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Introduction

A first attempt to write this book was made in the late 1990s, when the Slav “Triangle” – or the “Wineglass”, as Maxim Sorokin described the black pawn structure – used to be my main weapon against 1 d4. However, after almost finishing the Noteboom and a good part of the Marshall, I was unable to complete the issue – family cares, growing kids and, at the same time, intensive coaching work forced me not only to put a few hundred pages on the shelf but almost to forget about playing chess tournaments! Meanwhile, working with players of different levels and styles distracted me from the Triangle itself. During the last decade many other opening systems occurred in my practice, so when I got a chance to resume this work at the end of 2010 everything had to be reviewed from the beginning. Yet, it was actually nice, as it brought some pleasant memories back to me...

Frankly speaking, I’ve always been a bit superficial in my approach to chess, digging *wider* – in contrast to Maxim, who always dug *deeper*. Writing this book in memory of my best friend, I tried hard to be as accurate and systematic as him, coming up in advance with answers to many possible questions which may occur to attentive readers. Perhaps it made the book rather heavy, but modern chess has become very concrete and requires thorough preparation in all parts of the game, starting from the opening. Actually, when it came to the final stage of writing I cut many variations from the book; but if the material is still a bit too complicated for lower-level players, I would offer a simple piece of advice: at first look through the main lines, given in bold, and only refer to the sidelines later, whenever you feel it is required.

This book gives a complete and well-organized repertoire for Black, based on the Slav Triangle. However, I didn’t avoid any problems Black may face, so it should be also helpful for White players in their search for a way to counter the Triangle. I tried to remain as objective as possible, so don’t be surprised to see an assessment like “White keeps a slight edge” at the end of some lines. In fact this is true for almost every normal opening system, so why should the Triangle be an exception?!

The strategic ideas behind Black’s approach are rather simple and can be described in a few words: grab the pawn on c4, protect it by ...b7-b5, and prepare an advance ...c6-c5 to get the light-squared bishop into play and undouble the c-pawns. As a rule, if Black succeeds with this plan, he obtains a tangible advantage, though of course there will be many obstacles in the way. Actually, it may look like Black is ignoring some basic principles of

opening play, such as quick development, safety, fighting for the centre. He should certainly keep those in mind, but at the same time he wants to get some benefit on the queenside.

Isn't it too ambitious for the beginning of the game?! Doesn't it look like Black is trying to kill two birds with one stone? Perhaps, but there will be more stones in his bag! Besides, Black isn't playing this way against 1 e4 – it's a closed opening after all and White can't develop an initiative so quickly. Perhaps Black's approach might be called an exception, but it has been successful so many times in practice it should already become the rule!

In some lines Black has more than one possible way to play and, in spite of my own preference and simply to give a choice, I have covered most reasonable options – sometimes even those not quite satisfactory from Black's point of view, if there were some interesting or typical ideas which would be useful in other lines.

With the help of this book, which gives a complete picture of the "Slav Triangle" and many related systems, you may comfortably build your own repertoire with Black, adjusting it to your own style, level or your goals in chess. I've also attempted to provide as much explanation as possible since, as Eugene Znosko-Borovsky taught more than 75 years back, understanding typical plans and ideas, thematic manoeuvres and common tactics is more important than learning numerous variations by heart. As often happens in the latter case, a player is unable to refute a dubious move simply because he didn't see it in the book. On the other hand, since the Triangle can lead to rather unusual positions, it might be difficult – and in many cases not quite correct – to apply general principles, so the more concrete details aren't superfluous either. Modern chess hasn't only become a rather tough kind of sport, it's also becoming more and more scientific and so requires more and more precise knowledge...

Among those players who have regularly caused headaches for White and advanced the theory of the Slav Triangle, I would mention (in the order they came to mind): Maxim Sorokin, Alexander Galkin, Pavel Tregubov, Michal Krasenkow, Andrei Kharlov, Marek Matlak, Glenn Flear, Evgeny Sveshnikov, Alexander Moroz, Igor Novikov, Oleg Korneev, Marinus Kuijf, Markus Stangl, Josef Klingler, and Mark Van der Werf. Younger generations would be represented by Yuri Shulman, Dusko Pavasovic, Jakov Geller, Dmitry Frolyanov, Artyom Timofeev, Vladimir Malakhov, Sergei Zhigalko, and Niclas Huschenbeth.

Almost all top players, including the World Champions, have used the Triangle from time to time, but two of them, Alexei Shirov and Alexander Grischuk, deserve special praise for their contribution to the Noteboom and the Triangle Stonewall. As you may have noticed, a huge majority of the Triangle advocates mentioned here are Russian-speaking players, so I apologize in advance to those, especially from other parts of the world, who are somehow omitted from the list.

I would also like to thank some people personally, without whom this book would hardly have been written: Alexander Filipenko and Evgeny Gleizerov, who taught all of us

The Triangle System

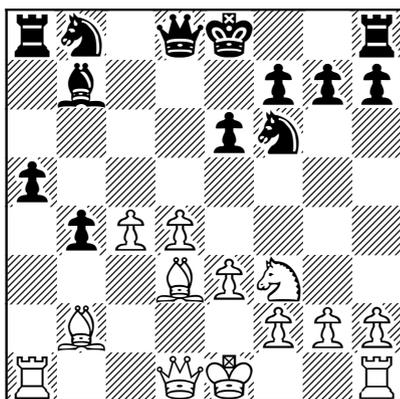
to play the Meran and Stonewall at Alexander Panchenko's chess school in the 1980s, and of course "Pancha" himself, who was my coach for many years (sadly, he's no longer with us); Alex Volzhin, who partially shared my enthusiasm for the Noteboom in the 1990s; Kateryna Lahno, who encouraged me to resume and finally complete this work; John Emms, who guided me through the writing process and kindly accepted all delays; and very special thanks to my wife Tatiana, who took care of our kids and many other things while I was plunged into this work.

In conclusion I would like to encourage readers to get the most benefit from my first big work. Enjoy sailing in the often troubled waters of the Slav Triangle and let it become the "Bermuda Triangle" for your opponents!

Chapter Eight

The Main Line with ♔c2

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c6 4 ♗f3 dxc4 5 a4 ♕b4
 6 e3 b5 7 ♕d2 a5 8 axb5 ♖xc3 9 ♖xc3 cxb5 10
 b3 ♕b7 11 bxc4 b4 12 ♕b2 ♗f6 13 ♕d3



The most natural move – White points both bishops towards Black’s kingside.

