

The Complete Bogo-Indian Defense

Maxim Chetverik

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About the author

Maxim Chetverik, born in Voronezh in 1963, is one of Russia's biggest chess opening experts. He has written books published in Russian, English, French and German on the Queen's Indian Defense, Catalan Opening, English Opening, Benoni System, Queen's Gambit Accepted, Sicilian Defense, Petroff Defense, Dutch Defense, Alekhine Defense and Albin Counter Gambit, as well as more general opening books, a book on middle-game strategy, and books on the games of Alekhine, Tal and Spassky.

He became an International Master in 2003 and is a regular tournament player to this day, as well as being a coach in his native Voronezh. His best tournament results include Budapest Open, 1st place, 1996, Open championship of Slovan Club, Bratislava, 1st place, 1998, Prague Open, 2nd equal, 2002, Kecskemet (Hungary) round robin tournament, 1st place, 2003, Stuttgart Open, 2nd place, 2009, Yaroslavl Open, 3rd place, 2015, Olomouc (Czech Republic), 2nd place, 2017, and Heraklion (Greece), 2nd place, 2019.



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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

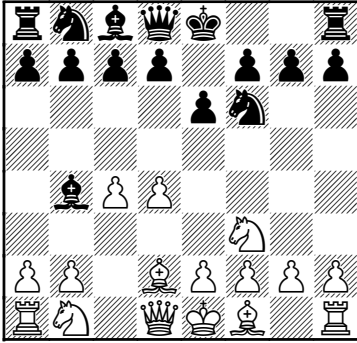
The Bogo-Indian Defense is a relatively young opening. The first game to be found in the database is that of Mackenzie – Noa (London 1883). By an odd coincidence, Hungarian player Josef Noa also defended the honor of the black pieces in the earliest-known Queen’s Indian Defense (Blackburne – Noa, Frankfurt 1887). Unfortunately, the chess content of both games was somewhat lackluster and so we are better off taking a time machine to the 20th century.

The 10th game of the Rubinstein – Bogoljubov match (Gothenburg 1920) began with the following opening moves: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♙b4+ 4.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 5.♚xd2 b6 6.♘c3 ♙b7 7.g3 0-0 8.♙g2 d6 9.0-0 ♘bd7 10.♚c2 ♖e8. This was a hybrid set-up that I review in chapter 12 of my book *The Queen’s Indian Defense: Main Line 4.g3 System* (published in 2018 by Elk and Ruby Publishing House) in the move order 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♙b7 5.♙g2 ♙b4+ 6.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 7.♚xd2. A fragment from this Rubinstein versus Bogoljubov game is included in game 2 of that same book. However, count of games in the Bogo-Indian proper in the last century should really start from the later (tournament) game Bogoljubov – Seleznev (Gothenburg 1920). It began 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 ♙b4+ 4.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 5.♘bxd2 c5 6.dxc5 ♚a5 7.g3 ♚xc5 8.♙g2 ♘c6 9.a3 ♚e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.e4 d6 12.♗e1 ♙d7 13.b4 ♗fd8 14.♚b3 ♙e8, where black’s sole weakness was d6 and he had a solid position. White eventually won a long-drawn game. These Russian emigre masters Efim Bogoljubov and Alexei Seleznev were friends and most probably discussed their game after it ended.

We begin our analysis of historical games with a well-known battle won in brilliant style by the future world champion.

No. 1 A. Alekhine – E. Bogoljubov
Budapest 1921

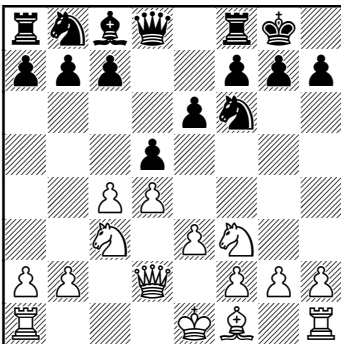
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♙b4+
 4.♙d2



4...♙xd2+ 5.♚xd2 0-0

Bogoljubov is no longer thinking here of playing a Queen's Indian Defense – after 5...b6 apart from 6.g3 black has to contend with 6.♘c3 (game 53) with the idea of the advances e2-e4 and d4-d5.

6.♘c3 d5 7.e3



The pawn structure is mostly settled, and is the same as that seen in the orthodox Queen's Gambit. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops should in theory favor

white, though one should not forget the advantageous role played by simplifications in cramped positions.

