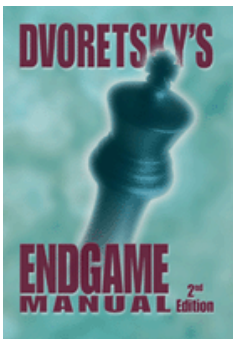




COLUMNISTS

*The Instructor*

Mark Dvoretsky



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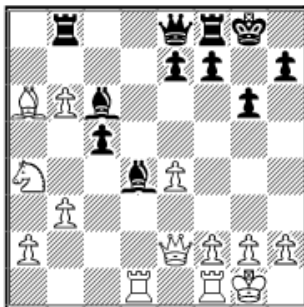
Critical Moments  
Part Three

My readers will no doubt have noticed that in each of the examples we have looked at so far, one of the players, or sometimes both of them will have played in a manner that falls far short of the ideal. We could, of course, ignore the problem, while dropping one of Savielly Tartakower's appropriate aphorisms, such as: "The errors are always there, waiting to be made," or "A game of chess is a tale of a thousand and one errors." Or we could take thought: do even leading grandmasters play that strongly? Why is it that, both over the board and in their annotations, they make so many mistakes? Can't this be avoided – or at least, can't the number of mistakes be decreased?

In any case, such thoughts continually occur to me, when I analyze recently played games, or test examples from my notebook. (In fact, careful analysis is sometimes precisely what shears the decorations from games which had, until then, seemed wholly admirable.) Of course, it's easy to look wise in the quiet of one's home study, especially after turning on "Fritz." But from a different standpoint, almost none of the errors of omission found in nature are computer-grade: this sort of task should certainly be within the abilities of masters and grandmasters.

The following position is one I have used as an exercise to train the powers of quick absorption. The task is to find, in one or two minutes, White's strongest move – which is the one he actually played.

*Agdestein – Vaganian*  
Naestved 1985



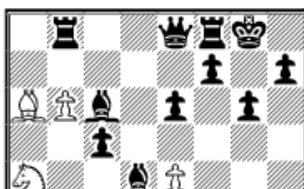
W?

Black wants to trade on a4, and then to take on b6. Simen Agdestein found a subtle means of keeping his far-advanced pawn at b6 on the board, where it soon turned into a terrible force.

**22 Rd1-b1!+/-**

And that's the whole task. However, not long ago, seeing that it was Black who won the game, after all, I decided to make an analysis of the game's further developments. And I was stunned: it turns out that nearly every point was critical, because the assessment of the position changed several times, sometimes radically. But these were two very talented, strong grandmasters! Time-pressure wasn't the excuse here: there were still many moves to go before the control, and at least one of the players, Rafael Vaganian, has never been known as a time-pressure artist.

**22...e7-e6**



W?

**23 Rf1-c1?!**

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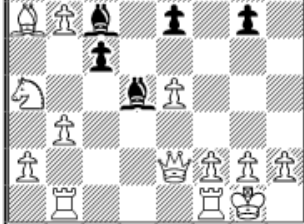
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The error in this move comes from general considerations: the weakening of f2 lends the opponent's counterplay added force.

So, how should White have continued? Clearly, Vaganian's hopes were pinned

to the opening of lines by f7-f5. By playing **23 Kh1!**, White prepares f2-f3, neutralizing both bishops and keeping the advantage. **Prophylactic thinking is the key to solving many positional tasks!**

For those who have no faith in "general considerations," and want to see the proof in variations, here's a short analysis. After 23...f5 24 ef, Black can recapture on f5 either with the rook or with the g-pawn. On 24...Rxf5, in addition to 25 f3, White should also take a look at 25 f4! (with the idea of Bd3-e4), and if 25...e5, then 26 Nxc5! On 24...gf, White still should not play 25 Rfc1, in view of 25...Rf6 26 Nxc5 Rxb6 unclear – he has better in 25 f3 e5 26 Nxc5! Kh8 27 b4 Rxb6 28 Bc4 (intending 29 Nb3), or 25...Rf6 26 Rfd1! (the safest) 26...Rh6 27 Rxd4! cd 28 Qe5+/-.

