

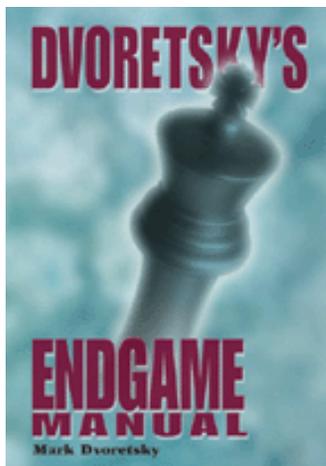


Lilienthal's Strategic Victories

In his younger days, Andrei Lilienthal played sharp attacking chess; in his most famous game, he executed a brilliant queen sacrifice against Capablanca. But there are few who know that, by the end of the 1930s, when Lilienthal shared first in the 1940 Soviet Championship with Igor Bondarevsky, and twice defeated Mikhail Botvinnik in great style, that he had achieved such creative harmony that he also played a number of classic positional games.

COLUMNISTS

The
Instructor
Mark Dvoretsky



I am offering a few of those games for your attention. You will see not only the moves, but also the Lilienthal's comments (from his games collection), written in italics. I would hope that you will be as impressed as I was by the level, both of the play and of the commentaries of this gifted grandmaster. And although I may, in my own annotations, have indicated a few inaccuracies, don't let that bother you - after all, "to err is human," and there will never be either an error-free player or an error-free annotator.

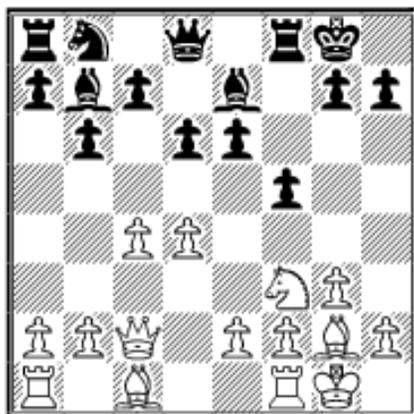
Lilienthal - Botvinnik XII USSR Championship, Moscow 1940

1. d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2. c2-c4 e7-e6 3. Ng1-f3 b7-b6 4. g2-g3 Bc8-b7 5. Bf1-g2 Bf8-e7 6. 0-0 0-0 7. Nb1-c3 Nf6-e4 8. Qd1-c2 Ne4xc3 9. Qc2xc3 d7-d6

Viktor Korchnoi liked to play 9...f5, but eventually, the main theoretical line became 9...c5.

10. Qc3-c2 f7-f5

White threatened 11. Ng5.



11. Nf3-e1!

11. d5 looks more energetic, the point being to answer 11...e5 (if 11...ed, then 12. Nd4) with 12. e4 (the tactical operation 12. Nxe5 de 13. d6 gives Black an excellent position after 13...Bxg2 14. de Qxe7), when 12...fe 13. Nd2 e3 14. fe Rxf1+ 15. Nxf1 Bg5 16. e4 (here, a more forceful approach would be 16. Be4! g6 17. h4) 16...Bxc1 17. Rxc1 leaves White with some positional advantage.



The move 12...fe would appear obvious, when in fact it is a strategic error: Black voluntarily gives up the e4-square. I would recommend 12...Bc8 instead. Now 13. Nd2? is met by 13...f4 with a kingside initiative. Bent Larsen adds that on 13. Ne1, Black can play either 13...Na6 = or 13...f4!? 14. gf ef 15. e5 Bf5, followed by 16...g5, when the position is unclear.

On 13. ef Bxf5 14. Qe2 Nd7 15. Nd2 Nc5 16. Ne4 Nxe4 17. Bxe4 g6, Black has equal chances. Instead of Black's last move, 17...Qd7 is a little more accurate, not giving White's bishop the h6-square.

The Yugoslav "ECO" comes to the very same conclusion: 11. d5 is not dangerous for Black, in view of 11...e5 12. e4 Bc8! However, the authors of ECO do not cite Lilienthal's analysis, but a later game Stean - Larsen (Lone Pine 1978), in which after 13. ef Bxf5 14. Qe2 Nd7 Black continued 15...Bg5 16. Ne4 Bxc1 17. Raxc1 a5 18. Qe3 Qe8 = (the idea being either 19...Qg6 or 19...h6 and 20...Qh5).

