

**Valeri Bronznik & Anatoli Terekhin**

# **Techniques of Positional Play**

45 Practical Methods to Gain the Upper Hand in Chess

**New in Chess 2013**

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# Introduction

Dear chess lover,

Please give me an honest answer: have you not often come out of the opening with a dream position only to see the tables turned on you afterwards? – I at least have often had that experience.

Or vice versa: your position after the opening was a modest one, but suddenly everything went splendidly right for you and the game took on a new aspect? Actually the question is more of a rhetorical one, the answer is obvious.

Why then do 90% of all chess players ascribe their tribulations to poor knowledge of the opening? We must at least be honest with ourselves: of course, good opening preparation is desirable, but it is not the main factor in our playing strength. An understanding of the middlegame and the endgame is far more important and can often enough help us to save dubious positions and not to spoil the good ones we have.

It may well appear tempting to acquire a few books or CDs on openings, to learn a few variations by heart and to hope that we can overcome an unsuspecting victim right in the opening with the theory we have mugged up on.

Unfortunately, it is only too easy for us to fall victim to such an attitude, if it leads us to a neglect of the middlegame and endgame – and even a completely superior position as we leave the opening in no way guarantees us a win, on the

contrary: it demands of us an ability to play the middlegame and the endgame.

But, unfortunately, it is not quite so simple to acquire such good knowledge of the middle- and endgame, since it is only recently that appropriate books have been gradually coming on the market. So that made it all the more interesting for me to lay my hands upon the book by the well-known Russian trainer FM A.Terekhin ‘Strategic Methods’<sup>1</sup> (the Russian prototype of the book which you have in your hand). Terekhin chose a lot of examples and from them worked out ideas the knowledge of which can turn out to be extremely useful for players of practically all levels – from advanced club players all the way up to masters. Many of his points of view – here I am thinking, e.g., of the explanations concerning the potential passed pawn – are completely new and to the best of my knowledge have not yet appeared in chess literature.

The idea soon occurred to me to translate the book into German – as usual with the able help of my late friend Dieter Mohrlök (IM and correspondence chess GM). In doing so, I have greatly revised the material from the Russian edition. Some not very convincing examples have been omitted, but in return I have included some new, and hopefully appropriate game fragments.

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Methods/Techniques, Methods/Techniques of positional play; translating it is not so clear-cut, and we spent a long time on possible variations of the German resp. later on the English title.

## *Techniques of Positional Play*

In addition the reader of the German resp. English edition will find significantly more analysis and explanations than there were in the Russian original. Nevertheless the main emphasis in this book was not laid on deep analysis, but rather on giving you as good as possible a feeling for and understanding of the ideas and methods which are presented. Consequently I have deliberately tried to avoid, where possible, complicated and confusing analyses.

Firstly, a little caution: in this book you will be confronted with new concepts which may at first glance appear strange, for example the aforesaid ‘potential passed pawn’ or the ‘wave-breaker’ or the ‘pendulum manoeuvre’. These expressions are inventions of A. Terekhin, and we have translated them to the best of our ability. Whenever you encounter each such technique the concepts will then be explained in greater depth.

The overwhelming number of examples comes from the creative work of world famous players. But there are also extracts of games played by less well-known people, whose names you may perhaps not know. That proves that it is not necessary to be a GM or even an IM to demonstrate successful use of a strategic idea. And a good thing it is too!

I must thank Anatoli Terekhin for having appreciated my work and making no objection to allowing me to stand as his co-author for the German and English edition.

IM Valeri Bronznik  
Stuttgart, August 2005

Dear reader,

When Valeri Bronznik showed me the inconspicuous little Russian book by Terekhin, I was immediately affected in a very special way. It is not that no good middlegame books had previously appeared – sterling service in this field has been done above all by Dvoretzky and Watson. No, for some reason there appeared to be specific and not so peculiarly complicated artifices with which I had never become systematically acquainted, but which I had come up against in fragmentary and painful fashion in my encounters with strong players.

The idea occurred immediately that the book had to be published in German, though it was clear that for a publication which would come up to Western standards – and I am not just talking about the translation – some fine-tuning was still required. Following the proverb ‘Too many cooks spoil the broth’ I also became involved with the work, changing the order of the techniques and arranging them in individual chapters, putting together a chapter with exercises drawn from ‘superfluous’ examples, etc.

The result – a tribute to the German penchant for systematising – is that the first four chapters are devoted above all to the art of pawn play, chapters V to X on the other hand to piece play. With appropriate reservations, of course.

