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Game 4
Michael Adams – Veselin Topalov
Wijk aan Zee 2006
 Sicilian Defence, Classical Scheveningen

The present game shows a kingside attack in conditions where both players have castled kingside. In such a case, a pawn-storm is much less likely to be effective, since the attacker would risk exposing his own king as much as the opponent's. Instead, the attack is usually carried out by pieces, as here.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♖e2

With this move, White eschews the sharper lines of the Najdorf, beginning with such moves as 6 ♖g5 and 6 ♖e3. Instead, he concentrates on sound development, postponing the weight of the struggle to the middlegame. In the immediate future, he will play 0-0, ♖e3 and f4.

6...e6

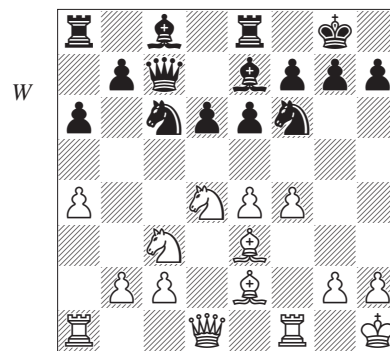
Black chooses to go into a Scheveningen-style set-up, with his two central pawns on d6 and e6. The pure Najdorf interpretation is 6...e5, accepting the backward d-pawn in return for control of the squares d4 and f4. We saw a classic example of a similar strategy working for Black in the game Matulović-Fischer, examined in *50ECL* (Game 30). Although 6...e5 is theoretically perfectly sound after 6 ♖e2, in recent years, the more flexible 6...e6 has become more popular at GM level, largely due to the influence of Garry Kasparov.

7 0-0 ♖e7 8 a4

This is a sign of White's relatively restrained plan. Rather than launching a violent attack on Black's king with g4-g5, as he would do if he had castled queenside, he intends to build up his attack in more patient fashion. As part of that approach, he prefers to limit Black's counterplay on the queenside, by holding back the advance ...b5.

8...♗c6 9 ♖e3 0-0 10 f4 ♗c7 11 ♔h1 ♖e8 (D)

This is the modern way to play the black position, following the example of Kasparov. Black intends to drop his bishop back to f8, defending his king. In the longer term, he hopes one day to break out with the central pawn-thrust ...d5, which will release the energy of his pieces. In this case, the rook on e8 is likely to prove



effective on the e-file. Black's position is very similar to the Hedgehog formation that we examined in Uhlmann-Bönsch, in *50ECL* (Game 41). As that game demonstrated so clearly, Black's 'coiled spring' position contains the seeds of a devastating counterattack if White over-extends himself in the search for attacking chances on the kingside.

Nonetheless, the move 11...♖e8 does have its drawbacks. In particular, Black leaves the f7-square undefended, and as we shall see later in the game, this becomes a factor when White breaks with e5.

12 ♖f3 ♖f8 13 ♗d2 ♘a5

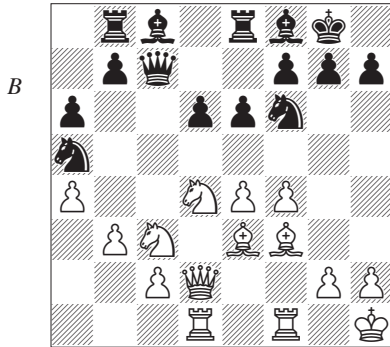
13...♖b8 has also been played here, and may even be more accurate. In the present game, Black plays a number of very natural and normal-looking moves in the early middlegame, but emerges with a difficult position.

14 b3 ♖b8

The purpose of this move is to prepare 15...b6, and then develop his bishop to b7 (of course, the immediate 14...b6? would lose material after 15 e5). The bishop could just go to d7 immediately, but it would be less active on that square. From b7, it puts pressure on White's e4-pawn, and it also allows the f6-knight to

retreat to d7, if attacked by a later g4-g5 thrust. However, the drawback to Black's plan is that his development takes longer to complete, and Adams later suggested that he should perhaps settle for 14...♙d7 and 15...♖ac8, completing his mobilization.

