

Mastering the Chess Openings

Volume 4

John Watson

GAMBIT

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Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
Ch	championship
corr.	correspondence game
tt	team event
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
1/2-1/2	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(D)	see next diagram

Dedication

To Tom Lombard, Kent Nelson and my friends in the Nebraska chess community.

Acknowledgements

This book wouldn't be complete without Graham Burgess's superb editing and excellent analytical suggestions. I also want to thank Ken Case, John Donaldson, Jeremy Silman and John Tomas for their friendship and inspiration throughout the five years of this project.

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This partial bibliography doesn't include books in which I found only one or two notes, nor have I listed many of the magazine and website articles that I used. However, all annotators and analysts are credited in the text. I've used a few sources so extensively that they deserve to be singled out: the outstanding annotations on the website *ChessPublishing.com*; the contributions and ideas in Jeroen Bosch's series *Secrets of Opening Surprises*; and the extraordinary articles in Stefan Bücke's magazine *Kaissiber*.

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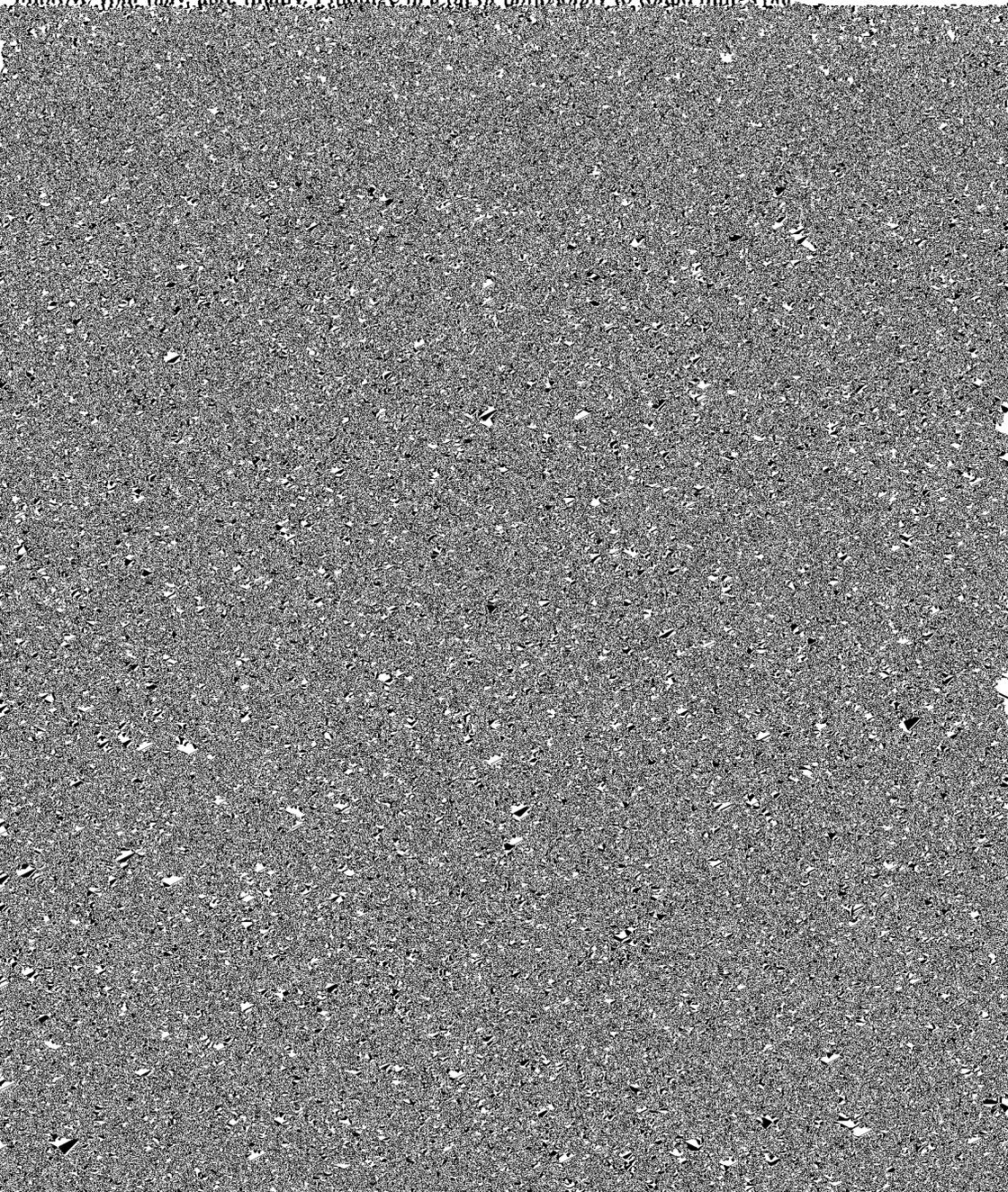
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Introduction

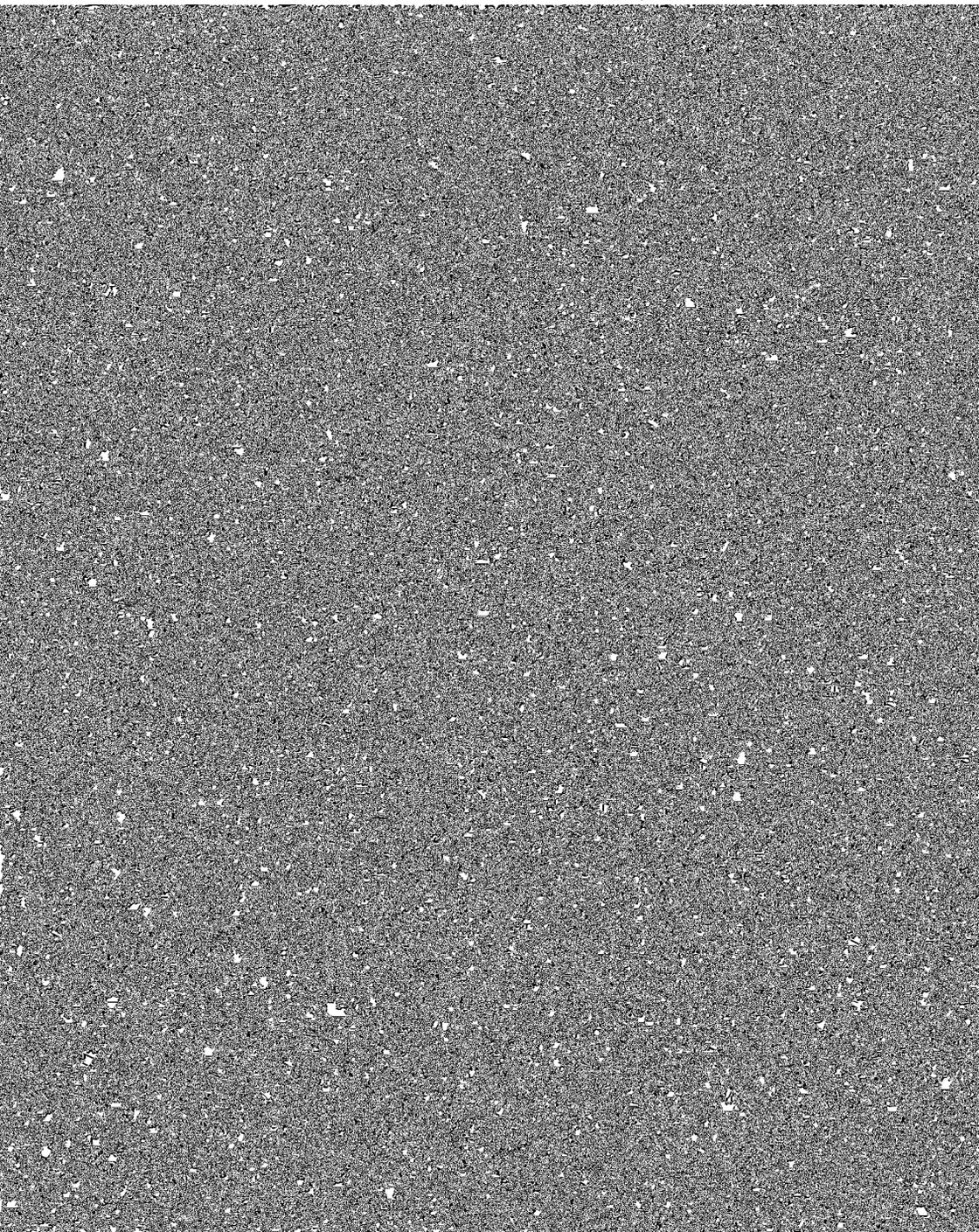
In this book, I first examine some major opening systems which lie outside the purview of the first three volumes, and then turn to a wide variety of openings related by type or theme. The result is a mix of modern strategies, old-fashioned approaches, and unconventional schemes in the openings. I supplement this with a detailed discussion of choosing and preparing openings, including ways to improve your play, and, finally, I indulge in a bit of philosophy to round things out.



1 Réti: Open and Closed Variations

1 $\Delta f3$ (D)

openings, I'll stipulate that White doesn't play d4 at an early stage (that is, not before White



White attacks the centre. As described above, he will fianchetto one or both bishops, with g3 & ♗g2 and b3 & ♗b2 in the majority of variations. Most openings, even those of a largely positional nature, contain several major lines that are unavoidably tactical. The Réti Opening is an exception, in that almost all its set-ups involve long-term manoeuvring. Because White avoids moving a centre pawn, there tends to be little early contact between the opposing forces. White fails to provide Black a target, and with some exceptions Black will also avoid too aggressive a commitment of his pieces. In most important variations, Black does establish a significant pawn presence in the centre. White's strategy is to snipe at his opponent from the wings, and eventually to expand on the queen-side or in the centre. In broader terms, this is the 'hypermodern' strategy, a name which probably needs updating, since it came into general usage in the 1920s!

After 2 c4, the game can still transpose into other openings, of course, notably if White plays d4. Since each variation leads to distinct positional themes, I'll discuss them as we go along.

and has always had a good reputation. In fact, some players prefer to make the Réti move c4 only after 1 ♟f3 d5 2 g3 e6 3 c4 or, say, 1 ♟f3 d5 2 g3 c6 3 c4 (or, if he doesn't want to gambit his c-pawn, he will wait with c4 for a few moves), or after an early b3 and ♗b2.

Black's motivation with 2...d4 is territorial gain. You may recognize that this position bears a close resemblance, with colours reversed, to the Modern Benoni (1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5) should Black play ...c5 next; and to the Schmid Benoni (1 d4 ♟f6 2 ♟f3 c5 3 d5 and 4 ♟c3) if Black plays ...♟c6 (without ...c5). In several variations we shall see illustrations of reversed positions in which White's extra tempo gives Black the information that he needs to adjust strategies and maintain equality. That trade-off has been a theme throughout these volumes, and is explicitly featured in Chapter 6.

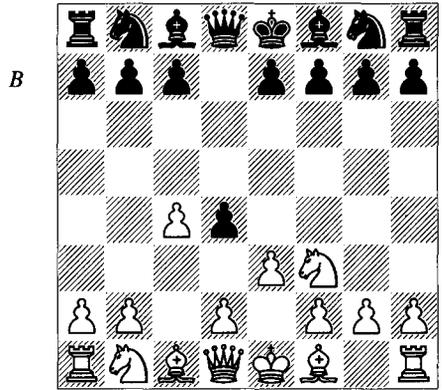
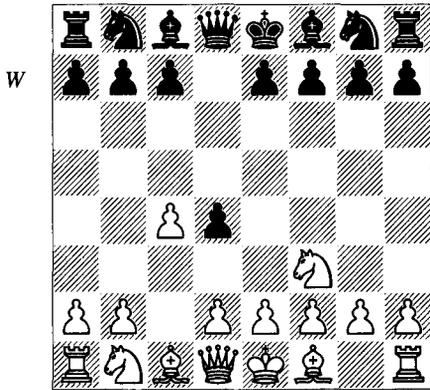
3 g3

An obvious alternative is 3 e3 (D), introducing one of the very few Réti Opening lines in which White will not normally fianchetto a bishop as part of his strategy.

The 2...d4 Advance

Khuzman – A. Mikhalevski
Beersheba 1993

1 ♟f3 d5 2 c4 d4 (D)



This e-pawn advance isn't seen as much as 3 g3 in grandmaster play because Black is thought to gain an uncontroversial equality. On the other hand, the resulting play has enough substance to keep good players interested:

a) 3...c5 4 exd4 cxd4 5 d3 is a reversed Benoni, intending g3 and ♗g2. That opening boasts of dynamic options versus almost any set-up, so it's probably best for Black to avoid it when he is a tempo behind.

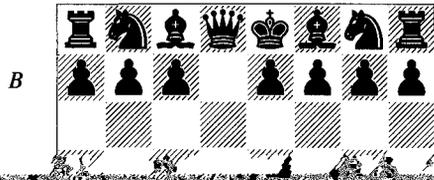
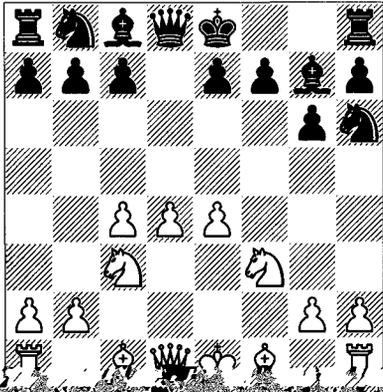
b) 3...dxe3 has been a bit underrated. To be sure, after 4 fxe3 Black has surrendered the

This aggressive push is one of the traditional and most important replies to the Réti Opening,

centre to White (who has a 2-1 majority), but a d3/e3 pawn-formation isn't terribly impressive unless the pawns can both advance. The standard line is 4...g6 5 d4 ♖g7 6 ♘c3, and now 6...♘h6!? has the idea of ...♘f5, so Gausel-Mortensen, Copenhagen 1996 continued 7 e4!? (D).

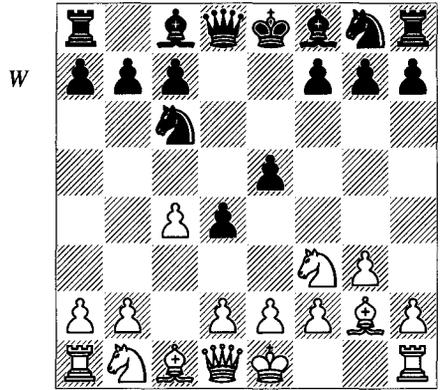
show an excerpt from the most popular modern main line: 6...c6 (preventing ♘b5 or ♘d5; 6...e5 7 d3 ♘e7 has been played for at least 70 years without being completely resolved; it's fair to say that the game is unbalanced but equal) 7 d3 ♘h6!? (headed for f5) 8 ♖e3 (after 8 ♖e2, 8...♘f5 9 g4 ♘h4 10 ♖g1 is a known line; then 10...♗d6 11 ♖g3 e5 12 ♘e4 ♗d8 is unclear; Black has also played 8...g6) 8...♗d8 9 ♖xh6!? gxh6 10 d4 ♖g7 11 d5, Zviagintsev-Granda, Pamplona 1995/6. Here Black's bishop on g7 compensates for his weaknesses; he can play, for example, 11...♗d6 or 11...♗b6.

We now return to 3 g3 (D):



Benoni with ...c5 in our section on 1 ♖f3 d5 2 c4 e6 below, when Black follows a main line and plays ...c5 and ...d4.

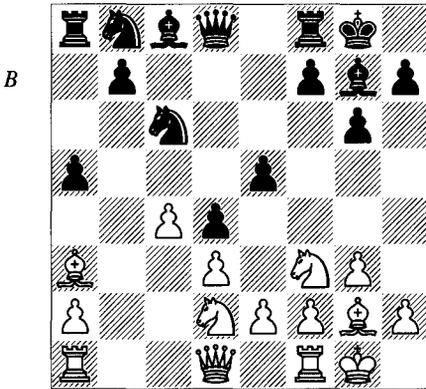
b) Grandmasters have shown some liking for the move 3...g6. Then Larsen-Chandler, Hastings 1987/8 provides a good example of the play: 4 ♖g2 ♖g7 5 d3 e5 6 0-0 ♗e7 7 b4! 0-0 8 ♗bd2 (or 8 ♗a3, with the idea ♗c2 and either queenside expansion or a central break by e3; this leads to original positions) 8...a5 9 b5 c5! (Black shouldn't cede too much ground) 10 bxc6 ♗exc6! (the idea is that the knight on e7 has few prospects, whereas the knight on b8 can watch over c5 from a6 or d7) 11 ♖a3 (D) (11 ♖b1 is the obvious alternative; Black has satisfactory play in this kind of position because of his ability to put knights on b4 and/or c5 as needed).



option of ♗a3-c2) 6...a5; Black might play ...♗f6-d7-c5 later. Naturally, there are trade-offs. For one thing, White is developing rapidly and getting castled ahead of time. It's an open question whether he can break with e3 or b4, and what advantage that might bring.

5...♗f6

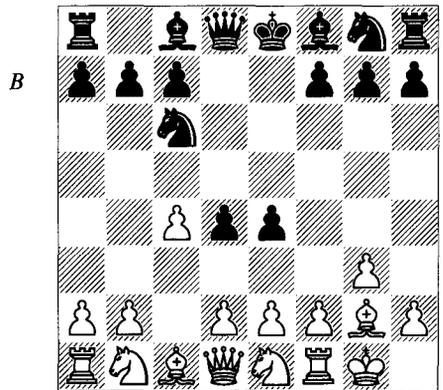
There's an interesting parallel here with the Schmid Benoni line 1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗f3 c5 3 d5 g6 4 ♗c3 ♖g7 5 e4 (a position also important to the Sicilian Hyper-Accelerated Dragon: 1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 g6 3 d4 ♖g7 4 d5 ♗f6 5 ♗c3) 5...0-0 (as opposed to 5...d6) 6 e5 ♗e8. If you've played that line with either colour, you might well think that 5...e4 6 ♗e1 (D) would favour White in our game because of the vulnerability and likely decimation of Black's centre.



11...♗b4 (or 11...♖e8, introducing the idea of ...♖f8; then White might try to target squares like d6 and b6 by 12 c5, having in mind ♗e4 and ♖b3) 12 ♖b3 ♗8a6 (a good alternative is 12...♖e7 with the idea ...♗8a6 or ...♗8c6) 13 ♖xb4 axb4?! (13...♗xb4 is better) 14 a3! bxa3 15 ♖xa3 ♖e8 16 ♖fb1 and White had a pleasant advantage, very much in the style of a Benko Gambit, and not even a pawn down!

4 ♖g2 e5 (D)
5 0-0

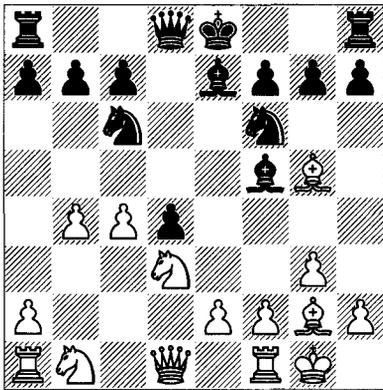
In the reversed position (picture Black's knight already developed on f6), d3 is usually met by ...♖b4+, to force a piece to d2. That strategy is also a sensible one here; for example, 5 d3 ♖b4+ 6 ♖d2 (the idea is that after 6 ♗bd2 ♖d6, White can no longer play ♗a3-c2, but 6 ♗fd2 would certainly be possible, retaining the



But that's not necessarily the case. Black has two possibilities:

a) 6...♗f6 7 d3 ♖f5 8 ♖g5 (perhaps White should settle for 8 ♗d2, when Black has a slight positional disadvantage after 8...♖e7 9 dxe4

♟e4 or 8...exd3 9 ♘d3 ♙e7 10 ♖b3 0-0 11 ♙f4) 8...exd3 9 ♘d3 ♙e7. At this point, increasing the light-square pressure by 10 ♘d2 is not terribly impressive following 10...0-0, when 11 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 12 ♖e4 ♜b8! anticipates White's ♘ec5, and 11 ♜a4 ♘g4 12 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 is about equal. Therefore the recommended move is 10 b4!? (D).

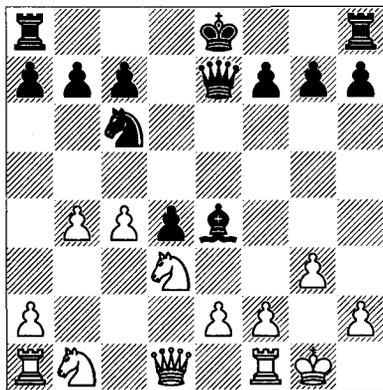


B

This position is said to be clearly better for White, and it certainly looks promising with the cooperation of a queenside advance and the bishop on g2. However, Black's centralized pieces provide a counterweight. Here are some options:

a1) 10...♙xd3? 11 exd3 ♙xb4 12 ♙xf6! gxf6 (after 12...♜xf6? 13 ♜b3! White either wins a piece or exposes the black king) 13 ♜h5 with a large positional superiority and attacking possibilities.

a2) 10...♘e4 illustrates Black's central presence: 11 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 12 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 (D), and then:

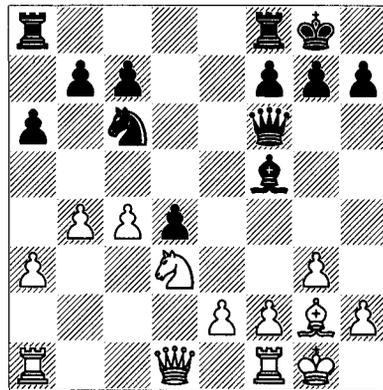


W

a21) 13 b5 and now 13...♘a5!? 14 ♘d2 0-0 15 ♘e4 ♜xe4 intending ...♜fe8 and ...b6 is dynamically balanced. Black can also sacrifice a pawn for activity by 13...♘e5 14 ♘d2 ♘d7 15 ♖b3 0-0-0 16 ♘xd4 h5!.

a22) 13 ♘d2 0-0 (13...♙f5 14 b5 and here 14...♘a5 15 ♜a4 b6 is unclear, while 14...♘d8 is safer) 14 ♘e4 ♜xe4 15 b5 ♘e5 (or 15...♘a5) 16 ♘c5 ♜g4 17 ♘xb7 ♜fe8 with compensation.

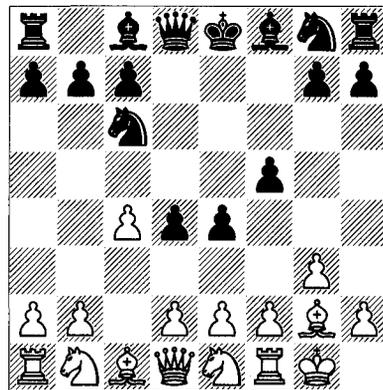
a3) Kovačević-Ree, Karlovac 1977 continued 10...a6 11 ♘d2 0-0 12 ♙xf6 (12 a3 ♜e8!) 12...♙xf6 13 ♘e4 ♜e7 (or 13...♜e8) 14 ♘xf6+ ♜xf6 15 a3 (D).



B

Here Black has several moves (such as the ambitious continuation 15...h5), but 15...♜fe8 is the most consistent; for example, 16 ♜e1 ♜e7 17 ♘c5 ♜ae8!, with the idea 18 ♘xb7? (18 ♙xc6 bxc6) 18...d3 19 e3 ♘d4 20 ♜a2 ♘c2 21 ♜f1 ♜c3.

b) Strange to say, even after 6...f5!? (D), a seeming overextension of forces, Black's position isn't necessarily inferior.



W

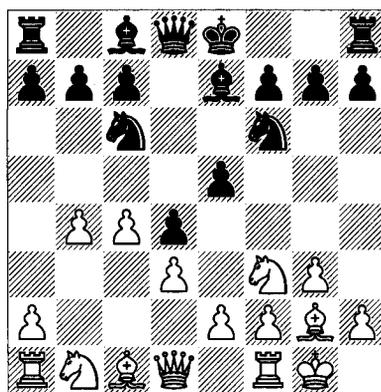
Theory gives this fifth pawn move a '?' with the follow-up 7 d3 ♘f6 8 ♗g5, but then 8... ♗e7! 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 dxe4 fxe4 11 ♗xe4 ♗h3 gives Black compensation for the pawn after 12 ♗g2 ♗xg2 13 ♗xg2 (13 ♘g2 g5! 14 ♘d2 ♖e7 and 0-0-0 intending ...h5) and now 13... h5! 14

B

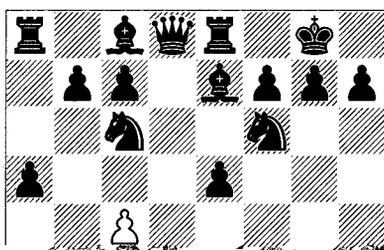


22 ♖xf5 gxf5 23 ♔g5+ with a repetition) 20 ♔h6 ♘f6? (20...f6 21 g4! hxg4 22 hxg4 ♙xd3 23 ♖e3) 21 c5! ♔d8 22 ♖e5! ♔d7 (22...♙d7 23 ♖xh5!; 22...♖a6 23 ♖xf5 gxf5 24 c6!) 23 ♙e4 (23 ♖e8! ♖axe8 24 ♙xf6 and mate follows) 23...♖a6 24 ♖xf5! gxf5 25 ♔g5+ ♘h8 26 ♙xf5 1-0.

b) 7...dxe3 establishes an intriguing balance of forces: 8 ♙xe3 ♙e7 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♖e8 (D).



B



W

a) Playing into White's idea by 7...♙xb4 8 ♘xe5! ♘xe5 9 ♔a4+ isn't so bad, but it gives White a small advantage if Black continues 9...♘c6 10 ♙xc6+ bxc6 11 ♔xb4 ♔d6 12 ♙a3. Instead, the exchange sacrifice via 9...♙d7 10

usually moves to c1 in order to activate it on f4 or g5! So if White can't remove the pawn from d4 in a satisfactory way, this bishop move is likely to be ill-advised. Black can reply 9...♖d6! 10 ♘f3 (10 f4 ♘g4 11 ♘xg4 ♙xg4 12 ♙xb7 ♚ab8 13 ♙f3 ♙xf3 14 ♚xf3 ♘xd3) 10...c5. The game's 9...♘g4 10 ♘xg4 ♙xg4 11 ♙xb7 ♚b8 12 ♙e4 would also have been promising

♙xe3 the best course of action would have been 14...♙f5!, intending 15 d4 cxd4 16 ♘fxd4 ♘xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♙e4! with some advantage for Black because of White's weak c-pawn.

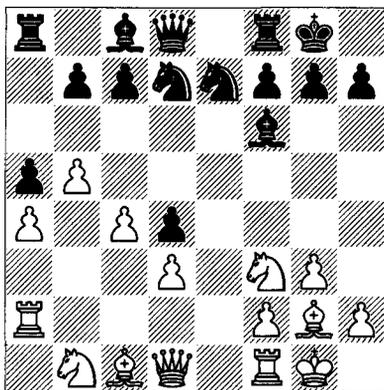
8 a3?!

Salov gives 8 b5! ♘cb8 9 e3 (D).



starting to look good for Black) 12...axb4 13 axb4 ♖xa2 14 ♗xa2 with a small but certain advantage for White.

11 b5 ♗e7 12 exd4 exd4 13 a4! (D)



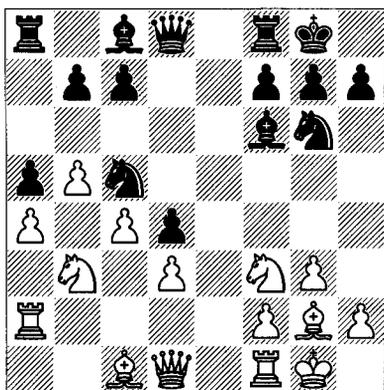
White eliminates any difficulties involving a combination of ...a4 and ...♗c5. More importantly, he discourages the single move that most coordinates Black's pieces, 13...♗c5.

13...♗g6

That is, 13...♗c5 14 ♖a3 ♗d6?! 15 ♗bd2 ♗b6 16 ♖e1 has the idea ♗e4; then 16...♖f5 17 ♗e4 ♖xe4 18 dxe4 leaves White in charge due to the threat of 19 e5.

14 ♗bd2 ♗c5!? 15 ♗b3?! (D)

The most accurate move was still 15 ♖a3!; for example, 15...♖e7 16 ♗b3 ♗xb3 17 ♗xb3 ♖xa3 18 ♗xa3 (threatening ♗c5) 18...♖g4 19 h3 ♖xf3 20 ♖xf3 ♖b8 21 ♖e2.



15...♗xb3 16 ♗xb3 ♖e6?!

16...♖e8 17 ♗d2 is only slightly better for White.

17 ♗d2 ♗c8 18 ♖a3 ♖e7 19 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 20 ♖e1 h6 21 ♗a3! ♗f5 22 ♗b3 b6

Black sacrifices the exchange, but it isn't good enough. However, after 22...♗d8 23 ♗c5 c6 24 ♖ae2, White's pressure is too great.

23 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 24 ♗c1 c5 25 bxc6 ♗xc6 26 ♗f4 ♗d8 27 ♗d2 ♗c5 28 ♖e5 ♗c8 29 ♖b2 ♗e7 30 ♖eb5

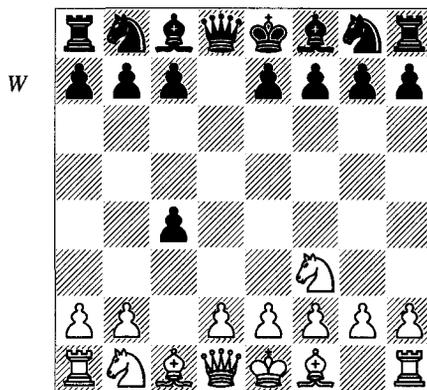
and White went on to win.

The Open Réti

Danailov – Bernard

Warsaw 1990

1 ♗f3 d5 2 c4 dxc4 (D)



Capturing on c4 opens the position, hence the name 'Open Réti', also called the 'Réti Accepted'. By this means Black resolves the problem of having to defend a structure with ...e6 and ...d5, or ...c6 and ...d5, which he may feel is a cramped one. His d-file is open, and there's a good chance of establishing a healthy restraint of White's d-pawn via ...c5 or ...e5.

3 ♗a3

For White, 3 ♗a3 is arguably the course truest to the spirit of the opening, since fianchettoes will follow. This development of the knight to the rim is also seen in the Catalan Opening and a couple of other Réti variations, with similar trade-offs. Of course, this is not the only way to recover the pawn; let's look briefly at alternatives:

a) 3 e3 will usually transpose to a Queen's Gambit Accepted after 3...♗f6 4 ♖xc4 c5 5 d4.

b) 3 ♖a4+ can lead down independent paths or in some cases transpose to a Catalan Opening. Of Black's many replies, 3...♟c6 is perhaps best in terms of clarity: 4 ♟c3 (4 ♟e5 can be met by 4...♟d7 or 4...♞d6 with the idea 5 ♟xc6 ♟d7!) 4...♟f6 5 e4 (5 g3 ♟d7! 6 ♞xc4 ♟b6 7 ♞b3 e5) 5...♟d7! 6 ♟xc4 (6 ♞xc4 e5) 6...♟b6 7 ♞b3 ♟xc4 8 ♞xc4 ♟g4.

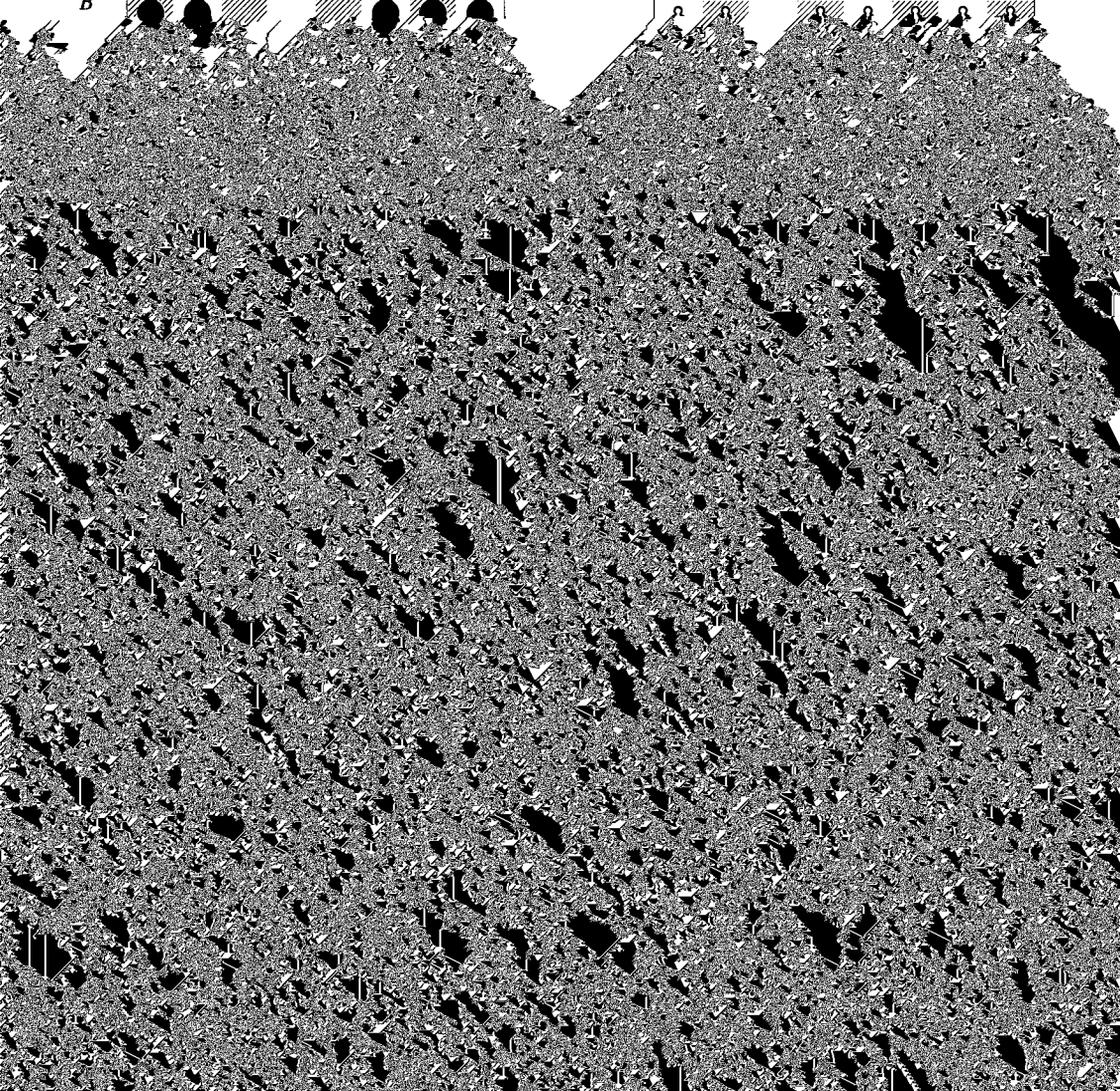
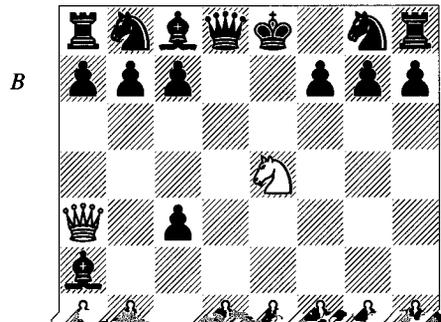
c) 3 e4 is one of the more interesting choices. Then the natural 3...c5 4 ♟xc4 ♟c6 often follows: 5 0-0 (5 ♟b5 ♟d7 6 ♟c3 e6 7 0-0 is an original approach by Gavrikov; Davies gives 7...♟f6 8 e5 ♟d5 9 ♟xd5 exd5 10 d4, when Black might try 10...♞b6 11 ♟xc6 bxc6 with what looks like equal play) 5...e6 6 ♟c3 (D).

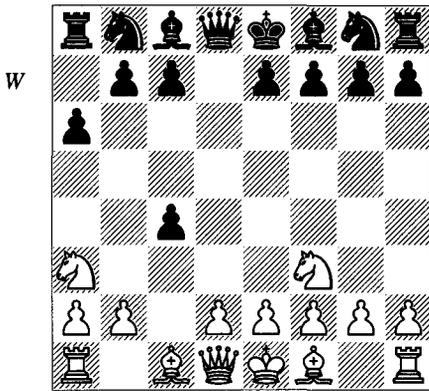
Both sides have a lot of leeway in interpreting this variation.

3...a6

Black threatens to defend his c4-pawn and wants to develop quickly by ...b5. There are of course other moves:

a) 3...e5!? 4 ♟xe5 ♟xa3 5 ♞a4+ (D) (5 bxa3?? ♞d4) and now:

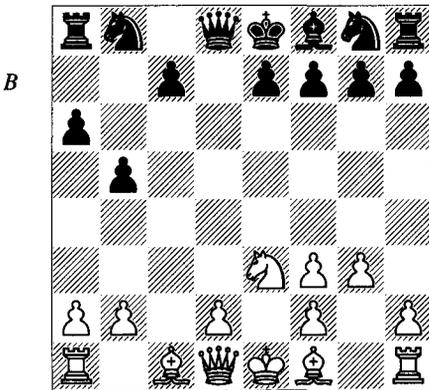




Réti, White often doesn't move his e-pawn anyway.

5...♗b7 6 g3 ♘d7

A natural and good move. At first, 6...♗xf3 7 exf3 (D) looks tempting, because Black will put a piece on d4 in front of the isolated d-pawn.



But the combination of White's better development (notice Black's kingside pieces), the strength of his bishop coming to g2 and his attack on Black's weakened queenside prove more important than his weaknesses. For example, 7...♘c6 (7...e5 8 ♗g2 c6 9 0-0 ♘f6 10 ♗e1 ♗c5 11 f4! e4 12 ♖c2; 7...♘f6 8 a4 b4 9 ♗g2 ♖d3 10 f4 ♗a7 11 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 12 ♗xe2 with d4 next) 8 ♗g2 ♘d4 9 f4 ♘f6 10 a4 (10 ♗xa8? ♖xa8 will give Black plenty of counterplay) 10...♗b8 11 axb5 axb5 12 ♘c2 e6 13 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 14 ♗c6+ ♗d8 15 0-0 ♗c5 16 ♗xb5!? (16 d3 favours White as well) 16...♗e7 17 ♗a4 ♖d6 18 ♗e2 ♗hd8. Black has some compensation, but it doesn't seem sufficient.

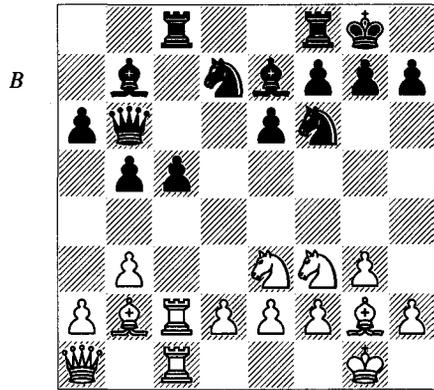
7 ♗g2 ♘gf6 8 0-0 e6 9 b3

The double fianchetto is used in most Réti systems.

9...c5 10 ♗b2 ♗e7

Black is making natural moves and has good central control, but 10...♗d6 keeps an eye on e5 and may be easier to play.

11 ♗c1 0-0 12 ♗c2 ♗c8 13 ♖a1! ♖b6 14 ♗fc1 (D)



White has played in true Réti style. The ♗a1 and ♖a1 manoeuvre goes way back to the opening's creator and namesake. White's pieces all have good range, but Black has pawn control of the centre. Neither side can claim an advantage yet.

14...♖a7?!

Tempi aren't absolutely vital in such positions, but 14...♗fd8 is natural and probably better.

15 d3

Finally a centre pawn moves! Black's position is fine; nevertheless, he needs to find a plan.

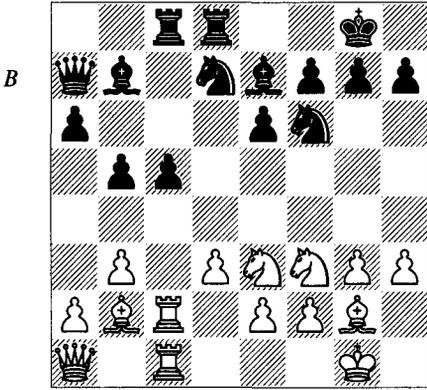
15...♗fd8 16 h3 (D)

16...h6

16...♗f8 looks like a better solution, guarding g7 in order to free the f6-knight to play ...♘d5; for example, 17 ♘e5 (17 ♘g4 ♘d5) 17...♗xg2 18 ♗xg2 ♘xe5 19 ♗xe5 ♖b7+ 20 f3 ♘d5 21 ♘xd5 exd5 22 e4 and now 22...c4!? or 22...♖d7 is equal.

17 ♗g4!?

A typical 'crawling-forward' idea would be 17 ♗c3 ♗c6!? (17...♗f8 looks positionally suspect after 18 a4!?, but Black comes out satisfactorily after 18...♗a8 19 ♗a2 ♖b6) 18 ♖b2 (with



the idea 19 b4) 18...a5 19 a3 ♖f8? (19...♖a6!) 20 b4 axb4 (20...cxb4? 21 ♗xf6! ♜xf6 22 ♜xc6) 21 axb4 ♜d5 22 ♜xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♗d4! ♖b6 24 e4 ♗b7 25 ♗e3. Then White has in mind 26 bxc5 and can claim a serious central advantage.

17...♜xg4

There doesn't seem to be a real threat, so other moves such as 17...♖b6 can be considered.

18 hxg4 ♜f6 19 g5 hxg5 20 ♜xg5 ♗xg2?!

This is not disastrous, but why give White's rook the h-file? A calm move like 20...♖b6 is better, when 21 ♗xb7?! ♖xb7 22 ♜f3 ♜g4! has the idea of ...f6 and ...e5, blunting White's bishop (23 ♗xg7?? f6).

21 ♗xg2 ♖b7+ 22 ♜f3 ♜e8

Now after 22...♜g4 23 ♜h1 f6, 24 ♜h4! ruins Black's plan. Carsten Hansen suggests that 22...♜d5 23 ♜h1 ♜h5 is equal, but White should get a little something out of 24 ♜xh5 ♜xh5 25

White has the simple ideas of ♖h1 and the move he plays next. He has no weaknesses in his pawn-structure, in contrast to Black's slight one on c5. In conjunction with the h-file and his control of the key square e5, this is enough to claim a winning position!

25...♗f8 26 ♖c1! ♖d5 27 ♜d4!?

Cleverly winning a pawn, but direct attack by 27 e4! decides outright; for example, 27...♖c6 (27...♖xd3?? 28 ♜d2) 28 ♜h8+ ♜g8 (28...♗e7 29 ♜xd8 ♗xd8 30 ♖g5) 29 ♜e5 ♖c7 30 ♖g5 (threatening ♖h5) 30...f6 31 ♜g6+ ♗e8 32 ♖h5 ♗d7 33 ♜h7 ♗d6 34 d4 and White wins.

27...cxd4 28 ♜xc8 ♗e7 29 ♜xd8

Or 29 ♜c5! ♖a8 30 ♗g1. The rest is easy.

29...♗xd8 30 ♖f4 ♗d7 31 ♖b8 ♜g4 32 ♖f8 ♜e5 33 ♖xg7 ♜xf3 34 ♖xf7+ ♗c8 35 ♖xf3 ♖d6 36 g4 ♖a3 37 ♖c6+ ♗b8 38 ♖xe6 ♖xa2 39 g5 ♖d2 40 ♖e5+ ♗b7 41 g6 ♖h6 42 g7 ♖g6+ 43 ♗f1 ♖f7 44 ♖g3 ♖g8 45 ♖f3+ 1-0

I think that it's fair to generalize a bit here and say that after 1 ♜f3 d5 2 c4, White can't expect to gain an advantage versus either 2...d4 or 2...dxc4; however, he can almost certainly reach unbalanced positions which have sufficient strategic content to challenge both players.

The Closed Réti

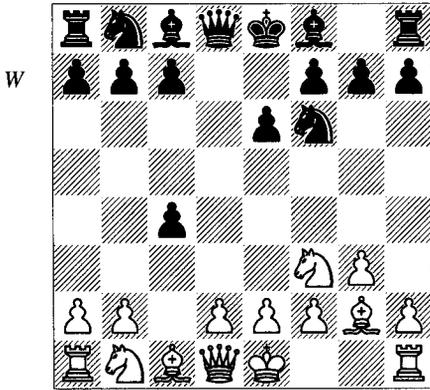
1 ♜f3 d5 2 c4 e6 (D)



still very popular. This is due in part to the fact that English Opening players, when faced with 1 c4 e6, frequently want to avoid a transposition into the Queen's Gambit Declined by 2 d4 d5 or 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4. Thus, after 1 c4 e6, they play 2 ♗f3 d5 and go into a Réti Opening via 3 g3 or 3 b3. Still another possible move-order is 1 c4 ♗f6 2 ♗f3 e6 3 g3 (or 3 b3) 3...d5. Not surprisingly, the Closed Réti is characterized by slow manoeuvring. Both sides tend to develop their pieces conventionally, with White fianchettoing both his bishops and Black playing ...♗f6, ...♗e7, ...0-0, ...b6 and ...♗b7 and usually setting up a moderate-sized centre with ...c5. You will see that, barring the exchange cxd5, both sides' rooks can stay uninvolved in the fray for a long time, and their optimal placement is difficult to determine until the early middlegame or later.

3 b3

The main line that we're heading for can be reached if White begins with either fianchetto; for example, 3 g3 ♗f6 4 ♗g2 ♗e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 c5, etc. Black has unique options, however, after 3 g3 ♗f6 (or immediately 3...dxc4) 4 ♗g2 dxc4 (D) (4...♗e7 5 b3 transposes to the main Réti lines).



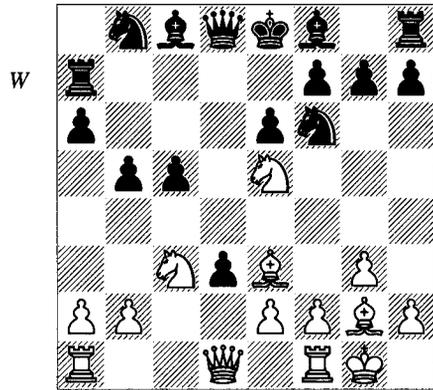
I can't do justice to the large and disparate body of theory and practice here, but both sides should look out for these possibilities:

a) 5 ♖c2 (the similar 5 ♖a4+ is less flexible because after 5...♗bd7 6 ♖xc4 {or 6 ♗a3} 6...c5, the queen will have to move again; theory indicates an equal outcome) 5...♗bd7 (not the only move, of course) 6 ♗a3 c5 (6...♗xa3 7 bxa3 ♗b6 8 ♗e5 0-0 9 ♗b2 may give White a

small edge because of his bishop-pair) 7 0-0 (or 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗ce5 ♗d5 9 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 10 b3 ♗e7 11 ♗b2 0-0 12 0-0, Polugaevsky-Serper, Tilburg 1992, and now 12...f6 followed by ...♖c8 should be fine) 7...♖b8 8 ♗xc4 b5 9 ♗ce5 (9 ♗e3 is worth a try) 9...♗b7 10 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 11 d3, Suba-Inkiöv, Iraklion 1985, and here 11...♗d6 (preventing ♗f4) equalizes.

b) 5 ♗a3 ♖d5!? 6 ♖a4+ (6 ♖c2?! can be met by 6...♗c6 7 ♗xc4 ♗b4!? or 6...♗xa3 7 bxa3 ♗c6 8 0-0 e5!; 6 0-0 is similarly answered with 6...♗xa3 7 ♖a4+ ♗c6 8 ♖xa3 e5) 6...c6 (or 6...♗d7 7 ♖xc4 ♗c6) 7 ♖xc4 ♗xa3 8 ♖xd5 exd5 9 bxa3 ♗f5!? 10 ♗b2 ♗bd7 with a solid position, and roughly equal play.

c) 5 0-0!? is a flexible move: 5...a6 (or 5...♗c6, with the idea 6 ♖a4 ♖d5!? 7 ♗c3 ♖c5) 6 ♗c3!? b5 (Kosten gives the imaginative 6...♗e7 7 b3!? cxb3 8 ♖xb3, planning d4, e4 and ♗f4) 7 d3! cxd3 8 ♗e5 ♖a7 9 ♗e3 c5 (D).



10 ♖xd3!? (or 10 ♗xd3) 10...♖c7?! (after 10...♖xd3 11 ♗xd3 ♗bd7 12 a4! b4 13 ♗e4 White will recover the c-pawn and obtain the better ending) 11 ♖fd1 ♗e7, G.Kuzmin-Belivavsky, Kiev 1978, and here 12 ♗f4! is extremely strong.

3...♗f6

At this point it's possible to play the extremely rare 3...dxc4 4 bxc4 e5!? (D).

The tactical basis for this advance is that 5 ♗xe5?? loses to 5...♖d4.

This dynamic idea, wasting a whole move on ...e6-e5, merits more attention than it has received. In practice the logical continuation 5 ♗c3 ♗c6 has followed. Then White has to deal

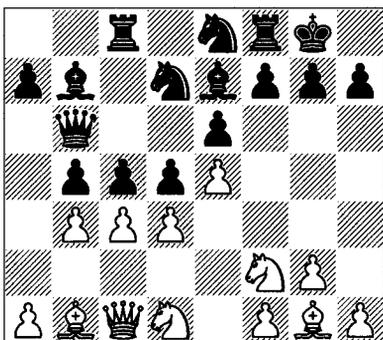


Black. Thus the decision between 3 g3 and 3 b3 becomes more confusing.

4 g3 (D)

cx d5 would free c6 for Black's knight, White plays conservatively, happy with the fact that his bishop on b2 is superior to Black's light-squared bishop) 8... ♖bd7 9 ♖bd2 ♙b7 10 ♗c2 ♗c8 11 e4 ♗b6 12 e5! ♕e8 13 d4 c5. Now it looks as though Black has achieved all of his goals and will free his game, but White has prepared a trick: 14 b4! (D).

B



to each side's pieces.) The game proceeded 21... ♖g7 22 ♙a5 ♗b7 23 ♙xd8 ♗fxd8 24 ♕a5 ♗c7 25 ♗e2 a6 26 ♕e1 ♕f5 27 ♗c3 b4 (if Black does nothing, White will build up and fashion a kingside breakthrough) 28 ♗xb4 ♗db8 29 ♗c3 ♗b5 30 ♗ea2 f6 31 ♕xc6 ♗xc6 32 ♙f1 fxe5 33 ♙xb5 ♗xb5 34 dxe5 d4 35 ♗d3 ♗xc5 36 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 37 ♗xa6 ♗xe5 38 ♕d3 ♗f6 39 ♗c8+ ♕f8 40 ♗a8 ♕d6 41 ♗d8 ♗xd8 42 ♗xd8 ♕b5 43 ♕e5 ♕g7 44 ♕c6 1-0. Very nice.

7 ♙b2

Delaying ♙b2 with 7 e3 has good and bad points; the idea is that in Benoni-like positions with ...d4, White's bishop is often better-placed on c1 than b2. For one thing the bishop on b2 blocks White's support of a b4 advance by a rook on b1; furthermore, a bishop on c1 might find an influential post on f4 or even support the move f4 if Black plays ...e5. After 7 e3 ♕c6 8 ♗e2, Kourkounakis-Botsari, Aegina 1995 pro-

The Réti Benoni

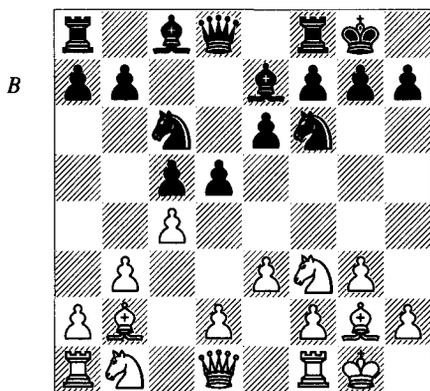
McNab – A. Norris
Scottish Ch, Aberdeen 2001

1 c4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 b3 ♘f6 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
 0-0 6 0-0 c5 7 ♙b2 ♘c6

I haven't used the exact move-order of the game because I want to mention a frequently-used move-order, 7...b6 8 e3 ♙b7. This will transpose to one of our main lines if Black plays 9...♘c6 or 9...♘bd7 (after 9 ♖e2, for example); see the following game. In this case, however, Black can't play the ...d4 variation that he does here.

8 e3 (D)

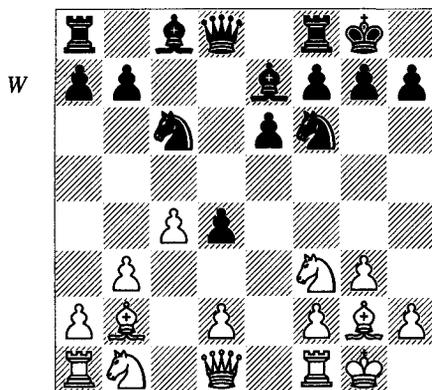
Over the years, White has settled upon this move as the main line. 8 cxd5 comes too early to cause Black real problems: 8...exd5 (or 8...♘xd5 9 ♘c3, when 9...♙f6 10 ♖c1 ♘xc3 11 ♙xc3 e5 was Réti-Grünfeld, Teplitz-Schönau 1928, while 9...b6 with the idea ...♙a6 is also fine) 9 d4 ♖e8 10 ♘c3 ♙g4 11 dxc5 ♙xc5. Here Black has the kind of active play he doesn't get in the main lines, when his bishop is on b7 instead of g4.



8...d4

In the next game we'll see the safer 8...b6. Other moves are seen much less often, although several are playable. Generally, if left to his

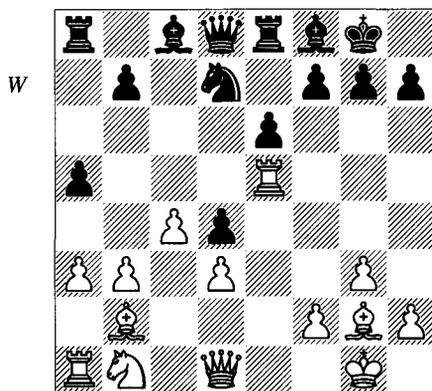
9 exd4 cxd4 (D)



Initially only a small minority of players were willing to test this position as Black, since it looked too much like a Modern Benoni with colours reversed in which Black wouldn't be able to play ...e5 successfully.

10 ♖e1 ♘e8!

This retreat became the main line after some bad experiences with slower moves. Tal-Zhuravliov, USSR Ch, Kharkov 1967 continued 10...♖e8 11 a3 a5 (12 b4 must be prevented) 12 d3 ♙f8 (12...♖b6!?) 13 ♘e5! ♘xe5 14 ♖xe5 ♘d7 (D).



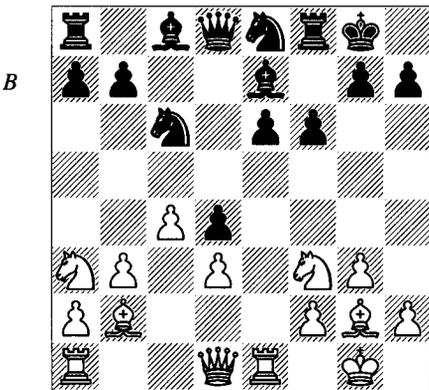
15 ♖b5! (threatening ♙xd4) 15...e5 16 ♘d2!. These are standard Benoni ideas. White's pres-

By contrast, 10...♠e8 prepares to support d4 by ...f6 and ...e5 while covering vulnerable squares inside Black's camp.

11 d3

White can play more ambitiously by 11 ♘e5 ♘xe5 12 ♜e5 f6 13 ♞e1 e5 (or 13...♘c7 14 f4 ♞b8 with the idea ...b5, which is hard to assess) 14 f4! (hacking away at Black's pawn-chain) 14...exf4 15 ♜f3! (15 gxf4 ♘c7 16 ♜f3 a5 17 d3 a4 produces a double-edged fight) 15...fxg3 16 ♜d5+ ♖h8 17 hxg3 ♜xd5 18 ♘xd5, as in Fishbein-D.Schneider, USA Ch, San Diego 2004. White has sacrificed a pawn for excellent piece pressure. 18...♘d6!? looks best, when Kosten suggests 19 ♘xd4 ♘c7 20 ♘f3 ♘xg3 21 ♘f2!. Then if 21...♘xf2+ 22 ♖xf2, White's central pawns, combined with the e-file and temporary pressure on b7, are at least the equivalent of Black's three passed pawns. Similarly, 21...♘f4 22 d4 gives White good chances, especially in view of 22...♘e6 23 ♘xb7! ♘xb7 24 ♜xe6. Overall, this line looks like a promising way for White to go.

11...f6 12 ♘a3 (D)



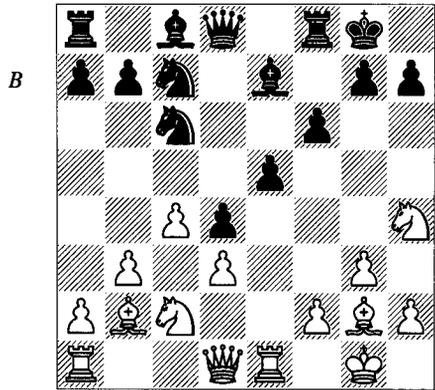
12...e5 13 ♘c2

Although ...♘bd7 is common in the Modern Benoni, here we see White playing the alternate Benoni plan ♘a3-c2 in almost every line, because b4 (or at least the threat of b4) is necessary in order to keep Black on the defensive and counteract his space advantage.

13...♘c7 14 ♜d2

White supports the move b4 and clears his back rank. This does use up the d2-square for a knight redeployment, but ♘d2 isn't necessarily a good idea anyway. Instead, 14 ♘h4!? (D) is a

strange-looking but promising move that tries to provoke Black into weakening his kingside with ...g5, and then attacking it with h4.



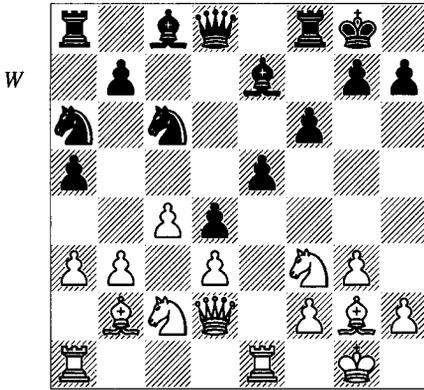
This is an idea that appears in the King's Indian Defence as well as the Modern Main Line of the Benoni. Since f4 is a positional threat, Black 'cooperates': 14...g5 15 ♘f3. Now White is ready to play h4; apparently, he needn't be in a hurry to make progress in such positions since he faces few threats. Here are two examples:

a) 15...♠e6?! 16 ♘fxd4 (this seems a good spot for 16 h4! g4 17 ♘h2 ♜d7 18 ♜d2 a5 19 ♜h6) 16...exd4 (16...♘xd4 17 ♘xd4 exd4 18 ♜xe6 ♘xe6 19 ♘d5 ♜b6! 20 ♜e2 ♖h8 21 ♜xe6! ♜xe6 22 ♘xe6 is unclear) 17 ♜xe6 ♘xe6 18 ♘d5 ♖h8 (18...♜d6 19 ♜e2 ♘cd8? 20 ♘xd4) 19 ♘xe6 ♘c5 20 ♘f5 with a lovely outpost and good prospects, Macieja-Vescovi, Bermuda 2005.

b) 15...♘f5 seems more accurate: 16 ♜e2 ♘g4 (16...♜f7! covers the second rank to quash any tactics; then 17 h4 g4 18 ♘d2 is hard to assess) 17 h3 ♘h5?! (17...♘e6) 18 g4 ♘g6 19 ♘fxd4! ♘xd4. Now the safest move is 20 ♘xd4 ♜e8! 21 ♘b2 ♘xd3 22 ♜d2; then Black has his share of the centre, but White has the threat of ♘xb7 and moves like ♘e3 and ♜ad1 in store. Instead, Kosarev-Bets, Peterhof 2006 continued 20 ♘xd4!? ♘b4 21 ♘f5 ♘xe1 22 ♜xe1 ♘xf5?! (22...♜b8 23 ♘e4) 23 gxf5 ♜b8, when White should have opened lines for his rook by 24 h4! gxh4 25 f4! exf4 26 ♜g4+ ♖h8 27 ♜xf4 with two bishops, an attack and d4-d5-d6 in reserve.

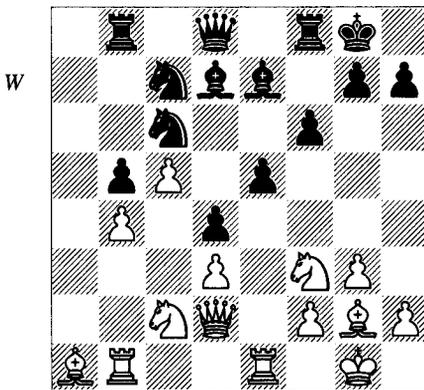
Sometimes White plays 14 a3 a5, when 15 ♜d2 transposes to the game, while 15 ♜b1 has also led to many tough battles.

14...a5 15 a3 ♘a6 (D)



16 b4!?

White embarks upon a pseudo-sacrifice consistent with the aim of piece activity. Schwartzmann-Lputian, Wijk aan Zee 1993 saw the slower 16 ♖ab1: 16...♗b8 17 ♙a1?! (17 ♙c1! keeps the bishop on a freer diagonal: 17...b5 18 ♘h4 ♙d7, Deleyn-Chuchelov, Belgian Team Ch 1995/6, and now 19 f4!?! ♘c7 20 f5 bxc4 21 dxc4 ♙c5 22 ♗d3 could be considered, with the idea of advancing by g4, h4 and g5) 17...♙d7 18 b4 axb4 19 axb4 b5 20 c5 ♘c7 (D).



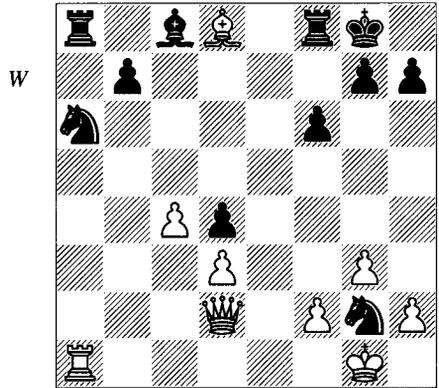
This kind of pawn-structure, common to this variation and the Modern Benoni, would be fine for White if he didn't have his dark-squared bishop, because he could challenge for the a-file. But it sits uselessly on a1, so Black must have the better prospects. In our main game, White solves that problem as follows:

16...axb4 17 axb4 ♘cxb4 18 ♘fxd4! exd4 19 ♙a3

The point: White gets his piece back.

19...♘xc2 20 ♙xe7 ♘xe1!

Black made the wrong queen 'sacrifice' in Lautier-Kotronias, Sochi 1989: 20...♗xe7? 21 ♗xe7 ♘xa1 22 ♗a5 ♘b3 23 ♗d5+ ♖h8 24 ♗f7! ♙g8 25 ♗e8 ♙e6 26 ♗xg8+ ♗xg8 27 ♗xe6 ♘ac5 28 ♗b6 and White went on to win. 21 ♙xd8 ♘xg2 (D)



22 ♙b6 ♙h3

Now 23 ♗d1 g6 24 ♙xd4 ♗ad8 25 ♙b6 ♗d6 is unclear. However, White went astray with 23 ♗e2?! g6 24 ♗b1 ♗ae8 25 ♗f3?? (25 ♗d2) 25...♘e1! 26 ♗xb7 ♘b4! and Black was winning. In general, the chances in this game looked balanced, which we could say about the entire variation. I would encourage White to investigate his alternatives on moves 11 and 14.

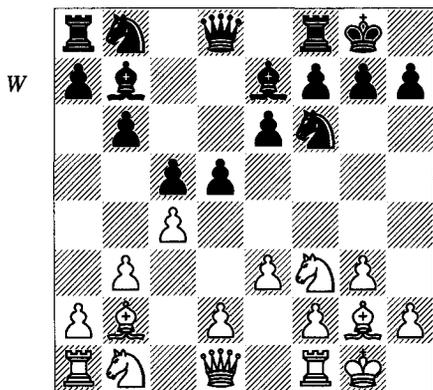
The ...b6 Fianchetto

Scherbakov – Vaganian

St Petersburg 1998

1 ♘f3 d5 2 c4 e6 3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♙g2 ♙e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 c5 7 ♙b2 b6 8 e3 ♙b7 (D)

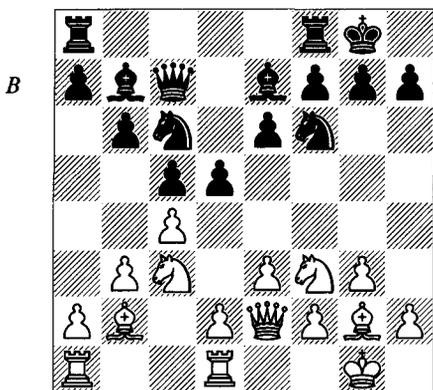
This and the following positions can be reached by a large number of move-orders; in fact, this game began with ...b6 on the second move! Since there are as yet no open lines, the question of how to activate rooks becomes of interest. Black tends to centralize with ...♗d8, opening the d-file by ...dxc4 when the timing is right; his other rook might go to b8 to support ...a6 and ...b5. White sometimes beats him to the punch with cxd5 and then places rooks on c1 and d1, hoping for an effective d4. Another



plan is d3 and a well-timed e4. It's all very position-specific.

9 ♖c3

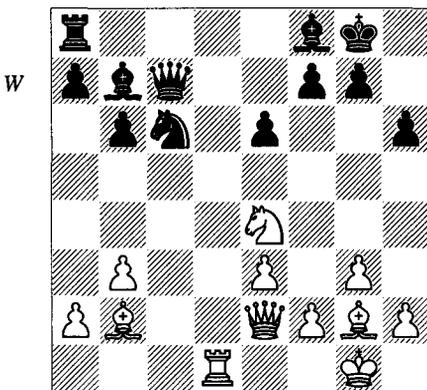
Let's see two examples of the sort of classical attack that White has mounted time and again: 9 ♖e2 ♘c6 10 ♙d1 ♗c7 11 ♘c3 (D).



Now it's very risky to delay ...dxc4 too long, because sooner or later cxd5 will produce an advantage, often in the form of a decisive attack:

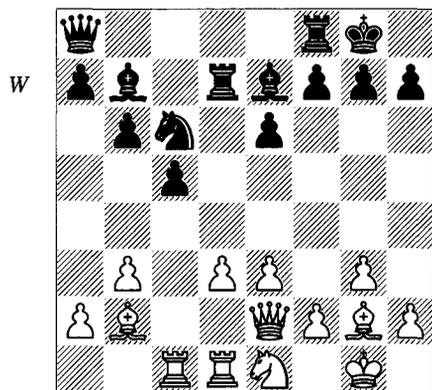
a) 11...♙fd8 12 cxd5 ♘xd5 13 ♘xd5 ♙xd5 14 d4 ♙d7 (14...cxd4 15 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 16 ♙xd4 and now 16...♙d7 17 ♙ac1 leaves White with a clearly superior position; still worse is 16...♙d6? 17 ♙dc1! ♙d7 18 ♙e5 with the idea 18...♙d5? 19 ♙c7) 15 dxc5 (this draws a piece away from Black's already under-populated kingside, and the bishop on c5 will often be subject to attack) 15...♙xc5 16 ♘g5! ♙xd1+ 17 ♙xd1 h6 18 ♘e4 ♙f8? (D).

19 ♘f6+! (routine, possibly, but nice anyway) 19...gxf6 20 ♙g4+ ♖h7 21 ♙e4+ f5 22



♙xf5+ exf5 23 ♙xf5+ ♖g8 24 ♙d7 ♙xd7 25 ♙xd7 ♙b8 26 ♙g4+ ♖h7 27 ♙f5+ 1-0 Szabo-Padevsky, Amsterdam 1972.

b) 11...♙ad8 12 d3 ♙b8 13 ♙ac1 ♙a8 14 cxd5 ♘xd5 15 ♘xd5 ♙xd5!? (or 15...exd5 16 d4 ♘b4!? 17 ♙c3 ♙a6 18 ♙d2! intending 18...♘d3? 19 ♙f1! c4 20 ♙xd3 cxd3 21 ♘e1) 16 ♘e1 ♙d7 (D).



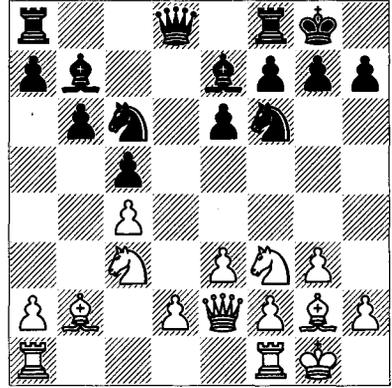
17 ♙g4 (a typical gravitation kingside) 17...g6 18 ♙f4 ♙b8! 19 ♙h6 f6?! 20 d4 ♙fd8 21 ♘d3 ♙a8? 22 ♘f4 ♙d6 and now 23 ♙e1! is hard to meet, while 23 ♘xg6! hxg6 24 ♙xg6+ ♖f8 25 ♙h6+ ♖e8 26 ♙h5+ also gives White an attack. Instead, the natural 23 d5?! (Padevsky-Gregoriu, Istanbul 1975) allows the surprising defence 23...♘e5! 24 ♙xe5 fxe5 25 ♘xg6 ♙f6.

9...dxc4!

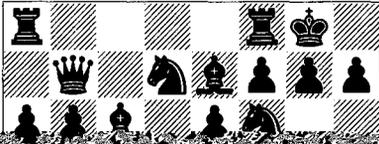
Black cuts out the idea of cxd5 right away. Actually, 9...♘bd7 is a respectable move with hundreds of games behind it. Just one example: 10 ♖e2 (10 d3! is more flexible, stopping ...♘e4 and leaving open the plan of ♘e1 and f4,

and in some cases g4-g5) 10...a6 (10...e4 is an equalizer, according to theory) 11 f1d1 c7 12 a1c1 dxc4 (again, Black shouldn't wait too long; a number of games have seen the likes of 12...ac8 13 cxd5 dxd5 14 dxd5 e4 e4 b7 16 d4 and Black has to cope with both 17 dxc5 and 17 d5) 13 bxc4 e6!? 14 d4! (we see that White's position has some elasticity to it, and he begins a potential central pawn-roller) 14...b7? (Kosten gives 14...cxd4 15 exd4 fe8(?!), although 16 d5! exd5 17 dxd5 still causes difficulties) 15 d5! (D).

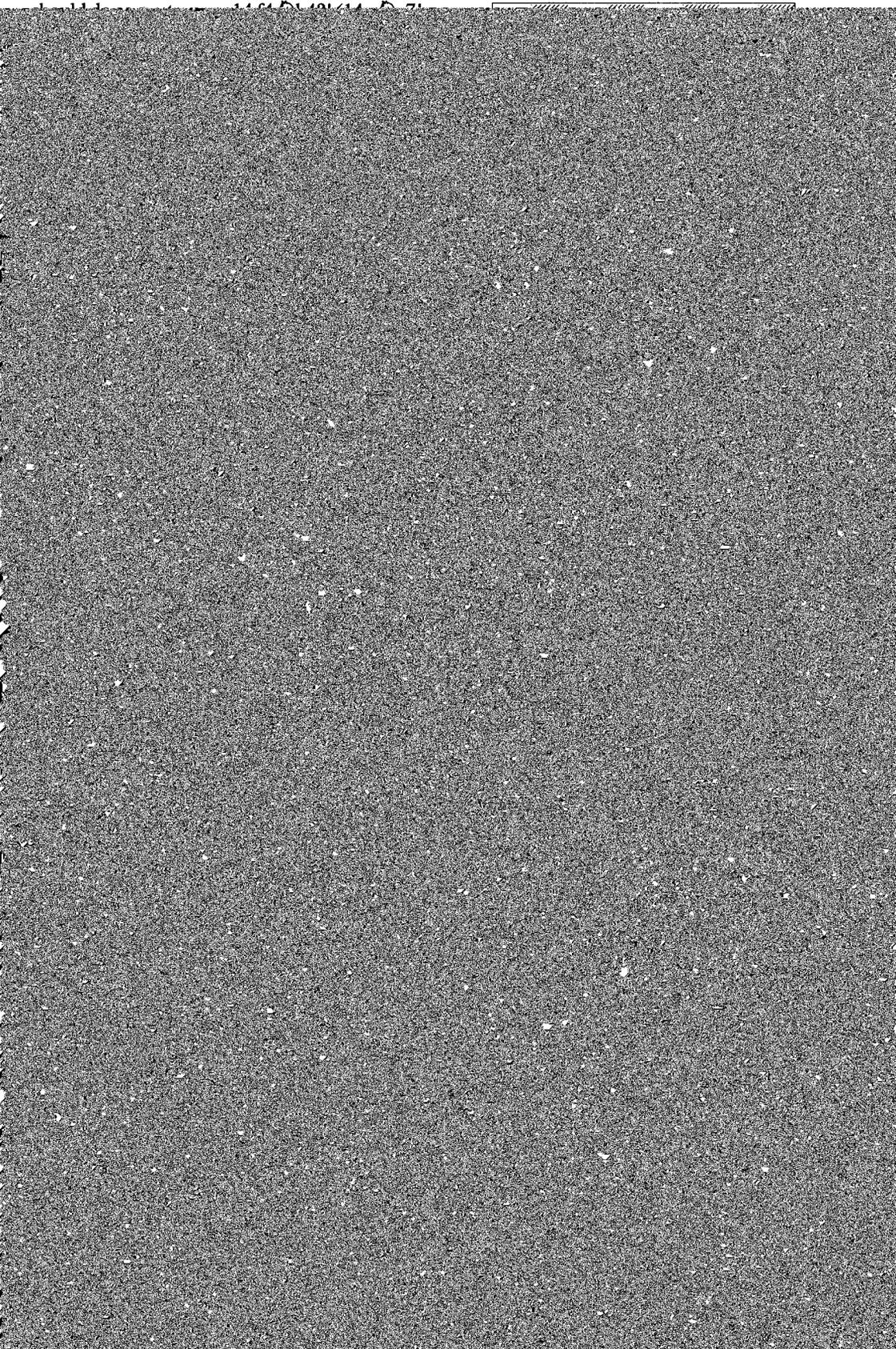
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B

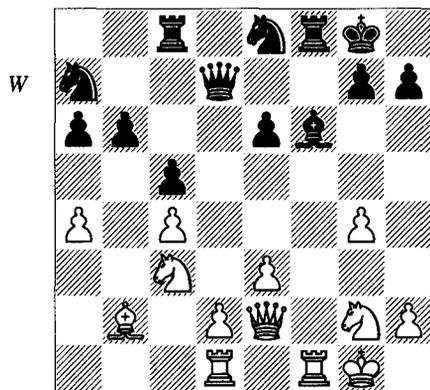


rook on f1 to support a kingside pawn-storm. In fact, much of the time that White succeeds directly out of the opening, he does so with some



White will often attack e6 on the grounds that after fxe6, Black must either take on an isolated pawn by ...fxe6 or cede the d5-square after ...♖xe6.

