

Introduction: The Veresov



This book is really the result of a happy accident. I had just finished my first book for Everyman Chess on the London System, when John Emms asked if I wanted to do a second book – on the Veresov. Apparently he had seen several of my games with the Veresov in the database. There was only one problem: John had been looking at my younger brother Jimmy's games! The database had inadvertently posted many of Jimmy's games under my name. Jimmy had played the Veresov in the 80's and had long since retired from tournament play to become a captain of industry, running our family business. I, on the other hand, had not played a single Veresov in my life. After confessing this to John he gave me the go ahead anyway. Perhaps John thought Veresov was in the Lakdawala family genes!

The book constituted a real challenge, and the irony of a London-loving chess chicken like me writing a book on one of the most bloodthirsty openings in chess was not lost on me. I had al-

ways considered the Veresov an opening of dubious lineage. After all, with 1 d4 and 2 ♖c3 White violates one of the biggest taboos in chess, which is don't block your c-pawn with your knight in a Queen's Pawn opening. What never occurs to Veresov naysayers is the fact that White isn't trying for c4, but instead plays for e4! Diehard Veresovers like Jimmy knew better. He would heap poetic praises upon his beloved opening. Not wishing to hurt the lad's feelings, I indulged him by nodding politely, coughing, looking up at the ceiling and whistling through my teeth, holding back any criticism of his favourite opening. Now, having thoroughly studied the opening, I can state with confidence that Jimmy was right and I was wrong. The Veresov is completely playable, and if you are a tactician and attacking player, it tends to suck your opponent into your realm of power. Nobody bothers to study the line as Black. So the greatest strength of the Veresov is its own dubious reputation!

Profile of a Veresover

Jimmy was born to play the Veresov:

1. He was incredibly lazy about opening study. In fact, he reached an impressive US Chess Federation rating just over 2400 without ever studying a single chess book! A feat only the young Capa matched. The opening is easy to learn because you play d4, ,  and often f3 against just about everything. The idea behind the opening is incredibly simple: force e4! no matter how Black responds. This one guiding principle makes your opening choices easy.

2. He was lopsided in his chess abilities. I would estimate his strategic understanding at the level of a typical kindergartener, while his tactical and calculation abilities were right in the neighbourhood of *Rybka*! Once at a family birthday party I was playing GM Kaidanov in a 5-0 game on the ICC. Jimmy came in late, looked at the position for about 20 seconds and stopped me from making the move I was going to play. He reeled off a long variation with a cheapo at the end and insisted I play it. Kaidanov walked right into it!

3. Jimmy was happiest when the position was a mess. The more unclear the position, the better. And with the Veresov that's what you get.





So if you have any of the following similar traits, then the Veresov is a perfect opening choice: you don't have much time or inclination for study; you are a natural tactician; and you revel in chaotic positions.

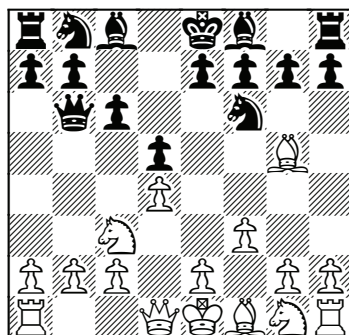
A History of the Veresov

Besides Jimmy, the other founding fathers of the opening were Savielly Tartakower, who invented the line in the 1920's and played it his entire life; Kurt Richter, who played it mostly in the 30's; and Gavril Veresov, who played it from the 30's to the mid-70's. Gavril Veresov must have had the better press agent for the opening to be named after him. Its pedigree includes four World Champions who employed it: Smyslov, Tal, Spassky and Karpov. The top GMs who play it today are Hector and Khachian.

Here is an early game in the Veresov. Note the utter confusion the opening inflicts on Black!

Game 1 K.Richter-G.Rogmann Berlin 1937

1 d4  f6 2  c3 d5 3  g5 c6 4 f3 



Logical. Black hits the sore spot on b2 before White gets into his groove

with ♖d2 and 0-0-0.

5 e4!

White can also take the milquetoast route with 5 ♖b1, but any red-blooded Veresover would hang his head down in shame if this were played!

5...♟xb2 6 ♘ge2 e6

Choosing to keep the game closed to protect himself from White's development lead. Instead, 6...dxe4!? 7 fxe4 ♟a3 8 e5 ♘d5 9 ♙d2 ♙g4 10 ♘xd5 cxd5 11 ♟b1! gives White enough for the pawn.

7 e5 ♘fd7 8 ♜b1 ♟a3 9 ♜b3 ♟a5 10 ♙d2 ♟c7 11 ♘f4 a6!

It is too soon for 11...c5?! 12 ♘b5 ♟c6 13 c4! dxc4 14 ♙xc4 cxd4 15 ♟e2 when the game has blasted open and White holds a massive development lead.

