

Game 76

B.Spasky-T.Petrosian

World Championship Match,

Moscow 1969, 5th game

Queen's Gambit D41

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♗c3 e6 3 ♗f3 d5 4 d4 c5 5 cxd5 ♗xd5 6 e4 xc3 7 bxc3 cxd4 8 cxd4 b4+ ♙d2 ♙xd2+

The difficulties of the endgame after 9...♙a5?! 10 ♖b1! ♙xd2+ 11 ♗xd2 ♗xd2+ 12 ♗xd2 have been known since the time of the classic game Rubinstein-Schlechter (San Sebastian 1912): 12...0-0 13 ♙b5! a6 14 ♙d3 ♖d8 15 ♖hc1 b5 (15...♗c6 16 ♗e3) 16 ♖c7 ♗d7 17 ♗e3 ♗f6 18 ♗e5 ♙d7 19 g4!... 1-0

10 ♗xd2 0-0 11 ♙c4 ♗c6 12 0-0 b6 13 ♖ad1!

At that time this position had not been explored very much, and one of the main guides was provided by the old game Alekhine-Euwe (18th matchgame, The Hague 1937): 13 ♖fd1 ♙b7 14 ♗f4 ♖c8 (14...♗f6!?) 15 d5 exd5 16 ♙xd5 ♗e7. Later Black incorrectly exchanged on d5 and White, after successfully avoiding the exchange of queens, could have exploited the power of his passed pawn (*Volume 1, Game No.145*). But not long before the match, the game A.Zaitsev-Polugayevsky (36th USSR Championship, Alma Ata 1968/69) went 13...♗a5!? 14 ♙d3 ♙b7 15 ♗e3 ♖c8 16 ♖ac1 ♗e7 with equality.

It is surprising that such a natural move as 13 ♖ad1, which immediately became standard, should have been an unexpected novelty, based on one of the longest opening preparations in Spassky's career (those were the times, when such moves were novelties!). Free piece play in a position with a mobile d4- and e4-pawn pair was undoubtedly to his taste, conforming with all the laws of harmony: quiet development, then a blow in the centre and a powerful combinative explosion.

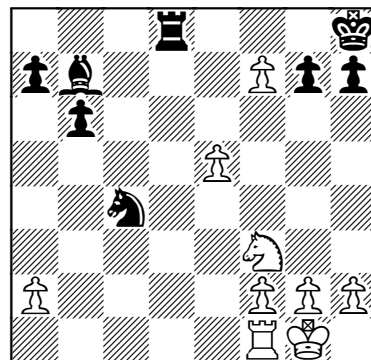
13...♙b7

The move order 13...♗a5 14 ♙d3 ♙b7

rules out a variation that could have occurred in the game (cf. the note to White's next move), although here too, apart from 15 ♖fe1 and 15 ♗f4 (Khalifman-Karpov, Dos Hermanas 1993) it is possible to play 15 d5! with chances of seizing the initiative: 15...exd5 16 e5 d4!? (in the book *Boris Spassky's 300 Wins* 16...♙c8 17 ♗f4 h6 is recommended, but after 18 ♗d4 and ♖fe1 White has enduring compensation for the pawn) 17 ♗xd4! ♗d5 18 ♗g5 (Lev-Onat, Haifa 1989), or 15...♗e7 16 ♖fe1 ♖ad8 17 ♗d4 g6 18 ♗h6 e5 19 ♗c2 (Lautier-Kazimdzhanov, Wijk aan Zee 2002).

14 ♖fe1

Another interesting idea is 14 d5 ♗a5 15 dxe6!? (15 ♙d3 – cf. above) 15...♗xc4 (15...♗xd2? 16 exf7+ ♗h8 17 ♗xd2 ♗xc4 18 ♗xc4 ♙xe4 19 ♗e5 and wins) 16 exf7+ ♗h8 17 ♗xd8 ♖axd8 18 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 19 e5.



Analysis diagram

How to neutralise the white pawns? If 19...♙xf3?, then 20 e6! Instead Boleslavsky considered 19...♙c8?! 20 ♖e1 g6 21 h4?! ♖f8! 22 e6 ♙xe6 23 ♖xe6 ♖xf7 with a probable draw, but White can win by 21 ♗g5! ♗xe5 22 f4 h6 23 ♖xe5 ♖f8 24 ♗e4 or 23...♙d7 24 ♖e7(d5) hxg5 25 ♖xd7!

