Steve Giddins

Bronstein

move by move

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About the Author

Steve Giddins is a FIDE Master and a former editor of British Chess Magazine. He spent a number of years of his professional life based in Moscow, where he learnt Russian and acquired an extensive familiarity with Russian chess literature and the training methods of the Russian/Soviet chess school. He's the author of several outstanding books and is well known for his clarity and no-nonsense advice. He has also translated over 20 books, for various publishers, and has contributed regularly to chess magazines and websites.

Other titles by the author:
The Greatest Ever Chess Endgames
The English: Move by Move
The French Winawer: Move by Move
Nimzowitsch: Move by Move

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David Bronstein: an Appreciation

David Bronstein was a truly remarkable figure. Not only was he one of the greatest players of all time, but he was also one of the most loved, especially by the average player. Everybody is aware of the details of his life, and especially his tied world championship match with Botvinnik in 1951, and also his famous book on the Zurich 1953 Candidates. However, as Bronstein himself put it in the *New in Chess* interview referred to below, "I'm more than a few numbers. I'm not Zurich '53 and 12-12!".

Given how much has been written about Bronstein already, I do not intend to present any sort of biography or career record here. But for me personally, Bronstein has the extra fascination that I did actually know him, albeit only a little, and I even played him. Furthermore, in his later life, Bronstein had a pronounced connection with the area of England where I myself live, namely the county of Kent. He had many close friends at the Charlton Chess Club, on the southern edge of London, and frequently stayed in nearby Sidcup, often for weeks at a time, with the family of Peter and Rosemarie Hannan. What follows is therefore in the nature of a personal appreciation of Bronstein, drawing on my own limited acquaintance with him, and some recollections by Rosemarie and other members of Charlton Chess Club, who have kindly shared their memories with me.

Bronstein had always been a great traveller, who loved meeting people, especially chessplayers of all levels. Naturally, as a Soviet citizen, he had always been restricted in his ability to travel, but, on the other hand, as one of the country's leading players since the end of the Second World War, he had been relatively privileged, and had enjoyed his fair share of foreign tournaments, at least up until 1976. This was despite the fact that his father had spent seven years in the Gulag, from the late 1930s, which would usually have meant that Bronstein would have been regarded as "politically suspect".

Everything changed for him in 1976, after Korchnoi defected. The two had been quite close, and in 1974, when Korchnoi had played his first match against Karpov, Bronstein was almost the only Soviet GM who had been willing to assist Korchnoi with his preparation. He recalls that it was his suggestion that Korchnoi defend the Tarrasch French with 3...c5, taking the IQP. Despite Karpov's legendary prowess in IQP structures, he was unable to win a single one of the seven games in which the line appeared in that match, nor the two further games in which Korchnoi used it in their next match at Bagiuo City in 1978.

Unfortunately, when Korchnoi requested political asylum in Holland after the 1976 IBM

tournament, Bronstein was one of the many Soviet GMs who were called upon to sign an infamous collective letter, denouncing Korchnoi. To his enormous credit, Bronstein refused, he and Gulko being the only active GMs to do so (Botvinnik also refused, but was already retired at the time, whilst Karpov published another, personal letter against Korchnoi). The result was that Bronstein became a 'neviezdny', someone who was not allowed to travel abroad (or, at least, not outside the Communist bloc). It was hard to imagine a worse punishment for the travel-loving Bronstein, and, whilst most such punishments lasted only a few years, he remained in that position until the onset of Glasnost at the very end of the 1980s.

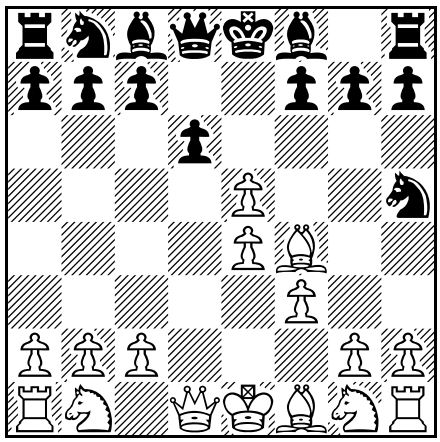
When he was finally free to travel to the West again, Bronstein made the most of it. Although by then in his late 60s, he spent a large part of his life in the West, staying with many amateur chess friends, such as the Hannans and the Dutch enthusiast Tom Fürstenberg, with whom he later co-wrote *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

From the early 1990s, Bronstein would often stay for weeks at a time with the Hannans, at their home in Sidcup. Charlton Chess Club member Tony Stebbings told me in an e-mail, that "On these occasions he would come along with Peter Hannan to Charlton club nights and go through games he had played, show opening ideas, play blitz, recount anecdotes and talk at great length [...] He sometimes turned out for Charlton in the London and Kent leagues and National Club Championship, his opponents got a shock when they saw who they were about to play [...] Once in the London League his opponent turned up late, sat down and played without noting who he faced; after the game he found out to his obvious shock and amazement to whom he had just lost."

The present book contains two games (nos. 8 and 29) played by Bronstein in evening league matches for Charlton.

Tony's Charlton team-mate Alan Hanreck recalls that he took his greatest-ever individual scalp, thanks partly to Bronstein. One of the opening ideas Bronstein demonstrated at the club one evening was an idea against the Trompowsky:

1 d4 ♘**f6 2** ♗**g5** ♘**e4 3** ♗**f4** and now Bronstein's suggestion was **3...d6**. After **4 f3** ♘**f6 5 e4** it looks as though White is a tempo up on the Pirc line 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 f3, as he has gained the move ♗f4, but Bronstein's clever idea was to exploit this with **5...e5! 6 dxe5** ♘**h5!**.



