

Chess Classics

Aron Nimzowitsch
MY SYSTEM
NEW TRANSLATION

QUALITY CHESS



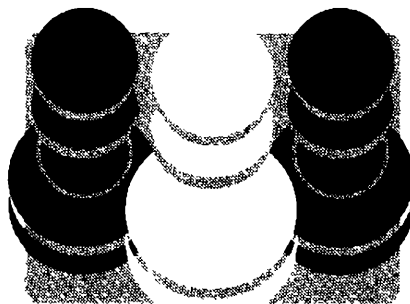


My System

A chess manual on totally new principles

By

Aron Nimzowitsch



Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk

Foreword

It would be interesting to choose the best chess book from the 20th century. *My System* by Aron Nimzowitsch would certainly be my favourite, and I think this would be a common choice. According to Mikhail Tal, this book is “full of the elixir of chess youth”. What are the secrets behind the powerful effect *My System* has on its readers?

I think that the magical power of this book can be found in the fact that the author managed to be ahead of his time. Already in 1925 he expressed still relevant modern ideas like prophylaxis, pawn activity, and the blockade. The impulse that originated from Nimzowitsch was so immense that the thinking of chess developed in his direction. If you look at the games of Petrosian and Karpov you immediately find the traces of Nimzowitsch’s “system”. These outstanding chess players developed to perfection the prophylactic style of preventing the opponent’s possibilities.

Nimzowitsch’s mark is recognisable to some extent in every top player. When I contemplate the later games of Kasparov, I am convinced that many of his decisions are based on purely prophylactic grounds.

Nimzowitsch did not write a simple handbook of opening lines, but a manual of chess. The opinions, ideas, and generalisations that he describes gave rise to a true revolution, whose consequences we can correctly evaluate today.

Artur Yusupov

From the publishers

When we decided to publish a new edition of *My System* our primary intention was to produce an updated translation. The second issue was which source we should use for this translation. We decided on the 2005 Rattman German edition, which contains a number of improvements from previous editions. We also decided to computer-check, within reason, the games in the book. The Rattman edition already had some interesting observations on the original text, which we decided to retain with their corrections in the text or as footnotes on the page (pages 15, 64, 74, 76, 84, 106, 126, 156) and their references to the editor.

We have also added two small essays at the end of the book. The first is a general discussion about the current relevance of *My System*; the second contains just over a dozen positions from the book where we think a new opinion might interest the reader. These positions have also been marked with superscript throughout the book.

We would like to thank Yuri Garrett of Caissa Italia for his superb efforts in researching Nimzowitsch’s tournament and match results, which are included towards the end of this book as the article “The Chess Career of Aron Nimzowitsch”.

This second print contains minor modifications, most of which will be hard to spot in a comparison. Alas, there is one addition to the *Nimzowitsch for the 21st Century* at the end of the book.

We hope that our new edition of *My System* will reveal this classic to a new generation of young chess players.

December 2006/August 2007

Preface

In general, I am not at all in favour of writing a preface; but in this case it seems necessary because the whole business is so novel, that a preface would be a welcome aid.

My new system did not arise all at once, but rather it grew slowly and gradually, or as one might say organically. Of course the main idea, the thorough analysing one by one of the different elements of chess strategy, is based on inspiration. But it would in no way be sufficient, should I wish to discuss open files, to say that such and such a file should be occupied and exploited, or if talking about passed pawns to say that this particular one should be stopped. No, it is necessary to go into some detail. It may sound somewhat amusing, but let me assure you, my dear reader, that for me the passed pawn possesses a soul, just like a human being; it has unrecognised desires which slumber deep inside it and it has fears, the very existence of which it can but scarcely divine. I feel the same about the pawn chain and the other elements of strategy. I now intend to give to you concerning each of these elements a series of laws and rules which you can use, rules which do go into a lot of detail and which will help you to attain clarity even about the apparently mysterious links between events, such as are to be found over the 64 squares of our beloved chessboard.

Part II of the book then goes into positional play, especially in its neo-romantic form. It is frequently claimed that I am the father of the neo-romantic school. Therefore it should be of interest to hear what I think about it.

Manuals are customarily written in a dry, instructive style. It is thought that one would somehow lose face, if one allowed a humorous tone to appear, because what does humour have to do in a chess manual! I cannot share this point of view. In fact I would go further: I consider it to be totally wrong, since real humour often contains more inner truth than the most solemn seriousness. As far as I am concerned, I am a great fan of parallels with an amusing effect, and thus I like to draw on the events of everyday life in order by doing so to throw some light on complicated happenings over the chessboard.

At many points in the book I have added a schematic diagram so that the structure of my thought can be seen clearly. This step was taken not only on pedagogical grounds, but also for reasons connected with personal security – since less gifted critics (and these do exist) only wish to or only can take into account isolated details and not the more complicated underlying structure which is the true content of my book. The individual parts, apparent by name at first sight, are seemingly so simple, but that is their merit. To have reduced the chaos inherent to a certain number of rules linked to each other in various relationships of cause and effect, that is exactly what I think I can be proud of. For example, the 5 special cases linked to the 7th and 8th ranks sound simple, but how difficult it was to tease them out of the surrounding chaos! Or the open file or even the pawn chains! Of course, at each stage things become more difficult, because the book is intended to be progressive in level. But I do not consider this growing difficulty to be armour which will protect me from the attacks of those critics who use only light weapons. I insist on this only for the sake of my readers. I will also be attacked for making use of a great number of my own games. But I shall not be downcast by this attack either. After all, am I not justified in illustrating *my* system with *my* games?! Moreover, I even include some games (well) played by amateurs, but this does not make me one.

I now confide this first edition to the public view. I do so with a clear conscience. My book will have its faults, it would be impossible for me to cast light into all the corners of strategy, but I consider that I have written the first real manual about the game of chess and not simply about the openings.

CONTENTS

I The Elements

Introduction	15
1 The centre and development	
1 By development we mean the strategic march of the troops towards the border	17
2 A pawn move must not be considered in itself to be a developing move, but rather simply a move which helps development	17
3 A lead in development is an ideal	19
4 Exchanging followed by a gain of tempo	20
A possible intermezzo between exchanging and gaining a tempo	21
5 Liquidation followed by development or a bid for freedom	21
6 The centre and its urge to demobilise	24
6a Surrendering the centre	26
7 Pawn grabbing in the opening	28
7a Take any central pawn if it can be done without too great a danger!	30
2 The open file	
1 Introduction • General comments and definition	31
2 How open files occur (or are born)	32
3 The ideal (purpose) behind all operations on a file	33
4 Possible obstacles to operations down a file	34
5 “Restricted” advance on a file in order give it up in favour of another file, or the <i>indirect</i> exploitation of a file • The file as a springboard	37
6 The outpost	38
Schematic illustration of the open file	42
3 The 7th and 8th ranks	
1 Introduction and general comments	43
2 <i>Convergent</i> and <i>revolutionary</i> attacks on the 7 th rank	
Seizing a square (or pawn) with an <i>acoustic echo</i> (a simultaneous check)	43
3 The five special cases on the 7 th rank	46
1 The 7 th rank “absolute” and passed pawns	46
2 Double rooks ensure perpetual check	46
3 The drawing mechanism of ♖ + ♜	47
4 Marauding on the 7 th rank	47
5 Combining play on the 7 th and 8 th ranks (flanking from the corner)	47
Schematic illustration for the 7 th and 8 th ranks	52
Schematic illustration for the 5 special cases	52

Illustrative games for the first three chapters	53
4 The passed pawn	
1 Getting our bearings	73
2 Blockading passed pawns	74
2a The first reason	75
2b The second reason	79
2c The third reason	80
3 The main and secondary functions of the blockading piece	80
The effect of the blockade	81
4 The struggle against the blockading piece	83
“Negotiations” or uprooting	84
5 Frontal attack by a king on an isolated pawn – an ideal!	86
6 Privileged passed pawns	89
7 When a passed pawn should advance	92
When can a passed pawn be considered ready to move?	92
Endgames and games illustrating passed pawns	95
Schematic representation for the passed pawn (question and answer session)	101
5 Exchanging	
1 We exchange in order to occupy (or open) a line without loss of time	103
2 We destroy a defender by exchanging	103
3 We exchange in order not to lose time retreating	104
3a “He tries to sell his life as dearly as possible”	105
4 How and where exchanges usually take place	105
6 The elements of endgame strategy	
Introduction and general comments • The typical disproportion	109
1 Centralisation	109
Shelters and bridge building	112
2 The aggressively posted rook as a typical endgame advantage	113
3 Welding together isolated troops and “General advance!”	116
4 The “materialisation” of the abstract concepts: file or rank	117
Schematic illustration of the “endgame” or “the 4 elements”	119
7 The pinned piece	
1 Introduction and general remarks	125
2 The concept of the completely or partially pinned piece	126
The exchanging combination on the pinning square	128
3 The problem of unpinning	130
a) Challenging	131
b) Ignoring the threat or allowing our pawns to be broken up	133
c) The reserves rush up to unpin in a peaceful way	133
d) Tacking (manoeuvring) and keeping open the options a, b, c!	134
Games involving pins	135
Schematic representation to illustrate pinning	141

8 Discovered check

1	The degree of relationship between the “pin” and the “discovered check” is defined more closely • Where is the best place for the piece which is discovering the check?	143
2	The treadmill (windmill)	144
3	Double check	145

9 The pawn chain

1	General remarks and definitions • The base of the pawn chain	
	The idea of two separate battlefields	149
	The idea of building a chain	149
	Towards the kingside	150
	Towards the centre	150
2	Attacking the pawn chain	151
3	Attacking the base as a strategic necessity	153
4	Transferring the rules of blockading to the pawn chain	154
5	The concept of a surprise attack compared to that of positional warfare, as applied to chains • The attacker at the parting of the ways!	156
5a	The positional struggle, or put simply the slow siege of the unprotected base	158
6	Transferring the attack	161
	Schematic representation of pawn chains	164
	Games to illustrate pawn chains	165

II Positional Play

1 Prophylaxis and the centre

1	The reciprocal links between the treatment of the elements on one hand and positional play on the other	177
2	Offences against sound positional play, which should be weeded out in every case as a <i>sine qua non</i> to the study of positional play	177
3	My novel conception of positional play as such	179
4	Next to prophylaxis, the idea of the “general mobility” of the pawn mass constitutes one of the main pillars of my teachings on positional play	183
5	The centre	184
6	What should be the <i>leitmotiv</i> behind true strategy	189
7	Giving up the centre	191
	The “surrender of the centre” – a prejudice	192
	Roads to the mastering of positional play (schematic representation of chapter 1)	200

2 Doubled pawns and restraint

1	The affinity between “doubled pawns” and “restraint”	201
1a	The only true strength of doubled pawns	203
2	A review of the best-known doubled pawn structures	203
	The doubled pawn complex in diagram 391 as an instrument of attack	209

3	Restraint • “Mysterious rook moves”	211
4	Clarification of the nucleus of a manoeuvre designed to restrain a pawn majority	216
5	The different forms of restraint are more clearly explained	216
a)	The mobile central pawn	217
b)	The struggle against a qualitative majority	218
c)	Restraining doubled pawn complexes	219
d)	My own special variation and its restraining tendencies	220

3 The isolated queen’s pawn and its descendants

a)	The isolated queen’s pawn	229
1	The dynamic strength of the d4-pawn	230
2	The isolani as an endgame weakness	230
3	The isolani as an instrument of attack in the middlegame	231
4	Which cases are favourable to White and which to Black?	232
5	A few more words about the creation of a <i>related weakness</i> among White’s queenside pawns	232
b)	The “isolated pawn pair”	233
c)	Hanging pawns	234
	From the “isolani” to “hanging pawns”	235
d)	The bishops	238
1	Horowitz bishops	239
2	A pawn mass directed by bishops	240
3	Cramping the knights while at the same time fighting against a pawn majority	241
4	The two bishops in the endgame	242

4 Overprotection and weak pawns

How to systematically <i>overprotect</i> your own strong points and how to try to get rid of weak pawns or squares	247
a) Overprotection of the central squares	249
b) Overprotection of the centre as a protective measure for your own kingside	251
How to get rid of weak pawns	252

5 Manoeuvring

1	What are the logical elements on which manoeuvring against a weakness is based? The concept of the “pivot”, around which manoeuvring takes place.	255
2	The terrain • The rule for manoeuvring • Changing place	255
a)	A pawn weakness, which is attacked in turn from the (7 th) rank and from the file	256
b)	Two pawn weaknesses, in this case c3 and h3	256
c)	The king as a weakness	257
3	Combining play on both wings, when for the moment the weaknesses either do not exist or are hidden	258

4	Manoeuvring when circumstances become difficult (your own centre is in need of protection)	260
Postscript: The history of the revolution in chess from 1911-1914		
1	The general situation before 1911	269
	Does “The modern game of chess” by Dr Tarrasch really correspond to the modern conception of the game?	270
2	The revolutionary ideas	276
3	Revolutionary theory put into revolutionary praxis	277
4	Other historical battles	279
5	Extension and development of the revolution in chess in the years 1914 to 1926	282
The chess career of Aron Nimzowitsch		285
Index of players		300
<i>My System</i> in the computer age (or footnotes)		303
Nimzowitsch for the 21st Century		313

Part I

The Elements

Introduction

In my opinion, the following should be considered as the basic elements of chess strategy:

1. The centre
2. Open files
3. Play on the 7th and 8th ranks
4. The passed pawn
5. The pin
6. Discovered check
7. The pawn chain
8. Exchanging*

In what follows, each element should be as deeply and lovingly examined as possible. We shall start with the centre, which we shall first deal with in such a way as to be of profit to the less experienced player. In part II of the book, which is devoted to positional play, we shall try to cast some light on “higher matters”, which will occupy centre stage. As you know, the centre is specifically *the* point of issue of the chess revolution which took place in the years 1911-1913; I mean the articles I wrote (for example “*Does ‘The modern game of chess’ by Dr Tarrasch really correspond to the modern conception of the game?*”) which were up in arms against the traditional method of considering the centre. That was in fact the signal for an “uprising”, namely the birth of the neo-romantic school. For that reason, considering the centre in two parts, as we wish to do here for pedagogical reasons, should seem justified.

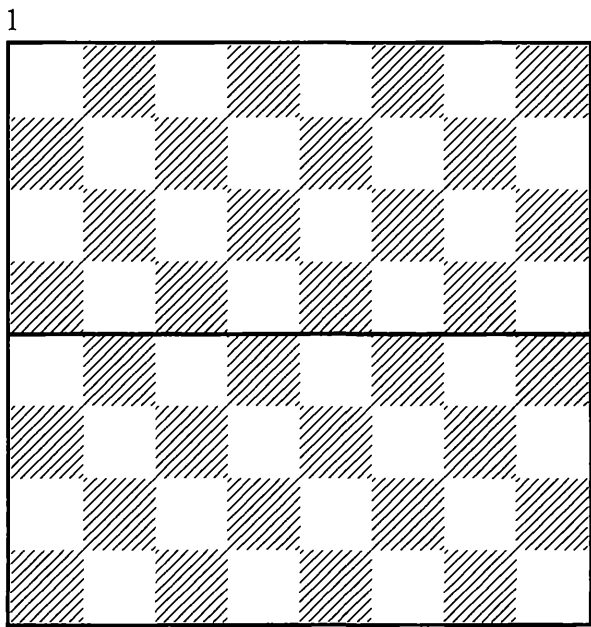
*The list given here does not in fact fit in with the actual structure of the book. “Exchanging” is dealt with as chapter 5, and then chapter 6, for pedagogical reasons, consists of “The elements of endgame strategy”. Originally this chapter should have been part of Part II, positional play. See page 43 – editor

Part I – Chapter 1

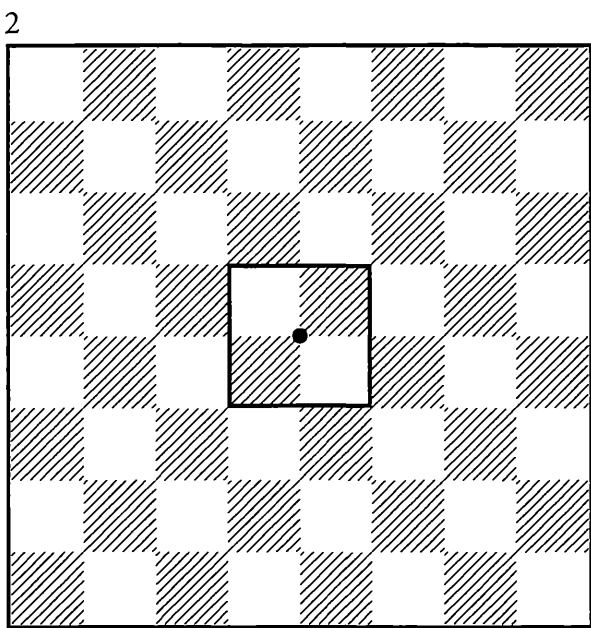
The centre and development

What the less advanced player must know about the centre and development

First a few definitions.



We call the line drawn across diagram 1 the *border*, and here the word “line” is used in its mathematical and not its chess sense.



The dot in the centre of diagram 2 is the *absolute centre* of the board, once again in the mathematical sense. It is easy to find this centre, positioned where the long diagonals cross.

By our centre, we mean the most restricted group of squares around the central point, in other words the squares e4, d4, e5, d5 (see the squares highlighted in diagram 2).

1. By development we mean the strategic march of the troops towards the border

The procedure is the same as the advance at the beginning of a war: both belligerent armies seek to reach the border as quickly as they can, in order to penetrate into enemy territory if it is possible.

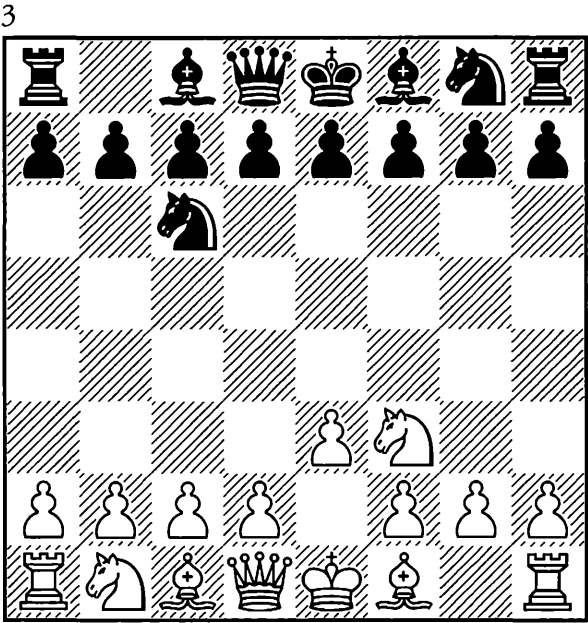
“Development” is a collective concept; one is not developed if one has only brought out 1-2 or even 3 pieces, but the idea is much rather that all the pieces should be developed. It is good – if I may say so – that the period of development be marked with the spirit of democracy. For example, think how undemocratic it would be to allow one of the pieces (your officers, as it were) to go on a long walking tour, while the others were sitting at home extremely bored. No, each piece will make one move – then mark time.

2. A pawn move must not be considered in itself to be a developing move, but rather simply a move which helps development

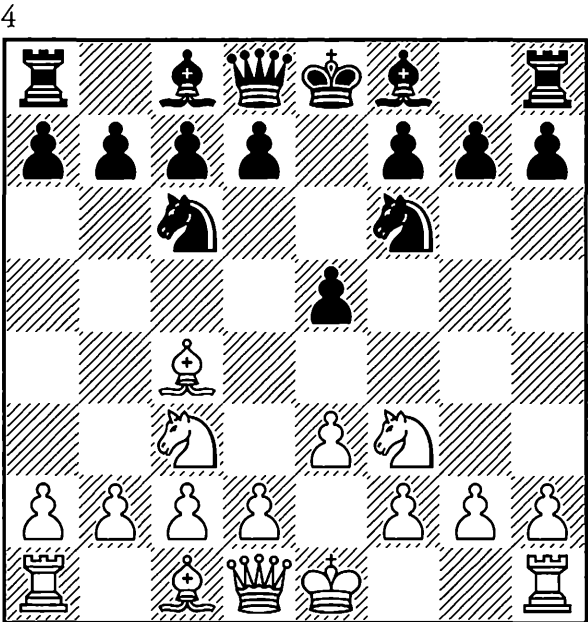
This is an important rule for beginners. The pawnless advance would be the best one, were it possible to develop the pieces without the aid of pawn moves! Because, as has been stated,

the pawn is not a fighting unit in the sense that the opponent would be afraid if it crossed the border, because the attacking force of the pawns is naturally tiny compared to that of the pieces. However an advance without pawns is unsustainable, because our opponent's pawn centre, thanks to its desire to expand, would repel those of our pieces which were already developed. For that reason, we should first set up a pawn centre in order to protect the development of our pieces.

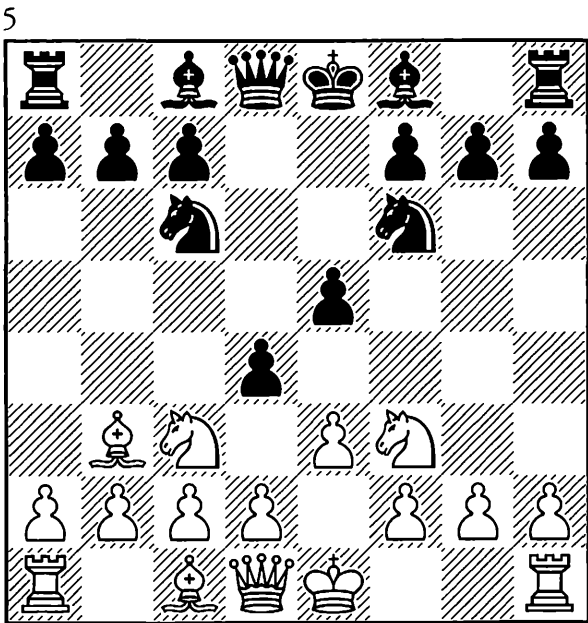
The following opening demonstrates the breaking up of a pawnless advance: 1.♘f3 ♘c6 2.e3



Since the pawn has not been advanced into the centre, we may characterise the advance as pawnless for our purposes. 2...e5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙c4?



4...d5 Now the erroneous nature of White's advance can be seen. The effect of Black's pawn mass is to *demobilise* it. 5.♙b3 (bad enough, moving a piece twice!) 5...d4



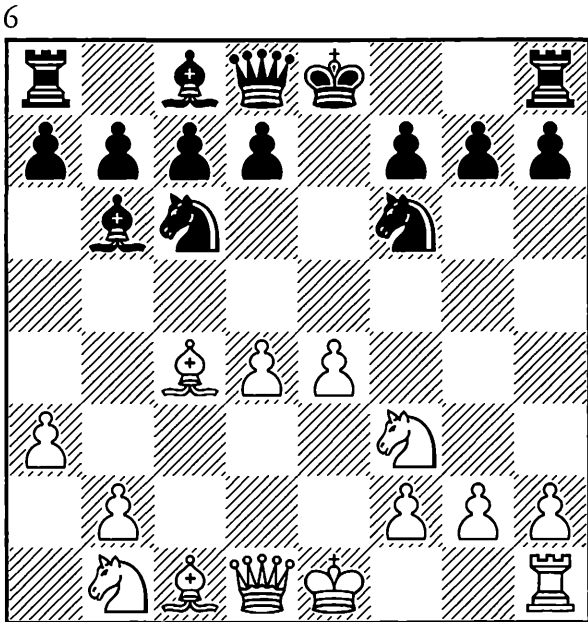
White's position is uncomfortable (at least from the point of view of the less experienced player).

The following game, which will also be quoted in the section on the *blockade*, is another example.

Nimzowitsch (without his ♖a1) – **Amateur**

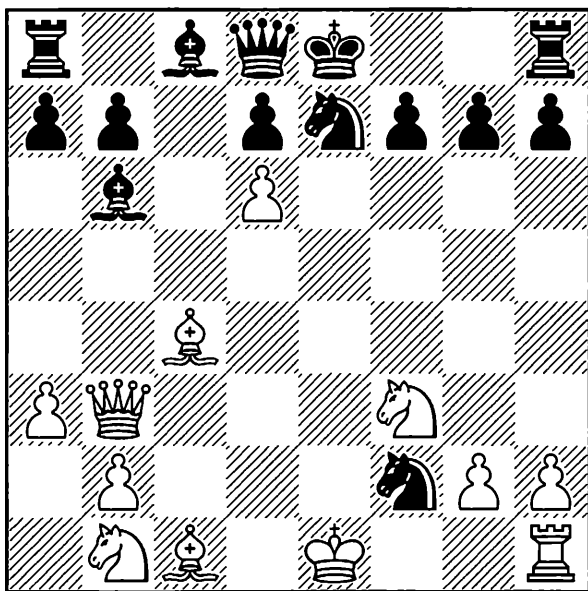
The white a-pawn is on a3. I will go over the game briefly at this point.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♙b6



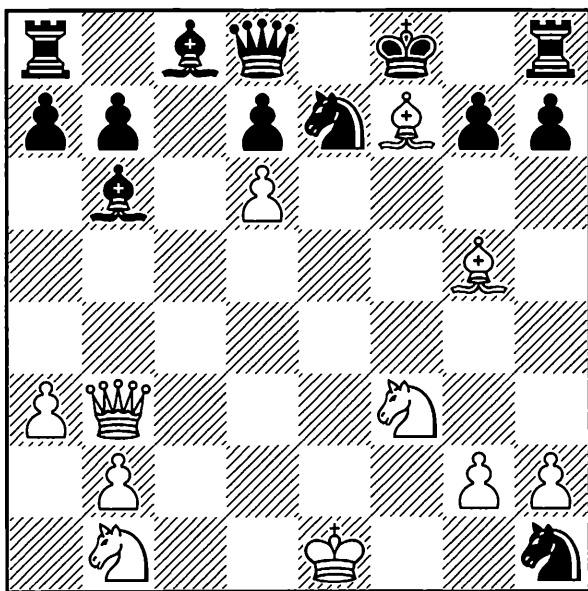
Black has now lost his centre and in addition, by omitting 4...d6, he has conceded far too much mobility to White's centre; so his advance may rightfully be classified as pawnless, or at least one which has become pawnless. 7.d5 ♖e7 8.e5 ♖e4 9.d6 cxd6 10.exd6 ♖xf2 11.♔b3

7



Black is now totally hemmed in by the pawn wedge on d6, and succumbs to White's attack within a few moves – despite winning a rook. 11...♖xf2 12.♕xf7 ♔f8 13.♕g5 1–0

8



From rule 2, it follows that pawn moves in the development phase are only permitted if they help occupy the centre or have some logical connection with the occupation of the centre. I mean something like a pawn move which protects its own centre or one which attacks the opposing centre. For example, in an open game after 1.e4 e5 both d2-d3 and d2-d4 – immediately or later – are always correct moves.

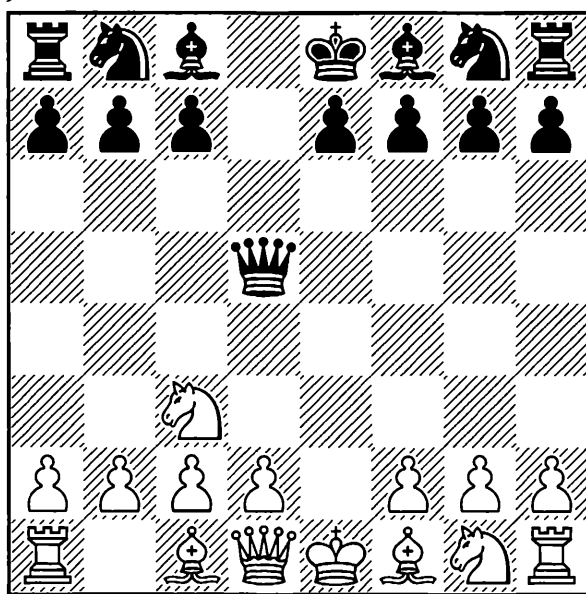
So, if only the above-mentioned pawn moves are allowed, this means that the much-loved advances of the rook pawns should be considered as a waste of time. (In closed games, this rule is only partially relevant; there is less direct contact with the enemy and development is completed at a slower pace.)

In short, we may say: In the open game speed of development is the overriding law. Each piece should be developed with only one move; each and every pawn move – with the exception of those which either establish or support your own centre, or attack that of your opponent – can be considered a waste of time. So – as was already made clear by Lasker – 1-2 pawn moves in the opening, no more.

3. A lead in development is an ideal

If I were running a race with someone, it would at least be a waste of precious time to stop in order to blow my nose, though there is nothing wrong with blowing one's nose. But if I could oblige my opponent to indulge in some similar time-wasting activity, this would allow me to achieve a lead in development. Such an action might be the repeated moving around of one and the same piece. So, one forces the opponent to waste time if one is able to simultaneously develop a piece of one's own and to attack an already developed piece of one's opponent.

9



This very typical position occurred as a result of the moves: 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♔xd5 3.♖c3

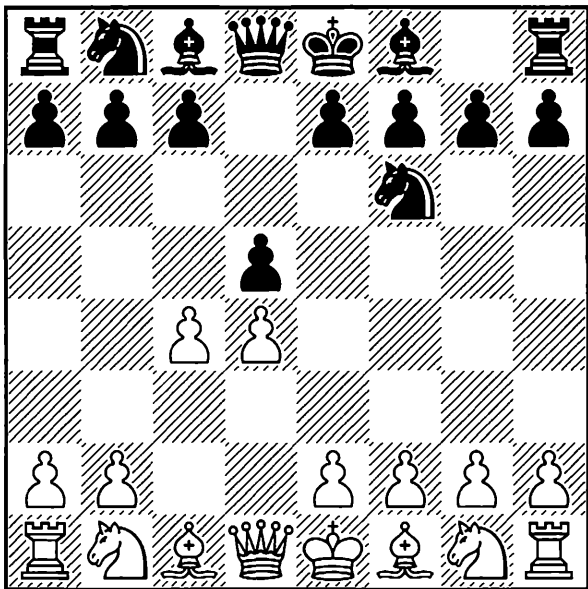
4. Exchanging followed by a gain of tempo

The previous game, short though it may be, contains a manoeuvre which we can describe as a compound one.

It is as follows: what was the reason for 2.exd5? The answer: to attract onto a compromised square the piece which would be making the recapture. The second part (3.♘c3) then consisted of the exploitation of the position of the queen which had been thus in a certain sense compromised.

The compound manoeuvre which has just been described is of very great importance for students. In what follows, we shall give other examples. 1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♘f6

10



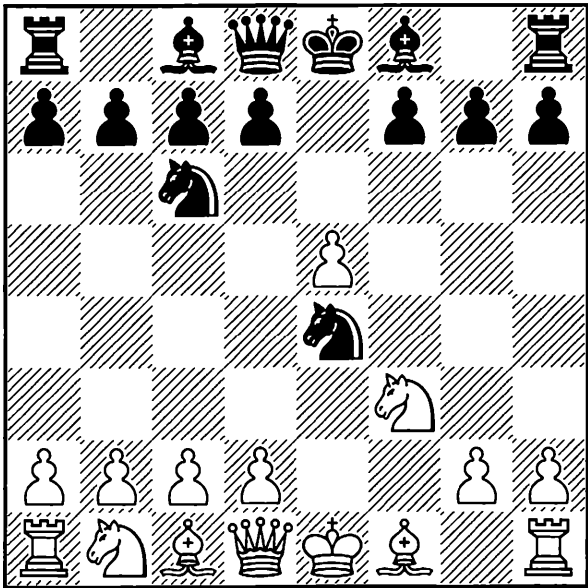
3.cxd5! and there now occur two variations: if 3...♙xd5 then 4.♘c3 and if 3...♘xd5 then 4.e4. In both cases, White's 4th move is a valid developing move, and one Black must meet by moving one of his pieces for a second time.

Moreover, the beginner will perhaps be wondering: Why should Black recapture? Many a solid businessman shows when playing chess an unworldly delicacy of feeling and does not recapture! But a master is unfortunately well aware that he is compelled – unavoidably – to recapture, because otherwise the material balance of power would be disturbed. This fact, that such pressure does exist, means that by recapturing our opponent is delayed in his development, except for those cases in which

the piece recapturing is by some coincidence also making a developing move.

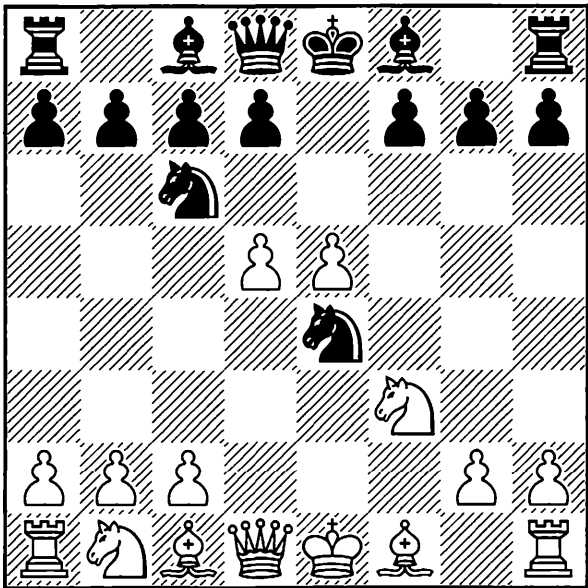
A further example: 1.e4 e5 2.f4 ♘f6 3.fxe5 ♘xe4 This is forced, or else Black would simply be a pawn down without any compensation. 4.♘f3! (to prevent ...♙h4†) 4...♘c6

11



5.d3 (the logical follow-up to the exchange 3.fxe5) 5...♘c5 6.d4 ♘e4 7.d5

12



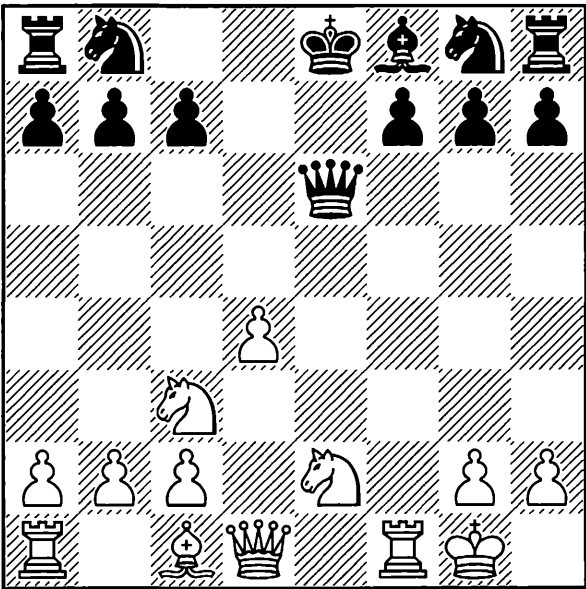
And after 7...♘b8 White has the possibility of winning further tempi by 8.♙d3 or also 8.♘bd2. The last example must be thought through: exchanging the tempo-consuming ♘e4 for the newly developed ♘d2 represents another loss of tempo for Black, because as the ♘e4 disappears, so do all the tempi it has consumed to get there, i.e. no trace of them remains on the board.

(This is just like a farmer who has lost a piglet to disease and regrets not only the piglet, but all the good feed he has invested in it.)

A possible intermezzo between exchanging and gaining a tempo

After 1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 ♖xd5 4.♘c3! ♜e6 White might consider the exchanging manoeuvre 5.fxe5 ♜xe5†, since e5 is a dangerous place for the queen. However, Black’s recapture on e5 is with check and apparently White is not able to exploit the position of the black queen. But in reality, the check must be understood as a simple intermezzo. White simply plays 6.♙e2 (though 6.♜e2 is even stronger) and still wins tempi at the cost of the queen after ♘f3 or d4, e.g. 6.♙e2 ♙g4 7.d4 (not 7.♘f3 on account of 7...♙xf3 without losing a tempo, since the queen would not need to move) 7...♙xe2! 8.♘gxe2 ♜e6 9.0–0

13



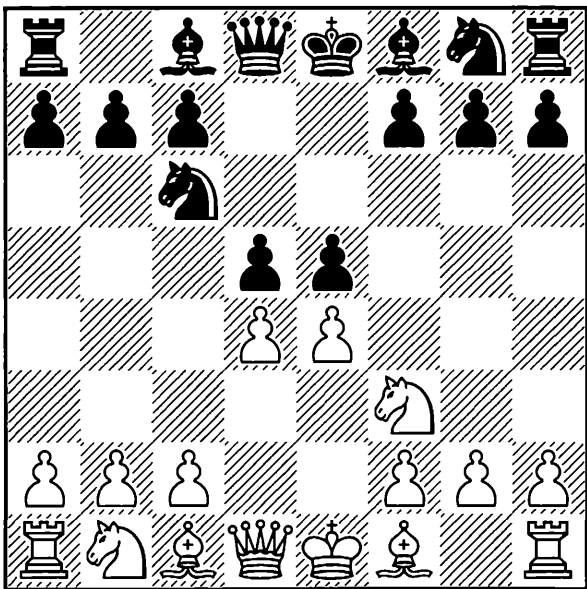
White has made 5 tempo winning moves (both knights and the rook have been developed, the pawn occupies the centre and the king is in safety – another tempo), whilst Black has only one visible tempo to show for his efforts, that is the queen on e6. But later this tempo will be lost two or even three times, since the queen will have to move about (it will be chased away by ♘f4); so White’s lead is worth at least 5 tempi. In order to explain to you how the intermezzo works, let me tell how Russian peasants had an intermezzo

between their engagement and their marriage... in the form of 5-6 children born out of wedlock, who constituted a mere intermezzo which in no way affected the idea that engagement and marriage belonged together. In our case we see the same thing: exchange, intermezzo, gain of tempo: the exchange and the gain of tempo were part of a whole, and the intermezzo changed nothing.

5. Liquidation followed by development or a bid for freedom

Whenever a businessman sees that an investment is going badly for him, he does well to liquidate that investment, so that he can put the proceeds into a better one. But unfortunately, from time to time, other tactics are tried: the businessman borrows in order to pay off a debt, and keeps on doing so until the evil day arrives when he borrows on one hand and on the other... he does not pay. That is not very pleasant, is it? When we transfer this idea to chess, I mean the sort of situation when development is threatened with being held up and we have to turn to radical measures since mere stop-gaps will not help. Let me first explain this with an example: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 d5

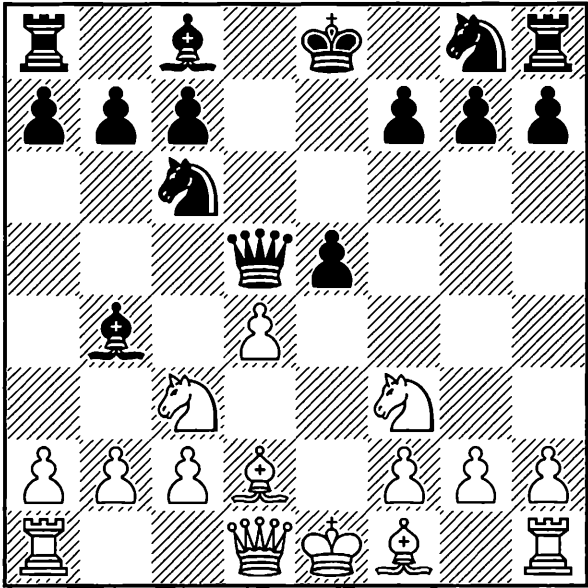
14



Black’s last move is dubious, since the second player should not immediately imitate such an enterprising move as 3.d4. 4.exd5 ♖xd5

5.♖c3 ♘b4. For the moment Black has been able to hang on, his queen need not move about the board, but after 6.♙d2,

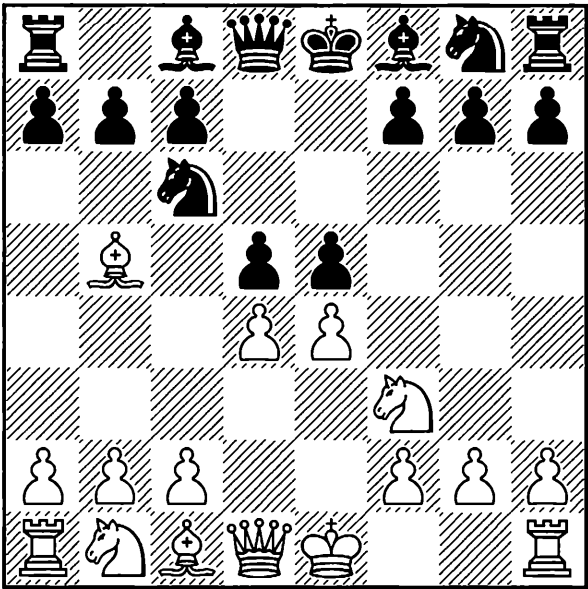
15



Black seems to be somewhat embarrassed since retreating the queen now that it is under threat would cost a tempo. However the exchange 6...♙xc3 7.♙xc3 (energetic liquidation) is correct and a similarly quiet 7...exd4 (certainly not a protective move such as 7...♙g4 or some retreat such as 7...e4, since there is no time for this during the developing stage!) 8.♖xd4 and then continued development with 8...♖f6. Black has released the tension in the centre (another characteristic, along with exchanges, of complete liquidation) and is in no way behind in development.

After 1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.d4 d5? White can also embarrass his opponent with 4.♙b5!.

16

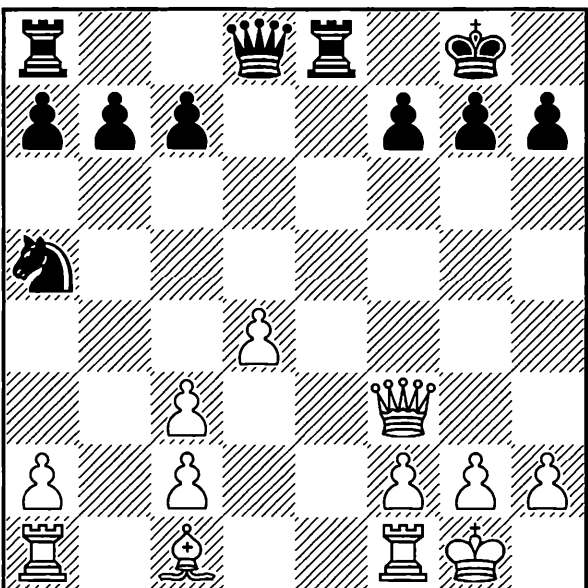


In his undeveloped state, Black sees that 5.♖xe5 is being threatened. What can he do? Protection with 4...♙d7 would be just as unsatisfactory as 4...♙g4. What is wrong with both moves is that they neglect any liquidation of the tension in the centre. 4...♙d7 loses a valuable pawn after 5.exd5 ♖xd4 6.♙xd7+ ♔xd7 7.♖xd4 exd4 8.♔xd4, and 4...♙g4 could be met with 5.h3 (which is a forcing move here), e.g. 4...♙g4 5.h3! ♙xf3 (best, if 5...♙h5? then 6.g4 followed by ♖xe5) 6.♔xf3 and from this position the queen has a decisive influence over the centre 6...♖f6 7.exd5 e4 (or he loses a pawn!) 8.♔e3! ♔xd5 9.c4 with a significant advantage for White.

Relatively best for Black was the immediate 4...dxe4: Black liquidates, since he cannot afford the luxury of an unstable position in the centre.

This could be followed by 5.♖xe5 ♙d7 and Black is threatening to win a piece after ...♖xe5. Next comes 6.♙xc6 ♙xc6 7.0-0 ♙d6 8.♖xc6 bxc6 9.♖c3 f5 and Black does not have a bad position since his development is satisfactory; or 6.♙xc6 ♙xc6 7.♖c3 ♙b4 8.0-0 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 and then something like 9...♖e7. After 10.♔g4 0-0 11.♖xc6 ♖xc6 12.♔xe4 White may be a pawn up, but Black will occupy the e-file with 12...♔e8 and will be somewhat better off after 13.♔f3 ♖a5!.

17

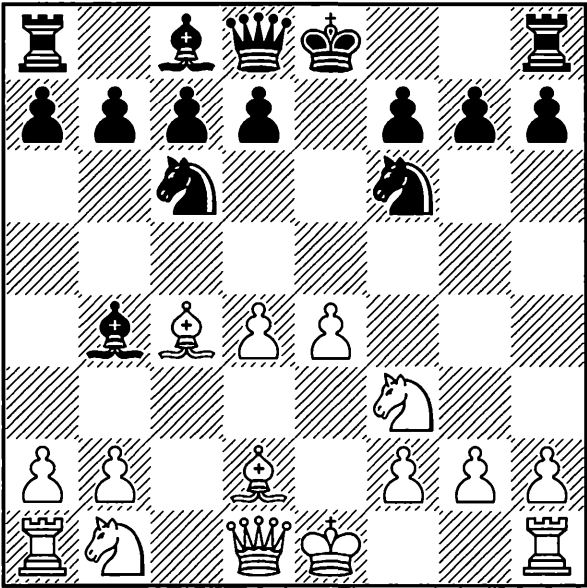


Since the process of development has been completed, manoeuvring will now start: possibly c7-c6 and the occupation of White's weakened

squares on c4 and d5 by ♖c4 and ♔d5. So, well-timed liquidation has put back on to the correct track Black's development which had become dubious.

Another example can be seen in the well-known Giuoco Piano: 1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♕c4 ♕c5 4.c3 ♗f6 5.d4 exd4 (Black is forced to give up the centre) 6.cxd4 ♖b4† 7.♕d2

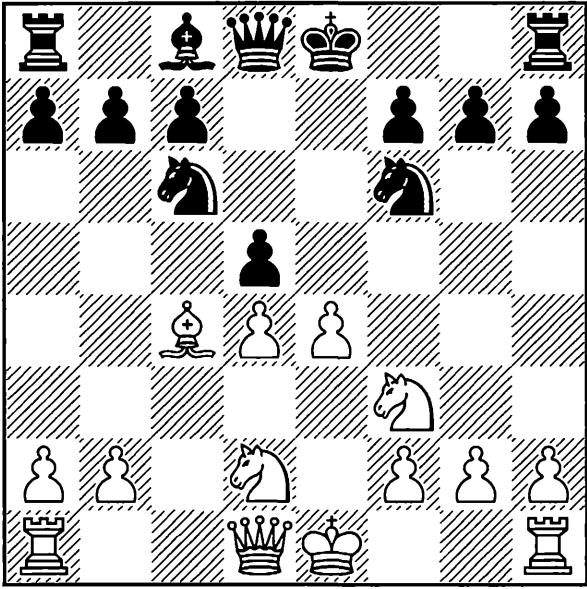
18



Now a little threat has arisen on b4, that is a possible ♕xf7† followed by ♔b3†.

On the other hand, White's central pawns are very strong and absolutely must be broken up by d7-d5. However, an immediate 7...d5 8.exd5 ♗xd5 would be met with 9.♕xb4 ♗cxb4 (or 9...♗dxb4) 10.♔b3 and White is somewhat better. So the correct move is 7...♕xd2† (gets rid of the threat on b4) 8.♗bxd2 and now the freeing move 8...d5.

19



After 9.exd5 ♗xd5 10.♔b3 Black achieves a roughly level game after the strategic retreat 10...♗ce7.

As we have seen, a properly employed exchange constitutes an excellent weapon and the basis for the typical manoeuvres we have analysed above:

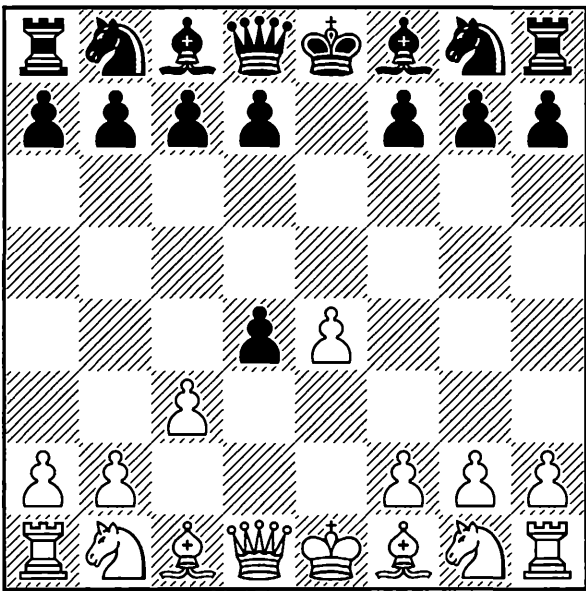
1. Exchange followed by a gain of tempo
2. Liquidation followed by either a developing move or a freeing move.

But we must quite specifically warn against exchanging willy-nilly, because exchanging off a piece which had moved several times for one of your opponent's which had never moved would be a typical beginners' mistake. So, exchanges should only be made in the above two cases.

An example of a bad, unmotivated exchange would be:

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3

20



White is playing a gambit. 3...♕c5? It is remarkable how this tempo-eating move is the first or second thought of every beginner, who having first considered 3...dxc3 rejects it ("in the opening, one should not play just to win a pawn" is something he has perhaps heard somewhere) in favour of 3...♕c5! What follows is, naturally, sad for Black: 4.cxd4 ♖b4† (moving the bishop!) 5.♕d2! ♕xd2† (unfortunately forced) 6.♗xd2 and White is 3 tempi ahead. The mistake was as early as 3...♕c5; after 4.cxd4 then somewhat

better than 4...♖b4† would have been 4...♖b6, since the former leads to an unfavourable exchange.

6. The centre and its urge to demobilise

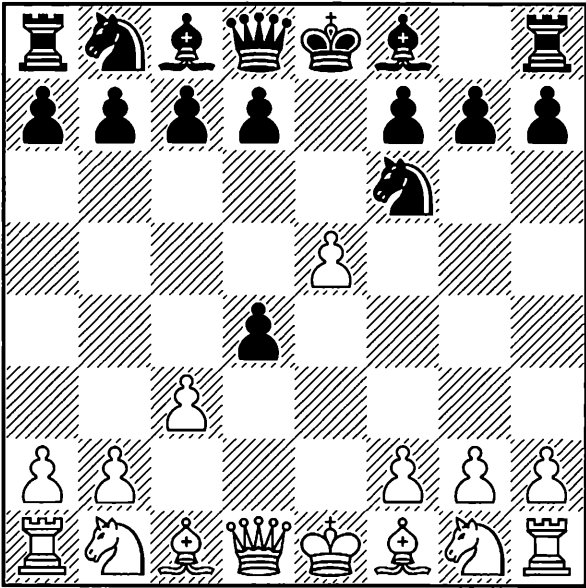
Examples: When and how to resist the advance of your opponent's centre

On maintaining and giving up the centre

As has already been mentioned, a free and mobile centre constitutes a terrible attacking weapon, since the threatened advance of the central pawns would drive back the opponent's pieces. However, in all such cases it depends on whether the knight which is driven off is in fact driven "from pillar to post" or whether it will manage to find a good position or make good use of its tempi.

Example: 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 (White's e-pawn is ready to advance and is only waiting for a knight to appear on f6 to put it to flight as soon as possible) 3.c3 ♘f6! Black takes a chance, and every beginner should try this in order to experience what the consequences of the central advance will be. 4.e5

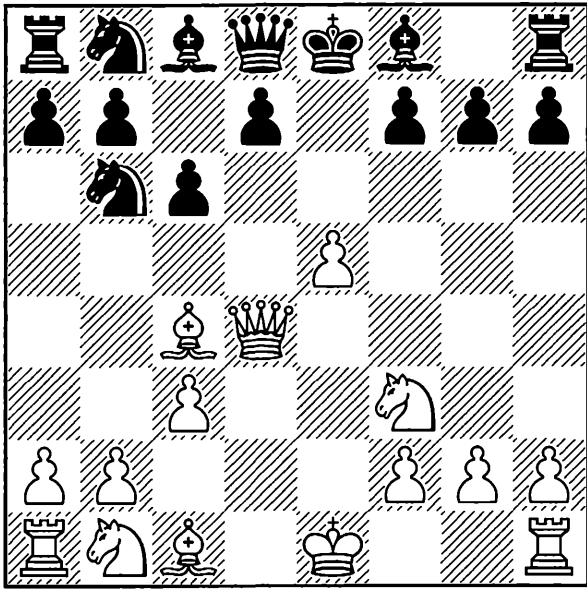
21



4...♞e4! Here the knight can hang on, because 5.♖d3 is met with a good developing move, namely 5...d5!, rather than by further wandering about with 5...♞c5? followed by 6.cxd4 ♞xd3† 7.♞xd3, which would leave White four tempi ahead¹.

On the other hand, after 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 ♞f6! 4.e5 this would not be the right moment to play the knight to d5, since the poor disturbed soul would not know much rest, e.g. 4...♞d5 5.♞xd4 (not 5.♖c4 on account of 5...♞b6 and the bishop must also lose a tempo) 5...c6 6.♖c4 ♞b6 7.♞f3

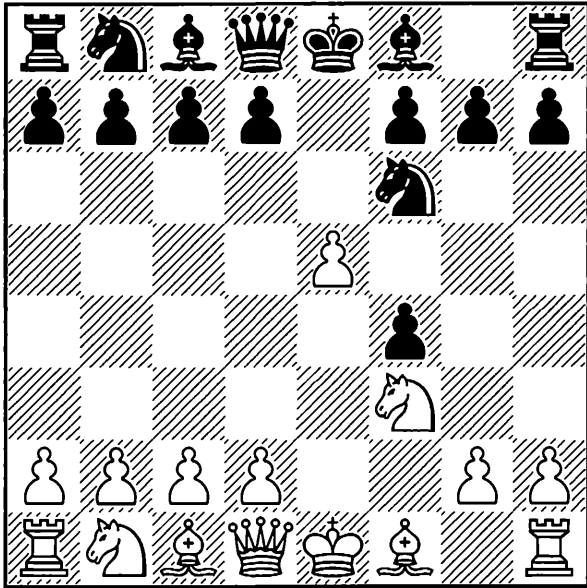
22



So White has 6 tempi compared to 2 or 1½, because the knight is no better posted here on b6 than it was on f6, and c7-c6 is hardly worth a full tempo since it is not a move by a central pawn.

Example: 1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 (a waste of time) 3.♞f3 ♞f6! 4.e5

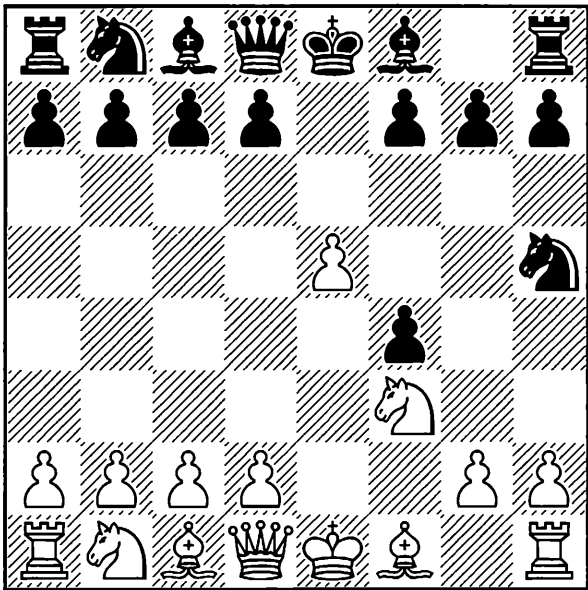
23



And we once more have the same problem: 4...♞e4 would not lead to stability, since there would come the immediate 5.d3 ♞c5? 6.d4, etc.;

but, exceptionally, the h5-square turns out to be an appropriate square (usually squares on the edge of the board are unfavourable for knights), e.g. 4...♞h5

24

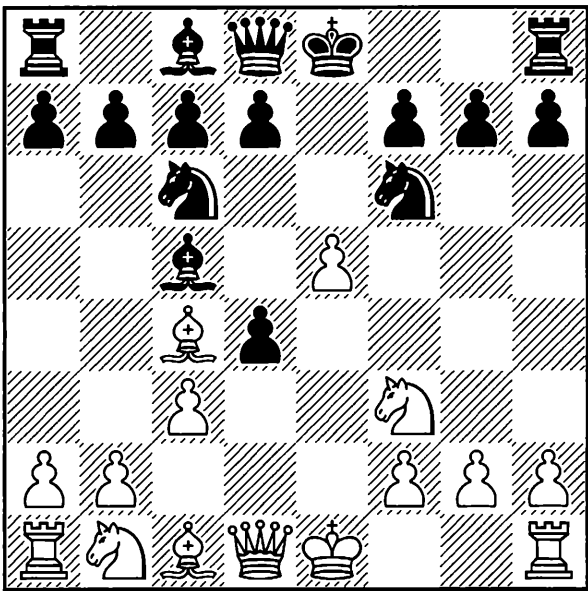


5.d4 d5 or even 5...d6 in order to force an exchange of the white king's pawn which has moved twice for the queen's pawn which has only moved once, and Black's position is not a bad one.

In general the knight seeks to remain in the centre, as in the first example (diagram 21) and it is quite exceptional for it to move *to the edge of the board* (diagram 24).

Example: 1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.c3 (an unpleasant move, planning an attack on the black centre in order to disrupt his opponent's mobilisation) 4...♞f6 5.d4 exd4 6.e5

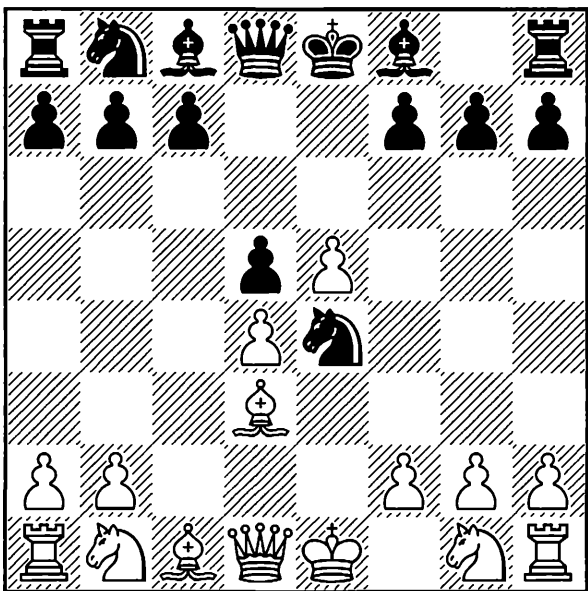
25



And now 6...♞e4 would be a mistake on account of 7.♙d5. But after 6.e5 the knight can no longer hang on by itself, but needs to rely on the help of the d-pawn, so 6...d5 and if 7.♙b3 ♞e4 and the knight does hold its position.

Example of the knight maintaining its position: In a position we have already looked at after 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 ♞f6! 4.e5 ♞e4! 5.♙d3 d5! there comes 6.cxd4.

26



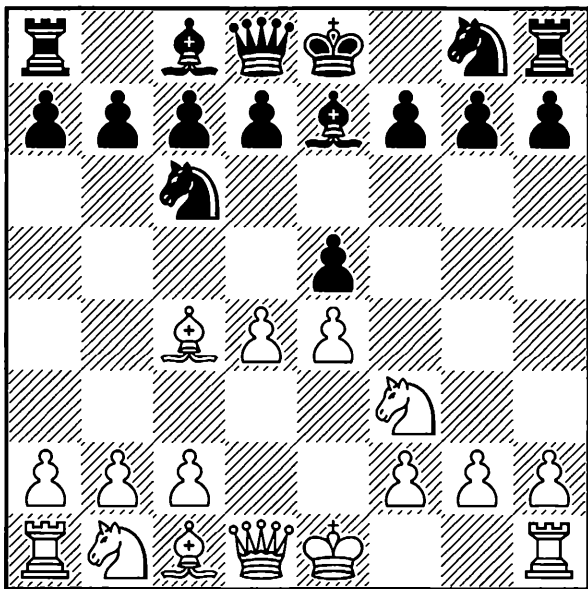
Black need not imagine himself to be in safety since in the air there is a tempo-winning attack on the ♞e4 (namely ♞c3). But Black can develop and attack at the same time, for example with 6...♞c6 7.♞f3 ♙g4 (threatens d4) or also by 6...c5, but not by the illogical 6...♙b4?!, e.g. 7.♙d2 and Black is forced into a tempo-losing exchange.

In any case, it is more prudent to keep the centre intact. We might manage to hold up the advance of the pawn mass as it grinds forward (a pawn roller) by the correct moves by the knight which we have demonstrated. However such a method of play is difficult, and moreover the pawn roller does not need to move forward at once, but its possible advance constitutes a permanent threat which will hang over our head.

So, So, as long as it is possible to do so without any other disadvantage, hang on to the centre.

After 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙e7 (quite playable, though there is the more aggressive 3...♙c5) 4.d4

27



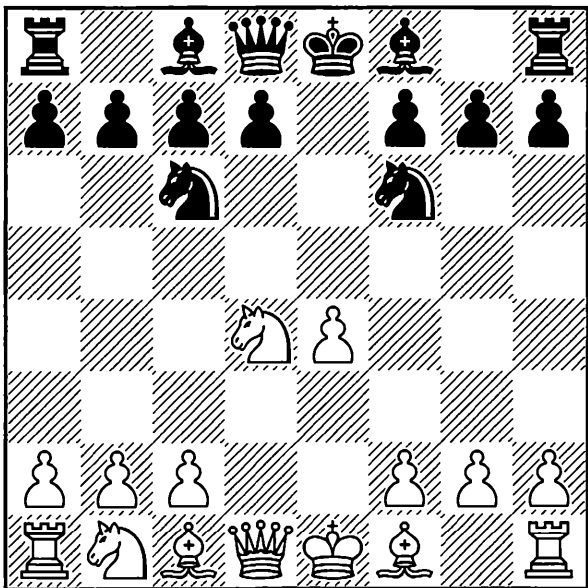
Black’s best course is to protect the centre (keep it intact) with 4...d6; after 5.dxe5 dxe5 White’s centre is immobile. What is meant is *protection by a pawn* (of course not 4...f6 which would be a horrible mistake, the c4-g8 diagonal would be decisive); after all, a pawn is a born defender. If a piece is called upon to protect a piece or pawn which is under attack, it feels itself to be restricted, whereas in a similar position the pawn feels really at home.

Moreover, in our case protection by a piece, perhaps 4...♙f6?, would be limited to the protection of the pawn itself rather than the more abstract concept of the centre, e.g. 4...♙f6? 5.dxe5 ♘xe5 6.♘xe5 ♙xe5. The exchange followed the line of our rule: exchange, win a tempo; so 7.f4 wins a tempo.

6a. Surrendering the centre

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4! (3...d6 would be unpleasant for Black, e.g. 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.♙xd8† ♙xd8 [or else e5 is lost], and Black has lost the opportunity to castle and with it a comfortable way of linking his rooks) 4.♘xd4. In the position which has now arisen, Black can, after due reflection play 4...♘f6,

28



since after 5.♘xc6 bxc6 the possible attempt at demobilisation 6.e5 can be met, e.g. by 6...♘e4 7.♙d3 d5. But by doing so, Black would only have solved a part of the problem, namely the minor issue of the g8-knight which was so hard to develop; but he would not have solved the problem of the centre as such. For that to happen, the following conditions have to be met:

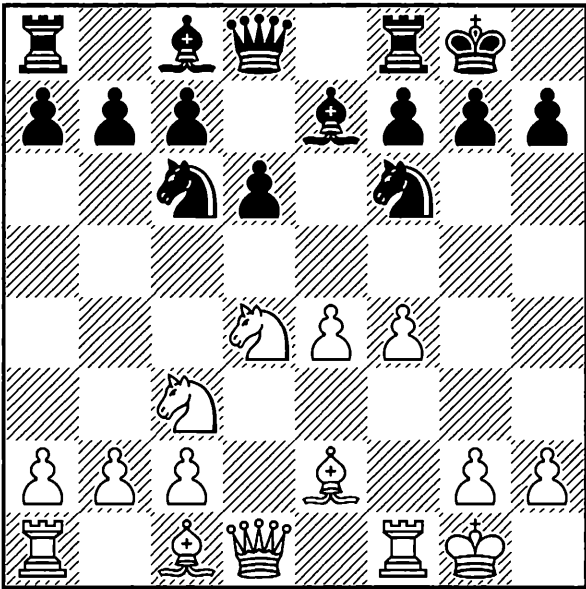
1. If you have allowed your opponent to establish a free and mobile centre pawn, then that pawn must be considered to be a dangerous criminal (a “runaway”): all your chess fury must be directed against it. This leads by force to the following condition:

2. The pawn must either be executed (d7-d5 then dxe4 must be prepared for) or imprisoned; so we either condemn the criminal to death or to a life sentence in prison. Or else there is a neat combination of both (15 years in prison and a death sentence as it were) by which we first sentence it to death and then commute that sentence to lifelong imprisonment; or, what is more usual, we restrain the e4-pawn until it is quite crippled (backward) and then we show what we are made of and carry out the sentence of death by playing d7-d5 and then dxe4.

The restraint would be introduced by 4...d6 and carried forward by ♘f6, ♙e7, 0–0, ♙e8 and ♙f8, keeping a close watch on any possible advance. White, on the other hand, will bet all on making the e-criminal mobile, by playing at the correct moment f2-f4 and ♙e1, etc.

The game could go as follows: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 d6 5.♙e2 ♘f6 6.♘c3 ♙e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.f4!

29

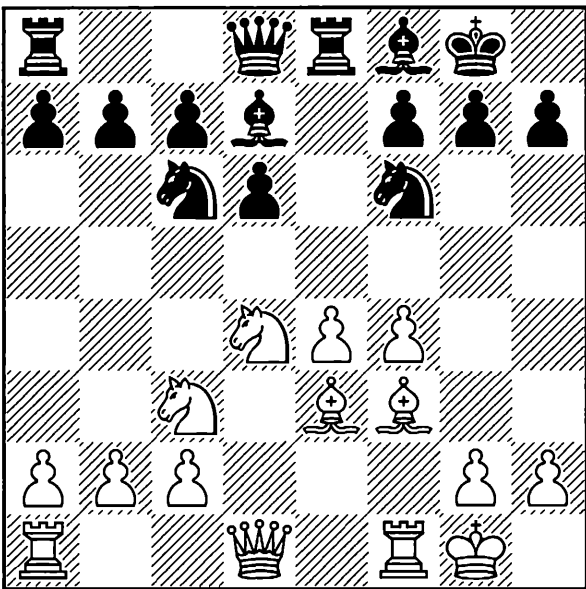


8...♙e8! (not 8...d5 on account of 9.e5) 9.♙e3 ♙f8 10.♙f3 ♙d7

The mobilisation is finished for both sides, White wishes to force through e4-e5 and Black is resisting it.

This constellation gives rise to the most interesting of struggles. We would like to offer an instructive example and to recommend that students practice such battles, both for and against the centre. Let us clinch this with a diagram.

30

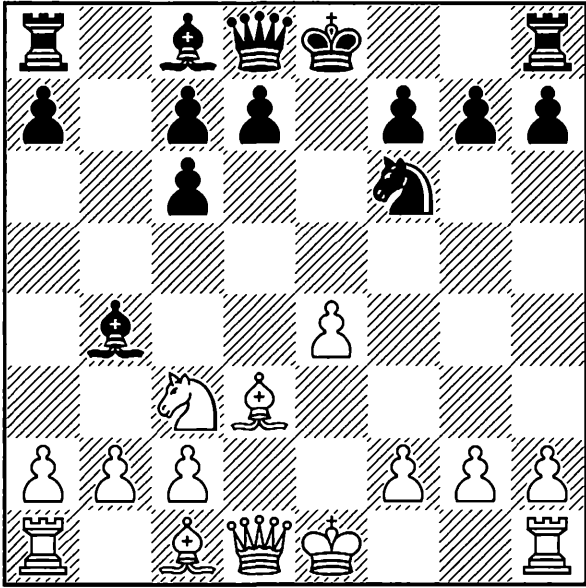


The process of restraint is a difficult one; it seems easier (but only in cases when that is suitable) to kill off the mobile centre pawn.

But, as has already been said, such cases do not arise all that often. Here is a small selection:

1. Scotch Game: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♙b4 6.♘xc6 (to be able to play the covering move ♙d3) 6...bxc6! 7.♙d3

31

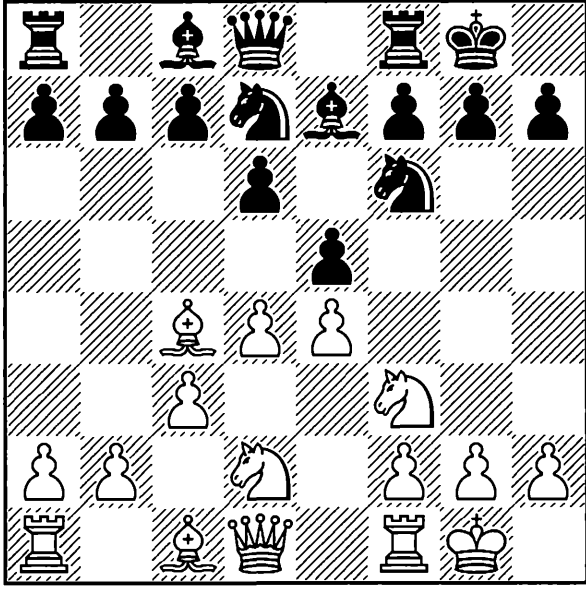


Now Black no longer has to lay siege to the e-pawn by moves like d7-d6 then 0-0 and ♙e8, since he has the immediate 7...d5. After 8.exd5 cxd5 the disturber of the peace (White's e4-pawn) has disappeared.

A similar fate was met by the central pawn in F. Lee – Nimzowitsch, Ostend 1907:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6 3.♘bd2 ♘bd7 4.e4 e5 5.c3 ♙e7 6.♙c4 0-0 7.0-0

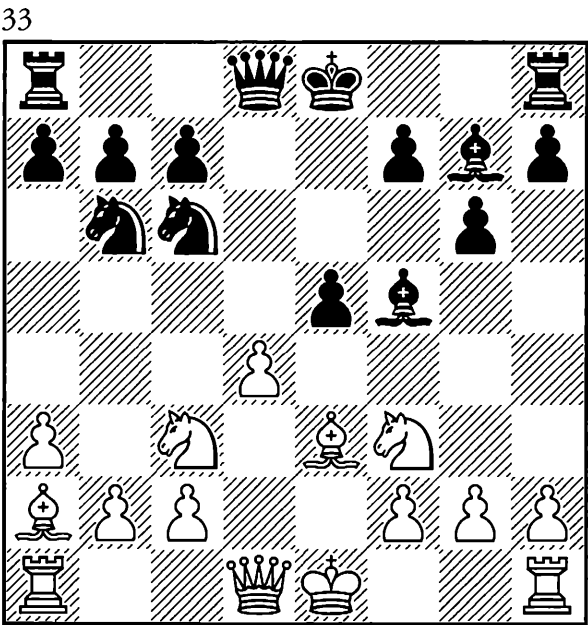
32



After 7...exd4 8.cxd4 Black destroys the opposing central pawn without previously restraining it or laying siege to it. How does he do so?

7...exd4! 8.cxd4 d5! after which, the proud, free and ever so mobile e4-pawn disappears suddenly, it has been pulverised! After 9.♔d3 (if 9.exd5 then 9...♖b6 followed by ...♗xd5) 9...dxe4 10.♗xe4 ♗xe4 11.♔xe4 ♗f6 (that was our exchange and subsequent gain of tempo) 12.♔d3 ♗d5 13.a3 ♔f6 and Black was better on account of the sickly pawn on d4 (see the full game on page 56)

One could give a lot of examples, but for lack of space we shall have to content ourselves with three. The third is taken from the opening of my game in Baden-Baden against Yates (who had the white pieces):
1.e4 ♗c6 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.♗c3 (or 3.e5 ♗d5 4.c4 ♗b6 5.d4 d6 and Black threatens to win back the tempi he has sacrificed; but perhaps 6.e6 fxe6 works, with attacking chances for White) 3...d5 4.exd5 ♗xd5 5.d4, by means of which White establishes a free central pawn. There followed 5...♔f5 6.a3 g6 (the alternative would be to restrain the d-pawn by 6...e6, followed by the occupation of the d-file as well as keeping an eye on things from d5) 7.♔c4 ♗b6 8.♔a2 ♔g7 9.♔e3 e5!.



So, Black did not so much play for restraint as for the execution of the d4-pawn. There followed 10.♖e2 0-0 11.dxe5 ♔g4 and I won back the pawn with the freer game.

7. Pawn grabbing in the opening

There is no time for pawn grabbing
The particular respect for the central pawn and how this manifests itself

Since mobilising the troops is by far the most important business to be carried out in the opening phase, it seems comical to someone who knows this to see the eagerness with which the less experienced player rushes into highly unimportant skirmishing, by which I mean pawn grabbing. It is psychologically possible to find an explanation for the eagerness just mentioned: a young player is full of energy and wishes to make use of it (which he manages to do by “taking the scalps” of some quite harmless pawns), whereas an older player, well, just wants to show off how young he really is. The result for both of them is misfortune.

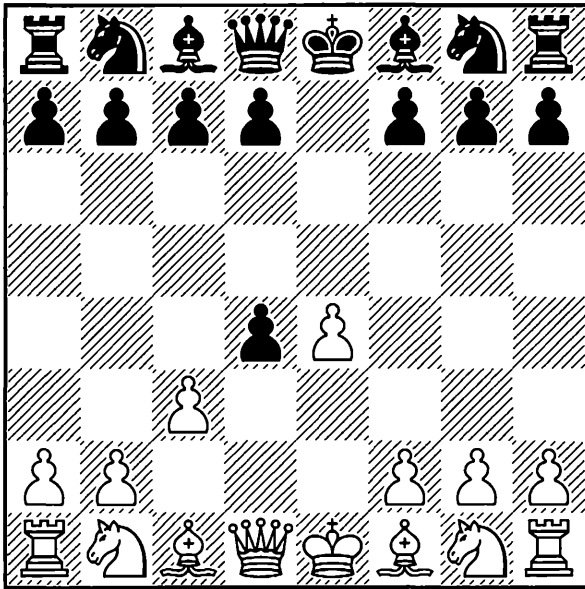
If you compare the as yet undeveloped game to a tender, childlike organism and when in addition you bear in mind that pawn grabbing amateurs are otherwise logical and sane minded people, you have to be astonished at how they acquire a taste for this sort of pawn capture. What would these gentlemen say if one fine morning they saw a six-year-old boy come into the stock exchange and buy some shares with a serious expression on his face? They would burst out laughing. Because when grown up and “serious” people like ourselves buy shares, etc., “we are well aware of what we are doing” (we probably have too much money and want to get rid of some of it, which we manage to do!). But what does a child want with shares!!! For exactly the same reason, let me ask the question: what does an undeveloped organism of a game need with vulgar pawn winning? The young organism needs to grow, that is its most important task. Nobody, be it father or mother or even the prime minister, can grow on behalf of the boy, nobody can take on that task for him, nobody can fill his place. But business is something which we adults still can do!

And the moral of the story: you should never play to win pawns before completing your development!

There is one single exception, which we shall discuss later. But first, let us look at the best way of declining a gambit. We can do this quickly, in any case, since we have already looked at a few short examples.

After **1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4! 3.c3**

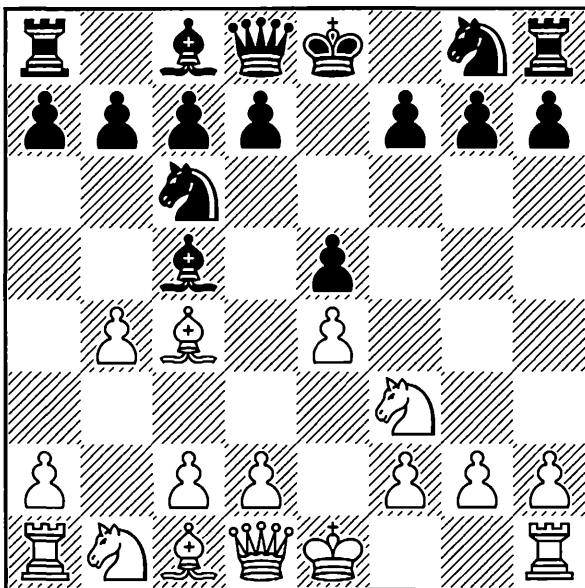
34



Black can either play **3...d5** (which we have especially recommended to the student) or any other developing move, with of course the exception of **3...c5??**. So, say **3...d5** **4.cxd4 d5** or **3...d5** or finally even **3...c6** **4.cxd4 d5** (and now c6 is logically linked to the centre). After **3...c6** **4.cxd4** there also comes **4...d5** **5.exd5 cxd5** with **...d6** to follow.

In the Evans Gambit: **1.e4 e5 2.f3 d6 3.c4 c5 4.b4**

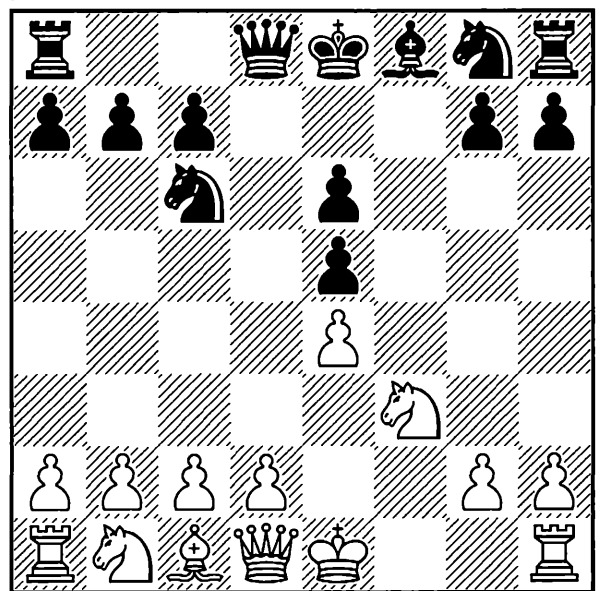
35



We decline the gambit by **4...b6** (in order not to be forced into moving our piece about after **4...xb4 5.c3**). Playing **4...b6** in no way costs Black a tempo, because **4.b4**, a move which White played of his own free will without Black being able to get in another developing move, was (when we consider things from the point of view of development) an unproductive move. It is and must always be considered unproductive, just like any pawn move which has no logical connection to the centre. Consider **4...b6 5.b5** (aiming for a demobilising effect and making a virtue out of the necessity of a motiveless pawn advance) **5...d4!**, and if now **6.dxe5** then **6...g5** with a strong attack.

You should decline the King's Gambit (**1.e4 e5 2.f4**) by **2...c5** or by the simple **2...d6**, a move which is much better than its reputation, e.g. **1.e4 e5 2.f4 d6 3.f3 c6 4.c4 e6!**; after **5.cxe6 fxe6 6.fxe5 dxe5**,

36



Black is well developed, has 2 open files for his rooks and stands somewhat better despite the doubled pawns. If instead **5.c5**, then perhaps **5...d7**, because if White goes wandering about the board with his bishop, then so can Black.

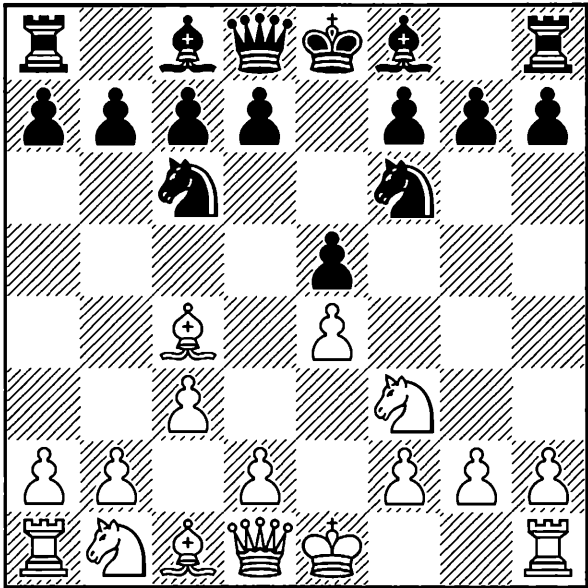
But you should specially look out for the possibility, after **1.e4 e5 2.f4 d6 3.f3 c6 4.c3 d6 5.c2**, of the transaction **5...exf4** and if **6.d3**, then **6...d5**. This means giving up the centre for the time being and then seizing it back again rapidly.

The gambit can also be accepted (1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 ♘f6!), but not with the idea of hanging on to the gambit pawn but much more to put the strength of White's centre to a stern test (4.e5 ♘h5) and or to get in the freeing advance 4...d5 (after 4.♘c3).

7a. Take any central pawn if it can be done without too great a danger!

Example: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.c3?

37

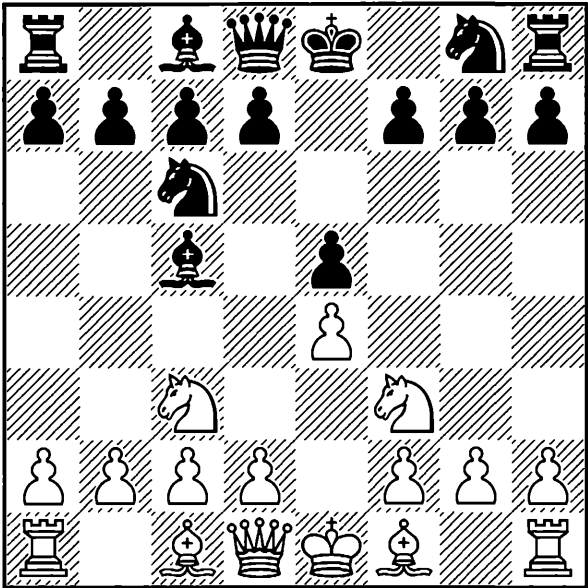


4...♘xe4, because to achieve the ideal gain as represented by the seizure of the centre, a tempo is not too high a price to pay. It is much less

important to hang on to the pawn; achieving the ideal, not a gain of material is what it is all about here.

To put in its simplest terms: winning a pawn somewhere on the edge of the board does not make you happy, but winning one in the centre means you are contributing to your own immortality, for it gives you the chance to spread your wings where the fight in the opening is at its thickest, in the centre. This is what our American friends call elbow room. So in cases such as those outlined above, let your knights become Americans!!

38



This brings to an end our first chapter. We refer you to games 1 and 2 in the games section which you will find at the end of chapter 3, page 53.

Part I – Chapter 2

The open file

1. Introduction

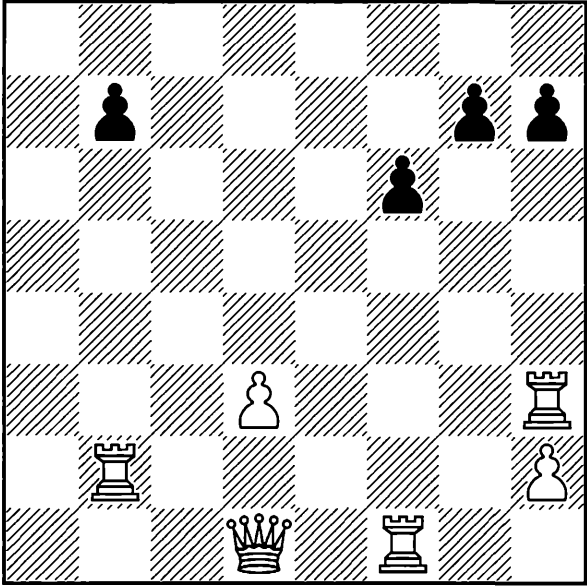
General comments and definition

The theory of open files, which I discovered, is to be regarded as one of the cornerstones of my system. Approximately 12 years ago, I published in the *Wiener Schachzeitung* the rule about creating outposts on open files, but at that time I had not yet realised that that particular manoeuvre was logically subordinate to the main purpose of operating down a file, namely managing to occupy the 7th or 8th rank. In other words, in order to break down your opponent's resistance on the file, you should set up the outpost. At the same time you should constantly keep your eye on the 7th rank, since the occupation of the latter is to be considered the main goal of any operation down a file. So establishing an outpost is only a subsidiary manoeuvre.

When delivering a lecture on open files in Scandinavia, I was in the habit of concluding with the following words: "I hope, gentlemen, that these rules about 'open files' will have served to 'open' your eyes." My little joke, which was also partially a serious remark, was never contradicted. The "open file" is my favourite amongst the children of my imagination, and it has always been a pleasure to be able to present to listeners or readers in its complete form this concept which cost me so much trouble and so many pangs of creation. But let us start at the beginning.

Definition: *A file is open, when one's own pawn is not there (or when, though present, it has a major piece of one's own in front of it), as for example the b-file in the diagram.*

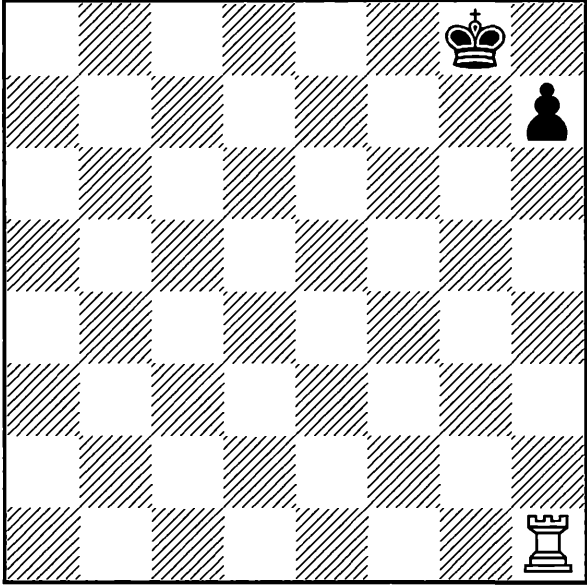
39



The white b-, f-, and h-files are open, the h-file from h3 onward. The d-file is closed.

This rule means that the decision as to whether a file is "open" or "closed" does not depend on whether the file is aimed towards totally empty friendly squares or to actual enemy pieces (usually pawns). There is in fact no difference in principle between attacking a piece and attacking a square.

40



Consider diagram 40, and now imagine on the other hand the same position, without a pawn on h7; there is simply the square h7 which White would like to occupy. In both cases, White will attempt with the material at hand (I only gave the essentials of the position) to bring to bear on h7 more pieces than Black can summon defenders. Once that has been achieved, he will in one case play ♖h1xh7 and in the other ♖h1-h7; in the first example he proudly replaces a captured piece with his own, and in the second he proudly puts his piece on the square he has seized.

So there is no difference of any sort between the h7-square which is to be captured and the h7-pawn, because the h7-pawn will have been reduced to immobility, since we must render as immobile as possible any object we are attacking.

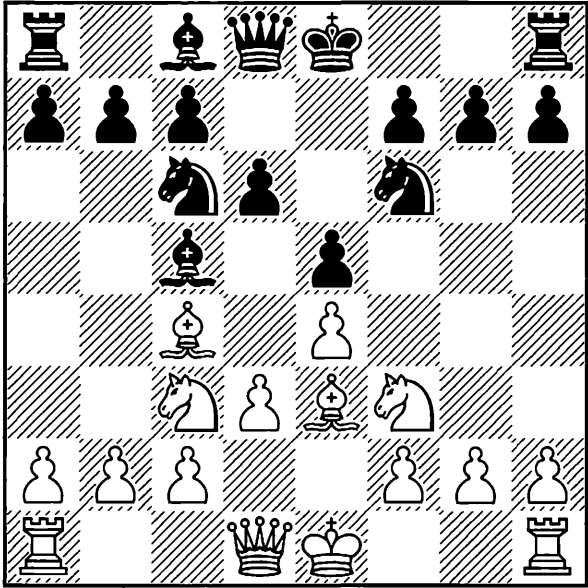
2. How open files occur (or are born)

Peacefully • Resulting from an attack

The point of attack

From the definition of an open file, it can be deduced that the line becomes open as a result of the disappearance of one's own pawn. This disappearance can be achieved in a peaceful manner when our opponent is obliged to exchange a well placed (central) piece of ours which is recaptured by a pawn.

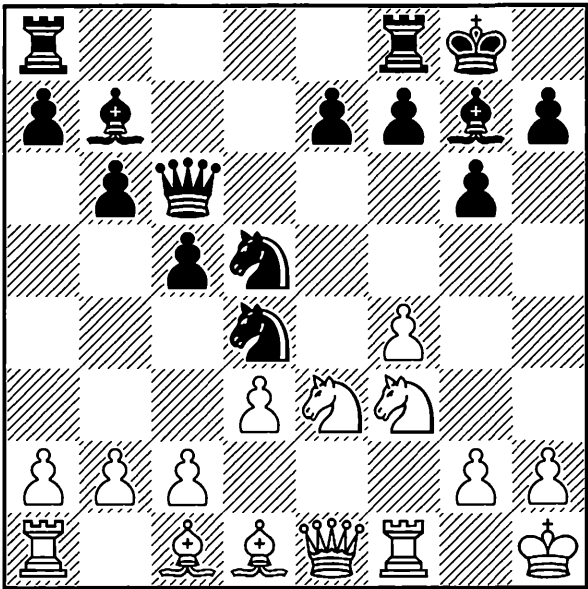
41



Black plays 6...♙xe3, and by doing so he opens the f-file for White.

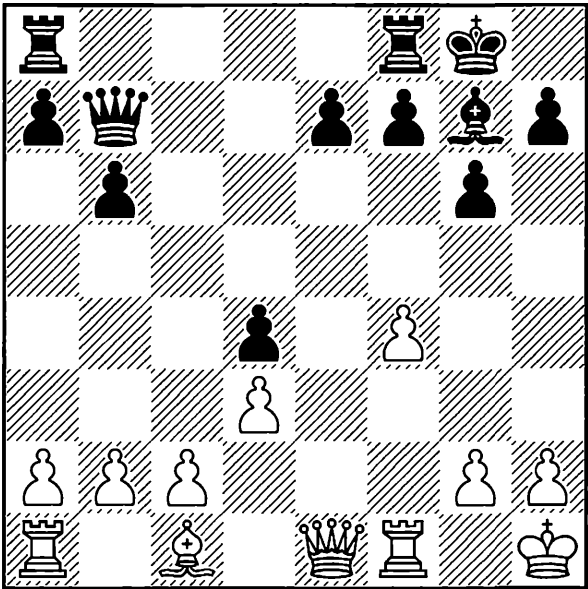
Here we must emphasise the word *central*: it is rare for one to be able to force the opponent into a line-opening exchange by placing one of your pieces on the flank (and this always never happens in the opening). You are much more likely to achieve your aim by positioning a piece in the centre, because centrally posted pieces whose field of action extends to all sides do get exchanged. A further example can be seen in the following position from the game **Thomas – Alekhine**, Baden-Baden 1925.

42



Black has positioned his knights in the centre and White was obliged to exchange with 14.♘xd4 cxd4 (opening the c-file) and subsequently 15.♘xd5 ♖xd5 16.♙f3 ♖d7 17.♙xb7 ♖xb7.

43



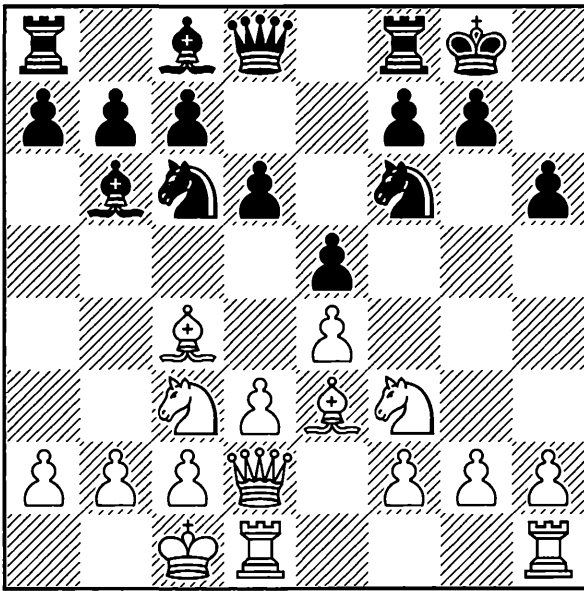
The importance of the said file was already considerable. Then came 18.c4! (the pawn could not have been held on c2) 18...dxc3 opening the

d-file, since his own blocking piece (each of one's own pieces is a blocking piece) disappears. After 19.bxc3 came ♖ac8 and ♜fd8 with play on both files.

So, position your pieces centrally and be sure that in doing so you do not encourage your opponent to try a pawn roller! Doing so frequently enough provokes your opponent into exchanges, which open files for you.

Think back to the position in diagram 41 and add the moves 6...♙b6 7.♚d2 0-0 8.0-0-0 h6?.

44

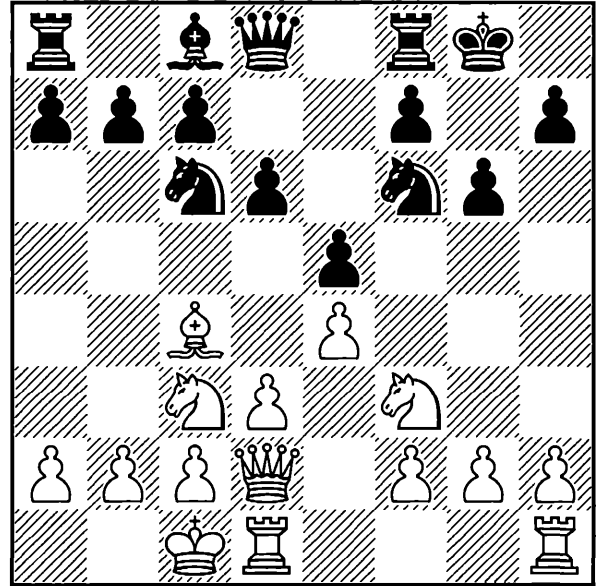


We now have a typical position in which files can be opened actively. Thanks to the pawn on h6, White can quickly bring about the disappearance of his own g-pawn; this means that h6 was a bad move. (The move could hardly be criticised as losing a tempo, because Black has already completed his development and there is a difference between going to sleep after finishing a job and going to sleep on the job!) The advance on h6 (= the object of attack, according to Tarrasch) goes as follows: h2-h3, g2-g4, g4-g5 and after h6xg5 a piece recaptures and then the g-file is occupied by ♜g1; it now appears open. One of our pieces may be in the way, but that is not important since the piece is mobile whereas a pawn is less so, and we really have our work cut out if we try to alter that fact!

Example 2: For the sake of practice, let us imagine that in diagram 44 the ♙e3 and ♙b6 are

not there, that the h-pawn is still on h7 and the g-pawn on g6.

45



Now g6 is the object of attack and the h-file is the one to be opened (it is always the *file next to* the object of attack). The plan is h2-h4-h5xg6.

Beginners are in the habit of over-estimating the importance of the file. One day, one of them proudly showed me his open file, but he had neither a rook nor a queen on the board, having already sacrificed them!

In the position after h4, we must first set about the defending knight on f6, by something like ♘d5, and then h4-h5 can be played comfortably without it being a sacrifice. The last resort for the defender, by-passing the pawn being attacked by g6-g5 after White's h4-h5, does not work here as g5 is not protected.

3. The ideal (purpose) behind all operations on a file

Less important accompanying phenomena • marauding • flanking attacks

The idea behind any operation on a file consists of finally penetrating via that file into the opponent's position, in other words on to the 7th or 8th rank.

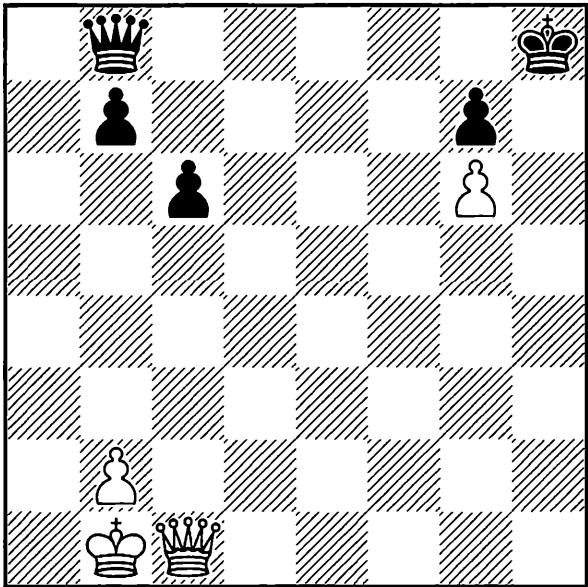
This is a very important rule. In stating it, we should emphasise *via that file*, because if for example we have been active on the d-file and then reach the 7th rank in a roundabout way by

moves such as ♖d1-d4-a4-a7, I do not consider the manoeuvre I have just described to be a direct exploitation of the d-file.

Here are some elementary cases of operations on a file:

1. Operating on the h-file:

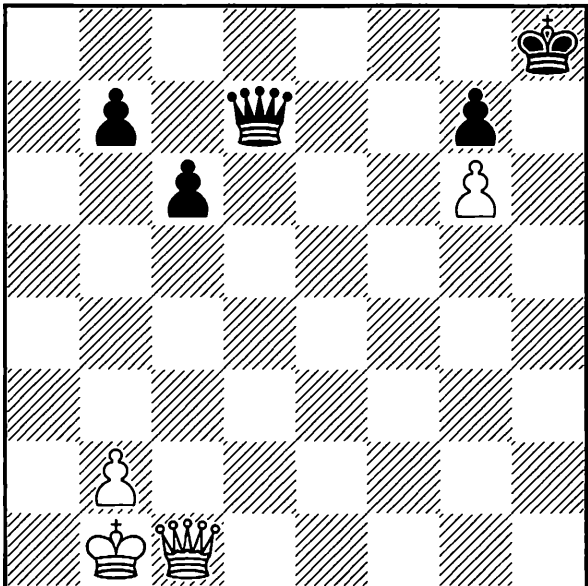
46



We occupy it by 1. ♖h1† (if we imagine an arrow going from h1 to h8, that would show the direction of action on the h-file) 1... ♜g8. And now according to our rule, ♖h8 or ♖h7. The former does not work, so 2. ♖h7† ♜f8 and then 3. ♖h8† with the capture ♖xb8 (we shall describe as marauding any fork-like attack on 2 pieces). This capture is in no way coincidental here, but rather the not untypical accompaniment to such a powerful penetration to the 7th or 8th rank.

2. With the queen on d7 instead of on b8:

47



Here the result would be no less unpleasant for Black after 1. ♖h1† ♜g8 2. ♖h7† ♜f8 3. ♖h8† ♜e7 4. ♖xg7† ♜ moves anywhere 5. ♖xd7† ♜xd7 6. g7.

Here, let me draw your attention to the triangular series of queen moves ♖h7-h8-g7 which make up a sort of flanking movement. We can summarise what has been said as follows: when there is insufficient resistance (no opposing pawn on h6 or h5) the attacker will secure the entry squares and penetrate to the 7th and 8th ranks, where it is not uncommon for him to carry out a marauding or flanking attack. (Moreover, things can happen in a characteristic manner: if you have done things correctly for a few moves, then fate will reward you with the possibility of seizing some material! This could also be called post-war morality.) Put like this, the whole matter seems easy to understand and also to achieve, but in reality there are major obstacles to overcome, as section 4 will demonstrate.

4. Possible obstacles to operations down a file

The block of granite and how to undermine it
The concept of *protected* and *unprotected* obstacles (pawns)

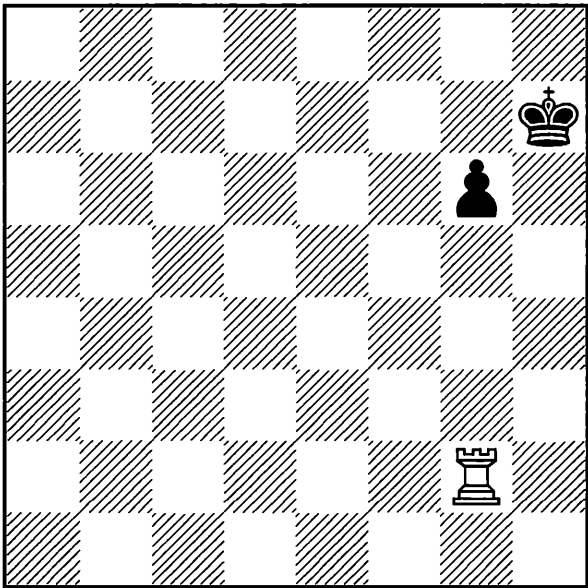
Two methods of carrying out an attack on opposing pawns which are in the way

The *evolutionary* and the *revolutionary* attack

We have seen how important the free access we have won to the 7th and 8th ranks can become. This being the case, it seems likely that nature herself, so to speak, may have done something to protect this sensitive spot, just as good-hearted and wise old Mother Nature has put man's heart in a well protected spot behind his ribs. (This place is so well protected and the heart so deeply hidden that in the case of many people, one might well think...that they were born without one.) Just to reassure the more sensitive among my readers, let me point out straight away that heartlessness is a not a serious disease, since it causes little pain to those affected.

The characteristic and natural protective set-up can be seen from the diagram.

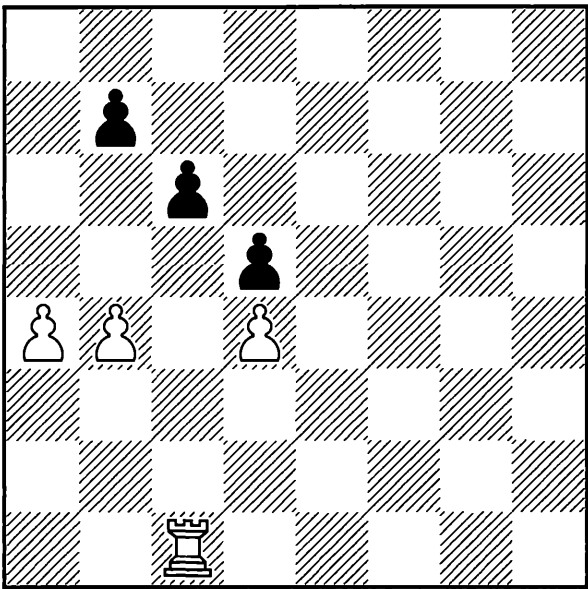
48



Here the g6-pawn prevents the attacker from reaching the 7th rank. “To get to the 7th or 8th rank you will have to go over my dead body,” the pawn seems to be saying.

If the said opposing pawn is protected by another pawn, it would make no sense attempting to run headlong into this block of granite, for example by tripling pieces down the file. It would be much cleverer first to undermine the g-pawn, by something like h2-h4-h5 then h5xg6. After h7xg6, our block of granite has been reduced to a single little pawn in need of protection. In the following diagram b4-b5xc6 would have the effect of undermining the pawn.

49



As we emphasised earlier, we recognise the pawn to be a sound defensive piece.

Protecting something with pieces is almost a misconception, only a pawn can protect without complaint over a long period of time.

So a “protected” pawn is one that is protected by one of its own colleagues.

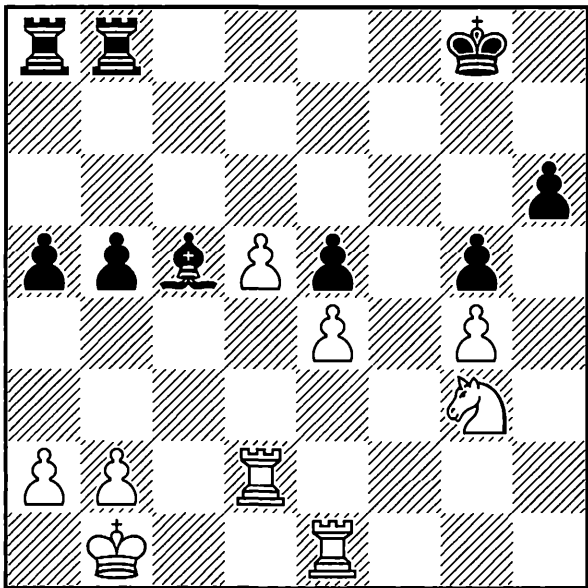
Should we entice our g-pawn out of his club, it will be attacked by a lot of pieces. So the obvious idea would be to win the pawn after piling on to it with attacker after attacker, firstly because of the material this wins, and secondly to break down resistance on the file.

The technique is first to bring our pieces into attacking positions. Then a lively struggle will follow. Black will protect as often as we attack and we will try to gain the upper hand by thinning out the ranks of the defenders, which can be done by:

- a) driving them away
- b) exchanges
- c) cutting off one of the defensive pieces.

This therefore *transfers* the attack from the target piece itself to its defenders, a quite normal process which we probably learned and used at school (in the rough-and-tumble of the playground, of course).

50

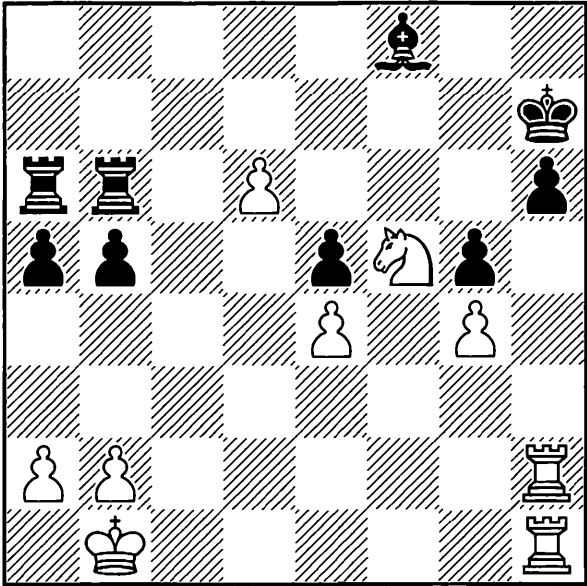


This endgame demonstrates the process: 1.♖h2 ♔h7 2.♖eh1 (White can pile on the attackers

since the obstacle, the h6-pawn, has no pawn protection) 2...♙f8 3.♘f5 ♖b6 and attack and defence are finely balanced 3:3. But with his next move, 4.d6 the defending ♖b6 is taken out of the fight and h6 falls, which simultaneously allows White to penetrate to the 7th and 8th ranks.

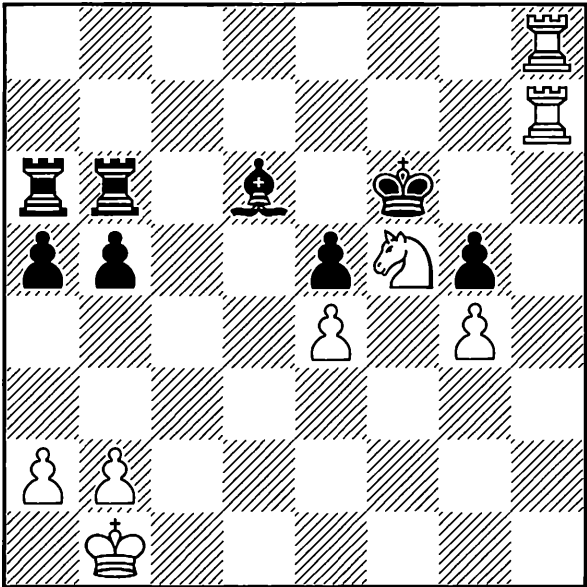
But suppose Black already had both of his rooks on the 6th rank, as shown.

51



Then the exchange sacrifice 4...♖xd6 would be possible. But in this case too 4...♙xd6 would be bad, because it would be met with 5.♖xh6† ♔g8 6.♖h8† ♔f7 7.♖1h7† ♔f6.

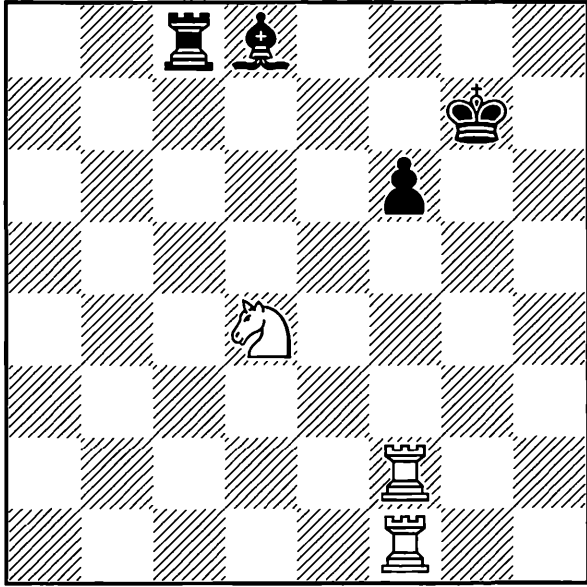
52



And now what seems a quiet move (after the powerful moves by which one rook occupied the 7th rank and the other the 8th!), namely 8.♖g7 then mate on the next move!

Another example is the following.

53

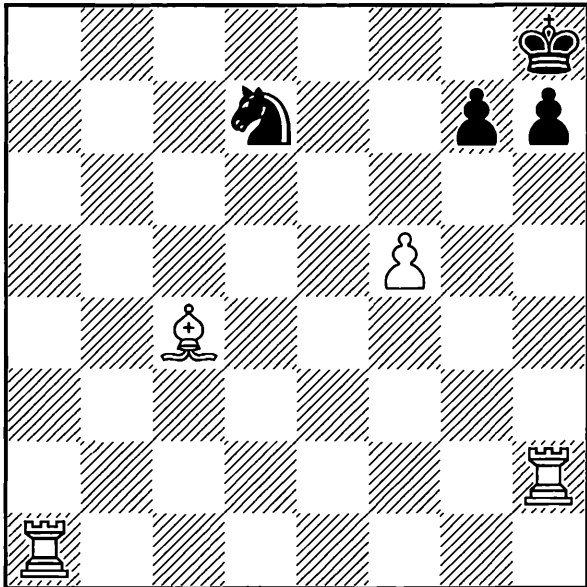


1.♘e6† ♔ moves anywhere 2.♘xd8 ♖xd8 3.♖xf6 = eliminating defenders by exchange.

What we have up till now been doing to the obstacle may be called an *evolutionary* attack; this is implied by the whole method of concentrating on one point in order to build up superior forces to attack it. The goal is also symptomatic, namely partly the gain of material (we were striving to take a pawn) and partly the ideal we had in view of seizing the 7th rank. This mixture is quite characteristic.

A totally different scenario occurs in the following diagram.

54



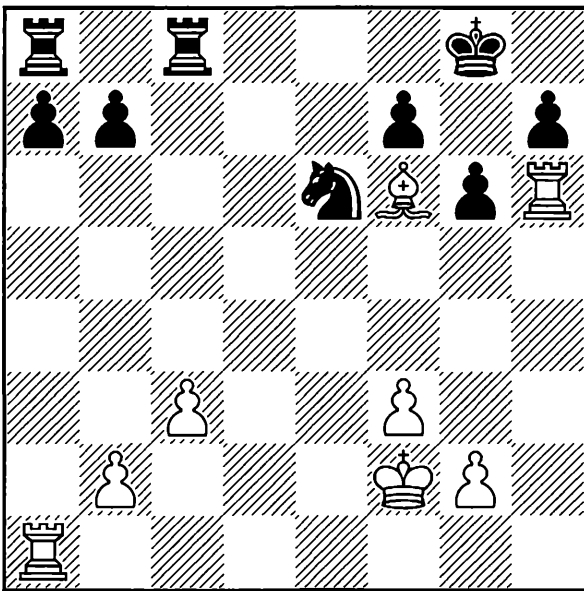
Only the most important actors are on stage. We start from the realisation that any play down the h-file by 1.♖ah1 would serve no purpose,

because of $1... \text{♟f6}$ or $1... \text{h6}$ setting up a block of granite on the h-file. How else might White exploit the h-file? Answer: by backing away from the idea of winning the h-pawn, and setting all in motion (including any necessary sacrifices) to remove it from the way by force, thus $1. \text{♖xh7} \uparrow \text{♔xh7}$ $2. \text{♖h1}$ **mate**.

This may be a simple finish, but it appears highly significant to me because it makes totally clear the difference between an *evolutionary* attack and a *revolutionary* attack.

So, let us look at another example.

55



The *evolutionary* attack would lead to the capture of our goal after $1. \text{♖ah1}$ ♟f8 $2. \text{♕e7}$ (thinning out the defenders by exchanges). But the *revolutionary* attack would not bother about winning the h7 pawn and be as follows:

$1. \text{♖xh7}$ ♔xh7 (there is no question of having won the pawn, since White has given up a whole rook for it) $2. \text{♖h1} \uparrow \text{♔g8}$ $3. \text{♖h8}$ **mate**. The idea behind the *revolutionary* attack, as is clear from this example, consists of forcibly clearing a way through to the 7th or 8th rank. Here one rook sacrifices itself for its partner, so that the latter can get on to h8; yes, even on the 64 squares there is comradeship.

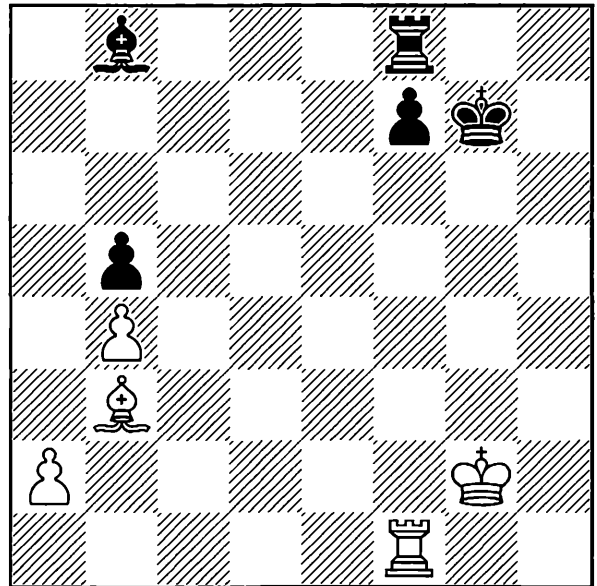
In what chronological order should the two methods of attack outlined above be used?

Answer: first you should try the concentration of forces, attacking the offending pawn several times, and in doing so you should look for

the chance to force the defending pieces into uncomfortable positions in which they get in each other's way (frequently the defending side suffers from a lack of space). After that, you should amongst other things consider the possibility of a forcible breakthrough, in other words a *revolutionary* sort of attack.

5. "Restricted" advance on a file in order to give it up in favour of another file, or the indirect exploitation of a file. The file as a springboard and its resemblance to a career in the diplomatic service.

56

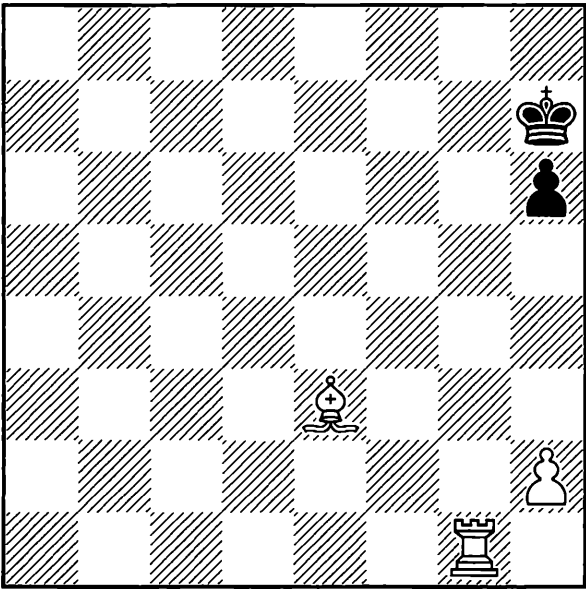


In this position the *direct* exploitation of the f-file (by $\text{♖xf7} \uparrow$ after previously forcing away the covering ♖f8) would be impossible with the minimal amount of material to hand. But obviously the simple ♖f1-f5xb5 wins a pawn. This could be followed up by ♖b5-b7 .

It is of prime importance to us to look into the logical content of this manoeuvre. Since $\text{♖f1xf7} \uparrow$ was not played, we cannot consider this to be a *direct* exploitation of the f-file in the sense of our definition. On the other hand, it would be carrying that bourgeois virtue of ingratitude a bit too far to claim that the winning of the b-pawn had not the slightest thing to do with the f-file. Where then is the truth? Answer: the file was here not used *directly* in the fullest sense of the word, but rather *indirectly*, like a sort of springboard.

If someone chooses a career in diplomacy because he feels he has the power to put Lloyd George completely in the shade, he will make use of his chosen profession to do just that. But should the choice of career have been because the young “dreamer” hopes to move in refined circles and in the long run to win the hand of a millionaire’s daughter, then for him his chosen career is simply a springboard...into his future father-in-law’s cheque book.

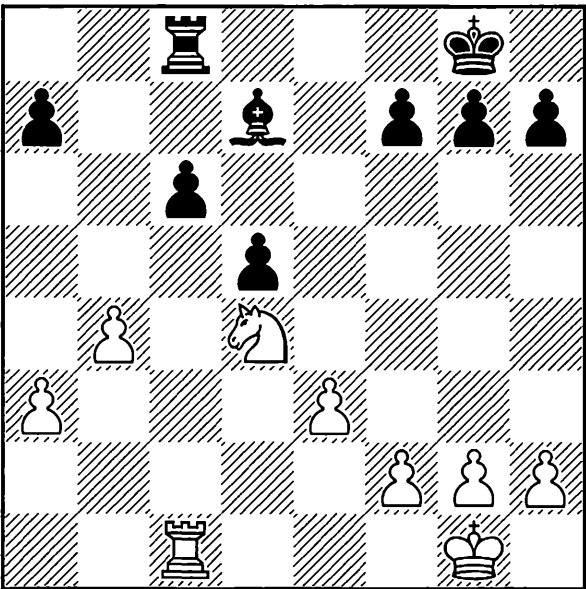
57



In this skeleton position ♔d4 then ♖g7† would be the *direct* exploitation of the g-file, whereas ♖g3 then ♖g3-h3xh6† would be the *indirect*.

In the next position we see the indirect use of the c-file as a springboard to the a-file: ♖c1-c5-a5 (cf. Nimzowitsch – Allies, page 71 and Thomas – Alekhine, page 70)

58



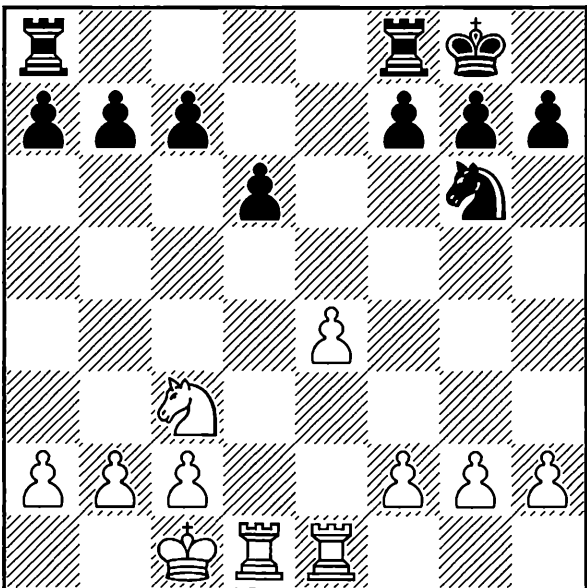
Your averagely gifted critic will be inclined to deny that the distinction investigated above has any practical value, but for those who think that their intellectual powers will help them bring light to the darkness, the first method should be of greater worth since much light is thus cast on the whole business of files. I could perhaps have expressed the above in more simple terms, but I took pleasure in giving to these mediocre critics (who can never see or understand what is essential) a little something to criticise, even if it is only a question of style.

6. The outpost

The radius of attack • The story about the newspaper • Which piece should occupy the outpost on a flank file and which on a central file • The exchange of roles and what it might prove

Let us begin by having a look at the following diagram.

59



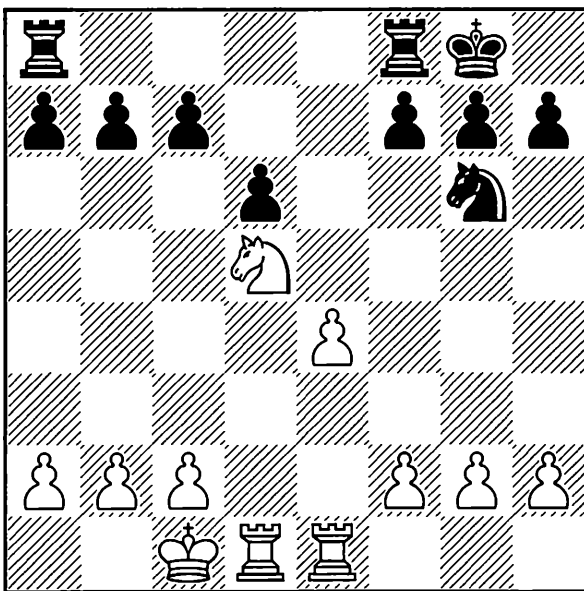
White has the centre and the d-file, Black the d6-pawn which is keeping an eye on the centre and the e-file; otherwise the game is level. White to move should now try to do something with the d-file. This seems difficult because the “protected” d6-pawn is like a piece of granite. Should White wish, despite what was said in rule 4, to attack d6 with ♖d1-d2 and ♖e1-d1,

not only would you, dear reader, laugh in scorn, but even the d6-pawn itself would do so! So, let us rather stick to the rules and try to undermine d6 with a well-timed e4-e5 (see point 4). That would also turn out to be impossible here, for the opponent's e-file is more than good enough to discourage our intended e4-e5.

So we abandon the d-file as such and content ourselves with exploiting it indirectly, that is to say with the restricted advance ♖d1-d4 and then the transfer of the rook to a4, as described in point 5. But even this manoeuvre is pretty weak, because Black's queenside is too compact (but it would have worked against an *isolated* a-pawn, with the e1-rook also being brought on to the a-file in the same way via the d-file). After all attempts have been seen to fail, we begin to look around for some other way to operate; this is a mistake, because the d-file can be exploited here.

The key move is 1.♞d5. Here d5 is the *outpost square* and the knight on d5 is the *outpost*.

60



Definition: *by an outpost we mean one of our own pieces, (usually a knight), which is placed, being protected (by a pawn of course) and on an open file within enemy territory.*

Because of its radius of attack, this knight, protected and supported as it is, has a particularly unsettling effect and causes our opponent to try

to weaken its position on the d-file – by c7-c6. So we can say:

- a) the outpost constitutes a base for new attacks.
- b) the outpost provokes a weakening of the opponent's powers of resistance in the file in question.

After 1.♞d5 c6 (1...♖ac8 also works, but you need iron nerves to leave a safely posted and threatening knight in the middle of your position for some considerable time – it is worse than putting up with a fly on your nose for even five minutes), there follows 2.♞c3 and now the d6-pawn will not be in a laughing mood after a possible ♖d2 and ♖e1-d1.

It is important for you to know that the power of the outpost is linked to its strategic connection to its own rear ranks. The outpost does not draw its strength from its own resources, but much more from its open file and the protecting pawn.

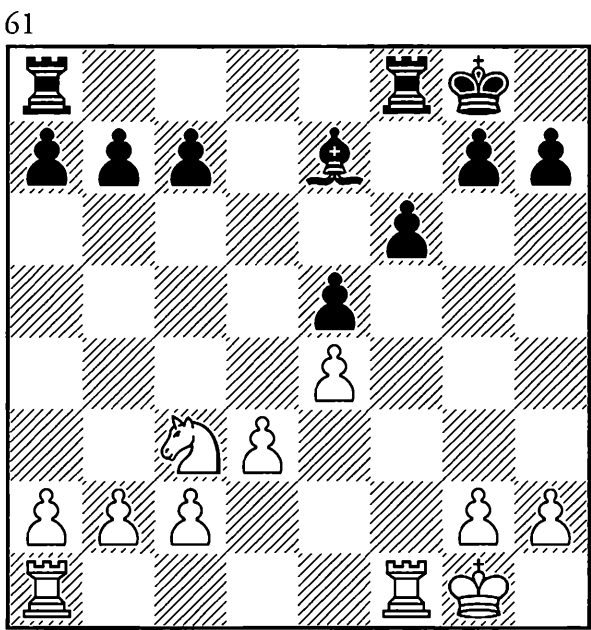
Let us compare the ♞d5 with a recently published newspaper. Then the ♖d1 would be like the capital which is backing the firm. And what role is played by the e4-pawn? That of a supporting political party. You see, a magazine with both capital and a party base behind it can correctly be considered to be resting on solid foundations. But if one of the two preconditions was not met, our paper (the outpost) would suddenly lose all prestige and importance.

e.g. in diagram 60 let us imagine an extra white pawn on d3 – then the d-file would be closed (the capital would have run out). In this case, there would follow 1...c6 2.♞c3 and the d-pawn is not weak – how could anything be weak if it cannot be attacked?

Or imagine diagram 60 with the white pawn on e3 instead of e4. Now there is no political party to back up the newspaper. This is painfully felt after the moves 1...c6 2.♞c3 d5! and White has achieved nothing, whereas with the pawn on e4 at least the d6-pawn was crippled (backward) for a certain length of time.

The outpost must be accompanied by the file behind and the pawn protecting it from one side.

Take this position from the Giuoco Piano.

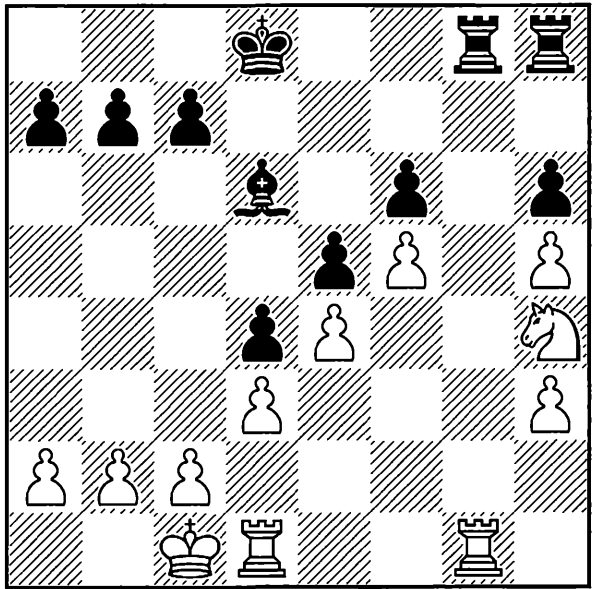


One could add x other pieces for both sides. White has the f-file with the outpost square f5 and Black has the d-file with the square d4. For the moment both files are biting on granite (on “protected” pawns). To break down this strong point, the knight is directed to f5 via e2 and g3. Once it gets there, it then attacks the g7-square, an attack which can be backed up by moves like ♖f1-f3-g3. The natural move would be to drive off the f5-knight by g7-g6, and then we could consider the mission of the outpost to have been fulfilled since f6 has now become a weakness. It would be important to point out that here the ♔f5 became the starting point for a fresh attack (on g7).

The outpost piece is frequently exchanged off on its outpost square. If the attacker has played correctly, it will be replaced by an equally good one. When this happens, changes in the advantages are the order of the day. For example, if after ♔f5 a piece takes it and is recaptured by e4xf5 White would receive the e4-square for a rook or the second knight and in addition chances to open the g-file after g2-g4-g5. In this case, the f5-pawn would help immobilise f6 the object of attack (see Haken – Giese in the games after chapter 3, page 57).

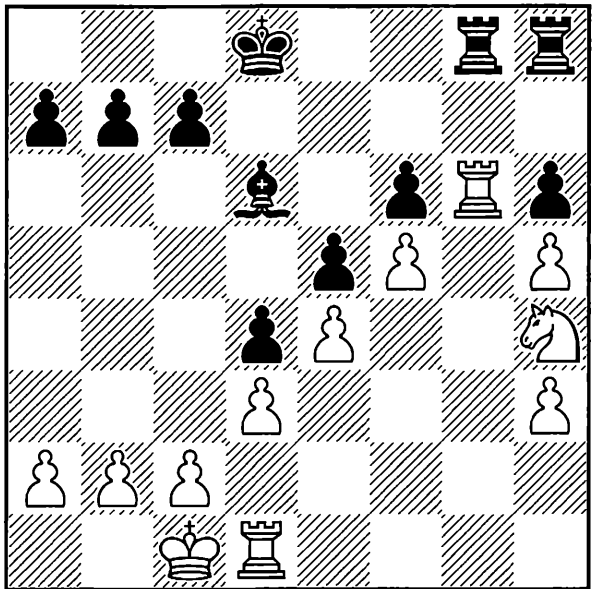
The outpost square on a flank file should be occupied by a *heavy calibre* (major) piece.

62



Here we would be dealing with a flank file (a, b, g, h are *flank files* and c, d, e and f are *central files*). A knight on such an outpost would be less significant, because the attacking radius of a knight on g6 would be small (the only position from which it would be even smaller would be the h-file or the a-file). But ♖g6! is excellent, since it starts to seize control of the previously *contested* g-file as well as offering other advantages.

63



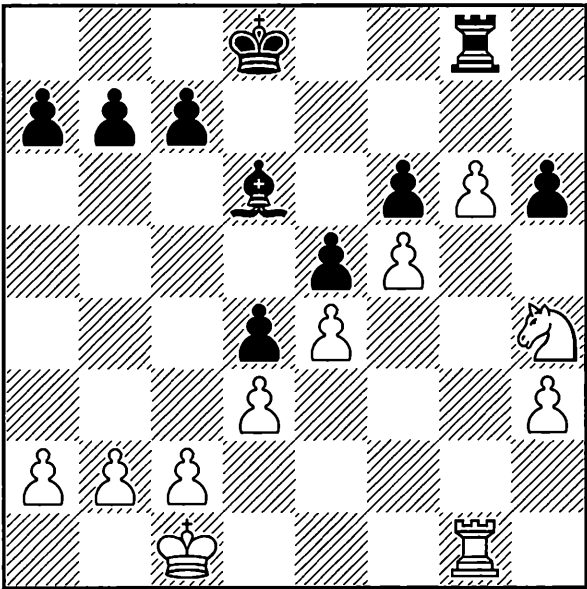
The file was *contested* because neither of the protagonists would be able to march up and down it. That is what would be possible if one side were really to possess the said file. Now White

has to find an appropriate square to double his rooks (the Archimedes principle, since he claimed he could move the world if he could only find a spot to secure his lever!). If we look for such a point, we shall find it. 1.♖g2? ♜xg2 2.♜xg2 ♜g8 and Black has the g-file. 1.♜g4 ♜xg4 2.hxg4 ♜g8 3.♜g6 and it will be hard for White to capitalise on his extra but backward g-pawn. **1.♜g6!** (outpost) **1...♜xg6** (or else ♜dg1 and the rooks are doubled) **2.hxg6** with a giant of a passed pawn and the chance of ♜g1-g4-h4 after a previous ♜f3.

So, White's g-file is closed after h5xg6, but a passed pawn arises from the ashes of the file and also attacking possibilities down the h-file. An example of the changing advantages after the exchange of an outpost, as discussed above.

But if we spend some time with diagram 63, we will discover after 1...♜xg6 2.hxg6 ♜g8 3.♜g1 a characteristic exchange of roles. You see, *before* 1...♜xg6, the white h-pawn supported the rook on g6; but *after* the exchange is completed a white rook now supports the former h-pawn which has advanced to g6.

64

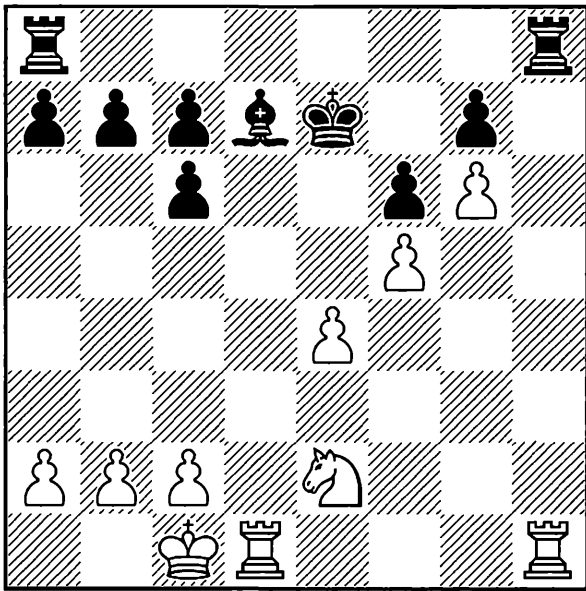


This case, arising from gratitude and delicacy of feeling, proves that there is a strategic connection between the pawn which protects the outpost (here h5) and the g-file itself.

We shall close this chapter with a sample game, chosen for pedagogical reasons and not just for amusement.

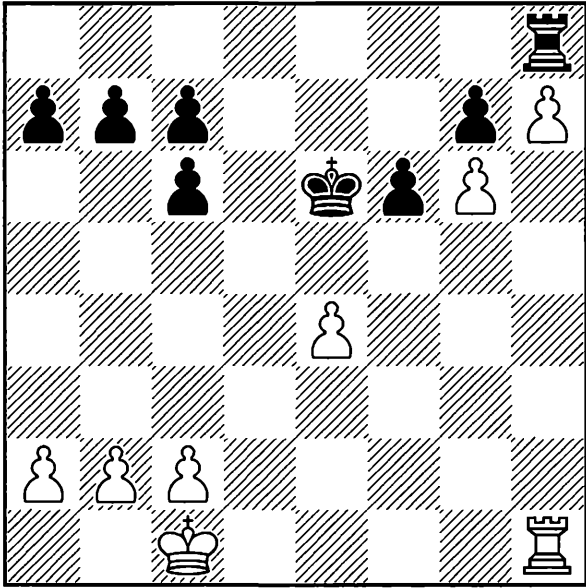
Nimzowitsch – Amateur

65



1.♜f4 Development is a principle which should be followed right into the endgame, but less experienced players neglect it right from the very opening. **1...♜ag8 2.♜h7!** Please, for pedagogical reasons, consider this move simply as occupying an outpost (otherwise it might be seen as an invasion of the 7th rank). **2...♞e8 3.♜dh1 ♜xh7 4.gxh7** (transforming the “file” into a “passed pawn”; also good would be 4.♜xh7 ♜f8 5.♜h5 with a possible knight sacrifice on f6) **4...♜h8 5.♜g6† ♞xg6 6.fxg6** and the passed pawn becomes a “protected” passed pawn. **6...♞e6**

66



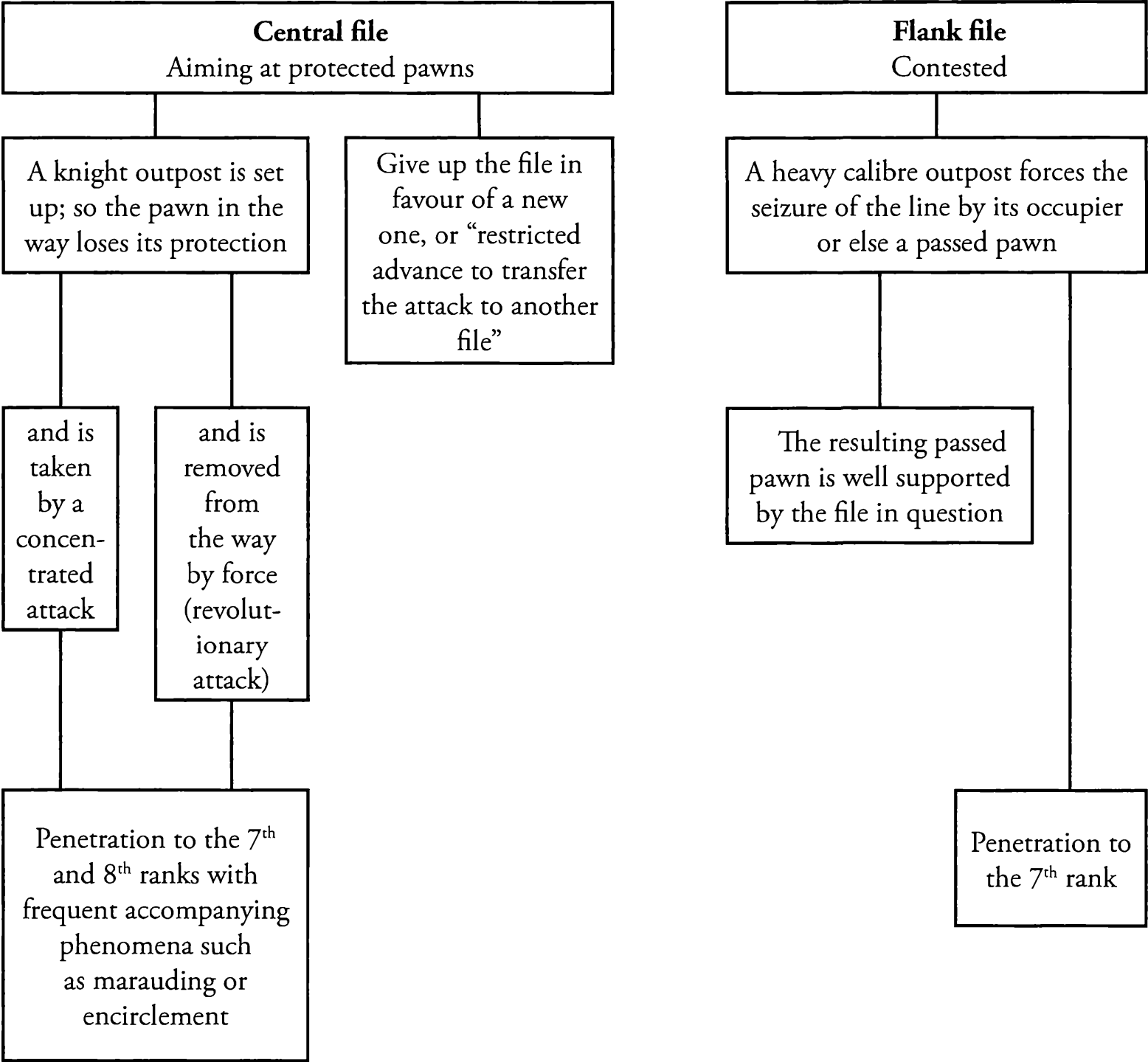
7.♜h5! This “restricted advance” prevents any attempt by Black to free himself by moves such as ♞e5 or f6-f5 and drawing closer to

the g6-pawn. 8...b6 8.c4 (8.b4 would cripple Black even more, but White has other ideas in mind) 8...c5 9.a4 a5 10.b3 c6 11.♖d2 ♖d6 12.♗e3 ♗e6 13.♗f4 ♗d6 14.♗f5! Now White's breakthrough becomes plausible. By making use of zugzwang White gets in e4-e5, resulting in the disappearance of the f6-pawn and making possible the entry of the white rook to f7. 14...♗e7 15.e5 fxe5 16.♗xe5 ♗d7 17.♖f5

Now it can clearly be seen that 7.♖h5 contained all the elements of the manoeuvre we designated as "restricted advance in a file", because ♖h5-f5-f7 must after all be seen as the transfer of the rook into a new file which is part of the said manoeuvre, despite the interval in time between the two parts in this case.

Black resigned, since ♖f7 then ♖xg7 would create two linked passed pawns.

Schematic illustration of the open file



Part I – Chapter 3

The 7th and 8th ranks

1. Introduction and general comments

Endgame or middlegame • The choice of a point of attack • “No swimming”

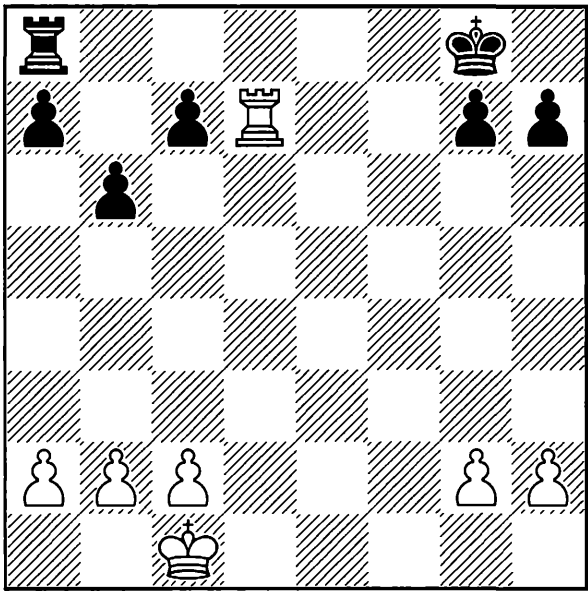
As we saw in chapter 2, penetration into enemy territory, in other words the 7th and 8th ranks, was the logical result of play down a file. I tried to portray this penetration by using some particularly striking cases (because of their catastrophic nature), but here on the other hand I must specifically emphasise that in the normal run of things (catastrophes always come about because of blunders by one player and are thus not the normal course of events) the 7th rank is not occupied till late on in the game, as we enter the endgame. This means that we tend to see the 7th and 8th ranks as *endgame advantages*, despite countless games which have been decided by operations along these ranks in the very middlegame. You should try to get on to your opponent’s back rank as soon as you possibly can, and if at first you should make the unpleasant discovery that your rook can find nothing to do there or is even lost, you should in no way be discouraged by this.

In our system, you should learn about the strategic elements of the endgame as soon as possible; for that reason, we shall insert after those on “the 7th and 8th ranks”, “the passed pawn” and “the technique of exchanges”, a chapter which actually belongs to “positional play” but which has to be treated earlier for pedagogic reasons. And after that, the 7th and 8th ranks will not simply be a mating instrument, but much more a well honed endgame weapon in the hands of the student. As has already been said, they are essentially both, but the endgame side does tend to be dominant.

It is extremely important to become used to conducting operations on the 7th rank in such a way that one has a specific object of attack in view from the very start. It is characteristic of the less well informed amateur that he chooses the opposite way of acting, he “flounders about”, i.e. he first looks to the right, then to the left. No, the rule is to choose an object of attack. Such an object can, as we have seen, be a pawn or a square. It doesn’t matter which, but just swimming about aimlessly would be a strategic disgrace.

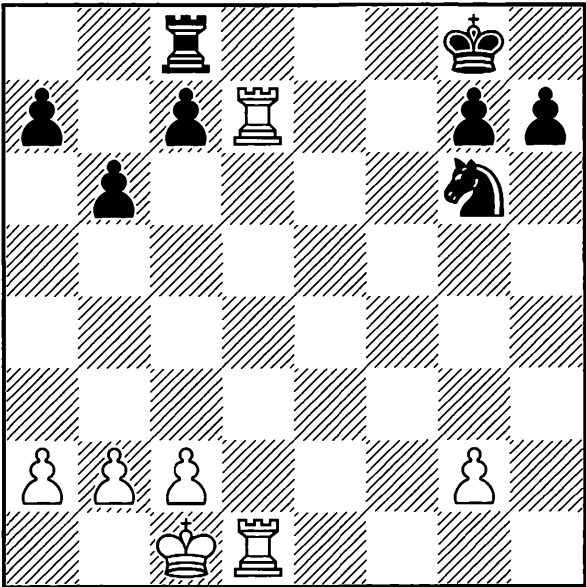
2. Convergent and revolutionary attacks on the 7th rank • Seizing a square (or pawn) with an *acoustic echo* (a simultaneous check)

67



White chooses c7 as the focus for his attack. After 1...♖c8 attack and defence balance out. With the same sort of procedure as we used on a file, we now seek to upset the said balance in favour of the attacking side. So if there were a ♙f2 for White and a black ♜g6, we would play ♙g3. With a bishop on f1 instead of f2, then ♙a6 is the correct idea – eliminating the defender.

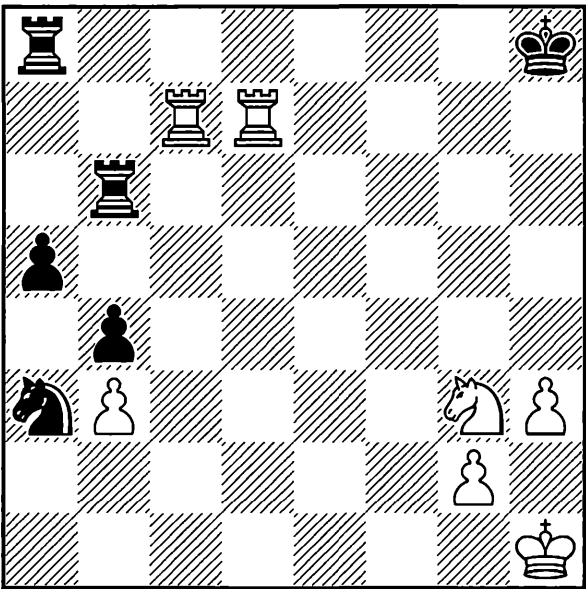
68



Or here, if our chosen point of attack is c7, then a logical continuation would be ♖d1-d4-c4, or the exchange of rooks 1. ♖d8† ♜xd8 2. ♜xd8† ♜f8, then the return to the 7th rank via c8 thus: 3. ♜c8 c5 4. ♜c7.

Returning to diagram 67, the king manoeuvre to c6 would be the route to follow, since c7 is the goal we have chosen.

69



Things are similar here. White chooses h7 as the point to attack, because that square would allow the possibility of a deadly flanking manoeuvre. 1... ♜h6 2. ♜f5 ♜h5 3. g4 ♜xh3† 4. ♜g2 ♜xb3 5. ♜h7†. Our goal has been achieved: the defender (the black rook) had to flee, White seizes h7 and delivers mate. 5... ♜g8 6. ♜cg7† ♜f8 7. ♜h8 mate.

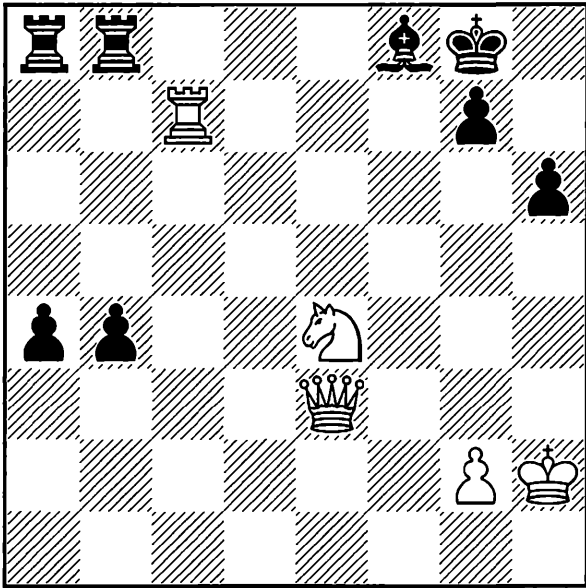
This should shed sufficient light on the convergent attack against a specific object of attack on the 7th rank.

Before we turn to the “revolutionary” type of attack, let us emphasise the important rule: **if the object of attack flees, the rook must attack it from behind!**

For example, a rook on the 7th rank is attacking the b7-pawn; if now b7-b5 then the move is ♜b7, not a sideways attack from the 5th rank. This rule can be explained as follows:

1. The 7th rank must be occupied for as long as possible, since new targets could appear on it.
2. The flanking manoeuvre (this is what ♜b7 was) is the strongest form of attack (these are in rising order of importance 1. frontal, 2. from the side, 3. flanking), which
3. frequently seeks to compel one’s opponent into cramped attempts at defence (an attack from the side would allow the easier defence of ... ♜b8).

70

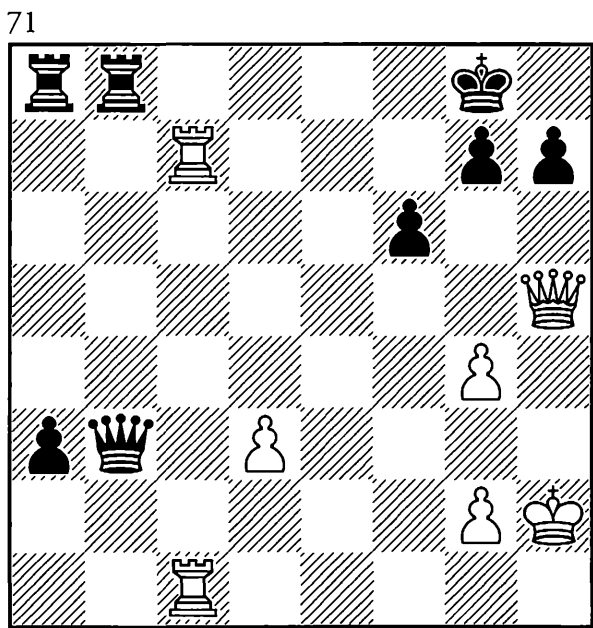


Let us choose g7. We are not anxious that it is well protected. We shall concentrate on it by 1. ♜g3 a3 (the passed pawns are very threatening) 2. ♜f5 a2 3. ♜e5 (and now mate is threatened by ♜xg7†) 3... a1=♜; now g7 is protected and White loses.

So g7 was a bad choice for an object of attack. The correct target is the h7-square, and it is seized by “revolutionary” tactics. **1.♘f6† gxf6 2.♙e6† ♔h8 3.♙d7**. Or **1.♘f6† ♔h8** (Black is stubborn) **2.♙xh6†** (White is even more stubborn) **2...gxh6 3.♙h7 mate** on the chosen square.

This example demonstrates the use of the “revolutionary” attack on the 7th rank: one pawn is forced out of the way in order to extend the pressure along the 7th rank on the neighbouring square. This “neighbouring square” is what we had considered the target for our attack.

There is another example in the following position.

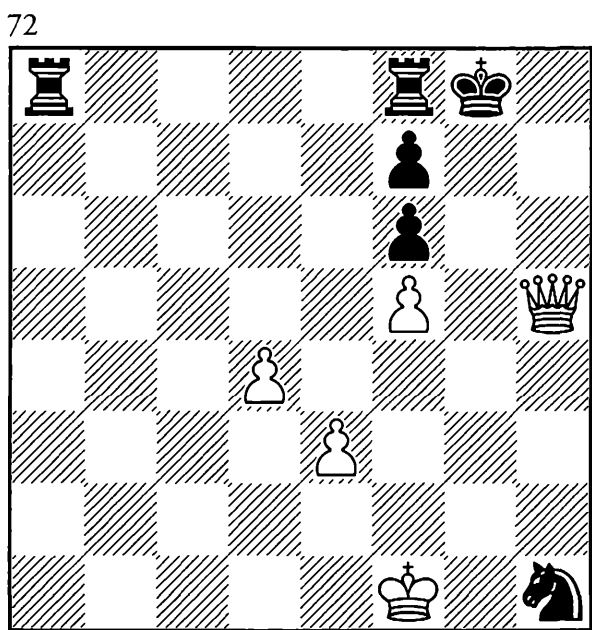


Here it would be hard to attack g7 (in fact it would be easier without White’s g4-pawn: **1.♙g4 g6 2.♙h4 h5 3.♙xf6**), for example **1.♙d7** (threatening **♙cc7**) **1...♙c8²** or **1.♙1c4** (threatening **♙f7†**) **1...♙f8**. The correct way is **1.♙xg7†** (h7 is the object of attack) **1...♔xg7 2.♙c7† ♔h8 3.♙xh7 mate**.

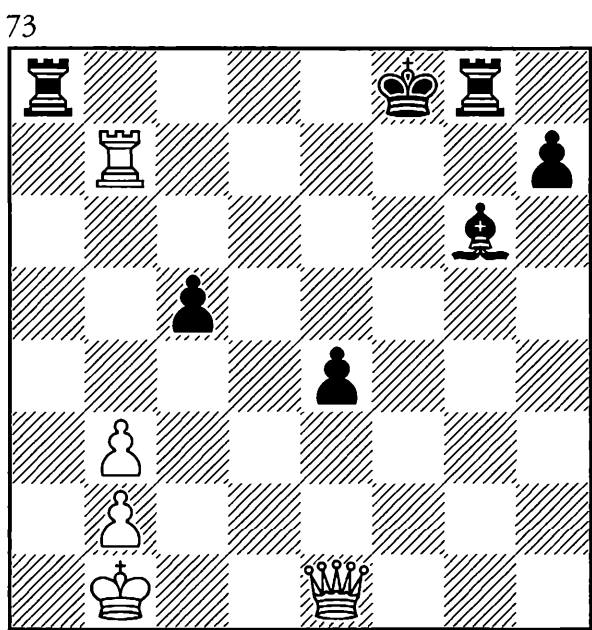
Capturing on g7 “extended” the effect on the 7th rank. After **2...♔f8** the win could also be achieved by **3.♙xh7**, because then Black would be quite unable to defend the 7th rank; but it would be more precise to advance the queen with a gain of tempo, so **3.♙h6† ♔e8 4.♙e3† ♔f8 5.♙e7†** (occupying the 7th rank with an “acoustic echo”) **5...♔g8 6.♙g7 mate**.

The last manoeuvre is in need of some

explanation: it is a typical way of preventing the opponent from bringing up his reserves.



White wants to capture the knight with check; he does so by **1.♙g4† ♔h7 2.♙h3† ♔g7 3.♙g2† ♔h6** and then **4.♙xh1†**. So, drive the king to whichever side you wish without losing contact with the piece (or square) you wish to seize.



Now consider this position. Here, the point to be seized is e7. **1.♙h4** or **1.♙f2† ♔e8 2.♙xc5** would fail miserably to **...e3†** and then mate by **...♙a1**. The correct way is **1.♙f1† ♔e8 2.♙b5† ♔f8 3.♙xc5† ♔e8 4.♙e7 mate**. The task could be stated as follows: White has to take c5 with check. After **1.♙f1† ♔e8 2.♙b5†** White is in contact with c5 and is still driving the enemy king.

After 1.♖f1† ♔e8 2.♖b5† ♔f8 3.♖xc5† both the contact to e7 and the driving of the king (it is forced on to e8) are still there.

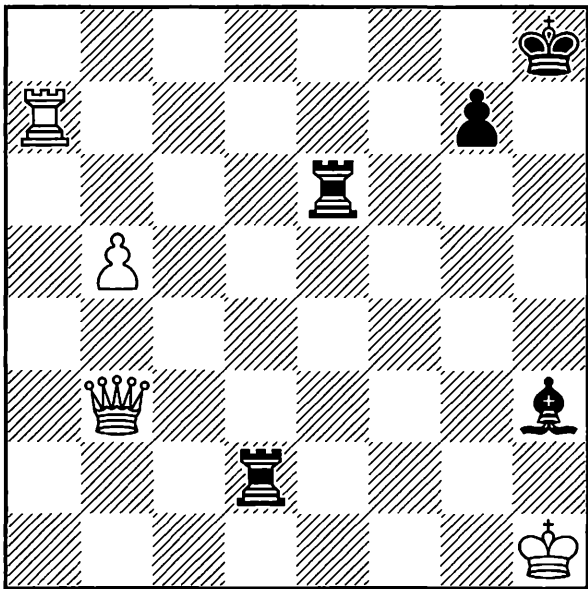
3. The five special cases on the 7th rank

- 1. The 7th rank “absolute” and passed pawns
- 2. Double rooks ensure perpetual check
- 3. The drawing mechanism of ♖ + ♘
- 4. Marauding on the 7th rank
- 5. Combining play on the 7th and 8th ranks (flanking from the corner)

By the “absolute” 7th rank we mean the occupation of the 7th rank which shuts in the king. Example: White ♖a7; Black ♔f8, ♘f6. Whereas, if the pawn were placed on f7, then the effect would not be “absolute”.

1st Special Case: The 7th rank absolute and a far advanced pawn almost always win.
Example: White ♔h1, ♖e7, ♘b6; Black ♔h8, ♖d8. White plays 1.b7, and ♖e7-c7-c8 cannot be prevented. If the black king were on g6, then the game would be drawn.

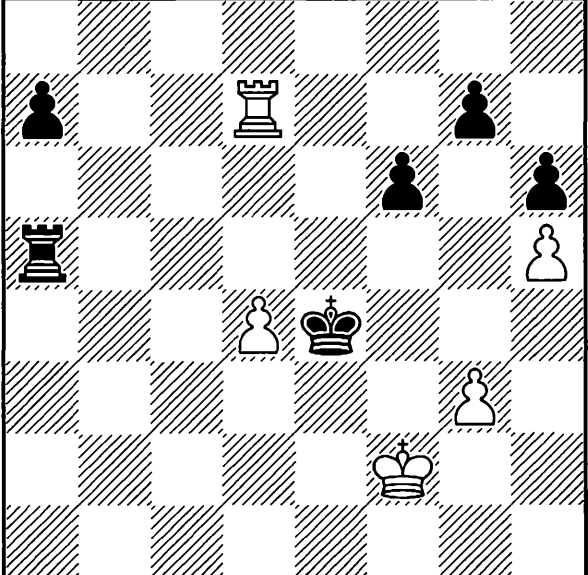
74



1.♖xh3† ♖h6 2.♖xh6† gxf6 3.b6 is decisive, because now the 7th rank is absolute. If that were not the case (i.e. if the pawn was still on g7) the game could be drawn by ♔h7.

The following position is from **Tarrasch – Lasker**, Berlin 1918.

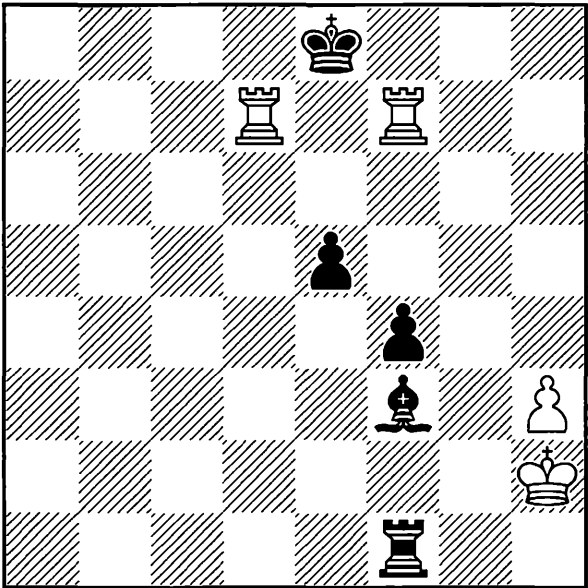
75



Lasker, in an annotation, demonstrates how to win after 1...♖a2† 2.♔g1?, namely by 2...a5 3.♖xg7 a4 4.♖g6 a3 5.♖xf6 ♖b2. If the g-pawn were still on g2, then there would still be a chance of a draw after ♔h2; but the 7th rank is absolute and Black wins. But after 1...♖a2† White’s attempt to neutralise the absolute 7th rank by 2.♔e1! would be interesting. Lasker gives: 1...♖a2† 2.♔e1! a5 3.♔d1 a4 4.♔c1 a3 5.♔b1 with a draw.

2nd Special Case: Draw by perpetual check. It is interesting because of a common psychological error.

76

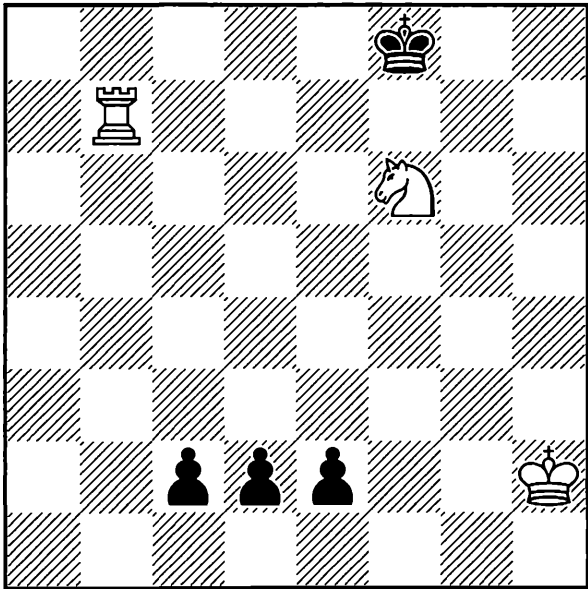


White (a less experienced player) recognises the desperate position of his king and takes a draw with 1.♖fe7†, having noticed that 1.♖de7† would

have allowed the king to gradually escape to a safe square (1.♖de7† ♔d8 2.♖d7† ♔c8 3.♖c7† ♔b8 and White has no more checks). After 1.♖fe7† ♔f8 2.♖f7† ♔g8 3.♖g7† ♔h8 4.♖h7† (4.♖g1?? ♖f2†) ♔g8 5.♖hg7† ♔h8 6.♖h7† ♔g8 he looks up at his opponent, as much as to say “Do you think you can really get out of this?”, gives a few more checks, then finally “for a change” gives a check with his other rook 7.♖dg7†?... and loses, because the king gets away to b8. The moral of the story is: 1. A change is not always as good as a rest; 2. The ♖d7 was a good sentry and should not have been disturbed unnecessarily.

3rd Special Case: The drawing mechanism with ♖ + ♘ (perpetual check).

