

Cyrus Lakdawala

opening repertoire

# Richter-Veresov Attack



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# About the Author

**Cyrus Lakdawala** is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 40 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the U.S.

## **Also by the Author:**

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*The Scandinavian: Move by Move*

*The Slav: Move by Move*

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# Introduction

A sequel rarely surpasses the original. Very few people claim *Rocky II* through *Rocky Balboa* were superior to the original film (although George Costanza did claim that *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York* was superior to *Home Alone!*). In the case of my Veresov books, in my super-unbiased opinion this one is more useful than the original *A Ferocious Opening Repertoire*, mainly since this one faithfully follows the path of the opening's founders, Kurt Richter and Gavriil Veresov, rather than the modern, slightly shady, fad du jour version of White playing 4 f3 and 5 e4, as was covered in the AFOR book.

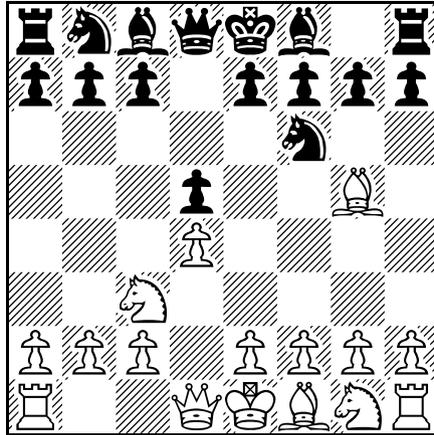
The similarity of their styles (both super-aggressive players) and choice of opening were perhaps not coincidental. To play an opening well, a player's and opening's spirits much touch. If you are an aggressive player who wants to pick a fight in an understudied opening, then the Richter/Veresov is an excellent stylistic fit.

Many chess players look upon the Richter/Veresov with suspicious intensity, on the one hand distrustful, on the other fascinated. The opening's vices are greatly exaggerated and one goal I had in writing this book was to come up with a Veresov repertoire which is both sound *and* adventurous, even if that sounds like a contradiction.

The reader can't easily see into a writer's fears as a book is written. After *A Ferocious Opening Repertoire*, I worried that the f2-f3 lines were strategically shaky for White, sometimes giving the feel of contrived nature. Luckily, the Veresov is not a single-industry town. Researching Richter's and Veresov's games, I discovered to my delight their more natural 4 ♖f3 system, so in this book I toned it down a notch and went with the sounder 4 ♖f3, e2-e3, ♗d3 and e3-e4 plan. Unlike blueblood openings like the Queen's Gambit or Ruy Lopez, which are products of centuries of theoretical toil, the Richter/Veresov is comparatively unexplored. This in turn means that your opponents will likely understudy the variation, which is somewhat under their theoretical radar.

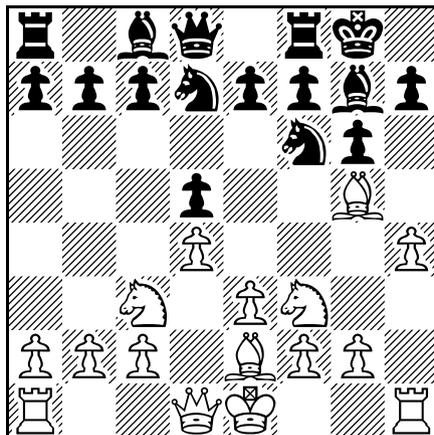
So the question arises: what do you want in life, adventure or solidity? *A Ferocious Opening Repertoire* went with glamour, adventure and danger, while this Opening Repertoire version sticks to slightly less adventurous, sounder lines.

Let's take a seat in the audience and look upon the stage of Richter's and Veresov's joint imaginations.



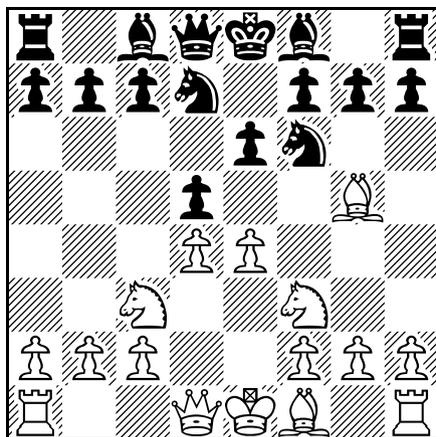
Welcome to the queenside version of the Ruy Lopez, also known as the Richter/Veresov Attack, which is not just a memento of a bygone era. You can't see me but I'm holding up my right hand, swearing to tell you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, just like a witness being sworn in for a court case. The Richter/Veresov is sound, and I say this upon penalty of perjury. There are so many tricky move orders and transpositions that sometimes, to our confused minds, they are as alike and nondescript as factory mannequins. Let's take a look at the lines we face.

We don't believe in the mantra of the 1950's, "better living through technology". This low-tech line is a kind of hybrid between the Jobava London and Barry Attack, with our bishop on g5, rather than on f4. Our plan is simple: We will play  $\text{♞e5}$ , followed by h4-h5 with a cavepersonishly dangerous assault.



Welcome to the wild, wild West, where h-pawns are flung forward without fear. Is this

a time for faith, or is the h4-h5 pawn sacrifice a charlatan faith-healer who takes your money without curing your ailment? The answer is, it's a bit of both. It's empirically shady yet can be a deadly ambush weapon for an unsuspecting opponent who has never seen it. The Richter/Veresov's DNA is equipped with a gambler's natural instinct for calculated risk-taking, so this line is offered as an option.

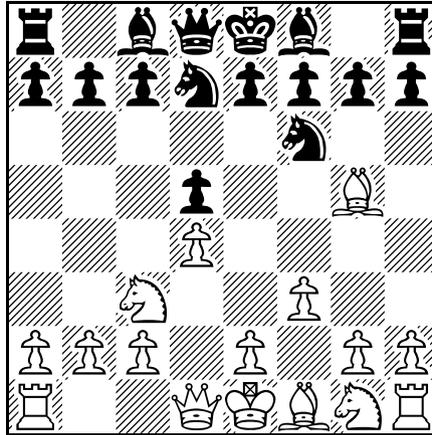


Is this a gambit, or is it performance art? We plan to sacrifice our e-pawn if Black plays ...h7-h6, followed by ...g7-g5. The resulting positions are satisfyingly chaotic.

### The 1 e4 Factor

The Richter/Veresov is not just distantly related to 1 e4. It actually *is* 1 e4 if Black decides to enter certain variations. So while this isn't a book on 1 e4, on the other hand it kind of is, since the Veresov often turns into the Classical lines of the French and Caro-Kann, Pirc, Modern, Philidor and even Owen's Defence. You play 1 d4, your opponent responds with, let's say, 1...d5. Then you bang down 2 ♘c3! and your opponent begins to get worried and thinks: "I don't remember my Richter/Veresov theory! So maybe I should play 2...c6 or 2...e6, turning the game into either a Caro-Kann or French Defence?" On 1...♗f6 2 ♘c3! they can also bail out and play 2...d6, turning the game into a Pirc, Modern or even Philidor.