I wish the readers a whole host of instructive moments!

FM Harald Keilhack, editor  
Schwieberdingen, Nov.2005/July 2013

# Chapter I

## Restricting the enemy pieces

*'If one piece is badly placed, then your whole game is bad'*

The whole of the first chapter is devoted to this adage from the Russian chess school. It illustrates different techniques for excluding an opposing piece from the action by means of clever pawn play and it presents the subtle consequences of this – which sometimes reach far into the endgame.

### Putting the knight in chains

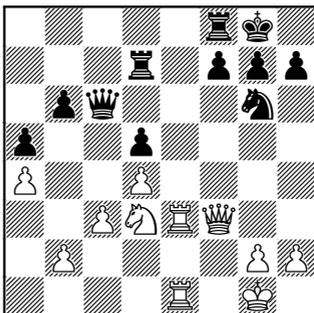
#### Technique No. 1

#### I. Paralysing the knight with the duo of wing pawns

We start with the surprisingly frequent motif of restricting a knight by the *wing pawns*:  $\Delta g3/\Delta h4$  against a  $\textcircled{N}g6$  is the main subject with various mirror image variations. The opponent is frequently faced with a choice only between different evils: Opposing with his own rook pawn (...h5 or ...a5) creates weaknesses or is not really possible. Allowing h4-h5 or a4-a5 leaves him at a disadvantage in space, and for the rest of its days the knight can often never find a good square.

##### ► 1.1 Botvinnik–Boleslavsky

Moscow (USSR Ch) 1941



The last move was 24...♖d6-c6.

*'Black wants to tie in one of the opposing pieces to the protection of the ♖a4. In that case the development of White's initiative would slow down. But White has at his disposal a clear attacking plan: drive away the ♘g6 so as to gain access to the e7-square for his rook and to the e5- and f4-squares for the knight. For that reason White ignores the petty threat posed by his opponent'* (Botvinnik).

**25.g3! ♜d6**

The continuation 25...♖xa4 26.h4 was extremely dangerous for Black, e.g. 26...♜d6 (or 26...♜fd8 27.h5 ♘f8 28.h6, and according to Botvinnik White's attack plays itself) 27.h5 ♘h8 28.♘f4±.

**26.h4! f6**

So as to control the e5-square.

**27.♖f5! ♖c8**

27...♖xa4 was quite bad on account of 28.h5 ♘h8 29.♘f4, e.g. 29...♘f7 30.♘e6! ♜b8 31.♖g4 ♘g5 32.♘xg5

## Techniques of Positional Play

fxg5 33. ♖e7 h6 34. ♗f5+- or 29... ♗d7  
30. ♗xd7 ♗xd7 31. ♖e7 ♗xe7 32. ♖xe7  
♘f7 33. ♘xd5+-.

**28. ♗xc8 ♗xc8 29. h5 ♘f8 30. ♖e7  
♗cd8**

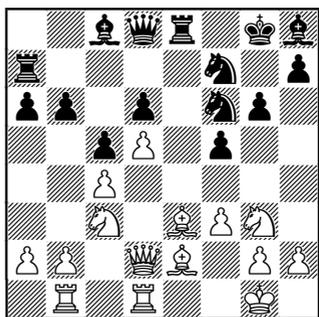
30... ♗c4 31. ♖b7 ♗xa4 32. ♖ee7+-.

**31. ♘f4±,**

and White won on move 49.

### ► 1.2 Tamburini–Botvinnik

Leipzig (Olympiad) 1960



Before looking at the further course of the game, I should like to draw your attention to Black's queen's rook, which is ready to pop up on the e-file in a single move – we shall delve more deeply into this idea and similar ones under ⇒ *Technique No. 32*, 'The rook lift.'

**21...h5!**

Δ...h5-h4, ...♘f6-h5.

**22. ♖f1 h4 23. ♘ge2 ♘h5**

A further gain of space on the kingside is the threat after ...g6-g5, ...f5-f4, when the ♖c8 becomes active; in addition the ♖h8 is now no longer blocked and can thus exert strong pressure along the long diagonal.

As far as White's position is concerned, one can sense a certain lack of harmony – the constellation ♘e2/♖f1 looks really

unnatural. The game ended surprisingly quickly.

**24. ♘f4??**

Of course White's desire to swap off his badly posted knight is an easy one to fulfil, but ...