13...♗bd7

Instead:

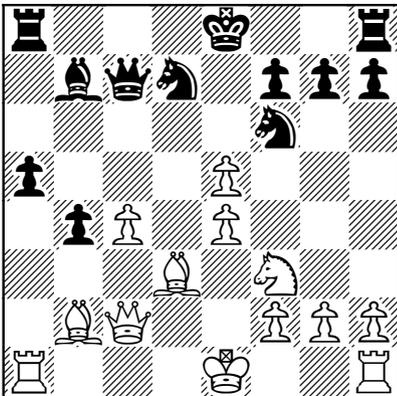
a) 13...♕e4?! is dubious. In many cases the exchange of the light-squared bishops is undesirable for Black, as it makes it harder to advance the queenside. However, the main problem here is that White gains important time with 14 ♕xe4 (on 14 ♖a4+ Black might

change his mind and play 14...♕c6!) 14...♗xe4 and now 15 ♖c2 (also good is 15 ♗e5!? 0-0 16 c5!, V.Bagirov-H.Blachmann, Berlin 1992; or 15 ♖a4+!? ♖d7 16 ♖c2!?, though Black can still fight after 16...♖b7!? 17 d5! f5 18 ♗d4 ♗c5 19 0-0 0-0, A.Muir-A.Bernei, Aarhus 1990) 15...♗f6 (if 15...f5 then 16 d5!?, followed by ♗d4, or 16 ♗e5 0-0 17 0-0 ♗d7 18 ♗d3 with the better chances, M.Najdorf-J.Szmetan, Buenos Aires 1973) 16 e4 ♗fd7 17 0-0 0-0 18 c5 ♖c7 19 ♖fc1 ♖c8, when Black has prevented c5-c6 but White is certainly better, according to tournament practice.

b) 13...0-0 is a valid move order and usually leads to the main lines after 14 0-0 ♗bd7. White can try other options but they aren’t too dangerous; e.g. 14 ♗g5 ♗bd7 (or 14...h6 15 h4 ♗bd7, but not 15...♕xg2?! 16 ♖g1 ♕b7 17 d5! with excellent attacking chances) 15 e4 (the crazy-looking 15 f4?! h6 16 h4?! would simply be ignored: 16...a4! and if 17 ♖xa4 then 17...♖xa4 18 ♖xa4 ♗c5! 19 ♖d1 ♗xd3+ 20 ♖xd3 hxg5 21 hxg5 ♗e4 with a safe extra piece) 15...e5! and White’s knight sally was a waste of time, E.Borulya-T.Shumiakina, USSR Women’s Ch., Podolsk 1990.

14 0-0

In the 1980s and '90s the immediate 14 ♖c2 was a common alternative, although in most cases it soon transposed to the main lines. Nowadays, 14 ♖c2 has become a rare option as White more often plays this variation without putting his queen on c2 at all, but we'll still take a look at it, in order to become familiar with the various orders of moves. Here 14...0-0 is a simpler way to reach the main lines (B and D) after 15 e4 e5! 16 0-0 (not 16 dxe5? ♗c5!) 16...♙c7 and so on, but 14...♙c7 is also possible. White's attempt to exploit this move order, playing the position without castling, is very double-edged: 15 e4 e5! 16 dxe5 (otherwise 16 ♗xe5?! ♗xe5 17 dxe5 ♗d7 is fine for Black, while 16 c5 may return to the main lines after 16...0-0 17 0-0 – see line B),

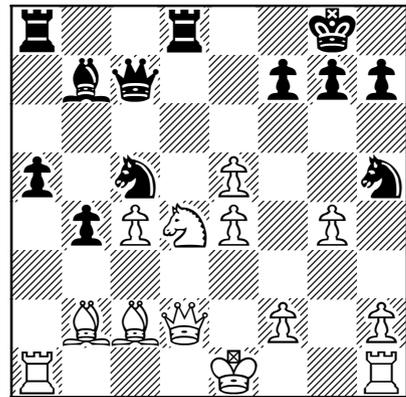


and now Black has to decide where the knight should go:

a) 16...♗h5 should be answered by 17 ♙d2!, cutting off the knight and threatening to win it with g2-g4 (after slow play such as 17 g3?! ♗c5 18 0-0 0-0, Wl.Schmidt-M.Matlak, Polish Ch., Czestochowa 1993, or 17 0-0 ♗f4 18 ♙fe1 0-0, R.De Leeuw-G.Prakken, Dutch Team Ch. 1994, Black is

clearly better), but Black is in time for counter-measures with 17...♗c5 and then:

a1) 18 ♗c2?!, still trying to catch the h5-knight, doesn't have the desired effect: 18...0-0 (or 18...b3!? 19 ♗b1 ♗xe4) 19 g4? (19 0-0 ♗e6!? would still be unclear) 19...♙fd8 (Black can even consider the crazy 19...f5!?) 20 ♗d4 (White already needs good advice: 20 ♗d4 b3 21 ♗b1 ♗e6! and 20 ♙e3 b3! 21 ♗b1 ♙d7! are simply bad) and here, in V.Beim-R.Scherbakov, Leeuwarden 1994, I spent a lot of time and failed to make the right choice from many attractive continuations:



a11) 20...♙xd4!? 21 ♗xd4 ♗e6 22 ♗e3 ♙xe5 23 0-0 ♙d8 24 ♙e1 ♗hf4.

a12) 20...♙xe5!? 21 gxh5 ♗b3! 22 ♗xb3 ♙xb2 23 ♙b1 ♙xd2 24 ♙xb2 ♙xc2! 25 ♙xc2 ♗xe4.

a13) 20...♗f4!? was what I actually played, whereupon we agreed a draw, as after 21 ♙xf4 ♙xd4! 22 ♗xd4 ♗e6 23 ♙e3 ♙xc4 Black regains the piece with sufficient compensation for the exchange.

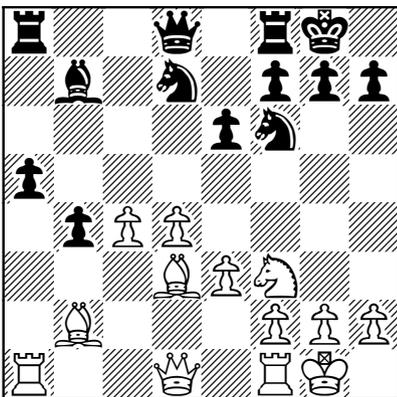
a14) However, instead of all these sophisticated ideas, Black could have secured a huge advantage with the simple 20...a4! 21 ♙xb4 (or 21 gxh5 a3) 21...♗f4, and if 22 0-0-0 then 22...♗xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 and

White is defenceless. For some reason I already counted my knight on h5 as lost and so supposed that my compensation for the piece would be insufficient, whereas in fact the number of pieces on the board is equal!

a2) Nevertheless, White can improve on all this with the unexpected 18 ♕e2! 0-0 (not 18...♗b3? 19 ♖e3! ♗xa1 20 ♕xa1 g6 21 ♗d4 with powerful play) and now the simple 19 0-0 is okay for White, since the h5-knight is no source of pride for Black. (Instead, 19 g4?! still doesn't work: 19...♗xe4 20 ♖e3 ♗hf6! 21 exf6 ♗fe8 22 ♕e5 ♖c6! 23 ♗d4 ♖c5 24 ♗f3 gxf6! and White faces problems; while 19 ♗d4?! is also in Black's favour: 19...♖xe5 20 ♗b3 ♗xb3 21 ♕xe5 ♗xd2 22 ♗xd2 ♗fd8+ with an annoying initiative in the ending; e.g. 23 ♖c1 f6! 24 ♕c7 ♗d7 25 ♕xa5 ♗f4 and so on.)

b) 16...♗g4!?, which looks risky, might be even simpler; e.g. 17 e6 ♗c5! (or 17...fxe6 18 ♕xg7 ♗g8 19 ♕d4 e5!? 20 ♕b2 0-0-0!?) 18 exf7+ (the consistent 18 ♕xg7? fails to 18...0-0-0! 19 ♕d4 ♗xd4! 20 ♗xd4 ♖d8!) 18...♖xf7 and Black is doing well.