In this book we don't dodge these heavy theoretical fights, but the reader must understand that there is no way to fully cover the Classical Caro-Kann and French, the Pirc, Modern, Philidor and Owen's Defence in a single book! So I urge you to use the e4 chapters as a base camp and then accumulate more books or hit your database to fill in the details. As a lifelong 1 ♗f3 and 1 d4 player, I didn't realize the 1 e4 lines are drugs I would someday crave.



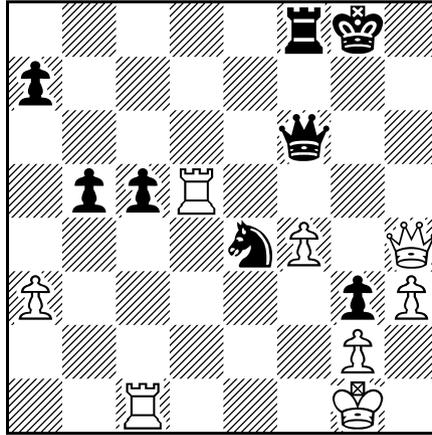
You are 13 years old at a family Christmas gathering. The key question is: will you get to eat with the grown-ups? Or do you remain in the humiliated, demoted state at the children's table? The coffeehouse 4 f3 line is the children's table. In this book we'll go with the adults' table version: the far more stable 4 f3 plan, where we follow with e2-e3, g3, O-O, e1-e1 and e3-e4. There is no need to weave in and out of the warren of theoretical avenues of 4 f3 lines which require loads of memorization, when we can go for the 4 f3 plan, which is both clear, direct and, most importantly, sound. When I first announced on Facebook that I was about to write this book, my buddy GM Jacob Aagaard jokingly wrote: "My favourite with Black!" and I think he meant the f2-f3 version, which we avoid in this book.

No chess writer will ever claim: "After exhaustive research, the universal consensus is that the Richter/Veresov is White's optimal opening!" But saying this, it's a very effective line, especially at club level. Good luck with your Richter/Veresov adventure!

Cyrus Lakdawala,  
San Diego, July 2022.

coming ♖xg3.

33 exf6 ♕xf6



**Exercise (combination alert):** How does White win material by force?

**Answer:** A queen check on g4 short-circuits Black's position.

34 ♕g4+ ♔f7

Alternatively, 34...♕g7 35 ♕e6+ pops the loose knight; and 34...♔h7 35 ♖h5+ is not much fun for Black either.

35 ♖f5 1-0

### Game 11

**R.Nezhmetdinov-B.Gurgenidze**

Rostov on Don 1958

Rashid Nezhmetdinov may be a minor deity in the pantheon, yet his fans are legion. I became a Nezhmetdinov groupie after watching the videos of super-Nezh fan and Croatian YouTuber Antonio Radi•, aka the Agadmatov, who has over a million subscribers to his channel.

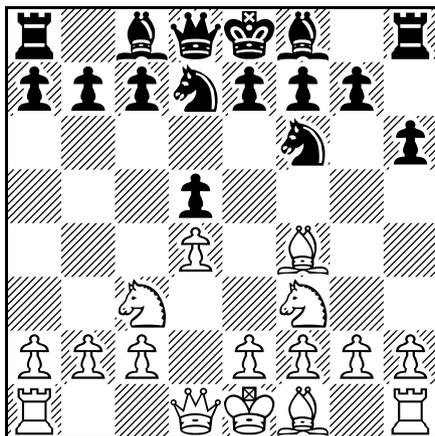
1 d4!?

Normally Nezhmetdinov played "best by test" 1 e4 as regularly as a musical metronome. Here is a rare example of an experimental plunge into a queen's pawn opening.

1...♘f6 2 ♘c3

Some Richter/Veresovers play the opening as a secondary choice, only hiring the line when in need of the full point.

2...d5 3 ♘g5 ♗bd7 4 ♖f3 h6 5 ♘f4!?



I like this move for the following reasons:

1. By moving the bishop back to the Londony f4-square, White threatens ♗b5, targeting c7, in Jobava fashion.
2. White has essentially handed Black ...h7-h6 for free. But is the move really free? If Black castles kingside, White can then try and exploit it with a future g2-g4-g5, opening lines against Black's king.
3. We don't need to risk Veresov's shady/fun pawn sacrifice which we looked at in Games 7 and 8. This one is a far safer option.

### 5...c6

If 5...a6 6 ♖d3 (after 6 e4!? dxe4 7 ♗d2 b6?! 8 ♗dxe4 ♘b7 9 ♖f3 ♗c8 10 0-0-0 e6 11 ♘d3 ♘e7 12 ♗he1 0-0 13 ♖h3 ♗e8 14 ♘xh6!, White got a winning attack for the sacrificed piece, B.Belyakov-R.Volkov, St. Petersburg 2018, but Black's 7th was too slow; 7...c5! is correct) 7...b5 7 ♗e5 c5 8 e4! cxd4 (if 8...c4 9 ♖f3 e6 10 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 11 e5 ♗g8 12 ♗e2, I slightly prefer White in this French-like position) 9 ♖xd4 ♘b7?! (9...e6 10 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 11 exd5 b4 12 ♗e4 ♗xd5 13 ♘g3 f5 14 ♗d2 ♘e7 15 0-0-0 looks sharp and balanced) 10 0-0-0 (after 10 exd5 ♗xd5 11 ♗xd5 ♗xe5 12 0-0-0 ♖xd5 13 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗xd5 White stands better in the ending due to the bishop pair in an open position) 10...e6 11 ♗xd7 ♗xd7, A.Morozevich-P.Leko, Abu Dhabi (blitz match) 2019, then 12 e5 ♗g8 13 ♗e4! and White stands clearly better.

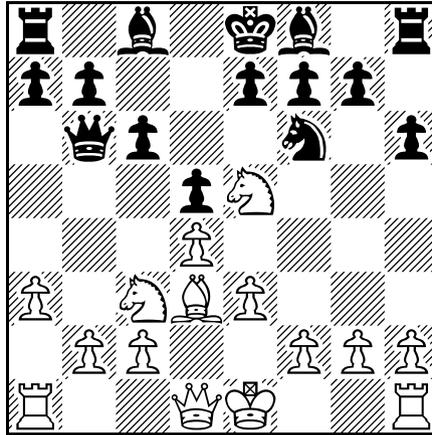
### 6 e3

Alternatively, 6 ♖d3 e6 7 e4 ♘b4 8 e5 ♗e4 9 ♗d2 ♗xc3 10 bxc3 ♘e7 11 c4, S.Vinchev-I.Tofan, correspondence 2017, and I slightly prefer White even if the engine says even.

### 6...♗h5!?

Sure. Let's fall behind in development against one of the greatest attacking players of all time. What could possibly go wrong? Black wants the bishop pair, which comes at a dangerous cost of time.

7 ♙e5 ♘xe5 8 ♘e5 ♙f6 9 ♙d3 ♚b6 10 a3



10...♘d7?!

Let's fall even *more* behind in development against one of the greatest attacking players of all time! Correct was 10...g6 (10...♚xb2?? wins the Bonehead of the Year Award, since 11 ♘a4 traps the queen) 11 0-0 ♙g7 12 f4 ♙f5 13 ♘a4 ♚c7 14 c4! ♙xd3 15 ♚xd3 e6 16 ♚ac1 and White stands only a shade better.

