

# Introduction

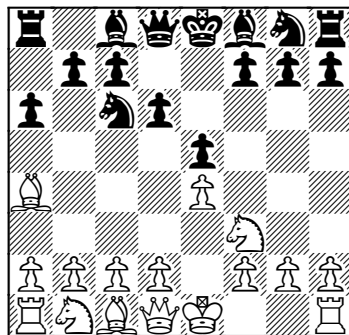
The Spanish Inquisition lasted from 1478 to 1834, but chessplayers have yet to escape the Spanish Torture! First studied by the priest (later bishop) Ruy Lopez de Segura, 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♖c6 3 ♙b5 (the Ruy Lopez or Spanish Opening) has tormented Black players for five hundred years, and there's no end in sight. According to Chessgames.com Opening Explorer, the Ruy is more than three times more popular than the Italian Game (3 ♙c4) and about five times more popular than the King's Gambit.

Bottom line, if as Black you wish to defend classically and meet 1 e4 with e5 and 2 ♘f3 with ♖c6—you will face the Ruy Lopez.

And you will face it again and again. I always try to play any opening that I write about, but sometimes it's not so simple. As I noted in my book, *The Budapest Gambit*, in the seven months of preparing the manuscript I was unable to get a single Budapest Gambit, even though the opening started on move two! Obviously it was easier to get the subject of my next, *Alekhine Alert*, with the “get it in one” 1...♗f6, but the Ruy Lopez is so popular among White play-

ers that it was just as easy to get as an Alekhine, even though the opening starts on the third move, not the first.

I advocate the Modern Steinitz against the Ruy, and this is the subject of this book: the basic tabiya occurs after the moves **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♖c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 d6**.



White's only way of avoiding the Modern Steinitz (once he's started with the Ruy) is the Exchange Variation, where White plays 4 ♙xc6 instead of 4 ♙a4. In order to give Black players a full repertoire I've covered the Exchange in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

One advantage of the Modern Steinitz is that it is learnable, even if you are starting from scratch—but just

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try a repertoire based on the Marshall Gambit! I like this sound sharp gambit, and I used to have great success with it—but since “my” opening only *started* after the moves 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♗f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♚e1 b5 7 ♙b3 0-0 8 c3 ♗ and now 8...d5—move eight!—in practice, after a few gambit successes as Black, I never got the Marshall again—just a huge assortment of Anti-Marshalls. I faced extraordinarily boring lines like the DERLD (delayed exchange Ruy Lopez deferred) where, on the sixth move, White avoids Marshall for the sleepyland line 6 ♙xc6 dxc6 7 d3 (see *True Combat Chess* for a miracle win from a dead-drawn position resulting from this opening).

You get the Modern Steinitz in four, with only one deviation, the Exchange Variation that goes with the territory—instead of a laundry list of deviations right up to move eight (need I mention later Anti-Marshalls like 8 h3 and 8 a4).

With the Modern Steinitz one gets a sound opening where, in most lines, you get *your position* and Black can play for a win. I can't say it's a walk-over for Black—but you *will* get rich play with excellent chances to equalize and more importantly, be able to counter-attack!

Before we begin the book proper with my traditional World Champions retrospective, it's worth going through the basic variations that will be covered, chapter by chapter. One thing that surprised me as I studied was the

great variety of play under the MS umbrella: there are two positively savage gambits, the Siesta and the Yandemirov, where Black sacrifices a pawn or a piece, respectively, for purely speculative reasons—and there are two rock solid positional lines. Yet even the positional lines sometimes feature wild attacks—unlike almost all other variations of the Ruy, in the Modern Steinitz Black frequently castles queenside; see, for example, Games 4, 23, 28 and 36. Besides all this, there are short forced draws and long endgame grinds. There are even two completely different ways of meeting the Exchange Variation! In short, there's something for everyone. Here's a preview of the lines that I will cover:

### **1. World Champions**

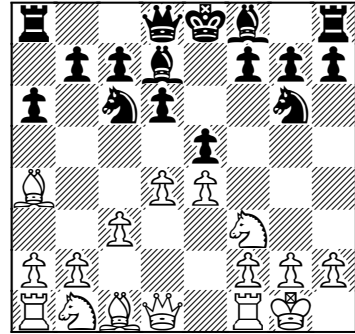
Every World Champion (with the sole exception of Kramnik) has either played the MS or played against it. Capablanca and Alekhine were great advocates of the defence, but the ultimate MS star of world-class players was someone who never received the title of World Champion, Mr. Forever Second, Paul Keres. According to the *MegaBase*, Keres played 59 games with the MS, using it throughout his career against foes such as Tal, Spassky, Euwe, Geller, Bronstein, etc. He won 27 games, drew 28, and lost only 4, for an astonishing winning percentage—against top level competition—of nearly 70% *with Black!*

With that kind of record, I've made Keres an honorary World Champion and hero of the entire book. The first chapter, as well as all the others (except for Chapters Six and Eleven, which feature lines he never played) will start with a Keres game—there is no better way to understand the Modern Steinitz than to study his games.