14...0-0



We have finally reached the point in the game that might be called the starting position for the main line Noteboom – it often

comes to players' minds when they hear the name of the opening.

The position is very complex. Both sides have emerged from the initial skirmish with high trumps. There are neither damaged units on the battlefield nor weaknesses in either army! So the forthcoming clash between two extreme powers is going to be really tough. Of course, it cannot happen in chess that neither side's game has any drawbacks, but here we have a rare case where the only real downside to each position is actually a strength in the opponent's.

Thanks to his strong pawn centre White keeps more important squares under control and this gives him a wider choice of possibilities. Black's main trump is his strong queenside passers, but those are a bit too far advanced to help his pieces in fighting for good squares. In fact Black's options are rather limited – in most cases he plays the same manoeuvres, uses the same tactical tricks. Nevertheless, these manoeuvres are more than sufficient – White should never feel comfortable!

Let's discuss a little how we'll consider the theory of the main Noteboom. There are many possible continuations here, many move orders, and they can in fact lead to the same positions! For example, it looks quite natural for White to utilize the power of his pawn centre and his strong bishops, so the first idea which comes to mind is to advance the pawn to e4, with the clear intention of developing an initiative in centre and king-side. White can try to carry out this plan with the aid of the queen on c2 and/or the rook on e1. In the former case he may delay moving the rook to e1, or else bring it to c1 in order to support the advance of the his c-pawn; he may also include c4-c5 at some point...

Thus it's quite difficult to consider variations move by move, though it's still worth trying in some particular cases. However, for better understanding and playing of the Noteboom it's more useful to study it in the following way: White's possible plans and Black's reactions to them; typical strategic and tactical ideas, thematic manoeuvres, possible dangers – if you know all such things you feel more comfortable over the board, and of course it brings better results.

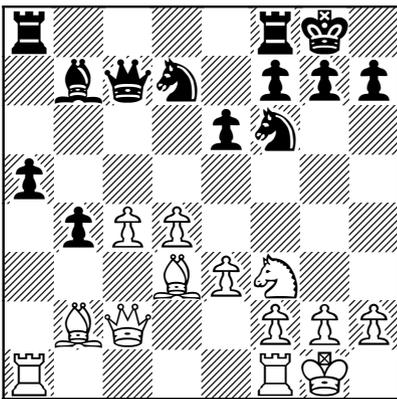
The main continuations nowadays are 15 ♘d2!? and 15 ♖e1, which are examined in the next two chapters; 15 c5!? is also covered in Chapter 10. We begin here with White's approach involving ♖c2, increasing his control over the e4-square and so secure the advance of his e-pawn.

15 ♖c2

This used to be White's main plan from the middle of the 1980s, when the Noteboom began to appear in practice more often.

15...♖c7

15...♗xf3?! 16 gxf3 ♖c7 isn't totally bad, but Black hasn't yet obtained active play and the exchange of his light-squared bishop may only decrease his counter-chances.



In this position White has a number of

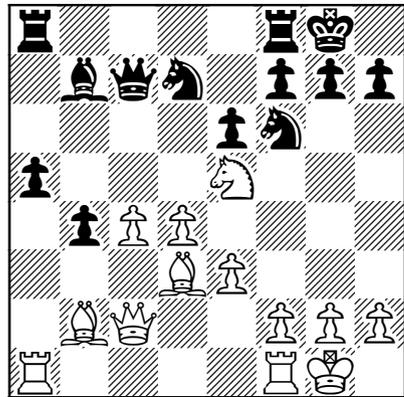
possible plans and various ways to carry them out – we'll consider them one at a time:

- A: 16 ♘e5? 110**
- B: 16 e4 e5! 17 c5 (without ♖fe1) 111**
- C: 16 ♖fc1 119**
- D: 16 e4 e5! 17 ♖fe1 122**
- E: 16 c5!? 135**

Note that lines B and D both begin with 16 e4 e5. As I mentioned above, it isn't always easy to examine the Noteboom move by move – here it makes more sense to see how the insertion of 16 ♖fc1 ♖fc8 affects things, before going on with the main line after 17 ♖fe1.

If White instead tries to prepare f2-f4 by retreating his knight with 16 ♘d2, then apart from 16...e5, which transposes to the next chapter (see 16 ♖c2 in line B), Black can think seriously about 16...a4!? as well.

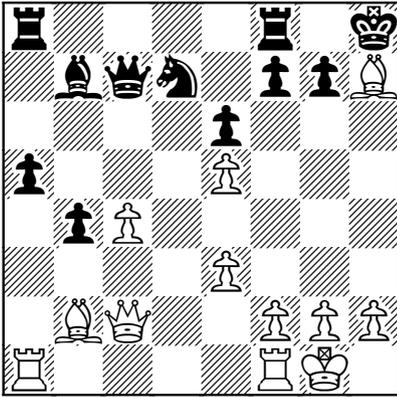
A: 16 ♘e5?



Since White's e-pawn push will be met by the counter-thrust ...e6-e5, he mechanically stops it with the knight, intending to support it by f2-f4 and only then advance his e-

pawn. Unfortunately, this is a well-known mistake.

16...♘xe5! 17 dxe5 ♘d7 18 ♖xh7+ ♔h8



Black's response looks rather risky – sacrificing the h7-pawn, which was a part of his king's shield, with check. However, the important strategic pluses he has achieved are more than sufficient to compensate this slight material loss. White's strong pawn centre is ruined and he can't open the long diagonal; whereas on the other side, Black's queenside passers can be supported by the knight installed on c5, and are almost unstoppable! Practice shows that White has to fight for equality.

