

CHESS MIDDLEGAME STRATEGIES

Volume 1

by

Ivan Sokolov



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KEY TO SYMBOLS

| | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------|
| ! | a good move |
| ? | a weak move |
| !! | an excellent move |
| ?? | a blunder |
| !? | an interesting move |
| ?! | a dubious move |
| □ | only move |
| = | equality |
| ∞ | unclear position |
| ∞ | with compensation for the sacrificed material |
| ± | White stands slightly better |
| ∓ | Black stands slightly better |
| ± | White has a serious advantage |
| ∓ | Black has a serious advantage |
| +- | White has a decisive advantage |
| -+ | Black has a decisive advantage |
| → | with an attack |
| ↑ | with initiative |
| ↔ | with counterplay |
| △ | with the idea of |
| ▷ | better is |
| ≤ | worse is |
| N | novelty |
| + | check |
| # | mate |

PREFACE

The 'work database' collection for this book which I started about two years ago meant the initial plan was for just one volume on Chess Middlegame Strategies.

However, the way my work and material built up and progressed, it soon became obvious that this 'one volume' would be approximately 500 pages long – so, the decision was taken to split the material into two volumes. The second volume is planned for the second half of 2017.

In this first volume I have annotated 37 games representing different aspects (chapters) of 'chess middlegame strategies'.

Readers will see that the vast majority of the games selected belong to the works of 'contemporary artists'.

Notwithstanding the 'traditional/golden classics selection', I preferred to use the 'contemporary learning examples' feeling that: A) younger/middle generation reader will more easily associate with them and B) they perfectly mirror the middlegame strategies used in modern top-class chess (i.e. today's chess at the highest level).

Opening play is in general not the subject of this book, although I did pay attention to opening ideas in the cases where I felt I had something useful to say on the subject (in the particular game selected).

The aim of this book is to offer the reader a spectrum of middlegame ideas/strategies, thereby inspiring and improving their practical tournament play.

Besides this book's 'practical aim', I hope that the reader will also gain purely aesthetic pleasure from playing over the games selected (and variations given).

Enjoy!
Ivan Sokolov

December 4th 2016

1. UNUSUAL ROOK LIFTS

The rook lift is a very common (mostly attacking) theme/manoeuvre dealt with in many books (including my own 'Sacrifice & Initiative' 2013).

The most common purpose of a rook lift is to bring the 'heavy artillery' to a flank and exert pressure on the enemy there.

In this chapter, I deal with unusual rook lift(s) — anyhow I (based on my knowledge/experience) have found them 'non-standard'.

So, let me give some explanation (one-by-one) as to why I chose them for this book.

FIRST EXAMPLE SEIRAWAN-KARPOV

An original 'out-of-the-box' idea by Seirawan in a very popular variation. The idea found no followers (only three games — all played by Yasser). This should help the reader to also think 'out-of-the-box' in similar positions and can also be used as opening preparation (the idea is sound and the opening line is topical).

SECOND EXAMPLE SALOV-KARPOV

The aim of this example is to understand the extra possibilities/strategies in hedgehog positions in which the white knight is developed to d2 (instead of the more common c3 square). This knowledge can be used in similar positions in practical play. I understood the full scope of the concept only after deeply analysing the game mentioned. I have also included some general guidelines for the opening line here.

THIRD EXAMPLE TOPALOV-CORI

Topalov's plan of attack in this game can be used by White in a closed Catalan, KID attack (i.e. KIA as White), French (as in this game). The rook lift played by Topalov (non-standard in such positions), combined with (on several occasions) a ♖g5 piece sacrifice — sacrificing a piece to open the h-file route to the enemy king — is very instructive!

FOURTH EXAMPLE ALEKHINE-KMOCH

‘Chess from the last century’ ☺. In standard isolated pawn positions a rook lift is a ‘common thing’, while a double rook lift is not. Using a double rook lift, Alekhine skilfully sustains the pressure until his opponent collapses.

FIFTH EXAMPLE TOMASHEVSKY- MCHEDLISHVILI

I was walking around the boards at the European Team Championships in Reykjavik, saw this game, remembered Alekhine-Kmoch, and almost instantly had a ‘dejà vu’ moment! A standard isolated pawn position, a double rook lift, skilful play by Tomashevsky.

In both these games (fourth and fifth) please notice that, contrary to ‘common knowledge’, the exchange of the light pieces did not help the side fighting against the isolated pawn, as the double rook lift provided the opposition with extra attacking possibilities.

I hope these five examples prove useful (to give you ideas) in similar positions in your practical play.

1

▷ Y. Seirawan

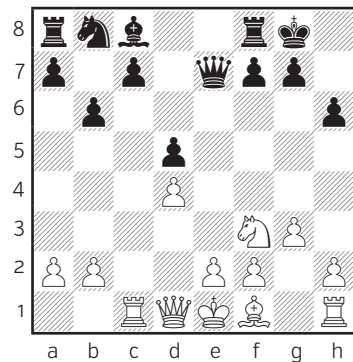
▷ A. Karpov

London, 1982 [D53]

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 d5 4. d4 Qe7
5. Qg5 h6 6. Qh4 o-o 7. Rc1 b6

Karpov goes for his favourite Bondarevsky/Makagovov (or also in many books called Tartakower) variation.

8. cxd5 Nxd5 9. Nxd5 exd5 10. Qxe7
 Qxe7 11. g3

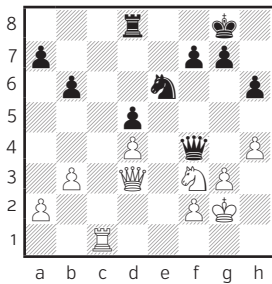


11... Re8

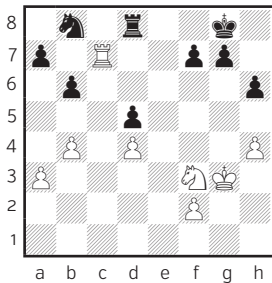
The other main move here is 11... Qa6 (at the top level Black has also tried here some other bishop moves, such as 11... Qb7 and 11... Qf5) 12. e3 c5 There is a very instructive game from Tigran Petrosian I would like to show here: 13. Qxa6 (13. dxc5 was the theoretical subject in Korchnoi, V (2695)—Karpov, A (2700) Merano 1981) 13... Nxa6 14. o-o Nc7 15. b3 Rac8 16. Re1 Rfd8 17. h4 Ne6 18. Qd3 Qf6 19. Qg2 cxd4 20. exd4 Rxc1 21. Rxc1 Because

of his c-file control White has a small advantage. Black wants to neutralize this by active play. 21...♙f4 Black utilises tactics. White's rook is attacked, and if it moves Black will play ...♙g4 creating the threat of ...♗f4. Black's queen on f4 'obviously' cannot be taken as Black will recapture with his knight and, owing to a simple fork, White will 'lose' a pawn.

Here comes a moment of superb judgement from Petrosian!!



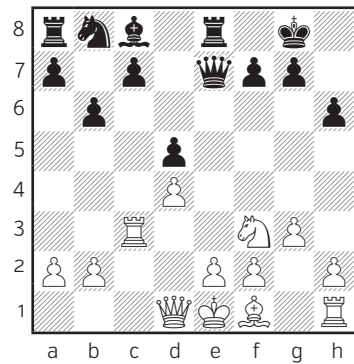
22.gxf4!! The ninth World Champion allows Black to execute his idea! In the resulting endgame White will have lasting pressure worth more than the sacrificed pawn. Simply great judgement by Petrosian! 22...♗xf4+ 23.♙g3 ♗xd3 24.♖c3 ♗b4 25.a3 ♗a6 26.b4 ♗b8 27.♖c7



The resulting position of White's pawn sacrifice idea. The active rook on c7 compensates for more than

a pawn here and Black is doomed to a passive defence. 27...a5 28.b5 ♗d7 29.♙f4 h5 (29...♗f8 30.♖c6 ♗g6+ 31.♙g4 ♖b8 32.h5 does not improve Black's situation.) 30.♗e5! ♗f8 (30...♗xe5 31.♙xe5±) 31.♖b7 f6 32.♗c6 ♗g6+ 33.♙g3 ♖d6 34.♖xb6 ♖e6 35.♖b8+ ♗f8 36.♖a8 ♖e1 37.♗d8 ♙h7 38.b6 ♖b1 39.b7 ♗d7 40.♖xa5 1-0 Petrosian,T (2640)—Portisch,L (2645) Palma de Mallorca 1974.

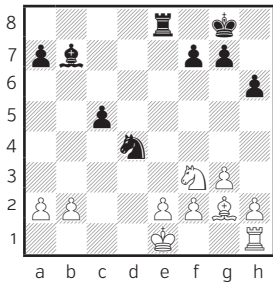
12. ♖c3!?



A very unusual rook lift (for such a standard QGD position). White's idea has a tactical element, combining the already existing c-file pressure with a timely ♖e3 threat (after developing his queen to a4). With the ♖e3 move White also breaks Black e-file pressure. The drawback of this 12. ♖c3!? Idea? It costs time by delaying the white kingside's development. It is interesting that this original idea from Yasser Seirawan did not find any followers (!). In my database all three games were played by Yasser himself. 12. ♙g2 is a common move here, seen in many top games.