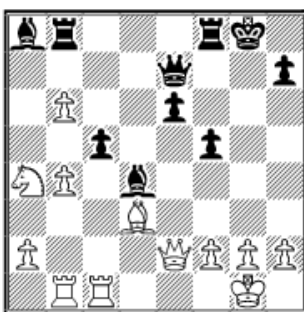
### 23...Qe8-e7?!

An "automatic reaction": White attacks the c5-pawn, so we defend it! But now, White gets time to shore up his position. The immediate **23...f5!** would have given Black full-fledged counterplay. On 24 Nxc5, there follows 24...fe 25 Nxe4 Rf4!, and Black gets to f2. And if 24 e5, then 24...f4, and the constant threat of f4-f3 is most unpleasant.

### 24 Ba6-b5 Bc6-a8 25 Bb5-d3 f7-f5 26 e4xf5 g6xf5 27 b3-b4?!

And here, White should have executed the same prophylactic operation: 27 Kh1, with 28 f3 to follow, even though now the consequences are less well-defined – White has, after all, lost some time. I found this variation: 27...Rf6 28 f3 Rh6 (28...Kh8 is weaker: 29 Rc4! intending either 30 Rxd4 or 30 b4) 29 Bxf5 Qf6 30 Qxe6+! Qxe6 31 Bxe6+ Rxe6 32 Nxc5+/- = (even though White has a lot of pawns for the piece, the outcome remains unclear).

Agdestein is in too much of a hurry to execute his planned line opening on the queenside, and allows his opponent to create immediate problems for his king.



B?

Vaganian had an interesting and very difficult task to resolve. Unfortunately, he could not do it.

### 27...Kg8-h8?

Black can only allow White to take the pawn at c5, and create the terrible threat of 29 c6, if he has a strong counter-

argument in place. But Black turns out to have nothing convincing at his disposal.

Vaganian apparently rejected 27...cb? out of fear of 28 Rc7, and with good reason: his position looks entirely too airy. Here are a few variations:

28...Qh4 29 Nc5! Rxb6 30 Nxe6+/-.

28...Qg5 29 g3!+/-, with 30 Rxb4 to follow, but not 29 Qxe6+? Kh8 30 g3 (30 Bf1 Qf4 31 Rb2! unclear would be better) 30...Bxf2+! 31 Kxf2 (31 Kf1!? Bxg3! 32 hg Qxg3, with an attack) 31...Rbe8!+/-.

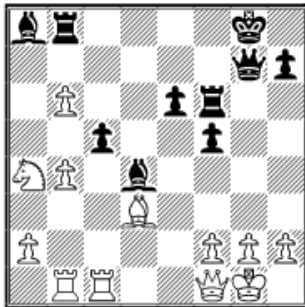
28...Qd6 29 Qh5 Bg7 30 Bc4 Rbc8 31 Rd1 Qe5 32 Rxc8 Rxc8 33 Nc5!!

+.-

Black would have to attack g2 with the queen; the only question is, from which square – g7 or g5?

First, we examine **27...Qg7!?**

28 g3? is no good, in view of 28...Qb7-+ (or 28...f4). Another losing line is 28 Qxe6+? Kh8 29 Bf1 Rg8 30 Rb3 Rbe8! 31 Qc4 (31 Qxf5 Ref8) 31... Qxg2+! 32 Bxg2 Rxc2+ 33 Kf1 Rxf2+ 34 Kg1 Rg2+ 35 Kf1 Rg1#. So White has to play 28 Qf1, which is met by 28...Rf6! (28...cb 29 Rxb4 would be bad)



W?

29 Kh1 Rg6 30 b7! (30 f3 Rh6 31 h3 Qg3-+) 30...Qxb7 31 f3 Qc7 leads to a dangerous position for White. But still worse is 29 bc Bxg2 30 Qxg2 Rg6 31 Bf1 (31 Qxg6 Qxg6+ 32 Kh1 Qh5 33 Rg1+ Kf7 34 Rg2 Qf3-+) 31...Kh8 32 Rb3 f4! 33 Kh1 Rg8! (but not 33...Rxc2 34 Bxg2 Rg8 35 Bf3 Bxf2 36 Rbb1 unclear) 34 Rg3 fg-+.

