

# BASIC CONCEPTS

All good chessplayers understand the basic ideas which underlie good opening play. They are not always easy to articulate, and it must never be forgotten that principles often come into conflict, and should never be followed unthinkingly. Consider them as mere guidelines or good advice, and try to follow them as often as you can.

## **STRATEGIC GOALS IN A HYPERMODERN OPENING**

White's primary goal in a hypermodern opening is to move pieces onto their best squares as quickly as possible. Move order is important only in how it affects the ability to place pieces in a desired position. The main battle is postponed until the middlegame, and the two sides can, to some extent, ignore each other in the Réti until both positions are established.

In this section, we will look at the role of the center in the Réti, and present a target position which represents the optimal formation for the most common variations. Then we will take a look at the role of each piece in the Réti Opening.

### **The Center**

Because we are dealing with a hypermodern opening, the center is not going to be occupied by our own forces. Instead, we are willing to let Black establish a strong center which will act as a target for our operations in the middlegame.

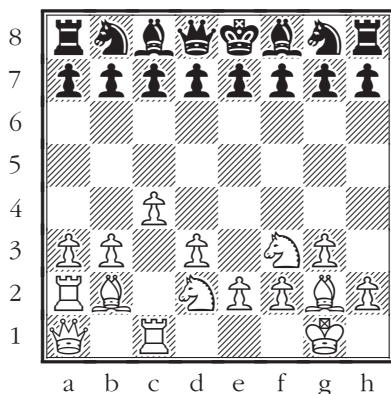
The assault on the center cannot begin until all pieces have been developed. Most of the pressure will come from long range, along the diagonals. With no open files in the center, the rooks will have little say in the discussion.

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In the opening, White is not concerned with attacking the center directly, but at the same time Black cannot be allowed to work freely in the middle of the board. It is very important to keep the Black pawns from advancing too far. They can be allowed onto e4 and d4, but no further.

### Ideal Formation

The basic formation of the Réti is a double fianchetto with kingside castling and a pawn at c4 supported by another at d3. In many cases, White can set up the formation seen in the diagram below. White's position is very solid and there are only two small flaws. The pawn at b3 is a little weak, defended only by a knight. The pawn at e2, though harder to get at, has no support at all.

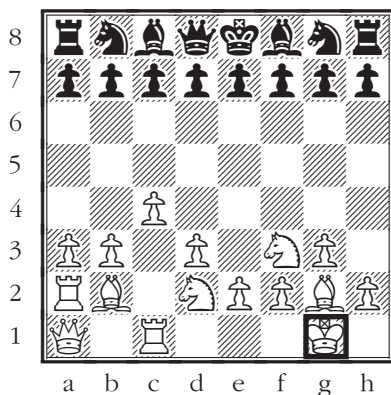


There is a certain elegance and efficiency in White's plans. Each piece has moved exactly once and has arrived at its ideal position. The king has some breathing room and all of the pieces except for the rook at a2 have some flexibility. About the only criticism that can be leveled against White's play is that it is confined to the first four ranks. No enemy territory is conquered. This gives Black time to choose a defensive formation without worrying about immediate threats.

To understand the position better, let's look at the role of each individual piece. Of course, White must alter the formation in response to certain Black strategies, so this section only applies to those positions where the ideal formation is used. The alternative

use of pieces in specific variations will be discussed in the Defensive Formations chapter.

## King

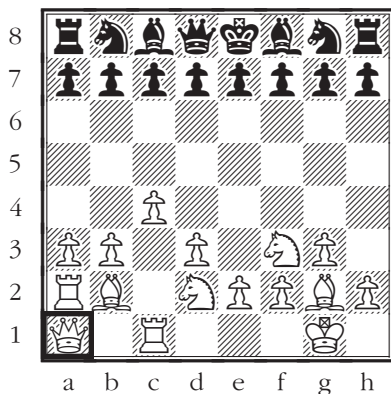


The king should be safely castled on the kingside, no matter what sort of defense Black mounts. Castling should be accomplished in the first ten to twelve moves. The king generally stays at g1 until the endgame, though it may move to g2 to recapture if Black exchanges light-squared bishops there. The king is defended by the bishop and knight at f3, but the knight at d2 can come to f1 to provide extra defense for h2.

Once the rook moves from f1, the weakness of the pawn at f2 should be kept in mind. As we will see later, Black can effectively ram the e-pawn down the file to e3 if White is not careful. Then the pawn at f2 either moves or is captured, and the pawn at g3 loses support.

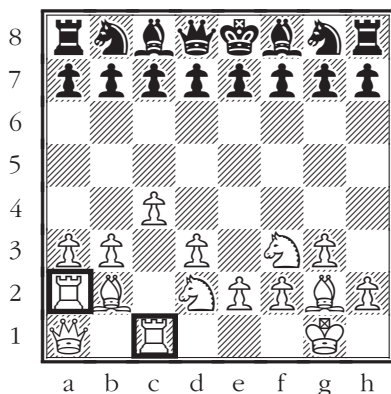
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### Queen



White has two different plans for the queen. In the purest Réti formations, it is stationed at a1. From this square it supports operations on the long diagonal and on the a-file. In the main lines, White often gains control of one of these important lines and this can be the main source of offensive action. Alternatively, it can go to c2, working on the c-file and the light squares in the center.

### Rooks

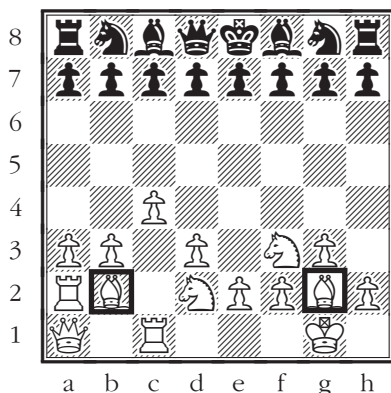


In the main line, the rook advances from a1 to a2 to make room for the queen. Sometimes the defense of the second rank,

especially e2 and f2, is necessary, and the rook can also usefully transfer to b2, c2, or d2 should opportunities arise on one of those files. There is usually a need to keep one rook on the c-file, as that file can be opened if White captures, for example, a pawn at d5 or b5. Another popular approach is to double rooks on the c-file.

The kingside rook can also move to e1 to support the advance of the e-pawn. If Black exchanges pawns so that the d-file is open, one or both rooks may find a home there. So be prepared to be flexible in placing your rooks, and study the use of rooks in the illustrative games and strategy sections below.

