

**My Magic Years
with Topalov**

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**My Magic Years
with Topalov**

Romain Edouard

Thinkers Publishing 2019



Key to Symbols

| | | | |
|----|---|----|--------------------------------|
| ! | a good move | ± | White stands slightly better |
| ? | a weak move | ∓ | Black stands slightly better |
| !! | an excellent move | ± | White has a serious advantage |
| ?? | a blunder | ∓ | Black has a serious advantage |
| !? | an interesting move | +— | White has a decisive advantage |
| ?! | a dubious move | —+ | Black has a decisive advantage |
| □ | only move | → | with an attack |
| N | novelty | ↑ | with an initiative |
| ⊙ | Lead in development | ↔ | with counterplay |
| ⊙ | Zugzwang | Δ | with the idea of |
| = | equality | △ | better is |
| ∞ | unclear position | ≤ | worse is |
| ∞ | with compensation for the sacrificed material | + | check |
| | | # | mate |

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Preface

by Veselin Topalov



In the second half of 2010 my manager Silvio Danailov told me he had received an email from a young French GM, offering his cooperation. We asked him to send an example of how he works, an analysis of some opening variation. Romain sent a file with an improvement in the Najdorf and I liked it. In my experience a young player willing to work hard is more valuable than a renowned but unmotivated GM, regardless of playing strength. Later I met Romain personally during the Chess Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk and we agreed on a training session in Salamanca.

Looking back, I would say our first sessions were the most fruitful. That's logical, as in 2010 it was easier for humans to find good ideas more quickly than computer engines than it was in 2014, the same way that in 2018 it is easier than it will be in the years to come.

Of all our discoveries, I am most proud of the move 14.Ba4! played against Nakamura during the Melody Amber rapid and blitz tournaments in Monaco, a very deep idea which was very well developed by Romain. Lots of beautiful lines have still to be revealed. Also the strong novelty 12.Ne5! from the last round of the same event against Aronian gave me a big advantage, although the result was a loss.

Often, the quality of the work of trainers or seconds has nothing to do with the final result. I don't think they're responsible for what happens during time trouble in a blindfold game or in the fifth hour of a long and tense struggle.

What was also very important was that we had the good luck to anticipate the new move 9.c5!? played by Morozevich in Zug in 2013, knowledge of which gave me an important point. So an otherwise original and fresh idea turned out a fiasco for my opponent. Another excellent discovery in Lanzarote was 9.Be5!?, played against

Kramnik. This surprise allowed me to get a huge advantage only a few moves later, something almost impossible in such a well-studied opening as the Queen's Gambit. There were many other improvements and some of them have still not been played.

Our last serious training was in the winter of 2014 when I prepared for the Candidates Tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk. I believe I prepared very well, but the problem was that results came much later than needed. However, as I've already said, I don't think Romain can be blamed for my loss against Svidler with the black pieces, for example. We found a great idea, revived a line with a bad reputation and I got an edge out of the opening, only to spoil it completely and lose. As a result the Candidates was a disaster for me, but I would say my good play in the tournaments which followed in 2014 and 2015 was largely due to the work we did in Lanzarote in the winter of 2014. For example the new move 7...g5!?, which gave me victory over Carlsen in Saint Louis a year and a half later in 2015, was prepared back then.

Romain crossed the 2700 benchmark in June 2014; I would like to think it was because he worked with me, not because he stopped working with me 😊.

This book is about how ideas are born during preparation, about what happens behind the scenes. Until Romain told me he was writing it I had no idea of his plans. I believe chess fans will like the honesty of the stories as nothing is hidden. I hope you enjoy it.

Veselin Topalov
Salamanca, October 2018

Photo Jean-Michel Péchiné (Europe Échecs)



Chapter 1

~ ~ ~

Topalov: A World Apart

For the purpose of writing this book I decided to look at all the games Veselin has played from 1995 until the present, as there were many I didn't know! I must say that, although seeing great moves from a 2800 player sounds normal, it was impossible not to be astonished by some of his games.

Topalov is one of the kings of practical decisions in chess. He regards chess as more a sport than a science. If he thinks an idea will work over the board, the notion of risk is irrelevant to him.