18...♙f6 19 fxe6 fxe6 (D)



20 g5!

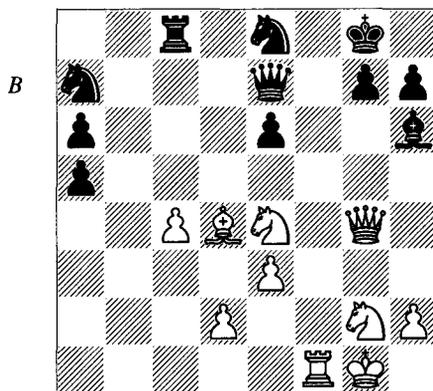
White sacrifices a pawn to open up lines with a gain of tempo.

20...♙xg5

20...♙e5!? 21 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 22 ♖g4! threat-

White stands much better in any case after 27...♖f8 28 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 29 ♙e5!.

28 ♙d4! (D)



Now Black can do nothing about the threat of ♙c5.

28...♖c7 29 ♙c5 ♖xc5 30 ♖xc5 ♖c7 31 ♖e4 ♖c6 32 ♖f6+ ♗h8 (D)



2 Réti: Slav Variations

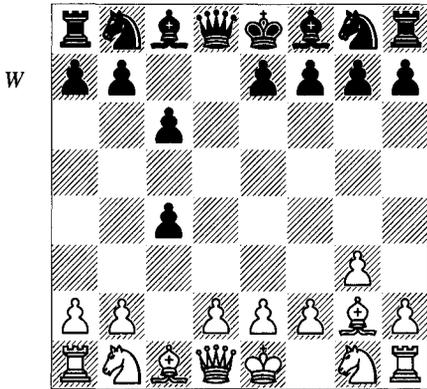
1 Qf3 d5 2 c4 c6 (D)



Black wants to avoid all this, he can also try 1 c4 c6 2 e4 e5 , but that has its own set of problems after 3 Qf3 , and is quite rare. The interested reader will have to dig around in books

c6 2 g3 d5 3 ♖g2, White must be willing to play against 3...dxc4 (D).

touch upon a subset of these, let's look at a few games.



Then Kosten suggests recovering the pawn by 4 ♖a3 ♗e6 (not 4...b5? in view of 5 ♖xb5, but 4...e5 5 ♖xc4 f6 is definitely worthy of consideration) 5 ♖c2 ♖a6 6 ♖xc4 ♖b4!? 7 ♖b3 ♗d5! 8 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 9 ♖f3. Following 9...e5 10 a3 b5 11 axb4 bxc4, he recommends 12 ♖e3!, attacking e5 and a7 while in some cases playing an effective ♖a5. So far, so good, but a possible problem is that Black can play 9...e6 instead, which sets up a nice restraint pawn-structure that goes well with the good bishop on f8. 9...e6 also works tactically in the line 10 a3 b5 11 axb4 bxc4 12 ♖c3 ♖f6 with the idea 13 ♖a5 c5. This last position is hard to assess, but at any it's not a clear improvement for White over the lines beginning with 2 ♖f3.

Instead of Kosten's 4 ♖a3, McDonald likes 4 ♖f3, giving the gambit line 4...b5 5 a4 ♗b7 6 b3! cxb3 7 ♖xb3 (actually, 7 axb5 cxb5 8 ♖xb3 seems to favour White slightly as well) 7...a6 8 ♗a3 with strong play. One issue in that case is whether other fourth moves like 4...♗e6 and 4...♖f6 are better. For example, after 4...♖f6, we've transposed to 3 g3 ♖f6 4 ♗g2 dxc4 below.

I have gone somewhat far afield to describe these ramifications of 1 c4 c6 2 g3, but they could be of considerable interest to English Opening players as well as those who prefer the Réti Opening.

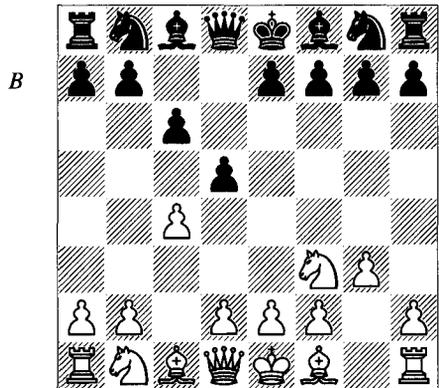
Let's return to 1 ♖f3 d5 2 c4 c6. The material expands quickly, as White has multiple moves at every juncture and Black several replies to each. With the warning that I shall only

The System with ...♗g4

Miroshnichenko – Mammadov
Baku 2006

1 ♖f3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 g3 (D)

We are used to weighing the differences between 3 g3 and 3 b3 when White is planning to fianchetto both bishops. But his intention in this game is to forego b3 with other ideas in mind. A drawback to doing so is that he allows ...dxc4 without being able to recapture with the b-pawn, but a significant benefit is that his queen is free to come to b3 or a4, something that happens consistently in the variations of this game and the next. White will also delay ♖c3 for some time so as to steer clear of attack by ...d4, as well as to reserve to right to play ♖bd2 or ♖a3.



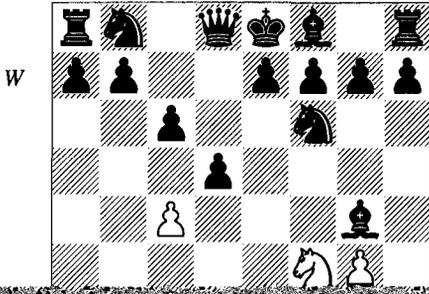
3...♖f6

Black doesn't commit his queen's bishop, which can go to f5 or g4. Upon occasion, 3...♗g4 is played instead of 3...♖f6, but this introduces issues of an early ♖b3, either immediately or after 4 cxd5. The ideas are similar to ones below.

4 ♗g2

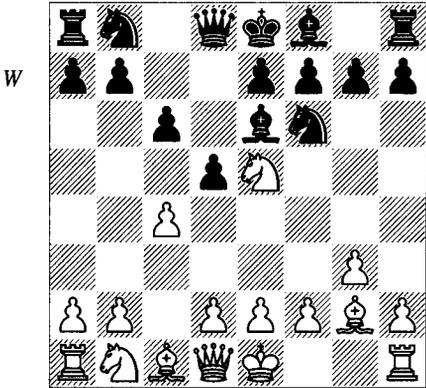
The basic position. We'll look at acceptance of the gambit by ...dxc4 on this or the next move in the game Poldauf-Saltaev below ('The Gambit Accepted').

4...♗g4 (D)



done before 5...♘bd7 is played. On the other hand, Black allows this move for a reason: the knight on e5 isn't defended and can be swapped off by ...♘bd7 with a gain of time. A little simplification won't hurt Black, who temporarily controls more space.

Of course, White can still go into the double fianchetto lines by 5 b3 (which has its own section below; see, for example, the game Pod-



Now White wants to play Qc3 and capture the bishop on d5, so Black gives it a retreat-square on c6: 7...c5 8 0-0 (8 Qc3 Qc6 9 0-0 Qbd7 10 d3 appears more promising, intending e4, Wf2 and d4) 8...e6 9 a3!? Qbd7 10 Qc3 Qc6 11 Re1 Qd6 12 e4 Qe5 !? (12...e5 13 b4!? cxb4 14 axb4 Qxb4 15 Qd5 Qd6 16 d4 0-0 is unclear; White has a nice centre, but still has to prove full compensation) 13 b4!? cxb4 14 axb4 Qxf3+ 15 Wxf3 e5 16 b5 Qd7 17 d4 0-0 18 dxe5 Qxe5 19 Qf4 with a complicated position that offers chances for both sides, Stoček-Talla, Czech Ch, Lazne Bohdanec 1999.

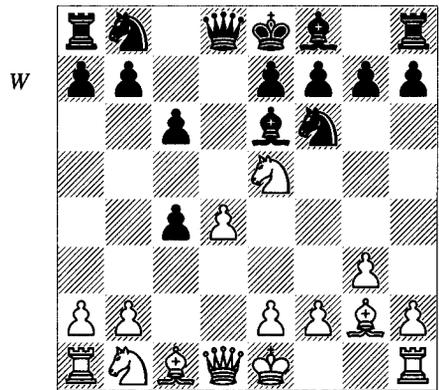
interested in this line for either colour you'll want to do some work. Here are a few ideas:

b1) 6 Wb3 Wc7 is easy for Black because White is so far from getting his pieces out that he can't exploit the queen's placement along the c-file. There may follow 7 d3 Qbd7 8 Qxd7 Qxd7 9 0-0 e6 with full equality.

b2) 6 Qa3 dxc4 (6... Qbd7 develops more quickly) 7 Qaxc4 Qd5 8 f3! (preserving his light-squared bishop and preparing e4) 8...e6 9 d4 Qxc4 10 Qxc4 Qb4+ 11 Qf2 Qbd7 12 Wb3 Qb6 ! 13 Qd1 Qe7 14 e4 Qxc4 15 Wxc4 Wb6 gives White the centre and an undoubted edge. But without a knight it's always difficult to make real progress against Black's classic restraint centre with ...e6 and ...c6.

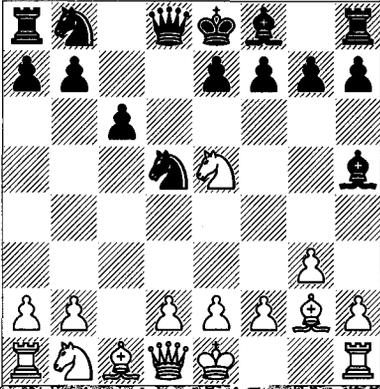
b3) 6 cxd5 Qxd5 (6...cxd5 7 Qc3 Qbd7 8 d4 is comfortable for White) 7 Qf3 (D) (7 f3?! can be met safely by 7... Qbd7 8 Qxd7 Wxd7 9 Qc3 e5, or more aggressively and unclearly with 7... Qxa2 ! 8 Qxa2 Wd5 {forking e5 and a2} 9 Qxf7 ! {9 Qc3 } 9... Wxa2 10 Qxh8 Wxb1 11 Qh3 ! {threatening Qe6 } 11... Wa2 12 Qc8 !).

b4) An intriguing gambit idea is 6 d4!? dxc4 (D).



7 e4 (trying to recover the pawn by 7 Qa3 provokes the response 7... Qd5 8 f3 b5 9 e4 Qe6 , and now 10 f4! gives White space and some development for the pawn; this deserves a closer look) 7... Qbd7 8 f4 Qxe5 9 fxe5 Qg4 10 Wd2 Qd7 11 Wg5 ?! (11 0-0! seems better; for example, 11...e6 12 Wf4 Qh5 13 Qe3 Qe7 14 Qd2 or 11...f6 12 h3 Qe6 13 d5 Qg8 14 e6 Qe5

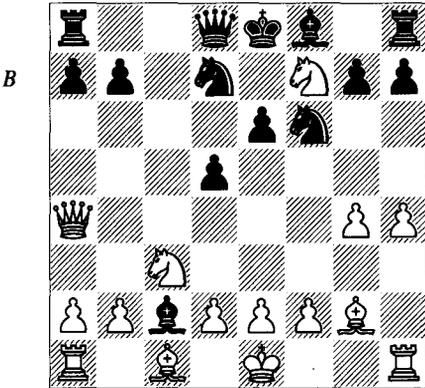
W



from the rest of the action, as often happens in the Slav Defence.

7 ♖a4+

7 ♘c3 isn't quite as forcing, but tends to lead to some advantage. A good example is 7... ♘c6 (7... e6 8 g4 ♙g6?! 9 h4 ♙d6 10 d4 is very awkward for Black) 8 ♖a4 ♗d6 9 d4 ♗b4 10 ♘xc6 ♗xa4 11 ♘xa4 bxc6, Kosten-Shirazi, Sautron 2005, and here 12 ♙f4! e6 13 ♗c1 with the idea of ♘c5 must be good, especially in view of 13... ♙b4+ 14 ♙d2! ♙xd2+ 15 ♗xd2, when White doubles by ♗c3 and ♗f1, and can play e3 and ♙f1, if needed, to win material on the



♖xg8++ ♔d7 22 ♜f6+ ♔d6 23 ♜xc3 and White mates or wins more material. The rest is clear.

17...♜xd7 18 ♜xc3! ♜xc3 19 ♜c1 ♜xc1+ 20 ♙xc1 gxf6 21 ♙a3 a6 22 ♜a5 ♜g8 23 ♜c5 ♙e4 24 f3 ♙b1? 25 ♜c8+ ♜d8 26 ♜xb7 ♙xa2 27 ♜e7# (1-0)

The System with ...♙f5

Smyslov – Bronstein

USSR Ch, Odessa 1974

1 ♜f3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 g3

Sometimes White sets up a structure with e3, b3, ♙b2, ♜c2 and ♜c3, moves which can be played in a variety of orders. Let me just present some of the more dynamic ideas: 3 e3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 (4 ♜c2 e6 5 b3 ♜bd7 6 ♙b2 ♙d6 7 ♜c3 transposes; naturally, there are alternatives) 4...e6 (among many options, Black has 4...♙g4, 4...♙f5 and 4...a6; the last is a modern way to treat many Slav Variations; for one thing, it means that lines with ♜b3, hitting the b-pawn, can be answered by ...b5 or even ...♜a7) 5 b3 ♜bd7 6 ♙b2 ♙d6 (6...♙e7 7 g4!? is promising, since 7 ♜v6 8 ♜g1 followed by ♜x7 recovers

simplest path to an advantage is 12 ♜xg6 fxg6 13 g5 hxg5 14 hxg5 ♜xh1+ 15 ♙xh1 ♜h5 16 ♜c2 ♜f8 17 e4.

c) 10...a6!? barely hangs on tactically, but leads to other problems. Fernandez Murgu-Ginzburg, Buenos Aires 1999 went 11 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 12 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 13 h5 ♙c2 14 d3 (to trap the bishop) 14...d4. Now, instead of the game's 15 ♜e4?! ♙a4, Kosten points out that White's best line is 15 ♜d2! ♙xd3! 16 exd3 dxc3+ 17 bxc3 0-0-0!? 18 ♜b1, when the bishop-pair grants him a clear superiority.

11 d4 b5

has the dual ideas of ♙a3 and ♜c7 . Instead, $9... \text{♜xd5}$ 10 ♜e4 ♙c7 allows White to play the fun and dangerous attack 11 ♜e5 $g6$ 12 h4! .

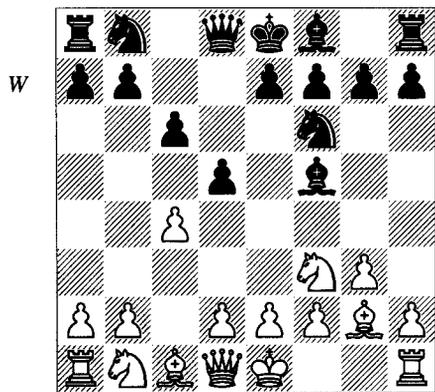
b) $8... \text{dxc4}$ 9 bxc4 $e5$ and now 10 0-0 favours White slightly because of his centre pawns, but the sacrifice 10 g4! ? is more fun: $10... \text{♜xg4!}$? ($10... \text{♜c5}$ 11 g5 ♜fd7 12 h4 is double-edged) 11 ♜e4 ♙c7 12 ♖g1 $f5$ 13 ♜e5 , and instead of $13... \text{♙e7?}$ 14 ♖xg4 , as in Cornette-Arutinian, Iraklion 2002, $13... \text{♜df6}$ 14 c5 $e4$ 15 h3 exf3 16 ♙c4+ ♜d5 17 ♖xg4 leads to great complications.

c) $8... \text{♙e7}$ 9 g4! ? (this is a popular pawn sacrifice in similar positions; White's first idea is $g5$, driving the knight from the centre, followed by $0-0-0$ and a kingside pawn-storm) $9... \text{♜xg4}$ 10 ♖g1 ♜ge5 11 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 (Wojtaszek-Cichocki, Dzwirzyno 2004) and here Kosten suggests 12 0-0-0! , giving the sample line $12... \text{dxc4}$ 13 f4! cxb3 14 ♙xb3 ♜g6 15 ♜e4 with a powerful attack; for example, $15... \text{♙b4}$ 16 h4 $f5$ 17 ♜g5 with the idea $h5$.

Obviously, White won't always get such dynamic play from the slow build-up with $e3$, ♙c2 , $b3$ and ♜c3 , but in any case the game is unbalanced and both sides should know something about it.

d) $8... \text{a6}$ 9 ♖g1! ? $b5$ 10 g4 $b4$ (after $10... \text{bxc4}$, Gurevich suggests 11 g5! cxb3 12 axb3 ♜e8 13 ♙d3 with threats) 11 g5! ♜e8 12 ♜a4 ♙e7 13 h4 , M.Gurevich-Kallai, Bundesliga 2001/2. White has a dangerous attack, but the position is obscure.

$3... \text{♜f6}$ 4 ♙g2 ♙f5 (D)

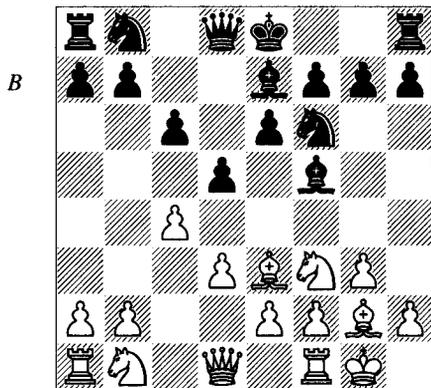


Black develops his bishop before cutting it off by $\dots e6$. As always, the players can arrive at

this basic position via different move-orders, and this game in fact began 1 ♜f3 ♜f6 2 g3 $d5$ 3 ♙g2 ♙f5 4 c4 $c6$. By putting the bishop on the active square $f5$, Black avoids getting hit by ♜e5 , as in the last game, but also loses the option of $\dots \text{♙xf3}$, which makes a successful $\dots e5$ less likely. Since Black's queenside is defended by one less piece, White will bring his queen to $b3$ and try to combine pressure on $d5$ with that on $b7$.

5 cxd5

This is the most popular choice, although there are two major alternatives. One is to play into a traditional Réti set-up by 5 b3 $e6$ 6 0-0 ♜bd7 7 ♙b2 ; compare the double fianchetto game below. The other is 5 0-0 , when $5... \text{dxc4}$ is a respectable move that transposes to $4... \text{dxc4}$ 5 0-0 ♙f5 . Instead, if Black plays $5... e6$, 6 d3 has a bit more to it than may first appear: $6... \text{♙e7}$ (the structure after $6... \text{dxc4}$ 7 dxc4 ♙xd1 8 ♖xd1 ♜bd7 9 ♜c3 favours White slightly; he wants to gain the bishop-pair by ♜h4 , and $9... \text{♙b4}$ 10 ♙d2 renews that idea, intending to answer $10... \text{h6?!}$ with 11 ♜b5! cxb5 12 ♙xb4 $a5$ 13 ♙d6 , after which the bishops rule) 7 ♙e3! ? (D).



Quite a few games have arrived at this position. White is playing one of Black's favourite set-ups with colours reversed (that is, in the London System with 2 ♜f3 and 3 ♙f4 versus the King's Indian Defence). White's idea is that after ♙b3 , Black won't be able to reply with $\dots \text{♙b6}$, and if Black's queen moves to the c -file, a speedy cxd5 , ♜c3 and ♖c1 will create strong pressure down that file.

With care, Black should be able to keep his disadvantage to a minimum, but the game stays

11...♖d7

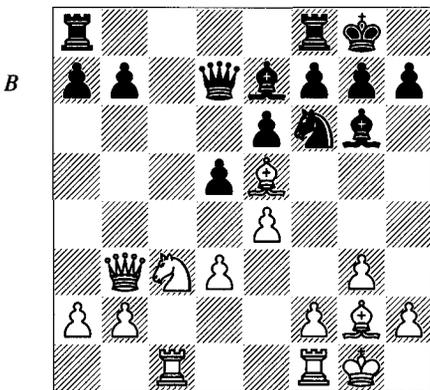
Black has played 11...♖d7 in several games, to fight for control of e5. In Vilela-Alarcon, Havana 2007, White responded with the direct 12 ♖b5 (after 12 a3 a6, the standard idea 13 e4! gives White the upper hand, especially after 13...♗c5 14 ♖c2 ♕g6 15 b4) 12...♗c5 13 ♖d1 ♖d7 14 ♖bd4 ♗xd4 15 ♗xd4 ♕g6 16 b4 ♗a6 17 a3, and the a6-knight is restricted by White's queenside pawns, so he has something to play for.

12 ♗e5!?

The pawn sacrifice 12 e4 also leads to the better game. Black should accept the pawn, although it comes at the cost of exposing his pieces and ceding the bishop-pair: 12...dxe4 (12...♕g6 13 exd5 exd5 14 d4 favours White) 13 dxe4 ♗xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 15 ♗e5 ♗xe5 16 ♕xe4 ♗c6 17 ♖fd1 ♖c8 18 ♖a4 ♕d8 19 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20 ♕xc6 bxc6 21 ♖xc6 with an edge for White, Barcza-Smyslov, Moscow Olympiad 1956.

12...♗xe5 13 ♕xe5 ♕g6 14 e4 (D)

A much later game, Pigusov-Lin Weiguo, Beijing 1996, saw the seemingly slow 14 h3, to prevent ...♗g4. There followed 14...♖fc8 15 e4 dxe4 16 dxe4 with a central superiority for White. A prophylactic move such as 14 h3 is possible since Black has no way to create threats or change the pawn-structure in one move.



After the text-move (14 e4), White has the initiative and Black's bishop on g6 is shut out of the game.

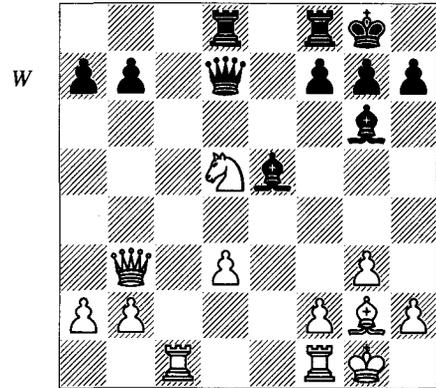
14...♖ad8

The situation becomes tactical after 14...♗g4 15 ♕f4 dxe4 16 dxe4 e5 17 ♗d5! ♖fc8 (or

17...exf4 18 ♖c7) 18 ♕h3! ♕d6? (18...h5 19 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 20 ♖d1 ♖e8 21 ♖xb7 and White will stay a pawn ahead) 19 f3 h5 20 ♕e3 ♖xc1 21 ♖xc1 ♖c8 22 ♖d1 1-0 Pigusov-Maximenko, Riga 1988.

15 exd5 exd5

White will also win a pawn after 15...♗xd5 16 ♗xd5 exd5 17 ♖c7 ♖e6 18 d4.

16 ♕xf6 ♕xf6 17 ♗xd5 ♕e5 (D)**18 d4! ♕b8**

Or 18...♕xd4 19 ♖fd1 ♕e5 20 ♗f6+ ♕xf6 21 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 22 ♕xb7.

19 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 20 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21 ♗e3 ♖xd4 22 ♖xb7 h5? 23 ♖c8 ♖e5 24 ♗c4 ♖e1+ 25 ♕f1 ♗h7 26 ♖xb8 ♕d3 27 ♗d2 ♖e2 28 ♖f3 1-0

The Gambit Accepted

Poldauf – Saltaev
Bundesliga 2006/7

1 ♗f3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 g3

For 3 b3 and related moves, see the next game.

3...♗f6

3...dxc4 (D) is possible already, and has some unique features.

After 4 ♕g2, 4...♗f6 transposes to our main game, but 4...♕f5 is an interesting alternative. It prevents 5 ♖c2 and intends 5 ♗a3 e5!, which is a theme that we're going to get used to in the next game. The point is that 6 ♗xe5?? is a blunder in view of 6...♕xa3 7 bxa3 ♖d4.

Instead, White can continue 4 ♗a3, when 4...♖d5 and 4...e5 raise issues that we'll deal

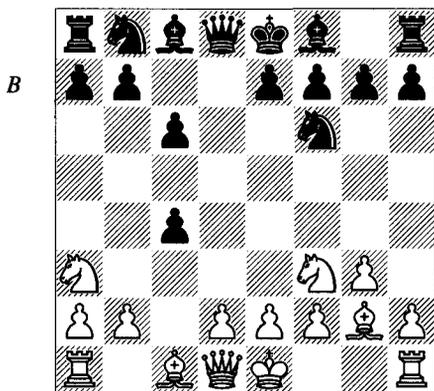


least three candidates. They have a good deal of theory behind them, so I'll try to indicate the

White threatens 7 axb5 and leaves Black to cover his weaknesses: 6...♙b7 (6...a6? 7 axb5 cxb5 8 ♖d4! with the idea 8...♗a7 9 ♖xb5; 6...e6 7 axb5 cxb5 8 ♖e5 ♖d5 9 d3!) 7 b3! cxb3 8 ♗xb3 a6 9 ♙a3!? (or 9 d4 e6 10 ♖c3) 9...♗d5 10 ♗e3! and Black won't be able to castle if he plays ...e6.

a4) 5...♖bd7 6 ♖a3 (6 ♗c2 ♖b6 7 a4 a5 8 ♖a3 ♙e6 is also complex; White has tried 9 ♖e5, with the idea 9...♗d4?! 10 ♖xc6!, and 9 ♖g5 ♙g4 10 ♖xc4! ♙xe2 11 ♖e5 ♙h5 12 b4!, a position reached in several games) 6...♖b6 7 ♗c2 ♗d5!? (Black has also played 7...♙e6 8 ♖g5 ♗d7, when 9 b3!? strives to keep the initiative) 8 ♖h4 (White needs something better here) 8...♗d4 9 ♖f3, Deriabn-Sitnikov, Dnepropetrovsk 2002, and now Black can repeat, or play 9...♗g4! with the idea 10 h3 ♗g6, when White may have to struggle for compensation. All this needs to be studied critically in order to get a feel for the imbalances.

b) 5 ♖a3 (D) and now:



b1) 5...e5?! is ineffective due to 6 ♖xc4 e4 7 ♖g5!, when 7...♙f5? loses to 8 ♗b3! in view of 8...♗e7?? 9 ♖d6+! or 8...♗c7 9 d3! exd3 10 ♙f4 with too big an attack. Upon 7...♙c5!?, 8 ♗c2! is strong.

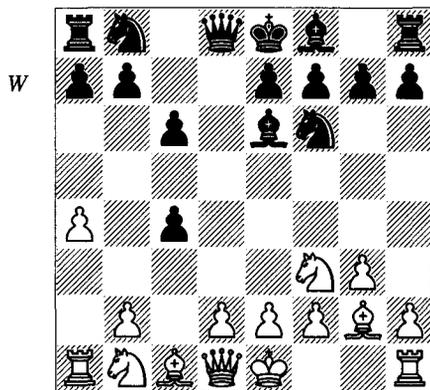
b2) White can reply to 5...b5 with 6 b3!, intending 6...cxb3?! 7 ♗xb3 with active play.

b3) 5...♗d5 is a good option; for example, 6 0-0 e5!? 7 ♖g5 ♗d4 and White must work for his compensation. Perhaps 8 ♗a4 ♙xa3 9 ♗xa3 ♙g4 would follow.

b4) 5...♙e6!? (this initiates a typical sequence that we shall see in other contexts and is usually satisfactory for Black) 6 ♖g5 ♙d5 7 e4

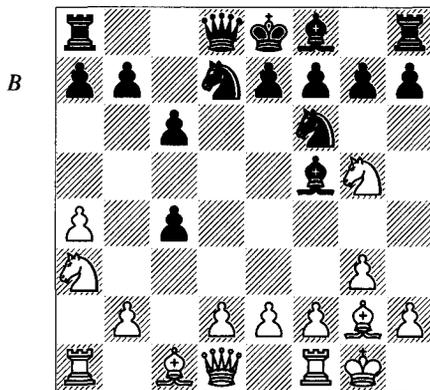
h6 8 exd5 hxg5 9 dxc6 ♖xc6 10 ♖xc4 e6 11 0-0 ♗d3 12 ♗a4 ♖d5!? with unclear complications based upon 13 ♖e5 ♗d4 14 ♗b5 ♗b4!.

c) 5 a4!? is one of the most challenging moves; for example, 5...♙e6!? (D), and now:



c1) After 6 ♖a3 ♖a6 7 ♖e5!?, as in the game Padevsky-T.Sørensen, Berlin 1984, Black has 7...♙d5! 8 f3 ♖b4 9 ♖axc4 ♙xc4 10 ♖xc4 ♗d4 11 d3 and now 11...♖fd5 or 11...e5 with strange complications.

c2) 6 0-0 ♖bd7!? 7 ♖g5 ♙f5 8 ♖a3 (D) and here:



c21) 8...h6!? 9 ♖f3 e5 10 ♖xc4 e4 11 ♖d4 ♙g6 12 a5 and 12...♙c5, as in Miroshniko-Skachkov, Cappelle la Grande 2004, is fine, but 12...♖c5! 13 ♖b3 ♙h5! has tactical points that are hard for White to meet. There are probably improvements here.

c22) Frolianov has suggested the amazing 8...♖e5!? 9 f4 ♖d3!? 10 exd3 ♙xd3 'with compensation'! In fact, two pawns, an impressive

Finally attacking c4, but this is too passive.

9... ♖b6 10 e4

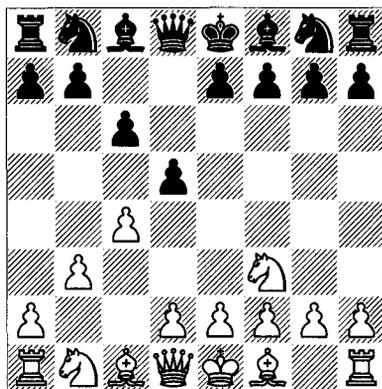
White doesn't improve matters by 10 ♘e3 ♙e6 11 ♘d4 ♙d5.

10... ♗a4!?

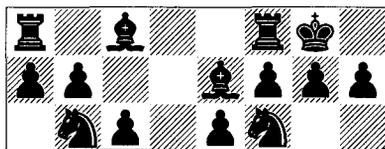
Black also stands better after 10...e5.

11 ♜b1 e6 12 ♘c3 ♗a5 13 0-0 ♙e7 14 b3 0-0 15 ♙b2 (D)

B



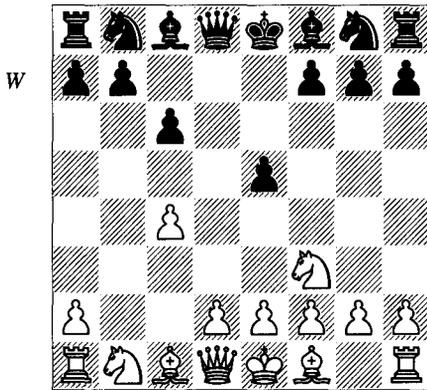
B



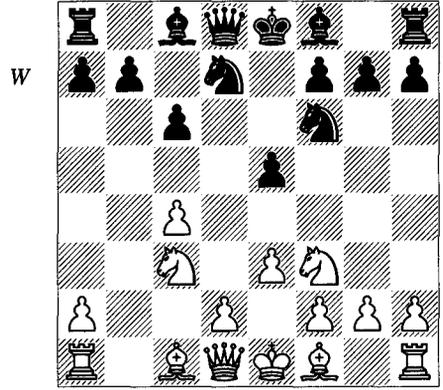
of 4...dxc4, transposing to the previous section and interfering with the double fianchetto that White is aiming for.

3...♟f6

The move 3 b3 has been played for aeons in innumerable grandmaster games, but Black has almost never played 3...dxc4 4 bxc4 e5! (D).

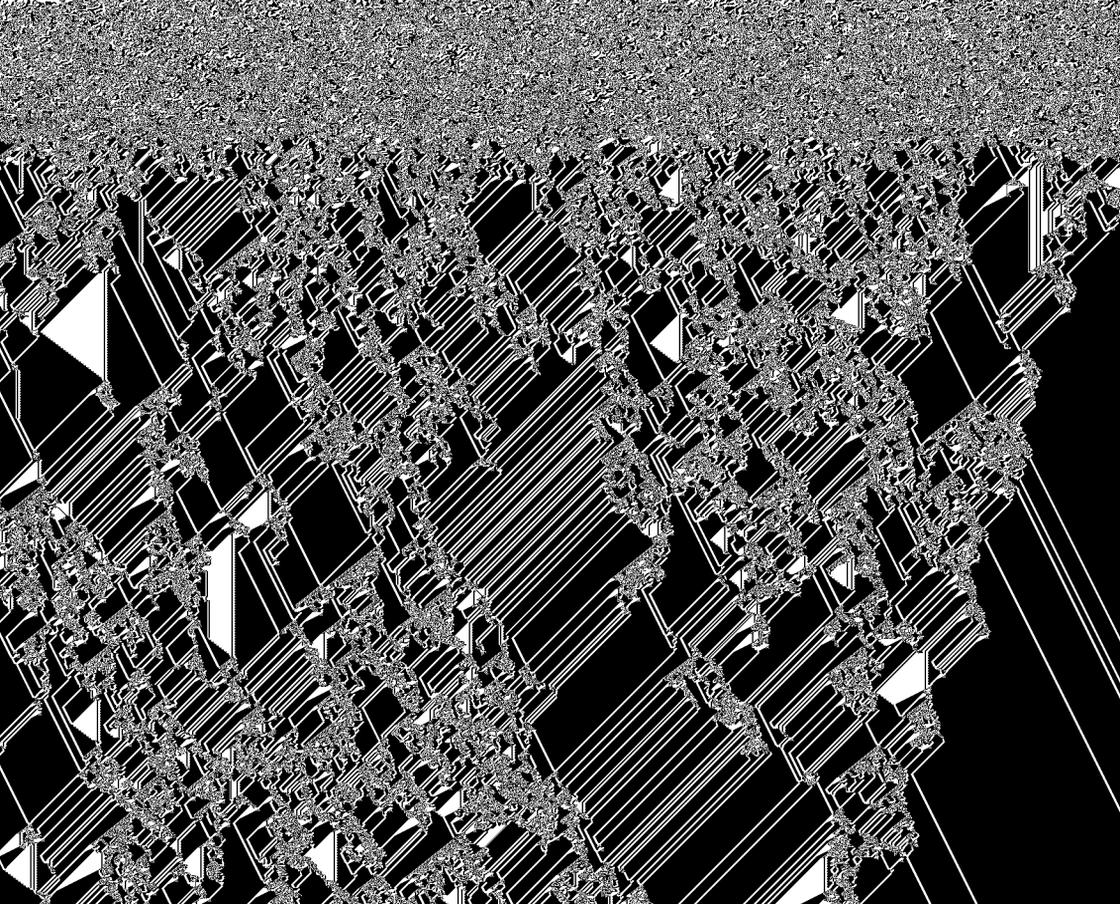


(the alternative 6...♟b4 7 ♖c2 ♜e7 8 ♟b2 ♞h6!? 9 ♟e2 ♞f6 10 0-0 ♟f5 would be an interesting sequence, with an eye on d3, but also to a kingside attack via ...e4).



The idea is 5 ♞xe5?? ♜d4. By this means, Black achieves a central pawn presence that White lacks. The idea invites comparison with

7 d4!?! (7 ♜c2 ♟b4 8 ♟e2 0-0 {or 8...♜e7} 9 0-0 ♜e8 is double-edged) 7...♟b4 8 ♟d2 0-0 9 ♟e2 ♜a5!?! 10 ♜c2 exd4 11 exd4 (11 ♞xd4 leaves White's c-pawn weak after 11...♜c7) 11...♜e8. This isn't clear, but it's easier to play with Black, since after 12 0-0 ♟a2 12 ♟xc2



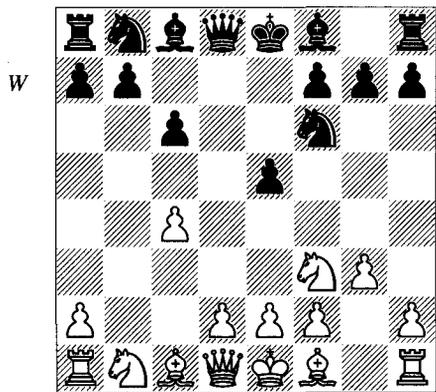
or 14 ♞xe4 ♙d4 . Thus the move 7 g3 appears suspect.

c2) If White plays 7 ♞c2 instead, one of many possible continuations would be 7... ♙d6 8 e3 $\text{♞e7}!$? (or 8...0-0, having in mind 9 d4 exd4 10 exd4 c5 11 d5 ♞e5) 9 ♙e2 e4 10 ♞g5 ♞c5 11 f3 (11... ♙a3 ♙f5 12 ♙xc5 ♙xc5 13 f3 $\text{♞h5}!$) 11... ♙f5 12 0-0 ♞e5 13 f4 ♞e7 14 g4 ♞xg4 15 ♙xg4 ♙xg4 16 ♞xc4 ♞e4 17 ♞xe4 0-0-0 18 ♞xd6+ ♞xd6 19 ♞f2 ♙h3 with unclear prospects not unfavourable to Black.

That's a lot of analysis, but taken as a whole, 3... dxc4 4 bxc4 $\text{e5}!$ presents White with problems to solve, enough to call into question his ability to gain an advantage. Remarkably, this little two-step manoeuvre hasn't been given serious consideration in the extensive literature on 3 b3 . What's more, the same idea a move later might be even more challenging in this respect, since White's options are more limited.

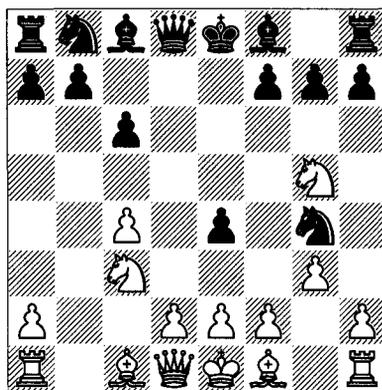
4 ♙b2

The most frequently played move by a considerable margin is 4 g3 , because White likes to stay flexible about the placement of his queen's bishop, but then he again has to deal with 4... dxc4 5 bxc4 $\text{e5}!$ (D).



This gives the player a very sharp choice between

W



8 ♞gxe4 (8 $\text{d3}??$ e3 threatens f2 and the knight on g5 , and 9 ♞ge4 exf2+ 10 ♞xf2 ♞xf2 11 ♙xf2 ♞f6+ picks up the knight on c3) 8... f5 9 f3 ♞e5 10 ♞f2 . After this virtually forced sequence, Black can play either 10... ♞xc4 11 e4 ♞b6 or 10... ♙e6 11 $\text{d3}!$? ♙c5 with the idea 12 $\text{e3}?$ ♞a5 13 ♙d2 ♙xe3 .

Therefore White might want to play 4 ♙b2 before g3 after all. Let's return to the main line with 4 ♙b2 , and look at two games.

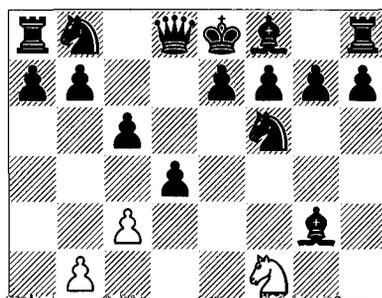
Capablanca Variation with 4... ♙g4

Podzielny – Dautov

Dortmund 1992

1 ♞f3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 b3 ♞f6 4 ♙b2 ♙g4 (D)

W



5 g3

I should mention that some strong players use 5 e3 and try to set up with ♖e2, ♜c2 and ♘c3. This was discussed in the note to 3 g3 in the game Smyslov-Bronstein above. In practice, if you choose 5 e3, you'll probably be on your own at an early stage of play.

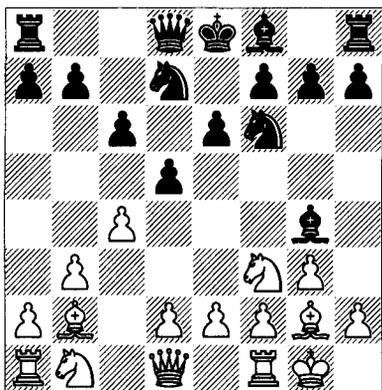
5...e6

Or:

a) An important move-order was seen in the game Vaganian-Gulko, USSR Ch, Erevan 1975: 5...♘bd7 6 ♖g2 e6 (many players would exchange minor pieces here, without provocation, by 6...♗xf3 7 ♗xf3 e5) 7 0-0 ♗d6 8 d3 0-0 9 ♘bd2 ♜e7, transposing into the main line.

b) 5...♗xf3 6 exf3 commits Black rather early, and after 6...♘bd7 7 f4, White's doubled f-pawn is coming in handy. This might be worth a closer look, except that in the majority of games White has already played ♖g2 by this point.

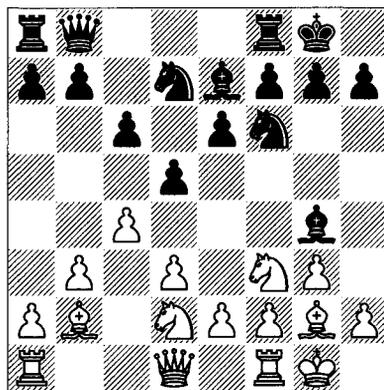
6 ♖g2 ♘bd7 7 0-0 (D)



7...♗d6

7...♗e7 is less ambitious, deferring ...e5 for a while. In some cases this protects Black from loss of tempo when the d-file opens (after, say, d3, e4, and ...dxe4), or when White brings a knight to c4 or e4. Play usually continues 8 d3 0-0 9 ♘bd2. Now there are several accepted defences, including 9...a5 10 a3 ♜b6. The modern favourite (inspired by some very old games) is 9...♜b8! (D), with the ideas of ...e5 and ...b5, while the queen avoids potential exposure down the c-file that would follow ...♜c7 and ♜c1.

W



Two brief examples confirm that Black has fully-fledged chances:

a) Morozevich-Vallejo Pons, Amber Blind-fold, Monte Carlo 2005 proceeded 10 h3 ♗h5 11 ♜e1 a5 12 ♘f1?! (sometimes White plays this manoeuvre when Black's bishop is still on g4, so that ♘e3 comes with tempo; ♘a3-c2-e3 is another path, but here it appears rather pointless) 12...♜e8 13 g4 ♗g6 14 ♘h4 a4 15 ♘xg6 hxg6 16 ♜c2 b5 with a space advantage for Black.

b) The classic Réti manoeuvre 10 ♜c1 ♜e8 11 ♜c2 ♗d6 12 ♜a1 appeared in Andersson-Garcia Martinez, Madrid 1973, which continued 12...e5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 e4?! and after 14...d4 15 ♗fc1 ♗f8 16 h3 ♗xf3 17 ♘xf3 a5 18 h4?! a4 Black was fine, although 14...dxe4 or 14...b5 were probably better ways to play for an edge.

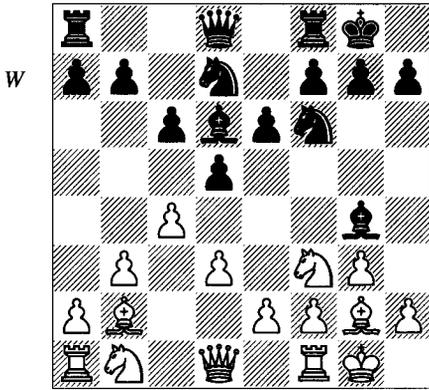
8 d3 0-0 (D)

Again, 8...♗xf3 9 ♗xf3 e5 is possible; normally, Black will want to exchange before White plays ♘bd2 with the promise of recapture by the knight in the case of ...♗xf3. On the other hand, that is by no means a hard-and-fast rule.

9 ♘bd2

A relatively popular alternative is 9 ♘a3 with the idea ♘c2, when White aims to build up for b4. As opposed to ♘bd2, the knight will cover a3, deterring the exchange of bishops by ...♗a3; also, in a few cases the move ♘e3 can be useful. I'll stick with the classical approach instead, but when you are preparing with either colour, it's nice to know that the idea of ♘a3 exists.

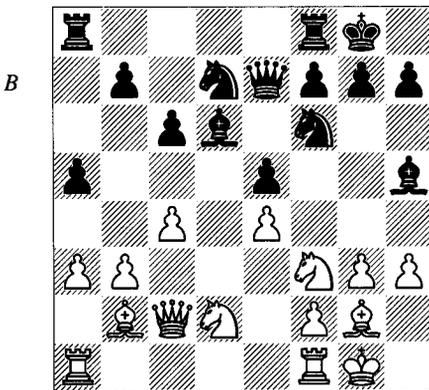
9...♜e7



Leko-Kasparov, Wijk aan Zee 2001 went 9...a5 10 a3 ♖h5!? (10...♗b6 has become a standard way to treat these positions) 11 ♗c2 e5!? 12 e4 dxe4 13 dxe4 ♖e8 14 ♘h4 ♕c5?! (Kasparov prefers 14...♘c5 and 14...♗b6!?) 15 ♘df3! ♗b6. At this point, Kasparov calls 16 h3 clearly favourable for White. This seems an odd assessment, but presumably the idea of g4 and ♘f5 is strong enough that Black must play 16...♕xf3, ceding the bishop-pair in a stable position, something you may not want to do on the 2700+ level!

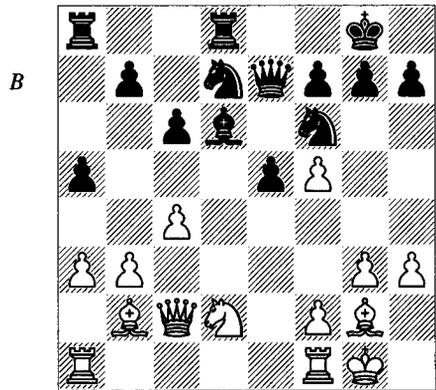
10 a3 a5 11 ♗c2

A game cited above, Vaganian-Gulko, USSR Ch, Erevan 1975, continued 11 h3 ♕h5 12 ♗c2 e5 13 e4 dxe4 14 dxe4 (D).



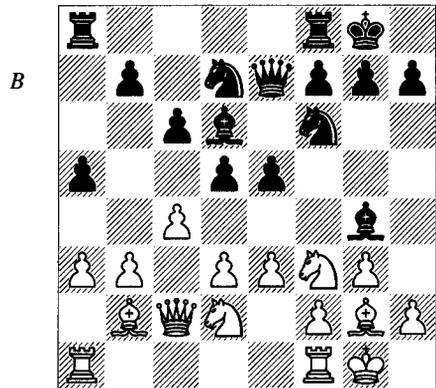
In a majority of games involving the double fianchetto and ...♕g4, White plays e4 at some moment and this pawn-structure results. The combination of e4 and c4 has a mixed effect. From White's point of view, the gaping hole on d4 is clearly a negative, although in practice it

proves difficult for Black to occupy. Furthermore, his king's bishop is restricted by his own centre pawn on e4. On the positive side, that same pawn supports a knight on f5, which will be very powerfully placed. Black's problem is that if he exchanges the knight by ...♕xf5 (often necessary), then exf5 reopens the g2-bishop's diagonal and White's e-file, while clearing what is effectively an outpost square for White's pieces on e4. In fact, that's what happened in the game after 14...fd8?! (Vaganian prefers 14...♕xf3 15 ♘xf3 ♖fe8; compare this with Kasparov's note above in the same situation) 15 ♘h4 ♕g6 16 ♘f5! ♕xf5 17 exf5 (D).



White controls the crucial e4-square and has prospects of g4-g5. The game continued 17...♕c5 18 ♖fe1 ♗d6 19 ♖ad1 ♖e8 20 ♘b1!? (or 20 ♘e4! ♗f8 21 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 22 ♗c3) 20...♗f8 21 g4 h6 22 ♖e2 and White could improve his position slowly while his opponent was left searching for a plan.

11...e5 12 e3!? (D)



White plays this unusual move with the idea of keeping the position flexible. To begin with, he stops Black's threat of ...e4-e3.

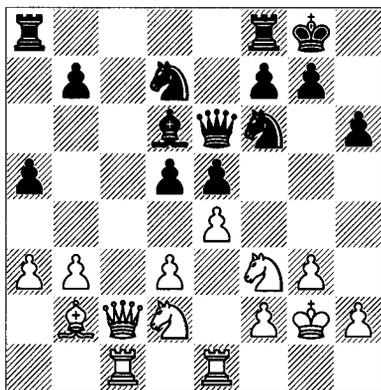
12...h6!?

Nevertheless, the advance of Black's e-pawn can be a factor. Horn queries 12...e4, correctly pointing out that after 13 dxe4 the e-pawn lands in trouble following 13...dxe4 14 ♖d4; that's particularly the case because after the coming h3 and ...♗h5, White has ♖f5. However, I'm not sure that Black stands worse after the reply 13...♗xe4!, when 14 ♗xe4 dxe4 15 ♗d4 ♖c5 looks satisfactory.

13 ♖fe1 ♜e6?!

The idea behind this move, exchanging the g2-bishop, is suspect because White can still transform the pawn-structure.

14 ♖ac1 ♗h3 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 e4! ♗xg2 17 ♗xg2 (D)



Black's problem now is that he has to give White the nice square c4 for his knight; also, White's remaining bishop is his good one.

17...d4 18 ♜c4! ♜xc4 19 ♗xc4 ♖a6?!

But 19...♗b8 20 a4 and ♗a3 gives White a large positional advantage.

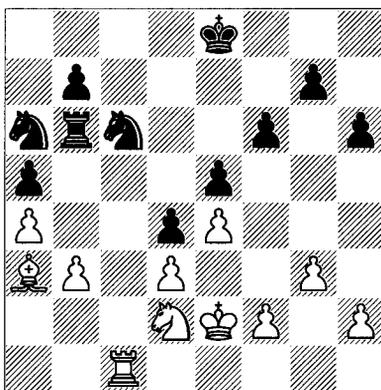
20 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 21 a4 ♖b6 22 ♗d2

Now White is ready for ♗a3, and he's still in charge of the outpost on c4.

22...♗b8 23 ♗a3 ♖e8 24 ♖c7 ♗a6 25 ♖c4 ♗d7 26 ♖ec1

Black is tied down and almost without useful moves. As is often the case, White need only open a second front to break down his defences. It is instructive how quickly he does so.

26...f6 27 ♗f3 ♗f7 28 ♗e2 ♗db8 29 ♖c8 ♗c6 30 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 (D)



31 f4! ♗d8 32 ♖f1 ♗e6?

But in the long run White can put a knight on c4 (following ♖b1) and if necessary penetrate with his king into the weak light squares on the kingside.

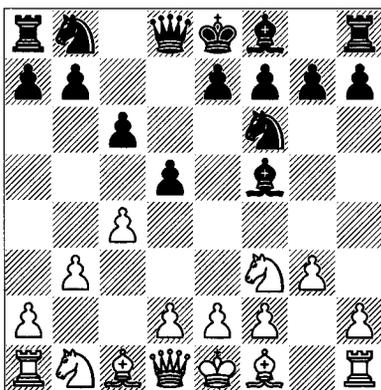
33 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 34 ♖f5 ♗b4 35 ♗c4 ♖c6 36 ♗xa5 1-0

The New York System

Our final Réti Opening game is an epic battle involving its inventor.

Réti – Em. Lasker
New York 1924

1 ♗f3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 b3 ♗f5 4 g3 ♗f6 (D)



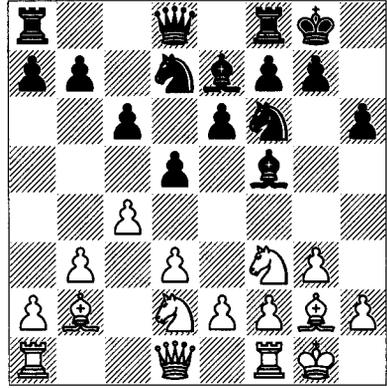
This is the line from the previous game, but with 4...♗f5 instead of 4...♗g4. It is often called the New York System, in honour of this game. The set-up with ...♗f5 is solid and has a good reputation, although it's not quite as popular or

ambitious as that with ...♗g4. Black wants to bring his bishop out in front of his pawn-chain and control e4, of course, while not exposing himself to a potential loss of tempo via ♖e5. One trade-off is that he can no longer play ...♗xf3, which as we saw above comes in handy in some positions, and makes possible the idea of ...e5 in one jump.

White will simply complete his development before trying anything too ambitious. He can hope to play e4 with gain of tempo in the future.

5 ♗g2 (D)

W



B

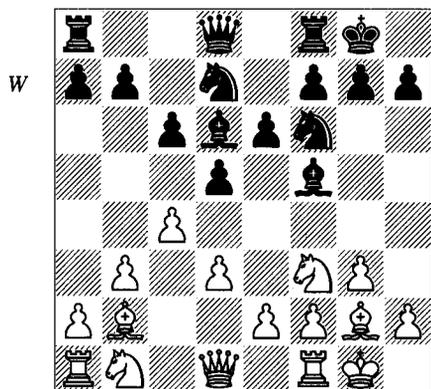


with obscure prospects) 10...♗h7 11 a3 a5 12 ♖c2 ♗c8 13 ♗a1 ♖c5 14 ♗fc1 (D).



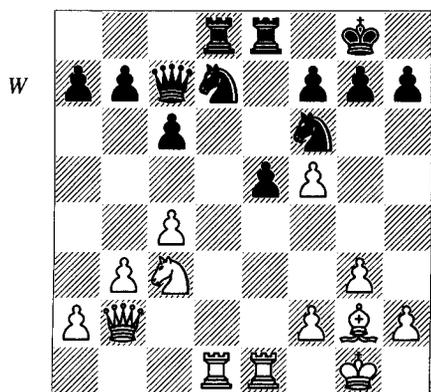
8 d3 0-0 (D)

The loose position of Black's bishop on d6 is exposed in the line 8...e5?! 9 e4!, hoping for 9...dxe4?? 10 dxe4 ♖xe4 11 ♘h4.



9 ♘bd2

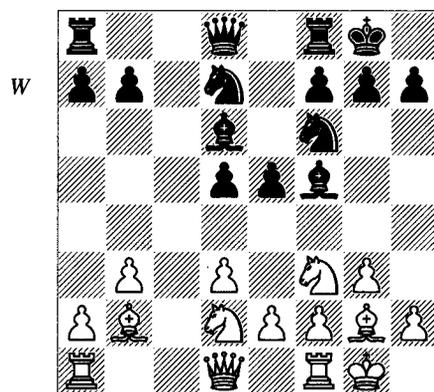
In another early clash of legends, Réti-Tar-rasch, Breslau 1925, White tried out 9 ♘c3!? (blocking off the b2-bishop, but there's nothing essentially wrong with the move) 9...♖e7 10 ♖e1 e5 11 e4 dxe4 12 dxe4 ♙e6 13 ♘h4 ♙a3 14 ♘f5! ♙xf5 15 ♙xa3 ♖xa3 16 exf5 ♖ad8 17 ♖c2 ♖fe8 18 ♖ad1 ♖a5 19 ♖b2!? ♖c7 (D).



Again we see White's control of e4 and open files. He needs to improve the position of his minor pieces by an advance of queenside pawns resulting in some combination of c5 and b5. The game proceeded 20 ♖a3 (20 b4! has the idea 20...♘b6 21 c5 ♘bd5 22 ♙xd5! ♘xd5 23 ♘e4; then White has won the opening battle) 20...a6 21 c5 ♘b8 22 ♖b4 a5 23 ♖c4 ♖xd1 24

♘xd1!? ♖d8 25 ♖c3 ♖d4? (Black takes over the attractive d4-square but forgets about his back rank; 25...♘bd7! should be fine, with the idea 26 ♘e3 e4! and if allowed, ...♘e5) 26 ♘b2 ♘fd7 27 f4 f6 28 fxe5 fxe5 29 ♙f1?! (29 ♘c4!, threatening ♘xe5, is very strong) 29...b6?, and here 30 cxb6! ♖xb6 31 ♘h1 would have yielded White a winning advantage because of Black's weak pawns and White powerful minor pieces, which can use c4 as a pivot point.

9...e5 10 cxd5 cxd5 (D)



11 ♖c1!?

This game has been characterized as a triumph of the Classical School of centre and development over somewhat fanciful hypermodern ideas; however, it would be more accurate to call it a victory by Lasker over Réti. Here, for example, 11 e4!? is fine, and has even been claimed to give White an advantage. I think that Black can come very close to complete equality, but he needs to play carefully:

a) 11...♙g4? 12 exd5 ♘xd5 13 ♘c4 (or 13 h3 and ♘c4) yields the kind of activity that White is after.

b) The same kind of position arises following 11...♙e6?! 12 exd5 ♙xd5 13 ♘c4!.

c) 11...♙g6 isn't bad: 12 exd5 (12 d4 ♘xe4 13 ♘xe5 ♖e8 14 ♘xg6 hxg6 gives Black sufficient activity to equalize) 12...♙xd3 13 ♖e1, and now 13...♖e8 14 ♘c4 ♙xc4 15 bxc4 may favour White slightly, but the computer move 13...♘g4! threatens ...♘xf2 and opens the way for the f-pawn following 14 ♘e4 ♙xe4 15 ♖xe4 f5 16 ♖e2 e4.

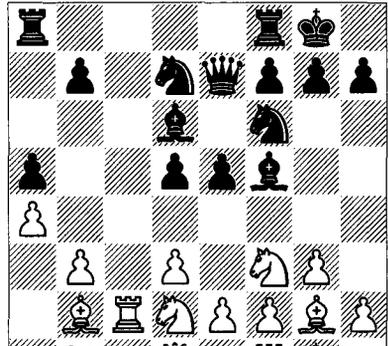
d) 11...dxe4 12 dxe4 (or 12 ♘xe4 ♙xe4 13 dxe4 ♖e7 and White's bishops are hard to make

use of; ...♖ac8, ...♜fd8, and perhaps ...♙a3 can follow, with a level game) and now 12...♙e6 looks about equal, but not 12...♙xe4?, which allows White terrific activity after 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♘h4! ♘df6 15 ♚e2 and ♘f5.

11...♚e7 12 ♜c2!?

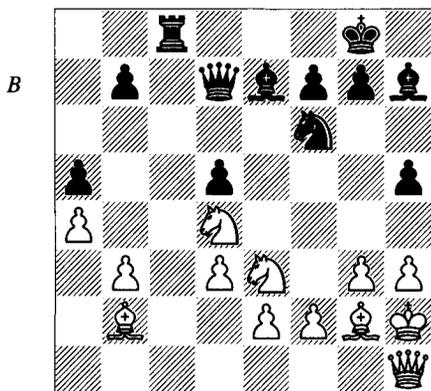
This is Réti's wonderful idea again, as above, to maximize the potential of every piece. But another promising method to get some pieces working was to challenge the centre by 12 e4!. You can compare the previous and following

B



24...h5

Something level-headed such as 24...♗c5!
25 ♖h1 and now 25...♞e8 or 25...♞d8 is better.
25 ♖h1! (D)

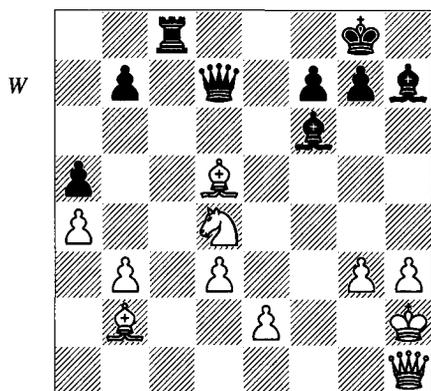


A lovely picture! ♖a1-h1 and White's back in the game.

25...h4

Now 25...♞d8 26 ♘b5! has in mind ♗xf6 and ♘xd5, or even ♗d4-b6.

26 ♘xd5 hxg3+ 27 fxg3 ♘xd5 28 ♗xd5 ♗f6! (D)



Black has to neutralize White's fine set of bishops.

29 ♗xb7?!

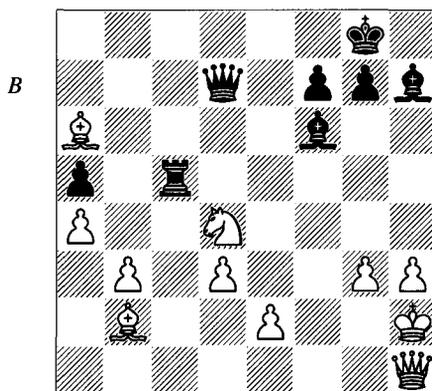
29 ♖f3! is solid and good; White will play e4 to anchor the bishop on d5, achieving a dynamic balance.

29...♞c5!?

A good move, although 29...♞d8! 30 e3 ♗xd3 31 ♖f3 ♖c7 is better still.

30 ♗a6? (D)

White threatens ♖a8+, but his pieces get misplaced. He had to scramble with 30 ♗e4! ♗xd4 31 ♗xh7+ ♗xh7 32 ♖e4+ f5 33 ♖h4+! ♗g6 34 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 (34...♖e7 35 e4 ♖c2+ 36 ♗g1) 35 ♗xd4 ♖c2 36 ♗g2 ♖xe2+ 37 ♗f3, which should end in a draw.



30...♗g6 31 ♖b7 ♖d8!?

White is in serious trouble after 31...♖d6!. But the text-move is also good enough. In what follows White has various alternatives, but he remains just outside the drawing zone.

32 b4! ♖c7 33 ♖b6 ♖d7! 34 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 35 e3 axb4 36 ♗g2 ♗xd4 37 exd4 ♗f5 38 ♗b7 ♗e6 39 ♗f3 ♗b3 40 ♗c6 ♖d6 41 ♗b5 ♖f6+ 42 ♗e3 ♖e6+! 43 ♗f4 ♖e2 44 ♗c1 ♖c2 45 ♗e3 ♗d5 0-1

This great battle illustrates the Réti at its best and I would urge everyone to experiment with his system from time to time in order to obtain some fresh positions to play with.

3 Modern Kingside Fianchetto

The fianchetto is used in three general types of central environment. Thus far in this series, we have seen it in a variety of well-established openings of two of these types. In the first case, a central presence is employed in conjunction with a fianchetto. For instance, in the Grünfeld Defence Black plays 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 along with a central break (3...d5), whereas in the Modern Benoni, Black's ...g6 is joined with ...c5. In the English and Réti Openings, White's g3 fianchetto combines with a pawn on c4, whereas in most major d-pawn openings, White can merge the same g3 with the central move d4.

In a second set of mainstream openings, there is no central pawn presence, that is, no early break or pawn on the fourth rank. Some examples are the King's Indian Defence and Pirc Defence, in which Black plays ...d6. It's true that he often follows this with a central advance by ...e5 or ...c5, but not within the first few moves. This also applies to the Queen's Indian Defence with ...b6, where the moves ...d5 and ...c5 are usually delayed. However, notice that in most lines of these openings, Black develops quickly; in particular, his king's knight is developed to f6, controlling e4 and d5 and making kingside castling more convenient. This adds an element of safety and contests the centre of the board.

In a third class of fianchetto defences, still looked at askance by some masters, Black foregoes commitment to either a central break or a strong central presence, often playing without a knight on f6 or c6. The most prominent examples begin with 1...g6 and 1...b6, which can

first half of the 20th century, but by and large leading players disapproved of them. After all, why should Black want to give White space and an ideal centre without a fight? The 'Hyper-moderns', beginning in the 1910s, proposed that targeting the centre from afar by means of a fianchetto was a legitimate alternative to setting up a traditional centre. But even they usually included a pawn on the 4th rank in their plans, or at least quick development. See, for example, the Réti Opening from the previous chapters. Then, in the latter part of the 20th century, many players discovered that they were comfortable operating with less space, particularly if there were opportunities to extend the range of their fianchettoed bishops by eventual pawn-breaks, or to exploit concessions that White might make to prevent that from happening. Thus 1...g6 in particular was elevated into the mainstream, and 1...b6, while not wildly popular among high-level players, has attracted the attention of a number of grandmasters. The overriding issue in both cases is whether White can use his greater territorial control to clamp down on Black's game. For the developing player, there is a lot to be learned by playing such positions from both sides and watching these conflicting goals play out.

Before plunging into 1...g6, I should note that White can himself pursue such a strategy by means of 1 g3 or 1 b3, allowing Black to set up a large centre, when the tempo derived from moving first gives him some extra ways to develop. In practice, 1 g3 often transposes to other openings. For example, it can lead to the Réti

independent theory which I'll be examining in the following chapter.

The Modern Defence

1 e4 g6 is called variously the Modern Defence, the King's Fianchetto Defence, the Rat, the Robatsch, and the Utjelky. Perhaps that's a reflection of its multi-faceted nature; in fact, the move 1...g6 tells us little about the kind of the game that will follow. Both White and Black can deploy their forces in a wide array of formations that bear little relation to one another, and the play can go in almost any direction. Thus, in what follows, I'll concentrate upon a selection of the most popular responses to 1...g6, with an emphasis on black pawn-structures that haven't been well represented in the rest of this series.

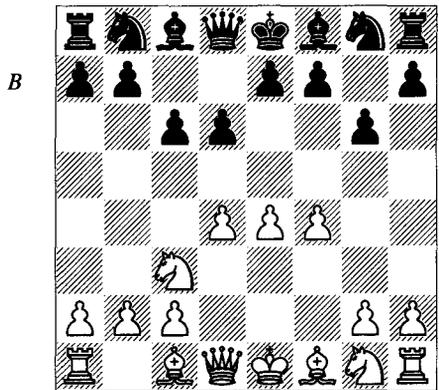
From White's point of view, the normal central set-ups apply, but we'll begin with what is arguably the most important one, involving the centre d4, e4 and f4. This is a direct threat to the playability of 1...g6, more so than the other broad centres that we have examined, for example, in the King's Indian Defence, the Pirc Defence, or the Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian. Let's step through some themes that arise from early moves, and then take a look at the problems arising from that central structure.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7

Obviously 1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♗g7 leads to the same position. Curiously, Black has often played 2...d6 at this point, because there are lines in which he'd rather get on with a queenside attack instead of putting a bishop on g7 yet. Since White plays ♗e3, ♖d2 and ♗h6 in many lines, Black may even save a tempo by not playing ...♗g7. That's rather abstract, but he might also be motivated by a specific sequence, that is, 2...d6 3 ♖c3 c6 4 f4 (D), the set-up White uses in the first three games.

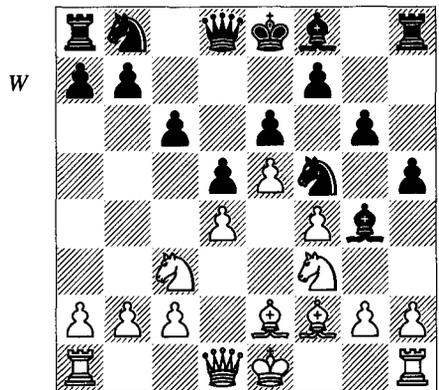
Then 4...♗g7 transposes to the main games, and Black also has these options:

a) 4...♖b6 prevents 5 ♗e3 and puts pressure on the d4-pawn, but Black must be careful in the face of White's attack; for example, 5 ♗c4 ♗g7 6 ♖f3 ♖h6 (6...♗g4? 7 ♗xf7+) 7 ♗b3 ♗g4 8 ♗e3 d5, Bologan-Azmaiparashvili, European Clubs Cup, Panormo 2001, and here



White can play simply 9 ♖d2! dxe4 10 ♖g5! 0-0 11 h3 ♗c8 12 g4 and 0-0-0 with the centre, development and much better placed pieces.

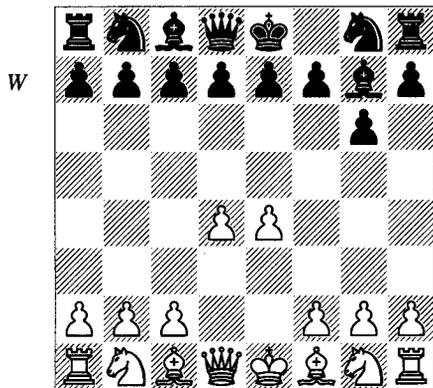
b) The most subtle move is 4...d5! with the idea 5 e5 h5!?, intending to develop his pieces on kingside light squares, a typical sequence being 6 ♖f3 ♖h6 7 ♗e3 ♗g4 8 ♗e2 ♖f5 9 ♗f2 e6 (D).



This is precisely the position arising from the game Hector-Høi below, which begins 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♖c3 c6 4 f4 d5 5 e5 h5, etc. In that game, however, Black is a tempo 'ahead', in that he has played ...d5 in one jump rather than via ...d6-d5. Ironically, however, Black's extra tempo there is ...♗g7, which is an undesirable move! This bishop actually belongs on f8, from where it supports the move ...c5 and can go to its best position on e7. Indeed, the move ...♗f8 occurs in Hector-Høi. So, by playing 2...d6 and deferring ...♗g7, Black has managed to save two moves (...♗g7-f8) in return for his loss of only one tempo (...d6-d5). It's

silly things like this that make a positional player's life more gratifying! Of course, 2...d6 in conjunction with 3...c6 is itself committal, and some players may not prefer this pawn-formation if White refrains from (or delays) f4 and plays, say, ♖f3 or ♙e3 instead.

We now return to 2...♙g7 (*D*):



3 ♖c3

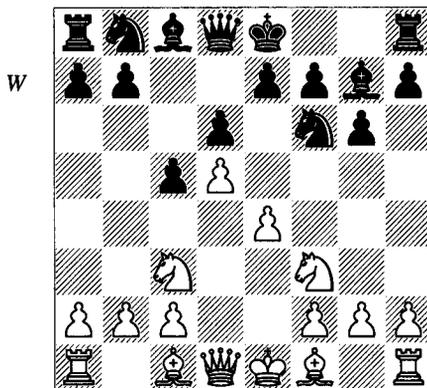
I'm going to focus on this straightforward knight development, which is basic to the traditional main lines of the Modern Defence, and easily the most popular at every level. It also makes possible a hypermodern interpretation of the opening by Black. For example, the move ...a6 with the idea ...b5 is highly relevant in lines with ♖c3, and not so much so otherwise. It would be impossible to address the enormous range of possibilities that 1...g6 opens up without sacrificing my emphasis upon ideas and themes, but I'll give games with the moves 3 c3 and 3 c4 below.

3...d6

Black can also play the subtle and very popular 3...c6; see below for illustrative games. If he wants to challenge the centre, the most thematic move is 3...c5, perhaps aiming for a Sicilian Defence after 4 ♖f3 cxd4 5 ♖xd4. This is infrequently played as White has two good alternatives:

a) One is 4 d5, when after 4...d6 it is harder for Black to find counterplay than in the Modern Benoni (1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 and ...♙g7), because the knight on c3 is well placed to meet Black's natural pawn-breaks. I won't go into the details, but the most natural continuation is 5 ♖f3 ♖f6

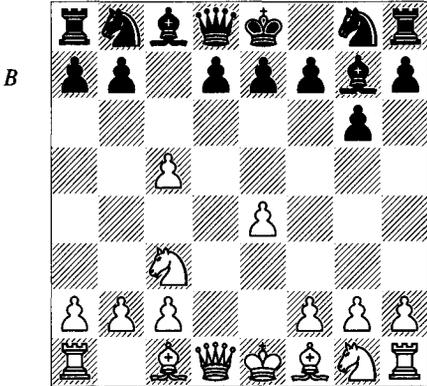
(*D*) (upon 5...e5? or 5...e6? there follows 6 dxe6 ♙xe6 7 ♖b5; instead, 5...a6 is logical, but does weaken the b6-square on the queenside, and White can play the standard manoeuvre ♖d2-c4; for example, 6 a4 ♖f6 7 ♙e2 0-0 8 ♖d2 e6 9 ♖c4 exd5 10 exd5 ♙e8 11 0-0).



