

## **Foreword**

I often thought about writing a book to analyze my best games and talk about my greatest victories. But either I didn't have time, or I kept thinking that the best games were yet to come...

Well, it looks like I've been beaten to it – but this is no cause for regret on my part! I looked at the games that Sarhan Guliev selected and analyzed and I took great pleasure in recalling the very beginning of my professional career, victories that I'd even forgotten. I feel that my style of play has always been the same – I won most of my games through active play.

I hope that readers will enjoy this book. It only remains for me to say a huge 'thank you' to Grandmaster Guliev for his captivating analysis of my games and, of course, to those people who have placed me on the same pedestal as great masters Alekhine and Capablanca, Korchnoi and Carlsen. For me this is a huge honour, I hope in my future games to demonstrate that this is not without justification.

**Veselin Topalov**

## Veselin Topalov's sporting journey

This book is devoted to the games of a great chess player who has done much to set the agenda for the development of modern chess – Bulgarian Grandmaster, FIDE 2005 World Chess Champion Veselin Topalov.

After becoming Under 14 World Chess Champion in 1989 Topalov became one of the leading chess players in the world in the mid 1990s. The wider Russian public first heard of the Bulgarian Grandmaster in 1994, when Topalov beat the Great and Fearsome Garry Kasparov at the Olympiad.

### V. Topalov – G. Kasparov [B81]

Olympiad, Moscow 1994

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4  
4.♗xd4 ♞f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙e3 e6  
7.g4 h6

Kasparov avoids the most principled line 7...e5 8.♗f5 g6 9.g5 gxf5 10.exf5 d5 11.gxf6 d4.

8.f4 (8.♙g2!? ♞c6 9.h3) 8...♞c6  
9.♙e2 e5 10.♗f5 g6 11.♗g3 exf4  
12.♙xf4 ♙e6 13.♖f1

Black only has one problem left to solve – what to do with the bishop on f8 in order to castle kingside. If he moves it to e7 then the pawn on h6 will be left hanging; if he moves it to g7 then the white bishop will take on d6, preventing White from castling. Black in the end decides to fianchetto his bishop, and after the capture on d6 to take advantage of the vulnerability of the pawn on b2, bishop on d6, knight on c3 – basically, of lots of White's pieces. But this means the black king has to remain in the centre.

13...♞c8 (13...♞b6!?) 14.h3  
♞b6

14...d5!? deserved consideration (Bönsch) 15.e5 (15.exd5 ♗xd5 16.♗xd5 ♙xd5=) 15...♗h7!.

15.♞d2

15.♞c1 ♗d4 16.♙d3 (16.♙e3? – Ftacnik – 16...♗xc2+ 17.♞xc2 ♞xe3+).

15...♙g7

15...♞xb2 16.♖b1 ♞a3  
17.♖f3∞; 15...♗d7 16.0-0-0 ♗de5  
17.a3 (17.♙e3= Bönsch) 17...♗a5↑.

16.♙xd6

Apart from the pawn's capture White has gained a permanent 'nail' on d6 preventing the black king from castling. However, 16.0-0-0 also deserved consideration, given that Black can still not play 16...0-0 due to 17.♙xh6.

16...♗g4

16...♗d4 also deserved consideration. 17.e5!? (17.♙a3 ♖d8 18.♙d3±) 17...♗d7 (worse is 17...♞xb2 18.exf6 ♞xa1+ 19.♗f2 ♞xc3 20.♞xc3 ♖xc3 21.fxg7 ♖g8 22.♗e4+- and White wins material according to analysis by Dolmatov: 22...♖xc2 23.♗f6+ ♙d8 24.♗xg8 ♖xe2+ 25.♙g3 f5 26.♗xh6 ♖e3+ 27.♙f4 ♖xh3 28.g8♞+

♙xg8 29.♘xg8+-) 18.0-0-0  
 ♗xe2+ 19.♗gxe2 ♗xe5 20.♗d5  
 ♖c6 21.♗c7+ ♖xc7 22.♙xe5 ♗d7  
 23.♖e3 ♙xe5 24.♖xe5 0-0 25.♗c3  
 ♗xd1+ 26.♗xd1 ♗c8 with a more or  
 less equal position;

16...♗d7 17.0-0-0 (17.e5 ♗cxe5  
 18.0-0-0∞) 17...♗b4 18.♙xb4  
 ♖xb4 19.a3 ♖b6. At first glance  
 Black seems to have excellent com-  
 pensation for the pawn, but White  
 can play 20.♗f5!? gxf5 21.exf5 ♙xc3  
 22.bxc3 ♗e5 (22...♖c5 23.fxe6)  
 23.fxe6 ♖xe6 24.♖d6 ♖xd6  
 25.♗xd6 ♗xc3 26.♗b6 0-0 27.♗xb7  
 ♗xa3 28.♗f5 ♗e8 29.♙f1 with a  
 slight advantage in the endgame.

