



COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding



Order

*Mega Corr 3**Edited by Tim Harding*

Who Was Winawer?

The main line of the French Defence arising from the sequence 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 is known in English-speaking countries as the Winawer Variation, but I doubt if many of the people who play it could tell you much about Winawer. Who was he, when did he live and why is the line named after him in some parts of the world but not in others?

This column will answer those questions — without attempting anything like a full-scale biographical sketch of the man.

The naming of chess openings and opening variations is indeed a lottery. In a few cases like the Evans Gambit there can be no argument and the use of the name is universal, but such cases are comparatively rare.

The Warsaw master Szymon Abramowicz Winawer (March 6, 1838-12 January 1920) was a strong player for his time, as we shall see, but he probably has less claim on the opening that bears his surname than just about anybody who has ever given his name to a major chess variation.

On the continent of Europe, the line beginning 3...Bb4 is normally styled the Nimzowitsch Variation, because Aron Nimzowitsch probably did more than anyone else to develop the bishop move into a system. Unfortunately, the 3 e5 line (called the Advance Variation in Britain and America) is also often attributed to Nimzowitsch, and then of course there are other openings and defences that bear his name too: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 of course, but also 1 e4 Nc6 and 1 b3. Nimzo was just too busy inventing openings!

Undeniably, Winawer played 3...Bb4 in a loss to Steinitz in his first international tournament, Paris 1867, two decades before the birth of Nimzowitsch. He also played the “Winawer Variation” on some other occasions, but probably played it no more frequently than the classical French, 3...Nf6. It cannot really be said that he contributed anything important to the theory of the variation, although this may be in part because almost all his opponents replied 4 exd5 rather than 4 e5, which is normal nowadays.

Steinitz–Winawer Paris, 27.06.1867

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4



Black pins the white knight and so threatens to win a pawn. White can either maintain the tension (4 Bd3), gambit the pawn (rarely tried in the 19th century) or resolve the tension in various ways.

By comparison, while the classical 3...Nf6 was usually met in the 19th century by the pin 4 Bg5 the move 4 e5 was also becoming considered as critical. Of course with the knight on f6, e4-e5 has a threat but against 3...Bb4 the pawn advance has no threat and this is presumably why it was almost never considered seriously.

Since Nimzowitsch, a player committing himself to 3...Bb4 is aware of the likely trade-off that will arise when Black (almost inevitably) continues ...Bb4xNc3. White obtains the bishop pair but incurs a doubled c-pawn, which becomes a long-term target for his opponent. I doubt if Winawer was more than dimly aware of such issues.

4 exd5 exd5 5 Bd3

Moles pointed out that Steinitz had already met 3...Bb4 on at

least three previous occasions including the 7th game of his 1863 match with Joseph Blackburne (“not the first time that Blackburne employed it”) and said that “no doubt even earlier examples can be dug up”. In that game, Steinitz played 5 Nf3 and beat Blackburne.

5...Be6 6 Nf3 h6

Instead of this “provincial move”, Blackburne improved with 6...Nf6 against Steinitz in 1868 and drew.

7 0–0 Bxc3 8 bxc3 Nd7 9 Rb1 Nb6? 10 Ne5 Ne7 11 f4 Bf5 12 Bxf5 Nxf5 13 Ba3 Nd6 14 f5 Ne4 15 f6!+- g6 16 Qg4 Qc8 17 Qxg6 Qe6 18 Qg7 0–0–0 19 Nxf7 Nxc3 20 Nxd8 Rxd8 21 f7 Nd7 22 Rbe1 Ne2+ 23 Kh1 c5 24 Bxc5 Qe4 25 f8Q Nxf8 26 Rxf8 Ng3+ 27 Qxg3 Rxf8 28 Bxf8 1–0

Irish master John Moles, back in the 1970s, wrote an excellent book (‘The French Defence: Main Line Winawer’). Moles remarks that the Polish player’s handling of the opening against Steinitz “suggests that even by the standards of his time he had little understanding of the problems of the defence ... and while he himself presumably played the Winawer before 1867 it is unlikely that he even deserves to be considered an innovator”.

Databases such as the ChessBase MegaBase2003 make it easier than it was in the 1970s to look for anticipations of opening innovations. The earliest two games with 3...Bb4 included there were both from a match Louis Paulsen v Ignatz Kolisch, London 1861, and both were drawn. In other sources, I find that Cecil de Vere and Blackburne also played 3...Bb4 against Paulsen that year.

Until the early 1880s, almost all games continued either 4 exd5 or 4 Bd3 — for example Zukertort played 4 exd5 against De Vere in a game published in the City of London Chess Magazine in the 1870s. W.N.Potter’s note was “This we consider the best reply to Black’s last move; the alternative move of B to Q3 being, in our opinion, inferior”. So it is clear

that in this era even the world's leading players were unwilling to consider 4 e5, closing the centre.

A rare exception was J.Von Minckwitz-E.Von Schmidt, Leipzig match 1866, where White tried 4 a3 Bxc3+ 5 bxc3 dxe4 6 Qg4 Nf6 7 Qxg7 Rg8 8 Qh6 which later became quite an important alternative to the main line.

As late as the 8th edition of the *Handbuch*, edited by Schlechter, the variation 3...Bb4 still only was considered worthy of two rows, one covering 4 Bd3 c5! and the other 4 exd5!, with a footnote mentioning 4 Qg4 and 4 a3 (see pages 796-7). So half a century after Steinitz-Winawer, 4 e5 (now generally reckoned as critical) was still not being taken seriously.

