THE CHIGORIN BIBLE

A CLASSIC DEFENCE TO THE RUY LOPEZ

by

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Iván Salgado López

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesing move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
=	equality
∞	unclear position
⩲	with compensation for the sacrificed material
⩱	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
⇆	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⌓	better is
≤	worse is
N	novelty
+	check
#	mate

FOREWORD

by Romain Edouard

IVAN AND IVAN: A WONDERFUL COCKTAIL!

I first met the Ivans many years ago: Ivan Salgado in 2004, at a World Youth Championship, and Ivan Sokolov in 2012, in a round robin tournament in Nancy. I became friends with both of them, as it was obvious that they were friendly and interesting people.

From 2011 to 2014 I was the captain of the Chalons-en-Champagne team which was competing in the Top 12 French league. In 2013, I decided to hire both Ivans, as I considered them strong fighters and great for team morale. It turned out they didn't know each other!

The funniest thing was the difference in their personalities. Ivan Sokolov was very classical, able to spend hours thinking about a position and come up with a very smart idea. Ivan Salgado was more the kind who — at the time — would switch on the engine and be convinced it showed the right move after a few seconds. As a result, any chess debate between them quickly became very animated!

I remember once asking, "Guys, I want to go 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 with Black, but if 4.♘c3 I don't want to play any of the main moves. What should I do?". Ivan Sokolov started to think, but Ivan Salgado immediately answered, "4...h6!", then added, "he should know 5.g3, or Black is absolutely fine!". Sokolov said, "Hmm, and what is so terrible if I play, let's say, 5.♗f4?". Salgado answered "Bad! Then 5...♗d6, equal 0.00". And Sokolov almost fell off his chair.

We had incredible fun during our first time together in the French league, and later, at another tournament, I saw both Ivans sitting together at dinner. "Did you two get along?", I asked. "Yes", answered Ivan Sokolov, "actually most of the things Ivan says make a lot of sense!". And they became great friends.

When they came up with the idea of writing a book together on a particular opening for Thinkers Publishing, I accepted with great excitement. Having seen previous examples of their work, I believed Ivan Sokolov's experience and

working method, complemented by Ivan Salgado's fresh ideas, would result in a wonderful cocktail.

Their book did not disappoint me. After reading it, you won't be missing any information about the Chigorin Defence, and will also acquire a lot of chess culture and understanding.

A highly recommended book!

Romain Edouard
Barcelona, Spain
4th November 2018

PART 1

GAMES, PLANS AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

by
Ivan Sokolov

INTRODUCTION TO PART 1

The Chigorin Variation is one of the oldest variations of the Ruy Lopez, 'invented' (according to my database) at the Monte Carlo tournament in 1902 by Carl Schlechter in his game versus Siegbert Tarrasch.

Doing my research for this book I was surprised to discover that in the early years of the development of the Chigorin Variation, Black often intentionally kept his king in the centre by opting for 8...♘a5 9. ♗c2 c5 instead of 8...0-0, trying to be flexible and keeping extra options. The drawback was that White was not obliged to spend time on h2-h3, as he was on 9.h3 in a regular move order. Nevertheless this unusual more order was tried with Black by Capablanca, Lasker, Botvinnik, Euwe, Rubinstein and Reshevsky, amongst others. However, sometime in the late 1940s, this flexible plan more or less disappeared from grandmaster practice, so I did not include it in the games in this book.

The player who made the greatest contribution to the Chigorin Variation in its early years was Akiba Rubinstein. According to my database Mikhail Ivanovich Chigorin himself played 'his' variation only twice, in 1906 and 1907, and it is rather surprising that the variation bears his name.

In later years Paul Petrovich Keres became the great champion of the Chigorin Variation, and an entire chapter of this book is devoted to his legacy.

The strategic part of the book consists of thirty-two fully-annotated games divided into five chapters, with the fifth chapter divided into four subchapters.

In this strategic part I have given an insight into the historical development of the variation and have tried to help the reader understand the most common plans and concepts for both sides.

My own practical experiences in this variation date back to 1994, and over the years I have tried it with Black versus greats like Kramnik, Shirov and Grischuk. Some of these experiences are included in the book.

The Chigorin Variation is rich in ideas which can be used in a range of middlegame positions arising from different variations.

Understanding the strategic ideas of this complex variation is also a middle-game improvement 'tool' and a must for anyone wanting to take his or her chess to the next level.

The current trend, developed in recent years, is for Black to capture on d4 with his e-pawn, aiming for Benoni-type pawn structure positions which lead to rather double-edged positions.

