

Chapter Six

The Boa Constrictor

The snake bite

In the previous chapter, we saw how time wasting when attacking often gets punished. However, in many cases a slow build-up *is* required. In such positions, the centre is usually either blocked or contains only a little tension. Play tends to be concentrated on the wings, where both sides try to develop an attack over time. It's important to recognize the long-term attacking plan as far ahead as possible, whilst simultaneously defending against the opponent's counterattack.

Game 34
B.Spasky-T. Petrosian
World Championship
(Game 7), Moscow 1966
Torre Attack

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♙g5

The Torre Attack is a very sound opening with a solid positional basis, and it offers chances to attack on both the kingside and queenside. It's also a good way to avoid the heavy theoretical lines of the Kings Indian, Grünfeld, Nimzo and other openings.

3...d5

3...h6 4 ♙h4 c5 5 e3 b6 is a typical set-up Black adopts, to play the position like a Queens Indian Defence. Petrosian opts for something more classical with 3...d5 and simply puts his pawns in the centre.

4 ♘bd2 ♙e7 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♙d3 c5 7 c3 b6 8 0-0

8 ♘e5 was chosen in Radjabov-Naiditsch (see Game 49).

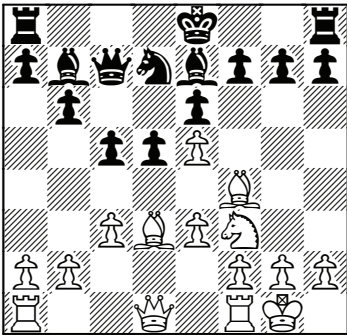
8...♙b7

Notice how Petrosian doesn't castle yet. He waits for White to show his intentions before committing his king to either the kingside or the queenside.

9 ♖e5 ♜xe5 10 dxе5 ♞d7 11 ♙f4

11 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 12 f4 0-0 reaches a standard Torre position. Now there's 13 ♜h5 f5 (or 13...g6) and also the possibility of 13 ♙xh7+, the Greek Gift sacrifice which will be discussed in Chapter Seven. In this case after 13...♙xh7 14 ♜h5+ ♙g8 15 ♜f3 f6 16 ♜h3 ♜e8 17 ♜h7+ ♙f7 18 ♜g3 ♜g8 Black seems to have defended.

11...♜c7 12 ♞f3



12...h6

An innocuous-looking but clever little move. Twelve moves into the game and still Petrosian doesn't commit his king, not giving White a target at which to aim his pieces. Of course, it's important to note that this strategy only really works because the centre is closed. In Chapter One we saw examples of the king not surviving in the centre, but here Petrosian correctly realizes it's okay to keep it there.

13 b4 g5

With such a move Black finally commits... to queenside castle!

14 ♙g3 h5

Forcing White to move his h-pawn to save his bishop, and this will then become a target for the pawn storm.

15 h4

If 15 h3 Black will yet again use White's h-pawn as a lever to open up the kingside with a future ...g5-g4 push. For example, 15...0-0-0 16 ♜c1 c4 (or 16...g4 17 hxg4 hxg4 18 ♞d4 ♞xe5 19 ♞b5 ♜b8 20 ♞xa7+ ♜xa7 21 ♙xe5 ♜h5 22 ♙g3 ♜dh8 and White feels the heat down that h-file) 17 ♙c2 g4 18 hxg4 hxg4 19 ♞d4 ♜dg8 with the greater attacking chances – the open h-file will certainly be useful.

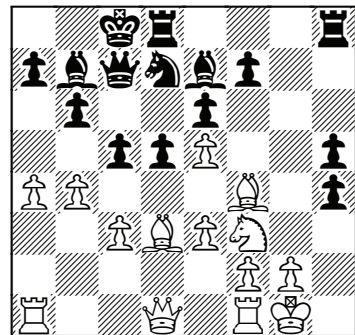
15...gxh4

15...g4 16 ♞g5 blocks the g-file. It's playable for Black but leads to a different type of position to the game.

16 ♙f4

If 16 ♞xh4 0-0-0 Black has the g-file to work with and the e5-pawn as a target.

16...0-0-0 17 a4

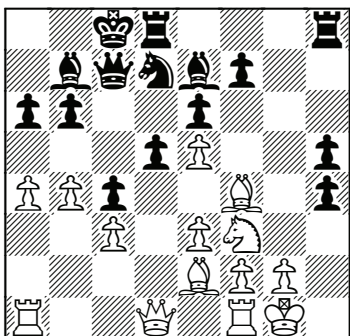


17...c4!

At first glance, a strange move. Yet Petrosian shows deep positional un-

derstanding with this decision. Rightly concerned that White threatened a5 opening the a-file with the standard attack on the fianchetto, Black closes lines on the queenside with this and his following move. Although ...c4 does shut out the bishop on b7 (as ...d4 is unlikely to be playable if White plants a knight there), Black can still use the rest of his pieces as well as the already opened g-file to stage an attack. Watch how this strategy is played out perfectly in the game.