19 ♗fd1

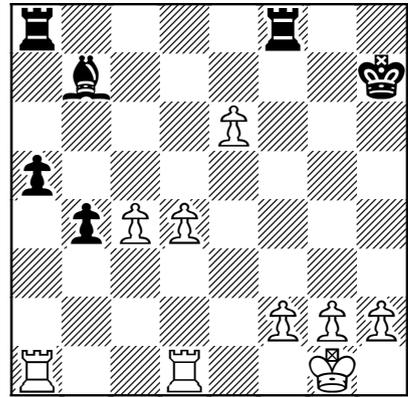
On 19 ♖e4 Black's pawns begin to roll without the support of the knight: 19...a4!? 20 ♖xb7 (20 f4?! is even worse: 20...a3 21 ♖xb7 ♗xb7 22 ♖d4 b3 23 ♗fb1 bxc2 24 ♗xb7 ♗fb8 and White resigned, A.Shneider-R.Scherbakov, Moscow rapid 1994; curiously enough, I spent only two minutes for the whole game while my opponent used almost all his time) 20...♗xb7 21 ♗ad1 (this fails to create any problems for Black's king; instead, 21 ♗fb1!? might be more tenacious, though Black' superiority is beyond doubts;

note that the pawn on a4 is still untouchable: 21 ♗xa4?? b3 wins) 21...a3 22 ♗d4 g6 23 ♖a1 b3 and Black's pawns quickly decide the game, V.Khomyakov-M.Sorokin, Katowice 1992.

19...g6

19...♘c5!? might be stronger.

20 ♖xg6 fxg6 21 ♗xg6 ♘c5 22 ♖d4 ♘b3! 23 ♗xe6 (23 ♗ab1 a4) 23...♗g7! 24 ♗h3+ ♗h7 25 e6+ ♘xd4 26 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 27 exd4



This unique position with two black and six (!) white connected passers arose in M.Kubala-A.Moroz, Decin 1997. Black was successful after 27...b3, but perhaps it's more precise to support the pawns with the bishop by 27...♖e4!?, as indicated by Genna Sosonko and Leon Pliester in some old annotations.

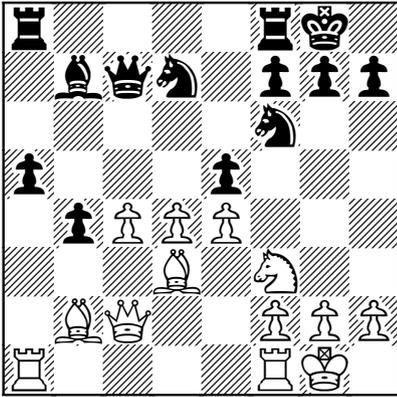
B: 16 e4

White builds a formidable pawn centre. His position looks very powerful, but Black has a strong antidote.

16...e5!

This thematic counter-strike is the main Noteboom trademark. Black is ready to give up his central pawn, as it's vitally important to destroy White's pawn phalanx and stop

the further advance of his e-pawn, hence slowing the progress of his initiative on the kingside.



According to Megabase 2011 its first appearance in reply to e3-e4 was in K.Plater-P.Trifunovic, Hilversum 1947 (see the beginning of Chapter 7), with the small difference that White's dark-squared bishop was on d2. Daniel Noteboom himself pushed his e-pawn almost two decades earlier, but in different situations, when White's pawn was still on e3 (in A.Voisin-D.Noteboom, Hamburg Olympiad 1930, and J.Vilardebo Picturena-D.Noteboom, Prague Olympiad 1931).

17 c5

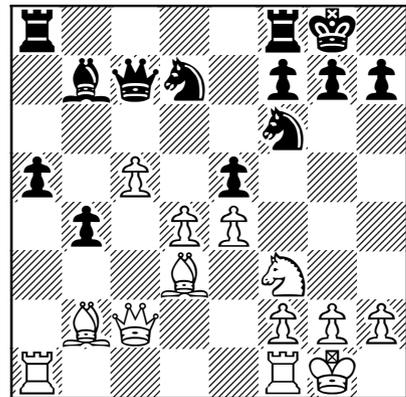
This advance is as vital for White as the just played ...e6-e5 is for Black! By pushing his c-pawn forward White obtains better prospects for his light-squared bishop, while also preventing his opponent's knight from being installed on the strong c5-square in the future.

White may also insert 17 ♖fe1 ♗fe8 (or 17...h6!?) and then play 18 c5! – in fact this might be a more accurate move order (see line D).

Accepting the gift by 17 ♗xe5?! allows Black to demonstrate the power of his idea:

17...♗xe5 18 dxe5 ♗d7! (stronger than 18...♗g4, which gives White a chance to activate his light-squared bishop by 19 c5 ♗xe5 20 ♖b5) 19 f4 (or 19 ♖e2 ♗c5!, so perhaps 19 c5!? has to be tried) 19...♗c5 is what Black is dreaming about! His powerful knight not only gives huge support to his queenside passers, which are unstoppable now, it also puts pressure on the centre. Conversely, White's central pawn mass only looks impressive – in fact it's obstructing the bishops' diagonals and so seriously limits White's attacking prospects. Black's advantage is almost decisive; e.g. 20 ♗f3 ♗fd8 21 ♗e1 a4 22 e6 ♗xe6 and White was unable to offer any resistance, R.Kujawski-M.Matlak, Miedzybrodzie 1991.

The alternative capture 17 dxe5 is also good for Black after 17...♗g4 (or 17...♗h5!?), although White gets more chances without the exchange of knights. Here he should definitely play 18 c5! with counterplay, otherwise he's just worse.



- B1: 17...h6?! 113**
- B2: 17...exd4! 114**

After 17 c5, it's becoming dangerous for

Black to maintain the tension in the centre. We'll take a brief look at such an approach in line B1. Other "waiting" moves are also suspicious:

a) 17...♖fe8?! is mistimed. As a rule, Black should move this rook only after its counterpart on f1 has clarified its intentions, whereas this early deployment allows White to play 18 ♖fc1! with a strong initiative; e.g. 18...♖ac8 (now 18...exd4? is too late due to 19 c6) 19 dxe5 ♘g4 20 c6! (not 20 ♕b5? ♘dxe5! 21 ♘xe5 ♖xe5! 22 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 23 g3 ♕xe4! with sufficient counter-chances, A.Czerwonski-H.Seifert, Polish Junior Ch. 1991) 20...♕xc6 (20...♗xc6 21 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 22 ♖xc6 ♕xc6 23 ♖xa5 or 21 ♗d2!? is much better for White) 21 ♕a6 b3 (the exchange sacrifice 21...♘dxe5 doesn't help much: 22 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 23 ♕xc8 ♖xc8 24 ♗d2 followed by ♖c5 with a decisive advantage) and now in Z.Jasnikowski-T.Luther, German League 1994, White should have played 22 ♗c3! intending e5-e6, against which there's no good defence: 22...♗b6 23 e6! ♘df6 24 exf7+ ♗xf7 25 ♕xc8 ♗xf2+ 26 ♗h1 ♖xc8 27 ♗xb3+ etc.

b) 17...♕a6?! is more reliable, attempting to extinguish White's initiative, but doesn't fully succeed: 18 ♕xa6 ♖xa6 19 ♖fc1 ♖c6 (or 19...♖c8 20 dxe5) 20 dxe5! ♘g4 (or 20...♖xc5 21 ♗e2 ♘h5 22 ♗e3) 21 h3 and Black faces problems, L.Van Wely-K.Engedal, Gausdal 1993.