However, Winawer does appear to have been the first person to meet 4 e5 in a competitive game. In the great London tournament of 1883, the English player Mortimer played 4 e5 but after 4...c5 White chose neither of the moves considered good today (5 a3 and 5 Bd2) but played 5 Be3. Here is that game with the contemporary annotations from the tournament book, written by the editor J.I.Minchin (in quotes, and some further comments of my own.

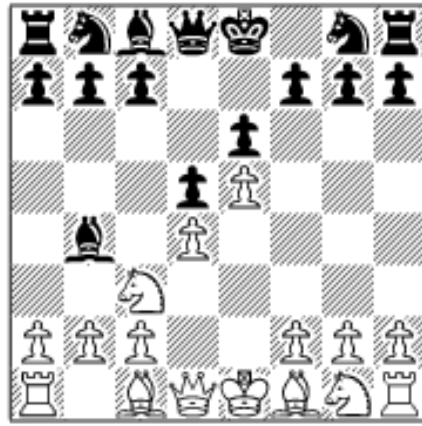
James Mortimer–Szymon Winawer London 1883

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4

Minchin gives this move a question mark — and White's reply gets the same.

The first game I have found in which Nimzowitsch played 3...Bb4 was against George Thomas at Marienbad (Marianske Lazne) in 1926; White replied 4 Nge2 and lost; in a later game, Thomas tried 4 e5 and Nimzowitsch replied 4...b6. Then in 1928, Lajos Steiner replied 4 e5 c5 5 Bd2 and beat Nimzowitsch.

4 e5



“White should change the Pawns, and no possible good could accrue from Winawer’s premature sortie of the Bishop. Advancing the pawn is the primary cause of White’s subsequent difficulties.”

4...c5

4...Ne7 was apparently played first in Von Gottschall-Tarrasch, Nuremberg 1888.

5 Be3

This move has since been played in a few games, but not by any major master.

The “modern” main line 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 was probably first seen in Von Gottschall-Tarrasch, Nuremberg 1896; White played 7 f4 and lost in 100 moves. It is interesting — in view of the subsequent attribution of 3...Bb4 to Nimzowitsch — that his arch-rival Tarrasch got there first! The idea was forgotten until it was developed in the early 1930s by Alatortsev, Botvinnik and Dubinin.

5...Nc6

Winawer answers the threat to his c-pawn by a sensible developing move but 5...Ne7, 5...cxd4 and 5...Qa5 have also been seen.

6 Qg4 g6 7 Bb5? Qa5



“Mr Mortimer does not understand the principles of the close game. He is now in a very bad way.”

8 Bxc6+ bxc6 9 Bd2 cxd4 10 Qxd4 c5 11 Qh4 Ba6 12 Nb1?

“White’s game is difficult, and he is subject to an annoying attack, but this move is about the worst he

could select.” 12 Qg4 “with a view of playing Nge2 seems to give the best chances of success”.

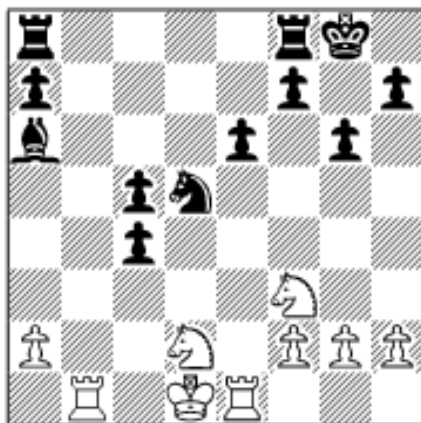
12...Qb5 13 c4?

13 Bxb4 “is far less disastrous”.

13...Bxd2+ 14 Nxd2 Qxb2 15 Rb1 Qxe5+ 16 Kd1 dxc4 17 Ngf3 Qd5 18 Qe4

“White is impatient for his fate. Changing Queens can only add to the certainty and speed of his end.”

18...Ne7 19 Re1 0–0 20 Qxd5 Nxd5



21 Ne4 Rfd8 22 Kc1 Nb4 23 Nxc5 Nd3+ 24 Nxd3 cxd3 25 Kd2 Bc4 26 Rb2 Bd5 27 Re3 Rab8 28 Rxb8 Rxb8 29 Rxd3 Bxf3 30 Rxf3 Rb2+ 31 Ke3 Rxa2 32 Rf4 Ra3+ 33 Kd2 a5 34 Kc2 Kg7 35 Kb2 Rd3 36 Kc2 Rd5 37 Ra4 Kf6 38 g3 Rb5 39 Kd3 Ke5 40 Re4+ Kd6 41 Rc4 Rc5 42 Ra4 h5 43 h3 e5 44 f4 exf4 45 Rxf4 Rf5 46 Ra4 Rf3+ 47 Ke4

Rxg3 48 Rxa5 Rxh3 49 Ra6+ Ke7 50 Ke5 Rf3 51 Ra7+ Kf8 0-1

“This is one of the worst games played by Mr Mortimer

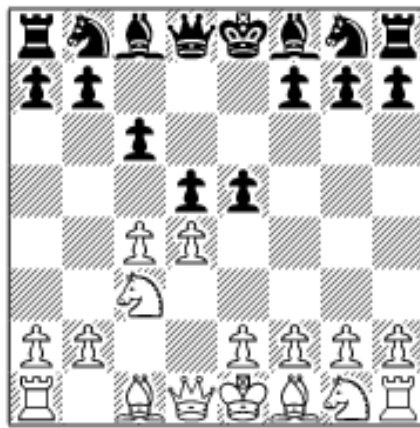
throughout the Tournament,” concluded Minchin. Since Mortimer (apart from four replayed draws) scored 3/26, that is saying something!

