

Cyrus Lakdawala

# The Nimzo-Larsen attack

**move by move**

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# About the Author

**Cyrus Lakdawala** is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the US.

## **Also by the Author:**

*Play the London System*

*A Ferocious Opening Repertoire*

*The Slav: Move by Move*

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*The Caro-Kann: Move by Move*

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# Contents

About the Author	3
Series Foreword	5
Bibliography	6
Introduction	7
1 Nimzo-Larsen vs. Classical set-up	18
2 Lines with ...e7-e5 and ...d7-d6	73
3 The Beginner's Variation	146
4 Reversed Open Sicilian	192
5 Reversed Nimzo-Indian	225
6 Réti set-ups	258
7 Reversed London, Torre and Trompowsky	285
8 The Trompowsky Nimzo-Larsen	329
9 Nimzo-Larsen vs. Dutch	346
10 Odds and Ends	360
Index of Variations	411
Index of Games	415

# Series Foreword

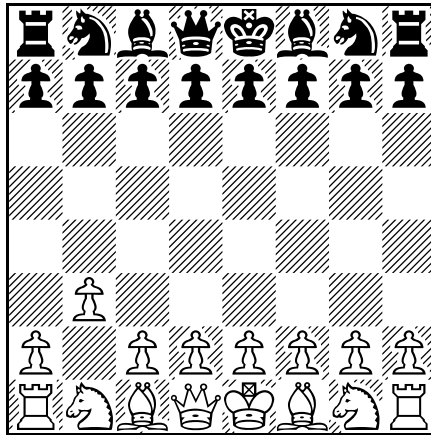
*Move by Move* is a series of opening books which uses a question-and-answer format. One of our main aims of the series is to replicate – as much as possible – lessons between chess teachers and students.

All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions, to test their skills in chess openings and indeed in other key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess openings, and to study chess in general.

Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms,  
Everyman Chess

# Introduction



In the Prajnaparamita Sutra, the Buddha asks: “Can you count, compare, measure, conceive, imagine, perceive, touch or divide the principle of space? Can you approach, reach or attain space? Can space even be described as infinite?” When you begin a chess game with 1 b3, your opponents soon discover that they go to war against a ghost and engage in battles against empty space. If the universe is infinite, then it stands to reason that every possibility – both physical and imagined – must find expression in a manifestation somewhere out there. The Nimzo-Larsen Attack is an opening which fits this theory.

Chess is that strange realm where dimensions of form and that of imagination interrelate and mesh. We play 1 b3, a harmless little move, allowing Black a blank canvas, with scope to set up any way he or she desires. On our very first move we challenge the forces of orthodoxy, who claim that we *must* enter a trendy theoretical line to claim our birthright White advantage. In fact, we cede this point and instead engage in one-on-one combat on raw chess skill, virtually circumventing the entire opening phase (well, apart from some of the super-sharp 1...e5 lines of the first three chapters in this book!). After 1 b3, prepare to enter realms where book knowledge grows vague, and where we must survive only by superior adaptability to the constantly shifting structures. In fact, our entire association with the opening phase (with the exception of a few forcing variations) grows so tenuous that it

virtually disappears. With our first move we give license to free reign on creativity—both ours and our opponent’s. Immediately after our first move, our future appears as a vacant lot. It is actually our opponent’s response which tells us what to build on that lot. We make our way through strange terrain of multitudinous possibilities, diverse futures.

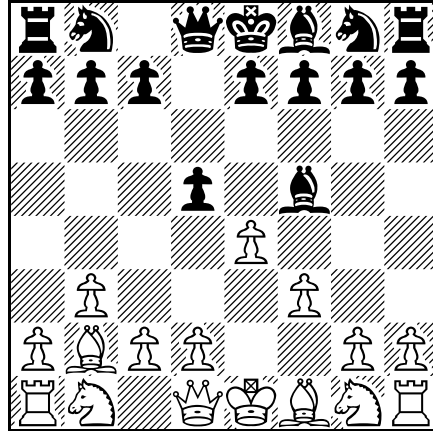
The Nimzo-Larsen isn’t as much an opening as it is a composite of other openings and structural possibilities. In hypermodern fashion – a necessary article of faith for our line – we often allow Black to take over the centre with ...e7-e5 and ...d7-d5, only to attack it later from the sides, and especially pressure it from the vantage point of our fianchettoed b2-bishop. Conquest of the central dark squares can be a key criterion of the Nimzo-Larsen.

## **We are our own Messiah**

The tendency these days is to look for an openings messiah, order his or her books and then faithfully practice the holy teachings. We disaffected Nimzo-Larseners, on the other hand, are sick and tired of waiting around. So we assume the role of our own openings messiah. This book is meant to be a block of suggestions and ideas, not commands to be followed. Most of us tend to play better within a familiar structure. When you open with 1 b3!, more than likely you alone will be within the familiar after a dozen or so moves, while your opponents will wander about, strangers to the alien environments which tend to arise from the Nimzo-Larsen.

I view my books as a joint venture in which you, the reader, and I participate. So I never accept an opening book contract unless I am willing to play the opening myself. I expected to take a hit in rating when I first took up 1 b3. In fact in my very first game, I groaned inwardly when I barely drew with a player rated 450 points lower. Then, as I studied and understood the opening more, events began to turn around.