12...♘a6

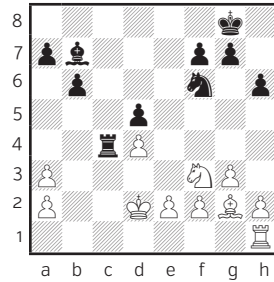
Direct central play with 12...c5, aiming to take advantage of White's delayed kingside development, looks perhaps the most principled response for Black and was played by another QGD connoisseur Efim Petrovich Geller: 13.dxc5 bxc5 (13...♘c6 14.cxb6 (14.♙g2? ♙a6♣) 14...♙b7 15.♙g2 axb6 (15...♙a6 16.0-o! ♙xe2 17.♚xd5±) 16.0-o±) 14.♚xd5 ♙b7 15.♚d2 ♘c6 16.♙e3 (16.♙g2 ♙ad8 17.♙e3! ♚f8 transposes to the game.) 16...♚f8 17.♙g2 ♙ad8 18.♙xe8 ♚xe8 19.♚e3 ♘d4 20.♚xe8+ ♙xe8



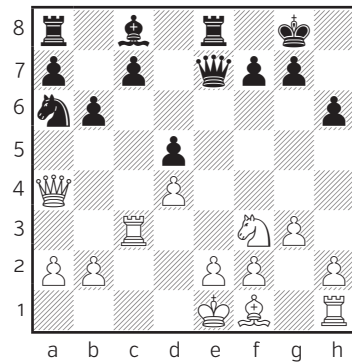
21.♙d1 (21.♘xd4 may be an improvement on the game: 21...♙xg2 22.♙g1 ♙d5 White seems (to me) to have a small advantage in this ending. 23.♘b3 (23.♘f5 ♙xa2 24.♙d2 ♙e6 25.♘e3↑) 23...♙b8 24.♙d2 c4 (24...♙xb3 25.axb3 ♙xb3 26.♙c2± This rook ending should be a draw, but it is definitely better to sit behind the white pieces here.) 25.♘c1 ♙xb2+ 26.♙c3↑) 21...♙d8 22.♘e1 ♙xg2 23.♘xg2 ♙b8 24.♙c1 (24.b3 c4=) 24...♘xe2+ 25.♙c2 ♘d4+= 1/2-1/2 Seirawan,Y (2600)—Geller, E (2575) Linares 1983;

12...♙b7 can lead to interesting complications: 13.♚a4 ♘d7! 14.♙xc7 ♙ac8 15.♙xc8 (15.♙xd7 ♙e4!-+) 15...

♙xc8 16.♙g2 ♙c1+ 17.♙d2 ♙c4 18.♚a3 ♚xa3 19.bxa3 ♘f6∞

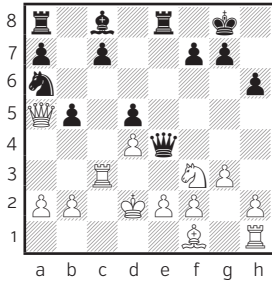


This is a tactically sharp ending; while the engine evaluation is around 0.00, to a human it simply looks like 'sharp play'. 20.♘e5 ♙xd4+ 21.♙c3 ♙a4 22.♙c1 ♙xa3+ 23.♙b2 ♙a5 24.♘xf7 (24.♙c7 ♙b5+ 25.♙a1 d4!♣) 24...♙b5+ 25.♙a1; 12...♙a6 13.♚a4 leads to some White plus, for example: 13...c6 14.♙e3 (14.e3!?) 14...♚d8 15.♙xe8+ ♚xe8 16.e3 ♙e4 17.♙xa6 ♚xf3 18.0-o ♘xa6 19.♚xa6±

13.♚a4**13...c5?**

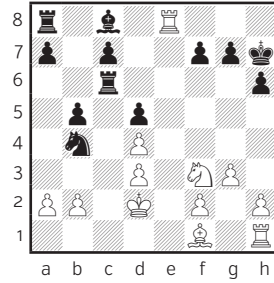
Facing a novel idea, Karpov goes for a tactical solution and definitely overlooks something in his calculations. 12.♙c3!? The idea will now (for

White) work to perfection! Facing the same position (against the same opponent!) for the second time, the 12th World Champion came better prepared and went for 13...b5! removing the white queen from the a4-e8 diagonal in order to, after 14. ♖a5, play actively (14. ♖xb5? ♜b8?) with 14... ♖e4! 15. ♔d2!



15... ♜e6

(15... ♖b1 can lead to complications resulting in a peaceful ending: 16. ♖xb5 c6 17. ♙g2 ♖xh1 (17... ♖xa2 18. ♖b3 ♖a5 19. ♖a3 ♖b5 20. ♗e5 ♜b8 21. ♜a1±) 18. ♖xc6 ♙d7 (18... ♖xg2?? 19. ♖xe8+ ♗h7 20. ♜xc8+-) 19. ♙xh1 ♙xc6 20. ♜xc6 ♗b4 21. ♜c5 ♗xa2 22. ♗e5 ♗b4 23. ♙xd5 ♗xd5 24. ♜xd5 ♜ed8= This ending should be a draw.) 16.b3? The move Yasser played in the actual game, but White simply does not have the time (here) for such a (positional) approach. Karpov takes advantage of White's tempo loss and swiftly develops a mating attack. (16. ♜e3! is definitely the move Yasser wanted to play when facing Geller a year later. Play is sharp and White has reasonable hopes for an advantage: 16... ♖b1 17. ♖a3 ♜c6 18. ♜e8+ ♗h7 19. ♖d3+ ♖xd3+ 20.exd3 ♗b4

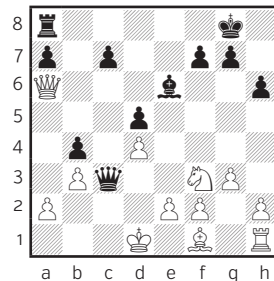


An unusual position with many ideas. I prefer White. 21.a3 (21. ♗e1 ♗xa2 22. ♗c2) 21... ♜c2+ 22. ♙e3 ♗c6 23.h4

a) 23. ♙g2 ♜xb2 24. ♜c1 ♙b7 25. ♜xa8 ♙xa8 26. ♙h3± (26. ♗h4 b4!) 26...b4 27.axb4 ♜xb4 28. ♙f5+ g6 29. ♙d7↑;

b) 23. ♙h3?! ♙xh3 24. ♜xa8 ♗e7±;

23... ♜b8 24. ♙e2 b4 (24... ♙e6 25. ♜xb8 ♗xb8 26. ♜b1±) 25.axb4 (25. ♙d1 ♜xb2 26. ♗g5+? hxg5 27.hxg5+ ♙g6 28.f4 ♙g4!-+; 25.a4 ♜xb2 26. ♜c1 b3! 27. ♜xc6?? ♜xe2+! 28. ♙xe2 b2-+) 25... ♗xb4 26. ♜b1↑) 16...b4 17. ♜e3 (17. ♜d3 c5-+) 17... ♖b1 18. ♜xe6 ♖b2+ 19. ♙d1 ♙xe6 20. ♖xa6 ♖a1+ 21. ♙d2 ♖c3+ 22. ♙d1

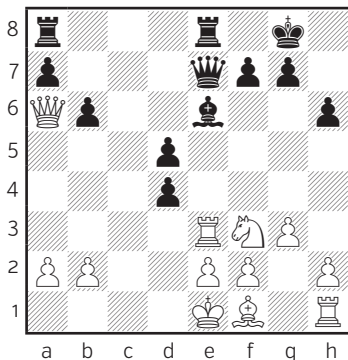


Obviously Black (here) wants more than a draw. 22... ♙f5! 23. ♗e1 ♜b8-+ Another rook lift brings the black rook to the c-file, aiding

the queen in attack and deciding the battle. 24. ♖xa7 (or 24.e3 ♖b6 25. ♖xa7 ♖c6-+) 24... ♖b6 25.e3 ♖c6 26. ♙c4 ♖a1+ 27. ♗e2 ♖b2+ 28. ♗d1 (28. ♗f1 ♙h3+ 29. ♗g1 ♖c3-+) 28... dxc4 29. ♖a8+ ♗h7 30. ♖xc6 c3 0-1 Seirawan, Y (2595)—Karpov, A (2700) Hamburg 1982;

An immediate 13... ♖e4? runs into a nice tactical refutation: 14. ♗d2! ♙d7 15. ♖xd7 ♖xh1 16. ♖a4!± and Black loses his knight on a6.

14. ♖e3! ♙e6 15. ♖xa6 cxd4



16. ♖b3!+-

White will evacuate his king and his material advantage will prove decisive.

16... ♙f5

16... ♖c5 17. ♖d3 ♙f5 18. ♖xd4 ♖a5+ 19. ♖d2 ♖xa2 20. ♗d4+-

17. ♙g2 ♙c2 18. ♗xd4 ♙xb3 19. ♗xb3

Black is running out of threats and White has a material advantage. Bringing his king to a 'safe place' will mean the game has been decided.