Apart from the French Defence, Winawer also has another important opening line named after him: here is the game where he introduced it.

Frank Marshall-Szymon Winawer Monte Carlo 1901

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 e5!?

In this case, Winawer does seem to be a genuine innovator although he only seems to have played it once in a competitive event. (That could be partly because this was his very last international tournament.) The *Handbuch* indeed attributes the move 3...e5 to him and databases do not throw up any anticipations of this move.



4 cxd5

Marshall prefers to decline the pawn and play a sharp attack of his own. In a later round from the same event, Alapin-Marco went 4 dxe5 d4 5 Ne4 Qa5+ 6 Nd2 Bf5 7 Ngf3 c5 8 Qb3 Nd7 with a sharp position and Black won in 54 moves.

4...cxd5

This position can also arise via the Slav Exchange (3 cxd5 cxd5 4 Nc3 e5).

5 e4 dxe4 6 d5?!

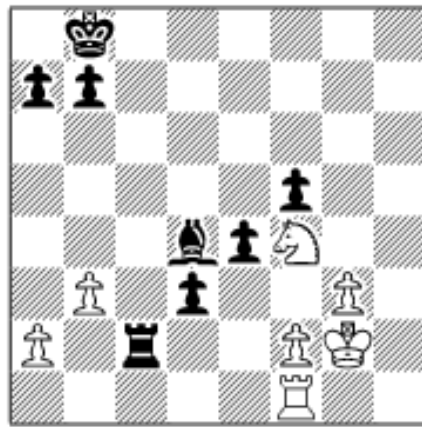
6 Bb5+ is now considered a somewhat unclear line, with various options for White after 6...Bd7 7 dxe5 Bb4.

6...Nf6 7 Bg5 Qb6 8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 Bb5+ Bd7 10 Bxd7+ Nxd7

11 Nge2 f5 12 Qa4 0–0–0

White has nothing for the sacrificed pawn.

**13 d6 Kb8 14 Qc4 Nc5 15 0–0 Qxd6 16 Qxf7 Qg6 17 Qc4
Rg8 18 g3 Qe6 19 Qxe6 Nxe6 20 Rad1 Nd4 21 Kg2 Bc5 22
Na4 Be7 23 Nac3 h5 24 Nxd4 exd4 25 Ne2 Bf6 26 b3 Be5 27
Rfe1 d3 28 Ng1 h4 29 Nh3 Rc8 30 Rc1 hxg3 31 Rxc8+ Rxc8
32 hxg3 Rc2 33 Nf4 Bd4 34 Rf1**



34...Bxf2! 35 Kh3

White could resign; if 35 Rxf2 d2 and the passed d-pawn wins the white rook.

**35...Rxa2 36 Kh4 d2 37 Rd1 Bd4
38 Ne2 Ra1 39 Rxd2 Be3 40 Rd8+
Kc7 0–1**

In recent years there has been quite a lot of interest in the Winawer Counter-Gambit. Objectively, it would be better if we just left this as his legacy and called 3...Bb4 in the French by some other name, especially as his name is usually incorrectly pronounced in English speaking countries. (Instead of “Win-ah-whirr”, since the name is Polish, I guess it should be “Veen-ah-ver”.)

However, the attribution of the 3...Bb4 French to Winawer is so long-established now, especially in Britain and America, that we are unlikely to see a change.

Winawer’s career

So far we have not really seen anything special about Mr Winawer. Nevertheless, his statistics are moderately impressive.

There is a website where players are assigned historic Elo ratings and world rankings based on them. I don’t know how

accurate these are, especially for the 19th century, but you may like to take a look at:

<http://www.chessmetrics.com/PL/PL44229.htm>

Here you can see the statistics and a graph for Winawer. With a career spanning from Paris 1867 to Monte Carlo 1901, he was in the world top ten for more than 20 years (apart from some inactive years). Of course, that is not saying as much as it would today, or even in the early 19th century, because there were relatively few top-rank chess masters in the 1870s and 1880s.

This chessmetrics site estimates his highest world ranking as #3 (behind Steinitz and Zukertort presumably) at the end of 1882, but his peak rating 2658 in 1880 when he was ranked slightly lower.

At Paris 1867, despite the loss we saw above, the (then unknown) Polish master finished second equal with Steinitz (behind Ignaz Kolisch, who soon retired from chess and became a financier under the wing of Rothschild.)

In 1868, Winawer won the first Polish tournament in history (held in Warsaw) according to the *Soviet Chess Encyclopaedia*. At this time his native Poland was a province of the Tsarist empire and many of the greatest European players came from there; later Rubinstein and Najdorf continued the tradition.

In 1875 Winawer visited St Petersburg. He won a match with the Russian master I.Shumov 5-2 and defeated Russia's leading player in the following game that is still in the theory books.

Szymon Winawer–Mikhail Chigorin St Petersburg, 1875

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 b4 Bxb4 5 c3 Ba5 6 d4 exd4 7 0–0 dxc3

The Compromised Defence was a risky winning attempt by the Russian, who in later years became the world's greatest exponent of the Evans Gambit. (At this time, Zukertort probably

knew the gambit best and, like Chigorin, was prepared to play either colour.) At Warsaw in 1882, Chigorin preferred the Normal Defence against Winawer and won.

8 Qb3 Qf6 9 e5 Qg6 10 Nxc3 Nge7 11 Ba3 b5!?



This is a counter-sacrifice to gain time for development and to open the b-file. Subsequent to the present game, Chigorin and other masters preferred 11...0-0 and then after 12 Rad1 the move 12...b5 is one option, but not the only one. The position is very complicated but in practice it is hard to defend Black's position.

