

Tibor Károlyi

PLAY THE SEMI-TARRASCH!

PART 2



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Play the Semi-Tarrasch! Part 2
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KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate

PREFACE

In the first book on the Semi-Tarrasch we looked in great detail at the variations in which White sometimes occupies the centre by pushing the e-pawn two squares. Many of these lines were testing for Black, but in my opinion the lines in general were nice for Black. In this second book we will look at all the other variations White can try. These lines do not go after Black at once, but this in no way means that Black can do whatever he or she wants. On the other hand, one can learn a lot from variations with isolated pawns, and investigation of such positions can raise one's chess-understanding tremendously.

When I asked Zoltan Ribli to say a few words on his Candidates match opponent, Torre, among other things he mentioned that Eugenio played a game that left a very strong impression on him. I would like to show this particular game. The game is by no means as flashy as Pinter's marvellous win over Portisch, but it still has a special beauty. I will borrow from my own analysis in my book on Torre, published by Chess Evolution. Enjoy this masterpiece!

▷ **K. Hulak**

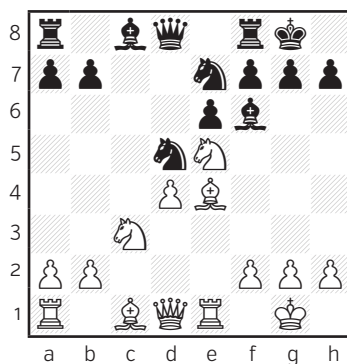
▶ **E. Torre**

Interzonal Toluca, 1982

1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 e6

In the Candidates matches, Torre deviated successfully with 5...♘c6. 6.♙g5 ♔a5 7.♚d2 ♙e6 8.c5 ♘e4 9.♞xe4 dxe4 10.♚xa5 ♞xa5 11.♙d2 ♞c6 12.♙c3 o-o-o 13.♞e2 ♙c4 14.♞g3 1/2 Ribli,Z-Torre,E, Candidates, Alicante 1983.

6.♞f3 ♙e7 7.cxd5 ♞xd5 8.♙d3 ♞c6
9.o-o o-o 10.♞e1 ♙f6 11.♙e4 ♞ce7
12.♞e5



12...♞f5

Until this point both players had chosen the main moves, but now Torre plays a novelty. According to the database this move was played twice in 1982, but I doubt that Torre was aware of the other game.

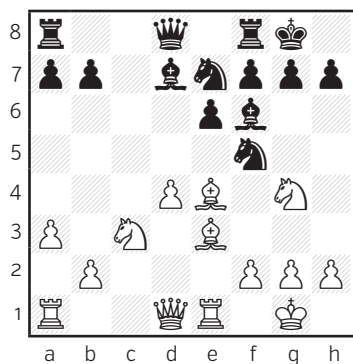
13.a3

Hulak's response is reasonable; a3 is a standard move in this variation. 13.♘g4!? has grown into the main move here, and it is testing for Black.

13...♘de7 14.♙e3 ♘d7

Black has other reasonable moves as well: 14...♘g6 and 14...♘d5.

15.♘g4!?



15...♙h4!

Torre saves his bishop in a very imaginative way. After 15...♘g6 16.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 17.d5 ♘xe3 18.♖xe3 Black's position would be unpleasant.

16.♙c2

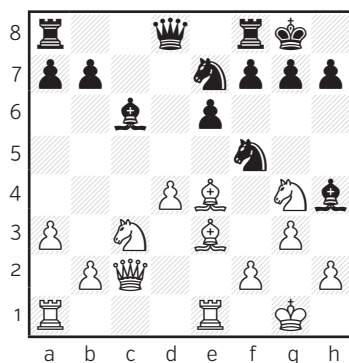
White should look for an advantage with 16.g3! at once. 16...♘xe3 17.♘xe3 ♙f6 (17...♙g5 18.d5 exd5 19.♘exd5 ♘xd5 20.♘xd5 ♙c6 21.♙b3 White is ahead in development, although Black has no weaknesses and the bishop pair, but White is somewhat better.) 18.♘g4 ♙g5 (18...♘c6 19.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 20.d5 ♘d4) 19.♙g2 (19.f4 ♙xf4=) 19...♘c6 20.h4 ♙e7 Black still has to catch up in development.

