

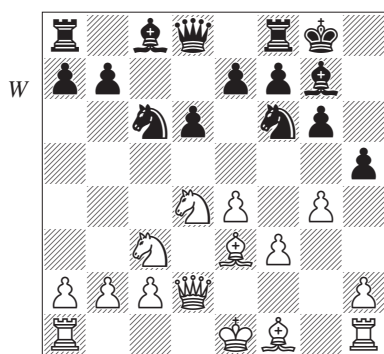
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The following game is an illustrative example in a modern interpretation...

Barcelak – Golubev
Münster 1996
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4
♜f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 0-0 8
♞d2 ♗c6 9 g4 h5 (D)



We earlier encountered this response in reply to h4, but Golubev adopts it in a significantly different situation. It is based on a series of tactical solutions made possible by his quick and sound basic development.

10 h3

10 g5 ♗h7 11 f4 would be answered by 11...♗xd4 12 ♙xd4 e5. Therefore White decides to keep the tension, planning further developing moves before taking action, but Black won't have any of that.

10...d5

Audacious indeed! This time the reaction in the centre comes in combination with wing counterplay. First we

find out that 11 g5, which at first glance looks like a simple refutation, can be parried by 11...♗h7 12 ♗xd4 (if 12 exd5 there is 12...♗b4 13 ♙c4 e6) 12...e6 (12...♙xd4? 13 ♙xd4 ♗xg5 14 ♞xg5 ♗xd4 15 0-0-0 is no good at all for Black) 13 ♗xc6 bxc6 14 ♗c3 ♞a5. Similarly, 11 gxh5 ♗xh5 12 exd5 is met by 12...♗b4 13 ♙c4 e6.

The alternative to 11 g5 is 11 ♗xc6 bxc6 12 e5 (after 12 0-0-0 e5 13 ♙c5 the exchange sacrifice by 13...d4 14 ♙xf8 ♞xf8 is in my opinion sound) 12...♗d7 13 f4, when 13...h4 was played in Kovchan-Golubev, Ukrainian Ch 1997. Then 14 0-0-0 ♞a5 (14...g5, suggested by Golubev, looks too pretentious in view of 15 ♙d3) 15 ♞e1 ♞e8 16 ♞xh4 ♞b8 brought White a material advantage, but at the cost of time which Black used to create counterplay on the queenside.

Considering all this, White probably looked for safety and returned to the first choice.

11 g5 ♗h7 12 0-0-0 ♙xd4 13 ♙xd4 dxe4 14 ♗xe4 ♗xd4 15 ♞xd4 ♞c7

15...♞xd4 16 ♞xd4 ♙f5 is good enough, but Black is ambitious and with good reason.

16 ♙c4?

White wishes to strengthen his king's defences by transferring the light-squared bishop to b3, as is often done in the Dragon. Unfortunately, Black now catches him on the wrong foot. 16 ♞e3 was correct.

16...♙f5

White had assessed that 16...♞f4+ 17 ♙b1 ♞xf3 (or 17...♗xg5 18 ♞hg1) 18 ♞df1 would hardly come into

consideration for Black. However, after the text-move, Black threatens 17...♖f4+ followed by 18...♖xf3 owing to the hanging white knight on e4. Therefore, White has no time to carry out the planned bishop transfer.

17 ♖b1 ♗ad8 18 ♖c3 ♗c8 19 ♖b3 ♖xc3 20 ♗xc3 ♗xg5

The price has been paid.

21 ♗d5 ♗fe8 22 ♖a4 b5 23 ♗e3 bxa4 24 ♗xf5 ♗xf3 25 ♗hf1 ♗e5 26 ♗de1 ♗c4 27 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 0-1

In Golubev's plan the sudden advance of the h-pawn blocked the attack on his king at no cost. Quite often though, players are willing to sacrifice a rook's pawn to gain time to create counterplay on the other wing. We find such sacrifices in various openings. The following instructive game will remind the reader of a variation popular a quarter of a century ago, typical of the problem we are discussing.

Bellon – Adorjan

Olympiad, Buenos Aires 1978

Caro-Kann

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗c3 dxe4 4 ♗xe4 ♗f6 5 ♗xf6+ gxf6

Black accepts lasting damage to his pawn-structure in the hope of using the semi-open g-file to his advantage. The position is quite sensitive and it took White a long time to find the right path.

6 c3

In a way this is a waiting move, but a useful one which restricts Black's options. Moreover, it reinforces the

d4-pawn and makes ♖b3 possible, which proves useful in several lines.