In this book you are offered a host of idiosyncratic ideas and flights of fancy – over safer, more solid lines – and I encourage readers to follow their imaginations when playing 1 b3. At this writing, my score with the opening stands at 25 wins, four draws and a loss, from an opposition rated around a 2250 average – a far higher percentage than normal scores with my main 1 ♘f3 or 1 d4 lines. Out of these games I achieved very few “+=” positions after the opening, and in most games my opponents equalized (and sometimes stood better!). Yet their troubles arose from the middlegame on. So what was the game changer? Opponents tended to react poorly to the bizarrification of the positions, ate up too much time on their clocks and began to grow disoriented, which in turn, induced inexplicable errors from such strong players. Don’t underestimate the weaponization of the outlandish!



In this position, the Nimzo-Larsen Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, I had White against GM Tamaz Gelashvili at the National Open rapid chess championship. The opening went 1 b3 d5 2 ♖b2 ♜g4 3 f3!? ♜f5 4 e4!?. Now my scary strong opponent, rated USCF 2668, later outplayed me but I hung on to the draw anyway, mainly because he burned so much of his clock dealing with a completely new set of opening problems, whereas I banged out my moves quickly. Why? Because we cover this position in Chapter Seven. So what is bizarre and unfamiliar to the opponent is merely routine, familiar ground for us, the Nimzo-Larsen clan.

## The Division of the Book

The book is, in a sense, dissected into two gigantic chapters: 1 b3 e5 lines, and 1 b3 and everything else lines! Chapters One, Two and Three, the largest in the book, cover the confrontational 1...e5 variations, which you do indeed need to study and, yes, even memorize parts of, since the lines tend to be forcing and quite mathematical. It is in these lines that we are vulnerable to home prep and a crafty opponent's computer analysis, so we must work hardest here in the book. Nevertheless, there is still plenty of room for imagination to frolic. Then we have Chapters Four through Ten, 1 b3 versus everything else. These lines tend not to engage in early confrontation, and therefore allow us to do some really strange things, which I, your enabler, encourage throughout the book!

## The History of the Nimzo-Larsen

In the 1920s and 30s, Aaron Nimzowitsch scored over 80% with 1 b3, and 1 ♘f3, 2 b3. Surprisingly, he played the latter 1 ♘f3 move order far more often than the purist 1 b3 version. He mostly got reversed Nimzo-Indian positions, as examined in Chapter Five, which he understood more deeply than virtually all his opponents.

Larsen, too, did very well with his namesake opening, scoring an impressive 80%, mainly with the 1 b3 move order. Yet, paradoxically, our opening was hit with a terrible setback

setback from a public relations standpoint, when then world champion Boris Spassky dismantled our hero, Larsen in a mere 17 moves in a high-stakes game at the USSR vs. Rest of the World match in Belgrade, 1970. It was painful to watch and not much of a contest. On the one side we observed a salivating cat and on the other a quaking hamster. Somehow this massacre embedded itself in our collective consciousness and now most players associate 1 b3?! with the Larsen-Spassky debacle. I have cunningly hidden this game, embedded somewhere in the notes of the book and refuse to annotate this embarrassment – unless, of course, I end up writing *Spassky: Move by Move!* (In which case I would no doubt extol and wax poetically over the glories of Spassky’s sumptuous attacking skills!)

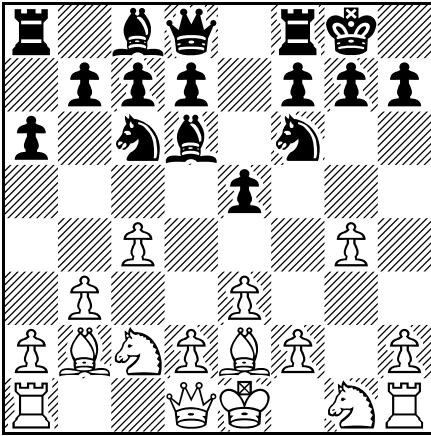
Fischer, in an experimental mood, took up the opening’s mantle in the early 70s, racking up a perfect 5-0 score, an act which injected our Nimzo-Larsen spirits with a considerable boost of confidence – although most players didn’t attribute Fischer’s success to the powers of the Nimzo-Larsen itself, since at the time Fischer slaughtered opponents at unheard-of margins with every opening. Then there followed four decades of dormancy – a lengthy convalescence period (to recover from the Larsen-Spassky game!) – where our opening was left untouched, like rotten cheese past its expiration date, by the upper echelon of chess.

## **A New, Hallucinatory Era for 1 b3!**

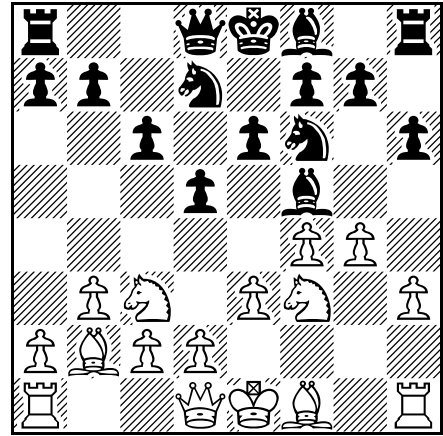
Fortunately, a violin doesn’t lose its tone if left unplayed by a maestro for a long period of time. In the present, our hibernating opening awakens to its old power and glory, none the worse for its disuse. Today, we arrive upon the threshold of a new era for our opening. Armenian GM Tigran L. Petrosian and Georgian super-GM – rated over 2700 – Baadur Jobava play 1 b3 regularly and with success. Modern GMs interpret the opening in a kind of high-end crazy formulation, inspiring a new generation of Nimzo-Larseners. Their play sparkles with anticipatory, child-like freshness, as we try and guess (almost always incorrectly!) their coming moves.

