

# Reckoning the Polugaevsky

TO TRACE a particular opening line through its evolution can be quite a mystifying and, at times, most trying occupation.

Some years ago I renounced the Black side of the hazardous Polugaevsky variation of the Sicilian Najdorf, and since then I have followed its various ups and

downs with interest. One of the positions most fraught with pitfalls arises after the following initial moves.

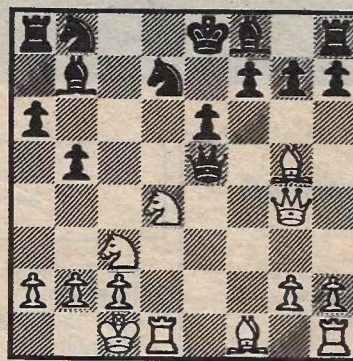
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| 1. e4   | c5    |
| 2. Nf3  | d6    |
| 3. d4   | cxd4  |
| 4. Nxd4 | Nf6   |
| 5. Nc3  | a6    |
| 6. Bg5  | e6    |
| 7. f4   | b5?!? |

This move signals the start of the Polugaevsky.

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| 8. e5   | dxe5 |
| 9. fxe5 | Qc7  |
| 10. Qe2 |      |

On 10.exf6 Qe5 ch and Black recovers his piece with a good game.

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| 10. . . . | Nfd7 |
| 11. 0-0-0 | Bb7  |
| 12. Qg4   | Qxe5 |



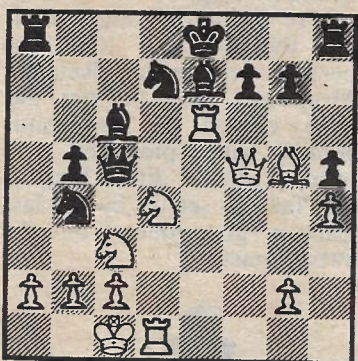
White has several choices at this point, but I consider the key move to be an immediate

- piece sacrifice . . .
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| 13. Bxb5! | axb5 |
| 14. Rhe1  | h5!  |
- Black must kick the Queen; all other moves allow winning sacrifices on e6.
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| 15. Qh4 | Qc5 |
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- This position used to be considered okay for Black, because after 16.Ncxb5 Rxa2 17.Kb1 Bd5 it's not clear just how much White has for his piece. But in Netanya 1976 a holocaust in the form of a Stean v Ungureanu happened.
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| 16. Qg3!! |  |
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varied with 13.Be2 against Grandmaster Sigurjonsson in the England v Iceland Telex match 1977 (see my column for the complete game). Unfortunately Sigurjonsson had a fine novelty in 13 . . . Bc5! prepared and won quickly after 14.Bf3?! Bxd4 15.Bxb7 Bxc3! 16.bxc3 Ra7 and Black mounted a winning offensive against the shattered White Queenside.

Immediately after this game finished I watched as John Nunn, who was also playing for the English side in London, analysed with Stean and showed him what seems to be a refutation of the whole line.

After the defensive 16 . . . Bc6 in the 13.Bxb5! sacrifice line Nunn produced 17.h4! Na6 18.Qd3 Nb4 19.Rxe6 ch! Be7! (or 19 . . . fxe6 20.Qg6 checkmate). 20. Qf5!!



Winning. If 20 . . . fxe6 21.Qg6 ch K moves 22.Nxe6 ch and the Black Queen drops. Alternatively on 20 . . . Qxf5 White has 21.Rxe7ch Kf8 22.Nxf5.

So, with that safely jotted down I trotted off to Asia and I didn't give the line a second thought until I received an airmail copy of *Informator 24* in Malaysia 1978.

Why, why, why is nobody playing 13.Bxb5?

The next day, by pure coincidence, I "asked" my opponent.

Selangor Open 1978.

