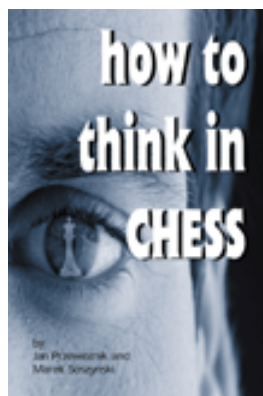




C O L U M N I S T S

The
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The Positional Exchange Sacrifice

The following game, in which White executed a problematical, positional exchange sacrifice, was first commented upon by the winner, Grandmaster Alexander Kotov - but quite superficially. In 1988, GM Igor Platonov published an article in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, where the game was subjected to a deeper and more substantive review. I have used Platonov's article as a training exercise for strong players. First, we would play out the game position; then we compared notes, and analyzed the resulting complications. This eventually led to a considerable expansion and improvement of the existing analysis of this game, and a number of new ideas.

You will note that all these training games ended in my favor. This is no accident - and it wasn't just because I relied on the earlier analyses, since each of the games quickly swerved into a new channel. Rather, it was because positions with unusual material imbalances are not that frequent in most players' practice. As a result of this training, my students were enabled to enrich their experience in this kind of struggle, which undoubtedly will help them in future tournament battles.

Bondarevsky – Kotov USSR Championship, Moscow 1948
 1. d2-d4 d7-d5 2. c2-c4 e7-e6 3. Ng1-f3 c7-c6 4. e2-e3 Ng8-f6 5. Bf1-d3 d5xc4 6. Bd3xc4 Nb8-d7 7. Nb1c3 b7-b5 8. Bc4-e2 a7-a6 8...Bb7! 9. e3-e4 b5-b4 10. e4-e5 b4xc3 11. e5xf6 Bf8-b4?!

“An invitation to a duel. Of course, Black might have avoided



the conflict with the simple 11...Nxf6 12. bc Bd6, with c6-c5 to follow" (Platonov). According to theory, White's position after 13. 0-0 0-0 14. Bg5 would be preferable.

Another possibility was: 11...cb 12. fg Bxg7 (12...baQ 13. ghQ is bad for Black) 13. Bxb2[∞].

12. 0-0 Nxf6 13. bc Bb4xc3

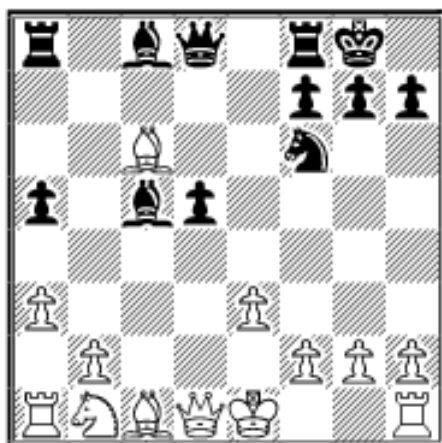


14. Bc1-a3!?

A courageous exchange sacrifice, although hardly forced. ECO recommends 14. Rb1!? 0-0 15. Qc2 (15. Bg5!?[∞]) 15...Bxd4 (15...Ba5 16. Ne5[±]) 16. Rd1 c5 17. Ba3 Qa5 18. Nxd4 Qxa3 19. Rd3 Qa5 20. Nc6 Qc7 21. Qxc5 Re8 22. Rd8 Rxd8 23. Ne7+ Qxe7 24. Qxe7[±].

Nearly a century earlier, the game **Mayet - Anderssen** (Berlin 1855) saw a similar exchange sacrifice - this time with the intent of preventing the opponent from castling.