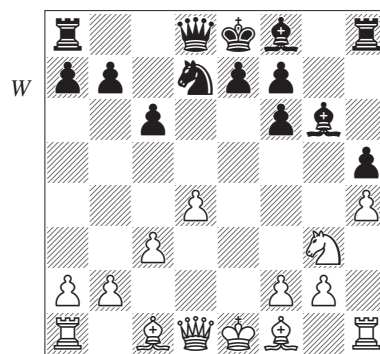
6...♖f5

6...♖d5, for instance, would be met by 7 ♖b3, when 7...♖xb3 8 axb3 opens the a-file to White's advantage. Also, after 6...e5 there is 7 ♖c4 exd4 8 ♖b3 ♖e7+ 9 ♗e2, an old idea of Nimzowitsch's which gives White plenty of compensation.

7 ♗e2 ♗d7

7...e5 is inappropriate. After 8 ♗g3 ♖e6 9 ♖e3 ♖c7 10 ♖d3 White controls the f5-square and is superior. No praise can be given to 7...h5, a move popular in the 1950s and 1960s, since 8 ♗g3 ♖g4 9 f3 ♖e6 (9...h4?! is dubious in view of 10 fxg4 hxg3 11 h4) 10 ♖f4 ♖a5 11 ♖d3 h4 12 ♗e4 ♗d7 13 0-0 proves advantageous to White.

8 ♗g3 ♖g6 9 h4 h5 (D)



This pawn cannot be defended, but it will cost White several tempi to capture it. Meanwhile, it temporarily blocks the expanding white pawn, and Black intends to use this respite to create counterplay on the queenside.

10 ♖e2 ♗a5 11 b4

In Stefansson-P.Johansson, Gausdal 1992, White successfully played the preparatory 11 a3.

11...♗c7 12 ♖xh5 a5

For years Black based his counterplay on this move. White is a pawn up, but he needs time to stabilize the situation. His king is still uncastled, and if he is to castle kingside then he will need to spend additional time defending the h4-pawn. Apart from that, after 13...axb4 White's queenside pawns will be under pressure.

13 ♖f4 axb4 14 ♖xg6 fxg6 15 cxb4

15 ♗d3 proved strong in Liberzon-Pasman, Beersheba 1984. In those days it was an important novelty. White is ready to trade his b-pawn for the g6-pawn. Then 15...bxc3 16 ♗xg6+ ♕d8 17 g3 e6 18 0-0 ♖a3 19 ♖c4 ♗e8 20 ♗e1 ♗d6 21 ♖f4 was advantageous to White.

15...e5 16 b5?!

This light-hearted move presents Black with counterplay. 16 ♗b1 is critical, given that 16...♗xa2 does not work due to 17 ♗b3 followed by 18 ♗g3. After 16...0-0-0 there is the strong 17 ♗d3, when after 17...exd4 18 ♗xd4 ♖e5 19 ♗c3 White stands better. I tried to improve on that by 17...♗d6, when 18 ♖e3 ♖h6 or 18 dxe5 ♗xd3 19 ♖xd3 ♖xe5 20 ♖e2 ♗d4 offers Black compensation, but 18 b5 is quite unpleasant. 18...c5 fails to 19 dxc5 and 18...♖c5 to 19 ♗xg6 exd4 20 ♗f5+. Since 17...f5 18 ♖g5 ♗e8 19 d5 cannot satisfy Black either, he would face difficulties.

16...♖b4+ 17 ♖d2 ♗d6

All of a sudden Black has a good deal of pressure in compensation for the pawn, and this provokes the following simplifications.

18 bxc6 bxc6 19 dxe5 ♖xe5 20 ♖xb4

White has no choice in view of the threatened 20...♗d8.

20...♗xb4+ 21 ♗d2 ♗xh4 22 ♗xb4 ♗xh1+ 23 ♕d2 ♗xa1 24 ♖c4 ♖xc4+ 25 ♗xc4 ♗8xa2+ 26 ♕e3 ♗e1+ 27 ♖f3 1/2-1/2

On the queenside, the a-pawn has a less dramatic but very important role in a number of positions arising in the Slav and Semi-Slav. The a-pawn's task is to undermine the compact mass of black pawns created in the opening.

Dizdar – Pavasović

Pula 1996

Semi-Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♖f3 e6 4 ♖c3 ♖f6 5 ♖g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 a4 (D)

Apart from the main line of the 'Anti-Meran' introduced by 7 e5, White has quite often chosen this lateral blow designed to undermine and destabilize Black's rampart on the queenside.

7...♖b7

In case of 7...b4 8 ♖b1 the pawn at c4 is lost and material balance established. After 8...♖a6 9 ♗c1 c3 10 bxc3 ♖xf1 11 ♖xf1 ♖bd7 12 ♖bd2 c5 13 d5 White's position is preferable.

The text-move is the modern method of defence: Black leaves the b5-pawn