White can only avoid these unpleasant consequences – in fact, he could even place his opponent in a bad spot, instead – by finding the spectacular counterstroke 29 b7!! (*en prise* three times!). The variations are relatively uncomplicated:

29...Bxb7 30 bc+-;

29...Rxb7 30 Nxc5 Rc7 (30...Rb8 would meet the same reply) 31 Nxe6! Rxe6 32 Rxc7 Qxc7 33 Bc4+-;

29...Qxb7 30 bc Qc7 31 Rxb8+ Qxb8 32 c6+/-.

In my opinion, Black's strongest move here is **27...Qg5!** – the point being to keep an eye on the rook at c1. In the variation 28 Qf1 cb 29 Rxb4 (else 29...Bxb6), Black has the unexpected shot 29...Bxf2+!! 30 Kxf2 (30 Qxf2 Qxc1+; 30 Kh1!? Rfd8 unclear) 30...Qd2+ 31 Qe2 Qxb4 32 Qxe6+ Rf7!, with approximate equality.

And on 28 g3, there follows 28...f4 29 Qxe6+ Kh8



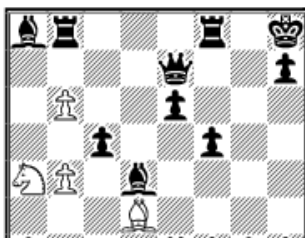
W?

To avoid the worst, White must choose 30 Rxc5!, but after 30...Bxf2+! 31 Kxf2 fg+ 32 Ke1 Qg7!, the chaos that now rules the board could produce any result.

**28 Kg1-h1?**

The most inappropriate possible moment to show caution. The straightforward 28

bc! Bc6 (28...Rg8? 29 c6) suggests itself, and now the simplest continuation is 29 Bb5 (29 Rc4 or 29 g3 are also good) 29...Be4 30 g3!? (intending 31 Rb4) 30...Bxb1 31 Rxb1+-.



B?

**28...Rf8-g8?**

With the respective king moves included, the capture on b4 is now



possible: 28...cb 29 f3 Qd6 30 Rd1 e5, or 29 Rc7 Qh4!? (there is also 29...Qd6 30 Qh5 Bg7) 30 Rxb4 (30 f3 Rf6) 30... Bxg2+! 31 Kxg2 Rg8+ 32 Kf1 Qxh2 33 Ke1 Rg1+ 34 Kd2 Bxb6! – all variations

lead to non-standard positions which are difficult to assess.

### 29 f2-f3 Qe7-h4

Here, the pawn capture is weaker than it was one move ago: 29...cb 30 Rc4, ! (but not 30 Bxf5?, because of the pretty shot 30...Rxc2!! unclear).

### 30 b4xc5

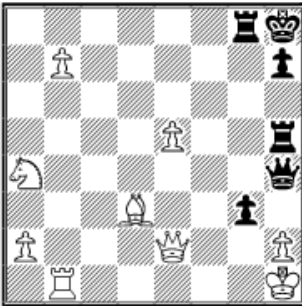
On the queenside, White holds an overwhelming advantage, while on the opposite side of the board, his opponent's attacking resources are insufficient. Now the principled continuation would be **30...Rg5!**



W?

A) The natural 31 c6? looks like it even loses after 31...Bxc6! (but not 31...Rh5? 32 g4!+., and not 31...Rbg8? 32 g3! Rxg3 33 b7+-) 32 Rxc6 Rbg8 (threatening 33...Qxh2+! 34 Kxh2 Rh5#) 33 g4 (33 g3 Rxg3 34 Rc8! Rxc8 35 b7 Rb8 36 Nc5 Rgg8 37 Nxe6 Rxb7+-) 33...fg (in this line, had Black played 30...Rg6?, the f5-pawn would be

pinned, and White wins) 34 f4! Rh5 35 Rc5! (I see no other way to stop the impending 35...g3) 35...e5! (stronger than 35...Bxc5 36 Nxc5 g3 37 b7 Qxf4 38 b8Q g2+! 39 Kg1! Qd4+ 40 Qf2 Qxf2+ 41 Kxf2 g1Q+! 42 Rxg1 Rxb8+/-) 36 Rxe5 Bxe5 37 fe g3 38 b7



B?

White is expecting 38...g2+ 39 Qxg2 Rxg2 40 b8Q+ Rg8 41 Qb2 Qxa4 42 e6 +, and draws. However, Black has a spectacular combination: 38...Qf4!! 39 b8Q (39 Rf1 Qh6!+-) 39...g2+! 40 Qxg2 Rxh2+! 41 Qxh2 Qf3+, and mates.