77



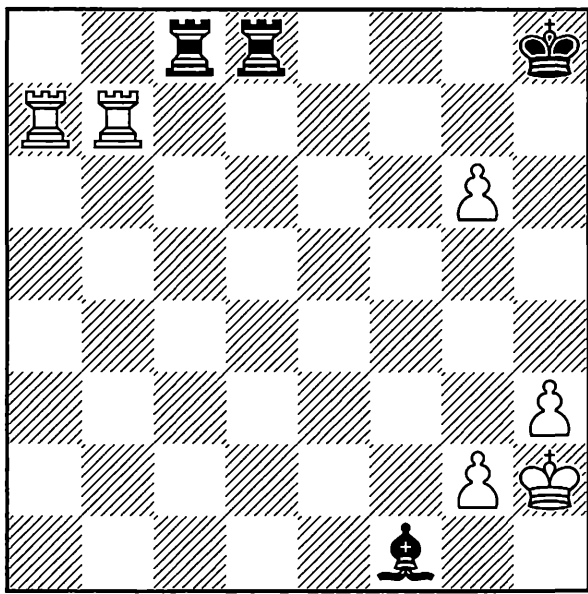
Black has 3 budding queens, so White tries to find a perpetual check. Since 1.♘h7† ♔e8 2.♘f6† fails to 2...♔d8, he must play 1.♖d7 and after 1...e1=♚ the drawing mechanism works faultlessly with 2.♘h7† ♔g8 3.♘f6† and then 3...♔h8 would be suicide. Pay attention to the key move, ♖d7, which brings rook and knight into strategic contact.

Let us add a black ♖c8 to the position. Now 1.♖d7 would not be good enough because of 1...♖c6; but then again, it would no longer be necessary since the ♖c8 prevents its own king from escaping and makes a sentry on d7 superfluous. So, 1.♘h7† ♔e8 2.♘f6† ♔d8?? 3.♖d7 **mate**. How gifted a king to commit

suicide in the centre of the board, whereas a less gifted one would have preferred to head for the corner!

4th Special Case: This is quite a simple one, but has to be known because of the complicated nature of the 5th case. It consists of driving the king out of the corner, after which some marauding takes place.

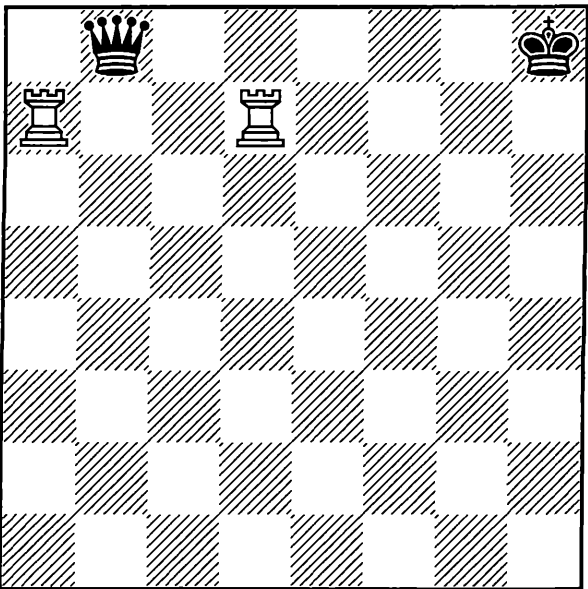
78



1.♖h7† ♔g8 2.♖ag7† ♔f8 3.♖f7† and wins the bishop. A necessary pre-condition was that the ♖h7 was protected, since otherwise 3...♔g8 would save the ♖f1. What you must note about this 4th case is that the united rooks are able to drive the king out of the corner on to the 3rd file (f or c). This ability forms the basis for the 5th case.

5th Special Case:

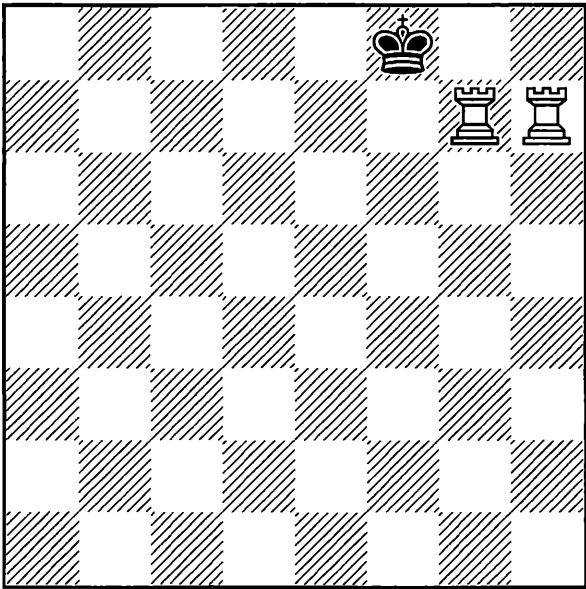
79



White, who would like to occupy the 8th rank, tries to do so in a crafty way (since the straight and narrow path seems out of the question because of the protection by the queen); he occupies the corner, drives the opposing king out of it and thus creates space for the rook’s flanking manoeuvre. So, **1.♖h7† ♕g8 2.♖ag7† ♕f8** and now **3.♖h8†** wins the queen.

The position which arises after the rook checks on h7 and g7 constitutes for us a typical starting position for all flanking manoeuvres from the 7th to the 8th rank.

80



The analysis of this starting position shows us two rooks ready to conduct a flanking manoeuvre, but also a quick-witted king: the latter’s contact with g7 saves it from the worst (mate on f8). As long as this contact exists, mate cannot be administered. In this case, the king is like someone taking a walk who is suddenly threatened by a mugger; the thief raises his hand with the weapon in it, but the walker grabs it and does not let go, because he knows that as long as he hangs on, the thief cannot stab him. So the rule is:

1. The king which is being “flanked”, should for as long as possible maintain the contact with the nearer of the rooks; the rooks which are attempting the flanking manoeuvre seek to break this contact, without altering the position of the rooks, and when

2. the victim heads for the corner, the aggressor can and must strive to drive it away from that corner.

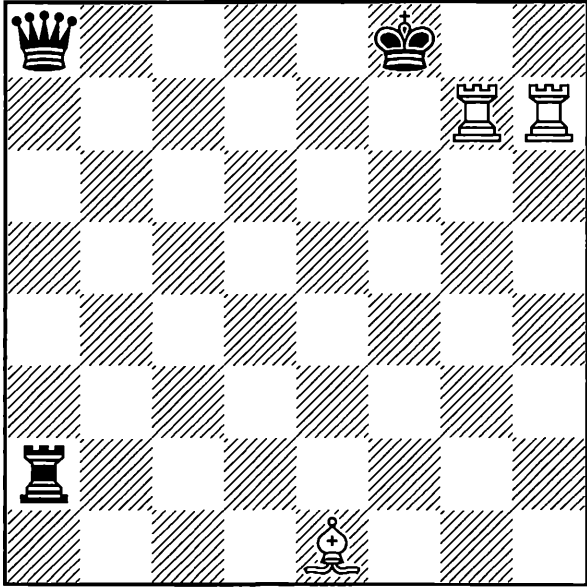
From the starting position, White can try three manoeuvres:

- a) the immediate gain of material
- b) a mating combination by breaking the “contact” between the rook and the king
- c) a tempo-winning combination.

a) We have already looked at, and should the opponent’s queen be somewhere on the 8th rank, then from our starting position it follows that we shall play **♖h8†**, winning the queen at the cost of our own g7-rook.

b) This contact must be broken, either by protecting the g7-rook (with a pawn or a piece), or by moving the king from f8 by other checks which leave our rook on g7.

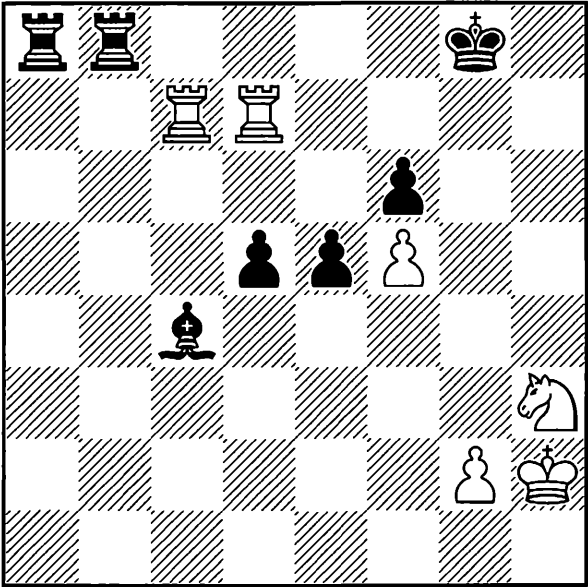
81



After **1.♗b4† ♕e8** the rooks have their hands free to deliver the fatal blow **2.♖h8 mate**.

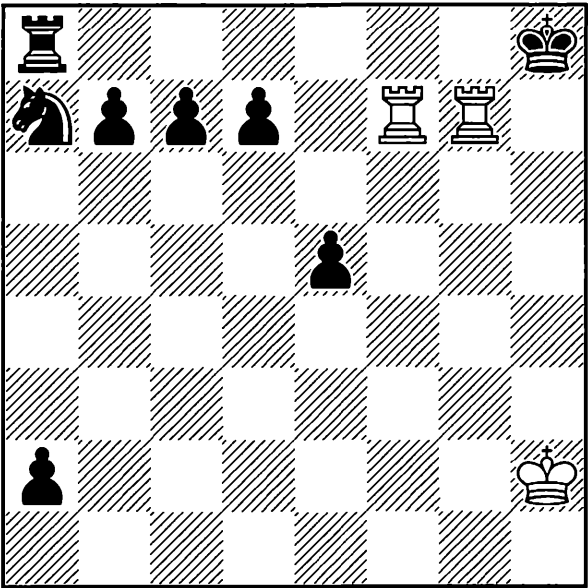
Instead of a bishop on e1, we could also imagine a white pawn on e6, when the line would be **1.e7† ♕e8 2.♖h8†** (the flanking manoeuvre we have just made possible), but the black king can now escape the mate: **2...♕d7** But this is unimportant, since any relief we have allowed him is, as it were, a poisoned chalice: **3.e8=♔††** and mate soon follows.

82



First White creates the typical starting position we saw in diagram 80: **1.♖g7†** (the move **1.♔f2** threatening **♔g4** would be weaker on account of **1...♕e2 2.♖xd5 ♖a4** intending **...♖f4**) **1...♔f8 2.♖h7** (threatens mate) **2...♔g8 3.♖cg7† ♔f8** and now **4.♔g5! d4!** (**4...fxg5 5.f6** leads to mate on h8) **5.♔e6† ♕xe6** (forced) **6.fxe6** then the king will be driven away from the **♖g7**: it is out in the open and on its way to dusty death on d7 after **7.e7† ♔e8 8.♖h8† ♔d7 9.e8=♖††** etc. This contact breaking check could only be defended against by **6...♖e8**, but at the cost of a rook after **7.e7† ♖xe7 8.♖xe7** and White easily wins, even if Black still has 1-2 more passed pawns, because then, as we previously emphasised, the rook could exercise the capacity of all rooks of attacking the fleeing pawns from the rear, from the 7th rank.

83



c) The starting position could be reached after **1.♖h7† ♔g8 2.♖fg7† ♔f8**, but what then? Neither method a) **3.♖h8†** nor method b) seems to work; of course, if only the white king were on g5, then there would be **♔h6**, etc.; but as things lie, it seems White will have to be content with perpetual check. But appearances are deceptive: first comes **3.♖xd7** threatening mate on h8. And so **3...♔g8**. Now White repeats the little manoeuvre: **4.♖dg7† ♔f8 5.♖xc7** and Black is again forced into **5...♔g8**, since he has no time to play his dream move **a1=♖**. (If your opponent has no time to do something to his own advantage because he finds himself obliged to play, instead of what he wants, some positionally irrelevant move while you are advancing, then obviously you have won a tempo.) Then comes **6.♖cg7†**. Before satisfying his hunger on the b7-pawn which is now in danger, White gives an appetising check! No, he is creating a longer term threat – that is his intention.

Whatever may be the case, this game is beautiful, as beautiful as the legend of Sviatogor! This Russian hero (a symbol for fertile farming land) once had to battle against an evil spirit – in the form of a dragon, I think. He won this struggle letting himself fall down in contact with the earth at critical moments. This contact with the miracle-bringing Mother Earth always gave him the strength to hang on, until his opponent was exhausted... Getting back in touch with the starting position, which White kept on doing, was just as miraculous.

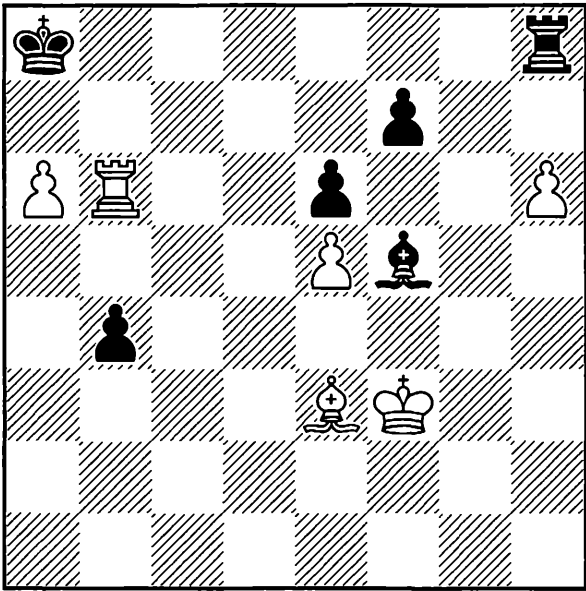
It finishes in a similar fashion: **6...♔f8 7.♖xb7 ♔g8 8.♖bg7†** (**8.♖xa7** would be a blunder on account of **a1=♖**) **8...♔f8 9.♖xa7 ♖xa7 10.♖xa7** and wins the a2-pawn and the game. To sum up, c) consists of White refreshing his attack by going back to the starting position. Or, to put it more simply, returning to the starting position creates a mating threat which in turn gives him a tempo to grab a piece: winning a tempo.

This should throw sufficient light on all three forms of the 5th Special Case. It has been clear that White has kept returning to the starting position.

This will be the start of our “novel”: the first meeting between boy and girl in a romance. From now on, when attacking you must choose between the different sorts of attack – a), b) or c) – and we can confidently entrust to you the further development of the chess romance of which we spoke. All the more so, since we have revealed the most difficult secret of all, namely the art of when to break off contact between f8 and g7.

To finish, two games and a little schema to illustrate the material.

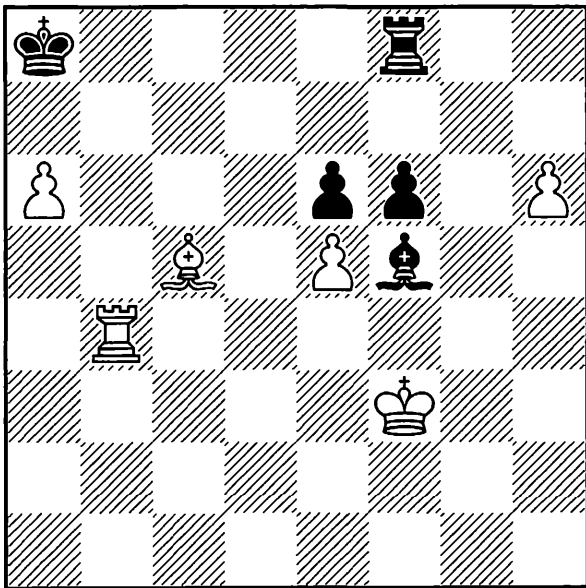
84



This diagram portrays the position from the tournament game **Nimzowitsch – Dr Bernstein**, which I played in Vilnius in 1912. The position arose after White’s 50th move and my opponent here played 50...♖f8 intending, after f7-f6, to reduce the material to such an extent that a win is no longer possible. But I calmly replied 51.♖xb4 f6 because, out of the ingredients at my disposal, I was able to construct an example of what I already knew to be my first special case for the 7th rank (passed pawn and 7th rank absolute). It was just like a sausage manufacturer making a good sausage from the individual elements, with the single difference that my ingredients were clear and chemically pure, whereas those of the sausage manufacturer appear to be of somewhat uncertain origin.

The continuation was 52.♔c5!.

85

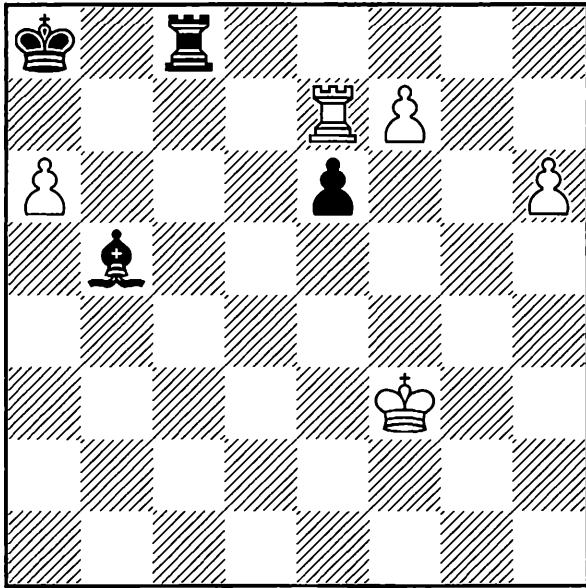


52...♖c8 (forced, since 52...♖f7 fails to 53.♖b7! ♖xb7 54.axb7† ♔xb7 55.exf6 and the ♔f5 turns out to have too much on its hands) 53.exf6 ♖xc5 54.f7 (the passed pawn!) 54...♖c8 55.♖b7! (the 7th rank absolute! My opponent’s apparent superior piece numbers are illusory).

“A splendid conception,” was the comment of Dr Lasker in *Schachwart* in 1913. But, my dear readers, this concept is obvious for me and for anyone who knows my system! I would like to point out what great practical chances are provided by the knowledge of my system: ideas come to you with much less effort, just as a journey seems easier when you know the way; landmarks can be seen on all sides, here an outpost, there the 7th rank absolute and over there a protected passed pawn wishes us “bon voyage” ...

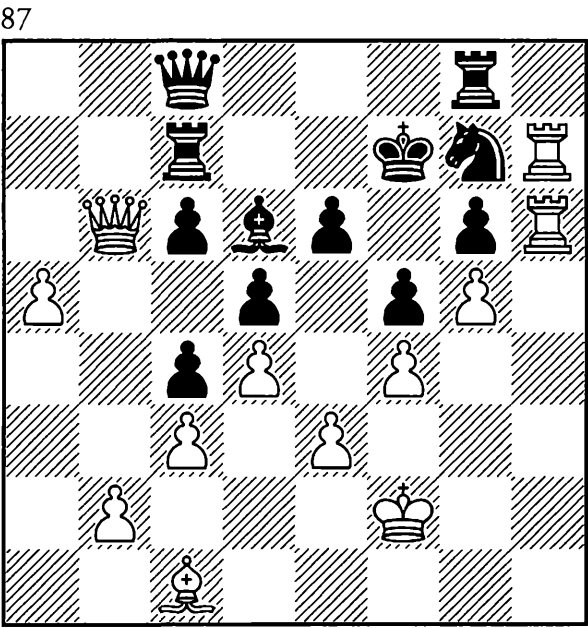
Next came 55...♔d3 56.♖e7 (of course) 56...♔b5.

86



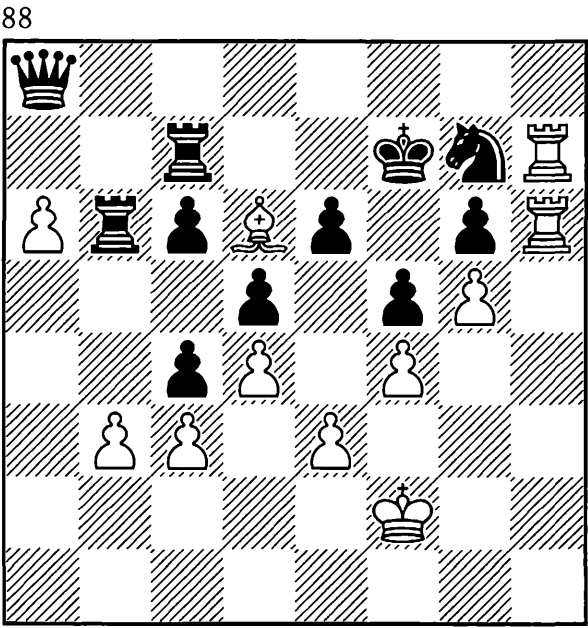
57.♔f4 White avoids 57.♖e8 ♕xe8 58.f8=♚ although he could have the pleasure of getting a new queen, for after 58...♙c6† then ♖xf8 both the queen and the pleasure would have disappeared! 57...♖h8 58.h7 ♕a4 59.♔e5 ♕b5 60.♔f6 e5 61.♔g7 1–0

The following position is from the game **Nimzowitsch** (without ♖b1) – **Dr Eliasstamm**, Riga 1910.



1.a6 ♚a8 (threatening ...♖a7 and then ...♖xa6) In this difficult situation, White saved the day by the “following subtle trap” as it was described in the *Dünazetung* or by a combination based on deep knowledge of the position (7th rank),

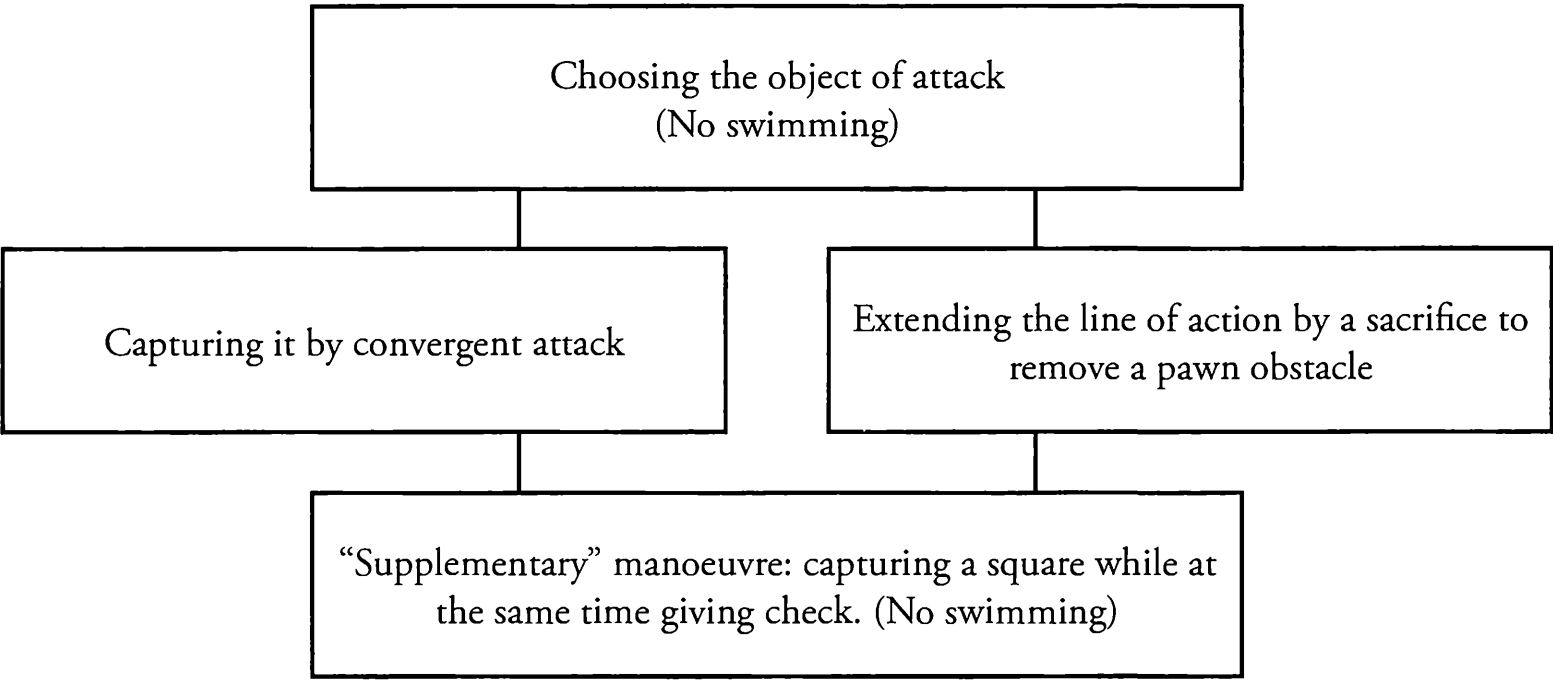
as we should prefer to call it. Next came 2.b3 ♖b8 (better was 2...♖a7) and then came the queen sacrifice 3.♕a3!! ♖xb6 4.♕xd6



4...♖c8 5.♖xg7† ♔xg7 6.♕e5† the king moves and the rook delivers perpetual check from g8 and h8.

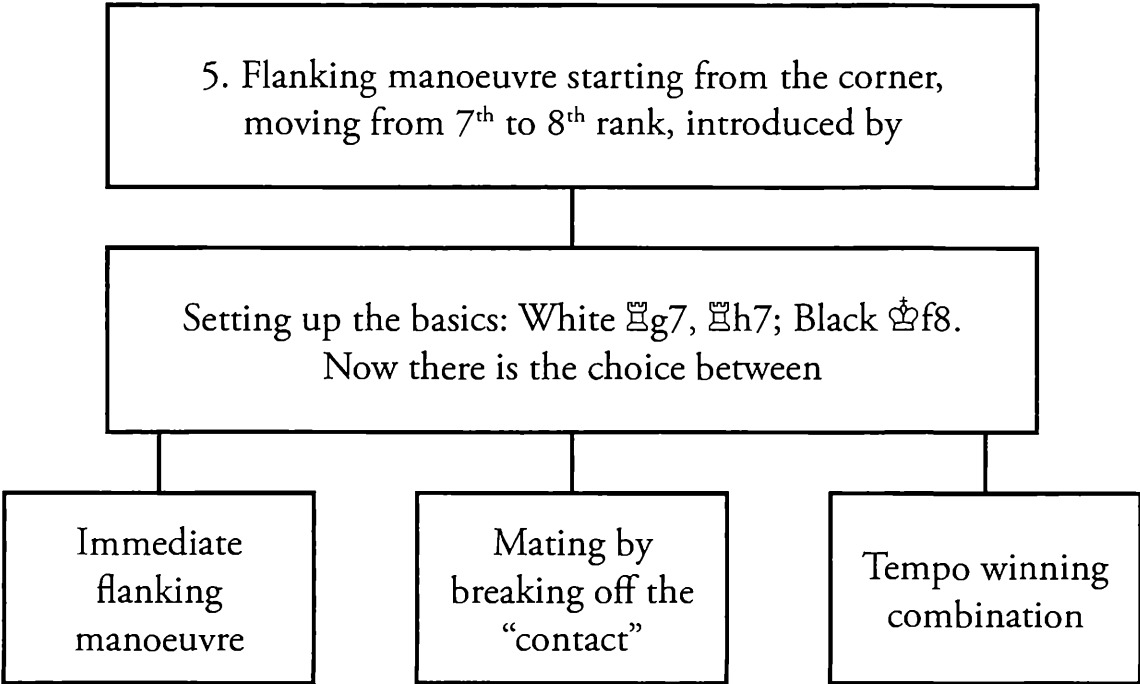
It is worth pointing out that after the queen sacrifice White always has a draw, e.g. 4...♚xa6 5.♕e5 ♔e8 6.♖h8† ♔d7 7.♖6h7 ♚a2† (to open up the a6-square) 8.♔g3 c5 9.♖xg7† ♔c6 10.♖xc7† ♔b5 11.♖xc5† ♔a6 12.♖a8† winning the queen, or 4...♚g8 5.♕xc7 ♖xa6 6.bxc4 then ♕e5 or 4...♚g8 5.♕xc7 cxb3 6.♕xb6 b2 7.♖xg7† ♚(or ♔)xg7 8.♖h1 and White has significantly better chances because of the strong a-pawn³.

Schematic illustration for the 7th and 8th ranks



Schematic illustration for the 5 special cases

- 1. 7th rank absolute and passed pawn
- 2. Double rooks ensure perpetual check
(proper use of the sentry)
- 3. The drawing mechanism of ♖ + ♜
- 4. Complicated driving and marauding



Illustrative games for the first three chapters

On one hand, it is difficult to make a choice, because the number of well-played games is so high and yet at the same time it is easy to do so, because when you get right down to it all games are somehow characteristic of the system since play down open files or along the 7th rank happens in almost every game.

Considering a game from the point of view of our rules is something nobody can stop us doing and at the same time something which we can always trot out for the greater good of our readers. So let's not get hung up about which games to choose, let's just get on with it.

Game 1

An illustration of the consequences of pawn grabbing in the opening.

Nimzowitsch – Alapin

Vilnius 1912

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.exd5 ♘xd5

Surrendering the centre.

5.♘f3 c5

To *execute* the pawn (see the section on surrendering the centre in chapter 1, page 26). *Restraint* would have been achieved by something along the lines of ♖e7, 0–0, b6 and ♖b7.

6.♘xd5 ♗xd5 7.♖e3

In order to combine in one single move development and attack (threatening dxc5, winning a pawn), White exchanged on d5, see section 4, chapter 1, page 20.

7...cxd4

The loss of this tempo consuming piece is a loss of time.

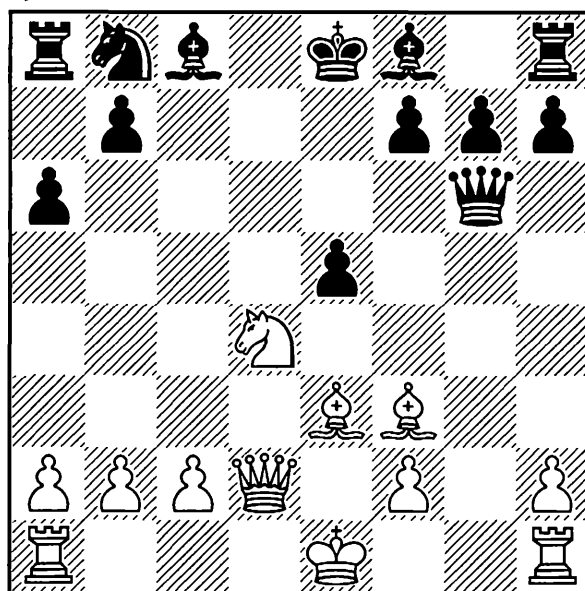
8.♘xd4 a6 9.♖e2 ♗xg2

Grabbing a pawn. The consequences are all too distressing...

10.♖f3 ♗g6 11.♗d2 e5

The crisis. Black wants to get rid of the unpleasant ♘d4, in order to somehow catch up on his development by ♘c6.

89



12.0–0–0! exd4 13.♖xd4

White's lead in development is now a very large one.

13...♘c6 14.♖f6

An express train of a move! Any other bishop move would be met with a developing move by my opponent. Now there is no time for development: Black must take the piece.

14...♗xf6 15.♖he1†

With simultaneous play down the e-file and the d-file. The danger of White breaking through is extreme.

15...♖e7

Or 15...♖e6 16.♗d7 mate.

16.♖xc6† ♘f8

Or 16...bxc6 17.♗d8 mate.

17.♗d8† ♖xd8 18.♖e8 mate.

Game 2

Teichmann – Nimzowitsch

Karlsbad 1911

White gets a free and mobile central pawn on e4; Black restrains it with the help of the resources available on the e-file (the outpost ♘e5), and then correctly manages to execute the "criminal" (Chapter 1, 6a, page 27). But then he collapses.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♘bd7

Makes development difficult but does hang on to the centre. However, describing the move as “ugly” would be in bad taste.

5.♙c4 ♘e7 6.0–0 0–0 7.♚e2 c6

And Black establishes for himself a sort of central pawn majority, though for the moment White is still in the driving seat.

8.a4

The closed nature of the position means that pawn moves in the opening are okay.

8...♚c7 9.♙b3 a6

Thinking of a possible future advance of the c-pawn.

10.h3 exd4

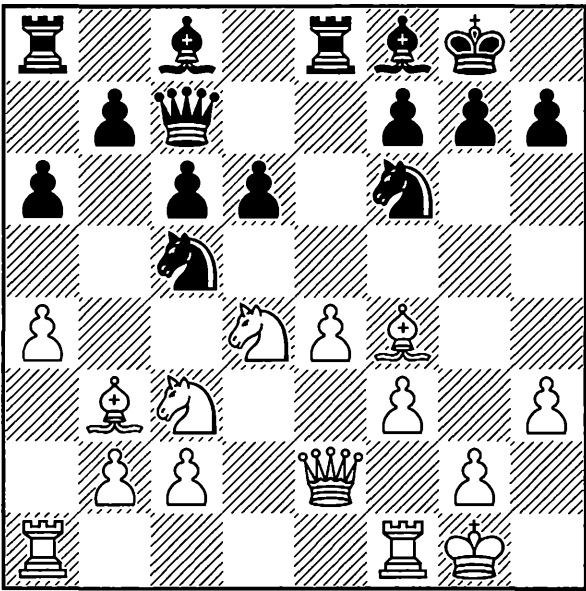
Surrendering the centre here should not be thought inconsistent: was I unlucky that the centre did not last for long? You can’t always be lucky.

11.♘xd4 ♞e8

Restraint against e4 (cf. diagram 30, page 27).

12.♙f4 ♙f8 13.f3 ♘c5

90



The attentive student will have been expecting the occupation of Black’s outpost by ♘e5 at this point; but Black wants to exchange first to get some breathing space. This is a good ploy in such restricted positions.

14.♙a2 ♘e6! 15.♙xe6 ♙xe6 16.♚d2 ♞ad8 17.♞fe1 ♙c8 18.♞ad1 ♘d7!

Now that his development has been completed harmoniously (though harmony was hard to achieve because of the lack of space) Black occupies the outpost.

19.♘f5 ♘e5

Controls the square and has a large attacking radius. Any attempt to drive it off by f3-f4 would weaken the e4-pawn.

20.♘d4 f6

Look how the e4-pawn is restricted more and more.

21.♔h1 ♚f7 22.♚f2 ♚g6 23.b3 ♘f7

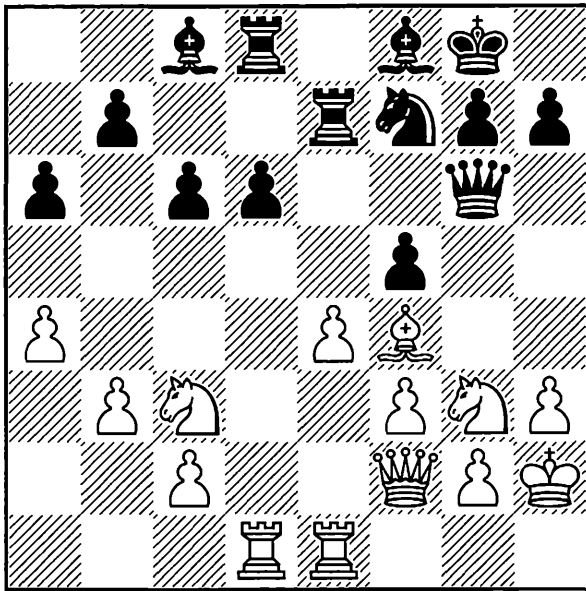
Now f6-f5 is being prepared. You might well ask what the ♘e5 has achieved. Plenty, because it stopped White taking any action.

24.♔h2 ♞e7 25.♘de2 f5!

“The execution of the crippled pawn.”

26.♘g3

91



26...fxe4?

Premature. The correct idea was to first play 26...♞de8; e.g. 26...♞de8 27.exf5 ♙xf5 28.♘xf5 ♚xf5 29.♙g3 ♞xe1 30.♞xe1 ♞xe1 31.♚xe1 ♚xc2.

27.♘cxe4

After 27.fxe4, the isolated e-pawn would not be good.

27...d5 28.♘c5 ♞de8 29.♘d3 ♞xe1

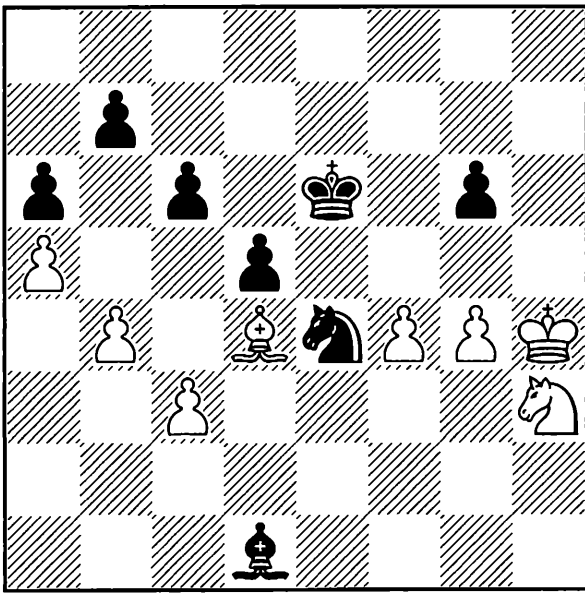
Black has now achieved equality. 29...♘d6 would surrender the e5-square (30.♙e5).

30.♞xe1 ♞xe1 31.♚xe1 ♚e6 32.♚xe6 ♙xe6 33.♙e3

This good move restricts Black’s queenside pawn majority. Black should now have been happy with the draw; but he wanted more and lost as follows: 33...♙d6 34.f4 ♔f8 35.♔g1 g6

36.♔f2 h5 37.♞c5 ♙c8 38.a5 ♞h6 39.b4
 ♔f7 40.c3 ♞g8 (40...♞f5 would have drawn)
 41.♔f3 ♞f6 42.♙d4 ♙xc5 43.♙xc5 ♙e6
 44.♙d4 ♞e4 45.♞e2! (Not 45.♞xe4 dxe4†
 46.♔xe4 on account of 46...♙d5† then ♙xg2)
 45...♙f5 (It's all over now; Black is simply a pawn
 down as his majority is crippled, while White's
 is mobile) 46.g4 hxg4† 47.hxg4 ♞d2† (It was
 much better keeping the bishop at home, thus
 47...♙d7) 48.♔g3 ♙c2 49.♞g1 ♔e6 50.♔h4
 ♙d1 51.♞h3 ♞e4

92



52.f5† (artistically making the most of his
 majority!) 52...gxf5 (52...♔f7 would have been
 met by the unpleasant 53.fxg6† ♔xg6 54.♞f4†)
 53.♞f4† ♔f7 54.g5 ♙g4 55.g6† ♔e7 56.g7
 ♔f7 57.♞g6 1–0

Game 3

Van Vliet – Znosko-Borovsky

Ostend 1907

An excellent example of play on an open file.
 Znosko gets a superior position from the start
 and presses straight into the enemy base without
 previously setting up an outpost.

1.d4 d5 2.e3 c5 3.c3 e6 4.♙d3 ♞c6 5.f4

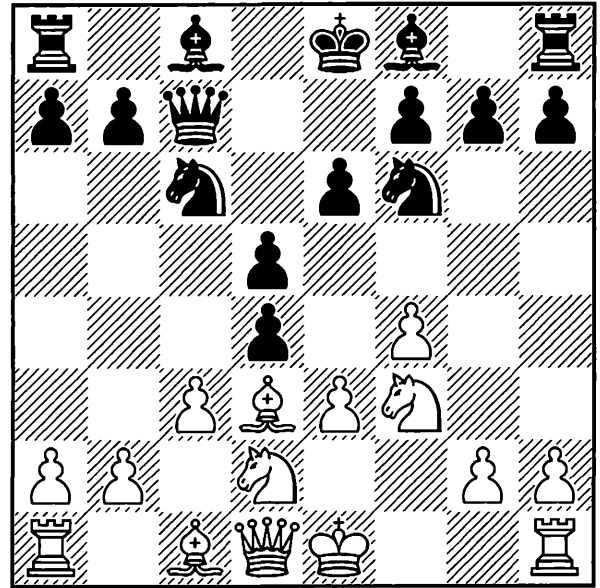
A reversed Stonewall, a very closed opening.

5...♞f6 6.♞d2 ♔c7 7.♞gf3

Overlooks the threat involved in 6...♔c7. Here
 7.♞h3 and then ♔f3 was the best set-up.

7...cxd4!

93

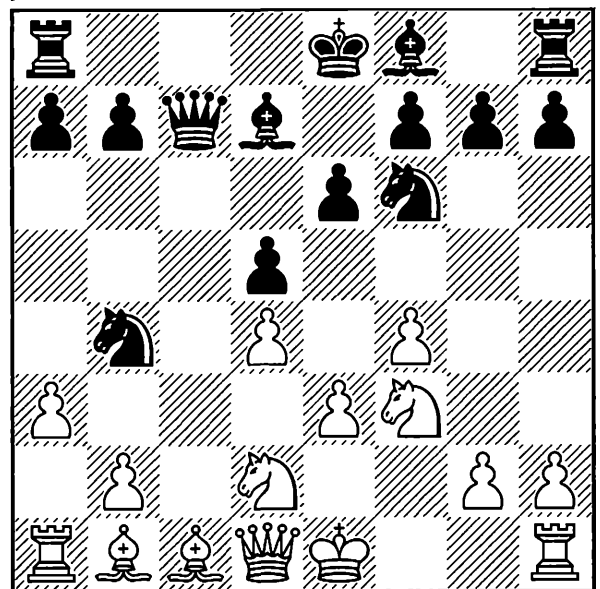


8.cxd4?

The correct positional move was 8.exd4
 (White has the e-file with the outpost e5,
 whereas the ♞c3 shuts off the opposing c-file,
 see section 4 of chapter 2, page 34), but here the
 said move would cost a pawn after 8.exd4 ♔xf4.
 In spite of this, it was preferable to the text move;
 consider 8.exd4 ♔xf4 9.♞c4! ♔c7 (9...♔g4
 10.♞e3!) 10.♞ce5 ♙d6 11.♔e2 and White has a
 quite well protected outpost on the e-file, which
 Black cannot shake with 11...♙xe5 12.dxe5 ♞d7
 13.♙f4 f6? because 14.exf6! ♔xf4 15.fxg7 ♔g8
 16.♔xe6† would be winning for White. But
 as long as the e-file with its outpost ♞e5 or a
 replacement for it in ♞e5 (after d4xe5) remains
 in White's possession, White would have an
 excellent position despite being a pawn down.

8...♞b4 9.♙b1 ♙d7 10.a3

94



10...♖c8!

This fine rook move finally justifies the knight manoeuvre which otherwise appears to be that of a beginner.

11.0–0 ♖b5! 12.♖e1 ♘c2 13.♙xc2 ♜xc2 14.♜xc2 ♖xc2

The 7th rank, backed up by the b5-f1 diagonal for the bishop and the e4-square for the knight.

15.h3 ♙d6 16.♘b1 ♘e4

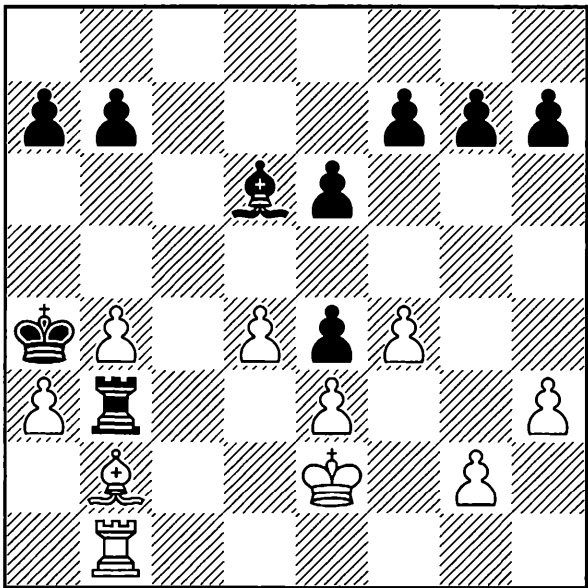
Not an outpost as we define it (it is missing the file behind it) but nevertheless a good substitute.

17.♘fd2 ♙d3 18.♘xe4 ♙xe4

18...dxe4 strengthening the position of the ♙d3 would also be quite nice... and would allow us to emphasise that the strength of a file or a diagonal always finds its most striking expression in a protected point: it is as though the abstract concepts “file” and “diagonal” had been transformed into material, because from my point of view a protected square counts as material.

19.♘d2 ♘d7 20.♘xe4 dxe4 21.♖b1 ♜hc8 22.b4 ♜c3 23.♙f1 ♙c6 24.♙b2 ♖b3 25.♖e2 ♜xe2 26.♙xe2 ♙b5 27.♙d2 ♙a4 28.♙e2

95



28...a5

The decisive breakthrough. The position of Black’s rook (pinning and threatening the e-pawn) was just too strong. The rest is obvious.

29.♙f2 axb4 30.axb4 ♙xb4 31.♙e2 ♙b5 32.♙d2 ♙a3 33.♙c2 ♖xb2† 34.♖xb2† ♙xb2 35.♙xb2 ♙c4 36.g4 ♙d3 37.g5 ♙xe3 0–1

Game 4

(File, outpost, 7th rank)

F. Lee – Nimzowitsch

Ostend 1907

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6 3.♘bd2 ♘bd7 4.e4 e5 5.c3 ♙e7 6.♙c4 0–0 7.0–0 exd4 8.cxd4 d5

These opening moves have already been discussed (see page 27).

9.♙d3 dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♙xe4 ♘f6

This was our exchange followed by gain of tempo.

12.♙d3 ♘d5

Play down the d-file against d4.

13.a3 ♙f6 14.♜c2 h6 15.♙d2 ♙e6 16.♖ae1 c6 17.♙e3 ♜b6 18.h3 ♖ad8 19.♖c1 ♖d7

Peaceful development. The object of attack (d4) is immobile, so why get excited?

20.♖fe1 ♖fd8 21.♜e2 ♜c7 22.♙b1 ♘e7

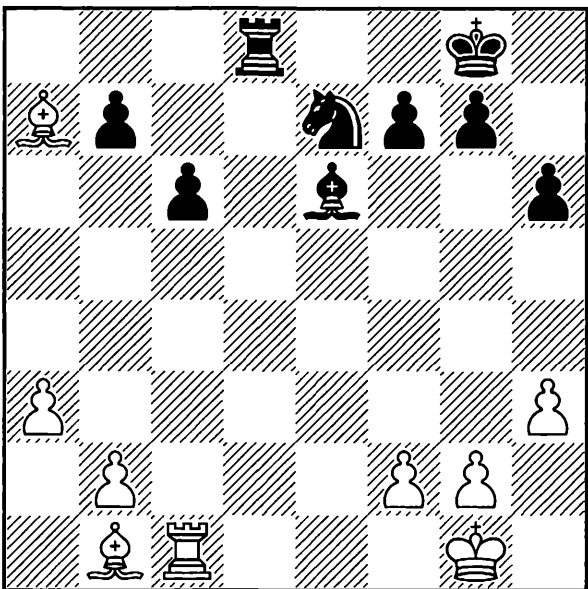
The work (done by the knight) is now over and so a change of scenery does it some good: the knight is heading for f5.

23.♘e5 ♙xe5 24.dxe5 ♜xe5 25.♙xa7 ♜xe2 26.♖xe2 ♖d1†

Black now forces his way into the enemy camp via the d-file.

27.♖e1 ♖xc1 28.♖xc1

96



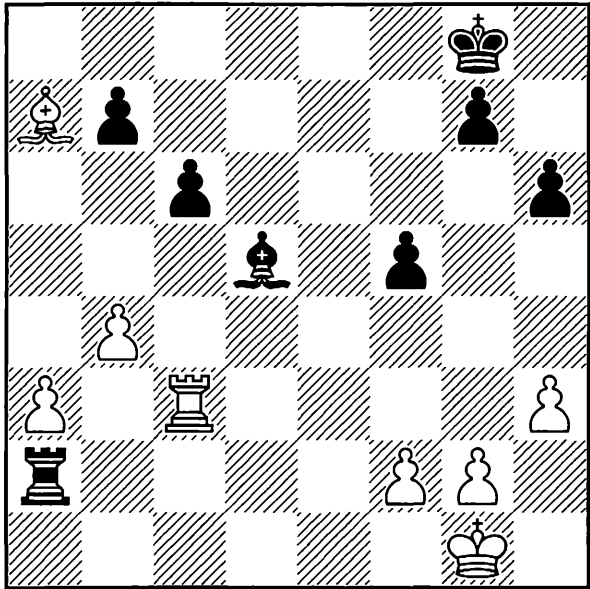
28...♖d2

Now play along the 7th rank (well, here it is the 2nd rank) begins.

29.b4 ♘d5 30.♙e4 ♘f6 31.♙c2 ♘d5 32.♙e4 ♖a2!

Allows me to bring about bishops of opposite colours.
33.♔xd5 ♔xd5 34.♖c3 f5!

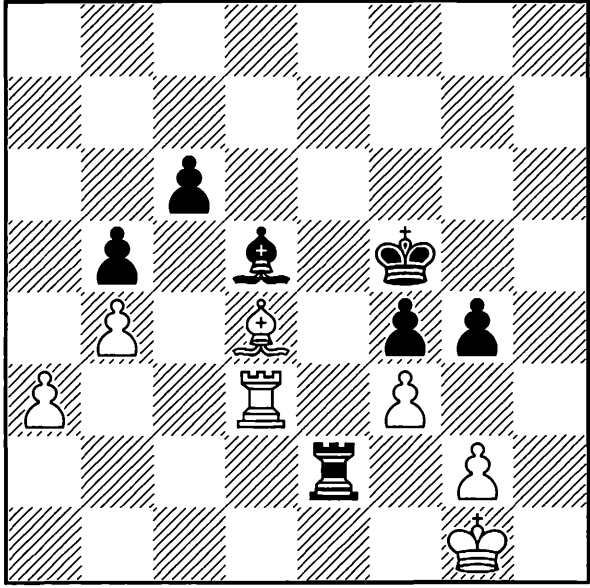
97



All according to my system. Black is seeking a point of attack on the 7th rank: play cannot go any further against a3, so Black wishes to expose the g2-pawn. This is achieved by a kingside advance.
35.♔h2 ♔f7 36.♔c5 g5 37.♖d3 b5 38.♔d4 ♔e4 39.♖c3 ♔d5 40.♔c5 ♔g6 41.♖d3 h5 42.♔b6 f4 43.♔d4 ♔f5 44.f3

White's position is very bad: the threat was g5-g4 then g4-g3†, f2xg3, ♖xg2†.
44...g4 45.hxg4† hxg4 46.♔g1 ♖e2

98



The back rank (here the 1st) is also weak and there is the threat of g4-g3. Nor does White have many moves to choose from...

47.fxg4† ♔e4 48.♖d1 ♔b3 49.♖f1 ♔xd4 50.♖xf4† ♖e4 51.♖f6 ♔d5 52.♖g6 ♖e2 53.♔h2 ♖xg2† 54.♔h3 ♖a2 0-1

In the following two games, the knight on its outpost is the main actor. In the first game, it is exchanged but replaced by the piece which recaptures. In the second, its manoeuvring skills are at a premium.

Game 5
Dr Haken – Giese
Riga 1913

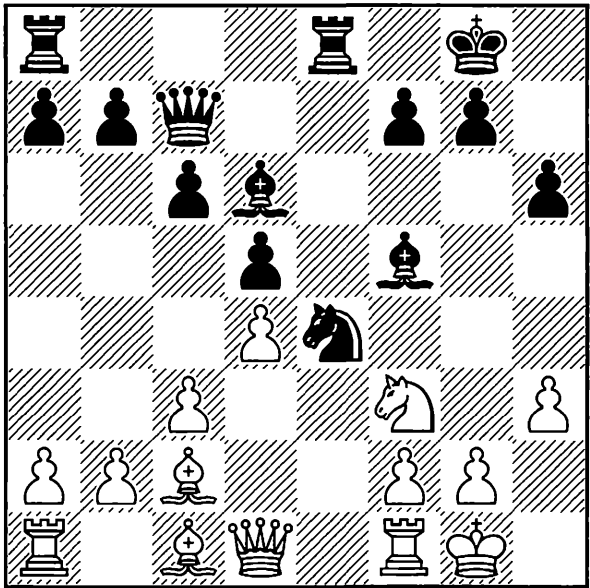
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♖f3 ♔d6 5.♔d3 ♖f6 6.h3 0-0 7.0-0 h6

In the Exchange Variation of the French Defence with ♖f3 and ♖f6, the pin ♔g5 or ♔g4 is one of the main motifs. Here this motif is ruled out by h3 and h6 and all the action takes place on the e-file.

8.♖c3 c6 9.♖e2 ♖e8 10.♖g3 ♖e4

The outpost.
11.♖h5 ♖d7 12.c3 ♖df6 13.♖h2 ♖c7 14.♖xf6† ♖xf6 15.♖f3 ♖e4 16.♔c2 ♖f5!

99



All the pieces are aiming at the strategic point (♖e4); this is called emphasising its strength.
17.♖h4 ♔h7 18.♔e3 g5 19.♖f3 f5 20.♖e1 ♖e7
The pressure down the file is increasing with every move.
21.♖d2 f4 22.♖xe4 dxe4

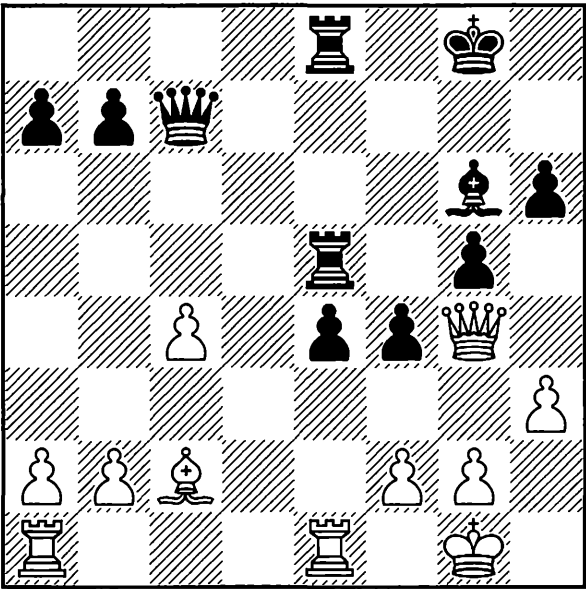
The outpost knight now has a worthy replacement in the “semi-passed pawn” e4.

23.♔d2 ♖ae8 24.c4 c5 25.♔c3 ♙g6!

In order to play ♖h7 and then e4-e3; also threatened is the possible advance against the objective h3, by moves like h6-h5, g5-g4.

26.♙g4 cxd4 27.♔xd4 ♙e5 28.♔xe5 ♖xe5

100



29.♙d1

If 29.♖ad1 then 29...e3 30.♔xg6 exf2† 31.♖xf2 ♖c5† 32.♖f1 ♖xc4† 33.♖f2 ♖c5† 34.♖f1 ♖b5† 35.♖f2 ♖xb2† 36.♖f1 ♖b5† 37.♖f2 ♖b6† 38.♖f1 ♖a6† 39.♖f2 ♖xa2† 40.♖f1 ♖a6† 41.♖f2 ♖b6† 42.♖f1 then a double exchange on e1 and ♖xg6.

This is a nice illustration of the theme “taking a pawn with check” (see also chapter 3, diagram 73, page 45).

29...♖d8 30.♖b1 ♖d2 31.♔xe4 ♖c5 32.♔d5† ♖g7 33.♖c1 ♖xf2† 34.♖h1 ♖exd5 0–1

The game in question was a transparent and therefore good illustration of the theme of the “outpost”.

Game 6

Tarrasch – J. Berger

Breslau 1889

A game from the very early days of chess knowledge

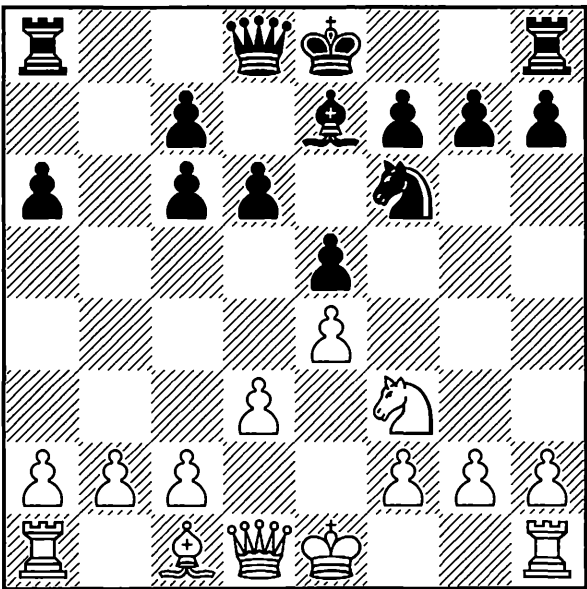
After the opening moves

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♙b4 6.♘d5 ♙e7 7.d3 d6

Tarrasch inflicted on his opponent doubled pawns by

8.♘b4 ♔d7 9.♘xc6 ♙xc6 10.♔xc6† bxc6

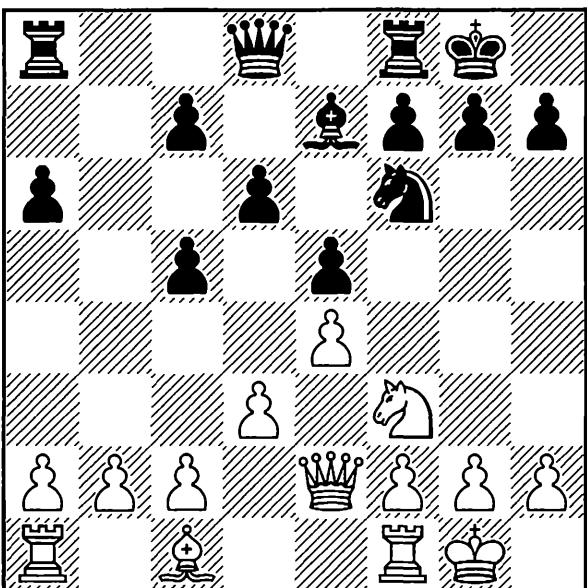
101



Though for the moment their weakness should not be all that great. There then followed

11.0–0 0–0 12.♖e2 c5?

102



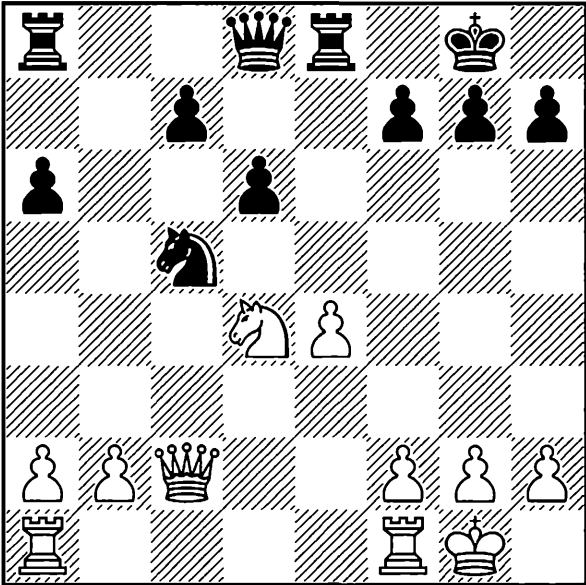
This move would be considered a bad one nowadays: the weakness of the doubled pawns is shown up by this advance by Black more than it would be by a central advance on the part of White; quite on the contrary, after d3-d4 e5xd4 the c6-pawn would be attacking White’s outpost square on the d-file! (you can see how the system makes thinking easier.) So correct play was ♖e8 and ♙f8, adopting a wait-and-see policy.

13.c3

In order to get in d3-d4 as quickly as possible and at any price. Today we know that a central attack is not the only satisfactory one. Correct was ♖f3-d2-c4 then to plan for either b4 or f4, whilst the centre remains passive.

13...♘d7 14.d4 exd4 15.cxd4 ♙f6 16.♙e3 cxd4 17.♙xd4 ♗e8 18.♗c2 ♙xd4 19.♘xd4 ♘c5

103



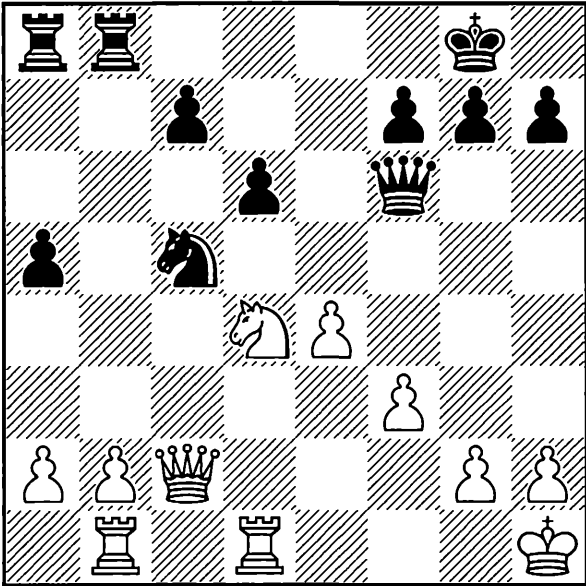
The fate of the game depends on this knight position. If the knight is driven off, then c7 can become weak.

20.f3 ♗f6 21.♗fd1 ♗eb8

White has the d-file with the d5-square. The e-file is useless for Black, partly because of the “protected” e4, but partly because the rooks are committed to preventing the move b2-b4.

22.♗ab1 a5 23.♖h1(!)

104



The idea behind this subtle move is to let the centre emerge as an attacking weapon: now (after 23.♖h1) there is the threat of 24.e5 ♗xe5 25.♘c6, which on this move would fail to the check on e3. But the move by the king cannot be said to have a positive value, since Black would in any case have to play ♗b7 just to double his rooks. (Black is operating down the b-file against the advance [or the square] b4).

23...♗b6

Not good, since White suddenly becomes strong down the d-file (the outpost d5 is now occupied with an attack on the ♗b6). On the other hand 23...♗b7 (suggested by Steinitz) or something passive (e.g. 23...h6) would suit better. e.g. 23...h6 24.e5 dxe5 25.♗xc5 exd4 26.♗xd4 a4 (pressure from Black’s b-file) 27.♗b4 ♗d6 with comfortable equality. Or 23...♗b7 24.♘e2 ♗ab8 25.♘c3 and then 25...a4, and the b-file starts to make itself felt.

24.♘e2 ♘e6 25.♘c3 ♗c6

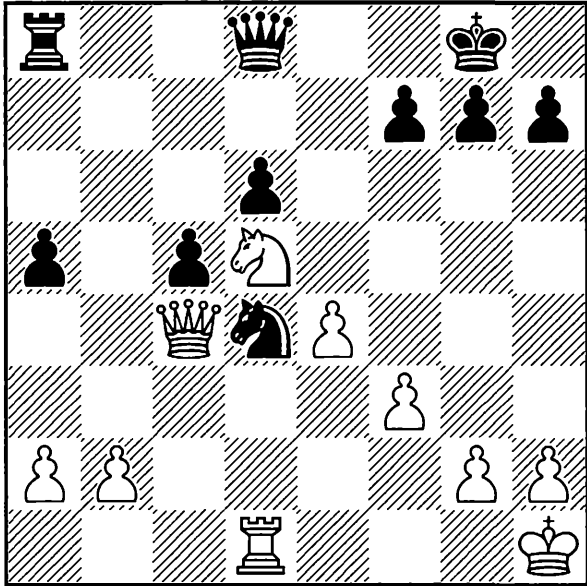
It is quite understandable that Berger finds the threatened ♘d5 uncomfortable; but it was better to go for the orderly retreat 25...♗d8 26.♘d5 ♗b7 then ...♗ab8.

26.♗a4 ♗c5 27.♘d5 ♗d8 28.♗bc1 ♗xc1 29.♗xc1

White’s manoeuvre ♗a4 and ♗c1 becomes crystal clear. He wishes to seize the c-file (which is still being contested) and then raise the stakes himself with, at the appropriate moment, ♗c6.

29...c5 30.♗d1 ♘d4 31.♗c4

105



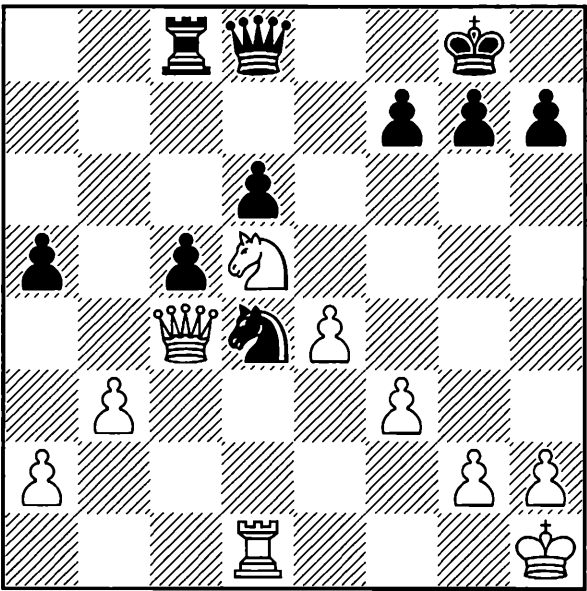
White wishes to swap off the ♖d4 by something like ♖d5-c3-e2 in order to be able to attack the d-pawn to his heart's content. Such an attack is bound to succeed, because the protecting pieces can easily end up in uncomfortable positions (e.g. Black: ♜d7, ♝e7; White: ♜d5, ♝d3) and then the e-pawn will attack the d-pawn (which is pinned) for a third time and then win it.

It is interesting to note how the white pieces (e.g. the ♝c4!) are aiming towards d5. It can happen that someone who has such a square as d5 is here goes in for long-winded manoeuvres with the said square as their base, i.e. his own pieces pass through d5. The poor d6-pawn is then attacked first one way then another until Black is finally out of breath defending it, meaning that he cannot keep step with White's manoeuvres. This is quite easy to understand, since not only is he manoeuvring without a base square but also he is somewhat cramped.

Things are not quite like that here, because Black commits an error, which forces the game away from the path of logical development.

31...♜b8 32.b3 ♜c8?

106



33.♜xd4 cxd4 34.♖e7†

Not 34.♝xc8? ♝xc8 35.♖e7† because the d-pawn would queen.

34...♝xc8 35.♝xc8† ♝f8 36.♝xf8† ♜xf8

And White won the pawn ending because of his distant passed pawn. We will look at this endgame later (page 96, diagram 182) and beg you to be patient.

The next game is a heavyweight encounter.

Game 7

Rabinovich – Nimzowitsch

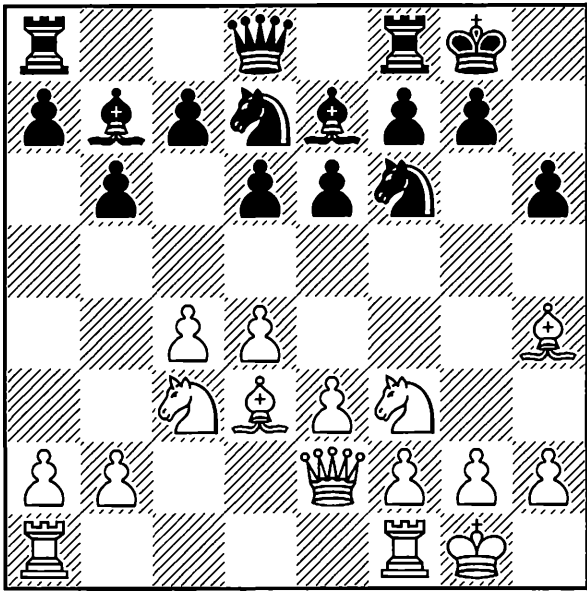
Baden-Baden 1925

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖f3 b6 4.♖c3 ♙b7 5.♙g5 h6 6.♙h4 ♙e7 7.e3 d6 8.♙d3 ♖bd7

Black has a solid but cramped game, which as a rule can only be freed slowly.

9.0–0 0–0 10.♝e2

107



10...e5

The move 10...♖h5 was “slower” but more appropriate.

11.dxe5 ♙xf3!

Not 11...♖xe5 12.♖xe5 dxe5 13.♜d1 with pressure down the d-file.

12.gxf3 ♖xe5 13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 14.♙e4 ♜b8

It is already clear that White's hold on the d-file with his outpost ♖d5 can be slackened by c7-c6. Yet, then the d6-pawn will be easy enough to defend, because it is on a square of the colour of its bishop. But what about the g-file? We'll soon see.

15.♜ad1 ♖d7! 16.♖d5 ♖c5 17.♙b1 a5

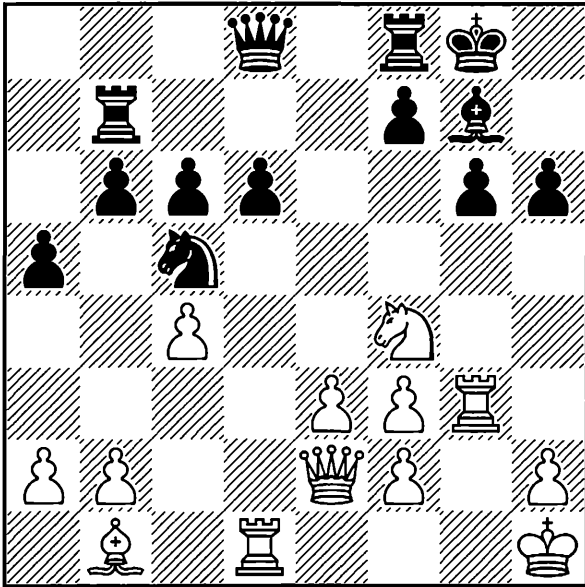
Not an outpost, but still strong. This is a good thing for you to practise: placing knights in positions from which they cannot be driven away.

18.♜h1 g6

This loosening move is forced by the threat of ♝c2.

19.♜g1 ♙g7 20.♜g3 c6! 21.♖f4 ♜b7!

108



The situation on the g-file can now be considered to be cleared, since it is obvious that there is the threat of a sacrifice on g6 (i.e. a “revolutionary” attack). On the other hand, slow undermining by h2-h4-h5 is hard to achieve.

22. ♖c2 ♜f6 23. b3

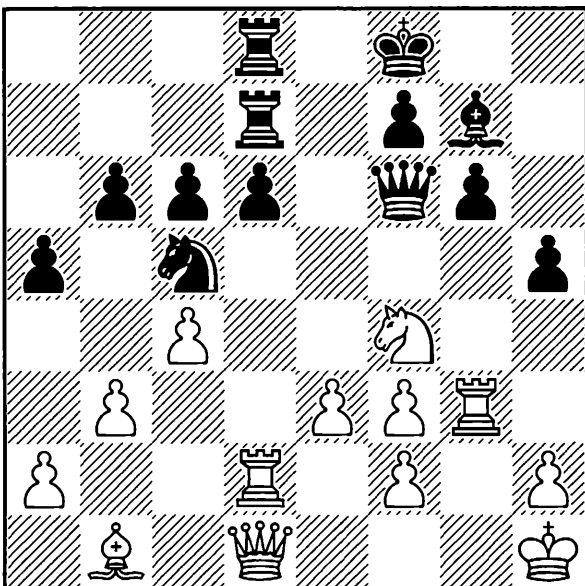
There was also the combination 23. ♘h5 ♜xb2 24. ♖xg6 (see previous note) 24... ♟fxg6 25. ♜xg6. But the attack should not succeed.

23... ♞e8 24. ♘e2

To bring the knight to d4. White’s dilemma consists of the presence of two files (d and g). He cannot really make up his mind which to choose and this is the cause of his downfall.

24... ♞d7 25. ♞d2 ♞ed8 26. ♘f4 ♟f8 27. ♜d1 h5!!

109



Not just to enable ♔h6, but also because the h-pawn will have a leading role to play.

28. ♜g1 ♔h6 29. ♘e2 d5

Gets rid of the weakness on d6 and he will soon seize the d-file.

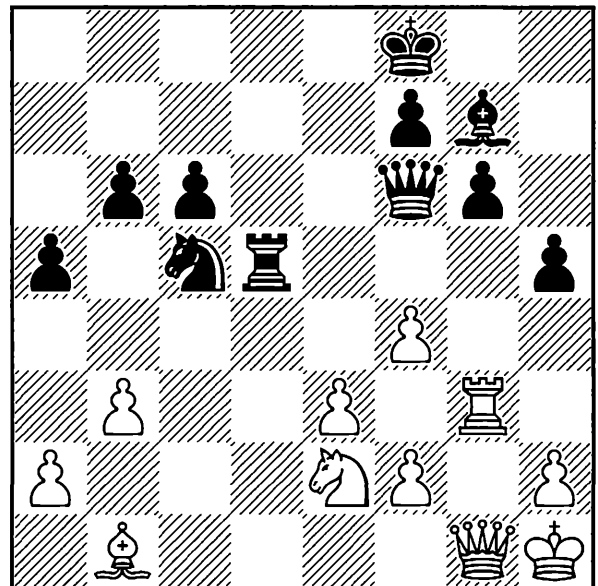
30. cxd5 ♞xd5 31. ♖xd5 ♞xd5 32. f4

After 32. ♘d4 there would be 32... ♔f4, e.g. 33. exf4 ♜xd4 34. f5 h4! 35. ♖g4 ♜c3 and f3 is hard to protect.

32... ♔g7

This giving up of the h6-f4 diagonal, difficult enough in itself, is relatively easy for someone who knows that intervening pieces on such a line (here possibly ♘d4) must be put under pressure. I did not like the immediate 32... ♞d2 (instead of 32... ♔g7) because of the reply 33. ♘d4 ♔xf4 34. ♖f3.

110



33. ♜c1

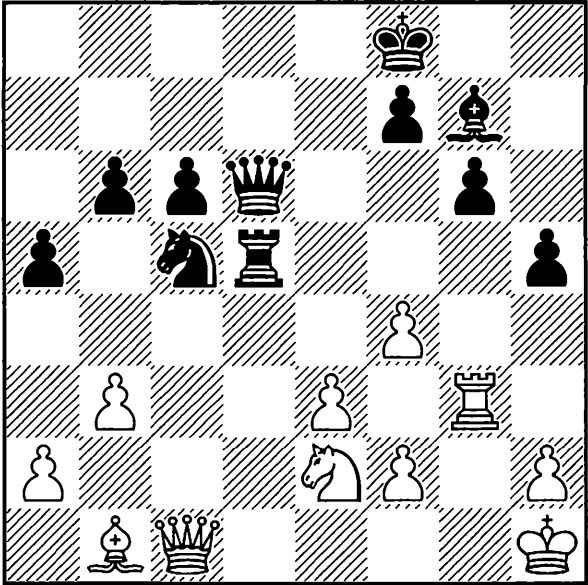
Here I had been expecting (at last!) the sacrifice on g6 and had prepared a nice problem for my opponent, namely 33. ♔xg6 h4! 34. ♖g4 fxg6 35. ♖xg6 ♜f5 36. ♖xg7 ♜e4† 37. ♜g2 (forced) 37... ♞d1† 38. ♘g1 and now the point of it all 38... h3!! 39. ♜xe4 ♘xe4 threatening mate on f2.

33... ♜d6

What follows is a textbook (I mean *my* textbook) exploitation of the d-file, but one which has a charming twist. If I had not had my rules to fall back upon, I would never have hit upon the final manoeuvre.

In what follows, I will give my feelings about certain moves, to help the reader follow what is happening.

111



34.♙c2 ♘e4 35.♖g2 h4 36.♘g1

I was glad to be rid of the knight and played 36...♘c3

This knight manoeuvre makes it possible to get into the opponent's base camp (here the 1st and 2nd ranks).

37.a4

37.a3? ♘a2 then winning the a3-pawn.

37...♘a2 38.♗f1 ♘b4

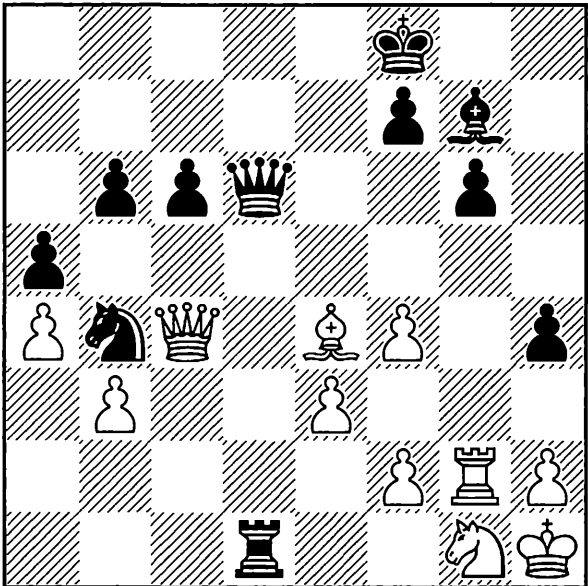
Here I had the unpleasant feeling that I had let the bishop go, that I had given it some elbow room...

39.♙e4 ♖d1

My first thought was: what a pity! Now the queen has also made it out into the open; but I soon saw the glimmer of a mate appearing, the same one I had had in mind since move 33.

40.♗c4

112



40...f5! 41.♙f3 h3! 42.♖g3 ♘d3! 43.♗c2 ♖c1

Here I was glad to see his queen having to go back home.

44.♗e2 ♖b1

And he resigned because of the fatal effects of being flanked by ♖b2.

My impression was that the system had been most effective in its support of the combinational style of play.

And for the eighth example, here is a short game which is known far and wide as the "Immortal zugzwang game". Our interest in it is that the outpost appears simply as a threat, a mere spectre. And yet its effect is enormous.

Game 8
Sämisch – Nimzowitsch
Copenhagen 1923

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♙b7 5.♙g2 ♙e7 6.♘c3 0-0 7.0-0 d5 8.♘e5 c6

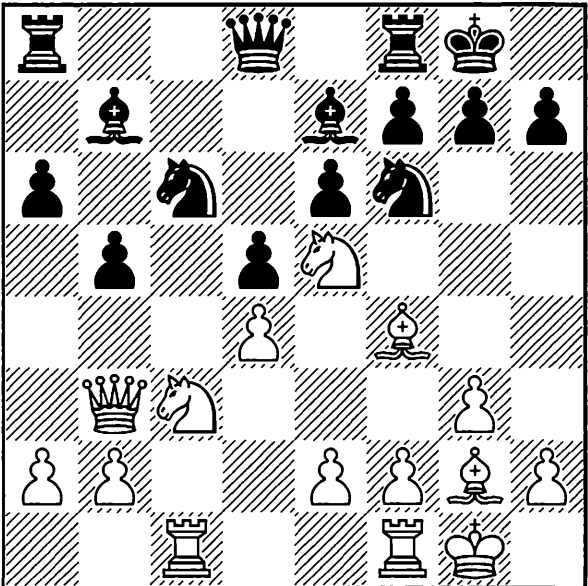
Secures the position.

9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♙f4 a6!

Protects the outpost square c4, namely by a6 and b5.

11.♖c1 b5 12.♗b3 ♘c6

113



The spectre! It silently glides towards c4...

13.♘xc6

Sämisch sacrifices two tempi (exchanging the tempo devouring ♘e5 for the almost

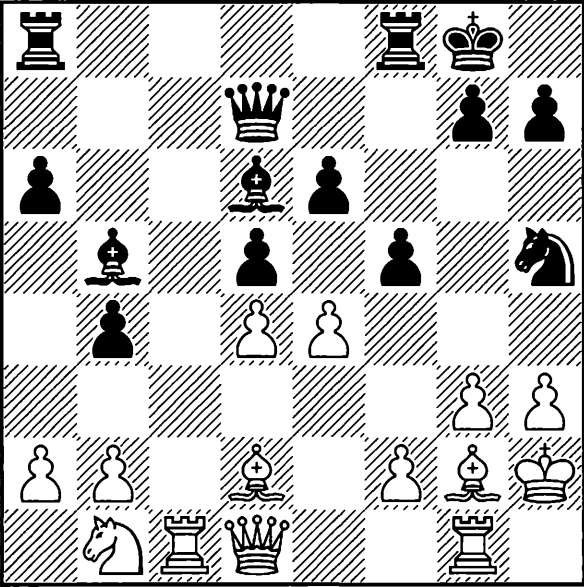
undeveloped ♖c6) just in order to get rid of the spectre.

13...♙xc6 14.h3 ♔d7 15.♕h2 ♜h5

I could have managed to inflict another spectre on him by 15...♙b7 then ♜f6-d7-b6-c4, but I wanted to turn my attention to the kingside.

16.♙d2 f5! 17.♙d1 b4! 18.♜b1 ♙b5 19.♞g1 ♙d6 20.e4

114



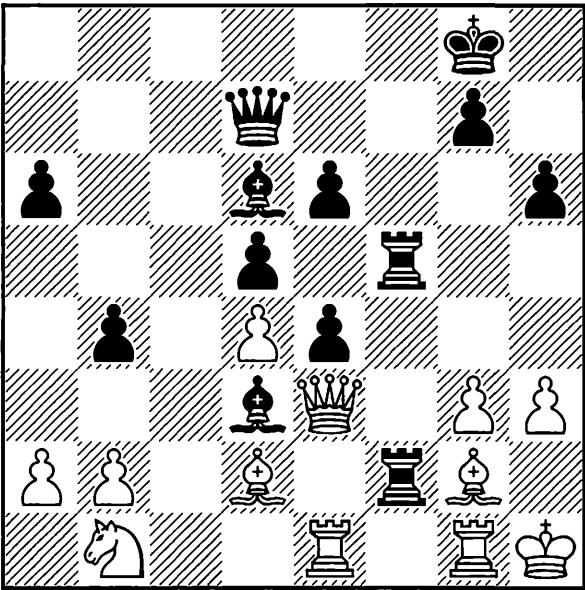
20...fxe4!

This otherwise quite surprising sacrifice arises from sober calculation: two pawns, the 7th rank

and a hopelessly entangled opposing queenside – all that for just one piece.

21.♙xh5 ♞xf2 22.♙g5 ♞af8 23.♕h1 ♞8f5 24.♙e3 ♙d3 25.♞ce1 h6!!

115



A brilliant move, which declares zugzwang. White has no more moves. For example if 26.♕h2 then 26...♞5f3; the same happens after 26.g4. Black just makes waiting moves with his king and White must run on to his opponent's sword.

So White resigns.

Introduction*

Brings in an important consideration for us as to the positive value of philosophical content
A short but painful goodbye to open files

This volume will take us to passed pawns and to the endgame, but before we start, let us quickly look over another few games, in which the open files upon which we set such a high value were somewhat surprisingly the stars. The attentive reader will already have guessed how deeply in love we are with the open file; so a final adieu, and then a really final one, and then a wave of the handkerchief. Can she still see us? Of course she can! Look how she is whispering to her companion the outpost knight. Farewell!

Wiping away a tear, we turn to new considerations. We shall now have other heroes to deal with: the passed pawns. These are young, upwardly mobile people, who however – for such is the way of the world – somewhere and somehow get stuck. And then come the nasty little endgame tricks, difficult manoeuvring and slow advances, and then, as they learn how serious life can be, they come up against positional play (but that doesn't happen for a few chapters yet).

The first volume stirred up some interest. There were the usual people who did not wish to understand what was being said. Critics said that the first volume would only be of any use to weaker players. That is in no way the case, is what I say. In the said volume, I revealed the *very essence* of the elements; this involves some philosophy and hard mental effort. Is philosophy not important? Is it not important for strong players to get to the philosophical heart of the matter? No, the truth of the matter is rather the opposite. Weaker players could only find patterns in the first volume, though these patterns could be of use to them in practical play; but stronger players, insofar as they really seriously followed the way things developed there, should however have gained *fresh ways of looking at things*. Take manoeuvres which they had previously carried out automatically time after time while scarcely thinking much about them. Well these manoeuvres would suddenly have had for them an *underlying theoretical importance* and would have shown themselves to be partial manoeuvres belonging to a many faceted strategic plan.

One example. Establishing a knight outpost (along the lines of ♖c5, protected by the d4-pawn and backed up by the open c-file) is, just like the common or garden penetration of the opponent's 7th rank (i.e. ♙c1-c7 in our example), one of the favourite manoeuvres of strong players. But the fact that the outpost is a preparation for the penetration is first made clear in my book.

In the *blockade* (of which there will be more in chapter 4), I will try to justify very thoroughly the idea of the “necessity of a blockade”. This allows us to make important strategic connections. But I can in no way agree with *those* critics who consider the whole structure I have just mentioned to be of no use. If I contented myself with simply recommending the blockade of a passed pawn, then my book would take on the character of a “collection of practical tips by an experienced housewife”.

On the other hand, I consider the chapter on passed pawns as a training ground for positional play. The latter (positional play) is closely linked to the elements, so it should not appear too surprising if things which are only apparently heterogeneous are woven together.

*This is the start to the second volume of the work, which was originally brought out in five volumes over a number of years.

Game 9**Nimzowitsch – Pritzel**

Played in a tournament in Copenhagen on 06.12.1922

1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♙e3 ♘f6 5.♙e2 0–0 6.♚d2

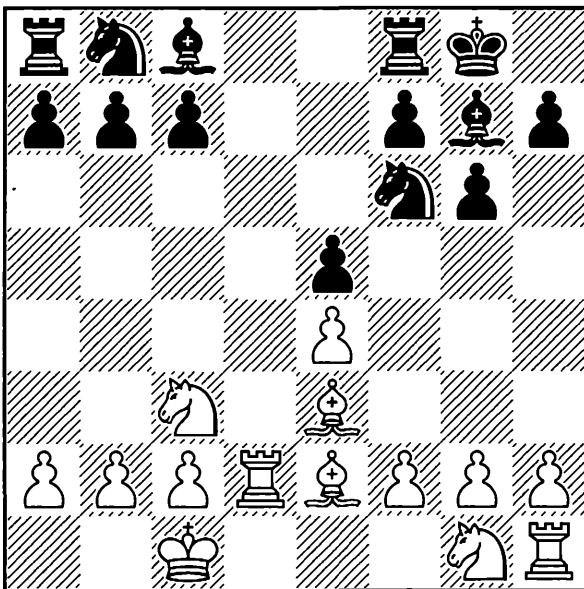
In order to be able to swap off the ♗g7 by ♗h6.

6...e5 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.0–0–0

The plan chosen by White is tempting because of the simple nature of the means employed. By allowing the exchange of queens, White wishes to aim for a plus in the d-file.

8...♚xd2† 9.♙xd2

116

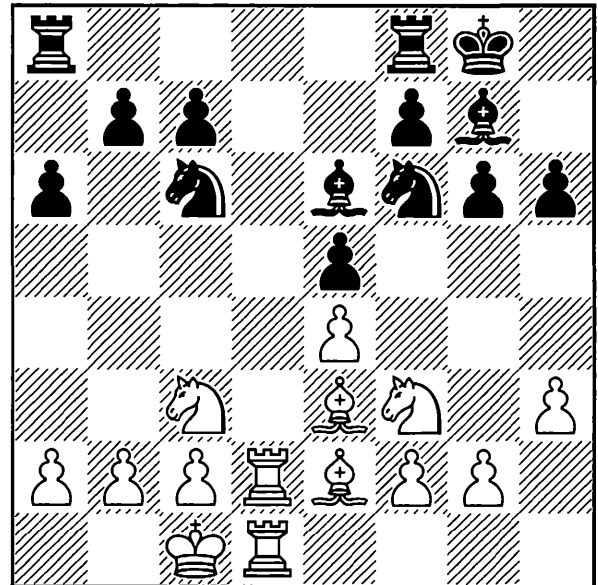
**9...c6?**

Moves like this, which weaken important squares (d6) should if possible be avoided and as a matter of fact, a piece soon fixes itself on d6.

What is important for the student is that the d-file was only “under pressure” *before* c7–c6 was played, whereas *after* the move c7–c6 it turns out to be weakened. So it was worth considering not playing c6 and, for example continuing with 9...♘c6. Things could have continued: 10.h3 (to be able to play ♘f3 without a subsequent ♘g4 by Black) 10...♘d4!? 11.♘f3! (but not 11.♙xd4 exd4 12.♙xd4 ♘g4!) 11...♘xe2† 12.♙xe2 or 11...♘xf3 12.♙xf3 and White is better.

Nevertheless 9...♘c6 was the correct move. But then Black had to react to 10.h3 by ♙e6, e.g. 10.h3 ♙e6 11.♘f3 h6 12.♙hd1 a6:

117

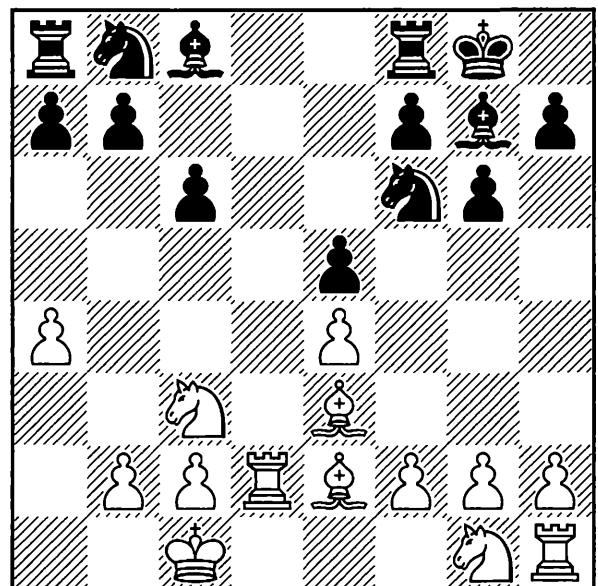


In this position White undoubtedly has the d-file, but since neither a penetration nor the establishment of an outpost by a later ♘d5 lies within the bounds of possibility, the value of the file seems somewhat questionable.

White’s central pawn e4 is of course in need of protection and this circumstance cripples White to some extent. Black can consider either the direct ♙fd8 (intending ♙xd8 ♙xd8 ♙xd8 ♘xd8 ♘xe5 ♘xe4; of course this line had to be introduced by ♘h7 or g6–g5 and the securing of the h6–pawn against an attack by the ♙e3, or else at the end of the line would come the reply ♘xe4 ♙xe5 ♙xh6); or the slow manoeuvre ♙fc8 then ♘g8–f8–e8 followed by contesting the d-file by ♙c8–d8. The latter method is characterised by little activity by White on the d-file.

10.a4

118



Apparently compromising, but in reality well-motivated, because firstly b7-b5 (a move which would mean an indirect attack on e4 and so an undesirable one) must be prevented and secondly the black queenside must be besieged.

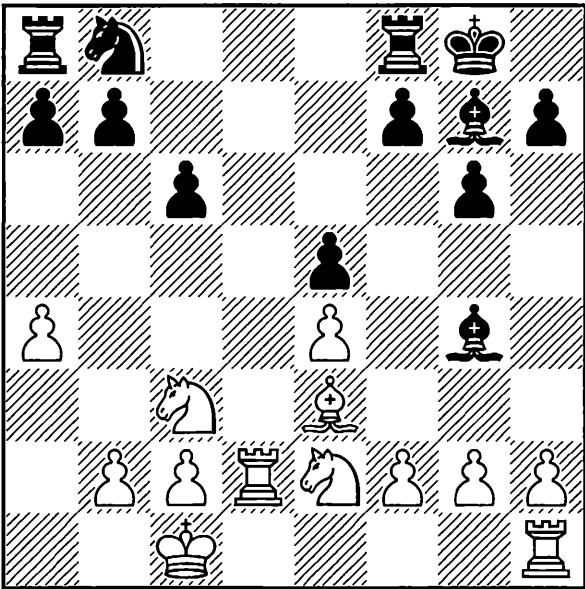
We feel justified in adopting the above-mentioned ambitious plan of encirclement. The reason is that the incontestable positional advantage we have in the central file after 9...c6 is played justifiably has an effect on the flanks.

This can be formulated as follows:

A superior position in the centre justifies an attack far out on the flank.

10...♖g4 11.♙xg4 ♙xg4 12.♘ge2

119



12...♗d7

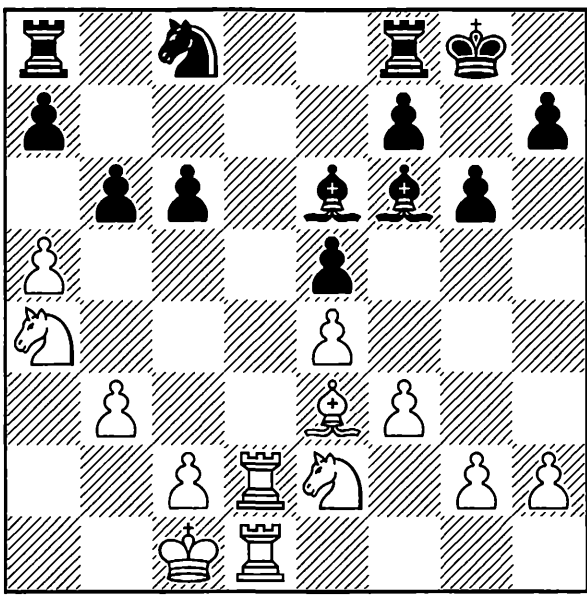
In unusual situations, normal moves rarely appear to fit the bill. The correct way to proceed was ♗a6, then ♖fe8 and ♙f8; the weakness on d6 would be protected and the position was quite tenable.

13.♖hd1 ♗b6 14.b3 ♙f6 15.f3 ♙e6 16.a5 ♗c8 17.♗a4

It is now obvious that the above-mentioned development with ♗a6 would have been less time-consuming than the text manoeuvre ♗b8-d7-b6-c8. White now has a strong position way out on the queenside and is threatening to encircle his opponent by ♗c5; it can now be seen that 10.a4! wasn't so short on attacking potential.

17...b6!

120



Excellent defence. Now after 18.axb6 axb6 19.♗xb6 ♗xb6 20.♙xb6 there would of course be 20...♙g5.

18.♖d3!

The “restricted advance”, which is particularly flexible here, with the rook going from the d-file to the c-file, and from there to the a-file.

18...bxa5

Bad. The correct move was ♖b8; Black's position still had some life in it, because just like Dr Lasker I believe in *defence*.

19.♖c3 ♗e7 20.♖c5 ♖fb8 21.♗ec3

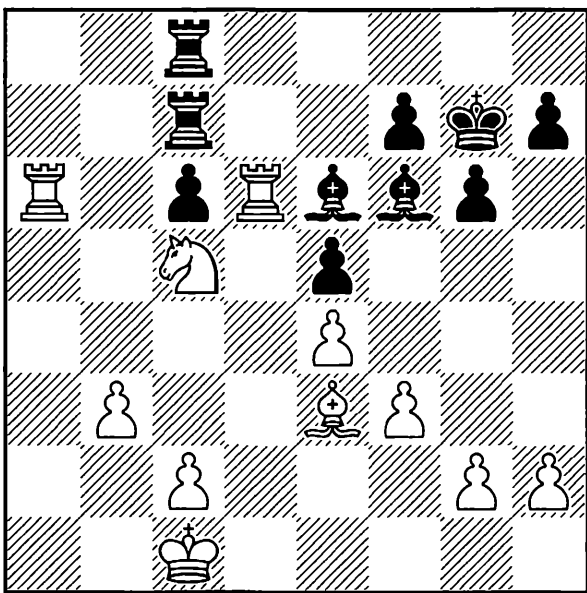
The a-pawn cannot run away.

21...a6 22.♖xa5 ♙g7 23.♗b6 ♖a7 24.♗ca4

One knight makes way for the other.

24...♖ab7 25.♖xa6 ♗c8 26.♗xc8 ♖xc8 27.♗c5 ♖bc7 28.♖d6

121



Only now do I occupy the d6-square, which Black weakened back on move 9. But the possibility had always been there...

28...♖d8 29.♗xe6 1-0

In the comments on the above game, we became better acquainted with the resources available to the player who is defending a file. Since this should be of such great practical value in play, we shall follow up with a second game which is equally instructive in this matter.

Game 10

Nimzowitsch – Tarrasch

Breslau 1925

1.♟f3 ♟f6 2.c4 c5 3.♞c3 d5

Playable, but a more solid line seems to be 3...e6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♞xd4 ♙b4 or also 3...♞c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♞xd4 g6. Now White could try to tie his opponent up slowly by 6.e4, though this attempt could be sufficiently well parried by 6...♙g7 7.♙e3 ♞g4! (Breyer) 8.♗xg4 ♞xd4 9.♗d1 ♞e6! (my suggestion). The position which is reached after 9...♞e6 is full of resources, such as:

I. ♗a5

II. 0-0 then f5

III. b6 then ♙b7

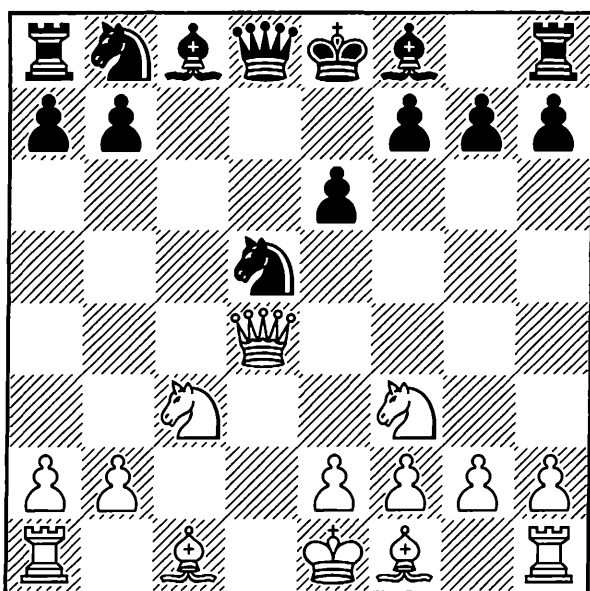
You should take a look at the lines which arise.

4.cxd5 ♞xd5 5.d4 cxd4

It seems to me that the best for Black is 5...♞xc3 6.bxc3 cxd4 7.cxd4 e6.

6.♗xd4 e6

122



7.e3

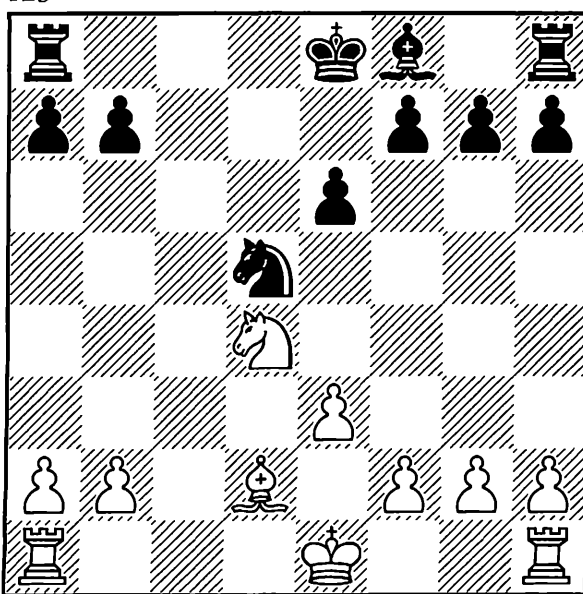
A very restrained move, which I decided upon because I had recognised that the more enterprising continuations 7.e4 and 7.♞xd5 exd5 8.e4 were less effective, e.g. 7.e4 ♞xc3! 8.♗xc3 (after 8.♗xd8† ♞xd8 9.bxc3 White would have had to look after a weak c-pawn on an open file) 8...♞c6 9.a3 ♗a5! (or 9.♙b5 ♙d7) with equality.

Or else 7.♞xd5 exd5 8.e4 dxe4! 9.♗xd8† ♞xd8 10.♞g5 ♙b4† 11.♙d2 ♙xd2† 12.♞xd2 ♞e7 with a level game.

If you are interested in the problems of development, you should take a look at 7.♞xd5 exd5 8.e4 ♞c6 (rather than 8...dxe4! as we suggested). After 9.♗xd5 ♗xd5 10.exd5 ♞b4 there would follow 11.♙b5† and Black would be hard put to find a good continuation.

7...♞c6 8.♙b5 ♙d7 9.♙xc6 ♙xc6 10.♞e5 ♞xc3 11.♞xc6 ♗xd4 12.♞xd4 ♞d5 13.♙d2

123



The position we have here appears really harmless but is actually extremely dangerous. White is threatening to occupy the c-file and in addition he has a comfortable square for his king (e2), while it is quite hard to say as much for Black (cf. note to Black's 17th move). In positions like this, the defender must play with extreme care.

13...♙c5

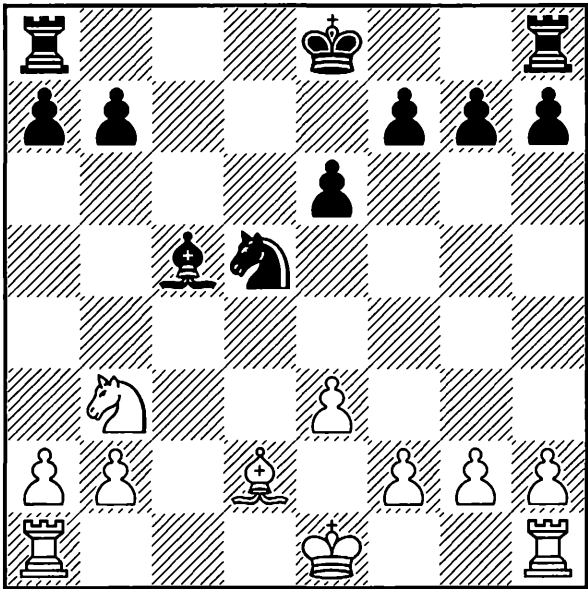
In order to chase the knight from the centre; but since the said knight wanders to b3 and

returns in triumph to an outpost on c5, then the move ♔c5 does not turn out to be unpleasant for White.

The best idea seems to be 13...♔e7, intending for example 13...♔e7 14.e4 ♘b6 15.♖c1 0-0 16.♙e2; now White may be very proud of having developed his king, though in this case the black monarch can dispense with development, because his bishop on e7 is a cunning prime minister, well able to take care of the running of the government, e.g. 16.♙e2 ♔f6! 17.♔e3 ♖fc8 18.b3 ♔xd4 19.♔xd4 and now 19...♘d7 or 19...♖xc1 20.♖xc1 ♖c8 21.♖xc8† ♘xc8 22.♙d3. Now the white king comes into its own, but it does seem that the black one is not far behind, 22...f6 23.♙c4 ♙f7 24.♙b5 a6† (or else the bishop sacrifice) 25.♙c5 ♙e7 followed by ♙d7 with a draw. For that reason, 13...♔e7 was the correct defence.

14.♘b3

124



14...♔b4

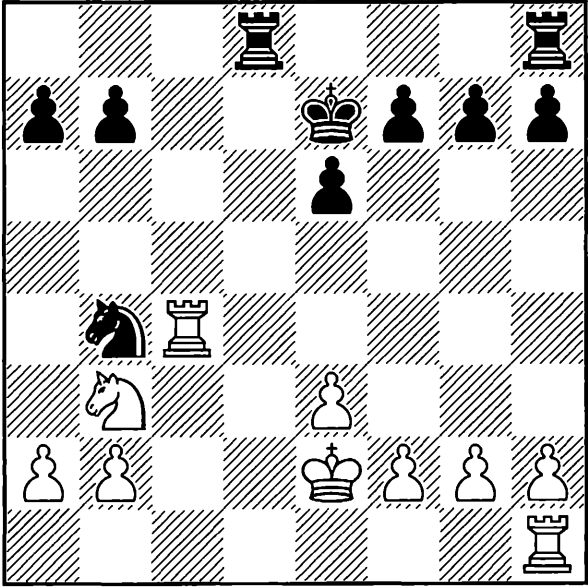
Here there were decidedly better moves in ♔b6 or ♔e7. After ♔b6 the c7-square would have been protected against any penetration and when you are defending, that is the recommended method! After 14...♔b6 15.e4 ♘e7! White's advantage would be minimal.

15.♖c1 ♖d8 16.♔xb4 ♘xb4 17.♙e2 ♙e7

Black has cleared a square for his king, but at the cost of precious time! (♔f8-c5-b4).

18.♖c4

125



18...♘a6

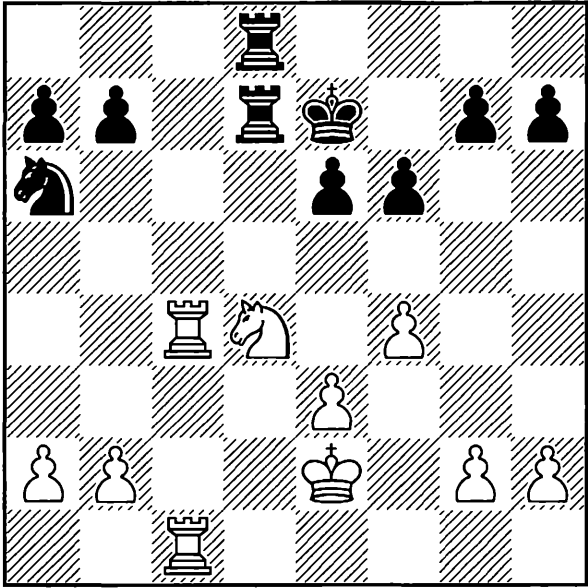
An unpleasant retreat. After 18...♘c6 White would not have played 19.♘c5 because of the reply ♘a5! then b6!; instead he would first have doubled rooks. Black would be unfavourably placed.

19.♖hc1 ♖d7

Black's position still inspires trust, though it contains the seeds of decay. White's next two moves demote Black's d-file to a passive onlooker, it is of no further value for an attack.

20.f4! ♖hd8 21.♘d4 f6

126



Black is intending to play e6-e5. Is that a threat? If not, then find a sensible waiting move for White!

22.a4!

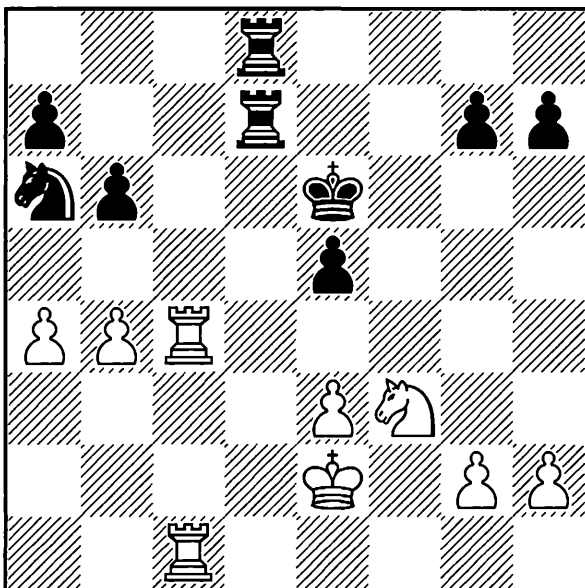
Even the double move by a pawn can be part of a wait-and-see policy. White in no way fears the move e5, because after 22...e5 23.fxe5 fxe5 24.♘f3, the pawn on e5 itself would be weak. Worth considering was however the energetic 22.b4 though it would be less advantageous after 22...b5!. But now this move (b2-b4) threatens to further cramp Black.

22...e5

Lashing out from a cramped position is psychologically understandable, if not always objectively justified. This is the case here. However Black stands badly, whatever he does.

23.fxe5 fxe5 24.♘f3 ♔e6 25.b4 b6

127



26.♖1c2!

One of those unprepossessing moves which, for an opponent who is cramped and threatened on all sides, are more unpleasant than the worst *direct* attack. The move “protects” and “waits”, but also contains a threat, though the way things stand the threat is minimal, since here it was simply a little extra. The (tiny) threat is ♘g5† and ♗e4, then b4-b5 will chase the black knight back to b8.

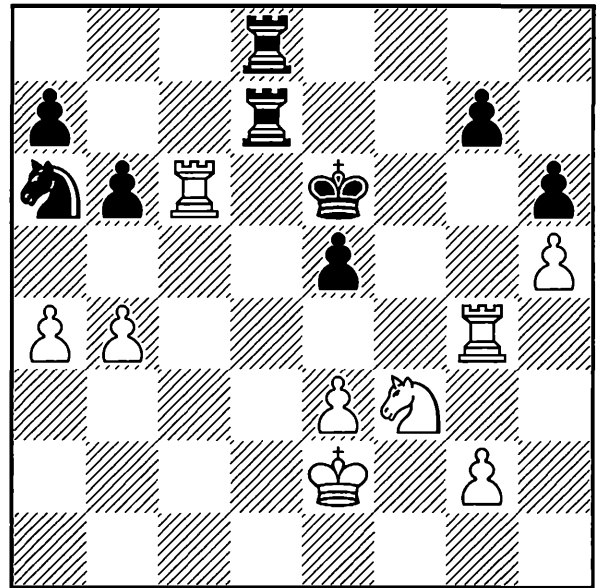
26...h6 27.h4! ♖d6 28.h5

The consequence of 26.♖1c2 is a series of new attacking possibilities, since g7 has become backward. The manoeuvre ♖c4-g4 would not only emphasise the weakness of the g-pawn but, much more than that, it would place the black king in a position of mortal danger. All this fell like ripe fruit into White’s lap simply and solely as the

logical result of the waiting move 26.♖1c2. The finest moves are after all, waiting moves!

28...♖d5 29.♖g4 ♖5d7 30.♖c6†

128



30...♖d6

30...♔f5? would be followed by 31.♖cg6 and then mate. After 30...♔d5 31.♖cg6 e4! the best line for White is 32.♗d2 ♗xb4 33.♗xe4.

31.♖g6†

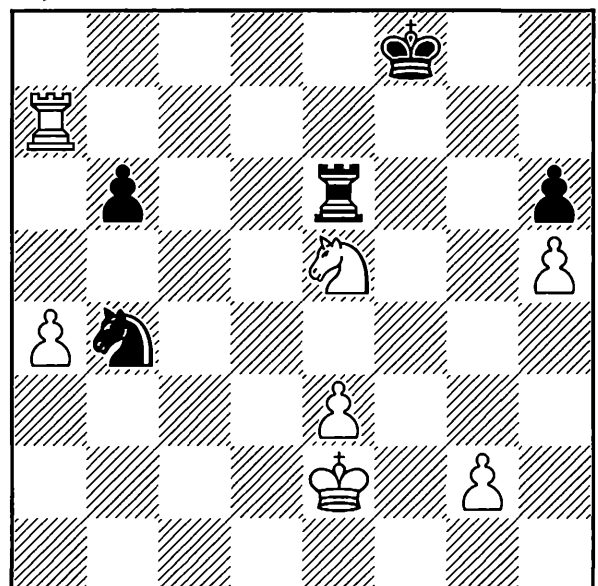
The possession of the squares c6 and g6 leads to a model encirclement of my opponent’s king. You should pay attention to the way the c-file functions like a springboard (♖c1-c4-g4).

31...♔e7

31...♔d5 would be followed by a neat little catastrophe: 32.♖cxd6† ♖xd6 33.e4† ♔c6 34.b5† and the knight, which felt so safely hidden on a6, is lost, to its great surprise!

32.♖xg7† ♔f8 33.♖xd6 ♖xd6 34.♖xa7 ♗xb4 35.♗xe5 ♖e6

129



White wins. Converting superior material into a win is one of the most important things and you can never practise it often enough.

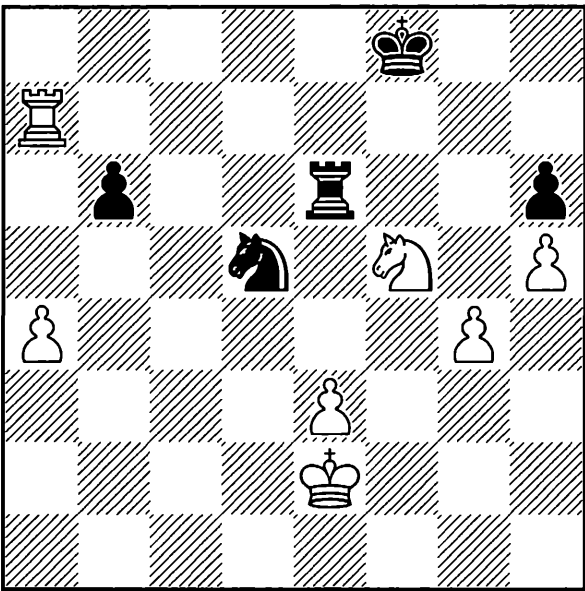
White has now won two pawns. A look at the position shows:

- I. White is in possession of the 7th rank;
- II. the e3-pawn is isolated and the g2-pawn is backward.

So what needs to be done, while making the most of the 7th rank, is to weld together the isolated or dislocated forces. To do this the knight is sent to f5, with gain of tempo.

36.♖g6† ♔g8! 37.♘e7† ♔f8 38.♘f5 ♘d5 39.g4

130



The knight on f5 has the effect explained above: it protects e3, attacks h6 and enables ♔f3 (the king hides behind its knight because it is so fearful).

39...♘f4† 40.♔f3 ♘d3

In order to protect himself (after ♖h7) by ♘e5† then ♘f7.

41.♖a8†! ♔f7 42.♖h8 ♘c5 43.♖h7†

You always go back to your first love! Long live the 7th rank!

43...♔g8

Since there would be a mating attack after 43...♔f8 44.♘h6; the advance of the g-pawn would also be unstoppable.

44.♖xh6 ♖xh6 45.♘h6† ♔f8 46.♘f5 ♘xa4 47.h6 ♔g8 48.g5 ♔h7 49.♔g4 ♘c5 50.♔h5

According to the motto: General advance (see the chapter on the endgame).

50...♘e6 51.g6† ♔g8 52.h7† ♔h8 53.♔h6 1-0

The following game (number 11) shows us an example of the “restricted advance” on a rook file. The advance is not an isolated event like a flash of lightning but rather it lasts and controls the square it occupies. You can see from that example how closely the “elements” are linked to technique at the higher level. A thorough understanding of these elements means you are more than half the way to becoming a master.

Game 11

Thomas – Alekhine

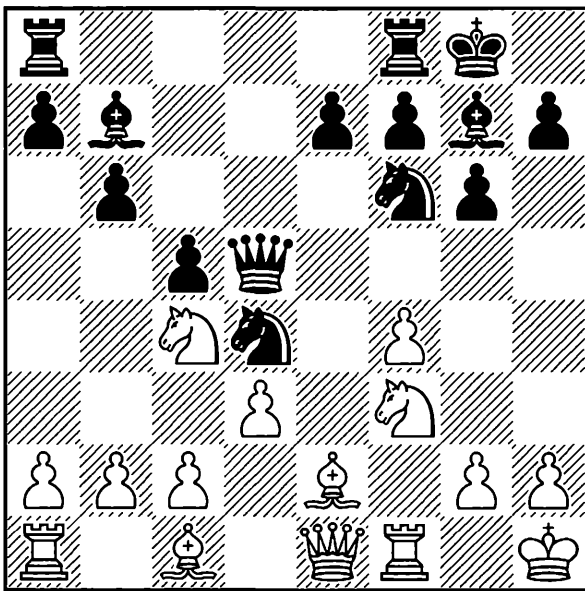
Baden-Baden 1925

1.e4 ♘f6 2.d3 c5 3.f4 ♘c6 4.♘f3 g6 5.♙e2 ♙g7 6.♘bd2 d5 7.0-0 0-0 8.♔h1 b6 9.exd5 ♖xd5 10.♙e1 ♙b7 11.♘c4

The position of this knight is some (meagre) compensation for his unharmonious set-up (the bishop on e2). Black has the superior position. On move 5 or even earlier White should have played c2-c4.

11...♘d4

131



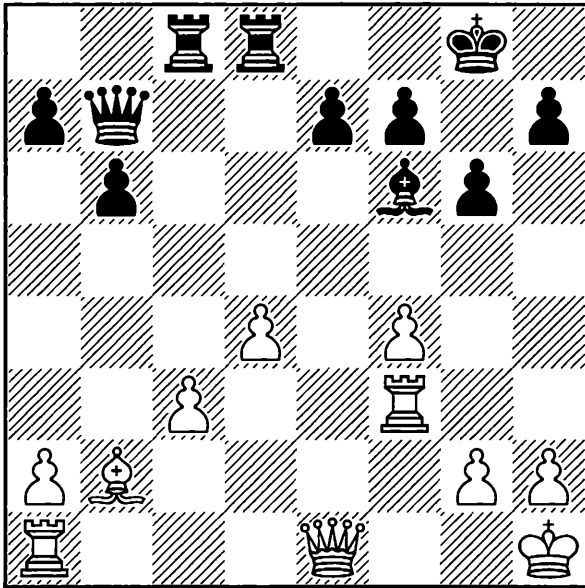
Outpost on the d-file.

12.♘e3 ♖c6 13.♙d1 ♘d5 14.♘xd4 cxd4 15.♘xd5 ♖xd5 16.♙f3 ♖d7 17.♙xb7 ♖xb7

White has relieved his position by the exchanges, but the open c-file forces him into the next move, which loosens things a bit.

18.c4 dxc3 19.bxc3 ♖ac8 20.♙b2 ♖fd8 21.♖f3 ♙f6 22.d4

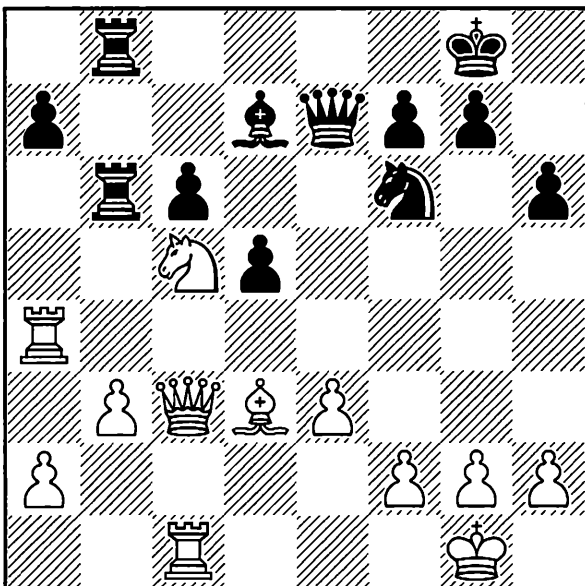
132



And we now reach, with reversed colours, a well-known position from the Queen's Gambit. Compare it with the following start to the consultation game Nimzowitsch – Prof. Kudrjawzew and Dr Landau, Dorpat 1910:

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♙g5 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♙e7 8.e3 0–0 9.♙e2 ♘c6 10.♘xc6 bxc6 and we now have with reversed colours the same pawn formation as in Thomas–Alekhine. There followed 11.0–0 ♙e6 12.♖c1 ♖b8 13.♙c2 ♙d7 14.♖fd1 “The theme up for discussion here is the well-known one of the isolated pair of pawns on c6 and d5.” (A.N. in *Deutsches Wochenschach* 1910, page 460) 14...♘e8 15.♙xe7 ♙xe7 16.♘a4 ♘f6 17.♘c5 ♖b6 18.♖d4 ♖fb8 19.b3 ♙e8 20.♙d3 h6 21.♙c3 ♙d7 22.♖a4

133



with a significant positional advantage. Now back to Alekhine's game.

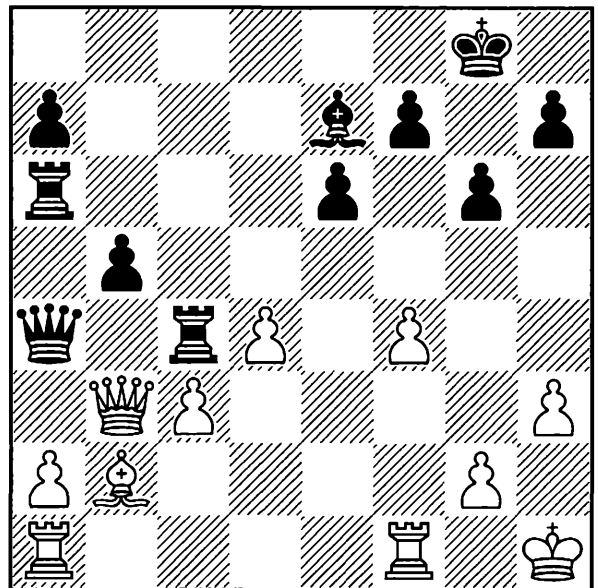
22...♙d5 23.♙e3 ♙b5 24.♙d2 ♖d5 25.h3 e6 26.♖e1 ♙a4 27.♖a1 b5 28.♙d1 ♖c4

The restricted advance on the c-file as a springboard to the a-file: see section 5, page 37. Notice the similarity between the manoeuvre in the present game and that in the consultation game.

29.♙b3 ♖d6 30.♙h2 ♖a6

The d-file too is used as a springboard. 31.♖ff1 ♙e7 32.♙h1

134



32...♖cc6

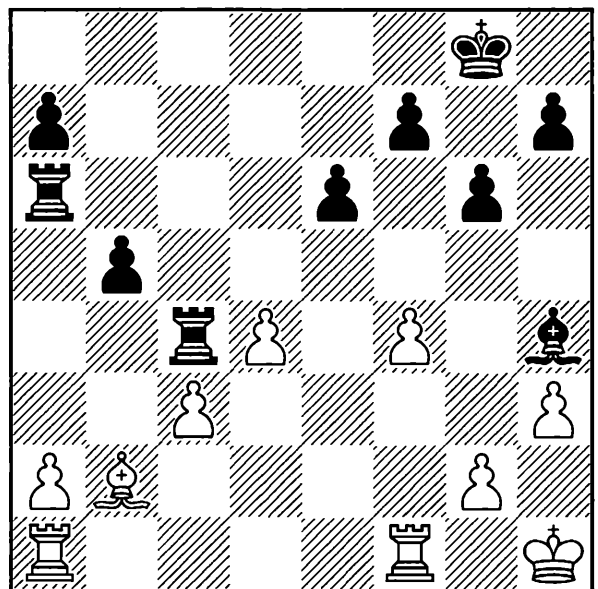
Very neat! He is planning to regroup with ♙c4, ♖aa4 and ♖ca6.

33.♖fe1 ♙h4 34.♖f1

White dare not weaken his own base with, e.g. 34.♖e5? ♙xb3 35.axb3 ♖xa1† 36.♙xa1 b4 37.c4 ♖a6 38.♙b2 ♖a2 and Black wins.

34...♙c4! 35.♙xc4 ♖xc4

135



The exchange is grist to Black’s mill, because a2 has now become very weak. Notice how the exchange has come about as a result of the quiet occupation of strategically important squares, almost automatically one might say. A beginner looks to exchange in a different manner: he pursues the piece which is tempting him with offers of an exchange and gets turned down; a master occupies the strong squares and the exchange which he wanted falls into his lap like a ripe apple (see chapter 5, page 103).

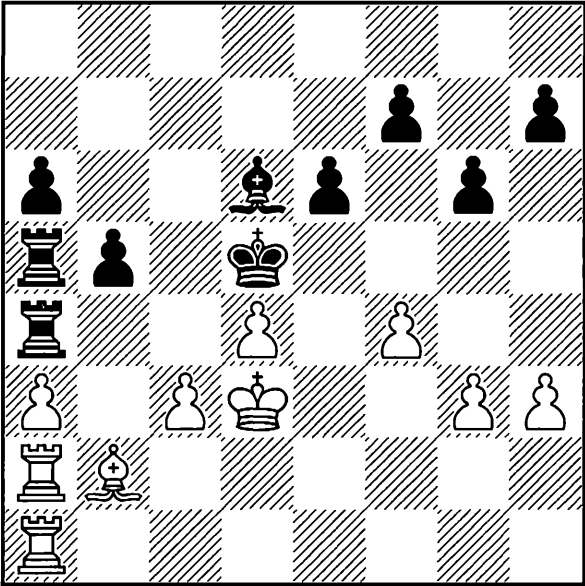
36.a3 ♖e7 37.♟fb1 ♖d6 38.g3 ♔f8 39.♔g2 ♔e7

Centralising the king (see chapter 6, page 109).
40.♔f2 ♔d7 41.♔e2 ♔c6 42.♟a2 ♟ca4 43.♟ba1 ♔d5

The process of centralisation has been completed.

44.♔d3 ♟6a5 45.♖c1 a6 46.♖b2

136



46...h5

A fresh attack, and yet the logical follow up to the play on the queenside: the white rooks are chained to the a-pawn, and even if we tried to make out that the black rooks are similarly immobile (which is however not the case, at least they can be brought back into play via c4 to attack c3), Black still has an undoubted plus in the form of the more enterprising position of his king. And the fact that this plus is worth mentioning

(for the advantage would be almost illusory if his opponent’s rooks were more mobile) is due to the circumstance that the white rooks are short of breathing space because of Black’s diversion.

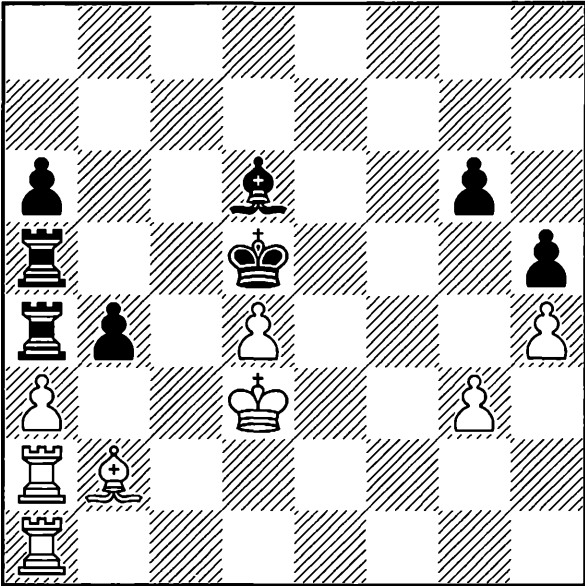
Thus the attack on the extreme flank has noticeably contributed to the importance of the greater mobility of his king. The strategic contact between the two apparently separate battlefields is therefore quite clearly proved, and the same is the case on the kingside: h7-h5 should help to provoke h3-h4, enabling e6-e5 to be extremely effective (g3 is exposed). In the strategic sense, this is a very instructive example, which you are recommended to study carefully.

47.h4 f6 48.♖c1 e5

The breakthrough which seals his opponent’s fate.

49.fxe5 fxe5 50.♖b2 exd4 51.cxd4 b4!

137



Obvious though this move may be, it should delight connoisseurs that the breakthrough’s only aim was to get rid of the nuisance that was c3. It is beautiful that the master should content himself with such a modest goal!

52.axb4 ♟xa2 53.bxa5 ♟xb2 0–1

The “restricted advance” was here carried out in virtuoso fashion.

We now take our leave of the open file and turn to passed pawns.

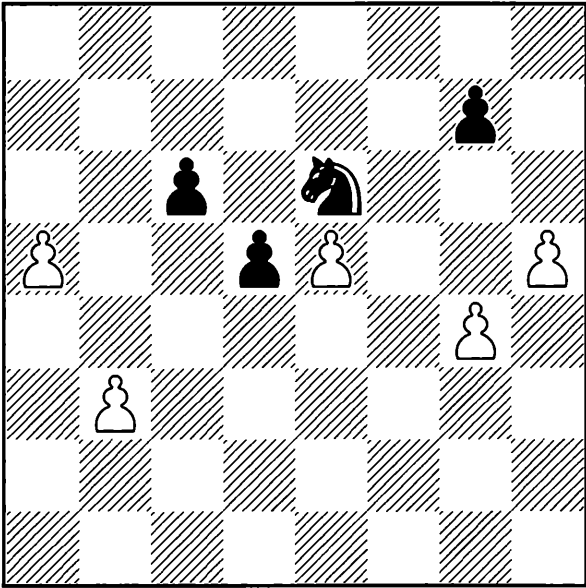
The passed pawn

1. Getting our bearings

The neighbour who can be a nuisance and the person living opposite who is definitely unpleasant • The candidate • The birth of the passed pawn • The rule about the candidate

A pawn is “passed” if there is no enemy pawn in front of it (on the same file) and on either of the neighbouring files, and cannot thus be prevented from promoting to a queen.

138



The white a- and e-pawns and the black d-pawn are passed. The e-pawn is “passed”, but blockaded.

If a pawn is checked (blockaded) in its advance only by opposing pieces, this in no way runs counter to the concept of being “passed”. There is the recognition that when a pawn is like that, then the enemy piece must sacrifice a part of its own effectiveness just to keep an eye on it, our pawn, and to keep that eye on it continuously.

Moreover, when we remember another circumstance, namely that the pawn as such has another advantage over a piece in that it is a born

defender, we gradually get the point that a pawn is worthy of our respect.

What is the best piece to blockade an ambitious enemy pawn? – The pawn.

What is the most secure defender of one our own pieces? – The pawn.

What is the cheapest piece on the board? – The pawn, once more, because pieces are not suited to long-term activities (such as blockading and defending), which will remove them from more active service. This is much less the case when a pawn is employed in such a role.

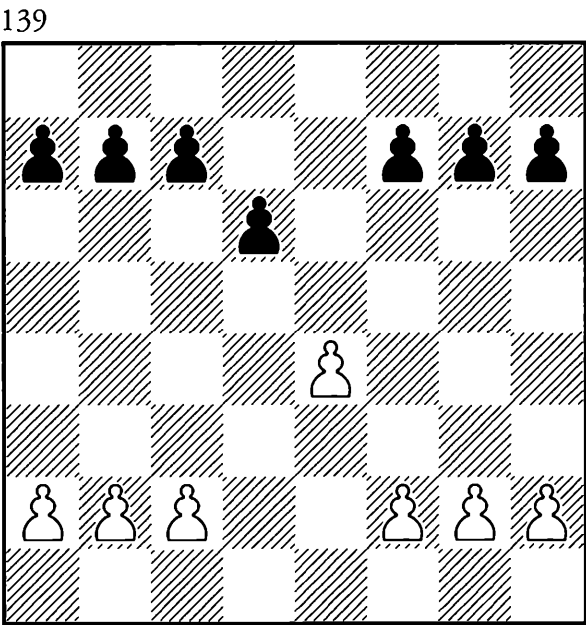
In diagram 138 neither the b-pawn nor the g-pawn is passed, though the former is less restricted than the latter since the b-pawn at least does not have an opposing pawn directly in front of it. Such a pawn might be described as an enemy, whereas an opposing pawn on a neighbouring file is more like a kindly neighbour, who can be a bit annoying. For example, whenever we rush down the stairs on an important errand, it can and does happen that a neighbour appears and engages us in a long conversation (about the weather, or politics or the price of beer) to hold us up, just like the c-pawn does to the b-pawn in our diagram.

However, a talkative neighbour is not exactly a bitter enemy, just as in our case a neighbouring pawn in our way is not an antagonist.

In our diagram, White’s g-pawn had no desire to move forward, whilst the b-pawn can at least try to do so.

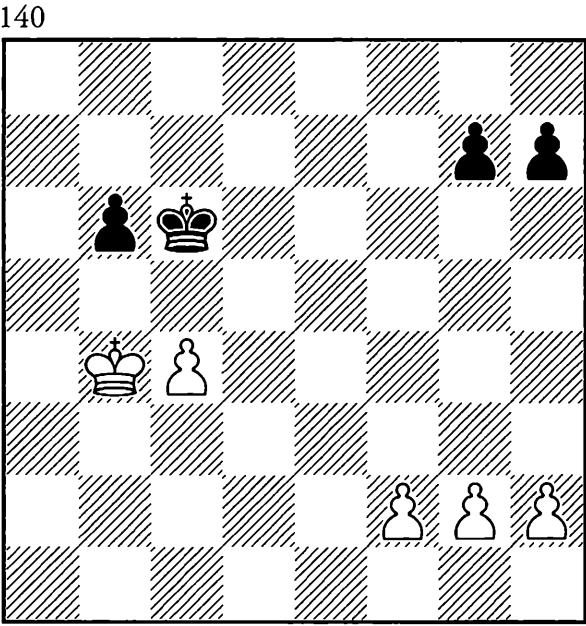
Let us now take a look at the “family” of the passed pawn. In this connection, we must first mention the majority. At the start of the game all the pawns are equally divided, but after the very first pawn exchange in the centre (e.g. 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.♞xd4) majorities are visible:

White has 4 to 3 on the kingside and Black 4 to 3 on the queenside. Imagine that to check any advance of the e4-pawn the black d-pawn were on d6.



As the game continues, Black can get in the advance f7-f5 (killing off the central passed pawn¹), and then the majority would be clearer to see: f2, g2, h2 against g7 and h7.

Rule: Every sound, uncompromised pawn majority is capable of yielding a passed pawn.²



Of the three kingside pawns, the f-pawn is the only one with none opposite. So the f-pawn is

the least restricted and therefore has the greatest claim to becoming a *passed* pawn. So it is the rightful *candidate*. So in any pawn majority, the one with no enemy pawn opposite is the candidate, leading to the laconic rule:

The candidate takes precedence

A rule which is dictated not only by strategic necessity, but much more, as I am sure you will admit, by sheer “good manners”. (Therefore no well brought up man, such as we all think ourselves to be, can ever forget it.) The rule could be presented with scientific precision as follows:

The spearhead of the advance is the candidate; the other pawns are to be considered as there to support it, so first f2-f4-f5 and then g2-g4-g5 and f5-f6.

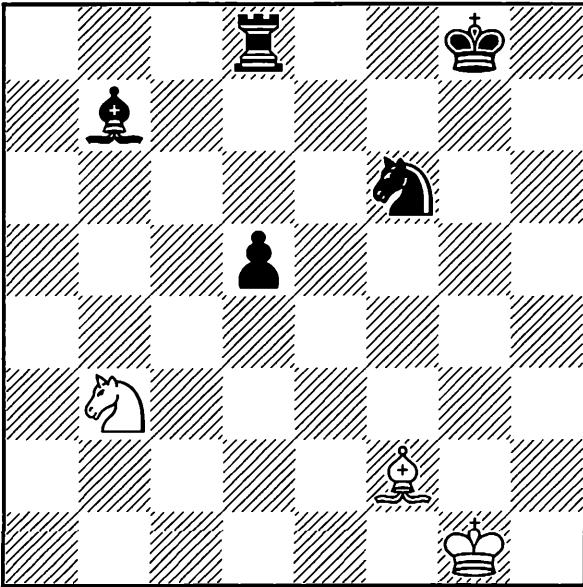
With the black pawns on g6 and h5, we play f2-f4, g2-g3 (not h2-h3 first, else Black cripples us with ...h4), h2-h3, g3-g4 and f4-f5. How simple! And yet, how often does one see weaker players advance the g-pawn in our diagram; then comes g7-g5 and the majority is of no value to us. I have often racked my brains as to why less experienced players start with g2-g4. The explanation is simple: they are undecided whether to start on the right (h4) or on the left (f4), so being unable to make up their minds they do what all solid citizens do: they steer to the centre ground.

2. Blockading passed pawns

The reasoning behind the blockade and why the said blockade is and must be of great importance to the practical player and not just to chess theorists • The very complicated links between the passed pawn and the blockader, because the said links are always in flux • Strong and weak, flexible and inflexible blockading pieces

¹ According to our definition, the e-pawn is not “passed”, but a “90% passed pawn” (see page 76) – editor
² This rule is not universally correct. There must be in addition a distance of at least two files from an opposing majority, as can be seen from a comparison of diagrams 139 and 140 – editor

141



In this position Black has a passed pawn, but it can be *blockaded* by ♖b3-d4 or ♔f2-d4.

By blockade, we mean the physical stopping of an opposing pawn by a piece.

This stopping is achieved by placing one's own piece directly in front of the pawn. But here, as in all other cases, the question arises: is blockading not an unnecessary use of energy? Is it not enough simply to keep the pawn under observation (here by the effect of the knight and bishop attacking the d4-square)? Is blockading a worthy task for one of our officers (the pieces)? Does this not significantly lessen its mobility if it takes its blockading task seriously? Is it not reduced to the rank of a stopped (immobile) foot soldier or pawn? In short, is blockading an economical use of forces?

I am glad to be able to offer you what I believe is an exhaustive solution to the problem I have raised. Your mediocre critic would sum up the problem in a short comment: passed pawns must be stopped. But to my mind this betrays a poverty of thought! The why and the wherefore are extraordinarily important. It would be ridiculous to write a novel without a psychological element. It would be just as ridiculous in my opinion to try to write a manual about chess strategy without immersing oneself in the innermost being of the participating pieces.

No matter how unusual the following scenario may seem, I can only insist on the fact that for me the passed pawn and all the other actors have a soul, just like human beings. They too have desires that slumber unrecognised within them, and fears of which they are scarcely aware (see preface, page 5).

But quite apart from that, a detailed case for the need to blockade is of more practical use than those who scorn theory (theory in the sense of a chess philosophy rather than opening theory) might be inclined to accept. But of course, I do not consider the presence of practical plans as an extenuating circumstance, for what have I to do with extenuating circumstances! The attentive reader will not blame me, because he has long since grasped that knowledge as such, even without specific plans, must be of extremely great practical value! And it is for you, that attentive reader, that my book has been written.

And now, let us get down to brass tacks. There are three reasons which make a blockade logically necessary; they will be analysed below under 2a, 2b and 2c. Section 3 will examine more closely the effectiveness of the blockading piece.

2a. The first reason: the passed pawn is a criminal, which belongs under lock and key: gentler measures such as police surveillance are not enough! • The passed pawn's lust to expand. • The awakening of the men in the rear.

We now return to diagram 141. Black's troops (bishop, rook and knight) are as we say *grouped* around the passed pawn, i.e. they co-operate in a complex, with the d5-pawn at its heart. The knight and bishop protect the passed pawn and the rook on d8 "supports" it as well as lending it some force to back up its advance. Here the pawn's lust to expand is so powerful (and can be seen externally in the fact that all the officers, despite their class consciousness, gather picturesquely around a mere footsoldier) that the d-pawn seems ready in many cases to advance alone, even should such an action cost it its life: e.g. d5-d4, ♖(b3) or ♔(f2) takes d4.

Now Black’s reserves have suddenly been activated: the ♖b7 has received a diagonal aiming at the white king, the rook an open file and the knight a new square in the centre. This forced advance with suicide (in order to open lines) is otherwise only characteristic of a *pawn roller* (a compact, advancing pawn mass in the centre), cf. the game at odds on page 18, and thus constitutes brilliant proof of the lust to expand of a passed pawn, because the mobile centre (the pawn roller) is endowed with incredible energy. The freeing of a square for a knight represents however, in our opinion, a quite special characteristic of the advance of a passed pawn.

Thus we can say: the first compelling and logical reason for a blockade is that a passed pawn is such a dangerous “criminal” that police surveillance (♜b3 and ♖f2) is not sufficient; it belongs in prison, that is to say total removal of its freedom by the blockading knight on d4.

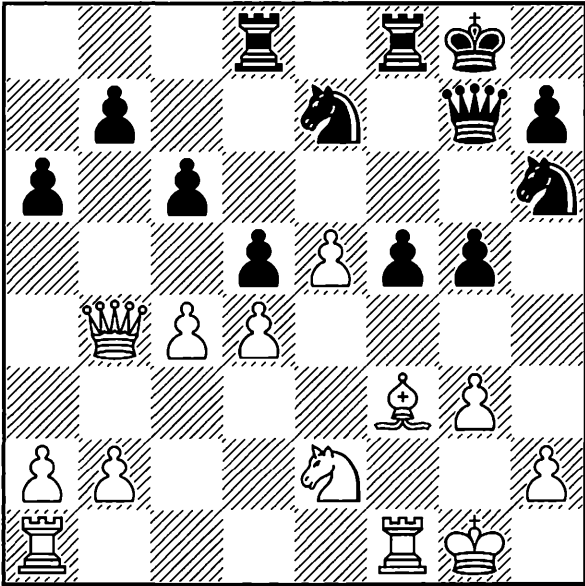
The process we have just glimpsed (the sacrifice of the passed pawn during its advance) is quite typical, although it may not appear fully necessary here, in order for a whole host of pieces behind it to come to life. Sometimes only one such piece benefits from this, but that is quite sufficient.

Why did we want our three pieces to come to life? Well, for the same reason that Ibsen in the final scene of his play “Ghosts” transformed the boring development of an illness into a dramatically moving entry. And just as humdrum critics (and doctors) so terribly attacked poor Ibsen, because he had falsified the clinical facts, I expect the same sort of chess critics to take me to task for exaggeration.

And now some examples:
Te Kolsté – Nimzowitsch
Baden-Baden 1925

Black, whose queenside and centre appear to be under threat is trying to promote his candidate. Since the candidate is 90 per cent a passed pawn, then the same rules apply.

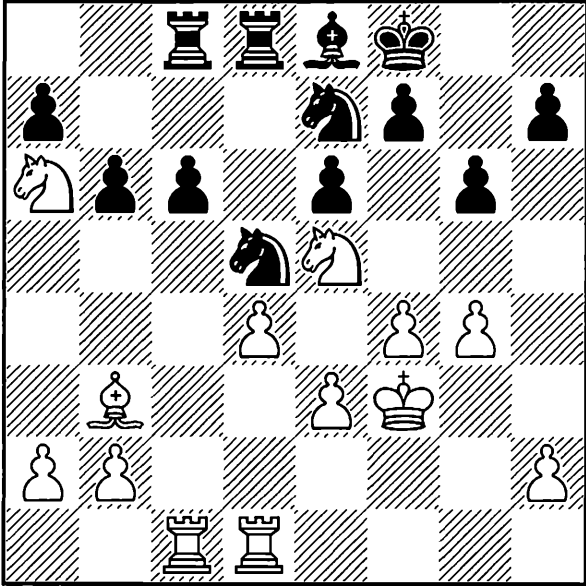
142



Next came 19...f4! 20.gxf4 g4! 21.♖g2 ♜hf5. So, a passed pawn (candidate) is sacrificed and the square (f5) is freed for the piece behind it, the ♜h6. Next came 22.♞b3 dxc4 23.♞xc4† ♔h8 24.♞c3 h5 25.♞ad1 h4 26.♞d3 ♜d5 27.♞d2 ♞g8. Black supports his pawn majority with all his might. 28.♖xd5 cxd5 29.♔h1 g3 and Black had an attack.

In the game **Alekhine – Treybal**, Baden-Baden 1925, we have the following interesting exchange:

143



27.e4 The mobile centre starts to move. 27...f6 (because 27...♜c7 costs the c-pawn)* 28.exd5 fxe5 The passed pawn which has suddenly

*The c-pawn is sufficiently protected after 27...♜c7, e.g. 28.♜xc7 ♞xc7 29.d5 exd5 30.exd5 ♞d6. It is not clear which line Nimzowitsch was thinking of here – editor

appeared on d5 appears to be a one-day wonder, the fruit of sudden inspiration and apparently about to decay as quickly. But appearances are deceptive: even this ethereal and poetic butterfly bows to the iron laws of chess logic. Next came **29.d6!!**. Here the intention in sacrificing the pawn is not the clearing of the square it came from, and yet the procedure obeys the spirit if not the letter of our rule: the pawn wishes to perish by advancing (see page 76). The main line would now be **29...e4†!** (to prevent, after 29...♞xd6 the possible recapture 30.fxe5) **30.♔xe4 ♞xd6 31.♔e5!! ♞cd8 32.♙xe6⁵**; note that only the pawn sacrifice 29.d6 made it possible for the king to join in.

And now, let us look at a whole game, which shows in practical play what we are studying here: the important effect of the threat.

P.S. Leonhardt – Nimzowitsch

San Sebastian 1912

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 ♖f6 4.♖c3 exd4

Surrendering the centre; Black is seeking to restrict e4 later; see also game 2, page 53.

5.♖xd4 ♙e7 6.♙e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♖c6 8.♖xc6 bxc6

Both players gain from the exchange: Black gets a more compact central mass (securing the outpost square d5 from a possible ♖d5, but a7 is isolated, and c5 can also become weak as in the game).

9.b3 d5

9...♞e8 seems quite playable here then ♙f8 equals extended restriction.

10.e5 ♖e8 11.f4 f5

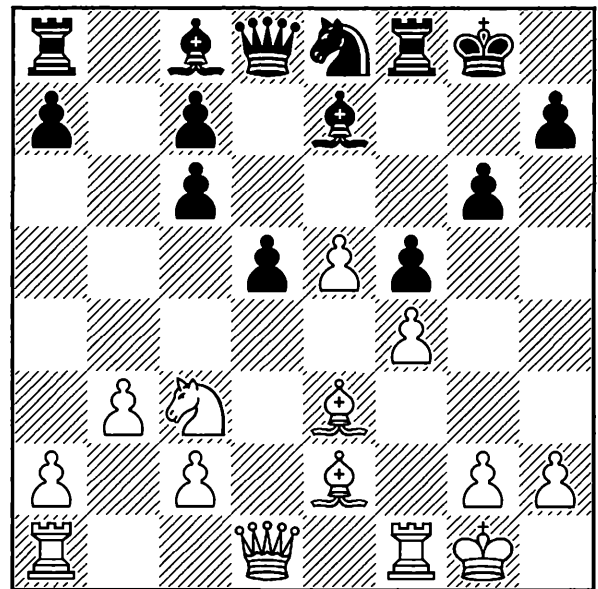
Or else White plays f4-f5 with a significant attack.

12.♙e3 g6!

The e5-pawn must be blockaded, but it does matter whether this is done by the bishop or the knight: the former would be inflexible (poor range, at best g4 – I mean that g2-g4, which would attack the minority, would be made more difficult) and also open to attack, namely by a knight which could pop up on c5, from where it could not be

driven away. On the other hand, a knight on e6 would not only be an excellent blockader, but very aggressive at the same time (e.g. preparing g6-g5). Finding the correct blockading piece is often of the utmost importance.

144



13.♖a4! ♖g7 14.♙d2 ♙d7

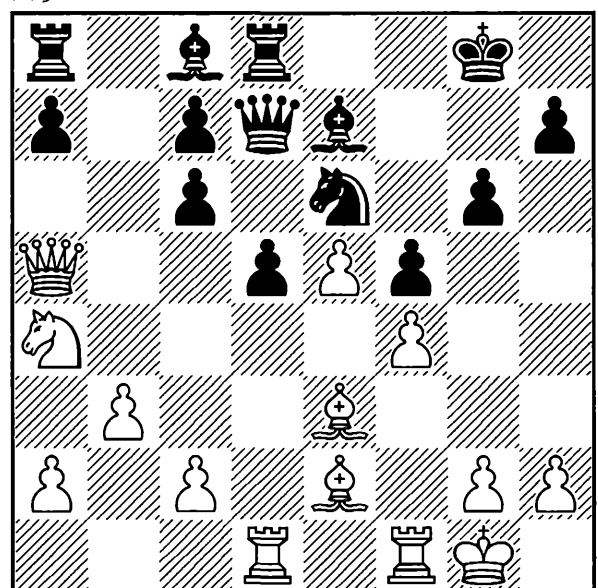
To follow up with ♞d8 as quickly as possible.

15.♙a5

Combines continuing pressure against c5 (cf. note to move 8 by Black) with play against the weak (isolated) a7-pawn.

15...♖e6 16.♞ad1 ♞d8

145



17.♖c5?

A positional error. White should be working to retain the knight as the final blockader to arrive on the square or to exchange it for nothing less than the other knight.

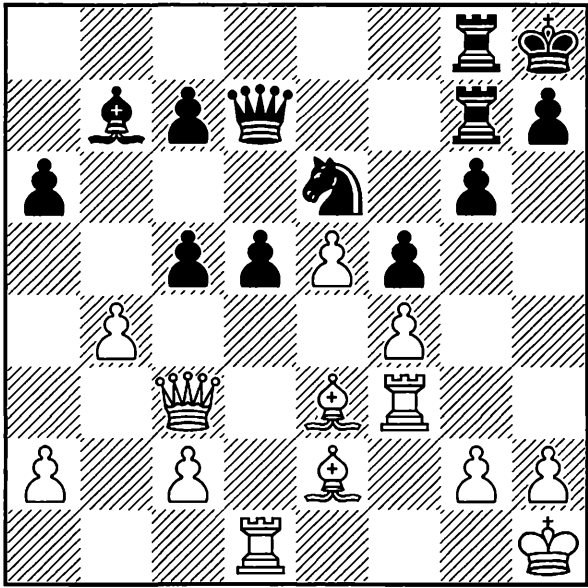
Here the two knights are the principal actors (because they are the best blockaders, as discussed already) and should either side give up one of these splendid steeds for a bishop, then he has made a bad bargain. The best move was 17.♖c5. 17...♖xc5 18.♖xc5 ♖b7 19.♗f3 ♔f7 20.♗h3 ♔g7 21.♗f1 ♖e8 22.♗hf3 ♖ad8 23.♗d1

Because 23.♗xa7? is out on account of 23...♖a8 24.♗xb7 ♖eb8. There is not much White can do. 23...a6 24.b4 ♔h8 25.♗a3 ♖g8 26.♗c3 ♖g7 27.♔h1 ♖dg8

Black is planning g6-g5; the blockading ♖e6 will be of incalculable use in this. A comparison of the two blockaders ♖e6 and ♖c5 in the present position is much in the favour of the knight. Here the bishop is not a bad blockader in itself, but its effectiveness in other matters is minimal.

28.♖e3 c5!

146



And the pawn's lust to expand comes to the fore. This is a procedure which we have discussed several times: a pawn sacrifice opens up the diagonal for the bishop. But now, you will object, the c6-pawn is neither a passed pawn nor a candidate! Correct, and yet logically it must be full of the lust to expand, because otherwise White would not have blockaded it for hours. So it takes its revenge for having been restricted.

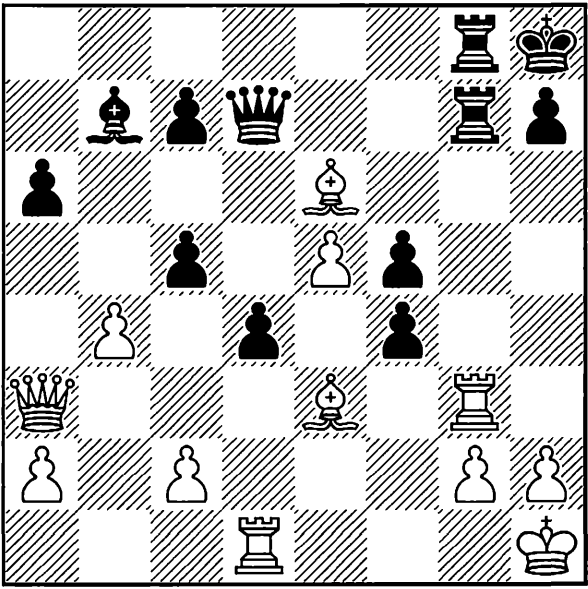
29.♗g3

The best was 29.bxc5 d4 30.♗xd4 ♖xd4 31.♖xd4 ♖xf3 32.♖xf3 with two bishops and two pawns for two rooks (suggested by Schlechter). 29...d4 30.♗a3 g5 31.♖c4 gxf4

Also good was 31...♖d5, just in order to conserve the illustrious ♖e6.

32.♖xe6

147



32...♖xg2†!⁶

Now the bishop gets rough: the death of the ♖e6 has completely unhinged it!

33.♔g1

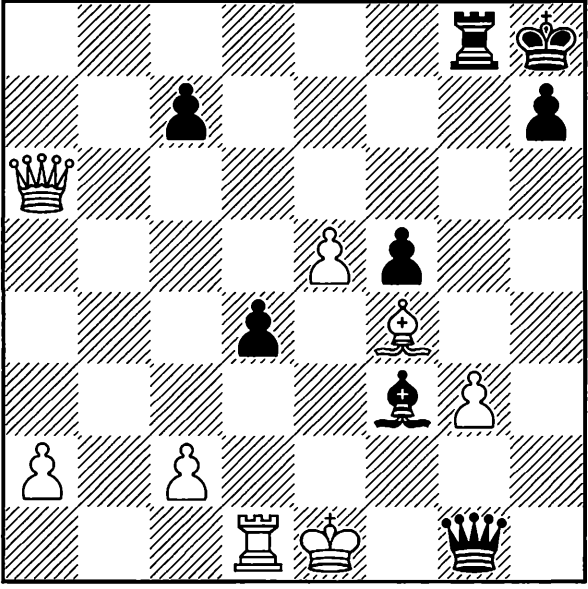
But look, it is still alive, the bold ruffian, and in fact, after 33.♔xg2 (33.♗xg2? ♗c6!) 33...♗c6† 34.♔f1 f×g3 35.♖xg8 g×h2 it would have taken its bloody revenge.

33...♗xe6

If you thought 32...♖xg2† was a bolt from the blue, then you did not completely understand the logic behind the bishop which had been restricted “for years” suddenly going ape.

34.♖xf4 ♖b7 35.bxc5 ♗d5 and won: 36.c6 ♖xc6 37.♔f2 ♖xg3 38.h×g3 ♗g2† 39.♔e1 ♖f3 40.♗xa6 ♗g1† 0–1

148



This game clearly shows the validity of the “first reason”. We now move on to the analysis of the second reason.

2b. The second reason: optimism in chess and the immunity of the blockading piece from attacks from the front • The opposing pawn as our protective wall • The more profound mission of the blockading piece • The weak point

In my book *Die Blockade*, I wrote as follows: “The second reason we are dealing with is both strategically and pedagogically important. In chess, in the long run the deciding factor is optimism. I mean that it is of psychological value to develop within ourselves the gift of being happy with small advantages. The beginner is only really happy when he can mate his opponent or perhaps even more when he can win his queen, because for a beginner that is possibly the greatest triumph. The master, on the other hand, is happy and royally content when he manages to spot the hint of a pawn weakness in some distant corner of the left-hand side of the board!

This optimism which I have thus described is the indispensable psychological basis for positional play. It is this optimism which gives us the strength, no matter in what trouble we are, to see a light at the end of the tunnel. As an example, we can see that in our case an opponent’s passed pawn constitutes without doubt a serious problem. But there is a chink of light showing through the problem. The fact is that in blockading this pawn, we are fortunate enough to place one of our pieces in some safety in the shadow of the said pawn; in other words the blockading piece need not fear a frontal attack. Example: black passed pawn on e4; a blockading white ♖e3 cannot be attacked by a rook playing ♜e8-e3, and so is to some extent safe there.”

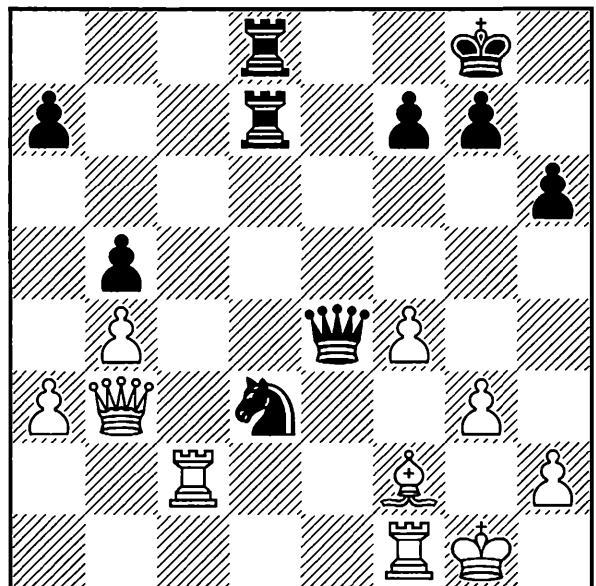
To the ideas expressed in *Die Blockade* let me add only that the relative safety in which the blockading piece is positioned must actually and in the most profound sense be symptomatic of a deeper mission, which it (the blockader) has

to carry out. If Nature and our opponent create such security for our blockader, the latter must be selected in such a way that it is capable of achieving great things. And in fact, things work out like that and our blockading square often turns out to be a “weak” square for our opponent.

I can well imagine that the route to an understanding of the concept of a “weak square” may have come by the blockading square. Our opponent had a passed pawn, we stopped it and then it suddenly became clear that the piece we used to stop the pawn was exerting highly unpleasant pressure. The enemy passed pawn is a natural protected post from which the blockader can carry out his reconnaissance work. Once the concept has been understood it was then *extended* and *dematerialised*. Extended because we went on to describe as weak any square directly in front of an enemy pawn, whether the pawn was passed or not, as long as we had the possibility of establishing ourselves on it without being able to be driven out. As time has gone by, we have softened our approach to such a common or garden pawn, and why not? It constitutes a good shelter from enemy rooks which are limited to a straight line approach.

But the concept of the weak square has become dematerialised, that is to say separated from any idea that material must be present. When, e.g., Dr Lasker speaks of weak white squares here,

149



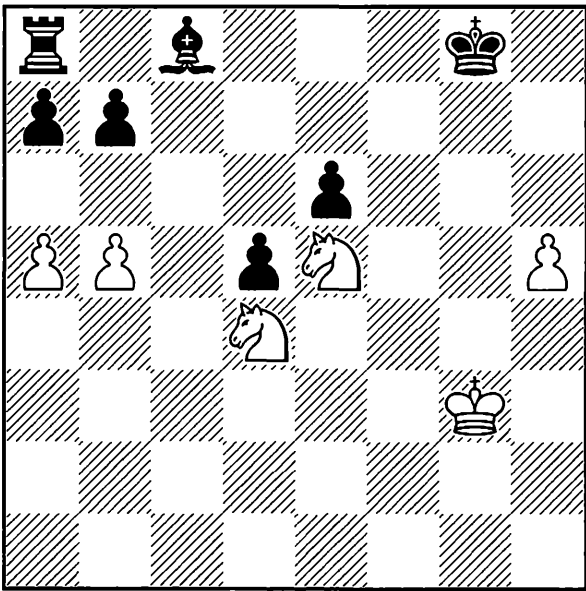
the opposing pawn is no longer a *sine qua non* for the piece which is occupying the weak square.

2c. The third reason: The crippling effect which results from a blockade is by no means “local” in its nature.

Transferring the effects of the crippling to the rear • The dual nature of the pawn as such • The pessimistic outlook on life and how this can be transformed into the deepest of melancholy

In the game Leonhardt – Nimzowitsch (page 77) the ♖c5 had blockaded the c-pawn; amongst other effects, this reduced the ♖b7 to a prisoner in its own camp. This state of affairs seems typical; all too often a whole complex of opposing pieces is affected in sympathy. Large areas of the board can be rendered useless for freer manoeuvring and even the whole opposing position can be become quite rigid: in other words the crippling effect has been transferred from a blockaded pawn to the rear echelons.

150



The e6- and d5-pawns are thoroughly blockaded, and as a result of that Black’s whole position has taken on a totally rigid cast: the bishop and rook are prisoners in their own camp and despite his material deficit White has winning chances.

The state of affairs sketched in here should not surprise us: we have often referred to the fact that every pawn can be an obstacle for its own pieces; getting rid of it can even quite often be a goal we heartily long for, especially when we are planning to open lines but also to seize a square for a knight (section 2a, page 75). Thus the blockade does not

just annoy the blockaded pawn itself, but also its brothers-in-arms.

A propos of pawns: it is important for the student to realise that there is a certain duality in the innermost being of the pawn; on the one hand, as illustrated above, the pawn wishes to commit suicide, on the other it hangs doggedly on to life, because the presence of pawns is not only important for the endgame but it also much more helpful in stopping the opponent’s pieces establishing themselves, or in other words in avoiding weak points in one’s own camp. The painful impression made on a mobile pawn by an enemy blockade can be explained in purely human or psychological terms: the pawn is not free of a pessimistic outlook on life (the duality of its inner being). Is it then so surprising that such pessimism is transformed into the deepest, blackest melancholy (which can also befall a *white* pawn!) on the first tragic conflict it meets? And that in addition it conveys such feelings of melancholy and depression to its fellow pieces?

However that may be, the mobility of a (central) passed pawn is often the lifeblood of the whole position and the restriction of the blood flow will naturally affect the whole body. As can be seen, there are significant arguments *in favour* of setting up a blockade as soon as possible, whereas on closer inspection it is only in rare cases that the arguments *against* hold true (namely that it is degrading for a piece to be reduced in value to a sentry, a blockader). To understand this, we must turn our attention to the blockading piece.

3. The main and secondary functions of the blockading piece

How it behaves, when it strikes and threatens, and how it does so when it goes off on holiday • The concept of elasticity • Different forms of the same • Strong and weak blockaders • How the blockader comes to terms with multiple demands on it, partly without impetus, and why I consider that to be proof of the vitality of the blockader • The “apparently degrading use of the officer as a sentry” turns out to be a wrong-headed opinion

The main function of the blockader appears to be as a competent stopper of the relevant pawn. In this sense, it itself tends to be immobile. And yet (for it has great vitality!) it is not rare for it to display considerable activity. Namely:

1. From its post, it can deliver threats (see the game Leonhardt – Nimzowitsch, page 77; the ♖e6 prepared g5)
2. A certain elasticity, which shows itself when the blockader does leave its square in appropriate circumstances.

