

Not Only a Spanish Inquisition

by **Glenn Flear**



NEW IN CHESS

Those fine fellows beaver away in Alkmaar have sent me five books to review this time. Two of these propose repertoires based on the Ruy Lopez and a third – ECO C Fifth Edition – contains 260 pages on this revered opening. I have played various types of Spanish since the year dot, so all this new material is very exciting and I was particularly interested to compare the assessments on various lines. So there is a distinctly Spanish flavour to what follows.

The remaining two books are co-authored efforts; Karpov and Podgaets looking at the Panov-Botvinnik Attack in the Caro-Kann, and Morozevich and Barsky giving an insiders' view of the Chigorin Defence.

In fact, having two or more authors seems to be the fashion, if these books are anything to go by, as only one of the five was written by one person alone. This process is great in principle, if everyone contributes great input, but someone has to take the responsibility of putting the package together into the finished product.

Various authors

Encyclopaedia C, Fifth Edition
Sahovski Informator 2006, 672 pages

To many in England, 1966 is inevitably associated with England last winning the World Cup (that is, at *football*, or, for you American folk, *soccer*). Yes, it was a long time ago wasn't it!

A revolution in the chess world also began in that year, with the appearance of the first *Informator*. Since then, the influence of the Serbian-led team of analysts has been remarkable and deserves recognition, and true, *Informators* still have pulling power due to the timeless desire for 'new' moves and grandmasterly analysis.

A few years later the present-day ECO-code system was refined in Belgrade so that all openings are classified using the letters A to E. For those unfamiliar with the letter C, this tome covers all openings starting with 1.e4 e6 and 1.e4 e5: The Latin openings – the French, the Italian and the Spanish.

However, I don't know if many grandmasters use the Encyclopaedias anymore. From a personal point of view, I still do, albeit rather less so than I did in my youth. I should also add that I no longer carry these weighty tomes to tournaments very often!

In fact I must admit that I now have all five editions of C, starting with the first, which had 350 pages and was published in 1974. The named authors included Keres, Kortchnoi, Larsen, Polugaevsky and Gligoric. A certain Mikhail Tal even did a couple of sections, one of which being C89 – the charismatic player thus covered the equally flamboyant Marshall Gambit.

The much updated and expanded fifth edition from 2006 has 672 pages, but hasn't called on the services of today's stars to enhance the material. In fact this was judged un-

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necessary since the appearance of the third edition in 1997.

These authorless tomes are in fact a compilation of the archives of games and analyses that have appeared in *Sahovski Informator* products over the years: the world according to *Informator*.

Inevitably there is a time lag between the appearance of a new idea and its publication in *Informator* (several months at least) and often much longer for inclusion in the next edition of the Encyclopaedia (at times several years). So does this product still appeal in the Computer and Internet Age?

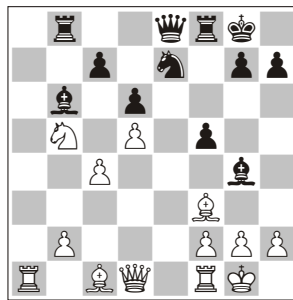
Despite some limitations, I still consider these works as starting points for a project, especially when dealing with an unfamiliar variation. A glance at the Encyclopaedia is helpful to get an overview of a variation. Then at least one should be able to avoid missing out anything fundamental, but also to fathom the consequences of secondary move orders. In many less-fashionable or perhaps quieter lines these tomes are perfectly adequate over time as reference works to, at the very least, give one a rough idea as to what the consensus thinks. However, I will invariably check my computer to see what's new and, of course, in order to get down to some fine detail.



One problem that I've encountered when I started to look at individual lines is that Sahovski products tend to miss out on important analyses if the source is from outside their domain. Here's an example...

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5 7.a4 ♖b8 8.c3 d6 9.d4 ♙b6 10.♘a3 0-0 11.ab5 ab5 12.♘b5 ♙g4 13.d5 ♘e7 14.♙c2 ♘g6

This move receives a ? in ECO. After 14...♗e8 15.c4 ♘e4 16.♙e4 f5 17.♙d3 e4 18.♙e2 ef3 19.♙f3



Khalifman's work in his 2003 *Opening for White according to Anand - 1.e4* is clearly inferior to that of ECO at this point. Khalifman only considered 19...♗h5?! 20.♖a3 ♘g6 21.♙g4 fg4 22.♙e3 and Black didn't have enough for the pawn in McShane-M.Müller, Germany Bundesliga 2002/03.