7...♘bd7

The setup 7...♚e7 and ♖f8-d8 is considered in chapter 8 (games 56 and 57).

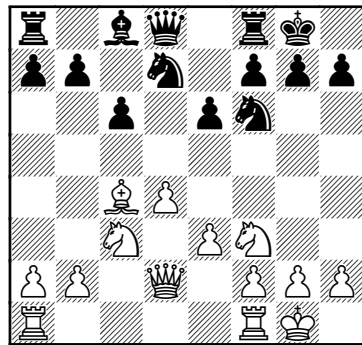
8.♙d3

The exchange 8.cxd5 exd5 is structurally close to game 56.

8...c6 9.0-0

Alekhine believed that this standard castling enabled black to gain equal play by opening the center and hence recommended the prophylactic 9.♚d1 (which has not been tested). The continuation 9.0-0-0 ♚e7 10.e4 dxe4 11.♘xe4 c5 12.♚he1 cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♘xe4 14.♙xe4 ♘f6 15.♙c2 was met in the game A. Grigoryan – Tomov (Bansko 2010). Now 15...♚c5!? supports the completion of development after 16...b6 or an attack against the white king with a7-a6 and b7-b5.

9...dxc4 10.♙xc4



10...e5!

This break is possible due to the interim exchange with check – 11.dxe5 ♘xe5! 12.♚xd8 ♘xf3+ 13.gxf3 ♚xd8.

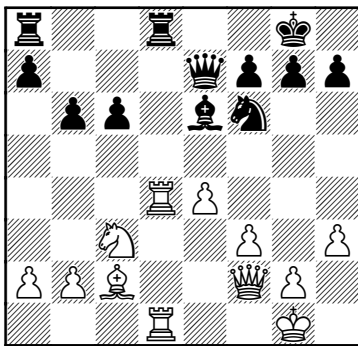
11. ♖b3

The bishop evades the attack ♗d7-b6 and protects against e5-e4 (as black loses the pawn after ♗f3-g5 and ♖b3-c2). The sacrifice 11. ♖xf7+ is only enough to draw (as correctly pointed out by Alekhine): 11... ♗xf7 (11... ♖xf7 12.dxe5 ♗g4 13. ♗ad1 ♗e7 14.e6+! ♖xe6 15. ♗d4 ♗ge5 16. ♗xe5 ♗xe5 17.f4 places the black king in danger) 12.dxe5 ♗g4 13.e6 ♗xf3! 14.exd7 ♖xd7 15.gxf3 ♗xh2! 16. ♖xh2 ♗h4+.

11... ♗e7?!

Thus far, Alekhine's annotations to the game are comprehensive and objective. He compares the potential of the opposing pawn groups and major pieces on the open file. Each side's potential proved to be equal in the later game Johner – Gruenfeld (Piestany 1922): 11...exd4 12. ♗xd4 ♗b6 13. ♗f4 ♖c5 14. ♗a4 ♗xa4 15. ♗xa4 ♖f5.

12.e4 exd4 13. ♗xd4 ♖c5 14. ♖c2 ♗d8 15. ♗ad1 ♖g4 16.f3 ♗e6 17. ♗f2 ♗xd4 18. ♗xd4 ♖e6 19. ♗fd1 b6 20.h3



“The game is practically over” (Alekhine). A premature verdict, as black is ready both to fight for the open file and cope with the enemy

pawn storm. The position after 20... ♗h5 21.e5 c5 22. ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 23.f4 g6 is defensible.

20...c5?! 21. ♗4d2 ♗xd2 22. ♗xd2 c4?

Here the pawn is vulnerable, whereas the white queen gains an excellent square in the center from where it can support the pawn bind. Alekhine suggested the best defensive approach – 22... ♗e8 and f7-f6 with chances of saving the game.

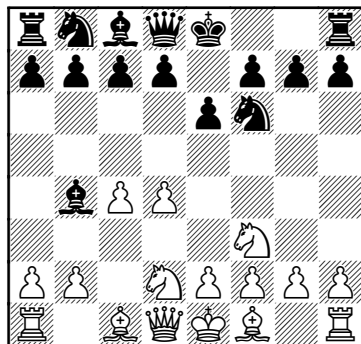
23.f4 g6 24. ♗d4 ♗c8 25.g4 ♖xg4 26.hxg4 ♗xg4 27. ♖g2 h5 28. ♗d5 ♗h4 29. ♗h1 ♗d8 30. ♖d1

Black resigned.

