



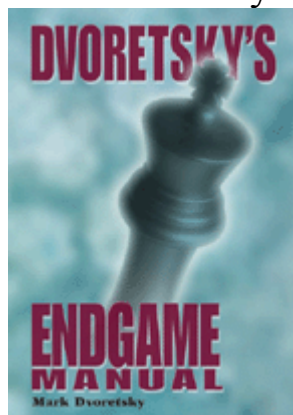
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COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



Lilienthal's Strategic Victories (Part Two)

We continue making our acquaintance with examples of the strategic mastery of grandmaster Andrei Lilienthal, from his mature creative period. In our examination of the following game, we shall compare Lilienthal's notes (in italics) with those of Botvinnik, from the tournament book he authored, and those of Fine, from his book, *Chess Marches On!*. Interestingly, the chief leitmotiv of this game is the same as that in the previous game we examined against Botvinnik: exploiting the unfortunate placement of the enemy knight (from my March column, see the [ChessCafe Archives](#)).

Lilienthal - Keres
Leningrad/Moscow 1941

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 Bb7-e4

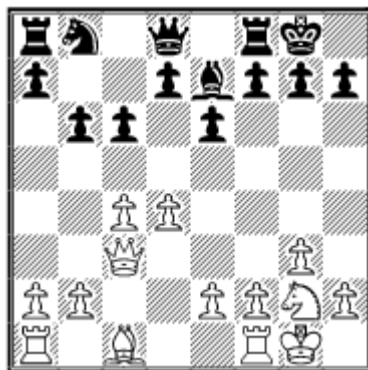
Black forestalls the move Qc3-c2. His intent is to continue with c7-c6 and d7-d5, without walling in the bishop. The loss of tempo involved in the exchange of bishops plays no substantive role.

10. Nf3-e1

Lilienthal suggests an idea here which does not appear in "ECO": 10. Bh3!? f5 11. Nd2 Bb7 12. Re1, preparing e2-e4. But in his opinion, as well as that of contemporary theory, the strongest move is 10. Bf4.

10...Be4xg2 1. Ne1xg2 c7-c6

Black has also tried 11...Bf6!? and 11...c5!? here.



12. d4-d5?!

On 12. e4 Black intended 12...d5 13. cd cd. The point of the center break is to gain a space advantage while not allowing d7-d5. Among the drawbacks of the move is the fact that Black will get counterplay along the c-file.

There was some point in playing 12. Bf4 first (after which 12...d5? is unfavorable, due to 13. cd cd 14. Rfc1 ±), and only after 12...d6, 13. d5. A game Belyavsky – Gulko (Lvov 1978) continued: 13...ed 14. cd c5 15. e4 Nd7 16. Qc2

b5 17. h4 Nf6 18. Rad1 (18. Ne3?! Nh5) 18...Re8 19. Rfe1 c4 20. e5 de 21. Bxe5 Bb4 22. Re2 Ng4 23. Bc3, with a slight edge to White.

12... c6xd5

In the 6th match game Korchnoi – Huebner (Solingen 1973), Black equalized by playing 12...Bf6 13. Qd2 ed 14. cd ed 15. Qxd5 (15. Nf4 d4) 15...Nc6 16. Rd1 Qe7 17. Ne3 Rfd8 18. Rb1 Qe6 19. b3 Ne7 20. Qf3 Rac8 21. Ba3 d6. White should probably have retreated his queen elsewhere: 13. Qf3!?, after which the double capture at d5 has less of a point, in view of 15. Nf4.

13. c4xd5 Nb8-a6

13...ed is bad, of course, because of 14. Nf4, when White recovers the pawn with the better position, because of the weakness at d7. Now on 14. d6, Black does not answer 14...Bxd6? because of 15. Qd3 with a double attack, but 14...Bf6.

14. Ng2-f4 Qd8-c8

14...Rc8 was possible too, but White must retreat the queen anyway, since the endgame resulting from an exchange would not be good for him.