16...♙c6!

Black exchanges his weaker bishop for White's well-placed one.

17.g3

After 17.♙xc6 bxc6 Black would be doing well.



17...h5!

Eugenio saves his dark-squared bishop with an original move.

18.♘e5 ♙f6

Black equalises as all his minor pieces are in play.

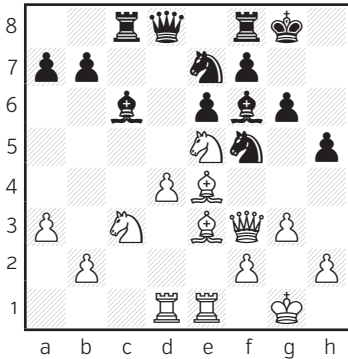
19. ♖ad1 ♜c8!?

This is a brave move, and one that requires precise calculation. After 19... ♙xe4 20. ♚xe4 ♘d5 the position would be equal with fewer chances for either side to take over.

20. ♚e2

If 20. ♘xc6 bxc6! 21. ♘a4 g6 22. ♘c5 ♘d5 Black has a good grip on White's centre. Black is not worse.

20...g6 21. ♚f3



21... ♙xe4!

Torre does not see any further way to improve his position, so he starts exchanging. This is a classical theme against an isolated pawn.

22. ♘xe4?!

White is looking for complications, but with this move he hands over the initiative. 22. ♚xe4 is safer.

22... ♙g7 23. h3

Hulak goes for a sharpening of the position. If his play comes to a standstill, White will have a lot of suffering ahead. On 23. ♘c3 ♚b6 24. ♜d2 ♜cd8 Black has the upper hand.

23... ♜c2!

Black has several ways to start playing for a win, for example 23... ♘d5, 23... ♚d5 or 23... ♘xe3 24. ♚xe3 ♘f5 25. ♚f4 ♜c2 are all playable. Torre chooses one which requires superb calculation.

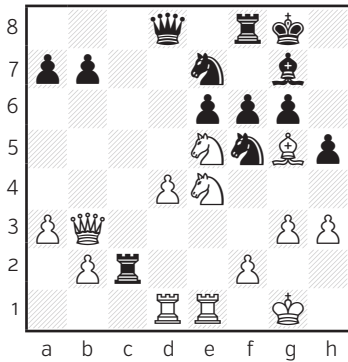
24. ♙g5!

White correctly goes for a sharp variation. If 24. ♜e2 ♜xe2 25. ♚xe2 ♚d5 26. ♘c3 ♚b3 Black will exert pressure on the d4-pawn.

24...f6

24... ♜xb2? would be a mistake. 25.g4! (After 25. ♘f6+ ♙xf6 (25... ♙h8 26.g4 wins.) 26. ♙xf6 ♚d5 the position would be balanced. 27.g4) 25... f6 (25... ♘h6 26. ♘f6+ wins. Or 25... ♘d6 26. ♙xe7 ♚xe7 27. ♘xd6 ♚xd6 28. ♘c4 and Black loses a rook.) 26.gxf5 fxg5 27. ♚c3±

25. ♚b3



25... ♖c8!

Torre is ready for Hulak's double attack.

26. ♘c5

Hulak commits a losing mistake in the complications. 26. ♘c3 would be clearly better. 26... ♖xc3! (26... ♖xf2 27. ♔xf2 fxe5 28. ♔g2 ♖c6+ 29. ♘e4 exd4 30. ♔g1 ♘d5 31. ♖c1 ♖b6 The position is even.) 27.bxc3 fxe5 28.g4! (If 28.dxe5 ♘c6 29.g4 hxg4 30.hxg4 ♘h6 White would struggle.) 28... ♙h6! 29.gxf5 ♙xg5 30. ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 31.fxe6 exd4 32. ♖xd4 (32.cxd4 ♘d5 Black's light pieces will soon dominate.) 32... ♖f3 33. ♖d7 It is difficult to tell whether White can survive or not.