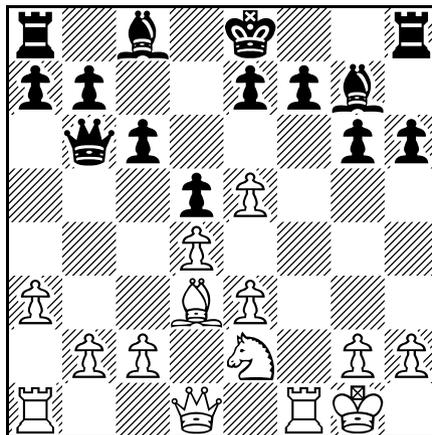
11 f4 ♘xe5?!

Why open White's f-file? 11...g6 12 0-0 ♙g7 was still correct.

12 fxexg6

12...e6? is even worse after 13 0-0 ♚c7 14 ♚h5, as Black can barely move.

13 0-0 ♙g7 14 ♘e2!



In case you didn't notice, we humans don't always need proof to believe something. Nezh believes in his own attacking chances and is willing to give away stuff to prove it. In

## Opening Repertoire: Richter/Veresov Attack

this case it was brilliant judgment. One of the rules of the Nezh franchise is that he must give away two or three pawns (soundly or unsoundly!) to attack. He wants to bring another attacker to the kingside and is willing to offer Black a pawn to reach his goal.

### 14...♙xe5?

Gurgenidze begins to believe in the highly implausible theory that he will survive by sacrificing one of his most important defenders.

Nor will Black get away with 14...♗xb2? (the message is clear: you have gone too far, so prepare to meet your just punishment) 15 ♖f4 0-0 16 ♗f3 ♗b6 (not 16...e6? 17 ♗g3 ♙d7 18 ♜xg6! and Black's game crumbles, whether he accepts the sacrifice or declines) 17 h4 ♙d7 18 ♗g3 with a winning attack for White.

Black's best defensive try would be to reduce material with 14...♙g4 15 ♗e1 ♙xe2 16 ♗xe2 0-0 17 c3 c5.

### 15 dxe5 ♗xe3+ 16 ♙h1 ♗xe5

Why not. A man condemned to execution in an hour isn't likely to worry about cholesterol in his final meal.

### 17 ♗d2!

Please, take my b-pawn! Nezh continues to tip generously. Black got three pawns for the piece and can win a fourth, yet is busted due to White's massive lead in development.

### 17...♗g5

If 17...♗xb2 then 18 ♜c3 (threatening to trap the queen next move) 18...♗b6 19 ♗f4 ♙e6 20 ♜a4 ♗a5 21 ♗d4 ♗g8 22 ♜c5 ♙c8 23 ♗ae1 f5 24 g4! with a winning attack for White.

### 18 ♗b4

Nyet. Of course Nezh isn't going to allow a queen swap.

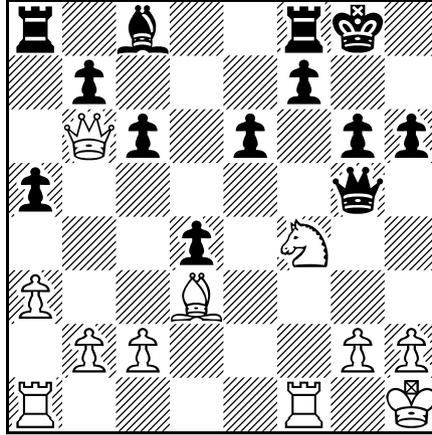
### 18...a5 19 ♗c5 0-0

Or 19...e5 20 c4 ♙e6 21 ♜c3 ♗e7 22 ♗e3 ♗g5 23 ♗e1!, when 23...0-0 24 h4 ♗e7 25 cxd5 ♙xd5 26 ♗g3 ♗ae8 27 ♗ae1 ♗d6 (or 27...♗e6 28 ♙f5) 28 h5 g5 29 ♜e4 ♙xe4 30 ♙xe4 leaves Black fatally weak on the light squares.

### 20 ♜f4

The engine goes for 20 c4 dxc4 21 ♗xc4 ♙e6 22 ♗c2 ♙d5 23 ♜g1!, followed by 23...♗ae8 24 ♜f3 ♗f6 25 ♗ae1 ♗g7 26 ♜e5 ♗d8 27 ♗a4 b6 28 ♗f4 and has Black losing here. It is easy to see that White has enormous pressure.

### 20...d4 21 ♗b6! e6



**Exercise (planning):** White's extra piece is worth more than Black's pawns. Prove why.

**Answer:** Annihilation of defensive barrier. Black won't survive the opening of the f-file.

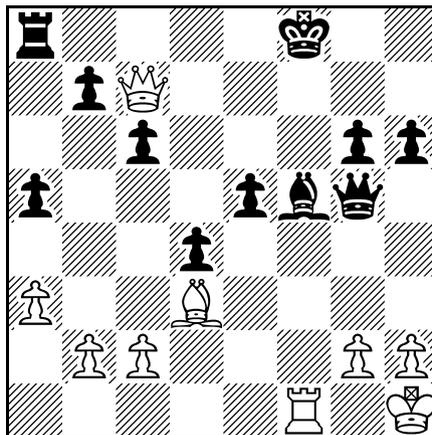
22 ♘xg6! fxg6 23 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 24 ♚c7!

This accurate move slides White's queen closer to the enemy king and also disallows Black's unravelling plan of ...♔e7 and ...♙d7.

24...e5

Of course 24...♚e7?? fails horribly to the simple 25 ♖f1+ ♔e8 26 ♙xg6+ with mate in two.

25 ♖f1+ ♙f5



**Exercise (planning):** Find White's most promising attacking plan.

**26 g4?**

One quirky Nezh-trait was an unnatural attraction to the convoluted, over the simple and clear. There is no need for this indulgence.

**Answer:** Simpler and stronger was 26 ♖h7! (Nezhmetdinov must have missed this nuance) 26...♗e8 27 ♗xf5 and game over.

**26...♗e7?**

Gurgenidze's only prayer was to accept with 26...♗xg4!, which forces White to find a number of good moves. 27 ♗d6+ ♖e8 (27...♖g8? 28 ♗xf5 gxf5 29 ♗g1 wins the queen) 28 ♗xe5+ ♖d8 29 ♗xf5 gxf5 30 ♗xf5 ♗d1+ 31 ♖g2 ♗g4+ 32 ♖f2 ♗h4+ 33 ♖f3 (not yet 33 ♖e2?? due to 33...♗e7) 33...♗h3+ 34 ♖e2 ♗g4+ 35 ♖d2 ♗g2+ 36 ♖e1 (not yet 36 ♖d3?! ♗g6) 36...♗g1+ 37 ♗f1 ♗g8 38 ♗f6 ♗g1+ (or 38...♖c8 39 ♗e7 ♗g1+ 40 ♗f1) 39 ♖e2 ♗g2+ 40 ♖d3 and wins.

**27 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 28 gxf5**

Black had no chance from this point.

**28...g5**

28...gxf5 29 ♗xf5 ♖e6 30 ♗h5 ♗h8 31 ♗e4 consolidates.