15. Qc3-f3 Qc8-c2!

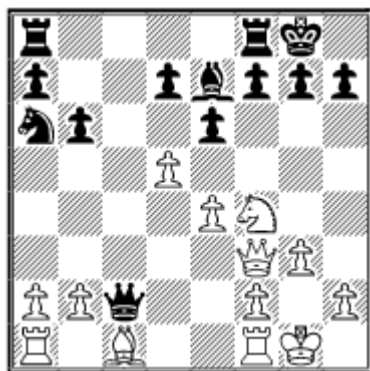
Up to this point, our game follows the 13th Euwe - Keres Match Game (Holland, 1939/40); Keres continued 15...e5, when Euwe sacrificed a pawn by 16. d6, without obtaining compensation. Of course, the sacrifice was unnecessary: either 16. Nd3 or 16. Ng2 would have been good. Black would reply 16...d6, and if 17. e4 e5 retaining an excellent position – White has real difficulty developing his queen's bishop.

Fine thought the pawn sacrifice correct - except that after 16. d6 Bxd6, White should not have continued 17. Nh5? Be7! 18. Be3 Qc6, with great advantage to Black, but 17. Nd5!, with outstanding compensation.

But is this true? Of course, after the passive 17...Nc7 18. Rd1 Nxd5 19. Qxd5 Bc7 (19...Bc5 20. Qxe5 Re8 21. Qh5, with some advantage) 20. Bg5!, White's initiative is dangerous enough; but Black could play something a lot more energetic: 17...Qc2! 18. Ne3 (18. e4 Nc5 is very good for Black) 18...Qg6 19. Nf5 Re8 20. e4 Bf8, when all Black's affairs are in order. All of this means he was right to play 15...e5.

With this move, Keres hampers the development of the queen's bishop, and strengthens Black's play considerably.

16. e2-e4



16...e6-e5?!

"Keres' positional sense abandons him here. Releasing the central tension plays into White's hands, as it grants him time to complete his maneuvers. 16...Bf6 was the obvious move." (Botvinnik)

I had intended to meet 16...Bf6 with 17. Re1, and if 17...Bxb2, then 18. Bxb2 Qxb2 19. e5!, with an attack. It's not clear, however, just how White planned to continue the attack after 19...Nc5 20. Nh5 Qc2!

The correct continuation was 16...Nc5!, and if 17. e5 d6 liquidates White's pawn center. Fine adds the moves 18. ed Bxd6 19. de fe!, believing that Black would have

the initiative. Let's extend his variation: 20. Qd1!? Qxd1 21. Rxd1 Be5! 22. Rb1 Rad8, and the endgame is about even.

We may conclude that Black obtained an excellent position from the opening, as a result of the overhasty advance 12. d5!?

17. Nf4-d3

Not 17. Nh5, in view of 17...f5!, when the knight has no retreat squares.

On 17. Ng2 (intending 18. Ne3), Black has either the same reply: 17...f5, or else 17...Nc5.

17...f7-f6?

On 17...d6 18. Ne1 Qc8, White would prevent f7-f5 by means of 19. g4. However, 17...Nc5, to simplify the position was worth considering. Fine gives the continuation 18. Nxe5 Bf6 19. Bf4! Bxe5 20. Bxe5 Rfe8 21. Bd4! (21. Rac1? Qd3!) 21...Qxe4 (the American GM also gives 21...Rxe4 22. Bxc5 bc 23. Rac1 Qe2 =, but on 23. Rfc1! Qe2 24. Qxe2 Rxe2 25. Rxc5 Rxb2 26. Rc7, Black still has an unpleasant endgame to defend) 22. Qxe4 Nxe4 23. Rac1 Rac8, when White has the preferable position.

The natural-looking 17...f6 turns out to be the cause of Black's defeat.

18. Nd3-e1!

White's task is to drive away the queen and get his queenside pieces into the game.

18...Qc2-a4 19. b2-b3

Not only driving off the queen, but also parrying the threatened 19...Nc5. If 19...Qd4 20. Nc2.