19... ♖ac8

19... ♖b4+ 20. ♗f1+-

20. ♙f3 ♖c2 21. 0-0 ♖xb2 22. ♖d1 ♖d8

23. ♗d4 ♖d7 24. ♗c6 ♖e8 25. ♗xa7

♖c7 26. a4 ♖a8 27. ♖xd5 ♖xa7

28. ♖d8+ ♗h7 29. ♖d3+ f5 30. ♖xf5+

g6 31. ♖e6 1-0

2

▷ V. Salov

▷ A. Karpov

Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee [7],
24.01.1998 [E15]

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗f3 b6 4.g3 ♙a6
5. ♗bd2

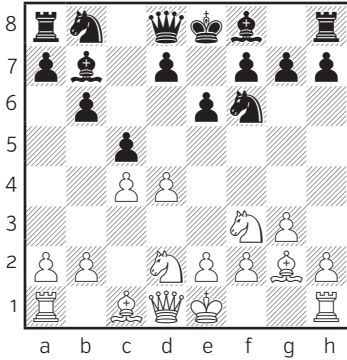
This development of the white knight leads to different strategic possibilities compared to standard (♗c3 development) positions.

In this game, the positions we will examine will be hedgehog-related. After I once lost (a terrible) game to Lembit Oll (mentioned later in the comments) and later analysing positions coming from this game (hedgehog-type play), I have formed the opinion that aiming for ...d5 — and (often) hanging pawns in the centre after subsequent Black ...c5 positions is Black's best. The reason is that the white knight developed on d2 (compared to ♗c3) is not pressuring Black's centre (compared to a ♗c3 hitting the central d5 square). This opinion, however, is personal and is a matter of taste.

5... ♖b7

5...d5 for example can (later) lead to 'hanging pawns in the centre'-type positions.

6. ♗g2 c5



Black is aiming for a hedgehog-type position and here we often get plenty of 'direct play' lines also. 6... ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 d5 9.cxd5 exd5 as seen in many games, leads to a strategically different kind of play, where White (as already mentioned above) needs to prove that his knight developed on d2 brings him advantages (again compared to the 'standard' ♖c3 development).

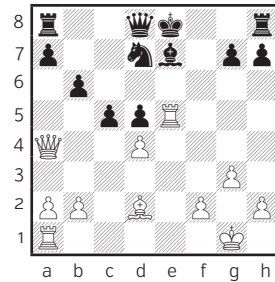
7.e4!

White wants to take advantage of Black's loss of time with 4... ♗a6 and then 5... ♗b7 and so opts for tactical-based, dynamic central play (aiming to take space).

7...cxd4

7... ♖xe4?? is a blunder and should lead to an opening disaster for Black: 8. ♖e5 d5 (8... ♖c3 loses a piece to

9. ♖h5 g6 10. ♖h3!+- ♖d5 11.cxd5 exd5 12.0-0 1-0 Oll,L (2600)—Guimaraes,J (2305) Oviedo 1992) 9.cxd5 exd5 (9... ♖xd2 10. ♖a4+ ♖d7 11. ♗xd2 ♗xd5 12. ♗xd5 exd5 13.0-0 with Black's king in the middle of the board, White has a winning advantage here. 13...f6 14. ♖fe1 fxe5 15. ♖xe5+ ♗e7



16. ♖ae1 (16. ♗g5? strangely enough, lets it slip 16...b5!= 17. ♖xb5 ♖b8 18. ♖c6 ♖b6 19. ♖a4 ♖b4 20. ♖c6 ♖b6 1/2-1/2 Goldin,A (2535)—Smirin,I (2490) Moscow 1989) 16...0-0 17. ♖xe7 ♖f6 18. ♗g5 ♖d6 19. ♖1e6+-) 10. ♖a4+ ♗e7 (10... ♖c6 11. ♖xe4+-; 10... ♖d7 11. ♖xe4 dxe4 12. ♗h3 is hopeless for Black as 12... ♗c8 loses to 13. ♖c6! ♖b8 14. ♖xf7!+-) 11. ♖xe4 dxe4 12.dxc5 ♖e8 (12... ♖d5 13. ♗f4 f5 14. ♗g5+ 1-0 Skytte,R (2416)—Nikcevic,N (2429) Budapest, 2014) 13.c6 ♖xc6 14. ♖xe4 ♖xe5 15. ♖xb7+ ♗f6 16.0-0 ♖b8 17. ♖e4 g6 18. ♖e1 ♗d6 19. ♖h4+ 1-0 Chernin,A (2605)—Podolchenko,E (2463) Ohrid 2009.

8.0-0!

Arguably the most challenging move for Black to face! White completes his development, maintaining the tension. 8.e5

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Volume 2
Opening meets Middlegame

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

| | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------|
| ! | a good move |
| ? | a weak move |
| !! | an excellent move |
| ?? | a blunder |
| !? | an interesting move |
| ?! | a dubious move |
| □ | only move |
| = | equality |
| ∞ | unclear position |
| ∞ | with compensation for the sacrificed material |
| ± | White stands slightly better |
| ∓ | Black stands slightly better |
| ± | White has a serious advantage |
| ∓ | Black has a serious advantage |
| +- | White has a decisive advantage |
| -+ | Black has a decisive advantage |
| → | with an attack |
| ↑ | with initiative |
| ↔ | with counterplay |
| △ | with the idea of |
| ▷ | better is |
| ≤ | worse is |
| N | novelty |
| + | check |
| # | mate |

PREFACE

In modern chess practice, the theory of the opening often stretches into the middlegame, sometimes quite deeply. When players choose particular opening variations, they are in essence deciding on the type of middlegame in which they would like to fight their opponents.

In this second volume of my “Chess Middlegame Strategies” series I have decided to focus on this connection between the opening and the middlegame. I have selected different themes from popular openings and examined the resulting middlegames, trying to offer a sort of user manual to guide readers through these middlegames. I have also offered some ideas on the theory of the different openings. The 30 games in this book cover a wide range of different middlegame types, so I hope there is something for everyone and that studying this book will enhance readers’ understanding of middlegame strategies.

Only one chapter in this book, “Knight Tales”, is not related to a particular opening. It concentrates on the middlegame theme of knights versus bishops. Originally I had planned to present much more pure middlegame material, but sometimes in the work process we adjust the original plan and, well... this book is the product!

Naturally I still have this pure middlegame material in my work database and I do not exclude the possibility that volume three may arrive around the end of 2018. Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy this book and the game selection.

Ivan Sokolov
November 2017

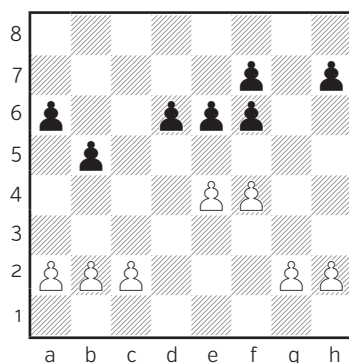
CHAPTER I. SICILIAN STRATEGIES

In modern chess, opening theory meets the middlegame. When choosing specific opening variations, players aim for particular types of middlegame positions in the hope of understanding these positions better than their opponents.

Opening preparation will not usually lead to a clear advantage for either side. If the computer evaluation of the early middlegame is not “0.00” then it will usually be no more than plus or minus “0.30” and the computer will say “=”. So knowing and understanding the typical plans and motifs in the chosen type of middlegame comes to the fore and will prove crucial in over-the-board play.

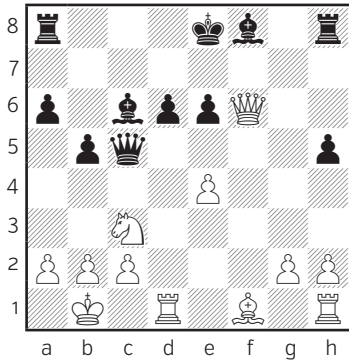
In this chapter I have selected a number of popular opening positions, hoping to help readers improve their understanding of such positions and ultimately become better players.

1.1. RAUZER IDEAS



Understanding this typical Sicilian Richter-Rauzer position is a must for any 1.e4 player, any Sicilian player and also any player keen to improve his or her general level. I have focused on dynamic decisions, in positions with an undefined or mobile pawn centre. Black has doubled f-pawns and potentially the more exposed king, but as compensation he has the advantage of the bishop pair.

I have selected five games trying to delve into the concepts involved in this complex position. Different ideas often combine with one another here. The material is divided into two parts.



The first three games of this Sicilian subchapter examine the ideas related to Black having his f6-pawn removed—in games one and three even by the means of a pawn sacrifice—so that Black’s dark-squared bishop can take over the a1-h8 diagonal. In games one and two Black has a mobile pawn centre, with the dark-squared bishop well placed on the long diagonal, and he castles queen-side. Tal achieved this position by sacrificing a pawn, while in Anand-Kramnik the material is equal.

Advice for White: exchange one of the black bishops! Black’s two bishops are superior to White’s knight plus bishop but once one of the black bishops is traded, Black’s initiative will diminish or vanish altogether.

Once the black king is safe (here on the queenside) Black is fine! White needs to be energetic and catch the black king in the centre, as in Kasparov-Hracek or Sengupta-Edouard. If White cannot embarrass the black

king, then opening up the position will only benefit the black bishop pair. In the Baron-Kozul game we see Black dominating in a pawn-down endgame! Endgames are generally good for Black here.