There only remains 19...♖c8!, and after 20 e6! ♙d5 21 ♗g5 ♗d6 22 ♖d1 ♙xe6 (22...♙xa2? 23 h4 and wins) 23 ♗xe6 (or 23 f8♗+ ♖xf8 24 ♗xe6 ♖c8) 23...♗xf7 24 h3 Black is obliged to fight for a draw in an infe-

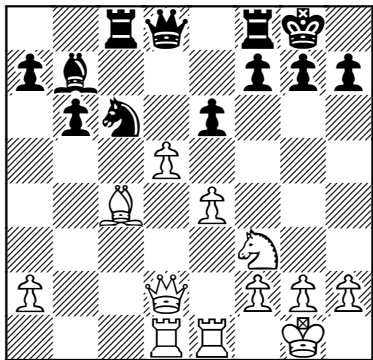
rior endgame, for example: 24...♔g8 25 ♖d7 ♗e8 26 ♖xa7 ♗xe6 27 ♖a8+ ♕d8 28 ♖xd8+ ♔f7 etc.

14...♖c8

14...♕e7?! would not be to everyone's taste after 15 d5 exd5 16 exd5 ♕f5 17 ♕e5! ♕d6 18 ♕c6! (Petrosian-Korchnoi, 6th matchgame, Ciocco 1977), but 14...♕a5 15 ♖d3 ♖c8 (15...♗d6!? Boleslavsky) 16 d5! exd5 17 e5! ♕c4 was possible – cf. the note to Black's 15th move.

15 d5!

An instant reply. Whereas Petrosian thought for 13 minutes: he had to make a difficult choice here.



15...exd5?!

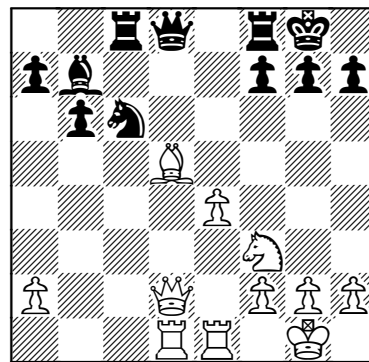
Of course, Tigran Vartanovich considered 15...♕a5 and saw the draw after 16 dxex6?! ♗xd2! (not 16...♕xc4? 17 exf7+ ♔h8 18 ♗xd8 ♖cx8 19 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20 e5 and wins) 17 exf7+ ♔h8 18 ♕xd2 ♕xc4 19 ♕xc4 ♖xc4 20 e5 ♖c8! 21 e6 ♖xe6 22 ♖xe6 ♖c7 23 ♖e8 ♖xf7 24 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 25 ♖d7 a5 26 ♖b7 ♖c8 27 g3 ♔g8.

But he also saw a sharp pawn sacrifice – 16 ♖d3! exd5 (Black fails to equalise after 16...♗d6 17 dxex6 ♗xe6? 18 ♕d4 ♗e5 19 ♕f5 or 17...fxex6 18 ♖b5! ♗xd2 19 ♖xd2) 17 e5! ♕c4 18 ♗f4, which did not appeal to him. And indeed, in the later game Polugayevsky-Tal, Black suffered a swift catastrophe after missing the best defence 18...♖c6! (*Game No.23*). In deciding to avoid these dangers,

Petrosian goes from the frying pan into the fire.

16 ♖xd5!

White would also have retained some advantage with 16 exd5!? ♕a5 17 ♖f1 ♗d6 18 ♕g5 ♖cd8 (18...h6 19 ♕e4 ♗g6 20 ♗f4 ♖fd8 21 d6; 18...♗h6?! 19 d6) 19 ♗d3! ♗h6! 20 ♗f5 ♖c8 21 ♗f4 f6 22 ♕e6 ♗xf4 23 ♕xf4 ♖d6 24 ♖d3! But the move 16 ♖xd5! is more tempting: this bishop is so strong, that sooner or later Black will almost certainly have to take on d5, and then White will acquire a passed pawn on this square. For Spassky, playing such a position was sheer pleasure!



16...♕a5?

Now the knight is stuck on the edge of the board for a long time, and Black's position really becomes difficult. Korchnoi recommended 16...♗e7 17 ♗f4 (I would also check 17 e5) 17...h6 – according to Boleslavsky, 'this is hopeless on account of 18 ♕h4! and ♕f5-d6,' although after 18...♗c7! White still has to look for an advantage: 19 e5! (19 ♗g4 ♕e7!; 19 ♗xc7 ♖xc7 20 ♕f5 ♕e7 with equality) 19...♕e7 (19...♕d8? 20 ♕f5!) 20 ♖b3! ♖cd8 21 ♖d6! etc. Boleslavsky suggested 17...♖c7!? with the idea of 18 ♕h4 ♗e5, but he was afraid of 18 h4, although after 18...h6 (18...♕d8? 19 ♕d4!) 19 h5 ♖d8 Black can successfully defend.