12 ♙d3?

His d-pawn required support with 12 ♘ce2 c5 13 c3.

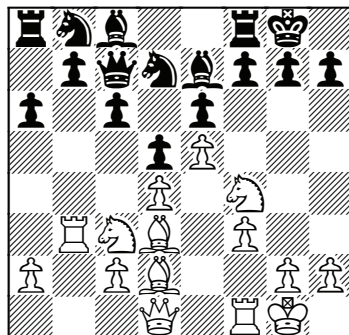
12...♙e7?

I just don't buy that White has full compensation for the piece if Black strikes with 12...c5! 13 ♘cxd5 (what else?) 13...exd5 14 ♘xd5 ♟d8 15 e6 fxe6 16 ♟e2 ♙f7 17 ♘f4 ♘b6. Moreover, Black's failure to counter in the centre results in a massive build-up against his king later in the game.

13 0-0 0-0

This time the central counter entails risk: 13...c5!? 14 ♘cxd5 exd5 15 ♘xd5 ♟d8 16 c3 ♘c6 17 ♙e3 cxd4 18 cxd4 0-0 19 ♘xe7+ ♟xe7 20 ♟b1 and White has only one pawn for the piece, but

may still have adequate compensation. He enjoys plenty of extra space and the bishop pair, not to mention that his pieces are aimed at Black's king and he might begin a giant pawn roller, starting with f4.



14 ♟e1 ♜e8

Black's position falls apart after the mistimed 14...c5? 15 ♘cxd5! exd5 16 ♘xd5 ♟d8 17 ♙a5! b6 18 ♟e4! g6 19 ♜xb6!.

15 ♟g3 ♘f8?!

15...c5! 16 ♘cxd5! exd5 17 ♘xd5 ♟d8 is messy but probably still in Black's favour.

16 ♘h5 ♘g6 17 f4 ♙d8?!

Black just doesn't believe in countering wing attacks with central counters! He had to plunge into the craziness of 17...c5 18 f5!.

18 ♟h3 b5?!

On his tombstone, Rogmann should have had the undertaker inscribe: "I wish I had played ...c5!" Even here, 18...c5 19 f5 exf5 20 ♘xd5 leads to a typical Veresov mess.

19 g4! ♟e7

For the love of God, man, ...c5! But maybe now it is too late. Also, please note how kind I am in awarding most of Black's non-...c5 moves '?'! instead of the full '?' that they deserve.

Here after 19...c5 20 f5 exf5 21 gxf5 c4 22 ♖xg7! White has a crushing attack.

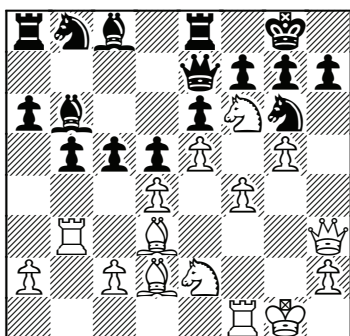
20 g5!

Planning to entomb Black's king with a knight sac on f6.

20...♙b6 21 ♖e2 c5!

Hooray! Perhaps this move should be awarded a '!!'. Unfortunately, it arrives too late.

22 ♖f6+!



The original maestro of the Veresov (the Richter-Veresov?) goes on to give a beautiful demonstration in the art of attack.

22...gxf6 23 gxf6 ♖f8 24 ♔h1 cxd4

The force of White's kingside build-up is revealed in the lines: 24...c4?? 25 ♙b4! which traps the queen, and 24...♗c6 25 f5 exf5 26 ♙h6 f4 27 ♖h5.

25 ♖g1 ♖d7 26 ♖h5 ♖xf6 27 exf6 ♖a7 28 ♙b4!

Deflecting a key defender.

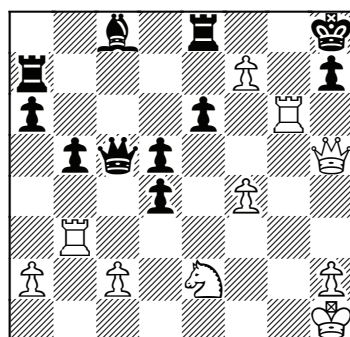
28...♙c5 29 ♙xc5 ♖xc5 30 ♙xg6 fxg6 31 ♖xg6+!

Obvious but still pretty.

31...♙h8

Black's king is utterly overwhelmed. This is how Napoleon must have felt near the end of the Battle of Waterloo! If 31...hxg6 32 ♖xg6+ ♔f8 33 ♖g3 and mate next move.

32 f7! 1-0



Black can't deal with the double threats of 33 fxe8(Q+) and 33 ♖e5+.