It seems justified in setting off on its travels:

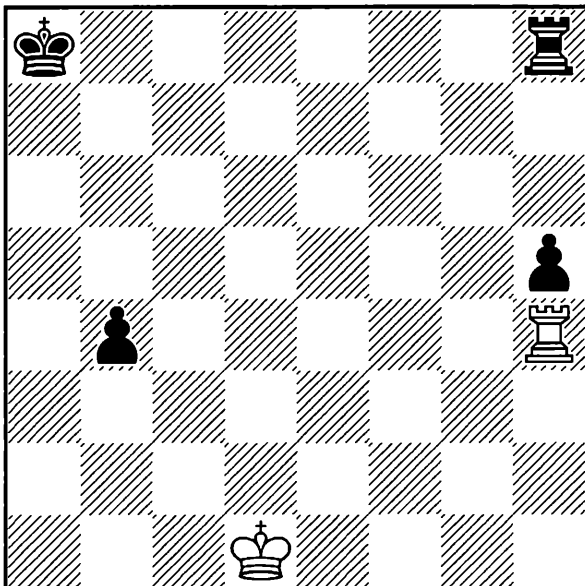
- a) if the journey looks promising: but the connections must all consist of express trains,
- b) if it can return in time to blockade on another square the pawn which has advanced in its absence,
- c) if it is in a position to leave a deputy behind to take care of the blockade.

It is clear that the deputy must be chosen from among the pieces which are protecting the blockader. Although it may not seem so, the last circumstance is of great importance; it shows how much the elasticity (at least in the form described under c) depends on the greater or lesser degree of the effectiveness of the blockade.

For a), see Nimzowitsch – Nilsson, page 97.

For b), consider the following diagram.

151

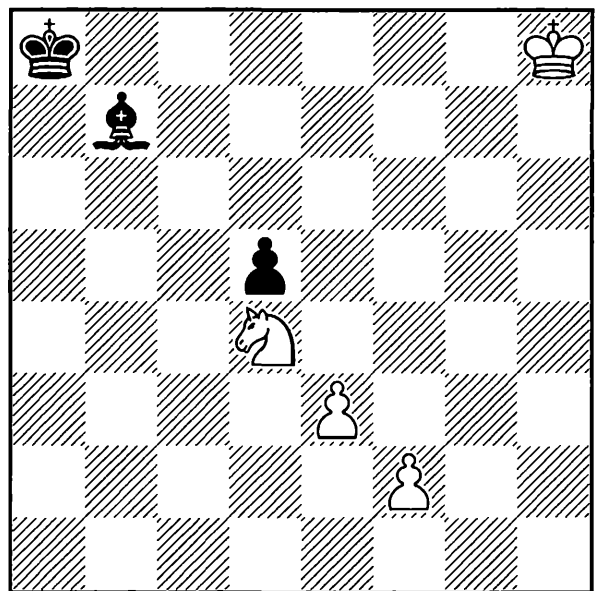


In this simplest of all positions, the blockading piece will take a short holiday: 1. ♖xb4. Of course the passed pawn exploits this to advance: 1... h4 2. ♖b2 h3 3. ♖h2. Our rook appears in the office, bows to the boss, greets his colleagues and then looking fresh and rested (though he has had to put himself out and about) reappears at his blockading desk. However, in the meantime his seat has changed from h4 to h2. The manoeuvre you have seen here has been performed again and again.

For c), see the ♖f4 in the game Nimzowitsch – Freymann, page 100.

The preceding little discussion (a, b, c) has shown that elasticity is *low* if the pawn being blockaded is *far* advanced. The blockading piece can deploy the most elasticity against a semi-passed pawn in the centre of the board.

152



The blockader on d4 is very flexible here and able to go on long journeys in all directions.

So much for elasticity; now let us analyse the effect of the blockade as such.

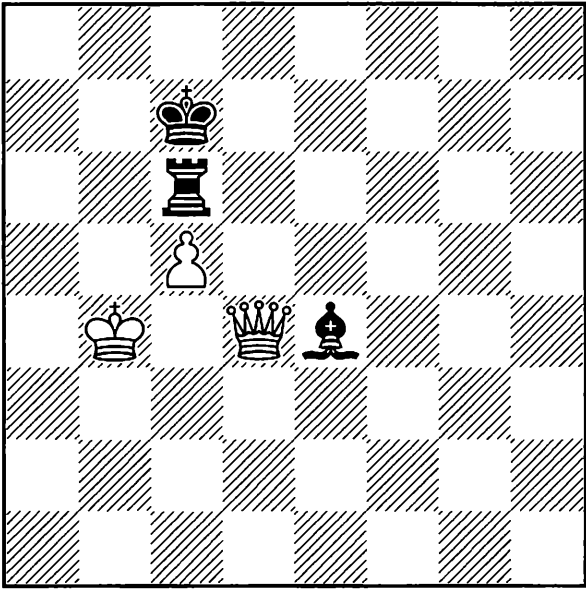
The effect of the blockade

The power to blockade has to be developed knowingly and systematically, unlike elasticity which frequently simply happens.

The effect of the blockade is heightened by calling up reserve troops, which in their turn must have safe posts.

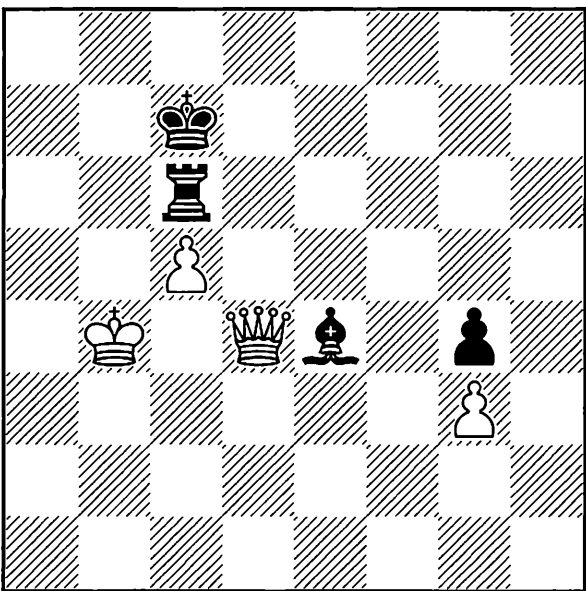
Compare the following two diagrams.

153



Black to move. Is the ♖c6 a strong blockader?

154



Black to move. Can the blockader maintain its position?

In the first, the bishop will wander to g6 on grounds of personal safety, depriving the blockader on c6 of valuable support. It is dangerous for the bishop to tramp up and down the long diagonal, because the eye of the law is on it (♔d4)! After 1...♗g6 comes 2.♕b5 and now the attempt by 2...♗e8 to reinstate the strategic link which was broken is powerfully refuted by 3.♔e5† ♕d7 4.♔xe8† ♕xe8 5.♕xc6. On the other hand, in diagram 154 the bishop can go to f3, where it would be safe and immovable. Thus the ♖c6 gains in importance and a draw appears unavoidable.

When studying the outpost, we came across a similar state of affairs. The blockader also derives its strength not from itself but much more from the strategic contact with the rear. A blockading piece which is either not protected or poorly protected will not be able to resist the opponent's pieces if they push sharply against it; it will either be put to flight or destroyed, after which the pawn it had been blockading will continue its march forward. Here it is particularly important for the defender to observe a rule which will be discussed in the second part of the book, the *overprotection* of the strategic point. The blockading square is above all a strategically important point, so defending it more than is strictly required is sound common sense. (So do not wait for your opponent to pile attack upon attack, but protect "just in case", just as before a ball one is accustomed to get in a good night's sleep.) So a remarkable constellation has been formed: whereas the blockading effect can only be heightened or maintained by painstakingly bringing up the reserves, the other virtues of the blockading piece (elasticity and threats made from its blockading square) turn out to be quite vital, i.e. they can be deployed without any great effort (they prosper like thistles on stony ground). There is an explanation for this:

1. the state of affairs described in c), when the protecting piece is able to replace a blockading piece which has moved,
2. the fact that the blockading square, as we saw in 2b), tends to be a weak square for your opponent.

According to my system, contact with that strategically important square must have a wonderful effect. This will be considered in more depth under positional play; but the student may already compare and check things, e.g. thinking of the 5th special case on the 7th rank under c), in connection with the legend of Sviatogor (see page 49). To sum up, there is the following principle:

Naturally when choosing a blockading piece, you should take into account its elasticity and the threats it can deliver. And yet, frequently it is enough to strengthen the blockading effect as such; elasticity and threats then come about of their own accord.

We consider that what has been sketched in here is extraordinarily significant. It must above all make it clear that a piece is not letting itself down by accepting the invitation to perform blockading duties, because the blockading square turns out to be a very honourable post, a safe one and yet one which permits initiative.

By looking over some master games or some of your own, you may check out the truth of our observations here. You should compare the various blockading pieces, their advantages, their fate and how they failed or succeeded and then you will gain more from a deep friendship with one of the actors than a superficial acquaintance with the whole cast! “A true master can make something out of nothing.” Such a sentiment is good not only for someone who wants to be a master, but for every student.

4. The struggle against the blockading piece

Uprooting • “Changez les bloqueurs!” • How we replace the “inadequate” blockader by a more appropriate one

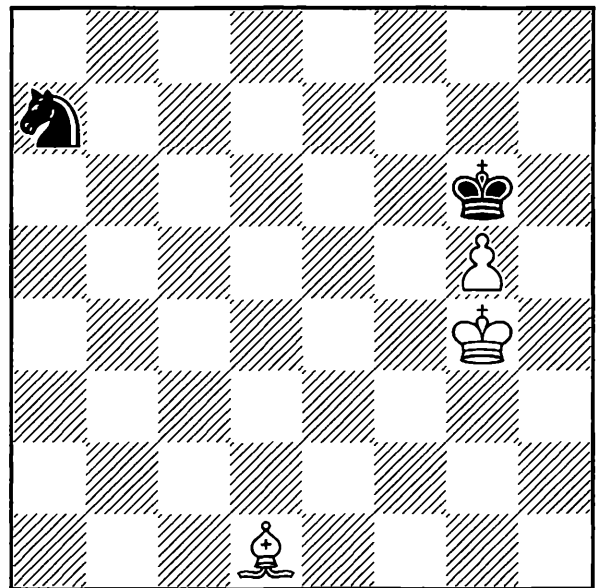
When we said that the blockading piece drew its strength from its contact with the rear echelons, this was incontestably true; yet the blockader must make some contribution of its own to the protection of the blockading wall. It does this by preventing opposing troops approaching itself for as far as its attacking radius will stretch.

Another advantage would be: the lower the value of the blockader the better. We mean that a blockader needs a thick skin. The somewhat over-sensitive nature of the king and queen would not fit in well with the role of the blockading piece. The minor pieces (♘ or ♙) can stand up to an attack (since they can call on protection), whereas the queen is in the habit of reacting to

the slightest attack by leaving the scene “with her head held high”.

The king too would also be a bad blockader, though in an endgame its royal gift of being able to change colour of squares comes in handy. So, if it is driven away from a white blockading square, it can settle on the black one just behind it.

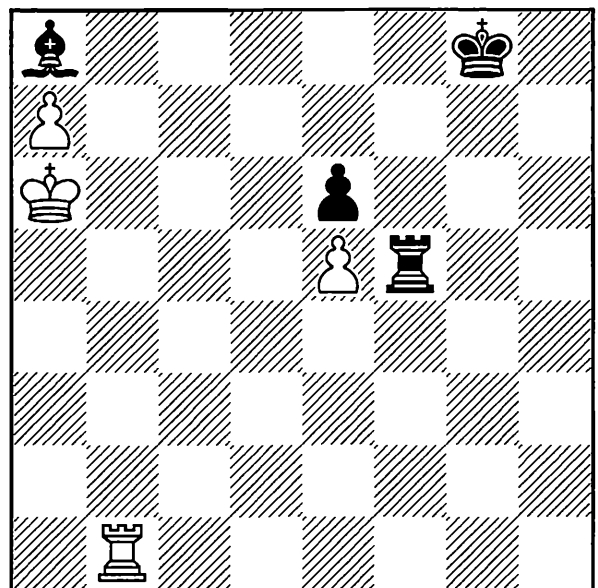
155



The check 1.♔c2† drives the king away from g6, but it then resumes the blockade on g7.

Since, as we have seen, there are different grades of blockading pieces (strong or weak, elastic or not) it is obvious that one blockader can be replaced by another according to the needs of the moment. If I capture a blockading piece, the piece which recaptures takes over its role, making “changez les bloqueurs” a fait accompli, or in plain English, there has been a change of government in the enemy state.

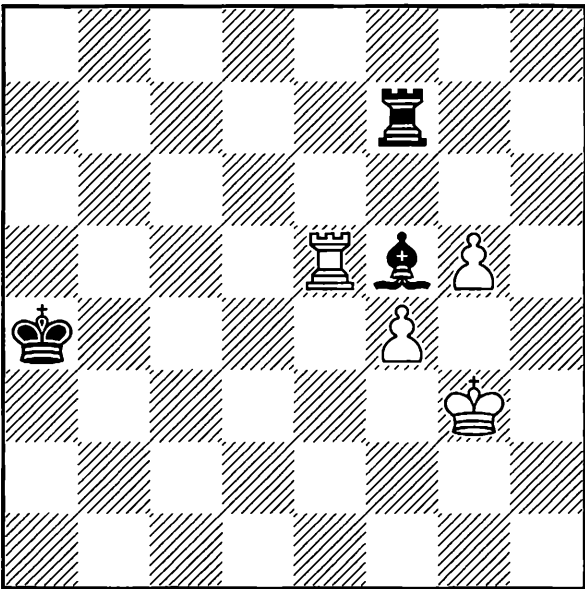
156



This combination is typical. The introduction would be 1.♖b8† ♜f8, and now the attacking radius of the ♔a8 makes it difficult for the approach of the white king which would otherwise be decisive. But next comes 2.♖xa8 ♜xa8 3.♙b7. The new blockader, the rook on a8, turns out to be a pleasant fellow quite unable to prevent the approach of the king. 3...♜f8 4.a8♙ ♜xa8 5.♙xa8 (cf. diagram 164, page 87); the pawn endgame cannot be saved, because the e-pawn is flanked as follows: 5...♙g7 6.♙b7 ♙g6 7.♙c6 ♙g5 8.♙d7! ♙f5 9.♙d6 and wins.

On the other hand, 1.♖b8† ♜f8 2.♙b6? ♔d5 3.♙c7 ♙f7 4.♖xf8† ♙xf8 5.♙b8 would fail because of 5...♙f7 a8♙ ♔xa8 7.♙xa8 ♙g6 and Black wins.

157



Black would be safe here but for his king being too far away. White forces the replacement of the awkward ♔f5 (which stops his king from approaching by ♙g4) by the more suitable (for White!) black rook. So: 1.♖xf5 ♜xf5 2.♙g4; the white pawns become mobile and the black king arrives too late: 2...♜f8 3.g6 ♙b5 4.f5 ♙c6 5.g7 ♜g8 6.f6 ♙d6 7.♙f5 (stopping ♙e6) and wins.

The idea is as follows: the attacking side is ready to take on the opposing blockade, but before he does so he wishes to replace the present blockader (which he finds awkward for one reason or another) with a different one. Only when that has happened can the negotiations begin!

“Negotiations” or uprooting

How would these negotiations be conducted? We would concentrate as many attacks as possible on the blockading piece, which would naturally call on its reserves to protect it. In this hot struggle around the blockader, we must, according our well-known scheme, create a situation where there are more attackers than defenders, and we do so by thinning out the ranks of the defenders by exchanging them, chasing them away or otherwise occupying them. In the long run, the blockader must retreat and our pawn can advance.

The transfer of the attack from the piece to its protectors which has been alluded to here is a well-known stratagem, which we learned about when studying open files (see page 36).

In the endgame it is common to *chase away* the blockader, whereas in the middlegame we try to *keep it busy* elsewhere. A most instructive example of this can be found in my game against Gottschall, Breslau, July 1925.

Nimzowitsch – von Gottschall

1.♘f3 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e3 ♘f6 4.b3 ♘bd7

4...c5 was correct, then ♘c6.

5.♔d3 c6 6.0–0 ♔d6 7.♔b2 ♙c7

In order to play e6-e5 and thus open the game. White starts a counterattack to prevent this.

8.c4 b6

After 8...e5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5!* (not 9...cxd5 because then the d-pawn would remain isolated after 10.dxe5) 10.♘c3, White has the freer game.

9.♘c3 ♔b7 10.♖c1 ♖c8 11.cxd5 exd5 12.e4

White is opening all the lines!

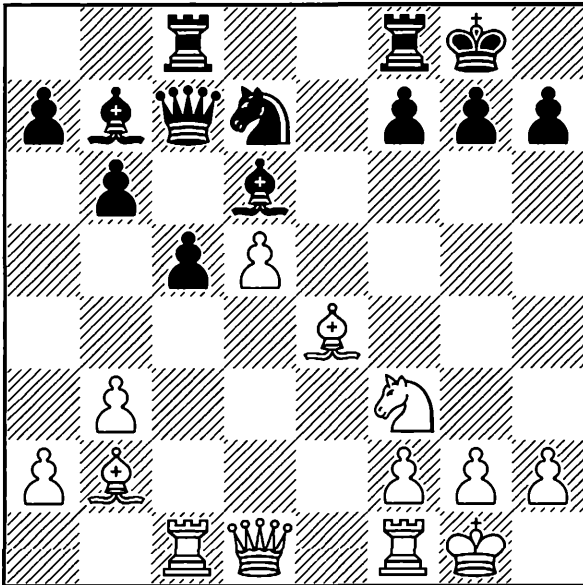
12...dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♔xe4 0–0 15.d5 c5

Now both bishops have free lines of fire towards the opposing kingside. Impressed by this, Black is inclined to value too little the liberation of the d-pawn, even to overlook it completely. And in fact, what could be undertaken by that well-blockaded (there is even a reserve blockader on d7) passed pawn.

But things turn out differently.

*Black should try 9...e4 – editor.

158



16. ♖e1 ♘d8 17. ♙b1

This attack leads to an instructive result for us: the blockading pieces ♙d6 and ♘d7 are partly deflected and partly destroyed. But first there is the threat of ♘d3.

17... ♖e8 18. ♘d3

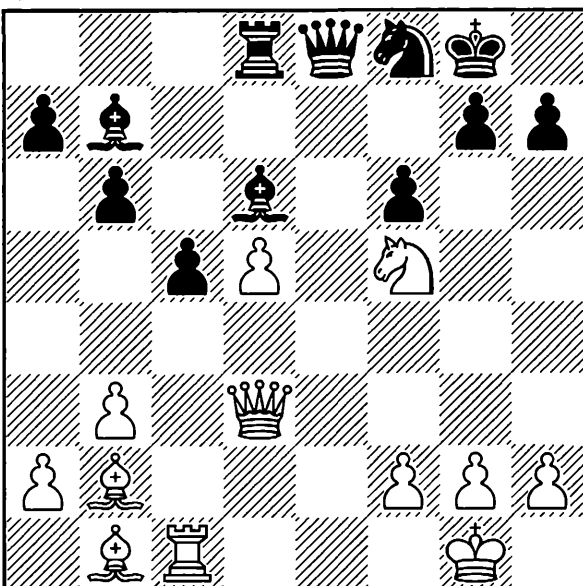
18. ♖xe8† first was even more precise.

18... ♘f8

18... ♖xe1† was better.

19. ♖xe8 ♘xe8 20. ♘h4! f6 21. ♘f5 ♖d8

159



Black thinks he can prove that d5 is weak, but a sacrifice rouses him from his sweet dreams.

22. ♙xf6! ♙xh2†!

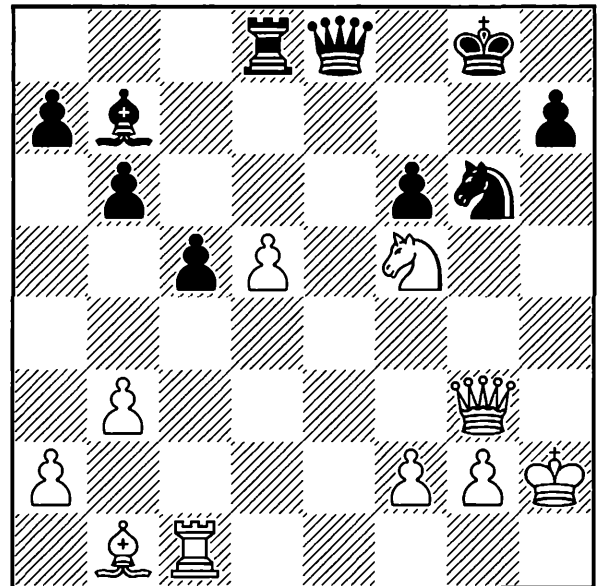
To avoid losing a pawn Black must acquiesce in this indirect exchange of the ♙b2 for the ♙d6 which follows. If 22... gxf6? 23. ♘xd6 ♖xd6 24. ♘g3† ♙h8 25. ♘xd6.

23. ♙xh2 gxf6

What a transformation. The d6-bishop has disappeared and the reserve blockader (the ♘d7) will soon end up on – g6! So the d-pawn is free!!

24. ♘g3† ♙g6

160



25. f4!

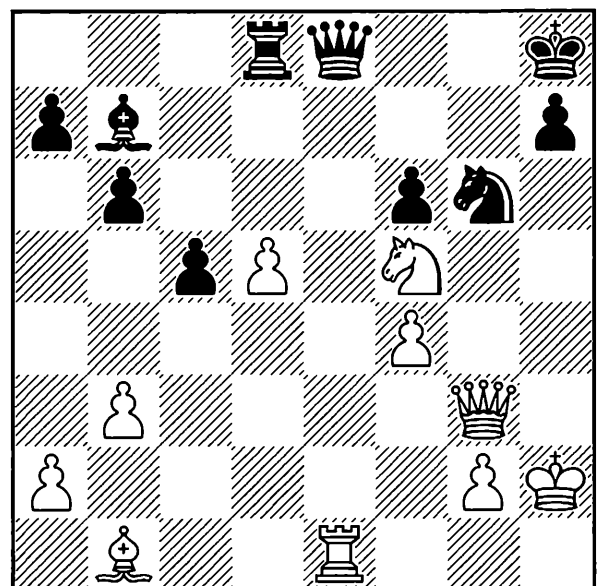
To enable ♖e1. The passed pawn is indirectly protected.

25... ♙h8

Not 25... ♖(or ♙)xd5 because of 26. ♖e1 then ♘e7† etc.

26. ♖e1

161



26... ♘f8!

After 26... ♘g8 the passed pawn would have made its mark in the most interesting way, namely: 27. ♘e7 ♘xe7 28. ♖xe7 (7th rank) 28... ♘xg3† 29. ♙xg3 ♖g8† 30. ♙f2 ♖g7. Apparently the threat

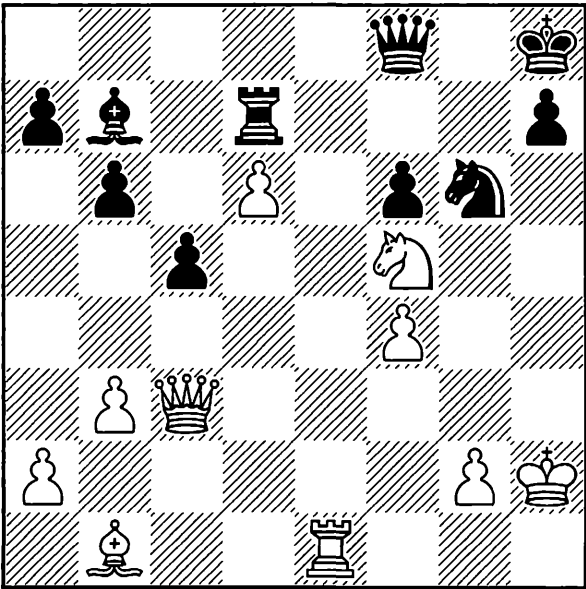
on the 7th rank has now been neutralised, but now the passed pawn has its say. 31.d6 ♖xe7 32.dxe7 ♙c6 33.♙e4 ♙e8 34.f5!! ♔g7 35.♙d5 and now e7 is untouchable. 35...♔h6 36.♔f3 ♔g5 37.♔e4 and Black is powerless against the threat ♙b7, ♔d5, ♙c6 with the death of the blockader.

27.d6! ♖d7

Why not 27...♙c8? Would that not have led to the win of the passed pawn? Answer: no, because then there would follow 28.♔e7 (by d5-d6 White has created for himself an outpost on e7) 28...♖h6† (the best) 29.♔g1 ♔xf4 and now 30.♔xc8 ♖xc8 31.d7 and wins.

28.♖c3

162



Threatening ♖e8! ♖xe8 ♖xf6† ♔g8 ♔h6 mate. So the back rank had to be secured by the retreat ♖d8 and White wins by ♖e7. Note that the winning moves ♖e7 or ♔e7 (in the previous note) must be seen as a consequence of the advance of the passed pawn.

28...♖xd6

Despair. After 28...♖f7 then 29.d7! ♖xd7 30.♖e8! would have decided things at once.

29.♔xd6 ♖xd6 30.♙xg6 hxg6 31.♖e8† ♔g7 32.♖g3

and White went on to win.

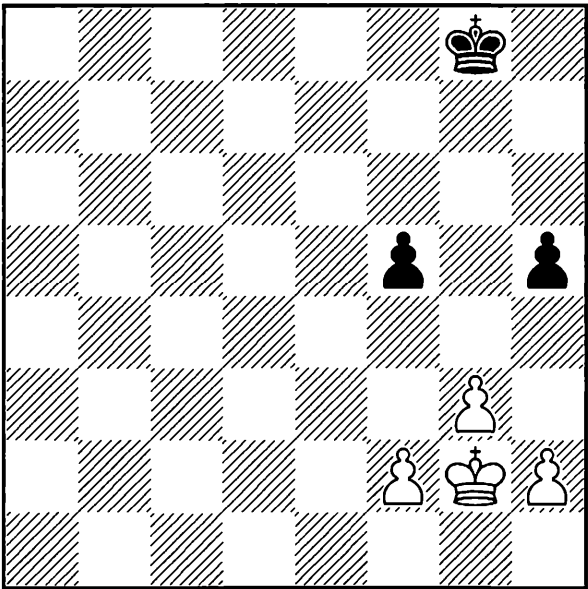
32...♙c6 33.♖e3 ♙d7 34.f5 ♖xg3† 35.♔xg3 ♙xf5 36.♖e7† ♔h6 37.♖xa7 ♙b1 38.♖a6 b5 39.a4 bxa4 40.bxa4 ♔g5 41.♖b6 ♙e4 42.a5 f5 43.a6 c4 44.a7 c3 45.♖b3 f4† 46.♔f2 c2 47.♖c3 1-0

5. Frontal attack by a king on an isolated pawn – an ideal!

Flanking • The role of the leader • The three-part manoeuvre consisting of frontal attack, the opponent being obliged to give way and the subsequent flanking • The reserve blocking square • The opposition has been done away with!

Many grizzled chess veterans will throw up their hands in horror; what, has the opposition now been done away with!! Yes, I am sorry that I cannot spare you that pain. The opposition is, deep down, connected with an “arithmetical” concept of the centre. In both cases, the heart of the matter is being judged purely on externals! (To clarify matters: an arithmetic view of the centre means counting up the pawns which are there and accepting that superiority belongs to the player who has the majority. This is a totally untenable concept, since in reality the situation in the centre can only be judged by the greater or lesser mobility present.) In what follows, I shall give you my totally new theory, which analyses the inner meaning of what is happening while excluding the opposition. The principles set up based on this ought to be welcome to the student.

163



In this position the creation of a passed pawn by h3, f3, g4 would not be enough, because the white king would be left behind its passed pawn. The king ought to play the “leading”

role, something like the pacemaker in a bicycle race, and not simply remain at home reading newspaper reports of what happened.

Moreover, you must be totally clear about one thing: the king in the endgame and the king in the middlegame are two fundamentally different beasts. In the middlegame the king is anxious, hides in its stronghold (the castled position) and needs a lot of support (it does not really feel safe unless it is in direct contact with its rooks and surrounded by the loving attentions of its own knights and bishops). In the endgame, on the other hand, the king becomes a hero, which is not all that difficult since the board appears almost completely clear of its enemies. Hardly has the endgame begun, than the king leaves its castle and strides slowly but impressively towards the centre (obviously because it intends to be in the centre of the action; more about this in chapter 6). He shows particular courage in dealing with – an isolated pawn. This struggle starts with a frontal attack, so something like White ♖f4, Black ♙f5. For the king this frontal position is an ideal worth striving for, because it can be extended (when other material is present) helping to take the pawn which is under siege, or (in a pure pawn ending) it can finally lead up to a flanking manoeuvre (diagrams 164 and 167).

So, when other pieces are present the king blockades the ♙f5, which is then attacked by the other pieces, which should lead to an uncomfortable defensive position for any piece protecting it; in what is simply a pawn duel (no pieces left) zugzwang comes to the aid of the attacking side.

Example: Consider diagram 163 with a white ♙f1 and black ♙f7. After 1.♖f3 ♖g7 2.♖f4 (the ideal position) 2...♖f6 there follows 3.♙d3 ♙e6 and the difference in value between the active ♙d3 and the passive ♙e6 which is tied to the ♙f5 is an important factor (see chapter 6, section 2, page 113).

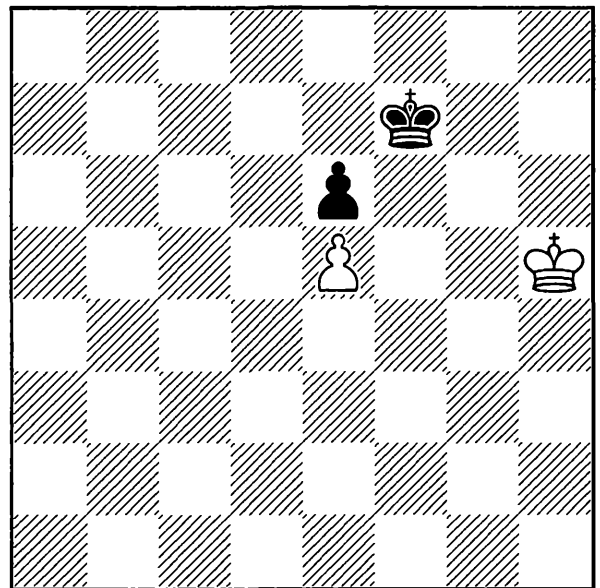
The pure pawn endgame on the other hand runs something like this (from diagram 163): **1.♖f3 ♖g7 2.♖f4 ♖f6 3.h4**. This was the “first stage” of the manoeuvre. Next comes **3...♖g6**,

the “second stage”. Whether it liked it or not the opposing king had to move to one side, as a result of the zugzwang, and now comes the “third and last” stage. White carries out a flanking manoeuvre **4.♖f4-e5** and wins. So the frontal attack has developed into a flanking attack, which is an improvement, because

Flanking is, as we know, the strongest form of attack (these are in rising order of importance: frontal, side and flanking).

The following examples will convince us that flanking is very strong in an endgame.

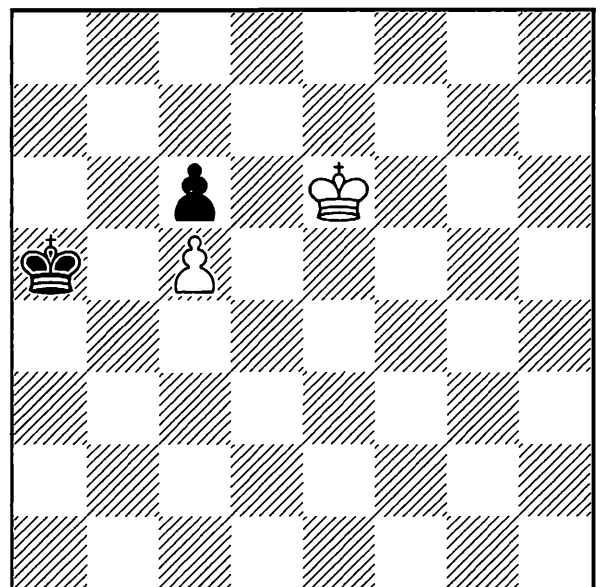
164



1.♖h6 ♖f8 2.♖g6 ♖e7 3.♖g7 ♖e8 4.♖f6 ♖d7 5.♖f7

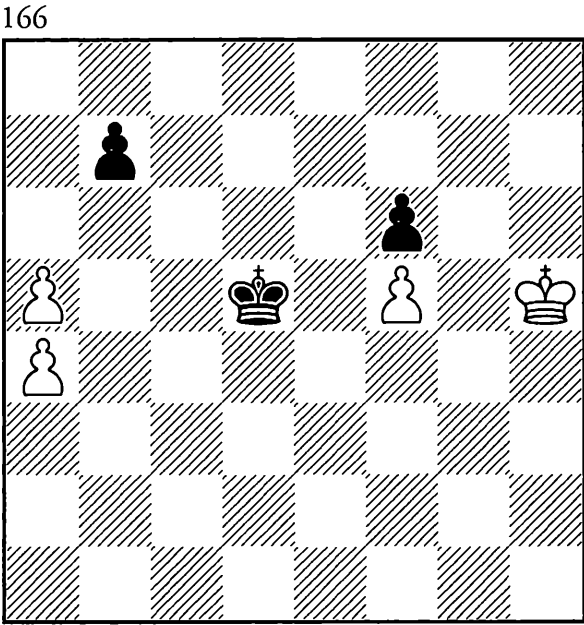
Notice how the white king approaches as if in a spiral, using zugzwang to do so.

165



In this case we have 1.♔d7! ♔b5 2.♔d6, but not 1.♔d6? because of 1...♔b5 and White does not have a good move and is himself in zugzwang.

Or finally this position:

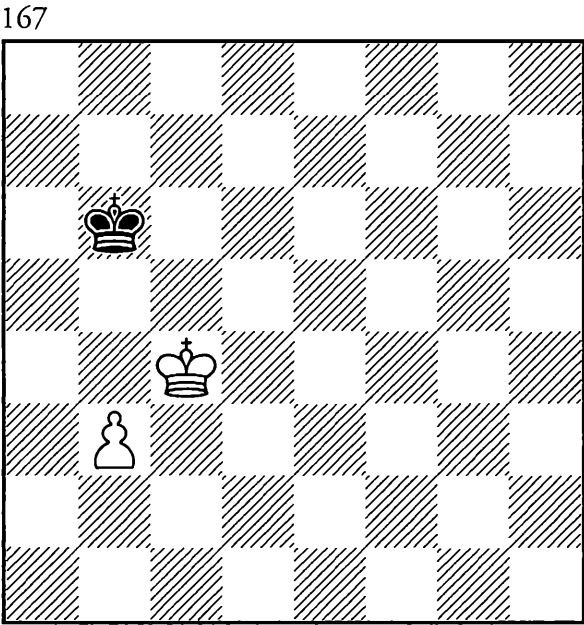


1.♔g6 ♔e5 2.a6! bxa6 3.a5

White sacrificed a pawn so that his opponent was in the uncomfortable position of having to make a move.

So once we have recognised the importance of flanking (although it is only effective when combating immobile obstacles), we can realise why we have to take such trouble about the three-stage manoeuvre to reach the said flanking.

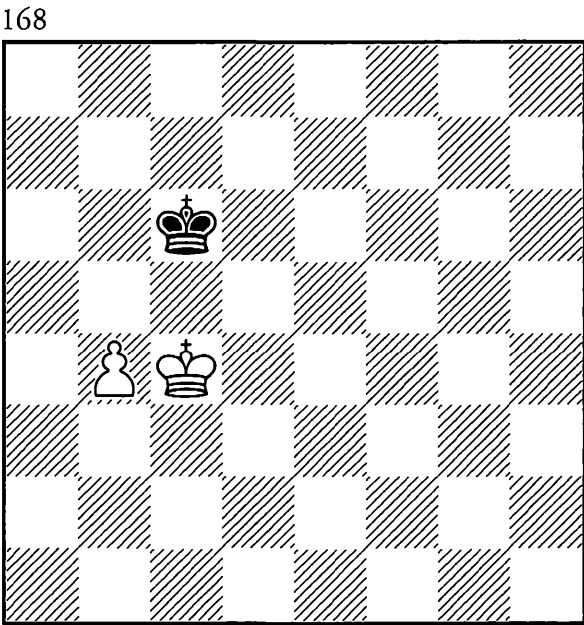
Let us now look at this three-stage manoeuvre in a position *without* opposing pawns



Here the b5-square must be occupied by White's king. So why b5? Because with his king on b5, White could ensure the advance of his passed pawn to b6, because from b5 his king only has to move to one side, e.g. ♔b5-c5 and the b-pawn which we must imagine advanced to b4, will get to b6 without let or hindrance. But in our position, b6 was the first unprotected step on the passed pawn's way to the queening square, since the squares b4 and b5 are already completely protected by the king on c4. So we commence a frontal attack on b5: 1.♔c4-b4 (stage one) 1...♔b6-a6 or c6 (the king must give way, stage two) 2.♔b4-c5 or a5 (stage 3, the flanking has been achieved) and now the white king reaches its goal of b5, e.g. 2...♔b7 3.♔b5!.

In the position which has arisen (White ♔b5, ♔b3; Black ♔b7) one could describe 3.♔b5 as being the frontal attack on the next position to be won (b6); the three-stage manoeuvre against b6 takes place in similar fashion to the one already carried out, namely 3...♔a7(or c7) 4.♔c6(or a6) and then ♔b6.

The application of this way of thinking is even easier for the defending side.



Black has to be able to draw, because the white king has remained in the rear. All Black would have to do now is to be careful not to let the white king take on the leading role and secondly to remember that after the blockading square the

reserve blockading square is his safest one. (With a white passed pawn on b4, the blockading square is b5 and the reserve blockading square is directly behind it, b6.)

In the above position, after 1.b5† Black plays 1...♙b6 (blockade) 2.♙b4 ♙b7 (reserve blockading square) 3.♙c5 ♙c7 (above all not 3...♙b8 or c8, which would allow the opposing king to press forward!) 4.b6† ♙b7 (blockade) 5.♙b5 ♙b8 (reserve) 6.♙c6 ♙c8 7.b7† ♙b8 8.♙b6 stalemate.

To avoid any misunderstandings, we absolutely must emphasise that the b8-square only becomes the reserve blockading square when the white pawn is on b6 and that when the pawn is on b5, the reserve square is b7.

In the position: White ♙c5, ♖b5; Black ♙b7 the move 1...♙b8 would be a disaster, because this would leave total control over the terrain to the opposing king and give him the chance to seize the leading role, thus 1...♙b8? 2.♙b6 with a decisive frontal attack on b7 (our three-stage manoeuvre!).

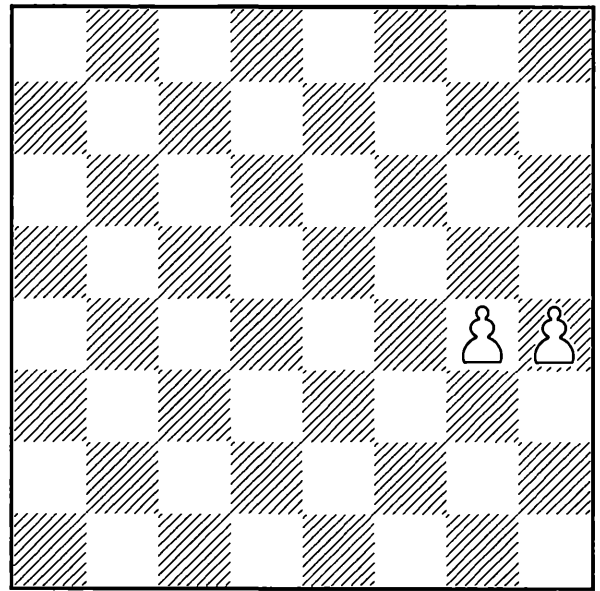
The theory of the opposition is totally lacking in clarity and must be described as obscure. The truth is simple: the attacking king fights for the role of leader, the defender tries to prevent this by using the reserve blockading square.

6. Privileged passed pawns: a) two linked passed pawns, b) the protected passed pawn, c) the distant passed pawn • The king plugs the gaps • Preparations for a journey • The beginner chasing a passed pawn which cannot be caught

On the 64 squares too, wealth is generally not equally divided; so for example, there are passed pawns which are much more effective than other normal passed pawns. Such ("privileged") passed pawns deserve to be held in high esteem and you should never miss the chance to create such a privileged pawn. We will now attempt to give an explanation of the effectiveness of such

pawns, based on their very nature. The rules will arise automatically, the pro and the contra in the struggle with or against such giants.

169



This shows the typical and ideal situation for two linked passed pawns. Their relations are those of real comrades, thus the position where both are standing on the same rank must be considered the most natural. The strength of passed pawns posted in such a way is that it is impossible to blockade them (the ♖g4 and ♖h4 show how impossible a blockade would be). However, further progression demands that the two passed pawns give up their ideal position, because although they look so nice on g4 and h4, their lust to expand (which they share to a great extent with every other passed pawn) will drive them on. And when one advances, the possibility of a blockade arises; for example, after h4-h5, an enemy piece could blockade on g5 or h6. From the above remarks and considering that the linked pawns on g4 and h4 could wish for nothing better than to advance in common to g5 and h5, there arises the following

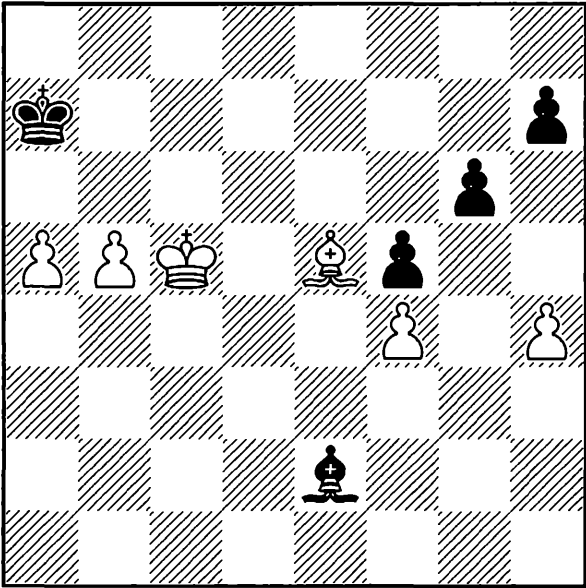
Rule: *The advance of a passed pawn from its ideal position must take place at a moment when the opponent is not in a position to mount a strong blockade. And furthermore: if the correct pawn is advanced at the right moment, then it will be possible to overcome with ease any weak blockade which is set up;*

the pawn which has remained behind will then advance and the ideal position will have been achieved once more.

So consider diagram 169. At the right moment the correct pawn advances, so say g4-g5; this allows the opponent to blockade on h5. The blockading piece, obviously badly backed up (hence the expression a “weak blockade”) is driven off and the move h4-h5 once more brings about an ideal position (h5, g5).

The most important aid would be the white king slipping into the breaches opened by the advance. So, (diagram 169), g4-g5, ♖h5 and now the white king which was at the ready slips into g4. We call this manoeuvre “filling or plugging the gap”. Now the white king need never fear being out of a job; if the worst comes to the worst, he can pick up a job as a dentist and do some fillings!

170



This position occurred in 1921 in a club match in Stockholm. White played **1.b6†?** and allowed an absolute blockade to be set up by **1...♙b7**; it was absolute because in the nature of things the black king can never be driven out of b7. Next came **2.♙d6** and the king wandered to g7 and helped itself to the ♖h7. But then came ♙h5 and the kingside banquet was over. His majesty now wandered ruefully to the other flank, but there was nothing for him there either, since the bishop which had broken

free and gone to h5 made the board unsafe for him. White had received just punishment for breaking the rules.

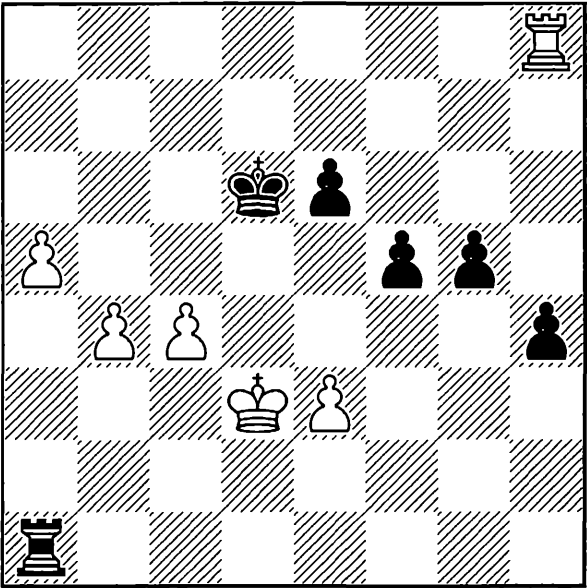
The correct method was: 1.a6 ♙d3 2.♙d4 ♙f1 3.♙b4†! (wishing to fill the gap on a5!) 3...♙a8 4.♙a5 ♙e2 5.b6. All went according to our plan: first the a-pawn advanced, because any obstacle (blockade would be too strong a word) could easily be cleared. The king plugged the gap created by the advance, the b-pawn advanced in his turn, and the two good comrades, a-pawn and b-pawn, were reunited!

The two linked passed pawns are a good illustration of the lovely German song “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden” (*I had a comrade*) as they advance in step. It only happens rarely, and only then when the pawns are far advanced and have grown very strong, that one will advance at the cost of his comrade’s life.

Perlis – Nimzowitsch

Karlsbad 1911

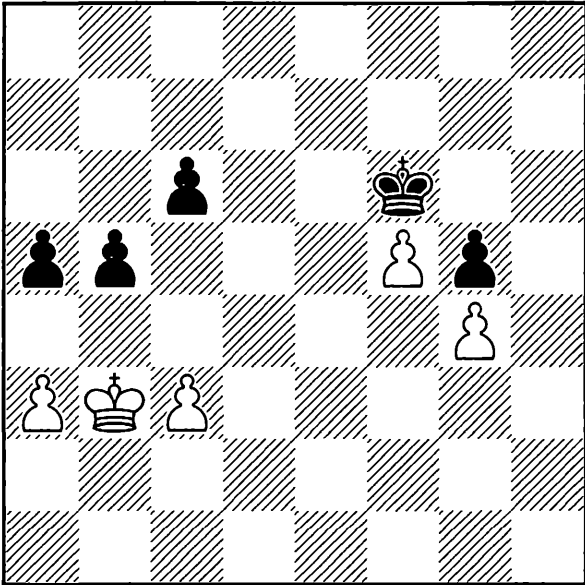
171



The ♙g5 shamefully abandons his comrade on h4! Yes, whenever a pawn gets “ideas of greatness”, then it forgets all about its comrades! **1...g4! 2.♙xh4 g3** and wins.

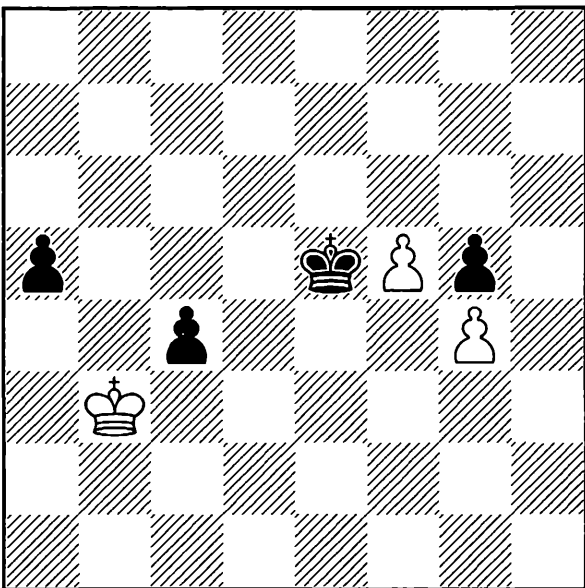
Let us now look at the protected passed pawn. The difference in value between a protected and a normal passed pawn can be seen from the following example:

172



White opens fire on Black's pawn majority: **1.a4 ♖e5 2.axb5** (2.c4? is wrong because of 2...b4 and Black has a protected passed pawn on b4. The kings would then have the unpleasant task of marching back and forth and keeping an eye on the pawns. This back-and-forth and pawn-watching can hardly be the role of any self-respecting monarch!) **2...cxb5 3. c4 bxc4†** (forced; 3...b4 is of no use since one of the white pawns would queen) and now a position has arisen which typifies the difference in value between a protected and a normal passed pawn:

173



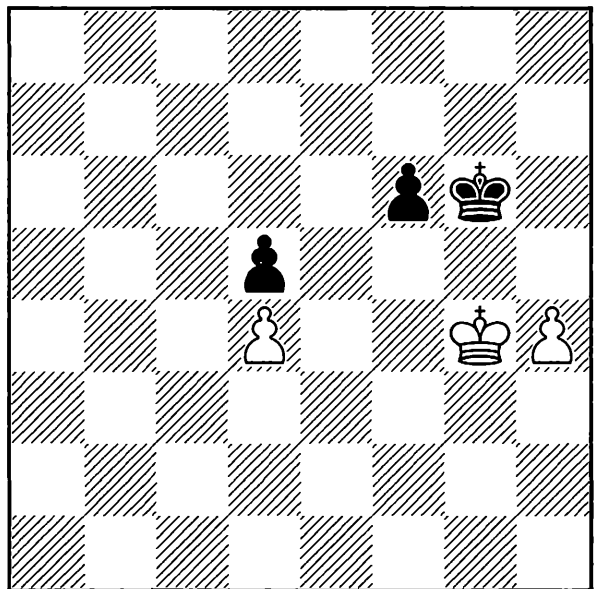
You can see how the white king will eat up Black's passed pawns effortlessly, whereas on the other hand the immunity to attack by the

king of the "protected" f5 is quite beautifully demonstrated.

However, it is not unknown for the less experienced player to forget all about this immunity and set off valiantly to take the g-pawn, for example in the position: Black ♖e5, ♘g5; White ♖a1, ♘f5, ♘g4. After ♖e5-f4 is met by f5-f6, he realises the error of his ways and begins (I kid you not!) to run after the f-pawn. The comedy goes as follows: 1...♖f4 2.f6 ♖e5!! 3.f7 ♖e6!! 4.f8♖ Resigns. This can be expressed as follows:

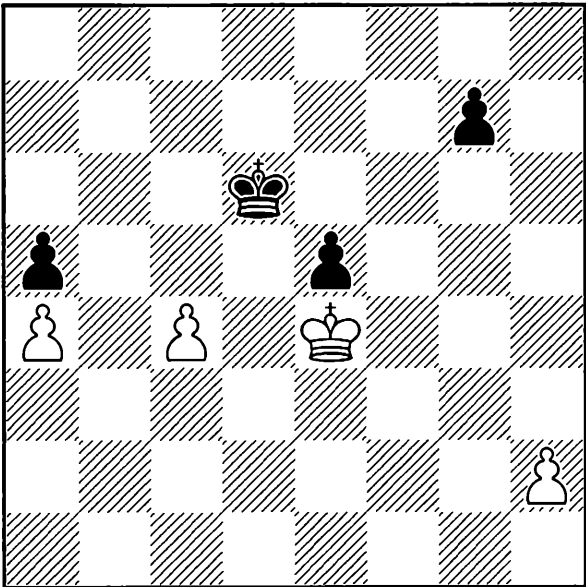
The strength of the protected passed pawn is founded in the fact that it is immune from any attack by the opposing king.

174



In this position the h-pawn is the "distant" passed pawn (i.e. from the *centre of the board*). After a mutual exchange of passed pawns (**1.h5† ♖h6 2.♖f5 ♖xh5 3.♖xf6**) Black's king is out of the game, whilst White's is nearer the centre and thus well-developed. That is decisive. So the more distant passed pawn is a trump card (it can divert the king), but like all trumps it must be used sparingly: do not play it too soon is the rule. The diverting exchange of pawns was simply the prelude to the king march which followed (cf. diagram 174). But that in itself must be carefully prepared for *before* the pawn push!

175



White has the more distant passed pawn on c4. Advancing it immediately would be a mistake, since after 1.c5† ♔xc5 2.♔xe5 the trip to g7 would be time-consuming and the travelling companion on h2 too dilatory. The correct procedure is 1.h4, getting your companion into place. 1...g6. We have the weapon of zugzwang to thank for this advance, and we should make good use of it in cases of distant passed pawns. There now follows 2.c5† ♔xc5 3.♔xe5 ♔b4 and Black arrives a move too late after 4.♔f6 ♔xa4 5.♔xg6 ♔b3 6.h5 a4 7.h6 etc.

Rule: *The trip you are planning for your king should be carefully prepared before the diversionary sacrifice. If possible make use of zugzwang. Advance the “travelling companion”! Entice forward any obstacles (the opponent’s pawns on the wing of your advance). All that before playing the diversionary move! – Compare also example 3, Diagram 182, page 96.*

7. When a passed pawn should advance

- a) for its own sake
 - b) to gain territory for its king to plug the gap
 - c) to offer itself as a diversionary sacrifice
- The size of the distance between the opposing king and the diversionary sacrifice
 - The appetising king manoeuvre
 - How the young man went forth into the world to become a conqueror

“An old, old story, but constantly renewed” is that of the less knowledgeable amateur who advances his passed pawn at absolutely the worst moment. For example, when he has two linked passed pawns he plays 1.b5-b6† (diagram 170, page 90) and allows his opponent to set up a magnificent blockade. So it must be of some practical value to set out the cases in which an advance is advisable.

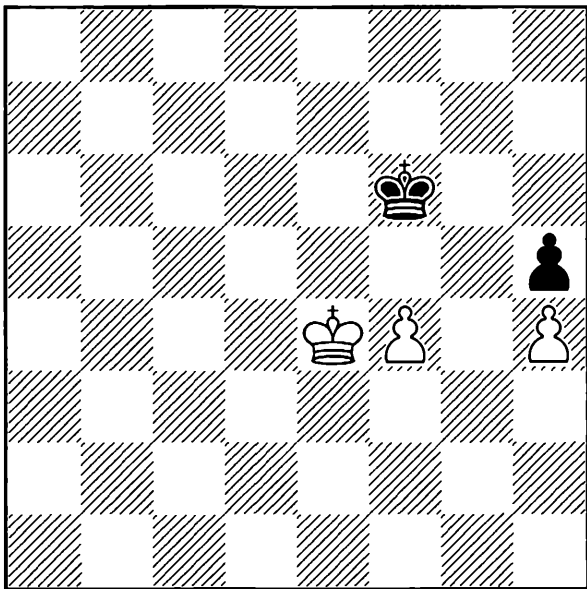
When can a passed pawn be considered ready to move?

We distinguish three cases:

- a) If this advance brings the passed pawn nearer its final goal (this is only the case when Black’s blockade will be weak), or if the advancing passed pawn becomes so much more valuable by then helping to protect important squares (see my game against von Gottschall – Passed pawn, section 4, page 84. In it d5-d6 helped to protect the e7-square and threatened ♖e7 or ♗e7). On the other hand, it is wrong to advance a pawn, when it can be definitely blockaded and is only protecting worthless squares. It is easy to bring passed pawns into this world, but it is much harder to prepare a future for them.

- b) If the advancing pawn clears space for a piece which moves after it, for example allowing its own king to move against a fresh opposing pawn:

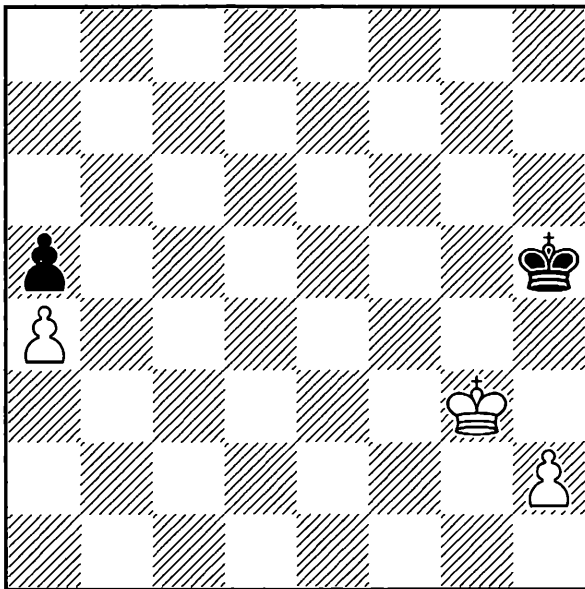
176



Play continues 1.f5 ♖f7 2.♗e5 ♜e7 3.f6† ♜f7 4. ♖f5 ♜f8! The f-pawn has no future as such. 5.♗g6! and wins the h-pawn. The reason behind the advance was simply to push back the black king and allow his own king to get at the h5-pawn!

c) The advance is played to sacrifice the pawn. In such cases the enemy king is to be diverted in a decisive fashion (see diagram 174). Another example would be as follows:

177



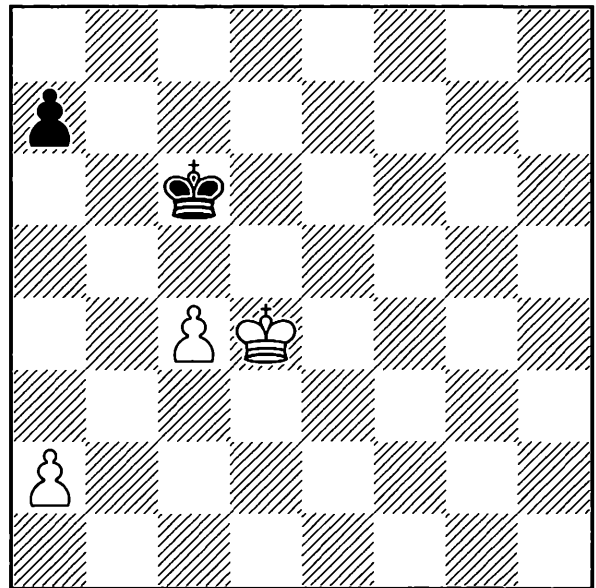
Here the white h-pawn is condemned to die for the common good, as a diversionary sacrifice. The question is only how and above all where? Since the greater the distance the greater the diversion, it would not be helpful to advance the h-pawn yet, since the said distance (between the diversionary sacrifice and the opposing king) would only get smaller. It is much more correct to march the king over to the other flank, so 1.♗f4 ♜h4 2.♗e5 ♜h3 and 3.♗d6, etc. On the other hand, 1.h2-h4?? would be quite wrong. (Not content with wishing to sacrifice the h-pawn, he offers it up on a plate! I call this excessive generosity!) After 1.h4?? comes 1...♗g6 2.♗f4 ♜h5 3.♗e5 ♜xh4 4.♗d5 ♜g5 5.♗c4 ♖f5 6.♗b5 ♖e6 7.♗xa5 ♖d7 8.♗b6 (threatening ♗b7) 8...♗c8 9.♗a7 ♖c7 and the white king is locked in. Draw.

After his march 1.♗f4! ♜h4 2.♗e5 ♜h3 to create an appetite, the black king can only console itself with the hearty breakfast of the h2-pawn.

You must take to heart the following: of course the diversionary sacrifice will perish; but in doing so it must inflict on the enemy the greatest possible loss of time.

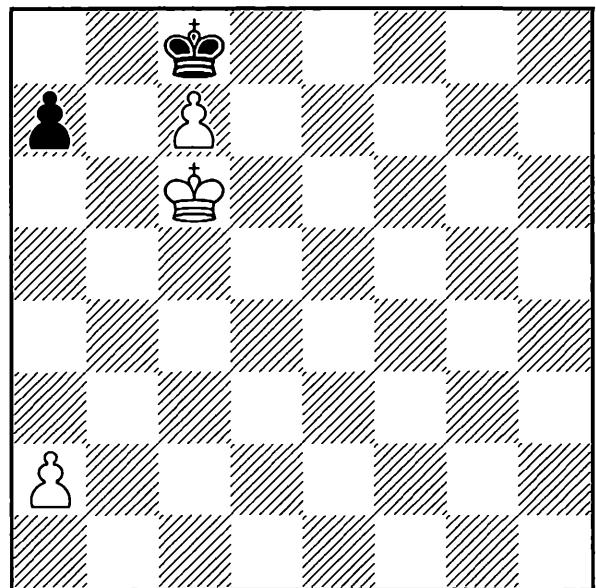
It is not always all that simple to recognise what the motive is for the advance of a pawn.

178



Firstly: 1.c5 ♜c7 2.♗d5 ♜d7 3.c6† ♜c7 4.♗c5 ♜c8 (the reserve blockading square) 5.♗d6 ♜d8 6.c7† ♜c8 7.♗c6

179



There was apparently no motivation for the advance and neither a), b) nor c) seems to fit the bill. Then comes 7...a7-a5. Black is in zugzwang and must advance his pawn which is the prelude to an exciting drama. The black a-pawn leapt forward in a double move, full of energy and

youthful arrogance. We choose to answer with the gentler **8.a3**, in order to show this callow youth that quietness is a worthwhile virtue. After **8...a4 9.♠d6** the game is decided. But suppose our youthful friend (the a7-pawn) had realised the error of his ways and tried the modest **7...a6**. Then we would have shown the unfortunate youth that energy can also be a trump card and we would have played **8.a2-a4**. Now after **8...a5 9.♠d6**, Black is once more losing.

The idea was as follows: the stalemate position of the black king forces an advance of the black a-pawn; White must arrange to meet this advance in such a way that when the a-pawns are blocked, it is White to move. He will then play **♠d6** or **♠b6** and win.

The whole business of the advance of the c-pawn could be classified under a). The c-pawn advanced for its own sake, because the affair of swapping

tempi between the two a-pawns turned the said c-pawn into a winner. On the other hand, if its own king had remained behind, it would only have been worth a draw.

I would tend to describe the above endgame as a spiritualist séance. At first glance, it appears inexplicable that such an ending is won with a pawn on a2, but only drawn if the pawn is on a3.

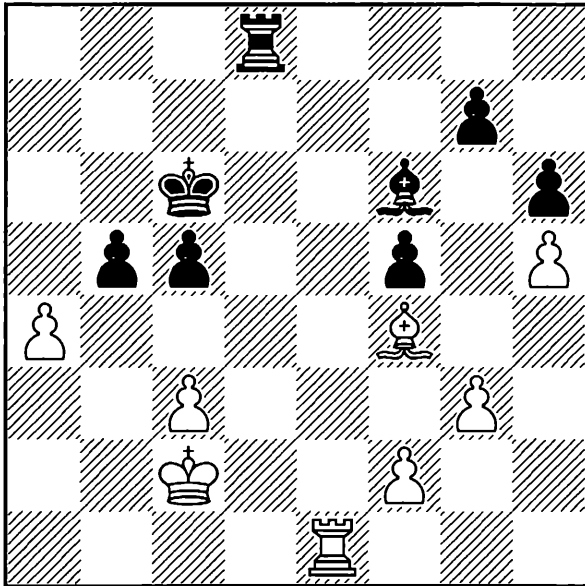
We shall close the chapter on the passed pawn by demonstrating a few endgames and games. In doing so, we wish to emphasise that we consider the said chapter to be an introduction to positional play. It is for that reason that we have had the pleasure of going into positional details, like the differing functions of the blockading piece, etc. If abstract thinking is not exactly your strong point, you may skip the section on the reasons behind the need to blockade.

Endgames and games illustrating passed pawns

Nimzowitsch – Rubinstein

Breslau 1925

180



White had the move and played an exchange sacrifice, which despite the length of the combination can be expressed in no other terms than: White is aiming for the ideal position (the frontal attack against an isolated pawn – see section 5, page 86). I managed to carry out the deeply laid plan (although it could have been refuted) since Rubinstein seemed handicapped by not being as familiar as I was with the well-known rules of my system. Moreover, I know no other ending in which this precise striving for “the ideal position” is more clearly illustrated than in the one which follows.

Things proceeded as follows: 1.♖e6† ♔d5 2.♖xf6 gxf6 3.axb5 (threatening 4.c4† ♔xc4 5.b6 etc) 3...c4 And now White took the ♕h6, although he had to give up the b- and h-pawns; there followed 4.♕xh6 ♖h8 5.♕g7 ♖xh5 6.♕xf6 ♔c5 7.♔d2!. The key idea. All that has happened up till now was solely and simply to clear the way for the king to get to f4. 7...♔xb5? An error. Here Black could prevent the king journey planned by White by 7...♖h6 8.♕d4† ♔xb5 9.♔e3 ♖e6† 10.♔f4 ♖e4† then ♖xd4 and wins. Note that 10.♔f3 (instead of 10.♔f4?) would

not have saved White either, because at the correct moment there would have followed ♖e4 then ♔xb5 and the king would have marched to e1 followed by ♖e2 etc.

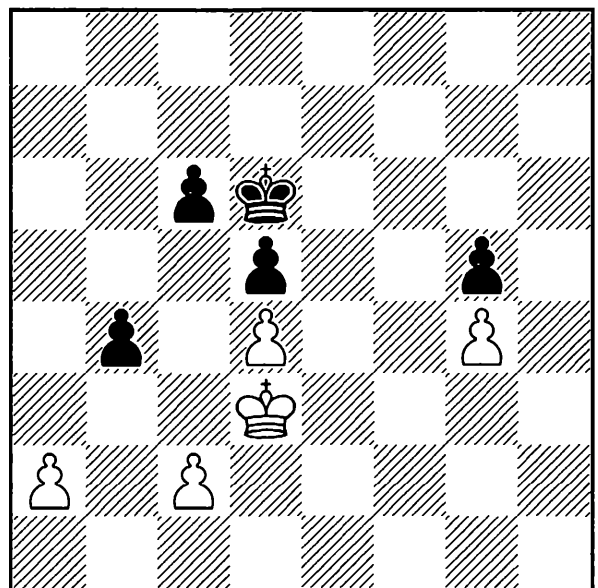
In the game, there followed 8.♔e3 ♔c5 9.♔f4!. And things are all right again. 9...♔d5 10.f3 And it ended in a draw after a few moves, since the rook and black king cannot both be liberated at the same time. (Or else there could be a double attack on c3 followed by an exchange sacrifice.) An instructive ending!! How keenly the king tried to achieve the frontal attack we have described! Why? Well, because such efforts form part of the king’s innermost being (and one of the rules of the blockade).

The second example shows a simple case of flanking.

Hansen – Nimzowitsch

Denmark (simultaneous)

181

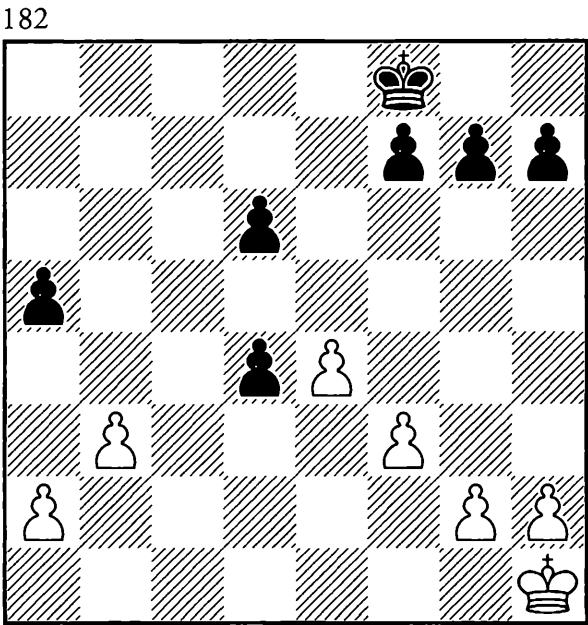


Black played 1...♔c7 (he has to do something against the threat of c3 with the distant passed pawn which would result from it) and the ending went as follows, simply and effectively: 2.c3 (or 2.c4 ♔b6 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.♔c2 ♔a5! – tempo!) 2...♔b6! 3.cxb4 ♔b5 4.♔c3 ♔a4 and the flanking works perfectly in spite of

allowing White to win the pawn, since White has been crippled which favours Black’s flanking manoeuvre.

Example 3 illustrates how a distant passed pawn can deflect a king.

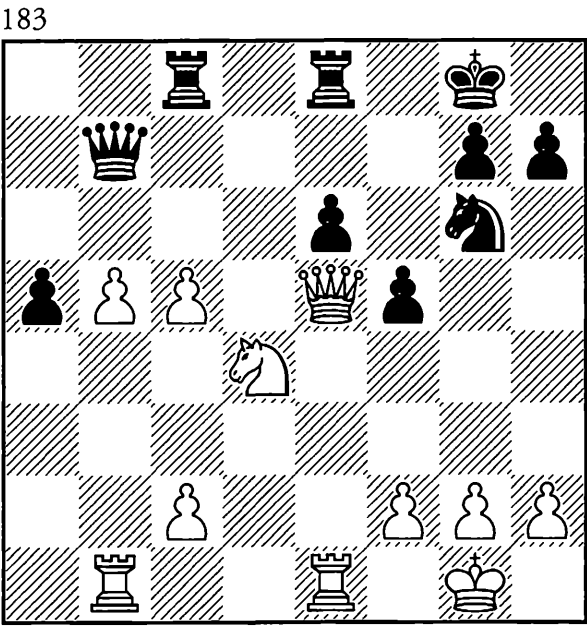
Tarrasch – Berger
Breslau 1889



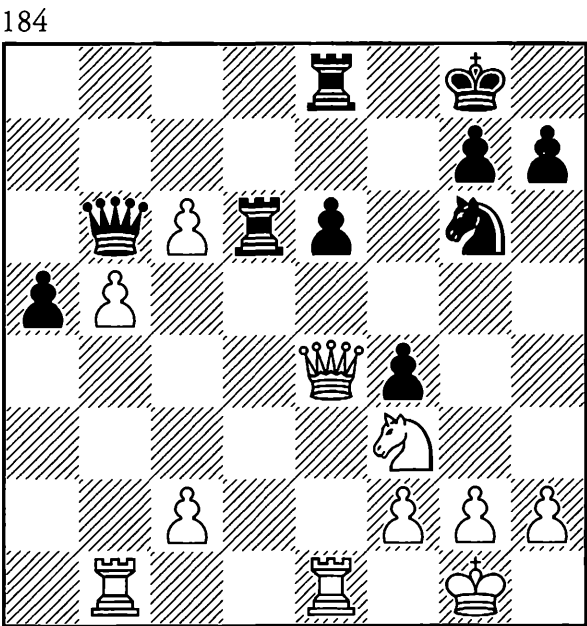
After an exchange of queens (see game 6, page 60) there now followed: 37.♔g1 ♕e7 38.♕f2 d5 39.e5 (there was also the simpler 39.exd5 ♕d6 40.♕e2 ♕xd5 41.a3 ♕c5 and White will also succeed with f2-f4 and finally a deflection by b4†) 39...♕e6 40.♕e2 (40.f4 would be weaker on account of 40...g5 41.g3 gxf4 42.gxf4 ♕f5) 40...♕xe5 41.♕d3 h5 42.a3 (42.h4! first would have been preferable) 42...h4! Black creates a chance for later. 43.b4 axb4 44.axb4 ♕d6 45.♕xd4 ♕c6 46.b5† White does not use the zugzwang. 46.f4 would have brought about zugzwang and a pawn advance by Black; this would have decisively favoured the later king excursion by White and the execution of the black pawns which follows it. 46...♕xb5 47.♕xd5 ♕b4! And now the deflection is of lesser importance in that Black, after the taking of the g- and h-pawns, needs only a few tempi for his own h-pawn. The ending is instructive on account of the errors. The position reached was finally won by White, after Black had overlooked the chance of a draw.

Example 4 is important for the way linked passed pawns move (see section 6, page 89).

Nimzowitsch – Alapin
St Petersburg 1913

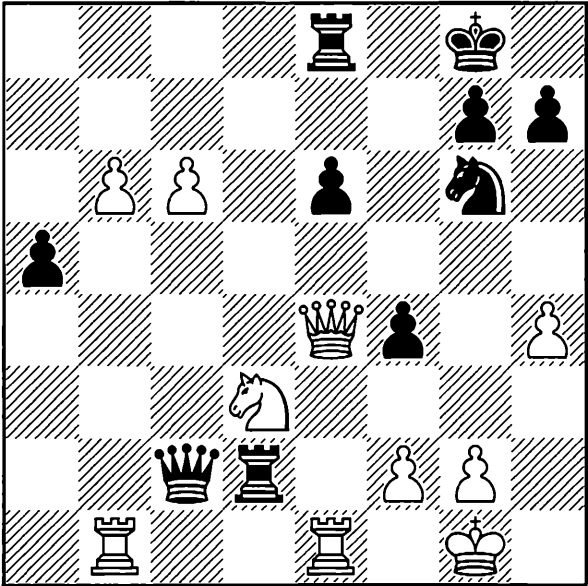


Play went: 1.c6! Here the choice of which pawn to advance first is made not so much on the grounds of which of them is under the greater or lesser danger of blockade, but because White would otherwise lose the c-pawn. 1...♕b6 (if 1...♖xc6 2.bxc6 ♕xb1 3.♖xb1 ♘xe5 then 4.c7 with a passed pawn and the 7th rank absolute [page 46], e.g. 4...♘d7 5.♘c6 and wins) 2.♕e3 Now the blockader on b6 must be chased away so that the somewhat backward b-pawn can advance (section 6, page 90). 2...f4 (the threat had been ♘xf5) 3.♕e4 ♖cd8 4.♘f3 ♖d6



5.h4! With his strong position in the centre (♔e4), White now wishes to prove that the defending pieces are hanging in mid-air. **5...♖c5** It has worked. The blockader has become more accommodating! **6.♘e5** (the move **6.h5!** would also be good and logical; **6...♖xh5 7.b6** and the two friends meet up again) **6...♞d4** (the main line would be **6...♞d2 7.♘d3 ♖xc2 8.b6!**,

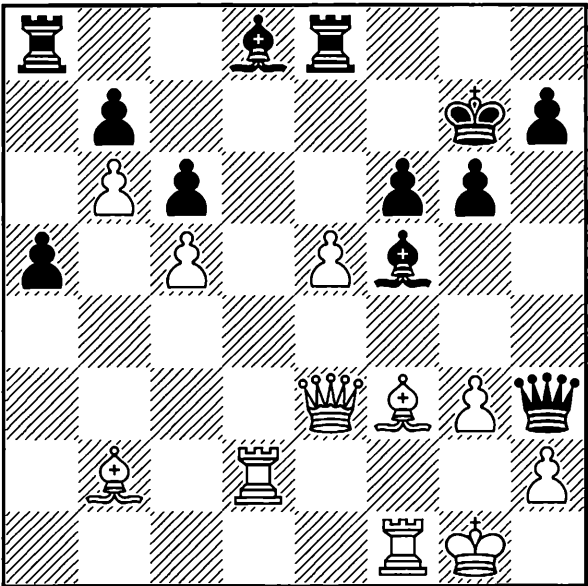
185



and without worrying about the loss of a piece the pawns march on to queen) **7.♖e2 ♘xh4 8.b6** (according to book, the way things should go!) **8...♞b4 9.♞xb4 axb4 10.b7 ♖c3 11.♖e4 ♘f5 12.♘d7 1-0**

Example 5 (Nimzowitsch – Amateur, odds game, Nuremberg 1904) shows how impetuous a passed pawn can become. Usually you cannot guess at its temperament, but we do know about its lust to expand. So the example which follows will not come as a surprise.

186



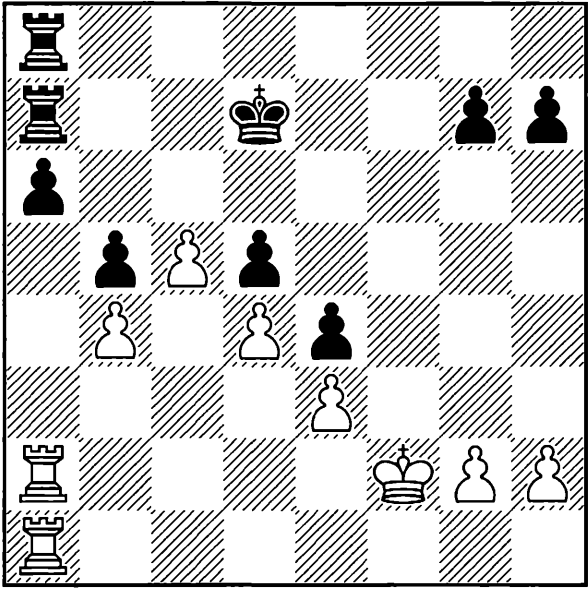
Next came **1.g4 ♙xg4 2.exf6† ♔f7**. Here, the king is a bad blockader because of its sensitivity. The danger of mate means that his blockading effect is pure illusion. **3.♙d5†!** To create a zone of activity for the f-rook without loss of time. It is now supporting the passed pawn to the best of its ability. **3...cxd5 4.♖xe8† ♔xe8 5.f7† ♔f8** The last attempt at a blockade. But now the piece behind (♙b2) is brought to life by the lengthening of the diagonal thanks to **5.f7**. It makes its presence felt, most uncomfortably for Black. **6.♙g7†! ♔xg7 7.f8♖ mate**.

This ending is a pragmatic demonstration of the lust to expand.

Example 6 is characteristic of the flexibility required of the blockader. The subject is an endgame which has come down to a blockade. We shall only look at the most important aspects.

Nimzowitsch – A. Nilsson
Nordic Master Tournament 1924

187

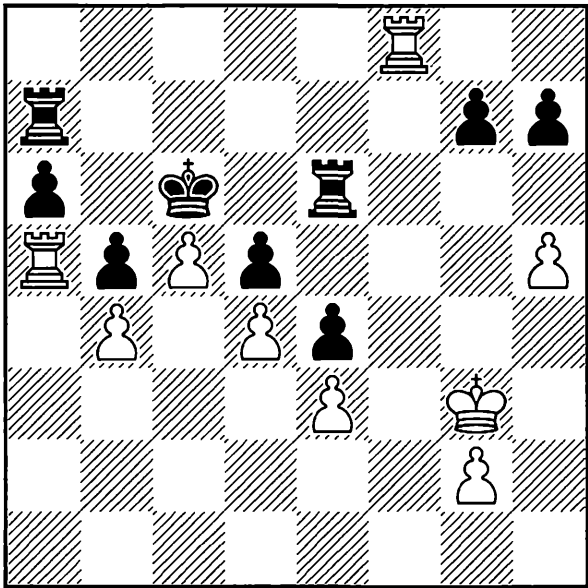


White wishes to play down the f-file with something like **1.♔g3, 2.♞f1**. He wishes to create for himself an entry point on f6 by advancing his h-pawn **h2-h4-h5-h6**, and for that reason the presence of the white king on the kingside is necessary. But despite the fact that the f-line dominates play, White found the courage to resist its lure and quietly played **1.♞a2-a5** and only then started the struggle for the f-file. The blockade on a5 is possible here, because the blockading piece

is flexible, i.e. it can be sent back to the kingside on forced marches.

The ending went as follows: 1.♖a5!! ♔c6 2.♔g3 ♔b7 3.♖f1 ♔c6 4.♖f5 ♖e7 5.h4 ♖aa7 6.h5 ♖e6 7.♖f8

188



The penetration. And the ♖a5 is still standing there, loyal and unmovable, keeping watch! But this immobile guardian is ready to intervene from one moment to another, either by ♖a5-a2-f2 (showing its flexibility) or by ♖a5xa6 if Black's rook moves away. The possibility ♖a5xa6 can be classified as a "threat from a blockading position". Next came 7...g6 8.h6 g5 9.♖b8 ♔c7 10.♖bxb5 ♖xh6 11.♖a4 ♖f6 12.♖ba5 ♔b8 13.♔g4 h6 14.♖a2 ♖af7 15.♖xa6 and went on to win in another 7 moves.

The above example takes us suddenly into the realm of the "blockaders". Let us remain for a short time in this somewhat mixed company. First let me show you a blockader which carries out its numerous duties

A blockader should, as we know, a) blockade, b) threaten and c) be flexible [it really needs to go to the gym!!]

in exemplary fashion. But it is also extremely hard-working, with a real hunger to perform. Look and marvel! (Here the well-meaning critic will intervene and mutter something about self-praise. But it is obvious that what I am admiring

is not the way I conducted the game, but rather the performance of the blockader, which to some extent I am separating from my own performance. But what does the mediocre critic care about such a separation?! His world is ruled by envy, and it is hard to separate oneself from envy.)

Game 12
Nimzowitsch – Behting
Riga 1919

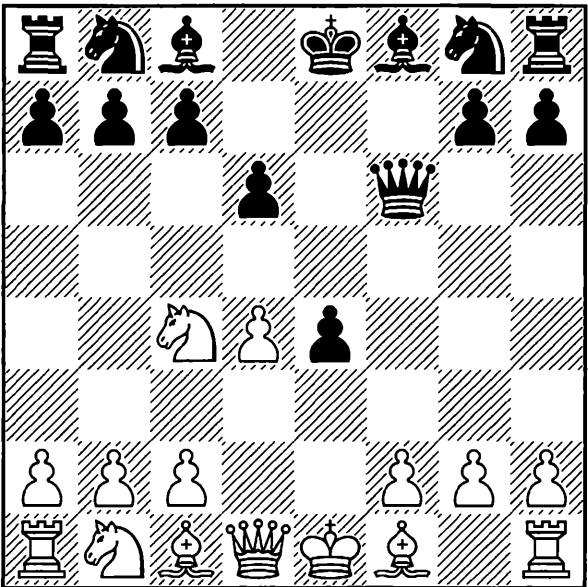
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 f5

According to K. Behting, whose opinion I am inclined to share, this move is quite playable. At least I know of no refutation.

3.♘xe5 ♖f6 4.d4 d6 5.♘c4 fxe4

"Theory" (the praxis of other masters) now recommends 6.♘c3 ♖g6 7.f3 but after 7...exf3 8.♖xf3 ♘f6 9.♙d3 ♖g4 10.♖e3† ♙e7 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.d5 ♘b4 13.♖f4 ♖d7 14.♘b6 axb6 15.♖xb4 the game is level.

189



6.♘e3!!

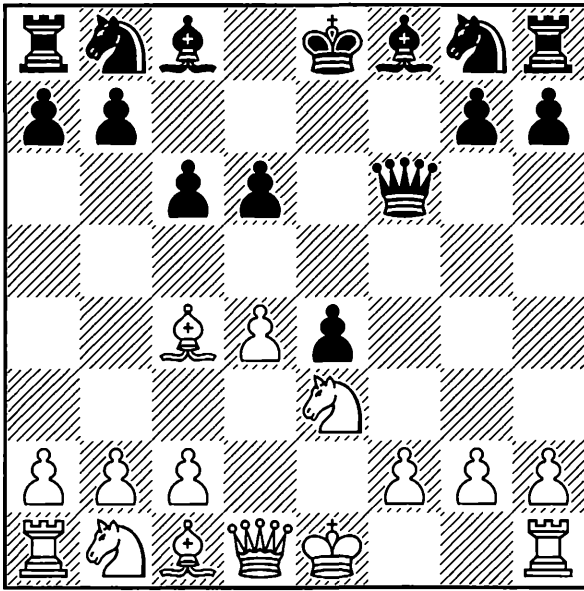
Ranged against this move are:

- 1. tradition, which rather demands 6.♘c3.
- 2. the principle of economic development (don't allow one piece to rove around the board).
- 3. the apparently tiny threat potential from the blockader. And yet 6.♘e3, linked with the following move, is in every sense a masterly move. And even if everybody else plays 6.♘c3, I still consider my knight move to e3 to be the

more correct, purely for reasons connected with my system.

6...c6 7.♔c4!!

190



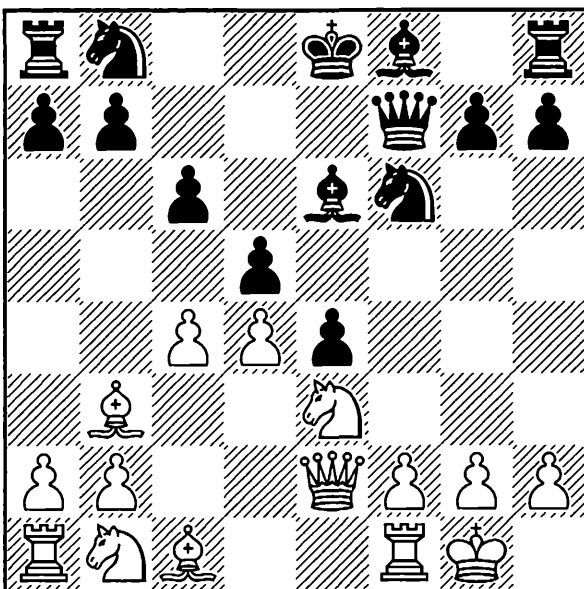
The reason for it. In order to castle kingside, Black must now play d6-d5, but this concedes a fresh opportunity to the ♖e3 (♔b3 + c2-c4 and pressure against d5).

7...d5 8.♔b3 ♔e6

Or 8...b5 9.a4 b4 10.c4 etc.

9.c4 ♖f7 10.♖e2 ♖f6 11.0-0

191



Not 11.♖c3 on account of 11...♔b4. White wishes to put the maximum pressure on d5. Let us take a closer look at the blockader on e3. Does it meet up to the demands made of a blockader? Yes, since

1. it blockades well, preventing the approach of opposing pieces (the g4-square)

2. it is making threats from its blockading square.

3. it is totally flexible, as we shall soon see. In short, the ♖e3 is an ideal blockader!

11...♔b4! 12.♔d2 ♔xd2 13.♖xd2 0-0 14.f4

In order to play f5, to help with the seizure of d5.

14...dxc4 15.♖dxc4 ♖e7 16.f5 ♔d5

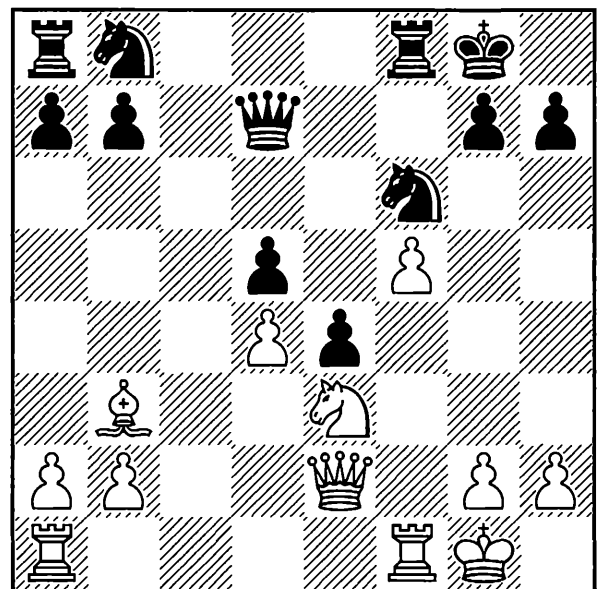
Black is trying to hang on to d5.

17.♖xd5 cxd5 18.♖e3

As soon as the blockader on e3 disappears, another knight takes its place. Even death did not influence the flexibility of the blockade.

18...♖d7

192



19.♖xd5!

This decisive sacrifice is the culmination of the theme of “the blockader exercises threats from its blockading square”.

19...♖xd5 20.♖xe4 ♖d8 21.f6!

The point of the combination and at the same time a further illustration of the principle of the lust to expand of the pawn (f5 was a candidate).

21...gxf6

If 21...♖c6 then 22.f7+ ♖h8 23.♔xd5 ♖xd5? 24.f8♖+ ♖xf8 25.♖xd5. But if 22...♖f8 then 23.♔xd5 ♖xd5 24.♖xh7 and wins.

22.♖f5 ♖h8 23.♖xd5 ♖e8

After 23...♖e8 24.♔c2! would win a whole rook.

24.♖xd7 ♖xe4 25.♖d8+ ♖g7 26.♖g8+ ♖h6 27.♖f1 1-0

And now in conclusion, and before the lust to expand of the pawn becomes a danger to the whole book, a counterpoint to the above game.

Game 13
Nimzowitsch – von Freymann
Vilnius 1912

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3 cxd4
4...♗b6 seems better.
5.♘xd4 ♘c6 6.♘xc6 bxc6 7.♙d3 ♗c7 8.♙f4 g5
Not quite sound, but leads to interesting play.
9.♙g3 ♙g7 10.♗e2 ♘e7 11.0–0 h5 12.h3 ♘f5
13.♙h2

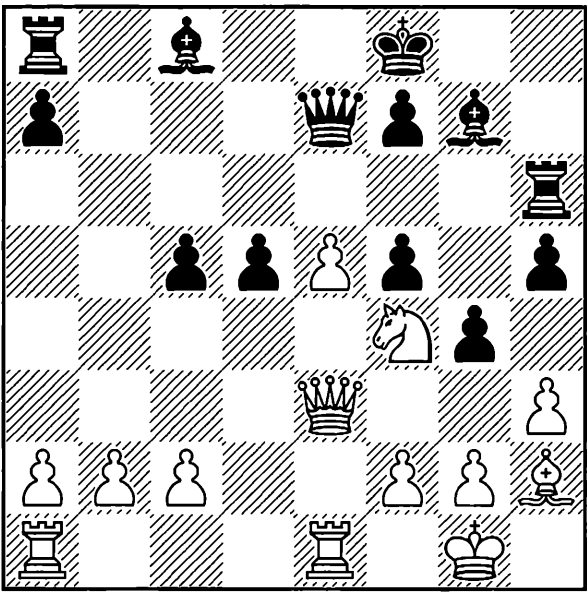
Obviously 13.♙xf5 exf5 14.e6 would be bad on account of 14...f4 15.exf7† ♔xf7, etc.
13...g4

The neat climax to the attack which began with 8...g5.
14.♞e1

After 14.hxg4 hxg4 15.♗xg4 would have come 15...♞xh2 16.♔xh2 ♙xe5† followed by ♙xb2.
14...♔f8 15.♘c3!

The knight is aiming for f4 (after a preliminary exchange on f5).
15...♗e7 16.♙xf5 exf5 17.♗e3 ♞h6 18.♘e2 c5
19.♘f4!

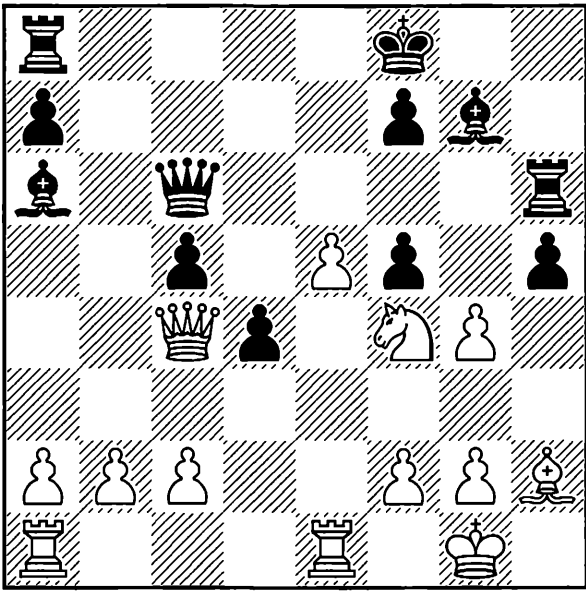
193



This knight must be seen above all as the blockader of f5 and the pawn mass linked to f5. But it is also an “anti-blockader” for its own ♙e5 which is striving to advance.

19...d4 20.♗d3 ♗d7 21.♗c4 ♗c6 22.hxg4!
The necessary preparation for ♘d3. An immediate 22.♘d3 would be met with 22...gxh3, e.g. 22.♘d3 gxh3 23.♗xc5† ♗xc5 24.♘xc5 ♞g6 25.g3 and White is badly off.
22...♙a6

194



23.♗d5!! ♗xd5
A highly interesting move would be 23...hxg4. It would be followed by a triumphal progress of the e-pawn to e8!, e.g. 23...hxg4 24.e6 (attacking the queen) 24...♗xd5 25.e7† ♔e8 26.♘d5 and then check on c7. (The “surprising advance of the pawn which was not stopped”.)
24.♘d5 ♙c4

If 24...hxg4 then once more 25.e6! winning the exchange.
25.♘f6 hxg4 26.♙f4 ♞g6 27.♘d7†
winning the c-pawn and the game after another 20 moves.

The main feature of interest to us is the role played by the ♘f4. It had a strong post as a blockader and it was well backed up, by the ♙h2. It also had a cramping influence on the ♙g7, ♞h6, etc. In addition, its threat value was considerable, threatening as it did d5 and e6. (The mobility of the ♙e5 is an amusing counterpoint to the immobility of the ♙f5.) And finally, its flexibility was significant, because the knight was able to calmly wander about as it was replaced by the bishop on f4.

And now, a schematic illustration and the chapter on the passed pawn can be closed.

Question and answer session to illustrate the passed pawn

- I. How is a passed pawn created?
From a majority • The rule of the candidate.
- II. Why must we blockade a passed pawn?
 1. Because it otherwise threatens to advance • Suicide as a threat •
The image of a criminal (police surveillance is not enough!).
 2. Because the blockading square is protected from frontal attacks and
moreover tends to become a “weak square” for one’s opponent.
 3. Because it can cripple whole enemy complexes.
- III. What demands must be made of the blockading piece?
 1. Basic effectiveness as a blockader.
 2. How effective are the threats it gives from the blockading square.
 3. Elasticity or flexibility.
- IV. How can one increase the effectiveness and the elasticity of the blockade?
The effectiveness of the blockade is increased by links to the rear (overprotection needed!).
But elasticity grows automatically as the blockade takes effect. However, the pawn being
blockaded must not be allowed too far forward.
- V. What are the imponderables in the blockade?
When the blockading squares have turned out to be good squares in all respects. This can be
explained by the tendency we have mentioned for the blockading squares to turn into weak
squares for the opponent.
- VI. What form does play against the blockading piece take?
 1. The efforts to uproot it.
 2. Attempting to bring about changes of blockading pieces.
- VII. Why is the opposition an outdated belief?
Because it judges the situation only by the outer symptoms.
My three-stage combined manoeuvre.
- VIII. Which passed pawns are “privileged” and how should they be treated?
 - a) Two linked passed pawns moving forward in step • Plugging the gap.
 - b) The “protected” passed pawn.
 - c) The “distant” passed pawn • The effect of diversion • Preparing things in advance.
- IX. Goal and purpose of an advance as far as passed pawns are concerned:
 - a) To get closer to the goal (queening) or to protect a square.
 - b) To win space for the king to advance into.
 - c) To end its existence as a sacrifice which entices the opponent away from the action.
The distance between the diversionary pawn and the opposing king is as great as possible.

Part I – Chapter 5

Exchanging

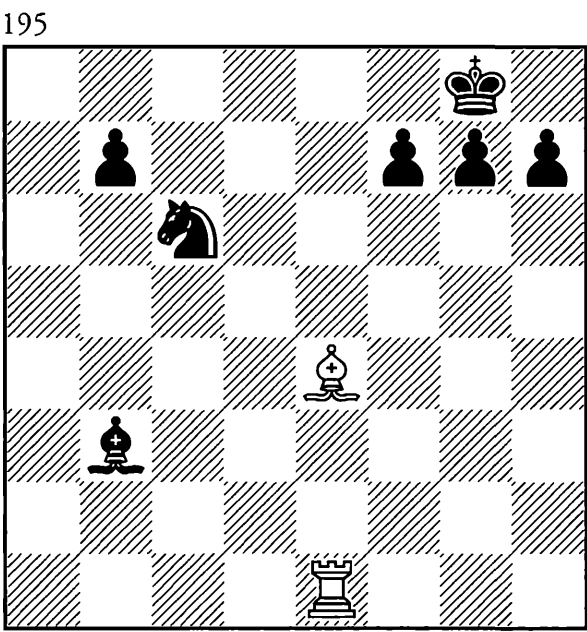
A short chapter which is essentially intended to cast some light over the possible motives for exchanging

In order to inform the student about the dangers of pursuing an exchanging policy too energetically, we shall in what follows point out the few cases in which an exchange seems indicated. In all other cases, exchanging, which is often done frantically, is a bad idea. The process of exchanging is automatic for a master. It enables occupation of files or ensures us of control over individual strategically important squares and the apparently desirable opportunity to exchange will fall into our lap like a ripe fruit (cf. game 11, note to move 35, page 72).

In the first chapter we analysed exchanges which win a tempo. In addition, we also exchanged to avoid being forced to retreat or to make a tempo-wasting defensive move (liquidation with subsequent development). Basically, both cases can be considered as tempo combinations, as in any case calculations about tempo play an important role in any exchange. Just think back to our exchange of a newly developed piece for one that had eaten up several tempi. In the middlegame the “tempo” motif can be seen in the uses of exchanges we shall now sketch in:

1. We exchange in order to occupy (or open) a line without loss of time

The simplest example would be as in the following diagram:



White wishes to occupy (open) a file, in order to deliver mate on the 8th rank; but if he tries ♔f3 or ♖a1, Black has time to prevent him doing so, e.g. he can play 1...♔f8 or 1...g6. The correct move is the exchange 1.♗e4xc6, leaving Black no time to protect against mate, because he “has to” (in the psychological sense too) recapture.

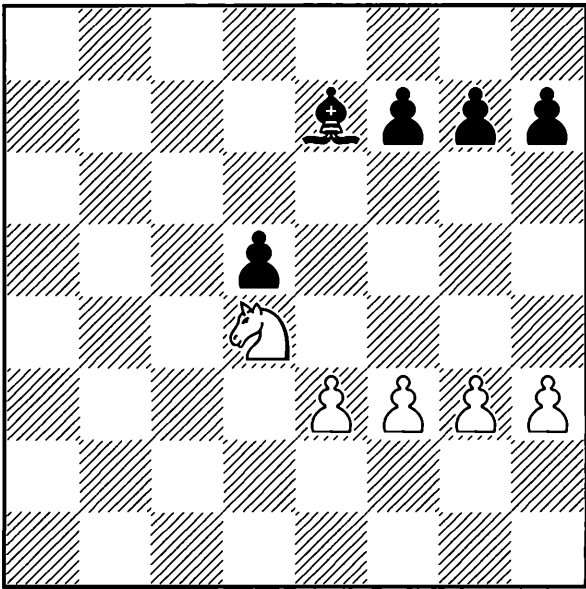
2. We destroy a defender by exchanging

We also destroy it because we recognise in it a defender. In the simplest case it is a defender of some material value; every protecting piece can be seen as such. From the first four chapters, we have come to recognise various protecting pieces. Pieces which defend a pawn which is preventing the opening of a file; pieces which lend aid to a blockading piece and pawns which protect an outpost, etc. It is worth striving to destroy any such piece in any specific case. But the concept of “defender” goes much further. You can also

defend territory (e.g. entry to the 7th rank) or defend yourself against an approach (in game 12, see page 98, the ♖e3 is “protecting” the squares g4 and f5 against a possible approach by ♙g4 or ♜f5). It is also a well-known fact that a knight on f6 “protects” the whole of a castled position (approaches such as ♙h5 are stopped).

It is similar with a centrally positioned blockading piece:

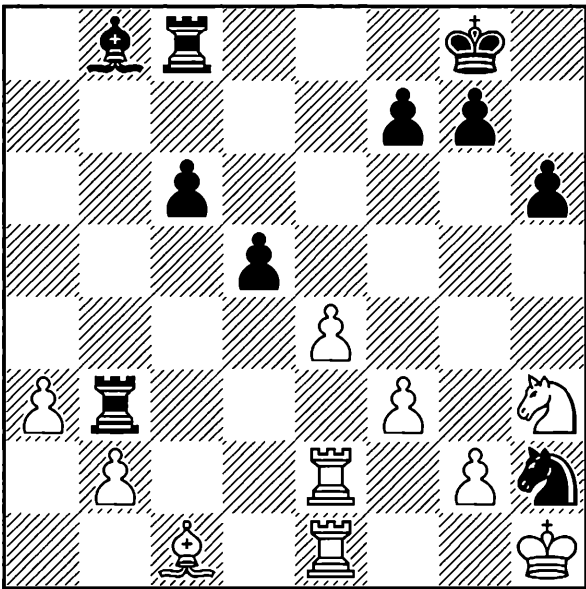
196



Because of its attacking radius, the knight protects and secures a wide stretch of territory. This ♖d4 could also be considered as a defender in our sense of the word. The rule is:

Your urge to destroy should extend to any defender, in the narrower or the broader sense of the word!

197



White wins by a series of exchanges, which combines exchanging moves of both sorts. One glance at the position and we can see the wayward knight on h2 and its defender, the bishop on b8. We play 1.exd5 (an exchange to open a file without losing time, case 1) 1...cxd5 2.♜e8† (the ♜c8 is defending the 8th rank; it must die) 2...♜xe8 3.♜xe8† ♕h7 4.♜xb8 The main defender has fallen. 4...♜xb8 5.♕xh2 and wins.

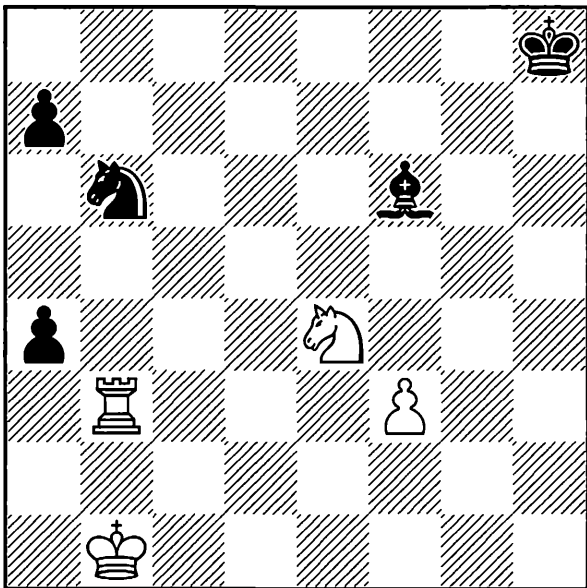
3. We exchange in order not to lose time retreating

Here it is usually a piece under attack which we are talking about: we have the choice of retreating it with loss of time, or exchanging it for an opposing piece and we choose the latter option, especially if by doing so we can make good use of the tempo saved by not retreating.

The question of tempo must be in some way critical. The simplest example would be: White ♕b1, ♜b3, ♖d2, ♗f3; Black ♕h8, ♜f6, ♖b6, ♗a7, a5.

Play may go 1.♖e4 a4. A counterattack.

198

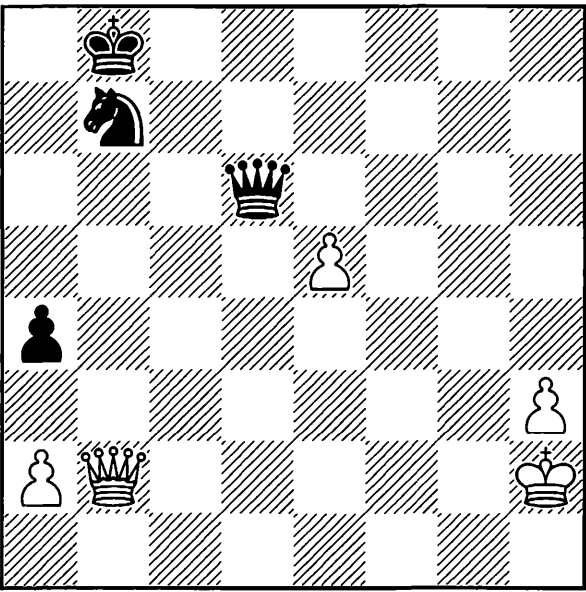


2.♜xb6 To save the tempo. 2...axb6 3.♖xf6 and wins.

When major pieces on both sides come under attack, it comes down to a sort of exchange case 3, which we shall call:

3a. “He tries to sell his life as dearly as possible”

199



Black plays 1...a3. White is quite happy to exchange queens, but since his ♔b2 is condemned to death, it appears quite understandable for it to sell its life as dearly as possible. Like a soldier who is surrounded and prepared to die will use his last cartridge; he wants to take as many enemies with him as possible, his life is to be sold as dearly as possible!! So 2.♚xb7† at least gets something for the queen, who was once so young and fair...

Generally speaking, such a “commercial” sacrifice of the queen is much stranger to the beginner than a heroic total sacrifice. The latter seems to him a common-place occurrence (moreover it need not be the queen, for which he has an overwhelming sense of respect), whereas the former seems quite strange to him. Additionally, it is not even a sacrifice, or at most a very temporary one, and perhaps the psychological difficulty for the beginner lies in this combination of “sacrifice” with base material gain.

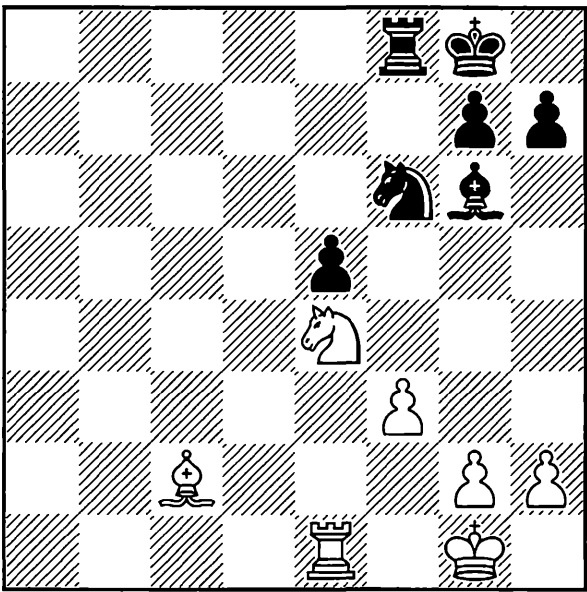
4. How and where exchanges usually take place

A lack of space prevents us going into this in the detail we would wish, so let us briefly refer to:

a) the simplification which is desirable to the player who is ahead on material. This means that exchanges are used as a weapon to force your opponent out of a strong position.

b) the fact that when two people want the same thing, there is a conflict. In chess this conflict takes the form of wholesale exchanges, e.g.

200

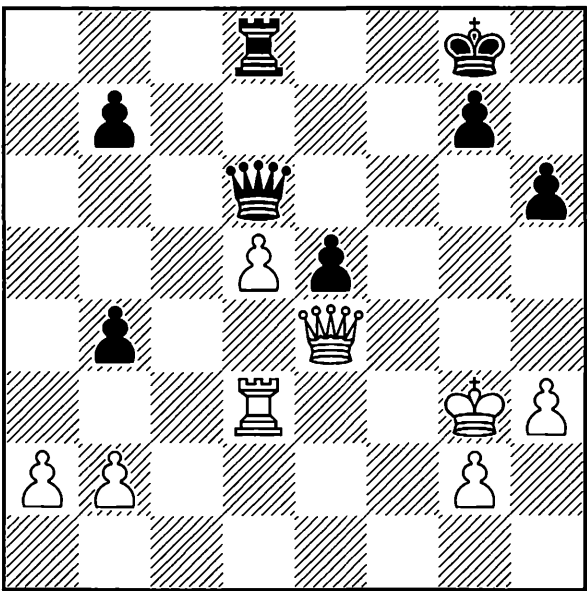


The key point is e4. White protects and overprotects that square as much as he can. Black wants to clear it, since a piece on e4 irritates him (by its radius of attack). And it will finally come down to a great blood-letting on e4.

c) the fact that if you are strong in one file, a simple advance is enough to provoke exchanges, because your opponent cannot permit an invasion. At the very least he must try to lessen the effect of such an invasion by exchanges.

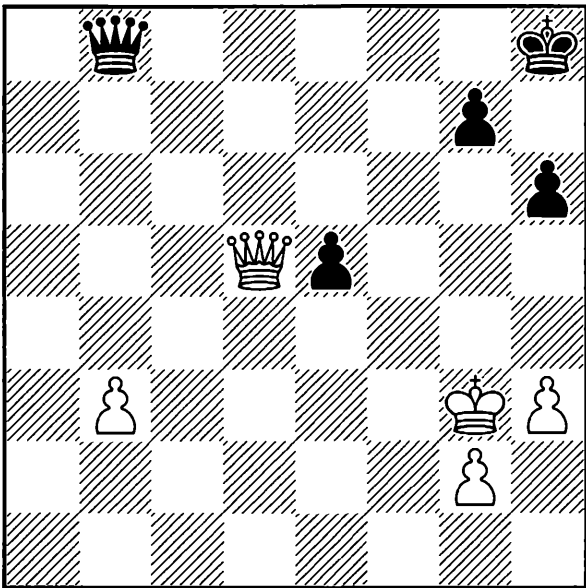
d) that weak points or weak squares tend to be mutually exchanged off (a sort of exchange of prisoners of war). As an example of this we offer the following endgame, from the game **Dr Bernstein – Perlis**, played in St Petersburg 1909.

201



Next came: 31...♖a8 32.♜b3 ♜xa2 33.♜xb4. There has been a mutual exchange of the weak pawns a2 and b4, and the same will happen to the pawns on d5 and b7. 33...♜a5 34.♜xb7 ♜xd5 35.♜b8†! The simple exploitation of the b-file has the desired effect of bringing about exchanges. 35...♞xb8 36.♞xd5† ♔h8 Dr Lasker correctly points out that it was preferable to manoeuvre the king to f6. 37.b3

202

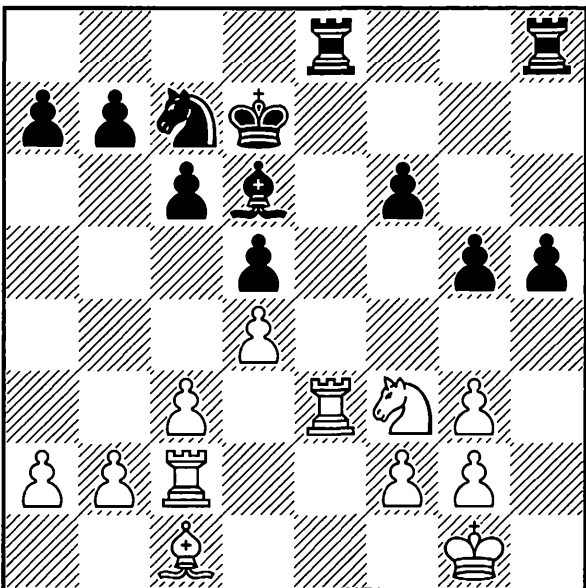


And, due to his b-pawn, Bernstein won a brilliantly played endgame to which we shall return [but not in *My System* – editor].

We close the above chapter by presenting two endgames.

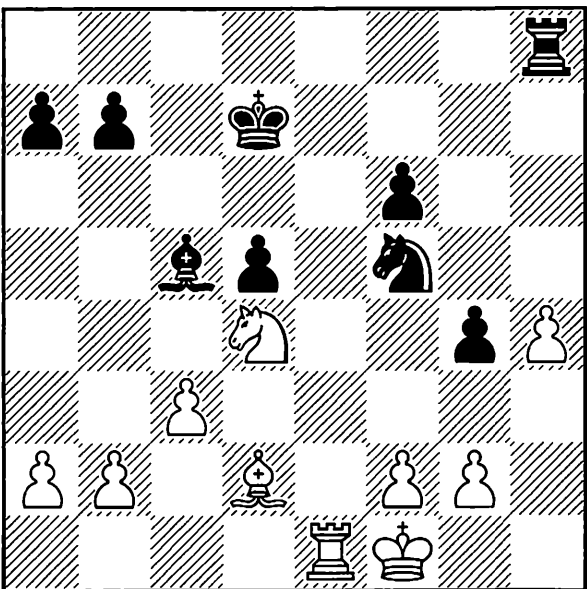
Rosselli del Turco – Rubinstein
Baden-Baden 1925

203



Play continued: 21...♜xe3. Otherwise White will play ♜ce2; on the other hand, Black does not have any other sensible move. 22.♞xe3 ♜e8 23.♜e2 ♜g7 24.♞d2 ♜f5! 25.♜e1 c5 26.dxc5 ♞xc5 Now the d4-square has become the burning issue; a battle is looming. 27.♔f1 h4 28.gxh4 g4 29.♜d4!

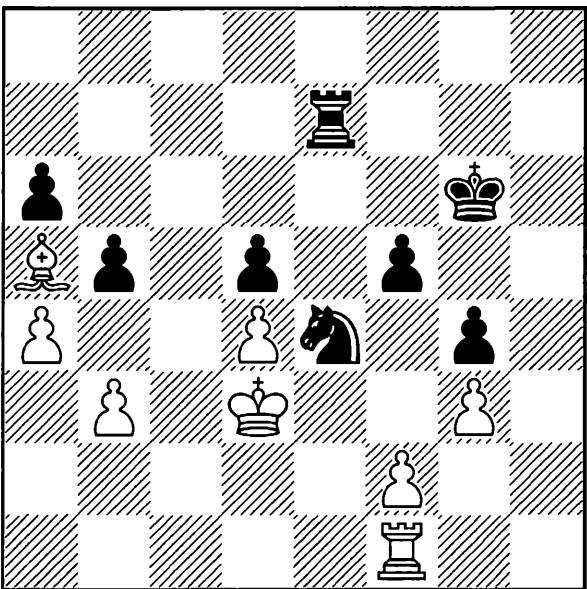
204



29...♞xd4 30.cxd4 See previous annotation. 30...♜xh4 31.♞c3 ♜h1† 32.♔e2 ♜h2 33.♜g1 ♜h4 34.g3 ♜f5 35.b3 ♜e6 36.♞b2 a6 37.♞c3 ♜d6 38.♔e3 ♜e4 39.♞e1 This was followed by a few vain attempts on the c-file by Rubinstein.

After White's 55th move, the following position had been reached:

205



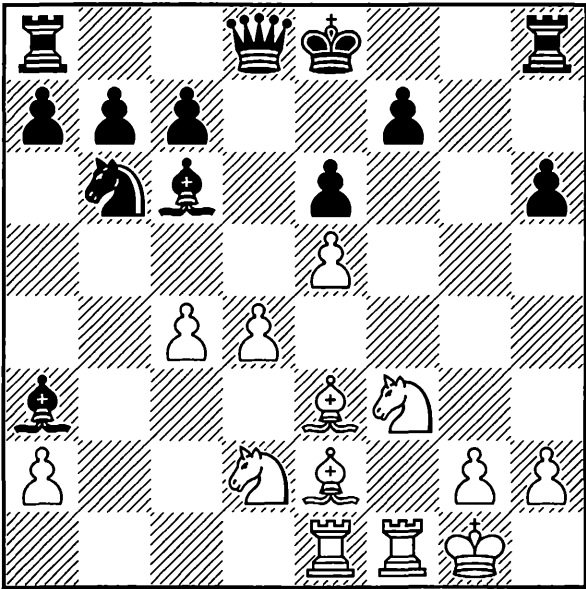
There now came the decisive breakthrough 55...f4! 56.gxf4 ♜h7 57.♞d2 ♜xd2! (taking the

defender of f4 and f2) 58.♙xd2 ♖h3 59.f3 gxf3 60.♖f2 ♙f5 61.♙e3 ♙g4 62.b4 (if 62.f5 then 62...♙xf5 63.♖xf3† ♖xf3† 64.♙xf3 bxa4 65.bxa4 a5, then flanking the white king) 62...♖h1 63.f5 ♖e1† 64.♙d3 ♖e4 0–1

After this classical tournament endgame, let's turn to a game played at odds in a coffee house. In it, the exchanging motif cropped up in an original form.

Nimzowitsch – Druwa
Riga 1919

206



White, who had conceded the trifling odds of a queen for a knight “risked” the breakthrough with 1.d5; next came 1...exd5 (a more solid move was 1...♘xd5) 2.e6 fxe6 (the correct move was 2...0–0) 3.♘e5 (the pawns have committed suicide to bring the knight to life on e5) 3...♙xc4 4.♙h5† ♙e7 5.♘xc6†! Surprisingly effective. Who thinks of exchanging when they are pursuing the enemy!? 5...bxc6⁸ 6.♖f7† ♙d6 7.♘xc4† dxc4 8.♖d1† Now things become clear: the ♙c6 was a defender (because just at this point there would have been the possibility of ♙c6-d5). 8...♙e5 9.♙f4† ♙e4 10.♙f3 mate!

Part I – Chapter 6

The elements of endgame strategy

Introduction and general comments

The typical disproportion

It is a well-known phenomenon that the very same amateur who was able to conduct his middlegame very creditably appears to be quite helpless in the endgame. The disproportion just mentioned is not very well-handled in the older method of teaching chess. One of the main requisites of good chess is the ability to play the middlegame and the endgame with equal skill. It may be in the nature of things for the student to gather first plenty of experience of the opening and the middlegame, but this problem (and it is a problem) must be tackled as soon as possible. You must be made aware from the very start that the endgame is in no way to be compared with stale leftovers from the feast of the middlegame. The endgame is much more *the* part of the game in which the advantages acquired in the middlegame are to be *realised*. Now, the realisation of advantages, specifically advantages of the material sort, is in no way a “lesser” occupation. Quite the opposite: it is a concern of the whole person, of the whole artist! In order to know what happens in the endgame and to appreciate it, you must learn about the endgame by starting from its individual elements, because it has such elements, just like the middlegame. We have already thoroughly analysed one such element, the passed pawn. There remain

1. Centralisation with its subdivision: “using the king, or shelters and bridge building”
2. The aggressively posted rook and the activity of pieces in general
3. Welding together isolated troops
4. “General advance!”

5. The “materialisation of files” we have already mentioned. (This should be understood to mean that the file [at first a somewhat “abstract” concept] will be transformed into a single point [protected by a pawn] which can be seized or can be said to be more concrete.)

Endgames are interesting in themselves, quite without Rinck or Troitzky.

1. Centralisation

a) of the king, b) of minor pieces, c) of the queen • The journey to the king’s castle • How the old king can protect himself from thunder and lightning • Shelters • Bridge building

a) The great mobility of the king is known to constitute one of the important factors in endgame strategy. In the middlegame, the king is a mere extra, but in the endgame it is one of the principal actors. So it must be “developed”, or brought nearer to the battlefield. This is achieved by centralisation. So

Rule: At the start of the endgame the king should start to head towards the centre, because from there it can go right or left, as needed, to attack either the opposing kingside or queenside.

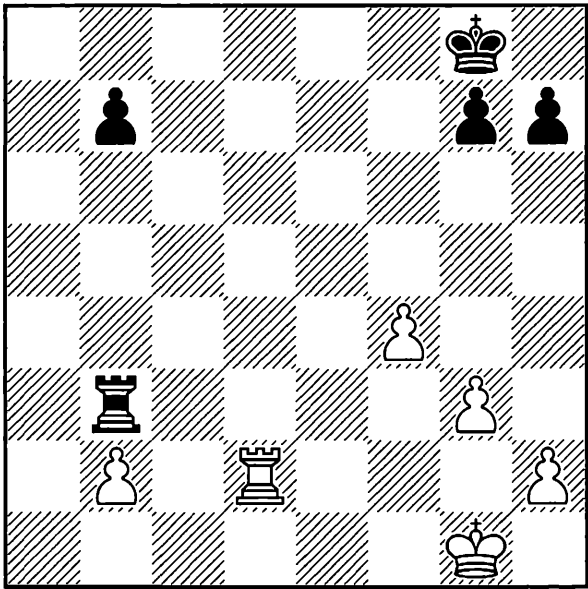
So we have the following picture: the king slowly approaches the centre, and when he has arrived he brings together all his ministers and advisers, eats a hearty breakfast, consults his ministers, has another breakfast (unlike other mortals kings eat two breakfasts), consults once more with his assembled advisers, and only then chooses what he

(and his advisers) consider the correct battlefield. This picture is intended to convey to you how slowly the king typically decides and acts.

Example 1: White ♔g1, Black ♚e8 (only the most important actors are present). 1.♔g1-f2. He heads for the centre and at the same time protects his base squares (e1 and e2) against penetration by ♚e8-e2 or ♚e8-e1.

Example 2:

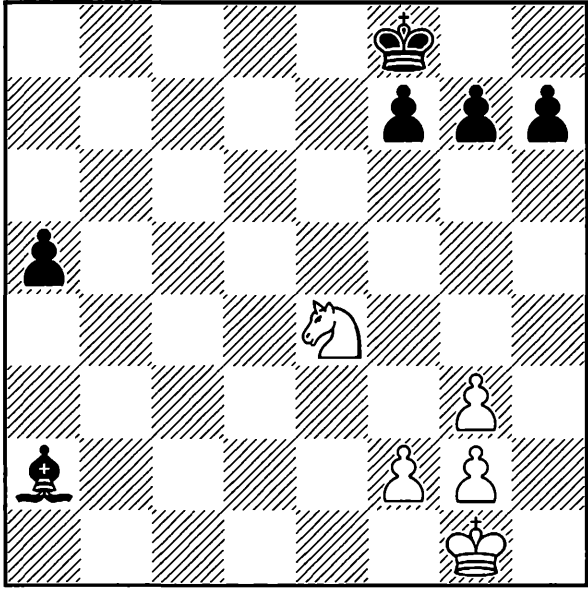
207



Here too the first moves are ♔g1-f2-e2 and now White chooses the queenside: ♔e2-d1-c2, protecting b2 and relieving the rook on d2 of this duty so that it can become a bit more enterprising, possibly by ♚d7.

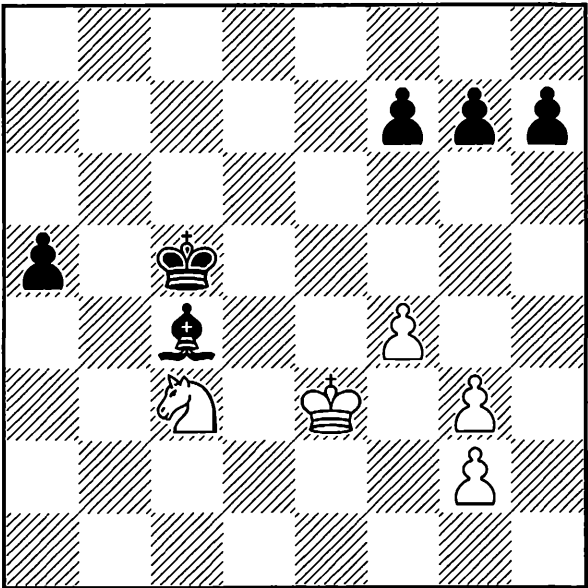
Example 3:

208



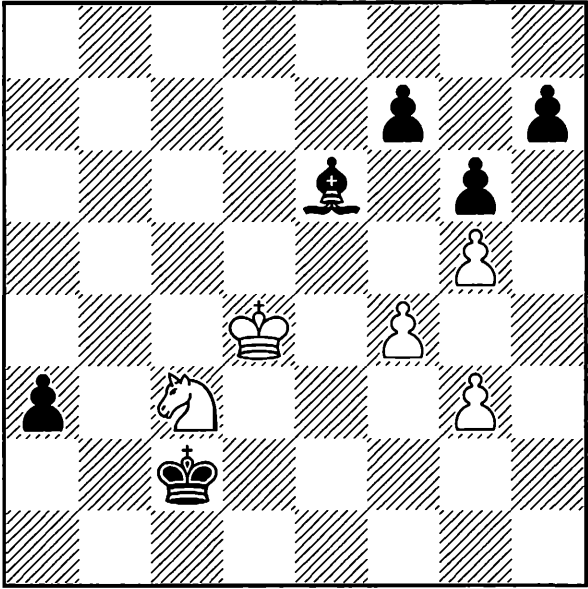
The next move in **Rubinstein – Nimzowitsch**, Karlsbad 1907, was **33.♔c3**, since the immediate centralisation of the king would fail to ♔d5, e.g. 33.♔f1 ♔c4† 34.♔e1 ♔d5 and an exchange of pieces is forced, or else a pawn is lost. After **33...♔c4 34.f4 ♔e7 35.♔f2 ♔d6 36.♔e3 ♔c5**

209



White had missed the proper moment to get in contact with the d4-square. If the position were with White ♔d4, Black ♔d6, on the other hand, the win would be much more difficult, whereas now it follows on logically. **37.g4 ♔b4** This is the heart of the matter: the central position c5 is considered as a stepping-stone to an attack on the flank, and there we have the real meaning of centralisation. **38.♔d4** (too late; see final remarks) **38...♔b3 39.g5 a4 40.♔b1 ♔e6 41.g3 ♔b3 42.♔c3 a3 43.♔d3 g6 44.♔d4 ♔c2! 0–1**

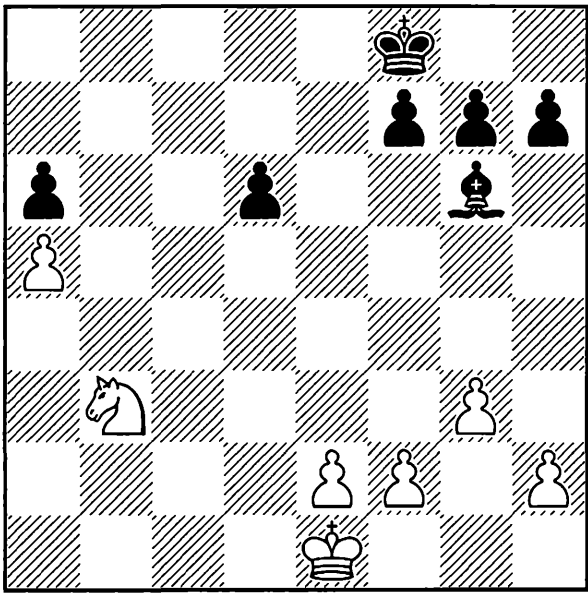
210



This example has demonstrated a new side to the central advance: the advance is not simply to create more space to manoeuvre for our own king but also to limit the space available to the opposing king. In such and similar struggles, despite its majesty the king displays unbelievable narrowness of mind in that it fights for a single square as though it was a whole kingdom! So you must take the following to heart: try everything you can to bring your king to as “central” a position as possible, partly for its own sake but also partly to limit the opposing king as much as possible, to deny it its place in the sun!

b) Centralisation is not simply something to do with kings; the other pieces show a similar tendency.

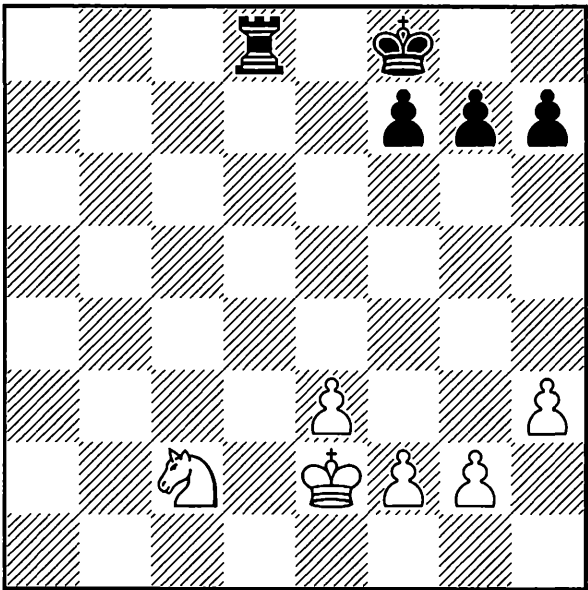
211



Here both ♔e1-d2-c3-d4 and $1.\text{♞d4}$ then e3 can be chosen. Similarly to the previous example, centralising the knight tends to achieve two things:

1. From d4, the knight keeps an eye on both wings.
2. It limits the range of the opposing king (preventing it going via e6 to d5). If the opponent has a rook, the centralised knight creates a protective screen for its own king, which can then also be centralised (behind the knight). Dr Tartakower, the witty author of *Hypermodern Chess* would describe that as a piece island. The simplest example would be:

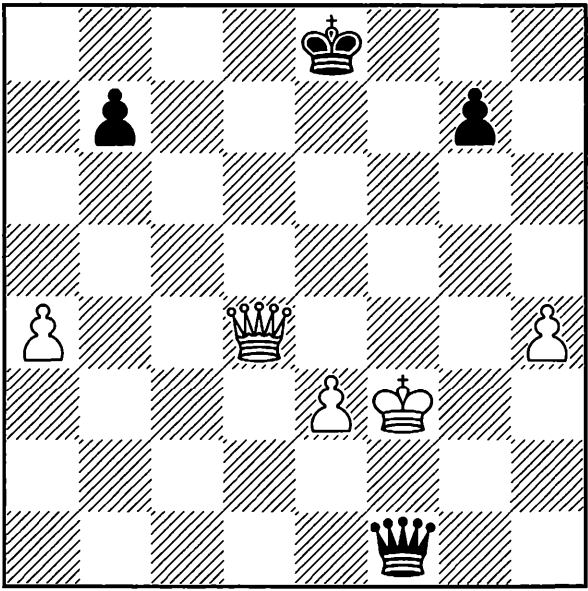
212



Then $1.\text{♞d4}$ followed by ♔d3 creates the central piece island with ♔ , ♞ , ♙ .

c) There is no more insistent proof of the importance of centralisation than the realisation that the queen too, which even from the edge of the board is truly an extremely effective piece, would like to be posted in the centre. The ideal would be a “central” queen, protected by a pawn and protecting in turn other pawns. With protection like this, one’s own king can undertake long sorties into enemy territory!

213



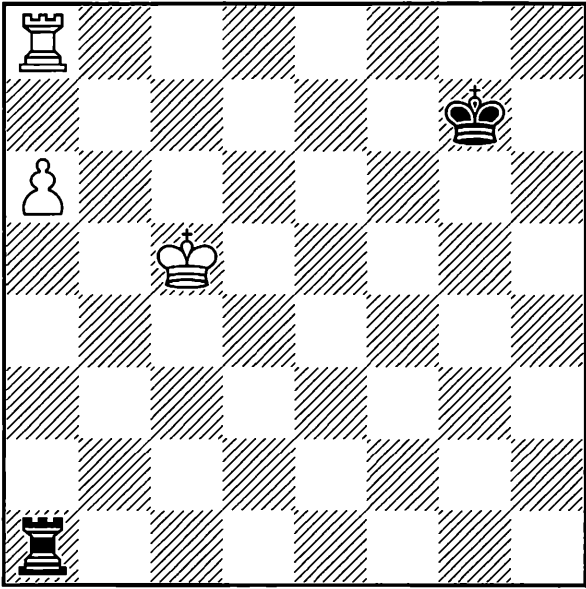
White decides to see a bit of the world, and heads off happily like the hero from a fairy tale. And finally he reaches a splendid castle in which he finds the young beautiful princess, as one does in all good fairy tales. The same happens to

our ♔f3, with the difference that there are two castles which attract him: the ideal positions on b6 and g6. After many a weary mile, he finally reaches one of these squares and safety... and wins. Compare with diagram 236, page 123.

Shelters and bridge building

We have just compared our king with all his wanderlust to the merry young lad who was so full of hope in the fairy tale. But there are sometimes realistic little differences between reality and the world of fairy tales. There may be all sorts of thunder and lightning in fairy tales, but no one ever even catches the sniffles (although from time to time the evil queen may be somewhat bunged up); but in the harsh and real world, a cold is not such an unusual matter. To protect himself against the danger of such an illness, the wandering king should always think about having a possible safe place. Such a shelter can render him sterling service when he is caught in a storm.

214

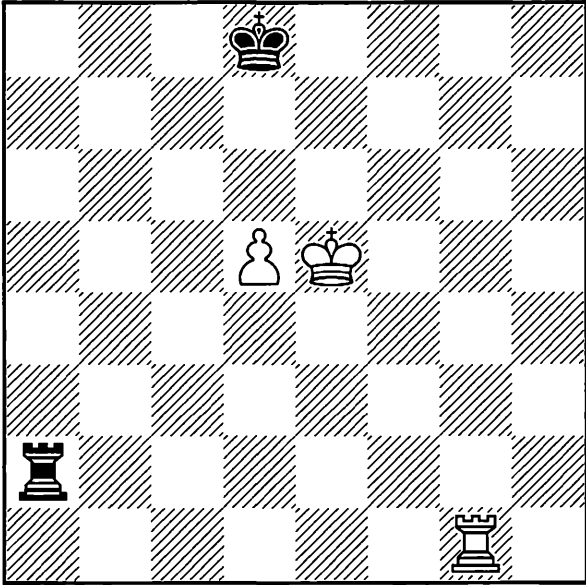


In this position 1.a6-a7 would be an obvious mistake, because after 1.a7 ♖a2 2.♔b6 (to be able to move the rook away and then promote the pawn) the white king would be exposed to the storm (that is to say the series of checks from the black rook). The correct idea would be to use a7 as a shelter for the king, so 1.♔b6 ♖b1† 2.♔a7 ♖b2 3.♖b8 ♖a2 4.♖b6 ♖a1 5.♔b7; and

since the sun is now shining, the old king has dared to come out once more. 5...♞a2 6.a7 and wins.

Things are similar in the following position:

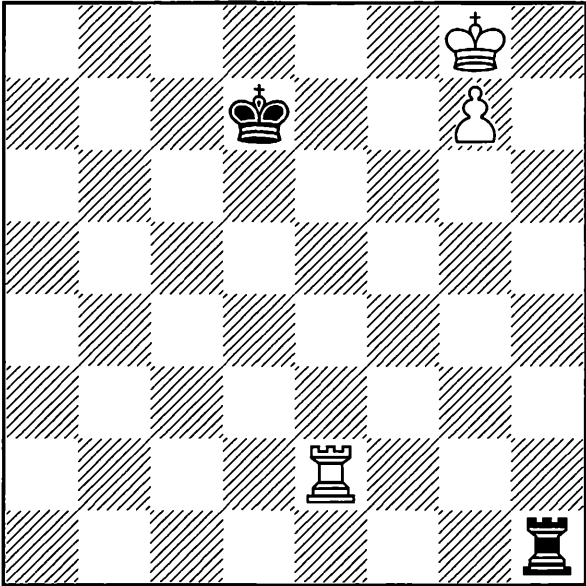
215



Here d6 would be the shelter, so you should not make this unusable by playing 1.d5-d6. The correct way is 1.♔e6 and if 1...♞e2† then 2.♔d6 and Black is out of checks and in danger of seeing his king cut off from the queening square⁹.

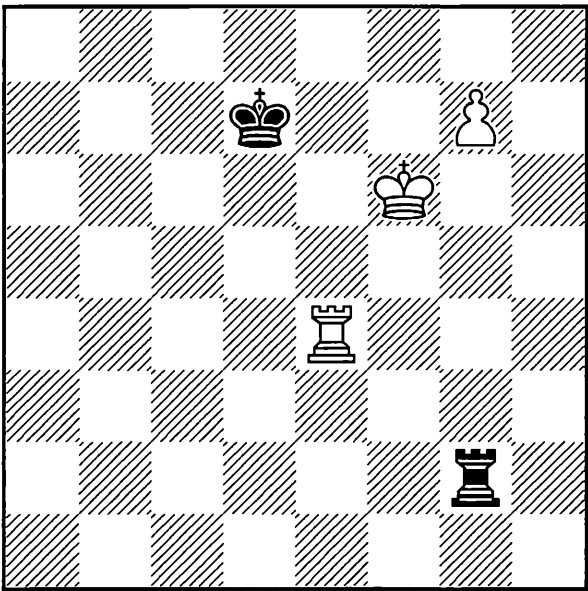
As human beings, it is our way that if by chance we find something which is to our advantage, we then make efforts to learn how to bring about on purpose the situation which proved by chance to be so advantageous. This is the case here too. Endgame technique demands of us that we learn to construct a shelter, just as a scout puts up his tent. We are helped in this by the idea of bridge building.

216



If White plays 1.♔f7, there then comes a series of checks and the white king must head home without completing his mission. The key move is rather 1.♖e4!, a move which at first sight is incomprehensible. Then comes 1...♗h2 and now our king may dare come out into the daylight: 2.♔f7 ♗f2† 3.♔g6 ♗g2† 4.♔f6!

217



4...♗f2† 5.♔g5! ♗g2† 6.♗g4! The bridge building is over; the square g5 has turned into an excellent shelter. After 4.♔f6 Black could also have waited with 4...♗g2 (instead of 4...♗f1†); but this is followed by a beautiful manoeuvre (which every bridge builder would envy) in which we transfer the whole bridge with all its equipment from one spot to another, namely 5.♗e4-e5!!, and build a bridge at g5, with the shelter then being situated on g6. This charming piece of play belongs to – everyday manoeuvring! This is proof of the wonderful beauty of chess!

It would be interesting to investigate whether an immediate 1.♗e5 might be feasible. It is, since 1.♗e5 also wins, though it is less convincing than the solution 1.♗e4, given by your author. After 1.♗e5 comes 1...♔d6 2.♔f7 ♗f1† 3.♔e8 (not 3.♔g6 on account of 3...♔xe5 4.g8♗ ♗g1†) 3...♗g1 4.♗e7 ♗g2 (or 4...♗a1 5.♔d7† wins) 5.♔f8 ♗g1 6.♗f7 and wins.

As well as creating a shelter, bridge building is for any king with wanderlust one of the typical elements of endgame strategy and is intimately linked to the manoeuvre handled under

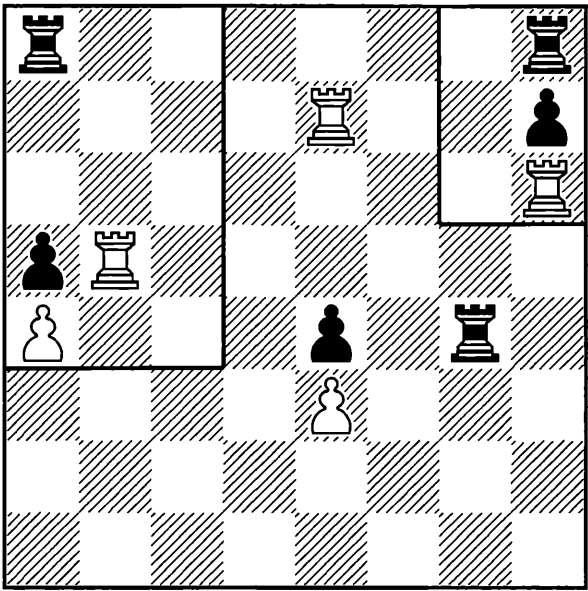
section 3, page 116. Moreover, bridge building also took place in our game 10, when ♔f5 created a shelter for our own king on f3 (see diagram 130, page 70)

2. The aggressively posted rook as a typical endgame advantage

Examples and justification • The active piece in general • The Tarrasch formula

If anyone wished to express an opinion about some middlegame position by saying that the position is more or less level but that White has the advantage of a more actively posted rook and that this advantage should be decisive, this answer would be the signal for a general shaking of heads. And in fact such an advantage is too slight to have a decisive effect in the middlegame. But things are quite different in the endgame, where the sort of advantage defined above can be of extraordinary importance.

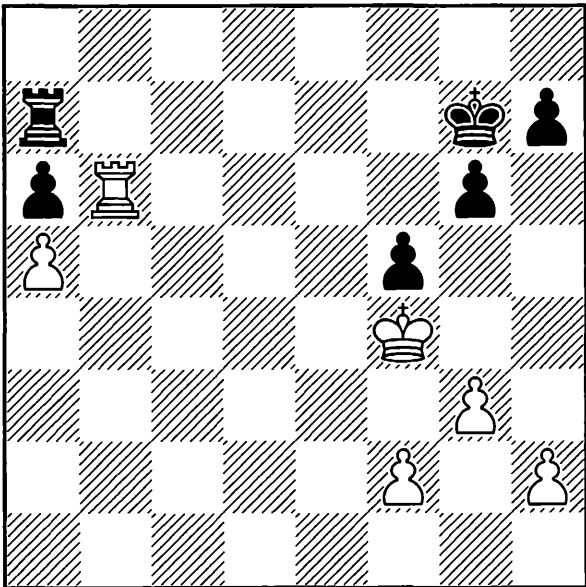
218



In each section of the diagram, the white rook has the aggressive, the black rook the passive position.

Consider the situation on the left side of the diagram: White ♖a4, ♗b5, Black ♖a5, ♗a8; when both sides have pawns on the kingside, the position of White's rook can be turned into the basis for some action there. This is even more the case when the white pawn is further advanced, as in the following position:

219



By h2-h4 followed by, at an appropriate moment, h4-h5 and h5xg6, White may expose the g-pawn to possible attacks. And whereas the white rook will be the driving force behind such operations, the black rook does not have nearly the same flexibility to be able to come up with sufficient defensive resources with which to oppose his attacking counterpart on the kingside.

So what has been said may be formulated as follows:

The weakness of the defending rook is based on the lack of flexibility which stops it getting to the other flank.

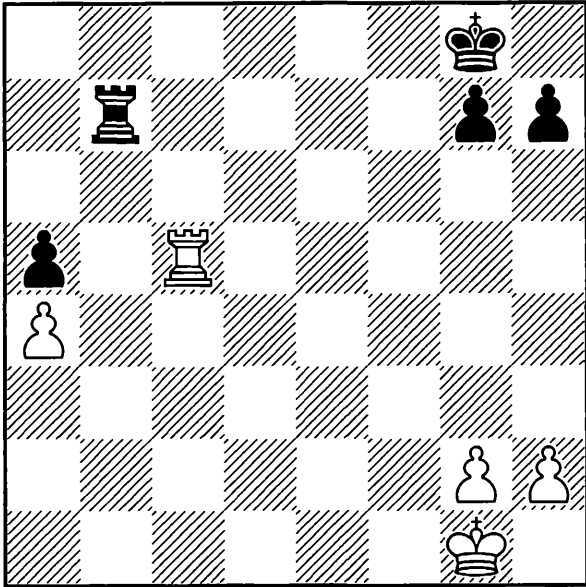
But this is emphasised by the fact that the white king gains greater freedom of manoeuvre (normally it would fear rooks), or as the proverb says: When the cat's away, the mice will play! In diagram 219, then, it would not do to underestimate the threat of ♔f4 to b6 (one step at a time, of course).

So, it is an everyday occurrence in games between masters for one of the players to undertake long manoeuvres and concentrate hard simply to achieve (as the result of all his efforts) an aggressive positioning of his rook and to force his opponent's rook into a passive role. Then the active rook has a truly "uplifting" effect, just like the lead singer in an opera who sees her

rival confined to an unimportant secondary role, just because she (the lead) is singing the main role.

And on the other hand, it is quite understandable that, having been outshone in such a way, the rival singer should call in sick and let down the production team. This is what happens in the next example.

220



It is Black's move, and turning down the role of the "passive rook", he plays 1...♖b7-b2! 2.♙xa5 ♖a2. The black rook is then very mobile and the draw should be safe. 1...♖a7 would probably have lost.

After much thought, and fully recognising the responsibility we are taking on our shoulders, we have come to the decision to set out for you the following rule:

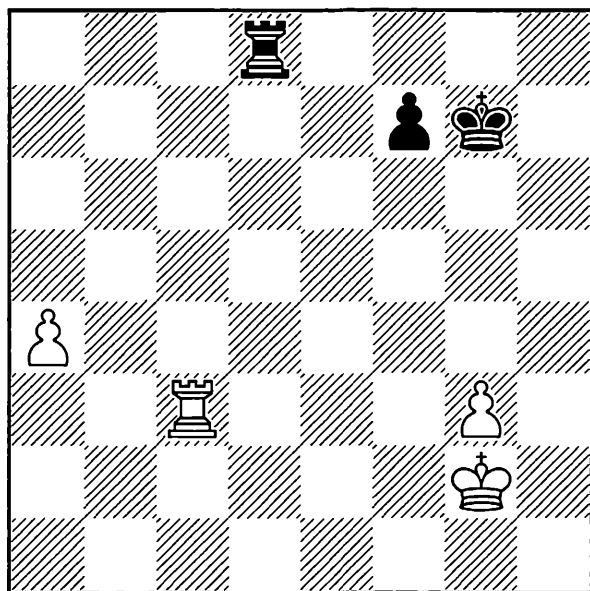
When faced with the choice of protecting a pawn by a rook, which would in consequence be condemned to a passive, very contemplative existence and sacrificing your pawn at once in order to make more active use of your rook, you should always opt for the latter.

As has been said, this rule should be observed in a prudent manner. The greater or lesser degree of activity, or passivity, must be weighed up carefully in each individual case. It is not our intention to foster a "sacrifice-omania". So: **sacrifice, but do so intelligently!**

When should the position of a rook be judged active with regard to a passed pawn of our own or one belonging to our opponent? This question has already been answered by Tarrasch; his splendid formula is as follows:

The rook belongs behind the passed pawn, no matter whether it is our passed pawn or our opponent's.

221



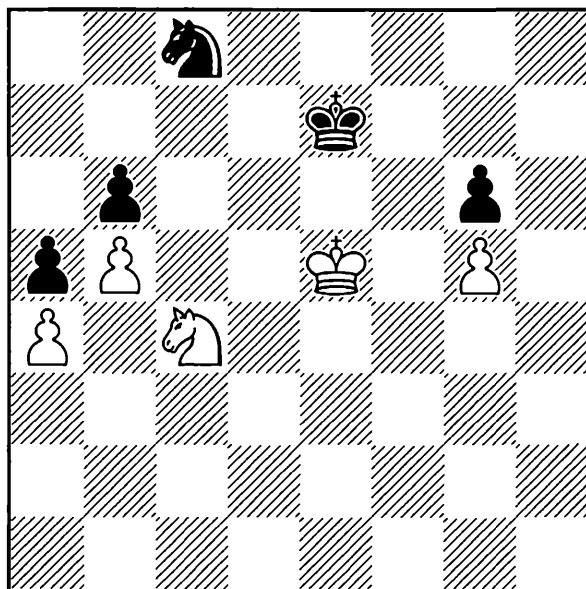
It is White's move and he plays 1.♖a3! i.e. putting his rook behind the pawn. The rook has an enormous effect, since it breathes its own life into the passed pawn. On the other hand, if Black had the move he would not post his rook in front of the opponent's passed pawn (i.e. not 1...♖a8? 2.♖a3 and White wins), but much rather behind it, so 1...♜d2† 2.♔f3 ♜a2. The rook position he has thus achieved is aggressive, firstly with regard to the white g-pawn which can be captured at an appropriate moment and secondly with regard to a possible king walk by White (for example, if the white king makes it to a6, then ♜b2 could shut it in or a series of checks could be given from behind if the king made it to b8 or c8).

It is not only the case with rooks, but also with minor pieces that the difference in value between an attacking and a defensive piece comes to the fore.

The weakness of a knight as a protective piece lies in its one-sided nature (any move it makes

abandons the piece it was protecting); this side to its nature favours zugzwang.

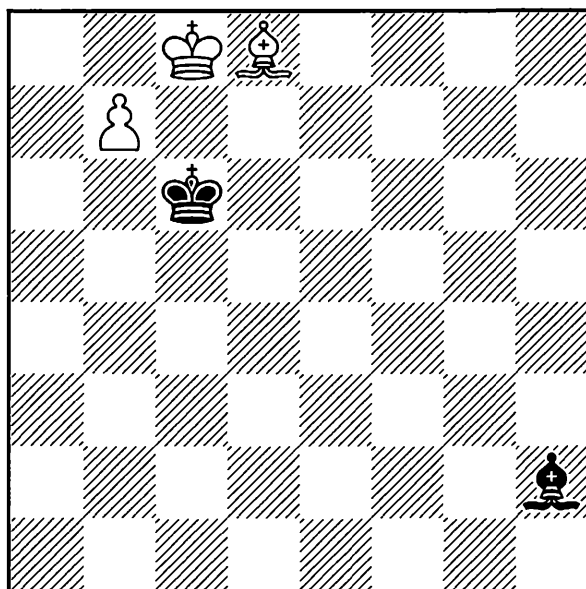
222



If it is Black's move, then he is in zugzwang. On the other hand, if White has the move (and that is the point here) he is only apparently in zugzwang, because the agile white knight can drum up various threats. White plays 1.♞e3 and the zugzwang passes to Black. Or else, he can play 1.♞d5 with the threat of ♞e5 and so on. If the above position were moved back by one rank (White's king on e4 and Black's on e6, etc.), White would still win.

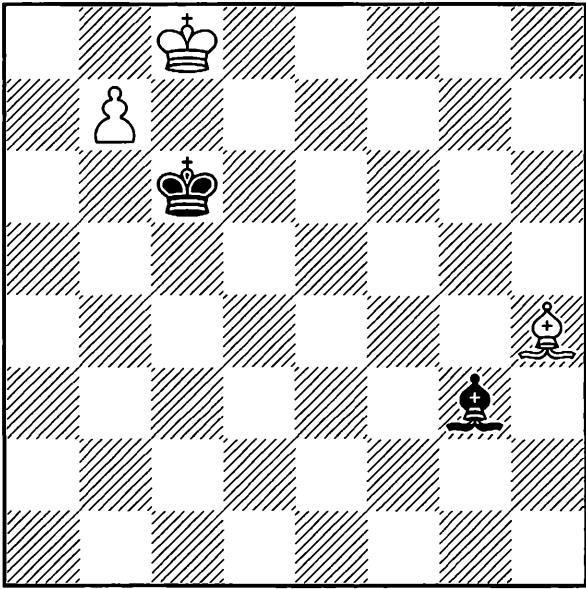
When a bishop is doing the protecting, then it becomes clear that it does not appear to be as quick at changing direction as a bishop which is attacking. Look at the charming way a win is achieved here.

223



In this case, Black’s bishop is the defender; the white bishop threatens to get to b8 via h4, f2 and a7. Apparently this threat is easily blocked by an opportune ♖a6. Thus 1.♙h4 ♖b5! 2.♙f2 ♖a6!. If now 3.♙h4, threatening ♙d8-c7, then the black king gets back to c6 in good time. But White plays 3.♙c5! (in order to force Black’s bishop into a move and at the same time to prevent ♙d6) 3...♙g3 And now White’s bishop heads back towards c7. 4.♙e7 ♖b6! 5.♙d8† ♖c6 6.♙h4!

224



Black now has no time for the saving manoeuvre he employed earlier: ♖c6-b5-a6. So 6...♙h2 7.♙f2 and wins by ♙f2-a7-b8, e.g. 7...♙f4 8.♙a7 ♙h2 9.♙b8 ♙g1 10.♙f4 ♙a7 11.♙e3.

3. Welding together isolated troops and “General advance!”

Since the two manoeuvres in the title are so interrelated, (one often slips imperceptibly into the other), they will be treated together in this section.

Bringing forces into contact with one another which have been separated cannot be hard; all you need to know is what one piece means to another. We know all sorts of things! For example, by “bridge building” a knight is able to conjure up a shelter for its king; or else, a knight can enjoy the protection of a humble pawn and can in return move away to protect other members

of its pawn family or to attack enemy ones. You could, for example, look at the ♘f5 in game 10, diagram 130, page 70.

In addition to that, we are aware that the king is able to plug holes in the ranks of its own pawns which have advanced. Nor should we forget that a centrally posted queen can look after widely separated pawns (see diagram 213, page 111). A good example of contact between white pieces can be seen in a position with: ♖a4, ♖g3, ♗f4, ♖f3.

And the pieces should advance together! A passed pawn prematurely going wild and running away ahead of its protectors and comrades, as is the case in diagram 171, page 90, is most definitely an exception to the rule. The latter is rather:

A pawn which is advancing should remain in contact with its fellow pieces! Any space which becomes free because of the said advance is best occupied by one of them.

For example, e4-e5 and soon afterwards ♘c3-e4 or ♖f3-e4, etc.

From time to time, an opposing rook tries to disturb your concentration by some annoying checks; in such a case, the rook should either be rendered harmless or packed off home (see Post-Alekhine, example 3, page 122).

Co-ordination is 80 per cent of all endgame technique; all the individual topics we have treated here such as centralisation, bridge building, hiding and gap plugging are subordinate to the main goal, co-ordination. They are like the cogs which fit together in the movement of a clock and set the whole mechanism in motion; so what we are talking about is a slow but steady advance of the serried ranks of your army. “General advance!” is the watchword!

You should also be aware that it is not impossible to centralise your forces on one flank: the pieces simply require to be grouped around a pawn, with it forming the centre and then you would indubitably have the most beautiful “central harmony”.

4. The “materialisation” of the abstract concepts: file or rank

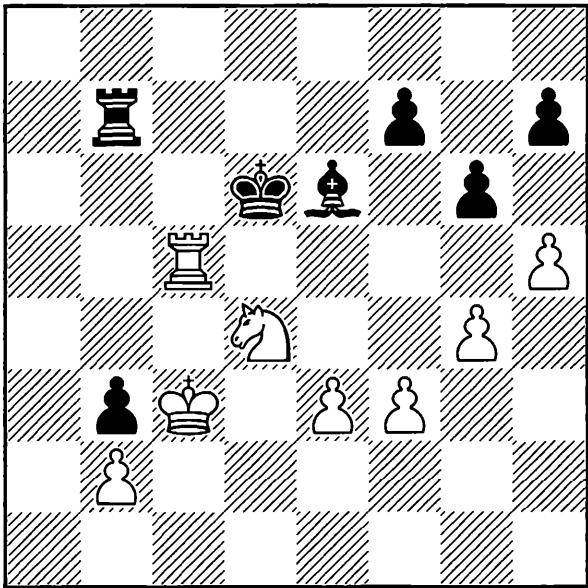
An important difference between operations down a file in the middlegame and the same in the endgame

We must first take note of a peculiar difference which is far from easy to spot: in the middlegame, it takes a lot of energy to exploit a file, the whole business involves activity. Think of the complicated set-up, above all the outpost knight. On the other hand, operations on a file in the endgame are quite simple in nature and peaceful. There is no sign of a knight on an outpost. The fortunate possessor of the file takes his time. He may, when the occasion demands it, possibly send forward a handful of troops to clear the ground for infiltration by a rook.

So in the middlegame, operations on the file are active, whereas in the endgame they are more peaceful.

Let us explain this by means of a few examples.

225

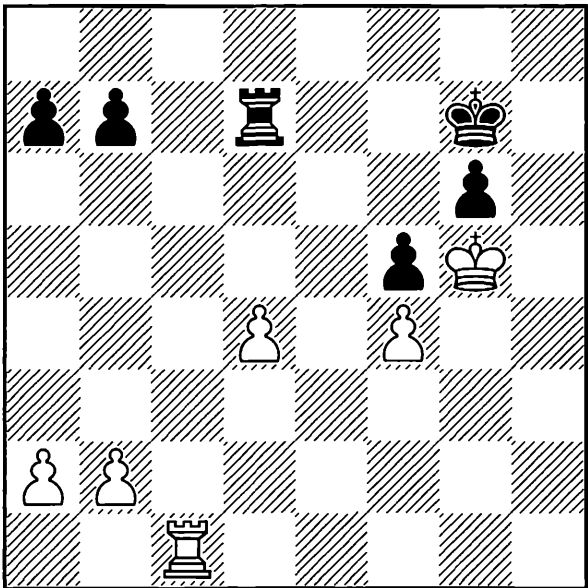


In **Nimzowitsch – Jacobsen** (1923), White is in clear possession of the 5th rank and by the apparently primitive sequence of moves which follows he manages to “materialise” the somewhat abstract concept of a rank, i.e. to convert it to a point which can be seized. The moves which followed were 42.♖c6† ♔d7 43.hxg6! hxg6 44.♟xe6! fxe6 45.♖c5 and then ♖g5 and f3-f4.

The g5-square is decisive, all the more so because the ♖g7 (the passive ♖) is moved in sympathy.

Another example is seen in my endgame against Allan Nilsson (see diagram 187, page 97). Almost nothing happened there, apart from White’s h-pawn making as though it wanted to advance, and yet White’s rook managed to penetrate to the 8th rank.

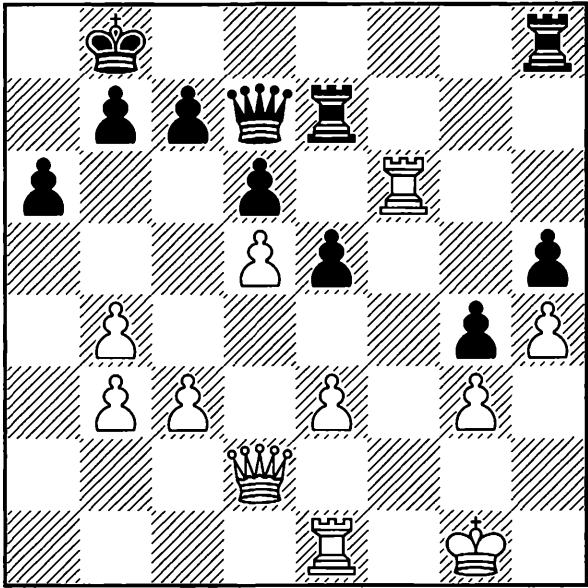
226



The continuation from this position is also typical. White calmly “goes for a stroll”: b2-b4, a2-a4, b4-b5, a4-a5, b5-b6 and finally ♖c7. If the threat is met by b7-b6, then ♖c6 has become possible. See now diagram 219, page 114. The 6th rank has crystallised into a point which can be seized – the g6-square.

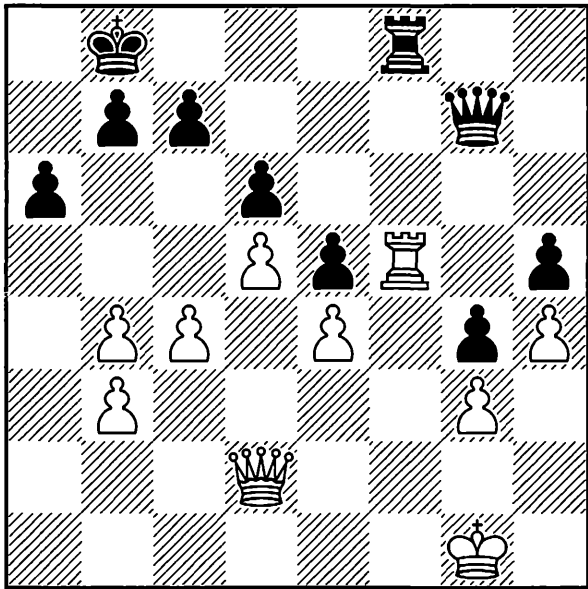
Capablanca – R. Martinez
Buenos Aires 1914

227



Here White has the f-file and Black is trying to defend the 7th and 8th ranks. Capablanca won almost automatically due to superior firepower down the file. **27.♖ef1 ♜he8 28.e4 ♜b5 29.♖a1!** White takes his time; the f-file will be crushed by superior weight. **29...♜d7** (the threat was 30.c4 ♜b6† 31.c5 ♜b5 32.♖a5 with the droll capture of the queen) **30.c4 ♜f7 31.♖xf7 ♜xf7 32.♖f1 ♜g7 33.♖f5 ♜f8**

228



34.♜g5!