B) The variation 31 Rc4 Rh5 32 h3 Qg3 33 Rxd4 Rxh3+ 34 Kg1 Rg8 35 Rd8!

looks like it should be a draw. Black is justified in trying for more with 31...Rbg8!?, for example, 32 g3 Rxg3 33 Rxd4 Qh3 (but not 33...Qxd4? 34 hg Rxg3 35 Be4! fe 36 Qb2 Qxb2 37 Rxb2 ef 38 Kh2 Rg4 39 Nc3 Rc4 40 Nb5 Rxc5 41 Nd6+/-) 34 Rf4 h6!+-, followed by 35...Rg2; or 32 Rxd4 Qxd4 33 Qb2 Qxb2 34 Rxb2 Bxf3 35 Bf1 Bc6, when White's position looks shaky.

C) But **31 b7!!** is very strong. For example:

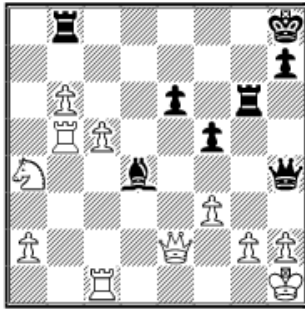
31...Rbg8? 32 b8Q, and the h2-square is defended.

31...Bxb7 32 c6 Rbg8 33 g3!+-, or 32...Rh5 33 g4! fg 34 Rxb7+-.

31...Rxb7 32 Rxb7 (but not 32 Qxe6? Rxg2!+-) 32...Bxb7 33 c6 Bc8 34 Rc4!+-.

The continuation chosen by Vaganian makes White's task considerably easier.

**30...Ba8-c6?! 31 Bd3-b5 Bc6xb5 32 Rb1xb5 Rg8-g6**



W?

Now 33 b7?! is tempting, tying the rook to the b8-square. On 33...Rh6 34 g4! decides. But Black has the brilliant reply 33...Qg3!!, forcing perpetual check after 34...Rh6 35 h3 Rxh3+ (the attempt to take h6 under control by 34 Qd2? is refuted by 34...Be3!).

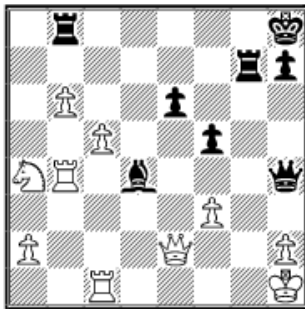
White has an effective means of extinguishing his opponent's pressure – pinning him along the fourth rank by **33 Rb4!** (33 Rc4! is just as good). He only has to make sure the queen sacrifice does not work: 33...Qxh2+ 34 Kxh2 Rh6+ 35 Kg3 Rg8+ 36 Kf4 Rh4+ 37 g4+-. Black fares no better after 33...Rh6 34 g3 Qxg3 35 Rxd4, or 33...Rbg8 34 g3 Rxg3 35 Rxd4 Qxd4 36 hg+-.

### 33 g2-g3? Rg6xg3 34 Rb5-b4?

As a classic player once said, "A move made one move too late is always a mistake!" Now, with the g-file opened, it would make sense to secure the first rank by **34 Rbb1!**? Black could not respond by 34...Rbg8 because of 35 b7+-, while 34...Qh3 is met by 35 Rg1! (weaker is 35 b7 Rx f3 36 Qxe6 Re3! 37 Qd5 Be5 unclear) 35...Bxg1 36 Rxg1 (36 Qe5+ Rg7 37 Qxb8+ Rg8 38 Qe5+ Rg7 =) 36...Rxg1+ 37 Kxg1 Rg8+ 38 Kh1, and it is Black's turn to seek the draw.

But the straightforward **34 b7!** might even be better. In any case, White continues with the same idea of returning his rook to the first rank. For example, 34...Rg7 35 c6 Qf4 36 Rbb1+-, or 34...Qf4 35 Rf1 Rg6 36 Rbb1 Qc7 37 Rfd1+/-.

### 34...Rg3-g7



W?

