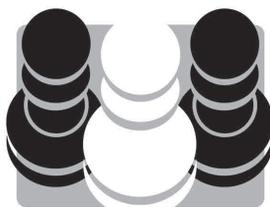


KING'S INDIAN WARFARE

By

ILYA SMIRIN



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Foreword

I first played against Ilya in 1980, when we were both in our early twenties. He was already a strong player of course – as well as a big King’s Indian fan. Since then, he has played this opening successfully against some of the best players in the world.

I believe there are two types of people who play the King’s Indian. One type bases their play on knowledge and analysis; the other type plays according to feeling and understanding. Ilya Smirin undoubtedly belongs to the latter camp. I don’t think he ever studied any deep theory! He has an excellent feeling for the middlegame, particularly for dynamic possibilities. When he gets a chance to attack the king, there are very few who can stop him.

Ilya may not know as much opening theory as some players, but he knows a lot about the history of the King’s Indian. I know that Ilya has been greatly inspired by the games of Mikhail Tal, Robert Fischer and especially Leonid Stein, one of his favourite players. The way Ilya handles the King’s Indian has been influenced by all of them. Stein in particular is one of Ilya’s heroes; the Soviet GM would often aim for the most complicated position possible, in order to obtain attacking and other dynamic possibilities. Ilya possesses the same type of flair for such positions – and nowhere is his talent more obvious than in the King’s Indian.

Ilya has played the King’s Indian successfully against some of the very best players in the world. See, for instance, Chapter 2, which contains Ilya’s games against Vladimir Kramnik, who is known as one of the strongest players on the White side of the KID. I find Ilya’s success against Kramnik and other elite players extremely impressive, as each game is a huge challenge. When you play this opening you take a big risk from the very beginning. White gets space in the centre and a lot of freedom for his pieces, while as Black you must rely on your dynamic and tactical qualities.



Ilya is deeply confident in the potential of the black pieces in the King's Indian. Chapter 8 contains the game Gelfand – Smirin from the 2005 European Club Cup in Saint Vincent, where Ilya played brilliantly and I was really lucky to save the game. Ilya's resourcefulness and feeling for dynamics was really impressive in this game.

Everything in chess is a reflection of one's personality. Ilya is a big fan of theatre, as well as action movies – and I think this is reflected in his handling of the King's Indian, which always leads to a lot of drama and action on the board! I'm sure the readers will enjoy the many ferocious attacks and dramatic battles contained in this book. Hopefully it will inspire some readers to start playing the King's Indian – or return to it, if they've not played it for a while.

Reading this book gives you a different type of insight into the King's Indian. It's not a theoretical book, where you get answers to your opening questions – and probably the King's Indian is not meant to be played in such a clinical way. Ilya's games have great instructive value, to be sure – but this is also a book for pleasure and for inspiration. For players who enjoy wild chess, who value imagination, creativity and epic fights on the board, this book will be a treat.

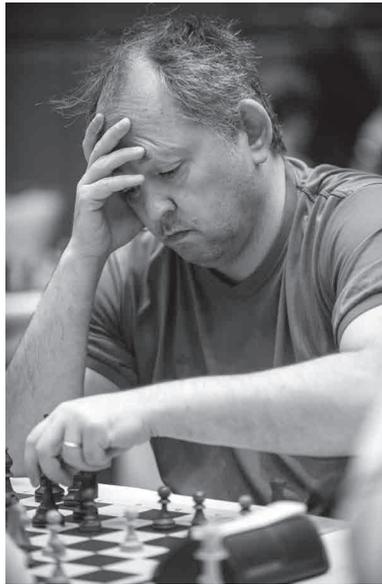
Boris Gelfand
2012 World Championship Finalist

Preface

In this book I would like to present my best King's Indian Defence games and in the process share with the reader my views on this complex and double-edged opening.

The King's Indian Defence is one of the most fascinating openings in chess. It involves everything I love about the game: risk-taking, attacking, exchanging weaknesses or material for dynamic chances, clever tactics, surprising turnarounds and a deep sense of possibility.

Many outstanding chess players played the King's Indian Defence throughout their whole careers. It is enough to mention just a few names (in chronological order): David Bronstein, Efim Geller, Mikhail Tal, Leonid Stein, Robert Fischer, Garry Kasparov. In modern days the King's Indian Defence is the main (and successful) opening in the games of Teimour Radjabov, and it is also played by Hikaru Nakamura, Alexander Grischuk and various other top players.



Not a King's Indian, but at least a current photo...

I have been a great lover of the King's Indian Defence from the very beginning of my chess life – that's over 30 years now. It is my favourite opening, so when I chatted to Jacob Aagaard after our game at the 2011 European Team Championship, and he asked if I had ever thought about writing a book, I felt attracted to share my love for and experience in handling this exciting opening.