Summary

...c5 was required! Defensive technique has come a long way since 1937. Today, most club players would reflexively counter in the centre at the first sign of a white attack, but one thing remains constant: the Veresov continues to confuse Black.

The Tone of this Book

I hope the reader will forgive my occasional overly-goofy tone. In the middle of a chapter, I may suddenly engage

you in a conversation about the Borg Collective and go on to confess impure thoughts towards space goddess Sevenofnine! The idea is to recreate the casual atmosphere of chess lessons at my home rather than that of a professor in a lecture hall. It's actually a mystery to me why most chess books are so formally written, as if readers are Amish elders rather than the goofs and nerds most of us are! Besides, I can't help it. The dangerous combination of Jimi Hendrix and Buddhist chants blasting away on the CD player while I write induces such outbursts! I hope the reader gets as much enjoyment reading this book as I did writing it.

Acknowledgments

No project this large gets produced by a single individual without the helping

kindness of others. I would like to thank John Emms for his Capa-like clarity with the chapter outlines, and also for allowing me to write the book the way I did. Thanks to Richard Palliser for his final edit of the book. Thanks to my friends Dave Hart and Peter Graves for their helpful discussions and suggestions while the book was in progress. Thanks to proof-reader-in-chief Nancy, and to computer wiz Timothy (I would like to add that any lingering resentment over the fact that the damned fool accidentally deleted a full day's work in Chapter Six has dissolved in the fog of time!).

Cyrus Lakdawala,
San Diego,
November 2010

Contents

Bibliography	4
Introduction	5
1 The Veresov: 3...♘bd7 4 f3!?	10
2 The Veresov: 3...♘bd7 4 ♕d3	45
3 The Veresov: Other Defences	71
4 Veresov versus French: Lines with ...♘f6	109
5 Veresov versus French: Lines without ...♘f6	130
6 1 d4 d5 2 ♘c3: Second-Move Alternatives	163
7 Veresov versus Caro-Kann	188
8 Veresov versus Dutch	208
9 Modern, Pirc and Philidor	233
10 Schmid Benoni and Czech Benoni	263
11 1...♘c6 and Owen's Defence	280
Index of Variations	298
Index of Games	302

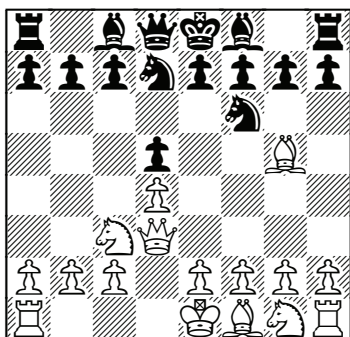
Chapter Two

The Veresov:

3...♘bd7 4 ♔d3

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 ♙g5 ♘bd7 4 ♔d3

This is a sounder alternative to the chaos of 4 f3 from the first chapter.



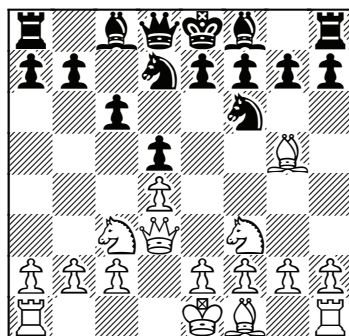
In this chapter, we deal with:

- a) 4...c6 from which you get mostly Caro-Kann style positions;
- b) 4...e6 where you deal with French positions;
- c) 4...h6?! usually leads to inferior French positions;
- d) 4...g6 leads to a hybrid Caro/Pirc position; and

e) 4...c5 when Black will capture on d4 with greater central control, but your development lead in the open position could make life tough for Black.

Game 15
Z.Kozul-A.Brkić
Zagreb 2006

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 ♙g5 ♘bd7 4 ♔d3
c6 5 ♘f3



GM Prié considers this the mainline of the 4 ♖d3 Veresov. White takes a wait-and-see approach and refrains from an immediate e4. One drawback is that White loses the option of slowly building his centre with f3 and e4.

5...b5

Blind ambition! Black launches an attack even before White commits his king to the queenside. Instead, after 5...g6 6 e4 dxe4 7 ♖xe4 ♙g7 (the game looks like it arose from some kind of Gurgeniǒze Pirc) 8 ♙e2 h6 9 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 10 ♙f4 White has a little extra space but Black stands solidly, A.Zubov-N.Papenin, Simferopol 2003.

6 a3!

White remains flexible, changes gears and plans to castle kingside.

6...a5!?