The variation after 5...♖f6 has transposed to a line of the Schmid Benoni, an opening that can arise from a wide variety of move-orders. A sample line goes 6 ♙b5+!? (6 ♙e2 is equally common) 6...♙d7 (6...♖bd7 7 a4 a6 8 ♙e2 brings Black's queen's knight to d7, a square from which it can't do much; 6...♖fd7 has been played in high-level games, but White has done well, for example in the main line 7 a4 0-0 8 0-0 ♖a6 9 ♙e1 ♖c7 10 ♙f1) 7 a4 0-0 8 0-0 and White intends to play ♙f4 and/or ♖d2-c4 with an edge. Hundreds of games have been played with the Schmid Benoni, however, and as you might suspect, both sides have lots of ways to set up their forces.

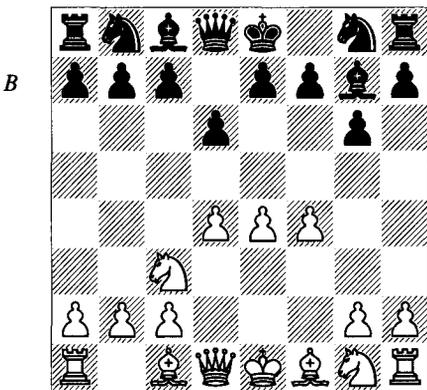
b) 4 dxc5 (*D*) voluntarily breaks up White's centre, with the idea that Black will either lose time recovering his pawn or make concessions.

This capture has been played quite a bit and there is plenty to explore. One line is 4...♙a5 5 ♙d2 ♙xc5, when a challenging move is 6 ♖d5!?, threatening 7 ♙b4 ♙c6 8 ♙b5!. Then there can follow 6...♖a6 (6...b6 is also played, although it's riskier) 7 ♖f3 (or 7 ♙e3 ♙c6 8 ♙d4) 7...e6 (7...♙xb2?! 8 ♙b1 ♙g7 9 ♙xa6 bxa6 10 0-0 ties Black down due to ♙b4, when 10...a5 11 ♙b5 ♙c6 12 ♙xa5 works out tactically in White's favour) 8 ♙c3 ♖f8 9 ♙xg7+ ♖xg7 10 ♖c3 and Black has weaknesses to worry about. Still, this whole line is playable.



4...xc3+!? 5 bxc3 ♖a5 constitutes another trade-off: attack on White's vulnerable pawns versus dark-square weaknesses around Black's king. White can develop normally, but he can also temporarily hold on to his pawn with the ambitious 6 ♖d4 ♘f6 7 ♗b4, when 7...♗xb4 8 cxb4 ♘xe4 9 ♘b2 is an ideal position for White's bishop-pair, so 7...♗c7! 8 ♘f3 ♘c6 9 ♗a4 might follow. These lines after 4...xc3+ are particularly interesting and unresolved.

4 f4 (D)



Here we have White's most direct challenge to Black's entire system. The intent is to dominate the centre and limit Black's pieces. Still, playing with a large centre exposes White to more counterattacking possibilities, so things are by no means clear. One advantage of 4 f4 is that it restricts the opponent's reasonable responses in a way that 4 ♘e3 or 4 ♘f3 doesn't.

4...c6

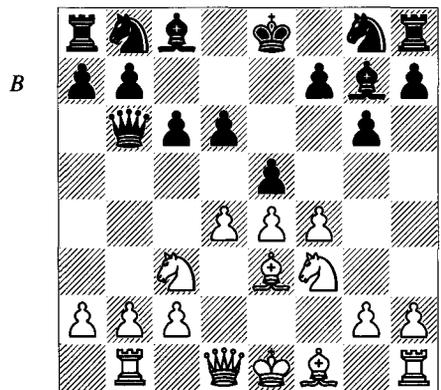
We shall see 4...a6 in the next section, with a note on 4...♘c6. Note that 4...♘f6 transposes to

a Pirc Defence, and indeed, a Pirc player may wish to use a 1...g6 move-order to get to some of his favourite lines. However, when Black plays 1...g6, he has to deal with a number of additional early options by White, whereas 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 (the Pirc) compels the defence of e4 on the second move and so limits White's choices. Most notably, the Pirc move-order 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 bypasses any lines with c4 for White.

After 4...c6 Black intends to answer ♘f3 with ...♘g4, when by the further ...♗b6, he can put pressure upon d4, White's most vulnerable point in the centre. The attack on White's centre by ...♘g7, ...♘g4 and ...♗b6 is aggressive and pointed, but it carries the risks that an early queen move typically entails. If Black doesn't want to go this way, he can play for queenside expansion by ...b5, as in the note to 5...♘g4 below.

5 ♘f3

5 ♘e3 is also played, and worth knowing if you play either side of the popular move-order 4 ♘e3 c6, because at that point 5 f4 transposes. A seeming drawback to 5 ♘e3 is 5...♗b6, because b2 is attacked and the move ...e5 will exploit the pin on d4. But White can still try for advantage after 6 ♚b1 (protecting b2) 6...e5!? (6...f5!? was Yudovich-Botvinnik, Moscow Ch 1966; then 7 e5! dxex5 8 fxe5 ♘xe5 9 ♘c4! gives good attacking chances for the pawn, so maybe simply 6...♘f6 should be tried) 7 ♘f3 (D).



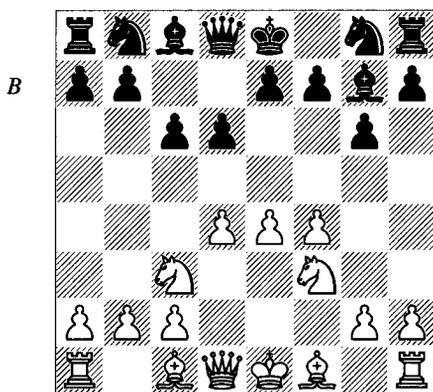
In spite of the tempo consumed by ♚b1 (which also precludes 0-0-0), White's centre and development pose serious problems for Black:

a) 7...♟d7 8 ♖d2 exd4 (8...♗c7 9 fxe5 dxe5 10 d5) 9 ♟xd4 ♖d8 10 ♟f3! (White piles up on d6; also, ♟d4 can be effective at the right moment) 10...♗e7 11 ♖d1 ♟xc3 12 ♗xc3 ♟gf6 13 e5! dxe5 14 fxe5 ♟e4 (otherwise e6 will follow) 15 ♖d4 f5 16 exf6 ♟dxf6 17 ♟c4 with a clear superiority.

b) 7...♟g4!? 8 fxe5 dxe5 9 ♖d2! (9 ♟c4 exd4! 10 ♟xf7+! ♟e7 11 ♟f2 ♟xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♟d7 yields unclear play) 9...exd4 10 ♟xd4 and White drives Black's pieces back; for example, 10...♖b4 11 h3 ♟c8 12 a3 ♗e7 13 ♟c4 ♟f6 14 0-0 0-0 15 ♟h6! with a serious attack. Then 15...♟xh6 16 ♖xh6 ♗c5?! 17 ♖bd1 ♗xc4 18 e5 ♟e8 19 ♟e4 is winning for White.

Because this line with 5 ♟e3 can be intimidating for Black, he might do well to avoid 5...♗b6 in favour of 5...♟f6 or 5...b5!?

We now return to 5 ♟f3 (D):



5...♟g4

Black chooses a committal course: he will have to cede the bishop-pair. The 'positional' follow-up to 4...c6 is 5...b5, which can lead in any number of directions; obviously, such a non-developing move risks having to go on the defensive. In response, the straightforward 6 ♟d3 is popular (as well as 6 a3); for example, 6...♟g4 7 e5!? ♟h6 (control of f5 is important) 8 h3 ♟f5 and White has two instructive options:

a) 9 g4 (preventing Black from occupying f5) 9...♟xd3 10 ♖xd3 ♖d7 11 ♟e3 ♟a6 12 0-0-0 ♟c7?! 13 exd6 ♖xd6 14 f5 ♟d5 15 ♟e4 ♗c7 16 fxc6 hxc6 17 ♟d2 ♟g8 18 ♟c5 and White was obviously for choice in Ehlvest-Granda, Zagreb Interzonal 1987.

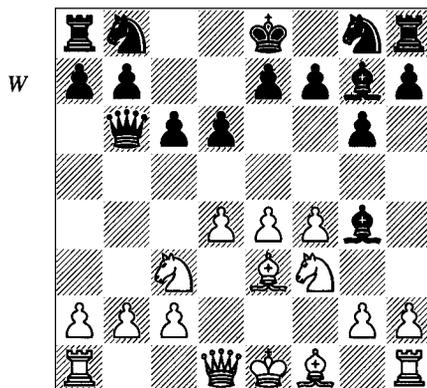
b) 9 ♟xf5, with the idea 9...♟xf5 10 g4! ♟g3 11 ♖g1 b4 12 ♟b1! ♟e4 13 ♗e2 d5 14 ♟bd2 ♟xd2 15 ♟xd2. Then White has a substantial superiority in every sector of the board; among other ideas, f5 can follow.

While 5...b5 may be playable, it gives White a lot of space and development to make use of. As always, you should refer to books and databases to learn more.

6 ♟e3

Black's basic idea, to attack White's centre, is shown in the line 6 ♟e2 ♖b6 7 e5 ♟h6! 8 ♟e4 0-0-0 c3. This is about equal; for example, 9...♟f5!? 10 ♟f2 c5 11 0-0 ♟d7.

6...♖b6 (D)



We have arrived at one of the oldest main lines of the Modern Defence.

7 ♖d2 ♟xf3

Doubling White's pawns. Without this move, Black's strategy makes no sense. He shouldn't permit a rook to get to the 7th rank by 7...♗xb2? 8 ♖b1 ♗a3 9 ♖xb7.

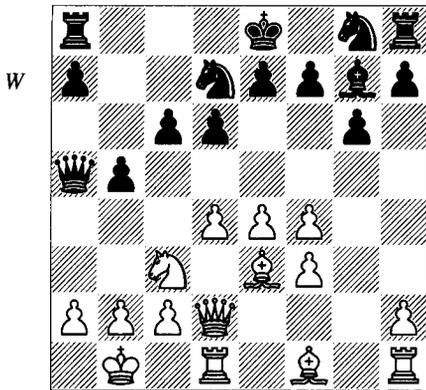
8 gxf3 ♟d7 9 0-0-0 ♗a5 10 ♟b1!

A calm move that is characteristic of such positions; for one thing, it defends a2 and therefore frees White's knight on c3 to move.

10...b5 (D)

This advance is consistent with the position, attacking via ...b4 and/or ...♟b6-c4. The main drawbacks to it are that Black still doesn't remedy his backward development and that if the attack doesn't succeed, the move ...b5 will make it riskier for him to castle queenside. Instead, Black could castle more safely right away, but it's not clear where his counterplay is coming from after, say, 10...0-0-0 11 ♖g1 ♟b8 12

♖g5 (or 12 f5) 12...♙c7 13 d5, as in J. Polgar-Crouch, Hastings 1992/3.



After the text-move (10...b5), we have a battle between a centralized position and a flank attack. White has no immediate threats, and Black is counting upon the lack of weaknesses in his pawn-structure (typical of positions with few pawns past the 3rd rank); ideally, his solid position will render White's advances harmless until he can himself make progress. This strategy runs up against the Classical school of thought, which says that the modern fianchetto defences (1...g6 and 1...b6) are simply insufficient if White plays in a principled manner by constructing a broad centre, developing quickly and suffocating Black. Experience shows that Black will have many tricky ideas, mostly due to the fact that White's centre is exposed. But the true classicist trusts that these are temporary problems that can be neutralized, after which his pawns and pieces will roll forward. As it happens, the outcome of the particular variation before us (with 4...c6 5 ♘f3 ♕g4) seems to support his point of view. Even if that proves the case, of course, the modernist will point to other variations in which his philosophy wins the day. And so it goes.

Let's see how the opposing strategies play out in two illustrative games that begin with 10...b5.

Bologan – Todorčević
Las Palmas 1993

11 h4

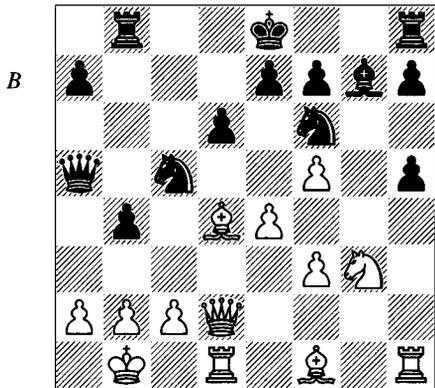
Trusting in his broad centre and space, White launches a straightforward flank attack.

11...♘b6

Black's idea is to play ...♘c4, either before or after ...b4, or perhaps ...♘a4.

a) It's still too early for Black to develop by 11...♘gf6?, because of 12 e5 ♘d5 (12...♘h5 13 d5!) 13 ♘xd5 ♙xd2 14 ♕xd2 cxd5 15 ♕xb5.

b) Instead, the d7-knight can also be used to support ...c5, one example going 11...b4 12 ♘e2 ♘gf6 13 ♘g3!? (13 ♖g1 and 13 f5 with the idea 13...gxf5 14 ♖g1 are good alternatives) 13...♙b8?! (13...♘h5 14 ♘xh5 ♙xh5 15 ♕e2 favours White, who intends f5 and ♖dg1) 14 h5 gxh5 15 f5 c5 (finally) 16 dxc5 ♘xc5 17 ♕d4 (D).

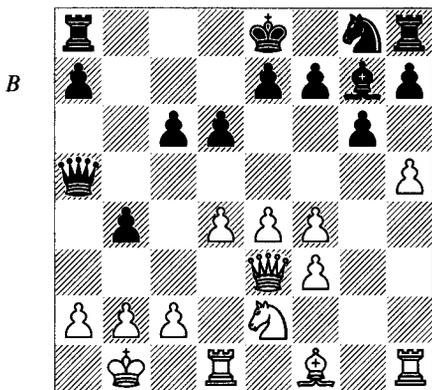


The bishop on d4 opposes Black's bishop on g7 and thereby interferes with his most promising attacking possibilities on the queenside. You might want to compare openings such as the Sicilian Dragon and King's Indian Defence. Lanka-Todorčević, Rome 1990 went 17...♖g8 18 ♕c4 (or 18 ♘xh5!) 18...♙c7?! 19 ♘xh5 ♘xh5 20 ♖xh5 ♘d7 21 ♖xh7 ♙xc4 22 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 23 b3! ♙b5 24 ♕xg7 and White was winning.

12 h5 b4 13 ♘e2 ♘c4 14 ♙d3 ♘xe3

Black's last few moves seem to be the most logical ones, and at this point he can only maintain his knight on the strong square c4 by allowing White to keep his dark-squared bishop and pursue further attacking ideas: 14...d5 15 ♕c1 ♖b8 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 ♖xh8 ♕xh8 18 f5! gxf5 and while 19 ♘g3 was quite effective in Korneev-Movsziszian, Berga 1996, even better is 19 exd5! cxd5 20 ♙xf5, threatening ♙h7.

15 ♙xe3 (D)

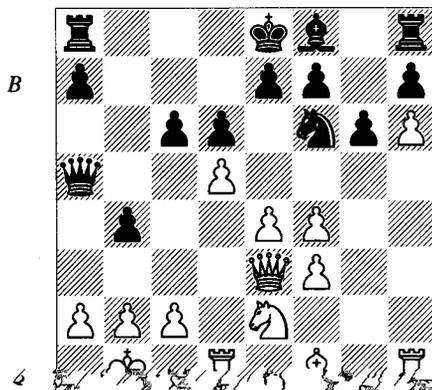


An interesting situation has arisen. At first sight, Black's position seems compact and relatively safe from direct attack. However, he finds it hard to develop his pieces or castle, so he has difficulty working up counterplay. This gives White time to get organized. He has various ways of improving his position such as $\text{d}3$, $\text{f}5$, $\text{d}5$ and $\text{e}5$, and his bishop can go to $\text{h}3$ or $\text{c}4$. In general, the opposite-coloured bishops favour White's attack. In view of all this, Black will have trouble defending.

15... $\text{d}f6$

Black's king is also exposed after 15...0-0-0; for example, 16 $\text{b}3!$? $\text{d}h6$ 17 $\text{g}1$ $\text{e}6$ 18 $\text{c}3!$ $\text{bxc}3$ 19 $\text{dxc}3$ sets up attacks based upon the open c-file and d5 breaks. Then Busemann-Vinot, email corr. 2002 continued 19... $\text{c}d7$ 20 $\text{g}5$ $\text{b}6$ 21 $\text{c}2$ $\text{b}8$ 22 $\text{f}5$ $\text{exf}5$ 23 $\text{h}3$ $\text{f}6$ 24 $\text{g}2$ $\text{he}8$, and now the easiest course for White was 25 $\text{exf}5$; for example, 25... $\text{gxh}5$ 26 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}g8$ 27 $\text{d}e4$, threatening $\text{fxg}8$ among other things.

16 $\text{h}6$ $\text{f}8$ 17 $\text{d}5!$ (D)



17... $\text{cxd}5$ 18 $\text{e}5$

18 $\text{d}4$ with the ideas of $\text{b}5+$ and $\text{e}5$ is also strong.

18... $\text{d}7$ 19 $\text{e}6$ $\text{fxe}6$ 20 $\text{wxe}6$ $\text{b}8$ 21 $\text{d}4$ $\text{wc}5$ 22 $\text{h}3$ $\text{b}7$ 23 $\text{he}1$

The power of every white piece is maximized, ensuring success.

23... $\text{d}b6$ 24 $\text{f}5!$ $\text{gxf}5$ 25 $\text{wxf}5$ 1-0

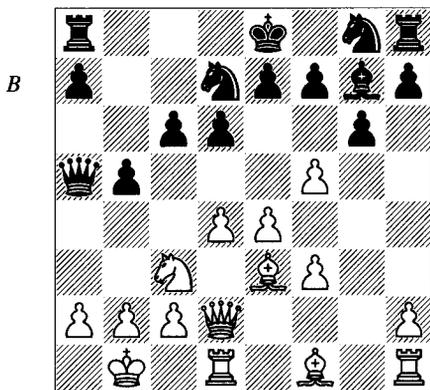
The threat of $\text{wh}5+$ is decisive.

Franzen – McAlpine

corr. 1991

11 $\text{f}5$ (D)

In some ways this is more thematic than the 11 $\text{h}4$ of the previous game, in that White frees his $\text{e}3$ -bishop for use upon the $\text{c}1$ - $\text{h}6$ diagonal. The main difference is that Black is finally permitted to develop his $\text{g}8$ -knight.



11... $\text{d}g6$

This move wasn't advisable before 11 $\text{f}5$ because White would have responded with $\text{e}5$. Here's a look at two instructive email correspondence games with alternative defensive plans. In both, we see how important it is to keep your pawn-structure intact in the Modern Defence:

a) 11... $\text{d}b6$ 12 $\text{h}4$ $\text{b}4$ 13 $\text{d}e2$ $\text{d}c4$ 14 $\text{w}d3$ $\text{d}xe3$ 15 $\text{wxe}3$ (very similar to the previous game) 15... $\text{d}f6$ 16 $\text{d}g3$ 0-0-0 17 $\text{h}5$ $\text{gxh}5$ (soon after this positional concession White will stand much better, but 18 $\text{h}6$ was a threat, and 17... $\text{h}f8$ 18 $\text{fxg}6$ $\text{hxg}6$ 19 $\text{hxg}6$ $\text{fxg}6$ 20 $\text{d}e2$ has threats such as $\text{g}1$ and $\text{d}f4$, in conjunction with $\text{h}3+$ and perhaps $\text{d}5$) 18 $\text{w}b3$ $\text{df}8$ 19 $\text{d}c4$ $\text{d}5$ 20 $\text{d}e2$ $\text{d}h6$ 21 $\text{e}5$ $\text{wfg}8$ 22

defend everything) 23 ♖c5 ♜b6 24 f6! e6 25 f4 ♙xf4 26 ♙xh5 ♜f8 27 ♙xf7! ♜xf7 28 ♜h3 ♘c7 29 ♘xe6 ♙b7 30 ♜h5 ♜hf8 31 ♘xf8 ♜xf8 32 ♜g4 ♘b5 33 ♜xf4 ♘c3+ 34 ♙a1 ♘xd1 35 e6 1-0 Petraitis-Vinot, email 2004.

b) 11...b4 12 ♘e2 gxf5 13 ♜g1 (the open file is well worth a pawn) 13...♙f8 14 ♜g5 e6 15 exf5 h6 16 ♜g1 ♜xf5 17 ♜xb4 ♜xf3 18 ♜d3 ♜f6 (Black is simply underdeveloped) 19 ♜b7 ♜b8 20 ♜xc6 ♜d8 21 d5 ♘e7 22 ♜a4 ♘xd5 23 ♜xd5 exd5 24 ♙h3 ♙e7 25 ♙d4 ♜f8 26 ♘f4 ♜c8 27 ♙f5 a6 28 ♙e1 ♜b5 29 ♙f6 1-0 Nejtěk-Valenta, email 2003.

12 ♙d3!?

Quite often this bishop is best-placed on f1, where it can't be harassed and can still choose whether to go to h3. 12 ♜g1 is in the spirit of the lines above; for example, 12...b4 13 ♘e2 c5? 14 dxc5 dxc5 (14...♘c5 15 ♘d4) 15 ♘c1! ♜b6 16 ♜g2 with the idea of f4 and e5.

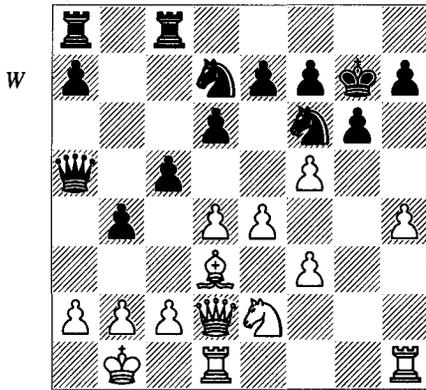
12...b4 13 ♘e2 c5 14 ♙h6

Or 14 a3 ♜b8 15 dxc5 ♘xc5 16 ♙c4.

14...0-0

Black would do better to divert White's queen by 14...♙xh6! 15 ♜xh6 gxf5 16 exf5 ♜c8.

15 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 16 h4 ♜fc8 (D)



17 h5!

Analysis by Keene, Botterill and Williams from back in 1972 went 17 b3 ♘b6 18 h5 c4! with a highly unclear counterattack.

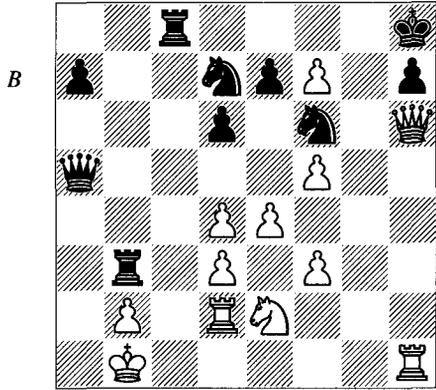
21 axb3!?

21 a3! would win more quickly following 21...♜c2 22 gxf7 ♜xe2 23 ♜dg1.

21...♜ab8

White also gets through after both 21...fxg6 22 ♘f4 ♜g8 23 ♘xg6+ ♜xg6 24 ♜xg6 ♜g8 25 ♜f7 and 21...♜c7 22 ♜d2.

22 gxf7! ♜xb3 23 ♜d2! (D)



Threatening ♜g1 and ♘f4, so Black's play is forced.

23...♜a3 24 bxa3 ♜xa3

Or 24...♜b8+ 25 ♜b2.

25 ♜b2 ♜xd3+ 26 ♙a1 ♜a3+ 27 ♜a2 ♜b3 28 e5

and White won shortly.

In these two examples, Black's queenside play wasn't a match for White's pawn-mass.

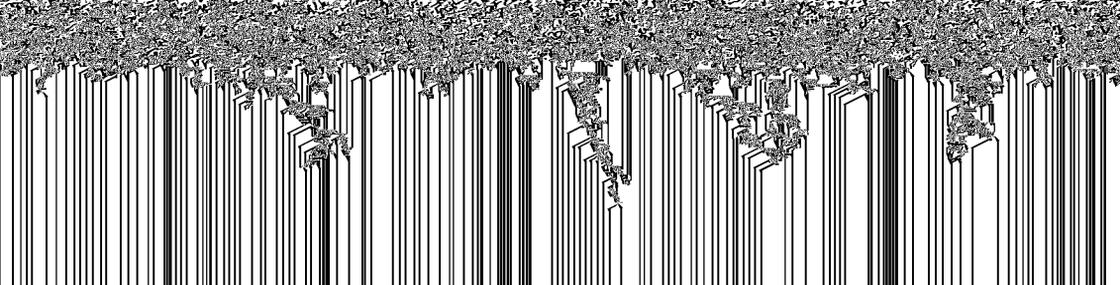
Tiger's Modern

Fedorovsky – Pel

Pardubice 2008

1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♙g7 3 ♘c3 d6 4 f4 a6

This advance is eccentric (literally), but fun and respectable. Before going on to describe it in detail, let me mention two rare alternatives. The slightly more committal 4...e6!? has been used to get to what is sometimes called the 'Hippo-

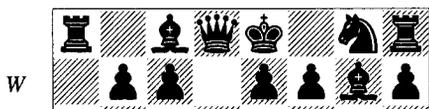


in advance, and will depend upon the opportunities presented by the opponent.

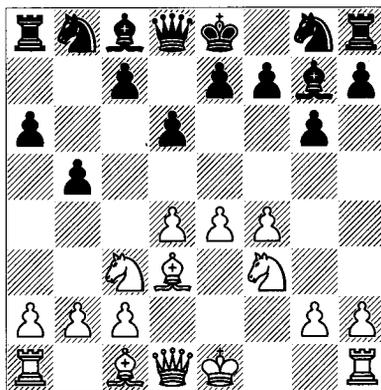
5 ♘f3

5 ♗e3 is often played, and can easily transpose, for example, to the note to White's 7th or 8th move below.

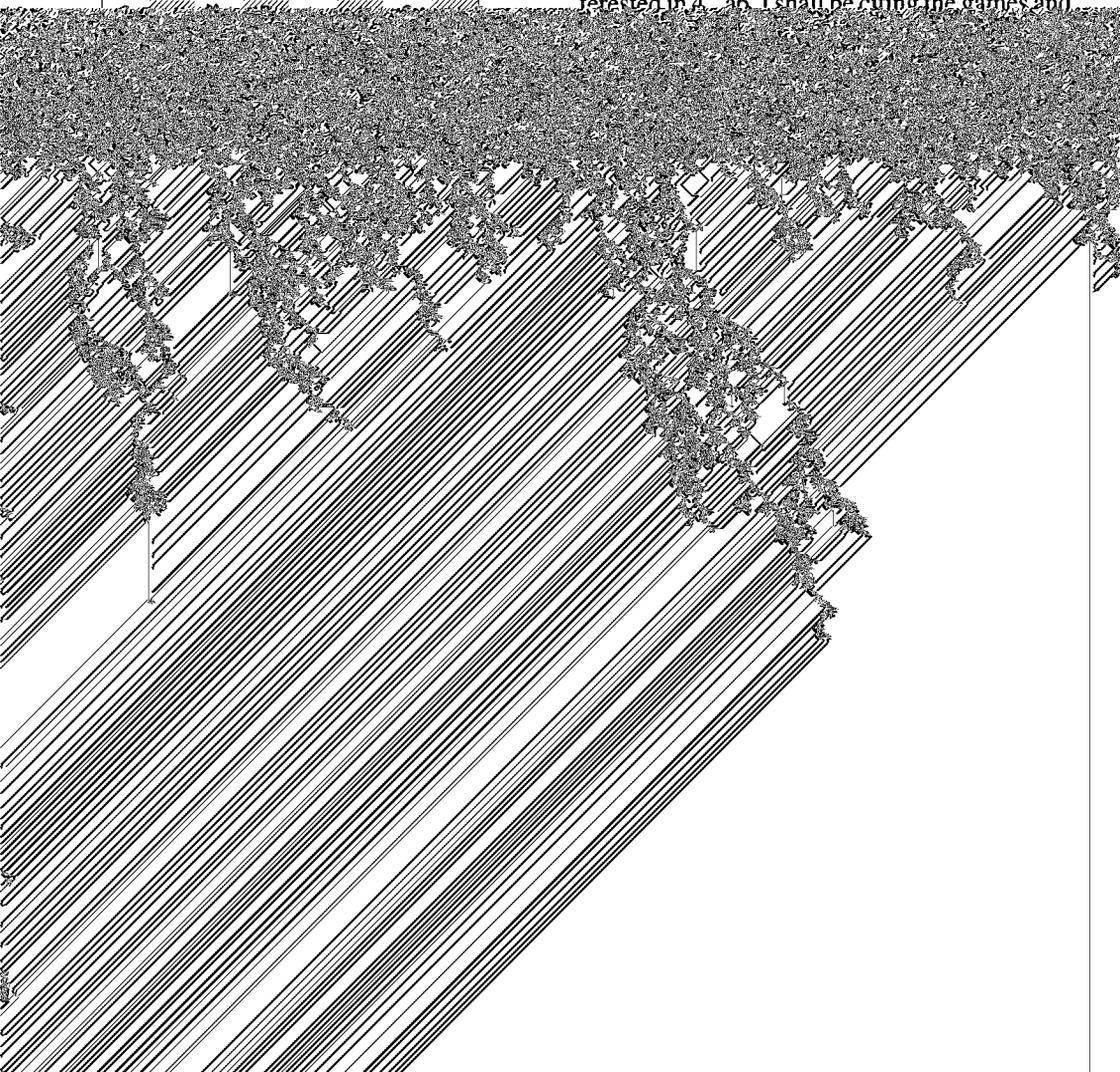
5 a4, preventing ...b5, is a 'natural' response, at least for a player without a lot of experience with this system. But after 5...♘c6! (D), Black has improved upon 4...♘c6 because b5 is denied to a white bishop or knight, and should White play d5, Black's knight has access to b4. In addition, White can only play 0-0-0 at the risk of exposing his king to a dangerous attack because of the weakened queenside.



B



Relatively noncommittal; Black would like to play a speedy ...c5 in some lines. There's no way to give a complete survey of this variation, so I'll confine myself to some examples; these will be a little dense but hopefully useful if you're interested in 4...a6. I shall be citing the games and

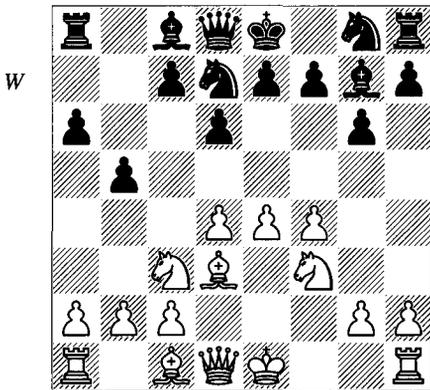


Black will try to break down White's pawn-mass. Specific moves communicate the key ideas better than words can here:

a) 11 c4 bxc3 12 bxc3 (12 dxc3 b4!? 13 Bb3!? xf3 14 Bxb4 Bb8 15 Bc4 a8! is about equal; then White shouldn't be too greedy, as after 16 Bxa6 0-0 and ...c5, he will struggle to hold things together) 12...0-0 (12...a5 sets up the move ...b4 in response to c4; then 13 g5!? initiates an attack such as 13...e6 14 Bb1 Bb8 15 exd6 cxd6 16 a3!? e3 17 Bc1 xf1 18 axd6; still, this is a good point for Black to look for improvements) 13 Bb1 Bb8 14 c4 d5b6 15 a5 dxc8 16 g5! e6! (16...h6 17 xf7 Bxf7 18 e6) 17 d5!? dxc5 18 dxe6 fxe6 (18...dxe6 19 dxe6 fxe6 20 e4!) 19 e3! h6 20 xc5 hxg5 21 exd6 cxd6 22 d4 with multiple threats. This is fascinating material, although obviously not forced.

b) 11 a5 (! - Hillarp Persson; White prevents ...a5 and takes away the retreat-square b6 for Black's knight on d5) 11...c5 12 g5! 0-0 (Hector-Hillarp Persson, Gothenburg 1997 went 12...cxd4 13 e6 dxc5, when one road to advantage is 14 exf7+! f8 15 f5!) 13 e6 f6 14 f7 Bc7 15 f5! cxd4? (15...g5 is better, however ugly) 16 exd7 xf7 17 dxd4! and moves like dxe6 and Bg4 are too strong to resist.

We now return to 6...d7 (D):



7 e5

The usual move. Instead, 7 a4 b4 8 d2 is similar to, and may transpose to, the previous

White can also play 7 0-0 b7 (perhaps not best; by transposition, Stefansson-Hillarp Persson, Gausdal 1996 went 7...c5 8 dxc5 dxc5 9 e3 b7 10 xc5 dxc5 11 e5, when Black held the balance following 11...Bb6 12 e4 xe4 13 dxe4 h6! 14 c4 0-0). Now 8 e3 c5 9 dxc5 dxc5! is a common position with Sicilian-like qualities. But 8 e5! is more dangerous, in view of 8...c5 9 exd6! cxd4 10 d4. I suspect that 8...e6 or 8...h6 is better. Notice how many options both sides have on every move!

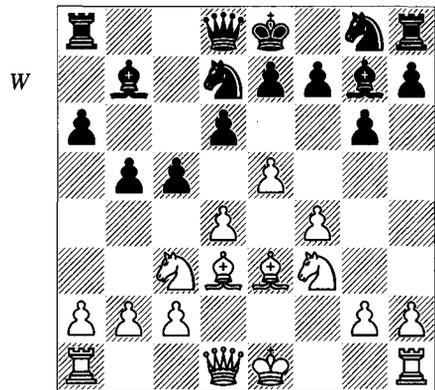
7...c5

7...b7 is the main alternative, which often transposes, although 8 e3 might now be met by 8...h6 (rather than 8...c5); for example, 9 e2 (9 e4 Bc8) 9...e6 (Finkel mentions 9...0-0 10 0-0-0 g4 11 e4 as slightly in White's favour) 10 0-0-0 b6 11 hgl f5, and perhaps 12 f2 is more accurate than 12 xf5 exf5 13 d5, which led to an unclear mess in Antal-Vajda, Nagykanizsa 2003.

8 e4

I ordinarily try to limit chaotic variations which contain few positional lessons, but in this case both sides need to be aware of some concrete possibilities. Keep in mind, however, that if you play 4...a6, you aren't forced to go into this position, and neither is White.

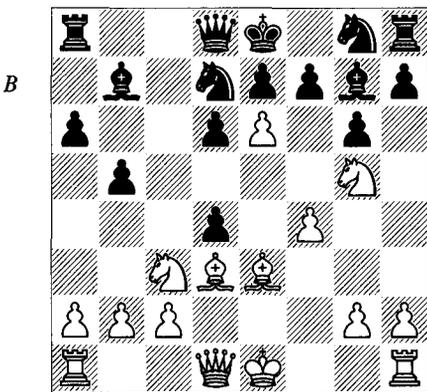
To begin with, some remarkable play can result from 8 e3 b7 (D):



a) A couple of games have followed the long and complex line 9 e4 Bc8 (in S.Pav-

18 ♖b1 ♗xg7 19 hxg4, and here 19...♗e5 would have been unclear according to Finkel; there are naturally many options!) 10 ♙xb7!? ♗xb7 11 dxc5 dxe5 (11...dxc5 12 a4! b4 13 ♗d5) 12 ♗d5 ♗xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♖c8 14 ♗b6!? ♗xb6 15 cxb6 ♗f6, Mortensen-Hillarp Persson, Danish Team Ch 2003. Now Hillarp Persson suggests 16 fxe5! ♗d5! 17 ♙d4 0-0, when White can keep a modest advantage by 18 0-0-0 or 18 a4 ♖xc2 19 0-0, but it may not be much.

b) A shocking line follows 9 ♗g5 cxd4 10 e6 (D).



10...f5!! 11 ♙xf5 (11 exd7+ ♗xd7 will leave Black with a powerful pawn-centre) 11...♗df6 12 ♙xg6+ hxg6 13 ♗d3 ♗h6 14 ♗xg6+ ♗f8 15 ♙xd4 ♗e8 and Black has the upper hand, San Segundo-Hillarp Persson, Elista Olympiad 1998.

to combine the best features of the Pirc and Sicilian Defences.

9 0-0

A few snippets of analysis illustrate the conflicting factors of White's attacking pieces and his crumbling centre:

a) 9 ♙e3 b4 10 ♗e2 can go in a number of directions; for example, 10...♗h6 (or 10...♗c7 11 c3 ♗h6!) 11 dxc5! ♗g4 12 ♙d4 dxe5 13 ♗xe5 ♗dxe5 (13...♗gxe5 14 c6!) 14 h3!? 0-0 15 hxg4 ♗xg4 16 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 with approximate equality.

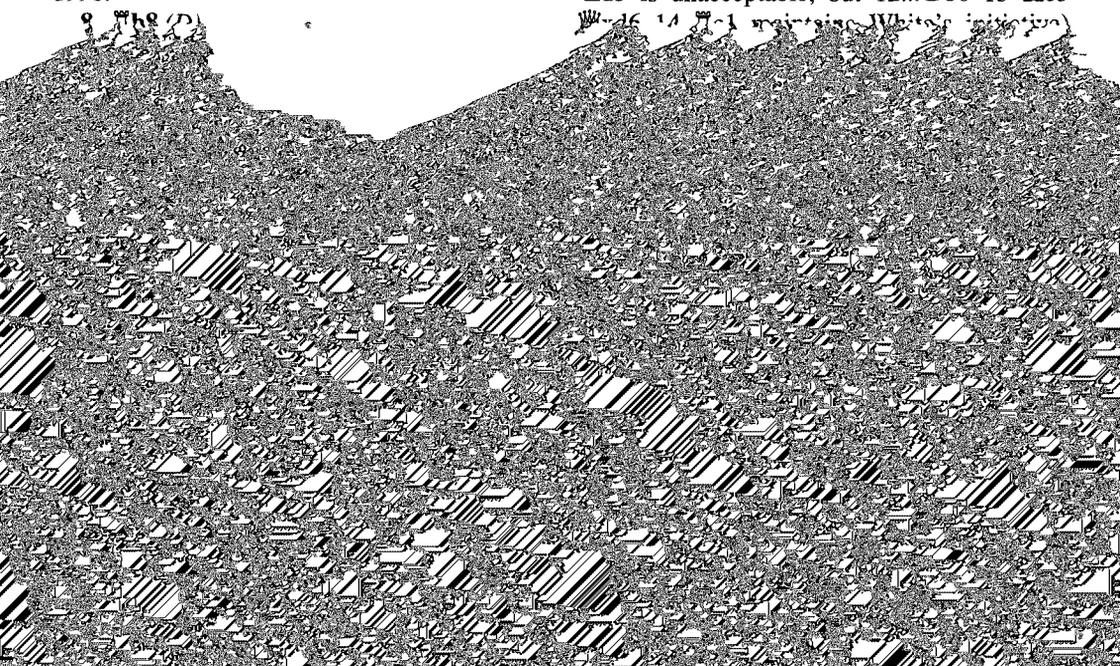
b) 9 ♗g5 cxd4 (after 9...♗h6 10 e6!, there might follow 10...♗f6 11 ♙c6+ ♗f8 12 exf7; then 12...cxd4 13 ♗d5!?) is fairly crazy, whereas 12...♗xf7 13 dxc5 h6 14 ♗xf7 ♗xf7 15 ♗e2 ♙e6 is unclear) 10 ♙d5 (a cute line is 10 e6 f5! 11 ♙xf5 ♗df6!) 10...e6 11 ♗ce4! (11 ♙xe6? ♗xe5!) 11...♙f8 12 ♗xf7 ♗xf7 13 ♗g5+ ♗e8 14 ♙xe6 dxe5 15 ♙f7+ ♗e7 16 0-0 e4! 17 ♗e1 ♗df6 18 ♙b3 ♗h6. This is still unclear.

9...cxd4

9...b4 may well be just as good, and I'll leave it for you to research.

10 ♗xd4 dxe5!

Black sacrifices the exchange for a pawn in order to destroy White's large centre; this is in the spirit of the 4...a6 line, and of many modern openings. The alternative 10...♙b7 11 ♙xb7 ♖xb7 allows White to use his superior development. Hillarp Persson gives 12 e6! (12 exd6! is perhaps more convincing, since 12...exd6? 13 ♗d5 is unacceptable, but 12...♗b6 13 ♙e3 ♗d6 14 ♖c1 maintains White's initiative)



12...♟gf6!

Black plays another exchange sacrifice for the double purpose of developing quickly and controlling more of the centre. If he tries to avoid capture by 12...♞b7?, White's easiest solution is 13 fxe5, with ideas including ♖f3 and ♟xe7. Then 13...♟xe5 14 ♟e3! ♖c7 15 ♟f4 leaves Black without good moves. Alternatively Black has tested 12...b4!? a number of times, but instead of 13 ♟xb8, 13 ♟a4! looks strong; one line would be 13...♖c7 14 ♟xb8 ♟xb8 15 ♟e3, intending 15...♟f6!? 16 ♟b6 ♖d7 17 ♟c5.

13 ♟xb8 ♖xb8 14 fxe5

Erenburg gives 14 ♟d3 ♟b7 15 ♖e2, but Black still has his basic central control for compensation after 15...0-0.

14...♟xe5!?

Several games have proceeded in this fashion, but 14...♟xe4 15 ♟xe4 ♟xe5 should be investigated as well. Black has obvious and probably adequate compensation for White's minimal material edge.

15 ♟f4 0-0

Not 15...♟h5?? 16 ♟c6+, but now 16...♟h5 is threatened.

16 ♟f3

White wants to discourage ...♟h5 while clearing the e-file for a direct attack on the e5-knight. 16 ♖e2 ♟h5 17 ♟d5 ♟xf4! 18 ♟xe7+ ♟h8 19 ♖xf4 ♟e6 is unclear according to Hillarp Persson.

16...b4

16...e6!? 17 ♖e2 ♟fd7 18 ♞ad1 ♖b6 19 ♟e4 was Kariakin-Hillarp Persson, Benidorm 2003; here 19...♟b7 would keep Black right in the game.

17 ♟d5!?

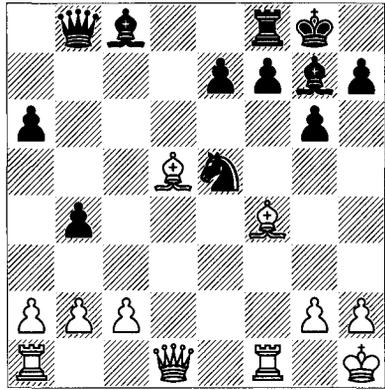
Erenburg and Hillarp Persson like 17 ♖e2!. Then 17...♟fd7 18 ♟d5 ♞e8 19 a3! should favour White, although Black still has his bishop-pair and pawn for the exchange.

17...♟xd5 18 ♟xd5 (D)

You can see how theoretical the odd little move 4...a6 has become: it turns out that we're still in a main book line! The earlier game Malmindin-Hillarp Persson, Sandviken 2004 went 18 ♖xd5 ♟e6! 19 ♖e4 ♟f5 20 ♖e2 ♖b5 21 ♖xb5 axb5 with a pawn and plenty of play for the exchange.

18...e6!?

B



18...♖b5 might be playable. White can force the pace with 19 ♟xe5 ♟xe5 20 ♟xf7+ ♞xf7 21 ♖d8+ ♟g7 22 ♖xf7+ ♟xf7 23 ♖xc8 ♟xb2 24 ♞e1, but after 24...♟f6, it will be hard for him to make progress.

19 ♟b3 ♖b5 20 a3 bxa3 21 ♞xa3 ♟g4?

Black should simply develop by 21...♟b7.

22 c4 ♖h5 23 h3 ♟xb2 24 ♞a2 e5 25 ♞xb2 exf4 26 ♖f3 g5 27 ♟g1 ♟f6 28 ♖xh5 ♟xh5 29 c5

Black has levelled the material, but White's rooks and passed pawn are too strong.

29...♟g3 30 ♞d1 ♟f5 31 ♟c2 ♟e6 32 ♟d3 a5 33 c6 ♞c8 34 ♞c1 ♟f8 35 c7 ♟e7 36 ♟a6 ♟e4 37 ♟xc8 ♟xc8 38 ♞d1 1-0

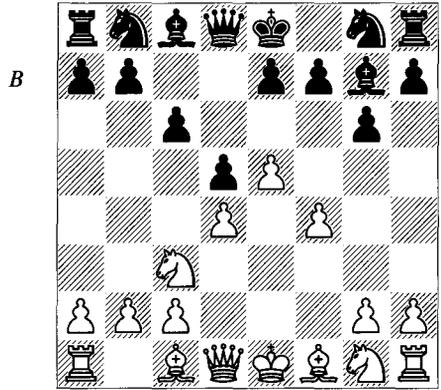
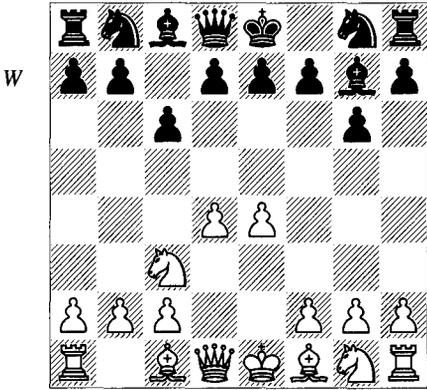
Conclusion: The hypermodern move 4...a6 is somewhat risky, but produces rich chess that will appeal to gamblers.

Modern Defence with an Early ...c6

Hector – Høi
Copenhagen 2002

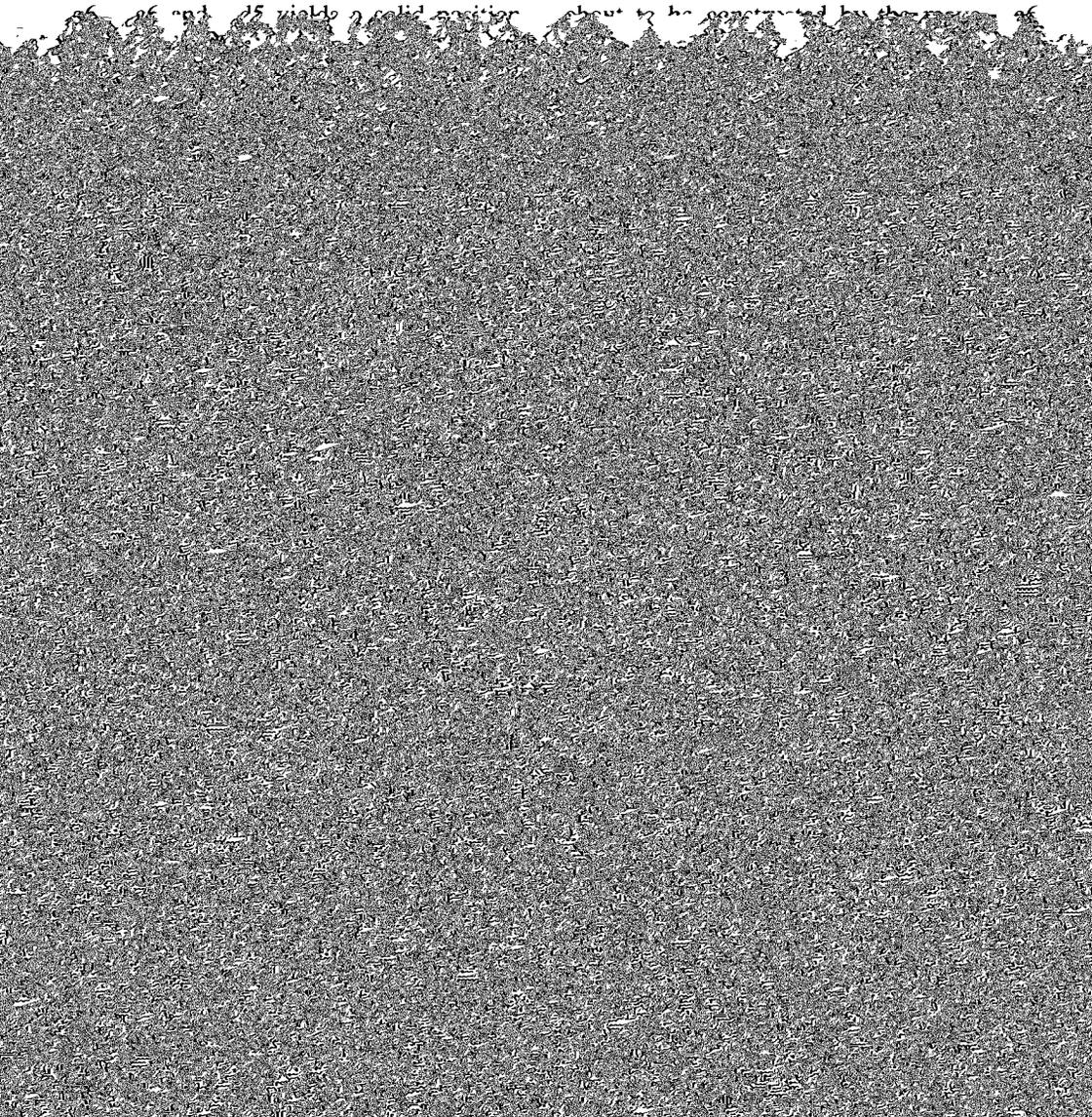
1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♟g7 3 ♟c3 c6 (D)

Today this has become a very popular move-order. Sometimes it is a prelude to fairly conventional set-ups involving ...d6. But Black can also play 4...d5 next (as he does in most of this section), staking out a central presence on the light squares. This strategy resembles Black's in variations of the Caro-Kann Defence (which sometimes directly transpose to these lines), the Scandinavian Defence and the Alekhine

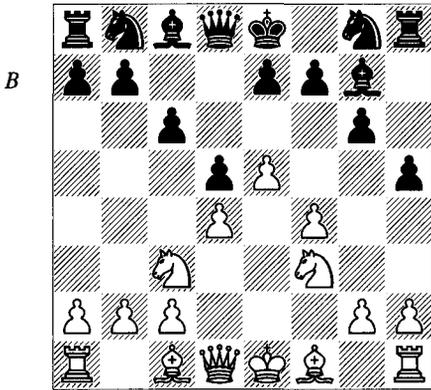


Defence. It seems odd to move so quickly away from the dark-square strategy that 1...g6 implies, but it turns out that the combination of

g4, which might not seem important until you realize that Black intends to put a bishop on g4, appropriately outside the pawn-chain which is



little short after 12 ♖d2, intending 13 ♘e2, to hit the g-pawn, although that's not completely clear) 9 ♘f3!? (9 ♖d2! intends 9... ♗b6 10 0-0-0 ♘g3 11 ♙xg3 hxg3 12 ♘ge2 ♙g4 13 ♙g1! ♙h5 14 ♗e3) 9...e6 (now though, 9... ♗b6! is a good try, because 10 ♗b1 ♘g3!? 11 ♙xg3 hxg3 is rather muddy) 10 ♙d3 ♙f8 11 ♘e2 ♙e7 12 0-0 ♘d7 13 b3. White can be happy in this kind of position; compare the main game. Since 6 ♙e3 also avoids some of Black's promising options in the main line, it should be looked into carefully by both sides.



6... ♘h6

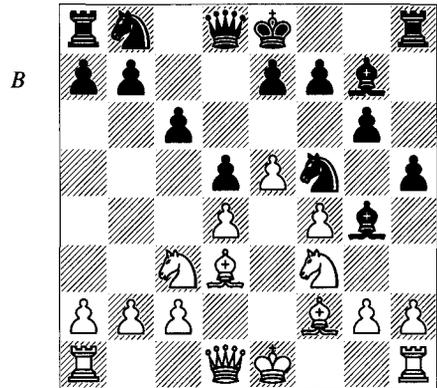
This knight eyes the light squares, especially f5, from where it can exert strong influence. An interesting example that shows Black playing for ...c5 is Hellers-Pettersson, Malmö 1993: 6... ♙g4 7 h3 ♙xf3 8 ♗xf3 ♗b6!? 9 ♗f2 (the d-pawn would be defended indirectly after 9 ♙d3!?, due to 9... ♗xd4?? 10 ♙e3; 9... ♘h6 instead allows 10 g4!, restricting Black's knight – there is plenty to explore here) 9...e6 10 ♙d3 ♘e7 11 0-0 ♘d7 12 b3 ♘f5 13 ♘e2 c5?! 14 c4! dxc4 15 ♙xf5! gxf5 16 bxc4!? cxd4 17 ♘xd4 a6 18 ♙e3 ♗c7 19 c5! with a huge attack based upon 19... ♘xc5? 20 ♘xf5 exf5 21 ♙xc5. White's c-pawn counterattack is a common worry for Black once he has essayed ...c5, which is not to say that it is always unplayable.

7 ♙e3 ♙g4 8 ♙d3

The other main move-order is 8 h3 ♘f5 9 ♙f2 ♙xf3 10 ♗xf3, when 10...h4 11 ♙d3 e6 12 0-0 transposes to the game, and the independent line 10... ♗b6 (hitting d4 and b2) virtually forces White to castle queenside, but 11

0-0-0 h4 12 ♘a4 ♗a5 13 ♗b3! gives White effective play in that sector; for example, 13...b5 14 ♘c5 or 13... ♗c7 14 ♙b1, with an early c4 to follow. It could be that 8 h3 is the most accurate move-order; at any rate, it avoids the next few notes.

8... ♘f5 9 ♙f2 (D)



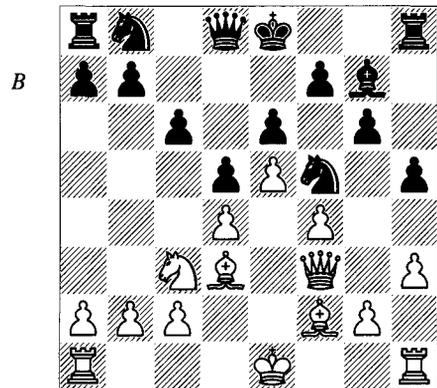
9...e6

Or:

a) 9... ♗b6 should definitely be considered, although it is seldom played. For example, 10 ♗b1 (10 ♖d2 ♙xf3 11 gxf3 ♘xd4 12 0-0-0 ♘f3 13 ♗e2 ♘d4 14 ♖d2 ♘f3 repeats) 10...h4!? (10... ♘d7 11 0-0 0-0-0; 10... ♘xd4 11 b4!) 11 h3 ♙h5!? 12 0-0 ♘d7 13 b4 e6 with an unclear game.

b) A creative if perhaps too exotic alternative played by master Brian Wall begins with 9... ♘d7 followed by ... ♘f8-e6. In one game, Black then continued ... ♙h6 (hitting f4) and ... ♘eg7, further blocking the light squares!

10 h3 ♙xf3 11 ♗xf3 (D)

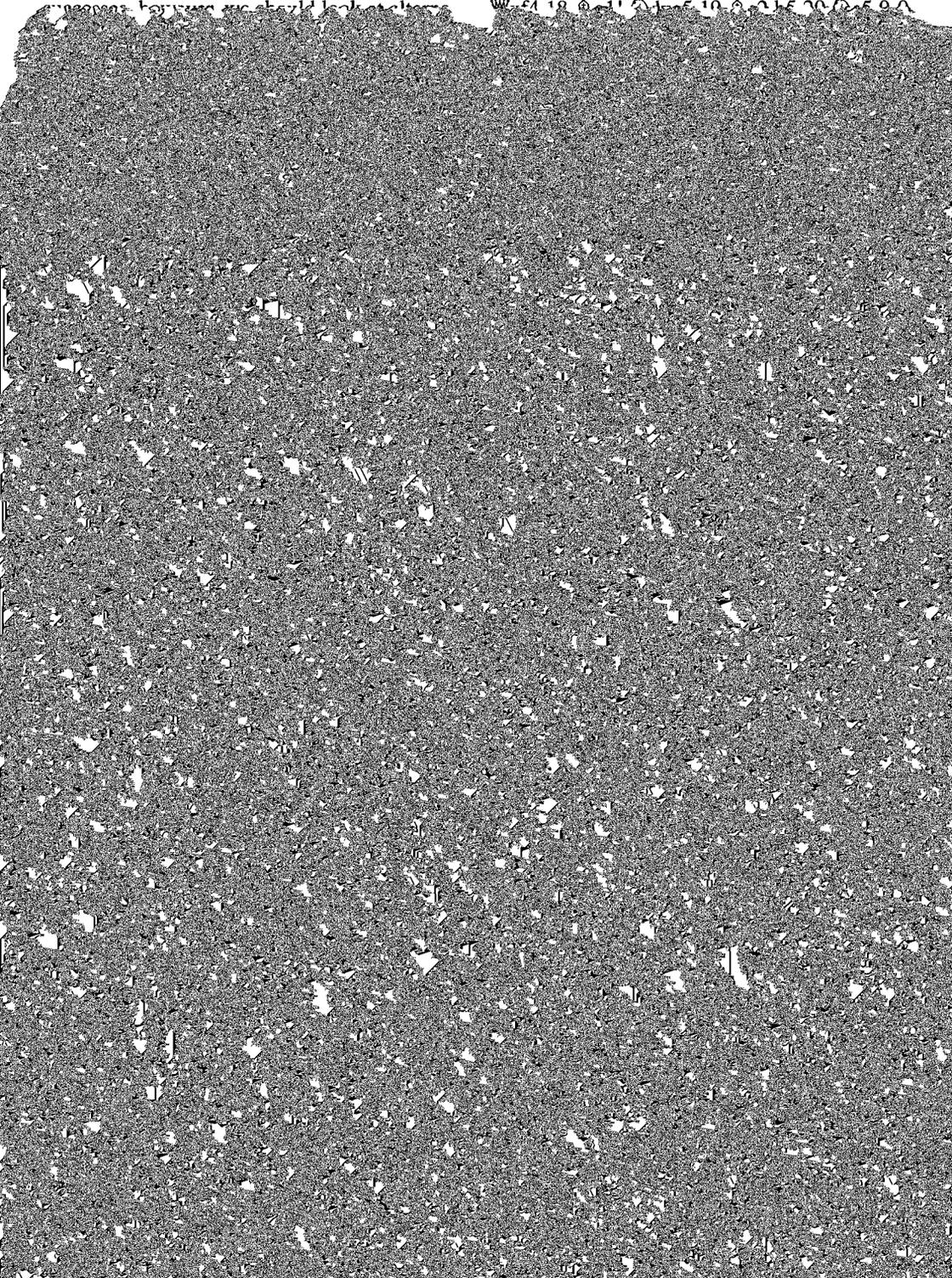


White intends g4.

11...h4

Now we have a position that has arisen many times over the years. Black logically clamps down on the possibility of g4. Given White's

example, 13...♘d7 14 ♚b1! a5 (not 14...0-0-0? 15 b4, when ♘a4 can't be prevented), when there are some wild lines such as 15 a3 a4! 16 b4 axb3 17 ♚xb3 ♗a7 18 ♘b5! cxb5 19 ♘xb5 b6 and 15 ♘a4! ♗b4 16 c3 ♘f3+! 17 ♗h1 ♗f4 18 ♘c1! ♘1-e5 19 ♘c2 15 20 ♘d5 9 ♘



knight on c3. The mirror image of this attack White to expel the bishop from a3 or utilize the

finds it so hard to contest White on the queenside in this line.

16 ♖fc1

16 c5 is also perfectly fine, since White's b4-b5 can't be stopped without allowing some other type of activity.

16...♟f8 17 c5! ♞d7 18 b4 a6 19 a4

Black can't really stop this stereotyped attack.

19...♟g7 20 ♚h2 ♜c7 21 ♞g1!?

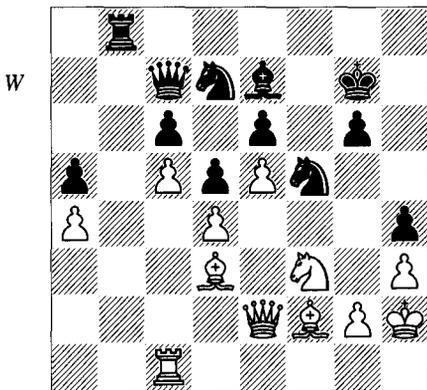
This knight is intended to come to f3 and attack the h-pawn. That's a good plan, although it's probably even easier to play 21 ♞c3!, intending b5.

21...b6 22 ♜e2 bxc5

After 22...b5, 23 ♖a3 and ♖ca1, perhaps even with ♜a2, will penetrate on the queenside.

23 bxc5 a5 24 ♖ab1 f6!? 25 ♞f3 fxe5 26 fxe5 ♖ab8 27 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 (D)

27...♜xb8 28 ♖b1 ♜c7 29 ♜e1 threatens ♟xf5 and capture on h4, but 29...♜d8 permits 30 ♖b7 with devastating effect.



28 ♟xf5

Now material losses are inevitable.

28...exf5 29 ♟xh4 ♟xh4 30 ♞xh4 ♞f6

30...♖b4 31 ♜f2! threatens ♜g3. After this White has various faster wins, but he keeps a grip on the position and wins nicely:

31 ♜e1 ♞e4 32 ♖b1 ♖xb1 33 ♜xb1 ♜e7 34 ♞f3 g5 35 g3 ♜f7 36 ♜b8 g4 37 e6! ♜xe6 38 ♜c7+ ♜f7 39 ♜xf7+ ♟xf7 40 ♞e5+ ♟e6 41 ♞xc6 ♞c3 42 h4 ♞xa4 43 ♞xa5 ♞c3 44 ♞c6 ♞e2 45 ♟g2 ♟d7 46 ♟f2 ♞c3 47 ♞e5+ ♟e6

This variation has had a fascinating history. Nevertheless, the main line is a wonderful illustration of the advantages of controlling more space. Black should look into playing 9...♜b6 or one of his 11th-move alternatives; as so often happens when one player has two knights against two bishops, he can't wait by, but must undertake something dynamic.

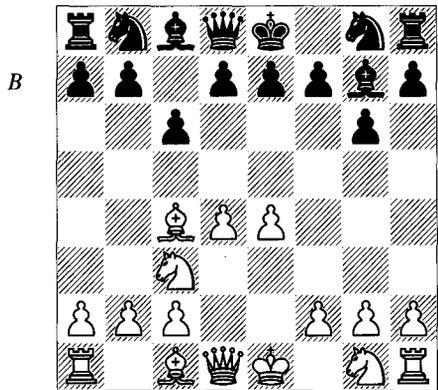
**Adams – Bologan
Bundesliga 1998/9**

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♟g7 3 ♞c3 c6

The remarkable 3...d5!?, intending 4 ♞xd5 c6 5 ♞e3 ♜xd4 or 4 exd5 ♞f6 (with the idea 5 ♟c4 ♞bd7 and ...♞b6) is a speculative idea which has received recent attention. It is probably in White's favour, but remains playable. You can research this in books and databases.

4 ♞f3

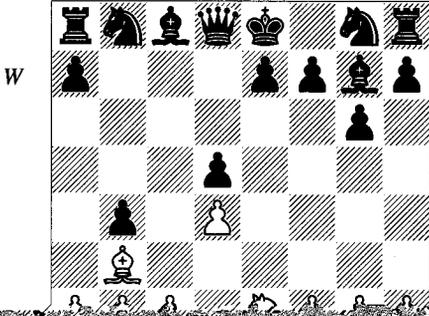
White plays the natural developing move, aiming at the centre. Of course, there are many alternatives such as 4 ♟e3 and 4 ♟g5, and 4 h4 is certainly possible. But the popular 4 ♟c4 (D) leads to particularly interesting play.



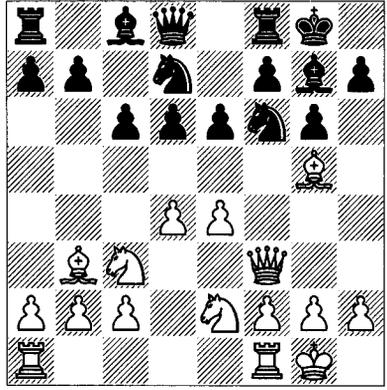
That directly discourages ...d5, and it puts a priority on quick development, sometimes having in mind a direct attack. The play is complex, generally going in one of two main directions:

a) Black should avoid overextending by 4...b5?! 5 ♟b3 b4 6 ♞ce2 ♞f6?! 7 e5 ♞d5 8 a3! bxa3 9 ♖xa3 0-0, as in Georgadze-Radev, Tbilisi 1971, when White can claim much the

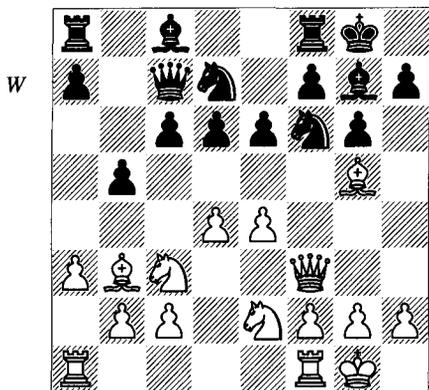
b4 7 ♖ce2 (or 7 ♖a4, eyeing c5 and preparing a3) 7...cxd5 (D).



B



c22) 10 a3 ♖c7 (D) (10...♗b7 11 ♖ad1 ♖c7 also looks playable).



After 11 d5?! (straightforward development by 11 ♖ad1 followed by ♗fe1 appears best) 11...cxd5! 12 exd5 ♗b7! 13 ♖xb5 ♖c5, Black gets the pawn back with excellent activity. Rublevsky-Iordachescu, European Ch, Silivri 2003 went 14 ♖bc3 ♖xd5 15 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♗xd5 exd5 (16...♖e5! is also good) 17 c3 ♖e5 18 ♖g3 ♖ab8 19 ♖ab1 ♖c4 with a nice initiative for Black. Instead, 14 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 15 ♖bc3 ♖xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 c3 ♖ab8 19 ♖ab1 was suggested, but then 19...♖c4 20 ♖fd1 ♖fe8 gives Black good counterplay. For example, the isolated queen's pawns can't be blockaded due to the tactic 21 ♖d4 ♗xd4 22 ♗xd4 ♖xb2!.

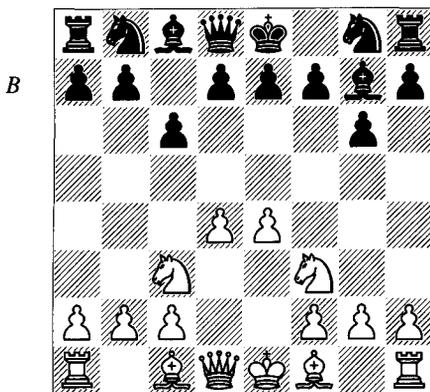
Black can fall victim to sudden attacks in these lines with 4 ♗c4 d6 5 ♖f3. But some Modern Defence players like to provoke White into aggressive activity, trusting that their compact position can repel any rash advances.

We return to the calmer 4 ♖f3 (D):

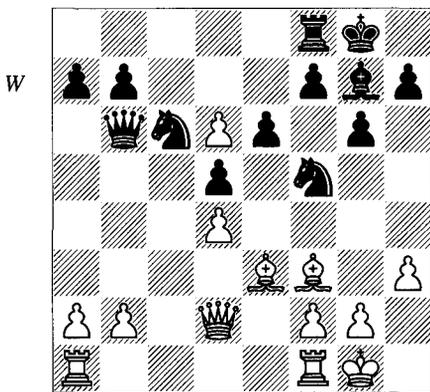
4...d5 5 h3

Over the years, this has become White's most popular choice. He expands a tempo, but prevents Black's plan of playing ...♗g4 and ...♗xf3, which is a good minor-piece trade-off in what will be a semi-closed position. After playing ...♗xf3 and ...e6, Black is left with his good bishop and believes that his knights will be well-placed in the resulting structure. Three brief examples:

a) 5 ♗e2 ♗g4 6 e5 e6 7 0-0 ♖e7 8 h3 (slow) 8...♗xf3 9 ♗xf3 c5 (central counterattack along the lines of the French Defence makes the



knight as effective as the bishops) 10 ♖b5?! (correct in principle, but it's too time-consuming to try to prop up the central pawn-chain; Black has only a small edge after 10 dxc5 ♖bc6 11 ♗f4 ♖a5 12 ♖e1 ♖xc5) 10...0-0 11 c3 ♖bc6 12 ♖d6 (White can no longer hold the centre: 12 ♖a3 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♖b6 14 ♖c2 ♖f5) 12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♖b6 14 ♗e3 and now 14...♖c8 15 ♖xc8 ♖axc8 16 ♖d2 wasn't bad for Black in Rozentalis-Blatny, Warsaw 1999, as he can break up the centre with ...f6. However, he could have played the classic exchange sacrifice to destroy White's centre: 14...♖ad8! 15 ♖d2 ♖xd6! 16 exd6 ♖f5 (D).



In this position both d-pawns will fall, leaving Black's centre pawns unopposed and mobile.

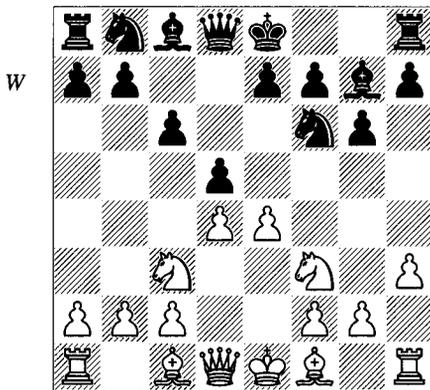
b) White has to be careful not to give Black a favourable French Defence in which he has exchanged off his light-squared bishop and retains excellent knights. For example, A.Belusov-Yurtayev, Seversk 1997 saw 5 e5 ♗g4 6 h3

♙xf3 7 ♜xf3 e6 8 h4? ♜b6 9 ♘e2 c5 10 c3 ♘c6 11 ♜d3 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♘ge7 with the better game, since ...♙f5 is not easy to counter.

c) White can try for a quick attack by 5 exd5 cxd5 6 ♙f4 ♘c6 (6...♙g4 is also playable) 7 ♘b5, but the reply 7...♙f8! forces a retreat. T.Kovarcik-Reinderman, Cappelle la Grande 1996 continued 8 ♘c7?! (White should be satisfied with disturbing Black's king and accept a loss of time by 8 ♙e2 a6 9 ♘c3; then 9...♙g4 10 0-0 e6 creates a threat against the d4-pawn, when 11 ♘e1 ♙xe2 12 ♘xe2 ♙h6 is roughly equal) 8...e5 9 ♘xe5 ♙xe5 10 ♙xe5 ♘xe5 11 ♘xa8 ♘c6 12 ♙e2 ♙e6 13 0-0 ♜xa8 and Black emerged with two pieces for a rook and pawn. Even with his dark-square weaknesses, this must be equal or better for him.

5...♘f6 (D)

This is Black's most direct way to challenge White's centre. In the next game we'll see 5...♘h6.



6 e5

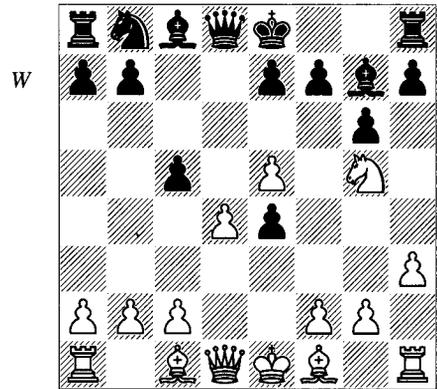
White makes the normal choice. Black can simplify and succeed in liquidating the centre following 6 ♙d3 dxe4 7 ♘e4 ♘e4 8 ♙xe4 0-0 9 0-0 ♘d7; for example, 10 ♙g5!? (10 ♙e3 e5; 10 c3 c5 11 ♙e3 ♜c7 12 ♜e2 ♘f6 13 ♙d3 b6) 10...h6!? (10...♜b6! 11 ♜b1 e5! would carry off a safe central break) 11 ♙e3 c5!? 12 dxc5 (or 12 ♜d2) 12...♜c7 13 ♜e2 (13 b4?! a5! 14 b5 ♘xc5 15 b6 ♜d6) 13...♜b8!? 14 ♜b5 ♘f6 15 ♙d3, Chandler-Christiansen, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984, and now 15...♘d5 provides compensation. White may be able to find a very small edge after 6 ♙d3, but that isn't clear.

6...♘e4 7 ♘xe4

7 ♙d3 ♘xc3 8 bxc3 c5 has some themes in common with the French Defence. I won't go into the theory here, but the play is rather less forcing than in the main lines and worthy of your investigation.

7...dxe4 8 ♘g5 c5 (D)

Black needs to counterattack before ♘e4 simply wins a pawn.

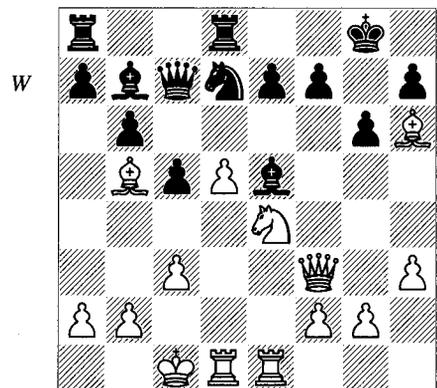


9 d5

White plays for a positional advantage. The sharp moves 9 ♙c4 and 9 e6 have also been tried here, but Black can at least hold his own after complications.