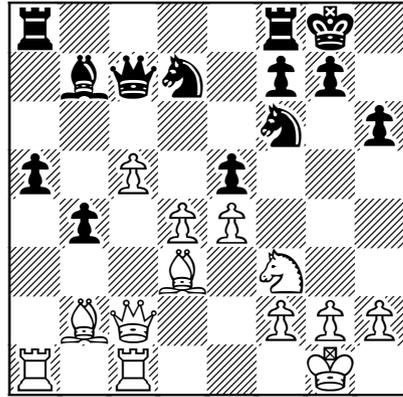
B1: 17...h6?!

Black is still trying to provoke a capture on e5, but this is an extremely risky and apparently dubious choice.

18 ♖fc1!

Inserting 18 dxe5 ♘h5! 19 ♖fc1 transposes to 19 dxe5 in the notes below after

19...♖fc8, while 18 ♖fe1?! allows Black to escape to the main line with 18...exd4 19 ♕xd4 ♖fe8 (see line D).



18...♖fc8

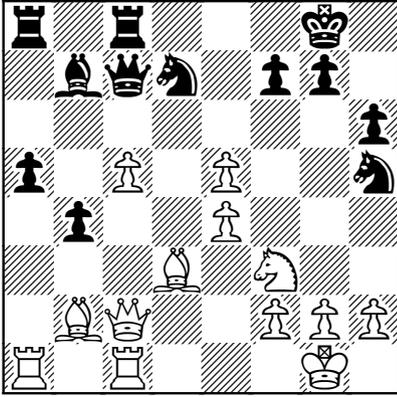
18...♖ac8 is also insufficient: 19 ♗e2 (19 dxe5!?) 19...exd4 20 c6! ♕xc6 21 ♘xd4 ♗b6! 22 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 23 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 24 e5 and White's initiative brings concrete results; e.g. 24...♘d5 (or 24...♖e8 25 ♖xa5 ♗c7 26 ♖b5, winning the b-pawn) 25 ♗e4 g6 26 ♖xa5 ♘7b6 27 ♗d4 ♗e6 28 h4 with a big plus.

19 ♗e2!

This queen manoeuvre, which creates various tactical possibilities on the c-file, has never been played in practice but it makes Black's life difficult.

Instead, the usual 19 dxe5 looks promising, as after 19...♘g4?! 20 e6! fxe6 21 ♗b3 White seizes a strong initiative; while 19...♘h7?! gives him a good choice, such as 20 e6! fxe6 21 ♘d4 ♘xc5 22 ♘b3 ♘xd3!? 23 ♗xc7 ♖xc7 24 ♖xc7 ♕xe4 25 ♕xg7 a4 26 ♘d2 ♕f5 27 ♘c4 with good chances of converting the exchange.

However, the familiar (cf 14 ♗c2 ♗c7, note 'a', earlier in the chapter) swing to the edge of the board with 19...♘h5! gives Black acceptable play:



a) 20 c6 ♖xc6! 21 ♜d2 ♜g6 is far from clear.

b) 20 e6 fxe6 21 ♗d4 ♘f4 is hardly much better.

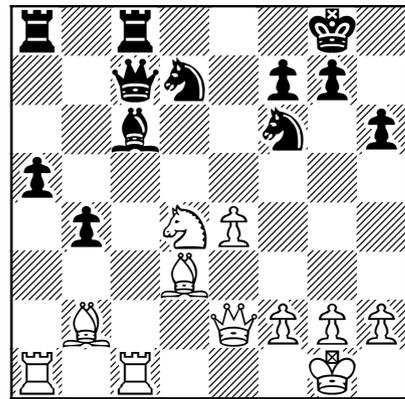
c) 20 g3!? is interesting, cutting off the h5-knight; but after 20...♗xc5! 21 ♗d4 ♘e6 22 ♜xc7 ♘c7 Black has sufficient counter-chances in the ending, as the direct 23 ♗b6 ♘e6 24 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 25 ♘d2 ♘c5 26 ♗e2 is parried by 26...♗xe4 27 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 28 ♗xh5 b3.

d) 20 ♜d2, intending simply to win the knight by g2-g4, looks promising, but Black's position is full of interesting tactical resources, as demonstrated in B.Itkis-M.Matlak, Miedzybrodzie 1991: 20...♗xc5 21 ♗d4 ♜e7 22 ♖xc5! ♖xc5 23 g4 ♜d7!? (or 23...♜e6!? 24 h3 ♖cc8) 24 h3 (not 24 gxh5? ♜g4+ 25 ♔f1 ♜xf3 26 ♗xc5 ♜h1+ and ...♜xa1) 24...♖c3!! 25 gxh5 (or 25 ♗xc3 bxc3 26 ♜xc3 ♘f4 with good compensation) 25...♜xh3 26 ♗xc3 ♜xf3 27 ♗d4 and White is unable to secure his extra piece. After 27...♗d8 28 ♜e3 ♜g4+ 29 ♔f1 ♜d7 30 ♔e2 ♜xd4 31 ♜xd4 ♖xd4 32 ♔e3 ♗d8 33 ♖xa5 ♗c6 the game simplified into drawish ending, but here time-trouble played its part and Black received a gift for his inspired

play: 34 ♖a6?? ♖xd3+!. Furthermore, Black might play for the initiative with 27...♗xe4!? 28 ♗xe4 ♜xe4, when White has to fight for equality – his king is now rather vulnerable and Black's passed pawns have yet to be stopped.

e) 20 ♗d4 is a solid move, securing the extra pawn, though Black isn't too worried about that after 20...♘f4 21 ♗c4 ♘f8!? (21...♘e6 22 ♗xe6 fxe6 isn't so clear, H.Klarenbeek-M.Kuijff, Dutch Ch. 1992; while 21...♜c6?! 22 ♗e3 ♘xg2?! 23 ♔xg2 ♜g6+ 24 ♔f1 ♗xe4 25 ♜d1 ♗d8 fails to 26 ♘h4! ♜h7 27 ♜h5 gives White a decisive advantage, M.Krasenkow-A.Volzhin, Katowice 1992) 22 ♗e3 ♘8e6, playing for the blockade of the opponent's e-pawns. White might still be somewhat better, but the position certainly promises chances for both sides.

19...exd4 20 c6! ♗xc6 21 ♘xd4

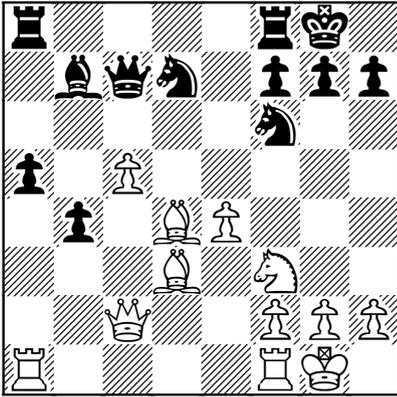


Thanks to the thematic c5-c6 push (e4-e5 is also on the agenda!) White has developed a strong initiative. Black faces serious material losses.