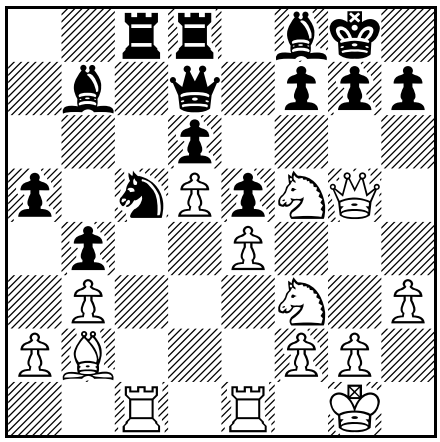
Now **7 ♗e3 dxe5 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8** leaves Black with a reasonable game, and **7 ♕d2 ♘xf4 8 ♕xf4 ♘d7!** regains the pawn, or else offers excellent dark-square compensation after **9 exd6?! ♗xd6**.

Alan later got the chance to play this novelty against 'Tromp' specialist, GM Julian Hodgson, at the 4NCL in 1996. Hodgson preferred 5 ♘c3, but after 5...♘bd7 6 e4 e5 7 ♗e3 ♗e7 8 ♘ge2 c6 Black had a reasonable Philidor position, and went on to beat his powerful GM opponent.

Tony's mention of blitz is a convenient moment to show you a game, which I did not think sufficiently serious to include in the main section of the book, but which bears reproducing. It is a great example of Bronstein's prowess at 5-minute chess, and was played in Moscow in 1962. One of the aims of the present book is to bring to light some unknown Bronstein games, as I know there are many players out there who collect Bronstein game scores. This game has not been widely published, as far as I know; I found it in Bronstein's little beginners' book, of which he was quite proud, but which is very quirky and not well-known.

D.Bronstein-K.Muchnik
5-minute game 1962
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗b7 14 ♘f1 ♖ac8 15 ♗b1 ♖fd8 16 d5 ♘c4 17 b3 ♘b6 18 ♗b2 ♘bd7 19 ♘e3 ♗f8 20 ♕d2 ♘c5 21 ♗d3 ♘xd3 22 ♕xd3 ♘d7 23 ♕d2 ♘c5 24 ♘f5 a5 25 ♖ac1 b4 26 ♕g5 ♕d7?



Now Bronstein strikes with a combination that most players would be proud of in classical chess, let alone a five-minute game:

27 ♗xe5! ♘xe4

27...dxe5 28 ♘xe5 ♕c7 29 ♘h6+ ♔h8 30 ♘exf7+ wins.

28 ♘h6+ ♔h8 29 ♖xe4 ♖xc1+

29...dxe5 30 ♘xe5 gxh6 31 ♕f6+ ♗g7 32 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 33 ♘xd7 ♗xf6 34 ♘xf6 was the best chance.

30 ♕xc1 ♗xd5 31 ♖d4 ♗xf3

Alternatively, if 31...dxe5 32 ♘xe5.

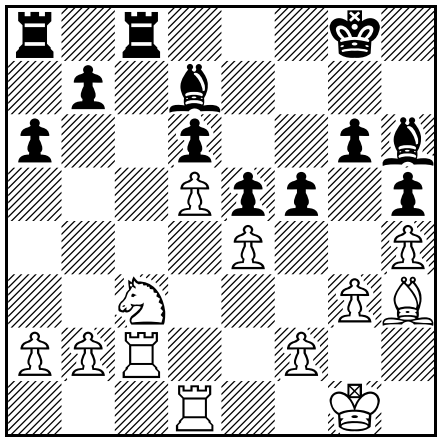
32 ♖xd6! ♗xd6 33 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 34 ♕g5+ ♔f8 35 ♕g8+ ♔e7 36 ♕xf7# (1-0)

Bronstein was always a complex character, I suspect, but by his later years, he had become a curious mixture of childlike joy and old-age bitterness. The former was evident from some of the memories relayed by Rosemarie Hannan. She described Bronstein as being "like an extra granddad in our house." Indeed, "he would come back beaming all over his face with carrier bags full of gifts, which he would produce like a conjurer out of a hat, chocolates, champagne etc. Once he even carried back four garden chairs and a sun lounger from the High Street. He must have carried them down the road in relays and arranged them at the bottom of the garden, waiting for me to notice."

The childlike quality of Bronstein was also something I noticed in my most personal encounter with him, when I played him at the British Rapidplay Championship. The game itself was nothing special, as I was totally overwhelmed by the chance to play such a great player, and lost very feebly. However, in the spirit of sharing unknown Bronstein scores, here is the game, for the benefit of those collectors of such.

S.Giddins-D.Bronstein
British Rapidplay Championship, Leeds 1991
Grünfeld Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c4 ♗g7 4 g3 0-0 5 ♗g2 d5 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 0-0 ♘b6 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 9 e3 ♗d7 10 h3 e5 11 d5 ♘e7 12 e4 ♘ec8 13 ♗g5 ♕e8 14 ♖c1 ♘d6 15 ♖e1 h6 16 ♗e3 ♘bc4 17 ♕e2 ♘xe3 18 ♕xe3 ♕e7 19 ♕c5 ♖fc8 20 ♖ed1 a6 21 ♘d2 f5 22 ♘c4 ♕f6 23 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 24 ♕xd6 cxd6 25 h4 h5 26 ♗h3 ♗h6 27 ♖c2



27...♗a4 28 b3 ♗d7 29 f3 ♖c7 30 a4 ♗e3+ 0-1

But what really sticks in my mind was the matter of scoresheets. Being a rapid game, there was no obligation to keep score, and I did not do so, instead reconstructing the game afterwards. But Bronstein, in this and all his other games, meticulously kept score throughout the game. Furthermore, when the game finished, he signed his scoresheet and then asked me to sign it as well. There was no need for this, as the result was handed in using a separate result slip, but Bronstein clearly intended to keep the scoresheet of the game, for his records. Imagine the scene – here am I, a rank amateur, having just played David Bronstein, and it is *he* who is asking *me* to autograph *his* scoresheet! He did the same with every opponent, and I suspect he retained all the scoresheets until his dying day.

But sadly, there was also an increasing note of bitterness in the later Bronstein. All of those who knew him experienced this, and it comes out especially strongly in his last major interview, given to Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam of *New in Chess* in 2001, and published in issue 2002/1 of that magazine. I strongly recommend this piece to anyone interested in Bronstein, as it sheds a very clear light on how he was in his final years (you can find the interview reprinted in the anthology *New in Chess: The First 25 Years*, which I edited).