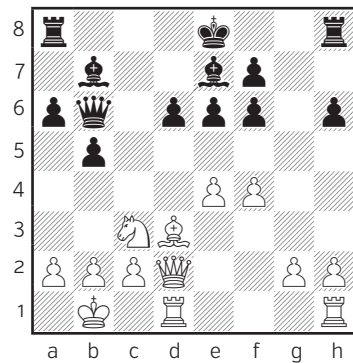
1

► J. Klovans

► M. Tal

Riga [9], 1981

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 ♗c6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♙d2 a6 8.o-o-o h6 9.♙e3 ♗xd4 10.♙xd4 b5 11.f3 ♙b7 12.♙b1 ♙e7 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♙d3 ♙b6 15.f4

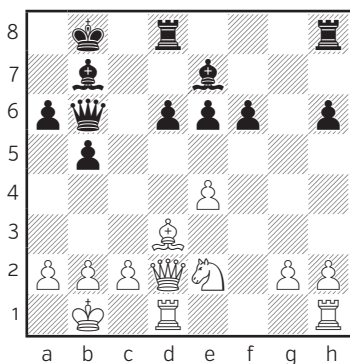


Through a slightly unusual move order we have reached a typical Richter-Rauzer Sicilian pawn structure. Opening theory is not our concern here so I will just mention that Black often keeps his king in the centre in these positions. Tal decides to castle queenside.

15...0-0-0 16.f5

White challenges Black to push ...e6-e5 and surrender the d5-square, a transaction which in this line is often less beneficial for White than may initially appear the case. Tal decides to keep his pawn structure flexible.

16...♔b8 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.♗e2



White plan's is clear. He wants to jump ♗e2-♗f4, hitting e6 and hoping to provoke ...e6-e5. Then he would aim to dominate the light squares, while the black bishop e7 would be badly placed in such a scenario. Tal decides to sacrifice a pawn in order to activate his dark-squared bishop and get his central pawns rolling forward. In a matter of just a couple of moves Black is to unleash the dynamic power of his bishop pair and his central rolling pawns, obtaining a winning attack. Tal's method is highly instructive and can be used in a number of similar positions.

18...f5!

The logical 18...d5, which is also the first choice of the computer engines, leads to a balanced game after 19.exd5 ♖xd5 20.♗he1. White threatens 21.♗f4.

(20.♗hf1 also looks about equal)

20...♗g5 21.g3 e5 22.♗c3 with unclear play. White will exchange the light-squared bishops, making the black king potentially vulnerable.

19.exf5 e5

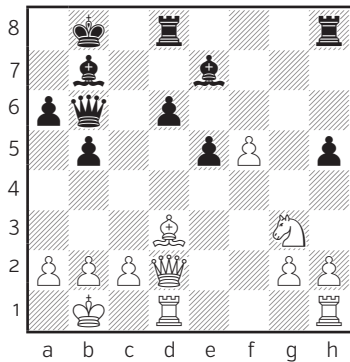
For the small price of just one pawn, Black has gained a rolling pawn centre and opened the h8-a1 diagonal for his dark-squared bishop. In such positions, for the defensive side (in this case White) it is clever to exchange one of the opponent's bishops as quickly as possible, as Anand did against Kramnik in our next game.

20.♗g3

The f6-square is a perfect spot for Black's bishop that is now on e7, so White hopes to prevent that move by placing his knight on h5.

20...h5!

White here underestimates the danger, losing a couple of important tempi to grab the irrelevant h-pawn.

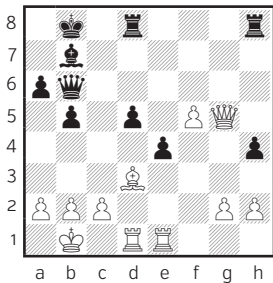


21. ♖e4?

As mentioned earlier, White needed to exchange one of Black's bishops, reducing the power of the enemy's initiative. For example: 21. ♖he1! h4 22. ♗e4 d5 23. ♗g5 Black is now forced to part with his bishop pair: 23... ♕xg5

(23...e4?! does keep the bishop pair, but also sacrifices an exchange: 24. ♗f7 ♖hg8 25. ♗xd8 ♕xd8 26. ♖f1 ♕f6 27. ♗h6 and Black does not have enough compensation for the sacrificed material.)

24. ♗xg5 e4



25. ♕e2

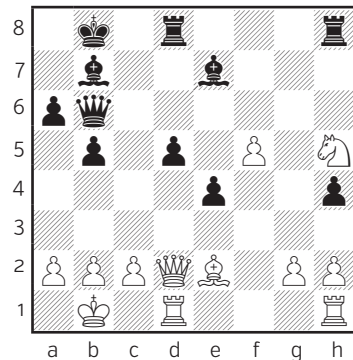
[25. ♕f1 ♖df8 (25...d4?! 26. ♖xe4! ♕xe4 27. ♗f4±)]

25... ♖hg8

(25... ♖df8 26. ♕g4±)

26. ♗xh4 ♖xg2 Black definitely has enough for his minimal material deficit, however the position is starting to simplify and a draw is becoming the likely result.

21...d5 22. ♕f3 h4 23. ♗h5 e4 24. ♕e2



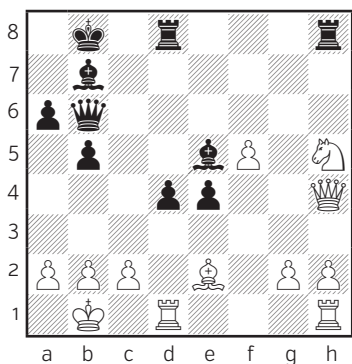
24...d4!

Black is getting a huge number of tempi for the price of that little pawn on h4!

25. ♗f4+ ♕d6 26. ♗xh4 ♕e5

It seems both sides got what they wanted. White has collected his pawn and is now two pawns up, Black has advanced his central pawns and placed his dark-squared

bishop on a perfect position. By grabbing the h-pawn White has placed his knight totally out of play and it will take quite some time and effort for the knight on h5 to enter the fray. White's king has been left without defenders. The attackers-defenders ratio favours Black, who is ready to push ...d3 opening the h8-a1 diagonal for his queen-and-bishop battery to deliver a deadly blow.



27. ♖hf1?!

White keeps neglecting his king position and gives Black a relatively easy kill. However, Black has too many attacking motifs and White simply does not have a good defence. For example, 27. ♕e7, trying to bring the queen to the aid of its king, does not help either: 27... ♖he8 28. ♕b4

(28. ♕a3 d3! 29. cxd3 ♕f2! 30. ♖g4 ♖xd3 31. ♖xd3 exd3-+ and Black wins in a few moves while white's knight on h5, bishop on g4 and

rook on h1 are all perfectly misplaced)

28...d3! 29.cxd3 a5! 30. ♕d2

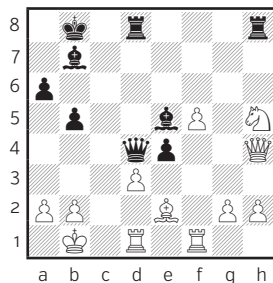
(30. ♕e1 exd3 31. ♖xd3 ♖xb2-+)

30...e3 31. ♕e1 ♖d4! and Black wins with a mating attack. Again, pay attention to the misplaced knight on h5.

27... ♕c5-+

Sensing that his opponent has no counter-play Tal takes his time in finishing things off. The threat is 28...d3 29.cxd3 ♕b4.

The immediate 27...d3 28.cxd3 ♕d4



was also winning as after 29. ♖d2 Black has plenty of time to bring his remaining forces into the attack: 29... ♖c8 30. ♖fd1 ♖d5 31. a3 ♖c7 32.dxe4

(32.f6 ♖hc8 33.dxe4 ♕xd2-+)

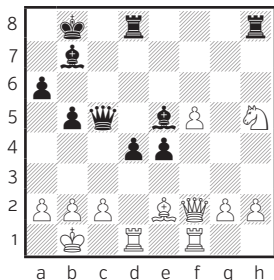
32... ♖xe4+ 33. ♖a1

(33. ♖a2 ♕d5+-+)

33... ♖c1+-+.

28. ♖c1

28. ♖f2



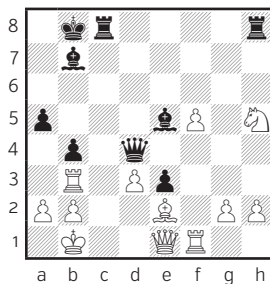
loses to 28...e3! 29. ♖e1. Black probably has several ways to win this, but the following line nicely illustrates the domination of the black bishop pair and White's helplessness.

(29. ♖h4 d3! 30. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 31. ♕xd3 — or 31.cxd3 ♖c8 — 31... ♖xh5 32. ♖xh5 ♖d4+-+)

29...d3 30.cxd3

(30. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 31. ♕xd3 and the greedy knight on h5 comes to a sticky end: 31... ♖xh5+-+)

30... ♖c8 31. ♖c1 ♖d4 32. ♖c3 b4 33. ♖b3 a5! The full triumph of Black's strategy that started with 18...f5! and made maximum use of the h8-a1 diagonal. Not having any counter-play, White is tied to an electric chair waiting for the execution!



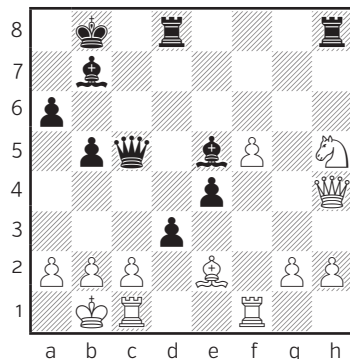
34.a3

(or 34. ♕f3 ♖xh5! Black keeps his bishops pair! 35. ♕xh5 ♕d5 36. ♖e2 a4+-+)

34... ♕d5 35. ♖d1 and now Black has enough time to bring his rook into the attack and decide the battle. 35... ♖h7+-+ Black's queen-bishop battery is still operating at full force. 36.f6 Pushing the f-pawn is White only counter-play. 36... ♖hc7 37.f7 ♕xb3 38. ♖xb3 ♖c2 39. ♖xc2 ♖xc2 40.f8 ♖+ ♖c8 41. ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 42. ♖c1+ ♕d8 43. ♖c2 b3 44. ♖c3 ♖h4+-+.