### 17.♙xg4 ♖xb2

Or 17...♙xg4 18.hxg4 (18.♗a4  
 ♖b5 19.hxg4 ♖xa4 20.♖d5 ♖a5+  
 21.c3 ♖xd5 22.exd5 ♗d8 23.♗e4±)  
 18...♖xb2 19.♗ge2 ♖xa1+ 20.♙f2  
 ♖b2 21.♗b1±.

### 18.e5!?

Maintaining the attack.  
 18.♗ge2!? also deserved consid-  
 eration (Speelman) 18...♖xa1+  
 19.♙f2 ♖b2 20.♗b1 ♖xb1 21.♗xb1  
 ♗d8 22.♖f4. Black has insufficient  
 compensation for the queen.

### 18...♗xe5

Otherwise the queen gets  
 trapped: 18...♙xg4 19.♗b1+-; 18...  
 ♙xe5 19.♗ge4 ♖xa1+ 20.♙f2 ♖b2  
 21.♗b1!; 18...♖xa1+ 19.♙f2 ♖b2  
 20.♗b1 ♖xb1 21.♗xb1±.

### 19.♗b1 ♖xc3

Black chooses a dangerous path.  
 Better was 19...♗c4! 20.♗xb2 (20.

♙xe6? ♙xc3 21.♙xf7+ ♗d7+-)  
 20...♗xd2 21.♙xe6 fxe6 (21...  
 ♙xc3? 22.♙xc8 ♗xf1+ 23.♖xf1  
 ♙xb2±) 22.♗xb7 (22.♖xd2 ♙xc3+  
 23.♖c1 ♙xb2+ 24.♖xb2 ♗c4 – it's  
 very difficult to assess this position,  
 but given that the king 'escapes' via  
 d7 it seems that Black is OK) 22...  
 ♗xf1!? (a draw results with 22...  
 ♙xc3 23.♗ff7 ♗e4+ 24.♖d1 ♗xd6  
 25.♗be7+ ♗d8 26.♗d7+ ♗e8=)  
 23.♗ge4 ♙xc3+ 24.♖xf1 ♗c6, and  
 the best that White can achieve is  
 perpetual check.

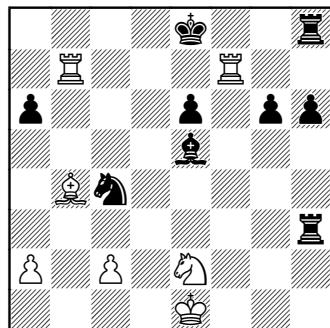
**20.♖xc3 ♗xc3 21.♙xe6 fxe6**  
**22.♗xb7**

White's threats along the 7<sup>th</sup> rank  
 are so powerful that Black's extra  
 pawn is totally irrelevant.

### 22...♗c4

More resilient would have been  
 22...♗d7 23.♗a7 (23.♗f7 ♖xf7  
 24.♗xd7+ ♖f6 25.♙e7+ ♖f7  
 26.♙d6+ only leads to a draw) 23...  
 ♗c8 24.♗e4 ♙d4 25.♗xa6±.

**23.♙b4 (23.♙c5!?) 23...♗e3+**  
 (23...♗xg3 24.♗xg7±) **24.♗e2 ♙e5**  
**25.♗ff7 ♗xh3?**



We can only assume that in time trouble Kasparov simply failed to see White's reply.

He should have played 25...♔d6. Black's position with his king in the centre and the rook out on h8 is truly awful, but White cannot mount a decisive attack without bringing along his knight. A possible continuation is 26.♔xd6 ♖xd6 27.♖be7+ ♔d8 28.♖d7+ ♔e8 29.♖fe7+ ♔f8 30.♔f2 ♖e4 (30...♖e5 31.♖d4+-) 31.♔f3 g5 (White threatened to move the knight to f4; another attempt – 31...♖e3+ 32.♔xe3 ♖f5+ 33.♔e4 ♖xe7 34.♔e5 ♔f7 35.♖d4 ♖e8 36.c4 g5 37.c5 h5 38.c6± – also leads to a large advantage for White) 32.♖a7. Black needs his knight to defend against material threats, but for now it cannot move as it is defending the rook on e4. White needs to free it up – 32...h5 33.♖ed7 g4+ 34.♔f2 ♖e8 doesn't help due to 35.♖f7+ ♔g8 36.♖fe7 ♔f8 37.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 38.♖a8+-.

### 26.♖d4!

Taking advantage of the fact that the knight cannot be taken due to the mate threat White advances it to join a decisive attack.