19...Qa4-a5 20. Ne1-g2

The knight heads for f5!

20...Be7-c5

With the unmistakable aim of exchanging the knight when it gets to e3.

Keres probably did not yet sense the strategic dangers of his position. Otherwise, he would probably have made a violent attempt to change the course of the game by 20...f5!? 21. ef Bf6 22. Qe2 e4 23. Rb1 Nb4. Of course, it's hardly possible to evaluate the consequences of such a desperate action over the board. If the variations don't work out, Black could very well wind up with a shattered position.

21. Bc1-e3 Ra8-c8

21...Ba3 was worth considering. White would have replied 22. Nh4, intending Qg4 and Nf5.



22. Be3xc5

In his annotations, Botvinnik considered this exchange inaccurate, and recommended 22. a3. For example: 22...Bxe3 23. Nxe3 Rc3 24. Qg4. 22...Qb5 is no better, for instance: 23. b4 Bd4 24. Bxd4 ed 25. Rfd1 Rc3 26. Qg4.

22...Qa5xc5

Here Botvinnik thought Black should have played 22...bc, closing the c-file. After 23. Ne3 d6 24. Nc4 Qd8 "Black practically equalizes". But I think that 25. Qf5! would have placed Black in a difficult position. If 25...Re8, then 26. f4! And 25...Nc7 26. f4 g6 27. Qg4 favors White too.

Besides, instead of Botvinnik's 24. Nc4, it would be more exact to play 24. Qf5, threatening 25. Qe6+ or 25. Nc4 followed by 26. f4.

Fine also examines 22...Nxc5 23. Ne3! Qb4 24. Nf5! Kh8 (24...Nxe4 loses to 25. Qg4 g6 26. a3!) 25. Rfe1 a5 26. Re3, when White's advantage is obvious.

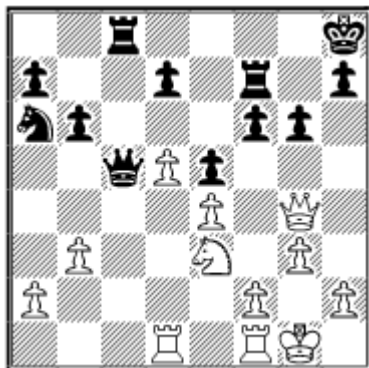
23. Ng2-e3 Kg8-h8

23...g6 24. h4 - Fine.

24. Qf3-g4 Rf8-f7

Black loses the exchange after 24...Qe7 25. Nf5 Qf7 26. Nd6. He should have played 24...Rfd8 instead, in order to keep his rooks connected.

25. Ra1-d1! g7-g6



At first glance it seems as though Black has warded off the kingside threats, and might be able to conduct a successful defense. But in fact, White's assault has only begun!

Active operations are temporarily transferred to the queenside – White plans to occupy the c-file by the Rd1-d2-c2 maneuver begun with his last move.

26. Qg4-e2! Na6-b8

The knight is forced to retreat, since 26...Nb4 would be bad because of 27. Rd2, threatening 28. a3, or 26...Qa5 in view of 27. Nc4.

Referring to that knight on a6, Fine comments in the well-known words of Siegbert Tarrasch:

Ein Springer am Rande
Ist stets eine Schande.

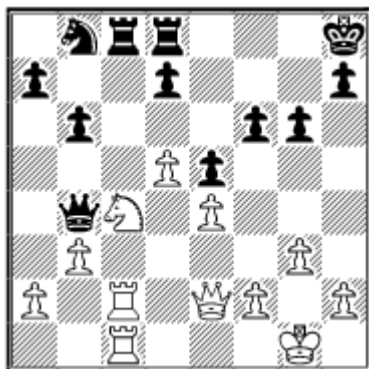
And he provides this English translation (it's inaccurate, but it keeps the meter):

A Knight on the side
You must not abide.

27. Rd1-d2 Rf7-f8 28. Rd2-c2 Qc5-a3

Attempting to prevent the doubling of rooks (29. Rf1 would now be met by 29...Qxc1+)

29. Ne3-c4 Qa3-b4 30. Rf1-c1 Rf8-d8



31. h2-h4!