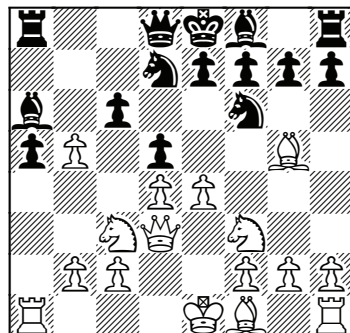
If you are brave and stubborn enough, you can actually still castle queenside: for example, 6...h6 7 ♙h4 e6 8 e4 dxe4 9 ♖xe4 ♙e7 10 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 11 0-0-0! 0-0 12 ♖e5 (the key for White is central play, since he is slower if he begins to attack Black's king) 12...♙b7 13 ♙e2 a5 14 ♙f3 ♖d5?! (14...b4!) 15 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 16 ♙xd5 cxd5 17 ♖xb5! ♖fc8?! 18 ♖d7! and White was up a pawn in the ending but later botched it, M.Pogromsky-A.Pugachov, Internet 2004.

7 e4 b4!?

Or 7...♙a6 8 b4 axb4 9 axb4 dxe4 10 ♖xe4 ♙b7 11 ♖b1 e6 12 ♙e2 with an interesting position where White stands just a shade better. Black controls d5 for

his pieces while White owns c5.

8 axb4 ♙a6 9 b5!



9...cxb5?

After this Black experiences serious difficulties. He should enter the line 9...♙xb5! 10 ♖xb5 dxe4 11 ♖e3! cxb5 (11...exf3?? 12 ♖d6 mate would be a pleasant surprise for White) 12 ♖d2 ♖b6 13 ♖xe4 ♖d5 14 ♖d3 e6 when White stands a tad better due to his bishop pair, but Black's queenside play gives him counterplay.

10 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 11 exd5 b4 12 ♖b3 ♙xf1 13 ♖xf1 ♖b6

Brkic had probably intended 13...♖b6?! 14 c4! bxc3 15 bxc3, but then realized that he couldn't recapture: 15...♖xd5?? 16 ♖e5! and Black is helpless to stop ♖b5+ or ♖a4+.

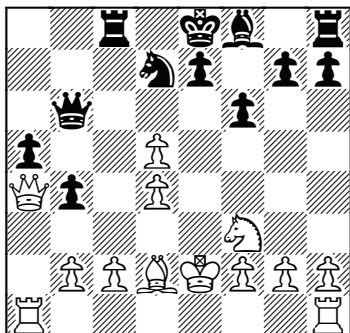
14 ♖a4!

Pinning the knight and preparing c4.

14...f6 15 ♙d2 ♖c8 16 ♙e2!

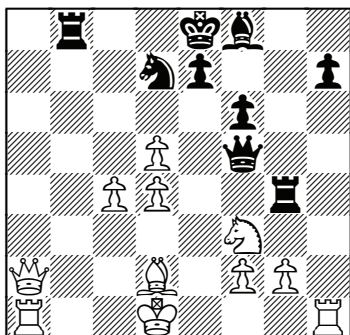
Very brave. He sees that d1 is actually a secure spot for the king. Black simply doesn't have the attackers to do the job. An alternative plan is to play h3 and walk the king to h2.

The opening has been a disaster for Black. Let's assess:



1. He is down a pawn;
2. Not only is Black behind in development, but the d5-pawn clogs Black's even further;
3. White's king is safe and comfortable in the middle since Black doesn't have enough attackers;
4. The a5-pawn is weak and hanging;
5. Black is stuck in an annoying pin on the a4-e8 diagonal.

16...g5 17 c3 ♕a6+ 18 ♔d1 bxc3 19 bxc3 ♕d3 20 ♕xa5 ♖b8 21 ♕a2! ♕f5 22 h3 ♙g8 23 c4 g4 24 hxg4 ♙xg4



After 24...♕xg4 25 ♖h2 everything is covered and White remains two pawns in the plus column.

25 ♕c2!

Simplifying into an easily won end-game. Black can't dodge the trade.

25...♕xc2+ 26 ♖xc2 ♙xg2 27 ♙e3 f5?

27...♙c8 28 ♙d3 ♖b6 29 ♖d2 is also hopeless.

28 ♖h4 1-0

Summary

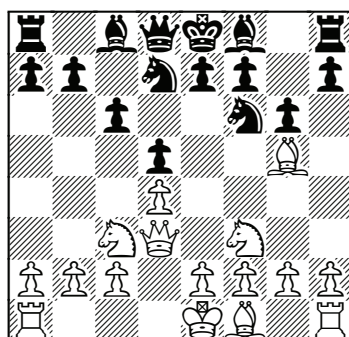
White takes a waiting approach with 5 ♖f3. He eventually plays for e4 no matter how Black responds.

Game 16

J.Bosch-A.Kabatianski
Dutch League 2009

1 d4 ♖f6 2 ♖c3 d5 3 ♙g5 ♖bd7 4 ♕d3 c6 5 ♖f3 g6

A more sober approach than 5...b5.