12 Nxb5 Rb8 13 Bxe7!

The old *Handbuch* suggestion 13 Qe3!? Bb6 14 Qf4 0-0 15 Rad1 has received little attention. 13 Qa4?! was often preferred in the 19th century but is not so clear. A famous Blackburne blindfold simultaneous win (England 1875) went 13...a6 14 Nd6+! cxd6 15 exd6 Nf5 16 Rae1+ Bxe1 17 Rxe1+ Kf8? 18 Qxc6! 1-0 (18...dxc6 19 d7+). However, 17...Nfe7! was found by a Glasgow player against Blackburne in a later simul. White may have only a draw in this highly unclear position and as a result Blackburne himself came to believe his rook sacrifice was not completely sound.

13...Kxe7

Not 13...Nxe7? 14 Nd6+ and White won in Schallopp-Hein, Hamburg 1868. If 13...a6 (Blijdenstein-Zukertort, Simpsons Divan, London 1874) then probably 14 Qa4! is correct.

14 Qe3!?

The old *Deutsche Schachzeitung* suggestion 14 Qa3+ (a zwischenzug to divert Black's bishop) 14...Bb4 15 Qe3 may be

even stronger. Then if 15...Kd8 16 Ng5 Rf8 17 Rad1 a6 18 e6 with a fierce attack.

14...Bb6

If 14...Bb7 15 Rad1 (Maybe better is 15 Qf4) 15...Bb6 16 Qa3+ Kd8 17 Rfe1 Re8 18 Bd5 a6 19 Nc3 Kc8 20 g3 Na7 (Tippin-Fink, California Ch 1930) 21 Bxb7+ Rxb7 22 Nd5 with good attacking chances.

15 Qa3+

15 Qf4!? is a computer suggestion.

15...Kd8 16 Rfe1

16 Rad1!? was successful in a later game Mortimer-Lasker, London 1891 (but Emanuel Lasker was giving a simul!).

16...Bb7?

16...Qc2 should have been played at once, throwing a spanner in the works. Nevertheless, after 17 Rac1 Qxf2+ 18 Kh1 Qc5 (18...a6 19 Bxf7 axb5 20 e6 looks very unhealthy for Black) 19 Qd3 White's chances are to be preferred as he has assembled considerable firepower and Black's king is vulnerable in the centre.

17 Rad1 Qc2 18 e6!



White has a winning attack. If now 18...Qxc4 19 Ng5!.

18...Ne5 19 Nfd4?!

Probably good enough to win, but this move is not best. Romanov later found 19 Rxe5! Qxd1+ 20 Re1 Qc2 21 e7+ Ke8 22 Qc5!! and computers confirm his analysis.

19...Nxc4 20 Nxc2 Nxa3 21 Rxd7+ Kc8 22 Ncxa3 fxe6 23 Rxd7 a6 24 Nxc7 Rf8 25 Rc1! Bxf2+ 26 Kh1 Be3 27 Nxe6+! Bxc1 28 Rc7 mate (1–0).

Winawer's peak years in international competition were 1878-83, the highlights being:

- Paris 1878 1st= with Zukertort, but losing the playoff +0 =2 -2.
- Berlin 1881 3rd-4th (with Zukertort).
- Vienna 1882 1st= with Steinitz, drew play-off match +1 =0 -1.
- Nuremberg (3rd German Congress) 1883 1st

Szymon Winawer – Louis Paulsen Vienna 1882

1 e4 c5

Paulsen was one of the pioneers of the Sicilian Defence. Winawer liked to double his opponent's c-pawn and this is one of the occasions where he was able to do it.

2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qb6 4 Bb5 e6

Black plans ...Nd4 which doesn't work immediately because of 5 Nxd4 exd4 6 Nd5 Qxb5?? 7 Nc7+. So now Winawer chops the knight off, but it's somewhat surprising that Paulsen did not recapture with the queen.

5 Bxc6 bxc6

Presumably Black expected to get counterplay on the b-file but it doesn't work out that way.

6 d3 Ba6 7 0–0 d5 8 b3 Rd8 9 Qe2 Nf6 10 Na4 Qc7 11 c4!



White fixes the doubled pawn preparatory to a siege that begins next move. This is somewhat reminiscent of the way the Grand Prix Attack used to be played in the 1970s and 1980s.

11...Be7 12 Ba3 dxc4 13 dxc4 Nd7 14 Rfd1 0-0 15 Rd2 Ne5 16 Nxe5 Qxe5 17 Rad1 Rxd2 18 Qxd2

White's strategy has been completely successful because of Black's ruined queenside pawns, while the white knight is a better piece than the light-squared bishop.

18...f5!?

If 18...Qxe4 19 Bxc5 is strong (clearly the bishop cannot be captured because of the knight fork on c5), so Black lashes out in the search of counterplay.

19 Bb2!? Qxe4 20 Re1 Qg4 21 Qd7 Bh4 22 Qxe6+ Kh8 23 g3 h5 24 f3 Qg5 25 Bc1 f4 26 Re5 Bc8 27 Rxc5 Bxe6 28 gxh4 Bh3 29 Nxc5 Re8 30 Kf2 1-0

This is one game where Winawer may be identified as a precursor of Nimzowitsch.

The Vienna result was probably the highlight of his career because this double-round tournament (financed by Kolisch) was one of the greatest chess events of the 19th century. By contrast, his result in London 1883 was rather disappointing. He was then 45 years old but the tournament winner Zukertort, who carried all before him, was only four years younger.

The contrast between the subsequent career of the two Polish-born masters is poignant. By 1888, Zukertort had lost the world championship match to Steinitz and then died, but Winawer lived on until 1920. It is not surprising that Zukertort had a plus

score in their meetings. The following game may have been the first time that Winawer was victorious.