When the Duke of Wellington was asked what his orders were in case he was killed in the Battle of Waterloo, he responded: “To do like me!” And so now we steal a glimpse of our top general’s modern interpretations of our line. (I sneaked in a diagram of one of my games as well. Okay, fine, I’m not included in the list of top Nimzo-Larsen generals, but I certainly qualify as newly enlisted zealot in our war!) Here is just a taste of some of the positions examined in the coming chapters. In each case White submerges himself in fanciful notions and dark alchemies and, in each case, White, the Nimzo-Larsener, functions and pushes forward upon the wind of a fundamentally optimistic premise: I will survive the complications and you, my bewildered opponent, won’t – and in each case they were correct! Behold that hallucinatory, strategy-less netherworld, called the Nimzo-Larsen, where all futures are possible:

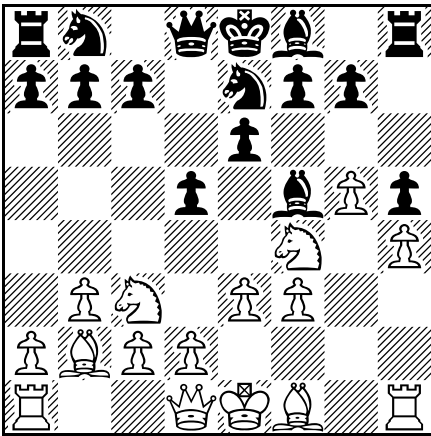




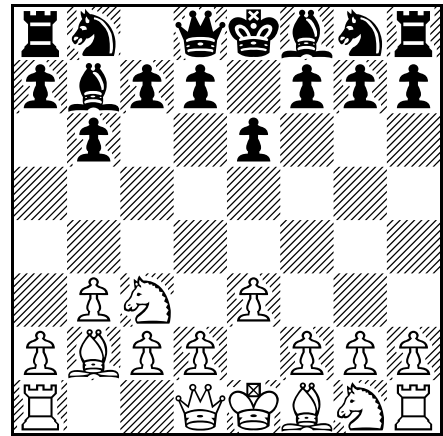
Petrosian-Vishnu (Game 25)



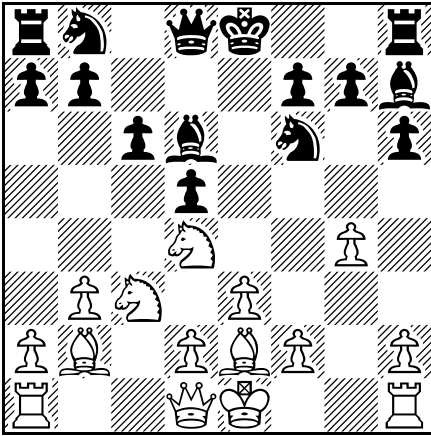
Jobava-Ma (Game 48)



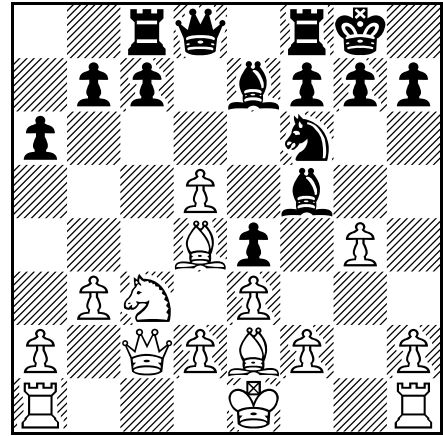
Jobava-Yu (Game 45)



Jobava-Giri (Game 55)



Kharlov-Ernst (Game 43)



Lakdawala-Krishnan (Game 33)

A quick glance at these diagrams and one would believe the book was titled: *The Grob: Move by Move!* The modern interpretation of the Nimzo-Larsen is a virtual ♖c3/g2-g4-fest! To the naked eye, it appears as if White's forces in the above positions lie about in disorderly array, like obese sunbathing tourists littered about the beach. In each case, White unscrews the lid, and allows anarchy and unblocked creativity to pour forth and splash as it may.

Conversely, watch how Nimzowitsch's greater understanding of the structure guides him to the win in the following game:

*Game 1*  
**A.Nimzowitsch-H.Johner**  
 Exhibition game, Bern 1931

1 ♖f3

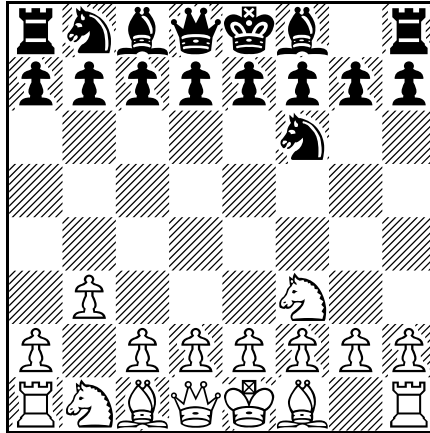
**Question:** Doesn't the Nimzo-Larsen begin with 1 b3 - ?