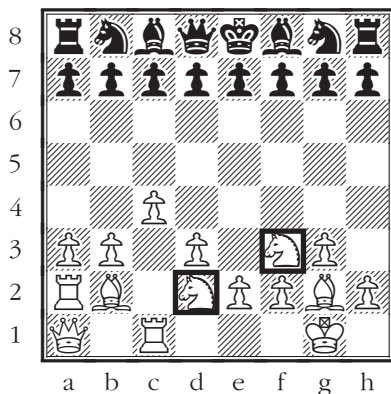
## Bishops



The cornerstone of the Rétí is the fianchetto of both bishops. Each will work on a long diagonal and simultaneously stand guard over important squares in the base camp. This is both a strength and a weakness in that if the bishops leave the board, there is important work that cannot be done. For this reason, White does not part with either bishop until the endgame, unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

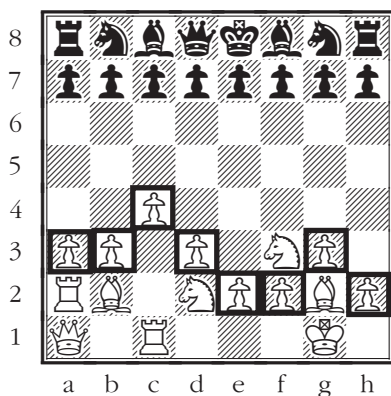
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### Knights



The kingside knight operates from f3, sometimes leaping to e5 as part of an attack, or to prevent the advance of Black's e-pawn. The other knight is usually placed at d2, so that it does not get in the way of the queen and bishop battery on the queenside, or hinder rooks from operating cleanly on the c-file. In the Réti Accepted, the knight has a different role, moving to a3 to recapture at c4, where it eyes e5, d6 and other useful squares.

### Pawns



The unbroken chain usually remains intact throughout the opening unless Black captures one of the pawns. The a-pawn anchors an advance of the b-pawn. Moving the b-pawn up the board is a strong maneuver which can cause great weaknesses in the Black position if there is a pawn at c6. The role of the c-pawn is to guard d5, sometimes capturing an enemy pawn there to open up the c-file.

Hypermodern strategy indicates that the central pawns remain at the second or third rank, except when going to e4 has tactical or positional justification. The f-pawn rarely moves, as it would expose the king and also weaken the e3-square. The kingside fianchetto mandates that the g-pawn be at g3, and it is wise to keep the h-pawn home in support, though sometimes it needs to go to h3 to kick out an annoying enemy piece.

# TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

In this section we examine typical strategic and tactical devices available to both sides. These patterns can often turn up in the early middlegame, so it is a good idea to pay close attention to these positions as well as those you encounter as you work your way through the illustrative games.

The examples are presented in full so that you can observe some of the transpositional move orders and trace the buildup of the position. Each diagram illustrates a specific tactical device. Study these carefully as you go along so that you can increase your strength and advantage with these openings.

Let us first turn our attention to the strategies and tactics for White, and after, we will look at these issues from the other side of the board, so we understand what Black is thinking when faced with our Hypermodern ideas.

## STRATEGIES AND TACTICS FOR WHITE

For the most part, White is concerned with queenside activity in the Réti and the related lines discussed in this repertoire. The center must not be neglected, however.

There are three different pawn breaks, where White uses a pawn to confront an enemy pawn and threaten to cause structural damage or advance into a more favorable position. The three breaks are at e4, b4 and d4. We'll look at those first. We'll then consider the situation at e5, an important battlefield. The power of the fianchettoed bishops is then explored, after which two weaknesses in Black's position are considered.

## The e4-break

For some reason, the e4-break seems to inspire bad play by Black at times, as the position unravels quickly. The advance of a pawn to e4 to confront a Black pawn at d5 is effective when the Black knight at f6 has to stand guard at f6 because of pressure on the pawn at g7. White often has a queen at a1 and bishop at b2, and even when Black has castled, the pawn at g7, can be weak.

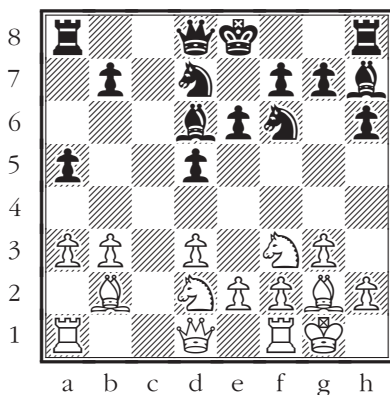
Here is a simple example, where Black has delayed castling too long.

### HEINE VS. FOX

Dortmund Open, 1991

#### New York System

1.Nf3 d5; 2.c4 c6; 3.b3 Bf5; 4.g3 Nf6; 5.Bg2 e6; 6.0-0 Nbd7;  
7.d3 h6; 8.Bb2 Bh7; 9.Nbd2 a5; 10.a3 Bd6; 11.cxd5 cxd5.



The position is deceptively calm, but the potential advance of the e-pawn has been underestimated by Black. **12.e4!** The threat of e5 is very real. **12...Bc7?!** 12...dxe4 would have been smarter. After 13.dxe4 Black could then play 13...Bc5, but even so White has a nice game after 14.Qe2, after which the rooks can take up useful positions on the c-file and d-file.

**13.exd5 Nxd5?** It was necessary to play 13...exd5, even though Black would have a rotten position after 14.Re1+. **14.Bxg7 Rg8; 15.Bd4 Bxd3.** Otherwise White is simply up a pawn with a good position. **16.Re1 Kf8.** Or 16...N7f6; 18.Ne5! Bxe5; 19.Bxe5 Ng4; 20. Nf3. **17.Ne4 Ba6?** Suicide. 17...Bxe4 was forced, but in any case White has a tremendous game. **18.Qd2. Black resigned.**

## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

The h-pawn is lost.

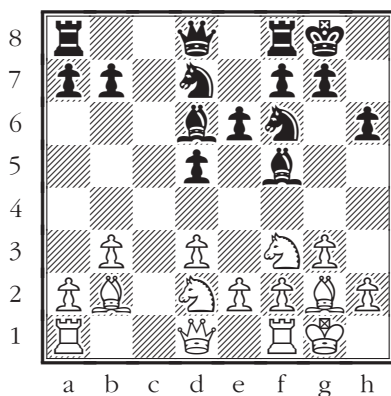
Life is rarely that simple, of course. In our next example Black has taken care of castling, but the same strategy proves effective for White.

### DONCEVIC VS. LUTGARDA GONZALEZ

Corte Ingles, 1989

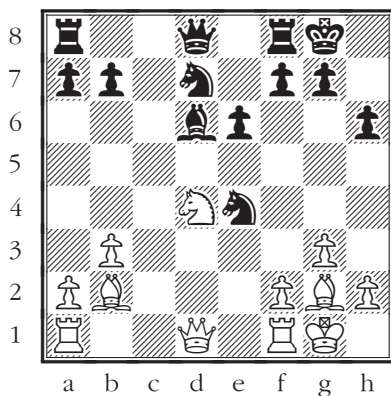
New York System

1.c4 c6; 2.Nf3 Nf6; 3.g3 d5; 4.b3 Bf5; 5.Bg2 e6; 6.0-0 Nbd7;  
7.Bb2 Bd6; 8.d3 0-0; 9.Nbd2 h6; 10.cxd5 cxd5.