Reminding Black that the kingside danger has also not gone away.

"Play on both wings is my favorite strategy," wrote Alexander Alekhine. As in the previous game against Botvinnik, Lilienthal brilliantly demonstrates this strategic concept.

31...Qb4-f8

Black has a difficult position. His pieces stand passively, the knight on b8 in particular has no moves. In addition, his kingside is weakened.

White is happy to exchange rooks. As we shall see, this simplifies the task of invasion.

32. Nc4-e3 Rc8xc2 33. Rc1xc2 Rd8-c8 34. Rc2xc8 Qf8xc8 35. Qe2-f3 Kh8-g7

For all practical purposes, Black is a piece down.

36. Ne3-g4 Qc8-f8

As Fine pointed out, 36...Qd8 was a little more stubborn, but it wouldn't have changed the assessment of the position: 37. h5! d6 38. Qe3! g5 39. h6+ Kf7 40. Qf3, etc.

37. h4-h5!

Threatening 38. h6+ with the win of the f6-pawn, thus forcing Black's reply.

37...g6xh5

And now the knight enters decisively at f5.

38. Ng4-e3 d7-d6 39. Ne3-f5+ Kg7-g6 40. Qf3-c3!

This new switch from one side of the board to the other is the quickest route to victory.

40...Nb8-a6

Black's knight re-enters the game, but too late. Tearing into the enemy position, the White queen snaps up the queenside pawns.

41. Qc3-c6 Na6-c5 42. f2-f3

Even simpler than 42. Nxd6. The queen on the seventh plus the knight at f5 bind Black hand and foot.

42...Nc5-d3 43. Qc6-c7 b6-b5 44. Qc7xa7 Black resigned.

Lilienthal - Dubinin

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-b4+ 6. Bc1-d2 Qd8-e7 7. 0-0 Bb4xd2

Otherwise White continues 8. Bg5 (or 8. Bf4).

8. Qd1xd2

More energetic than 8. Nbx2. The queen's knight will be better developed at c3.

8...0-0 9. Nb1-c3 d7-d5

A different plan would be 10...d6 followed by Nbd7. In the absence of dark-squared bishops, this seems more logical. Note that Black's attempt to simplify by exchanges with 9...Ne4 would lead, after 10. Nxe4 Bxe4 11. Qf4, to a definite advantage for White. The game Sosenko - L. Hansen (Amsterdam 1989) continued: 11...d5 12. Rac1 Na6 13. cd Bxd5 14. a3! c5 15. dc bc 16. e4 Bb7 17. Rc4 Rab8 18. Rfc1 Bc6 19. Ne5 Bb5 20. R4c3 f6 21. Nf3 e5 22. Qe3±. And by the way, Black's difficulties here have the same cause as in the two Lilienthal games examined previously: the unfortunate position of a knight at the edge of the board.

10. c4xd5

Another promising continuation would be 10. Ne5.

10...Nf6xd5

Black did not wish to recapture on d5 with the pawn, so as not to be left with the "bad" bishop. However, this would also have given him the half-open e-file and a strongpoint on e4, and thus sufficient counterplay.

11. Nc3xd5

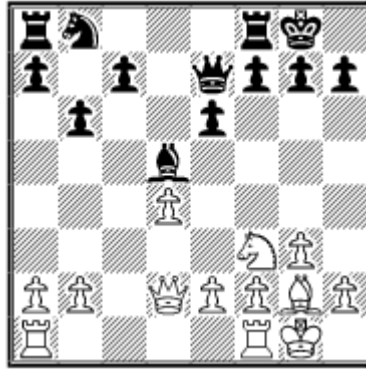
Another good idea was 11. Rac1 Na6 12. Ne5, for example:

12...Rfd8 13. Nxd5 ed 14. e3!± (14. Nc6? Bxc6 15. Rxc6 Nb4 is weaker: not only is the rook attacked, but also the a2-pawn; or 14. Nd3?! c5 15. dc bc 16. e3 d4, with a small edge to White [Sosenko - Hecht, Malta Olympiad 1980]);

12...c5 13. dc Nxc5 14. Nxd5 ed 15. Nf3 Ne6 16. e3, also with a small advantage [Tukmakov - Reshevsky, Vilnius 1978].