Life had dealt Bronstein a tough hand in some ways, especially with the imprisonment

of his father as part of Stalin's crazy purges. He was only a young teenager at the time, and one can scarcely even imagine how traumatic it must have been to see his father carried away, and then to have to live as the son of "an enemy of the people". There was also the disappointment of coming so incredibly close to being world champion, only to miss out at the very last moment. Bronstein's great friend Tom Fürstenberg, whom I once met in the Press Room at the Wijk aan Zee tournament, expressed the view that the 1951 world championship match had "ruined Bronstein's life", and there is no doubt that it left a bitter psychological scar.

Bronstein often expressed rather bitter views about modern chess and the younger generation of grandmasters. Tony Stebbings recalled Bronstein telling his Charlton friends that he had been born at the wrong time, and that younger generations had far greater opportunities to travel and earn money. He said much the same thing in his 2001 NIC interview. Like many of his generation, Bronstein was hit quite hard by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the associated economic meltdown and inflation, which left him with an almost worthless pension. In the NIC interview, he bitterly lamented how "in Soviet times, a player like me would have a pension that was five times that of a doctor". He was deeply offended by the sight of players such as Kasparov and Kramnik, competing for million-dollar prizes in world championship matches – in the 1950s, when he played his match against Botvinnik, the prize for winning the world championship was about 150 roubles and a slightly larger apartment. Now players were earning millions and "They think quite something of themselves [...] all because they can push a pawn from e2 to e4", as he said derisively to Dirk Jan.

On the other hand, Bronstein was aware of his tendency to complain, and tried to downplay it. One of the first things he said in the NIC interview was: "Don't portray me as a disgruntled old man", and Dirk-Jan adds "It's a request that he will repeat more than once today...". Bronstein went on to admit that he was far better off than many of his generation, millions of whom died in the war (he was exempted from military service because of poor eyesight). "At least I could travel and see something of the world [...] I could buy a nice tweed jacket or a fine shirt in England, luxuries that [the average Soviet citizen] could only dream of".

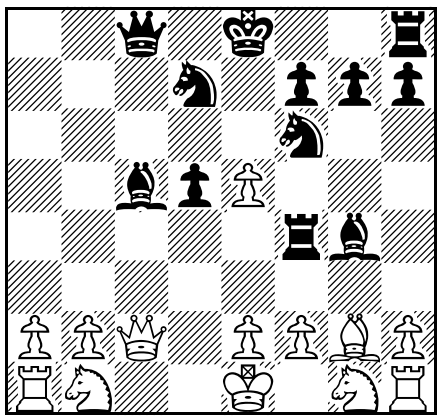
Just as the first draft of this book was finished, my friend Gerard Welling, the Dutch IM, told me an interesting anecdote about Bronstein, which again sheds light on the latter's vulnerability. Gerard played Bronstein in a rapid event in Holland in 1996 and the two got talking after the game. Bronstein started telling of how, a few months earlier, he had returned to the small village in the Ukraine where he had been born. He chatted with an old man, who was farming in the area. The man had clearly never heard of Bronstein, and asked what he had done with his life. Bronstein replied that he had become a chess grandmaster and had tied for the world championship, whereupon the old man just grunted: "Huh! Nothing worthwhile, then!". Most people would just have dismissed the old man as rude, but Bronstein had clearly been deeply hurt by the remark, and, even months later, he sat at the table with Gerard, muttering, "He's right, of course. I have wasted my life, wasted it completely".

Therein lies the essence of the contradiction in David Bronstein. On the one hand, he was very privileged by Soviet standards, but on the other, he had to take some hard blows in his life, and clearly always felt he was on the outside, as far as the Soviet chess authorities were concerned. This was a difficult path to tread, and the disappointments he suffered took their toll on him. But his essentially childlike qualities and deep love of chess never failed to shine through, despite the black moments. And, as a player, he was one of the most creative geniuses the game of chess has ever seen, who left behind a legacy of wonderful games. I have done my best to choose a representative sample here, and to annotate them as instructively as I can, using modern silicon help to penetrate as many of the mysteries as possible. I hope the book brings pleasure to Bronstein's numerous admirers.

To finish this small personal appreciation, here is another game, which was not serious enough to warrant a place in the main games section, but which always makes me laugh out loud, whenever I see it. It was played against a much weaker opponent, at the Norwegian Open at Gausdal in 1990. For me, it typifies Bronstein's attitude to the game. It would have been all too easy for him to have beaten such opponents on sheer technique, especially after such a ludicrous opening as White played here (with all due respect to my friend, Mike Basman), but that was not Bronstein's way. He chooses the most combinative path (2... ♗xg4 is supposed to be the one line that gives White chances in this opening) and wins with elegance. "Chess should give people pleasure", he said in his NIC interview, and he lived up to that principle.

B.Olsson-D.Bronstein
Gausdal 1990
Grob Opening

1 g4 d5 2 ♗g2 ♗xg4 3 c4 c6 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 ♕b3 ♘f6 6 ♕xb7 ♘bd7 7 d4 ♖b8! 8 ♕xa7 ♕c8 9 ♗f4! e5 10 dxe5 ♗c5 11 ♕a4 ♖b4 12 ♕c2 ♖xf4



13 exf6 ♗xf2+ 14 ♔d1 ♖c4 15 fxg7 ♖g8 16 ♘c3 ♖d4+! 17 ♔c1 ♗e3+ 18 ♔b1 ♖d2 19 ♕xh7 ♘f6 20 ♕h4 d4 21 ♕xf6 ♖xb2+ 22 ♔xb2 ♕xc3+ 0-1

It was a privilege to have known and played you, David Ionovich!

Steve Giddins,
Rochester, Kent,
February 2015

Game 13
Bronstein-Ljubojevic, Petropolis 1973

Game 13
D.Bronstein-L.Ljubojevic
Petropolis Interzonal 1973
Alekhine's Defence

This game is without doubt the most tactically complex and fascinating in the entire book. It has been the subject of detailed analyses by many top players, including Bronstein himself, Vasiukov, Timman, Speelman and Kasparov. In what follows, I will try to bring together and summarize the main points of these analyses, with the aid (of course) of the computer, and to help the reader get to grips with one of the best games of the 1970s.