### 35 Qe2-e5?

The final mistake. By now, 35 Rbb1 would be useless: 35...Qg5! (the rook stays at b8 in order to stop 36 b7) 36 f4 Qxf4 37 Rf1 Rbg8! 38 b7



B?

Black wins by means of the fine move 38...Rg6!!, whose idea becomes clear in the variation 39 c6 Qc7! 40 Qf3 Qxh2+ 41 Kxh2 Rh6+ 42 Qh3 Be5+, with mate to follow. Black may also transpose moves: 38...Qc7 39 Qf3 Rg6!! (threatening 40...Qxh2+!) 40 Rfe1 Qe5!+.

But **35 b7!** would still have permitted Agdestein to avoid loss; for example, 35...Rxb7 36 Rxb7 Rxb7 37 c6 Rc7 38 Qxe6 =.

### 35...Rb8-g8 36 Qe5xd4 Qh4-g5

"An open line frequently looks like an open wound." (Tartakower)

### 37 Rc1-g1?!

To add to his other troubles, White now overlooks mate. On the other hand, 37 Qb2 e5! would also have made it impossible for him to defend his king.

### 37...Qg5xg1+ 0-1

There are many ways to go about completing yourself as a chessplayer. You can train your combinative alertness and your ability to calculate variations, develop your capability to intuitively grasp the essence of a position, study endgame theory and complete your technical mastery, analyze typical middlegame positions, acquaint yourself with the work of great players past and present so that you may enrich your own arsenal with the techniques and weapons they used, and so on, and so forth. I have often held relatively short training sessions in various countries, dedicated to one or more of these above-cited (or un-cited) problems. And almost always our exercises helped facilitate measurable growth in our students, which they themselves joyfully noted. Now, what sort of heights might they aspire to, if they could do such work regularly?!

Nevertheless, it seems that I cannot convince anybody that this is the right thing to do – neither by logic, nor by the stability of my training achievements. On the one hand, many players do not understand how they can effectively set up educational or training work, or where they can obtain good materials and quality exercises. But the main problem is this worldwide, insane focus on the openings, this ruling conviction (when it is really a misconception!) in the minds of chessplayers that here – right here! – lies the key to success. Everyone, from the weak to the strong, is doing nothing but endlessly refining their opening repertoire, closing their eyes to the unsatisfactory quality of the play that follows.

I recall one amusing episode that occurred early in the 90s, during one of my first U.S. visits. One of the local amateurs approached me, saying that he had heard a lot about my work methods, and had enormous respect for and interest in them. He asked me who else among the American trainers made use of my methods, and expressed a burning desire to take a lesson from me. I declined, but this amateur was persistent. At last, we agreed to spend two or three hours at it. I began to explain something; he listened patiently for a while, and then cut me off.

“All this is interesting, of course; but couldn’t you just show me the best way to play the King’s Indian vs. the Samisch Variation?”

So there you have it: method/schmethod – concrete opening information, alas, always looks more useful.

I’d like to conclude with another example of this theme, which I consider the deepest and most significant.

#### *Rodriguez – Ernst*

Subotica Interzonal Tournament, 1987

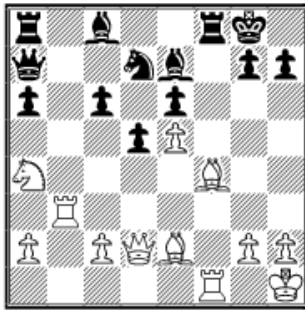
**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Qb6 8 Qd2 Qxb2 9 Rb1 Qa3 10 f5 Nc6 11 fe fe 12 Nxc6 bc 13 Be2 (13 e5) 13...Be7 14 0-0 0-0 15 Rb3 Qc5+ 16 Be3 Qe5 17 Bf4 Qc5+**

Black could also take the pawn: 17...Nxe4 18 Nxe4 Qxe4 19 Bxd6 Rxf1+ 20 Kxf1 Bf6 21 Ba3 = (Timman – Ribli, Amsterdam 1986).

### 18 Kh1 d5?!

18...e5? 19 Be3 Qa5 20 Bb6+- would be a mistake, but Black had the better line 18...Ng4! 19 h3 (19 Bxg4 e5) 19...e5 =.

**19 e5 Nd7 20 Na4 Qa7**



W?

Let's try to solve the task White faces here. Right away, we see that he cannot attack the pawn at e6 by 21 Bg4?, because of the reply 21...Nxe5+.