**Answer:** Technically, yes, but some players start the game with 1 ♖f3 and 2 b3. In this book, the vast majority of the games do indeed begin with 1 b3!

**Question:** Why would White want to avoid the 1 b3 move order?

**Answer:** It has the effect of cutting out Black's sharpest and most theoretical response 1...e5, whose lines we covered for nearly half the book. Which means it is also possible to play the Nimzo-Larsen à la carte.

1...♘f6 2 b3



There we go. Radical stuff back in 1931. The hypermodern's philosophy: a preposterous notion (allow the opponent to take control of the centre, to later attack it from the wings) ceases to bear that label if it can also prove its effectiveness. Sometimes we play a shocking move (yes, 2 b3 was shocking in 1931), not for its inherent power, as much as for the sheer exhilaration of it.

2...d5

In the 1920s and 30s virtually every one tossed in the classical ...d7-d5 response at some point or another. All but a few radical hypermoderns challenged the theory that physically controlling the centre with your pawns was always a positive venture.

3 ♖b2 c5 4 e3 ♗c6 5 ♖b5

Reaching a reversed Nimzo-Indian, which we cover extensively in Chapter Five.

5...♗g4

Not a great line for Black, who usually gets robbed of the bishop pair in this version. We cover 5...♞c7, 5...♗d7 and 5...a6 responses in Chapter Five.

6 ♗xc6+

**Question:** Should White wait for ...a7-a6 before swapping on c6?

**Answer:** Not normally. White often takes on c6 unprovoked in this line. However, he *can* delay by tossing in 6 h3 ♗h5?! (I think this natural move almost gives White a winning position; I suppose Black can change his mind and play 6...♗d7 which would hand White a not terribly useful tempo with h2-h3, whereas 6...♗xf3 7 ♗xc6+ bxc6 8 ♞xf3 gives White a pleasant structural edge without the cost of the bishop pair) 7 g4 ♗g6 8 ♗e5 ♞c8 9 h4!

## The Nimzo-Larsen Attack: Move by Move

(White herds pawns to make the structure pliable to his wishes, threatening 10 h5 ♗e4 11 f3) 9...d4 (9...h5? 10 ♖xg6 fxg6 11 g5 ♘d7 is strategically nauseating for Black, who nurses an awful pawn structure on the kingside, is weak on the light squares, and has handed White the bishop pair – normally Black's birthright in the reversed Nimzo-Indian) 10 ♖xc6 bxc6 11 ♗a6 ♜b8 12 h5 ♗e4 13 f3 with a clear structural superiority to White, E.Dizdarevic-I.Kinez, Pula 1996.

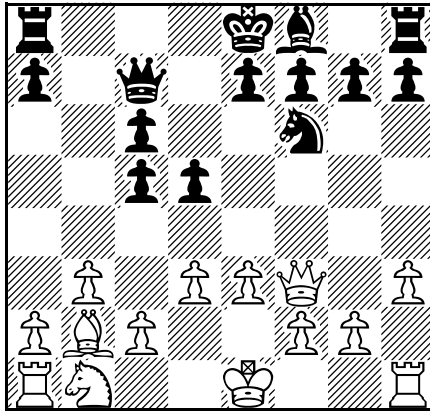
**6...bxc6 7 h3 ♗xf3?!**

Now White has damaged the opposing queenside for free. At least 7...♗h5 8 g4 (White can also play more quietly with 8 d3 h6 9 ♖bd2) 8...♗g6 9 ♖e5 ♘d7 10 ♖xg6 hxg6 gets Black an open h-file in exchange for the bishop.

**8 ♗xf3 ♜c7**

Recognizing the need to fight for e5.

**9 d3**



**9...e6**

**Question:** Why didn't Black play 9...e5 instead?

**Answer:** It violates the principle: *Avoid fixing pawns on the same colour as your remaining bishop.* White seizes the advantage after 10 ♗g3 ♘d7 11 e4 ♜b8 12 ♖c3 ♗d6. And 12...d4?! 13 ♖b1! is even better for White, who now controls c4, may later target c5, and is free to consider both f2-f4 and c2-c3 pawn breaks.

**10 ♖c3**

**Question:** Why can't White win a pawn here?

**Answer:** It isn't worth the loss of initiative after 10 ♗xf6?! gxh6 11 ♗xf6 ♜g8 12 ♗f3 ♗g7 13 c3 a5.

**10...♗d6 11 ♖a4**

Giving notice to Black that c5 is a weak pawn.

**11...♙e5**

Reminding White that control over e5 is a privilege, not a right. Swaps hurt Black, but he had to do something about the b2-bishop's eternal gaze upon f6.

**Question:** Can Black dissolve the weakness with 11...c4 - ?

**Answer:** He merely trades one problem for another after 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 13 dxc4 dxc4 14 0-0 f5 15 e4 fxe4 16 ♖xe4 cxb3 17 cxb3, when Black's pawns – especially c6 – are weak, and his king looks somewhat insecure as well.

**12 ♗xe5 ♜xe5 13 0-0 ♞d7 14 ♜e2!?**

Nimzowitsch wants to slide his queen over to the other side of the board in search of targets. Today's GMs would undoubtedly play 14 c4, fixing the target on c5.