The move 11. Ne1, offering to exchange bishops, was taken by many as a draw offer.

11...Nb8-c6?

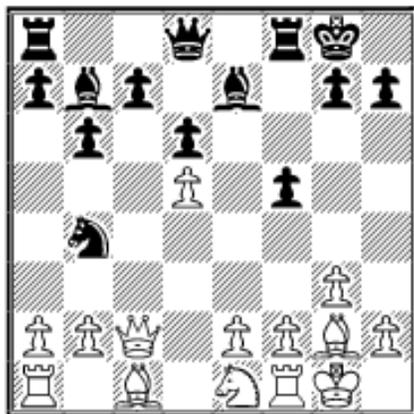
Black strives to keep the game complicated. 11...Qc8 was preferable, as Keres played in a match game with Euwe from 1940. After 12. e4 Nd7, Black obtained a good position. That game continued 13. d5?! fe 14. Qxe4 Nc5 15. Qe2 Bf6 =. White would have done better to have played 13. ef ef 14. d5 (ECO recommends 14. Bh3g6 15. Bh6, with a slight advantage, but there is no need to weaken the dark squares: 14...Be4!? deserves attention). In this position, Paul Keres believed that Black should open the game up by 14...c6!?, with unclear play.

Black has also tried 11...Bxg2 12. Nxc2 Qd7 (12...c6?! is weaker: 13. e4 Na6 14. ef ef 15. Qa4± Alekhine - Keres, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939) 13. e4 fe 14. Qxe4 d5 15. Qg4 Bd6 (15...e5!? 16. Qxd7 Nxd7) 16. cd ed 17 Qxd7 Nxd7 18. Bf4, with a small advantage (Averbakh - Bilek, Palma de Mallorca 1972).

12. d4-d5 e6xd5 13. c4xd5

White has opened the c-file, and the backward pawn at c7 may come under siege. Additionally, the c6- and e6-squares are weak. If White can get his knight to d4, his advantage will be indisputable. The natural continuation for Black here would be 13...Ne5, to which I intended to reply 14. e4. If this had happened in the game, I have no doubt the grandmaster would have played a different move (14. Nd3, for example), since the e-pawn's advance would cost the exchange after 14...Ba6.

13...Nc6-b4?



In making this move, Botvinnik believed that White had to defend the d5-pawn with 14. Qb3; in that case, after 14...a5 15. a3 Na6, he could not play b2-b4, and the resulting position could be considered even.

14. Qc2-d2!

A completely unexpected move, which allows White to box in his opponent on the queenside.

Lilienthal found a pretty and very strong move. However, the same could have also been achieved by 14. Qc4!, for example: 14...a5 15. a3 Na6 (15...Ba6 16. Qf4 Bxe2 17. ab+) 16. b4 Bf6 17. Rb1 ab 18. ab Nb8 19. Nd3 and 20. Nf4+.

14...a7-a5

Botvinnik was of the opinion that Black had to decide on 14...c5 here, even though his position remains difficult after 15. dc Nxc6 16. Nd3. By the way, after 14. Qc4 Black would not have had this possibility.

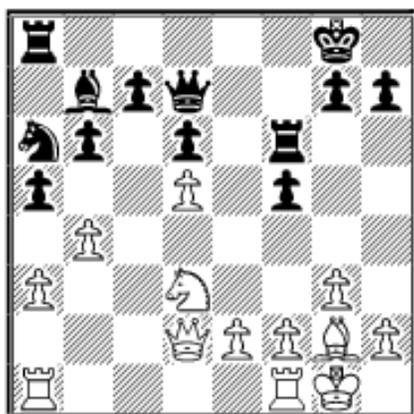
15. a2-a3 Nb4-a6 16. b2-b4

This is the point of 14. Qd2: the knight stands poorly at a6. Until almost the very end of the game, it is unable to get into play.

16...Be7-f6 17. Bc1-b2 Qd8-d7

Had Black forced exchanges here by 17...Bxb2 18. Qxb2 Qf6 19. Qxf6 Rxf6, then after 20. Nd3, the resulting endgame would have been in White's favor. White retains his pressure against the pawn at c7, while the knight on a6 remains, as before, condemned to inactivity.