9...♙xe5 10 ♘xe4 ♘d7

Delchev-F.Rey, Val Thorens 1996 is often cited for its finish, but also illustrates the dangers of an overly passive strategy for Black: 10...0-0 11 c3 b6?! (better moves are 11...♘d7 and 11...♜c7 with the idea ...♜d8) 12 ♙h6 ♜e8?! 13 ♜f3 ♘d7 14 ♙b5 ♙b7 15 0-0-0 ♜c7 16 ♜h1 (lovely centralization) 16...♜ed8 (D).

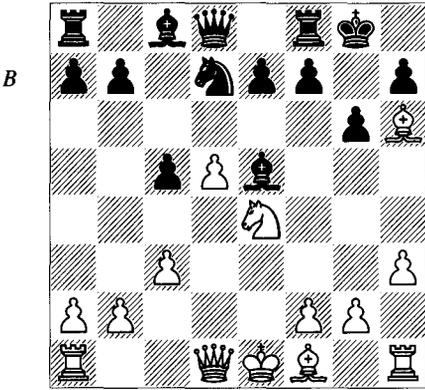


17 d6! (now some pretty tactical play follows) 17... $\text{e}6$ 18 $\text{xf}7$!! (the point) 18... $\text{xf}7$ 19 $\text{c}4$ $\text{d}5$! (19... $\text{e}6$?! 20 $\text{xd}6$ $\text{g}8$? 21 $\text{xe}6$ mates in a few moves) 20 $\text{xd}6$ $\text{xd}6$ 21 $\text{xd}5$ $\text{e}6$? (but after 21... $\text{xf}6$ 22 $\text{g}5$ $\text{f}8$! 23 $\text{xf}6$ $\text{xf}6$ 24 $\text{de}5$ Black has weaknesses and is quite tied down) 22 $\text{xe}6$ $\text{xe}6$ 23 $\text{d}3$ $\text{e}5$ 24 $\text{e}3$ $\text{d}6$ 25 $\text{e}6$ $\text{c}7$ 26 $\text{f}4$ $\text{b}7$ 27 $\text{xe}7$ $\text{c}6$ 28 a4 a6 29 $\text{e}2$! $\text{b}7$ 30 $\text{f}3$ $\text{a}7$ 31 $\text{xa}8$ $\text{xa}8$ 32 $\text{c}7$ 1-0.

11 c3 0-0

After 11... $\text{b}6$ 12 $\text{xc}5$ $\text{xd}5$ 13 $\text{b}5$ $\text{f}8$ 14 $\text{h}6$ $\text{g}7$ 15 $\text{e}3$! White stands significantly better due to his superior development.

12 $\text{h}6$ (D)



12... $\text{e}8$

This is sensible, and Black also comes close to equalizing with 12... $\text{g}7$ 13 $\text{d}2$ (13 $\text{xg}7$ $\text{xg}7$ 14 $\text{c}4$!?) 13... $\text{hx}6$ 14 $\text{hx}6$ $\text{b}6$ 15 0-0 $\text{f}6$ 16 $\text{xf}6$ $\text{xf}6$ 17 $\text{e}3$ $\text{d}6$.

13 $\text{b}5$!?

An active choice. White has also played 13 $\text{f}3$ $\text{a}5$ 14 $\text{e}2$, when 14... $\text{f}6$ equalizes.

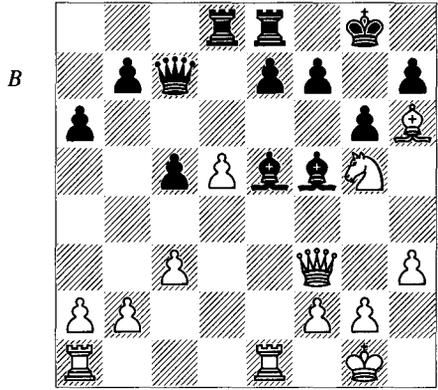
13...a6 14 $\text{xd}7$ $\text{xd}7$!?

Here 14... $\text{xd}7$ looks perfectly good; for example, 15 $\text{xc}5$ (15 0-0 $\text{b}5$! followed by ... $\text{d}8$) 15... $\text{b}5$ 16 $\text{a}4$! $\text{d}8$ 17 $\text{xb}5$ $\text{axb}5$ 18 0-0 $\text{f}5$ 19 $\text{d}1$ $\text{f}1$ 20 $\text{d}1$ $\text{c}7$??

15... $\text{b}c7$

Adams queries this move, and suggests that 15... $\text{f}5$ 16 $\text{xc}5$ $\text{b}6$ yields compensation. Then 17 $\text{e}3$! would discourage 17... $\text{xb}2$?! due to 18 g4.

16 $\text{e}1$ $\text{ad}8$ 17 $\text{f}3$ $\text{f}5$ 18 $\text{g}5$ (D)



18... $\text{f}6$

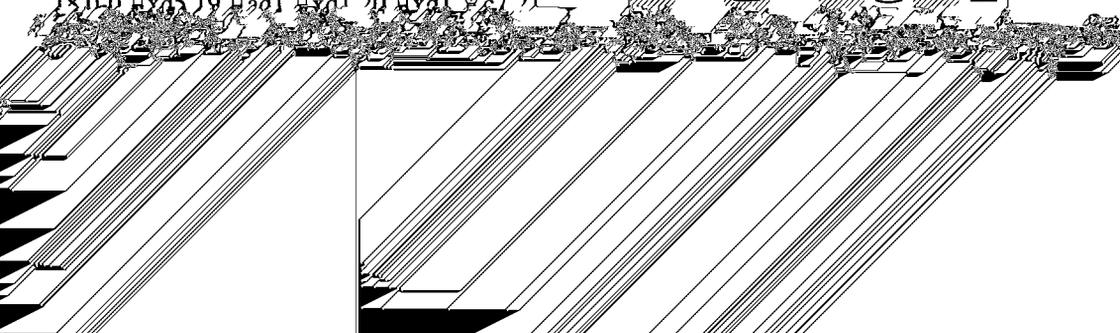
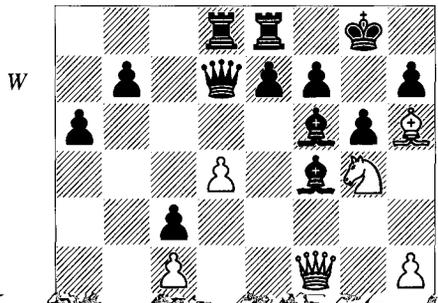
The alternative defence 18... $\text{f}6$ 19 $\text{e}6$ $\text{xe}6$ 20 $\text{dx}e6$ $\text{c}4$ 21 $\text{ad}1$ $\text{xd}1$ 22 $\text{xd}1$ is unclear. Possibly Black should settle for 22... $\text{h}2$ 23 $\text{f}1$ $\text{d}6$ instead of 22... $\text{b}6$ 23 $\text{d}5$! $\text{xb}2$ 24 $\text{d}8$!.

19 $\text{e}2$

Adams mentions 19 g4 $\text{c}8$ 20 $\text{e}3$ and 19 $\text{e}3$ with the idea $\text{ae}1$. Compare the game.

19...c4 20 $\text{ae}1$ $\text{d}7$?! (D)

Not 20... $\text{d}3$?? 21 $\text{xf}6$!, but 20... $\text{d}6$ could be tried.



21...♗d3 22 ♖e3 ♗xg5?!

Now Black will have trouble on the dark squares. He could challenge White to make progress after 22...b5. But not 22...♗xd5?? because of 23 ♗xf6!.

23 ♗xg5 f6?

Adams gives 23...♗xd5 24 ♗f4!, with an attack based upon capturing on e7.

24 ♗h6?!

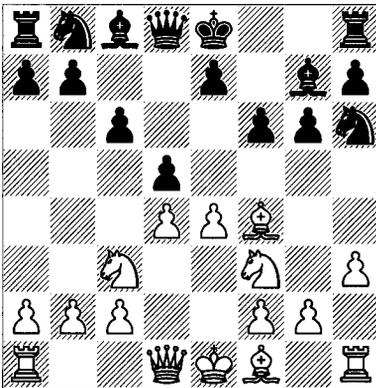
square f7, and weaken the e6-square! Nevertheless, we have to remember that chess is a matter of specifics and timing. It turns out that Black's cluster of pieces on the kingside serves not only the purpose of preventing the advance e5 by White, but of preparing ...e5 for himself. For his part, White is happy to accept the gift of so much time, and will try to show that his opponent's strategy is too slow.

get the same material imbalance as in the previous note with 11 exd5 cxd5 12 ♖xd5!? ♜xd5 13 ♙c4 ♜d7! 14 dxe5 fxe5 15 ♘g5 ♜e7 16 ♙xf7+ ♜xf7 17 ♘xf7 ♜xf7 18 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 19 ♜xe5 ♘c6 20 ♜e3 ♙f5 21 c3, which is equally unclear) 11...fxe5 and now 12 ♘a4?! was tried in Zarnicki-Reinaldo Castineira, Internet Chess Club 2003, targeting e5. A simple move such as 12 ♜d2 is probably better, because Black could have forced White to prove his point by 12...b5! 13 ♘c5 ♜d6 14 b4 ♘d7, when he appears to have no problems.

c) Hraček-Van Mil, Hamburg 2002 saw typical piece deployment for both sides: 9...♜e8 10 ♙b2 a6 11 ♙f1 b5 12 ♜d2 ♙b7 13 ♜ad1 ♘d7 14 a3 e6 (White has a classical position with centralized development, but nothing obvious to do) 15 h4 ♜c7 16 h5 gxh5 (or 16...g5) 17 ♘h4 dxe4!? (17...♘h6!?) 18 ♘xe4 f5 19 ♘g3, and here 19...♘f6 would have kept things level; for example, 20 ♙e2 ♜ad8 21 ♙xh5 c5.

6...f6 (D)

Black proceeds with the idea of ...f6 and ...♘f7, followed by ...e5 if allowed. Continuing 6...dxe4 7 ♘xe4 ♘f5 8 c3 0-0 9 ♜d2 surrenders the centre to no apparent purpose.

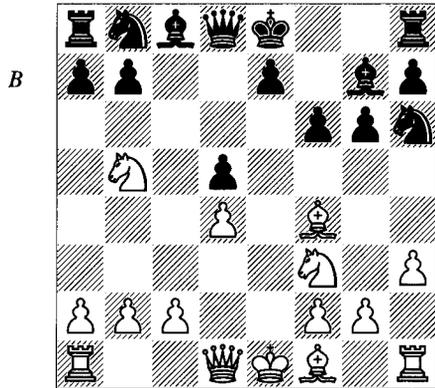


7 exd5!

The flexible strategy 7 ♙e2 ♘f7 8 ♙h2 0-0 9 0-0 was tried in Topalov-Shirov, Linares 1994. Black held his own by playing solid, non-descript moves: 9...b6 10 ♜e1 ♙b7 11 ♙f1 ♘d7 12 a4 a6 13 a5 b5 14 exd5 cxd5 15 ♜e6!? ♜c8. Now Shirov suggests 16 ♘e2!?, although 16...♜e8 with the idea ...♘d8 yields dynamic chances (17 ♘f4 ♘g5!).

7...cxd5 8 ♘b5! (D)

White goes for the throat. Black looks relatively safe following 8 ♙xb8!? ♜xb8 9 ♙b5+ ♘f7 (9...♙d7 10 ♜e2) 10 ♜e2 e6, as in Barlov-Gaprindashvili, Palma de Mallorca 1989.

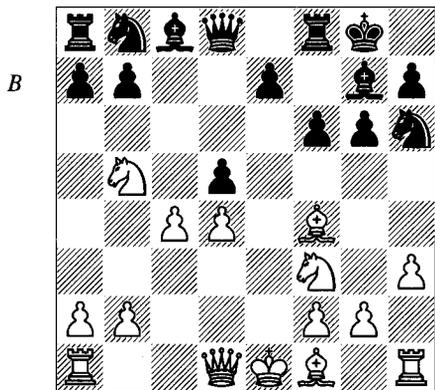


8...0-0!

This pseudo-sacrifice is logical. 8...♘a6 allows 9 c4 with real pressure. Then 9...0-0 can be answered variously; for example, 10 ♘c3! is a particularly straightforward choice, intending to meet 10...e6 with 11 ♜b3. In Gallagher-Efimov, European Team Ch, Pula 1997, White played 10 cxd5 ♜xd5 11 ♜c1, when 11...♘f7 12 ♙c4 ♜f5 looks best.

9 ♘c7?!

After some forced moves this comes to little. White should play 9 c4! (D).



Then Black seems to have his work cut out for him; for example, 9...♘c6 (9...a6 10 ♘c7 e5 may be best, although 11 ♘xa8 exf4 12 c5! gives White's knight access to b6 and leaves him with a lead in material; after 9...♙d7?!, 10 ♜b3!

creates significant problems, since 10...dxc4 11 ♖xc4+ followed by 12 ♘c7 will win something) 10 cxd5 ♗xd5 11 ♘c7!? (or 11 ♗d2! with the idea 11...g5 12 ♘c7; a little better is 11 ♘f7 12 ♘c7 ♗d4 13 ♘e2 but Black

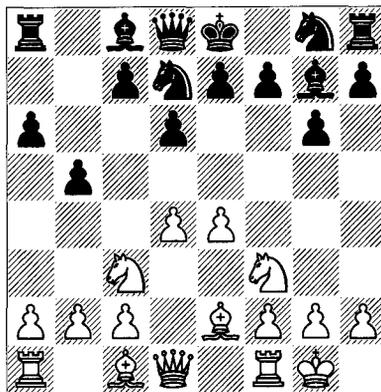
15...♗d8 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 17 ♘c4 ♘xc4 18 ♘xc4

At this point, Black played 18...b5!? 19 ♘e3 ♘xd4 20 ♗g4, with an unclear position. His better course would have been 18 ♘xd4 19

By moving his knight first, Black supports ...c5 and perhaps ...e5, while keeping his bishop on the c8-h3 diagonal for a move, in case e5-e6 becomes bothersome. Nevertheless, 6...♘d7 has its own drawbacks, and we need to understand the implications of various move-orders. At this junction there are two natural alternatives:

a) Black is behind in development in these ...a6/...b5 lines, and so both sides should be on the lookout for direct attacks. For example, an extremely important attacking theme arises in the variation 6...♘f6? 7 e5! ♘fd7 (7...dxe5 8 ♘xe5 ♙b7 9 ♙f3!) 8 ♘g5! (or 8 e6!, since 8...fxe6 9 ♘g5 attacks e6 and prepares moves such as ♙g4/f3 and ♖e1, and the common defensive idea 9...♘f8? gets hit with 10 ♙xb5+! intending 10...axb5 11 ♗f3) 8...dxe5 9 dxe5 and now 9...e6 (to prevent 10 e6) is strongly met by 10 ♙xb5!, again with the idea 10...axb5 11 ♗f3. If Black instead plays 9...♘e5, he comes out on the short end of the long forced sequence 10 ♗xd8+ ♘xd8 11 f4 h6 12 fxe5 hxg5 13 ♖xf7 ♙xe5 14 ♙xg5; for example, 14...♘c6 15 ♙f3 ♙xh2+ 16 ♚f2 ♙b7 17 ♖e1

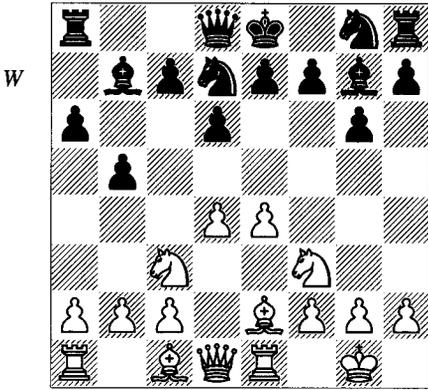
W



the idea ...e6) 11 ♗d2!? (11 ♙f3 ♗c8 12 ♖e1 c6) 11...c6 12 dxc6 ♘xc6 with what appears to be quite an acceptable Sicilian position for Black.

7...♙b7

Black can head for the Sicilian Defence structure straightaway by 7...c5 8 ♙f1 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♙b7 (after 9...♘gf6 10 a4! bxa4!? 11 ♖xa4 ♘c5 12 ♖c4 White threatens e5; this seems slightly awkward for Black in spite of White's exposed rook). White's most promis-



The position after 7...♗b7 has been the starting point for a good many Modern Defence battles. It embodies the fight between classical and hypermodern development.

8 ♖f1

White moves his bishop out of the way, both protecting the e4-pawn and strengthening its potential advance to e5. In the next game we'll look at 8 ♖g5.

8...c5

Black begins his attack on d4. This completes the plan laid out by 4...a6.

9 a4

In the Classical Variation, this pawn advance is White's default strategy. White lures Black's b-pawn forward and then attacks it, opening lines for his own benefit.

9...b4

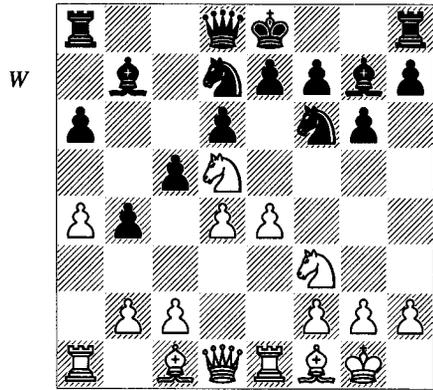
9...cxd4 10 ♖xd4 b4 transposes into the note above on 7...c5; 9...bxa4?! 10 ♖xa4 not only reduces the pressure on White's centre (via ...b4), but creates weaknesses on Black's queenside, notably on a5 and a6.

10 ♖d5 ♖gf6 (D)

Black can't just toss out moves in this system; for example, 10...e6? 11 ♖f4! was already practically decisive in the game Honfi-Vadasz, Kecskemet 1975, based upon 11...exd5? 12 exd5+ ♖e7 13 ♖xd6 ♖f6 14 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 15 d6, winning.

11 ♖xf6+

Or:



b) After 11 ♖g5 cxd4 12 ♖xd4, 12...h6! 13 ♖h4 0-0 14 ♖xb4 ♖e8! threatens to regain the pawn on e4, which is surprisingly hard to defend. In response to a slow move, ...g5 or ...♖c5 is good, so a plausible line is 15 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 16 ♖d3 a5 17 ♖a2 ♖b6 18 c3 ♖ab8! 19 ♖e2 e5! 20 ♖b5 d5 21 exd5 e4 22 ♖c4 ♖xd5 23 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 with the bishop-pair and activity in return for the pawn.

11...♖xf6

11...♖xf6 seems playable as well, since the critical 12 ♖h6 is unclear after 12...cxd4 13 ♖xd4 ♖b6 14 c3 ♖c8.

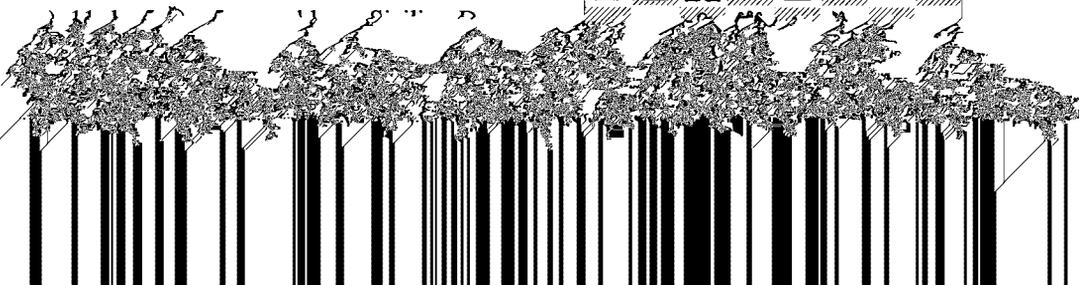
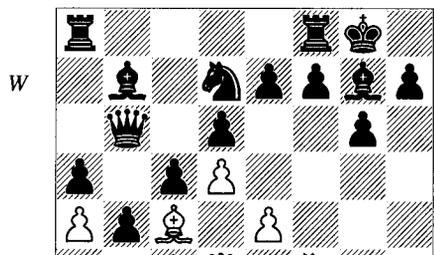
12 d5

White tries to shut out the b7-bishop and win space at the same time; the drawback is that Black's dark-squared bishop becomes all the more powerful.

12...0-0 13 ♖c4

White would like to play 13 a5, but then 13...e6! breaks up the centre with active counterplay.

13...a5 14 ♖d3 ♖d7 15 c3 ♖b6 (D)



16 ♖f4 ♖a6

Now the play is equal, in part because neither side will be able to break down the other's defences.

17 e5 ♖xc4 18 ♚xc4 ♚a6 19 ♚e4 bxc3 20 bxc3 c4

Black would love to play ...♗c5-d3.

21 ♚e3! ♚b6

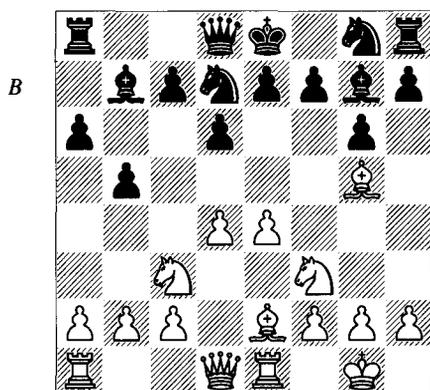
But now 21...♗c5 22 exd6 exd6 23 ♖h6 ♗d3 24 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 25 ♚d4+ only loosens Black's king position.

22 ♚e2 ♚a6 23 ♚e3 ♚b6 1/2-1/2

Khalifman – V. Popov

St Petersburg Ch 1997

1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♖g7 3 ♗f3 d6 4 ♗c3 a6 5 ♖e2 b5 6 0-0 ♖b7 7 ♗e1 ♗d7 8 ♖g5 (D)

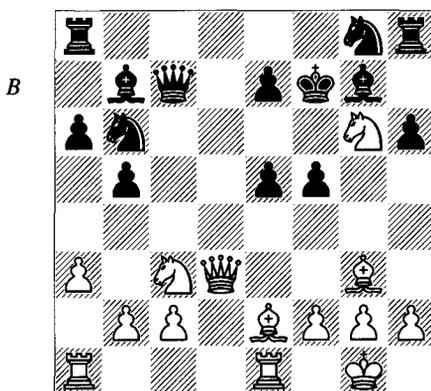


White frequently places his bishop on this active square, from which point it pins the enemy e-pawn, participates in direct attacks, and stays out of the way of White's e-file play (as opposed to 7 ♖e3 or 8 ♖e3, for example). From Black's perspective, the bishop doesn't defend against ...c5, and it can become isolated from the central squares if driven back to h4 by the move ...h6.

8...c5

In the Modern Defence, Black always has to have a healthy respect for primitive-looking assaults; for example, 8...h6 9 ♖h4 ♗b6!? 10 a3 c5 (it's safer to attend to development by 10...♗f6 or 10...g5 11 ♖g3 ♗f6) 11 e5!? cxd4 12 ♚xd4 dxe5 13 ♚e3! ♚c7?! (Black should play 13...♗f6! 14 ♗xe5 and now 14...♗bd5!, defending nicely – but not 14...0-0?! 15 ♖f3)

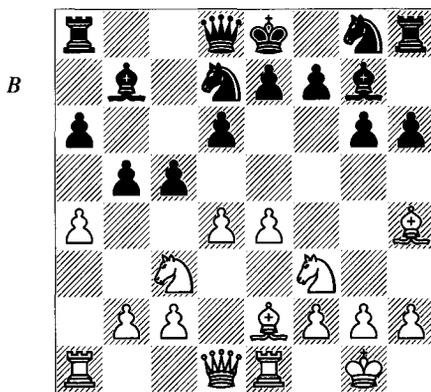
14 ♖g3 f6? 15 ♗h4 ♗f7 16 ♚d3 f5 17 ♗xg6! (D).



17...♚d7 (allowing a cute finish; 17...♗xg6 is also losing after 18 ♖h5+! ♗f6 19 ♖xe5+) 18 ♖h5 ♚xd3 19 ♗f4+! 1-0 Grünfeld-Soltis, Lone Pine 1979. It's mate in two.

9 a4 h6 10 ♖h4 (D)

Hillarp Persson analyses 10 ♖e3 b4 11 ♗d5 ♗gf6 12 ♗xf6+ (12 ♖c4!?) 12...♗xf6 13 e5 ♗d5 14 e6 0-0 and claims an edge for Black; at any rate, he'll have very active pieces.



10...cxd4

Movsesian likes 10...b4 11 ♗d5! g5 12 ♖g3 for White on the basis of 12...e6 13 ♖xd6!, but 12...♗gf6! solves Black's main problems; for example, 13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♖xe5 0-0! 17 ♖xf6 ♚xd1 18 ♚exd1 exf6 19 ♗d4 ♚fe8 with active pieces and the idea ...♚e5. So perhaps 10...b4 maintains a balance.

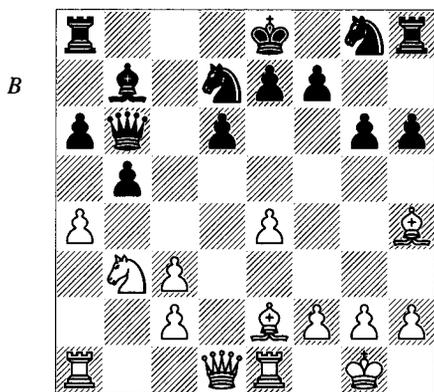
11 ♗xd4

Browne-Benko, Las Vegas 1975 saw the immediate 11 ♖d5, which is also not easy to meet: 11...bxa4 (played reluctantly; 11...g5?! is undesirable because of 12 ♖g3 ♗gf6 13 ♗xd4! with the idea 13...♗xe4 14 ♗f5) 12 ♗xd4 ♗gf6 13 ♖f3!? (13 ♗xa4!) 13...♗c5 (13...e5!?) 14 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 15 ♖xf6 exf6 16 ♗d2 ♗f8 with level chances.

11...♗b6 12 ♗b3 ♖xc3?!

Probably not the best idea. 12...b4!? seems playable.

13 bxc3 (D)



13...♗gf6

We've seen this trade-off frequently throughout this book: White's c-pawns are exposed along the half-open c-file and Black has potential dark-square weaknesses because of the exchange of his bishop on c3. In this case, he has the additional problem of a target on b5.

14 axb5

14 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♗d4!? is also promising. White goes after the b-pawn and invites the lengthy forcing sequence 16...♗xd4 17 cxd4 ♗xe4 18 ♗a5! ♖a6 19 ♗c6! (hitting b5) 19...♗d7 20 ♗b4 ♖b7 21 ♖xb5+ ♗c7 22 ♗xa8 ♗xa8 23 f3 ♗b6! 24 ♖c4 ♗a4! 25 ♗d5+ ♖xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♗c3 27 ♖xf7 ♗xd4 28 ♗xe7 ♗d1+ 29 ♗f2 ♗d2+ 30 ♗f1 g5 31 ♖b3 and Black has a difficult task ahead. It's not clear how he can deviate from all this.

14...axb5 15 ♗xa8+ ♖xa8 16 ♗d4 ♖xe4

White seems to have the better of it regardless; for example, 16...g5 17 ♖g3 ♗xe4 18 ♖xb5 ♗d8 (18...♗xc3?? 19 ♗a1!) 19 ♗a1 ♖b7 20 ♗b1 ♗c7 21 ♖a6!. Perhaps 16...b4 should be tried, but White wins a pawn by 17

♖b5!? 0-0 18 cxb4 e5 19 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 20 ♗f3, counting upon 20...g5 21 ♗xg5! hxg5 22 ♖xg5 with three pawns and an attack for his piece.

17 ♖xb5 g5 18 ♖g3 e5 19 f3 ♖g6 20 ♖f2 ♗c7 21 ♖f1 ♗e7

Movsesian mentions the ending 21...0-0 22 ♗b5 ♗c6 23 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 24 ♗xd6 ♖xc2, but then White has 25 c4 with a powerful passed pawn.

22 ♗d2

White is probably winning now, even if his execution isn't perfect:

22...♗b8 23 ♗b5 ♗c6 24 c4 ♗e8 25 h4! f6 26 ♖d3 ♖xd3 27 ♗xd3 gxh4?? 28 ♗d4 ♗a4 29 ♗h7+ ♗d8 30 ♗e6+ ♗c8 31 ♗e7 ♗b7 32 ♗b1+ ♗a8 33 ♗xe8! 1-0

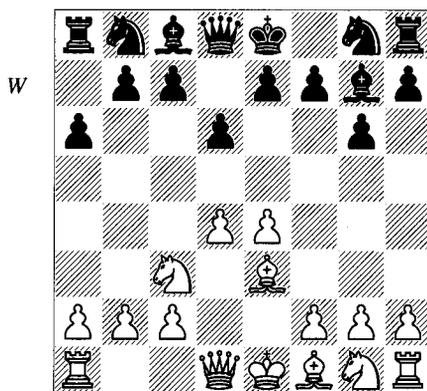
Other White Formations

Lines with 4 ♖e3 are popular versus both the Pirc Defence and Modern Defence, often planning ♗d2 with some combination of f3, ♖h6 and h4-h5. In the case of the Modern Defence, however, it's worth mentioning that if Black delays ...♗f6, the move ♖h6 won't be possible. The following game again illustrates Black's modern strategy of ...a6 and ...b5:

Xie Jun – M. Gurevich

Haarlem 1997

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 ♗c3 ♖g7 4 ♖e3 a6 (D)



5 ♗d2

Pursuing the above-mentioned plan. Other moves:

a) The insertion of 5 a4 b6 favours Black because White will be less disposed to play 0-0-0, while an attack by e5 isn't so dangerous with White's bishop on e3.

b) White can also play for the big centre by 5 f4, when the game Ramesh-Hillarp Persson, Amsterdam 2000 continued 5...b5 6 ♖f3 ♙b7 7 ♙d3 ♘d7 8 ♚e2!? (8 0-0) 8...c5 (Hillarp Persson suggests 8...b4!? 9 ♘d1 ♘gf6) 9 dxc5 ♘xc5 10 ♙xc5 ♙xc3+ (10...dxc5 11 e5 ♚b6 12 ♙e4!) 11 bxc3 dxc5 12 e5 ♘h6 13 0-0 ♚b6 with unclear play which looks satisfactory for Black.

5...b5 6 f3

6 a4 b4 7 ♘a2 (or 7 ♘d1 a5 8 c3) 7...a5 8 c3 is another common approach.

6...♘d7 7 h4

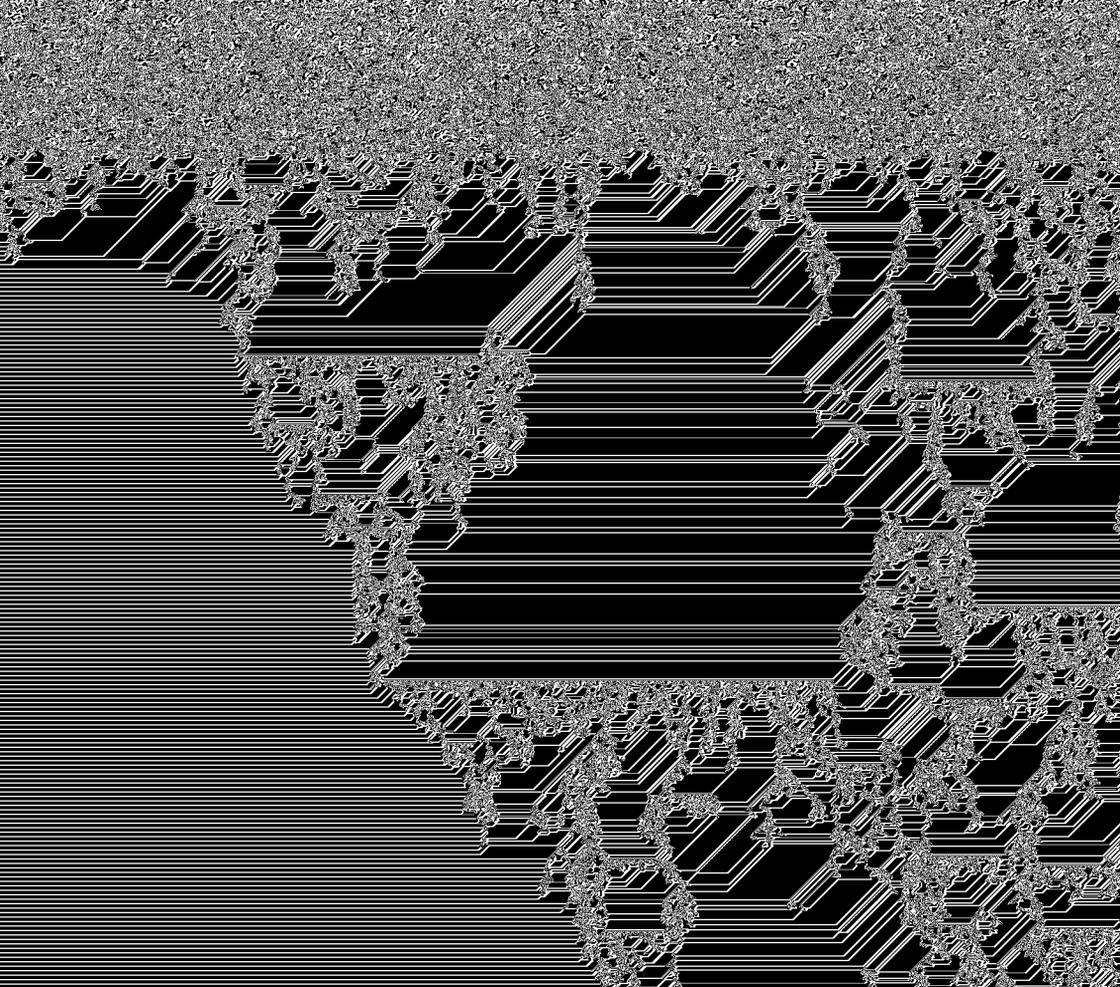
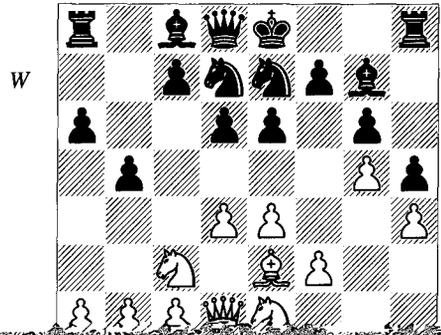
Direct, and sort of a main line. Obviously there are legitimate alternatives, such as 7 0-0-0 ♙b7 8 h4 h5 9 ♘h3, when Speelman suggests 9...♙c8 with the direct idea ...c5, reinforcing both Black's attack on the queenside and his

(or 9...♙c8 10 0-0-0) 10 dxc5, Cubas-Leitão, Americana 2007, and now 10...♘xc5 11 ♙d1 ♘h6 (or 11...♙c8!?) is good enough, with a balanced game. Then White doesn't profit from 12 ♘xb5 axb5 13 ♙xc5 0-0 14 ♙d4 ♙xd4 15 ♚xd4 ♙xa2.

8 g4 h5! 9 g5

9 gxh5 ♙xh5 has the idea of ...e5 and perhaps ...♙f6, attacking the weak pawn on h4.

9...e6 10 ♘ge2 ♘e7 (D)



20...gxf3 21 h3 cxd4 22 d4 e5! 23 e5

23 e5 is met by 23...a2!, and Black is also in charge after 23 f6+ xf6 24 e5 (24 gxf6 d4+ 25 d4 g6 26 h5 e5) 24...d7 25 b2 d6.

23...e5 24 f4?! c3!

Now everything is defended; the rest of the game is straightforward.

25 f6+ g7 26 h5+ g8 27 f6+ h8 28 g6 g8 29 hxg8 hxg6 30 Wh6+ xg8 31 h5 d4+ 32 g2 f4 0-1

Of course, White has several other ways of setting up against the Modern Defence without playing c3. The following games show a few of these.

Bruzon – Bareev

FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005

1 e4 g6 2 d4 g7 3 c3

This is an extremely solid set-up. The players can also reach the position of the main game via 3 f3 d6 (3...c5 is the Hyper-Accelerated Dragon Variation of the Sicilian Defence) 4 d3 (4 c3 f6 5 bd2 0-0 6 e2 transposes the note to 5 d3 below) 4...f6 5 0-0-0 6 c3.

One of the most frequently-used non-positional lines with 3 f3 is 3...d6 4 c4 f6 5 e2. White has a simple idea: e5 followed by e6 and/or quick development. In many cases he

This is a strategy in the spirit of many modern openings: permitting White's centre to advance so as to undermine and break it down. Two examples of contrasting pawn-play and piece-play on Black's part:

a) 7 h3 (White tries to deny Black's c8-bishop any active squares) 7...c5! (taking advantage of the non-developing move h3) 8 c3 c7!? (8...cxd4 9 cxd4 c6 10 0-0 c7 11 c3!? dxe5 12 dxe5 d4! 13 dxd4 d4 equalizes due to 14 e1 e6! 15 e6 dxe6) 9 dxc5 d5! 10 d3 e6 11 e3 d7 12 0-0 c7 (or 12...dxc5) 13 c4 dxc4 (13...e5) 14 xc4 dxe5 15 c3 cxf3+ 16 Wxf3 xc3 17 bxc3 d7 18 e6 and in Negi-Hillarp Persson, Malmö 2007, Black tried 18...fxe6!?, an interesting attempt to unbalance things, but 18...e6 19 ab1 b6! 20 cxb6 axb6 is also possible, a standard device that we've seen in the Grünfeld Defence and in several other openings.

b) 7 0-0 allows Black to develop piece activity: 7...g4 8 d1 (after 8 bd2, the piece-play approach is 8...c6 9 e3 dxe5 10 dxe5 d7, intending ...f5 or ...d8; Black can also use his pawns by 8...c5!?, and if 9 dxc5, Hillarp Persson suggests the typical Pirc Defence sacrifice 9...c6 10 exd6 exd6 11 e3 c8) 8...c6 9 d5! d7 (or Hillarp Persson's 9...e6 10 xc6 bxc6 11 bd2 c5) 10 c3 e6 11 b3 d5?! (11...dxe5 12 dxe5 e7 looks better) 12 h3 xf3 13 Wxf3 f6 and in the game Sham-

4...♖f6

Black more often than not plays ...♖f6 to transpose to a Pirc Defence formation against the slow c3. The Pirc move-order 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♗d3 g6 4 ♗f3 ♗g7 5 c3 arrives at the position in the game.

The move we saw so often above, 4...a6, doesn't make as much sense now, because ...b5 can be answered by a4; then there's no knight on c3 to be attacked by ...b4. Naturally, 4...c6 and even 4...e6 are legitimate options, if rather passive ones.

5 ♗d3

5 ♗bd2 0-0 6 ♗e2 is another common piece placement. Black can play the normal array of moves such as 6...c5, 6...♗bd7 and 6...b6, or play in an analogous fashion to our main line: 6...♗c6 7 0-0 e5 8 dxe5 (8 d5 ♗e7 prepares to move the knight from f6 and play ...f5; by comparison with a King's Indian Defence, White is far away from being able to effect a meaningful queenside advance) 8...dxe5 (or 8...♗xe5) 9 ♖c2!? (White would like to play ♗c4, attacking e5, perhaps followed by ♗d1 and ♗e3-d5; another and possibly better version of this would be 9 b4 a6 10 ♖c2) 9...a5 10 a4 ♗h5 (this is Black's standard idea: he intends to place his knight on an aggressive post on f4 and slowly

Black's bishop on g7. Then White can develop without having to worry over his centre. On the other hand, the formation with c3 is rather passive, putting no real pressure on Black. Thus Black has plenty of leeway in developing. There have been many games with this line over the years (as well as with White's bishop on e2 and queen's knight on d2, as in the previous note), but I'll limit myself to a popular remedy that fits the occasion:

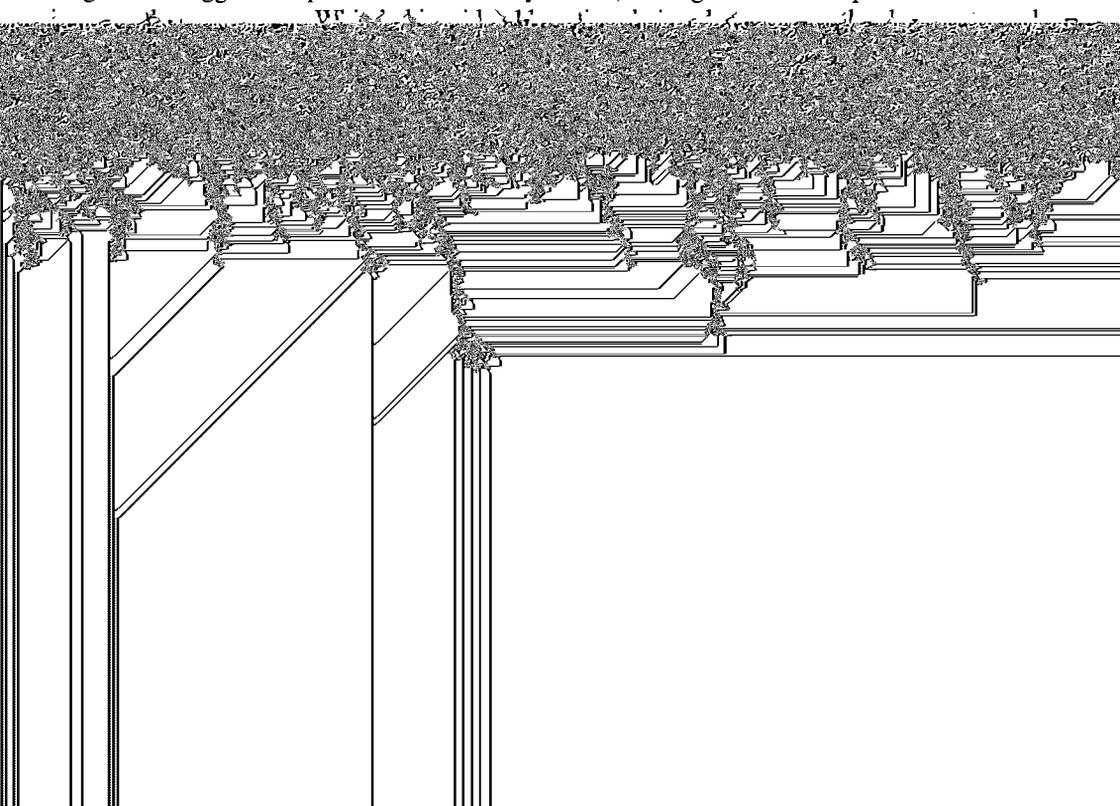
6...♗c6

Although 6...♗bd7 planning ...e5 is perfectly playable, it blocks Black's light-squared bishop and attacks nothing. By means of 6...♗c6, Black wants to play ...e5 with direct pressure on d4, in order to force a commitment from White. Alternatively, Black has played 6...c5, planning ...♗c6 with the same end in mind.

7 ♗bd2

This is a natural move, yet it blocks the bishop on c1, so White sometimes waits and brings the knight to a3. To maintain flexibility, White often does that by 7 h3, because it's a move he plays in almost every line anyway, and of course it prevents ...♗g4. By looking at the lines which follow, you can see that 7 h3 usually transposes. Other instructive choices:

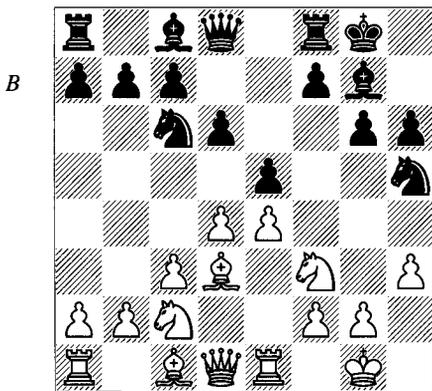
a) 7 d5 gains time and prevents ...e5 for the



a5, as in Korchnoi-Sznapik, Lucerne Olympiad 1982, exploits the dark squares and White's passively-placed pieces to counteract his space deficit.

a3) 8 h3 c6 9 c4 cxd5 10 exd5 (10 cxd5 e6! 11 dxe6 ♗xe6 12 ♖c3 ♖c6 leaves Black with an isolated pawn but he has wonderful bishops and the prospect of ...d5; Hillarp Persson continues 13 ♗f4 d5 14 e5 ♖d7 15 ♖e1 and now 15...f6!? 16 exf6 ♗xf6 with satisfactory play, while 15...d4! intending 16 ♖b5 ♗b6 looks better still) 10...♖a6 11 ♖c3 ♖c5 12 ♗c2 e6 13 ♗g5 exd5 14 cxd5 ♗d7 was equal in Sturua-Yrjöla, Komotini 1992, since 15 b4 ♖a6 16 a3 ♗c7 exposes White's modest weaknesses down the c-file.

b) 7 ♖e1 e5 8 h3 (after 8 ♖bd2, 8...♖h5 is Black's normal plan, while the game Alekseev-Hillarp Persson, European Team Ch, Khersonis 2007 continued 8...♖d7, hitting d4; then after 9 ♖b3 simply 9...a5 should give balanced play; for example, 10 a4 exd4 11 cxd4 ♖b4 12 ♗b1 b6 with pressure on White's centre to follow) 8...h6 9 ♖a3 ♖h5 (heading for f4) 10 ♖c2 (D).



b3) The instructive encounter Gausel-Hillarp Persson, Sweden-Norway match, Karlstad 2005 continued 10...a6!? 11 a4 (after 11 ♗d2, 11...g5 is possible, since White has no indirect attack on h5) 11...♗f6!? (Black's primitive idea is to play ...♖f4 and attack by advancing the king-side pawns; nevertheless, the queen can become exposed here) 12 a5 (12 ♖e3! may favour White somewhat in view of 12...exd4 13 ♖d5 ♗d8 14 cxd4 with the idea 14...♖xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 16 ♗xh6 ♖e8 17 ♗d2) 12...♖f4 13 ♗f1 g5 (this leaves a hole on f5; Black hopes that White won't be able to exploit it in time) 14 d5 ♖e7 15 ♖e3 ♗g6 (now Black is ready for either ...f5 or ...h5 with ...g4) 16 g4!? (putting a stop to ...f5) 16...♗xe4! (Black decides not to wait around, and trades the queen for sufficient material) 17 ♖f5 ♗xf5 18 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 19 c4 c6 20 dxc6 ♗xc6 21 ♗xd6?! (a little greedy; 21 h4 improves) 21...♖eg6 22 ♖e1 ♖ad8 23 ♗a3 e4! 24 ♗e3 ♖e5 25 ♗b3 ♖d7 26 ♖d1 ♖fd8 27 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 and Black obviously had a good deal of pressure in view of White's many weaknesses.

c) 7 ♖a3 (intending either ♖c4 or ♖c2 and keeping the diagonal open for his bishop on c1) 7...e5 8 ♖c2 ♗g4!? 9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3. Here 10...d5!? would strike back in the centre before White completes his development and consolidates the position to the benefit of his bishop-pair; for example, 11 ♗g5! exd4 12 cxd4 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 h6 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♗d2 ♖d5. Then Black has a strong knight blockading the isolated d-pawn, although White can still play for pressure down the c-file.

7...e5 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 ♖c4 ♖h5 10 ♖e1 ♖f4 (D)



11 ♖xf4!?

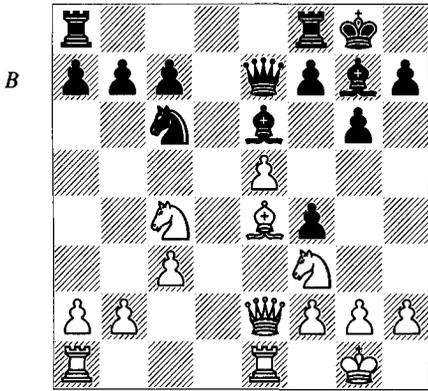
White gives away his good bishop to rid himself of the intrusive knight on f4 and gain the initiative in the centre. This doesn't yield anything; nor did 11 ♖f1 ♗xd1 (or 11...♗e7) 12 ♗xd1 ♖g4 with an equal position, as played in *Wagner-Kasparov, Internet blitz 1998*.

11...exf4 12 e5!? ♖e6!

White's idea was probably 12...♖g4 13 ♖e4!

13 ♗e2 ♗e7 14 ♖e4!?

(D) 14 ♗e4 hits the f-pawn, but 14...♗ad8 15 ♗ad1 ♖h6! followed by ...♖d5 or ...♖f5 and ...♖g7 leaves White's own e-pawn vulnerable.



14...♗c5! 15 ♖cd2 ♖xe5 16 ♖xb7 ♗ab8 17 ♖xe5 ♗xb7! 18 ♖b3 ♗b5 19 ♗xb5?!

It's always risky to go into a two knights vs two bishops position when the board is open and queens have been exchanged.

19...♗xb5 (D)

how dangerous the bishop-pair is in spite of Black's multiple pawn weaknesses.

20 ♖c6 ♗b6 21 ♖cd4 ♖d5

21...♖xd4! 22 cxd4 ♗d8! is an excellent alternative, because White is tied down and ...a5-a4 looms. As the old saying goes, part of the advantage of having two bishops resides in the ability to exchange one of them advantageously. This opportunity arises more often than the chance to exchange a knight because the bishop has a longer reach.

22 ♖e7 ♗c8!? 23 ♗d7 ♖a8 24 ♗d1 ♖f6 25 ♗d2?

White can only play solidly and hope to stay within drawing range; for example, 25 f3! c5 26 ♖e2 c4 27 ♖bd4 ♗xb2 28 ♗xa7.

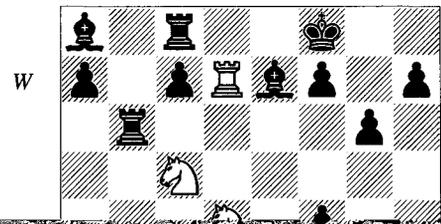
25...♖f8?

Black has successfully used the 'Steinitz Restriction Technique' of White's knights, denying them any forward squares. Now is the time to drive them away from the defence: 25...c5! 26 ♖f3 (26 ♖e2 f3 is clearly undesirable) 26...c4 27 ♖bd4 ♗cb8! 28 ♗xa7 ♖xf3 29 ♖xf3 ♗xb2, etc.

26 ♖c5?

White holds steady after 26 f3 c5 27 ♖e2.

26...♖e7! (D)



Averbakh Variation

Finally, we take a brief look at $1\ e4\ g6\ 2\ d4\ \text{♙}g7\ 3\ c4$, which is sometimes called the Averbakh Variation (not to be confused with the Averbakh System in the King's Indian, which arises after $1\ d4\ \text{♘}f6\ 2\ c4\ g6\ 3\ \text{♘}c3\ \text{♙}g7\ 4\ e4\ d6\ 5\ \text{♙}e2\ 0-0\ 6\ \text{♙}g5$). This is White's most important alternative to the lines above, and in fact, for some players $3\ c4$ has been a disincentive to using $1...g6$ at all. It's a set-up that may well appeal to those who play $1\ d4$, since $1\ d4\ g6\ 2\ e4\ \text{♙}g7\ 3\ c4$ leads to the same position, and the resulting pawn-structures will be familiar to most of them. In fact, the game will very often transpose to a King's Indian Defence (if Black plays an early $...d6$ and $...♘f6$) or a Benoni-related defence if Black plays $...c5$ and White replies $d5$; then Black may continue $...d6$, $...e6$ and $...exd5$ as in the Modern Benoni and offshoots, or $...d6$ and $...e5$, a structure from various lesser-used lines. In addition, Black can choose from a variety of unique, non-transpositional lines, a few of which we'll identify in the following game.

Sashikiran – Kakageldiev

Asian Team Ch, Esfahan 2005

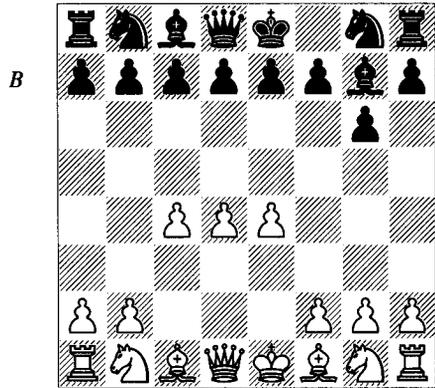
1 e4

Another way to get to our main line is $1\ d4\ g6\ 2\ c4$ (or $1\ c4\ g6\ 2\ d4$) $2...♙g7\ 3\ e4$. If White plays $3\ \text{♘}c3$ instead, $3...c5\ 4\ d5\ \text{♙}xc3+!$ $5\ bxc3\ f5$ is one of those eccentric variations that has been around for many years. Black tries to show that his knight-pair and White's weaknesses are sufficient compensation for his opponent's bishop-pair and influence on Black's vulnerable dark squares. This line has never really caught on at the top levels, but can make for creative and instructive chess if you're looking to experiment.

1...g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 c4 (D)

3...d6

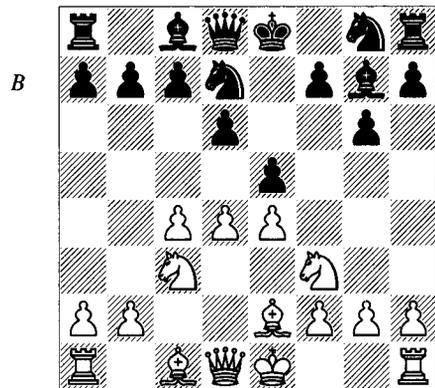
After $3...c5$, $4\ \text{♘}f3\ cxd4\ 5\ \text{♘}xd4\ \text{♘}c6$ is a Maroczy Bind Sicilian Defence, and $4\ d5\ d6$ may transpose into some form of Benoni. In the latter case, Black may not arrive at one of the more dynamic lines, however, particularly because if he plays the moves $...e6$ and $...exd5$,



White has the option of recapturing with his e-pawn.

4 ♘c3 ♘c6

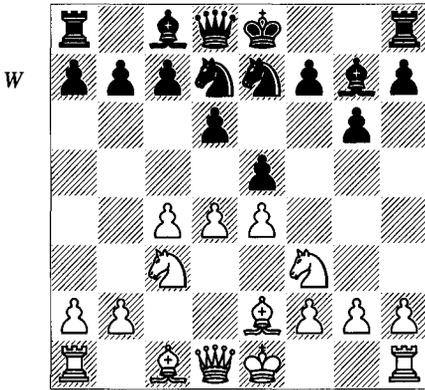
$4...♘f6$ directly transposes to the King's Indian Defence. $4...♘d7$ can go every which way; the most important reaction is $5\ \text{♘}f3$, if only because in many cases, the move $\text{♘}f3$ has already been played on one of the moves 1-4. Then there are some unique lines after $5...e5\ 6\ \text{♙}e2$ (D).



Now $6...♘gf6$ will almost certainly transpose to a line of the Classical King's Indian Defence. Alternatively:

a) $6...♘h6?!$ might be a handy way to support $...f5$, but it runs into $7\ h4!$. It's always important for Black to watch out for this move when he can't respond to it by $...h5$ or $...h6$ (in order to answer $h5$ with $...g5$). There can follow $7...f6$ ($7...exd4\ 8\ \text{♘}xd4\ \text{♘}f6\ 9\ h5$ doesn't solve anything) $8\ h5$ ($8\ \text{♙}xh6\ \text{♙}xh6\ 9\ h5$ is also good; White has ideas of $\text{♘}h4$ and $\text{♙}g4$) $8...c6\ 9\ d5\ \text{♘}f7\ 10\ \text{♘}h4$ and White has space and pressure on the light squares.

b) 6...♞e7 (D) has been used a lot over the years, but White has generally done well.



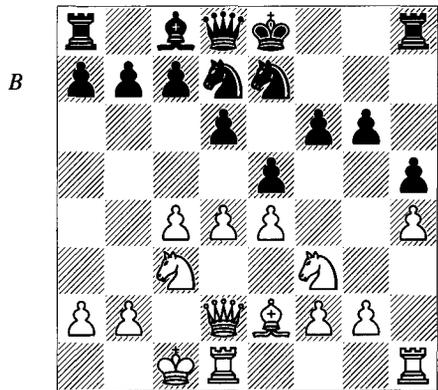
Black's idea is to enforce ...f5 without playing ...♞f6 and then having to move the knight again before being able to move the f-pawn. Alternatively, he can play for ...exd4 and ...♞c6. The strategy is in itself logical enough, but without a knight on f6, White's centre isn't subject to much pressure and Black's pieces are a bit cramped; for example, his queen can't use the e7-square. In addition, White gains ideas of h4-h5, whereas the useful move ♟e3 (perhaps planning dxe5 and c5 at some point) isn't subject to counterattack by ...♞g4. Here are a few, brief, examples of the main lines:

b1) 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♟e3 h6?! (8...f5?! is risky when ♞g5 is available; for example, 9 ♞g5 ♞f6 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 c5! ♜xd1 12 ♟c4+ ♜h8 13 ♞axd1 and White stands significantly better; the uninspiring 8...exd4 9 ♞xd4 ♞c6 may be Black's best) 9 ♜c2!? (not bad, but 9 dxe5! is strong regardless of how Black recaptures; for example, 9...dxe5 10 ♜d2 ♜h7 11 ♞ad1 ♞c6 12 ♜c2) 9...f5?! 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♞ad1 f4 12 ♟c5 ♜f7 13 ♟a3 ♞c6 (13...♟f6 14 c5!) 14 c5 (opening up the a2-g8 diagonal) 14...♜h8 15 ♟c4 ♜f8, Ilyin-Zemtsov, Kaluga 2005. White has space and activity, and among other moves, 16 ♞d5 lands Black in an utterly passive position.

b2) 7 d5 0-0 8 h4 ♞f6 (8...h6 9 h5 g5 10 g4! dooms Black to suffering on the queenside, where White has a natural advantage; notice how White's pawns on d5 and h5 prevent a knight from getting to f4) 9 ♟e3!? ♞g4 10 ♟d2 h5 11 ♞g5 (this is White's basic idea: the

knight can't be kicked away from g5 except by ...f6, after which the move ♞e6 forces ...♟xe6 and creates very serious light-square weaknesses in Black's camp) 11...c6 12 f3 ♞f6 13 ♟e3 cxd5 14 cxd5 ♟d7 15 ♜d2 a6 16 0-0-0! with the idea ♜b1 and ♜c1, when White controls the play on the queenside, Kiselev-Kantsler, Ljubljana 1992. The theme of 0-0-0, ♜b1 and ♜c1 is common in the Sämisch Variation of the King's Indian Defence.

b3) 7 h4 h5 (7...h6 8 ♟e3 exploits the trade-off h4 vs ...h6, because the pawn on h6 is a target) 8 ♟g5 f6 9 ♟e3 ♟h6 10 ♟xh6 ♜xh6 (we've seen before that exchanging one's bad bishop by ...♟h6 or ...♟a6, while sometimes effective, can also weaken squares of its colour and interfere with castling; in this case, the negatives outweigh the positives) 11 ♜d2 ♜h8 12 0-0-0 (D).



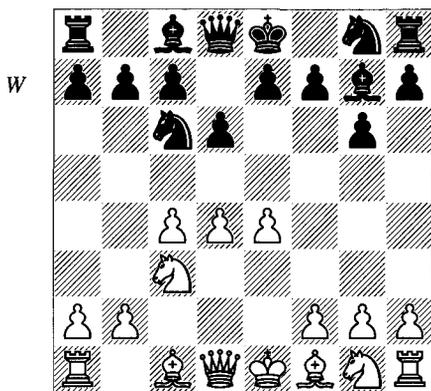
Black has his usual deficit in territory. Prusikhin-Burnett, Budapest 2003 continued 12...b6 (played to stop c5; for example, 12...c6 13 c5! exd4 14 ♜xd4 dxc5 15 ♜d6!, when White has a dominant position, with ideas of ♟c4-e6, e5 and in some cases ♜g3) 13 dxe5 fxe5? (after 13...dxe5, 14 ♜h3!? ♟b7 15 ♜g3 is one good continuation) 14 ♞g5 ♞f6 15 f4 ♞c6 16 c5!. Black's position is being torn apart, especially in view of the line 16...bxc5 17 ♟b5 ♟d7 18 ♟xc6 ♟xc6 19 fxe5.

We now return to 4...♞c6 (D):

5 ♟e3

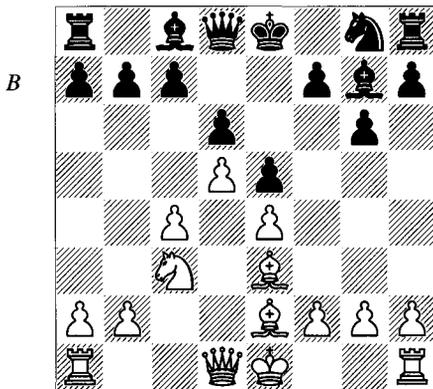
5 d5 allows 5...♞d4 with the idea 6 ♟e3 c5, which is a complex and theoretically unclear variation. 5 ♟e3 prevents that.

5...e5 6 d5 ♞ce7



Black wants to play ...f5 quickly, since his f-pawn isn't blocked by ...d6, as in the King's Indian Defence. But ...f5 lacks punch without a piece controlling e4, and White is able to carry out c5 much faster than in the corresponding King's Indian positions.

After 6...d4 7 dge2, Black can't maintain his knight on the outpost and has to grant White a lead in space and development after 7...dxe2 8 dxe2 (D).



8...f5?! (8...dxe7 9 c5!) 9 exf5 dxf5?! 10 g4 d7 11 h4 e7 12 b3! b6 13 0-0-0 d6 14 hgl h5 15 gxh5 dxh5 16 d3!?! 0-0-0? (or 16...d5 17 c2!) 17 c5!! dxc5 18 d6!, Medina-M.Konopka, Czech Ch, Lazne Bohdanec 1999. White wins in view of 18...cxd6 19 d5 e6 (19...exh4 20 dxh6+ axb6 21 b6) 20 xg6! d6 21 c4, etc.

7 g4

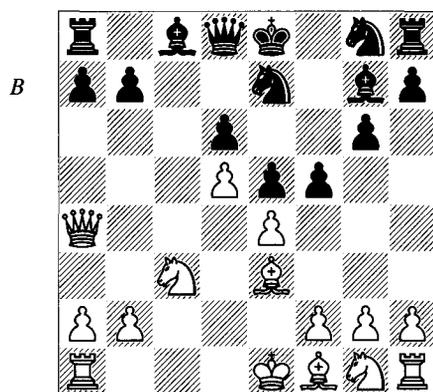
The point of this move is to discourage Black's essential break ...f5. White has numerous alternatives here, including 7 d2, 7 d3,

7 dge2 and the attractive 7 f3, when 7...f5 8 g4 transposes to 8 f3 below. However, the most uncompromising choice is 7 c5, with the kind of accelerated queenside attack that Black is subject to in the Modern Defence. Nevertheless, White's own centre also comes under fire after 7...f5 8 cxd6 cxd6. Then:

a) 9 d5+ e8! 10 f3 h6 11 dxh6+ dxh6 gives Black the better bishop and a solid game, unless White makes an early pawn-break f4; then things become extremely complex and often tactical. Whatever the correct assessment, Black has held his own in practice.

b) 9 d5!? is another option for White (of many), with the idea 9...a6 10 a4 e7 11 a3.

c) 9 a4+ (D) has scored very well for White over the years. Black will soon have to move his king, but the fight continues:



c1) 9...e7?! 10 d3 (threatening d5+ followed by e6) 10...h6 11 c1 d6 12 d3 f8 13 b3!?! fxe4 (13...f4 14 c5! g8 15 b4! with ideas of a3 and b5) 14 xe4 left White with better piece placement and targets in Gausel-A.Karlsson, Gausdal 1997.

c2) 9...e8! 10 a3! d6 11 f3 fxe4 12 fxe4 d4 13 e5! (13 d2 h6! 14 0-0-0 d2+ 15 xd2 d6 16 d3 e7 is fairly solid; then White does well to attack on the queenside) 13...h6 (13...d6 14 d2! leaves the knight stranded on g4) 14 dxh6+ dxh6 15 b5 (a direct attack on d6 and c7; the alternative is 15 d3 e7 16 e2, when White can play on either side of the board) 15...d7 16 c1 b6 17 d7 b8 18 d3 e7 19 e2 f8 20 f1, Hellborg-Chernin, Stockholm 1997.

4 Modern Queenside Fianchetto

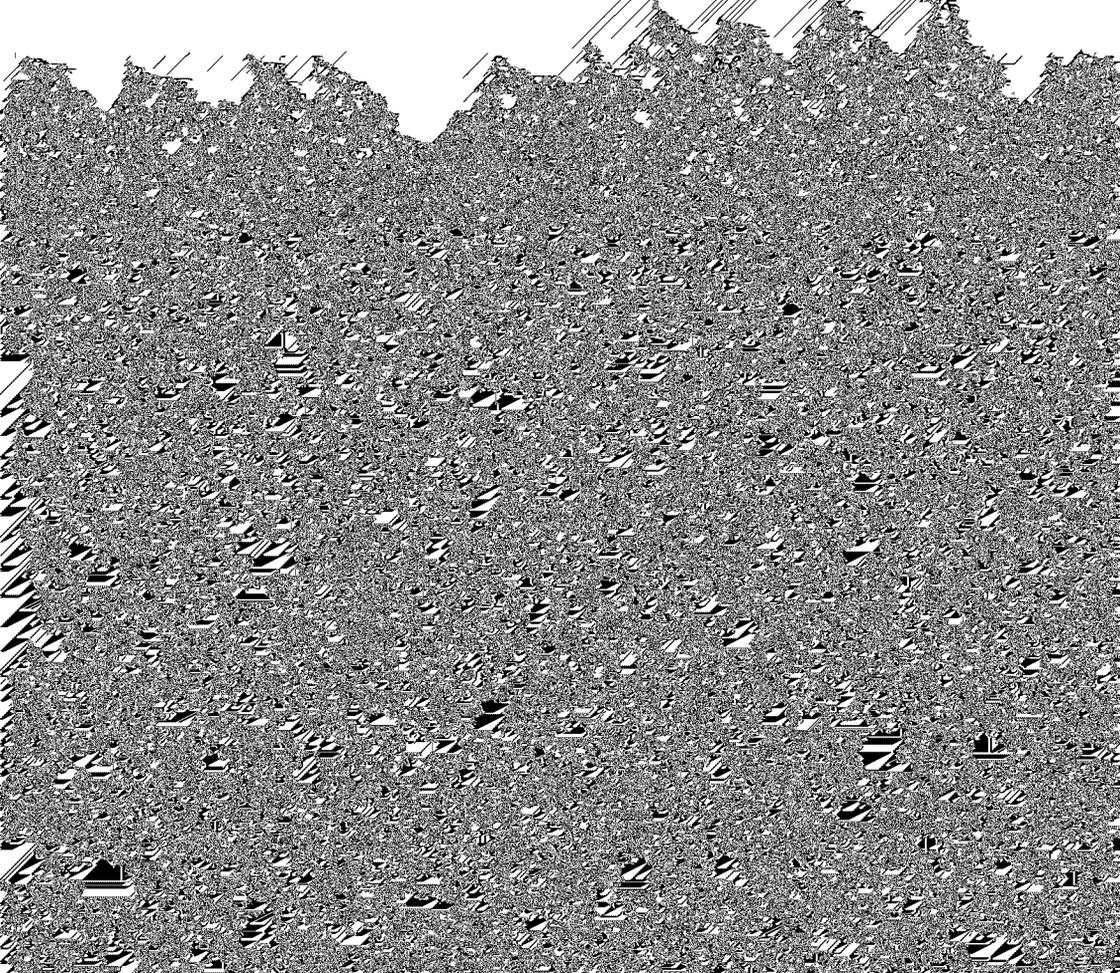
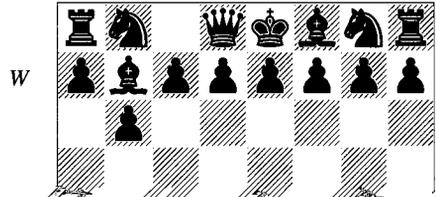
In this chapter I'll be examining modern queenside fianchetto systems, primarily those with ...b6 on one of the first two moves, but also 1 b3. These aren't extremely popular at the very top levels, but they have been played consistently by strong grandmasters as well as masters. With ...b6 and ...♖b7, Black's play tends to be concentrated upon controlling the central light squares with moves such as ...e6, ...f5, ...♟f6/e7 and ...♘b4; if he succeeds in doing so, his bishop on b7 will gain in strength. White will often challenge those squares and try to limit the bishop's influence by d5, e4 and/or f3, supported by ♟c3, ♙d3 and ♖e2/c2.

A comparison with 1...g6 of the last chapter is interesting. Perhaps the most significant dif-

Owen Defence

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♗b7 (D)

Obviously White could have begun with 1 d4 as well, and in fact many games go 1 d4 e6 2 e4 b6 (2...d5 is a French Defence) and 3...♗b7. With either move-order, playing ...b6 and ...e6 on the first two moves has a few subtleties, as we'll see in the first few games.



As mentioned above, White's e-pawn is under attack. In the majority of cases, he will defend it while developing by 3 ♘d3 or 3 ♗c3. Assuming that White doesn't follow 3 ♘d3 with an early ♗c3, these two methods are fundamentally different, although they often lead to types of positions that you may recognize from other openings.

Let's begin with a classic game. I've adjusted the opening move sequence so as to address some basic move-order issues straightaway.

Dorfman – Miles
Tilburg 1992

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♘b7 3 ♘d3 (D)

3 d5 e6 isn't dangerous, because Black will succeed in breaking up White's centre (with ...♗f6 and ...c6, if necessary), but I'm surprised that I can only find a handful of very low-rated games with 3 e5, since 1 b3 e5 2 ♘b2 e4 is a legitimate line in which ...d5 is played soon thereafter. The idea is that after 3 e5 d6 (to dissolve the cramping e-pawn) 4 ♗f3, Black's queenside light squares are weakened. Finally, 3 f3 is logical, erecting a barrier against the b7-bishop. Then Black has many ways to go; for example, 3...e6 (3...g6!?) 4 ♗c3 (4 c4 is a line of the English Defence, examined below) 4...♗f6 (4...♗h6!? intending ...f5) 5 ♘e3 and now 5...c5 or 5...d5.



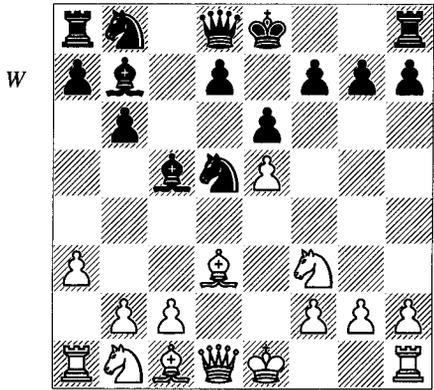
R

Black's strategy as a whole. The differences between them are important enough to warrant a fairly lengthy digression, and Black has a couple of other options. As always, it's important to understand move-orders in order to get the position you want:

a) 3...c5?! is positionally suspect due to 4 d5, hemming in Black's queen's bishop. Black has forfeited the option of attacking d5 by means of ...c6.

b) Black plays 3...e6 more frequently than 3...♗f6. It can variously transpose to any of the next few games. Importantly, however, it gives White the option of 4 c4, which is the main line of the English Defence section below (1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 e4 ♘b7 4 ♘d3). An independent line after 3...e6 is 4 ♗f3, and now:

b1) 4...♗f6?! (probably too provocative) 5 e5 ♗d5 6 a3! c5 7 dxc5 ♘xc5 (D).



This resembles the note to 8 a3 below, except

c) 3...f5? was debated for many years but now it's established that 4 exf5 ♗xg2 leads to a losing position after the sequence 5 ♖h5+ ♘6 6

...♗g6, ...♗c5, ...♗f6 and ...c6 in one order or another; 5 ♗e2 d5! is Wind's idea, so as not to cede White the powerful centre and smooth de-

10 ♖xc4 cedes a centre pawn for a flank pawn, which tends to be undesirable, although White does command more space following 10...♗xc4 11 e5!? (11 ♗xc4 ♗xe4 12 ♗d3 ♗f6 13 ♗f4 0-0 and ...d6 is solid) 11...d5!? 12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 ♗xc4!? (13 ♗f4 confers a nominal edge, but no more) 13...dxc4 14 ♖xc4 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 0-0 and Black has structural compensation for the pawn.

10...♖c7 11 ♗e5 b5 12 f4 0-0 13 ♗g4 ♗xg4 14 ♖xg4 ♗b3! 15 ♗xb3!

Instead, 15 ♗xb3?! cxb3 16 ♗d3 ♗xe4! 17 ♗xe4 f5 leaves Black ahead in development with much the better bishop.

Up to this point, Dorfman had been following the game Ki.Georgiev-Miles, Biel 1992: 15 ♖b1?! ♗xd2! (White's knight is more valuable than his bad bishop) 16 ♗xd2 ♗xe4! 17 ♗xe4 f5 18 ♖f3 fxe4 19 ♖xe4. Now Miles should have prevented his opponent from playing f5, since that's White's best way to free his prob-

18 e5 f6 19 ♖e6+ ♖h8 20 exf6 ♗xf6 21 ♖e2 ♖ae8 22 ♖d3 he wins a pawn without apparent retribution.

17...♗d6! 18 ♗e4?!