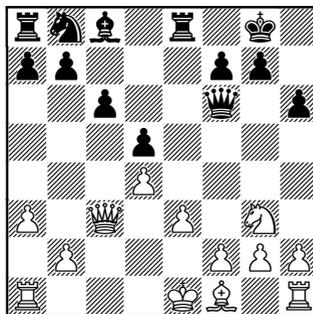
**24... ♘xf4 25. ♖xf4 ♖d4+ 0-1**

After 26. ♖h1 g5 White loses the ♖f4.

So there was no longer any need for the rook lift to e7 – White had already abandoned his position.

### ► 1.3 Petrosian–Botvinnik

Moscow (1st WCh game) 1963



White has at his disposal the usual plan of the minority attack on the queenside (b2-b4-b5). And what about Black's counterplay?

**12...g6!**

Intending ...h6-h5-h4.

**13.f3?!**

As Botvinnik writes in his notes on this game, the only possible reason for this move is as preparation for queenside castling – the pawn would otherwise be left hanging on f2.

Of course there would be another reason for 13.f3, namely to prepare e3-e4. But for the moment that does not look like a realistic option and in fact in the future course of the game White manages neither

## Chapter II

# Create breathing space for your pieces!

Instead of, as in the previous chapter, restricting opposing pieces, the discussion is now about the activation of our own pieces or how the pawns are used for that. They can either sacrifice themselves ( $\Rightarrow$  *Technique Nos. 8-9*), blasting open outposts ( $\Rightarrow$  *Technique No. 10*) or securing them ( $\Rightarrow$  *Technique No. 11*).

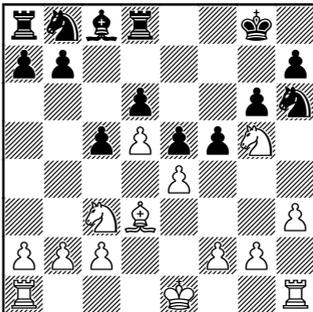
### Technique No. 8

## The temporary pawn sacrifice

Now, the temporary pawn sacrifice. Every chess player knows that in the Queen's Gambit the c-pawn is not really sacrificed; or there are cases where one offers the b-pawn in the knowledge that  $\text{♙:♖b7}$  is always followed by  $\dots\text{♜b8}$  and  $\dots\text{♝:♖b2}$ . Here are some less trivial examples:

#### ► 8.1 Alekhine–Tartakower

Dresden 1926



White has the more active position and a lead in development. Consequently he should open the centre, but the natural **12.0-0** ( $\Delta$ 13.f4) is followed by **12...f4** or even first **12...♗a6** ( $\Delta$ ...♗b4) 13.a3 f4, and the centre would remain closed.

#### 12.f4!

This pseudo-sacrifice allows Alekhine to achieve his aim. He first forces the opening of the centre and only then does he castle.

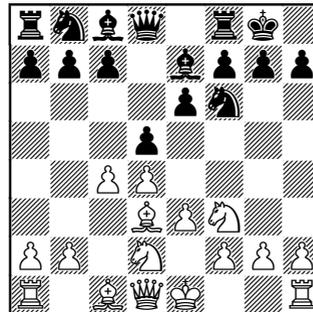
#### 12...exf4 13.0-0

The ♖f4 cannot be protected.

#### 13...♗a6 14.♝xf4 ♗b4 15.♝h4±

#### ► 8.2 Nimzowitsch–Capablanca

New York 1927



How should Black continue here?  $6\dots\text{♗c6}$  is scarcely worth considering – Black would deprive himself of the resource  $\dots\text{c5}$ . Of course Black could continue with  $\dots\text{♗bd7}$ , but Capablanca wants to bring about a more active position for this knight.

**6...c5! 7.dxc5**

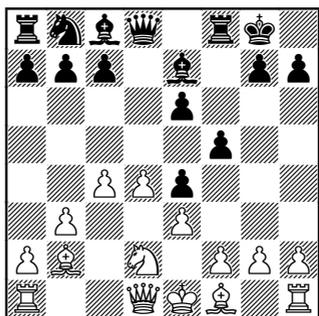
After both **7.0-0** cxd4 8.exd4 ♘c6 and also **7.cxd5** cxd4 8.♘xd4 e5 9.♘4f3 ♙xd5 Black gets a pleasant game.

**7...♘a6! 8.0-0 ♘xc5 9.♙e2 b6**

with comfortable equality for Black.