Going back to the first chapter, we'll see the great predecessors win one by one with the Modern Steinitz (Steinitz himself, Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine, Euwe, etc) until finally, in the modern age, we find a certain Fischer who never played the MS with Black—but discovered its strength when he lost to it as White! Even Kasparov, who was never seen on the black side of the MS, had to concede a short draw in a World Championship match when Short uncorked the MS! By the time we get to Anand, all the variations covered in the book will be seen.

## 2. Solid Line 1: The Knight Defence

The great divide in the MS is between the solid lines, where Black defends e5 against an early assault, and the gambits, where Black is willing to pour oil on any central flames and fight fiercely in the chaotic blaze that ensues. Needless to say, the latter is not to everyone's taste, so I begin with the solid knight defence of the centre: an ideal example is the sequence 5 O-O ♖d7 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 d4 ♘g6 from Oim-Keres (Game 21).



## 3. Solid Line 2: The Bishop Defence

Here Black defends e5 with the fianchettoed bishop, much like a King's Indian Defence: Black's basic set-up is seen after the moves 5 O-O ♖d7 6 d4 ♗f6 7 c3 g6 8 ♖e1 b5 9 ♖c2 ♖g7 as in Parma-Keres (Game 25).

## 4. The Siesta

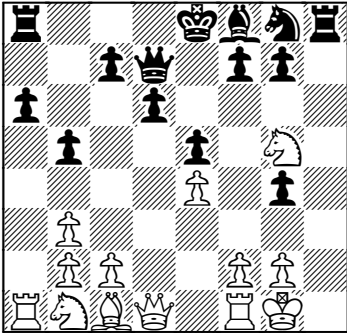
This fierce gambit occurs after 5 c3 f5!?—Black eschews solidity and opts for an unclear pawn sacrifice in one of the critical lines, which continues 6 exf5 ♗xf5 7 d4 e4 8 ♗g5 d5 9 f3 e3; see the rest of this wild encounter in Euwe-Keres (Game 34).

## 5. The Yandemirov Gambit

Why sac a pawn when you can sac a piece? The Russian GM Valeri Yandemirov is the primary advocate of just this kind of madness. He reasons that if White tells you where his king lives (answers the MS move 4...d6 with 5 O-O) then you might as well attack him immediately and ferociously. A typical line is 5 O-O ♖g4 6 h3 h5 7 d4 b5 8 ♖b3

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♖xd4 (Black sacrifices a piece on move 8!) 9 hxg4 ♖xb3 10 axb3 hxg4 11 ♖g5 ♜d7 and Black has compensation for the bishop with the open h-file and trapped white knight on g5; see Aseev-Yandemirov (Game 50).



### 6. Delayed Exchange Variation

White can enter a version of the Exchange Variation a tempo down by waiting for Black's 4...d6 and then taking on c6. This kind of tempo-loss variation is only good for White if the Black player is not prepared—but Keres, for example, brushed this line off with ridiculous ease: he scored seven wins for Black and only five draws, with no losses! My analysis also shows that Black has nothing to fear; e.g. 5 ♗xc6+ bxc6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♜xd4 c5 8 ♜d3 ♖e7 9 ♖c3 ♜b8 10 b3 ♖g6 11 0-0 ♗e7 12 ♖d5 ♗f6 and Black had equalized in Meckling-Keres (Game 53).

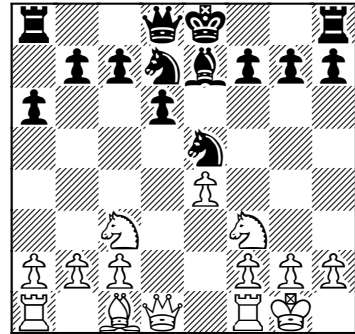
### 7. Duras Variation

This is an attempt by White to force the position into a Maróczy Bind structure, but the Ruy and the Bind are two dif-

ferent animals that don't get along well. 5 c4 (the Duras move) is met easily by Reshevsky's 5...♗g4, targeting the hole at d4, and Black has no problems; see Keres-Reshevsky (Game 60).

