight in preparation for a timely d4-d5 or even ♖c3-a2 to hit the bishop.

23 ... c5

23...e5 24 ♖d5! illustrates another use of 23 ♗e2.

24 d5!?

An interesting attempt to improve on 24 ♗ed2?!, which was played in Yusupov-Portisch, Linares 1989. 24...cxd4 25 ♗xd4 ♖f6 26 ♙d6 ♙xd6 27 ♗xd6 b5 produced instant equality.

24 ... e5

An automatic reaction, but the alternative 24...♙xc3!? 25 d6 ♗f6 26 bxc3 e5 – a suggestion of Kotronias – deserves a mention. Until the idea is given an outing in international practice the Greek GM's assessment of unclear seems perfectly reasonable. Kotronias offers 27 ♙h3 (! – Kotronias) 27...♗cd8 28 ♙c1 ♙c6 with the conclusion that White's bishop pair is hampered by the untidy pawn structure.

25 ♙e3

25 d6?! ♗e6 26 ♙e3 is tempting, but then 26...♖b8! swings the balance in Black's favour.

25 ... ♗d6

Normally the queen is not an appropriate piece with which to blockade a pawn (on d7, alas, the knight is far away from d6), but at least on d6

the queen is able to oversee developments on both sides of the board. Nevertheless, despite the closed nature of the position Black should still be on the lookout for attempts to exploit the position of his most powerful piece.

26 ♙h3 ♖c7

27 ♘b1!

This kind of 'positive' retreat is often overlooked by the club player. A clue to discovering the idea behind this move is 25...♗d6 (and the accompanying note). White's reaction is typical of titled players – as soon as the queen arrives on d6 White looks for a way to harass it, so sending the versatile knight to either c4 or f5 is standard practice.

A worthy alternative, also designed to undermine the blockading queen, is 27 f4!?

27 ... ♙c8

28 ♘d2

28 ♘a3!/? hinders the ...b6-b5 advance and invites ...♙b4xa3, after which it is not clear who gains most from the exchange.

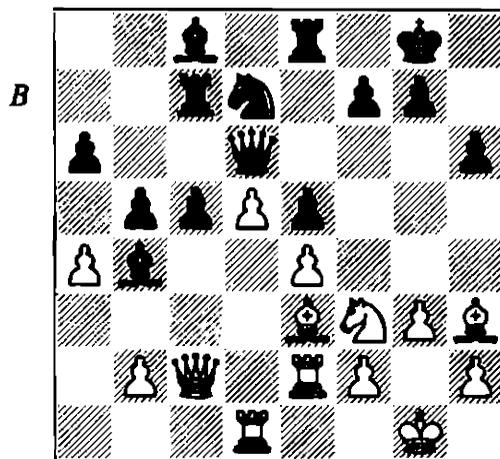
28 ... b5

Of course Black can put an end to the planned journey by removing the knight, but it is not desirable for Black to give up his dark-squared bishop with the queen standing on d6.

29 ♘f3 (D)

29 ... c4?!

Khalifman offers 29...h5!?, evaluating the position after 30 ♘h4 g6 as unclear. The does seem better than the ambitious text, with which Black hopes to arrange a knight manoeuvre of his own.



30 ♘h4 g6

Black judges that keeping the knight out of f5 is worth a pawn. 30...♘c5 31 ♙xc8 ♖exc8 32 ♘f5 is uncomfortable for Black.

31 ♙xc8 ♘c5

32 ♙xc8 ♖exc8

33 axb5 axb5

34 ♘f3

The knight is no longer required on h4.

34 ... ♖a8?

After Khalifman's 34...♘b3 35 ♙e3 ♙c5 Black has some – but not quite enough – compensation for the pawn.

35 ♙d2?

In his eagerness to bring his minor pieces over to the queenside White returns the favour and misses the decisive 35 ♘xe5! ♗xe5 36 ♙f4 ♗e7 37 d6. It is rather ironic that, after praising professionals for appreciating the problems associated with blockading queens such as the one in this particular game, this relatively simple, thematic 'combination' should be overlooked by both players! Perhaps the top GMs were distracted by events on the queenside, or were short of time.

- 35 ... ♖a4  
 36 ♔g2 ♘d3  
 37 ♙xb4 ♖xb4  
 38 ♖xd3!? cxd3  
 39 ♗xd3 (D)

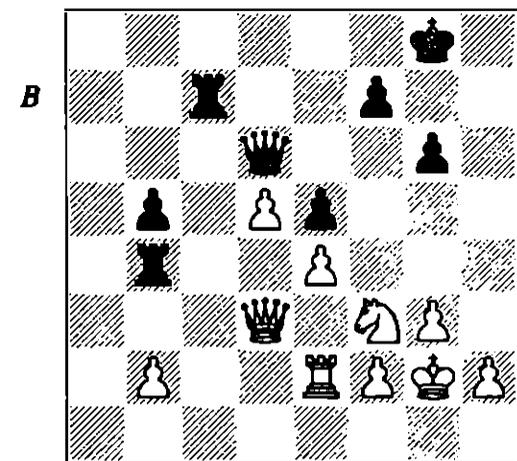
- 42 ♗f3  
 42 ♗a6!? also looks good for White.  
 42 ... ♗d6  
 43 b3!

Punishing Black for leaving his rook on b4. The eager 43 ♗g4? backfires after 43...f5! 44 ♗h3 ♔g8! 45 exf5 g5!.

43 ... ♗a6  
 This time 43...f5 44 exf5 g5 is different because White has 45 ♘g6 g4 46 ♗d3 with a clear advantage.

44 ♖d2  
 Now White is ready to turn his attention to his opponent's weaknesses on the kingside, hence Black's attempt at distraction.

- 44 ... ♖d4  
 45 ♖xd4 exd4 (D)



The exchange sacrifice is quite logical. Remember that White is already a pawn up, so he has emerged with two pawns for the exchange – a more appealing prospect than being tied down to the defence of the b-pawn. White has a protected passed pawn on d5 and no serious weaknesses, but with best play the power of Black's rooks should give him a good chance to maintain the balance.

- 39 ... ♖f6?!

Another natural move, defending the e5-pawn, but now both f6 and g6 are weaker. 39...♖bc4 makes more sense.

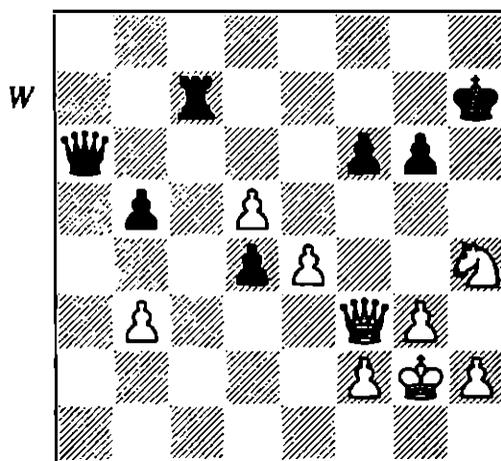
- 40 ♗a3!

Highlighting another bonus of bringing the rook to the c-file – White would not have had this slightly annoying pin.

- 40 ... ♗c5

Losing time. 40...♔g7 is more accurate.

- 41 ♘h4! ♔h7



- 46 ♗f4!

The only effective method of threatening to push the d-pawn. 46 ♗d3 ♗b6 47 ♘f3 fails to 47...♖c3 48 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 49 ♘xd4 b4 50 d6 ♖d3 51 ♘c6 ♖xd6 52 ♘xb4 ♖d4 53 ♘d5 f5 with equality.

From this point on the win is merely a matter of technique. The game continued: 46...♗b6 (46...♖d7

47 ♖xg6! ♔xg6 48 ♗g4+, 46...♞e7 47 d6 ♞f7 {47...♞d7 48 ♖f5!} 48 ♖f3 and 46...♞f7 47 ♖f3 are all winning for White) 47 d6 ♞f7 (47...♞d7 48 ♖f5! ♔g8 49 ♗g4) 48 ♗g4! (48 e5? ♗c6+ 49 ♖f3 ♗d5 is unclear) 48...♞g7 (48...g5 49 ♗h5+ ♔g8 50 ♖f5) 49 ♗h3! d3 (49...♔g8 50 ♗e6+ ♔h7 51 ♗xf6 d3 52 ♖f3) 50 ♖f5+ ♔g8 51 ♖xg7 ♗xd6 (51...d2 52 ♖e8 d1 ♗53 ♗e6+ ♔h7 54 ♗f7+ ♔h6 55 ♗g7+) 52 ♖e8! ♗d4 53 ♖xf6+ ♔f7 (53...♗xf6 54 ♗c8+ ♔g7 55 ♗d7+) 54 ♗h7+ ♔e6 55 ♗xg6 d2 56 ♖d5+ ♔d7 57 ♗f7+ 1-0.

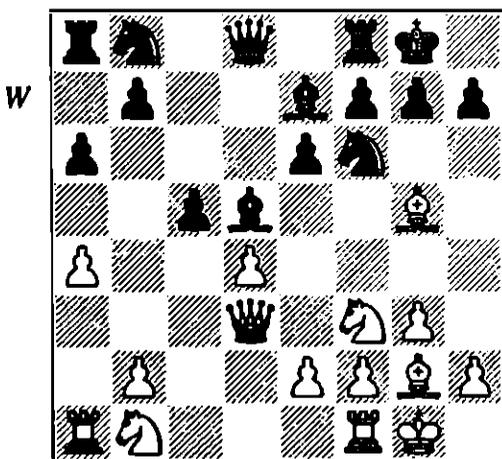
Game 11

Marin – Gomez Esteban

Seville 1992

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♔g2 ♔e7 5 ♖f3 0-0 6 0-0 dxc4 7 ♗c2 a6 8 a4 ♔d7 9 ♗xc4 ♔c6 10 ♔g5 ♔d5 11 ♗d3

11 ... c5 (D)

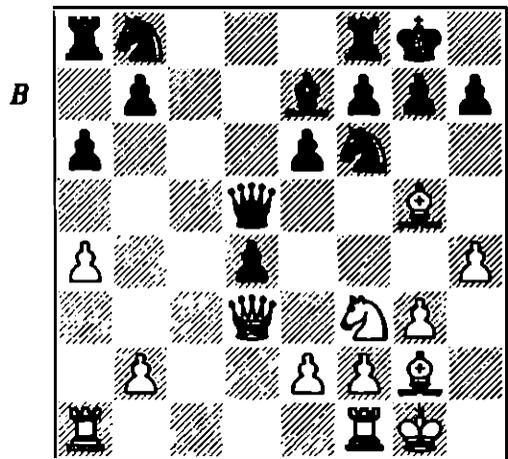


12 dxc5

I prefer the capture to the alternative 12 ♖c3, but as Karpov has had experience with this move on both

sides of the board, it certainly merits attention:

a) Karpov-Beliavsky, Linares 1994 continued 12...cxd4 13 ♖xd5 ♗xd5? (after 13...♖xd5 14 ♔xe7 ♗xe7 15 ♖xd4, or 14...♖xe7 15 ♖xd4, White is only slightly better) 14 h4! (D).



It would be easy to underestimate the potency of this odd advance (a theoretical novelty), but Black is already in an uncomfortable position. 14...♖bd7 (14...♖c6 permits White to demonstrate the logic behind h2-h4: 15 ♔xf6 ♔xf6 16 ♖g5 ♗f5 17 ♔e4, e.g. 17...♗e5 18 f4 {18 ♔xc6 ♔xg5 19 ♔xb7 ♞ab8 20 ♔xa6 ♔e3 21 ♔h2} 18...♗c7 19 ♖xh7 ♞fd8 20 ♖xf6+ gxf6, or 17...♗a5 18 ♔xc6 ♔xg5 19 ♔xb7 ♞a7 20 ♔e4 with a clear advantage to White in both cases; 14...e5? loses to 15 ♔xf6 ♔xf6 16 ♖g5) 15 ♖xd4 (15 ♔xf6 ♖xf6) 15...♗d6 (15...♗a5 16 ♖b3!) 16 ♞fd1! ♖c5 (16...♗b6 meets with 17 a5!, while 16...♞ac8 17 ♖f5! spells trouble: 17...exf5 18 ♗xd6 ♔xd6 19 ♞xd6 ♞c2 20 ♔xb7 ♞xe2 21 ♔xa6 ♞xb2 22 ♔b5) 17 ♗c4! (better than 17 ♗c2 ♗b6 18 a5 ♗b4,

or 17 ♖f5 ♖xd3 18 ♖xd6 ♖xb2 19 ♖d2 ♖xd6 20 ♖xd6 ♖c4) 17...♖fd8 18 b4 ♖xa4 (18...♖cd7 19 ♖c6!; 18...♖ce4 19 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 (19...♖xf6 20 ♖xe4 ♖xd4 21 e3 ♖xa1 22 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 23 ♖xb7) 20 ♖xb7 ♖ab8 21 ♖xa6 ♖xb4 22 ♖b5) 19 ♖b3! ♖b6 (19...♖b6 20 ♖c6; 19...♖xb4 20 ♖xb4 ♖xb4 21 ♖xa4 ♖c3 22 ♖c4 ♖b2 23 ♖d2) 20 e3 1-0.

b) Donev has suggested meeting 12 ♖c3 by 12...♖c6!?, when 13 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 14 dxc5 ♖d7 15 b4 ♖xc5! solves Black's opening problems. An improvement is 13 ♖fd1!, exerting more pressure on the centre.

12 ... ♖e4!?

A direct equalizing attempt which aims to clear the board of a few pieces before regaining the sacrificed pawn. This is a desirable course from the defender's point of view, but accurate and uncompromising play from White should make Black struggle to win the c-pawn without making a significant concession.

The conventional route to material equality is 12...♖bd7 (12...♖xc5 13 ♖c3 ♖c6 14 ♖e5 ♖xd3 15 ♖xd3 ♖xg2 16 ♖xg2 left White with a comfortable edge in the game King-Barry, Dublin Telecom 1991), when 13 ♖c3 ♖xc5 14 ♖e3! presents Black with the threat of 15 ♖xf6, which damages his kingside pawns. Black has two ways to add to the protection of the c5-knight (14...♖g4? is refuted by 15 ♖xe7 ♖xe3 {or 15...♖xe7 16 ♖xd5} 16 ♖xd8 ♖xf1 17 ♖e7):

a) 14...♖a5 was played in the game Gulko-Pigusov, Moscow 1990.

Gulko improved on his game with Beliavsky in Amsterdam 1989, in which 15 ♖ad1 ♖c6 was already equal. This time he found 15 ♖xd5! ♖xd5 16 ♖a3!, forcing Black to tread carefully. The game continued 16...♖xg5 (16...♖d6 17 ♖d2! ♖e4 18 ♖c4 ♖xa3 19 ♖xa5 ♖xg5 20 ♖xa3 and the g5-knight is just one of Black's worries; or 16...f6 17 ♖d2 ♖b6 18 a5, when White is ready to go active) 17 ♖xg5 h6 18 ♖fc1 (18 ♖f3!?) 18...♖d7 (18...♖ac8? runs into 19 ♖xf7! with the idea of ♖g2xd5 followed by b2-b4) 19 ♖e4 b5: Here, instead of 20 b4?! ♖xa4 21 ♖xa4 bxa4 22 ♖c5 ♖7b6 with equality, 20 axb5 ♖xb5 21 ♖c3 ♖xc3 22 ♖xc3 would have left White with a small but definite lead according to Pigusov.

b) 14...♖c8 15 ♖fd1 ♖e8 (or 15...♖g4 16 ♖xd5) 16 ♖e5 ♖b6 (once again 16...♖g4 is inadequate – 17 ♖xg4 ♖xg5 18 f4 ♖f6 19 ♖e5! ♖xe5 20 fxe5, etc.) 17 ♖h3! was seen in Smyslov-Nogueiras, Graz 1984: 17...♖cd8 (17...♖xb2 18 ♖abl ♖a3 19 ♖xd5) 18 a5! ♖b3 19 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 20 ♖xf7 and White had the upper hand.

13 ♖xe7 ♖xe7

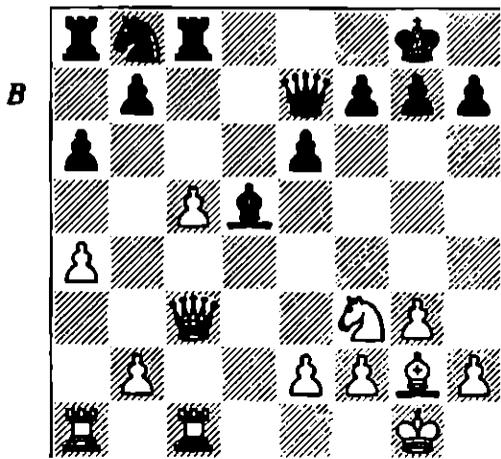
14 ♖c3 ♖xc3

14...♖xc5? loses a pawn to 15 ♖xd5.

15 ♖xc3 ♖c8

16 ♖fc1 (D)

Of course White is happy to try to hold on to the extra pawn if he can do this with constructive moves. At first glance the queen's rook may appear to be the more natural candidate



to come to c1 but, as will soon become evident, in some lines Black's struggle to restore material equality results in White having a passed a-pawn, when White will then require a rook on the a-file.

16 ... ♘d7  
17 b4 a5

Black seeks to undermine the defence of the c-pawn. Inadequate is 17...b6? 18 ♘e5, with a clear advantage to White.

18 ♜d4

White wants to drive back the enemy bishop with e2-e4. Another viable option, 18 ♘e1, involves offering to exchange the bishops. After 18...axb4 19 ♜xb4 Black is still not ready to capture on c5, for example 19...♘xc5 20 ♘d3 b6 21 ♜xb6, or 19...♜xc5 20 ♙xd5 exd5 21 ♜xb7, so Marin offers 19...b6 20 a5 bxc5 21 ♜a4, when the a-pawn is significantly more dangerous than the c-pawn (notice how valuable the rook is on the a-file).

18 ... axb4  
19 e4 ♙c6

19...♘xc5 20 ♜xb4 (20 exd5 ♘b3) 20...♙xe4 21 ♜xc5 nets White two pieces for a rook and pawn

(21...♙xf3?? 22 ♜xc8+), which leaves the first player with a definite edge.

20 ♜xb4 b6

Pins on the a3-f8 diagonal seem to be a theme in this game.

21 ♘d4 ♙b7

After 21...bxc5 22 ♘xc6 (22 ♜a3!?) 22...♜xc6 23 ♜b7 White is active and has a dangerous a-pawn (well supported by major pieces and the Catalan bishop).

22 ♜c4!

Anticipating that the coming arrival of the black rook on c5 may backfire on White, e.g. 22 a5?! ♜xc5!, when the threat to win the queen with 23...♜xc1+ highlights the only potential problem of bringing the king's rook to the c-file. Now, on the other hand, White's queen is defended, introducing the threat 23 cxb6.

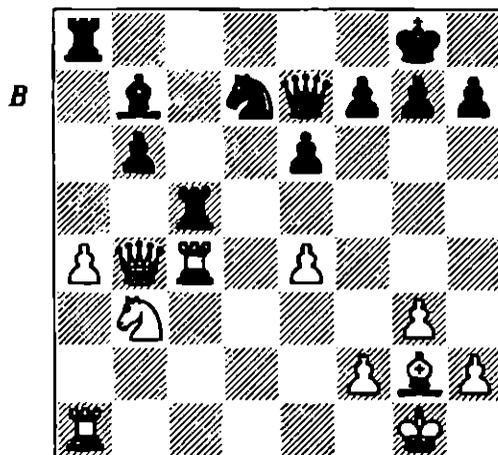
22 ... ♜xc5

a) 22...♙a6 23 cxb6! illustrates another point behind 22 ♜c4.

b) 22...bxc5 23 ♜xb7 ♜cb8 loses to 24 ♘c6.

c) 22...♘xc5 permits White to launch his a-pawn after 23 ♜xb6 ♘xe4 24 ♜xc8+ ♜xc8 25 a5.

23 ♘b3 (D)



23 ... ♗f6

The only move. Black simultaneously side-steps the pin and defends the c5-rook by lining up on the a1-rook. 23...♙a6 produces a brief flurry of activity from which White emerges with a clear advantage: 24 ♖d4 e5 25 ♘xc5 (once again White must be careful to avoid 25 ♖xd7? ♖c1+) 25...bxc5 (25...exd4? 26 ♘xa6) 26 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 27 ♗xc5, etc.

24 ♖d1?!

An inaccuracy which presents Black with an opportunity to steer the game to equality. 24 ♖xc5! keeps White on top, since after the forced 24...♘xc5 White has a far from obvious idea ('b').

a) 25 ♖d1 requires exact defence from Black but is ultimately insufficient for advantage: 25...♗b2! (not 25...♘xb3? 26 e5! ♖d8 27 ♗xb3) 26 ♗xb6 h6 27 ♖d8+ ♕h7 (27...♖xd8 28 ♗xd8+ ♕h7 29 ♘xc5 ♗c1+ 30 ♙f1 ♗xc5 31 ♗d3 ♗c6 32 a5, etc.) 28 ♖xa8 ♙xa8 29 ♗xc5 ♗xb3 30 ♗d4 (30 a5?? ♗b1+ 31 ♙f1 ♗xe4) 30...♙c6! is completely equal because 31 a5?? loses to 31...♗b1+ 32 ♙f1 ♙b5.

b) The power of 25 ♗xb6! was not discovered until after the game. The point is 25...♘xb3 (25...♗b2 26 a5! ♘xb3 27 ♖d1) 26 ♖b1! (26 e5? ♗xe5 27 ♖d1 ♙d5) 26...♘a5 27 e5!, when White is guaranteed to regain the piece with a clear advantage in the resulting ending, e.g. 27...♗xe5 (27...♗e7 28 ♙xb7 ♘xb7 29 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 30 ♖xb7 g5 31 ♖b4 offers White excellent winning chances) 28 ♙xb7 ♖b8 (28...♘xb7 29 ♗xb7

is also very good for White in view of Black's extra worry concerning his weak back rank) 29 ♖d1 g6 30 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 31 ♗xd8+ ♕g7 32 ♙f3 ♗a1+ 33 ♗d1, and Black has a difficult defensive task ahead.

24 ... ♖xc4

25 ♗xc4 ♖c8

What a difference a move makes. White's pressure has disappeared, and Black has nothing to worry about. The game ended: 26 ♗b4 ♖c2 27 ♖d2 ♖xd2 28 ♗xd2 ♗e7! 29 a5 bxa5 30 ♘xa5 ♙a8! 1/2-1/2.

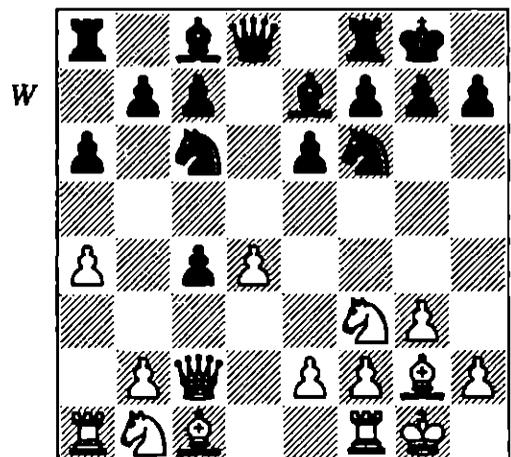
### Game 12

Kramnik – Piket

Dortmund 1995

1 ♘f3 d5 2 d4 e6 3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♙g2 ♙e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 dxc4 7 ♗c2 a6 8 a4

8 ... ♘c6 (D)



9 ♗xc4

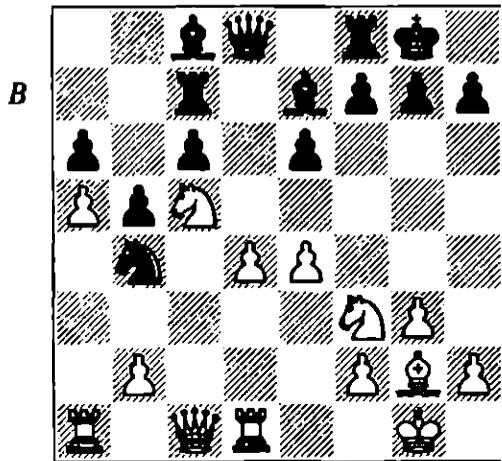
Simple and best. There is little reason to delay or avoid this capture. Defending the d-pawn with 9 ♖d1 gives Black a comfortable game after either 9...♘a5 or 9...♘b4.

9 ... ♗d5

The point. White often has an active queen in the Catalan, so here Black also strives for activity. Now that White has created a hole on b4 Black judges that an exchange of queens should not lessen his counterplay. Alternatively, if White does not trade first Black has the option of swinging the queen over to h5. Black does have other reasonably natural moves which require our attention:

a) 9...♗d7 is rather passive. The complicated 10 ♖e5 is suggested in some books, but I prefer the sober 10 ♗d2, which has the advantage of putting a stop to any ideas involving ...♖c6-a5 or ...♖c6-b4 without releasing the tension. Smyslov-Krogius, Moscow 1991 went 10...♖e4 11 ♗f4 ♖d6 (11...♖c8 12 ♖d1 ♗e8 13 ♖bd2?! ♖a5 14 ♗a2 ♗c6 15 ♖ac1 ♗d5 earned Black an equal position in Chernin-Rivas, Groningen 1980, so an improvement is 13 ♖c3! to cover the d5-square) 12 ♗c3 ♖b8 13 ♖d1 a5 14 ♖bd2 ♖b4 15 ♖e5 and Black was severely cramped. Breaking out with 15...g5 16 ♗e3 ♖f5 17 ♖dc4 ♖xe3 18 ♖xe3 c6 19 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 20 ♖c4 ♗c7 21 e4 succeeded in removing a couple of minor pieces, but with a pawn on g5 Black faced new, equally serious problems.

b) 9...♖b4 looked promising for a few moves in B.Lalić-Bryson, Hastings 1993: 10 ♗g5 b5 11 ♗c1 ♗b7 12 ♖c3 c6 13 ♖d1 ♖c8. However, the early occupation of b4 turned sour after 14 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 15 ♖e4 ♗e7 16 ♖c5 ♖c7 17 e4 ♗c8 18 a5 (D).



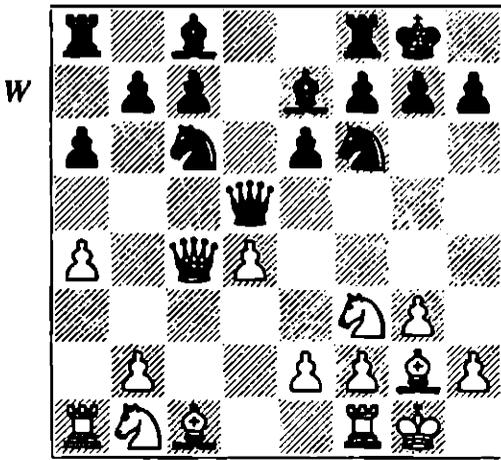
In order to save the stranded knight Black was forced to play 18...f5, conceding the e5-square and resulting in a terrible stranglehold after 19 ♖e5 fxe4 20 ♗xe4. The rest of the game is a wonderful illustration of how White's Catalan bind can be deadly. The patient way in which Lalić maintains complete domination of the key central squares c5 and e5 deserves study. Watch those knights: 20...♗e8 21 ♗d2 ♖d5 22 ♖ac1 ♗d6 23 ♖e1 ♗h5 24 ♗g2 ♖h8 25 ♖e4 g5 26 ♖e2 g4 27 ♖ed3 ♗e7 28 ♗e1 ♗g5 29 ♖cc2 ♗g6 30 ♖e5 ♗h5 31 ♖e4 ♗b7 32 ♖d6 ♗a8 33 ♖d3 ♗f6 34 ♖xe6 ♗xd4 35 b4 ♖g7 36 ♖c5 ♖g5 37 ♗e4 ♗g7 38 ♖d7 ♖g8 39 ♖b6 ♖c7 40 ♖e7 1-0. Torture.

c) 9...♖a5 is probably too artificial. 10 ♗c2 b6 11 ♖e5 ♖d5 12 ♗d2! ♗b7 13 ♗xa5 bxa5 14 ♖c6 ♗xc6 15 ♗xc6 was very good for White in Najdorf-Bolbochan, Argentina 1949.

Let us return to the position after 9...♗d5 (D).

10 ♖bd2

White is content with an early queen trade as long as his opponent loses some time in the process. Of



the two main alternatives, one involves voluntarily trading queens and the other is aimed at keeping them on the board.