He wants to be on the attack and believes an objectively inferior position isn't necessarily bad if his opponent needs to find several difficult defensive moves. "If that's the only move for my opponent, let's enter the line and see if he sees it!" is his philosophy.

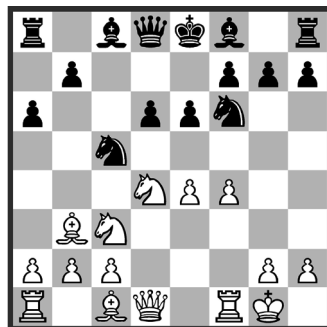
He never liked peace over the board or routine play. The moments where he has refused to repeat moves or has sacrificed something strictly out of intuition are countless.

In short, Topalov's aim has always been to hit hard and bring his own touch to the game, and I think he has succeeded!

I would like to open this book with what might be the most beautiful game Topalov has ever played: a masterpiece against Garry Kasparov, at the Euwe Memorial, Amsterdam 1996.

♁ Topalov, Veselin (2700)
♚ Kasparov, Garry (2775)
♁ Amsterdam 1996

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4
♙f6 5. ♘c3 a6 6. ♙c4 e6 7. ♙b3
♘bd7 8. f4 ♘c5 9. 0-0!?

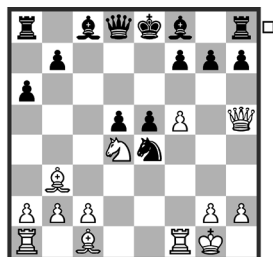


Position after: 9. 0-0!?

The sharpest line: White invites Black to take the e4-pawn, otherwise he will play e4-e5. The other option is 9. ♙f3.

9... ♘cxe4 10. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11. f5 e5
12. ♙h5 ♙e7

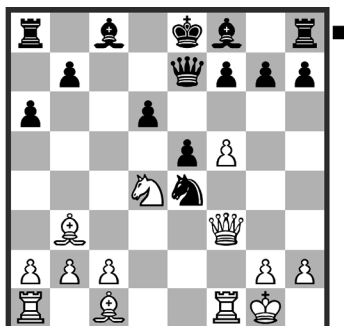
12... d5



Position after: 12... d5

This is the main move here nowadays. Two days after this game Nigel Short used this improvement to beat Topalov himself: 13. ♖e1 ♙c5 [13... ♚c7!? 14. ♙xd5 ♜f6 15. ♙xf7+ ♚xf7 16. ♖xe5+ ♙e7 17. ♚e2 ♔f8 18. ♙g5 has also been played twice, with enough compensation for the piece, but probably not more.] 14. ♖xe4 ♙xd4+ [14... 0-0!? 15. ♖g4 ♙xd4+ 16. ♔h1 e4 is also playable.] 15. ♙e3 0-0 16. ♖xd4 exd4 17. ♙xd4 f6. White has compensation for the exchange, but isn't better: 18. ♙c5?! ♖e8 19. ♖d1 ♔h8 20. ♖xd5 ♙d7 0-1 (46) Topalov, V (2700) – Short, N (2665) Amsterdam 1996.

13. ♚f3



Position after: 13. ♚f3

13... ♞c5

13... exd4? 14. ♖e1+–

14. ♞c6!? ♚c7 15. ♙d5!

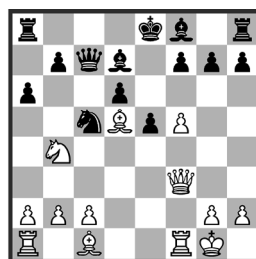
Nowadays engines find this move quickly, but they weren't so helpful back in 1996!

15. ♞b4? ♞xb3 16. ♚xb3 b5! 17. ♞d5 ♚c6 followed by ...♙b7 would be excellent for Black.

15... a5

The human move, trapping the knight on c6.