However, Black has 19...♘g6!, a fine move first played by Ganguly in a zonal tournament in 2001, but overlooked by Khalifman. A shame, because it changes the assessment of the variation and thus the whole line for Black:

A) A recent example led to a quick black win: 20.♖a3 ♘e5 21.♙g4 fg4 22.♗c2?? (22.♗g3!?) 22...♗f2! 23.♗f2 ♘c4 24.g3 ♗b5 0-1, Berescu-Sofronie, Predeal, Romanian Championship 2006;

B) 20.b3 ♘h4 is analysed by Sasa Velickovic (a member of the editorial board) as leading to equality.

15.h3 ♙h3!

The only good reply and well-analysed by Khalifman in 2003. ECO

doesn't consider this move which, along with their belief in 14...♗e8, explains why it judges 14...♘g6 so harshly.

Retreating the bishop favours White: 15...♙d7 16.♘a3 ♗e7 17.♗e1 ♘h5 18.♘c4 ♘hf4 19.♘b6 ♖b6 20.♗h2, Mamedov-Borisek, Oropesa del Mar 1999, as well as 15...♙h5 16.♗d3, Acs-Estrada Nieto, Hungary 2000, leave Black with nothing much for the pawn.

16.gh3 ♗d7 17.c4!?

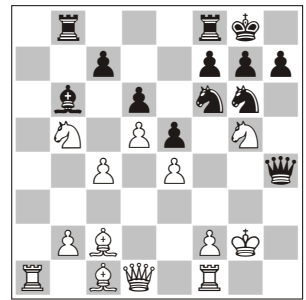
Not very challenging was 17.♘h2 ♗b5 18.♘g4 ♘g4 19.♗g4 ♖a8 ½-½, Fercec-Hiermann, Oberwart 2003.

17...♗h3 18.♘g5

The only move, otherwise Black's attack crashes through.

18...♗g3 19.♗h1 ♗h4 20.♙g2

Black has some chances on the kingside for the piece, but I suspect that he may not quite have enough compensation.



20...♘f4!

20...h6 21.♘h3 ♘e4 22.♗e2! (22.♖a3 f5 23.♗e2) 22...f5 23.♖a3 ♖f6 24.♖h1. So far following Khalifman's analysis, who correctly concludes that White beats off the attack: 24...♖bf8 25.b4 ♘e7 26.♗f3 ♖g6 27.♗f1 ♖g4 28.♖g1 ♖f6 29.♙e3, Karjakin-Radjabov, Cap d'Agde 2006, and White went on to win.

Black didn't have enough compensation either after 20...♘h5 21.♘h3 ♘g4 22.♘f4 ♗g5 23.♗f3! ef4 24.♖h1 f5 25.ef5 ♙f2 26.♗f2 ♗g3 27.♗f1 f3 28.♖g1, S.Zhigalko-Sofronie, Pardubice 2006.

21.♙f4 ef4 22.♘h3!?

After 22.♟f3 ♖g4 23.♞h1 ♜fe8 24.♞h2 Khalifman considers the position to be winning for White. This may not be so clear-cut, as Black can continue pressing despite being a piece down and can perhaps pick up a pawn or two to compensate, for example: 24...♞h4 25.♞e2 ♜e5 26.♜g1 ♟f2 27.♜g2 ♟g3 28.♞d4 ♜h5 with just about enough practical compensation.

22...g5 23.♞a3!

Korneev-Ragger, Austrian Staatsliga 2006/07, also led to a white blunder: 23.♞e2 ♞g4 24.♞d1?? (24.♞h1 ♞f2! but better is 24.♞a3, but I believe that Black has enough play following 24...♞e5 25.♞d1 f5! 26.ef5 ♜f5 27.♞e4 ♜bf8 28.♞a8 ♜f7) 24...♞e3! (a thunderbolt!) 25.fe3 ♖g3 26.♞h1 ♞h3 27.♞g1 ♟e3 28.♜f2 ♞a8 and Black was on top and went on to win.

23...♞g4 24.♞h1?

24.♞e1! ♞e5 25.f3 would instead test Black's resources: 25...♞e1 26.♞e1 ♞c4 27.♞g5 gives back some material for a favourable endgame.