Szymon Winawer–Johannes Zukertort Paris 1878

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Bb4 5 Nd5

This is rather unambitious. Nowadays 5 0–0 is almost invariably played but maybe Winawer wanted to simplify or was worried about his c-pawn being doubled.

5...Bc5!?

5...Nxd5 6 exd5 e4 (6...Nd4 was the move usually played in the 1870s and 1880s.) 7 dxc6 dxc6 8 Be2 exf3 9 Bxf3 0–0= Shiffers-Steinitz, Hastings 1895, is given in ECO. Black's 9th improved on 9...Qe7+ as in Albin-Baird, Manhattan 1893.

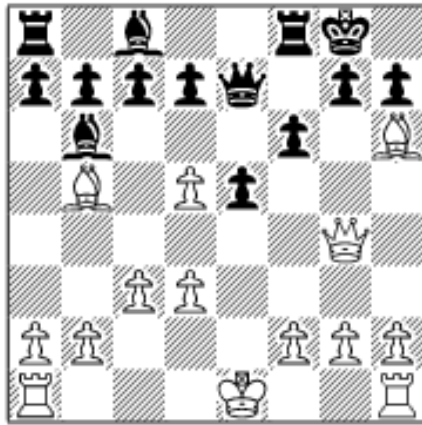
6 d3

Flechsigt-Englisch, Leipzig 1877, had gone 7 c3, offering the e-pawn, but Winawer follows two games Zukertort had played with White that year.

6...Nxd5

Zukertort's opponents had played 6...a6 and 6...h6 but he doesn't want to waste time with such trifles. However, White now obtains a slight initiative.

7 exd5 Nd4 8 Nxd4 Bxd4 9 c3 Bb6 10 Qg4 0–0 11 Bg5 f6 12 Bh6 Qe7



13 d6!

This is a key move: preventing ...d6, which would drive him back. Now Black has some structural problems to solve and the extra pawn is not very useful.

**13...cxd6 14 Bc4+ Kh8 15 Be3 f5
16 Qe2**

This seems rather timid; 16 Qh5 or 16 Qh3 look more aggressive.

16...Bc5?!

Maybe Black should exchange bishops on e3. This move looks as if Zukertort expected White to straighten out his pawns by Bxc5 but that was hardly likely. Black has wasted rather a lot of time with this bishop.

17 0-0-0 f4 18 Bd2 b5!?

Zukertort offers the pawn back to get play against the white castled king — but Winawer has a better idea.

19 Bd5 Rb8 20 d4 Bb6 21 Qe4

21 Rhe1 came into consideration, attacking the e-pawn.

21...Qf6

Getting things moving by ...b4 might be better.

22 h4 b4 23 h5 bxc3 24 Bxc3 exd4

Foolhardy? Both 24...Qh6 and the defensive 24...Bc7 were sounder.

25 Rxd4!?

25 Bxd4 Bxd4 26 Qxd4 is playable in view of White's shattered pawns, but being a pawn down, White naturally wants an attack, for which he is willing to invest the exchange.

25...Qh6?

25...Bxd4 26 Bxd4 Qh6 27 Bxa7 is rather murky but Black should have tried it. 27...f3+ (27...Rb5) 28 Kb1 fxg2 (28...Ba6) 29 Rg1 and Black had better return the exchange before it's too late. 29...Ba6 30 Bxb8 Rxb8 31 f4 Qxh5 32 Qxg2 Bd3+ 33 Ka1 is unclear.

26 Ra4!

It is becoming clear that g7 is a soft spot and Black's piece coordination is poor. If 26...Bxf2 then 27 Qe7 should win.

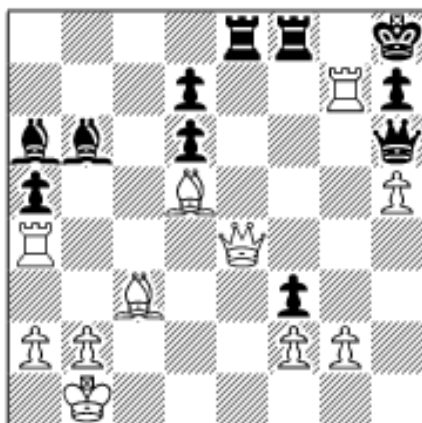
26...a5 27 Rh4

White's arrangement of three heavy pieces on the fourth rank is amusing.

27...f3+ 28 Kb1 Ba6 29 Rg4

Black's defences have collapsed. He has to shed material.

29...Rbe8 30 Rxd7!



Now as 30...Rxe4 31 Rg8 is checkmate, Black loses his queen and the rest is mopping up.

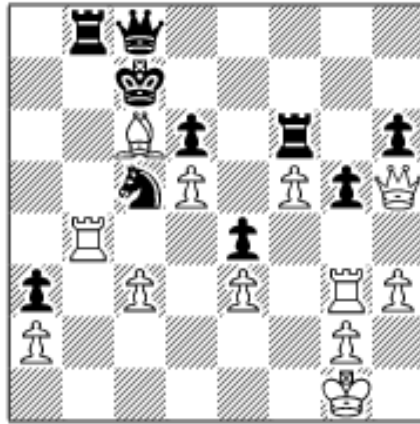
30...Qxg7 31 Bxg7+ Kxg7 32 Qg4+ Kh8 33 gxf3 Bd3+ 34 Kc1 Bf5 35 Qh4 Re2 36 Rd4 Bd8 37 Qg3 Rfe8 38 Rd2 Re1+ 39 Rd1 R1e2 40 Rg1

Black's temporary counterplay is neutralised by the new mate threat (41 Qg7 or 41 Qg8) and the

end soon comes.