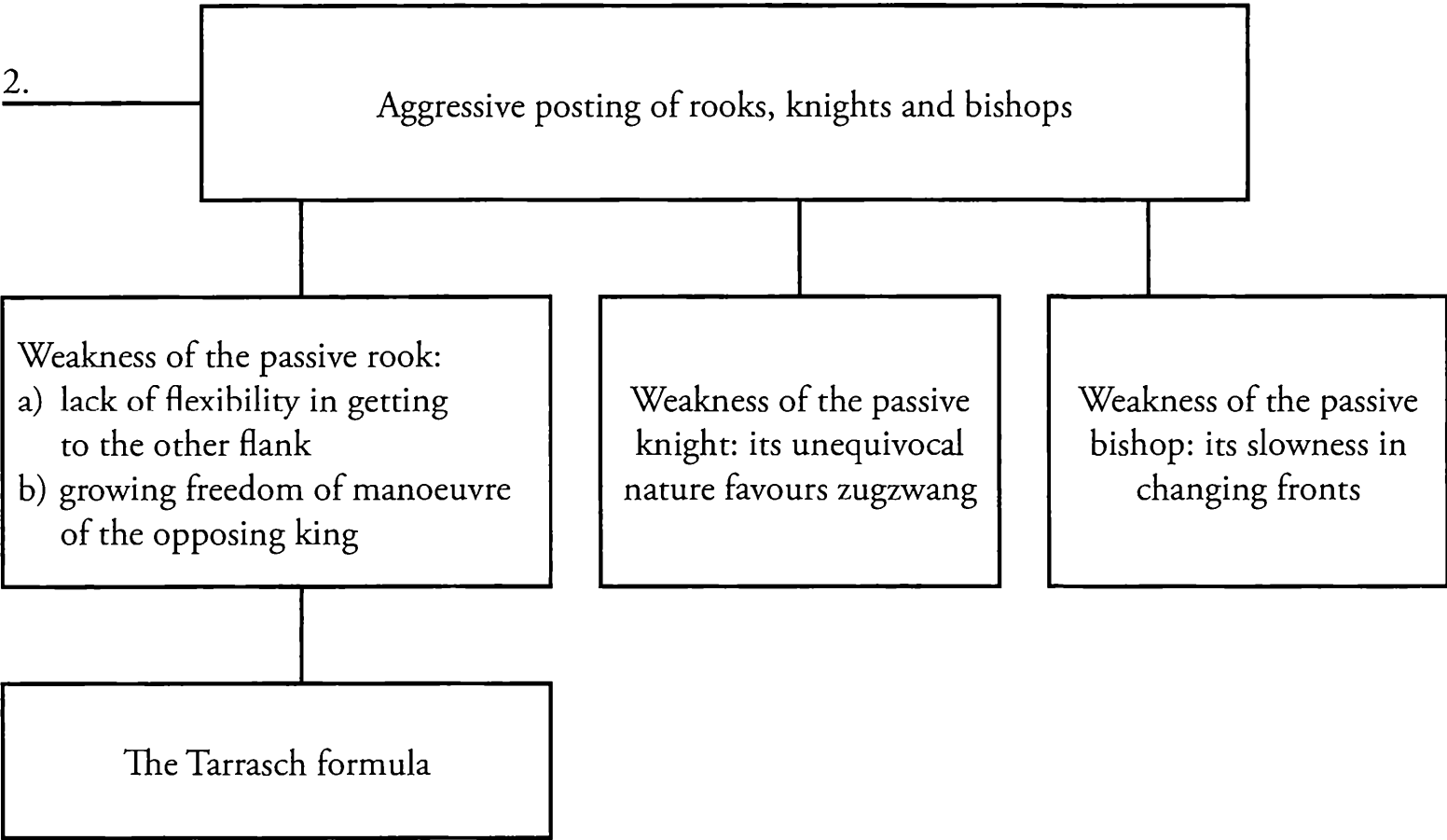
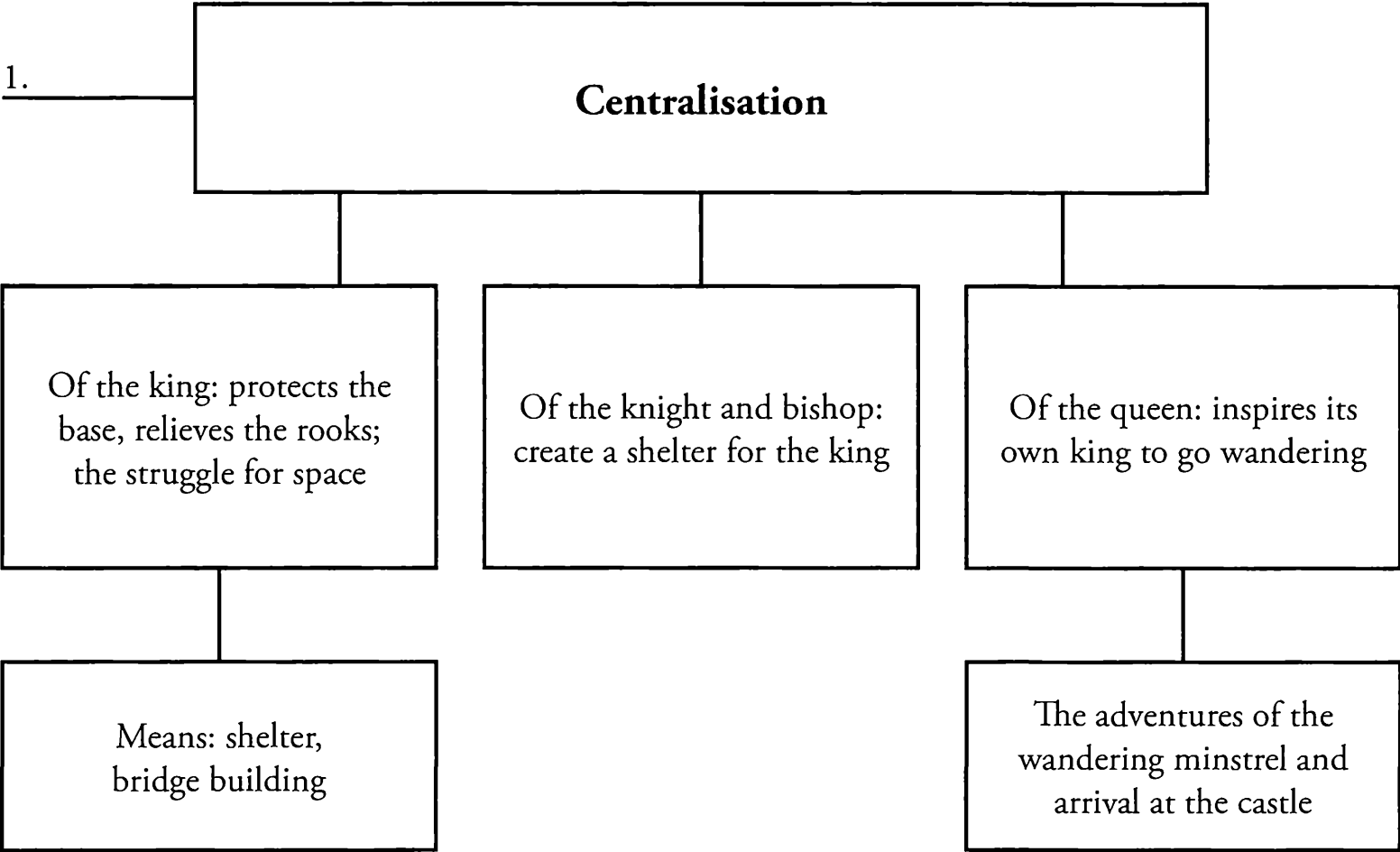
This wins a pawn.
34...♜h8 35.♜xh5 ♜xh5 36.♖xh5 ♜f3 37.♔g2 ♖xb3 38.♖f5 and Black resigned, because the h-pawn is unstoppable, e.g. **38...♖b2† 39.♖f2** etc.

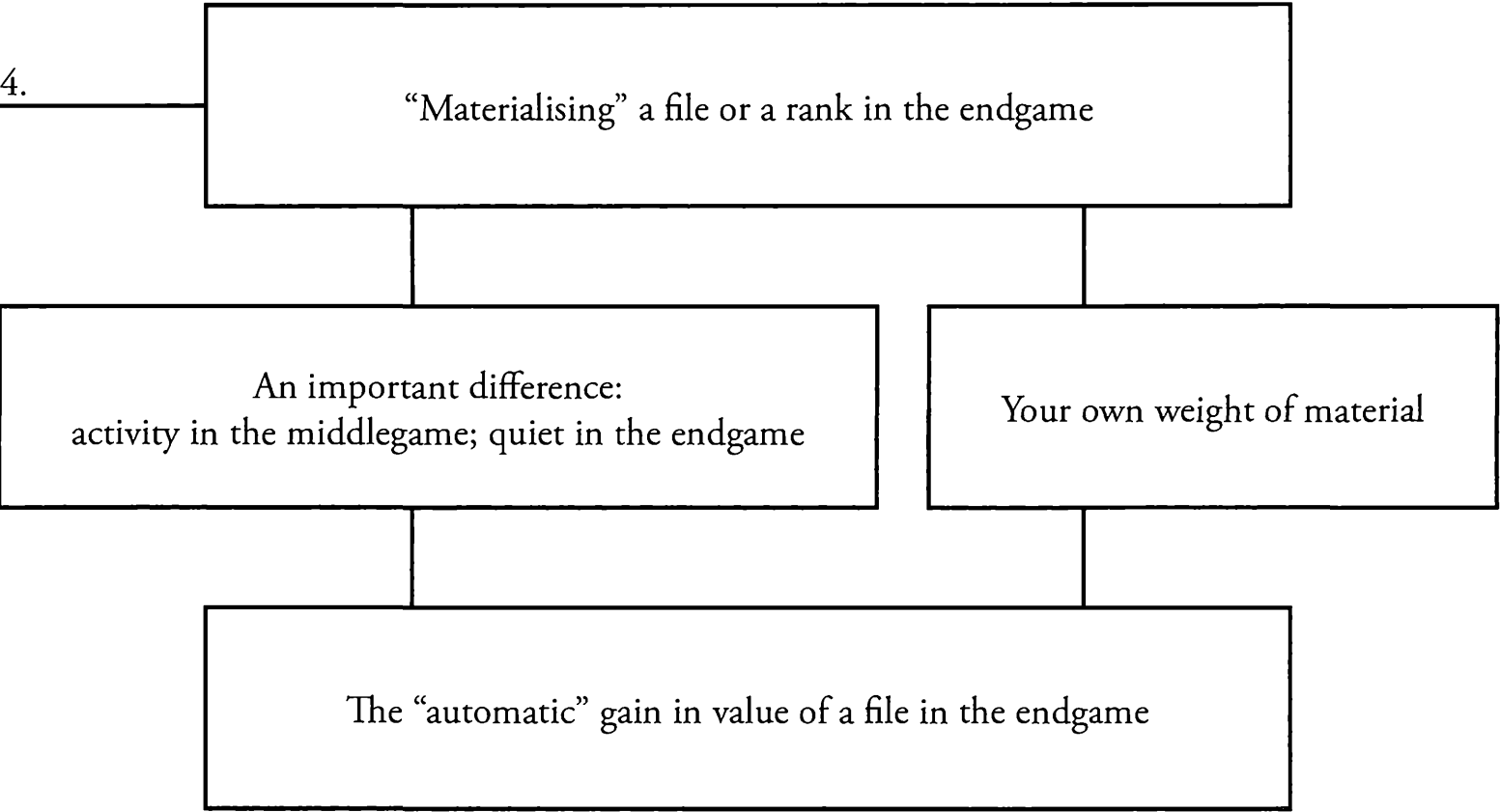
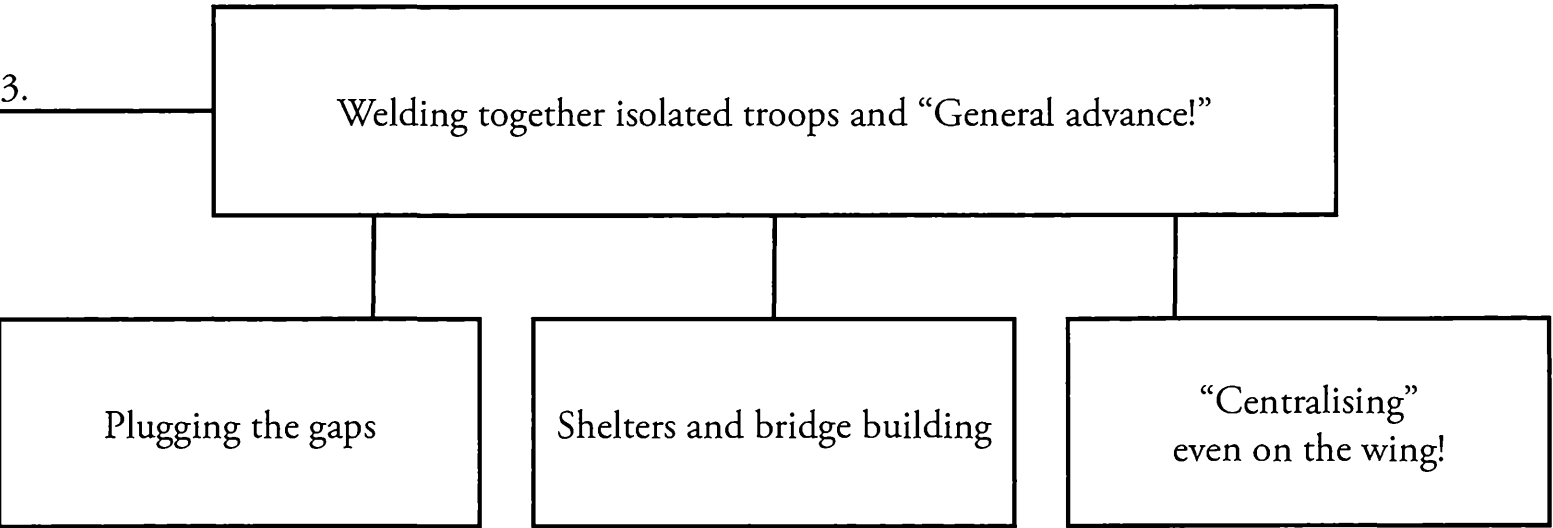
The moral for the student could be formulated as follows:

If (in the endgame) you have lasting possession of the file without yet having prepared a possible entry point, the latter will arise almost of its own volition without any effort on your part!

There now follow a schematic illustration and a few games.

Schematic illustration of the “endgame” or “the 4 elements”

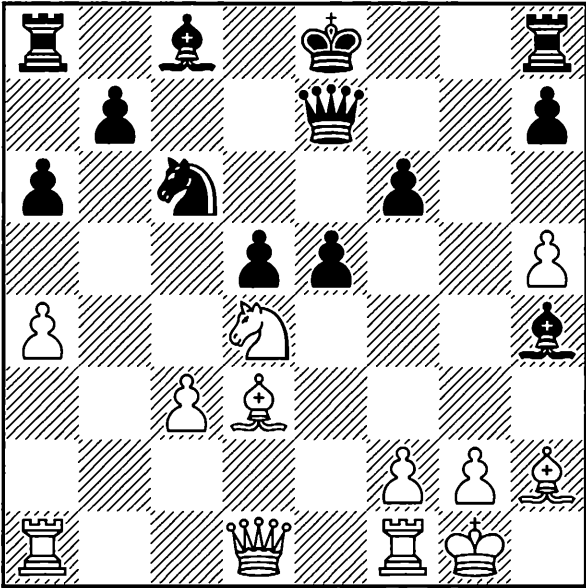




Example 1:

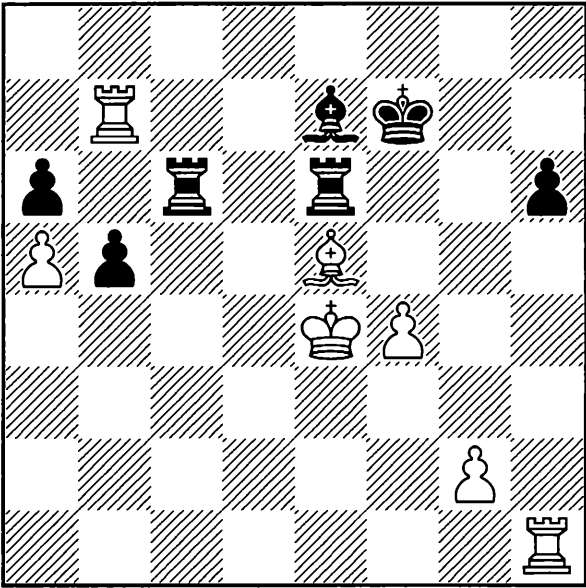
Nimzowitsch – Spielmann
San Sebastian 1912

229



White made the transition to an endgame by 20.♔f5! ♖xd4 21.♔xc8 ♖xc8 22.cxd4 0–0 23.dxe5 fxe5 24.♔xd5† ♔f7 25.♔xf7† ♖xf7 26.♔xe5. This leaves him with a temporary pawn superiority, but with what might be called a “chronic” central bishop. Next came 26...♖f5 27.f4 ♖xh5 28.♖ab1 ♔e7. Spielmann defends with his customary inventiveness. 29.♔f2 The process of centralisation continues. 29...b6 30.♔f3 ♖h6 31.♖fd1 ♖c4 32.♖d7 ♔f7 33.a5 b5 34.♖e1 ♖cc6 35.♔d4 ♖he6 36.♖h1 h6 37.♖b7 ♖ed6 38.♔e5 ♖e6 39.♔e4

230

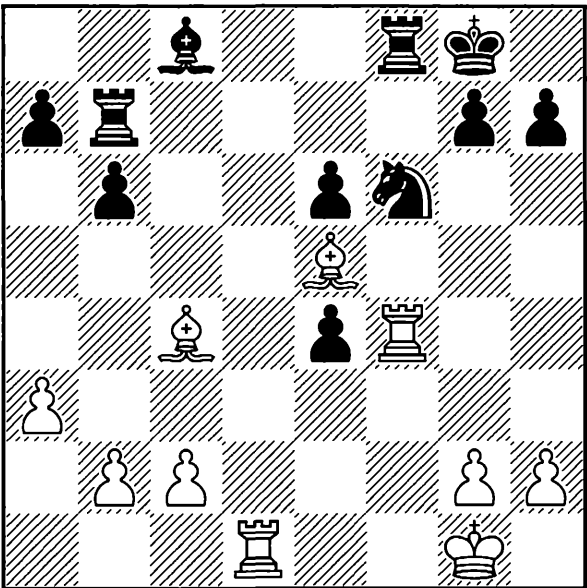


After the preparatory rook manoeuvres (note how the ♖b7 is keeping a stern eye on the weak square b6, the 7th rank will be “materialised”), Black’s rooks turn out to be passive enough to allow a further advance of the white king; ♔e5, the king and ♔f4 now make up a central piece island, the bishop is the bridge builder and the e4-square is the shelter. 39...♖c4† 40.♔f5 ♖c5 41.♖d1 b4 He has no way to save himself. 42.♖d8 ♖xa5 43.♖f8† ♔xf8 44.♔xe6 1–0

Example 2 once again demonstrates centralisation at work.

Thomas – Nimzowitsch
Marienbad 1925

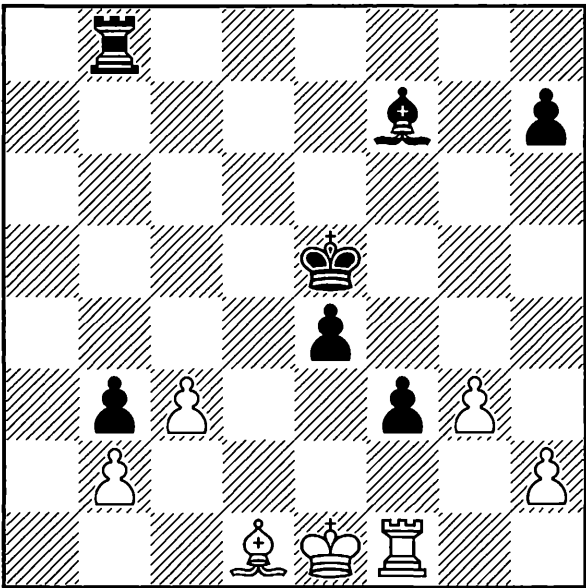
231



In the unfortunate position that he was in, Black tried 20...♔f7. There followed 21.♖e1? (the correct move was 21.g4) 21...♔e7 22.♔c3 ♖d5, and after the moves 23.♖xf8 ♔xf8 24.♔e5, Black was over the worst of it. 24...b5 25.♔b3 ♖f6 26.♔f1 ♔e7 Now my opponent could no longer resist the temptation to win back the pawn and played 27.♔xf6† gxf6 28.♖xe4. When, after 28...e5 he sent his rook to h4 with 29.♖h4, Black got the upper hand and won by centralising powerfully as follows: 29...♔f5 30.♔e2 ♔g6 31.♔d5 ♖b8 32.c3 f5 33.♔b3 ♔f6. Note the united advance of the central block. 34.♔c2 a5! Because, when you get down to it, White’s majority is a minority; or, if you prefer it, it is

a majority abandoned by any patron saints such as the rook and the king. 35.♖h3 e4 36.♖h4 b4 37.axb4 axb4 38.♖f4 ♔e5 The gap is plugged. 39.♖f1 b3 40.♙d1 f4 41.♔e1 ♙f7 42.g3 f3

232

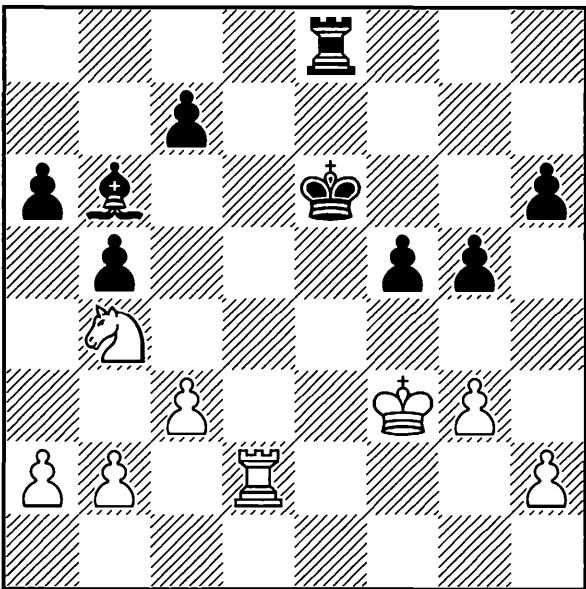


White is terribly restricted. Next came the sacrifice 43.♙xf3 exf3 44.♖xf3, and after a hard struggle Black went on to win as a result of his material superiority.

Example 3 is a very combinative endgame.

Post – Alekhine
Mannheim 1914

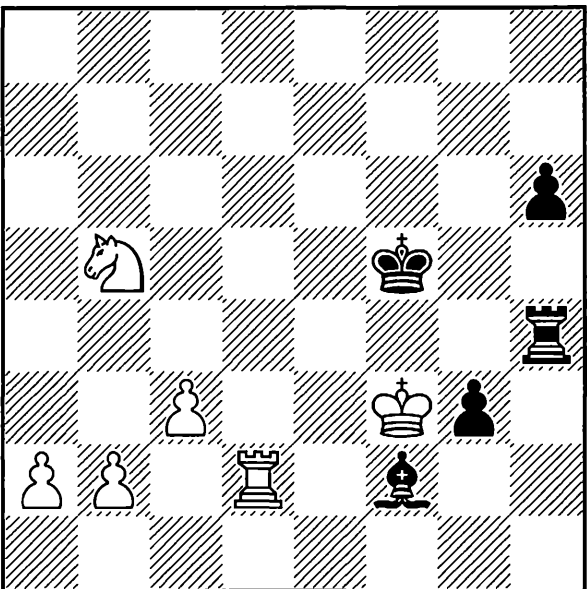
233



It seems as though the Franco-Russian with his wonderful imaginative gifts wishes to sweep away all the rules in my system with his brilliant

imagination which continually overflows. It may seem so, but in reality he plays according to the ideas about centralisation which are in my system. 40...g4! The candidate (f5) waits; what we have here is a sacrificial combination. 41.♔g2 (41.♔f4? ♔f6 with threats of mate) 41...♔f7 42.♙xa6 ♖e1 43.h4 ♔g6! 44.♙b4 f4! 45.gxf4 ♖g1! 46.♔h2 g3! 47.♔h3 ♙f2 Now pawn, bishop and rook form a united whole. But for the moment at least the group has little chance of expansion. 48.♔g4 (the threat was ♖h1! ♔g4 ♖xh4! etc.) 48...♖h1 49.f5! ♔f6 50.♙d5! ♔e5 51.♔f3 ♔xf5 52.♙xc7 ♖xh4 53.♙xb5

234

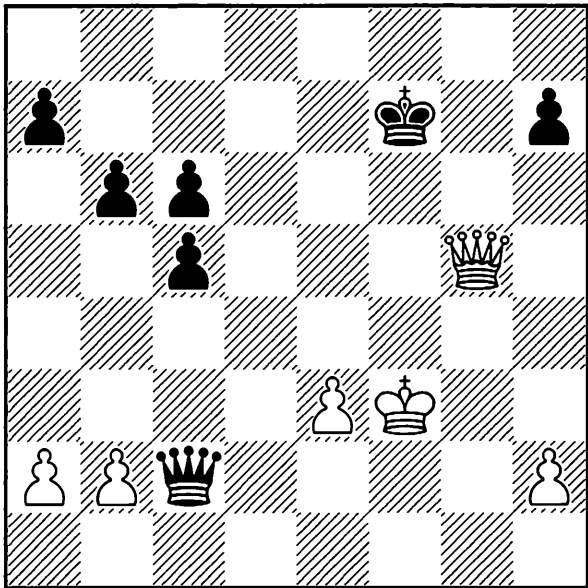


Black has surrendered his whole queenside. Why? Well, because once White's h4-pawn has fallen, the lust to expand which was missing until then (see note to move 47) is well and truly available; the two linked pawns with their king plugging the gaps will cut short any resistance. 53...♖f4! 54.♔g2 h5 55.♖d8 h4 56.♖f8! The rook wants to prevent any co-ordination. 56...♔g5 57.♖g8! (not 57.♖xf4? ♔xf4 then ♔g4, etc.) 57...♔h5 58.♖h8! ♔g6 59.♖e8 (in order to secure his base which after ♙c5 is threatened by ♖f2!) 59...♙c5 60.♖e2 ♔f5 Heading forward to plug the gaps! 61.b4 ♙b6 62.♔h3 ♖f2 63.♙d6! ♔f4 64.♖e4! ♔f3 65.♔xh4 ♙d8! 66.♔h5 ♖h2! 67.♔g6 The white pieces have all gone; the house lies empty and deserted. 67...g2 0-1

For **Example 4** we have chosen a king march, which is interesting for us since it all happens under the protection of the centralised queen.

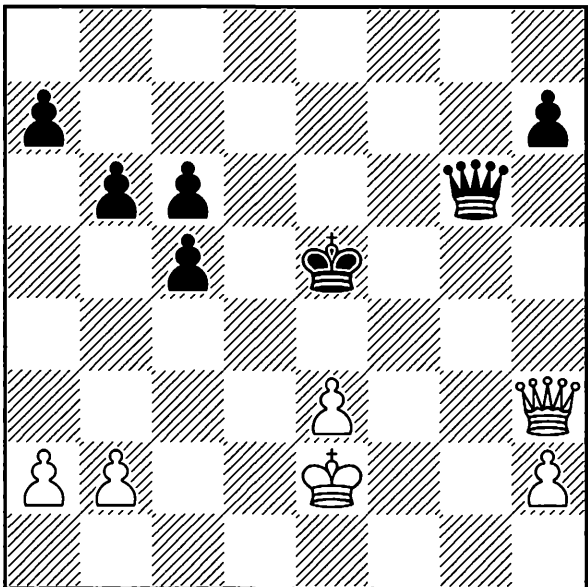
E. Cohn – Nimzowitsch
Munich 1906

235



There followed: 39.♞e5 ♞d1† 40.♔f2 ♞d5 The struggle for the centre of the board. 41.♞f4† ♔g6! The start of the journey. The first threat is ♞f5. 42.♔e1 ♞f5! 43.♞g3† ♔h5 44.♞g7 ♞e4! The black king prepares to head off either to h2 or e3 (cf. diagram 213, page 111). 45.♞f7† ♔g4 46.♞g7† (or 46.♞d7† ♔h4!) 46...♞g6 47.♞d7† ♔f3 48.♞h3† ♔e4! Our ideal frontal position! 49.♔e2 ♔e5!

236



After the king has wended its wearisome way to the e4-square, it then retreats in order to introduce the threat of ♞g6-c2†. This is the real point of the manoeuvre, gaining time for the move c5-c4, which forces the white queen to protect the d3-square from then on. It is just as interesting and instructive to watch how the king flees to e7, continually manoeuvring out of checks, and how the queenside pawns unstoppably advance. 50.♔d2 c4 51.♞f1 ♞e4 52.♞e2 ♔e6 53.♞f1 ♔e7! 54.♞e2 b5 55.♞f1 a5 56.♞g1 ♞e5 57.♔c2 b4 58.♞f2 ♞e4† 59.♔c1 a4 60.♞g3 b3 61.axb3 cxb3 62.♞c7† ♔e6 63.♞c8† ♔d5 64.♞d7† ♔c4 65.♞f7† ♔d3 0-1

Part I – Chapter 7

The pin

1. Introduction and general remarks

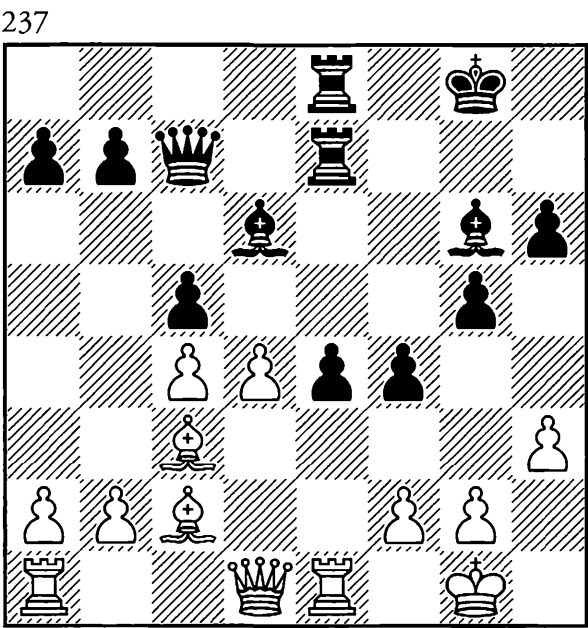
Tactics or strategy • The possible reinstatement of a pin which has been broken • The parable of pinned passed pawns

After chapter 6, which was so difficult with its positional issues, chapter 7 should appear “all too easy”. This may lead you to ask whether the pinned piece can really be called an element in our definition of things, because it is possible to build one’s whole game around an open file or a passed pawn, but around a pin? This is an opinion we do not share. Of course, pins normally occur in the ebb and flow of tactics, perhaps when we are pursuing a fleeing enemy. However, on the other hand a well-planned pin can be the basis which influences the way we construct the whole future course of a game. Here it must be pointed out that the pin does not have to last for ever: a pin which only crops up occasionally, in fact even the threat of such a pin, can provoke your opponent into weakening moves and thus its effect can last right into the endgame.

So, the following game merits our special interest. It is about a pinning motif which suddenly appeared, then just as suddenly disappeared. Some 20 moves later, the game seems to be following purely positional lines. Instead of the fleeting adventure of a temporary pin, the board is now dominated by a lasting positional advantage, the e-file. Things have settled down and peace reigns, with that “disturbing incident” quite forgotten by White. Then suddenly it happens: the almost forgotten excitement returns, bringing troubled dreams in its wake, making him realise how hollow

and uninteresting his happiness had been and threatening to destroy completely what had been the safe little world of a nice little middle class family...

The game (**Dr Haken – Giese**, Riga 1913) went as follows (see also page 57): **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♘f3 ♙d6 5.♙d3 ♘f6 6.h3 0–0 7.0–0 h6** Now the pinning motif via ♙g5 or ♙g4 appears dead and buried. Next came: **8.♘c3 c6 9.♘e2 ♖e8** (play down the e-file) **10.♘g3 ♘e4 11.♘h5 ♘d7 12.c3 ♘df6 13.♘h2 ♔c7 14.♘xf6† ♘xf6 15.♘f3 ♘e4 16.♙c2 ♙f5! 17.♘h4 ♙h7 18.♙e3 g5 19.♘f3 f5 20.♖e1 ♖e7 21.♘d2 f4 22.♘xe4 dxe4 23.♙d2 ♖ae8 24.c4 c5 25.♙c3 ♙g6**



Black’s last move sees the pin motif being reinstated, for the threat is now an advance on the target h3 at the right moment by h6-h5 and g5-g4. At the point where it was made, 6.h3 was seen as a defence to the threatened pin and is therefore logically and causally linked to the said pin.

Accordingly, the attack on h3 should then be considered as a logical extension of the same line, the pinning motif. In other words, the attack on h3 means the reinstatement of the pinning motif which had been out of the equation since move 6.

The rest of the game is of no interest to us for the moment and in any case can be found on page 58. If you play it over, you will work out to your own satisfaction that Black does not do any more about renewing the adventure involved in the move 25...♔g6: he ruefully returns to his e-file and things return to normal. But that is unimportant, because things could have happened in another way. What is important is that you have learned about the great strategic importance of pinning.

2. The concept of the completely or partially pinned piece

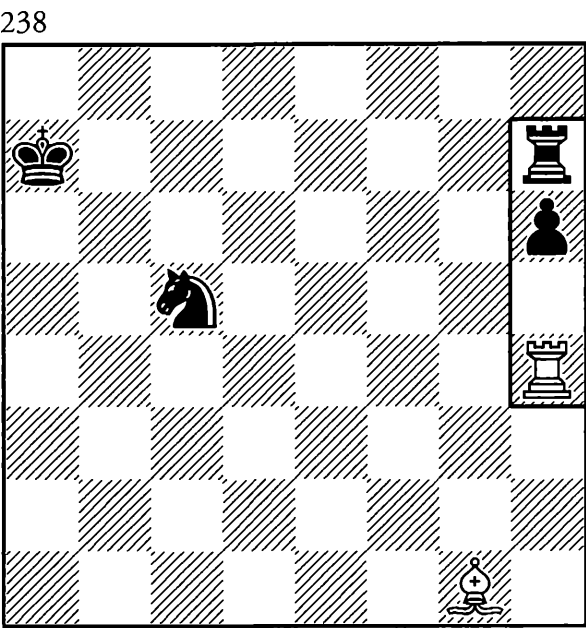
The protection offered by a piece which is pinned is only imaginary! Be a man and don't be afraid to put your piece on a such a "protected" (?) square • Seizing the piece which is languishing in the pin • Exchanging combinations on the pinning square (= the square on which a piece is pinned) and the two different reasons which underlie such combinations

In a pin, there are three actors:

- 1. the piece which is doing the pinning
- 2. the opposing piece which is being pinned
- 3. the piece behind the piece which is being pinned.

The pinning piece is attacking the piece which is behind through the piece which is pinned. So the latter is standing between the first two mentioned. The piece behind is generally of royal blood – or else it would not be so fearfully hiding behind another one – thus the king or the queen. All three actors are on the same rank, file or diagonal. The pinned piece may not move away, because otherwise the piece behind it would be

exposed to the threatened attack. If this lack of mobility is absolute, i.e. the pinned piece may make no move of any sort, then we can speak of a complete pin. If on the other hand, the pinned piece can move to one or more squares on the line between the piece behind and that which is pinning, the pin is called "partial". The diagram illustrates the two types of pin.



Here the pin on the knight is complete, whereas the pin on the pawn is only "partial", since h6-h5 is possible.

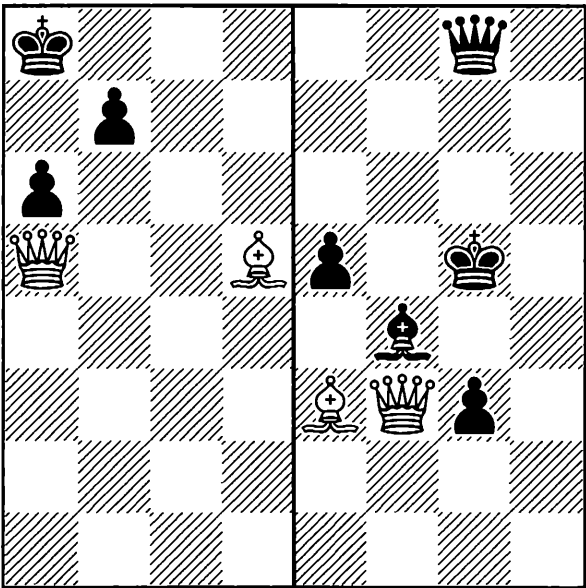
A knight when pinned is always completely pinned. As far as other pieces are concerned, you can only partially pin one which moves in the same way as the pinning piece.

Example: White ♔h1; Black ♖c6, ♕b7; here the c6-bishop is only partially pinned, since it can move up and down the c6-h1 diagonal. A pawn can only be completely pinned by a diagonally moving piece; when it is pinned on a straight line, the pinning piece would have to blockade the pinned pawn (e.g. White ♖g6, Black ♗g7, ♕g8) in order to achieve complete immobility.* But this immobility has nothing to do with the pinning itself and must rather be thought of as equally divided between the effects of pinning and blockade.

*This is not quite correct, as a pawn can be completely pinned along a rank – editor

The protection offered by a piece which is pinned is only imaginary! It is simply pretending to protect; in reality it is crippled and immobile. This means that you can confidently put your own pieces en prise: the pinned piece may not touch them.

239



The winning moves 1.♙xg3† and 1.♙xa6† are easy to find; all you have to do is realise that the ♔f4 and the ♖b7 are pinned, which means that the “otherwise” protected squares g3 and a6 are totally unprotected.

So, try to work out which squares are “otherwise” protected and you are correct in considering them to be fair game!

How easy it would be then to put your queen en prise (!) – though less experienced players would sooner stick their head in a lion’s mouth! Such respect for traditional laws! Be brave! Be brave! A piece which is pinned is powerless! And is it not one of the humble citizen’s greatest virtues, being brave when there is no danger.

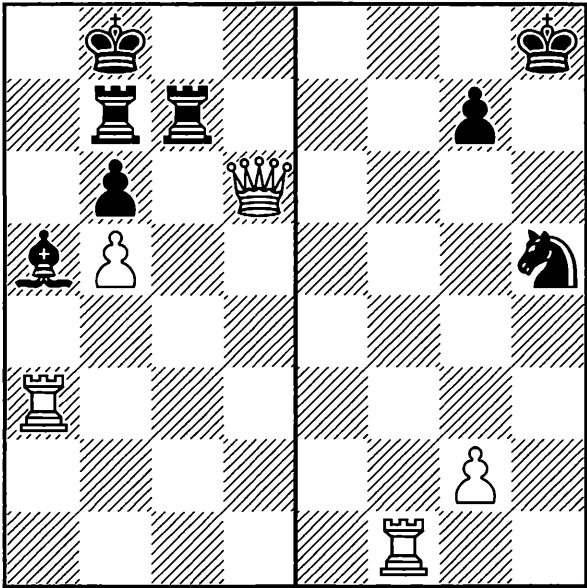
It is very frequently worthwhile playing to win the pinned piece. This comes as no surprise to the likes of us, who know that any immobile (or even slightly restrained) piece tends to be weak. Running alongside the task of winning the pinned piece is the problem of stopping your opponent unpinning it, because this would restore its mobility and with that its strength.

Apart from keeping in mind the possibility of an unpinning, the operation to win a pinned piece always runs along predictable lines; so, pile up attack upon attack and if there is enough protection, thin out the ranks of the defenders! (See also page 35.)

There is one absolute plus on your side, whatever else: when a piece is pinned, the attack by a pawn is decisive.

The reason for this is that the only way for a piece to escape the attack from a pawn is by flight. If the piece is pinned, it is quite helpless against an attacking pawn, since flight then appears to be impossible.

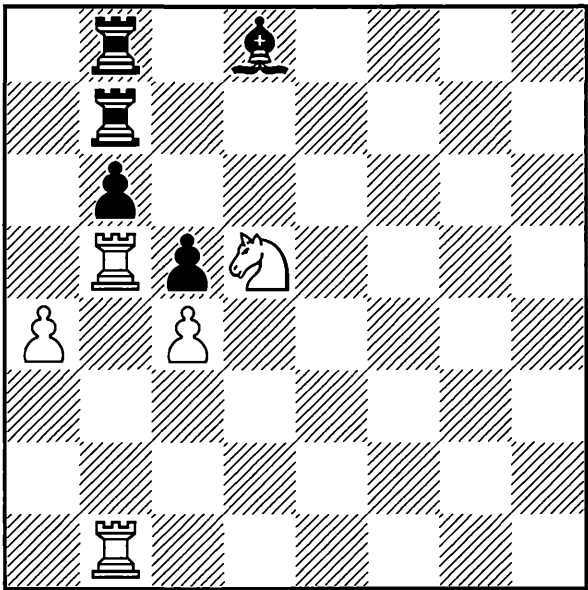
240



On the right comes 1.♙h1 g6 and up comes the pawn with 2.g4. It is not quite so easy for the pawn to get there on the left, since first it has to dispose of a few bystanders: this happens by 1.♙xa5 bxa5 2.b6 and wins.

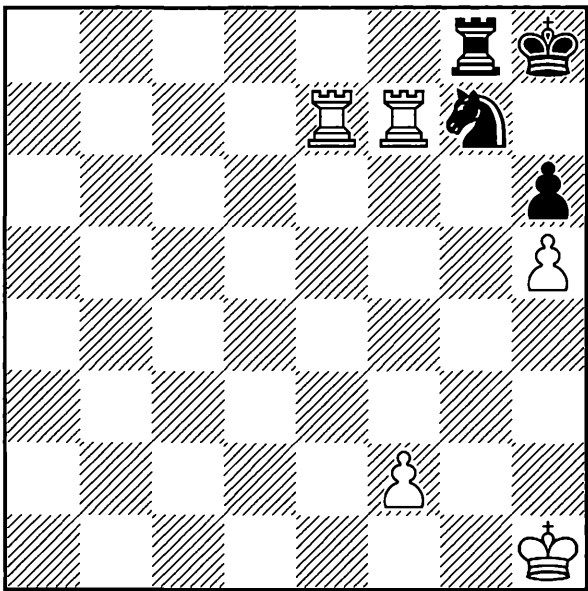
As a rule, the plan of attack against a pinned piece is organised in such a way that we take immense trouble to achieve that superiority of material we have mentioned before, i.e. more pieces attacking the target than defending it (in this case the pinned piece is the object of attack). We take, as we have said, the greatest of pains, but the ideal is to attack with a pawn to finish off the manoeuvre, as is frequently the case. For example, let us look at the following diagram.

241



From the position, it is clear what intensive work has gone into besieging the pinned pawn on b6. (Moreover, we could already count the passive position of the black defenders as ideal results of our siege.) But now the pawn gets to work and its advance leads to a more palpable result.

242



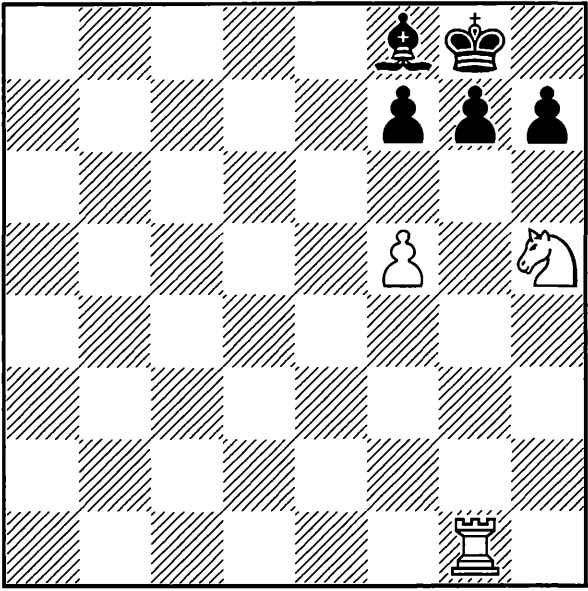
In this position the ♖g7 is pitifully pinned. The “piece behind” is here represented by the threat of mate on h7. By advancing his h-pawn, White has prevented any unpinning by ♔h8-h7-g6; the pressure exerted on the pinned knight simply by our pieces is keenly felt, but as yet it does not lead to a direct result. But now, clutching its dagger, the f-pawn advances and decides matters.

So, the pieces create pressure (and sometimes this is enough to win the pinned piece, since piece pressure is no joke), but the actual executioner is and always will be the pawn.

The exchanging combination on the pinning square

1st motif:

243



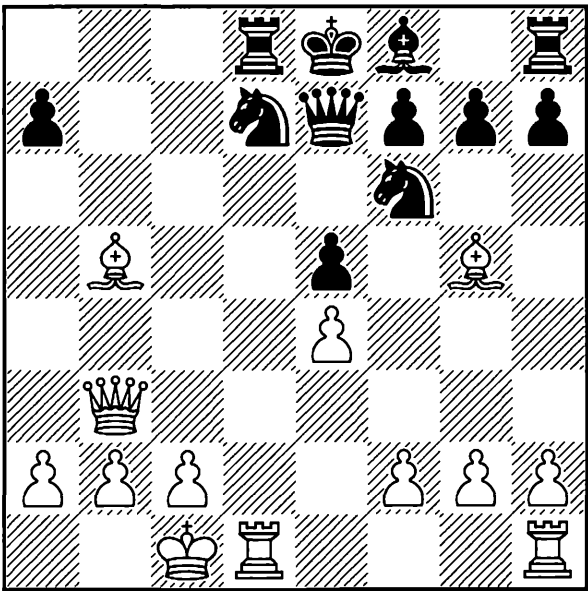
Here we are dealing with the capture of the pinned pawn on g7. We have heaped up our attacks (the superiority of 3:2 has already been achieved), but have to face up to the disappointment that the said pawn cheerfully advances (g7-g6); the rascal was not pinned, at the most only “partially” so! (g7xf6 and g7xh6 were impossible, but not g7-g6.) The problem of how to win the object of our attack is however easily solved, by 1. ♖xg7 ♔xg7 2. f6. White’s idea consists of replacing the partially pinned g7-pawn by the completely pinned bishop.

But what would need to be explained is the tricky question of why, despite having given up an attacking piece, White still had a superior position relative to g7. In fact, before ♖h5xg7 White had three attackers (rook, knight and the f-pawn which was ready to leap forward) to Black’s two defenders (king and bishop). After ♖h5xg7 was played, White retained only two attackers, while Black had apparently lost nothing. The error in this reasoning lies in

the final statement: both defenders (king and bishop) may still be there, but the bishop is no longer defending g7 but it has rather turned into a piece which is pinned and the object of White's attack. So the manoeuvre 1.♘h5xg7 ♕f8xg7 has taken out one attacker and one defender, making it clear that the status quo has been maintained.

2nd motif: In **Morphy – Duke of Brunswick** and **Count Isouard**, after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♕g4? 4.dxe5 ♕xf3 5.♖xf3 dxe5 6.♕c4 ♘f6 7.♖b3 ♖e7 8.♘c3 c6 9.♕g5 b5 10.♘xb5! cxb5 11.♕xb5† ♘bd7, we have a highly dangerous pin on the ♘d7. There followed 12.0–0–0. This move is the quickest way to get both rooks on to the d-file to attack d7. 12...♞d8

244

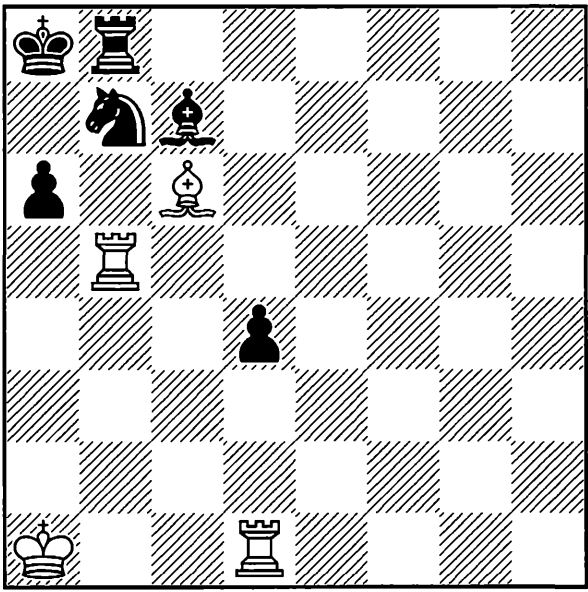


In this position, a simple doubling of rooks would win the knight, e.g. 13.♞d2 ♖e6 14.♞hd1 ♕e7 15.♕xf6, but Morphy had a much stronger manoeuvre in mind. He played 13.♞xd7 ♞xd7 14.♞d1. This successful “exchange combination” on the pinning square is worthy of interest. Was it carried out to replace a partially pinned piece by a completely pinned one? No, because the ♘d7 was already completely pinned. Would it have been played if the rook had already been on d2? No, because then the combination would not have been necessary, because doubling rooks would be so strong. The reason for the exchange was obviously to gain a tempo in the struggle for d7.

Let us take a good look at the position before and after ♞xd7. Before ♞xd7, White had two attackers against two real defenders because the ♘f6 is half dead and the queen is too important a piece to do well in a rough-and-tumble involving minor pieces.

After ♞xd7, White loses an attacking piece, but immediately after that he replaces it with a fresh rook, whereas Black's defensive rook on d8 is irretrievably lost (see above, under “tricky questions”). So White has gained a fighting unit and secured the superiority of numbers in the struggle against the pinned piece. For that reason, the second motif is the gain of tempo. After 14...♖e6, then 15.♕xf6 would have won easily. Morphy preferred the more elegant 15.♕xd7†! ♘xd7, because now the knight on d7 is “pinned” against the threat of mate on the d8-square, but is forced to move and allow mate as follows: 16.♖b8†! ♘xb8 17.♞d8 mate.

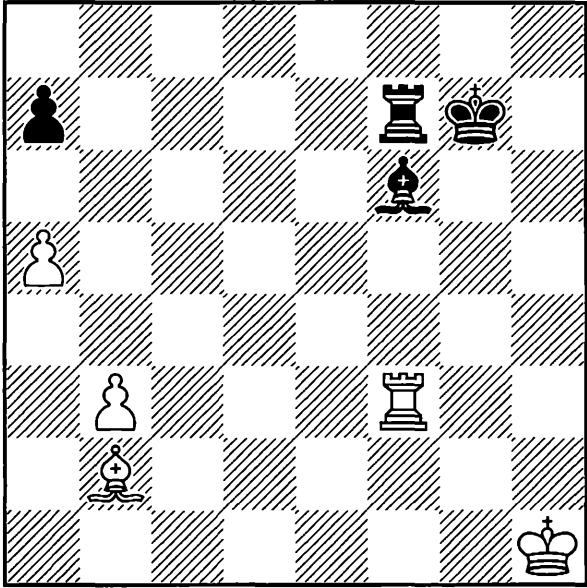
245



Here the rook on b5, which is pinning the knight, is itself under attack; moving it would present your opponent with the tempo he wants to unpin, e.g. 1.♞b2 ♘a7 2.♞db1 ♘d6. So the correct procedure is 1.♞xb7 ♞xb7 and now 2.♞b1 wins. Since the sacrifice on b7 was made only with the intention of avoiding a loss of tempo, we must recognise in this case our 2nd motif.

But both motifs can be united in a single combination, as in the following example.

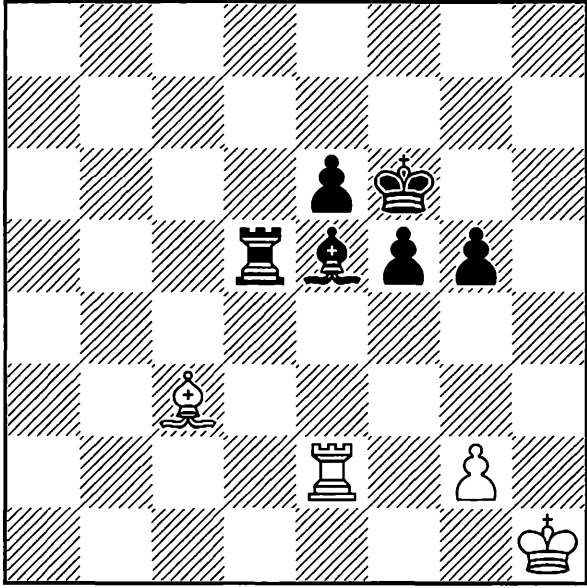
246



It is evident that a general exchange is called for, but after 1.♔xf6† ♚xf6 2.♚xf6 ♔xf6 3.b4 ♔e5 the black king would come out of things quite well. So the exchanges must be managed more skilfully: 1.♚xf6! ♚xf6 2.b4 and now Black must lose a tempo by making a king move (which is in a sense absorbed by the following king move, when it must go back to f6); thus 2...♔f7 3.♔xf6 ♔xf6 4.b5 and the pawn cannot be stopped. So, one could call it a tempo-winning combination. This is correct, but the gain of tempo was achieved by knowing how to replace the “partially pinned” bishop by the “completely pinned” rook. All in all, this case represents a combining of both motifs.

Let us finish this section with an example which demonstrates the exploitation of a pin being aided by the so rightly beloved use of zugzwang.

247



It is obvious that a pin can easily lead to a lack of possible moves for a player, because it is very frequent that the elasticity of those pieces which are protecting the pinned piece is at a low ebb, even to the extent that protection can only be offered from a single square. This position is taken from a game at odds played by Dr Tarrasch. After the lead-in sacrifice we have discussed (motif 1), i.e. after the moves 1.♚xe5 ♚xe5, there follows 2.g3!. If that is not played, then f5-f4 could create some breathing space for the king, but now 2...f4 fails to 3.g4 and Black collapses because of the limited nature of the protection offered to the ♚e5. After 2...g4 he would be in just as big a fix¹⁰.

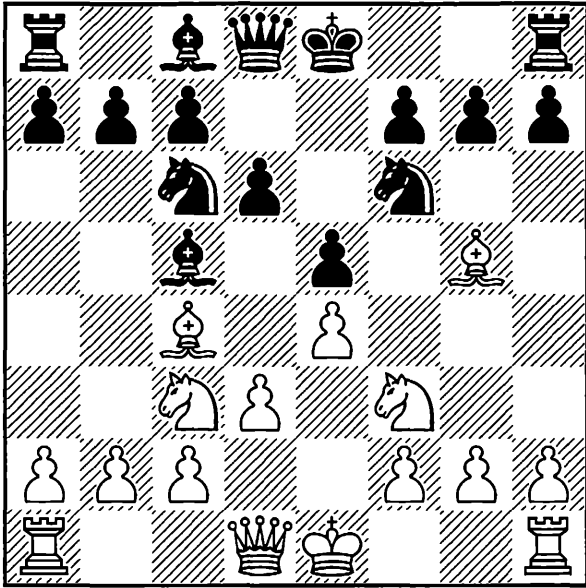
This more or less exhausts what we have to say about the pinned piece. We shall now tackle the subject of unpinning.

3. The problem of unpinning

a) at the start of the game b) in the heat of battle • The policy of the “corridor system” and the “defensive military alliance of those who are being threatened” • “Challenging”: its purpose, danger and deeper meaning • Is the struggle to unpin immediately a manifestation of the “pseudo-classical” spirit?

After the moves 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6, White can establish a pin by 6.♙g5 and miraculously this simple little pin can conjure up a whole forest of possibilities.

248

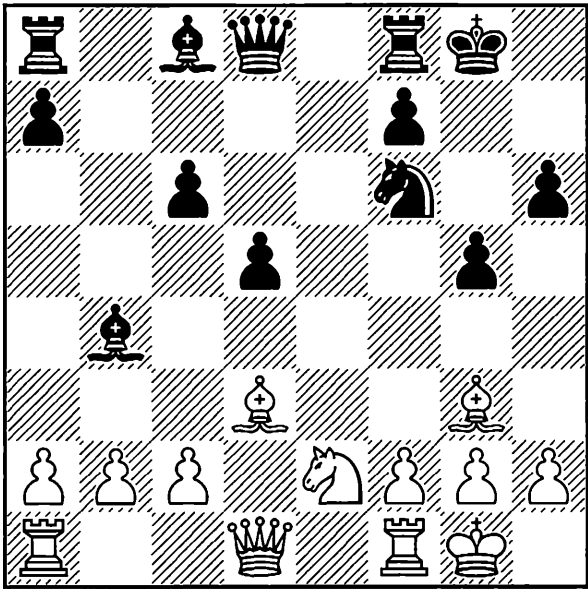


Should Black immediately challenge the cheeky bishop by 6...h6 7.♔h4 g5 or should he demonstrate the greatest of reserve and with a smile play 6...♙e6? Or should he go in for the risk of a counter-pin (♙g4)? Or finally, perhaps it might seem appropriate to ignore the threat which is linked to the pin (7.♞d5 and disruption of his kingside by ♞ or ♙xf6) and calmly “centralise” with 6...♞d4? Also worth considering is 6...♞a5 and 6...0–0 cannot be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders either. We shall now try to look at individually the most important methods of unpinning.

a) Challenging

It will immediately be clear that an early advance of the flank pawns must have a compromising effect. To take one example, in the Scotch Game, after 1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♞xd4 ♞f6 5.♞c3 ♙b4 6.♞xc6 bxc6 7.♙d3 d5 8.exd5 cxd5 9.0–0 0–0 10.♙g5 c6 11.♞e2 we can see the continuation 11...h6 12.♙h4 g5?. But after 13.♙g3,

249

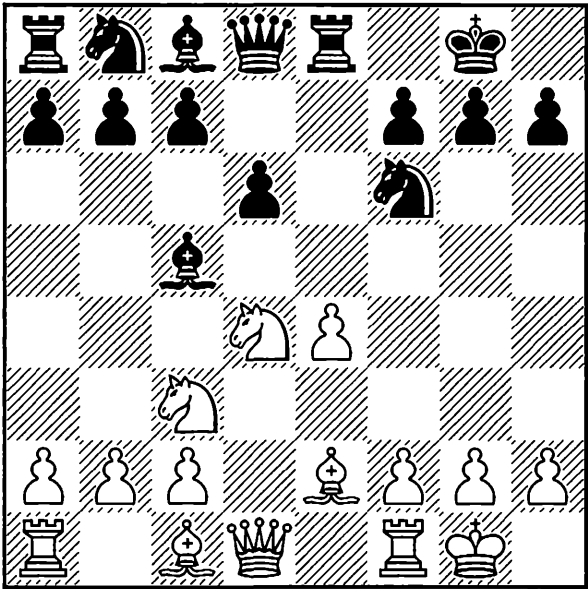


White has the attacking move f4 and the possibility of occupying the squares h5 and f5, which have been weakened by the move g7-g5 (there can no longer be any cover provided by a pawn on g6). “Challenging” was therefore not appropriate.

On the other hand, challenging can exactly fit the bill, e.g. in the opening of the following

tournament game, E. Cohn – Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1907: 1.e4 e5 2.♞c3 ♙c5 3.♞f3 d6 4.d4 exd4 5.♞xd4 ♞f6 6.♙e2 0–0 7.0–0 ♙e8

250



Black has abandoned the centre, but is putting pressure on the ♙e4. 8.♙g5? (the correct move was 8.♙f3) 8...h6! 9.♙h4 g5 10.♙g3 ♞xe4 11.♞xe4 ♙xe4 12.♞b3 ♙b6 13.♙d3 ♙g4! 14.♙d2 ♙e8 and after ♞c6 and ♙f6 Black had consolidated his position; in other words the d6-pawn appeared to be stable. Black won easily.

We have intentionally looked at two extreme cases in order to see what “challenging” was all about. We have reached the conclusion that “challenging” loosens up a position and should therefore only take place when there is some other compensation.

Such compensation is frequently that the bishop which is forced away ends up in some wilderness. Such a wilderness is however transformed into a garden in full bloom if the centre is opened. The following examples will make my meaning clear.

After 1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♙b5 ♙b4 5.0–0 0–0 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.d3 ♙g4 8.h3 ♙h5 9.♙g5 (the immediate 9.g4 would be a mistake on account of 9...♞xg4 10.hxg4 ♙xg4 then f5) 9...♙d6 10.♙xf6 ♙xf6, then 11.g4 is quite correct, because the black bishop ends up on g6, from where it can do nothing against the solid pawn mass of e4 and d3. (If Black had still

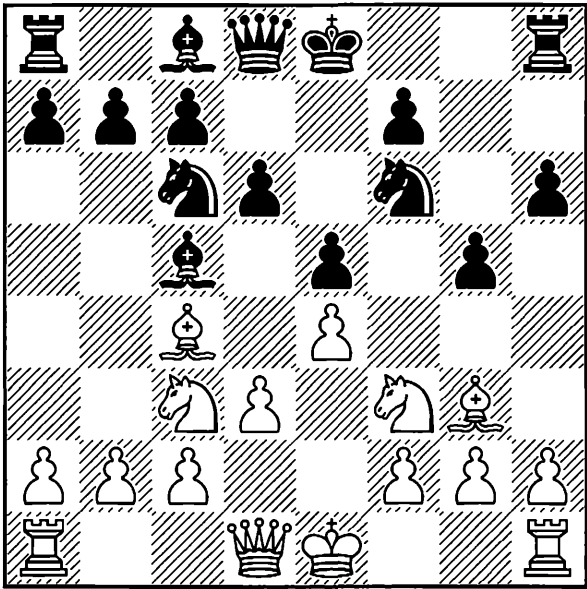
had his d-pawn, i.e. a pawn on d6 rather than c6, then some life could be brought to the wilderness by d6-d5.)

Of course, the ♔g6 can be brought to f7 after f7-f6, but that takes time. But White has no worries, since with a solid centre a loose kingside is easy enough to defend. Even more than that, his “loose kingside” will turn into a slow-moving but safe instrument of attack, like a tank, with the help of ♖f5 at the right moment (cf. the game Nimzowitsch – Leonhardt, page 136).

And now that we have to some extent defined the logical link between the “wilderness” and the “centre”, it will be a pleasure to analyse the position referred to at the start of section 3.

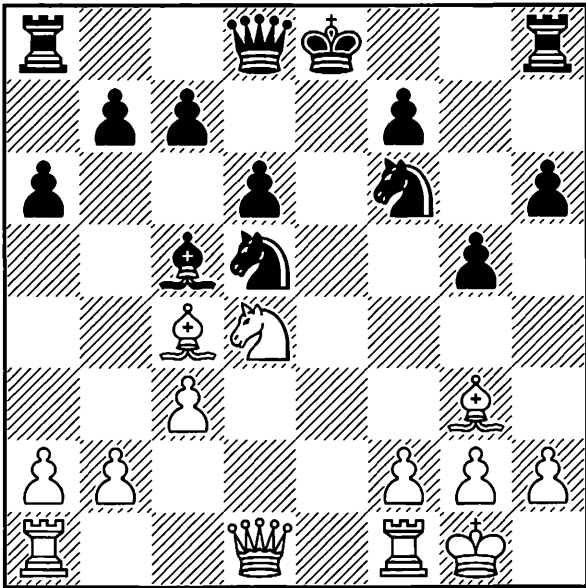
After 1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♔c4 ♔c5 4.♖c3 ♖f6 5.d3 d6 6.♔g5 h6 7.♔h4 g5 8.♔g3

251



we have to be interested in the question as to whether the wilderness to which the ♔g3 has been banned can in fact be made to bloom. To do so, we have to scrutinise closely what attacking possibilities there are for White in the centre. These turn out to be: ♔b5 then d3-d4, or else ♖d5 followed by c3 and d4. (In passing, it should be pointed out that the ♖d5 is an outpost on the diagonal of the ♔c4, similar to an outpost on a file.) After 8...a6, to take away the first possibility, there could follow 9.♖d5 ♔e6 10.c3 ♔xd5 11.exd5 ♖e7 12.d4 exd4 13.♖xd4. Black can win a pawn, but after 13...♖exd5 14.0-0

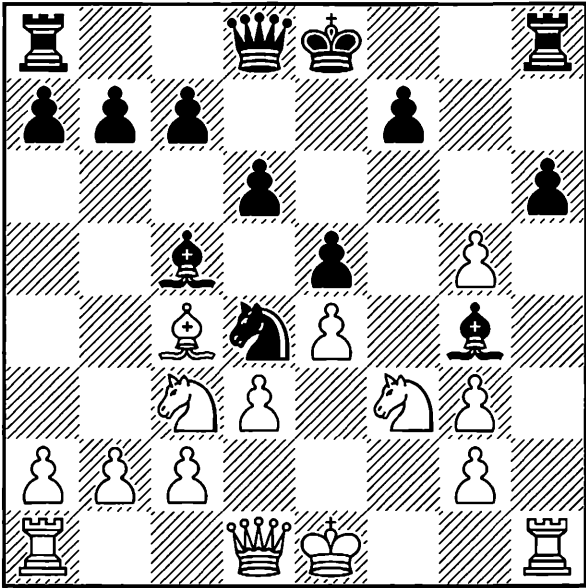
252



White’s position would be preferable, because life has been breathed into the ♔g3 which need no longer exercise any restraint.

From diagram 251 Black can also play 8...♔g4 in order to somehow restrain White’s aspirations in the centre. One game now continued 9.h4 ♖h5. A possible move was 9...♔g8 or even 9...♔d7; the text move removes too many troops from the centre. 10.hxg5 No matter how tempting this move may seem – after all, is not this capture the logical consequence of the pawn advance? – 10.♖d5 was the correct move. The logic for this was that after 9.h4 ♖h5 White had a plus in the centre which he should exploit by 10.♖d5. 10...♖d4 This transposition of moves fails because White has a surprising combination up his sleeve, see Nimzowitsch – Fluess, page 137; after 10...♖xg3 11.fxg3, Black could start a very nice attack, with 11...♖d4.

253



Now 12.♖xh6 ♖xh6 13.gxh6 ♕xf3 14.gxf3 ♔g5 or 12.♘d5 ♕xf3 13.gxf3 ♔xg5 14.g4 c6 15.♖h5 cxd5!! and wins, since the queen gobbles up all the white pieces.

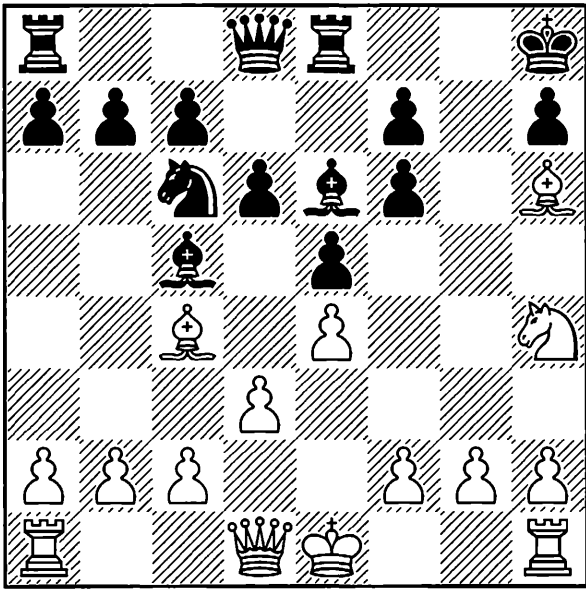
It is extremely important for you to understand that challenging, though it apparently only takes place on the flank, in fact represents a problem in the centre.

We shall demonstrate the correctness of this connection with a new example in section c).

b) Ignoring the threat or allowing our pawns to be broken up

This method may be chosen whenever there is greater freedom of action in the centre, i.e. not simply as in the former case (a) when passive defence is involved. Here we need to have a guarantee that we can gain some activity. e.g. 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♕c4 ♕c5 5.d3 d6 6.♗g5. Now the idea of ♘d5 threatens to become unpleasant. Yet, in spite of that method b) can be used, so 6...0-0 7.♘d5 ♕e6. Now the breaking up of the kingside by 8.♘xf6† gxf6 9.♕h6 ♖e8 10.♘h4 ♔h8 would result in a game with both chances and counter-chances.

254



In no way does White have a startling advantage, because the freedom of action we wanted in the centre (the possibility of d6-d5) is present and nothing in the world is better against

a flank attack than a central thrust. White has allowed his troops to get involved in a diversion which has meant they have lost contact with the centre; the only justification for such a diversion would be if it could lead to him seizing the f5-square, which seems unlikely. Nor would the outcome be any clearer after 8.♕xf6 (instead of 8.♘xf6†) gxf6 9.♘h4.

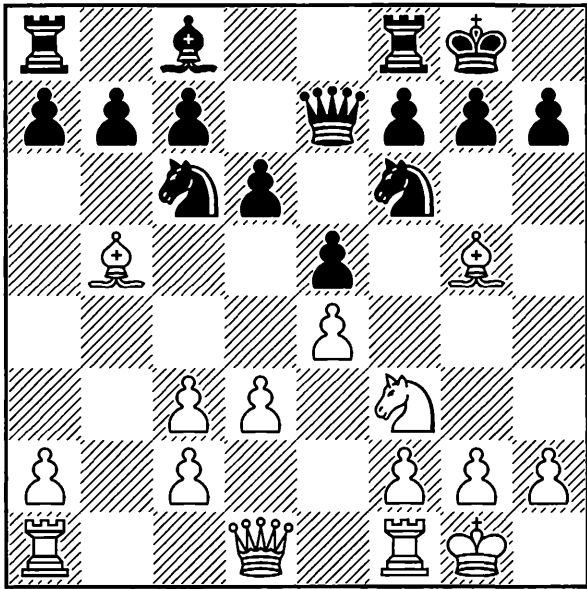
For White, the best continuation after 6...0-0 7.♘d5 ♕e6 would be 8.♔d2 maintaining the pressure. After the moves 8...♕xd5 9.♕xd5 unpinning by the challenge 9...h6 would not be possible, e.g. 10.♕h4 g5? 11.♕xc6 bxc6 12.♘xg5. White is slightly better.

c) The reserves rush up to unpin in a peaceful way

For all those who like a peaceful life, this method can be recommended. It is known to us from the Metger Unpin in the Four Knights Game and also from the match game between Tarrasch and Marshall in the Petroff Defence.

The method in the Metger Defence is: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♕b5 ♕b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.♗g5. Now Metger plays 7...♕xc3 8.bxc3 ♔e7

255

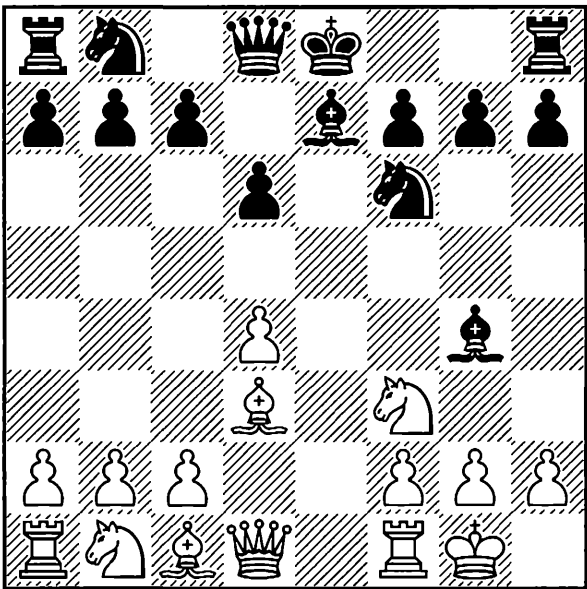


with the intention of playing ♘c6-d8-e6 and should the bishop then go to h4, unswervingly in the same style ♘e6-f4-g6 (♗g5) and then h6. It should be pointed out once more that such time-consuming manoeuvres are only possible

when the central position is fixed. After 8...♞e7 we usually see 9.♞e1 ♞d8 10.d4 ♞e6 11.♞c1 c5 or 11...c6 with roughly equal chances.

In the Petroff, after 1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞xe5 d6 4.♞f3 ♞xe4 5.d4 ♞e7 6.♞d3 ♞f6 7.0-0 ♞g4

256



Tarrasch is in the habit of unpinning by choosing the quiet manoeuvre ♞e1 then ♞b1-d2-f1-g3 and then h3 (or perhaps first h3). He has won some nice games in this way. The logic which seems to justify this time-consuming operation is based on two premises:

- 1. the unpinning must take place as soon as possible,
- 2. the auxiliary troops which have been brought over are rewarded for their help by a favourable position with chances of getting to grips with the enemy (e.g. ♞g3-f5).

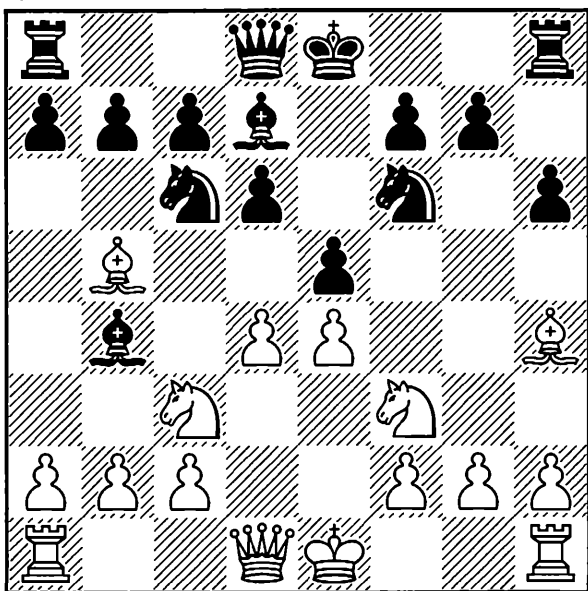
I would like to add that modern players are from time to time inclined to put up with the unpleasantness of a pin for some length of time; we are no longer convinced that a pin has to be shaken off immediately. Our point of view can be seen in (d).

d) Tacking (manoeuvring) and keeping open the options a, b, c!

The above is of course extremely difficult and makes high demands on your technique. See for yourself in the game **Nimzowitsch – Capablanca**, Riga, 1913: 1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♞c3 ♞f6

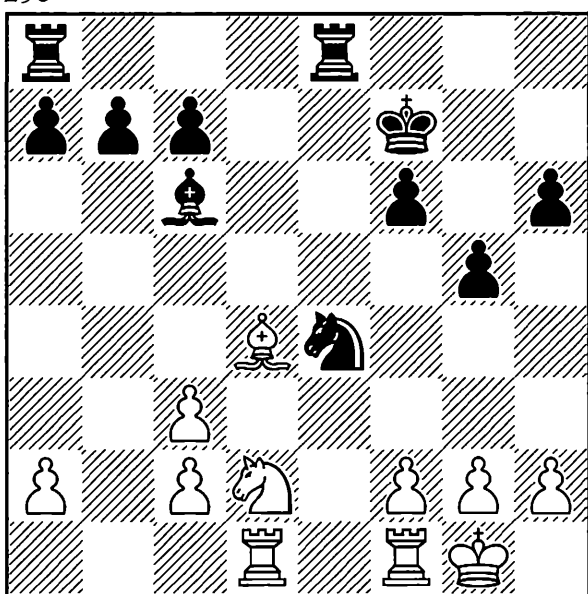
4.♞c4 ♞c5 5.d3 d6 6.♞g5 ♞e6 7.♞b5 h6 8.♞h4 ♞b4! 9.d4 ♞d7!

257



As a result of the advance 9.d4 which was provoked by Capablanca, the e4-pawn now needs protection. 10.0-0 ♞xc3 11.bxc3 (11.♞xc6 could be played first) 11...g5 12.♞g3 ♞xe4 (Black had waited till a suitable moment before unpinning) 13.♞xc6 ♞xc6 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♞xe5 (possibly 15.♞xe5 was somewhat better) 15...♞xd1 16.♞axd1 f6 17.♞d4 ♞f7 18.♞d2 ♞he8

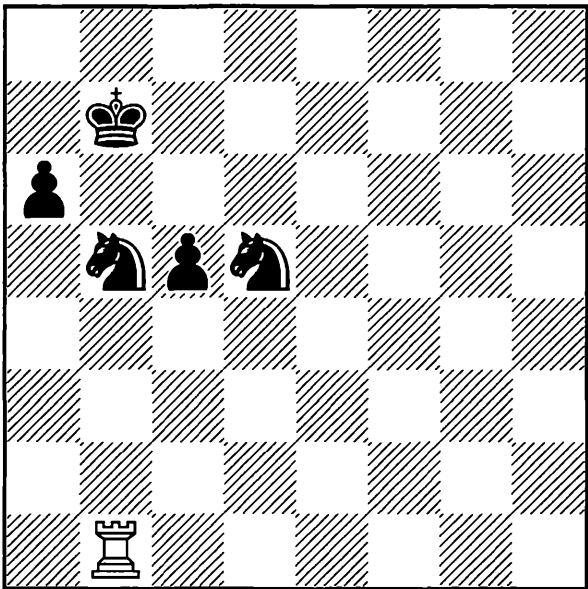
258



Black has a favourable endgame. Your author was obliged to concede defeat after 64 moves.

At an advanced stage in the game, specifically when tactics are important, the process of unpinning can be seen from quite a different angle.

259



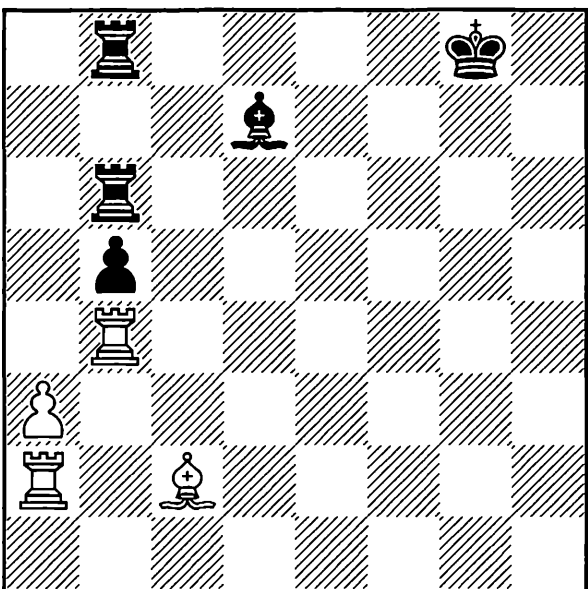
Here the unpinning move will be ♖d5-b6 or ♜d5-b4.

We shall call the space between the pinning piece and the piece which is being pinned on the one hand and on the other the space behind the pinned piece itself and the piece lying behind it – the “corridor”.

The pin can be broken by placing in that corridor a piece which is itself protected. Another possibility is to remove the “piece behind” from the line of the pin, e.g. in diagram 259, ♜c6 or ♜c7, etc. would prepare to bring the pin to an end.

If the piece behind is not all that valuable, simply protecting it sufficiently achieves the same end. In this last case, you have to keep in mind the contact you often seek to maintain between the pinned piece, the piece behind it and the piece which is protecting the latter.

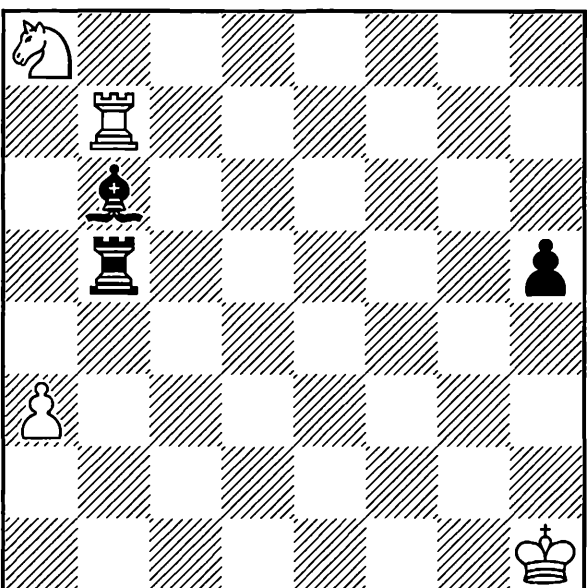
260



White intends to increase the power of the threat a3-a4 by playing ♖ab2 and then ♔d3; how can Black move to anticipate this build up? By putting his b6-rook on b7 and protecting it by ♔c6 – this would enable him to play b5xa4 in the event of a3-a4.

It is also worth considering the unpinning demonstrated in this diagram.

261



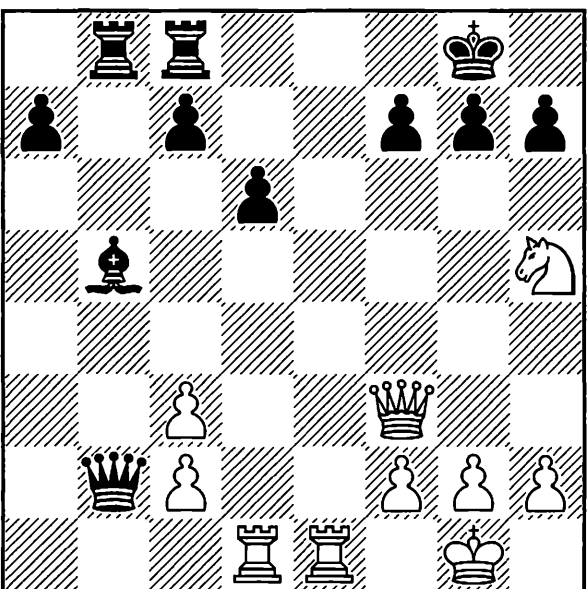
Black plays 1...♖b1† 2.♔ moves ♖b2†, then ♔d4. Here the contact which has been established between bishop and rook saves the ♔b6 which would otherwise have been lost.

This brings to an end our chapter on the pin; in conclusion there are some games and a schematic illustration of our ideas.

Games involving pins

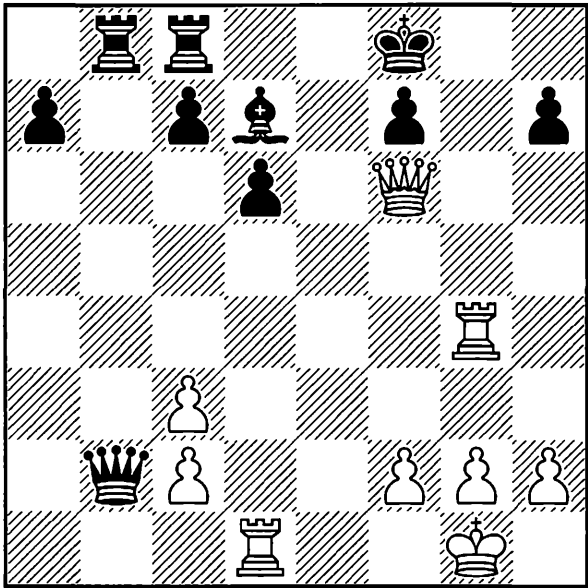
The following position comes from the game **Nimzowitsch – Vidmar**, Karlsbad 1911.

262



The move played in the game was 22.♖b1, after which the two rooks were put back opposite each other by 22...♜e8. But, as I demonstrated later, there was a winning move in 22.♜e4. The main line comes after 22...♙c6 23.♘f6† gxf6 (if 23...♙h8 then 24.♖h4 ♜xc2 25.♘h7!). It comes down to a pursuit of the black king; it is forced to flee, but the flight itself is beset with difficulties as more and varied pins are conjured up. As we pointed out in the first section of this chapter, the pin led to the pursuit. Next comes 24.♜g4† ♙f8 25.♜xf6 ♙d7!.

263



26.♜g7 ♙e6 27.♜xh7 ♙e8 And now comes pin number 1, i.e. 28.♜e1, with the threat of ♜xf7†. To avoid that, Black must play 28...♙d7 and the f7-pawn is pinned, so 29.♜xe6† wins easily.

For the sake of practice, let us take another look at the position in diagram 263. At this point 26.♜f4 would win, because 26...♙e6 would not work on account of 27.♜xe6; 26...♙e8 also fails to 27.♜e1 and after 26...♙g8 there is the decisive 27.♜xf7† ♙h8 28.♜f6† ♙g8 29.♜f3.

The three games which follow make clear the connection between the pin and the centre.

Game 14
Nimzowitsch – P.S. Leonhardt
San Sebastian 1911

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙b5 ♙b4 5.0–0 0–0 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.d3

White now has a solid position, since the opposing d-file is biting on granite (the protected d3-pawn). The solidity just mentioned also shows itself in the fact that White’s king pawn can never be troubled by d6-d5; in other words, the centre cannot be opened.

7...♙g4

The pin.

8.h3 ♙h5 9.♙g5

The move 9.g4 would be premature on account of 9...♘xg4 10.hxg4 ♙xg4 and then f5.

9...♜d6 10.♙xf6 ♜xf6 11.g4

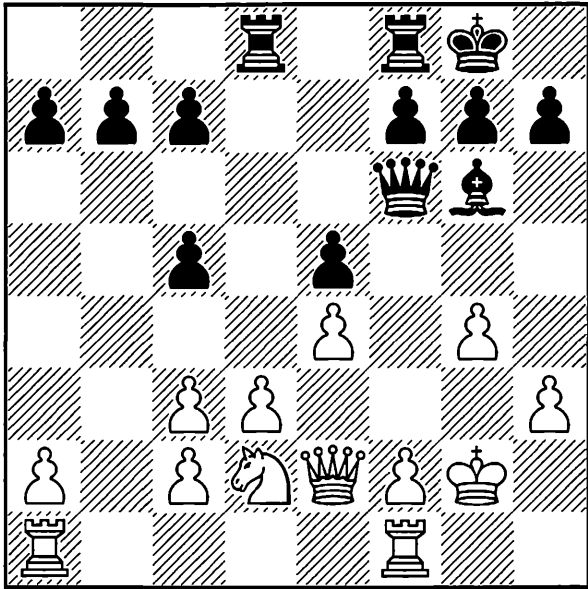
Challenging is the idea here, because the bishop is sent off to a wilderness which, because d6-d5 is not possible, can in no way turn into a garden in bloom; see unpinning (a). Note how h3 and g4 slowly turn into an assault force.

11...♙g6 12.♙g2 ♜ad8 13.♜e2 ♙xc3

Or else there comes ♘c3-d1-e3-f5.

14.bxc3 c5 15.♘d2

264



White now on one hand wants to enable ♘d2-c4-e3-f5; but on the other, he is hoping to prevent for as long as possible the annoying move c5-c4 without having himself to play c3-c4; the latter move would leave the outpost square in the d-file (d4) unprotected.

15...♜e7 16.♘c4 b6 17.♘e3 f6

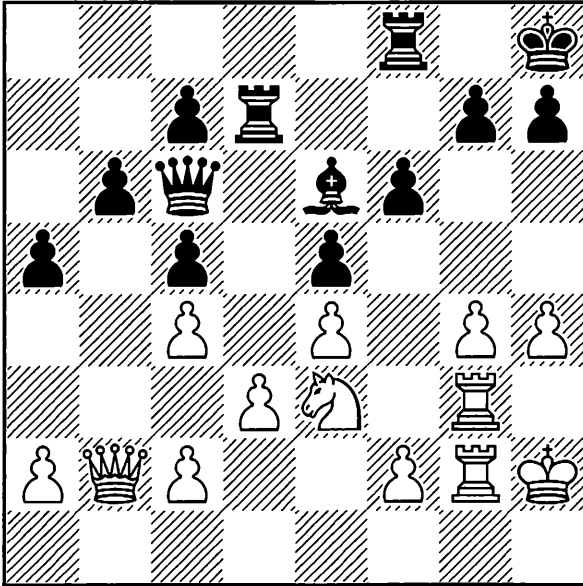
In order to liberate the bishop at last. But the move allows at some point g4-g5.

18.♜g1 ♜d7 19.♙h2 ♙h8 20.♜g3 ♜b5 21.♜e1 ♜a4 22.♜c1 ♜d7 23.h4 ♙f7 24.c4

Black has managed to provoke White into c3-c4. But in the meantime White has lovingly secured the kingside.

24...♙e6 25.♚b2 a5 26.♖ag1 ♚c6 27.♙1g2!!

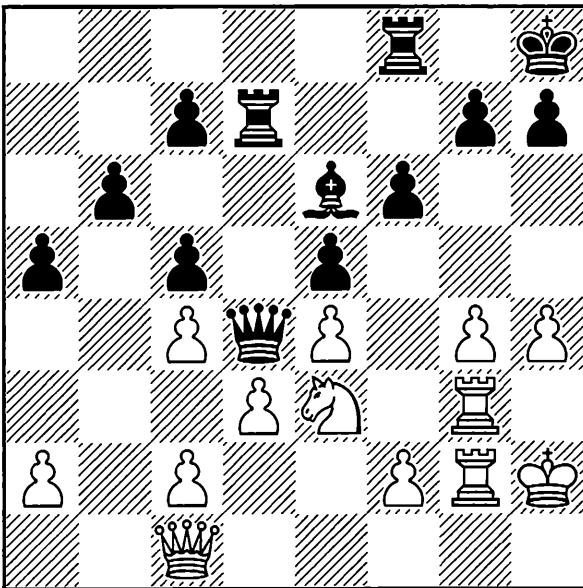
265



White quite calmly finishes his preparations for an appropriate welcome for the queen which is aiming for d4. Note how he combines defence in the centre with attacking plans on the right.

27...♚d6 28.♚c1 ♚d4?

266



29.♘d5!

Wins the queen. This “trap” was much praised. The fact that it is subordinate to the strategic goals I set myself in this game was not really considered by anybody. But the strategic goal was the prevention of the central breakthrough or central manoeuvres and in the long run the enabling of g4-g5 with an attack.

The remaining moves were 29...♖xd5 30.c3! ♖xd3 31.exd5 (31.cxd5 was more precise) 31...♚xc4 32.dxe6 ♚xe6 33.♚c2 c4 34.♚f5 ♚xf5 35.gxf5 1–0. From the painstaking and long-winded defensive measures chosen by White (moves 21, 22, 25, 28), you can see how well aware he was that the set-up with h3 and g4 needed a closed centre.

This game was an instructive example of the “challenge”.

Game 15

Nimzowitsch – Dr Fluess

Correspondence 1913

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙c4 ♙c5 5.d3 d6 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4

7.♙e3 is also playable of course.

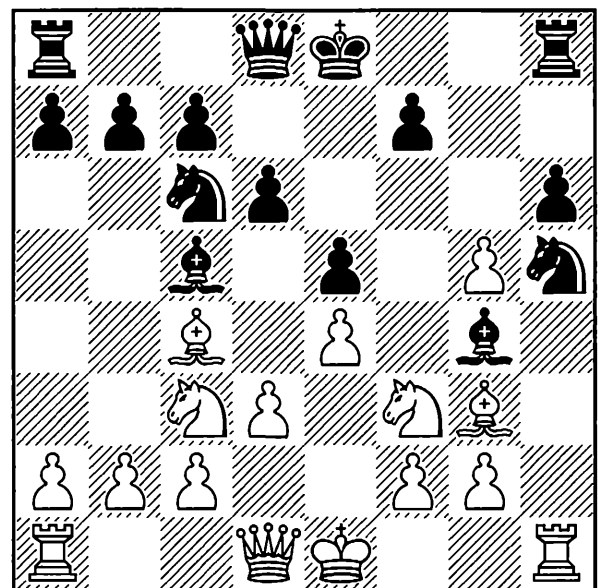
7...g5

7...♙e6 should be a better move here.

8.♙g3 ♙g4 9.h4 ♘h5 10.hxg5

As has already been pointed out, White should have brought out the problem of the centre more sharply here, e.g. 10.♘d5! ♘d4 11.c3 and we prefer White's position.

267



10...♘d4

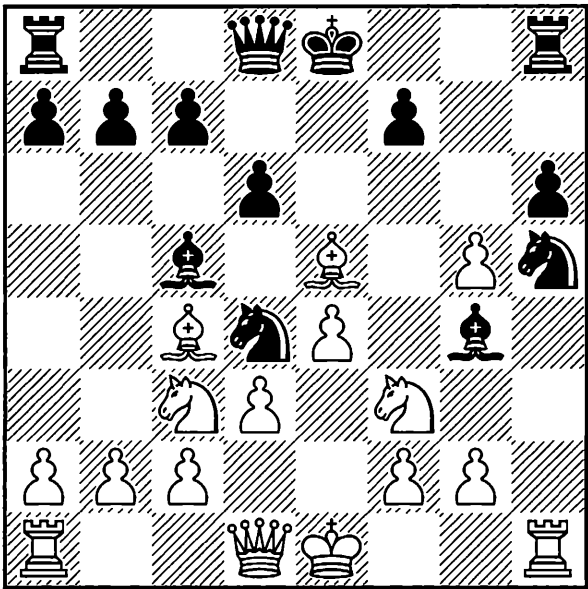
And here Black could make the most of the centre which White has neglected by 10...♘xg3 11.fxg3 ♘d4. As has already been shown, 12.♘d5? would not be sufficient, because Black has at his disposal the queen sacrifice with 12...♙xf3 13.gxf3 ♚xg5 14.g4 c6 15.♙h5 cxd5!.

Furthermore, after 10...♞xg3 11.fxg3 ♞d4 the sacrificial continuation 12.♙xf7† ♚xf7 13.♞xe5† dxe5 14.♞xg4 would not be good enough for White, since 14...♞xg5 15.♞d7† ♚g6 would leave Black safe.

Therefore the flank attack with 10.hxg5 instead of the central advance with 10.♞d5 seems to have been a decisive mistake, which Black could have exploited by 10...♞xg3 and then 11...♞d4.

11.♙xe5!

268



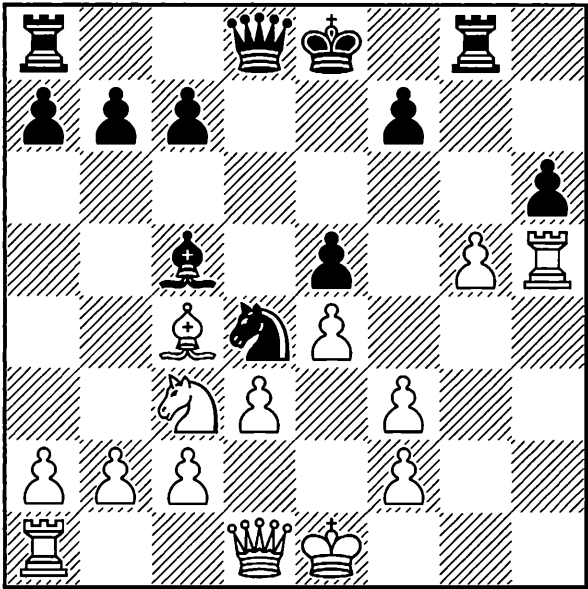
An astounding way out; White gives up his bishop, but leaves Black with an exposed ♞h5 and king.

11...♙xf3

If Black accepts with 11...dxe5, then 12.♙xf7† ♚xf7 13.♞xe5† ♚g8 14.♞xg4 and wins.

12.gxf3 dxe5 13.♞xh5 ♞g8!

269



Apparently White's position is not one to be envied, because the d4-knight is putting pressure on it and the g-pawn seems to be lost.

14.f4

Salvation.

14...exf4 15.♞g4

The point of it. White is not afraid of Black's attack (♞c2†) which will fizzle out.

15...♞xc2†

Or else White will castle. If 15...♞xg5 then the reply is 16.♞xf4.

16.♞d2 ♞xa1 17.♙xf7! 1-0

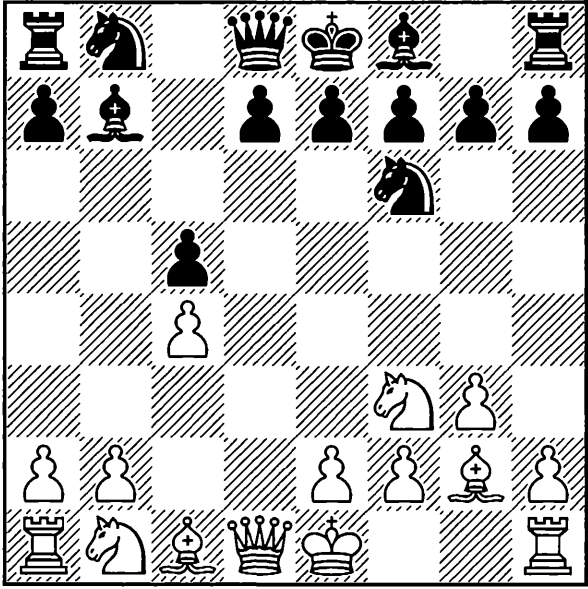
If 17...♚xf7 then 18.♞f5† ♚e8 19.♞e6† ♚f8 20.g6 and wins; or 19...♞e7 20.♞xg8† ♞f8 21.♞h7! ♞e7 22.g6! and now both 22...♞xh7 23.gxh7 ♙d4 24.♞b5 and 22...♙d4 23.♞b5 ♞b4† 24.♚d1 lead to a white win.

Game 16 has a splendid selection of pins; we see, one after the other, nasty ones and harmless ones.

Game 16
Rubinstein – Nimzowitsch
Marienbad 1925

1.d4 ♞f6 2.♞f3 b6 3.g3 c5 4.♙g2 ♙b7 5.dxc5 bxc5 6.c4

270



The manoeuvre chosen by White cannot be criticised. He obtains the d-line with its outpost square d5, whereas Black's central majority

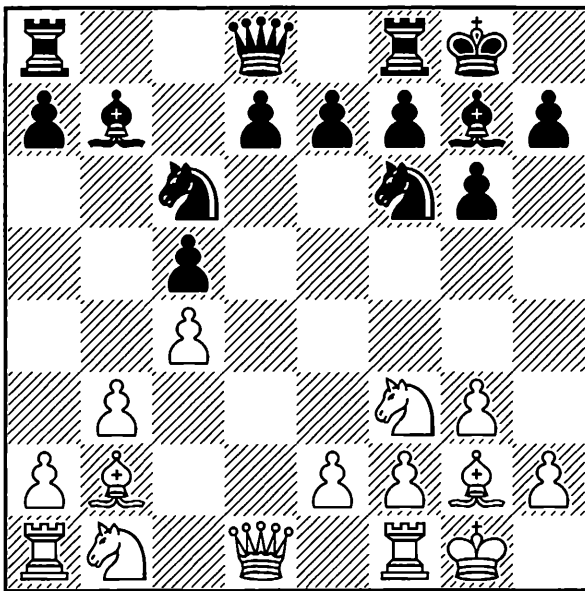
(the c-, d- and e-pawns against the c- and e-pawns) is capable of very restricted mobility. (As you can see, we are getting all positional with you; mobility as a criterion for the value of a pawn as such is exactly the hub around which all positional play turns.) Many critics have expressed an unfavourable view about the manoeuvre in question, and wrongly so, since the tempo theory ("The c-pawn makes two moves and then disappears," says, for example, one prominent master wrinkling his brow) is not very convincing when it comes to closed games.

6...g6 7.b3 ♖g7 8.♗b2 0-0 9.0-0

Both sides have now castled with clear consciences, because even two of the most hypermodern masters can hardly drum up more than four "squint" bishops!

9...♞c6

271



A normal move, but one which has a deeper meaning: what might be expected would be d6 and ♞d7, in order to follow up with a7-a5 and then ♞b6 and a5-a4. No matter how healthy the feeling is to want to fend off the isolated a-pawn, it is in no way advisable to emphasise this too much. In my opinion, this is where we see the main error of classical (I mean pseudo-classical) strategy, namely that its proponents were hell-bent on getting in a specific advance, without taking into consideration the following points:

- 1. that there was something called the possibility of transforming advantages, i.e. giving up one advantage in favour of another;*
- 2. that one's opponent will surrender many a point of his own free will without being forced to do so.*

In our case, White will of course play ♞c3 to counter a5-a4. Yet, will the knight remain there eternally? No, because it would like to go to d5. So the chance to play a5-a4 will fall into Black's lap like a ripe fruit.

On the other hand, the knight is far better on c6 than on b6, because White is obviously planning the set-up with ♞c3, ♖c2 and ♖e4. So Black is counting on the counter set-up ♞c6, ♖d6, ♖e5 and ♞d4!, with the d6-pawn taking cover behind the ♞d4.

10.♞c3 a5 11.♖d2 d6 12.♞e1

The start of a difficult and costly journey ♞f3-e1-c2-e3-d5. A more natural continuation is 12.♞d5 ♞xd5 13.♗xg7 ♖xg7 14.cxd5.

12...♖d7 13.♞c2 ♞b4! 14.♞e3 ♗xg2 15.♖xg2

Taking with the knight meant a diversion from its journey to d5.

15...♖b7† 16.f3

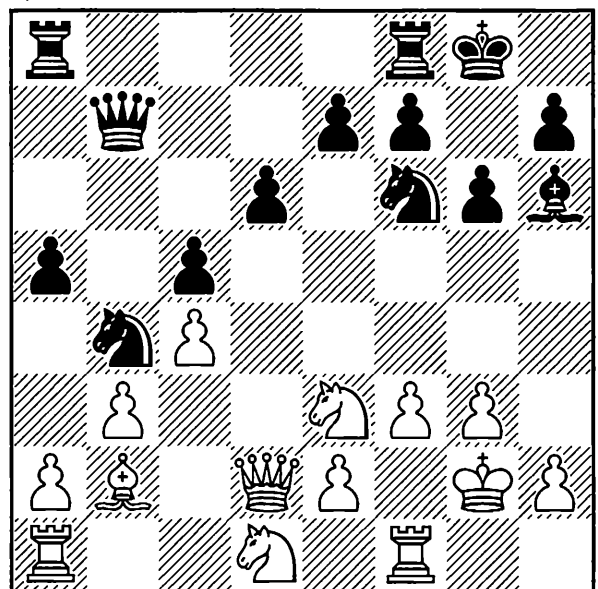
If 16.♖g1 then 16...♞e4 17.♞xe4 ♖xe4 and a5-a4 is on the cards.

16...♗h6

A pin of the harmless sort, because obviously the last move represents a considerable weakening of his own (black) kingside.

17.♞cd1

272



Now the threat is 18.♙xf6 exf6 19.♖xd6 17...a4

See the note to 9...♘c6.

18.bxa4 ♜fe8!!

This purely defensive move (against the threat already mentioned of ♙xf6 etc.) is all the more surprising because, after the “energetic” advance on move 17, anything other than a defensive move would have been expected. This switching between attack and defence is what makes the combination a totally original one.

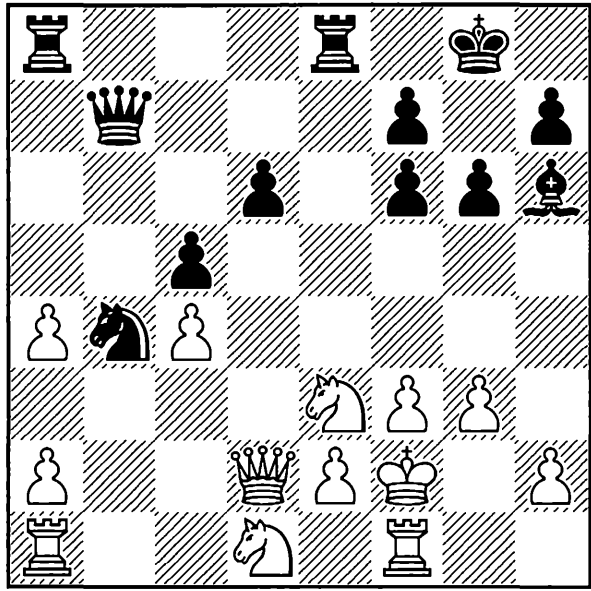
19.♙xf6

So Rubinstein does not believe in the solidity of the defence chosen; he will soon learn better.

19...exf6 20.♚f2

Now White is threatening to unpin by means of f3-f4; after that he would be ready to occupy d5 for once and always.

273



20...f5!!

Black unveils his plan: White is helpless against the double threat 21...f4 22.gxf4 ♙xf4 with a lasting pin on one hand and 21...♙g7 then ♙d4 with just as lasting a pin on the other.

21.♖xd6 ♙g7! 22.♖b1 ♙d4

Threatening ♘d3†.

23.♘g2

The poor knights! On move 17 they had to break off their journey and now they both perish, without having got any closer to their destination of d5. After 23.♖b3 Black could have continued the siege of the pinned ♘e3

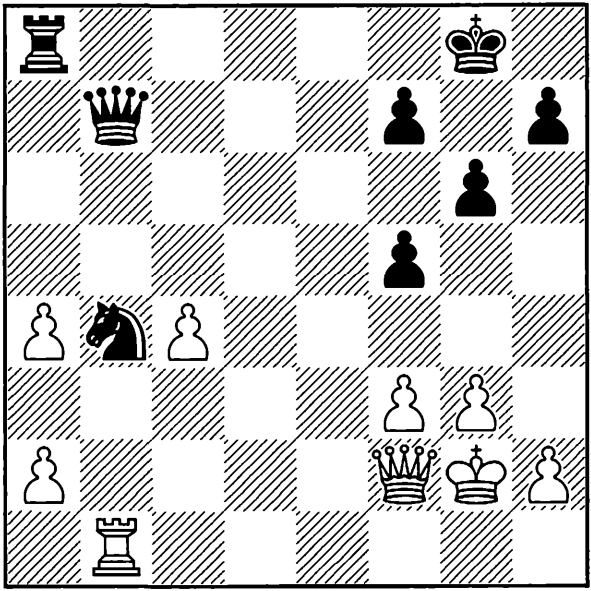
most emphatically by 23...♖e6 24.♖f4 ♖e7 (threatening ♘c2) 25.♘g2 ♖e8.

23...♙xe3 24.♘xe3 ♖xe3 25.♖xc5

Now it is White's turn to set up a pin.

25...♖xe2† 26.♖f2 ♖xf2† 27.♖xf2

274



Forced, because 27.♘xf2 would lose at once after 27...♘d3†! and then ♘xc5, and b7 is protected.

27...♖xa4!

The “immediate unpinning” by 27...♖e7 is avoided, because White can gain no advantage from the pin.

28.a3

If 28.♖b2 then 28...♖c8!, since this is the only valid retreat for the “piece behind”. After 28.♖b2 on the other hand 28...♖c7 would be bad on account of 29.♖e1; so would 28...♖c6? be on account of 29.♖d1. It should be obvious that 28...♖xa2?? would be a blunder because of 29.♖xa2 ♘xa2 30.♖xb7.

28...♖xa3 29.♖e2 ♖a8

Now it returns home, satisfied and in a good mood.

30.c5 ♖a6

The unpinning.

31.♖xa6 ♘xa6 32.♖a1

A final pin.

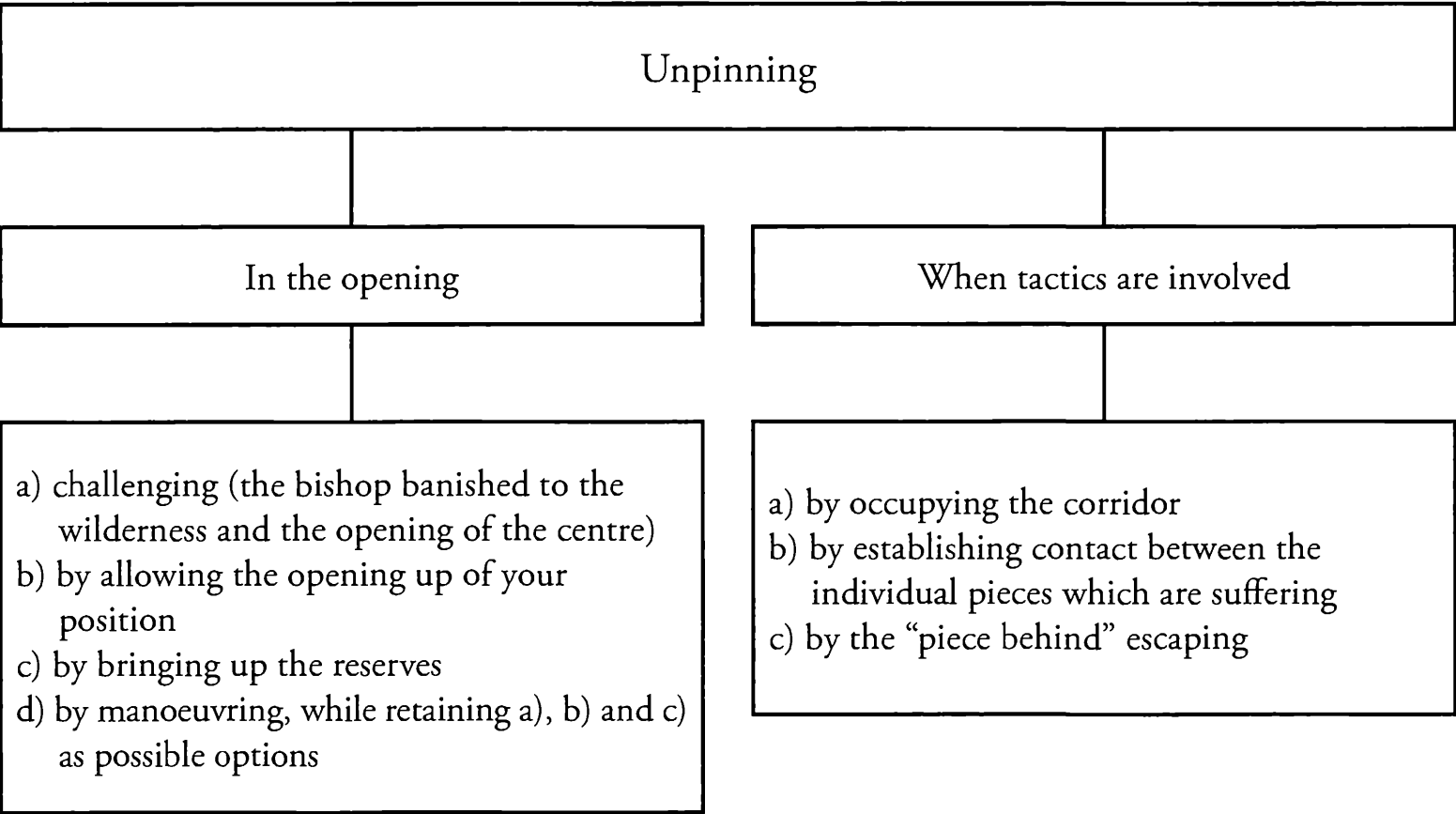
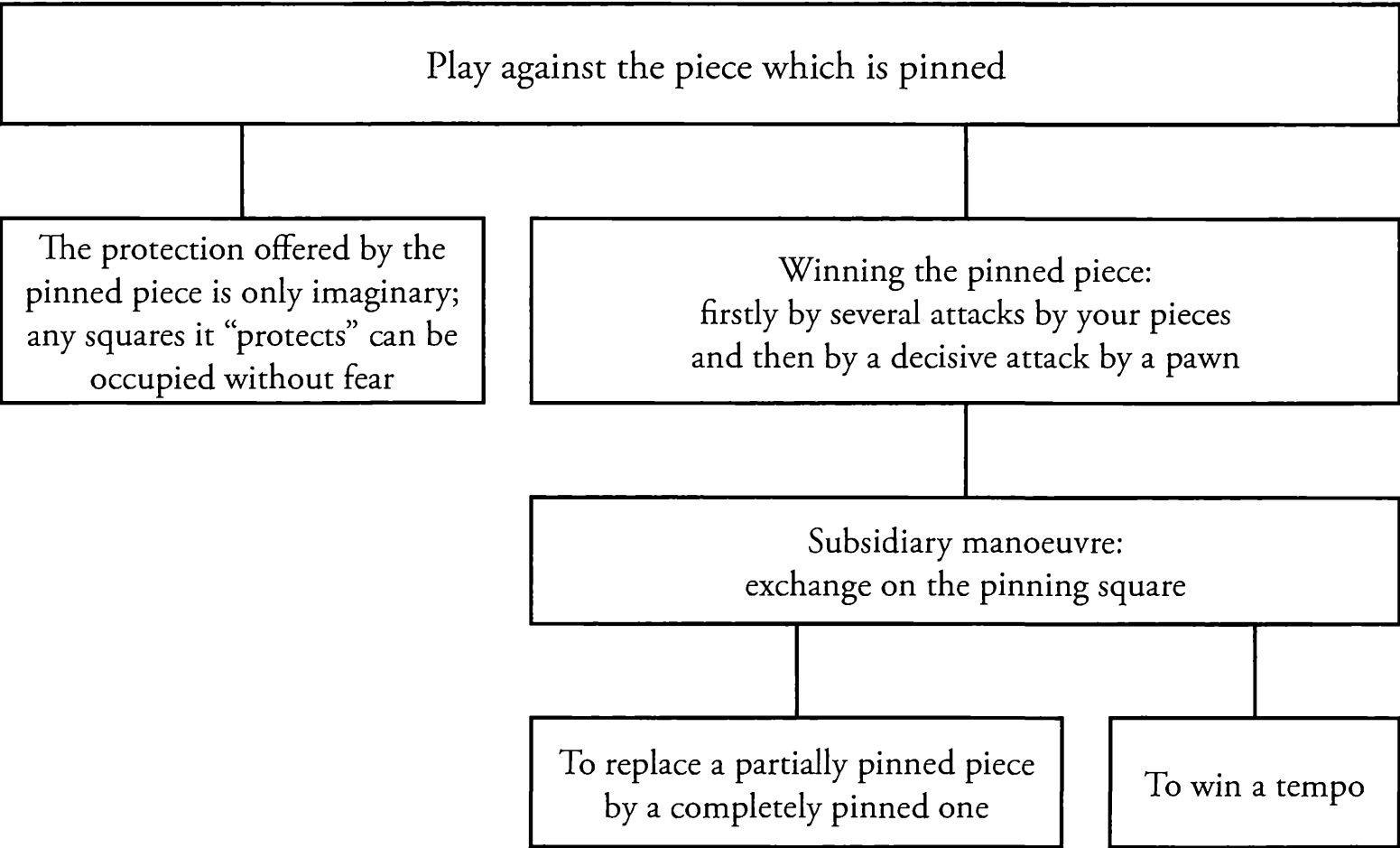
32...♘c7

And a final unpinning.

33.♖xa8† ♘xa8

And White resigned on move 38.

Schematic representation to illustrate pinning



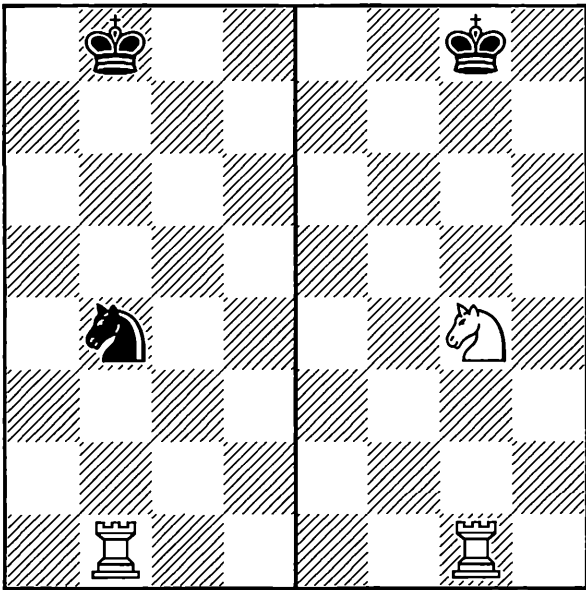
Part I – Chapter 8

Discovered check

A short chapter, but one that is full of dramatic events.

1. The degree of relationship between the “pin” and the “discovered check” is defined more closely • Where is the best place for the piece which is discovering the check?

275



The diagram clarifies the degree of relationship between the pin and the discovered check. It can be seen that the pinned piece, worn out by continual attacks has changed its appearance. This change has seen the former sickly boy mature into a powerful warrior. So we may say that discovered check is a pin in which the pinned piece has gone over to the enemy camp with flying colours. Here too, just like with the pin, there are three actors in our little play, namely:

1. a piece which would give check if it were not masked by another
2. a piece which is blocking the way of the check
3. the piece which is lying behind

or more briefly

1. the threatening piece
2. the piece between
3. the threatened piece

Whereas in a pin the reduced mobility of the pinned piece (the piece between) was the root of all evil, in the discovered check things are the other way around in that the piece between has enormous mobility: any move it makes is permissible, it can even occupy a square protected by several enemy pieces, since it cannot be taken because your opponent is in check!

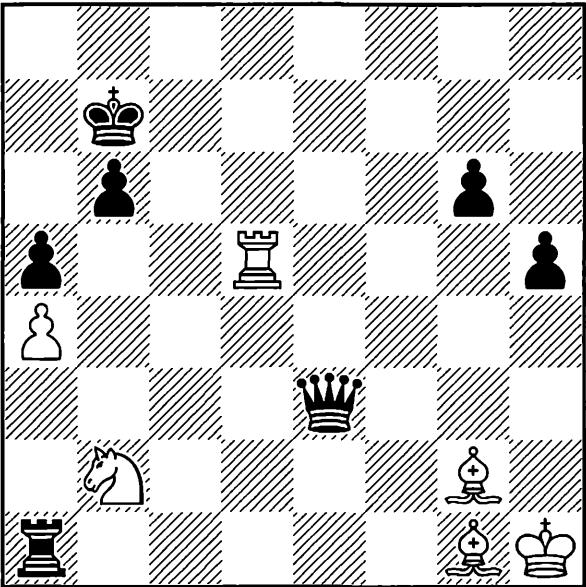
So the piece between resembles the little man who can do whatever he wants because he is protected by someone powerful.

Let us take a closer look at the possible moves which the said “little man” may make; we find that the piece which is moving during the discovered attack can do one of three things:

- a) It can take anything, even if it was in fact nailed down, since the opponent may not recapture.
- b) It can attack any of your opponent’s major pieces without the slightest worry that the square it has occupied is rightfully an opposing square, i.e. one that is attacked several times by your opponent.
- c) It can exchange the square from which it is moving for any other square which it considers for whatever reason to be more advantageous.

Now consider the following position.

276



Here a) could be accomplished by $\text{B}\times\text{h}5+$ or $\text{B}\times\text{a}5+$. Bear in mind how unafraid the piece which is moving is; b) in this case would be $\text{B}\text{e}5+$ or $\text{B}\text{d}3+$, and c) can be found by remembering that the $\text{B}\text{g}1$ is pinned and thus incapable of satisfying its healthy appetite. With that in mind, you find $1.\text{B}\text{d}1+$ K moves $2.\text{B}\text{xe}3$.

It ought not to be necessary to encourage you, since from the previous chapter you will have learned how rewarding it is to show courage, whenever danger... is only imaginary!

So, all squares, even those which are under heavy fire from your opponent are accessible to the piece which uncovers the check.

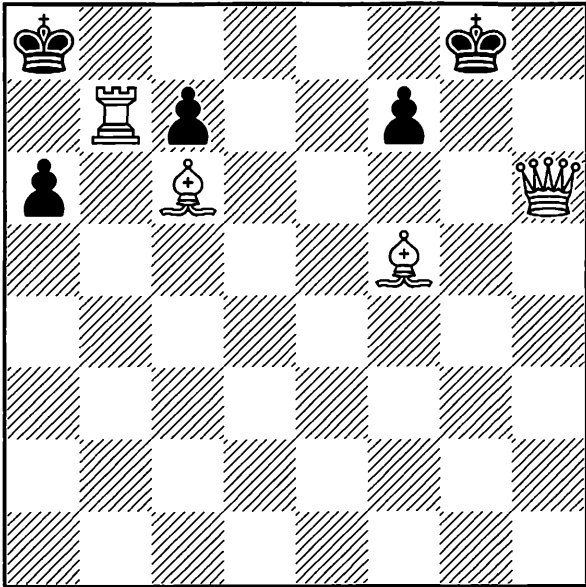
Group c) of course is much wider in scope than what can be seen from the example in diagram 276. Listing the possibilities would not serve any purpose, because the reasons why a piece is more effective in one place rather than another can be very diverse. See, moreover, the example quoted under the heading "treadmill".

2. The treadmill (windmill)

The long-distance piece which is discovering the check has the choice of all the squares along the line in which it moves, without it costing a single move; thus it is completely free.

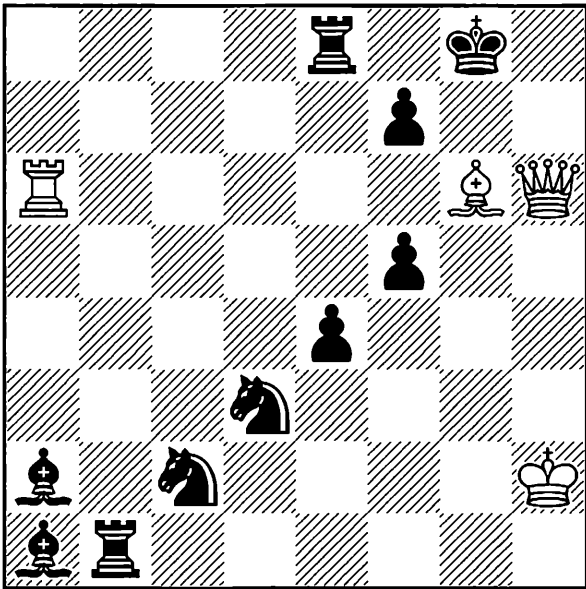
The following diagram shows two treadmills.

277



On the right side of the diagram, the move is $1.\text{B}\text{h}7+$ when the only king move is $1...\text{K}\text{h}8$ allowing the fearsome prospect of a discovered check. If White plays $2.\text{B}\text{b}1+$, Black gets out of the check by $2...\text{K}\text{g}8$, but $3.\text{B}\text{h}7+$ entices it back into the same situation, because the king which would otherwise be stalemated has only one move, because the bishop it is blocking the queen's threatening effect. So $1.\text{B}\text{h}7+$ blocks the threat from h6-h8 and thus creates a flight square for the king. The stalemate position which has just been outlined results in a treadmill, with the powerful advantage that the piece between can occupy any square along its line of retreat (here the diagonal h7-b1) without it costing him a move; when the king moves, it is once more White's turn to move.

278

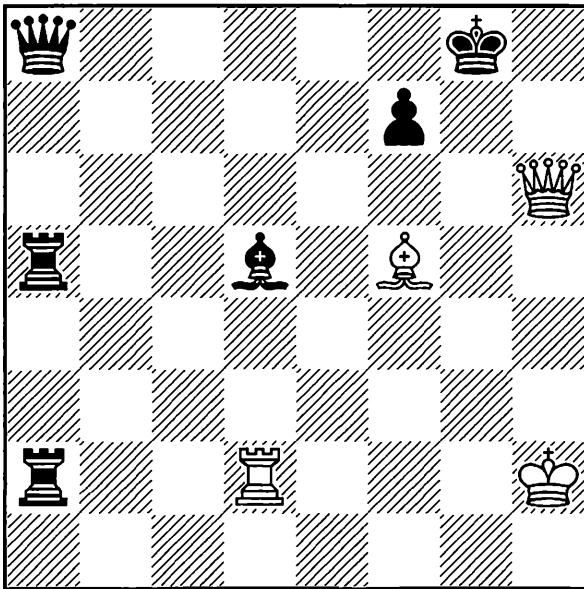


The treadmill can inflict terrible destruction, as this example shows. We have 1.♙h7† ♖h8 2.♙xf5† ♖g8 3.♙h7† ♖h8 4.♙xe4† ♖g8 5.♙h7† ♖h8 6.♙xd3† ♖g8 7.♙h7† ♖h8 8.♙xc2† ♖g8 9.♙h7† ♖h8 10.♙xb1† ♖g8, and now White returns a bit of his surplus material, something like a rich old usurer becoming a benefactor as he grows old, and as long as it does not cost him much: 11.♞g6† fxg6 12.♙xa2† and mate on the next move.

The bishop munched its way to b1 so that after the rook sacrifice it could seize the a2-g8 diagonal.

A similar, but more subtle picture can be seen in the following position.

279

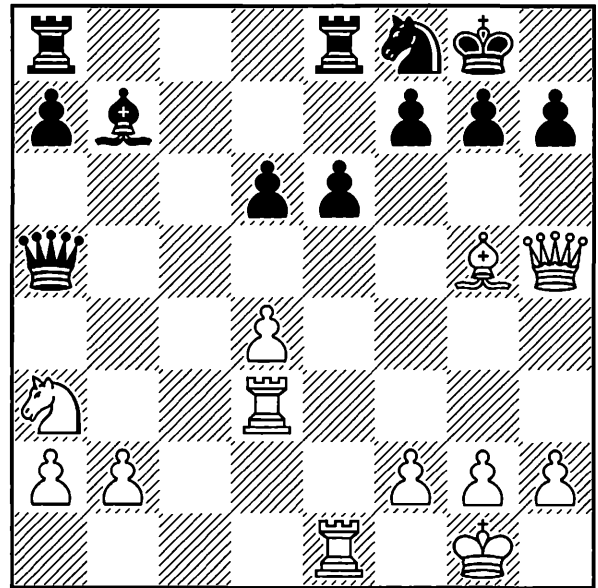


Here the bishop is protecting the f7-square and must be enticed away from d5. This is done by 1.♙h7† ♖h8 2.♙c2† (improving the position as in c) above) 2...♖g8 3.♞g2†! ♙xg2 and once more 4.♙h7† ♖h8 5.♙g6† ♖g8 6.♞h7† ♖f8 7.♞xf7 mate.

Both of the previous examples were constructed for the purposes of this manual.

Under the heading of treadmill, we must show the ending which **Torre** won against **Lasker** (Moscow 1925); despite its elegance, it is only with the greatest of reluctance that I do so, since Lasker's truly great genius so impresses me. However even great geniuses are vulnerable from time to time, as the following game seems to prove.

280



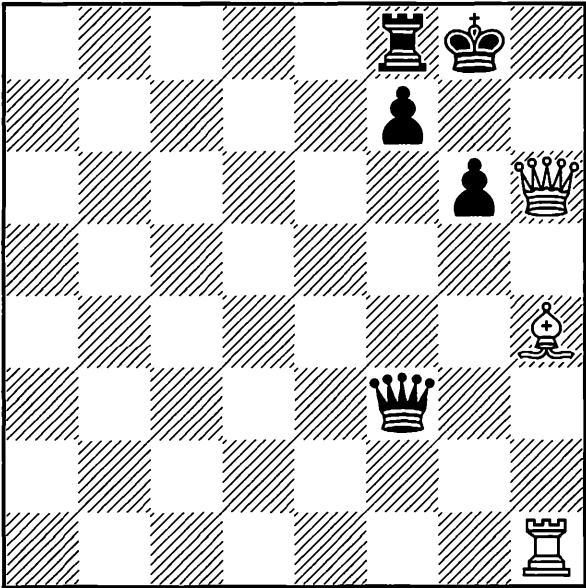
The position is dangerous for White since his e1-rook is directly, and his g5-bishop is indirectly, attacked. Torre found 21.b4! ♞f5 (not 21...♞xb4 because of 22.♞b1; but better than the text move was 21...♞d5) 22.♞g3 h6 23.♞c4 (this knight move would not have been possible with the queen on d5) 23...♞d5 24.♞e3 (Torre is fighting like a lion to unpin, but without the resource of the discovered check it would not have been possible for him to do so) 24...♞b5 25.♙f6! (in order for the discovery to fulfil its full potential, the queen had to be enticed on to an unprotected square; that was the reason for 24.♞e3!) 25...♞xh5 26.♞xg7† ♖h8 (a treadmill has been set up.) 27.♞xf7† ♖g8 28.♞g7† ♖h8 29.♞xb7† ♖g8 30.♞g7† ♖h8 31.♞g5† ♖h7 32.♞xh5 ♖g6 33.♞h3 ♖xf6 34.♞xh6† and he went on to win the game.

3. Double check

This often has the effect of a storm breaking. It arises in such a way that the piece which is moving away also delivers check. The effect of the double check is to cancel out two of the possible ways of escaping the check: namely, taking the piece and blocking with another piece. The only way out is to flee.

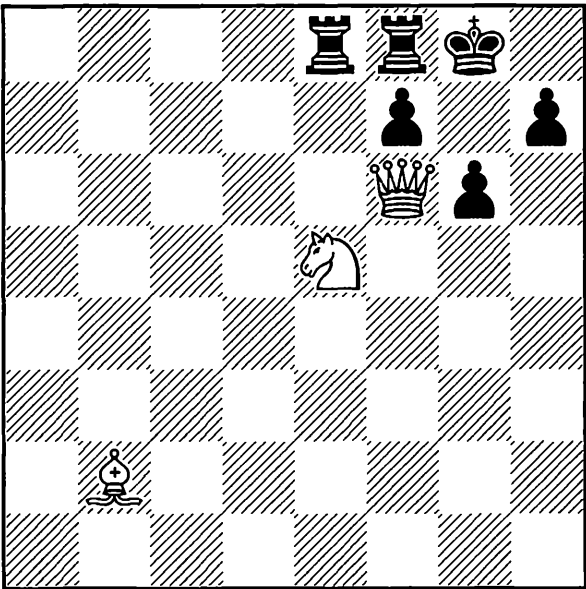
Consider the following diagram.

281



Here the choice is between 1.♔h7† and 1.♔h8†. The first results in a simple discovered check (1.♔h7† ♕xh7 2.♕f6†) which allows the defence 2...♔xh1 or 2...♔h5. But the second move involves a double check, automatically ruling out both these defences, thus 1.♔h8†! ♕xh8 2.♕f6†† ♕g8 3.♖h8 mate.

282



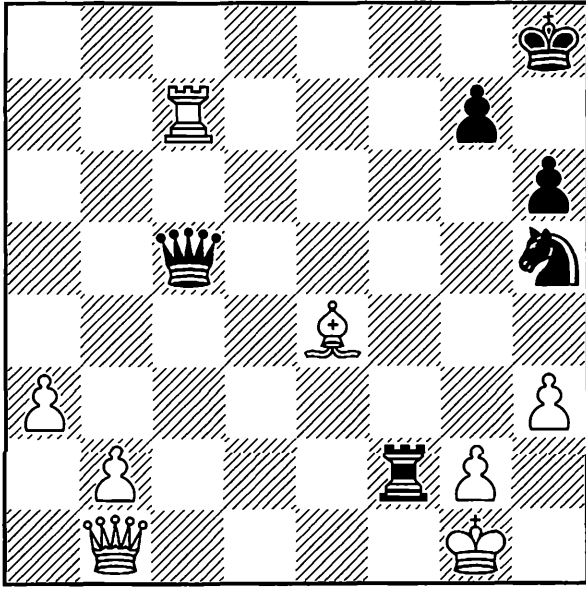
This is another known position. Mate in 3 moves by 1.♔h8† ♕xh8 2.♕xf7†† ♕g8 3.♕h6 mate.

Double check is a purely tactical weapon. It is terribly compelling; even the most sluggish king will panic – driven to flight after a double check.

We shall close this chapter with three short sample games.

1. In the game between **von Bardeleben** and **Nisniewitsch** played some years ago, things came down to the following interesting position:

283



White's last move had been ♖b7-c7 (of course not ♖b7-b8†?? because of ♖f8† then ♖xb8). Black now played ♔xc7 and the game ended in a draw.

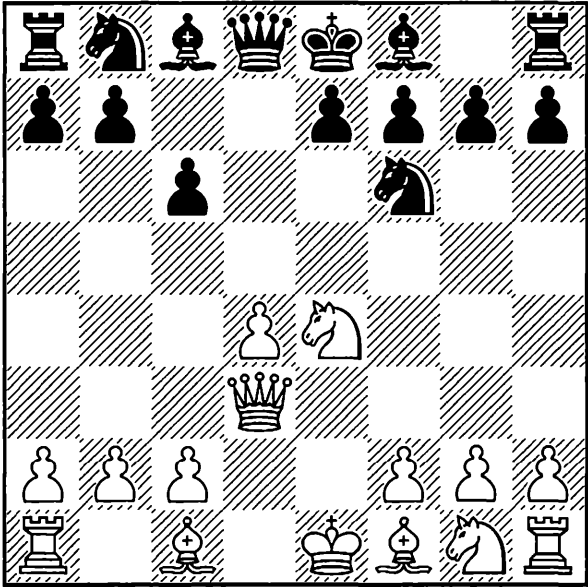
I later pointed out the following winning continuation: 1...♖f1†† 2.♕xf1 ♕g3† 3.♕e1 ♔e3† 4.♕d1 (note the powerful compulsion; the king is already on d1 and yet only few moves ago it was safe and sound in its castle) 4...♔e2†! 5.♕c1 ♔e1†! 6.♕c2 ♔xe4† (a twist has been added to the double check here, which is known to us but which however seems a bit unusual since it normally takes place on a file and not as is here the case on a diagonal; the said twist – or tactical manoeuvre – consists of interrupting a line of protection by inserting between two pieces which are protecting each other a third piece; here the king was enticed on to c2 between the ♔b1 and the ♕e4.) 7.♕c1 ♕e2† winning the queen and the game.

2. The following well-known game was played between the imaginative Réti and the no less imaginative Dr Tartakower.

Réti – Tartakower
Vienna 1910

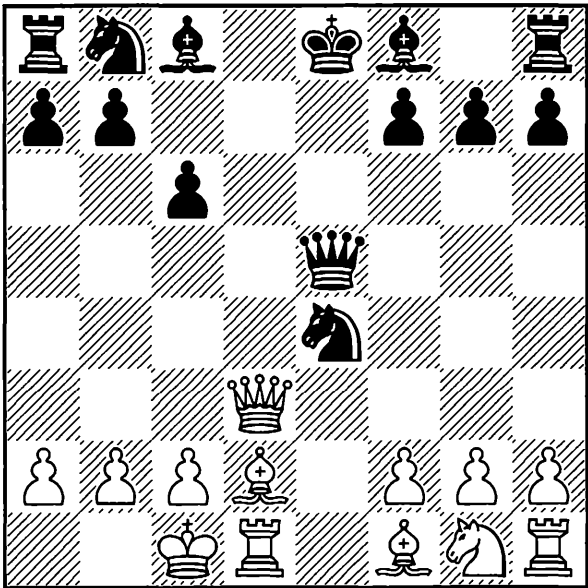
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♕c3 dxe4 4.♕xe4 ♕f6 5.♔d3 (a really unnatural looking move)

284



5...e5? The somewhat theatrical looking gesture by White – we mean ♔d3 – has worked; Black wishes to refute it forthwith, but this turns out to be impossible (because 5.♔d3 was not such a bad move) and so White gets the better game. The correct move was 5...♘xe4 6.♔xe4 ♘d7 then ♘f6 with a solid position. 6.dxe5 ♔a5† 7.♙d2 ♔xe5 8.0–0–0 ♘xe4 (a mistake; the correct move was 8...♙e7)

285



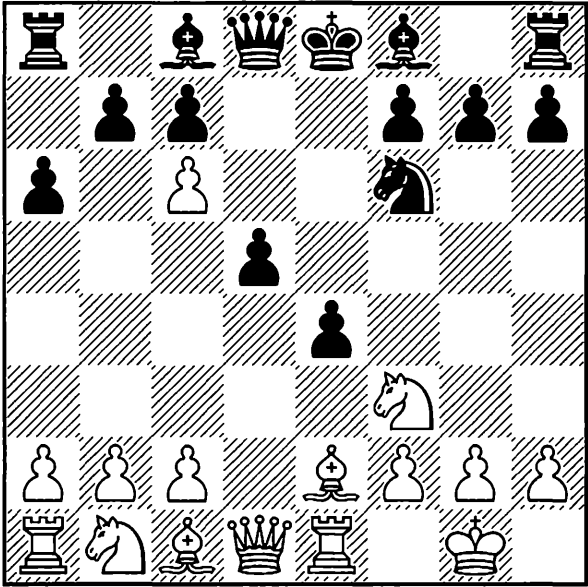
9.♔d8† ♘xd8 10.♙g5†† ♘c7 11.♙d8 mate. If 10...♘e8, then 11.♙d8 mate. The final combination is in fact a pretty one.

3. On December 3rd 1910 I gave a simultaneous display in Pernaú (on the Baltic); including the following neat little game.

Nimzowitsch – Pastor Ryckhoff

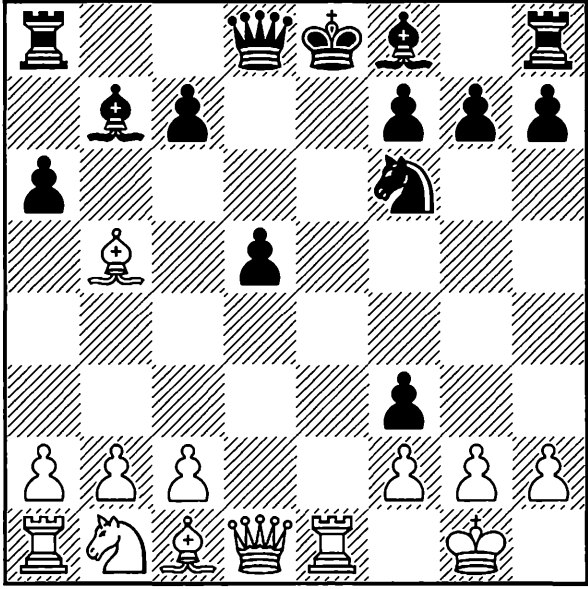
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6 4.0–0 d6 5.d4 ♘xe4? 6.d5 a6 7.♙d3 ♘f6 (7...♘e7 did in fact save the piece, but not the game, e.g. 8.♙xe4 f5 9.♙d3 e4 10.♙e1 exd3 [or f3] 11.♔xd3 [or f3, as the case may be] with a strong attack) 8.dxc6 e4 9.♙e1 d5 10.♙e2!!

286



After Black was forced to protect the e-pawn by d6-d5, White would have time to retreat both his pieces which were threatened by the fork; but he moves the bishop in such a way that he surrenders the knight. 10...exf3 (Black does not see the danger and quietly pockets the piece; the end however will be horrible!) 11.cxb7 ♙xb7 (if 11...fxe2 then simply 12.bxa8♔ because the e2-pawn is pinned) 12.♙b5 Double check and mate.

287



The pawn chain

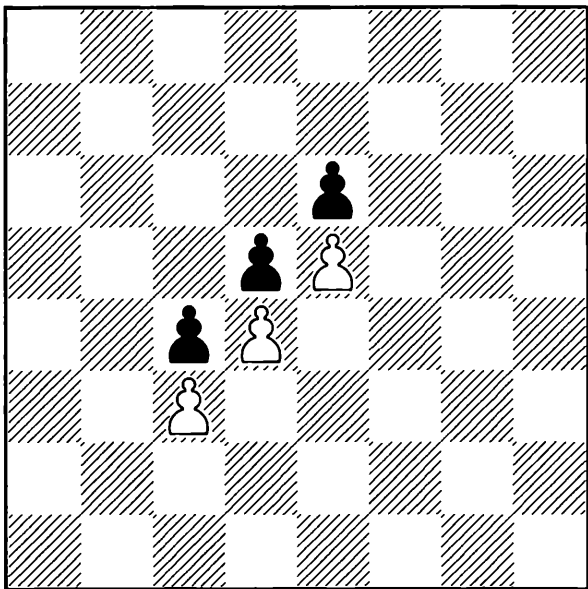
1. General remarks and definitions • The base of the pawn chain • The idea of two separate battlefields

After 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 we have a black-white pawn chain. The pawns d4, e5, e6 and d5 are the individual links in the chain; d4 should be considered the base of the white chain, while the e6-pawn performs the same function for the black chain.

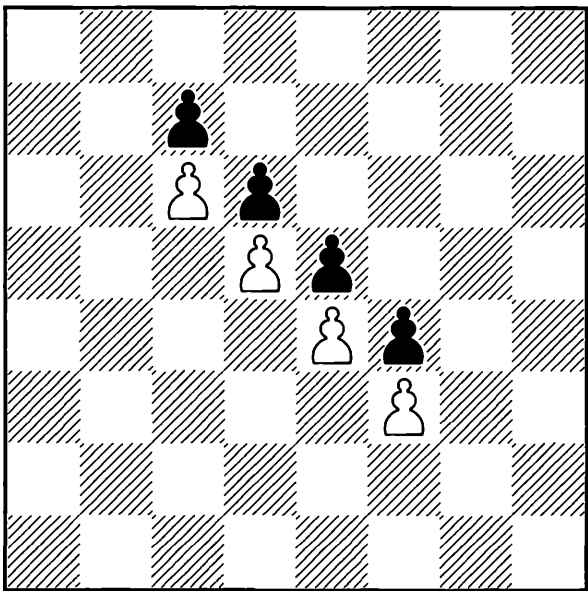
So the bottom link in the chain, which supports all the other links, will be called the base.

Every black-white pawn chain, in other words every series of white and black pawns running diagonally across the board and meshed together, divides the board into two halves, which are diagonally opposite each other. For the sake of convenience, we shall call this black-white chain the pawn chain. The two diagrams below show examples of pawn chains.

288



289



The idea of building a chain

Before you tackle what follows, you should quickly check that you are well versed in the ideas concerning open files, the blockade and passed pawns. If not you should refresh your ideas on these, because both of these chapters are necessary for the correct understanding of what will follow.

The question is as follows: after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 and for as long as e4 does not advance, White has the possibility of opening the e-file by e4xd5 in order to begin more or less lasting operations there (for example, setting up an outpost ♖e5). By playing 3.e4-e5 he gives up this chance and releases the tension in the centre for no apparent reason. So why does he do so? Well, I do not believe that the energy stored up in White's position before he plays 3.e4-e5 could suddenly disappear just because of that move. No, it must still be there, even if in some modified form.

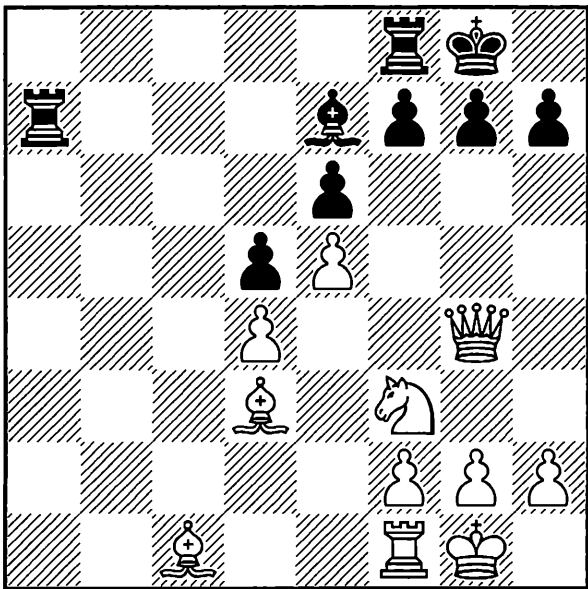
3.e4-e5 above all blocks the movement of the black pawns, is in other words a blockade.

But we all know that the pawns which happen to be placed in the middle have a powerful urge to expand, and thus what we have done to our opponent is to inflict on him a not inconsiderable disadvantage.

But moreover, thanks to 3.e4-e5 two new battlefields have emerged, one of which is Black's kingside and the other – the centre.

Towards the kingside

290



The e5-pawn could here be described as a centre which has been advanced to bring about a demobilisation and to form a wedge. It removes the f6 square from Black's knight and even allows White's attacking forces to approach more closely (♔g4). The kingside which has been restricted by the said pawn can also be attacked by other pieces, e.g. by ♕d3, ♖f3 and ♕c1. Should Black try to defend by attempting with f7-f5 to establish lines of communication along his 7th rank (perhaps with a rook posted on a7), our e5-pawn remains a splendid wedge by exercising a not inconsiderable influence on any attempts to reunite Black's isolated kingside with the rest of his troops. We mean the following: White attacks the g7-square, Black advances his f-pawn by two steps in order to cover g7 along the 7th rank. But this otherwise excellent defence fails to a sharp protest by the e5-pawn which captures (e5xf6) and after the reply ♗xf6 White obtains the e-file and with it the e5-square to exert

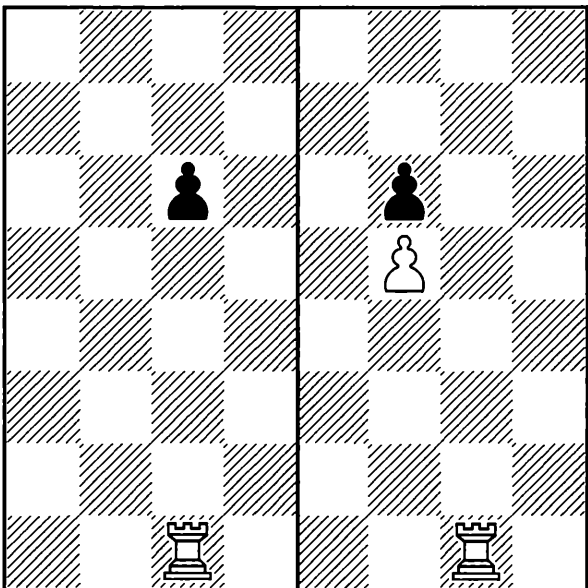
pressure on the backward e6-pawn. In the first case (the kingside as a battlefield) a White pawn on f4 would have a disruptive influence because of its negative effect (blocking the diagonal of the c1-bishop and its own pieces which might like to make use of f4), which would overshadow any positive one.

Towards the centre

As well as cramping the opponent's kingside, e4-e5 has quite different aims in mind. By it, White wishes to fix Black's e6-pawn on its square, in order to get at it by f2-f4-f5; e6xf5 would then mean the surrender of the base of Black's chain. Should Black not capture, then White can either build a wedge or choose f5xe6 f7xe6 ♖-f7-e7 which would mean the start of the downfall of the e6-pawn.

To be able to better understand the connection, we need to examine more closely the very nucleus of the side attack or flanking attack.

291

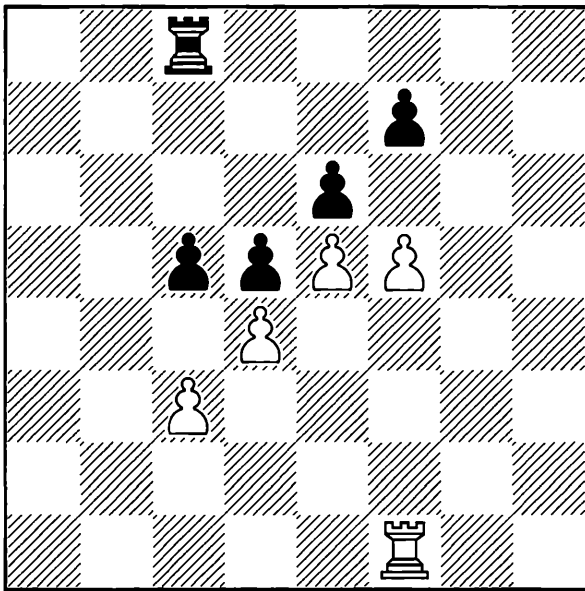


On the left we have a frontal attack by the rook: the object of attack c6 is quite simply being shot at. On the right, it is impossible for there to be a frontal attack, so the manoeuvre which is planned is ♗g1-g6xf6 or ♗g1-g7-f7xf6. The important thing for our purposes is to emphasise that the white pawn on f5 is an element (a logically forced element) of our nucleus. Were there no f5-pawn, a frontal attack on f6 would be possible, and that would far

and away be simpler. Moreover, an attack on an f6 which is not fixed would be a strategic nonsense when you consider the principle: the object of attack must first be rendered immobile. Therefore the position presented in diagram 291 (right) constitutes the real nucleus of the side or flanking attack.

This short but valuable definition of matters creates a greater logical justification for the plan of attack illustrated in diagram 292.

292



Schematic representation of the central battlefield: both players are attacking the appropriate base of the opponent's pawn chain; the rooks are lurking there, ready to break in!

This is because the plan is working towards achieving the desired formation, in other words doing the necessary preliminary work to give us a clear conscience. If the operation demonstrated under "nucleus" means in fact an attack, then we have clear proof that e4-e5 (building a chain) followed by f2-f4-f5 also means the same thing. Thus the centre (or the e6-pawn) should be considered to be a second battlefield. To sum up:

e4-e5 means building a chain, and always creates two battlefields: the opposing kingside which has been cramped by e5 is one of them and the base of the opponent's pawn chain is the other. And further: e4-e5 is totally imbued with the desire for attack; the attack which was present before e4-e5

is transferred from d5 to the e6-pawn, which is rendered immobile by e5 and thus exposed to attack by f2-f4-f5.

2. Attacking the pawn chain

The pawn chain as a blockading problem • Why my philosophy of the pawn chain was bound to raise a storm of indignation right from its first publication (1913, *Wiener Schachzeitung*, issues 5-8) • The attack on the base and the critical moment

There was a time – before 1913 – when people were firmly convinced that if a pawn chain saw one of its links disappear, then it had to lose all claim to thrive. I have to attribute to myself the honour of having first described this as a prejudice, because back in 1911 I had already demonstrated in some games (against Salwe and Levenfish, both in Karlsbad 1911, and against Tarrasch in San Sebastian 1912) that I am inclined to consider the pawn chain purely as a problem of restraint. It was not about the total numbers of the links in the chain, but purely and simply about whether the opponent's pawns remained restrained. How we achieve it is irrelevant! It can be by pawns or by the effect of rooks or bishops. The main thing is that they (the pawns) should be restrained! What was at that time my most revolutionary concept (one to which I had come by intensive work on the problems of the blockade) did not fail to raise a storm of indignation. People were particularly annoyed about my claim: "The watchword consists of a mutual attack on the bases of the pawn chains." We could not fail to quote a passage from an article by Alapin, in which he rages terribly against my theory. The old, old story: an innovator. Critics howl like they were possessed. But later what was new becomes accepted. And finally it boils down to: What? That's supposed to be new! But we always knew that.

So, here is the above mentioned quotation from the well-known theoretician Alapin, which I present in its entirety, with no changes and not

a word in my own defence. His reproaches can shower down on my poor head. I make only the comment that all the brackets and parentheses in the text are not in any way interjections on my part but rather they all stem from Alapin. Let Alapin speak for himself:

As far as his so-called philosophical (!?...) justifications for 3.e5 are concerned, they are as follows: apparently "White's attack should be transferred from d5 to e6." (Before the move 3.e5, there was in fact an "attack" from the ♠d5 against the ♠e4, because d5xe4 there was a threat. The opposite is not the case; because e4xd5 "threatened", apart from the freeing of the ♠c8, absolutely nothing in the foreseeable future, so there can also be no question of the "transfer" of the non-existent white attack!...). After this "transfer" (3.e5?), then according to Nimzowitsch "The watchword consists of a mutual attack on the bases of the pawn chains, i.e. of c7-c5 and f2-f4-f5." It is correct that after 3.e5 Black at once begins the attack against the white pawn chain with 3...c5!. But is there anything we do not know about the possibility of "f2-f4-f5" in this variation? In all 10 of the above mentioned "successful" practical games, Nimzowitsch himself played ♠g1-f3 without advancing his f-pawn!?... So there is not the slightest shadow of a hint of any "mutual watchword"!?... Meanwhile Master Nimzowitsch considers the most important "philosophical point" (!?...) to lie in the following "rule" which "originated with him" and is therefore printed in bold type on page 76: "The attack on a pawn chain can be transferred from one link in the chain to another"... Of course it can be done; it is not forbidden!... Whether it can be done depends on one's opponent, on the circumstances and on good fortune... But what this "rule" (!?...) should actually mean and why it is described as "philosophy" (??...), well that completely escapes me!?

So much for Alapin. When I read these lines, I feel like I am once more enjoying the agony and the ecstasy which are the result of the creation of new values. How splendid! Just look at how indignant the man is! What is making the veins in his brow stand out with anger is the NEW, the

innovative, something he did not know! And I was that innovator!

Nowadays everybody knows that all that I said about the pawn chain is incontestable truth.

But we, the kind readers of my book and I, also know that

- a) after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 White's attack on d5 does exist. Alapin did not know this because he was then unacquainted with my theory of open files.
- b) and nowadays it is also absolutely recognised that it can easily be proved that f2-f4-f5 is the tendency in those positions which characteristically arise after e4-e5 (on move 3 or later).

If we wanted to examine this more closely, there is a lot we could learn about why after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 the attack with c7-c5 is the first to succeed rather than f2-f4-f5. As has already been emphasised, the tendency of both white and black pawn chains to restraint is a mutual one. The white pawns wish to blockade the black ones and vice versa. After 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 the black pawns are restrained in their way towards the centre whereas the corresponding white ones have already crossed the centre (compare the e5 pawn with e6). We are thus justified in considering the white pawns as the restraining ones and the black pawns as those which are being restrained. The pawn's lust for expansion is at its greatest when it is directed towards the centre. So Black has more justification for the attack by c7-c5 than White has for the corresponding advance on the other flank (f2-f4-f5). The threat of f2-f4-f5 does however exist as such. Whenever Black's c7-c5 attack evaporates, then it is White's "turn" with f2-f4-f5.

The fact that in many games it never gets round to the execution of the above threat only proves one of two things. Either that White has had plenty to do with defending against the c7-c5 attack, or else that he has chosen the "first" of the two battlefields, namely the kingside which has been cramped by e4-e5 (see under 1. "The idea of two separate battlefields").

As far as transfer is concerned, you will soon realise how great the importance is of this rule which I have given. But let us proceed systematically.

3. Attacking the base as a strategic necessity

Sweeping away the members of the opposing pawn chain only happens as part of a freeing action on behalf of your own pawns which have been restrained! Therefore this essentially reduces the problem of chains to a blockading problem!

Recognising the opposing pawn chain which is cramping us as an enemy and attacking it is one and the same thing; it can be formulated as follows:

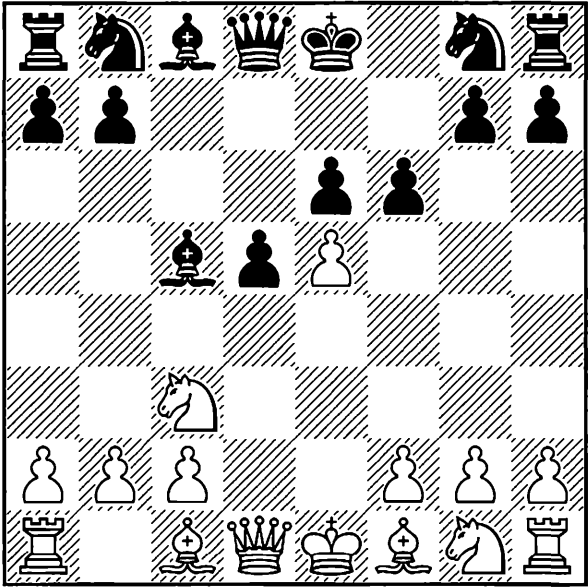
A freeing action can never be started too soon when chains are involved.

The struggle for liberation is carried out as follows: the attack should first be aimed at the base, which should be attacked by a pawn; by insisting and threatening you seek to achieve the elimination of the base (“taking it out”) from the chain. After that the attack should be directed against the next one in the chain, the new base.

Example: After 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Black’s pawn formation (e6 and d5) seems to be restrained. So, according to our rule, Black should immediately start his attack on the white pawn chain and that should be by 3...c7-c5 and in no way by 3...f7-f6, because the pawn on e5 is more of an architectural ornament whereas the d4-pawn is the foundation of White’s chain. If you wish to undermine a construction, you naturally do not make a start with any architectural adornments; you tend to try to blow up the foundations. The ornamentation would naturally follow automatically.

After 3...c7-c5, White has different possibilities. Black’s plan can be seen at its clearest if White plays somewhat naïvely, as though he had no idea about the problem of the pawn chain, something like 3...c5 4.dxc5 ♗xc5 5.♖c3? f6!:

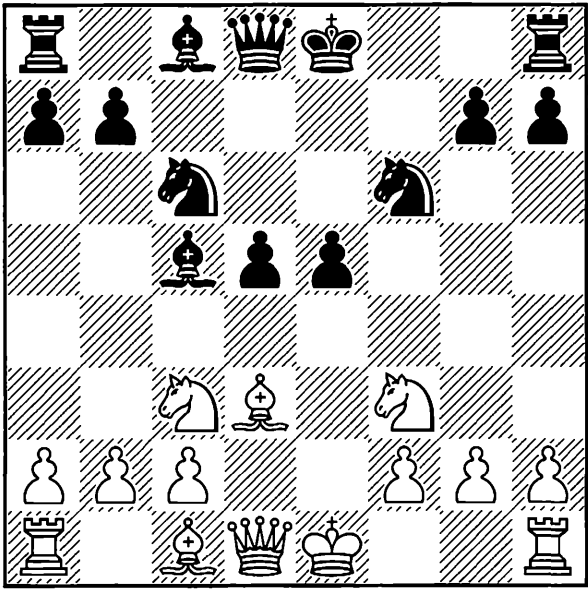
293



That is the logical way for things to develop: firstly the big chief “d4” was destroyed, and now it is the pawn on e5 that is in for it, so each one neatly in turn! Just like the hero in the films who is fighting alone against superior numbers. How does he do it? Very simple. He takes on the first one and knocks him out, then turns to the next one and beats the living daylights out of him, deals a powerful blow to number three and so on, until they are lying in a crumpled heap. So, each one neatly in turn! And always start with the big chief (the base pawn)!

After 5...f7-f6 there came 6.exf6?. Still showing his naïvety, since a better move was 6.♘f3. 6...♗xf6 7.♘f3 ♗c6 8.♗d3 e5!

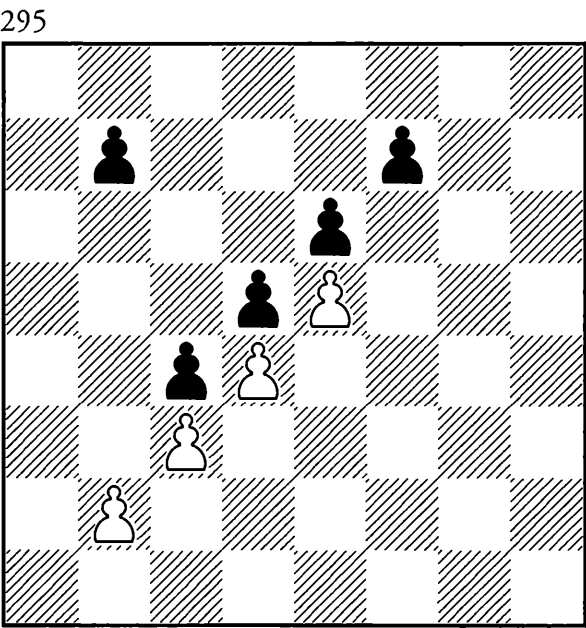
294



Thanks to White’s faulty strategy, Black’s freeing action, which normally should have lasted 20-25

moves, can now be considered to be over. Black has firstly compelled the members of the white chain, including its base, to disappear one after the other and to do so voluntarily (by capturing outwards by d4xc5 and e5xf6). After that his own pawns could advance triumphantly, by e6-e5. This keenly sought advance constitutes in fact the explanation for the energetic measures taken by Black from move 3 on: his pawns which had been restrained were to win back their freedom of movement. That is all that Black wants and longs for. Accordingly, once they have advanced these also seem to be imbued with a particularly warlike spirit; you get the impression, that these pawns which once been restrained are seeking revenge for the humiliation they suffered. Or is the reckless advance of the liberated central pawns rather the easily explicable desire to stretch of those who have been bound and gagged? Whatever may be the case...

The final advance of the pawns which had been restrained constitutes the necessary consequence, even the goal of every freeing attempt where there have been pawn chains.



Here the c3-pawn is the base of White's pawn chain (not b2, because the latter is not bound into the black-white pawn chain since there is no black counterpart on b3) and we will storm this base with the b-pawn, i.e. b7-b5-b4. After c3xb4

has been provoked, the new base pawn d4 would not be protected as was its predecessor c3. But an unprotected base (i.e. not protected by a pawn) constitutes a weakness and brings about a strict siege, which we shall treat in section 5.

In the example just quoted, f7-f6 should be described as an error compared to the correct b7-b5-b4, because after the fall of the e5-pawn, White's pawn chain would remain intact.

We are now on our way to a true definition of how things stand:

In the realm of pawn chains, the struggle for freedom is identical to the struggle against a blockading piece which is bothering us (chapter 4), and for that reason our problem is reduced to a blockading problem.

4. Transferring the rules of blockading to the pawn chain

The exchange manoeuvre (to replace a strong opposing blockading piece by one which is more approachable) applied to the pawn chain.

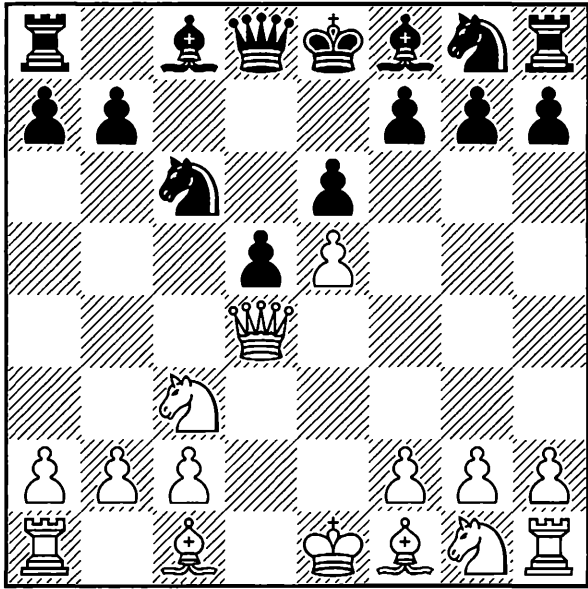
It is obvious for us (since we have studied chapter 4) that *any* opposing piece which stops an otherwise mobile pawn should be considered as a blockader. And yet it must come as a surprise that after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 we are inclined to consider the white pawns on d4 and e5 as proper blockaders. What is surprising is that it must come over as quite unusual to see a pawn(!) described as a blockader. The pawns otherwise always appear as the pieces which are being blockaded and the part of the blockader is always assigned to a piece! Very true; but pawns in a chain are pawns of a higher order and by their function accordingly different from other pawns. So it ought to seem quite normal to feel that they can be, and to treat them as if they are, blockaders.

With that recognition behind us, let us now try to apply to pawn chains the "exchange manoeuvre on the blockading square" which we know from chapter 4. The said exchange was only justified when the replacement blockader turned out to be

weaker than the piece which was its predecessor. The same holds true in the realm of pawn chains.

Example: after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5! 4.♘c3 Black can attempt to replace the blockader (the d4-pawn) with a new blockader (♙d4). In fact, after the next moves 4...cxd4 5.♙xd4 ♘c6

296



the queen reveals itself to be a blockader which is hard to maintain and thus the exchange manoeuvre turns out to be correct, this in spite of a possible 6.♙b5 since after 6.♙b5 ♙d7 7.♙xc6 ♙xc6 Black would have the advantage because of his two bishops and mobile central pawns.

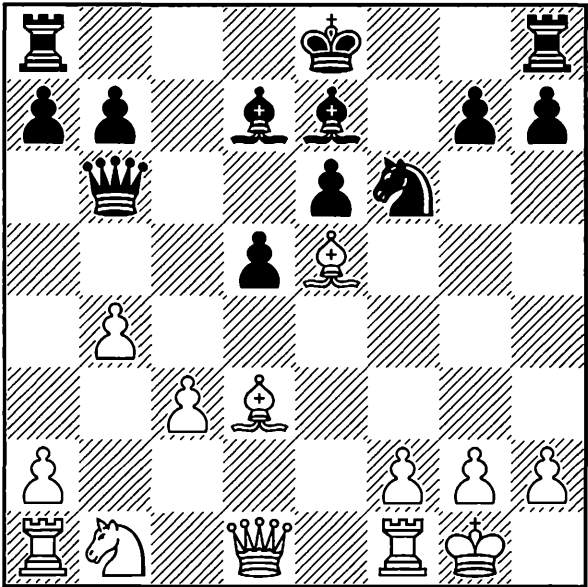
On the other hand the manoeuvre would be weak after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♙e3, since after 4...♘c6 5.♘c3 cxd4 (a better move is 5...♙b6) 6.♙xd4 the bishop would be a very tough nut to crack (a strong blockader) and the further exchange 6...♘xd4 7.♙xd4 ♘e7 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♙f4 would lead to the driving away of the blockading troops, but only with a loss of time, caused by the two moves made by Black's knight.