What I want to achieve with this book is to give the reader a course in playing the King's Indian, which in turn will also be a course in playing dynamic chess. Every chapter will be structured in the following way:

- A few positions from the games in the chapter for the reader to solve
- General introduction to the topic; for example, tactics typical of the King's Indian
- Some of my own games that are relevant to the topic

The basic idea is to explain the topic in a simple (yet hopefully not simplistic) way and then show how the concepts showed up in my games, which were played at a high grandmaster level. I would implore the reader to be realistic when trying to solve the positions from the games. My intention is to help you broaden your mind and improve your imagination.

I decided quite deliberately to have 49 main games in this book. I could easily have made it 50, of course, but I like the number 49 for several reasons. 7×7 is one of them, but there is also the feeling of incompleteness. Or in other words: I am leaving room for more. And it is certainly my goal to add to this collection of memorable King's Indian games in the years to come.

I hope this book will help the reader to play better chess, and inspire more players to take up this fascinating opening.

Ilya Smirin,
Kfar Sava, August 2016

Chapter 4

Line Opening



*In the King's Indian it is important to look
beyond apparent obstacles to success...*

My Games

Alexander Huzman – Ilya Smirin

Sverdlovsk 1987

1. d3 f6 2. c4 g6 3. c3 g7 4. e4 d6 5. d4
0–0 6. e2 e5 7. 0–0 c6

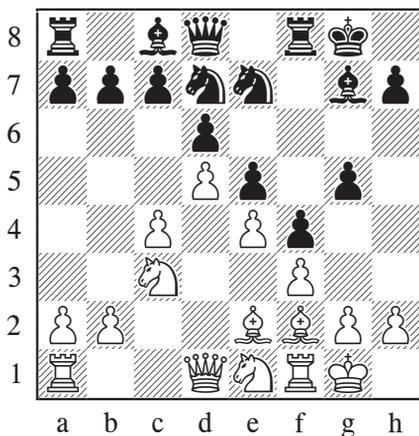
The most popular continuation among such moves as 7... a6 , 7... bd7 , 7... exd4 , 7... we8 and 7... c6 .

8. d5 e7 9. e1 d7 10. e3

One of the most aggressive setups for White against the KID, and a pet variation of Viktor Korchnoi.

10. d3 f5 11. f3 f4 is another popular line; a slightly more “quiet” one.

10... f5 11. f3 f4 12. f2 g5



13. b5 !

An interesting story is connected with this move. It was first played by Korchnoi against Hulak just two days before my game with Huzman. There were neither databases nor internet in those ancient days, so information usually reached players much more slowly than nowadays. However, the Korchnoi – Hulak game was an exception – it was published the

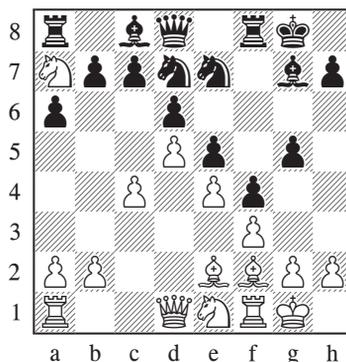
next day in the Russian language newspaper “Soviet Sport”. I was lucky, as during the lunch break, only a few hours before the game, Boris Gelfand enlightened me about the brilliant idea played by Korchnoi.

13. d3 f6 14. c5 g6 15. c1 f7 was played in Taimanov – Najdorf, Zurich 1953, as mentioned in the introduction.

13... b6 !

Forewarned is forearmed, even though I did not expect that my future Israeli teammate Alexander Huzman would follow Korchnoi's footsteps. Here is his game:

13... a6 14. a7 !!



A really beautiful move!

14... xa7 15. xa7 b6 16. b4 b7 17. c5 dxc5
18. c1 c8 19. bxc5 a8 20. c6 f6 21. xb6

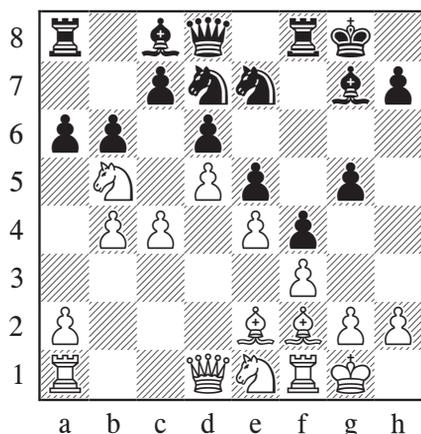
The bishop falls in the end, but the price is very high.

21... xb6 22. xa6 g4 23. d3 g3 24. h3 e8
25. c5

White won in Korchnoi – Hulak, Zagreb 1987.

I did not want to repeat Hulak's fate, and found the best move 13... b6 over the board.

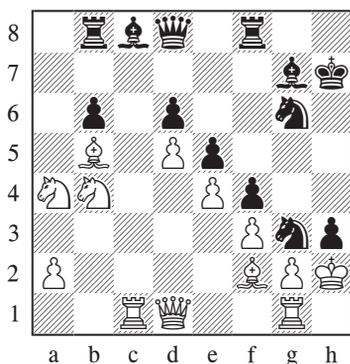
14. b4 a6



15. ♖a3

In my opinion, retreating this knight to c3 is more logical, even though Black is usually doing OK after that. Below is another of Korchnoi's games – this time he was on the receiving end of Black's attack:

15. ♖c3 h5 16. ♖h1 ♗f6 17. c5 g4 18. cxb6 cxb6
 19. ♖c1 g3 20. ♗g1 gxh2 21. ♗f2 h4 22. ♖a4
 ♜b8 23. b5 axb5 24. ♗xb5 ♖h5 25. ♖xh2 ♗g3
 26. ♜g1 ♗g6 27. ♖d3 ♖h7 28. ♖b4 h3



29. ♜xc8!?