Bogoljubov began to actively promote the opening named after him, and with both colors. In the game Bogoljubov – Walter (Ostrava 1923) white introduced the move 4. ♗bd2. That game wasn't of interest, however, and I prefer a slightly later example from Bogoljubov's career.

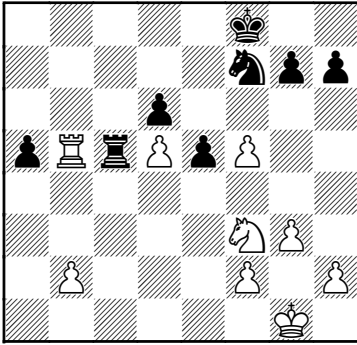
**No. 2 E. Bogoljubov – W. Winter
London 1927**

1.d4 ♗f6 2. ♗f3 e6 3.c4 ♖b4+ 4. ♗bd2



The computer recommends 21...fxe4 22.♘d2 e3 23.♙xe3 ♙d7 24.♘e4 b5, and white's activity is not worth more than the sacrificed pawn.

22.♙h3 ♖c8 23.♙xf5 ♙xf5
24.exf5 ♖xc7 25.♖xc7 ♖c8 26.♖xb7
♙xb6 27.♖xb6 ♔f8 28.♖b5
♖c5



29.♖b8+

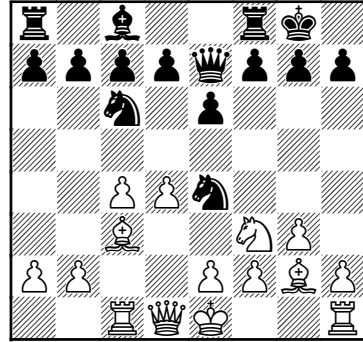
White's pawns are too weak to give him real winning chances. Nevertheless, he should have tested the knight endgame after 29.♖xc5 dxc5 30.♘d2.

29...♙e7 30.♖b7+ ♙e8 31.♖b6
♙e7 32.♖b7+ ♙e8 33.h4 ♖xd5
34.♘g5 ♘xg5 35.hxg5 g6 36.fxg6
hxg6 37.♖g7 ♖b5 38.♖xg6 ♙e7
39.♖g7+ ♙e6 40.♖a7 ♙f5 41.♖a6
♖d5 42.♖b6 ♙xg5 43.b4 axb4
44.♖xb4

Draw agreed.

No. 111 A. Delchev –
J. Campos Moreno
Barcelona 2019

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♙b4+
4.♙d2 ♙e7 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♘c3 0-0
7.♙g2 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 ♘e4 9.♖c1



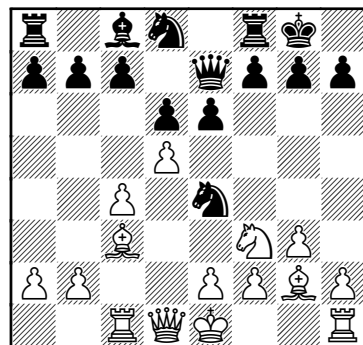
In this and the following games white protects his bishop with his rook (usually on move 8, without the additional moves 6...0-0 7.♙g2). In this example, black rejected ♘e4xc3.

9...d6

If 9...a5 10.0-0 d6 it makes sense to avoid exchanging the bishop via 11.♙e1. Further, the game Postny – Schmitz (Bad Wiessee 2013) continued 11...f5 12.d5 ♘b8 13.dxe6 ♙xe6 14.♘d2 ♘c5 15.♘b3 ♘xb3 16.♙xb3 c6 17.♙e3 ♘d7 18.♙c3 with a tangible advantage thanks to the bishop pair.

10.d5 ♘d8

If black waits to exchange with 10...♘b8 11.dxe6 then he has the option of 11...♙xe6 12.♘d4 ♙d7 (but not 12...♙xc4? 13.♘f5). If 13.0-0 black can count on equality via 13...♖e8 14.♘b5 ♙c6.