18. Bb2xf6 Rf8xf6



19. Ne1-d3

Of course not 19. ba? in view of 19...Nc5!, when the threat of 20...Nb3 gives Black excellent play.

19...a5-a4

But now White was threatening 20. ba, with a favorable opening of the a-file. Here's an interesting variation: 19...ab 20. ab Qb5 21. Nf4 (21. Ra3, followed by tripling on the a-file, isn't bad either) 21...Qxb4 22. Qxb4 Nxb4 23. Rxa8+ Bxa8 24. Ra1 Rf8 25.

Ra4! c5. Here I saw that Black could get mated most amusingly: 26. dc Nxc6 27. Bd5+ Kh8 28. Ng6+!

Thus, Black had to close the a-file, after which White could set about exploiting the weaknesses created in the enemy camp at c7, c6 and e6.

20. Ra1-c1 Qd7-f7 21. Nd3-f4

The knight occupies a dominating position, and Black's game is strategically lost. From this general observation to the end of the struggle is, however, a very great distance.

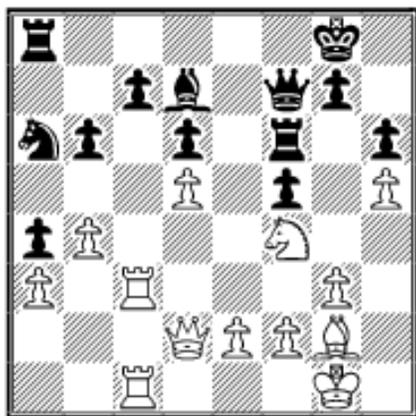
21...Bb7-c8 22. Rc1-c3 Bc8-d7 23. Rf1-c1 h7-h6!? 24. h2-h4

Cutting short Black's attempt to obtain counterplay by g7-g5, which would now lose to 25. hg hg 26. Ne6.

24...Ra8-a7 25. h4-h5

As a consequence of h7-h6, there is a new hole at g6, and the knight has become unassailable at f4.

25...Ra7-a8



26. Rc3-e3!

26. e3, with Bg2-f1 to follow, would have been less energetic, allowing Black to respond with b6-b5.

Exploiting the weak squares at e6 and g6, the powerful knight at f4, and the not inconsequential circumstance that Black's knight is stranded on the queenside, White begins decisive action on the e-file and the king's wing. Classic strategy!

26...Kg8-h7 27. Rc1-c3

If Black exchanges rooks, the other rook will occupy the e-file.

27...Ra8-b8 28. Qd2-d3 Rb8-a8 29. Nf4-g6

The threat of 30. Re7 forces Black to give up the exchange.

29...Rf6xg6 30. h5xg6+ Kh7xg6

If 30...Qxg6, then 31. Re7.

31. Re3-e6+

Of course Black cannot take the rook; however, 31. g4 was simpler, forcing exchanges.

31...Kg6-h7 32. g3-g4 c7-c5

A last attempt to complicate the game somehow.

33. b4-b5 Na6-c7 34. g4xf5 Nc7xb5

34...Re8 would have been somewhat more stubborn. I had intended to reply 35. Qe4. Another good line was 35. f6+ g6 36. Rxd6 Bxb5 37. Qh3 Rxe2 38. Re3.

35. f5-f6+ Kh7-g8 36. Rc3-c4

Of course not 36. Re7?, because of 36...Qxf6, when both white rooks are attacked.

36...Ra8-e8

Otherwise 37. Re7. On 36...gf, 37. Rg4+ decides.

37. Rc4-g4

Forcing open the kingside.

37...g7-g5 38. Re6xe8+ Bd7xe8 39. Rg4-e4 Kg8-f8

On 39...Qg6, simplest is 40. Re7 Qxd3 41. Rxe8+ Kf7 42. Re7+ Kxf6 43. Re6+.

40. Re4-e7 Qf7-g6 41. Bg2-e4 Qg6-h5

Or 41...Qxf6 42. Rxe8+ and 43. Qxb5.

42. Be4-f3 Qh5-g6

If 42...g4 43. Qh7 forces mate.

43. Re7xe8+

Black resigned. On 43...Qxe8 there follows 44. Qh7 Qf7 45. Qxh6+ Kg8 46. Bh5.