11...Bb7xd5

Not wishing to have this bishop "butting into" the d5-pawn, Black gets himself in trouble. By now, he should have been thinking about 11...ed, followed by c7-c6 and Nb8-d7.

**12. Nf3-e5!**

After the bishops are traded off, the weakening of Black's queenside will tell.

12. Rfc1 would have been less accurate, in view of 12...Nc6! (controlling the central squares), for example: 13. Ne1 Bxg2 14. Nxg2 Qd6, attacking the d4-pawn while preparing 15...Ne7.

12...Bd5xg2 13. Kg1xg2 Rf8-c8

Obviously, White is going to "press" along the c-file, so the rook move looks natural. However, it would have been better to have held off on the exchanges, and even to have ceded White the open lines, in order to exchange off the c7-pawn. After 13...c5 14. dc Qxc5 15. f4 Na6, White of course has the advantage, but it will be quite difficult to realize. For example, 16. Rac1 (16. Nd7 Qc6+ and 17...Rfd8) 16...Qb4 17. Qxb4 Nxb4 18. a3 Nd5 19. Kf3 Rfc8 20. e4 Nf6, and Black can defend.

The endgame after 21. g4 Kf8 22 g5. Ne8 23. h4 is still unpleasant for Black. Additionally, White could very well exchange queens somewhat differently: 17. Qc2!? Nc5 18. a3 Qe4+ 19. Qxe4 Nxe4 20. Rc7.

Black's defense can be strengthened by means of the intermediate move 16...Rfd8! And in light of this, White should in turn choose 16. Rfd1! (instead of 16. Rac1), when his advantage is clear.

14. Rf1-c1

Now the weakness of the c-pawn will make itself felt. 14...c5 is now bad in view of 15. dc Rxc5 16. Rxc5 Qxc5 17. Rc1.

The intermediate move 15...f6 (instead of 15...Rxc5) is decisively refuted by 16. cb! Rxc1 17. Rxc1 fe 18. Rc8+ Kf7 19. Rc7.

14...f7-f6

A forced weakening, as otherwise White blockades the c7-pawn, entrenching himself on c6. The immediate 15. Nc6 would offer nothing, since Black could reply 15...Qd7.

15. Ne5-d3 c7-c6 16. Qd2-e3!

A move which pursues three aims at once: long-term prevention of c6-c5, creating pressure on the e6-pawn, and the possibility of exploiting the e-file pin by d4-d5.

16...Nb8-d7 17. Rc1-c2 Qe7-d6

Forced, since 17...Rc7 would be met by 18. d5, winning a pawn.

The pawn is in fact not won here and it's not clear, therefore, whether 18. d5 is worth playing; Black actually has two defenses:



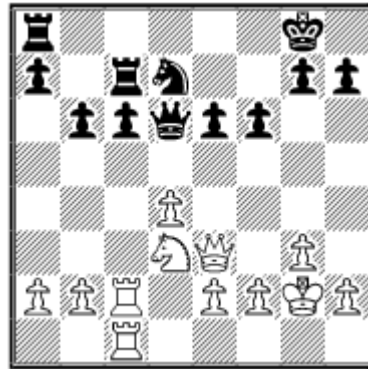
A) 18...Nc5, when 19. Nxc5? cd! does not work; the exchange sacrifice 19. Rxc5?! bc 20.

de c4 21. Nc5 Qd6 is unconvincing. On the other hand, 19. d6! Qxd6 20. Nxc5 bc 21. Rd2!? keeps White's advantage.

B) 18...Qd6!? 19. Qxe6+ (19. de Nf8 20. Nf4 Re8) 19... Qxe6 20. de Nf8 21. Nb4 (21. Rac1 c5) 21...c5 22. Nd5 Rb7, and White's advantage is small.