B2: 17...exd4! 18 ♗xd4

Black tried various moves here, but in most cases White is able to maintain the initia-

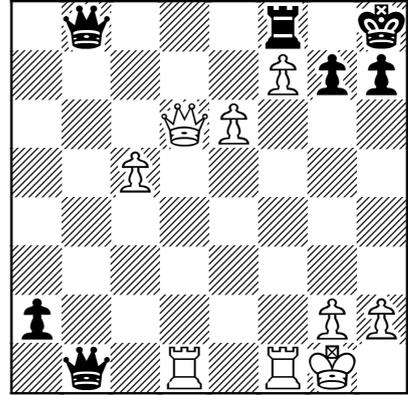
tive, and so for a long time this position was considered good for White.



For instance, the exchange of light-squared bishops by 18...♗a6? fails to the response 19 e5 ♗xd3 20 ♖xd3 ♘h5 21 ♘g5 g6 22 e6!, I.Pesorda-W.Egartner, Austrian League 2000.

However, with the king's rooks still on f1 and f8, the knight sally 18...♘g4!? might be playable and then:

a) 19 ♗b5 doesn't bother Black too much: 19...♗d5 (19...♗c6 20 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 21 h3 ♘gf6 also gives him good play, A.Hollis-M.Matlak, corr. 1992) 20 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 21 f4 (if 21 ♖b2 then 21...f6 is acceptable, B.Züger-J.Klinger, Bern 1991) 21...♗c6 22 ♗b2 ♗a6 and Black's chances already seem preferable, D.Birnbaum-E.Relange, Cappelle la Grande 1995. The rest of the game is worth playing through: 23 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 24 ♖e2 ♖a7 25 ♖f2 a4 26 ♖g4 f5! (Black has a clear advantage, but now huge complications begin) 27 exf5 a3 28 ♗e5 b3 29 f6 b2 30 ♖d1 ♗xe5 (30...g6!?) 31 fxe5 ♖f7 32 ♖e2 ♖b3? (32...♖e6!?) 33 ♖ff1? (33 f7+! ♗h8 34 ♖ff1) 33...a2? (33...♖aa8!) 34 f7+! ♗h8 35 ♖xa6 b1♖ 36 ♖d6! ♖b8 37 e6! (this position deserves a diagram!)



37...♖xd6 (after 37...a1♖ Black has *three* queens on the board!! – but perhaps he didn't have the third one in his hand in time trouble, and in any case the result would be the same) 38 cxd6 a1♖ 39 e7 and here Black had to find the only way to save the game and his pride! Defeat would be too painful after he has managed to promote both his Noteboom pawns: 39...♖b6+! (not 39...♖a7+? 40 ♗h1 ♖bb8 41 d7 and White wins) 40 ♗h1 ♖a8! 41 d7 ♖xg2+! 42 ♗xg2 ♖g6+ 43 ♗h1 ♖e4+ with perpetual check.

b) 19 ♖fc1 ♗c6 20 e5?! ♗xf3 21 gxf3 ♗dxe5 22 ♗xh7 ♗h8 is better for Black, J.Nesterov-E.Relange, Groningen 1993.

c) 19 h3!? ♗ge5 20 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♗b5, M.Lacrosse-M.Strijbos, Dutch Team Ch. 1994 doesn't look promising – compared with 19 ♗b5 White has played the seemingly less useful move h2-h3 (instead of f2-f4), but after 21...♗c6 (21...♖fd8!?) 22 ♗b2 ♗a6 23 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 it might give White the chance to get his rook to the central file by 24 ♖fd1 with some pressure, although Black should be okay.

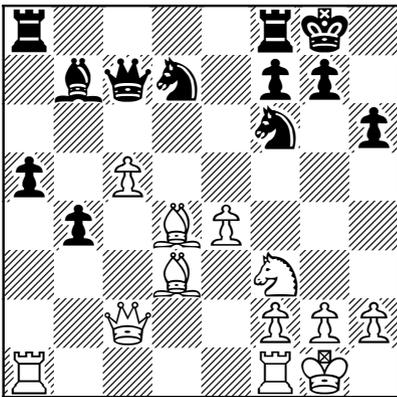
d) 19 ♗c4, intending to put the bishop on d5, would be met by 19...♗a6!?, exploiting the position of White's rook on f1 and reduc-

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ing his attacking resources: 20 c6 (neither 20 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 21 ♚c4 $\text{♞e6!?$, nor 20 ♙d5 ♙xf1 21 ♞xf1 should be too dangerous) 20... ♞de5 21 ♞xe5 ♞xe5 22 ♙xe5 ♚xe5 23 ♞fd1 ♙xc4 24 ♚xc4 g6 25 ♞ac1 ♞fc8 and Black is okay, G.Dizdar-P.Bachmayr, Austrian League 1997.

Nevertheless, while the manoeuvre ... ♞g4-e5 followed by the exchange of light-squared bishop may be acceptable for Black, it isn't very attractive for the true Noteboom advocate. Fortunately, Black has another possibility:

18...h6!



At the end of the 1980s this set-up breathed new life into Black's position! Since that time White tried various ways of fighting for the advantage. Let's consider them step by step.

19 ♞fc1

This development of the rook looks harmless as the threat c5-c6 can be easily parried. However, White still has active possibilities so Black must be careful. Instead:

a) 19 ♞fe1 ♞fe8 or 19 ♞ac1 ♙c6 20 ♞fe1 ♞fe8 transposes to the main variations, examined in line D below.

b) 19 h3?! is too slow to bother Black, who has several good options such as 19... ♙c6 or

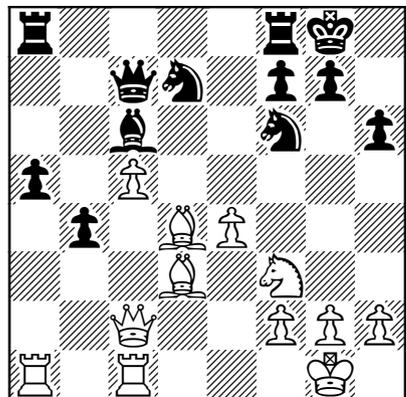
the natural 19... ♞fe8 – in most cases the move h2-h3 is less useful than any Black reply. He might even play 19... $\text{a4!?$, and if 20 ♞xa4 ♞xa4 21 ♚xa4 , then 21... ♞xc5 22 ♞c1 ♞xa4 23 ♞xc7 ♙xe4 24 ♙xe4 ♞xe4 25 ♞c4 ♞ac3 with a draw.

c) 19 e5 at once is harmless. Black has a choice of knight moves:

c1) 19... ♞d5 20 e6?! (this only creates problems for White; but 20 ♙c4 ♚c6 , A.Trisic-C.Lindner, Hamburg 1994, or 20 ♙h7+ ♞h8 21 ♙e4 ♙c6 is fine for Black) 20... fxe6 21 c6 (or 21 ♙h7+! ♞h8 22 ♙xg7+? ♞xg7 23 ♚g6+ ♞h8 24 ♚xh6 ♞xc5) 21... ♙xc6 22 ♞fc1 ♞e7 and Black is doing well, A.Zaichko-O.Karpeshov, Ufa 1999.

c2) 19... $\text{♞h5!?$ again deserves attention, not obstructing the bishop: 20 ♙h7+ ♞h8 21 ♙e4 b3 22 ♚b1 a4 23 ♞e1 ♞xc5 24 ♙xb7 ♞xb7 25 ♚e4 (instead 25 ♚f5 g6 26 ♚g4 ♞h7 27 ♞ac1 ♚e7 is unclear) 25...a3 26 ♚e3 (not 26 g4? b2 27 ♞ad1 ♞c5) 26... ♚c2 27 ♞ac1 ♚g6 28 ♚xb3 ♞fb8 and Black is fine.