An exemplary exploitation of the unfortunate position of an enemy knight, stranded on the edge of the board. And to think that our "textbook example" was created in a game against one of the strongest chessplayers in the world. It was no accident that Tigran Petrosian, who was himself a highly skilled positional player, rated this game extremely high.

(The following appreciation of GM Lilienthal was written for the magazine "Chess Sankt-Peterburg" by Ilya Odessky, an IM and close personal friend of Lilienthal.)

My Good Man

Andrei Arnoldovich Lilienthal is now 93. He is both very old, and very sweet. He is totally, totally ... different.

So different, that when I first met him, I didn't believe it. Not that I suspected any falseness, or cynicism, or slyness of him - no. I just refused to believe it. It was a sort of defensive reaction - we are so quickly callous, and so willing to convince ourselves that this is necessary, so willing to admit to ourselves that this is how it will always be...

"Lilienthal has no enemies" is a phrase so worn to transparent pointlessness, that on first reading it, I thought it meaningless. What does it mean - not to have any enemies? Have they all died? Yes, he had outlived them all; and now, like the famous wise man of China, he sits upon the riverbank, gazing at the bodies floating away below him? Or is it that they never existed? Nothingness has no enemies either, but a living public man always has some. Good men have their betrayers, the talented have the talentless, and the successful have the envious. What good is it to have no enemies? What good is it, when everybody considers your best quality to be the absence of enemies?

I do not know if Andrei Arnoldovich has (or had) enemies or not; it doesn't interest me. What amazes me is something else entirely: the man has no memory whatsoever for the bad! At our last encounter, he suddenly remembered one "very nice person," some Comrade Chesnokov, a bureaucrat in the OVIR, who spent some years preventing Lilienthal from traveling abroad. "How much he wanted to help me then!," Andrei exclaimed; and I bent closer, to see if he was joking. Not a bit: "How much he wanted to help me! He asked me to wait, while he went into the next room. He was gone a long time; then he came back, and said that there was nothing to be done. He was very downcast."

I only heard him with half an ear. The thought that occurred to me was this: What if, in Chesnokov's whole bureaucratic life (he was, I expect, some mid-ranking soul-swallower), his only positive evaluation was this heartfelt one of Lilienthal's, which was expressed in his absence, at that?

It was time for me to respond. I decided to laugh it off (and, as it turned out, not very successfully):

"Who could have prevented this bureaucrat from letting you go? Some world champion, perhaps?"

"A champion's wife," came the serious, well-considered reply. "But I will not speak her name, since she has recently passed away. But our relations were always cordial."

"How could they have been? Wasn't it she who..."

"Yes," broke in Andrei, clearly letting me know that the conversation had gone astray. And he moved the board closer, so I could see it better.

(Normally, when my chess friends hear of my close relationship with Lilienthal, out of courtesy, they ask, "How's he doing?" Which, if you like, could be taken to mean, "How are things with him?", but which really means something quite different from the usual "How is he?", and mostly is intended to mean, "And how is it that he has not yet gone bye-bye?" Medically speaking, I stand prepared to reassure you all: he has not gone bye-bye. But his world is, without question, "somewhere else"; his life is in those squares...)

At his home, I have never seen Lilienthal without a board. Analysis has become his atmosphere, his bread and wine. I only have to bring him some fresh chess news, and Andrei is visibly seized by a rising duality: on the one hand, a young colleague has come to visit, and it would be impolite not to notice him; but on the other hand - there, at the end of his arm, lies that without which life is insupportable, that which encompasses his life with thought, like cotton wrapped around a wooden toy.

He begins to look past me, and I know it is time to leave. I do not doubt that, as soon as I get home (we live almost next door to each other, by Moscow standards: 20 minutes on the metro), the telephone is bound to ring: "Ilya, you left, and I started analyzing, and found something really interesting. This won't take up much of your time - just a few moves" - just as if I had been sitting next to him the whole time, and knew just what position he's talking about, and could respond to his ideas on the fly.

And now - a word about - words. Out of all the labels chessplayers use to describe moves, the years have left Lilienthal with only three:

"Astonishing" - This is used to describe a discovery, or a combination, or in general any clever solution of a position, so it is pronounced with a low, sibilant first "s". It's a move that he has not yet shown you, but it's already pre-announced, already redolent with the scent of something found in an Eastern bazaar. And you, who a second ago were just an innocent bystander, now listen, already expectant.