These modern developments and the current theoretical state of affairs in general are dealt with in the theoretical part of the book by my friend, Ivan Salgado.

This 'Chigorin bible' aims to be the ultimate improvement 'tool' for club and tournament players in the variation. The first part provides the reader with a good understanding of general plans and strategic concepts and the second part provides direct theoretical knowledge.

I hope the reader will also simply enjoy playing over the games, many of which are famous historical ones. I really enjoyed selecting and analysing them.

Ivan Sokolov
Lelystad, The Netherlands
9th October 2018

CHAPTER 1.
FIRST GAMES AND PLANS

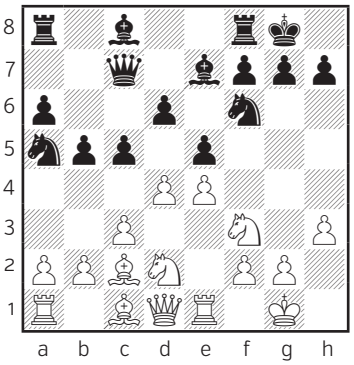
According to my database Mikhail Ivanovich Chigorin played 'his variation' in only two regular tournament games, at Nuremberg in 1906 and Ostend in 1907.

This information came to me as a complete surprise, but my database simply shows no other games of his with it. In the first game (vs Duras) Chigorin did not show any coherent plan for Black, at least in the opening, and got a clearly inferior position, although he eventually won the game. In the second game (vs Schlechter) he had definitely prepared opening and middlegame plans and his ideas in that game resemble plans for Black that we were to see in years to come. Chigorin developed his pieces to try to exert pressure on White's centre, while remaining flexible in case White closed the centre by pushing d4–d5. Pioneering efforts are usually difficult; Chigorin tried to solve his opening problems with an ill-timed central pawn break, the position opened and, with White's pieces well positioned for such an eventuality, Black soon came under a crushing attack.

1

▹ **Carl Schlechter**
▸ **Mikhail Chigorin**
Ostend 1907

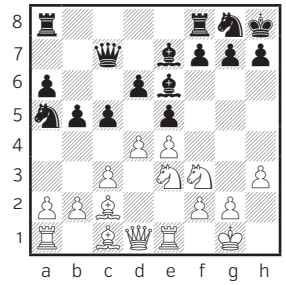
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0–0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0–0 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♕c7 12.♘bd2



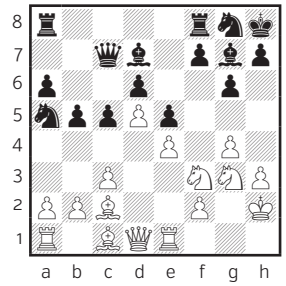
12...cxd4

Chigorin's first game in 'his variation' went 12...♔h8?! 13.♘f1 ♘g8?! Black is preparing for counterplay with ...f7–f5 if White closes the centre with d4–d5. The problem with playing 12...♔h8?! and 13...♘g8?! though is that Black does not exert any central pressure, so White can take his time over a decision about

the centre and happily continue to develop his pieces. 14.♘e3 ♗e6

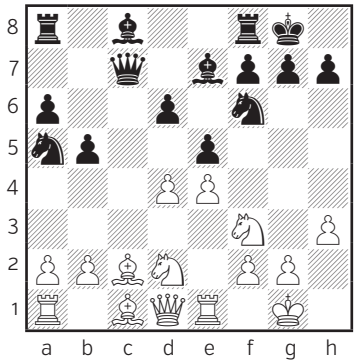


15.♘f5 White wastes no time in starting a kingside attack, typical of the playing style of those times. He could have put Black in a difficult situation (i) after *15.b3*±, cutting the a5-knight out of play, (ii) by continuing development and pushing d4–d5 at a convenient moment, (iii) simply going for the exchange of d-pawns with dxe5, or (iv) playing for the ♘d5 jump, since Black's knight is on g8. It is not easy for Black to find useful moves here. 15...♗f6 16.d5 ♗d7 17.g4 g6 18.♘g3 ♗g7 19.♔h2



Chigorin has reached the type of position he was aiming for when playing 12...♔h8 and 13...♘g8. The centre is closed, so he can try to improve his pieces and prepare pawn pushes or breaks. First he improves his knight (a plan we see up to the present day) with 19...♘c4! 20.♘d2 To trade or not to trade? Strategically it is useful for Black to keep the knights in these types of positions as his b6-knight will slow down any white queenside pawn push, while helping support a possible pawn roller with ...a6–a5, ...c5–c4 etc. Chigorin makes the correct strategic decision! 20...♘b6! 21.h4?! Not seeing how to advance on the kingside, White sacrifices a pawn. 21...♕d8! 22.♔g2 ♕xh4 23.f3 ♗h6 24.♖h1 ♕f6 25.♖h3 ♕g7 26.♔f2 ♗f4∓ White did not have enough compensation for the pawn and Black went on to win in Duras,O -Chigorin,M Nuremberg 1906.