### 8. White Plays an Early d2-d4

Here White tries to take over the centre without preparation by c2-c3—he simply shoves his d-pawn forward on move five or six. The first variation has long been refuted as a winning attempt, and is nowadays only played to draw. Playing d2-d4 on move 6 is a little better and usually transposes back to Chapter Three, although independent lines are possible, if not dangerous: 5 0-0 ♗d7 6 d4 ♖f6 7 dxe5 ♖xe5 8 ♗xd7+ ♖fxd7 9 ♖c3 ♗e7 shows easy equalization for Black in Hermlin-Keres (Game 72).



### 9. Four Fishes

It's possible—even probable—that you will meet players who do not want to get an advantage with White—they want only to play defensively and hope to draw. With this “goal” in mind, one

is likely to run into any of the following four fishes on move five: 5 ♖c3, 5 d3, 5 h3 or 5 ♕e2. All of these defend against non-existent attacks, and all give up the advantage of the first move—but when you’re playing to draw anyway, what does that matter? A typical example is 5 h3 (if Bobby Fischer saw such a move, he’d be rolling over in his grave, and not just from DNA testing!) 5...♗f6 6 0-0 b5 7 ♙b3 ♘a5 and Black was already at least equal in Paljusaj-Nei (Game 76).

### 10. Ruy Exchange:

#### Main Line with 4...dxc6

The Exchange Variation is White’s only way to both play the Ruy Lopez and avoid the Modern Steinitz. White gives up the two bishops but damages Black’s pawn structure; generally speaking White hopes to win the ending, while keeping the draw in hand. Keres always took back with the d-pawn (the popular way) and nowadays Magnus Carlsen does so as well—but both these great players draw almost all their games in this variation. A typical position is reached after 4 ♙xc6 dxc6 5 ♖c3 f6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♗xd4 c5 8 ♗de2 ♕xd1+ 9 ♗xd1 and White is minutely better in a drawish position; see Khachiyani-Taylor (Game 80).

### 11. Ruy Exchange:

#### Larsen’s Variation, 4...bxc6

One of the great discoveries I made while working on this book is that the

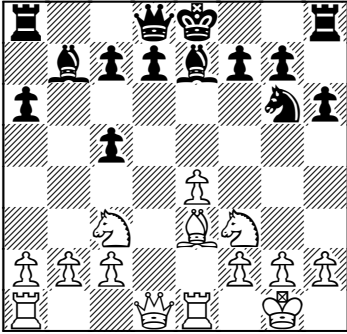
recapture with the d-pawn (away from the centre, which lames Black’s queen-side pawns into the ending) is *not* obligatory, and in fact the natural recapture towards the centre is quite playable! Yes, Black reaches Chapter Six a tempo down, but it’s hard to see what White does with this tempo—while Black’s winning chances are much higher than in the dull fashionable lines with 4...dxc6. World Champions like Lasker and Alekhine used to play 4...bxc6, then it was forgotten; then revived by Larsen—then forgotten again, and even vilified: Krzysztof Panczyk and Jacek Ilczuk in their recent book *Ruy Lopez Exchange* call taking towards the centre “unjustified” and add, “This variation is played only once in a blue moon, and it doesn’t have much value. White has a few strong continuations that cause serious problems for Black.”

But I disagree with these modern commentators, or rather I agree with the great Alekhine, who called this variation “eminently practicable”. Having played the boring 4...dxc6, I can’t wait to surprise my next exchanging foe. I imagine him chopping my knight, looking for the quiet game; he feels he has at least a draw is in his pocket—and then I go all Larsen on him with 4...bxc6!

A pretty example is 5 d4 exd4 6 ♗xd4 c5 7 ♗f3 ♙b7 8 ♖c3 ♗e7 9 0-0 h6 10 ♖e1 ♗g6 11 ♙e3 ♙e7 and Black has completed her development Chap-

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ter Two style, with no endgame problems to look forward to: this is Herrero Crespo-Monllor Garcia (Game 83).



Not every potential Modern Steinitz player will like every line in the book, but as you see, you don't have to: the opening is so rich that you can build a repertoire to suit your taste.

And one final note before we go to

the World Champions' games—how did I do with the Modern Steinitz myself? There are two answers to this: in preceding years I used to play the MS from time to time, without benefit of any study, and my results were up and down as one might expect, hovering around 50%. Then I began to actually study the variation in preparation for this book, and aimed for the MS every time I had Black. I quickly discovered that few White opponents were prepared for this line (they were all booked to the gills against 4...♘f6 of course). Meanwhile, I was getting the advantage straight off; I was often better before move ten.