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| M. CHANDLER | W. B. KEONG |
| 1. e4       | c5          |
| 2. Nf3      | d6          |
| 3. d4       | cxd4        |
| 4. Nxd4     | Nf6         |
| 5. Nc3      | a6          |
| 6. Bg5      | e6          |
| 7. f4       | b5          |
| 8. e5       | dxe5        |
| 9. fxe5     | Qc7         |
| 10. Qe2     | Nfd7        |
| 11. 0-0-0   | Bb7         |
| 12. Qg4     | Qxe5        |
| 13. Bxb5!   | axb5        |
| 14. Rhe1    | Nf6?        |
| 15. Bxf6    | Qxf6        |
| 16. Nxe6!   | fxe6        |
| 17. Rxe6 ch | Qxe6        |
| 18. Qxe6 ch | Be7         |
| 19. Nxb5    | Ra6         |
| 20. Nc7 ch  | Resigns.    |

On 20 . . . Kf8 21.Rd8 ch

## ALGEBRAIC NOTATION

The algebraic notation in this chess column is that used almost exclusively in Europe and in many other countries elsewhere. Each square has one designation only. The vertical files are labelled a to h from White's left. In horizontal rank the squares are labelled a to h from White's end. Normal symbols are used, except that pawns as such are not mentioned; just the arrival square is given for a non-capturing pawn move.

Bxd8 22.Qe8 mate.

Well, he didn't know! In Manila a week later who should I bump into but Michael Stean who was in the Philippines as Korchnoi's second.

I pounced: "What's wrong with the 13.Bxb5 Polugaevsky?"

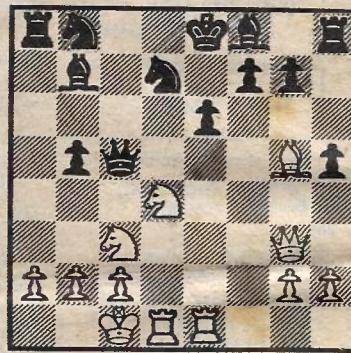
"What indeed," was his reply.

GM Raymond Keene also in Manila with Korchnoi asked what was right with it. When I told him of

20.Qxf5!! he turned to Stean and asked why Michael hadn't mentioned it in the recent article he had written for *Modern Chess Theory*. Stean admitted he had promised Nunn not to reveal the move, and amazingly it hadn't leaked beyond the three of us.

My last question: should I tell Stean that every chess player in New Zealand may now know about the line?

MURRAY CHANDLER



Originally an idea of the English IM John Nunn, this move appears to be almost docile!

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| 16. . . . | Na6 |
| 17. Nxe6! |     |

But that one doesn't! White lures the King to his doom.

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| 17. . . .   | fxe6 |
| 18. Rxe6 ch | Kf7  |
| 19. Rxd7 ch | Kxe6 |
| 20. Rxb7    | Bd6  |
| 21. Bf4!    |      |

Although a rook down Michael Stean shuns the draw that occurred in Nunn-Stean Hastings 75/76, after Nunn took the perpetual check with 21.Qh3 ch Qf5 22.Qe3 ch Qe5 23.Qh3 ch etc.

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| 21. . . . | Nc7  |
| 22. Bxd6  | Qxd6 |
| 23. Rb6!  |      |

And White picks up the Black Queen after 23 . . . Qxb6 24.Qg6 ch remaining with a winning position thanks to his extra pawns and Black's exposed king. Ungureanu resigned nine moves later.

After that game addicts of the Poly began deviating in all directions, one of the most popular being 12 . . . Qb6. However this was soon shown to be dubious — and everybody began switching back to the 12 . . . Qxe5 line again! But what happens if White sacrifices on b5? The game Rayner-Amos (Haifa, 1976) which I actually watched, soon demonstrated the reason.

Instead of playing 16 . . . Na6 as in the previous game, Amos over-protected his knight on d7 and his b-pawn, with the defensive move 16 . . . Bc6 and after 17.Ndxb5? Bxb5 18. Rd5 Bc6 (17 . . . Qc6!) 19.Rxc5 Bxc5 they reached an unclear position, but Black went on to win.

Then it was White's turn to panic, and one of the first to do so was Michael Stean who