24...♞f2 25.♞f2 ♖f2 26.♞h3 f5 27.ef3 ♖h4 28.♞g2 ♖f2 29.♞h3 ♜be8

And Black's attack was too strong in Vocaturo-Godena, Italian Championship, Cremona 2006.

My conclusion: ECO seems to have its finger on the pulse after 14...♞e8 but has completely missed the bus on 14...♞g6. Khalifman was ahead of his time concerning 14...♞g6 but had overlooked an important game and its consequences after 14...♞e8.

For many an average player who wants some explanation of what is happening in a line, a few internationally recognized symbols won't be enough. They may feel more comfortable when they are reading their text-rich repertoire book, but these by definition miss out great chunks of standard classical theory. As a general rule most opening books these days are

becoming selective in the variations they deal with (and by implication those that are omitted altogether!) so it's pragmatic to have something somewhere in black-and-white that enables us to see the wider picture.

When we consider the vast quantity of highly-concentrated 95%-relevant information contained within, and the modest price of 32 Euros, it's not bad value at all despite a few shortcomings.

So there is definitely a place for the Encyclopaedia today on our bookshelves, but principally as a complementary work.

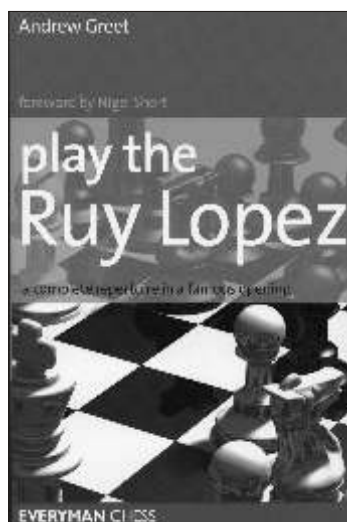
Andrew Greet

Play the Ruy Lopez

Everyman 2007, 376 pages

The title refers quite correctly to White playing the Ruy Lopez. This I had to think about for a while! After 1.e4 e5 2.♟f3, Black can, if he wants, *play* the Petroff with 2...♟f6 or choose to *play* the Philidor with 2...d6, but he can only *invite* the Ruy Lopez with 2...♞c6. It's White, by playing 3.♞b5, who decides that it's going to be a Ruy Lopez.

The author suggests that the reader should accept the invitation and then demonstrates a coherent repertoire for any who are likely to fol-



low his advice. This is based on the Worrall Attack, but Greet also uses more than half the book to investigate Black's early alternatives. So even if the Worrall isn't your cup of tea you can learn about all sorts of weird and wonderful black sidelines with or without ...a6.

Naturally, if you are looking for an anti-Spanish weapon with bite but without 'too much' theory, then Greet may have the solution for you. Even strong grandmasters can definitely gain from delving into these pages, here's an example:

Mamedov,Rauf

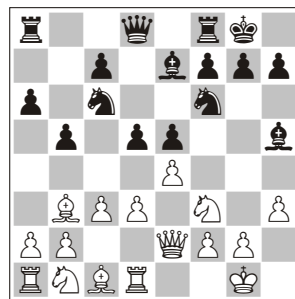
Naiditsch,Arkady

Moscow Aeroflot Open 2007 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♞c6 3.♞b5 ♞f6 4.♞e2!? a6 5.♞a4 b5 6.♞b3 ♟e7 7.0-0 d6 8.c3 ♟g4!?

I prefer 8...0-0!, for example: 9.d4 (if 9.♞d1, then the typical Ruy Lopez manoeuvre 9...♞a5 10.♞c2 c5 11.d4 ♖c7 looks reasonable) and only now 9...♞g4, once White has committed himself to d2-d4.

9.h3 ♟h5 10.♞d1 0-0 11.d3 d5??



This move has been played before, but this doesn't make it any better! White has an extra tempo (the rook is on d1 rather than f1) compared to an analogous position in which Black is considered to be OK. On page 301, Greet points out that this move is actually a blunder as it loses a pawn. Did neither player notice this possibility?

Instead, Black should choose between 11...♞a5, 11...♞d7 or 11...♞e8.

12.♟bd2?

12.g4! (with White having his rook on d1 there is no ...dxe4 resource, as White would then simply recapture on e4 attacking Black's queen) 12...♙g6 13.g5 ♟h5 14.♙d5 wins a pawn (Greet). 12.♙g5? was by a young Norwegian player in the game Carlsen-Howell, Budapest 2003. Whatever happened to him?

12...d4 13.♟f1

and White went on to win.