28...d3!

The queen-bishop battery decides.



29.cxd3 ♖d4 30.♙c3 b4 31.♙b3 ♗d5
0-1

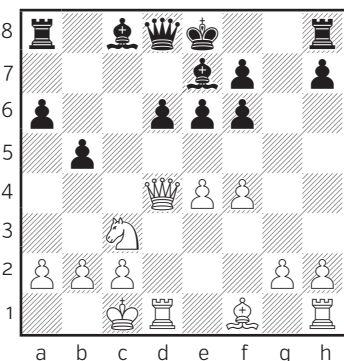
2

▷ V. Anand

▶ V. Kramnik

Wijk aan Zee [4], 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
♗f6 5.♗c3 ♗c6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♙d2 a6
8.o-o-o ♘xd4 9.♙xd4 ♙e7 10.f4
b5 11.♙xf6 gxf6



A typical Richter-Rauzer pawn structure. Once upon a time, this was a pet-line of Kramnik when playing Black. Understanding the dynamics of these positions helps players to understand other similar Sicilian positions. White is ahead in development and eager to open files towards the black king. To execute this strategy White often has to be ready to sacrifice material. Black is banking on his bishop pair, should the position open up.

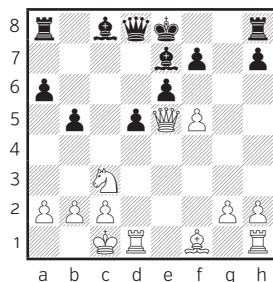
12.e5!?

Direct and radical! We will see a similar decision in Geller-Larsen later in this chapter.

12...d5 13.♙b1

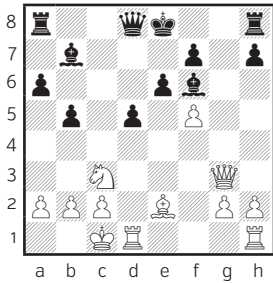
This feels a bit timid...

a) 13.f5 looks more consequent, leading to a dynamic balance: 13...fxe5 14.♙xe5

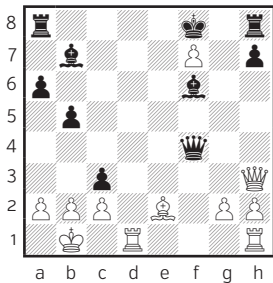


14...o-o (Black cannot play 14...♙f6 15.♙g3 ♙b7 because White did not waste time on 13.♙b1 and is now faster: 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♙e2→.) 15.♘e4 f6 16.♙g3+ ♙h8 17.fxe6 ♙xe6∞.

b) Improving the bishop with 13.♙e2 before opening the centre is probably a critical idea for assessing this position: 13...♙b7 14.f5! fxe5 15.♙xe5 ♙f6 16.♙g3. Now with the white bishop already developed on e2, Black cannot allow fxe6 so easily as in Kramnik's game, as ♙h5+ will be coming.



16...♖b8 17.♗h3! Keeping the queens on the board is here a consequent decision, involving a piece sacrifice. For such decisions a player needs a brave heart and a good feeling for the initiative, or superb preparation! (17. *fxe6* leads to an ending that is fine for Black: 17...♗xg3 18. *exf7+* ♔f8 19. *hxc3* d4 20. ♖b1 ♕xg2=) Now 17...d4 effectively forces White to sacrifice a piece. [After 17...b4 Black probably did not like 18. ♖a4 (The piece sacrifice played in the game, 18. *fxe6*, is now less effective for White because the d-file is not open: 18...♗f4+ 19. ♔b1 *bxc3*.) 18... ♕c6 19. ♖c5 and White has good attacking prospects.] 18. *fxe6!* ♗f4+ 19. ♔b1 *dxc3* 20. *exf7+* ♔f8

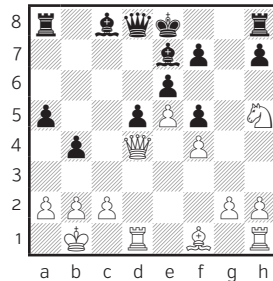


21. a3! A surprisingly calm move, eliminating the ...♗b4 threat. The black monarch cannot find shelter, while White develops a winning attack. Computer engines support this evaluation. It is interesting that even without knights on the board Black still does not have a suitable defence! 21...h5 22. ♖hf1 ♗e5 23. ♕d3 ♗g5 24. ♗d7+ ♕xg2 25. ♖de1 ♕e7 26. ♖f5 ♗h4 (26... ♕h3 27. ♗e8+ ♖xe8 28. *fxe8* ♗+ ♕xe8 29. ♖xg5+-) 27. ♖fe5 ♖d8 28. ♗c7 ♖xd3 29. *cx*d3 1-0 Sengupta,D (2558)-Edouard,R (2636) Hastings 2011.

13... ♕b7

As in Sengupta-Edouard above, Black is in a hurry to catch up in development.

13...b4 actually chases the white knight away to a good square: 14. ♖e2 a5 15. ♖g3 f5 16. ♖h5



A white knight is almost always well placed on h5 in those positions! Kasparov,G (2785)-Hracek,Z (2625), Yerevan 1996, continued 16... ♖b8

CHESS MIDDLEGAME STRATEGIES

**Volume 3
Strategy Meets Dynamics**

by

Ivan Sokolov



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KEY TO SYMBOLS

| | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------|
| ! | a good move |
| ? | a weak move |
| !! | an excellent move |
| ?? | a blunder |
| !? | an interesting move |
| ?! | a dubious move |
| □ | only move |
| = | equality |
| ∞ | unclear position |
| ∞ | with compensation for the sacrificed material |
| ± | White stands slightly better |
| ∓ | Black stands slightly better |
| ± | White has a serious advantage |
| ∓ | Black has a serious advantage |
| +- | White has a decisive advantage |
| -+ | Black has a decisive advantage |
| → | with an attack |
| ↑ | with initiative |
| ↔ | with counterplay |
| △ | with the idea of |
| ▷ | better is |
| ≤ | worse is |
| N | novelty |
| + | check |
| # | mate |

PREFACE

Dear reader,

The book you are now holding is my third and final in the series on “Chess Middlegame Strategies.” In this book I have taken strategic themes from specific openings and combined these with standard strategies such as the open file, space or flexibility. Indeed, the subtitle for this book is “Strategy Meets Dynamics” and that is a good definition of what this book is about.

The book contains 43 annotated games divided among seven chapters. Within these pages you will find strategic plans related to typical pawn structures arising from the Geller/Tolush Gambit or the Anti-Moscow Gambit. By taking the time to study those chapters you should come away with a deeper understanding of the subtle nuances in pawn structures and the dynamics that arise. In addition, you will learn different strategic/dynamic ideas and this will strengthen your practical play in such positions.

The chapter on ‘Karpov’s King in the Center’ is where you will be surprised at how often the 12th World Champion, playing Black no less, deliberately gave up the right to castle. Not only will you gain perspective on when you might wish to leave your king uncastled you will also see how Karpov arranges his pieces so that each move is in harmony with those before and after the king move. Lastly you will improve your knowledge, from both sides of the board, of this particular variation of the Caro-Kann.

The open file theme is one that has been written on extensively. What I have tried to do here is show some modern approaches to this concept.

Perhaps the one dynamic theme that often amazes players is the exchange sacrifice. I have included no less than 11 annotated games in this chapter sorted by the different objectives that the player is trying to accomplish. There is plenty of knowledge to be absorbed by studying these games.

Finally, the work concludes with the daring, some may even say swashbuckling, aggressive g-pawn push! This aggressive move is used as a means to seize

the initiative. I have laid this chapter out based upon opening variations and you may find it useful as opening preparation as well as ideas for dynamic play.

My aim in this book, as well as its two predecessors, is not only to help you improve your middlegame understanding but to give you new and different ideas/concepts to employ in your own play.

In addition to the chess improvement that is offered I also hope that you will simply enjoy playing over the selected games.

Ivan Sokolov
Lelystad, Netherlands, August 7th, 2019

CHAPTER I. KARPOV'S KING IN THE CENTER

Anatoly Karpov was the 12th World Champion. His reign lasted from 1975–1985 and then from 1993–1999 during the split championship period. With a peak Elo rating of 2780 and 102 months as the number one rated player in the world we can learn a thing or two from him. His classical style, endgame technique, deep understanding of positions and harmonious piece play is something one can wish to emulate.

At some time around 1993 he came up with an idea which I will paraphrase as “Castling is overrated”!

Competing in the Dortmund super tournament in 1993 Karpov introduced an idea whereby he connected his rooks and made an immediate threat against the opponent. Karpov was playing none other than Gata Kamsky who had challenged him for the world champion's crown in an 18-game match held in Elista (Kalmykia) in 1996. Karpov won the 20 game match and retained his title with a score of 10.5–7.5 (+6=9–3). By the time of the Dortmund meeting both players knew each other's style quite well.