29. gxh3 ♗xh3! 30. ♖xh3 ♜g5!! gives Black a winning attack.

29... ♜xc8 30. gxh3 ♜h8 31. ♗xb6 ♜e7
 32. ♖d3?! ♜b8!

Black has a big attack and won in Korchnoi – Ye Jiangchuan, Novi Sad 1990.

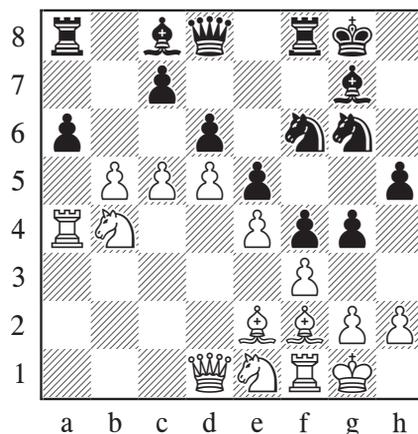
15...h5?!

Black starts his usual routine in this variation – activity (attack) against the opponent's king. However, in this case I would prefer 15... ♗f6, with the further transfer of this rook to g6 or h6, or 15... ♖f6 16. c5 b5, which I like most. In contrast, after 15... a5?! (activity on the wrong flank) 16. c5! axb4 17. cxd6 cxd6 18. ♖c4 ♖c5 19. ♖d3 White's chances should definitely be preferred – he is far ahead in developing an initiative.

16. c5 b5

Now it's evident that the knight on a3 is preventing White from playing a2-a4, so he must move it first – and time is very valuable in such positions.

17. ♖ac2 ♖f6 18. a4 bxa4 19. ♜xa4 ♗g6
 20. b5 g4 21. ♖b4



21...g3!

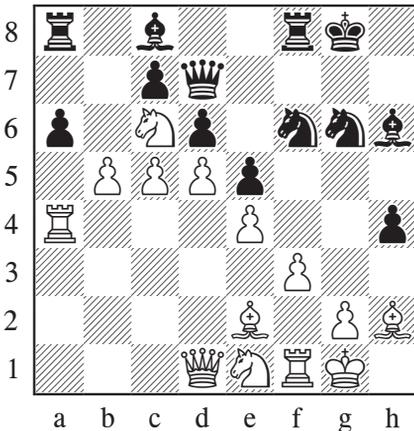
After the famous game Taimanov – Najdorf (see above) this pawn sacrifice became typical in such positions.

22. hxc3 fxc3 23. ♗xg3 h4

Black's activity is based mainly on the weak dark squares around the white monarch. Black's knights strive to reach f4 and g3; the bishop will support them from h6 and the g-file is free for Black's heavy artillery. The question is: will

Black have enough time to do all these things, or will the opponent smash Black's queenside and/or centre first?

24. ♖c6 ♜d7 25. ♙h2 ♙h6

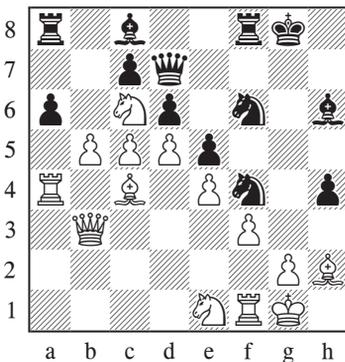


Now 26... ♙e3† 27. ♖h1 ♗h5 is threatened.

26.f4?!

It's easy to understand the motivations behind this drastic decision: the black knight is deprived of the h5-square and White's pieces on the kingside have more space. On the other hand, White has returned the sacrificed pawn on a6), one black knight is already *en route* to the excellent outpost at f4, and the e4-pawn and g4-square have become much weaker. I think the more principled (and stronger) continuation was:

26. ♜b3 ♗f4 27. ♙c4



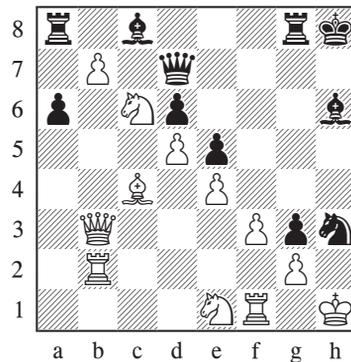
After which the following complications are possible:

27... ♖h8 28.b6

28. ♝a2 ♝g8 29.cxd6 cxd6 30.b6 ♗6h5



31. ♝b2 (the following exciting variations show the strength and danger of Black's direct assault against the white king: 31. ♗a5 ♗h3† 32. ♖h1 ♗g3† 33. ♙xg3 hxg3 34.b7 ♙e3 And now 35.bxa8=♜ ♜h7→ or 35.bxc8=♜ ♝axc8 36. ♜b7 ♝c7 37. ♜xc7 ♗f2† 38. ♝xf2 gxf2 39. ♝xf2 ♜xc7.) 31... ♗h3† 32. ♖h1 ♗g3† 33. ♙xg3 hxg3 34.b7 (34.gxh3 ♜xh3† 35. ♖g1 ♙f4 36. ♝g2 ♝g7→)

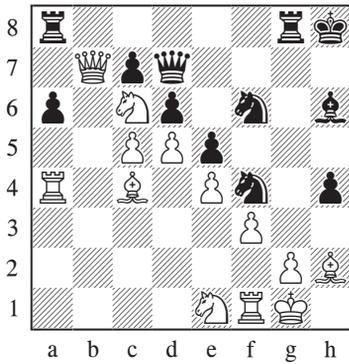


34... ♙e3!! 35.bxc8=♜ ♝axc8 36. ♜xe3 ♗f4 37. ♜a7 ♜e8 and despite two extra pieces White is helpless to prevent mate after ... ♜h5.

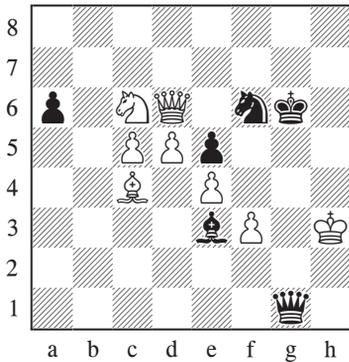
28... ♝g8 29.bxc7

29.b7 seems to be losing after 29... ♙xb7

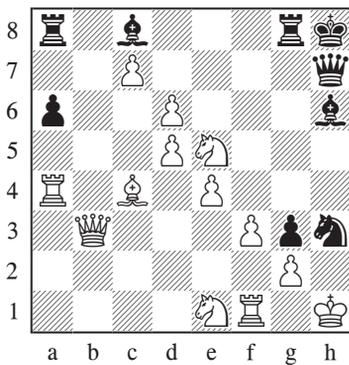
30. ♜xb7



30...♖xg2! 31.♖xg2 h3 32.♞a2 ♘e3†
 33.♔h1 hxg2† 34.♞xg2 ♞xg2 35.♔xg2 ♞g8†
 36.♙g3 ♞h7 37.♞h1 ♞xg3† 38.♔xg3 ♞xh1
 39.♞c8† ♔g7 40.♞xc7† ♔g6 41.♞xd6
 ♞g1† 42.♔h3



42...♙f4 43.♖xe5† ♔h5→ Quite a journey
 for the black king!
 29...♖6h5 30.cxd6 ♖h3† 31.♔h1 ♖g3†
 32.♙xg3 hxg3 33.♖xe5
 33.♖e7 ♖f4!→
 33...♞h7



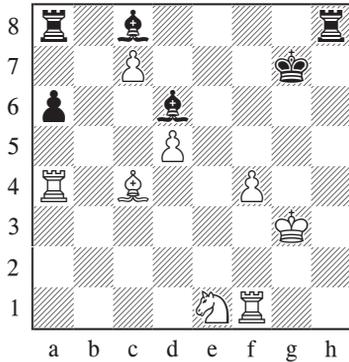
34.gxh3

The only move in this wild and picturesque position. If 34.♞c3? ♞g7 35.d7 ♘xd7 36.♙xa6 ♘d2! White gets mated in 6 according to the silicon brains.

34...♙e3 35.♖f7† ♔g7

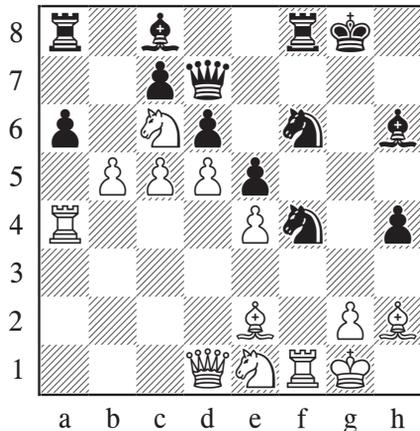
And after the forced:

36.♖g5! ♙xg5 37.♞b2† ♙f6 38.e5 ♞xh3†
 39.♔g1 ♞h2† 40.♞xh2 gxh2† 41.♔xh2
 ♙xe5† 42.f4 ♞h8† 43.♔g3 ♙xd6



There arises a complex endgame, the most probable result of which is a draw, despite White's extra pawn (the pawn on c7 will fall). I apologize for showing such long and possibly not error-free variations. Usually I try to avoid that, but on this occasion these variations are very important for understanding the whole picture. Also I hope you will find them interesting and even paradoxical.

26...♖xf4



27.bxa6?

In such a sharp and unbalanced position this natural move, which would probably be made by the vast majority of players, proves to be a mistake.

