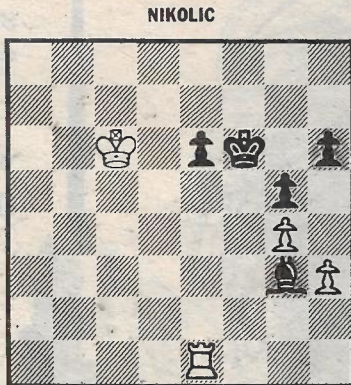


# Oops

by Murray Chandler

**E**VERY chessplayer knows what it feels like to make a terrible blunder. Throwing away several hours of hard work in a moment of temporary insanity is one of the most frustrating things imaginable. Yet nobody seems to have found a cure. The Eastern Europeans are great believers in writing your move down before you play it, and then checking one last time for oversights. But that didn't help Soviet grandmaster Rafael Vaganian.

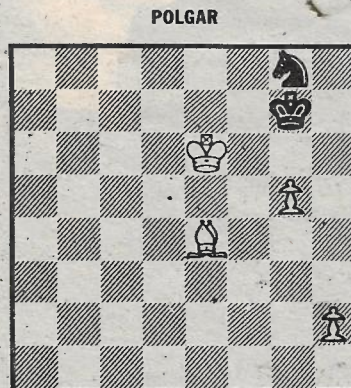


NIKOLIC

VAGANIAN

Play continued 49. Kd7?? Bx e1 and White resigned.

One of the most memorable mistakes of my professional career happened in Switzerland last year. It got a lot of publicity too, as my opponent was the Hungarian Zsusa Polgar. *Schachwoche*, the Swiss/German weekly, proclaimed it the "Blunder of the Century", which may have been overstating it a little.



POLGAR

CHANDLER

After 53. ... Nh6 I played 54. g x h6 ch?? Kh8! and the endgame is now a draw, even with two h-pawns. The Black king can be stalemated, but never ejected from the corner. I had only calculated 54. ... K x h6 55. Kf6 Kh5 56. Kg7 Kh4 57. Bf5 Kg5 58. Be6 Kh4 59. h3 Kg5 60. Bd7 Kh4 61. Kh6 and White wins. After a 20-minute think it didn't even occur to me the Black king needn't capture the pawn.

Apart from fatigue, it is impossible to provide a rational explanation for either blunder. This week's game, however, is a perfect illustration of how preceding events can contribute to the chances of a catastrophe. Curiously, it was played in the same Italian tournament as Vaganian's rook sacrifice.

Regio Emilia 1987/88

BOGO-INDIAN DEFENCE

**A BELYAVSKY**      **L CHRISTIANSEN**  
1. d4                      Nf6

- 2. c4                      e6
- 3. g3                      Bb4 ch
- 4. Bd2                    Qe7
- 5. Bg2                    B x d2 ch
- 6. Q x d2                d6
- 7. Nc3                    0-0
- 8. Nf3                    e5
- 9. 0-0                    Re8
- 10. e4                    Bg4
- 11. d5                    B x f3
- 12. B x f3                Nbd7
- 13. b4                    a5
- 14. a3                    Ra6

American grandmaster Larry Christiansen tempts 15. b5 Raa8 when Black's knight has access to the c5 square. Soviet No 3 Alexander Belyavsky is not provoked.

- 15. Nb5                    Nb6
- 16. Rac1                  a x b4
- 17. a x b4                Qd7
- 18. Qd3                    Ra4
- 19. Qb3                    Rea8
- 20. Rfd1                  h5
- 21. h4                    g6
- 22. Rb1                    Ng4
- 23. Be2                    Qe7
- 24. Rbc1                  c6
- 25. d x c6                b x c6
- 26. c5!?
- 27. b x c5                Nd7
- 28. Nd6                    Ndf6
- 29. Bc4                    N x f2

A desperate bid for counterplay.

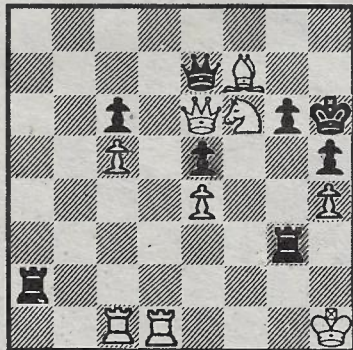
- 30. K x f2                Ra3
- 31. B x f7 ch!            Kg7
- 32. Qe6                    Ra2 ch
- 33. Kg1                    R8a3!

A first shock for Belyavsky. Black is still dead lost, but 34. Q x e7 would allow 34. ... R x g3 ch 35. Kh1 Rh3 ch! (now the White queen no longer covers this square) 36. Kg1 Rg3 ch 37. Kf1 Rf3 ch 38. Ke1 Re3 ch with a draw by perpetual check.

- 34. Ne8 ch

As 34. ... N x e8 35. Q x g6 ch Kh8 36. Qh6 is mate; both 34. Q x a2 and 34. Kh1 were also winning.

- 34. ...                    Kh6
- 35. N x f6                R x g3 ch
- 36. Kh1



- 36. ...                    Q x f7!?

A second queen offer, with the same theme of perpetual check after 37. Q x f7 Rh3 ch. White can avoid this with the zwishenzug (in-between move) 37. Ng4 ch! h x g4 38. Q x f7 Rh3 ch 39. Kg1 Rg3 ch 40. Kf1 Rf3 ch 41. Q x f3 and wins. However, Belyavsky's choice — a queen offer of his own — is just as good. The win is still there.

- 37. Rd7!                    Q x f6!

37. ... Q x e6 allows 38. Rh7 mate, but in fact Black would now have to resign after 38. Rh7 ch! K x h7 39. Q x f6. Belyavsky's following blunder, appalling as it may be, is comprehensible because (1) White was not suspicious of this third queen sacrifice because he believed Black was lost anyway; (2) capturing the queen did not allow perpetual check, hitherto the basis of Black's defence; (3) stalemates in the middlegame are extremely rare; (4) White was probably in time pressure after such complications.

- 38. Q x f6??              Rh2 ch!!

Draw agreed

After 39. K x h2 Rg2 ch! Black disposes of his last piece and is, remarkably, stalemated. A disastrous blunder and a classic swindle! ■