Black could also have considered the immediate 16...♗c7!? 17 ♖c1 ♗e7 (*Boris Spassky's 300 wins*), or 17 ♗g5 h6 18 ♗g4 ♕e7 19

♠d4!? (little is promised by 19 ♠xb7 ♠xb7 20 ♠d7 ♠c7, or 20 e5 ♠cd8 21 e6 ♠xd1 22 ♠xd1 ♠c8) 19...♠cd8! (19...♠xd5?! 20 exd5 ♠cd8? 21 ♠e6!; 19...♠xd5? 20 ♠f5! ♠c3 21 exd5) 20 ♠c1 ♠b8!, and the tactical stroke 21 ♠e6!? fxe6 22 ♠xe6+ ♠h7 23 ♠xe7 ♠xd5 24 exd5 only leads to a draw: 24...♠fe8! 25 ♠f7 ♠f8 26 ♠e6 ♠f4 27 ♠c2 (27 ♠f1 ♠d6) 27...♠d4 and ...♠xd5.

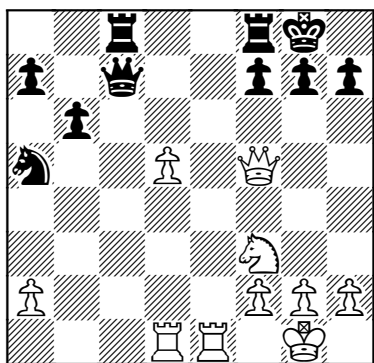
17 ♠f4! ♠c7

Or 17...♠e7 18 ♠d4! By this point Petrosian had already spent more than an hour, and Spassky – just 21 minutes.

18 ♠f5!

Avoiding the exchange of queens, by analogy with the Alekhine-Euwe game. After 10 minutes' thought Black accepts the inevitable.

18...♠xd5 19 exd5



19...♠c2

‘After 19...♠c4 (to transfer the knight to d6) 20 ♠g5 g6 21 ♠h3 h5 22 ♠e4 ♠d6 23 ♠f6+ ♠g7 24 ♠g3! White’s attack is decisive. 19...♠d6 is also unsuccessful (it has long been known that the queen is a poor blockader) after 20 ♠g5 ♠g6 21 ♠xg6 hxg6 22 d6! ♠b7 23 d7 ♠cd8 24 ♠e7 ♠c5 25 ♠d6 ♠b7 (25...f6 26 ♠e6!) 26 ♠c6 (26 ♠d5!? – G.K.) 26...♠c5 27 ♠c7, and if 27...f6 there follows 28 ♠xc5!’ (Bondarevsky)

20 ♠f4!?

Retaining the queens, even at the cost of the a2-pawn. Spassky spent 20 minutes on this move. He was, of course, hesitating: the tech-

nical solution 20 ♠xc2! ♠xc2 21 ♠e7! ♠xa2 22 ♠xa7 ♠c2 23 d6 was good, for example: 23...♠cc8? 24 d7 ♠b8 25 ♠d4 and wins (Boleslavsky), 23...h6 24 ♠e5!, or 23...♠d8 24 ♠g5! (not 24 ♠e5 ♠c5! 25 f4 ♠c6) 24...♠c6 (24...♠c5 25 f4!) 25 ♠c7 f6 (25...♠b4 26 ♠b7) 26 ♠f7 ♠a8 27 g4 ♠b4 28 ♠b7 ♠c6 29 d7 ♠d8 30 ♠a7! ♠b8 31 ♠d6 h6 32 ♠e1 and wins. But he took a more creative decision: by threatening an attack on the king, it was possible to win even more quickly.

20...♠xa2

In Geller’s opinion, it was more tenacious to play 20...♠ce8 21 d6 ♠xe1+ 22 ♠xe1 ♠d3 (not 22...♠xa2? 23 d7 ♠d5 24 ♠c7), although here too after 23 ♠d4 ♠b7 24 h3! things are difficult for Black.

21 d6! ♠cd8 22 d7

‘The passed pawn, after reaching the seventh rank, ties down both rooks. Black’s position is hopeless.’ (Bondarevsky) However, he still has some practical chances.

22...♠c4

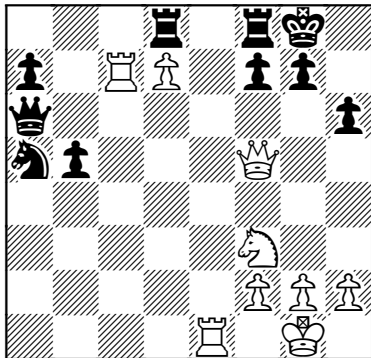
In the event of 22...♠c2 23 ♠c1! ♠d3! (if 23...♠b3 24 ♠c7 ♠b5 White wins by 25 ♠e7! h6 26 ♠e5 or 25...♠b3 26 ♠ce1) 24 ♠ed1 Black’s position is no better than in the game: 24...♠b5 25 ♠c7! (25 ♠c7 ♠f5 26 ♠xa7 is slower) 25...a6 (25...♠c6 26 ♠d6!) 26 ♠e4 (26 ♠d6!?) 26...♠b3 (if 26...♠b2, then 27 ♠g5 g6 28 ♠e7!) 27 ♠e5 ♠c5 28 ♠d5 and wins, or 24...♠b3(e2) 25 ♠c7! ♠e6 26 ♠d6 ♠f5 27 ♠e1! h6 28 ♠dd1 (with the threat of ♠xd8!) 28...♠c5 29 ♠xa7 etc.