After 15... ♙d7 Black's life would be no fun: 16. ♞b4



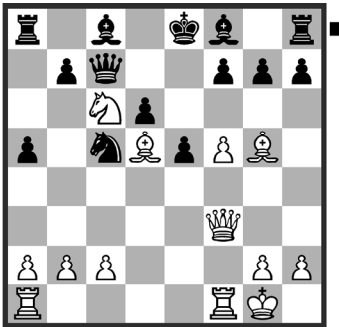
Position after: 16. ♞b4

16... ♙e7 [16... ♚b6? 17. ♙xf7+!! ♔xf7 18. ♞d5 ♚c6 19. ♚h5+ ♔g8 20. f6+–] 17. ♚h5! [17. ♙xf7+? ♔xf7 18. ♞d5 ♚d8 19. ♚h5+ ♔g8–; 17. ♙c4 ♙c6 18. ♞d5 ♙xd5 19. ♙xd5] 17... ♖f8 [17... 0-0 18. ♖f3 ♚c8 19. ♙h6! ♙f6 20. ♖af1 ♖g3 with a winning attack.] 18. ♙e3 and White has huge compensation for the pawn.

16. ♙g5!

(see diagram next page)

The key move. White wants to play ♞d8! Of course Black can't get rid of the g5-bishop by playing ...f6 because of ♚h5+.



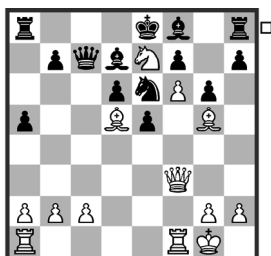
Position after: 16. ♖g5!

16... ♜a6?

16... ♖d7 was the only move, though if White finds the most challenging reply, Black needs a heroic defence.

A) 17. ♖xf7+? just fails: 17... ♔xf7 18. ♚h5+ ♕g8 19. f6 ♖e8 0-1 Degraeve, J (2551) – Ninov, N (2500) Béthune 2006.

B) 17. f6?! doesn't make Black's life particularly difficult: 17... g6! [17... ♖xc6? 18. fxg7 ♖xg7 19. ♖xf7+ wins easily.] 18. ♘e7 ♘e6!



Position after: 18... ♘e6!

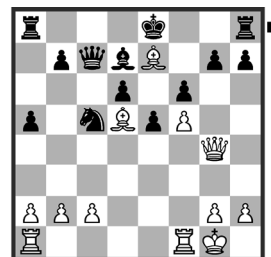
and Black wants to go ...♖xe7 and ...f5. Of course White has some compensation, but the game is very un-

clear: either side could lose within a few moves! For example 19. ♖h4 [19. h4 ♖xe7 20. fxg7 f5 21. ♖f6 ♚c5+ 22. ♜f2 ♘d4 23. ♚d1 ♚xd5 24. ♖xh8 ♔xe7] 19... ♖xe7 [19... g5!? 20. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 21. ♖xg5 ♖xe7 22. fxg7 ♜g8] 20. fxg7 f5∞.

C) 17. ♘e7!N Wow! Scary stuff, but Black is fine with accurate play.

C1) 17... f6? 18. ♚h5+ ♔xe7 [18... ♔d8 19. ♘g6 ♖e8 20. ♖e3±] 19. ♖xf6+! [19. ♚f7+?? ♔d8 20. ♖xf6+ ♔c8→] 19... gxf6 [19... ♔xf6 20. ♚h4+ g5 21. fxg6+ ♔g7 22. ♜f7+→] 20. ♚f7+ ♔d8 21. ♚xf6+ ♔c8 22. ♚xh8 ♚d8 23. f6 is crushing for White.

C2) 17... ♖xe7 18. ♖xe7 f6! [18... ♔xe7 19. f6+ ♔d8 20. fxg7 ♜e8 21. ♖xf7+; 18... ♚b6 19. f6→] 19. ♚g4

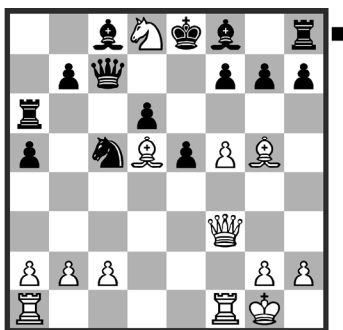


Position after: 19. ♚g4

19... ♖e6!! and Black holds: 20. ♖xe6 [20. ♖xd6 ♚xd6 21. ♖xe6 ♘xe6 22. fxg6 0-0=] 20... ♚xe7 21. ♚h5+ ♔d8 22. ♖d5 ♜c8!? White has compensation, but Black is

probably not worse as he will play ...♔c7 and ...♔b8. When White plays a3 trying to push b4, Black answers ...a4, and it is not easy to 'kill' Black.