Play the Ruy Lopez is thicker than most Everyman opening books and is almost twice as long as the highly-regarded *Play the King's Indian* for instance! This is not because it is stuffed full of obscure and superfluous references, but because there is a great deal of text. The book consists of three major sections, each of which could have been turned into a book in its own right and could perhaps have been called: 'Playing against the Ruy Lopez without 3...a6', 'Playing against the Steinitz Deferred and other fourth move alternatives' and 'Playing the Worrall Attack'.

Andrew Greet is not an experienced author and so he has felt the need to explain everything in full, whether he is accounting for the timing of a manoeuvre or his own reasoning. I'm not sure if this resulted from a lack of self-assurance, but it does mean that the reader is offered a full picture of what is going on. The reader can rest assured that he won't be fobbed off with a disappointing 'unclear' just as things are getting interesting. For instance, on page 143 at the end of a line the author states: '...leads to a rather double-edged and complicated position. I feel as though White ought to be a bit better here due to Black's numerous pawn weaknesses. This verdict is supported by the computer programs, although we must also not underestimate Black's counter-chances, based on his powerful pair of bishops.'

Even the books referred to in the Bibliography receive a couple of lines summarizing their particularities!

He has avoided the book being weighed down with game references by keeping them to a healthy level, so at times he has wielded the knife quite liberally, but the portions are thus lean and digestible. Those with an appetite for more can always gorge themselves on their Megabase, but in most sections the offering is adequate. I consider the book to be well-written and as such useful for players of all standards, especially those intending to place their bishop on b5. Overall a worthwhile and enjoyable first book.

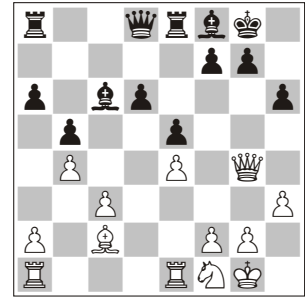
Sverre Johnsen & Leif Johannessen
The Ruy Lopez: A Guide for Black

Gambit 2007, 208 pages

It doesn't feel that long ago when I reviewed Sverre Johnsen's co-production with Vlatko Kovacevic *Winning with the London System* (Gambit 2005). I remember pointing out that despite the Norwegian's best efforts his modest rating (actually 2172 at present) is an issue. The idea of bringing a GM on board then certainly helps to bridge any credibility gap. When the dull London System was in focus, Kovacevic was able to point out many positional features whereas here, with a more ambitious opening, Leif Johannessen has taken on the task of refining the state of the ultra-complex Zaitsev System.

Despite being inexperienced in authorship, the young Norwegian GM (for the record, he's 2537!) has done an excellent job of bringing the present state of theory to the public's attention. In several lines his convincing analysis demonstrates why Khalifman and others have underestimated Black's resources. Here's an important example:

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♟f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♙b7 10.d4 ♞e8 11.♟bd2 ♙f8 12.d5 ♟b8 13.♟f1 ♟bd7 14.♟3h2 ♟c5 15.♙c2 c6 16.b4 ♟cd7 17.d6 ♙c6 18.♙g5 h6 19.♙f6 ♟f6 20.♟g4 ♟g4 21.♞g4



and now Black has

21...♙d7!

Although this was popularized in September 2003, it was played at least as early as Vouldis-Cela, Greece 1997, which Khalifman has unfortunately overlooked. ECO curiously gives the move order 21...♞c8 22.♙b3 ♙d7, although Bacrot and everyone else play 21...♙d7. Johannessen himself has even used this move in recent months.

22.♞f3 ♞c8 23.♙b3 ♙e6

and both ECO and the Norwegians use several Bacrot games to show that Black has equalized, for example:

24.♙e6 fe6 25.a4 ♞d7 26.ab5 ab5 27.♞d3 ♞c6 28.♞a3 d5!

Külaots-Bacrot, Gothenburg 2005.

The book is, however, no scientific paper proving some obscure point, it's actually an excellent handbook for the practical player.

The use of English is excellent, as for that matter are the style and attention to detail, even in the slower positional lines, making the whole package a pleasure to read.

A nice touch is the inclusion of a number of quotations, which adds humour and a human touch that others would do well to follow.

I would advise anybody up to grandmaster to take the time to read the 'Preface by Leif', an object lesson in the process of preparing a repertoire. Something that is often misunderstood by lesser mortals.