White would be quite well-placed: his pieces are positioned for a kingside attack, but have enough influence on the centre, e.g. 9...f6 (to roll up White's pawn chain) 10.♙b5 a6 11.♙xc6 bxc6 12.0-0 and Black will never manage to make his e6-pawn mobile, since any f6xe5 would be met with ♘f3xe5 and the knight would settle down in this nice square.

This brings us closer to an understanding of pawn chains. All exchanges in this area take

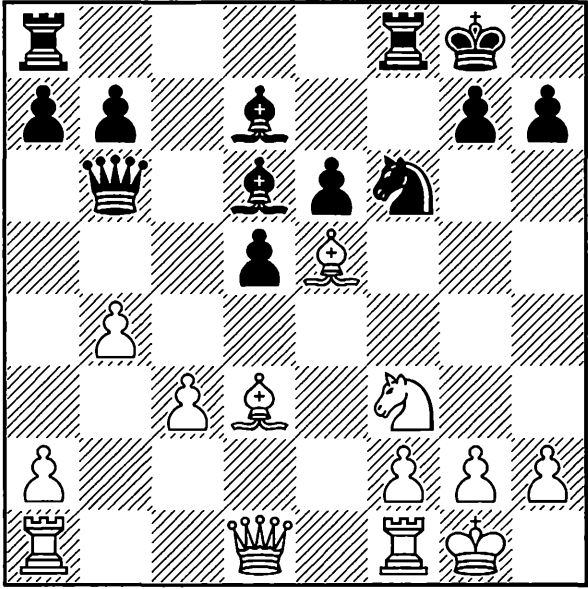
place with the sole intention of replacing strong blockaders with weaker ones, and in doing so we will be much helped by the feeling for the positions developed in chapter 4. We must, in my opinion, judge on a case by case basis whether the blockader is strong or weak, flexible or inflexible, etc. The ability to make such differentiations will stand us in good stead.

297



Here ♙c2 would be a weak move, though it involves the sharp threat of ♙xf6 then ♙xh7. The error is that White would have been much better doing something to protect his blockading wall, something like ♘d2 0-0 ♘f3. After ♙c2? on the other hand there could be 0-0! ♙xf6 ♙xf6 ♙xh7† ♙h8 ♙g6 (or ♙d3) e6-e5!. White has won a pawn, but Black has overcome the blockade and is now ready to march forward in the centre. White should be lost.

298



Here 15.♔d4 ♚c7 16.♚e2 would be worth thinking about in order to follow up with 17.♞e5. However this plan to extend the blockade is currently impossible, because after 15.♔d4 ♚c7 16.♚e2 there follows 16...♞g4!! 17.h3 e5! and the lust to expand of the e-pawn is still there, despite all countermeasures. The correct move is 15.♚e2 after which came 15...♞ac8 (or else 15...♔xe5 16.♞xe5 ♞ac8 17.c4!) 16.♔d4! ♚c7 17.♞e5 and Black is well-blockaded.

Sowemaysay: 15.♔d4 ♚c7 16.♚e2 would be bad, because the possible reserve blockader (=♞f3) would be of little help as a blockader, i.e. it never gets to e5.

The notes to my game with Salwe, from which we have taken the last diagram, will give some more examples of this exchanging method.

5. The concept of a surprise attack compared to that of positional warfare, as applied to chains
The attacker at the parting of the ways!

When the attacker has played according to our instructions (i.e. attack on the base and correct use of the exchanging manoeuvre on the blockading square), he will often be rewarded with the complete liberation of the pawns which had been restricted. But sometimes even with the means demonstrated the struggle gets bogged down, and in such cases it is necessary to employ a new stratagem. See the following game, which is instructive from beginning to end and which I often consider as the stem game for my new philosophy of the centre.

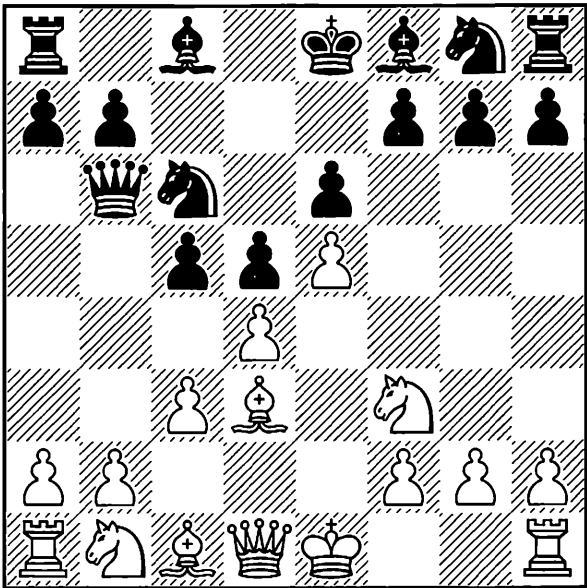
Nimzowitsch – Salwe
Karlsbad 1911

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♞c6 5.♞f3 ♚b6

As can be seen, Black constantly tries to persuade or force his opponent to surrender the

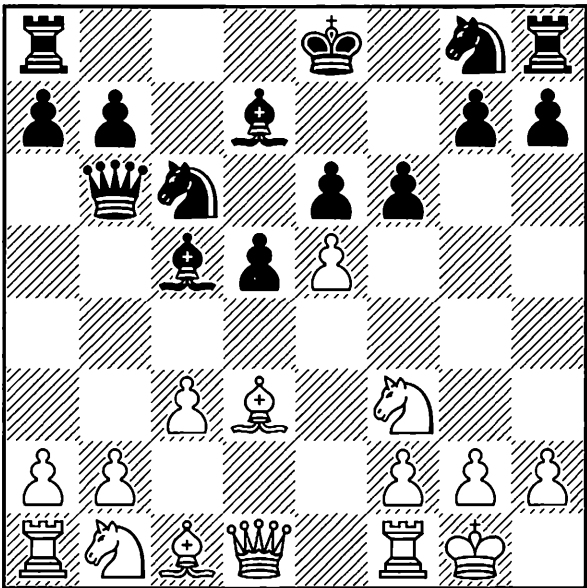
base square d4. This sort of tendency, which toys with the idea of going on to roll up the whole chain, is what we call the surprise strategy. The move 5...♚b6 should be seen as such; queen moves in the opening are otherwise seldom appropriate; but here the dominating factor is the pawn chain, the well being and woes of which determine all our actions! 6.♔d3

299



6...♔d7 A very plausible move; since White is still hesitant to play dxc5, Black wishes to make the decision easier for him by ♞c8.* But the correct course was 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 switching to a new course. 7.dxc5!! ♔xc5 8.0–0 f6

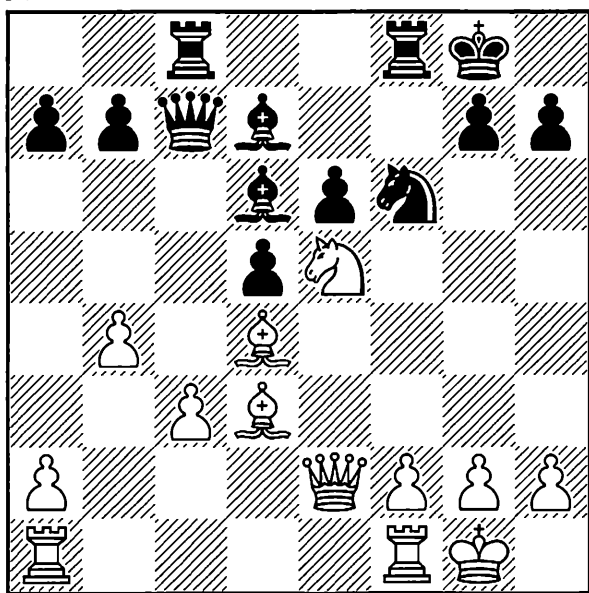
300



*This note by Nimzowitsch is somewhat misleading. He gives the real reason on page 158: Black plays 6...♔d7 in order to force the ♔d4 to make up its mind, because it is not sufficiently well protected since the ♔d3 no longer has a discovered check. As the game shows 6...♔d7 is in any case premature and should have been replaced by 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 ♔d7. After that White must pay attention to his d4-pawn. The game move 7.dxc5 is in no way related to the “threat” ♞c8, even if ♞c8 is in itself a reasonable move – editor.

9.b4! (to offer lasting protection to e5; 9.♞e2 would also offer protection, but not lasting protection since after it there would come the “exchange” 9...fxe5 10.♞xe5 ♞xe5 11.♞xe5 ♞f6 and it is easy to drive away the blockader ♞e5) **9...♞e7 10.♞f4 fxe5** (once again the exchanging manoeuvre we have so often discussed, but this time it is not justified, since the new blockader turns out to be a very tough customer) **11.♞xe5 ♞xe5 12.♞xe5 ♞f6** (because the move 12...♞f6 which he would have liked to play would fail to 13.♞h5† g6 14.♞xg6† hxg6 15.♞xg6† ♞e7 16.♞xf6† ♞xf6 17.♞g7†) **13.♞d2** (the possible win of a pawn by 13.♞c2? 0–0 has already been shown to be deceptive, see diagram 297) **13...0–0 14.♞f3!** (the blockading troops are to be reinforced by the knight) **14...♞d6** (see diagram 298; 14...♞b5 would not be very pleasant because of 15.♞d4 ♞a6 16.♞xb5 ♞xb5 17.♞g5 which would win a pawn) **15.♞e2** (we have already explained that 15.♞d4 would be premature here) **15...♞ac8 16.♞d4 ♞c7 17.♞e5**

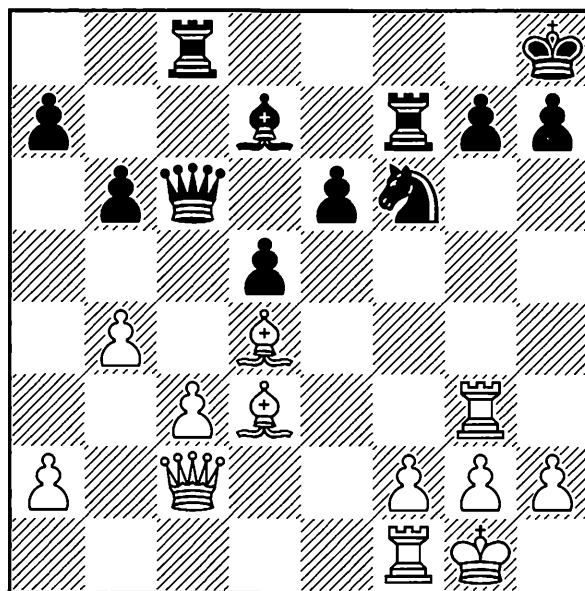
301



Now the immobility of the blockaded pawns is greater than ever. White has played very economically. The possibility of a successful occupation of d4 and e5, however, hung by a thread, dependent on a painstaking exploitation of the terrain, namely the squares d4, e5, c2 and e2. **17...♞e8 18.♞ae1 ♞xe5 19.♞xe5 ♞c6 20.♞d4!** To force the ♞e8, which also has its eye on h5, into a decision. **20...♞d7 21.♞c2**

(the decisive regrouping) **21...♞f7 22.♞e3 b6 23.♞g3 ♞h8**

302



24.♞xh7 (from Chapter 6 we know about how effective centralised pieces are, even directed towards the flanks) **24...e5** (24...♞xh7 would lose on account of 25.♞g6 ♞e7 26.♞e1 ♞d6 27.♞e3 d4 28.♞g5 ♞xc3 29.♞xc3 dxc3 30.♞xc3 and White won: 30...♞g8 31.a3 ♞f8 32.♞h4 ♞e8 33.♞f5 ♞d4 34.♞xd4 exd4 35.♞xe7 ♞xe7 36.♞d3 ♞d6 37.♞xf6 gxf6 38.h4 1–0.

It is now important to take a retrospective look at the game which has just been discussed. After the early moves 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♞c6 5.♞f3 ♞b6 6.♞d3 Black could and should have moved into calmer waters with 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 ♞d7 then possibly ♞g8–e7–f5. But he preferred to aim for a complete capitulation by his opponent (as far as the pawn chain was concerned, we mean). The plan was

- 1) d4xc5 and e5xf6 were to be forced
- 2) possible replacement blockaders, e.g. a bishop on e5, were to be chased away
- 3) the black central pawns once released were to advance in triumph.

But this plan failed because the replacement blockaders could not be driven away, in other words they were effective blockaders. But for us it is important to set up the following two premises:

- a) When black pawns are being strangled (restrained), it makes absolutely no difference whether they are being strangled by pawns or pieces; one is just as painful as the other.
- b) Consequently the destruction of the restraining pawns in the chain in no way means an advancing or more or less complete freeing operation, since the possible replacement blockaders would still remain to be displaced. Whether and to what extent the latter is possible is what is really important.

To illustrate the relationship between pawn and piece, consider the following: “Of course it is the pawns which are the best fitted to build up a centre, because they are the most stable; but pieces which are posted in the centre can very well replace pawns.” A.N. 1913, taken from my article *The surrender of the centre – a prejudice*. We shall often come back to this article and let us point out only that we are inclined to consider as really damaging any attempt at liberation which once started was not brought to a successful conclusion, just like Salwe’s attempt in the above game. – And now back to diagram 299.

5a. The positional struggle, or put simply the slow siege of the unprotected base

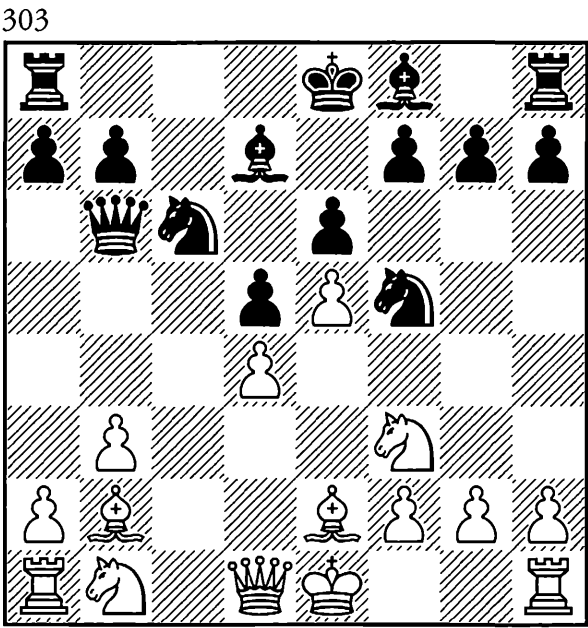
Attacking a piece several times • The protecting pieces get in each other’s way!
How to maintain the pressure • The birth of fresh weaknesses • The base as an endgame weakness

Since after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♚b6 6.♙d3 the move 6...♙d7 isn’t very promising, Black should, as has been emphasised several times, much rather have played 6...cxd4. What would be the significance of this move? Well, it renders the base d4 totally immobile or fixes it on d4 as one says. Before c5xd4 was played, the d4-pawn was able, for good or ill, to leave its square (by d4xc5), but this is now no longer possible.

We must be clear that 6...c5xd4 contains not a little resignation; the ambitious dreams of forcing

the opponent into a complete capitulation as far as the pawn chain is concerned are now dead and buried. But instead of this Black obtains small but real possibilities. The d4-pawn is now attacked several times. This is not so much happening with the hope of winning the base pawn, but much more to force the opposing pieces into a defensive and therefore passive role. Our goal is an ideal one: the advantage of aggressively posted pieces (see Chapter 6, page 113).

The continuation might be: 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 ♙d7 (threatening ♘xd4 which before the playing of ♙d7 would have failed to the check on b5, e.g. 7...♘xd4?? 8.♘xd4 ♚xd4 9.♙b5† winning the queen) 8.♙e2 (after 8.♙c2 Black could play 8...♘b4 and obtain the advantage of the two bishops.) 8...♘ge7! (Slowly or quickly, Black does choose *the* development which puts the base under pressure. Rightly so, because in the closed game – i.e. that which is characterised by the presence of pawn chains – the chain mentioned is the only valid guiding principle.) 9.b3 ♘f5 10.♙b2



10...♙b4†! This check shows us the dark side of multiple protection, in fact it puts the dark side in the spotlight: the protecting pieces are getting in each other’s way! 11.♙f1 (since both 11.♘c3 and 11.♘d2 would lose a defender) 11...♙e7 Suggested by Tarrasch. You should take to heart the idea which underlies this move: in order to be able to maintain the pressure, Black

must not allow the present ratio of 3:3 defenders to attackers to be broken in White's favour. The pieces which are attacking d4 must seek to maintain their attacking positions. h7-h5 could be played to achieve this (to prevent g2-g4); the text move achieves the same effect in a different way. If now 12.g2-g4, then the reply would be 12...♗h4, *one* attacker and *one* defender would disappear and the status quo (2:2) would be restored.

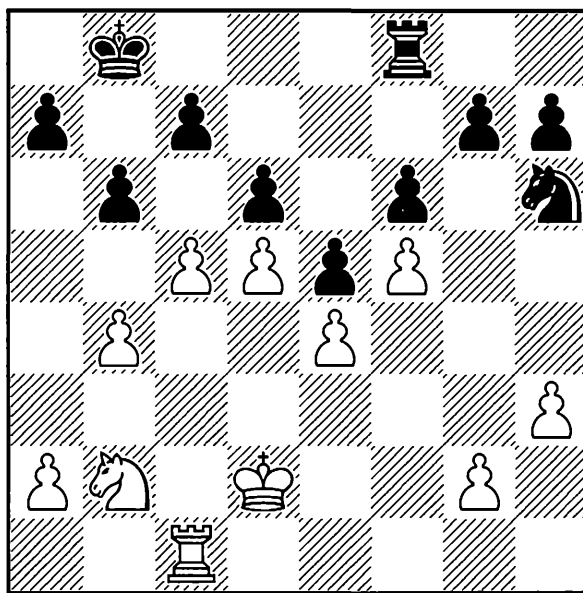
The typical strategy for relevant cases proceeds from the following premises:

- a) the opposing base pawn, fixed on its square, should be attacked by several pieces.
- b) in doing so, the minimum requirement is an aggressive piece positioning, which can be judged by the fact that your opponent starts to have some difficulties with his development. (Worth pointing out would be the lesser elasticity or manoeuvrability of the defending pieces: for example, should there be a sudden attack on the other flank the defenders cannot match the attackers for speed and are left behind.)
- c) you should maintain the pressure on the base as long as possible, but at least until new weaknesses have arisen in the opposing camp (these "new weaknesses" will appear as logical consequences of his difficulties in developing).
- d) then you modify your plan of battle: the original weakness (the base on d4) is given up and the latest one attacked as energetically as possible! And it is only much later, perhaps not until the endgame, that the weak base pawn of the opposing chain once more becomes the object of attack.
- e) the weak base pawn is simply considered as an endgame weakness, since the specific attacking instrument (the neighbouring open file, in our case the c-file) does not come fully into its own until the endgame (♖c8-c4xd4 or ♖c8-c2-d2xd4).
- f) The attacker should never forget that he too has a base pawn to defend. Should White

manage to clear up his own problems in the pawn chain, i.e. to shake off the pressure on d4, then the tables can be completely turned with f2-f4-f5 attacking the base or piece play against the kingside which has been cramped by e5.

Putting a) into practice should not be difficult for you. See for example the following position:

304



The chain we are talking about is e4, d5, e5, d6. Black's base is the d6-pawn. White now plays **1.cxd6 cxd6 2.♖c6 ♗f7 3.♗c4 ♖d8** (if 3...♖c8 then 4.b5 ♖xc6 5.dxc6 with the better knight ending) **4.a4!** (to maintain the attacker, the c4-knight, on its square). White has now put the base pawn on d6 under pressure and by doing so has the ideal advantage mentioned under b), viz. the more aggressive piece posture (the ♗c4 is more aggressive than the ♗f7, etc.) This advantage could be exploited either by 5.b5 then perhaps ♖c3 and a4-a5 or by play on the kingside (5.h4 then ♖d2-e3-f3-g4-h5 followed by g2-g4-g5; the defence by h7-h6 would allow penetration by ♖g6).

It is much more difficult for you the student to assimilate the content of c) and d). The direct exploitation of a pawn weakness is not actually part of the middlegame – see point f). All we may hope to achieve is to keep our opponent suffering for some length of time from the disadvantage of having to be on the defensive.

If the consequence of such difficulties is a new weakness in the enemy ranks – which is not at all improbable – then it is not only allowed but even a good idea to abandon the base and to turn our attention to the new weakness. The further the two weaknesses are apart (geographically and logically), the better it is for us! This connection was not really appreciated by the pseudo-classical school.

Tarrasch, for example, was in the habit of continually and single-mindedly attacking the base, while however at least remaining true to the wing he had chosen (see Paulsen–Tarrasch, page 165).

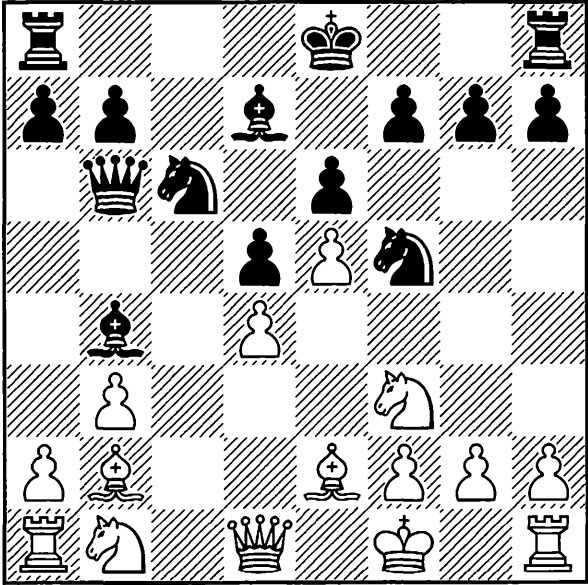
We, on the other hand, are of the opinion that the weakness of the opposing base pawn can only be fully exploited in the endgame – see point e) – or more precisely:

The goal in the endgame is a direct and real seizure of the object of attack which is doing its duty as the base; in the middlegame, however, the attacks can and must only help to create indirect advantages.

For example, in the middlegame Black attacks the opponent’s base pawn; the opposing defenders get in each other’s way, difficulties in development arise, and White is forced to create a new weakness in his camp (in order to overcome the problems he has in developing). This fresh weakness can be considered as the indirect fruits of our siege operations; the existence of the former can be totally forgotten and the whole weight of the attack can be directed against the new one. And not till the endgame should we pay any notice to the former object of our affections. In the endgame the base pawn may once more become the principal object of attack.

As an example of the indirect exploitation of a weakened opposing base pawn, we have diagram 305. After 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♚b6 6.♙d3 cxd4! 7.cxd4 ♙d7 8.♙e2 ♘ge7 9.b3 ♘f5 10.♙b2 ♙b4†, White (Paulsen) was forced to give up his right to castle by 11.♔f1.

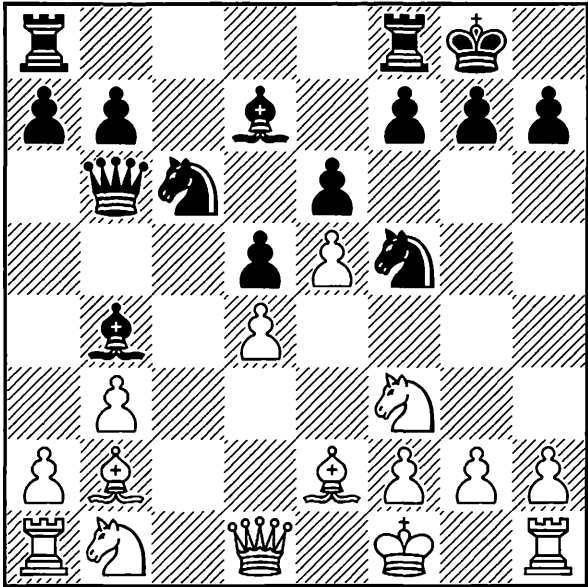
305



This meant that the pressure against d4 had taken on a concrete face. Black’s task therefore would no longer be the maintenance of the pressure on d4 (which could be achieved by 11...h5 or 11...♙e7 and if 12.g4 then 12...♘h4 and the attack against d4 does not in any way lessen); Black would do better to give up the attack on the said base and do all he can to expose ♔f1 as a weakness and to exploit it. However, this can only be achieved by means of a well-hidden exchange sacrifice. Moreover, this variation which I discovered is one of my favourite combinations, which clearly illustrates the way “principle” and “combination” belong together (by which I mean that I was only able to discover the combination because I had recognised the truth of the principle “Away from the base square!”).

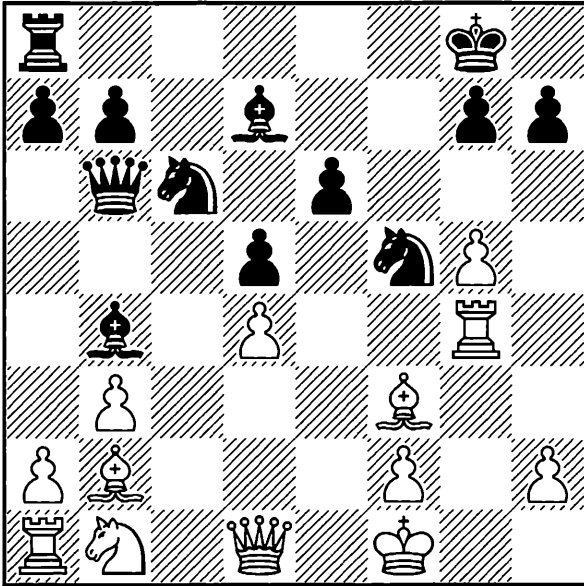
After 11.♔f1 I suggested 11...0–0!!

306



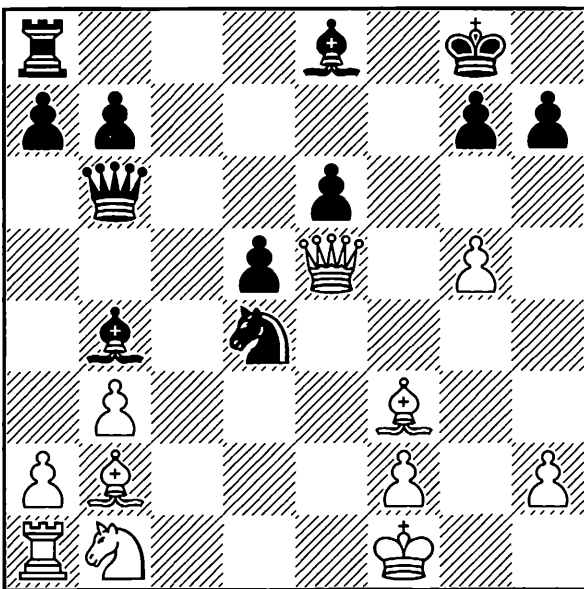
The main line would be **12.g4** (if **12.♔d3** to relieve the pressure on d4, then **12...f6 13.♔xf5 exf5** and Black has the advantage of the two bishops) **12...♖h6 13.♗g1 f6! 14.exf6 ♗xf6! 15.g5 ♗xf3! 16.♔xf3** (or **16.gxh6 ♗f7**) **16...♜f5 17.♗g4**

307



White's bare kingside, the weakly protected squares on the f-file should in my opinion be sufficient for a win. For example: **17...♔e8** (**17...♗f8** is also good enough) **18.♖e2 ♜cxd4 19.♗xd4! ♜xd4 20.♖e5**

308



The last chance! **20...♔b5† 21.♔g2 ♜f5 22.♔xd5** (**22.♜c3** is met by **22...♔xc3 23.♔xc3 d4** etc.) **22...exd5 23.♖xf5 ♗f8 24.♖xd5† ♗f7!** (self-pinning in order to secure g7 against a possible **♖d4**) **25.♖d4 ♔c5**, and White must resign.

The decision naturally came on the kingside; Black was able to exploit the new weakness completely without bothering about the old one. You should pay particular notice to the shift from move 11 on from the centre (base pawn d4) to the kingside which had been weakened by **11.♔f1**.

As a counterpart to the shift we have just demonstrated, we would like to emphasise (see diagram 305) that White would have good chances after **11...♔e7** by playing **12.g3** and then **♔g2**, because after he manages to consolidate White can very well turn the tables – see under f). What is meant here is the attack on Black's kingside which has been cramped by the e5-pawn, see Nimzowitsch – Tarrasch, page 166.

Before continuing, we would like to encourage you most strongly to practise exploiting your opponent's weak pawn in the endgame. We recommend the study of game 15, page 137, and in addition the application of the following method: set up a pawn chain on the board, e.g. White d4, e5; Black d5, e6; add a few more pawns to each side (White a2, b2, f2, g2, h2; Black a7, b7, f7, g7, h7) and try to exploit the weakness of d4 in a pure pawn ending, in a rook and pawn ending, and in one with a rook and minor piece.

6. Transferring the attack

In diagram 299, page 156, Black had the choice of two plans, namely between **6...♔d7** (in everyday language, the surprise attack) and **6...cxd4** (in everyday language, positional siege laid to the fixed base pawn on d4).

It is a fact that there must be a moment when Black is obliged to make his choice; it is never possible to retain for as long as you want the choice between two plans, at least not when we are dealing with pawn chains!

And there is a simple reason for this. The defender, basing his actions on what possibilities exist for striking out from the questionable state of uncertainty he is in (for that is what it is), is

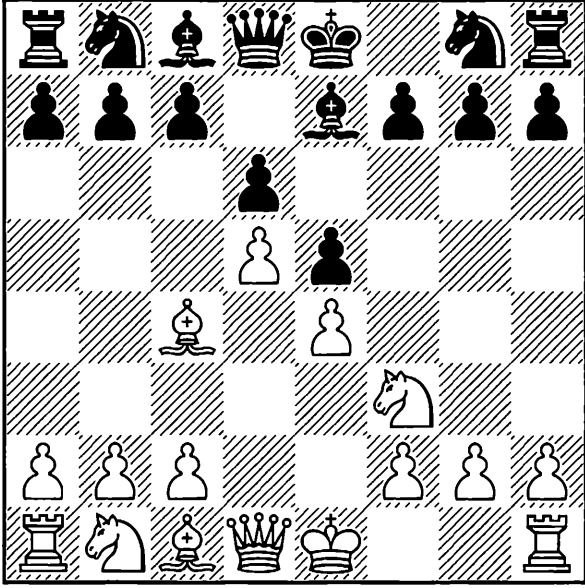
able to threaten to break free. Once this threat has reached maturity, it forces us into making up our mind and taking a decision.

Another moment which can force a decision occurs when our opponent threatens us on the opposite flank; in such a case we would possibly have to react sharply, and flirting with two different plans would no longer be an option.

Whereas up till now we have been speaking about the choice between two different *types* of attack, while the actual object of attack (d4 in the example we have been discussing) remained precisely the same, the choice of an object of attack itself can from time to time be very painful. We are talking about a pawn chain which has to be attacked. What can be doubtful here, you may well ask. “Of course we must direct our attack against the base.” Very good! But how do we do that if for some reason the base cannot be shaken? Would it not be opportune to direct our attack against a new base? How to do that will be seen in the following brief discussion of the stratagem known as “transference”.

Consider the following chain, which arose after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙e7 4.d4 d6 5.d5 ♖b8.

309

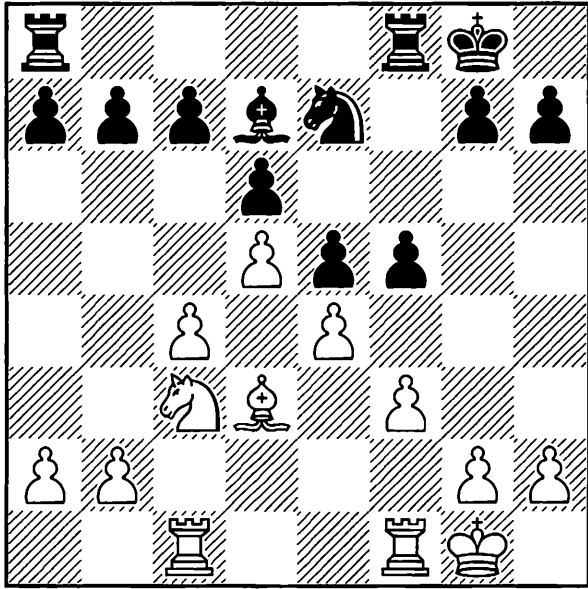


As the main battleground White now chose the centre, aiming for 6.♙d3 then c2-c4 with a plan to play c4-c5 (he could also have decided on the alternative attack with pieces – without c2-c4 – against the opposing queenside which was being

cramped by d5). Black is looking to play f7-f5 to shake White’s base on e4. The pseudo-classical school considered f7-f5 to be a refutation of d4-d5; this, however is not the case, as I showed in my revolutionary article *Does Dr Tarrasch’s ‘Modern Game of Chess’ correspond to the modern conception of the game?* which appeared in 1913. f7-f5 is simply a natural reaction to d4-d5 and as such just as acceptable as White’s c2-c4-c5.

It could essentially boil down to this position.

310



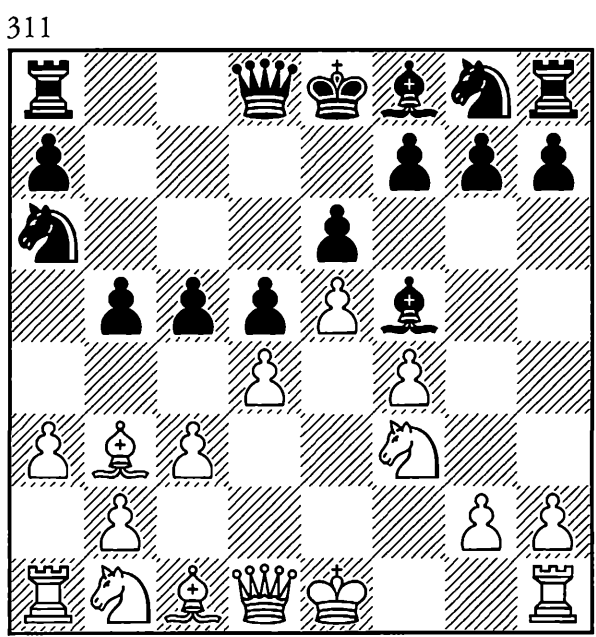
Black’s attack against the base e4 does not look very promising; after a possible f5xe4 the reply can be either f3xe4 (and the base e4 is well-defended) or ♘ or ♙xe4 with a good replacement centre. So Black plays f5-f4, exchanging the base e4 for a new base on f3. The latter would be easy enough to defend against the planned g7-g5-g4xf3, but then White’s king position appears threatened and cramped. In other words:

White’s king position marks f3 out as a weaker base than e4.

But other events can cause one base to appear weaker than another, so the transfer of the attack from one base to another is not a matter of pure chance, as Alapin and the other masters believed before the publication of the above article. The said possibility is much rather another natural weapon in the struggle against any pawn chain. A considered judgement about the strength of a

chain ought to sound something like: “Base e4 hard to attack, base f3 (after the transfer by f5-f4) very sensitive for such-and-such a reason, etc.” That is the real truth which I have discovered about pawn chains.

Since chapter 9 could get a lot longer, we shall have to content ourselves with the short explanations above. Transference is typical and we could quote game after game, but we shall limit ourselves to the following opening: 1.e4 ♘c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♙f5 4.f4 e6 5.♘f3 ♘b4 6.♙b5† c6 7.♙a4 b5 8.a3! ♘a6 9.♙b3 c5 10.c3



Since the base pawn on d4 seems to be overprotected, Black was correct in playing here 10...c4 (= transferring the attack from d4 to c3).

After the next moves 11.♙c2 ♙xc2 12.♙xc2 ♘e7, Black restrained (see the chapter on restraint which follows in part II, page 211) by h5 and f5 the white kingside which was ready to attack (= prevention of the natural thrust f4-f5) and then by a later a7-a5 and b5-b4 took up the attack against the new object of attack: c3.

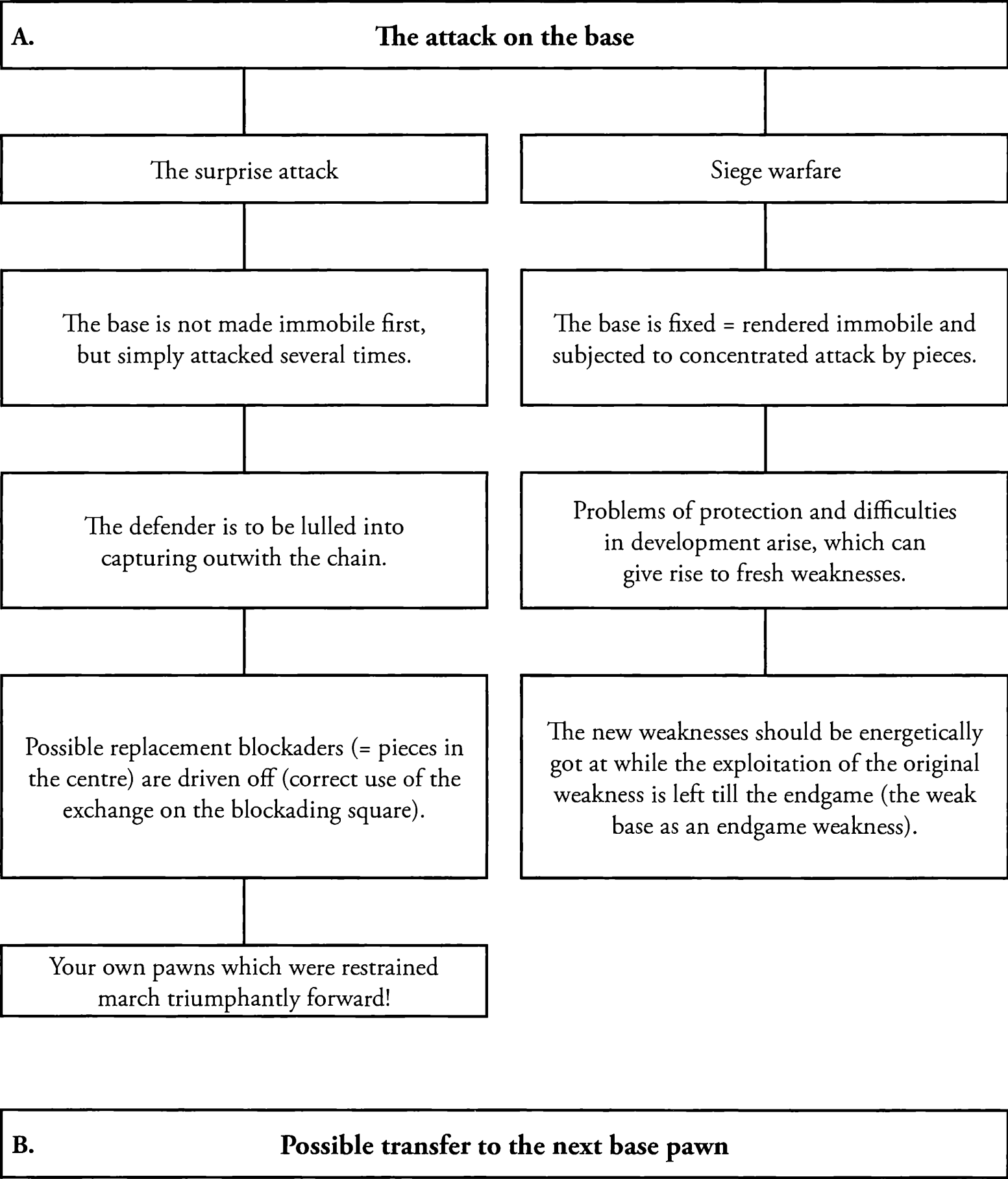
Before we present our usual schematic representation, we should like to point out just how difficult it is to play correctly with pawn chains. As soon as a chain is formed, we have the choice “wing” or “base”; then later during an attack against the base we must take the difficult decision between “surprise attack” and “siege warfare”. As if that is not enough, we must always bear in mind the possibility of transferring the attack to the next member of the chain. Nor is it easy to decide when and where this transfer should happen. And we must never forget, despite all these possible methods of attack, that we too have a vulnerable base.

It has been a difficult chapter, but one that has seen much light thrown on the subject thanks to our explanations. As can be seen, my rules concerning pawn chains have arisen organically from my rules about “open files” and “playing against the blockader”.

You will find further consideration of pawn chains in the chapter about restraint and the centre.

Schematic representation of pawn chains

The idea of the pawn chain: we create two battlefields, the wing which has to be attacked with pieces or the centre that is to be attacked by a pawn thrust (in other words against the base).



Games to illustrate pawn chains

Game 17

L. Paulsen – Dr Tarrasch

Nuremburg 1888

Illustrates the struggle against a pawn chain (besieging)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♟f3 ♚b6 6.♙d3

It would be more natural to develop with 6.♙e2, since d4 is the base and as such must be most thoroughly defended: 6.♙e2 does this much better than 6.♙d3.

6...cxd4 7.cxd4 ♙d7 8.♙e2 ♘ge7 9.b3 ♟f5 10.♙b2 ♙b4† 11.♟f1

Forced. See diagram 305, page 160.

11...♙e7

To keep up the pressure on d4 (12.g4 ♟h4!). But the correct idea was to switch from d4 to the kingside which had been ruined by 11.♟f1, so 11...0–0! 12.g4 ♟h6 13.♞g1 f6! 14.exf6 ♞xf6 15.g5 ♞xf3! 16.♙xf3 ♟f5 17.♞g4 ♙e8, see diagram 307, page 161 with the explanations to it.

12.g3 a5?

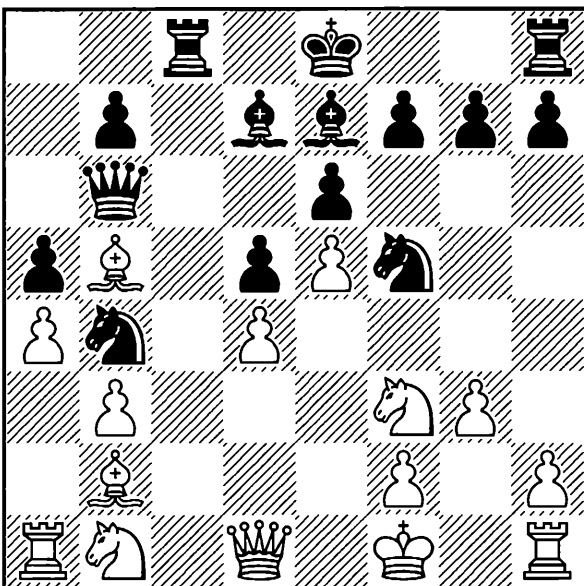
To exploit the new “weakness” b3. The only problem is that b3 is not in fact a weakness, the position of White’s king is more of one.

13.a4 ♞c8 14.♙b5

The b5-square is now a good support point for White’s pieces.

14...♟b4

312



15.♙xd7†?

Quite wrong. After 15.♟c3 (see the next game) White could overcome all his difficulties, e.g. 15.♟c3! ♙xb5† 16.♟xb5 ♟c2 17.♞c1 ♟ce3† 18.fxe3 ♟xe3† 19.♟e2 ♟xd1 20.♞xc8† ♟d7 21.♞xh8 ♟xb2 22.♞c1 and wins.

15...♟xd7 16.♟c3 ♟c6 17.♟b5 ♟a7 18.♟xa7?

Under no circumstances should White ever surrender b5; 18.♞d3 ♟xb5 19.axb5 would have sufficed. You can see how much damage was done by 12...a5?.

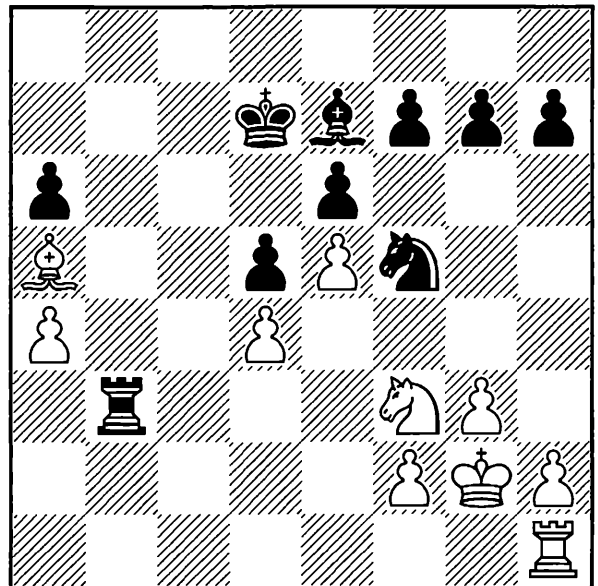
18...♞xa7 19.♞d3 ♞a6!

Now we can experience...the weakened base as an endgame weakness.

20.♞xa6 bxa6 21.♟g2 ♞c2 22.♙c1 ♞b8 23.♞b1 ♞c3 24.♙d2 ♞xb3 25.♞xb3 ♞xb3 26.♙xa5

Fortunately White has got rid of his weakness b3 (on an open file), but d4 and a4 are hard to defend.

313



26...♞b2!

Not 26...♞a3 on account of 27.♞c1. But now 27.♞c1 would be followed by 27...♟e3† then ♟c4.

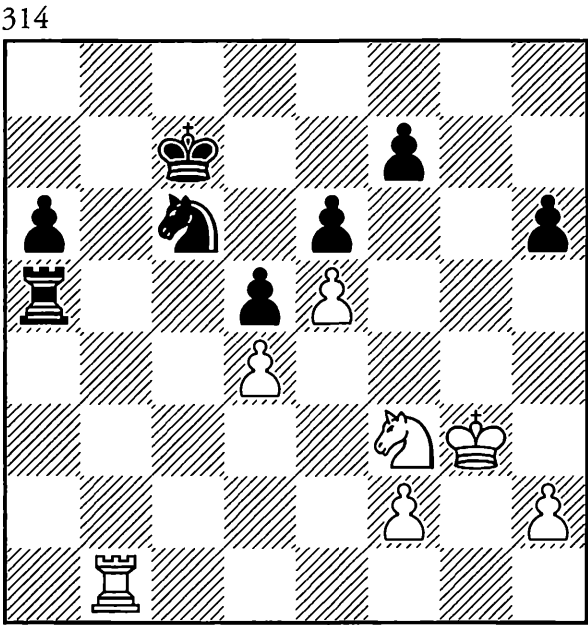
27.♙d2 ♙b4 28.♙f4 h6

This can be played now. Black’s position can put up with this little loosening move creating an object for attack.

29.g4 ♖e7 30.♖a1 ♜c6 31.♙c1 ♞c2 32.♙a3 ♞c4

The immediate 32...♙xa3 was simpler.
33.♙b2 ♙c3 34.♙xc3 ♞xc3 35.♞b1 ♜c7 36.g5 ♞c4

At last!
37.gxh6 gxh6 38.a5 ♞a4 39.♜g3
A last despairing effort to continue the “attack” which started with 36.g5.
39...♞xa5



And Black won: 40.♜g4 ♞a3 41.♞d1 ♞b3 42.h4 ♖e7 43.♖e1 ♖f5 44.♖d3 a5 45.♖c5 ♞c3 46.♞b1 ♖xd4 47.♖a6† ♜d8 48.♞b8† ♞c8 49.♞b7 ♜e8 50.♖c7† ♜f8 51.♖b5 ♖xb5 52.♞xb5 ♞a8 etc.

The ending, which was well played by Dr Tarrasch, can be recommended for further study.

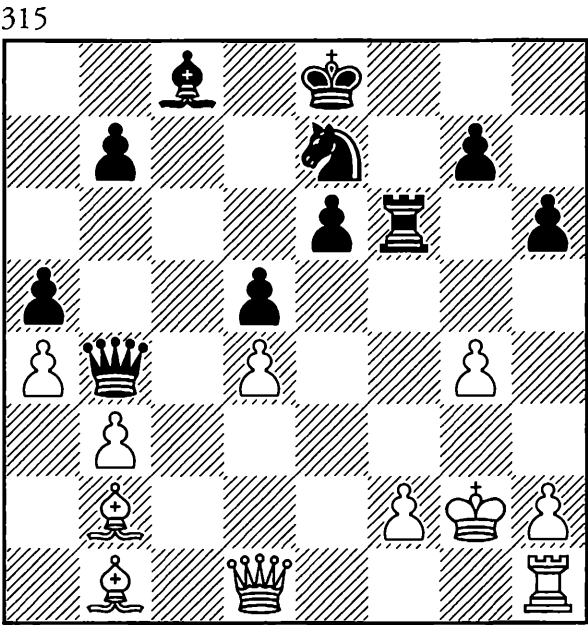
Game 18
Nimzowitsch – Dr Tarrasch
San Sebastian 1912

The first 14 moves were as in the previous game (with a transposition). From diagram 312 play continued:

15.♖c3! ♖a6
For 15...♙xb5† 16.♖xb5 ♖c2 see the note to the 15th move in the previous game.
16.♜g2 ♖c7 17.♙e2 ♙b4 18.♖a2 ♖a6 19.♙d3 ♖e7 20.♞c1 ♖c6 21.♖xb4 ♖axb4 22.♙b1

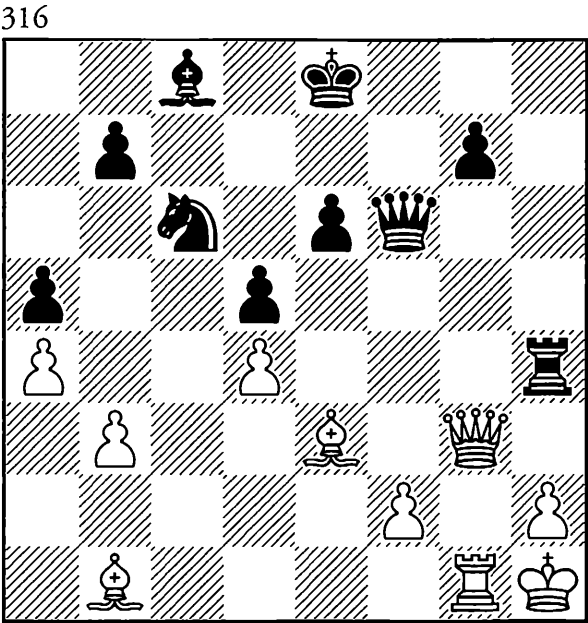
Now White has overcome his difficulties in development, the base d4 is optimally protected, and so the tables can be turned. White starts an attack against the black kingside which was cramped by e4-e5.

22...h6 23.g4
To make castling look an unattractive option. A good, perhaps better, idea was 23.♞c1-c3-e3.
23...♖e7 24.♞xc8† ♙xc8 25.♖e1 ♞f8 26.♖d3 f6 27.♖xb4 ♞xb4 28.exf6 ♞xf6



29.♙c1!
The courage to intentionally let oneself be put under pressure for hours, just on account of a remote possibility, is now rewarded: White obtains a direct attack. Look at the bishops which have suddenly awakened to fresh activity.

29...♖c6 30.g5 hxg5 31.♙xg5 ♞f8 32.♙e3 ♞e7 33.♞g4 ♞f6 34.♞g1 ♞h8 35.♜h1 ♞h4 36.♞g3



36...♖xd4

Despair. The threats were now ♔g5 and also ♖xg7.

37.♔xd4 ♜xd4 38.♖xg7 ♖f3† 39.♖g2 ♖xg2†
40.♗xg2 ♜xb3 41.h4 1-0

Burn comments on this game: “An excellent game on the part of Herr Nimzowitsch, well illustrating his strategic skill. Dr Tarrasch, himself one of the greatest masters of chess strategy, is completely outplayed.” Flattering though this praise is for me, I must point out that it is not too difficult to manoeuvre well in a closed system. At that time, I already knew that e4-e5 cramps Black’s kingside considerably. If White can hold d4 without any other disadvantage, then the moment must surely come when his wheat will be in bloom, namely in the form of a piece attack against the cramped kingside or in the form of an emphatic attack on the pawn chain (f2-f4-f5xe6, etc.).

Nowadays that sounds credible, *at that time* the above game had a revolutionary effect.

Game 19

Prof. Becker – Nimzowitsch

Breslau 1925

This game illustrates my idea of the “two battlefields” in a particularly striking fashion.

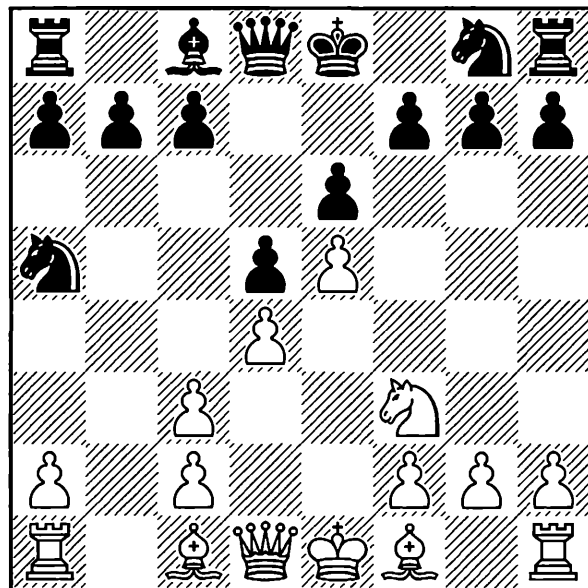
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘c6

As though playing at odds, to use Dr Lasker’s expression. By this Lasker means the choice of a variation which you yourself do not consider a good one. The idea consists of setting your opponent a difficult problem. Lasker liked this method and was a virtuoso of it. This is the reason for some people thinking that Lasker’s Achilles heel is his handling of the opening. But the latter idea is based, as we have said, on a misconception.

The move 3...♘c6 comes from Alapin. But if White plays e4-e5 at the right moment, Black’s c-pawn is obstructed; this represents quite a shadow side to Alapin’s idea.

4.♘f3 ♗b4 5.e5 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘a5

317



The last two moves raise the stakes: because Black has been taking his time developing his cramped kingside, whereas a cramped wing should have a special claim to careful treatment! And yet, Black has not yet passed the point of no return, after which it becomes impossible to draw the game.

7.a4

Hard to understand; a better try was 7.♘d2 ♘e7 8.♖g4 (battlefield no. 1). Black should have set about painstaking defence here by 8...♘f5 9.♔d3 ♗g8 10.♖h3 h6.

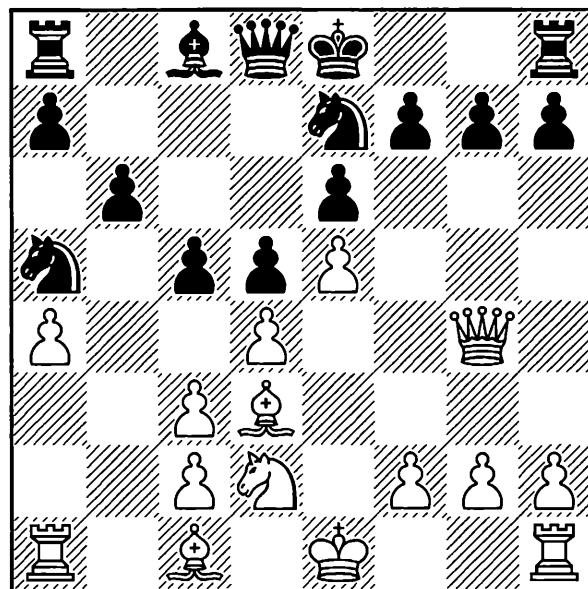
7...♘e7 8.♔d3 b6

The attack on the base (d4) by c5 is being prepared.

9.♘d2! c5 10.♖g4

How should Black protect his g-pawn?

318



10...c4!

He shouldn't, because here any direct attempt at protection would compromise his position.

11.♙e2

11.♚xg7? ♜g8 then cxd3.

11...♘f5

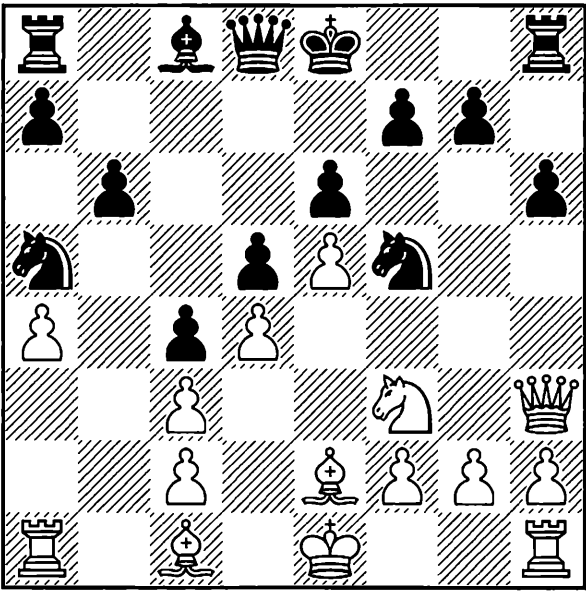
The g-pawn is protected, but d4 has been relieved and once more White has a free hand for play on the right wing.

12.♘f3 h6

To maintain the ♘f5 on its good post. The threat was ♙g5, ♚ moves, ♘h4. But Lasker prefers, and rightly so, the flexible defence 12...♘c6 and if 13.♙g5 then f6. An interesting line would be 12...♘c6 13.a5!? ♘xa5 14.♙g5 f6! 15.exf6 gxf6 16.♙h4 and now 16...♘xh4 would fail to 17.♚g7!, but 16...♚e7 seems to consolidate things sufficiently.

13.♚h3

319



How can Black prevent the following elegant threat to break through, namely: 14.g4 ♘e7 15.g5 h5 16.g6! ♘xg6 17.♘g5 then ♜g1.

13...♚d7

I love it when the king goes for a walk.

14.g4 ♘e7 15.♘d2

Threatening 16.♚f3 followed by ♚xf7 or ♘xc4!

15...♚e8

The queen occupies the throne which the king has vacated! Moreover she has her eye on the a4-pawn, which she seems to fancy.

16.f4

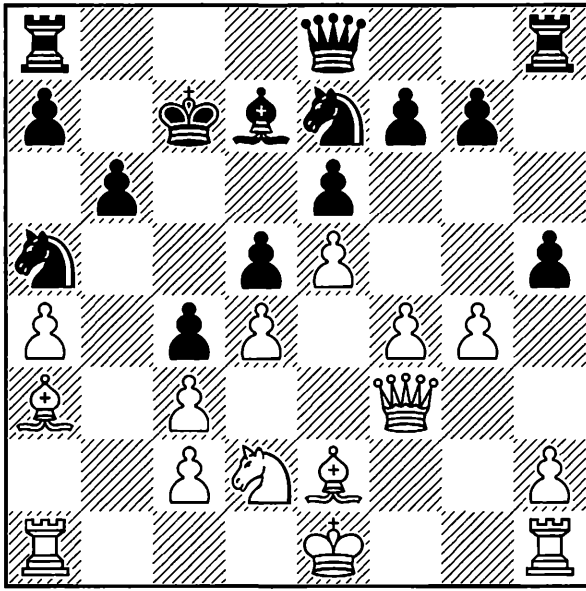
And a change of scenery! The old battlefield disappears in a trice and new plans of attack make their appearance: White wants to attack the base of the chain by f4-f5.

16...♚c7

The king continues its walk.

17.♙a3 ♙d7 18.♚f3 h5!

320



The white kingside constitutes a formidable attacking weapon; the purpose of the last move was to put it out of action. But the move 18...♙c6 (to fend off the other threat ♘xc4!) would not have been enough, e.g. 19.f5 followed by the establishment of a wedge by f5-f6 would be unendurable.

19.♘xc4!

If 19.gxh5 then 19...♘f5 and kingside which was previously ready to march forward is crippled. But if 19.h3, then 19...hxg4 20.hxg4 ♜xh1† 21.♚xh1 ♚h8 and White is kept busy.

19...♘xc4 20.♙xc4 hxg4

Naturally not 20...dxc4?? on account of 21.♙d6† then. ♚xa8.

21.♚g2 ♘f5 22.♙d3 ♙xa4!!

A nice late breakfast in a dangerous situation.

23.♙xf5 exf5 24.♚xd5

Another move that would be difficult to defend against is 24.c4. The defence would consist of 24...♚c6 25.♚xd5 (not 25.cxd5 because of 25...♚c3†) 25...♚xd5! 26.cxd5 ♙b5!!, because it would not longer be possible to prevent this bishop settling on d5 (via c4).

24...♔c6

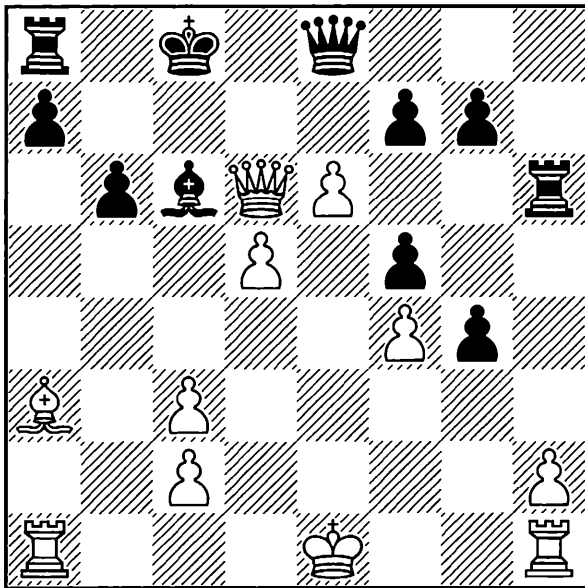
Black's king position may be surrounded by threats, but there is hope.

25.♚d6† ♕c8

In view of the planned combination; also possible was 25...♕b7 26.d5 ♔b5

26.d5 ♖h6 27.e6

321



27...♔xd5!

Later this was described as the “only move”, and rightly so. Of course, Black had another only move: 27...♖xe6† 28.dxe6 ♔xh1 29.0–0–0 ♔f3! (not 29...♔e4? on account of 30.e7, then ♚e5!, and the white queen gets new and decisive squares) 30.exf7 ♚xf7 31.♚d8† ♕b7 32.♖d7† ♕a6 and Black is safe. You see, a sound position has at least two “only moves”.

28.♚xd5 ♚xe6† 29.♚xe6† ♖xe6†

White is now happy to be a piece up, but his remaining soldiers hardly make a very warlike impression (a bit of a trick after such a battle!). In such circumstances the white king is not all that sure where to go: if he goes to the left, his f4-pawn will be unhappy, and if to the right then the pawn pair c2 and c3 will be miserable. Quite heart-rending...

30.♕d2 ♕b7 31.♖ae1 ♖h8 32.♖xe6! fxe6

33.♖e1! ♖xh2† 34.♕d3 g3

Anything but a passive rook! (34...♖h6?)

35.♖g1

After 35.♖xe6 g5! 36.fxg5 g2 the g5-pawn will turn out to be the obstruction.

35...♖h3!

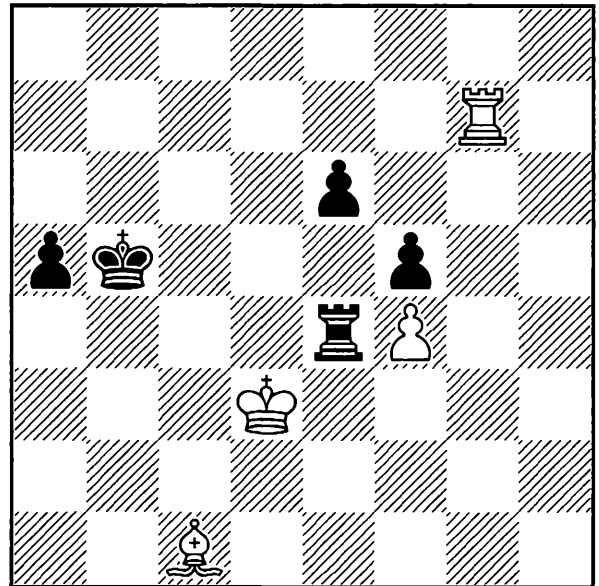
Much better than 35...g2 since the prospect of getting to c2 is, as we shall see, important.

36.♕d4 ♕c6 37.♖g2 a5 38.c4 ♖h2! 39.♖xg3 ♖xc2

See the previous annotation.

40.♖xg7 ♖e2 41.♔c1 ♖e4† 42.♕d3 b5 43.cxb5† ♕xb5

322



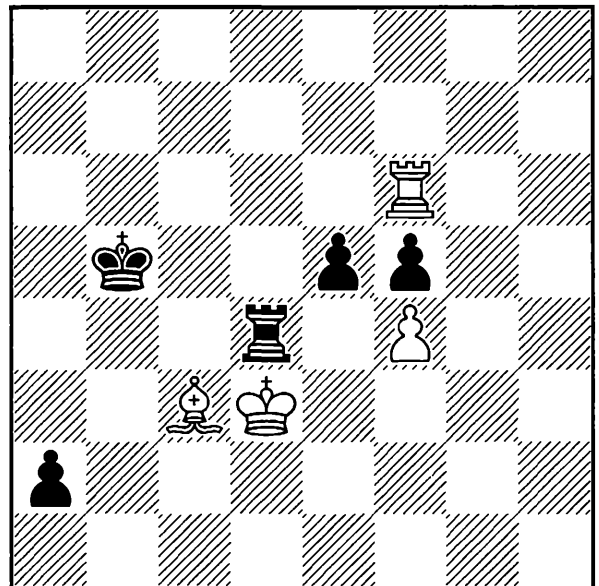
In spite of fine play (centralisation and the extra piece) White cannot win the game! So Black's piece sacrifice was correct.

44.♔e3 ♕c6 45.♖f7 a4 46.♖f8 a3 47.♖a8 e5 48.♖a6† ♕b5 49.♖b6†

Herr Becker really wants to win and so it finally came about that he *lost*.

49...♕a5 50.♖f6 a2 51.♔d2† ♕b5 52.♔c3 ♖d4†

323



Ending six hours of hard struggle with such a problem check really is not pleasant!

53.♔e2?

The correct move was 53.♔c2 ♖c4 54.♔b2 ♖xc3 55.♖xf5.

53...♖xf4 54.♖f8 ♔c4 55.♙a1 ♖e4† 56.♔d2 f4

Now White should be lost.
57.♖c8† ♔d5 58.♖d8† ♔e6 59.♖e8† ♔f5 60.♖g8 f3 0-1

Game 20

Opocensky – Nimzowitsch

Marienbad 1925

This game is a demonstration of how and where an advance on the *wrong* wing should be punished.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙c2 b6 5.e4 ♙b7

The lust to expand of White's central pawns is rather less here than one might suspect at first glance.

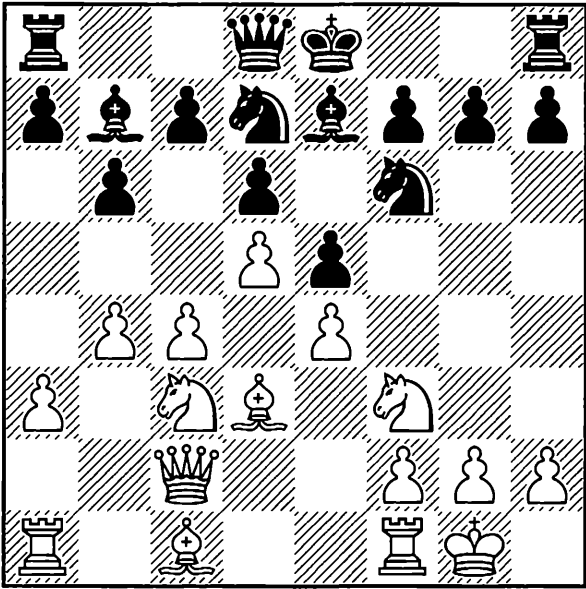
6.♙d3 ♘c6 7.♘f3 ♙e7!

With this surprising retreat, which threatens ♘b4, Black manages to bottle up his opponent's central pawn mass and at the same time keep his valuable king's bishop.

8.a3 d6 9.0-0 e5 10.d5

They are now bottled up.
10...♘b8 11.b4 ♘bd7

324



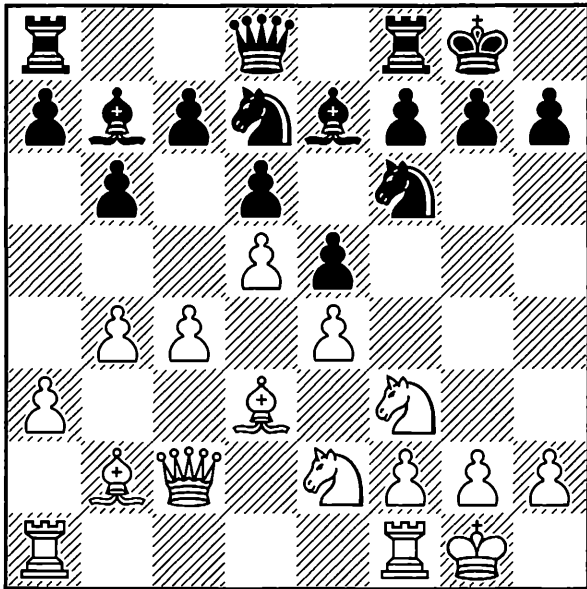
12.♙b2

The pawn chain e4, d5, e5, d6 demands, after sufficient preparation, play with c4-c5. Because of the two battlefields (see our explanations in section 1) which have arisen after d4-d5, only one is usable, namely the attack on the base d6. The other theoretically possible plan of attack (the advance of pieces to attack the flank which has been cramped by d5) must be regarded as nipped in the bud by the presence of an obstruction on c4.

The only valid plan here (c4-c5) needed to be prepared by 12.h3 and 13.♙e3, e.g. 12.h3 h6! (still the best chance) 13.♙e3 g5 14.♘h2. Black will try to attack White's kingside, but White's attack (♘a4, c4-c5) is quick to set in motion, and White's castled position looks defensible. Therefore 12.h3 and 13.♙e3 was the correct continuation.

12...0-0 13.♘e2

325



The white pieces are leaving the queenside in favour of the kingside. But this transfer weakens his own influence on the centre. With his knight on c3, c7-c6 could be met with d5xc6, and the ♘c3 is threatening Black's outpost square d5. But should the ♘c3 wander off, the advance c7-c6 gains in force. And that very advance is perhaps not yet on the cards because White is weaker on the queenside, but it will come. What makes the game fundamentally interesting for the student is how Black turns into his base of

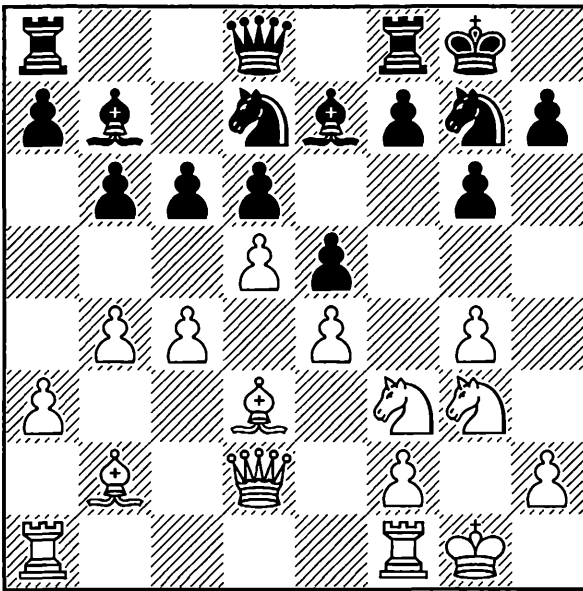
operations the battlefield which White turned up his nose at.

13...♖h5 14.♔d2

After 14.g4 Black would have replied with 14...♖hf6. Black wants to be attacked on the kingside because he considers this battlefield inappropriate in this case (because as has been said, White should have been playing on the queenside).

14...g6 15.g4 ♖g7 16.♖g3 c6!

326

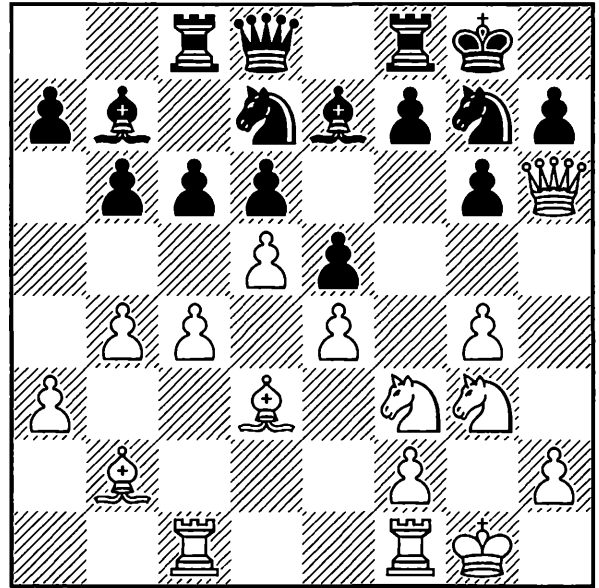


What was the point of this move? If c6xd5 is now finally played, then after the reply c4xd5, all that would have been achieved would be the exposure of his own base square d6. So in this case, Black would have been doing his opponent's work, because (now we are imagining that the black pawn is still on c7) the strategically recommendable procedure for White – c4-c5xd6 and then c7xd6 – would have brought about the same pawn configuration, and for White that is worth aiming for!

But the reasoning above contains two errors of logic. Firstly, White's advance c4-c5 will not simply content itself with c5xd6; that would not be the only threat. Creating a wedge pawn (transferring the attack) by c6 would be a far more dangerous threat. And secondly, by ♔b2 and ♖c3-e2-g3 White has been unfaithful to his queenside; the proper punishment consists then in Black gaining the upper hand there!

17.♔h6 ♜c8 18.♜ac1

327



18...a6!!

A very difficult move. After 18...cxd5 there could follow 19.exd5; true, after that Black would obtain two powerful pawns by 19...f5 20.gxf5 gxf5 but after 21.♔h1 and ♜g1 Black would be badly off: the mobility of his e- and f-pawns would turn out to be an illusion, whereas White's kingside attack would be very real. Black wants to play c6xd5 at a moment when e4xd5 is impossible.

19.♜fd1 ♜c7 20.h4? cxd5! 21.cxd5

Since 20.h4 has further weakened White's position (the g4-square), 20...cxd5 seems appropriate. After 21.exd5 there would have followed 21...♖f6, as in the game; also the breakthrough b6-b5 would have been in the air as a threat.

21...♜xc1 22.♜xc1 ♖f6 23.♖h2 ♔h8

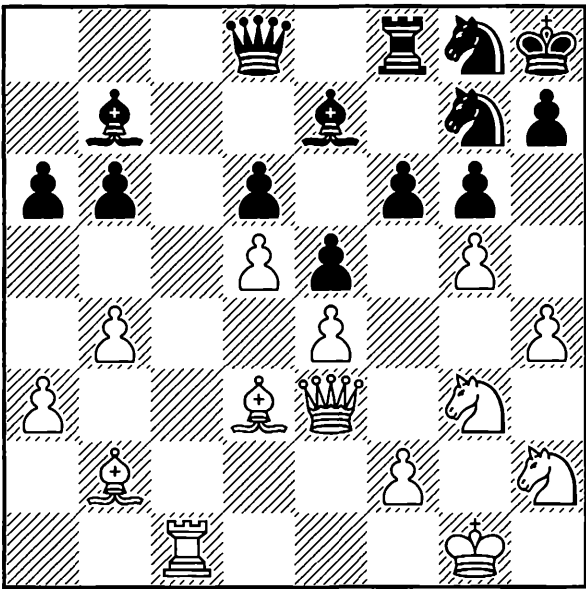
The white queen is in danger of her life, e.g. 24.f4? ♖g8. If White had played 23.♖g5 then 23...♔d7! 24.f3 ♜c8 and the queen is in danger from ♔f8.

24.♔e3 ♖d7 25.♖f3 ♖f6 26.♖h2 ♖g8 27.g5 f6

This powerful attack which is starting on the kingside can be considered from the point of view of the history of this game to be the secondary one, because Black has actually set about his opponent with c7-c6. Because White felt himself to be attacked by c7-c6, he saw this as a reason to hasten his counter-attack (by h2-h4). This haste brought about new weaknesses on his kingside.

Thus the attack f7-f6 should be seen as the logical follow-up to the c7-c6 attack.

328



28.♖f3 fxg5 29.hxg5 ♕c8 30.♝c6

An ingenious saving move, which is extraordinarily difficult to meet. You should also note that the position which has just arisen looks as though White had all the time been operating exclusively on the queenside (by c2-c4-c5xd6 which had been followed by c7xd6) whereas Black had been seeking his salvation in a counter-attack against the base pawn e4...

Kindly Mother Nature! It is not at all her way to pitilessly point out every single error at once. Very often she closes an eye to it. And from time to time she gets involved with a gentle smile and tries to smooth things over.

An example: for many generations the Chinese tried to cripple the feet of their children, yet Chinese babies are still born with normal feet. Another example: Europeans have for years and years trained to become hard-working businessmen, journalists, diplomats and even chess critics; yet European children still come into the world as truth-loving little citizens.

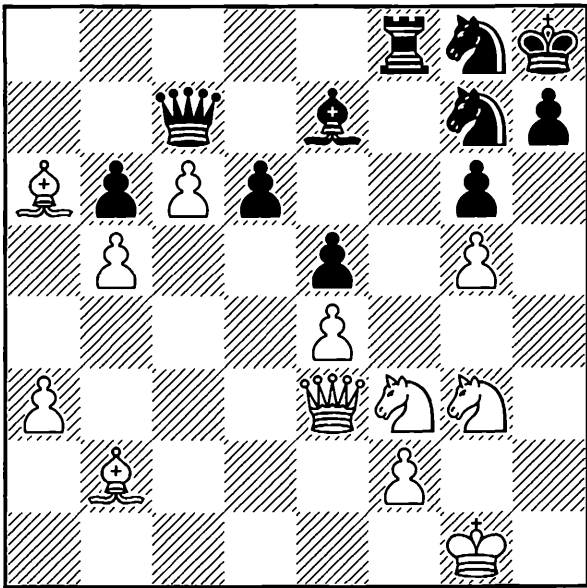
In our game, White had chosen the wrong side for his battlefield, but after a series of moves the game suddenly looks as if White had all along been operating on the appropriate wing. Despite that his game is lost, but nature's tendency to level things out from time to time cannot be denied here.

30...♕d7 31.♕xa6

After 31.♝xb6? comes ♝xf3. The sacrifice of the exchange is very promising.

31...♕xc6 32.dxc6 ♖c7 33.b5

329



33...h6!

This pawn sacrifice creates freedom to manoeuvre. Otherwise sacrifices on d6 or e5 would have been possible. See for example the following variation: 33...♖e6 (instead of the text move) 34.a4 ♕d8 35.♕a3 ♖f7 36.♕xd6! ♖xf3 37.♕xe5† ♖g7 38.♖xf3 then 39.c7.

34.gxh6 ♖e6 35.a4 ♕d8 36.♕a3 ♖f7

Because now 37.♕xd6 ♖xf3 38.♕xe5† would simply be met with 38...♖h7.

37.♖xe5 dxe5 38.♕xf8 ♖xf8 39.a5 ♖xh6

The fact that this attack by the knight has become possible is also due to 33...h6!.

40.axb6 ♖g4 41.c7 ♖xe3 42.c8♖ ♖f3 43.fxe3 ♖xg3† 0-1

Black wins the e-pawn with check and can then take the b-pawn.

Game 21
Rubinstein – Duras
Karlsbad 1911

As we know, the philosophy of pawn chains which we have dealt with can constitute a good criterion for the evaluation of any possible situation where chains are involved. But as this game will show, the theory of chains we have just mentioned can

also cast light on the related notion of battlefields. So we are talking about an extended criterion. Of course, it would be necessary here to wish to start from the chain as a first premise. We would recommend that you try to understand the two different battlefields, namely the chain as such on one hand and the extreme queenside as the other, as logically connected. It is possible to do so without great difficulties in the game which follows.

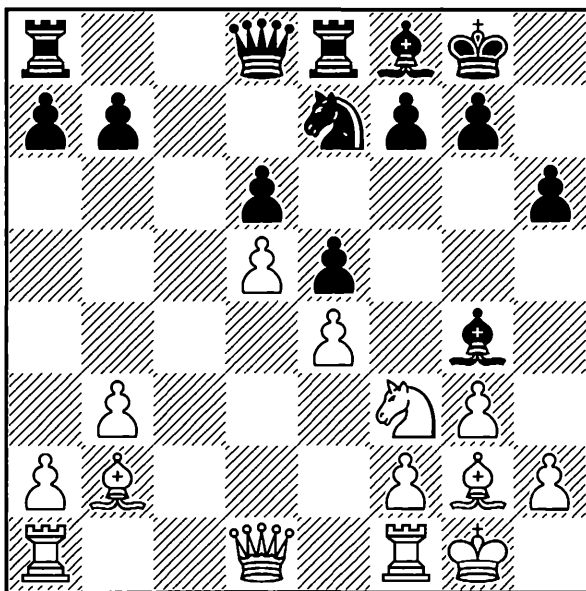
1.c4 e5 2.♖c3 ♖f6 3.g3 ♗b4 4.♗g2 0-0 5.♖f3 ♜e8 6.0-0 ♖c6

The exchange 6...♗xc3 was worth considering. 7.♖d5 ♗f8 8.d3 h6 9.b3 d6 10.♗b2 ♖xd5 11.cxd5 ♖e7 12.e4 c5

In the long term, something will have to be done about the c-pawn.

13.dxc6 ♖xc6 14.d4 ♗g4 15.d5 ♖e7

330



The pawn chain e4, d5, e5, d6 has now been formed, and Black's base (d6) already appears exposed (from the side), just as if both sides had still had their c-pawns and the typical attack c2-c4-c5xd6 had taken place, followed by c7xd6.

16.♙d3 ♙d7 17.♖d2

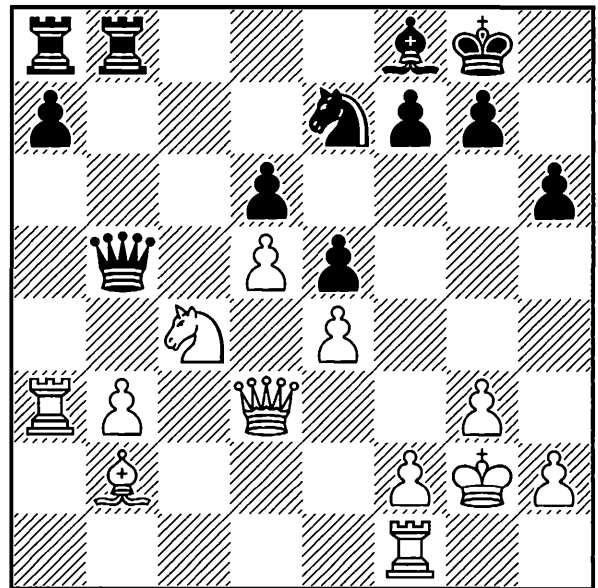
And the knight is sent forward to attack the exposed base.

17...♗h3 18.a4

To secure the knight's position on c4.

18...♗xg2 19.♖xg2 ♜eb8 20.♖c4 b5 21.axb5 ♜xb5 22.♜a3

331



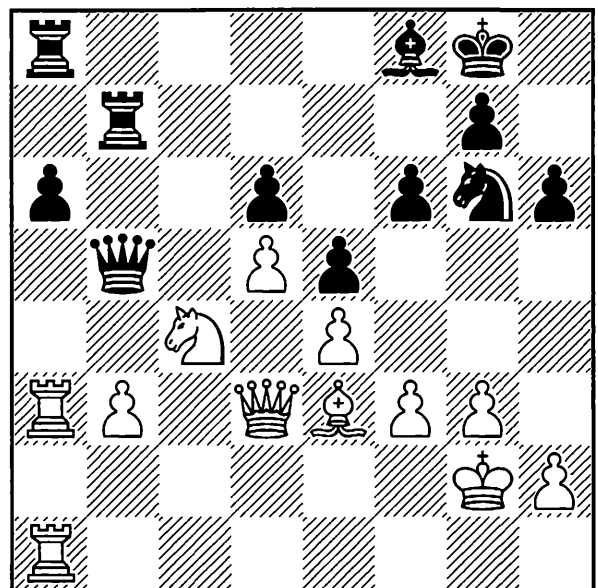
In such and similar positions there is always the question: which pawn is the weaker, the a-pawn or the b-pawn? Here this question could be answered by following the path of logical deduction: since d6 is weaker than d5, the same relationship must hold true on the remainder of the queenside; if that were not the case, then 18.a4 must have been wrong and that is unlikely. In fact, was White not justified in supporting his own strategically important ♖c4? That would be nonsense! No, ♖c4 was all right as was 18.a4, so 20...b5 *must* have led to a less favourable situation for Black. The correctness of our evaluation is validated by the course of the game.

22...♖g6

Perhaps 22...♖c8 would have been better.

23.♜fa1 a6 24.♗c1 ♜b7 25.♗e3 f6 26.f3

332



If Black could get in f6-f5, then his game would not be all that bad. But there is no way it can happen here, and Black gets hemmed in.

26...♞e7 27.♞f1

Threatening ♞xd6.

27...♞c8 28.♞d2 ♞b4 29.♞c4 ♞xc4 30.♞xc4 ♞ab8 31.♞d2 ♞c7 32.♞xa6

Note the masterly and varied ways the d2- and c4-squares are exploited.

32...♞c2 33.♞6a2 ♞xa2 34.♞xa2

The remainder, with its centralisation of the white king followed by an advance of the unit ♞, ♞, ♞, is easy to understand. It went 34...♞e7 35.♞f2 ♞f7 36.♞e2 ♞e8 37.♞d3 ♞d7 38.♞c3 ♞d8 39.♞c4 (c3 is our shelter, the ♞c4 is the bridge builder) 39...♞c7 40.g4 ♞d8 41.♞a6 ♞c7 42.h4 ♞d8 43.h5 ♞c7 44.b4 ♞b7 45.♞a8 ♞d8 46.♞b3 ♞b8 47.♞xb8 ♞xb8 48.b5 ♞e7 49.b6 f5 (there is nothing left to hope for) 50.gxf5 ♞g8 51.♞f2 ♞f6 52.♞h4 1-0

The next game is an example of transference, carried out in classical style.

Game 22
Maróczy – Süchting
Barmen 1905

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♞g5 ♞bd7 5.e3 ♞e7 6.♞f3 0-0 7.♞c2 c6 8.a3 ♞h5

Not really suitable; better was 8...♞e8 or 8...h6

9.h4 f5

9...f6 would be met by 10.♞d3.

10.♞e2 ♞df6 11.♞e5! ♞d7 12.♞d1 ♞e8 13.c5

Chain building.

13...♞c7 14.b4 a5 15.g3!

Maróczy, more than anyone else, knows how to prevent freeing moves (here the move f4).

15...axb4 16.axb4 ♞xa1 17.♞xa1 ♞e4 18.g4! ♞xc3 19.♞xc3 ♞f6 20.♞f4!

Threatens ♞g6 and thus gains time for g4-g5.

20...♞c8 21.g5 ♞d7 22.♞d3!

The exchange would make the breakthrough harder.

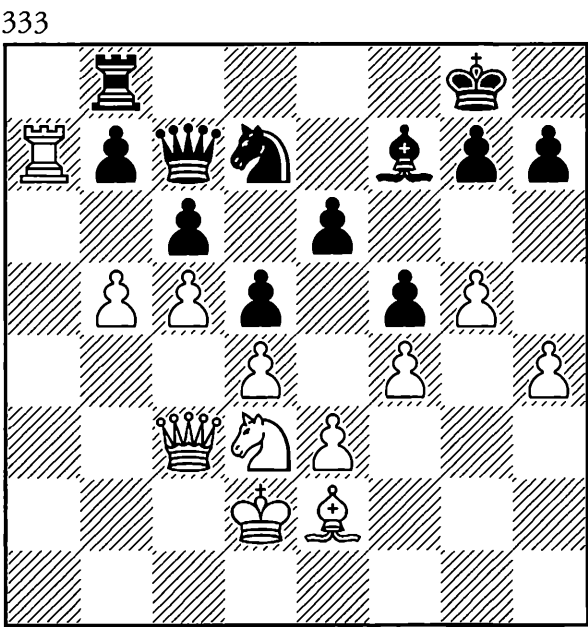
23...♞f7 23.♞d2 ♞d8 24.♞a1

Only now does play start on the actual battlefield. The idea is of course an attack on the base c6 by means of b4-b5.

24...♞c7 25.♞a7 ♞e8 26.♞xc7 ♞xc7 27.f4

Prevents all breakthrough attempts by e6-e5.

27...♞b8 28.b5



At last!

28...♞c8

Or 28...cxb5 29.♞b4 etc.

29.b6

Play against the base c6 would be continued by 29.♞b4 and then something like ♞c3-a3-a4. But transferring the attack to b7 is even stronger and above all safer: Süchting is quite paralysed.

29...♞e8 30.♞c1 ♞f8 31.♞b3 e5!

The only way to save b7; otherwise there would come ♞a5, ♞xb7, then ♞a6 after ♞xb7.

32.dxe5 ♞e6 33.♞d3! g6 34.h5 ♞f7 35.♞a5 ♞d8 36.e6!

Our sacrifice of the unblockaded passed pawn by advancing it. The pieces behind it spring into life (see page 75).

36...♞xe6 37.h6 d4 38.♞xd4 ♞a2†

And White won: 39.♞e1 ♞e6 40.♞e5 ♞e8 41.♞xb7 ♞b3 42.♞e2 ♞b1† 43.♞f2 ♞h1 44.♞d6 ♞h4† 45.♞g2 ♞xf4† 46.♞xf4 ♞d5† 47.♞f3 ♞xf3† 48.♞xf3 1-0.

This concludes our treatment of the elements.

Part II

Positional Play

Part II – Chapter 1

Prophylaxis and the centre

This introductory chapter consists of my conception of positional play and continues my treatment of the problem of the centre.

1. The reciprocal links between the treatment of the elements on one hand and positional play on the other

As you shall soon see, my dear reader, my conception of positional play is largely based on the knowledge which we have painstakingly gathered from the “elements” in the first nine chapters of the work. What I have just said is particularly true of the strategies we have sketched in concerning restraint and centralisation. These connections have the happy effect of bringing to our work a certain unity of structure, which must of course be helpful to the reader. But the latter must in no way fall prey to the hope that getting to the heart of positional play will mean no further difficulties worth mentioning; that would be an error. Firstly, positional play involves other ideas too, such as the rule which I discovered about overprotection or the very difficult central strategy; and secondly the very *transfer* of ideas we got to know in the “elements” on to new ground, that of positional play, is hard enough in itself. It is more or less the same sort of difficulty as is faced by a composer trying to adapt a violin sonata for a full orchestra. The “theme” and the motifs may well remain unchanged, but the piece as a *whole* gains significantly in breadth and depth.

Let us explain that with a concrete example from chess, for example, restraint. In the “elements” this was discussed in a relatively restricted sense: the restraint of a passed pawn, or

holding up an opposing pawn chain which has broken free and wishes to advance. In positional play, on the other hand, the theme of restraint becomes much more important: here we are often talking about a whole wing which must be restrained. In games in which the player who is restraining arranges things particularly well (I am thinking of my game in Dresden against Johner in 1926 – see game 30, page 225), we experience the following: the whole board (both flanks, every corner) takes up the theme and trumpets it forth.

Even worse for the student is the second case: here the theme appears on an epic level, with a whole series of apparently senseless moves back and forward and in all directions. This manoeuvring resembles the accompanist in our musical analogy. Many people consider both of these, manoeuvring and accompanists, as superfluous; many chess lovers will go as far as calling this moving back and forward decadent. In reality, however, this manoeuvring frequently enough constitutes the strategically appropriate method (note, strategically and not merely psychologically) of making the most of the slight space advantage, and the freer manoeuvrability of troops from one wing to the other which that makes possible.

2. Offences against sound positional play, which should be weeded out in every case as a *sine qua non* to the study of positional play

a) how dilettantes always desperately want to be doing something

b) how masters overestimate the accumulation of small advantages

In fact, many amateurs do not seem at ease with the idea of positional play. However twenty years of teaching chess has convinced me that this evil can easily be done away with, since in the overwhelming majority of cases what we are talking about is simply a *psychologically wrong attitude* on the part of the said amateurs. I maintain that positional play as such has nothing mysterious about it; any amateur who has studied my elements (in the first nine chapters) must find it easy to come to terms with this way of playing. All he has to do is:

- 1. get rid of the “weeds” which are strangling his thought processes.
- 2. follow the rules laid down in what follows.

A typical widespread misconception on the part of the amateur we are speaking about starts from the idea that every single move must immediately achieve something; this means that he is always looking for moves which threaten something or which parry a threat by his opponent, and in doing so he totally neglects all other possible moves, such as waiting moves, or moves to reposition his pieces, etc. We must really insist that this way of looking at things is quite wrong. On the whole, positional moves are neither threats nor defensive moves; the way I see things, it is much more a question of moves which are intended, *in the wider sense*, to consolidate our position and therefore it is necessary to bring our own pieces into contact with the squares which are strategically important for us or for our opponent (see later under the headings “the struggle against freeing moves by your opponent” and “overprotection”).

When a positional player, i.e. someone who understands in the wider sense how to secure his position, is playing against a purely combinative player, there frequently occurs the following moment of surprise: the combinative player, who is attacking violently, is expecting only one of two counter-moves, either a defensive move or a counter-attack; then he is surprised by the positional player who chooses a move which

fits into neither of those categories; the move somehow brings his own pieces into contact with a key square, and this contact turns out to be miraculous with the result that the position is cleared up and the attack grinds to a halt.

A similarly amazing effect can be produced by a move which protects a square that is not even under attack. The positional player defends this square not so much for its own sake, but also because he knows that the defending piece will actually gain in strength because of being in contact with the said square. I will say more about this under “overprotection”.

And now, as an example, here is a game which is a striking illustration of the wrong psychological attitude I have been talking about. I was playing White against a well-known amateur, who is not a weak player, but whose idea was that a normal game of chess should run along the following lines: “One player castles short, the other long, and each starts a violent pawn storm against his opponent’s king and whoever lands his punch first has won.”

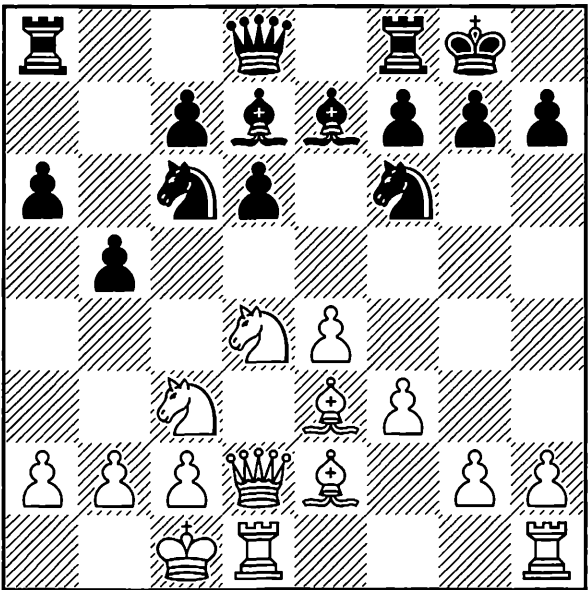
You can now see how this somewhat amateurish misconception is reduced to absurdity.

Nimzowitsch – N. N.

Riga 1910

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♗xd4 d6 This move is quite playable, but only when linked to a solid defensive set-up, which can be achieved by something like ♘f6, ♕e7, 0–0, ♖e8 with pressure on e4. **5.♗c3 ♗f6 6.♕e2 ♕e7 7.♕e3 ♖d7 8.♙d2 a6? 9.f3 0–0 10.0–0–0 b5**

334



The attack does not seem appropriate here, and it made all the more amusing the aggressive expression used by my opponent on making the move: “Now we can get started!”

For a moment, I understood him because he obviously expected the reply 11.g4 with an exciting race between the pawns on both sides. Who would get there first? But I played 11.♟d5. With this move, which occupies the outpost square on the d-file, White meets a second aim in positional play: a premature advance by your opponent on the flank should be punished by play in the centre (= central breakthrough or seizure of the centre). Next came 11...♞xd5 12.exd5 ♞xd4 13.♙xd4 and White is significantly better: he has the centralised position which cannot be taken from him by 13...♙f6 14.f4 ♞e8 15.♙f3 with ♞he1 to follow. In addition, Black’s queenside position is shattered which will be a nasty endgame weakness. 11.♟d5 was a positional move. We have discussed the psychological attitude of Black above.

And the moral of the story? Don’t always look for an attack! Consolidating moves, in the broadest sense of the term, which meet the demands of the position are far more frequently what should be played.

Another wrong attitude can be seen among masters. Many masters and strong amateurs believe that positional play is above all about the accumulation of small advantages which can then be exploited in an endgame. Playing like this requires a fine understanding of the game and is aesthetically very satisfying.

For my part, I should like to suggest that the accumulation of tiny advantages is in no way the most important component of positional play. I am more inclined to attribute to the said manoeuvre a subordinate role. Also the difficulty of this sort of play is significantly overestimated, and finally it is hard to understand why a niggardly building up of a stock of little value should be considered “admirable”. Is it not reminiscent of an old miser at work, and who can find that “admirable”? We must then realise that

there are other things which merit the attention of the positional player, things which are far more important than this “accumulation”.

What sort of things are these then and what do I consider to be real positional play? My answer to that question is short and to the point: *prophylaxis!*

3. My novel conception of positional play as such

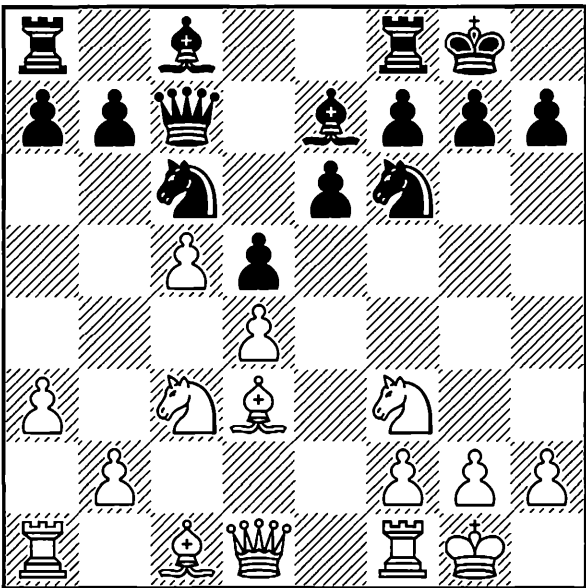
The well-known accumulation of tiny advantages is only the second (or perhaps third) most important thing; what is far more significant is prophylaxis (anticipation of problems) applied both to moves by the opponent (external) and to our own position (internal). My innovation of “overprotection”: a definition and explanation of what it means.

As has already been mentioned several times, neither attack nor defence are what is essential, in my opinion, in positional play; what is needed is a far more energetic and targeted prophylaxis. What is important above all is to head off certain positionally undesirable possibilities before they materialise. If we set aside for the moment such blunders as can be made by less experienced players, there are only *two types* of such possibilities. (We remind you in passing, that a beginner must take great care not to lose his central pawn, since that error could allow his opponent to set in motion a pawn avalanche. An experienced player on the other hand would be able to find ways and means to restrain that avalanche.) One of these possibilities consists of allowing your opponent to make a “freeing” pawn move. So the positional player must post his pieces in such a way as to prevent the opponent’s freeing move. In saying this, we must point out that on a case to case basis you must check whether the relevant “freeing” move actually leads to a freeing of the position. As I pointed out in my revolutionary article *Does ‘The modern game of chess’ by Dr Tarrasch really correspond to the modern conception of the game?*, it may well be true to say that “all that glitters is not gold” holds true for freeing moves too:

many a freeing move leads to an unfavourable and premature opening of the game, and other freeing moves can be seen simply as a normal reaction and accepted as such, just as it would make no sense to try to combat some natural phenomenon.

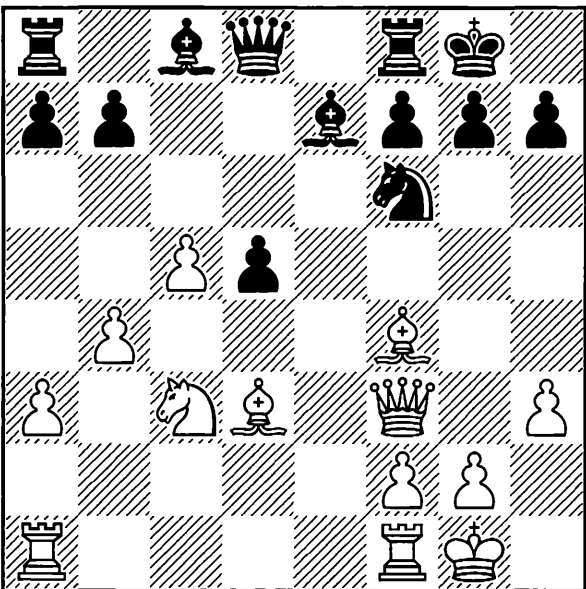
Although freeing moves will be discussed more specifically under “restraint”, let us look at two examples at this stage.

335



This is an example of erroneous freeing. In similar positions, the move e6-e5 can be a freeing move, since it opens up a position which is somewhat cramped and is at the same time the appropriate positional response in the centre to White’s attempt at encirclement on the queenside (play in the centre as opposed to play on the wing). Yet here White was right to play b2-b4! (instead of Bc1). Thus 1.b4! e5? 2.dxe5 Nxe5 3.Bf4! Nxf3† 4.Qxf3 Qd8 5.h3.

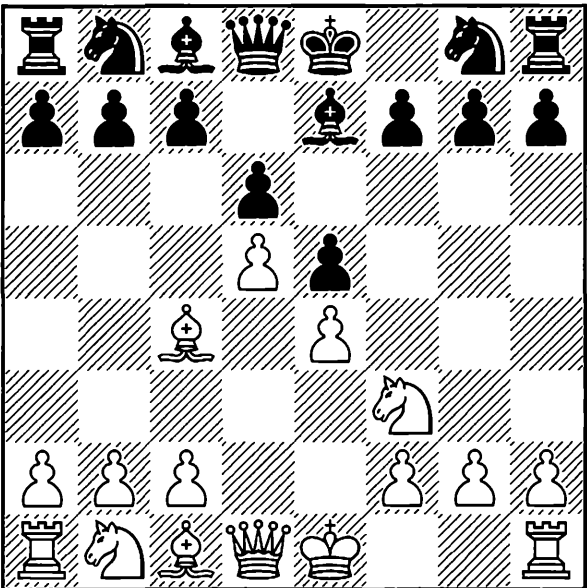
336



Then will come Rad1 and occupying the blockading square d4 either with the bishop or the knight, and White has the better game. From the very start, Black was a tempo short and thus his freeing attempt failed.

Example 2 shows us that it is not possible to prevent for ever freeing advances for which the time is ripe. In such cases our goal is to make the freeing action *more difficult to achieve*, without becoming obsessed by the idea of preventing it altogether. This position arose after 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc7 4.d4 d6 5.d5 Nb8

337



The pawn chain e4, d5 against e5, d6 means that White will aim for c2-c4-c5 and Black for f7-f5. Forcible solutions such as 6.Bd3 Nf6 7.h3 0-0 8.g4? would not suit the position. On the other hand, 6.Bd3 Nf6 7.c4 0-0 8.Nc3 Ne8 9.Qe2 seems quite appropriate, intending to meet 9...f5 with the exchanges 10.exf5 Bxf5 11.Bxf5 Bxf5 12.Ne4. Compare this with the explanations to diagram 310, page 162.

So we can sum up by saying that the prevention of freeing pawn moves (insofar as it appears necessary and possible) is of the greatest importance for positional play. This prevention is what we understand when we speak of external prophylaxis.

What is much harder to understand is the concept of “internal prophylaxis”, because here we are having to deal with a completely new idea.

What we are talking about is taking measures to prevent some problem which we have not yet recognised as such, but which can be extremely disruptive and is usually exactly that. The problem is that our own pieces are either not in contact with or are in insufficiently good contact with our own strategically important points. Since I considered the said circumstance to be a problem, it follows that I had to formulate the strategic rule that one must overprotect one's own strategically important points (that is to say have more defenders than there are attacking pieces). My rule or justification can be put as follows:

“Weak points, and even more so strong points, (in short every point which could be described as strategically important) must be overprotected! The pieces which fulfil this duty are rewarded for helping to overprotect the said strategically important points by the fact that they are well-placed when it comes to undertaking other duties; so to express it somewhat dramatically, the importance of the strategic point envelops them in its halo.”

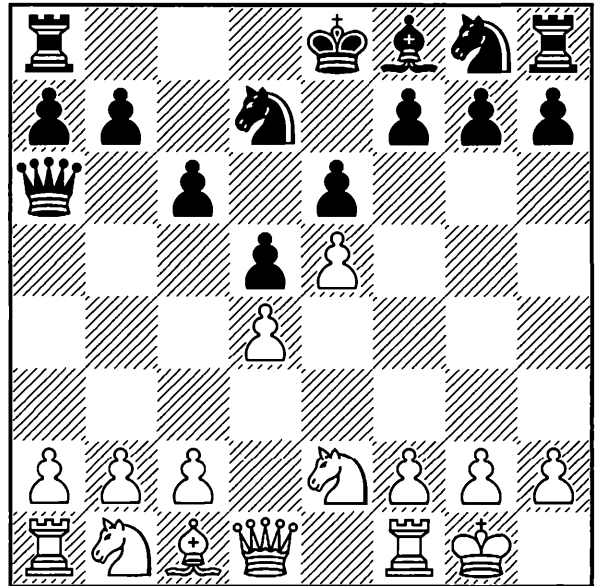
So much for the formulation of my rule.

Two explanations are above all necessary.

Firstly: think of the curious circumstance we looked at when analysing the passed pawn, that blockading squares usually turn out to be good squares in every respect. It is like an officer who was unhappy to go to some boring garrison town (a blockading square) and then surprisingly found a lot to do there; the strategically meritorious task (the blockading) was rewarded by the chance of seeing some more action from the new blockading post; just like in fairy tales where people are rewarded for their good deeds!

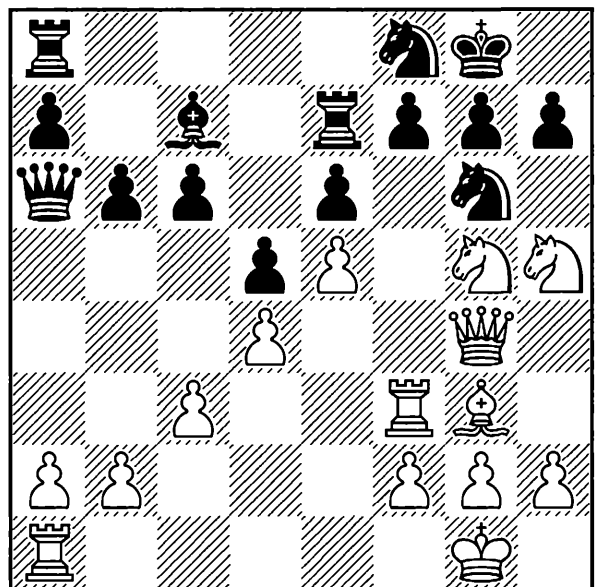
In a certain sense, the idea of overprotection is nothing more than an extended form of what I have just described: for example, we overprotect an advanced passed pawn, like the e5-pawn in diagram 338, where protection by d4 is insufficient as White is planning to answer c6-c5 by d4xc5 (= surrender of the base of the chain and occupation of the d4-square which has thus been freed).

338



In this position (from the game Nimzowitsch – Giese) we overprotect the e5 pawn as follows: 9.♖d2 ♜e7 10.♜f3! ♜g6 11.♞e1! ♞b4 (to finally bring the bishop to c7 and then play f7-f6, in spite of White's overprotection) 12.c3 ♞a5 13.♞f4! (overprotecting a third time!) 13...0-0 14.♞g3 ♞c7 15.♜g5. And now we see the inner strength of the overprotection in drastic fashion; the apparently lifeless overprotecting pieces – the ♜f3, the ♞f4 and the old soldier ♞e1 – suddenly show a surprising amount of animation! 15...♞fe8 16.♜f4 ♜h8 17.♞g4 ♜f8 18.♞e3! And how the old soldier cheers up at the prospect of nice little fight! 18...b6 (a somewhat better move was 18...♞d8) 19.♜h5 ♜hg6 20.♞f3 ♞e7

339

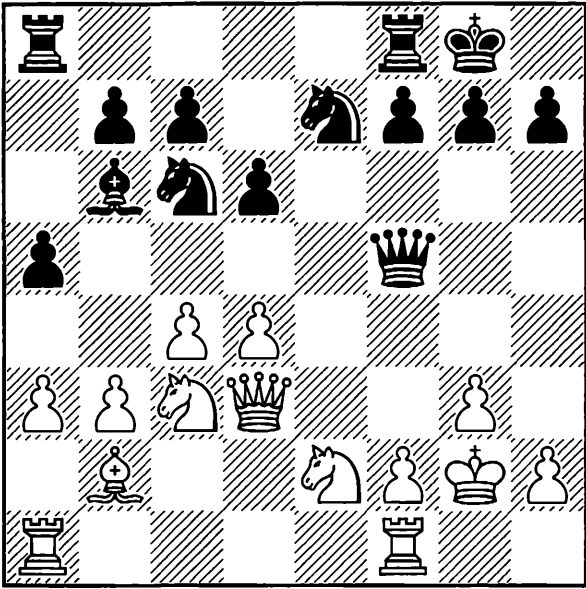


21.♜f6† ♜h8 and now White would have a simple win by 22.♜fxh7 ♜xh7 23.♜xf7† ♞xf7 24.♞xf7.

The idea was as follows: overprotecting a strategically important point was a “good deed”; the reward for it was the increased radius of activity for the pieces which were doing the overprotection!

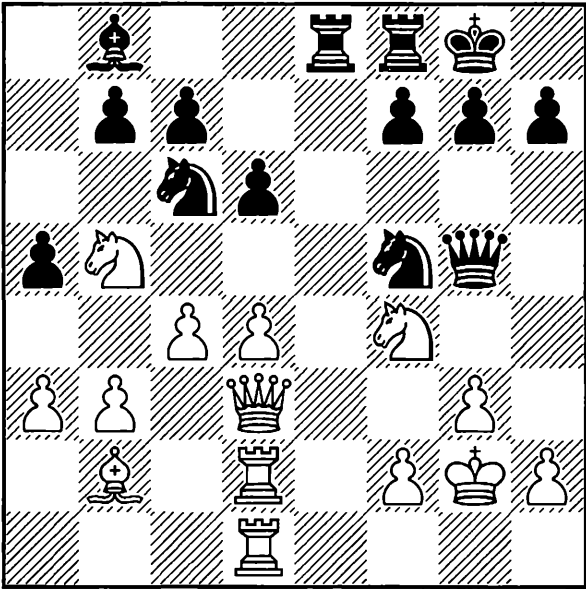
Just one more example (since overprotection in all its forms will have a whole chapter dedicated to it later). See diagram 340 (Nimzowitsch – Alekhine, Baden-Baden 1925).

340



After 15.♖ad1 ♜ae8 there comes the quite unlikely-looking manoeuvre 16.♜d2 followed by 17.♜fd1. Why? Because the ♔d3 (and perhaps the ♙d4 too) is the key to White’s position, so overprotection is called for. And in fact, after a few moves the rooks on d2 and d1 turned into doughty warriors (giving excellent protection to their king). Things developed as follows: 16.♜d2! ♜g5 17.♜fd1 ♙a7! 18.♘f4 ♘f5 19.♘b5 ♙b8

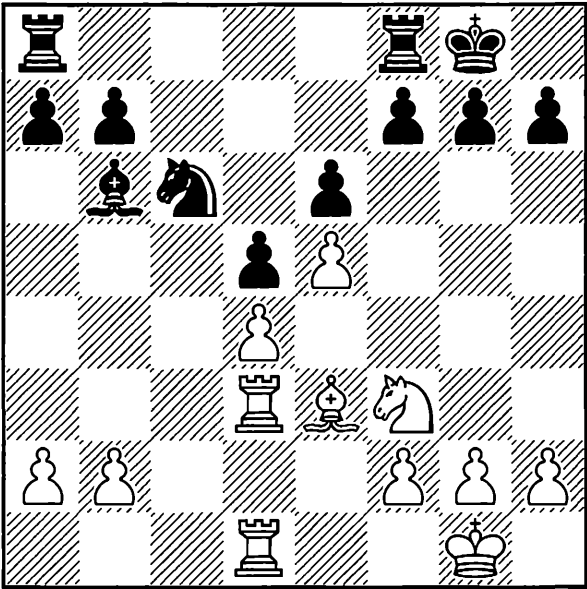
341



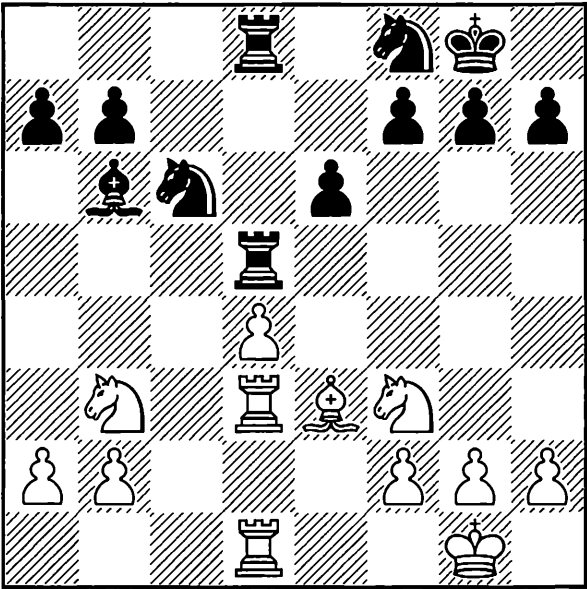
And now 20.♜e2 should have been played, followed by ♜de1 and the overprotecting pieces would have had their reward.

And now my second explanation. Of course the rule of overprotection holds particularly true for strong points, thus for the important central squares which are likely to come under heavy fire, for strong blockading squares or strong passed pawns, etc. You should never overprotect quite normal weak squares, because this could lead to your defenders being in passive positions (see page 113). However a weak pawn which is the base of an important pawn chain may, in fact must, be well overprotected. As an example of this, let us turn to our old friend the pawn chain d4, e5 against d5, e6. See diagram 342 and compare it with diagram 343.

342



343



In the former, the rooks are protecting the weak base (in one sense, the base of every chain can be considered weak since it lacks the only really secure protection – that of another pawn). But this protection indirectly helps the strong e5-pawn, because as we know the strengthening of the base at the same time represents a strengthening of the whole chain. For example, play through my game against Tarrasch (page 166) once more: in it I first painstakingly overprotected d4, but then worked up a strong attack which led to a win. The heart and soul of this attack, however, was the e5-pawn which was able to lean on the d4-pawn which was *now* restored to health.

But in the position in diagram 343, there is no e5-pawn, which in turn very much reduces the role which could otherwise have been played by the rooks on d1 and d3; all that actually remains of their once so important “role” is the boring duty of stopping the d4-pawn being taken.

In other words, the way the overprotection is organised in diagram 343 includes no prospect of an attack in the future (in complete contrast to diagram 342) and indeed comes over as a “passive deployment of the defending pieces”, which we must specifically warn against (see page 113). This can be summed up as follows:

The rule concerning overprotection is actually only valid for strong points. Weak points only have a right to overprotection if they themselves are helping to support strong points (= the weak pawn is the nurse for a growing giant!).

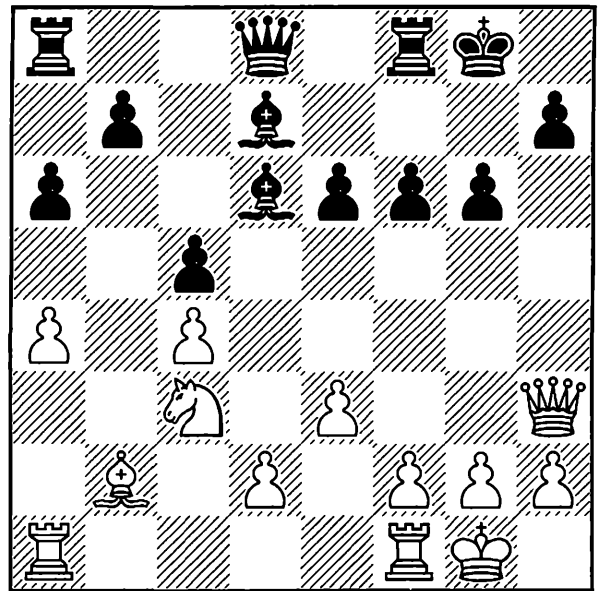
4. Next to prophylaxis, the idea of the “general mobility” of the pawn mass constitutes one of the main pillars of my teachings on positional play

The reader, who has been complaining about too many rules, gets a nice little plaster.

In the long run, the positional struggle comes down to a struggle between mobility (of the pawn mass) on one hand and restraining tendencies on the other. In this all-embracing struggle, prophylaxis, though an important stratagem in itself, is only a means to an end.

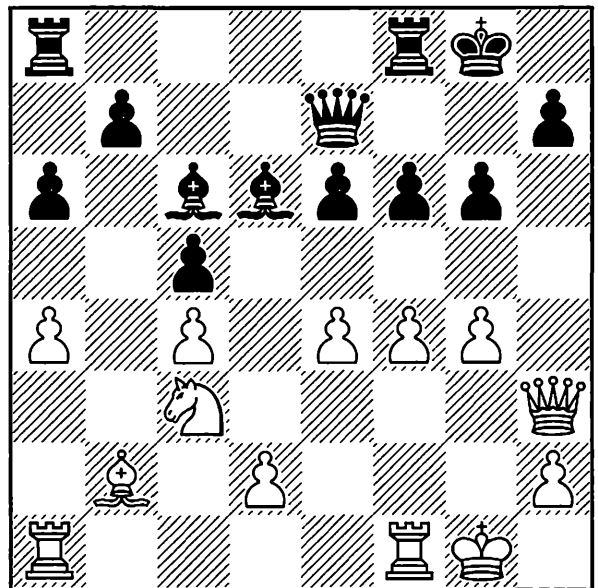
It is extremely important to strive for mobility (of the pawn mass) since a mobile mass can have a crushing effect because of its lust to expand. This mobility is not always harmed by the possible presence of a pawn which may be left behind in the advance (= a backward pawn). For example, the backward pawn can work as a nursemaid. So when talking about a mobile pawn mass, what we need is a general mobility of the mass, not so much that each and every pawn should in itself be mobile.

344



We are expecting sooner or later the freeing advance d2-d4 to get rid of the backward d2-pawn. But what happened in **Nimzowitsch – Prof. Michel**, Semmering 1926, was the more correct 17.f4 ♖e7 18.e4! ♙c6 19.g4!.

345

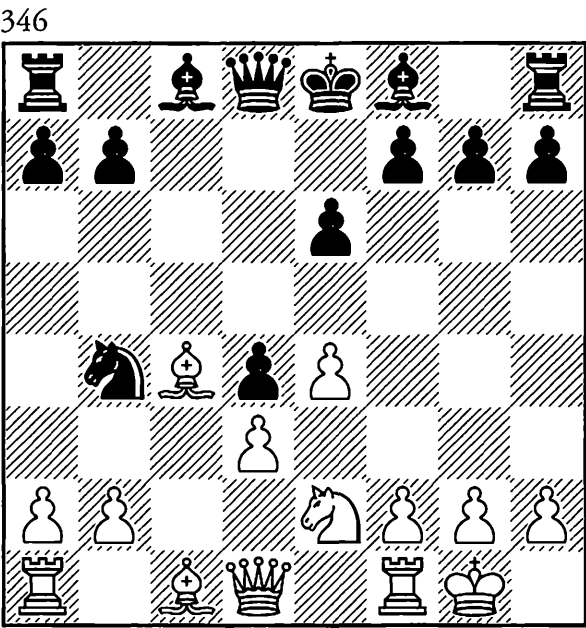


And White won easily (see game 23 at the end of this chapter).

Also in my game against Rubinstein in Dresden 1926, I was in no hurry to get rid of my backward pawn.

Nimzowitsch – Rubinstein

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗b4 6.♙c4 e6 7.0–0 ♗8c6 After 7...a6 I would not have hurried to get rid of the backward pawn, because 8.d4 cxd4 9.♙xd4 ♙xd4 10.♗xd4 ♙c5 11.♙e3 ♙xd4 12.♙xd4 ♗c2! 13.♙ad1 ♗xd4 14.♙xd4 ♗c6 15.♙d2 b5, and then ♙b7 and ♙e7, would only lead to equality. I would rather, after 8.a3 ♗4c6, have chosen 9.d3 and would have been well-placed after ♙e3 followed by moving my major pieces into the attack. 8.d3 ♗d4 (or else a3 will follow) 9.♗xd4 cxd4 10.♗e2



And after f2-f4 White obtains a mobile pawn mass, efficiently supported by ♙c4. This game can be seen after the end of part II chapter 2, page 221.

We hope to win over to our side many a chess lover by our *lenient* judgement of backward pawns! The rule about overprotection (section 3) will have appeared too stringent to many readers. They will have been thinking, why should they not be able to manoeuvre to their heart's desire, but always have to be thinking about defending some mysterious points or other which are not even under attack? I hope my lenient judgement of backward pawns will come as some consolation to such readers.

And now, let us turn our attention to that frightful area where amateurs (and sometimes masters) come to grief all too often. We mean the centre!

5. The centre

Insufficient notice paid to the central area as a typical, recurring error • The centre as the Balkans of the chessboard • The popular, but strategically dubious “switching” of the attack from the centre to the wings • The invasion of the centre • The occupation of the central squares

It ought to be known by everyone that it is necessary in certain positions to direct your pieces against your opponent's centre; for example, in those positions characterised by white pawns on e4, f4 and black pawns on d6, f7 (or white d4 and c4 against e6 and c6). What, however, is less well-known is that keeping an eye on the centre constitutes a strategic necessity even in semi-barricaded positions.

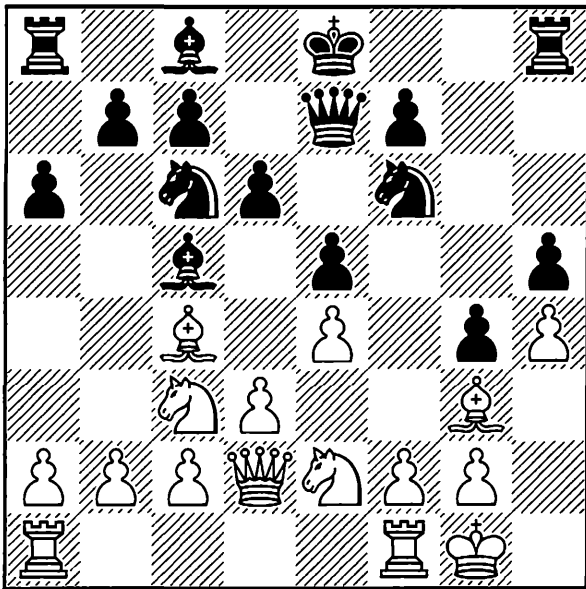
The centre is like the Balkans of the chessboard. This means that warlike operations are and will never be far away there.

Firstly, I can remember a position which looked quite harmless as far as the centre was concerned; it occurred after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.♗c3 ♗f6 5.d3 d6 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4 g5 8.♙g3 (cf. explanations to diagram 251, page 132). Although I have described the centre as harmless, two warlike operations exist there as potential threats: I. ♙b5 then d3-d4, II. ♗d5 then c2-c3 and d3-d4.

Another example can be seen in the opening of the game **Capablanca – R. Martinez**, Buenos Aires 1914. After 1.e4 e5 2.♙c4 ♙c5 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.d3 ♗c6 5.♙g5 h6 6.♙h4 g5 7.♙g3 h5 8.h4 g4 9.♙d2 d6 10.♗ge2 ♙e7 11.0–0, Black thought he could permit himself a move such as 11...a6. The loss of time which it causes is all the more important, because the position only *appears* to be a closed one, whereas in reality it

can be opened up at any point (by ♞d5). This is true of 90% of all closed centre positions.

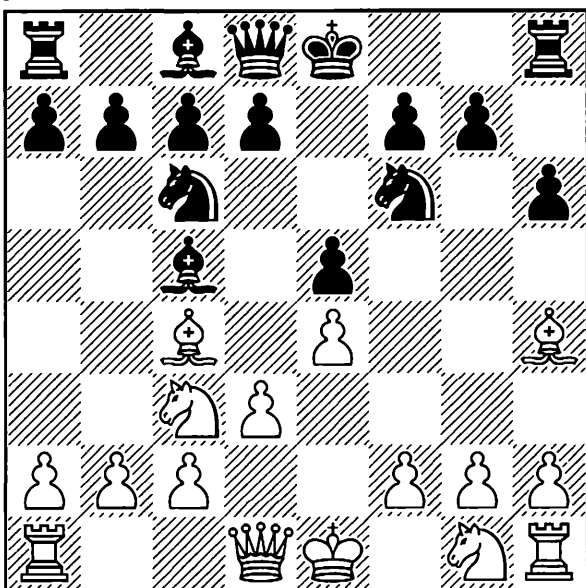
347



Next came $12.\text{♞d5! } \text{♞xd5 } 13.\text{exd5 } \text{♞d4 } 14.\text{♞xd4 } \text{♞xd4 } 15.\text{c3 } \text{♞b6 } 16.\text{d4 f6!}$, and White had a decisive advantage. After the further moves $17.\text{♞ae1 } \text{♞d7 } 18.\text{♞f4 } 0-0-0 \text{ } 19.\text{♞e3 } \text{♞de8 } 20.\text{g3 } \text{♞b8 } 21.\text{b4 } \text{♞a4 } 22.\text{♞b3 } \text{♞d7 } 23.\text{dxe5 } \text{♞xe3 } 24.\text{fxe3 fxe5 } 25.\text{♞f6 } \text{♞xb3 } 26.\text{axb3 } \text{♞e7}$ we reach the position which we discussed earlier (see diagram 227, page 117).

After the first six opening moves, Black could have achieved the initiative with a more skilful strategy. $1.\text{e4 e5 } 2.\text{♞c4 } \text{♞c5 } 3.\text{♞c3 } \text{♞f6 } 4.\text{d3 } \text{♞c6 } 5.\text{♞g5 h6 } 6.\text{♞h4}$

348

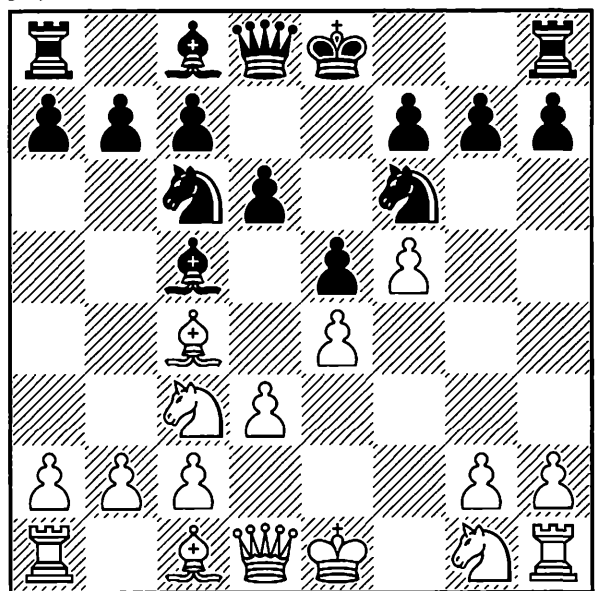


And now perhaps $6...\text{d6}$. The simplest was however $6...\text{♞e7}$. Another possibility was

$6...\text{♞d4}$, e.g. $7.\text{♞d5 g5 } 8.\text{♞g3 c6! } 9.\text{♞xf6† } \text{♞xf6 } 10.\text{c3 } \text{♞e6 } 11.\text{h4 d6}$ followed by ♞d7 and $0-0-0$ and possibly ♞f4 . If, after $6...\text{d6}$, White plays $7.\text{♞d5 g5 } 8.\text{♞g3}$ then $8...\text{♞e6}$ with the well-known threat $9...\text{♞xd5 } 10.\text{exd5 } \text{♞e7 } 11.\text{♞b5† c6 } 12.\text{dxc6 bxc6}$ and Black dominates the centre.

All the cases just mentioned show that the function of the knight on c3 and the one on c6 does not simply consist of preventing the respective pawn advances d5 and d4. No, these knights can clearly be shown to have the duty, at the first opportunity conceded by the opponent, to start an invasion of the centre by ♞d5 or ♞d4 respectively. Such a concession frequently appears in the games of many amateurs, since they have a preference for a premature switch of the action to one of the flanks. Unfortunately it cannot be denied that they don't give too much thought to the question of whether they might be withdrawing too many troops from the centre. The following type of play has been seen for years among amateurs (and in some master tournaments too!!): $1.\text{e4 e5 } 2.\text{♞c3 } \text{♞f6 } 3.\text{♞c4 } \text{♞c5 } 4.\text{d3 } \text{♞c6 } 5.\text{f4 d6 } 6.\text{f5?}$

349

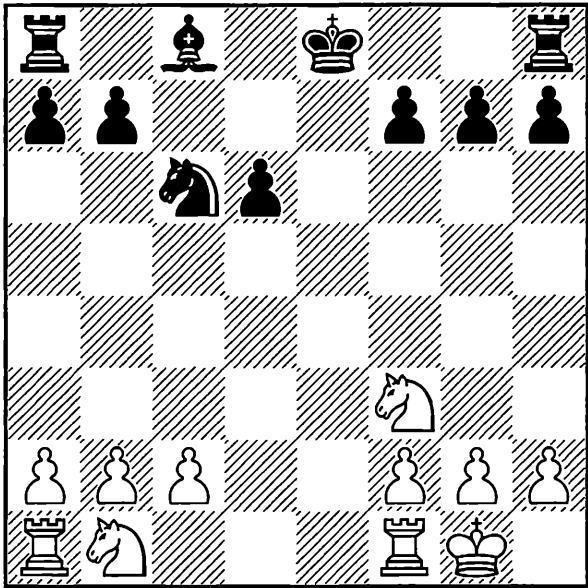


Of course $6.\text{♞f3}$ is the correct move. After $6...\text{♞d4}$ then c6, b5, a5, ♞b6 and then at some point the advance d6-d5, Black gets strong play in the centre (and on the left flank) and has an excellent advantage.

Moreover, I cannot warn you enough against the above-mentioned "change of front". Let me

give you an example which is not dramatic, since I am fortunate enough to be dealing with readers who can take a hint and need not be scared by horror stories. It went: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.dxe5 ♘xe4 5.♙d3 ♘c5 6.♙f4 ♘xd3† (here Black could have developed according to scientific principles by 6...♘e6 and d6-d5; the ♘e6 would have been our flexible and strong blockading piece) 7.♚xd3 ♘c6 8.0-0 (I would prefer 8.♘c3 followed by 0-0-0) 8...♙e7 9.exd6 ♙xd6 10.♙xd6 ♚xd6 11.♚xd6 cxd6

350



Next came 12.♙e1†? ♙e6 13.♘g5 (for non-positional players, the characteristic change of front) 13...♙d7 14.c3 And White's position is not particularly favourable. The correct course was 12.♘c3! (instead of 12.♙e1†?) then 13.♘b5 and 14.♘d4, centralising with the superior game.

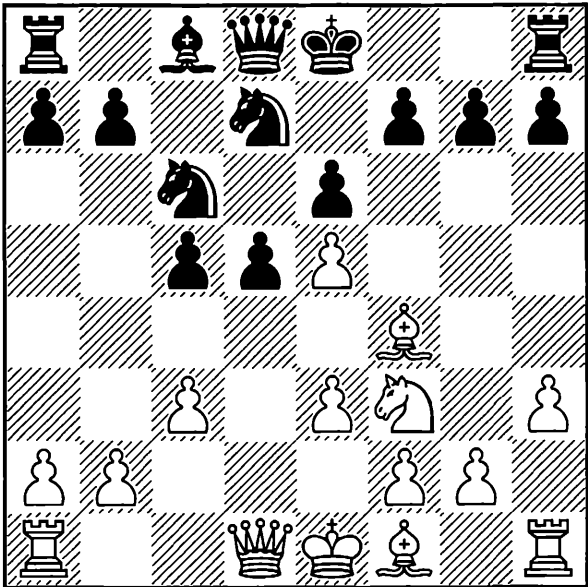
And now we present a whole game, because it is a good example of how even strong players frequently underestimate the central strategy.

Berndtsson – S.J. Bjurulf
Sweden 1920

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♙f4 e6 4.e3 c5 5.c3 b6

Here the following line appears the best: 5...♘c6! 6.♘bd2 ♙e7 7.h3 (directed against a possible ♘h5) 7...♙d6! 8.♘e5 ♙xe5 9.dxe5 ♘d7 10.♘f3 and now a violent struggle breaks out around e5.

351



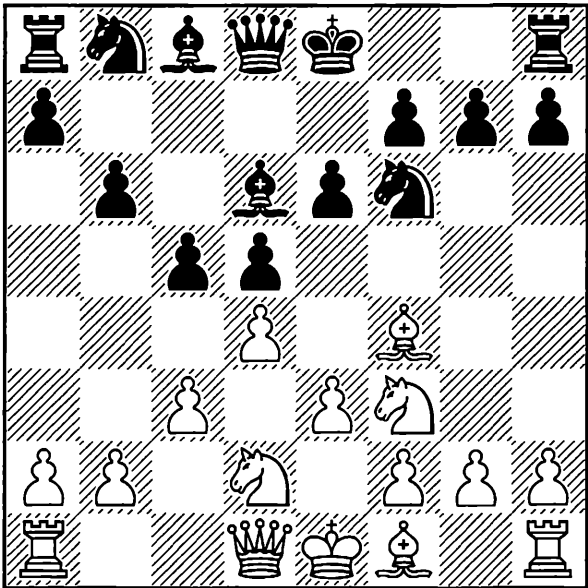
Black to move. A typical example of the struggle for a central square (here e5).

We can only recommend that positional players practise such central battles. A good plan now would be 10...a6! 11.♙d3 f6! (not 11...♙c7 on account of 12.0-0 ♘dxe5? 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♙h5 and wins) in order, after 12.exf6 ♙xf6, to seize the hotly contested point e5 (not the e5-pawn) by means of e6-e5. We recommend that you study this position.

The move 5...b6 is a typical mistake; it is played as though there were absolutely no central battlefield.

6.♘bd2 ♙d6

352



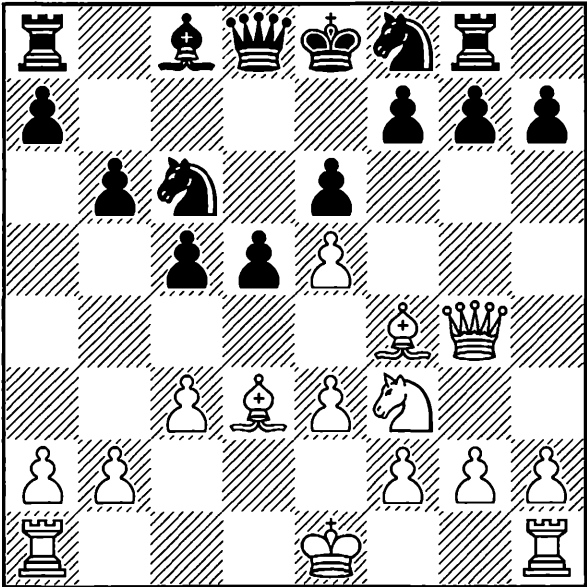
7.♘e5

I really like the above move, although there was at this point a chance tactical possibility

with 7.♙b5† ♕d7? 8.♙xd6 ♙xb5 9.dxc5 which was perhaps objectively preferable. But 7.♘e5 is the more logical move, because 5...b6 can be considered a loss of tempo as regards any action in the centre, meaning that the centre is ripe for an invasion.

7...♙xe5 8.dxe5 ♘fd7 9.♖g4 ♜g8 10.♘f3 ♘c6 11.♙d3 ♘f8

353



White to move. There is no doubt that the e5-square belongs completely to him. But where should the attack be directed: to the left, to the right or in the centre?

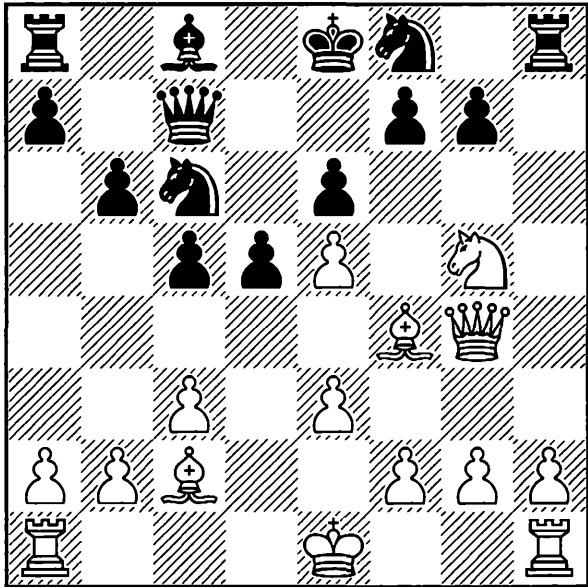
12.♘g5

White commits the strategic error of underestimating the importance of the e5-square, the key to the whole position. The attack should never be set up in such a way that the safety of the key point is compromised. Quite the contrary. It would have been more appropriate as we have seen to overprotect it.

The correct way to play involved passive behaviour on the kingside, but taking action in the centre (e3-e4) and on the queenside (b4, a4) along the following lines: 12.0-0 ♙b7 13.b4! c4 (not 13...cxb4 14.cxb4 ♘xb4 on account of 15.♙g5 winning a piece or causing some other such unpleasantness) 14.♙c2 ♖d7 15.a4 a6! (if 15...0-0-0 then 16.a5 bxa5 17.b5! with a winning attack) 16.e4! 0-0-0 17.♙e3 ♘c7 18.a5! with a decisive attack.

12...♖c7! 13.♙xh7 ♜h8 14.♙c2

354

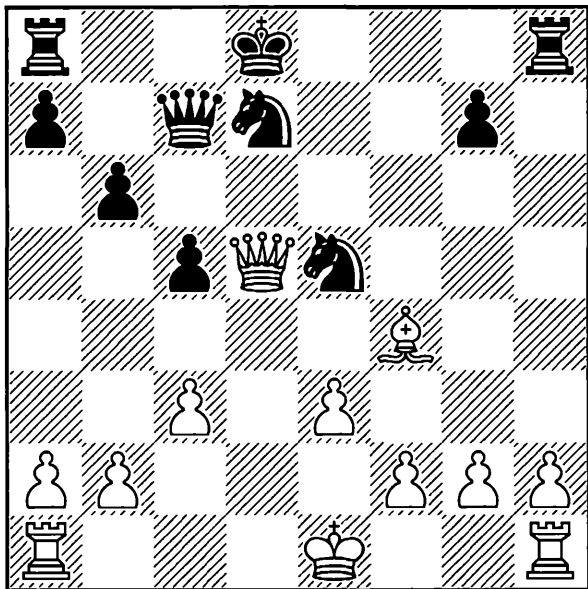


Black to move. How should he punish his opponent for having neglected to keep an eye on the centre (e5) during his last few moves?

14...♙b7?

Here Black should try to seize the e5-square, no matter how dangerous that might seem; therefore simply 14...♘xe5!. He would always achieve a quite satisfactory game, perhaps even the better of things, e.g. 14...♘xe5! 15.♖g3 f6 16.♘f3 ♘xf3† 17.♖xf3 e5! 18.♖xd5? ♙b7 19.♙a4† ♘e7, and Black wins a piece. Or (14...♘xe5!) 15.♙a4† ♘e7! with the threat of ♘d3†. On the other hand 15...♙d7 would be bad, because here White can get three pawns and a strong attack for the piece he has sacrificed by 16.♙xd7† ♘fxd7 17.♘xe6! fxe6 18.♖xe6† ♘d8 19.♖xd5.

355



But by 14...♟e5! 15.♞a4† ♟e7 Black would, as we said, have achieved an excellent game. What has happened, strategically speaking, in this game can be presented in the following light: 5...b6 did nothing for the centre, and as a result White became powerful there (= ♟e5). But on move 12, he neglected the key point e5, which could have led to the loss of his whole advantage if Black's counter-play had been correct. You can see how dominant central strategy is.

15.♟f3 g6 16.♞g5?

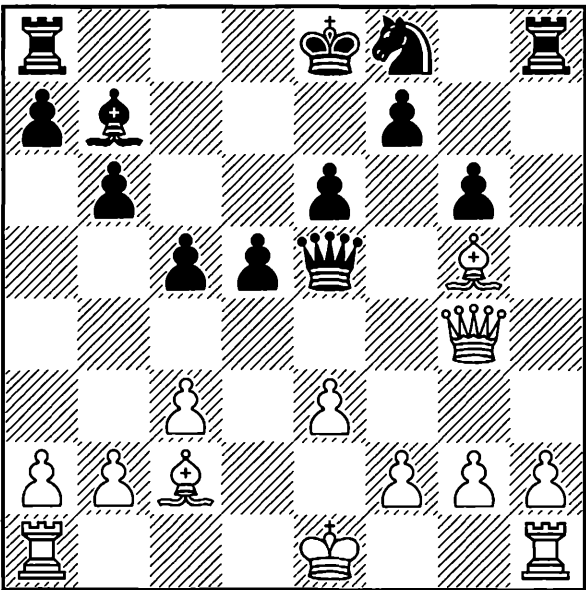
Hardly has he completed his lucky escape from danger in the centre, than White with his combinatory style of play once more sacrifices his main positional strength, e5. The overprotecting pieces, the ♟f3 and the ♞f4, should have remained in place; what was appropriate was the course demonstrated in the note to move 12.

16...♟xe5!

Now he is showing some courage!

17.♟xe5 ♞xe5

356



18.h4

Here White absolutely had to play to re-occupy e5: so 18.♞f4! and if 18...♞h5 then 19.♞g3 f6 20.♞d6 and Black can scarcely manage to shore up his position which is threatened from all points of the compass. After the text move on the other hand, Black could reach a position of total safety.

18...b5?

This not only involves a loss of time, but it weakens the c5-pawn and allows a2-a4. The

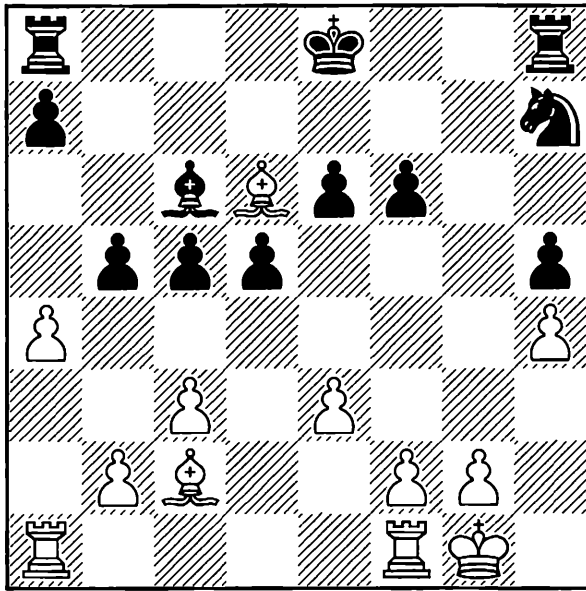
correct move was 18...♟d7. If White replies 19.♞a4 then 19...f6 20.♞f4 ♞e4! 21.♞b5 g5 or 21...0-0-0 and Black has a good position.

19.0-0 ♟h7 20.♞f4 ♞h5 21.♞xh5 gxf5 22.a4

And Herr Berndtsson played the rest of the game very well.

22...♞c6 23.♞e5 f6 24.♞d6

357



24...bxa4

If 24...c4 then 25.axb5 ♞xb5 26.♞a5 followed by ♞a4 and strong play down the a-file.

25.♞xc5 ♟d7 26.♞xa4 a6 27.♞xc6† ♟xc6 28.♞a5! ♞hb8 29.♞b4!

Clearing the line of attack a5-h5!

29...♞b5 30.♞fa1 ♞xa5 31.♞xa5 ♟b6 32.e4 ♞d8 33.exd5 exd5 34.c4 dxc4 35.♞xh5 ♞d7

White has achieved his aim and the passed pawns are now unstoppable.

36.g4 ♞g7 37.f3 ♟b7 38.♟f2

And he went on to win: 38...♞f7 39.♞c5 ♟f8 40.♞xc4 ♟g6 41.h5 ♟e5 42.♞d4 ♟c6 43.♞e4 f5 44.♞f4 ♟e5 45.♞xf5 ♞xf5 46.gxf5 1-0

Despite all its faults, this amusing and inventive game enables us to throw some light on the problem of the centre. Black's 5th move was an example of paying insufficient attention to the centre. White's 12th showed us an "underprotection" of the centre, and at the same time a typical and erroneous switching of play from the centre to the flanks. On move 14, Black underestimates the value of the key point e5,

or else he would have chanced 14...♖xe5. And finally, our comments on move 18 demonstrate an instructive example of the occupation of the central squares. The moral of all this:

1. keep an eye on the centre!
2. overprotect!
3. do not switch fronts prematurely!
4. after the pawns have disappeared (e5), you must at least occupy the squares! (= pieces as replacement blockaders for pawns in a chain, see under pawn chains.)

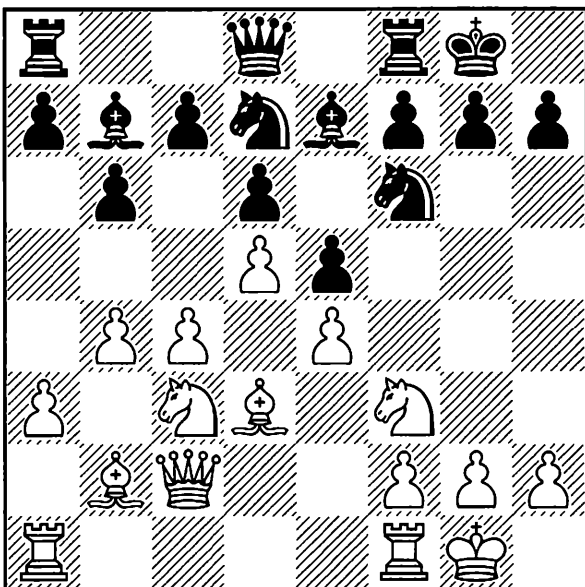
6. What should be the *leitmotif* behind true strategy?

Answer: a deliberate overprotection of the centre (instead of the erroneous but widespread underestimation of the centre) and in addition a systematic application of the stratagem of centralisation (instead of the equally erroneous but equally widespread “change of front”!).

We cast more light on play on the centre compared to play on the flanks: whoever plays in the centre deserves victory.

In the extraordinarily typical game which we have just looked at, we saw how “changing fronts” and “neglecting key central squares” led to some odd positions. This changing of fronts we have just mentioned sometimes crops up in master games too; think of **Opocensky – Nimzowitsch, Marienbad 1925** (page 170).

358

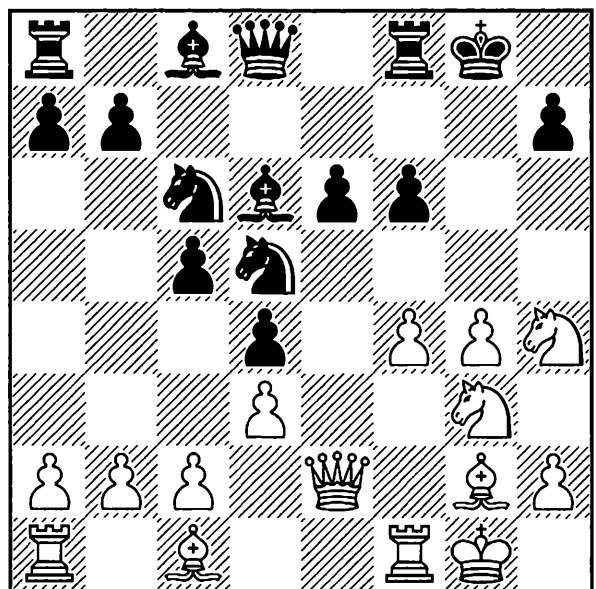


From this position play continued as follows: 13.♖e2? ♖h5 14.♔d2 g6 15.g4 ♖g7 16.♖g3 c6! and the change of front has changed things so much that Black, who could have been hard-pressed on his queenside, may now mount his own attack.

But what is typical of master games, and in this the gifted Czech master Opocensky is of course no exception, is and will remain centralisation. Alekhine makes use of this strategy particularly often and it has become (as well as play against opposing squares of one specific colour) the leitmotif in all his games. Even when it appears that he has a knife at his throat on the kingside, he always finds the time to mass his troops in the centre! If you are keen to learn, you should model yourself on him.

In our game in Semmering in 1926, (**Nimzowitsch – Alekhine**), after 1.e4 ♖f6 2.♖c3 d5 3.e5 ♖fd7 4.f4 e6 5.♖f3 c5 6.g3 ♖c6 7.♗g2 ♗e7 8.0–0 0–0 9.d3 ♖b6 he got into difficulties because he had neglected to play 9...f6. Next came 10.♖e2 d4 11.g4 (starting a violent attack) 11...f6 12.exf6 gxf6 (or else there will follow the centralisation of the white knight by ♖e2-g3-e4) 13.♖g3 ♖d5! 14.♔e2 ♗d6! 15.♖h4

359

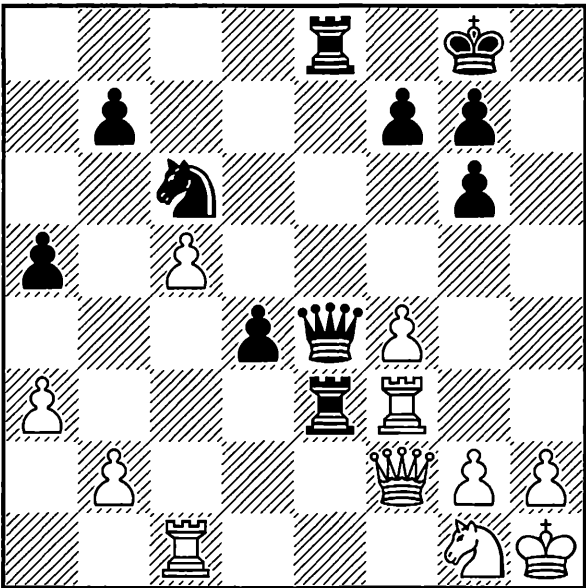


15...♖ce7! 16.♗d2 ♔c7 17.♔f2 And now the inner strength of the centralised black set-up came to the fore with the following surprising series of moves 17...c4! 18.dxc4 ♖e3! and

Alekhine obtained equality (the game will be thoroughly analysed in *The praxis of my system* as game no. 15).

I too am theoretically and practically absolutely in favour of centralisation. Take a look, for example, at my game against Yates in Semmering 1926. **Yates – Nimzowitsch: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♙d3 ♘e7 6.♘ge2 0–0 7.0–0 ♙g4 8.f3 ♙h5 9.♘f4 ♙g6 10.♘ce2 ♙d6 11.♚e1** Here the moves 11.♙xg6 hxg6 12.♘d3 would be centralising; the squares c5 and e5 would then be under long-term observation. **11...c5! 12.dxc5 ♙xc5† 13.♙h1 ♘bc6 14.♙d2 ♙e8 15.♘xg6 hxg6!** (creates a central point on f5) **16.f4** (normal development was 16.♚h4 ♘f5 17.♚xd8 ♙axd8 and Black has a slight endgame advantage) **16...♘f5 17.c3 d4! 18.c4 ♚b6 19.♙f3 ♙b4** (to clear the central square e3) **20.a3 ♙xd2 21.♚xd2 a5** (– restraint) **22.♘g1 ♙e3 23.♚f2 ♙ae8 24.♙d1 ♚b3 25.♙d2 ♘d6 26.c5 ♘c4! 27.♙xc4 ♚xc4** (the c5-pawn is weak, the d3-blockader has been cleared away and the effect on White’s centre is worse than ever) **28.♙c2 ♚d5! 29.♙c1 ♚e4!**

360



Now centralisation has been completed. Yates sacrificed a pawn by **30.f5** to defend against the growing pressure down the e-file and lost in the endgame after: **30...♙xf3 31.♘xf3 ♚xf5**

Further striking examples of centralisation can be found in great quantities in master praxis. Here we mention only Alekhine –Treybal,

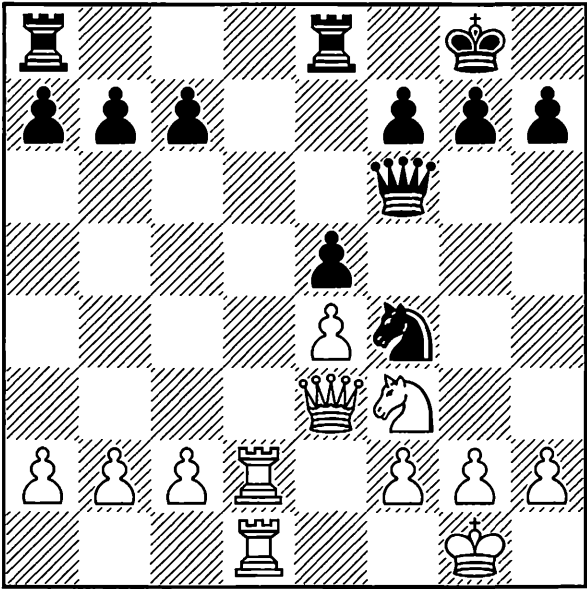
Baden-Baden 1925 (see page 76) and Nimzowitsch – Spielmann, San Sebastian 1912 (see page 121).

And now we turn to an analysis of play in the centre compared to play on the wing! The game Nimzowitsch – Alekhine, which we have already seen, gives us one example of how the above-mentioned struggle is in the habit of going.

The one who is playing in the centre always has the better prospects, but this is especially the case when we are talking about the frequently recurring group of positions we will now deal with: when one player has made an apparently promising diversion towards his opponent’s kingside. Everything would be just fine...but (an important but!) the opponent is dominating an open centre file! And this is what cuts the feet from under the flank attack with astonishing regularity. But even more astonishing than the said regularity is how the diversion we have mentioned (undertaken under the difficult circumstances described) keeps on finding new fans. And they all pay their tribute (in the form of horrible losses) to the incontrovertible truth: **a central file beats a flank attack**. The tribute paid by the author of this book consisted of the mere detail of missing out on a first prize (I lost the decisive game against Rubinstein in San Sebastian 1913 and thus had to be content with a share of 2nd and 3rd prizes).

Let us first take a look at the schema for the struggle being discussed.

361



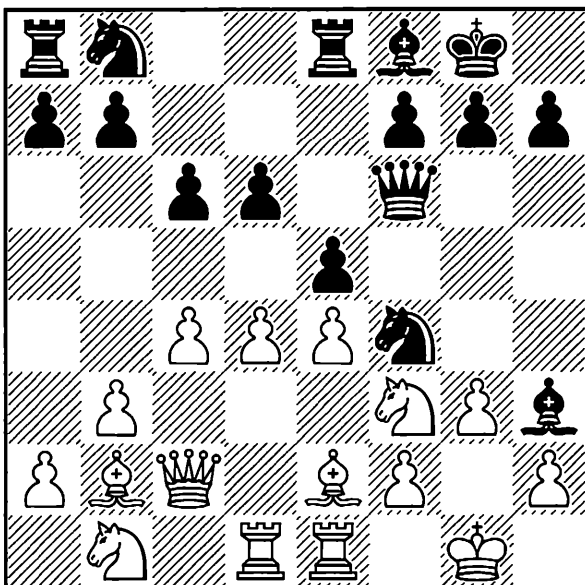
Black's attack is always going to fail because his rooks have the unpleasant duty of guarding his own base (here the 7th and 8th ranks) from penetration by White's rooks which are standing at the ready. In addition, e5 is not well enough protected (not a question of chance, since the ♖f3 is centralised, in total harmony with the whole white set-up and directed against e5). Since the whole business is extraordinarily important for discussions about the centre, we will give a whole game to illustrate it.

Rubinstein – Nimzowitsch

San Sebastian 1912

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 d6 3.♗f3 ♖bd7 4.♗c3 e5 5.e4 ♕e7 (there is probably nothing wrong with the immediate fianchetto by g6 and ♕g7) 6.♕e2 0–0 7.0–0 ♖e8 8.♝c2 ♕f8 9.b3 c6 (here, as Lasker correctly remarked in *BZ am Mittag*, 9...g6 then ♕g7, followed by exd4 then ♖e5, was a sounder continuation) 10.♕b2 ♖h5? (the “diversion” which cost me 2500 francs and the first prize!) 11.g3 ♖b8 12.♖ad1 (the central file makes its appearance!) 12...♝f6 13.♖b1! ♕h3 14.♖fe1 ♖f4 That I would be able to bring the knight to f4 whatever the circumstances was something I had foreseen in playing 10...♖h5. Unfortunately, or else I would have resisted the temptation to undertake a diversion.

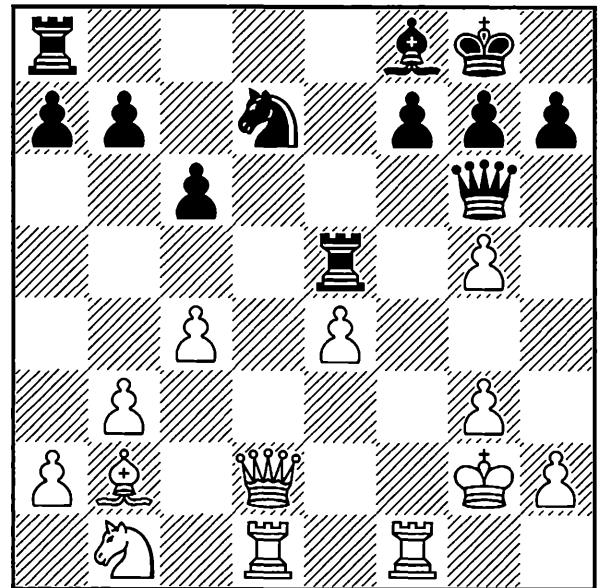
362



15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♖xe5 ♖xe5 17.♕f1! White could gain an advantage by 17.♕xe5 ♖xe2†

18.♝xe2 ♝xe5 19.♖d8 (the central file). 17...♖d7 18.♝d2 (now all of Black's “diverted pieces” are hanging in mid air) 18...♕xf1 19.♖xf1 ♖h3† 20.♕g2 ♖g5 (with the threat of mate in two) 21.f4 ♝g6 22.fxg5

363



22...♖xe4? If 22...♝xe4† 23.♕h3 ♖e7, then 24.♖de1 would win a piece. Relatively best was 22...♖e7, when the win could only be achieved by 23.♕a3! c5! – not 23...♝xe4† on account of 24.♕g1 c5 25.♖fe1 etc. – 24.♖c3, because after Black plays the forced 23...c5, he no longer has the possibility of ♖c5, whereas on the other hand the d5-square is available to White for his operations. 23.♝xd7 ♖e2† 24.♖f2 and White won.

This was the worst defeat in the 22 years of my chess career! At the end of this chapter there will be a similarly instructive game: Kline – Capablanca.

7. Giving up the centre

In some game annotations as early as 1911 and 1912, I had already advanced the theory that the centre need not be occupied by pawns: I maintained that centrally posted pieces or lines aimed at the centre could replace these pawns. The main point was to restrain the opponent's central pawns. I sent this idea in 1913 in the form of an article to the Swedish publication *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten* (whose chess columnist was Lindström) and also to G. Marco.

The Swedish journal published the article at once, but it did not appear in the *Wiener Schachzeitung* until 1923.

The following editor’s explanation for the delay appeared in the *Neue Wiener Schachzeitung*:

“This article was intended for publication in the ‘*Wiener Schachzeitung*’, which was obliged to cease publication due to the confusing wartime circumstances. Master Marco has now made it available to us and we publish with all the more pleasure, since it is especially pertinent as we are now in the age of the Neo-romantic School.”