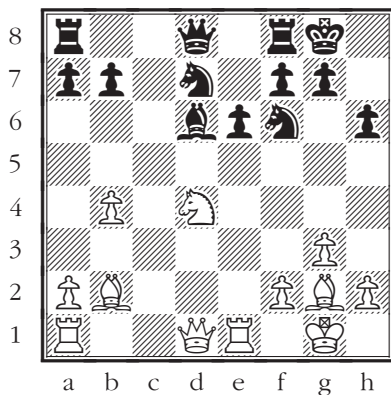


Black has prevented the advance of the e-pawn to e4. Or has he?

11.e4!? dxe4 Black bites at the bait. Instead, 11...Bg4 was interesting. 12.dxe4 Bxe4; 13.Nxe4 Nxe4; 14.Nd4!



White is down a pawn, but the pin on the long diagonal is sufficient compensation by itself. **14...Ndf6; 15.Re1 Nc5; 16.b4! Ncd7.**



Perhaps now Black expected White to capture at b7. There is a much stronger move, however. **17.Nxe6! fxe6; 18.Qxd6 Rb8; 19.Qxe6+ Kh8; 20.Rad1 Qb6; 21.Qxb6 axb6; 22.Re7! Black resigned.**

Our third example shows the strategy in use from a pure Réti formation. Here the queenside battery comes to life and the weakness at g7 is once again exposed.

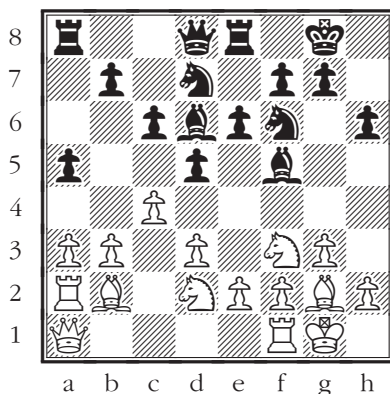
## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

### DALY VS. MCDONNELL

Ireland Championship, 1991

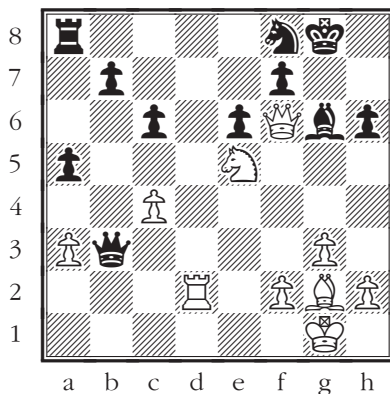
New York System

1.Nf3 Nf6; 2.g3 d5; 3.Bg2 Bf5; 4.c4 e6; 5.0-0 Be7; 6.b3 0-0;  
7.Bb2 Nbd7; 8.d3 c6; 9.Nbd2 h6; 10.a3 a5; 11.Ra2 Re8; 12.Qa1  
Bd6.



Black's bishop at d6 invites White to play e4, since the e5-square is weak, and so is g7! **13.e4! dxe4; 14.dxe4 Nxe4; 15.Nxe4 Bxe4; 16.Bxg7**. The barrier is destroyed. Black is already in trouble.

**16...Bf8; 17.Bxf8 Nxf8; 18.Rd2 Qb6; 19.Qf6 Bg6. 19...Qxb3;**  
20.Ne5 Bg6; 21.Ng4! Kh7; 22.Be4! is crushing, because 22...Bxe4  
is answered by mate in two. 23.Qxh6+ Kg8; 24.Nf6# **20.Ne5 Red8.**  
20...Qxb3 transposes to the previous note. **21.Rfd1 Rxd2; 22.Rxd2**  
**Qxb3.**



Now Black will have the resource of a check at b1, but that isn't enough. **23.Bf1 Qc3**. 23...Qxa3; 24.Ng4 Kh7; 25.Nxh6! a4 (25...Kxh6; 26.Rd4 leads to checkmate.) 26.Nxf7 Bxf7; 27.Qxf7+ Kh8; 28.Rd4 wins. **24.Rd3 Bxd3**. 24...Qa1! would have saved Black, though White does have compensation for the pawn. **25.Qxf7+ Kh8; 26.Qf6+ Kg8; 27.Bxd3**. With the Black queen at a1 this would not have been possible. **27...Qc1+; 28.Kg2 Qg5; 29.Qf7+ Kh8; 30.Ng6+! Black resigned**, having nothing better than **30...Nxb6; 31.Bxb6 Qxb6; 32.Qxb6**.

## The b4-break

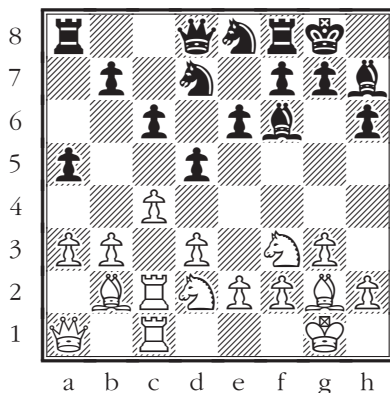
When Black has a pawn at a5 or c5, White can undermine the pawn structure by playing b4. If Black captures, then a useful file is opened. If Black does not capture, White can choose to capture or advance the pawn to b5, securing important space on the queenside. The b4-break doesn't usually lead to an immediate win, but it can have some dramatic effects.

### PALATNIK VS. SHERZER

Chicago, 1992

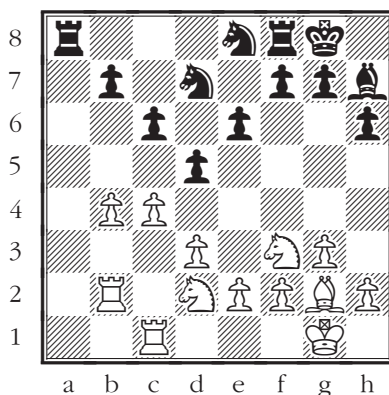
New York System

**1.Nf3 Nf6; 2.g3 d5; 3.Bg2 Bf5; 4.c4 e6; 5.0-0 c6; 6.b3 Nbd7; 7.Bb2 Be7; 8.d3 0-0; 9.Nbd2 a5; 10.a3 h6; 11.Rc1 Bh7; 12.Rc2 Ne8; 13.Qa1 Bf6; 14.Rfc1.**



## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

The exchange of pieces and queens does not reduce the advantage White enjoys because of his control of more queenside territory. 14...Bxb2; 15.Qxb2 Qf6; 16.b4! Qxb2; 17.Rxb2 axb4; 18.axb4.



Even in the endgame White can play effectively on the queenside, as seen in this example. The position is by no means winning, but the burden is on Black to defend precisely.

18...Nd6; 19.Nd4 dxc4. 19...e5! is a better defense. 20.c5 Nf5; 21.Nxf5 Bxf5; 22.e4 dxe4; 23.dxe4 Be6 is pretty solid, and Black will make good use of the a-file. 20.dxc4 Rfd8; 21.c5 Nf5; 22.Nxf5 Bxf5; 23.Nc4 Ra7; 24.e4 Bg6; 25.Rd2. An excruciating pin, which leads to the win of material. 25...Ra4; 26.Nb6 Rxb4; 27.Rxd7 Rxd7; 28.Nxd7 Bxe4; 29.Bxe4 Rxe4; 30.Rb1. Black resigned.