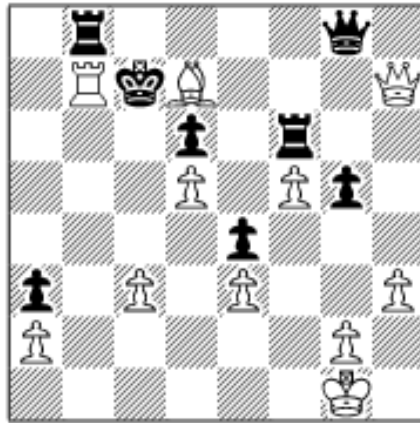
**40...Re1+ 41 Rxe1 Rxe1+ 42 Kd2 Re8 43 Qxd6 a4 44 b4 axb3
45 axb3 1-0**

At Vienna 1882, he was on the wrong end of the following brilliant combination by the Irish master James Mason.



Mason now broke through by **40 Rxe1! hxe1 41 Qh7+ Nd7 42 Bxd7** but this was only the start. Winawer offered the queen exchange by **42...Qg8**, which invites the deeper second wave of the attack.

43 Rb7+!



43...Kxb7

If 43...Rxb7 44 Qxg8 but now Mason cut the communication cord between rook and queen anyway.

44 Bc8+! Ka8 45 Qxg8 Rxf5 46 Qd8 Rxd5 47 Qd7 Rb1+ 48 Kh2 Rd2 49 Qc6+ Kb8 50 Qxe4 Rbb2 51 Be6 Kc7 52 Qc4+ Kb6 53 Bd5 g4 54 hxg4 Rf2 55 Qc6+ Ka7 56 Qc7+ 1-0.

Winawer missed the great Hastings 1895 tournament. There is a story that he wanted to play under an assumed name to escape debtors but I don't know if that is true!

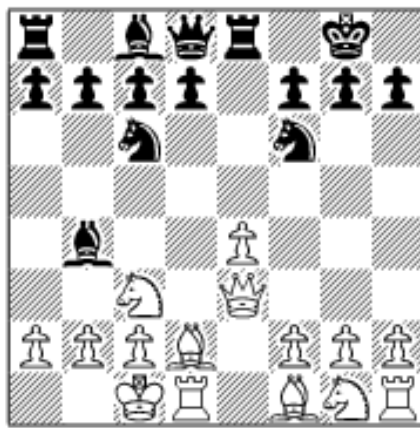
In 1896 lost a match to Janowski 2-5 but he did win this miniature against Steinitz.

**Szymon Winawer-Wilhelm Steinitz German Congress,
Nuremberg 1896**

1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 Qxd4 Nc6 4 Qe3

The old Centre Game seen here was popular in the 1880s and 1890s; Winawer had played it before. Later 2 d4 became a rarity in master chess, but it was revived a century later and can still take opponents by surprise sometimes.

4...Nf6 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Bd2 0-0 7 0-0-0 Re8



8 Bc4

White is offering the e-pawn as a gambit but probably not in the best way. A modern version is 8 Qg3 Rxe4 9 a3 and if 9...Ba5 10 Be2.

8...Bxc3?!

Better is 8...d6 9 f3 Na5 10 Bb3

Nxb3+ 11 axb3 a5!, obtaining counterplay by opening the a-file (Romero Holmes-Karpov, Madrid 1992).

9 Bxc3 Nxe4

9...Rxe4 is bad because of 10 Bxf6 Rxe3 11 Bxd8 and when the rook retreats, White regains his pawn by Bxc7 with a clearly superior game.

10 Qf4 Nf6 11 Nf3 d6 12 Ng5 Be6 13 Bd3 h6 14 h4!

This position is not completely clear but Black has a tough defensive task to justify his pawn-grab.

14...Nd5

14...hxg5 is risky. After 15 hxg5 ChessBase's notes to the present game (in Mega Database 2003) just give 15...Nd5? 16

Rh8+! Kxh8 17 Qh4+ Kg8 18 Bxg7! Kxg7 19 Qh6+ Kg8 20 Rh1. However, 15...Ng4 is the critical move, when Black may well be able to improve on the following game which is the only example I can find of the piece being accepted. 16 Be2 Nce5 17 Rh5 Ng6 18 Qd4 N4e5 19 f4 Bg4 20 Bxg4 c5 21 Qe3 Nxc4 22 Qf3 Qd7 23 f5 N6e5 24 Rdh1 f6 25 Bxe5 Nxe5 26 Qd5+ Kf8 27 gxf6 gxf6 28 Rh8+ Ke7 29 R8h7+ Kd8 30 Rxd7+ Nxd7 31 Rh7 1–0 O.Salmensuu-J.Norri, Finland ch 1998.

15 Bh7+ Kh8 16 Rxd5! Bxd5 17 Be4!



Threatening 18 Nxf7+ Bxf7 19 Qxh6+.

17...f6??

Black had to try 17...Rxe4! e.g. 18 Nxe4 (18 Nxf7+? Kg8!) 18...Ne5 (Not 18...Bxe4??? 19 Qxh6+ 1–0 as in a Czech junior game a few years ago!) 19 Nxd6! Qxd6 (19...cxd6 20

Rd1!) 20 Bxe5 Qc6 21 Rd1 and now:

a) 21...Be4! is given by ChessBase but after 22 Bc3 White still has some chances of avoiding the draw.)

b) 21...Bxa2 22 Rd6 1–0 is supposedly De Greef-Seibold (or Seybold), corr 1931 (or 1937), but I would like to see some contemporary written confirmation of this game. In the final position, 22...Qxg2 defends g7 and after 23 Rd3 the game remains very unclear.