### 26...♖e3+

26...♔xd4 27.♖fe7+ ♔d8 28.♖b8#; 26...♖h1+ 27.♔e2 ♖h2+ 28. ♔d3+- . Maybe Black can fight on after 26...♔g3+ 27.♔e2 (27.♔f1 ♖e3+ 28.♔e2 ♖d5) 27... ♖h2+ 28.♔f3 ♔h4 29.♖fe7+ ♔xe7 30.♖xe7+ ♔d8 31.♖xe6+ ♔c8

32.♖c7+ ♔b8 33.♖xc4±, but also without much success.

### 27.♔f1 ♖e4 28.♖fe7+ ♔d8 29.♖c6+

Black resigned due to the mate threat: 29.♖c6+ ♔c8 30.♖a7+ ♔d8 31.♖bd7#. Both players made huge efforts to calculate combinations and Topalov's turned out to be better. Moreover, the lines that Kasparov chose were extremely risky.

### 1-0

Topalov's membership of the elite was firmly established in 1996 after a number of first places (either joint or outright) in Madrid, Amsterdam, Lyon, Novgorod and Dos Hermanas.

## V. Topalov – G. Kasparov [B86]

Amsterdam 1996

### 1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 a6 6.♔c4

This nearly dead variation (at least at top levels) was brought back to life by Nigel Short in his 1993 world title match against Kasparov.

### 6...e6 7.♔b3 ♖bd7 8.f4 ♖c5 9.0-0 (9.♖f3!?!; 9.f5!?) 9...♖cxe4

Black has good play after 9...♔e7 10.e5 dxe5 11.fxe5 ♖xb3 (the line 11...♖fd7 12.♔f4 ♖f8 13.♖f3 ♖g6 was twice played against the author of this text. It is sufficiently reliable and I have the suspicion that White barely has any advantage in these positions) 12.axb3 ♔c5 13.♔e3 ♖d5.

10. ♖xe4 ♗xe4 11. f5 e5 12. ♖h5 ♖e7?!

12...d5 was probably stronger, as Short played against Topalov in the same tournament, and which Lubomir Kavalek played way back in 1965. 13. ♖e1 ♖c5 (13...exd4?? 14. ♖xe4+ ♖e7 15. f6! gxf6 16. ♖xd5 ♖f8 17. ♖h6+-) 14. ♖xe4 ♖xd4+ 15. ♖h1 (Topalov lost this game after 15. ♖e3 0-0 16. ♖xd4 exd4 17. ♖xd4 f6 18. ♖c5? – 18. ♖f3!∞ provided sufficient compensation – 18...♖e8±) 15...0-0 (15...♖d7 16. ♖e1 0-0 17. c3) 16. ♖h4, and if 16...♖xf5, then 17. ♖xd4! g6 18. ♖g4 ♖h8 19. ♖h4 ♖xg4 20. ♖xg4 with an unclear position.

13. ♖f3 ♗c5 (13...exd4 14. ♖e1±)

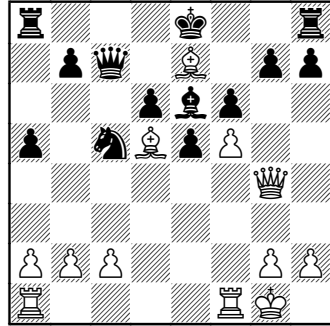
14. ♗c6! ♖c7 15. ♖d5 a5?!

Better would have been 15...♖d7 16. ♗b4 ♖e7 17. ♖c4 (the sacrifice 17. ♖xf7+? ♖xf7 18. ♗d5 ♖d8 19. ♖h5+ ♖g8+- doesn't work) 17...♖c6 18. ♗d5 ♖xd5 19. ♖xd5 with excellent positional compensation for the pawn.

16. ♖g5! ♖a6?

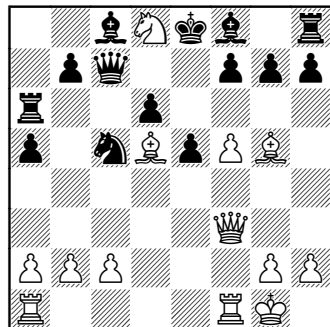
Better was 16...♖d7 17. ♗e7!! (17. f6?! Topalov 17...g6 18. ♗e7 ♗e6!∞) 17...♖xe7 (17...f6 18. ♖h5+ ♖xe7 – 18...♖d8 19. ♗g6 ♖e8 20. ♖e3± – 19. ♖xf6+! gxf6 – 19...♖xf6 20. ♖h4+ g5 21. fxg6+ ♖g7 22. ♖f7+- – 20. ♖f7+ ♖d8 21. ♖xf6+ ♖c8 22. ♖xh8 ♖d8 23. f6 – White has the advantage, but the square for promoting the f pawn is for now controlled by Black and he can resist – analysis by To-

palov) 18. ♖xe7, and here: 18...f6 (18...♖xe7 19. f6+ ♖d8 20. fxg7 ♖e8 21. ♖xf7+-; 18...♖b6 19. f6 g6 20. ♖h1±) 19. ♖g4 ♖e6,



which the human mind would not consider, 20. ♖xd6 (20. ♖xg7 ♖g8) 20...♖xd6 21. ♖xe6 ♗xe6 22. fxex6 0-0 23. ♖ad1 ♖b6+ 24. ♖h1 h5 25. ♖h3 ♖ae8 with a more or less equal position.