I also liked the fact that after 9.d4 (instead of 9.h3) 9...g4 10.d5 a5 11.c2, the book's authors are recommending 11...c6!, rather than 11...c8!?, which isn't looking as rosy as when Nigel Davies recommended it in *Play 1 e4 e5* (Everyman 2005).

The earlier deviations by White are given an adequate, albeit at times limited coverage, although the Exchange Variation quite rightly receives plenty of space; I know from personal experience how many average players out there think that 4.c6 is the way to frustrate the stronger player.

The bedrock of this book, however, is the Zaitsev, some 40% of the work. Johannessen has sensibly given secondary alternatives in many key variations, due to the risk that one of them could be busted by a new discovery. However, I am not sure that the average Joe will want to put in the work necessary to prepare such a razor-sharp system, when he knows that 90% of his opponents will no doubt settle for an early deviation.

It's fairly well documented that, as a rule, Gambit, tend to include more game references and analytic variations in the notes than Everyman do (this is immediately noticeable when you flick through this book and compare it with Andrew Greet's). In certain Gambit books in the past there has been a tendency to go over the top, but here the complexity of the variation requires plenty of material to tell the whole story. Overall I fell that they have got the balance about right between text, home analysis, previous experience and conclusions, and even the ubiquitous C212s are kept within bounds.

I didn't find the book to be that difficult to follow, but it may be that those players at the lower end of the scale would struggle at times. So although I'm recommending this admirable book I'm not sure that players below 1900 will be able to fully get to grips with the Main Line Zaitsev as a potential repertoire.

Of course nobody expects me to forego the opportunity to compare these three Ruy Lopez sources that arrived together in the post. So here I am, sitting in my comfy chair conducting my very own 'Spanish Inquisition'.

The Worrall is where there is a clash of minds, and so here is where I can compare all three sources.

1.e4 e5 2.f3 c6 3.b5 a6 4.a4 f6 5.e2 b5 6.b3 e7 7.0-0 8.c3 d5 9.d3 b7 10.bd2 e8

This system is recommended by the Norwegian chaps who make the poignant comment 'common sense indicates that Black should be fine here'. Fair enough.

11.a3

Greet's suggestion to spice up an otherwise equal variation.

11.d1 f8 12.f1 a5 (12...h6 13.a3 b8 14.e3 de4 15.de4



b7 16.d5 c5!, Ehlvest-Anand, Riga 1995) 13.c2 c5 14.g5 h6 15.h4 d4, Barlov-Pyhälä, Helsinki 1990.

ECO reaches the following diagram via the following move order: 11.e1 f8 (the simplest way to equality may then be 11...d7!? 12.f1 a8, Keres-Geller, Budapest 1952, which is mentioned by ECO) 12.a3 d7 13.ed5 d5 14.e4, see below.

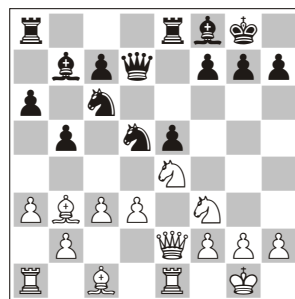
11...f8 12.ed5

Greet's recommendation, as he accepts that 12.a2 is too slow and may even favour Black, for instance: 12...b8 13.e1 (13.dg5 h6 14.h3 c5 15.f3 b7 16.h1 c4, Mortensen-Leko, Copenhagen 1995) 13...b7 14.f1 c5 15.ed5 d5 16.d5 d5 17.d2 g6 18.a1 g7, Short-Timman, Amsterdam 1992.

12...d5

12...a5! 13.a2 (13.c4?! is dubious because of 13...e4! 14.de4 e4) 13...d5 14.b4 c6 15.e4 a2 16.a2 d5 17.c2 ('although the black position remains quite resilient' – Greet) 17...a5! = Flear.

13.e4 d7 14.e1



By transposition we reach a position that is covered in some detail by Greet, who develops a number of his own ideas.

14.h4!? is an interesting suggestion of Greet's.

14...f5!

14...a8?! is given as better for White by ECO and Greet after 15.g5, as in Short-Z. Almasi, Wijk aan Zee 1995. Greet gives this line a thorough analysis,

whereas the Norwegian book is superficial at this point. Even so, both agree with ECO that the text move leads to equal chances.

15.♟a2

15.♟h4?! is not good because of 15...♞a5 16.♟a2 fe4 17.de4 c6 Greet.