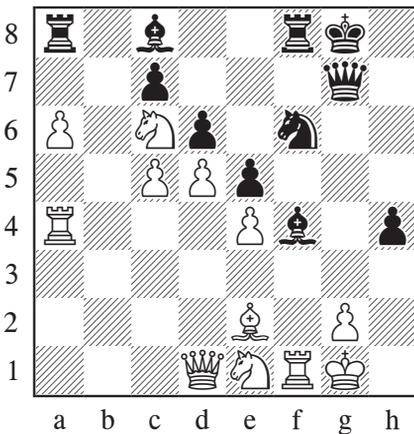
Correct was 27.♖d3!, with an unclear battle.

27...♖g7 28.♗xf4

The knight on f4 is very annoying, so Huzman decided to exchange it. But now the bishop, which replaces the knight, becomes really menacing. It's hard to suggest something better, for instance:

28.♔h1 ♖g4 29.♗g1 (29.♖a3 ♖h3!-+) 29...h3, and from h1 the king stares in fear at his numerous enemies.

28...♗xf4



29.♖d3

Again, it's not easy to offer a better move.

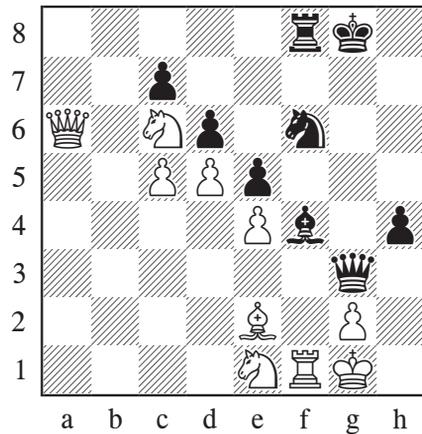
After 29.cxd6 ♖g3!? 30.♖xf4 ♖xf4 White is in trouble.

29...♖xa6?!

A tempting but, alas, wrong sacrifice.

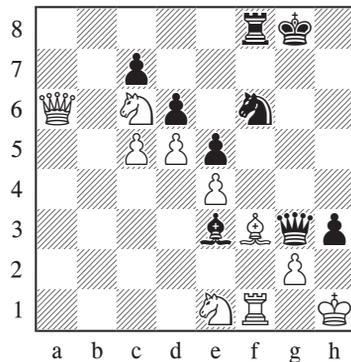
After the immediate 29...♖d7! (my opponent saw this move during the game) 30.cxd6 ♖c5! 31.♖e7† ♔h7 32.♖a3 ♖xa4 Black would have a decisive advantage.

30.♖xa6 ♗xa6 31.♖xa6 ♖g3



32.♖d3?

A serious mistake. After 32.♗f3 ♗e3† (32...h3? 33.♖e7† ♔h7 34.♖f5 ♖h2† 35.♔f2 ♖g8 36.♖c4+-; 32...♖xe4 33.♗xe4 ♖h2† 34.♔f2 ♖g3† 35.♔g1=) 33.♔h1 h3

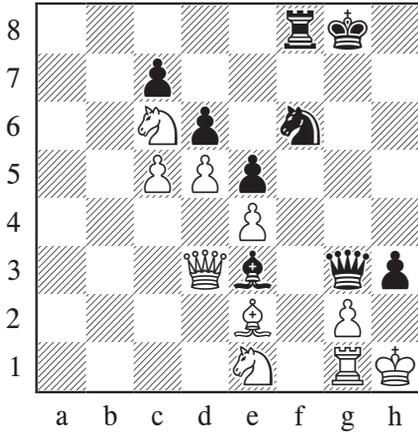


34.♖e2! (the queen is back in time) 34...♗f4 35.gxh3 ♖xh3† 36.♔g1 ♖g4 (36...♔h7 37.♖f2) 37.♖c2 ♗h2† 38.♔h1 the game would have ended in a draw.

32...♗e3† 33.♔h1 h3! 34.♖g1?

The last error in time trouble.

34.♞f3 ♜xe1† 35.♚f1 still would have allowed White to hold on, even though Black is much better.



34...♔f7!

Now the rook will join the attack from h8 to threaten checkmate. White cannot prevent this, so he resigned.

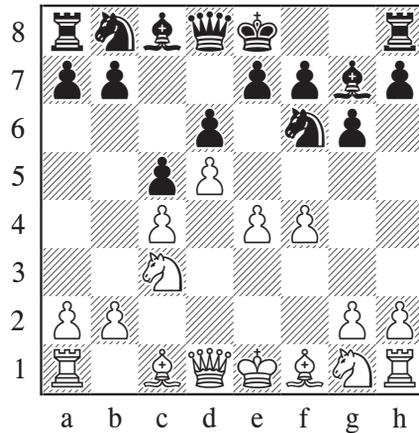
0-1

Yuri Dokhoian – Ilya Smirin

Sverdlovsk 1987

This game, as was my encounter with Huzman, was played in a competition that was very memorable for me. The first league of the USSR Championship in Sverdlovsk (now Ekaterinburg) was my first really big success. Despite being a newcomer to tournaments of this calibre, I took clear first place ahead of such players as Tshchkovsky, Khalifman, Gelfand, Tukmakov and Malaniuk. Before the tournament I had not touched chess or even thought about it for around two months. The reason – I was in military service from 1986-88. By winning this first league I qualified for the 1988 USSR Championship. It was a super-tournament with the participation of Kasparov, Karpov, Yusupov, Salov, Ivanchuk, Beliavsky, Vaganian and others, but that's already a different story.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.♘c3 ♚g7 5.e4 d6 6.f4



The aggressive Four Pawns Attack (with a slightly different move order) – a sign that White is going for the maximum in the opening. He would love to smash his opponent with his powerful centre.