26... ♘xd4!

This brilliant shot obtains a winning position right away.

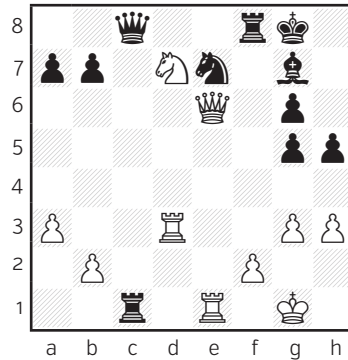
27. ♖xd4 ♖xc5 28. ♘d7 fxg5 29. ♖d3

After 29. ♘xf8 ♔xf8 30. ♖d6 ♖c1 31. ♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 32. ♔g2 ♖c8 33. ♖xe6 ♖d7 Black's material advantage is sufficient to win the game.

29... ♖c1!

Reducing the attacking force.

30. ♖xe6+



30... ♖f7!

Black has come out of the complications with an extra piece, but Hulak decides not to resign.

31. ♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 32. ♔h2 ♖c6!

Getting rid of the strong e6-queen is very practical.

33. ♖b3 ♘f5

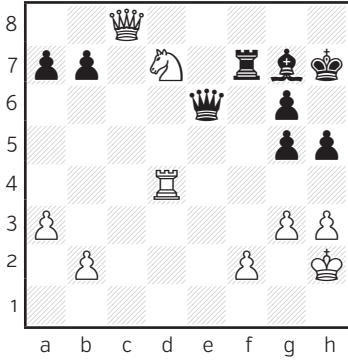
Black is a piece up and he starts attacking. Now he threatens ... ♘d4.

34. ♘b8 ♖b6 35. ♖c2 ♘d4 36. ♖c8+ ♔h7 37. ♘d7

I think Hulak had no time to resign.

Hulak resigns. Recapturing the rook would hang the queen, but Torre of course would not miss a checkmate in two. Hulak started the game with an attack; Torre finished the game with checkmate. Torre's opponent in the World Championship Candidates matches was right; this was indeed very worthy of close study.

37... ♔e6 38. ♖xd4



38... ♖xf2+ 0-1

CHAPTER 1.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5
♘xd5 WHITE DOESN'T PLAY 5.♘f3

The sidelines at move 5

One of the many good qualities of the Semi-Tarrasch is that White has very few options to try to exert pressure. It may be a bit extreme to say so, but it is close to the truth that there is only one pawn structure White can opt for with a realistic hope of obtaining an advantage. White players very rarely play moves other than 5.e4, 5.♘f3, or 5.e3 with developing the knight to f3. One can hardly find a game from grandmasters with alternatives. I like to close all angles, so although I will not discuss the sidelines too much, I will still devote a few pages to them.

■ Game 1

▷ **A. Korobov**

▶ **F. Berkes**

Aeroflot Open A, Moscow, 2017

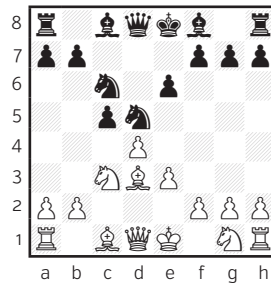
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5
♘xd5 5.g3

White wants to fianchetto the bishop without the putting the knight on f3,

so the bishop will have a stronger effect. This game matters only for players who employ the Queen's Gambit move order.

Let's see White's other early possibilities. Against the 5.♘xd5 capture both recaptures 5...♙xd5 and 5...exd5 give a free position, though taking back with the pawn gives more chances to fight.