17. ♗d8!!+-



This is a very unusual square for a white piece, but it enables him to get to the black king or obtain a decisive material advantage.

17...f6 18.♘f7 ♖g8 19.♙e3  
g6 20.♘g5! ♜g7 (20...fxg5 21.f6!  
♜h8 22.f7+ ♔d8 23.♙xg5+ ♙e7  
24.f8♖+ ♜xf8 25.♚xf8+ ♔d7  
26.♚xe7#) 21.fxg6 ♗xg6!

Losing is 21...hxg6 22.♚xf6  
♚e7 23.♙f7+ ♔d8 24.♙c4 ♚xf6  
25.♜xf6 ♔e7 26.♜af1 ♙f5 27.♜xf8  
♚xf8 28.♙xa6 ♞xa6 29.g4.

22.♙f7+ ♚xf7 23.♞xf7 ♔xf7

Kasparov has managed to get two  
pieces and a pawn for his queen, but  
the position is technically winning  
for White.

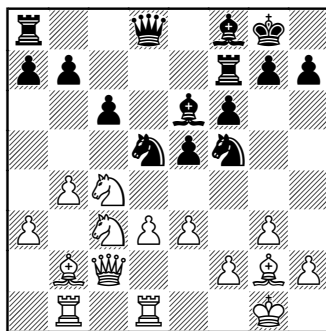
24.♙xc5 dxc5 25.♜ad1 ♙e7 26.♜d5  
and White won. 1–0

These two games with the then  
Classical World Champion show To-  
palov's creative signature – turning  
up the pressure, an unusual pattern  
of struggle, a relaxed attitude to ma-  
terial.

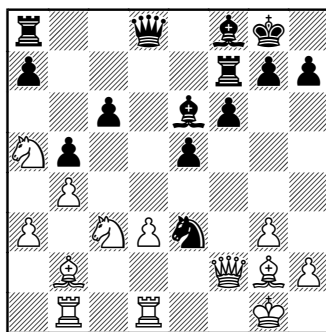
At the end of the 1990s Topalov  
confidently joins the 2700+ club.  
During these years Veselin's playing  
style is finally settled. The Bulgari-  
an finds it much easier than other  
elite chess players of his generation  
to give up material and frequently  
looks for situations where he can do  
so. Making a real material sacrifice  
for domination becomes his favour-  
ite trick.

## E. Bareev – V. Topalov

Candidates match, Dortmund 2002,  
1<sup>st</sup> game of the play off



17...b5! 18.♞a5 ♞dxe3! 19.fxe3  
♞xe3 20.♚f2



20...♞xg2!

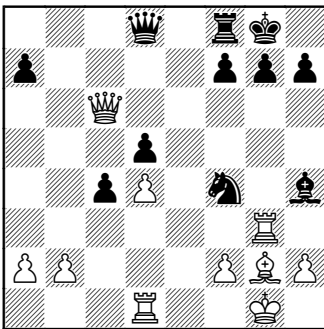
Black refuses to take the  
rook, believing that the weakened  
light-coloured squares around his  
opponent's king are more material.  
20...♞xd1 21.♜xd1 ♜c8 22.♞xc6  
♚d7 23.♞a5±.

21.♚xg2 ♜c8 22.d4! ♚b6  
(22...exd4? 23.♞xc6 ♚b6 24.♞x-  
d4+-) 23.♞e2 ♜d7 24.♜bc1 (24.

♖f2 exd4 (24...♙g4 25.♘b3 ♗e8  
 26.♘c5±) 24...c5! 25.dxc5 ♙xc5+  
 26.bxc5 ♗xc5 27.♘d4! (27.♖f2  
 ♗xd1+ 28.♗xd1 ♗c2! 29.♙c3 ♗xe2  
 30.♖xb6 axb6 31.♘b7 ♙h3±) 27...  
 exd4 28.♗xc5 ♖xc5 29.♖c6 ♖e5  
 30.♖c1 (30.♙xd4 ♖e2 31.♖c1  
 ♗xd4 32.♗xd4 ♙h3 33.♗d2 ♖e3+  
 34.♙h1 ♖e4+ 35.♙g1 ♖e3+=)  
 30...♖e4 31.♗e1! ♖d5 32.♖c6 d3  
 33.♖xd5 ♙xd5 34.♗d1 ♙e6, and  
 Topalov held the endgame (½–½).