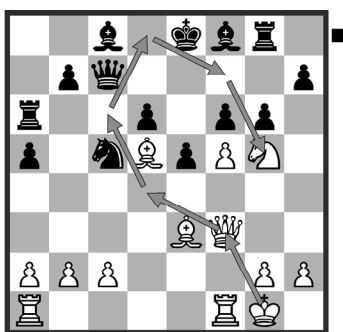
17. ♖d8!!+-



Position after: 17. ♖d8!!+-

Black is already lost!

17... f6 18. ♖f7 ♜g8 19. ♙e3 g6 20. ♖g5!



Position after: 20. ♖g5!

What a magical knight!

20... ♜g7

20... fxg5 21. f6! ♜h8 22. f7+ ♔d8 23. ♙xg5+-

21. fxg6 ♜xg6 22. ♙f7+

Black can do nothing but sacrifice his queen. It took White some time to convert, which is normal, but the rest of the game isn't too relevant.

I give it here just in case you would like to see it to the end!

22... ♙xf7 23. ♖xf7 ♔xf7 24. ♙xc5 dxc5 25. ♜ad1 ♙e7 26. ♜d5 ♙g4 27. ♙e4 ♔g7 28. ♜fd1 ♙xd1 29. ♜xd1 ♜e6 30. ♙f5 ♔f7 31. ♜e1 b6 32. h4 ♜g7 33. ♔f1 ♙d6 34. ♔f2 ♙c7 35. ♔f3 ♔e7 36. ♜e4 ♔f7 37. ♜g4 ♜e7 38. ♔e4 ♜xg4+ 39. ♙xg4 ♙d8 40. a4 ♔f8 41. c3 ♜g7 42. ♙c8 ♔e8 43. ♙e6+ ♔f8 44. g4 ♜f7 45. h5 ♜g7 46. h6 ♜g6 47. ♙d5 ♙e7 48. ♔f5 ♜xh6 49. ♙b7 e4 50. ♙b8+ ♔f7 51. ♙xb6 e3 52. ♙e6+ ♔e8 53. ♙xe3 ♜g6 54. ♙e4 ♜g5+ 55. ♔f4 ♔d7 56. ♙b7+ ♔e6 57. ♙c8+ ♔f7 58. ♙c7 h5 59. gxh5 ♜xh5 60. ♙xa5 ♙d6+ 61. ♔e4 f5+ 62. ♔d5 ♙e7 63. ♙c7 ♜h6 64. a5 ♜d6+ 65. ♔e5 ♜f6 66. ♙c8 1-0

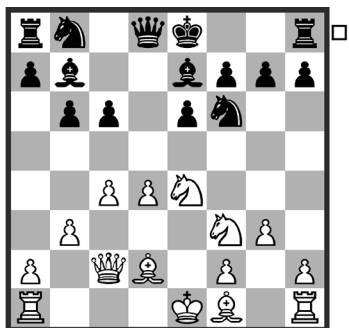
This game shows that one can recognize Topalov's style of play in his opening preparation.

You can imagine what kind of instructions he gives to his seconds: "Be creative and aggressive!".

In 2005, he became World Champion in San Luis, Argentina. A few months prior to winning the title, he won a stunning game against Visly Anand, which is symbolic of everything Veselin loves about chess: sacrifices, intuition – and blood. It gives me pleasure to continue the book with this game.

♁ Topalov, Veselin (2778)
 ♚ Anand, Viswanathan (2785)
 ♁ Sofia 2005

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘f3 b6 4. g3
 ♙a6 5. b3 ♙b4+ 6. ♙d2 ♙e7 7. ♘c3
 c6 8. e4 d5 9. ♙c2 dxe4 10. ♘xe4
 ♙b7



Position after: 10... ♙b7

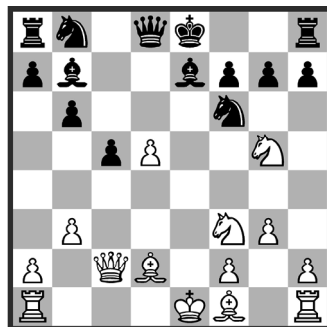
11. ♘eg5!?

An absolute novelty at the time – and quite a bit of bluff since it has only been repeated twice! Typical Topalov!