And the box score? Of my seven "post-study" games with the Modern Steinitz, *I won all seven with Black.*

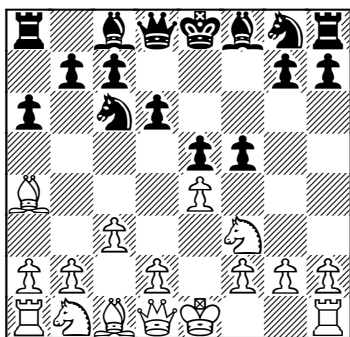
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## Chapter Four

# The Siesta

The Siesta occurs after the specific move order **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♞c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 d6 5 c3** (but does not work against the developing 5 0-0, so again, this is not a universal system), when Black decides to play in reversed King's Gambit style with **5...f5!?**.



While it's possible to enter the solid Bishop Defence with **5...♙d7 6 d4 ♞f6 7 0-0 g6** as in the previous chapter, you will—if you play **5...f5**—immediately get your opponent's attention!

Is the Siesta sound? In my opinion, *yes*. I have done a ton of research (for example, going through David Levy's *The Siesta Variation*, which is an entire book devoted just to this variation) and I have checked everything with the fearless *Fritz*, and basically what I find is this: in the critical line, the “true gambit” variation that continues **6 exf5 ♙xf5 7 d4 e4 8 ♞g5 d5 9 f3 e3!** (Games 34-35; **9...h6** is weaker—see Game 36) Black has compensation for the pawn. No more, no less: the sac doesn't win, but White has no way to clearly consolidate his material either. Ultra-sharp and critical positions occur on practically every move, and very exciting and nerve-wracking chess ensues!

On the other hand, quite *non-critical* is what seems to be the main line now, the extremely boring **6 exf5 ♙xf5 7 0-0 ♙d3 8 ♚e1 ♙e7 9 ♙c2 ♙xc2 10 ♚xc2 ♞f6 11 d4 e4 12 ♞g5 d5 13 f3**



h6 14 ♖h3 0-0 15 ♜d2 exf3 16 ♜xf3 ♜f7 which is often played at a high level, but gives White absolutely nothing—and from the fighting gambiteer point of view of Black Siesta players, an unconscionably high percentage of draws! Try to stay awake as I cover this line in Games 37-38.

Various tactical lines where White tries to refute the Siesta are seen in Games 39-41—although none of these work, Black must know the answers.

Game 42 shows an attempt by White to force a draw right in the opening, while in Game 43 White tries to revive Réti's line against Capablanca which we saw in Game 4. Once again, these tries prove unsuccessful.

Finally, Game 44 shows the only move I've faced when I've played the Siesta, 6 d3?!, when Black gets the edge right away—which is fun, but hardly challenging. Now let's jump right in, with Keres of course, and face the critical line at once.

### Game 34

**M.Euwe-P.Keres**

World Championship,  
The Hague/Moscow 1948

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♜c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 d6 5 c3 f5

I wondered how the Siesta fared at the highest level, so I clicked on "Elo White" on *ChessBase*—and it turns out that the top ten by rating didn't make

much of a dent in this opening. White scored one win and there were nine draws! White was higher rated in nine of the ten games, often by as much as 200 points (and was only two points lower in the other game), but the only win came courtesy of the young Anand, whereas Shirov and Kasparov could do no damage! This seems quite encouraging—with all the databases and super-core machines, there is no known refutation!

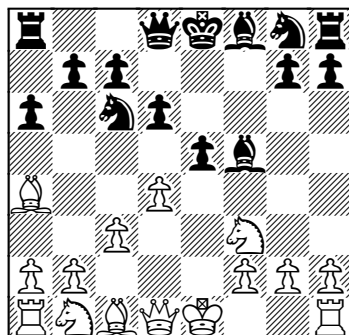
Keres played the Siesta three times, the main game's big win, then a short draw (see the notes to Game 42), and then fell victim to a prepared line (see the note to White's 11th move below). While this was a painful loss, Black's play can be improved, as I will show.

Nevertheless, the reader is warned: sharp lines like this are vulnerable to prepared lines in specific variations (as our first two solid lines were not), especially in this computer age!

**6 exf5**

Best!

**6...♙xf5 7 d4!**



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And best again! As already mentioned, this sharp counterblow is the critical test of the Siesta.

### 7...e4

Clearly there is no other move: the die was cast by Black's bold ...f7-f5, and now it's attack at all costs!

### 8 ♖g5

One recalls that Capablanca's 8 ♖e2 was quite ineffective against Marshall's Siesta—Black was better after 8...♙e7 9 ♘fd2 ♘f6 10 h3 d5, as I pointed out in a note to Game 4.