### T. Radjabov – V. Topalov

Wijk-aan-Zee 2003



23...♗e8!?

Black's position is better despite  
 being the exchange down – the  
 knight is too strong and the pressure  
 along the dark-coloured squares is  
 intense. With his last move (♗c3–g3)  
 White gives up his material advan-  
 tage, agreeing to play a pawn down  
 – 23...♙xg3 24.hxg3 ♘xg2 25.♙xg2  
 ♗e8± with excellent chances for  
 Black to turn his material advan-  
 tage into a win. But you have to have

special nerves to turn down the ex-  
 change offered and to play materi-  
 al down, when you can play with a  
 pawn up!

24.♗g4 ♗e6 25.♖c5 ♘xg2 26.  
 ♗xg2 a6±

And so on – Topalov in his  
 pointedly unhurried style pushes his  
 pawns forward, while his opponent,  
 devoid of counterplay (the rook on  
 g2 looks extremely unwieldy, the  
 pawn on h2, f2 and d4 are weak),  
 slowly loses.

27.♖a3 g6 28.♖c3 ♖e7 29.b3  
 ♖a3 30.♖c2 ♖e7 31.♙f1 cxb3  
 32.♖xb3 ♖d6 33.♖d3 ♖f4 34.♖d2  
 ♖f5 35.♖d3 ♗e4! 36.♖b3 ♙g7  
 37.♖d3 h5 38.♖b3 ♙f6 39.♗g3  
 ♗f4!

He could have taken the pawn  
 on d4, but then he would have had  
 to defend his pawn on d5. Instead  
 of this, Topalov ties his opponent up  
 even further, attacking nearly all his  
 weaknesses simultaneously.

40.♖e3 h4 41.♗g2 ♗f3 42.♖e2  
 a5 43.♙g1 ♗f4 44.♙h1 ♗e4 45.♖f1  
 a4 46.♗d2 ♙xd4± 47.♖d1 ♙e5  
 48.f3

He cannot take on d5 48.♗xd5  
 due to 48...h3 49.♗g1 ♖f4 50.♗g3  
 ♖xf2–+.

48...♗b4 49.♗d3 h3 50.♗e2 d4  
 51.♗f2 ♙f4 52.♖e2 ♗b1+ 53.♗d1  
 d3–+ 54.♖f1 ♗xd1 55.♖xd1  
 d2 56.♗e2 ♖d3 57.♗f2 (57.♗e4  
 ♖c3–+) 57...♙e3 58.♗f1 ♙d4  
 59.a3 ♙g8○ 60.f4 ♖e4+ 61.♗f3  
 ♙f2!

White resigned. Impressive play all over the board leaving his opponent totally helpless. 0–1

### A. Kharlov – V. Topalov [C24]

FIDE World Chess Championship,  
Tripoli 2004

1.e4 e5 2.♙c4 ♘f6 3.d3 c6 (3... d5) 4.♘f3 ♙e7 5.0-0 d6 6.a4 0-0 7.♙e1 ♘bd7 8.♘c3 ♘c5 9.d4 exd4 10.♘xd4

On the board we see something akin to the Philidor Defence, but White has lost a tempo (d3-d4). 10... a5 11.♙f4 ♘g4 12.♙e2 ♘f6

Probably, Topalov didn't like 12...♘e5 13.♙e3 f4, but Black's two last moves look like he is returning White the lost tempos that he needs to hold an advantage.

13.♙f3 ♙e8 14.♙d2 g6 15.h3 ♘fd7 16.♙ad1 ♙f8 17.g4

An interesting plan to strengthen his position. Unlike a similar structure in the King's Indian White has a pawn on c2 instead of c4. Because of this, and also due to the pawn on a4, White has no chance to chase the knight from c5 and launch an attack on the queenside. This means that he needs to pressurize Black on the kingside, as demonstrated by White's last move. 17.♘de2?! ♘e5.

17...♙b6

A position more akin to the King's Indian is reached with 17... ♘e5!? 18.♙g2 ♙g7 19.♙c1 (here

in reply to 19.b3 Black finds 19... ♘ed3↔) 19...♙b6↔.

18.♙g2 ♘e5

But not 18...♙xb2?? 19.♙b1 ♙a3 20.♙a1 ♙b4 21.♙eb1 ♙c4 22.♙f1+.

19.b3 ♙b4 20.♘de2±

I think that White can be happy with the outcome of the opening – the black bishop, unlike in the King's Indian, is stuck on the passive square f8, the knight on e5 can be easily chased away with the move f4, and Black has no real targets for counterplay. Maybe Topalov's subsequent sharp counterplay arose from a desire not to simply wait and see what White would do.

