



C O L U M N I S T S

Hoisting the Hippopotamus

Lev Alburt & Al Lawrence



The Alex Files

Tomorrow's Theory Today

IT'S MANKIND'S RECURRING DREAM, subject of speculation in one way or another from ancient auguries to "Twilight Zone" episodes—if we could only get tomorrow's newspaper (or at least its headlines) today! We wouldn't have to be a brilliant financier to make our killing in the market. We needn't have great horse-sense to pick the ponies, nor political savvy to back the right mayor.

Well, sorry to keep coming back to the 64 squares, but what about getting a secret heads-up on tomorrow's theoretical novelties (TNs), the exact locations and detonators of the unearthed landmines of the chess openings? Even if the merely mortal couldn't really become world champ with them, we could have a heck of a time down at the club bowling the local kingpin right into the gutter.

Kasparov calling ... who told you about my secret move?

Last month, we told the story of how co-author Lev Alburt won the 1990 US Championship while playing openings that he had studied for only a few hours, immediately before the games—but with GM Alex Chernin as his trainer. Chernin not only provided numerous TN, but showed an almost supernatural ability to explain ideas and themes so concisely and clearly that Lev was able to create new theory of his own. In a true "fantasy variation," Lev's discovery even attracted a telephone call from then World Champion Garry Kasparov, who wondered who had "told" Lev about the secret TN Garry's analytical team had found independently and was keeping under wraps for the right occasion. Lev enjoyed explaining that it was really his first game in the opening!

After his own experiences, Lev was eager to find out if Chernin's magic would work on those below GM level.

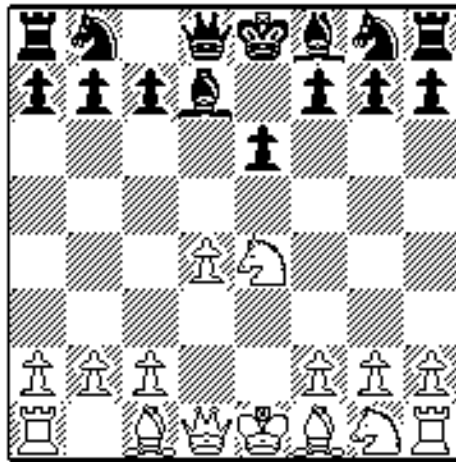
Lev's students and Alex

After the 1990 Championship in Jacksonville, Lev headed back to New York, where his students ranged from beginners to masters. He invited Alex to join him. One of Alburt's students, a B-player, was an especially busy man, the CEO of a leading national investment firm. He felt that he needed an opening he could understand quickly

and play with confidence. Of course, Lev thought of Alex.

"Can you teach my student a solid system against 1. e4 in one hour?" Lev asked Alex just

before the lesson. "I can do it in thirty minutes," Alex said calmly, unwittingly playing a strange variation of the American television game show "Name that Tune." Lev was very curious to see how this session would turn out. Chernin had picked out the Rubinstein French, an unfashionable line that relies on the same third move, after 1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5, regardless of whether White chooses 3. Nc3 or 3. Nd2. Black plays 3...dxe4, and responds to 4. Nxe4 with 4...Bd7 (*See Diagram*)



Lev watched Alex adapt himself perfectly to the needs of this particular student. Alex showed him the ideas and moves of the main line, which led to an equal position. Then he circled back to demonstrate how players of White typically go wrong, overreaching in the center and leaving their d-pawn vulnerable. He explained how to take advantage of that mistake.

"Time!" Lev thought to himself as he glanced at his watch. Alex smiled and looked up at the CEO, who had now been transformed into that most focused of humans, the chess player at the moment of enlightenment. Lev's student was delighted to spend another half-hour trying different side variations and asking Alex questions.

Chernin's telephone lesson with another of Lev's over-committed students, a C-player and a best-selling writer on nutrition, followed the same sequence of events. Both players were thrilled with the results of their opening. Each became something of an expert in the line, and found themselves able to battle successfully players (or computers) several hundred rating points above them. Clearly, Alex's magic touch worked on non-masters as well as someone battling for the US Championship.

Then-current theory held that the Rubinstein variation left Black with a significant disadvantage. What Alex achieved was every chess player's and every chess theoretician's dream—he drastically changed the evaluation of a key opening position from a clear edge for White to approximate equality.

Thus it was not merely that Lev's students' opponents wouldn't find the right moves, although they probably wouldn't. The truth was that

the moves and ideas Alex had worked out practically equalized!

The Alex files—future theory

Five years later, in 1995, Alex came back to New York. Albur's students were eager to see him. Indeed, they were still playing his line in the Rubinstein French. But something had changed. In fact, new opening books now recanted earlier pronouncements on the variation, and Alex's line became quite popular with the likes of Anatoly Karpov. Theory had finally caught up with Chernin, at least regarding the Rubinstein. The students were quite impressed that, just as Alex told them five years earlier, his ideas and moves were now given in books as the way to reach approximate equality in this variation! Alex's theoretical ideas are like magic time capsules that contain the truth that will be dug up years in the future. Top players such as Gelfand, Beliavsky and Lautier know and rely on Alex's genius for seeing into the theoretical future. Beliavsky says it succinctly enough: "Alex's files show theory as it will be in 10 years.!"