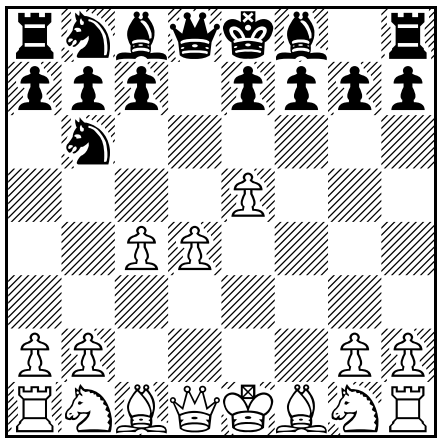
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4

A good sign. White chooses the Four Pawns Attack, undoubtedly the most critical and dangerous (for both sides) response to Alekhine's Defence.

Question: Is the Four Pawns really any good? It does not seem to be very popular.

Answer: It is true that the line has not been as popular in recent decades as some of the quieter responses, but, in reality, I think it is an extremely dangerous reply. I know of one grandmaster, who a couple of years ago, spent some time analysing Alekhine's Defence, intending to play it as Black, but who eventually gave up on the idea, precisely because he could not find anything he regarded as satisfactory against the Four Pawns.

5...dxe5 6 fxe5



6...c5?

This move is the sharpest of all Black's lines in the Four Pawns, and has been a fascinating area for analytical research over the years. However, it is objectively bad.

Question: Really? I thought it was supposed still to be playable?

Answer: Many books will tell you that. However, my aforementioned grandmaster friend revealed to me that according to his analysis (which I trust), 6...c5 actually loses more or less by force.

Question: Did he tell you how?

Answer: He did, as it happens, but that particular trade secret will not be revealed in this book.

6...♘c6 is the sounder main line alternative.

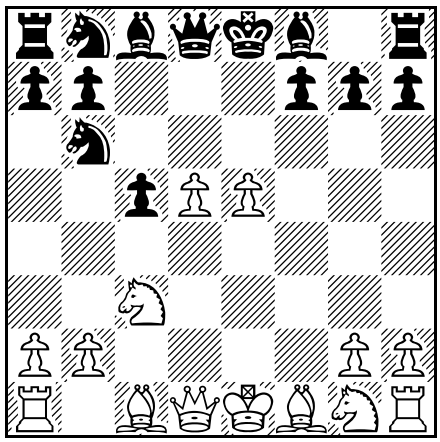
7 d5 e6

7...g6 is objectively the only way to keep Black on the board, I suspect, but I cannot recommend it.

8 ♘c3

Although 6...c5 is objectively not good, it is a mass destruction weapon in online blitz. I would not mind a glass of red wine for every game that has gone 8 d6? ♕h4+, winning for Black, for example!

8...exd5 9 cxd5



Question: This position looks like absolute suicide for Black! Surely the central pawns are going to kill him?

Answer: Well, Alekhine's Defence is one of the most archetypal of hypermodern openings, and the whole idea is to encourage White to set up a broad pawn centre, in the hope that it will prove too unwieldy and will serve as a target for Black's guerrilla raids from the edge. The 6...c5 variation is an extreme application of this approach and certainly not for the faint-hearted.

9...c4

This was a relatively new idea at the time of this game, replacing the discredited older alternative 9...♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕d4, after which 11 ♗b5+ ♗d7 12 ♕e2 ♘xd5 13 e6! fxe6 14 ♕xe6+ ♘e7 15 ♘f3 ♕f6 16 ♕e2 was found to be good for White. Indeed, one of the games referred to by Kasparov, which reached this very position, was Ljubojevic-Noses, Dresden 1969. As we will see, the entire 6...c5 line became a favourite battleground for the young and highly talented Yugoslav GM.

Question: So what is the point of 9...c4?

Answer: The move does several things. It shuts in White's king's bishop, and it prepares to bring its counterpart out, either to c5, cutting through the heart of White's position, or to b4, pinning the knight and thus exerting pressure against the d5-pawn. The whole of Black's play is about targeting the two white pawns on d5 and e5 – if White manages to maintain them and get castled, then he will just have a crushing advantage, so Black must fight tooth and nail against this.

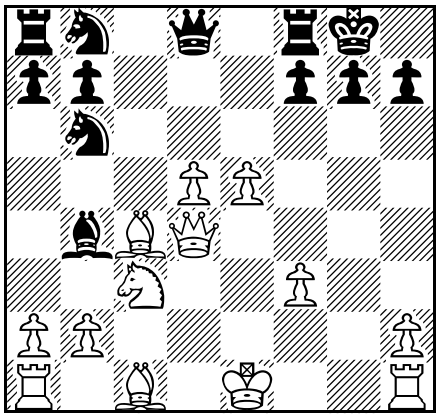
10 ♘f3 ♗g4?

Objectively, this has to be condemned. Modern theory prefers 10...♗b4.

11 ♕d4

Once again, the passage of time has shown that this is not best. Kasparov quotes 11 ♗e2 as giving White a clear advantage, but none of this was known at the time of the present game.

11...♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♗b4 13 ♗xc4 0-0



Question: So what is going on here? The position looks a real mess already.

Answer: Believe me, this position is a picture of calm and order, compared with what will follow. Both sides are playing logically. Black has to get developed and start creating threats against the white centre. Already, in defending his two central passed pawns, White has allowed the capture on f3, splitting his pawns and exposing his king, and it is still far from clear where the latter will find a refuge – castling on either side will leave it exposed, and in the centre it is even more insecure. Black's immediate threat is 14...♘c6 15 ♕e4 ♘xe5, demolishing the white centre.

14 ♖g1

White sets up threats along the g-file, and also prepares to meet 14...♘c6? with 15 ♕g4, winning.

14...g6!