19...♙c6



This simple move not only halts White's c-pawn, it also supports the future advance of the queenside passers. Here there's no need for Black's rook to copy its counterpart

– it can be more effectively developed to e8, where it will not face opposition. Curiously, sometimes a situation which looks the same (cf 17...♙fe8?! 18 ♚fc1 above) is actually the opposite – when Black's rook goes to e8 early, its white counterpart goes to c1 with great effect! How is that possible?! The point is that each side deploys their rook at the most appropriate moment, when the situation in some particular area – in this case around the c6-square – is favourable for them.

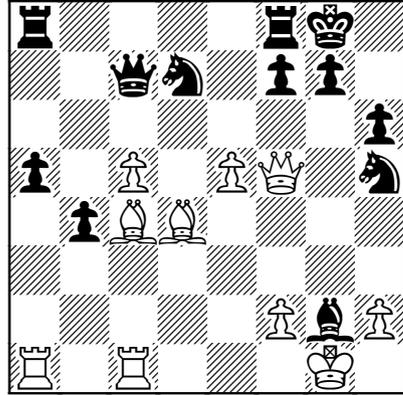
Although 19...♙fc8 isn't strictly necessary here, it remains quite playable. This option will be examined in line C, where White may force this position by using a different move order.

20 e5

White should act quickly, as Black still has natural improving moves to make, and slow play such as 20 ♚b2?! gives him important time; e.g. 20...♙fe8 21 h3 (or 21 e5?! ♗g4 22 ♗f5 ♗dxe5 23 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 24 f4 ♗g6 25 ♗xg7 ♙xf4, P.Haba-M.Kuijff, German League 1997) 21...♙e6! 22 ♗h4?! (or 22 e5 ♗h5 23 ♗c4 ♙e7) 22...♗e5! 23 ♗b1, V.Ikonnikov-R.Scherbakov, Chelyabinsk 1991, and now it was the right moment to grab the pawn: 23...♗xe4 with a big advantage.

20...♗d5

Once again 20...♗h5!? looks fairly interesting, and here, by leaving the long diagonal open, it prevents the opposing queen from making use of the e4-square. White is able to maintain some pressure, but it seems bearable: 21 ♗c4 (21 ♗h7+ ♗h8 22 ♙f5 is harmless; e.g. 22...♙ae8! 23 ♙e1 ♗xf3 24 ♙xf3 ♗xh7 25 ♙xh5 ♗g8) 21...♗xf3 22 ♙f5! (not 22 gx3? ♗xe5 23 ♙f5 ♗xc4 24 ♙xc4 g6 with a big advantage for Black) 22...♗xg2! and now White has a dilemma:



a) 23 ♙xh5 sees Black hold on after 23...♗b7! 24 c6 (not 24 e6?! ♙f4! 25 exd7 ♙e4! 26 ♗f1 ♙xd4 27 ♗b5 b3 or 25 exf7+ ♗h8 26 ♗d1 ♗f6 and it's White who faces problems) 24...♗xc6 and then:

a1) 25 ♗d5 ♙a6 is okay: 26 e6 (or 26 ♙g4 ♗xe5!) 26...fxe6 (not 26...♙d6?! 27 ♙xc6! ♙xc6 28 ♙e1!) 27 ♗xe6+ (not 27 ♙g6?! ♗f6 28 ♗xe6+ ♗h8 29 ♗f5 ♙g8!) 27...♗h7 28 ♗f5+ ♗g8 with a draw by repetition.

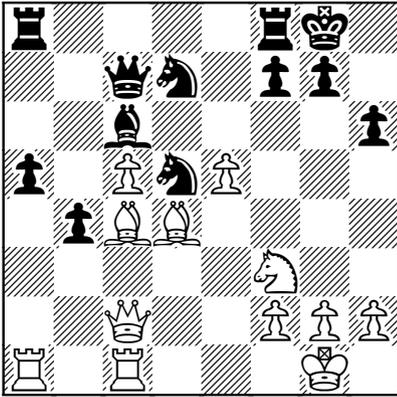
a2) 25 ♗b3!? ♙ae8! 26 e6 (26 ♙g6? fails to 26...♗xe5! 27 ♗xe5 ♙xe5 28 ♙xc6 ♙d7 and Black is at least not worse) 26...fxe6 27 ♙g6 ♗e5! and now neither side has a choice: 28 ♗xe6+ ♗h8 29 ♙xc6! ♙xe6! not (29...♙xc6?? 30 ♗xe5) 30 ♙xe6 ♗xc6 31 ♙xh6+ ♗g8 32 ♙e6+ ♙f7! 33 ♙e8+ (not 33 ♙c1? ♗xd4! 34 ♙e8+ ♙f8 35 ♙xf8+ ♗xf8 36 ♙xc7 b3 and wins) 33...♙f8 34 ♙e6+ ♙f7 with another draw.

b) 23 ♗xg2!? may be better: 23...♙c6+ 24 f3 (24 ♙f3 ♗f4+ 25 ♗g3 ♙xf3+ 26 ♗xf3 ♗e6 is unclear; e.g. 27 ♗xe6 fxe6+ 28 ♗e4 b3! 29 c6 ♗b6!) 24...g6 (24...g5!?) 25 ♙e4!? (25 ♙g4!?) 25...♙xe4 26 fxe4 and White keeps the initiative in the endgame. Black can hold on with 26...♗f4+ (26...♙fe8 is met by 27 ♙f1) 27 ♗g3 ♗e6 28 ♗xe6 fxe6 29 c6 ♗b8 30 c7

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♖d7 31 ♜c6 ♜fc8!, but he remains under some pressure.

21 ♙c4!



Planning ♜e4-g4 and ♘h4-f5 or f2-f4-f5 with an attack.