### The d4-break

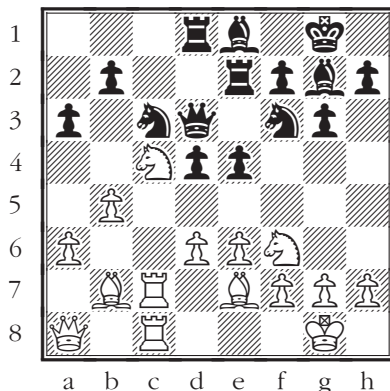
When Black has a pawn at e5 or c5, White can advance the d-pawn to d4 and create a crisis in the center. When there is an enemy pawn at e5, White must calculate the consequences of Black advancing to e4, keeping the center blocked. A further complication here, seen later in the section on Black strategies and tactics, is the possible advance of the pawn to e3.

OSTL VS. ARNOLD

Eppingen, 1988

New York System

1.Nf3 Nf6; 2.c4 g6; 3.b4 Bg7; 4.Bb2 0-0; 5.e3 d6; 6.Nc3 e5;  
7.d3 Re8; 8.Be2 c6; 9.0-0 d5; 10.cxd5 cxd5; 11.Rc1 a6; 12.Na4  
Nc6; 13.a3 Re7; 14.Rc2 Bd7; 15.Nc5 Be8; 16.Qa1 Qd6; 17.Rfc1  
Rd8.



White can establish control over e5 by advancing the d-pawn. While this strategy is not always effective it is a useful plan when Black is fianchettoed on the kingside.

The plan is to seal the center and play on the queenside.

18.d4!? e4; 19.Ne5 Nb8; 20.a4. From e5, the knight exerts influence at c6. White's queenside advance is therefore more effective. 20...Qb6; 21.Ba3 Nfd7; 22.Nexd7! Bxd7; 23.b5. The discovered attack on the rook enables White to open up the queenside. 23...Ree8; 24.bxa6 bxa6; 25.Rb2 Qa7; 26.Nb7! The Black queen is trapped on the a-file. 26...Rc8; 27.Bc5. **Black resigned.** 27.Nd6 Rxc1+; 28.Qxc1 Rd8; 29.Rb7 wins.

**Pressure at e5**

The e5-square is one of the most critical in the Réti. If Black can establish a strong pawn there, then White will have difficulty in denying counterplay in the center and on the kingside. White wants to control e5 with a knight at f3, a bishop at b2, and a queen at a1. Nevertheless, Black can usually arrange the advance of the

## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

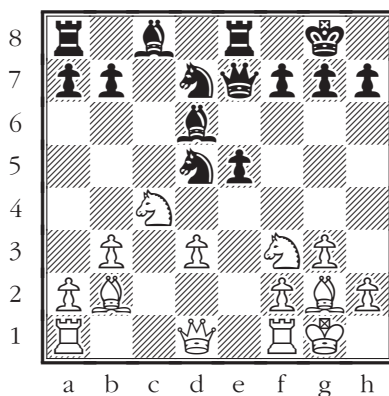
e-pawn supported by a rook on the e-file, a bishop at d6, and a knight at d7. When the pawn arrives at e5, White can sometimes expose it to attack by eliminating the pawn at d5 (if necessary) and bringing a knight to c4.

### WEYERSTRASS VS. VAN DER

Laren (Training), 1988

#### Semi-Slav Formation

1.g3 Nf6; 2.Bg2 e6; 3.c4 d5; 4.Nf3 c6; 5.b3 Be7; 6.Bb2 Nbd7;  
7.0-0-0; 8.d3 Re8; 9.Nbd2 Bd6; 10.e4 e5; 11.exd5 cxd5; 12.cxd5  
Nxd5; 13.Nc4 Qe7?



An obvious move, defending the pawn, but White has a winning combination. Instead, Black should have dropped the bishop back to c7 or b8 and then supported the e-pawn with ...f6.

14.Nfxe5! N7f6. Or 14...Nxe5; 15.Bxd5!; 15.Nxf7! Kxf7;  
16.Bxd5+ Nxd5; 17.Qh5+ Kg8; 18.Qxd5+ Be6; 19.Qxd6 Bh3;  
20.Qxe7 Rxe7; 21.Rfe1. Black resigned.

### The Bishop Awakens

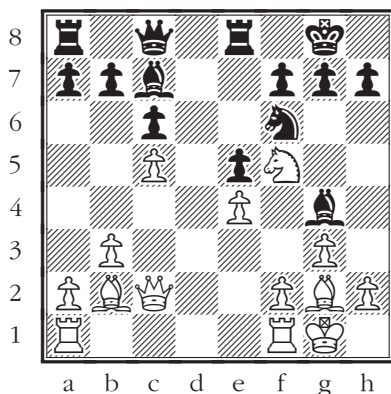
The bishop at b2 can often seem to be passive, not hitting any particularly useful target. In the worst case, it is hemmed in by Black pawns and has no scope at all. The lack of scope can dictate strategy, as White can adopt extreme measures, sometimes even sacrificial ones, to bring new life to the old cleric.

MILANOVIC- RANDJELOVIC

Becici, 1993

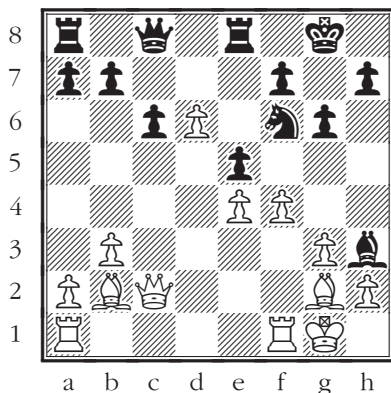
Semi-Slav System

1.Nf3 d5; 2.c4 e6; 3.g3 Nf6; 4.Bg2 c6; 5.b3 Nbd7; 6.Bb2 Bd6;  
7.0-0-0; 8.d3 Re8; 9.Nbd2 e5; 10.e4 Nc5; 11.Qc2 dxe4; 12.Nxe4  
Ncxe4; 13.dxe4 Bg4; 14.Nh4 Qc8; 15.c5 Bc7; 16.Nf5.



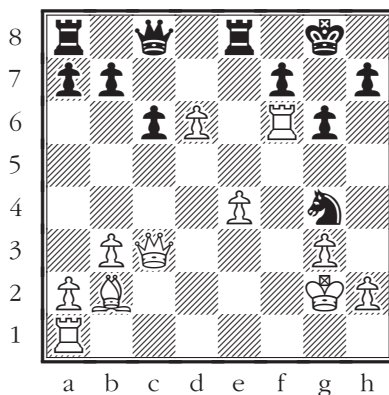
White has a good position, but there are no immediate threats. Black should not weaken the protective pawn barrier. The consequences are fatal!