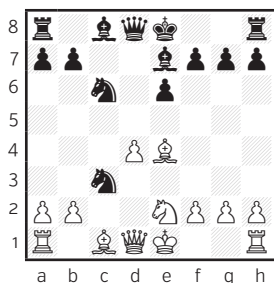
a) 5.e3 c5 6.♙d3 ♘c6 Black could choose to head for a Nimzo-Indian position with 6...cxd4 7.exd4 ♙b4.



7.♘ge2 The knight can sit on e2 in many openings such as the Scandinavian, the Nimzo-Indian and sometimes the Caro-Kann. It stands well on e2 to open the position, but if White's play stops then the knight becomes misplaced. The lines with

♘f4 we will discuss later. 7...cxd4 (7...g6) 8.exd4 ♙e7 Black develops conventionally. (In the spirit of the Grünfeld, 8...g6!? is also quite possible.) 9. ♙e4

a1) 9...♘xc3?!



I don't like this capture as it strengthens White's centre, but it gives a fighting position and can be played. 10.bxc3 ♙c7 11.0-0 0-0 It is hard to work out the difference between the knight standing on e2 rather than f3, but this game suggests that Black is OK. 12.♙c2 g6 (12...f5 13.♙f4 ♙d6 14.♙xd6 ♙xd6 15.♙f3 ♙d7 16.c4+=) 13.c4 (13.♙f4 ♙d6) 13...♙f6 14.♙d1 ♙d8 15.♙e3 ♙d7 16.♙f4 (16.♙ab1 ♘a5=) 16... ♙a5 (On 16...e5 17.♙g3 ♙ac8 18.♙ac1 ♙a5 19.d5 ♘d4 20.♘xd4 exd4 the position would be even.) 17.♙ab1 ♙ac8 18.c5 Black would stand all right after 18...b6 (18... ♙e8=) 19.♙d2 ♙a6 20.♙d3= or 18.♙xb7 ♘xd4.

a2) 9...0-0 I do not fully recommend this well-known plan in the main Semi-Tarrasch. 10.0-0 ♙f6 11.♙d3 h6 (11...g6 12.♙h6 ♙e8

13.♙fe1 ♘ce7 14.♘f4+=) 12.♙d1 (12.♙g3 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♙xd4 14.♙xh6 ♙c7=) 12...♙d7 13.♙g3 ♙h4 14.♙h3 ♙e8 15.♙f3 ♘ce7 and Black has a nice position.

a3) 9...♘f6! I prefer to ask a question of the bishop.

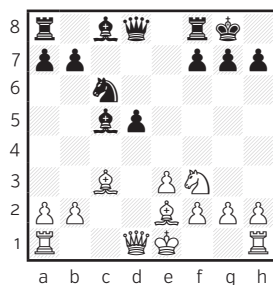
a31) 10.♙c2 ♘b4 11.♙b3 0-0 Black will play ...b6 and ...♙b7 with a pleasant game.

a32) 10.♙xc6+ bxc6 11.♙e3 (11. ♙a4 ♙b6) 11...♙a6 ad Black is very active.

a33) 10.♙f3 0-0 11.♙f4 ♙d6 12.♙g5 h6 13.♙h4 e5 14.d5 ♘d4 15.♘xd4 exd4 16.♙xd4 ♙e8+ when Black has excellent compensation for the pawn.

b) 5.♙d2 c5 (5...g6) 6.♘f3

b1) 6...♙e7 7.dxc5 ♙xc5 8.♘xd5 exd5 9.♙c3 0-0 10.e3 ♘c6 11.♙e2



11...a6 This looks like a loss of tempo. In many ordinary Tarrasch lines this move makes room for the bishop on the diagonal, but here it