11.0-0

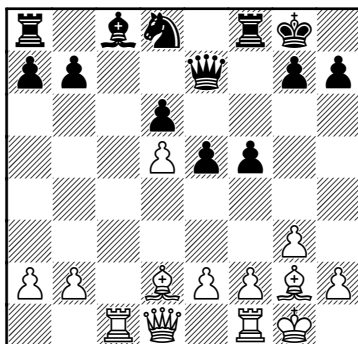
Let's see what happens if white evades the exchange with 11.♙b4. The game Rombaldoni – Caruana (Bratto 2006) continued 11...a5 12.♙a3 e5 13.♘d2 ♘xd2 14.♖xd2 b6 15.0-0 ♘b7 16.b3 ♘c5 (the knight has reached a nice outpost via a slightly unusual route) 17.♙b2 ♙f5 18.h3 ♙g6 19.♚h2 f5. The bishops haven't achieved anything and the game should end in a draw.

The continuation 11.dxe6 ♘xe6 12.♙b4 was introduced by a young Kramnik in 1992, but black soon found strong counter arguments. As an example see the game Chetverik – Loginov (Zalakaros 1994): 12...a5 13.♙a3 f5 14.0-0 ♚h8 15.b3 b6 16.♙b2 ♙b7 17.♘d4 ♘xd4 18.♖xd4 ♖f6 19.♖cd1 ♖e6 20.♖fe1?! (here and earlier the prophylaxis e2-e3 is useful) 20...♖f8 21.♙f3 (21.e3 c5! 22.♖d3 ♘g5) 21...f4 with an initiative for black.

11...e5 12.c5 f5 13.cxd6 cxd6 14.♘d2

Let's try 14.♙b4 in the changed structure: 14...♘f7 15.a4 b6 16.a5 ♘c5 17.♙a3 ♙d7 18.♘d2 ♖fc8 19.b4 ♙a4 20.♖e1 ♘d7 21.♘b1 ♘f6 22.♖d2 ♙b5 23.♙b2 bxa5 24.bxa5 ♖ab8 25.♘a3 ♙a6 26.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 27.♘c2, and a draw (Korchnoi – Loginov, Moscow 1994). Grandmaster Loginov, a known expert in this variation, extinguished his opponent's ambitions on the queenside in exemplary fashion.

14...♘xd2 15.♙xd2

**15...f4**

If 15...b6 16.♖c3 ♙b7 17.♖b3 e4 18.f3 the vulnerability of the d5 pawn cannot be exploited. Any black activity on the kingside promises nothing either.

16.gxf4 exf4 17.♖c4 ♖g5 18.♚h1?!

He should have taken control of the third rank via 18.♖b3 thanks to the nice tactic 18...♙g4 19.♖xf4! ♖xf4 20.♖g3. Now it's black who has a tactical opportunity.

18...♙h3! 19.♙xh3 ♖xd5+ 20.♙g2 f3

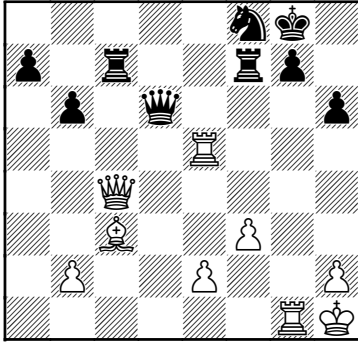
This is to capture the rook after 21.♙xf3 (lengthening the operating reach along the file of the f8 rook). The variation 20...♖xc4 21.♙c3 ♖f5 22.♖xd6 f3 23.exf3 ♖f4 leads to unclear consequences.

21.♖g4!? fxg2+ 22.♖xg2 ♘e6 23.♙b4 ♖xa2 24.♖xd6 ♖f7 25.♙c3 ♖d8 26.♖b4 ♖d5 27.f3 ♖dd7 28.♖g4 b6 29.♖fg1 h6 30.♖e4 ♘f8

Instead of the knight's unjustified retreat 30...♖f5 was better, in order to neutralize the dangerous rook on g1 from the g5 square.

31.♖e5 ♖d6 32.♖c4 ♖c7??

It's not easy for white to extend his advantage once black moves out of the pin with 32...♙h7. This big blunder was likely due to time trouble.



33.♙xc3 d6 34.♙e7+
Black resigned.