13.cxd4



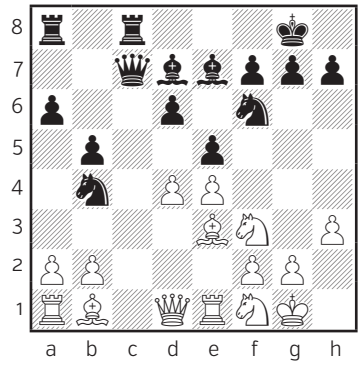
13...♗d7!

The exclamation mark is because Chigorin's idea is from 1907! Now-

adays Black develops his bishop to d7, connecting his rooks, while the bishop is both well placed and flexible should White close the centre with d4–d5. Schlechter will continue to develop his pieces while keeping decisions about his central pawns open, also a common white strategy up to the present day!

Modern theory does not consider 13...♗d7 precise and the main line nowadays is 13...♘c6 14.♘b3 a5 15.♗e3 a4, for which please see the theoretical part of the book.

14.♘f1 ♘c6 15.♗e3 ♘b4 16.♗b1 ♖fc8



Black is ready, if White decides to close the centre with d4–d5, but White refuses to cooperate!

17.♕d2!

17.d5 a5 leads to a good game for Black. One modern example (reached by a different move order) went 18.♖e2 ♗d8 19.♘g3 ♕b7 20.♕d2 ♘a6 21.♗c2 ♘b4 22.♗b1 ♘a6 23.♗c2 ♘b4 ½–½ Short,N (2674)-Adams,M (2741) Wijk aan Zee 2005.

17...d5?!

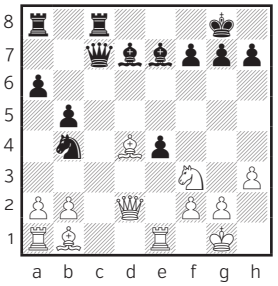
Principled, but it doesn't quite work. Opening the centre favours White.

18.♘g3! exd4 19.♗xd4

Chigorin definitely misjudged the consequences of his 17...d5? central break, for which Black was simply not ready. There is no way for him to liquidate into anything playable; the white pieces are simply much better placed and he lands in a lost position.

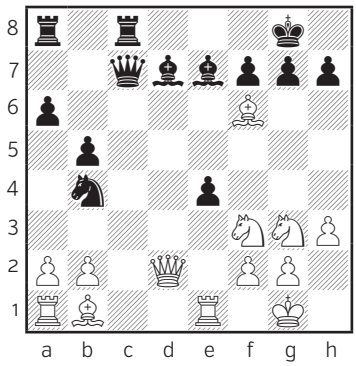
19...dxe4

19...♘xe4 does not help: 20.♘xe4 dxe4



21.♗c3! ♕d6 22.♗xe4 ♕xd2 23.♗xd2 ♖a7 24.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 25.♖xe7+–.

20.♗xf6!



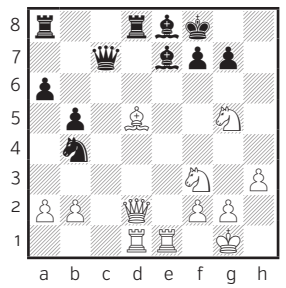
The most precise continuation. The black king has no defenders.

20...♗xf6 21.♘xe4 ♗e7 22.♘eg5 ♘c6 23.♗xh7+ ♔f8 24.♖ad1

24.♘xf7 also wins.

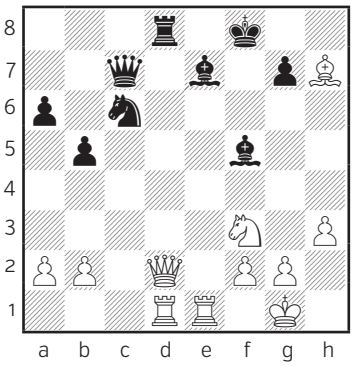
24...♖d8

24...♗e8 does not escape the mating attack after 25.♗e4 ♖d8 26.♗d5 ♘b4



and now the queen lift mates: 27.♕d4! ♖xd5 28.♕h4+–.

