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Inside Chess

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Shirov-Polgar Madrid 1997

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I've always enjoyed the clashes between Alexey Shirov and Judit Polgar. Both players have an ultra-aggressive style and approach each game with a take no prisoners attitude. In earlier games, Judit won them all.

GM Alexey Shirov-GM Judit Polgar Madrid (1), 1997 Sicilian B54

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 d6 6.g4

Black's move order is intended to play a Scheveningen while avoiding the Keres Attack. When Black's Knight isn't on the f6-square, White's last move has always struck me as peculiar.

6...a6 7.Be3 Nge7 8.f4 b5(?!)

With the text, Black doesn't challenge White's play on the Kingside. The most critical line has to be 8...Nxd4 9.Bxd4 (9.Qxd4 e5) e5 10.fxe5 dxe5 11.Bxe5 Qxd1+ (11...Qa5!?) 12.Rxd1 Bxg4 leads to an interesting ending with White having only a small edge.

9.g5! Bb7 10.Bg2 h6 11.gxh6 Ng6 12.Nxc6 Bxc6 13.Qd4! Qh4+



14.Kd2!

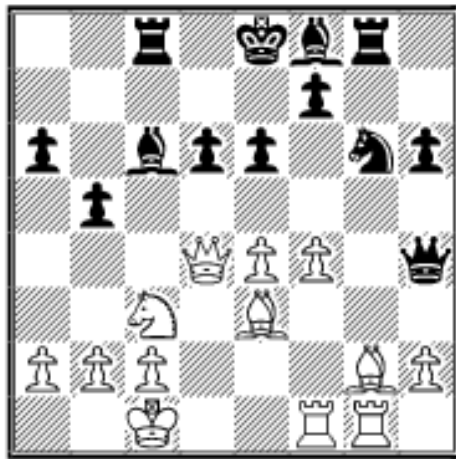
An inventive way to prosecute the attack. It also makes perfect sense. After 14.Bf2 Qxh6 the f4-pawn is far too weak. With all the action going on the Kingside, White's King exits stage left. White's threats now include h6xg7, Qd4-b6 and f4-f5 putting Black's game under

considerable pressure.

14...gxh6

This is definitely what now what Black had in mind with ...h7-h6 hoping to activate the h8-Rook. However, the choices of 14...Qxh6 15.f5 Nf4 16.Raf1 e5 17.Qb6 and 14...Rhx6 15.Raf1 were both worse.

15.Raf1! Rg8 16.Kc1! Rc8 17.Rhg1!



Impressive play by Shirov. He has managed to activate all his pieces on key squares, have a safe King and opened the Kingside to his own advantage. Black is in trouble without, it seems, having made a mistake.

17...Ne7 18.Qd2

A bit of a safety check. While 18.Bf3 Rxd1 19.Rxd1 Nf5 20.exf5 Bxf3 should be trouble for Black things aren't so cut and dry. I like leaving White's Queen on the d4-square and would've preferred 18.Bh1 angling for Qd4-h8 with strong pressure.

18...b4 19.Nd1 Ba4 20.b3 Bb5 21.Rf3 Nc6 22.Rh3 Qd8 23.Kb1!

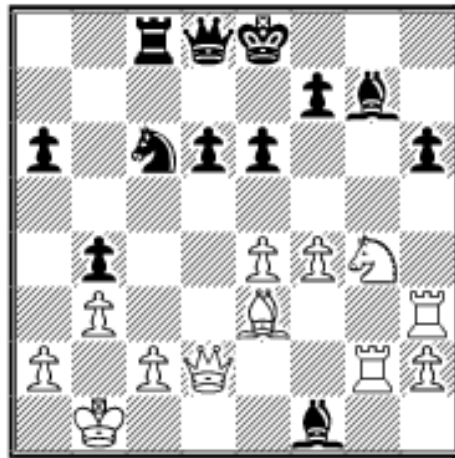
A nice move which highlights Black's problems. How is Black supposed to proceed? Playing for ...d6-d5 is out of the question.

Developing with 23...Bg7? 24.Bf3 only creates a self made pin on the g-file. Besides making White's King that more secure, he now gives himself the opportunity for c2-c4 when the open c-file will no longer have negative consequences.

23...Rg4 24.Nf2 Rxc2 25.Rxc2 Bf1

With a couple of trades, Judit hopes to reduce the pressure. The problem is that the Kingside has been fatally compromised.

26.Ng4 Bg7



27.f5!

A telling blow. The loss of the h6-pawn means that the Kingside is about to burst open.

**27...Bc3 28.Qf2 Bxc2
29.Qxc2 exf5 30.Nxh6**

Simple chess. Now the threat of Nh6xf7 has to be met.

30...Kd7 31.Nxf5 Qg8 32.Qe2 Qg6?

In a lost position, Judit blunders a pawn and the game. She had to try 32...Be5 and hope.

33.Rh6 Qg8 34.Rxd6+ Ke8 35.Qxa6 Ne7 36.Qb5+ 1-0

An impressive game by Shirov. Theoreticians will have to re-think this variation for Black.

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