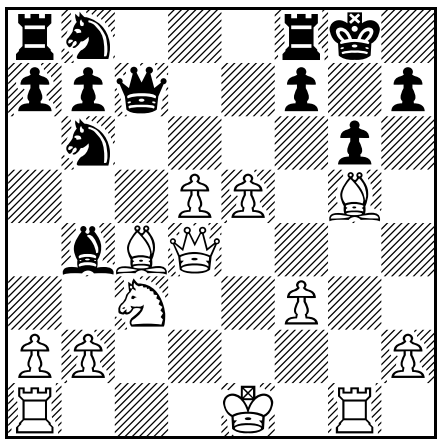
Ljubojevic's prior experience with this line had also encompassed the white side of this position. His opponent had played 14...♕c7? and been crushed after 15 e6 f6 (or 15...fxe6 16 ♗h6 e5 17 ♗xg7! exd4 18 ♗xd4+ ♔f7 19 ♖g7+ and wins – Kasparov) 16 ♗h6 ♕xc4 17 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 18 ♖g8+! ♔xg8 19 ♕g1+! and Black resigned in Ljubojevic-Honfi, Cacak 1970.

15 ♗g5!

Even this was all theory at the time. A correspondence game between two British amateurs, Gibbs and Stewart, had seen White try 15 ♗h6?, but he ran into 15...♘c6 16 ♕e4 ♘xe5! and was massacred. Bronstein's move was a key improvement, possibly prepared, although we cannot be sure of this.

15...♕c7

Previous annotators, starting with Vasiukov in the Russian tournament book, recommended 15...♕c8 as superior, so that a later d5-d6 will not hit the queen. However, Timman pointed out that this move has the crucial drawback of not attacking e5, with the result that White can reply 16 ♗b3 (Kasparov gives the surprising 16 ♖g4 which he claims is also very strong) 16...♗c5 17 ♕h4. Now there is no 17...♕xe5+, as would have been available in the game. Timman then analysed only 17...♗xg1? 18 ♕h6!, winning. 17...♕f5!? is much more tenacious, but, the silicon monster finds the stunning and very strong move 18 ♖g2!, simply getting the rook off prise and preparing ♘e4. White seems to be winning here: for example, 18...♘8d7 (18...♕xe5+ 19 ♖e2 ♕f5 20 ♗c2 ♕c8 21 0-0-0 gives a decisive attack) 19 f4! and White has defended his centre, repulsed all Black's threats, has an extra pawn, and plans simply 0-0-0, with a crushing attack.



Question: After Ljubojevic's move, things look bleak for White, don't they? After all, the bishop on c4 is hanging and there is also a threat of 16...♗c5, winning the rook at g1. What does White do?

Answer: He sacrifices a whole rook, that is what.

16 ♗b3! ♗c5 17 ♕f4

Note that 17 ♕h4?, as in the previous note, loses here to 17...♕xe5+.

After the text, we have a very critical position. Black must decide whether to accept the offered rook.

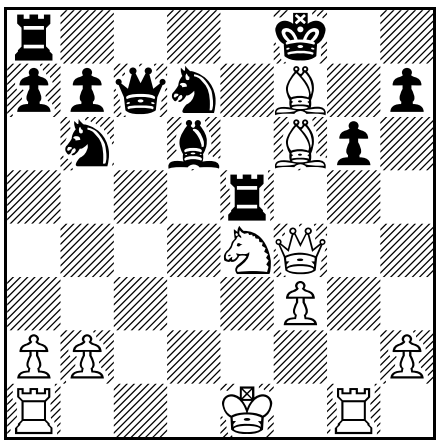
17...♗xg1!?

Question: Is this right?

Answer: Probably. There are two alternatives:

a) 17...♘8d7 was Vasiukov's recommendation. He then gives 18 d6 ♕c6 19 0-0-0 ♗xg1 20 ♖xg1 ♕c5 21 ♖e1 ♖ae8 as fine for Black, but Kasparov and the computer point out that, in this position, simply 22 e6! fxe6 23 ♖xe6 wins at once: 23...♖xf4 24 ♖xe8+ ♔g7 25 ♖g8 is mate, and 23...♖c8 24 ♖e5+ ♕c4 (24...♔h8 25 ♖xc5 ♖xf4 26 ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 27 ♗xf4 leaves White a piece up) 25 ♕g3 wins the black queen.

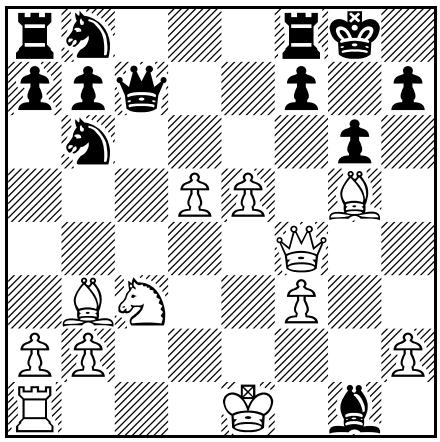
b) The other way of declining the rook is 17...♖e8, once again going after White's e5-pawn. Now Vasiukov once again had it wrong, claiming a refutation with 18 d6? ♗xd6 19 ♘b5, but missing 19...♖xe5+! 20 ♕xe5 ♗b4+, winning for Black. Speelman instead gives 18 ♗f6, which led to a quick white win after 18...♘8d7 19 ♘e4! ♘xe5 20 ♖xg6+!! 1-0 in S.Marjanovic-B.Filipovic, Yugoslavia 1974. Instead, 19...♖xe5 is a better try, but the computer shows that 20 d6! ♗xd6 21 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 is winning.



The star move is 22 ♕h6+! (Kasparov condemns this line for White, but only considers 22 ♗xe5 which is unclear after 22...♗xe5 23 ♕h6+ ♗g7 24 ♕xh7 ♘f6 25 ♘xf6 ♕xf7 26 ♕xg6 ♕xf6) 22...♔xf7 23 ♕xh7+ ♔e6 24 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 25 ♖xg6+! ♘xg6 26 ♕xg6+ ♔e7 27 ♕f6+ ♔d7 28 ♖d1 and White's attack is decisive: for example, 28...♘c4 29 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 30 ♕f7+ ♔c8 31 ♕f8+ ♕d8 32 ♕xd6, etc.