"Garbage" - the opposite of the first word. Most often referring, not to any single move, but to a completely incompetent analysis. This is used only once an evening - so great is his regret that his highly-regarded brother in the search for chess truth could be, this time, so far from it. In our first encounters, I tried to approach Andrei with what seemed like a simple thought: what if, indeed, a "brother" did this dirty deed deliberately (perhaps out of an overweening need for filthy lucre, or simply because of a lack of time to get fully into the position)? What if there are some analysts who abuse the confidence of the reader - such an honored grandmaster surely need not waste his time reading such tripe? But explaining such a thing to Lilienthal is an exceedingly pointless task.

Even a garbage analysis can be corrected. Now, whether that correction should be printed ... Here you have Andrei Arnoldovich in all his glory. He is afraid - so afraid! - lest he might offend a "good person". He questions, and cannot decide for himself - should his refutation be printed, or not? Here I shall reveal a little secret: in Andrei's memory, the garbage analysis is de-personified! Only the chess mistake remains, while the name of its author is completely forgotten. More than once, our dialogues have taken on the form of a short anecdote:

- Look, Ilya, what he's written here. What a garbage move!

- Andrei Arnoldovich, this isn't Philidor we're talking about here!

- Really?! (short pause) Well, what should we do?

Or:

- Andrei Arnoldovich, that's just Fish-boy; he always writes like that.

- Really?!

- Let's not bother refuting him in print; it's not worth it.

- Of course, of course, you're right.

And then - visible relief, as if I had removed a heavy weight from his soul.

The final leg of his descriptive triad is, "El - leh - mmen - tary!" Just like that: in syllables, accented, with sonorous "l" and "m" sounds, linked, as though he were reading an exam question aloud to himself. A victorious, professorial epithet: none of you saw this, but *I* saw it! And although the challenge is certainly not directed at you, still, there's a little embarrassment (after all, you didn't see this elementary move, either). But immediately, with no more than a second's interval, he adds: "The old man can still find something, eh?" With a marvelous laugh - the sort of laughter that can only come from someone whose spirit rests easy; and all at once, any embarrassment is dispelled.

(This past year, I met a man who laughed a great deal - sometimes, for no reason at all - and such a juicy, rolling laugh, too: it was infectious. But when I looked more closely, I saw that, while he was laughing, his eyes were looking you up and down, from one side to the other. How different from Lilienthal's laughter! Andrei laughs as though enraptured; and, finished, once again he is open to his fellow conversant - the discussion can continue.)

Along with these three epithets, there is also one verb, used as a dividing marker: once used, the conversation ceases to be about anything else; now we get down to business. "Let's grind!" Interestingly, I have never heard him use it in the past tense: never "We ground it," but only "we did some grinding." This linguistic bit of cleverness could hardly be a conscious one: clearly, it's dictated to his unconscious by his chess experience, and also his exceptional intelligence (which in Lilienthal takes the place of academic culture) - more than any brainy books, it

convinces me that in chess, there can never be a "last word." Lilienthal says that you can "start grinding" this or that position, and you can "continue to grind;" but this work is never-ending: not when you finish your analysis, not when you finish your life.

How do our joint "searches for truth" go? (Alas, I am afraid that Andrei would never approve those quotation marks.) I cannot oppose Lilienthal, once he has shown me a new idea - and certainly not out of a sense of etiquette (what would be the point?!), but simply because a 30-year-old, barely seasoned master can hardly followed the thought of such a "senior" (as he calls himself). The best I can do is to take his analyses home and run them through the computer. For the reader to understand the amount of material I am speaking of here, I will say that the least I have ever taken home from Lilienthal's has been 10 pages, and that we usually meet 2 or 3 times a week.

So, my computer whirs away. No need to create a cult of personality: of every 10 new analyses, 5 or 6 are immediately refuted, 2 or 3 are passable - the sort one may print, or perhaps not. And 1 of every 10 or 20 analyses (that is, one per week, minimum) is a gem.

Having unearthed the pearl, I set my iron buddy to produce the detailed analysis, while I call Andrei, to share the results of my computer probing.