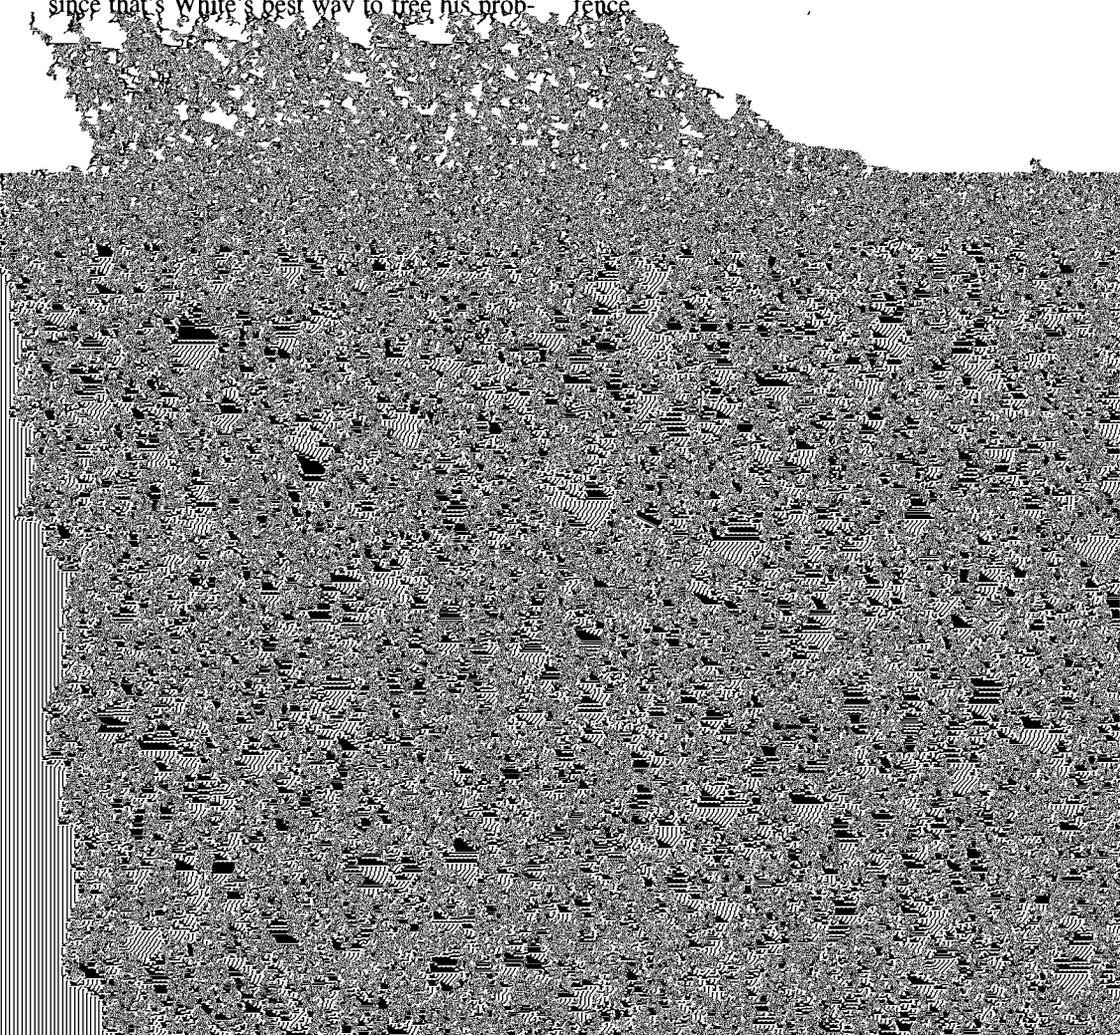
It's premature to cede a pawn. True, Black is taking control after 18 h3? ♖fe8, and his bishop-pair gives him a plus after 18 ♗f3 f6! 19 ♗h6 ♖f7 20 ♖ae1 ♖h8 21 ♗d2 ♖ff8. Probably 18 ♗xb3 ♗xh2+ 19 ♖h1 is the best course.

18...♗xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♗xh2+ 20 ♖h1 ♖ae8 21 ♖f3 ♖g3

Black went on to convert his extra pawn, in spite of some inaccuracies:

22 a4 ♖xf3 23 ♖xf3 ♗d6 24 ♗e3 g5!? 25 g4 ♖e4 26 axb5 ♖fe8 27 ♗xg5 ♖e2 28 ♖g1 ♖xb2 29 ♖f2 ♖ee2 30 b6 ♖xf2 31 bxa7 ♖g2+ 32 ♖f1 ♖bf2+ 33 ♖e1 ♖g1+ 0-1

In the following games, Black plays ...d5, to establish a position much like the French Defence.

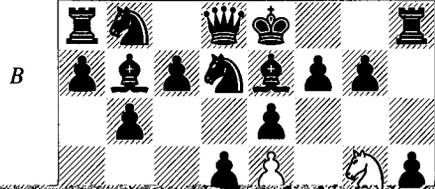


Black would like to play ... $\text{c}4$ and ... $\text{a}6$. Exchanging his bad bishop in this fashion is a major theme in the 'French-Owen', and White usually makes sure to prevent it: 12 $\text{a}3$ $\text{a}6$ 13 $\text{b}1$ $\text{c}8$ 14 $\text{d}2!$? (heading for $\text{f}4$ and $\text{g}4$) 14... $\text{a}4!$ (fixing the light squares) 15 $\text{c}2$ (15 $\text{f}4$ $\text{a}5!$) 15... $\text{b}5$ 16 $\text{d}3$ and Black played the relatively solid 16... $\text{a}5$ in Trygstad-Gawehns, Bergen 2000. He might have tried 16... $\text{b}6$, in order to attack the d-pawn and prepare ... $\text{b}4$; for example, 17 $\text{f}4$ $\text{h}6$ 18 $\text{g}4$ $\text{g}6$ with ... $\text{h}5$ to follow. In general, the play looks balanced in this line.

4... $\text{e}6$ 5 $\text{f}3$ $\text{d}5$

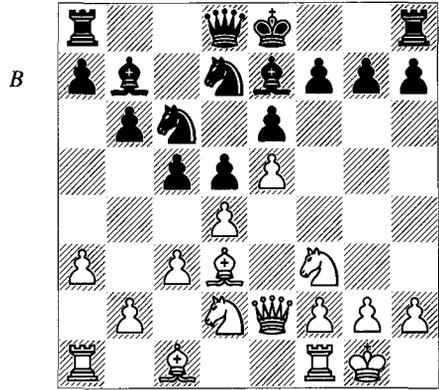
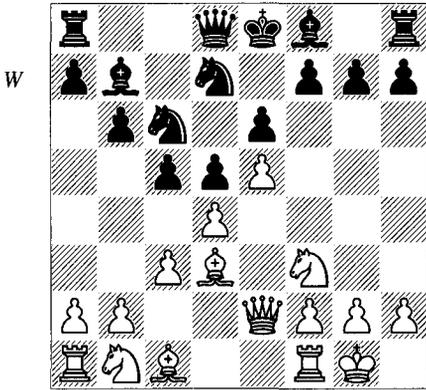
If Black is heading for ... $\text{d}5$ structures, this is the obvious timing, but not risk-free. We saw

10 $\text{xe}6$ $\text{fxe}6$ 11 $\text{h}5+$ $\text{f}8$ 12 $\text{f}3+$ $\text{f}6$ to equality) 8... $\text{h}5$ (White was threatening $\text{xe}6$ followed by $\text{wg}7$, and a cute line is 8... $\text{c}5$? 9 $\text{hx}7$ $\text{g}8$ 10 $\text{xe}6!$ $\text{fxe}6?$ 11 $\text{g}6\#$; Gawehns suggests that the strange-looking 8... $\text{f}8$ might be OK – the idea is to stabilize the kingside and get in the favourable move ... $\text{a}6$; for example, 9 0-0 $\text{h}5$ 10 $\text{g}3$ $\text{a}6$ or 9 $\text{h}5$ $\text{gx}5$ 10 $\text{gx}5$ $\text{d}7$ and ... $\text{a}6$) 9 $\text{g}3$ (D).



We see 8...♙e7 in the next game, with many of the same ideas.

reasonable, and in general, these lines look fun to play for both sides.

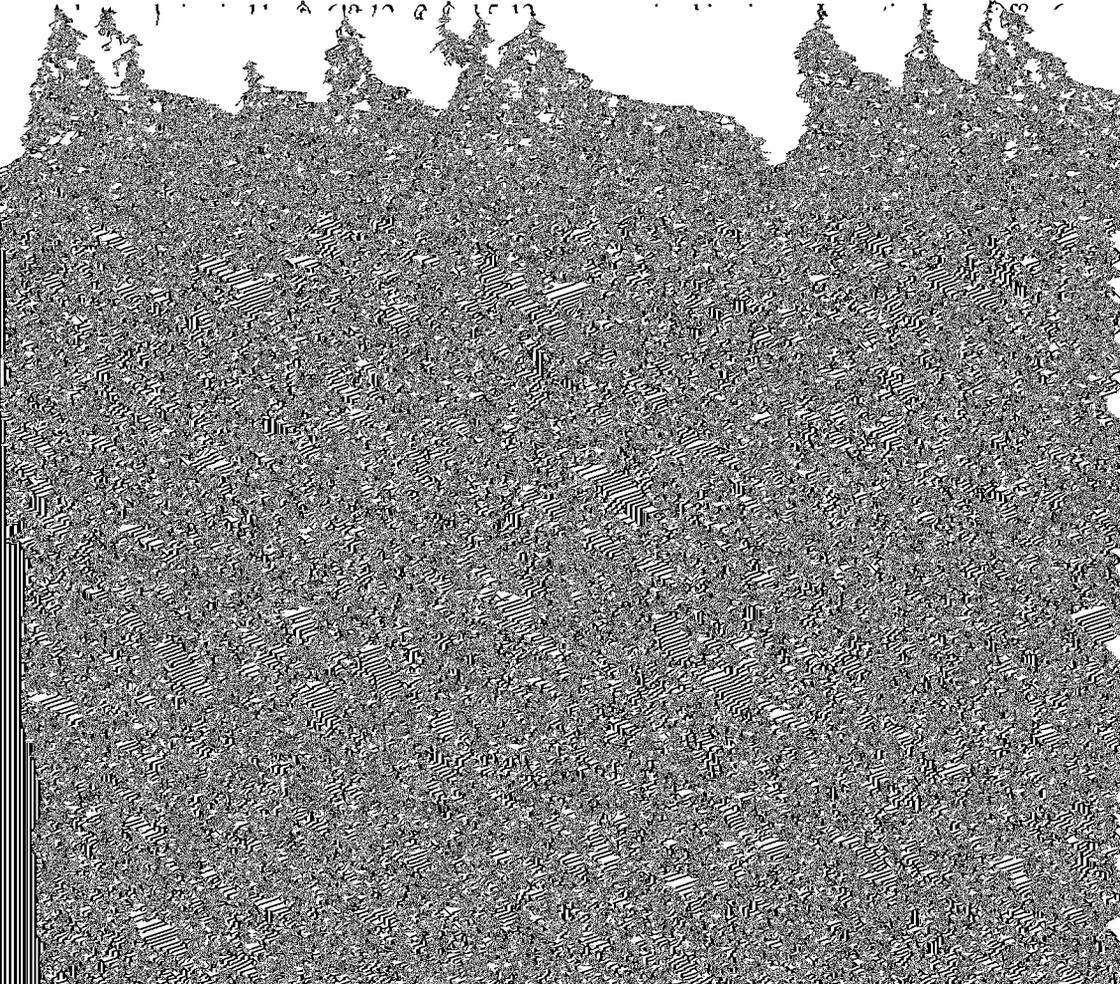


9 a3

After 9 ♖bd2, 9...♙e7 may well transpose. 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♖b4 also has to be considered, but 11 ♙b5! is a good reply, as 11...a6 12 ♙a4 ♜c8 13 a3 ♚c6 14 b4 is comfortable for White.

10...g5!?

This advance comes up repeatedly in the 'French-Owen', just as it does in the related French Defence positions. Black is not merely launching a kingside attack, but preparing to



23 ♖c3 ♜b8

Perhaps the last chance to gain a pull was 23...♖fc8!

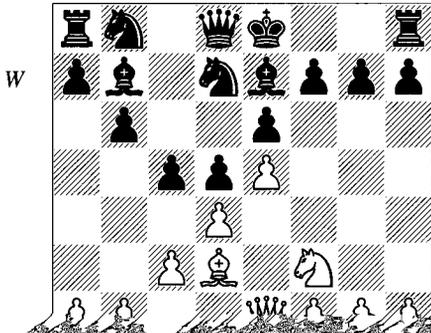
24 ♚d3 ♜fc8 25 ♜dc1

The game is even now, and a draw eventually resulted.

Dautov – C. Bauer

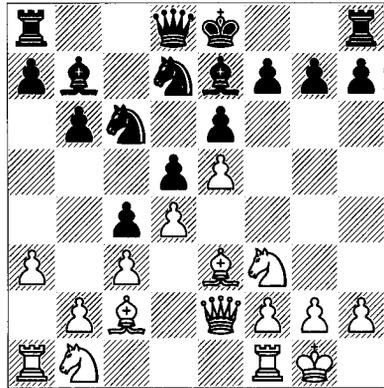
European Team Ch, Gothenburg 2005

1 d4 b6 2 e4 ♘b7 3 ♘d3 ♜f6 4 ♚e2 e6 5 ♜f3 d5 6 e5 ♜fd7 7 c3 c5 8 0-0 ♘e7 (D)



11 ♘c2 (D)

B



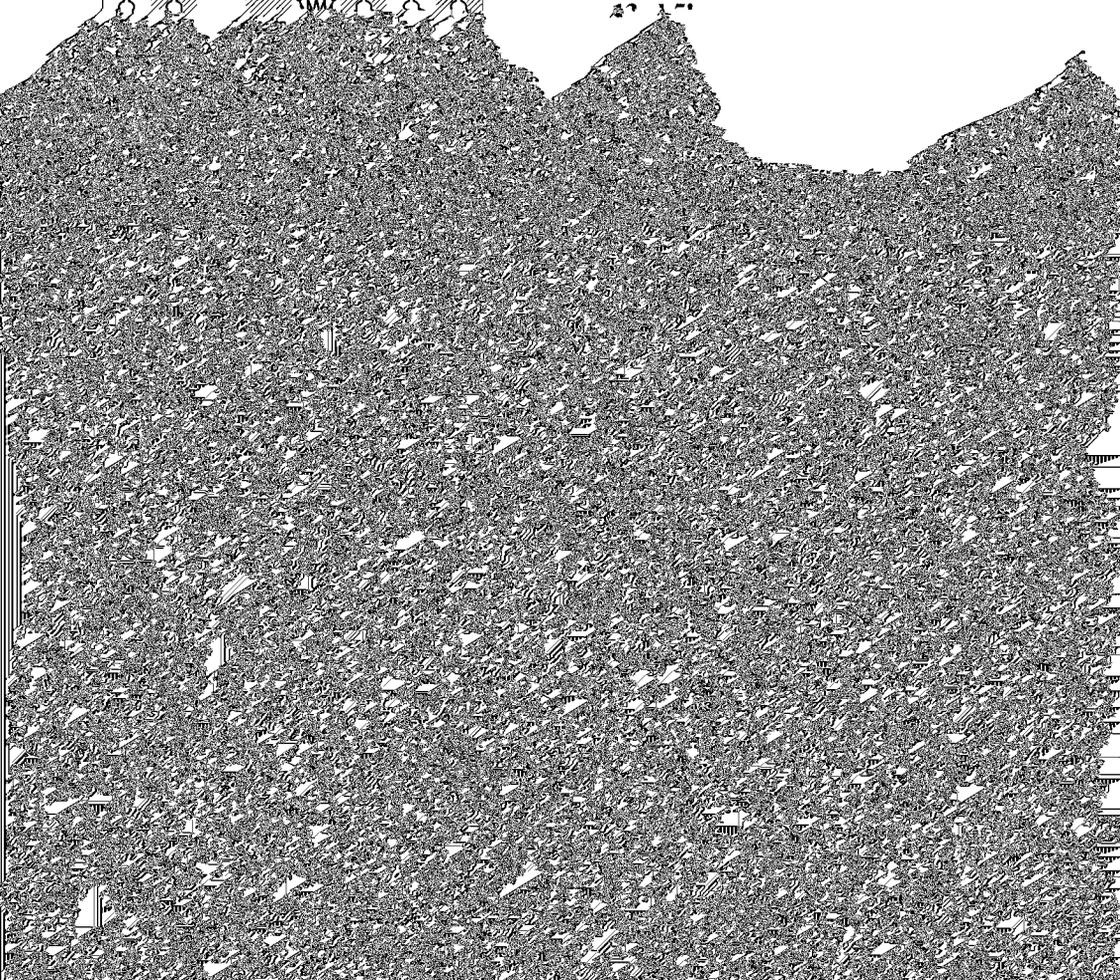
11...b5

Black can also clamp down on White's queenside by 11...♜a5 and then prepare for ...0-0-0 by ...h6 and ...♚c7.

12 ♜bd2 a5 13 ♜e1

White prepares f4-f5, the thematic kingside attack.

♚? ♚?



with a couple of formations that more resemble a Trompowsky Attack (1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♙g5).

K. Nikolaidis – Minasian
Panormo Zonal 1998

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 ♘c3

The defensive-looking move 3 f3 is remarkably rare, perhaps because it gives Black too much leeway. I'm going to leave it to the reader to think about, but you should know that 3...e6 is normal, when the obvious ...d5 soon thereafter has the advantage that if White plays e5, the

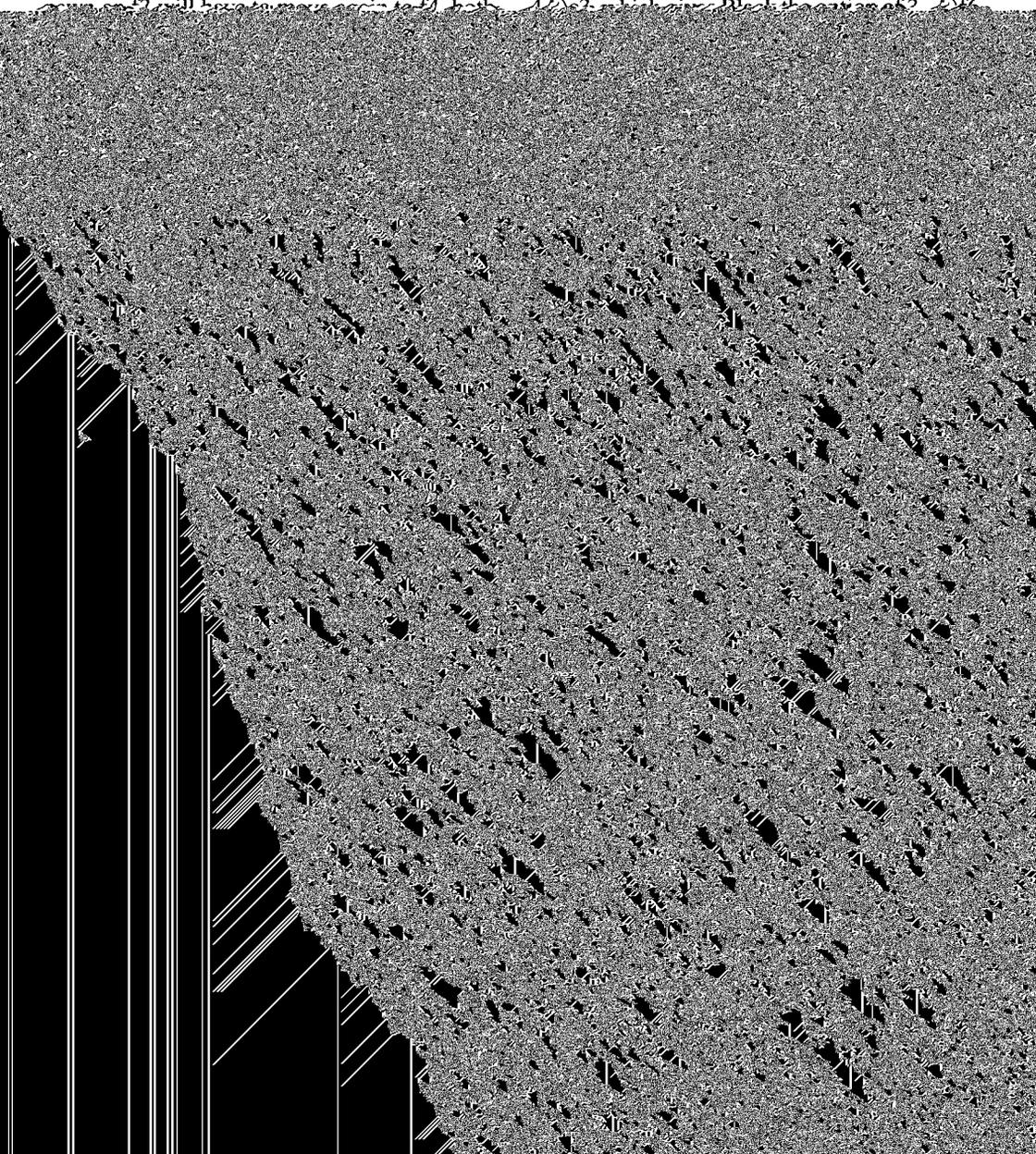
the move ...d5 can be favourably countered by exd5.

On the flip side, the knight on c3 can be pinned by ...♙b4, which adds to the pressure on e4 exerted by Black's queen's bishop. Furthermore, White's inability to bolster the centre with c3 means that a properly-timed ...c5 can create more difficulties than we saw in the previous two games.

4 ♘f3

There are two important alternatives for White here:

a) 4 ♙d3 (the other move-order is 3 ♙d3 e6 4 ♘c3, which gives Black the option of ♗f6



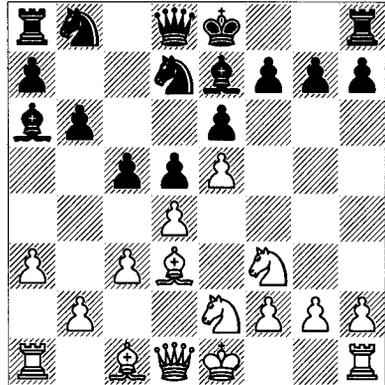
10 ♖xd6+!, or by 6 d5! exd5 7 exd5 ♗xd5 8 0-0 with moves like ♖e1 and ♗f4 to come.

a33) After 5...♗c6!? 6 ♗e3 e5!? 7 d5 ♗ce7, Flear points to Black's potential breaks ...c6 and ...f5. He gives 8 a3 ♗c5 9 ♗d2 (9 ♗xc5! bxc5 10 0-0 with the idea f4 may well improve) 9...♗g6 10 b4 ♗e7 11 ♖c1 h6, intending ...♗g5. In general, however, White's chances look better after 5...♗c6.

a34) Probably 5...♗e7! is best, after which White's greater command of territory confers an edge, but the plan of ...0-0 and ...f5 is in the air.

b) 4 a3 prevents ...♗b4 and has gained a following. 4...♗f6 (D) (here's a case in which 4...g6 is more attractive than usual, because White's a3 plays no significant part in the resulting position; in contrast, White has clearly the superior pawn-structure after 4...d5?! 5 exd5! exd5).

W



It's always difficult to tell whether this 'bad bishop' exchange is productive or seriously weakens the queenside light squares. In this case, the latter cannot be exploited: 10 ♗f4 (10 ♗c2 ♗c6 11 0-0 ♖c8) 10...♖c8! 11 0-0 ♗xd3 12 ♖xd3 ♖a6 13 ♖d1 ♗c6 14 ♗e3, Ehlvest-Blatny, New York 2004, and now simply 14...♖c8 followed by ...0-0 is fully satisfactory.



The main alternative is 6 ♖e2 d5 7 e5 (7 exd5 ♖xd5 8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 bxc3 0-0 10 ♙f4 ♜c8 11 ♜fe1 c5 12 dxc5 ♖xc5 13 c4 ♟bd7 equalized in Bareev-C.Bauer, Enghien-les-Bains 2001) 7...♟e4 8 ♙d2 (8 0-0!? can be answered safely by 8...♙xc3 9 bxc3 ♟xc3 10 ♖e3 ♟e4, intending to return the pawn in order to gain the light squares after 11 ♙a3 ♟c6!) 8...♟xd2 (8...♙xc3 9 bxc3, and now 9...c5 or 9...h6 looks satisfactory, whereas Gawehns's more daring 9...♟d7!? 10 ♙xe4 dxe4 11 ♟g5 h6 12 ♟xe4 ♖h4 13 g4 0-0-0 yields a lot of compensation for a pawn) 9 ♖xd2 ♙e7 10 h4!? ♙a6 (the natural 10...c5 11 0-0-0 ♟c6 equalizes) 11 ♖f4 ♙xd3 12 cxd3 c5 13 0-0 ♟c6 with mutual chances, E.Berg-Blatny, Bermuda 2003.

6...h6 7 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 bxc3 d6 10 ♟d2! g5!? (D)

This may seem strange, but it discourages White's main plan of f4. Next, Black will play ...e5 to try to force a decision from White about what to do with his d4-pawn.

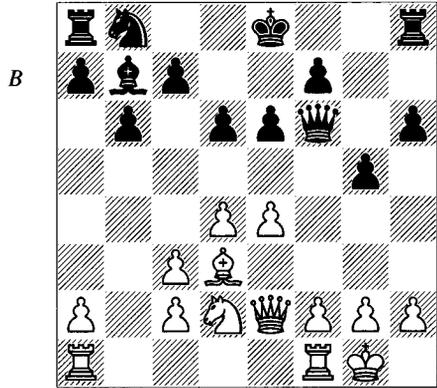
The alternative 10...e5 11 f4! has been thoroughly tested, with an almost certain advantage for White if the game proceeds 11...exd4?! 12 e5!. Instead, 11...♖e7 has a decent reputation; for example, 12 ♖g4! 0-0 13 ♟c4 and instead of 13...♟d7 14 ♟e3!, when Black should have been in trouble in A.David-C.Bauer, French Team Ch, Port Barcares 2005, Black can play 13...exd4 14 cxd4 b5 15 ♟d2 ♟c6!?! with the idea 16 d5 f5! 17 exf5 ♖e3+ 18 ♜f2 ♟e7 19 ♙xb5 ♙xd5 20 ♙d3 ♜ae8. White can probably find a modest advantage somewhere in this line, but it shouldn't amount to much.

Nothing else is terribly impressive here:

a) 11 f4 gxf4 12 g3 (12 ♖g4 e5) 12...♜g8 13 ♟h1 e5.

b) 11 e5?! appears too ambitious after simply 11...dxe5 12 ♟e4 and either 12...♖g7 or 12...♖e7 13 dxe5 ♟d7.

c) 11 a4 is slightly irritating, but Black can cope after 11...e5 (11...a6!? 12 ♟c4 ♟d7) 12 ♟b3 a5 13 ♙b5+ c6 14 ♙c4 ♟d7.

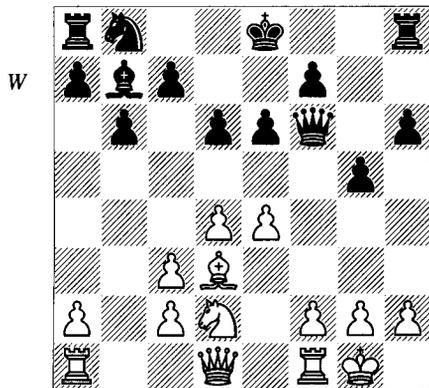


11...e5 12 ♖e3 (D)

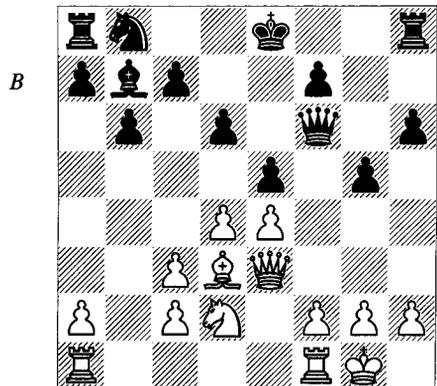
Or:

a) 12 ♟c4 is a clever concept: the idea is ♟e3-f5. The f5-square is potentially a significant advantage, although White's bad bishop and Black's solid position are compensating factors. Black may want to clarify matters by 12...♟d7 13 ♟e3 exd4! 14 ♟d5 ♙xd5 15 exd5+ ♟f8 with a dynamic balance.

b) 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♟c4 cedes the c5-square to Black's knight when no piece can challenge it, with the likely follow-up 13...♟d7 14 ♟e3 0-0-0 15 ♟f5 ♟c5 16 a4 a5.



11 ♖e2 (D)



12...♖d7!?

Bauer mentions 12...♖c6!, which is more pointed. If White counters the threat on d4 by 13 d5, 13...♗e7 14 a4 a5 15 ♖b5+ ♜f8 is safe, and White has no way through on the queen-side. Black proceeds with moves such as ...♗g6 and ...♜g7, with ...h5 and ...♖c8 as needed.

13 ♖b5 0-0-0

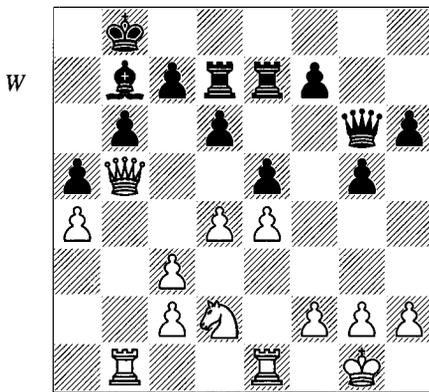
A little risky; the alternative was 13...c6 14 ♖d3 0-0.

14 a4 a5 15 ♖ab1 ♗he8 16 ♗fe1 ♖g6 17 ♖d3 ♜b8 18 ♖xd7!?

Gawehns analyses 18 ♖a6 ♗c5! 19 dxc5 dxc5 20 ♖b5 ♖xa6 21 ♖xa6 ♗xd2 22 ♖xa5 ♖c6 with a positional plus for Black.

18...♗xd7 19 ♖b5 ♗ee7? (D)

This proves to be too slow. 19...♗de7! threatens ...exd4 and a capture on e4. Then Nikolaidis gives the by no means compulsory 20 d5 ♜a7 21 ♗c4 ♖a6 22 ♖b3 with complications; it's not clear what White's plan would be.



20 ♗c4 exd4 21 ♗xa5

White also has the upper hand after 21 cxd4 d5 22 ♗e5.

21...d5

21...♖xe4 22 cxd4 ♖a8 23 d5! threatens ♗c6+.

22 ♗xb7 ♜xb7 23 exd5?

23 cxd4! (with the idea e5) is extremely strong, in view of 23...dxe4?! 24 d5! with the idea a5.

23...♗xe1+ 24 ♗xe1 ♗d6 25 a5?! ♖xc2 26 cxd4 ♖c3 27 a6+ ♜a7 28 ♗d1 f5 29 h3 g4 30 hxg4 fxg4

Now the game is equal; it was eventually drawn.

English Defence

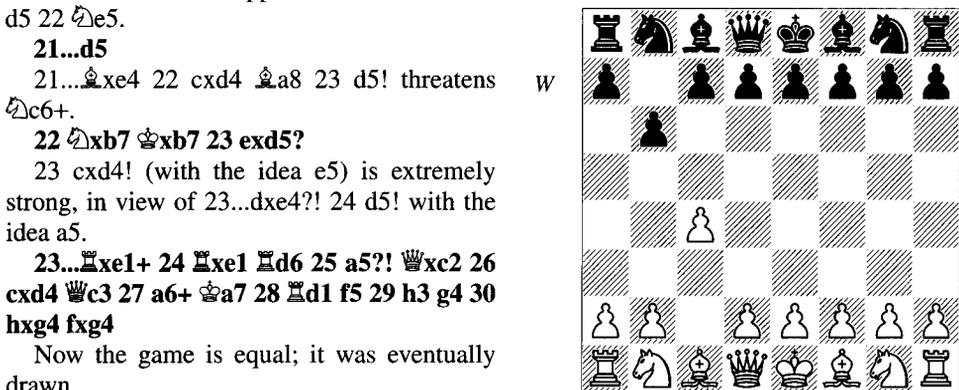
The English Defence is defined by the moves ...b6 and ...e6 versus White's c4. In the great majority of cases, Black also plays ...♖b7 and White d4, but occasionally Black plays ...♖a6, and White sometimes foregoes d4 in order to avoid central exposure.

In general, I would characterize the English Defence as one of the most exciting and instructive modern fianchetto openings. It embraces an extraordinary number of highly tactical variations, which unfortunately requires a lot of preparation from Black (and an unusually detailed exposition on my part). However, most of those tactics grow out of distinctive positional roots. What's more, the hypermodern theme of attacking an occupied centre from the flank will seldom express itself more clearly.

1 c4 b6 (D)

1...b6 is more popular versus 1 c4 than 1 e4 or 1 d4, for reasons that become clear next move. Nevertheless, I should note that 1 d4 e6 is appropriate for a French Defence player, because 2 e4 d5 leads to the French Defence itself and 2 c4 b6 brings us back to the English Defence.

The other popular move-order after 1 c4 is 1...e6; for example, 2 d4 b6 transposes to the main line. 2 ♗f3 is an independent move-order that often transposes to another opening; for example, 2...d5 (Queen's Gambit or Réti), 2...c5 (Symmetrical English), 2...f5 (Dutch), or various Indian formations with 2...♗f6 (notice that this kind of transposition isn't possible after 1 d4 b6 2 e4).



2 d4

The alternative 2 ♘f3 ♘b7 3 g3 ♘xf3 is discussed below, in the notes to Marjanović-Ivanisević.

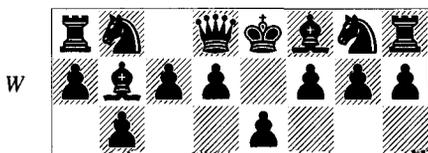
2...e6

Of course, 2...♘b7 is playable as well. With 2...e6 Black leaves himself ready to play an early ...♘b4. He might also want to hold off on 2...♘b7 in order to retain options for the bishop if White plays slowly. For example, 2...e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 is a Queen's Indian Defence, when the modern main lines involve the move ...♘a6. Furthermore, the move 3 d5!?, which would directly block off the bishop after 2...♘b7, can now be answered by 3...♘a6 (4 e4 ♘f6!), 3...♘f6 4 a3 (to avoid ...♘b4) 4...♘a6, or the bizarre-looking 3...♞h4 (hitting c4), whose theoretical reputation is not bad.

3 e4

If there's a way for White to get a substantial advantage against the English Defence, this has to be it. Establishing a broad centre conforms with our usual 'stress test' of any black defence that doesn't itself establish a central pawn presence. I should say that the slower approach with 3 a3 ♘b7 4 ♘c3 (equivalent to 1 c4 b6 2 d4 ♘b7 3 ♘c3 e6 4 a3, with minor move-order issues) has been a deterrent to some prospective players of the English Defence, particularly at grandmaster level, because it's easy to fall into a cramped position. Nevertheless, Black has plenty of ways to develop his pieces and will not have to fear being steamrollered by pawns, so the a3 lines are not to be feared in the way that 3 e4 is. I'll take this up in a game below (Sher-Lempert).

3...♘b7 (D)



This position constitutes the starting point for the most frequently-played and most challenging variation of the English Defence. Black is in the strange circumstance that he has a remarkable number of moves at his disposal for each of his early moves, but that they tend to be the same moves: ...♘b4(+), ...♞h4(+), ...f5 and ...♘e7 (or ...♘f6, normally not before ...f5). Naturally, Black makes other piece moves and pawn-breaks (sometimes the light-squared break ...d5, for example, but rarely ...c5 or ...e5). Nevertheless, the basic attacks on White's centre are strangely similar for a move as noncommittal as ...♘b7.

The implementation of these moves depends upon White's own set-up, of course, but right at this moment he settles much of the question by his choice, which is usually either 4 ♘d3 or 4 ♘c3. White's general strategy is straightforward: support of his centre, development, and a pawn advance. He can play f3 or ♞c2 to further the first goal, although the latter move tends to be ineffective. Pressing forward with d5 cuts off Black's bishop on b7, but it uses a valuable tempo and opens up some squares for Black's pieces – see the next note. The prospect of White's d5, however, accounts for the fact that Black seldom commits to ...♘f6 before ...f5; that is, he wants to have the move ...f5 available to break down White's c4/d5/e4 phalanx.

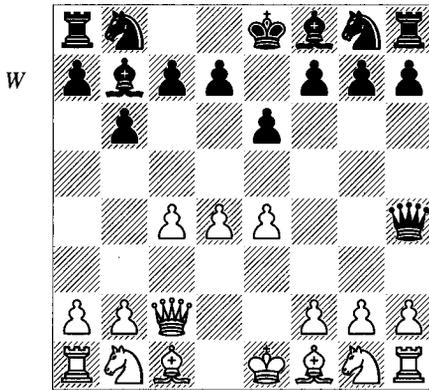
4 ♘d3

This bishop development is the most important move, although 4 ♘c3 has been played more often and is discussed in games to follow. The drawback to 4 ♘c3 is that it grants Black's dark-squared bishop an immediate and effective role following 4...♘b4. By contrast, 4 ♘d3 ♘b4+ lets White avoid doubled pawns by 5 ♘d2 and can even speed his development; 4...♘b4+ is a rare choice for Black, but a legitimate one with its own ideas, and we'll cover it in the next game.

Some lesser continuations:

♘xc6) 7...♙xc3+! 8 bxc3 ♖e7 9 ♖e2 0-0 10 c4 ♜e8 11 f3 c6!; this leaves White no good way to defend against a double capture on d5, unless he tries 12 dxc6 ♘xc6, when Black has the possibility of an opportunistic ...d5 and, failing that, ...♗e5, ...♙a6 and ...♞ac8.

b) 4 ♖c2 can lead to various traps after the primitive 4...♗h4! (*D*), attacking e4 twice and pinning the f-pawn that might otherwise protect it.



Then 5 ♘c3 ♙b4 is seen below under the move-order 4 ♘c3 ♙b4 5 ♖c2 ♗h4!. Otherwise:

b1) 5 ♘d3? is actually a bad mistake in view of 5...♘c6!, which threatens not only 6...♘d4, but also 6...♘b4 and 7...♘xd3+, winning the e-pawn! Since 6 ♘f3 ♖g4 attacks g2 as well, and 6 d5 ♘b4 7 ♖e2 ♘f6 8 e5 ♘g4 is a double attack on f2 and e5, only 6 g3 ♖f6 7 d5 seems playable, until you find that 7...♘b4 8 ♖e2 ♗d4! 9 ♙c2 ♙a6! wins. An amazing example of pure piece-play, which triumphs without any help from the pawns!

b2) 5 ♘d2 is best. After 5...♙b4 6 ♘d3, 6...f5!? 7 ♘f3! ♙xd2+ 8 ♙xd2 ♖g4 9 ♘e5 ♖xg2 10 0-0-0 fxe4 11 ♙e2 is a much-played gambit. Upon 11...♘f6, Odessky suggests 12 ♞hg1! ♖xh2 13 ♙e3!. Because playing in this manner is so risky for Black, it seems better – or at least more practical – to play 6...♖g4, hitting the g-pawn immediately: 7 ♙f1 (7 g3 f5 8 f3 ♖h5) 7...f5 8 f3 (8 ♘gf3 ♙xd2 9 ♙xd2??) fxe4 10 ♘e5 ♖xg2+!; 8 h3 ♖g6 is difficult to assess or work out) 8...♗h4 9 exf5, Levitt-Ehlvest, New York 1994, and here 9...♘c6! 10 fxe6 dxe6 gives Black at least adequate compensation

according to separate analyses by Levitt and Odessky.

c) 4 f3 can be answered by the typically dynamic 4...f5! 5 exf5 ♘h6! (this resembles 4 ♘c3 ♙b4 5 f3 f5 6 exf5 ♘h6! below), a gambit based upon 6 fxe6 ♘f5! with an attack. Instead, 6 ♙xh6 ♖h4+ 7 g3 ♖xh6 wins the dark squares; for example, 8 fxe6 ♙b4+ 9 ♙f2 0-0 with a strong initiative.

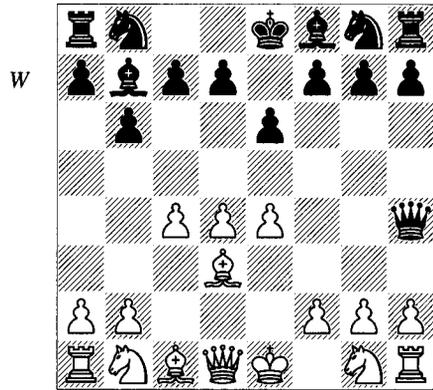
After 4 ♘d3, Black's main replies are 4...f5 and 4...♘c6. Let's begin our investigation with a game that came 20 years after the same opponents brought attention to 4...f5 on the international scene:

Browne – Miles

Reno 1999

1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 e4 ♙b7 4 ♘d3 f5

This leads to wild and forcing play. We'll see 4...♙b4+ in the next game. Periodically writers recommend 4...♗h4 (*D*), but there are at least two good answers:

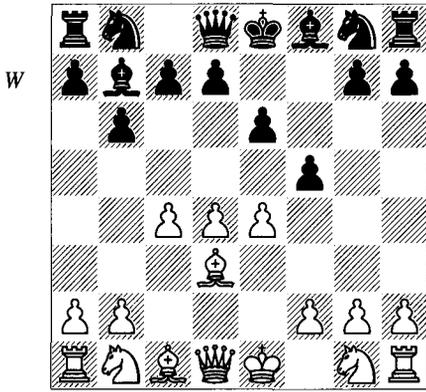


a) White can sacrifice a pawn with 5 ♘f3 ♖g4 6 0-0 ♙xe4 7 ♙xe4 ♖xe4 8 ♘c3, which yields a powerful attack, Plaskett-Forintos, Ramsgate 1981.

b) 5 ♘d2! wins time by attacking the queen; for example, 5...f5 (5...♙b4 6 ♘f3 ♖g4 7 0-0 ♙xd2 8 ♖xd2! is awkward, since White wins after 8...♙xe4?? 9 h3 ♖f5 10 ♘h4 ♖h5 11 ♙xe4 d5 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♘f5!) 6 ♘gf3 ♖g4 7 0-0 ♙xe4 (or 7...fxe4 8 h3 ♖f5 9 g4! ♖g6 10 ♘e5, when 10...♖h6? fails to 11 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♖xh3 13 ♘g5 ♖h4 14 ♖f3!) 8 ♘xe4 fxe4 9 h3 ♖f5 10 ♘h4! (10 ♙c2 is also very

strong) 10...♖f6 11 ♔xe4 d5 12 ♗a4+! c6 13 cxd5 ♗xh4 14 ♚e1 with a killing attack.

We now return to 4...f5 (D):



5 exf5!

White takes up the challenge. Otherwise Black just piles up on the e-pawn by ...♗f6 and ...♗b4, whereas 5 f3?! fxe4 6 fxe4 ♔xe4! has the idea 7 ♔xe4? ♗h4+.

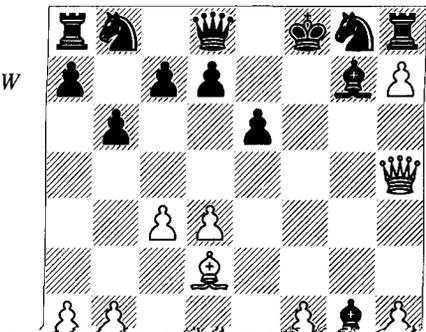
5...♔g5

Black in turn wins the rook on h1, knowing that he will face a dangerous attack. We'll see 5...♗b4+ in the next game.

6 ♗h5+ g6 7 fxg6 ♔g7

Forced. First, 7...♗f6? will lose if White finds 8 g7+ ♗xh5 9 gxh8 ♗f6 (9...♔xh1 10 ♗xh7) 10 ♗f3! ♔xh1 11 ♔g5 ♔xf3 12 ♔xf6, etc. And 7...♗b4+?, leaving g7 undefended, is no better: 8 ♗c3 ♗f8 9 ♔h6+! (or 9 g7+ ♗xg7 10 ♗g4+ ♗f8 11 ♗xg2) 9...♗xh6 10 ♗xh6+ ♗e7 11 ♗g5+ ♗e8 12 ♗xg2 threatening ♗xa8 and g7.

8 gxh7+ ♗f8 (D)



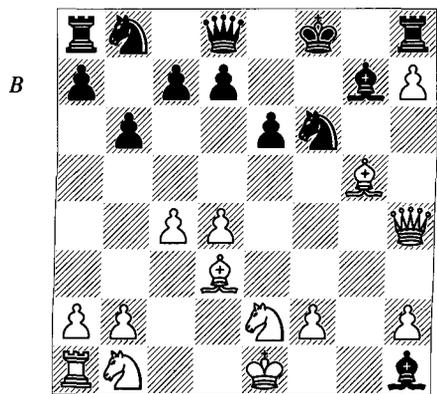
The key starting position for what has been called the 'Whole Hog Variation', in honour of Black's unashamed greed. White is about to be a rook down for two pawns, in return for obvious attacking chances against Black's loose king. This extraordinarily tactical line has long been a theoretician's nightmare, and I'll try to show a complete solution with a minimum of details.

9 ♗e2!

White develops and forces Black to capture on h1; this knight will head for f4. I won't go into the details about 9 hxg8 ♗+?! ♗xg8, but Black's activity gives him at least equality.

9 ♔g5 is sometimes regarded as more accurate than 9 ♗e2, often transposing after 9...♗f6 10 ♗h4 ♔xh1 11 ♗e2. In fact, this was the actual move-order Browne used in the game. Instead, 11 ♗d2 prevents the tricky move ...♔f3 that we see below. But 11 ♗d2 in turn forfeits the opportunity for ♗c3 at some point, which contributes to White's victory in our main game. Fortunately (for simplicity's sake), it turns out (at least in my opinion) that Black is essentially lost after either 11 ♗e2 or 11 ♗d2, and that 9 ♔g5 is therefore just as strong as 9 ♗e2. A key transposition to lines below is 11 ♗d2 ♗e7 12 ♗e2 ♗f7 13 ♗f4 (13 0-0-0 isn't as good due to 13...♔xh7!).

9...♔xh1 10 ♔g5 ♗f6 11 ♗h4 (D)



11...♗e7

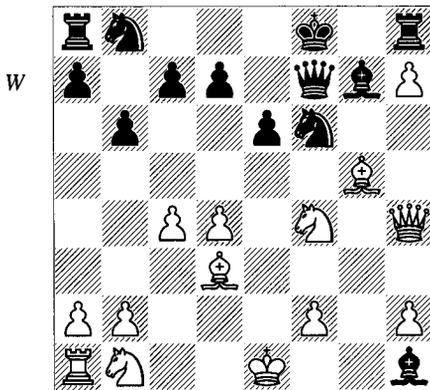
Often cited as the toughest defence. Other moves:

a) 11 ♔f3 was long thought to be adequate

lines have apparently put it to rest: 12 ♖f4 ♘c6 13 ♘d2 ♙g4 14 ♗g6+ ♜f7 15 ♘e5+ ♘xe5 16 dxe5 ♙f5 17 ♙xf5 exf5 18 exf6 ♙xf6 19 ♖h5+ ♜g7 20 ♖h6+ ♜f7 and here the game Baginskaite-Miles, Philadelphia 1999 concluded in a draw following 21 ♖h5+ ♜g7 22 ♖h6+. However, various analysts (including Yermolinsky) found that 21 ♖f3! wins. Without going into detail, the main line is 21...♗e8+ 22 ♜f1 ♙g7 23 ♖h4 ♗e4 24 ♖h5+ ♜f8 25 ♙e1 ♖xh7! 26 ♖xh7 ♗xf3 27 ♙e3 ♖h1+ 28 ♜e2 ♖b1 29 ♙h6! ♖xb2+ 30 ♜f1 ♙xh6 31 ♖xf5+ and White wins.

b) After 11...♘c6, the stem game Browne-Miles, Tilburg 1978 went 12 ♖f4?! ♜f7?! (12...♘d4 13 ♘g6+ ♜e8 14 ♖xd4 ♖xh7 15 ♘e5 ♖xh2! seems fine for Black) 13 ♙g6+!? ♜e7? (13...♜f8!) 14 ♘h5 ♗f8 15 ♘d2 e5 16 0-0-0 ♘xd4 17 ♖xh1 ♘e6 18 f4 and White won easily. In view of Black's improvements in this line, the correct move is 12 ♘d2!, which has been analysed exhaustively for many years, leading to a substantial advantage for White. To get the whole story, you'll have to refer to the books, but one tricky line goes 12...b5!? (Black produces some chaos; after 12...e5 13 0-0-0! e4 14 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 15 ♘xe4 ♖xh7 16 ♖f4 ♜f7, 17 ♙d3! is easiest) 13 cxb5 (13 ♖f4 is also good) 13...♘b4 14 ♙g6 ♙b7 15 ♘f4 ♜e7 16 ♘h5 ♗f8 17 d5! ♘xd5 18 ♘e4 and White is winning, Flear-Plaskett, British Ch, Torquay 1982.

12 ♖f4 ♗f7 (D)

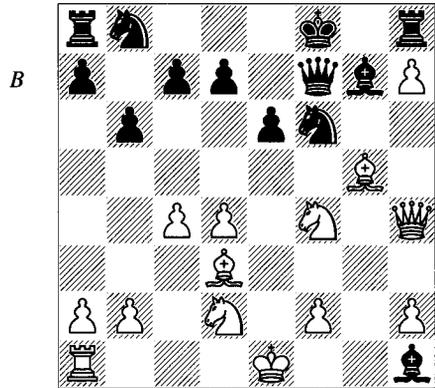


13 ♘g6+

This probably supersedes other moves at this stage, but 13 ♘d2 in particular is important as White could already have played ♘d2 earlier:

a) 13 ♘c3 is a comparatively recent development: 13...♘c6!? 14 ♘g6+ ♜e8 15 ♘xh8 ♙xh8 16 0-0-0 and instead of 16...♙f3? 17 ♖g1!, as in Dorić-B.Kovačević, Rijeka 2006, Black has to try 16...♘b4 17 ♙b1 ♙b7, when White can keep up the pressure with 18 d5.

b) 13 ♘d2?! (D) is a position that can also arise from the move-order 9 ♙g5 ♘f6 10 ♖h4 ♙xh1 11 ♘d2 ♗e7 12 ♘e2 ♗f7 13 ♖f4.



Objectively, Black should play 13...♖xh7!, when 14 ♙xh7 ♘xh7 15 ♖xh7 ♙xd4 led to a draw in W.Taylor-Haugen, corr. 1995. Some writers have held out hope for Black after 13...♘c6?!, since 14 ♙g6 gets hit by 14...♖xh7 15 ♙xh7?! (15 ♖g3! ♖g8 16 0-0-0 with an attack – Odessky) 15...♘xh7 16 ♖xh7 ♘xd4! with a dynamic balance, Vegh-Zlovilov, Sankt Augustin 1990. But White can play 14 ♘g6+!, when I see nothing better than 14...♜e8 15 ♘xh8 ♙xh8 16 0-0-0 (16 ♙xf6!?) 16...♘b4 (otherwise the bishop has no good squares) 17 ♙b1 ♙b7 18 d5! with the idea 18...exd5 19 ♙e1+ ♜d8 20 ♙e5! and ♙f5.

Let's return to the game:

13...♜e8 14 ♘e5 ♗f8 15 ♘c3! d6 16 0-0-0! (D)

16...dxe5

Widely criticized, but the purported improvement 16...♙b7 17 ♙g6+ ♜e7 18 ♘g4 ♘bd7 is refuted outright by Bücker's 19 d5; for example, 19...e5 20 ♘e4 and ♙f5xd7 follows.

17 dxe5

White is winning.

17...♜e7?!

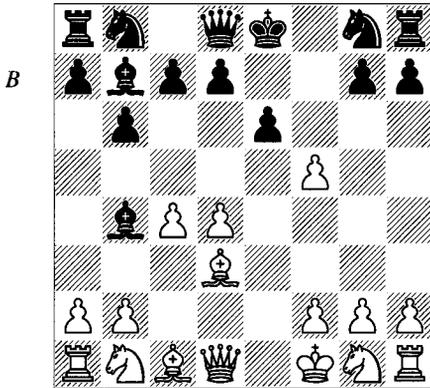
But 17...♘bd7 18 exf6 ♙xf6 19 ♖xh1 is only a small improvement. Over the course of



game, and initiate some aggression of his own. But he'll have to give up some material to do that.

6 ♖f1 (D)

White protects his g-pawn. It's easy to confirm that if White interposes a piece, say, 6 ♙d2?, Black can exchange and play 7...♙xg2. Then 8 ♖h5+ is wholly insufficient because of 8...♙f8.



6...♟f6

Apparently Black has to sacrifice at least a pawn to keep things moving:

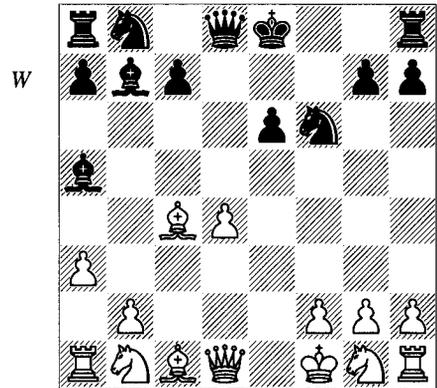
a) 6...exf5? is positionally disastrous: 7 c5!? (7 ♙xf5 ♟f6 8 c5! is an alternative, with the idea 8...bxc5 9 a3) 7...bxc5 8 a3 c4 9 ♙xc4 ♙d6 10 ♟c3 ♟f6 11 ♟f3 ♖e7 12 ♟h4! g6 13 ♖b3 ♙e4 14 f3, Peuraniemi-Nordfjörd, corr. 1997, and White wins material in view of 14...♟g4 15 g3.

b) 6...♖h4?! has been suggested and played a few times, but it falls short: 7 ♟f3 (alternatively, 7 fxe6 has the idea of d5; then 7...dxe6? is hopeless after 8 ♖a4+ ♟c6 9 ♟f3) 7...♖h5 8 a3!? ♙d6 9 ♟c3!? (again, 9 fxe6! is perfectly safe for White; for example, 9...dxe6 10 ♖e2 or 10 ♙e2) 9...exf5 10 ♟b5 ♟f6!?, Estremera Panos-Rausis, Seville 2003, and now 11 ♖e2+ ♟d8 12 ♟g5! is best.

7 ♟f3

White wants to accumulate positional gains based upon better-placed pieces. This is a favourite way to treat the position today, and seems to give White a small edge. But in order to truly punish this system, you need to enter into a riskier bargain. And it's another of those times that positional understanding gives way to loads of concrete analysis:

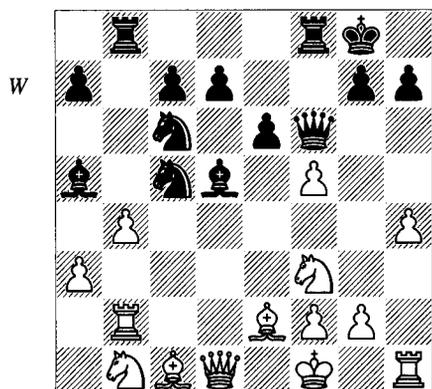
a) 7 c5 bxc5 8 a3 is a radical and well-tested line. It is utterly chaotic in a number of variations, but should favour White if he's careful. I'll show a couple of important lines, then let you research on your own: 8...c4! (8...♙a5 9 dxc5 threatens b4; then 9...c6 10 ♟f3 clearly favours White) 9 ♙xc4 ♙a5 (9...♙e7 10 fxe6 doesn't hold; if Black goes for accelerated development by 10...0-0, then 11 ♖b3 ♙e4 12 ♟c3 is a good way to play it) 10 fxe6 dxe6 (D).



11 ♟f3 (analysis by Bücker and Wind goes 11 ♙xe6 ♖e7 12 ♙c4 ♟c6 13 ♟f3 0-0-0 14 ♟c3 ♖he8 15 ♙e3 ♟xd4 16 ♟xd4 c5 17 ♟f5! ♖xd1+ 18 ♖xd1 ♖e5 19 ♟d6+ ♟b8 20 ♟xe8 ♟xe8 21 ♙d3!? ♙xc3 22 bxc3 ♟f6 23 h4 and White has a small edge) 11...0-0 12 ♟c3 ♟h8 13 ♟g5! ♖d6 14 ♖e2 ♟bd7, Graf-Bunzmann, Herringsdorf 2000, and now Odessky thinks that White should grab the pawn by 15 ♟xe6 with the better game. He gives 15...♖ae8 16 ♙f4 ♖xe6 17 ♙xd6 ♖xe2 18 ♙xf8 ♖xb2 as best, but after 19 ♟d1 ♖c2 20 ♟e3 ♖xc4 21 ♟xc4 ♙a6 22 ♖c1, White's two rooks and pawn will outweigh what is about to become three pieces.

b) 7 ♙e2!? threatens ♙h5+ and c5, but Black has dynamic chances: 7...0-0 (Wind analyses 7...♖e7! without finding any great fault in it; one point is that 8 ♙h5+ ♟xh5 9 ♖xh5+ ♖f7 10 ♖xf7+ ♟xf7 11 fxe6+ dxe6 offers Black compensation) 8 c5 bxc5 9 a3 ♙a5 (the point of 7 ♙e2 is that Black lacks the ...c4 resource that we saw in line 'a') 10 dxc5 ♟e4 (after 10...♟d5 11 ♟f3 ♖xf5 12 b4 ♖f6 13 ♖a2 ♟xb4 14 axb4 ♙xb4, Wind prefers 15 h4!, intending ♖h3) 11 b4 ♖f6 12 ♖a2 ♙d5 13 ♖b2 ♟c6 14 ♟f3

(Wind's suggestion 14 f3 is more promising)
 14...♖ab8 15 h4!? (15 ♘bd2 is another can of worms) 15...♘xc5! (D).



16 ♖c2 ♘e4 17 bxa5 ♘d4 18 ♘xd4?! (18 ♖d3 or 18 ♖d1 leaves everything to be played for) 18...♖xd4 19 ♘g6 Lindinger-J enrook

9...♖e8!

Apparently White keeps some edge in any case, although hardly an overwhelming one:

a) 9...exf5 10 ♘xf5 ♘c6 (10...♖e8 11 ♘d3) 11 ♘g5 ♖e8 12 ♘xf6! ♖xf6 13 ♘e4.

b) 9...♘c6 10 ♘g5 ♖e8 11 fxe6! dxe6 12 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 13 ♘e4 ♖d8 14 ♖a4 ♘a8 15 ♖e1 and Black is tied down, Dautov-B.Filipović, Swiss Team Ch 2004.

10 ♘g5!?

10 fxe6! looks risky because of the open f-file, but in fact it opens lines for White as well; for example, 10...dxe6 11 ♖e2 with the ideas of ♘g5 and ♘b5, and if 11...♘xf3 12 ♖xf3 ♘c6, then 13 ♘e4! ♘xd4 14 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 15 ♖e4.

10...exf5! 11 c5! ♘e7

Not 11...bxc5?? 12 ♖b3+ and ♖xb7.

12 ♘xf5 ♘h8

Or 12...♖h5!? 13 h4 ♘xf3 14 ♖xf3 (14 gxf3 bxc5 15 dxc5 ♘c6 16 ♘d5 is a decent option) 14...♖xf3 15 gxf3 bxc5 16 dxc5 ♘xc5 17 ♖d1

20 ♖g3! ♕f7 21 ♗e2 is safe and sound.

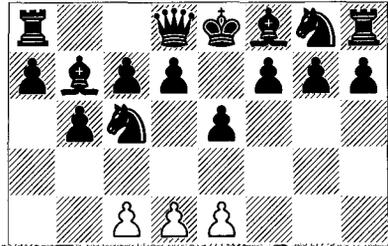
careful: 7 ♕c2?! (7 ♗c3 ♘b4 8 ♕d4! d6 9 ♗f3

♔d4 may be best) 12...cxd5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 e5
 ♘g6 15 ♘g5? (15 0-0-0 is necessary) 15...h6,
 Scherbakov-Bischoff, Linares 1996. White had
 probably missed that 16 ♘xf7 fails to 16...♘f4,
 but after 16 ♔f5? hxg5 17 hxg5 ♖e8 18 ♔h3
 d6, he ended up with no attack.

8 0-0

White could consider 8 ♗g5 ♗e7 9 h4!? pre-

B



hxg3 leaves White a pawn up with much the better position) 19 ♖g4 ♕xd6 20 exd6 0-0 21 ♘a4!? ♜ae8 22 ♘c2 ♜d8 23 d7 ♜e7 24 ♜d4! and Black could have resigned.

6...♘xd3+ 7 ♜xd3 ♖b4

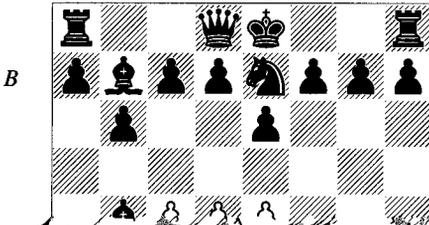
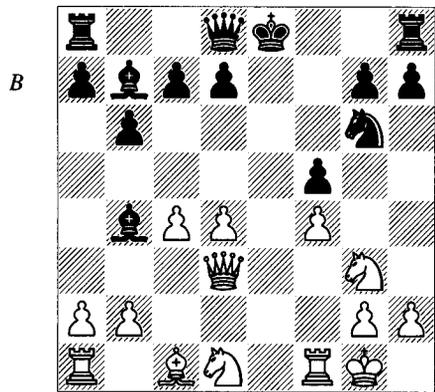
7...♘e7 and 7...g6 are alternatives, although in the latter case 8 h4 looks bothersome.

8 0-0 ♘e7 9 ♘d1! (D)

A creative move that leaves the bishop looking silly out on b4, and also threatened with capture by 10 a3 and e5. 9 a3 is a little slow, and Black seems to get good counterchances following 9...♕xc3 10 ♘xc3 0-0; for example, 11 ♕g5 f6 12 ♖h4 d5 13 f3 ♜d7 14 ♜fd1 ♖a6 15 b3 ♜ad8, Chuchelov-Teske, Cappelle la Grande 1998.

♜xd6 18 ♘f5) 17 b3 f6 18 ♖b2 with a small advantage for White.

10 f4 f5 11 exf5 exf5 12 ♘g3 (D)



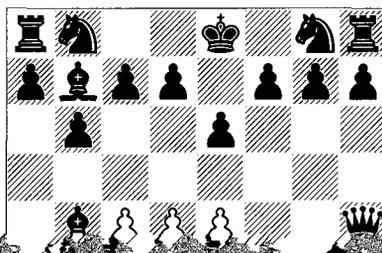
12...0-0?

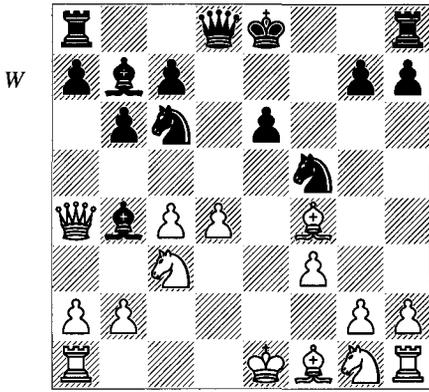
12...♘h4 comes up short to 13 a3 (or 13 ♘xf5 ♘xg2 14 ♘xg7+) 13...♕e7 14 ♘e3 with the idea 14...g6? 15 d5! 0-0 16 ♘e2 followed by g3. 12...♜f6 13 ♘xf5 0-0 14 a3 ♕e7 15 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 16 ♘c3 also favours White, but

Gorbatov – Ehlvest
 St Petersburg 1994

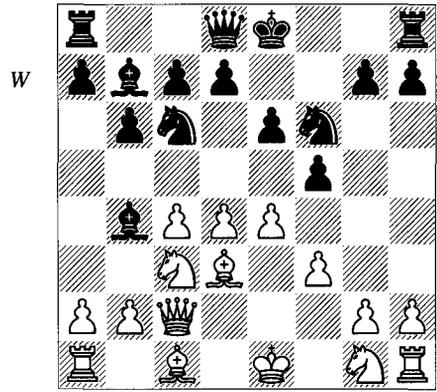
1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 e4 ♖b7 4 ♘c3 ♕b4 (D)

W





c21) After 10 0-0-0 ♖xd4 11 ♗b5?! 0-0! 12 ♗xc7, Odessky finds adequate counterplay in 12... ♗g5+ 13 f4 ♗h6! 14 ♗xd4 ♗xf4!
 c22) 10 d5 exd5?! (10... ♗xc3+ 11 bxc3 exd5

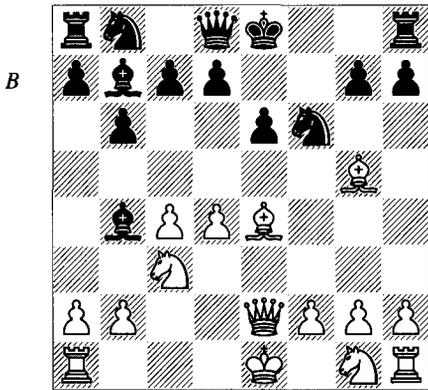


8 ♗e2! (not great, but everything else practically loses on the spot! An incredible line is 8 e5 ♗xd4 9 ♗a4 ♗g4!! 10 ♗xb4 ♗h4+ 11 g3 ♗xe5!, and 8 ♗e3 fails to 8...fxe4 9 fxe4 ♗g4!)

open the e-file by ...exd5, while 10 dxex6 ♖c6! is also tough to handle.

d) 6 ♖e2 ♗f6 is often played; it's vital to know the specifics:

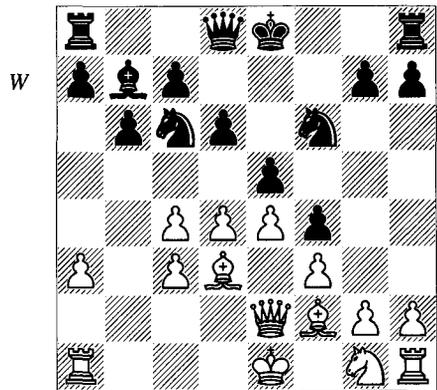
d1) 7 ♗g5 fxe4 (7...0-0 is a playable alternative, and even 7...h6 8 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 secures a fair share of the play) 8 ♗xe4 (D) (not 8 ♗xf6?? exd3! 9 ♖h5+ g6).



8...♗xe4?! (this sacrifice is often recommended, but is perhaps too speculative; instead, 8...♗xe4! 9 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 10 ♖xe4 0-0 11 ♗f3 ♗c6 12 0-0 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♖f5! has proven to equalize for Black) 9 ♗xd8 ♗xc3 10 ♖g4! ♗a4+ (10...♗e4+ 11 ♖e2! ♗xd8 12 f3) 11 ♖f1 ♗xd8 12 ♖xg7 ♗f8 13 ♗f3! ♗xf3 14 gxf3 and Black is coming up a little short.

d2) 7 f3 ♗c6! 8 ♗e3 (8 e5?! introduces a famous trick: 8...♗xd4! 9 ♖f2 ♗h5 10 ♖xd4?? ♗c5) 8...f4!? (or 8...fxe4 9 fxe4 e5 10 d5 ♗d4 – compare the game) 9 ♗f2 (9 ♗xf4 ♗xd4 10 ♖d2 is structurally sounder; Black nevertheless develops quickly after 10...♖e7 11 ♗ge2 ♗xe2 12 ♗xe2 0-0) 9...e5! 10 a3?! (10 d5 ♗d4 11 ♖d2 0-0 is roughly level after 12 ♗ge2! ♗xe2! 13 ♗xe2 ♖e7 14 a3 ♗c5) 10...♗xc3+ 11 bxc3 d6 (D).

For Black, this is a pleasant version of a Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, since White is unable to do anything on the kingside. In Bercys-Rahman, Philadelphia 2004, White tried to free his passively-placed bishops by 12 c5!? dxc5 13 dxc5, but his queenside weaknesses showed after 13...0-0 14 ♖c2 ♖e7 15 ♗e2 ♗h8 16 ♖b1 ♗d7! 17 cxb6 axb6 18 a4 ♗c5 19 ♗b5 ♗a5 (Black is taking over the light squares) 20 ♗c1 ♖ad8 21 0-0 ♗c8! 22



♗e1 ♗e6 with an obvious positional superiority.

6...g6 7 ♖e2 ♗f6 8 f3

8 ♗g5 is similar to the line 6 ♖e2 ♗f6 7 ♗g5 above, but this time, apart from the normal move 8...h6, the queen sacrifice 8...fxe4 9 ♗xe4 (9 ♗xf6 exd3) 9...♗xe4! 10 ♗xd8 ♗xc3 is sound; for example, 11 bxc3 ♗xc3+ 12 ♖f1 ♗xa1 13 ♗xc7 ♗xd4 14 ♗d6 ♗c6 might follow.

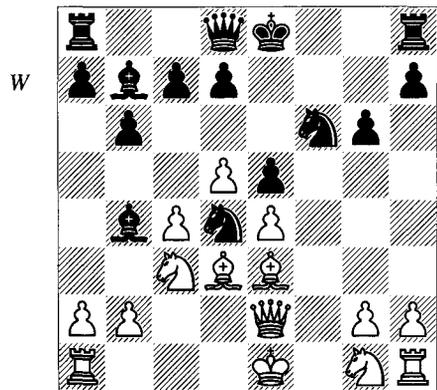
8...♗c6! 9 ♗e3

9 e5? ♗xd4! 10 ♖f2 ♗h5! 11 ♖xd4?? ♗c5 actually occurred in Adorjan-Spassky, Toluca Interzonal 1982.

9...fxe4 10 fxe4 e5 11 d5

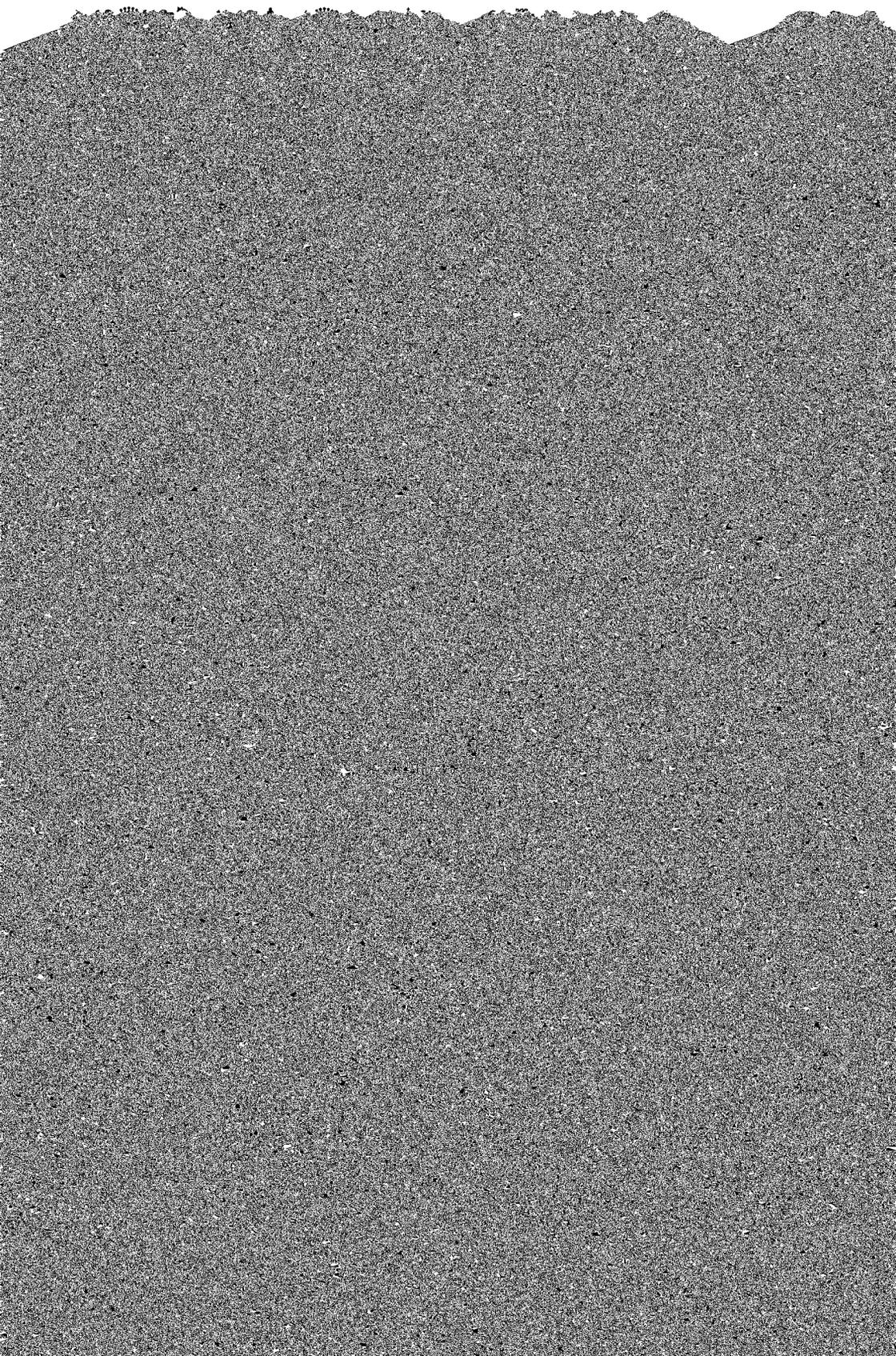
11 ♗f3 exd4 12 ♗xd4 0-0 13 0-0 ♗xc3 14 bxc3 ♖e7 puts pressure on e4 and secures an outpost on e5.