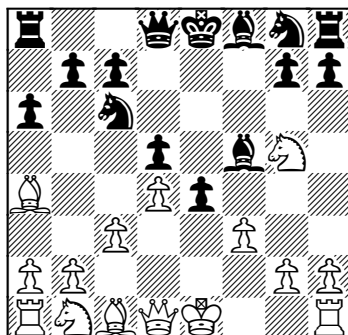
Another great world champion got nothing with 8 d5 exf3 9 ♖xf3 (not 9 dxc6 b5 10 ♙b3 fxg2 with a clear advantage for Black, or 10 ♖xf3 ♙xb1 11 ♙b3 ♙g6 12 0-0 ♘f6 13 ♖e1+ ♙e7 14 ♙g5 ♙f8 and Black keeps his extra piece, though White has some pressure) 9...♖e7+ 10 ♙d1 ♙e4 11 ♖h3 ♖f7 (Black returns the piece to avoid problems on the e-file) 12 dxc6 ♙xc6 13 ♖e1+ ♙e7 14 ♙xc6+ bxc6 15 ♘d2 ♘f6 16 ♘f3 (White can't keep the black king in the centre, as 16 ♖e3 fails to 16...♘g4) 16...0-0 17 ♘g5 ♖d5+ 18 ♙d2 h6 19 ♖e6+ ♙h8 20 ♘h3 ♖xe6 21 ♖xe6 ♖fe8 and Black equalized and eventually drew in G.Kasparov-J.Lautier, Lyon 1994.

### 8...d5

Black gains space and gives the king's bishop the d6-square. 8...♙e7 is worse, as this move has no threat: White can just castle with some advantage; e.g. 9 0-0 ♙xg5 10 ♖h5+ g6 11 ♖xg5 and Black has a dreary, slightly

worse position—not what the Siesta gambiteer wants!

### 9 f3



The first critical moment: Black must note that calm moves fail.

a) 9...exf3? only helps White, who responds with 10 0-0! ♙d6 (and not 10...♙xb1 11 ♖xb1 fxg2 12 ♖xf8+ with an immediate win by fork) 11 ♖xf3 and White has the superior development and an attack.

b) 9...♘f6? 10 0-0 ♖d7 11 fxex4 ♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♙xe4 13 ♘d2 ♙g6 14 ♘f3 and Black will have to compromise his position still more to meet the threat of 15 ♘e5.

Since White's play is so easy in these lines, it's obvious that strong measures are required: in short, gambit play! When you play 5...f5, you *must* be ready to sacrifice a pawn, and this is the moment—but which pawn? There are two legitimate contenders: Keres' 9...e3, seen here, and Lautier's 9...h6, seen in Game 36. I prefer Keres more complex move, but we're going into the jungle here, and there is no com-

pletely certain evaluation of the complex and unclear variations to come.

### 9...e3! 10 f4

10 ♖xe3 allows Black to damage the white kingside—which means another case of Black castling queenside: 10...h6 11 ♗h3 ♕xh3 12 gxh3 ♜f6 13 ♜d3 0-0-0 14 0-0 ♗ge7 15 ♕c2 g6! (well played—Black establishes a knight on a square, f5, that White can't attack due to his shattered pawns) 16 ♗d2 ♗f5 (White's extra pawn is meaningless, but his breezy king is not! Black gradually outplays his opponent and finally forces a win—note that White's doubled h-pawns never have a role in the game) 17 f4 ♕d6 18 ♜f3 ♜hf8 19 ♕f2 ♗h4 20 ♕xh4 ♜xh4 21 f5 ♗e7 22 ♜e2 ♗xf5 23 ♖h1 ♜de8 24 ♕xf5+ gxf5 25 ♜f2 ♜h5 26 ♜e1 ♜xe1+ 27 ♜xe1 f4 28 ♜e6+ ♖b8 29 ♜g4 ♜e8 30 ♜g2 ♜g8 31 ♜f1 ♜a4 32 ♜b1 ♜e8 33 b3 ♜b5 34 ♜f1 ♜d7 35 ♜d3 ♜e1+ 36 ♗f1 ♜e6 37 c4 c6 38 c5 ♕c7 39 ♖g1 ♜e2 40 ♖h1 ♜xa2 41 ♗d2 ♕a5 42 ♗b1 ♜e4! 0-1

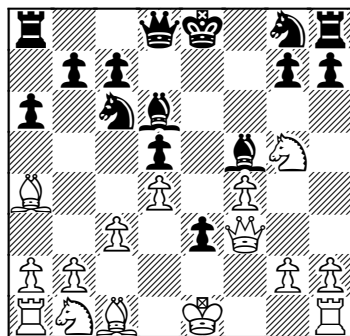
### 10...♕d6

I think that 10...♗f6, which in some lines transposes to variations from this game, is more accurate, as it avoids the white queen check on h5—see next game for this alternative.