11... c5

11... h6? is exactly what White was hoping for: 12. ♘xf7! ♙xf7 13. ♘e5+ ♙g8 14. ♙h3 ♙c8 15. 0-0-0 (or even just 15. 0-0) and White has both dynamic and positional compensation: look at Black's development!

12. d5 exd5 13. cxd5

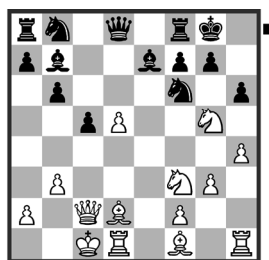


Position after: 13. cxd5

Here Black has already to make an important decision: and Anand made the right one!

13... h6!

A) 13... 0-0? would already be the decisive mistake: 14. 0-0-0 h6 [14... ♙xd5? 15. ♙c3 g6 16. ♙c4+–] 15. h4!

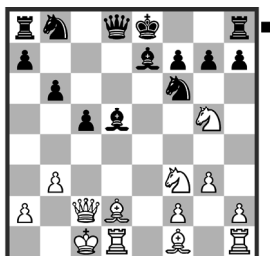


Position after: 15. h4!

A very important idea that became possible as a result of Black making the mistake of castling. 15... ♖bd7 [15... hxg5 16. hxg5 ♜xd5 17. ♚h7#] 16. ♙c3 and with the d6-threat and ♙b5 coming next, targeting the d7-knight, the black position is on the brink of collapse.

B) 13... ♜xd5? 14. ♙b5+ ♚f8 [14... ♙c6 15. ♜xf7 ♚xf7 16. ♜e5+] 15. ♜xf7! [15. 0-0] 15... ♚xf7 16. ♚f5+ ♙f6 17. ♜g5+ ♚g8 [17... ♚f8 18. ♜e6++-] 18. ♚e6+ ♚f8 19. ♚f7#

C) 13... ♙xd5? 14. 0-0-0!



Position after: 14. 0-0-0!

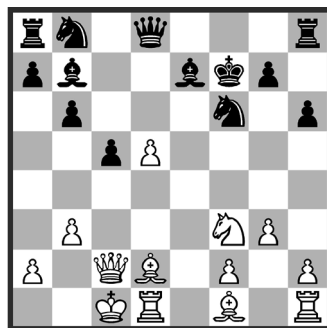
is quite bad for Black: 14... ♚c8 At least escaping from the d-file. [Just giving up the bishop is not enough either: 14... ♙xf3 15. ♜xf3 0-0 16. ♙c3 ♚e8 17. ♜g5 g6 18. ♙g2 ♜c6 19. ♚he1 and White wins material.] 15. ♙c3 ♙xf3 16. ♜xf3 ♜c6 17. ♚e1 and Black's position is a nightmare, since 17... 0-0?! is met by 18. ♜g5 g6 19. ♚xe7 ♜xe7 20. ♙xf6+-.

D) 13... ♚xd5?? loses right away to 14. ♙c4+-.

14. ♜xf7!?

14. ♙b5+ ♜bd7 15. ♜e6 fxe6 16. ♚g6+ ♚f8 17. dxe6 ♚e8!=

14... ♚xf7 15. 0-0-0



Position after: 15. 0-0-0

15... ♙d6

The most logical move, avoiding ♜e5+ and also d5-d6 which is coming soon, if not immediately.

A) 15... ♙xd5? 16. ♙c3+-

B) If 15... ♜bd7 White could play 16. ♙f4! with the idea d5-d6. Black would have to continue 16... g5 17. ♙xg5! when it definitely looks bad for him.

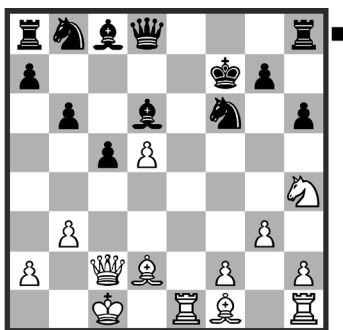
16. ♜h4! ♙c8

A strange-looking move to say the least, but the threat of ♙h3 was just too troublesome.

16... ♜bd7 17. ♙h3 ♜f8 [17... ♙xd5? is still impossible: 18. ♚he1! ♚e8 19.