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. a3 c5 4. dc Bxc5 5. Nf3 a5 6. e3 Nc6 7. cd ed 8. Bb5 Nf6 9. Ne5? 0-0 10. Nxc6 bc 11. Bxc6



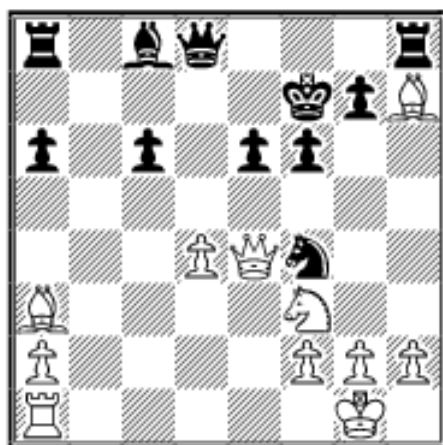
11...Ba6! 12. Bxa8 Qxa8 (threatening 13...d4) 13. Qf3 Nd7! 14. Nc3 (14 Qg3) 14...Ne5 15. Qxd5 Nd3+ 16 Kd1? (16. Kd2 was better) 16...Qc8?! (romantic: for the sake of his attack, Black rejected the simple win by 16...Nxf2+) 17. Kc2 Rd8 18.

Qh5? (18. Qf3) **18...Nf4?!** (again, 18...Nxf2 was an easy win), and White resigned, although he should first have made sure that Black would find the decisive continuation of his attack after 19. Qg5! Bd3+ 20. Kd1.

14...Bc3xa1 15. Qd1xa1

A different, and promising, continuation of the attack - **15. Qc2!?** **Nd5 16. Rxa1** (16. Ne5? Bc3 17. Bf3 Qc7-- does not work - Platonov) - was tried out in the training game **Inarkiev - Dvoretzky** (12-21-2001, Game/90).

16...f6 17. Bd3!? (17. Nd2!?) **17...Nf4 18. Bxh7 Kf7 19. Qe4** (19. Bc1 Ne2+!; 19. Be4 Bb7 20. Rb1 Qd7 ΔRab8)



19...Qd5?!

19...Qc7! was better: 20. Bc1!? Ne2+ 21. Kh1 Nxc1 22. Rxc1 Bd7 23. Bg6+ Kf8

20. Qxf4 Rxh7 21. Ne5+ Kg8 22. Rc1

Another good line was 22.

Ng6!? Qh5 23. Ne7+ Kh8 24. Qd6 (or 24. Qc7) 24...Bd7 (24...Qe8 25. Ng6+ Kg8 26. Ne7+ Kh8 =) 25. Qxd7 (25. h3 Qe8) 25...Qxh2+ 26. Kf1 Qh1+ 27. Ke2 Qxg2 28. Qxe6 Re8 29. Re1±, intending Kd3.

22...Bb7 23. Ng6 Qxa2

If 23...Qd8 24. Nf8; but 23...Qd7 was safer.

24. Ne7+ Kf7 25. Bc5

25. Qg3 g5 26. Qd3 Rh6 27. Rb1 Bc8 28. Rb2 =

25...g5 26. Qc7 Qb3 27. h4?

Weakening his own king position was not to be recommended. 27. Qd7 Rah8 28. Re1 would retain a dangerous attack. However, at this moment, we were both in fairly severe time-pressure.

27...gh (27...Rah8 28. g4!?) 28. Re1 h3! (28...Ke8? 29. d5) 29. Nd5+ Kg6 30. Nf4+ Kh6 31. Qd6 Rg8 32. Re3?

32. Rxe6? Qd1+ 33. Kh2 hg+; 32. d5!? Rhg7±.

32...Qb1+ 33. Kh2 hg 34. Rh3+ Kg5 35. Nxe6+ Kf5 36. Qf4+ Kxe6 37. d5+ cd White resigned.

15...Nf6-d5!

Black is planning f7-f6 followed by Kf7. He has much better chances of a successful defense than in the Mayet - Anderssen game, since Black has an excellent central outpost at d5.