► **8.3 Kan–Konstantinopolsky**

Sverdlovsk 1943



**9...c5! 10.dxc5**

**10.d5** could be followed with **10...♘a6** Δ...♘c7 with better play for Black.

**10...♘a6!**

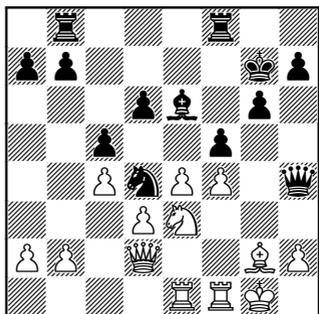
**10...♙xc5** 11.♙e2 with equality.

**11.♙e2 ♘xc5 12.0-0 ♘d3**

Black has the initiative.

► **8.4 Angantysson–Reshevsky**

Lone Pine 1978



The threat is **20...fxe4** followed by **21...♙xf4**. White could prevent this by **20.exf5**,

but after **20...♙xf5 21.♘xf5+ ♘xf5** the ♘f4 would remain a palpable weakness.

White finds a way to keep the f-file closed:

**20.e5! dxe5 21.♘c2!**

Self-evidently not **21.fxe5??** f4 **22.♘d5** f3–+.

**21...♘xc2?!**

**21...e4** would lead after **22.♘xd4 cxd4 23.dxe4 ♖bd8 24.♙b4 b6 25.e5** to a more or less level position.

**22.♙xc2**

Black cannot make his extra pawn count. Additionally the ♖e1 is now extremely active.

**22...♖bd8?**

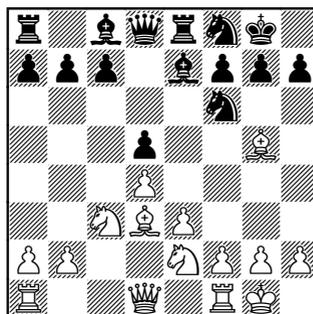
**22...♖be8** was stronger, e.g. **23.♖xe5** (23.♙c3!?) **23...b6 24.♖fe1 ♙d7 25.♙d2 ♖xe5 26.♖xe5 ♙f6 27.♙e3±**.

**23.♖xe5 ♙f6 24.♖fe1±**

White will soon be able to rejoice in an extra pawn, because Black has simply too much material hanging (♙e6, ♖b7, ♘c5).

► **8.5 Bareev–Lputian**

Montecatini Terme 2000



Here White has two basic plans: central play with f2-f3, e3-e4 or the minority attack b2-b4-b5 (from time to time both ideas can be combined).

And even if White decides on the second plan, it still appears that he must first

## Chapter VII

# Working with the king

In this chapter we shall deal with various aspects of the safety of the king:

- How to get the king into the corner 'on foot' as it were.
- How to evacuate it from endangered zones by even longer route marches.
- How to strengthen the pawn shield of the king with the right recapture on g3/g6.
- And in *Technique No. 30* we shall finally see just how dangerous an attack on the h-file can be.

### Technique No. 27

## Artificial castling

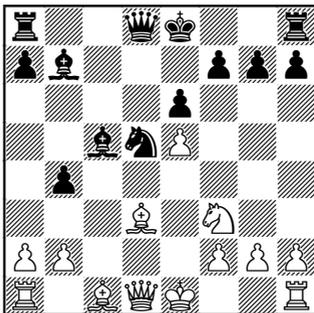
Sometimes 'normal' castling is not or not easily possible, or the opponent has prevented it by a check. Then artificial castling can be the only way to get the king to safety – by it walking across to the kingside and with the rook coming into play only later.

In various opening variations artificial castling is the order of the day.

We shall first consider variations involving a type of position from the Meran Variation and then take a short look at a main line from the Volga-Benkö Gambit.

### ► 27.1 Uhlmann–Larsen

Las Palmas 1971



This is a typical position from the Meran Variation after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♙d3 dxc4 7.♙xc4 b5 8.♙d3 ♙b7 9.e4 b4 10.♘a4 c5 etc.

#### 14.♙b5+

With this move White prevents Black from castling kingside.

At first glance this looks unpleasant for the second player, but in reality nothing bad has happened!

#### 14...♙e7

Larsen plans to develop his queen and to bring the ♖h8 to d8 after which the king can wander via f8 to g8 – this idea was carried out with no problem in the game.