So here is the article:

The “surrender of the centre” – a prejudice concerning the 3...d5xe4 variation.
By A. Nimzowitsch

When in the much disputed variation 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 Black plays the move 3...dxe4, he is in the process of surrendering the centre, according to current opinion.

This point of view appears to me to be based on an incomplete and misunderstood conception of the notion of the “centre”. I shall try:

- 1. to point out that this is in fact a prejudice,
- 2. to explain the historical development of the same.

Firstly, let us define the concept of the centre.

For this, we need simply stick to the word itself: the centre is the squares which are situated in the middle of the board. *Squares! Not pawns!* This is important and should never be forgotten, under any circumstances.

The significance of the centre, i.e. the complex of squares which is situated in the middle of the board, as a basis for further operations, lies beyond all possible doubt. Take, for instance, this annotation by Emanuel Lasker:

“White does not have a good enough position in the centre to be able to take action on the flanks.” This is subtly thought out and illustrates at the same time the deep relationship between the centre and the flanks, the centre being the dominating principle and the flanks subordinate to it.

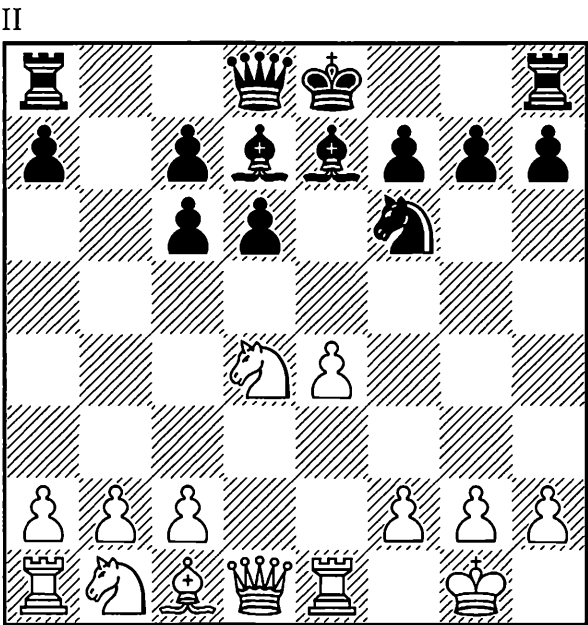
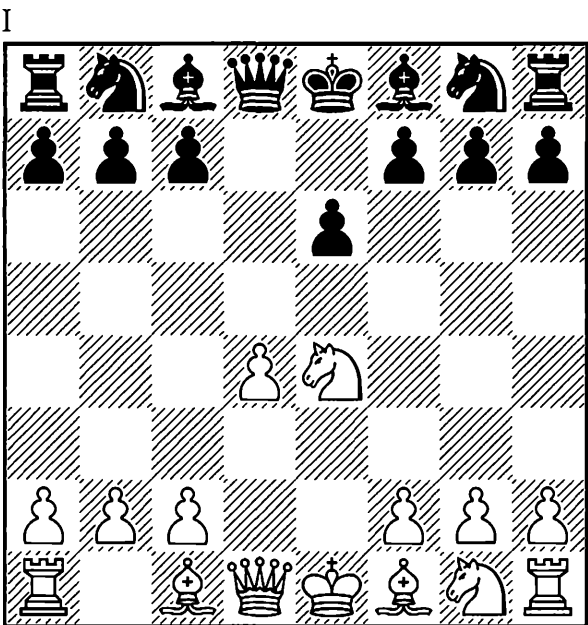
That the control of the centre must be so important becomes clear when you realise that by building up in the centre you are able to make your presence felt on both flanks, and even to swing over to one of them.

Without a solid centre there can also be no sound position.

We spoke of dominating the centre. What do we mean by that? What influences this control?

The general opinion is: the centre should be occupied by pawns; e4 and d4 is the ideal, but at least one of these two (should your opponent not have the corresponding pawn) makes possible the seizure of the centre.

Really? In the illustrative positions (diagrams I and II) does the possession of a central pawn (d4 or e4) justify us in speaking of a seizure of the centre?



If I were involved in a fight for, say, the conquest of a centrally placed and open (i.e. unfortified) space and if I occupied the said position with a handful of troops, without having prevented my enemy from keeping up a steady fire on the position I had “seized”, would it occur to me to state that I had conquered the position in question? Of course not. So why should I do the same in a game of chess?

So we are gradually getting round to what it is really about: not about occupation, i.e. positioning pawns, but much more about general effectiveness in the centre, and this is decided by completely different factors.

I have formulated this idea as follows: when you allow a pawn to disappear from the centre (e.g. d5xe4 in diagram I) this is far from meaning that you have given up the centre. The concept of the centre is a much wider one.

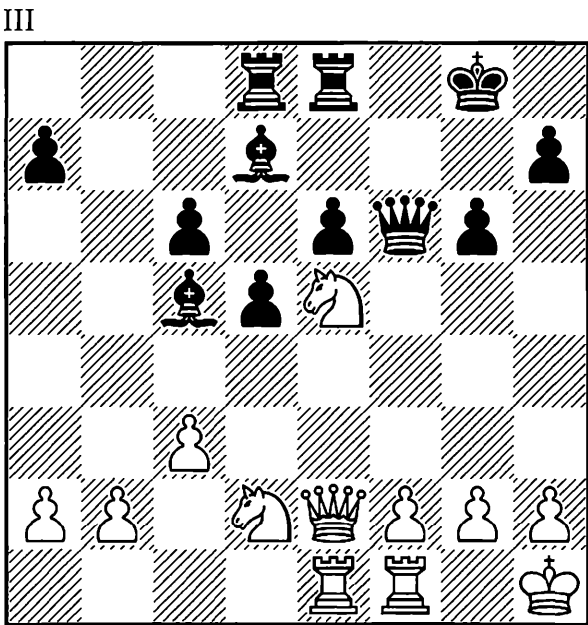
Of course, the pawns are the pieces best suited to establishing a centre because they are the most stable; but pieces which are posted in the centre are perfectly capable of replacing pawns. And also pressure exerted on the opposing centre, from rooks or bishops which have trained their sights on it, can also be important.

We come up against the last case in the variation 3...d5xe4. The move, erroneously described as a surrender of the centre, in fact quite significantly increases Black’s effectiveness in the centre. Since d5xe4 in fact removes the obstruction on d5, Black obtains a free hand in the d-file and on the b7-h1 diagonal (which he opens for himself by b7-b6).

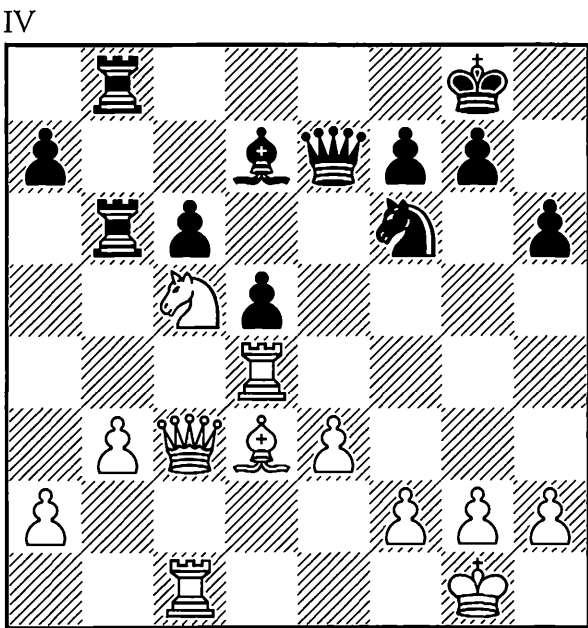
Obstruction! That is the drawback of occupying the centre with pawns. In its essence (stability, conservative nature one might say) a pawn is a good building block in the centre, but also an obstruction!

There are many examples of the fact that effectiveness in the centre does not depend on the number of pawns with which one side is occupying it. Let us take a look at some of these.

Pieces in the centre: 1. Pawns on e6 and d5 blockaded by white knights on e5 and d4, e.g. **Nimzowitsch – Levenfish**, Karslbard 1911.



2. The isolated pawn pair d5, c6 which results from an exchange of the knight on c6 in an isolated queen’s pawn position, e.g. **Nimzowitsch – Prof. Kudrjawzew and Dr Landau**, Dorpat 1910 (see page 71).



The two cases quoted show us a blockade. But that concept is an elastic one. Often the simple holding up effect produced by pressure from a rook, which should first of all prevent the advance of the opposing centre, culminates in complete paralysis which blocks any advance.

Cases of pressure exerted on the opposing centre are legion (see also diagram II).

They lead either to blockade followed by annihilation (for only by moving is a piece guaranteed to keep on living) or to uncomfortable positions for the protecting pieces, a circumstance

which causes the downfall of the “fortunate” possessor of the centre.

What has just been said teaches us that nothing is to be gained by the arithmetical process of counting the centre pawns. The idea that we could wish to make such a process the starting point of a philosophy of the centre must be considered totally wrong-headed. This is a superannuated concept invented by the first of the modern positional players, first being used in the chronological sense!

I am certain that in a few years nobody will consider 3...d5xe4 to be a surrender of the centre. The disappearance of such a prejudice will open the way for a new and brilliant development of chess philosophy and – strategy.

Let me say a few more words about the birth of this prejudice; it is closely linked to the history of positional play...

First there was Steinitz. But what he said was so unusual and he himself was such a larger than life figure that his “modern principles” could not become popular without qualification.

Then came Tarrasch. He took up the ideas of Steinitz and rendered them more palatable to the general public by diluting them.

And now, our specific case. As has been said, Steinitz was a deep and a great thinker and nowhere was his thought deeper and greater than in his ideas about the centre! Best of all, think how in the Ruy Lopez his move (d7-d6) turned the apparently so healthy opposing pawn e4 into what everyone could recognise as such recognisable weakness!

Nothing was further from his mind than a formalistic, arithmetic understanding of the centre...

That was my article, to which there was added another illustrative game which we shall omit here for lack of space. Instead of it, you should take another look at the chapter on “Pawn chains” and especially game no. 24. With this, we must take our first farewell of the centre, but this shall not stop us returning to the main problem discussed here as often as the opportunity presents itself.

There follow some games to illustrate this first chapter.

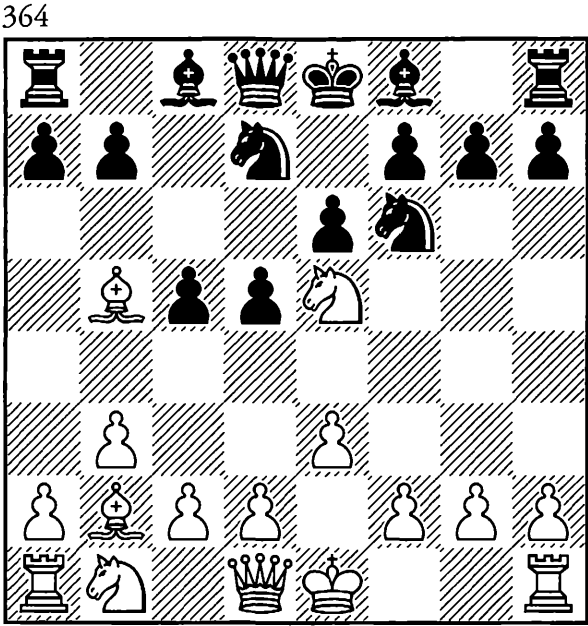
Game 23
Nimzowitsch – Prof. Michel
Semmering 1926

This illustrates the ideal of “total mobility”, but also touches on the problem of prophylaxis.

1.♞f3 d5 2.b3 ♞f6 3.♙b2 c5 4.e3 e6

An innovation. Black avoids the development of the ♞ to c6, because it could lead to it being pinned (♙b5).

5.♞e5 ♞bd7 6.♙b5



6...a6?

Here 6...♙d6 was better than the text move, firstly when you think of development and secondly because White is threatening to become strong down the b2-g7 diagonal (he is also seeking to support the outpost e5 on that diagonal). So prophylaxis was urgently required, e.g. 6...♙d6! 7.♞xd7 ♙xd7 8.♙xd7† ♞xd7 9.♙xf6 gxf6 and there is both good and bad associated with the doubled pawns (cf. Chapter 2 about doubled pawns).

Moreover, we also consider 6...♙e7 to be better than the text move (6...a6).

7.♙xd7† ♞xd7 8.♞xd7 ♙xd7 9.0–0 f6

Admitting the weakness of the b2-g7 diagonal. Worth considering was 9...♙d6, e.g. 9...♙d6 10.♞g4 ♞c7 followed by 0–0–0.

10.c4 dxc4

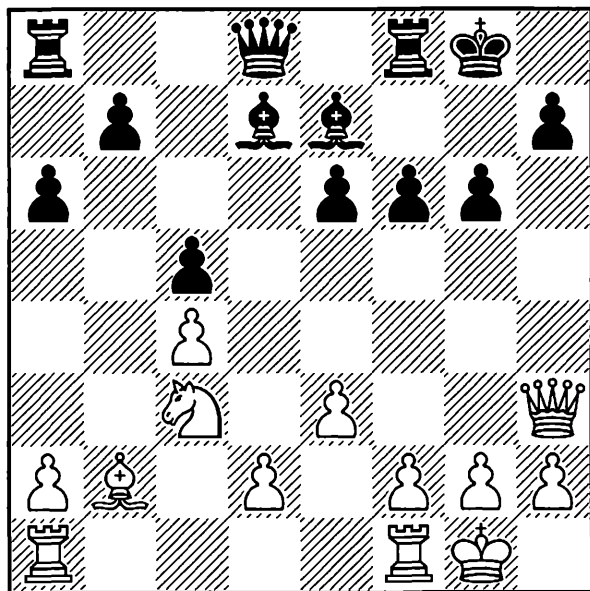
The threat was 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♖h5† then 13.♗xd5.

11.bxc4 ♖d6 12.♗h5† g6 13.♗h6 ♖f8 14.♗h3!!

The best square for the queen, but hard to find. Now 14...e5 would only surrender the d5-square, e.g. 14.♗h3 e5 15.♗g3 (threatening 16.♙xe5) 15...♙g7 16.e4 then d3 and ♖b1-c3-d5 with a positional advantage for White.

14...♙e7 15.♘c3 0-0

365

**16.a4!**

White will sacrifice any effectiveness his d-pawn might have by planning the set-up with e4, f4 etc. which will leave his d-pawn backward. But this plan makes it necessary to paralyse the three queenside pawns, hence the text move.

16...♙d6 17.f4 ♗e7 18.e4 ♙c6 19.g4

A pawn roller, which should hardly be difficult to render harmless.

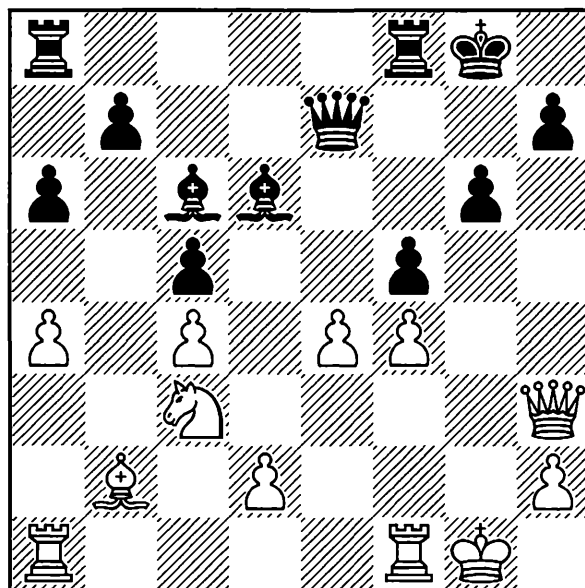
19...f5

If Black does nothing, White has the choice between a direct kingside attack and on the other hand play against the c5-pawn. In that case play could go something like 19...♗ae8 20.♗e3, followed by a4-a5 then ♙b2-a3 and finally e4-e5 to drive away the defending ♙d6. After the text move (19...f5) the game is lost to a mating attack.

20.gxf5 exf5

Or 20...gxf5 21.♙f2, etc.

366

**21.e5**

The following line is dedicated to friends of combinatory complications: 21.♘d5 (instead of 21.e5 as was played) 21...♗xe4 22.♗ae1 ♗xc4 23.♘e7† (Black can resign after 23.♗h6 ♗f7 24.♗e6 with the threat of 25.♗xg6† – editor) ♙xe7 24.♗xe7 ♗f7 25.♗xf7 ♗xf7 26.♗c3 ♙f8! and Black seems to have sufficient defensive resources.

21...♙c7 22.♘d5 ♙xd5

Had Black retreated his bishop to b8 on move 21, he would now have been able to meet the penetration ♘d5 by ♗e6, but it would have done him no good, e.g. 21...♙b8 22.♘d5 ♗e6 23.♘f6† ♗xf6 24.exf6 ♗e4 (the counter-chance) 25.f7† and White wins by 25...♙xf7 26.♗xh7† ♙f8 29.♗g7† ♙e8 28.♗fe1 etc.

23.cxd5 ♗d7 24.e6! 1-0

Black resigned. After 24...♗xd5 25.♗h6 forces mate (or the loss of the rook) and upon 24...♗e7 there is disaster after 25.♗c3.

The surrender of the centre

The following game is an example of how easily a premature surrender of the centre can lead to a debacle. In spite of that, the said procedure seems quite practicable to us. The only thing is that at the start, we must not allow ourselves to be pushed on to too slippery a slope (which can easily happen with this sort of play); to manage this,

we must weigh in the balance how tenacious a tournament player we are, and if we come up to scratch then we have quite good prospects for the future. See for example the way Rubinstein won games like this (San Sebastian 1911) and game 25. But now game 24...

Game 24
Dr Tarrasch – Mieses
Berlin 1916

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4

Gives up the centre, but opens the d-file and the b7-h1 diagonal for pressure against White's centre.

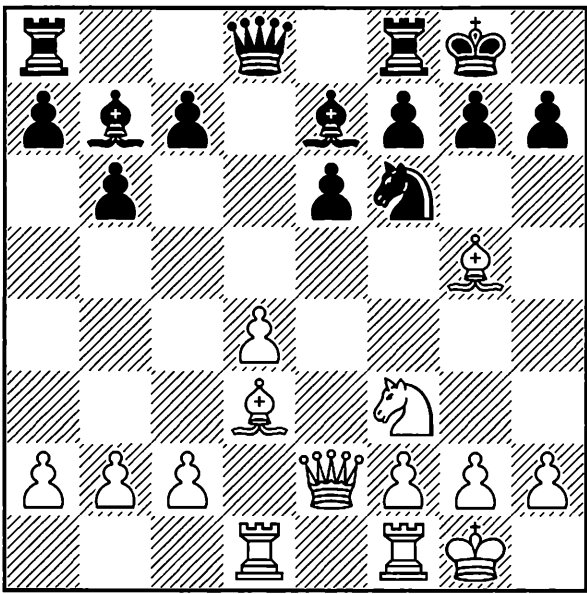
4.♗xe4 ♘d7 5.♗f3 ♗gf6 6.♙d3 ♗xe4

A more solid try was 6...b6, but the text is also playable.

7.♙xe4 ♗f6 8.♙d3

If 8.♙g5 ♙e7 9.♙xf6 then best is 9...gxf6.
8...b6 9.♙g5 ♙b7 10.0-0 ♙e7 11.♖e2 0-0 12.♙ad1

367



12...h6?

Showing a lack of the necessary tournament tenacity! Why not 12...♙d5? If after that 13.c4 then 13...♙a5, possibly followed by ♙ad8, and the pressure starts to make itself felt. But if 13.c4 ♙a5 14.d5 then 14...♙ae8! with strong counter-threats, e.g. 15.dxe6? ♙xf3 16.♙xf3 ♙xg5. It is immediately obvious why the “contact” with the d5-square is so effective: here d5 constitutes first

the outpost square on the d-file, and secondly the outpost on the diagonal b7-h1, and finally even a blockading square. The enormous strategic significance of the d5-square explains why even a fleeting contact with it works wonders!

13.♙f4 ♙d5

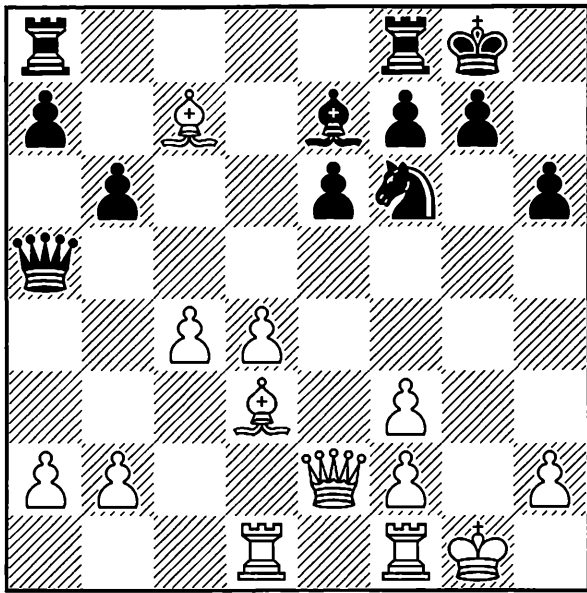
Now this move is unfavourable, since the c7-pawn is hanging. We can now see the slippery slope.

14.c4 ♙a5 15.♙xc7 ♙xf3

Worth considering was 15...♙ac8 16.♙e5 ♙fd8, and the white pawn majority is strongly hampered in its advance.

16.gxf3!

368



16...♙xa2?

Black is not happy with the loss of the pawn and seeks compensation in a risky fashion, which costs him his queen. After 16...♙fc8 17.♙e5 ♗d7! (taking into account the threat of ♗h1 then ♙g1) he could still put up some resistance. If now 18.♙e4 then 18...♗xe5 19.♙xa8 ♗g6! and Black is threatening to play ♗f4, then possibly ♙d6 and ♙h5.

17.♙a1 ♙b3 18.♙c2 ♙b4 19.♙a4 1-0

The queen was neatly trapped.

In a situation which is very similar to the previous game, Tartakower was able to turn the d5-square (which Mieses had so neglected) into the base for activity which he handled in virtuoso fashion.

Game 25

Grünfeld – Dr Tartakower

Semmering 1926

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 ♘g4 4.♗e5 ♘h5
5.♗xc4

After 5.♗c3 the best is 5...♗d7 causing the bold knight on e5 to make up its mind.

5...e6 6.♞b3

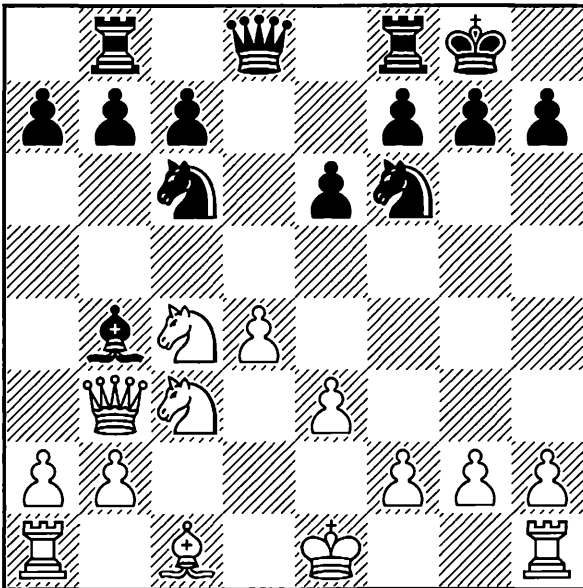
Simultaneously threatening 7.♞xb7 and 7.♞b5†.

6...♗c6 7.e3 ♞b8!

He is not afraid to use the rook to protect the modest pawn.

8.♗c3 ♗f6 9.♘e2 ♘xe2 10.♗xe2 ♘b4† 11.♗c3
0-0

369



Now that both sides have completed their development, the game is roughly level, but the otherwise well protected white centre is showing an obvious degree of immobility. But *My System* teaches that any immobile complex has a tendency towards weakness. The truth of this sentence will soon become clear.

12.0-0 ♗d5!

The knight feels at home on d5, because 13.e4 is impossible on account of the reply 13...♗xd4.

13.♗xd5

13.♗e4 would be followed by a queenside mobilisation for Black by 13...b5 14.♗e5 ♗xe5 15.dxe5 c5 16.a3 c4, etc. or 14.♗cd2 e5!, etc. wrecking White's game.

13...♞xd5! 14.♞c2 e5!

White's centre is already being rolled up.

15.♗xe5 ♗xe5 16.dxe5 ♞xe5 17.♘d2 ♘xd2
18.♞xd2 ♞fd8 19.♞c2 ♞d5!

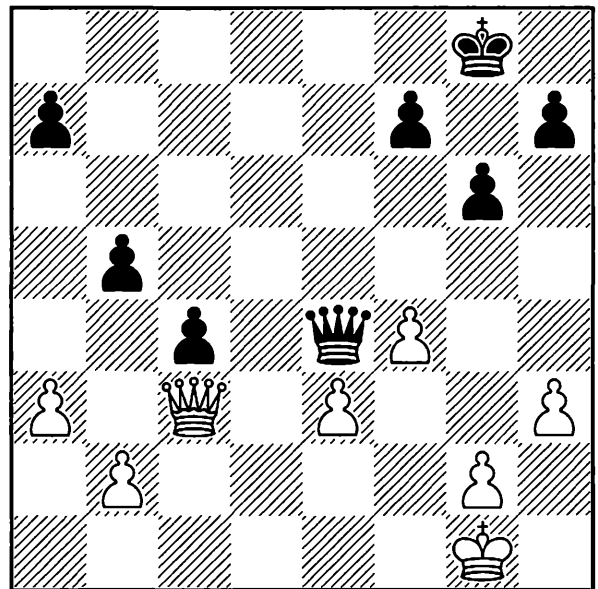
He makes excellent use of the d5-square.

20.♞ad1 ♞bd8 21.♞xd5 ♞xd5 22.♞d1 g6
23.♞xd5 ♞xd5 24.a3 c5

Black has a definite endgame advantage: a queenside pawn majority, the d-file and last but not least the centralised queen position. But the advantage is only tiny.

25.h3 b5 26.f4 c4 27.♞c3 ♞e4!

370



Continuing to centralise! White's pawn majority was more difficult to make use of than Black's (e.g. 26.f3 would have been followed by 26...f5, and e4 is prevented); this explains why he loses.

28.♗f2 a5!

Tartakower plays the whole endgame with wonderful precision and genuine artistry. In my opinion, Tartakower is the third best endgame artist of all today's masters.

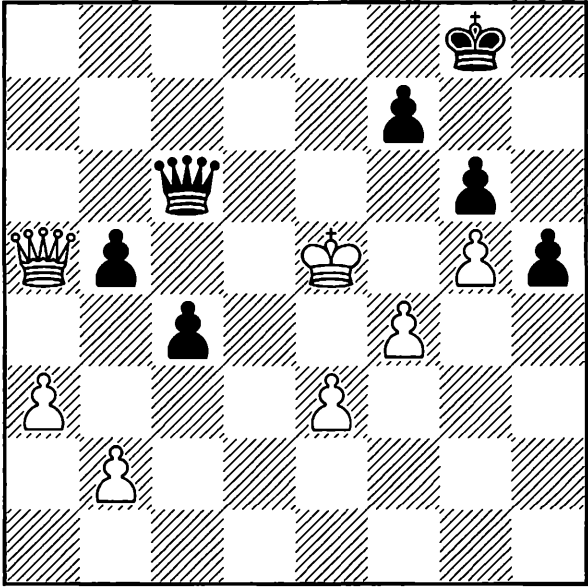
29.g4 h6 30.h4 ♞h1!

Only now (and his slow and steady pace deserve our praise) does he abandon the central position in favour of a diversion.

31.♗g3 ♞g1† 32.♗f3 ♞h2! 33.g5 h5 34.♗e4
♞xh4 35.♞xa5 ♞h1† 36.♗e5 ♞c6!

So that he can, after 37. ♞e1, employ the following manoeuvre (37.♞e1) ♞c5† 38.♗e4 ♞f5† then ♞c2 and wins.

371



37.♙a7 h4 38.f5
White is already on his last legs.
38...gxf5 39.♗xf5 ♖f3† 40.♗e5 h3 41.♗d4
♙g4† 0–1

Game 26
Kline – Capablanca
New York 1913

This game illustrates the stratagem of a central file against a flank attack.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6 3.c3 ♘bd7 4.♙f4 c6 5.♙c2
♙c7 6.e4 e5 7.♙g3 ♙e7

White now has the attacking position in the centre. That is a definite advantage. But here the weakness of e4 (we shall soon see why e4 is “weak”) soon leads to the surrender of the above-mentioned advantage, i.e. White sees himself obliged to equalise by playing d4xe5.

8.♙d3 0–0 9.♘bd2 ♙e8! 10.0–0 ♘h5

To exchange the bishop.
11.♘c4 ♙f6 12.♘e3 ♘f8 13.dxe5

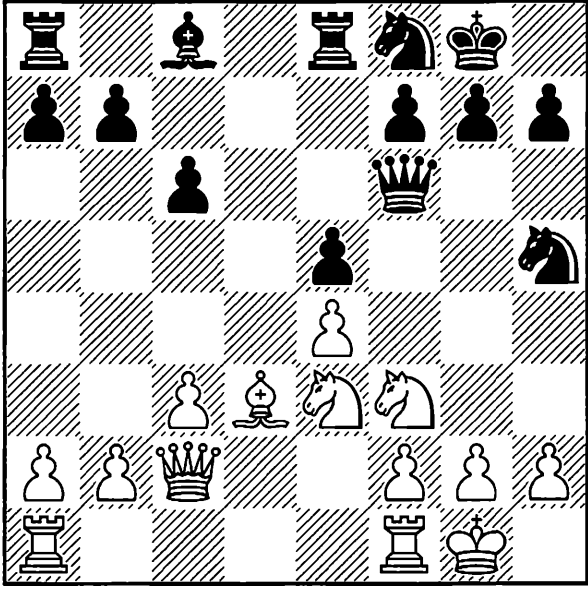
Since the ♙d3 is necessary for the defence of e4, an exchange is the only way to defend d4 against ♘e6. You should memorise this motif of forcing the opponent to make up his mind (be it by dxe5 or by d4-d5). We shall have to investigate this motif in the next chapter.

13...dxe5 14.♙h4 ♙e7 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6?

With this move and the next one, a “diversion” is introduced, which should be considered

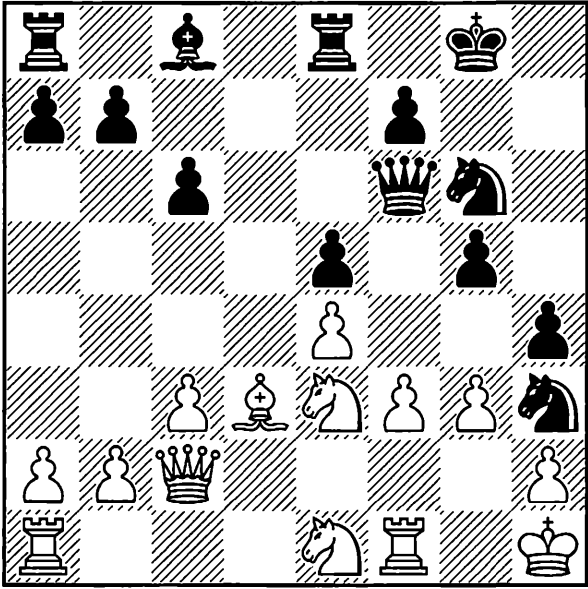
against the spirit of this opening. Correct play consisted of ♙e6 and the doubling of rooks on the d-file, exploiting at the same time the somewhat uncomfortable position of White’s bishop on d3. The simplest would seem to have been ♙e6 on the 14th move.

372



16.♘e1 ♘f4? 17.g3 ♘h3† 18.♗h1 h5 19.♘3g2
g5 20.f3 ♘g6 21.♘e3! h4

373



The knight on h3 has had its retreat cut off; the attempt to save it by the reckless advance of the kingside pawns allows the possibility of a blow which is decisive in such situations, namely the invasion of the centre, here by ♘f5.

22.g4??

According to my analysis, penetration by 22.♘f5 would have been decisive for White,

for example 22.♖f5 hxc3 23.hxc3 ♕xf5 24.exf5 ♖e7 25.♔g2 ♔g7 (is the pawn sacrifice 25...g4 26.fxg4 ♖g5 better?) 26.♔xh3 ♖h8† (or 26...♖d5 27.♖e2) 27.♔g2 ♖h6 28.♔f2 ♖h2† 29.♖g2 ♖h3 30.♔e1 ♖xg3 31.♖e3.

22...♖hf4

Now the knight enjoys its newly regained freedom. After this rather doubtful excursion, which could have ended fatally for him, Black begins the correct plan of play down the d-file, and he is able to carry it through to victory with supreme mastery.

The remainder needs little explanation. It went: 23.♖f2 ♖xd3 24.♖xd3 ♕e6 25.♖d1 ♖ed8 26.b3 ♖f4 27.♖g2 ♖xd3 28.♖xd3 ♖xd3 29.♖xd3 ♖d8 (why not 29...♕xg4?) 30.♖e2 h3 31.♖e3 a5! 32.♖f1 a4 33.c4 ♖d4! 34.♖c2 ♖d7 35.♖e3 ♖d8 36.♖d1 ♖xd1† 37.♖xd1 ♖d4 (d-file and centralisation) 38.♖f2 b5! 39.cxb5 axb3 40.axb3 ♕xb3 (threatening 41...♖a1†) 41.♖xh3 ♕d1 42.♖f1 cxb5 43.♔g2 b4 44.♖b5 b3 45.♖e8† ♔g7 46.♖e7 b2 47.♖xg5 ♕b3 and won.

Game 27

Rubinstein – Levenfish

Karlsbad 1911

This illustrates the struggle of the effect of a file against a pawn centre. Motto: first restrain, then blockade, and finally destroy.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.♕g5 ♕e7 5.e5 ♖fd7 6.♕xe7 ♖xe7 7.♖d2 0–0 8.f4 c5 9.♖f3 f6

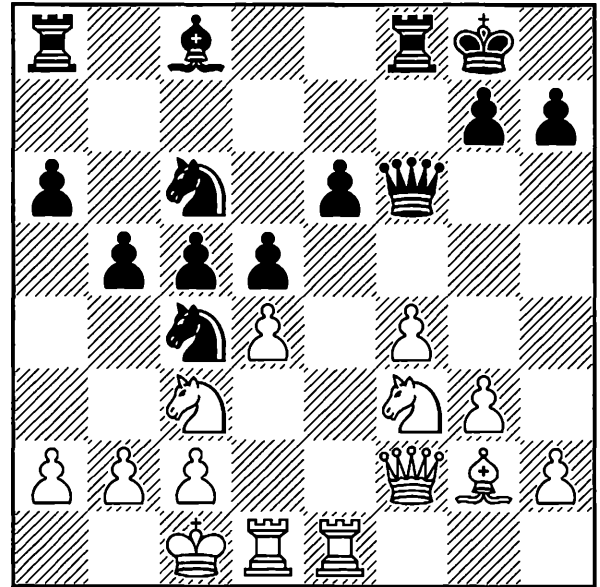
The correct way to attack a chain was first to capture by 9...cxd4 10.♖xd4 and only then play ...f6. But after 10...f6 11.exf6 ♖xf6 the position reached is still similar to that in the text.

10.exf6 ♖xf6 11.g3 ♖c6 12.0–0–0 a6 13.♕g2 ♖b6

Attacking in the direction of g2-d5 constitutes a necessary component in White's plan. This direction (after c5xd4) does restrain the freeing advance e6-e5 more thoroughly than any other set-up would have been able to do.

14.♖he1 ♖c4 15.♖f2 b5

374



16.dxc5!

Bravo! He is not afraid of the flank attack ♖xb2, because strong play in the centre can never be brought down by an attack on the flank. And his play is centralised: he has central files the restraining pressure of which is beginning to be felt, and in addition the prospect of occupying the central points d4 and e5. Just note how Black's attack on the wing is driven back from the centre!

16...♖xb2 17.♔xb2 b4 18.♖d4! bxc3† 19.♔a1

A rook is there to take the ♖c3.

19...♖xd4

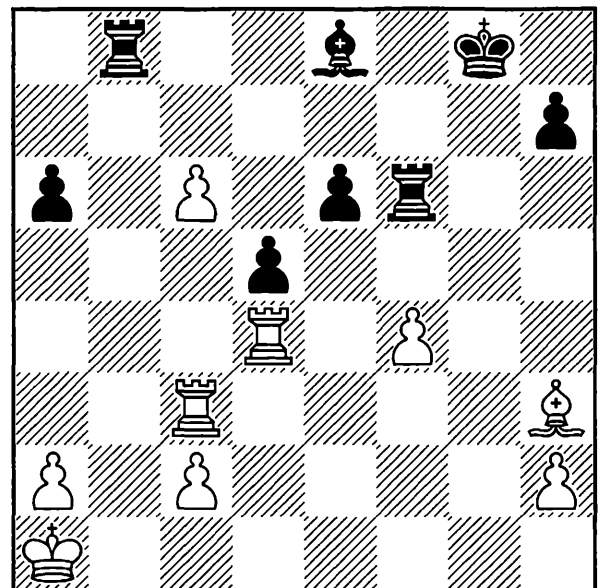
After 19...♕d7 there would come 20.♖xe6 ♕xe6 21.♖xe6 ♖xe6 22.♕xd5.

20.♖xd4 ♖b8 21.♖e3 g5

Now he tries the other flank.

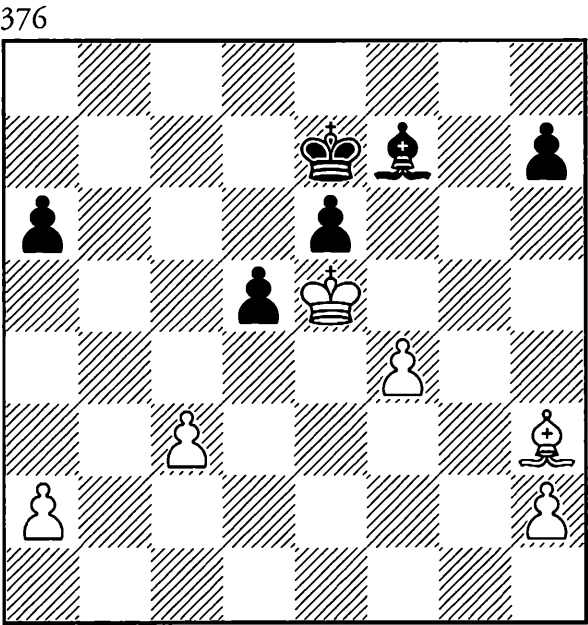
22.♖xc3 gxf4 23.gxf4 ♕d7 24.c6 ♖xd4 25.♖xd4 ♕e8 26.♕h3 ♖f6

375



27.c7

I would have preferred it if he had sought the decision in a bishop ending, rather than by using the passed pawn on c7, which is a bit of an appendage. For example, aiming for this position:



Then comes f4-f5 exf5 ♔xf5, and White wins the d-pawn and the game. This would have been a clearer demonstration of the idea of restraining the pawns (e6 and d5), blockading them and only then destroying them. But even as things went in the game, it was instructive enough! (e.g. White’s 13th, 16th and 18th moves.)

27...♜c8 28.♜xd5 ♜xc7 29.♔xe6† 1–0

Roads to the mastering of positional play (schematic representation of chapter 1)

1. Counter the false conception that every single move has to produce an immediate effect; waiting moves and quiet moves are also totally justified!
2. Recognise the idea of *prevention* as being the key one in positional play! With this in mind, struggle to prevent freeing moves by your opponent and in doing so prevent any internal disorganisation of your position, in order to bring your own pieces into contact with (your own) strategically important points.
3. Have tremendous respect for the *central strategy*; avoid any premature moves to the flanks (out of fear of a central invasion by your opponent) and try rather to operate under the watchword of *centralisation*.
4. Aim for *total mobility* for your own pawn mass, but not for the individual mobility of every single pawn.
5. Get used to considering the control of the centre as a “question of restraint”; do not let an arithmetical approach to the central pawns be decisive.
6. What is important for positional play is not attack, nor even defence, but only *consolidation*!

Part II – Chapter 2

Doubled pawns and restraint

1. The affinity between “doubled pawns” and “restraint”

The former encourages plans of restraint by your opponent • What does it mean: suffering from the disadvantage of doubled pawns? • The concept of *passive* (= static) and *active* (= dynamic) weakness • When is it appropriate to undouble an opponent’s doubled pawns? • The (only) real strength of doubled pawns looked at more closely

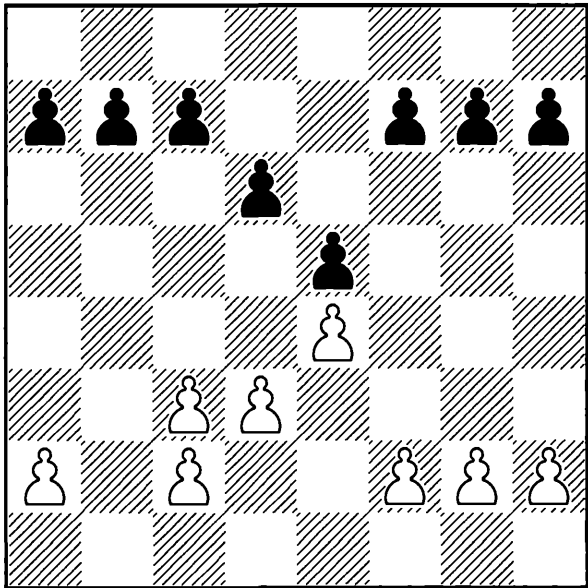
Restraint can also be conceived of without the presence of doubled pawns; but real total restraint, which reigns over whole stretches of the board and which gives your opponent breathing difficulties, is only possible when that opponent is suffering from the disadvantage of doubled pawns.

To what extent, we may now ask, does one *suffer* from the said disadvantage? It is not enough to state that *isolated* doubled pawns can easily be captured in the endgame or that they can at least be highly unpleasant to defend. This is because the suffering is also there even when we are talking about *compact* doubled pawns which are easy to defend.

We are defining doubled pawns as compact whenever they are linked to another pawn or pawns in a pawn mass (see diagram 377).

Nor would it be sufficient for the suffering to be defined as the problems connected with the difficulty of creating a passed pawn (e.g. W. ♠a2, b2, c2, c3 against a7, b7, c7). The main cause of the suffering is that in an advance in close formation a certain tendency to paralysis could become apparent.

377



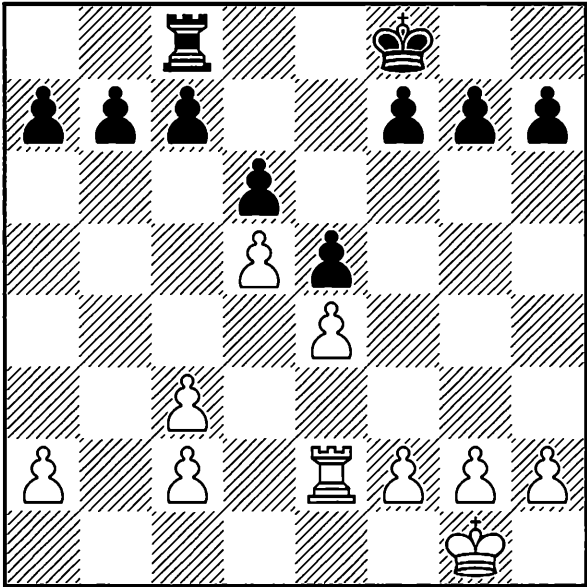
With a pawn on b2 instead of c2, the formation could advance with d3-d4-d5 then c3-c4, b2-b4 and c4-c5. But there is no b-pawn in the diagram, and thus the attempt to transfer the attack (see under pawn chains) fails: d3-d4-d5 then c3-c4 will be met by b7-b6 and the planned c4-c5 will turn out to be totally impossible. What we have just recognised about the principal weakness of compact doubled pawns (which we shall describe as an active or dynamic weakness) makes it possible to construct the

Rule: *when your opponent possesses a pawn mass weakened in attacking scope by doubled pawns, it is worthwhile to push him into advancing it.*

With this in mind, in diagram 377 after d3-d4, Black must attempt to provoke his opponent into continuing with action in the centre. As long as he is allowed to hang about on d4, the disadvantage of the doubled pawns is as little obvious as a limp – when someone is sitting down. The weakness only appears when he advances.

As well as an “active” weakness, there is also the concept of a “passive”, “static” weakness which we must distinguish from the active one. Unlike in diagram 377, the latter is only laid bare when you “have a go” at the doubled pawns, that is send your own pawns forward to attack them.

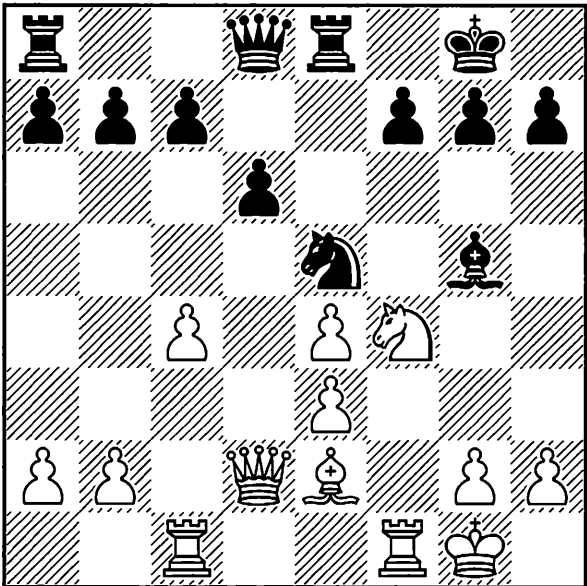
378



Here the static weakness of the doubled pawns is a great one: 1...c6 2.dxc6 ♖xc6, or 1...c6 2.c4 cxd5 3.cxd5 ♖c3 then ♖a3. In each case, Black gains the advantage.

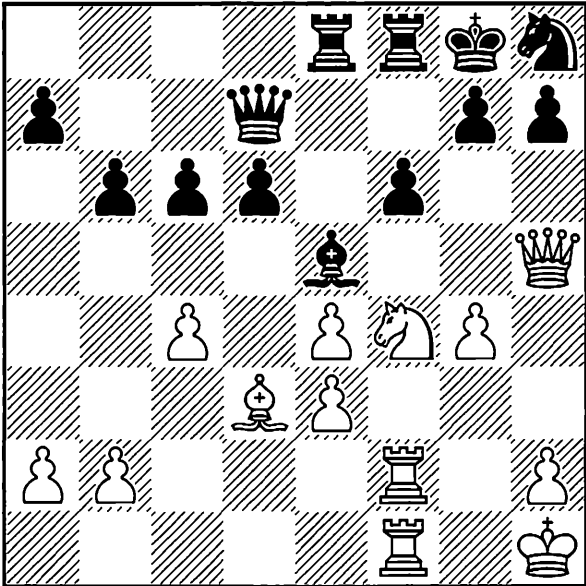
Rule: *When the doubled pawns show a static weakness, then you should advance against them and not at all be afraid to undouble the pawns. The problem only half disappears; one part of the nice clover leaf may disappear into thin air, but the part which is left will suffer all the more.*

379



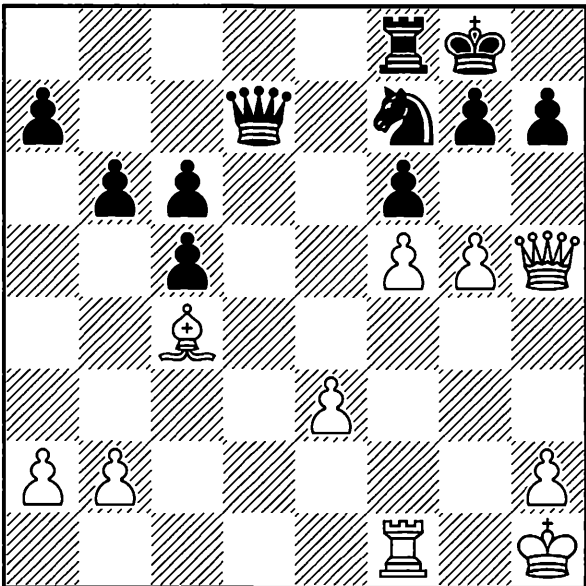
Now consider the position in diagram 379, taken from a game by the author (**E. Cohn – Nimzowitsch**). Black encouraged White’s hope that he was heading for a simplification, which would mean that the exploitation of the doubled pawns in the endgame might not be all that hard. Next came 16...♖d7 17.♖e1 ♜g6 18.♙d3 ♙f6 19.♖f2 ♙e5 (Black is counting on the strength of the e5-square) 20.♖c2 ♖f8 21.♙h1 b6 22.♖f3 ♖ae8 23.♖cf2 ♜h8 24.♖h5 c6 25.g4 f6

380



And now Cohn allowed himself to be tempted into an interesting attack, the result of which would only be to open up the game and expose the hopeless position of the pawns on e3 and e4. He played 26.c5 and play continued 26...♙xf4 27.♖xf4 dxc5 28.♙c4† ♜f7 29.g5 ♖e5 30.♖f5 ♖xf5 31.exf5

381

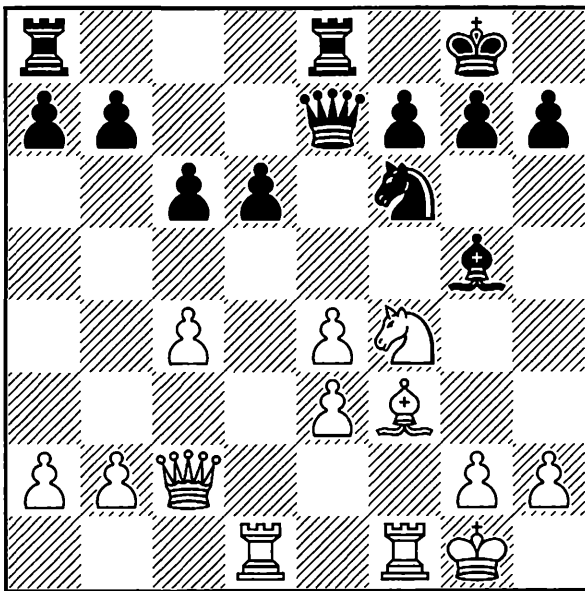


Here the win could be forced by 31...♔h8. After 32.g6 there would come 32...♖h6, and after 32.♙xf7 ♜xf7 it would be 33.g6 ♜d5†, followed by h6.

Black was therefore right in his choice of a waiting strategy; the flank attack had to fail due to the centre file (the e5-square), and the ending is hopeless for White (= an example you should study carefully for the idea of “waiting moves” with doubled pawns).

However an “advance” was also possible in the position in diagram 379, because here the e3, e4 pawns constitute a passive weakness also. The advance might go as follows: 16...♖d7 (instead of 16...♜d7) 17.♙f3 ♖f6 18.♜c2 c6!. He “sacrifices” the d-pawn, in order to get the e4-pawn in return, thus an exchange of d6 for e4. As a result he would be defending by the advance d6-d5 then the capture dxe4. After 19.♝cd1 ♜e7

382



we achieve our “exchange” and then the e3–pawn becomes an easy target.

Principal rule: *Isolated doubled pawns and “compact” or advancing doubled pawns should be challenged (= attacked by pawns).*

An opposing doubled pawn complex which has not yet advanced should, on the other hand, first be goaded into action before being challenged, i.e. let it tire itself out first!

1a. The only true strength of doubled pawns

As we have seen, a pawn mass with doubled pawns attached to it contains a certain latent weakness, which shows up when the said pawn mass is required to advance. We call this, as we have said, a dynamic weakness. When, on the contrary, the pawn mass stands still (is at rest), it can be quite strong. See e.g. diagram 377. After d3-d4 a position is reached, from which it will take a lot of effort to force White. I mean by this that Black scarcely has enough positional means to be able to force his opponent into a decision about d4xe5 or d4-d5. On the other hand, this would be easier if he had a ♖b2 instead of on c2.

Doubled pawns make it easier to hold out!

It is hard to explain why; perhaps there is some justice in this world (an attempt to compensate for dynamic weakness by static strength), perhaps even the b-file contributes something; however, experience has shown that doubled (c-)pawns make it easier to hold out.

This is the only real strength of doubled pawns. See the game which follows (Haakanson–Nimzowitsch) and later my games against Johner (page 225) and Rosselli (pages 205 and 223).

2. A review of the best-known doubled pawn structures

Doubled pawn complexes • The doubled pawn complex as an instrument of attack

a) White ♖e4, d3, a2, c2, c3 (or c3, c4); Black ♖e5, d6, c7, b7, a7; see diagram 377.

The strongest formation for White is the one reached after d3-d4; he should hang on to the latter as long as possible. After d4-d5 on the other hand, White’s weakness should begin to be felt. Thus it is a strategic requirement for Black to force White into d4-d5. He should do this where possible without the help of c7-c5. Because after c5? d5, a challenge (by c7-c6) would no longer be possible, nor would there be the chance to occupy c5 with a knight.

In diagram 377, many players commit the error (with Black) of wanting to get stuck in with d6-d5. This goes against our principal rule (see above), according to which we should first provoke the opposing doubled pawn complex into some sort of action; this and only this allows us to exploit the active (dynamic) weakness of that doubled pawn complex.

The following examples should help cast some light on the struggle between the defender who wishes to remain at rest and the attacker who wishes to push him into a decision.

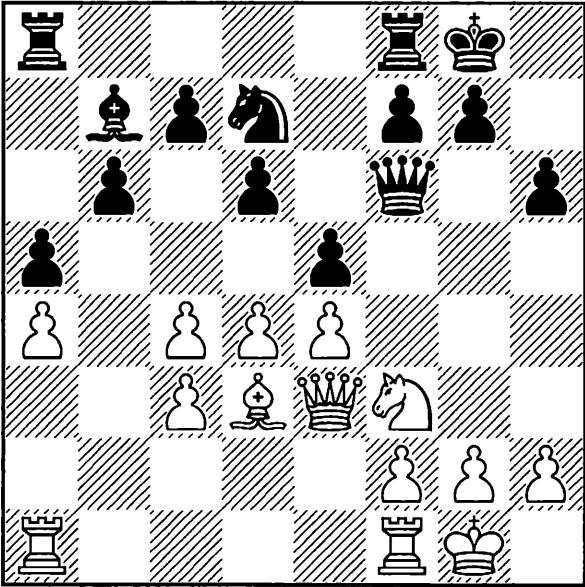
Firstly, we have an example of how, by a single badly thought out move, the defending side can give away all his trump cards.

Haakanson – Nimzowitsch

Played in 1921

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.♙g5 h6 5.♙xf6 ♙xf6 6.e4 ♙b7 7.♘c3 ♙b4 8.♙d3 ♙xc3† 9.bxc3 d6 (now comes e6-e5 and the doubled pawn complex we have mentioned several times – diagram 377 – has arisen) 10.♙e3 ♘d7 11.♙d3 e5 12.0–0 0–0 13.a4 a5

383



14.♘e1 White had a good position, because it is unlikely that his opponent could manage to force him into a decision (d4-d5). But his somewhat clumsy text move creates difficulties in his own camp. The right idea was 14.♘d2 followed by f2-f3. The somewhat exposed queen could then

move from e3 to f2 and nothing would prevent him from hanging on. On the other hand 14.♘e1? was met with 14...♙ae8! 15.f3 ♙e6! and now White actually had to bite the bullet (= play d4-d5), but he preferred 16.♘c2 and after 16...exd4! 17.cxd4 f5! 18.d5 ♙e5 19.♙d4 ♘c5 20.♙fd1 fxe4 21.fxe4 ♘xd3 22.♙xd3 ♙xe4, he lost a pawn and the game.

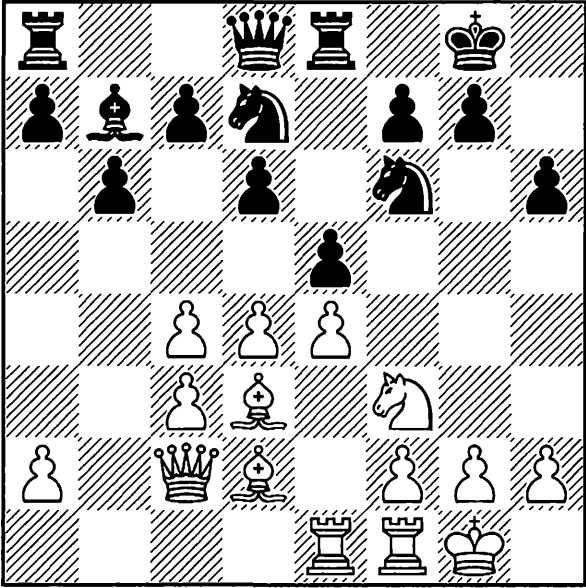
The struggle in the above game is paralleled in much more serious mode in the following example:

Janowski – Nimzowitsch

St Petersburg 1914

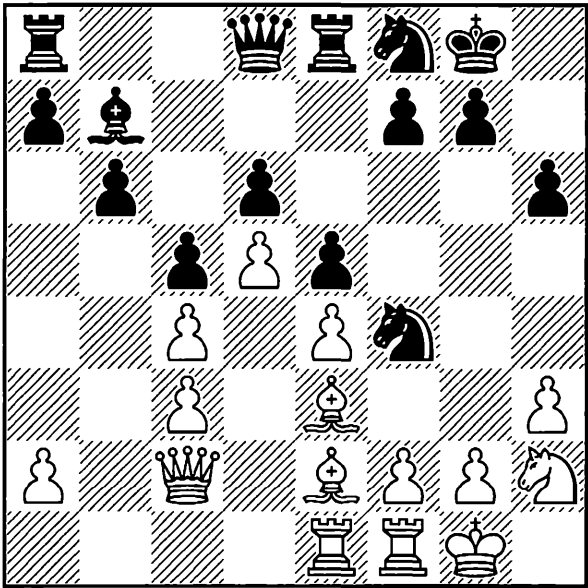
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♙b7 6.♘f3 ♙xc3† 7.bxc3 d6 8.♙c2 ♘bd7 9.e4 e5 10.0–0 0–0 11.♙g5 h6 12.♙d2 ♙e8 13.♙ae1

384



Black now had the difficult task of provoking his opponent into taking action in the centre. He tried to bring it about by the manoeuvre ♖f6-h7-f8-e6. 13...♘h7 Also possible was 13...♖f8, e.g. 14.h3 ♘g6 15.♘h2 ♙e7! and if now 16.f4 then 16...exf4 17.♙xf4 ♙e8 and White has no comfortable way of defending the ♙e4. But the game continued with 13...♘h7, then 14.h3 ♘hf8 15.♘h2 ♘e6! 16.♙e3! (he remains there) 16...c5! (because he can see no other way of breaking down his opponent's stubborn defence) 17.d5 ♘f4! 18.♙e2 ♘f8.

385



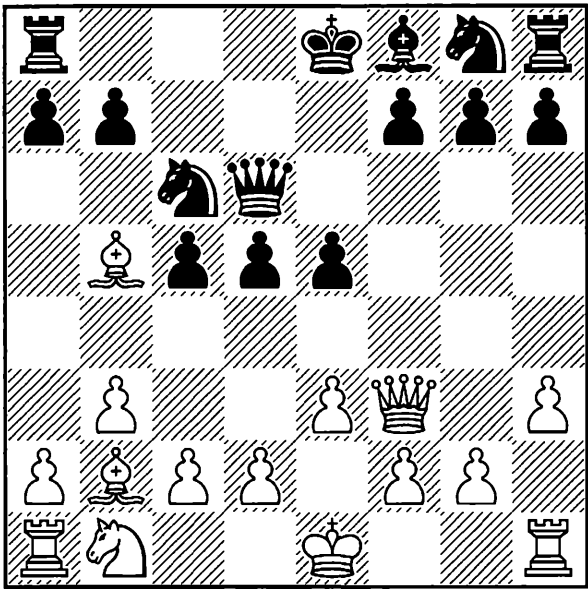
For Black the $\triangle c4$ and the $f4$ -square represent a certain chance of setting up a combined attack on both wings.

As we have seen, it is frequently very difficult to force into action in our sense an opponent who remains in this “crouching” position. So it is clear that we should only bring about the doubled pawn complex in our opponent’s position when we feel it will be possible to force him out of the crouching position we have mentioned. An extremely instructive example of this can be found in the following opening.

Nimzowitsch – Rosselli del Turco
Baden-Baden 1925

After only seven moves: 1. $\triangle f3$ $d5$ 2. $b3$ $c5$ 3. $e3$ $\triangle c6$ 4. $\triangle b2$ $\triangle g4?$ 5. $h3!$ $\triangle xf3$ 6. $\triangle xf3$ $e5$ 7. $\triangle b5$ $\triangle d6$

386



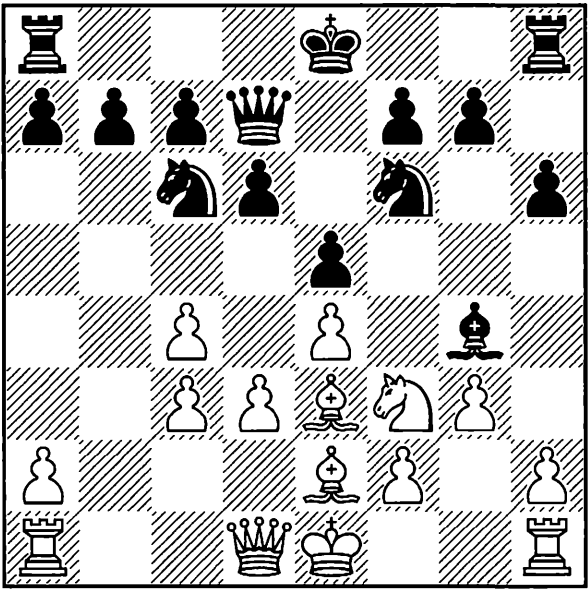
White had the chance to inflict doubled pawns on his opponent, e.g. 8. $\triangle xc6$ † $bxc6$ 9. $e4$. But what would he have gained by it? How could he then have forced Black into $d5-d4$? So he played **8.e4!** initially passing up on the said chance. **8...d4** and now, after $d5-d4$ has been played, the doubled pawn complex would be a goal he would much desire. For this reason, there came 9. $\triangle a3$ (threatening 10. $\triangle c4$ $\triangle c7$ 11. $\triangle xc6$ † $bxc6$) **10...f6!** 10. $\triangle c4$ $\triangle d7$ 11. $\triangle h5$ † **g6** 12. $\triangle f3$ $\triangle c7$ (if 12...0–0–0 then 13. $\triangle a5$ $\triangle ge7$ 14. $\triangle xf6$) **13. $\triangle g4$** and the $g4-d7$ diagonal soon led to Black having to put up with the doubled pawns in order to avoid other unpleasantness. The game follows, with full notes, at the end of this chapter (page 223).

The player who is “hanging on” has to reckon that his pawn complex has very limited mobility and that he must suit his piece moves to that fact. These must be small and neat and directed to both sides; what we mean can be seen from the example which follows.

Nimzowitsch – Sämisch
Dresden 1926

After the moves: 1. $c4$ $e5$ 2. $\triangle c3$ $\triangle f6$ 3. $\triangle f3$ $\triangle c6$ 4. $e4$ $\triangle b4$ 5. $d3$ $d6$ 6. $g3$ $\triangle g4$ 7. $\triangle e2$ $h6$ 8. $\triangle e3$ $\triangle xc3$ † 9. $bxc3$ $\triangle d7$

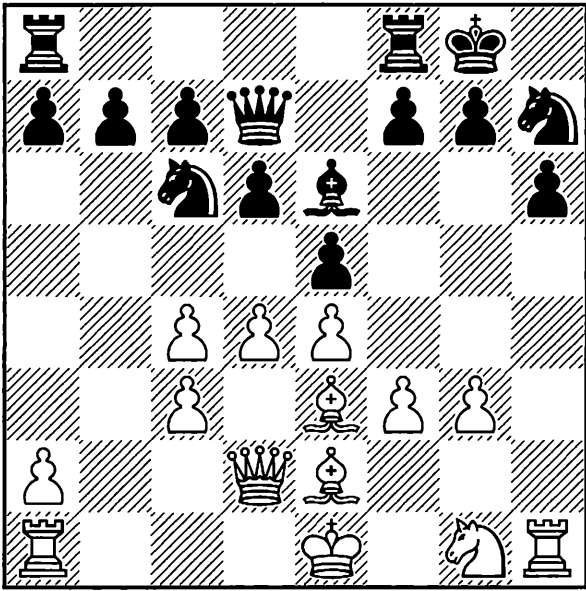
387



White was fully aware of the dynamic weakness of his doubled pawn complex. So his plan was to let his pawn hang on at $d3$ or at worst $d4$. Look at

the small, neat moves made by the white pieces; they fit in with the circumstances brought about by the central pawn configuration: when the firm is short of capital (here mobility), economy must be the watchword! Next came **10.♖c2!** (the immediate 10.♖d2 would be met by 10...0-0-0 and on d2, the white queen would be as clumsily placed as it is possible to be) **10...0-0** (but after 10.♖c2, White would meet 10...0-0-0 with 11.0-0 then ♜fb1, and White's pieces would be co-ordinating nicely, partly on account of the queen's position on c2) **11.♖d2! ♞h7 12.h3! ♟xh3 13.♞g1 ♟g4 14.f3 ♟e6 15.d4**

388

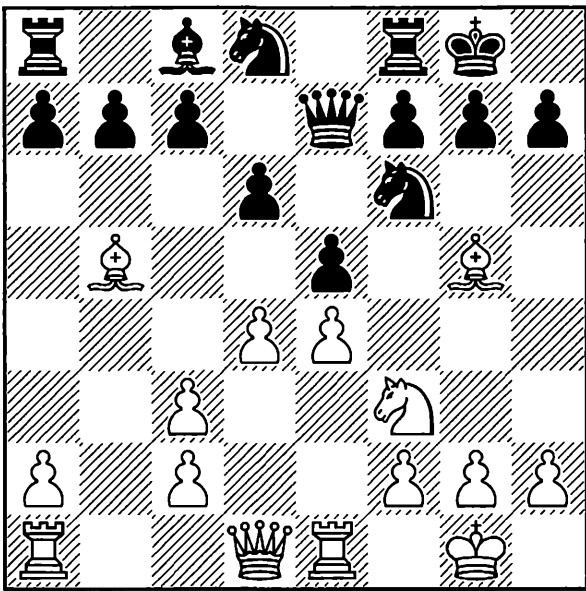


White won a piece and the game.

Thus we have subjected the doubled pawn complex to deep analysis; as a result of the said analysis, things which appear on a daily basis can be looked at from a new point of view (**Spielmann – Rubinstein**, Karlsbad 1911): **1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♟b5 ♟b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.♟g5 ♟xc3 8.bxc3 ♖e7 9.♟e1 ♞d8 10.d4** According to current wisdom, White has the attacking position in the centre. This is wrong, in my opinion. It would really be the case with the ♟b2 rather than the ♟c2. But here the apparently attacking posture of the pawn on d4 has only *the one* fundamental purpose of masking White's own weakness c2, c3. After d4-d5 this (dynamic) weakness would become obvious. For that reason the set-up c2, c3, d4, e4

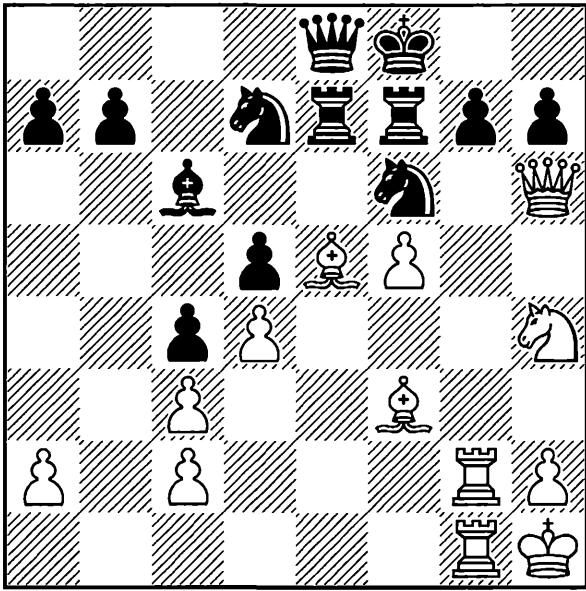
opposing e5, d6, c7, b7, a7 can be considered by someone who thinks about it a bit more deeply as a “crouching position”, like a frog.

389



Next came **10...♞e6 11.♟c1 c6** (here the correct move was 11...c5!, e.g. 12.dxc5 dxc5 13.♞xe5? ♞c7 etc.) **12.♟f1 ♟d8 13.g3 ♖c7 14.♞h4**. Now White wishes to play f2-f4. So did White have the initiative in the centre?! No. The facts are much more as follows: since on move 11, Black had neglected to bother his opponent, White was able to build up an attack from his crouching position. Next came **14...d5 15.f4! exf4 16.e5 ♞e4 17.gxf4 f5 18.exf6 ♞xf6 19.f5 ♞f8 20.♖f3** and Spielmann won in brilliant fashion: **20...♖f7 21.♟d3 ♟d7 22.♟f4 ♟e8 23.♟e5 c5 24.♟h1 c4 25.♟e2 ♟c6 26.♖f4 ♞8d7 27.♟f3 ♟e7 28.♟e2 ♟f8 29.♟g1 ♖e8 30.♟eg2 ♟ff7 31.♖h6! ♟f8**

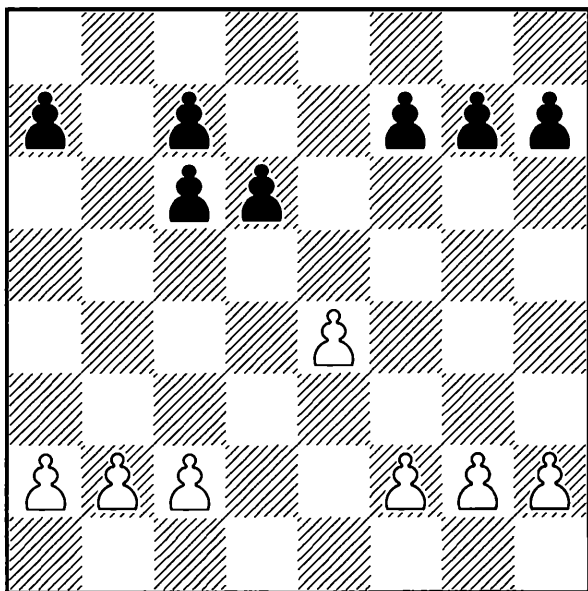
390



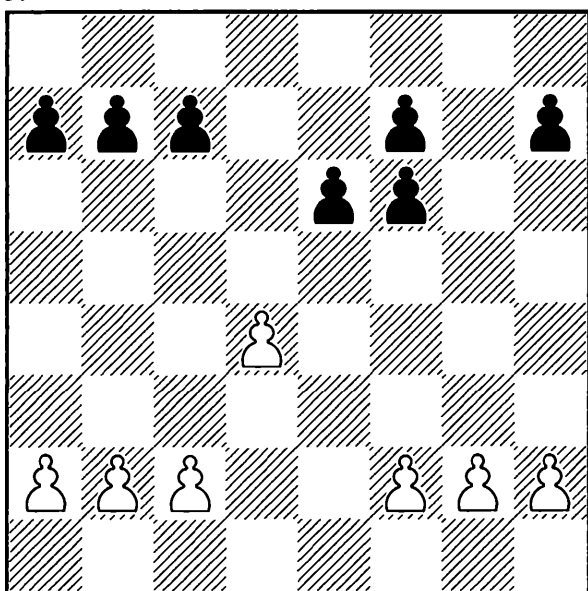
32.♘g6† A brilliant breakthrough combination.
 32...hxg6 33.♚h8† ♘g8 34.♙d6 Restrained
 and pinned all over the place, his opponent has
 nothing to offer against a penetration down the
 g-file to g8. 34...♚d8 35.♙xg6 ♘df6 36.♙xf6!
 ♙xf6 37.♙xg7! 1–0

b) We now move forward to a presentation of the
 next doubled pawn complex.

391



392



The point of this pawn configuration is that
 in the ♖c6 or the ♖f6, Black may see a substitute
 for the centre he has lost, since the effectiveness
 of the ♖c6 and the ♖f6 extends in the direction
 of the centre. This influence on the centre can be
 seen in diagram 392 in that White cannot make
 any use of the outpost square e5. Secondly, there

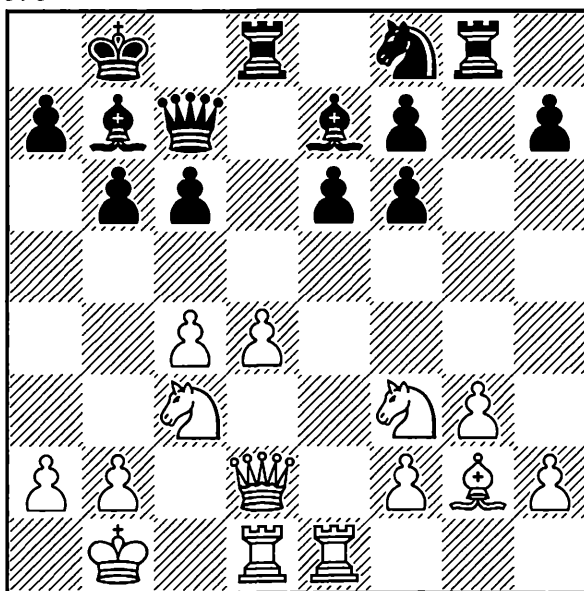
is the threat of e6-e5, and thirdly f6-f5 can be
 played, then ♙g8 (g2-g3), h7-h5, f5-f4 and h5-
 h4. In other words, the pawn mass which looks
 defensive (e6, f7, f6) can open up (like a fist) and
 be sent forward to the attack. The weakness lies
 in the isolated ♖h7. White will aim to prevent the
 diversionary attack suggested (♙g8, f5, h5 etc.)
 by posting pawns on f4, g3, h2, followed possibly
 by ♘f3 and ♙g2. Then the game will be level.
 But it is extremely difficult for Black to choose
 the correct moment to move out of defence by
 f6-f5. Consider the following examples.

Nimzowitsch – Dr Perlis

Ostend 1907

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 dxe4 5.♘xe4
 ♙e7 6.♙xf6 gxf6 7.♘f3 ♘d7 8.♚d2 ♙g8 (this
 move might perhaps have been delayed) 9.0–0–0
 ♘f8 (protecting the weakness, the isolated ♖h7)
 10.c4 c6 11.g3 ♚c7 12.♙g2 b6 13.♙he1 ♙b7
 14.♘b1 0–0–0 (Dr Perlis has very skilfully made
 the most of the defensive strength of his complex;
 but he will soon see the arrival of the moment to
 use the doubled pawns as an attacking instrument
 also) 15.♘c3 ♘b8

393



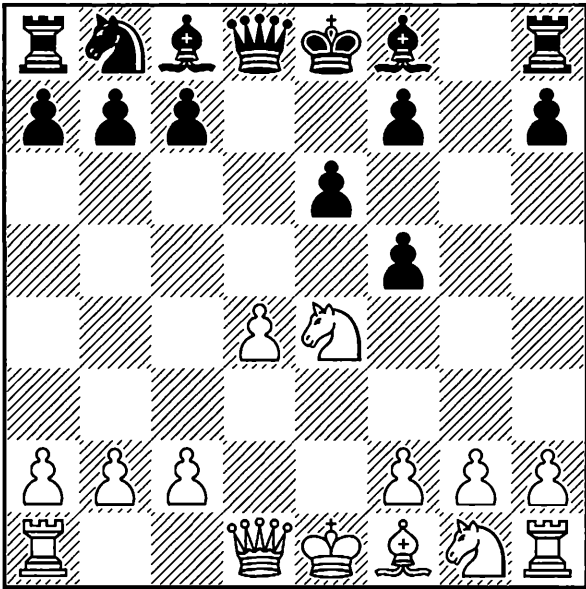
16.♚e3 (the lack of an outpost on e5 is all too
 painful for White) 16...♘g6 (now f6-f5-f4 is
 already a threat, since the protection of e5 is
 now being undertaken by the knight from g6)
 17.h4 f5 18.♘e5 (at last!) 18...f4! 19.♙f3 ♘xe5

20.dxe5 fxg3 21.fxg3 ♖b4 with equality. (The game concluded 22.a3 ♙xc3 23.♚xc3 c5 24.♙xb7 ♚xb7 25.♞d6 ♞xd6 26.exd6 ♞d8 27.♞d1 ♚e4† 28.♙a2 ♞d7 with a draw on move 30.) In this game, Perlis (a very subtle player) made good use of the doubled pawn complex both in defence and in attack. Things were less convincing in the next game.

Yates – Dr Olland
Scheveningen 1913

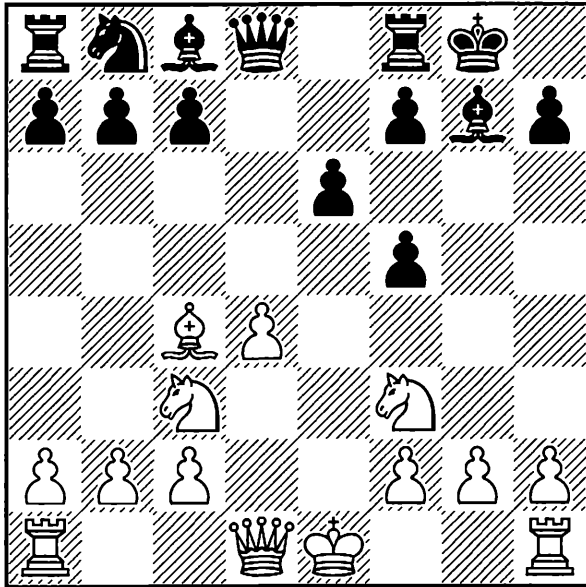
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 dxe4 5.♙xf6?
(better was the immediate 5.♘xe4) 5...gxf6
6.♘xe4 f5?

394



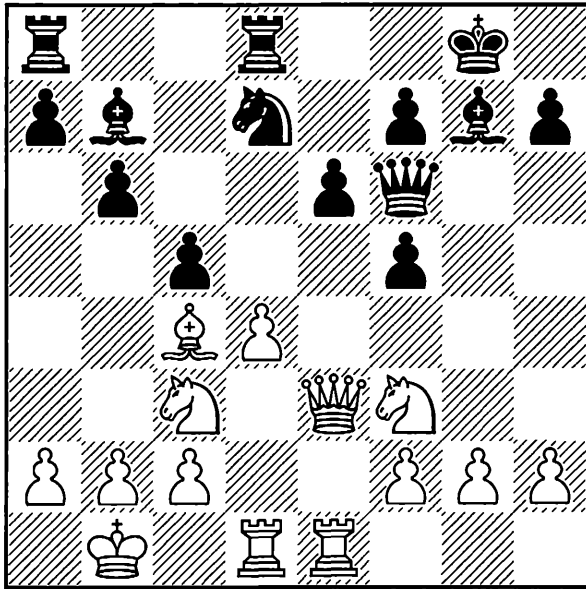
It seems to me a poor choice of the moment to advance. Extending the characteristic position (= pawn configuration) by b6, c6, ♘d7, ♚c7, ♙b7 and 0–0–0, as in the previous game, seems to me to be more in accordance with the needs of the position. 7.♘c3 ♙g7 (this bishop now takes on the defence of the e5-square, but the f6-pawn would be a more reliable guardian) 8.♘f3 0–0 (after 8...♘c6, which I recommended as better in the *Wiener Schachzeitung* of 1913, there could follow 9.♙b5 0–0 10.♙xc6 bxc6 11.♚d3! ♞b8 12.0–0–0 and all Black’s attempts to mount an attack should fail to the possibility of penetration by ♘e5, e.g. 12...♚e7 13.♘e5 ♚b4 14.b3 etc.) 9.♙c4? (9.♚d2 then 0–0–0 was needed)

395



9...b6? (9...♘c6 10.♘e2 e5! 11.dxe5 ♘xe5 would have freed some space for the bishops, e.g. 12.♘xe5 ♙xe5 13.c3 ♙e6 and Black is well-placed; for us it was interesting to note how the opportunity for e6–e5 arose, cf. the introductory remarks to the complex we are now discussing) 10.♚d3 ♙b7 11.0–0–0 ♘d7 12.♞he1 ♚f6 13.♙b1 ♞ad8 14.♚e3 c5?

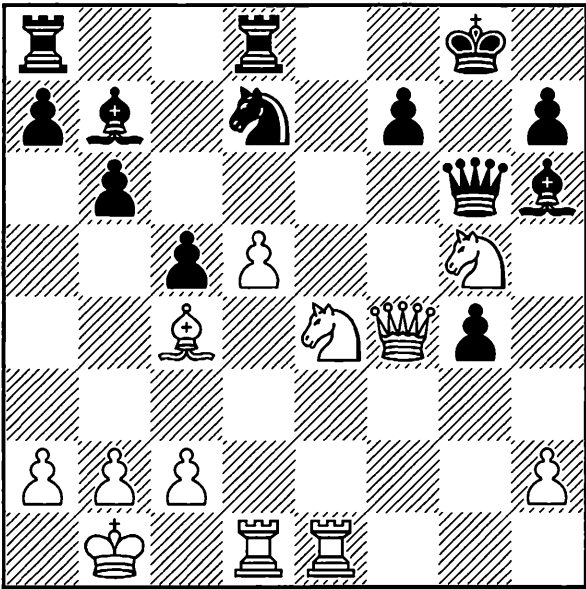
396



A better move might be 14...c6 in order on one hand to pin down the d-pawn and on the other to play b5 and then perhaps ♘b6. The business with f6–f5 did not work out; the pawn mass did not become an attacking instrument; quite on the contrary, there is now the possibility of g2–g4. 15.d5 e5 16.g4 Now the game departs from the realms of exact

calculation. White should be satisfied to have achieved a passed pawn; against the pawn pair e5, f5, it would be appropriate to try a restraining manoeuvre, starting with something like 16.♘d2 then f3. White would then not be badly off. 16...fxg4 17.♘g5 ♔h6 18.♘ce4 ♚g6 19.f4 exf4 20.♚xf4

397



With enormous complications. After a few more mistakes by Black, White won in 44 moves.

In the above game, Black could not make good use of his doubled pawn complex as an attacking instrument. Things are quite different in the next game, where we are talking of the complex c7, c6, d6 against e4, c2 (diagram 391 rather than 392); in fact we consider the pawn skeletons in 391 and 392 as totally identical in their characteristics.

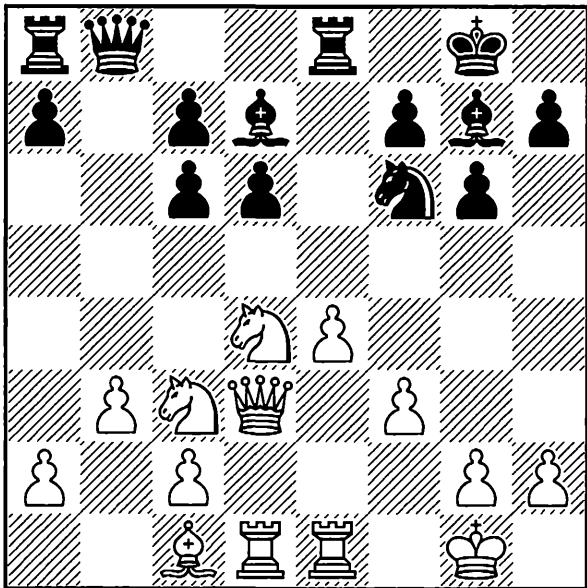
The doubled pawn complex in diagram 391 as an instrument of attack

Teichmann – Dr Bernstein
St Petersburg 1914

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙b5 d6 5.d4 ♙d7 6.0–0 ♙e7 7.♚e1 exd4 8.♘xd4 0–0 9.♙xc6 bxc6 10.b3 ♚e8 (as well as the task of making the most of his doubled pawn complex, Black also has to solve the problem of how to restrain White's free centre) 11.♙b2 ♙f8 12.♚d3 g6

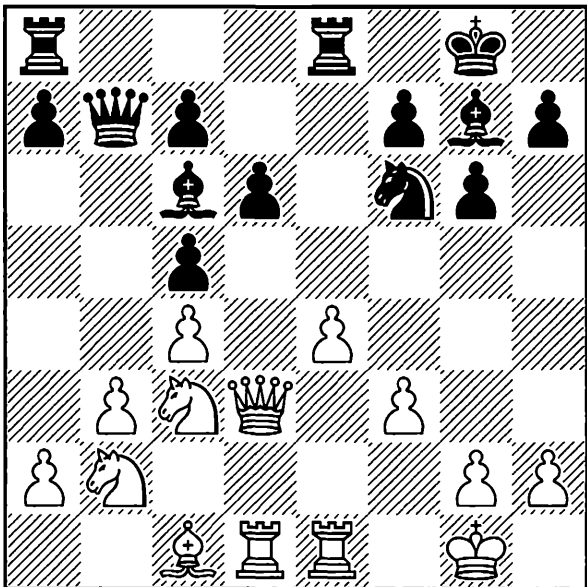
13.♚ad1 ♙g7 14.f3 (he could make his centre aggressive by 14.f4 but he does not do so and aims more at consolidation) 14...♚b8 (getting the final pieces into place so that the planned c5 will have a powerful effect) 15.♙c1

398



15...♚b6 (according to Dr Lasker, a better try was 15...a5 [threatening ...a4!] 16.♘a4? c5; if 16.a4 then 16...c5 17.♘db5 ♙c6, then ♘d7 with a good game for Black) 16.♘a4 ♚b7 17.♘b2! c5 18.♘e2 ♙b5 19.c4 ♙c6 20.♘c3

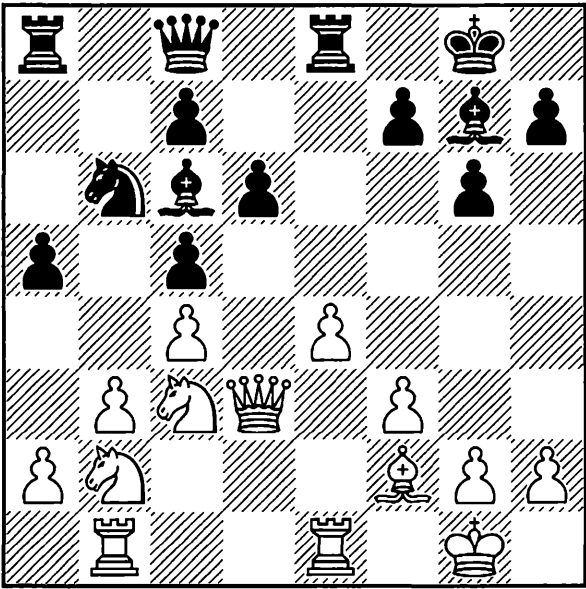
399



In similar positions, the set-up with a4, b3, c4 creates a problem pawn on b3 and in doing so destroys all winning chances for White. The set-up chosen in the text is intended to prevent the advance a7-a5-a4 *without* the help of weakening pawn moves. Then Black would also retain his

weakness, the ♖a7. 20...♟d7 21.♙e3 ♟b6 22.♟b1 a5 23.♙f2 The next move should be 23...♞c8.

400



Black is threatening a5-a4. After 24.♟d5 comes 24...♟xd5 25.cxd5 ♙d7 and then a4. But White scarcely has any other trump cards, apart from ♟d5.

Our impression is as follows: c6-c5 frees the d5-square and therefore can be considered somewhat double-edged. But if the preconditions are met, namely if the ♖e4 is more or less restrained, and effective parries are available for a possible ♟d5, then the advance may be justified. We consider the counter set-up chosen in this game (White ♖c4 b3 a2 then ♟b2 and ♟c3) to be a solid one, but we think that the relative number of the pieces required makes a win for White unlikely. Games played in this line, e.g. in the Lasker – Schlechter match, have always been drawn.

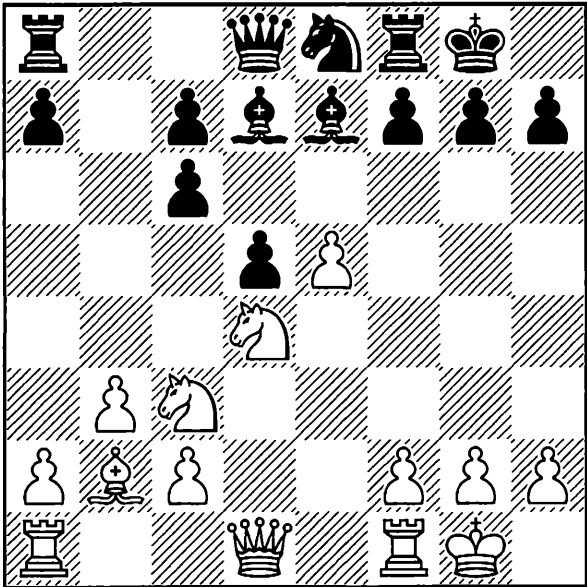
But we consider the development by d6-d5 to be bad, because this encourages annoying restraining possibilities. A very instructive game in this light is:

Billecard – Dr Bernstein

Ostend 1907

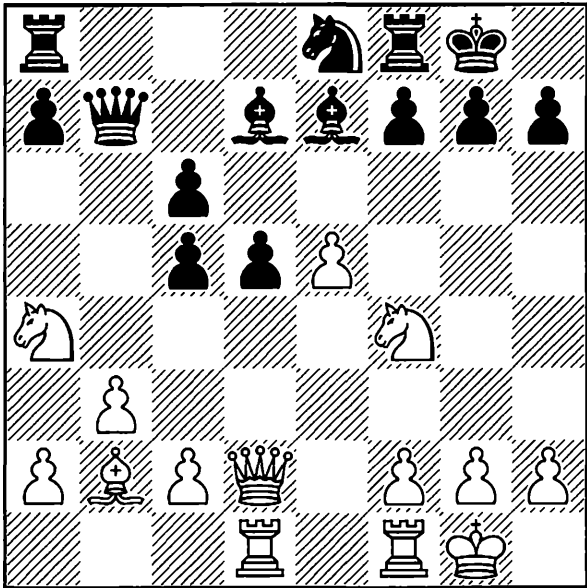
1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.♟c3 ♟f6 4.♙b5 d6 5.d4 exd4 6.♟xd4 ♙d7 7.0–0 ♙e7 8.♙xc6 bxc6 9.b3 0–0 10.♙b2 d5 Next came: 11.e5 ♟e8

401



12.♞d2! (it is White's – correct – opinion that the advance of Black's doubled pawns will not strengthen them!) 12...c5 13.♟de2 c6 14.♟ad1 ♞c7 15.♟f4 ♞b7 (the threat was 16.♟xd5) 16.♟a4

402



This move leads to a blockade by occupying c5. Black would have felt even more a blockade against ♖c7, c6, d5. Then a knight on c5 would have a paralysing effect. This game should help us recognise the affinity mentioned at the start of this chapter between doubled pawns and restraint. 16...c4 17.♙d4 cxb3 18.axb3? (18.cxb3 appears more logical) 18...♟c7 19.♟d3 ♟e6 20.♟dc5 ♞c7 21.♟xd7 ♞xd7 22.♞e3 ♟xd4 23.♞xd4 ♟ab8 24.♟c5 ♞f5 25.♟d3 White controls the c5-square. But had he played

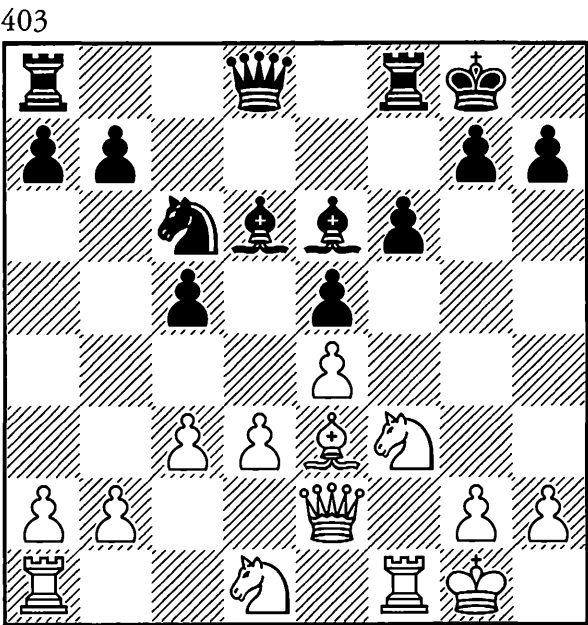
18.cxb3, the pressure down the open c-file would have become considerably stronger. This seems to refute 10...d5.

If you are interested in deeper logical links, you will surely say: “How easy the complex c7, c6, d5 should be to blockade! Because Black managed to undouble his pawns, and in addition White made a crashing error (18.axb3? instead of 18.cxb3!), and yet the mobility of c6 and d5 remained extremely minute!” In fact this judgement is correct: c7, c6, d5 are very susceptible to a blockade, in other words the “affinity” between doubled pawns and restraint we mentioned at the start of this chapter can now be seen as very probable. See for example our game on page 77. As we proceed, this probability should become a certainty.

3. Restraint

“Mysterious rook moves” • Genuine and false freeing moves and how to fight against them

There was a time when it was still quite normal for many critics to attack me and thus make fun of my ideas. There were then some critics who were in the habit of mocking my rook moves and calling them mysterious. Such a move can be seen for example here.



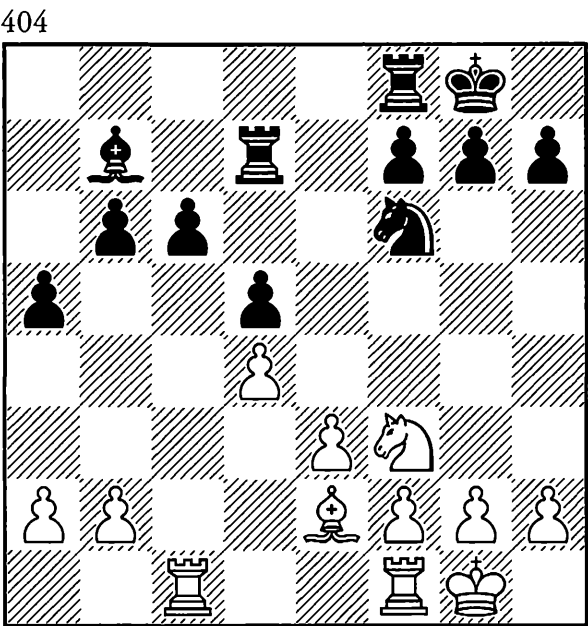
Obviously White wishes to play d3-d4, at some point, since it seems feasible. ♖f8-e8 would now help to make this freeing move permanently

difficult. So it would have a preventive effect. The only thing about the whole business which is mysterious is the outward appearance of the move (= a rook occupies a file which is at present closed), not its strategic goal. In spite of that, let us hang on to the description “mysterious”, only the irony will not now be directed against the moves.

Asking a piece simply to attack directly is worthy only of a mere “woodpusher”. A sharper chess mind also correctly requires his pieces to undertake some preventive work. The situation is typically as follows: a freeing action planned by your opponent (usually a pawn thrust) would also bring about an open file for you. This possible open file (it is not in your power to open it) should be occupied nevertheless; in fact we do so in advance, with the idea of making the opponent regret his freeing moves.

The “mysterious” rook move is part of the framework of rational strategy. If you are keen to learn, you should constantly practise with it, especially by psychologically combating the prejudice that rooks are only worth being employed extremely actively. I maintain that the prevention of freeing advances is much more important than whether at any given moment the rook is considered passive or active.

Let us look at some examples.

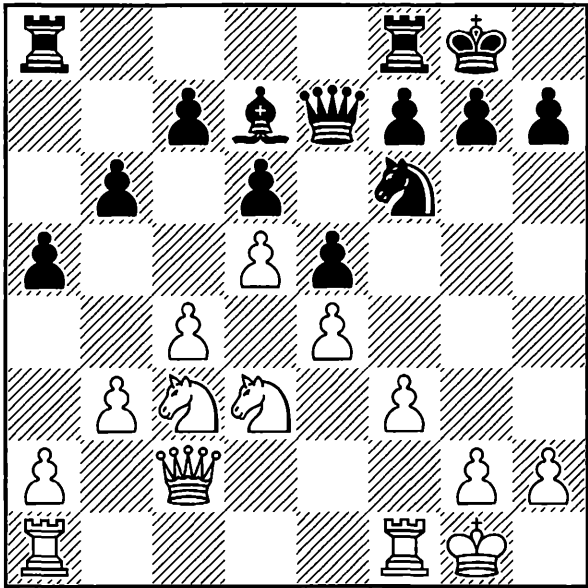


The position should be considered as schematic, as we are talking about the opening phase.

White plays 1.♖fd1, i.e. he is expecting Black to play at some time c6-c5 and wants, when that happens, to make use of pressure on the c- and d-files against the hanging pawns d5 and c5, after the sequence dxc5 bxc5.

The “mysterious” rook move is mainly something that happens in the opening. But it can also play an important role at the start of the middlegame.

405



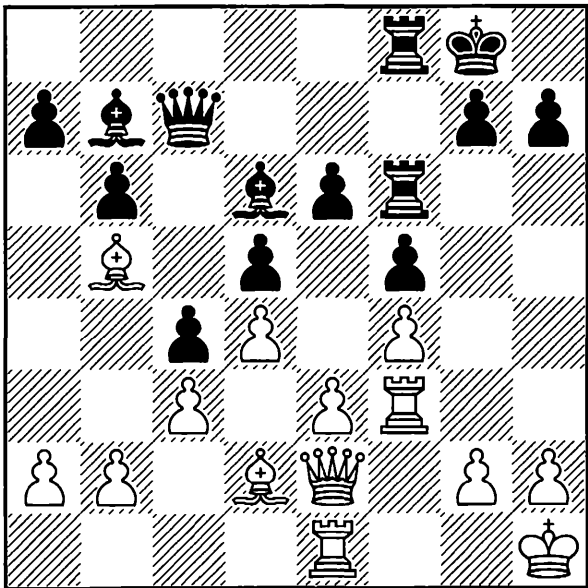
Black feels at liberty to play 1...♖a7. If then 2.a3 he continues 2...♖fa8. Now White can implement his plan, b3-b4 then c4-c5, only by making certain concessions to his opponent; for example, things might continue 3.♗b2 ♗d8 4.b4 axb4 5.axb4 ♗b8! and now 6.♖xa7? ♗xa7 and Black keeps the a-file. Or 6.♖fb1 ♖f8 7.c5 bxc5 8.♖xa7 ♖xa7 9.bxc5 ♗xb2 10.♖xb2 ♖a3 11.♖c2 ♖c8! 12.c6! (the best; not 12.cxd6 cxd6 13.♘b5 ♖a1† 14.♖f2 ♖a6 with approximate equality) 12...♘e8, then f7-f5 with some counterplay. A further example can be found in the endgame which follows.

Kupchik – Capablanca

Lake Hopatcong 1926

The following position was reached after White's 19th move: the chain d5, c4 interlocked with d4, c3 demands an attack on the base c3 by means of a7-a6, b6-b5, a6-a5 and b5-b4. But first it is necessary to secure things against a possible attack by g4.

406

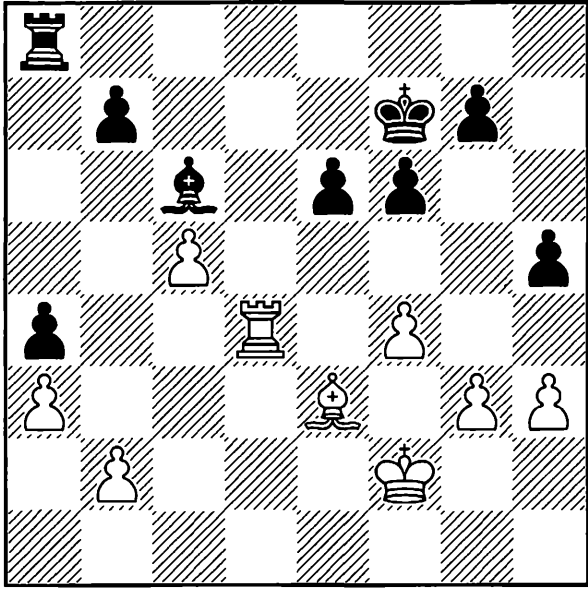


Thus we had: 19...h5! 20.♖ef1 ♖h6!!. The “mysterious” rook move, since Black can see White's operation (h2-h3 then g2-g4) coming and wishes to be ready to attack down the h-file. Next came: 21.♙e1 g6 22.♙h4 ♖f7! 23.♗e1 a6. At the right moment! 24.♙a4 b5 25.♙d1 ♙c6 26.♖h3 (defensive play on the queenside was rather what was called for) 26...a5 27.♙g5 ♖hh8 28.♗h4 b4 29.♗e1 (or 29.♙f6 ♙e7) 29...♖b8 30.♖hf3 a4 and won with his attack (31.♖3f2 a3 32.b3 cxb3 33.♙xb3 ♙b5 34.♖g1 ♗xc3 etc.). The rook manoeuvre ♖f8-f6-h6-h8 looks very fluid and creates the most pleasing effect when you play through the game.

von Gottschall – Nimzowitsch

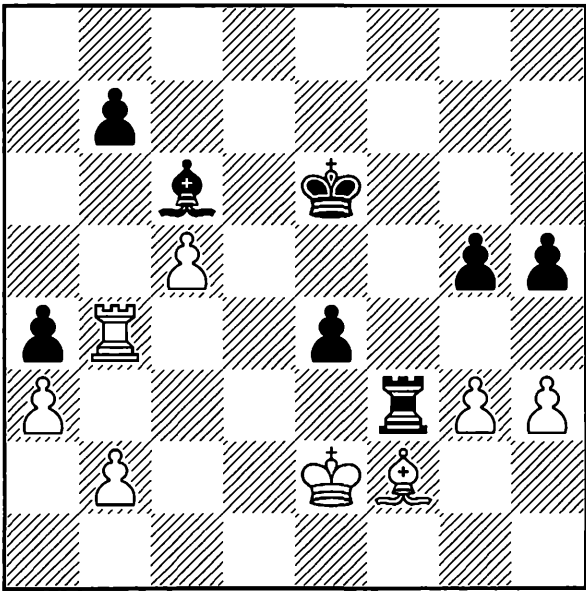
Hanover 1926

407



This position was reached after White's 28th move. Black wishes to make use of his kingside majority by ♔f7-g6-f5 then e6-e5. But 28...♔g6 would be met by 29.g4. So I chose the "mysterious" rook move (which is possible even in an endgame!) 28...♖h8!. After the moves 29.♗d1 ♕g6 30.♗d4 ♕f5 31.♘d2 came another "mysterious" rook move: 31...♖f8 which, to be quite fair, we shall rather call semi-mysterious, because 31...♖f8 is more active than 28...♖h8, which was played simply for preventive purposes. Next came: 32.♙e1 e5 33.fxe5 fxe5 34.♗h4 g5 35.♗b4 ♕e6† 36.♕e2 e4 37.♙f2 ♖f3

408



The passed pawn, the rook which has penetrated White's position and a certain weakness of the c5-pawn brought about a slow decline in White's game (cf. also our explanations to this ending on page 258).

The mysterious rook move places a rook on a closed file which can only be opened by our opponent (and if he does not do so, then our rook is "wasting its time" there). Such a rook move should never be played without being aware that you are sacrificing a certain effectiveness. This sacrifice is made in order to prevent a freeing action by your opponent or at least to render such more difficult.

But if we recognise that any freeing move planned by our opponent is not a genuine one

(i.e. it does not lead to the liberation he has in mind), then it would be highly uneconomical to wish to make the said sacrifice beforehand.

In the above-mentioned game (Blackburne – Nimzowitsch, diagram 403) the difference between genuine and false freeing moves is made abundantly clear. Since this is very characteristic of our conception of prophylaxis, let us look at the whole game.

Blackburne – Nimzowitsch
St Petersburg 1914

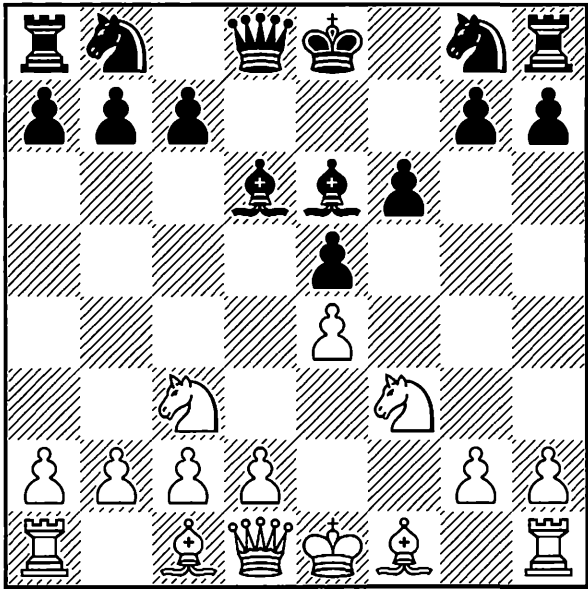
1.e3 d6 2.f4 e5 3.fxe5 dxe5 4.♘c3 ♘d6

The best move, since Lasker's idea of an early development of the knight does not really get to the heart of the matter. It is much more about the pawn configuration and how to work against all freeing pawn moves.

5.e4 ♘e6
Prevents ♘c4.

6.♘f3 f6

409



As will become clear from move 8, Black is playing to prevent the pawn advance d4, which is in a certain sense a freeing one; d4 would bring into its own White's central majority. The way Black plays allows him to completely paralyse his opponent's central majority. And now, I ask you: Why does Black permit the freeing move d2-d4 on move 7?

7.d3

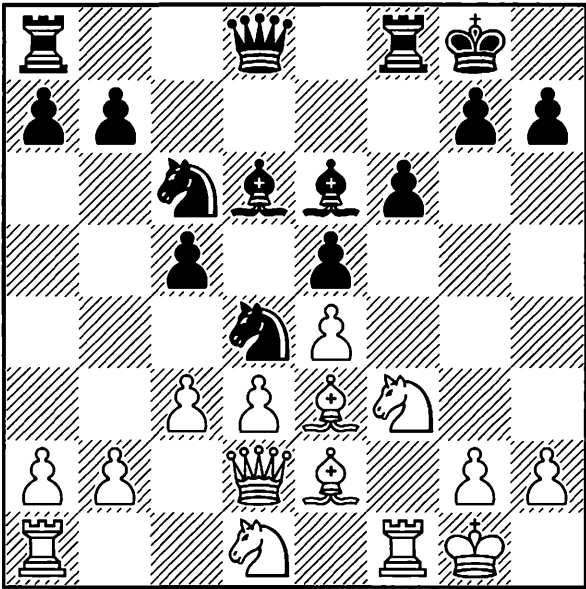
White refrains from it. Correctly so, because here 7.d4 would be the typical example of a false liberation, which only manages to create new weaknesses, e.g. 7.d4 ♖d7! 8.d5 (or else e5xd4 will follow with play against the isolated e4-pawn) 8...♗f7 and he will go on to occupy the c5-square with a bishop or a knight.

7...♜e7 8.♗e3 c5!

By calling to his aid the resources offered by the d-file, Black now forces his opponent on to the defensive (see moves 9 and 10 by Black).

9.♞d2 ♜bc6 10.♗e2 ♜d4 11.0-0 0-0 12.♜d1 ♜ec6 13.c3

410



Black receives his reward for his purposeful play: d3 is a weakness.

13...♜xe2† 14.♞xe2

See diagram 403.

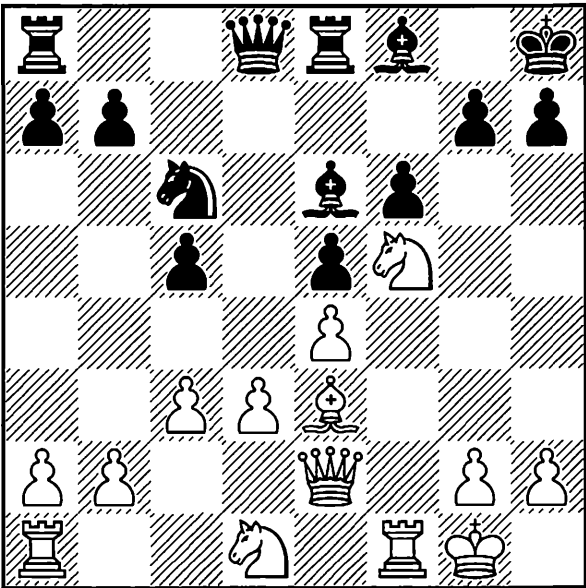
14...♞e8!

The mysterious rook move, which threatens by attacking the ♗e4 to make the e-file difficult for White if he plays d3-d4. At the same time, it also clears the square for the bishop which would like to get back to f8.

15.♜h4 ♗f8 16.♜f5 ♜h8!

White has made good use of the f-file – his only chance. Though totally unprepossessing, the text move is nevertheless characteristic of positional play: Black secures for himself the possibility of g7-g6 and f6-f5 and does not want to be disturbed by a check on h6 when he plays these moves.

411



17.g4 ♞d7!

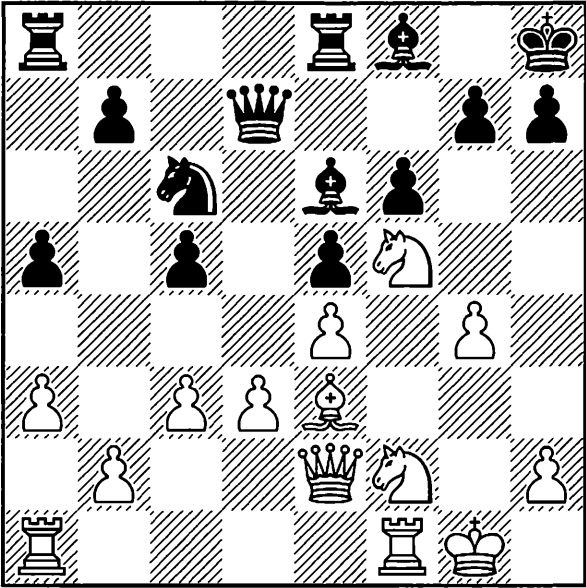
Prepares a parry for the ever-present threat of the advance g4-g5, e.g. 18.g5 g6 19.♜g3 f5! and Black has an excellent position. See the previous note.

18.♜f2 a5

The ♗a2 is under permanent threat; a possible b2-b3 can now be met with a5-a4. As you can see, the weakness of White's centre has affected the queenside in sympathy.

19.a3

412



19...b5

A strong move here would be 19...♗b3, but then Black would have given up his parry of g4-g5. Yet 19...♗b3 could be played (you should not be a slave to your parries!), e.g. 19...♗b3 20.g5

fxg5 21.♙xg5 c4! (suggested by Lasker) 22.dxc4 ♖e6 23.♘e3 ♗g6 24.♗g4 ♙c5! and wins. Or (19...♙b3 20.g5 fxg5 21.♙xg5 c4 22.dxc4 ♖e6) 23.♗f3! ♙xc4 24.♗fd1 and Black's position is slightly preferable.

20.♗ad1 ♗ab8

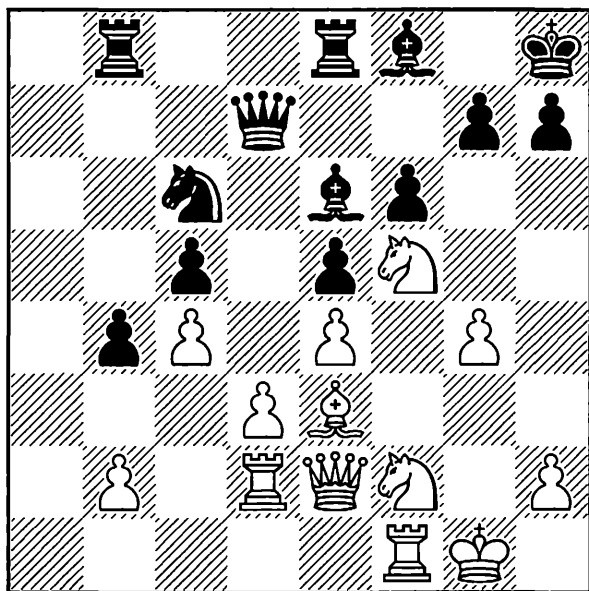
Some tempi could be saved with the immediate 20...b4.

21.♗d2 b4 22.axb4 axb4!

22...cxb4? 23.d4!

23.c4

413



Black should now come out with his trump cards!

23...♗a8?

Black had reached a strategically winning position; he should not wait any longer before playing his trumps. These trumps consisted of ♘d4, leading to ♙xd4, and g7-g6 followed by ♙h6 to control the diagonal.

Consider: 23...g6 (instead of 23...♗a8) 24.♘g3 ♘d4! 25.♙xd4 cxd4 then ♙h6. Or 25.♗d1 (instead of the exchange) 25...♗a8 then ♗a4, the exchange of queens is forced and Black gets a good endgame.

The trumps could also be played in reverse order, e.g. 23...♘d4 24.♙xd4 cxd4 25.♗f3 (best) 25...g6 26.♘g3 ♗e7 27.♘d1 ♙h6 28.♗g2 ♙g5! followed by ♗b8-a8-a1, etc.

24.♗f3 ♗a2?

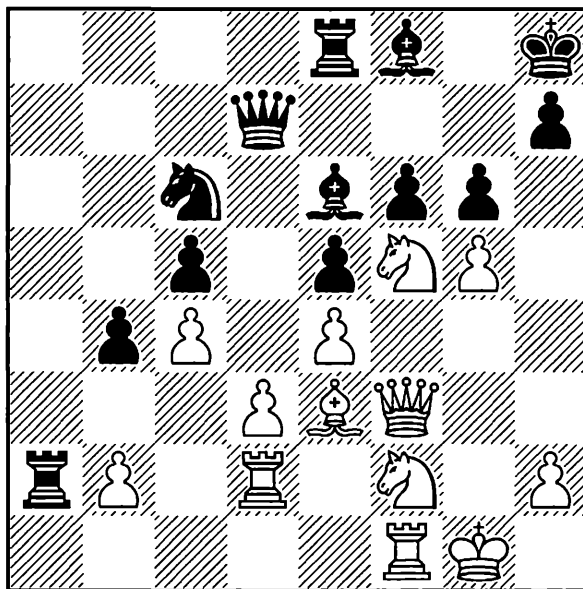
There was still time for 24...♘d4, etc.

25.g5

Thanks to a little tactical finesse (White's 26th move) this advance, once thought to have been prevented, has become possible. Black is at a disadvantage.

25...g6

414



26.♘g4!

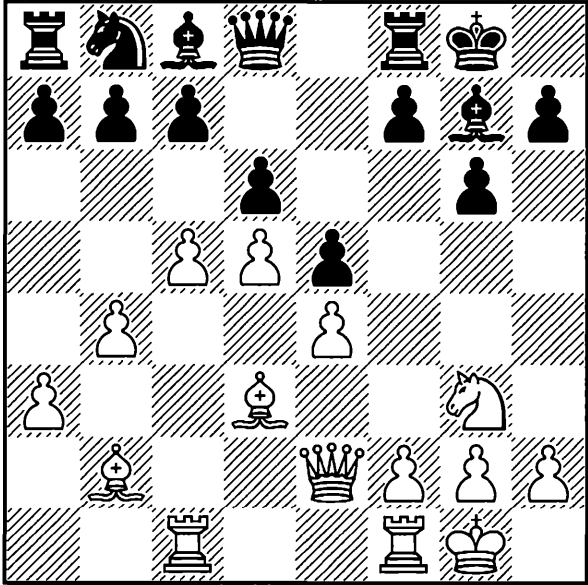
Deprives Black of the fruits of his deeply laid plans. Next came 26...gxf5 27.♘xf6 ♘d4 28.♗f2 (28.♗h5 was a quicker win) 28...♗c6 29.♘xe8 ♗xe8 30.♙xd4 exd4 31.exf5 and won easily.

What we learn from this game is firstly how to distinguish between genuine and false freeing moves. You should also take in how Black was able to restrain d3-d4 and later (till he suddenly went wrong) g4-g5. For us, the most important thing is the following statement:

I do not know any absolute freeing moves. A freeing move in an undeveloped position always turns out to be "false" or illusory; and vice versa, a move that cannot be classified amongst freeing moves can lead to a very free game if we have a surplus of tempi.

Consider, for example, diagram 415 (overleaf). White obviously has a powerful plus as far as tempi are concerned; under these conditions, Black's freeing move f7-f5 leads to a premature opening up of Black's underdeveloped game, e.g. 1...f5 2.exf5! gxf5 3.♘h5 then f2-f4 and a strong attack.

415



This linkage was unknown to the pseudo-classical school, which believed only in absolute freeing moves; f7-f5 (when White has ♖e4, d5 against d6, e5) was reckoned to be such a move and in 80 cases out of 100 they considered it worth recommending. We have dropped this figure to 60 out of 100. Because even after the defensive move f2-f3 (i.e. 1...f5 2.exf5! gxf5 and then 3.f3) the strength of the pawn duo e5, f5 should in no way be overestimated. And suddenly we have reached the nucleus of restraining manoeuvres.

4. Clarification of the nucleus of a manoeuvre designed to restrain a pawn majority

The struggle against a central majority

The qualitative majority

It is impossible for me to show the nucleus for restraint in some sort of diagrammatic representation (sounds nice, doesn't it!), and so I shall choose another method: so, Black has a majority (say ♖a5 and b5 against ♖a3; or ♖e5 and f5 against ♖f3). He is threatening to create a passed pawn and (secondly) also an attack on the castled position introduced by the creation of a wedge by f5-f4 then ♜f8-f5-h5 etc. Our way to restrain this consists of trying to neutralise the extra opposing pawn via the open file linked to two separate blockading points. In the position White ♖f3, Black ♖e5 f5, (and Uncle Tom Cobley and all), the possessor of the majority has two threats: one consists of the advance e5-e4, the

other in creating a wedge by f5-f4, supplemented by some sort of diversion like ♜f8-f5-g5 or h5 etc. At the same time he is aiming to plant a black knight on e3.

Where then does the restraint come from? Well, by blocking e5-e4 by f3-f4 then possibly ♜e3 as a blockader and on the other hand after f5-f4 by getting in ♞e4. This knight would help make difficult the above-mentioned diversion because of its attacking radius.

Thus the nucleus of restraint is an open file combined with a double possibility of blockading.

The central majority must not be allowed too far forward, or else the threat of the creation of a wedge would become too terrible. Take for example White ♖f2, g2, h2, ♜g1 against Black ♖h7, g7, e4, f4 (and lots of pieces on both sides). By f4-f3 (= wedge building) Black is threatening to interrupt the lines of communication between g2 and h2 on one hand and White's second rank on the other (= a white rook on a2 could no longer protect g2 or h2). All things being equal, Black's attack is quite strong. Therefore we can see the necessity of fixing our opponent's central majority back on the 4th rank (i.e. Black ♖e5, f5, White ♖f3).

If you know our thoughts on pawn chains, it is easy to assimilate the concept of the qualitative majority: a wing which is advancing in the direction of the opponent's base pawn can naturally be considered qualitatively superior.

Thus in the position where White has ♖e5, d4, a2, b2, c3, f4, g4, h3 against Black's ♖e6, d5, c5, a7, b7, f7, g7, h7, White has the qualitative majority on the kingside and Black on the queenside.

5. The different forms of restraint are more clearly explained

- a) The mobile central pawn
- b) The struggle against a qualitative majority

c) Restraining doubled pawn complexes

d) My own special variation and its restraining tendencies

a) The mobile central pawn

White $\Delta e4$ against $\Delta d6$ and $f7$; or White $\Delta d4$ against $\Delta e6$ and $c6$. One occurs, e.g., by 1.e4 e5 2. $\Delta f3$ $\Delta c6$ 3. $\Delta b5$ d6 4.d4 exd4 5. $\Delta xd4$ $\Delta d7$. Black's restraint comes through action on the e-file, by means of $\Delta f6$, $\Delta e7$, 0–0, $\Re e8$, $\Delta f8$.

Another important aid to the paralysing of White's centre is the more passive pawn formation d6 and f6. The position White $\Delta e4$, Black $\Delta d6$, f6, is typical, and I call it the "saw position", because the e4-pawn should be caught in the teeth of the saw, between d6 and f6.

The order of the manoeuvres directed against the mobile centre is generally:

- 1) the passive "saw position", then
- 2) more aggressive restraint by pressure from a rook
- 3) causing the once-mobile centre pawn to become either backward or isolated
- 4) mechanically blocking it by a blockading piece
- 5) taking the pawn.

A good way of characterising the tendency of the restraining side is the formula: "First restrain, then blockade and finally destroy!" Carrying this out is difficult, but rewarding (also in the pedagogical sense). This means that the analysis of the position which arises after 1.e4 e5 2. $\Delta f3$ d6 3.d4 exd4 4. $\Delta xd4$ is excellent training, which we cannot recommend enough to you.

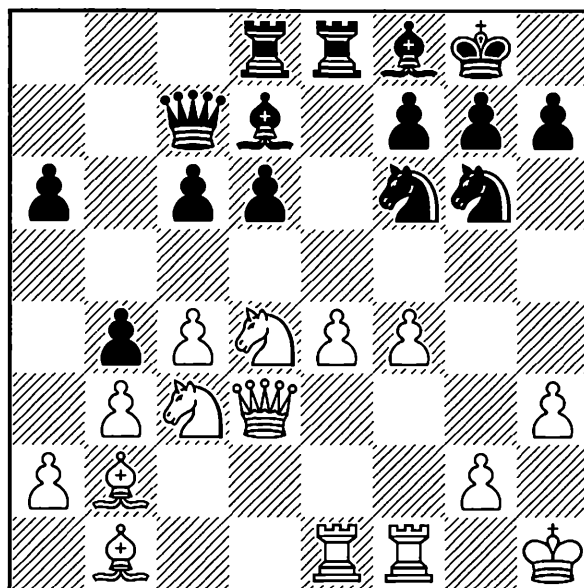
The following illustrative game is only apparently complicated in its motifs; it boils down to the struggle against the $\Delta e4$, which is controlling the square.

Shoosmith – Nimzowitsch, Ostend 1907

1.d4 $\Delta f6$ 2.c4 d6 3. $\Delta f3$ $\Delta bd7$ 4. $\Delta c3$ e5 5.e4 $\Delta e7$ 6. $\Delta d3$ 0–0 7.0–0 exd4! (if 7... $\Re e8$ then 8.d5 and Black remains cramped, e.g. 8... $\Delta c5$ 9. $\Delta e3$ $\Delta xd3$ 10. $\Re xd3$ $\Delta d7$ 11.b4 a5 12.a3 etc.)

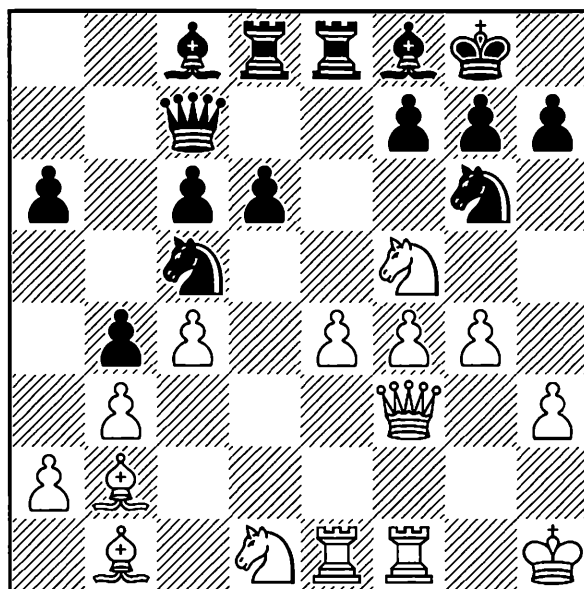
8. $\Delta xd4$ $\Re e8$ 9.b3 $\Delta e5$ 10. $\Delta c2$ a6 (you will soon understand Black's advance) 11. $\Delta b2$ $\Delta d7$ 12.h3 $\Delta f8$ 13.f4 $\Delta g6$ 14. $\Re f3$ c6 15. $\Re ae1$ b5 (now things are clear: Black is keeping an eye on the $\Delta e4$ and trying at the same time to get rid of the c-pawn which is annoying him, because it makes the $\Delta d6$ backward) 16. $\Re d3$ $\Re c7$ 17. $\Delta h1$ $\Re ad8$ 18. $\Delta b1$ b4!!

416



Here we are dealing with an admittedly somewhat unusual-looking example of chain building. The links in the chain are $\Delta b3$ and c4 against $\Delta b4$ and ... $\Delta c5$ (!), because why should a piece not take on the role of a pawn in a chain from time to time!? The plan consists of the sequence $\Delta c8$, $\Delta f6$ -d7-c5, then a7-a5-a4 to attack the base of the white chain, b3. Accordingly, b5-b4 brings about a transfer of the attack from c4 to b3. 19. $\Delta d1$ $\Delta c8$ 20. $\Re f3$ $\Delta d7$ 21. $\Delta f5$ $\Delta c5$ 22.g4?

417



A mistake, which for a moment means that the $\Delta f4$ needs protection; but this “short” moment is long enough to allow Black a brilliant breakthrough. 22... $\Delta e6!$ (exploiting White’s error) 23. Wg3 $\Delta b7$ 24.h4 d5 25.e5 c5 26.cxd5 $\Delta xd5$ 27. $\Delta g1$ (27. $\Delta e4?$ $\Delta xd1!$) 27... $\Delta d2$ 28. $\Delta fe3$ Wc6 0–1

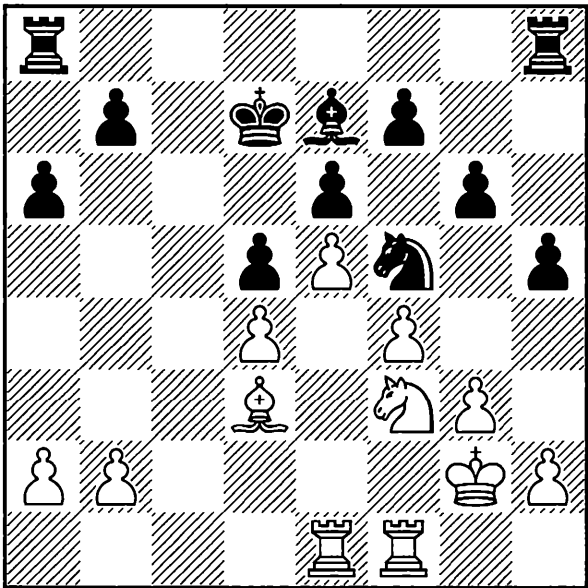
Let me recommend to you my games against Teichmann (part I, page 53) and Blackburne (this chapter, page 213).

b) The struggle against a qualitative majority

Imagine that in diagram 405 the black knight is on c5 instead of f6. Then, what we would have would be the typical restraint of a qualitative majority. If $\Delta d3xc5$, then $b6xc5$, paralysing White’s advance. But if 1.a3 in order to continue with 2.b4, then 1...a4! 2.b4 $\Delta b3!$, and this strong knight position represents compensation for White getting in c4-c5.

Try to understand how the activity of Black’s rook pawn is made up of equal parts of passive and active effects. This pawn, or the $\Delta h5$ in diagram 418, is what bears the whole weight of our restraining manoeuvres.

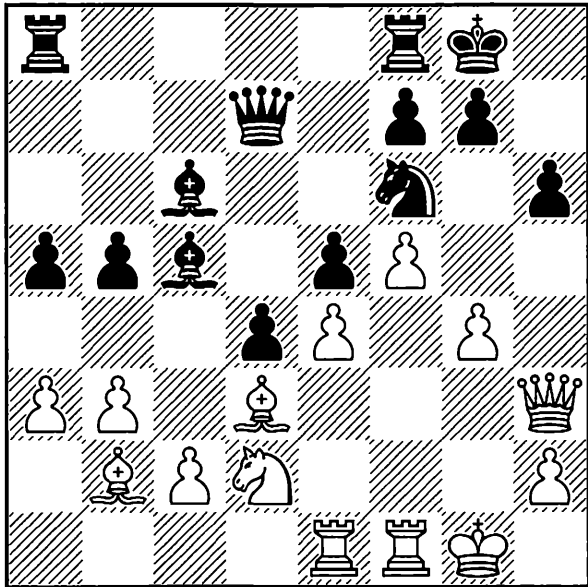
418



*White’s qualitative majority emerges;
1.h3 is effectively met by 1...h4! 2.g4 $\Delta g3$.*

The advance h5-h4 (diagram 418) or a5-a4 must always be the first reply to h2-h3 or a2-a3 respectively.

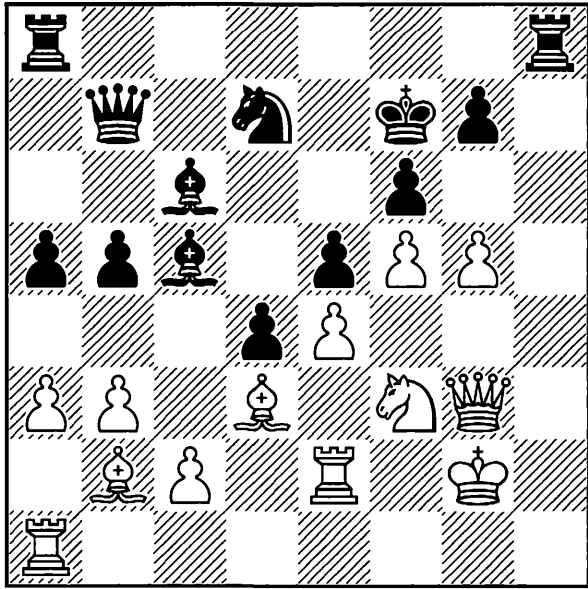
419



Another typical procedure can be seen here. The combined advance planned by White (Wg3 , h2-h4, g4-g5) cannot be prevented in the long run. This advance would (and we are now considering f7-f6, which cannot be avoided, as having been played) lay bare the base of the black chain (after g5xf6 g7xf6). Much worse for Black would be the attack on the king involved in the advance. The correct plan now consists of holding up White’s h4 and g5 for long enough to allow the king to flee.

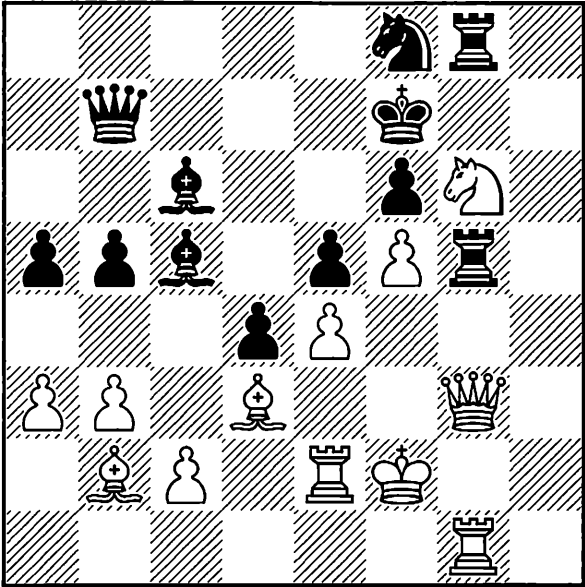
So in diagram 419 (Van Vliet – Nimzowitsch, Ostend 1907) things went as follows: 21... $\Delta h7$ 22. $\Delta f3$ We7 23. Wg3 $\Delta fe8$ 24.h4 f6 25. $\Delta a1$ (White too has weaknesses) 25... Wb7 26. $\Delta fe1$ $\Delta f7!$ 27. $\Delta e2$ (if 27.g5 then 27...hxcg5 28.hxcg5 $\Delta e7!$ with a tenable game) 27... $\Delta h8!$ (the mysterious rook move!) 28. $\Delta g2$ $\Delta f8$ 29.g5 hxcg5 30.hxcg5 $\Delta d7$

420



White’s attack on the king can be considered as having gone wrong, because after 31.gxf6 gxf6 32.♖g6† ♔e7 33.♖g7† ♔d6! Black would have an excellent position. The game went 31.gxf6 gxf6 32.♘h4 ♖ag8 33.♘g6 ♖h5 34.♔f2 ♘f8 35.♖g1 ♖g5

421



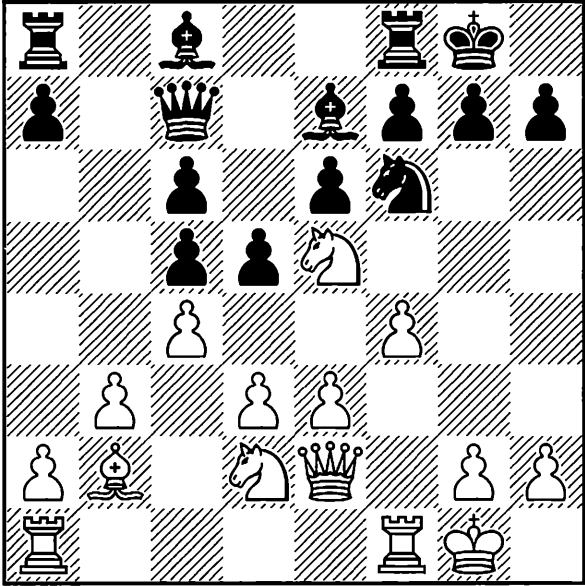
with an advantage for Black. You should learn by heart the last-ditch defence illustrated here.

c) Restraining doubled pawn complexes

As well as the dynamic weakness we have emphasised several times, we must also describe the following points as decisive:

- 1. the imprisoned bishop
- 2. lack of space and difficulties in protection

422

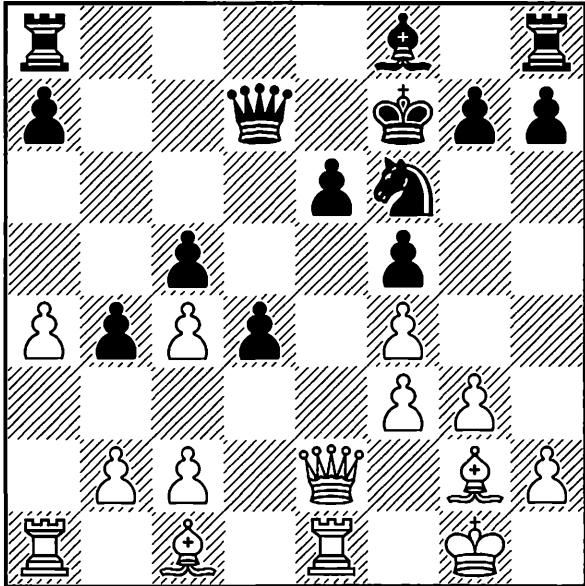


The “dead” bishop on c8! (It is a prisoner in its own camp.)

For 1, we offer you diagram 422, which is from Bird’s Opening, and the following two openings:

I. 1.f4 d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.d3 (somewhat unusual) 3...♘c6 4.♘c3 ♖g4! 5.g3 ♖xf3!! 6.exf3 e6 7.♖g2 f5! 8.0–0 d4 (charming – the ♖g2 is now a prisoner in its own camp; the weakness on e6 is easily protected) 9.♘b1 b5 10.a4 b4 11.♘d2 ♘a5 12.♖e2 ♔f7 13.♖e1 ♖d7 14.♘c4 ♘xc4 15.dxc4 ♘f6 and Black (Dr Erdman) is dictating the pace.

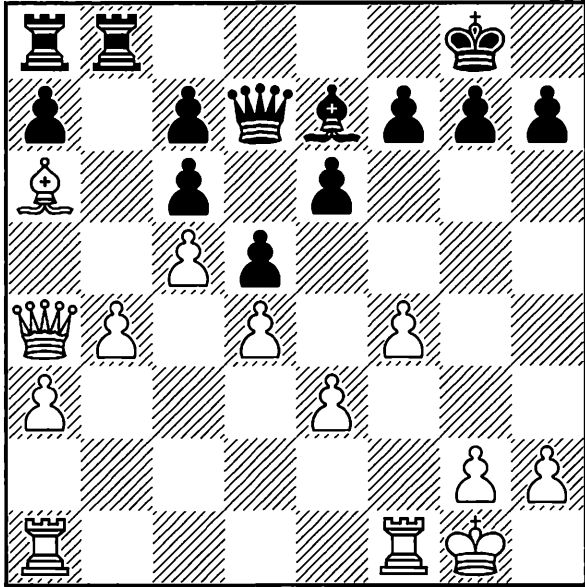
423



II. 1.e3 e5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♖b4 5.♖e2 (here it was worth considering 5.d4 exd4 6.exd4 d5 7.♖e2 with equality) 5...0–0 6.0–0 ♖e8 7.a3 ♖xc3 8.bxc3 d6 and for the whole of the game (Nimzowitsch – Réti, Breslau 1925), White suffered from the ♖c1 which was hard to make use of.

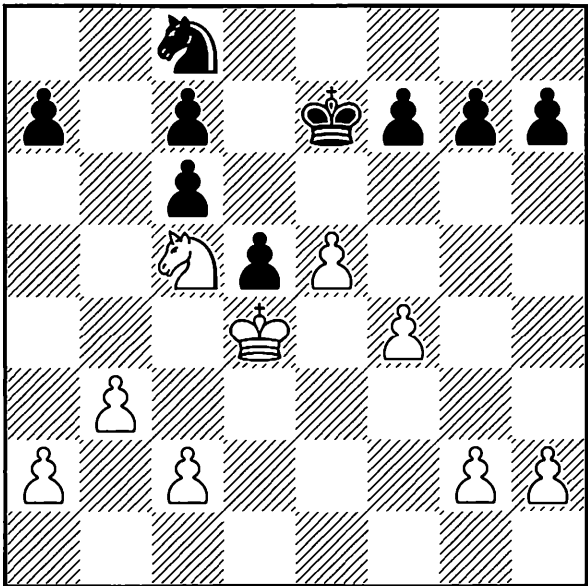
For 2, see the following two diagrams.

424



Without the $\Delta c7$ Black would have freedom of movement, but now – taking into account the threat of $\textcircled{B}b7$ – he is halfway to being stalemated.

425



This shows us the blockading knight, which is enormously effective against doubled pawns; not only is Black's majority illusory in its total value, but each single component of the said majority appears to be in danger of its life. Under these circumstances, White's majority can win when it pleases. Even if both sides have rooks (White $\textcircled{R}a4$, Black $\textcircled{R}d8$ or b6), the situation would be untenable for Black. This demonstrates how great the paralysing effect of doubled pawns can be!

d) My own special variation and its restraining tendencies

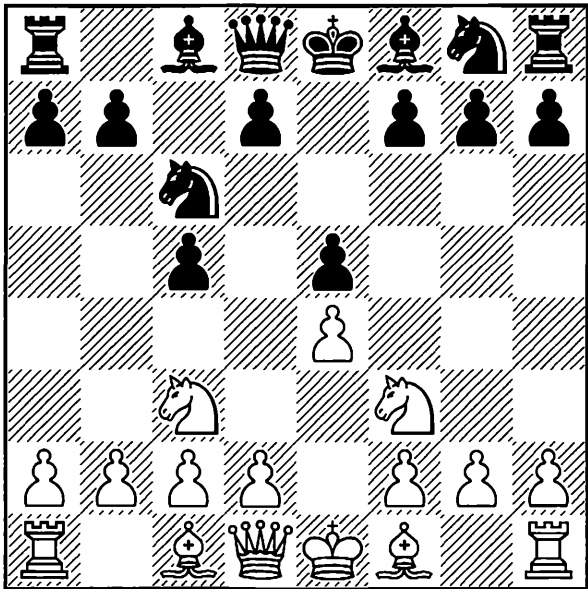
We are talking about the line: 1.c4 e5 2. $\textcircled{B}c3$ $\textcircled{B}f6$ 3. $\textcircled{B}f3$ $\textcircled{B}c6$ 4.e4. As far back as 1924, I tried after 1.f4 c5 2.e4 $\textcircled{B}c6$ 3.d3 (an idea of Dr Krause) 3...g6 and then the move 4.c4. I consider the reason behind this move is a blockading idea which covers half the board. In *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten* 1925, page 10, I made the following comment about 4.c4 (after 1.f4 c5 2.e4 $\textcircled{B}c6$ 3.d3 g6):

“Since this move is not played with the idea of preventing d7-d5 or even making it more difficult, then it needs a special explanation: Black wishes to use the set-up with e7-e6 and d7-d5. Once he has established this, he will then think of extending

his attacking formation on the queenside, by an opportune $\textcircled{B}d4$, in order after $\textcircled{B}xd4$ c5xd4 to set up pressure on the $\Delta c2$ (i.e. down the c-file). The text move takes preventive measures against this possible extension of play on the queenside. The hole on d4 appears to be unimportant.”

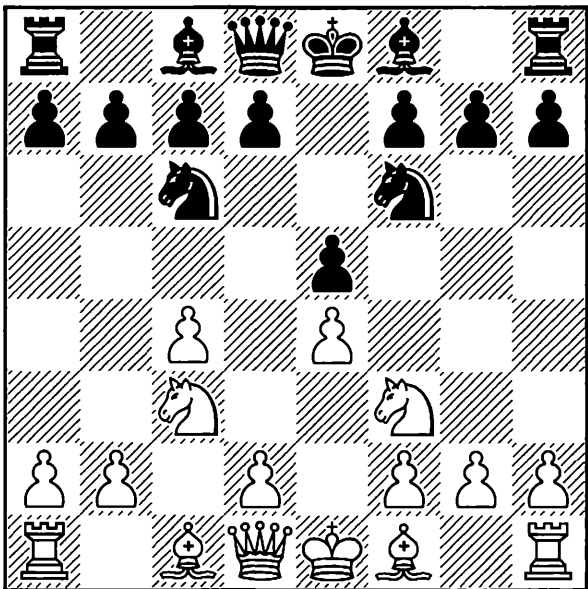
If I now ask myself, how I found the moral courage (because it takes moral courage either to play a move or conceive a plan which goes against tradition), then I would have to say that it was my intensive preoccupation with the problem of the blockade which helped me do so. I was always trying to look at this problem from new angles. As a result in Dresden 1926, I chanced, after 1.e4 c5 2. $\textcircled{B}f3$ $\textcircled{B}c6$ 3. $\textcircled{B}c3$, on the move 3... e5,

426



a move which then caused a huge sensation. My special variation 1.c4 e5 2. $\textcircled{B}c3$ $\textcircled{B}f6$ 3. $\textcircled{B}f3$ $\textcircled{B}c6$ 4.e4 can be seen as one more step along that road.

427



Moreover, the respected theoretician Dr O.H. Krause from Oringe, Denmark, has made a separate investigation into the combination of e4 and c4, and appears to come to partially similar conclusions quite independently of my analyses.

Now we come to the games and refer you in addition to my specific investigation in *Die Blockade*.

Game 28

Nimzowitsch – Rubinstein

Dresden 1926

This game illustrates the effect of prevention and the idea of total mobility.

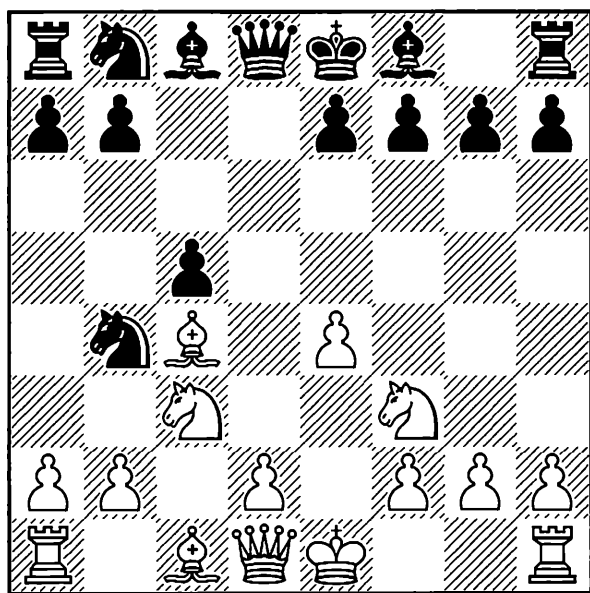
1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♙c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4

An innovation of mine, which accepts the backwardness of the ♘d2 for the sake of other advantages.

5...♘b4

Here 5...♘xc3 6.bxc3 g6 was preferable.
6.♙c4!

428



6...e6

It was not possible here to exploit the weakness on d3 at once, e.g. 6...♘d3† 7.♙e2 ♘f4† 8.♙f1 threatening d2-d4. Or 6...♘d3† 7.♙e2 ♘xc1† 8.♙xc1 ♘c6 9.♙b5 ♙d7 10.♙xc6 ♙xc6 then d4 and a superior endgame.

7.0–0 ♘8c6

Here we prefer 7...a6. In any case, White then retains an excellent game after 8.a3 ♘4c6 9.d3 followed by ♙e3.

8.d3 ♘d4

The threat was 9.a3.

9.♘xd4 cxd4 10.♙e2

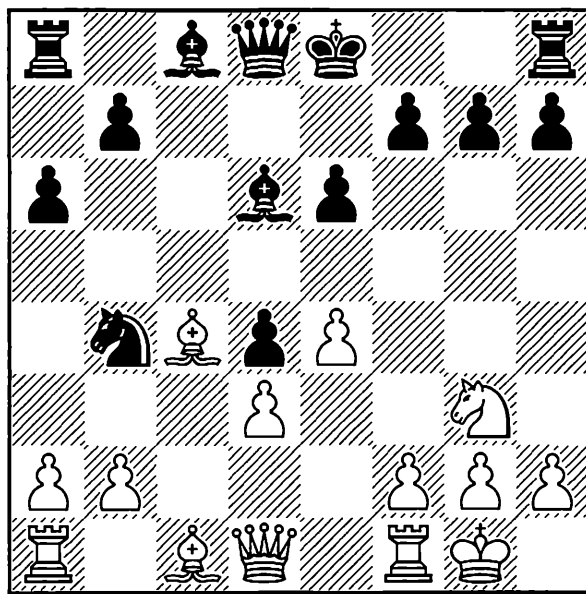
White is now very well placed: the remaining weakness on d5 is well covered, the total mobility of his kingside (f2-f4) is considerable and – what is of the greatest importance – the apparently obstructed ♙c4 is playing a preventive role which is quite decisive, militating as it does against a possible e6-e5.

10...a6

To prevent the threatened 11.♙b5† ♙d7 12.♘xd4.

11.♘g3 ♙d6

429



12.f4

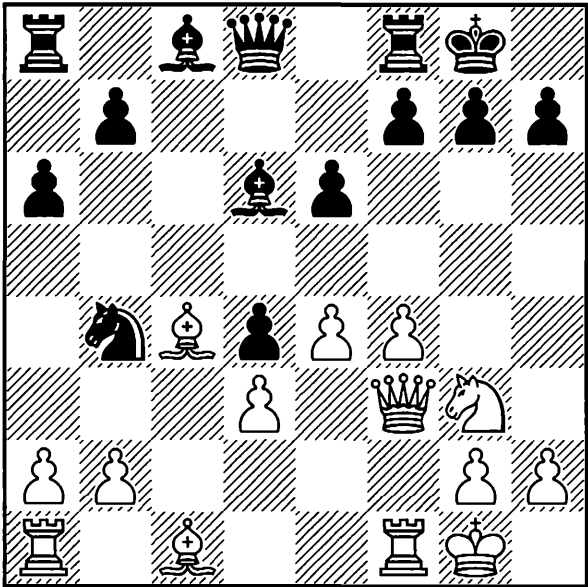
Here 12.♙g4 was very strong, e.g. 12.♙g4 0–0 13.♙g5! ♙e7 14.♙h6 ♙f6 15.♙xg7 ♙xg7 16.♘h5. Or 12.♙g4 0–0 13.♙g5 e5 14.♙h4 followed by a sacrifice on g7 (♘g3-h5xg7). The best reply to 12.♙g4 was 12...♙f6 13.f4 but even here White would have a totally superior position.

After the less sharp text move, Black can almost equalise.

12...0–0 13.♙f3

A direct mating attack is no longer possible: e.g. 13.e5 ♙c7! 14.♙g4 ♘h8 15.♘h5 ♙g8 16.♙f3 f5! 17.exf6 gxf6 18.♙h4 ♙g6 19.♙h3 ♙e7 and Black is threatening to consolidate with ♙d7 and ♙ag8.

430



13...♔h8 14.♙d2 f5 15.♖ae1 ♘c6

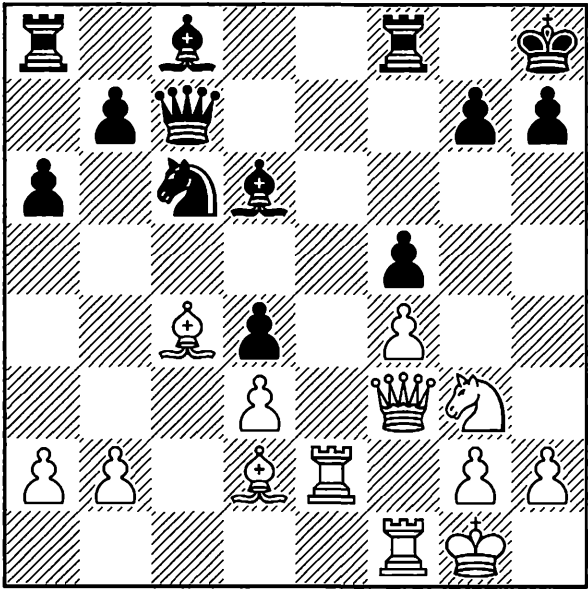
Rubinstein has defended skilfully. But White still has a trump card: the e-file.

16.♖e2 ♜c7

Not good. In cramped positions, you cannot afford to give your opponent any chance to make a decent move! But 16...♜c7 removes the possibility, after 17.exf5 exf5, of 18...♜f6. So the correct move was 16...♙d7. Then if 17.exf5 (best) 17...exf5 18.♖fe1, Black plays 18...♜f6 and he is certainly much better off than in the game.

17.exf5 exf5

431



18.♘h1

The knight is setting out on a long journey, with g5 as its goal, in order to support as best it

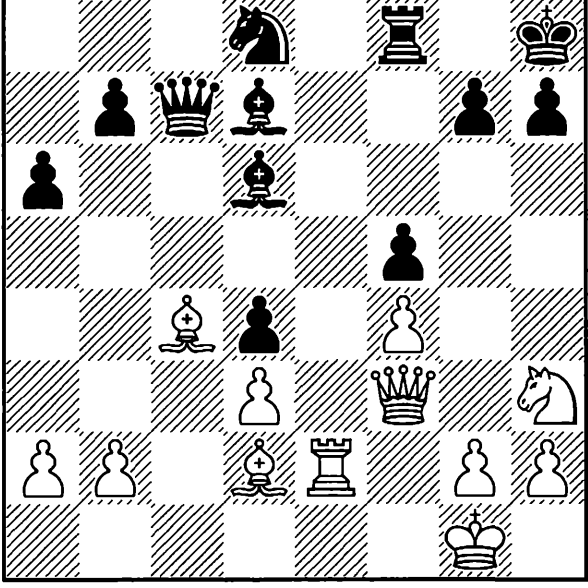
can the preventive bishop on c4 which has just been granted a chance for some direct action. And in the meantime, White's e-file is dependent on its own resources and conducts a despairing but successful struggle for its own existence. The vitality of the e-file I have just indicated is the point of the knight manoeuvre!

18...♙d7 19.♘f2 ♖ae8 20.♖fe1 ♖xe2 21.♖xe2 ♘d8

Now it can be seen that 21...♖e8 would fail to 22.♜d5.

22.♘h3

432



22...♙c6

And now 22...♖e8 would permit some amusing lines such as 22...♖e8 23.♜h5! ♖xe2 24.♘g5 h6¹¹ 25.♜g6 hxg5 26.♜h5 mate.

23.♜h5 g6 24.♜h4 ♔g7 25.♜f2!

Black's castled position was still too strongly defended. So White wishes to force Black into a regrouping of his troops.

25...♙c5

Or 25...♜b6 26.b4 then ♙c3!.

26.b4 ♙b6 27.♜h4

A recurring theme, such as you generally only find in problems. But there was also a good line in 27.♜e1 ♙e4 28.♘f2 winning a pawn by ♘xe4 etc.

27...♖e8

After 27...♖f6 would come 28.♘g5 h6 29.♘h7! with an immediate win.

28.♖e5! ♘f7

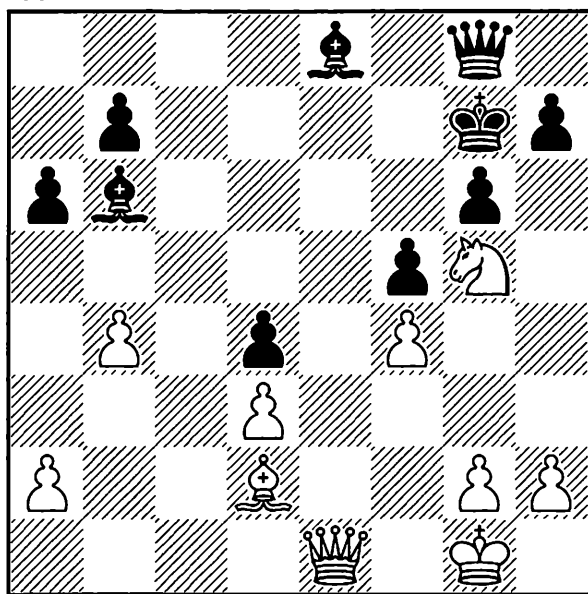
28...h6 would be met with 29.g4 with a powerful attack, e.g. 29.g4 fxg4 30.f5 ♖xe5 31.f6† ♖xf6 32.♗xh6 mate; Or 28...h6 29.g4 g5? 30.fxg5 threatening mate on h6. After the text move, White has a forced and elegant win.

29.♙xf7 ♖xf7¹¹

If 29...♗xe5 then 30.fxe5 ♖xf7 31.♘g5 ♖g8 32.e6 ♙d5 33.♗f4 with an easy win.

30.♘g5 ♖g8 31.♗xe8 ♙xe8 32.♗e1!

433



A remarkable losing position for Black. Despite the lack of material, a mating attack is in the air and it cannot be beaten off. From here on there are some nice lines.

32...♙c6

After 32...♙f8 White wins with 33.♗e5 ♙d8 (still the best; after 33...♗xa2 comes 34.♗f6† ♙g8 35.♘e6, or 34...♙f7 35.♘xf7 then ♗xb6) 34.♘e6† ♙e7 35.♗c5†! ♙d7 36.♘f8†!. Note how White does not use the discovered check on move 35 and how the black king has got tangled up among his own pieces!

33.♗e7† ♙h8

If 33...♙h6 then of course 34.♘e6

34.b5

Tightens the noose! After 34...axb5 then 35.♘e6 h5! 36.♗f6† ♙h7 37.♘g5† ♙h6 38.♙b4 should lead to mate.

34...♗g7

Despair.

35.♗xg7† ♙xg7 36.bxc6

And White won.

Game 29

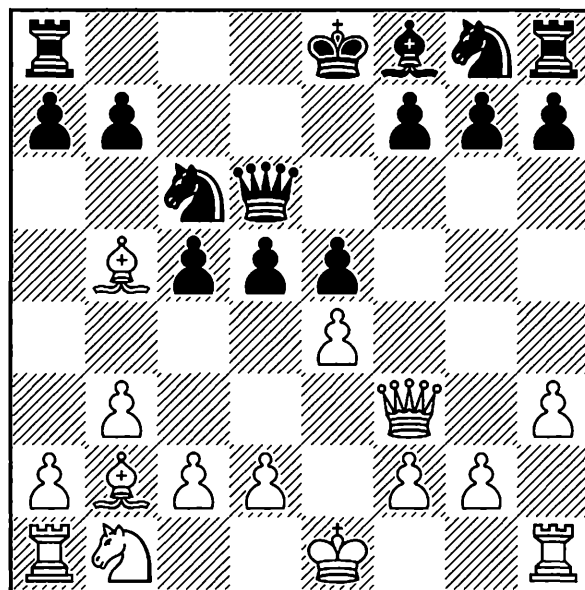
Nimzowitsch – Rosselli del Turco

Baden-Baden 1925

Illustrates the restraint of a doubled pawn complex in an extraordinarily striking fashion.

1.♘f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e3 ♘c6 4.♙b2 ♙g4 5.h3 ♙xf3 6.♗xf3 e5 7.♙b5 ♖d6 8.e4

434



Here we are dealing with a remarkable situation which I discussed at an earlier opportunity (page 205). One should not inflict the doubled pawns on Black by an immediate ♙xc6† bxc6, but bring them about indirectly. After 8.♙xc6† bxc6, the opponent could hang on in his crouching position without ever playing d5-d4, e.g. 8.♙xc6†? bxc6 9.e4 ♘f6 etc.

8...d4 9.♘a3

Threatening 10.♘c4 ♖c7 11.♙xc6† bxc6 and the doubled pawns are an obvious weakness.

9...f6 10.♘c4 ♖d7 11.♗h5†

The queen manoeuvre is intended to prevent the opponent from castling *queenside*, but *not* kingside, as one might suppose at first glance.

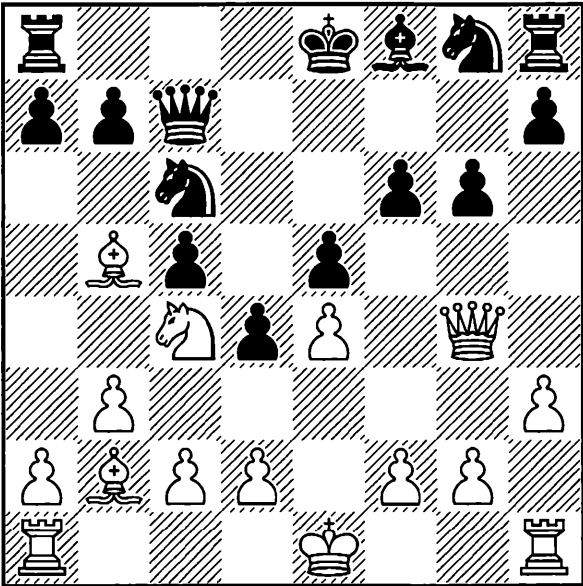
11...g6 12.♗f3 ♖c7

Not 12...0-0-0 on account of 13.♘a5, when the protective move 13...♘ge7 is out of the question because of 14.♗xf6.

13.♗g4!

Now the queen can be happy with the observation post it has seized! The queen manoeuvre looks quite hypermodern!

435



13...♔f7

The threat was 14.♖e6† ♔d8 (or 14...♙e7 15.♘a5) 15.♙xc6 and the unpleasant doubled pawns have been set up.

14.f4! h5 15.♗f3 exf4 16.♙xc6

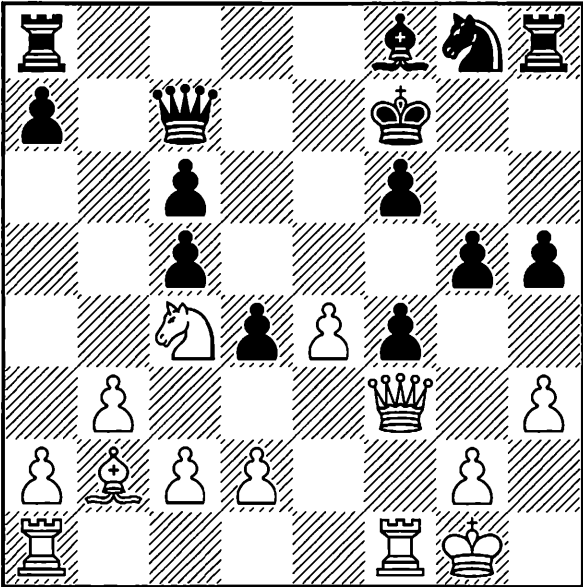
Just at the right moment, because the queen cannot now recapture, e.g. 16...♗xc6 17.♗xf4 ♖e8 18.0-0!! ♗xe4 (18...♗xe4 19.♘e5†!) 19.♗c7†!! and wins (19...♗e7 20.♘d6† followed by ♘xe8).

16...bxc6

White has at last reached his goal, though at the cost of a pawn; but that is unimportant here.

17.0-0 g5

436



Because the black position (see previous note) *can* be burst open (of course White cannot allow

consolidation by the black ♘e5). To open things up, three pawn moves are needed, I. c3, II. e5, III. h4. If White tried to get by with only two of them, his job would only be half finished. But in the game we see all three pawn moves.

18.c3 ♖d8

This rook would thus have a fortunate link to d4!

19.♖ae1! ♘e7 20.e5 ♘f5 21.cxd4! ♘xd4

If 21...cxd4 then 22.exf6 ♔xf6 23.♗e4, and 23...♘g3 does not work on account of 24.♙xd4†.