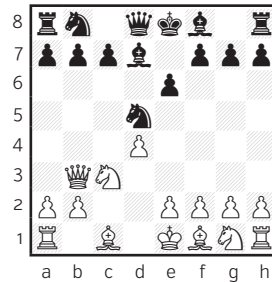
is close to giving away a tempo. (11... ♗f5) 12.o-o ♖e8 13.♖c1 ♗b6 14.♗d4 White has accomplished the possibility of squeezing for some time to come. 14... ♗xd4 (14... ♗d6!?) 15. ♗xd4 ♗e6 16. ♗f3 h6 17. ♖c3 ♗d6 18. ♗xb6 ♗xb6 19. ♗d2 White is somewhat better and at the end of a long ‘massage’, White managed to win in the game Dragomarezkij,E-Simonian,T, Moscow 2015.

b2) 6... ♗c6 7.dxc5 (7.e4 ♗xc3 8. ♗xc3 cxd4 9. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 10. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 11. ♗xd4 ♗b4+ 12. ♗e2 f6= or 7. ♗xd5 ♗xd5 8. ♗c3 cxd4 9. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 10. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 11. ♗xd4 ♗b4+= Stegaritu,V-Pop,A, Calimanesti 2013) 7... ♗xc5 8.e4 ♗xc3 9. ♗xc3 ♗b6 10. ♗d2 o-o 11. ♗c4 ♖d8 12. ♗e2 ♗b4 13. ♖c1 ♗d7 14.o-o ♖ac8= Van Beek,L-De Jong,M, Amsterdam 2006.

c) 5. ♗c2 This move doesn’t pose any danger for Black, but it can be played without the risk of getting into trouble. 5... ♗b4 (If Black just wants to play for neutralising then 5...c5 6.dxc5 ♗xc5 gives an easy game.) 6. ♗a4+ (6. ♗d1? ♗xd4) 6... ♗d7 7. ♗b3 c5 8.dxc5 (8.a3 cxd4) 8... ♗xc5 9.a3 ♗4c6 (9... ♗b6 10. ♗e4=) 10. ♗xb7 ♗d4 11. ♗e4 ♗b6 Black’s compensation is tremendous.

d) 5. ♗a4+ In the Grünfeld, which has similarities to the Semi-Tarrasch, the queen check is a seri-

ous possibility, so it is better not to take this check too lightly! 5... ♗d7 (I just want to show how things can go wrong for Black: 5... ♗c6?! 6. ♗f3 ♗b6?! 7. ♗d1 ♗e7 8.e4 and the very reasonable Black player obtained a clearly worse position fairly early in the opening, Rakotomaharo,F-Kigigha,B, Baku 2016.) 6. ♗b3



d1) 6...c5!?! Black rarely has a chance to play dynamically. 7. ♗xd5 (7. ♗f3 cxd4 8. ♗xd5 exd5 9. ♗xd4 ♗c6 10. ♗xc6 bxc6 Black stands well.) 7...exd5 8. ♗xd5 cxd4 9. ♗xd4 ♗c6 10. ♗e4+ ♗e7 11. ♗d2 (11. ♗f3 o-o) 11...o-o 12. ♗c3 ♗f6+= White has to play carefully as Black’s development advantage is considerable.

d2) 6... ♗c6 The bishop take on a somewhat unusual role. 7.e3 a6 8. ♗f3 ♗d7 9. ♗d2 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 (10. ♗xc3 ♗d6 11. ♗d3 o-o (11... ♗d5 12. ♗c2 f5 13.e4 fxe4 14. ♗xe4 ♗f6=) 12.e4 e5 (12...f5 13. ♗xe6+ ♗h8 Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn as on 14.e5 Black has the cute 14... ♗xe5) 13.dxe5 ♗c5 14. ♗c2 ♗xd3+ 15. ♗xd3 ♗c5 16. ♗c2 ♗b5 Black has compensation for the pawn.) 10... ♗e4 11. ♗e2

♙d6 (11...c5=) 12.o-o o-o 13.♖fc1 c5 14.a4 ♜c8 15.♙e1 cxd4 (15...♙c7 16.h3 c4 17.♙b2 ♙c6 and Black has the upper hand.) 16.cxd4 ♜xc1 17.♜xc1 ♙b8 18.♘g5 ♙d5 19.♙c2 f5? (19...♘f6 and Black would be fine.) 20.♙c4 ♜c8 21.♙xd5! and the strong Chinese player got an advantage, Shen,Y-Ning,K China 2017.