As with all chess games nothing is one-sided. While Karpov did connect his rooks, Kamsky responded with a principled knight move which included sacrificing a pawn. As a result he was able to remove Karpov's dark-squared bishop in the transaction gaining counterplay against the black king.

A careful analysis of the following games will reveal how White players try to restrict Black from castling with either ♔g4 or ♕h4 only to be caught off guard when they suddenly realize that their queen may be trapped and they must surrender several tempos to relocate the queen.

The first four games, with further Karpov games given in the notes, come from Karpov's favorite Caro-Kann variation. Thanks to Karpov this variation was very popular back in the 1990s when masters contemplated positions instead of switching on an analysis engine. I was very skeptical of this concept when Dutch GM Jan Timman first showed it to me during an analysis session. After additional reflection

on how many times my own queen (placed on either g4 or h4) became a target and how difficult it was to really attack Black's seemingly exposed king I began to warm to this idea.

Game five shows Karpov applying the same idea in the Queens Indian while game six shows Vishy Anand connecting his rooks, by applying 'Karpov's King in Center' idea while scoring an important win in his 2008 World Championship match versus Vladimir Kramnik.

A few important observations:

- Karpov's king in the center is safer than it looks.
- White players beware! White's queen hastily brought to g4 or h4 can easily become a target!
- Karpov's idea can easily be applied in similar positions.

I hope you enjoy the chosen games that illustrate this concept.

- Kamsky-Karpov, 1993
- Shirov-Karpov, 2001
- Shirov-Karpov, 2002
- Topalov-Karpov, 1997
- Portisch-Karpov, 1996
- Kramnik-Anand, 2008

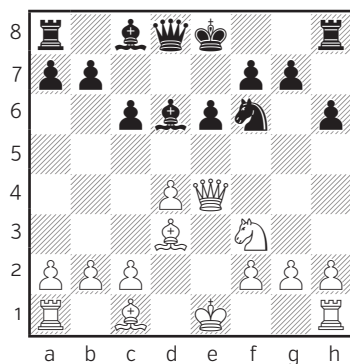
1

► G. Kamsky

► A. Karpov

Dortmund 1993

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. ♘d2 dxe4 4. ♘xe4
 ♘d7 5. ♘g5 ♘gf6 6. ♙d3 e6 7. ♘1f3
 ♙d6 8. ♚e2 h6 9. ♘e4 ♘xe4
 10. ♚xe4 ♘f6



This pawn structure gives White more space for the time being while Black will seek to liberate his game by pushing his pawn from c6 to c5. White seeks to restrict Black's development and places his queen on a seemingly aggressive square.

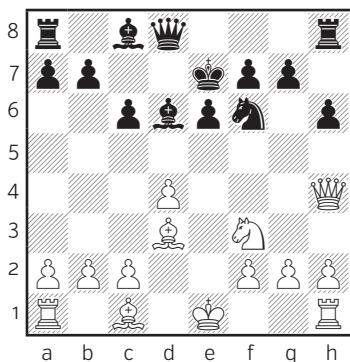
11. ♚h4

After this game 11. ♚e2 became the main line for White.

It looks as if Black will have problems bringing his king to safety. Should he castle kingside he runs

the risk of a strong attack by White which may end up in checkmate for the black king. The idea of castling queenside is simply not attractive. Karpov comes up with an ingenious concept.

11... ♖e7!



Black keeps his king in the center creating the threat of 12...g5! White's aggressively placed queen is now a liability.

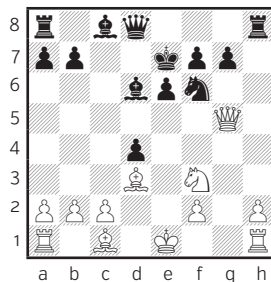
Black's king, although looking a bit strange on e7, is quite safe. Realizing what Black is up to Kamsky takes a pragmatic approach.

12. ♗e5!

White sacrifices a pawn in order to win Black's bishop pair, gain a lead in development and try to target the black king.

a) 12.g4? looks rather reckless and plays into Black's hands 12...c5! (12...

g5 13. ♖h3 c5 also looks good for Black.) 13.g5 hxg5 14. ♖xg5 cxd4.



White is already in serious trouble 15. ♗d2?! (If White is pawn grabbing he should do it at once with 15. ♖xg7 although Black has a better game after 15... ♗g8 16. ♖h6 ♖a5+ 17. ♖e2 ♗d7 18. ♗g5 ♗e5±.) 15... ♗d7 16. ♖xg7 ♗g8 17. ♖h6 ♗c6 18. ♖e2 ♖c7± Black had a large advantage in De Firmian,N (2590)-Epishin,V (2635) Newark 1995.

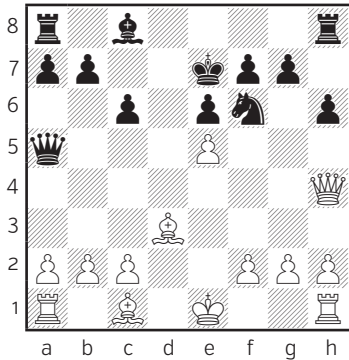
b) A relatively calm solution for White was 12. ♗f4 when Black gets an equal game after 12... ♗b4+ 13. ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 14. ♖xd2 (14. ♗xd2?! looks like a dubious pawn sacrifice 14...g5 15. ♖g3 ♖xd4±) 14... ♖a5+ 15.c3 c5=.

12... ♗xe5!

Karpov correctly judges that the pawn sacrifice must be accepted.

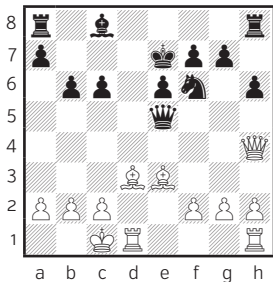
If 12...g5 White plays 13. ♖g3 and has a comfortable initiative.

13.dxe5 ♖a5+

**14.C3**

White's pawn on c3 will later limit his queen's mobility thus he might have been better off leaving it on c2.

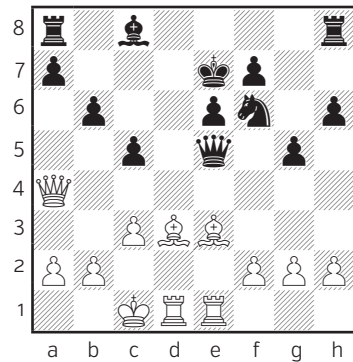
14. ♖d2!? may be an improvement on Kamsky's play. 14... ♗xe5+ 15. ♖e3 b6 (15... ♗xb2 looks rather risky for Black as White obtains strong counter play via 16. ♖c5+ ♔e8 17. 0-0 or 16. 0-0.) 16. 0-0-0



16... g5 (16... ♗d8 17. ♗he1 ♗a5 18. a3 with good compensation for the sacrificed pawn in Golubev, M (2492)-Drozdoskij, Y (2627) Odessa 2010.) 17. ♗a4 c5 with this pawn still on c2 White's queen, once placed on a3, would have more mobility and the

position may be an improvement over the game.

14... ♗xe5+ 15. ♖e3 b6 16. 0-0-0 g5
17. ♗a4 c5 18. ♗he1

**18... ♖d7**

When computers first started playing chess they were materialistic and would not hesitate to grab a pawn. In this position such pawn grabbing would be bad for Black after 18... ♗xh2?! White gets a strong attack with 19. g3 ♗g2 20. b4!→.

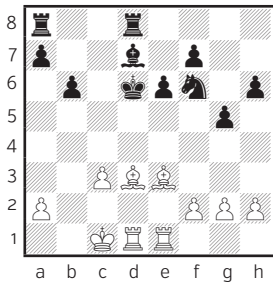
19. ♗a3

There is no immediate threat against the queen so Black continues his development.

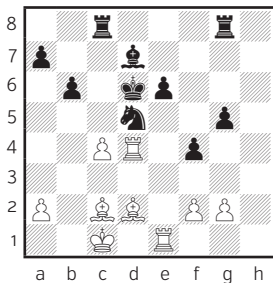
19... ♗hd8 20. g3

Here White had an interesting possibility with 20. b4!?. The threat is ♖e3xc5 which forces 20... cxb4 21. ♗xb4+ ♗d6 (21... ♔e8??

22. ♖xb6+-) 22. ♔xd6+ ♕xd6 resulting in the following position.



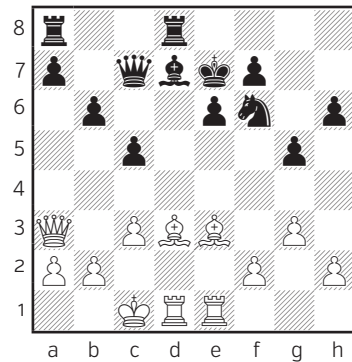
Although it is White to move, he does not have a deadly discovered check. This is likely a position of 'dynamic balance' where play may continue 23. ♖e4+ ♗d5 24. h4 ♖g8 25. hxg5 hxg5 26. c4 ♖ac8 27. ♗d4 f5 28. ♖c2!? (28. ♖xd5 exd5 29. ♖xd5+ ♕c7= leads to a draw) 28...f4 29. ♖d2.



Now Black must march with his king! 29... ♕c5! 30. ♗de4 ♗f6 31. ♗e5+ now Black can retreat with 31... ♕d6. (Black's other option is to choose to be 'brave' or 'greedy': 31... ♕xc4 32. ♖b3+ ♕d4+ 33. ♕b2 and the computer says this position is "0.00" but it looks like a mess to human eyes.) 32. ♖b4+ ♕c7= White has compensation for his sacrificed pawn but not more.