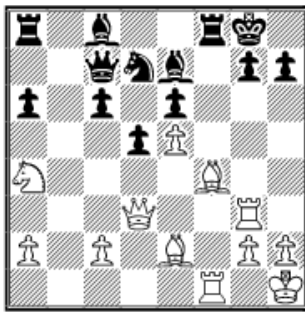
At first glance, this would not seem to be the place for deep thinking: why not just move the rook to g3 or h3, with the idea of whipping up an attack on the king?

Let's not jump to conclusions, however. Time for some prophylactic thinking: let's ask ourselves, what will our opponent be doing in the meantime? The question is not a simple one – it requires an accurate assessment of different possibilities. The answer will actually be two ideas: fortifying the kingside (and the e6-point as well) with 21...Rf7! and 22...Nf8!, or attacking the central pawn at e5 by 21...Qc7! – removing it would even be worth giving up the exchange by Rxf4, under certain circumstances.

On 21 Rh3, Black would reply 21...Rf7!, and attacking h7 will be useless after 22...Nf8.

But after 21 Rg3, the move 21...Rf7 is now dubious, in view of 22 Bh5, and if 22...g6? (22...Rf8 would be better now), White gains a decisive attack by sacrificing the bishop: 23 Bxg6! hg 24 Rxg6+ Kh8 (24...Rg7 25 Rxg7+ Kxg7 26 Qd1+-; 24...Kf8 25 Bh6+ Ke8 26 Rxf7 Kxf7 27 Rg7+ Ke8 28 Rxe7+! Kxe7 29 Qg5+, and mates) 25 Qe2 Nf8 26 Rg3 Nh7 27 Be3! Rxf1+ 28 Qxf1+-.

But now 21...Qc7! is strong. If 22 Qe3, then 22...Rb8 creates a strong threat of 23...Rb4. 22 Qd3!? would be more interesting.



B?

Black cannot play 22...Nxe5?? in view of 23 Rxg7+! Kxg7 24 Qg3+, while 22...Rb8?! would allow White to stir up great complications by 23 Rh3 g6 24 Rxh7!! Kxh7 25 Qh3+ – although it appears that this method fails to give White an advantage: 25...Kg8 26 Qxe6+ Rf7 27 Qxf7+ (27 Qxg6+ Rg7 28 Qe6+ Kh8 29 Bd3 Nxe5 30 Qxe5 Qxe5 31 Bxe5 Rb4

unclear) 27...Kxf7 28 e6+ Ke8 29 Bxc7 Rb4 =.

Black has no need to go in for these adventures: the exchange sacrifice 22...Rxf4! 23 Rxf4 Qxe5 gives him an excellent position.

21 Qd1!? might look tempting, defending the rook and preparing 22 Bg4. Black cannot reply 21...Nc5? because of 22 Be3+-; and on 21...Rf7 there follows 22 Bg4 Nf8 23 Nb6 Rb8 24 Nxc8 Rxc8, when White's position is preferable in view of the weakness of e6. Still, his advantage is not great. Also, his opponent could quite rightly play something more aggressive: 21...Qc7!? On 22 Bg4, he would sacrifice the exchange by 22...Rxf4!? 23 Rxf4 Qxe5, with outstanding compensation. And on 22 Bd3, he could play either 22...g6 or 22...Nxe5!?

Amador Rodriguez found a brilliant strategic solution to the position.

### 21 Qd2-c3!!

The threat to take on c6 leaves Black no time to play 21...Rf7. And after Black parries this threat, the queen moves to h3, taking aim at the

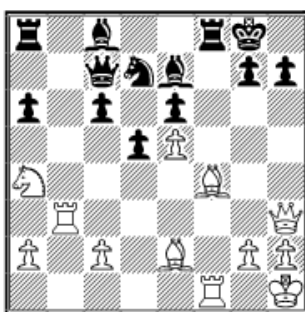
vulnerable h7- and e6-squares (the knight doesn't have time to go to f8); after this, the rook goes to g3 or f3, and the bishop to d3. In this manner, White's pieces gain coordination, and the pressure on Black's kingside grows stronger.

Now Black faces a critical moment: he must find the best way to counter White's incipient attack.