11...♗d4 (D)



12 ♗xd4

It's a pity to give up this good bishop, but White is faced with some poor options:



I suspect that White retains some theoretical advantage in the ...g6 set-up, which probably doesn't mean much in practice. Here's a game which illustrates a more confrontational strategy by Black:

Sher – Lempert

Erevan open 1996

1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 a3 ♗b7 4 ♘c3 f5

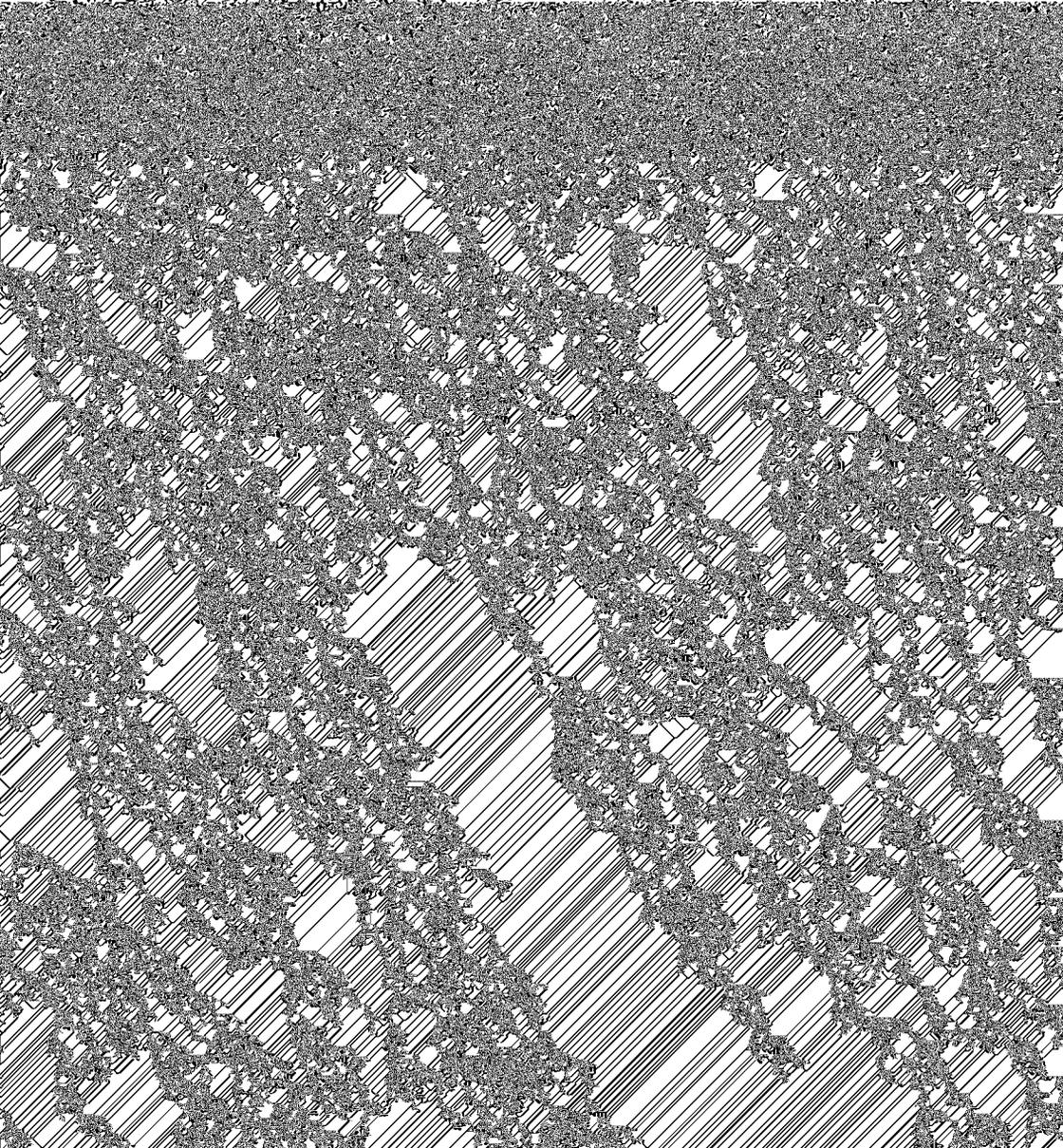
The most aggressive players are attracted to this move. 4...♘f6 also stops 5 e4. Then 5 ♘f3 is a Queen's Indian Defence (Petrosian Variation), but 5 d5 is a more ambitious idea. It is often countered by the quick developing 5...♗d6

6 g3

White intends ♗g2 and either ♘f3-d4 or ♘h3-f4.

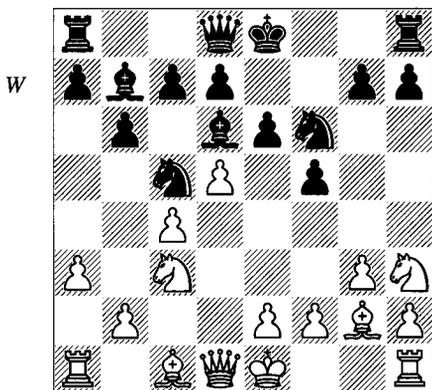
6...♘a6

6...g6 is a standard English Defence response to d5, since White has cleared the long diagonal for Black's g7-bishop, but here (unlike the lines below with ...♗d6-e5), Black's bishop has no direct contact with c3, which means that the crucial manoeuvre ...♘a6-c5 is no longer possible after 7 ♗g2 ♗g7 8 ♘h3! 0-0 9 0-0 ♘a6 10 b4! (D).



♖xg2 ♖e7 14 exd7 ♖xd7, with more than adequate compensation.

8...♗d6 (D)



9 0-0

Two valid alternatives are 9 ♗f4 and 9 ♖b5 ♗e5 10 f4, the latter winning the bishop-pair, albeit with a loss of time.

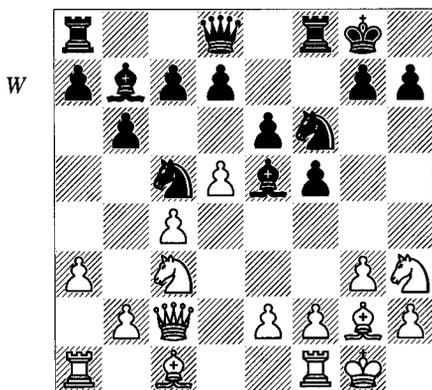
9...♗e5

The point of ...♗d6. Now White always has to be on the lookout for ...♗xc3 and ...exd5.

10 ♖c2

There are legitimate alternatives at this juncture as well, such as 10 ♗d2 and 10 ♖b5!? with the idea 10...a6?! 11 f4!.

10...0-0 (D)



We have arrived at a kind of main line for the 4...f5 variation, and it has been played in a remarkable number of games. White shouldn't ignore earlier options, however, since Black seems to hold his own here.

11 ♖d1

White sometimes plays 11 ♗d2, but his most common alternative to the text-move is 11 ♖f4 ♖e8!? (Black should avoid positions like 11...♖e7 12 ♗d2 c6?! 13 dxe6 dxe6 14 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 15 b4 ♗xc3 16 ♗xc3 ♖ce4 17 ♗a1! with an unopposed bishop on the powerful long diagonal, I.Sokolov-Rahman, Istanbul Olympiad 2000) 12 ♖b1 a5! 13 b4 axb4 14 axb4 ♖ce4 and everything gets liquidated: 15 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 16 ♗xe4 fxe4 17 ♖xe4 ♗xf4 18 ♗xf4 exd5 19 ♖xe8 ♖axe8 20 cxd5 d6 21 ♖fc1 ♖f7 22 ♖b2 ♗xd5 23 ♖bc2 ♖ee7 24 f3 h6 1/2-1/2 Miladinović-C.Bauer, Nancy 2005.

11...♖e7 12 ♗e3!?

A simple and clever idea: White wants to prop up d5 but also oppose Black's bishop by ♗d4 at the right moment.

12...♖ce4!?

Morozevich came up with the typically creative 12...♖ab8, simply defending b8, versus Kasparov (Frankfurt rapid 2000), and equalized nicely after 13 ♖ac1 ♖ce4?! (13...a5! looks more accurate) 14 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♖f4 (15 ♗xe4!? fxe4 16 ♖g5) 15...c5! 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♖d3 ♗f6 18 f3 ♖c5.

13 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♖ac1

Odessky analyses 14 ♗xe4 fxe4 15 ♖xe4 ♗xb2 16 ♖g5 at length and thinks that best play is 16...♖f5 17 ♖a2 ♗e5 (17...♗f6 18 ♖hx7!) 18 f4 (18 d6 ♖xd6!) 18...♗d6 19 g4 ♖xg5 20 fxg5 ♖f8 with extremely active pieces; for example, 21 a4 ♖e8! threatens 22...exd5.

14...c5! 15 dxe6 dxe6 16 ♗f4 ♗f6 17 ♖d3 e5! 18 ♗e3 g5!

Not precise, but bold and effective. The simple 18...♖ad8 19 ♖cd1 ♖xd3 would leave Black with the more comfortable position.

19 ♖cd1 ♖ad8 20 ♖xd8?!

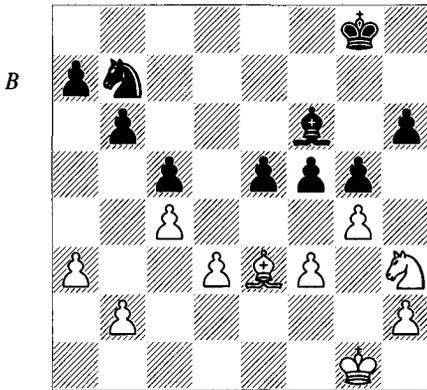
Heading for an inferior endgame. 20 f3! forces the pace: 20...f4 21 fxe4 fxe4 22 ♖xe3, and White should hold the balance.

20...♖xd8 21 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 22 ♖d3 h6 23 g4?

An oversight. Odessky suggests 23 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 24 f4 exf4 25 gxf4 g4 26 ♖f2 ♖d6 27 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 28 ♗d2 ♖d6 29 b3, but this is pretty awful after 29...♗h4 30 ♖d1 ♖e4. Maybe 23 ♗f1 is best, if somewhat depressing.

23...♖xd3! 24 exd3 ♖d6 25 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 26 f3 (D)

Black's point is 26 gxf5? g4.



26...e4! 27 gxf5

Or 27 fxe4 fxe4 28 b3 exd3 29 ♖f2 ♘a5.

27...exd3 28 ♖f2 ♗xb2 29 ♖xd3 ♗xa3 30 h4 ♖d6 31 hxg5 ♖xc4 32 ♗f4 hxg5 33 ♗xg5 ♖d6 34 f6 c4 35 ♖e5 c3 36 ♗f2 ♖f7 37 ♖c4 ♗c5+ 38 ♗e3 c2 0-1

Certainly 4...f5 qualifies as the most dynamic and perilous of Black's 4th-move choices versus 3 a3, while 4...♖f6 looks less exciting but more reliable. Theory shuttles back and forth between verdicts of equality and a modest advantage for White. The main appeal of 3 a3 is that it steers clear of the dramatic counterattacks that Black can play versus 3 e4. For his part, Black will have a relatively safe position, but he will often have to be satisfied with operating from a position with less space and fewer tactical possibilities. You'll find that positional skill is at a premium in these lines.

Finally, White can head for many other set-ups if he plays 2 ♖c3 or 2 ♖f3, as seen in the following game:

Marjanović – Ivanisević

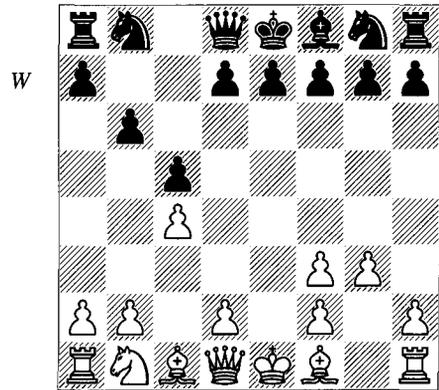
Yugoslav Ch, Subotica 2000

1 c4 b6 2 ♖c3

Upon 2 ♖f3 ♗b7, Black can always opt for a Queen's Indian set-up with ...e6 and ...♖f6, or enter into a Symmetrical English with ...c5. However, he has an important alternative plan when White plays g3 on this or the following move:

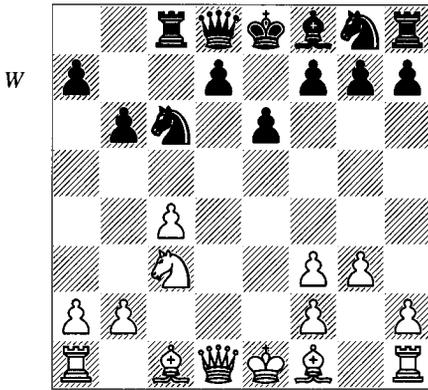
a) 3 g3 (this is equivalent to 2 g3 ♗b7 3 ♖f3) and now 3...♗xf3! 4 exf3 cedes the bishop-pair for positional compensation. Black

usually continues with 4...c5 (D) (he can also play 4...e6, with ...c6 and ...d5 to come).



I won't go into the very lengthy details, but 3...♗xf3 can be a good psychological weapon because it interferes with White's common intention to play a 'simple' English set-up with g3, ♗g2, ♖c3 and e3 or e4. The advantage of 4...c5 is that it controls the weak point on d4. In response, White can develop by some combination of ♖c3, ♗g2 and 0-0, but in doing so, he allows Black to fortify his grip on d4 and gain a strong outpost there by, for example, ...♖c6, ...g6 and ...♗g7. Since that is highly unattractive, White almost always plays 5 d4!. Now 5...cxd4 6 ♗xd4 ♖c6 transposes to line 'b', or something very similar, but Black has the option of 5...♖c6!?, a provocative attempt to contest d4 directly. Play usually goes 6 d5 ♖d4 7 ♗e3 ♖f5. While White has tried several moves here, Black seems to equalize versus all of them, including the most frequently-seen 8 ♗d2 g6 9 ♗c3 ♗g7 10 ♗xg7 ♖xg7; for example, Knott-Summerscale, British Ch, Millfield 2000 went 11 ♗h3 ♖h6 12 0-0 ♖hf5 13 ♖a3 ♖d4 14 ♖c2 ♖gf5 15 ♖e3 ♖d6! 16 f4 0-0 17 b4 ♗c7 18 a4 f5 19 ♗a3 ♖e4 20 ♗d3 e5 with a fine position for Black.

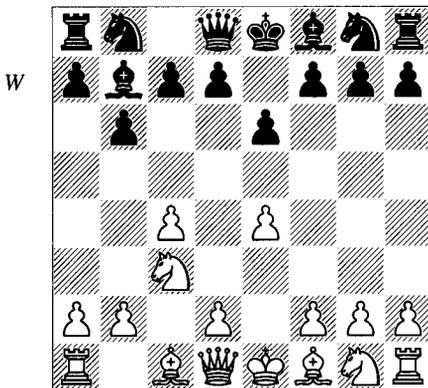
b) 3 ♖c3 (this is thought to be more precise than 3 g3) 3...e6 4 g3 ♗xf3! (again, conceding a bishop to gain more control over d4; 4...♖f6 5 ♗g2 c5 would transpose into one of the Hedgehog lines of the English Opening – see Volume 3) 5 exf3 c5 6 d4! cxd4 (this time 6...♖c6 7 d5 ♖d4 is regarded as inferior after 8 ♗e3 ♖f5 9 ♗h3!) 7 ♗xd4 ♖c6 8 ♗d1 ♗c8 (D) (not the only move, but it indirectly targets the c4-pawn).



Again we have a case of White having the bishop-pair and open e- and d-files, which offset his weaknesses (the doubled f-pawns and the central squares d3 and d4). Play can continue 9 $\text{♟f4!?$ ♞b4 10 ♝c1 ♜ge7 11 a3 ♞xc3+ 12 ♞xc3 , as in Fridman-Mainka, Recklinghausen 2002. Now the easiest course is 12...0-0!, emphasizing Black's lead in development and planning ...d5. White should stop that with 13 ♞d6! ♞e8 14 ♞h3 (to prevent 14... ♜f5) 14... ♞a5! 15 ♞d3 , when Black can equalize with either 15... ♝c6 or 15... ♞b7 16 ♞xe7 (16 0-0 ♜xd6 17 ♞xd6 ♝c6 18 ♞d3 d5 19 cxd5 ♝xc3 20 ♞xc3 ♜xd5 gives Black a strong knight) 16... ♞xe7 17 0-0 ♜c5! 18 ♝c2 a5, intending to meet 19 b4? (19 f4 a4 20 ♞g2) with 19... ♞a6! 20 bxa5 bxa5 and Black has the c5 outpost in front of the isolated pawn.

Black's primary motivation in this line is that White doesn't get to play mechanically with g3, ♞g2 , 0-0, etc., as he may like to do versus other set-ups.

2... ♞b7 3 e4 e6 (D)



4 ♜f3

Or:

a) 4 ♜ge2 ♜f6 tempts White into 5 e5?! ♜g4 6 d4 ♞h4! with the idea 7 g3? ♜xh2! 8 ♜f4 (8 gxf4?? ♜f3\#) 8... ♜f3+ 9 ♞xf3 ♞xh1 .

b) 4 g3 f5 5 ♞g2 ♜f6 6 d3 fxe4 7 ♜ge2 ♜c6! equalizes, Smejkal-Kengis, Bundesliga 1999/00.

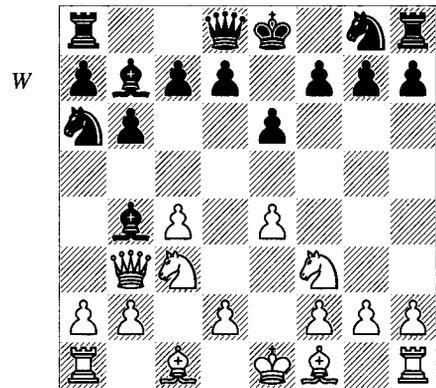
4... ♞b4

As usual, Black wants to put pressure on e4 immediately. 4...c5 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♜xd4 is a kind of Sicilian offshoot.

5 ♞d3

With this move, White signals his intention to play ♞c2 and d4.

5 ♞b3 ♞a6! (D) can lead to a cute trick and in any case to double-edged action:



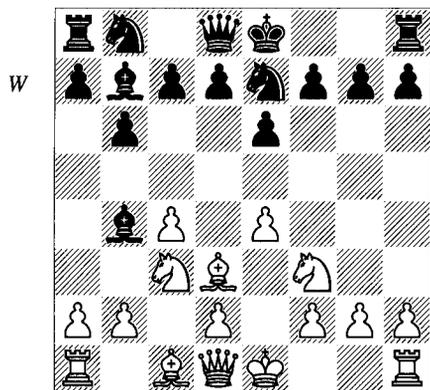
a) 6 a3?! falls into 6... ♜c5! 7 ♝c2 (7 ♞xb4?? a5 8 ♞b5 c6 traps the queen!) 7... ♞xc3 8 ♞xc3 ♜xe4 9 ♞xg7 ♞f6 10 ♞xf6 ♜gxf6 with pressure; for example, 11 b4 a5! 12 ♞b2 axb4 13 axb4 ♞xa1+ 14 ♞xa1 ♞e7 intending ... ♞a8 next, when the activity of Black's pieces is more important than White's bishop-pair.

b) 6 d3 is a bit slow and might allow Black to attack via 6...f5 7 exf5 ♞xf3 8 gxf3 $\text{♜e7!?$ 9 fxe6 0-0! 10 exd7 ♞xd7 with compensation for two pawns in the form of outposts, development and play against White's weaknesses.

c) 6 ♞e2 ♜e7 (better than 6... ♞xc3 7 ♞xc3! ♞xe4? 8 d3! ♞b7 9 ♞xg7 ♞f6 10 ♞h6! , when White wins material – a common tactic) 7 0-0 0-0 8 d3 ♜g6 (8...d5 9 exd5 exd5 10 d4!) 9 a3 ♜c5! 10 ♝c2 (not 10 ♞xb4?? a5) 10... ♞xc3 11 ♞xc3 d5! (with two knights versus a bishop-pair, you will often want to blast open the

position) 12 cxd5!? exd5 13 e5 d4! 14 ♖xd4 ♗xe5 with dynamic counterplay.

5...♗e7 (D)



As often happens in the English Defence, Black wants to attack White's centre with ...f5.

6 ♖e2!?

This actually threatens to win Black's bishop by 7 a3! ♗d6 8 e5 ♗xf3 9 exd6 ♗xe2 10 dxe7, etc. Nevertheless, the healthier choice is 6 0-0 ♗c2! with the idea of d4. That has various possible replies, including the thematic 7...f5, 7...c5!? and the Indian-like 7...♗g6 8 d4 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 d6 intending ...e5. Then 10 h4! ♗xh4 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♖h5 is a lively response; for example, 12...hxg5 (12...e5 can be met by 13 c5!? or 13 ♖xh4) 13 ♗xg5 f6 14 ♗xh4 ♖e8 15 ♖e2 and White gets the nod.

6...♗g6!?

6...f5 7 ♖c2 ♗d6!? is double-edged.

7 a3

Or:

a) 7 0-0 0-0 (or 7...♗h4) 8 ♗c2 f5! has the idea 9 exf5 ♗xf3 10 gxf3 ♗h4.

b) Agrest-Atalik, Bled Olympiad 2002 saw 7 ♗c2 ♗h4 8 a3 ♗d6 9 ♗xh4 ♖xh4 10 ♗g3, when both 10...♗c6 and 10...f5 yield equal and double-edged play.

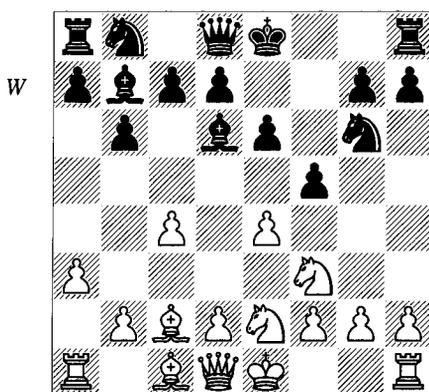
7...♗d6 8 ♗c2 f5! (D)

This standard break once again increases the power of Black's queen's bishop, the heart of the English Defence.

9 ♗c3

Or:

a) 9 exf5?! ♗h4! 10 ♗xh4 ♖xh4 11 d4 0-0 12 d5 exd5 13 cxd5 ♗a6 and ...♗ae8 leaves Black too active.



W

b) Sorokin-Lalić, Calcutta 2000 went 9 d4 ♗xe4 10 ♗xe4 fxe4 11 ♗g5 ♗e7 12 ♗xe4 d5 with an easy game for Black.

9...♗h4! 10 d4 ♗xf3+ 11 ♖xf3 ♖h4 12 g3 ♖h3 13 ♗f4 ♗c6 14 0-0-0?!

After 14 ♗b5 0-0 15 ♗xd6 cxd6 16 ♖e3, Black has 16...♗a5!? 17 ♗xd6 ♗xe4 18 ♗xe4! fxe4 19 b4 ♖g2! 20 ♖f1 ♗c6, with ...e5 coming and in some cases ...♗f3.

14...fxe4 15 ♗xe4?!

But 15 ♖xe4 ♗d8 16 d5 ♗f7 is comfortable for Black.

15...0-0! 16 ♗xd6 cxd6 17 ♖c3 ♗a5! 18 ♖he1

Play is forced after 18 ♗xd6!? ♖f3 19 ♗d3 ♗xc4! 20 ♖xc4 ♖c8 21 ♗c7 ♖f7! 22 ♖hf1 ♗d5 23 ♖c3 d6.

18...♗ac8 19 c5

19 b3?? loses to 19...♖xf4!.

19...dxc5 20 ♖b1 ♗d5 21 ♗d6 ♖f3 22 ♖d3 ♖xf2

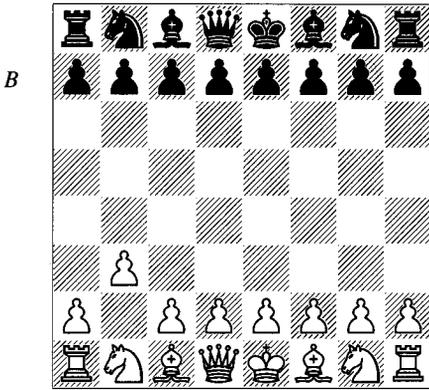
Black is simply winning.

23 dxc5 ♗c4 24 ♖xd5 exd5 25 ♖e7 ♖f1+ 26 ♖a2 ♖f7 27 ♖d4? ♗xd6 28 ♗b3 ♖xe7 0-1

Larsen's Opening: 1 b3

1 b3 (D)

White himself may wish to take advantage of the benefits of a queenside fianchetto by playing 1 b3, sometimes known as Larsen's Opening, or the Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack. As I've mentioned, the top-level players use this move relatively infrequently, because Black has conservative set-ups which neutralize White's possibilities. Nevertheless, we'll look at a few of

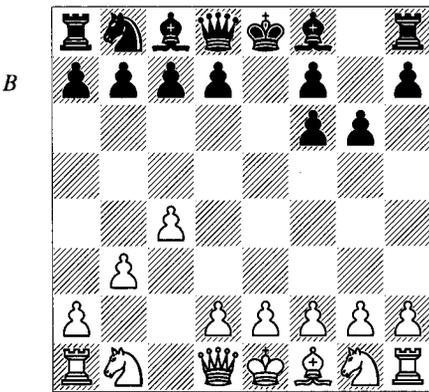


the more lively lines, with a couple of games that illustrate the paradoxes inherent in reversed positions. But first, let's walk through some initial moves.

1...e5

If Black can play this most cooperative of moves and get away with it, especially in conjunction with ...d5, that's not a good sign for White's ambitions as a whole. We'll test that theory in a couple of games. But first, let me describe, without serious analysis, just a few of the many other ways that play can develop, with an emphasis on themes that cross over from opening to opening:

a) 1...d6 2 e2 b2 g6 (not the only move, of course) 3 e3xf6!? (most other moves allow a comfortable King's Indian position following ...e6g7, ...0-0 and ...d6) 3...exf6 4 c4 (D).

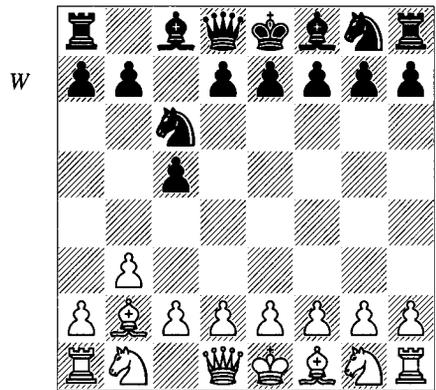


Compare this position with the English Defence variation 1 c4 b6 2 d3 e2 b7 3 d3c3 e3xf3 4 exf3 c5! from the previous section. In that case, Black had a more interesting game than

White does here, because d4 was a weakness and White had some looseness in his position. This happened because of White's move c4, whereas ...c5 isn't present in our reversed line. I should also mention that 1 b3 c5 2 e2 b2 d6 3 c4 g6?! (more commonly arrived at via 1 c4 c5 2 b3 d6 3 e2 b2 g6?!) 4 e3xf6! exf6 5 d3c3 followed by g3 and e3g2 combines the best of both worlds for White, because Black cannot carry out ...d5.

Anyway, in the diagram position after 4 c4 (in the 1 b3 version), White's position is sound enough. Nevertheless, Black has no serious weaknesses, and can develop naturally by ...f5 and ...e6g7 or even win space by 4...d5!? 5 cxd5 e3xd5 6 d3c3 e2a5, as played successfully in several contests.

b) 1...c5 2 e2 b2 d3c6 (D) and now:



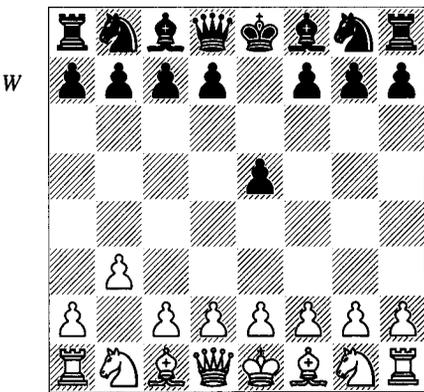
b1) 3 d3f3 d6 4 d4 (otherwise 4...e5) 4...cxd4 5 d3xd4 e2d7 and now 6 g3?! permits the advance 6...e5! with the idea 7 d3b5 e2a5+ 8 d3c3 d5! 9 e3xd5 e2d8 and White is in trouble, because ...e6 and ...a6 is threatened. That illustrates the danger of permitting your opponent a central majority.

b2) 3 e3 d6 (3...e5 4 e2 b5 d3e7 and 3...d3f6 are also options) 4 d3e2 (Odessky's recommendation, rather than 4 d4 cxd4 5 exd4 d5!) 4...e5 (after 4...d3f6 5 d4 cxd4 6 d3xd4 e5 or 6...g6, Black has few problems and his central majority may come into play) 5 d4. Now 5...cxd4 6 exd4 e2a5+! with the idea 7 e2c3 e3d5 is one route. Another is 5...exd4 6 exd4 d3f6!, since 7 d5 d3b4 followed by ...e6f5 and sometimes ...e2a5 looks good, but so does 7 dxc5 d5!, with the kind of isolated pawn position in which

Black's activity is at least sufficient for equality.

c) 1...d5 2 ♖b2 has another large complex of possibilities attached to it; we shall examine just a couple. White would often like to see something along the lines of 2...c5!? 3 e3 (3 ♘f3?! f6! is a famous positional trick, when Black achieves ...e5; then 4 d4?! is a poor response in view of 4...cxd4 followed by ...e5) 3...♘c6 4 ♖b5, with a reversed English Defence a tempo up in which he reserves the options of ♘f3, ♘e2 and/or f4. After 2...c5, we often get positions resembling those of the Nimzo-Indian and Queen's Indian Defences. Of course, 2...♘f6 is safe and sound, as is 2...♗f5; play may enter the realm of the Réti Opening if White combines g3 and c4. Another popular defence begins with 2...♗g4!?, trying to get the bishop out in front of the pawn-chain following ...e6. This can go in many directions, such as 3 g3 c6 4 ♗g2 ♘f6 5 ♘f3, when 5...e6 6 0-0 ♘bd7 7 c4 leads to a Réti Opening, with an optional d4. But Black can also play independently for ...e5; for example, 5...♘bd7 6 0-0 (6 d4) 6...♗xf3!? 7 ♗xf3 e5. Finally, Odessky analyses the rare gambit 3 f3 with the idea e4; for example, 3...♗h5 4 e4 dxe4 5 ♖e2! threatening to win a piece with 6 ♖b5+. Apparently this was even played by Kasparov!

Let's return to 1...e5 (D):



2 ♖b2 ♘c6

Naturally, 2...d6 can't be bad; then 3 e3 ♘f6 4 c4 (4 d4 exd4 and after 5 exd4 d5 White's bishop is not happy on b2, but following 5 ♗xd4 ♘c6 Black will win the bishop-pair or gain more time; 4 ♘f3 c5!? has the idea 5 d4?!

cxd4 6 exd4 e4 7 ♘fd2 d5) 4...♘c6 5 ♘c3 g6, and White will want to develop slowly, since 6 d4?! exd4 7 exd4 d5 or 7...♗g7 is at least equal for Black.

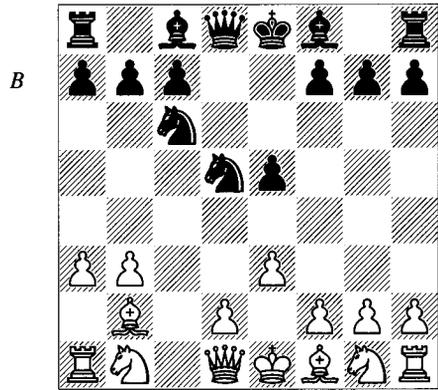
3 e3

3 c4 is of course possible; it is an English Opening with the less-than-inspiring b3 and ♖b2 thrown in.

3...d5

3...♘f6 is a well-known continuation. A few ideas:

a) 4 c4 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 a3! (D) prevents ...♘db4 and is a useful Sicilian Defence move in its own right.

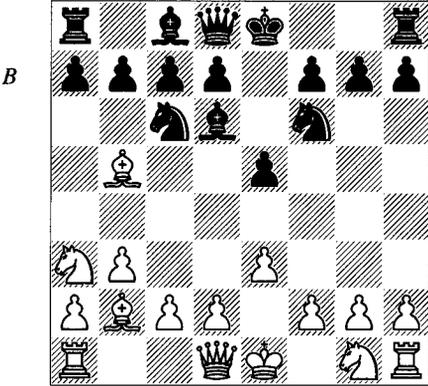


a1) Here I think that 6...g6! has been underrated. White is supposed to gain the upper hand by 7 ♖b5 ♗g7 8 ♘f3, putting direct pressure on e5 and c6. A few games have proceeded 8...♗g4, when both 9 ♖c2 and 9 h3 favour White. But here the pseudo-sacrifice 8...0-0! turns things around; for example, 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 ♘xe5 (10 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 11 ♘xe5 ♖g5 12 ♘f3 ♖xg2 13 ♗g1 ♖h3 14 ♗g3 ♖d7 15 ♖c2 ♗e8 and White's light squares are weak) 10...♖g5 11 ♘f3 ♖xg2 12 ♗g1 ♖h3 13 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 14 ♗g3 ♖f5, and the combination of ...♗a6 and ...♗fe8 causes White difficulties.

a2) The main line goes 6...♗d6 7 ♖c2 0-0 8 ♘f3 ♖e7 9 d3 f5 10 ♘bd2 ♗h8!? (10...♗d7 11 ♗e2 ♗ae8) 11 ♗e2 ♗d7, and here instead of 12 0-0 ♗ae8, Odessky recommends 12 ♘c4 with a kind of dynamic equality. Some players will enjoy this Sicilian Defence structure as White.

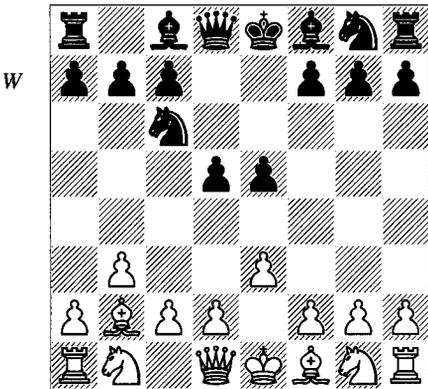
b) 4 ♖b5 ♗d6!?! (a surprising number of games and much analysis have been devoted to this move; although I should say that 4...d6 5

♖e2 {so as not to block the f-pawn} 5...♗d7 is satisfactory for Black, with the idea 6 0-0 g6; upon 6 d4, Black can play 6...exd4 7 ♖xd4 ♗e7 or 6...♞e7 7 0-0 g6) 5 ♖a3 (D) with the idea ♖c4.



Now there are all kinds of crazy lines with 5...♖a5! (to stop ♖c4) 6 ♗e2 a6 7 c4 0-0, and 5...a6 6 ♗e2; for example, 6...♗e7 7 ♖c4 e4. In Walti-Shabalov, Suhr 1992, Black played the fascinating move 5...e4! (with the idea ...♗e5 or ...♖e5), leading to 6 ♖c4 ♗e7 7 ♗xc6 (7 ♖e2? ♖b8! and ...a6 or ...c6) 7...bxc6 (7...dxc6 gives active play and equality) 8 ♖e2 0-0 9 ♖g3?! (Odessky suggests 9 d3 d5 10 ♖d2) 9...d5 10 ♖e5 ♞d6?! (10...♞e8! with the idea ...♗d6 may produce some advantage) 11 f4! ♖e8, and now 12 c4! with the idea 12...f6?! 13 c5! ♞xc5 14 ♞c1 would favour White slightly.

Let's return to 3...d5 (D):



Here we have the Owen Defence Reversed, surely a position in which White can play for

advantage. Of course, as with many reversed openings, you'll find that White's extra move will sometimes tip Black off to the appropriate defence. For a more thorough discussion of this phenomenon, see Chapter 6.

4 ♗b5

This pin is consistent with everything we learned from the Owen. If White is reduced to 4 c4 d4 (4...♖f6 5 cxd5 ♖xd5 is a playable Reversed Sicilian), then he's admitting to having achieved nothing with 1 b3. And 4 ♖f3 can be met by 4...f6, or simply 4...e4 5 ♖d4 ♖xd4 6 ♗xd4 a6! (versus ♗b5+, which would follow if Black played 6...c5) 7 d3 (7 ♗e2 ♞g5!) 7...c5 8 ♗b2 ♖f6 9 ♗e2 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0, with even chances.

4...♗d6 5 f4

This is certainly the usual continuation in both the Owen and English Defences: when the f-pawn can't be captured, it makes sense to use it to break up the opposing centre. If Black defends e5 with pieces, then an exchange on e5 establishes a central majority. However, with the advance f4 come some problems, namely, a lack of development and exposure of the king-side, so it's worth noting that White has several less critical and less explored moves:

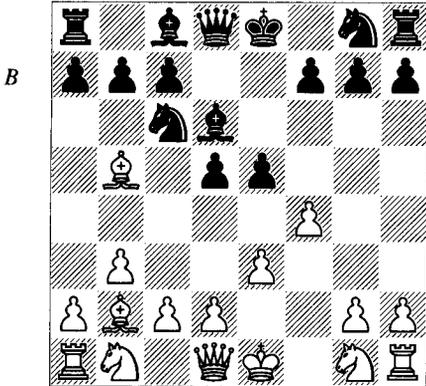
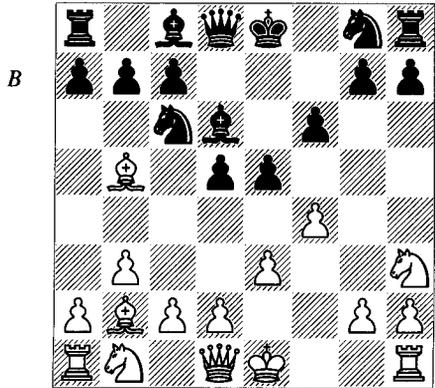
a) 5 ♖f3 f6 6 c4 (6 d4! is interesting; for example, 6...e4 7 ♖fd2 f5 8 ♖c4! with the idea 8...dxc4 9 d5) 6...a6 7 cxd5?! (7 ♗xc6+ bxc6 8 ♖c3) 7...axb5 8 dxc6 bxc6 with the bishop-pair and good central control.

b) 5 ♖e2 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 f4 ♗e6 8 ♖bc3 f6 and both sides have plenty of play. In fact, 5 ♖e2 would be a good starting point for your investigations.

c) 5 c4 dxc4 (or 5...♖e7) 6 bxc4 (6 ♗xc4 ♞g5! 7 ♖f3 ♞g6 is an interesting set-up) 6...♗d7! (6...♖e7 is also logical and sound) 7 ♖f3 ♖b4! (a remarkable move that seems to work; Palliser disapproves of 7...♞e7 8 c5! ♗xc5 9 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 10 ♖xe5, when White has a central majority, but Black has a bishop-pair after 10...♗d5 and this really isn't much) 8 ♗xd7+ ♞xd7 9 0-0 ♖d3! 10 ♞b3 ♖c5 and the exciting 11 ♞c2 e4! 12 ♗xg7? exf3! gave Black a superb attack in Van Arkel-Posch, corr. 1987. Instead, 11 ♞c3 needs to be tested, to which the best response is again 11...e4!, when a long forcing line would be 12 ♖e5! (12 ♞xg7 exf3 13 ♞xh8 0-0-0 gives obvious compensation)

12... ♖f5! 13 ♜xf7! ♚xf7 14 ♚xg7 ♜h5 15 h3
 0-0-0 16 ♜xh8 ♜e7 17 ♜f6 ♜f5! 18 f4! ♜g8
 19 ♜h2! ♜e7!? 20 ♜e5 ♜xg2+ 21 ♜xg2 ♜h4+
 22 ♜h1 ♜e2 23 ♜g1 ♜f3+ 24 ♜h2 ♜f2+ 25
 ♜h1 ♜f3+ with a draw by repetition.

We now return to 5 f4 (D):



After 5 f4, we'll look at two different games, each with defences borrowed from the white side of the Owen and English Defences.

Hässler – Pineault
corr. 1988

5...f6 6 ♜h5+

White seeks to weaken Black's kingside and at the same time soften up the a1-h8 diagonal. However, this is not necessarily his best course:

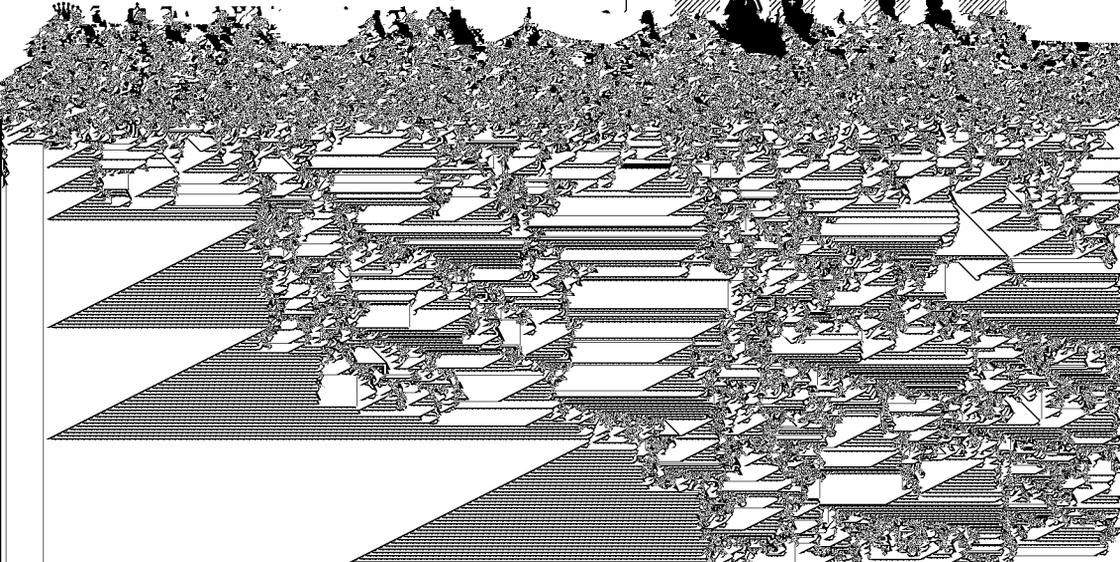
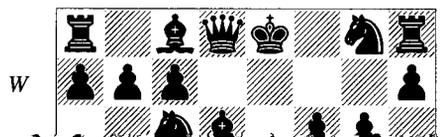
a) 6 fxe5?! fxe5 7 ♜xc6+ bxc6 8 ♜xe5?? is a blunder: 8... ♜h4+ (8... ♜xe5 9 ♜h5+) 9 g3 ♜e4 10 ♜xg7 ♜xh1! (10... ♜g4 11 ♜c3! ♜g6 12 ♜xh8 ♜xd1 13 ♜xd1 is almost equal!) 11

6... ♜ge7 7 fxe5 fxe5 8 0-0 ♜f5!, which he thinks can't be cracked. Surely White can get as much play here as in any other equal position. True, Odessky is convincing in his dislike for 9 ♜h5+ ♜g6 10 ♜f3 ♜d7; nor is he a fan of 9 ♜xc6+ bxc6 10 ♜f2 0-0 11 d3 ♜g6 12 e4 ♜e6. But White should attack the centre by 9 c4 a6 (9...0-0 10 cxd5 ♜b4 11 ♜f2! a6 12 ♜e2) 10 ♜xc6+ bxc6 and now 11 d4!?, threatening c5, or 11 ♜h5+ g6 12 ♜h4. As far as I can see, 6 ♜h3 is one of White's best opportunities in this 5...f6 line.

6...g6 7 ♜h4

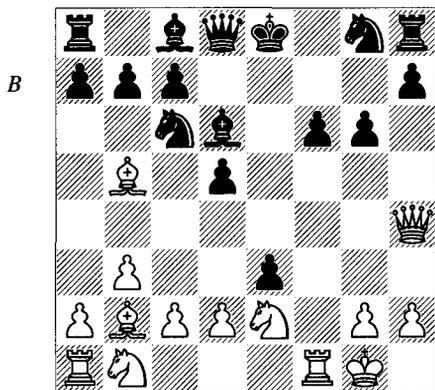
Now White has potential or actual threats to win the e5-pawn, which Black usually liquidates right away:

7...exf4 (D)



idea ... f5 already favours Black, but speeding things up by $9 \text{ d}3$! $a6$ $10 \text{ e}6$ $\text{xc}6$ $\text{bxc}6$ $11 0-0-0$ looks absolutely playable, and could even make Black uncomfortable) $9 \dots \text{ce}7$!?! (here $9 \dots \text{b}4$! looks promising; Black neglects his development, but attacks c2 and prepares to kick the bishop with ... $a6$, in some cases followed by an early ... $c5$) $10 \text{ e}5$!?! ($10 \text{ d}3$! $\text{f}5$ $11 0-0$! is very unclear) $10 \dots \text{g}7$, Gonsior-Novak, Czechoslovakia 1979. Suddenly Black threatens ... $\text{f}5$ and he's also ready to fortify the centre with ... $c6$; the knight on e5 isn't doing much.

b) Odessky suggests that $8 \text{ e}2$ may be best. Then Fontana Sotomayor-Palomar, Aragon 1992 was a short affair: $8 \dots \text{fxe}3$! ($8 \dots \text{f}8$!?! prevents $\text{xf}4$ and intends ... $\text{g}7$, but Black has to be careful following $9 0-0$! $g5$ $10 \text{ f}2$) $9 0-0$ (D) ($9 \text{ dxe}3 \text{ e}5$ holds the pawn comfortably).

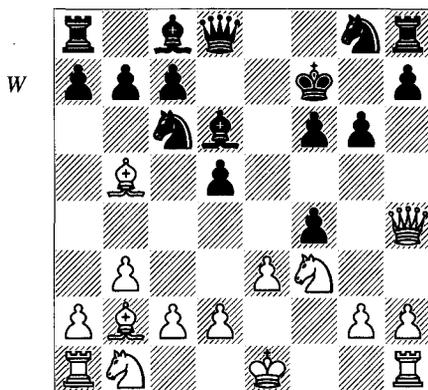


Let's look at the game first: $9 \dots \text{d}7$!?! $10 \text{ dxe}3 \text{ g}4$ $11 \text{ f}2 \text{ h}6$!?! (Black should stand well enough after $11 \dots a6$ or $11 \dots \text{d}7$ $12 \text{ f}4$ $0-0-0$ with the idea $13 \text{ dxd}5$?? $\text{h}5$) $12 \text{ bc}3$ $0-0$?? $13 \text{ dxd}5 \text{ h}5$ $14 \text{ e}f4 \text{ e}xf4$ $15 \text{ fxf}4 \text{ xd}5$ $16 \text{ e}c4$ and White won shortly.

The problem with this line (and, perhaps, with $8 \text{ e}2$!) is $9 \dots \text{d}7$!!, which frees the knight to go to e5 or b4 while clearing the way to castle queenside. A sample line would be $10 \text{ f}4$ ($10 \text{ dxe}3$!?! $\text{b}4$! $11 \text{ e}xd7$ + $\text{xd}7$; $10 \text{ e}xf6$?? $\text{xf}6$ $11 \text{ fxf}6 \text{ fxf}6$ $12 \text{ fxf}6 \text{ e}5$) $10 \dots \text{e}5$ $11 \text{ e}xd7$ + $\text{xd}7$ $12 \text{ dxd}5 \text{ e}2$ $13 \text{ e}1 0-0-0$ $14 \text{ xe}2 \text{ g}4$ $15 \text{ h}3 \text{ e}c5$ + $16 \text{ h}1$, and Black keeps the upper hand after $16 \dots \text{f}2$ + $17 \text{ fxf}2 \text{ e}xf2$ $18 \text{ fxf}2 \text{ xd}5$ $19 \text{ xa}7 \text{ c}6$, or by $16 \dots \text{h}5$ with the idea $17 \text{ hxg}4$!?! $\text{xd}5$ $18 \text{ c}3$? $\text{g}5$!.

$8 \dots \text{f}7$!?! (D)

$8 \dots \text{fxe}3$ $9 0-0$ increases the pressure on f6, but Black is temporarily two pawns up and may be able to consolidate: $9 \dots \text{e}c5$ ($9 \dots \text{f}8$ $10 \text{ dxe}3 \text{ e}7$ $11 \text{ d}c3$!?! $\text{xe}3$ + $12 \text{ h}1 \text{ ce}7$ $13 \text{ ae}1 \text{ h}6$ is unclear) $10 \text{ h}1$ (or $10 \text{ d}d4 \text{ d}6$ $11 \text{ dxe}3 \text{ e}d7$) $10 \dots \text{d}d6$ $11 \text{ dxe}3 \text{ g}e7$!, returning one pawn for development.



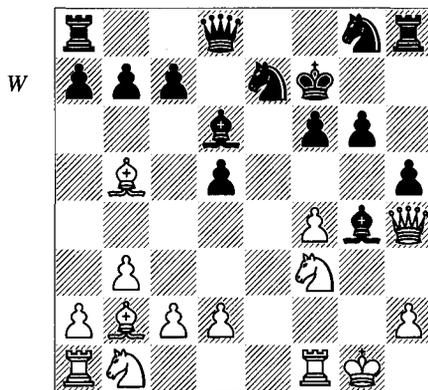
$9 0-0 \text{ ce}7$!?

$9 \dots \text{b}4$! is a good option, hitting c2 but also preparing ... $a6$.

$10 \text{ g}4$!?

To guard f5, but $10 \text{ d}3$! is much better, giving White fully-fledged chances.

$10 \dots \text{h}5$! $11 \text{ e}xf4 \text{ e}g4$ (D)



$12 \text{ e}5$ +

White didn't fare better with $12 \text{ g}5$!?! in Cataudella-Loiacono, corr. 1983: $12 \dots \text{g}7$ (or $12 \dots \text{fxg}5$ $13 \text{ fxg}5$ + $\text{f}5$ $14 \text{ e}xh8 \text{ gh}6$!) $13 \text{ f}5 \text{ dxf}5$! $14 \text{ e}e6$ + $\text{h}7$ $15 \text{ fxf}5 \text{ e}7$ $16 \text{ g}5$ + $\text{fxg}5$ $17 \text{ f}xg5 \text{ e}c5$ + $18 \text{ d}4 \text{ e}c3$ + $19 \text{ f}2 \text{ xg}5$

20 dxc5 d4 21 ♖xd4 ♗h3+ 22 ♖h1 ♜f8 23 ♜d2 ♜d5+ 24 ♖g1 ♜f4 0-1.

12...♖g7 13 ♖xg4 hxg4

Black also has the better game following 13...♗f5.

14 ♜xg4 ♗f5 15 ♗c3 ♜h4 16 ♜g2 ♖xf4?

Now things become unclear. Black is virtually winning after 16...c6! 17 ♗d3 ♗gh6 (threatening ...♜g4) 18 ♖xf5 ♗xf5 with ideas of ...♜b6+ or ...♜c7 and ...♜ah8.

17 ♜xf4 ♜xf4 18 ♗xd5 ♜h4 19 ♗d3 ♖h7

At this point, 20 ♖h1 ♗g3+ 21 ♖g1 ♗f5 draws by repetition, as does 20 ♗e3! ♗gh6 21 ♗d5 ♗g8. In the game, Black gained a small advantage and eventually won.

Now let's see a positional variation, with results that are more to White's taste.

Ljubojević – Portisch

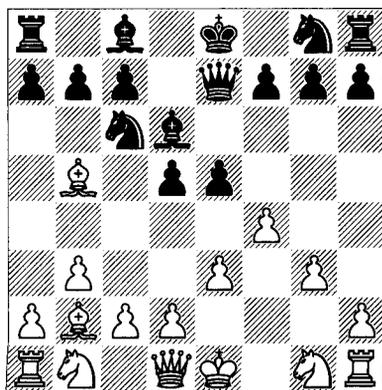
Teesside 1972

1 b3 e5 2 ♗b2 ♗c6 3 e3 d5 4 ♗b5 ♗d6 5 f4 ♜h4+

Apart from the 5...f6 of the previous game, 5...♜e7 is also played, with the same ideas as in this game. There are trade-offs, but I suspect that 5...♜h4+, weakening White's kingside, is slightly better.

6 g3 ♜e7 (D)

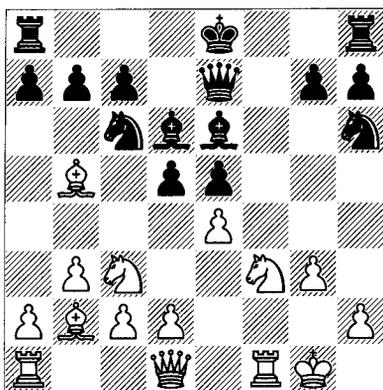
W



7 ♗f3 ♖g4

7...f6 is widely-played and recommended, but I think that the English Defence/Owen Defence idea 8 ♗c3! is harder to meet than has been evident in actual games: 8...♗e6 9 0-0 ♗h6 (the only move played in practice) 10 fxe5 fxe5 11 e4! (D).

B



11...d4 (11...dxe4 can be answered by 12 ♗xe4 0-0 13 ♜e2 or 12 ♖xc6+ bxc6 13 ♗xe4 0-0 14 ♜e2 with a pleasant positional advantage in both cases; for starters, note Black's isolated e-pawn and the outpost on e4) 12 ♗d5 ♜d7 (12...♜d8?? is met by the pretty combination 13 ♗xe5! ♖xe5 14 ♜h5+ ♗f7 15 ♜xf7! ♖xf7 16 ♜xe5+, and now 16...♖f8 17 ♖a3+ or 16...♗d7 17 ♜xg7 ♜f8 18 ♜xd4, etc.) 13 ♗g5! (or 13 c3) 13...♖g4 (13...0-0-0 14 ♗xe6 ♜xe6 15 ♜h5) 14 ♖e2 ♖xe2 15 ♜xe2 0-0-0 16 c3 with a central attack. This isn't hopeless for Black, but he has a hard time getting his pieces to decent squares.

8 fxe5

8 h3 ♖xf3 9 ♜xf3 ♗f6 saves Black a tempo.

8...♖xe5

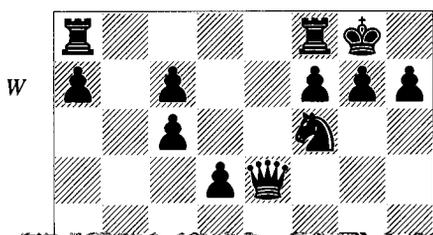
Watch out for the trick 8...♖xf3?? 9 exd6 ♜e4 10 ♗c3!, with the idea 10...♜f5 11 ♜f1 ♖xd1 12 ♜xf5 ♖xc2 13 ♜f2! (Odessky's move), or 10...♜g4 11 ♖e2 ♖xe2 (11...♗e5 12 ♗b5!) 12 ♜xe2 ♜xe2+ 13 ♖xe2 ♗f6 14 ♗b5 (or 14 dxc7).

9 ♖xe5 ♖xf3 10 ♜xf3 ♜xe5 11 ♗c3 ♗f6 12 ♖xc6+ bxc6 13 0-0

Zurek-Krajina, Czech Team Ch 1997/8 went 13 ♜f4 ♜xf4 14 gxf4 d4! 15 exd4 0-0-0 16 ♗e2 ♜he8 17 c3 c5! 18 dxc5 ♗e4! 19 ♜d1! (the only reasonable move) 19...♜d3! with the idea of ...♜f3 and ...♗f2, among others. Then 20 ♜g1! ♜f3 21 ♜xg7 ♗f2 22 ♜a1 ♗d3+ 23 ♖d1 ♗f2+ would have drawn.

13...0-0 (D)

This position has arisen many times over the years and gives White the kind of positional plus that he usually aims for when playing 1 b3. The hope is to win an endgame by exploiting



Prusikin-Bossert, Rieden 1966, but White didn't have to permit all this.

16...c5!?

16...♞c5 isn't necessarily bad, but the text-move is more aggressive.

17 ♜f1

Odessky analyses 17 ♜xa7 ♞b6 18 ♜a4 d4

5 Gambits

First, what *is* a gambit? In the broadest terms, it's the sacrifice of a pawn or two in the opening. Sometimes a piece sacrifice is also called a 'Gambit' (e.g., the Cochrane Gambit in the Petroff: 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗f6 3 ♗xe5 d6 4 ♗xf7), but I think that it's most accurate to restrict the term to pawn sacrifices, and to ones that arise in the early stages of the opening. Of course, there's a hazy line here between 'early stages' and later ones. In the Marshall Attack of the Ruy Lopez, for example, Black doesn't give up a pawn until his 8th move. Some might consider that more of a pawn sacrifice than a gambit. The distinction isn't important in that case; however, if you look at a long list of named gambits, you'll see that they almost all sacrifice a pawn within the first five moves, and very often on the second or third move.

Up to this point in the series, we haven't dealt with a great many gambits. To some extent, that's because they tend to be lacking in the standard themes that I've emphasized throughout. For example, we usually won't see much similarity in pawn-structures between a particular gambit opening and the more conventional openings that we are used to. Nevertheless, when taken as a set, gambits share fundamental characteristics. We shall see, for instance, that almost every gambit emphasizes free piece-play. In addition, most gambits are designed to control the centre, whether by the influence of pieces or by a superior pawn presence. In gambits which depend upon early attacks, that central advantage is often cashed in for tactical gains; in positional gambits, it tends to persist for a while. Oddly enough, there are two fundamentally opposed techniques by which a gambiteer tries to take charge of the middle of the board. In some gambits, a flank pawn is sacrificed for the opponent's central pawn, thus establishing a central majority. In others, para-

squares. Both approaches are perfectly legitimate; I'll talk further about this distinction below.

What about the person on the other side of the board, who is charged with defending against a gambit? What techniques are available to him? Broadly speaking, there are two basic approaches. Some players are happy to grab a pawn or two; they find that their extra material makes up for some temporary discomfort, and fully expect the pressure to abate after they play some accurate defensive moves. Other players, however, don't want the bother of defending against an attack, or of suffering under positional constraints, so they'll decline many or all gambits. Similarly, some will accept the gambit pawn(s), but then return them soon thereafter, in order to catch up in development or improve the central situation. In fact, there are gambits that have disappeared from ordinary practice because declining or returning the material proves so effective. In any case, all three of these methods of defence are justified in the appropriate situations.

How important are gambits? Because of their rarity at the highest levels, it's easy to underestimate their influence and utility. For each gambit mentioned in this chapter there corresponds one or more books, and/or sections of books, devoted to its investigation, along with articles and masses of master games. With a few exceptions, in fact, I can't possibly present a significant percentage of the theoretical details behind these openings because there is so much material. But I shall try to outline the most important variations and subvariations, along with what I think are the most critical defences. More importantly, I want to describe the basic ideas behind selected gambits, and point out their positive and negative qualities. It's true that some gambits are of dubious or marginal

without exposure to this unique opening form. In that context, the words of Grandmaster Alex Yermolinsky are enlightening:

“From the early days of my development as a chess-player I hated gambit play ... I just couldn’t accept this as chess ... All classic gambits seemed to lead to the same scenario: White (in most cases, but sometimes it can be Black – anyway, a gambiteer) has to rush things up, has to try to transform his short-lived initiative into an attack against the black king. If it works out, he wins a beautiful game ... if not – I don’t know, those games never seem to get published – maybe he loses?”

“Looking back I realize now, things were not so simple. My stubborn refusal to accept gambit play as an important part of chess strategy inevitably caused me to miss something. I missed a chance to learn how to play wide open positions, when your pieces seem to be hanging in the air, and there are maybe 2-3 moves given to you to create something, before they get exchanged or driven back. The hard work I had to put up to overcome this case of arrested development ... could have been easily avoided if I had given myself a little practice in my younger days.”

In what follows, I’ve looked at a few gambits in more detail than they would seem to merit from their frequency of use. That’s because, in contrast with positional openings, the precise move chosen in a gambit is often the difference between life and death. Interestingly, it’s sometimes easier to discover original ways of playing gambit openings, and defending against them, than it is to come up with new ideas in openings which are, at least superficially, under fewer constraints. I think that’s mainly because gambits haven’t undergone as thorough a reappraisal with the assistance of computers as have a number of the more mainstream openings. It turns out that there are numerous flaws in the analysis which has been handed down from author to author over the years, which is all the more reason to take an interest in this area.

Primitive Gambits

One large group of gambits consists of straightforward attacking enterprises. Here structural

issues and long-term gains are of considerably less concern than the immediate success of direct assault. Most of the time, this means that the gambiteer sacrifices a centre pawn for rapid development and open lines. I don’t use the word ‘primitive’ in a derogatory sense; after all, direct attack can be very effective. Let’s see some examples, starting with those classic gambits that Yermolinsky was referring to:

Danish and Göring Gambits

Many of the oldest gambits begin with 1 e4 e5, which is logical in view of the fact that 1 e4 is already the fastest developing move, and 1...e5 one of the most committal replies. The Danish Gambit is a fascinating attempt to jump all over Black from the outset, and you can certainly use it to play for a win, especially against opponents within your own rating range or somewhat higher. It’s not the kind of opening to play casually, however; without a fair amount of study, there a risk that you either won’t recover your material or that there will be an unfavourable simplification. Fortunately, the positional and tactical ideas are great fun to go over, so you’ll find yourself easily motivated.

Linden – Maczuski

Paris 1863

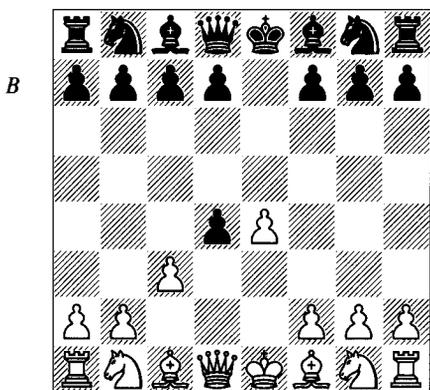
1 e4 e5 2 d4

This move-order doesn’t necessarily indicate that White wants to play a Danish Gambit, but it avoids the need to study openings beginning with 2 ♖f3 like 2...d6 and 2...♗f6. For example, the Göring Gambit begins 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3 dxc3 5 ♗xc3, yet 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 ♗xc3 will often come to the same thing. See the note to 4 ♗c4 below.

2...exd4 3 c3 (D)

With this move White makes it a gambit. 3 ♗f3 ♗c6 (other moves could be investigated) 4 ♗xd4 is a Scotch Game where White has bypassed the main-line Petroff. 3 ♖xd4 (the Centre Game), while by no means bad, loses time after 3...♗c6. For the consequences, I’ll refer you to the standard theoretical sources.

After 3 c3, White plans to sacrifice pawns in return for open lines and a direct attack on Black’s king. Before getting into the details in

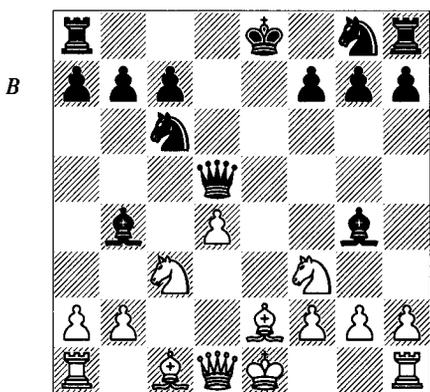


the next few notes, it's worth playing over the main game itself in order to get a feel for this fundamental idea.

3...dxc3

Most gambits can be declined, and at this juncture Black has several instructive ways to do so; for example:

a) 3...d5 4 exd5 ♖xd5 5 cxd4 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 (perhaps the best way to keep the queens on is 6 ♙e3, which Nigel Davies argues is more likely to produce complications; for example, an original piece placement arises after 6...♘f6 7 ♘c3 ♙b4 8 ♘e2!?, intending a3; then the most critical line is 8...♙g4! 9 h3!?, introducing another pawn sacrifice: 9...♙xe2 10 ♙xe2 ♖xg2 11 ♙f3 ♖g6 12 ♖b3 followed by 0-0-0, as suggested by Voigt and Müller) 6...♙g4 7 ♘c3 ♙b4 8 ♙e2 (D).



This is a position that can arise from the Göring Gambit via 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3 d5 5 exd5 ♖xd5 6 cxd4 ♙b4+ 7 ♘c3 ♙g4 8 ♙e2. Oddly enough, it can also come up in the

Chigorin Defence to the Queen's Gambit Declined! That is, from 1 d4 d5 2 c4 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 ♙g4 4 e3 e5 5 cxd5 ♖xd5 6 ♘c3 ♙b4 7 ♙e2 exd4 8 exd4.

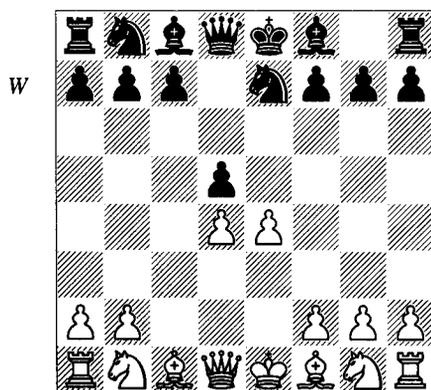
At any rate, the best-known solution was played by Capablanca: 8...♙xf3 9 ♙xf3 ♖c4, when White can't castle and c3 hangs, so he needs to commit:

a1) 10 ♖b3 ♖xb3 and now 11 ♙xc6+ bxc6 12 axb3 transposes to the 10 ♙xc6+ bxc6 11 ♖b3 line, while 11 axb3 ♘ge7 has proven solid for Black in many games.

a2) Marshall-Capablanca, Lake Hopatcong 1926 went 10 ♙e3!? ♙xc3+ (Black can also play 10...0-0-0, when 11 ♖b3 is pretty much forced anyway) 11 bxc3 ♖xc3+ 12 ♖f1 ♖c4+ 13 ♖g1 ♘ge7 14 ♖c1 ♖xa2 15 ♖a1 ♖c4 16 ♖c1 1/2-1/2.

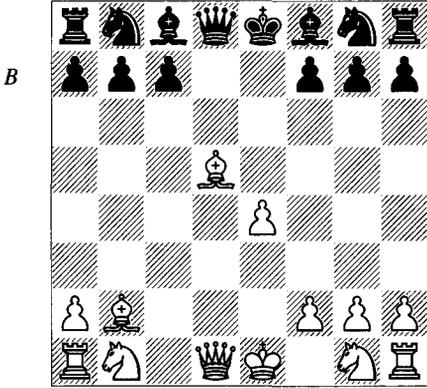
a3) 10 ♙xc6+ bxc6 11 ♖e2+ (11 ♖b3 ♖xb3 12 axb3 ♘e7 is thought to be equal; maybe all the weak pawns even out! But either side can press on with ambitions of winning) 11...♖xe2+ 12 ♖xe2 ♘e7 13 ♙e3 ♘f5 14 ♖hd1 0-0-0 15 ♖d3 ♖he8 16 ♖ad1 with balanced play, Velimirović-Ziatdinov, Kusadasi 1990. It's hard for either side to make real progress. Nevertheless, several positions along the way can be played for a win with either colour.

b) 3...♘e7 isn't played much, because Black seems to be cutting off his own pieces (the queen and f8-bishop). However, he wants to continue ...d5 and gain access to key light squares after White advances the e-pawn. A knight on the more natural square f6 would be subject to tempo-gaining e5 attacks. After 4 cxd4 d5 (D), White has to decide what to do about his e-pawn.



not be decisive, but it retains a strong attack for the two pawns.

c) 5...d5 is a very well-known idea. Black can either give back both pawns and seek equality, or try to hold on to one of them. Play continues 6 ♖xd5 (D) (6 exd5 blocks off White's attacking bishop, allowing 6...♟f6 7 ♜c3 ♙d6 with a solid extra pawn).



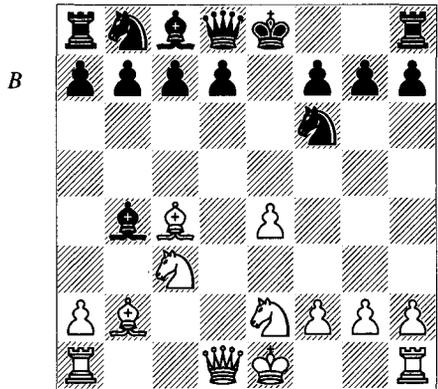
There is extensive theory here, and I'll try to present just enough for you to work with:

c1) 6...♟f6 is tricky: 7 ♖xf7+!? (this seemingly devastating move only wins a pawn, but re-establishes a material balance; 7 ♜c3!? ♜xd5 8 ♜xd5 is an ambitious way for White to retain more chances – then 8...♜d7! has the idea ...c6 and avoids the ancient trap 8...c6? 9 ♟f6+! gxf6 10 ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 11 ♖xf6+ 7...♜xf7 8 ♖xd8 ♙b4+ (Black's point) 9 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 10 ♜xd2. This simplified position was once regarded as favourable for Black because of his queenside majority, but it is probably about equal (after all, White has a kingside majority!). Play can continue 10...♞e8 11 ♜gf3 (or 11 ♖xf6?! gxf6 12 ♜of3 ♟e6 13 0-0 h6! intending ♙b7 ♞ad8

c22) 7 ♜c3 ♖xc3+ 8 ♙xc3 ♟f6, and once White has lost his attacking piece on d5, he may still have enough compensation for the pawn, but no more than that. His best line seems to be 9 ♖f3 ♜xd5 10 exd5 0-0 11 ♟e2, when in practice, the opposite-coloured bishops – favouring the attacker – have combined with prospects of ♟g3-h5 or ♟f4-h5 to produce balanced results.

c23) 7 ♜d2 (this maintains a threat on g7) 7...♖xd2+ (after 7...♟e7, White might play 8 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 9 ♖b3+ ♜d5! 10 0-0! ♖e7 11 exd5 and Black's king is exposed; 7...♟f8!? is a curious alternative, protecting g7 and dodging ♖a4+; the Danish Gambit is by no means worked out) 8 ♖xd2 ♟f6 9 ♖g5 (9 ♖c3!? is an alternative: 9...c6 10 ♙b3 0-0 11 ♜f3 ♙e6!? and here White might try 12 0-0 ♖e7 13 ♜d4!?) 9...0-0 10 0-0-0 ♖e7 11 ♟e2 with some attacking prospects. Black has a material plus, however, and 'dynamically equal' seems a fair verdict.

6 ♜c3 ♟f6 7 ♟e2 (D)

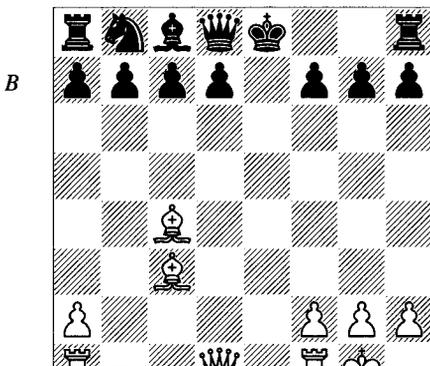


White develops calmly. Black has to be care

8...♗xc3 9 ♗xc3 ♕xc3?!

This fails, but again, 9...0-0 allows 10 ♗d5!, hitting the b4-bishop and threatening ♖g4. Then Black can try to hold on by 10...♖h4, but this quickly becomes depressing; e.g., 11 ♖c2 ♕a5 12 ♜ad1 ♗c6 13 ♜d3 d6 14 ♜g3 ♗e5 15 f4 ♗g6 16 ♗f6+! with the idea 16...gxf6 17 ♜xg6+ hxg6 18 ♖xg6+ ♖h8 19 ♕xf6+.

10 ♕xc3 (D)



to be a little more cooperative in allowing such attacks, but the Danish Gambit can still be fun to play today. Let's turn to its cousin, the Göring Gambit. I'm going to switch to heavier analytical mode, because it's so important to know precise moves if you're going to enter into either side of this opening.

Ciocaltea – Karaklajić
Smederevska Palanka 1971

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3 dxc3

Black may also decline the pawn. In the last game, we saw (by transposition) 4...d5 5 exd5 ♖xd5 6 cxd4 ♕g4 7 ♕e2 ♕b4+ 8 ♗c3. Here are two other ways:

a) 4...♗ge7 (D) closely resembles 3...♗e7 versus the Danish, and the ideas are the same.

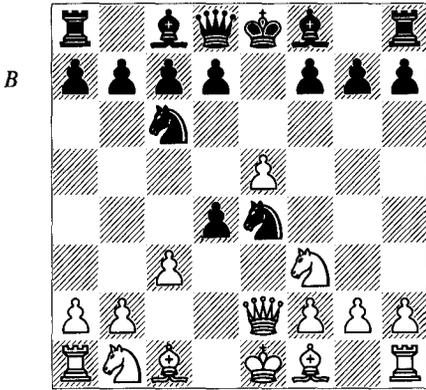
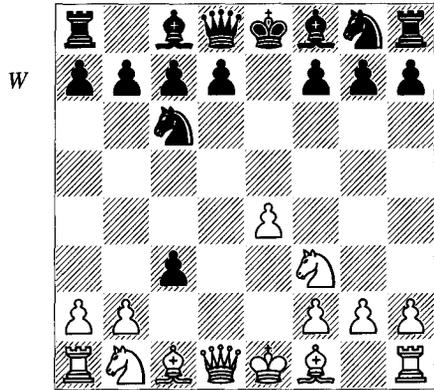


moves; instead, 10...c6? is hit by 11 ♖e1+ ♗e7 12 ♗xd5! ♜xd5 13 ♜b4) 8 ♜b3 ♗e6 9 ♜xb7 ♘a5 10 ♗b5+ ♘f8! 11 ♜a6 c5, threatening ...♗c8. Black has active counterplay.

a3) 5 cxd4 d5 6 e5 (6 ♘c3!? dxe4 7 ♘xe4 ♗e6 produces a typical isolani position) 6...♗g4 (6...♗f5!? contemplates ...♘b4 or ...♗e4) 7 ♗e2 ♘f5 8 ♗e3 ♗e7 (or 8...g6!?) 9 0-0 0-0 10 h3 ♘xe3 11 fxe3 ♗e6 with approximate equality; Black intends ...f6.

b) 4...♘f6 counterattacks the e-pawn and comes close to equalizing. Nevertheless, White may get a slight pull following 5 e5 ♘e4 6 ♜e2 (D).