25.♘xf7 ♗f5 26.♘xd8 ♖xd8



Various moves win here for White.

27.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 28.♗xf5 ♕b6 29.♘e5 ♔g8 30.♘d7 ♕h6 31.♖xe7 ♕g5 32.♘f6+

1–0

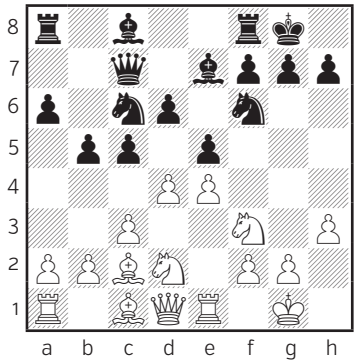
At Ostend in 1907, alongside the Ostend Championship tournament where the Schlechter-Chigorin game was played, there was a Masters tournament, where first place was shared by Ossip Bernstein and Akiba Rubinstein. In their game Akiba Rubinstein chose the 'Chigorin Variation' and came up with a novel plan of shuffling his knights to f7 and g7 (see the game). Black's concept looks flexible, but is rather passive. Eighteen years later Efim Bogoljubow would test Rubinstein's concept by advancing his g-pawn and following up with a knight sacrifice on f5. This is rather dangerous for Black and was likely underestimated by Rubinstein. Throughout

his career Akiba Rubinstein made significant contributions to the 'Chigorin Variation' (many more than Chigorin himself) and I honestly have no idea why the concept was not called the 'Rubinstein Variation'.

2

▹ **Ossip Bernstein**
▸ **Akiba Rubinstein**
Ostend 1907

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 ♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♕c7 12.♘bd2 ♘c6

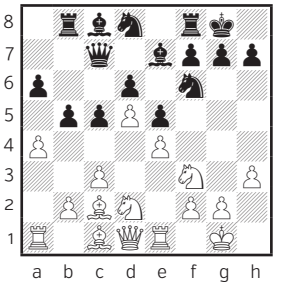


13.d5 ♘d8

The plan Rubinstein invented in 1907! Black's d8-knight will go to f7, and the f6-knight to g7. Black's problem is that he does not really get to play ...f7–f5, while White gets dangerous knight sacrifice possibilities on f5 after pushing g2–g4, as in the Bogoljubow game below. It is quite possible that Rubinstein simply underestimated White's sacrificial possibilities on f5, as in his game vs Bogoljubow.

14.♘f1

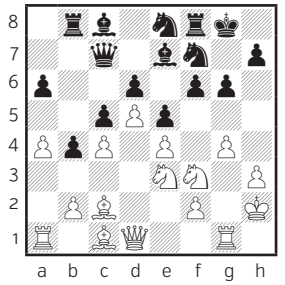
Eighteen years later Bogoljubow decided to close the queenside in order to focus on a kingside attack, and played 14.a4 ♖b8



15.c4! To stop the opening of the queenside in White's favour, Black now needs to close it immediately. 15...b4 If White is to focus on a kingside attack, this is the correct strategy, as he needs all four rooks on the board and does not want to be bothered on the queenside. 16.b3

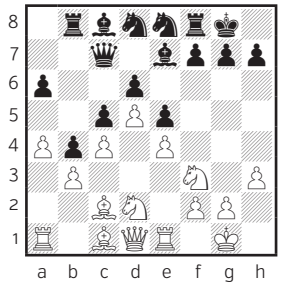
[16.♔h2 ♘e8 17.g4 was Bogoljubow's strategy in another game of his vs Rubinstein. The two of them had quite a theoretical debate on this line in the mid-1920s! 17... g6 18.♖g1 f6 19.♘f1 ♘f7 20.♘e3?! The start of a wrong idea to place the bishop on the a1–h8 diagonal. (*20.♘g3*, keeping his dark-squared

bishop on the c1–h6 diagonal, looks nice for White, who will keep improving his position and prepare a break on the kingside, while Black is a sitting duck!)