15.♞g3 g6 16.♟g5:

A) 16...♟g7 17.♞e4 (17.♣d2!? Greet) 17...♞a5 18.♞c5 ♣c6 19.♟d5 ♣d5 20.♞b7 ♞b7= Grischuk;

B) 16...h6 17.♟f6 ♟h7 18.♟e5 ♞f4 19.♟f4 ♞e2 20.♞e2, with ‘a finely balanced but at the same time unbalanced position’. He means equal! Da Silva-Di Moreno, correspondence game 2002.

15...♟h8! 16.♞fg5 h6 17.♣h5 fe4 18.de4 ♞f6 19.♞f7 ♟h7 20.♞g5

Tiviakov-Grischuk, Linares 1999. This draw by perpetual check seems to be the final word.

My conclusion is that in this case ECO adequately summarizes the state of theory. The Norwegian couple have recommended a satisfactory system for Black, even if they could have explained the various ideas in rather more detail. Greet has delved deeply into the line, given plenty of original analysis, taken time over his explanations and he is objective in admitting that despite the need for Black to be the more accurate, the line yields no objective advantage.

Nigel Short has written the Foreword and his influence on this variation is obvious as the Introduction includes just one game – his famous win against Karpov in the Candidates semi-final from 1992. However, I don’t believe that this variation has the same surprise value as back then and Short probably agrees, as he doesn’t seem to place his queen on e2 these days.

Nevertheless, even if the Worrall is ‘OK, but nothing special’ Andrew Greet has to be commended for his work effort.

Alexander Morozevich & Vladimir Barsky

The Chigorin Defence According to Morozevich

New In Chess 2007, 240 pages

Has anyone else thought of this format for a book? You find a 2700+ player, ask him politely to analyse his games from the opening that he popularized/invented/revived and turn it into a book. Barsky is apparently a close friend of the modern-day Chigorin-hero as well as an IM and an advocate of 2...♞c6 himself, so a good choice of writing partner.

The result is original, fascinating at times and very instructive, but not quite what we expect from an opening book. So for instance this work doesn’t cover the whole of the Chigorin in detail, but instead delves into the analysis and thinking of *the* top Chigorin advocate of the past fifteen years.

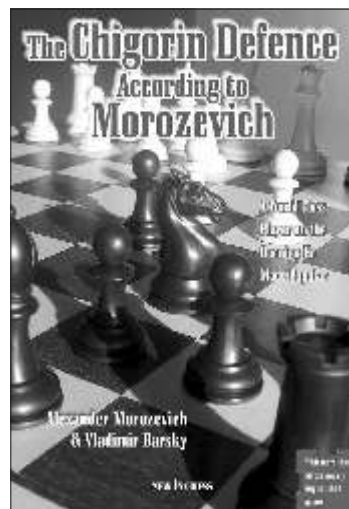
So certain variations where Morozevich has considerable experience get the full works, such as the fashionable 3.cd5 ♣d5, but for lesser lines you’ll perhaps have to refer to other works such as *Die Tschigorin-Verteidigung* by Valeri Bronznik (Schachverlag Kania 2001).

In fact the title about sums it up: this is Morozevich on his intense

relationship with this controversial opening. There are 76 annotated games (fairly completely with a natural emphasis on the early phase) of which 52 are Morozevich’s (one also features co-author Barsky). The book claims that more than 50 of these are previously unpublished, but even in those that have been, the analysis has been scrutinized and corrected (if need be) with this book in mind. One way of getting so many new games has been to use his Internet experiences, many of them blitz, but despite plenty of blunders these games represent fertile ground for testing purposes. The notes are at times lacking anything more than symbols and could have done with some of the authors’ interpretations, but thankfully the whole book isn’t like this. At times at the end of a game Morozevich will take ‘a closer look’ at a key position, adding in further analysis and comment.

So with all this new top-class input even many older assessments will need looking at again. In addition, the anecdotes about team analyses and matches in bars add to the atmosphere, the description of various development plans and advice is certainly pedagogic, but in my opinion the over-riding lesson to be learnt is Morozevich’s and Barsky’s emphasis on the practical struggle. This is noticeable in Morozevich’s style in the games, but also when it comes to his preparation.

A fundamental truth is that there is more than one way to approach opening preparation. The mainstream approach of seeking ‘an edge with white and equality with black’ is challenged by those who insist on playing non-conformist openings. Someone playing the London System, for instance, is really aiming for ‘comfort with white’ and a King’s Indian player is seeking ‘dynamic potential’ despite accepting a ‘space disadvantage’.