Now Black's queen needs to move.

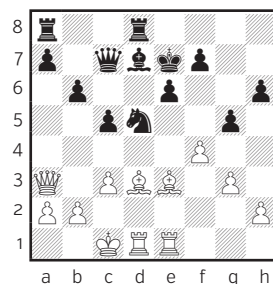
20... ♕c7



White has enough compensation here but needs to open lines toward the black king by removing the pawns which shield the king. White's queen on a3 is out of play and can only be useful if White manages to either push b2-b4 or use the a3-f8 diagonal pin to place his bishop on d4. Kamsky tries to make use of the pin.

21. ♖d4

21.f4 Trying to immediately open the position looks like another logical try. After 21... ♗d5



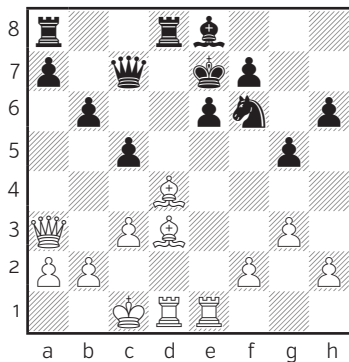
22. ♕d4! looks like the critical line here.

a) 22. ♕d2 is artificial: 22...gxf4 23.c4 ♖e3 24. ♕xe3 fxe3 25. ♕c2 ♕c6 26. ♖xe3 ♗xd1+ 27. ♗xd1, now Black can be ambitious with 27... ♗g8 (27... ♗d8 is easy equality) 28. ♖xh6 ♖e5. With his centralized queen, only Black can be better here.

b) 22. fxg5 ♖xe3 23. ♗xe3 hxg5 and the engine gives around 0.00 but it is obvious that White is trying to keep the balance here.

22...f6 is very sharp. The engines give many 0.00 variations, but it is easy for a human to go wrong in such complex situations.

21... ♕e8!



21... ♕c6? is a mistake due to 22. ♕e5 ♖d7 (22... ♖b7?? drops the queen to 23. ♕a6+-) 23.b4! now the black

pawn defense crumbles leading to a big advantage for White.

22. ♖b1

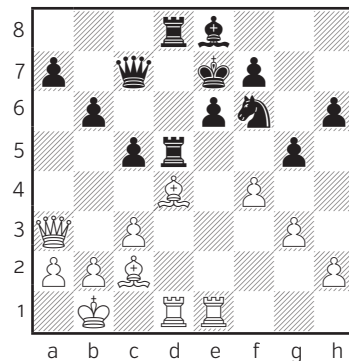
22. ♕e5 does not bring anything to White after 22... ♖c6.

22... ♗d5

Karpov goes for the most logical plan. He doubles his rooks on the d-file planning to exchange them (starting to force exchanges in general) — a good plan when you are a pawn up.

The engine is witty enough to point out that 22... ♕c6!? now works with White's king on b1. A repetition of position occurs after 23. ♕e5 ♖b7 24. ♕a6 ♕e4+ 25. ♖a1 ♖c6 26.c4 ♖g4 27. ♕b5 ♖b7 28. ♕a6. Karpov may well have seen this but he is up material and not happy with a draw.

23.f4 ♗ad8 24. ♕c2



Now Karpov wants White to make a decision regarding his d4-bishop.

24... ♖5d6

This move forces a few trades.

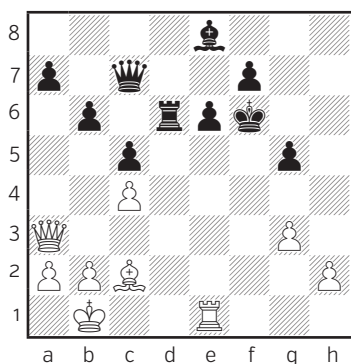
24... ♖c6!? was a good alternative since after 25.fxg5 hxg5 White lacks a clear plan of attack and after the natural 26. ♖f1 ♘g4 the advantage goes to Black.

25. ♗xf6+

White gives up his bishop pair but gains some threats against the black king.

25. ♗e5 ♖xd1+ 26. ♗xd1 ♔d7 looks better for Black.

25... ♖xf6 26.fxg5+ hxg5 27. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 28.c4



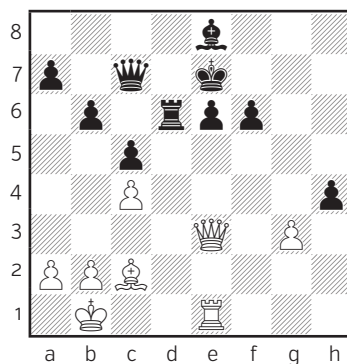
Opening the third rank to the white queen. Black has traded quite a few

pieces, but his king is now somewhat exposed. The position is one of dynamic balance.

28... ♔e7

28... ♔g7 was probably safer 29. ♖e3 f6 (29... ♖d8!? leads to an unclear position after 30. ♖e5+ f6 31. ♖e4.) 30.h4 ♗g6 31. ♗xg6 ♔xg6 32.hxg5 ♖d7 a draw is the most likely result after 33. ♖f3 e5 34. ♖h1 ♖f5+ 35. ♖xf5+ ♔xf5=.

29. ♖e3 f6 30.h4 gxh4



31.gxh4

31. ♖h6?? is a blunder because Black's king runs to safety on the queenside 31...hxg3 32. ♖g7+ ♔d8 33. ♖xf6+ ♔c8.

Once again, the silicon brain says the position is easy 'o.oo'. To humans those positions are difficult to play, and we are now going to see

several big mistakes. Even for great players it is easy to err in complex positions.

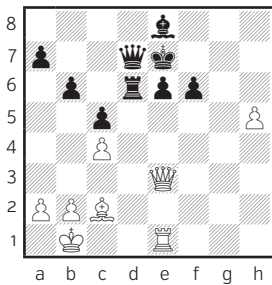
31... ♖d7

a) 31... ♔d8? running to the queen-side does not work for Black due to simple 32. ♕f3.

b) 31... ♗f7 can lead to a draw by 32. h5 ♗xh5 33. ♖h1 Black now needs to find the tactical defense: 33... ♗d7! 34. a3 ♗e8 35. ♖g1 ♗f8 36. ♖h1 ♗e8=.

32. ♗h6

a) 32. h5? is a blunder here as after

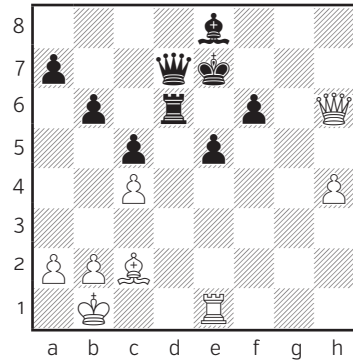


32... ♗xh5 33. ♖h1 Black is a tempo up compared to our 31... ♗f7 line and White does not have a threat. 33... e5

b) 32. a3!?∞ is a computer engine proposal. White has now removed all of Black's back rank ♖d1+ motifs and White has, due to Black's unsafe king, good compensation for his sacrificed pawn. As a reminder

this might be an easy 0.00 position to the computer but to humans this is very unclear and easy for either side to win or lose.

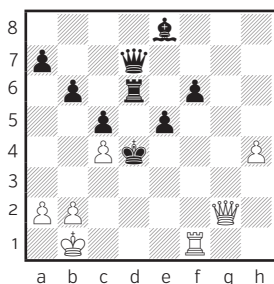
32... e5



33. h5?!

Kamsky correctly understood his h-pawn to be a 'power' here but this move is not precise.

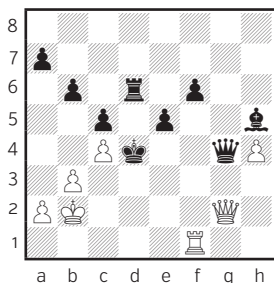
33. ♗g7+ was White's best and after 33... ♔e6! (33... ♗f7 34. h5; or 33... ♔d8 34. ♗h8 both look very risky for Black as White's h-pawn is very strong.) White can make an entertaining draw with 34. ♗f5+ (34. ♗g4+ ♔e7 is a move repetition, since 35. ♗f5? loses to a nice tactical shot due to his back rank problems: 35... ♗g6!-+) 34... ♔xf5 35. ♖f1+ ♔e4 36. ♗g2+ ♔d4. Black's king is his most active piece but considering the long-term prospects White should be happy with a draw.



37.b3! (37.♖d1+?? ♔xc4-+.) Now Black has several possibilities, but all of them lead to no more than a draw. 37...♙h5 is the riskiest choice.

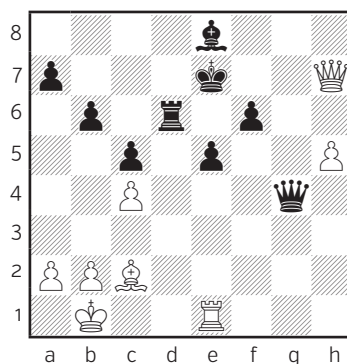
[37...♔c3 38.♚g3+! ♜d3 (38...♔b4 39.♚e1+ ♔a3 40.♚c1+=) 39.♚e1+ ♔d4 (39...♜d2?? 40.♜f3+ ♔b4 41.♔c1+-) 40.♚f2+ ♔c3=]

38.♔b2 now it is Black who must find the only move to draw: 38...♚g4!