**14...0-0 15 ♜d2!?** f5

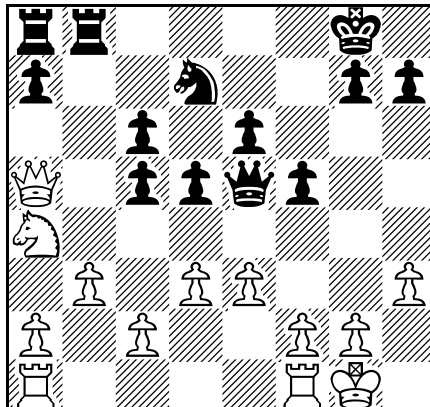
Black hopes to get something cooking on the kingside to distract White from the other wing. 15...a5! was also possible, keeping White's queen off that square, albeit at the cost of a tempo.

**16 ♜a5!**

With this move, Nimzo sends his opponent a message. Not a loud one, but enough to indicate just who is in control of the position.

**16...♖fb8**

Instinct, the more powerful force, generally overrides logic in times of crisis. With his last move Black decides to play for high stakes, refusing to play a defensive move like 16...♜d6.



**Exercise (critical decision/calculation):** Calculate the ramifications of 17 ♞xc5 ♜b5 18 ♞xd7 ♜xa1. Sinister emanations pour forth from c5. Can White take it or not?

**Answer:** White has seen deeper into the position and the move works.

**17** ♖xc5!!

White's knight frolics about in high spirits, the way your dog acts when you return home from a trip. In such positions our likes and dislikes are discarded variables. In math-based calculations, there is but a single solution to the equation.

**17...♖b5 18** ♗xd7 ♕xa1 **19** ♖c7! ♖c3 **20** a4!

Nimzo implements an inestimably crucial component to White's sequence. The rook is chased to a tactically vulnerable square. Those who were aggressors suddenly find themselves in the role of the assailed. It becomes clear that defence of Black's offside rook will prove to be an enormous drain on his resources.

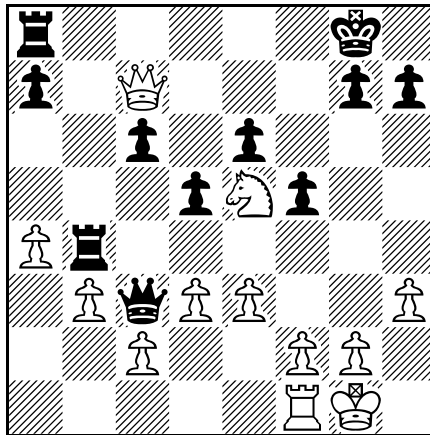
**20...♖b4**

A move which attests to Black's extreme level of desperation. For now, the rook loafes about and runs idle, like a computer monitor on sleep mode. Instead:

a) 20...♖a5? (this awkward move is slow death for Black) 21 d4! h6 22 ♖e5 ♖h8 23 ♗g6+ ♖g8 24 ♗f4 ♖e8 25 ♗h5 mates. Veni vidi vici. In this way White breaks up an oversized, unmanageable whole into scattered, weakened chunks. There is no way to protect g7.

b) 20...♖a5? 21 ♖xc6 ♖bb8 22 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 23 ♖xe6+ ♖h8 24 ♖xf5. White continues to siphon off extraneous black pawns and regains the exchange with four pawns' interest.

**21** ♖e5!



Nimzo strangles Johner's joy with each passing move. He threatens c6, as well as ♖f7+, followed by ♖xe6. White's attacking queen and knight team swim into the nervous black king's line of sight.

**21...♖f8**

Or 21...♖h8 22 ♗f7+ ♖g8 23 ♖e7! ♖bb8 (23...♖ab8 24 ♗d8! ♖xd8 25 ♖xd8+ ♖f7 26 ♖a5! c5 27 ♖c7+ ♖f6 28 f4 ♖xc2 29 ♖f3! ♖xb3 30 ♖g3 g6 31 ♖xh7 is curtains for Black's king) 24 ♖xe6 ♖f6 (24...♖e8?? walks into the smothered mate combination every Russian first grade child knows: 25 ♗h6+ ♖h8 26 ♖g8+ ♖xg8 27 ♗f7 mate) 25 ♗h6+ ♖f8 26 ♖xf6+

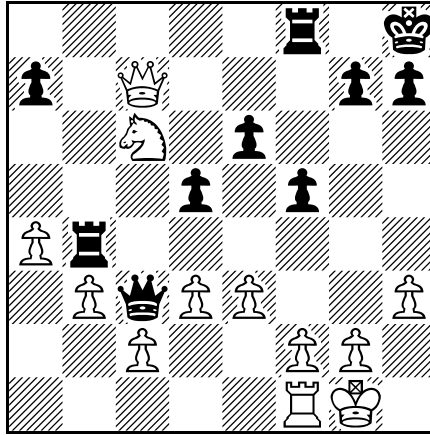
gxf6 27 ♖xf5 and White should convert with three pawns for the exchange.

22 ♖xc6

Threatening ♖e7+ with a discovered attack on Black's loose queen.

22... ♗h8

"This too shall pass," thinks Black's king of the new wave of White's attack. Unfortunately, he is mistaken and his position reaches terminal proportions. Johner by now surely realizes he is caught under the thrall of a power greater than his own.



Black nurtures a final, lone hope for survival – a daydream more than a hope. But his last move overlooks a lethal potential. We sense a foreboding, an absolute finality on the horizon, as a cat's face appears to the goldfish in the bowl.