**29 f6+ ♖d6 30 f7 ♗f8 31 ♗g6 1-0**

## Game 12

**L.Alburt-A.Kosteniuk**

Razuvaev Memorial, Rockville 2013

I remember interviewing GM Lev Alburt in 1988 for my syndicated chess column for Copley News Service. I came away with the impression of a soft-spoken, humble man, who downplayed his many achievements in life. Here in 2013, decades past his best, he dismantles a grandmaster and former women's world champion, who was then in her prime.

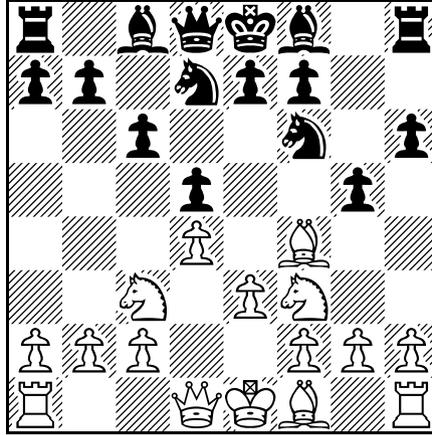
**1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗c3**

The way most players normally go through openings is through the eyes of an old man or woman who has seen everything and lives in a state of perpetual boredom. What I love most about the Richter/Veresov is that little pause you get from the opponent when you bang out 2 ♗c3. The opponent is familiar with our line, yet is not so confident since it isn't played as often as mainstream lines.

**2...d5 3 ♗g5 ♗bd7 4 ♗f3 h6 5 ♗f4**

Again, we paradoxically switch to a Jobava London where White hands Black the "free" move ...h7-h6 which, as this game and the last shows, is both a blessing and curse for Black.

**5...c6 6 e3 g5!?**



Be careful for what you wish for... I reveal a little secret: all London (and Richter/Veresov!) players love it when Black tosses in ...g7-g5. The engine says this is fine for Black, whereas your London-loving writer claims the opposite.

**7 ♕g3 ♞h5**

Going after the bishop pair is the logical extension of Black's last move.

**8 ♕e5!**

This gains time on the h5-knight.

**8...♞xe5 9 ♞xe5 ♞f6 10 h4**

10 ♕e2 is an idea, planning h2-h4 without giving Black the option to bypass with ...g5-g4.

**10...♖g8**

Novelty. One thing I absolutely love about the Richter/Veresov is that we often leave theory early, rather than on move 30, as in some lines of the Ruy Lopez, Najdorf, King's Indian, or any other theory-infested line. Z.Mestrovic-J.Stocek, Nova Gorica 2004, saw 10...g4 11 ♕d3 h5, when I slightly prefer White's chances after 12 0-0 ♕g7 13 ♞e2 ♞d6 14 c4.

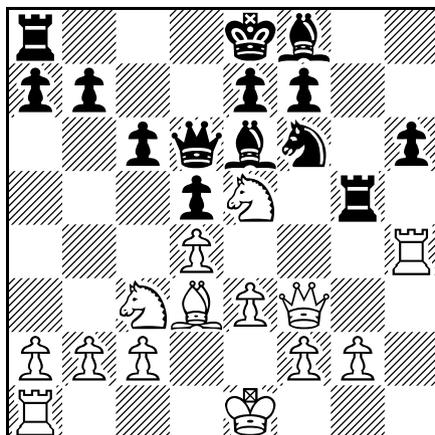
**11 hxg5 ♖xg5!?**

Does Black's position rate as an ideal one to launch an attack? I doubt it. Recapturing with the rook feels anti-positional and Black's rook and h-pawn are nothing more than targets for White's pieces. 11...hxg5 12 ♕d3 ♕e6 leaves White with only an edge.

**12 ♞f3**

Another plan is to keep the f-pawn free to push forward with 12 ♞d2 ♞g4 13 f4! ♖g8 14 ♕d3.

**12...♕e6 13 ♕d3 ♞d6 14 ♖h4!**



Seizing control over g4, while keeping open the possibility of doubling rooks on the h-file and sacrificing the exchange on h6.

**14...♖b4?!**

I don't understand the motivation behind this move, which is a clear waste of time. Instead, Black should challenge the e5-outpost with 14...♞d7 15 ♞xd7 ♙xd7 16 e4, which leaves her only a smidgeon worse.

**15 0-0-0 0-0-0 16 g4!**

Alburt threatens ♖g3 and f2-f4, seizing the initiative on the kingside. 16 ♞e2, intending ♞f4, also looks promising for White.

**16...♙b8 17 ♖g3!**

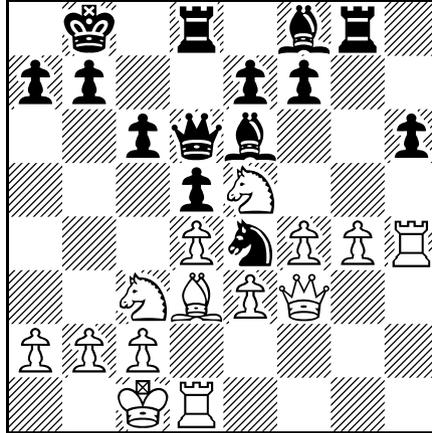
Threat: ♞xc6+ and ♞xb4.

**17...♖d6 18 f4 ♙g8 19 ♖f3!**

Threat: f4-f5, followed by ♞xf7. Black is already busted.

**19...♞e4!?**

When we have choices the one which involves us taking action tends to be the most tempting, since, if we are already in a souring position, any change feels welcome. This psychologically understandable sacrifice is a justifiable attempt to complicate in an already poor position. In reality it makes matters worse. Admittedly, supine acceptance with 19...♖c7 20 f5 ♙c8 21 ♞xf7 is depressing, when White won a pawn for zero compensation.



20 ♕xe4!

White's advantage is smaller in the line 20 ♘xe4 dxe4 21 ♕xe4 f6 22 ♘g6 ♕xa2.

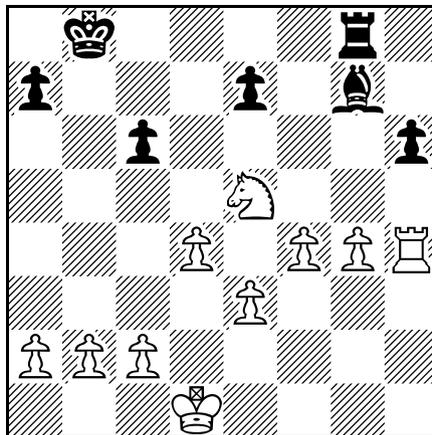
20...dxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♕d5

This loses more material, though at this point there was no saving the game. If 21...♙c7 22 ♘c5 ♕g7 23 ♘xe6 fxe6 24 ♘d3, Black is a pawn down with a strategically wretched position.

22 ♘xd6 ♕xf3 23 ♘dxf7 ♕xd1 24 ♘xd8 ♕g7 25 ♘dxc6+!

The Japanese word kamikaze translates to "divine wind". White was going to lose this knight anyway, so why not pick up another pawn on its way out?

25...bxc6 26 ♙xd1



This would have been a really, really good place to resign. Black is three pawns down in the ending, with an all-isolani remaining cast, all of whom forget their lines. On top of that there isn't a single potential target in White's position.

26...♖c7 27 ♘f7!