16. Qa1-c1?

Too slow! **16. Ne5** was more energetic, intending Anderssen's maneuver: Nc4-d6. The attempt to prepare castling by 16...Ne7? then runs into Platonov's central break 17. d5!:

17...ed 18. Nxc6; 17...cd 18. Nc6! Nxc6 19. Qxg7 Kd7 20. Qxf7+ Ne7 21. Bg4+-; 17...Nxd5 18. Bh5! Rf8 19. Nxf7! (even stronger than Platonov's 19. Qc1) 19...Qf6□ 20. Qc1, when White retains a powerful attack;

17...0-0 18. Nxc6 Nxc6 19. Bxf8 Nd4! (Platonov considered 19...Qxf8 20. dco) 20. Qxd4 Qxf8±/±.

So Black would have had to continue **16...f6 17. Nc4 Kf7**. Platonov thinks that here (and also in other, similar

positions) White should trade his light-square bishop for the powerful knight at d5. For example: 18. Bf3 g6 (18...Kg8 19. Bxd5) 19. Nd6+ Kg7 20. Bxd5 cd 21. Qc3 h5 22. h4♖. Despite his material advantage, Black will not find it easy to defend, given the threatening position of the knight at d6 and the presence of opposite-color bishops, which strengthens the attack.

In the training game **Zvjagintsev - Dvoretzky** (11/12/1997, Game/90), White gave check at once: **18. Nd6+!? Kg8**. With this move order, the g7-g6 and Kg7 setup is less attractive, since it would take the king two moves to get to g7.

19. Qb2!?

Aimed against 19...Rb8 and 19...Qa5.

19...a5!?

Intending 20...Nb4.

20. Bc5 h5

On 20...h6, Black has to consider 21. Bh5.

21. Re1?!

21. h4!♖ was considerably stronger. Vadim was afraid of the response 21...Ba6?!, when White would play 22. Bxa6 Rxa6 23. Qb7 Nc7 24. Rb1♖, or 24. Nc4♖.

21...h4 22. Bd3 (△ 23. Bg6) 22...Rh6 23. h3 Bd7

The position probably favors Black already.

24. Qd2 Rb8

If 24...a4!?, (intending 25...Qa5), then 25. Nc4)

25. f4? f5! (intending Rg6-g3) **26. Be2 Rg6**

Bringing the rook to g3 may be objectively strong, but it allows White to complicate. 26...a4!? was simpler.

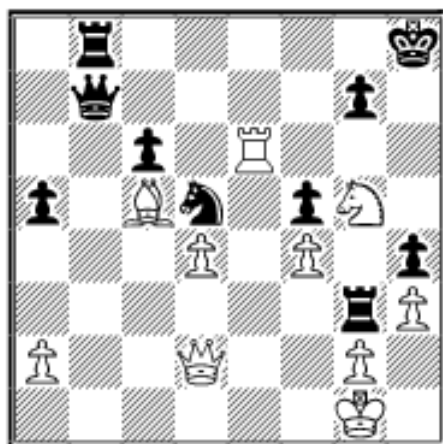
27. Bh5 Rg3 28. Nf7 Qc8! (28...Qf6 29. Bd6) **29. Ng5 Qb7!?**

29...Qc7! was more exact, with no fear of 30. Bf7+ Kh8
31. Bxe6 Qxf4 32. Nf7+, because of 32...Kg8-+)

30. Bf7+ Kh8 31. Bxe6 Bxe6

31...Qb2? 32. Qxb2 Rxb2 33. Bxd7 =.

32. Rxe6



32...Nf6!

32...Qb1+!? would have led to some interesting tactical complexities. On 33. Kh2 Qf1 34. Bd6, Black has a winning combination: 34...Nxf4! 35. Bxf4 Rxb2+! 36. Qxg2 Qxf4+. And after 33. Re1!, the tempting 33...Ne3 (hoping for 34. Rxb1 Rxb1+ 35. Kf2 Nc4 36. Qc2 Rb2-+) is met by 34. Nf3!, when 34...Nxg2 35. Rxb1 Nxf4+ 36. Kf2 Rg2+ 37. Ke3 Rxb1 38. Kxf4 Rxd2 39. Nxd2 Rh1 leads to an unclear endgame. Apparently, Black's best would have been 33...Nxf4! 34. Rxb1 Rxb1+ 35. Kh2 Rxb2+ 36. Qxg2 Nxg2 37. Kxg2 Rb2+ 38. Kf3 Rxa2.