**Exercise (combination alert):** Find one move and you force Black's immediate resignation.

**Answer:** Double attack. No need for sparkling tactics when inertia does all the work.

23 ♗d6! 1-0

**Summary:** Against the set-up ...d7-d5, ...c7-c5 and ...♖c6, we get a reversed Nimzo-Indian.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks as always to editors John Emms and Jonathan Tait for their insight and suggestions; to comma czar Nancy for her tea-making and proof-reading; and to Tim for his computer backing-uping skills.

May your opponent's eyebrows arch at least half an inch in reproachful bewilderment, and may your imaginations run wild as you open your game with 1 b3!

Cyrus Lakdawala,  
San Diego, July 2013

chief's insult to his enemy from *The Last of the Mohicans*: "Reed that bends...the enemy know the shape of your back, but they have never seen the colour of your eyes. Your name will never be mentioned again in your tribe – it is already forgotten."

If instead 23...♔g8 (the queen enters her room and slams the door behind her – her servants wince upon hearing the breaking of glass and the crash of splintering furniture inside) 24 dxe5 ♕f7 25 ♖d4 ♖xd4 26 ♗xd4 ♕e6 27 ♗c6 ♕xg4 28 hxg4 ♖f8 29 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 30 ♗xc7 and Black crumbles.

**24 dxe5 ♖xe5 25 ♕xc8**

Material begins to hang, as a sad corollary to Black's earlier decisions.

**25...♗xc8 26 ♗d5! 1-0**

After 26...♕d6 27 ♖xb6, we see the true measure of Black's misery as Fischer's pieces crawl in like ants in jam.

**Summary:** Play the 3 c4 move order if you have experience with the Scheveningen Sicilian structure as Black.

*Game 30*  
**R.J.Fischer-U.Andersson**  
Exhibition game, Siegen 1970

In the realm of human achievement, Fischer – psychosis aside – sits among the likes of da Vinci and Mozart in his field. Games like this remind us why.

**1 b3 e5 2 ♕b2 ♖c6 3 c4 ♖f6 4 e3 ♕e7 5 a3 0-0 6 ♗c2**

Still waiting for ...d7-d5 to appear!

**Question:** And if Black refuses to play ...d7-d5, then what?

**Answer:** Then we get something similar to Larsen-Andersson from Chapter Two (Game 20), a much slower strategic fight.

**6...♗e8 7 d3 ♕f8 8 ♖f3 a5**

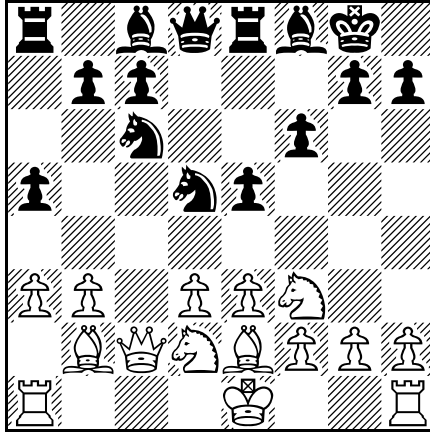
Come on man, get on with it!

**9 ♕e2 d5**

Hooray!

**10 cxd5 ♖xd5 11 ♖bd2 f6**

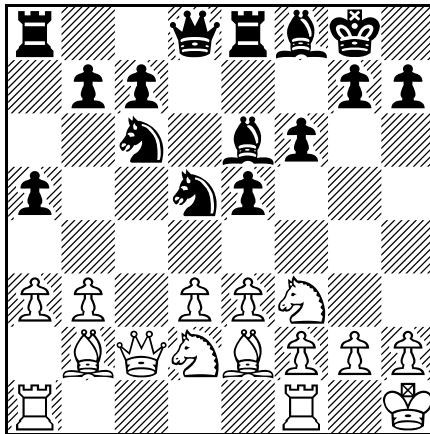




**Question:** What differentiates this position from Fischer-Tukmakov?

**Answer:** Tukmakov played the loosening but more aggressive ...f7-f5. In this game Anderson, true to his nature, plays the super solid ...f7-f6, come-and-get-me formation. He also tossed in ...a7-a5, which weakens b5 but constrains White's queenside ambitions by preventing b3-b4 expansion ideas.

**12 O-O ♗e6 13 ♔h1!!**



“Faith and begorrah!” I muttered to myself, while trying to puzzle out Fischer’s intent when I first played over this game at the age of 10. (Which admittedly is a bit odd, since I am Indian, not Irish. But I was trying to imitate Chief O’Hara, the Irish Gotham City Chief of Police from the 1960s’ Batman TV show.)

**Question:** A random move from White rewarded with a double exclamation mark? Please explain.

**Answer:** A completely new plan of immense gravity and far-reaching consequences takes birth. The double exclamation mark was for the originality of the idea: White plans ♖g1 and g2-g4, after which his knight has free reign over e4, as well as a potential attack. Today, every Scheveningen, Najdorf, Kan and Taimanov Sicilian player is aware of such a plan, thanks to Fischer. Of course, it entails risk for White as well, since he voluntarily weakens his own king. But think about this: the only way for Black to disrupt this plan is to pry open the centre – not so easy, since Black's central structure is rigid for now.