♔g6+ ♕g8 – if 19...♔f8 then 20.♘f5 wins – 20. ♖xh6 ♖f8 21. ♖xg7 ♖xg7 22. ♘f5+–] 18. ♖c3 ♕g8 19. ♜he1 would be extremely difficult to handle for Black.

17. ♜e1!



Position after: 17. ♜e1!

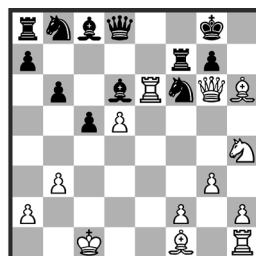
Again an inspired move, with the idea of going ♜e6! The engine gives White sufficient compensation for a draw with various other options (17. ♔g6+, 17. ♖c4 or even 17. ♔b1), but this is definitely the trickiest continuation for Black.

17... ♘a6!

Again the best move by Anand. Black develops and aims for counterplay with ...♘b4.

A) Black could also try to develop his kingside first. After 17... ♜f8 the game might objectively be a draw, but look at the kind of defence Black would have to find: 18. ♔g6+ [18. ♖xh6 gxh6?? 19. ♔g6#] 18... ♔g8 19. ♖xh6 ♜f7

[19... ♜c7 20. ♜e6! is worse as White threatens ♜xd6.] 20. ♜e6! (Δ♘f5)

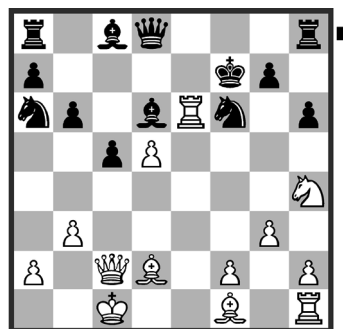


Position after: 20. ♜e6!

20... ♘c6! The only move according to the engine. 21. ♘f5 ♘e5□ [21... ♘e7? 22. ♜xe7! ♖xe7 23. ♘xg7+–] 22. ♜xe5!? [22. ♔g5 ♘f3 23. ♔g6 ♘e5 is a fun perpetual.] 22... ♖xe5 23. ♘xg7 ♔h8□ 24. ♜xf7 ♔g8 25. ♔e7 ♔h7□ 26. ♖g5 ♔e4□ 27. ♘e6 ♔e1+ and Black has perpetual check.

B) 17... ♜e8 18. ♔g6+ ♕g8 19. ♖c4 is just bad for Black: the tension on the e-file is not to his advantage!

18. ♜e6!!



Position after: 18. ♜e6!!

This rook is untouchable, as the d5-pawn has been for several moves. White will play ♖c3 next and Black's position will just collapse.

18... ♖b4!

Best again!

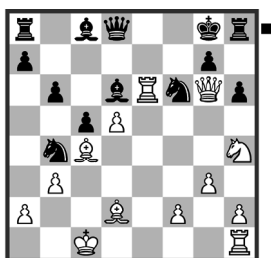
A) 18... ♔g8, pretending that he might want to take the e6-rook, doesn't help much, as after 19. ♖c3 Black would still be very brave to take it: 19... ♖xe6? 20. dxe6 ♖c7 21. ♖c4+.

B) 18... ♖c7 19. ♖c4 is also extremely dangerous for Black: White threatens ♖xd6 and ♖f4, while ♖c3 can also be the next move.

C) Of course not 18... ♖xe6? 19. dxe6+ and ♖xa6 next.

19. ♖xb4!?

19. ♖g6+!? ♔g8 20. ♖c4 was definitely the other option.

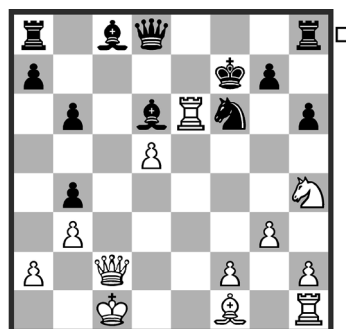


Position after: 20. ♖c4

Black might hold by seeking counterplay on the queenside: 20... b5!? [20...