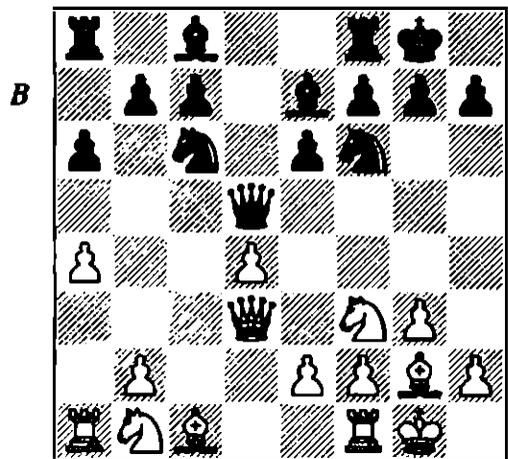
a) 10 ♖xd5 is not as negative as it may first appear, and it presents Black with an early opportunity to go wrong:

a1) 10...exd5? is what White is hoping for. I would bet that most club players would recapture with the pawn in an instant, as this has the double bonus of liberating Black's light-squared bishop and giving the e6-pawn a prominent outpost on d5. Unfortunately Black never gets the chances to enjoy these 'improvements', as we can see from Romanishin-K.Grigorian, USSR Ch 1977: 11 ♙f4 ♙g4 12 ♞d1 ♞ac8 13 ♝e5! ♝xe5 (13...♙xe2? loses to 14 ♝xc6 bxc6 15 ♞e1) 14 dxe5 ♝h5 15 ♙e3 g6 (the e2-pawn is still taboo: 15...♙xe2? 16 ♞d2 ♙g4 17 h3 ♙e6 18 g4, etc.) 16 ♙xd5 ♙xe2 17 ♞d2 c6 18 ♙xf7+ ♜xf7 19 ♞xe2 and White has emerged with an extra pawn.

a2) 10...♝xd5! keeps Black's disadvantage in the queenless midgame to a minimum. Both 11 ♙d2 ♞d8 12 ♝a3 ♙d7 13 ♞fc1 ♙e8

14 a5 ♞ac8 15 ♝c4, Barda-Rittner, corr. 1965-6, and 11 ♝bd2 ♝a5 12 b3 ♞d8 13 ♙a3 ♙xa3 14 ♞xa3 ♙d7 15 ♝e5 ♙e8 16 ♝dc4, Andrianov-Savon, Moscow Ch 1982, are enough for a small plus.

b) 10 ♖d3 (D) gives the game another character altogether:



b1) 10...♝b4 11 ♖d1 c5 (11...♞d8 12 ♝c3 ♖h5 13 ♖b3 ♙d7 14 ♙g5! is good for White) 12 ♝c3 ♖c4 13 dxc5 ♞d8 14 ♙d2 ♖xc5 15 ♖b3 ♙d7 16 ♞fc1 proved awkward for Black in Polugaevsky-Ivkov, Hilversum 1973.

b2) 10...♞d8 11 ♝c3 ♖h5 (or 11...♖a5 12 ♙d2!?) 12 ♖c4! ♝d5 (White also has the advantage after 12...♙d7 13 ♙f4 ♙d6 14 ♙g5!) 13 a5! severely restricts Black. In Polugaevsky-Krogus, USSR 1973, play continued 13...♙d7 14 e4 ♝xc3 15 bxc3 ♝xa5 (15...♞ac8 16 e5 ♝a7 17 ♖b3 ♙c6 18 c4 with a good position for White, Sosonko-Najdorf, São Paulo 1978) 16 ♖xc7 ♝b3, and now 17 ♙a3! would have been very strong, e.g. 17...♝xa1 18 ♙xe7, or 17...♞ac8 18 ♖b6 ♝xa1 19 ♙xe7 ♞e8 20 ♙c5!).

10 ... ♖d8

11 e3

Decision time for Black. To exchange or not to exchange?

11 ... ♗h5

11...♙d7 runs into 12 ♘e5! ♘xe5 13 ♗xc7! ♗d6 14 ♗xd6 ♙xd6 15 dxe5 ♙xe5 16 ♘c4, but exchanging queens is feasible. Panno-Gomez, Santiago Z 1987 is a typical illustration of the long-term advantage White tends to get in these positions. After 11...♗xc4 12 ♘xc4 ♙d7 13 ♙d2!? ♘b4 14 ♘fe5 ♘fd5 White could have played 15 ♘xd7 followed by a4-a5 with a bind on the queenside and the bishop pair. Instead he opted for 15 ♖fc1, when 15...♙e8 should have been answered with 16 ♙xb4 ♙xb4 17 ♘d3, when White controls the key c5-square. Note that the c-file, extra space, Catalan bishop and the two centre pawns give White more choice as far as finding a constructive plan is concerned.

12 e4!

By establishing a dominant pawn centre White hopes to deny his opponent sufficient space within which to manoeuvre.

12 ... ♙d7

13 b3 b5

A necessary counter. Without any activity Black would have a dismal future.

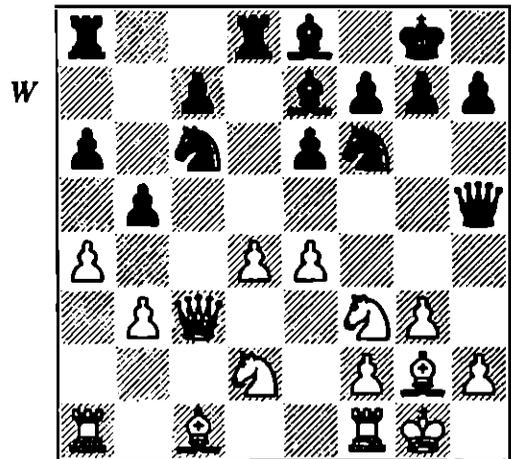
14 ♗c3

But absolutely not 14 axb5?? axb5.

14 ... ♙e8(D)

14...bxa4 15 bxa4 ♙b4 (15...♙e8 16 ♙a3 is clearly better for White)

16 ♗c2 ♖ac8 17 ♘c4 gave White a good game in Korchnoi-Tal, Moscow Ct (6) 1968.



15 axb5! axb5

This way Black keeps his queenside pawns intact. Others:

a) Apart from leaving the a6-pawn weak, 15...♗xb5 also permits White to take control of the c5-square by exchanging the dark-squared bishops with 16 ♙a3.

b) 15...♙b4!? is interesting but White is able to stay ahead after 16 ♗c2 ♗xb5 (or 16...♘xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 18 e5!?, when 18...♘d5 meets with 19 ♘f3 ♙c3 20 ♖xa6) 17 e5.

16 ♖xa8 ♖xa8

17 ♙b2 ♖a2

18 ♗c1!

Better than settling for the slight edge that results from 18 ♖a1 ♖xa1+ 19 ♙xa1. White's remaining rook has a future on any one of the c-, d- or e-files. Of course the potential consequences of Black's aggressive rook invasion should be considered, and White concludes that the rook may even be poorly placed on a2 – it may even help White.

18 ... ♗h6!?

Highlighting one of the chief drawbacks of 11...♗h5. Without doing anything spectacular White has denied his opponent any opportunity to put his queen to good use on the kingside. Now Black prepares to bring his queen back into the game, and as there is no direct route to the other side of the board he must spend precious time while doing so. However, a look at the alternatives suggests that the game choice is indeed correct:

a) 18...♘b4? simply loses a pawn to 19 ♗xc7.

b) 18...♙b4 takes b4 from the knight, thus inviting White to evict the rook under favourable circumstances with 19 ♗b1.

c) 18...b4 does provide Black's queen with instant access to the queenside, but after 19 ♗b1 ♗a5 20 ♘c4 ♗a7 21 ♚d1 White's pieces (particularly the c4-knight) are superbly placed.

19 h3

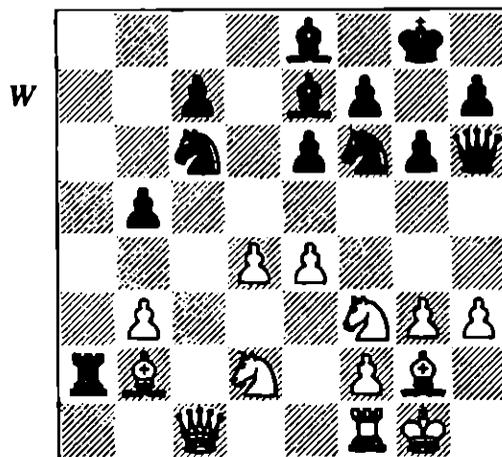
In view of the number of moves Black is investing White may as well take time out for this useful if not strictly necessary precaution. The direct 19 ♚d1 is possible, but 19 ♗b1 ♘b4 20 ♚c1?! ♚xb2 21 ♗xb2 ♘d3 helps only Black.

19 ... g6 (D)

20 ♚e1

Again 20 ♚d1!? seems like a good alternative. White wants the rook on e1 so that the threat of d4-d5 has more punch because the rook could be deadly once the e-file is open.

20 ... ♗f8



20...♘b4 is still inadvisable in view of 21 ♗xc7.

21 ♗b1 ♘b4

22 ♘e5

Kramnik offers 22 ♙f1 as a possible improvement.

22 ... ♘d7

23 ♙c3

Undermining the defence of the black rook, forcing its retreat.

23 ... ♚a6

Not 23...♘xe5? 24 ♙xb4 ♙xb4 25 ♗xa2.

24 ♘xd7 ♙xd7

25 ♘f3

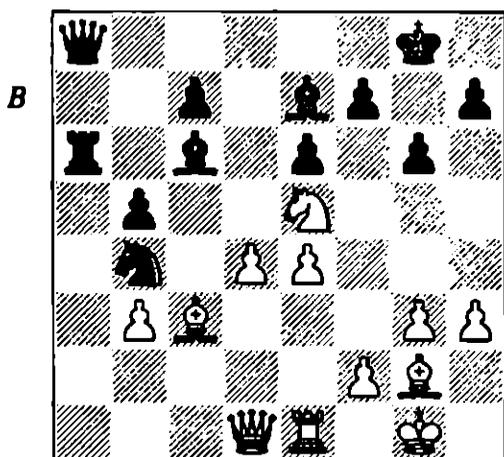
With another knight ready to come to e5 perhaps Black should now consider 25...f6, despite the fact that this move does seem rather ugly.

25 ... ♗a8

26 ♘e5 ♙c6?!

No doubt aimed at hindering 27 d5, which can now be answered with 27...exd5 28 exd5 ♘xd5, when Black emerges the victor after 29 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 30 ♙xd5 ♗xc3 31 ♚xe7 ♚a1. However, as we shall see the bishop is, in fact, exposed on c6, which points to the safe, albeit passive, 26...♙e8, when White still has a dangerous initiative.

27 ♖d1! (D)



White's formidable centre affords him the luxury of switching operations from one side of the board to the other. Ironically the white queen is returning to base, but from here a number of potentially useful squares are available. It is worth taking a look at how both players send their queens all over the board in this game.

27 ... ♘a2

28 ♙b2 b4

After 28...♙b4 29 ♖e3 Black's pieces are tied up on the queenside while White has the makings of an attack.

29 d5?!

Very tempting, though 29 ♖f3!? looks good, and 29 ♖c2 – which emphasizes the lack of coordination of Black's pieces and means that a subsequent ...♘a2-c3 will cost Black a pawn – is virtually winning according to Kramnik. Perhaps his choice in the game is less precise, even if it is aimed at opening up the position.

29 ... ♙e8

30 ♘g4

30 ♙f1 ♖d6! 31 ♘c4 ♖d8 merely chases the rook to a better square.

Again White opts for an attractive move rather than the prudent 30 ♖c2!. Now Black is more or less forced into finding the best defence.

30 ... ♘c3

31 ♖f3

31 ♖d4 h5 32 ♘h6+? ♖h7 backfires, while 32 ♘f6+ transposes to the game.

31 ... h5

32 ♘f6+

Not 32 ♘h6+? ♖g7. Changing direction with 32 ♘e5 is worth a try, since this is one of those positions in which a simple, positional approach may achieve the same result as all-out attack.

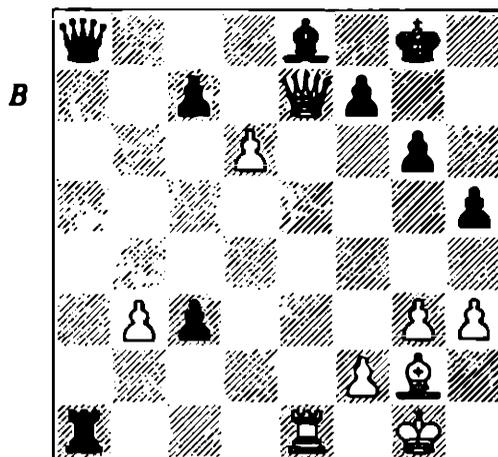
32 ... ♙xf6

33 ♖xf6 exd5

34 ♖d4

If White hits the b4-pawn with 34 ♖e7 Black needs to be very careful with his reply:

a) 34...♖a2? loses with the queen on the e-file: 35 ♙xc3 bxc3 36 exd5 ♖a1 (36...c2 37 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 38 ♖xe8+ ♖g7 39 ♖e1 ♖b2 40 ♙e4 f5 41 ♙d3) 37 d6! (D).



37...♖xe1+ (37...♙c6 38 d7!) 38 ♖xe1 ♙c6 (38...♖c8 39 ♖xc3, or

38...♜d8 39 dxc7) 39 d7! c2 40 ♙xc6, etc.

b) 34...♞xe4 is not available to Black in the main game, and 35 ♜e5!? f6 36 ♜e7! appears to be a good reason to avoid it here.

c) 34...♞e6 35 ♜xb4 ♞xe4 transposes to the note to Black's 34th move.

34 ... ♞a2

Certainly in the spirit of the game, though 34...♞e6!? keeps an eye on the crucial f6-square, and practically forces White into trading off into an ending with only minimal winning chances. After 35 ♜xb4 (35 e5 ♜a5) 35...♞xe4 36 ♜d4 f6 37 f3 (37 b4 ♜c6 38 ♞c1 ♜d6) 37...c5 38 ♜d1, if Black continues 38...♞g5 39 ♞xe6 ♞xe6 40 ♙xf6 then the weak dark squares around Black's king are the only worry for the second player, while Kramnik's 38...♜a2 seems to allow 39 ♜xd5! ♙f7 40 ♞xe4 ♞xe4 41 ♜d8+! ♞e8 42 ♜xf6.

35 ♜xb4

White needs to continue to be the aggressor, so 35 ♙xc3 bxc3 36 exd5 c2 is not an attractive option because the c2-pawn is an inconvenience.

35 ... ♞b5?!

Bravely declining the offer to remove White's dark-squared bishop. The alternatives lead to a clear advantage for White with little hope of counterplay for Black, so perhaps Piket was content to take more chances in the hope that this would confuse Kramnik.

a) 35...♞xb2 36 ♜xc3 ♜a2 37 exd5 ♙b5 (37...♙d7 38 ♜f6) 38 ♜f6! (38 ♜c5) 38...♞xb3 (38...♞b1

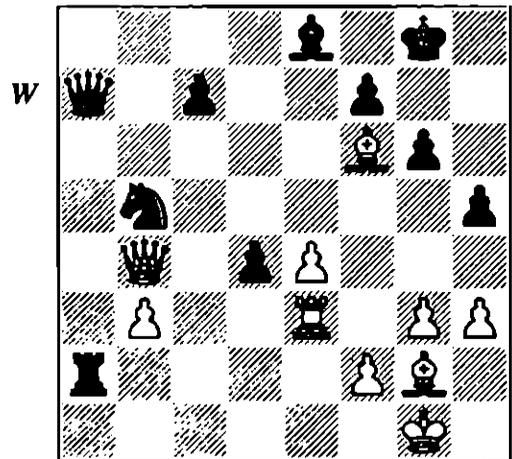
39 ♞xb1 ♜xb1+ 40 ♚h2 ♜xb3 41 ♜d8+ ♚g7 42 ♜xc7 and White is a pawn up) 39 ♞e7 ♜b1+ 40 ♚h2 ♜f5 41 ♜xf5 (or 41 ♞xf7 ♜xf6 42 ♞xf6) 41...gxf5 42 ♞xc7, etc.

b) 35...♞e2+ 36 ♞xe2 ♞xb2 37 ♞xb2 ♜a1+ 38 ♚h2 ♜xb2 39 ♜e7! ♙b5 40 ♜xc7 ♜xb3 (40...♜xf2 41 ♜b8+) 41 exd5.

36 ♙f6! ♜a7

37 ♞e3 d4 (D)

Both 37...c5 and 37...♞a6 lose to 38 exd5!.



38 ♜e7! ♞d6

39 ♞d3!

Decisive. Not 39 ♞e1? d3 40 ♞f1 d2.

39 ... ♜a6

The alternatives 39...♜a5 40 ♙xd4 (40 ♞d1!?) 40...♜e1+ 41 ♚h2 and 39...♞a1+ 40 ♚h2 ♜a5 41 ♙xd4 are also winning for White.

40 ♞d1?!

40 ♙g5! is possible: 40...♜xd3 (40...♚h7 41 ♜f8) 41 ♙h6 ♚h7 42 ♜f8 ♞f5 43 exf5, etc.

40 ... ♜e2

41 ♞f1 d3

42 ♙d4! d2

43 ♜e5 ♚f8

44 ♙e3 ♖g8  
 44...f6 45 ♗xf6+ ♙f7 46 ♙f3.  
 45 ♙h6 ♗xf2+!?

Resourceful to the end, Black tries one final trick. 45...♘f5 46 ♗xe8+ ♖h7 47 ♗xf7+ ♖xh6 48 exf5 gxf5 49 ♗f6+ ♖h7 50 ♗xf5+ ♖h8 51 ♗f3! is another way to end the struggle.

46 ♖xf2 d1♗+  
 47 ♖f1!

Not 47 ♖b2? ♗a1!

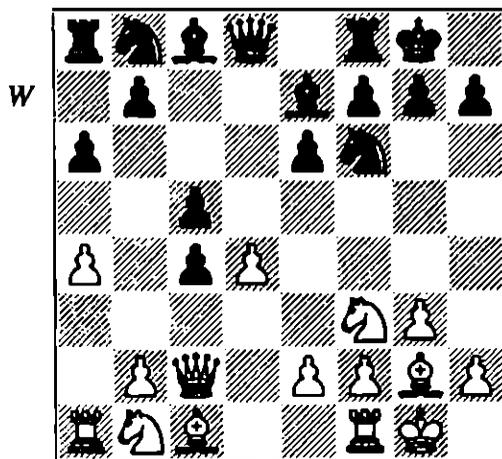
47 ... ♖xg2+  
 48 ♖xg2 ♗e2+  
 49 ♖g1 1-0

It is interesting that this game is extremely complicated, with both players making raids in enemy territory and White finally going for mate. Replace White's 8th move with 8 ♗xc4, and we find ourselves in a variation characterized by endings. That these games feature the same opening is a testament to the Catalan's variety.

Game 13  
**Hübner – Siegel**  
*Germany 1994*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2 ♙e7  
 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 0-0 dxc4 7 ♗c2 a6 8 a4  
 8 ... c5 (D)

Contesting the centre so early is a popular equalizing try. Black hopes that the symmetry resulting from the liquidation of the centre pawns will go towards nullifying White's advantage. However, White's lead in development and superior freedom of movement for his pieces are enough to keep him in front.



9 dxc5

Undoubtedly the best. 9 ♖d1 ♘d5 10 ♗xc4 (10 dxc5? ♘b4) 10...♘c6 11 dxc5, for instance, presents Black with a pleasant choice of 11...♘a5 12 ♗d3 ♘b4 or 11...♘e3. Nor is 9 ♗xc4 b5 10 ♗c2 ♙b7 11 dxc5 ♙e4 12 ♗c3 ♘bd7 desirable for White.

9 ... ♘c6

Usually Black plays 9...♙xc5 first and then 10...♘c6, which does not allow the possibility mentioned in the note to White's 10th move. However, in reply to 9...♙xc5 White is not obliged to transpose with 10 ♘a3 ♘c6. Instead he can choose to capture on c4 with the other knight: 10 ♘e5 ♘bd7 11 ♘xc4 ♗e7 12 ♘c3 h6 (12...e5 13 ♙g5!) 13 a5! e5 14 ♘a4 ♙b4 15 b3 and White stands better, Smyslov-Medina, Skopje OL 1972.

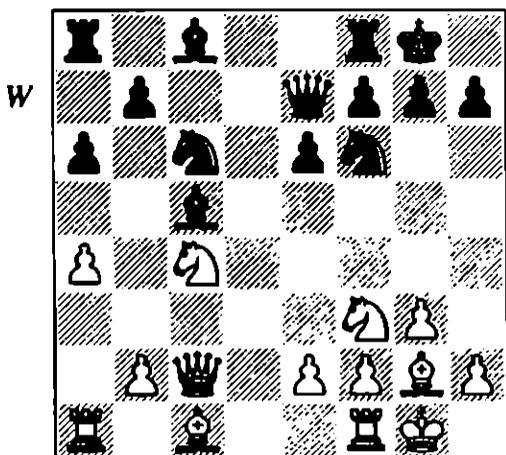
Taking on c5 with the queen has also been tried: 9...♗a5 10 ♘bd2 ♗xc5 (after 10...c3 11 ♘b3 cxb2 12 ♙xb2 Black has lost valuable time) 11 ♘xc4 ♘bd7 12 b4! ♗h5 13 ♙d2 ♘d5 14 ♗b1 ♙f6 15 ♖a3 ♘7b6 16 ♘a5 and White was better in Shpinker-Matsukevich, USSR 1978.

10 ♘a3

White ignores the invitation to take on c4 with the queen, 10 ♖xc4. Mikhalchishin-Kuzmin, USSR 1977 saw Black sacrifice a pawn for an initiative after 10...e5 11 ♙e3 h6 12 ♖c1 ♙e6 13 ♘a3 ♘a5 14 ♚d1 ♖c7 15 ♖c3 ♘d5 16 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe3 18 fxe3 ♙xc5, though 14 ♘d2 and 14 ♖e1 may improve. Black also has good chances to level the game with 10...♖d5. We can conclude, therefore, that the order of Black's 9th and 10th moves is a matter of taste.

Furthering development with 10 ♘a3 and 11 ♘xc4 makes more sense than moving the queen around. Moreover, by posting a knight on c4 White highlights one of the problems with 8...c5, namely the weak b6-square. The prospect of White being able to use b6 and/or a5 at some point often prompts Black into either wasting a tempo with ...a6-a5 (preventing a4-a5), or pushing ...b7-b6, which creates another hole on c6.

10 ... ♙xc5  
 11 ♘xc4 ♖e7 (D)



The e7-square provides the black queen with a safe haven. From here

the c5-bishop is defended and 12...e5 is threatened. White has two ways to prevent this liberating advance.

12 ♘fe5

The main alternative is 12 ♙f4 (12 ♘ce5 ♘xe5 leads back to the game). Then:

a) Tkachev-Bryson, Cappelle la Grande 1994 continued 12...♘d5 13 ♙d2 ♘db4 (13...e5 14 ♘fxe5) 14 ♖b3 f6 (14...a5 15 ♘ce5 b6 16 ♙g5 ♖a7 17 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 18 ♙e3 was slightly better for White in Kamsky-Speelman, Linares 1991) 15 a5!? ♖h8 16 ♘b6 ♙xb6 17 axb6 e5 18 ♚fc1 ♙e6 19 ♖a3 with an unclear position.

b) In Kaidanov-Marciano, Andorra 1991, Black got his pieces tangled up after 12...♘b4 13 ♖b3 b6 14 ♚fd1 ♘fd5 15 ♙g5 f6 16 ♙d2 ♚b8 (16...a5 leaves Black slightly worse) 17 e4 ♘c7 18 ♘d4!. The game continued 18...♙d7 19 ♙f4 ♚fc8 20 ♘d6 ♚f8 21 ♘6f5 ♖d8 22 ♙xc7 ♖xc7 23 ♘xe6 ♙xe6 24 ♖xe6+ ♖f7 25 ♘xg7 and White soon won.

12 ... ♘xe5

Black, too, can advance a knight into enemy territory with 12...♘d4. However, the knight on e5 is well posted and, if White does retreat, the d3-square is as useful in this variation as it is in other lines of the Catalan. As for Black, it is clear that his knight will soon be evicted from d4, but the only available square is f5 (returning to c6 is not good), which is not a good home for the knight as much of the action takes place on the other flank. Ftačnik-Nogueiras, Cienfuegos'1980 continued 13 ♖d1

♙d8 14 e3 ♘f5 (14...♘c6 15 ♘xc6 bxc6 16 ♙d2 e5 17 ♖c2 ♙b7 18 ♙a5 ♚e8 19 ♙c3 ♙d6 20 ♚fd1 and Black had nothing to show for his weak queenside pawns, Adamski-Swic, Poland 1978) 15 ♖b3 ♘d5 (15...♖c7 16 ♘d3 ♚b8 17 ♙d2 b6 18 ♘xc5 bxc5 19 ♖a3 ♖a7 20 ♙a5 with a considerable positional advantage, Polugaevsky-Ivkov, Amsterdam 1972) 16 ♙d2 f6 17 ♘d3 ♙a7 18 ♙a5. White controls more key squares and enjoys a lead in development.

Notice in the above examples how White was able to exploit the a5-square.

13 ♘xe5 ♙d4

Polugaevsky's recommendation, which aims to keep White's advantage to a minimum. The point is to meet 14 ♘f3 with 14...e5.

Instead 13...♖c7?! 14 ♘c4 (14 ♙e3!?) makes life more uncomfortable for Black, but 13...♘d5 is a perfectly credible alternative. After 14 ♘d3 ♙d6 15 ♙d2, 15...♙d7 16 ♖b3 suddenly gave White the nasty threat e2-e4 in Tukmakov-Petersson, Bern 1991. The game continued 16...a5 17 ♚fd1 ♙c6 18 e4 ♘b4 19 e5 ♙c5 20 ♙xb4 ♙xb4 21 ♙xc6 bxc6 22 ♘b4 axb4 23 ♚d6 ♖b7 24 ♖c4 ♚fc8 25 ♚ad1 ♖b6 26 b3 h6 27 ♚c1 and White had the win in his sights. Perhaps Black should settle for a slightly worse position with the retreat 15...♘f6.

14 ♙f4!?

14 ♘d3 followed by 15 ♙d2 is known to give White the better game.

14 ... ♘h5

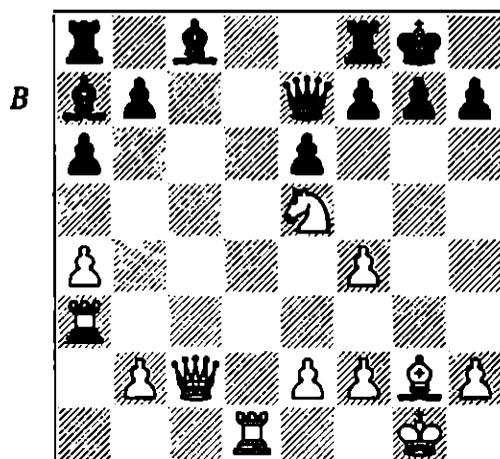
14...g5? must be investigated. Then 15 ♘f3? ♙xf2+! (15...gxf4 16 ♘xd4 fxf3 17 hxg3 e5 18 ♘f5) 16 ♚xf2 gxf4 17 ♘g5 (17 gxf4 ♘g4 18 ♘g5 f6) 17...h6 works out well for Black. This leaves 15 e3! gxf4 (alternatively 15...♙b2 16 ♖xb2 gxf4 17 exf4 is excellent for White) 16 exd4 fxf3 17 fxf3, when White dominates.

15 ♚fd1 ♘xf4

16 gxf4 ♙a7

Now that he has spent a couple of moves removing White's dark-squared bishop Black is not willing to part with his own. 16...♙xe5 17 fxe5 ♚b8 (17...♚d8 18 ♚xd8+ ♖xd8 19 ♚d1) 18 ♚d6! b5 19 a5 is a good example of how Black can find himself being overpowered.

17 ♚a3! (D)



As we shall see, the rook has many uses on the third rank, thanks in no small part to the capture g3xf4. Black's problem is his inability to bring his pieces into the game, which may explain his eagerness to evict the knight.

17 ...

f6

After this move White shows no mercy, leaving Black in a daze for the rest of the game. Other moves, however, fail to give Black any hope of forcing White to loosen the grip.

a) 17...♖b8 18 ♖c3 ♙b6 19 ♙e4 and White gets a free run at his opponent's king.

b) 17...♗c5 comes to mind, but after 18 ♗xc5 ♙xc5 19 ♖c3 ♙b4 20 ♖c4 a5 (20...♙a5 21 b4) 21 ♖c7 White retains a dangerous initiative in true Catalan style. The exchange of queens as a means of alleviating pressure is less successful in this opening than in many others.

18 ♖h3!

And why not?

18 ... fxe5

a) After 18...g6 19 ♖xg6 hxg6 20 ♗xg6+ ♗g7 21 ♗h5 White threatens to make full use of the g3-square.

b) 18...g5 also results in White reaching an overwhelming position, though there is only one way to achieve this:

b1) 19 ♙e4? is tempting and incorrect, e.g. 19...fxe5 20 ♙xh7+ (20 ♖xh7 ♗f6) 20...♙h8 21 ♙f5+ (21 ♗g6 ♗g7 22 ♗h5 exf4) 21...♙g8 22 ♙xe6+ ♙xe6 23 ♗g6+ ♗g7 24 ♗xe6+ ♗f7 (24...♖f7 25 ♖h6) 25 ♗xe5 ♗f6, etc.

b2) 19 ♖g4? gxf4.

b3) 19 ♖d3? e5.

b4) A bit of lateral thinking leads us to 19 ♖c3!. Then after 19...♙b6 (19...fxe5 20 ♖c7, or 19...♙b8 20 ♖xc8 fxe5 21 fxg5) 20 ♖c4 ♙c7 21 fxg5 fxg5 22 a5 Black has a terribly weak kingside and serious difficulties with development. Of course,

unlike the game, Black will survive more than five or six moves, though there is nothing in the position to suggest that White's advantage is not equally as decisive as it is in the game.