22.♗e4 ♙e7

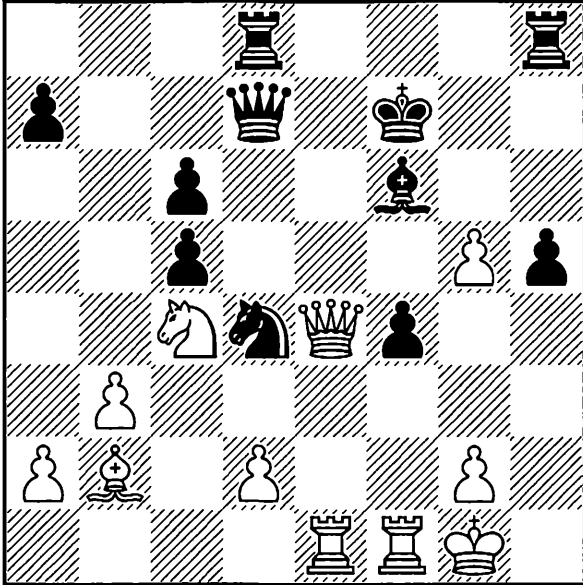
22...f5 would be met by the retreat which is so dear to modern players, 23.♗b1!!, e.g. 22...f5 23.♗b1! ♔e6 (to defend f5) 24.♗d3! followed by ♘d6! with a decisive attack.

23.h4

Now Black's position, which is undermined on all sides, collapses like a house of cards.

23...♗d7 24.exf6 ♙xf6 25.hxg5 1-0

437



After 25...♙g7 26.♘e5† ♙xe5 27.♗xe5 the helplessness of Black's king position is quite touching.

My dear colleague Knoch – but first I must paint a picture of him... Well, Knoch is the most objective of all those masters who think in an objective manner; he has a particularly critically inclined intelligence and is absolutely incapable of uncritical enthusiasm (unlike most other people, who allow themselves to be swept

away by enthusiasm without asking too many questions about why they have done so). Knoch has a mental equanimity which one can but envy... However, Knoch has authorised me to tell my readers that he is “quite in love” with the game Nimzowitsch – Rosselli.

Game 30 illustrates complete restraint and is worthy of standing beside the well-known “Immortal Zugzwang Game” (Sämisch–Nimzowitsch, Copenhagen 1923). I personally think no. 30 is even better.

Game 30

Johner – Nimzowitsch

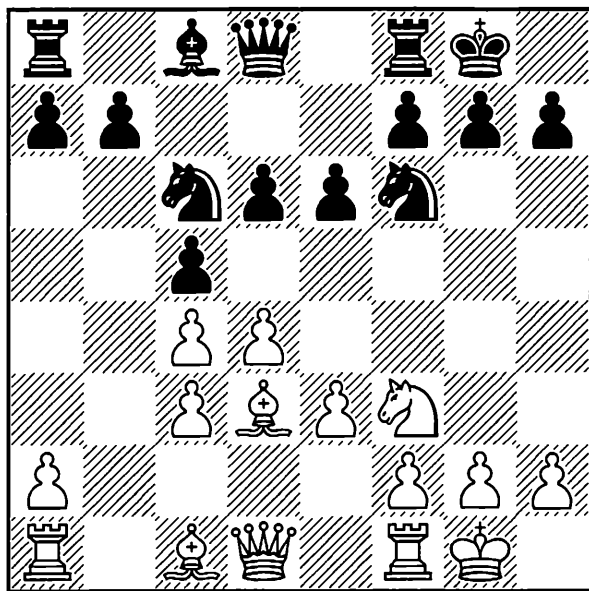
Dresden 1926

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0–0

Black wishes to bring about the doubled pawn complex only under circumstances which are favourable to him, cf. game 29.

5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♙xc3 8.bxc3 d6

438



The prognosis for the c3, c4 complex seems quite good for Black (though not overwhelmingly so). However after, for example, 9.e4 e5 10.d5 ♘a5, it would not have been so easy for Black to achieve the barricade he manages in this game, because for that the Black c-pawn would have been better on c7! (See the explanations to the doubled pawn complex and my game against Janowski, page 204.)

9.♘d2!

A fine plan! If Black now plays 9...e5 10.d5 ♘a5, then 11.♘b3 should counter the attack-minded ♘a5.

9...b6 10.♘b3?

There was no hurry with this move; firstly 10.f4 should have been played. If so, then 10...e5 11.fxe5 dxe5 12.d5 ♘a5 13.♘b3 ♘b7 14.e4 ♘e8 and the weakness on c4, which can also be attacked from d6, will be covered by ♙e2, whereas for his part White could make use of the f-file along with a2-a4-a5 as the basis for his operations; the game would then be roughly level.

10...e5! 11.f4

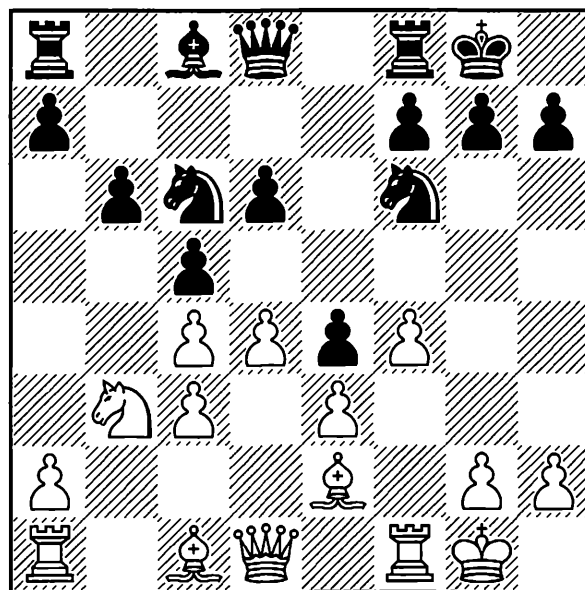
Because 11.d5 would then be met with 11...e4!, e.g. 11.d5 e4! 12.♙e2 ♘e5!; or 11.d5 e4 12.dxc6 exd3 with an advantage to Black.

11...e4

Another possible move was 11...♙e7 and then if something like 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.d5, then 13...♘d8 14.e4 ♘e8 and with ♘d6 and f7-f6 Black sets up a strong defensive position (see move 10).

12.♙e2

439



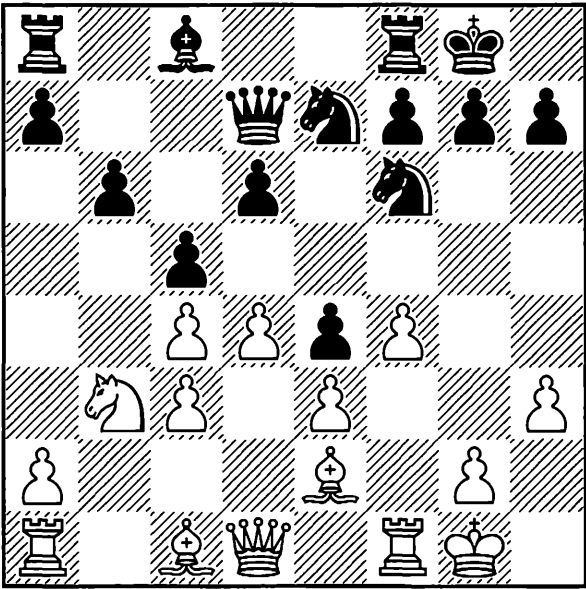
12...♙d7!

Black spots that White has a qualitative kingside pawn majority with his f-, g- and h-pawns. The text move involves a complicated procedure to restrain it. Simple restraint could be achieved by 12...♘e8, e.g. 13.g4 (or 13.f5 ♙g5) 13...f5

14.dxc5! (note the “dead” bishop on c1 we have spoken about before and take into account how ineffectively White’s pieces are posted to counter an attack down the g-file) 14...dxc5 15.♖d5† ♖xd5 16.cxd5 ♘e7 17.♙d1 ♘d6 and White has a slight advantage.

13.h3 ♘e7

440



14.♖e1

Black could also get an advantage after 14.♙d2, e.g. 14.♙d2 (threatening ♙d2-e1-h4) 14...♘f5 15.♖e1 (the best; the threat was 15...♘g3 then to exchange it for the bishop, which would leave c4 particularly weak) 15...g6. If now 16.g4 ♘g7 17.♖h4, then 17...♘fe8 and the movement of the pawns has been nipped in the bud, because the next move will be the powerful f7-f5.

Thus we keep getting the same picture: the clumsiness of the white pieces brought about by the doubled pawns c3 and c4 makes it difficult to carry out significant action of any sort on the kingside.

14...h5! 15.♙d2

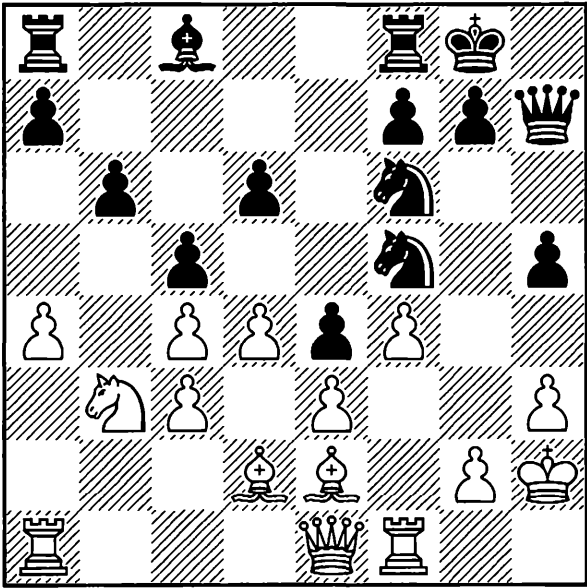
15.♖h4 does not work on account of 15...♘f5 16.♖g5 ♘h7 17.♖xh5 ♘g3.

15...♖f5!

Aiming for h7(!), which would be an excellent post for it, since there would then be the threat of paralysis by h5-h4. You have to admit that the restraining manoeuvre ♖d8-d7-f5 is a remarkable conception.

16.♙h2 ♖h7! 17.a4 ♘f5

441



Black is threatening 18...♘g4† 19.hxg4 hxg4† 20.♙g1 g3 etc.

18.g3 a5!

Here, putting up with the backwardness of b6 is easily done!

19.♙g1 ♘h6 20.♙f1 ♙d7 21.♙c1 ♙ac8

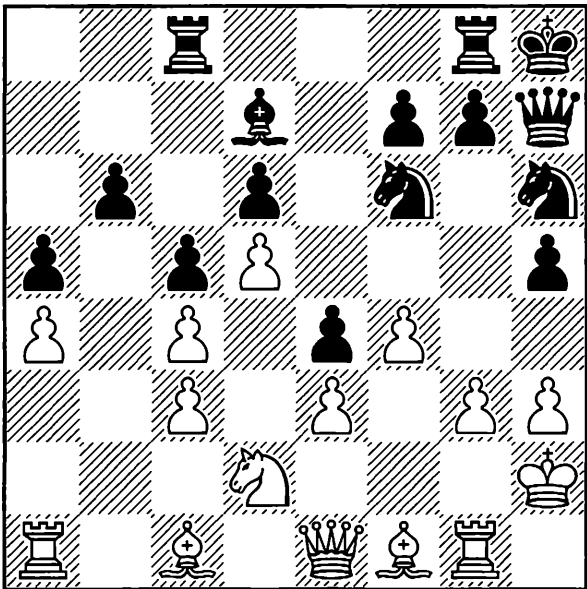
Black wishes to force White into d4-d5, in order to be able to act on the kingside without hindrance.

22.d5

Or else there will come 22...♙e6 and d4-d5 will be forced anyway.

22...♙h8 23.♘d2 ♙g8

442



Now comes the attack. So was ♖d7-f5-h7 already an attacking manoeuvre?! No and yes. No, because the idea was exclusively to restrain

the white pawns. Yes, because any restraint is the logical prelude to an attack, because any immobile complex tends towards weakness and thus must sooner or later become an object of attack.

24.♙g2 g5 25.♘f1 ♖g7 26.♖a2 ♜f5 27.♙h1

White has cleverly mustered all his defenders.

27...♖cg8 28.♚d1 gxf4

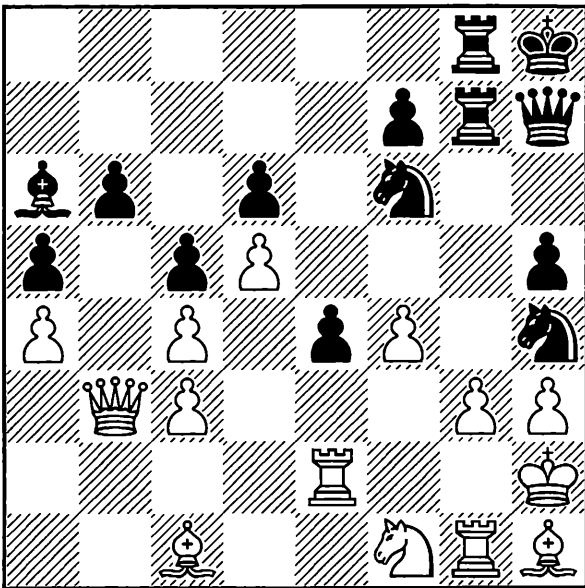
Opens the g-file for himself, but also the e-file for his opponent; so the move demanded deep thought.

29.exf4 ♙c8 30.♚b3 ♙a6 31.♖e2

He sees his chance. The e-pawn has become in need of protection. If he had played purely defensively, something like 31.♙d2, there would have been a nice combination: 31.♙d2 ♖g6! 32.♙e1 ♜g4† 33.hxg4 hxg4† 34.♔g2 ♙xc4! 35.♚xc4, followed by the quiet move 35...e3!! and only 36.♜xe3 will prevent mate on h3, but at the cost of the queen.

31...♜h4

443



32.♖e3

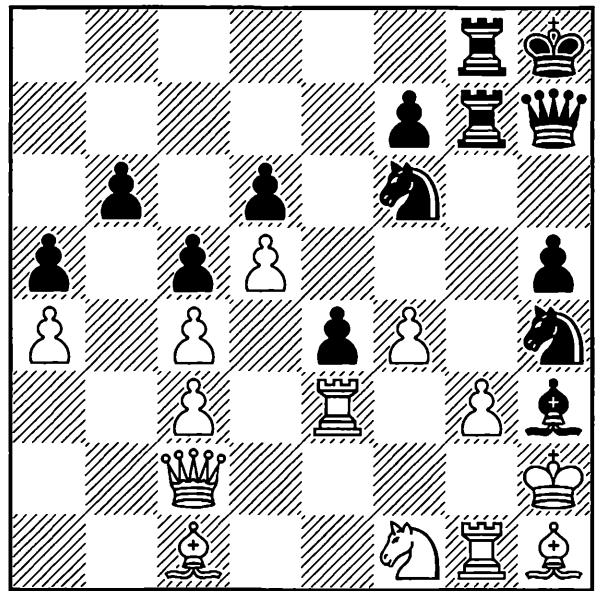
Here I had of course expected 32.♜d2, because the ♙e4's need of protection constitutes, as I have said previously, White's only counter-chance. But it would have been met by a most charming queen sacrifice, namely 32.♜d2 ♙c8 33.♜xe4 ♚f5 34.♜f2 ♚xh3† 35.♜xh3 ♜g4 mate.

Moreover, the whole point of it is that the moves 32...♙c8 and 33...♚f5 may on no account

be played in reverse order, e.g. 32.♜d2 ♚f5? (instead of 32...♙c8!) 33.♚d1! ♙c8 34.♚f1 and everything is protected; whereas, after 32.♜d2 ♙c8! 33.♚d1, the move 33...♙xh3!! would remove the cornerstone from the whole White fortress (34.♔xh3 ♚f5† etc.).

32...♙c8 33.♚c2 ♙xh3!

444



34.♙xe4

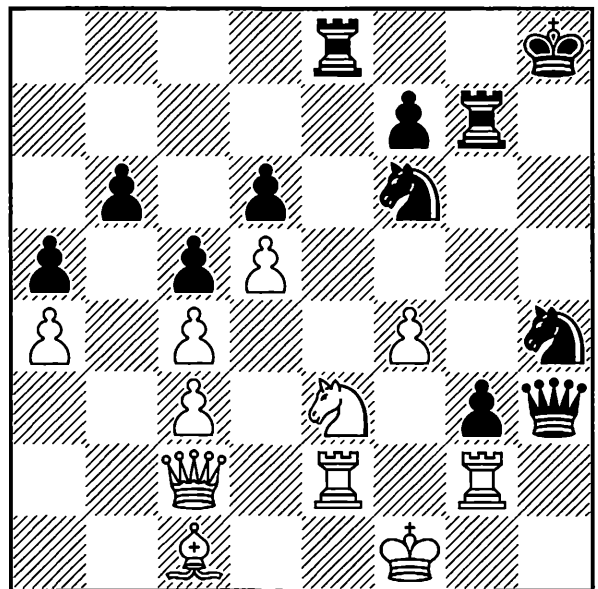
34.♔xh3 ♚f5† 35.♔h2 would have led to mate in 3: 35...♜g4† 36.♔h3 ♜f2† 37.♔h2 ♚h3 mate.

34...♙f5

The best, because h5-h4 can no longer be stopped; after the fall of the ♙h3, the defence has become hopeless.

35.♙xf5 ♜xf5 36.♖e2 h4 37.♖gg2 hxg3† 38.♔g1 ♚h3 39.♜e3 ♜h4 40.♔f1 ♖e8!

445



A precise last move, because now the threat is 41...♖xg2 42.♖xg2 ♔h1† 43.♔e2 ♖xg2† and White can do nothing about it.

41.♔e1 would even be followed by mate by 41...♖f3† 42.♔d1(or f1) 42...♖h1†. One of the most beautiful blockading games I have ever played.

Part II – Chapter 3

The isolated queen's pawn and its descendants

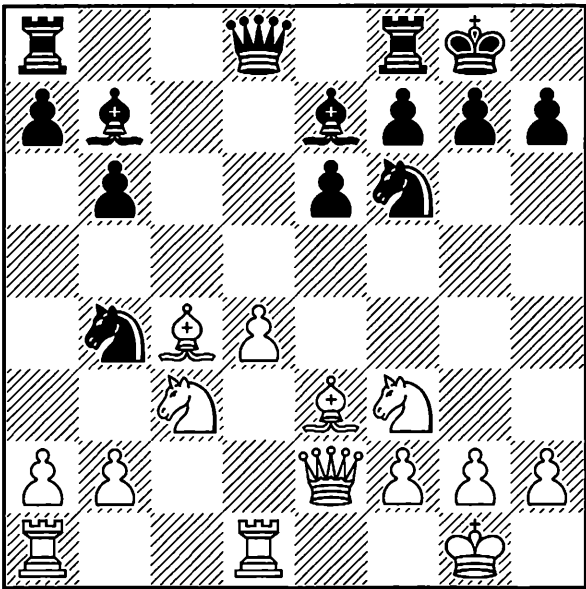
What I mean is the isolated pawn duo c6, d5 and the hanging pawns c5, d5.

We also make the acquaintance of the two bishops, which are somewhat over-estimated.

a) The isolated queen's pawn (see diagrams 446 and 447)

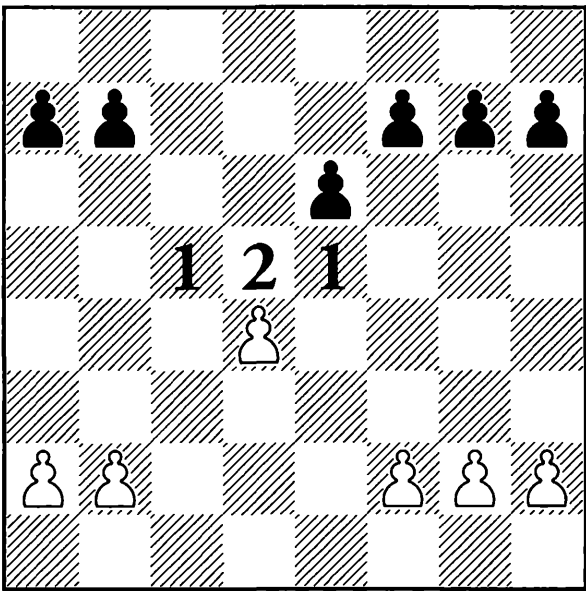
In my opinion, the problem of the isolated queen's pawn is one of the cardinal problems of positional play. We are here talking about the value put on a statically weak pawn, but one that despite its weakness is full of dynamic strength. "What is more important then, the static weakness or the dynamic strength?" In this form, the problem becomes more important, reaching as it does beyond the narrow realms of chess.

446



The isolated queen's pawn. Note the outpost squares: e5 for White and d5 for Black.

447



Schematic representation of the isolated queen's pawn: 1 means an outpost for White; 2 is an outpost for Black.

It is essential for you to make up your own mind, based on your own experience, about the problem I have just indicated. Try, as White to reach the normal position, e.g. 1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.e3 c5 5.♗c3 ♗c6 Then in one game try 6.♕d3 cxd4 7.exd4 dxc4 8.♕xc4 and White has an isolated pawn. And in another play 6.cxd5 exd5 7.dxc5 ♕xc5 and White has to fight against the isolated pawn. This is an excellent exercise. It will do you good to get a feel for how dangerous your opponent's isolated pawn can become in the middlegame. In addition, it will enrich your experience of how difficult it is prevent your own isolated pawn being captured in the endgame.

Some instructive points of view, the fruits of my researches stretching over many years, will accompany you down this thorny path, but we cannot avoid the path for you, because only painful experience can help you make up your mind here: “Those who have never shed bitter tears...”

1. The dynamic strength of the d4-pawn (see diagram 447)

This strength lies in its lust to expand (= the tendency towards d4-d5) and further in the circumstance that this pawn is protecting or making possible White’s outpost squares e5 and c5. On the other hand, Black’s outpost square d5 is – at least in the middlegame – not full compensation for this, for quite apart from the arithmetic superiority (two outpost squares against one), White can show that a knight on e5 (see diagram 446) must be much more keenly effective than any counterpart on d5 will ever be. This is because it is clear that a knight backed up by two strong diagonals for a bishop (d3-h7 and g5-f6) puts the opposing kingside under pressure, and what is more urgent than an attack on the king?! An examination of the lines involved thus gives an undoubted plus to White.

On the other hand, however, our pawn has – as we know – a tendency to be a weakness in the endgame. How should we evaluate that? Is the difficulty only due to the fact that d4 is hard to protect, or do other calamities threaten us?

2. The isolani as an endgame weakness

Critical for an evaluation of the problem just raised is the fact that the points e5 and d5 have to be evaluated differently in the endgame compared to in the middlegame. This is because there is no longer any likelihood of an attack on the king, thus causing e5 to lose much of its glory, whereas Black’s d5 point gains in importance. If White has not yet somehow managed to penetrate to c7 or has no other trumps to show from the middlegame, his position cannot be thought of as enviable. White is suffering not only because

his isolated pawn is in need of protection, but also because the white squares such as d5, c4, e4 can become weak. Consider for example diagram 447 with a white king on c4 and queen on d2 and a black king on c6 and knight on e7. By a knight check, Black will soon drive the king away from c4, then himself plays queen on d5 and forces his way further forward with his king (via c4 or e4). In all relevant cases, d5 can be thought of as the key square for Black: it can be used for blockading, centralising and manoeuvring. d5 functions as a gateway (see the examples above) and also as a pivotal square for all possible troop movements, e.g. (imagine diagram 447 with some additional rooks and knights) for moves like rook on d8-d5-a5 or knight on f6-d5-b4 and finally knight on f6-d5-e7-f5xd4. A knight posted on d5 has an impressive degree of effectiveness towards both wings; a bishop on d5 quite often decides matters despite the presence of bishops of opposite colours (e.g. when both sides have rooks). Of course, it can seem that White has compensation or more than compensation for Black’s trumps, e.g. as said if he has a rook which has penetrated to c7; but these cases can merely be considered the exceptions to the rule. Let us sum it up:

White’s endgame weakness in our case lies in the fact that d4 appears to be threatened, whereas d5 is extraordinarily strong. In addition, the white squares d5, c4, e4 tend to be weak, whereas White’s previous strength (the e5 point) has lost much of its former importance.

White’s pawn formation was not compact; the problems we have raised, such as the continuing weakness of a complex of squares of a specific colour, etc., generally more normally affect a broken or less compact pawn formation. We earnestly recommend you to sharpen your understanding of what is a compact and what a non-compact position. You should also take to heart that it is not just the isolated pawn on its own which tends to be weak, but also the complex of squares which surround it. That is where the greatest problem lies!

3. The isolani as an instrument of attack in the middlegame:

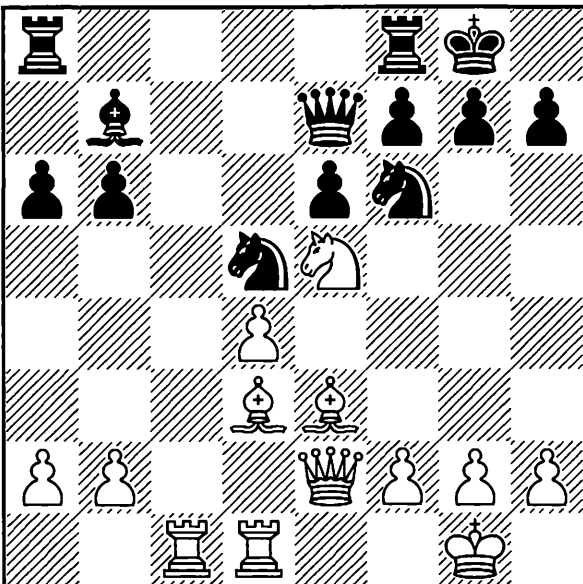
Sound development, which is ready to give way to a violent attack at the first sign of weakness on the part of the opponent, e.g. taking pieces away from the kingside!

Many amateurs rush forward too violently when an isolated pawn is in question, whereas there does not seem to me to be any objective reason for an all-or-nothing attack born of despair. The first thing which is required is rather the greatest possible stability. The attack will arise of its own volition (for example, should Black have perhaps moved the ♖f6 away from the kingside, which is natural since the knight wants to go to d5). During development (see diagram 446) we recommend a solid set-up with ♔e3 (not g5), ♖c2, ♗c1 and ♘d1 (not d1 and e1), also ♔d3 or b1 (not b3). We cannot warn White enough against aiming for surprise attacks in the earliest stages, led in by something like ♖e5xf7 (when there is a bishop on a2) or by a diversionary attack with a rook (♗e1-e3-h3). The only correct way to proceed is with a set-up which ensures the security of d4 (the ♔e3 and the ♖d4 belong together like a wet nurse and a baby!).

Only when Black has removed pieces from the kingside should White sound the attack! And in my opinion it should be carried out in sacrificial style.

Now look at the following diagram.

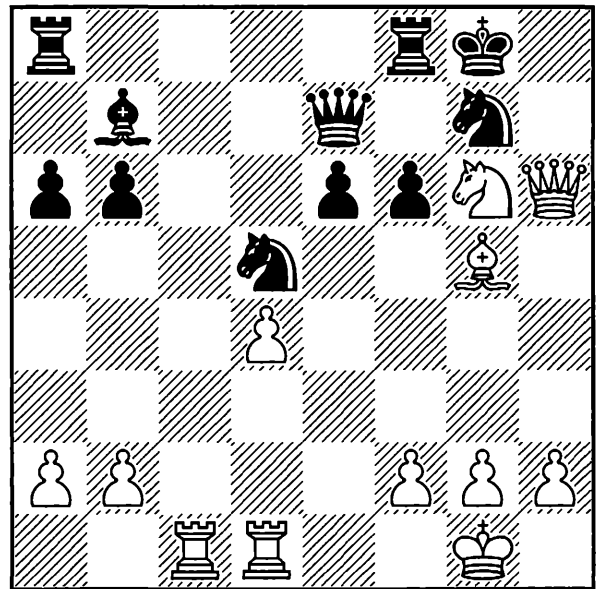
448



This position is from the game **Nimzowitsch – Taubenhaus**, St Petersburg 1913. White has developed in the way we have been talking about; the move 19...♖e8 (in the game 19...♖xe3 was played – editor) would give him in all cases the much desired chance to go over to a direct attack on the king. In this case the result is not certain; but since attacking in this fashion is characteristic of isolated pawn positions, let us look at some variations.

For example: 19...♖e8 20.♖h5 g6 (if now 20...f5 then 21.♔g5) 21.♖h6 ♖g7 (or 21...f6 22.♖g4) 22.♔g5! (the pieces are now emerging from their bases!) 22...f6 23.♔xg6 hxg6 24.♖xg6

449



And now there are two lines, according to whether the queen goes to d7 or d6. In the first case, as well as 25.♔h4!, the combinatory 25.♔xf6 is also possible, e.g. 24...♖d7 25.♔xf6 ♖xf6 26.♖h8† ♖f7 27.♖e5† ♖e8 28.♖xd7 ♖xh8 29.♖xf6† with three pawns for the sacrificed piece. After 24...♖d6 (instead of 24...♖d7), White can also continue the dance with 25.♖h8† ♖f7 26.♖h7 fxg5 27.♖e5†, e.g. 27...♖e8 28.♖xg7 ♖e7 29.♖g6† ♖d8 30.♖c6 with complications of a Romantic hue.

So, once more: develop solidly, support the isolated pawn (♔e3!) and only attack when the opportunity presents itself!

4. Which cases are favourable to White and which to Black?

In general, the following can be said:

It is worth White's while aiming for the following two cases:

- I. White has got in d4-d5 e6xd5, then recaptured on d5 with a piece. This has brought him a better position because it is a centralised one (Rubinstein–Tartakower, Marienbad 1925).
- II. White has developed play on the c-file, cf. Nimzowitsch – Taubenhaus, page 243.

Worth striving towards for Black are:

- I. All cases of the nature of an endgame (of course, other things being equal).
- II. Those cases where Black has played d5xd3, b2xc3 in order to fix the c3 afterwards and to lay siege to it (cf. our game 11, page 70 and in addition the note to move 15 in game 31, page 243).

5. A few more words about the possible creation of a *related weakness* among White's queenside pawns

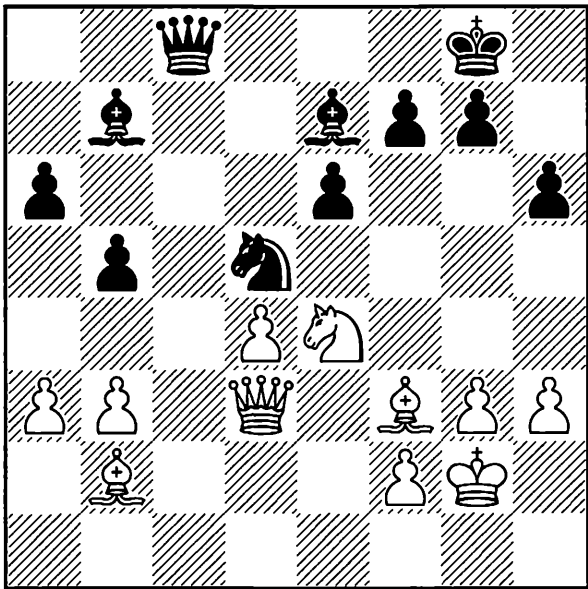
One indication of the weakness of the isolated pawn is represented by the fact that the attacking side may quite frequently transfer his attack from the d-pawn to the queenside. We were able to see such a case of a "related weakness" in game 21, page 172. Something similar occurs in the following game:

Rubinstein – Dr Lasker
Moscow 1925

After the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 f6 4.f3 c3 e6 5.f3 bd7 6.f3 dxc4 7.fxc4 b5 8.f2 a6 9.0-0 b7 10.b3 f7 11.f2 0-0 12.f5 c5 13.f3 c7 14.fxd7 fxd7 15.f4 ad8 16.fc1 b8 17.f2 cxd4 18.exd4 fc8 19.g3 fa8 20.fg2 fd8 21.fxc8 fxc8 22.fc1 fc1 23.fxc1 h6, there was a strategically interesting example of the exploitation of the weakness on d4. Next came: 24.f2 fb6 25.h3 (since he wants to avoid the exchange of queens,

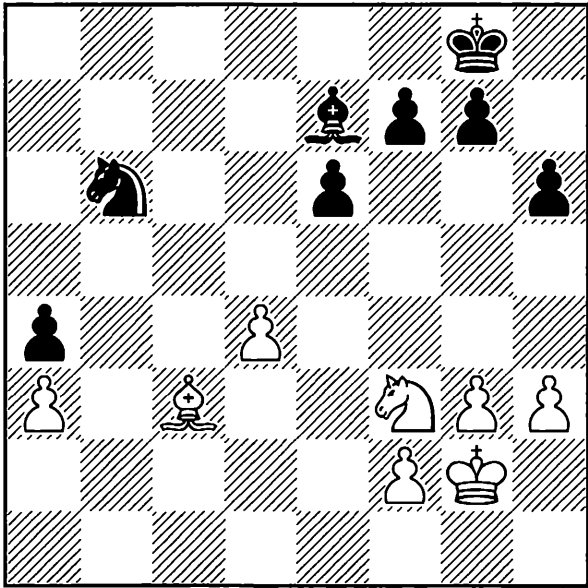
25.f2c2 f2c8! would not do) 25...f2c8 26.f2d3 fb5! (threatens fb4) 27.a3

450



27...fb6!! (now b3 has become weak) 28.f2h2 fd5 29.f2g2 f2c6 30.f2d2 a5! 31.f2c3 In desperation he turns to the exchange of queens, but succumbs to the "related weakness" which has just developed. 31...f2xf3! 32.f2xf3 (32.f2xf3 would fail to 32...f2c2 33.f2b7 fb5!) 32...f2xc3 33.f2xc3 a4! (now the weakness of the queenside becomes apparent) 34.bxa4 bxa4

451



And White lost, because the attempt to save the game by 35.f2b4 fails to 35...f2xb4 36.axb4 a3 37.f2d2 and now 37...fb5!, preventing the approach of the white king via e2, d3 and c4 (f2e2 would always be met by fb3!). This excellent endgame is remarkable not only for the

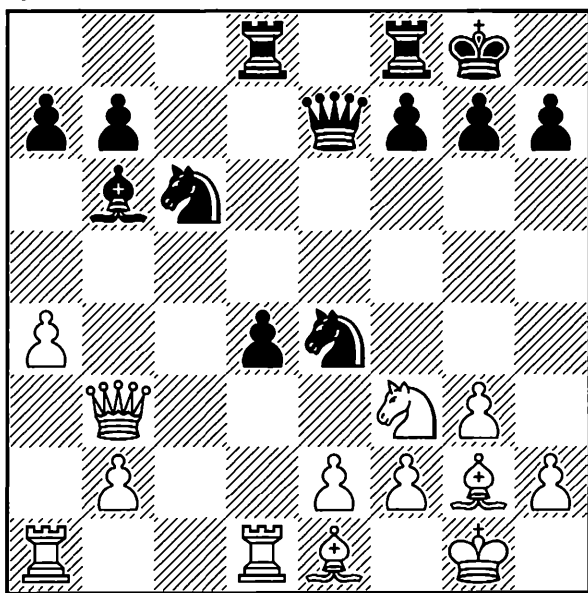
transfer of the attack but also for the masterly and varied ways in which the d5 point is used.

I would like to add something about the way to *lay siege* to the isolated pawn. Nowadays we no longer consider it necessary to render the opposing isolated pawn totally immobile; quite the contrary, we like to leave it some freedom of movement and so give it the illusion of freedom instead of shutting it up in a cage (this is the principle of the great zoos, if we liken the isolated pawn to one of the smaller predators). How this is done can be seen from the following game.

Dr Lasker (whom we count among the moderns) – **Dr Tarrasch**, 1914.

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♙g2 ♜f6 7.0–0 ♙e7 8.dxc5 ♙xc5 9.♜bd2 And now the isolated pawn has the choice, whether to be weak on d5 or d4. Tarrasch preferred the latter, and there followed 9...d4 10.♜b3 ♙b6 11.♚d3 ♙e6 12.♚d1 ♙xb3 13.♚xb3 ♚e7 14.♙d2 0–0 15.a4 ♜e4 16.♙e1 ♚ad8.

452

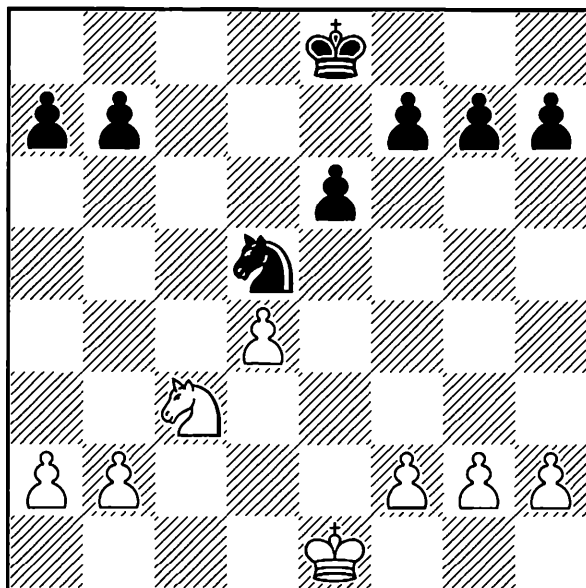


17.a5!! ♙c5 18.a6 bxa6 (if 18...b6 then 19.♚a4 with the threat of b4) 19.♚ac1 Now all the pieces protecting the ♙d4 are hanging by a thread. Here the isolated pawn resembles someone who is having difficulty paying his debts and who has to manage to convince credulous people (here the ♙c5 and the ♘c6) to stand as guarantors. Next came 19...♚c8 20.♜h4 ♙b6 21.♜f5 ♚e5 22.♙xe4 ♚xe4 23.♜d6 winning the exchange.

All in all, the isolated pawn is a not ineffective attacking instrument for the middlegame, but it can become really weak in the endgame.

b) The “isolated pawn pair”

453



Here Black can exchange on c3. If he manages to stop the opposing pawns on c3 and d4 and then completely blockade them, then he can claim that his somewhat dubious-looking strategy (namely with ♜xc3) was correct. This is because White is quite considerably bothered by the pawns which are blocked in his own camp near the border line. One problem (the obligation to defend the c3 and d4 pawns) is made worse by the other (the lack of space). The blockaded pawns on c3 and d4 (or d5 and c6 with reversed colours) – and only these – are what I call the isolated pawn pair. We can find examples of this in game 11, page 70.

The picture is essentially different when the player under siege manages to advance the c3-pawn, bringing about the formation with pawns on c4 and d4. We no longer call these pawns an isolated pawn pair. We prefer to describe them as “hanging” pawns.

The choice between the generally not very mobile isolated pawn pair and the hanging pawns is not a difficult one to make. Of course the hanging pawns are far preferable, just from the fact that they can threaten something; and even should these threats turn out to be illusory, which would be what we expect of them, then a dubious

initiative is better than undoubted deadly passivity (as we have learned is the case of the isolated pawn pair which is still being blockaded – game 11). So we can draw up the following rule:

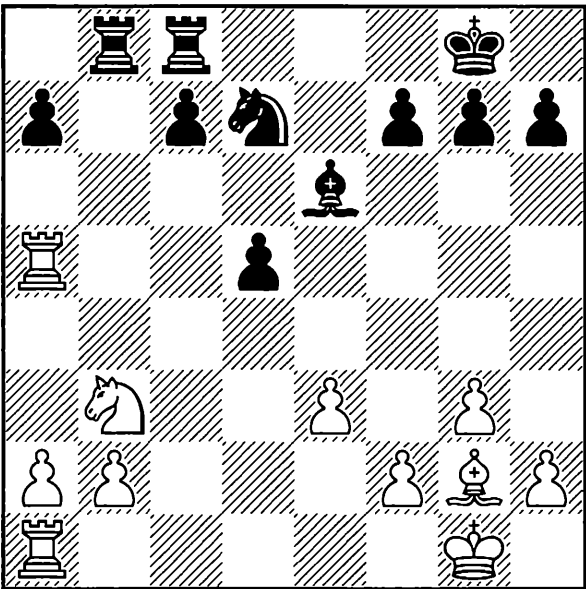
The possessor of an isolated pawn pair (diagram 453 after the moves ♖xc3 bxc3) must do all he can to enable the advance c3-c4; he must on no account allow himself to be blockaded. The troublesome formation c3, d4 is, as far as he is concerned, simply a transitory grub-like state on the way to the butterfly c4, d4, with its permanent threats c4-c5 or d4-d5.

We now quote a case in which Black (who has the isolated pawn pair) struggled to make possible c6-c5.

Nimzowitsch – J. Giersing and S. Kinch
Copenhagen 1924

1.c4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟xc6 bxc6 6.g3 d5 7.♟g2 ♟b4† 8.♟d2 ♟xd2† 9.♟xd2 0-0 10.0-0 ♟b8 11.♟c2 (White avoids b2-b3, because he is hoping to “manoeuvre” via the b3-square, e.g. ♟b3 or ♟c2-a4) 11...♟e8 12.e3 ♟e6 13.cxd5 (worth considering was 13.♟b3 dxc4 14.♟d4) 13...cxd5 (Black now has the notorious isolated pawn duo – because the set-up c7, d5 deserves the name “isolated” even more than the set-up c6, d5; quite rightly, he is trying to get in c7-c5) 14.♟b3 ♟d6 15.♟fc1 ♟ec8 16.♟c5 ♟xc5 17.♟xc5 ♟d7 18.♟a5

454



In order to establish the blockade permanently on his next move, by ♟c1. 18...c5!! 19.♟xa7 c4 20.♟d4 ♟xb2! 21.♟xe6 fxe6 22.♟xd7 c3 (Black has achieved mobility for his c-pawn at the cost of a piece sacrifice! White cannot force a win.) 23.♟h3 c2 24.♟xe6† ♟f8 25.♟f7† (another possibility was 25.♟f5) 25...♟e8 26.♟xc8 ♟b1† 27.♟g2 ♟xa1 (or 27...c1♟ 28.♟xb1 ♟xb1 29.♟f4) 28.♟c7 c1♟ 29.♟xc1 ♟xc1 and the game was drawn in 42 moves.

c) Hanging pawns

Their family tree and what we can learn from it
Advancing in a blocked position

The three diagrams 455-7, give a picture of the career or the history of the birth of the two hanging pawns. A single glance is sufficient to show that we are able to work out how the isolated pawn gave birth to hanging pawns.

The family tree of hanging pawns leads directly back to the isolated pawn as their ancestor.

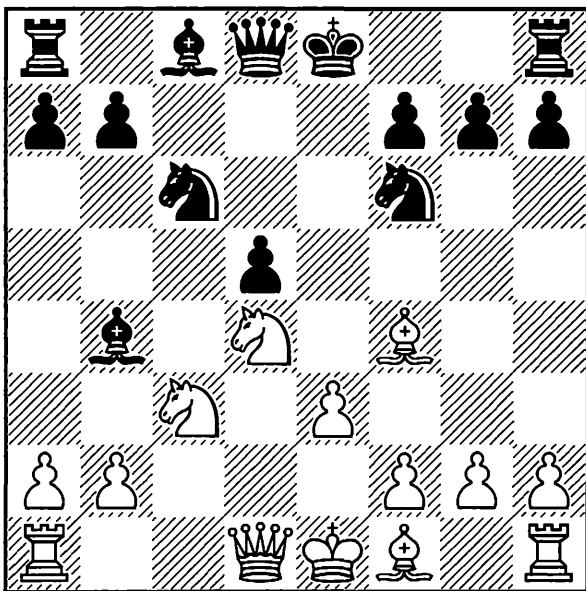
This point of view, the soundness of which can be proved, will be useful to us, because it will give us the chance to contrast the somewhat unclear motives of hanging pawns with those of their somewhat more direct grandfather. In short, the study of family history will help shed some light on our understanding of *one* particularly complicated member of the family. The hanging pawns have inherited from their grandfather *one* essential characteristic, namely that strange mixture of static weakness and aggressive power. But whereas in the case of the isolated pawn both the weakness and the strength were evident (remember: any black isolated ♟d5 needs protection, and in addition the d4-square and the nearby squares c5, e5 become endgame weaknesses. Its strength on the other hand lies in the fact that e4 and c4 tend to become outpost squares and there is always the possible thrust d5-d4 to take into account), both are hidden in the case of hanging pawns. So with these somewhat problematic pawns, only two things can be considered as solidly established:

1. Both hanging pawns (e.g. in diagram 457) are “unprotected”, i.e. not defended by any pawn, and that the attacks on them in order to achieve open files are all the more annoying because of that.
2. The possibility of reaching a relatively safe position (I mean achieving a position in which the hanging pawns protect each other – something like c5, d4 or d5, c4 in the case of diagram 457) occurs fairly frequently.

From the “isolani” to “hanging pawns”

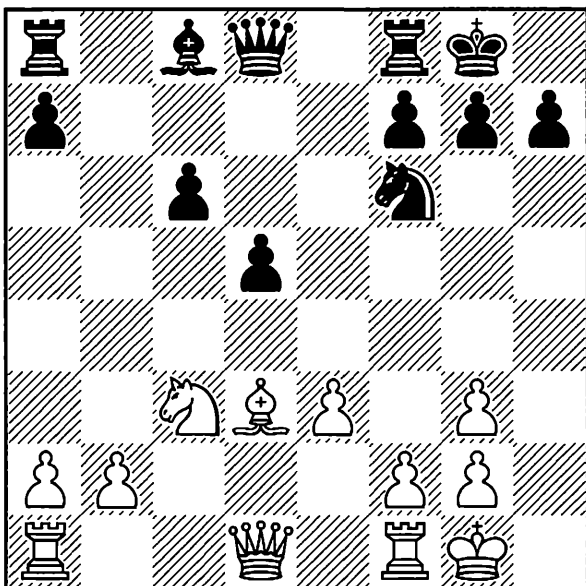
A game in 3 pictures, from the game **Rubinstein – Nimzowitsch**, Karlsbad 1907:

455



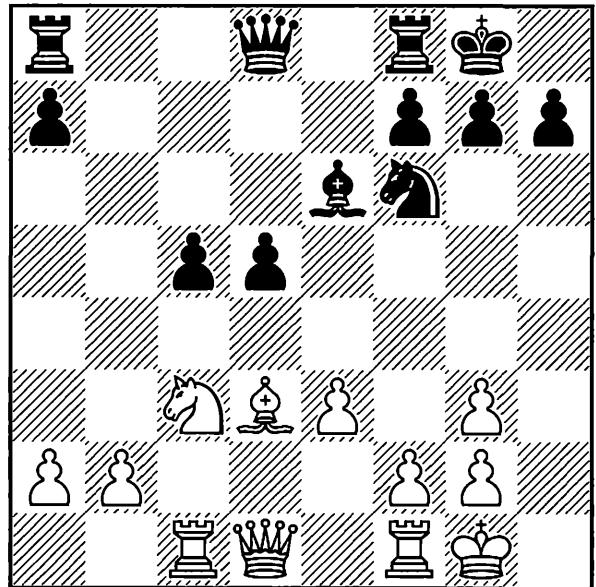
The isolani

456



The isolated pawn pair

457



The “hanging” pawns

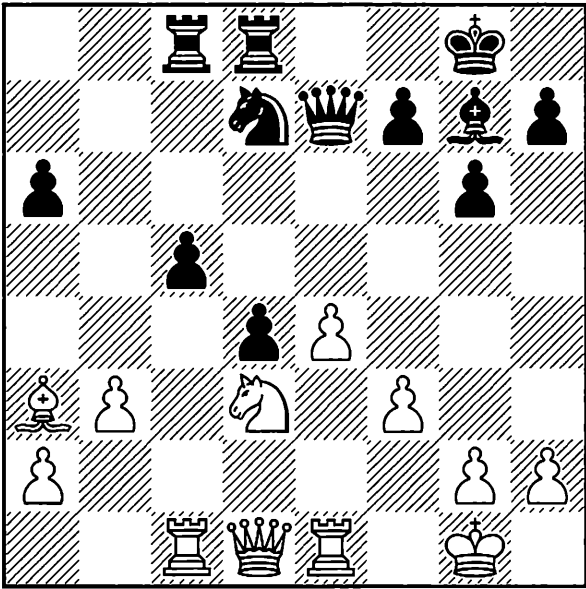
But the problem is as follows: if the only way to achieve the above-mentioned possibility of reaching relative safety is by surrendering any initiative in the centre, and if the pawns which thus reach “safety” can be blockaded, is it not more advisable to do without this position of “safety” and remain “hanging”?

This is not an easy one to answer. It depends on a closer look at the circumstances, namely the type and details of the blockade which will follow. The fact is that “safety” as applied to a blockaded complex is only a very loose concept. This is something I would like to anticipate: it is all too easy for blockaded pawns to tend to be weak. In spite of that, it appears quite appropriate to consider an advance of the hanging pawns in individual cases where the position is blocked. These cases are as follows:

1. the pawns which belong to the opposing blockading ring are themselves open to attack (see the $\Delta b2$ in Rubinstein – Nimzowitsch);
2. the blockade costs the opponent too much to maintain; this means that the necessary forces for the blockade are too great or that the blockaders which the opponent has at his disposition are somehow unsuitable (lack of flexibility or insufficient threats exerted from their positions, see pages 80-81).

We offer as a counterpoint the following two diagrams.

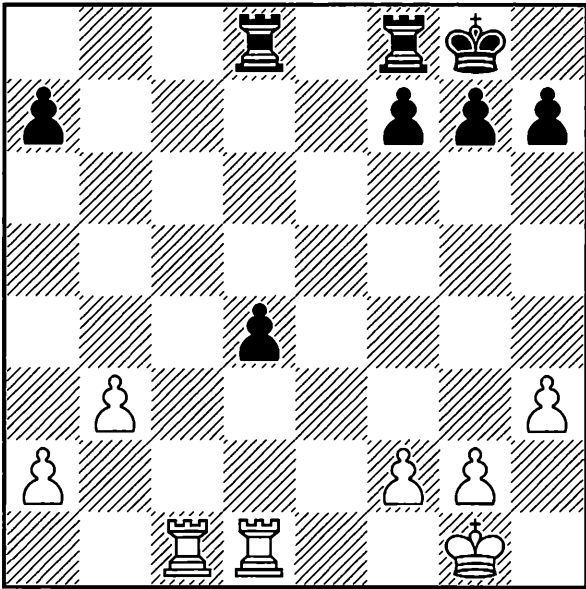
458



E. Cohn – Duras, Karlsbad 1911

The attempt to secure the hanging pawns was only relatively successful: c5 is weak, though d4 is a passed pawn.

459



The ♠d4 is the result of the two hanging pawns c5 and d5. Many moves ago d5-d4, e3xd4, c5xd4 was played. The ♠d4 is now blockaded by ♖e2-d3, and White gains an advantage.

Here the safety of the blockade turns out to be deceptive and the advanced pawns become weak. And once more, the reason can be found in the qualities of the blockaders: in diagrams 458 and 459, the ♠d3 and the ♖d3 are excellent blockaders, which is sufficient explanation for the failure of the rescue attempt.

So the truth seems to lie in the following facts:

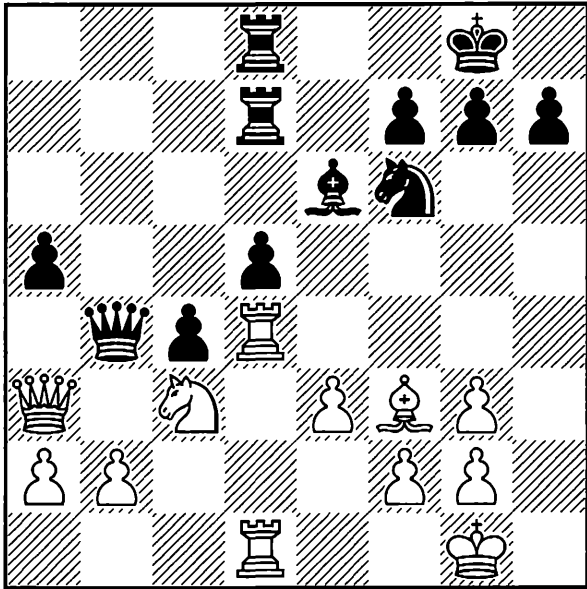
Just as our judgement of the white isolated pawn on d4 depended on the greater or lesser degree of initiative proper to it (the outpost point protected by the pawn somehow or other needed to be important), we also believe that we should require a certain degree of initiative on the part of the hanging pawns which have reached the safety of the blockade.

We shall now give some examples.

Rubinstein – Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1907 (see diagram 457).

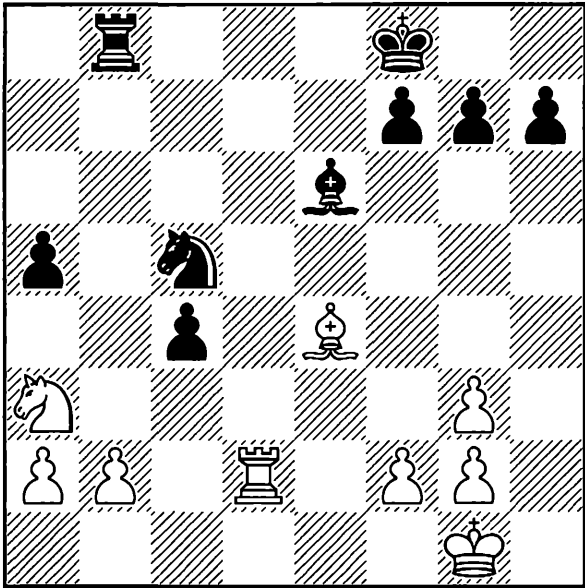
There followed: 15. ♖a4 ♜b6 (Black is “hanging on”) 16. ♖a3 c4! (heads for blockaded “security”, but White’s blockading ring – ♠b2 – can be attacked; so Black’s advance was justified here) 17. ♙e2 a5 18. ♞fd1 ♜b4 19. ♞d4 ♞fd8 20. ♞cd1 ♞d7 21. ♙f3 ♞ad8

460



22. ♜b1 (a waiting move was better, e.g. 22. ♞4d2 etc.) 22... ♞b8 23. ♞1d2 ♜xa3! 24. ♜xa3 ♜f8 25. e4 This leads in the long run to the loss of a pawn; but White’s position was unfavourable anyway. The balance that was still there on move 21 – the weaknesses on d5 and b2 balanced each other out – has given way to a clear disproportion between the two sides: b2 has now become quite weak, d5 on the other hand even appears overprotected. 25... dxe4 26. ♞xd7 ♜xd7 27. ♙xe4 ♜c5

461

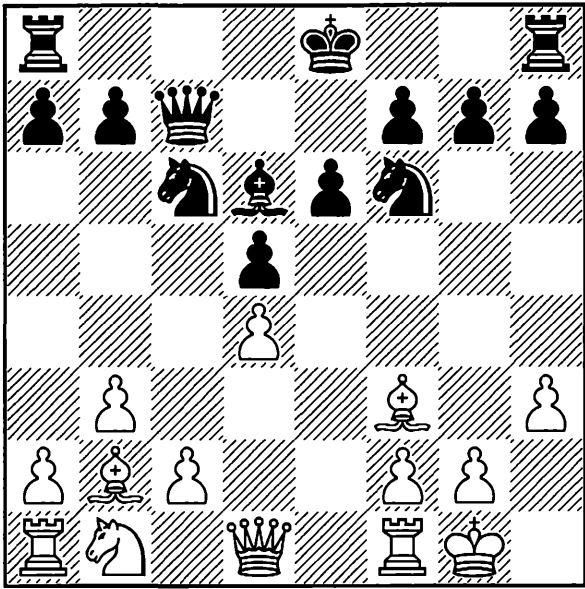


28.♖d4 (or 28.♙c6! ♜b4 29.♙d5 ♘a4 with advantage to Black) 28...♘xe4 29.♖xe4 ♜xb2 30.♘xc4 ♜b4 31.♘d6 ♜xe4 32.♘xe4 ♙xa2 and Black won.

It is much more frequent in master praxis to see the move d5-d4 or d4-d5 (from the hanging position c4, d4). It leads in a cute way to the closing of quite an original circle: from isolated pawn via hanging pawns to isolated pawn. In this case what matters is whether the new isolated pawn can prove its worth.

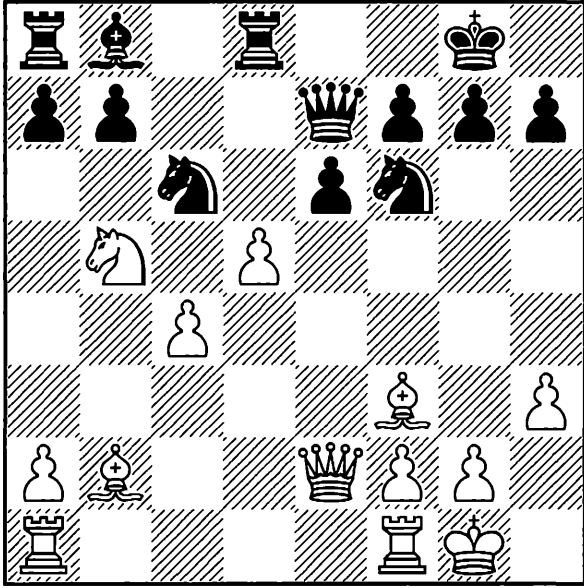
Nimzowitsch – Tartakower, Copenhagen 1923
1.♘f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e3 ♘c6 4.♙b2 ♙g4 5.♙e2 ♙c7 6.d4 cxd4 7.exd4 e6 8.0-0 ♙d6 Black is attacking in a Queen's Gambit Declined. 9.h3 ♙xf3 10.♙xf3 ♘f6

462



11.c4! dxc4 12.bxc4 0-0 13.♘c3 In order to hang on, the set-up here should be ♘d2-b3 then ♙e2 and ♜c1 and d1. But I wanted to “cash in” by d4-d5. 13...♜fd8 14.♘b5 ♙e7 15.♙e2 ♙b8 16.d5

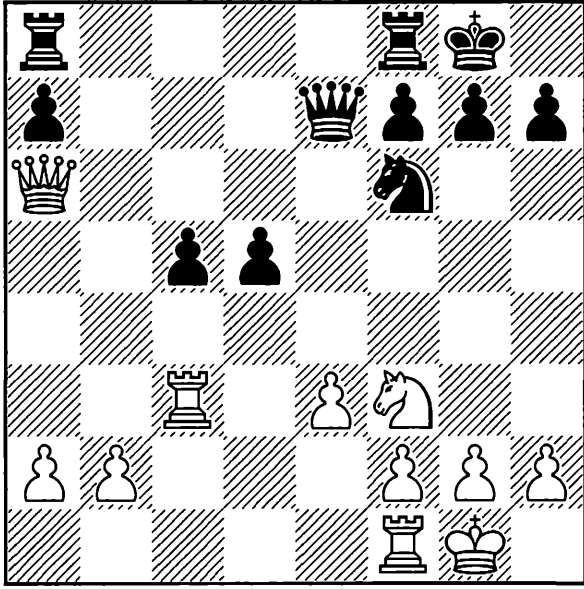
463



16...exd5 17.♙xe7 ♘xe7 18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.cxd5 ♙e5! 20.♖ad1 and not only was the d-pawn maintained, but for the rest of the game it counter-balanced to a considerable degree Black's queenside majority. Indeed, Tartakower underestimated its value and lost.

J. Bernstein – Teichmann, Karlsbad 1923
The possessor of the hanging pawns found things less comfortable in this game, starting from the position below.

464



Elegant pirouettes by Black

There followed: 17.♖a3 ♘e4 18.♞d3 ♞fd8 19.♞fd1 ♜e6 20.♘d2 ♞b6 21.♘f1 ♘f6 22.♘g3 ♞ac8 23.h3 h6 24.♘e2 ♞d7 25.♘c3 ♜e6 26.♜a5 d4! (tired of the eternal threat, he tries to replace the hanging pawns with the security of the blockade we have spoken about several times; but this nearly worked out to his disadvantage) 27.exd4 cxd4 28.♘b5 (how can the newly created isolated pawn be saved?) 28...♞f5!¹² (the next few defensive moves are played with a steady hand) 29.♜a4! ♞c1! 30.♞xc1 ♞xd3 31.♞c8† ♕h7 32.♜c2 ♞xc2 33.♞xc2 d3! 34.♞d2 (the ♘d3 still seems to be in danger.) 34...♘e4! 35.♞d1 ♞b7 (a final liquidation!) 36.♘c3 ♘xc3 37.bxc3 ♞b2 38.♞xd3 ♞xa2 ½–½ Note how the d-pawn was protected indirectly. This stratagem represents another opportunity for the defender to get from the misery of the hanging pawns into a more settled situation.

d) The bishops

The proud bishop pair – such is the name sometimes given to the two bishops – is a terrible weapon in the hand of today’s warriors. And yet for a time, I toyed with the idea – a blasphemous one, I must admit – of not taking a close look at this weapon in my book. My system, or so I said to myself, contains only two things which are worthy of deep examination: namely the elements and the strategies. For example, the isolated pawn, which seemed somehow to have merged into the problem of restraint, was for me a strategy. But how could I bring the proud bishops into this scheme of things?

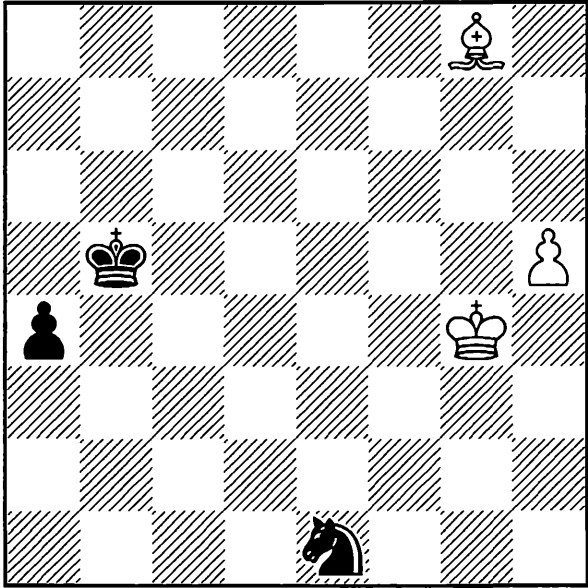
We cannot simply dismiss as idle or playful the above question. To us it seems rather to be of decisive theoretical interest. It would lead me too far away from the subject to go into my views on this subject, so let me simply give you the result of this thought process:

I have decided that the advantage of the “two bishops” can neither be seen as an element in our sense, nor as a strategy: the two bishops are and remain for me virtually a type of weapon.

But checking out or establishing when to use various types of weapons is absolutely not part of the plan of my book (on the other hand, Berger made this the leitmotif of his book on the endgame). Despite that, you would be quite correct in expecting that I should make you aware of the dangers posed by an opposing bishop pair and explain them where possible. I shall try to meet your concerns in what follows.

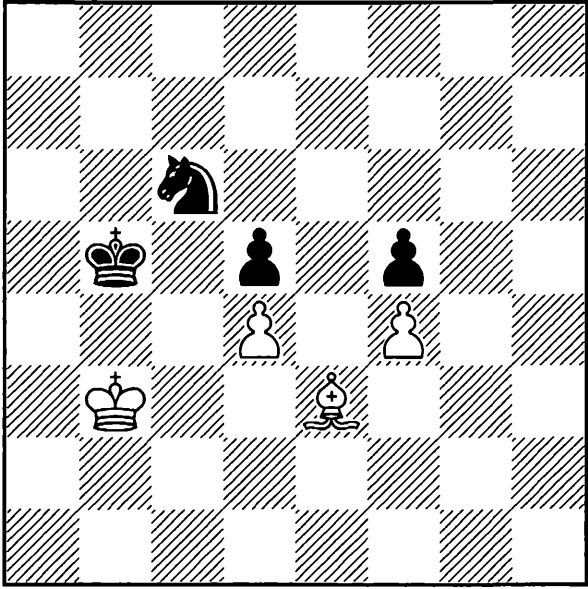
The superiority of the bishop compared to the knight is particularly striking in the group of positions which I shall now sketch in: each player has one (or more than one) passed pawn supported by his king:

465



The bishop comes out victorious, because it is very good at preventing the advance of opposing passed pawns or slowing down the said advance.

466



On the contrary, play from diagram 466 exposes the principal weakness of the bishop: when it is necessary to defend space, it is usually helpless, because how can a black squared bishop defend white squares! Black's advance, which will shame the bishop, develops more or less as follows: 1...♖a5† 2.♗c3 ♖a4 3.♙f2 ♖c6 4.♙e3 ♖a7 5.♙f2 ♖b5† 6.♗d3 ♖b3. This will be followed by a check on b4 or b2, allowing the black king to seize the c4-square as well, etc.

Please consider the cases in diagrams 465 and 466 as the two extremes, between which the remaining cases will fall: the advantage is their long range; their weakness the squares of the opposite colour, that is the difficulty for bishops.

And one more point. The position with White ♙g2, ♖c5 and Black ♖b8, ♖c6 (with other pieces and pawns) is no more conclusive for the superiority of bishop over knight than the position with White ♖c5, ♙b4 and Black ♖c6, ♖e6 would be for its alleged inferiority. In each case, what makes itself felt is the strategic superiority (namely the advantage we have previously analysed of an aggressively posted piece compared to a passive one belonging to the opponent), but in no way the intrinsic superiority of either weapon.

To sum up: the principal weakness of the bishop consists of the difficulty of protecting squares of the opposite colour, its main strength is its range.

And now we can suddenly see why two bishops should be so strong. The reason is clear, their strength is doubled, but their weakness which we have just mentioned is cancelled out by the presence of the "other" bishop.

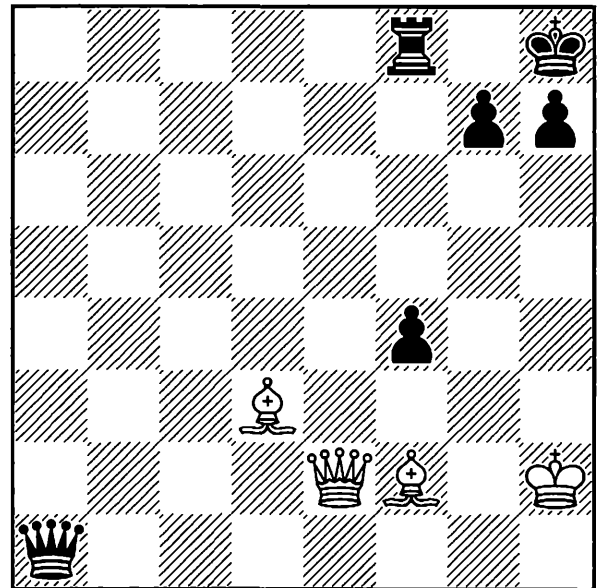
It is scarcely possible to set down on paper all the various situations in which the two bishops could be unpleasant. But we shall try to mention briefly the most important ones.

1. Horowitz bishops

This is what we call two bishops which are operating on neighbouring diagonals (e.g. ♙b2 and ♙d3), in order to unite their forces against

the opposing castled king. Their effect is often devastating: one bishop forces an opposing pawn to move, which opens the way for the second bishop.

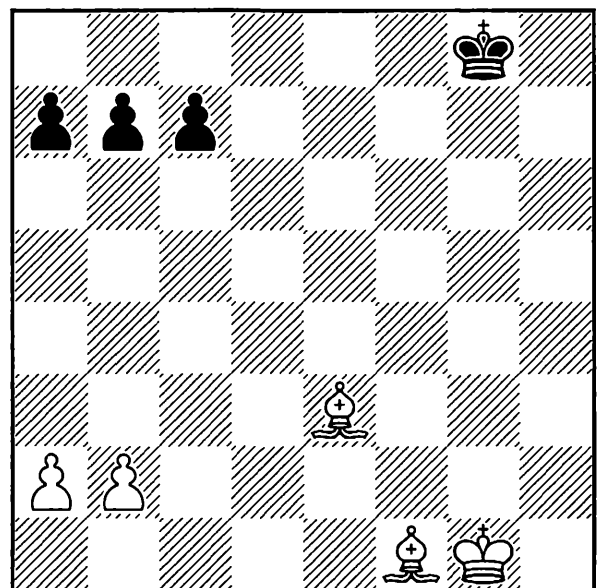
467



Here 1.♙e4 forces the loosening pawn move g7-g6 and allows the ♙f2 to intervene decisively. Things are similar in the following game: 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♙c4 cxb2 5.♙xb2 ♙b4† 6.♖c3 ♖f6 7.♖ge2 ♖xe4 8.0-0 ♖xc3 9.♖xc3 ♙xc3 10.♙xc3 0-0. Black has castled and feels "armed to the teeth" both against 11.♙g4 (g6) and against 11.♙d4 (♙g5), but he has overlooked the usual combined efforts of the Horowitz bishops: 11.♙g4 g6 and now mate cannot be avoided after 12.♙d4. The co-operation of the ♙c4 is obvious – it is pinning the ♖f7.

I would like to mention the bishops in this diagram.

468



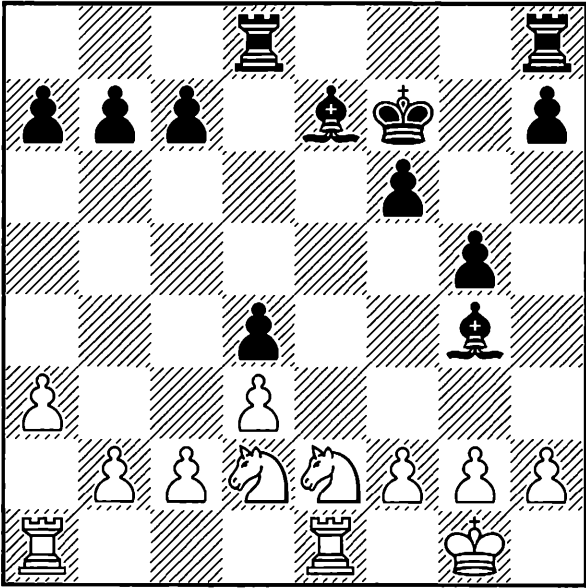
They form a sort of variant of the Horowitz bishops, and a very noble variant at that. No attack on the king is present here. But the unpleasant effect of the attack on a7 (I have picked out only the most important pieces), even if the attack is not very intensive, will finally force Black into the formation ♖a7, ♖b6, ♖c5, which smoothes the way for the “other” bishop, because it is followed by a4, b3 and the squares a6, b5 and especially c4 are opened up as possible positions for the white-squared bishop. Black’s majority also appears to be paralysed. This sort of strategy will often be found in Maróczy’s games.

2. A pawn mass with bishops

A pawn mass, which does not require to create a “majority”, rolls forward under the direction of a bishop pair. It advances quite far and cramps the opposing knights. Finally, there is the opportunity for a breakthrough.

As an example of this, let us turn to the well-known game **Richter – Dr Tarrasch**.

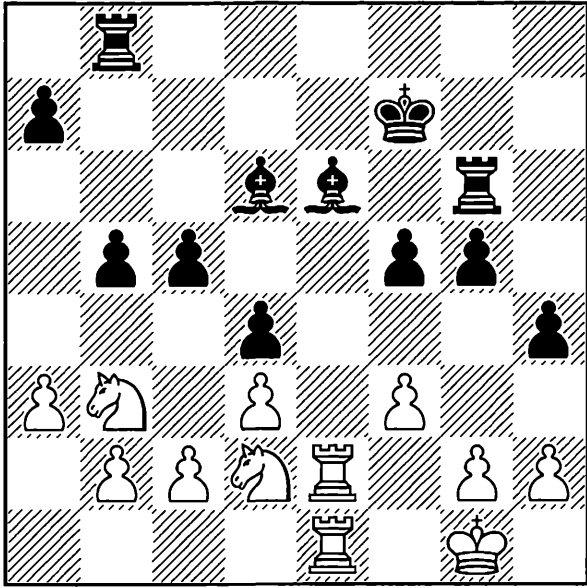
469



There followed: 19...c5 20.♖g3 h5 21.f3. The defence is carried out with insufficient knowledge: if the knights do not want to lose out, they must fight for places to make a stand. So 21.a4 followed by ♖c4 seemed indicated. 21...♗d7 22.♗e2? b5! 23.♗ae1 ♗f8! 24.♖ge4 ♗g8 (in order to play f5) 25.♖b3 ♗c8 26.♖ed2 ♗d6 27.♖e4 ♗f8 28.♖ed2 f5 29.♗e5 ♗d6

30.♗5e2 (or 30.♗d5? ♗g6) 30...♗a8 (now the a-pawn should advance) 31.♖a5 ♗ab8 (or else 32.♖b7 nullifies all his work at hemming White in) 32.♖ab3 h4 33.♖h1 ♗g6 34.♖g1 ♗e6

470



Until this excellent move was played, the closing of the e-file by the bishops on d6 and d7 was more an ideal than a reality. 34...♗e6 turns this ideal into the said reality. This corresponds to the process we have remarked on, that the notional restraint of a passed pawn gives way to a mechanical block (= a blockade).

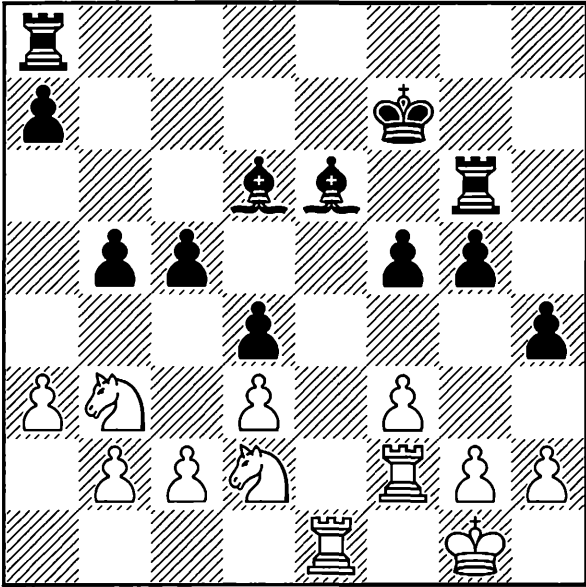
So much for the strategic and theoretical grounding for the manoeuvre. The practical value of the move lies in the fact, as Tarrasch himself correctly remarked, that it has created two new possibilities:

- I. ♖f7-e7-d7
- II. a6, ♗c8, then ♗d6-b8-a7 and finally c5-c4.

Here I would like to point out that c5-c4 is in this case the correct strategic plan; you can see why in the note to White’s 38th move. 35.♗f2 ♗a8!? He forsakes his main plan – c5-c4 – and tries once more to get in a7-a5; he only manages to do so because his opponent fails to spot a subtle resource.

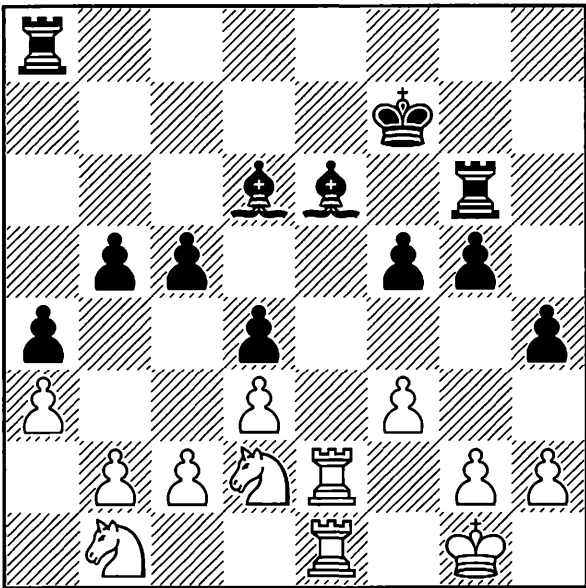
Naturally it is all very well to aim for a5-a4, driving White all the way back, but one must not go so far as to subordinate the strategically necessary plan to the idea of ornamental effect. As a whole, the classical school had a weakness for artistic effect!

471



36.♟f2? A blunder! How can he simply allow a5 without a fight! After 36.♞a5, Tarrasch gives 36...♙c7 37.♞b7 ♙f4, when because of the threat of ♙e3 he gains time for ♟c8. But he overlooks a hidden resource: 38.♞xc5! ♙e3 39.c4! and Black cannot win, because White's queenside is strong and the black squares – e.g. c5 for the knight – are no less so. A plausible line might be 39...bxc4 40.dxc4 ♟c8 41.b4 ♟c7 42.♞f1 ♙xf2 43.♞xf2 and White has a good position. **36...a5 37.♞b1 a4 38.♞3d2**

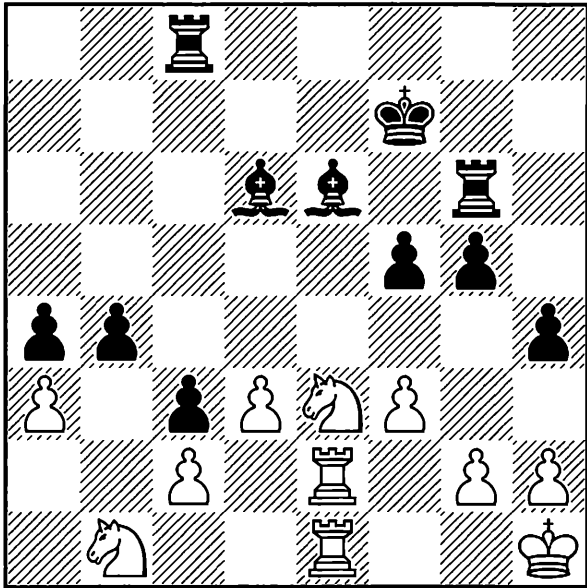
472



Now comes the breakthrough, which logically speaking comes as no surprise, since we know that Black has a definite – qualitative – majority (imagine the extra pawns, white ♞e4 and black ♞e5 and it will be quite obvious). But here even more favourable for the breakthrough is the wretched

position of the knight and the wide area of friction, I mean the 4-pawn front. **38...c4 39.♞f1 ♟c8 40.♞h1 c3 41.bxc3 dxc3 42.♞e3 b4**

473



The game plays itself now. White resigned on move 47.

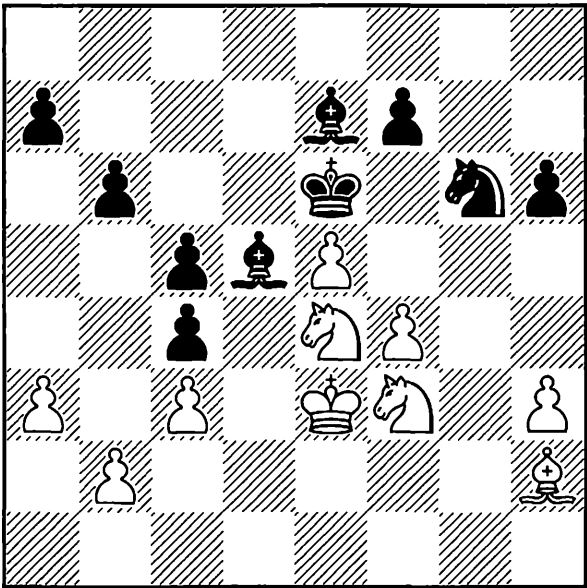
3. Cramping the knights, while at the same time fighting against a pawn majority

A really difficult task, you will say. Excellent technique must be required. Not so. If you have some knowledge of the art of restraining and blockading opposing pawn complexes, you will soon realise to your satisfaction that in the group of positions we are talking about, it is easier to cramp the knights than it was in the positions seen in section 2. You would be quite right in saying: successful restraint of the pawn majority automatically brings in its wake a restraint or cramping of the knights; this is because the blockaded pawns can easily turn out to be obstructions for the knights.

See, for example, the following game:
Harmonist – Dr Tarrasch, Breslau 1889
1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.♙b5 ♞f6 4.0–0 ♞xe4 5.d4 ♞d6 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♞f5 8.♟xd8† ♞xd8 9.♙g5† ♞e8 10.♞c3 h6 11.♙f4 ♙e6 (White's majority is not very mobile) 12.♟ad1 ♟d8 13.♞e4 c5 14.♟xd8† ♞xd8 15.♟d1† ♞c8 16.h3 b6 17.♞f1 ♙e7 18.a3 ♟d8 19.♟xd8† ♞xd8 (the exchange of rooks has increased

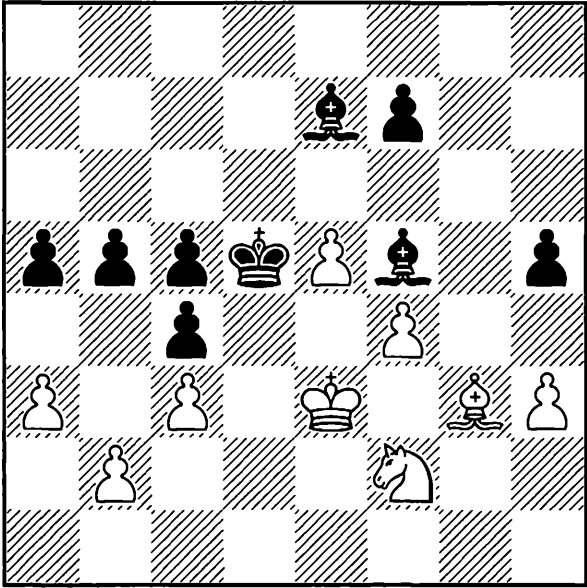
the radius of action of the black king quite significantly) 20.c3 ♖d5 21.♟fd2 ♔d7 22.♞e2 g5 23.♞h2 ♟h4 24.g3 ♟g6 25.f4 ♞e6 26.♞e3 c4 27.♟f3 gxf4† 28.gxf4 c5

474



In the position which has arisen White's pieces are rather blocked in; this happy occurrence for Black is the automatic result of his successful blockade of the ♖e5 and the ♖f4. This should not surprise us, since we have often seen how the blockade can miraculously have a beneficial effect on the whole remainder of the situation. There followed: 29.♟g3 ♟h4 30.♟xh4 ♞xh4 31.♟e4 ♞e7 32.♞g1 ♞c6 (intending ♞d5 then ♞c6-d7-f5 driving the knight back further) 33.♞f2 ♞d7 34.♞g3 (34.♟d6 offered the possibility of a draw by aiming for bishops of opposite colours) 34...♞d5 35.♟f2 h5 36.♞f3 ♞f5 (blockade!) 37.♞e3 b5 38.♞f3 a5 39.♞e3

475



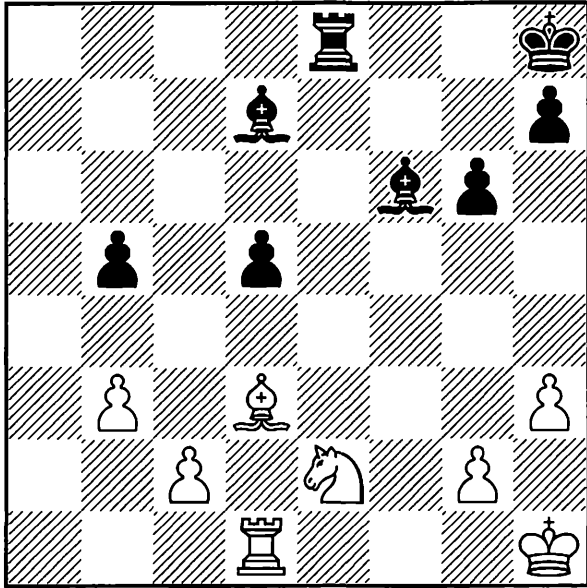
White is “stalemated”. 39...b4 40.♞f3 ♞c6 41.axb4 (White is lost) 41...cxb4 42.cxb4 axb4 43.♟e4 ♞d5 44.♟d6 ♞xd6 45.exd6 c3 46.bxc3 b3 0–1

4. The two bishops in the endgame

The strong points of the bishops which we went into in more detail above now appear in combination. We consider the ideal to be the successful transformation of the sort of advantage which consisted only of the type of weapon into a clearly visible strategic advantage, e.g. that of an aggressive piece placement compared to a defensive one on the part of your opponent (see p.113). This combined play with the above transformation as an ideal can be seen in the following example.

Michell – Tartakower, Marienbad 1925

476

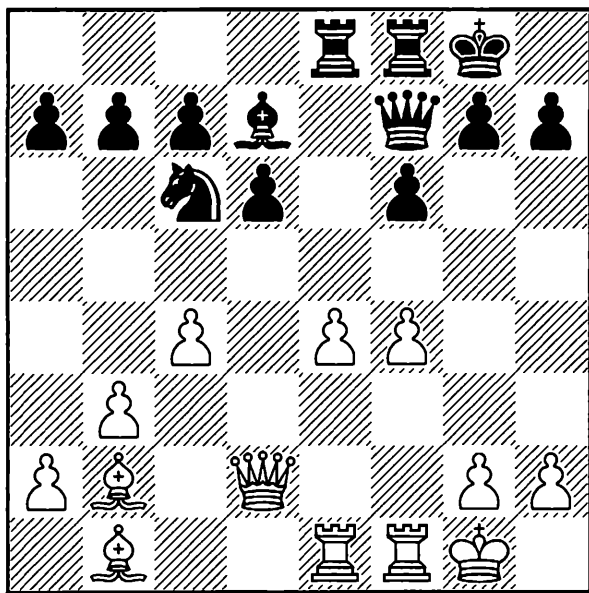


White has a solid position; the weakness of the Black squares c3 and d4 appears unimportant. There followed: 40.♞g1 ♞g7 41.♞f1 ♞c6 42.♟g1 g5 43.♟f3 h5 (both pawns advance, because they feel that they are a qualitative majority because of the high level of protection and support from the bishops!) 44.♞e2 ♞e4! 45.♞d3 ♞f4 46.♞e2 g4 47.hxg4 hxg4 48.♟h2 g3! 49.♟f3 Black has correctly stopped following the plan of hemming in the knights; what he now has is more valuable: the ♖g2 has become an object of attack and

the white pieces from now on, especially the ♖f3, are obliged to guard it (page 113). This strategic advantage will soon be decisive. **49...d4 50.♖f1 b4 51.♗d2 ♜h4 52.♗f3 ♜h8!** (from here it threatens both h2 and the e-file) **53.♕d2** (where there is a shortage of good moves, you can rely on a blunder...) **53...♜h2! 54.♗xh2 gxh2 55.♜h1 ♕e5 56.♖f1 ♕e4** (a charming position!) **57.♕d1 ♖f6 58.♕d2 ♖g5 59.♕d1 ♖g4 0–1**

We have now done enough in the praise of the bishops. There remain just a few words about situations in which they – the bishops – do less well. These are closed or semi-closed positions, see for example game 33, page 249. The bishops are surprisingly weak against a central knight which is safe from attack.

477



Even here it seems to me that Black can hold out against the Horowitz bishops.

The following two games bring to an end chapter 3.

Game 31

Nimzowitsch – Taubenhaus

St Petersburg 1913

Illustrating the isolated pawn

1.d4 d5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.c4 e6 4.e3 c5 5.♖d3 ♗c6 6.0–0 dxc4 7.♖xc4 cxd4 8.exd4 ♕e7 9.♗c3 0–0 10.♖e3

10.d5 would be bad on account of 10...♗a5 11.b3 ♖b4; nor would 10.♖g5 be sound, e.g. 10.♖g5 b6 etc.

10...b6

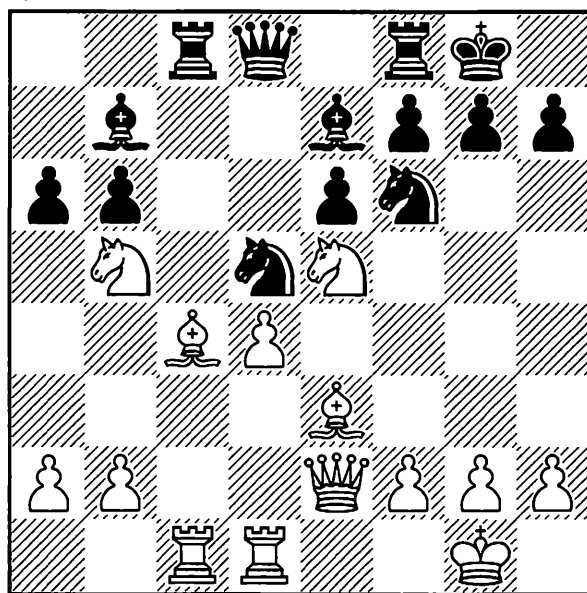
10...a6 followed by b5 would unnecessarily weaken c5.

11.♞e2 ♖b7 12.♞fd1 ♗b4 13.♗e5 ♜c8 14.♞ac1 ♗bd5 15.♗b5

Strategically speaking, a remarkable idea. White is thinking: I have a sound centre, so a diversion is strategically justifiable; on the other hand, I don't feel like keeping the hanging pawns after 15.♖a6 or 15.♖d3. But objectively speaking, the correct move was 15.♖a6, e.g. 15...♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♞c7 17.♖xb7 ♞xb7 18.c4, then possibly a2–a4–a5.

15...a6

478



16.♗a7! ♞a8

If 16...♞c7? then 17.♖xa6.

17.♗ac6 ♞d6 18.♗xe7† ♞xe7 19.♖d3! ♗xe3

There was no need for this yet. Worth considering was

I. 19...a5 then ♞fc8 or

II. 19...♞fd8 then ♗d7 and ♗f8.

For 19...♗e8 see the explanations to diagram 448, page 231.

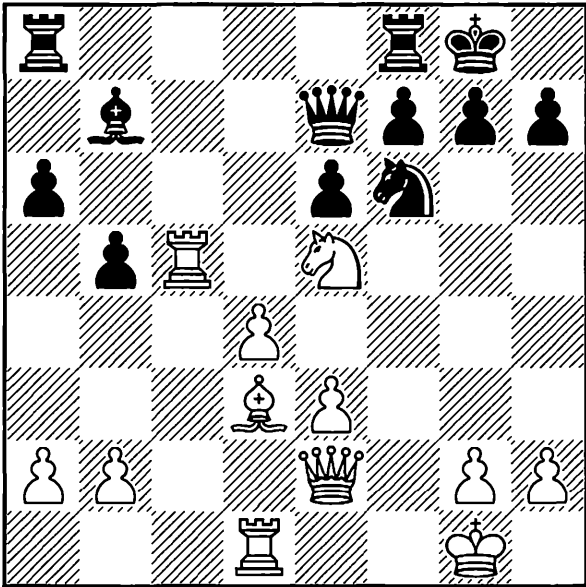
20.fxe3 b5

Weakens the c5-square; after 20...a5 (instead of the text), then ♞fc8 there still wasn't much on.

21.♞c5

This occupation of the outpost square gives White play on the c-file.

479



21...♖fc8 22.♗dc1 g6 23.a3

What now follows is a prime example of play on an open file. But the slowness with which White gradually wins space is significant for positional play.

23...♘e8 24.b4 ♘d6

If 24...♖g5 then 25.♘xf7!.

25.♖f2 f5

To take the pressure off f7; it also enables ♖g5.

26.♖f4 ♘e8

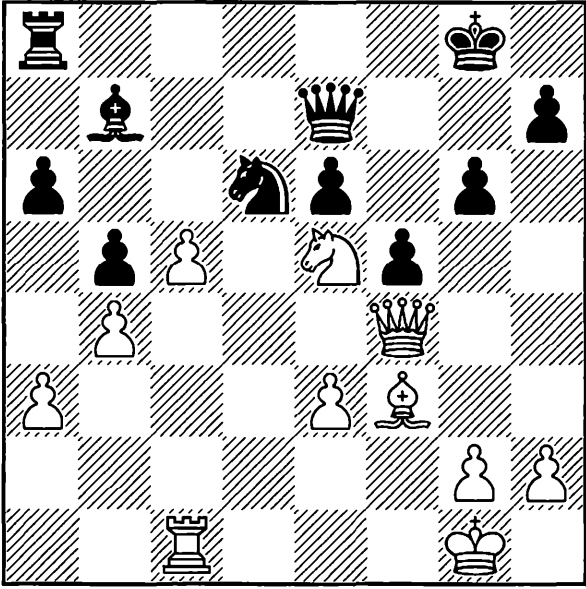
There is nothing Black can do.

27.♙e2 ♘d6 28.♙f3

Breaks the resistance on the c-file.

28...♗xc5 29.dxc5

480



29...♘e8

If 29...♘e4 then 30.c6! g5 31.cxb7 ♖f8 32.♗c8 and wins.

30.♗d1 ♘f6 31.c6

The c-pawn, the fruit of the queenside operations, now decides the game.

31...♙c8 32.c7 ♖a7 33.♗d8† ♔g7 34.♗xc8 ♗xc7 35.♘xg6 1-0

Game 32

Rubinstein – Znosko-Borovsky

St Petersburg 1909

This game, which is dedicated to the question of hanging pawns, is very characteristic of them, though in a very special sense: it shows the terrible dangers to which hanging pawns are exposed from the moment they are born. Infant mortality is here relatively high and very much greater than with adult hanging pawns (which in the worst of cases can always turn to the security offered by blockade).

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♘f3 0-0 7.♖c2 b6

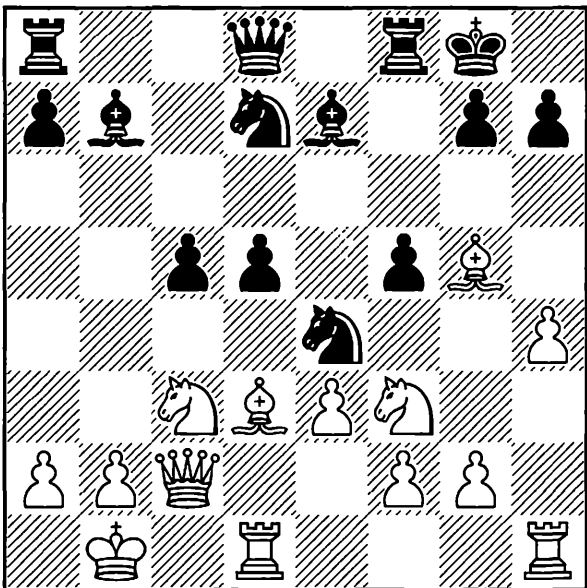
Here 7...c5 is possible, e.g. 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♙xe7 ♖xe7 10.♘xd5 exd5 11.dxc5 ♘xc5 when the isolated pawn does not seem that bad!

8.cxd5 exd5 9.♙d3 ♙b7 10.0-0-0 ♘e4 11.h4 f5 12.♔b1 c5

The correctness of this move stands and falls by the correctness of the pawn sacrifice we recommend in the next note. Instead of 12...c5 there is the solid and good 12...♗c8 recommended by Dr Lasker, e.g. 12...♗c8 13.♖b3 ♘xc3† then c7-c5. There is also the less solid, but not bad, 12...h6 13.♙f4 ♙d6 14.♙xd6 cxd6.

13.dxc5 bxc5

481



Instead 13...♖c8 was possible: after 14.cxb6 ♜xb6 Black would have had good attacking chances, while after 14.♘d4 there could come 14...♜dxc5. In any case the result of the game could have been in doubt, but not after this move. Note also the line 13...♜dxc5 14.♘xd5! ♙xd5 15.♙c4 and wins.

**14.♘xe4! fxe4 15.♙xe4 dxe4 16.♚b3† ♔h8
17.♚xb7 exf3 18.♖xd7 ♜e8 19.♖xe7 ♜g6†
20.♔a1 ♖ab8**

The storm has not only swept away the hanging pawns, but a piece too. Black's despairing attack is easily beaten off.

21.♚e4

Lasker praises this move, but 21.♚d5 also seems to work, e.g. 21.♚d5 fxg2 22.♚xg2 ♜c2 23.♙f6!. There is more than one way to skin a cat!

**21...♚xe4 22.♖xe4 fxg2 23.♖g1 ♖xf2 24.♖f4
♖c2**

24...♖bxb2 is followed by 25.♖f8†! and this is decisive.

25.b3 h6 26.♙e7

Next came: **26...♖e8 27.♔b1 ♖e2 28.♙xc5
♖d8 29.♙d4 ♖c8 30.♖g4 1–0.**

You will also find a good game with the two bishops at the end of chapter 5, page 264. We now move on to *overprotection*.

Part II – Chapter 4

Overprotection and weak pawns

How to systematically *overprotect* your own strong points and how to try to get rid of weak pawns or squares

This is a short chapter, which is mainly intended to cast some light on the various forms in which “overprotection” may appear. We have already attempted (pages 181-183) to explain the sense and deeper meaning of overprotection. So let us simply repeat briefly that the contact to be set up between the strong point and the overprotecting pieces must work to the advantage of both parties: to that of the “point” because the prophylaxis which is set in motion to defend it brings to it the greatest safety imaginable against possible attacks; but also to the overprotecting pieces, because the “point” acts for them like a source of energy, from which they can constantly draw fresh strength.

Overprotection clearly represents a manoeuvre which is closely intertwined with positional play and indeed must always be so because of its nature. Nevertheless, there were even traces of overprotection in our “elements”. For example when we were speaking of open files: White ♖d1, ♘c3, ♕e4; Black ♜c7, ♙d6. The outpost knight (after ♘c3-d5) must, as we had expressly pointed out on page 39, be protected by both the rook and the pawn. What is the meaning of this compulsion if not the necessity to overprotect the strategically important outpost.

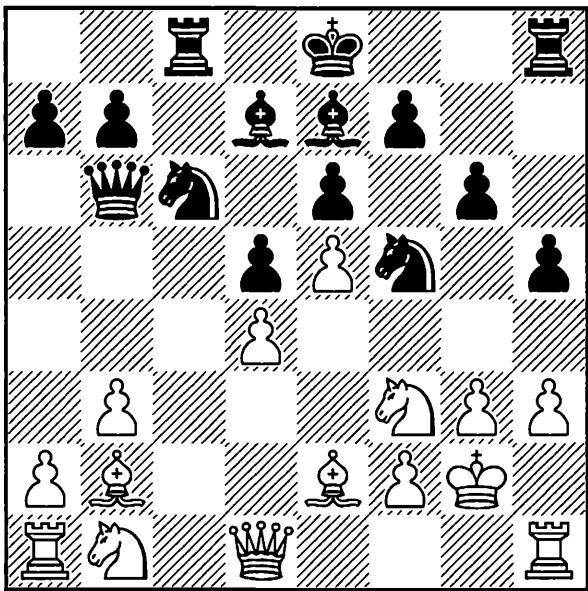
Also, in the area of pawn chains overprotection is a strategy we like to use. Play through the game on page 181 (Nimzowitsch – Giese) and note in particular how overprotection was required not so much for the base (for which we have such respect), but rather for a modest “candidate” (we had overprotected the e5-pawn, because we had

to bear in mind the unavoidable possibility of d4xc5; this meant that e5 would be promoted to the new base).

Here are two further examples of the wonderful vitality of overprotecting pieces.

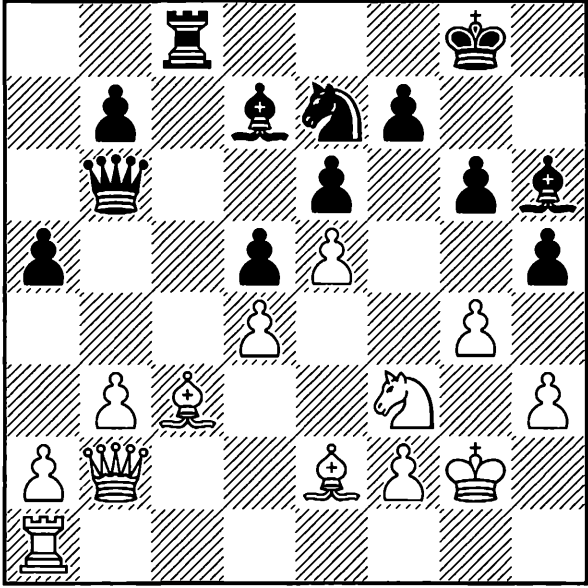
I. Nimzowitsch – Rubinstein, Karlsbad 1911
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♜b6 6.♙d3 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♙d7 8.♙e2 ♘ge7 9.b3 ♘f5 10.♙b2 (for the moment, d4 has emergency cover, but no more than that) 10...♙b4† 11.♙f1 h5 12.g3 ♝c8 13.♙g2 g6 14.h3 ♙e7

482



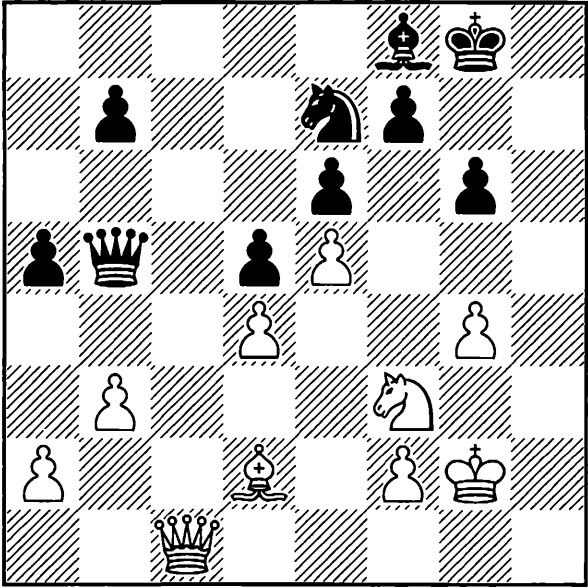
Intending to meet a possible g4 with ♘h4†. 15.♜d2! a5 16.♝c1 ♙f8 17.♜d1! ♙h6 18.♝c3 0-0 19.g4 ♘fe7 20.♘a3! (only now does it become clear why White hesitated before developing this knight; he had intended to give it an honourable post overprotecting d4) 20...♘b4 21.♘c2 (there now follows a surprisingly effortless unravelling of the knot of white pieces on the queenside) 21...♝xc3 22.♙xc3 ♘xc2 23.♜xc2 ♝c8 24.♜b2! No matter what happens, d4 is and will remain overprotected.

483



24...♙b5 25.♙xb5 ♖xb5 26.♙d2! (the overprotecting piece shows its claws!) 26...♙f8 27.♖c1 hxc4 28.hxc4 ♖c6 29.♗a3 (overprotecting piece no. 2 gets in on the act too – see previous note) 29...♖xc1 A pity. White wanted to offer a queen sacrifice after 29...♙f5, e.g. 29...♙f5 30.♖xc6 ♙xa3 31.♖c8† ♔g7¹² 32.gxf5 with a strong attack. This is an excellent indication of the inner tension within overprotecting pieces. 30.♗xc1 with a better game for White.

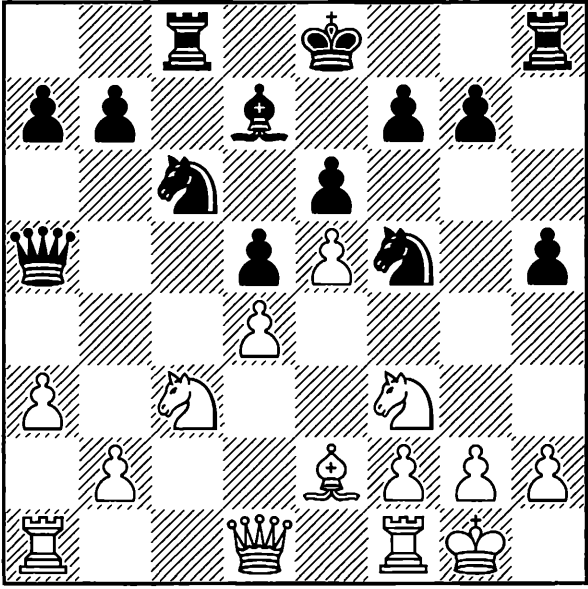
484



II. Nimzowitsch – Spielmann, Stockholm 1920
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♙f3 ♙c6 5.c3 ♗b6 6.♙e2 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♙h6 8.♙c3 (8.b3 seems more prudent; see previous example) 8...♙f5 9.♙a4 ♗a5† 10.♙d2 ♙b4 11.♙c3 ♙d7 (Preferable was 11...♙xc3† 12.♙xc3 ♗b4 [12...♗b6? 13.♙a4!]) 13.♙b5 0–0 14.♙xc6 ♗xb2 15.♙a4 ♗b4† 16.♗d2 when White would have the c5-point

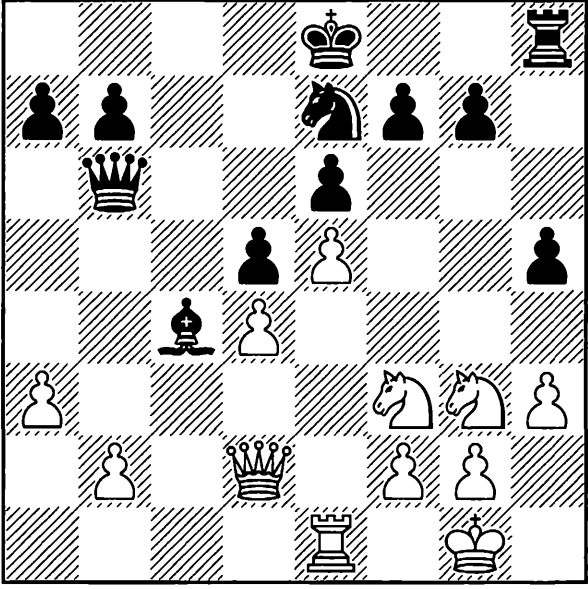
and Black an extra, but backward, pawn.) 12.a3 ♙xc3† 13.♙xc3 h5 14.0–0 ♖c8

485



15.♗d2! ♗d8 (threatening g5!) 16.h3 (so as to meet g5 with the counter-thrust g4, e.g. 16...g5 17.g4 hxc4 18.hxc4 ♙h4 19.♙xh4 ♖xh4 20.♙g2 then ♖h1 with an advantage to White) 16...♙a5 17.♖ad1! ♗b6 18.♖fe1 (d4, and also up to a certain point e5, are now systematically overprotected, and this strategy makes it possible later, almost automatically, to master any complications which might arise) 18...♙c4 19.♙xc4 ♖xc4 20.♙e2 ♙a4 21.♖c1 (look how useful the overprotecting pieces are all over the place, for example the rook on d1 can go to c1, the knight on e2 to g3) 21...♙b3 22.♖xc4 ♙xc4 23.♙g3 ♙e7

486



White is somewhat better (and won on move 61, see *Die Blockade* page 39).

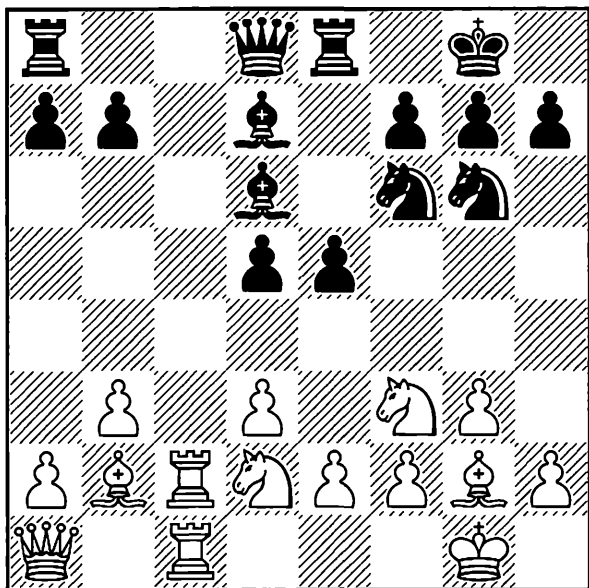
So much for the overprotection of the base. The following points also need to be overprotected.

a) The central squares

We have already emphasised at an earlier stage that it is a thoroughly bad thing not to pay sufficient attention to the centrally placed battlefield. We are dealing here with a detail, or to be more precise, with the judgement of a very specific situation which is typical of hypermodern play. As is very well known, hypermodern players are well capable of resisting the impulse to occupy the centre with pawns; at least until the first favourable opportunity which comes along. Should such an opportunity present itself, then all false piety is set to one side and the pawns, supported by the fianchettoed bishops, burst out violently to occupy the centre and to try to crush the opponent. The overprotection of certain central squares is, as we have said, a well tried and highly recommended remedy against this threat.

Let us first take a look at the opening to the game **Réti – Yates**, New York 1924. 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙d6 5.b3 0–0 (Why the hurry? Clearing things up in the centre was far more urgent: so c6, ♘d7 and e5.) 6.0–0 ♞e8? 7.♙b2 ♘bd7 8.d3? c6 9.♘bd2 e5 (there can be no doubt that the position which has now arisen is more favourable for Black; White should have played 8.d4) 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.♞c1 ♘f8 12.♞c2 ♙d7 13.♞a1 ♘g6 14.♞fc1

487



White's queen manoeuvre is characteristic: he wishes to undermine the opposing centre by a future d3-d4, and if e5-e4 then ♘e5; this means that Black must overprotect the e5-square just in case. Best would be first 14...b5 to get to grips with the queenside which is compromised by the position of the queen on a1; if then 15.♘f1 then 15...♞b8! = overprotection of e5 16.♘e3 a5 with a better game for Black.

I had already demonstrated this method of play in the supplements to *Kagans Neueste Schachnachrichten* 1924. But not much was thought of it then, since the idea of overprotection was totally unknown in the world of chess. Things are different nowadays.

During my autumn tour in 1926, moreover, I often had the chance to play ♞b8 with a similar idea to what happened in the next game.

Since one of the said games took a very interesting turn, I do not feel that I can deprive you of it.

Game 33

Schurig (+ **K. Laue**, Halle, till move 12) – **Nimzowitsch**
Leipzig simul 1926

1.♘f3 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♙g2 c6 4.b3 ♙d6 5.♙b2 ♘f6 6.d3 ♘bd7 7.♘bd2 ♞c7

Also possible was 7...e5. The text move introduces an original manoeuvre: Black is planning an attack way out on the queenside, but before doing so wants to consolidate his own centre against the possible threat of e2-e4-e5; thus he plans to overprotect e5. Moreover, the queen has a reserve square b8, to which it can if necessary retreat, e.g. if the c-file is opened.

8.0–0 a5 9.c4 b5

The question as to whether a flank attack is permissible can only ever be answered by an evaluation of the specific situation in the centre: when your own central position is consolidated, a flank attack cannot be wrong. That is the case here; what does it matter that the king has not yet castled, it cannot be attacked.

10.cxb5 cxb5 11.♞c1 ♞b8

The spare room.

12. ♖c2

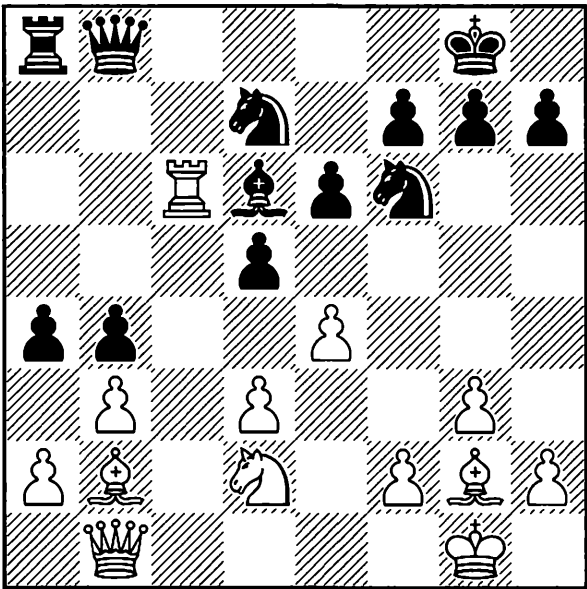
12.e4 appears more urgently needed.

12...0-0 13.e4 ♕b7 14. ♖d4 ♜c8 15. ♖b1 ♜xc1
16. ♜xc1 b4 17. ♖c6

I think he is a little over-hasty in this.

17... ♕xc6 18. ♜xc6 a4

488



Every free moment is used to strengthen the position way out on the queenside.

19.d4

This move can be chalked up to the success of Black's strategy of overprotection! Now the valuable b2-f6 diagonal is obstructed, but otherwise the thrust e5 could not have been forced through.

So once more the overprotecting pieces have rendered excellent services, though they had no real opposition and were able to operate in all directions.

Also worth mentioning is the variation with 19.f4 to retain the d-pawn on d3. There could come: 19... ♕c5†! and White has to go for 20.d4 when after 20... ♕f8 21.e5 the game position would be reached.

19... ♕f8! 20.e5 ♖e8

White's bishops are not very active now.

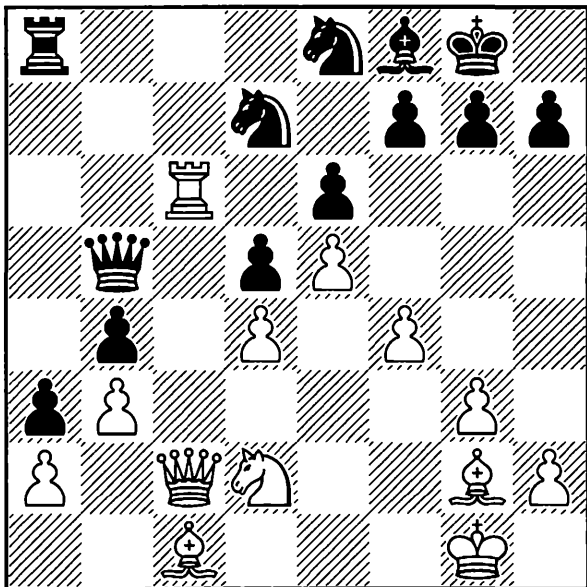
21.f4 ♖b5

The immediate 21...a3 was more accurate.

22. ♖c2 a3 23. ♕c1

Here the intermediate move 23. ♕f1 was essential.

489



23... ♕c5

This interesting combination ought to start with 23... ♖c5 (not 23... ♕c5). The difference will soon be made clear.

24. ♜xc5 ♖xc5 25.dxc5?

The intermediate move 25. ♕f1 (which would not have been available after 23... ♖c5) would have gained him a tempo for the endgame.

25... ♜c8

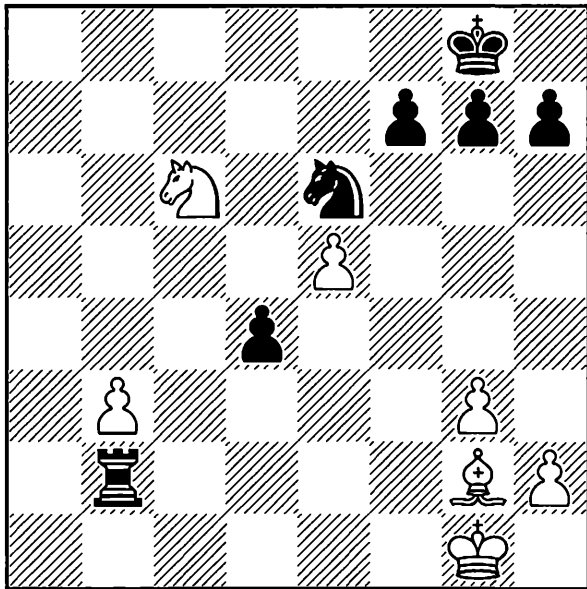
The ♖a2 is doomed – does it not look it?

26. ♖b1 ♖xc5† 27. ♖xc5 ♜xc5 28. ♕xa3

Or 28. ♕d2 ♜c2 29. ♕f1 ♜xa2 30. ♕xb4 ♜g2† and wins. If White had a tempo more (see note to White's 25th move), this variation would have been impossible.

The remaining moves were 28...bxa3 29. ♖xa3 ♜a5 30. ♖c2 ♜xa2 31. ♖d4 ♜b2 32.f5 ♖c7 33.fxe6 ♖xe6 34. ♖c6 d4 0-1

490



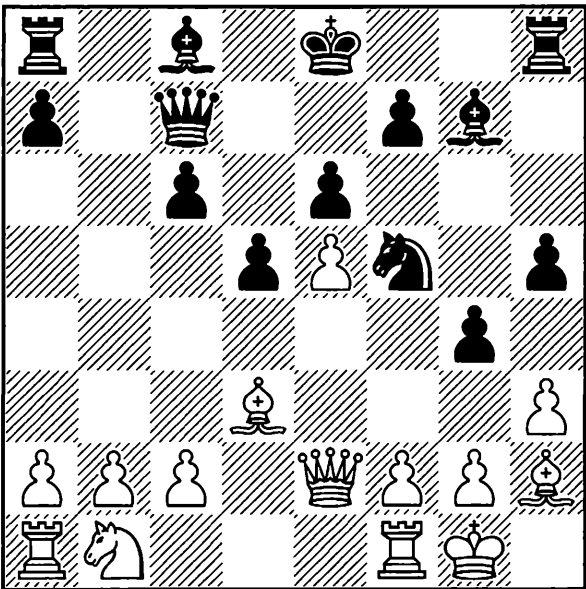
b) Overprotection of the centre as a protective measure for your own kingside

The case we shall now look at in more detail differs from a) in its general tendency and is treated here as an independent manoeuvre rather than as a subdivision of the previous case.

The discussion on page 189 about diagram 359 shows a characteristic example of case b). Game 13 on page 100 was also an instructive example.

In the said game, (Nimzowitsch – von Freymann, Vilnius 1912), after move 13 the following position had been reached,

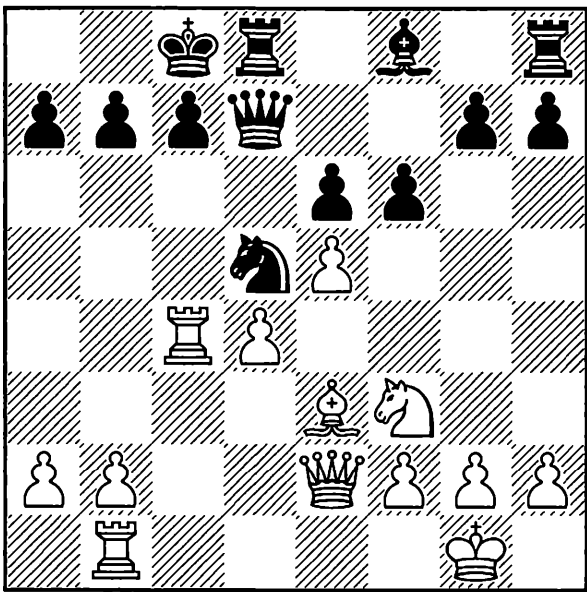
491



Black having just played 13...g4! (he had planned, after the reply 14.hxg4 hxg4 15.♖xg4 ♜xh2!, to play 16.♔xh2 ♚xe5† followed by ♚xb2). But White played 14.♞e1. In doing something for his centre, he simultaneously strengthens the resistance his position can put up against flank attacks also. Next came: 14...♔f8 15.♘c3! (the start of a blockading manoeuvre) 15...♞e7 16.♙xf5 exf5 17.♞e3 ♜h6 18.♘e2 c5 19.♘f4 with a better game for White, because here the two bishops have little say in the matter (thanks to the strength of the knight which cannot be driven away) and also Black's total mobility is very restricted (c5, d5 are to some extent mobile, the rest is blocked).

But what is especially interesting for us is the manoeuvre chosen in the following consultation game, (Three Swedish Amateurs – Nimzowitsch, 1921)

492

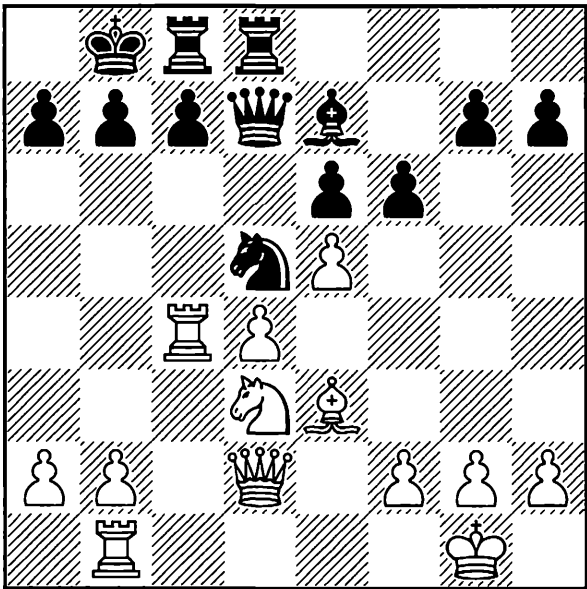


It was Black's move. There is no doubt that the ♘d5 is the pride of Black's position. But it is not easy to find a plan. White is threatening to take the initiative, though not a very dangerous one: ♞d2 then ♘f3-e1-d3-c5. My train of thought during the game led me to me to a hidden manoeuvre, which I still consider a good one. Here are the isolated elements of my thought process:

- I. ♘d5 is strong,
- II. therefore the overprotecting pieces ♞d7 and ♞d8 are also strong,
- III. but the ♞d8 also has commitments to its king, which influence its strength in the centre; so
- IV. the h-rook must go to c8!

Accordingly, the following moves were played: 14...♔b8! 15.♞d2 ♞c8! 16.♘e1 ♚e7 17.♘d3 ♜hd8

493



Mission accomplished! The d-rook can now really consider itself a central piece, since the king is being protected by its colleague on c8. You will get a further report about the doings of the d8-rook in game 34 at the end of this chapter, page 253. And as you look at it, be sure to notice how the inner strength belonging to the overprotecting piece as such did not fail to manifest itself. We could go on to consider many points which are worth overprotecting, but we wish to limit ourselves to the few examples we have looked at here. Before we turn to the next stratagem, we must however sum things up:

You should only overprotect strategically valuable points, not a sickly pawn or a weak-looking kingside, etc.

Overprotection, you see, is not an act of Christian charity and pity: the pieces protect a point because they expect strategic advantages to flow from the contact they have established with it. There is only one exceptional case in which a weak pawn has any justifiable claim to overprotection, that is when it is functioning as the nursemaid to a growing giant, for example White $\Delta d4$ and $\Delta e5$, Black $\Delta e6$ and $\Delta d5$. The base of the chain (d4) may well be weak, but it is the nursemaid for the strategically significant $\Delta e5$; therefore overprotection of d4 would be in order.

With this we say farewell to overprotection.

How to get rid of weak pawns

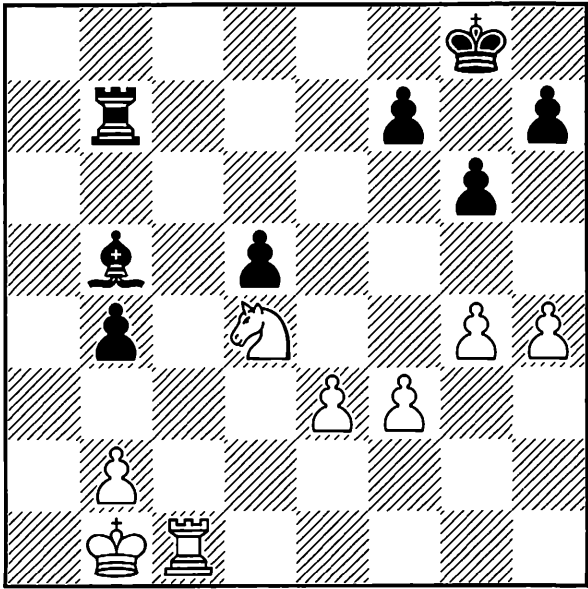
Here we are not talking so much about *the methods* of getting rid of such pawns, but much more about *which* pawns do not receive tender treatment.

It always comes down to the same situation: a pawn complex which could be called sound, but which has one sickly component. According to the state of the weakness, we distinguish 2 cases:

- a) the weakness of the pawn is obvious,
- b) the weakness would only emerge as such after a successful pawn movement (your own or your opponent's)

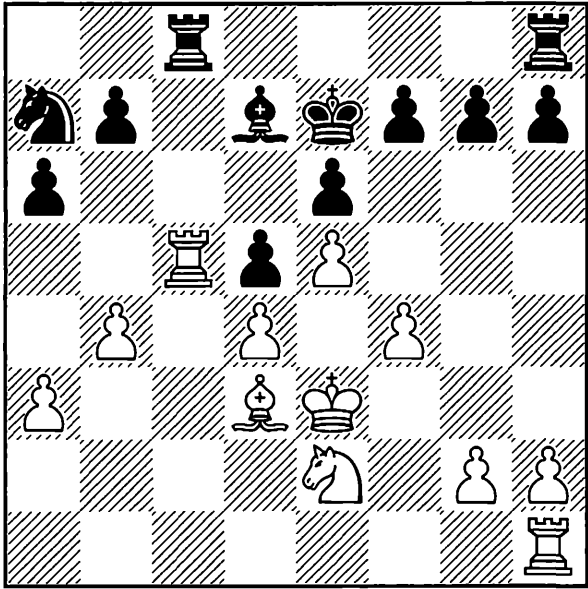
We shall give one example for each case. For a) **Nimzowitsch – Jacobsen**, Copenhagen 1923.

494



Next came: **36. $\Delta c5$ $\Delta d7$** (or **36... $\Delta d3$ † 37. $\Delta c1$ $\Delta d7$ 38. $\Delta c8$ † $\Delta g7$ 39. $\Delta b8$) **37. $\Delta xd5$** So White is now a pawn up. **37... $\Delta f8$ 38. $\Delta c2$ b3† 39. $\Delta c3$ $\Delta e7$** White is in a position of being able to bring together his own herd of pawns – e, f, g; to achieve this he only has to play e3-e4, then everything is neatly protected and the shepherd (the $\Delta d5$) can with a clear conscience turn to other matters. But no, the $\Delta h4$, stupid sheep that it is, would run away from the shepherd – the possible threat in a rook ending is the manoeuvre $\Delta a7$ -a1-h1xh4 – and be cast out of the flock. Next came: **40. h5! $\Delta e6$ 41. $\Delta c5$ $\Delta d6$ 42. $\Delta c6$ † $\Delta d7$ 43. hxcg6 hxcg6** (he has managed it!) **44. $\Delta xe6$! fxe6 45. $\Delta c5$** then $\Delta g5$ and f3-f4 with an easily won rook ending.**

495



For **b)** we have an endgame from Tarrasch's younger days (**Dr Tarrasch – Barthmann**, see diagram 495). Black here played **21...♖c6** and then came **22.♖hc1 ♖hc8 23.g4 g6 24.f5 gxf5 25.gxf5 ♖g8?** (there is no way that **26.f6†** should be allowed, so it seems necessary to play **25...exf5 26.♟f4 ♟e6 27.♖g1** with a hard fight) **26.f6† ♟f8 27.♖g1 ♖xg1 28.♟xg1 ♟g8** and Black's h-pawn forms a glaring weakness in his game. But Black could have avoided this bad state of affairs by playing h7-h5 on move 21, intending to allow f5-f6 (as in the game), only under the condition that both the g- and h-pawns would be exchanged off. Things might have gone **21...h5! 22.h3 g6** (not **22...h4?** on account of **23.♟g1** then **♟f3**), and after a few moves Black would have achieved a more favourable position.

Whereas case a) is not too demanding, correct handling of the strategic instruments indicated under case b) is extremely difficult; it requires above all a rather exact knowledge of the varied ways an advance of a compact pawn mass can be carried out, especially on one wing. In my book, I have devoted many pages to this advance and all its consequences. So I must leave you, dear reader, to your own devices and hope that fate is kind to you. Just bear in mind that any strategic necessity to get rid of one of your own pawns can occur either as part of a planned advance of your own, not just as part of one of your opponent's as was seen in diagram 495. You need to make a case by case decision as to when to get rid of your mangy sheep, whether at the start of the operation (– a closed pawn advance) or during it.

We shall leave you with a game which illustrates overprotection and then move on to a new chapter.

Game 34

Three Swedish Amateurs – Nimzowitsch

Played in 1921

Besides overprotection, this game also illustrates issues of the isolated queen's pawn.

1.e4 ♟c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 f6 4.♟b5

4.f4 is reckoned to be better.

4...♟f5 5.♟f3 ♖d7 6.c4 ♟xb1!

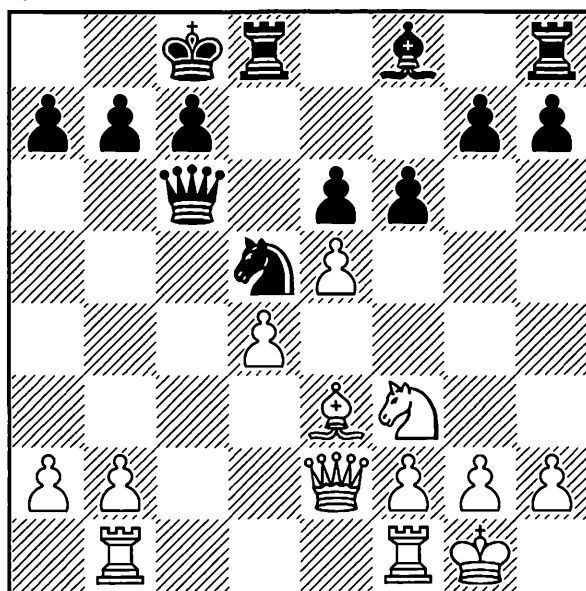
Black is planning with this far from obvious exchange to seize d5 for the knight.

7.♖xb1 0–0–0 8.cxd5

If **8.c5** then **8...g5!**. Next a struggle builds up for the possession of the central point e5. For example (**8.c5 g5**) **9.♖e2** (threatening e6 and Black is blocked in) **9...♖e6!** **10.h3 ♟h6** then **♟f7**; or also **10...♟b8**. In both cases, Black does not come out of things too badly.

8...♖xd5 9.♟xc6 ♖xc6 10.0–0 e6 11.♟e3 ♟e7 12.♖e2 ♟d5

496



We can call the d4-pawn isolated with a clear conscience. Its weakness (for the endgame!) is obvious and also the d5-square is a really strong one for Black. As far as the advantages for White (of the isolated pawn) are concerned, there is the quite good outpost square c5, though e5 is unusable, I mean for the **♟f3**. The game should be level.

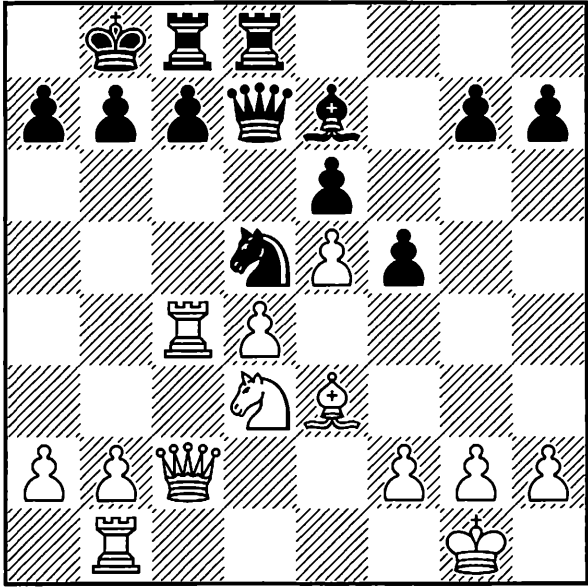
13.♖fc1 ♖d7

It is very much open to question whether instead of the rook move the exchange on f6 would not have been better; his opponent would get the g-file and a centralised bishop on d6, but the e-file would have been good compensation. We have already discussed during the analysis of diagram 492 on page 251, the peculiar overprotection which follows in moves 14 to 17.

14.♖c4 ♟b8 15.♖d2 ♖c8 16.♟e1 ♟e7 17.♟d3 ♖hd8 18.♖c2 f5

After successfully consolidating his position, Black goes over to the attack, which is difficult to conduct, as firstly there are no objects of attack and secondly White too has attacking chances.

497



19.♖c1

Here 19.b4 was absolutely necessary, with the possible intention of ♖c5, ♙xc5, bxc5. The question is whether Black's position is strong enough to put up with such a weakening? Possible moves after 19.b4 are 19...b6 and 19...b5.

After 19...b6 20.♖c5! can be played: after 20...♙xc5! 21.bxc5 c6 Black's position is quite good. But on no account should he accept the knight sacrifice, as can be seen from the combinations which follow: (19.b4 b6 20.♖c5) bxc5 21.bxc5† ♔a8? (the counter-sacrifice 21...♖b6 was necessary) 22.c6 ♕e8 23.♖a4 (threatening ♖xa7†) 23...♖b6 24.d5!! ♖xd5 25.♖xa7† ♔xa7 26.♕a4† ♔b8 27.♙xb6 cxb6 28.♖xb6† ♔c7 29.♖b7† ♔d8 30.c7†! ♖xc7 31.♖b8† ♖c8 32.♖xc8† ♔xc8 33.♕xe8† and wins. A real Morphy-style combination.

But we can take in at our leisure how the overprotected central position is so strong that Black need have no fear of opening up his position, while still remaining in control of the situation. This is because he is able to avoid with a smile all the combinations his opponents can throw at them, no matter how devilish they are.

And finally after 19.b4 we should point out the variation which arises after the reply 19...b5.

Again, Black fares not badly, e.g. 19.b4 b5 20.♖c6 ♖b7 21.♖c5† ♙xc5 22.♖xc5 ♖b6 followed by c6 and Black is strong on the white squares.

19...g5 20.♖c5 ♙xc5 21.♖xc5 ♖g8 22.♕e2 h5! 23.♙d2

23.♕xh5? g4! then ♖h8.
23...h4 24.a4 g4 25.a5 a6! 26.b4 c6

And White has finally run out of steam.
27.♖b1 ♕f7 28.♖b3 f4 29.♕e4 f3! 30.♖c1

Because White could not hold out after 30.gxf3 gxf3† 31.♖f1 ♖cf8 (stronger than 31...♖g1†).

30...fxg2 31.♖xg2 ♖cf8

Look how easy it is to make use of the black rooks. I see this as further proof of the enormous vitality of overprotecting pieces.

32.♖f1 g3! 33.hxg3 hxg3 34.f4

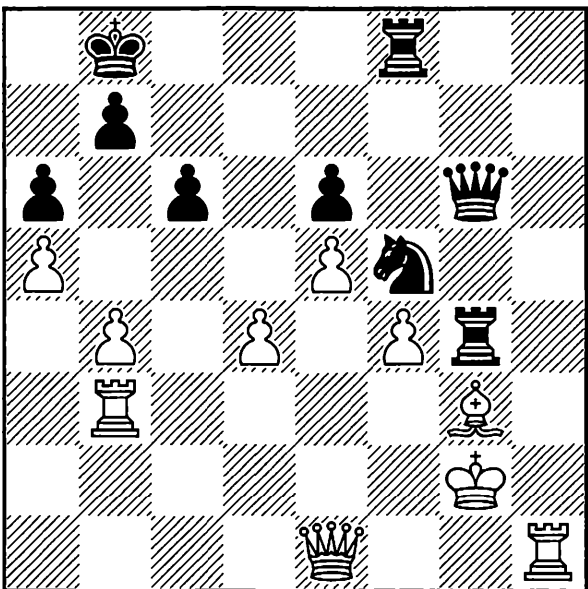
34.♖xg3 would expose the king after the reply 34...♖xg3†.

34...♖e7

35.♖xg3 should now be followed by 35...♖f5 36.♖g5 ♖xg5† then ♖h4†.

35.♙e1 ♖f5 36.♖h1 ♖g4 37.♙xg3 ♕g6 38.♕e1

498



38...♖xg3!

Strong and decisive, but so simple and tasteless: it wins the pawns which are so comfortably installed on the 4th rank.

39.♖xg3 ♖xf4 40.♖hh3 ♖xd4 41.♕f2 ♖xg3† 42.♖xg3 ♕e4† 43.♖h2 ♕xe5 44.♖g2 ♕d5† 0-1

One of my favourite games.

Part II – Chapter 5

Manoeuvring

Manoeuvring against an enemy “weakness”
The combined attack on both wings
Is there a certain relationship between the two strategies mentioned above?

1. What are the logical elements on which manoeuvring against a weakness is based?
The concept of the “pivot”, around which manoeuvring takes place.

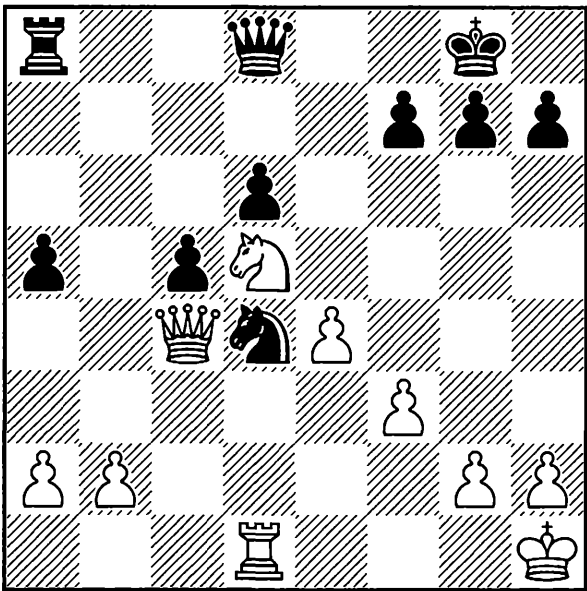
I should like to start my analysis with an attempt to establish a general plan for the operation I shall be discussing. I imagine a manoeuvring operation going something like as follows: an opposing weakness can be attacked in at least two ways, but each of these attacks will meet a satisfactory defence. So to seize the opposing weak point, our attack alternates between the methods (manoeuvring is like a sailing boat tacking), as we exploit the greater freedom of movement which we possess due to the conditions of the terrain. We thus oblige the opposing pieces to take up uncomfortable defensive positions, leading to restraints being imposed on the defence and the weakness turning out to be untenable. As can be seen from the above, it would be quite wrong to describe manoeuvring as purposeless moving to and fro; quite the reverse, each manoeuvre has a clear pre-established purpose, it intends to overcome a quite specific weakness. The ways which lead to this conquest are however complicated.

2. The terrain • The rule for manoeuvring • Changing place

In order for us to be successful, the terrain on which the manoeuvring takes place must somehow be well consolidated. The characteristic

feature is that the various troop movements are always carried out via a quite precise square (or a line of demarcation).

499



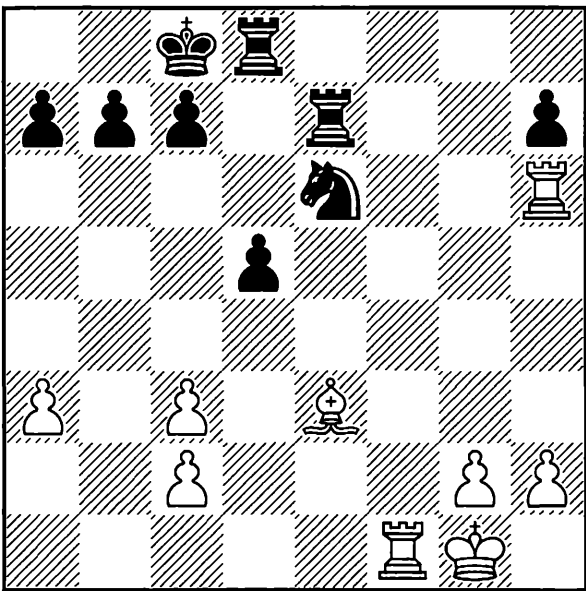
For example, here it is the d5-square which the white pieces wish to occupy, so that they can continue their manoeuvres from that point. So the d5-square might be considered here as a fortified staging-post, and it would be only right and proper for us to describe it as a pivot, around which the whole manoeuvring operation turns. All manoeuvring stands under the sign of the fortified d5-square; the pieces all want to get out of the wings and on to d5, even the ♖d1 manages to do so. The rule for manoeuvring, moreover, requires that d5 should be occupied by various pieces in turn, because this will always create new threats and help to embarrass the enemy. The relationship between the white pieces on one hand and the pivotal square d5 on the other is exactly the “contact” we conceived of in the previous chapter as existing between overprotecting pieces and a strategically valuable square. The fact that the pieces are striving to be in contact with d5

is clear proof of the strength of d5. Note also the manoeuvre described as changing place: the series of white moves ♖e3, ♔d5, ♖c4. As well as the changing of pieces occupying the “pivotal square”, the manoeuvre just described constitutes another valuable weapon which can come to the aid of the player who is manoeuvring.

Let us now look at some examples of the most typical cases of manoeuvring.

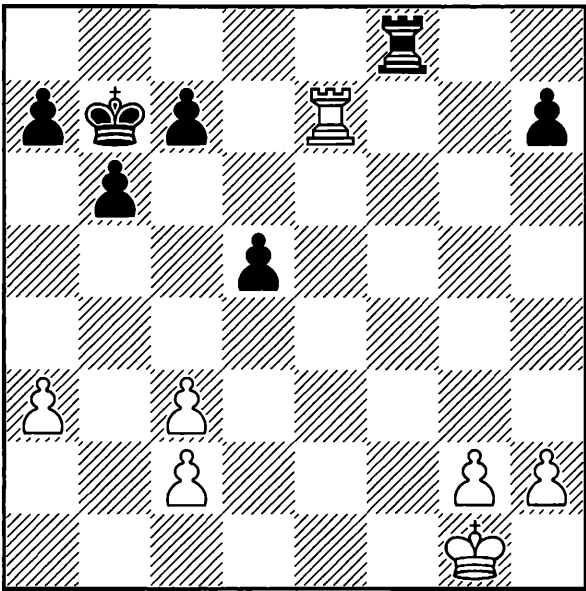
a) A pawn weakness, which is attacked in turn from the (7th) rank and from the file

500



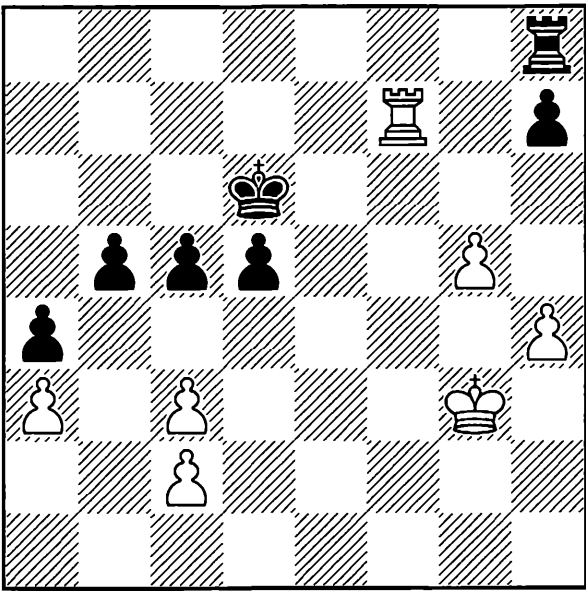
In **Rubinstein – Selezniev**, there came **1...b6**. A better move was 1...d4, e.g. 1...d4 2.cxd4 ♖xd4 3.♙g5 ♖e2† 4.♙f2! (or else 4.♙h1 ♙f7 will follow) 4...♙f8† 5.♙f6 ♙xf6† 6.♙xf6 ♙e6. This was followed by: **2.♙f2 ♙f8 3.♙e1 ♙ef7 4.♙hxe6 ♙xf2 5.♙e8† ♙b7 6.♙xf8 ♙xf8 7.♙e7**

501



There now followed some splendid manoeuvring against the weakness on h7. Black first protected it by **7...♙h8**. But then came **8.♙f2**. After **8...♙c6 9.g4 ♙d6 10.♙f7 a5 11.g5 a4 12.h4 b5 13.♙g3 c5**, Black is threatening to create a passed pawn by b4.

502



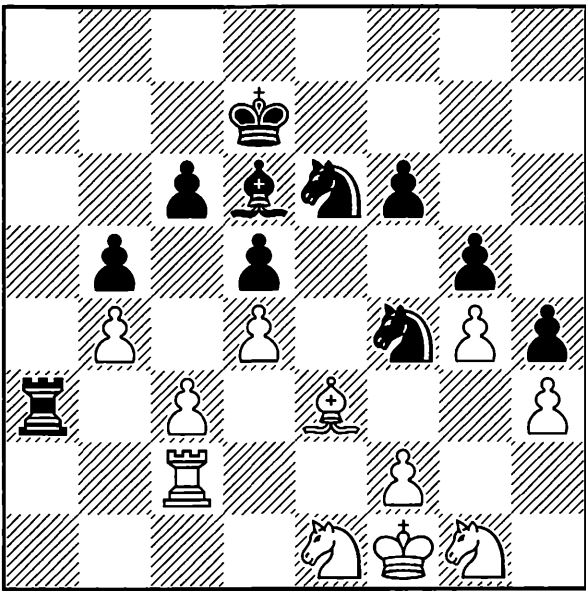
Rubinstein attacked the h7-weakness from the other side, by **14.♙f6† ♙c7 15.♙h6 b4 16.cxb4 cxb4 17.axb4 ♙a8 18.♙xh7†!** (the weakness has fallen) **18...♙b6 19.♙f7 a3 20.♙f1 a2 21.♙a1 ♙b5 22.g6 ♙xb4 23.h5 1–0**

Here the “pivot or axis” is the files e7-h7 and h6-h8. You should try to work out why the change of front on move 14 may not take place earlier.

The next case is much more complicated.

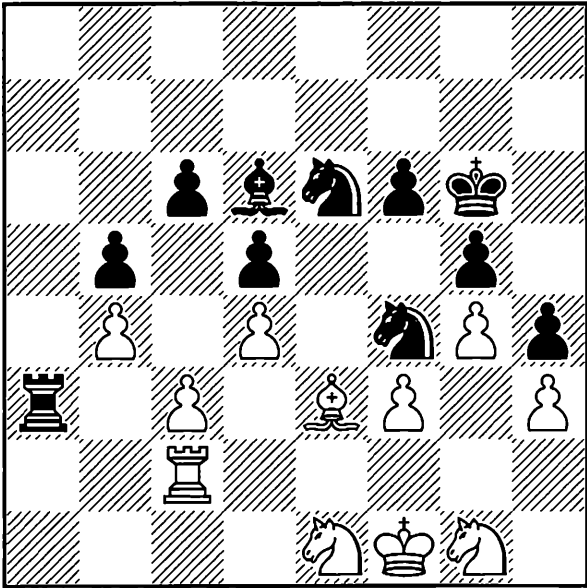
b) Two pawn weaknesses, in this case c3 and h3

503



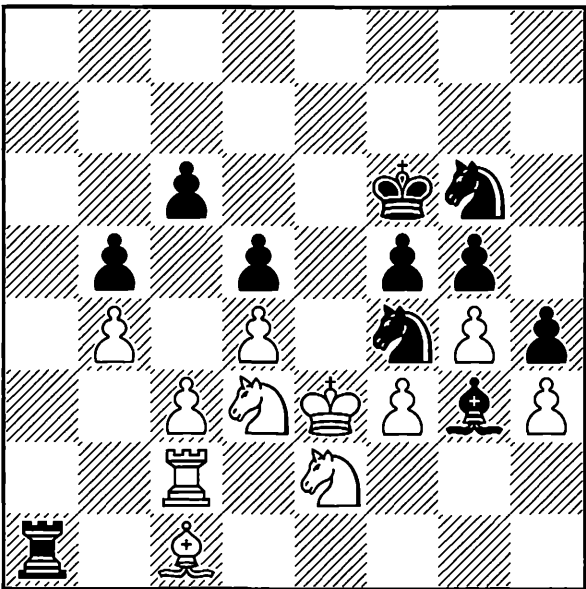
The pivotal square for the action against h3 appears to be under threat, but is saved, and that happens as a result of a well-timed massage of the weak pawn on the other side of the board, the c3-pawn. So we can thus see the logical connection between the two separate battlefields. In **Kalaschnikow – Nimzowitsch**, 1914, next came: **36...♔e7**. If White remains passive, Black would get an advantage by means of a direct attack, by ♔e7-f7-g6 followed by the pawn thrust f6-f5. White will then have to defend by f2-f3, finally giving his opponent the chance to attack which he desired, i.e. to post the bishop on g3 (of course after the ♖f4 has moved away), which threatens White's whole defensive set-up and against which there is no defence. However White did not remain passive, but tried to hinder the execution of his opponent's plans, by playing **37.♘g2!**. This offers the exchanges **38.♙xf4 ♘xf4 39.♘xf4 ♙xf4** which would result in a clear draw. The f4-square which appears to be threatened could not be held by Black without the possibility of manoeuvring on the other side. Thus **37...♖a1† 38.♙c1 ♖a2! 39.♘e1!**. The saving manoeuvre carried out on moves 37 and 38 turns out to be effective, because now – with the rook on a2 – the intended relieving exchanges would only lead to a disadvantage for White, e.g. **39.♙xf4? ♙xf4! 40.♖d1 ♙d2 41.♘e2 ♘f4!**. After the moves **42.♘gxf4 gxf4 43.♔g2 ♖c2** Black develops a considerable appetite. **39...♔f7** So Black has gained a tempo! But now things repeat themselves! **40.♖c2 ♖a3! 41.♘g2 ♖a1† 42.♖c1 ♖a2! 43.♘e1 ♔g6 44.♖c2 ♖a3 45.f3**

504



This weakening move could not be avoided in the long run; otherwise Black would play f6-f5 and if gxf5 then ♔xf5 and g5-g4 with a passed h-pawn. **45...f5** Got there! The rest went without a hitch. **46.♔f2 ♔f6** (making space for the knight) **47.♙c1 ♖a1 48.♔e3 ♘g6 49.♘d3 ♙g3** (see the note to Black's 36th move) **50.♘e2 ♘ef4**

505



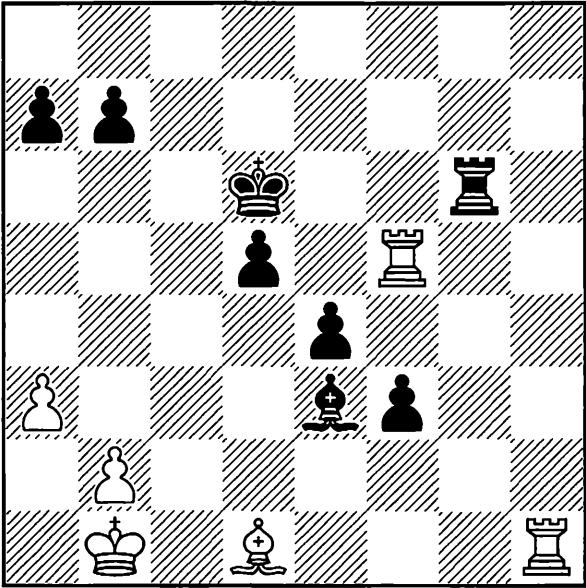
51.♘g1 ♘xd3 52.♔xd3 ♙f4! 53.♘e2 ♙xc1 54.♘xc1 ♘f4† 55.♔e3 ♘xh3 The fortress on h3 falls after a heroic defence. Next came **56.♘e2 f4†** and White resigned, because ♖f1 wins another pawn.

c) The king as a weakness

Two possibilities exist for the terrain, one for the pivot or demarcation line.

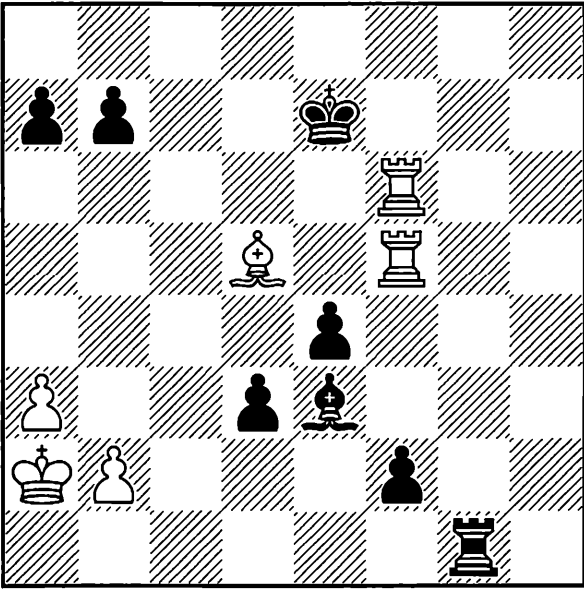
This very amusing position is from the game **Nimzowitsch – Kalinsky**, 1914.

506



1.♙b3 (after 1.♙c2 f2 2.♖d1 would come 2...♔e6 and White cannot win) 1...d4 2.♙d5 ♖g4 (but not the immediate 2...f2 because of 3.♙xe4 etc.¹³) 3.♖hh5 f2 and now White doubles rooks on the f-file with tempo. 4.♖f6† ♔e7 5.♖hf5 ♖g1† 6.♔a2 d3

507



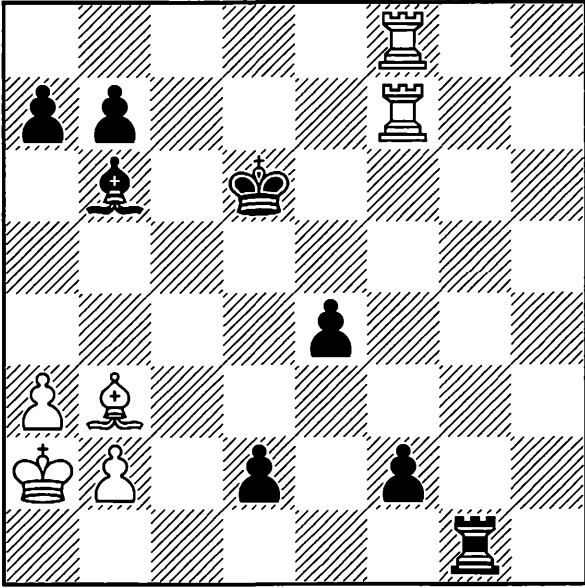
The position reached is one we shall use as a touchstone for the correctness of our theses. We had explained, that a manoeuvring action only comes about whenever what we considered to be the conditions were met, namely:

- a) the presence of a pivot or axis
- b) a multiplicity of threats which could be directed against the weakness.

Our test has a favourable result. Although this time the weakness is a notional one rather than a concrete pawn weakness, the formation which favours manoeuvring is identical to the one we suggested: nor is there here any shortage of threats, since White is not only threatening to drive the opposing king to the edge of the board, but also has up his sleeve a nice king hunt which will send it towards the centre. Just as a multiplicity of threats is present, so is a pivot: the f-file (= line of demarcation, the king cannot cross it) will doubtless serve as such. Seen from this point of view, the toing and froing which follows is quite understandable, indeed goes with a bit of a swing.

After 6...d3 there came: 7.♖e6† ♔d7 8.♖f7† ♔d8 9.♖ef6¹³ d2 (for the time being the king's position at the edge of the board cannot be exploited, because 10.♖h7 fails to 10...f1♖; and 10.♖h6 doesn't work at all, so he continues to manoeuvre) 10.♖f8† ♔e7 11.♖6f7† ♔d6 12.♙b3 ♙b6?

508

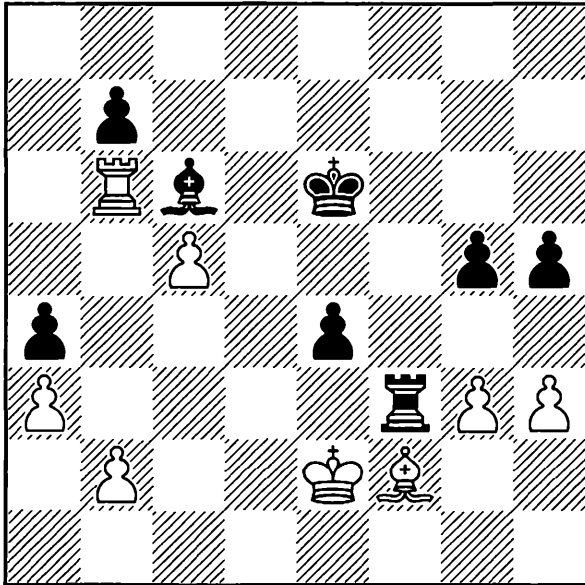


Perhaps 12...a6 was better with a possible hiding place for the king. 13.♖f6†!! Now the king must choose; it can either return to the now indefensible position on the edge or make off into the open, where fate will catch up with it in a different form. Next came: 13...♔e5 (if 13...♔e7 then 14.♖8f7† ♔d8 15.♖h6 and wins) 14.♖e6†! ♔d4 15.♖xf2! d1♖ 16.♙xd1 ♖xd1 17.♖e2! winning the pawn and the game.

3. Combining play on both wings, when for the moment the weaknesses either do not exist or are hidden

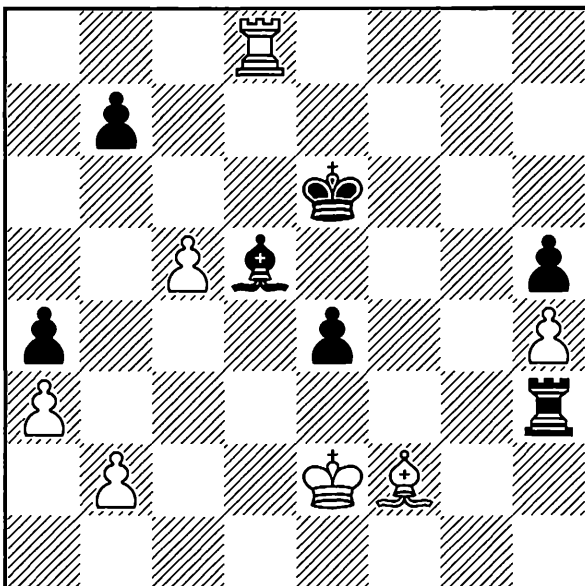
Consider the position in diagram 509, taken from the game **von Gottschall – Nimzowitsch**, Hanover 1926. Logical analysis concludes that the c5-pawn is a definite weakness, when you take into account the uncertain placement of the bishop on f2. On the other hand, in no circumstances at all would I accept that the pawn mass g3, h3 be described as a weakness; this is because in this case there is a lack of operating space on the kingside.

509



What happened next is analysed according to the manoeuvring which takes place. Black chose the following, at first sight incomprehensible, manoeuvre: 39...♙e5 40.♞b4 ♔d5. The explanation for the above tempo-sacrificing combination is as follows: 39...♙e5 40.♞b4 ♔d5 leads to a zugzwang position, because if the rook returns to b6, then after the breakthrough, (41.♞b6) h4 42.gxh4 gxh4 43.♙xh4 comes the intermediate move 43...♙xc5 attacking the b6-rook. There are no other plausible moves: 41.♞d4† fails to 41...♙xc5 42.♞xa4†? ♞xf2† and 41.h4 would, as we shall see later, create the operating space that was previously so sorely lacking. In the game, White decided on 41.h4 and there followed: 41...gxh4 42.gxh4 ♞h3! 43.♞d4† ♙e6 44.♞d8 ♙d5

510



Now Black began systematic manoeuvres (against h4) with the g4-square as the pivot for this manoeuvring. He also in fact penetrated White's camp via g4.

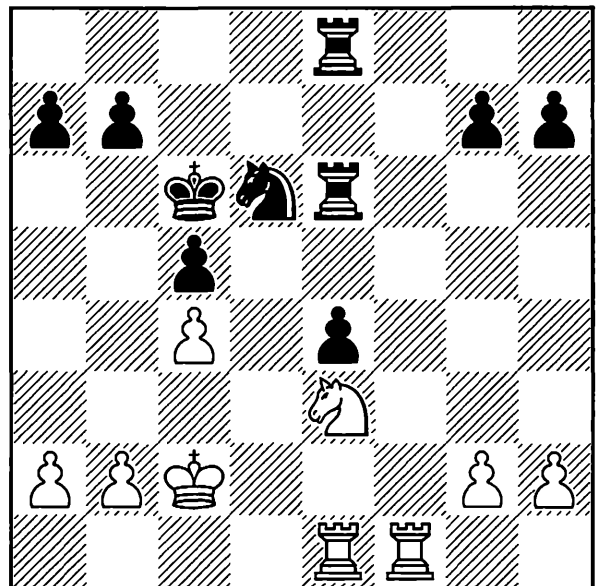
The meaning of the strategy which was successful here can be seen from the following summary which works for all analogous cases: we first manoeuvred against the obvious weakness (c5). By means of zugzwang (with a hint of a threat mixed in) we somehow managed to force our opponent into the deployment h3-h4. But this led, in the nature of things, to the fact that what was before this move a latent weakness turned into a striking and easily attackable one. To sum up:

Play on both wings is frequently based on the fact that you first attack one wing or a specific pawn weakness on it, but in doing so tempt the opposing wing out of its position as a reserve, with the result that new weaknesses are created on that reserve wing. This is the signal for systematic manoeuvring against two wings (à la Kalaschnikow–Nimzowitsch).

That is the rule. I would like to raise the case of an interesting exception to the rule, namely that you can act as if the weakness on the other wing had already been laid bare.