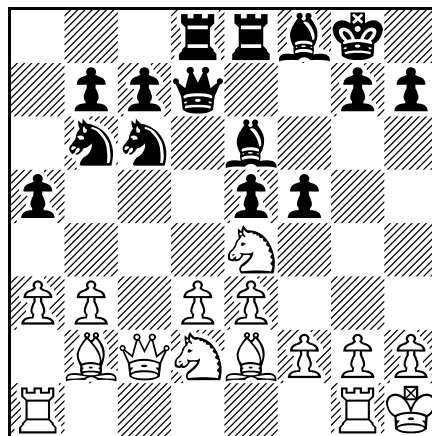
13...♖d7

Clearing a path for ...♗ad8 and making it more difficult for White to engineer g2-g4.

14 ♖g1 ♗ad8 15 ♞e4 ♚f7

**Question:** Why did Andersson allow White g2-g4 after all?

**Answer:** I have a feeling Andersson welcomed the g-pawn thrust and didn't trust Fischer's plan. Black pays a structural price if he attempts to thwart the plan. For example, 15...♞b6 16 ♞fd2 and now if Black takes the nuclear option and tosses in 16...f5!?, there is a high cost to his king's safety:

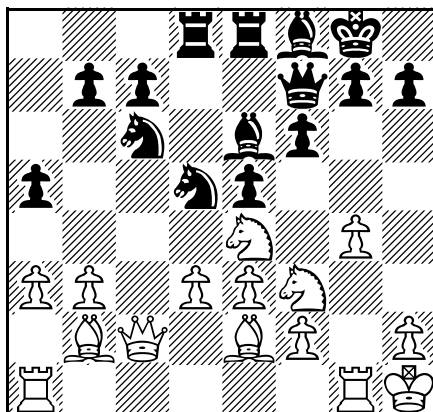


a) 17 ♞c5! ♙xc5 18 ♖xc5 e4 19 g4!? exd3 (19...f4!? 20 ♞xe4 ♙xb3 21 ♖g5 favours White) 20 gxf5 ♖d5+ 21 ♖xd5 ♙xd5+ 22 ♙f3 ♙xf3+ 23 ♞xf3 ♗d7 and I like White's chances with his guns trained upon g7, despite Black's deeply entrenched d3-pawn.

b) At first I thought 17 ♞g5 was White's best, but now I'm not so sure. After 17...♙d5 18 e4 ♞d4 19 ♙xd4 exd4 20 ♙h5! (threatening e8 and also d5) 20...g6 21 exd5 gxh5 22 ♞e6, my intuition tells me this position favours White, but *Houdini* insists that Black is okay:

22...♖c8 23 ♖f3 ♗xd5 24 ♗xf8 ♜xf8 25 ♗xd4 ♖f4 26 ♗c4+ ♗d5 27 ♖f3 ♗xc4 28 dxc4 ♗d3 29 ♜a2 and it won't be so easy to exploit Black's structural weaknesses, since his powerful d3-knight compensates somewhat.

**16 g4**



Genius is not always bound to precepts. In this case Fischer deliberately violates the principle: *Avoid weakening your king's pawn front*. Such decisions are played with irreversible intent: come and get me before I get you.

**16...g6!?**

**Question:** Why did Black weaken himself down the a1-h8 diagonal?

**Answer:** Black probably played the move for the following reasons:

1. He feared g4-g5, and if ...f6-f5, then White may have a g5-g6 zwischenzug which clears g5 for a knight.
2. If White played a future ♗h4, it may have provoked ...g7-g6 anyway.
3. Black may feel a bit safer if he has a chance to play ...♗g7, although this would leave c5 for the e4-knight.

**17 ♜g3!**

White hopes to procure provisions for a long campaign by transferring resources to the kingside. By lifting the rook, he clears the way for the a1-rook.

**17...♗g7 18 ♜ag1 ♗b6**

Attacking b3.

**19 ♗c5**

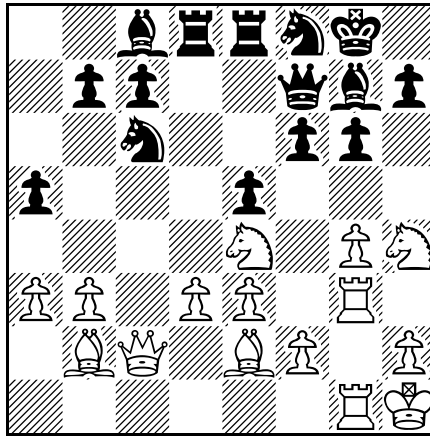
Covering b3, attacking b7, and threatening to pick off the bishop pair.

**19...♗c8 20 ♗h4! ♗d7 21 ♗e4**

White's attack sits on the border of effective and inadequate, and for now remains indeterminate. The black king's safety and White's surrounding forces weigh evenly on the scale – until:

21...♘f8?

21...♖h8! prevented White's next move.



**Question:** I fail to understand the purpose of White's massive build-up on the g-file. Where is his breakthrough?

**Answer:** Up to now, White's kingside forays have only had the effect of nettling Black, more than inflicting any real damage. So let's turn this question into an exercise:

**Exercise (planning):** Black's last move was an error and now, imperceptibly, White's strategic pressure yields dividends. How can White make significant progress?

**Answer:** Fischer's tactic enables him to eliminate a key defender of the dark squares.

22 ♘f5!