19 ♗xh7+ ♙f7

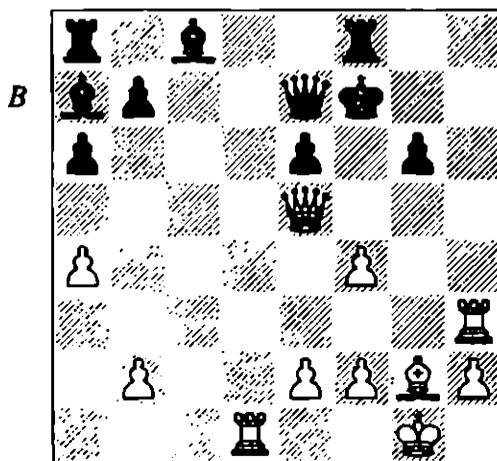
20 ♗h5+

As soon as a piece has been invested in an attack it is imperative that the aggressor endeavours to continue generating powerful threats without providing the opponent with annoying counterplay (or a decisive lead in material once an offensive has failed). One such example is 20 fxe5 ♙e8 21 ♙e4 ♙d7 22 ♙g6+ ♙d8 23 ♖hd3 ♖xf2, etc.

20 ... g6

20...♙g8 is refuted by 21 ♙e4! ♖f5 22 ♙xf5 exf5 23 ♖d8+! ♗xd8 24 ♗h8+ ♙f7 25 ♗xd8.

21 ♗xe5 (D)



The fact that White is a piece down is hardly relevant – two of Black's pieces are yet to move!

21 ... ♙e8

There is no defence.

a) 21...♗c5 22 ♖h7+ ♙e8 23 ♗g7 ♗xf2+ 24 ♙h1.

b) 21...♜f6 22 ♜c7+ ♚e8 23 ♠h7 ♙xf2+ 24 ♚h1 e5 (24...♞f7 25 ♞d8+) 25 fxe5.

22 ♙e4 ♜f6

Again there are two other defensive tries which White needs to have calculated:

a) 22...♞g8 23 ♠h8 ♜f7 (or 23...♞xh8 24 ♙xg6+) 24 ♞xg8+ ♜xg8 25 ♜f6.

b) 22...♜f7 23 ♜g5 ♙xf2+ 24 ♚g2 ♜f6 25 ♙xg6+ ♚e7 26 ♠h7+.

23 ♜c7 ♙xf2+

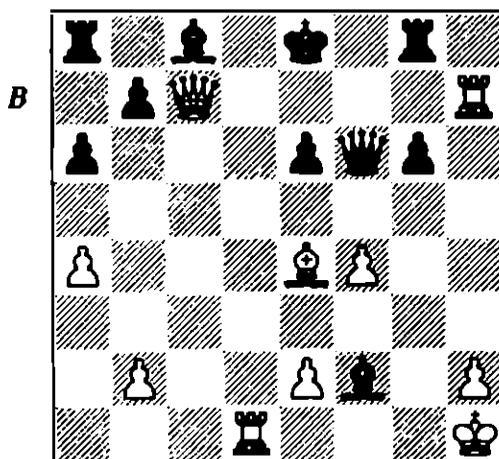
24 ♚h1

Threatening 25 ♞d8+.

24 ... ♞g8

Or 24...♞f7 25 ♠h8+.

25 ♠h7 (D) 1-0

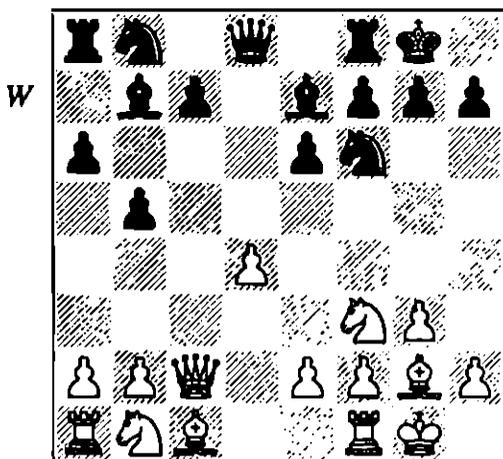


Apart from the final move (which threatens 26 ♞d8+) there is also the immediate 25 ♙xg6+! ♞xg6 26 ♠h8+, etc.

8 5...♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♚c2 a6:  
8 ♚xc4

This straightforward recapture is very popular at international level. Rather than frustrating his opponent's queenside expansion White even invites the ...b7-b5 advance.

After the natural 8...b5 9 ♚c2 (9 ♚b3 only makes the freeing ...c7-c5 easier to carry out) 9...♗b7 (*D*) we arrive at the following position:



White almost always continues by developing his dark-squared bishop to d2, f4 or g5, the latter two being more active.

10 ♗f4

10 ♗f4 is the most direct move, forcing Black to put the ...c7-c5 plan on hold for a few moves by actually attacking the c-pawn. How Black responds depends on how annoying he finds White's dark-squared bishop: 10...♘d5 (Games 14 and

15), 10...♘c6 intending ...♘c6-b4-d5 (Games 16 and 17) and 10...♗d6 (Game 18) have all been played.

Game 14

Ribli – Karpov

Amsterdam 1980

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 ♗e7  
5 ♘f3 0-0 6 0-0 dxc4 7 ♚c2 a6

8 ♚xc4

b5

9 ♚c2

♗b7

10 ♗f4

♘d5

Although this seems like a logical reaction it does have a couple of drawbacks – namely the time spent in performing the exchange and White's tightened grip on the centre after a subsequent ...♘d5xf4, g3xf4.

11 ♘c3

The retreat 11 ♗d2 makes little sense; Black has an easy game after 11...♘d7 12 ♘c3 ♘b4 13 ♚b1 c5.

11 ...

♘xf4

Otherwise Black's 10th move has no point.

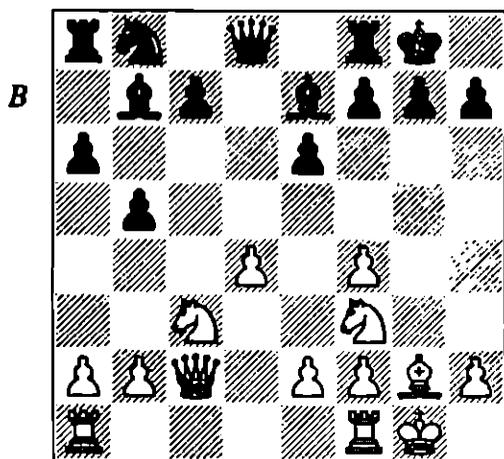
12 gxf4 (*D*)

White is happy with this exchange since his opponent's pieces are nowhere near ready to exploit the gaps in his king position.

12 ...

♘d7

Black concentrates on supporting the advance of his c-pawn, a thrust



which is designed to undermine White's control of the centre. The alternative, 12... ♖c6, is examined in the next main game. Other moves do not help Black:

a) 12... ♜c8 13 ♖e4 ♖d7 14 ♜ac1 g6 15 ♖e5 ♖xe5 16 fxe5 ♖xe4 17 ♖xe4 ♜a7 18 ♖c6 ♜b8 19 ♜e4 a5 20 ♜c3 left Black too cramped in Quinteros-Henley, Lone Pine 1976.

b) Black suffered similar punishment in Inkirov-Bönsch, Stara Zagora Z 1990, when after 12... ♜a7?! 13 ♜fd1 ♖d6 14 ♖g5! g6 15 ♖xb7 ♜xb7 16 ♜e4 c6 17 ♜f3 ♖e7 18 ♖ge4 b4 19 ♖c5 White was well in control.

c) 12... g6?! 13 ♜fd1 ♖d6 14 e3 ♖xf3 15 ♖xf3 ♜a7 16 a4! b4 17 ♖e4 ♖d7 18 ♜c6! (homing in on the traditionally vulnerable c6-square) 18... ♖f6 19 ♖c5 ♜e8 20 a5! with a clear territorial and positional advantage to White, Csom-Barczay, Kecskemet 1975.

### 13 ♜fd1

White does better to bring his rook to the centre, in anticipation of a future exchange after ...c7-c5, rather than commit himself too early. After the forcing 13 ♖g5 ♖xg5 14

♖xb7 Black can chip away at the white kingside with 14... ♖xf4! 15 ♖xa8 ♜h4. Gutman-Kochiev, USSR 1978 continued 16 ♜fd1 ♜xa8 17 ♜e4 ♜xh2+ 18 ♖f1 ♜e8 19 ♜f3 ♖d6 20 e3 f5 with an unclear position. Less drastic but equally ineffective is 13 ♖e4: 13... ♜c8 14 ♜fd1 (14 ♖c5 ♖xc5 15 dxc5 ♜d4) 14... c5 15 dxc5 ♖xc5 16 ♖xc5 ♜xc5 17 ♜xc5 ♖xc5 18 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 19 ♜c1 ♜c8 20 ♖e5 ♖a4, as was seen in Inkirov-Georgiev, Bulgarian Ch 1982, illustrates the relative ease with which Black is able to steer the game to equality when White fails to keep up the pressure.

### 13 ... ♜c8

Black removes his queen from the potentially dangerous d-file, supporting ...c7-c5 in the process. 13... c5? is asking for trouble after White's 13th move because 14 dxc5 creates an uncomfortable pin (♖f3-e5 is threatened). Giving up the fight to push the c-pawn gives White too much space and leaves the c6-square vulnerable:

a) 13... ♖f6 14 ♖e5! ♖xg2 15 ♖xg2 ♖d6 16 e3 ♜c8 17 ♖e4 ♖d5 (White's superiority in the centre is sufficient for an advantage after 17... ♖xe4) 18 ♜ac1 f6 19 ♖c6 favoured White in Böhm-Luczak, Polanica Zdroj 1980.

b) 13... ♖xf3 14 ♖xf3 ♜b8 was tried in Smyslov-Barczay, Kapfenberg Echt 1970, but after 15 ♖e4 ♖d6 16 e3 ♜h4 17 ♖h1 ♖f6 18 ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 19 ♜g1 ♜e7 20 ♖c6 White had managed yet again to land a piece on c6.

## 14 ♖e4!

Ribli's move, which has been employed by professionals ever since this famous victory. Nevertheless, GM Sosonko chose 14 a4!? against Dutreeuw, Brussels Z 1993, judging that after 14...b4 (14...bxa4 leaves the a6-pawn weak) 15 ♖e4 Black's separated queenside pawns and the newly relinquished c4-square should be enough to dissuade him from simplifying with 15...c5. This proved correct, and the game continued 15...♗d5 16 ♜ac1 ♜a7 17 ♖e5 ♖xe5 18 fxe5 ♜a8 19 ♜d3, when Black lost patience and broke out with 19...f5 20 exf6 gxf6 21 ♗f3 ♜d8. After 22 ♜e3 ♖h8 23 ♖h1 ♜g8 24 ♜g1 White had a better game thanks to his superior pieces and pawn structure.

## 14 ... c5

The thematic freeing advance which, incidentally, is not possible after 14...♗xe4 15 ♜xe4 as 15...c5 loses the exchange to 16 ♖g5. However, interesting is 14...f5, which arose in the game Ricardi-Granda, Buenos Aires 1991. Still concentrating on the c5-square, White played 15 ♖c5?!, and after 15...♖xc5 16 dxc5 ♗e4! 17 ♜b3 c6 18 ♖e5 ♗d5 Black had succeeded in muddying the waters by establishing control of the important d5-square. Instead of the inaccurate 15 ♖c5 Kotronias recommends 15 ♖g3, giving 15...c5 16 dxc5 ♖xc5 17 ♜ac1 a5 (ruling out b2-b4) 18 e3 ♜d8 with chances for both sides. It is true that Black's knight is posted well on c5, but the e6-pawn is weak (b5 and c6 may also

prove vulnerable once the light-squared bishops are exchanged), and with two knights White is better placed to use the e5-square than Black is to use e4.

15 dxc5 ♖xc5

16 ♖xc5 ♜xc5

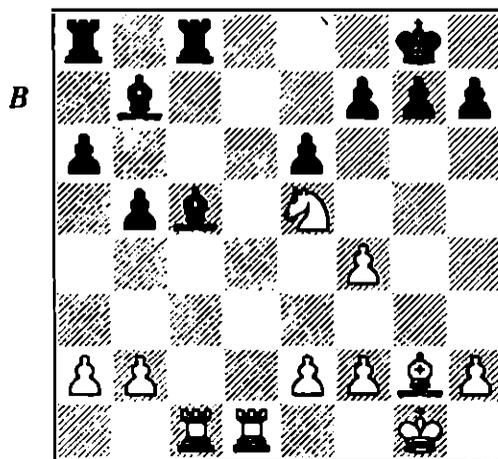
After 16...♗xc5 White does not have the typical Catalan tactic 17 ♖g5 intending 17...g6 18 ♗xb7 ♜xb7 19 ♜xc5 because 17...♗xf2+ and 18...♜xc2 wins for Black. However, 17 ♜ac1 gives White extra pull on the c-file and consequently a superior version of the game.

17 ♜xc5 ♗xc5

18 ♜ac1 ♜fc8

The king's rook comes to the c-file in order to clear the path for the king to join the game via f8.

19 ♖e5! (D)



The advance of Black's queenside pawns has left Black a little vulnerable on the light squares (c6, a6), so White is willing to part with his bishop.

19 ... ♗xg2

20 ♖xg2

White has a slight but definite edge. His versatile knight eyes the

weak c6-square and the rooks are well placed on the centre files. A crucial factor here is the relative strengths and weaknesses of the pawn configurations. It is irrelevant that Black's early pawn advances on the queenside were carried out to gain time on the enemy queen – the only visible result now is that they are over-extended. A look at the white pawns tells a different story – five out of the six pawns are yet to leave their original squares, well out of the reach of Black's pieces. Indeed the bishop, while having a certain amount of freedom, is (of course) limited to operating only on the dark squares, unlike the knight. As for the doubled f-pawns, the f4-pawn provides White with extra protection of the important e5-square.

In fact Karpov found this typical Catalan ending difficult to defend, and the rest of this instructive game can be found in the Introduction.

Game 15

Permiakov – Berzinš

Latvian Ch 1994

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♖g2  
 ♖e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d4 dxc4 7 ♜c2 a6 8  
 ♜xc4 b5 9 ♜c2 ♖b7 10 ♖f4 ♘d5  
 11 ♘c3 ♘xf4 12 gxf4

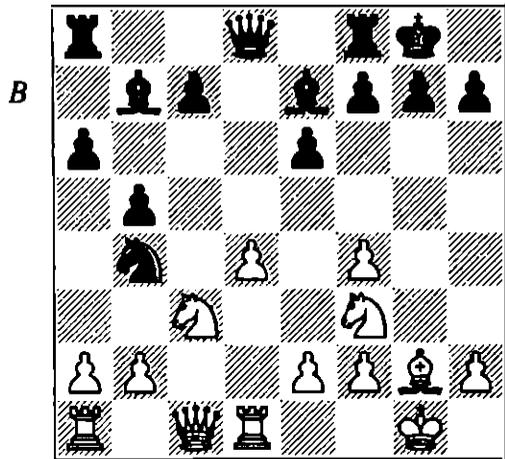
12 ... ♘c6

Now the knight is ready to harass the queen with ... ♘c6-b4, when the d5-square will be available if necessary.

13 ♜fd1 ♘b4

14 ♜c1 (D)

14 ... ♜d6?!



As is often the case the natural move is not necessarily the most accurate. Black's queen is heading for b6, but this manoeuvre does nothing to diminish White's authority.

a) Best is 14... ♜b8, which is not easy to find. Black concedes the d-file but retains the opportunity to push the c-pawn immediately. Black was successful in Ribli-Grünfeld, Skara Echt 1980, yet this was due entirely to White's rather helpful play: 15 e4? (too loose) 15...c5 16 d5 c4 17 ♘e5 ♖d6! 18 a3 ♖xe5 19 fxe5 ♘d3, etc. A big improvement is 15 a3, which is enough to keep White in the driving seat. In Stangl-Ruf, Kecskemet 1990, White maintained his advantage after 15... ♘d5 16 ♘e5 (16 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 17 ♘e5 also favours White but Stangl's choice is preferable) 16... ♘xc3 17 ♜xc3 ♖xg2 18 ♖xg2 ♖d6 19 ♜ac1 ♜b7+ (trading off the final pair of minor pieces still leaves White dominating the centre and the c-file) 20 ♘c6 ♖h8 21 ♜f3.

b) 14... ♘d5 (this is far more likely to be encountered at club level than 14... ♜b8) 15 ♘e4! ♖d6 16 ♘c5! ♜a7 (16... ♘xf4? 17 ♘xb7 ♜b8 18

♜c6), and now both 17 ♖e5 and 17 e3 leave White with the better position, whereas 17 ♖xb7?! ♜xb7 18 e3 ♜b6 19 ♜c2 ♜e7 was equal in the game Shvedchikov-Karasev, USSR 1979.

15 e3 ♜b6

The problem with having the queen on d6 is that 15...c5? now loses a pawn to 16 a3 ♖d5 17 ♖e4.

16 a3 ♖d5

17 ♖e4

Not 17 ♖e4? ♖xf4!.

17 ... ♜fd8

18 ♖e4

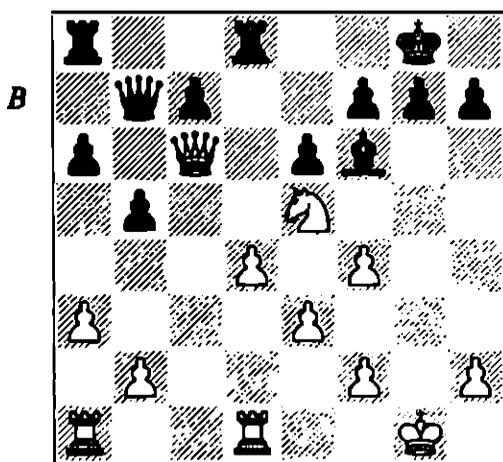
Black is struggling because his forces are tied to the defence of the weaknesses on c5 and c6. Faced with the prospect of ♜c1-c2 followed by ♜a1-c1, he now seeks to relieve the pressure through exchanges.

18 ... ♖f6

19 ♖xf6+ ♜xf6

20 ♜xb7 ♜xb7

21 ♜c6! (D)



It is usually a good indication that things have gone well for White if he has been able to keep his opponent's c7-pawn at bay and then add to Black's suffering by establishing a

piece on c6. The use of this key square forms an important part of White's strategy in positions which feature such pawn configurations.

21 ... ♜xc6

After 21...♜ab8 22 ♜xb7 ♜xb7 23 ♖c6 ♜d6 24 ♜dc1 White's command of the c-file guarantees a clear advantage (24...♜b6 25 ♖a5).

22 ♖xc6 ♜d6

23 ♜dc1!

The rook has completed its duties on the d-file, while the other rook supports a break on the a-file.

23 ... h6

Preparation for a kingside offensive, a distraction which is sorely needed since Black is clearly experiencing difficulties on the other flank.

24 a4!

White wastes no time.

24 ... bxa4

Unfortunately for Black he has little choice but to provide White with another target in the form of the a-pawn. Trying to keep the queenside intact does not help: 24...♜e8 (24...♜c8 25 axb5 axb5 26 ♖a7) 25 axb5 axb5 26 ♜a7 ♜c8 27 ♜b7 leaves Black about to lose a pawn.

25 ♜xa4 g5

26 fxg5 hxg5

27 ♜c5 ♖g7

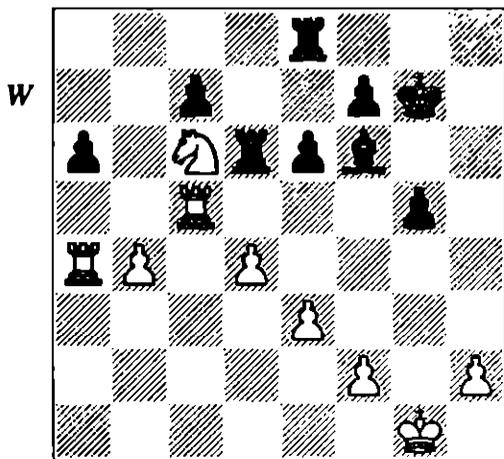
28 b4

Threatening b4-b5xa6.

28 ... ♜e8 (D)

29 ♖g2!

Having developed a stranglehold since the late stage of the opening it is in White's interest to preserve the bind rather than spoil the fruits of his labour by capturing the lonely



a6-pawn immediately, thus inviting a simplification which would keep Black's disadvantage to a minimum owing to the newly created pin on the 6th rank – 29 ♖xa6 e5 30 dxe5 ♖xe5.

After the text Black is left searching for constructive waiting moves that are not there, so now he faces facts and again looks to the kingside for counterplay.

29 ... ♙e7  
 30 ♖xa6 f5  
 31 b5

Defending the a6-rook in order to free the knight. In fact White now threatens 32 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 (32... ♖xa6 33 ♖xf5+) 33 ♖xc7!, netting a second pawn.

31 ... ♖d7

31... ♖d5 also runs into 32 ♖xe7, when both 32... ♖xc5 33 dxc5 ♖xe7 34 ♖a7 (followed by 35 b6) and 32... ♖xe7 33 ♖xe6! are decisive.

32 ♖e5! ♙xc5

Forced, as otherwise the c-pawn falls.

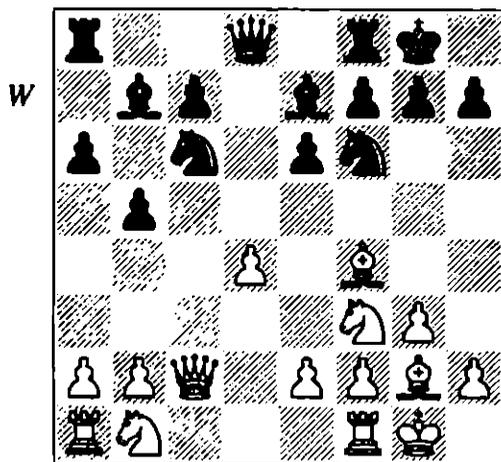
33 ♖xd7 ♙d6?!

A lesser evil is 33... ♙b4 34 ♖a7 ♙d6, when 35 ♖b6-c4 puts White on the road to victory.

Now White can accelerate the winning process by simply freeing the b-pawn. The game ended: 34 ♖xd6! cxd6 35 b6 ♖e7 36 b7 ♖xd7 37 b8 ♜g4 and Black resigned (1-0).

Game 16  
**Ribli – Speelman**  
*Moscow OL 1994*

1 ♖f3 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2  
 ♙e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d4 dxc4 7 ♜c2 a6 8  
 ♜xc4 b5 9 ♜c2 ♙b7 10 ♙f4  
 10 ... ♖c6 (D)

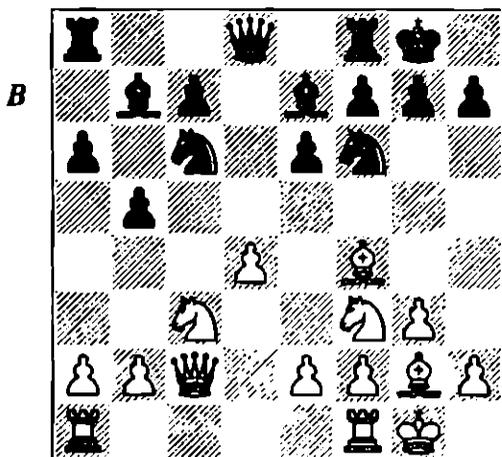


The most frequent choice at master level. Despite the fact that this move obstructs the c-pawn Black is not giving up on the thematic freeing advance, which will become more of a reality after ... ♖c6-b4. 10... ♖c6 is indeed a good move, and is one of the reasons why I prefer the variation with 8 a4. However, the average club player must either know his theory very well or be able to calculate accurately when considering his 10th move options, as Black's 11th move in the main line appears at first glance to lose a pawn.

11 ♖d1

White may, in fact, ignore the attack on his d-pawn and simply develop his queen's knight:

a) 11 ♖c3 (*D*) is the most popular alternative, after which Black has a choice:



a1) 11...♙b4 12 ♗b1 (12 ♗c1 transposes to the main game) 12...c5! 13 dxc5 ♙xc5 14 ♙e5?! (14 ♖g5 ♙xg2 15 ♗xg2 looks equal) 14...♖g4 15 ♖e4 ♙xe4 16 ♗xe4 f5! 17 ♗b1 was played in Kirov-Vera, Timisoara 1987. After 17...♗b6 18 e3 ♙xe3! 19 fxe3 ♖xe5 20 ♖xe5 ♗xe3+ 21 ♖f2 ♗xe5 22 ♙xa8 ♖xa8 Black stood better. White was successful with 17 ♗f4 in Inkiöv-Speelman, Novi Sad OL 1990, but everyone except GM Kotronias failed to spot that after 17...♖c2! 18 ♖ac1?? Black has the crushing 18...♖xf2!! (only 18...♖ge3 19 ♖xc2! ♖xc2 20 ♖g5 – which clearly favours White – had been considered) 19 ♖xf2 ♙e3, etc.

a2) The obvious 11...♖xd4 has been almost ignored since the continuation 12 ♖xd4 ♙xg2 13 ♖fd1 has long been regarded as good for White on account of 13...♙d5 14 e4. However, in Ninov-Lechtynsky,

Stara Zagora Z 1990, Black played 13...♙b7!?, challenging his opponent to demonstrate an advantage. In fact, after 14 ♖xe6 ♗e8 15 ♖xf8 ♗c6 16 f3 b4 17 ♖ac1 bxc3 18 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 19 ♖xc3 ♗xf8 20 ♖xc7 ♙d5 Black had a perfectly comfortable position. We can conclude (for the moment at least) that 11 ♖c3 offers White very little. Perhaps after 11...♖xd4 12 ♖xd4 ♙xg2, 13 ♖xe6 fxe6 14 ♗xg2 is worth a try.

b) 11 ♖bd2! also invites Black to grab the d-pawn, but this time 11...♖xd4 12 ♖xd4 ♙xg2 13 ♖xe6 fxe6 14 ♗xg2 leaves White with the extra possibility of ♖d2-f3. The game Mochalov-Itkis, USSR 1983 continued 11...♖c8 12 ♖b3 ♖b4 13 ♗c1 ♙d5 14 ♗d1 ♙e4 15 ♖e1 c5 16 ♖xc5 ♙xc5 17 dxc5 ♖xc5 with an equal position, while Mochalov's suggested improvement 14 ♖fd2 ♙xg2 15 ♗xg2 ♗d5+ 16 f3 ♗a8 17 ♙e3 (with the idea of ♙e3-g1 followed by e2-e4) seems irrelevant in view of Kotronias's 15...c5 (reserving the check on d5), which solves Black's opening problems.

Returning to the main game, the text move puts the onus on Black to avoid being clamped.

11 ... ♖b4

The point. After dealing with the attack on his c-pawn by blocking the c-file Black immediately leaves his pawn undefended, since 12 ♗xc7? loses the exchange after 12...♗xc7 13 ♙xc7 ♖c2 14 ♖e1 ♖xa1 15 ♙xb7 ♖a7. The general unawareness of this possibility at club level probably explains why 10...♖d5 is so popular.

It is preferable for Black to hit the queen now because 12 ♖b3 can then be met with 12...♙d5. In Palatnik-G.Kuzmin, Kiev 1984 Black inserted 11...♞c8, but after 12 ♖c3 ♖b4 13 ♖b3 ♖bd5 14 ♖e5 White had an improved version of the main lines.

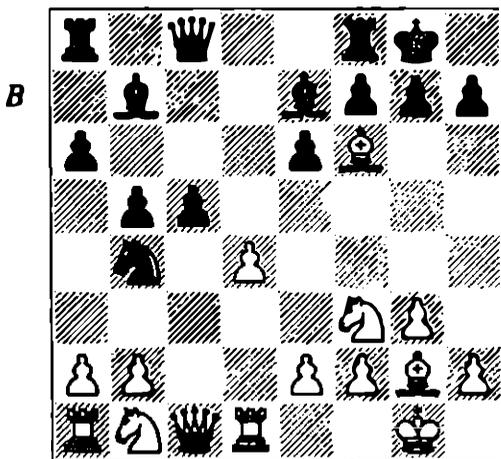
12 ♖c1 ♞c8

Now Black takes his turn to bring a rook to the same file as the enemy queen. 12...♖bd5 features in the next main game.

The other important alternative is 12...♖c8, which prepares the ...c7-c5 thrust without Black having to worry about a subsequent d4xc5. Again it is necessary for Black to be aware of – or to have calculated in advance – the fact that 13 ♙xc7 runs into 13...♖fd5! 14 a3 (14 ♙f4 ♖c2) 14...♖xc7 with a good game.

Since 13 ♖bd2 c5 produces instant equality, the most telling reply to 12...♖c8 is 13 ♙g5!:

a) The idea is to answer 13...c5 with 14 ♙xf6 (D):



a1) 14...♙xf6 15 dxc5 a5 16 ♖a3 ♙d5 17 e4 ♙xe4 18 ♖xb5 saw White get the better of the complications in Vera-Sisniega, Mexico 1984.

a2) 14...♙f6 maintains the defence of the c-pawn at the cost of damaging Black's kingside pawn structure. Then:

a21) The forcing 15 a3 ♖d5 16 e4 ♖b6 17 d5 exd5 has been tried several times, but White's compensation for the pawn is in doubt after 18 ♖f4 (18 ♖h4 ♞d8 19 ♖c3 d4 20 ♖e2 d3 21 ♖f4 c4 22 ♖f5 ♙f8 23 ♖h5 ♖e6 24 ♖h6+ ♖h8 25 ♙h3 ♖xh3 26 ♖xf7+ ♖g8 27 ♖h6+ led to a draw in Smejkal-Byrne, Baden 1980) 18...♖e6, though the position is complicated.

a22) In Agzamov-Karpov, USSR 1983 the sober continuation was 15 ♖c3 ♞d8 16 a3 ♖d5 17 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 18 dxc5 ♖xc5 19 ♖xc5 ♙xc5 20 ♖e1 ♙xg2 21 ♖xg2. Karpov then played 21...f5, and after 22 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 23 ♖d3 ♙e7 24 a4 bax4 25 ♞xa4 ♞d6 the game was equal. Instead of the unambitious 24 a4, Agzamov's proposed improvement 24 ♞c1 gives White the traditional Catalan slight endgame advantage, thanks to his more active pieces and Black's rather delicate pawn structure.

b) Afraid of the consequences of the exchange on f6, many players may opt to support the f6-knight first with 13...♖bd5 before pushing the c-pawn, but analysis by Smyslov has shown that if after 14 ♖bd2 Black continues 14...c5 then after 15 e4! he faces problems: 15...♖b4 (15...♖b6 16 e5 ♖fd7 17 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 18 dxc5) 16 e5 ♖fd5 17 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 18 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 19 dxc5 ♖d3 20 ♖b3 ♖xb2 21 ♞d7, etc. This leaves 14...h6,

when White took control of the c5-square and the centre in Smyslov-Olafsson, USSR-Rest of the World, Belgrade 1970: 15 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 16 ♜b3 ♖d6 17 ♜c5 ♖d5 18 ♜e5 ♖xg2 19 ♜xg2 with a structural and territorial advantage.