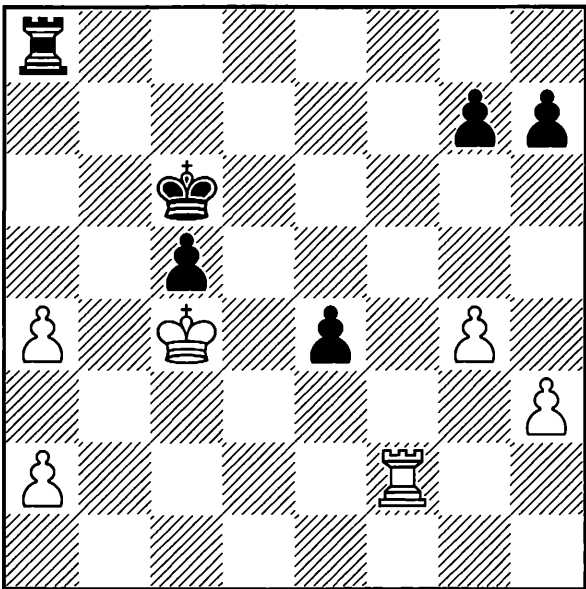
Next comes an example of this, from the game von Holzhausen – Nimzowitsch, Hanover 1926.

511



Black hurried to bring about a clarification of the situation; he played **32...♖h6**. The actual struggle should be shifted to the queenside (by b7-b5), but I was aware that after the opening up of the game (by b5, etc.) the advanced position of White's kingside pawns would be very useful to me. Next came: **33.h3 ♜g6 34.♞e2 a6 35.♞f4 b5 36.b3 ♜g5 37.g4 ♜ge5 38.♞c3 a5!** (the weakness of h3 in conjunction with the possible chance of removing the blockade from the e4-pawn urgently demand operating space and the relevant pivot; Black is fighting for these with his last move) **39.♞ef2 a4** (now the threat is axb3 then bxc4, so that the rooks can penetrate via the a- and b-files) **40.bxa4 bxc4! 41.♞f8 ♜5e7 42.♞xe8 ♜xe8 43.♞xc4 ♞xc4 44.♞xc4 ♞a8!**

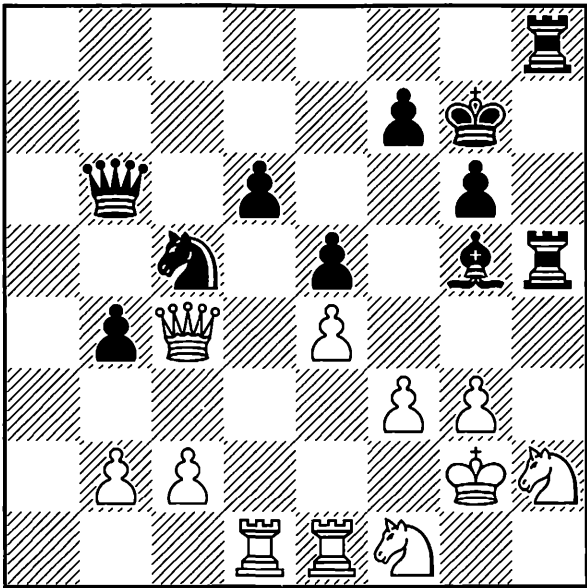
512



The necessary terrain has been acquired, consisting of the a-, b- and d-files; I would describe d4 as the pivotal square. **45.♞f7** (or **45.♞b3? ♞d5!**) **45...♞xa4† 46.♞b3** (46.♞c3 was somewhat better) **46...♞b4†! 47.♞c3 ♞b7 48.♞f5 ♞a7 49.♞c4 ♞a4† 50.♞b3 ♞d4** (the “pivot”!) **51.♞e5 ♞d6 52.♞e8 ♞d3† 53.♞c4 ♞xh3** (proper exploitation of the “terrain” has not failed to bear fruit: the weakness has fallen) **54.♞xe4 ♞a3 55.♞e2 ♞a4† 56.♞b5 ♞xg4 57.a4 ♞b4†** and won on move 71.

In diagram 513 an elegant threat of mate is simply used to bring about a manoeuvre which weakens the opposing queenside with gain of tempo.

513

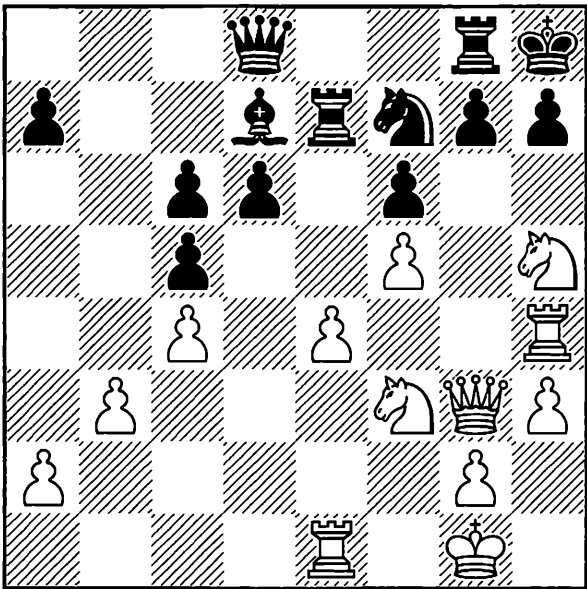


In **Teichmann – Nimzowitsch**, San Sebastian 1911, Black played **31...♞e6**, threatening **32...♞xh2† 33.♞xh2 ♞xh2† 34.♞xh2 ♞f2† 35.♞h3 ♞f4** and wins. **32.♞e2** meets the threat, but now Black gains a tempo: **32...♞d4 33.♞ee1** (if **33.♞f2** then **33...♞e3!**) **33...♞b7!** (now the only way to defend against **34...♞c8** is by a sacrifice) **34.♞xd4** (or **34.c3? bxc3 35.bxc3 ♞b2†** and wins) **34...exd4** and Black won after a hard battle; see Teichmann – Nimzowitsch at the end of this chapter, page 262.

4. Manoeuvring when circumstances become difficult (your own centre is in need of protection)

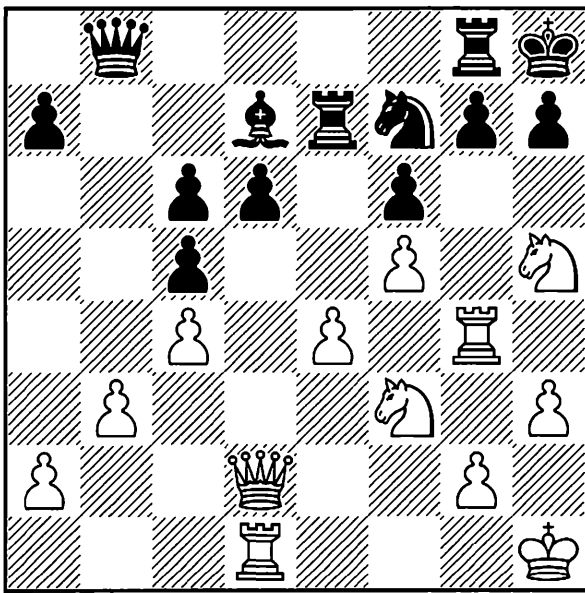
We conclude with a game which is full of the genuine manoeuvring spirit.

514



This position is from the game **Lasker – Salwe**, St Petersburg 1909. The cramped king position is a glaring weakness here. And ♠d6 should be considered as one also. But White's own weakness on e4 obliges him to a certain amount of restraint. The space available to operate against d6 is, we must admit at once, not very flexible; the ♠d6 can only be attacked by the ♖d1 and from the diagonal. There seem to more chances of an advance on the kingside where the ♖ and ♗ can exchange h- and g-files whenever it suits them. It takes great skill to conjure up an effective operation out of such unimpressive possibilities. Lasker did so as follows: 27...♗e8 28.♗f2! (after 28.♘f4 the defence 28...♘h6 is possible) 28...♗f8 29.♗d2 (fixes d6 and makes the defence just mentioned impossible) 29...♗b8 30.♙h1 ♗fe8 31.♗g4! ♗g8 (if 31...♘h6 then 32.♘xf6 with advantage to White) 32.♗d1! (because e4 has been relieved)

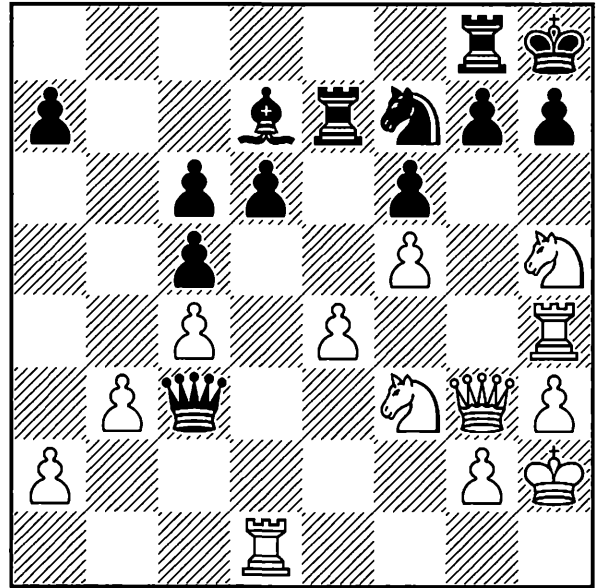
515



32...♗b4? And the queen finally gets diverted. 32...♗e8 was decidedly preferable. But just at that point, it was hard to predict that the radius of effectiveness of the queen which had got into the opposing camp via b4 would be so convincingly localised. 33.♗f2! ♗c3 34.♗h4 (now this freshened up version of a previous set-up is more effective than ever before) 34...♘h6 35.♗f4 ♘f7 36.♙h2 ♗ge8 37.♗g3 ♗g8 38.♗h4 In the tournament book, Lasker comments at this point; "If 38.♗g4 ♘h6 39.♗h4 then Black can

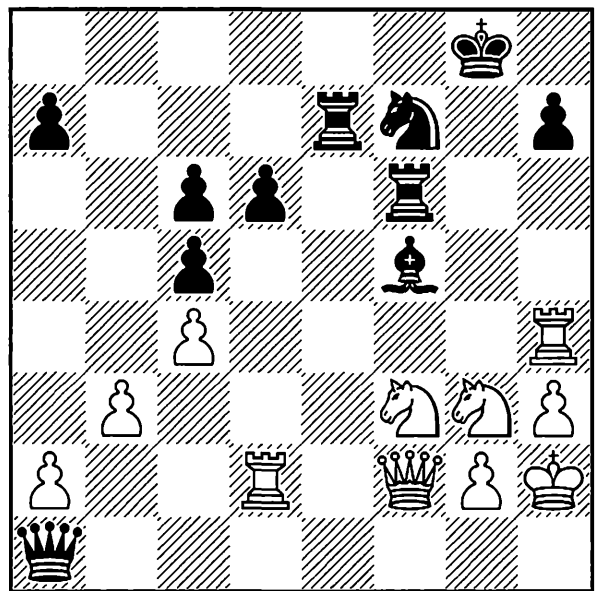
play 39...d5 40.exd5 cxd5 41.♗xd5 ♙c6. Now the manoeuvre 38...d5 fails to 39.cxd5 cxd5 40.♘f4." So the attack on e4 is still in the air. Note the preventive effect of White's manoeuvres.

516



38...g5 (the threat was 39.♘f4 ♘h6 40.♗xd6) 39.fxg6 ♗xg6 40.♗f2 f5 (to get rid of the weakness on f6) 41.♘f4 ♗f6 42.♘e2 ♗b2 43.♗d2 ♗a1 44.♘g3 ♙g8 (White was threatening 45.exf5 ♗xf5 46.♘xf5 ♗xf5 47.♗xh7†) 45.exf5 ♗xf5

517



46.♘d4! cxd4 47.♘xf5 ♙f8 48.♗xd4 ♗xd4 49.♘xd4 ♘e5 50.♗h5 ♗ef7 51.c5 dxc5 52.♗xe5 cxd4 53.♗xd4 ♗f2 54.♗d8† ♙g7 55.♗a5 and White won.

Lasker's play here is impressive; it is remarkable how, despite the dearth of material and threats, he manages to control the whole board and

almost completely to minimise the importance of his own weakness. You can learn from this game that:

The number of available objects of attack (= opposing weaknesses) can to a certain extent compensate for the lack of threats at your disposal.

Next come some games and endgames.

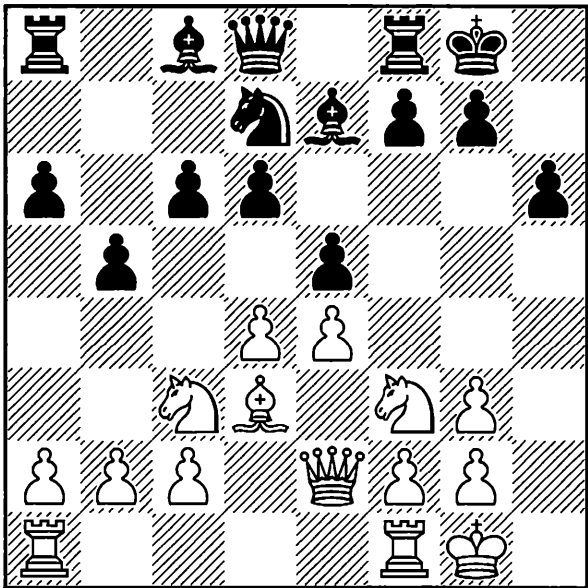
Game 35
Teichmann – Nimzowitsch
San Sebastian 1911
Hanham Opening

This game illustrates combined play on both wings. It is also characteristic for the fearlessness with which Black can to a certain point neglect his own weakness, d6.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♙c3 ♙bd7 5.♙c4 ♙e7 6.0–0 0–0 7.♚e2 c6 8.♙g5

Here 8.a4 deserves to be preferred.
8...h6 9.♙h4 ♘h5 10.♙g3 ♙xg3
10...♙f6 was also worth considering.
11.hxg3 b5 12.♙d3 a6!

518



Black's pawn mass is now of such a nature (I mean in its internal structure) that it must inspire respect: note particularly how he can advance in one of two ways, c6-c5 or perhaps d6-d5.

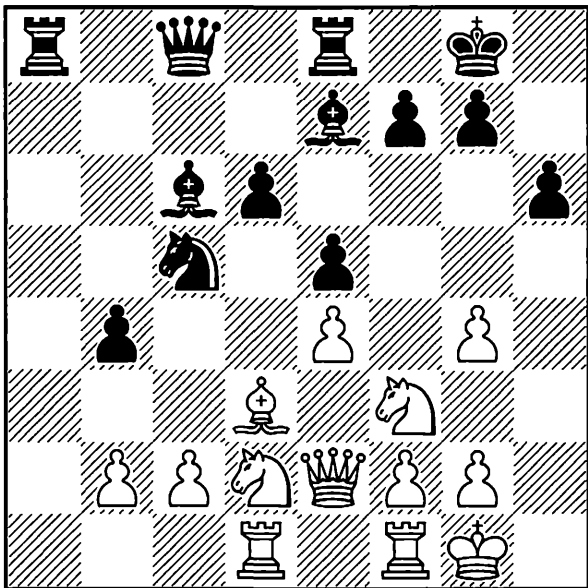
13.a4

He is trying to nip in the bud the still latent power of the pawns.

13...♙b7! 14.♚ad1 ♚c7 15.axb5 axb5 16.g4 ♙fe8! 17.d5

To avoid Black playing this move.
17...b4 18.dxc6 ♙xc6 19.♙b1 ♙c5 20.♙bd2 ♚c8

519



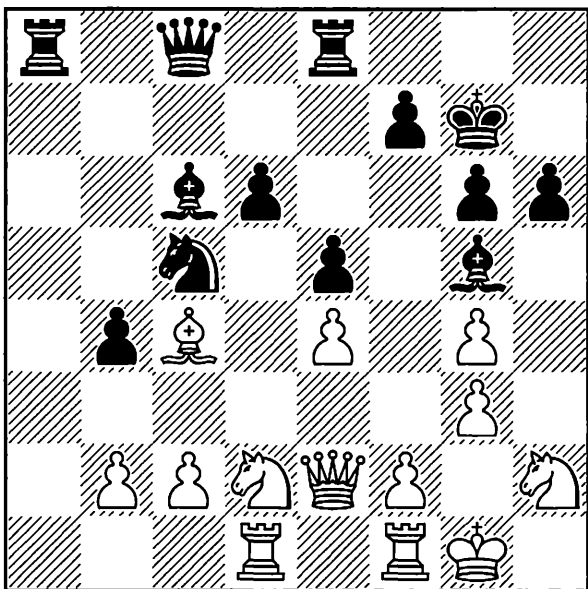
White's attempt at picking a fight (pardon my choice of words) can be regarded as having come to nothing: d6 is easy to protect and the two bishops are now working quite well in conjunction with the a-file and the threatening diagonal c8-g4.

21.♙c4

An amusing way to protect the ♙g4 (21...♚xg4? 22.♙xf7+).

21...g6 22.g3 ♙g7 23.♙h2 ♙g5!

520



The weakness of d6 is not very important here.

24.f3

Not 24.f4? exf4 25.gxf4 ♙f6 and Black wins a pawn.

24...♙c7

Threatening 25...♘a4, and if then 26.♖b1, Black has 26...♙xd2 and ♙xe4.

25.♖fe1 ♖h8 26.♘df1 h5

The next few moves see the important files and diagonals being occupied.

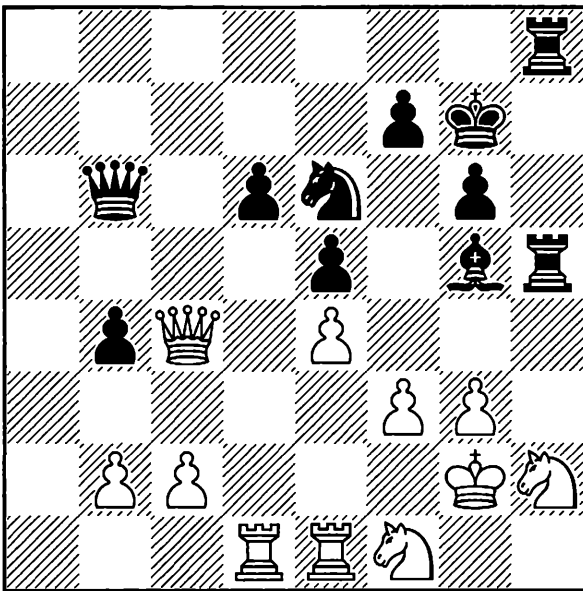
27.gxh5 ♖xh5 28.♙d5 ♖ah8 29.♙xc6 ♗xc6

30.♗c4 ♗b6 31.♔g2

Now a weakness has slowly emerged, namely White's base; if the knight were on d4, a decisive breakthrough on to the 2nd rank would follow.

31...♘e6

521



Aiming for d4, but at the same time threatening the kingside. The threat is 32...♖xh2† 33.♘xh2 ♖xh2† 34.♔xh2 ♗f2† 35.♔h3 ♙f4!, cf. our explanations to diagram 513, page 260.

32.♖e2!

Without the presence of the above-mentioned threat, White would perhaps have a sufficient defence in 32.♖d5 ♘d4 33.f4.

32...♘d4!

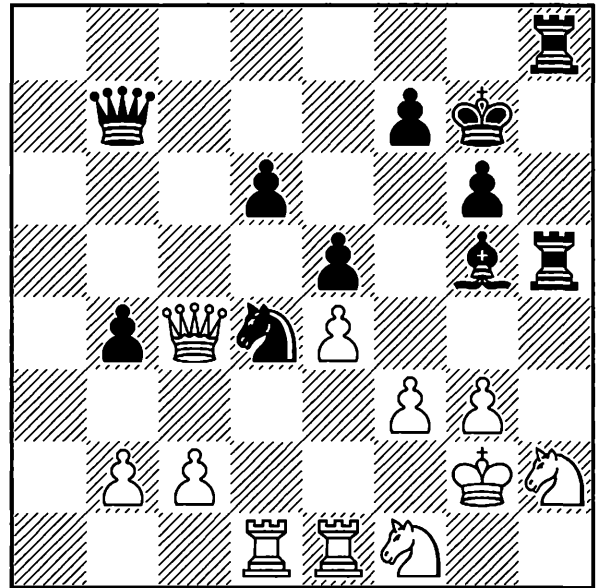
But now this move is made with gain of tempo.

33.♖ee1

Or 33.♖f2? ♙e3!.

33...♗b7!

522



34...♖c8 can no longer be staved off. This was a good example of how to concentrate on various weaknesses at the same time.

34.♖xd4

After 34.c3 bxc3 35.bxc3 ♗b2† the weakness of the second rank would tell.

34...exd4 35.♘g4

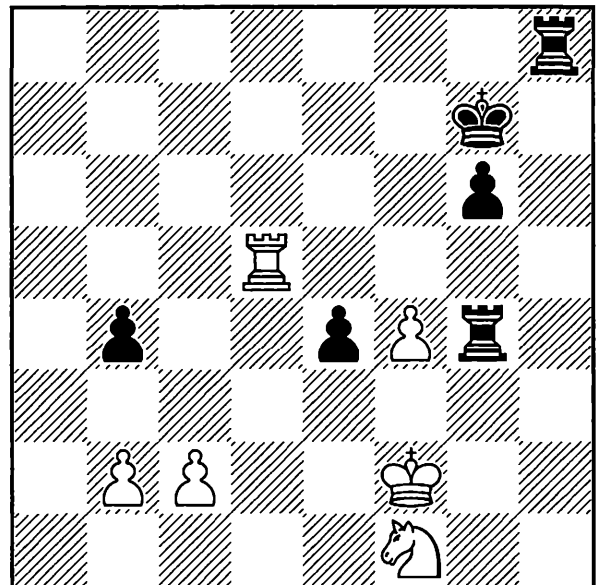
Or 35.♗xd4† ♙f6 36.♗xd6 ♖d8.

35...♗b6 36.f4 ♙e7 37.♖d1 f5 38.♘f2 fxe4

39.♗xd4† ♗xd4 40.♖xd4 d5 41.g4 ♙c5!

42.♖d1 ♖h4 43.♖xd5 ♙xf2 44.♔xf2 ♖xg4

523



In order to maintain his advantage, Black had to try to keep on combining an attack on the king with play in the centre (= d6-d5 and ♙c5).

45.♔e3 ♖c8

But now it is the turn of the queenside.

46.♔xe4 ♖c4† 47.♔d3 ♖cxf4

Now things are easier. 48.♖e3 ♜g3 49.♞e5 ♜f6 50.♞e8 ♜f7 51.♞e5 ♞f6 52.c4 b3 53.♜d4 ♞e6 54.♞xe6 ♜xe6 55.♜d5 g5 0–1

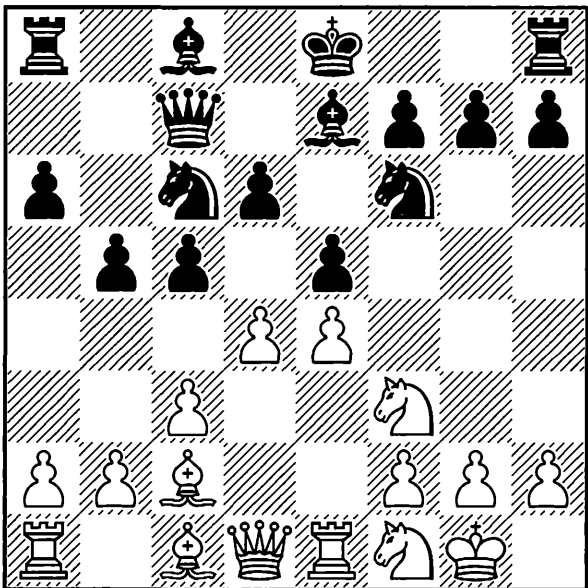
The above game is known in Denmark as the “Classic Hanham Game”.

Next we bring you a really complicated game in the strategic sense. Lasker manoeuvres on one wing and breaks through on the other. Why and how? You will find the answer in the annotations.

Game 36
Dr Lasker – Burn
St Petersburg 1909

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♞b5 a6 4.♞a4 ♖f6 5.0–0 ♞e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♞b3 d6 8.c3 ♜a5 9.♞c2 c5 10.d4 ♞c7 11.♜bd2 ♜c6 12.♜f1

524



12...0–0?

Black should be forcing his opponent to clarify matters in the centre, therefore 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 ♞g4.

13.♜e3

Intending to invade the centre with ♜d5.

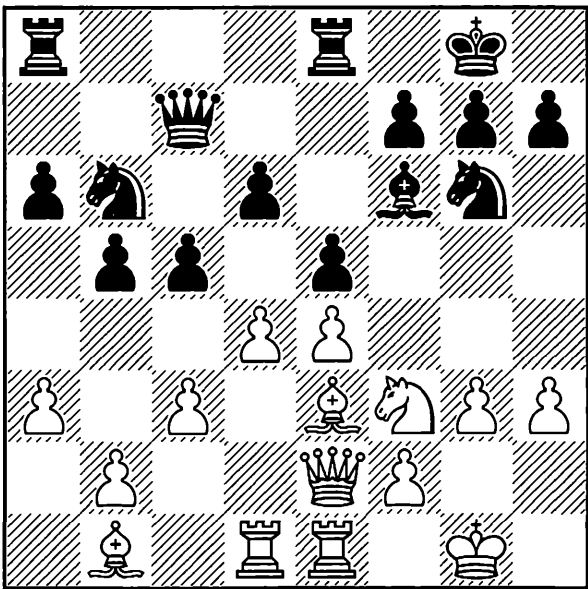
13...♞g4 14.♜xg4!

14.♜d5 would have been followed by 14...♞a7 with an attack on d4, e.g. 14.♜d5 ♞a7 15.♜xe7† ♜xe7!.

With the text move, Lasker is playing for the advantage of the two bishops.

14...♜xg4 15.h3 ♜f6 16.♞e3 ♜d7 17.♞e2 ♞f6 18.♞ad1 ♜e7 19.♞b1 ♜b6 20.a3 ♜g6 21.g3 ♞fe8

525



Black has been playing quite deliberately to prepare for d6-d5. So Lasker now sees himself forced into d4-d5, thus blocking in his own bishops. The game now moves into a new stage.

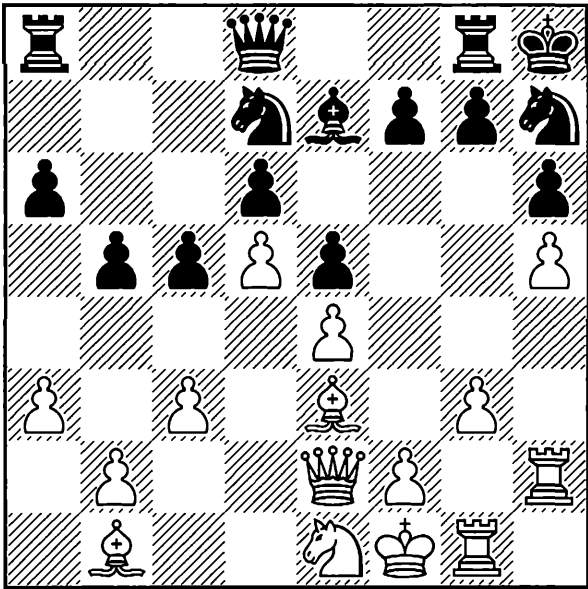
22.d5 ♜d7 23.♜g2 ♞d8

Instead of this he should have organised a preventive role for his rook by 23...c4 followed by ♜c5; this is because White is preparing, e.g. f2-f4. The knight would also have been well-placed there.

24.h4 ♞e7 25.h5 ♜gf8 26.♞h1 h6 27.♞dg1 ♜h7

The g5-square now seems well supported. 28.♜f1 ♜h8 29.♞h2 ♞g8 30.♜e1

526



After 30.♘h4 Black would simply exchange (30...♙xh4 31.♖xh4); the position would then start to look quite rigid. So Lasker cleverly avoids ♘h4 and tries to keep what little dynamic is left in the position.

30...♖b8 31.♘c2 a5 32.♙d2 ♙f6 33.f3 ♘b6 34.♖f2

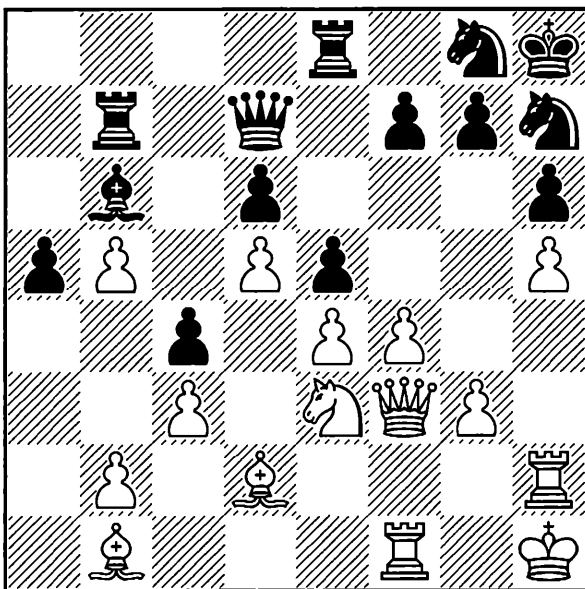
White wants to play ♘e3 at some point, but to retain f3-f4 as a reply to ♙g5 (Lasker).

34...♘c8 35.♗g2 ♗d7 36.♗h1 ♘e7 37.♖h2 ♖b7 38.♖f1 ♖e8 39.♘e3 ♘g8 40.f4 ♙d8 41.♗f3

Lasker has managed to play f3-f4 in what are favourable circumstances for him; but it did not bring an immediate advantage. However, the black pieces which have to guard against threats including ♘f5 are now less favourably posted should there be a successful penetration of the queenside. So we can say: Lasker has laid siege to the kingside in order to break the contact between the opposing pieces and their queenside; he now wants to roll that up with c3-c4 and gain two advantages at once: glaring weaknesses will be created and in addition his bishops will get some space. Possibly 42.c4 b4 43.♙c2 then ♗d1 and ♙a4.

41...c4 42.a4 ♙b6 43.axb5

527



43...♗xb5

The decisive mistake. Correct, as suggested by Lasker in the tournament book, was the exchange on e3, e.g. 43...♙xe3 44.♙xe3 ♗xb5 then a5-a4 and ♖a8 and Black can hold the game.

44.♘f5 ♗d7 45.♗g4 f6

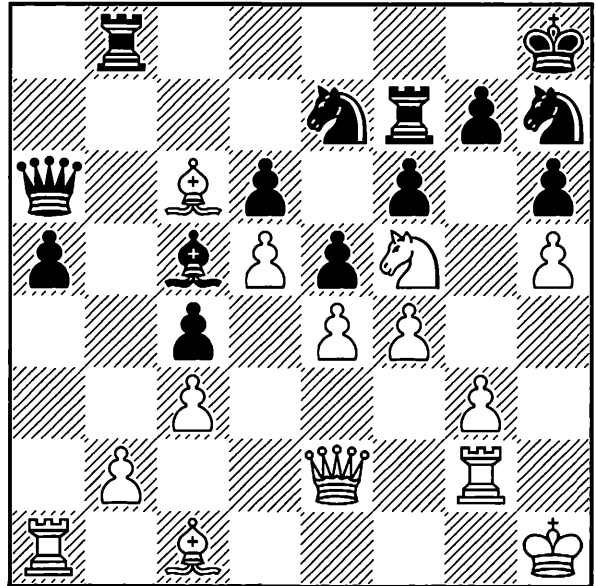
The ♘f5 can no longer be driven away by ♘e7. Black now has glaring weaknesses on both wings and Lasker seizes them without any special effort.

46.♙c2 ♙c5 47.♖a1 ♖eb8 48.♙c1 ♗c7 49.♙a4 ♗b6 50.♖g2 ♖f7 51.♗e2 ♗a6 52.♙c6

Threatening b2-b4.

52...♘e7

528



At last he manages to throw out the intruder (♘f5), but in the meantime White has become too strong on the queenside.

53.♘xe7 ♖xe7 54.♖a4 exf4

Despair. Next came 55.gxf4 f5 56.e5 ♘f6 57.♖xc4 ♘g4 58.♖xc5 ♗xe2 59.♖xe2 dxc5 60.d6 ♖a7 61.e6 ♖a6 62.e7 ♘f6 63.d7 ♘xd7 64.♙xd7 1-0

This excellent game is characteristic, amongst other things, of the fight by the two bishops to acquire free space for their operations.

Game 37

E. Andersson, R. Enström, O. Öberg – Nimzowitsch

Upsala (Sweden) 1921

This is one of four simultaneous consultation games. It is an instructive illustration of the link between play in the centre and diversionary attacks on the flanks. The dependence of flank attacks on one's central position appears most clearly.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3

The correct move was 3.e5.

3...♙b4 4.♙d3 ♘c6

A fresh train of thought.

5.♘ge2 ♘ge7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e5

Looks very good.

7...♘f5! 8.♙e3 f6

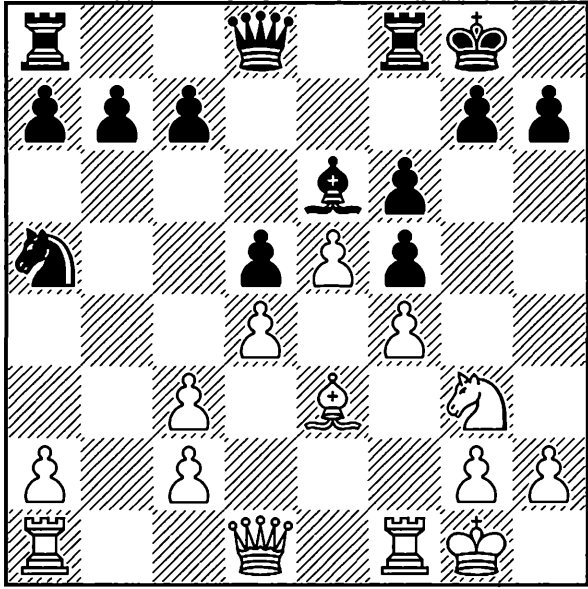
And Black has overcome his opening problems.

9.♙xf5 exf5 10.f4 ♙e6

According to the “law”: passed pawns must be blockaded.

11.♘g3 ♙xc3! 12.bxc3 ♘a5!

529



It was only with reluctance and after great thought that I decided on this diversion out on the flank. It seems somewhat daring, because conditions do not seem to be quite safe in the centre. One of my main principles states that a flank attack is only correct when your own centre has been consolidated. However, there is no way that White can force his opponent to play f6xe5. But if he captures himself, he may get the e5-square (after ♙xf6), but Black can alleviate the danger I spoke of by calling up his reserves.

13.♙d3 ♙d7 14.♙f3 g6 15.♘e2 ♙f7! 16.h4 h5 17.♘h2! ♙af8!

The reserves; see previous note.

18.♙g3 ♘h7 19.♘g1!

Aiming for g5 or e5. You can see that the consulting parties are well-versed in the art of manoeuvring, opponents to be taken seriously.

19...♙g7 20.♘f3 ♙a4

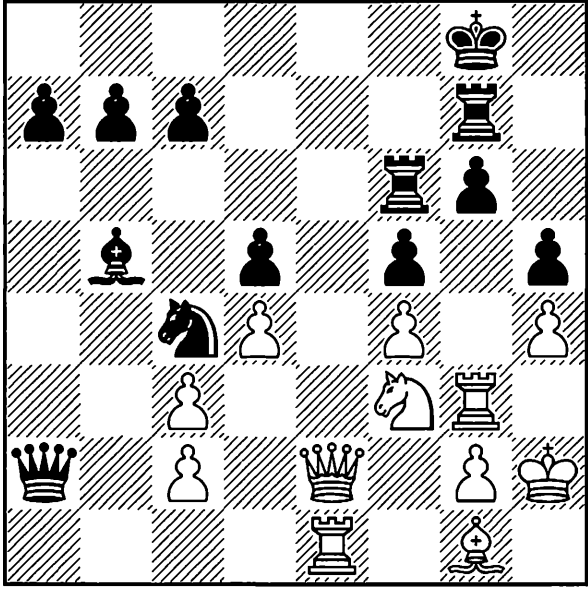
Finally Black sets in motion the attack prepared by his 11th move. All honour to him for this slowness.

21.exf6 ♙xf6 22.♘g5† ♘g8 23.♙g1 ♘c4 24.♙e1 ♙d7!!

Such a simple strategic retreat, but it unveils my defensive plan: according to my system, the ideal result of any operation on a file is penetration to the 7th or 8th rank. But here the entry squares e7 and e8 are well-protected and the rook on g3 cannot help since it is barred from the e3-square.

25.♘f3 ♙b5 26.♙d1 ♙xa2 27.♙e2

530



27...♘d6!!

This retreat introduces a manoeuvre which seems suited to neutralise the apparently so powerful e-file. The move 27...♙a3 intending to bring the prey home safely by means of 28...♙d6, would not be so good; cf. 28.♘e5 ♙d6 29.♘xc4 ♙xc4 30.♙f2 ♙e6 31.♙e5! and White still has drawing chances, whereas the ponderous manoeuvre in the text wins.

28.♙e5 ♘e8!

Threatening to regroup by ♙f6-d6 then ♘e8-f6, meaning that the rook and knight have exchanged positions. Should White prevent this by 29.♘g5 (so that 29...♙d6? 30.♙xe8† and mate on the move), White may be strong on the e-file, but he is prevented from exploiting the said file by the peculiarity of this position –

the white queen is blocked in, e.g. 29.♖g5 ♕c6! 30.♞ge3 ♜xc2 or 30.♞e2 ♜c4 (blockade!) 31.♞ge3 a5 and wins, since 32.♜e6? is impossible on account of 32...♞e7 and there is no other effective move available on the e-file. The game continued:

29.♜d2 ♜d6 30.c4 ♜d7 31.♞c3 ♜f6

Successfully concluding the difficult regrouping under enemy fire.

32.cxd5??

A blunder, but even after 32.♞e2 ♞e6 33.♞d1 ♞ge7 White would have had no prospects.

32...♜g4† 0-1

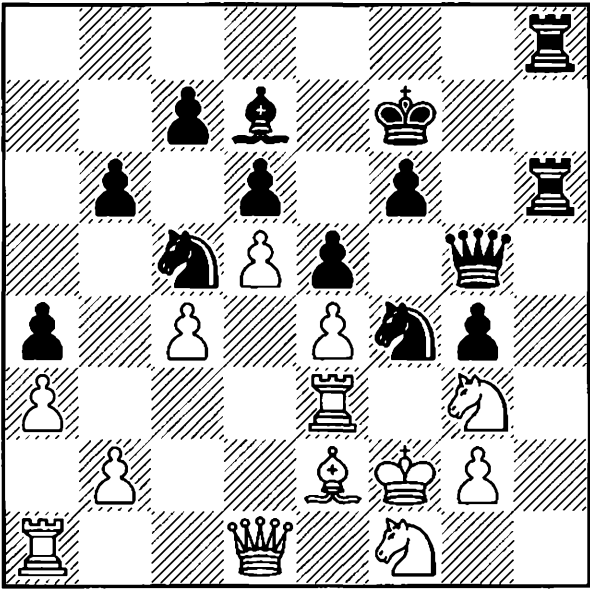
And last but not least, two endgames.

Vestergaard – Nimzowitsch

Simul against 25 players

Vejle (Denmark) 1922

531

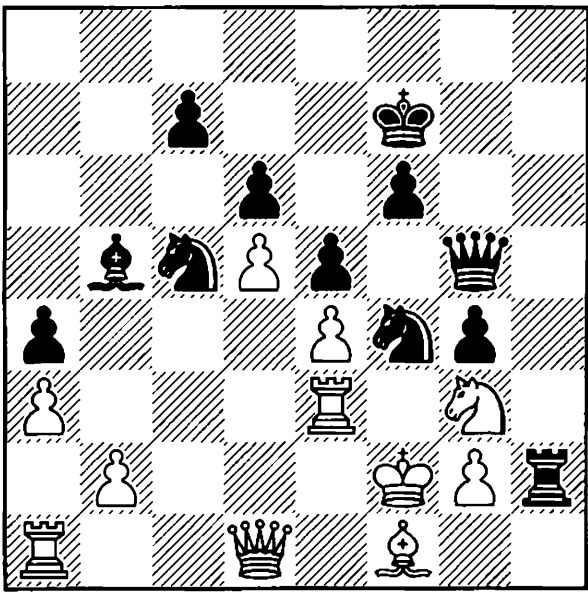


As the diagram shows, Black has first made as if to attack on the queenside by ...a5-a4, but then chosen the kingside for his attack. White has set up a tough defensive position. It was my move, and after some thought I played 1...b5!!.

Great amazement on the part of the spectators! Black has no troops with which to attack on the queenside! Next came: 2.cxb5 ♞h2 3.♜xh2 ♞xh2 4.♜f1 ♜xb5!

Now it dawns on them. The queenside thrust was intended as a diversion to – the kingside.

532



5.♜xb5 ♜h3† 6.♜f1 ♞xe3 7.♞e1 ♞g1† 8.♜e2 ♞xg2†

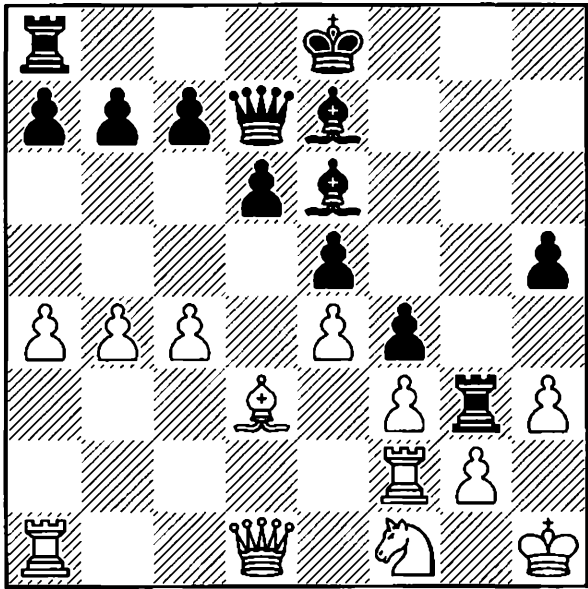
And mate in two moves.

The latest example from recent praxis is also characteristic of the surprising interrelationship between two diversions.

Seifert – Nimzowitsch

Leipzig 1926

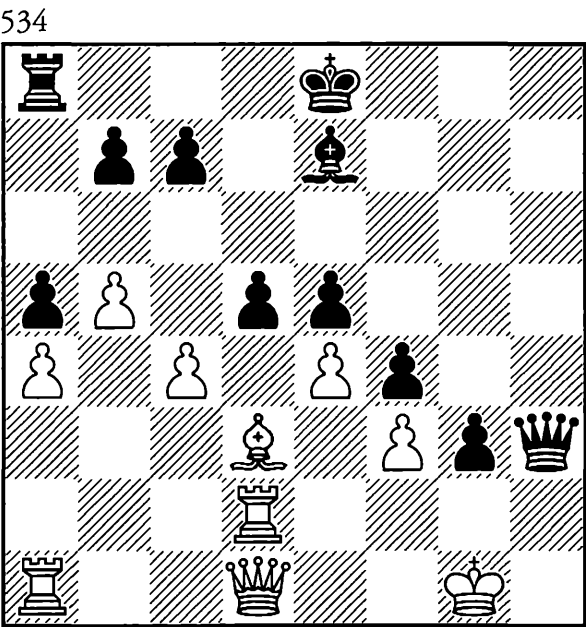
533



There followed 1...h4 2.♜xg3 hxg3 3.♞d2 and then came an advance on the other side: 3...a5

My opponent parried with 4.b5

but resigned after: 4...♜xh3 5.gxh3 ♞xh3† 6.♜g1 d5!!



The whole point of it. The check on c5 is catastrophic. The correct defence was 4.♔f1, e.g. 4...axb4 5.♖b2 c5 with a drawish set-up.

Thus we bring to an end our book on positional play and turn to a historical examination of the “chess revolution” of 1911-1914.

Postscript

The history of the revolution in chess from 1911-1914

1. The general situation before 1911

Precursors: I attack the arithmetic conception of the centre (in annotations to some games in the *Wiener Schachzeitung* and the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*)

My article: “Does ‘*The modern game of chess*’ by Dr Tarrasch really correspond to the modern conception of the game?”

Let me say this from the outset: within a manual, given that I do not have a great deal of space, it is not possible for me to write at great length or depth about the theme I have chosen. I will content myself with referring to, or quoting from, the revolutionary articles of the period. The same is true of the important games I referred to above. So now that you are prepared and safe in that knowledge, we must turn to the dusty parchments.

However, firstly a position on which I lay colossal value: I do not wish to enter into polemics. Anything smacking of polemics must therefore be removed from the manuscripts. And should a little polemical dust still be attached to this or that old piece of paper, I did not wish it to be so, or else I was unable to remove that speck of polemics without damage to historical truth.

The first advance against that theory of the centre which expected salvation to come only from pawns, came in the games I played in 1911 against Salwe and Levenfish in Karlsbad. More about these in the notes to the games which will follow.

Furthermore, I began to have slight doubts about the great power of the advancing centre

and I came up with the line: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6, stem game Spielmann – Nimzowitsch, San Sebastian 1911.

Likewise, I was the one who was able to properly understand that manoeuvre which nowadays has to a great extent become a commonplace: play against a complex of weak squares on one single colour. See my opening in **Tarrasch – Nimzowitsch**, San Sebastian 1912: **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♘f5 4.♘d3 ♘xd3 5.♙xd3 e6 6.♘f3 ♙b6!** followed by ♙a6. This exchange means playing against the weak white squares. I was able to lay more emphasis on this tendency in my game against Leonhardt (San Sebastian 1912).

It would serve no purpose to mention or even to hint at all the scorn and mockery which was directed at me; let it suffice to say that nobody has ever been mistreated like that in the whole history of chess. The reward for my new ideas consisted of abuse, or at best of systematic silence.

The revolution came in 1913. It came in the form of the article which we shall now quote, an article of an extremely revolutionary nature.

Let me emphasise once more that I have no desire to be polemical. I have revised the article, removing any polemical edge. I must specifically point out that whenever in the article I say Tarrasch, I do not so much mean him personally but rather the whole school which he represents.

I have also omitted the exclamations in bold type which adorned the margin and had the effect of a fanfare. Because the revolution is long

past, we no longer need fanfares but only the quiet and peaceful development of it.

And now to the article.

Does “The modern game of chess” by Dr Tarrasch really correspond to the modern conception of the game?

New thoughts about modern and unmodern chess

By A. Nimzowitsch

(Appeared in 1913 in the *Wiener Schachzeitung*, issues 5-8.)

The collection of games published by Dr Tarrasch under the above title actually constitutes a critical opening manual in a curious form.

The whole plan, and a very well chosen one it is too, according to which Dr Tarrasch is working here, consists of games annotated by him and grouped according to the openings. He does so by first presenting the unsatisfactory methods of play, then going on to better ones and finally providing us with a nice surprise, in other words the “only correct” method.

I truly wish the book a wide circulation, because it contains both system and clarity.

Yet it appears to me that the conception of Dr Tarrasch does not completely fit in with the latest really modern one.

Dr Tarrasch is, and for all of us always will be, the author of *300 games of chess*. He was the one who, in that book, was the first to take into account the need of the public for strictly logical knowledge based on a series of rules. All that annotation had to offer before him was either a mass of variations or something that was too deep (Steinitz!!), because the latter is also an error.

Steinitz suffered from one single mistake, that of being at least 50 years ahead of his generation! This meant that he could be decried as baroque, and it is not uninteresting to note that this totally undeserved but generally widespread opinion originates with Dr Tarrasch himself.

But to return to the *300 games of chess*, although Dr Tarrasch offered little of his own in it,

since the ideas were those of Steinitz, I would like to describe the work as partially classical! And I believe I am correct in doing so! The conception is so straightforward and the individual basic elements of the game such as open files or the centre are presented so clearly distinguished from other motifs that the above description must appear justified!

We find in this excellent book a plethora of models for the exploitation of the open c-file (or if you will, open files in general! – game against v. Scheve) or how to undermine an advanced pawn centre which is unjustified and lacking in support from pawns (e4 and d5; game with Metger) or how to make use of the two bishops with the characteristic pawn advance to cramp the opposing knight (against Richter).

But there are quite specific warnings, according to Dr Tarrasch, against an always reprehensible “surrender” of the centre.

Here, as in other things, he is relentlessly single-minded. I am not using the word logical, because that would not be the same thing. (Single-mindedness is apparent logic; or if you will, logic that appeals to the eye rather than the exploring mind.)

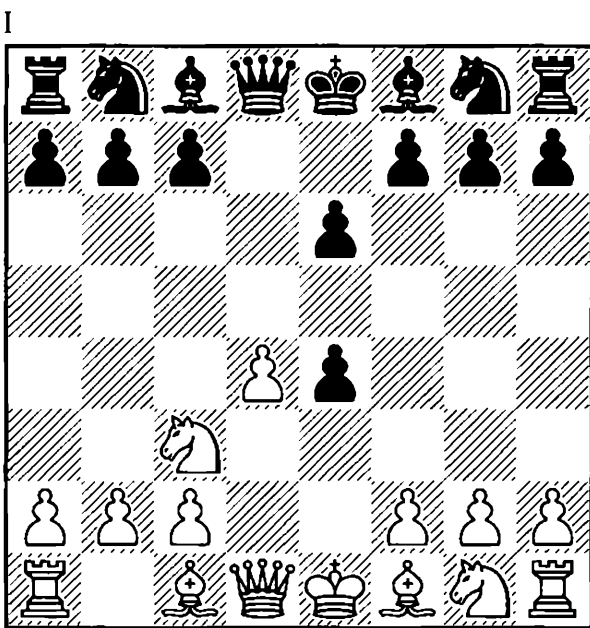
But the game is now incomparably more complicated, the conception of it has become deeper! New ideas are trying to make their way... In many matters, and quite specially in relation to the “surrender of the centre”, one has for some time been less rigorous, or might I say, less orthodox than in the past.

But Dr Tarrasch is both cool and unwelcoming to these new ideas and this is once more totally clear from his new book *The modern game of chess*. What has he then to say about, e.g. the French Defence (page 359-385)? This is accepted as the opening in which the problem of the centre dominates and puts all else into the shade. Be it in its closed form by the pawn chain e5, d4, c3 against f7, e6, d5 with a possible c4, or in method of play following the capture d5xe4, or possibly the equalising Exchange Variation by e4xd5 e6xd5... the problem of the centre is always in the foreground.

The problem we have just described is particularly vivid in the variation with 3...d5xe4. This line has been elaborated with love and sweat and has annoyed all the purists for more than 20 years as they moan on about the “surrender of the centre”. And yet it has been very successful, since Rubinstein found in ...b7-b6 an improvement which raises doubts about the value of 3.♘b1-c3 and which inspired me to revive the move 3.e4-e5, with which I, as is known, (despite all the purists) had the greatest of success!

In his new book, Dr Tarrasch sets himself at the head of the purists by ignoring quite such a deep method of play as 3...d5xe4! The only game he quotes is: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4? (the ‘?’ is by Dr Tarrasch) 4.♘xe4 ♔d7 (Game no. 187 – it is known that the only correct move is 4...♘b8-d7) and that game has in common with the thoroughly modern 3...d5xe4 only the move itself, not the idea behind it. And the fact that he chooses this game with the colourless continuation ...♔d7 when there is a plethora of material (I am thinking of the numerous splendid victories by Rubinstein in this variation) speaks volumes!

Allowing a pawn to disappear from the centre (3...d5xe4) is a long way from surrendering the centre.



The concept of the centre is a much broader one! See my explanations in the *Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1912 (Nimzowitsch – Salwe).

The pawns may well be, because of their stability, the most suitable pieces to form a centre, but pieces posted in the centre can very well replace pawns. And also pressure on the opposing centre from rooks and bishops can be of considerable importance!

That is the really modern conception of the centre, which I stand for.

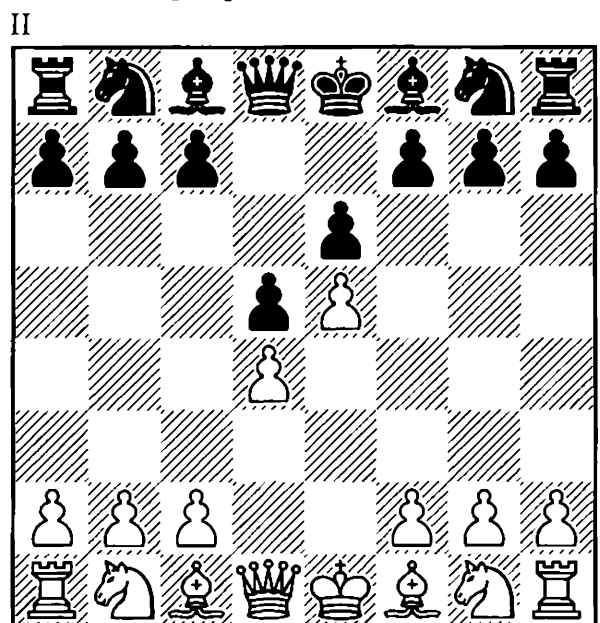
But Dr Tarrasch gives d5xe4 a question mark: “surrender of the centre!” And yet here with his d-file and diagonal b7-h1, there is no doubt that Black has a firmer presence in the centre than his opponent! In spite of having abandoned the centre.

I cannot underestimate how important this single-mindedness of Dr Tarrasch is for those who are beginners in positional play. It is however less recommendable for advanced players who are striving to improve.

So much for the 3...d5xe4 variation.

Now let us turn to the 3.e4-e5 variation. This move, which I introduced, displeases Dr Tarrasch. He quotes the game against Leonhardt and writes: “White turns the game into a gambit with all the chances and counter-chances which that implies. A more correct move is c2-c3.”

The philosophical basis underlying 3.e4-e5 which justifies my claiming the move 3.e4-e5 as my intellectual property is as follows.



With the move e4-e5 White transfers his attack from d5 to e6, which he makes immobile

move e4-e5 according to the rule: “An object of attack must first be immobilised.” The result is a pawn chain which hinders both players. It is natural to strive to destroy a pawn chain which cramps you; and such attacks must be directed at the “foot” of the chain, so by Black against d4 and by White against e6 (c7-c5 or f2-f4-f5)! Moreover Black can also transfer the attack from d4 to c3 (c5-c4 – immobilising the c3-pawn then b7-b5-b4) according to a rule I formulated: “The attack on a pawn chain can be transferred from one member of the chain to another.”

But when is the right moment to transfer the attack in this way?

Deciding that is extraordinarily difficult, though there are usually indications within the position.

The move e4-e5 must happen on move 3, because the tendency to put the transfer off until it can be accomplished with tempo, i.e. by an attack on a knight on f6, does not seem very appropriate, for the following reason:

What is symptomatic of the cramping of Black on the kingside is the unsuitability of f6 for the knight. Should White allow it to be there even for a moment, he allows it to enjoy the blessings of f6, i.e. he lets it get into play to a favourable position via f6, meaning that thereafter the greater part of his cramping must appear illusory!

I am certainly not a player of gambits, but carrying out absolutely the policy of cramping (i.e. e4-e5 on move 3) is worth the loss of a pawn!

So my pawn sacrifices against Spielmann and Leonhardt (San Sebastián 1912) must be considered from this totally new point of view.

How far Dr Tarrasch is from this novel and certainly modern point of view can be seen from his remark which I have quoted above, which appears to try to brand me as a gambit player.

What is more, 3.♖b1-c3 is, as has been pointed out already, also not good on account of 3...d5xe4!.

And now to the usual variation: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.e5 ♖fd7 6.♙xe7 ♖xe7. Here we are missing Alapin's variations.

Alapin's wonderful results, think only of the f7-f6 line (7.♖b5 ♖b6 8.c3 a6 9.♖a3 f6) or the strategically excellent manoeuvre ♖b8-c6-d8-f7, after having blockaded the f4-pawn by f7-f5, followed by g7-g5 – constitute without any doubt the basis for future research and should not be passed over.

Nor does Dr Tarrasch give a friendly reception to the inventive idea in the main line by Svenonius: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.exd5 exd5, and then ♙c1-g5, ♙d3 and ♖e2, which appears to be very strong. Dr Tarrasch only mentions it in passing.

Of all his comments on the French Defence, we can only consider as theoretically valuable the annotations to the games Tarrasch – Teichmann and Tarrasch – Lowcki. There he is talking about a suggestion by Rubinstein, namely a purely positional treatment of the usual line 4.♙g5, which by renouncing the aggressive posting of the bishop on d3 “surrenders” the centre, in order to lay siege to it most effectively with his pieces (♖e5, etc.) – principles which we find very congenial and which I long ago victoriously made use of in my games against Salwe and Levenfish in Karlsbad 1911, and that in the 3.e4-e5 line.

Of course, we cannot find in these bare, aphoristic remarks by Dr Tarrasch about the correct strategy in the French, any substitute for the highly important variations which have been omitted or only treated sketchily: I. 3...dxe4!, II. 3.e4-e5, III. ...♖c6, Alapin and IV. Svenonius.

Let us now turn to the Ruy Lopez (pages 3-113). And it is the same story! The same overestimation of the importance of the centre (I mean occupying it by pawns) and this is linked to a panicky terror of possibly surrendering it.

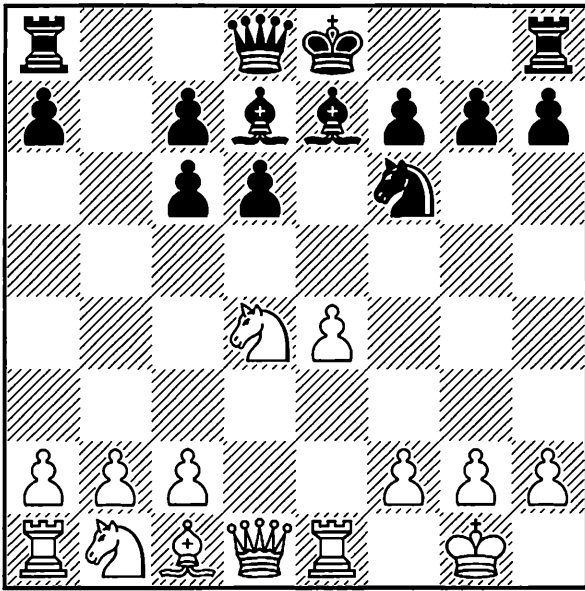
We have already stated in the previous section that this view of things is based on an incomplete and misunderstood conception of the centre.

A direct consequence of this way of looking at things is Tarrasch's condemnation of cramped defence. Because the latter may easily lead to a surrender of the centre, then that is enough for Tarrasch to condemn it.

The Steinitz line d7-d6 (?) leads the procession of “inadequate” defences in the Ruy Lopez, (with or without a7-a6). The question mark was awarded by Dr Tarrasch.

After the moves 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 d6 7.♙xc6† bxc6 8.d4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♙d7

III



Dr Tarrasch prefers White's game, because of the “freer play”, that could be used for all sorts of attacking possibilities (page 14, game 18, move 8).

If Dr Tarrasch did not draw from external features such as “free play”, conclusions about the intrinsic value of a position, which is in reality determined only by the characteristic situation in the centre, he would absolutely never prefer White's position.

Let us look at the intrinsic value of the said position.

The first thing we notice is that White has a pawn on e4 and Black pawns on d6, c6, c7: this is the essence of the position. This indicates an unmistakable tendency for Black to undermine the central e4-pawn by f5 or d5, in addition to using the e-file as the natural base of his operations, whilst White will use the d-file. Black will base himself on e5 – made possible by the pawn on d6 – for further operations on the e-file! White's attempt make similar use of the outpost on d5 supported by his e4-pawn to exploit the d-file is forestalled by the effect of the black pawn on c6.

So this shows us that Black will be more effective on the e-file than White on the d-file, meaning that Black has more pressure on White's centre than vice versa.

In addition and in passing, the compact mass d6, c6, c7 also constitutes a force which is capable of being developed against the opposing queenside (e.g. c5 and a5 against the b3-pawn).

Thus in the given position we can in no way speak of an advantage for White, which is confirmed in convincing fashion by the course of the match games Lasker – Janowski and Lasker – Schlechter.

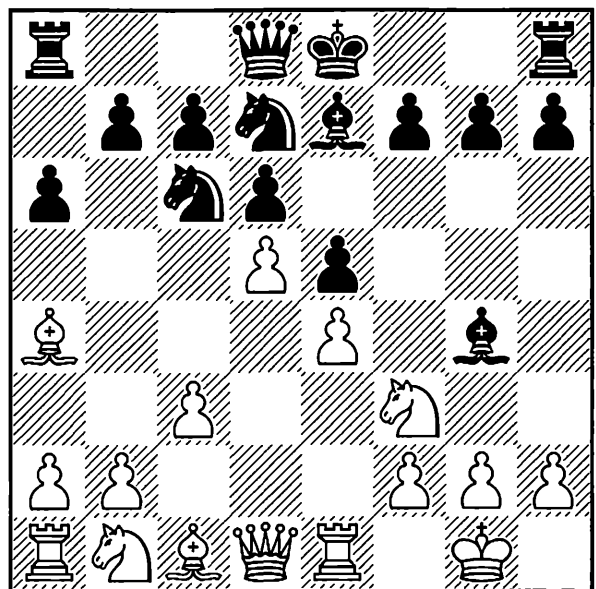
In any case, it is clear that it does not fit in with modern demands to try to write off this difficult position with a cliché such as “freer play”.

What we are aiming for nowadays is deep analysis based on the essence of the position! So we no longer make use of clichés such as “free, comfortable play” etc.

We cannot help giving another very conclusive example.

After the moves 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 d6 7.c3 ♙g4 8.d4 ♘d7 9.d5 (Lasker – Janowski, Paris 1909, page 53)

IV



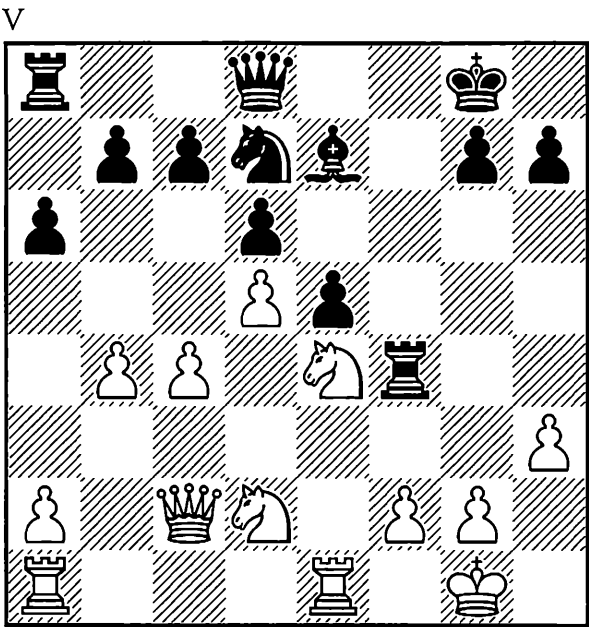
Tarrasch makes the following remark, which is extraordinarily characteristic of his way of looking at things: “This move (d4-d5) is almost always bad if Black can later mount a counter-attack with f7-f5.” This is incorrect. The move

f7-f5 can only be considered a natural reaction to the advance d5 and as such need in no way be feared. A short piece of analysis which bears in mind the essential nature of the position will immediately convince us of that.

With the move d4-d5, White transfers (as with the move e4-e5 in the French Defence) from e5 to d6 the attack, which he intends to start with c3-c4-c5. On the other hand, he is ready to allow his opponent the possibility of an attack on his chain by f7-f5 (just like c7-c5 in the French).

Nothing says that White must be at a disadvantage as a result of this attack, not even praxis according to which Dr Tarrasch, although a theoretician, seems to prefer to base his judgements.

The consequence of the advance d4-d5 in the above game was the position in the following diagram.



As can be seen, the position has already moved on a lot: White is ready to proceed with c5, whereas Black is considering operating down the f-file. But the opening of the latter was all that was achieved by f7-f5. White's centre – and that is the essential – has not suffered in the least. White may have had to “surrender” the centre, but the knight on e4 is a complete replacement for the e4-pawn and effectively exercises control in all directions.

The fact that Lasker lost the game has nothing to do with the value of d4-d5.

As far as d4-d5 is concerned, we are missing here one of the excellent games by Maróczy in which he made use of the following subtle stratagem: in reply to the “terrible” advance f5, he simply took the bold fellow, and that at a time when it was even effectively supported by its colleague on g6! The result was the creation of pawns on e5 and f5, certainly quite splendid to look at!

But they were “hanging” just a little and that was enough for Maróczy to systematically lay siege to them and destroy them!

It is superfluous to add anything about the “best defence” 3...a6 4.♖a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙xe4! (the exclamation mark is Dr Tarrasch's). Schlechter's innovation ♙c6xd4 (after 5...♙xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♖b3 d5 8.a4? ♙xd4) has indeed raised questions about the value of a2-a4, though the strength of the line for White is far from being at an end! It is not based on the possession of the a-file, which only represents a little more “freedom”, but much more after 8.dxe5 ♖e6 on the position of the pawn on e5 and the possibility of making himself unpleasant by ♙d4 (e.g. 9.♙d4 ♙xd4 10.cxd4), since the c7-pawn is backward. Moreover, as has already been pointed out by Herr Malkin in *Schachwelt* with extensive analysis, Dr Tarrasch greatly overestimates the line with ♙xe4.

In the treatment of the Four Knights Game, to which we shall now turn, we have nothing about Rubinstein's line 4...♖c5 5.♙xe5 ♙d4 (Tarrasch – Rubinstein, San Sebastian 1912), nor about the probable rehabilitation of the ♙c6-e7 variation first successfully tried out by Spielmann against Tarrasch in Hamburg. And it is notable how little attention Dr Tarrasch gives to the variation 6.♖xc6, which I have provided with new lines and a new justification, although it has already attracted sympathetic attention from all sides (e.g. Capablanca has adopted my ideas).

And now let us turn to the Queen's Gambit.

If we had much to complain about in Dr Tarrasch's treatment of the Ruy Lopez, the French and the Four Knights Game, here we have only

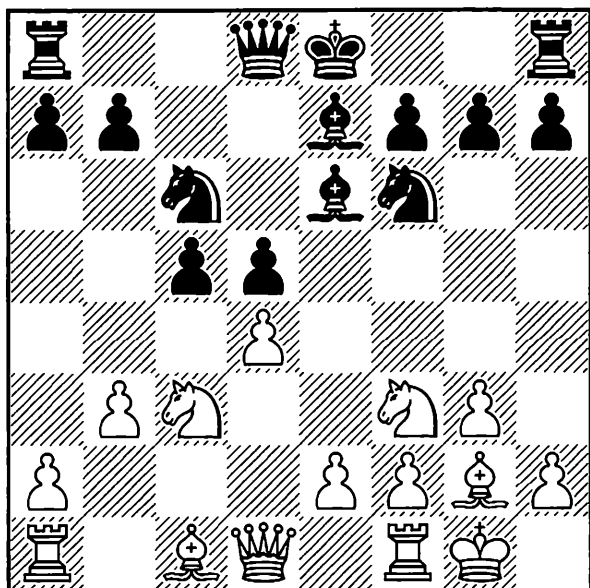
praise to offer. The classification is extremely clear, the conception shows the characteristic exactitude of Dr Tarrasch and the choice of games is equally good.

Only one thing remains unclear to us: why does Dr Tarrasch persist in describing as “orthodox” the line 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 which even today contains a plethora of possibilities and is on the point of being regarded as modern once more?! And why on the other hand does he consider as modern the variation with 3...c5 which he himself suggested and which does not lead to very lively play. It could be said that it has been given up nowadays?!

I wonder how anyone can feel impelled to choose a variation in which you get, as is the case in the c7-c5 line, an isolated pawn, which according to all the rules of the art is stopped in its tracks – think of the bishop on b2 – and most embarrassingly immobilised by the other bishop on g2. How can they?

That is the very least that White can comfortably achieve after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5? 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.g3 ♗e6 7.♗g2 ♗e7 8.0–0 ♘f6 and now, if desired, even 9.b3.

VI



Can anyone be tempted to choose this line, when with the highly modern line (wrongly classified by Dr Tarrasch as “orthodox”) with 3...♘f6, he effortlessly gets a game in which he can achieve safe development, a solid position and a powerful initiative?

I can also see an admission of the hopelessness of the arguments against 3...♘f6 in the following: after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6! 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♘f3 0–0 there arises a position in which White (insofar as he has grown up with notions such as “free play”, “gain of tempo” and “rapid development”) will be uncertain what to play next. 7.♗d3 would cost a tempo after dxc4; 7.♖c1 would not suit for other reasons, and 7.♙c2 – the last way out – allows the safe line with 7...c5! (all right at this point) 8.0–0–0 ♙a5! which has already been tried out in numerous games by Teichmann.

Even the quite “old” but in no way outmoded line with b7-b6 has its merits; just try playing over the game Pillsbury – Schlechter, Hastings 1895.

What is very modern nowadays is the adoption of an “irregular” defence to the Queen’s Gambit. I mention only the Dutch which is treated by Dr Tarrasch in rather step-motherly fashion and the Hanham Variation.

The latter is a thorn in the flesh of Dr Tarrasch. He cannot accept that the principle of free play for the pieces, which he swears by, should be subordinated to the principle of the correct pawn configuration.

But once more, modern praxis proves him wrong: recently this deep, but somewhat bold line has won a new convert in Capablanca. I looked in vain in the *Modern game of Chess* for the “Classic Hanham Game” (Teichmann – Nimzowitsch, San Sebastian 1911) which has been included in all the text books.

And finally a few words about the Caro-Kann and the Centre Counter 1.e2-e4 d7-d5.

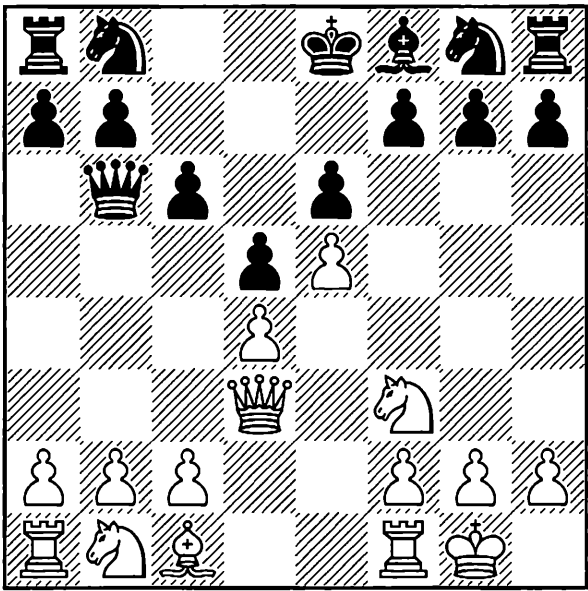
Dr Tarrasch declares the first of these two openings to be totally incorrect because 1...c7-c6 “does nothing for development” (page 425). This is once more Dr Tarrasch’s same favourite, not very modern nor very useful criterion for the judgement of openings.

But 1...c7-c6 contains the ambitious plan of proving that e2-e4 is premature; at least that is the deep plan which I believe underlies the

opening; we can put to one side the question as to whether the inventors realised the full import of 1...c7-c6, but it is certain that this opening has a future.

Just think of my own quite revolutionary-looking innovation. 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♙f5 4.♙d3 ♙xd3 5.♚xd3 e6 6.♘f3 ♚b6 7.0-0

VII



7...♚a6 It means renouncing c7-c5, which has been almost automatic for decades, in favour of total exploitation of the white squares which have become weak as a result of the exchange of the ♙d3. This shows the possibilities of the Caro-Kann! But Dr Tarrasch has not a single word to say about it.

Though Dr Tarrasch only includes three games with the Caro-Kann, he considers it appropriate to give ten examples of the Centre Counter. One would have been sufficient, namely the game Rubinstein – Bernstein, San Sebastian 1911, in which Rubinstein followed a recommendation by Lasker and destroyed the Centre Counter totally and for ever! But unfortunately this particular game is missing.

There is an interesting comparison between the Caro-Kann and the Centre Counter. Both are aiming at e4, but whereas the former prepares and gives strength to the advance d5 by means of c7-c6, the latter does not wish to waste a “development tempo” (!) and plays 1...d7-d5 immediately, successfully achieving for Black a free game, but a lost game!

We have now learned about Dr Tarrasch’s conceptions and views over a series of different openings. We had the opportunity to admire his “single-mindedness”, which sometimes rises to the level of classicism as in the *300 games of chess*; but we have also seen how it frequently causes him to make shallow judgement based on purely external features.

When looked at in detail, we found that his narrowly based conception of central strategy did not match up with modern ideas. The same was true of the way he usually did not take into account the pawn configuration which characterised or even brought about the position (especially in the centre). Seen from this point of view, we are obliged to reject his clichés such as “free play”, “cramped defence” etc. as a restriction to the natural development of chess philosophy. We quite particularly emphasise that we could never come to terms with the view of Dr Tarrasch that the centre has been “surrendered” as soon as the number of pawns occupying it has diminished.

Apart from these shortcomings, the book contains much excellent material. To the literature of chess, “*The modern game of chess*” has added perhaps a book the modernity of which may be doubtful, but which is nevertheless very interesting and to be recommended. The beginner in positional play can learn much from its single-mindedness, and even the connoisseur will find a lot of valuable and interesting ideas in this new work by Dr Tarrasch.

2. The revolutionary ideas

- a) The flexible centre
- b) The pawn roller is not dangerous
- c) The weakness of a complex of squares of the same colour

If you take a closer look at the above article *Does ‘The modern etc.*, you will see that it is above all directed against an arithmetic conception of the centre. What is crucial is simply the greater or lesser degree of mobility which the opposing centre possesses: if restrained it is weak, if blockaded halfway to being lost!

That article (and even more so, one in the *Wiener Schachzeitung* called *My System*) also combats a formalistic conception of the elements such as the backward pawn, the object of attack, etc. What it boils down to is always the “intrinsic value” of the position (deriving from the pawn skeleton present) but not freer play and similar matters of form. In the article *Does ‘The modern etc.*, it is also pointed out that it is frequently very rewarding to act against a weakened complex of squares of one colour in the opponent’s camp. This idea presents the new thought that setting up a watertight blockade is worth the sacrifice of a pawn (previously the logical connection between “sacrifice” and “attack” was known, but not that between “sacrifice” and “blockade”).

If we go on to take into account that the pawn roller was relatively speaking not dangerous, as was recognised in 1911 after the stem game Spielmann – Nimzowitsch, San Sebastian, we are then in the pleasant position of having understood all the elements which come together in what was later described as the hypermodern school.

The in itself very inventive idea of Réti, that plans for attack must already be present as we develop, is correct but is not an integral element in the move towards hypermodernism; classical players were already aware of that. Likewise we must regretfully decline an astute attempt by Tartakower to see something new in the “variability of weaknesses”. (“An opposing strength may be treated as a weakness.”) We shall later see that this conception is based on a certain lack of consideration being paid to the concept of a “relative weakness”.

3. Revolutionary theory put into revolutionary praxis

The model game for the ideal Queen’s Gambit

Back in the summer of 1913, I played with my student and training partner, the agronomist Wiese, roughly 20 to 25 serious games, in which I was testing the value of my innovation which went against all tradition (= I will completely renounce the occupation of the centre by pawns).

We could find no refutation – and nor has one been found by anyone else until present – and so I was bold enough to try it out in all seriousness in the Russian National Championships. I had lost the scoresheet, but I finally managed to find the game in a chess column. We present it here and cannot do other than to describe it as a document of the greatest importance in the history of chess.

Game 38

Gregory – Nimzowitsch

All-Russian Championships, St Petersburg 1913

The stem game for the ideal Queen’s Gambit.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.♙g5

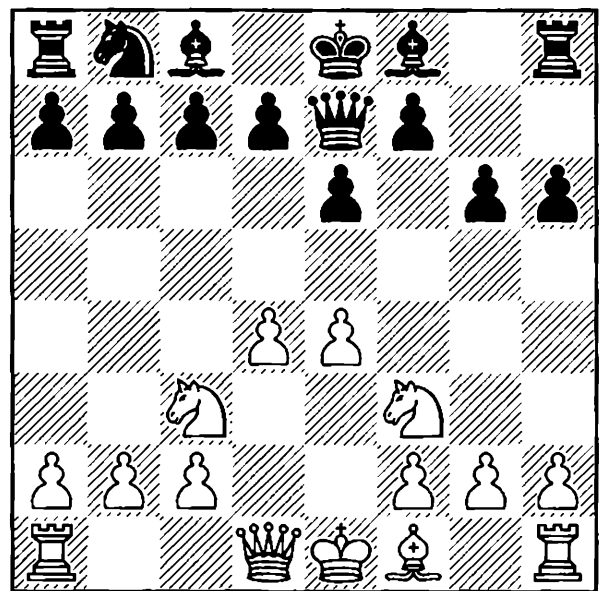
After 3.c4 I intended to chose 3...b6, since the d5-square must be left constantly unoccupied.

3...h6 4.♙xf6 ♖xf6 5.e4 g6

Black has the bishops and in what follows strives to hang on to them.

6.♘c3 ♖e7!

535



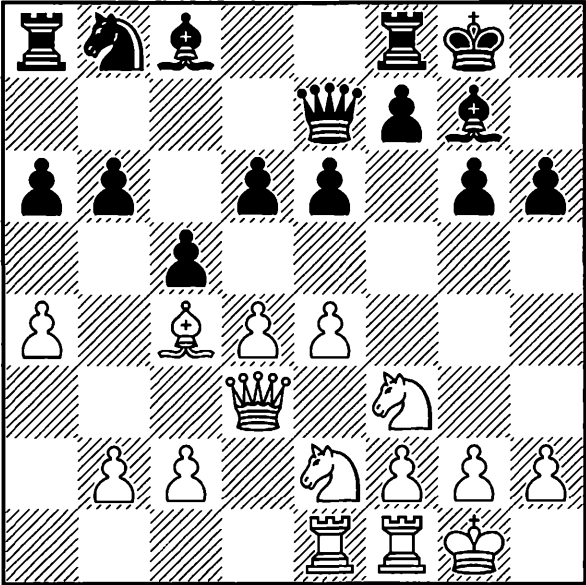
So as not to be exposed after playing d7-d6 to the move e4-e5, which would open up the game.

7.♙c4 ♙g7 8.0-0 d6 9.♖d3 0-0 10.♗ae1 a6 11.a4 b6 12.♘e2

White’s centre is not very mobile, since any thrust would be easily met, e.g. 12 e5 d5! or 12.d5 e5!.

12...c5

536



Here there appears a strategy which every hypermodern player should take note of. I mean the continuity of an attack against a pawn mass. It is as follows: the threatened advance must be deprived of its intrinsic sharpness (it happened here by 6...♞e7!). Once that has happened, then and then only may we consider the mass as more or less immobile and attack it, because only those elements which have been immobilised can be made objects of attack.

13.c3 ♞d7 14.b3

Worth considering was 14.♞d2, e.g. 14...♞xa4 15.f4 with certain chances.

14...♞e8 15.♞c2 b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.♞d3 ♞c8! 18.dxc5 dxc5 19.e5 ♞c6 20.♞xb5

20.♞g3 would have been met with 20...b4, e.g. 21.c4 ♞e8! with the better game.

20...♞xe5 21.♞xe5 ♞xb5 22.♞f3 ♞b7 23.♞d2 ♞c6 24.f3 ♞fb8

Now the bishops come into their own.

25.♞g3 ♞a7 26.♞f2 ♞d5 27.♞f1 ♞a2 28.♞xa2 ♞xa2 29.c4 ♞d4 30.♞fe2 ♞c6 31.♞d1 ♞b2 32.♞c1 h5 33.♞e1 ♞a8

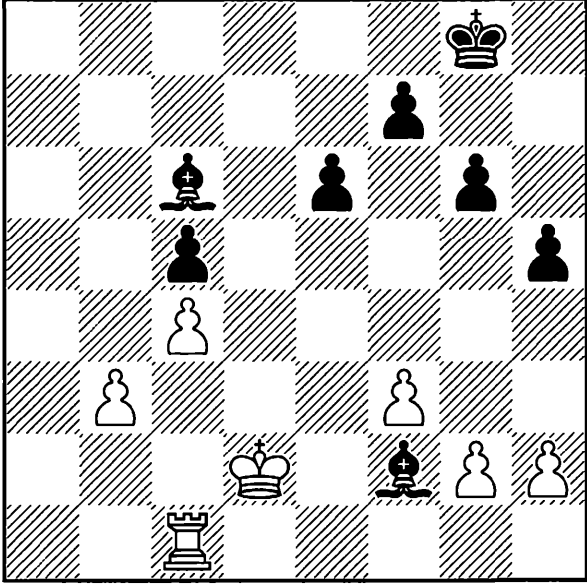
Threatens complete paralysis by 34...♞aa2 since 35.♞b1 is then impossible because of 35...♞xb1† then 36...♞a1.

34.♞h1! ♞aa2 35.♞f2 ♞xd2 36.♞xd2 ♞xd2 37.♞xd2 ♞xf2

The win is still a considerable way off. Black goes on to manoeuvre against c4, but retains the possibility of penetrating with the ♞ (to g3), for

example on move 70. But this alone would still not be enough; Black must also make use of his pawn majority. This however is worrying because it loosens the position and the c-pawn must not be taken lightly.

537



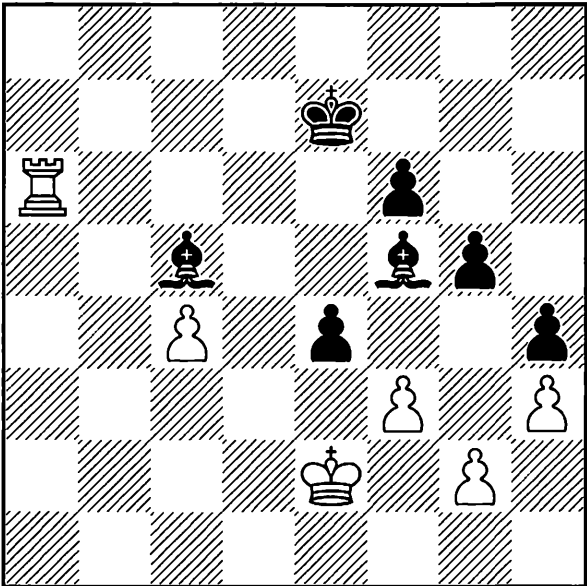
38.♞b1 ♞f8 39.b4 cxb4 40.♞xb4 ♞e7 41.♞b8 ♞d4 42.♞c8 ♞d7 43.♞a8 e5 44.♞c2 ♞c6 45.♞c8 ♞a4† 46.♞d3 ♞d7 47.♞c7 ♞d6 48.♞b7 ♞g1 49.h3 h4

The g3-square now appears ripe for penetration.

50.♞b8 ♞e6 51.♞a8 ♞b6 52.♞h8 ♞f2 53.♞a8 ♞f5† 54.♞e2 ♞b6 55.♞h8 g5 56.♞g8 f6 57.♞f8 ♞e7 58.♞b8 ♞d4 59.♞b5 ♞g6 60.♞a5 ♞f5 61.♞a6 ♞c8 62.♞c6 ♞d7 63.♞a6 ♞c5 64.♞d3 ♞f5† 65.♞e2 e4!

At last the moment has arrived!

538



66.♖c6 ♔d4 67.♗a6 ♕e6 68.♗a4 e3 69.♔d3 ♕c5

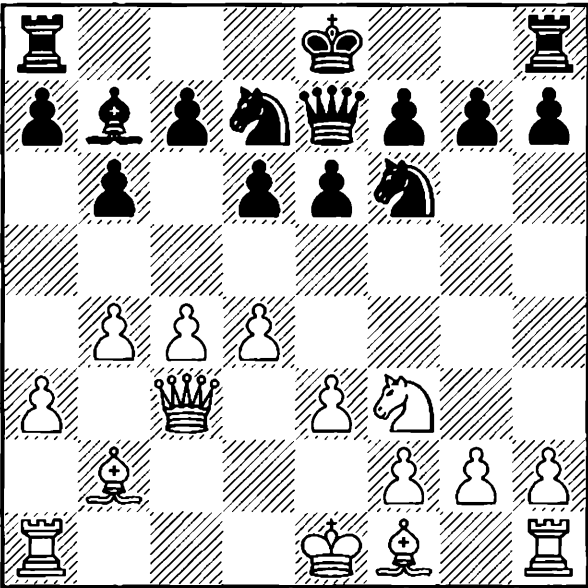
Now the king is threatening to march to g3.
70.♗a6 ♕xc4† 0–1

4. Other historical battles

The previous game did not fail to excite lively interest; those of my colleagues who were *willing* to imitate me did so and tried out my innovation in the very same tournament. But only when Levitsky strikingly lost with it against Flamberg, did the masters see that this quite new plan could not be assimilated without some effort; because naturally a new plan also demands the use of a new methodology. But I continued my studies and then employed the opening in the St Petersburg Grandmaster Tournament in 1914 against Janowski. We have already quoted the first 18 moves of that game on page 204. In addition to that, I also had Black against Dr Bernstein and the game went as follows:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.♘c3 ♕b7 5.e3 ♕b4 6.♗b3 ♗e7 7.a3 ♕xc3† 8.♗xc3 d6 9.b4 ♘bd7 (Black now has an excellent position; White's centre has little mobility, the b7-e4 diagonal is important) 10.♕b2

539



10...a5 (this is good enough, but 10...♘e4 then ...f5 was preferable) 11.♕e2 axb4 12.axb4 ♗xa1† 13.♕xa1 0–0 14.0–0 ♘e4 15.♗c2 f5 16.♘d2 ♘xd2 (here the hypermodern-looking

thrust 16...c5 looks appropriate) 17.♗xd2 ♗a8 18.♕c3 ♗e8 Black would still be well-placed after 18...♘f6 to prevent d4-d5. After the text move, there followed 19.d5! e5 (19...exd5? 20.♕f3) 20.f4 ♕c8, and after a series of highly dramatic complications, the game ended in a draw.

In the same tournament, Alekhine adopted my innovation – the ideal Queen's Gambit – and used it successfully, which gave me great pleasure. The correctness of my – revolutionary – principles meant a great deal to me.

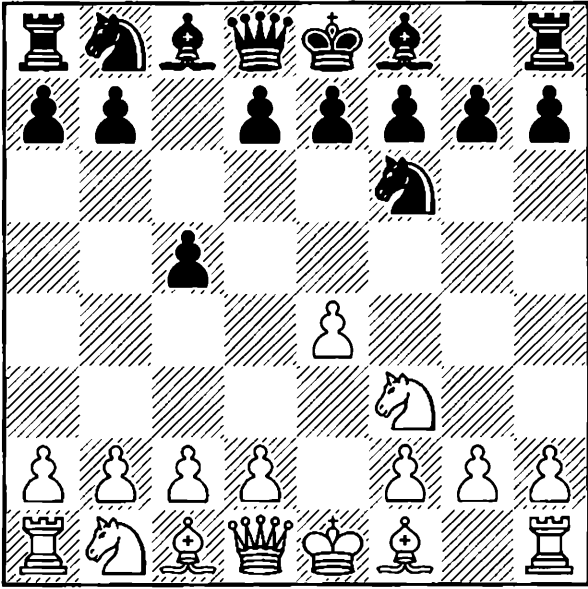
And now some more historic games.

Game 39
Spielmann – Nimzowitsch
San Sebastian 1911

Stem game for the thesis of the relative lack of danger presented by a pawn roller.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

540



Spielmann now started to think; after a few minutes I raised my eyes from the 64 squares and saw that my dear old companion-in-arms Spielmann was quite bewildered!! He was looking at the knight, first confidently, then full of doubt, and finally, passing up on the possible chase with 3.e5, he played the prudent 3.♘c3.

The following year I used 2...♘f6 against Schlechter. In the tournament book, Tarrasch

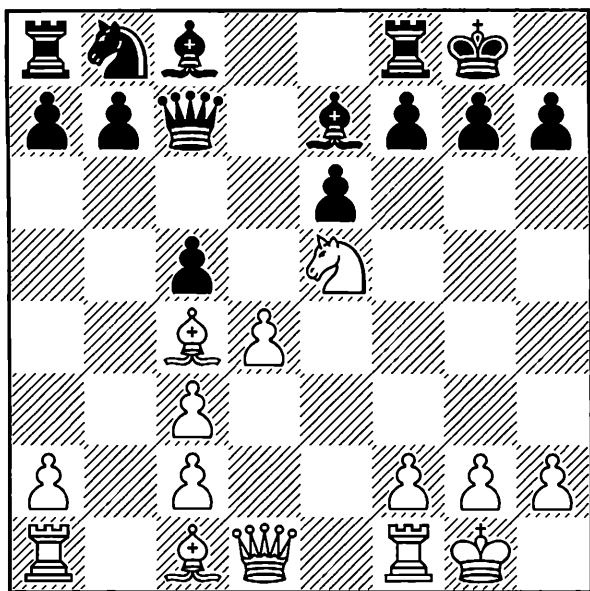
made the following remark: "Not good, since the knight is driven away at once, but in the opening Herr Nimzowitsch goes his own way, though we cannot recommend it to the world at large."

Mockery can be powerful: e.g. it can embitter young talents. But there is one thing it cannot do: prevent for ever the victorious breakthrough of strong new ideas! That is the case here. Who cares nowadays about the old dogmas, like the fossilised theory of the centre, the worship of open play and the totally formalistic concepts? But new ideas, these ways which are apparently out of bounds and not to be recommended to the world at large, have today become the route along which all, great and small alike, may travel in the knowledge that they are perfectly safe.

My game with Schlechter went as follows: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6! 3.e5 ♘d5 4.d4 and Tarrasch asks why should 4.c4 not be played as it would certainly force the black knight on to bad squares. No, it would not. Even in the case of 1.e4 ♘f6 (Alekhine) then 2.e5 ♘d5 3.c4 ♘b6 4.d4, the only effect the chase has is to compromise White's game. Schlechter – Nimzowitsch continued 4...cxd4 5.♙xd4 e6 6.♙c4 ♘c6 7.♙e4 d6! 8.exd6 (or 8.♙xd5 exd5 9.♙xd5 dxe5 with two bishops and a solid pawn majority) 8...♘f6! 9.♙h4 ♙xd6 10.♘c3 ♘e5!, and Black had a certain freedom of manoeuvre in the centre of the board.

3.♘c3 d5 4.exd5 ♘xd5 5.♙c4 e6 6.0-0 ♙e7 7.d4 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 0-0 9.♘e5 ♙c7

541



What now follows is play against the hanging pawns which come into existence.

10.♙d3 ♘c6 11.♙f4 ♙d6 12.♙e1 cxd4!

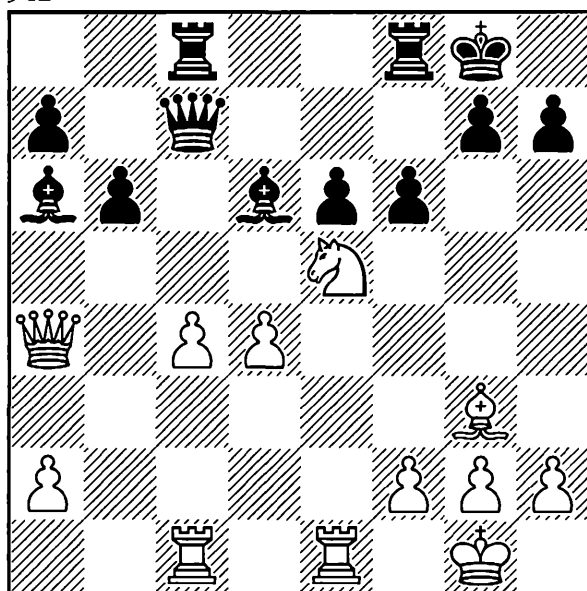
This exchange in conjunction with 13...♘b4 constitutes the point behind the process started by 9...♙c7.

13.cxd4 ♘b4 14.♙g3 ♘xd3 15.♙xd3 b6 16.c4 ♙a6

The hanging pawns. They come under heavy fire, but cling tenaciously to life. The game is level.

17.♙ac1 ♙ac8 18.♙b3 f6 19.♙a4?

542



19.c5 ♙xe5 20.dxe5 led to a draw.

19...fxe5 20.dxe5 ♙a3! 21.♙xa3 ♙xc4 22.♙e4 ♙d7 23.h3 ♙d5

Black's advantage becomes clear when the bishop takes up this post.

24.♙e2 ♙b7 25.f4 ♙f7 26.♙ec2 ♙xc2 27.♙xc2 ♙g6 28.♙c3

It is difficult for White to surrender the c-file; but if 28.♙c3 h5! 29.h4 ♙xf4)

28...♙xa2! 29.♙h4 ♙d5 30.♙e7 ♙e8 31.♙d6 ♙e4 32.♙c7 h6 33.♙f2 ♙e1† 34.♙f1 ♙e3† 35.♙f2 a5 36.♙e7 ♙e1† 37.♙f1 ♙e3† 38.♙f2 ♘h8

Directed against ♙f6.

39.♙d8 ♙e1† 40.♙f1 ♙e3† 41.♙f2 ♙e1† 42.♙f1 ♙g3 43.♙f2 ♙f8 44.♙xb6 ♙xf4 45.♙e7 a4 (a passed pawn plus a mating attack, things are looking bad) 46.♘f1? (he was lost anyway) 46...♙xg2† 0-1

Game 40
Nimzowitsch – Spielmann
San Sebastian 1912

The stem game for the combination of sacrifice and blockading intentions.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.dxc5 ♙xc5 6.♙d3 ♘ge7 7.♙f4!

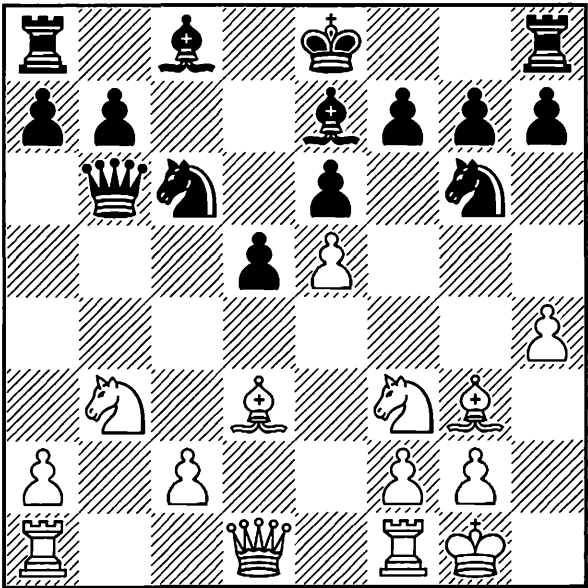
Overprotecting the strategically important ♖e5.

7...♙b6 8.0–0 ♙xb2

This was not a typical sacrifice of a pawn for the attack. The motive is rather exclusively that White wishes to maintain the e5-point in order to then use the same as the basis for a blockade. This motif is known from the game of nine men’s morris where a piece is sacrificed in order to be able to encircle an opposing majority with one’s own minority. Transferring this stratagem to chess would indeed be revolutionary!

9.♘bd2 ♙b6 10.♘b3 ♘g6 11.♙g3 ♙e7 12.h4

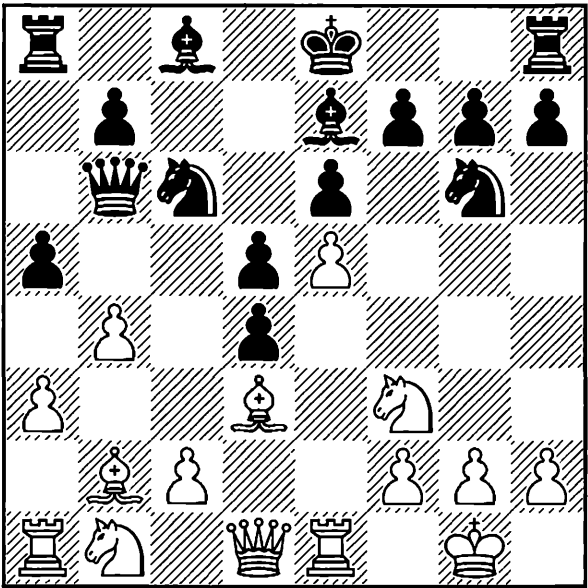
543



Nor is this an attacking move in the general sense of the term. It means: get away from the key square e5! There followed: 12...♙b4 13.a4 a6 14.h5 ♘h4 15.♘xh4 ♙xh4 16.c3 ♙e7 17.♙h2 f5 He needs this move, which opens up all sorts of things for his opponent, to create some breathing space. It is only now that the attack can happen. 18.exf6 gxf6 19.♘d4 e5 20.♙f5 with a strong attack. White won on move 44 (see page 121).

Things followed a similar course in the game Nimzowitsch – Leonhardt, San Sebastian 1912. 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3 (later I discovered the even more revolutionary 4.♙g4) 4...♙b6 5.♙d3 cxd4 6.0–0 ♘c6 7.a3 ♘ge7 8.b4 ♘g6 9.♙e1 ♙e7 10.♙b2 a5

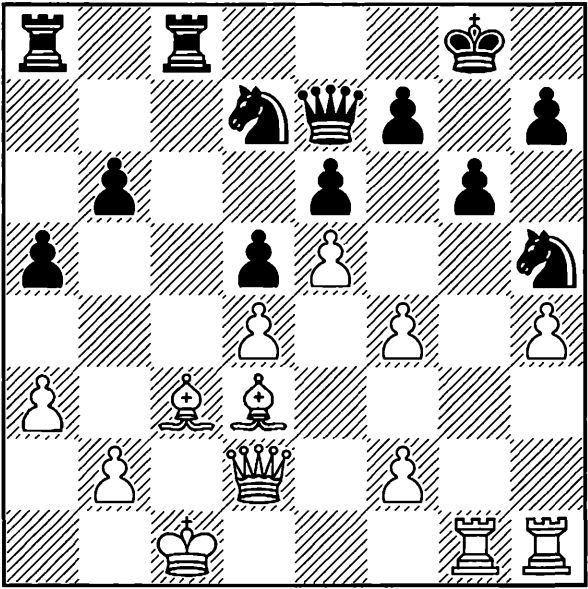
544



Now he loses his extra pawn. After 10...a6! we would once again have our conflict between the extra pawn and the cramping policy.

The said stratagem made its appearance in a most vivid form in the game Brinckmann – Nimzowitsch, Kolding 1923.

545



Next came: 19...b5!!. This sacrifices a pawn in order to be able to exchange the ♙d3. Thereafter, the blockade initiated by the knight on f5

becomes effective. There followed **20.♙xb5 ♖ab8** **21.♙e2 ♜b6** (the immediate **21...♜g7** was more precise, and if **22.h5** then **22...♜b6** which will force an exchange on c4 – after **♜c4 ♙xc4** – and finally the occupation of f5 with a positionally won game for Black) **22.♞d1** (he could have saved himself by **22.♙xh5 ♜c4 23.♞c2 ♜xa3 24.♞d2 22...♜c4 23.♙xc4 ♖xc4 24.♞g5 ♜g7 25.h5 ♜f5 26.hxg6 fxg6** and Black won without difficulty.

5. Extension and development of the revolution in chess in the years 1914 to 1926

The theme we have set ourselves here would provide enough material for a whole book, but lack of space compels us to moderate ourselves We shall only point out the most important events and save a deeper examination for a booklet.

Alekhine’s **1.e4 ♜f6** is the most brilliant “post-revolutionary” act. To be sure the idea behind this innovation is not totally new, because it is based on my theory of the lack of danger from a pawn roller which I propagated, based on the line **1.e4 c5 2.♜f3 ♜f6**. But Alekhine’s move is surprising and I will not deny it the adjective “brilliant”.

Also interesting is Réti’s attempt to make use of the stratagem of the elastic or flexible centre which I had discovered. Probably after **1.♜f3 d5 2.c4** the answer **2...dxc4** is not bad. e.g. **3.♜a3 c5!** (my suggestion) **4.♜xc4 ♜c6** aiming for the set-up with **f7-f6** and **e7-e5**.

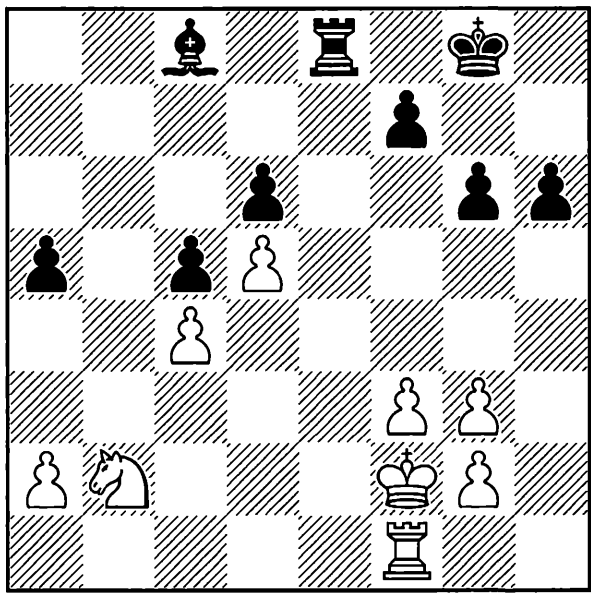
It is also worth looking at Grünfeld’s interesting defence. **1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 g6 3.♜c3 d5! 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.e4 ♜xc3! 6.bxc3 ♙g7** going on to pressurise White’s centre by **c7-c5**.

Even if it only concerns one detail, Sämisch’s move **7...♜e4** is inventive and original (**1.d4 ♜f6 2.♜f3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.g3 ♙b7 5.♙g2 ♙e7 6.0–0 7.♜c3 ♜e4!**). This early invasion by the knight looks as anti-pseudo-classical as possible, but has found a good number of followers (in varied positions) and turned out to be extremely fruitful.

But from the ideological point of view, nothing new has been discovered in the years 1914 to

1926, if we except the new ideas discussed in this book, e.g. overprotection and prophylaxis. Tartakower’s interesting attempt to produce a new revolutionary idea must be considered to have failed. Let us discuss that matter, if only briefly, since it is important.

546



Tartakower claims to have seen in the course of this struggle the proof that a hypermodern player can, if he wishes, treat any opposing strength as a weakness (i.e. not just typical weaknesses such as backward pawns, etc.). So: where there’s a will, there’s a way, that is to say an opposing weakness. The game (Jacobsen – Nimzowitsch, Copenhagen 1923) went: **34...♙f5 35.♖c1 h5 36.♖c3 a4! 37.♜d1 g5 38.♜e3 ♙d7 39.♞e2 f5 40.♞d2 f4** and now White’s kingside, which a few moves ago looked so strong and resistant, just collapsed after **41.gxf4 gxf4 42.♜d1 ♞f7 43.♜f2 ♞g8** etc.

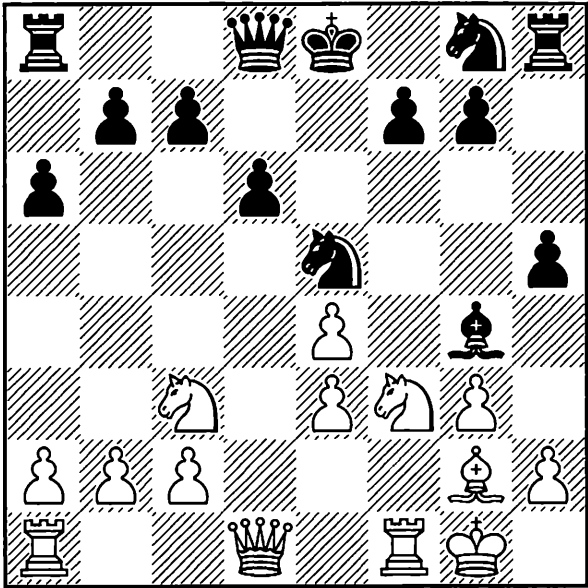
But for anyone who has read this book, it is obvious that from the start the white king had been suffering from a related weakness, i.e. White’s defensive forces were tied to the weaknesses on c4 and a2, and thus the white kingside was inadequately protected. And the moral is:

You can only attack a weakness. Of course it does not have to be a traditional weakness, but it must be some sort of weakness, even if only a related weakness.

We moderns are just as tied to the laws of logic as are the non-moderns, except that we are aiming for an assimilation of the dead dogmas and a revival of them. But logic demands that we seek to destroy our opponent's position by exploiting its weaknesses. The sentence that says we have to attack our opponent's strong point is a modern error, no more. All that you have to do as you think more deeply about things is to extend the concept of "weakness"; a pawn which organically speaking can be said to be totally intact can nevertheless be weak, e.g. if the condition of the terrain is unfavourable, or if there is a related weakness, as in diagram 546, etc.

In the game **Nimzowitsch – Spielmann**, 1904, after the moves **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♙c5 5.♙e3 ♚f6 6.♘b5 ♙xe3 7.fxe3 ♚h4† 8.g3 ♚d8 9.♘1c3 a6 10.♘d4 ♘e5 11.♙g2 d6 12.0–0 ♙g4 13.♘f3 h5?** (13...♙xf3!), the ♘e5 had sunk to the level of a bluff, or, if you wish, a piece which would be strong in itself but which is marked out as weak on account of the whole position of its own side, just weakened by h5. White swept the bluffer aside.

547



14.♘xe5!! ♙xd1 (14...dxe5 was better in any case) **15.♘xf7 ♚d7 16.♘xh8 ♙g4 17.♙f7** and White's attack must get through.

We once more point out how very rewarding it appears to attack such a weakness, which is somehow the strategic nerve point of the opposing position, e.g. the base of a chain.

This brings us to the end of our explanations. Before leaving you, we give you one last game and refer you to a collection of games which will appear this year and which I will use to firm up the rules for my system.

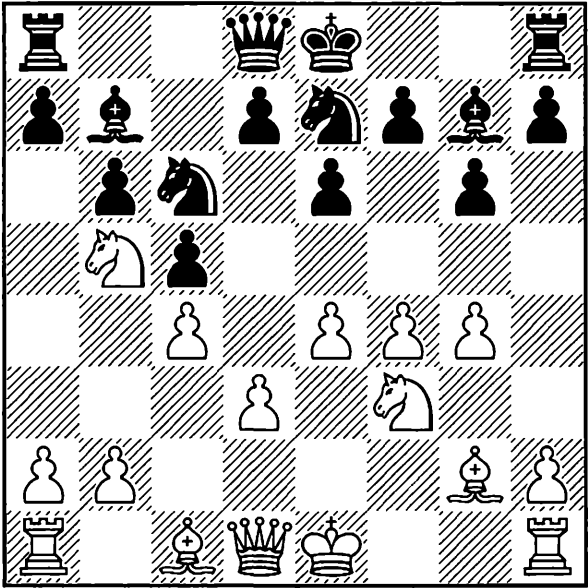
Game 41
Nimzowitsch – Anton Olson
Copenhagen 1924

In this game, seven white pawns show greater total mobility than eight black ones. Thus does thought (dynamic effect) triumph over mere material.

As you will remember, the greatest feature of the chess revolution which has taken place is to be seen in the assimilation of dead dogmas. This assimilation appears clearly in this game, which we therefore offer for the greater good of our readers. **1.f4 c5 2.e4 ♘c6 3.d3 g6 4.c4! ♙g7 5.♘c3 b6 6.♘f3 ♙b7 7.g4**

The total mobility of the white kingside pawns gently starts to become apparent. **7...e6 8.♙g2 ♘ge7 9.♘b5!**

548



To bring about a6. Then the b6-pawn's need of protection will become the basis of a sharp combination.

9...d6 10.0–0 a6 11.♘a3 0–0 12.♚e2 ♚d7 13.♙e3 ♘b4

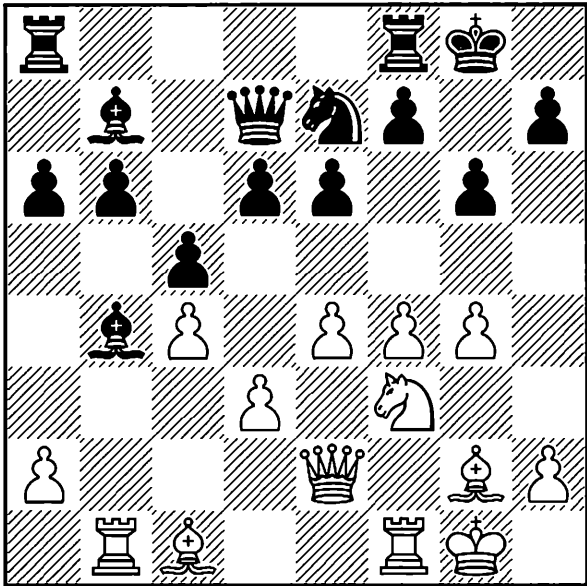
Otherwise 14.♙ad1 then d4 will follow, with advantage to White.

14.♖c2 ♜xb2 15.♞ab1 ♜c3 16.♖xb4 ♜xb4

Or else 16...cxb4 17.♜xb6 – see the note to White’s 9th move.

17.♜c1!

549



White has managed to wrest away from his opponent the long diagonal.

17...f6 18.♜b2 e5 19.g5

The combination of sacrifice and blockade would have been clearer after 19.f5 g5 20.h4, with a long-lasting attack, whereas the value of Black’s extra pawn would have been purely illusory.

19...♖c6

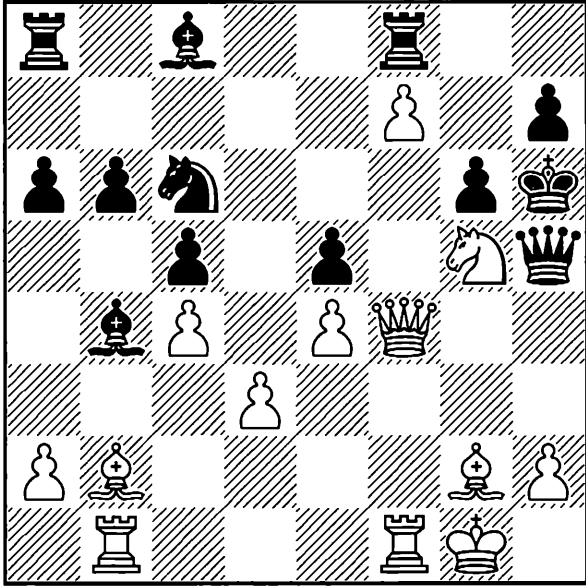
Or 19...fxg5 20.♖xg5 (threatening 21.♜h3) 20...♖c6 21.f5.

20.gxf6 ♜g4 21.fxe5 dxe5 22.♞e3 ♜h5

To protect e5.

23.♖g5 ♜c8 24.f7† ♖g7 25.♞f4 ♖h6

550



Forced.

26.♖e6†! exf4 27.♜g7 mate

And now, gentle readers, we take our leave...

Index of players

A

Alapin 53, 96, 151, 152, 162, 167, 272
 Alekhine 32, 38, 70, 71, 76, 116, 122, 182,
 189, 190, 279, 280, 282
 Amateur 18, 41, 97
 Amateurs, Three Swedish 251, 253
 Andersson, E. 265

B

Barthmann 253
 Becker 167, 169
 Behting 98
 Berger, J. 58, 59, 96, 238
 Berndtsson 186, 188
 Bernstein, J. 237
 Bernstein, O. 50, 105, 106, 209, 210, 276,
 279
 Billecard 210
 Bjurulf 186
 Blackburne 213, 218
 Breyer 67
 Brinckmann 281
 Brunswick, Duke of 129
 Burn 167, 264

C

Capablanca 117, 118, 134, 184, 191, 198,
 212, 274, 275
 Cohn, E. 123, 131, 202, 236

D

Druwa 107
 Duras 172, 236

E

Eliasstamm 51
 Enström 265
 Erdman 219

F

Flamberg 279
 Fluess 132, 137

G

Giersing 234
 Giese 40, 57, 125, 181, 247
 Gregory 277
 Grünfeld 197, 282

H

Haakanson 203, 204
 Haken 40, 57, 125
 Hansen 95
 Harmonist 241

J

Jacobsen 117, 252, 282
 Janowski 204, 225, 273, 279
 Johner 177, 203, 225

K

Kalaschnikow 257, 259
 Kalinsky 257
 Karpov 3
 Kasparov 3
 Kinch 234
 Kline 191, 198
 Kmoch 224, 225
 Krause 220, 221
 Kudrjawzew 71, 193
 Kupchik 212

L

Landau 71, 193
 Lasker 19, 46, 50, 66, 79, 106, 145, 167, 168,
 191, 192, 209, 210, 213, 215, 232, 233, 244,
 245, 261, 264, 265, 273, 274, 276
 Laue 249
 Lee 27, 56
 Leonhardt 77, 80, 81, 132, 136, 269, 271,
 272, 281
 Levitsky 279
 Lindström 191
 Lowcki 272
 Levenfish 151, 193, 199, 269, 272

M

Malkin 274
 Marco 191, 192
 Maróczy 174, 240, 274
 Marshall 133
 Martinez 117, 184
 Metger 133, 270
 Michel 183, 194
 Michell 242
 Mieses 196
 Morphy 129, 254

N

N. N. 178
 Nilsson 81, 97, 117
 Nisniewitsch 146

O

Öberg 265
 Olland 208
 Olson 283
 Opocensky 170, 189

P

Paulsen 160, 165
 Perlis 90, 105, 207, 208
 Petrosian 3
 Pillsbury 275
 Post 116, 122
 Pritzel 65

R

Rabinovich 60
 Réti 146, 219, 249, 277, 282
 Richter 240, 270
 Rosselli del Turco 106, 203, 205, 223, 225
 Rubinstein 95, 106, 110, 138, 140, 172, 184,
 190, 191, 196, 199, 206, 221, 222,
 232, 235, 236, 244, 247, 256, 271,
 272, 274, 276, 296
 Ryckhoff 147

S

Salwe 151, 156, 158, 261, 269, 271, 272
 Sämisch 62, 205, 225, 282
 Schlechter 78, 210, 273, 274, 275, 279, 280
 Schurig 249
 Seifert 267
 Selezniev 256
 Shoosmith 217
 Spielmann 121, 190, 206, 248, 269, 272, 274,
 277, 279, 281, 283
 Steinitz 59, 194, 270, 273
 Süchting 174
 Svenonius 272

T

Tal 3
 Tarrasch 11, 15, 33, 46, 58, 67, 96, 113, 115,
 119, 130, 133, 134, 151, 158, 160,
 161, 162, 165, 166, 167, 179, 183,
 194, 196, 233, 240, 241, 253, 269,
 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276,
 279, 280, 295
 Tartakower 111, 146, 196, 197, 232, 237,
 242, 277, 282
 Taubenhaus 231, 232, 243
 Teichmann 53, 209, 218, 237, 260, 262, 272,
 275
 Te Kolsté 76
 Thomas 32, 38, 70, 71, 121
 Torre 145
 Treybal 76, 190

V

Van Vliet 55, 218
 Vestergaard 267
 Vidmar 135
 von Bardeleben 146
 von Freymann 81, 100, 251
 von Gottschall 84, 92, 212, 258
 von Holzhausen 259
 von Scheve 270

Y

Yates 28, 190, 208, 249

Yusupov 3

Z

Znosko-Borovsky 55, 244

My System in the computer age

-By Jacob Aagaard and John Shaw

One of the aspects of chess that has changed most over the last century has been the approach to chess analysis. Alekhine, Botvinnik, and a generation of strong Soviet players introduced a culture of deep and accurate chess analysis as a scientific approach to the game. Later greats like Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov helped to raise the bar even higher with their ambitious and methodical approaches.

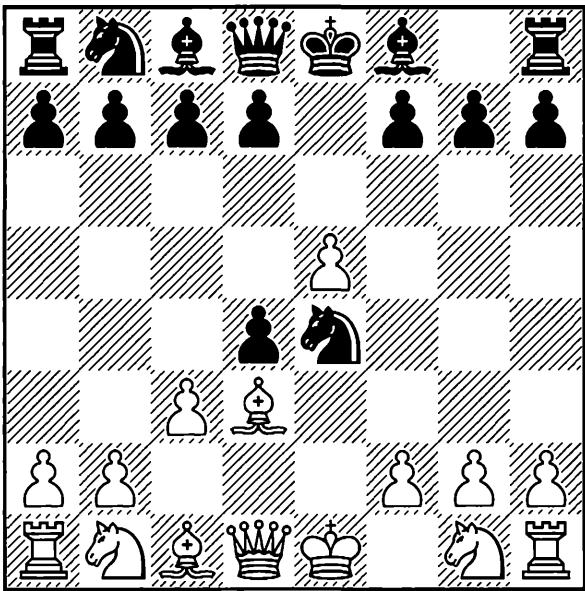
In the 90's another dimension was added to chess analysis with the emergence of strong chess engines. While editing this book we have seen the release of Fritz10, and its 4-2 defeat of the World Champion Vladimir Kramnik in a match, even though this seems to have been decided mainly by Kramnik allowing a mate-in-one in a drawn position.

So, as with many other steps forward, the improvements in chess analysis consist of a combination of the evolution of shared human understanding and technological advances. It is only natural that two players from the 21st century can go through an 80-year-old book and find improvements. However, we would like to stress that this does not in any way lessen the instructional value of this book, nor is it intended to put Nimzowitsch down. We are absolutely certain that Nimzowitsch, armed with a laptop, would produce magic we could only dream of. Also, it is clear from the text in the book that Nimzowitsch was using a lot of these examples illustratively, and did not intend to state every detail about each and every position. It would thus be unfair to come back 80-odd years later and point fingers.

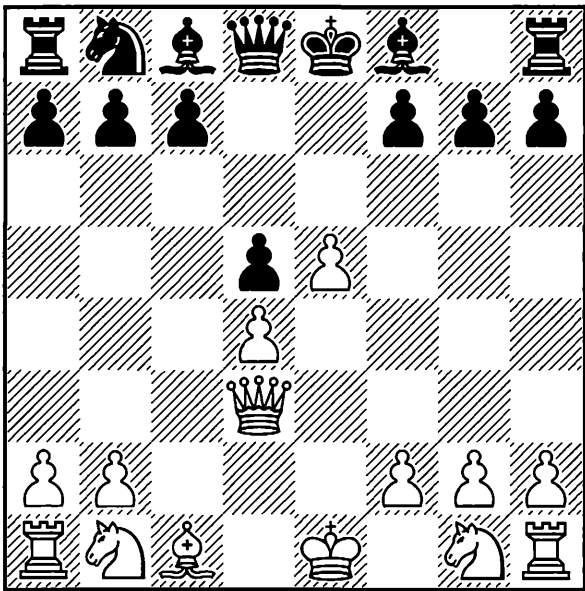
For these reasons, we would like the reader to forgive us for suggesting some improvements on various analyses in the book. We have done this because we find the chess in these examples of interest, and think that admirers of *My System* might appreciate this little article. We would like to emphasise that these examples are not intended as a comprehensive list of corrections or possible improvements: only positions that we find interesting or instructive are included.

The format of this article is simple. Throughout the book small superscript numbers have been added to the moves in question. These numbers are then replicated here, where an explanation of the tactic or idea that Nimzowitsch missed or ignored is given. However, we will also give the page number of the example so that this article can be read separately and the reader can refer to the examples elsewhere in the book.

1 – Page 24

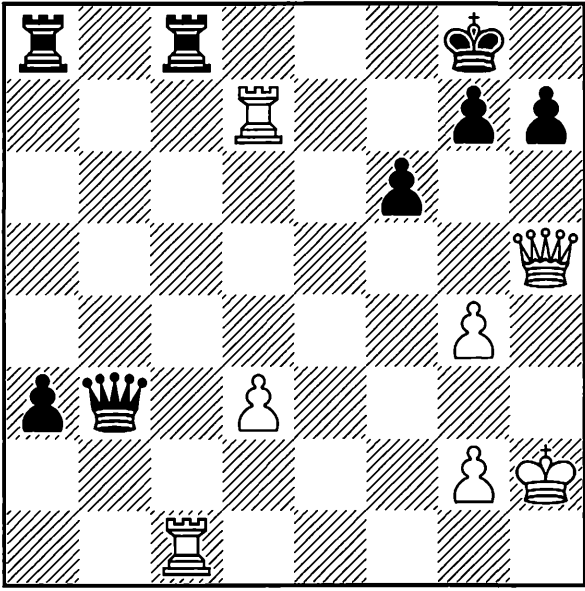


In this position Nimzowitsch correctly gives **5...d5!** as a good move. However, his comment that **5...♘c5? 6.cxd4 ♘xd3† 7.♙xd3** leaves White four tempi ahead is at best misleading. After **7...d5!**

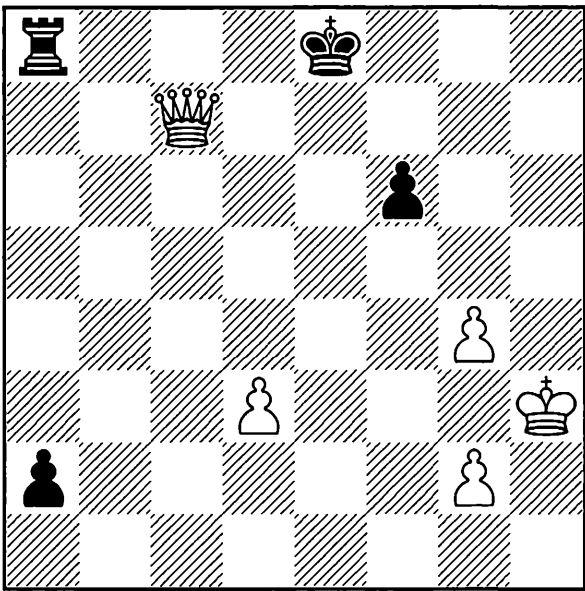


(as indicated in other sources as well) Black is by no means worse. White has not developed any pieces yet either. Actually it could be argued that White is left with his bad bishop and that the c8-bishop has a great future on the weakened light squares.

2 - Page 45

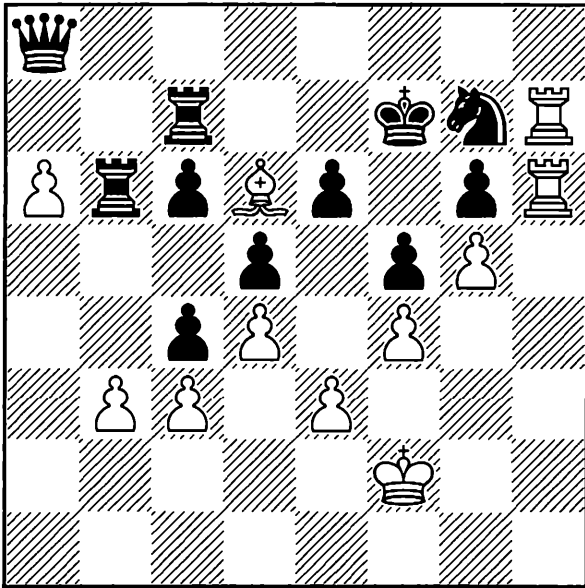


Nimzowitsch ends here, after **1...♖c8**, probably with the notion that **2.♖cc4 ♔h8!** is OK for Black. The surprise is that **2.♖b1!** gives White a winning attack. (Admittedly, **2.♖e1** also wins, though in a less instructive way.) Play should continue: **2...♙e6 3.♖xg7† ♔xg7 4.♖b7+ ♔f8** Here there is an amazing detail: **5.♙h6†!!** is the only winning move. The reason for this can be found in the following line: **5...♔e8 6.♙xh7 ♖c7!** The only defence. **7.♖xc7 ♙e5† 8.♔h3 ♙xc7 9.♖xc7 a2**

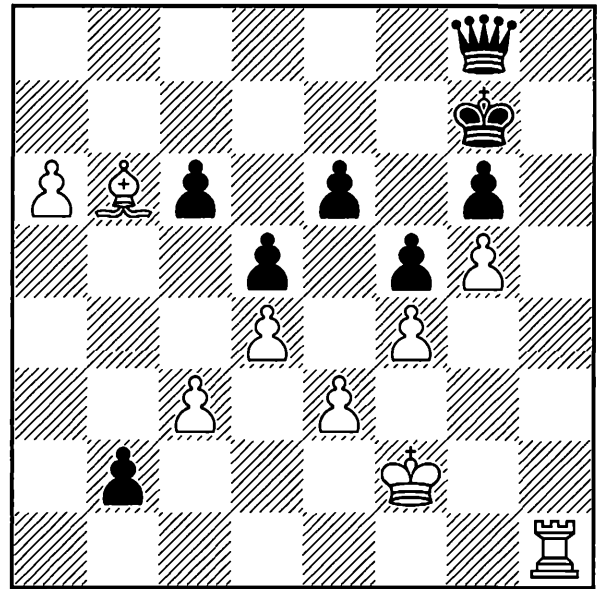


White desperately needs the check on c6 to stop the pawn. **10.♙c6†** and wins. Had the king been on f8, all White would have been able to produce would have been a perpetual check.

3 – Page 51



b1=♔ 12.♖b8† with perpetual check two queens down.) 8.♖h1



To this position Nimzowitsch writes:

“It is worth pointing out that after the queen sacrifice White always has a draw, e.g. 4...♖xa6 5.♙e5 ♘e8 6.♖h8† ♘d7 7.♖6h7 ♔a2† (to open up the a6-square) 8.♙g3 c5 9.♖xg7† ♘c6 10.♖xc7† ♘b5 11.♖xc5† ♘a6 12.♖a8† winning the queen, or 4...♖g8 5.♙xc7 ♖xa6 6.bxc4 then ♙e5 or 4...♖g8 5.♙xc7 cxb3 6.♙xb6 b2 7.♖xg7† ♖(or ♘)xg7 8.♖h1 and White has significantly better chances because of the strong a-pawn.”

Actually, hardly any of this is accurate. White should be happy that Black played 4...♖c8, as he would have been in trouble in most other lines:

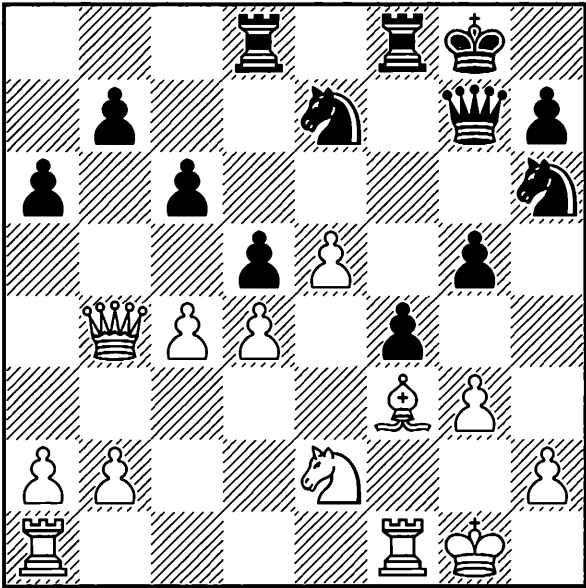
4...♖xa6 5.♙e5? (White should try 5.♙xc7 with a likely draw. For example: 5...♖a2† 6.♙f3 ♖xb3 7.♖h1!) Now 5...♘e8 is the only move mentioned, but the clever 5...♖e7! creates a safe square on d7 and allows Black to escape. 6.♖xg7† ♘e8 7.♖h8† ♘d7 8.♖gg8 c5! 9.♖d8† ♘c6 10.♖c8† ♖xc8 11.♖xc8† and either king retreat will give Black great chances.

4...♖g8 5.♙xc7 cxb3! (5...♖xa6 6.bxc4 and White is better because of the idea ♖h8 rather than ♙e5.) 6.♙xb6 b2 7.♖xg7† Nimzowitsch misses that there is a huge difference between Black's possible recaptures on g7. Correct is 7...♘xg7! (7...♖xg7 8.♖h1, by the way, only gives White a draw after accurate play: 8...♖f8! 9.a7 ♖a3 forces him to find 10.♖h7† ♘g8 11.♖b7!

8...♖h8! Seemingly the best of a few options. 9.♖xh8 b1=♔ It is not clear that Black can win, but at least he would be the one trying.

4...♖xa6! is unmentioned, but seems to be the best option and would have given Black good winning chances after 5.♙xc7 cxb3 6.♙e5 ♖g8 7.♙xg7 ♖xg7 8.♖xg7† ♘xg7 9.♖h1 ♖a2†, when the extra pawn counts.

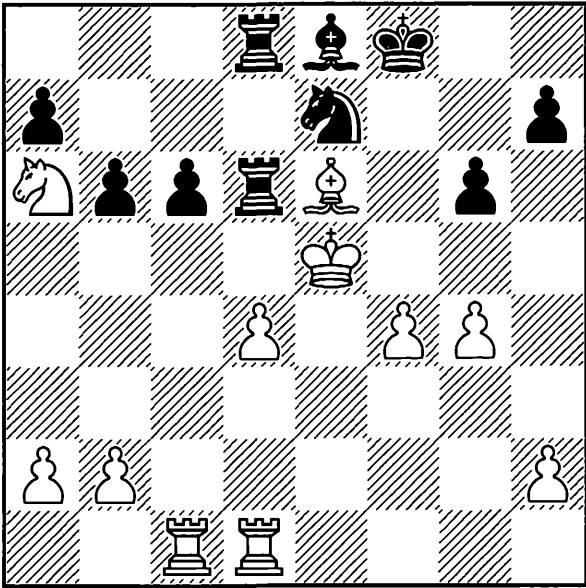
4 – Page 76



Nimzowitsch clearly understood that squares can be more important than pawns. Here he has played **19...f5-f4**, but for some reason does not appreciate that **20.g4!?** (keeping the knight on h6 out of play) was a prudent answer, just as **20.♖xb7** should come into consideration. In all cases White looks preferable.

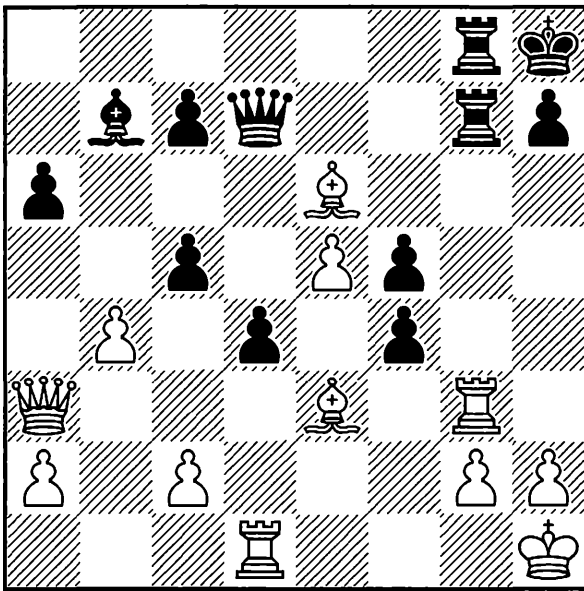
5 – Page 77

32.♖b3x♗e6, as given by Nimzowitsch, is not advisable.



The problem is **32...♖xe6†!** **33.♗xe6 ♖d5!** **34.f5 ♗g8** and White is mated on the next move. Instead **32.♗c7!** would allow White to keep the advantage.

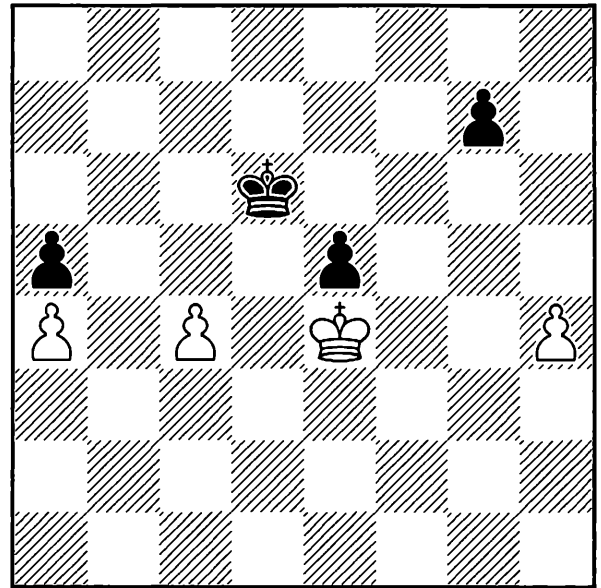
6 – Page 78



Nimzowitsch played 32...♙xg2† and later won the game. However, 32...♖xg3! wins much faster, based on 33.hxg3 ♔c6! or 33.♙xd7 ♖xg2 both ending the game in a hurry.

7 – Page 92

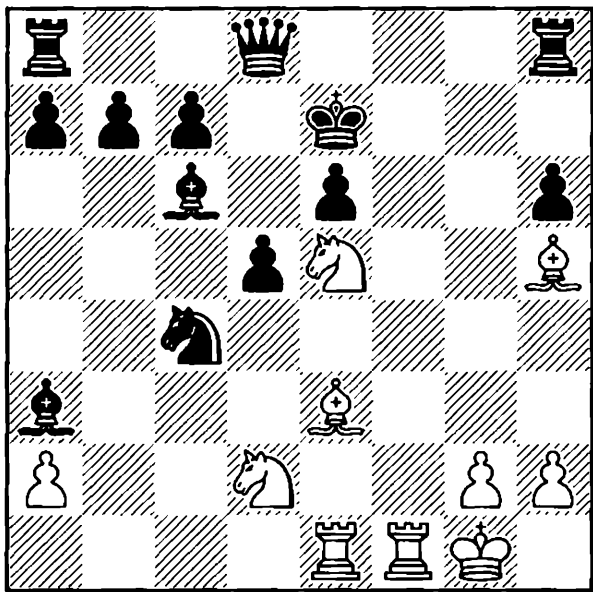
In this example Nimzowitsch is trying to make an instructive point, but uses a bad example to do so. After 1.h4



Black should not give White a free tempo by moving the pawn closer with 1...g6?? but instead draw with 1...♔c5! 2.♙xe5 ♔xc4 3.♙f5 ♔b4 and so on. Compared to the line given by Nimzowitsch, Black takes one move longer to reach the a-pawn; but White takes two moves extra to capture the g-pawn...

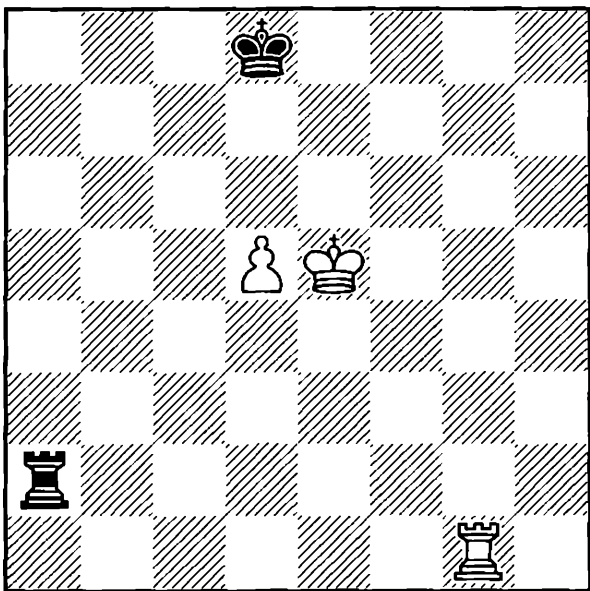
8 – Page 107

In the following position White chose an incorrect move order, allowing Black a chance to escape.



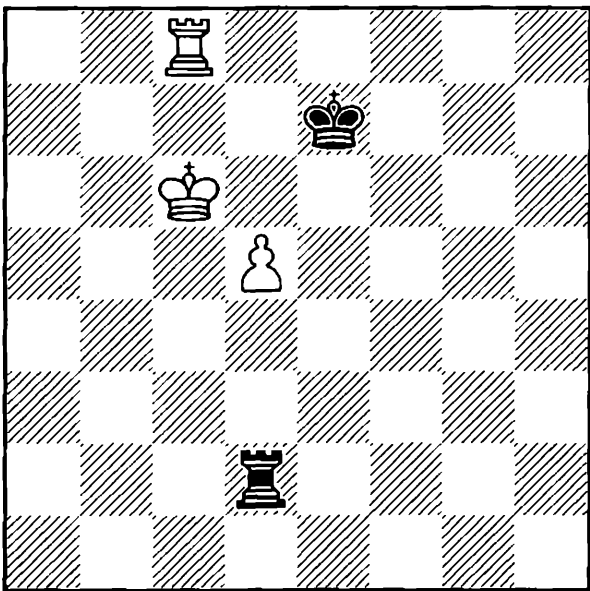
Nimzowitsch played 5.♖xc6†? when instead of 5...bxc6 Black needed to find 5...♔d7!! to escape to an unclear position. But taking on c6 is simply the correct plan executed incorrectly. White mates after 5.♜f7† in the same way as in the game.

9 – Page 112



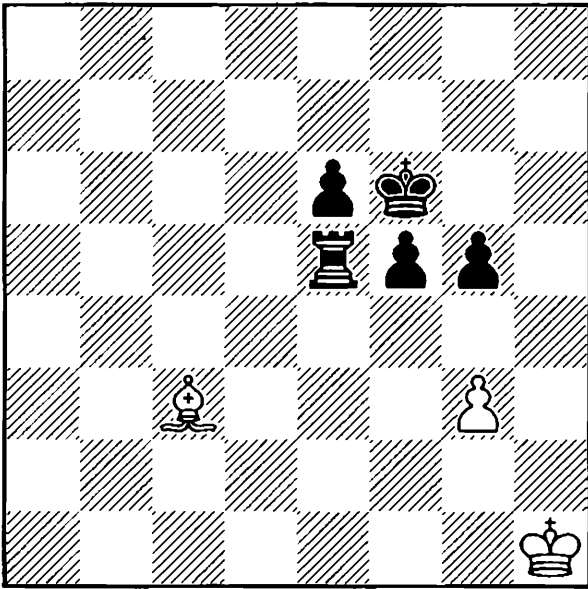
About this position Nimzowitsch writes: “Here d6 would be the shelter, so you should not make this unusable by playing 1.d5-d6. The correct way is 1.♔e6 and if 1...♜e2† then 2.♔d6 and Black is out of checks and in danger of seeing his king cut off from the queening square.”

Though this is all technically correct, we think it might give some readers the wrong impression. Black is actually able to salvage the game from the final position with a series of only moves: 2...♔e8! The king needs to be on this side of the pawn. (Going to the other sides loses to a nice little line: 2...♔c8 3.♜g8† ♔b7 4.♜g7† ♔c8 5.♜c7† ♔b8 6.♜e7 ♜d2 7.♔c6 ♜c2† 8.♔d7) 3.♜c1 ♜d2! The pawn is kept in line. 4.♜c8† ♔f7 5.♔c6 ♔e7!



White cannot make any progress.

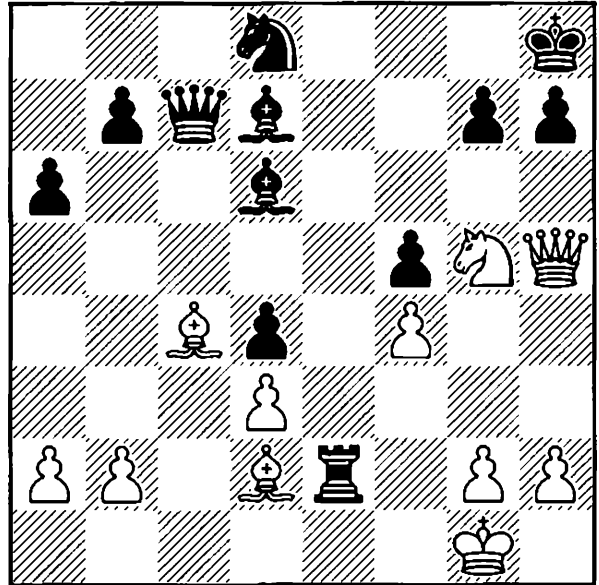
10 - Page 130



It is not clear to us if a pawn went missing from f2 in the typesetting in 1925, in the original manuscript or later on. The pawn is not there in the 1979 Danish edition, nor the 2005 German and Italian editions. Of course, we shall not exclude the possibility that Nimzowitsch quickly composed the example to make a general point and never really checked it. Had he done so, he would certainly have spotted 2...♔g6! 3.♙xe5 ♔h5 with a simple draw. White cannot prevent 4...f4, exchanging the last pawn.

11 – Page 222

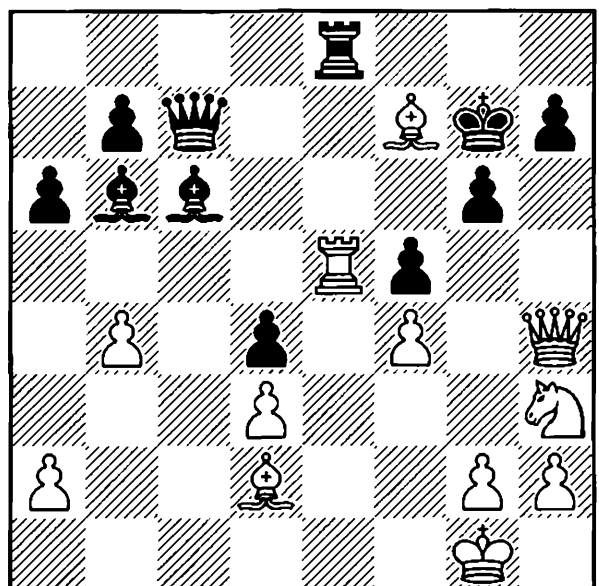
In the notes to 22...♙c6, starting with 22...♞e8 23.♞h5 ♞xe2 24.♘g5 we get this position:



Instead of the rather compliant 24...h6 Black can defend better with 24...♞xg2†! 25.♔xg2 ♙c6† 26.♔f1 g6 27.♞h4 h5! (the threat was 28.♙f7) 28.♘f7† ♘xf7 29.♞f6† ♔g8 30.♞xg6† ♔f8 31.♙xf7 ♞xf7 32.♞xd6† ♔g8, when he has reasonable hopes of reaching a draw.

For this reason White is better off with the simple 23.♞xe8† ♙xe8 24.♞d5 ♙f7 25.♞xf5 netting a pawn.

Later in the same game, at the beginning of page 223, we have the following position.

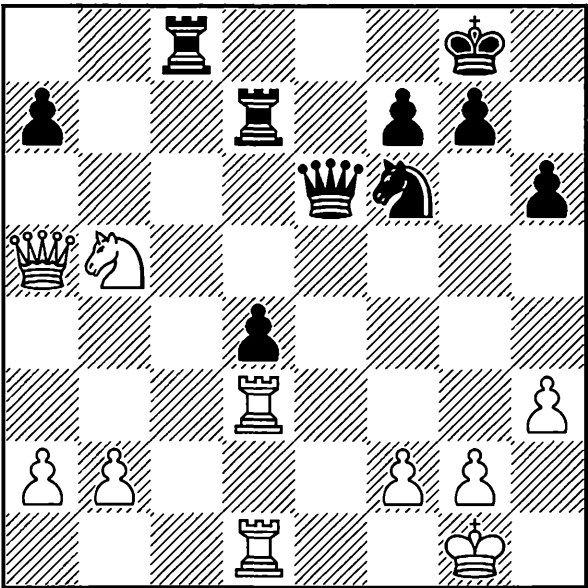


Nimzowitsch writes in the notes to 29...♔xf7: “If 29...♖xe5 then 30.fxe5 ♔xf7 31.♘g5 ♔g8 32.e6 ♕d5 33.♗f4 with an easy win.”

But 32...♕d8! is an improvement and might go straight to a draw.

So stronger would be 32.♘e4! which leads to some funny tactics: 32...♕d8 (The “concept” is 32...fxe4 33.♗f6 mate!) 33.♘f6 ♖f7 Preventing White’s queen escaping the pin with check. Now, out of several moves, 34.♕e3 looks quite good. The bishop is safe because of the potential check on c4. White is certainly much better, but not obviously winning.

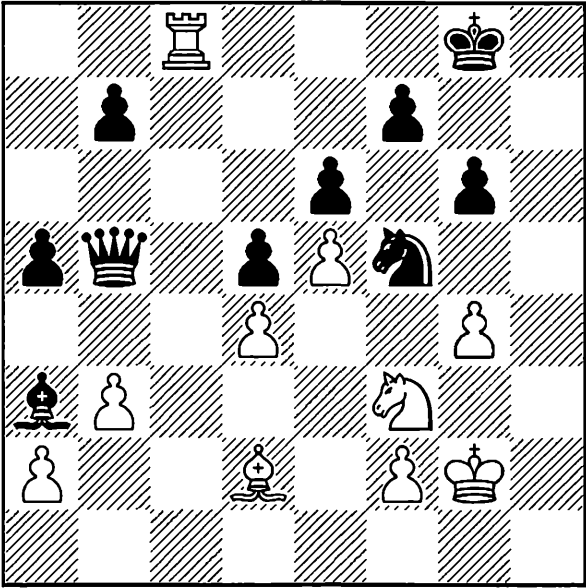
12 – Page 238



Nimzowitsch was very impressed by 28...♔f5 and eventually the game was drawn. But stronger was 28...♖c5! when after 29.♖xd4 (29.b4 would only make matters worse after 29...♖g5) 29...♖xd4 30.♖xd4 ♔e2! White has serious problems. 31.♔d8† ♖h7 32.♘c3 ♔xb2 33.♘d1 ♔xa2 losing a pawn is probably what he must accept.

13 - Page 248

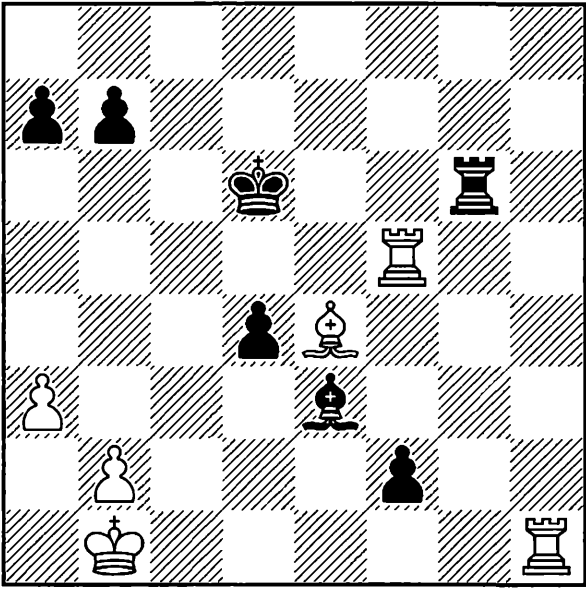
In the notes to 29...♖xc1 Nimzowitsch writes: “A pity. White wanted to offer a queen sacrifice after 29...♜f5, e.g. 29...♜f5 30.♖xc6 ♟xa3 31.♖c8† ♜g7 32.gxf5 with a strong attack.” This attack is certainly very dangerous, maybe even just winning. But Black can defend much better:



Nimzowitsch fails to mention 31...♜h7! when all White has is a draw after 32.gxf5 gxf5 33.♟g5 ♖d3! 34.♟f6 ♖e4!.

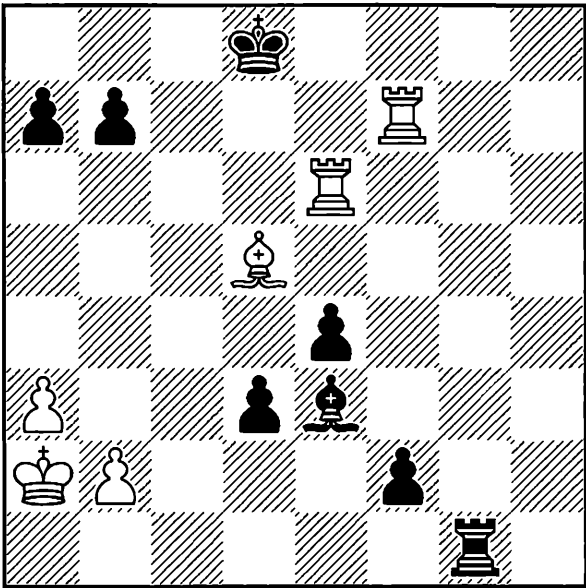
14 – Page 257-8

In Nimzowitsch – Kalinsky there are two very nice improvements to Nimzowitsch’s annotations. The first comes after 2...f2 3.♟xe4 (instead of 2...♖g4). This leaves us with this position:



Black has 3...♖g1† 4.♜c2 ♜e6!! with an amazing draw based on 5.♖f8 ♜e7 6.♖f5 ♜e6 with a repetition of moves. The bishop on e4 is overloaded.

Later in the game Nimzowitsch misses an elegant win when playing 9.♖ef6:



9.♖d6†! ♜e8 10.♖xb7 and White wins, based on 10...♖c1 11.♟xe4 ♟g5 12.♖dd7 when mate is inevitable.

Nimzowitsch for the 21st Century

- by Jacob Aagaard

Aron Nimzowitsch was born in Riga, Latvia, but from 1922 until his death in 1935 he lived in Copenhagen, Denmark. He wrote *My System* in 1925. His choice to write the book in German had undoubtedly more to do with marketing than his poetic abilities in this language. Still, it has been one of the most influential chess books of all time. Many of the top players have it on their list of best-ever chess books – often at Number One. For all that, previously published “New Editions” of *My System* were little more than reprints of a translation from 1929, just with more diagrams (in Nimzowitsch’s time, diagrams were a technical frustration for the publisher, but this is no longer the case).

In contrast, with this version we have had the original text translated anew so that the language will seem fresh to the modern reader. Also, we have included a number of corrections of typos and the like. Nimzowitsch’s ideas, however, have not been altered.

This does not mean that chess has not developed since 1925. On the contrary, many of Nimzowitsch’s opinions have been re-evaluated, refined, and in some cases forgotten about.

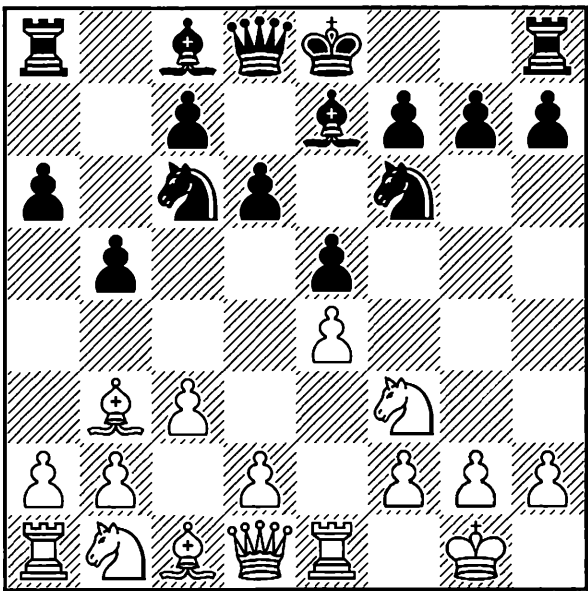
There was a ruling idea in science at the beginning of the 20th century that the mechanics of our physical reality had basically been worked out, and all that now remained was to fill in the missing slots. Then along came quantum physics and blew away the old understanding of the universe.

During the second half of the 20th century, chess underwent a similar transformation. The most important change was probably realizing the importance of dynamics. While some moves were ruled out on principle at the beginning of the 20th century, even in 1925 when this book was originally published, a more scientific approach gradually took over. I will try to give some brief headlines over the next few pages, but would

recommend that the reader refer to John Watson’s *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy – Developments Since Nimzowitsch* for a deeper understanding of how modern chess is approached by the strongest players. Like Nimzowitsch, Watson is not necessarily correct in every detail of his analysis, but, as with *My System*, reading his book will undoubtedly enhance the reader’s understanding of how chess works.

Watson describes the principle of *Rule-Independence* as the main paradigm shift during the 20th century. Many classical players tended to follow the “rules” more rigidly than a modern player would. Watson apologetically gives the following example of dogmatism from Capablanca to illustrate how far we have come:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3



8...♘a5 9.♙c2 c5 10.d4 ♔c7

“It can be said that the opening is over. In this variation, everyone, from critics to grandmasters, seems to agree that the moves of the text are the best ones. Bogoljubow, some time ago, tried to discredit the variation, castling with the black pieces on move eight instead of the text move

...♠a5. The innovation did not enjoy great success and the masters have returned to the old variation.

It is curious how this happens so often. The young masters want to do better than the old masters, and to prove all kinds of innovations. Sometimes the element of surprise produces good results; but with certain classical variations, as in the present case, the new moves are frustrated by uncompromising defence of the old guard.”

Modern theory of course gives 8...0-0 as the preferred move, and only after 9.h3 should Black consider 9...♠a5 10.♖c2 c5 11.d4 ♖c7, which is today known as the Chigorin variation, and is just one among several main lines. (Though 8...♠a5 is currently not favoured by theory, it still has a few followers, including grandmasters Larsen and Radulski. The latter used it to defeat Ivanchuk in 2004.)

Besides the difference of opinion between Capablanca and modern praxis, we should also note that in this position after move 11, opening theory is just beginning for modern players. At almost the same time as this new translation is published, Romanian grandmaster Mihail Marin will publish *A Spanish Repertoire for Black*, where close to a hundred pages will be dedicated to this very position; and the number of pages is only kept so low because, as a repertoire book, the majority of the theory can be disregarded.

Though few would expect 8...0-0 to go out of fashion, we have repeatedly seen that what was once considered the main line has been discredited because of a novelty. The current trend at the highest level in 2006 is thus to play 7...0-0 instead of 7...d6, when White does not allow 8.c3 d5!? (the Marshall Attack) which has been considered to equalize for Black for the last decade. Instead White looks for an advantage after 8.a4 or 8.h3.

It should also be mentioned that the point behind castling on move 8 as Black is to force White to spend time on 9.h3, which is hardly as useful as it is for Black to have castled, based on 9.d4 ♖g4, when White's centre is under pressure. Of course this does not mean that this

is not played! Currently 10.♗e3 is undergoing a revival with young Russian grandmasters introducing new ideas continuously. Amusingly, they seem to be following the game Capablanca – Bogoljubow, London 1922, a good deal of the way...

Watson's main point

One of Watson's main points is that chess has evolved over time. While 8...0-0 was deemed risky by Capablanca (but not an innovation, it was played in 1904 by Chigorin and earlier by other players), this move has now become standard. What is much more to the point is the rise of the Sicilian Defence. In the classical period (Watson puts the end of this arbitrarily at 1935, the year of Nimzowitsch's death) it was most common to reply to 1.e4 with 1...e5 and to 1.d4 with 1...d5. Today, the most popular answer to 1.e4 is 1...c5 and the most popular answer to 1.d4 is 1...♗f6, often with the intention of answering 2.c4 with 2...e6 and then 3.♗c3 with 3...♖b4, the Nimzo-Indian Defence, and 3.♗f3 with another Nimzowitsch favourite, 3...b6, the Queen's Indian Defence. To illustrate the topicality of this tandem it is worth noting that Veselin Topalov especially prepared to meet the Queen's Indian Defence in the 2005 World Championship in San Luis, Argentina, as this was a favourite of most of his opponents!

It would be wrong to talk about new dogmas replacing old ones when it comes to openings. We are closer to an “anything goes” situation, though it would be more prudent to talk about an expansion of the possible. For example: the Scandinavian Defence, which gives Black a lost game according to Nimzowitsch, is still seen frequently at international tournaments, and even once in the 1995 World Championship match between Kasparov and Anand. There are still openings that enjoy a better reputation than others, but the realm of the possible has greatly expanded.

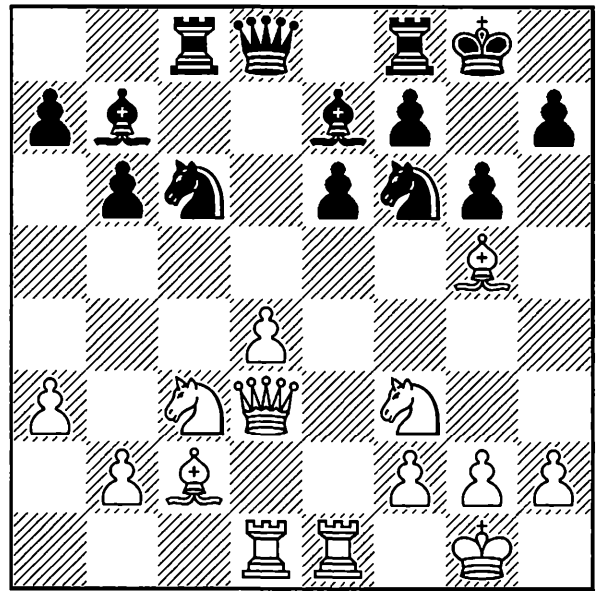
The reason for this can be explained this way: in the classical period (say, from Steinitz

till 1935) most players were technicians, with Capablanca as the most famous example. When playing Black, most players would strive towards equality and hope to outmanoeuvre their opponents later on. In the modern period this strategy is still used by some top players, but what seems to be a slight majority prefer to seek imbalanced positions, meaning that they will give concessions in return for gains. For example, by taking on a bad structure in return for a lead in development; or the other way around, as in a variation that is currently very popular among top players, the a6-Slav, where Black after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 plays the provocative 4...a6. Korchnoi, who is certainly not known to be dogmatic, accompanied this with a question mark in the notes to his 1996 game against Ivan Sokolov, even though Korchnoi lost that game and has not convincingly answered the a6-Slav since.

The biggest development in chess has been a development of the dynamic potential of the game. Though the change in style has been general and no player has changed chess single-handedly, it does make sense to mention the main characters. Players like Petrosian, Fischer, Karpov and Kramnik who have further developed the ideas of the classical masters, ideas such as prophylaxis and general technique. At the same time there has been a dynamic revolutionary guard with the main names being Tal and Kasparov. However, it is widely agreed that Alekhine was the first player to analyse really deeply and avoid dogmatic views. To this day, Alekhine remains a hero to every dynamic chess player. It is difficult, or perhaps impossible, to describe the changes in chess thinking entirely in general terms, so let's take a look at a definite example of the difference between classical and modern methods.

One specific example of the evolution of chess thinking is in the treatment of isolated queen pawn (IQP) positions. Nimzowitsch recommended putting the bishop on e3. Today we have a much more aggressive "perfect set-up" in these positions:

Belavsky – Karpov, USSR 1986



White's possibilities in these structures have been dealt with exhaustively in Alexander Baburin's superb book *Winning Pawn Structures*. After studying Baburin's book it is obvious that our understanding of how to play such positions has improved beyond all recognition since the days of *My System*.

Is *My System* still relevant?

So, given the huge development in chess theory, it is reasonable to challenge the relevance of what is undeniably an old book. What can one learn from a book written 81 years ago? To fully answer this question would require reading the book aloud from page 1, so let me instead offer a different, but relevant question:

Were the strongest players of Nimzowitsch's time equal to our own?

It is a common view among chess critics (Watson is one of them) that chess masters of the past did not possess the strength of today's masters, and that this is not only a question of acquiring opening theory, but also a question of chess having changed dramatically. Though this sounds logical we should also take into account that the opposing view has strong advocates:

"When I review the games of the old masters, I realize they were by no means weaker than contemporary players; maybe even stronger!

I am talking about middlegame and endgame play, naturally. If a chess genius like Alekhine was brought into our time and given access to modern theory, he would be able to compete at the highest level.” – *World No. 93, grandmaster Alexander Riazantsev* on ChessCafe.com 2006.

When you look at Nimzowitsch’s technical performance in the games in this book I tend to agree with Riazantsev. But when it comes to complex positional decisions I simply cannot judge. The only conclusion I can make is that Nimzowitsch was a stronger player than me. That assures me that there is definitely something to be learned from the old masters. The foundations of chess in the 21st century were laid in the 19th and 20th century by true

giants of the game. Look, for example, at what one of Watson’s main heroes has to say on the subject:

“I am sure that Steinitz would become world champion if he was born in our time. I analysed a lot of his games and can honestly say that no one contributed as much to chess as he did.” Artur Yusupov in conversation in 2006.

In conclusion, chess understanding has certainly evolved and expanded since *My System* was written - anything else would be a wonder - but that does not destroy the relevance of this classic book. Modern chess thinking is a refinement of previous ideas, leaving the study of *My System* as an essential part of a full chess education.



MY SYSTEM

Aron Nimzowitsch was one of the greatest chess players of the 1920s and 1930s, ranked just behind the famous World Champions Alekhine and Capablanca. His reputation as an author is higher still.

My System is at the top of a very short list of chess classics. Nimzowitsch's ideas have had a profound influence on modern chess thinking. Most chess masters will at some point have studied Nimzowitsch's work, and not to have read My System is by many regarded as a shocking gap in a chess player's education.

The problem for an English-speaking audience has been that My System was written in German more than eighty years ago. The commonly-used contemporary translations have sounded dated for some time, and were always questionable: the translators frequently toned down many passages, fearing Nimzowitsch's biting wit would be too controversial.

This edition uses a brand-new translation that recreates the author's original intentions. For the first time an English-speaking audience can appreciate the true nature of a famous chess book.

- A modern uncensored translation of a chess classic.
- A famous chess book with a superb reputation.
- The first new English translation in decades.
- Previous translations have censored and diluted the author's writing.

£14.99 €21.99 \$29.95

ISBN 10:91-976005-3-9

ISBN 13:978-91-976005-3-8



QUALITY CHESS

www.qualitychessbooks.com

