

Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy

Advances Since Nimzowitsch

John Watson

GAMBIT

Contents

Symbols	6
Dedication	6
Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
Part 1: The Refinement of Traditional Theory	
1: Overview	10
The Nature of Middlegame Theory	10
Methodology	12
2: The Centre and Development	14
The Centre and Tempi	14
Pawn-Grabbing in the Opening	17
The Really Big Centre	22
The Mobile Central Pawn-mass	22
Surrender of the Centre	27
3: Minorities, Majorities, and Passed Pawns	30
Minority Attacks	30
Majorities and Candidates	33
Passed Pawns and the Blockade	35
The Lustful Contemporary Passed Pawn	37
4: Pawns: in Chains and Doubled Up	41
Nimzowitsch's New Ideas	41
Nimzowitsch and Doubled Pawns	43
An Old Dispute	46
The Evolution of Doubled-Pawn Theory	49
Tripling Up	55
5: The Evolution of the IQP	59
Framing the Issue	59
The Modern IQP Environment	62
6: Minor-Piece Issues	66
The Conventional View	66
Opposite Colours Attract?	70
Folklore or Reality? Queens and Knights	71
7: Those Radical Rooks	75
Seventh and Eighth Ranks	75
Rooks Who Roam on Ranks	75
Drawish Endings?	81

asserted in accordance

ot, by way of trade or
inding or cover other
this condition being

n the British Library

N.
ilbooks.com
USA.

contact the publishers,

8: Royalty in Our Times	83
The Nimzo-Kingdian Defence	83
King Adventures after Nimzowitsch	84
9: Assorted Topics	88
Manoeuvring and Weaknesses	88
Exchanging, Old and New	89
Overprotection: A Few Remarks	89
Part 2: New Ideas and the Modern Revolution	
1: Overview	92
The Death of Chess Revisited	92
2: Rule-Independence	97
The Demise of the General Rule; Examples from Practice	98
Description Versus Reality	103
The Royal Guard and How It Strays	104
Affording Common Courtesy to a Horse	108
3: Modern Pawn Play	111
New Treatments of the Pawn-chain	111
The Positional Pawn Sacrifice	117
Are Your Pawns Really Backward?	125
The New Relationship of Flank to Centre	133
Other Pawn Issues	137
4: The Modern Bishop	140
All That Fianchettoing	140
The New Morality of Bad Bishops	142
The Bishop-pair Reconsidered	147
5: The Contemporary Knight	151
They Live on the Edge	151
Optical Illusions	157
Are You Feeling Superfluous?	160
6: Bishops versus Knights 1: One-on-One	163
The Minor Pieces Face Off	163
7: Bishops versus Knights 2: Minor-Piece Pairs	169
Against all Odds: Championing the Steeds	169
<i>a) Classical Case: Permanent Weaknesses</i>	169
<i>b) Space/Centre for Bishops: An Obscure Trade-off</i>	175
<i>c) Reversing the Conventional Wisdom</i>	178
Vengeance of the Bishops	191
A Practical Digression	195
8: The Exchange Sacrifice	197
Origins	197

83	A Conceptual Leap	199
83	Petrosian's Patent	202
84	The Unfinished Product	205
88	9: Prophylaxis	211
88	Nimzowitsch's Notion	211
89	Modern Prophylaxis: Pervasive Prevention	214
89		
	10: Dynamism: The Modern Difference	222
	What is Dynamism?	222
	Accumulation or Plunder?	224
	Dynamic Balance and Planning	227
92	Optical Advantages versus Elasticity	228
92		
	11: Time and Information	231
97	Information Theory and Chess	231
98	<i>Remis?</i>	232
103	Time and Reversed Openings	233
104	Today's Symmetry is Tomorrow's Opportunity	236
108		
	12: The Initiative Dance: Some Musings	238
111	The Mysteries of Momentum: What is an Advantage?	238
111	Dynamism and Provocation	240
117		
125	13: The Modern Opening Reconsidered	244
133	The Paradox of Alekhine	244
137	The Analytical Revolution	247
	An Overview of Contemporary Theory	248
140	The Avant-Garde	262
140		
142	14: Playing Modern Chess/Conclusion	265
147	Conclusion	267
151	Bibliography	268
151		
157	Index of Players	270
160	Index of Openings	272
163		
163		
169		
169		
169		
175		
178		
191		
195		
197		
197		

Introduction

In *Chessman Comics #2*¹, Chessman and Zugzwang are seen watching the chess western movie "Fort Blunder", starring General Principle and Chief Alternative, in which the following dialogue takes place between the General and his assistant: "General Principle, sir, you've almost killed off them Old Indians!"; "Yup, but I fear there are new Indian formations coming!". At the time of Nimzowitsch, the world of chess was undergoing major transformations which would indeed challenge the general principles then dominating chess theory. In fact, these changes, most apparent in the new Indian formations championed by Nimzowitsch himself, ultimately cast into doubt the very validity of having such things as 'general principles' at all. Nimzowitsch challenged older theory, and his successors ushered in an era of pragmatism, rejection of dogmatism, and analytical research which still characterizes chess today. My task in this book has been to identify the most important changes in chess theory which distinguish modern from classical chess thought.

Right away, since I am aware how daunting this book may seem to the reader, I want to make some organizational and philosophic points. First, defining what is 'modern' in chess has been a tricky task; as a general guideline, I have chosen 1935, the year of Nimzowitsch's death, as a dividing point between modern and pre-modern play. Of course, there was no revolution in chess thought during that particular year; so ideas which I characterize as 'modern' were not necessarily unheard of before 1935, and naturally, some of the concepts I will emphasize have only recently entered the general consciousness. But when the reader is confused as to why I am designating an idea as 'modern' or 'classical', he or she is advised to take this somewhat arbitrary dividing point as a guide.

Unfortunately, the structure of this book is a bit tricky, and I hope the reader will forgive me if I make repeated explanations about it. Part 1 is designed to make the student feel comfortable with classical theory and with Nimzowitsch's revisions to that theory. It seemed only fair to the average chess fan to explain a bit about older theory and to lay some foundation for later claims of radical change. But Part 1 also opens the subject of the modern 'evolution' of the older theory. Although the distinction is a bit arbitrary, I have introduced in Part 1 what could be termed 'natural' developments of older theory, whereas Part 2 is devoted to 'revolutionary' changes, for example, ones which refute older principles or involve fundamental philosophical changes. Thus, both parts fulfill the mandate of the book's subtitle ('Advances Since Nimzowitsch'); but Part 2 covers, with a minimal review of past thought, the new ideas which radically distinguish modern play. Hopefully, the chapter and section introductions will help the reader to make sense of these distinctions. At the risk of becoming tedious, I will repeat and expand upon what I have just said about the organization of this book in the first chapter of Part 1, and then again, to a lesser extent, in the first chapter of Part 2.

Next, I want to discuss my stylistic approach to this book, including the use of statistics and my choice of exemplary material. The first point to make is that this is *not* an instructional book. While I would hope and assume that its study can only help one as a player, that is not its primary purpose. Nor am I writing a complete guide to chess middlegame theory, in the way that well-known books written by Pachman or Euwe and Kramer have done. The book before you *is* a sort of middlegame book, with numerous examples from opening theory, since the opening and middlegame are no longer

1 The author referring to his own *oeuvre!* *Chessman Comics #2*; Watson & Myreng; Chess Enterprises Inc., 1982.

ing me about chess

ce, and to the folks at
M Larry D Evans, for

functionally separable. Within that context, however, I am concerned with a large but limited set of topics I find relevant to my thesis of advances in modern chess. So, for example, if the reader looks for a section about "Open Files as a Factor in an Attack against the King" (Pachman), I may have said absolutely nothing about the subject. There is also little of a 'how to play' variety here. My goal has been to investigate theoretical issues, not, for example, how to handle time-pressure or prepare for the next tournament. The exciting reality is that there is enough material and food for thought to write a book twice this long without deviating from chess ideas themselves.

From time to time throughout both Parts, I have referred to statistical analysis I have run on some issue (the frequency of appearance of a certain pawn structure, for example, or the winning percentages of Black in the Sicilian Defence). In every case, this was done using the ChessBase database program. Although I have not always indicated the size or scope of the searches done, I have tried to make each search as unambiguous and statistically significant as possible. But interpretations of such data may certainly vary, and the reader might have fun doing his own research on such topics, especially since there are more subtle distinctions to be gleaned by so doing. For the first time, I think, certain ancient issues are subject to at least partial solution by using this type of analysis. As my ever-astute editor Graham Burgess points out, however, the use of such statistics leads to unavoidable ambiguities. Suppose, for example, that you examine a large set of endings to decide whether queen and knight are superior to queen and bishop. If players already feel that the queen and knight are superior, they may tend to convert superior positions into that presumably safest of advantageous endings. The resulting win-loss percentages will then be skewed in favour of the queen and knight, since they will reflect perception as well as reality. While I could do nothing about such effects, I did take care to examine not just statistics, but concrete examples whenever making a statistical claim. To cut a long story short, I feel that my tentative conclusions are largely correct in spite of this problem; and in the most controversial cases (such as ♖+♘ vs ♖+♙), any

skewing would tend to favour the side I'm arguing against (in this case, the side with queen-and-knight), and thus its correction would only strengthen my argument. If that last sentence is confusing, just keep in mind the drift of this discussion when you come across statistical arguments!

The most difficult part of writing this book has involved the choice of what examples to use. At first, I wanted to avoid the re-use of the same classic examples which middlegame and instructional books have tended to beat into the ground. Experienced readers will know which ones I mean. On the other hand, it would be sheer arrogance to ignore what the many wonderful writers on middlegame topics have said about the issues I am dealing with. Ultimately, I reviewed and took notes on a wide array of books, mostly theoretical works, instructional books, and games collections. Many of these are indicated in the bibliography. I used more examples from these than I had originally intended, in part because of the wisdom imparted by their authors, but also because I discovered a number of new aspects to these examples (including errors and mistaken assessments) which I felt clarified my arguments about the differences we see in modern chess. Then, as will be particularly evident in Part 2, I used database searches to find fresh examples of games with modern ideas which range from routine to path-breaking. Since many of these modern examples might seem a little bizarre to the less experienced reader, their juxtaposition with well-known examples and with fairly nondescript exemplary positions will hopefully put one more at ease while exploring the new concepts. Another general issue which I'm sure will arouse comment concerns the relative chess understanding of classical and modern players. The reader should understand that my own early chess education was almost entirely filled by the study of the games of players before 1930; and the very first thing I did in preparing for this book was to play over and critically examine hundreds of games by the old masters, as well as to read the classic texts and tournament books. Although I seldom explicitly address the subject, it will be obvious that I consider modern players to have a broader and more subtle understanding of the

game than their predecessors. Normally, this would go without saying, and it in no way denigrates the great old masters, much as it hardly undercuts Bill Tilden's achievements in tennis to state that Andre Agassi would dominate him in a match, or Newton's work in physics to say that he failed to invent relativity theory. But there is so much emotion invested in the veneration of the old champions that I want to emphasize my respect for their play, and also how irrelevant I consider the direct comparison between champions of vastly different eras. The point of the book is to show what has changed

in modern chess, not to make negative judgments about individual players.

Finally, I need to remind the reader that there is no way of 'proving' the various claims I make about modern play. I can show examples, of course, but in the end, I will undoubtedly over- or under-estimate the importance of various ideas. This book will be most meaningful if one keeps a careful eye out to assess whether the theories presented here have a solid empirical basis in one's own study and play. I hope that my book will at least influence you to do so, and to think freshly about modern chess.

John Watson
Carlsbad, CA; 1998

Part 1: The Refinement of Traditional Theory

1 Overview

The Nature of Middlegame Theory

Chess is traditionally divided into three phases: opening, middlegame, and endgame. Throughout chess history, but especially in the last four decades, opening theory has expanded steadily. Of late, this expansion has become a sort of explosion, and we are inundated with almost unlimited material on this phase of the game, from books to magazines to databases. Endgame theory, while never an area of intense popular interest, has always inspired a flow of high-quality books and articles, if only because the ending is so well-suited to definitive conclusions and strict analysis.

But what of middlegame theory? Players wishing to study this area of the game have a limited and rather unsatisfactory range of resources from which to choose. Rather than address this phase of play in a theoretical sense, books tend to focus on more popular and tractable topics such as combinations, attack and defence, how to improve one's thinking, and general advice for the competitor. In contrast to the opening and endgame, areas in which players normally turn to a contemporary work for enlightenment, many if not most students still read the classics when it comes to middlegame theory. How many of us learned our general middlegame principles from, say, Lasker and Nimzowitsch, or from the newer, but hardly contemporary, works of Euwe and Kramer, Romanovsky, or Pachman? In the United States, to this day, the most popular of these traditional sources is Nimzowitsch's *My System*, a book written in 1925! However brilliant, readable, and ahead-of-its-time that book is (and it is all

those things), one has to wonder that we don't have any number of more advanced and updated works of its kind. Has the theory of the middlegame gone nowhere in the last 68 years?

Despite its appearance, that is not just a rhetorical question, and it requires a bit of thought to answer. On the one hand, this book will try to show that the state of modern chess theory is indeed dramatically different from the state of theory at the time of Nimzowitsch. On the other hand, it is extremely difficult to codify that difference in the way that chess theory has traditionally been presented, that is, with general rules, principles, or philosophic statements. We are all familiar with the kind of rules to which I am referring, ones which are purportedly useful if not strictly accurate, e.g., move each piece once in the opening, develop knights before bishops, pawns are strongest abreast, rooks belong behind passed pawns, don't put knights on the edge of the board, two bishops constitute an advantage, don't move pawns in front of your king, refrain from pawn-hunting when undeveloped, and so many others. Then there are 'principles' of positional play, which are often descriptions of the advantages or disadvantages of various elements of play, e.g., bad bishops, backward pawns, knight outposts, centralized pieces, doubled pawn complexes, pawn-chains, and countless other considerations to which we will return in the course of this book.

I will now risk a statement that is at least in spirit, if not literally, true: *This type of 'rule-oriented' and 'principle-oriented' theory was worked out or at least substantially understood by the time of Nimzowitsch's death in 1935.* To put that a little differently, the rules and principles which could be clearly stated and still have

prospects of applying to practical play with general usefulness had already been enunciated and internalized by the world's best players by 1935. Let's assume that this proposition is true for the moment. Wouldn't it explain the lack of later works which posit a whole new set of principles and rules, reflecting the discoveries of later generations? But here's where things get tricky. Anyone who reads a great deal of chess literature will be familiar with a related point of view, which goes something like this: 'Oh yes, all the fundamental principles were known by the great Old Masters. Modern chess consists of applying them to an increasing number of specific positions, along with a massive increase in opening theory.' One might even add: of 'mere' opening theory, for many with this attitude make the familiar claim that if you simply gave, say, Lasker or Capablanca some time to 'catch up' with modern opening theory, they would immediately be challengers for the world title.

I completely disagree with this point of view, and I don't believe it follows from my italicized statement above at all. Furthermore, it misses the point. While modern chess theory has advanced tremendously since the time of the early masters, it hasn't advanced in a simplistic, rule-based fashion. In fact, to emphasize this, Part 2 of this book will begin its examination of modern chess with a whole chapter emphasizing its 'rule-independent' nature. But is modern chess therefore somehow less 'principled' than that of older times? There are several ways of answering this question. The first, least disturbing, answer was expressed by Richard Réti in his magnificent classic *Modern Ideas in Chess*, when he was describing the modern style:

"What is really a rule of chess? Surely not a rule arrived at with mathematical precision, but rather an attempt to formulate a method of winning in a given position or of reaching an ultimate object, and to apply that method to similar positions. As, however, no two positions are quite alike, the so-called rule, if applied to an apparently similar position, may possibly be wrong, or at least as regards that particular position, there may exist a more suitable or effectual method of play. *It is the aim of the modern school not to treat every position according to one general law, but according to the principle*

inherent in the position. An acquaintance with other positions and the rules applicable to the treatment thereof is of great use for the purpose of analysing and obtaining a grasp of the particular position under consideration ... the source of the greatest errors is to be found in those moves that are made merely according to rule and not based on the individual plan or thought of the player." [italics mine]

This eloquent exposition contains the relatively benign notion that in chess, general rules will never have universal application, and the rather more daring one that each position has a principle inherent in it. That insight is closely related to another fundamental tendency of modern chess: the increasing reliance on concrete analysis. That phrase ('concrete analysis') has been a favourite of a whole series of leading players and theoreticians from what was often called 'The Soviet School of Chess'. Whether they formed such a 'school' or not can be argued, and of course, they claimed a variety of philosophic tenets. But the unifying claim which most clearly distinguishes the post-war generation of dominant players was the rejection of dogma and primacy of concrete analysis over abstract evaluation. Or, stated slightly differently, the replacement of general rules by an emphasis on the characteristics and consequences of the position at hand. In this respect, it is interesting to consider the recent books of super-trainer GM Mark Dvoretsky, which are making a huge impression on the European and American chess worlds. Among the many ideas and practical techniques he presents in his books, a powerful and consistent theme (and interestingly, the one singled out for praise by Kasparov) is the value of 'the analytic approach', which assigns paramount value to actual analysis. It would be hard to think of a modern world-class player who does not take this approach.

There is another way to answer the question 'Is modern chess less principled?'. A more radical response is to say that there are, indeed, a great number of new principles and even 'rules' *implicit* in modern play. But these principles and rules have not been explicitly stated; or in a very few cases, they have been stated, but not in a way that has infiltrated the conscious thinking of contemporary players. The reasons for this

wonder that we don't
ore advanced and up-
Has the theory of the
re in the last 68 years?
e, that is not just a rhe-
quires a bit of thought
id, this book will try to
ern chess theory is in-
rent from the state of
zowitsch. On the other
icult to codify that dif-
hess theory has tradi-
that is, with general
sophic statements. We
ind of rules to which I
are purportedly useful
e.g., move each piece
velop knights before
gest abreast, rooks be-
s, don't put knights on
bishops constitute an
awns in front of your
-hunting when unde-
thers. Then there are
play, which are often
ages or disadvantages
ay, e.g., bad bishops,
outposts, centralized
plexes, pawn-chains,
derations to which we
of this book.
nent that is at least in
e: *This type of 'rule-
oriented' theory was
stantially understood
h's death in 1935.* To
; the rules and princi-
y stated and still have

lack of exposition are quite simple: the subtlety and complexity of such new principles would tend to require pages of painstakingly qualified prose for them to be adequately described, and it is both more natural and efficient for players to simply internalize this type of 'rule' during the over-the-board solution of hundreds of relevant positions. In fact, it may be said of any chess rule that the concrete experience of an individual player gives him a more accurate and subtle understanding of its application than any conceivable verbal statement could.

Regardless of which of these two apparently opposing models we prefer, the days of easily expressible general guidelines are over. Thus, there is very little possibility that players or researchers will ever undertake to extend the project begun by Steinitz, Tarrasch, and Nimzowitsch, that is, the codification of chess principles on a large scale. Ironically, although chess students are always warned to see the big picture rather than get lost in a morass of variations, the reality is that the modern player derives his *perspective and intuition* from the detailed analysis of great numbers of positions. When you combine this fact with the growing irrelevance of so many of the classical rules, it is hardly surprising that writers are reluctant even to address the subject of modern principles, preferring to give examples of modern play which they deem typical.

Methodology

In light of the above, the very attempt to elucidate modern chess in general terms may seem old-fashioned and misguided. And yet, our modern literature of games collections, annotated games, and magazine articles reveals a large pool of profound and revealing comments by strong players about new and subtle ways of thinking about the game. Even more powerfully, their games themselves speak to us. It is still possible to discover general wisdom in the mass of modern practice; we simply have to realize that the new ideas will be more qualified and specific than the bold and often discredited generalities of former times. Furthermore, there is a dynamic interconnectedness in chess which needs be taken into account; thus, modern guidelines will often have more to do with

techniques, sequences and procedures than with static rules.

To address such a complex subject, I have chosen to divide my discussion into two rather arbitrary parts. Part 1 of this book will review classical theory, and examine how certain traditional theoretical issues have been resolved or transformed in modern chess. The advances discussed will be in the broader sense 'evolutionary'; we want to see what revisions and extensions of older theory can be described without scrapping old models or resorting to a new and potentially burdensome vocabulary. Part 2 tries to address the more 'revolutionary' ideas of the modern age. Many of these ideas involve the complete rejection of older rules, rather than their mere revision. Naturally, this distinction is rather arbitrary, and an overlapping of topics is inevitable; just for example, the treatment of doubled and tripled pawns in Part 1, Chapter 4, could probably have fitted into Part 2 as well. While on the subject of how 'revolutionary' a chess idea is, it might be useful to consider the historical role of Nimzowitsch's work. If one reviews the writings of Steinitz and Tarrasch, and games ranging from those of the nineteenth-century masters to Nimzowitsch's contemporaries, one can make the case that almost everything explicated and categorized in *My System* can be found in the previous literature and games. On top of that, Nimzowitsch's own games are often unconvincing evidence for his own principles; one could argue (and it has been said) that Nimzowitsch more often won his games by superior calculation and even trickery than by application of his principles. But the enormity of his achievement resides in something else entirely; it is in transforming the underlying, implicit principles of the chess played up to his time into an explicit, conscious part of modern chess-players' thought. Steinitz had done this with certain concepts such as the bishop-pair, pawn weaknesses, queenside majority, and other positional principles and techniques. Nimzowitsch either invented or brought into general use fundamental concepts such as the blockade, seventh rank, outposts, prophylaxis, the treatment of pawn-chains and doubled pawns, and many others. The fact that other chess-players had utilized such concepts in

their games (or for that matter, played various hypermodern openings) is hardly relevant, since they did so for the most part randomly and unsystematically.

Likewise, just about any 'modern' chess idea expounded upon in this book can be found in some game or other prior to 1935; but these ideas had not become the conscious (and everyday) property of the world's leading players. To give a simple example (only because it is more easily stated in a few words than most of the ideas we will be dealing with), the sacrifice of the exchange obviously occurred well before the Soviet masters took a particular liking to it in the 1940s and 1950s; but it was neither a frequent occurrence nor a part of the chess consciousness of the times. Similarly, the notion of attacking pawn-chains at the front of the chain (and not at the base) certainly occurred prior to modern times; but it is now a conscious part of the chess-player's arsenal, and is employed in certain familiar and well-defined contexts. Other changes are more general, for example new ideas about time and development, dynamism, modern prophylaxis, and such things. I

would contend that such advances are meaningful and real, despite the difficulty in describing them.

Beginning with the next chapter, then, our task in Part 1 will be to present sketches of older theory and to show what has changed, while remaining in the context of the old formulations. I will try to do this by following, to some extent, the order of exposition in Nimzowitsch's *My System*. Furthermore, I will try to consider what Nimzowitsch himself said about a particular area first, before addressing what others before and after him thought. This is primarily a stylistic device, and due to the limited relevance of a number of topics in *My System*, it will be only a general guideline. It is important to remember that, since the subjects addressed are ones connected with particular new ideas in modern chess, this book is by no means comprehensive. The reader should not expect a primer or general work on positional chess; but rather, an exposition of certain topics which illustrate the advances of modern theory.

Without further ado, then, let's turn to the chess itself!

Part 2: New Ideas and the Modern Revolution

1 Overview

In Part 1, we reviewed classical principles and discussed their extensions and revisions in modern times. Now it is time to indulge ourselves by examining what is truly new and unique about chess in our era. These distinguishing features might be thrown into relief by a short excursion into the past...

The Death of Chess Revisited

The reader will recall that our (rather arbitrary) date of departure into 'modernity' is 1935. The main representatives of the 'hypermodern school' had already passed their peaks. And according to some chess writers, they were considered to have been defeated by the classical school. This was based on tournaments such as New York 1924 and New York 1927 and more importantly, by the persistence of classical players such as Lasker and Capablanca in the world championship, followed by Alekhine, who at any rate was no hypermodern.