18 ♖e2 a6!



A key move: the a- and b-pawns now face each other and whichever one White pushes, the other moves forward to block the position. This is a very useful defensive idea, because now White cannot make any progress at all on the queenside and must direct all his efforts into trying to stem the tide that will come on the other side of the board.

19 ♖h1

19 b5 a5 or 19 a5 b5 is no good for White. All lines are closed and the shut-

ters put up!

19...♗dg8 20 ♖g1 ♗g4 21 ♚d2 ♗hg8

Black doubles on the g-file. What is White's plan though? He has zero counterplay on the other wing.

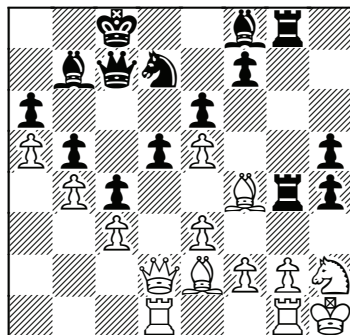
22 a5

Spassky could have played this advance earlier, at any time from move 19, with the same response from Black:

22...b5 23 ♗ad1 ♙f8

The computer still thinks that White is slightly better, but it cannot offer any plan at all here. In contrast, Black can reroute the bishop to g7 to attack e5, and think about a timely ...d4/...h3 to open up that bishop on b7.

24 ♘h2



24...♗xe5!

A nice exchange sacrifice; Petrosian even wins a second pawn to even up the material balance. White still has no plan, except to defend against the impending onslaught!

25 ♘g4 hxg4 26 e4 ♙d6

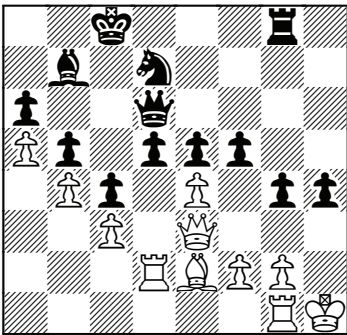
Not 26...dx4? 27 ♙xe5 with mate on d8 if Black recaptures. Has Black lost the thread here?

27 ♖e3 ♜d7 28 ♙xd6 ♚xd6 29 ♜d4

After 29 f4 gxf3 30 ♙xf3 ♚e5 31 ♜ge1 ♜f6 32 exd5 ♚xe3 33 ♜xe3 ♜xd5 34 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 35 ♜d2 f5, two pawns and a monster bishop provide ample compensation for the exchange.

29...e5 30 ♜d2 f5

30...d4 31 cxd4 ♚xb4 is possible, but Black should be attacking on the other wing!



31 exd5

If 31 exf5 Black replies 31...♚f6. Now the bishop on b7 is a great piece, which can be released at any time with ...d4. Also, ...h3 can be thrown in to further open up the long diagonal towards the king on h1.

31...f4 32 ♚e4 ♜f6 33 ♚f5+ ♙b8 34 f3

34 ♜e1 ♙c8 35 ♚c2 h3 36 g3 ♜g5 37 ♙h2 ♙f5 38 ♚c1 ♜e4 is pretty depressing for White.

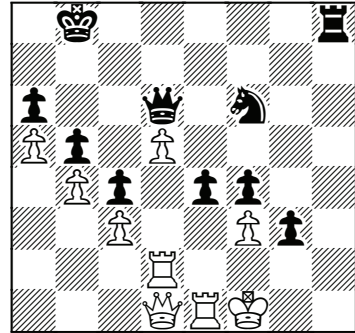
34...♙c8 35 ♚b1 g3

The pawn advance ...h3 is coming and White can do nothing about it.

36 ♜e1

Or 36 ♙f1 ♜h8 and the threat of ...h3 is renewed.

36...h3 37 ♙f1 ♜h8 38 gxh3 ♙xh3 39 ♙g1 ♙xf1 40 ♙xf1 e4 41 ♚d1



Huge progress has been made in the attack, but Black still needs to find the coup de grâce to finish things off. Petrosian does just that.

41...♜g4! 42 fxg4

If 42 ♜xe4 then either 42...♚h6 or 42...♜h1+ wins.

42...f3

White is a rook to the good but he can do nothing here. Those black pawns are majestic and the h-file will spell the end for White.

43 ♜g2

Or 43 ♙g1 ♚h6 with an unstoppable mate on h1.

43...fxg2+ 0-1

White resigned, as 44 ♙xg2 ♜h2+ forces mate after 45 ♙g1 ♚h6 46 ♚d4 ♜h1+ 47 ♙g2 ♚h2.

A subtle and well crafted attack by Petrosian. It all started with 17...c4! and 18...a6! to deny the opponent any counterplay, and then Black slowly crushed White on the kingside with a gradual build-up.