Practicing what he preaches & making it look easy

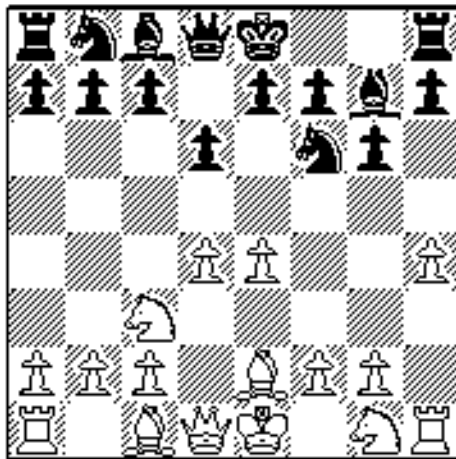
Here's a game of Alex's in which he handles the Black pieces in his beloved Pirc against our new (and three-time) US Champion Joel Benjamin.

Benjamin-Chernin Buenos Aires, 1992

1. e4 d6 2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 g6 4. Be2

In the upcoming line, this modest-appearing move is a sheep in wolf's clothing, preparation for a blood-thirsty, early attack.

4... Bg7 5. h4 (*See Diagram*)



White draws a bulls-eye on the Black king and leaves the center to the mercy of fate. His future depends on the outcome of the h-pawn's suicide mission. Chernin now deploys a plan he calls Operation Enter the Dragon, after the final film from the legendary martial artist Bruce Lee.

5...c5 6. dxc5

After 6. d5 often continues 6...h5, achieving good play. Additionally, after 6. d5 Black can ignore White's h-pawn's advance in favor of 6...0-0, because White has to deal with the consequences of both ... b7-b5 and ... e7-e6. This last move

follows the classical prescription against the wing attack—a counter in the center.

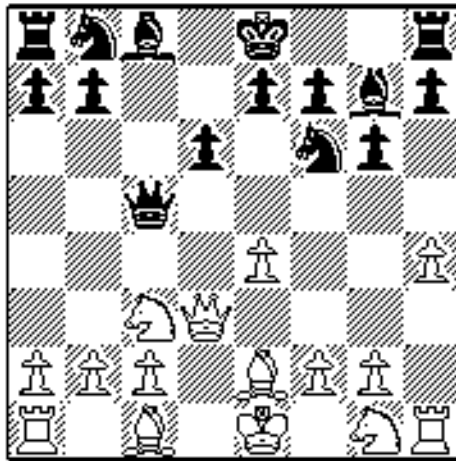
6...Qa5

Black has transposed to a favorable position in the Sicilian Dragon. Nothing remains for White but to defend e4 by 7. Kf1 or 7. Qd3. In both cases, after 7...Qxc5, White continues to pin his hopes on the march of the h-pawn. Benjamin chooses the queen move, preserving his right to castle.

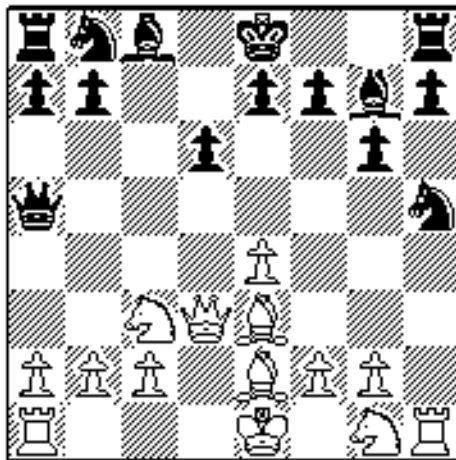
7. Qd3

This continuation adds the possibility for White in some variations of forcing an exchange of queens by checking on Qb5.

7...Qxc5 (See Diagram)



8. Be3 Qa5 9. h5 Nxh5 (See Diagram)

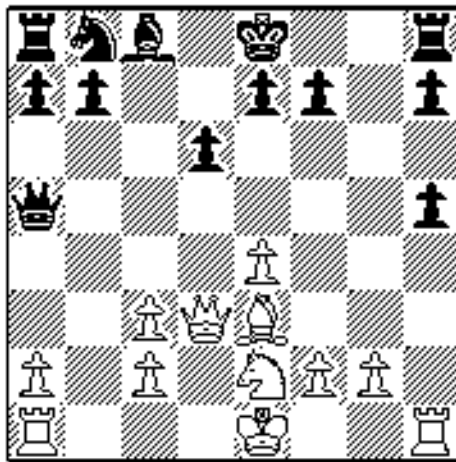


But not 9...Nxe4??, 10. Qb5+, winning.

Black aims to spoil White's queenside pawns.