33. d5

33. Qe2 is beautifully refuted by 33...Qb1+ (33...Qb2?? 34. Re8+! +-) 34. Kh2 Rxb3+!! (34...Rxb2+? 35. Qxg2 Rb2

36. Re2) 35. gh Rb2-+.

33...Qb2 34. Qxb2 Rxb2 35. Bf2

35. dc Rgxc2+ 36. Kf1 Rgc2-+.

35...cd-+ 36. Bxc3

36. Ra6 Rc3!? (threatening 37...Rc1+) 37. Ra8+ Ng8 38. Bxh4 Rc1+ 39. Kh2 Rcc2-+

36...hg 37. Kf1 Rf2+ 38. Ke1 Rxc2 39. Ra6 Rxa2 40. Ra8+ Ng8 41. Kf1

41. Nf7+ Kh7 42. Ng5+ Kg6 43. Rxc2 Ra1+ (43...g2 44. Nf3 a4) 44. Ke2 g2-+.

41...a4

41...Rf2+ 42. Kg1 Rxf4 43. Ra6!? g6 44. Ra7 Rh4! 45. Kg2 f4R.

42. Ra6!? g6! 43. Rxc2 Rf2+ 44. Kg1 a3 45. Nf7+ Kh7 46. Rxc3 a2 47. Ng5+ Kg6 48. Nf3+ Kf7 49. Ne5+ Kf8
White resigned.

16...f7-f6! 17. Nf3-d2

17. Qxc6+ Bd7 18. Qd6 Qc7

17...Nd5-e7?

An unfortunate retreat. In order to set up the easily-prevented threat of 18...0-0, the knight quits its excellent central post. More logical was 17...Kf7 18. Nc4, and now either 18...g5!? 19. Nd6+ Kg7, or 18...Kg8 19. Nd6 Bd7 (Δ 18...Qa5) - *“Black’s position would have been more comfortable than the one in the note to White’s 16th move”* (Platonov).

18. Qc1-c5! Ke8-f7 19. Nd2-c4 Ne7-d5

Acknowledging the error.

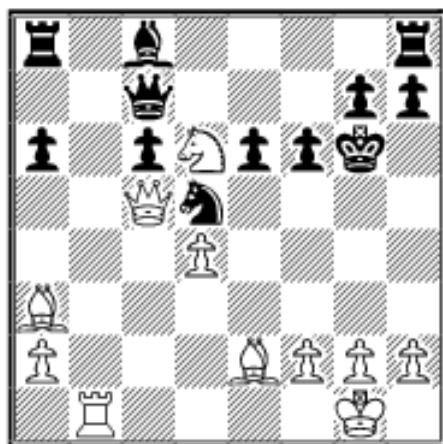
20. Rf1-b1

“A calm and powerful move, in the spirit of the classic examples of attacking chess. By securing the b-file, White provides even more strength to the invading knight on d6, and in some lines threatens Rb1-b3 (using the open file as a trampoline, à la Nimzowitsch), transferring the rook to the kingside” (Platonov).

20. Bf3!?, intending Re1, Nd6+ and Bxd5, was also worthy of consideration.

20...Qd8-c7 21. Nc4-d6+ Kf7-g6

21...Kg8? 22. Ne8 Qf7 23. Qxc6+- was bad (Platonov)

**22. Rb1-b3!?**

Threatening 23. Rg3+. White had other ways to continue the attack as well:

Kotov suggested 22. Qc2+!? f5 23. g4. Platonov's recommended answer was 23...h6, with the continuation

24. Bd3 Rf8 25. Nxf5 Rxf5. However, White simply continues 24. gf+ ef 25. Bd3 Rf8 26. Nxc8 Raxc8 27. Bxa6±. And 23...Rd8 is met by 24. gf+ ef 25. Qd3 Kf6 26. Rb7 Qxb7 27. Nxb7 Bxb7 28. Qh3±.