13 ♜c3

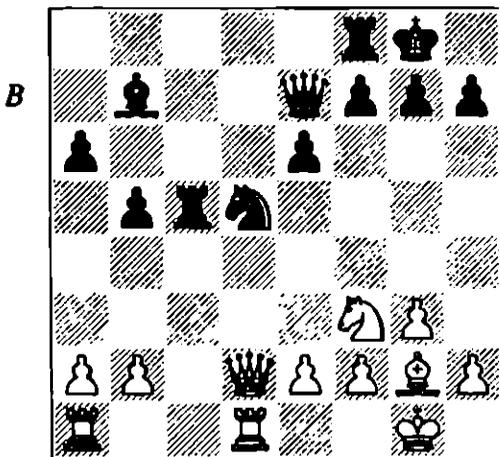
13 a4 has been suggested occasionally but the move is yet to catch on. The idea is to meet 13...c5 with 14 dxc5 ♜xc5 15 ♜c3.

13 ... ♜bd5

Black completes the knight manoeuvre, blocking the d-file in readiness for ...c7-c5.

14 ♜xd5

White almost always makes this capture. An interesting option is 14 ♖e5!?, which is well worth further investigation. The move was given a fairly recent outing in J.Horvath-Wells, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1993, which went 14...c5 15 dxc5 ♖xc5 16 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 17 ♜e4 ♜e7 18 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 19 ♜d2 (D).



Obviously White's advantage in the diagram position is small, but Black's queenside pawns form a target which the white pieces are well

placed to attack. Black, meanwhile, can look forward to no more than defending the ensuing ending, since his winning prospects are nil. The game continued 19...♜f6 (19...♜fc8 20 ♜e1 h6 21 ♜acl ♜xc1 22 ♜xc1 ♜xc1 23 ♜xc1 ♜f6 24 ♜d3 gave White the usual slight but persistent edge in Andersson-Kir.Georgiev, Sarajevo 1985, which White went on to win) 20 ♜d6! (20 ♜acl h6 21 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 22 ♜c1 ♜b6 23 ♜e5 ♖xg2 24 ♜xg2 is equal, Andersson-Beliavsky, Debrecen Echt 1992) 20...♜xd6 21 ♜xd6 ♜fc8 (21...♜c2? 22 ♜d4 ♜c7 23 ♖xb7 ♜xb7 24 ♜xa6) 22 ♜e1 ♖xg2 23 ♜xg2 a5 (23...♜5c6 24 ♜ad1 ♜f8 25 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 26 ♜d8+ ♜e7 27 ♜a8) 24 ♜a6 a4 25 b3 axb3 26 axb3 g5 27 ♜d3 ♜c2 (after 27...♜c3 28 b4 White still retains his slight advantage because of the vulnerable b5-pawn) 28 ♜a8 ♜xa8 29 ♜xa8+ ♜g7 30 ♜f1 ♜e4 31 b4 ♜d2+ 32 ♜e1 ♜b3 33 ♜a7 ♜f6 (33...♜c1? loses: 34 ♜d1 ♜a2 35 ♜xa2 ♜xa2 36 ♜c2 e5 37 ♜b3 e4 38 ♜xa2 exd3 39 exd3) 34 ♜d7 ♜a2 35 f3 h5 36 ♜f2 g4 37 f4 ♜d2 38 ♜b7 and Black resigned due to 38...♜d4 39 ♜e3 ♜b3 40 ♜e5. This game illustrates how difficult these endings are for Black, whereas White, on the other hand, has a ready-made plan of chipping away at the enemy queenside. These endings are just what White is looking for in the 8 ♜xc4 lines.

14 ... ♜xd5

Again the recapture with the knight is perhaps more 'natural' as it puts the question to White's bishop.

However, there is nothing wrong with 14...♙xd5, which seems to offer excellent chances of steering the game to equality and is consequently the main choice at international level. After 15 ♙e3 (preventing 15...c5) 15...c6 16 ♖e1, Atalik-Vaganian, Manila OL 1992 went 16...♖g4 17 ♙f3! ♖xe3 18 ♗xe3 ♙f6 19 ♗a3! (threatening 20 e4) 19...♙xf3 20 ♖xf3 ♗b6, when 21 b4! would have left White slightly better. In Khalifman-Lutz, Wijk aan Zee 1995, Black sensibly persevered with the ...c7-c5 plan with 16...♗b6!, earning full equality after 17 ♖d3 ♙xg2 18 ♖xg2 ♖d5 19 f3 c5 20 dxc5 ♖xe3+ 21 ♗xe3 ♙xc5 22 ♖xc5 ♗xc5 23 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 24 ♖ac1 ♖cc8 25 b4 g6, etc. With no subsequent improvements for White I recommend 14 ♙e5 (previous note).

15 ♙g5

15 e4!? is an untested suggestion which aims to exploit White's control of the centre, e.g. 15...♖f6 16 e5 ♖d5 17 ♙g5.

15 ... c5

Black finally manages to achieve the desired (necessary) liberating break.

16 dxc5 ♗e8

16...♖xc5? 17 ♗xc5 is one for Black to avoid. The text ensures that Black will soon win back his pawn, so White's task is to head for a favourable ending by exchanges.

17 ♙xe7 ♗xe7

18 ♖e5 ♖xc5

19 ♗d2 ♖c3

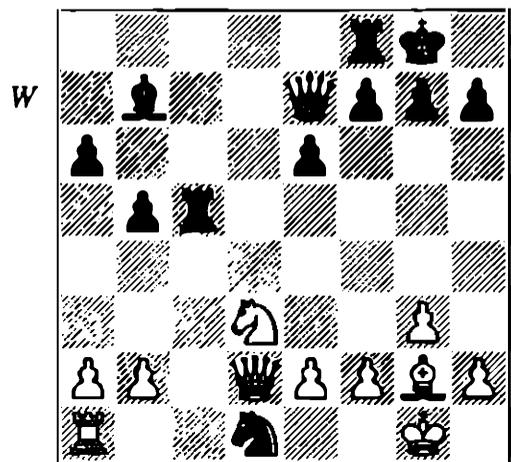
19...♗c7 may be better. In Ribli-Gligorić, Novi Sad 1982, White

obtained a minuscule edge after 20 ♖d3 ♖c2 21 ♗e1 ♖f6 22 ♙xb7 ♗xb7 23 ♖ac1, when 23...♖fc8? loses to 24 ♖c5!. 19...♖f6 runs into 20 ♖d7! (Speelman).

20 ♖d3!

After 20 bxc3 White would be happy with 20...♙xg2? 21 ♖d3, but 20...♖xe5 spoils the party.

20 ... ♖xd1 (D)



21 ♖xc5

White can try 21 ♙xb7!? (Speelman), with an unclear position after 21...♖xf2 22 ♖xf2 (22 ♖xc5 ♗xc5) 22...♖h5 (22...♖f5+ 23 ♙f3 e5 24 e4 ♖f6 25 ♖b4) 23 ♙f3 ♖xh2+ 24 ♖g1 ♖h6 25 ♖c1. White has two active pieces for a rook and two pawns but his kingside pawn structure has been damaged, although the rook on h6 does seem out of play.

21 ... ♗xc5

22 ♖xd1 ♙xg2

23 ♖xg2 h6

Black invests a tempo on providing his king with an escape square. White's edge is too small to mean anything.

24 ♖c1 ♗e7

25 ♗f4

The tempting 25 ♖c6?? loses:  
25...♗b7 26 ♗d6 ♖c8.

25 ... ♗d7  
26 b3 ♖c8!  
27 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8  
28 ♗d6 ♗c2  
29 ♗xa6

29 ♗d8+ ♖h7 30 ♗d3+ ♗xd3 31 exd3 produces an unclear pawn ending which is almost certainly drawn according to Speelman.

29 ... ♗e4+  
30 ♖g1 1/2-1/2

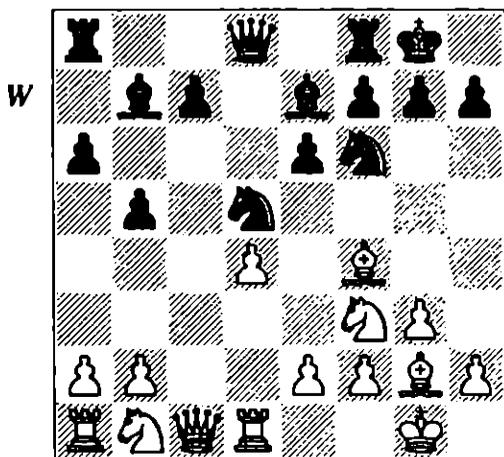
### Game 17

Heine Nielsen – J.Kristensen

*Ars 1995*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♙e7  
5 ♙g2 0-0 6 0-0 dxc4 7 ♗c2 a6 8  
♗xc4 b5 9 ♗c2 ♙b7 10 ♙f4 ♘c6  
11 ♖d1 ♘b4 12 ♗c1

12 ... ♘bd5 (D)



Before turning to the c-pawn Black brings his knight back into the game. By doing so before White's knight has arrived on c3 Black gives himself the option of capturing on f4 at some point.

13 ♘bd2

Preparing to post the knight on b3, from where White hopes to exert pressure on the crucial c5-square. As we have already seen, White does not have to worry about acquiring doubled f-pawns. 13 ♘c3 transposes to the previous game after 13...♖c8, while 13...♘xf4 was seen in Andersson-Braga, Mar del Plata 1982. After 14 ♗xf4 ♙d6 15 ♘e5 ♙xg2 16 ♖xg2 ♗b8 17 ♗f3 c5! 18 ♘c6 ♗b6 19 dxc5 ♙xc5 20 a4 bxa4 21 ♘xa4 ♗b5 Black was well on his way to a draw.

13 ... ♘xf4?!

I don't really trust this tempting capture in these positions. The temporary pawn sacrifice 13...c5 14 dxc5 ♖c8 is a more sensible alternative. Then after 15 ♘b3 Black must be careful how he regains the pawn:

a) 15...♘e4? invites 16 ♗b1!, intending 16...♘xc5 17 ♘xc5 and 18 e4.

b) Gligorić tried 15...♗e8 against Andersson in Bugojno 1982, but found himself much worse after 16 ♘e5 ♘xf4 17 gxf4 ♙xg2 18 ♖xg2 as 18...♘e4 allows 19 ♘d7.

c) 15...♘d7! is the only move. In Ribli-Vaganian, Mexico 1980, there followed 16 ♗c2 ♘xc5 17 e4 ♘d7! 18 ♗e2 ♘xf4 19 gxf4 ♗c7 20 ♖ac1 ♗xf4 21 ♖xd7 ♖xc1+ 22 ♘xc1 ♗xc1+, and now 23 ♗f1 would have been very good for White. One improvement for Black is 19...♖c7!, with chances for both sides.

14 gxf4 c5

Black abandoned this plan in Illescas-Campora, Spanish Ch 1995, selecting instead 14...♙d6. Play continued 15 ♘b3 (after 15.e3, 15...♗e7

16 ♖b3 ♜ac8 17 ♖a5 ♖d5 18 ♖c6 ♜d7 19 ♖fe5 and 15... ♖d7 16 ♜c2 g6 17 ♖b3 both favour White according to Gulko) 15... ♖d5 16 ♖e5 ♖xg2 17 ♜xg2 ♖d5 18 e4 ♖b6 19 ♖c5, and White had two annoying knights in his opponent's half of the board. Countering on the kingside with 19... ♜e8 20 b3 f6 21 ♖ed3 f5 22 f3 ♜h5 23 ♜f1! ♜f6 24 ♜h1 fxe4 25 fxe4 ♖xc5 26 ♖xc5 did not help Black shake off the grip.

15 dxc5 ♜c7

16 ♖b3

Stronger than the negative 16 c6?! ♜xc6 17 ♜xc6 ♖xc6 18 ♖e5 ♖xg2 19 ♜xg2 ♜fc8, which soon ended peacefully in Csom-Parma, Rome 1981. 16 e3 was similar in Illescas-Lautier, Madrid 1993: 16... ♜xc5 17 ♜xc5 ♖xc5 18 ♖b3 ♖e7 19 ♖e5 ♖xg2 20 ♜xg2 ♜fc8 21 ♜ac1 ♖d5 22 ♜f3 and White had slightly more than Csom but not enough, sharing the point 24 moves later.

16 ... ♜ac8

17 ♖e5

Inviting the usual exchange of light-squared bishops, a trade which is desirable to White because it removes another piece from Black's exposed queenside.

17 ... ♖xg2

18 ♜xg2 ♖xc5

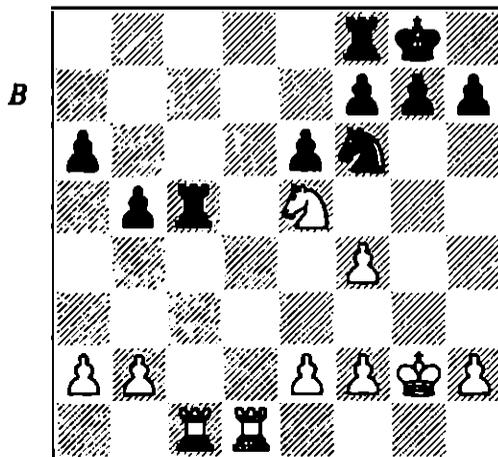
After all his trouble Black takes the pawn while he still can. 18... a5 19 c6!? could prove annoying.

19 ♖xc5 ♜xc5

20 ♜xc5 ♜xc5

21 ♜ac1 (D)

A familiar position, not unlike those which can arise from other



variations of the Catalan. Engineering the ...c7-c5 break has required considerable effort, and White has maintained his territorial superiority and lead in development right through to the ending. Black is no position to contest the c-file because of the weakness of his back rank, his remaining pieces are relatively passive (even the king is further from the action than White's) and the queenside pawns are a constant worry – factors which combine to accentuate Black's discomfort.

21 ... ♜d5

21... ♜xc1 22 ♜xc1 ♖d5 23 ♜f3 leaves White with a slight but promising long-term advantage.

22 ♜f3 ♜xd1

23 ♜xd1 ♖d5

The beginning of an erroneous plan to distract White from his slow squeeze policy by going active. Understandably Black was afraid of 23... ♜a8 24 e4, after which White is ready to invade on the queenside with all his pieces, yet this is perhaps the lesser evil.

24 e4 ♖b4?

Consistent and losing. In his bid for counterplay Black sends his

knight across the board into enemy territory, but there will be no way out. Black's last chance to continue the uphill struggle to a half-point is 24... ♖b6 25 ♜d6 ♜b8 26 ♖c6 ♜a8, when White must keep chipping away.

25 a3 ♖c2

25...f6 26 ♖d7 makes no difference.

26 ♖c6!

Suddenly Black's knight is deprived of a retreat square, and Black cannot evict White's knight in view of 26... ♜c8 27 ♖e7+.

26 ... f5

26...b4 27 axb4 e5 28 fxe5 produces the same result.

27 e5 1-0

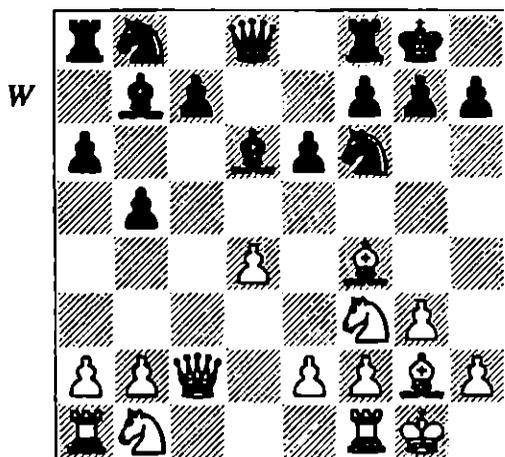
### Game 18

Ca.Hansen – S.Petersen

Denmark 1990

1 c4 ♖f6 2 d4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♖g2  
dxc4 5 ♖f3 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♗c2 a6  
8 ♗xc4 b5 9 ♗c2 ♖b7 10 ♖f4

10 ... ♖d6 (D)



Another 'knee-jerk' reaction to 10 ♖f4, defending the c-pawn while

challenging White's bishop. As we shall see in the notes to Black's 11th move, if Black gets the opportunity to swap on f4 he should probably decline. Having said this, White's most promising continuation involves moving his bishop yet again – this time to g5, exploiting the pin on the h4-d8 diagonal (if Black plays ... ♖d6-e7 then he is simply a move down on the 10 ♖g5 lines).

11 ♖bd2

11 ♖xd6?! is obviously what Black is hoping for: 11...cxd6 12 ♖bd2 ♗b6 13 e4 ♖c6 14 ♗d3 e5 15 d5 ♖b4 16 ♗b3 a5 (17 ♜ac1? ♖xe4! 18 ♖xe4 ♖xd5), Kavalek-Commons, USA Ch 1975, is one example. 11 ♖g5 merits attention, since Black has nothing better than transposing to the main game with 11... ♖bd7, in which case White has 'avoided' 11 ♖bd2 ♖xf4.

11 ... ♖bd7

If Black insists on trading bishops he should do so now. Despite giving White more control of the centre and potential play on the g-file, Karpov has played the black side of 11... ♖xf4 12 gxf4, so it requires investigation. Stangl seems to be an expert on this line.

a) In Stangl-Hedke, Dortmund 1993, Black exchanged his remaining bishop and established a knight outpost on d5: 12... ♖bd7 13 ♜fc1 (13 ♜fd1 ♜c8 14 ♖b3 ♖e4 15 ♗d2 ♖d5 16 ♜ac1 ♗e7 17 ♖c5 ♖xc5 18 ♜xc5 favoured White in Dizdarević-Cvetković, Yugoslavia 1984, while 13 e3 was played in Seirawan-Karpov, London 1984, when 13... ♜c8

should have met with 14 ♖b3 followed by ♜a1-c1 instead of Seirawan's 14 b4?, which created a long-term weakness on c4) 13... ♜c8 14 ♖b3 ♖e4 15 ♜c3 ♖d5 16 ♜d2 ♖xf3 17 ♖xf3 ♜h4 18 e3 f5. After 19 ♖h1 ♜f6 20 ♜g1 ♜h6 21 ♜g2 ♖h8 22 ♜c1 Black's kingside activity came to nothing, while on the other flank White was ready with ♜d2-a5 and ♖b3-c5.

b) Another of Stangl's games, Stangl-Stern, Bundesliga 1991, went 12... ♜d6 13 e3 ♖bd7 14 ♖b3 ♖e4 15 ♜c3 ♜ac8 16 ♜fc1 ♖d5 17 ♜d2. Even after the thematic 17...c5 (otherwise White can simply plant a piece on this square) 18 dxc5 ♖xc5 19 ♖xc5 ♜xc5 20 ♜d4 ♜xc1+ 21 ♜xc1 ♜b4 22 a3 ♜xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♖xg2 24 ♖xg2 ♜a8 25 ♜c6 Black found himself on the wrong side of yet another Catalan ending, throwing in the towel twenty moves later.

## 12 ♖g5

Of White's alternatives only 'd' promises anything:

a) 12 ♜fc1 ♜c8 13 ♖b3 ♖e4 14 ♜d1 ♜e7 with equality, Korchnoi-Drimer, Budapest 1961.

b) 12 ♜ac1 ♜c8 13 ♖b3 ♖e4 14 ♜d2 ♖d5 15 ♖xd6 cxd6 16 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 17 ♜c1 ♜a8 with equality, Heinig-Tischbierek, Leipzig 1979.

c) 12 ♖b3 ♖e4! 13 ♜c1 ♜c8 14 a4 (14... ♖xc5 15 dxc5 ♖xf4 16 gxf4 ♜d5) Black simply replies 14... ♜e7, when 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♜a7 looks active but achieves nothing. In fact in Vorsony-Schmid, corr. 1959, the rook was made to look rather pointless on a7: 16... ♖xf4 17 ♜xf4 ♜b4!

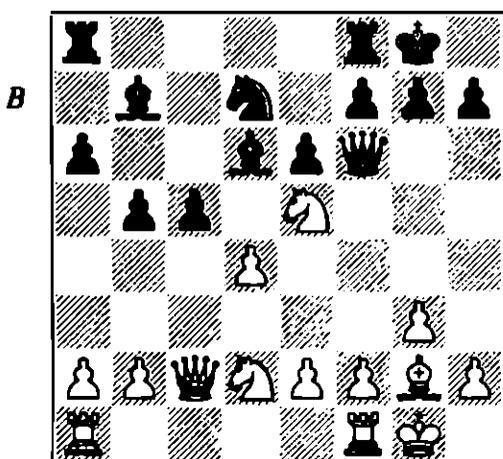
18 ♖bd2 ♖xf3 19 ♖xf3 c5 20 dxc5 ♜xc5 21 ♜a6 (21 ♜fa1? g5! 22 ♜e3 ♜xe3 23 fxe3 ♜c2 was terrible for White in Smyslov-Gligorić, Warsaw 1947) 21... ♖e5 22 ♖b7 ♖g6 23 ♜f3 ♜c7 with advantage to Black (the white pieces lack coordination).

d) The aggressive 12 a4!? puts Black's queenside under pressure and deters Black from playing 12... ♜c8 because then 13 axb5 axb5 leaves the b5-pawn open to attack and ♜a1-a7 is coming. 12... ♖xa4? simply leaves White with ideal targets on a6 and c7. Csom-Plachetka, Berlin 1979 illustrates how White may put the tension created by 12 a4 to good use: 12... ♜b8 (Black leaves a rook on the a-file, offers the b5-pawn support, adds to Black's influence of the b8-h2 diagonal and clears the path for the other rook to come to c8 if the opportunity arises) 13 ♖e5 ♖xg2 14 ♖xg2 c5 (not surprisingly Black is relieved to push his c-pawn, but 14... ♖b6 is better according to some commentators, though White is still in control after 15 axb5 axb5 and then 16 ♜c6 or 16 ♖df3 ♖bd5 17 ♖d2) 15 ♖df3 ♖xe5 (15...cxd4? 16 ♖c6 ♜c7 17 ♖e7+ ♖h8 18 ♜xc7, or 15...c4? 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 18 ♖xd7) 16 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 17 dxe5 ♖d7 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 20 ♜d1! ♖xe5 21 ♜xc5 ♖xf3 22 exf3 ♜b7 23 ♜d6! ♜b8 24 ♜c6 and White's active pieces gave him the better of the ending.

## 12 ... ♜c8

Yet again Black must decide whether the traditional freeing advance is viable. In Hübner-Eng,

Bundesliga 1986 White demonstrated that it is not: 12...c5?! (the actual move-order was 11 ♖g5 ♜bd7 12 ♜bd2) 13 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 (13...gxf6 14 ♜g5! fxf5 15 ♖xb7 ♜b8 16 dxc5! ♜xc5 {16...♜xb7 17 cxd6 ♜f6 18 ♜c5 is very good for White}) 17 ♖g2 and Black has nothing to compensate for structural weaknesses on both sides of the board) 14 ♜e5! (D).



14... ♖xg2 15 ♜xd7 ♜d8 16 ♜xf8! ♖xf1 17 ♜xh7+ ♖xf8 18 ♜xf1 cxd4 19 ♜h8+ ♖e7 20 ♜xg7 with a decisive advantage. The game ended: 20... ♜h8 21 ♜g5+ ♜f6 22 ♜xf6+ ♖xf6 23 ♜c1 ♖e5 24 ♜f3+ ♖d5 25 ♜d1 e5 26 e3 ♖c5 27 exd4 ♖xd4 28 ♖f1 ♜c8 29 ♜xd4 exd4 30 ♖e2 ♖e4 31 f3+ ♖d5 32 ♖d2 ♜h8 33 h4 f5 34 ♜h1 a5 35 h5 ♖e5 36 h6 1-0.

13 ♜b3

Highlighting the vulnerability of a5 and c5.

13 ... h6

There are two other natural moves to be considered. White emerges with a clear advantage in each case:

a) 13...c5?! still fails to reach the mark: 14 ♖xf6! gxf6 15 ♜g5 fxf5 16 ♖xb7.

b) After 13... ♖e4?! White has 14 ♜xe4! ♜xe4 15 ♖xd8 ♜fxd8 16 ♜a5!, when 16...c5? makes matters even worse for Black in view of 17 ♜b7 ♜f8 18 ♜h4!, etc.

14 ♖xf6 ♜xf6

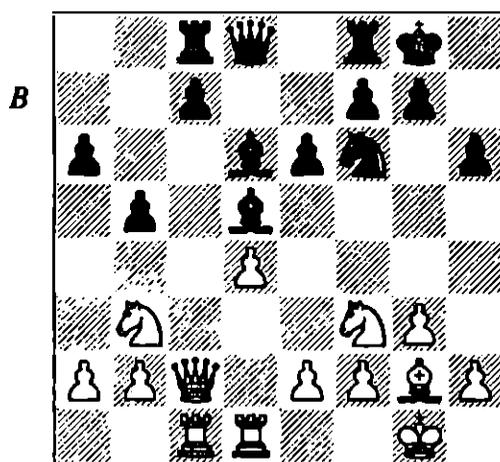
Preferable to 14... ♜xf6 15 ♜g5.

15 ♜ac1

Notice that White's moves are logical and easy to find. He simply continues developing, bringing a rook to the important c-file.

15 ... ♖d5

16 ♜fd1! (D)



And now the other rook. Apart from completing the activation of all his pieces, this move prevents 16... ♖xb3 17 ♜xb3 c5 because 18 dxc5 exploits the pin on the d-file.

16 ... ♜e7

Now Black's threat to take on b3 and then push the c-pawn is real, hence White's next.

17 ♜fd2!?

Having decided that control of the c5-square is essential (by now the reader will be well aware of this theme!), White is happy to support the b3-knight even at the cost of presenting Black with another pawn break.

17 ... ♖xg2  
17... ♖xb3 18 ♜xb3.

18 ♜xg2 e5

Failure to contest White's space advantage would result in Black being gradually pushed off the board.

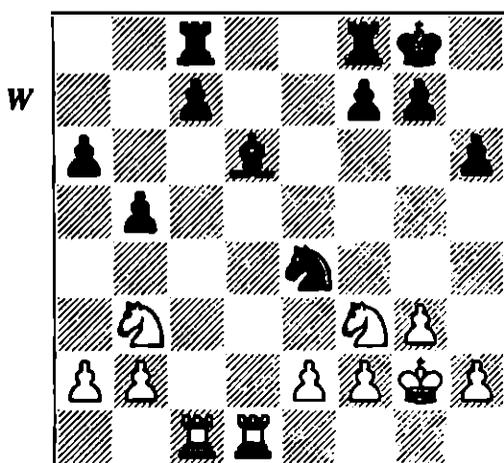
19 dxe5 ♜xe5  
20 ♜f3

With his queen, rooks and knights effectively posted and well coordinated it is clear that White has much the better game. We may add to this Black's a-pawn and weaknesses on a5, c5 and c6.

20 ... ♜e4

Seeking to relieve the pressure through a trade of queens. After 20... ♜e7 21 ♜bd4 the prospect of a knight coming to either c6 or f5 leaves Black short of moves.

21 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 (D)



22 ♜fd4

White's moves continue to be straightforward. He threatens to put a rook or a knight on c6 and combine play on the queenside (perhaps involving a timely a2-a4) with the advance of his kingside pawn majority. Black's next denies White use of the

c6-square but leaves the c-pawn open to attack.

22 ... c5?!

23 ♜f5 c4?

Whoops. 23... ♖e5 24 ♜e7+ just loses an exchange for nothing, and 23... ♜fd8 24 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 25 ♜xc5 parts with a pawn. Petersen's choice is even worse.

24 ♜d2! 1-0

24... ♜xd2 25 ♜xd6, etc.

## 10 ♖g5

In posting the bishop on g5 instead of f4 White is aiming to hinder the ...c7-c5 advance by exchanging on f6, forcing Black to recapture with a piece which would otherwise be covering the crucial c5-square. Whereas 10 ♖f4 puts Black under pressure by attacking the c7-pawn, creating a certain amount of tension in the process, 10 ♖g5 more or less forces Black to make his queenside break under circumstances which allow White to carry out wholesale exchanges into what he hopes is an ending with good winning chances. Unfortunately for Black there is no avoiding these exchanges and the slightly inferior endings which follow.