15 ♖ad1 (D)



15...♘c6

The consistent move here is 15...b6, but this allows White to break in the centre in energetic style by 16 e5!. A typical variation, given by Adams, would be 16...dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘d7 (17...♙xe5? 18 ♙f4 costs Black the exchange) 18 ♙h5 ♘xe5 (or 18...g6 19 ♙f2) 19 ♙f4 g6 20 ♘e4, with dangerous threats for the pawn. Note how in this variation, White is able to bring pressure to bear down the f-file, against the f7-square, thereby illustrating the point made in the note to 11...♗e8.

In view of these lines, Topalov felt that 15...b6 was too risky, but in this case, his plan of 14...♖b8 must be considered to have been inaccurate, since its whole point was to allow 15...b6 and 16...♙b7. This is a good example of how apparently small tactical points can influence strategy. In principle, placing Black's bishop on b7 is strategically a good idea, but since it proves tactically impossible to carry out, the whole plan beginning 14...♖b8 is called into question.

16 ♙f2

Adams pointed out that 16 ♙f2! would have been stronger here, once again utilizing Black's weaknesses on the f-file. The threat of 17 e5 would then have been awkward to meet. However, the move chosen is also quite good. White intends to bring his bishop to h4, after which the threat of e5 gains in strength. Black's next move is designed to prevent this.

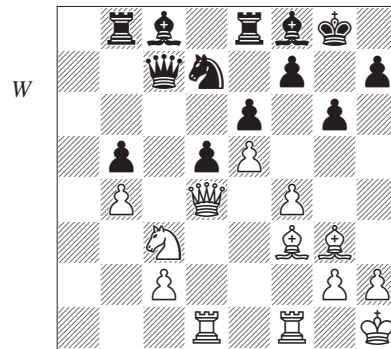
16...♘d7 17 ♙g3 ♘xd4 18 ♙xd4 b5 19 axb5 axb5 20 b4

This move is unusual in such positions, since it creates weaknesses down the c-file. However, in this particular position, it is more important to secure the position of White's knight on c3. White is ready to break with e5, after which the c-file weaknesses will become secondary.

20...g6?!

This turns out to be just about the decisive mistake. Black was already in trouble, and in Adams's view, he had no choice but to go into an inferior ending with 20...♙c4. White retains the better chances after 21 ♙xc4 bxc4 22 b5, but his advantage is significantly less than in the game.

21 e5 d5 (D)



22 f5!

Setting in motion what proves to be a winning attack. Black has little choice but to capture, since it is already too late for 22...♙c4, which loses to 23 fxe6 fxe6 24 ♘xd5! ♙xd4 (24...exd5? 25 ♙xd5+ costs Black his queen) 25 ♙xd4 exd5 26 ♙xd5+ ♖h8 27 ♙f7 ♗e7 28 e6.

22...gxf5 23 ♘xd5! ♙c4

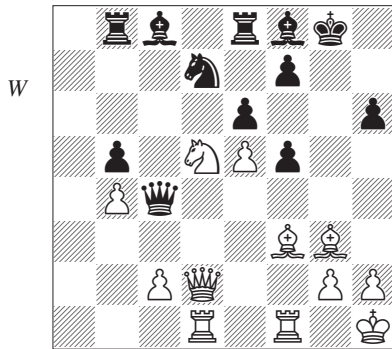
Capturing by 23...exd5? loses at once to 24 e6; e.g., 24...♙b6 25 exf7+ ♖xf7 26 ♙h5+, with a winning attack.