Platonov considered 23...Nf4!? a poor move, because of the breakthrough 24. d5, for example: 24...Nxe2+ 25. Qxe2 cd 26. gf+ ef 27. Nxc8+-; 24...Nxd5 25. Kh1 (intending

Rg1); 24...c5 25. de Nxe2+ 26. Qxe2 Qxd6 27. gf+ with an attack. But after 24...Qa5! 25. Nc4, he only examined 25...Nxe2+ 26. Qxe2 Qxd5 27. Ne5+ Kf6 28. g5+ +- and 25...Qxd5 26. Bf3 - but here, he missed 25...Qc3!-+.

White must therefore give up the spectacular, but unsound breakthrough in favor of 24. Bf3 h6 25. Qc1!, with mutual chances. Interestingly, Kotov suggests replacing White's last move with 25. gf+ ef 26. Rb7. Platonov extended the variation as follows: 26...Qd8 27. Nf7 Bxb7 28. Nxd8 Rhxd8. The evaluation of this last position is disputable, since White has 29. Be4!; on the other hand, rather than play 27...Bxb7?, Black could end matters with 27...Re8!

Platonov thinks White's strongest plan here is to trade his bishop on d5, by 22. Bf3!?. His opinion is that this plan, although it doesn't win, still gives Black difficult problems to solve. Here is his analysis (with several corrections):

22...Rb8 23. Re1 Qb6?! 24. Qc2+ f5 25. Nxc8 Rhxc8 26. Rxe6+ Nf6 (26...Kf7 27. Bxd5 Qb1+ 28. Re1+ +-) 27. Bh5+! Kxh5 28. Qxf5+ g5 29. Bc1 +-;

22...h6 23. Bxd5 (23. Qc2+ f5 24. Nxf5 ef 25. Bxd5 Bd7 - Dvoretsky) 23...ed 24. Rb7 Qd8! (24...Qxb7 25. Qc2+ f5 26. Nxb7 Bxb7 27. g4+-) 25. Qxc6! (but not Platonov's line: 25. Qc2+ f5 26. Nf7, in view of 26...Re8!-+);

22...Rd8 23. Bxd5 (23. Qc2+) 23...ed 24. Qc2+ Kh6! (24...f5 25. Rb7 Qxb7 26. Nxb7 Bxb7 27. g4 Kf7 28. Qxf5+ Kg8 - Dvoretsky) 25. Nf5+ (25. Rb7 Bxb7 26. Nf5+ Kg6 27. Nd6+ = Dvoretsky) 25...Kg6!, and White has only a perpetual check (Platonov). Certainly, it is not easy to leave one's king exposed to discovered check, but 25...Bxf5?! doesn't solve Black's problems: 26. Qxf5 (Δ 27. Bc1+) 26..Rf8 (forced) 27. Qh3+ (27. Re1 Rf7! =, intending 28...g6) 27...Kg6 28. Bxf8 Rxf8 29. Qd3+ f5

30. Qxa6M - (Dvoretsky).

22...h7-h6 23. Qc5-c2+

Here too, Platonov recommends 23. Bf3. This move is justified after 23...Rd8 24. Bxd5 ed (24...Rxd6? 25. Be4+ f5 26. Qe5 [Platonov] 26...Rxd4 27. Qxd4 e5 28. Qc4 fe 29. Qxe4+ +-) 25. Qc2+ f5 26. Rb7! Qxb7 (26...Qxd6 27. Bxd6 Bxb7 28. g4+-) 27. Nxb7 Bxb7 28. g4±.