### 11 ♜f3

The position is razor sharp and, facing a new attack, it's understandable that Euwe falters. Indeed, it's not easy

to elucidate what the positional aims of White and Black should be in this chaotic position—but after some study, I believe I have at least that part down.



White needs to capture the pawn on e3 (if he delays too long it will become a dangerous passed pawn, as seen in the next game) *and* has to establish a knight on e5 to block the e-file, which is otherwise full of weak squares due to the pawn advances d2-d4 and f2-f3-f4. If White can do both (as for example in the Marciniak game given in variation 'b' below) then he gets the better game and usually wins.

From the other side, Black can't hold the e-pawn—though he should watch for White taking too long to take it, when he may have interesting tactical opportunities. However, let's say White takes the pawn off early. Then Black has to prevent the white knight manoeuvre to e5, usually by putting pressure on f4, and so forcing g2-g3. Then Black must prepare a breakthrough piece sac on the kingside—there really isn't any other way through. In my note

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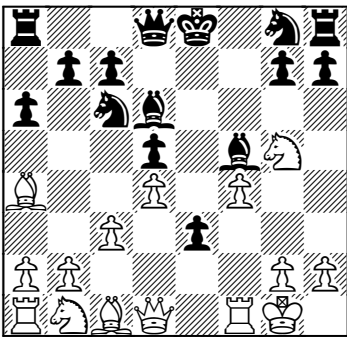
to the ninth move above, I said how Black has to be ready to sac a pawn in the opening—but really one must be ready and eager to sac more if you want to play this gambit successfully!

Keres succeeds in carrying out Black's positional aims in the game, whereas Euwe never gets his knight to e5, and finally perishes due to Keres' strategically sound piece sac on f4. Likewise in the next game, Black will have the opportunity for a decisive piece sac on g2.

The sharp play and duelling aims make this an extremely exciting opening (at least this variation of it!).

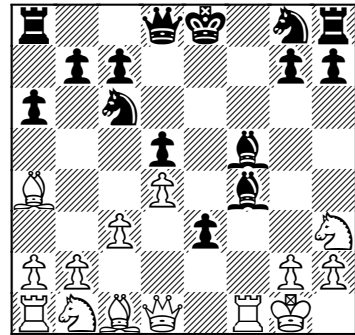
Again, one can easily forgive Euwe his inaccurate play while facing this mess for the first time! With the benefit of hindsight, Keres' annotations and my faithful *Fritz*, it becomes clear that White had two better tries at this point, namely castling immediately and the opportunistic check on h5. Let's see where these take us:

a) 11 0-0



Keres dismissed this move in his

annotations to the main game, saying that Black is fine after 11...♙xf4 12 ♖xf4 ♖g5. Unfortunately, while most of his notes in general, and indeed for this game, are of a very high order, this particular note is casual and flawed—and a relatively unknown player spotted it and played his improvement against Keres 18 years later! That game continued (after 11...♙xf4) not with 12 ♖xf4, but the surprising 12 ♘h3! (skewering both black bishops!)



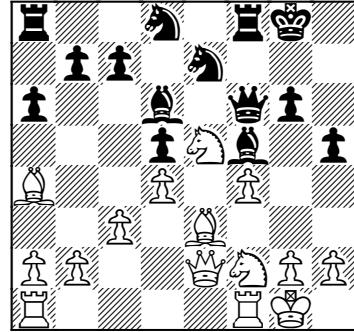
12...♙xf4 (there is nothing better: if 12...b5 13 ♘xf4 bxa4 14 ♘h5! and a4, e3, g7 and f5—three black pawns and a bishop—are all hanging, which simply means White is winning) 13 ♖h5+! (the point of the novelty: White gets the two bishops and multiple attacking possibilities) 13...g6 14 ♖xh3 e2 (trying to mix it up, as after 14...♙d6 15 ♙xe3 White's positional advantage is practically decisive) 15 ♖e6+ ♖e7 16 ♙xc6+ ♙d8 (the complicated 16...bxc6 comes down to a simple pawn up position for White: 17 ♖xc6+ ♙f7 18 ♖xf4+ ♙g7 19 ♙d2 ♖e3+ 20 ♖f2 e1♖+ 21 ♙xe1

♖xe1+ 22 ♜f1 ♖e3+ 23 ♔h1 and White can finally develop while maintaining at least a one pawn advantage) 17 ♖xd5+ ♙d6 18 ♜e1 and as Black's last trump, the e-pawn, is now doomed, Keres went down to a rare MS defeat in K.Skold-P.Keres, Stockholm 1966—and never played the Siesta again!