39.♚f2+ ♔d3 40.♚c2+ ♔e3 41.♜e1+ ♔f3 42.♜f1+ (42.♚e2+ going for the black queen does not make much sense for White as only Black can be better after 42...♔g3 43.♜g1+ ♔xh4 44.♜xg4+ ♔xg4=.) 42...♔e3=.

33...♚g4! 34.♚h7+



In the heat of the battle Karpov makes a losing blunder!

34...♔d8?

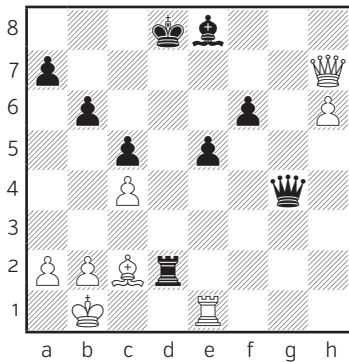
Karpov's desire to bring his king closer to safety on the queenside is easy to understand. However, White's h-pawn is now terribly strong and fast.

34...♔f7! was winning for Black as White must deal with his back-rank problems. The pride of White's position, the h6 pawn, will either be removed or stopped as 35.♜h1 is forced.

[35.h6 ♚xc4! 36.b3 (36.♔b3 ♚d3+ 37.♚xd3 ♜xd3 38.♜h1 ♜d8-+) 36... ♚g4 37.♜h1 ♜d8-+]

35...♚f3! (35...♚xc4 36.b3 ♚e2 37.♔g6 ♜d1+ 38.♜xd1 ♚xd1+ 39.♔b2 ♚d2+=) 36.♜g1 ♚xh5-+

35. h6!+- ♖d2



36. ♖f5?

36. ♖h8!+- pinning Black's bishop and promoting the h-pawn was easily winning for White. After 36... ♖e7 (36... ♖xc2 37. ♖xc2 ♖xc4+ 38. ♖b1+- and White will queen his h-pawn.) 37. h7 ♖h2 38. ♖f1 ♖g5 39. ♖g8 ♖h6 40. ♖e4 the threat of h-pawn promotion has tied up Black's queen and rook and now after 40... ♖h4 41. ♖g1+- the weak position of Black's king proves decisive.

36... ♖xf5?

Being a pawn up and having a weak king (and likely little time on clock) Karpov decides a queen swap makes sense. True...in general it does...but now White's h-pawn is impossible to stop!

36... ♖h4! saved the game. After 37. ♖e4 ♖xh6 38. ♖a8+ ♖e7 39. ♖xa7+ ♖d7 40. ♖xb6 ♖g6 41. ♖xc5+ ♖f7.

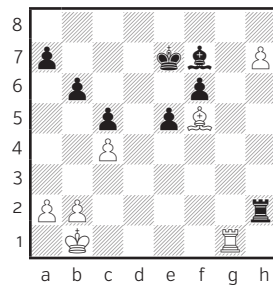
Although a pawn down Black is not worse thanks to his passed e-pawn e.g. 42. ♖xg6+ ♖xg6+ 43. ♖a1 ♖c2 44. a3 ♖d1+ 45. ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 46. ♖a2 e4=.

37. ♖xf5

Securing the advance of the h-pawn, this ending is lost for Black.

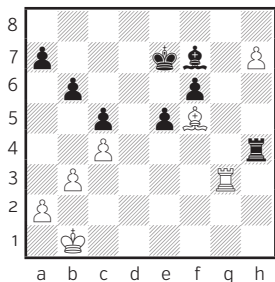
37... ♖d7

37... ♖h2 offered more resistance but not enough to change the outcome after 38. h7 ♖e7 39. ♖g1 ♖f7.

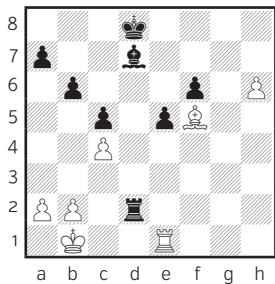


Now White needs to be clever and win a tempo. The correct move is 40. ♖g7!! (40. ♖g8 allows Black to draw by building a fortress 40... ♖xh7 41. ♖xh7 ♖xg8 42. ♖xg8 f5; Another error would be 40. ♖g3? due to the bad position of the white king Black replies with 40... ♖e6-+) 40... ♖f8 41. ♖g3! when ♖h4 is arguably the best defense but it does not help. (41... ♖e7 now loses immediately because White improves his king with 42. ♖c1! and his h-pawn queens with the help of ♖h3 or ♖h3: 42... ♖e6

43. ♖h3 or 42... ♜h4 43. ♜h3 or 42... ♖f8 43. ♖h3.) 42.b3 ♖e7



White will now improve his king position to the point where the bishop against two pawns ending does not allow Black the previous fortress. 43. ♖b2 ♖f8 (43... ♖e6 always loses to 44. ♜h3.) 44. ♖c3 Black is doomed to only making rook moves 44... ♜h6 (44... ♖e7 45. ♜h3-+) 45. ♜d3! ♖g7 46. ♜d7 ♜h5 47. ♖e6 ♜xh7 48. ♜xf7+ ♖g6 49. ♜xh7 ♖xh7 50. ♖d3 ♖g6 51. ♖e4+-.



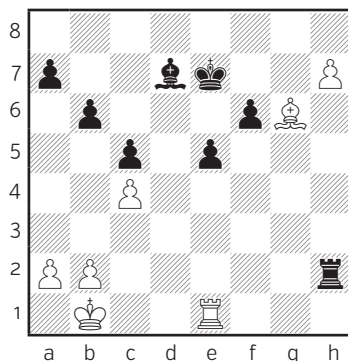
Most likely in time trouble Kamsky makes a terrible blunder!

38. ♖g6??

38. ♖c1! was winning on the spot. After 38... ♜d4 39. ♖e4! the h-pawn

queens 39... ♜xc4+ 40. ♖d2 ♜d4+ 41. ♖c3+-.

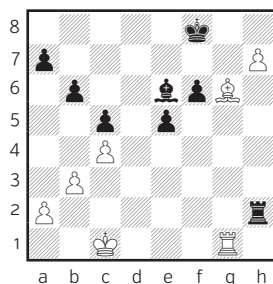
38... ♜h2 39.h7 ♖e7



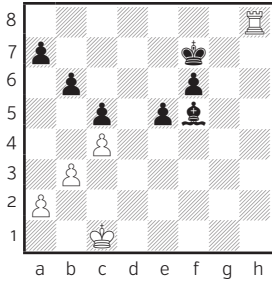
The last move before the time control often turns out to be 'the fatal one'!

40. ♖d3?

A losing blunder. 40. ♜g1 was still drawing after 40... ♖e6 (40...f5?! allows White to promote his pawn and could only bring Black trouble after 41. ♜g5! ♖f6 42. ♖h5 and now Black has to look for a 'study like' solution 42... ♖xg5 43.h8 ♜ ♜h1+ 44. ♖c2 ♖c6! hoping to make a draw.) 41.b3 ♖f8 42. ♖c1



Black is still the one who needs to be precise to reach a draw: 42...♔g7! 43.♙f5+ ♚f7 44.♙g6+ ♚g7 45.♙f5+ ♚f7. White can attempt to win with 46.♖g8 ♙xf5 47.h8♔ ♖xh8 48.♖xh4 reaching the following position.



Black's passed connected pawns provide enough counter play to hold the balance 48...♙g4 49.♖a8 f5 50.♖xa7+ ♚f6 51.♖a6 f4 52.♖xb6+ ♚f5 53.♖b8 e4 54.a4 e3 55.♚c2 (55. a5?? f3-+) 55...♚e4 56.♖e8+ ♚d4 57.♖d8+ ♚e4 58.♖e8+=.

40...♙e6-+

40...f5 was also an easy win: 41.♖xe5+ ♚f6 42.♖d5 ♖xh7-+.

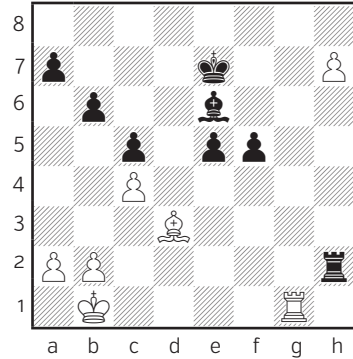
41.♖g1

41.♙g6 does not help as White's h-pawn eventually falls to 41...f5 42.♖xe5 ♚f6 43.♖e1 ♙d7 44.♖d1 ♚xg6 45.♖d6+ ♚xh7 46.♖xd7+ ♚g6 47.♖xa7 f4-+.

41...f5-+

The rest of the game does not need comments. Black's pawns simply

roll, and White cannot create any counter threats.



42.♖g7+ ♚f6 43.♖xa7 e4 44.♙e2 f4 45.b3 f3 46.♙d1 ♙f5 47.♚c1 ♙xh7 48.♖b7 ♚e5 49.♖xb6 ♖xa2 o-1

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► A. Shirov
► A. Karpov
Linares 2001

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♖c3 dxe4 4.♗xe4 ♗d7 5.♗g5 ♗g6 6.♙d3 e6 7.♗1f3 ♙d6 8.♚e2 h6 9.♗e4 ♗xe4 10.♚xe4