> ***Question:*** So the conclusion, after all these complications, is that Black might as well take the rook?

Answer: Yes.



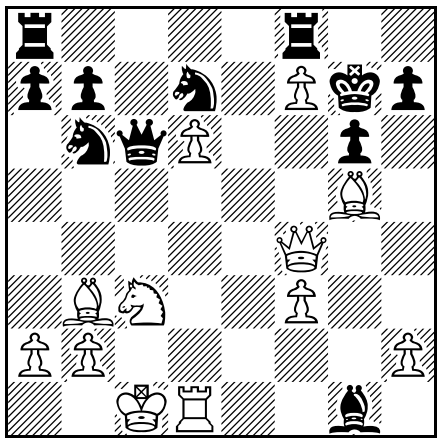
18 d6

Ljubo's experiences with this line are highly interesting. As we have seen, prior to the present game, he had played the white side a couple of times, and always won. Then he switched to the black cause for the present game, and lost. However, undeterred, he carried on playing it as Black, and racked up several victories. One of these came later the same year, when the Romanian GM Florin Gheorghiu took him on, and attempted to improve on Bronstein's play with the move 18 ♔e2?. However, this proved bad, and Gheorghiu lost as follows: 18...♕c5! (as we will see below, this is a key resource for Black in many variations; the black queen defends the bishop on g1 and, together, the two pieces create threats against the white king) 19 ♖xg1 ♕xg1 20 ♗f6 (it looks as though Black will be mated after ♕h6, but the white king is too exposed)) 20...♕g2+ 21 ♔e3 (21 ♔e1 ♘8d7 is no better: for instance, 22 ♕h6 ♘xf6 23 exf6 ♖ae8+ 24 ♘e4 ♖xe4+ 25 fxe4 ♕xe4+ 26 ♔d2 ♕d4+ and the f6-pawn drops) 21...♕xb2 22 ♔d3 (or 22 ♕h6 ♕c1+) 22...♘8d7 23 ♘e4 ♖ac8 24 ♕h6 ♘xe5+ 25 ♔e3 ♖c3+ 0-1, F.Gheorghiu-L.Ljubojevic, Manila 1973.

Kasparov's *My Great Predecessors* volume reveals one other stunning thing about this position. He claims that Ljubo recently revealed to him that, after playing 18 d6, Bronstein offered a draw, because he had just five minutes (!) left on his clock. Ljubo, who, as we have seen, was armed to the teeth in this opening line, had used just ten minutes on his own clock, so naturally he declined. We can only be grateful that he did so, as well as marvelling at Bronstein's conduct of the rest of the game, with so little time left.

18...♕c8?

This proves to be a serious mistake. 18...♕c6? is no better, losing at once after 19 e6 fxe6 20 ♗xe6+ ♔g7 21 ♗h6+ and mate. 19...♘8d7 is actually the best try, but also good for White after 20 exf7+! ♔g7 21 0-0-0.



Question: How come a position like this is good for White? He is still a rook down, and what is he threatening? Say, I play simply 21...♗c5, getting the bishop back to safety?

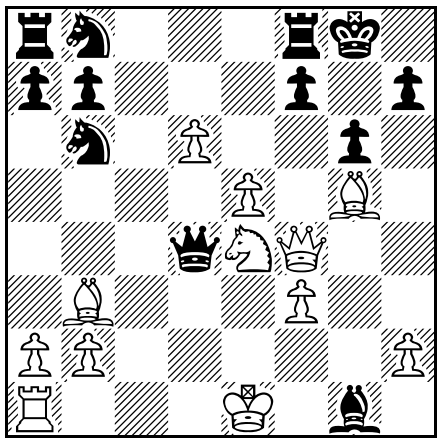
Answer: White still has a crushing attack, and can take his time. Simply 22 ♔b1! gets the king off the c-file and prepares 23 ♘e4. The computer shows that Black cannot defend: for example, 22...♖ac8 (pointless, but Black has no way to get any pieces over to the kingside or to shut out White's attacking units) 23 ♘e4 and there is no defence to 24 ♗f6+.

Question: It seems amazing that with so many pieces on the board, and an extra rook, Black cannot defend.

Answer: The problem is that his extra rook is not really taking an active part in the game, and the d6-pawn cuts his position in half. Meanwhile, every white piece is taking part in the attack, apart from his king. If you have trouble believing that White is winning here, it is worth spending some time, pushing the pieces around and trying to find a defence. You will learn a great deal about the power of the initiative.

Question: So if the other queen moves lose, what should Black do?

Answer: The critical move is 18...♕c5!, an idea we have already seen in the game Gheorghiu-Ljubojevic, quoted above. Now there are threats around the squares f2 and maybe even e3. White continues 19 ♘e4! when 19...♕d4! is critical (as shown by Vasiukov, 19...♕e3+ 20 ♕xe3 ♗xe3 21 ♗xe3 ♘c6 22 f4 is good for White, who has a pawn for the exchange and has preserved his powerful central pawn phalanx and dark-squared bishop).



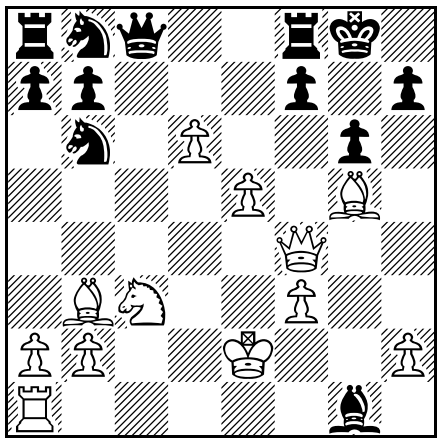
Question: And what is going on here?