This was also the era of talk about 'the death of chess'. There are varying accounts, but the details are inessential with respect to the concept itself. Réti's version in *Modern Ideas in Chess* has it that due to the large number of draws at the beginning of Capablanca's 1921 match with Lasker, Capablanca expressed the following view (quoting Réti now): "Chess technique and the knowledge of openings have progressed to such an extent today that it might, even against a weaker player, be difficult to win a game. As a remedy, he [Capablanca] proposed a reform in chess. He suggested a change in the opening position, and as an example the interchange of the positions of rooks and bishops. I think that perhaps Capablanca's fears are

exaggerated ... But in principle, [he] was certainly right." Réti goes on to agree with Lasker's suggestion that one should be able to win by eliminating the opponent's material (along with a change in the stalemate rule).

According to Imre König's account, Lasker himself, after his match with Capablanca, "predicted that Capablanca's detailed analysis of openings would lead to the death of chess by draws. Capablanca expressed similar views after his defeat by Alekhine." Whoever first floated the idea of the death of chess, I find it revealing that all three of these great players felt that chess had been essentially worked out, that something was wrong with the game, and (most amusingly) that 'detailed' opening theory was responsible for the increasing drawishness of chess. Little did they know!

Perhaps the first point to make is that the 'death by draw' theory was based on some rather scanty evidence in the first place, for example, two matches in which Capablanca was involved. One could argue that Capablanca played conservatively in general, and especially against world-class players in match situations. Also, all three participants in these matches employed an extremely limited opening repertoire, which led to the same lines being repeated and little chance of either side gaining a large advantage. Furthermore, one should note that the Lasker match went only 14 games before Lasker withdrew.

Apart from those considerations, was chess really getting that much more drawish? Looking at databases, one can see an apparent rise in drawishness from the period 1800-1900 (for which I have White winning 46%, Black 36%, with 18% draws) to the period 1901-1935

(44%-32%-24%), but even this 6% rise might be partially explained by a bias in the database games selected, i.e., in a relatively small selection of early games, there is a tendency to include a lot of individual wins (e.g., all Morphy's casual games), as opposed to the complete tournament results which dominate databases with modern games. It is also interesting to compare 1890-1910 (44%-33%-24%, figures rounded), virtually indistinguishable from the 1901-1935 results. Continuing along this vein, did drawishness indeed take over chess in the modern period? We indeed see a definite rise in the 1935-65 era to 41%-28%-31%; hardly a death blow to competitiveness, however. Then, interestingly, a minuscule decline in the draw rate (and slight gain in Black's fortunes) for more recent times (post-1965) at 40%-30%-30%, a figure that has been looking remarkably stable.

So the draw threat was greatly exaggerated, and chess continues apace. Why? It is first interesting to look at what Alekhine said, again quoting König: "Alekhine, however, took the opposite view, saying that the imperfection of technique was the cause of the greater number of draws. As to the over-analysis of openings, he considered that we knew very little about them." Well, yes! In this last respect, Alekhine was simply right, and so many of his contemporaries wrong. I will separately discuss the changes and expansion of modern chess openings towards the end of Part 2. And in general, Part 2 may be said to provide an answer to Lasker and Capablanca's arguments. A great number of factors have gone into the continued decisiveness of modern chess results, despite the greater knowledge, experience, and technical facility of the modern player. The chapters which follow attempt to serve as a guide to some of those factors. Perhaps paramount among them, however, is the gradual relaxation of dogmatism which accompanies modern play.

On the one hand, who cannot have the greatest respect for the genius of a Lasker, Capablanca, Tarrasch or Rubinstein? They were magnificent players who advanced chess enormously and continue to captivate modern generations. In particular, the drama of their confrontations (being so infrequent, and in an era of so few professional players) lends a romance which, to many, seems missing in modern

play. Nevertheless, these players (and their contemporaries) were inevitably unimaginative and limited in several respects. Essentially, the range of positions they considered playable (or even worthy of investigation) was very narrow, and, on the grounds of 'general principles', they continually dismissed ideas and moves which we now consider natural and normal.

We will discuss the movement away from such high concepts in subsequent chapters. For now, although later chapters go into a lot more detail, let's take a brief look at the attitudes of older masters just in the realm of opening theory. First, there's simply the issue of what openings people saw fit to play. In the 1800s, anything but 1 e4 was a bit eccentric; 1 e4 e5 was played in about 64% of games, and 1 e4 with another reply (almost always a French or a Sicilian) was played in about 23%. 1 d4 d5 occurred in about 10% of games (mainly due to an influx at the end of the century, which elicited contempt from some of the Classicists), and other answers to 1 d4 were below the noise level (less than 1% combined). Alternatives to 1 e4 and 1 d4 (Staunton's 1 c4 notwithstanding) were so rare as not even to be a subject of controversy.

By the period 1901-1935, 1 d4 had become orthodox, with 1 d4 d5 grabbing 28% of the games, and other answers to 1 d4 occurring a respectable 16% of the time. 1 e4 e5 was still being played 31% of the time, with other answers to 1 e4 (still the French and the Sicilian, two-thirds of the time, with some others creeping in) using up 20% of the game space. This leaves a surprising 5% (these numbers are rounded off) for other first moves, as the hyper-moderns begin to leave their mark.

The modern figures are drastically down to 14% for 1 e4 e5 (and lower among the world's top players; see the next paragraph), 35% for other replies to 1 e4 (slightly more than half of these Sicilians!), 15% for 1 d4 d5 (repeat my remark for 1 e4 e5), and 23% for other replies to 1 d4. The 12% for other openings reflects the popularity of the English Opening more than anything else, since 1 $\text{c}\text{c}\text{f}\text{3}$ tends to transpose to an English or Queen's Pawn opening.

Turning to top-level play (by investigating a database of *Informators*), we see that 1 e4 e5 is still less common at 9.5%, and 1 d4 d5 is played

inciple, [he] was cer-
s on to agree with
one should be able to
opponent's material
re stalemate rule).

nig's account, Lasker
with Capablanca, "pre-
detailed analysis of
the death of chess by
used similar views af-
fine." Whoever first
th of chess, I find it re-
rese great players felt
tially worked out, that
h the game, and (most
l' opening theory was
asing drawishness of
w!

t to make is that the
was based on some
the first place, for ex-
hich Capablanca was
gue that Capablanca
n general, and espe-
players in match situ-
participants in these
remely limited open-
o the same lines being
of either side gaining
ermore, one should
h went only 14 games

iderations, was chess
ich more drawish?
e can see an apparent
the period 1800-1900
winning 46%, Black
the period 1901-1935

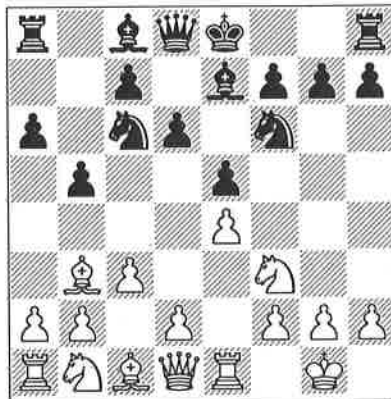
13.8% of the time. There are some very interesting details when we look more closely. The old Orthodox lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined (including all ... $\text{Qb}7$ lines like the Capablanca Variation, and throwing in the Lasker Variation just for good measure) account for less than 2% of the 1 d4 d5 games, or about a 0.25% of all games. And yet this was the variation which was leading to the 'death of chess'! The fact is that even the formerly narrowly-interpreted lines of 1 d4 d5 have broadened considerably in scope, especially with the popularity of the Slav Defence and Queen's Gambit Accepted, whereas similar things could be said about 1 e4 e5. In his *Last Lectures*, for example, Capablanca, for example, presents the following rather smug view of the Ruy Lopez, an opening he certainly knew a thing or two about:

1 e4 e5 2 $\text{Nf}3$ $\text{Qc}6$ 3 $\text{Bb}5$ a6 4 $\text{Ba}4$ $\text{Nf}6$ 5 0-0 $\text{Be}7$

"The variation preferred today by a majority of masters..."

6 $\text{Re}1$ b5 7 $\text{Bb}3$ d6 8 c3 (D)

B



8... $\text{Qa}5$ 9 $\text{Bc}2$ c5 10 d4 $\text{Wc}7$

"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 the eighth instead of the text-move ... $\text{Qa}5$. 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 the uncompromising defence of the old guard."

Now I'm not picking on Capablanca, and there are far more egregious examples of dogmatism about openings (see below); but even here, in a very conservative position which was extremely familiar to him (and by no means prone to tactical explosions, as so many modern openings are), he fails to have an appreciation for the possibilities of the game. And this is the crux of the matter: the old masters had an attitude that chess was strictly limited and regulated by a set of principles, and were blind to the flexibility that modern play has revealed. They were extraordinarily quick to condemn anything that 'looked' unusual to them, or even something which, however logical (e.g., Bogoljubow's 8...0-0 idea!), hadn't caught on or had lost one well-known game. Nimzowitsch's win as White over Marshall's Modern Benoni, for example, practically eliminated the opening for a few decades, despite the use of a variation subsequently shown to be harmless to Black.

In the case before us, of course, 8...0-0 went on to become the main line (in fact, it was probably already the most important move by the end of Capablanca's career). One could argue that this is a technical and not a strategic point (although by avoiding h3 in Capablanca's move-order, White gains time to consolidate his centre, a really serious issue which has eliminated 8... $\text{Qa}5$ from normal practice). But beyond the move-order, the fact that ... $\text{Qa}5$ and ...c5 is not Black's only strategy (despite "everyone's" agreement), has been shown by the wide variety of alternative plans later adopted in this variation. Just for example, a database of *Informators* (including 37-69) reveals that out of approximately 800 games beginning with the 8 c3 0-0(!) 9 h3 position, there are indeed 189 games with the traditional 9... $\text{Qa}5$ 10 $\text{Bc}2$ c5 11 d4. However, there are also 123 games with Breyer's move 9... $\text{Qb}8$, 228 games with ... $\text{Bb}7$ and ... $\text{Re}8$ on the 9th and 10th moves, 60 games with 9...h6, 73 games with 9... $\text{Qd}7$, 39 games with 9... $\text{Be}6$, and even some interesting

experiments such as the 11 games featuring 9...a5!?

And how many games are there with the 8...♘a5 line given as best by Capablanca? Precisely 1, by that great reviver of historical lines, Bent Larsen. *TWIC* (a database of recent games) also contained only 1 such game (out of about 700 in this variation), won by White in classical style by avoiding h3. The real point is that strategic flexibility and openness to new ideas is characteristic of modern chess. It turns out that experimentation has much more going for it than just the 'element of surprise'.

Of course, I could also quote enormous increases in the use of openings such as the Pirc, Modern, Alekhine's, Caro-Kann, King's Indian, Nimzo-Indian, Benoni, and many others. But it's not only a matter of which openings the old masters picked; it's also how narrowly they were interpreted. One need only look at the today's Sicilian or King's Indian (or Grünfeld or Caro-Kann – or almost any modern opening, for that matter) to see how strategies have diversified into utterly unique paths and sub-variations which are so different in character as to be almost separate openings.

The main point, which we will also pursue in the next chapter with reference to areas beyond the opening, is that even the greatest of the old masters were limited by a powerful dogmatism based on general principles they supposed to be true. A good reference which reveals some of these attitudes is Raymond Keene's *The Evolution of Chess Opening Theory*. I will close this chapter with a few examples from his book, and cite some similar cases I have found elsewhere.

The narrow distribution of opening variations before 1935 (outlined above) had its source in traditional closed-mindedness towards new ideas. Tarrasch, whose works were enormously influential, has recently been the subject of some revisionist denial regarding the dogmatism Nimzowitsch accused him of. But, despite his brilliant writing and undoubted contributions to the game, even a casual look through Tarrasch's *Dreihundert Schachpartien* vindicates Nimzowitsch. Tarrasch stated, for example, that "1...e5 is, theoretically and practically, the only completely satisfactory answer to 1 e4". He said of the Sicilian Defence: "Against the best play, it is bound to fail", and claimed

that the Caro-Kann "cannot possibly be sufficient to give equality". Among many other openings he condemned as inferior, he called the Queen's Gambit Accepted "a strategic error", and the Slav Defence "not adequate" (and "wholly bad" if Black plays ...e6 as well as ...c6, currently a favourite among many of the world's strongest players!). And in the French Defence, of course, he gave 3 e5 a "?" and called 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 "?!", saying "this is well-known to be not good". These latter two opinions, no longer taken seriously, were first challenged by Nimzowitsch in his own writings and practice.

But Keene makes the point that even the relatively 'progressive' voices of Nimzowitsch's time tended towards dogmatism. Nimzowitsch himself called the Modern Benoni 'an unfortunate extravagance'. And Steinitz, the king of eccentric opening moves in the nineteenth century (as well as a brilliant innovator), is quoted by Tarrasch as telling Charousek, who had lost to Tarrasch in a Pirc Defence (in 1896!) that "If you choose such a weird opening, you shouldn't be surprised if you lose the game!". Réti, an avowed opponent of dogmatism in chess, referring to 1 e4, claimed that his own opinion that "the reply 1...e5 is a mistaken one and will be refuted by the consistent attack against e5 as exemplified in the Ruy Lopez is admitted today in the practice of the masters". He also claims that "it can be established that there are two defences against 1 e4 which make it absolutely impossible for the first player to obtain any initiative, and which give Black such an even game, without any difficulties at all, that it has become unwise in practical play to open with 1 e4, since these defences are generally known. They are the Caro Kann Defence and ... 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙f6 4 ♙g5 dxe4." Despite a modest revival of the latter defence, no one considers it a serious deterrent to 1 e4, and the Caro-Kann is still challenged regularly and with normal success by the world's top players, who have yet to abandon 1 e4 in consequence.

There are certainly many other examples. Alekhine, the most creative opening player of his day, and probably the first who investigated openings well into the middlegame in a truly modern fashion, shared the tendency to reject moves of an experimental nature. We will talk

about his stubborn and rather bizarre views on the Sicilian Defence in a later chapter. He had an aversion to even the most clearly favourable Hedgehog structures for Black, and in general, seemed to dislike the fianchetto. For example, he considered the King's Indian Defence inferior due to the Four Pawns Attack(!), and according to Keene, he felt that 1...g6 was 'a joke' (I'm not sure where this is from; but I found that in his *Best Games*, he at any rate says that 1...g6 is 'rightly considered inferior' and in the New York 1924 tournament book he calls it 'not valid'). Alekhine also maintained that in the Grünfeld, after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5, 4 cxd5 was a poor move, 'especially after' 4...♗xd5 5 e4, when Black's attack on White's centre after ...♗xc3 and ...c5 gave him 'at least equality'. It is interesting that as late as 1943, in *The Ideas Behind the Chess Openings* (and in later editions), Reuben Fine shared these last two views, saying that versus 1 e4 g6, 2 d4 already gave White an 'appreciable advantage',

and that after the above 5 e4 in the Grünfeld, "Black may well get the better of it". Fine then followed up with a lengthy prose discussion to prove that "♗b3 is the key move for all white attacks in the Grünfeld," a statement he put in italics and called a 'useful rule'. What is most interesting about Fine's assertions is that he arrives at them via prose explanations and general principles, adducing almost no concrete variations. By this time, the new Soviet players had already abandoned such an approach in favour of concrete analysis.

To conclude, who are the villains of this introductory piece? For one thing, a narrow view of the game in which whole areas seem excluded. But even more so, a dogmatic approach. And what does dogma in chess consist of? A blind obedience to the strictures of some general rule or principle. Therefore, we now turn to Chapter 2 to see what's up with such rules and principles.

2 Rule-Independence

Many changes have taken place in modern chess, for example, with respect to new ideas about weaknesses, the relative strengths of minor pieces, the value of the exchange, and considerations of time and dynamism. But the forerunner and in some sense precursor to these changes has been a philosophic notion, now so entrenched that we barely notice it. I call this notion 'rule-independence', for lack of a more comprehensive way to express it. It is simply the gradual divestment on the part of chess-players of the multitudinous generalities, rules, and abstract principles which guided classical chess, and which still dominate our teaching texts. Furthermore, a rejection of the very notion of the 'rule' has taken place, in favour of a pragmatic investigation of individual situations. The intense study of large numbers of positions, in combination with a dramatic increase in the frequency of play by the average professional player, has led to a new approach to chess knowledge. This approach might be described in terms of 'unconscious principles', or subtle and verbally inexpressible guidelines which are continually modified and weighted to fine-tune the assessment of positions. A 'feel' for positional chess is developed, just as in the old days, but one which is unconstrained (or considerably less constrained) by dogma. Hence, 'rule-independence'.

Well, those are just words until I provide some supporting examples, which I will give aplenty in this chapter and throughout Part 2. Before moving on, however, let me risk repeating some of my discussion from Part 1, Chapter 1, if only to give the reader some perspective, and to allow others to speak on this topic. In the last chapter, we began to touch on a number of dogmatic views which led even the most brilliant of players and thinkers to make some rather foolish assessments about certain positions. My contention was that adherence to rules and general principles played a major role in these misassessments. At some point around the 1930s, this dogmatism began to change in

earnest, and Nimzowitsch himself was probably the leading figure in the new attitude. The so-called Hypermodern School was partially responsible for the change, and I'd like to repeat what Réti (a leading Hypermodern spokesman) said:

"It is the aim of the modern school not to treat every position according to one general law, but according to the principle inherent in the position. An acquaintance with other positions and the rules applicable to the treatment thereof is of great use for the purpose of analysing and obtaining a grasp of the particular position under consideration ... the source of the greatest errors is to be found in those moves that are made merely according to rule and not based on the individual plan or thought of the player."

The transitional figure in this modernization, at least among world champions, was certainly Alekhine. We have already seen a sample of his occasional narrow-mindedness in the last chapter; but he was also the first player who systematically deepened his research into a wide variety of openings, and he played positions with a pragmatic reliance upon involved calculations, which is typical of the modern style. At roughly the same time as Réti, Znosko-Borovsky, in *The Middle Game in Chess*, commented about this side of Alekhine:

"...in the middle game, when a certain plan is under consideration, the general principles (occupation of the centre, open lines, strong and weak squares) are of less account than the selection of an object of attack, against which all the available forces are to be launched. On this point Alekhine goes so far as to say 'all general considerations must be entirely forgotten' and 'only that which contributes to the execution of the plan selected is of any avail.'"

Pachman adds to these sentiments in his *Complete Chess Strategy, Vol 1*, in a chapter called "The Development of Modern Chess". He describes Alekhine as discovering aspects of play "which lay beyond the limits of acquired

principles and which almost defied human understanding ... Alekhine's victory [over Capablanca] was significant, because it pointed to the inexhaustible possibilities of chess while refuting arguments about the stagnation of the game."

It is this association between being 'beyond principles' and opening inexhaustible possibilities that interests us. Jumping forward to our time, it might be worthwhile to hear about some related topics from Mark Dvoretsky, certainly one of the best, if not the best, characterizer of the features of modern play. Dvoretsky talks about rules which relate to certain types of positions, like 'opposite-coloured bishops in the middlegame favour the attacker'. Then he goes on to say: "However, in grandmasters' and masters' arsenals there are also several finer, less formal evaluations. We understand that 'in certain positions you have to act a certain way', but at times it is difficult to formulate exactly what that 'certain position' is." His point is that deep study of many related positions (and the openings from which they arise) is the concrete method by which this difficulty is resolved.

It is important to distinguish between 'rules' in the sense given above and practical guidelines for play. Such guidelines may be stated in a rule format, but they are essentially just helpful reminders, and don't need 'refuting', because they are assumed to be of limited application. A good example of such a guideline, which has very many exceptions and yet is still a useful thing to ponder over the board, is the idea of improving the position of one's worst piece. Kosikov points out that in slow, manoeuvring positions where "time is not of decisive significance" (alas, how many such positions are there?), activating the worst-placed piece is generally a good idea. I don't doubt that all strong players heed this rule, even if only subconsciously, in the sense that they are very aware of poorly-placed pieces and are always factoring in how feasible it is to improve their position. But it is not a theoretical principle of the type "backward pawns on an open file are weak", for example. Incidentally, Alekhine had an interesting variant of Kosikov's rule. He said about an early knight move in the opening: "the development problem of this knight, *being here the most elaborate one*, must be solved on the very first opportunity." [italics his] There is a

lot of validity to this idea, although it makes a rather poor 'rule', because in many openings, the problem piece (e.g., the bishop on c8 in a Stonewall Dutch Defence) is attended to only after most of the other pieces are out. Still, if one considers various French Defence variations with White having e5 in (Advance Variation, Winawer, or Tarrasch with 3 ♖d2 ♗f6 4 e5), there exist some lines (by no means all) in which Black spends several tempi trying to do something useful with his c8-bishop before he begins to get his other pieces out and gets castled. Similarly, in the Caro-Kann Defence, Black often plays ...♗f5 (or ...♗e6 or ...♗g4) at the first opportunity. Sometimes one may even move the king at an early stage, just to resolve its status and clear the way for other pieces.

While on this subject, some such 'guideline rules' are probably just as suspect as the more concrete ones. While the reader may be quite open to a rejection of rules like 'knights on the rim stand badly', for example, he or she is less likely to feel comfortable with any questioning of that most-repeated of all principles: 'The most important thing is to have a plan' (or: 'planless play leads to disaster'). I will have more to say about this later in the book, but hear what Dvoretsky says in a section called 'The Plan': "There is a popular opinion that the highest strategic art is the ability to envelop nearly the whole game in a profound plan, and that this is precisely how leading grandmasters think. This is a delusion. It is nonsensical to map out an overly long plan – the very next move could totally change the situation on the board and give it a completely different direction." He then goes on to talk about using the phrase 'the next strategic operation' in place of the word 'plan', to emphasize the local, time-limited, and pragmatic nature of most actual planning. I think that this is a very astute distinction which applies particularly to the heavy and multifaceted positions which arise from so many modern openings.

The Demise of the General Rule; Examples from Practice

Andy Soltis opens his excellent book *The Art of Defence* with a humorous little example which

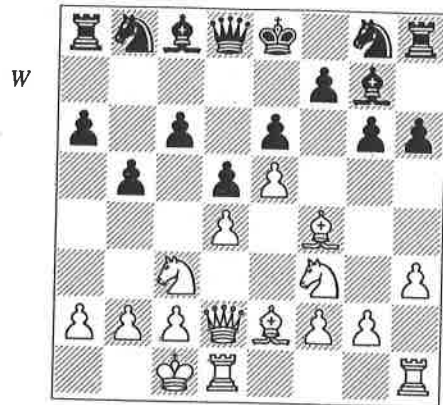
, although it makes a
e in many openings,
he bishop on c8 in a
) is attended to only
eces are out. Still, if
ench Defence varia-
5 in (Advance Varia-
h with 3 ♖d2 ♕f6 4
(by no means all) in
al tempi trying to do
c8-bishop before he
ces out and gets cas-
lvaro-Kann Defence,
r ... ♗e6 or ... ♗g4) at
etimes one may even
stage, just to resolve
/ for other pieces.

ome such 'guideline
suspect as the more
reader may be quite
; like 'knights on the
ple, he or she is less
with any questioning
all principles: 'The
o have a plan' (or:
aster'). I will have
in the book, but hear
section called 'The
pinion that the high-
ty to envelop nearly
nd plan, and that this
grandmasters think.
nsensical to map out
ery next move could
n on the board and
rent direction." He
using the phrase 'the
n place of the word
local, time-limited,
ost actual planning. I
ite distinction which
e heavy and multi-
rise from so many

**General
om Practice**

lent book *The Art of*
ittle example which

I hope that he doesn't mind me pilfering:



Khliavin - Zhdanov
Latvian Ch 1961

This position arose after 1 e4 c6 2 ♖c3 d5 3 ♗f3 g6 4 d4 ♗g7 5 h3 a6 6 ♗f4 ♗f6 7 e5 ♗g8 8 ♗d2 b5 9 ♗e2 h6 10 0-0-0 e6.

Here Soltis comments: "It doesn't take long to conclude that White has a very strong game. He has developed nearly all of his pieces while Black's only developed piece, his king's bishop, bites on granite. Black's queenside is full of holes on dark squares and he has just locked in his queen's bishop. A quick mating attack is assured, you might conclude. And you'd be right:

11 g4 ♗d7 12 ♗g3 ♗f8 13 ♗df1 ♗b6 14 ♗d1 a5 15 ♗e1 b4 16 ♗d3 ♗c4 17 ♗e1 ♗b6 18 b3 ♗xd4 19 bxc4 ♗a1+ 20 ♗d2 dxc4 21 ♗f4 ♗xa2 22 ♗e3 ♗b7 23 ♗d2 g5 24 ♗h5 c3 25 ♗d3 ♗d8 26 ♗e4 ♗c5+ 27 ♗f3 ♗d4 28 ♗e3 ♗d5+ and mates

Yes, Black delivered the mate. And in less than 20 moves from the diagram."