6 e4 dxe4 7 ♖xe4 ♙g7 8 0-0-0 0-0 9 ♙b1

Moving the king to b1 is almost a

reflex in such positions, but in opposite-wing attacks every tempo counts. Perhaps White should continue with the immediate 9 h4! h6 10 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 11 ♜xf6+ ♖xf6 12 h5 ♔a5? (reckless; he should play the saner move 12...g5) 13 hxg6 ♖f5 14 gxh7+ ♔xf7 15 ♔b3 ♖e4 16 ♖c4 ♖g5+ 17 ♜xg5 ♔xg5+ 18 ♜b1 ♖d5 19 ♔h3! and White had a material advantage as well as an attack, R.Barhudarian-Y.Nikolaev, St Petersburg 2008.

9...a5

Black is first to begin to attack, but one advantage in White's favour is extra space, which keeps his king safer. It was Steinitz who first advised against attacking if you control less territory than your opponent.

10 ♜g3

Putting a stop to ...♖f5 ideas and also preparing h4-h5.

10...♜b6!?

Going for piece play over a traditional pawn storm. A more normal approach would be 10...b5 11 h4 ♜g4 12 ♔d2 h6 13 ♖f4 h5 14 ♜e4 ♜b6 15 ♜fg5 ♜d5 16 ♖g3 ♖f5 17 ♔e1 ♔b6 18 f3 ♜gf6 19 c3 ♔fd8 20 ♔a1 b4 21 c4 ♜c7 22 c5 when the chances look balanced.

11 c4!?

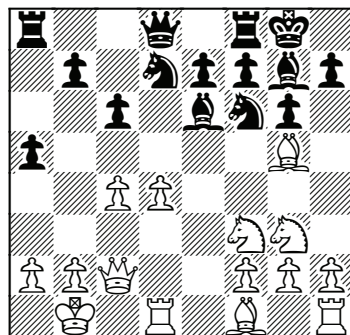
Taking control over d5 at the cost of undermining support for his d-pawn.

11...♖e6

Traditionally in such structures, Black tries to eliminate his light-squared bishop for a knight. However,

after 11...♖g4 12 ♖e2 a4 13 h3 ♖xf3 14 ♖xf3 a3 15 b3 White's space and bishop pair give him a clear edge and help keep his king safe.

12 ♔c2 ♜bd7



The work is done on b6 and he prepares ...b5.

13 h4 b5

Black can also try to halt the advance of White's h-pawn: 13...h5!? 14 ♔e1! (an exchange sac on e6 will be strategically devastating to Black) 14...♖g4 15 ♜h2! (threat: 16 f3) 15...♔e8 16 f3 ♔c7! 17 ♜xg4 ♔xg3 18 ♜f2 a4 19 ♔h3 ♔c7 20 g4 a3 21 b3 and White's attack looks a bit faster, but his structure is also more shaky. Perhaps chances are balanced.

14 h5 bxc4 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 ♖xc4

Or 16 ♔e1!? (contemplating an exchange sac on e6) 16...♖d5 17 ♖xc4 ♜b6 18 ♖xd5 ♜bxd5 19 ♜e4 and White's knights will attain powerful outposts on c5 and e5. Black has the open b-file and chances against White's king, but I give White a slight edge.

16...♙xc4 17 ♜xc4 ♜b6 18 ♙h6 ♙xh6?

There was no reason for Black to give White a free move to double on the h-file. He should play 18...♜fb8! 19 ♜c1 ♙h8.

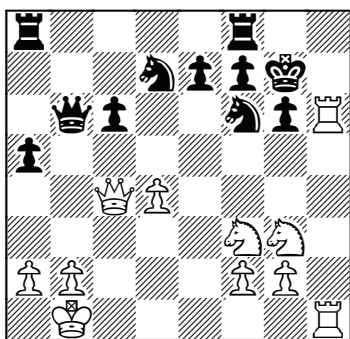
19 ♜xh6 ♙g7 20 ♜dh1?

A critical moment in the game. White's move allows Black to challenge the h-file with his rooks. White missed the more subtle 20 ♜c1! and Black must be very careful. For example:

a) 20...♜h8?? 21 ♜f5+! mates.

b) 20...♜fb8?? 21 ♜f5+! and once again White mates in five.

c) 20...♜g8! (the only move) 21 ♜e5 ♙f8 22 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 23 ♜e4 ♜b8 24 ♜h7 and Black's king is in a precarious situation; ♜g5 is in the air.



20...♜b5!

A terrific defensive move. Black covers the critical f5-square and deprives his opponent of opportunities to sac on f5. This allows Black time to challenge the h-file with equality.

21 ♜c1 ♜h8

No more ♜f5+ tricks, so Black confronts White on the h-file.

22 a3 ♜ab8 23 ♙a1 ♜g4 24 ♜xh8 ♜xh8 25 ♜e1 e6 26 ♜d2 ♜gf6

Black has equalized. The mutual weaknesses on d4 and c6 cancel each other out.