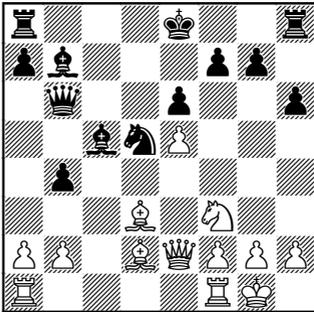
An alternative to it was 14...♙f8 intending ...h7-h6, ...g7-g6, ...♙g7.

15.0-0 ♖b6 16.♙d3 h6 17.♖e2  
♜hd8 18.♙d2 ♙f8 19.♜ac1 ♜ac8  
20.♜c2 a5 21.♜fc1 ♙g8 22.h3  
♘e7

Black has a very comfortable game. He was going to win after 14 more moves.

► 27.2 Utemov–Dreev

Gorki 1989



16...0-0 would run into 17.♖e4 ♘f6 18.♗h4± with strong attacking threats. But how can Black get his king to safety?

**16...♝f8!**

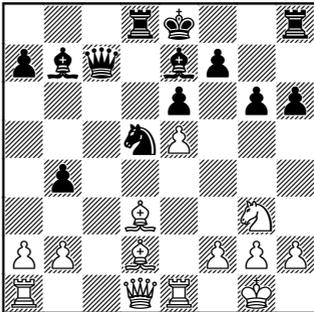
Intending ...g7-g6 and then ...♝f8-g7.

**17.h4 g6 18.♞h2 ♙d4 19.♞ab1 ♞d8 20.♞f3 ♙c5 21.♞bc1 ♞g7 22.♞c2 ♞e7 23.h5 ♞f5 24.♙f4 g5,**

and Black seized the initiative.

► 27.3 Epishin–Dreev

Tilburg 1994



This situation is very similar to the one in the previous example. Black cannot

castle, because that would leave the ♔h6 unprotected. So:

**19...♝f8! 20.♞c1 ♗b6 21.♗e2 ♞g7 22.♙c4 ♗d4 23.♙b3 h5 24.♞ed1 ♗b6**

With chances for both sides.

► 27.4 Volga–Benkő Gambit

Theoretical variation

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.bxa6 ♙xa6 6.♞c3 d6 7.♞f3 g6 8.e4!**

The most straightforward! After **8.g3 ♙g7 9.♙g2 0-0 10.0-0 ♞bd7 11.♗c2 ♗a5** the ♙g2 would remain ineffective.

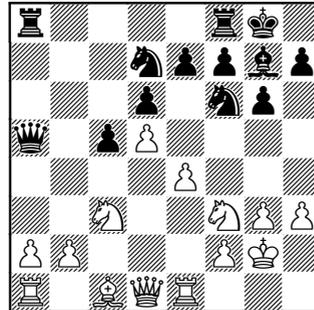
**8...♙xf1 9.♝xf1 ♙g7 10.g3**

Or even the longer way with **10.h3 0-0 11.♞g1 ♞bd7 12.♞h2 ♗a5 13.♞e1.**

**10...0-0 11.♞g2 ♞bd7 12.h3**

After **12.♞e1** the move **12...♞g4** gives counterplay.

**12...♗a5 13.♞e1**



The white king position is secured in exemplary fashion. Of course after **13...♞fb8** Black retains play on the queenside in return for his pawn.

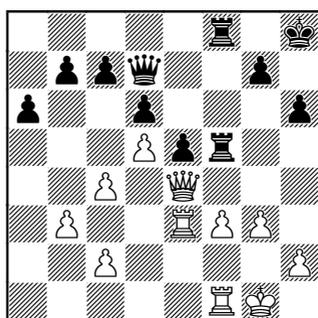
## Technique No. 41

# The Rubinstein manoeuvre: ... ♔d8-b8-a7!

Here we have a sort of abstract ‘queen fianchetto’ in which her majesty appears on what is for her the somewhat unusual square a7, from where it exerts an astonishingly strong influence:

### ► 41.1 Janowski–Rubinstein

Karlsbad 1907



29... ♔d8!

The possibility offered by this move of activating the queen by ... ♔d8-g5 is quite obvious. But Rubinstein has in mind a hidden idea: the queen can also go to the a7-g1 diagonal, where it is very active and moreover frustrates the idea of c4-c5.

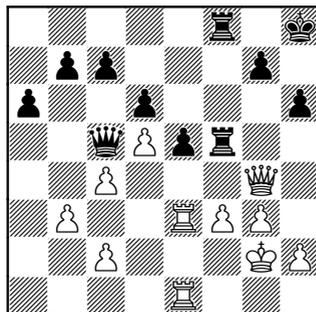
30. ♖g4

Directed against ... ♗d8-g5.