A clever rhetorical device by Andy. One might also notice a few other features of this example which he doesn't mention. By move 17, Black still only has one piece not on its original square! And it is a piece he has moved three times, whereas two other pieces he has moved twice each ... back to their starting positions! Having violated every rule in the book, what does he then do? Moves his queen out, of course, and conducts a little one-piece attack which wraps up the game.

Soltis's point is about the art of defending well, but it's not clear that much defence was

involved here. More relevant, it seems to me, was Black's violation of classical precepts in favour of concrete structural goals. Now, I wouldn't argue that in the above game Black's provocation was fully correct (although it may have been so); but I would say that it involves a typical modern tendency, even if in a rather extreme form. A number of traditional rules are jettisoned in seemingly casual fashion, such as: developing one's pieces; not moving a piece twice in the opening; not making too many pawn moves in the opening (7 of the first 10 moves), and especially not *flank* pawns (here, advanced versus no corresponding weakness in the opponent's position); and finally, not moving the queen out before the other pieces.

This sort of black set-up is unusual, but not completely so. Soltis's example came from a Caro-Kann Defence, but off the top of my head, I can think of two other openings in which such undeveloping strategies are pursued fairly often: the French Defence (various lines with ...b6 and ...♗b4-f8 or ...♗f6-g8) and the Modern Defence. And less extreme forms arise throughout chess, for example, in the Alekhine, Pirc, and Scandinavian Defences.

Here's an example of a different type of rule-independence which illustrates a number of key modern notions:

Suba - Sax
Hastings 1983/4

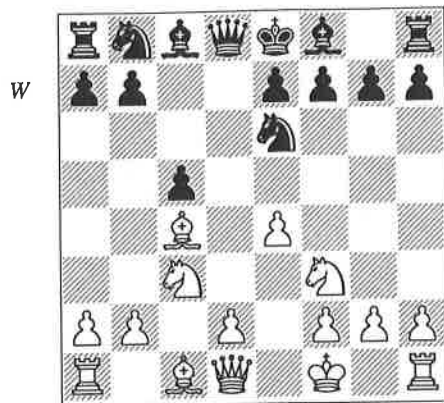
1 c4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♗xd5 5 e4

Nimzowitsch! He first played this versus Rubinstein in 1926. In general, Nimzowitsch was the first player to ignore backward pawns and structural weaknesses in so many situations. In this case, White's d-pawn is classically backward on an open file, and there is a terrible hole on d3. In fact, White's strategy was slow to catch on; Botvinnik (who was also uninhibited by backward d-pawns) was the next to pick it up, and not until the 1970s was there a real revival of the move.

5... ♗b4 6 ♗c4

These moves have now been played hundreds of times, of course; but they have a wonderful beginner's quality to them, don't you think? Notice that 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♗xd4?? fails to 7... ♗xd4.

6...♠d3+ 7 ♖e2 ♗f4+ 8 ♜f1 ♘e6 (D)

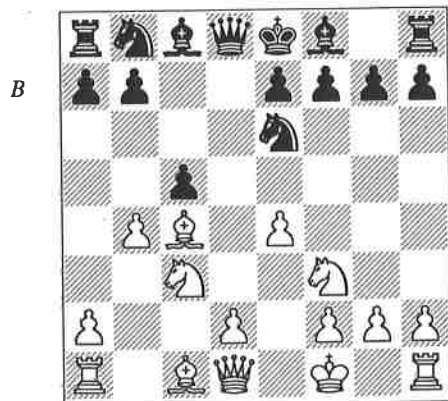


Which side is being more 'modern'? White dances around with his king and ignores weaknesses, whereas Black moves the same knight for the sixth time, when no other piece has been touched! But notice that he prevents d4, considering a structural gain worth more than mere considerations of development.

9 ♘e5!?

This opening is a terrific example of modern play. 9 d3, which would solidify the centre and free the c1-bishop, is hardly ever played (4 times out of 110 games in the database I'm looking at, and only in the least modern examples). The text-move is apparently less logical, moving an already developed piece, and further abandoning control of the key square d4; but it is in fact much more to the point than 9 d3.

The really revealing thing is to consider White's two main alternatives to those moves. The first one, played in numerous very high-level grandmaster games, is 9 b4! (D).



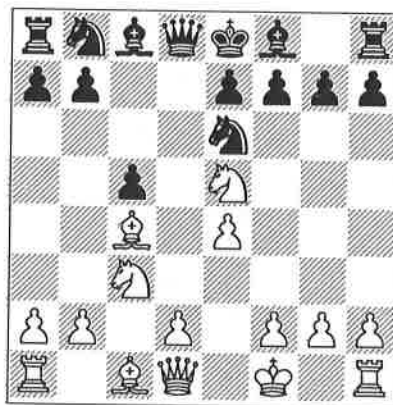
OK, giving up a flank pawn for central control is not exactly unheard of, but when Black has no weaknesses, and White can't castle and connect rooks? Well, it turns out that after 9...cxb4 10 ♘e2!, White is about to play d4, and then things like ♖b2, h4-h5, and ♗h3 or ♗h4, when his mobile centre and lead in development probably more than make up for his pawn deficit (see, for example the game Hübner-Tukmakov, Wijk aan Zee 1984 and later examples). The king on f1 suddenly doesn't stand so badly.

Eventually, someone figured out that by declining White's offer and offering his own pawn instead, Black could gain a critical tempo needed to cover d4, by 9...g6! 10 bxc5 ♖g7. Without pursuing opening theory too far, it turns out that after 11 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 12 d4 ♘c6 13 ♖e3 ♗a5 intending ...0-0-0, Black gets great pressure for the pawn, with equality being the ultimately most probable result. Needless to say, although the books stop there, this is not the end of the story. An entirely logical newer development by White (after unsatisfactory results with 10 bxc5) was 10 ♗b1 ♖g7 11 ♘e2!, as in Losos-Radola, corr. 1993 and a couple of other games, keeping an eye on d4 and contemplating bxc5 and/or ♖xe6. In fact, this whole variation probably deserves more attention, which is also the typical verdict for hundreds of newly-invented positions in our extraordinarily rich chess age.

An even more bizarre outcome of this debate was White's next attempt from the penultimate diagram, Suba's 9 h4!?, which Murey may have been the first to play. Well, why not? If Black wants to spoil my fun with ...g6, says White, I'll be ready for h5 in response! This Larsenesque move (when in doubt, advance your rooks' pawns!) is not as silly as it looks. Suba gives 9...h6 10 ♘e5! (in view of 10...g6? 11 ♗f3; compare the next note in the game); and 9...♘c6 10 ♘g5! ♘xg5?! 11 hxg5, which he says is better for White, although I'm not so sure after 11...g6. Suba (a truly modern thinker, even for these times, to whom we will return in later chapters) says that "The move 9 h4 corresponds to the position's general requirements and increases White's potential. It provides *luft* for the white king, space for the rook and an outpost on g5."

Whatever. The interesting thing to me here is the *sequence* of games by which these ideas were reached. In hindsight, of course, any crazy move can be justified 'positionally', but it took top-flight GMs many years even to find 9 b4. In fact, 9 d3 or 9 g3 was played in the few games of the 1930s and 1940s, and 9 b4 wasn't discovered until the 1980s. Then many well-publicized games occurred before Black hit upon the 9...g6 idea. And really, is 9 h4 a brilliantly-conceived move arising purely out of the 'demands of the position'? Of course not. As Suba himself states, he found it after becoming disillusioned with 9 ♘e5 g6! (see the next note). It is, like 9 b4 or even 8...♘e6 or 5 e4 (both of which were new ideas at one point), a pragmatic response to a concrete problem. This is very important to understand. In modern chess, the analysis and work come first, and the supporting verbiage comes later (if at all) for the sake of closure, or more often, for the sake of the popular audience.

Now we return to the position after 9 ♘e5:



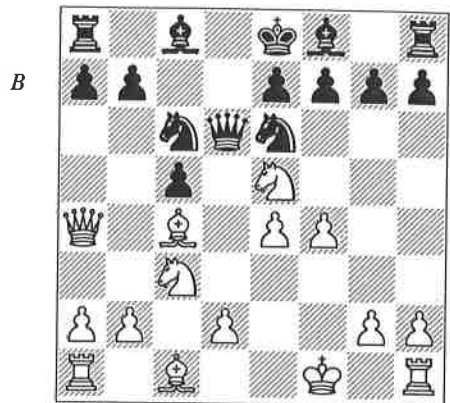
9...♗d6

Suba points to earlier games with 9...♗d4 10 ♗a4+ ♘d7 11 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 with satisfactory play for Black. Ironically, the two moves which actually bring out a new minor piece, 9...♘d7? 10 ♘xf7! ♗xf7 11 ♘xe6+ ♗xe6 12 ♗b3+ with a winning attack (as occurred in one game), and 9...♘c6?! 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 d3 (intending ♘e3, ♘a4, ♗c1, etc.) both favour White. In fact, it is to prevent ...♘c6 or ...♘d7 that 9 ♘e5 is played; and in that sense, it is a prophylactic move, a concept we will discuss in later chapters.

Finally, Black (specifically Timman) found 9...g6!, a move which Suba calls 'rock-solid'. It

is typical, I think, that the latter move, still refraining from bringing a piece out, but aiming at the critical d4-square, is the one which eventually came to be the solution to 9 ♘e5. The fact that the directly developing moves are unsatisfactory may be the result of some deep principle, but if so, it was a principle unknown to grandmasters! Rather, they subjected this variation to increasingly deep and creative analysis until the truth of the position began to reveal itself. Once again, then, this is an example of pragmatism replacing principle.

10 f4 ♘c6 11 ♗a4 (D)



11...♘d8

Instead, 11...♘d7 12 ♘b5 ♗b8 13 ♘xd7 ♗xf4+? 14 ♘g1 ♘xd7 15 d4 ♗xe4 16 d5 wins a piece. Is this tactic fundamentally guaranteed by the nature of the position? I doubt it; we should say instead that the tactics end up favouring White. If even one such line had worked for Black, White would simply have to abandon 9 ♘e5 (or 10 f4, or 11 ♗a4) as insufficient to achieve an advantage.

12 d4!

Suddenly, lines are ripped open and the game concludes in the way any Morphy or Alekhine game might have. As 12...♗xd4 13 ♘b5 wins immediately, the game concluded:

12...cxd4 13 ♘b5 ♗b8 14 ♘xd4 f6 15 ♘dxc6 bxc6 16 ♘f7+! 1-0

A final point about this game. While it is certainly a fun little miniature, I don't think the average modern professional would play through it with a feeling of amazement or incredulity. We have internalized the modern, pragmatic approach to such an extent that the moves seem

almost 'normal'. But it would be great fun to see this game annotated by Tarrasch, Capablanca, or even Alekhine! I suspect we would get a number of expressions of horror, at least between moves 5 and 9, as well as a healthy dose of ridicule. And it's highly doubtful that any of them would have suggested 9 h4 as an improvement!

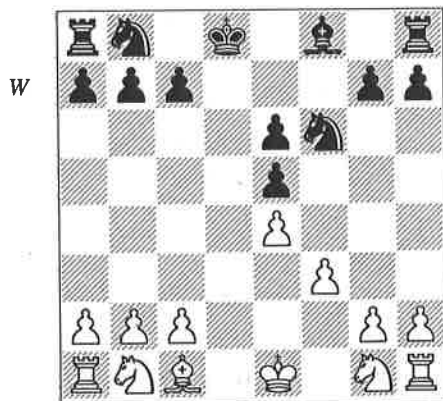
The following example (also dealt with in Neil McDonald's book *Positional Sacrifices*), is far less eccentric, but illustrates the flaunting of two general rules in the more tranquil setting of a queenless middlegame:

Yusupov – Christiansen

Las Palmas 1993

1 d4 d6 2 e4 ♟f6 3 f3 e5 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 6 ♙c4 ♙e6 7 ♙xe6 fxe6 (D)

Right from the start, we see a willingness to take on the dreaded doubled pawns. What's worse, they are isolated as well! But Black has two reasons to feel secure. One is that the set of doubled centre pawns controls important squares on the only open file, namely d4 and d5, as well as f5 and f4. The other is simply the pragmatic consideration that Black's e-pawns are difficult to attack and relatively easy to defend.



8 ♞h3!

Don't put your knights on the rim! Well, knights are living on the edge these days, as we shall see in Chapter 5. But the case before us is really simple. Neither side is about to make any dramatic pawn-breaks, so there is plenty of time to manoeuvre pieces to their best posts. In

the case before us, that would involve the knight going to d3 via f2; where would it go from e2? As McDonald points out, ♞f2-d3 could be followed by ♞d2-c4 and ♙d2-c3 with a three-way attack on the forward e-pawn.

8... ♙c5

So Black decides to cede his (relatively bad) bishop to prevent White's idea.

9 ♞f2 ♙xf2+ 10 ♜xf2 ♞c6 11 ♙e3 ♜e7 12 ♞a3!

Yusupov has no inhibitions about these flank knights! This time, the idea is more subtle: he doesn't want Black's knight settling in on d4, so he will be playing c3 soon. Then – behold! – a route to the ideal d3-square has been opened: ♞c2-e1-d3.

12... a6?!

McDonald rightly criticizes this move, suggesting simply 12... ♞ad8 13 c3 (13 ♞b5 a6 14 ♞xc7? ♞d7 15 ♙b6 ♞c8) 13... ♞d7 and ... ♞hd8 "and Black would have a safe position". White could probably keep up a nagging pressure for many moves to come; but such a position arguably justifies Black's decision to take on the doubled pawns at move 6. See also the note to Black's 16th move.

13 c3 ♞hd8 14 ♜e2 h6

Again, 14... ♞d7 was preferable.

15 ♞c2 ♞d7 16 ♞hd1 ♞ad8

McDonald points out that had Black doubled earlier, then either both pairs of rooks would now come off (and therefore White's later pawn advances would not open files for a remaining rook, as happens in the game); or White would have to allow Black complete control of the d-file. One feels that in that case, the game would probably have been drawn.

17 ♞xd7+ ♞xd7 18 ♞e1 ♞e8 19 ♞d3 ♞d6 20 ♙f2!

With the plan of ♙g3 followed by b4, a4, ♞b1, and b5. Black moves quickly to prevent this.

20... b6 21 ♙g3 ♞f7 22 a4 a5 23 ♞c1 ♜f6 (D)

24 b4!

A very interesting decision. White will give up the apparently powerful d4-square to Black's knight, because he sees that in the resulting position, e5 will be weak and he may have a devastating passed a-pawn.

24... ♞d8

at would involve the f2; where would it go ld points out, ♖f2-d3 d2-c4 and ♗d2-c3 with e forward e-pawn.

cede his (relatively bad) e's idea.

f2 ♖c6 11 ♗e3 ♖e7 12

itions about these flank idea is more subtle: he ight settling in on d4, so on. Then – behold! – a square has been opened:

criticizes this move, sug- 18 13 c3 (13 ♖b5 a6 14 :8) 13...♗d7 and ...♗hd8 : a safe position". White o a nagging pressure for out such a position argu- decision to take on the e 6. See also the note to

h6 ; preferable. d1 ♗ad8

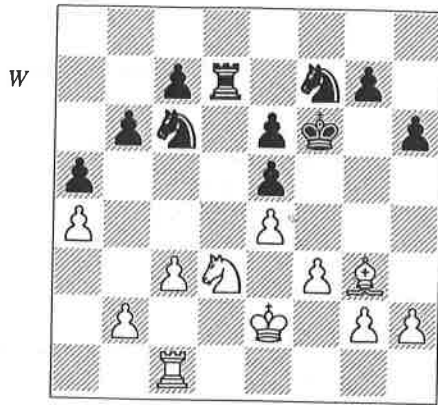
t that had Black doubled h pairs of rooks would efore White's later pawn en files for a remaining : game); or White would mplete control of the d- at case, the game would awn.

♖e1 ♖e8 19 ♖d3 ♖d6

.g3 followed by b4, a4, oves quickly to prevent

7 22 a4 a5 23 ♗c1 ♖f6

ecision. White will give rful d4-square to Black's s that in the resulting po- : and he may have a dev- 1.



Yusupov gives 24...axb4 25 cxb4 ♖d4+ 26 ♗e3 c6 27 a5 bxa5 28 bxa5 ♗a7 29 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 30 ♗xe5+ ♖xe5 31 ♗c5+, winning.

25 b5 ♖e7 26 ♗f2

Now we've returned to a type of classical technique (which Mayer calls 'the Steinitz Restriction Method'), used by the possessor of a bishop versus a knight in the endgame. First the knights' forward outposts are taken away by pawns (here, b5 and e4); and then White opens lines for his bishop (here, by c4-c5). Yusupov points out that the immediate 26 c4 is tricky due to 26...c5! 27 bxc6 ♖xc6, although in fact, White looks much better in that case as well.

26...♗b8 27 c4 c5

Now, although White won with the sacrifice 28 ♖xc5?! bxc5 29 ♗xc5, this may not have been sufficient for an objectively winning advantage. Far better, as it turns out, was the other sacrifice 28 ♗xc5! bxc5 29 ♖xc5, for example, 29...♗a8 30 ♖d7+ ♖g6 31 c5 and the pawns are simply devastating.

This was a simple but instructive game between two creative players. Both of their ideas were almost certainly legitimate, but White had the better practical chances and on this day, also played better. One doubts if either GM was burdened by doubts about 'breaking the rules' of chess.

Description Versus Reality

Before entering into discussions of specific rules and principles, I should make a simple distinction which applies to my notes as well as anyone else's. One must always keep in mind the difference between a description of play

and the play itself. For all I will say about re-jecting rules, it is still true that we must use them as tools when annotating a game. Thus, for example, there is no substitute for saying something like: "and Black stands better be-cause of his two bishops and White's backward pawn on the open d-file." One simply has to bear in mind that such a statement has an im-plied subtext, for example: "Black stands better because, although there are many cases of two bishops being inferior, this is not one of them, since the knights in this particular position have no useful outposts and White can't play the pawn-break that might force a transformation of the pawn structure leading to the creation of an outpost (or he could do so, but at the cost of allowing a strong attack against his king, as shown by this variation..., etc.). Also, although backward pawns are perfectly acceptable in many positions, the one in this exact position is actually weak because it lacks the protection of a bishop on e2 and White can't implement the dynamic pawn-breaks by b4 or d4 which would normally justify taking on such a backward pawn. For example, 23 b4 would fail to ...", and so forth.

Naturally, we don't kill trees for the sake of such explanations, which in reality are usually even more complicated and qualified than the one I have given. Instead, we use abbreviated statements of principles as indicators to guide the reader's thoughts in the direction of our own. It is very important to realize that a player's use of such descriptions in written notes by no means implies he had given thought to them during the game. I think that there is a great danger here for the student. He or she will pick up a book of annotated games by some world-class player and assume from such general descriptions that "this is the way the great players think". In reality, most players are un-concerned with giving exact descriptions of their thought-processes; it is much easier to characterize a position generally, with hind-sight, and ignore the gory details. For those who want something more revealing, although difficult, I recommend Jon Speelman's excel-lent collection (see the Bibliography), which provides a refreshing dose of reality for those who think they can get by on general consider-ations alone.

The Royal Guard and How It Strays

Let's move on now to some snapshot examples of how modern chess treats (or mistreats) the general rules and principles of yore, with the understanding that we will be saying much more about such principles in the following chapters on pawn play, the bishop, the knight, etc.

We already talked about the precept against 'pawn-hunting when undeveloped', and especially hunting for flank pawns, in Chapter 2 of Part 1. I could conceivably have included that discussion in this more 'revolutionary' section of the book, since players are now willing to go to great lengths to secure a pawn in so many situations. Please refer there for some typical examples. A similar older precept, also dealing with pawns (and originating with Steinitz) is that one should not move pawns in front of one's king. The basis for this idea is fairly straightforward. If, in a position where Black has castled on the kingside after a double e-pawn opening, for example, Black moves his pawn to h6, that pawn is a natural target for the advance g4-g5, opening the g-file. In an analogous manner, if the same king is resting on the queenside, the move ...a6 or ...c6 begs for retribution by b4-b5, whereas ...b6 tempts advances such as a4-a5.

Today, one sees players moving the pawns in front of their kings on a regular basis, particularly in certain pawn structures. It's fair to say that this tends to be associated with one of two factors which make this 'obviously' OK:

a) one side has a space advantage on that side of the board, as well as a stable centre, so that counterattack against one's king is hardly a danger;

b) one or both sides has fianchettoed, so by definition, there is a pawn moved right in front of the king (i.e., g3 or ...g6); in such a situation, additional moves like h3/...h6 and f4/...f5 tend to be much safer.

If case 'b' seems like a silly example, we discuss elsewhere the enormous prejudice against the fianchetto which persisted well into the 1920s and 1930s; part of the objection to the fianchetto was, of course, weakening squares

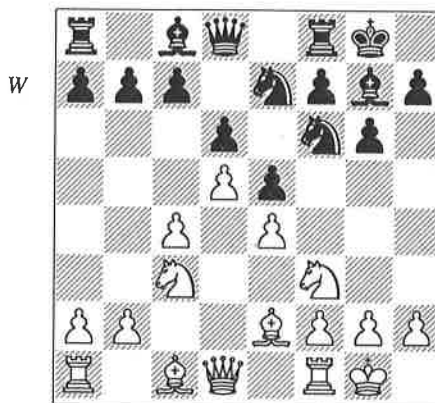
around one's king and giving pawns a target for attack.

There is also a third idea behind the advance of pawns in front of the castled king:

c) prophylaxis, or the preventing of concrete ideas which one's opponent might want to implement. All three of these reasons will be encountered below.

Let's look at a main-line King's Indian Defence for a moment:

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 (D)



Black has ...g6 already in, of course, but as lengthy experience has shown, he will also not hesitate to play for ...f5, and then further ...f4, ...g5-g4, etc. We are so used to this that it almost goes without saying. Furthermore, it hardly seems like such a radical or modern thing to do, since the pawn-chains dictate a black kingside attack and a white one on the queenside.

Well, there are several interesting things to discuss here. First of all, this is a very good example of how flexible modern chess strategy is. I have just said that the pawn structure 'dictates' ...f5-f4, etc., as if there is a principle involved here. But it turns out that it is only the concrete nature of the position which commands the troops. As students of the King's Indian Defence know, had White played the venerable and still-popular line 7 d5 a5 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 ♘a6 (D), a whole new 'principle' arises:

In fact, after either 10 0-0 or 10 ♘d2, Black much more frequently plays ...h5 (another pawn move in front of the king!) than ...f5. For example, 10 0-0 ♖e8 (or here 10...♗d7 11 ♘d2 ♖b8!? 12 a3 ♘h7 13 ♖b1 h5!) 11 ♘d2 ♘h7 12

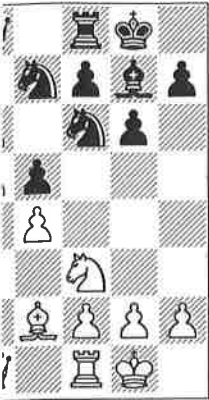
giving pawns a target for

the idea behind the advance of the castled king:

the preventing of consequences the opponent might want to exploit of these reasons will be

in-line King's Indian De-

1 d4 c3 e2 g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 c6 8 d5 e7 (D)



ready in, of course, but as is shown, he will also not ...f5, and then further ...f4, used to this that it almost. Furthermore, it hardly is a modern thing to do, as dictate a black kingside pawn on the queenside.