20...f6

Not a 'King's Indian' move – and I don't really understand it. I can only assume that he had some of the following ideas in mind: 1) to free up the f7 square for his knight and strengthen the pawn on d6, but in this case with his next move you could say that Topalov changed his mind; 2) not to allow White to use the g5 square for his pawn or bishop; 3) to free up the 7<sup>th</sup> rank for the rook, but this would be too far ahead; 4) to wait for the move ♙e3 and sacrifice a piece – given the following events this seems the most likely.

We should also consider the immediate 20...h5 21.gxh5 (21.♙xe5 dxe5 – 21...♙xe5 22.f4 ♙e8 23.gxh5 gxh5 24.♙h2! – 22.gxh5 ♘e6 with



the dark-squared bishop providing some, albeit probably insufficient, compensation) 21...♙xh3 22.♙xe5 ♙xg2 23.♙xd6 ♙xe4 24.♙xf8 ♖xf8 25.♞xe4 ♚xe4 26.♞g3 ♚g4± and White has the initiative; 20...♙e6 21.♙g5!?

21.♙e3 h5!? 22.f4 (22.gxh5 ♙x-h3∞ 23.♙xc5 ♚xc5 24.hxg6 ♙g4 25.♚f4) 22...♞xg4!?

What is most surprising in Black's last two moves is that they are played by a person who won the first game of the match and only needs a draw to win the match!

Another way to sacrifice a piece is 22...hxg4 23.fxe5 gxh3 24.♙f3 dxe5 25.♚h2, but here compensation is unlikely to be sufficient – the black king may be too weak.

23.hxg4 ♙xg4 24.♚c1 f5

After this it is difficult to comment on the game. It is clear that for a long time Black's compensation remained insufficient; but I cannot find a clear path for White to reach a technically won position.

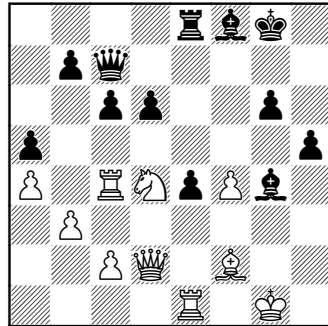
25.♞d4 (25.exf5!?) 25...♚b6

26.♚d2 ♚c7 27.♙f2 ♙e6 28.♞c4 28.e5 dxe5 29.fxe5 ♙xe5 (29...♞h7△ ♙h6) 30.♙g3 ♙g7∞.

28...♞ae8 29.♞d4

29.e5 dxe5 30.♞xc5 (30.♙xc5 ♙xc5+ 31.♞xc5 ♚b6干) 30...ex-f4⇌; 29.♞c1 fxe4 30.♙xc5 dxc5 31.♞cxe4 ♙g7 (31...c4 32.bxc4 ♙c5+ 33.♚h2 ♚e7 34.♙g3).

29...♞xe4! 30.♞xe4 ♞xe4 31.♙xe4 fxe4∞



White now has an extra rook; but when you have a piece against a large number of pawns you need to somehow try to attack them from the side or from behind, and here White doesn't manage to do this.

32.♞c3

32.♞b5 ♚d7 33.♞c3 ♙f3 34.♚h2 ♚f5; 32.♞xc6 bxc6 33.♞cxe4∞.

32...d5 33.♞g3 ♙d6 34.♙e3 ♚d7 35.c3

It's dangerous to attempt to 'grab' a pawn on the way: 35.♚xa5 g5 (35...h4 36.♞g2 h3 37.♞h2 ♙f3 38.♚f2 ♚g4) 36.♚d2 ♙f8 37.♞f1 gxf4 (37...♚c7 38.♞xg4 hxg4 39.♞e6+-) 38.♙xf4 ♚f7 39.♞e2 ♚h7 40.♞xg4 hxg4 41.c4.

35...♞f8 36.♞f1 b6 37.♞f2 c5 38.♞b5

As the game's commentators correctly pointed out (Shipov and Ivanov), this is not the right square for the knight either (all the action is taking place on the kingside), and from this moment in time White experiences serious difficulties. Cor-

rect would have been 38.♖e2!? or 38.♖c2.

38...♙b8 39.♖fg2 g5 40.♖f2 (40.♖xg4 hxg4 41.fxg5 g3⇒) 40...♙g7 41.♖c1 (41.♖gg2!? ♖f5 42.fxg5 ♙f3 43.g6 ♙xg2 44.♖xg2) 41...♙g6 42.♖f1 ♖f5 43.♖gg2 ♖f7 44.fxg5 ♙f3 45.♖h2 ♙xh2+ 46.♖xh2 ♖f4!