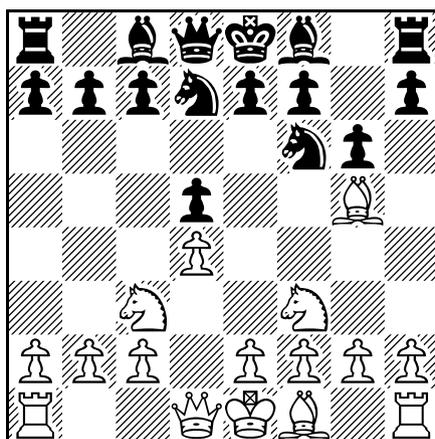
Targeting h6.

27...c5 28 ♘xh6 1-0

Since 28...♗xh6 29 ♖xh6 cxd4 30 g5 dxe3 31 ♖e2 e5 32 ♖xe3 exf4+ 33 ♖xf4 leaves White three pawns up in the rook and pawn ending.

Game 13  
G.Veresov-Bunatian  
Moscow 1965

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 ♗g5 ♗bd7 4 ♘f3 g6



The kingside fianchetto is one of Black's most common options. Homer ridiculed archers in battle, accusing them of cowardice. Yet by the Roman emperor Justinian's reign, they could pierce enemy armour with a steel tipped arrow from 100 yards. The fianchetto is the chess version of an archer, whose goal is to kill, without being in close proximity to the actual battle.

5 e3

Let's concentrate on this sensible developing move, which I believe to be superior to either 5 ♖d2 or 5 ♖d3.

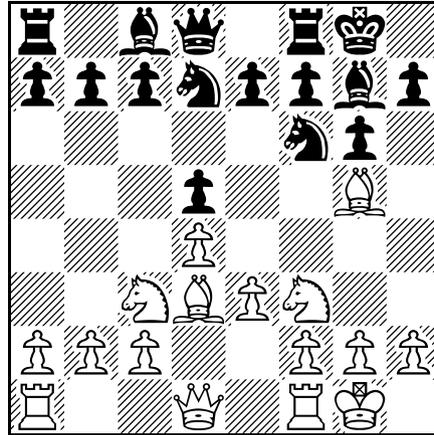
5...♗g7 6 ♗d3

With this move our two plans are:

1. Play for the central break on e4 with ♗d3, 0-0, ♖e1 and e3-e4.
2. Play as in #1 but, instead of e3-e4, toss in ♘e5 at the end, as in Veresov's game.

We'll look at a third plan for White, 6 ♗e2 followed by h2-h4, later in the chapter.

6...0-0 7 0-0



### 7...c5

Other moves:

a) 7...c6 8 ♖e1 ♗e8 (Black will play for the freeing break ...e7-e5, if given a chance) 9 e4 dxe4 10 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 11 ♗xe4 ♖f6 12 ♗d3 (maybe 12 ♗xf6 exf6! 13 c3 is more dynamic, although I doubt that Black stands worse) 12...♗g4 13 c3 ♗d5! (threat: ♗xf6, followed by ...♗xg5) 14 ♗xf6 (after 14 ♗e3!? ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 16 gxf3 e6 White's bishop pair compensates for Black's healthier structure, S.Mihajlovskij-V.Epishin, Creon 2003) 14...♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♗xf6 17 a4 a5 18 f4 with an equal ending since Black has no way to exploit White's broken f-pawns, which actually come in handy to suppress the ...e7-e5 break, S.Mamedyarov-P.Svidler, World Blitz Championship, Astana 2012.

b) 7...b6 8 e4 dxe4 9 ♖xe4 ♗b7 10 ♖e1 ♗e8 11 c3 ♗c8 (Black wants freedom with ...c7-c5) 12 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6, A.Lima-A.Guara Neto, Fortaleza 2012, and now after 13 ♗e2 White's position is a touch more comfortable since Black hasn't been able to achieve either a ...c7-c5 or ...e7-e5 break for now. Note that if 13...c5?! 14 ♗b5 ♗c6? (Black should agree to further humiliation with 14...♗f8 15 ♗ad1) 15 ♗a6! (Black is already in big trouble) 15...♗a8 (if 15...♗c7 16 ♗f4, Black is busted) 16 ♖e5 ♗d5 17 c4 ♗e6 18 d5 is awful for Black.

### 8 ♖e5!?

In the next two games we look at Tony Miles' treatment with 8 ♖e1, which is also my preference over Veresov's move.

### 8...e6

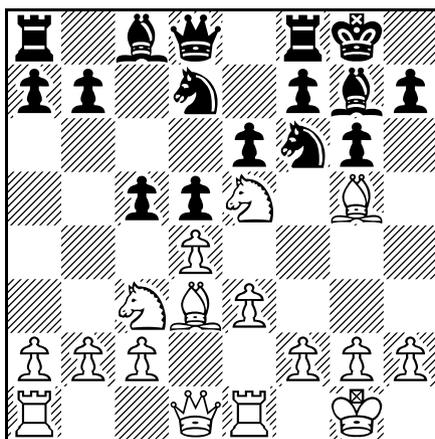
If instead, 8...cxd4 (or 8...♖xe5 9 dxe5 ♖g4 10 ♗e2 d4 11 exd4 cxd4, transposing) 9 exd4 ♖xe5 10 dxe5 ♖g4 11 ♗e2 d4 12 ♖b5 ♖xe5 13 ♖xd4 ♗b6 14 ♗xe7 ♗e8 15 ♗h4! (more challenging than (15 ♗a3 ♗d8 16 c3 ♖c6 17 ♗c4 ♖xd4 18 cxd4 ♗xd4 19 ♗b3, when White has nothing) 15...♗xb2 16 ♗b1 ♗xa2, B.Maryasin-Z.Sturua, Moscow 1981, then 17 ♖b5 and White has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

### 9 ♖e1

In a later game GM Alburt opted for 9 ♗b5 (9 f4?! should be avoided due to 9...cxd4 10

## Opening Repertoire: Richter/Veresov Attack

exd4 ♖b6 with a double attack on b2 and d4) 9...h6 10 ♕h4 cxd4 11 exd4 ♖b6 12 a4 a6 13 a5 ♜c7 14 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 15 ♙g3 ♜d8 16 ♙a4!? (I would go for 16 ♙xd7! ♙xd7 17 ♜d2 and then play for a future ♙e5, angling for a superior minor piece position) 16...b5 17 axb6 ♜xb6?! (after 17...♜xb6! 18 ♜e2 ♜f6 19 ♙e5 a5! 20 ♜b1 ♙a6, I prefer Black by a shade) 18 ♙c6 ♜a7 19 ♜b5 ♜e7 20 ♜d6 ♜a7 21 c3 ♙d7?! (21...a5 is better) 22 ♜b5! (Black's rook ran out of safe squares) 22...♙xc6 23 ♜xa7 ♙b7 24 ♜b3, when Black had no way to trap the wayward knight and Albur converted, L.Albur-E.Gufeld, USSR 1974.