Several interesting things to all, this is a very good example: modern chess strategy is the pawn structure 'dictates' there is a principle involved that it is only the concrete position which commands the move of the King's Indian Defense. It is played the venerable 7 d5 a5 8 e2 g5 h6 9 e4 h4 with 'principle' arises:

10 0-0 or 10 d2, Black usually plays ...h5 (another of the king!) than ...f5. For (or here 10...e7 11 d2 e1 b1 h5!) 11 d2 h7 12

W



a3 e2 d7, and doesn't it look like Black has been preparing ...f5? But it happens that after each of 13 d2 b5, 13 e2 h1, and 13 b3, the move 13...h5 is the more popular one, and ...f5 is indefinitely delayed or sometimes skipped. It turns out that *in this case*, the activation of the 'bad' bishop on g7 takes precedence. This is a result of years of experimentation and analysis, and any rules one might want to adduce to explain it would be rather feeble in the face of the powerful message sent by that practice.

Of course there are many other examples from the same pawn structure, for example, ones in which Black actually plays on the *queenside* and foregoes ...f5. This occurs in the main 7 0-0 d2 c6 lines after 8 d5 e7 9 d2 c6 or 9...e7 10 a3 a5 intending ...a4; but also fairly frequently after 7 0-0 d2 b7, e.g., 8 e1 c6 9 e1 a5 10 b1 e8 11 d5 d2 c5 and ideas like ...e7, ...cxd5 and ...b5 or ...a4 can follow, depending upon the course of play. The point is that just shifting the position of Black's knights slightly can completely change his most appropriate plan.

Nevertheless, I sense that the reader will not be overly impressed with this example. Everyone knows that Black can get away with ...f5 and other kingside pawn moves in such a position because he has the natural levers there, and his king is quite safe. What's the big deal? Well, let's look at this from the other point of view, White's. So it's obvious that the kingside is Black's territory, right? How about this modern idea in the same variation:

1 d4 e2 f6 2 c4 g6 3 d3 c3 e2 g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 e2 e5 7 0-0 d2 c6 8 d5 e7 9 e1 d7 10 f3 f5 11 g4! (D)

B



This is a fully legitimate move which has been played in hundreds of GM games. It is, again, a purely pragmatic move: White wants to block the kingside, normally by h4 and g5. Then he will have a free hand on the queenside with the standard c5 break. A related system, developed later, is probably more effective; instead of 10 f3 in this line, he plays 10 d3 f5 11 e2 d2 e6 12 f3 f4 13 g4!?, an irritating variation for Black to meet, against which he can end up positionally lost if he fails to respond accurately.

So did the pawn structure 'dictate' white pawn advances in front of his king as well? That would be a tough case to make, whereas the pragmatic approach (if it works, I'll play it) seems more persuasive. Let's continue to look at this opening from White's point of view. One modern idea in a very old system is:

1 d4 e2 f6 2 c4 g6 3 d3 c3 e2 g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 e2 e5 7 0-0 d2 c6 8 d5 e7 9 e1 d7 10 f3 f5 11 g4! (D)

B

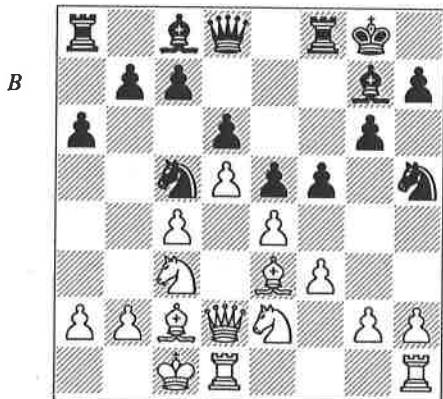


Wrong side of the board, isn't it? Previously, 11 ♞d3 had been the main move.

Let's see how play continued in some typical examples from the diagram: 11...f5 12 exf5 gxf5 13 gxf5 ♞b6 14 ♞f3! (an earlier game Gelfand-Romero, Wijk aan Zee 1992 also illustrates White's little notion: 14 ♞h1 ♙xf5 15 ♜g1 ♞f6 16 ♞f3! ♞g4 17 ♞g5 ♞xe3 18 fxe3 e4 19 ♞e6! , winning) 14... ♙xf5 15 ♞g5 ♞e7 16 ♞h1 ♞f6 17 ♜g1 ♞h8 18 ♞d2 with a clear advantage (Kramnik also gives 18 ♜g3! ?) Kramnik-Knaak, Dortmund 1992. You may notice, by the way, that the players of White in these games, so coolly advancing that pawn in front of their king on the 'wrong' side of the board, are mere 2700+ players.

What about the other side of the board? Well, White doesn't castle queenside much in the King's Indian, but an obvious example of moving pawns in front of the king arises in the Sämisch Variation:

1 d4 ♞f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♞c3 ♜g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♙e3 e5 7 d5 ♞h5 8 ♞d2 f5 9 0-0-0 ♞d7 10 ♙d3 ♞c5 11 ♙c2 a6 12 ♞ge2 (D)



OK, we have opposite-side castling, and Black (so far) has only advanced pawns on the side his king is on. What should White do? Well, anyone who is familiar with this type of position knows that White has won many games by pushing his *queenside* pawns aggressively forward, as if his king were safely tucked away elsewhere. The usual idea is b4 and c5, and if Black plays the logical ...a5, White generally plays a3 and simply allows the open a-file. It turns out (a key phrase in this book, which emphasizes that these conclusions have

been reached by dint of long practice) that White's space advantage and greater manoeuvring room on the queenside is just enough to offset the dangerous-looking pawn-breaks Black can try on the queenside. White's space protects him from attack.

That's the idea. Let's see an example from practice, in which the black player puts up resistance to this idea, as one might expect from a world champion:

Timman – Kasparov Linares 1992

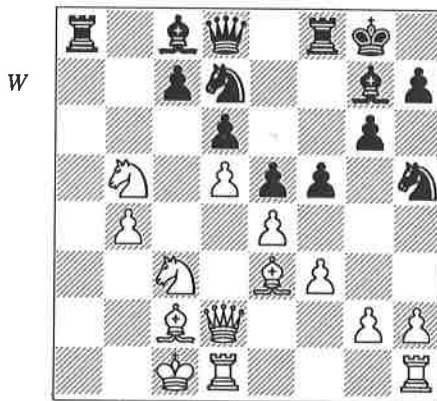
12...b5!

Black lashes out; let's see what happens if he doesn't act quickly: 12...b6 13 ♞b1 ♞b8 14 b4! f4 15 ♙f2 ♞d7 16 ♞c1 ♞f7 17 ♞a1 ♙f8 18 ♞d3 and White soon broke with c5 in Gheorghiu-Yanofsky, Tel-Aviv 1966. Such positions have arisen time and again, and are very awkward for Black.

13 b4 ♞d7 14 cxb5

14 exf5!? gxf5 15 ♞g3 would be an attempt to play on the kingside; but also very interesting is Kasparov's suggestion 14 c5!? a5 15 a3 axb4 16 axb4 dxc5 17 bxc5 b4 18 ♞b5! ?

14...axb5 15 ♞xb5! ♞xa2 16 ♞ec3 ♞a8 (D)



17 ♞b2!

Walking right into potential tricks on the long diagonal; but again, White's space defends him, and now the queenside is his.

17... ♞df6 18 ♞a7! fxe4 19 ♞c6 ♞d7 20 g4!?

Kasparov concedes White a small edge after 20 ♙xe4 as well.

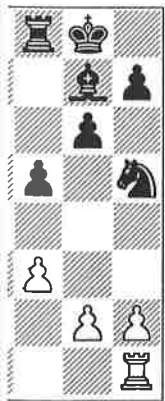
long practice) that would greater manoeuvre is just enough to give pawn-breaks Black White's space pro-

as an example from which player puts up something might expect from a

sparov
192

what happens if he
13 ♖b1 ♜b8 14 b4!
15 ♜f7 17 ♖a1 ♙f8 18
e with c5 in Gheor-
1966. Such positions
are, and are very awk-

would be an attempt
also very interesting
14 c5!? a5 15 a3 axb4
18 ♖b5!?.
12 16 ♖ec3 ♜a8 (D)

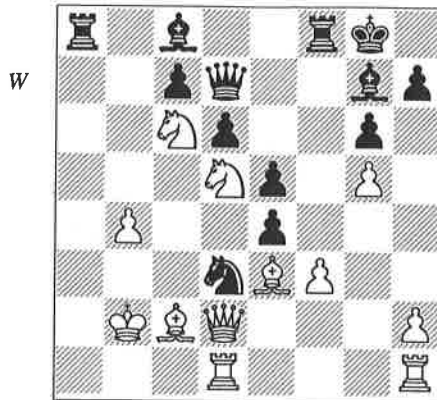


essential tricks on the
White's space defends
is his.

14 19 ♖c6 ♜d7 20

to a small edge after

20...♙f4 21 g5 ♖6xd5
21...♙6h5? is positionally hopeless.
22 ♖xd5 ♖d3+! (D)



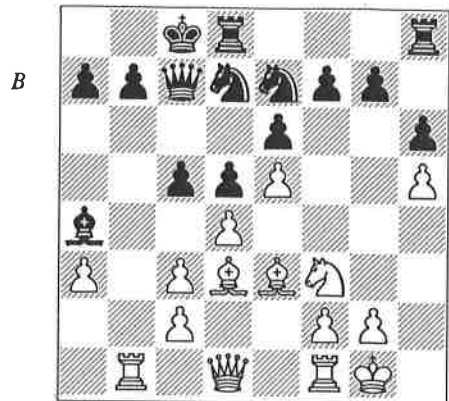
Forced, as was proven in analysis by both players. Black must open lines.

Here, Timman miscalculated and erred by 23 ♖xd3? exd3, when Black's attack proved too strong. But as the combined analysis of various players later showed, he could have played simply 23 ♖b1! with a large advantage, the main line running 23...♜xf3 24 ♜hf1 ♜xf1 25 ♜xf1 ♙b7 26 ♖f6+! ♙xf6 27 gxf6 ♜f7 28 ♖a5!, and Timman demonstrated a clear edge for White from this position.

The details aren't important, of course. What we see is that in the King's Indian Defence, both sides can and do advance pawns in front of their kings, regardless of 'whose' side of the board they're contesting.

Another very interesting example of this phenomenon comes up in the French Defence, Winawer Variation. After years and years of games following the moves 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♙b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♖xc3+ 6 bxc3, White has tried any number of set-ups with moves such as ♖f3, a4, ♙a3, ♙d3 and the like. But only in recent years has the idea of playing h4-h5 taken hold. To begin with, that idea was used mainly for attacking purposes, with a rook-lift to h4, perhaps followed by ♜g4 (to attack the kingside), or by dxc5 and ♜hb4 (to attack a black king on the queenside). Only in the last few years has White realized that h4-h5 goes well with castling kingside. This might seem paradoxical (why weaken the h5-pawn and the kingside at the cost of two tempi?), but in fact, it

is a prophylactic advance, designed to thwart Black's normal course of action. Consider this position:



Svidler - Shaked
Tilburg 1997

Traditionally in such positions, without the inclusion of h4-h5, Black has been able to play ...c4 and then challenge the kingside by means of ...f6. Then he either gains a big centre by meeting exf6 with ...gxf6 or is able to gain influence on the kingside by ...fxe5, ...♜df8, and often, pushing his remaining pawns on that side of the board. But here, with h4-h5 in, White has deliberately provoked the advance ...c4, because now the h5-pawn cramps Black (preventing ...♖g6 or an effective ...g5, for example). In fact, the long-term chances on that side of the board are White's, after ♖h4 and ♙g4 for example, with an eventual f4, g4, and f5. The immediate 13...c4 14 ♙e2 f6 might run into simply 15 ♙f4 (note the lack of ...♖g6 or ...g5 here) 15...♖c6 16 ♜e1, intending 16...fxe5 17 ♖xe5 ♖dx5 18 ♙g4, when c5 is falling and Black's pawns are weak. Thus, h4-h5 is essentially prophylaxis directed against ...c4 and ...f6.

There are now several such positions in the Winawer with h5 versus ...c4 (not all favourable for White; the assessment depends on concrete tactical considerations). Ironically, one of Black's plans when confronted with this squeeze is to play ...b5, ...a5 and ...b4, after preparation, advancing his pawns in front of his own king! But what is most interesting about this case is how long it took for White to accept h4-h5 as a legitimate plan not just associated

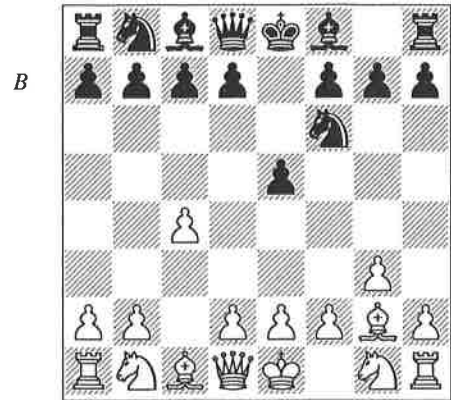
with direct attack; one feels that the strictures against moving pawns in front of one's king must have played some role in this reluctance.

Affording Common Courtesy to a Horse

Another of the old saws which infiltrated my young chess consciousness was "develop knights before bishops". I believe Lasker was fond of this one; of course, he may never have meant it to be more than a general guideline, but it turned out to be a usable rule in the classical openings. For example, in double e-pawn openings, you're likely to make that Nf3 move before Bc4 or Bb5 , and certainly Nc3 tends to come before any false start by the queen's bishop. In the Queen's Gambit, moreover, we have both Nc3 and Nf3 before any bishop move in many lines (for example, in the Semi-Tarrasch, most Tarrasch QGDs, and almost all Slav Defences); and at least the queen's bishop is polite enough to wait for the b1-knight to get to c3 before dashing off to g5 in the orthodox Queen's Gambit Declined positions. Similarly, in the Queen's Gambit Accepted, Nf3 and sometimes Nc3 will generally precede Bxc4 . Finally, in the classical English Opening variation, 1 c4 e5 , the sequence $2\text{ Nc3 Nf6 3 Nf3 Nc6}$ was for years the most popular sequence, whereas the main line of the Symmetrical Variation was $1\text{ c4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Nf3}$ (or $3\text{ g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Nf3 Nf6}$, etc.) $3...Nf6 4\text{ g3 g6 5 Bg2 Bg7}$.

These sorts of openings provided the training grounds for generations of players, and there arose the general feeling that the development of knights by principle preceded that of bishops. After all, we already know where the knights are going (f3 and c3, f6 and c6, right?), but the bishop has several options along its natural diagonal, so why tip your hand too early? But like so many rules, this one often fails in concrete situations. Modern chess is replete with bishop-before-knight developments, which simply take advantage of concrete positional considerations. Let's start with a couple in that same classical English Opening. After 1 c4 e5 , the innocent move 2 Nc3 can subject White to harassment by $...Bb4$ (e.g., after $2...Nf6 3\text{ g3 Bb4}$) or allow expansion in the centre (e.g.,

$2...Nf6 3\text{ g3 c6}$, intending 4 Bg2 d5 , and the tempo win by $...d4$ will justify Black's play in several lines). And the other knight development, 2 Nf3 , allows $2...e4$. Even $2\text{ Nc3 Nf6 3 Nf3 Nc6 4\text{ g3 Bb4}$ or 4 e3 Bb4 forces White to consider when and whether $...Bxc3$ is going to be a threat. So a common modern alternative has been 2 g3 , e.g., $2...Nf6 3\text{ Bg2 (D)}$.

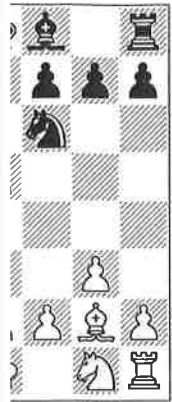


A case of bishops before knights, simply so that Black must commit before he knows where White's knights are going to be. Play often goes $3...c6$ ($3...Nc6$, following the 'knights before bishops' rule, is actually considered inferior due to 4 Nc3 , when $4...Bb4 5\text{ Nd5!}$ keeps a small, enduring advantage; again, I simply refer to the theory, rather than attributing this to any self-evident feature of the position) $4\text{ d4 exd4 5 Nxd4 d5 6 Nf3}$, and White would prefer to play $Bg5$ or $cxd5$ and 0-0 next, rather than commit his other knight to c3 and subject it to harassment from $...c5$ and $...d4$.

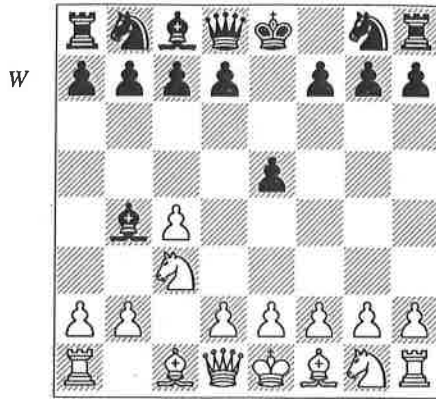
This is a modest example, and 2 g3 is by no means 'superior' to 2 Nc3 ; it is just a valid alternative. But along the same lines, Black has recently (beginning in the early 1980s) turned his attention to 2 Nc3 Bb4! (D) .

By the time of this writing, there have been many hundreds of high-level games with this move, indicating that it has at least a certain credibility; but up to 1970, I can find only 4 such games, and by 1980, only 19 (and those by unknown players)! It's hard to believe that this doesn't to some extent reflect the ancient prejudice against bishops before knights. The repeated adoption of $2...Bb4$ by players such as Kramnik and Shirov shows what a conceptual

g 4 ♖g2 d5, and the
stify Black's play in
her knight develop-
. Even 2 ♘c3 ♗f6 3
♗b4 forces White to
r ...♗xc3 is going to
modern alternative
5 3 ♗g2 (D).



the knights, simply so
before he knows where
to be. Play often goes
; the 'knights before
considered inferior
♗b4 5 ♗d5! keeps a
e; again, I simply re-
attributing this to
of the position) 4 d4
d White would prefer
0-0 next, rather than
o c3 and subject it to
...d4.
le, and 2 g3 is by no
3; it is just a valid al-
ame lines, Black has
early 1980s) turned
4! (D).
ting, there have been
evel games with this
as at least a certain
'0, I can find only 4
only 19 (and those by
rd to believe that this
ect the ancient preju-
ore knights. The re-
4 by players such as
vs what a conceptual

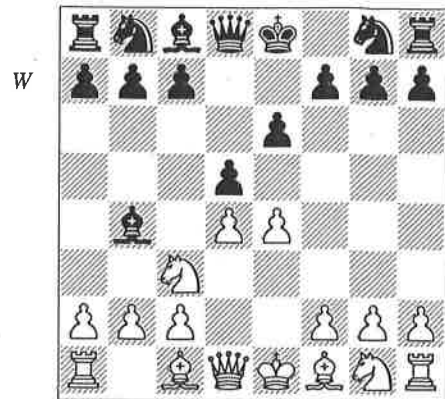


shift has taken place. First, if White plays a
move such as 3 g3 or 3 e3, Black can capture on
c3 and compromise White's pawns, securing
plenty of play. Of course, White can gain a
tempo for the moment by 3 ♗d5; but it doesn't
take much reflection to see that the knight on d5
will itself lose a tempo to ...c6, and in any case,
it is a second move by the same piece in the
opening and hardly the kind of development
lead that inspires fear in the second player. In
fact, after 3 ♗d5, Black has played 3...♗a5,
3...♗c5, 3...♗d6, and even 3...♗e7!?. This last
move has intriguing modern aspects to it. Black
voluntarily cedes the two bishops, because af-
ter ♗xe7 (a move White has actually foregone
in several games), Black can easily expand in
the centre by ...♗f6 (or ...f5 first), ...0-0, ...c6,
and ...d5. I must admit that at the current time,
White seems to be keeping a small advantage
in this line, but arguably no more than in many
of the main 1 c4 e5 variations. At any rate, there
is no *a priori* reason to reject ideas such as
2...♗b4.

Let's consider some more examples. The
reader is probably familiar with some major
openings in which the bishop is developed first,
for example, the French Defence, Winawer
Variation: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗c3 ♗b4 (D).

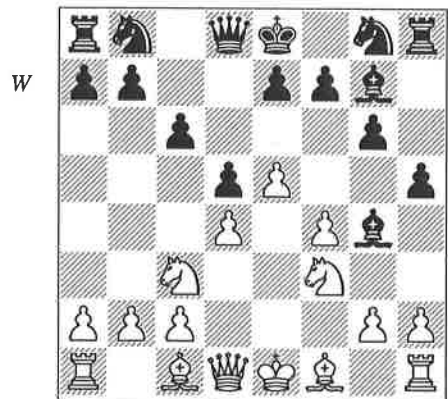
In this opening, Black very often continues
to neglect the knights, a few examples being:

- a) 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♗f3 ♗g4.
- b) 4 e5 b6 5 a3 ♗f8 (or 5...♗xc3+ followed
by a quick ...♗a6) 6 ♗f3 ♗a6.
- c) 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♖c7 and now
7 ♗f3 b6 intending ...♗a6, or 7 ♖g4 f5 8 ♖h5+
g6 9 ♖d1 ♗d7, intending ...♗a4. In these two
cases, Black has decided that resolving the



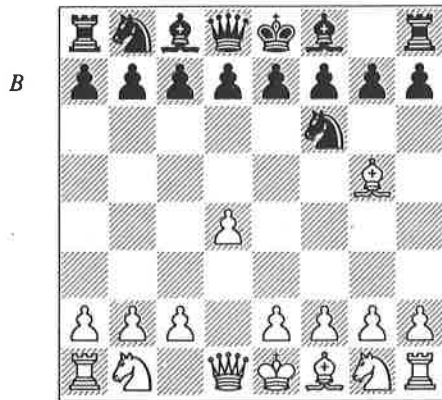
issue of his 'problem bishop' on c8 takes prior-
ity over developing his knights, which have
decent prospects in such a position and need
not be hurried to their destinations.

The Modern Defence, not surprisingly, of-
fers us many examples of characteristically
modern thinking. Here, too, the theme of 'bish-
ops before knights' arises. After 1 e4 g6 2 d4
♗g7 3 ♗c3, one example of this is Gurgen-
idze's line 3...c6 4 f4 d5 5 e5 h5 6 ♗f3 (against
other moves, Black will normally play ...♗g4
or ...♗f5) 6...♗g4 (D).



Black has achieved his primary goal, to get
his c8-bishop out in front of the pawn-chain. He
plays ...e6 next, and often, the further bishop
move ...♗f8 (to prepare ...c5) will occur before
the best posts for both knights are decided
upon. Another example after 3 ♗c3 is 3...d6 4
f4 c6 5 ♗f3 ♗g4, and on his next move, having
brought both bishops out before his knights,
...♖b6 will normally be preferred to any knight
development.

Speaking of modern openings, how about 1 c4 e6 2 d4 b6, the English Defence? In many of the main lines, not only the c8-bishop but also the f8 one is developed before other pieces, e.g. 3 e4 ♘b7 4 ♗c3 ♙b4. And a truly modern opening is the Trompowsky Attack, all the rage and now well established as a solid system: 1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♙g5 (D).



Why commit the bishop so early, when it may be better-placed on f4 or b2, or even on its original square? Well for one thing, only by moving the bishop immediately to g5 does White force Black into making a committal decision with respect to his f6-knight. Clearly, if Black already had ...e6 in (e.g., 2 ♗f3 e6 3 ♙g5), the move ...h6 would be possible, putting the question to the bishop without allowing doubled pawns. Alternatively, ...♙e7 could be played. But with the precise Trompowsky order, moves such as 2...h6, 2...d6, 2...g6, and 2...d5 all allow ♗xf6, doubling Black's f-pawns, and 2...e6 allows White to trade his bishop for the centre by 3 e4 h6 4 ♗xf6, when

after 4...♗xf6 White can seek a more dynamic follow-up than 5 ♗f3. A natural alternative is 2...♗e4, when after 3 ♙h4 or 3 ♙f4, the knight on e4 will have to lose time to f3, with unclear consequences. (Here the almost too modern 3 h4! is a whole other story, involving issues of the bishop-pair versus the open h-file and the cramping influence of White's g-pawn). The interesting thing, again, is how many years it took for this simple bishop-before-knight development to catch on. Similarly, there has been a lot of recent interest in the neglected opening 1 d4 d5 2 ♙g5. As in the Trompowsky, development of White's other bishop will often precede that of his knights, for example in the variations 2...g6 3 e3 ♙g7 4 c3 ♗d7 5 ♙d3 and 2...♗f6 3 ♗xf6 gxf6 4 c4 dxc4 5 e3 c5 6 ♙xc4.