18 Bxd5 fxg5 19 hxg5 Ne5 20 g6! 1-0. (Black resigned; the deadly threat is Rxh6+.)

It seems that Winawer was wont to experiment with his openings. For example, 1 e4 f6? (1-0, 61) occurred in Marco-Winawer, Berlin. The Soviet Chess Encyclopaedia attributes to him a little-seen defence to the King's Bishop's Gambit (1 e4 e5

2 f4 exf4 3 Bc4 Ne7 and also a line in the Queen's Gambit Accepted (1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 Be6) but I don't find any example of these. However, in his long career Winawer must have played far more games than can be found in databases, which mostly include his international tournaments and matches only.

During his career Winawer played against all the major players of the last third of the 19th century, from Adolph Anderssen to Emanuel Lasker. On his day, he could and did beat anyone (except maybe Lasker and Pillsbury who emerged late in Winawer's career and only played him once or twice apiece).



Winawer's longevity — in both absolute and chess career terms — was just slightly less than his English rival Joseph Blackburne (1841-1924). As I observed in Kibitzer 56, when the two played their last game at Monte Carlo in 1901, Blackburne was “only” 59 whereas Winawer

celebrated his 61st birthday just after the end of the tournament. Winawer lost. The two met in many games over four decades: I have not found any game between them prior to 1870 when Blackburne began his international career. The same mathematical pedants who hold that the current millennium began only in 2001 have the satisfaction of “knowing” that Blackburne and Winawer met in competitive games over **five** decades! Blackburne achieved a substantial plus score against him.

(As a digression, I expect there must be a few cases of masters playing chess against each other in five or even six decades but I have so far been unable to establish what is the record. I thought of Emanuel Lasker and Jacques Mieses, who began their match

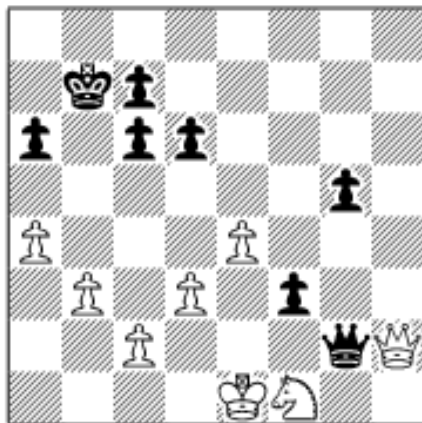
in December 1899 but I cannot find a game between them later than 1909 although Mieses lived into the 1950s. Tartakower and Mieses could have played in up to six decades but I find no meetings from the 1930s or 1950s, while in the case of Bogoljubow and Tartakower: they met in four decades including the 1950s but not the 1940s!)

To sum up Winawer, it seems to me that he would be assessed nowadays as a strong international master. There was no grandmaster title in the 19th century but if there had been, the holders in his heyday would have been Anderssen, Steinitz, Zukertort, Blackburne and Chigorin and maybe Gunsberg with Tarrasch, Pillsbury, Janowski and Lasker added in the 1890s. Anybody not on that list was probably his inferior in the 1880s at least, and even near the end of his career he could still beat “grandmasters” although his loss percentage was increasing.

His reputation as an opening innovator is partially justified, if rather inflated. His attacking powers were considerable, even towards the end, and he also seems to have possessed considerable patience (or “sitzfleisch”) which enabled him to play long endgames if necessary. At Vienna 1882, he tried for a very long time to beat Miksa Weiss with rook, knight and pawn against rook and bishop (at the start his opponent had two pawns!). He was careful to avoid a pawn advance that would have allowed Blasck to give up his bishop and obtain rook versus rook and knight.

This endgame later reduced to a rook and pawn versus rook ending) but the position was completely drawn and his opponent was equal to the technical task. The game lasted 142 moves in all.

At Nuremberg 1896 he defended a bad king and pawn endgame ingeniously against Charousek and managed to bring about a queen and pawn ending which, while objectively lost, was not easy for the tragic Hungarian master.



In this position, Charousek (Black) has sacrificed a knight for a bind; the white queen must constantly protect the mate on e2. Winawer recognizes that he must give back the material sooner or later but wants to create the chance of a passed pawn for himself before doing so.

50...c5 51 c3 Kc6 52 d4 cxd4 53 cxd4 a5

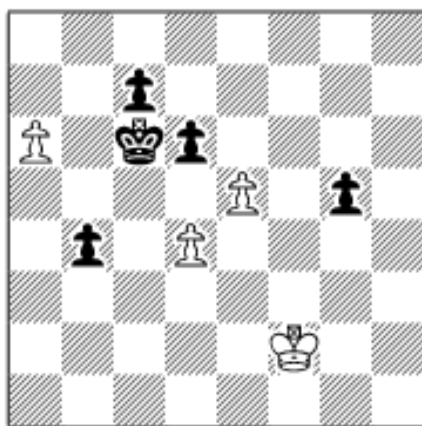
Zugzwang is imminent.

54 Qxg2 fxg2 55 Kf2 gxf1Q+ 56 Kxf1 Kd7 57 Kf2 Ke6 58 b4!

The best practical chance.