**16...g6?** Perhaps Black thought that the distant bishop at b2 poses no danger, because the pawn at e5 is in the way, and is solidly supported by a bishop and a rook. Appearances can be deceiving! **16...Qe6** was the correct move. **17.Nd6! Bxd6; 18.cxd6 Bh3?** Black has no time for such luxuries. **18...Nh5; 19.Qd2 a5** was a more dynamic possibility. **19.f4!**



## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

This is the key to bringing the bishop at b2 into the attack. **19...Bxg2; 20.Kxg2 Nd7; 21.fxe5 Nxe5.** The long diagonal is still blocked, but White has a strong initiative. **22.Rf6 Ng4?** Black forgets how necessary the knight was at e5! **22...Qd7; 23.Raf1** is not a lot of fun, but may be best. **23.Qc3!**



The diagonal leads to victory. **23...Rxe4?; 23...Nxf6?? 24.Qxf6** mates quickly. **23...Ne5** was necessary, though after **24.Raf1 Qd7; 25.Rxf7 Qxf7; 26.Rxf7 Kxf7; 27.d7 Nxd7; 28.Qg7+ Ke6; 29.Qxh7** and the h-pawn will advance. Or **27...Re7; 28.Ba3 Re6; 29.Qd2 Rd8; 30.Qg5! Rxd7; 31.Qf4+ Rf6.** The king cannot retreat because of **Qf8#**. **32.Qxe5** and White should win.

**24.Rxg6+. Black resigned.**

### Weakness at b7

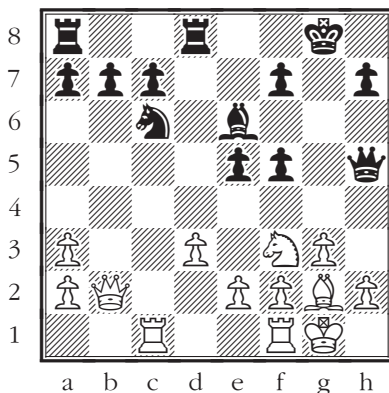
Black's position is usually vulnerable at b7 if the bishop has left its home square of c8 and headed out toward the kingside. The pawn can be attacked on the diagonal, on the b-file, or from a knight at c5 or a5. Black usually takes measures to protect the pawn, by placing a pawn or piece at c6, and the b-file is closed at the start of the game. In some variations White opens the b-file by a recapture at c4, but there is one variation where the pawn at b7 is exposed early in the game. This is the deferred form of the Réti Gambit where Black captures at c4 on the third move.

POLULJAHOV VS. DOROSHKIEVICH

Novosibirsk, 1995

Réti Gambit Deferred

1.c4 e6; 2.g3 d5; 3.Nf3 dxc4; 4.Na3 Bxa3; 5.bxa3 Qd5; 6.Bg2 Nf6; 7.0-0 0-0; 8.Bb2 Rd8; 9.Qc2 Nc6; 10.Rac1 Qh5; 11.Bxf6 gxf6; 12.Qxc4 e5; 13.d3 Be6; 14.Qc2 f5? Black cannot afford to weaken the kingside like this. Now the a1-h8 diagonal can be exploited. 15.Qb2!



White has the optimal Réti pressure at b7. The queen directly attacks the pawn, and the bishop at g2 is ready to participate once the knight moves out of the way. 15...e4 Black hopes to seal the diagonal, relying on the bishop to get to d5 to provide additional defense.

**16.Qxb7! Bd5!** Black was counting on this move, but White was ready with a crushing reply. Taking the knight wasn't much of an alternative: 16...exf3; 17.Bxf3 Qh3; 18.Rxc6 is hopeless for Black. **17.Rxc6!! Rab8.** Taking the rook is possible, but risky. 17...Bxc6; 18.Qxc6 exf3; 19.Bxf3 Qg6; 20.Qxc7 Rab8; 21.Qxa7 gives White more than enough compensation for the exchange.

**18.Qxc7 Bxc6; 19.Qxc6 exf3; 20.Bxf3 Qg6.** At least Black has saved the a-pawn, but White is still much better and went on to win.

## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

### Weakness at f7

The traditional weakness at f7 can sometimes be exploited in the Réti, especially when a knight at g5 combines forces with a queen on the a2-g8 diagonal. I'll illustrate this with one of my own recent victories.

#### SCHILLER VS. SNYDER

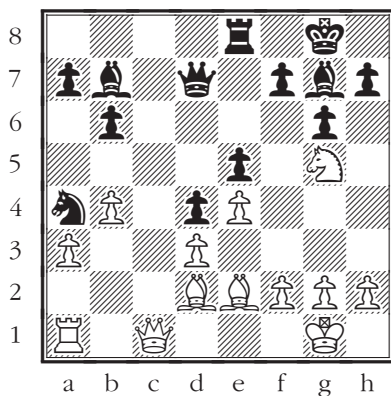
Mechanics' Institute Masters, San Francisco, 1998

#### Symmetrical Variation

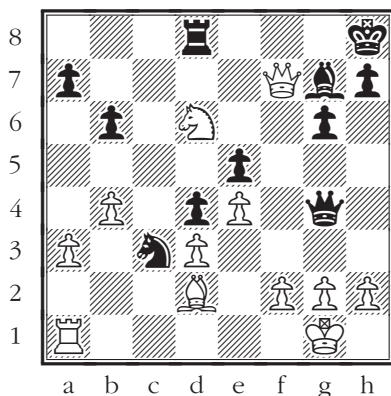
1.Nf3 Nf6; 2.c4 c5; 3.b3 g6; 4.Bb2 Bg7; 5.e3 0-0; 6.Be2 Nc6; 7.0-0 b6; 8.Na3!? Bb7; 9.Nc2 d5; 10.cxd5 Qxd5; 11.d3 Rad8; 12.Qb1 Rfe8; 12...Ba6; 13.e4 Qe6; 14.Ne3 is not very clear. Perhaps Black can play 14...Nxe4; 15.Bxg7 Kxg7; 16.dxe4 Bxe2; 17.Qb2+ Nd4; 18.Nxd4 cxd4; 19.Qxe2 dxe3; 20.Qxe3 with an uninspiring position, though White controls a bit more space.

13.Rd1 e5; 14.e4 Qe6; 15.Bc3 Nd7. 15...Nd4; 16.Ncxd4 cxd4; 17.Bd2 is a reasonable alternative. 16.a3 Nd4; 17.Ncxd4 cxd4; 18.Bd2 Nc5; 19.b4! Na4?! This looks strong, but the a2-f8 diagonal is weaker than it looks. 19...Nb3!? 20.Ng5 Nxd2; 21.Nxe6 Nxb1; 22.Nxd8 Nc3 is the only way to avoid dropping the exchange immediately, but 23.Nxb7 Nxe2+; 24.Kf1 Nc3; 25.Nd6 (25.Rdc1 Bf8! traps the knight at b7.) 25...Rd8; 26.Nc4 Nxd1; 27.Rxd1 b5; 28.Nd2 Rc8; 29.Ra1 Rc3; 30.Ke2 Bh6 is certainly no worse for Black. 19...Nd7; 20.Rc1 Rc8; 21.Ng5 Qe7; 22.Qb3 Bh6; 23.h4 was possible.