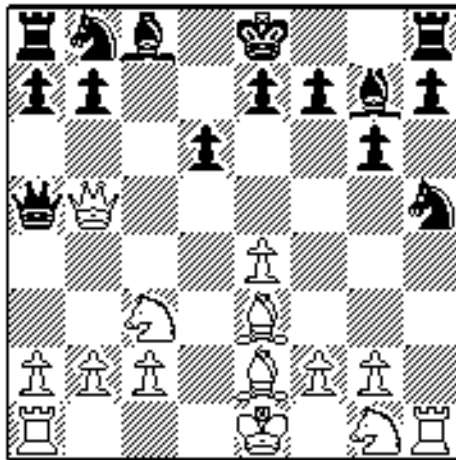
10. Qb5+

If White chooses instead 10. Bxh5, he has to accept mangled queenside pawns after 10...Bxc3+ 11. bxc3 gxh5 12. Ne2. (See Diagram)



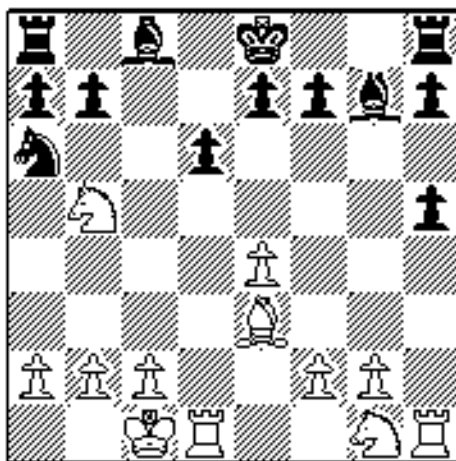
Now if White goes for the h-pawn with 13. Nf4, Chernin intends ... Bg4! After 14. f3, Black plays 14...Ne5, with the advantage. Here the natural 15. Qd4? fails to 15...Bxf3.

Now back to what actually happened on the board after 10. Qb5+ (See Diagram)



10. Qb5+ Qxb5 11. Nxb5 Na6 12. Bxh5 gxh5 13. 0-0-0

Somewhat better is 13. Bd4, when Black enjoys only a small advantage. (See Diagram)



13...f5! 14. exf5 Bxf5

Black's light-square bishop energetically enters the game.

15. Rxd6

Joel has ideas of his own, after all. After 15...exd6, comes 16. Nxd6+, collecting two pawns and the bishop on f5.

15...Bxc2!

Removing the bishop from the forking square.

16. Rd2 Bg6

Chernin has a better position as Black after only 16 moves against a

world-class player who certainly knows his openings. A resume item for both Alex and the Pirc!

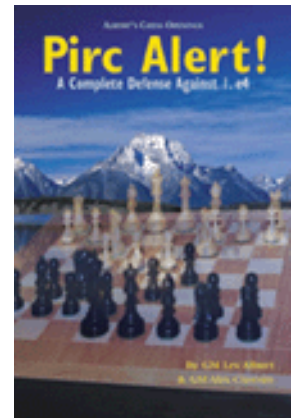
Personal coaches and Alex Chernin's unusual book

We've mentioned from time to time in *Hoisting* that a personal coach can do wonders for your game. Some of these stories about Alex illustrate the point about as well as it can be made. The right books can be enlightening as well. Chernin's new *Pirc Alert!* offers probably the most comprehensive explanation of the *ideas* of an opening ever published. Your *Hoist* co-authors "disclose" their involvement with the book, but certainly give the theoretical credit to Alex, who assumes the roll of "GM at the reader's elbow." He deserves great credit for holding nothing back. He shares the many TNs he's uncovered over two decades of playing the Pirc, and explains the foundational ideas of the opening in a way that should set a new, and hard to achieve, standard for serious opening books.

You can bet that Garry Kasparov, along with other chess-elite, will be pouring through *Pirc Alert!*

Pirc Alert!

Get a complete repertoire for the rest of your chess career, everything you need to know to defend against White's most popular first move—1. e4. World Championship Candidate and Pirc specialist GM Alex Chernin holds nothing back. *Pirc Alert!* is packed with surprise-weapons, never before revealed—theoretical novelties that can win you many games!



Chernin and three-time US Champ Lev Alburt explain in understandable terms both the winning ideas as well as the theory and moves of the Pirc Defense, a dynamic system used by the world's chess elite.

Ideal for those who have other demands on their time, the Pirc Defense rewards understanding ideas over rote memorization.

"Chernin gives you theory as it *will* be in 10 years!"

—World Championship Candidate GM Alex Beliavsky

***Pirc Alert!* by Alex Chernin and Lev Alburt will be release in mid-January. This massive 448-page volume has a suggested retail price of \$34.95. The Chess Cafe is offering it at **\$29.95**. You should expect delivery during the last week of January.**

Order *Pirc Alert!* at the special price of **\$29.95. Click [here](#).**

We enjoy and learn from your Email. Feel welcome to send your thoughts directly to AlforChess@aol.com

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