### 9...♜a5

Black wants the option of playing ...♜xe5 without the queen on d8, which would leave the f6-knight pinned. Instead:

a) 9...h6 10 ♕h4 a6 11 ♜xd7 ♙xd7 12 dxc5 ♜c8, S.Mihajlovskij-G.Timoscenko, Slovakian Championship, Prievidza 1998, looks interesting after 13 ♜f3 g5 14 ♙g3 ♜xc5 15 ♙e5. Here I slightly prefer White since Black's kingside pawns have been loosened and White can at least dream of a future attack.

b) Black can also go pawn hunting with 9...cxd4 10 exd4 ♖b6, but White doesn't need to give anything up: 11 ♜a4! and the queen must back off, as after 11...♜xd4!? 12 c3 ♜xe5 13 ♜xe5 ♜xe5, sure, Black gets rook, knight and pawn for the queen. But wouldn't you still rather take White's side? I would.

### 10 a3

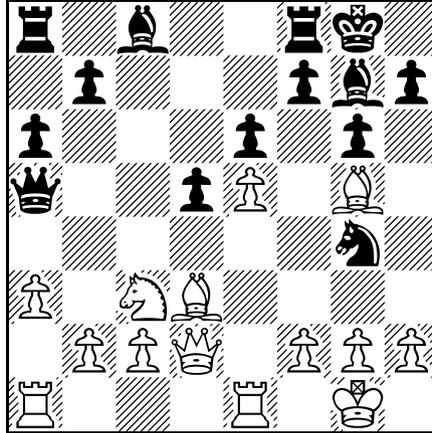
He wants to evade ...c5xd4 and ...♜b4 ideas.

### 10...a6 11 ♜d2 cxd4

Perhaps 11...♜xe5 12 dxe5 ♜d7 13 f4 f6 14 exf6 ♜xf6 is a shade more accurate, when Black stands no worse.

### 12 exd4 ♜xe5 13 dxe5 ♜g4?!

The d7-square was correct for the knight.

**14 ♖f4!?**

There is a big difference between someone who wants alcohol and someone who needs it. Veresov was a complications addict. In this case Black should still be okay. White gets a clear strategic edge with the simple and strong 14 ♖f4! f6 15 exf6 ♘xf6 16 ♙e5. I love White's Nimzowitschian blockade of e5.

**14...♘xe5**

Forced.

**15 ♜xe5 f6 16 ♘xd5! exd5**

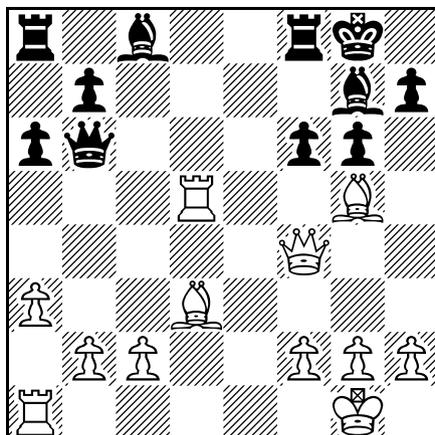
Not 16...fxe5?? 17 ♘e7+ ♙h8 18 ♜h4, when ♘xg6+ is coming and Black can resign; nor 16...fxg5?? 17 ♘e7+ ♙h8 18 ♘xg6+! hxg6 19 ♜xf8+ ♙xf8 20 ♜xa5, which is a hopeless ending for Black.

**17 ♜xd5!**

The rook is tactically guarded due to ♙c4.

**17...♜b6?**

Black should fall into the trap with 17...♜xd5! 18 ♙c4 ♜f7 19 ♙xf7+ ♜xf7 20 ♙h6 (or 20 ♙h4 g5) 21...g5 21 ♜e4 ♙xh6 and stands no worse, despite giving the queen away.



**Exercise (combination alert):** It isn't so easy to stay afloat in this sea of confusion. Black just blundered. Prove why.

**Answer:** Move the queen to c4, threatening a deadly discovered check, while allowing the pin with 18...♙e6.

18 ♔c4!

Threat: ♖d6+ followed by ♖xb6. Less efficient is 18 ♙h6?! 18...♙e6! 19 ♔d6 ♗xd6 20 ♖xd6 ♙xh6 21 ♖xe6, when Black is only one pawn down, with hopes to draw due to the bishops of opposite colours.

18...♙e6

Or 18...♗e6 19 ♖d6 ♗xc4 20 ♙xc4+ ♚h8 21 ♙f4 with a dominating position and extra pawn for White.

19 ♙e3! 1-0

Fortes Fortuna adiuvat: 19...♗c6 (19...♗xb2 20 ♙d4 traps the queen) 20 ♗xc6 bxc6 21 ♖d6 ♙d5 22 c4 ♙f7 23 ♖xc6 leaves Black two pawns down.

### Game 14

**A.J.Miles-L.M.Christiansen**  
Phillips & Drew, London 1982

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3

In case you didn't know it, my friend the late GM Tony Miles and the Veresov were BFFs, from youth on.

2...d5 3 ♙g5 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 g6 5 e3 ♙g7 6 ♙d3 0-0 7 0-0 c5 8 ♖e1

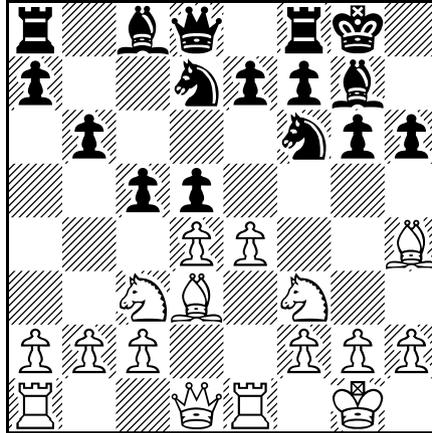
I like this path more than Veresov's 8 ♘e5 from the previous game. White simply plays

for e3-e4 and Black must be careful not to fall into a slightly inferior position where White's space nags.

**8...h6**

8...b6 9 e4 dxe4 10 ♖xe4, as seen in the next game, is much the same.

**9 ♙h4 b6 10 e4**



This is White's simple idea, to blast open in the centre while slightly ahead in development. White's plan is devoid of fanfare, yet it's potent enough to take down a strong grandmaster in this game.

**10...dxe4 11 ♖xe4 cxd4**

11...♙b7 fails to equalize: 12 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 c3 leaves Black with three pawn islands to White's two, with a pair of isolanis to worry about should an ending arise. Also, White may later be able to make use of the c4-hole.

**12 ♖xd4 ♙b7 13 c3 ♙c8**

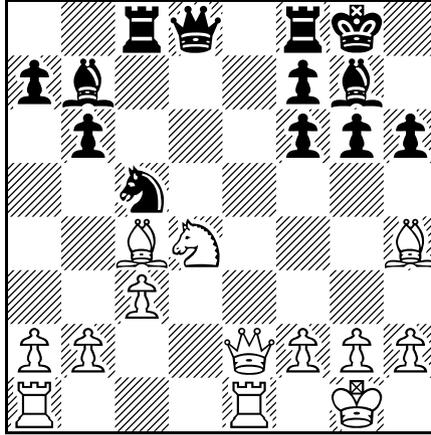
After 13...♖xe4 14 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 15 ♙xe4 ♖f6 16 ♙e1 e6, S.Mamedyarov-M.Gagunashvili, European Championship, Batumi 2002, the engine says dead even, while I slightly prefer White due to the queenside pawn majority and Black's slight weakness of c6.