5...c5

Black undermines the centre at once.

6. ♙g2 ♘xc3

Black simplifies the position.

7.bxc3 cxd4!

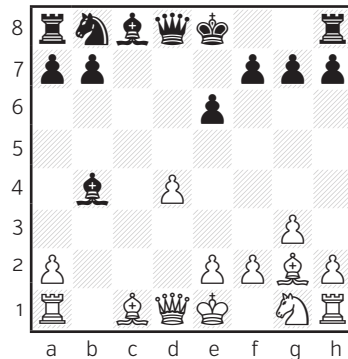
Black gets rid of White's centre or takes away White's right to castle.

8.cxd4

8.♙xd4 ♘c6! The former world champion doesn't transpose to the known line by 8...♙xd4 9.cxd4 ♘c6 10.♘f3 (which we discuss at 5.♘f3 c5 6.g3 ♘c6 7.♙g2.) 9.♙xc6+?! Giving up the bishop pair is a step in the wrong direction. 9...bxc6 10.♙xd8+?! Exchanging usually increases the power of the bishop pair. 10...♙xd8 11.♘f3 f6 12.♘d4 ♙c7 13.♘b3 e5 14.f4 (14.♙e3 doesn't equalise because of 14...♙a3) 14...♙d6 15.♙e3 ♜e8 16.♙f2 ♙a6 Black is better, but this was a highly unusual game for a world champion, as great players

rarely play the openings like an amateur! Topalov,V-Kramnik,V Stavanger 2016. According to my database the game ended in 20 moves with Black winning, but although Topalov's position was difficult, it was far from resignable.

8... ♙b4+



9. ♙f1

White makes a serious concession. In exchange for the great bishop and the strong centre he gives up the right to castle and undertakes a misplaced rook on h1.

9. ♙d2

a) 9...♙xd4! Taking the key pawn is preferable. 10.♜b1 (10.♘f3 ♙xd2+ 11.♘xd2 o-o Interestingly my computer program evaluates it as equal. Winning it is not simple, but Black is a pawn up.) 10...♙xd2+ 11.♙xd2 ♙xd2+ 12.♙xd2 ♘a6 13.♘f3 o-o 14.♜hc1 White has compensation for the pawn, but Black is safe.

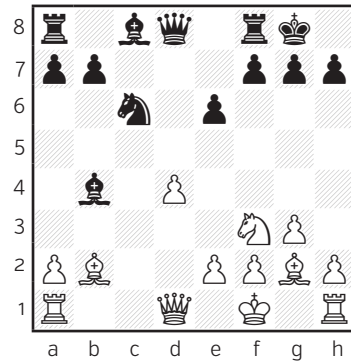
b) 9... ♗xd2+ 10.♔xd2 o-o 11.♖f3 (11.♗c1+= or 11.e3 ♗c6 12.♗e2+=) 11... ♗c6 12.o-o ♗d7 (12...♔d6 13.♗ac1 ♗d7 14.♔b2+=) 13.e4 (13.♗ab1 b6 14.♗fc1 ♗c8 15.e4 ♗a5 16.♗e5+=) 13... ♔a5 14.♔f4?! This move gives away the advantage. (With 14.♔b2 White would still retain a small edge.) 14...f6 15.♗ab1 e5 16.dxe5 fxe5 17.♔h4 ♔c7 18.♗fd1 h6 19.♗b2 ♗e6 and Black has a fully healthy game, Alzate,D-Sanchez,L, Bogota 1970.