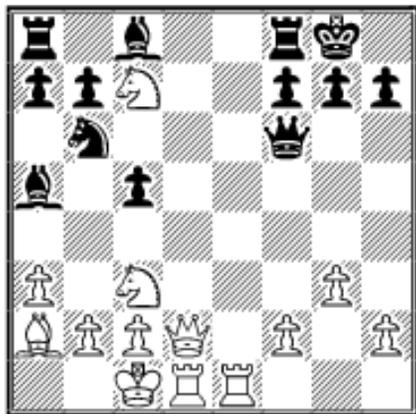
Now, I must tell you: Lilienthal harbors a deep suspicion of computer analysis. This is no brother-in-arms to him. Not once, in all our acquaintanceship, have I ever heard him call any set of computer moves "astonishing". I think, once again, at a subconscious level, Lilienthal's logic is not very complicated: Chess is a living thing; I am a living being. The computer is a dead thing - how can it surpass myself, in living creativity?

How do I allow myself to think up this logical train of thought for Lilienthal? Because the highest praise he has ever allowed himself to express for a computer has been: "Good boy!" And not even that - more like: "Nice going, computer!" You can praise a smart kid that way - but a machine?

So, here, I bring Lilienthal the computer's response; he takes some time (usually, the same 20 minutes it takes me to get home) - and his refutation of the computer's garbage analysis is ready. Sometimes, I don't even have time to make it home: my answering machine already has a couple of Lilienthal's calls flashing. Once again, no need to paint the picture of an otherworldly prophet (the kind we've seen so often in Soviet films about heroic types: a serious frown, a muttered "da-da-da", and bang! - problem solved): so far, it's only Round Two. How many rounds can there be? As many as you like. One rook endgame analysis started a year and a half ago, and it's still going strong, with no end in sight, and none of our little collective (Lilienthal, "Tiger", and myself as messenger-boy) any the worse for it.

Well, why bother describing it - better to show you how this all plays out in real life. I shall use one of our more recent analyses - and purposely, an "unfinished" one.

L. McShane - E. Bacrot
Lausanne, 2003

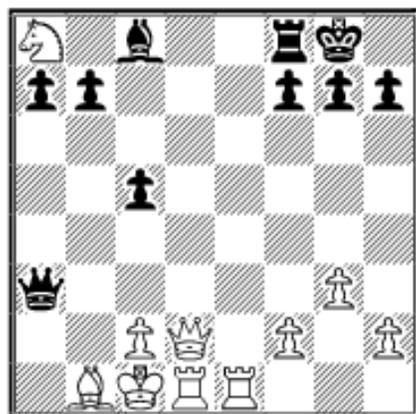


A tournament of the world's strongest junior players; the final round. Etienne Bacrot chose 20...Bg4?! 21. Nxa8 Na4 22. Nc7! Nxc3 (22...Bxc3 23. bxc3 Nxc3 24. Nd5!) 23. bxc3 Bxc7, and after the unforeseen 24. f3! Bc8 (24...Bxf3 25. Rf1 Qc6 26. Bd5 Bxd5 27. Qxd5) 25. Qe3, Luke McShane confidently converted his material advantage.

Here is Lilienthal's first analysis.

"In spite of Black's rook being attacked, **20...Na4!** suggests itself, with the continuation **21. Nxa8** (21. N7d5 Qa6, when White has no clear advantage) **21...Bxc3!** (but not 21...Nxc3? 22. bxc3 Bxc3 23. Qf4!? Qa5? 24. Qxf7+!, and mate next)

22. bxc3 Nxc3 23. Bb3 (23. Bxf7+ Kxf7! ; or if 23. Bb1 Black mates in three: 23...Na2+! 24. Bxa2 Qa1+ 25. Bb1 Qxa3# See diagram).



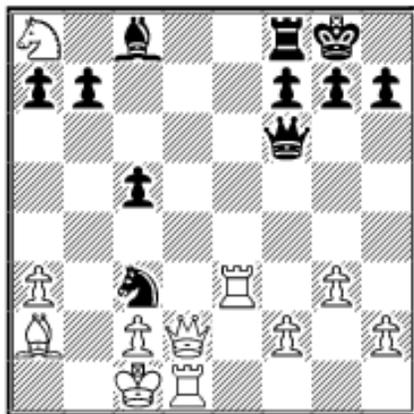
23...Na2+ 24. Kb1 Nc3+ 25. Kc1, and perpetual check. The game could have been in the running for the most beautiful game of the tournament."