18. Ra1-c1 Rc8-c7

And now White threatened 19. Qe4, which would cost Black the c6-pawn. This too is not completely accurate: the pawn could be saved (by 19...f5, for instance), although only at the cost of serious positional concessions.



19. Qe3-f4!

Direct pressure along the c-file promises nothing. One weakness - the c6-pawn - Black can defend. Therefore, White must try to force a new weakening.

Black cannot trade queens, since he will lose one of the attacked pawns. And he can't retreat the queen, either. So he must accept the isolation of his e-pawn, while simultaneously opening the d-file for his opponent.

19...e6-e5 20. d4xe5 Nd7xe5

Black hopes to save himself in a heavy-pieces endgame. After 20...fe 21. Qe4 Rac8 22. b4! c5 23. bc bc 24. Rc4, he would be totally helpless.

21. Nd3xe5 f6xe5 22. Qf4-c4+

Perhaps it would have been better to withhold this check for a while, and play 22. Qe4.

I think that Lilienthal actually came to the correct decision intuitively. For on 22. Qe4?! Rac8 23. Rc3 Qd4!, it is not likely that he could then have occupied the vital d-file.

22...Kg8-h8 23. Rc2-c3

Securing the occupation of the d-file.

23...h7-h6

Now the c6-c5 advance would have played into White's hands, handing over the important d5-square for the use of his pieces. The "airhole" h7-h6 is necessary anyway, as otherwise Black will find himself hampered by the weakness of the e5- and c6-pawns.

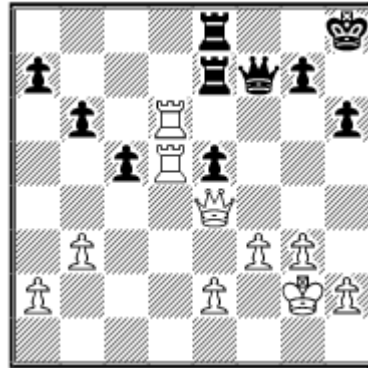
24. Qc4-e4 Ra8-c8 25. Rc3-d3 Qd6-e6 26. Rc1-d1 Rc7-e7 27. b2-b3

This cold-blooded continuation leaves the opponent no chances. In view of the threat to the c6-pawn (after 28. Rd6), Black must play c6-c5 (a move which until recently he was himself striving to play), and surrender the d5-square to White.

However, 27. a4!? looks more straightforward, creating the same threat; the weakening of the b3-square hardly counts here. Evidently, White still had not foreseen the next stage of the plan of strengthening his position. And this is normal: very rarely are plans created whole, from beginning to end. Usually, the player will find one stage after the other; only later, in our eyes, do his actions fall together into a unified plan.

27...Rc8-f8 28. Rd3-d6 Qe6-f7 29. f2-f3 c6-c5 30. Rd1-d5 Rf8-e8

Black must defend not only the e5-pawn, but the 7th rank as well.



31. Rd5-d3

Defending the b3-pawn, White prepares the march of the a-pawn. The rook retreats, in order to avoid the premature exchange of rooks after 31...Re6.

31...Kh8-g8 32. a2-a4!

White's mastery of the d-file ensures that the plan he has chosen will succeed. He intends to push his pawn to a6, and then to accept the exchange of a pair of the heavy pieces: in either a queen or a rook endgame, the control of the b7-square will be decisive.

32...Re7-e6 33. Rd6-d5

33. Rd7 R6e7 34. Qb7 would be premature, in view of 34...e4! 35. fe Rf8 36. Rf3 Rxd7 37. Rxf7 Rfx7. With two rooks for the queen, Black should not lose.

33...Qf7-b7 34. Qe4-g4

Threatening 35. Rd7.

34...Qb7-f7 35. Qg4-e4 Qf7-b7

The last few moves were made to gain time. Black can undertake nothing, and must await developments.