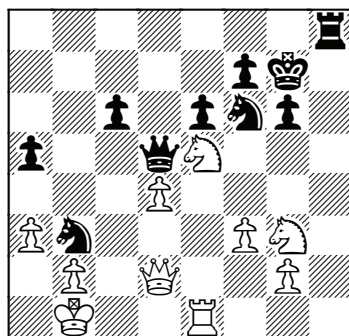
27 ♜e5?!

His d-pawn needs support: 27 ♜c1 c5 28 ♜c3 cxd4 29 ♜xd4 e5 30 ♜c4 ♜xc4 31 ♜xc4 is balanced but still sharp due to the opposite-wing pawn majorities.

27...♜d5 28 f3 ♜c5

Threatening to land on b3, but this isn't the strongest move. Black should go for 28...c5! 29 ♜xa5 ♜a8 30 ♜b5 ♜xd4 31 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 (threatening to take on a3) 32 ♜b3 ♜b8 33 ♜c2 ♜e5 with the initiative.

29 ♙b1 ♜b3



30 ♜e3?

Meekly submitting to the loss of a pawn. White misses an opportunity to counterattack and target f7 with the line 30 ♜f4! ♜xd4 (Black is in big trouble after 30...♜xd4? 31 ♜e4 ♜f5 32 g4 ♜h4 33 ♜g5) 31 ♜e4! ♜d2+! 32 ♜xd2 ♜xe5 33 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 34 ♜xa5, which

regains the lost pawn with equality.

30...♖xd4 31 ♖c1 ♗h2 32 ♜e2 ♜b3 33 ♜c3 ♗d2 34 ♗xd2 ♜xd2+ 35 ♖a2 ♗xg2 36 ♜a4

The pure pawn race favours Black: 36 ♜xc6 ♜xf3 37 ♜xa5 ♜e5 38 a4 g5 39 ♜b7 ♜c4 40 ♜d1 ♗g4 and now 41 a5?? isn't possible due to 41...♜xa5! 42 ♜xa5 ♗a4+.

36...♜d5 37 ♗xc6 ♗g5! 38 ♜g4 ♗f5 39 ♜c5 ♜xf3 40 ♗a6 ♜d2?

Black wins easily after 40...♜c3+! 41 bxc3 ♗xc5 42 ♖b3 g5 when his three connected passers carry the day.

41 ♗a7 ♜f8?

There was no need to defend the threat on e6. Indeed, Black once again misses 41...♜c3+! 42 bxc3 ♗xc5.

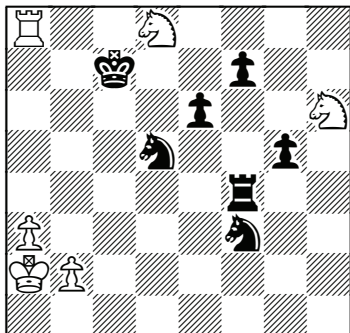
42 ♜d7+ ♖e8 43 ♜de5 ♜f3 44 ♗a8+ ♖e7 45 ♜c6+ ♜d6 46 ♜xa5

Black is still winning, but one gets the sense that he is in the process of botching things!

46...♗f4 47 ♜h6 g5 48 ♜b7+ ♖c7?

He should move closer to his pawns with 48...♖e5!.

49 ♜d8!



49...♜e5?

Yet another missed opportunity. It's like a once-powerful wizard whose magic has drained away. Black should play the superior 49...♜b6!, but White still has a problem-like draw with 50 ♜hxf7 ♜xa8 51 ♜xe6+ ♜d7 52 ♜xf4 gxf4 53 ♜h6 ♜e5 54 ♖b3 ♖e6 55 ♖c3 ♜b6 56 ♜d4 f3 57 ♖e3 ♜bc4+ 58 ♖f2 ♜xb2 59 ♜g4 ♜bd3+ 60 ♖e3 ♖f5 61 ♜h2 f2 62 ♜f1 ♖g4 63 ♖e2 ♜h3 64 ♜e3 ♜g4 65 ♜d1! eliminating f2 and drawing the game.

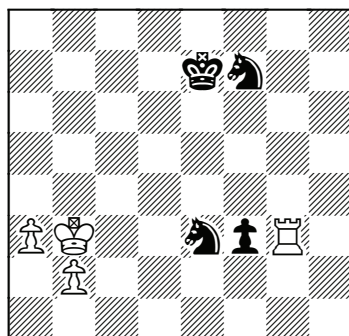
50 ♜hxf7! ♜xf7 51 ♜xe6+ ♜d6 52 ♜xf4 gxf4

All White has to do is sac his rook for the pawn to seal the draw.