Impressive? Especially since Black has to take on c3 with the bishop - most unusual! - as well as the miraculous mating pattern, of course.

Now I will retransmit the first annotations by the computer.

First of all, Black has no need to force the perpetual check: after 20...Na4! 21. Nxa8 Bxc3! 22. bxc3 Nxc3 23. Bb3, he wins the queen by 23...Ne4!

And second, he found a stronger defense: **23. Re3!**



By controlling the c3-square, White liquidates the mate threat. So, Black must reorient himself and win material instead:

23...Nxd1 24. Qxd1 Qa1+ 25. Bb1 Be6 26. Qf3 (even the obviously weaker 26. Nc7 Ba2 27. Qd6 Qxb1+ 28. Kd2 is not clear: Black must reply 28...f6 to ward off the threatened combination 29. Qxf8+ Kxf8 30. Re8#) 26...Rxa8. Nothing about the rook endgame after 26...Ba2?! 27. Qxb7 Bxb1 28. Qxb1 Qxb1+ 29. Kxb1 Rxa8 is "enlightening" for

Black: White has at least 30. Kb2 Kf8 31. Kc3, etc. And 26...Rb8!?! is amusing, but nothing more: 27. Rxe6! (stronger than 27. Nc7 Ba2 28. Qxb7 Qxb1+ 29. Qxb1 Rxb1+ 30. Kd2) 27...fxe6 28. Nc7 Qe5 29. Qf4 Qe1+ 30. Kb2 Rf8 31. Qg5, and White consolidates his overwhelming material advantage.

27. Qxb7 Rd8 28. Qxa7 Qf6 29. f4

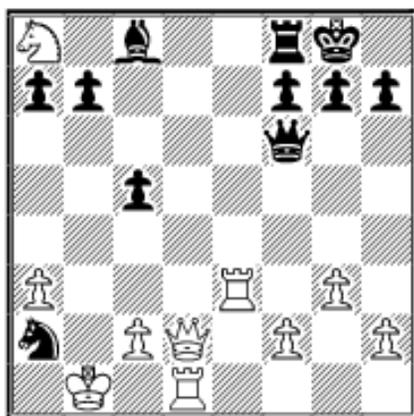
Not 29. Qxc5? Qxf2 30. Rd3 Qe1+ 31. Kb2 Rb8+. And after 29. Rd3 Rxd3 30. cxd3, Black has a guaranteed draw: 30...Qc3+ 31. Bc2 Qe1+ 32. Kb2 Qe5+.

29...Qd4 30. Rd3 Qg1+ 31. Kb2, and in view of the unplayability of 31...Rxd3? 32. Qb8+ the computer, after a moment's thought, evaluates the position in White's favor.

Lilienthal found all this immensely deplorable. Garbage analysis, no doubt of it. One should not count material here; one should continue the mating attack!

Lilienthal's second analysis:

Not 23...Nxd1, but **23...Nxa2+! 24. Kb1**



and now, a choice:

24...Be6!? 25. Nc7 Bc4 26. Qd6 (26. Nd5? Bxd5 27. Qxd5 Nc3+) 26..Nc3+ 27. Kc1 Na2+, with a draw; or

24...Bf5!? 25. Kxa2 (25. Nc7 Qb6+ 26. Kxa2 Qxc7) 25...Rxa8 26. Qd6 Qxd6 27. Rxd6 Bxc2

And the computer, in turn, turned the corner.

In the line 24...Be6!? 25. Nc7 Bc4, White wins by **26. Ne8! Qb6+ 27. Ka1 Be6 28. Rxe6! Qxe6 29. Nd6 Rd8** (29...h6 30. c4) **30. Re1 Qg6** (30...Qh6 31. Qd5) **31. Nxb7!**

The line **24...Bf5!? 25. Kxa2 Rxa8 26. Qd6** (Qxd6? 27. Rxd6 Bxc2 should be

extended: 28. Re7 gives White great winning chances, although) **26...Be6+ 27. Kb1 h6 28. f4** (28. Qxc5 Qxf2) **28...b6** is stronger for Black. The Engineer of Inhuman Spirit evaluates this position as even, while I raise my shaky hand to point out that White does have an exchange plus.