In his turn, White seeks the most favorable moment for the push a4-a5-a6.

36. Rd3-e3 Qb7-f7 37. a4-a5 Qf7-b7

There is no joy in 37...ba 38. Rxc5 Rb6 39. Rxa5 Rxb3 40. Rxb3 Rxb3 41. Rxa7, when Black is a pawn down, and without a defense against White's many threats.

38. Qe4-c4 Qb7-f7

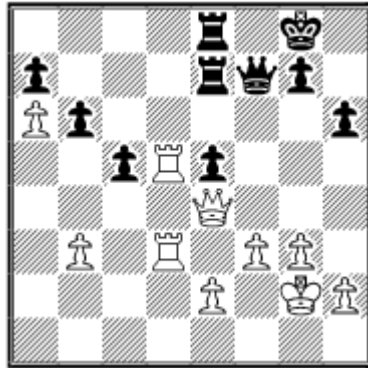
In strategically difficult situations, sometimes the best practical chance lies in a well-timed attempt to change the character of the struggle. In this case, that would be: 38...e4!? 39. Re5 (39. Rxe4 Rxe4 40. fe Kh7) 39...Qf7 40. Rxe6 Rxe6. On the other hand, this too would leave Black with a difficult position. I recommend comparing this episode with my commentary to Black's 20th move in the earlier game Lilienthal - Keres.

39. a5-a6

The aim is achieved! Now there remains but to simplify.

39...Re6-e7 40. Qc4-e4 Re7-e6 41. Re3-d3 Re6-e7

White threatened 42. Rd7 Re7 43. Qb7. Debatable – if you compare it with the commentary on move 33, the pawn's advance to a6 hardly changes anything about the variation given there. On the other hand, this means little, since there is in fact no good advice for Black here: individual moves can't change anything now.

**42. Rd5-d8 Qf7-e6**

On 42...Rxd8 43. Rxd8+ Re8 44. Rxe8+ Qxe8 45. f4 (another good line was 45. Qb7 Qb5 46. Kf2, or 45...Qf7 46. Qb8+ Kh7 47. Qxe5 Qxb3 48. Qe4+ Kh8 49. Qa8+ Kh7 50. Qxa7) 45...Qc8 (45...Qb5 46. Qc4+ leads to a won pawn endgame for White) 46. Qb7 Qe8 47. Qd5+, Black is a pawn down in a queen endgame with a weak pawn at a7.

43. Rd8-d6 Qe6-f7 44. Kg2-f2

Since further exchanges are unavoidable, White brings up his king first. This is the principle of "Never be in a hurry, when you have an advantage to exploit!" Before changing the character of the position, first make every useful move you can – even if it's only a minimal improvement.

44...Re7-c7 45. Rd6-d8 Rc7-e7 46. Qe4-c4 e5-e4

A more normal course - 46...Rxd8 47. Rxd8+ Kh7 48. Qxf7 Rxf7 49. Rb8, followed by the approach of the king - would have been hopeless for Black. So he makes a desperate attempt to complicate. (Note that the situation is now less favorable than it would have been on move 38.)

47. Rd8xe8+ Re7xe8 48. Rd3-d7 Qf7xc4 49. b3xc4 e4xf3 50. Kf2xf3!

Much stronger than 5. ef. Marching the king over to the queenside quickly decides matters.

50...Re8-a8

Forced – but now the king's road is clear to the queenside.

51. Kf3-e4 Kg8-h7 52. Ke4-d5 Kh7-g6 53. Kd5-c6

The a6-pawn will cost Black his rook.

53...Ra8-e8 54. Rd7xa7 Re8xe2 55. Ra7-d7 Re2xh2 56. a6-a7 Rh2-a2 57. Kc6-b7

According to Lilienthal's book, the game ended here. The computer database, however, gives a few more completely unnecessary moves: **57...Kf6 58. a8Q Rxa8 59. Kxa8 h5 60. Kb7 g5 61. Kxb6 Kf5 62. Kxc5 Kg4 63. Rg7**, and Black resigned.



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