### Game 19

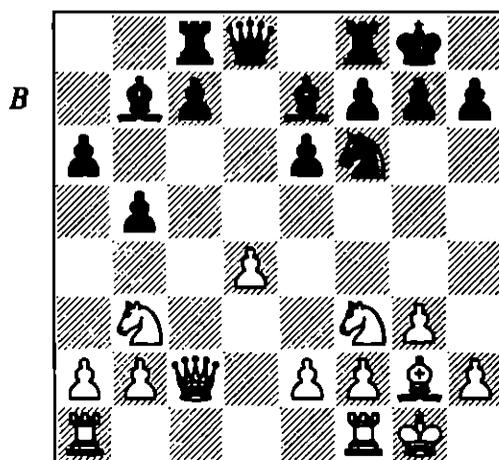
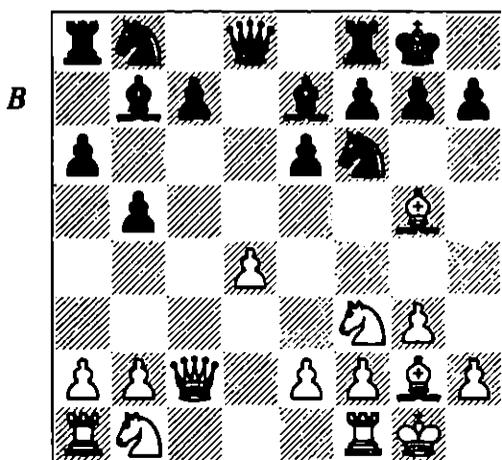
Illescas – Epishin

Madrid 1995

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♖g2 ♖e7  
5 ♜f3 0-0 6 0-0 dxc4 7 ♜c2 a6 8  
♜xc4 b5 9 ♜c2 ♖b7

10 ♖g5 (D)

10 ... ♜bd7



### 11 ♖xf6!

This guarantees White direct passage to the desired endgame stage, virtually missing out the middle-game altogether. 11 ♖bd2 usually transposes to the main line if 11... ♖c8 is met by 12 ♖xf6, though if White is happy to play the unclear position which arises after 11...c5! 12 ♖xf6 gxf6! there is an alternative in (11... ♖c8) 12 ♖b3!?. Larsen-Ribli, Amsterdam 1980 went 12... ♖e4 13 ♛c1 c5 14 ♖xc5! (avoiding 14 dxc5 a5!) 14... ♖xc5 15 dxc5 ♖xc5 16 ♛e3 ♛a8 17 ♖xf6 gxf6 and now 18 ♖ad1! seems to favour White, who has a ready-made target in the shape of Black's weakened kingside pawn structure.

- 11 ... ♖xf6  
 12 ♖bd2 ♖c8  
 13 ♖b3 (D)

As usual the fight revolves around the c5-square. Black must do something to undermine White's grip, and here he chooses to chase the enemy queen.

- 13 ... ♖e4

The next game deals with the temporary pawn sacrifice 13...c5.

- 14 ♛c3!

14 ♛c1 watches over c5 but gets in the way of the rooks: 14...c5 15 dxc5 a5 gives Black sufficient activity.

- 14 ... ♖d5

In Andersson-Winants, Tilburg rpd 1993, Black settled for 14... ♖d7 15 ♖fd1 c6 and soon drifted into deep water: 16 ♖ac1 ♛b6 17 ♖c5 ♖xc5 18 dxc5 ♛c7 19 ♖e5! ♖xg2? (19... ♖d5 20 e4 b4 21 ♛xb4 ♛xe5 22 exd5 exd5 was necessary, when White has the better pawn structure in an unclear position) 20 ♖d7! b4 21 ♛d4. The game continued 21... ♛a5 (21... ♖cd8 22 ♖xc7 ♖xd4 23 ♖xg2 ♖d8 24 ♖xc6) 22 ♖xe7 ♖d5 23 e4 ♖xa2 24 ♖a1 (24 ♖xf7! is more to the point) 24... ♖cd8 (24...b3 25 ♖xf7) 25 ♛e3 ♛a4 26 ♖g2 ♖d1? (26...b3) 27 ♛f3! ♖xa1 28 ♖xf7 ♖d8 29 ♖xg7+! ♖xg7 30 ♛f7+ ♖h8 (30... ♖h6 31 ♛f6+ ♖h5 32 g4+) 31 ♛f6+ 1-0 (31 ♛f6+ ♖g8 32 ♛xd8+ ♖g7 33 ♛e7+).

- 15 ♛d2

Undoubtedly the best move. Others:

a) Kotronias gives 15 ♛c6 ♛d6 16 ♖e5! ♖xg2 17 ♖xg2 f6! 18 ♛xd6 cxd6 with an even ending.

b) 15 ♖c1 brought White nothing in Lalić-Gligorić, Yugoslav Cht 1989: 15...♗b4 16 ♗e1 ♙xg2 17 ♗xg2 c5 18 dxc5 ♙xc5 19 ♗xc5 ♖e7 20 ♖d2 and a draw was agreed.

c) The brave 15 ♖a5!? is far from dull, but the result should be similarly amicable. Hölzl-Haugli, Haifa Echt 1989 was entertaining: 15...♙b4 16 ♖xa6 c6 17 ♗e5 ♙xg2 18 ♗xg2 ♗e7 19 e4 f6 20 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 21 ♖xb5 ♖b8 22 ♖e2 ♖fc8 23 ♖ac1 ♖xc1 24 ♖xc1 ♖xc1 25 ♗xc1 ♖d6 26 ♖c4 ♙a5 27 ♖b5 ♖c6 28 ♖xa5 ♖xc1 29 ♖c5 ♖b1 30 ♖xe7 ♖xe4+ 31 f3 ♖c2+. I would prefer to have the piece rather than the pawns, and perhaps Black should have avoided trading all the rooks. Consequently something like 19 ♖fc1 f6 20 ♗d3 ♖a8 21 ♖b7 ♖b8 is a logical conclusion to 15 ♖a5.

15 ... c5

Made possible now that the queen has been driven from the c-file.

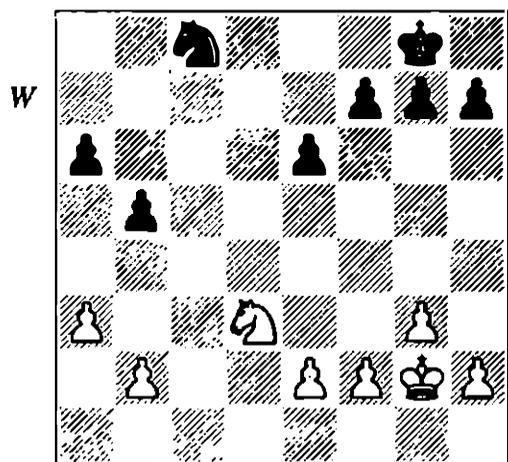
a) Black tried 15...♗b4 in Andersson-Mirallès, Cannes 1989, but there is less point here than with the queen on c1 (see Lalić-Gligorić, note 'b' to White's 15th move). After 16 ♖fc1 ♙d5 17 ♖d1 a5 18 a3 a4 19 ♗c5 ♗c6 20 ♗b7 ♖d7 21 e3 ♖b8 22 ♗c5 ♖c8 23 ♗d2 ♖d8 24 b4 axb3 25 ♗dxb3 the black pieces were poorly coordinated.

b) If the last couple of moves were not enough, then 15...♙b4 forces the queen to run yet again. Then, instead of 16 ♖d1 c5 17 a3 c4!?, Spiridonov-Kotronias, Corfu 1989, I prefer 16 ♖g5. The exchange 16...♖xg5 17 ♗xg5 helps White as

...c7-c5 is no longer available to Black, while 16...f6 17 ♖h4 produces another target on e6. This leaves 16...♖e8!?, suggested by Kotronias without further analysis. It would appear that after 17 a3 ♙e7 (17...h6 18 ♖h4 ♙xf3 19 ♙xf3 does not lessen White's grip) 18 ♖d2 c5 we are back in the main game, meaning the black queen will come to a8. However, thanks to the extra moves in this variation White's pawn has already arrived on a3, saving a whole tempo on the game (see White's 22nd move in the main game).

16 ♗xc5	♙xc5
17 dxc5	♖xc5
18 ♖fc1	♖xc1+

Black has to surrender the c-file. The game Konopka-Porubszky, Zalakaros 1994, saw Black volunteer to trade off into a knight ending – something which he was soon to regret: 18...♖c7 19 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 20 ♖c1 ♖b4 21 ♖xb4 ♗xb4 22 a3 ♗c6 23 ♗e1 ♙xg2 24 ♗xg2 ♖c8 25 ♗d3 ♗e7 26 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 (D).



Of course this kind of position is exactly what White wants. His knight is more active, his queenside pawns

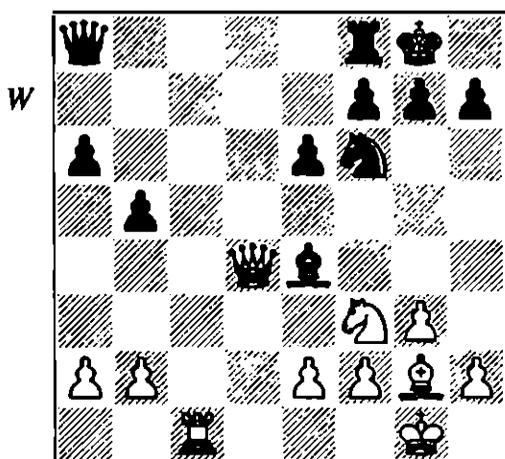
are less exposed than Black's, and his king is nearer to the action – decisive factors. The game finished quickly: 27 ♖f3 ♖f8 28 ♜e3 ♜e7 (28... ♜e8 29 ♜d4 ♜d8 30 ♖b4) 29 ♖b4 ♖b6 30 ♖xa6 ♖c4+ 31 ♜d4 ♖xb2 32 ♖c7 e5+ 33 ♜c5 ♖d1 34 f3 ♖c3 35 ♖d5+! ♖xd5 36 ♜xd5 f6 37 ♜c5 1-0.

19 ♜xc1 ♜a8!

This is now established as the best move. The a-pawn, the c6-square and the long diagonal are given added protection and the rook is free to roam the back rank. The accommodating 19... ♖f6 20 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 21 ♖e5 ♖xg2 22 ♜xg2 ♖e8 23 ♖d3 left White in control of the c-file and the game in Larsen-Tal, Næstved 1985.

20 ♜d4 ♖f6 (D)

The pinned knight is no match for the bishop after 20... ♖xf3?! 21 ♖xf3.



21 ♜c5

White doubles on the c-file. 21 ♜c7 is natural and was seen in another of Konopka's games, this time against Cladouras in the Bundesliga, 1992. Once again Black offered an

exchange of queens: 21... ♜d5 22 ♜xd5 ♖xd5 23 a3 ♖c4 24 ♖f1 ♜d8 25 ♖e1 ♖d5 26 ♖h3 ♖e8 (after 26... ♖xf3 27 exf3 the bishop will soon prove very effective on the f1-a6 diagonal) 27 ♜a7 ♜a8 28 ♜xa8 ♖xa8 29 ♜d2 ♖f8 30 ♜c3 ♜e7 31 ♖b4 with excellent chances for White. 31... ♖d6 32 ♖d2 ♜d7 33 ♖a5 ♖b7 34 ♖b6 ♜c8 35 ♖g4! ♖b8 36 ♖f3 ♖c8+ 37 ♜c5 ♜c7 38 ♖xb7 ♜xb7 39 ♖e4 f6? (39... ♜c7 40 ♖g5 ♖d6 41 ♖xh7 ♖e4+ 42 ♜d4 ♖xf2 43 ♖g5 ♖g4 44 ♖xf7 ♖xh2 45 ♖g5 ♜d6 46 ♖e4+) 40 ♖d6+ ♖xd6 41 ♜xd6 e5 42 b4 1-0.

21 ... ♖h6

The annoying possibility of back-rank mate often looms over Black in these variations, so now is as good a time as any to put an end to such a worry.

22 a3 ♜d8

23 h3

Neither side is in a hurry; both are making preparations for the inevitable arrival of more simplification. Black's next simply overprotects his weak link – the a-pawn.

23 ... ♖b7

24 ♜b6 ♜b8

Black sits and waits. White retains his lead after 24... ♜c8 25 ♜xc8+ ♜xc8 26 ♖h2.

25 b4!

Fixing Black's queenside pawns on the same colour squares as White's bishop just in case Black should later take on f3. Now, for example, 25... ♖xf3? 26 ♖xf3 ♜xb6 27 ♖xa8 is uncomfortable for Black because his a-pawn will soon come

under attack. The only problem with 25 b4 is that it increases Black's control of the c4-square, so White must remember to keep this in the back of his mind.

25 ... ♙d5

26 ♖c7 ♘e8

Not 26... ♙c4 27 ♘e5.

27 ♖f4 ♖b7

27... ♖c8 28 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 29 ♘e5.

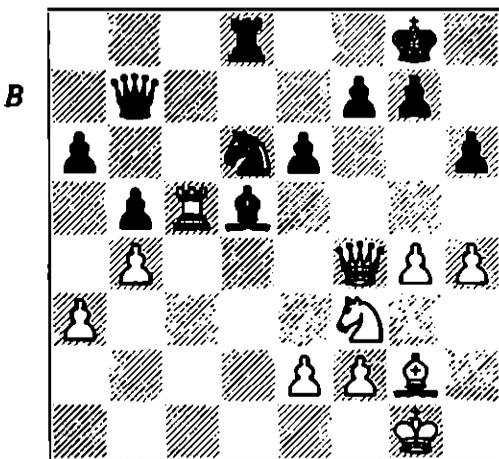
28 h4!

The first part of what is a standard strategy. In a symmetrical position the player with the more active pieces is sometimes free to advance his kingside pawns in a bid to generate new weaknesses in the enemy camp. This should at least leave the opponent with less room in which to manoeuvre. White's timing is impressive, for Black is busy regrouping.

28 ... ♖d8

29 ♖c5 ♘d6

30 g4!(D)



White is in no danger of being attacked, and Black has no pieces on the kingside, so this new offensive is really quite logical.

30 ... ♖e7

Not 30... ♘e4? 31 ♖c7. White retains his initiative after 30... ♖f6?! 31 g5! ♘e4 32 ♖c7 e5 33 ♖c1.

31 g5! ♖hg5

Preferable to 31... h5 32 ♘e5, which only makes life more difficult for Black.

32 ♖hg5 ♙xf3

Eliminating the knight now that the changed circumstances have introduced extra possibilities involving ♘f3-e5. However, with pawns on both sides of the board it is clear that White now has the stronger minor piece.

33 ♙xf3 ♘f5

Kotronias has suggested 33... ♘c4, which reminds White that he needs to think about the safety of his own a-pawn, while simultaneously threatening to undermine the support of the g5-pawn with ...e6-e5. He then gives 34 ♖c7 ♖d7 35 ♖c8+ ♖d8 36 ♖c7 with a draw, but 34 a4 looks much better. Then 34...e5, in fact, instead of highlighting the g5-pawn as a potential weakness, turns the same pawn into a potential hero after 35 ♖g4, when Black is faced with g5-g6 combined with ♙f3-d5 as well as the loss of a pawn on the other flank (35... ♖d4 36 ♖c8+ ♖d8 37 g6!).

34 e4!?

The more patient 34 e3 is also good. Illescas judges that it is safe to step up the pressure.

34 ... ♘d4

35 ♙g4 ♖d6

36 ♖xd6 ♖xd6

37 f4

Even with the queens off the board White's kingside expansion is

a promising policy, hence Black's next.

37 ... f5!

38 gxf6!

Not 38 exf5 exf5 39 ♙xf5 ♜xf5 (39...♜e2+? 40 ♚f2 ♜xf4 41 ♚e3) 40 ♚xf5 ♚d3.

38 ... gxf6

39 ♚f2 ♚g7

40 ♚e3

40 e5!? has been suggested.

40 ... e5!?

Interesting. However, sometimes a waiting policy consisting of 'nothing' moves is the key to a good defence. Here 40...♚g6 would be the patient approach.

41 fxe5

41 ♙c8!? eyes the a6-pawn. With the game choice White decides to accept the offer in order to create a passed pawn, even if this means letting the knight run free on the queen-side.

41 ... fxe5

42 ♚xe5 ♜c2+

43 ♚f4 ♜xa3

44 ♚e7+ ♚f8

45 ♚a7 ♜c2

46 ♚e5?

Throwing away the win according to Kotronias, who found 46 e5! ♚d4+ 47 ♚g5 ♜xb4 48 ♙f3! (48 e6? ♜c6).

46 ... ♚h6!

46...♚b6? 47 ♙e6! leavesthe rook cut off on the wrong side of the board.

47 ♙e6 ♜xb4

48 ♚f7+ ♚g8!

Again Black finds the only move (48...♚e8? 49 ♚d6 does not look too

healthy for Black). The remaining moves were: 49 ♚f5 ♜d3 50 ♚a7+ (50 ♚d7+ ♚xe6!) 50...♚f8 51 ♚a8+ ♚e7 52 ♚a7+ ♚f8 1/2-1/2.

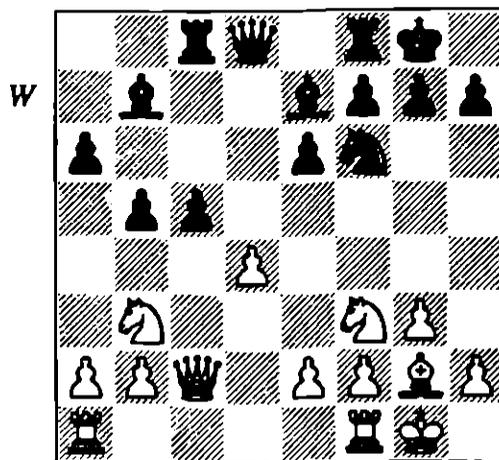
Game 20

Andersson - Petursson

Reggio Emilia 1989

1 ♜f3 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2 ♙e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d4 dxc4 7 ♚c2 a6 8 ♚xc4 b5 9 ♚c2 ♙b7 10 ♙g5 ♜bd7 11 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 12 ♜bd2 ♚c8 13 ♜b3

13 ... c5 (D)



This is a direct attempt to solve Black's problems with a temporary pawn offer. Black hopes to achieve something approaching equality after the coming sequence of exchanges.

14 dxc5 a5

14...♙d5 is the alternative, when best is 15 ♜e1 ♙xb3 16 ♚xb3 ♙xc5 17 ♜d3 followed by a2-a4. The game Konopka-Breyther, Bundesliga 1994, continued 17...♙d6 (the queens came off in Konopka-Maros, Slovak Ch 1993: 17...♙e7 18 a4 ♚a5 19 axb5 ♚xb5 20 ♚xb5 axb5

21 ♖a7 ♖d6 22 ♜b7 ♜b8 23 ♜xb8 ♜xb8 24 ♖a1 ♜f8 25 ♖a7 b4 26 h3! and now White simply marched his king over to the queenside; the game continued 26... ♜b5 27 ♜f1 ♖b8 28 ♖a4 ♖d6 29 ♜e1 ♜d5 30 ♜d1 ♜e7 31 ♖a7+ ♜c7 32 ♜c2 ♜d7 33 ♜b3 ♜b6 34 ♜b7 ♜xb7 35 ♖xb7 ♜d5 36 ♖xd5 exd5 37 ♜xb4 and Black soon resigned) 18 a4 e5 (18... ♜b6 transposes to Khuzman-Timoshchenko, Tashkent 1987, when 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♜a2 ♜b8 21 ♜fc1 ♜fc8 22 ♜xc8+ ♜xc8 23 ♜a6 would have been clearly better for White because the b5-pawn is difficult to defend) 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♖h3 ♜b8 21 ♜b4 ♖xb4 22 ♜xb4 ♜b6 23 ♜fd1 ♜fd8 24 e3! h6 25 ♖f1. Yet again Black's b-pawn was a liability: 25...e4 26 ♜e7 ♜xd1 27 ♜xd1 ♖e8 28 ♜d6 ♜a5 29 ♜c5 ♜d8 30 ♜xb5 ♜c7 31 ♜c4 ♜b8 32 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 33 b4 and there was no stopping the passed pawn – White won.

Returning to the main game, Petursson's 14...a5 is to provoke a2-a4 in the hope that White's queenside pawns will prove to be just as weak as Black's later in the game.

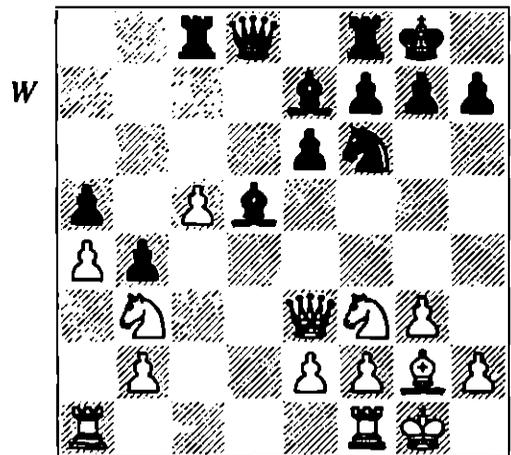
**15 a4**

Faced with 14...a5 for the first time, Ian Rogers chose 15 ♜fd1?! against Geller in Vršac 1987. This should have been sufficient only for equality after 15... ♜c7 16 c6 (White played 16 ♜d3? and after 16...a4 17 ♜bd4 ♖xc5 was already struggling) 16... ♖xc6 17 ♜fd4 ♖xg2 18 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 19 ♜xg2 a4 20 ♜xb5 ♜c2 21 ♜3d4 ♜xb2 22 ♜dbl!.

15 ... ♖e4

16 ♜c3 b4  
17 ♜e3 ♖d5! (D)

An improvement on 17... ♜d5, which serves only to misplace the black queen after 18 ♜fd1 ♜h5. In Hulak-Lalić, Yugoslavia 1989, White played the new 19 ♜dc1!, leaving the other rook on a1 to defend the a4-pawn just in case. Play continued 19... ♖d5 20 h3 ♖xb3 21 ♜xb3 ♖xc5 (21... ♜xc5 22 ♜d4 ♜fc8 23 ♜c6 ♖f8 24 ♜e3! with a clear advantage to White), and now 22 ♜c4 ♜d5 23 ♜ac1 would have put Black under considerable pressure.



**18 ♜fd1**

Although White can't adequately defend his extra pawn, he is able to use the time Black must expend in regaining the pawn to choose the character of the inevitable ending.

18 ... ♜c7  
19 ♜fd4

Petursson's suggestion 19 ♜ac1 ♖xb3 20 ♜xb3 ♖xc5 21 ♜d4 ♜b6 22 ♜c4! is worth further study.

19 ... ♖xg2  
20 ♜xg2 ♖xc5  
21 ♜ac1 ♖xd4  
22 ♜xd4 ♜b7+

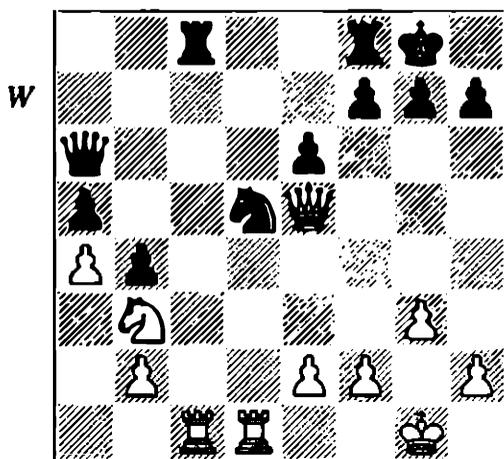
23 ♔g1 ♜a6

Defending the a5-pawn and attacking the e2-pawn.

24 ♜e5

Defending the e2-pawn and attacking the a5-pawn! 24 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 25 ♜d8+ ♞e8 26 ♜d3! ♜xd3 27 ♜xd3 ♜c2 is equal.

24 ... ♞d5 (D)



25 ♞c5?

Surprisingly this positive move – which plans to double rooks on the c-file – hands the initiative over to Black. It is better to strike while the iron is hot with 25 e4!, which was given an outing in L.Hansen-Berg Hansen, Danish Ch 1996. 25... ♞b6 is forced (25... ♜e2? loses to 26 ♞d4, and 26 ♜xa5 ♜xa5 27 ♞xa5 ♜a8 28 ♞c6 ♜xa4 29 f3 is bad for Black in view of the sorry b4-pawn), and after 26 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 (26... ♜xc8 27 ♜d6 ties Black up) 27 ♜c1 ♜d7 28 ♜xa5 ♜xa4 29 ♜xb6 ♜xb3 30 ♜d4 White had succeeded in preserving the initiative. The game continued 30...h6 31 ♔g2 ♜a4 32 ♜c7 ♜b5 33 b3 ♜a8 34 ♜c4 ♜a2 (Black's problem is that even after the more stubborn move 34... ♜b8 there is still no easy way to

keep White at bay, for an exchange of queens leaves the rook tied to the defence of the b4-pawn, while White's king has a clear path to the queenside) 35 h4! e5? (voluntarily loosening the kingside) 36 ♜d8+ ♔h7 37 ♜c8! ♜a7 38 ♜f5+ g6 39 ♜f6 ♜b8 40 h5 gxh5 41 ♜c6 1-0.

Returning to the game, Andersson's faulty plan is rather time-consuming, allowing Black to generate some useful threats of his own.

25 ... ♜c6  
26 ♜c2 ♞b6  
27 ♜dc1 ♜cd8!

Almost mocking White's build-up on the c-file.

28 ♞b3!?

Perhaps White had intended 28 b3 ♞d5 29 ♞e4, but 29... ♜a6 30 ♜c6 ♜a8 31 ♜1c5 ♜fe8! followed by ...f7-f6(-f5) makes the white rooks look ridiculous. The game choice hopes to simplify to a draw.

28 ... ♜d1+!  
29 ♜xd1 ♜xc2  
30 ♜d4!?

Active defence. Petursson evaluates the position after 30 ♜d3 ♞c4! (30... ♞xa4 31 ♜xa5 ♞xb2 32 ♜d8 ♜b1+ 33 ♔g2 ♜e4+ 34 ♔g1 g6 35 ♞c5) 31 ♜c5 ♜b1+ 32 ♔g2 ♞xb2 33 ♜f3 ♞xa4 34 ♜xa5 ♞c3 35 ♜xb4 ♞xe2 36 ♜e3 as only slightly better for Black, but 36... ♜g1+ 37 ♔f3 ♞c1! 38 ♞xc1 (38 ♜e1 ♜xf2+) 38... ♜h1+! 39 ♔g4 ♜xc1 (Kotronias) does appear to offer Black more.

30 ... ♜xb3  
31 ♜d3 ♜xa4  
32 ♜xb6 ♜a1+

- 33 ♔g2 ♖xb2  
 34 ♖xa5 g6  
 35 ♖b6! ♖c8?!

Correct is 35...♖xe2 36 ♖d4 with a long ending ahead.

- 36 ♖b7! ♖c2  
 37 ♖f3 ♖f8  
 38 ♖b5?

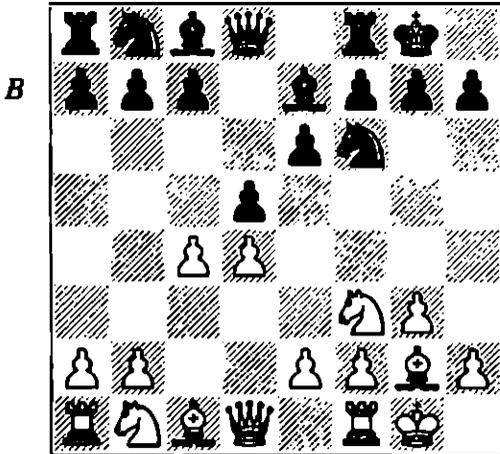
Missing 38 ♖e3!, which draws comfortably.

- 38 ... ♖e4!

Now Black has time to reassert his authority. The remaining moves were:

- 39 h4 ♖d8 40 ♔h2 e5 41 ♖e3 ♖d4 42 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 43 ♖xe5 ♖b8 44 ♖d5 f5 45 ♖d2?? (short of time White – not surprisingly – misses the impressive try 45 ♔g2 ♔f7 46 ♔f3 ♔e6 47 ♖d1! b3 48 ♔e3 ♔e5 49 ♖b1 b2 50 ♔d3 f4 51 g4 {51 gxf4+?! ♔xf4 52 ♔c2 h5!} 51...f3! 52 e3 ♖b4! 53 h5! g5 54 h6! ♔f6, when the winning process will be more problematic) 45...♔f7 46 ♔g2 ♔e6 47 ♔f3 b3 48 ♖b2 ♔d5 49 ♔e3 ♔c4 50 ♔d2 ♖d8+ 0-1 (51...♔c3 is the beginning of the end).

# 9 Closed Catalan: Introduction and lines with e4xd5



The following game, which also deals with early alternatives for Black, features an interesting queen manoeuvre for White.