23 ♠f5! h6

After 23...♠c6 24 ♠e5 ♠e6 the cold-blooded 25 ♠xe6 fxe6 26 ♠c1 (Fritz) was possible, but I prefer 25 ♠c2 (threatening 26 ♠c7 a6 27 ♠g6! ♠xg6 28 ♠xd8) 25...♠f6 26 ♠c7 ♠a8 27 ♠e3! ♠d8 28 ♠d6, or 25...b5 26 ♠c5! ♠b6 27 ♠d5 with an overwhelming advantage.

24 ♠c1! ♠a6?! (24...♠a4 was more tenacious, with the hope of 25 ♠e5 f6!, although after 25 ♠c7! things are essentially unchanged: say, 25...a6 26 ♠d5 ♠b3 27 ♠d6

♖b2 28 h3 etc.) **25 ♖c7 b5**



26 ♘d4?

A seemingly natural move, which was passed over by many commentators or even, as in *Informator* (No.7/488) and the book *Boris Spassky's 300 Wins*, accompanied by an exclamation mark. In fact, this is a mistake that put White's victory in jeopardy! 26 ♖e8! ♘b7 (26...♗d6 27 ♖c8!) 27 ♖c8! would have been quickly decisive, for example: 27...♗a1+ 28 ♘e1 ♗d4 29 ♗xb5, or 27...♗a4 28 h3 ♗d1+ 29 ♖h2 ♗d6+ 30 ♘e5 f6 (30...♗f6 31 ♗e4) 31 ♗g6!, and 31...fxe5 fails to 32 ♖cxd8! ♗xg6 33 ♖xf8+ and ♖h8 mate.

Here the difference between human thinking and computer calculation is clearly seen: the human does not want to allow the check at a1, and have to make the 'unaesthetic' move ♘e1, whereas the machine simply has no such qualms.

26...♗b6?

Apparently already demoralised, Petrosian misses an unexpected saving opportunity – 26...♗d6! 27 ♘xb5 ♗d2 28 ♖f1 ♘b3! 29 ♖xa7 ♘d4! 30 ♘xd4 ♗xd4, 'and it is still not easy for White to make use of his powerful pawn.' (Boleslavsky, Bondarevsky) I would have said – not at all easy (the weakness of the back rank!):

1) 31 ♖b7 ♖b8! (31...g6 32 ♗b5 ♖g7 33 ♖e1! is not so clear) 32 ♖c7 (after 32 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 33 ♖e1 g6 the d7-pawn falls even more quickly) 32...♖b6 33 ♖e1 ♖f6 34 ♗c5 ♗xc5

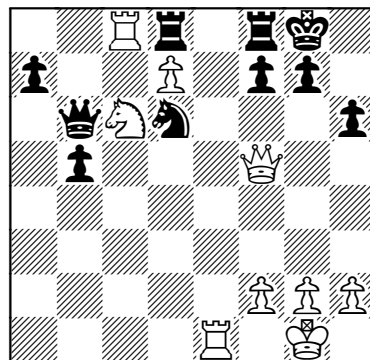
35 ♖xc5 ♖d6 36 ♖c7 ♖d8 with a draw;

2) 31 ♖c7 g6 32 ♗b5 ♖g7 33 ♖e1 (33 ♖fc1 f6!) 33...♖b8! 34 ♗e2 (34 ♖c4 ♖xb5 35 ♖xd4 ♖d8, then ...♖b7 and ...♖f6-e7) 34...♖b2 35 ♗f3 ♖d2 36 g3 ♖d8 37 ♖e7 ♗f6 38 ♗e3 ♖d1+ 39 ♖g2 ♖8xd7!

27 ♖c8! (now there is no defence) **27...♘b7**

It was totally bad to play 27...♗xd4? 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♖e8+, or 27...b4 28 ♖e8! ♗xd4? 29 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 30 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 31 ♗c5+!! ♗xc5 32 d8♗ mate, while after 27...g6 the simple 28 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 29 ♗xb5 is decisive.

28 ♘c6 ♘d6



29 ♘xd8! (an elegant concluding stroke)

29...♘xf5 30 ♘c6 1-0

And Spassky took the lead.