20.Rc1 Rc8; 21.Ng5! Rxc1+; 22.Qxc1 Qd7.



**23.Qc4!** This is awkward to meet. Black should probably passively defend f7. **23...Rc8; 24.Qb3 Nc3?; 24...Bc6; 25.Bg4!!** is a variation on the theme seen in the game. **25...Qxg4; 26.Qxf7+ Kh8; 27.Ne6 Rg8; 28.f3! Qh5; 29.Nxg7 Rxc7; 30.Qf8+ Rg8; 31.Qf6+ Rg7; 32.Qxc6** wins. **24...Rf8** is ugly, but probably best. White is a little better after **25.Rc1. 25.Bg4!! Qxg4; 26.Qxf7+ Kh8; 27.Qxb7 Re8; 28.Nf7+ Kg8; 29.Nd6! Rd8. 29...Rf8; 30.Bxc3 dxc3; 31.Qd5+ Kh8; 32.Nf7+** wins. **30.Qf7+ Kh8.**



**31.Bh6! Bxh6; 32.Qf6+ Kg8; 33.Qxd8+ Bf8; 34.Qe8 Qf4; 35.Qe6+ Kg7. 35...Kh8; 36.Qxe5+ Qxe5; 37.Nf7+ Kg7; 38.Nxe5** is simple enough. **36.Ne8+ Kh6; 37.Qh3+ Kg5; 38.Qxh7 Qg4; 39.f3 Qe6; 40.h4+ Kf4; 41.Nc7. 41.Kf2** can be played immediately, but Black can prolong the struggle with **41...Nd1+; 42.Rxd1 Qa2+; 43.Kg1 Ke3. 41...Qd6; 42.Kf2!** White forces mate with the g-pawn, so **Black resigned.**

## Trapped Queen

In defending the queenside, Black can sometimes find the queen in an uncomfortable position. The disadvantage in control of space leaves the queen with less flight squares. Sometimes, there is simply no way to evade attack by White's forces.

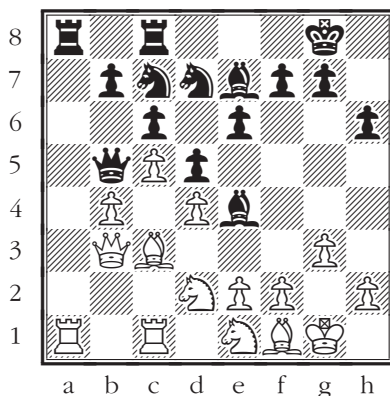
## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

### TARUFFI VS. CAPPELLO

Reggio Emilia, 1978

New York System

1.c4 c6; 2.b3 d5; 3.Bb2 Nf6; 4.Nf3 Bf5; 5.d3 e6; 6.g3 Nbd7;  
7.Bg2 h6; 8.0-0 Be7; 9.Nbd2 0-0; 10.a3 a5; 11.Qc2 Bh7; 12.Rfb1  
Qc7; 13.b4 Rfc8; 14.Qb3 axb4; 15.axb4 Ne8; 16.Rc1 Qb6; 17.Bc3  
Bg6; 18.d4 Nc7; 19.c5 Qb5; 20.Bf1 Be4; 21.Ne1!



Black's queen is in deep trouble, and there is no place to run, so **Black resigned**.

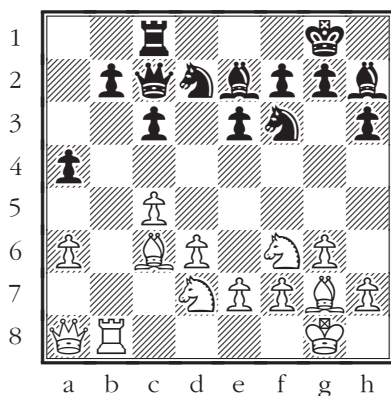
### Premature Queenside Break by Black

The advance of a Black pawn to b5 is not a bad plan, as long as the b-file is still occupied by a White pawn. When Black exchanges the pawn at d4 for the pawn at c4, White recaptures with the b-pawn, except in the Réti Accepted, when there is not yet a pawn at b3. This structure creates a problem for Black, as the pawn at b7 is weak. One natural remedy is to advance it to b5, but as we see, this too has its drawbacks.

SCHWARTZMAN VS. HERRMANN

Dortmund, 1989  
New York System

1.c4 c6; 2.Nf3 d5; 3.b3 Bf5; 4.g3 Nf6; 5.Bb2 e6; 6.Bg2 h6;  
7.0-0 Be7; 8.d3 0-0; 9.Nbd2 a5; 10.a3 Nbd7; 11.Re1 Bh7; 12.Bc3  
dxc4; 13.bxc4 Qc7; 14.Qc1 Rfc8; 15.Qb2. Black plays an inferior  
plan, trying to exchange a pair of rooks. This robs Black of a use-  
ful defensive piece. 15...Ra6?; 16.Rab1 Rb6; 17.Qa1! Rxb1;  
18.Rxb1.



White is going to add to the pressure on the b-file, but Black should not over-react. 18...b5? Passive defense with 18...a4 followed by ...Nc5 would have been better. 19.Nd4! Bf8; 20.Nxc6. Black resigned.

**STRATEGIES AND TACTICS FOR BLACK**

Black's strategic goals vary depending on the defensive formation. It is hard to generalize, but there is one theme that must be understood by both sides, and that is the effects of an advance of Black's e-pawn to e5, e4 or even e3. There are three squares that can become vulnerable in the Réti: e2, b3 and f2. Each of these squares lacks sufficient support to withstand an organized assault by Black's pieces, but fortunately they are relatively hard to get at. White must also avoid allowing the pieces to become entangled or stuck in unproductive positions.

## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

### Black Plays on the e-file

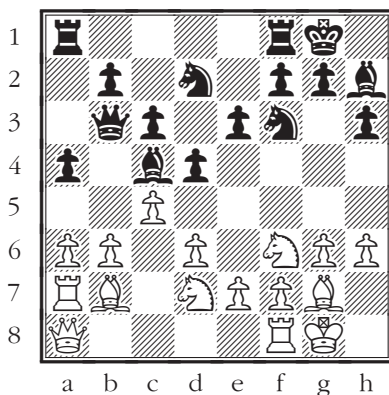
One of Black's best strategies is to advance the e-pawn to e4, where it confronts the White pawn at d3, or even to e3, pointing to the weakness of the pawn at f2. This latter plan is especially effective when White has moved the h-pawn, because then when the f-pawn leaves, the pawn at g3 is vulnerable.