6...0-0 7. ♖f3 e6

As a teenager, a couple of times I played a pawn sacrifice in the spirit of the Benko Gambit – 7...b5 8.cxb5 a6 9.a4 ♖a5 – but without much success.

8.dxe6

More common is:

8. ♗e2 exd5 9.cxd5

9...exd5!?

9...♗g4

9...♞e8 10.e5 leads to very deeply analysed complications. To play such lines requires one to have a lot of theoretical knowledge and a good memory.

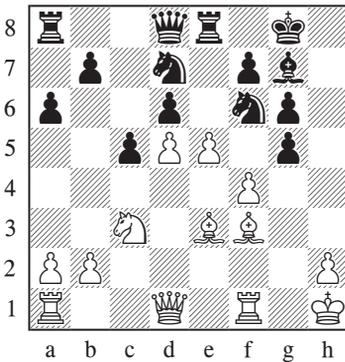
10.0-0

The following is an inspiring (for Black) game by the great Mikhail Tal:

10...♗xf3

Modern theory recommends 10...♗bd7.

11. ♗xf3 ♗bd7 12. ♖h1 a6 13. ♗e3 ♞e8 14.g4 h6 15.g5 hxg5 16.e5



16...gxf4! 17.exf6 ♞xe3 18.fxg7 ♗e5 19.♗g2 ♖g5 20.♗e4 ♖h4 21.♖d2 ♖xg7 22.♖f2 ♖xf2 23.♞xf2 f3 24.♗xd6 ♞d8 25.♗xb7 fxg2† 26.♖xg2 ♞xd5 27.b3 ♗d3 28.♞c2 ♞e1 0-1 Doroshkievich – Tal, Yerevan 1975.

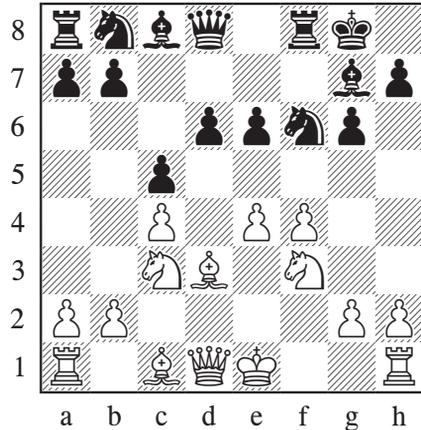
However, the move made by Yuri Dokhoian (a former long-time second of Garry Kasparov, and captain of both the men's and women's Russian national team) has its venom.

8...fxe6

Now Black's pawn formation in the centre becomes stronger.

I like the other possible capture 8...♗xe6 less, but perhaps it's just a matter of taste.

9.♗d3



9...e5!?

Over-the-board improvisation.

The main continuation here is:

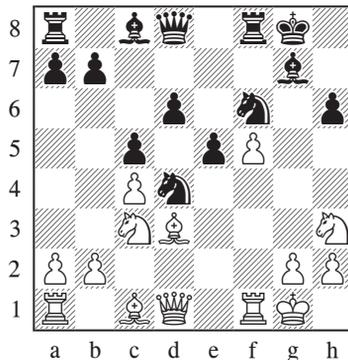
9...♗c6 10.0-0 ♗d4

I'd like to mention a game by another World Champion:

11.♗g5

More promising looks 11.♗xd4 cxd4 12.♗b5 and Black has to solve certain problems.

11...e5 12.f5 h6 13.♗h3 gxf5 14.exf5



14...b5! 15.♙e3 bxc4 16.♙xc4† ♖h8 17.♙xd4 cxd4 18.♜d5 ♙a6! 19.♜xf6 ♙xc4 20.♜h5 ♙xf1 21.♚g4 ♚d7 22.♞xf1 d3 23.♚f3 d2 24.g4 ♞ac8 25.♚d3 ♚a4 26.♜f2 ♚d4

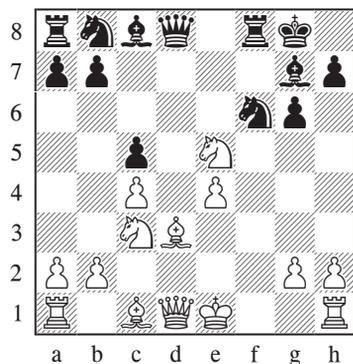
Black won in Christiansen – Kasparov, Moscow 1982.