I am deliberately breaking off the "grinding" at this spot. Andrei Arnoldovich has gone off to Budapest, where there might be an interesting match planned (one which may again be cancelled); besides, Christmas is coming soon, and it's always better to observe the holiday at home.

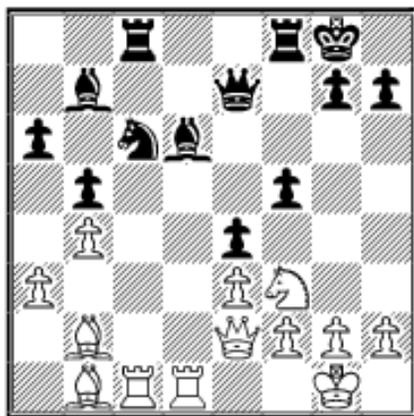
For my part, I can say that it would be even better if the final word in this analysis were to be offered by the readers of my column. Or perhaps not even a final word, just an attentive retouching. Keep in mind what Andrei Arnoldovich unobtrusively reminds us: One may "grind away", perhaps one even must "grind" away - but one can never be finished.

I remember.

IM Ilya Odessky

Addendum

My January column contained an analysis of the game Marshall - Schlechter (Ostende 1907)

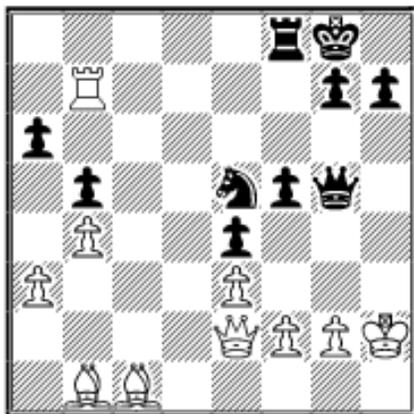


White chose 20. Ba2+ Kh8 21. Ng5!, and after 21...Qxg5 22. Rxd6 Rfd8 23. h4! Qg4 (23...Qxh4 24. Bxg7+!) 24. Qd2, quickly exploited his overwhelming positional advantage.

I suggested a tactical defense, involving a piece sacrifice: 21...Bxh2+! 22. Kxh2 Qxg5 23. Rd7 Ne5!, which would have secured Black sufficient counterplay. I also showed that this counterplay would have been much less effective, if White had refrained from the

bishop check at a2.

20. Ng5! Bxh2+! 21. Kxh2 Qxg5 22. Rd7 Ne5! 23. Rxb7 Rxc1 24. Bxc1



The point being that, after 24...Ng4+ 25. Kg1, White has a strong riposte to 25...Qh6 that he did not have in the game: 26. Qa2+! Kh8 27. Bb2. And on 25..Qh4, 26. Qe1! Qh2+ 27. Kf1. With the bishop on a2, Black would reply 27...Ne5! 28. Bb2 Qh1+ 29. Ke2 Qxe1+ 30. Kxe1 Nd3+; but here, the move 27...Ne5 has no point, since the d3-square is covered by the bishop.

All this looked very logical and pretty, until I received a letter out of India, from IM

Sundararajan Kidambi, pointing out that refraining from the bishop check at a2 also has its drawbacks. In the last diagrammed position, Black could continue his attack by **24...Rf6!** (which would not have been possible if the black king had first been driven into the corner). Let me give Kidambi's main variation:

25. Kg1! Nf3+ 26. Kf1 Qh5! 27. Qa2+ Kf8 28. gf ef 29. Ke1 Rd6! 30. Qf7+ (the only way to continue the game - if White does not wish to settle for a repetition after 30. Rb8+) **30...Qxf7 31. Rxf7+ Kxf7 32. Bxf5 Rh6 33. Be4 Rh1+ 34. Kd2 Rf1 35. Bxf3 Rxf2+ 36. Be2 g5 37. Ke1 Rh2**, and the outcome remains unclear.

So despite Schlechter's inaccuracies, Black's position was still not lost, almost up to the end.

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