Answer: The position is basically unclear. Ljubo netted yet another point in this variation, when he reached this very position against the Israeli GM, Yehuda Grünfeld, at the Riga Interzonal of 1979. That game continued 20 ♖d1 (Timman suggested, 20 ♔f1 but the computer's 20...♘8d7 21 ♖e1 ♘xe5 looks better for Black) 20...♕xb2 21 e6?! (Speelman's 21 ♖d2 forces a draw by repetition, as the computer confirms: 21...♕a1+ 22 ♖d1 ♕b2 23 ♖d2 ♕c1+ 24 ♔e2 ♘8d7 25 ♗f6 ♘xf6 26 ♘xf6+ ♔g7 27 ♘h5+ gxh5 28 ♕g5+ ♔h8 29 ♕f6+, etc) 21...♘8d7! 22 e7! ♕xh2 23 exf8♕+ ♖xf8 24 ♕xh2 ♗xh2 25 ♘f6+? (25 ♔f2 is a better try, when Black is better but not clearly winning) 25...♔g7 26 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 27 ♗e7 ♖b8 28 ♔f2 ♗e5 29 ♖c1 ♘c5 30 ♖d1 ♗f6 31 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 32 ♗c4 ♖d8 33 ♔g3 a6 34 ♗f1 ♔e5 35 f4+ ♔e6 36 ♗c4+ ♔f6 37 ♔f3 b5 0-1, Y.Grünfeld-L.Ljubojevic, Riga Interzonal 1979.

19 ♔e2?

Given the complexity of the game, not to mention Bronstein's clock situation, it is hardly surprising that the players should exchange errors around here. Bronstein's move looks logical, since it allows his rook on a1 into the game, without pinning the queen's knight (and thus threatens ♘e4), but it is actually wrong.

Bronstein pointed out that 19 0-0-0! is correct: for example, 19...♗c5?! 20 e6 fxe6 21 ♕e5! ♖e8 22 ♗h6 ♕d7 23 ♘e4 and the attack is too strong. Timman analyses the more tenacious move 19...♕c5 when 20 e6 ♘8d7 21 exf7+ ♔g7 22 ♔b1! is similar to the line we analysed after 18...♕c6– White just unpins the knight and so threatens ♘e4, with a very strong attack. Of course, it was precisely to avoid such a tempo loss with ♔b1 that Bronstein chose instead to put his king on e2, but this should have cost him dearly.



19...♗c5?

Question: Another mistake!

Answer: Yes, and this time, it proves fatal. Ljubo's error is perhaps less excusable, in that he had plenty of time on his clock, and apparently continued moving at near-blitz speed. But even so, the complexity of the game is just colossal, and mistakes are inevitable in an over-the-board struggle, even after long thought.

Question: So what should he have played?

Answer: The same key move that we have already seen in several lines: 19...♕c5!. Now 20 e6? was analysed as inadequate even in the pre-computer era by Vainstein and Speelman, both of whom pointed out the excellent defence 20...♘8d7! (or 20...♕f2+ 21 ♔d3 ♘8d7! – Kasparov) 21 exf7+ (21 exd7 ♘xd7 leaves White with nothing; his deadly central pawn duo has gone, and Black's knight covers f6) 21...♔g7 22 ♗h6+ ♔h8! and the king escapes the checks, while Black is still a rook up.

It looks as though 19...♕c5 walks into 20 ♘e4, but then there is a check on b5: 20...♕b5+ after which it appears that Black is winning. For example, 21 ♔d2 ♘c4+ 22 ♔e1 and now Speelman's 22...♘e3! is one of several winning moves. Even 22...♗e3, which Timman analysed as losing to 23 ♘f6+ ♔h8 24 ♕h4, is still winning for Black, after 24...♕b4+! 25 ♔f1 (or 25 ♔e2 ♕d2+ 26 ♔f1 h5 and White is busted, since the usual response 27 ♘xh5 is just met by 27...♗xg5) 25...♘d2+ 26 ♔e2 ♕xh4.

Question: So what are we concluding here?

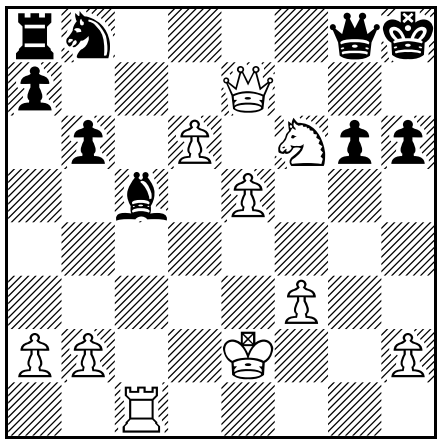
Answer: That 19...♕c5! is winning for Black and refutes Bronstein's 19th move.

20 ♘e4

Now, on the other hand, White has a winning attack.

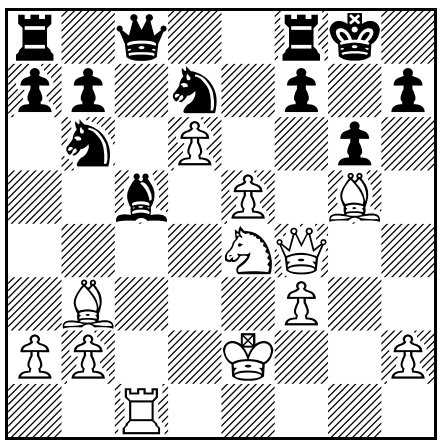
20...♘8d7

20...♘6d7 is slightly more stubborn, but Timman gave a superb piece of analysis, to show how White still wins: 21 ♖c1! (the point of this move becomes clear an impressive ten moves later) 21...b6 (the computer's 21...♘c6 22 ♘xc5 ♘dxe5! keeps Black alive here, although White still has a powerful attack for just an exchange) 22 ♗f6 ♘xf6 23 ♘xf6+ ♔g7 24 ♕h4! h6 (or 24...♖h8 25 ♘h5+ ♔g8 26 ♗xf7+!) 25 ♘h5+ ♔h7 (if 25...gxh5 26 ♕f6+ ♔g8 27 ♕g6+ ♔h8 28 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 29 ♗c2 f5 30 ♗b3+) 26 ♕f6 ♖g8 27 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 28 ♕f6+ ♔h7 29 ♗xg8+ ♕xg8 30 ♕e7+ ♔h8 31 ♘f6 and wins.



Note that, in this position, if White's rook were not on c1, Black would have a saving check on c4!.