Game 21  
Cifuentes – Sosonko  
*Dutch Ch 1992*

1 c4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♙g2  
♙e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d4  
6 ... ♘bd7

Others:

a) 6...♘a6?! has been tried occasionally by GM G.Kuzmin. The idea is to activate with ...c7-c5 while dissuading White from the usual 7 ♖c2 due to ideas of ...♘a6-b4. In Tukmakov-G.Kuzmin, Lvov Z 1990, White did nothing to spoil Black's plan, and after 7 ♘c3 c5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 dxc5 ♘xc5 10 ♙e3 the d4-square gave White a long-term edge. Black 'repaired' his isolated d-pawn with 10...♘ce4 (10...♙f5 11 ♖c1 ♖c8 12 ♘d4 ♙g6 13 ♙h3) 11 ♖c1 ♙e6 12 ♘d4 ♙d7 13 ♘xe4 dxe4, but 14 ♘b3 h6 (14...b6 15 ♖d4 ♙b5 16 ♖xd8 ♖fxd8 17 ♘d4 and 14...♙c6 15 ♖c2 followed by ♖f1-d1 are both good for White) 15 ♖d4 still favoured White.

b) 6...c5 is a perfectly playable alternative. After 7 cxd5:

In the Closed Catalan Black opts to keep his pawn on d5 rather than 'accept' the c4-pawn. We will concentrate on a sensible form of development for White involving a combination of some or all of the moves ♖d1-c2, b2-b3, ♘b1-d2 and ♖f1-d1, and culminating with e2-e4. As for Black, the usual plan is to continue supporting the centre with ...♘b8-d7, ...c7-c6, ...b7-b6, ...♙c8-a6 (to put pressure on the c4-pawn) or ...♙c8-b7 and ...♖a8-c8, etc.

When White's pawn does – inevitably – arrive at to e4, the game reaches a critical point. If Black chooses not to capture, a stand-off is created in the centre, and White is then free to take on d5 if he so wishes. Another plan for White is an early e4-e5, aiming to close the centre in preparation for a kingside offensive.

b1) 7...exd5 transposes to the main line of the Tarrasch Defence, which Catalan players should be quite happy to face.

b2) 7...♞xd5 is not good, e.g. 8 ♖c3 ♜h5 9 dxc5 ♞d8 (9...♙xc5 10 ♙g5 ♖bd7 11 ♞c1) 10 ♜c2 ♖c6 11 ♙g5 ♙xc5 12 ♙xf6 gxf6 13 ♞ad1 ♙d7 14 ♖d5, Lombardy-Navarro, Mexico 1980.

b3) Black can recapture on d5 with the knight, 7...♞xd5, when White has a choice:

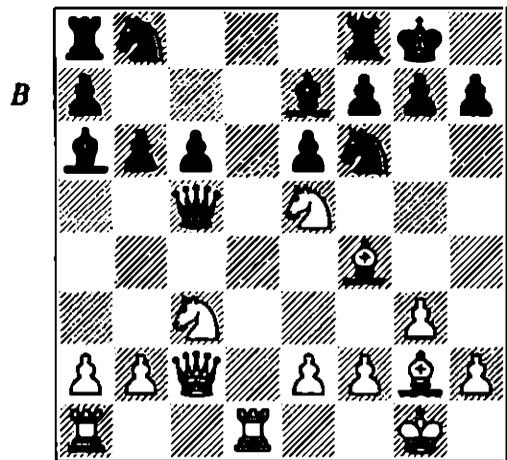
b31) In Tal-Agdestein, Reykjavik 1987 (and many others), White chose 8 dxc5 ♙xc5 (8...♖c6 9 ♜c2 ♖db4 {9...♜a5 10 ♖g5! ♖f6 11 ♖e4} 10 ♜c2 with a pleasant advantage on account of his more active pieces. The rook is coming to the d-file, e2-e4 is a possibility, a2-a3, b2-b4 and ♙c1-b2 can be prevented only by ...a7-a5 (which weakens Black's queenside) and Black is rather cramped.

b32) With 8 e4 White expands in the centre but hinders the Catalan bishop. White's extra space is sufficient for an advantage, e.g. 8...♖f6 9 ♖c3 cxd4 (Black is also slightly worse after 9...♖c6 10 d5 exd5 11 exd5 ♖b4 12 ♖e5) 10 ♖xd4 and Black has difficulties completing development.

c) 6...c6 should transpose to the main line unless Black does not follow up with ...♖b8-d7 soon.

c1) 7 ♜c2 is normal. Piket-Breninkmeijer, Groningen 1990 continued 7...b6 8 ♖e5 (8 ♖bd2 leads to 'c2') 8...♙b7 9 ♙f4! dxc4 (both

9...♖bd7?! 10 cxd5 ♖xe5 11 d6 ♖f3+ 12 ♙xf3 ♙xd6 13 ♙g5 and 9...♖fd7 10 ♖d3 followed by ♖b1-d2, e2-e4, etc., are good for White) 10 ♜xc4 ♙a6 11 ♜c2 ♜xd4 12 ♞d1 ♜c5 13 ♖c3 (D).



Black played 13...♖d5?! (13...g5 meets with 14 b4, but a lesser evil is 13...♙b7 14 ♞ac1 b5 15 a4 b4 16 ♖e4), allowing 14 ♖xd5!, when 14...cxd5 (14...♜xc2?? 15 ♖xe7+ ♖h8 16 ♖xf7+ ♞xf7 17 ♞d8+) 15 ♜d2 ♜b4 (15...f6 16 ♖d3 ♙xd3 17 ♜xd3 ♖d7 18 ♞ac1 ♜a5 19 ♜e3 ♖c5 20 a3) 16 ♜xb4 ♙xb4 17 e4! gave White a promising position as the ending approached.

c2) 7 ♖bd2 b6 8 ♜c2 ♙b7 9 e4 ♖a6 10 a3:

c21) 10...♞c8?! 11 b4! c5 12 dxc5! bxc5 (White is clearly better after both 12...dxe4 13 ♖g5 bxc5 14 b5 ♖c7 15 ♖dxe4 and 12...♖xe4 13 ♖xe4 dxe4 14 ♞d1 ♜e8 15 ♖e5!) 13 b5 ♖c7 14 exd5 exd5 15 ♖e5 was good for White (pressure on the h1-a8 diagonal) in the game Flear-Garcia Palermo, Zenica 1987.

c22) Kaidanov-Nenashev, Lucerne Wcht 1993 continued 10...dxc4

11 ♖xc4 b5 12 ♖cd2 c5 13 e5 ♖d5  
14 ♖e4 with the better game for White.

c23) The immediate 10...c5 is the most obvious follow-up to ...♖b8-a6. Practice has shown that White's best reply is 11 e5 ♖d7 12 dxc5, which was seen in Kožul-C.Hansen, Wijk aan Zee 1991. Recapturing with a piece on c5 runs into 13 b4, so 12...bxc5 is forced. However, this leaves the knight stranded on a6, which prompted Hansen to return it to its original square: 13 ♖e1 ♗c7 14 h4 ♖ad8 15 ♖f1 ♖ab8 16 cxd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗g5 ♖fe8 18 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 19 ♖g5 ♖f8 20 f4 ♗xg2 21 ♗xg2 and White stood better in view of his extra space, the weak c-pawn and active knights, which soon took control of the d6-square after 21...♖c6 22 ♖ac1 ♖d4 23 ♖e4 ♗b6 24 ♖e3 ♖c7 25 ♖c4, etc.

d) 6...b6 is a luxury which Black cannot really afford. As long as White does not allow an effective ...c7-c5 he can count on a pleasant edge. This is usually done by transposing to a favourable version of the Queen's Indian Defence, and the most active option is to exploit the pin on the long diagonal with 7 ♖e5 (also slightly better for White is 7 cxd5, when 7...♖xd5 8 e4 ♖f6 9 ♖c3 ♗b7 10 ♖e5 is uncomfortable for Black, and 7...exd5 leads to a Q.I.D. in which Black may have to resort to the unsightly ...c7-c6).

e) 6...♖e4 aims to steer the game into the Stonewall variation of the Dutch Defence (after a quick ...f7-f5), but this particular move-order is

suspect as Black is not supposed to occupy e4 so early.

7 ♗c2 c6  
8 b3

8 ♖bd2 b6 will generally come to the same thing, but 9 e4 can have some independent possibilities – see Game 24, Orlov-Tal.

8 ... b6  
9 ♖d1 ♗a6

For 9...♗b7 and the plan of taking on e4 after White's eventual central advance, see the next chapter.

10 ♖bd2 ♖c8  
11 e4 c5

The most active of Black's 11th move options. There are two alternatives which merit a mention:

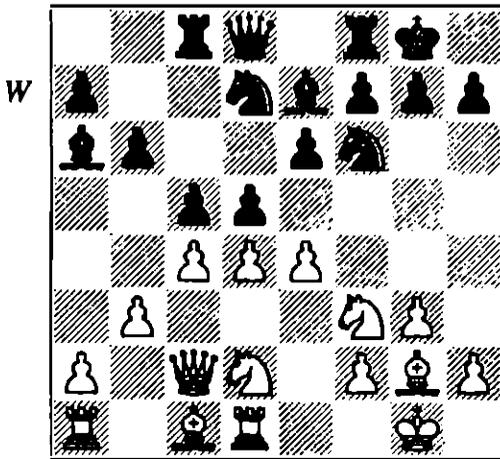
a) 11...♗b7 was Black's choice in the game Marin-J.Horvath, which can be found in the Introduction.

b) With the less critical 11...♗c7 Black plans to relocate his queen before creating a stand-off in the centre after ...c6-c5.

b1) This approach was successful in the game J.Horvath-Huss, Leukerbad 1992, thanks mainly to White's lukewarm reply: 12 ♗b2 ♖fd8 13 ♖ac1 ♗b8 14 ♗b1 ♗b7 15 ♖g5 h6 16 ♖h3 dxe4 17 ♖xe4 c5 18 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 1/2-1/2.

b2) The game Savchenko-Bareev, Pula 1988 saw White react more positively with 12 e5, leaving Black rather cramped after 12...♖e8. Following the natural 13 ♖f1 ♗b8 White could have played 14 ♖e3! with a clear advantage, e.g. 14...c5 15 dxc5! ♖xc5 (15...♗xc5 16 ♗b2) 16 cxd5 ♖d3 17 ♗b1.

Let us return to 11...c5 (D).



In the diagram position there are now no fewer than five possible pawn captures. Consequently both queens – particularly White’s – are in danger of becoming exposed on the centre files. Ideally Black would like to get the most from his light-squared bishop by exchanging on d4 and following up with an assault on the c4-pawn. As for White, he can weather the storm or search for an active plan on the other side of the board.

### 12 e5

White hopes to demonstrate that Black’s light-squared bishop is ineffective on a6. 12 e5 leads to play similar to Orlov-Tal (Game 24), although here White has already placed his rook on d1 (the e1-square could turn out to be more appropriate).

### 12 ... exd5

### 13 ♖f5!?

White has an interesting manoeuvre in mind. The queen leaves the potentially hazardous c-file to take up residence on the kingside. Black’s queen, meanwhile, is still on the d-file. Equally important is 13 ♖b2, which is investigated in the next main game, Umanskaya-Ilinsky.

### 13 ...

### g6

Black does not want to allow the enemy queen to remain on such a menacing outpost. The price of keeping the queen at bay is the slight weakening of Black’s kingside and, while this factor may not be a serious problem at the moment, the irrevocable structural damage could be significant later in the game.

Grün-Conquest, Schmollenberg 1986 developed in similar fashion, but it seems that the time spent on Black’s 13...♞e8 could have been put to better use. After 14 ♖b2 g6 15 ♜h3 ♞c7 White went on the offensive with 16 dxc5 ♟xc5 17 ♞g5 h5 18 ♞df3, when the f7-pawn was becoming a liability. 18...♙d6 19 ♜h4 dxc4 20 bxc4 ♙b7 21 ♜d4! did not help Black, and the game ended 21...♙e7 22 ♜f4 ♞d7 23 ♞xd7 ♟cxd7 24 ♟xf7 ♟xf7 25 ♞g5+ ♟g8 26 ♙xb7 ♟c5 27 ♙d5+ ♟g7 28 ♟f7 1-0. Note how powerful the white queen proved to be, and how Black was punished for the ostensibly harmless 13...♞e8.

### 14 ♜h3

### h5

Preparing – at the cost of creating further weaknesses in front of the black king – to close out the queen with a timely ...♟f6-g4. Having seen in the previous note an illustration of White’s attacking potential, Black may as well push the h-pawn on his own terms instead of being forced to do so under less favourable circumstances.

### 15 ♖b2

### ♞c7

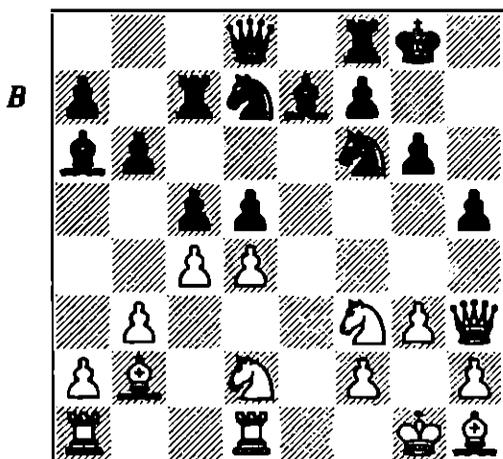
Vacating the c8-square for the bishop to challenge the queen on the

h3-c8 diagonal and providing necessary protection should Black simply drop the bishop back to b7.

15...♔b7 transposes to Tal-Lputian, Manila IZ 1990. The players agreed a draw here, a decision which had little or nothing to do with the position.

16 ♔h1!? (D)

After 16 ♖e1 ♔c8 White still has to engineer a route back to safety for the queen with 17 ♔h1, but then Black can ease some of the tension by exchanging a pair of knights with 17...♘e5 18 ♗f1 ♘xf3+.



Thanks to the text Black continues to be rather cramped, and White is able to rearrange his major pieces before stepping up the pressure.

16 ... ♔b7

There seems less point in 16...♔c8 now. The queen simply comes to f1, when White has a slight advantage in view of his more active pieces and Black's kingside weaknesses.

17 ♖e1

When Black nudged his rook up to c7 he also ruled out any plans White may have had of undermining

the d7-knight through pressure on the d-file and the h3-c8 and a1-h8 diagonals. Since nothing will come from putting a rook on the c-file, the time has come to occupy the two centre files, after which White will be ready to strike with ♘f3-e5. White has time for this because Black is too busy keeping his position intact to do anything too aggressive.

17 ... ♘g4

Black, too, is making preparations for ♘f3-e5.

18 ♖ad1

There is now nothing left for White to improve.

18 ... ♖e8

Consistent with Black's plan, which is aimed at preventing White from opening up the centre for his more harmonious forces. The continuation 18...dxc4 19 ♘xc4 cxd4 20 ♖xd4, for example, presents White with a definite pull, because Black's pieces stand somewhat awkwardly and lack the harmony which White's enjoy.

19 ♘e5 ♘dxe5

19...cxd4 20 ♘xg4 hxg4 21 ♗xg4 is very good for White.

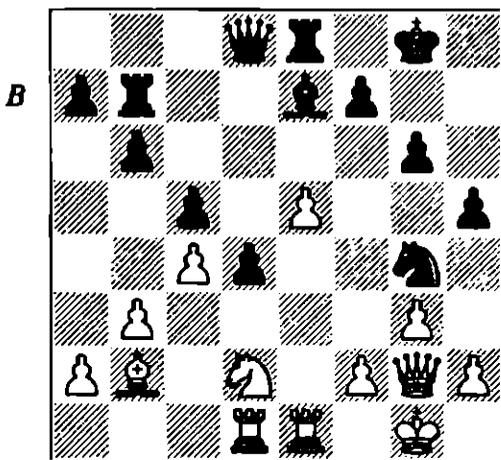
20 dxe5 d4

Trading off a few more pieces with 20...dxc4 21 ♘xc4 ♖d7 22 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 23 ♔xb7 ♗xb7 leaves White with a comfortable advantage in the centre and on the kingside after 24 ♗f1.

21 ♔xb7 ♖xb7

22 ♗g2 (D)

Let us briefly examine the effects of the queen's journey, which began



with 13 ♖f5. The mere presence of this powerful piece on f5, in front of the enemy king and within striking distance of the d5-pawn, practically forced Black into making a stand with ...g7-g6. Having 'retreated' to h3 the queen still exerted latent pressure on d7, but a new worry for Black was the potential threat to attack the h7-pawn with ♘f3-g5, d4xc5, ♙b2xf6, etc. – hence ...h7-h5. The queen has moved only three times and is well posted on g2, but the damage to Black's kingside pawn structure, while not too serious, is nonetheless irrevocable. A well-timed e5-e6 could be a serious cause for concern.

On the queenside, meanwhile, Black has managed to close the a1-h8 diagonal with his protected passed d-pawn, which both bodes well for the endgame phase and helps hinder the f2-f4 advance in view of ...♘g4-e3.

22 ... ♞c7

22...♞d7 23 e6! fxe6 24 ♖e4! leaves Black with a broken kingside – a fitting illustration of the power of White's queen manoeuvre.

23 h3 ♘h6

24 ♘e4?!

The position after 24 e6 f5 is assessed by Ftačnik as unclear. I find it difficult to believe that, with so many weaknesses on the kingside, Black is not in trouble. After, for example, 25 ♘f3, White threatens ♘f3-e5, hitting the g6-pawn and introducing the possibility of relocating the knight on f4 (via the d3-square), from where g6 is still under pressure (as is h5), and the d5-square is available (note that White's queen is also ready to come to d5). White can bring his bishop back into the game with ♙b2-c1, when ♙c1-f4 is coming and the weakness of the squares g5 and h6 is accentuated.

It certainly does seem that White has a choice of targets and continuations after 24 e6! f5 25 ♘f3, with excellent chances. Moreover, one would think that the appropriate culmination of White's entire middle-game strategy should be based upon exploiting the very concessions induced by Cifuentes's queen sally.

With the risk-free text White is concentrating on generating a passed pawn of his own by planting his knight on d6 and subsequently obliging Black to capture. This plan appears to be good enough for no more than a draw with best play.

24 ... ♖c8

25 ♙c1 ♗h7

26 ♙f4

26 ♙xh6 ♗xh6 27 g4 hxg4 28 hxg4 ♗g7 achieves less than nothing.

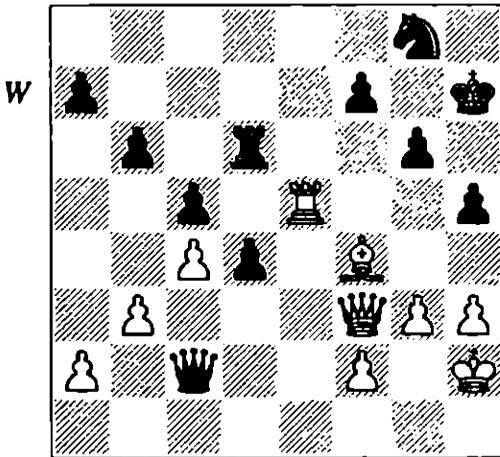
26 ... ♖f5

27 ♘d6

Now it is too late to push the e-pawn: 27 e6?! ♖c6 28 exf7 ♜xf7, and Black, needing to defend no more, assumes control.

- 27 ... ♗xd6  
 28 exd6 ♜xe1+  
 29 ♜xe1 ♜d7  
 30 ♖h2 ♜g8  
 30...g5? 31 ♜e5.  
 31 ♜e5 ♜c2  
 32 ♜f3 ♜xd6! (D)

Now Black is well on his way to a draw. 32...d3? runs into 33 ♜d5.



- 33 ♜xh5+ g4h5  
 34 ♗xd6 ♖g6!  
 35 ♖g2  
 35 g4 hxg4 36 ♜xg4+ (36 hxg4 ♜f6) 36...♖h7 37 ♜h5+ ♜h6.  
 35 ... ♜f6  
 36 g4 hxg4  
 37 hxg4 ♜e4  
 38 ♗f4

38 ♜xe4+ ♜xe4 39 ♗b8 favours White after 39...d3 40 ♖f3 d2 41 ♖e2 ♜xf2 42 ♖xd2 ♜xg4 43 ♗xa7, but 39...a6 40 ♗c7 b5 41 f3 ♜c3 is far less appealing.

- 38 ... ♜e6  
 39 ♜d3+ ♜e4+  
 40 ♜xe4+

White is not yet ready to split the point with 40 ♜f3, but the outcome is inevitable.

The game ended: 40...♜xe4 41 f3 ♜c3 42 a4 ♜e2 43 ♗d2 d3 44 ♖f2 ♜d4 45 ♖e3 (45 b4 ♜b3 46 ♗c3 d2 47 ♖e2 cxb4 48 ♗xb4 ♜d4+ 49 ♖xd2 ♜xf3+ 50 ♖e3 ♜e5) 45...f5 (45...♜xb3 46 ♖xd3 ♜xd2 47 ♖xd2 ♖g5 48 ♖e3 f5 49 gxf5 ♖xf5 50 f4 is Black's losing line, though 46...f5 draws) 46 ♗c3 f4 47 f4 (White loses after 47 ♗xd4? cxd4+ 48 ♖xd3 gxf3) 47...♜xb3 48 ♖xd3 ♖g5 49 ♖c2 ♜d4+ 50 ♗xd4 cxd4 51 ♖d3 ♖xg4 52 ♖xd4 ♖f5 53 ♖d5 ♖f6 54 ♖d6 (54 ♖c6 ♖e5 55 ♖b7 ♖d6 56 ♖xa7 ♖c7 57 ♖a6 ♖c6) 54...♖f5 55 ♖d5 ♖f6 56 ♖d6 ♖f5 57 a5 (one final try, hoping for 57...bxa5?? 58 c5 a4 59 c6 a3 60 c7 a2 61 c8 ♜+) 57...♖e4 58 ♖c6 bxa5 59 ♖b5 1/2-1/2.

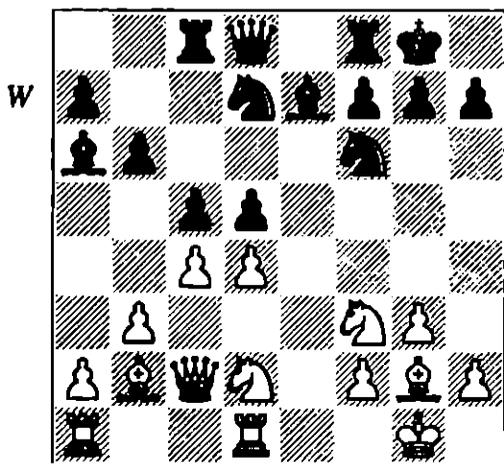
Game 22

Umanskaya – Ilinsky  
 Russia 1995

- 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♜f3 ♗e7  
 5 ♗g2 0-0 6 0-0 c6 7 ♜c2 ♜bd7 8  
 b3 b6 9 ♜d1 ♗a6 10 ♜bd2 ♜c8 11  
 e4 c5 12 exd5 exd5  
 13 ♗b2 (D)

More natural than the teasing 13 ♜f5 of Cifuentes-Sosonko, this simple developing move is also seen more frequently. Thus far White's pieces have been sensibly placed, so there is nothing to suggest that White should worry about the threatened attack down the c-file.

- 13 ... b5!?



An interesting attempt to justify the development of the light-squared bishop on a6. Others:

a) Another way to mount an assault on the c4-pawn is to trade on d4 first – 13...cxd4 14 ♖xd4 b5. Now 15 ♖ac1 bxc4 16 bxc4 ♖b6 17 ♖f5 ♖xc4 18 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 19 ♗d2 gives White good play for the pawn according to Lputian and Tavadian, but 15 ♗f5 bxc4 16 bxc4 looks more interesting, with a further branch:

a1) 16...dxc4? is not to be recommended due to 17 ♖c6 ♗e8 18 ♖e1.

a2) In Ghitescu-Radulov, Bucharest 1971, Black played the obvious 16...♗xc4. The series of exchanges which followed left White with a clear advantage: 17 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 18 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♖b6 20 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 21 ♖f5.

a3) More than a decade later Radulov endeavoured to improve in a game against Sosonko in Plovdiv 1983, this time choosing to retain the tension with 16...♗b6. Unfortunately for the GM from Bulgaria, after 17 ♖ab1 dxc4 18 ♗a3 he had to sacrifice with 18...♗xa3 (18...♗d8 19 ♖c6 ♖xc6 20 ♗xe7) 19 ♖xb6 axb6, when 20 ♖b1! would have given

White the better game (20...♗b2 21 ♖c6, or 20...♗c5 21 ♖c3).

b) In Rotshtein-Lputian, Wijk aan Zee 1993, the ostensibly quiet 13...♗b7 was seen. After 14 ♗f5 Black returned his attention to a queenside strike: 14...dxc4 (14...g6 15 ♗h3 will transpose to Cifuentes-Sosonko) 15 ♖xc4 b5 16 ♖ce5 c4 17 bxc4 bxc4 18 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 19 ♗xd7 ♖xd7. Further simplification enabled White to retain a slight edge into the ending: 20 ♖e5 ♗xg2 21 ♖xd7 ♗f3 22 ♖xf8 ♗xd1 23 ♖xd1 ♖xf8 24 ♗c3 ♖e8 25 ♖g2 ♖d7 26 ♖f3 and White earned the full point on the 64th move after Black had difficulties holding the firmly blockaded c-pawn.

#### 14 cxd5

White is unable to win the battle over the c4-square, so a good idea is to exploit Black's somewhat time-consuming opening strategy by concentrating on piece activity in the centre.

#### 14 ... c4

Without this advance there would have been little point in spending a tempo on 13...b5.

#### 15 bxc4 bxc4

#### 16 ♖e5!

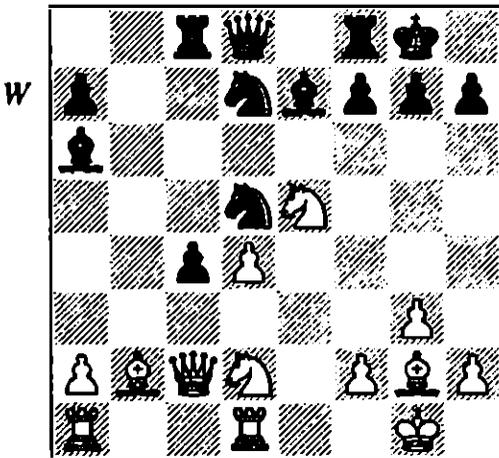
White must waste no time generating an initiative which is energetic enough to cancel out any play Black has with the c-pawn.

#### 16 ... ♖xd5!?(D)

One of the points behind White's previous move is illustrated in the following line: 16...c3 17 ♖c6 cxb2 18 ♗xb2 ♖xc6 (18...♗e8? 19 ♖e1) 19 dxc6 ♖b6 20 ♖ac1, when the rook

and two connected passed pawns are more effective than Black's two pieces – the pawns can be blockaded but White is constantly pressing.

With the text, incidentally, the game was still following theory that was known at the time. White's next is the first new move.



17 ♖e4!

Simple chess. White relies on well-positioned pieces rather than falling into Black's game-plan with the messy 17 ♖xf7 or the passive 17 ♙xd5?! ♜xe5 18 ♙e4 ♞d3.

17 ... ♞b4

Again 17...c3 must be investigated. After 18 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 19 ♙xc3 ♜xe5 20 dxe5 ♜c7 White escapes the pin on the c-file with 21 ♜a4, hitting the a6-bishop. Then 21...♙e2 22 ♜dc1 ♙g5 23 ♙d2 gives White a clear advantage, so 21...♜xc3 22 ♜xa6 is a lesser evil, though Black still has an uphill struggle.

18 ♜c3 ♞d3?!

It is understandable that Black wants to use the c4-pawn aggressively, and the knight does appear to be quite menacing in the heart of enemy territory but, as we will see,

White is able to 'ignore' the knight. Consequently Black is less well equipped to deal with matters in his own half of the board. More circumspect is 18...♞d5 19 ♜f3! with a slight but enduring edge for White.

19 ♙a3

White's pieces work very well together and control some key squares, and the threats of ♜e4-d6 or ♙g2-h3 force Black into making a capture that strengthens White's grip on the centre.

19 ... ♜7xe5

20 dxe5 ♙xa3

Not an attractive exchange from Black's point of view as the removal of his dark-squared bishop leaves White's knight free to jump into d6. 20...♙b7? fails to 21 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 22 ♞d6! ♙xg2 23 ♜xc8 ♜b7 24 ♞e7+! ♜h8 25 ♞f5, etc.

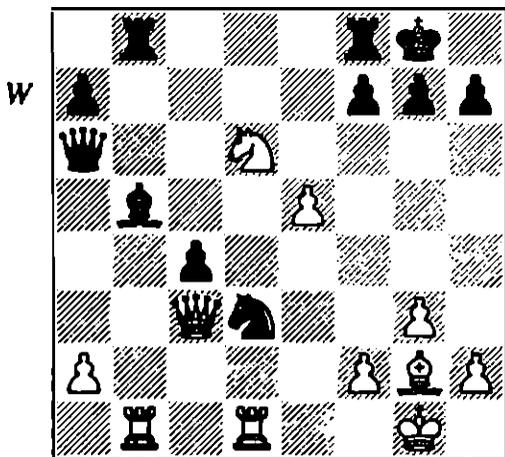
21 ♜xa3

White now has a clear advantage. Having just made the point that the white knight cannot be challenged once it arrives on d6, it is also true that Black can be content with the d3-knight (White can give up the bishop for the knight, but only as a last resort because this would leave the light squares firmly in Black's hands). However, the crucial factor here is the scope of the bishops, and this is the main ingredient of White's superiority. The Catalan bishop has a bright future on the h1-a8 diagonal, whereas its counterpart on a6 has served its purpose (attacking the c4-square and subsequently supporting a black c-pawn) but is now without an effective role.

21 ... ♖b6  
 22 ♖ab1 ♙b5  
 23 ♗c3

Threatening to win the pinned bishop with 24 a4.

23 ... ♗a6  
 24 ♘d6 ♖b8 (D)



25 ♗d4!

Note how White has had few problems playing around the invading c-pawn (which has become more of a weakness than a strength). Moreover the d3-knight has made virtually no impact on the game since arriving on d3. Black never had the opportunity to attack the f2-pawn and White had adequate control over the e5-square.