9... ♗c6

a) 9... ♗c3?! 10.♗b1 ♔xd4? (10...o-o 11.♗a3 ♗e8 12.♗xb7 ♗xb7 13.♗xb7 ♔a5 14.♗xa8 ♔xa3±) 11.♔xd4 ♗xd4 12.♗xb7! White wins.

b) 9...o-o 10.♗b1 ♔e7 (10...a5 11.♗f3 ♗c6 12.h4 h6 13.♖g1 e5 Black is doing fine as on 14.d5 ♗f5 can be played.) 11.♔b3 ♗a6 12.♗f3 ♗d8 13.h4 ♗b8?! Black has a good position, however he should not waste time and needs to develop quickly, otherwise White takes over. (13...h6 14.♖g1 b6 15.♖h2 [15.♗e5 ♗b7=] 15... ♗b7 16.♗d1 ♗ac8 Black is active enough.) 14.♖g1 (14.h5 h6 15.♗f4+=) 14... ♗d6 15.♗g5 (15.♗e5+=) 15...f6? (15...h6 16.♗e4 ♗c7 17.♗a3 ♔d7 18.e3 b5 is unclear) 16.♗e4 (16.♗h3+=) 16... ♗c7 17.♗e3 ♗d7 18.♗c3 (18.♖h2+=) 18... ♗b6 19.♖h2 White stands better thanks to the strong centre, Korchnoi,V-Luk, H, Chelyabinsk 1959.

10. ♗b2 o-o 11. ♗f3

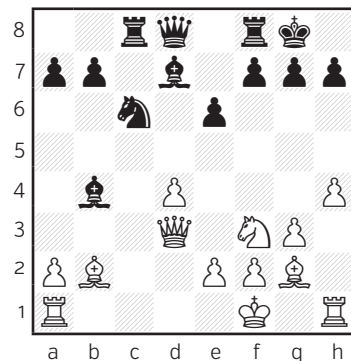


11... ♗d7!

The talented Hungarian grandmaster handles the position in the right spirit, developing his pieces quickly.

11... ♔a5 12.h4 (12.a3 ♗c3=) 12...h6 (12... ♗d8 13.♔c2 h6 14.♖g1 ♗d7 15.♖h2 ♗ac8=) 13.♔c2 f5 A surprising decision, but not necessarily bad. 14.♔b3 ♗d8 15.♗c1 ♗d6 (15... ♗f8 16.♖g1 ♔a6 17.♖h2 ♗a5 18.♔c3 ♗c6 is unclear) 16.♖g1 ♔b4 17.♔c2 ♗e7 18.♗b1 Akvist,H-Olsson,A, Eskilstuna 1971 and after 18... ♗d7 Black would be doing all right.

12.h4 ♗c8 13. ♔d3



13...f6!

An unprejudiced decision. Berkes weakens his pawn structure with this unconventional move, but it takes away a lot of squares.

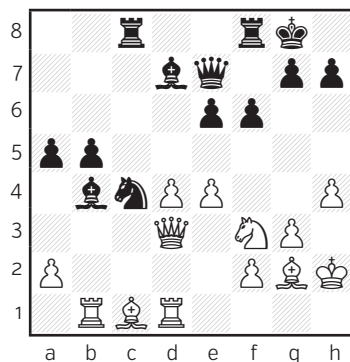
14. ♖g1 ♘a5! 15. ♖h2 ♘c4 16. ♜ab1

Not giving away the two bishops is preferable. 16. ♘c3!? ♘xc3 17. ♙xc3 ♘e5 18. ♙b3 ♘g4+ 19. ♖g1 ♜c7 and I think it is easier to play this position with Black.

16... ♙e7

16... ♘xb2 17. ♜xb2 a5=+

17. ♘c1 b5 18. ♜d1 a5 19.e4



19... ♘a3

A move with peaceful intentions, I think the Hungarian grandmaster should have played for a win with 19... ♜fd8!? Perhaps the tournament standing generated the decision?

20. ♙e2 ♘xc1 21. ♜bxc1 a4 22. ♜c3 1/2