10.fxe5

Interesting complications could have resulted after 10.f5!? gx5 11.ex5 d5!? 12.cxd5 (12.♜xd5 is possible as well) 12...e4. I will leave it to the reader to bring in a verdict.

10...dxe5 11.0–0

On the greedy: 11.♜e5



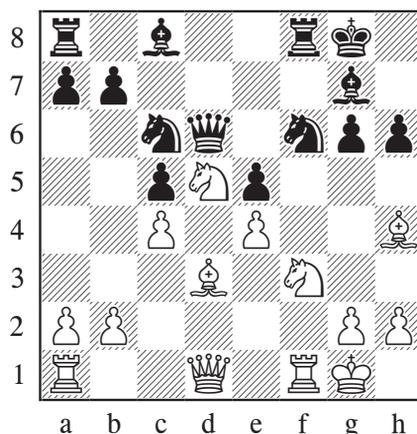
Black can (and should) continue 11...♜g4! 12.♜f3 ♞xf3! 13.gxf3 (13.♚xf3? ♜e5) 13...♚h4† 14.♜d2 ♜f2 15.♚e1 ♜c6! (the point), with a devastating attack.

11...♜c6

So the position is almost symmetrical, the only difference being that the bishop on g7 is potentially slightly more active than its counterpart on d3. Since it is White's turn to move, chances should be roughly equal.

12.♙g5 h6 13.♙h4 ♚d6 14.♜d5?!

In my opinion 14.♙c2 ♜d4 15.♜xd4 cxd4 16.♜d5 ♜xd5 17.cxd5=, with a dull position, was more to the point. But in that case I doubt this game would have been in this book.



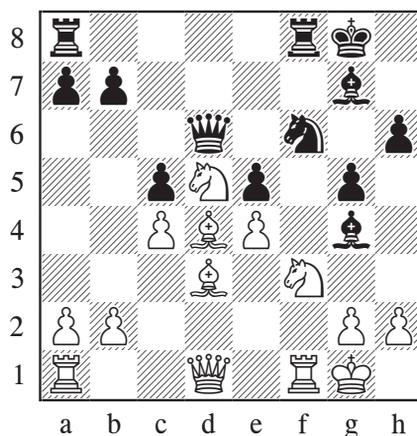
14...g5!

Fighting for the initiative.

15.♙e1

After 15.♙g3 ♜h5† Black's activity is annoying, and it is not easy to find a plan for White.

15...♙g4 16.♙c3 ♜d4 17.♙xd4



This bishop has made a long trip just to be exchanged for the knight on d4 – a definite achievement for Black.

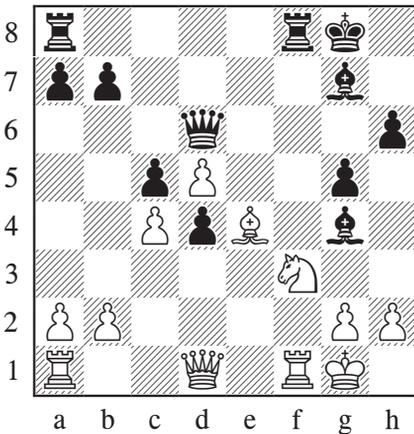
17...♜xd5! 18.exd5

18.♙xe5 ♙xe5 19.exd5 ♙xh2† understandably did not appeal to my opponent.

18...exd4 19.♙e4

It seems that White has a solid and perfectly safe position.

19.h3, to check the intentions of the bishop on g4, was the better move. Now if 19...♙xh3 (19...♙h5 20.♙c2 ♜f4 21.♞d3 ♞e3† 22.♞xe3 dxe3 23.g4 ♙f7 24.♞ae1 ♞ae8 25.♞e2 and White is not worse in this ending; 19...♙d7!?) 20.gxh3 ♞g3† 21.♔h1 ♞xh3† 22.♞h2 ♙e5 23.♞c2 ♙xh2 24.♙f5 ♞xf5 25.♞xf5 ♞xf5 26.♞xf5 ♙f4 Black would remain slightly better, with two pawns for the exchange, but after, let's say, 27.♞e1 a draw is the most probable outcome.

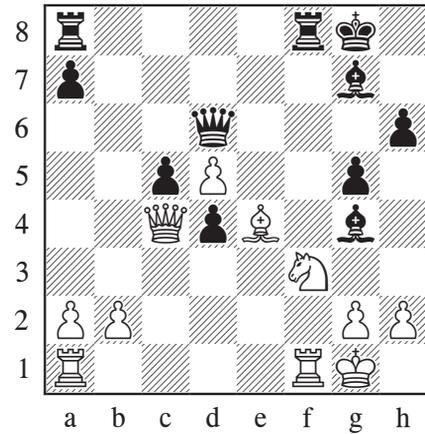
**19...b5!**

With the clear goal of opening up the position; my bishop pair would appreciate that very much!

20.♞d3?

This natural move is a mistake, but it was not easy to foresee Black's reaction.