An impressive disdain of material.

47.♙xf4 ♖xf4 48.♖g2

This leads to an almost forced loss, but 48.♖e1 e3 would not leave him with any chances of gaining his necessary victory either.

48...h4 49.♖e1 e3 50.♖h2 ♖xg5+ 51.♙f1 h3 52.♖b1+ ♙e4 53.♖b2 ♙d3+ 0-1

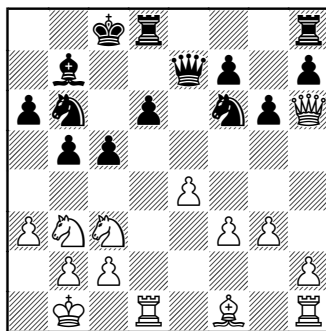
You can argue about the correctness of the sacrifice, but the game as a whole leaves a strong impression – the powerful, ‘anti-material’ onslaught by Black and the helplessness of the White pieces despite their numerical advantage.

Another curious feature of Topalov's play is his attitude towards his own king. Everybody, and Topalov too, knows very well that the safest place for it is behind some pawns, somewhere on g1 or b1, yet time and again the Bulgarian brings the king to the centre – much more often than other players.

## G. Kasparov – V. Topalov

Wijk-aan-Zee 1999

A famous game, which Kasparov considers to be one of the best in his career. It has been exhaustively analyzed in the third volume of Garry Kasparov on Garry Kasparov; here we recall just a few key highlights.

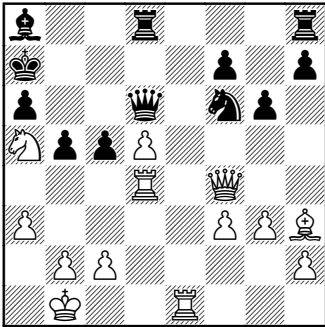


For the moment Topalov is luring his opponent to making flank manoeuvres ♖a5 and ♙h3 in order to be able to play d5 and take advantage of the somewhat lack of harmony in the White position.

17...♙b8 18.♖a5 ♙a8 19.♙h3 d5 20.♖f4+ (20.exd5 ♖fxd5 21.♖xd5 ♖xd5 22.♖f4+ ♖c7 23.♖f6 ♖e8) 20...♙a7 21.♖he1 d4 22.♖d5

Given Kasparov's playing style 22.♖a2 was unlikely.

22...♖bxd5 (22...♖fxd5? 23.exd5 ♖d6 24.♖xf7+-) 23.exd5 ♖d6 24.♖xd4!



### 24...cxd4

24...♟b6! was stronger and would have forced White into playing 25.b4 ♖xf4 26.♞xf4 ♘xd5 27.♞xf7. Here White has several problems given his knight out of position on a5, but he is probably not much worse, for example: 27...♞he8 (27...cxb4 28.axb4 ♘xb4 29.♘b3 ♙d5 30.♞f6+ ♘c6 31.♘d4 ♞df8 32.♞xf8 ♞xf8 33.♘xc6 ♙xc6) 28.♞xe8 ♞xe8 29.♘b3 cxb4 30.axb4 ♞e1+ 31.♟b2 ♞e2 32.♞xh7 ♘xb4 33.♞h6 ♞xc2+ 34.♟b1 ♙xf3 35.♙f5.

### 25.♞e7+!!

Nice, but it wasn't a surprise for Topalov.

25...♟b6 (25...♞xe7? 26.♞xd4+- ♟b8 27.♞b6+ ♙b7 28.♘c6+) 26.♞xd4+ ♟xa5 (26...♞c5 27.♞xf6+ ♞d6 28.♙e6!! ♙xd5 29.b4+-) 27.b4+ ♟a4 28.♞c3

He could have won with 28.♞a7! ♙b7 (28...♘xd5 29.♞xa6+!! ♞xa6 30.♞b2 ♘c3+ 31.♞xc3 ♙d5 32.♟b2 with mate on b3) 29.♞b7 ♞xd5 (29...♘xd5 30.♙d7!! ♞a8 31.♙xb5+ axb5 32.♞a7+ ♞a6 33.♞xd5 ♞xa7 34.

♞b3# or 30...♞xd7 31.♞b2 ♘c3+ 32.♞xc3 ♞d1+ 33.♟b2 ♞d3 34.♞a7!+-) 30.♞b6a5 (30...♞a8 31.♞xf6 a5 32.♙f1+-) 31.♞a6 ♞a8 32.♞e3!! ♞xa6 (32...♞he8 33.♞xa8 ♞xa8 34.♟b2+-) 33.♟b2 axb4 34.axb4 ♟xb4 35.♞c3+ ♟a4 36.♞a3#.