I understand Keres' aversion to prepared variations, but there is a simple improvement available: Black could have played 11...♘f6, which is recommended by Levy in his Siesta book. This transposes to critical lines in the next game, and will be analysed there.

b) 11 ♖h5+! is probably the real test of Keres' move order. In the main game Black carried out his piece sac idea as follows: he developed his king's knight to g6 (forcing g2-g3 by White), and eventually sac'ed a bishop on f4, when the g6-knight recaptured with a decisive attack. Whereas after the white queen check, Black has to block the g6-square with another piece, thus derailing the smooth progress of his attack. In the following game he never gets full compensation, and if 10...♙d6 is to be revived, Black needs an improvement before move 20: 11...g6 (Keres rejects 11...♙g6 because of 12 ♖f3 ♖f6 13 ♖xe3+ ♗e7 and the "disagreeable" 14 ♖e6—but I'm not so sure: after 14...♙f5 15 ♖xf6 gxf6 Black has certain compensation in the queenless middlegame, as he prevents the e-file blocking ♗e5 because of his new f-pawn; nevertheless, it's not clear if Black's positional pluses

are really enough for the pawn) 12 ♖f3 ♖f6 13 0-0 ♗e7 14 ♙xe3 h6 15 ♗h3 ♙e4 16 ♖e2 0-0 17 ♗d2 ♙f5 18 ♗f2 h5 19 ♗f3 ♗d8 20 ♗e5



(if White achieves this knight journey with no side effects in this variation, he gets the better game) 20...b5 21 ♙c2 ♙xc2 22 ♖xc2 ♗f5 23 ♙d2 ♙xe5 24 fxe5 ♖c6 25 ♖d3 ♗e6 26 ♗h3 ♜ab8 27 ♗g5 and it's now obvious that Black doesn't have a shred of compensation for the pawn, and White duly converted in A.Marciniak-W.Swiecicki, Poland 1957. Where can Black improve? I haven't been able to find anything after 11...g6, so I'd recommend 11...♙g6, when Black might hold the ensuing pawn down—though it all seems rather cheerless.

This last variation (11 ♖h5+) is why I prefer 10...♗f6 to Keres' 10...♙d6.

**11...♖f6 12 ♖xe3+?!**

This develops Black while blocking the queen's bishop—not exactly a world champion move.

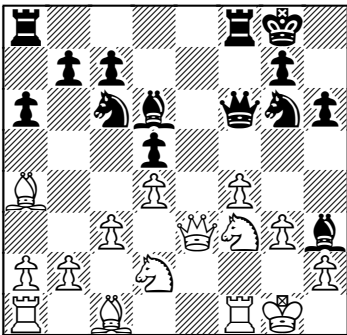
Evidently correct is 12 ♙xe3 h6 13 ♗h3 ♖f7 (not 13...♖g6 14 0-0 ♙e4 15

## Slay the Spanish!

f5 ♖f7 16 ♚e2 ♗f6 17 ♗d2 and White eliminates the strong light-squared bishop with a clear advantage) 14 ♗d2 ♗f6 15 ♗f2, reaching a typical Siesta where Black has some compensation due to the hole at e4 and the unblocked e-file, but is it enough? Black must evidently throw caution to the winds and play 15...0-0-0 16 ♙xc6 bxc6 when his king position is compromised, but his centre is strong and he has the two bishops. Risky for Black, dangerous for White is all I can say!

### 12...♗e7 13 ♙xc6+!

Although Keres cites this as a serious mistake for three reasons—the exchange strengthens Black’s centre, gives him the bishops, and weakens the light squares—it’s not clear that White had anything better; e.g. 13 ♗f3 0-0 14 ♗e5 ♙xb1 15 ♚xb1 ♙xe5 16 dxe5 ♖g6 and Black recovers his pawn with the advantage; or if 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♗d2 ♗g6 15 g3 h6 16 ♗gf3 ♙h3 “with a decisive attack” according to Keres—but, amusingly enough, with a “clear advantage to White” according to Mr. Fritz!