In the chapters which follow, we will be addressing more rules and principles applying to specific pieces and formations. Traditional strictures against knights on the edge of the board, attacking the front of the pawn-chain, creating backward pawns on open files, ceding outposts, allowing doubled pawns, and the like, will be examined. Broader abstractions are even more vulnerable to criticism. The rule which states that 'a player with more space should avoid exchanges', for example, is so riddled with exceptions as to have lost its usefulness. I hope that this chapter has given a sense of the process by which the modern player has freed himself from the limitations of such rules, substituting a concrete and pragmatic assessment of the position at hand. This 'rule-independence' forms the basis for the discussion in succeeding chapters.

by reading this chap-
add to your repertoire
cepts tied to them.
develop a more open
lities inherent in mi-
uld view with suspi-
ch claims to do more

8 The Exchange Sacrifice

The increasing frequency of the exchange sacrifice is probably the most widely-acknowledged change in modern chess technique. Fortunately, so many books and articles have covered this phenomenon that I need not justify it as a valid concept. Moreover, you need only pick up an *Informator*, or any magazine with recent games, to find good examples of exchange sacrifices. In what follows, I have therefore chosen to concentrate on the historical evolution of the exchange sacrifice. We will see how its function has changed over the years, and how current players are employing it in ever more imaginative ways.

First, what do we mean by an 'exchange sacrifice'? Obviously, the sacrifice of a rook for a bishop or an knight. But in this book, we are not concerned with such a sacrifice if it is immediately followed by a mating attack, or by the achievement of material superiority. For this reason, the term 'positional exchange sacrifice' is sometimes used, to indicate that the exchange is given up in order to establish long-term advantages which the sacrificer hopes will ultimately repay him. Indeed, most of the examples below are of this nature. But I should add that one can sacrifice the exchange for a long-term initiative or attack, in which the primary justification is tactical rather than positional, even though the resolution of that attack cannot be accurately foreseen. In such cases, the compensation may have a positional basis, for example a dangerous knight outpost next to the enemy king, but I think 'long-term' best describes the set of sacrifices we will be concerned with here.

Origins

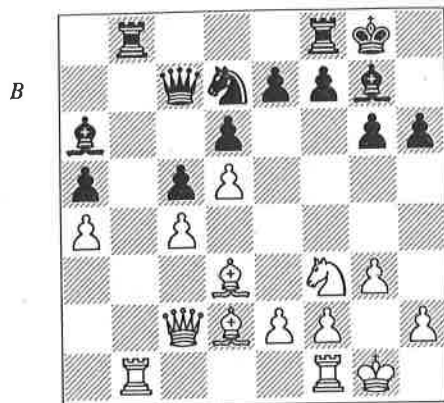
Was the exchange sacrifice unknown previous to the modern era? Of course not, but the reader can conduct an experiment which is perhaps more powerful than any statistics I could quote. Look through a book of classic brilliant victories from before 1935 and see how many of

them include an exchange sacrifice (in the long-term sense described above). One might also look at the World Championship matches up to that time for the same purpose; or examine collections of games by Lasker, Tarrasch, Rubinstein, Capablanca, or any of the other masters of the pre-1930 era. Now do the same thing with a book of famous victories from, say, the last 30 years; and examine the games collections of Botvinnik, Petrosian, Karpov, Kasparov, or indeed, of any modern grandmaster. This exercise should dispel any doubt that the exchange sacrifice is part and parcel of modern chess in a way that it never was before the 1930s.

Another telling indication of change in the attitude towards the value of the exchange appears when we look at the analysis of the older masters in tournament books, games collections, and opening books. Time and again, variations are dismissed because one side or the other wins the exchange, although the other side might have a pawn, active play, and an 'obviously' better game if that exchange is captured. Certainly one of the repeated errors of early opening analysts is that they considered some line or other inferior or not worthy of attention because they failed to appreciate powerful compensation for the exchange. Today, the exchange sacrifice is so second-nature to the professional that this type of oversight is much less common.

It is instructive to search pre-1930 databases for successful exchange sacrifices. Almost without exception, we find compensation only from direct mating attacks and/or the immediate acquisition of at least two pawns for the exchange. Long-term sacrifices are seldom seen; one feels that this simply must reflect a pre-modern attachment to static material evaluations. There are nevertheless a few precursors of the modern attitude. Tarrasch himself, in annotating a game between Janowski and Lasker from 1909 (won by Janowski, the exchange down), commented that a knight in the middle

of the board, protected by a pawn and out of the range of any enemy pawn, is nearly as strong as a rook. And once in a while, we see a quite modern-looking idea:



Selezniev – Alekhine

Triberg 1921

The position looks innocent enough, and one might expect mass exchanges along the b-file. Instead, Black uncorks...

20...♖b4!

We should not be surprised that Alekhine, who shared so many stylistic characteristics with modern players, would find this shot. The first point is that if White doesn't take the rook, 21...♖fb8 intending ...♖b2 will force him to do so.

21 ♙xb4 cxb4

Now White is an exchange up with even pawns. So what is Alekhine's idea? He wants to gain certain positional advantages, namely, use of the c5-square as a powerful knight outpost, a protected passed pawn on b4, the two bishops, and pressure on White's now-backward c4-pawn along an open file. In addition, White's bishop is bad on d3, and his a-pawn is more vulnerable than it was, due to the possibility of ...♗c5.

22 ♗d2 ♗c5?

This shows that Alekhine was not depending upon lengthy calculations, but made his sacrifice on principle. In fact, this knight move allows a clever reply. Alekhine shows that the correct sequence was 22...♖c8!, to pressure the c-pawn, when ...♙c3 or ...♗b6 will follow, with the subsequent win of a pawn. Black would have

more than enough play for the exchange in that case.

23 ♗b3!

Alekhine had missed this. Now on 23...♗xa4, White plays 24 ♖a1! ♗c5 25 ♗xa5 ♙xa1 26 ♖xa1 (threatening ♙xg6) 26...♙g7 27 ♗c6 with advantage. So Black voluntarily loses a whole tempo:

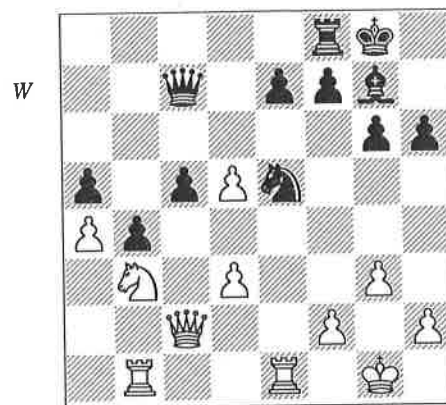
23...♗d7 24 c5!

Freeing the d3-bishop. Black wins a pawn, but he no longer has White so tied down. Still, his powerful bishop and well-placed knight gives him compensation for the very slight material deficit.

24...♙xd3 25 exd3 dxc5 26 ♖fe1

If 26 ♖c4, Alekhine had planned 26...♗d6!, intending 27 ♗xa5 ♗e5, hitting f3 and d3.

26...♗e5 (D)



27 ♖e3

Alekhine gives the line 27 ♖xc5 ♗f3+ 28 ♗f1 ♖xc5 29 ♗xc5 ♗d2+ 30 ♙g2 ♗xb1 31 ♖xb1 ♖d8! as better for Black. Disagreeing Euwe and Kramer come up with the 'correction' 28 ♙g2! ♗xe1+ 29 ♖xe1 ♖xc5 30 ♗xc5 ♖c8 31 ♗b3, to free White's game (this looks about equal). But instead of 30...♖c8, 30...♖d8 looks quite strong. Such lines reinforce the idea that Black has adequate compensation, despite missing a chance to be better on move 22.

27...♖c8 28 ♖c1 ♗d7!?

It's hard to criticize this aggressive move which not only threatens d5 but intends to probe White's light-square weaknesses. Nevertheless, 28...♗d8! would be difficult to meet not losing a tempo to ♗xc5 in the key line 29 d ♗g4 30 ♖e4 ♗f6.

lay for the exchange in that

sed this. Now on 23...♖xa4, 1! ♖c5 25 ♖xa5 ♗xa1 26 .xg6) 26...♗g7 27 ♖c6 with k voluntarily loses a whole

ishop. Black wins a pawn, s White so tied down. Still, p and well-placed knight ation for the very slight ma-

d3 dxc5 26 ♖fe1
ine had planned 26...♗d6!, ♖e5, hitting f3 and d3.



he line 27 ♖xc5 ♖f3+ 28 :5 ♖d2+ 30 ♗g2 ♖xb1 31 er for Black. Disagreeing, come up with the 'correc- 1+ 29 ♖xe1 ♖xc5 30 ♖xc5 e White's game (this looks ead of 30...♖c8, 30...♖d8! Such lines reinforce the idea uate compensation, despite) be better on move 22.

♗d7!?

ize this aggressive move, reatens d5 but intends to -square weaknesses. Never- would be difficult to meet, o ♖xc5 in the key line 29 d4

29 d4 ♖g4 30 ♖e4 c4!?

Now 30...♖f6 31 ♖xc5 ♗d8 is unclear.

31 ♖c5 ♖f5 32 ♗e2 b3!?

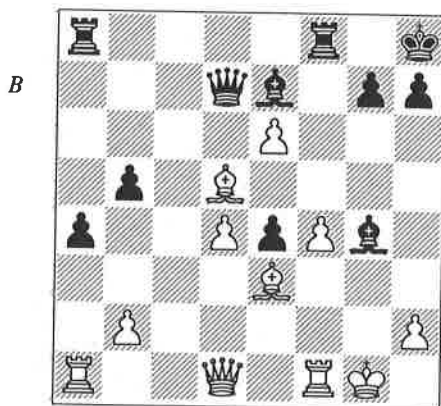
This speculative attempt to cash in on the passed pawns succeeds. In reality, however, Black should probably opt for 32...♖xf2!, e.g., 33 ♖xf2 ♖xd5! (33...♖xf2+ 34 ♖xf2 f5 35 ♖e3 ♗xd4 36 ♖b3!) and Black has three pawns and multiple threats for the rook (combinations of ...f5 and ...♖d8 win back more material).

33 ♖xg4?

White gets confused; he should play 33 ♖xg4!, when 33...b2 34 ♖b1 ♖xg4 35 ♖xg4 c3 36 ♖d3 holds the pawns. After the text-move, Black regains his material and still has attacking chances, which he soon converts into a winning game:

33...b2 34 ♖xb2 ♖xg4 35 ♖xc4 h5 36 ♖c2 h4 37 ♖d3 ♖d8 38 f3 ♖h5 39 ♖e4 hxg3 40 hxg3 ♖g5 41 ♗g2 ♖d2+ 42 ♖h3 ♗f6 43 ♖c2 ♖h6+ 44 ♗g2 ♗g7 45 g4 ♖h8 46 ♗f2 ♖b8 47 ♗e2 ♖b4 48 ♖d2 ♖h2+ 49 ♗e3 ♖g1+ 50 ♗e2 ♗xd4

...and Black went on to win.



Treybal - Spielmann
Teplitz Schönau 1922

Black could simply play 21...♖xd5 22 ♖xg4 ♖f5 with a definite advantage; but Spielmann, always a romantic attacking player, makes the interesting decision to sacrifice an exchange:

21...♗xe6! 22 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 23 ♖c2 ♗c4!

Trying to maximize the power of the bishops. Now 24 ♖xe4? ♗d5 will win the queen, so White must play passively. This position has a modern look, in that Black's two strong bishops

and potential passed pawn on the queenside fer more than adequate compensation for exchange. In what follows, the play is not ter bly accurate, but Black wears down the wh defences and wins without too much trouble

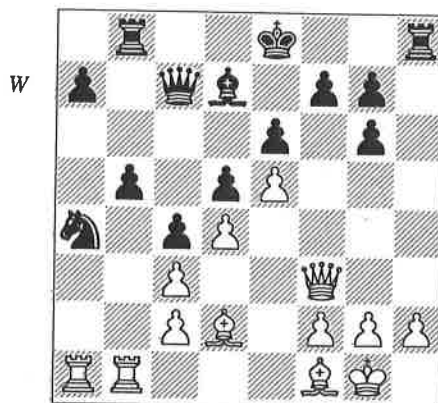
24 ♖f2 ♗d3 25 ♖d2 b4!?

A more direct method was 25...♗f6, e.g., ♖b4 ♖h3 27 ♖d2 ♖d8, etc.

26 ♖h1 b3 27 ♖g2 ♖b7 28 f5! a3 29 ♗xf6 30 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 31 bxa3 ♗c2 32 ♖g1 ♖33 a4? ♖f5! 34 a5 ♖f3+ 35 ♖g2 h5 36 ♗g1 0-1

A Conceptual Leap

When books discuss the exchange sacrific there's a justifiable tendency to refer to Petr cian, who made some stunning and creative c fers (see below). More recently, a number top players have made a living off exchan; sacrifices; McDonald's *Positional Sacrifice* for example, devotes a whole chapter to Ka pov's efforts in this regard. Today, in fact, eve top player looks for opportunities to bene; from an appropriate exchange sacrifice. But tl first world-class player to draw attention to new assessment for this material imbalance was Botvinnik. He was, to be sure, only or contributor to a conceptual revolution origina ing with Soviet players in the 1930s and 1940 and in fact did not often offer his rooks for m nor pieces. But several of his games capture the new spirit and strongly influenced genera tions to come.



Tolush - Botvinnik
USSR Ch, Moscow 1945

Black has gone to a lot of trouble to grab a pawn in the opening, and now he faces some difficulty in countering White's activity. With the next move, White aims his bishop at the sensitive dark squares.

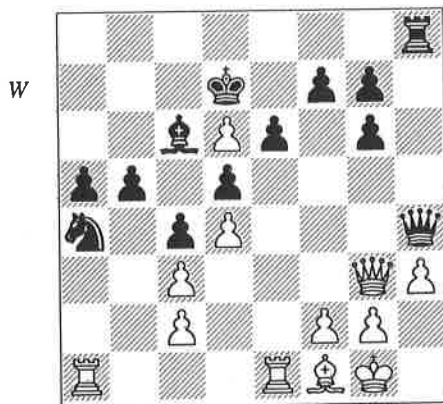
18 ♙c1 a5 19 ♙a3 ♜b6

Now 20 ♙d6 can be answered by 20... ♞xd6 with two pawns for the exchange. White's next move strengthens the ♙d6 idea and threatens ♞g5 .

20 ♞g3 ♞d8 21 ♙d6 ♞xd6!

Anyway! This is the sort of move that computers still don't suggest, even as a fourth option. After all, there are no threats and Black is a pawn up. But the modern player knows from experience that, in the long run, White can advance on the kingside and activate his bishop-pair. By giving up the exchange, Black changes the equation completely, because he gets a pawn and long-term chances on the queenside for the exchange, and most importantly, he can completely neutralize White's chances.

22 exd6 ♙c6 23 h3 ♚d7! 24 ♞e1 ♞h4! (D)



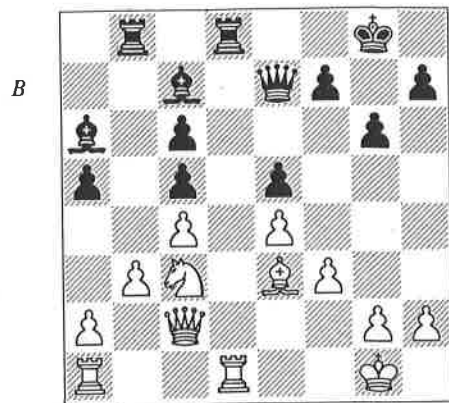
Not only will the d6-pawn fall if queens are exchanged, but White will simply have to wait around for Black to break on the queenside.

25 ♞e5 ♞f6 26 ♞g3 ♞h4 27 ♞e3 ♞f4 28 ♙e2 ♞h4 29 ♙f3 b4! 30 ♞xh4 ♞xh4 31 g3 ♞h8!

Black isn't diverted by 31... ♞xh3 32 cxb4 axb4 33 ♞b1 . The rest of the game almost plays itself since, with this queenside and central structure, Black's knight is worth a whole rook.

32 cxb4 axb4 33 ♞b1 ♞b8 34 h4 ♞b7 35 ♚h2 ♚xd6 36 g4 ♚c3 37 ♞a1 ♚b5 38 ♞d1 ♞a7 39 h5 g5 40 ♚g2 ♞a2 41 ♙e2 0-1

After 41... ♞xc2 , the two passed pawns decide easily.



Liublinsky – Botvinnik
Moscow Ch 1943

This example is perhaps over-used in the texts, but it is a forerunner of hundreds of similar sacrifices. Black has been outplayed, and is now faced with threats like ♞f2 and ♚a4 , winning the c-pawn. Black's bishops are just pathetic, stuck behind their own pawns, and White's position has no weaknesses. One would expect White to win this position over 95% of the time; for example, what if he takes the rooks off on the open file? Black can hardly live with his pawn weaknesses in a simplified position. But Botvinnik finds an all-star defensive solution:

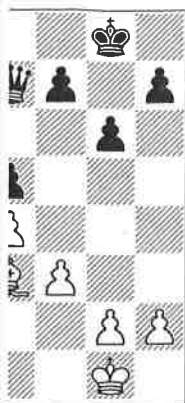
25... ♞d4!!

So simple, and yet shocking at the time. If White takes the enemy rook, Black's pawns are straightened out (with a protected passed pawn; compare the Alekhine example above), and his two bishops will actually have something to do.

26 $\text{♚e2!?$

Soltis approves of this move, saying 'better to give up a knight than a bishop'. In fact, although the move itself is not bad, the idea behind it is bad. As others have pointed out, 26 ♙xd4! cxd4 27 ♚a4 was correct, so that after ♚b2-d3 , the knight can take up an ideal blocking post on d3. Black could still try to scare up play by, e.g., 27... c5 28 ♚b2 ♙b7 with the idea 29 ♚d3 (the prophylactic 29 ♞f1! ♞f8 30 ♞ae1 is a nice alternative) 29... f5 30 ♞e1 ♞f8 , perhaps hoping to swing the bad c7-bishop

two passed pawns de-



Botvinnik
h 1943

aps over-used in the
r of hundreds of simi-
been outplayed, and is
ke ♖f2 and ♗a4, win-
s bishops are just pa-
eir own pawns, and
weaknesses. One would
position over 95% of
at if he takes the rooks
k can hardly live with
a simplified position.
ll-star defensive solu-

ocking at the time. If
ok, Black's pawns are
rotected passed pawn;
ample above), and his
have something to do.

s move, saying 'better
a bishop'. In fact, al-
s not bad, the idea be-
s have pointed out, 26
s correct, so that after
ake up an ideal block-
could still try to scare
28 ♗b2 ♖b7 with the
lactic 29 ♖f1! ♖f8 30
e) 29...f5 30 ♖e1 ♖f8,
ig the bad c7-bishop

around to e3 via g5. Of course, White is simply better if he plays carefully, but not so easily as he would have been had Black omitted 25...♖d4.

26...♖c8 27 ♗xd4?!

Of course, White hasn't lost anything after 27 ♖xd4! cxd4, when again I like 28 ♖f1! ♖e6 29 ♖ae1 f5 30 ♗c1. Alternatively, White could play for queenside expansion.

27...cxd4 28 ♖f2?

Now *this* move, generally ignored, strikes me as a very serious mistake. As Euwe and Nunn point out, White needs to break on the queenside. A plausible sequence would be, for example, 28 ♖d2 c5 29 a3 f5 30 ♖db1, to meet the game plan 30...f4 (30...♗h8 is better, but 31 ♖b2 still prepares b4) with 31 b4! axb4 32 axb4 cxb4 33 ♖b3, etc.

After the text move, Botvinnik shows what two bishops and a kingside advance can do.

28...c5 29 ♖f1 f5 30 ♖g3 ♖d7 31 ♖ad1 f4! 32 ♖f2 g5 33 g4?!

Weakening. It's not easy to counter Black's idea of ...h5, ...g4, ...♗h8 and ...♖g8; but running to the queenside by 33 ♖fe1 and ♗f1-e2 seems like a sound idea. The rest of the game is typical, in that the rooks can only wait around for the bishops to become active. Black is already better.

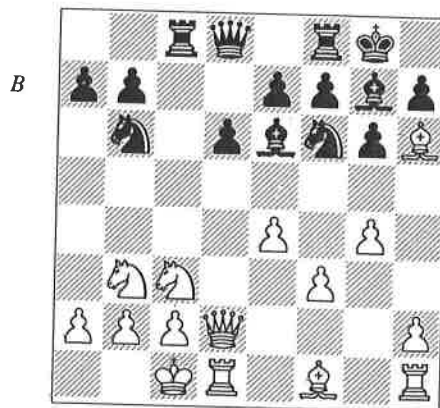
33...fxg3 34 ♖xg3 ♖h3 35 ♖f2 h5 36 ♖fd2 h4 37 ♖f2 ♖f8 38 ♖d3 ♖f4 39 ♗h1 ♗h7 40 ♖g1 ♖d8 41 ♖e2 ♖f7 42 ♖d1 ♖h5 43 ♖e3 43 ♖e1 g4!.

43...♖xf3+ 44 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 45 ♖xg5 ♖xd3 46 ♖xd8 ♖e3 47 ♖b6 ♖xe4 48 ♖xc5 ♖e2 49 ♖d1 ♖g4 50 h3 ♖xh3 51 b4 ♖f5 52 ♖d6 d3 53 bxa5 h3 0-1

It is interesting to see how theoreticians reacted to the new situation. In *The Middle Game*, for example, Euwe seemed compelled to proclaim: "The advantage of the exchange is decisive. There can be no two opinions about this, and it is necessary to begin this chapter by stating it definitively." Why was this necessary? Because Euwe was uncomfortable with all the games coming out of the Soviet Union in which the side the exchange down kept winning! And he was quick to add something that wouldn't have been in the old manuals: that having the two bishops and a protected passed pawn or a

weakened enemy king position "must be reckoned as full compensation". Remarkably, in the very short introduction to the whole of Volume 1, he concludes with a paragraph on this very topic, stating: "Compensation for the exchange in terms of positional advantage is a theme which has attracted a lot of attention lately, especially on account of a number of games played in Russia. It seems that it is easier to obtain full compensation than had formerly been supposed." Obviously, the issue was preying on his mind. Which is to his credit, because a lot of the western players didn't seem to fully catch on the new state of affairs until 30 or 40 years later.

If I listed the early players from the USSR who contributed to the discovery of the countless types of positions in which the exchange could be given up for long-term play, I would undoubtedly omit some deserving names. Just to name a few, Boleslavsky, Bondarevsky, Lillienthal and, a bit later, Bronstein and Geller were great contributors. Pachman points out these two examples from that era:



Panov - Simagin
Moscow 1943

From this typical Sicilian position, one might expect, for example, 12...♗c4 13 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 14 h4 with an attack. Instead, Simagin plays the remarkable...

12...♖h8!!

'!!' not for soundness, but because of the time in which it was played. The idea of giving up material without getting enemy weaknesses or direct attack in return was simply beyond the

pale in the early 1940s. Today, even average players make such moves, an indication of the revolution which has taken place in the way that this material balance is assessed.

13 ♖xf8 ♜xf8 14 ♘d4 ♙c4

Black's compensation for the exchange is largely wrapped up with his dark-squared bishop, which has no counterpart and may be unleashed against the white king. This is a case where Black has no guarantee of not just ending up in an exchange-down ending, and whether 12...♙h8 is completely sound is open to question. In what follows, although both sides have alternatives on nearly every move, the course of the game itself indicates the kind of problems White faces.

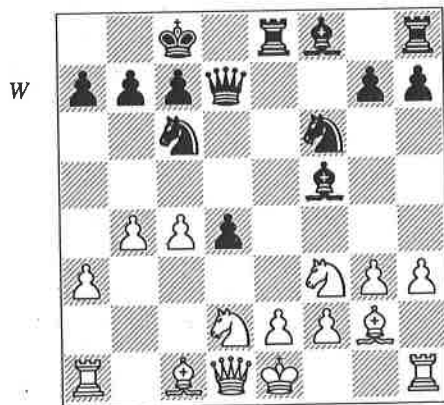
15 ♗g5!? ♘fd7!? 16 ♙h3 e6 17 ♖b1 ♘e5!?
18 f4 ♘f3!? 19 ♘xf3 ♙xc3 20 bxc3?