**14 ♙e2 ♖c5!?**

Larry is willing to take on structural compromise in exchange for freedom. I prefer his choice over 14...♙xe4 15 ♙xe4 ♖xe4 16 ♙xe4, which leaves White with nagging pressure on e7 and c6.

**15 ♖xf6+ exf6 16 ♙c4**

Now White gets the healthy queenside majority versus Black's lesser version on the kingside. Tony emerged with a comfortable edge from the opening.



**16...♖d7**

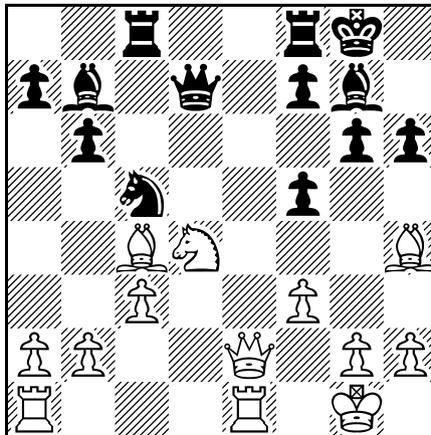
Given that White wants swaps, 16...♖e8 is not very tempting. After 17 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 18 ♗xe8+ ♗xe8 19 f3, Black is the one fighting for the draw. If all the pieces are removed from the board, Black will be lost in the king and pawn ending, due to the inefficient kingside majority.

**17 f3**

Here 17 ♗b5! ♖d5 18 f3 a6 19 ♗c4 ♗h5 20 ♗f2 is more accurate.

**17...f5?!**

Black is better off playing 17...♗fe8 18 ♗f2 ♗a6! 19 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 20 ♗ad1 ♖c5.



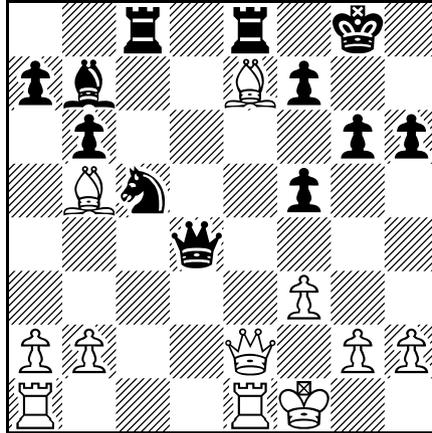
**Exercise (planning):** Come up with a plan to increase White's advantage.

**18 ♗e7?!**

This allows Black counterplay.

**Answer:** Simply move the e-rook to d1, threatening horrible discoveries on Black's queen, which has trouble finding a safe haven: 18 ♖e1! ♜c8 19 ♜f1 ♜c7 20 ♘b5! ♜f4 21 ♙g3 ♜g5 22 ♙d6 ♜e3 (threatening to chop f3) 23 f4! and White wins material.

18...♜fe8 19 ♙b5 ♙xd4+ 20 cxd4 ♜xd4+ 21 ♙f1



**Exercise (critical decision):** Without hard analysis, all we have at this stage is wild conjecture. Black's choices are: a) 21...♜b4??; b) 21...♘e4; c) 21...♙c6; d) 21...♙a6; e) 21...♜xe7. Two choices lose outright, one is inferior for Black, and two more save him. Can you pick one of the two lines which saves Christiansen's position?

21...♜b4??

This loses outright. As does c) 21...♙c6?? 22 ♙xc6 ♜xc6 23 ♙xc5 ♜xe2 24 ♙xd4 and White wins a piece; while after e) 21...♜xe7? 22 ♜xe7 ♜xb2 23 ♙c4 ♜f8 24 ♜d6 ♙g7 25 ♜ad1, Black doesn't get enough for the exchange and White should convert.

**Answer:** Both b) and d) save Black.

b) 21...♘e4! 22 ♜ad1 ♜e5 23 ♙xe8 ♜xe8 24 ♜d8 (if 24 fxe4 ♜xe7, Black's bishop is worth White's extra rook) 24...♜xd8 25 ♙xd8 ♙a6!! 26 ♜xa6 ♘d2+ 27 ♙f2 ♜d4+ 28 ♙g3 (or 28 ♙e2 ♘c4! 29 ♜d1 ♜e5+ 30 ♙f2 ♜c5+) 28...f4+ 29 ♙g4 h5+ 30 ♙h4 ♜xd8+ 31 ♙h3 ♜d7+ (Black's annoying queen keeps popping her head up, as a gopher emerging from its burrow in your backyard) 32 ♙h4 ♜d8+ is perpetual check. A chorus of sweet-voiced angels couldn't have sounded better to Larry C's ears than Tony's draw offer, had this position occurred in the game.

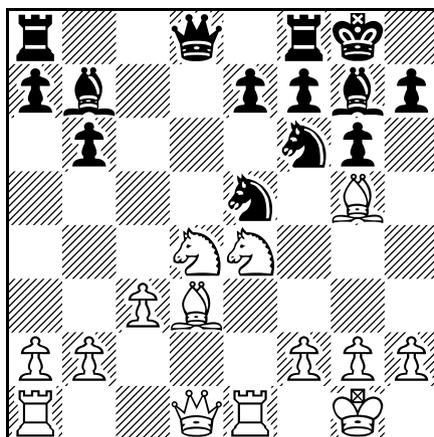
d) 21...♙a6! also saves Black: 22 ♙xa6 ♘xa6 23 ♜xa6 ♜c2 24 ♜e2 ♜xb2 25 ♙f6! (not 25 ♜ae1?? ♜xe7! and Black wins) 25...♜xe2 26 ♙xb2 ♜f2+ 27 ♙e1 ♜xb2 28 ♜b1 ♜xa2 29 ♜c8+ ♙g7 30 ♜c3+ ♙g8 and White can't win.

22 ♙xe8 1-0

Oh the religious exultation of swindling a powerful opponent! Only now did Larry see that 22...♖xe8 23 ♜xc5! ♖xe2 24 ♜xb4 leaves White a rook up.

Game 15  
**A.J.Miles-O.Popovich**  
 Manchester 1982

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗c3 d5 3 ♜g5 ♗bd7 4 ♗f3 g6 5 e3 ♜g7 6 ♜d3 0-0 7 0-0 c5 8 ♖e1 b6 9 e4 dxe4  
 10 ♗xe4 cxd4 11 ♗xd4 ♜b7 12 c3 ♗e5



This central counter is the engine's top choice. 12...♖c8 would be similar to the previous game.

**13 ♜c2**

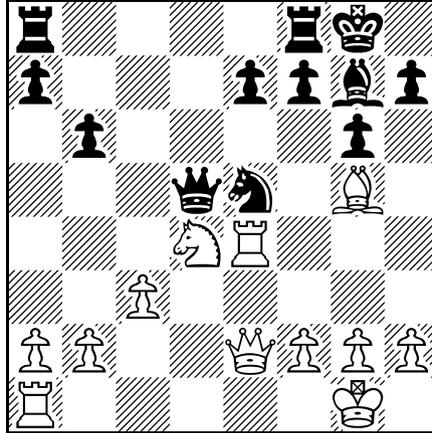
If 13 ♗xf6+ exf6 14 ♜f4 ♗xd3 15 ♖xd3, Black's bishop pair makes up for his devalued kingside structure. Nonetheless, this is the way I would play White, avoiding the possible draw in the next note. If 15...♖d5, as in C.Hoi-D.King, Jurmala 1985, then 16 f3 and I slightly prefer White's chances.