#### FEUSTEL VS. GRAF

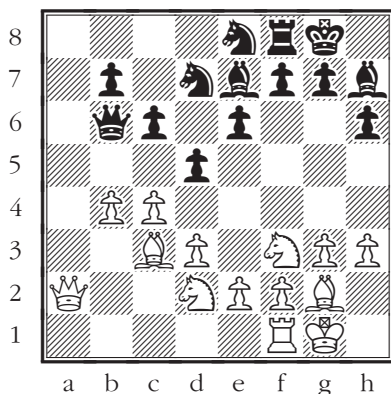
Bad Worishofen, 1993

New York System

1.Nf3 d5; 2.c4 c6; 3.b3 Nf6; 4.Bb2 Bf5; 5.g3 e6; 6.Bg2 h6;  
7.0-0 Nbd7; 8.d3 Bc5; 9.Nbd2 0-0; 10.h3 Bh7; 11.a3 a5; 12.Ra2  
Qb6; 13.Qa1.



When White adopts the a-file strategy Black often finds it hard to come up with a useful move. White slowly prepares the b4-break. 13...Ne8; 14.Bc3 Be7; 15.b4 axb4; 16.axb4 Rxa2; 17.Qxa2.



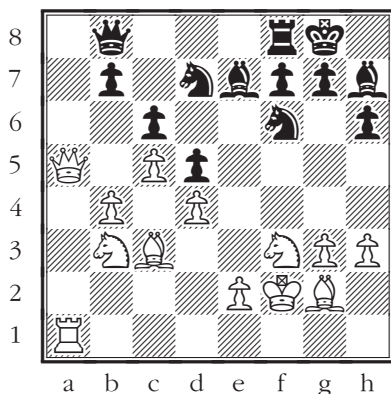
White has more space and control of the a-file. Black's forces are poorly coordinated. **17...Bf6.** 17...Bxb4?; 18.Rb1 c5; 19.cxd5 exd5; 20.Qxd5 Nef6; 21.Qc4 wins a pawn after exchanges at b4. 17...dxc4; 18.Nxc4 Qc7; 19.Ra1 gives White a strong queenside initiative and complete control of the a-file.

**18.c5 Qc7; 19.Nd4?** White practically forces Black to expand in the center. This is hypermodernism taken one step too far! White should have been content to play more quietly with 19.d4 although Black can still advance with 19...e5 since 20.dxe5 Nxe5; 21.Nxe5 Bxe5; 22.Bxe5 Qxe5; 23.Nf3 Qc3 is certainly nothing to brag about for White.

**19...e5.** The hypermodern invitation is accepted at last! Black's center is certainly impressive. Can White cope with the advancing e-pawn?

**20.N4b3 e4!** The most consistent move. 20...d4; 21.Bb2 is about equal, but White does still have the a-file. **21.d4 e3!** White's kingside will be critically weakened, especially the pawn at g3. The break must be played immediately. Otherwise White will seal the center with e3 and then go to work on the queenside. **22.Nf3 exf2+; 23.Kxf2.** Necessary, to protect the g-pawn. **23...Be7; 24.Qa5 Qb8!; 25.Ra1 Nef6.**

## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS



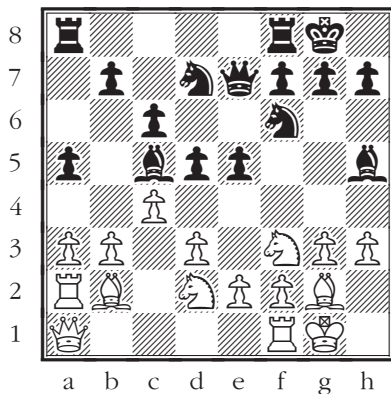
The simple threat of ...Ne4+ is difficult to meet. **26.Nfd2 Nh5; 27.Nf1**. White thinks this maneuver saves the g-pawn, but it doesn't. **27...Nxb3!; 28.Nxb3 Bh4; 29.Kf3**. **White resigned** without waiting for the checkmate at g3.

### LARSEN, F VS. WELLING

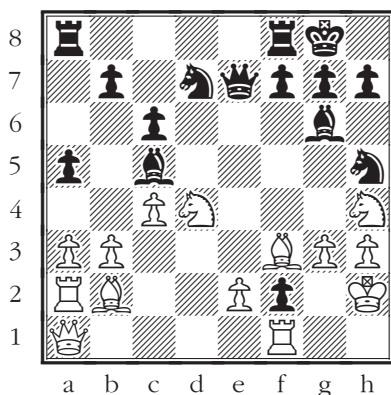
Lugano Open, Switzerland, 1986

#### Capablanca System

**1.c4 c6; 2.Nf3 d5; 3.b3 Nf6; 4.Bb2 Bg4; 5.d3 e6; 6.Nbd2 Nbd7; 7.g3 Bc5; 8.Bg2 0-0; 9.0-0 a5; 10.a3 Qe7; 11.Ra2 e5; 12.h3 Bh5; 13.Qa1.**



White has taken too long, and Black is ready for action in the center. 13...e4!; 14.dxe4 dxe4; 15.Nd4 e3!; 16.N2f3 exf2+; 17.Kh2. The g3-square remains weak, nevertheless. 17...Bg6; 18.Nh4 Nh5; 19.Bf3.



19...Nxg3!; 20.Kxg3 Bd6+; 21.Kg2 Qxh4; 22.Rxf2 Nf6; 23.Qh1. White's position is ridiculous, and Black swiftly breaks through. 23...Ne4; 24.Bxe4 Qxe4+; 25.Nf3 Bc5; 26.e3 Qxe3. **White resigned.** How fitting that the weakness at e3 provides the final blow.

## Weakness of e2

The pawn at e2 is often left unguarded, and Black can take advantage of this by direct pressure on an open e-file or with a knight attack from f4 or d4. If the e-pawn then advances, the pawn at e2 is weak.

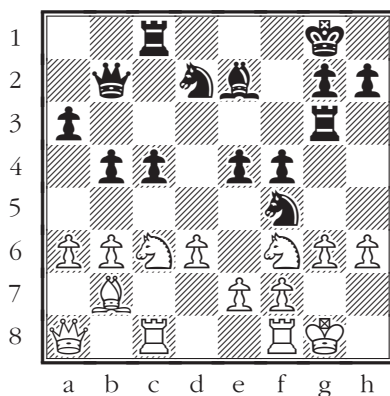
## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

### SPINDELBOECK VS. PALAC

Graz Open, Austria, 1995

#### Réti Gambit Deferred

1.Nf3 d5; 2.c4 e6; 3.g3 dxc4; 4.Qa4+ Nd7; 5.Bg2 a6; 6.Qxc4 b5; 7.Qc2 Bb7; 8.0-0 c5; 9.d3 Ngf6; 10.Nc3 Rc8; 11.b3 Be7; 12.Bb2 0-0; 13.Rac1 Qb6; 14.Nd2 Bxg2; 15.Kxg2 Nd5; 16.Qb1 Rfe8; 17.Qa1 Bf8; 18.a3 Qb7; 19.Kg1 e5; 20.h3 Re6; 21.Nde4 f5; 22.Ng5 Rg6; 23.Nf3 Nf4; 24.Nh4 Be7; 25.Nf3.