53 ♗g8 ♜e3 54 ♖b3

54 ♗g1 also gets in range to sac: 54...f3 (or 54...♜e5 55 ♗h1 f3 56 ♗h2 ♜5g4 57 ♗h3 f2 58 ♗f3) 55 ♗g6+ ♖e5 56 ♗g3 f2! 57 ♗f3! reaches the target.

54...f3 55 ♗g6+ ♖e7 56 ♗g3!



The f-pawn is worth more than the rook! White finally engineers a position where the pawn cannot escape the sac.

56...♜e5 57 ♗xf3! ♜xf3 58 ♖c3 ♜d6 59

b4 ♔d5 60 a4 ♘e5 61 b5 ♔c5 62 a5
♘d5+ 63 ♔d2 ♔xb5 64 a6 ♔xa6 65 ♔e2
½-½

Phew! A close call for White, who was on life support for a long time before his miraculous recovery. I was sure *Rybka* and *Fritz* would be fooled and erroneously claim Black is up +6 at the end, but they both saw the light and had it almost at dead even. I am very sorry to have to report that *Crafty*, their naive cousin, has Black winning here. Well, nobody's perfect!

Summary

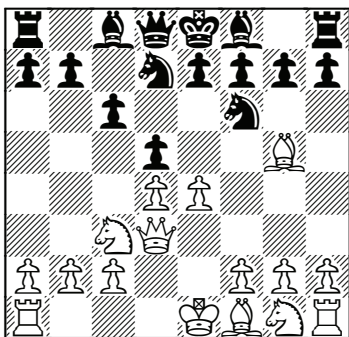
5...g6 is a good way to respond to the 5 ♘f3 line. Black should equalize with correct play.

Game 17

M.Khachian-I.Miller

US Open, Los Angeles 2003

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 ♙g5 ♘bd7 4 ♔d3
c6 5 e4



5...dxe4 6 ♘xe4

Now we get a ...♘d7 Caro-Kann with two key differences:

1 White's bishop is committed to g5. Black may make use of this to engineer a freeing swap later on.

2. White's queen is on d3. This may help, since the queen can later go to g3 or h3, targeting Black's kingside. In some cases White may even manage ♗e4 and ♙d3, ganging up on h7.

6...e6

Khachian also had this position against one of my students: 6...♘xe4 7 ♗xe4 ♗a5+ 8 ♙d2 ♗d5 9 ♗h4 (9 ♗e3 is covered next game) 9...♘f6 (blasting free with 9...e5!? may not be wise: 10 ♘f3 ♙e7 11 ♗g3 exd4 12 ♗xg7 ♙f6 13 ♗h6 ♗e4+ 14 ♙d1 ♗g6 15 ♙d3 ♗xh6 16 ♗e1+ ♙d8 17 ♙xh6 favours White since he has the better pawn structure) 10 c4 ♗e4+ 11 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 12 ♙e3 with just an edge to White, who has space, but will have a tough time making anything of it because Black stands solidly, M.Khachian-E.Liu, Los Angeles 2003.

7 ♘f3 ♙e7 8 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 9 h4 h6!?

He doesn't want the annoying bishop to sit on g5 forever. However, if Black now castles kingside, the h6-pawn is a ripe sac target, and White has the simple plan of h4 and g4-g5, prising things open.

10 ♙e3 ♗e7 11 0-0-0 e5!

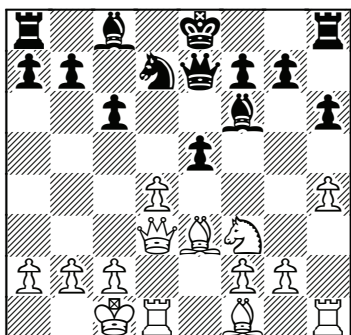
Probably the best choice in a difficult situation. Black frees himself, despite his lag in development.

In other lines, Black faces a dilemma of where to place his king:

a) Let's say he goes queenside with 11...b6?! 12 ♖e4 ♙b7 13 ♙f4 0-0-0 then 14 ♙g3! threatens 15 ♖f4 and after 14...g5 15 ♙a6! ♜b8 16 ♙xb7+ ♖xb7 17 ♜e5 Black scrambles to cover his multiple weaknesses.

b) The kingside looks even worse: 11...0-0? 12 ♖e4! ♜d8 13 ♙d3 ♜f8 14 g4 and Black will not survive.

c) 11...c5?! 12 dxc5 ♜xc5 13 ♖b5+ ♜d7 and Black has opened the position while dangerously behind in development.



12 ♖e4!

White foresees a superior ending.