### 28...♞xd5 (28...♙xd5? 29.♟b2)

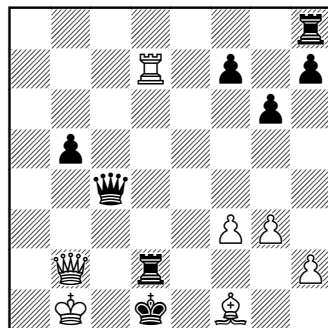
29.♞a7 (29.♟b2? ♞d4) 29...♙b7 30.♞xb7 (30.♞c7? ♞d1+=) 30...♞c4 30...♞he8! 31.♞b6 ♞a8 32.♙f1+-, capturing the c4 square and threatening a diversion with ♞d6.

### 31.♞xf6 ♟xa3

Just as when accepting a sacrifice Black is driven by a desire to fight, optimism and aesthetic pleasure. Better is 31...♞d1+ 32.♟b2 ♞a8 (32... ♞d4+ 33.♞xd4 ♞xd4 34.♞xf7 ♞d6 35.♞e7 ♙e6) 33.♞b6 ♞d4+ (33...a5 34.♙d7! ♞d5 35.♞e3 axb4 36.♞a7+-) 34.♞xd4 ♞xd4 35.♞xf7 a5 36.♙e6 axb4 37.♙b3+ ♟a5 38.axb4+ ♟b6 39.♞xh7 ♞f8 40.f4, but not 31...♞a8? 32.♞b6 a5 33.♞a7+-.

### 32.♞xa6+ ♟xb4 33.c3+! ♟xc3

34.♞a1+ ♟d2 35.♞b2+ ♟d1 36.♙f1! ♞d2 37.♞d7!



A forgotten resource, and so the king's 'long walk' will not go unpunished.

37...♖xd7 38.♙xc4 bxc4 39. ♖xh8 ♖d3 40.♗a8 c3 41.♗a4+ ♙e1 42.f4 f5 43.♙c1 ♖d2 44.♗a7

Black resigned. 1–0

A wonderful achievement by the winner; but take note of the fighting spirit and guts of the loser. Maybe his readiness to struggle to the end with the strongest players was one of the reasons for Topalov's future victories.

Topalov is great at finding solutions in the style of 'don't let him develop, open him, tactical play and checkmate'.

## V. Topalov – E. Bareev [C11]

Candidates match, Dortmund 2002,  
2<sup>nd</sup> game of play off

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6  
4.♙g5 dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♘bd7 6.♘f3  
♙e7 7.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 8.h4 c5 9.♗d2  
cxd4 10.♘xd4 h6

Another example from Topalov's games with a similar position:  
10...0-0 11.0-0-0 h6 12.♘f3 ♗b6  
13.c3 e5 14.♙e3 ♗a5 15.g4 e4 16.g5!  
♙e7 17.gxh6! ♗xa2 18.♗d4! ♘f6  
19.hxg7 ♖e8 20.♙c4 ♗a1+ 21.♙c2  
♗a4+ 22.♙b3 ♗xd4 23.♘xd4  
♙xg7 24.♖dg1+ ♙h7 25.♙xf7 ♖f8  
26.♙g6+ ♙h8 27.♘f5+-, and  
White won (Topalov – Shirov, Leon  
2001)

11.♙xf6 ♘xf6 (11...♗xf6!?)  
12.♗b4!?

This prevents Black from castling kingside. 12.0-0-0!?.

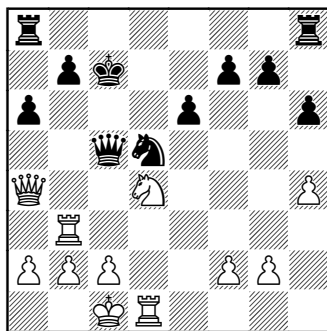
12...♘d5

Similar to the game 12...♗e7  
13.♙b5+ ♙d7 14.♙xd7+ ♗xd7  
15.0-0-0 ♘d5 16.♗a3↑; but 12...a5  
deserved consideration (a recommendation by Rabinovich), and he manages to chase the queen from the diagonal: 13.♙b5+ ♙d7 14.♗a3 ♗e7.

13.♗a3 ♗e7 14.♙b5+ ♙d7  
15.♙xd7+ ♙xd7

In this game this move didn't work out, although objectively it's not a bad move. Maintaining the option of castling would have allowed 15...♗xd7 16.0-0-0 a6 17.♖h3↑.

16.♗a4+ ♙c7 17.♖h3! a6  
18.♖b3 (18.0-0-0!?) 18...♗c5!  
19.0-0-0



19...b5?

The last chance to fight on would have been 19...♘b6! 20.♘xe6+ (20. ♗b4 ♗xb4 21.♖xb4 ♖ad8=) 20...

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