**13...♗xe4**

After 13...♗d5 14 ♖e2 h6 15 ♜h4 ♖c8 (Black plays for the full point; 15...♗f4 16 ♖e3 ♗d5 17 ♖e2 ♗f4 would be a repetition draw) 16 f3 (16 ♖ad1 may be more accurate) 16...♜a6 17 ♖d2 f5 18 ♗xf5!? gxf5 19 ♖xd5+ e6 20 ♖d6 fxe4, S.Barbre-R.Spitzer, correspondence 1987, the engine slightly prefers Black after 21 ♜xe4, although White certainly gets practical chances and he ended up winning this game.

**14 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 15 ♖xe4 ♖d5 16 ♖e2!**

Tony is rightfully unafraid of Black's possible ...f7-f5-f4-f3 idea. I like his provocative move more than 16 ♖e2 e6 17 ♖b3 ♖c5, which looks even, B.Munguntuul-Zhang Xiaowen, Chinese Team Championship 2012.



**16...f5?!**

Belief is a house we love and refuse to leave until mean Truth evicts us. *Stockfish 14*, that fountainhead of authority, gives this move a thumbs down. Black plans to sacrifice the f-pawn by pushing it all the way to f3. The problem is it's a misassessment to believe that Black gets full compensation, despite attractive optics. Instead, 16...♖fe8 17 ♗e1 ♕xa2 18 ♘b5! (18 ♖xe5 ♙xe5 19 ♕xe5 f6 20 ♖e2 fxg5 21 ♘e6 ♖f8! 22 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 is only equal) 18...♖ac8 19 ♙f4 a6 20 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 21 ♖xe5 axb5 22 ♖xb5 is slightly in White's favour.

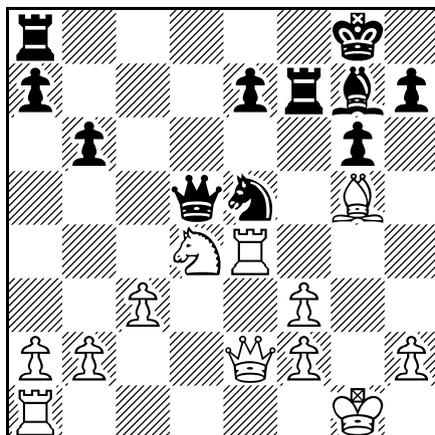
**17 ♗e3 f4?!**

This move is your annoying Facebook friend who, when you contradict his opinion, merely repeats his false claim, but this time in all caps, as if that proves his point beyond a shadow of contention. Black's move is both consistent and incorrect. 17...♙f6 18 h4 is unattractive for Black, yet necessary.

**18 ♗e4 f3 19 gxf3**

Most certainly not 19 ♘xf3?? which hangs a piece to 19...♘xf3+ 20 gxf3 ♕xg5+.

**19...♖f7**



Black's pressure for the pawn is an optical illusion, which Tony proves in the next few moves, as he seizes the initiative.

**20 f4!**

Hey, I thought this pawn was supposed to be weak. 20 h4! ♖af8 21 ♖d1 is strong too.

**20...♗c4 21 ♘e6!**

White's knight sits on a dominating square, making Black's king slightly unsafe and lending protection to White's f4-pawn.

**21...♗d6**

21...♗xb2?? allows 22 ♗c7.

**22 ♖e3 ♖c8 23 ♖d1 ♗c6**

23...♗c4 is met by the undermining shot 24 ♗xe7!.

**24 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 25 ♖e6!**

Black's e-pawn isn't running away.

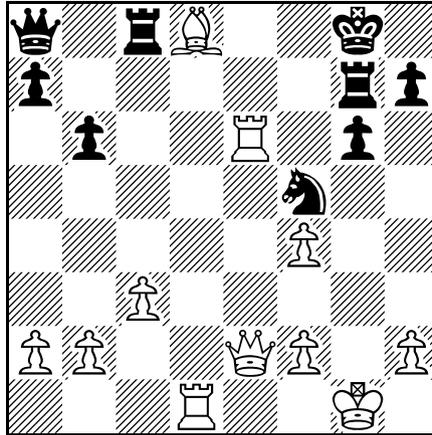
**25...♗a8**

25...♗c4 26 ♖d3! ♗xa2?? runs into 27 ♖dxd6, since 27...exd6 28 ♖e8+ mates next move.

**26 ♗xe7**

White is two pawns up and Black has no chance of whipping up any kind of attacking chances against White's king, mainly since Black's king is in far more trouble.

**26...♗f5 27 ♗d8!**



The bishop is tactically protected and White threatens mate in two on the back rank.

**27...h5**

Black's king needs air. Not 27...♖xd8?? 28 ♜xd8+ ♚xd8 29 ♜e8+ ♔f7 and White doesn't even bother taking Black's queen since 30 ♚e6 is mate.

**28 c4!**

Dual purpose:

1. White intends to attack with ♜f6-c3 and ♚e5.

2. c3-c4 is also a defensive move since now Black's annoying ...♘h4 ideas can be met by the diagonal-clogging ♜d5!.

**28...♔h7 29 ♜f6 ♜f7 30 ♜c3**

Threat: ♜xg6 and ♚e6+.

**30...♜g8**

30...♘h4 is also met by 31 ♜d5, when 31...♜xf4?? fails miserably to 32 ♜xh5+ gxh5 33 ♚xh5+ ♔g8 34 ♚g5+ ♔f7 35 ♜e7+ ♔f8 36 ♚g7 mate.

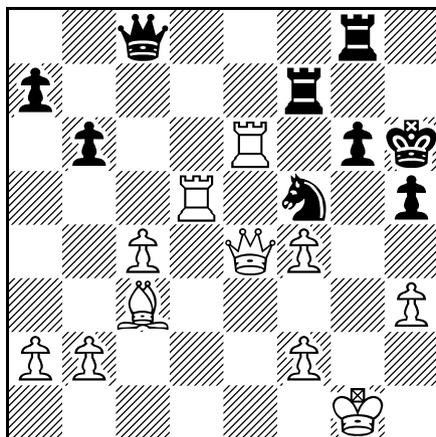
**31 ♜d5! ♚b7 32 ♚e4!**

White's position improves with each passing move.

**32...♚c8 33 h3**

This way White's king has the option of moving to h2.

**33...♔h6??**



When my wife Nancy does something really dumb, she opens her eyes wide, as if to display her complete innocence. This trick comes in handy if we first blunder and then notice it, as Popovych must have done after making his last move.

**Exercise (combination alert):** Black's last move was a blunder in an already lost position. Where is White's knockout punch?

**Answer:** Pinned piece. Black's knight was simply hanging on f5 due to the pin.

**34 ♖xf5! 1-0**

Unfortunately for Black, 34...♖xf5 35 ♗xf5 gxf5+ is illegal.

Game 16  
**A.J.Miles-D.King**  
 Amsterdam 1982

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗c3 d5 3 ♙g5 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 g6 5 e3 ♙g7 6 ♙d3 0-0 7 0-0 b6