30... ♗b8! 31. ♖g2 ♗a7! 32. ♖fe1  
 ♗c5

(see diagram next column)

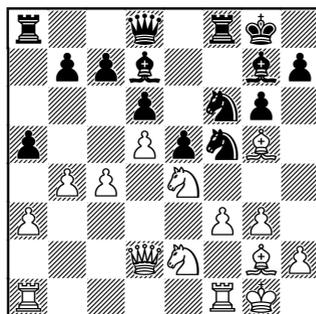
Now Black is planning to obtain an initiative on the queenside by ... ♗c5-b4 and then ... a6-a5-a4, whereas White has



no counterplay and must concentrate on defensive measures. Rubinstein went on to win this game.

### ► 41.2 Lematschko–Gurieli

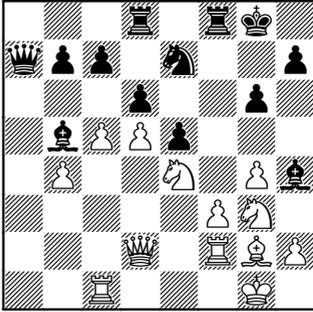
Kuala Lumpur 1990



16... ♗b8! 17. ♖xf6

After 17.c5 ♗a7 18.g4 ♘e7 19. ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 20. ♖e3 the black queen finds another nice place – 20... ♗a6!, after which the idea of ... ♗c4 appears.

17... ♖xf6 18.g4 ♗a7+ 19.c5 ♘e7  
 20. ♖ac1 ♖b5 21. ♖f2 axb4 22.  
 axb4 ♖h4 23. ♘2g3 ♖ad8



**24.cxd6?!**

White probably wanted to deprive her opponent of the option of ...d6xc5, in addition she activates the ♖c1, but on the other hand the a7-g1 diagonal now opens up for the black queen.

24.g5 with an unclear position was stronger.

**24...cxd6 25.♖h6**

25.g5 is followed by 25...♖b6 (directed against ♖c1-c7) 26.♗h1 ♖f4 with a strong initiative.

**25...♗xg3 26.hxg3 ♘xd5 27.♖d2**

27.♘g5? ♘f6-+.

**27...♖d4**

27...♘e3!?

**28.♖d1?**

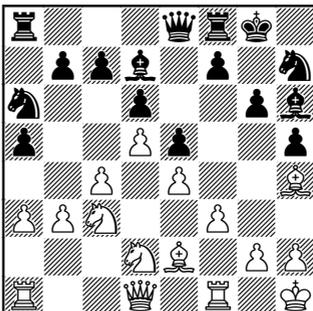
28.♖xd4 exd4 29.♖d2 d3 30.♘f2 ♖.

**28...♖xd2 29.♖dxd2 ♗c4,**

and Black won.

### ► 41.3 Shirov–J. Polgar

Madrid 1994



Here we have a well known position from the theory of the King's Indian Defence.

Before this game, basically 15...♗e3 was played here, e.g. 16.♖c2 c6 17.♗f2! ♗xf2 18.♖xf2±, Illescas–Gelfand, Linares 1994.

Polgar's next move was a novelty then:

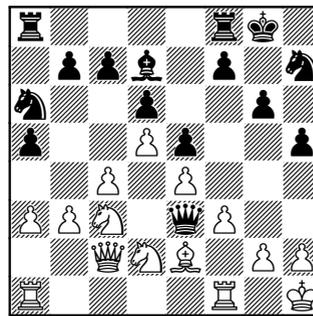
**15...♖b8!?**

Black is planning to bring her queen into play via a7.

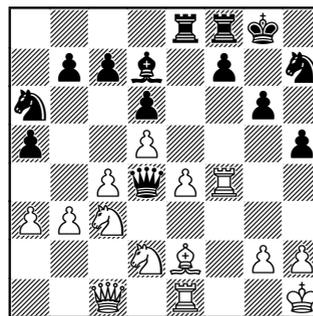
**16.♖c2**

16.♗f2 is followed by 16...♖d8! intending ...♖g5.

**16...♗e3 17.♗f2 ♖a7 18.♗xe3 ♖xe3∞**



**19.f4?! exf4 20.♖ae1 ♖c5 21. ♖c1 ♖d4 22.♖xf4 ♖ae8**



Thanks to her pawn structure and the active position of the ♖d4 Black has the better chances.