Stronger is 23...Kh7 24. Qc2+ f5 (24...g6) 25. Bxd5 ed 26. Re3 (26. Rc3!? Qe7! 27. h3 Qf6 28. Rxc6 Bd7-+ - Dvoretsky) 26...Rd8 27. Nxf5 (27. Ne8? Qf7! [27...Qa5? 28. Nxg7! Kxg7 29. Re7+ +-] 28. Nxg7 [28. Re7 Rxe8!-+] 28...Ra7!-+ - Platonov) 27...Bxf5 28. Qxf5+ Kh8!P, and 29. Re7 Re8-+ doesn't work (Dvoretsky).

Less exact would be 28...g6?! (instead of 28...Kh8!) 29. Qf6 Rd7 - White does not continue 30. h4 Rf7 31. Re7 (which Platonov gives as a draw after 31...Rxe7 32. Bxe7 Rg8 33. h5), because of 31...Qxe7!-+, but with 30. Re6 Rg8 31. Bc1 Qd8 32. Qf4 Qf8 33. Qd2, followed by h4-h5, with an unclear position.

23... f6-f5



24. Nd6-c4?

A mistaken repositioning of this knight - it stood better at d6 than it will at e5.

On 24. Bf3!?, Black could retreat the knight by 24...Ne7! (24...Nf6 25. g4∞), and if 25. d5! (Platonov), then 25...Rd8!

(25...Nxd5 26. Bxd5 ed 27. Re3 Kh7 28. Nxf5 Bxf5 29. Qxf5+ g6 30. Qf6+-; 25...ed 26.Re3 Kh7 27. Nxc8∞) 26. Nxc8 (Platonov's suggested 26. Ne8 is refuted by

26...Qe5+) 26...Raxc8 27. de (27. d6 Rxd6 28. Bxd6 Qxd6+) 27...c5.

After **24. g4!? Kh7**, the training game **Zvjagintsev - Dvoretzky** (11/12/1997. Game/60, beginning with Move 22) saw the unfortunate continuation **25. Bc4? Rd8! 26. Nxc8** (26. gf Rxd6; 26. Bxd5 ed 27. Nxf5) **26...Raxc8 27. gf ef 28. Bxa6 Rb8 29. Rg3?! Kh8! 30. Qxf5 Qf4 31. Qg6 Qf6?! (31...Qxd4!+ 32. Bd3 Qa1+ 33. Kg2 Nf4+) 32. Qxf6 Nxf6 33. Rc3** (we stopped the game here).

White had a stronger line: 25. gf ef 26. Bf3 (26. Nxf5? Bxf5 27. Qxf5+ g6+) 26...Be6 27. Rb7 Qa5 28. Nxf5 Qe1+ 29. Kg2.

24...Kg6-h7 25. Nc4-e5 Ra8-b8 26. Rb3-g3 Nd5-f4! 27. Be2-f1 Rh8-d8 28. Rg3-c3

28. Qc1!? c5! (28...Rxd4 29. Nxc6) 29. Bxc5 (29. Rc3 Rxd4 30. Rxc5 Qd6 31. Nf7 Qd7 32. Rc7 Qa4+) 29...Nd5.

28...Bc8-b7 29. Ba3-c5 Nf4-g6 30. Ne5xg6?

“Black’s stouthearted defense threw Bondarevsky off his stride. Had he kept his knight, retreating it to c4, White could still have retained some small attacking chances. The exchange of knights sharply reduces his attacking firepower.” (Kotov)

30...Kh7xg6+ 31. g2-g4 Bb7-c8

31...Qf4

32. Rc3-g3 Kg6-h7 33. Bf1-d3 Qc7-f4 34. g4xf5 e6xf5 35. Qc2-e2 Rb8-b7 36. h2-h3 Qf4-h4 37. Qe2-e5 Qh4-f6 38. Qe5-f4

White's flag fell.

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Translated by Jim Marfia

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