The knight exchange 21...Nc5 that he selected in the game turned out favorably for White, since a potential defender of the kingside disappeared from the board, in exchange for the only white piece not participating in the attack.

21...c5 is met by 22 Qh3! (22 Bg4 d4 23 Bxe6+ Kh8 unclear, is weaker) 22...Rf7 (22...Kh8 23 Bd3+-), and now either 23 Bh5!? g6 24 Rbf3+/-, or the more forcing 23 Qxe6! Nf8 24 Qxd5 (24 Qc6 Bd7 25 Qxd5 amounts to the same thing) 24...Be6 25 Qe4 Bxb3 26 ab+- In view of the unpreventable threat of 27 Bc4, Black is forced to return the exchange, winding up a pawn down in a bad position.

As usual, the way out involves showing some initiative. With **21...Qc7!**, Black targets the central pawn at e5. But he must find some answer to **22 Qh3!**



B?

22...Nxe5? doesn't work, in view of 23 Nb6 and 24 Nxc8. After 22...Nc5?! 23 Nxc5 Bxc5 24 Rbf3, followed by 25 Be3, White's attack plays itself; nor is 23...Rxf4!? 24 Rxf4 Qxe5 25 Qg4 Bxc5 26 Rh3 any better for Black.

The exchange sacrifice by **22...Rxf4!!** is, of course, the first thing that pops into

one's head (after 23 Rxf4 Qxe5 24 Rf2 Nf6, Black's compensation is more than sufficient). But first, White will take the e6-pawn with check. This looks so threatening, that the first impulse is to quit calculating and look for something else. Only a clear realization of the difficulties Black faces after "normal" continuations can force us to continue our examination of this variation. In the end, we decide to go for it, despite its obvious risks and the impossibility of calculating its entertaining complications to the end.

**23 Qxe6+ Kf8! 24 Rxf4+ Nf6** (White's queen is trapped, but he has a beautiful shot) **25 Nc5!**



B?

And what now? Black cannot take, either on e6 or on c5 (because of 26 Rxf6 +! gf 27 Qxf6+).

**25...Ke8!**

As Wilhelm Steinitz taught us, **the king is a strong piece that can take care of itself**. White still has to give up the

queen, but his assault continues.

**26 ef! Bxe6 27 Nxe6 Qe5! 28 fg**

White gets nothing out of 28 Nxc7+ Kd7 29 fe Qxf4 or 29 Bg4+ Kd6.



B?





28...Kd7!

But not 28...Qxe6?, in view of 29 Rb7!  
Qg8 30 Bh5+ Kd8 31 Rf7+-.

29 Nf8+ Rxf8!

And now, White has a choice:

a) 30 Rb7+ Kd6 (30...Kc8 31 gfQ+ Bxf8 32 Bxa6 Qe1+ 33 Rf1 Qxf1+  
34 Bxf1 Kxb7+/-) 31 gfQ Bxf8 32 Rf2.

b) 30 Rxf8 Qxg7 31 Rf1.

c) 30 gfQ Bxf8 31 Rf7+! Ke8 32 Rff3.

The latter two variations look more appealing. In each, White retains somewhat better chances, but the outcome remains unclear.

It's too bad that all this is merely the product of my own fantasy – it would have made a notable game! And wouldn't it be great to learn how to play at this level?!

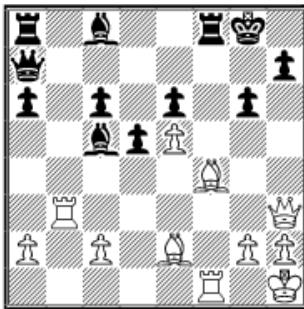
21...Nd7-c5? 22 Na4xc5 Be7xc5

22...Qxc5 23 Qh3+/- would hardly change anything.

23 Qc3-h3!

Intending to bring up the rook, and then follow up with 25 Bd3.

23...g7-g6



W?

Another critical position, which means a new task, where should we move the rook?