Black has an aggressive position even though the only advanced piece is under attack. The knight is safe for the moment, because the g-pawn is pinned. More importantly, the e2-square has been neglected and Black wins by simply chasing the knight at c3. **25...b4. White resigned.**

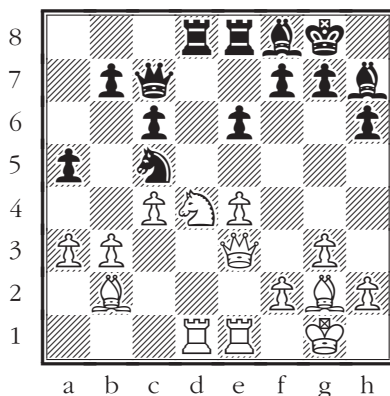
### Weakness at b3

When both the a-pawn and c-pawn have moved, the b-pawn loses its valuable protector and can often become a backward pawn. This can be an easy target for Black's operations. I used this to gain a victory over an International Master at a recent tournament.

REY VS. SCHILLER

Wilkerson International, San Francisco, 1998  
New York System

1.c4 c6; 2.Nf3 d5; 3.b3 Nf6; 4.Bb2 Bf5; 5.g3 h6; 6.Bg2 e6; 7.0-0 Nbd7; 8.d3 Be7; 9.Nbd2 0-0; 10.a3 a5; 11.Qc2 Re8; 12.Rfe1 Bf8; 13.e4 dxe4; 14.Nxe4 Nxe4; 15.dxe4 Bh7; 16.Rad1 Qc7; 17.Nd4 Rad8; 18.Qc3 Nc5; 19.Qe3.



Black has an ideal defensive formation. The bishop at f8 defends g7, so there are no tricks on the diagonal. There is a strong knight at c5, tying White down to the defense of b3. The b-pawn is actually very weak, and Black was able to exploit this.

**19...e5!; 20.Ne2?** White underestimated the power of the sacrifice of the e-pawn. 20.Nf5 was necessary, though Black would be happy with the position after 20...Qb6; 21.Rxd8 Rxd8; 22.Bxe5 Qxb3; 23.Qxb3 Nxb3. 20.Nc2 b5 gives Black the initiative. **20...Rxd1!; 21.Rxd1 Rd8; 22.Rxd8 Qxd8; 23.Bxe5 Qd1+; 24.Bf1 Nxb3; 25.Nc3 Qd2!**

Black has recovered the pawn, and the remaining queenside pawns are weak. It took a while, but Black eventually won.

### Weakness at f2

In most openings the f-pawn is the weak spot in the king's defense, whether castled or not. In the castled position, the pawn has the support of both king and rook. In the position below,

## TYPICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

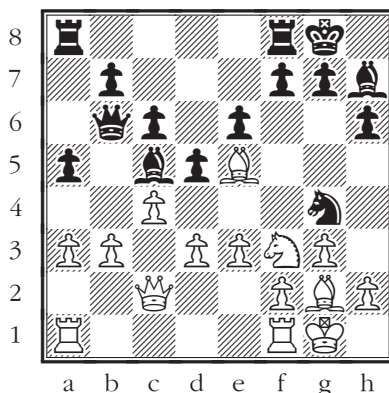
White even has the queen helping out, and Black is only attacking with three pieces. Nevertheless, the weakness is exposed with deadly efficiency.

### KISS VS. SCHARNBECK

Postal, 1987

#### New York System

1.Nf3 d5; 2.g3 Nf6; 3.c4 c6; 4.b3 Bf5; 5.Bg2 e6; 6.Bb2 Nbd7;  
7.0-0 h6; 8.d3 Bc5; 9.Nbd2 0-0; 10.Qc2 Qb6; 11.e3 a5; 12.a3  
Bh7; 13.Ne5 Nxe5; 14.Bxe5 Ng4; 15.Nf3.



White seems to have the f2-square sufficiently defended, with queen, rook and king facing queen bishop and knight. But White has a weakness at d3, too. Black takes advantage by sacrificing at e3.

**15...Bxe3!** The bishop cannot be captured because then the knight gets to e3 and forks queen and rook. **16.Bd6.** 16.Bxg7 Bxd3!; 17.Qxd3 Nxf2 and White has nothing better than 18.Qxe3 Qxe3; 19.Rae1 Nh3+; 20.Kh1 Qxb3; 21.Bxf8 Rxf8; 22.Bxh3 Qxa3 with four healthy pawns and the queen for the rook and minor pieces.

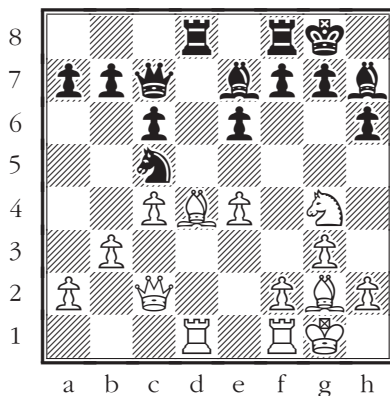
16.Ra2 dxc4; 17.bxc4 Nxe5; 18.Nxe5 Rad8!; 19.Rb2 Qc5; 20.fxe3 Qxe3+; 21.Qf2 Qxe5; 22.Rxb7 Bxd3; 23.Re1 Qc3; 24.Bxc6 Bxc4 and Black has two extra pawns. **16...Bxf2+; 17.Rxf2 Bxd3; 18.Qxd3 Qxf2+; 19.Kh1 dxc4; 20.Qe4 Rfd8; 21.Qxg4 Rxd6; 22.Qxc4 Rad8.** White resigned, since Black has three extra pawns and threats on the back rank.

## Artificial Piece Placement

Another way for White to get into trouble is to place pieces in positions which are not comfortable in the Réti system. For example, it makes little sense for White to transfer the bishop from g2 to c2. Most players do not deliberately place pieces on bad squares. They arrive at their unfortunate locations usually as part of an attacking or defensive maneuver. In our example, White uses g4 for the knight and pays a price.

### RESCHKE VS. HABA Wuerzburg Open, 1992 New York System

1.c4 c6; 2.b3 d5; 3.Bb2 Bf5; 4.Nf3 e6; 5.g3 h6; 6.Bg2 Nf6;  
7.0-0 Be7; 8.d3 0-0; 9.Nbd2 Nbd7; 10.Qc2 Bh7; 11.e4 dxe4;  
12.Nxe4 Nxe4; 13.dxe4 Nc5; 14.Rad1 Qb6; 15.Ne5 Rad8; 16.Bd4  
Qc7; 17.Ng4.



White has no real threats and the position of the knight at g4 is truly strange. Black takes advantage instantly. 17...f5!; 18.Be5 Qb6; 19.exf5 exf5 and the knight cannot retreat. 20.Qc3. 20.Ne3 f4. 20...fxg4; 21.Bxg7 Rxd1; 22.Rxd1 Ne4. White resigned.