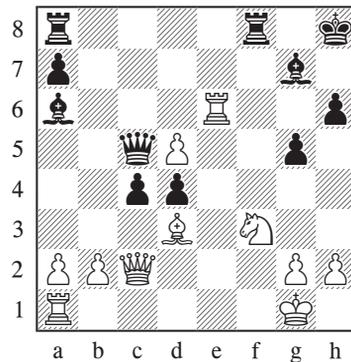
20.cxb5 c4♣ was barely playable, but after the modest 20.b3 bxc4 21.bxc4 ♞ab8 Black would have only a little pressure.

20...bxc4 21.♞xc4**21...♙c8!**

A very strong and unexpected manoeuvre, with the idea ...♙a6. Also ...g5-g4 may be an important threat in some lines.

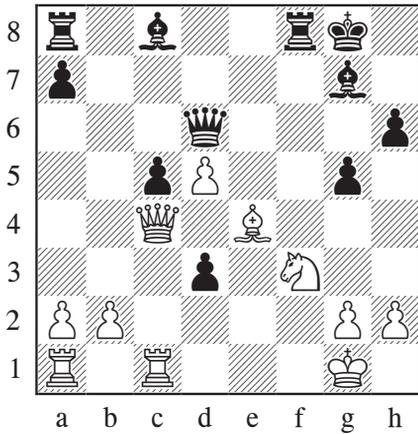
22.♞fc1

Slightly preferable was 22.♞c2 ♙a6 23.♞fe1, but with energetic play – 23...c4 24.♙h7† ♔h8 25.♞e6 ♞c5! 26.♙d3 (26.♞xa6 d3† 27.♞f2 ♞xf2† 28.♔xf2 ♔xh7)



26...♞b5! 27.♞xa6 cxd3 28.♞c6 ♞xb2 29.♞c1 ♞c3 30.♞c6 d2! 31.♞xc3 dxc1=♞† 32.♞xc1 d3 33.♞ab1 g4 – Black obtains a nearly-decisive advantage in the endgame.

22...d3!



I am sorry for using so many diagrams, but this four-move span (starting from my 19th move) is one of my favourites in my whole career. It's hard to believe, but this powerful push basically decides the game in Black's favour. The dynamics of Black's position are so strong that the opponent is helpless.

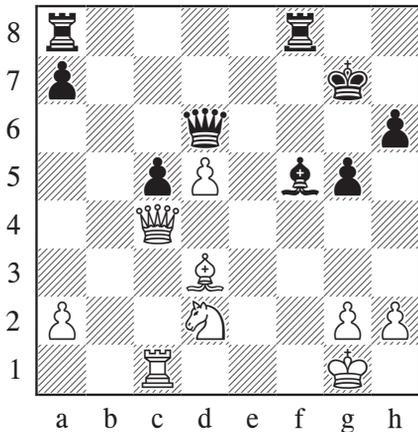
23. ♖xd3

What else? 23. ♜xc5 ♜xc5† 24. ♞xc5 g4 25. ♜d2 ♖d4† and 23. ♞ab1 ♖a6 24. ♜xc5 ♜xc5† 25. ♞xc5 ♞xf3 26. ♖xf3 ♖d4† and Black wins in both cases.

23... ♖xb2

And a simple fork is the result. A decisive loss of the exchange is unavoidable.

24. ♞ab1 ♖xc1 25. ♞xc1 ♖f5→ 26. ♜d2 ♜g7?! 26... ♖xd3 27. ♜xd3 ♞ae8 would win faster.



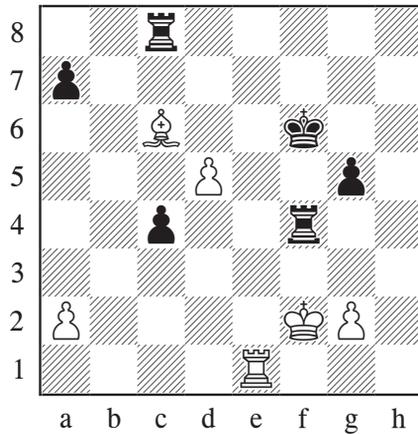
27. ♜e4!?

More stubborn was 27. ♜c3† ♜f6 28. ♜xf6† ♞xf6 29. ♖b5, but after 29... ♞b8 30. ♞xc5 a6 31. ♞c7† ♜f8 32. ♖f1 ♞b2 Black is winning anyway.

27... ♜e5 28. h4 ♖xe4 29. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 30. ♖xe4 ♞f4

The rest is simple and does not require further comment.

31. ♖d3 ♞d4 32. ♖b5 ♞c8 33. ♖c6 c4 34. hxg5 hxg5 35. ♜f2 ♜f6 36. ♞e1 ♞f4†



37. ♜g3 c3 38. ♞e6† ♜f7 39. ♞e2 ♞c4 40. ♞c2 ♞b8 41. ♖d7 ♞b2 42. ♞c1 c2 43. ♖f5 ♜f6 44. ♖h7 ♞xa2 45. d6 ♞b2 46. ♞f1† ♜g7 47. d7 ♞d4 48. ♖f5 ♞b1

What I like most about this game is the speed with which White's seemingly solid position fell apart after a few forceful strokes. **0-1**