The Siesta is definitely not a line to play if you suffer from “fear of Fritz”! Not afflicted with this malady, I put in a few “human” attacking moves, and soon the machine admitted the great Keres was right (but still no “sorry” future!): 17 ♚f2 ♗xf4! (the thematic sacrifice) 18 ♙xc6 bxc6 19 ♗e5 (or 19 gxf4 ♖g6+ 20 ♙h1 ♚xf4 with excellent compensation) 19...♗g2!! 20 ♚xg2 (if 20 ♚xf6 ♗xe3 21 ♚xf8+ ♚xf8 22 ♗df3 ♗c2 23 ♚b1 ♙xe5 24 dxe5 ♚xf3 snaps off a piece) 20...♙xcg2 21 ♙xcg2 ♚ae8 (White’s lack of development is painful) 22 ♗df3 ♙xe5 23 dxe5 ♚xe5! 24 ♚xe5 ♖xf3+ 25 ♙h3 ♚f5 26 ♚e8+ ♙h7 27 ♙h4 ♖g2 (Kotovian creep!) 28 a4 (28 h3 g5+ 29 ♙xg5 hxg5+ 30 ♙h5 ♚hx3 is a nice mate; and 28 ♙f4 g5+ 29 ♙g4 ♚xf4+ 30 ♙h5 ♚hx2 mate is similar) 28...♚hx2+ 29 ♙g4 h5+! 30 ♙xf5 ♚h3+ 31 ♙f4 (if 31 ♙e5 ♖g4 32 ♚a8 ♚e4 mate, or White can settle for losing his queen with 32 ♙f4 ♚e2+ 33 ♙d4 ♚xe8) 31...♚f1+ 32 ♙g5 ♚f6+ 33 ♙hx5 g6+ 34 ♙g4 ♚f5+ 35 ♙h4 ♚h5 mate.

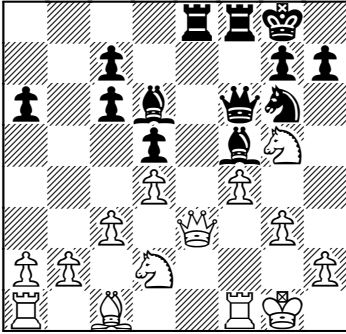
Now that’s a winning attack! Black mates with his last piece! One sees again that only bold sacrificial play can justify the Siesta.

### 13...bxc6 14 0-0 0-0 15 ♗d2?

This is the real mistake: 15 ♗f3! may equalize; e.g. 15...♙e4 (if 15...♙xb1 16 ♚xb1 ♖g6 17 ♙d2 ♚xf4 Black recovers his pawn, but only with an equal game) 16 ♗g5! (16 ♗e5 is positionally good, but here it fails tactically to 16...♙xe5! 17 dxe5 ♖g6 with a fatal

fork) 16...♙f5 17 ♘f3 with a Sofia draw looks like best play.

15...♘g6 16 g3 ♖ae8



Black gets a rook to the e-file and White can't block with ♖e5, which means that Black's plan has worked—and White is in big trouble!

17 ♗f2 ♙d3!

Simple but very strong: Black eliminates a defender (the f1-rook) while the other white rook is not playing. My study of this game paid off when I used a similar manoeuvre in Game 44.

18 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 19 ♗xe1 ♙xf4!!

Breakthrough! Now Black has a winning attack, but note that this was the only way—on virtually any quiet continuation White would soon get a knight to e5 and Black would have nothing for the pawn. Instead, by sacrificing a piece, Black decisively opens the enemy king position.

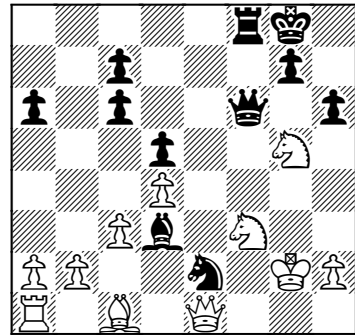
20 gxf4

If 20 ♗e6+ ♗xe6 21 ♘xe6 ♙e3+ 22 ♙g2 (22 ♙h1 ♖f1+! 23 ♘xf1 ♙e4 mate is amusing!) 22...♖f2+ and Black wins a piece.

20...♘xf4 21 ♘df3

Or 21 ♘gf3 ♗g6+ 22 ♙f2 (not 22 ♗g3 ♖e2+) 22...♖h3+ 23 ♙e3 ♙c2! and this beautiful blow, exploiting the weak light squares, forces White to give up the queen to avoid mate; e.g. 24 ♗f1 (if 24 ♗e2 ♗h6+ 25 ♘g5 ♗xg5 mate) 24...♗e6+ 25 ♖e5 ♖xf1 etc.

21...♖e2+ 22 ♙g2 h6



Black recovers his piece with a winning attack.

23 ♗d2 ♗f5 24 ♗e3 hxg5 25 ♙d2 ♙e4 0-1

After 26 ♖f1 ♗g4+ wins everything.

A fantastic attacking game by Keres—he defeats a World Champion in 25 moves with Black!—but the improvement 11 ♗h5+ casts serious doubts on his move order. This issue is addressed in the next game.

Game 35  
O.Kinnmark-V.Ciocaltea  
Halle 1967

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 d6 5