When one plays a pet line, it's noticeable how one's opponents (who are less familiar with the type of positions arising) require more time and energy to work out the ramifications of what's going on. So despite the fact that 'theory is on their side' they find it hard work to make the most of their position. The Chigorin is one of these 'probably inferior but damned awkward to face' openings.

On many occasions he points out where White can obtain a pull, so there is no disguising the fact that classical equality is 'theoretically' out of reach. He describes the Chigorin and Albin as '...possible ways of playing; perhaps not the very best, but perfectly permissible. In both cases I regarded the positions obtained as acceptable'. However, Morozevich also points out that playing the Chigorin 'is not some magic wand with black; its employment demands serious work at home'.

So if you want to improve your practical chances with adventurous openings, you still have to put in the homework.

So you'd better read this book first!

Anatoly Karpov & Mikhail Podgaets

Caro-Kann Defence – Panov Attack

Batsford Chess 2006, 276 pages

Jimmy Adams has been busy it seems! He has translated both this and the sister volume on the Advance and Gambit System (see my reviews in Yearbook 81) in a short space of time.

The resulting English is agreeable and flows along very nicely, but retains a certain charm with some quaint turns of phrase typical of translations from Russian.

There are, however, two serious problems with this book.

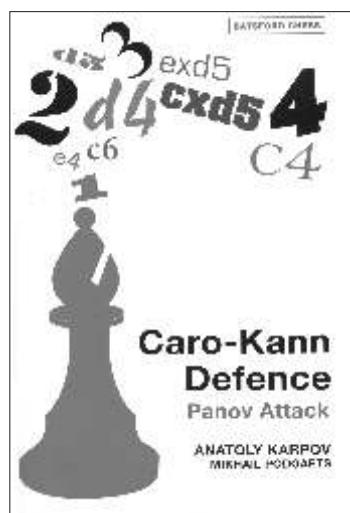
The first has arisen because of time. Despite the best of intentions on everybody's part, the process of

combining two people's work in Russia, publication in Russian, translation into English and ultimately the editing, printing and publishing of the Batsford team takes time. This has never presented a problem for instruction manuals from the great trainers and thinkers that Russia continues to produce, but opening books are somewhat special.

As far as I can see, the authors have kept abreast of theoretical developments up to and including *Informator* 88, but anything more recent than late-2003 is absent. The inclusion at the back of the book of twelve illustrative games from 2004 and 2005 recognizes this failing, but addresses the problem only partially.

So the point is that the book is basically out-of-date.

My second moan is about the structure of the book. The chapters are too large and cumbersome and



the material is presented in a confusing manner. Notes, sub-notes, variations etc. are extremely difficult to follow unless one starts right at the beginning of a chapter and continues from left-to-right. In order to classify the material, all sorts of different symbols are used and then often reused on the following pages and we are con-

fronted with a mass of variations with moves in bold text, A's, a's, I's, I's all over the place.

Each chapter does, have a welcome Index, which helps somewhat, but my overall impression is that the presentation is messy.

So my conclusion is that the manuscript that Batsford were presented with needed updating and restructuring with the same degree of application as the process of translation. The time and effort involved would have been worthwhile, in my opinion.

Co-author Mikhail Podgaets is promoted to the front cover, which I think is an improvement over *Advance Variation and Gambit System* and doubtlessly justified, although the repartition of the workload isn't mentioned in the contents.

Although players of the Caro-Kann will be the main beneficiaries of Karpov's & Podgaets's work there is a wider appeal in this particular volume, due to the possibilities of transposition to other openings such as the QGA and the Nimzo-Indian. Students of the isolated queen's pawn structure will benefit from a fair few of these 276 pages.

The last significant section doesn't even qualify for chapter status and is only considered as an appendix.

The Steiner System, or 1.e4 c6 2.c4, is still, however, given 30 pages and makes an excellent addition as it will appeal to Slav (but not Caro-Kann) players (such as myself!) who are tired of not being sure what to do after 1.c4 c6 2.e4.

There is unfortunately no Bibliography, but I'm not aware of another work covering these variations in such detail, especially the Steiner System, so the book definitely has its pluses. Indeed, once one eventually finds a particular variation one does find the interesting ideas, original analysis and the logical synthesis necessary for a good book.

So an important and stimulating work, but also disappointing.