Apart from planting the queen firmly in the centre of the board White could also consider 25 ♙d5!? with play against both the c-pawn and the f-pawn. Not to be recommended, on the other hand, is 25 ♖xb5? ♖xb5 26 ♗xc4 ♘b2 with a decisive advantage to Black.

25 ... ♙a4  
 26 ♖f1 ♖xb1

After 26...♖bd8 27 f4 White's ominously mobile kingside pawns and the vulnerability of the f7-pawn guarantee a dangerous lead. Even after the text White has control of the b-file and the centre, as well as the prospect of turning to the kingside with ♙g2-d5. The future looks bleak for the c-pawn, too, so Black has in mind a final attempt to confuse the issue.

27 ♖xb1 ♙c2

Forcing White to surrender the b-file or neglect the back rank. 27...♙c6 28 ♗xc4 is very difficult for Black.

28 ♖b7!

White increases the pressure.

28 ... ♗a5  
 29 ♙d5

Now all of White's pieces are perfectly placed.

29 ... ♗e1+  
 30 ♚g2 ♘xe5?

Hastening the end. A better defensive try is 30...♗xe5 31 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 32 f4 ♘g4, when 33 ♚h3! is still excellent for White (a7, c4 and f7 are all easy targets) but at least there is a certain amount of work left.

Now White was able to decide the game in just a few moves: 31 ♘xf7! ♙e4+ (31...♘xf7 is answered by 32 ♙xf7+: 32...♖xf7 33 ♖b8+ ♖f8 34 ♗d5+ or 32...♚h8 33 ♙g6) 32 ♙xe4 ♘xf7 33 ♙d5 1-0.

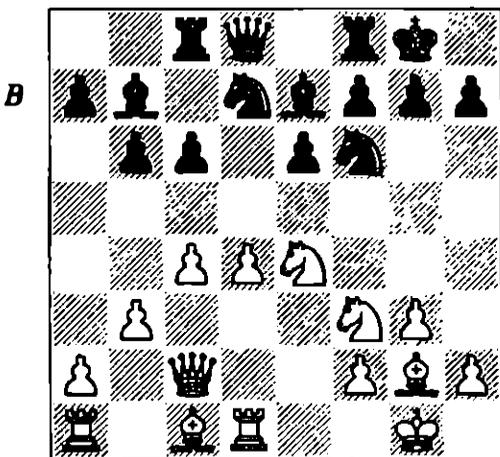
# 10 Closed Catalan: Black plays ...d5xe4

Game 23  
Salov – Spassky  
France 1994

1  $\text{d}f3$   $\text{d}f6$  2  $c4$   $e6$  3  $g3$   $d5$  4  $\text{g}2$   
 $\text{e}7$  5 0-0 0-0 6  $d4$   $\text{bd}7$  7  $\text{c}2$   $c6$   
 8  $b3$   $b6$  9  $\text{d}1$   
 9 ...  $\text{b}7$   
 10  $\text{c}3$   $\text{c}8$   
 11  $e4$   $\text{dxe}4$

Spassky actually captured with his knight here, but reversing his 11th and 12th moves allows us to investigate an important alternative for Black.

12  $\text{dxe}4$  (D)



12 ...  $\text{dxe}4$

Hoping to relieve some pressure and later gain time with an attack on the queen. Another thematic move which is also seen very often is 12...c5. Then after 13  $\text{dxf}6+$   $\text{dxf}6$

14  $\text{d}g5!$   $\text{d}xg5$  15  $\text{d}xb7$   $\text{c}7$  White has a choice:

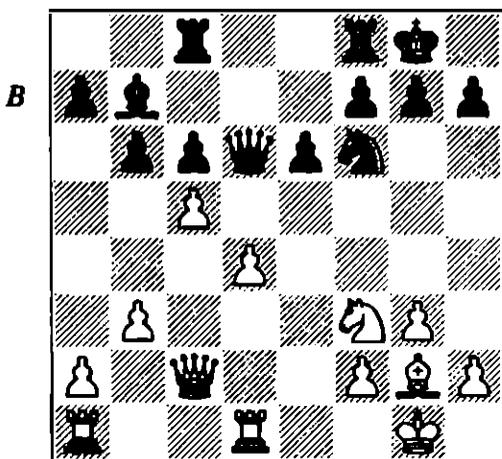
a) The game Epishin-Belotti, Reggio Emilia 1996 is typical. The game continued: 16  $\text{d}e4$   $f5$  17  $\text{d}g2$  (16...f5 first appeared in Rogers-Godena, Manila OL 1992, the players producing an interesting draw: 17  $d5$   $\text{fxe}4$  18  $\text{dxe}6$   $\text{d}f6$  19  $\text{c}xe4$   $\text{d}xa1$  20  $e7$   $\text{c}8$  21  $\text{c}e6+$   $\text{h}8$  22  $\text{d}f4$   $\text{d}d4$  23  $\text{d}xc7$   $\text{e}8$  24  $\text{d}d8$   $h6$  25  $\text{e}1$   $\text{b}7$  26  $\text{c}f5$   $\text{d}f6$  27  $\text{e}6$   $\text{g}8$  28  $\text{c}g6$  1/2-1/2) 17...cxd4 18  $\text{d}xg5$   $\text{c}xg5$  19  $\text{d}xd4$   $e5$  20  $\text{d}d5$   $\text{c}e7$  21  $\text{e}1$   $g6$  22  $\text{c}d2$  and White had very active pieces, dominating the centre files.

b) 16  $\text{dxc}5$  is equally popular and also leaves Black with a difficult defensive task after 16... $\text{d}xc1$  17  $\text{d}axc1$   $\text{d}xb7$  18  $c6$   $\text{c}7$  19  $\text{d}xd7$   $\text{d}xd7$  20  $\text{cxd}7$   $\text{c}xd7$  21  $\text{d}d1$  in view of White's control of the d-file. Yusupov-Beitar, Thessaloniki OL 1988 ended in less than a dozen moves: 21... $\text{c}e7$  (21... $\text{c}c6$  22  $\text{d}d4$   $h5$  23  $\text{c}d2$  was no improvement in Jurek-Mueller, Bern 1996) 22  $\text{c}d3$  (or 22  $\text{d}d3$  and 23  $\text{c}d2$ ) 22... $g6$  23  $\text{c}d6$   $\text{e}8$  24  $\text{c}d7$   $\text{f}8$  25  $\text{c}a4$   $a5$  26  $\text{d}d7$   $\text{c}c5$  27  $\text{c}b5$   $\text{c}xb5$  28  $\text{c}xb5$   $\text{c}c8$  29  $\text{d}b7$   $a4$  30  $\text{bxa}4$   $\text{c}c4$  31  $\text{d}xb6$   $\text{d}xa4$  32  $\text{d}a6$  1-0.

13  $\text{c}xe4$   $b5$

Spassky is fond of this move in the Closed Catalan. Black's other two alternatives tend to lead to the same structure.

a) 13...♠f6 looks natural enough, evicting the queen from the h1-a8 diagonal (and from the middle of the board). However, practice has shown that Black is unable to improve the cramped nature of his position. After 14 ♖c2, for example, the desired ...c6-c5 is still not possible as d4xc5 clears the d-file for the rook to hit the queen. Prefacing the push of the c-pawn with ...♗e7-d6 would only walk into an uncomfortable pin after White takes on c5, so the only logical continuation is 14...♖c7. Then 15 ♗f4 ♗d6 16 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 invites White to stamp out any counterplay and increase his advantage with 17 c5! (D).



This is a dream Catalan position for White, who enjoys several privileges in return for surrendering the d5-square. The immediate structural change in the position is the firm blockade of the c6-pawn, forcing Black to abandon any hope of freeing himself with ...c6-c5. Hence the

b7-bishop now looks rather miserable compared with the mighty Catalan bishop. In addition White has won valuable space on the queenside, and the c5-pawn introduces the possibility of sending a dangerous piece into the heart of enemy territory with ♠f3-e5/d2-c4-d6, etc. Should Black prevent this manoeuvre by nudging the b6-pawn one square, then his bishop will face imprisonment behind the 'friendly' pawns on b5, c6 and e6. Last but not least is White's control of the pivotal e5-square. Of course the battle is not over yet, but White is in charge. From the diagram position the game Sher-Bobbia, Ticino 1994, continued 17...♖e7 18 ♠e5 ♠d5 19 a3 ♠fd8 20 b4 g6 21 ♠d2 b5 22 ♖b3 a6 23 h4 and White simply ignored the d5-knight and used his space advantage at leisure to strangle his opponent.

b) The other option is to keep ...♠d7-f6 in reserve and play the immediate 13...♖e7. Unfortunately for Black White is still able to carry out the same thematic thrust of the c-pawn despite having no direct influence over the c5-square: 14 ♗f4 ♗d6 15 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 16 c5!, the point being that after 16...bxc5 17 dxc5 Black cannot play 17...♠xc5 because this loses a piece to 18 ♖b4 ♖e7 19 ♠ac1, etc. Consequently Black should play 16...♖e7, when 17 b4 reinforces White's grip on the queenside. Then ...♠d7-f6 transposes to the previous note (see also Portisch-Radulov in the Introduction), so in Ribli-Herzog, Lucerne

OL 1982 Black left his knight on d7 to watch over the e5-square. The game continued 17...♖fd8 18 ♖e1 (18 ♖e3 ♗a6 19 ♘e5 ♘xe5 20 dxe5 bxc5 21 bxc5 ♗xd1+ 22 ♗xd1 ♗c4 23 ♗d6! was clearly better for White in Sosonko-Westerner, Bundesliga 1982 – 23...♖b7 24 h4 h6 25 ♗xc6!, etc.) 18...♗a6 19 ♗ac1 ♗b5 20 h3 h6 21 ♗d2! ♖f8 22 ♖d1, causing Black to regret bringing his bishop to b5: 22...a5 23 a4 ♗a6 24 b5! ♗b7 (24...cxb5 25 c6 ♘f6 26 ♗f1). Now White put his knight on e5 anyway, 25 ♘e5 ♘xe5 26 dxe5 bxc5 27 ♗d6 ♗a8 28 b6! giving him a decisive advantage: 28...♗xd6 29 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 30 exd6 ♗b8 31 ♗xc5 ♗xb6 32 ♗xa5 ♗b8 33 ♗a7 g5 34 a5 ♖g7 35 a6 ♖f6 36 d7 ♖e7 37 d8♖+ ♖xd8 38 ♗xf7 ♖e8 39 ♗h7 ♗d8 40 a7 ♖f8 41 ♗c7 1-0.

14 ♗f4!?

A new move. Perhaps not quite satisfied with c4-c5 in this particular position, White anticipates the opening of the b-file by positioning his dark-squared bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal.

14 ...            bxc4  
15 bxc4           ♖a5  
16 ♖c2!

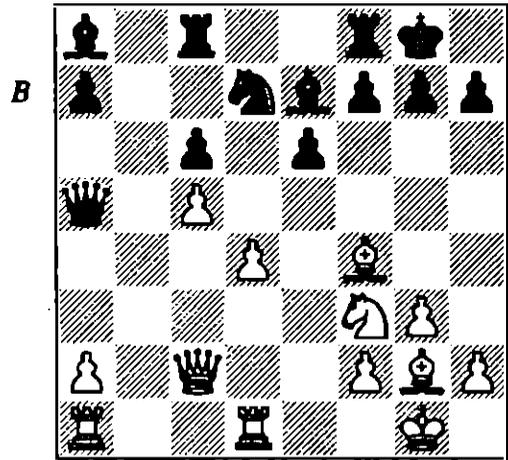
Rather than wait for the queen to be chased away from e4 at a time which is convenient to his opponent, White drops the queen back now in order to set a trap.

16 ...            ♗a8

The tactical justification for White's last move can be seen after the planned 16...c5?, when White has the final say on the long diagonal

with the crushing 17 ♘g5 ♗xg5 18 ♗xb7.

17 c5! (D)



Once again White acts to put a stop to the ...c6-c5 break by planting his own pawn on c5, thus embarrassing the a8-bishop.

While it is clear that Black is short of breathing space, his cramped position is reasonably solid. Moreover, there are no pawn breaks available to White, so the first player must search for other methods to infiltrate Black's position, and this requires a certain amount of patience. Consequently the next phase of the game involves White improving the positioning of his pieces to the maximum, while Black is limited to planting his knight on d5 and then making the best of the rest, trying to prevent an invasion in the process. With best play White enjoys a clear advantage.

17 ...            ♘f6  
18 ♘e5            ♘d5  
19 ♘c4!

Gaining a tempo on the queen to facilitate the occupation of the inviting d6-square.

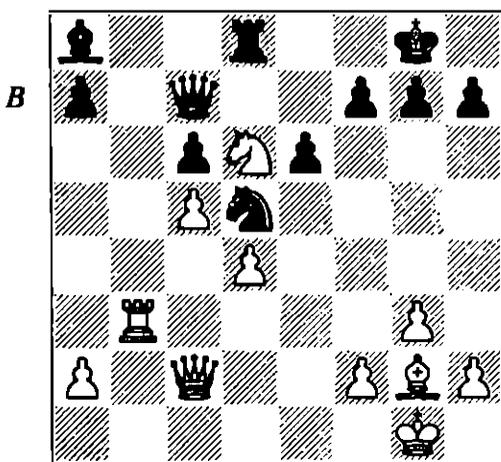
19 ... ♖d8  
 20 ♙d6 ♙xd6  
 21 ♜xd6 ♞b8  
 22 ♜ab1

With so many superior pieces White does not hesitate to challenge rooks. Another reason for White to bring a rook to the b-file is to rule out ...♙a8-b7, so the bishop remains locked out of the game on a8.

22 ... ♜c7  
 23 ♞xb8 ♞xb8  
 24 ♞b1 ♞d8!

Black keeps his remaining rook on the board in order to remind his opponent that he is ready to attack the pawn on d4 if the opportunity arises. After 24...♞xb1 25 ♜xb1 Black is completely tied down. Note that 24...♙b7? is still not possible in view of 25 ♜b2.

25 ♞b3! (D)



Threatening ♜c2-b2 followed by ♙g2-f1-a6-b7, when White forces his rook to b7. Black cannot afford to allow this, and prepares to challenge knights.

25 ... ♜f6  
 26 ♜h2 ♜e8  
 27 ♜c4!

Exchanging knights makes no sense for White, for the c4-square provides easy access to e5, d6, b6 and a5.

27 ... h6  
 28 ♙f3!

Instructive. White is in no hurry so he vacates g2 in order to bring the king off the back rank, and in the meantime the scope of his bishop has increased significantly (now Black has to consider the possibility of ♙f3-h5 at some stage if the knight is allowed back into d6).

28 ... ♔f8  
 29 ♔g2 ♜f6  
 30 a4 ♜e8  
 31 a5

Note how White has calmly put his extra space to such good use. The b7-square still forms an important part of White's plans, and now that the enormous knight obstructs the bishop's route to a6 and b7 White toys with the idea of a5-a6 and ♜c4-a5-b7, or (again after a5-a6) ♜c4-b6!?

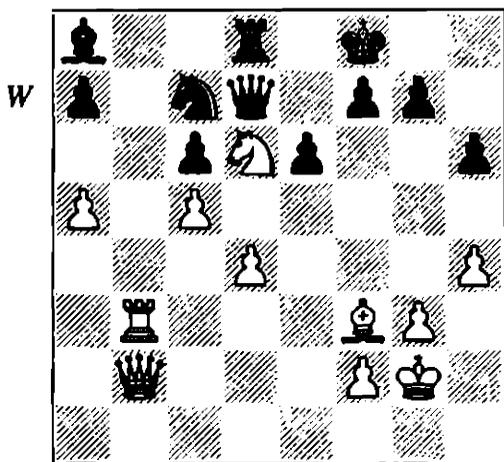
31 ... ♜c8  
 32 h4

Claiming yet more territory – this time on the kingside.

32 ... ♜c7

Simply waiting to be pushed off the end of the board is a rather futile policy (White is slowly but surely creeping forward on both flanks, having already decided there is no longer any use for his backrank!). At least from c7 Black's knight threatens to continue to a6, b5 or d5.

33 ♜d6 ♜d7 (D)  
 34 ♞b8



The correct choice. An overwhelming, undisputed initiative can be a problem occasionally, an inaccuracy here and there (or choosing the wrong plan) resulting in the opponent managing to wriggle out of the stranglehold or even swing the balance in his favour. Here, for example, 34 ♖h5 is tempting, with the idea of meeting 34...g6 with 35 d5. However, the simple 35...♔g8! is far from clear.

With the text White quickens the tempo of the game, a reasonable progression after the expansion on the kingside and the advance of the a-pawn.

34 ... ♘a6

The tricky 34...♘b5!? requires careful handling from White. A mistake is 35 ♖xa8? ♖xa8 36 ♘xb5, when Black simply side-steps the pin on the h1-a8 diagonal and creates a decisive pin of his own on the b-file with 36...♖b8!. Instead White should play 35 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 36 ♗b4! with a commanding position in the ending, e.g. 36...a6 37 ♘xb5 cxb5 38 c6+ ♗e7 39 ♗c5! ♗xc5 40 dxc5 ♕e7 41 ♕f1, etc.

35 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8

36 ♗d2

The queen is heading for the kingside.

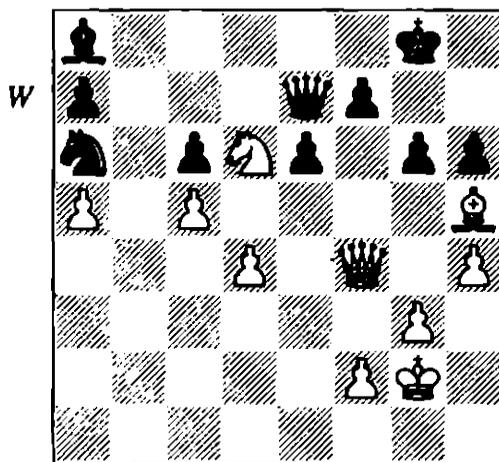
36 ... ♔g8

37 ♗f4 ♗e7

37...♗f6 38 ♗xf6 gxf6 39 ♘c8.

38 ♖h5 g6 (D)

38...f6 39 ♗e4 leaves Black with weak points on c6 (♖h5-e8), e6 (♖h5-g4/f7+) and g6 – too much to deal with when his bishop is trapped (and his knight far away on the queenside).



39 ♗xh6! ♗f6

The tactical justification of White's previous move lies in the variation 39...gxf6 40 ♘e4 f5 41 ♗g6+ ♕f8 42 ♘g5 ♗b7 (42...♗d7 43 ♘h7+ ♕e7 44 ♗f6+ ♕e8 45 ♗f8#) 43 ♘xe6+ ♕e7 44 ♘g7, when White eats up the kingside.

40 ♖f3 ♗xd4

41 ♗g5!

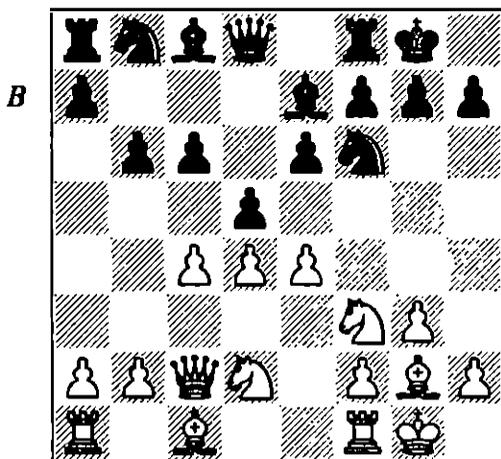
Winning. The remaining moves of the game were:

41...♘c5 (41...♗xc5 42 ♗d8+ and then 42...♕g7 43 ♘e8+ and 44 ♗xa8, or 42...♕h7 43 ♘e4) 42 ♗e7! ♘d3 (42...♗g7 43 ♗xa7) 43 ♗xf7+ ♕h8 44 ♗f8+ ♕h7 45 ♘e4 1-0.

# 11 Closed Catalan: White plays e4-e5

Game 24  
Orlov – Tal  
New York 1990

1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 ♙e7  
5 ♙g2 0-0 6 0-0 ♘bd7 7 ♚c2 c6  
8 ♘bd2 b6  
9 e4 (D)



Quite natural. White elects to expand in the centre without spending time on other moves such as ♖f1-d1 or b2-b3 and ♙c1-b2, thus depriving Black of time which could be used to prepare for the middlegame. However, it could also be argued that it is premature to push the e-pawn before development has been completed. As is often the case, it comes down to what the player feels most comfortable with – a build-up of tension or earlier direct action.

9 ... ♙b7

After 9...♙a6 White may also push his e-pawn still further, 10 e5, and this was first seen in Cifuentes-Flear, Polanica Zdroj 1992. The game continued 10...♘e8 11 ♖e1 ♜c8 12 ♙f1! ♘c7 13 b3 dxc4 14 ♘xc4 ♘d5 15 ♚e4! and White stood better. Black now chased the knight away with 15...b5, cutting across White's plan to bring his queen over to g4 (threatening ♙c1-h6) in order to take control of the d6-square with ♙c1-g5, etc. After 16 ♘e3 ♖e8 17 h4 ♘f8 White played the ostensibly helpful 18 ♘xd5! and, despite allowing Black to 'repair' his pawn structure, this was enough for a clear advantage: 18...cxd5 (18...♚xd5 19 ♚xd5 cxd5 20 a4 ♖b8 21 ♙d2 is also good for the first player) 19 ♚g4 ♜c6 20 h5 with a King's Indian Attack style initiative.

10 e5

The point. The attack on the knight is what gives 9 e4 independent significance; alternatives such as 10 b3 should transpose to the other games in this chapter.

10 ... ♘e8

11 b3

The modern treatment of this particular line. White is not afraid of his opponent's coming ...c6-c5 break because Black will eventually have

to address the communication problems created by the e8-knight.

Previously, the over-simplistic 11 cxd5?! had been equally popular, but by releasing the tension in the centre and on the queenside White runs the risk of allowing Black to invade down the c-file, something which is not so easily achieved in similar King's Indian Attack positions. An interesting response to 11 cxd5 is 11...exd5!?, with the idea of bringing the troubled knight back into the game with ...d8-c7-e6. Perhaps afraid that this would leave his centre pawns vulnerable to attack and invite White to put his kingside pawn majority to good use by throwing forward his f-pawn, Black chose the conventional recapture 11...cxd5 in C.Hansen-Eingorn, Dortmund 1988. The game continued 12 e1 (12 Wa4 a5 gets White nowhere) 12...Rc8 13 Wd1 Wc7!? 14 f1 Wc2 15 Wxc2 Rxc2 16 d3 Rc8 with equality (in fact the weakness of the d4-pawn and Black's queenside edge mean that White should be careful). White lacks a constructive method of preventing the exchange of his most powerful piece once the c-file has been opened. In this line 14 d1 would be fine after 14...Wc2? 15 Wxc2 Rxc2 16 d3, when the rook is trapped on c2, but 14...b5 followed by ...Wc7-b6 and ...f7-f6 gives Black more than enough counter-play.

11 ... Rc8  
 Preparing ...c6-c5.  
 12 f2 c5  
 13 dxc5

The other central pawn exchange is also possible, though less advisable with the queen in the firing line of Black's rook:

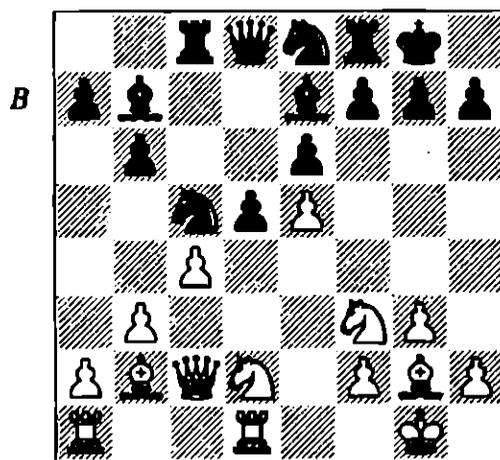
a) The variation 13 cxd5 cxd4 14 Wd1 fxd5 15 fxd4 Wc7 16 Rc1 Wb7! 17 We2 d7c7 illustrates how Black can benefit.

b) In Goldin-Bouzoukis, Philadelphia 1992, White first played 13 Rac1, and the postponement of c4xd5 was justified after 13...Wc7 14 cxd5 fxd5 15 d4 e4 Wb7 16 Rfe1 h6 17 We2 d7c7 18 d2fd2 Rfd8 19 d7c4, when the weakness of the d6-square was uncomfortable for Black. The queen manoeuvre ...Wd8-c7-b7 is less effective here because White has not lost time with his queen, so the more relevant 13...d7c7 makes more sense.

13 ... d7xc5

Better than 13...fxc5 14 h4, when Black will regret neglecting the g5-square.

14 Rfd1 (D)



Now both players have a rook on the same file as the opposing queen, resulting in a stand-off in the centre as neither side is ready to open until a

suitable square has been found for the queens.

14 ... ♖c7

14...b5!? has been suggested, intending to meet 15 cxb5 by 15...♞b6 16 ♖d4 ♖d7 with an unclear position. In Veingold-Delgado, Seville 1994, White played 15 ♖ac1, bringing added support to the c-file instead of handing it over to Black. Indeed after 15...♖c7 16 b4!? ♖a4 17 c5 both the c- and d-files were closed by passed pawns, leaving White with unlimited use of the precious d4-square: 17...a5 18 a3 axb4 19 axb4 ♖a6 20 ♞b3 ♞e8 21 ♔a1 ♖b8 22 ♔f1 ♔a6 23 ♖d4 and White's domination eventually became decisive.

15 ♖ac1 ♞e8

16 ♞b1

The preparations completed, attention focuses once again on clearing the centre pawns.

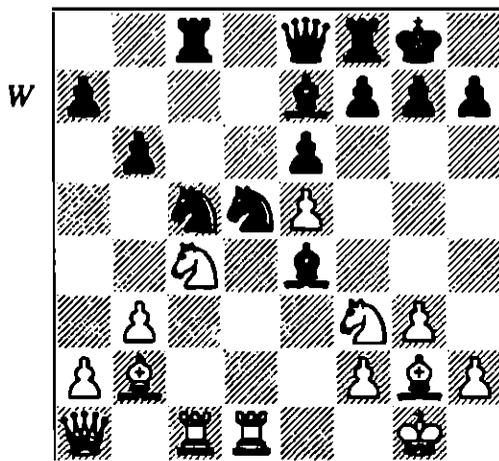
16 ... dxc4

Black wastes no more time. Here too, challenging the c-pawn only helps White: 16...b5 17 b4! ♖a4 (the black knights are misplaced after 17...♖5a6 18 cxb5 ♖xb5 19 a3) 18 c5 and White's space advantage and the d4-square are significant.

17 ♖xc4 ♔e4

18 ♞a1 ♖d5 (D)

White's queen has not really been pushed out of the game because Black will soon find his kingside under pressure on the a1-h8 diagonal after ♖c4-d6 and a subsequent ...♔e7xd6, e5xd6, etc. White, in fact, is practically forced into carrying out this action now that Black's knights



have finally found two nice squares on c5 and d5. There is no way through the central files at the moment, and Tal made sure to post his light-squared bishop in the heart of enemy territory before ending the journey of his king's knight. Consequently White is hampered by his opponent's annoying grip on the b1-h7 diagonal and the proximity of the unwelcome visitor to his Catalan bishop. An urgent reaction is required.

19 ♖d6

Although we have established that this is the most appropriate course, White is not obliged to drop his knight into d6 immediately. Worth investigating is 19 ♖d4!?, attempting to profit from the rather unusual position of the e4-bishop (normally this active posting is unavailable to Black):

a) 19...♔g6 20 ♖d6 ♔xd6 21 exd6 is clearly better for White according to Tal.

b) The stubborn 19...f5 is stronger than retreating the bishop. Then 20 ♖d6 ♔xd6 21 exd6 ♞d7 is rather messy. Black's knights, reasonable grip on the light squares and the

weak d-pawn should provide sufficient compensation for White's control of the dark squares.

White's choice in the game forces ...f7-f6, which creates a weakness on e6 and may leave Black vulnerable on the h3-c8 and a2-g8 diagonals.

19 ... ♖xd6  
 20 exd6 f6  
 21 ♖d4

It is logical to seek to punish the bishop for its audacity. Now both 22 b4 and 22 ♖xc5 are threatened, and protecting the bishop with 21...f5 simply loses a tempo on line 'b' in the note to White's 19th move. Tal produces an aggressive response to the threat.

21 ... e5

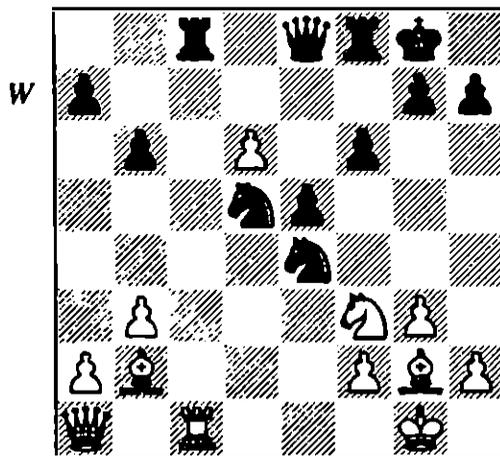
Cleverly putting the onus on White to find the most accurate continuation in a critical position. Another uncompromising reply is the tempting 21...♚h5. However, after 22 ♖xc5 ♖xf3 23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 White has 24 ♖h4! ♚f5 25 ♖h3, a decisive variation which justifies White's play by highlighting the susceptibility of the e6-pawn and the h3-c8 diagonal.