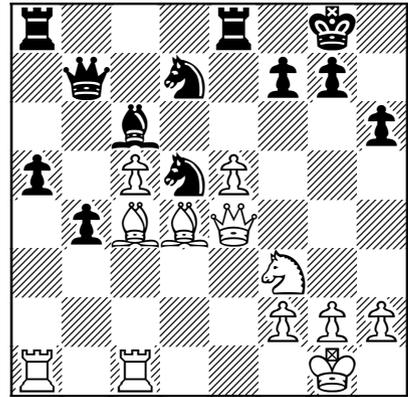
21...♜fe8

21...a4!? looks suspicious, but in fact it is far from clear: 22 ♜e1 (22 e6 is harmless: 22...fxe6 23 ♜e1 ♜xf3! 24 gxf3 ♘f8 and Black is at least not worse) 22...b3 23 ♜f5 ♘e7 24 ♜h3 ♙xf3 25 e6! ♜f4 26 exf7+ ♘h8 27 ♜xd7 ♘f5 28 ♜xa4! ♜g5! 29 ♙f1! (not 29 g3?! ♜ad8 30 ♜e8 ♘xd4!) 29...♜ad8, and now 30 ♜e8 can be parried by 30...♜g6 31 ♜a6 ♜dxe8! 32 fxe8 ♜xe8 33 ♜xg6 ♜xe1 34 gxf3 (or 34 ♙c3 b2!) 34...♘xd4 35 ♜b6 with a draw. Alternatively, 30 ♜e8 initiates crazy complications, which most likely lead to the same outcome: 30...♜xd7 31 ♜xf8+ ♘h7 32 ♜h8+ ♘xh8 33 f8 ♜+ ♘h7 34 h4! ♜g6! 35 h5! and here there are many ways to end the game with perpetual check, so let's pick the most beautiful one: 35...♜g5!? 36 ♙e3! ♜xh5! 37 gxf3 b2!? (or just 37...♘xe3 38 ♜a8! ♜g5+ etc) 38 ♜a8! b1 ♜ 39 ♜g8+ ♘g6 40 ♜a6+!? (or 40 ♜e6+ ♘h7 41 ♜g8+) 40...♘d6! 41 ♜e8+! ♜f7! 42 cxd6! ♘h7 43 d7 ♜xf3! 44 d8 ♜ ♜g4+ 45 ♘h2 ♜h5+ 46 ♙h3

♜xh3+! 47 ♘xh3 ♜h1+ 48 ♘g4! ♜g2+ 49 ♘h4 g5+ 50 ♜xg5! and Black has to give perpetual.

All the same, getting the rook into play seems more reliable than just pushing the queenside pawns and hoping that everything will be fine.

22 ♜e4 ♜b7!



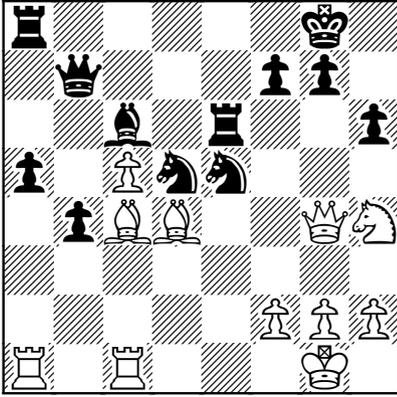
23 ♜g4

The immediate 23 ♘h4!? should be met by 23...♜e6!, when 24 ♜g4 transposes to the main line. The direct 24 ♘f5 is parried by 24...♘e7! 25 ♘xe7+ ♜xe7 26 ♜g4 ♙d5!? and Black is okay; while 24 f4 is too double-edged: 24...♘b6 25 ♜e3 ♘xc4 26 ♜xc4 ♙d5 27 ♜cc1 f6! (Black must break up the pawn chain) 28 ♜g3 (or 28 f5 ♜xe5 29 ♙xe5 ♘xe5, or 28 ♘f5 fxe5 29 fxe5 ♘h7 30 ♘d6 ♜c6) 28...fxe5 29 fxe5 b3 and Black is doing pretty well.

23...♜e6! 24 ♘h4!

White's plan looks promising, but Black has sufficient defensive resources. On 24 ♜e1 he has a good choice between 24...♜g6, followed by ...♘f8-e6, and 24...b3!? 25 ♘h4 ♜ae8 26 ♜g3 (not 26 f4? ♜b4) 26...a4 and so on.

24...♘xe5!



25 ♖g3!

In Z.Jasnikowski-R.Scherbakov, Katowice 1992, White went astray with 25 ♖xe5? ♗xe5 26 ♖f5 and here, instead of 26...g6 27 ♖xh6 ♖h7, the exchange sacrifice 26...♗xf5! 27 ♗xf5 b3 could have posed serious problems as Black's passers aren't easily opposed.

25...♖g6!?

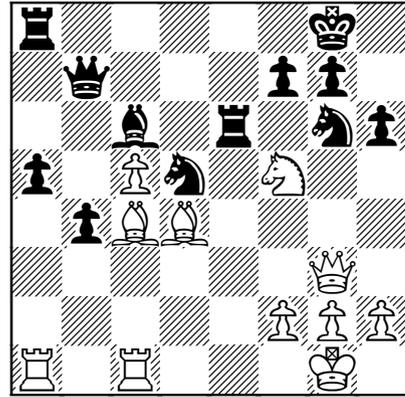
The most reliable. Others are more risky:

a) 25...f6 26 ♖xe5!? ♗xe5 27 ♗e1!? ♖g5 (or 27...♗ae8?! 28 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 29 ♗d3 with the initiative) 28 ♗d6 and Black's king is vulnerable.

b) 25...♗ae8 may be playable; e.g. 26 ♖xd5!? (after 26 f4 ♖xf4! 27 ♗xf4 ♖xc4 28 ♗xc4 both 28...g5!? and 28...b3!? give Black sufficient compensation for the piece) 26...♖xd5 27 f4 can be met by 27...b3!? (or 27...♗g6!? 28 ♖xg6 ♖xg6) 28 ♗f1 (alternatives don't promise much: 28 f5 ♗a6 29 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 30 ♗xe5 b2, or 28 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 29 fxe5 b2 30 ♖f5 g6 31 ♖xh6+ ♖g7 32 ♖f5+ ♖g8 33 ♖h6+ with a draw) 28...♖xg2! 29 f5 ♖xf1 30 fxe6 f6 31 ♖xe5 (or 31 ♗xf1 ♗xe6 32 ♖f5 ♖h7 33 ♖b2 a4) 31...fxe5 32 ♗xf1 b2 (or 32...♗xe6 33 ♗d3 ♗f6) 33 ♗g6 (not 33 ♗b1? ♗b4) 33...♗f8 34 ♖f5 ♗f6 and Black holds on: 35 ♖xh6+ ♖h8 36 ♖f7+ (not 36 ♗xf6? b1♗+)

36...♖g8 37 ♖h6+ ♖h8 with a draw by repetition.

26 ♖f5



White's initiative gives him decent compensation for the pawn, but Black is at least not worse. He may choose between 26...♖df4!? 27 ♖xg7 ♖xg2 28 h4 ♖d5!? 29 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 30 ♖e3 ♗e4 31 ♖xf4 ♖xc4 with excellent compensation for the exchange, and 26...♗c7!? 27 ♖xg7 (27 ♗xc7?! ♖xc7 28 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 is good for Black) 27...♗xg3 28 hxg3 ♖e4 29 ♖f5 ♖de7 30 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 with the better ending.

C: 16 ♗fc1