In Pachman, 18 f4 is queried and 18...♘f3 given '!'. But at this juncture, 20 ♜xd6! seems to me a clear improvement; in lines after 20...♜e8 21 bxc3, the ability of the queen to retreat to b4 allows White to defend. But Black could have deviated earlier, and this is just a detail in a brilliant effort.

20...d5! 21 ♜c1 ♘a4 22 exd5 ♙xa2+! 23 ♖a1

Instead, 23 ♖xa2 ♘xc3+ 24 ♖b3 loses to 24...♜c5!. After 23 ♖a1, Black is a full rook down, but White's king is too exposed to survive:

23...♜c5 24 dxe6 ♘xc3 25 ♖d4 ♙xe6 26 ♙xe6 fxe6 27 ♖a4 ♘xa4 28 c4 ♖d8 29 ♖a2 ♜b4 30 ♖e1 ♖d3 31 ♖xe6 ♘c3+ 0-1



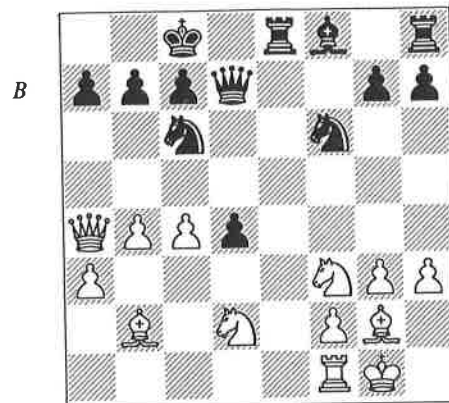
Bondarevsky - Mikenas
Moscow 1950

Black seems to be getting a strong attack for his pawn. He threatens 12...♙d3, and 12 0-0 ♙xh3 intending ...h5-h4 is at least unpleasant. White's choices seem limited, but he finds...

12 ♙b2!

So simple, once you see it! And I think that such moves got much easier to see, once players started thinking in terms of 'well, I'll only be an exchange down'.

12...♙d3 13 0-0! ♙xe2 14 ♜a4 ♙xf1 15 ♖xf1 (D)



The smoke has cleared and any modern player would want to be White. He has two bishops and a powerful attack, and his king is perfectly safe. All for a mere exchange!

15...♖b8 16 b5 ♘d8 17 ♘xd4 ♙c5 18 ♘2b3 ♙xd4 19 ♙xd4 b6

Pachman gives 19...a6 20 ♜a5, and adds that White's bishops are stronger than Black's rooks. The attack which follows is unstoppable:

20 c5 ♖e7 21 cxb6 cxb6 22 ♙xb6! axb6 23 ♜a8+ ♖c7 24 ♜a7+ ♖d6 25 ♖d1+ ♖e5 26 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 27 ♜c7+ ♖e6 28 ♘d4+ ♖f7 29 ♘f5 ♖e1+ 30 ♖h2 ♖d1 31 ♜c2! 1-0

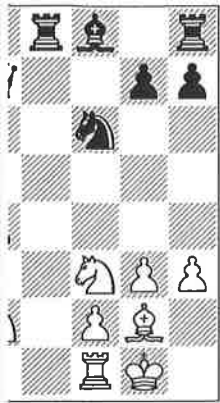
Petrosian's Patent

Petrosian really put the 'positional' into the positional exchange sacrifice, and specialized in giving up the exchange to salvage apparently lost positions. This remarkable genius of the game repeatedly broke through the material barrier, finding new ways to exploit the good qualities of his minor pieces against sudden sluggish rooks. I will simply quote snippets from his own 1982 lecture on the subject (reprinted

getting a strong attack for
ns 12...♔d3, and 12 0-0
h4 is at least unpleasant.
limited, but he finds...

you see it! And I think that
easier to see, once play-
terms of 'well, I'll only

♙xe2 14 ♖a4 ♙xf1 15



learned and any modern
to be White. He has two
ul attack, and his king is
a mere exchange!

♙d8 17 ♘xd4 ♙c5 18
4 b6

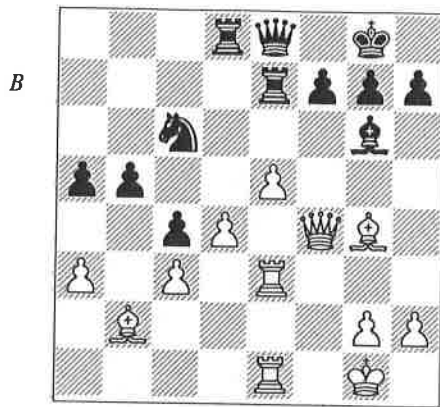
♙a6 20 ♖a5, and adds that
longer than Black's rooks.
ows is unstoppable:

♙xb6 22 ♙xb6! ♙b6 23
♙d6 25 ♙d1+ ♙e5 26
+ ♙e6 28 ♘d4+ ♙f7 29
d1 31 ♖c2! 1-0

tent

e 'positional' into the po-
rifice, and specialized in
ge to salvage apparently
emarkable genius of the
ke through the material
ways to exploit the good
pieces against suddenly
imply quote snippets from
on the subject (reprinted

in *Petrosian's Legacy*), in order to bring his
own ideas to the reader.



Reshevsky – Petrosian
Candidates tournament, Zurich 1953

This is a famous example. Petrosian explains
how he didn't like his position, and saw that
White could play h4 next, provoking kingside
weakness, followed by the return of his bishop
to c1 with attack. He then considered a number
of ways to bring a knight to the ideal square d5.
But playing 25...♘b8 (in order to follow up
with ...♘d7-b6) allows 26 ♙f3 and d5, whereas
a rook move like 25...♖b7 (to bring the knight
to d5 via e7) could run into 26 e6 (or 26 ♙f3)
26...♘e7 27 ♙f3! ♘d5? 28 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 29
♖f3, winning. Ultimately, he played a move 'so
simple, there was no doubt of its correctness':

25...♙e6!!

Now we are in a different realm of creative
sacrifices; I don't believe that this would have
been played by another player in Petrosian's
time, and probably by precious few today. The
knight gets to d5 after all, supported by a stal-
wart pawn on e6 and an unopposed monster of a
bishop on g6. Play continued:

26 a4 ♘e7 27 ♙xe6 ♙xe6 28 ♖f1 ♘d5 29
♙f3 ♙d3

White now quite correctly returned the ex-
change (else ...b4 follows):

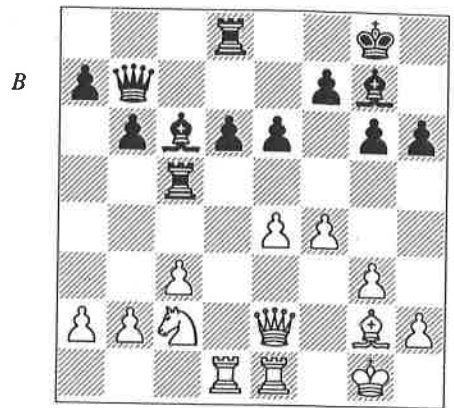
30 ♙xd3 ♙xd3 31 ♖xd3 b4 32 ♙xb4 ♙xb4

Black's far superior minor piece secures a
quick draw.

33 a5 ♙a8 34 ♙a1 ♖c6 35 ♙c1 ♖c7 36 a6
♖b6 37 ♙d2 b3 38 ♖c4 h6 39 h3 b2 40 ♙b1
♙h8 41 ♙e1 1/2-1/2

An elegant masterpiece of strategy.

In the same year, Petrosian played what
would now be considered a 'routine' exchange
sacrifice to win the centre and enhance his two
bishops. He begins with a rook seemingly out
of place on the fourth rank (see Part 1, Chapter
7 for more on such rooks):

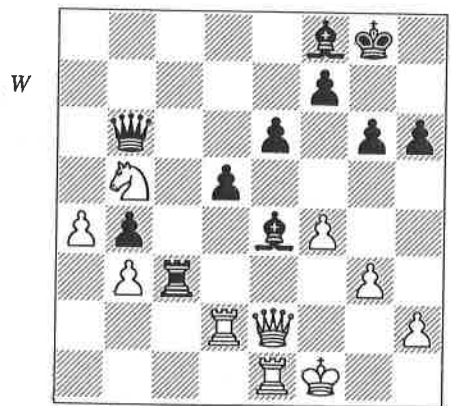


Troianescu – Petrosian
Bucharest 1953

22...b5! 23 ♙d2 ♙c4 24 a3 a5 25 ♘e3 ♙xe4!
26 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 27 ♘c2 d5 28 ♘d4 b4 29 ♙xb4
♙xb4 30 a4 ♖a7 31 ♖f2 ♙c8 32 b3 ♙f8!

With a terrific game, obviously. But it takes
something else to win...

33 ♘b5 ♖a6 34 ♖e2 ♖b6+ 35 ♙f1 ♙c3!
(D)

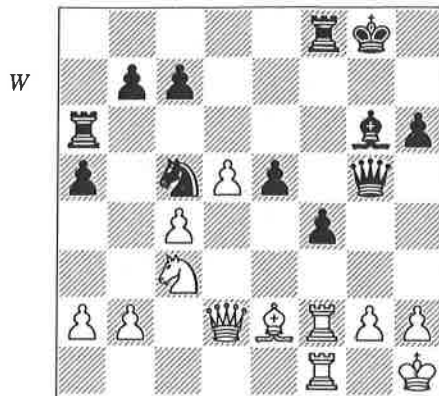


Another exchange sacrifice, of course! The
game is soon decided:

36 ♘xc3 ♙xc3 37 ♙c2 ♖xb3 38 ♙ec1 ♙b4
39 g4 ♙xc2 40 ♙xc2 ♖xa4

Black's pawns were much too strong; he won quickly.

More pathbreaking is the next example:



Petrosian – Gligorić
Varna Olympiad 1962

White is having one of those awful days against the King's Indian Defence. His minor pieces are vastly inferior, and his rooks are doing nothing. Black intends to play something like ...♖af6, ...b6 and ...e4, and both his minor pieces are potential invaders on d3. Against Kasparov, one might just consider resigning! But Petrosian plays the seemingly illogical...

26 ♗f3!!

What's this? White walks right into ...e4. True, the immediate 26...e4 27 ♖d4! is not impressive (27...♗d3 28 ♗xe4 and White is actually better; compare the game). But what will happen if Black simply prepares it?

26...♖af6 27 ♖e1!!

Again, so simple, yet so difficult! The exchange is meaningless compared with the possibility of winning e4 for a knight and activating the light-squared bishop. Instead, 27 ♖e2? loses to 27...♗d3 28 ♗e4 ♗xe4 29 ♖xd3 ♗g3+!.

27...♗d3 28 ♖fe2 ♗xe1 29 ♖xe1 ♖e8 30 c5 ♖ff8

Petrosian: "If you have time to consider this position attentively, trying some lines, you should feel that the material plus means nothing."

31 ♗e4 1/2-1/2

Petrosian: "He offered a draw. There is no sense for White to reject this offer; he has no reasons to play for a win."

B



Portisch – Petrosian
San Antonio 1972

White has been positionally better for some time, and now threatens to invade on e7. Petrosian realizes that this is his chance to turn the tables, and plays...

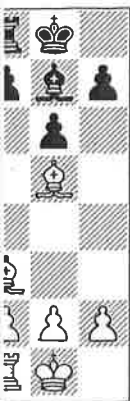
24...e5!! 25 ♗e7?!

Petrosian: "He [Portisch] cannot decide whether I have sacrificed the exchange or blundered it away. Finally, after the game, Portisch said that he had decided that it was a blunder...". In fact, White should resist the temptation and play something like 25 dxe6 ♖xe6 with an unclear position.

25...f5 26 ♗xf8 ♗xf8

"White has a rook for a minor piece but no active play: all the files are closed. The black pawn stands on e5, not e7, so the white knight on c6 is very beautiful, but nothing else. Situations might arise where Black could have an extra piece in action ... Black undoubtedly has the edge." Petrosian continued with ...♗c8, ...♗fd7 and ...♗f6, but failed to advance his centre pawns accurately and only drew. Perhaps no other player had as many brilliant games which ended in a draw! By the way, this position is also an example of the irrelevant knight outpost on c6, as discussed in the 'Optical Illusions' section of Chapter 5.

Of the following position, Petrosian says: "White has a great positional advantage. He practically has an extra passed pawn on d5 ... when the game has transposed into an endgame ... the passed, well-protected pawn can be decisive."



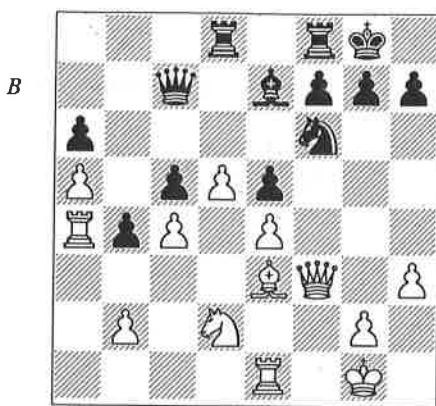
Petrosian
1972

...y better for some
...o invade on e7.
...his chance to turn

...] cannot decide
...exchange or blun-
...ne game, Portisch
...was a blunder...".
...ne temptation and
...ne temptation and
...ne temptation and

...minor piece but no
...closed. The black
...the white knight
...nothing else. Situa-
...could have an ex-
...doubtedly has the
...th ...c8, ...fd7
...vance his centre
...drew. Perhaps no
...iant games which
...y, this position is
...ant knight outpost
...Optical Illusions'

...s, Petrosian says:
...al advantage. He
...ed pawn on d5 ...
...l into an endgame
...pawn can be deci-



Tal - Petrosian
Riga 1958

Here students of Nimzowitsch (or readers of any modern textbook) will quite naturally begin to think along the lines of the classic blockade by ...De8-d6 and perhaps trying to activate or exchange the bad bishop by ...Bg5 or ...Bh4 at some point. Well, neither of these plans can be achieved; but Petrosian figures out a way to justify the existence of his two minor pieces. Can you guess how?

25...Bd6!

A far-reaching and profound idea. Not only does Petrosian bring his rook over to a side of the board where it is supported by no other pieces and has no attacking chances, but he also plans to put his minor pieces on their 'worst' squares: the bishop on d6 and the knight on d7! We will soon see why.

26 Qb3 Qd7 27 Baa1 Bg6 28 Bf1 Bd6 29 h4 Wd8 30 h5

Tal naturally wants to make the rook look silly.

30...Bf6 31 Wg4 Bf4!

Suddenly, the whole point! As Petrosian said 25 years later: "my mind worked some other way then"!

32 Bxf4!?

Taking the bait. But the alternative 32 Bxf4 exf4 33 Bxf4 Bxf4 34 Wxf4 We7 intending ...De5 would be unclear, according to Petrosian, and at any rate "better than a cramped position with a material balance."

32...exf4 33 Qd2 De5 34 Wxf4?!

After 34 We2, Petrosian gives 34...g5 or 34...Wh4. "Tal realized that events were taking

a bad turn for him, so he tried to complicate matters." But in the ensuing complications, Black gains a pawn for the exchange with excellent attacking chances:

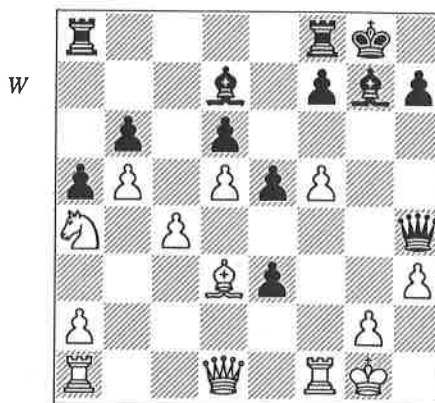
34...Qxc4 35 e5 Qxe5 36 Qe4 h6 37 Bae1 Bb8 38 Bd1 c4 39 d6 Qd3 40 Wg4 Ba7+ 41 Qh1 f5 42 Qf6+ Qh8 43 Wxc4 Qxb2 44 Wxa6 Qxd1 45 Wxa7 Wxd6 46 Wd7 Wxf6 47 Wxd1 Bb8

At this point, Black is much better, but he failed to convert the position to a win, once again only drawing!

Petrosian sacrificed many other exchanges, and of course, he often actually won the games in which he did so. Since his time, no top player has been able to ignore the exchange sacrifice, which has permeated modern chess.

The Unfinished Product

It would seem that the games of the last section would be hard to top. But modern chess has taken the exchange sacrifice and found ever more outrageous applications for it. Let's start with an example of exchange-down play in a simplified position.



Seirawan - Kožul
Wijk aan Zee 1991

White to move has to deal with ideas such as ...e4 and ...Wd4. The most tempting move (which many players would conclude is forced) is 19 Qxb6!?, with unfathomable complications. But Black seems to be holding his own after either 19...e4 (e.g., 20 f6 Bxf6 21 Bxf6 Wxf6 22 Qxd7 Wf2+ 23 Qh1 exd3 24 Wg4+

♖h8 25 ♖d4+ f6 26 ♜xf8 ♜xf8 27 ♖xd3 e2), or 19... ♖d4 20 ♖h1 ♖xb6 21 f6! ♖d4! 22 fxg7 ♖xg7 with the idea of ...c4 or ...f5. Instead, Seirawan uncorks...

19 ♖g4!!

Once you see White's strategy as a whole, this may seem obvious. But to give up the exchange in a simplified position without even winning the b6-pawn seems like sheer lunacy.

19... ♖xg4 20 hxg4 e4 21 ♙e2!

The whole point, which had to be foreseen. Taking the e-pawn would be suicidal, activating Black's rooks, and the 'natural' 21 f6 loses to 21... exd3 22 fxg7 (22 ♜xb6 ♙h6! and ...e2, among others) 22... ♜fb8!, when Black's pawns are too strong.

21... ♙xa1 22 ♜xa1 ♜ab8 23 ♖h2

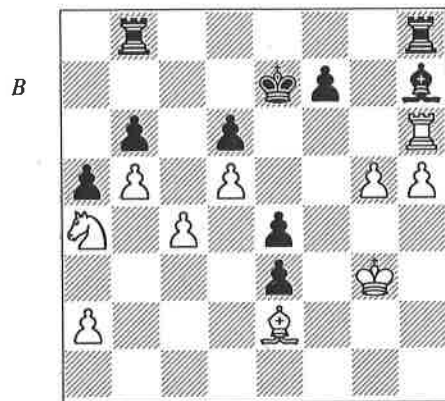
So what have we here? White would love to play ♖g3-f4, with a dominating position (look at Black's 'good' bishop!). But what about trying to free Black's pieces?

23... h5! 24 gxh5 ♙xf5

White is still a full exchange down, after all. At this point, White made a good move, but not the best:

25 ♖g3?!

Seirawan mentions an incredible alternative here, which simply wins the game outright! Don't believe it? Here is his analysis (supplemented by my own): 25 ♜f1! ♙h7 26 ♜f6! ♜fd8 27 g4! ♖f8 28 ♖g3 ♖e7 29 ♜h6 ♜h8 30 g5 (D).



Now the drastic extent of White's bind has become clear. The move g6 alone is often enough to win, but White has the luxury of improving his position as well, e.g., 30... ♖d7 31

♖f4! ♖c7 32 ♖xe3 ♜bg8 33 ♖f4 e3 34 ♜f6 and Black is helpless.

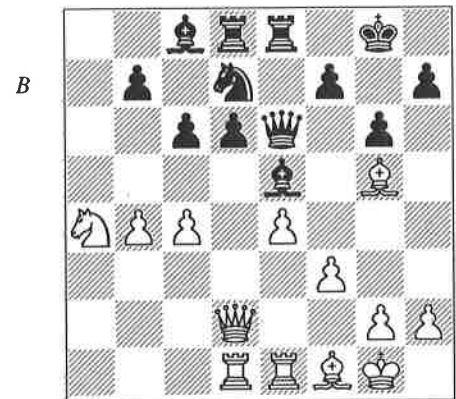
The game was also instructive, but not quite as convincing:

25... ♖g7 26 ♖f4 ♙h7 27 g4! f6 28 ♜c3 ♖h6 29 ♜d1 ♜be8 30 ♜xe3 ♙e5 31 ♜f1 ♙g8 32 ♙d1 f5? 33 ♙e2! ♙g5 34 c5! bxc5 35 b6 ♜e8 36 gxf5 ♜b8 37 ♜b1 ♙gg8 38 b7 ♖g7 39 ♜b6 ♖f7 40 ♙a6 ♖e7 41 ♜c6 ♖d7 42 ♜c8 1-0

A brilliant effort.

The exchange sacrifice seems to become ever more routine, and at the same time, ever more exotic. By this I mean that there are a great number of standard positions in which exchange sacrifices are second nature, for example, ... ♜xc3 in various Sicilians and especially in the Dragon Variation, or ... ♜xf3 in a wide variety of French Defences. In both of these cases, Black gains the advantage of split and doubled pawns in the enemy camp; but he also tends either to win a centre pawn or to gain control over key central squares. At the same time, every tournament brings us new and exciting ways to sacrifice the exchange. Let's look at a couple of examples of the more radical kind.

The speculative tactical exchange sacrifice has become common. Not surprisingly, Tal provides us with an early, not fully sound, example:

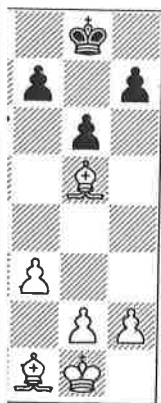


Gligoric - Tal
Leipzig Olympiad 1960

Black has all sorts of difficulties here, with the d6-pawn, among other things. Tal seizes the opportunity to change the dynamics of the contest in radical style:

33 ♖f4 e3 34 ♜f6 and
 ructive, but not quite
 7 27 g4! f6 28 ♘c3
 xe3 ♜e5 31 ♜f1 ♜g8
 5 34 c5! bxc5 35 b6
 ♜gg8 38 b7 ♖g7 39
 ♜c6 ♖d7 42 ♜c8 1-0

seems to become
 the same time, ever
 that there are a great
 tions in which ex-
 nd nature, for exam-
 ilians and especially
 ...♜xf3 in a wide va-
 s. In both of these
 vantage of split and
 ny camp; but he also
 pawn or to gain con-
 es. At the same time,
 us new and exciting
 ange. Let's look at a
 more radical kind.
 l exchange sacrifice
 surprisingly, Tal pro-
 lly sound, example:



Tal
 ad 1960

facilities here, with
 nings. Tal seizes the
 namics of the con-

23...c5!? 24 bxc5 dxc5 25 ♙xd8 ♙d4+ 26
 ♖h1 ♜xd8

Well, this seems a bit absurd, since although Black has the two bishops, White has an outpost for his knight on d5 and open lines for his rooks on the queenside. Objectively, White must be better. But the bishop on d4 has no counterpart, and as long as White's bishop on f1 can't be freed (by f4, for example), Black's minor pieces can create problems. How long his pressure can last is illustrated by the game continuation, which I will give without notes. Although White surely could have played better, Black's play makes a powerful aesthetic impression:

27 ♘c3 ♘e5 28 ♘d5 ♖g7 29 ♜b1 ♜d6 30
 ♜b3 ♜d7 31 ♜eb1 ♜a6 32 ♘b6 ♜c6 33 h3 h5
 34 ♘d5!? ♜a4 35 ♜b6 ♜e8 36 ♜c2 ♜a3 37
 ♜6b3 ♜a4! 38 ♘b6 ♜a2 39 ♘xa4 ♜xc2 40
 ♘b6 ♙e6 41 ♘d5 g5!

Amazingly, Black is probably equal now.

42 ♜xb7 ♙xh3 43 gxf3 ♘f3 44 ♙g2 ♘h4
 45 ♜f1 ♜xg2 46 ♜xf7+ ♖h6 47 ♜b1 g4 48
 ♘f4 ♜a2 49 ♜b6+ ♖g5 50 ♘e6+ ♖g6 51
 ♘d8+ ♖g5 52 ♘e6+ ♖g6 1/2-1/2

In certain tactical respects, Kasparov could be considered a spiritual successor to Tal, but his sacrifices tend to be more sound. The next game illustrates this, in that Black's exchange sacrifice looks as crazy as the one by Tal, but seems to be objectively correct.