24 ♙d2

In the middle of an attack, it is natural to keep the queens on the board, but the computer points out that 24 ♘f6+ is also very strong. After 24...♘xf6 25 exf6, the b8-rook is very short of squares, and after the further moves 25...♙xd4 26 ♙xd4 ♖b6 27 ♗e1, Black is terribly tied up. Nonetheless, Adams's move is more thematic and pursues the attack on the black king. The main point is that 24...exd5 loses to 25 ♙g5+

♔h8 26 ♙xd5 ♖g4 27 ♗xg4 fxg4 28 ♙xf7.
This explains Black's next move, which prevents the check on g5.

24...h6 (D)



25 h3!

A very surprising quiet move in the middle of a raging attack, and also a nice echo of Black's previous move. White simply takes the g4-square away from Black's queen, as well as making *luft* for his own king. Usually, the attacker would not have time for such luxuries in the middle of an attack, as maintaining the initiative and keeping the defender off-balance with continual threats is usually the order of the day. Here, however, Adams has appreciated that Black does not have any obvious defensive moves.

25...exd5

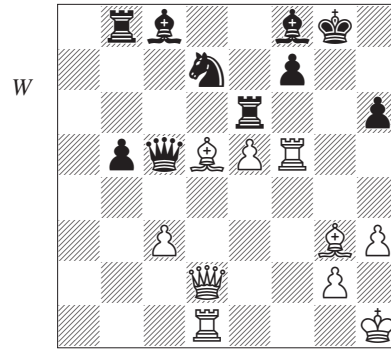
There is nothing else. 25...♙g7 26 ♗f6+ ♗xf6 (or 26...♙xf6 27 exf6, when both b8 and h6 are hanging) 27 exf6 attacks both b8 and g7, whilst 25...♔h8 26 ♗f6 ♗xf6 27 exf6 e5 28 ♙d5 ♖c7 (28...♖xb4 29 ♙xf7 traps the rook) 29 ♖e2 gives White a devastating attack, for no material investment. Topalov decides he may as well have a piece to suffer for.

26 ♙xd5 ♖xb4 27 c3 ♖c5

Giving back the piece by 27...♖e7 28 ♗xf5 ♗xe5! 29 ♗xe5 ♙e6 was a slightly tougher defence, although White is still winning with accurate play. Adams then gives 30 ♙xe6 fxe6 31 ♖e2 as the strongest, when the exposed black king and weakness on e6 will cost him the game.

28 ♗xf5 ♗e6 (D)

A desperate attempt to block the a2-g8 diagonal, at the cost of the exchange. Instead, 28...♗e7 29 e6 is decisive, since the b8-rook is once again *en prise*.



29 ♗xf7!

Crashing through decisively, and much better than the routine capture of the exchange on e6.

29...♗b6

29...♔xf7 30 ♖f4+ ♔e8 (or 30...♔e7 31 ♙h4+ winning) 31 ♙xe6 is crushing.

30 ♗df1

Good enough, but Adams points out that 30 ♖f4! was even better, with the point that 30...♗xd5 loses to 31 ♗xd5!.

30...♗xd5

30...♙g7 31 ♖f4 ♗xd5 32 ♖g4 mates.

31 ♗xf8+ ♖xf8 32 ♗xf8+ ♔xf8 33 ♖xd5

The attack has triumphed. Not only does White have a material advantage of ♖+2♗ vs 2♗, but he also has an ongoing attack against the highly exposed black king. The rest is just a mopping-up exercise.

33...♔e8 34 ♙h4 ♙d7 35 ♙f6 b4 36 ♖e4

Adams himself pointed out that 36 ♖d3! wins even more quickly, but in some time-trouble, he preferred simply to annex another black pawn, since 36...bxc3? 37 ♖g6+ leads to mate.

36...♙c8 37 cxb4 ♗b7 38 ♖g6+ ♔d7 39 ♖xh6 ♔c7 40 ♖f4 ♔b8 41 h4 ♗c7 42 h5 1-0

A fine kingside attack, conducted in conditions of same-side castling.