We now return to 4...dxc3 (D):



White attacks Black's knight just when it's not well-positioned to retreat. The main line goes 6...f5 (6...♘c5 7 cxd4 costs Black too much time; according to theory, 6...d5 7 exd6 f5 is playable, but better for White) 7 exf6 d5 8 ♘bd2 d3!? (this leads to a lengthy forcing sequence; 8...♜xf6 9 ♘xe4 dxe4 10 ♜xe4+ ♜e6 11 ♗d3! dxc3 12 bxc3 is held to favour White very slightly) 9 ♜e3 ♗c5 10 fxg7 ♗g8 11 ♘d4 ♗xd4 12 cxd4 ♗f5 13 ♗xd3 ♜e7 14 ♗b5 0-0-0 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 ♘xe4 dxe4 (after 16...♗xe4 Black's weak queenside hurts him in the case of both 17 0-0! ♜xg7 18 g3 and 17 f3 ♜xg7 18 g3!) 17 ♜c3 (White can also get an edge with 17 ♜h6 ♜xg7 18 ♜xc6 ♜xg2 19 ♜a8+ ♘d7 20 ♜d5+ ♘e7 21 ♜e5+ ♗e6 22 ♗f1) 17...e3! (17...♜xg7 18 ♜xc6) 18 ♗xe3 ♗xg7, Iskov-Kaiszauri, Oslo 1980, and here 19 0-0! is suggested in *Informator*. Indeed, 19...♗h3 20 g3 ♗xf1 21 ♗xf1 is clearly better for White with his two pawns for the exchange and Black's queenside weaknesses.

5 ♘xc3

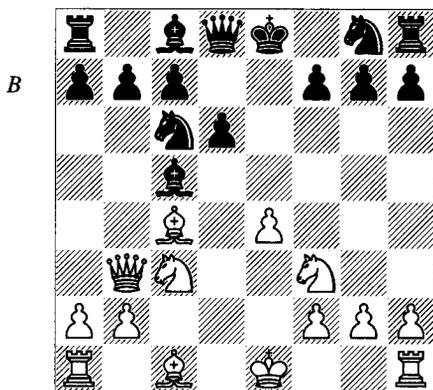
This distinguishes the Göring Gambit. White can also proceed in Danish Gambit style with 5 ♗c4, which opens up some new possibilities after 5...cxb2 (5...c2!?) 6 ♗xb2, but in the end, the simple 5...♘f6 (with the idea 6 e5 d5!) is probably best answered by 6 ♘xc3 or 6 0-0 d6 7 ♘xc3, transposing to other main lines below. 5...d6 also transposes after 6 ♘xc3, but if White is a lunatic, he can try Marshall's amazing response 6 ♜b3 ♜d7! (guarding f7 and threatening ...♘a5) 7 ♜xc3!??? (an apparent blunder) 7...d5! 8 exd5 ♗b4 9 dxc6 ♗xc3+ 10 ♘xc3 bxc6? (10...♜e7+! 11 ♗e3 ♘f6 12 0-0-0 0-0 is better; White can develop very rapidly, but a queen for two pieces is a lot!) 11 0-0 ♘e7? (however, 12 ♘e5 was threatened, and White has a real attack after 11...♜d6! 12 ♗e1+ ♘e7 13 ♗g5!) 12 ♗xf7+! ♘f8 13 ♗b3 ♗b7 14 ♗e3 ♘f5 15 ♗c5+ ♘d6 16 ♘d4 with a winning game, Marshall-Halper, New York 1941. More old-fashioned romanticism!

5...♗b4

This pin proves effective. After 5...d6 6 ♗c4, 6...♗e6 7 ♗xe6 fxe6 8 ♜b3 ♜d7 9 ♜xb7 ♗b8 10 ♜a6 has scored well for White in practice, while 6...♘f6 is seen in our next game. Again, White's sneaky move-order with 2 d4 (described in the last game) might have given White more leeway in these lines, since without having committed to ♘f3, he could play an early ♘ge2, f4 or even ♜b3, just to take the game out of mainstream theory.

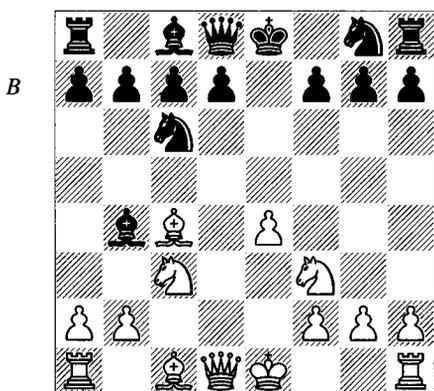
At any rate, it's easy for Black to go wrong in the Göring, and even fairly strong players can

get in trouble after 5...♙c5!? 6 ♙c4 d6 7 ♚b3 (D).



The most important line goes 7...♚d7 (with the idea ...♗a5; 7...♗a5 8 ♙xf7+ ♖f8 9 ♚a4 ♖xf7 10 ♚xa5 leaves Black's king a bit exposed, and the advance e5 will be a theme) 8 ♗d5!; for example, 8...♗ge7 (8...♗a5? 9 ♚c3 ♗xc4 10 ♚xg7) 9 ♚c3! 0-0 10 0-0 ♗g6?! (returning the pawn by 10...♗xd5 11 exd5 ♗e5! 12 ♗xe5 dxe5 13 ♚xe5 ♚e8 gives Black roughly equal chances) 11 b4 ♙b6 12 a4 ♗ce5 13 ♗xb6?! (13 a5! ♗xc4 14 ♚xc4 c6 15 axb6 cxd5 16 ♚xd5) 13...axb6 14 ♙b2 ♖h8? (14...♚c6!), Schlechter-Hromadka, Baden 1914, and now 15 ♗xe5 dxe5 16 f4! is very strong.

6 ♙c4 (D)



White really has to develop speedily at all costs.

6...d6

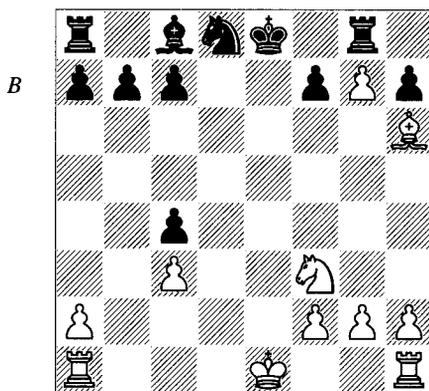
6...♙xc3+ 7 bxc3 d6 is also possible. It usually transposes (8 ♚b3, for example, is the note

to 7 0-0) but has the benefit of forcing White to capture with a pawn on c3. In principle, White could exploit this move-order with ♙a3 and e5, but that's hard to implement successfully.

Simply 6...♗f6 is a major option. Then the line 7 e5 d5 (7...♗e4?? 8 ♚d5) 8 exf6 dxc4 9 ♚xd8+ ♗xd8 10 fxg7 ♚g8 has been around for a long time. Now:

a) 11 0-0!? ♙xc3 (versus ♗d5) 12 bxc3 is a unique and little-tested approach. White gives up the g-pawn in order to gain pressure in the centre and on the queenside: 12...f6 (upon 12...♚xg7 13 ♚e1+, play can go 13...♙e6 14 ♙f4 ♚c8 15 ♚e2 with ideas of ♗d4 or ♗g5; nor is 13...♗e6 14 ♙h6 ♚g6 15 ♙f4 attractive) 13 ♚e1+ (13 ♗d4 ♖f7 14 ♙f4 c6 15 ♙d6 ♚e8 16 ♚fe1 ♗e6 17 ♙f8 ♙d7 18 ♗xe6 will be drawn) 13...♖f7 14 ♚e4!? b6! 15 ♙h6 ♙b7 16 ♚xc4 ♗e6 (16...♙xf3! 17 gxf3 ♖g6 18 ♙f4 c5 19 ♙g3 ♗e6) 17 ♗h4! ♙d5 18 ♚a4 ♗xg7 19 ♚d1 ♙e6 20 f3 ♗e8 21 ♙f4 ♗d6 22 ♙xd6 ♚gd8, and the action subsided in Ketola-A.Ivanov, ICCF email 2004.

b) Traditionally White plays 11 ♙h6 ♙xc3+ 12 bxc3 (D).



Now Black has pursued two main paths. The resulting lines are very concrete:

b1) Black may or may not stand satisfactorily after 12...♗e6 13 0-0-0, but it's easy to fall into trouble; for example, 13...♗xg7 (13...♗c5? 14 ♗g5 ♗d3+ 15 ♚xd3! cxd3 16 ♗xh7 ♖e7 17 ♚e1+ ♙e6 18 f4 f5 19 g4 ♖d6 20 gxf5 ♙xf5 21 ♗f6 with a winning game, Levy-Karaklajić, Cienfuegos 1972) 14 ♚he1+ (or 14 ♗h4!?) 14...♗e6 (14...♙e6 15 g4! and now 15...♚d8?! 16 ♗d4! ♚d5 17 f4 ♖d8 18 ♙xg7 ♚xg7 19

♖xe6 1-0 was Dolgov-Kudriatsev, corr. 1993, but 15...♗e7 16 ♘h4 is also difficult for Black) 15 ♙f4 ♙d7 (15...f6! 16 ♙xc7 ♗f7) 16 ♙xc7 ♙c6 17 ♘d4! ♚xg2?? (17...♙xg2 18 f4!) 18 ♘xc6! bxc6 19 ♙g3, when the rook on g2 is trapped and can't get out without material concessions, Dolgov-Walter, ICCF corr. 1990.

b2) 12...f6! 13 0-0-0 ♗f7 can lead to interesting play, although sometimes it peters out because of the opposite-coloured bishops: 14 ♙d4!? (14 ♘d4 ♗g6! seems to equalize; for example, 15 ♙f4 ♚xg7 16 ♚he1 ♙d7 17 ♘b5 ♚xd1+ 18 ♚xd1 ♘e6 19 ♘xc7 ♘xc7 20 ♙xc7 is dead drawn) 14...♗g6 15 ♚h4 c6 (15...♘e6 should be equal) 16 ♙d1 ♙f5 17 ♙e3 ♙d3?! 18 ♚g4+ ♗f7 19 ♘e1! h5 20 ♚h4 ♙f5 21 ♚f4 ♙g4 22 f3 ♙e6 23 ♙d4 ♗xg7 24 ♙xf6+ ♗g6 25 ♙d6 and White was winning in Dolgov-Kaverin, corr. 1991.

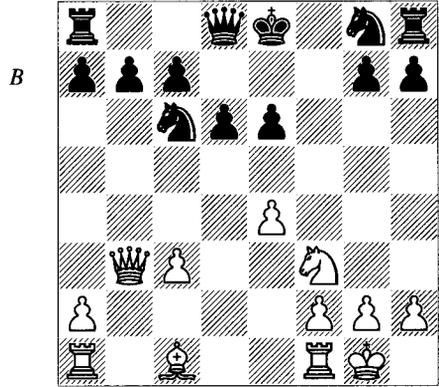
We now return to 6...d6 (D):



8...♙g4!?

This is Black's most dynamic move, but perhaps not his best.

a) 8...♙e6 is a popular and extremely important alternative. There usually follows 9 ♙xe6 fxe6 10 ♗b3 (D).



Now Black has two ways to protect e6, and some fascinating attacking themes result from both:

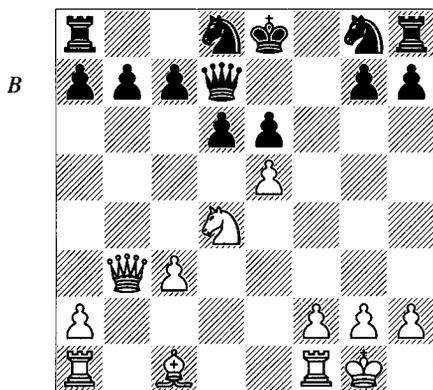
a1) With 10...♗c8, Black decides that he wants to look after his b7-pawn as well: 11

13...♖d7 (13...♘e7 doesn't prevent 14 f5!, in view of 14...exf5 15 exf5 ♘xf5?? 16 ♗b5+, picking up the knight on f5; instead 14...e5! can't be too bad; then White has time to play slowly, and might begin by trying to probe the kingside by 15 ♘f2 and ♘g4) 14 ♔a3!?! (now 14 f5 e5 with ...♘f6 is ineffective for White; on the other hand, 14 ♔e1 is a good slow move, with the idea e5) 14...♖c6 15 ♘h1!?! (15 e5 is consistent with 14 ♔a3) 15...♘e7 16 ♔ae1 0-0 17 f5 a5 18 ♘f4 a4 19 ♖d1 e5? (a bad mistake; Black has played nearly perfectly, and now simply 19...♖c4! or even 19...♖xc3 20 ♗f3 ♖c4 leaves White short of compensation) 20 ♘h5 (suddenly moves like ♗g4, ♗f3 and ♔c1, intending to capture on h6, are extremely hard to answer) 20...♖c8? (20...♖c4 21 f6! ♘g6 22 ♔c1! ♘e6 23 ♗g4 ♘h7 24 ♘g1! protects f1 and prepares fxg7), and now 21 ♗g4! would pretty much have won outright: 21...♖d7 22 ♔c1 ♘h8 23 ♗g6 ♖f7 24 ♔xh6!, etc.

a2) 10...♖d7 has a fair reputation, returning the pawn on b7. However, the position is relatively unexplored. For example, White might try the simple 11 ♘d4, which threatens ♖xb7 as well as a capture on e6 (the book line is 11 ♖xb7 ♗b8 12 ♖a6, when 12...♘f6!, with good piece-play, is almost certainly better than 12...♘ge7 13 ♔e3 0-0 14 ♗ab1 with an edge for White). Then:

a21) White's centre gives him compensation after 11...♘d4 12 cxd4 b6 (12...0-0-0 13 ♗b1 b6 14 a4! is no fun for Black) 13 d5!, in view of 13...e5 14 f4 exf4 15 ♔b2! or 13...exd5 14 ♖xd5 c6 15 ♗b3, for example, when 15...♘f6 16 f3 0-0-0 17 a4!?! ♗he8 18 a5 b5 19 ♔f4 a6 20 ♗fd1 gives White ongoing pressure.

a22) 11...♘d8 12 e5! (D).



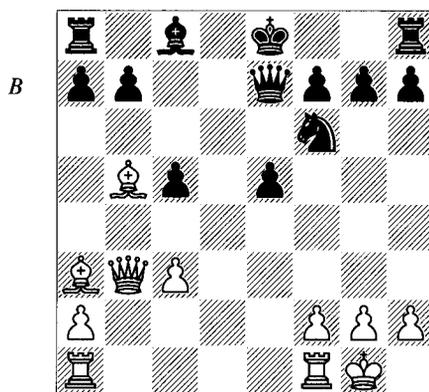
I don't believe that this line has been tried, but to me it doesn't look easy for Black at all. He should probably play 12...d5 (12...dxe5 13 ♘f3 has ideas of ♔a3, ♘xe5 and ♗d1; 12...♘e7 13 exd6 cxd6 grants White good chances by 14 ♔g5 or 14 ♔e1 d5 15 ♔a3 0-0 16 ♗ad1, intending 17 c4, which Black can't stop by 16...♗c8, because after 17 c4!, 17...♗xc4? loses to 18 ♘xe6!) 13 ♔a3 ♘e7 14 c4 (or 14 ♗ad1 0-0 15 c4 c6 16 f4!) 14...c6 15 f4, when White intends 15...0-0 16 f5! with the initiative: 16...exf5 17 e6!?! ♖c7 18 cxd5 cxd5 19 ♔xe7 ♗xe7 20 ♖xd5 g6 21 ♗ac1.

b) 8...♘f6 is an established main line. Then 9 ♔a3 ♔g4! 10 ♖b3 0-0 and 9 ♘g5 0-0 10 f4 ♗e7 don't impress, which leaves:

b1) The speculative 9 ♔e1!?! 0-0 10 ♗b1 gives White positive chances in a less simplified position than in the lines after 9 ♖b3.

b2) 9 e5 and now 9...♘xe5 10 ♘xe5 dxe5 11 ♖b3 ♗e7 12 ♔a3 transposes to the main position below, but with this move-order, Black can also play 9...dxe5, when 10 ♖c2 0-0! 11 ♔a3 yields full compensation (but no more than that) after 11...h6 or 11...♘a5. This is more dynamic than 10 ♘g5 0-0 11 ♔a3 ♖xd1 12 ♗axd1 ♔f5.

b3) 9 ♖b3 ♗e7 10 e5!?! (10 ♔g5 0-0 11 ♗ae1 is risky; White would then reorganize to play f4) 10...♘xe5 11 ♘xe5 dxe5 12 ♔a3 c5 13 ♔b5+ (D).



This position has been played in many games and has led to numerous draws. Black can safely give his extra material back by 13...♘d7 14 ♗ad1 0-0 (but not 14...b6? 15 ♔c6) 15 ♔xd7 ♔xd7 16 ♖xb7 ♗fd8, etc. He also has the

underrated alternative of 13...♔d7 14 ♟xd7+ ♞xd7 15 ♟xc5 ♚e4! 16 ♟a3 ♚d2! 17 ♞b4! 0-0-0! 18 ♜fd1 ♞c6. Finally he can choose the ambitious 13...♟f8!?, with ideas of ...a6 and ...b5 or simply ...b6, while the king can get away with ...♟g8 and ...h6 or ...h5. In practice, Black has done well in this position following 14 f4! e4 15 f5, although it's still unclear. At any rate, White should check out his earlier options before entering this 10 e5 (or 9 e5) line.

9 ♞b3

The only way to fight for the initiative, hitting f7 and b7. Black jumps at the opportunity to expose White's king.

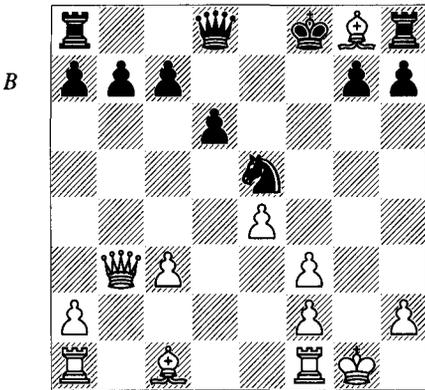
9...♟xf3

9...♞d7?! turns out badly following 10 ♚g5 ♚d8 11 e5!, intending 11...dxe5? 12 ♜e1.

10 ♟xf7+ ♟f8 11 gxf3

11 ♟xg8 ♜xg8 12 gxf3 and now 12...♚e5 transposes, but 12...♞d7 is more complex.

11...♚e5 12 ♟xg8 (D)



12...♜xg8

Alternatively, Black can grab the pawn but expend precious time by 12...♚xf3+?! 13 ♟g2 ♚h4+ 14 ♟h1 ♜xg8 15 ♞xb7!? (or 15 ♜g1 with the idea 15...♞f6 16 ♜g3) 15...♞c8! 16 ♞xc8+ ♜xc8 17 ♞b1, when White has the more active pieces in the ending.

13 f4! ♚f3+ 14 ♟g2 ♚h4+

14...♚xh2!? 15 ♞h1 ♚g4 16 ♞xb7 favours White; Black's rook on g8 is very passive.

15 ♟h1 ♞d7

At this point, the game continued 16 f5? ♞c6 17 f3 ♜e8, and with the threat of ...♞xe4, Black equalized. Instead, White should play 16 f3! (16 c4 is also good, but achieves less following

16...♞g4 17 ♞g3 ♞e2 18 ♟e3 ♚g6 19 e5 or 16...♜e8 17 f3 ♞h3 18 ♜f2) 16...♞h3 (16...♞c6 doesn't seem to improve after 17 c4 ♜e8 18 ♞d3) 17 ♜f2. Black can't make significant progress and White's advantage is clear; for example, 17...♞b8 18 ♟e3 b6 19 ♜g1 ♚g6 20 ♜g3 ♞d7 21 f5 ♚e5 22 ♜g2, etc.

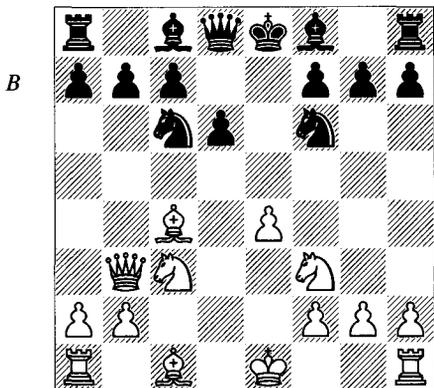
Przybyla – Sapa

Polish corr. Ch 1992-4

1 e4 e5 2 ♚f3 ♚c6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3 dxc3 5 ♟c4 d6 6 ♚xc3 ♚f6

This normally leads to a complex forcing line that White has a hard time avoiding. The 'Danish' move-order would be 1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 ♚xc3 ♚c6 5 ♟c4 ♚f6, when 6 ♚f3 d6 is the main line in this game. Instead, White could try to avoid theory by 6 ♞e2!? (6 ♚ge2 allows 6...♟c5 with easy development for Black) 6...♟c5 (6...d6 7 ♟g5 ♟e7 8 0-0-0 may not favour White, but at least it's unique; f4 is a theme, for example) 7 ♚f3 0-0 8 ♟g5 with the idea 0-0-0. However, this is a speculative notion that should be reserved for lower-level adventures.

7 ♞b3 (D)



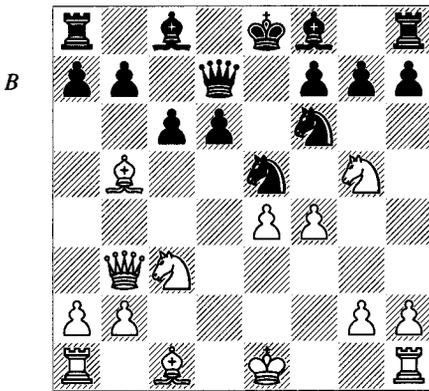
White needs to counter the straightforward idea of ...♟e7 and ...0-0, and it's also desirable to quash the defensive move ...♟e6.

7...♞d7!

7...♞e7 is logical, attacking e4 preparing ...♚e5, but putting the queen on the dangerous e-file is risky and (unlike 7...♞d7) it doesn't threaten to simplify by ...♚a5. Fehlhammer-K.U.Müller, Bundesliga 1992/3 continued 8 0-0

♘e5 9 ♘xe5 dxe5 10 ♙g5 c6 (versus ♘d5), and now instead of 11 f4?! (when 11...♙e6! was correct), White had the powerful 11 ♚fd1!. Then 11...h6? 12 ♙xf6 ♚xf6 (or 12...gxf6 13 ♘b5!) 13 ♘b5! is killing, since Black can't stop ♘c7+. After 11...a6?!, White's other tactical point appears: 12 ♙xf7+! ♚xf7 13 ♚d8+ ♗e7 14 ♚b6!, threatening ♚xc8 or ♚ad1. Nor does 11...♙e6 improve matters after 12 ♘d5! with a terrific attack. Finally, 11...♙g4 allows White a better ending after 12 ♘b5 ♙xd1 13 ♚xd1, or White can enter into 12 f3 ♙e6 13 ♘d5! cxd5 14 exd5 b5! 15 ♙xb5+ ♙d7 16 d6 ♚d8 17 ♙xd7+ ♚xd7 18 f4! with a strong attack.

8 ♙g5 ♘e5 9 ♙b5 c6 10 f4 (D)



A very important position in the Göring Gambit. Surprisingly, it isn't that well worked out.

10...cxb5

Or:

a) The other major move is 10...♘eg4, when I'll just give a typical example out of the scores that have been played: 11 h3!? (11 ♙d3 and 11 ♙e2 are the main alternatives) 11...cxb5 12 hxg4 h6 13 ♘xb5!? d5 (13...a6 14 ♘c3 b5 is unclear) 14 ♙e3 a6 15 ♘c3 ♚xg4? 16 e5! ♚g3+ 17 ♙f2 ♚xf4 18 exf6 ♚xg5 19 0-0! ♙d6 20 fxg7 ♚g8 21 ♚ae1+ ♙e6, Schulz-Volbert, corr. 1981, and here the easiest win was 22 ♚a4+ b5 (22...♗d8 23 ♙h4) 23 ♘xb5 axb5 24 ♚xb5+ ♗d8 25 ♚b7; for example, 25...♚c8 26 ♚xe6! fxe6 27 ♙b6+ ♚c7 28 ♙xc7+ ♙xc7 29 ♚f8+.

b) 10...♘g6 11 ♙d3 (11 e5!? h6 12 exf6 hxg5 13 0-0 cxb5 14 ♘d5 was complex and fascinating in Mastrovasilis-Ovod, Groningen

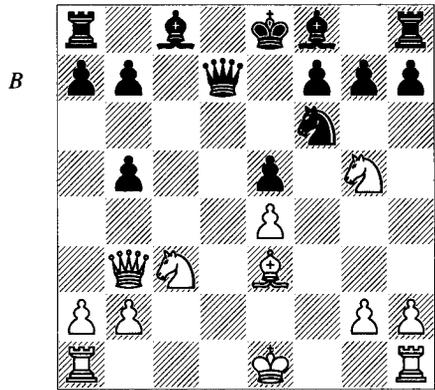
1999; 11 ♙c4?! d5! 12 exd5 ♙c5 13 ♙d2 ♚e7+ 14 ♘d1 0-0 15 h3 b5 favoured Black in Lutikov-Lisitsyn, Leningrad 1951) 11...h6 12 ♘f3. This position has arisen many times and is still unresolved; for example, 12...♚c7 13 ♚c2 (13 0-0 ♚b6+) 13...♙g4 14 0-0 ♚b6+ 15 ♗h1 0-0-0 16 h3 ♙xf3 17 ♚xf3 with satisfactory compensation for White, but no more than that.

11 fxe5 dxe5

11...♘g4?! permits White to grab the initiative by 12 e6! fxe6 13 ♘xb5 (threatening ♘xe6) 13...a6 14 ♘d4 e5 15 ♘de6 h6 16 ♚c4!; for example, 16...b5 17 ♘c7+ ♗d8 18 ♘f7+ ♗e7 19 ♙d5.

12 ♙e3 (D)

White wants to combine ♚d1 and ♘xb5. After 12 ♘b5 a6 13 ♘c3 ♙c5!, Black activates quickly and remains a pawn to the good.



12...a5!

Long experience has shown the worth of this move, whose main point is to drive White's queen away by ...a4, but has the added benefits of securing b4 for a bishop and in some cases preparing ...♚a6. Instead, 12...♙d6 13 ♚d1 0-0 14 ♘b5 ♘e8 15 0-0 threatens multiple captures on d6, although instead of the known 15...♚e7? 16 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 17 ♚xd6! ♚xd6 18 ♚xf7, 15...h6! limits the damage: 16 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 17 ♘xf7!? (17 ♚xf7 ♘xf7 18 ♚xd7 ♙xd7 19 ♘xf7 ♚xf7 20 ♚xb7 ♚e8 favours White, and yet Black has his chances) 17...♚xf7 18 ♚xd6 ♚xd6 19 ♚xf7+ ♗h7 20 ♚d5. White may pick up a pawn, but the opposite-coloured bishops complicate matters.

13 0-0

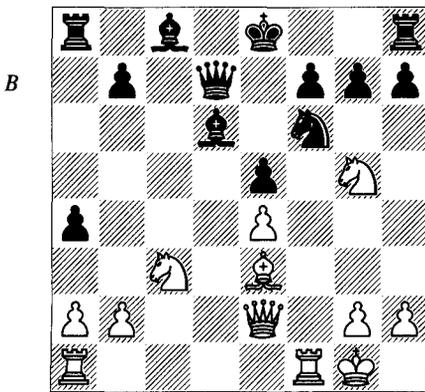
White remains a pawn down after 13 ♖d1 a4! 14 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 15 ♘xb5 ♙b4+.

13...a4 14 ♗xb5 ♙d6!

Covering e5. Obviously, 14...♗xb5 15 ♘xb5 can't be good for Black, and after 14...h6 15 ♖ad1 ♗xb5 16 ♘xb5 ♙e7 17 ♘c7+ ♙f8 18 ♘f3! White wins material, in view of 18...♙a5 19 ♙b6 ♙c5+ 20 ♙xc5+ ♖xc5 21 ♖d8+ ♙e7 22 ♖xh8.

15 ♗e2! (D)

Keeping the pressure on. After 15 ♖ad1 ♗xb5 16 ♘xb5 ♙b8, Black has successfully guarded his pieces.



15...h6

This forces the pace, and it may well be the best continuation. Black has tried several other moves here, including 15...♙a6 and 15...♗g4. 15...0-0? was played by none other than a young Alexander Grishchuk versus Fluvia Poyatos (World Under-16 Ch, Oropesa del Mar 1998). The game continued 16 ♖xf6! gxf6 17 ♘h7! ♘h7 18 ♗h5+ ♙g8 (18...♙g7 19 ♗h6+ ♙g8 20 ♖f1 ♙e7 21 ♖f5! forces 21...♗xf5 22 exf5 and White will follow with either ♘d5 or ♘e4) 19 ♘d5 ♙e7 20 ♖f1 f5, and here instead of 21 ♖xf5? ♙a6!, when Black was defending, White had simply 21 ♖f3! f4 22 ♖h3 ♗xh3 23 ♘xe7+ ♙g7 24 gxh3 fxe3 25 ♗xe5+ with a winning position, since he can reposition his knight to d5 and f6.

16 ♖xf6! gxf6 17 ♘d5 ♙f8?

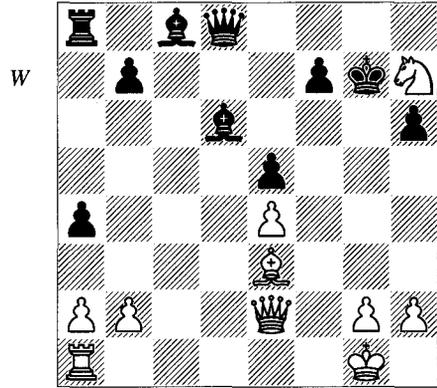
17...♙e7 18 ♘e6! fxe6 19 ♗h5+ ♙f8 and now 20 ♙xh6+ ♖xh6, etc., is a draw. White can try for more by 20 ♘b6, but 20...♗b5 21 ♙xh6+ ♖xh6 22 ♗xh6+ ♙g8 23 ♗g6+ ♙f8 24 ♘xa8 ♗xb2 probably leads to a draw anyway.

18 ♘xf6 ♗d8 19 ♘gh7+! ♖xh7

19...♙g7? 20 ♙xh6+! ♘xh6 21 ♗h5+ ♙g7 22 ♗g5#.

20 ♘h7+ ♙g7? (D)

But after 20...♙g8 21 ♗h5 ♙e7 22 ♖d1 White keeps a powerful attack going.



21 ♗h5! ♙xh7 22 ♖f1 f5

After 22...♙e6 23 ♗xh6+ ♙g8 24 ♖f3 ♙g4 25 ♖g3 White can win in several ways; for example, 25...♗d7 26 ♗h5! ♗c8 27 ♙h6!.

23 ♗xh6+ ♙g8 24 ♗g6+ ♙h8 25 exf5 1-0

White threatens ♖f3-h3 as well as ♙g5 and f6.

There's a lot of life in some of these almost-forgotten gambits. I've given a lot of details in this section, so that you can pick up this opening right away if you're interested.

Milner-Barry Gambit

The Danish and Göring Gambits are classic examples of 1 e4 e5 gambits which jettison central pawns for development and attack. The same idea can be used against other openings. Here's an example from the French Defence.

R. Moyer – B. Kaczmarek

corr. 1969

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 ♘c6 5 ♘f3 ♗b6

This is the traditional main line of the Advance Variation.

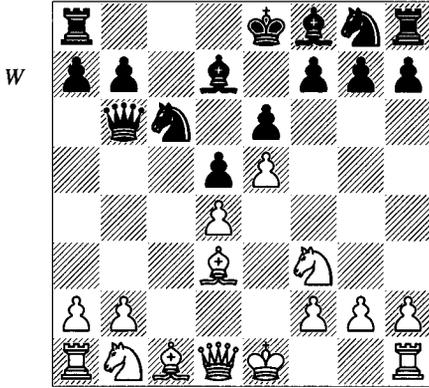
6 ♙d3

In the vast majority of cases, White plays this move with the intention of gambiting the d-pawn. We saw 6 ♙e2 in the introductory

Chapter 3 of Volume 1, and 6 a3 is also played; both of those moves keep White's d-pawn defended by the queen on d1.

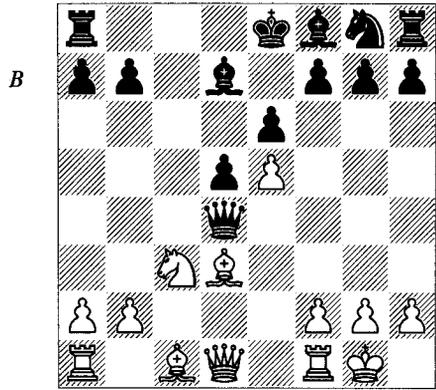
6...cxd4 7 cxd4 ♕d7 (D)

Black prepares to capture on d4. Notice that 7...♗xd4?? loses a piece to 8 ♖xd4, since 8...♙xd4?? 9 ♕b5+ costs Black his queen.



8 0-0

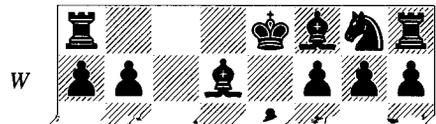
Formally speaking, it is this move that introduces the Milner-Barry Gambit. White's d-pawn cannot be comfortably defended, since 8 ♕e3? allows 8...♙xb2, and 8 ♕c2 runs into 8...♗b4 9 ♕b3 (to preserve the bishop-pair generally, and his good bishop in particular; 9 ♕a4 ♙a6! threatens ...♗d3+) 9...♙a6!, preventing castling and preparing ...♗d3+. White can also gambit the pawn with 8 ♖c3 first, which normally transposes after 8...♗xd4 if White continues with the natural 9 ♗xd4 ♙xd4 10 0-0 (10 ♙e2 has the drawback that Black can play 10...f6!; compare the next note). Here the bold move 9 ♖g5!? is sometimes tried and might be fun to play, although like other slower moves in the Milner-Barry, it allows Black to retreat and attack the e-pawn via 9...♗c6!



After 10 ♖c3, we should ask what White has for his pawn, and why he is offering Black another one. Essentially, the answer is the same as in the Danish and Göring Gambits: he has cleared out central lines and taken a lead in development. But there are some differences: in those double e-pawn examples, White controlled the centre with a pawn on e4 facing one on d7 or d6. Here he faces a central majority of pawns and a very solid black pawn-structure. Thus White has little long-term compensation, and the onus falls on him to drum up quick action with his pieces.

10...♙xe5 (D)

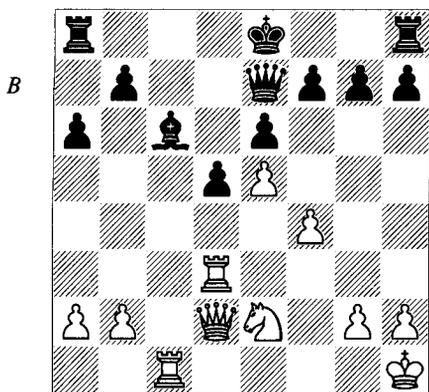
Now it's a truly 'primitive' gambit, with both centre pawns cleared away. While 10...♙xe5 is the riskiest move, losing still more time without developing, it is in some sense the most principled: Black gains not only a key central pawn, but a 2:0 majority in the centre. In the next game we see 10...a6.



Black loses even more time in this way. He should return one of the pawns and get devel-

b4 ♖xb4 20 ♖xd5+! 1-0 Brandao-Wellington,
Banco do Nordeste do Brasil Ch 1999.

to exchange queens, so (ignoring many of the theoretical details), scores of games have continued 14 ♖d1 ♜xd3 15 ♜xd3 ♚b6! (15...♙c4 16 b3 ♚c7 17 ♚b2 gives White good compensation; after 17...b5, both 18 f5 and the more positional 18 ♜d1 intending ♜e3 are promising) 16 ♚e3 ♚c5 17 ♚xc5 ♚xc5 18 ♚d2! (Black has done very well after 18 f5 ♚c6! intending ...0-0-0 and ...exf5 with ...♚e7 in some order) 18...♚c6 19 ♜c1 ♚e7 20 ♜e2! (D).



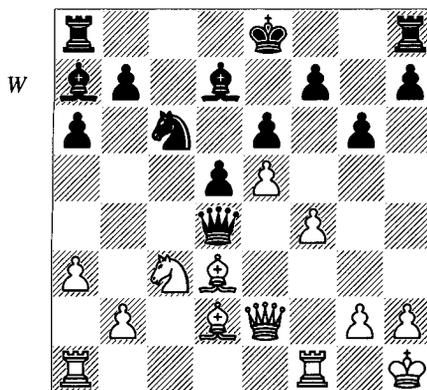
After most of the attacking themes are gone or have been put on hold, White still has long-term compensation worth roughly a pawn. We can see that Black's bishop on c6 is bad, and that a white knight on d4 will be a force to reckon with. An early example of this position went 20...0-0 (Black can bail out at this point with 20...♚b5; for example, 21 ♜dc3 0-0 22 ♜d4 ♚d7 23 ♜c7 ♜ab8 24 ♚a5 ♜fc8 25 g3 ♚e8 26 ♚b6 ♚c6!, giving the pawn back for equality) 21 ♜d4?! (more accurate is 21 ♜dc3 or 21 ♜g3 with the idea f5) 21...♜ac8 22 ♜g3 f6 23 f5?! (fancy-looking, but White should play to restrict the bishop further by 23 ♚e1 ♚d7 24

b) 14 a3 takes b4 away from Black's queen, but is slow: 14...♚a7 (or 14...♜a5) 15 ♚d2 g6 16 b4 ♚b6 (16...b5! is a good option) 17 ♚g4 ♜d4 18 ♚e3 ♚d8 19 ♜ad1 ♜c8, Cubas-An.Rodriguez, Mar del Plata Zonal 2001.

14...♜b4

Experience demonstrates that 14...♚a7 is also good.

15 ♚b1 ♚a7 16 a3 ♜c6 17 ♚d3 g6 (D)



18 ♜ac1

18 b4 transposes to Cubas-An.Rodriguez above.

18...♚b6 19 b4 ♜d4 20 ♚d1 ♜f5 21 ♜a4

It's hard to see what else to do.

21...♚d8 22 ♜c5 ♚c6!?

22...♚xc5 23 ♜xc5 b6 24 ♜c1 ♚b5 secures the extra pawn.

23 ♜xa6

A typical French Defence pawn sacrifice for light-square control follows 23 ♚xf5 gxf5 24 ♚e3 (24 ♜xa6 d4): 24...d4! 25 ♚xd4 ♚xd4 26 ♚xd4 ♜g8 with ...0-0-0 or ...♜d8 to come.

23...♜e3 24 ♚xe3 ♚xe3 25 ♜c2 0-0 26 ♚a1

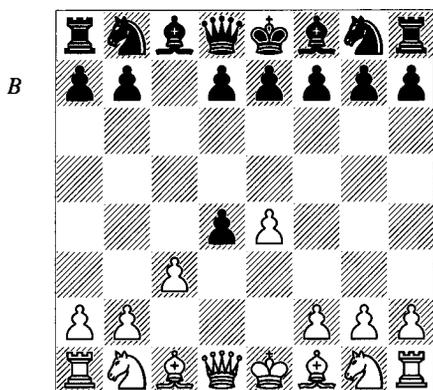
White is in bad shape. After 26 ♜c5 d4 27 b5

have been written about the Morra, including whole ones about specialized subvariations, so I'll have to be content with presenting a structural overview that concentrates upon the most important variations. In doing so, I'll attempt not to skimp *too* much on details so that the reader can get a good start on a Morra and/or anti-Morra repertoire. My apologies in advance for the density of coverage; these are unruly lines, and sometimes the moves are more important than the explanations!

Hardarson – de Firmian Copenhagen 1999

1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 (D)

White offers a pawn. Notice how the combination of 2 d4 and 3 c3 resembles the Danish and Göring Gambits.



3...dxc3

Most of the time, Black takes up the chal-

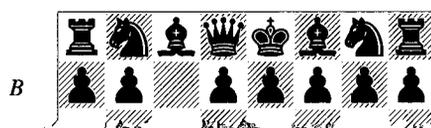
e5 (6...♙g4?! 7 ♘c3) 7 ♘c3 ♙b4 8 ♙d2 ♙xc3 9 ♙xc3 e4 10 ♘e5.

c) Similarly, 3...♘f6 4 e5 ♘d5 is a main line of the 2 c3 Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 c3 ♘f6 3 e5 ♘d5 4 d4 cxd4). To be well prepared on either side, you should consult the theory of the 2 c3 Sicilian.

d) 3...e5!? used to have a poor reputation, but is not so bad. One variation goes 4 ♘f3 ♘c6 5 ♙c4 (5 cxd4 exd4 6 ♘xd4 and now both 6...♙b4+ and 6...♘f6 7 ♘xc6 dxc6 8 ♙xd8+ ♙xd8 9 f3 are known lines which offer White a very slight edge) 5...♙c5!? (Langrock prefers White after 5...♘f6 6 ♘g5!? d5 7 exd5 ♘xd5 8 ♙b3! ♙e6 9 ♙xb7 ♚c8 10 0-0, although Black might want to dispute that assessment; the rare 5...♙c7!? is quite a logical move – then maybe 6 ♙b3 is best, intending 6...d6 7 cxd4 exd4 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♙g5!, but Langrock analyses 6 0-0 ♘f6 7 ♘g5 ♘d8 8 ♙b3 ♘e6 9 f4! ♙c5 10 ♘xf7!? to an indefinite conclusion) 6 b4!? ♙b6 (6...♙d6 may improve: 7 b5 ♘a5 8 ♙e2 ♘f6 9 cxd4 ♘xe4 10 0-0 ♙e7) 7 b5 ♘a5 8 ♘xe5 ♘xc4 9 ♘xc4 d5!? 10 ♘xb6 ♙xb6 (10...axb6 11 ♙xd4!) 11 exd5 with an extra pawn.

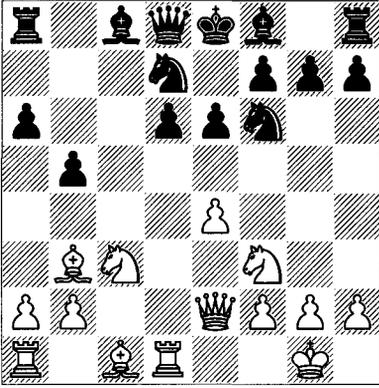
The reason that Black doesn't decline the Morra Gambit more often is that the methods of doing so are unambitious, and in many cases slightly inferior. If nothing else, his winning chances are appreciably reduced.

4 ♘xc3 (D)



set-up introduces two interesting defences fol- 9. ♗e7?!, ♗c6 is more precise, preparing

B



something better than 13 ♖e3 ♜b7, repeating the position.

b2) 10...♗e7 11 ♘d4!? ♜b6! 12 ♗xe6 fxe6 13 ♘xe6 g6! (13...♙f7? 14 ♘d5!) and White lacks compensation. All of this is open for debate.

c) Another move-order with the same idea is 6...♗e7 7 0-0 ♘f6 8 ♜e2 a6, when 9 ♞d1 b5 10 ♗b3 ♘bd7 is line 'b2' above. Langrock suggests instead 9...e5!?, for example 9...dxe5 10

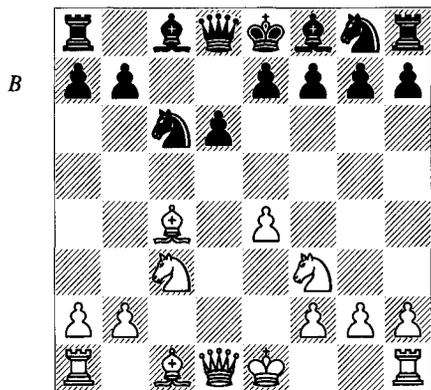
by 6...♗c5!, so White should probably transpose with 6 ♘f3. A possible advantage of 5 ♗c4 could come in the line 5...g6, when White has various tries to avoid the main lines given in the next note (which deals with 5 ♘f3 g6). For example, 6 ♜b3!? (6 ♗g5 ♗g7 7 ♜d5!? e6 8 ♜d2 might be worth a try) 6...e6 (6...♘e5 7 ♗f4 ♘xc4 8 ♜xc4 d6 9 ♘d5) 7 ♘f3 ♘a5 8 ♜a4 a6! (8...♘xc4 9 ♜xc4 a6 10 ♜d4 f6 11 0-0 with terrific development) 9 ♗e2 b5 10 ♜d4 and White has some play for the pawn due to his development and Black's dark-square weaknesses.

5...d6

We'll see combinations of ...e6 and ...a6 in the next game. 5...g6 is known as the Fianchetto Defence, which has a sound reputation. If Black can get ...♗g7 and ...d6 in, his position will be well-nigh unassailable. Therefore, to justify his gambit, White needs to act quickly. One of the main lines goes 6 ♗c4 (6 h4 ♘f6! 7 h5 ♘xh5 8 ♞xh5!? gxh5 9 ♘g5 ultimately seems to fail to Langrock's 9...♗g7! 10 ♜xh5 ♞f8 11 ♗c4 ♘xc3+! 12 hxc3 ♘e5 13 ♗b3 ♜a5 and Black

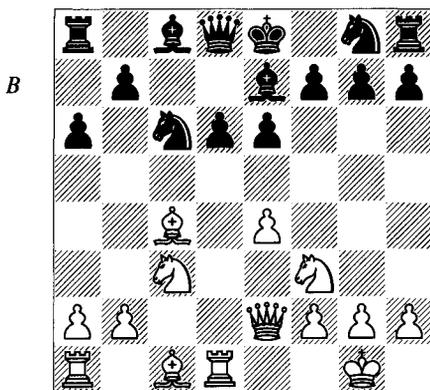
with great compensation) 11 ♖xe5+ ♜f6 12 0-0 d6 13 ♗e3 h6 14 ♚e1 e5! 15 h3 with the idea f4. Now Black might try 15...g5, but a safe equalizer according to Langrock is 15...♗b6 16 ♗xb6 axb6 17 ♙e3 ♙e6.

6 ♙c4 (D)



6...a6

Many players feel that this is the most reliable defence in the Morra Gambit complex, or at least the easiest to play. Black retains the idea of ...♙g4, and also the flexibility to decide between ...e6 and ...e5. In any case, we've come to a major splitting point where Black needs to commit to a structural choice. One of the main



all of White's potential forward posts c5, d5, e5 and f5. His problem, of course, is catching up in development. Some sophisticated players use the following move-order: 9...♙d7 (Black delays ...♜f6 so as to prevent White from placing his bishop on g5 early on; he also blocks the d-file in the face of 10 e5) 10 ♙f4 e5 11 ♙e3 ♜f6 12 ♚d2 0-0 13 ♚ad1 h6 (13...b5 14 ♙b3 ♜a5! is recommended by Langrock, although White might bail out with the tactic 15 ♜xe5!? ♜xb3 16 axb3 dxe5 17 ♜d5! ♜xd5 18 ♚xd5, when 18...♙e6! 19 ♚xd8 ♚fxd8 looks about equal) 14 ♜h4!? ♜a5 (14...b5 15 ♙b3 b4 16 ♜a4 ♜xe4 17 ♙b6 ♜xd2 18 ♙xd8 ♜xb3 leads to equality according to Langrock) 15 ♙e6 ♜xd4

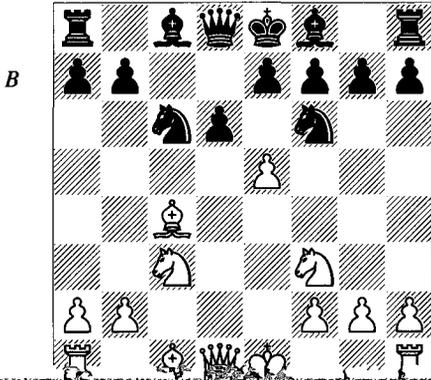
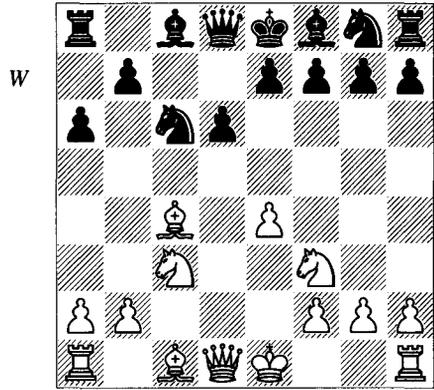
Black sacrifices a whole tempo and cedes the d5-square, but stops e5 and intends ...♟g4 to increase his new-found control over d4, or simply ...♟e6. As compensation for Black's extra pawn, White has space and control of the d5-square. One important line goes 10 ♟e3 (10 h3 has been played a lot, when 10...0-0 11 ♟e3 ♟e6 or 11...a6 is a typical follow-up) 10...0-0 (10...♟g4 11 h3 ♟h5!? 12 g4 ♟g6 13 ♟h4! intends ♟f5) 11 b4! (a typical queenside space-grab) 11...♟g4 (11...♟xb4 12 ♟xe5 eliminates Black's hard-earned central presence) 12 a3. This position introduces a middlegame that appears about equal. White doesn't have immediate threats, but Black has some issues with the weakness of his d5-square, and has to find a way to redeploy his forces.

b) 6...♟f6!?, sometimes thought to be dubious, has the advantage that after 7 0-0 (7 ♟g5 e6), Black can play 7...a6 and transpose into the line 6...a6 7 0-0 without having to face 6...a6 7 ♟g5. White's standard reply has been 7 e5 (D).

11 ♜e2 ♞e8 12 ♞fe1 ♟d7 13 ♜c2!?, with the dual ideas of ♜b3 and ♞ad1. 8...♜xd6 is playable, when 9 0-0!? or the attacking 9 ♜e2 is more attractive than 9 ♜xd6.

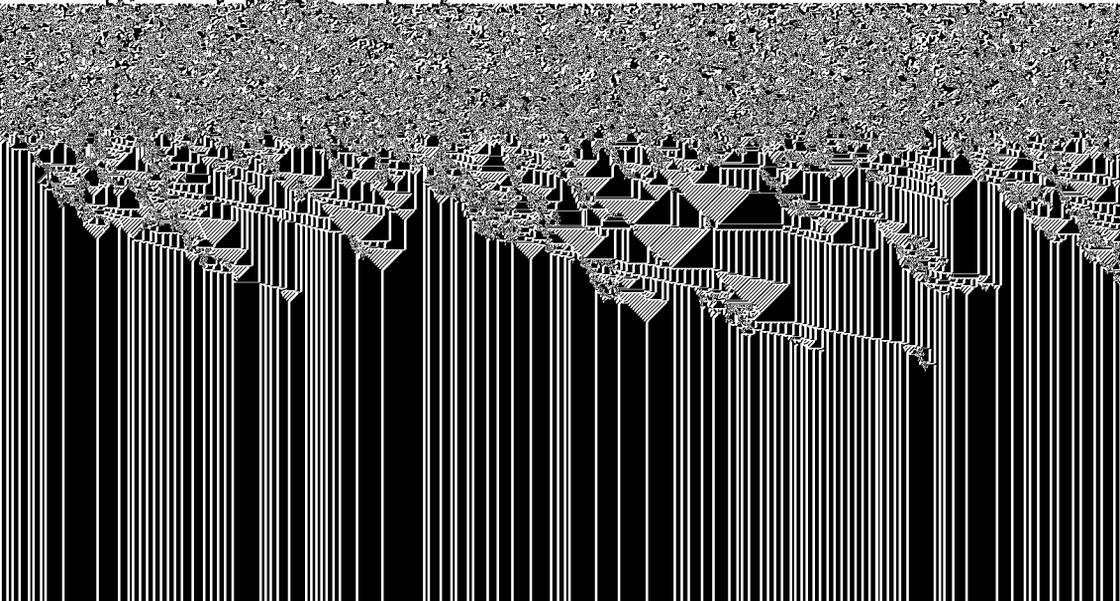
b22) 8 e6!? fx6 9 ♟g5 ♟ge5 (9...♟f6?! 10 ♟xe6) 10 ♟xe6 ♜a5 11 ♟b3 ♟xe6 12 ♟xe6 ♜a6!; neither side can castle, and Langrock gives various lines that lead to equality.

Finally, we return to 6...a6 (D):



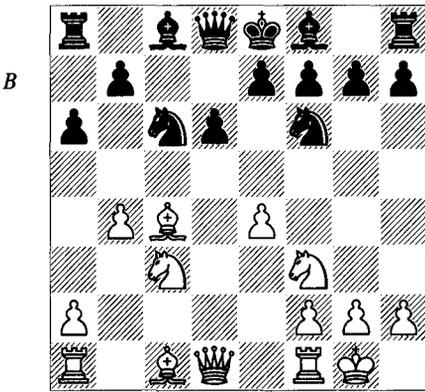
7 0-0

Already White might want to look for something harder-hitting. An often-recommended idea for him is 7 ♟g5, with the line 7...♟f6 8 ♟xf6 gxf6 9 0-0 e6 (9...♞g8!?) 10 ♟d4. It has been pointed out that this is virtually the same position as a sideline of the Richter-Rauzer Sicilian with the same tempi but White having a pawn less! After 10...♟e7, intending ...0-0 and ...♜h8, Langrock continues 11 ♟xc6 bxc6 12 ♜g4, with the idea of ♜g7, interfering with



set-ups. In particular, 8 ♖e2?! ♗g4! 9 ♖d1 e6 has scored brilliantly for Black over the years, getting the bishop out without the disadvantage of having to play ...e5 (and in doing so, ceding d5). After 10 ♗f4, 10...♘h5! 11 ♗e3 ♜f6 (or 11...♙e5) is effective. White has almost nothing for a pawn.

Alternatively, both 8 ♗g5 e6 9 ♖e2 and 8 ♗e3 (eyeing b6) 8...e6 (8...♗g4 9 ♖b3!) 9 ♖e2 ♗e7 10 ♖fd1 b5 11 ♗b3 ♗d7 are playable for White, if slightly uninspiring. Objectively, they are probably better than 8 b4, which is more of a gamble.



8...♗g4

This is consistent with ...d6 and ...a6, but not the only move.

a) White's first point is that 8...♘b4?! 9 e5! is very awkward for his opponent: 9...d5 (9...dxe5?? 10 ♗xf7+ – that trick again!) 10 ♖a4+ ♘c6 11 ♖d1 ♗d7 12 ♘d5 ♘d5 13 ♗xd5 e6 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♗e3 with a promising attack against Black's queenside weaknesses.

b) A simple and common-sense alternative is 8...e6 9 b5 (9 a3!? is perhaps best; having established an edge in space, White would then switch back to conventional development with ♗f4) 9...axb5! 10 ♗xb5 ♗e7. This looks good, especially since 11 e5 (11 a4!? 0-0 12 ♗a3) 11...♘g4! 12 exd6 ♖xd6 13 ♖e2 0-0 14 ♖d1 ♖c7 isn't particularly frightening. White needs ideas here.

c) 8...b5 9 ♗e2 threatens 10 a4, which is surprisingly strong; for example, 9...♘b4 10 a4 ♗d7! 11 e5! dxe5 12 ♘xe5 bxa4 13 ♖xa4! with the tactical idea 13...e6 14 ♗h5!! g6 15

♗g5! ♗e7 16 ♖xb4! ♗xb4 (16...gxh5 17 ♖b7) 17 ♖f3! ♗xc3 18 ♘xd7, etc.

You can see the appeal of 8 b4 to gambit-style players! But 8...e6 needs some work on White's behalf.

9 b5 ♗xf3

9...axb5 should also work; for example, 10 ♗xb5 e6 11 ♖b1!? ♗xf3 12 ♖xf3 ♗e7.

10 gxf3 axb5

10...♗e5 11 bxa6! ♘xc4 12 axb7 gave White good tactical chances in N.Regan-Van Beek, Haarlem 1998: 12...♖a7 13 ♘b5 ♖xb7 14 ♖a4 (threatening checkmate in 1!) 14...♘d7 15 ♖xc4 with free piece-play (♗g5 and ♖b1 are coming) and an outside passed pawn.

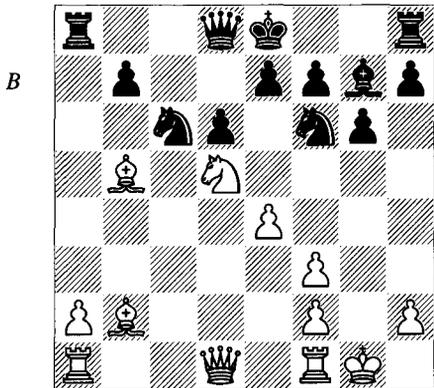
11 ♗xb5

11 ♘b5?! doesn't seem to hold up.

11...g6! 12 ♘d5

White should look for something else here, perhaps 12 ♖b1 ♗g7 13 ♗a4.

12...♗g7 13 ♗b2 (D)



13...♘h5

Martin gives 13...0-0 14 ♘xf6+ exf6 15 ♖d5 intending ♖fd1, although 15...f5! 16 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 with the idea 17 exf5 ♖g5+ 18 ♘h1 ♘e7! gives Black the superior pawn-structure; for example, 19 ♖d4+ ♖f6 20 ♖xf6+ ♘xf6 21 fxg6 fxg6 22 ♖ad1 d5. In general, we can say that the b4-b5 plan depends upon mistakes by the opponent.

14 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 15 ♖c1 0-0 16 ♗xc6 bxc6 17 ♖xc6 ♖xa2?

Black relaxes. 17...e6! is correct.

18 ♖c8! ♖d7

18...♖xc8? 19 ♘xe7+.

19 ♖c7 ♖d8

19... ♖b3 20. ♗xe7+ ♘h8 21. ♖b3 wins d5. a) The most common move is 9. ♗e5 but

An astonishing number of players (including grandmasters) have fallen for the trap 9 h3?? ♘d4!, winning on the spot. The alternative 9 g3 a6 10 ♙f4 ♙d6! (or 10...d6) is fairly solid for Black, although naturally White still has some compensation.

9...♙b8 10 h3 h5

A standard idea; White can't capture the knight unless he weakens his own kingside first.

11 g3 a6

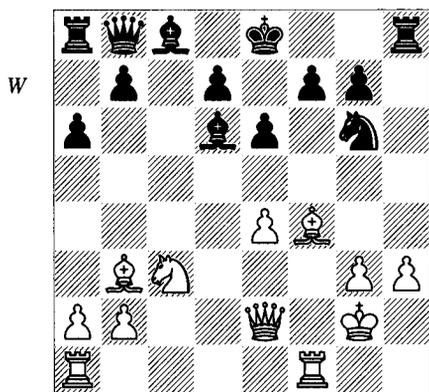
11...♙c5 12 ♙f4! ♘ge5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗ac1 threatens 15 ♙xe6. In what follows, White lets the game drift.

12 ♘c3 ♘ge5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♙f4 ♙d6! 15 ♙b3 h4

By luring White into playing g3, Black has justified the move ...h5.

16 ♘g2 hxg3 17 fxg3 ♘g6 (D)

Both 17...f6! and 17...b5 leave Black with as many attacking chances as White, in addition to his extra pawn.



18 ♙xd6 ♙xd6 19 ♙g4 b5 20 ♗ad1 ♙e5

White has no compensation; the e5 outpost serves Black well. A desperate counterattack ensues.

21 ♗xf7 ♘xf7 22 ♗f1+

And now simplest was 22...♘g8! 23 ♙xg6 ♙h5, winning, because White can't avoid the exchange of queens. In spite of Black's good play thus far, the game ended tragically following 22...♘e7 23 ♙xg6 ♗f8? (23...b4!) 24 ♘d5+! exd5 25 ♗xf8 ♙b7?? (25...♘xf8 26 ♙xd5 ♙xb2+ 27 ♘f3 ♙c3+ 28 ♘g2 ♙d2+ with a perpetual check) 26 ♗f7+ ♘d8 27 ♙b6+ ♘e8 28 ♙xb7 ♘xf7 29 ♙xd5+! ♘f6 30 ♙xa8

♙xb2+ 31 ♘f3 ♙c3+ 32 ♘g4 ♙d3 33 ♙f8+ 1-0.

The developing player would do well to try out the Morra Gambit upon occasion. It can serve to improve your tactical skills, while throwing a lot of Sicilian Defence players off balance.

Even in slow openings such as the Caro-Kann Defence, there are respectable gambits in this category; for example, White clears out the centre for activity in the variation 1 e4 c6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙g4 4 h3 ♙xf3 5 ♙xf3 e6 6 d4 dxe4 7 ♘xe4!? ♙xd4 8 ♙d3, intending to attack with the help of the open central files.

Blackmar-Diemer Gambit

1 d4 by its nature develops less dramatically than 1 e4, but I should mention some fairly mainstream examples of primitive gambits in d-pawn openings. The most obvious example is the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, which goes 1 d4 d5 2 e4 dxe4 and either 3 f3 or 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 f3 exf3 5 ♘xf3, the latter a mirror-image of the Göring Gambit. Once more, there are books and many publications on this opening. There are many wonderful traps and tactics in the Blackmar-Diemer, and it may be worth experimenting with, but I don't think it quite holds up against accurate defence. To keep the coverage concise, I'll bypass much of the fun and give a respectable example:

Alexander – Golombek

British Ch, Nottingham 1946

1 d4 d5 2 e4

Unfortunately, serious move-order issues can interfere with White's plans in the Blackmar-Diemer. Here 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 e4 is also played, when 3...dxe4 transposes. But Black can also play 3...♘xe4 4 ♘xe4 dxe4, which has been pretty effective in practice. Some fans of the gambit are willing to accept that and work around it. Others feel that 2 e4 dxe4 3 ♘c3 may be the best move-order, even if White has to deal with 3...e5 in the note to Black's third move.

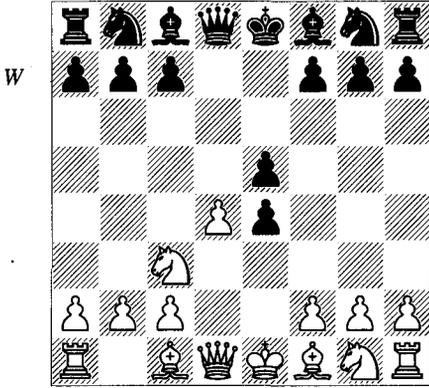
2...dxe4 3 ♘c3

Upon the immediate 3 f3, 3...e5! is known to be good. Then 4 dxe5 ♙xd1+ 5 ♘xd1 ♘c6

already gives Black the advantage; for example, 6 c3 e6 ! 7 xe4 0-0-0+ 8 d2 xe5 .

3... f6

Unfortunately for the gambiteer, 3... e5 (D) at this point illustrates another limitation of the Blackmar-Diemer.



For example:

- 4 dxe5 is met by 4... xd1+ .
- 4 xe4 has several answers, an ambitious one being 4... xd4 5 d3 f5 , while after 4... exd4 , the common reply 5 c4 seems to end up in Black's favour after 5... e7 6 e2 f5 .
- Nor is the slow 4 e3 exd4 5 xd4 xd4 6 xd4 c6 appealing.
- White has often played 4 h5 , but the counter-gambit 4... f6 ! 5 xe5+ e7 subjects him to difficult pressure.
- 4 ge2 c6 ! (4... exd4 is a popular alternative, and 4... f5 with the idea 5 dxe5 xd1+ is also promising) 5 e3 (5 d5 ce7) 5... f5 ! 6 dxe5 xe5 7 xd8+ xd8 8 0-0-0+ d7 9 f4 f6 and White has to show how his position might be worth a pawn.

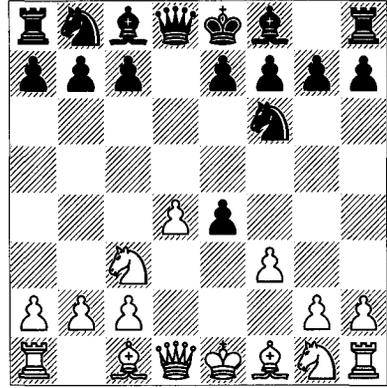
I should emphasize that this is hardly the last word; further research and/or creative thinking may improve your view of White's prospects.

4 f3 (D)

4... xf3

Black can also decline the gambit. Among other tries, 4... c6 is a particularly useful semi-waiting move. Black's first point is that 5 fxe4 e5 ! makes structural gains. Black has the advantage after 6 dxe5 (6 d5 is met by 6... b4 ; 6 df3 exd4 7 xd4 xd4 8 xd4 may be best, but both 8... b4 and 8... c5 with the idea ...0-0 and ... bd7 leave White with little compensation

B



for the isolated e-pawn) 6... xd1+ 7 xd1 g4 8 e1 xe5 , when he has a powerful outpost on e5 in front of the isolated pawn. Other moves for White include 5 c4 a5 ! and 5 g5 bd7 , which is a variation of the Veresov Opening, that is, 1 d4 d5 2 c3 f6 3 g5 bd7 4 f3 c6 5 e4 dxe4 . In that line, 6 fxe4 e5 ! 7 dxe5 a5 ! with the idea 8 exf6 xg5 is known to be at least equal for Black. Finally, 5 xe4 isn't what White wants in terms of structure (the pawn on f3 is misplaced); then 5... bd7 already equalizes or more.

5 xf3

Black has an overwhelming record versus 5 xf3 ?. His pawn advantage is safe after 5... g6 or 5... c6 , which leave no weaknesses in the position. With care, Black can also get away with 5... xd4 !, since White can't win enough time attacking the queen to succeed in attack.

5... c6

This is one of the better defences. Black strengthens his control of d5 without blocking off his queen's bishop, which can develop to f5 or g4 . To my mind, the frequently-played alternatives 5... e6 and 5... g6 , analysed in remarkable detail over many years, offer White more chances to work up a significant attack.

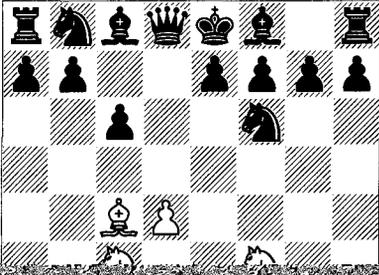
6 c4 (D)

Black does very well against other moves; for example, 6 e5 bd7 (or 6... f5), and 6 d3 g4 !

6... f5

White gets what he wants after 6... g4 ?? 7 e5 ! e6 (7... xd1 ?? 8 xf7 !; 7... h5 ?? 8 hx5) 8 xe6 fxe6 (Black's isolated e-pawns are not only targets, but they also imprison Black's bishop) 9 0-0 bd7 10 f4 xe5 11

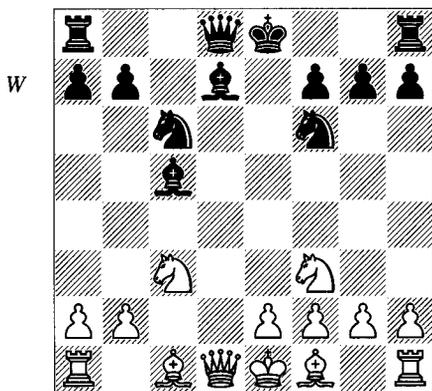
B



d4 f5 2 e4 fxe4 and now 3 f3 exf3 4 ♖xf3 or 3 ♗c3 ♗f6 4 f3 exf3 5 ♖xf3 (though Black normally doesn't take on f3 so readily). That's a mirror image of the Morra Gambit. A more original idea arises in the Queen's Gambit Semi-Slav sequence 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♗c3 e6, if White continues 4 e4!? dxe4 (4...♗b4 is the most promising way to decline the offer) 5 ♖xe4 ♗b4+ 6 ♗d2!? ♗xd4 7 ♗xb4 ♗xe4+ 8

exd6 ♖xd6 at lower levels of play, but that has yet to attract much interest among masters. If White plays 4 ♘f3, he is not even behind in the number of pieces developed. On the other hand, 1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6 3 exd6 ♖xd6, known as the From Gambit, has a long history of grandmaster practice. Clearly, that's because of the fact that 1 f4 doesn't help White's development and somewhat exposes his king. See Chapter 6 for some analysis. Similarly the gambit 1 e4 c5 2 f4 d5 3 exd5 ♘f6 4 c4 e6! 5 dxe6 ♗xe6 clears out Black's centre, but leaves holes all over White's position (the moves f4 and c4 have not been productive) and gives Black a lead in development.

The Hennig-Schara Gambit is a good example of a 1 d4 opening in which Black plausibly abandons his centre pawns for activity. It begins 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 cxd5 cxd4!? 5 ♗xd4 (5 ♗a4+! is a technical nicety; you can reach the main position via 5...♗d7 6 ♗xd4 exd5 7 ♗xd5 ♘c6 with 8...♘f6 next, gaining another tempo on White's queen; White avoids a couple of alternate tries by Black if he plays this way) 5...♘c6! 6 ♗d1 exd5 7 ♗xd5 ♗d7!; for example, 8 ♘f3 ♘f6 9 ♗d1 ♖c5 (D) is considered the main line of this gambit.



As with our other primitive gambits, Black has cleared out the centre but gained several tempi for an attack by pieces. He can pursue that in various ways; for example, by moving his queen to c7, e7 or b6, and then playing ...0-0-0 or ...0-0 with ...♗d8. The dynamic old main line continues 10 e3 ♗e7 11 ♗e2 0-0-0 12 0-0 g5! 13 b4!. White returns the pawn to launch a queenside attack after 13...♗xb4 14 ♗b3.

Positional Gambits

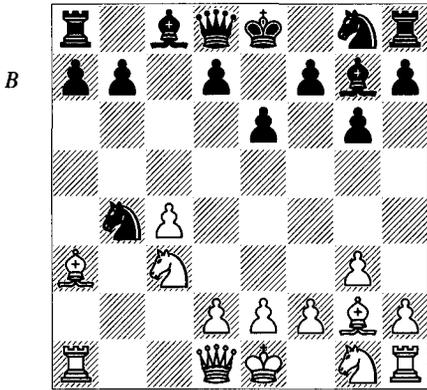
When modern chess was first developing, gambits were almost always used as a means to establish an attacking game. Today, those gambits are still with us (see above), but we often play gambits which are positional in their orientation. In these, the gambiteer retains an influential pawn-centre, which is usually part of his compensation. The most common strategy employed is the sacrifice of a flank pawn to establish a full and often mobile pawn-centre. This can involve giving up a flank pawn in order to divert one of the opponent's centre pawns, thus establishing a pawn-majority. Or it might involve surrendering a flank pawn with the goal of gaining time, which is then used to establish a large centre. Note that this is the opposite of the strategy in the previous section, which involved clearing out one's own centre pawns! Let me begin by listing some of these gambits and examine a few others via games.

To begin with, there's the King's Gambit, discussed in Volume 1: 1 e4 e5 2 f4. White offers his f-pawn in order to draw Black's e-pawn away from the centre. Then, ideally, he will be able to play an effective d4 and develop his pieces quickly around a mobile centre. Black has several gambits which employ the same philosophy, the two most prominent of which are the Latvian Gambit (1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 f5) and the Schliemann Defence to the Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 f5).

The Queen's Gambit (discussed in Volume 2) is not a real gambit, at least in its pure form 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4, because White can recover his pawn quickly. We do see a number of lines, however, in which White sacrifices a pawn for the sake of establishing a large, mobile centre; for example, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 a6 5 e4 b5 6 e5. An analogous line in the Slav is 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 e4 b5 6 e5, while 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5 h6 6 ♗h4 dxc4 7 e4 g5 8 ♗g3 b5 is a major line in the Semi-Slav. These have a rather opportunistic character, and when White succeeds he usually does so by direct assault supported by tactics, rather than by further central pawn advances.

b4 Gambits

In openings which begin with moves other than 1 e4 or 1 d4, most gambits for White are positionally-based flank-pawn sacrifices. In the Symmetrical variations of the English Opening, we find various offers involving b4; for example, 1 c4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 ♖g2 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 a3 e6 6 b4!?. The point is seen in the line 6...cxb4 7 axb4 ♘xb4 8 ♗a3 (D).

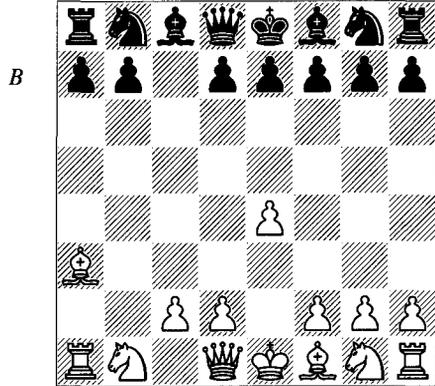


Here the considerations are more positional than tactical. White's development advantage is only slight, but he has some serious pressure on the dark squares: ♘b5 or ♗e4 might follow, and d4 and ♘f3 also hit dark squares; finally, even e4-e5 is sometimes an issue. In this precise position, furthermore, the knight can't be easily defended in view of 8...a5? 9 ♗xb4.