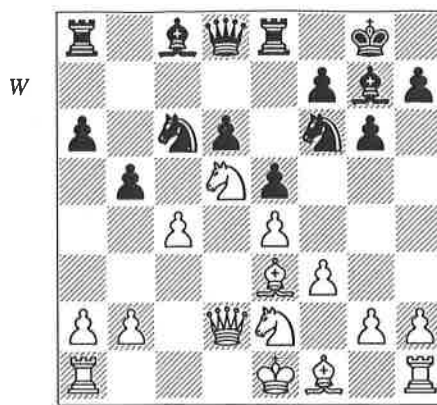
Beliaevsky - Kasparov
 Moscow 1981

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6
 ♙e3 ♘c6 7 ♜d2 a6 8 ♘ge2 ♜e8 9 ♘c1 e5 10
 d5 ♘d4 11 ♘1e2 c5!? 12 dxc6 ♘xc6 13 ♘d5
 b5!! (D)

This is truly amazing. After Black gives up the exchange, he will still be left with a weak pawn on d6, a gaping hole on d5, and a bad bishop on g7! And yet, concrete dynamic factors seem to give Black just enough counterplay, however White continues.

14 ♙b6 ♜d7 15 ♘c7 ♜b8 16 ♘xe8 ♜xe8
 17 ♙e3

A big decision, allowing Black to win a pawn and gain play in the centre and along the b-file. Kasparov's analysis of the alternatives is a good survey of the opportunistic nature of



Black's position, based on the strength of the d4-square and his lead in development:

a) 17 ♙c7 ♜b7 18 ♙xd6 bxc4 (threatening ...♜d7) 19 ♙a3 ♙e6 20 ♘c3 ♜d7 21 ♜f2 ♙h6 22 ♜d1 ♘d4 with compensation.

b) 17 c5 ♜b7! 18 ♜xd6 ♙e6 19 ♘c3 ♙f8 20 ♜d2 ♜d7 21 ♜f2 b4 with compensation.

c) 17 cxb5 axb5 (17...♜xb6!? 18 bxc6 d5! 19 exd5 e4, but I think 17...axb5 is better) 18 ♙e3 d5 19 exd5 ♘d4 20 ♘c3 b4 21 ♘e4 ♘d5 with compensation.

17...bxc4 18 ♘c3 ♙e6 19 ♙e2

An amazing line is Kasparov's 19 ♘d5 ♘xd5!?! 20 exd5 e4 21 dxe6 ♜xe6, which he describes as 'unclear'! In fact, White has terrific difficulties defending in that case.

19...♘d4 20 0-0 d5 21 exd5 ♘xd5 22 ♘d5 ♙xd5

Kasparov assesses the position as already better for Black. The knight on d4 is a real thorn in White's side, but can't be exchanged without unleashing the power of Black's bishops. In what follows, Black very casually builds up his attack.

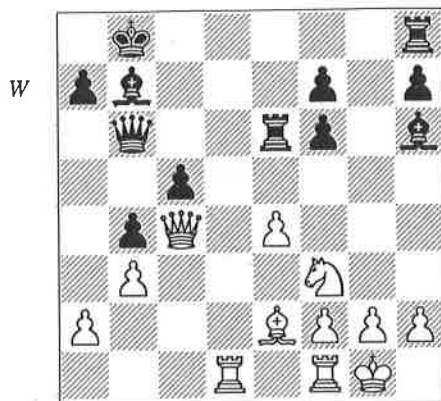
23 ♜f2 h5! 24 ♜c1 ♜e6 25 ♙f1 h4 26 ♜e1 ♜c6 27 ♙h6 ♙h8 28 f4? e4

Simply winning for Black, according to Kasparov. This is where the human eye still outperforms the materialistic computer processor. The game finished:

29 ♜d1 ♙e6 30 f5 ♘xf5 31 ♜f4 ♜e8 32 ♜fd2 ♜c5+ 33 ♖h1 ♙e5 34 ♜g5 ♖h7 35 ♜d8 ♜xd8 36 ♜xd8 ♜f2 37 ♜d1 ♘xh6 38 ♜xe5 e3 39 ♜c3 h3 40 ♜e1 ♘g4 0-1

A nice finish is 41 ♜c1 ♙d5 42 ♜xf2 exf2 and there is nothing to be done about ...♘e3 and ...hxg2+.

As one might imagine, Karpov's exchange sacrifices (which are quite frequent) emphasize long-term positional pressure:



Karpov – Gelfand
Linares 1993

Most players would play the 'forced' 20 ♙d3 without thinking, and worry about how to build up later. Karpov felt that Black would have good chances after 20... ♜g8 in that case, threatening ...f5. Instead, he found:

20 ♞d5!

As so often with Karpov, this is a prophylactic idea to restrict Black's play.

20... ♞he8

Temporarily, Black resists the exchange offer. After 20... ♙xd5 21 exd5 ♞e7 22 ♞d1 , Karpov assesses the position as clearly favourable to White. McDonald lists the following factors to support this assessment:

- all the squares along the e-file are covered, so Black's rooks lack effectiveness;
- the opposite-coloured bishops actually favour White's attack, and from d3, White's bishop can hit h7 or go to f5;
- White has a strong passed pawn in the centre; and
- Black's king is exposed.

To this, I might add that White may be able to bring a knight via h4 to f5, from where it will dominate the board.

21 ♙d3 ♞d8! 22 ♞d1 ♞ed6 23 ♙e2 ♙xd5

White was threatening exchanges and capture on f7, and 23... ♞xd5 24 exd5 ♞d6 25 ♞c2 also obviously favours him.

24 exd5 ♞b7 25 ♞h4! ♙f8 26 ♙c4 ♞xd5

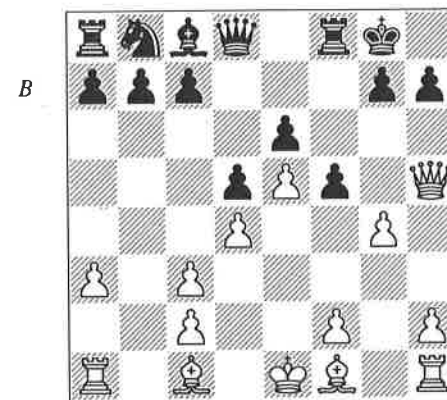
A counter-sacrifice, since 26...h6 27 ♞e4 ♞d7 28 ♞d3 prepares the aforementioned ♞h4-f5 . But Black is left with quite a few weaknesses.

27 ♙xd5 ♞xd5 28 ♞e1 ♞d8 29 ♞xf6! ♞c7 30 g3 ♙d6 31 ♞g5 ♞d7 32 ♞e8+

Now the difference between the airy black king position and the solid white one becomes decisive. The rest is really just technique.

32... ♞b7 33 ♞e4 ♙e7 34 ♞f5 ♞c6 35 ♙g2 ♞c7 36 ♞h8 ♞g6 37 ♞d5+ ♞c6 38 ♞xc6+ ♞xc6 39 ♞xh7 ♙d5 40 ♞d2 ♙f6 41 ♞c4 ♙d4 42 ♞h6 ♞c6 43 g4 ♞e6 44 h4 ♙d5 45 g5 1-0

Sticking in the realm of positional sacrifices, the modern player is increasingly aware of opportunities to establish a single minor piece which is more effective than a rook. Here is a clever example:



Martin Gonzalez – Dolmatov
Barcelona 1983

White is threatening 11 ♙d3 and 12 gxf5 . Black's solution is remarkable, in that he foregoes natural moves in order to give up material for the foreseeable future:

10... ♙d7! 11 gxf5

White's attack is completely frustrated after 11 ♙d3 ♙e8 12 ♞h3 ♙g6 .

11... ♞xf5 12 ♞h3 ♙e8 13 ♙d3 ♙g6!

The whole point. A bishop on f5 will be worth more than a rook! Although it would be a strong piece in any case, its enormous strength here also derives from the weakness of White's doubled c-pawns. Because of them, White will not be able to free his game, and at the same

crifice, since 26...h6 27 ♖e4 prepares the aforementioned lack is left with quite a few

15 28 ♖e1 ♖d8 29 ♗xf6! ♗c7 ♗g5 ♖d7 32 ♖e8+

erence between the airy black d the solid white one becomes st is really just technique.

♗e4 ♖e7 34 ♗f5 ♗c6 35 ♖g2 ♗g6 37 ♗d5+ ♗c6 38 ♗xc6+ ♗d5 40 ♗d2 ♖f6 41 ♗c4 ♗d4 ♗g4 ♖e6 44 h4 ♗d5 45 g5 1-0

e realm of positional sacrifices, er is increasingly aware of op- establish a single minor piece effective than a rook. Here is a



Gonzalez – Dolmatov
Barcelona 1983

eatening 11 ♖d3 and 12 gxf5. 1 is remarkable, in that he fore- ves in order to give up material ble future:

1 gxf5
k is completely frustrated after ♗h3 ♖g6.

♗h3 ♖e8 13 ♖d3 ♖g6!
point. A bishop on f5 will be a rook! Although it would be a any case, its enormous strength s from the weakness of White's is. Because of them, White will free his game, and at the same

time, Black's knight has outpost squares like c4 and a4 to play with.

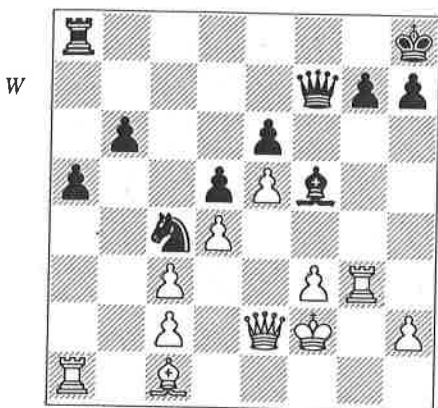
14 ♖g1 ♗f8 15 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 16 ♗f3 ♗c6!

Both preventing White's c4 and eventually, heading for the c4-square via a5. He also allows the exchange of queens by 17 ♖h6 ♖g6 18 ♗xf8+ ♖xf8, but then after White's bishop retreats, Black wins the c2-pawn and his bishop, knight, and rook on an open file will dominate the play, particularly with White's weak pawns.

17 ♗e2 ♖h8 18 a4 ♗f7!

As Dvoretsky points out, this prepares ...♗a5, the immediate 18...♗a5 allowing 19 ♗b5! b6 20 ♗d7.

19 a5 b6 20 axb6 cxb6 21 ♖g3 ♗a5 22 f3 ♗c4 23 ♖f2 a5 (D)



White has got rid of his weak a-pawn, but in return, Black has a dominating knight on c4 and passed a-pawn of his own. White has absolutely nothing to do as Black improves his position.

24 ♖g1 a4 25 ♖a3 ♖g6 26 ♖f2 ♗f5

Opposite-colour bishops favour the attacker. Black ties down White's pieces until he finally is able to break through on the queenside.

27 ♖a2 ♖a7 28 ♖c1 h6 29 ♖g1 a3 30 ♖g2 ♖h5 31 ♖g3 ♗f8 32 ♖h3 ♖g6 33 ♖g3 ♖f5 34 ♗g2 b5 35 ♗f2 b4!?

A good practical move, although perhaps it should have been prepared for a few moves, since White could have defended better in what follows.

36 ♗e1! ♖xc2! 37 cxb4

Not 37 ♖xc2? b3, and the pawns triumph.

37...♖b1 38 ♖a1?

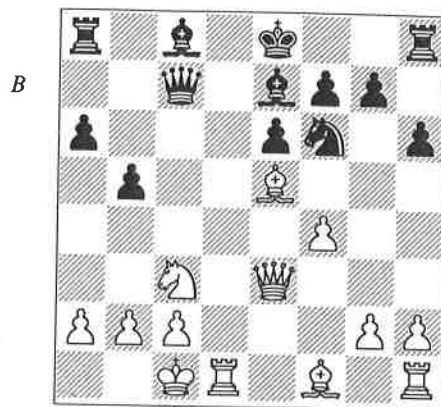
Dvoretsky points out that White should try 38 ♖xa3! ♗xa3 39 ♖xa3 ♖d3! 40 ♗c3 ♖c4,

when "White's position is difficult". Now, however, Black wins.

38...a2 39 f4 ♗e8 40 ♗e2 ♗a4 41 ♗e1 ♖b7 42 ♖d2 ♗xd2 43 ♗xd2 ♖xb4 44 ♖d3 ♖xd3 45 ♗xd3 ♖b3 0-1

Since 46 ♗d1 loses to 46...♗b4. At no time in this game was either white rook the equal of Black's light-squared bishop.

So many modern exchange sacrifices involve getting two bishops and an attack that such a procedure seems almost trivial. The next game is typical in this regard, but has an extra twist.



Ivanchuk – Kramnik
Dos Hermanas 1996

Where should Black's queen go?

14...♗g4!

Nowhere! Now 15 ♖xc7 ♗xe3 is not attractive, so Ivanchuk grabs the exchange:

15 ♗f3 ♗xe5 16 ♗xa8 ♗d7

Not 16...♗c6? 17 ♗xb5!. After 16...♗d7, White's next move is cleverly calculated, but 17 ♗f3 ♖b7 18 ♗g3 was probably correct. Then Nunn gives Black 'reasonable' long-term attacking chances by a combination of ...♖f6 and ...b4.

17 g3?! ♗b6 18 ♗f3 ♖b7 19 ♗e4 f5!

A far-reaching idea. Clearly Ivanchuk had worked out this sequence, and correctly felt that he could now give back the exchange and retain the superior game, based on Black's king in the centre. But Kramnik has a surprise in store.

20 ♗h5+ ♖f8 21 ♗f2 ♖f6!

Remarkable! Again, Black sees that his minor piece (in this case the bishop on b7) is worth more than a rook, and rejects 21...♙xh1 22 ♜xh1. What is different here from the standard exchange sacrifice is that his remaining rook is completely out of the game! Also, it took courage to resist the probable forced draw after 21...♙c5 22 ♜h3 ♙xh1 23 ♜g5 hxg5 24 ♜xh8+ ♜f7 25 ♜h5+ with perpetual check.

22 ♙d3 ♜a4 23 ♜he1!

With a counterattack. 23 b3 ♙b2+ 24 ♜b1 ♙a3 is too strong.

23...♙xb2+ 24 ♜b1 ♙d5!

Defending e6 and threatening the king, as the line 25 ♙xf5? ♙xa2+! 26 ♜xa2 ♜c4+ 27 ♜b1 ♜c3+ 28 ♜xb2 ♜b4+ 29 ♜c1 ♜a2# demonstrates. The following tactical sequence is White's best try.

25 ♙xb5! ♙xa2+ 26 ♜xa2 axb5 27 ♜b1! (D)

27...♜a5!?

This leads to a win, so it is difficult to criticize. Nevertheless, Kramnik gives a lengthy analysis which shows that 27...♜e7! is more decisive (covering the second rank). After 27...♜a5, White would lose after 28 ♜d7 ♜xe1+ 29 ♜d1 ♜g8! 30 ♜g6 ♙f6; but he should play 28 c3!, although Black maintains a big edge after 28...♜xc3+! 29 ♜xb2 ♜a4+ 30

B



♜a2 ♜b4! (Kramnik). Ivanchuk now falters under the pressure and loses quickly:

28 ♜d3? ♙a3! 29 ♜a2 ♜c3+ 30 ♜b3 ♜d5 31 ♜a2

What else? 31 ♜xe6 loses to 31...♜a4+ 32 ♜a2 ♜c3+ 33 ♜a1 ♙c1#.

31...♙b4+ 32 ♜b1 ♙c3 0-1

Black never used his rook!

This concludes our presentation of the modern exchange sacrifice. Other examples of this weapon are strewn throughout this book, and the reader may also want to relate our discussion here to the topic of modern dynamism in Chapter 10.

12 The Initiative Dance: Some Musings

Chess would be an easy game if there were a set of guidelines which one could absorb to master the game. Since that isn't the case, players everywhere wonder about what separates the club player from the master, the master from the grandmaster, and even the 'average grandmaster' from the world champion. I have neither the knowledge nor inclination to answer such questions in any detail, but I would like to speculate briefly in order to introduce this chapter's topic. My own feeling is that the most important factor which differentiates experienced players from each other is their ability to calculate well, which includes the ability to visualize and assess positions accurately. That, in turn, is closely connected with advanced pattern-recognition skills and a good memory. The player who can see further into the position and accurately assess what's happening, whether tactically or positionally, tends to be the better player. There are, to be sure, other important determinants such as ability to concentrate fully for extended periods of time, fighting spirit, work ethic, and the like. But having the ability to visualize positions accurately (a major part of calculation), and being able to draw on an enormous bank of patterns and positions in a clear and useful way tend to be the most important determinants of what we call chess talent. From what has been written about this subject (and from the experience of prodigies, for example), I think a case can be made that those skills are to a large extent innate; or at least they must be learned at a very early age.

Nevertheless, there are types of chess thought not fully tied in with calculation and visualization which also play an important role. Players and writers are notoriously vague about abilities in this realm, using words such as 'intuition', 'creativity', and 'imagination', for example. In practical terms, the most common and important test of such qualities arises when players must calculate to a certain depth in a

position and then simply make an intuitive judgement about whether the resulting situation will be favourable or not. A strong player, for example, may be skilled at estimating with high probability whether a position will be good for him, whereas a grandmaster may also have the ability to see unusual tactical shots at the end of a calculation, in just that one branch of analysis which he 'happens' to extend a bit further than the others. In their notes to games, good players talk a lot about just 'feeling' whether a possible attacking variation would win out in the end or not. It seems to me that the ability to make such judgements depends upon recognizing critical moments of a game, and even more importantly, understanding the swings of momentum which occur in any given contest. I'd like to look at some interpretations of those swings here.

The Mysteries of Momentum: What is an Advantage?

Modern chess writers have made the point that there are various kinds of initiative. The one which appeals best to our 'arithmetical' understanding is when one side is attacking, and in a step-by-step fashion, that initiative is finally converted into a combination. Suetin calls this kind of initiative 'gradually ripening'. But Romanovsky makes the point that "the initiative will quite often bear a temporary character: it either runs dry or is intercepted by the opposing side." Now by the initiative 'running dry', we can presume he means that one side's activity and threats cease without the other's taking over. But how typical is this situation? It seems to me that the reality is more like Tal's comments in the last chapter about Black equalizing, i.e., that when Black 'equalizes', he is usually better. Or as Réti says about the attack: "once [it] is repulsed, the counterattack is

usually decisive". Similarly, I feel, the loss of initiative by one side is very often accompanied by its adoption by the other side.

So it's fair to say, as a starting point, that shifts in momentum (or the lack of them) don't seem to follow any set pattern. Here's how I would describe the three 'model' situations: In an exceptional game, one side has an initiative, develops it over the course of 15-25 moves, and finally coverts it into a winning attack or end-game. Kasparov seems particularly brilliant at finding positions in which the initiative never peters out, and I remember that the German GM Uhlmann at his peak was also quite adept at this – it was as though the opponent never had a chance to squirm out. Then there are some games in which one side has the initiative, the other side neutralizes it, and the game is quickly drawn. But in a typically complex modern struggle between two equally matched opponents, it seems to me that the struggle is often characterized by a handing back and forth of initiative, mutual threats, and unclear tension. Suba makes some excellent observations about this issue. He begins by discussing the overall idea of 'the advantage':

"The advantage in chess does not seem to obey the rules of simple logic. Two good moves do not necessarily make a good pair. An attacking move which forces a retreating move in reply does not always give any advantage, or increase an existing one. Sometimes such 'ply' may even do damage to a favourable balance of the initiative or some other sort of advantage ... There is a sort of coil-spring defensive potential which must be considered a factor. It is a form of dynamic potential [Suba's term which we discussed in Chapter 10 – JW] and shows that, paradoxically, the latter can sometimes be improved by a retreating move". Note how this is consistent with our discussion of tempi and 'information' in the last chapter.

Applying this model to the concept of the initiative, Suba provides us the following conversation between the Fan ('F') and the Master ('M'):

"F: Do you think that initiative is a part of dynamism as well?

M: No, I think that initiative is just an exterior aspect of dynamism. It is a continuous consumption and regeneration of dynamism, and a

change in the balance of these two elements may jeopardize potential.

F: Is that why sometimes you lose the initiative without any logical explanation?

M: Yes. Sometimes you must lose it, just like that. If you try to cling to it, by forcing the issue, your dynamic potential will become exhausted and you won't be able to face a vigorous counterattack."

Now, if the last two chapters dealt with relatively unproveable abstractions, this kind of talk seems to be approaching mysticism, or at least, some chess equivalent of Continental Metaphysics! But I think the open-minded reader will admit that, however unscientific and even exotic these comments are, they also ring true as a description of our personal chess experience. Haven't we all felt this 'coil-spring defensive potential' in a position, and doesn't the Master's explanation of losing the initiative and trying to cling to it too long correspond to many of our own games? What's more, don't these ideas apply to many of the games of even the best players of our day? I think that we resist such concepts because:

a) they aren't all that useful in improving our own play: after all, it's easier to examine a potential course of action carefully and then make our best possible assessment about it than it is to try to figure out which kind of initiative we've been handed, or how 'coily' our opponent's defensive springs are!

b) that familiar arithmetical model has a powerful influence on us: if I'm 'better' for a certain number of moves, by a certain 'amount' (say, a half of a pawn), then it's absurd that suddenly I'm faced with a situation in which I can't even equalize! Of course, this means that I've made a mistake somewhere; but the seeming irrationality of the situation arises when after a series of perfectly logical and harmless moves, we can't even cash in our half pawn for equality, but rather have to watch in horror as the opponent's counter-initiative unfolds and threatens to sweep us off the board entirely! And then, graciously, we find that after another 5 or 6 of our own semi-desperate defensive moves, our *opponent* runs out of ideas, and suddenly (also without having seemingly done anything wrong) stands worse again!

Of course, to an ultra-logical critic, this may

y make an intuitive
r the resulting situa-
not. A strong player,
ed at estimating with
t a position will be
grandmaster may also
usual tactical shots at
just that one branch
pens' to extend a bit
their notes to games,
about just 'feeling'
ing variation would
t seems to me that the
ements depends upon
ents of a game, and
understanding the
ch occur in any given
some interpretations

Momentum: stage?

e made the point that
of initiative. The one
'arithmetical' under-
is attacking, and in a
t initiative is finally
tion. Suetin calls this
ally ripening'. But
point that "the initia-
temporary character:
cepted by the opposi-
tative 'running dry',
that one side's activ-
out the other's taking
is situation? It seems
more like Tal's com-
about Black equaliz-
k 'equalizes', he is
says about the attack:
the counterattack is

just sound like the ravings of a weak player. That critic might object: "Look, it all just seems irrational to you because you aren't strong enough to see into the position clearly, or you simply can't calculate far enough." But that objection is a bit specious; using the same reasoning, why should we ever attempt to talk about chess in theoretical terms at all? It is never possible to assess arithmetically all of the elements of a complex position and take into account all future possibilities; even if a computer were ultimately able to do the equivalent of this, it would do so by essentially performing a brute-force search on *all* future moves, not by adding up theoretical advantages and disadvantages. To me, the proof that Suba's model reflects something very real about chess (putting aside the question of its usefulness) is that we have here a description of not just the typical 1800 player's adventures in the local club championship, but also of the fantastic and convoluted battles which the world's top ten players fairly regularly engage in! In particular, if you recall our several discussions of the complex and dynamically-balanced modern openings which characterize top-flight chess, you will recall the remarkable length of time during which the advantage and initiative seems to swing back and forth. This not only happens in some theoretical sense, but in the minds of our best players, who make this dynamic give-and-take explicit in the notes to their own games, and in post-mortems.