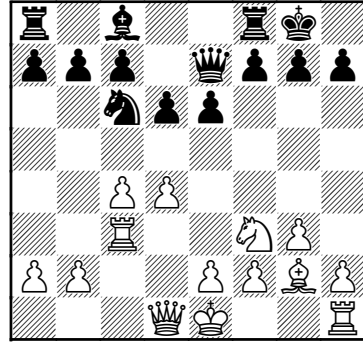
No. 112 R. Markus – E. Toth
Hungary 2014

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♖b4+
4.♙d2 ♚e7 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♘c3 0-0
7.♙g2 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 ♘e4 9.♙c1
♙xc3

Black occasionally continues 9...a5, which supports the sortie ♘c6-b4. However, the knight gets chased from b4 to a6, and in the game Prohaszka – Tratar (Sarajevo 2010) it was stuck there until the end: 10.0-0 ♘xc3 11.♙xc3 d6 12.d5 ♘b4 13.a3 ♘a6 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.♘d4 c6 16.♙e3 ♙d7 17.f4 ♙ae8 18.♘f3 ♙c8 19.♙c2 ♙c7 (if 19...♙d8 the variation from this game wouldn't have worked due to the hanging knight on g5) 20.♘g5 g6 21.♙c3 e5 22.fxe5 ♙xf1+ 23.♙xf1 ♙xe5 24.♙xe5 dxe5 25.c5 ♙g7? 26.♘e4

b6? 27.♘d6. Black of course played weakly, but the reputation of the maneuver ♘c6-b4-a6 is generally pretty poor.

10.♙xc3 d6



11.d5

Here we view the plan to capture d5xe6.

11...♘b8

After 11...♘d8 12.dxe6 fxe6 13.0-0 e5 14.c5 black's camp lacks coordination, whereas 12...♘e6 looks solid. Even a worse endgame after 13.0-0 ♙d7 (13...♙f6!? not allowing white's knight to get to the center) 14.♘d4 ♘xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙xe2 (not forced and 15...♙c6 was solid) 16.♙e3 ♙g4 17.♙xg4 ♙xg4 18.♙e7 ♙ab8 19.♙xc7 ♙fc8 20.♙xc8+ ♙xc8 21.b3 b6 and black defends easily (Arkell – Vlassov, Marianske Lazne 2016).

12.dxe6 fxe6 13.♘d4

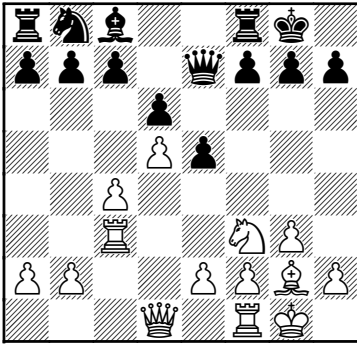
This prevents 13...♘d7 in view of 14.♘xe6! In the later game Markus – S. Popov (Kragujevac 2016) white allowed the enemy knight to travel to f6 and he retained a small advantage after 13.0-0 ♘d7 14.♘d4 ♘f6 15.♙d2 e5 16.♘c2 ♙e6 17.♘e3

f3 54.♙e6+ ♔g8 55.♙e5+ ♔h8
56.♖f7 ♗e8+ 57.♙e6

Black resigned.

No. 114 M. Lagarde – S. Schneider
Rhodes 2013

1.d4 e6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 ♙b4+
4.♙d2 ♖e7 5.g3 ♗c6 6.♗c3 ♙xc3
7.♙xc3 ♗e4 8.♖c1 0-0 9.♙g2 d6
10.0-0 ♗xc3 11.♖xc3 e5 12.d5 ♗b8



13.b4

White aims to break with c4-c5 supported by his b-pawn, as after 13.c5 ♗a6 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.♗d2 ♙d7 the c-file is opened too early, and black will not concede it. The same has happened in practice after 13.♖c2 a5 14.c5 ♗a6 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.♗d2 b5 17.♖c1 ♙d7.

The more flexible continuation 13.♗d2 after 13...a5 offers white the opportunity to play 14.f4!?, while if 14.c5 ♗a6 15.cxd6 cxd6 it's useful to bring the knight into play, instead of building a harmless battery with major pieces. After the complicated continuation 16.♗c4 ♖d8 17.♖b3 ♗c5 18.♖b6 ♗a4 19.♖xd6 ♗xc3 20.bxc3 ♖xd6 21.♗xd6 f6 22.c4 (Gupta –

Amin, Dubai 2012) 22...♖d8 23.c5 b6 the initiative gained at the cost of the exchange is only sufficient to draw.