♖xe6? is still wrong: 21. dxe6 ♖e8 22. e7+ ♖bd5 23. ♖xd5+ ♖xd5 24. ♖xd6+.] 21. ♖xb5 [In case of 21. ♖he1 Black would now be in time for 21... ♖xe6! 22. dxe6 ♖e8! and he is fine.] 21... ♖bxd5 Now it's time to take this pawn! Once again a crazy line follows: 22. ♖f5 ♖f8 23. ♖d6 ♖xf5 24. ♖xd8 ♖xg6 25. ♖xa8 ♔h7 and the engine evaluates the position as equal.

19... cxb4

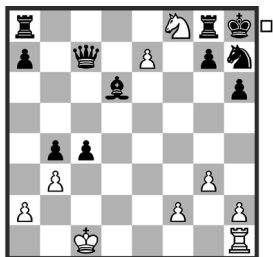


Position after: 19... cxb4

20. ♖c4

20. ♖c6 would regain some material, but that's not what White wants: 20... ♖b8!? [20... ♖xe6 leads to another crazy line: 21. dxe6+ ♔g8 22. e7 ♖c7 23. ♖c4+ ♔h7 24. ♖f3 ♖hg8 25. ♖g6! and Black is in trouble, for example 25... b5? 26. ♖f5 bxc4 27. ♖f8+ ♔h8 28. ♖h7+! ♖xh7

(see diagram next page)



Position after: 28... Nxd7

29. Nf6#.] 21. Rxd6 Qd7 and Black will counterattack on the c-file.

20... b5?

Jumping the gun! Black should have kept this key move for later.

20... Qg8! was correct. It seems that Black holds if he can play like an engine: 21. Nf5 [21. Qg6 Qxe6!? 22. dxe6 Rxc8 Black is ready to take on c4 with (counter) check whenever White plays e6-e7. 23. Nf5 Qf8 24. Re1 Ne8 25. Qb1 Rxc4 26. bxc4 Qe7∞] 21... b5! 22. Rxd6 Qf8 23. Qd3 Qxf5 24. Rxf6 Qxf6 25. Qxf5 Qc3∞.

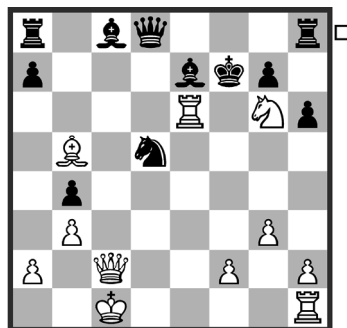
21. Qxb5 Qe7?!

Not a good move, but the position was bad already.

A) 21... Qg8 22. Qc4 and White will play Nf5. Black's position is a disaster. As I said earlier, by playing ...b5 too early, Black wasted an important bullet. Now the c4-bishop is entrenched.

B) 21... Nxd5? loses at once: 22. Qg6+ Qg8 23. Re8+–.

22. Ng6 Nxd5



Position after: 22... Nxd5

23. Rxe7+?!

Not spoiling all the advantage, but instead White could have forced Black to resign! My feeling is that Topalov thought he was winning at once and missed Black's 25th move.

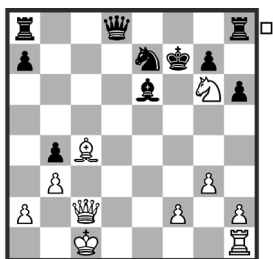
23. Re5! (Δ Rxd5) 23... Qb7 24. Qf5+ and for example 24... Qf6 leads to a nice mate: 25. Qe6+ Qxg6 26. Qd3#.

23... Nxe7 24. Qc4+

24. Qd1!? was a bit easier: 24... Nxc6 25. Qxd8 Rxd8 26. Qc4+ Qf6 27. Qb2+ Ne5 28. f4+–.

24... Qf6!?

24... Qe6



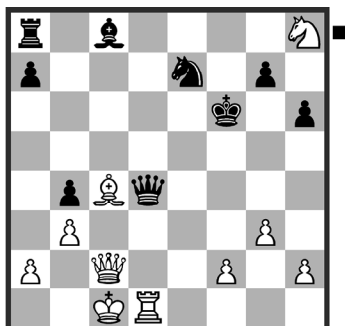
Position after: 24... ♙e6

25. ♘xe7! The right way to win the queen. [25. ♙xe6+?! ♚xe6 26. ♖e1+ ♚f6 27. ♘xe7 ♖c8! and Black has chances.] 25... ♙xc4 [25... ♚xe7 26. ♖e1+–] 26. ♚f5+! ♚xe7 27. bxc4 ♚d4 28. ♖e1+ ♚d6 29. ♖d1+–

25. ♘xh8 ♚d4!