58...axb4 59 a5 Kd7 60 a6 Kc6 61 e5

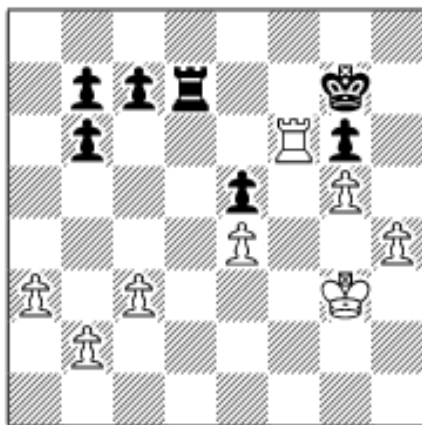
Now both sides have split passed pawns and a queen endgame is therefore inevitable.



61...b3 62 e6 b2 63 e7 Kd7 64 a7 Kxe7 65 a8Q b1Q 66 Qd5 Qc1 67 Qe4+ Kd8 68 Qa8+ Kd7 69 d5 Qf4+ 70 Kg2 Qe4+ 71 Kg3 Ke7 72 Qa5 Kf6 73 Qxc7 Qxd5 74 Qd8+ Kf5 75 Qf8+ Kg6 76 Qe8+ Qf7 77 Qe4+ Kg7 78 Kg4 Qf6 1/2-1/2

Charousek gave up trying and offered a draw. Presumably he missed something but the point is that Winawer made it hard for him.

At Budapest 1896, he beat the great Tarrasch in a rook endgame. Here is the final phase of that encounter. Winawer (White) has just forced the exchange of queens on f6.



49...Rd3+ 50 Rf3 Rd2

Black must not allow a king and pawn ending.

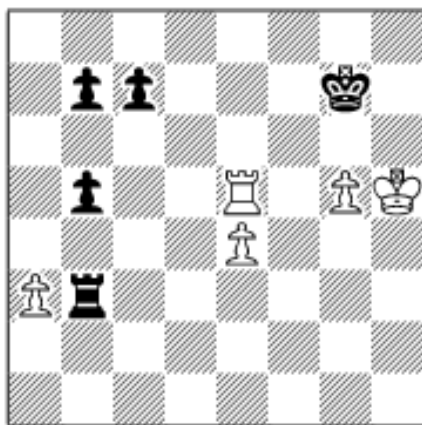
51 b3 b5 52 h5!?

White creates a passed pawn and entry squares for his pieces. I have the feeling Black might have been

able to save this position but in practice it was very hard to find a good defensive plan.

52...gxh5 53 Rf5 Rd3+ 54 Kh4 Rxc3 55 Rxe5 Rxb3 56 Kxh5

White sacrifices his whole queenside to drive forward the g-pawn. His aim is to get a winning position with rook and pawn apiece, and for this purpose either the e-pawn or the g-pawn may suffice, according to how Black defends.



56...Kf8

If 56...Rxa3 57 Rd7+ Kf8 58 Rxc7 Re3 Black wins the e-pawn but it costs time and the g-pawn becomes the decisive weapon: 59 Rxb7 Rxe4 60 Kg6 b4 61 Rb8+ Ke7 62 Kg7.

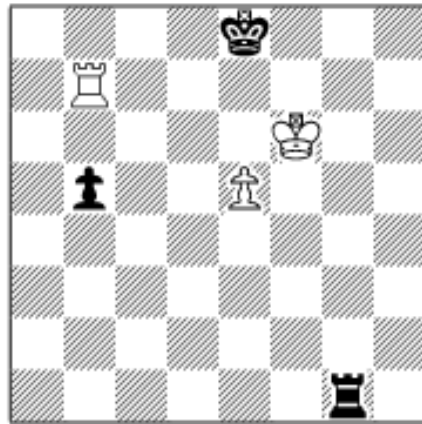
57 Rf5+ Kg7 58 Rd5 Rxa3 59 Rd7+ Kf8 60 g6 Rh3+ 61 Kg5

Rg3+ 62 Kf5 Rf3+ 63 Kg4 Rf1 64 Rxc7 Rg1+ 65 Kf5 Rf1+ 66 Ke6 Rg1 67 g7+ Kg8 68 Rxb7 Rg6+ 69 Kf5 Rxg7 70 Rb8+ Kf7 71 e5

The tempo is more important than the b-pawn. If the black rook were already on the third rank (e.g. at a6) this would be a draw, but it has been diverted by the need to capture the g-pawn a few moves ago. So the white king is able to get ahead of the e-pawn here.

Therefore, Tarrasch correctly moves his rook to get the maximum vertical distance, but then he follows up incorrectly.

71...Rg1! 72 Rb7+ Ke8 73 Kf6



The critical moment arrives. This position is discussed in volume 5 of 'Comprehensive Chess Endings' by Averbakh & Kopayev (page 218 of the 1987 Pergamon Press edition).

73...Rh1?

Here (say Averbakh and Kopayev) the correct system of defence is

73...Re1! 74 Rxb5 Re2 75 Ke6 Kf8! with a draw, as discovered by Karstedt in 1898, just too late for Tarrasch. When the defending king moves correctly to the short side, White cannot make progress.

74 Rb8+ Kd7 75 e6+ Kd6 76 Rd8+ Kc5 77 e7 Re1 78 e8Q Rxe8 79 Rxe8

Now the task is to stop the black pawn — without the aid of tablebases.

79...b4

79...Kd4 80 Rb8 Kc4 81 Ke5 b4 82 Ke4 reaches the same position as after White's 81st move in the game.

80 Ke5 Kc4 81 Ke4 Kc3 82 Ke3 b3 83 Rc8+ Kb2 84 Kd2 Ka1 85 Kc3 b2 86 Ra8+ Kb1 87 Rb8 Ka1 88 Kc2 b1Q+ 89 Rxb1+ 1-0

Next month's column will complete my coverage of the Sokolsky Opening. Thanks to everybody who has sent in games and material for these articles.

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