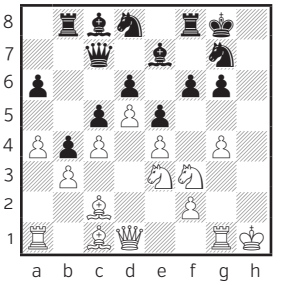


20...♔h8 21.b3 ♖g8 22.♗b2 ♗f8 23.h4 ♕e7 24.♖g2 Now Black gets his bishop to f4 and is doing fine. 24...♗h6! 25.♕e2 ♗f4+ 26.♔h1 ♕f8 with a comfortable game for Black in Bogoljubow, E-Rubinstein, A DSB-Kongress 1925.]

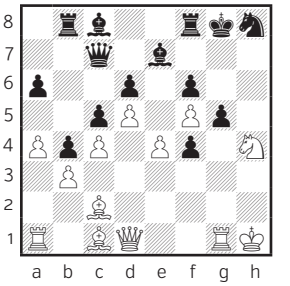
16...♘e8



17.g4 (White had no reason to rush. He could have played *17.♘f1*, preparing to push the g-pawn.) Rubinstein understood that Black's correct reaction is to push ...h5 (as we will see later in the 'g4-pawn push' section), however he did not go about it in the best way. 17...g6 (The immediate *17...h5!* had to be played, creating counterplay.) 18.♔h1 ♘g7 19.♖g1 h5 20.♘f1 hxg4 21.hxg4 f6 22.♘e3

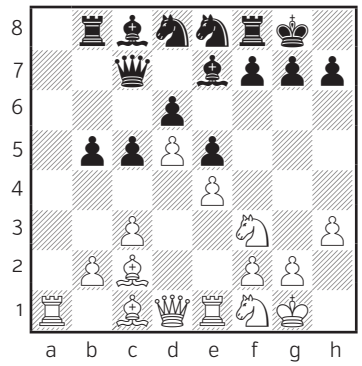


White has consolidated his position on the kingside and is ready to prepare the thematic piece sacrifice on f5. 22...♘f7 23.♘h4 ♘h8 24.f4 (*24.♘ef5±* also looks quite strong.) 24...exf4 25.♘ef5 ♘xf5 26.gxf5 g5



27.♗xf4 (*27.♖a2!*, bringing the rook to h-file first, looks quite good for White. *27...♖f7 28.♗d3 ♖h7 29.♖h2* with ♗xf4 to follow and Black still needs to solve the problem of his king.) 27...♖f7 28.♗h2 ♖h7 29.♘g2 ♘f7 and the game was eventually drawn in Bogoljubow, E-Rubinstein, A Baden-Baden 1925.

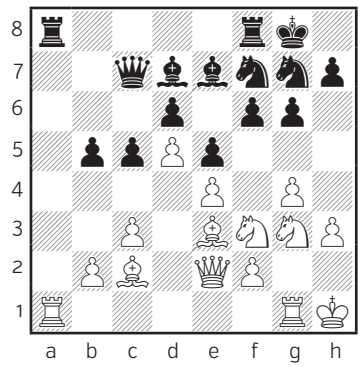
14...♘e8 15.a4 ♖b8 16.axb5 axb5



17.g4

17.♗e3 with b2–b4 to follow, combining play on both wings, is another plan for White.

17...g6 18.♘g3 ♘g7 19.♔h1 f6 20.♖g1 ♘f7 21.♗e3 ♗d7 22.♕e2 ♖a8



23.♘d2

In order to sacrifice a piece on f5, White needs his rooks on the board, thus 23.♖ab1 ♖fb8 24.♖g2 and White is ready to jump with his knight to f5, e.g. 24...b4 25.c4 ♕c8 26.♘f5 with an attack.

23...♔h8 24.b3 ♕b7 25.♗d3 ♖a6 26.♖gb1 ♖fa8

½–½

In 1908 the 'Chigorin Variation' was to gain prominence at top level when it was adopted twice by Tarrasch in his World Championship match versus Lasker. Lasker tried to keep central flexibility, however Tarrasch understood that in particular situations, swapping pawns and knights on d4 is good for Black, as the d6-pawn is merely an academic weakness. This strategy had already been adopted a year earlier by Rubinstein, so in essence Tarrasch was copying Rubinstein's strategy. This concept is nowadays seen in many opening variations, however in 1907 and 1908 Rubinstein and Tarrasch were definitely ahead of their time. In the first game Lasker launched a futile attack and Tarrasch won easily with a mating attack himself! In the second game in this line Lasker stuck to his concept, trying to improve on move 16. Tarrasch lost the thread and Lasker won with a mating attack. Modern theory agrees with Tarrasch, and, due to Rubinstein's and Tarrasch's reactions, Lasker's 'flexible strategy' with 13.♘f1 has disappeared from tournament practice.