22 ♖xe4

A necessary exchange sacrifice – there is no turning back. 22 ♖xc5? fails to 22...exd4, and the situation after 22 ♖dc4 is sufficiently different from the previous note to allow Black to play 22...♚h5!?, for example 23 b4 ♖xf3 24 ♖h4 ♚f5 25 ♖h3

♚xh3! 26 ♖xh3 ♖d3 and White's pieces certainly lack harmony.

22 ... ♖xe4 (D)



23 ♖d2?

The losing move. Correct is 23 ♖xe5! fxe5 24 ♖xe4 ♖f6 25 ♖f5 when the removal of the f6-pawn and the bishop pair keep the game balanced. After the text White's queen and bishop bite on granite, so Black is able to put his material lead to good use.

23 ... ♖xd2  
 24 ♖xd5+ ♚h8  
 25 ♖d1

Unfortunately for White the obvious alternative 25 ♖xc8 ♚xc8 26 ♚d1 does not work due to 26...♚c5 27 ♚xd2 ♚xd6, after which White cannot escape the pin on the d-file.

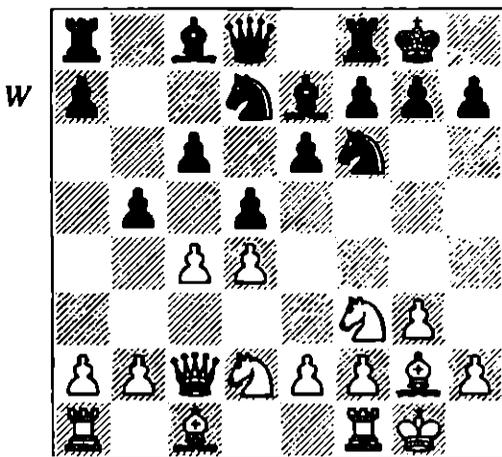
25 ... ♖c2

Black is winning. The remaining moves were: 26 ♖c1 ♚g6 27 ♖b7 ♖d8 28 ♖a3 ♖xc1+ 29 ♚xc1 ♚b1! 30 ♚xb1 ♖xb1 31 ♖b4 a5 32 ♖e1 ♖xd6 0-1.

# 12 Closed Catalan: Black plays an early ...b7-b5

Game 25  
Rajković – Colović  
Cetinje 1993

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c6 4 ♘bd2  
 ♘f6 5 g3 ♘bd7 6 ♙g2 ♙e7 7 0-0 0-0  
 8 ♚c2  
 8 ... b5?! (D)



This straightforward challenge to the c-pawn was first tried by I.Rabinovich against Botvinnik in 1938 (see 'b' in the note to Black's 9th move). Examples of the provocative thrust are not uncommon – particularly at club level – despite the fact that ...b7/b6-b5 rarely works in these positions (ideally – for Black – the white knight is on c3 and Black has a rook or queen on the c-file, facilitating Black's occupation of the e4-square after ...b5-b4).

9 c5!

White's simple but effective plan is to give his opponent little room for manoeuvre and restrict the freedom of Black's light-squared bishop.

9 ... a5

Black can do nothing to contest White's space advantage in the centre and on the kingside, so there is only one remaining area of the board in which he can make a stand. The intention is to combine queenside expansion with the occupation of the d5-square, which will soon be available to Black because White's only constructive try for an advantage involves the central thrust e2-e4. It is important to see how White should deal with the alternatives:

a) The textbook reaction to c4-c5 is 9...e5, but in this particular position White has enough influence in the centre to come out on top after 10 dxe5 ♘g4 11 ♘b3 ♘dxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 13 ♘d4!, when the weak c6-pawn accentuates the power of 14 ♙f4, 14 f4 and 14 e4.

b) With 9...♚c7 Black wants to force through ...e6-e5. Both 10 a4 and 10 e4 are enough for a slight edge, while White played the ostensibly obliging 10 ♘b3 in Botvinnik-I.Rabinovich, USSR 1938. The game went 10...e5 11 ♘xe5! ♘xe5 12 ♙f4 ♘fg4 (12...♘fd7 13 e4! opens the



for White, is the lesser evil. Instead Black voluntarily damaged his defensive wall with 18...g6?, an error which White punished rather ruthlessly: 19 h5 ♖f6 20 hxg6 hxg6 21 ♖xg6! fxg6 22 ♜xg6+ ♜f8 23 ♜e4! (23 ♖h6+?! ♜e7 24 ♖g5 ♜f8 is less clear) 23...♜e7 (23...♖xe5 24 dxe5 ♜f7 25 ♖h6+ ♜e7 26 ♖g5+ ♜f8 27 ♜h6+ ♜g7 28 ♜h5 ♜f7 29 ♜h8+ ♜g8 30 ♜h4 ♜a7 31 ♖h6+ ♜g7 {31...♜f7 32 ♜f4+ ♖xf4 33 ♜f6#} 32 ♜d1!, etc.) 24 ♖g5 ♜f8 (24...♖xg5 25 ♜xg5+ ♜f8 26 ♖g6+! ♜f7 {26...♜g8 27 ♖e7+! ♜f7 28 ♖xd5} 27 ♜h4 ♜g8 28 ♜h7+ ♜g7 29 ♜xg7+! ♜xg7 30 ♜g2! followed by ♜a1-h1) 25 ♜f4! ♜d8 26 ♜xf6! ♖xf6 27 ♜e1! ♜d5 (27...♖d7 28 ♖g4) 28 ♜g7+ ♜e8 29 ♖xf6 ♜a7 30 ♜g6+ ♜af7 31 ♖xf7 ♜xf7 32 ♜e5 ♜f3 33 ♜g8+ 1-0 (33...♜f8 34 ♜xe6+).

13 ♜c2

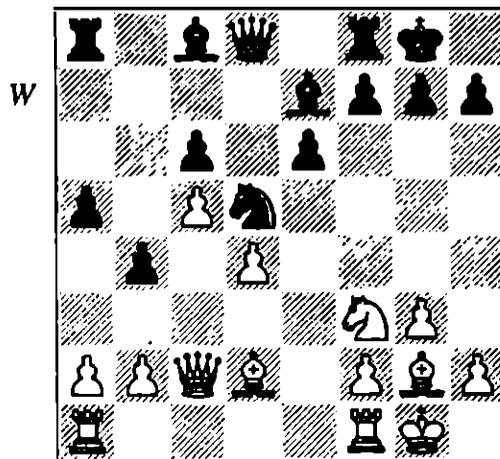
Remember that 13 ♜xc6? leads only to an early draw (13...♖d7 14 ♜b7 ♜b8).

13 ... ♖d5

Although installing the knight on d5 is one of the points behind tempting White's c-pawn forward, there is nothing constructive Black can do with this piece. Very short of space, Black has to content himself with engineering a solid set-up, but in practice White tends to have so much freedom (and time) that Black finds himself on the uncomfortable side of a potent initiative.

14 ♖d2 b4 (D)

Black does not want to be deprived of breathing space for his light-squared bishop.



15 ♜fe1 ♖a6

16 ♖e5

White's knight is at least as strong as Black's.

16 ... ♜c7

17 ♖e4!

With the centre closed White is justified in turning to the kingside to exert pressure and generate an attack against the king. As for striking on the other wing with 17 a3, White is clearly better after 17...bxa3 18 ♜xa3 ♖b5 19 b3 (a5 and c6 are weak), but 17...♖b5! is much better.

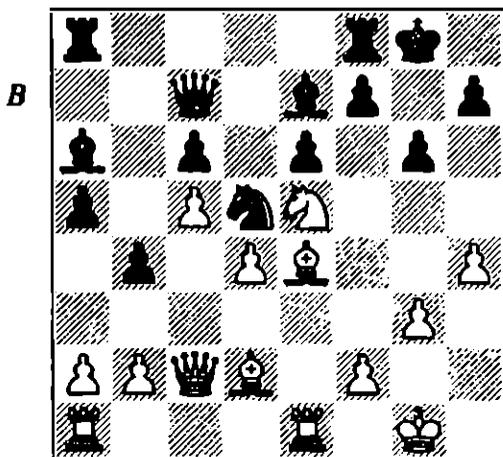
17 ... g6?!

White still has an initiative after 17...h6, but with the text Black presents his opponent with a ready-made target. White's knight, bishop and queen are within striking distance of the g6-pawn, and his next move threatens to heighten the pressure still further.

18 h4! (D)

18 ... ♖f6

Black is unable to drum up any counterplay on the queenside because he has no pawn breaks and there is insufficient room to manoeuvre his pieces into active positions, so his best policy is simply to try to



prepare for the inevitable kingside attack.

- 19  $\text{♔f3}$   $\text{♙g7}$   
 20  $\text{h5}$   $\text{♙b5}$   
 21  $\text{♖e4}$

From here the queen is ready to swing over to the kingside if necessary, and there is now the added 'threat' of following up a sacrifice on g6 or f7 with  $\text{♖e4xe6(+)}$ .

- 21 ...  $\text{♞fd8}$

Providing the black king with an escape route. The rook is better placed on the d-file as White now has to keep in mind the possibility of an attack on his d-pawn after ... $\text{♘d5-e7/f6}$ . Less accurate, for example, is  $\text{21...♞fe8}$ , which White is free to meet with  $\text{22 hxc6 hxc6 23 ♖h4}$  followed by  $\text{♚g1-g2}$  and  $\text{♞el-h1}$ .

- 22  $\text{hxc6}$   $\text{hxc6}$   
 23  $\text{♚g2}$

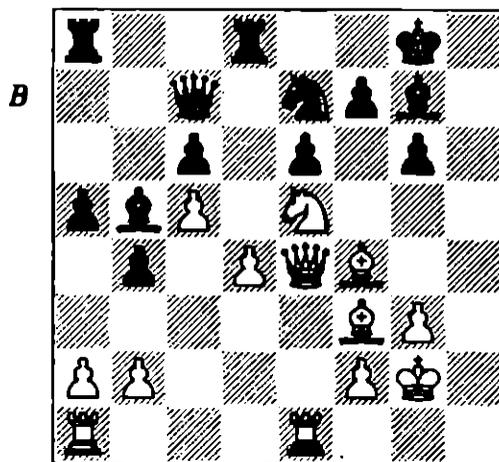
White must clear the way for his rook(s) to come to the h-file if the attack is to reach a successful culmination, so he may as well play this useful move now.

- 23 ...  $\text{♘e7}$

Passively waiting for White to invade at leisure is tantamount to resignation.

- 24  $\text{♙f4! (D)}$

The tempting  $\text{24 ♘xf7?}$  backfires:  $\text{24...♞xd4! 25 ♖xe6 ♙c4}$  and Black wins. White's initiative provides more than just the foundation for a kingside attack – thanks to his space advantage he is able to bolster the centre and harass Black's queen before occupying the h-file.



- 24 ...  $\text{♖c8}$   
 25  $\text{♞ad1}$   $\text{♞a7}$   
 26  $\text{♞h1}$

The beginning of the end. Black is powerless. All of White's pieces are on – or have access to – the kingside, Black is effectively playing without his light-squared bishop and White dominates.

- 26 ...  $\text{♘f5}$   
 27  $\text{g4}$   $\text{♘e7}$   
 28  $\text{♙h6!}$   $\text{♘d5}$

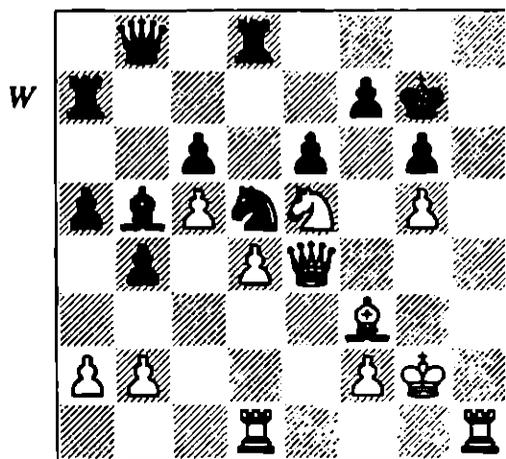
$\text{28...♙h8 29 ♙g5!}$  doesn't change the ultimate outcome.

- 29  $\text{g5}$   $\text{♖b8}$

Or  $\text{29...♙h8 30 ♖h4 ♘e7 31 ♙f8! ♚xf8}$  (or  $\text{31...♙xe5 32 ♙xe7 ♞xe7 33 dxe5}$ )  $\text{32 ♖xh8+ ♘g8 33 ♞h7}$ .

- 30  $\text{♙xg7}$   $\text{♚xg7 (D)}$   
 31  $\text{♞h7+!}$

154 Closed Catalan: Black plays an early ...b7-b5



Such a finish is inevitable.

31 ... ♔xh7

32 ♖h4+ ♔g7

32... ♔g8 33 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 34 ♖h1  
 ♔f8 35 ♖h8+ ♔e7 36 ♖f6+ ♔e8 37  
 ♖h8# is another possible way to end  
 the game.

33 ♖h6+ ♔g8

34 ♕xd5 ♕e2

35 ♖h1 ♖h5

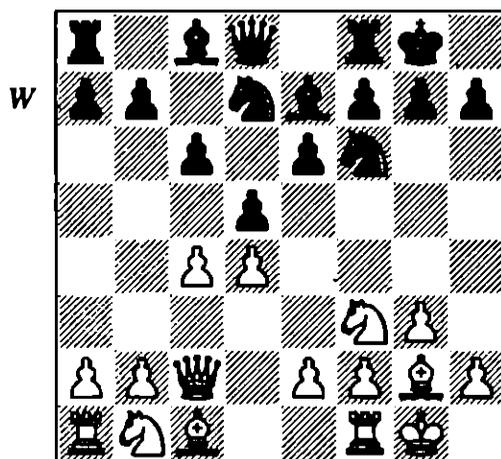
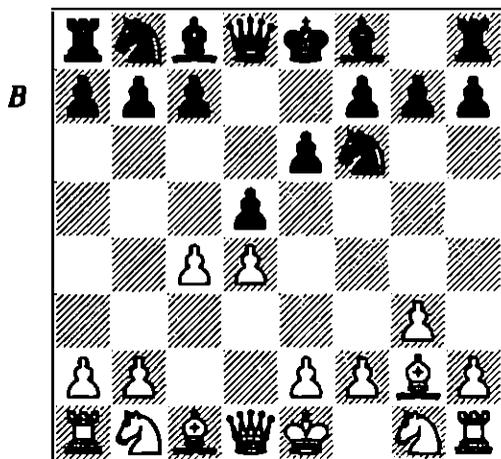
36 ♗g4 1-0

# Index of Variations

- 1 d4            ♘f6  
 2 c4            e6  
 3 g3            d5  
 4 ♖g2 (D)

- 6 ...            ♘bd7  
 6...♘a6 131  
 6...c5 131  
 6...c6 132  
 6...b6 133  
 6...♗e4 133

- 7 ♗c2            c6 (D)

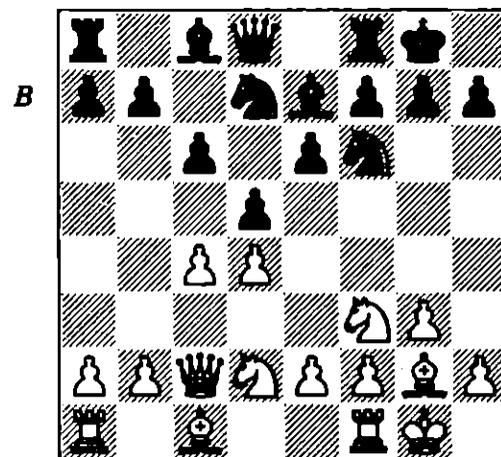
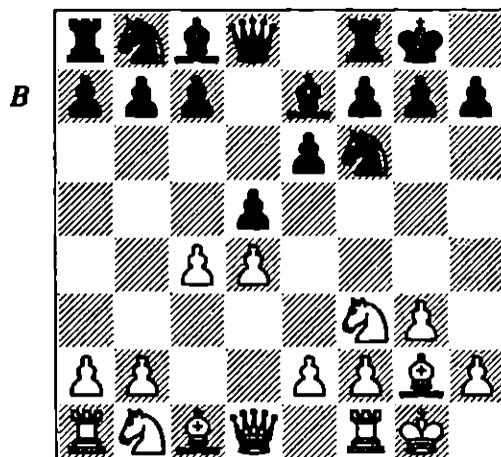


## Closed Catalan

- 4 ...            ♗e7  
 4...♗b4+ 14  
 4...c6 16  
 4...c5 16  
 5 ♘f3            0-0  
 6 0-0 131 (D)

- and now:  
 A: 8 ♘bd2  
 B: 8 b3

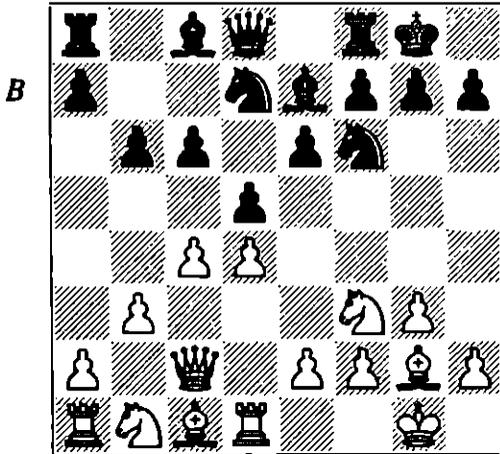
- A)  
 8 ♘bd2 (D)



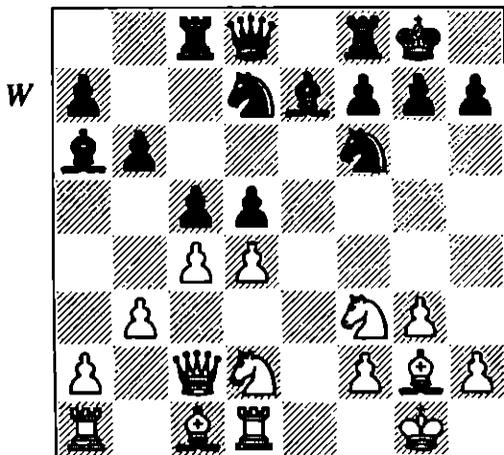
8 ... b6  
 8...b5 150  
 9 e4 ♖b7  
 9...♗a6 10 e5 146  
 10 e5 146

B)

8 b3 b6  
 9 ♖d1 (D)



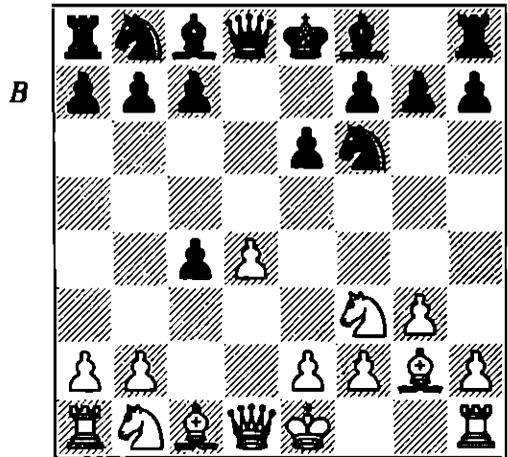
9 ... ♗a6  
 9...♗b7 10 ♘c3 ♖c8 11 e4 dxe4 141  
 10 ♘bd2 ♖c8  
 11 e4 133 c5  
 11...♗b7 10  
 11...♗c7 133  
 12 exd5  
 12 e5 134  
 12 ... exd5 (D)



13 ♗f5 134  
 13 ♗b2 137

### Open Catalan

1 d4 ♘f6  
 2 c4 e6  
 3 g3 d5  
 4 ♗g2 dxc4  
 5 ♘f3 (D)



and now:

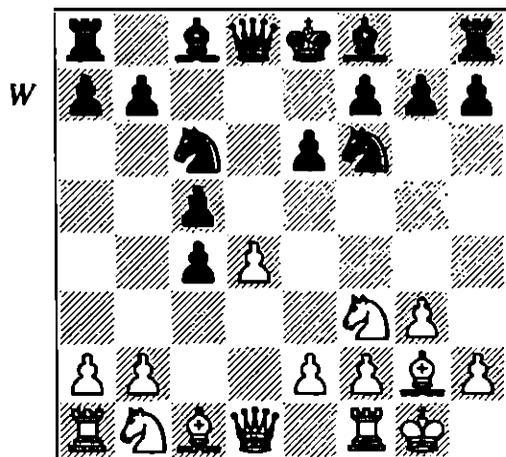
C: 5...c5  
 D: 5...a6  
 E: 5...♗e7

Alternatives:

a) 5...♘c6 6 ♗a4 63  
 b) 5...♗d7 6 ♘e5 71  
 c) 5...♘bd7 6 ♗a4 78  
 d) 5...b5 42

C)

5 ... c5 18  
 6 0-0 ♘c6 (D)  
 7 ♘e5 18  
 7 ♗a4 27  
 7 ... cxd4 35  
 7...♗d7 27  
 7...♗e7 27



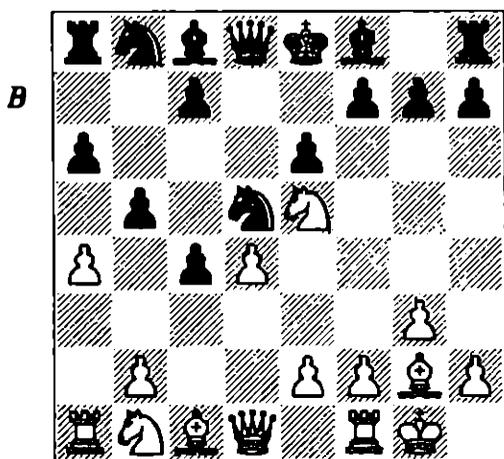
7...♞d7 27  
7...♞a5 27

D)

5 ... ♞a6 48  
6 0-0 ♞b5

6...c5 48  
6...♞c6 48  
7 ♞e5 ♞d5

7...♞a7 51  
8 a4 (D)

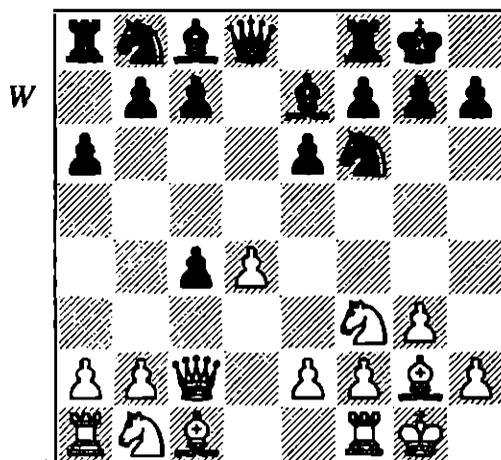


8 ... ♞b7  
8...c6 52  
9 b3 58  
9 axb5 54  
9 e4 54

E)

5 ... ♞e7

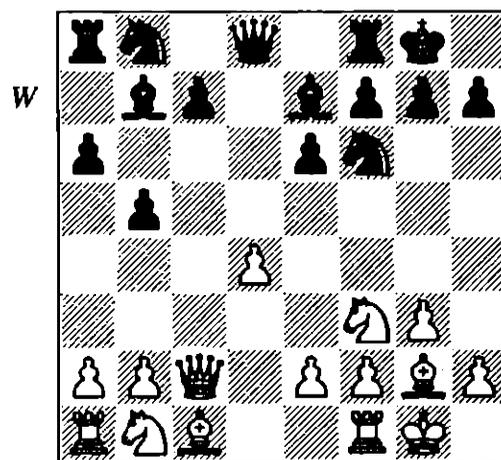
6 0-0 0-0  
7 ♞c2 ♞a6 (D)  
7...b5 86  
7...c5 86  
7...♞bd7 8 ♞xc4 78



and now:  
E1: 8 ♞xc4  
E2: 8 a4

E1)

8 ♞xc4 ♞b5  
9 ♞c2 ♞b7 (D)



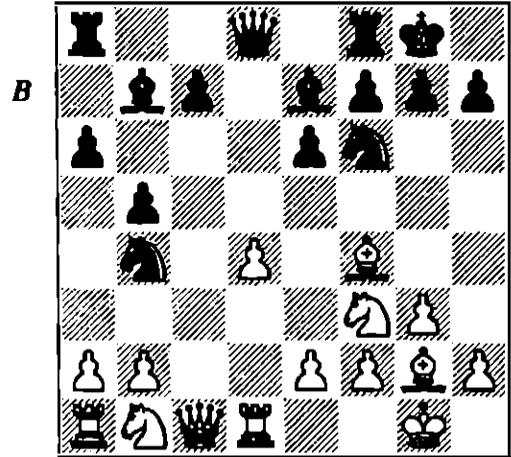
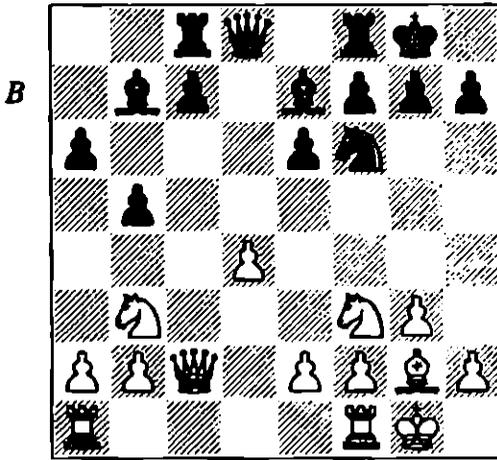
and now:  
E11: 10 ♞g5  
E12: 10 ♞f4

E11)

10 ♞g5 122 ♞bd7

- 11 ♔xf6 ♖xf6  
 12 ♜bd2 ♜c8  
 13 ♜b3 (D)

- 11 ♜c3 173  
 11 ♜bd2 173  
 11 ... ♜h4  
 12 ♜c1 (D)



- 13...♔e4 123  
 13...c5 127

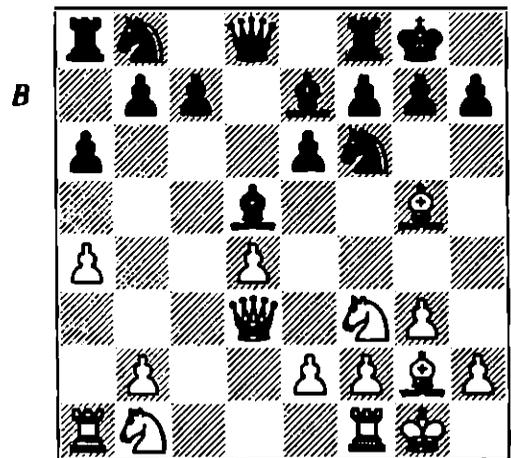
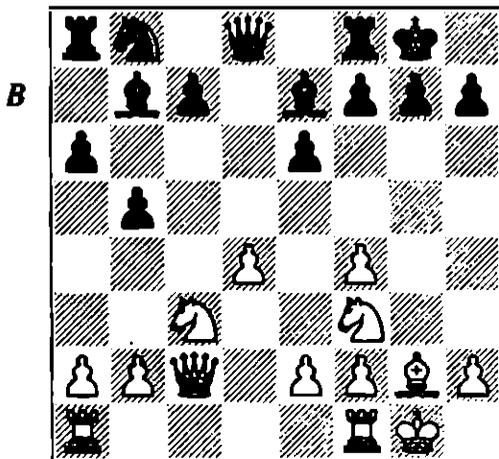
- 12...♜bd5 117  
 12...♜c8 114  
 12...♜c8 114

E12)

- 10 ♔f4 107 ♜c6 112  
 10...♔d6 119  
 10...♜d5 107 11 ♜c3 ♜xf4 12 gxf4  
 (D)

E2)

- 8 a4 ♔d7  
 8...♜c6 9 ♜xc4 95  
 8...c5 102  
 9 ♜xc4 ♔c6  
 10 ♔g5 ♔d5  
 11 ♜d3 (D)



- 12...♜c6 110  
 12...♜c8 108  
 12...♜a7 108  
 12...g6 108  
 12...♜d7 107  
 11 ♜d1

- 11...♔e4 87  
 11...c5 92



The Catalan is a favourite of many top grandmasters, with Kasparov, Karpov and Korchnoi using it to good effect in key matches. Once White's Catalan bishop has started breathing fire down the long diagonal, Black's days are numbered.

This is the first book to explain the Catalan in a way accessible to club and tournament players.

IM Dunnington focuses on the key plans at White's disposal, and how to exploit the typical errors Black makes when facing the Catalan, while providing full theoretical coverage of the sharp lines in which Black tries to hang on to the gambit pawn.

**Angus Dunnington** is a young English international master who has studied the Catalan intensively. He is chess correspondent for The Yorkshire Post and an Olympiad trainer. This is his fourth book for Batsford.

OTHER CHESS BOOKS FROM BATSFORD INCLUDE:

**The Chigorin Queen's Gambit**

*Angus Dunnington*

Black breaks all the rules—and gets away with murder!

0 7134 8020 3      **£13.99**

**Winning with the Kan**

*Ali Mortazavi*

A guide to a dangerous system that your opponents are unlikely to know.

0 7134 7803 9      **£12.99**

**Understanding the Spanish**

*Shaun Taulbut*

A simple introduction to the themes

0 7134

**Beating the Anti-King's Indians**

*Joe Gallagher*

A complete repertoire for Black when White dodges the main lines.

0 7134 8012 2      **£14.99**

For further information about Batsford chess books, please write to:  
Batsford Chess Books,  
583 Fulham Road,  
London SW6 5BY

**Batsford Chess Online:** <http://www.batsford.com>

£12.99

ISBN 0-7134-8021-1



9 780713 480214 >