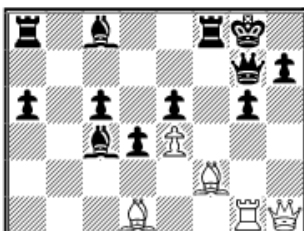
As usual, it makes sense to employ prophylactic thinking: think about what means our opponent plans to use in order to coordinate his pieces. And then we shall see that we should play **24 Rbf3!**,

in order to answer **24...Qg7** with **25 Bh6 Rxf3 26 Qxf3! Qe7**, after which comes either 27 Qg3 followed by 28 h4, or **27 Bg5!?** The bishop is taboo: 27...Qxg5 28 Qf7+ Kh8 29 Qe8+ Kg7 30 Rf7+ Kh6 31 Qh8, and mates soon. On 27...Qg7, White can continue his attack by 28 Qc3 Qa7 (only move) 29 h4; and 28 Bf6, followed by 29 h4, isn't bad, either. If 27...Qc7, then the simplest is 28 Be3! Ba3 29 h4; and 27...Qe8 is met by 28 h4. Black's position undoubtedly remains extremely shaky, even though one cannot assert with absolute conviction that White's attack must inevitably break through.

24 Rb3-g3? Qa7-g7

Now 25 Bh6? no longer works: 25...Rxf1+ 26 Bxf1 Qxe5.

25 Be2-d3



B?

25...a6-a5?!

This is a strange move: Black will not be



able to trade off the light-squared bishops by Bc8-a6 in any case, because of the weakness on e6.

Meanwhile, the proper path for Black was very easy to find: he had only to apply **“the principle of the worst-placed piece,”** as described in Alexei Kosikov’s lecture in *School of Chess Excellence 4 – Positional Play*. Black’s queen rook is not in play, so it should be developed via Ra8-a7-f7. After 25...Ra7!, the position becomes completely unclear. Thomas Ernst indicates the variation 26 Rg4 Raf7 27 Qg3? (27 g3 would be better) 27...Qxe5-+.

Instead of 26 Rg4, 26 Rgf3 is stronger (“amending his mistake” on move twenty-four). Then Black could choose the roughly equal endgame with two pawns for the exchange after 26...Raf7 27 Bh6 Rxf3 28 gf Qxe5 29 Bxf8 Bxf8 30 Qg3 Qd6!? 31 Qxd6 Bxd6 32 Rb1 Bc7, or else play the waiting move 26...a5, in order to get the queen’s rook to f7 only after White plays 27 Qg3 or 27 Qg4. For example, 27 Qg4 Raf7 28 h4 Be7 unclear.

### 26 Qh3-g4!

The queen clears the way for the h-pawn.

### 26...Bc5-d4

Here too, 26...Ra7 27 h4 Raf7 was better.

### 27 Rg3-f3

Finally, the rook takes up its mandated position on the open file.

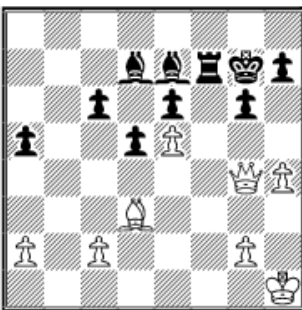
### 27...Bc8-d7 28 Qg4-h4!

Having indirectly defended his center pawn (28...Bxe5? 29 Bh6+-), White prepares the bishop invasion at h6.

### 28...Bd4-c5 29 Bf4-h6 Rf8xf3

If 29...Qxe5?, then 30 Bxf8 Rxf8 (30...Bxf8 31 Rf7+-) 31 Rxf8+ Bxf8 32 Qd8 Qd6 33 Rxf8+ Qxf8 34 Qxd7+- (Ernst).

### 30 Bh6xg7 Rf3xf1+ 31 Bd3xf1 Kg8xg7 32 Bf1-d3 Ra8-f8 33 Qh4-g5! Rf8-f7 34 h2-h4 Bc5-e7 35 Qg5-g4



White has achieved a significant advantage. The following mistake by his opponent makes his task easier.

35...c5? (as Ernst indicated, Black had to play 35...Kh6!+/-) **36 c4! d4 37 h5 g5 38 h6+! Kg8** (38...Kxh6 39 Qh3+) **39 Qe4 Bf8 40 Qa8 a4 41 Kh2 Re7 42 Kg3 Re8 43 Qa7 Re7 44 Qxc5 Rf7 45 Qb6 Bxh6 46 c5 Bg7 47 Qd8+ Bf8 48 Be4 d3 49 Bxd3 Bc6 50 Bc4 Re7 51 Qd6 Bd7 52 c6 Bc8 53 Qd8 1-0**

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