25... ♚xh8? 26. ♖d1 is hopeless for Black.

26. ♖d1□



Position after: 26. ♖d1□

It turns out White wins anyway!

26. ♚b1?? ♙f5+–

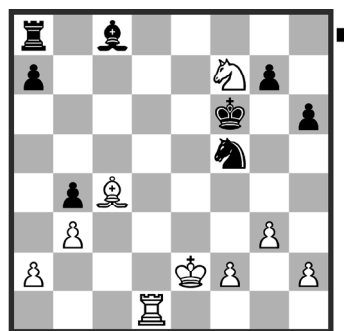
26... ♚a1+ 27. ♚d2 ♚d4+ 28. ♚e1 ♚e5+ 29. ♚e2

29. ♚f1?? ♙h3+ 30. ♚g1 ♖xh8+–

29... ♚xe2+ 30. ♚xe2 ♘f5

30... ♙g4+ 31. f3 ♙xf3+ 32. ♚xf3 ♖xh8 33. ♖d6+–

31. ♘f7+–

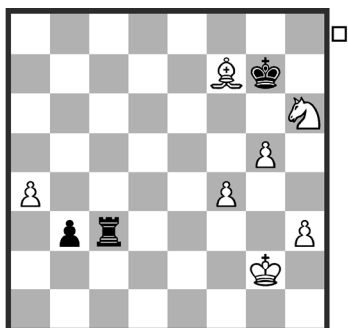


Position after: 31. ♘f7+–

White has an extra pawn and the initiative, which Topalov easily converted.

31... a5 32. g4 ♘h4 33. h3 ♖a7 34. ♖d6+ ♚e7 35. ♖b6 ♖c7 36. ♘e5 ♘g2 37. ♘g6+ ♚d8 38. ♚f1 ♙b7 39. ♖xb7 ♖xb7 40. ♚xg2 ♖d7 41. ♘f8 ♖d2 42. ♘e6+ ♚e7 43. ♘xg7 ♖xa2 44. ♘f5+ ♚f6 45. ♘xh6 ♖c2 46. ♙f7 ♖c3 47. f4 a4 48. bxa4 b3 49. g5+ ♚g7

(see diagram next page)



Position after: 49... ♔g7

And now a pretty finish...

50. f5! b2 51. f6+ ♔h7 52. ♖f5!

Black resigned as he gets mated with g6+, g7+, etc.

1-0

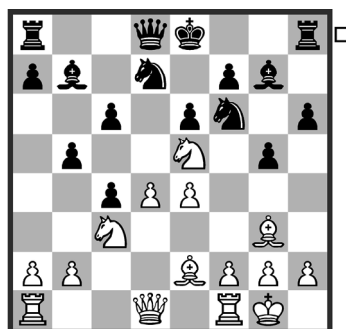
The new computer era is diminishing the possibility of this kind of idea, but the 'Topi touch' has never completely disappeared.

One would think that, in the years after this game with Anand, computers would have improved so much that such creativity had become impossible.

In Wijk aan Zee 2008, Topalov again proved this assessment wrong...

♖ Topalov, Veselin (2780)
 ♜ Kramnik, Vladimir (2799)
 🌐 Wijk aan Zee 2008

**1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. ♘f3 ♘f6 4. ♘c3 e6
 5. ♙g5 h6 6. ♙h4 dxc4 7. e4 g5 8.
 ♙g3 b5 9. ♙e2 ♙b7 10. 0-0 ♘bd7
 11. ♘e5 ♙g7**



Position after: 11... ♙g7

In this well-known position in the Moscow Variation, Topalov decided to go for a new idea: a piece sacrifice! The engine manages to solve Black's problems here, but the question was whether Kramnik would be able to find these moves over the board, as it was almost certain that he wouldn't be expecting the next move...

12. ♘xf7!?

A new move at the time. I remember Topalov smiling at the press conference, after showing the game, saying: "Now I have to see if Ivan (Cheparinov, his second at the time) has more of these ideas!"