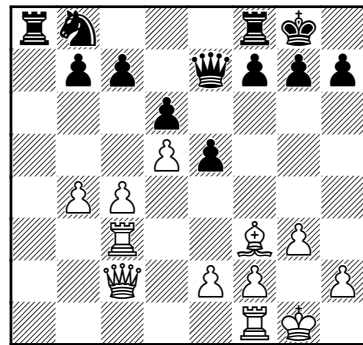
13...♙g4

If 13...a5 then the pin 14.♖a3!? has proved a good answer. In the game Chetverik – Passchyn (Geraardsbergen 2019) after 14...b6 15.♗d2 ♗a6?! 16.bxa5 ♗c5 17.♗b3 ♗xb3 18.axb3 bxa5 19.♖d2 white won a pawn without any clear compensation for black. After the better 15...♗d7 white still retains some initiative on the queenside.

14.♖c2

The standard break c4-c5 has been carried out several times with support from a knight via 14.♗d2 ♗d7 15.♗b3 b6. After 16.c5 a5 17.♖c4 ♗f6 18.h3 ♙h5 19.cxd6 cxd6 20.b5 ♗d7 (Fridman – Timoshenko, Eforie Nord 2009) the rook's invasion is harmless, and the players soon exhausted their fighting resources.

**14...a5 15.a3 axb4 16.axb4 ♙xf3
17.♙xf3**



17...♖d7

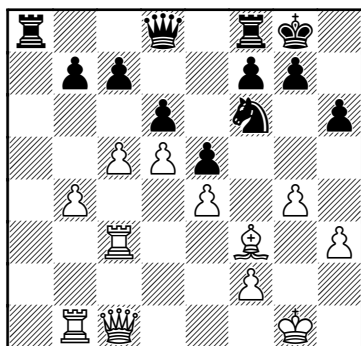
An unexpected and rather questionable decision by black. If 17...b6 18.e4 c5 19.b5 ♖a7 white's

spatial advantage didn't promise him anything real.

18.♖b1 ♖a4 19.♖c1

The principled continuation was 19.c5 ♖xc2 20.♖xc2 f5. Black has freed the f7 square for his rook in the event the c-file is immediately opened, but white can gradually improve his position with 21.e3 ♖a3 22.♙e2.

19...♞d7 20.e4 ♞f6 21.g4 ♖d7
22.h3 h6 23.c5 ♖d8



24.g5

The young French grandmaster playing white tries to outplay his weaker opponent in a sharp struggle, given that quiet continuations (such as 24.♖a3) promise nothing more than equality.

24...hxc5 25.♖xc5 ♖d7
26.♙g2 ♞h7 27.♖d2 ♖d8 28.♖g3
♖f6 29.♖bb3 ♖a1+ 30.♙h2 ♖f4
31.♖xf4 exf4 32.♖gf3

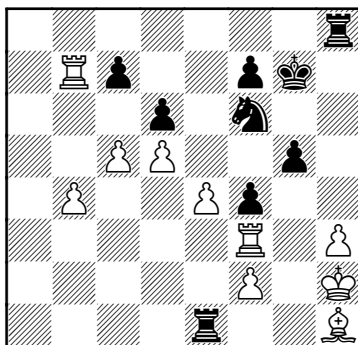
32.♖gc3 ♖a2 33.b5 dxc5 34.♖xc5
♖xf2 35.♖xc7 ♖a8 leads to a draw, and Lagarde attempts a rook adventure from the edge of the board.

32...g5 33.♖a3 ♖e1 34.♖a7 ♞f6
35.♖xb7?

White has crossed a bridge too far. The right continuation was 35.♖fa3,

in order to exchange one rook pair and thereby neutralize his opponent's counterplay on the kingside.

35...♙g7 36.♙h1 ♖h8



37.♙g2

Now compared with the variation 37.♖xc7 ♞g4+ 38.♙g2 ♞e5 the knight alters its victory march.

KEY TIP. The knight's triumph over the fianchettoed bishop is notable, and this is frequently found in the Bogo-Indian Defense. White should weigh up carefully whether he wants to create a strong pawn chain with d5-e4, only to suffer for his efforts with his bishop.

37...♞xe4 38.♖xc7 ♞d2 39.♖d3
f3+ 40.♙g3 ♖xh1 41.♖xd2 ♖1xh3+
White resigned.

This final chapter contained what is considered to be the main line of the Bogo-Indian Defense. On the whole, white's position is preferable, but the variety of possible structures and plans that arise promises further deepening of the 6.♞c3 system and, hence, potential changes to evaluations.

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