21 ♖c1

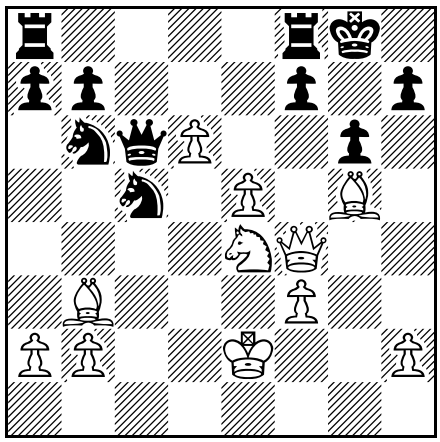


Question: What is the idea of this?

Answer: White sets up an exchange sacrifice on c5, to lure the black knight away from covering f6.

Question: Once again, I am astonished that White can afford such seemingly quiet moves, when he is a rook down!

Answer: Yes, but as we pointed out before, what is the extra black rook doing? The answer is nothing – it sits on a8, contributing precisely zero to the defence of the kingside. In the area of the board that matters, namely the black king's vicinity, White has every one of his pieces, bar the king, taking part in the attack. Even the rook on c1, as we have said, is taking part, by threatening to lure the d7-knight away from the critical zone.
21...♕c6 22 ♖xc5! ♘xc5



White has now invested two rooks for one minor piece, a deficit of 'seven points' (reckoning a rook as five points and a minor piece as three), but again, what matters is the material that is playing in the area of the board that matters, i.e. the zone around the black king, There, White is attacking with queen, rook, two bishops and a knight, plus the e5-pawn (which should certainly be counted, as it controls f6, for example, as well as threatening to advance to e6). Black is defending with his king, rook and three pawns, plus the knight at c5 – a hopeless deficit.

Question: But surely, this counting of pieces is not serious, is it? It sounds like something one uses with beginners!

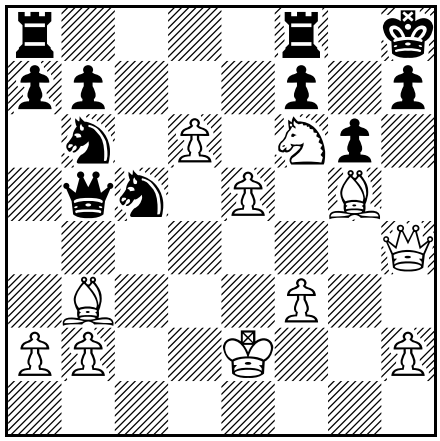
Answer: It is deadly serious. Watch some of the videos, in which Kasparov demonstrates his

games, and you will see him employ exactly this approach. Yes, a really experienced player tends to assess such attacks more by 'feel' or instinct than by actually counting, but that is only because he subconsciously builds a similar counting approach into his instinct in the first place. For the less experienced, it is an excellent way to assess whether an attack has a good chance of succeeding.

23 ♘f6+ ♔h8

23...♔g7 24 ♕h4 is no better. For example, 24...♕b5+ 25 ♔f2 h5 26 ♘xh5+ and mate is forced: 26...gxh5 27 ♗f6+, etc.

24 ♕h4 ♕b5+



25 ♔e3!!

Again, brilliant tactical calculation by Bronstein, whose flag must by now have been hanging. The apparently safer 25 ♔f2? throws away the win after 25...♘d3+ 26 ♔g1 ♕c5+ 27 ♔g2 (27 ♔h1? actually loses after 27...h5! 28 ♘xh5 ♕f2! 29 ♘g3+ ♔g8 30 ♗f6 ♕e1+ 31 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 32 ♔h1 ♕c1+ 33 ♔g2 ♘f4+ and Black will force off the queens or mate White: for example, 34 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 35 ♔f1 ♘h5! 36 ♘xh5 ♖ac8 and wins) 27...h5 28 ♘xh5 ♕f2+ 29 ♕xf2 ♘xf2 30 ♘f4 and White perhaps has enough for the exchange, but no more.

25...h5

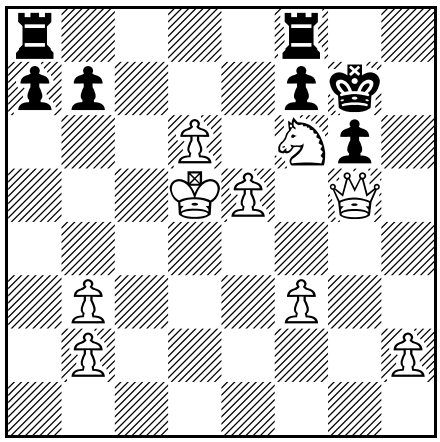
If 25...♕d3+ 26 ♔f2 and now the d3-square is blocked to the black knight.

26 ♘xh5 ♕xb3+

Question: Is giving up the queen forced?

Answer: I am afraid so. After 26...♕d3+ 27 ♔f2 ♘e4+ (27...gxh5 28 ♗f6+ mates) 28 fxe4 ♕d4+ 29 ♔f1 ♕d3+ 30 ♔e1 ♕b1+ 31 ♗d1 the checks run out.

27 axb3 ♘d5+ 28 ♔d4 ♘e6+ 29 ♔xd5 ♘xg5 30 ♘f6+ ♔g7 31 ♕xg5



The smoke finally clears, and White has a winning material advantage. Now he just has to reach the time control at move 40, which Bronstein duly did.

31...♖fd8 32 e6 fxe6+ 33 ♔xe6 ♖f8 34 d7 a5 35 ♘g4 ♖a6+ 36 ♔e5 ♖f5+ 37 ♕xf5 gxf5 38 d8♕ fxg4 39 ♕d7+ ♔h6 40 ♕xb7 ♖g6 41 f4 1-0

An absolutely fabulous game, and one of the most interesting ever played by Bronstein. The complications were head-spinning and even many of the later published analyses, by such giants as Timman and Speelman, contain mistakes, sometimes ones which change the assessment completely. As always, when one subjects such pre-computer analysis to silicon examination, errors turns up, but this is no reflection on the players or analysts.