What began as a once promising defensive barrier suddenly displays signs of a potential rout. Now the attack surges forth, as if with a life of its own.

22...♙e6

22...gxf5?? loses to 23 gxf5 ♙xf5 24 ♖xg7+ ♜xg7 25 ♘xf6+! (this zwischenzug destroys Black) 25...♗f7 26 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 27 ♘xe8+.

23 ♘c5 ♘e7?

Now something just doesn't feel right in Black's position, the same way a tiger gazes upon a raw slab of meat, swinging suspiciously from a rope in the forest. Black should try to minimize his disadvantage with 23...♘d7 24 ♘xe6 ♜xe6 25 d4! (threatening ♙c4) 25...♘b6 26 dxe5 fxe5 27 ♘xg7 ♗xg7 28 f4, when Black remains in an unpleasant but still playable position.

24 ♘xg7

The old black dark-squared bishop, condemned for heresy, distressingly finds himself

tied to a flaming stake, unable even to cross himself in his agony.

**24...♔xg7**

The trouble with 24...♔xg7? is that White can simply take on b7 now with 25 ♖xb7 ♕d5+ 26 ♕f3.

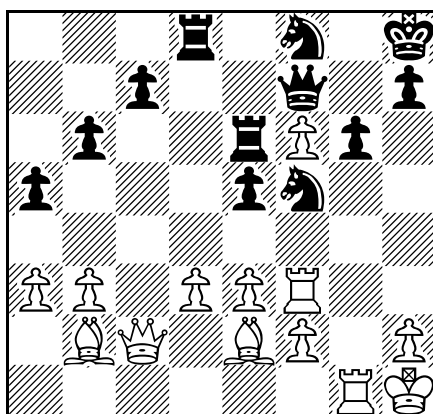
**25 g5**

Of course. Fischer ruthlessly tears down the already weakened dark squares around Andersson's king.

**25...♘f5 26 ♜f3 b6 27 gxf6+ ♔h8!**

Black's only hope is to use White's f6-pawn as a shield. 27...♔xf6?? 28 ♘e4 ♚e7 29 ♕xe5+ is totally hopeless for Black.

**28 ♘xe6 ♜xe6**



Black's defenders remain in a loose confederation of disconsolate clusters, all vulnerable, all ineffective.

**Exercise (planning):** Find a forcing way to increase White's already significant advantage.

**Answer:** Principle: *Open the position when you own the bishop pair.*

**29 d4! exd4 30 ♕c4 d3**

After 30...dxe3 31 ♜xf5! ♜d2 32 ♚c1 gxf5 33 ♜g7 ♚e8 (the queen flails about like a bee on its back) 34 f7! clears the a1-h8-diagonal and mates.

**31 ♕xd3 ♜xd3**

Complete desperation, but 31...♘d6 32 h4! and h4-h5! is crushing.

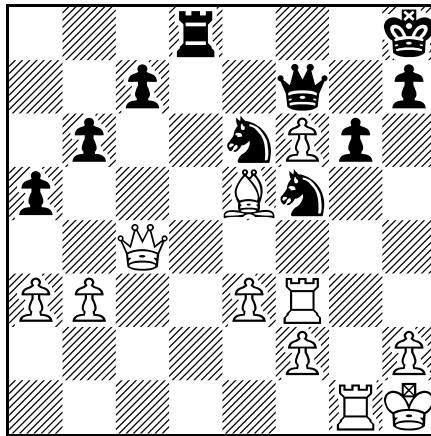
**32 ♚xd3 ♜d6 33 ♚c4!**

Principle: *Swap pieces when ahead in material.*

**33...♘e6**

33...♚xc4 34 bxc4 ♜d2 35 ♕e5 (threatening 36 ♜xf5! gxf5 37 f7 mate) 35...h5 36 ♕xc7 is totally hopeless.

34 ♖e5 ♖d8



In a situation of macabre foreboding, Black's helpless king can do no more than glare melancholy accusation at the growing number of attackers gathering around him. Securing immediate victory is a moment's work, but only if you work out the combination.

**Exercise (combination alert):** Fischer's next move, 35 h4, is winning but not the best. The g-file represents a potential gateway into Black's position. The question is: how can White enlarge the aperture of entry?

35 h4

**Answer:** Three conspirators in on one secret are two too many. The secret, now leaked becomes common knowledge: The key is rook entry to g7, after which all hell breaks loose for Black. In one sweeping motion the blockade falls, and with it all hardship is abolished for White: 35 ♖xf5! gxf5 36 ♖g7 ♖e8 37 f7! (the long diagonal is cleared, threatening ♖g8 mate with double check!) 37...♗xg7 (now the f7-pawn, effervescent with joy, achieves her aim: the death of her sister and her own promotion to queen) 38 fxe8♖+ ♖xe8 39 ♖f7 ♖g8 40 h4 mates in a few moves.

35...♗d6 36 ♖g4 ♗f8 37 h5 ♗e8 38 e4!

An insurance policy against an unwanted future ...♗d5+ trick.

38...♖d2 39 ♖h3! ♗g8

39...♖xf2 fails to 40 hxg6 ♗xg6 41 ♖xg6.

40 hxg6 ♗xg6 41 f4

Threatening f4-f5.

41...♗f8 42 ♖g5!

Threatening ♖h6+.

42...♗d6 43 ♖xd6+ 1-0

44 f5 is next.