12...exd4 13 ♖xe7+ ♙xe7

Black can also give up a pawn in the hope of a draw after 13...♙xe7 14 ♜xd4 ♜b6 15 ♖e1! and then:

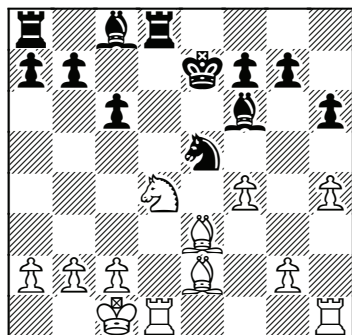
a) After 15...0-0 16 ♙xh6 ♙f6 17 ♙e3 ♜d5 18 c3 ♜xe3 19 ♖xe3 ♙xd4 20 cxd4 ♙e6 21 b3 ♖fd8 22 ♖e4 ♜d6 23 ♙c4 White begins to consolidate his extra pawn.

b) 15...♜d5? 16 ♙c4 ♜xe3 17 ♖xe3 ♙d8 18 ♜d1 and Black's king is caught in traffic.

14 ♜xd4 ♜e5 15 ♙e2 ♜d8

15...♜g4? would be similar to the game: 16 ♜xc6+! bxc6 17 ♙c5+ ♙e8 18 ♖he1 ♜e5 19 ♙f3 ♙b7 20 ♙d4 wins.

16 f4!

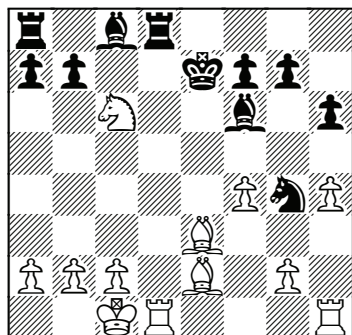


This looks like a strategic blunder by White, who gives up the g4-square. But beware: when a GM plays such a move, there is usually a very good reason!

16...♜g4?

A trusting soul. Black jumps into g4 and also into a trap. He had to play 16...♜g6 17 g3, but even here White's space and slight development lead put him in control.

17 ♜xc6+!!



A bolt of lightning from a blue, summer sky! Black's king is a lot less safe than he believed.

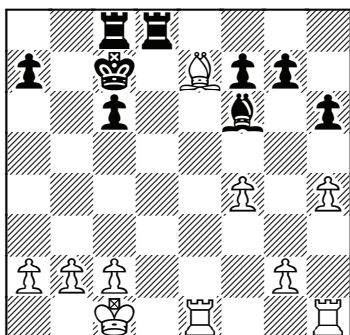
17...bxc6 18 ♖c5+ ♔e8 19 ♖de1!

A sting at the end. Black has no choice but to return the piece to get out of the crossfire.

19...♗d7?

After 19...♖d5! 20 ♖xg4+ ♔d8 21 ♖xc8 ♖xc5 22 ♖g4 the factor of opposite-coloured bishops gives Black some hope of survival.

20 ♖xg4+ ♔c7 21 ♖xc8 ♖axc8 22 ♖e7!



22...♖d7!?

Deliberately allowing his pawns to sustain damage, but banking on counterplay down the g-file. Black should lose the rook ending after 22...♖xe7 23 ♖xe7+ ♔d7 24 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 25 ♖e1 ♖b8, since White is up a clear pawn and has multiple targets: a7, c6 and possibly even g7 with the plan ♖e3, h5 and ♖g3.

23 ♖xf6 gxf6 24 g3 h5 25 ♖e3 ♖g8 26 ♖d1 1-0

The five isolanis are driftwood scattered along a beach. Black is only one

pawn down, but the damage to his structure is too much to overcome.

Summary

Be prepared to go into an odd, Smyslov line of the Caro if you choose to play a quick e4 against 4...c6.

Game 18

M.Khachian-I.Koniushkov

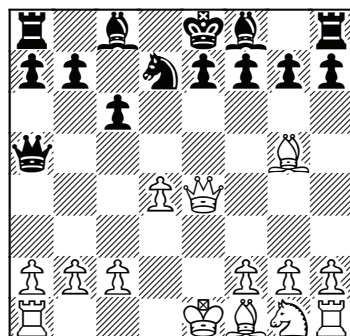
Moscow 1996

1 d4 d5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♖g5 ♖bd7 4 ♔d3 c6 5 e4

If you castle, you can sometimes transpose to the 4...g6 line: 5 0-0-0 g6 6 f3 ♖g7 7 e4 dxe4 8 fxe4 ♔a5 9 e5 ♘d5 10 ♘xd5 cxd5 11 ♔b3 sees White lead in development and space, J.Hector-H.Olsen, Swedish Team Championship 2006.

5...♘xe4 6 ♘xe4 dxe4 7 ♔xe4 ♔a5+

This is an annoying manoeuvre borrowed from the Caro, which forces White to back off for a few moves.



8 ♖d2 ♔d5 9 ♖e3