Dynamism and Provocation

The above comments are meant to give a picture of the paradoxical nature of momentum and initiative. In modern openings, both White and Black try to find positions in which they cede to their opponents apparent advantages (often the attack or initiative), knowing that such advantages can be neutralized, in return for positional gains or counterattack. The resulting positions tend to be unfavourable to the side with the failed attack, because the other player either gains long-term positional advantages or himself assumes the initiative. This might be called a strategy of long-term provocation, in that the opponent is invited to take apparently promising, but ultimately committal, steps.

In the most general sense, this describes the essence of numerous dynamic modern defences for Black. In many of the main lines of major defences like the various Sicilians, the French, the Modern Benoni, and the Grünfeld, for example, White can get both the initiative (normally via spatial preponderance and/or a lead in development) and attacking chances, whereas Black often holds long-term positional and counter-attacking trumps. The trick is to find variations in which the initiative or attack peters out and passes back to Black. We have already seen such ideas in the Poisoned Pawn Variation of the Najdorf Sicilian, for example, and in our discussion of 'mega-centre' openings such as the Four Pawns Attack versus the Benoni or the radical pawn-storms against the Grünfeld Exchange Variation. But even calmer main-line Open Sicilians and Grünfelds have the irritating tendency to leave Black with a nice queenside attack and open c-file in an ending, so White generally has to transform the pawn structure before that arises. Similarly, Modern Benoni endings are often characterized by a position where Black's queenside pawns come rushing down the board by ...b5, ...c4, and b4, for example; so in games with that opening as well, White has a tendency either to attack or to transform the pawn structure during the middlegame. In such cases, if White attacks by rushing his pawns forward to open lines against the king, the failure of that attack will more often than not lead to an effective counter-initiative by Black, as the reader has probably experienced.

This sort of dynamic resiliency in openings like the Sicilian is pretty well-known, but what about from the white side? It seems to me that a lot of modern openings feature something similar by White. He plays for positional gains (in some case, merely 'the accumulation of small advantages'!), but in doing so, provokes Black to counter actively by attacking or, at least, seizing an initiative. White's hope is that when that attack fails or the initiative peters out, he will be left with either a permanent positional advantage or an attack of his own. As an example, recall how, in our overview of the 4 ♖c2 Nimzo-Indian in Chapter 7 (subsection 'c'), we saw lines where Black (with the knight-pair) went all-out in attack, whereas White possessed

use, this describes the dynamic modern defences: the main lines of major Sicilians, the French, the Grünfeld, for example the initiative (norrance and/or a lead in ng chances, whereas term positional and i. The trick is to find initiative or attack pe-to Black. We have all the Poisoned Pawn Sicilian, for example, 'mega-centre' openings vs Attack versus the vn-storms against the tion. But even calmer ; and Grünfelds have o leave Black with a open c-file in an end-has to transform the hat arises. Similarly, re often characterized k's queenside pawns ard by ...b5, ...c4, and nes with that opening ncy either to attack or structure during the es, if White attacks by d to open lines against at attack will more of- n effective counter- e reader has probably esiliency in openings well-known, but what ? It seems to me that a ature something simi- or positional gains (in accumulation of small ng so, provokes Black attacking or, at least, te's hope is that when initiative peters out, he permanent positional his own. As an exam- erview of the 4 ♖c2 7 (subsection 'c'), we (with the knight-pair) areas White possessed

the long-term advantage of the two bishops. White's provocative philosophy (confirmed by experience) was that if the attack failed, his counterattack and positional advantages would be decisive. Certainly many 1 c4 e5 variations of the English Opening are based on provoking an ultimately ineffective Black kingside attack (...f5/...g5), and the same thing might be said of the white side of the main lines of the Dutch Defence.

To conclude this chapter, let me point out a few games in other openings featuring this dynamic.

Kasparov – P. Nikolić

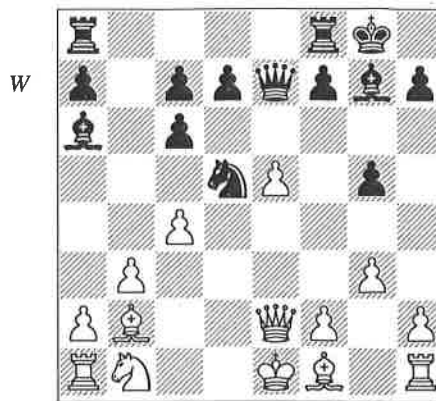
Linares 1997

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♖e7 7 ♖e2 ♗d5 8 c4 ♙a6 9 b3 g5!

Black has a lead in development, and plays actively. One factor to be aware of, however, is that if he doesn't succeed in either attacking White or transforming the pawn structure, his three pawn islands and doubled pawns may leave him with a very poor ending. In the following case, when Black's activity fizzled, White's positional advantages were decisive: 9...g6 10 g3 ♙g7 and now Kasparov-I.Sokolov, Erevan Olympiad 1996 (by transposition) continued: 11 ♙b2 0-0 12 ♙g2 ♞fe8 13 0-0 ♗b6 14 ♞e1 d5 15 ♖c2! ♞ad8 16 ♗d2 ♖c5 17 ♞ac1 d4? (White is better regardless, but this is positional suicide) 18 ♗f3 d3 19 ♖d2 (better is 19 ♖c3! ♙c8 20 ♞cd1 ♙f5 21 h3 h5 22 ♗h4) 19...♙c8 20 h3 h5 21 ♞cd1 ♙f5 22 e6! ♞xe6 23 ♞xe6 ♙xe6 24 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 25 ♖c3+ ♗g8 26 ♞xd3 ♞xd3 27 ♖xd3 (the end of active play, so Black's pawn weaknesses will be decisive) 27...♗d7 28 ♖c3 ♙f5 29 ♗d4 ♖e5 30 ♖d2 c5 31 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 32 ♖a5 ♗e5 33 ♖xa7 h4 34 ♖a8+ ♗g7 35 ♖e4 ♖f6 36 ♖xh4 1-0. This game illustrates the delicate balance between provocation and handing one's opponent a devastating attack. Because of this, the 'provocation strategy' is not to be entered into lightly; but you will find that provocation is in any case inherent in a number of modern counterattacking openings.

10 g3 ♙g7 11 ♙b2 0-0 (D)

12 ♗d2!?

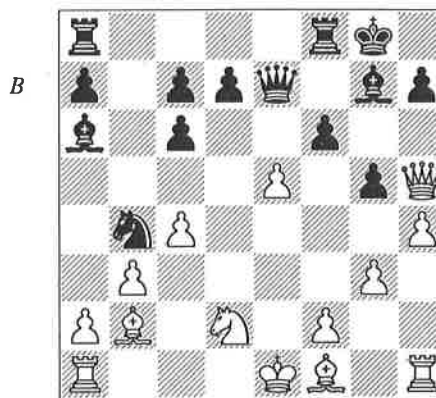


White's development is slow, and with this move, he even commits to leaving his king in the centre – a blatant provocation!

12...f6!?

Trying to open lines; Black feels that the ending after 13 exf6 ♙xf6 14 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 15 ♙xf6 ♞xf6 is approximately equal.

13 ♖h5! ♗b4 14 h4! (D)



Ironically, White launches an attack while underdeveloped, based on 14...♗c2+? 15 ♗d1 ♗xa1 16 hxg5. But the real point is to force simplification and exploit White's long-term advantages.

14...g4!

Kasparov's analysis of the main line after 14...♖e8 goes 15 ♖xe8 ♞axe8 16 0-0-0 ♗xa2+ 17 ♗b1 ♗b4 18 ♗e4 fxg5 19 ♞xd7! ♙c8 20 ♞xc7 ♙f5 21 ♙g2 ♗d3 22 ♙a3 with a clear advantage.

15 ♗d1 c5 16 a3 ♗c6?

White is better after 16...♙b7! 17 ♞g1 ♗c6 18 ♙d3 f5 19 ♙xf5 ♙xe5, but at least Black

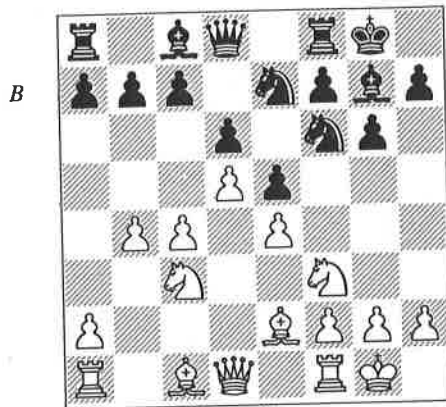
would be in the game. The text-move allows a forcing sequence which gives White a simple positional win.

17 ♖d3 f5 18 ♙xf5 ♙xe5 19 ♜e1 d6 20 ♙e4! ♙b7 21 ♜xg4+ ♜g7 22 ♙d5+ ♗h8 23 ♙xe5 dxe5 24 ♜xg7+ ♗xg7 25 ♚e4 ♜ad8 26 ♚xc5 ♙c8 27 ♜a2 1-0

Anand – Z. Almasi

FIDE KO World Ch, Groningen 1997

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c4 ♙g7 4 ♚c3 0-0 5 e4 d6
6 ♙e2 e5 7 0-0 ♚c6 8 d5 ♚e7 9 b4 (D)



There's hardly a more common example of a 'provocative' white opening than the main lines of the King's Indian Defence. In most variations, including the one we are following, White turns his attention to opening files and establishing key squares on the queenside, which in the long run tends to be decisive. In doing so, he leaves himself open to a kingside attack by Black, beginning with the move ...f5 and often followed by ...f4, ...g5-g4, and the attempted massacre of White's king. As with the provocative openings employed by Black above (the Sicilian Defence, for example), if the attacker's strategy falters, he is usually in big trouble positionally, and he tends to lose most endings. Of course, what can happen to Black in the Sicilian can also happen to White in the King's Indian, i.e., the provocation is sometimes too severe, leading to an overwhelming attack by the side that has been provoked to do so!

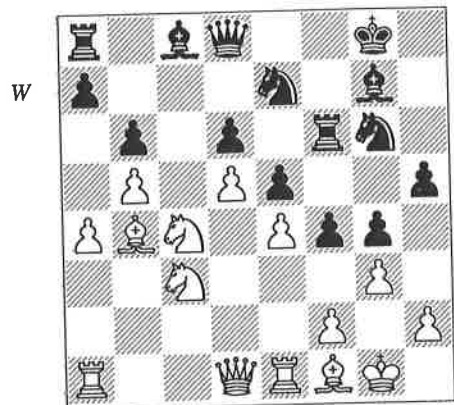
9...♚h5 10 ♜e1 ♚f4 11 ♙f1 h6

The line with 9 b4 and 10 ♜e1 is extremely popular just now; Kramnik, for example, has

had excellent results with it. As in variations with 9 ♚e1, Black attacks on the kingside, but White's pieces are better-placed for defence than in those lines. Very common at this point is 11...f5, but that allows 12 ♚g5 with the idea of ♚e6, which not only leaves White with a small positional edge on the light squares, but eliminates any fantasies Black might have of attacking on the kingside. 11...h6 tries to keep the attack alive, but is also rather slow and hasn't yet been very successful.

12 c5 g5 13 ♚d2 f5 14 g3 ♘fg6 15 a4

This is probably more accurate than 15 ♚c4, when after 15...fxc4! 16 cxd6 (else he has to worry about ...dxc5 and ...♚xd5) 16...cxd6 17 ♚xe4 ♚f5 Black intends ...♚d4 in many lines. Black played differently in the following game, which, however, also shows how terribly difficult it is for him to scare up a real attack in this position, even with a lot of time to reorganize his forces: 15...f4 16 ♙a3 ♜f6 17 b5 b6 18 cxd6 cxd6 19 ♙b4 g4 20 a4 h5 (D).



21 a5 ♜b8 22 axb6 axb6 23 ♚b1! h4 24 ♚bd2 f3 25 ♚xd6 hxg3 26 hxg3 ♚f8 27 ♚2c4 ♜h6 28 ♜a7 ♙d7 29 ♙c3 ♚c8 30 ♜xd7! ♚xd7 31 ♚f5 ♜h5 32 d6 ♜f6 33 ♜d5+ ♗h8 34 ♚ce3 ♜g6 35 ♙c4 ♜h7 36 ♚h4 ♚f6 37 d7 ♚xd5 38 d8 ♜+ ♜g8 39 ♜xg8+ ♗xg8 40 ♙xd5+ ♗h7 41 ♚xg4 ♚d6 42 ♚xf3 ♚xb5 43 ♙f7 1-0 Izkuznykh-Fedorov, Omsk 1996.

15...f4

OK, so now Black has his standard attack. But as the game in the last note shows, that attack tends to run into a brick wall, leaving White his queenside advantage. In this game, Black falls victim to a rather easy tactic.

. As in variations
1 the kingside, but
laced for defence
nmon at this point
2g5 with the idea
ves White with a
light squares, but
ck might have of
l...h6 tries to keep
rather slow and
ful.

1 2fg6 15 a4
urate than 15 2c4,
d6 (else he has to
xd5) 16...cxd6 17
2d4 in many lines.
e following game,
how terribly diffi-
a real attack in this
time to reorganize
6 17 b5 b6 18 cxd6
).



6 23 2b1! h4 24
1xg3 2f8 27 2c4
c8 30 2xd7! 2xd7
2d5+ 2h8 34 2ce3
2f6 37 d7 2xd5 38
40 2xd5+ 2h7 41
43 2f7 1-0 Izkuz-

is standard attack.
ote shows, that at-
rick wall, leaving
tage. In this game,
r easy tactic.

16 2c4 g4 17 2b5 2f6 18 2a3 h5??

Something like 18...2h7 should have been tried, but after 19 2c1 a6 20 2c3, White's chances on the kingside are much better than Black's on the kingside, which have stalled. After 18...h5, White wins material and the game:

19 2xc7 2xc7 20 cxd6 2xd6 21 2xd6 2xd6 22 b5 2f6 23 d6 2f5 24 exf5 2xf5 25 2d5+ 2h8 26 2ad1 2d8 27 2d3 2xd3 28 2xd3 h4 29 d7 hxg3 30 hxg3 f3 31 2c1 2f8 32 2e4 2e6 33 2a3 1-0

In this chapter, I have speculated about some rather hard-to-define and unproveable ideas

regarding the ebb-and-flow of dynamic struggles. To those interested in this topic, I would recommend examining contemporary games with these concepts in mind, and see if you feel that such ideas are helpful. I have included this discussion in my book mainly because I feel that this is the sort of area which will become increasingly important. Players who can get a feel for the paradoxical comings and goings of momentum and initiative, for example, will be well-armed for the type of chess contemporary masters engage in. And the correct use of provocation is a skill which separates the finest players from the rest of us.

14 Playing Modern Chess; Conclusion

How does one actually *play* modern chess? As I have said before, this is not an instructional book. But the majority of readers will certainly be players, and players who are looking to improve their game. Having come to an end of this lengthy work, I'm sure that many of you will be saying something along the lines of: "OK, but what do I do when confronted with these issues over the board? It's all well and good to speak of being independent of rules and principles, but what should I then use for guidance?" Looking at Part 2 on a chapter-by-chapter basis, one finds that I have indeed largely defined modern chess in terms of its ambiguities and not its certainties. With respect to pawns, for example, we learned that modern players will often neglect development for structure, allow backward pawns in the opening, move pawns in front of their king, attack the front of a pawn-chain, and advance flank pawns when the central situation is unresolved. On the other hand, they will just as often do the traditional thing (develop quickly, avoid backward pawns, keep kingside pawns on their original squares, etc.). The situation with respect to minor-piece issues is also muddy. We found that bad bishops are often not bad at all, that knights can be strong on the edge of the board, and worst of all, that the knight-pair can be superior to the bishop-pair in either very closed, semi-closed, or wide-open positions! You can successfully grab flank pawns in the opening with your queen when you're staggeringly behind in development; or you can do so and quickly be mated. And so forth when it comes to exchange sacrifices, prophylaxis, etc. Looked at from a distance, this is all not much help, and perhaps a good reason to take up carpentry or writing mystery novels.

But we aren't looking from a distance; we are looking at concrete games and positions. This is the level at which real improvement takes place; you have to develop your intuition and judgement by studying countless actual

situations. I think the frustrated player desiring to achieve mastery has to confront that reality before anything else. Once we accept that general rules are inadequate to lift our play to the next level, the question of what constitutes chess knowledge can be addressed. And here we get some rather surprising answers. 'How-to-improve' chess books may well be able to raise the level of your practical skills or even your rating (although I am sceptical of the degree to which they can do so beyond a certain playing strength). But they won't do much, if anything, for your knowledge of the game itself. Such books can only deal with one side of the equation, for example, thinking techniques, psychological approaches, and sporting considerations (e.g., time management, repertoire choice, and the like). But your knowledge of the interplay of positional and tactical elements, and the paradoxical nuances of initiative and momentum, for example, are a separate and ultimately more important realm.

Let's again see what our friend Suba has to say about this subject: "Most books on 'modern theory' consider that improving one's play by studying strategy means reaching the superior level of a player who has had that instruction. That may be partly true, but I would warn you that the dogma introduced may have a detrimental effect on your creativity. Try to read such books with a critical eye, as if you do not believe a word of what they say. Memorize opening variations, endgame techniques, combinations, ideas, even whole games if you can, but not rules and dogma."

This last sentence is a remarkably honest proposal! After all, it runs counter to the advice of just about every instructional book or magazine article out there! Haven't you seen it time and again: "Don't memorize openings; just learn the 'principles' behind them" ... "you shouldn't be trying to learn by heart; understanding the 'ideas' is what really counts" ... "young players spend too much time learning openings, when



truly experimen-

4 c6! 9 d3!

12 Bb1

openings like the
ch on. It's not as
at deal; one won-
e-bishops' dogma

kolov

96

5 e4 e6?!

ending.

d5 8 c3 e6 9

? dxd6 11 cxd6

13 f3

temporary open-
reflect the rule-
of modern chess
ader, in a similar
is book to some of
his attention.

they should be mastering the fundamental principles of the game”, and so forth? This advice is given with a straight face by strong grandmasters whose entire time is occupied by (and whose chess upbringing consisted primarily of) studying and memorizing opening variations and whole games! And if this were an endgame book, I could say something less strong but similar: grandmaster authors who for years were drilled and inundated with the *memorization* of specific endings breezily inform their readers that they shouldn't be learning a lot of specific endings by heart, but rather be absorbing fine principles about rooks behind passed pawns and bringing the king into play! Well, as Tisdall absolutely correctly says, rules “gain more general relevance the later the stage of the game they refer to”, and therefore I acknowledge that endgame principles are definitely worth paying heed to. But even in that stage of the game, as any prolonged association with grandmasters will teach you, a concrete knowledge-base of countless specific positions both informs those rules and is essential to their correct application.

Think of spoken language. When you speak a language well, you aren't pausing in mid-sentence to think about whether the verb should be active or passive, or how to conjugate it, nor worrying about the case or gender of a noun. Similarly, in chess, the GM doesn't spend much (if any) of his time in a position thinking “is that outpost strong for my knight?” or even “how do I improve the position of my worst piece?”. Rather, he already knows how good or bad the knight is there, and automatically takes into account the badly-placed piece. He simultaneously weighs such factors in with a few hundred other considerations, most of which he is familiar with because he has faced similar positions before. Sure, he might occasionally ‘step back’ from the board and consider general issues, but anyone who has analysed extensively with strong players knows that the concrete possibilities in analysis dominate, with such positional factors being simply imbued in the play itself, as the rules of grammar are in spoken language. One's real positional understanding increases non-verbally as one refines one's judgement.

When we consider further, the language comparison becomes less precise, but still

useful: for example, grammatical rules almost always apply, whereas chess ones can actually be wrong, or so unreliable as to be worthless. Thus, whereas one can at least imagine learning a language with tolerable fluency simply by applying the rules of grammar, a similarly mechanical application of chess rules would be disastrous. Moreover, even with its better record of accuracy, grammar is learned in practice mainly by example, along with the relevant exceptions. This implies that at the very least, any chess principles should be learned in a realistic context, with attendant ambiguities, and also with plenty of counter-examples. This contrasts with the approach which most chess books take. To quote Suba again: “A game which is a ‘model of strategy’ is a rare bird between two players of a similar level. Classical strategy presupposes that you play with much weaker (or much stronger!) opponents ... [In the examples given by classical theory,] the side with the disadvantage totally lacks any counterplay, and generally not only the author's but also any other logical plan will win. Today such positions rarely appear, particularly between players of the same strength.” In other words, the way we are supposed to learn our general principles (grammar) from such books is not by examining realistic games (sentences as actually spoken), but by being spoon-fed one-sided, unrealistic positions (highly idealized constructions which only confuse us when we later visit the country in which the language is spoken).

So back to the question of how to play modern chess. This book, I repeat, cannot teach you how; but the contrasting examples of concrete play which I've given (if I've done my job well) should help you to get started towards building up a language of modern chess, consisting of its vocabulary, phrases, sentences, conceptual nuances, and *implied* grammar. To the extent that general chess theory helps, it does so because it trains your eye to look for various elements and techniques which constitute such a language, and lends them some unity. Hence, even the relatively abstract discussions I have provided on prophylaxis, dynamism, time, and initiative have been interwoven with examples, and will hopefully direct the reader's thoughts towards recognizing how those elements play out in actual games.

Conclusion

We have arrived at the end of this work, and it's time to look back at what's been accomplished. The primary purpose of this book was to present the ways in which modern chess theory differs from classical theory. What have we found? In Part 1, we concentrated mainly on features of modern play which constituted modest revisions to older thought, for example:

a) new conceptions of development, e.g., an abandonment of the 'move each piece once' principle;

b) a pragmatic materialism, expressed in grabbing flank pawns in the opening;

c) a willingness to take on mobile but vulnerable central pawn-masses;

d) the evolution of minority-attack theory and gradual decline in the importance of pawn majorities and passed pawns in the middle-game;

e) a more sophisticated approach to doubled and tripled pawns which includes willingness to accept them in return for control over key central squares, and new methods of exploiting doubled pawns by dominating colour complexes;

f) a working out of, and pragmatic approach to, isolated queen's pawn positions;

g) increased knowledge of minor-piece trade-offs;

h) a mild evolution of rook play along ranks;

i) exchanges for the sake of colour-complex play.

In Part 2, more definitive theoretical shifts were discussed. Many of these revolved around the general concept of 'rule-independence', whereby the classical edifice of rules and principles is rejected. In almost every case, a pragmatic decision founded in concrete analysis turns out to be preferable to such rules, as shown by these modern tendencies:

a) ignoring development to make purely structural gains, or for prophylactic purposes;

b) happily accepting 'permanently' backward pawns;

c) taking on doubled pawns for dynamic reasons;

d) moving the pawns in front of one's king;

e) developing bishops before knights, or queens before the other pieces;

f) attacking the front of the pawn-chain (as opposed to the base);

g) advancing flank pawns when one's centre isn't secure and/or when one's pieces aren't developed;

h) the almost routine acceptance of 'bad' bishops and knights on the edge of the board;

i) opening the position when one has knights, and stabilizing it when one has bishops.

Those are advances relating to rule-independence. Then there are the broader features of theory and practical play which have characterized modern chess, for example:

a) long-term positional pawn sacrifices;

b) the increasing use of the fianchetto;

c) resolution of bishop-pair issues;

d) new ideas about the worth of knight outposts and superfluous pieces;

e) the ubiquitous exchange sacrifice;

f) completely new handling of the knight-pair versus the bishop-pair;

g) the increasing use of prophylaxis;

h) the tendency to replace 'the accumulation of small advantages' by dynamic play;

i) the use of elastic opening systems;

j) advances in creating asymmetrical positions;

k) depth of opening preparation; and so forth.

I have engaged in other speculative discussions as well (Are queen and knight better than queen and bishop? Is chess a draw? Are rook endings drawish?); but the above lists summarize the type of issues which reflect the primary purpose of the book, i.e., to describe the advances of modern chess. In addition, I hope that I have at least provided the reader with some of the spirit and flavour of today's game. While contemporary play is difficult to get a handle on, it is also more open-ended and creative than during any other age.

That is a good thing. Certainly, it is legitimate to fret over the future effects computers may have on chess; but we should also appreciate the exciting reality we have now. What's more, the creativity which young players are exhibiting today can only broaden and enrich the game further. I am confident that in the coming years, the ideas and trends described in this book will develop in ways none of us could imagine, which is as we would want it to be.