Consequently, the pseudo-sacrifice 6...♘b4 7 axb4 cxb4 is more common, when 8 d4 bxc3 9 e3 intends ♘e2xc3 and ♗a3, a gambit with the same dark-square themes. In Volume 3, I covered this position in some detail.

In the Sicilian Defence, the diversion of the black pawn from c5 arises in the Wing Gambit, 1 e4 c5 2 b4, which allows White to have more leeway in the centre following 2...cxb4. He can play 3 d4 or 3 ♗b2 at that point, but more commonly opts for 3 a3, trying to develop quickly after 3...bxa3 4 ♘xa3 or 4 ♗xa3 (D).

White intends to construct a large centre, but he also hopes to win dark squares and prevent Black from castling if he plays ...e6 or ...e5; this strategy resembles the English Opening example above. Of course, there are



many options for Black even before this point, including 3...♘f6 or 3...d5.

The same idea (and sometimes the same pawn-structure) arises in the French Wing Gambit: 1 e4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4 cxb4, when White can play either the central move 5 d4 or the developing 5 a3 bxa3 6 ♗xa3.

In the Scandinavian Defence with 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♗xd5 3 ♘c3 ♗a5, White can play another sacrifice of the b-pawn, Mieses's long-discarded 4 b4!?. After 4...♗xb4, the older 5 ♖b1 scrounges up some activity, but has generally been ineffective because after 5...♗d6, Black develops normally. Recently, White has played 5 a4! with the idea 6 ♗a3; then Black has some problems getting developed, because White can answer ...e5 or ...e6 with ♗xf8 and prevent castling, as well as gaining influence on the dark squares. Even the move a5 can prove useful. Of course, this gambit may turn out to be of marginal soundness, but at least it combines quick development with positional considerations.

g4 Gambits in the Dutch Defence

The mirror image of the Sicilian Defence gambit with b4 is a Dutch Defence gambit with g4. It turns out that there are quite a few of these:

Ravikumar – Nasir Ali

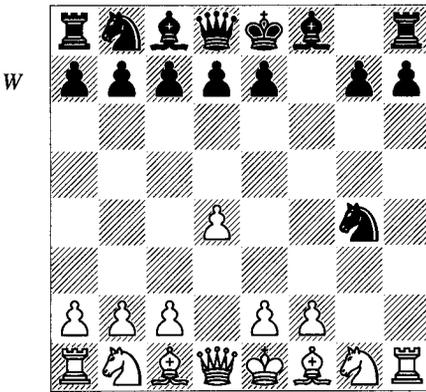
New Delhi 1982

1 d4 f5 2 g4!?

This is called the Krejčík Gambit. White undertakes to divert Black's f-pawn from control of e4, just as 1 e4 c5 2 b4 tries to draw Black's

c-pawn from control of d4. White has three similar and respectable ways to gambit the g-pawn:

a) The move 2 h3 has the same idea of g4, but intends to recapture on g4 with his h-pawn in case of ...fxg4, while not allowing ...g3 (see the note to move 3 in the main game). This is sometimes called the Korchnoi Attack. Play can proceed 2...c3 (after 2...d5, White can still continue with 3 g4 fxg4 4 hxg4 e4 and 5 f3 or 5 h3, but that looks speculative, and it's probably more sensible to exploit the hole on e5 by 3 c3 and 4 e4) 3 g4 fxg4? 4 hxg4 c3 (D), and now:



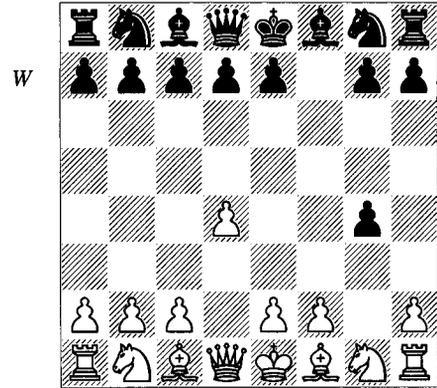
al) 5 e4 d6 6 e5!? g6 (6...c6 is recommended by A. Watson) 7 f3 c3 8 e4 c6 9 d2 with positional pressure and attacking chances, Korchnoi-Känel, Biel 1979.

a2) 5 d3! appears still stronger, and includes the trap 5...c3? 6 exh3!. Also terrible is 5...h6? 6 exh6 gxh6 7 f5!, threatening f5h5#. Even the best move, 5...g6, allows 6 exh3!? exh3 7 fxg6+ f7 8 f5, which is probably somewhat better for White, and 6 exh3 is by no means necessary; for example, both 6 c3 and 6 h3 generate more than enough play for a mere pawn.

b) Another version of a g4 gambit in the Dutch Defence stems from Alapin's move 2 d3, attacking f5. Then if Black chooses 2...e6 (2...d5 is probably better), White plays 3 g4 fxg4 4 h3 gxh3 (not the only move) 5 exh3, which is an approximate mirror-image of a line in the Sicilian Wing Gambit. White has reasonable compensation, with ideas of c3 or c4, as well as simply e2 and e4.

c) 2 c3 c3 (2...d5 is the main alternative) 3 g4!? is a similar idea, when 3...fxg4 (3...fxg4 4 h3) 4 e4 forms a big centre, and then 4...d6 5 h3 keeps up the pressure. As usual, Black's e6-square is weak.

2...fxg4 (D)



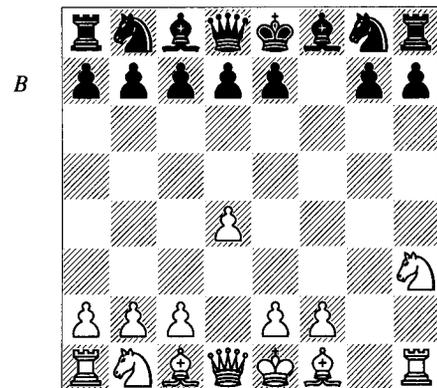
3 h3

3 e4 is the next game.

3...gxh3?!

This cedes the h-file to White, who also gets rapid development against a weakened king position. 3...g3 4 fxg3 c3 is a good way to decline the gambit. Then 5 c3 d5 6 e2 e6 7 e4 d6 8 e3 0-0 9 d2 with the idea 9...h5 10 e2 leads to a nicely imbalanced position, perhaps slightly in favour of White because of Black's difficulty in achieving ...e5.

4 exh3 (D)



White has a serious attack, with ideas of c3, d3 and e4.

4...c3 5 c3?!

This supports e4 and threatens 6 ♖d3. Another good course is 5 ♘c3 d5 6 ♖d3 with the idea ♗f4 and 0-0-0.

5...d5 6 ♖d3 ♖d6! 7 ♘c3!

7 ♘xh7 ♘xh7 8 ♗xh7 ♗xh7 9 ♖xh7 ♘c6 10 c3 e5 gives Black some compensation.

7...c6 8 e4!? dxe4 9 ♘cxe4 ♘xe4 10 ♘xe4 ♖c7 11 ♘g5 ♖a5+ 12 ♗d2 ♖d5 13 ♗xh7 ♗f5 14 ♗xh8! ♗xd3 15 ♗xd3

White is winning; he has far too many pieces out aimed at Black's weaknesses, with ♗e4 and 0-0-0 in reserve if needed.

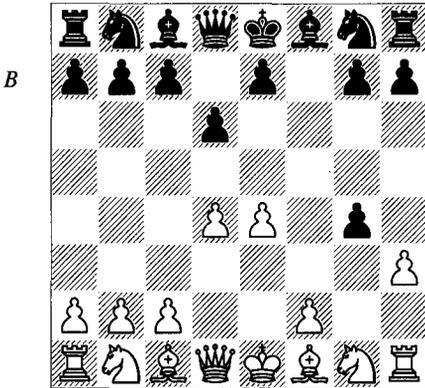
Marzolo – Piat

Clermont Ferrand 2001

1 d4 f5 2 g4 fxe4 3 e4 d6

Here it seems wise to stake out central territory by 3...d5 4 e5 ♗f5, when 5 h3 ♖d7 6 hxg4 ♗xg4 7 ♗e2 ♗xe2 8 ♘e2 is double-edged.

4 h3! (D)



White plays much as he does in the Sicilian Wing Gambit with 3 a3.

4...♘f6

As above, 4...g3 keeps White's h-file closed, but after 5 fxg3, there is no obvious follow-up, and White controls the centre.

5 ♘c3

5 hxg4 ♗xg4 6 f3 is similar: 6...♗e6!? (not 6...♗h5? 7 e5) 7 ♘h3 c6 8 ♘g5 ♗g8 9 ♗h3 with ample pressure on the light squares.

5...♘c6 6 hxg4 ♗xg4 7 f3 ♗d7 8 ♗g5 e5

A good move, but it further weakens the light squares.

9 ♘ge2 h6 10 ♖d2 ♗g8 11 ♗e3 exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♖e7 13 0-0-0 a6 14 ♘b3

Here 14 ♗c4! ♗h8 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 ♗xd5 would confer a clear advantage upon White.

14...0-0-0 15 ♗c4 ♗e6 16 ♘d5 ♗xd5?

16...♖f7 is better.

17 exd5

Surprisingly, 17 ♗xd5! ♘xd5 18 ♖xd5 wins material because of 18...♗h8 19 ♗g5.

17...♘e5 18 ♗e2 c5?! 19 dxc6 ♘xc6 20 ♗b6 ♗d7 21 ♗he1 ♖f7 22 ♗f1! ♗e7?!

But against 22...♖h5, 23 ♖c3 ♗b8 24 ♘d4 ♘d4 25 ♗xd4 is very strong; for example, 25...d5 26 ♗xa6! with the idea 26...bxa6 27 ♗e5+ ♗d6 28 ♖b4+.

23 ♗h3

White picks up material; he won easily.

...b5 Gambits in the Nimzo-Indian Defence

Sometimes the offer of a pawn by ...b5 can be used to divert White's c-pawn. This occurs in the Benko Gambit, discussed below, where Black completes the analogy with the Sicilian and Dutch examples by playing ...b5 and then ...a6. In several variations of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, we see the same idea; for example, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘e2 b5!? 6 cxb5 a6 is a gambit based upon controlling the light squares. It was developed by Vitolinš. Another type of flank pawn sacrifice is seen in this game:

Short – Aleksandrov

European Team Ch, Pula 1997

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♗g5

This is the Leningrad System of the Nimzo-Indian. Now one of Black's primary methods of defence involves sacrificing a flank pawn:

4...h6 5 ♗h4 c5 6 d5 b5 (D)

In typical gambit style, Black undermines White's support of d5.

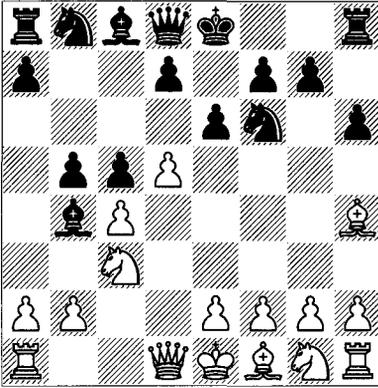
7 dxe6

7 cxb5 g5 8 ♗g3 ♘xd5 works out well for Black. If White is going to decline the gambit, 7 ♖c2 with the idea of e4 is one of the best ways to do so.

7...fxe6 8 exb5 d5

This is the point: once the c-pawn disappears, Black is able to establish a central superiority.

W



9 e3 0-0

The game we are following actually went 6...0-0 7 e3 b5 8 dxe6 fxe6 9 cxb5 d5, trans-

15 ♖xd3 ♙xa6) 13 a3 ♙a5 14 b4 dxc3 15 bxa5 ♖xa5 16 ♘e2 ♘xa6 17 0-0 ♘c5 with ideas of ...♘d3 and ...♙a6; then Black stands better.

11...c4 12 ♙c2

12 ♙b1 leaves room on c2 for the queen. After 12...axb5 13 ♖c2, 13...♙xc3+ 14 bxc3 e5!? has been played, but 13...♘bd7! 14 0-0 ♖b6 looks safer, with a central majority and space.

12...axb5 13 0-0 ♘c6?!

Insisting upon playing with a material deficit. Simply 13...♙a5! keeps Black's good structure intact, because 14 a4 (14 a3 ♙e7; 14 ♘d4 ♙xc3 15 bxc3 e5 16 ♘f5 ♘c6) 14...bxa4 15 ♙xa4 ♙d6 leaves White with a vulnerable b-pawn.

14 ♘xb5 e5?!

14...♙c5 followed by ...♖b6 and/or ...♘b4

g6 10 b3! makes the sacrifice permanent. Then 10...♙g7 11 ♖b2 cxb3 12 axb3 0-0 13 d4 gave White central compensation in Salov-Beliavsky, USSR Ch, Minsk 1987.

b) 1 ♖f3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 g3 ♗f6 4 ♙g2 ♙g4 5 ♗e5 ♙e6 6 d4!? dxc4 7 e4 again establishes a strong centre in return for the pawn.

c) 1 c4 e6 2 g3 d5 3 ♙g2 c6 4 ♗f3 dxc4 5 0-0 ♗f6 (5...b5 6 a4 ♖b7 7 b3! cxb3 8 ♖xb3 is similar) 6 a4 ♗a6 7 ♗a3 ♙xa3 8 ♖xa3 ♗b4 9 a5 0-0 10 b3 cxb3 11 ♖xb3, and White has a typical central advantage along with the bishop-pair and dark-square pressure, Kosten-Goldin, Paris 1994.

d) 1 c4 c6 2 ♗f3 d5 3 g3 ♗f6 4 ♙g2 dxc4 5 ♖c2 b5 6 b3 cxb3 7 axb3 ♙b7 8 ♙a3 with dark-square pressure and a potential attack on Black's backward c-pawn, Dzhindzhikhashvili-Bagirov, USSR Ch, Baku 1972.

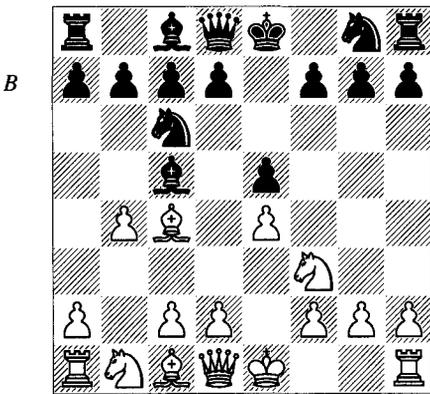
You'll find many variations on these themes in opening praxis.

The Evans Gambit

Finally, a flank pawn may be sacrificed purely for the sake of gaining time. In the classic example, the Evans Gambit, White wants to use that time to set up a large centre. Here are a couple of games and a brief survey:

H. Lehmann – P. Müller
Lucerne 1952

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♙c4 ♙c5 4 b4!? (D)



This introduces the Evans Gambit, which for some time in the 19th century was the most

popular attacking opening around. The Evans is still being used by some grandmasters, and received a boost from Kasparov's successful adventures with it. This charming game shows why enthusiasts love it, and I've embedded as many important lines as I can, including some fun miniatures, to illustrate the lay of the land for potential gambiteers.

4...♙xb4 5 c3 ♙a5

Or:

a) 5...♙d6!? looks funny, blocking the d-pawn, but it supports e5 and therefore allows Black to castle quickly, something he often doesn't get to do in the Evans Gambit. Short-I.Sokolov, Sarajevo 2004 went 6 d4 ♗f6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖e1 h6 9 ♗bd2 ♖e8 10 ♙b3 (with the idea of ♗c4) 10...b5 11 a4! b4 12 ♗c4 bxc3 13 dxе5 ♙xe5 14 ♗fxе5 ♗xe5 15 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 16 ♙f4 ♖e7 17 e5 ♗e8 18 ♖d3 with an attack.

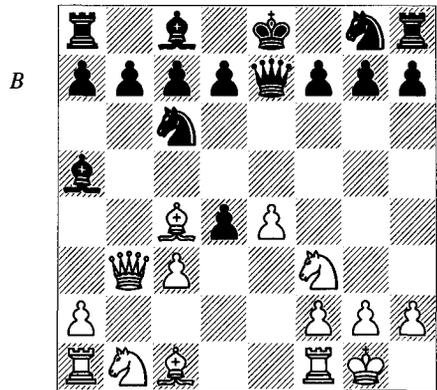
b) 5...♙e7 6 d4 ♗a5 is one way to attempt to return the pawn: after 7 ♗xe5 ♗xc4 8 ♗xc4 d5 9 exd5 ♖xd5, White has space and the better centre following 10 ♗e3, but Black has the two bishops and practice has shown that he has his full share of the chances. Following Kasparov's example, White often prefers to stay a pawn down with 7 ♙e2 exd4 8 ♖xd4, relying on his attacking chances.

6 d4 exd4

It's always risky to allow White a mobile centre, so Black takes time to prevent that. 6...d6 is a solid alternative seen in the following game.

7 0-0

White can try ♖b3 at several junctures. Here 7 ♖b3 is unresolved; for example, 7...♖e7 8 0-0 (D):



a) Crazy play results from 8...♟f6 9 ♘a3 d6 10 cxd4 ♘b6 (10...0-0 11 e5! ♟d7! is unclear) 11 e5 ♟xd4 12 ♟xd4 ♘xd4 13 exd6 (13 ♘xf7+? ♟xf7 14 ♟a4+ ♟d7 15 ♟xd4 ♟xe5; 13 exf6 ♟xf6) 13...cxd6 14 ♟c3 0-0 15 ♟ad1 (15 ♟ae1!?) 15...♘c5 16 ♟fe1 ♘e6 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 18 ♟xe6 ♟f7 and Black keeps his pawn. There are many alternatives here for both sides.

♟xb7?! ♟db4 12 ♘xe6 ♟b8) 8...♟e5! (8...d5 9 exd5 ♟e5 10 ♟xd4! is very complicated, but can be avoided by 8...♟e5) 9 ♘b3 (now 9 ♟xd4 can be met by 9...f6!; 9 ♟xf7 ♟xf7 10 ♘xf7+ ♟xf7 11 ♟h5+ g6 12 ♟xa5 d5 gets Black's pieces out quickly) 9...d5! 10 exd5 (10 cxd4 ♟5g6) 10...0-0 11 ♟xh7 ♟xh7 12 ♟h5+ ♟g8 13 ♟xe5 ♟f5! 14 ♘d2 (14 cxd4 ♟e8) 14...c5 (Black can keep an edge by 14...♟e8! 15

one good option, and 11 d5 ♖ce7 12 a4 another) 11...dxe5? (11...♗ge7) 12 d5 ♖ce7 13 ♙xd7+ ♜xd7 14 ♗xe5 ♜f5 15 ♜a4+ ♕d8 16 ♙f4 ♗g6 17 g4! with a winning game, Hirschfeld-Kolisch, Paris 1864.

b) 9...♗a5 can be answered by 10 ♙d3, but some classic games continued 10 ♙g5 f6 11 ♙f4 ♗xc4 12 ♜a4+ ♜d7 13 ♜xc4: for exam-

Offering more pawns for open files!

15...♙xd5

Black is thoroughly lost after 15...♗xd5 16 ♜ad1 c6 17 ♗xd5 ♙xd5 18 ♜e2.

16 ♜a4+ c6 17 ♜ad1 ♗d7 18 ♗xd7 ♜xd7 19 ♗xd5 cxd5 20 ♜xd5! 1-0

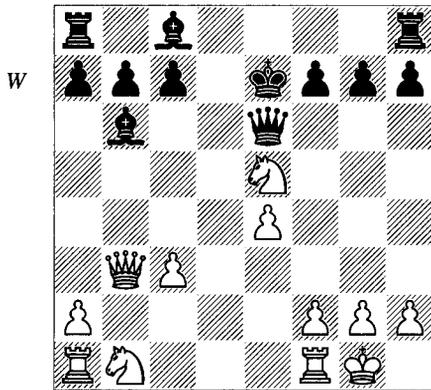
After 20...♜xa4 21 ♜e1+ White mates in a few moves.

0-0 might follow) 8. ♖b6 (or 8. ♘f6) 9. a4 8. a4 ♘f6 (Lasker also played 8. exd4 9.

a) 11...d5 12 ♖a4+ (12 dxe5 dxb3 13 dxc6 hxc6 14 axb3 dxf6) 12...c6 (12...d7 13 ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 14 dxe5+ ♗e8 15 dxc6 hxc6 16 e5!?) 13 dxe5 ♖xc6 14 dxf7 ♗e7 15 dxc8 and both 15...d8! and 15...d6 leave the h8-knight in major trouble.

b) 11...f6! may be easiest of all: 12 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 13 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 14 dxe5 ♗e6 (D)

12 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 13 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 14 dxe5 ♗e6 (D)



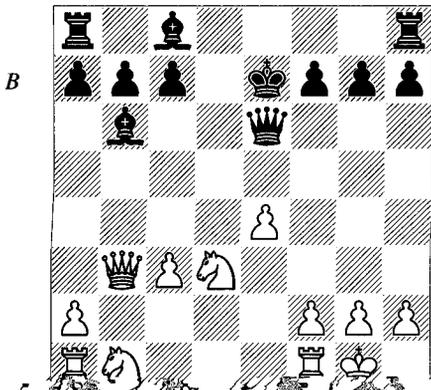
Black has done well in this position because of his pawn-structure and bishop-pair.

15 d3?! (D)

Or:

a) 15 d4 ♖d8 16 ♖a3+ ♗e8 17 dxb6 ♖xb6 favours Black's activity and pawn-structure, but as it keeps the queens on the board, this is probably White's best course.

b) 15 ♖a3+ ♖d6 16 ♖xd6+ cxd6 17 d3 (17 d4 ♖c5 18 d2 ♖e6) 17...d6 18 d2 ♖hc8, Ebeling-Rantanen, Jyväskylä 1987; compare the game.



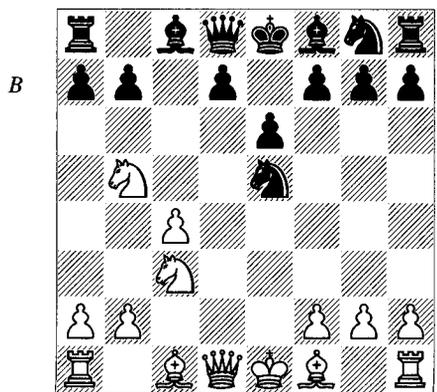
15...♖xb3! 16 axb3 ♖d8 17 d4 c6 18 d3 ♖c7 19 d5 ♖e5 20 ♖ac1 ♖g4 21 d3 ♖d3

With his opponent having the bishop-pair, active rooks and targets to attack, White doesn't stand a chance. The game concluded 22 d1 ♖f4 23 ♖c2 ♖ad8 24 d3 ♖d1 25 ♖a2 ♖xc3 26 hxc3 ♖xb3 27 ♖b2 ♖xc3 28 d1 ♖cd3 29 ♖c1 a5 30 d3 c4 31 ♖h2 ♖d2 32 d5+ ♖8xd5 33 ♖xb3 ♖h5+ 0-1.

Positional Gambits of Centre Pawns

Sometimes one side sacrifices a centre pawn (rather than a flank pawn), not for an attack, but with the object of improving his central position and/or establishing lasting positional advantages. One simple example is the Albin Counter-Gambit, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4, which I discussed in Volume 2; Black's d-pawn cramps White and wins territory. It has a reasonably good reputation. The Falkbeer Counter-Gambit, 1 e4 e5 2 f4 d5 3 exd5 e4, is a king's pawn mirror image of the Albin! In modern chess it has few takers, however, because the pawn on e4 can't be maintained.

In Volume 3, I discussed an early central pawn sacrifice by White which has all the characteristics of a positional gambit: 1 c4 d6 2 d3 c6 3 e4 c5 4 e5 d7 5 d3 c6 6 d4 cxd4 7 dxd4 dxe5 8 ddb5 (D).



It is aimed entirely at dark-square control rather than attack. The main line goes 8...a6 9 d6+ ♖xd6 10 ♖xd6 f6 11 ♖e3, when the weaknesses on d6 and b6 compensate White for

12 ♖b6 ♜f5 13 ♗c5 ♗e7 14 ♗xe7+ ♜xe7?!
 15 c5 0-0 16 0-0-0 f5 17 ♖c7 ♜5c6 18 ♖d6
 ♜e8 19 ♜a4 ♜d5 20 ♖c4 and here 20...♜f6
 (Black played the horrible 20...b5 21 ♖xb6 in

Usually, White tries to consolidate in the
 centre before using up a tempo on this move;
 for example, 10 ♜d2 ♜d8 11 a3 intending b4.
 10 a3 ♗5 11 ♗d2 is an intriguing alternative

27 ♙xh5 ♚xh5 28 f3 ♜e5 29 ♖xc7 ♜xf3+
30 ♙h1 ♖xc7 31 ♚e2 ♜g4 0-1

Resignation is a bit premature, but White can hardly move and Black threatens ...♜fxh2,

play consists of queenside pressure which may not even come to fruition until the endgame.

Let's begin by examining one of Pal Benko's own games from several decades ago. In essen-



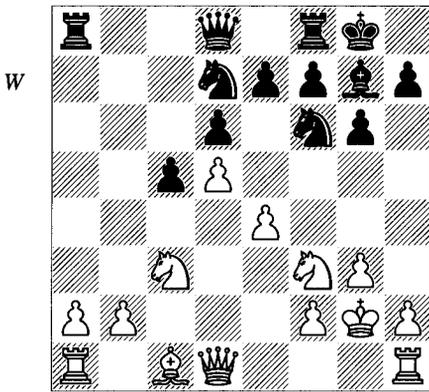
easily be rendered immobile. This occurs in other openings, even when the pawns are passed (i.e., in the absence of an enemy c-pawn), as long as they are on half-open files. In the Perle

8 e4

A major decision. White stakes out room in the centre, but loses the right to castle and creates an interior weakness on d3. In the next game we shall see other ways of handling the position.

8...♙xf1 9 ♖xf1 ♗g7 10 h3

At the time of this game, this was the most popular move. White stops ...♘g4 and will 'castle by hand', marching his king over to h2. The related 10 g3 0-0 11 ♖g2 ♘bd7 (*D*) was a main line of the Benko for some years, accounting for hundreds of master games.



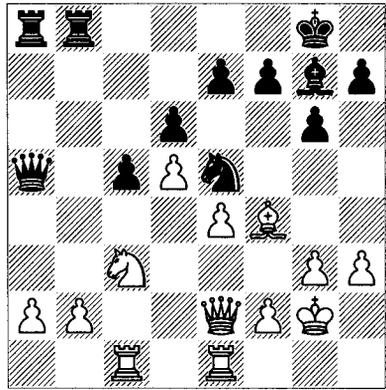
It's worth seeing a few examples in order to illustrate the pluses and minuses of these two very similar set-ups. In doing so we shall be introduced to some basic themes of the Benko Gambit. Once White has moved his king to g2, he must decide whether to allow ...♘g4-e5:

a) Upon 12 ♖e1, 12...♗a5 is a good move, but the most thematic idea is 12...♘g4, preventing e5 and bringing a black knight to e5, from where it watches over c4 and d3. That needn't be fatal, of course, and Black has to be wary of playing ...c4 (intending ...♘d3), because he gives White access to his own d4-square with the possibility of ♘d4-c6. White can respond with piece-play or pawn-play:

a1) 13 ♗f4 ♗a5 14 h3 ♘ge5 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♗e2 ♖fb8 17 ♖ac1 (*D*).

17...♗a6!? (this is by no means the only move, but demonstrates how endgames can be satisfactory for Black even when White hasn't compromised his pawn-structure; 17...♖b4! is an attractive alternative, especially in view of the critical line 18 b3 c4! 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20

B

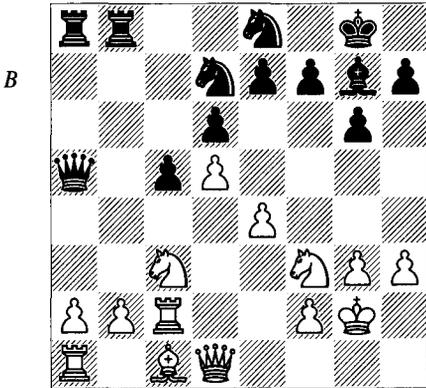


bxc4 ♗c5 21 ♘d1 ♖a3, when Black is two pawns down but has sufficient counterplay) 18 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♖c2 ♗xe2 20 ♖xe2 ♖b4! 21 a3 ♖b3 22 ♘d1, Karpov-Salov, Belgrade 1996, and now 22...♖ab8 would have kept the pressure on, with equality.

a2) 13 h3 ♘ge5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 f4 drives the knight away, but at the cost of creating further internal weaknesses in White's camp. In Neverov-Bologan, Nikolaev Zonal 1995, Black tried 15...♘d7 (15...♘c4 16 ♗d3 ♘b6 is also sensible) 16 ♗c2, and now he arranged his pieces both to increase the pressure on White's queenside and to look down the long light-squared diagonal: 16...♖a6!? (16...♗a5 17 ♗d2 ♗a6 18 a4 ♖fc8! 19 ♖a3 c4 is unclear) 17 a4 ♗a8 18 ♘b5! ♖c8 19 ♗d2 c4! 20 ♗c3 (20 ♗e3 ♘c5 21 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 22 ♖a3 at least temporarily stops Black's initiative) 20...♗xc3 21 ♘xc3 ♘c5 22 ♖e2 ♖b8 23 ♖a3 ♖b4 with active rooks and an attack on d3, b3 and a4. These lines seem balanced.

b) 12 h3, stopping ...♘g4, is logical. A typical example is 12...♗a5 (Benko's 12...♘b6 with the idea ...♗d7 and ...♗b7 is still held to be a sound method of play) 13 ♖e1 ♖fb8 14 ♖e2! (covering b2 and thus at least theoretically allowing White's bishop to move) 14...♘e8 (covering e5, and presaging a trek to b5 via c7, in order to exchange White's knight on c3) 15 ♖c2! (*D*).

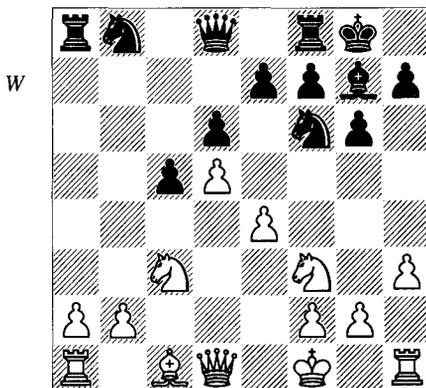
White protects c3 and b2, again preparing for a move by White's bishop. This position has arisen scores of times. In Neverov-Van der Weide, Hoogeveen 1999, Black chose 15...♘b6 (15...♖b4 and 15...♖b7 are also played) 16 ♗e2 ♗a6!? (with White's pieces coordinating so



well, the ending may not be optimal; 16...♘a4! looks like a better solution: 17 ♖xa4 ♗xa4 18 ♜c4 ♗a6 19 a3, Maduro-Mendes, Coimbra 1995, and now 19...♘c7 looks satisfactory, considering capturing on b2, but also having in mind ...♘b5 or even ...e6) 17 ♗xa6 ♜xa6 18 ♞b1! (18 b3 is answered with 18...f5!) 18...♘a4?! (18...♘c7 is met by 19 b4!, but 18...♘c4 may be best) 19 ♘d1! ♘c7 20 b3 f5 21 ♘d2 ♘b6 22 b4! and White was consolidating. An instructive example.

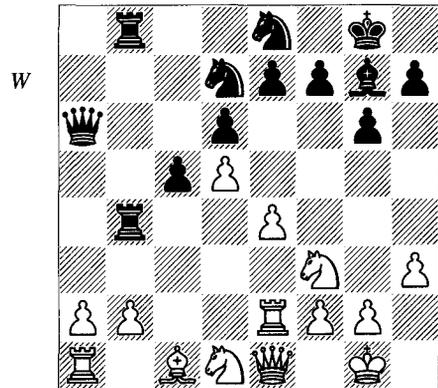
c) 12 ♗c2 ♗b6 13 ♞b1 ♜fc8! is a typically creative Pal Benko idea, preparing ...c4 and ...♘c5. For everyone else, putting the rook on b8 would be automatic. 14 b3 ♘g4 15 h3 ♘ge5 16 ♘xe5 ♙xe5 17 ♙d2 c4! gave Black full equality in Donner-Benko, Palma de Mallorca 1971. After 18 bxc4 (or 18 b4 ♜a3! intending either ...♗a6 or ...♜ca8) 18...♗d4 Black stands better.

10...0-0 (D)



11 ♙g1 ♘a6

11...♘bd7 12 ♙h2 ♗a5 13 ♜e1 ♜fb8 14 ♜e2 is precisely the position we saw in the preceding note 'b', with the exception that ♙g1-h2 has replaced g3 and ♙g2. One example is 14...♞b4 (alternatively, 14...♜a7 is playable, or 14...♘e8 15 ♜c2 ♘b6 16 ♗e2 ♗a6 17 ♗xa6 ♜xa6 18 ♞b1 ♘c4) 15 ♙g1 ♘e8 16 ♗e1!? ♜ab8 17 ♘d1 ♗a6! (D).



18 ♙g5 (not 18 ♙d2? ♙xb2!) and now 18...♙xb2 led to equality in Scherbakov-Vučković, Belgrade 2000, but 18...e6! 19 dxe6 fxe6 would have created a positional advantage in the centre and forced White to deal with b2 anyway.

12 ♙h2 ♗b6 13 ♗e2

As this variation is no longer used much, I'll skip over the remaining theory.

13...♜fb8 14 ♘d2 ♘c7

Benko gives the line 14...♘b4 15 ♘c4 ♗a6 16 ♙f4 ♘c2! 17 ♗xc2 (else ...♘d4) 17...♗xc4 with adequate compensation.

15 ♘c4 ♗a6 16 ♙d2 ♘d7 17 ♞he1 ♘e5!

As usual, Black is not afraid of simplification, including the exchange of queens.

18 ♘xe5

18 b3? ♘xc4 19 ♗xc4? ♗xc4 20 bxc4 loses to 20...♞b2.

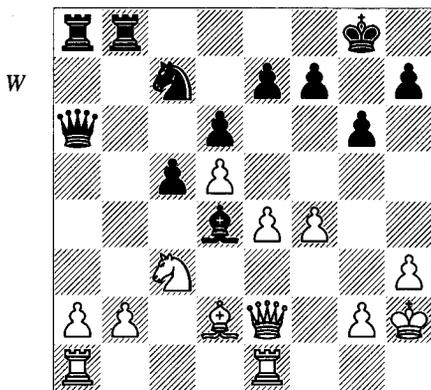
18...♙xe5+ 19 f4 ♙d4 (D)

Benko: "Black stands better: the pawns on a2 and b2 are targets, the d5-pawn can be undermined by a well-timed ...f5 advance, and White's counterplay is nowhere to be seen."

20 ♙c1 ♗xe2 21 ♜xe2 ♙f8

By protecting e7, Black prepares ...f5, which will undermine the pawn on d5. This is another Benko Gambit theme, especially in the ending.

22 ♘d1



White's problem is that there isn't anything positive to do, and he can't even sit still in the face of ideas like 22 ♖h1 f5 23 exf5 gxf5 24 ♜d2 ♞b3! 25 ♜e2 ♙e3 and 22 ♜c2 ♙xc3! 23 ♞xc3 ♞a4 24 ♞e3 f5.

22...f5 23 exf5 gxf5 24 ♙e3 ♜xd5 25 ♙xd4 cxd4 26 ♜d2 e5 27 fxe5 dxe5 28 ♜f2 ♙e7

Black's powerful centre pawns make the victory a matter of technique, especially since White's queenside can't profitably advance.

29 a3 ♜e3 30 ♞e1 ♞b3 31 ♜d3 ♞b5 32 ♙g1 ♙d6 33 ♜b4 ♜d5 34 ♜d3 e4 35 ♜c1 d3 36 g4 ♜f6 37 ♞f1 ♞g8 38 ♙h1 ♙e6 39 ♜a2 fvg4 40 ♞df2 ♞g6 41 ♜c3 0-1

White resigned without waiting for 41...♞h5 or 41...♞e5.

To this day, Black wins many games based upon the positional ideas that appear in this game. Next, we'll look at a modern variation in which Black doesn't have such an easy time finding good squares for his pieces.

Van Wely – Carlsen

Wijk aan Zee 2008

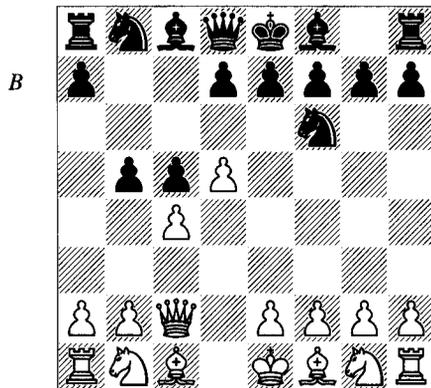
1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5

White has a great many ways to decline the gambit or return Black's pawn. Here are some brief comments:

a) An obvious try is 4 a4, intending 4...bxc4 5 ♜c3. But 4...b4, closing the position, can stifle the play and make it difficult to open lines.

b) 4 ♜d2 has the simple idea e4, which shouldn't be too dangerous if Black quickly breaks up the centre via ...bxc4 and ...e6. White would rather have his knight on c3 in such positions.

c) 4 ♜c2 (D) is more subtle than 4 ♜d2, still intending e4 but reserving the possibility of ♜c3 and leaving a path to f4 or g5 open for his queen's bishop. Then Moskalenko suggests that the most important lines are:



c1) 4...bxc4 5 e4 e6 6 ♙xc4 exd5 7 exd5 d6 8 ♜c3 ♙e7 9 ♜ge2 (or 9 ♜f3 0-0 10 h3) 9...0-0 10 0-0 ♜bd7 11 ♜g3 (by delaying ♜f3 in favour of ♜c2, White now has a direct view of the f5-square) 11...♜b6 12 b3! ♜xc4 13 bxc4 is a structure worth remembering, since White's space, grip on d5 and superior minor pieces outweigh Black's bishop-pair.

c2) 4...b4 5 e4 d6 6 f4! sets up a mobile centre as in the King's Indian Four Pawns Attack. White intends ♜f3, ♙d3, 0-0 and/or ♜bd2 in some order.

c3) 4...♜a6 5 ♜c3 (or 5 a3) 5...bxc4 6 e4 ♜b4 (6...e6 7 ♙xc4) 7 ♞a4! e6 8 ♙xc4 ♙b7 9 ♙g5 ♙e7 10 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 11 ♜ge2 with the idea of a3; again, delaying ♜f3 proved useful.

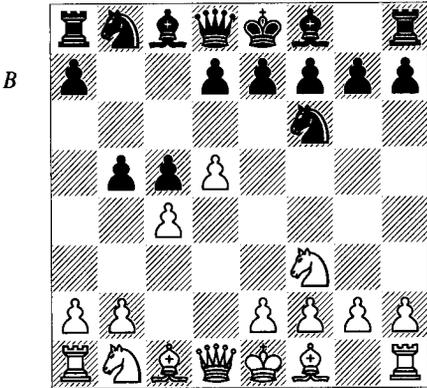
c4) 4...e6 5 e4 exd5 (5...bxc4 transposes to 'c1') 6 cxd5 c4 7 ♜c3 with a small advantage for White.

d) 4 ♜f3 (D) is arguably the most significant attempt to get the better game by purely positional means.

Then 4...e6! is the Blumenfeld Gambit, after which 5 ♙g5 is an older main line, but I believe that 5 dxe6 fxe6 6 cxb5 should, with care, give White an advantage. The usual responses to 4 ♜f3 are:

d1) 4...bxc4, when 5 ♜c3 and 6 e4 is comfortable for White, although playable for Black.

d2) 4...♙b7, when among other ideas, 5 ♜bd2 bxc4 6 e4 and 5 ♜c2 ♜a6 are critical.

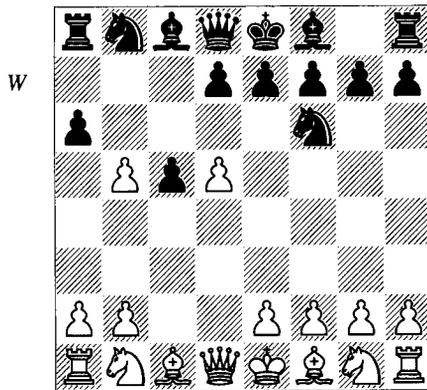


d3) 4...b4, when 5 a3 creates queenside possibilities.

d4) 4...g6 is probably Black's safest choice, and can still transpose into normal lines following 5 cxb5, or go its own way after 5 ♘bd2 or 5 ♗c2.

Considerable theory is attached to 4 ♘f3, and players on both sides of this opening will benefit from its investigation.

4...a6 (D)



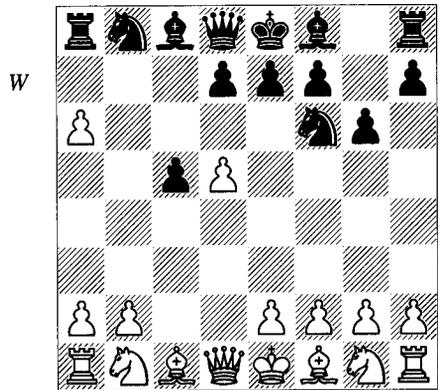
5 bxa6

Acceptance is the principled move, but White has some important alternatives here such as 5 b6, 5 f3 and 5 e3. Each of those moves has extensive theory associated with them, and if you want to build a repertoire with the Benko Gambit, you'll want to learn something about them as well. To keep this coverage fairly concise, I'll refer you to more specialized sources.

5...g6! (D)

Of all the move-order nuances in the Benko Gambit, this one most needs to be understood.

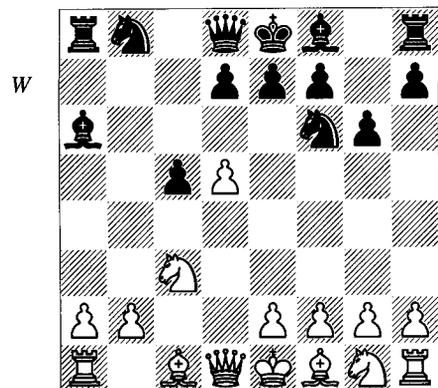
If Black plays 5...♙xa6 (as he did in many of the early games with this variation, including the previous one), it turns out that White can defend effectively by fianchettoing both bishops: 6 g3 d6 (6...g6 7 b3) 7 ♙g2 g6 8 b3! ♙g7 9 ♙b2 0-0 10 ♘h3 and 11 0-0. Experience has shown that, with Black's g7-bishop neutralized, he will have a relatively more difficult time achieving counterplay against White's queenside. Compare the next note.



6 ♘c3

Here, however, the line 6 b3 ♙g7 7 ♙b2 0-0 8 g3 is well met by 8...♙xa6!, when Black's bishop has more options and ...♘c7 has to be taken into account: 9 ♙g2 d6 10 e4 (for example, White has to be careful that his d-pawn isn't lost to a combination of ...♘c7 and ...♙b7) 10...♙b7 11 ♘e2 e6! with a very effective central attack.

6...♙xa6 (D)



7 g3

Introducing the Fianchetto Variation, the most popular choice of grandmasters today. 7 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{g}g7$ 8 $g3$ $d6$ 9 $\text{g}g2$ transposes to the main line of this game. In such a flexible opening there are always obscure variations hidden within the transpositions, but fortunately they tend not to be too important at this juncture.

7... $d6$ 8 $\text{g}g2$ $\text{g}g7$ 9 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}bd7$ (D)

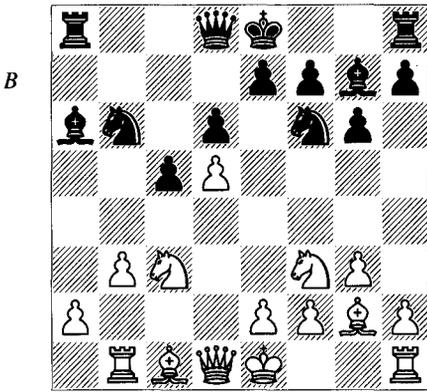
a-file or occupy a6 with another piece. That may sound rather abstract, but you will see that in key variations below, Black's favourite and probably best move is ... $\text{g}c8$!

Of course, Black mustn't be too upset with the passive position of White's bishop on g2; he should get on with his queenside play. That generally means ...0-0, ... $\text{w}a5$ and ... $\text{b}fb8$, as in the previous game, but he also has ideas of a well-timed ... $\text{d}b6$ in order to attack d5 and en-

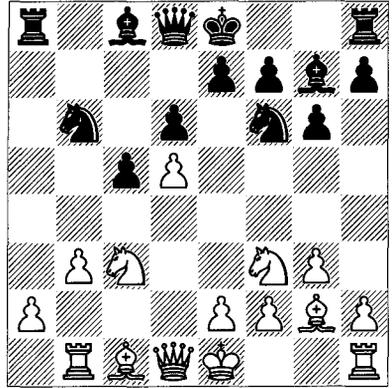


of b4) 11...♖b6 12 b3 ♗a3 13 0-0 0-0 to transpose to the game position.

What about 10...♖b6 (compare the previous note)? For some time, it was dismissed due to 11 b3 (D).



W

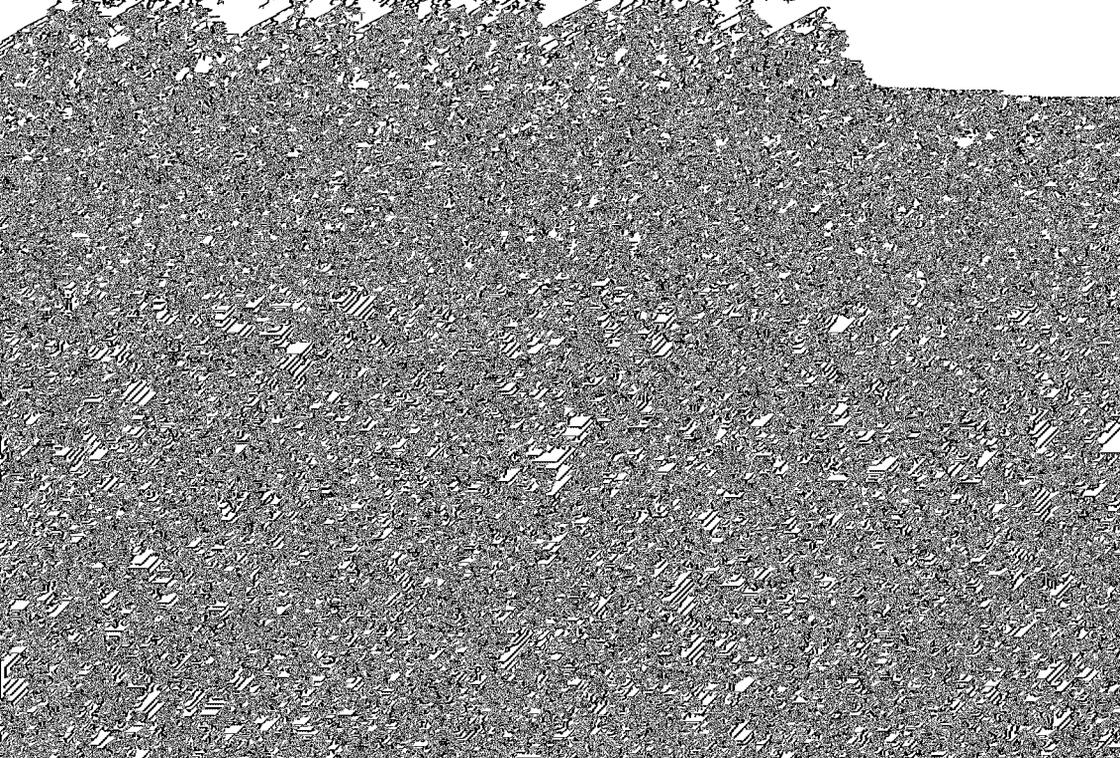


♗d2 0-0 15 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 16 ♗e2 ♖e8! 17 a4 ♗xe2+ 18 ♖xe2 f5!, as in Cvitan-Matamoros, Cannes 1996, when White will have to give back his d-pawn and leave Black with a 2:0 central majority.

This move keeps Black's pieces out of c4 and a4, while in some cases preparing ♗b2. Now if Black plays ...c4, White will reply b4, establishing two connected passed pawns on the queenside and making the bishop look silly on a6. Nevertheless, Black has returned to this position with some new ideas and it is still being disputed today:

a) 11...♗b7 (attacking d5) 12 ♖h4! (12 e4 can be met by 12...♗a6! establishing the sort

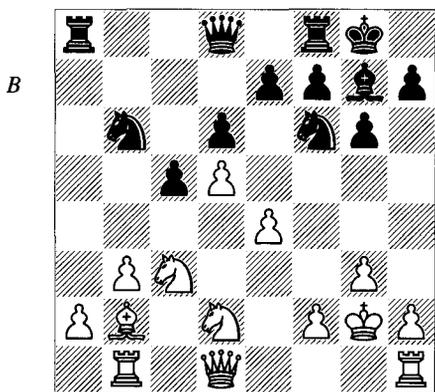
Nevertheless, this exotic strategy (...♗c8-a6) is in itself proof of the efficacy of White's placement of his bishop on g2, in that Black's bishop on a6, so powerful in other variations, feels obliged to retreat to its home square so long as White hasn't moved his e-pawn. This corresponds with McDonald's observation above about the relative strengths of the two sides' light-squared bishops. Instead of 12 e4, White should move his f3-knight, and there seems to be a pleasant choice:



instead, 14 f4!? prevents ...g5, but creates an internal weakness on e3, inviting 14...0-0 15 0-0 {15 a4 c4!} 15...♟g4; and 14...♟b7 15 e4 ♟a6 is still possible, as in the game Gordon-Djurhuus, Oslo 2008) 14...g5 15 ♟f3 ♟f5 (15...♟b7 16 e4 {16 0-0 ♟bxd5!} 16...♟a6 17 a4! 0-0 18 h4 g4 19 ♟d2 prepares ♟f1 and ♟c4, after which White has an extra pawn and solid position) 16 e4 ♟g6 17 0-0 0-0 18 ♟fd1 ♟g4 19 h3 ♟xf3 20 ♟xf3 h5, Breier-Van der Weide, Wijk aan Zee 2006, and here White has several ways to solidify his extra pawn; for example, 21 ♟g2 (or 21 a4) 21...g4 (21...♟fd7 22 a4 ♟e5 23 ♟e2) 22 a4 gxh3 23 ♟xh3 ♟g4 24 ♟e2.

b12) 13 ♟d3! is quite possibly better: White keeps d5 under guard, protects against ...c4, and still watches over f5. White plans ♟b2 next; for example, Feller-Gunnarsson, Differdange 2008 continued 13...♟d7 14 0-0 g5 15 ♟f3 and Black didn't find enough compensation following 15...♟f5 16 e4 ♟g6 17 ♟d1 ♟a6 18 ♟c2 0-0 19 ♟b2.

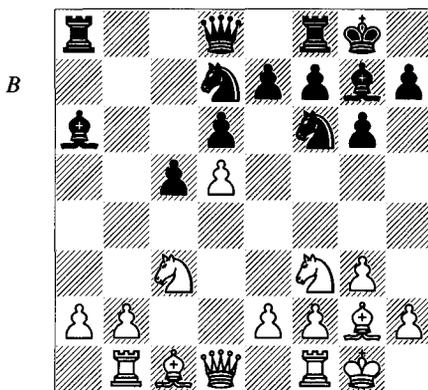
b2) 12 ♟d2 is also promising, covering c4 and e4. Black can still implement his plan by 12...♟f5 13 e4 ♟c8 14 ♟b2 (after 14 0-0?! ♟a6 15 ♟e1, Gawain Jones's 15...♟d3! gives Black full compensation) 14...♟a6 15 ♟f1 ♟xf1 16 ♟xf1 0-0 17 ♟g2 (D).



White's pieces are coordinating better than in Cvitan-Matamoros above. His knight on d2 and bishop on b2 are unusually well-placed. In Van Wely-E.Berg, Reykjavik 2008, seeing no prospects on the queenside, Black tried to play

after 20 ♟e1 ♟d7 21 ♟e2 (21 ♟b5! is also strong) 21...c4 (21...d4 22 ♟b5 d3 23 ♟d1!) 22 bxc4 ♟xa4 23 ♟xa4 ♟xa4 24 cxd5 exd5 25 ♟xf6! ♟xf6 26 e5 ♟e7 27 ♟b5 ♟xb5 28 ♟xb5 and Black was a pawn down for less than nothing.

11 0-0 (D)



11...♟a5

The Benko is very flexible, and I'm not sure that anyone knows what's best here. Some possibilities:

a) 11...♟b6 12 b3 ♟a7!? 13 ♟d2!? ♟a8 14 ♟d1 ♟b8 15 ♟b2 and Black hasn't made real progress, L.Johannessen-Djurhuus, Norwegian Ch, Røros 2002.

b) 11...♟e8 has the idea of ...♟c7-b5 to assist in the queenside attack. One way to prevent this is 12 ♟c2 ♟c7 13 a4!? ♟b7 (after 13...♟xc3 14 bxc3 ♟xd5, White has two strong bishops and a pin on the long diagonal; for example, 15 ♟h6 ♟e8 16 ♟g5 ♟c4 17 ♟fd1 ♟7f6 18 ♟e4!, intending 18...♟a7 19 ♟xd5! ♟xd5 20 ♟d2) 14 ♟d1 (or 14 e4 ♟a6 15 ♟a2!?, covering b4) 14...♟b6 15 e4 ♟a6 16 b3 ♟b4 17 ♟d2 ♟a6 18 ♟a3 and White consolidated in Grishchuk-Tregubov, French Team Ch 2005.

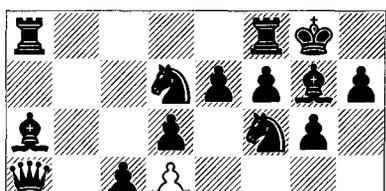
12 ♟d2 (D)

12 ♟c2 has been played more, but this straightforward bishop development seems to cause Black the most problems.

12...♟b6

Again, several ideas are possible here. After 12 ♟b7 planning an early ...a6. Floor room

B



19... Qd7 20 Qb5 Rc8

20... Qxb5 21 axb5 Bb6 22 bxc5 Qxc5 23 Qe3 isn't much better.

21 Qh3 (D)



6 f-Pawns and Reversed Openings

This chapter re-opens the topic of reversed openings, which I've already discussed at some length in the context of the English Opening in Volume 3, and to a lesser extent in other places (for example, 1...b6 and 1 b3 in Chapter 4 of this volume). A reversed opening usually refers to a case in which White plays an opening best known as a black defence, hoping to exploit the advantage of his extra move. Sometimes Black plays what is normally a white opening with a tempo less; this is the case with a couple of the double e-pawn variations I'll mention below. Obviously, for White to gain a tempo on a known variation will more often be attractive than for Black to play a known variation with a tempo less. Even so, since white systems on average sport a somewhat higher evaluation than black ones, their adoption with a tempo less will not necessarily lead to a disadvantage.

Up to this point in the series, I've examined openings in which the first pawn move is made by the b-, c-, d-, e- or g-pawn. In this chapter, I'm beginning with a discussion of the neglected f-pawn openings, namely, 1...f5 (the Dutch Defence, played versus 1 d4 or 1 c4), and 1 f4 (the Bird Opening). The Dutch has a storied history of use by elite players, and numerous devoted grandmaster advocates today. The Bird, although it has never been played extensively at grandmaster level, has a respectable master following and is undergoing a modest revival. I'll devote most of this chapter to a serious investigation of this opening duo. Then I look at the King's Indian Attack in the context of reversed openings, since it is the other side of

logical thinking. So it's only natural to assume that there must be some way to make use of an extra move. After all, chess moves have value, and you wouldn't voluntarily give a move away under normal circumstances. However, as we've talked about throughout these volumes, the worth of an extra move isn't a straightforward matter. In reversed positions of the English Opening, for example, it's remarkable how seldom White can actually claim to have the better game. For one thing, any advantage is limited by the fact that he will usually be playing what are essentially defensive or counterattacking lines. In addition, there's a paradoxical benefit in *not* having to move, in that Black gets a better look at what his opponent is up to and is able to react accordingly. Thus White's strategy will be to try to gain something from his extra move without compromising his position, and Black will try to make use of the extra information revealed by that move. It sometimes happens that, if White isn't careful, he will actually end up in a worse position than if he hadn't had the extra move at all!

Stepping outside the practical realm, this difficulty (of converting a move into something of value) is also revealing about the nature of chess itself. The paradox of information applies to every move, whether in a reversed position or not. In some sense, however sound and logical a move is, it contains the risk of leaving you worse off! That enormously magnifies the complexity and subtlety of the game. If advantages and disadvantages were additive in some linear fashion, chess would be a minor game at best

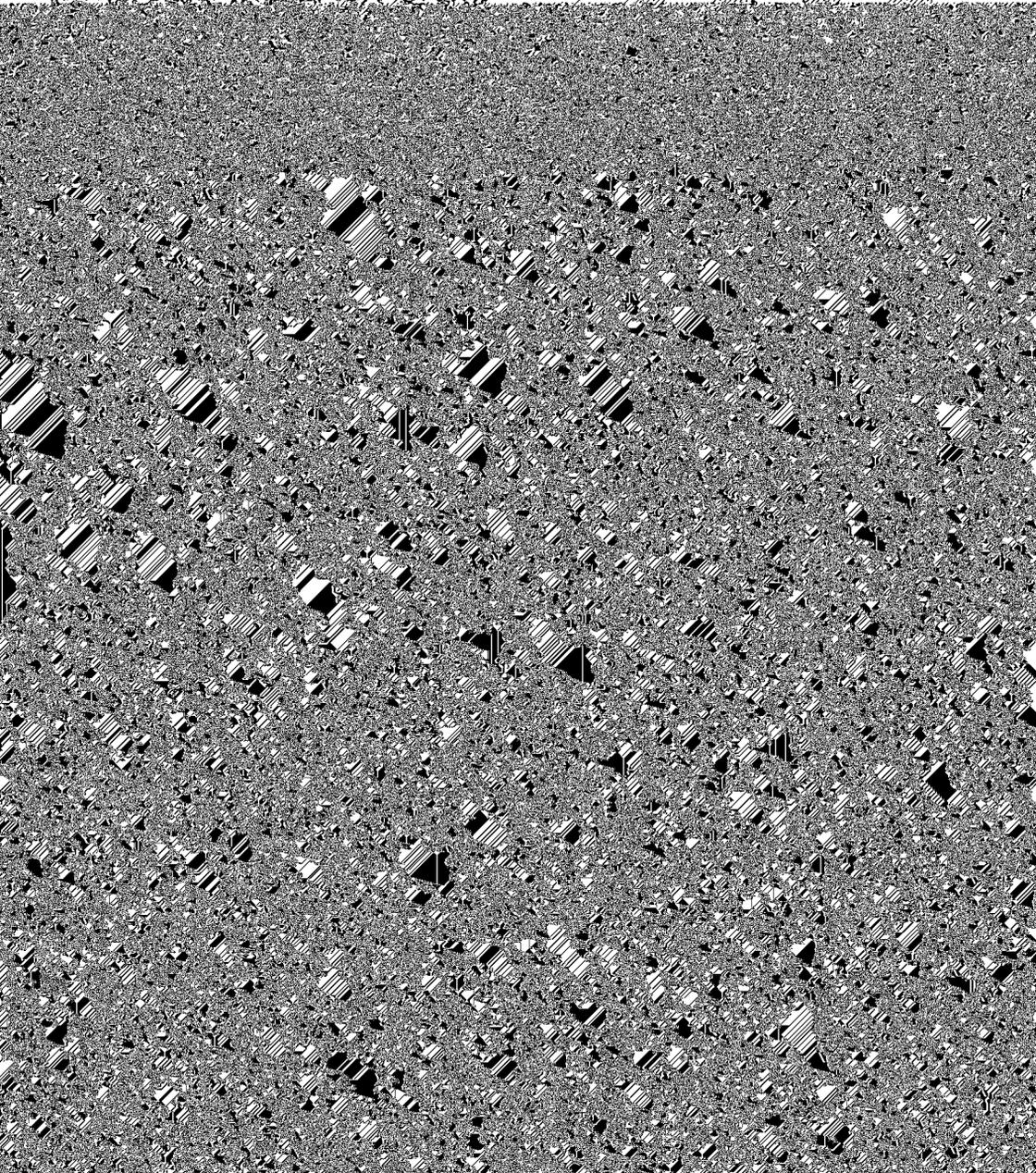
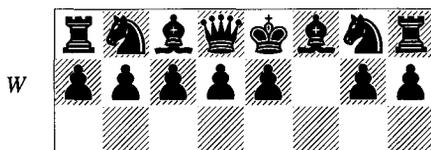
always seems to show up in one or another line of analysis where you're least expecting it. When you see how such a straightforward task (concentrating on only a single move) can entangle you in a whole complex of issues, it helps you appreciate how deep and impenetrable chess really is.

Returning to the task before us, and before moving on to specific examples, you need to know which reversed openings are fit for inclusion in your repertoire. The simplest criterion is subjective: do you enjoy playing the opening in question? Strictly speaking, that's not neces-

Having said all that, let's move to our first set of reversed openings.

Dutch Defence/Bird Opening

1 d4 f5 (D)

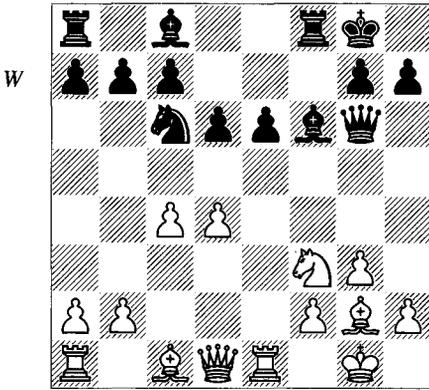


refer you to the standard remedies in theoretical works.

The Dutch Defence can be thought of as a mirror image of the Sicilian Defence. In particular, we see that if White plays e4 in the Dutch Defence, ...fxe4 gives Black a central majority and a half-open f-file, just as in the Open Sicilian with, e.g., 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4, Black obtains a central majority and a half-open c-file. In the Dutch, Black's first goal is usually to achieve ...e5, whereas in the Sicilian, a successful ...d5 usually denotes equality or better.

Take the position after the following sequence:

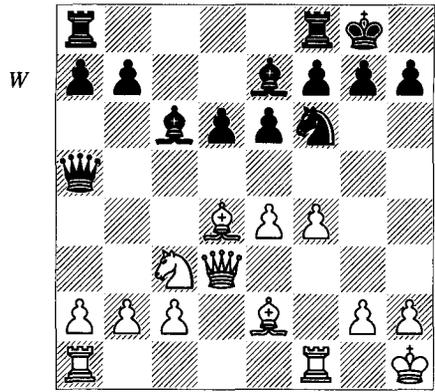
1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♙g2 e6 4 c4 ♗e7 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 ♘c3 ♚e8 8 ♜e1 ♞g6 9 e4 fxe4 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♞xe4 ♘c6 12 ♜e1 ♙f6 (D)



...and compare it with this common structure and piece placement for Black in the Sicilian Defence:

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♗e2 e6 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 ♗e3 ♘d7 9 ♖h1 ♘xd4 10 ♗xd4 ♗c6 11 ♞d3 0-0 12 f4 ♞a5 (D)

First, note that in all variations of the Dutch Defence, since Black plays ...d6 or ...d5 at some point, he will have a weakness on e6. Similarly, in the Open Sicilian (with 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4), assuming that Black plays either ...e6 or ...e5, he adopts a weakness on d6 (that applies to most variations, although not in the Dragon and Accelerated Dragon). In the Dutch, Black will generally have to castle kingside, i.e., on the same side of the board as his weakness, and he will lack the natural protection that a pawn on f7 affords a castled king. In the Sicilian Defence,



Black's corresponding weakness on d6 is further away from his normal king placement on g8, and all three kingside pawns remain on the second rank, guarding their charge.

A comparison of flank attacks is also revealing. After the exchange of flank attacks is also revealing. After the exchange on d4 in the Sicilian Defence, Black has a potentially strong minority attack on the queenside via ...b5-b4. In both the Classical and Leningrad Dutch, after an eventual e4 and ...fxe4, Black's advance of his kingside minority exposes his king. Nevertheless, by the time White plays e4, Black's f-pawn in the Dutch Defence can sometimes assist a serious kingside attack by ...f4, often in conjunction with ...g5. As White's most popular and arguably most promising lines nearly all stem from playing g3, ♗g2 and 0-0, this kingside advance, combined with moves such as ...♞h5, ...♗h3 and ...♘g4, can cause considerable havoc in White's camp. I should mention that in the Classical Variation (...♘f6, ...e6, ...d6 and ...♗e7), Black can also play a sort of waiting game with moves such as ...c6, ...a5 and ...♘a6, delaying both ...e5 and ...g5. This time there is no analogy in the Open Sicilian, since d4/...cxd4 has already been played; whereas, when playing Black in the Closed Sicilian, there would be no point in delaying both ...d5 and ...b5 in favour of risky moves like ...f6, ...h5 and ...♘h6.

From White's point of view, the two most important differences between these openings are:

- 1) In the Sicilian, he usually attacks in the centre and on the kingside; in the Dutch, he attacks in the centre and queenside.
- 2) In the Sicilian, his centre is typically under attack from ...♘f6 and the likes of ...b5-b4,

...♙b7 and ...♘bd7-c5; it is also subject to radical transformation from the move ...e5. In the Dutch, his c4/d4 centre tends to be fairly secure, particularly since ...g5-g4 is a risky venture; and the move ...d5 is not a realistic option in most positions (with a few important exceptions).

Needless to say, most strong players feel that the trade-offs for the Sicilian Defence are worth it as Black, whereas fewer are willing to adopt the Dutch Defence. Nevertheless, the comparison is useful for identifying the underlying features of both openings.

Leningrad Dutch

Beliaevsky – Malaniuk

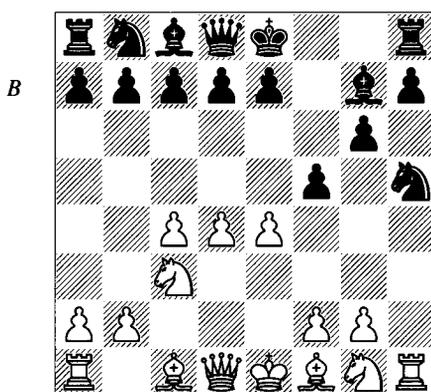
USSR Ch, Moscow 1983

1 d4 f5 2 g3

I'll concentrate upon this move in all variations; White plays g3 and ♙g2 in a large majority of all Dutch Defence lines. On an obvious level, this supports White's ideal break e4, which will open lines for White in classical fashion. Another factor is that, with pressure on b7, Black will have to be careful in developing his queen's bishop. In some cases, it's important that White's attack on d5 makes the move ...d5 itself more difficult for Black to play, whereas the moves ...c5 and ...e5 can sometimes weaken d5 and the centre. Finally, whether or not Black plays ...c6, the bishop on g2 supports the advance b4-b5, just as it does in the English Opening. Not surprisingly, there's more to this move, but that's best shown by example.

Instead, the natural move 2 c4 can transpose, or White can go his own way. Perhaps the main sequence that Black should avoid is 2...♘f6 (2...g6?! 3 h4!, when 3...♙g7 4 h5 is annoying, while 3...♘f6?! 4 h5! ♘hx5 5 ♖hx5 gxh5 6 e4 is worse still; compare the rest of this note) 3 ♘c3 g6 (3...d6! with ...g6 next avoids the following problem) 4 h4! ♙g7 5 h5!, intending 5...♘hx5 6 e4! (D).

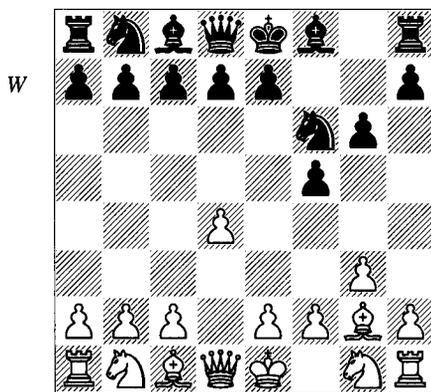
Now there is no ideal defence against White's threats of 7 ♖hx5 and 7 exf5; for example, 6...♘f6 (6...e6 7 exf5 exf5 8 ♖hx5 gxh5 9 ♗hx5+ ♘f8 10 ♘d5 with a huge attack, threatening both ♗xf5+ and ♙g5, to begin with) 7



exf5 gxf5 8 ♙g5 (or 8 ♙f4 d6 9 ♗c2 and 0-0-0; or even 8 ♘h3 intending ♘f4; in every case, White's half-open h-file facing Black's weakened kingside gives White some advantage) 8...0-0 9 ♗d2 d6 10 0-0-0, and White has more than enough for a mere pawn. Always be aware of this h4-h5 possibility.

2...d6

Sometimes Black uses this particular move-order in order to discourage ♘h3 lines (see below). Instead, 2...g6?! 3 h4! presents the kind of difficulties seen in the previous note. So the conventional move-order is 2...♘f6 3 ♙g2 g6 (D).



Then apart from the normal 4 ♘f3 ♙g7 5 0-0 d6, transposing to the game, White has:

a) 4 ♘h3, intending ♘f4 followed by d5. After 4...♙g7 5 ♘f4, a common defence is 5...♘c6, intending ...e5. After 6 d5 ♘e5, Black's knight can't easily be dislodged from e5; a typical continuation is 7 ♘c3 c6 8 e4 fxe4 (8...d6 is also playable) 9 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 10 ♙xe4 cxd5 11

♙xd5 e6 12 ♙g2 0-0 with chances for both sides.

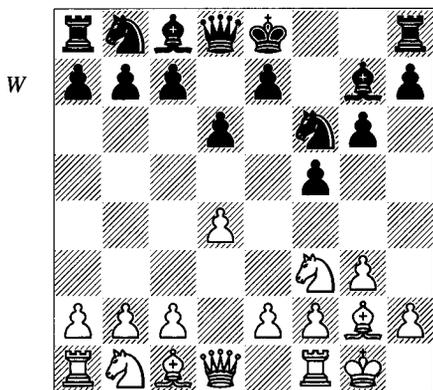
b) Alternatively, White can play 4 c3!? with the idea of ♖b3, which both attacks b7 twice and prevents Black from castling; for example, 4...♙g7 5 ♘h3 0-0? 6 ♖b3+ and 7 ♙xb7. Black usually resorts to ...e6 and/or ...d5 at some point in order to get castled, with which he has achieved respectable results.

I won't say more about these deviations, but they will repay some study.

3 ♘f3

Now 3 ♙g2 ♘f6 4 ♘h3 (with the idea 4...g6 5 ♘c3, looking to play d5 and ♘f4) 4...e5! denies White's knight access to f4, and Black has no problems following 5 dxe5 dxe5 6 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8. Of course, there are options other than 5 dxe5, but Black should come out all right because White's knight is poorly placed on h3.

3...g6 4 ♙g2 ♙g7 5 0-0 ♘f6 (D)



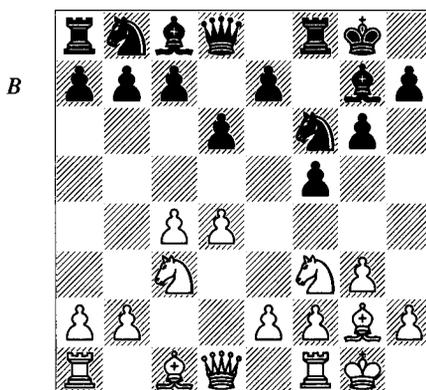
This is the Leningrad Dutch formation for Black, distinguished by the fianchetto of Black's king's bishop. It is the choice of most modern players, although the Classical and Stonewall Variations are still important. An optimist might argue that the Leningrad Dutch is an improved version of the King's Indian Defence, because in the King's Indian, Black ends up moving his king's knight in order to advance his f-pawn, whereas in the Leningrad Dutch, the pawn is already on that square! Naturally there are some limitations to that argument, but it's true that Black initially has more direct control of the centre due to the move ...f5, and if he can carry

companionship of his pawn on f5 increases the possibility of a productive central advance.

6 c4

6 b3 0-0 7 ♙b2 will be examined below.

6...0-0 7 ♘c3 (D)



7...♖e8

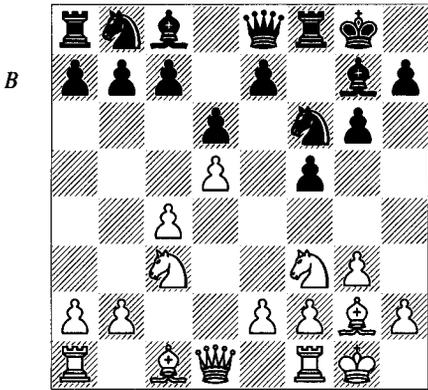
This is the modern main line of the Leningrad Dutch, replacing the moves 7...c6 and 7...♘c6, which used to be considered the only two respectable choices. Those moves are still important choices, of course, but I'll stick with the queen move so as to cover the essential practical details. The Leningrad Dutch is a popular system and, like others, has a massive body of theory attached to it.

Why 7...♖e8? It's really a matter of timing and specifics. The threat of an early ...e5 limits White, who has to prevent Black from equalizing with that advance, and it turns out that transferring Black's queen to the kingside (usually by ...♖h5) can have real benefits. Black also keeps his options open, as can be seen in the next few notes. Finally, he has a concrete defence in mind versus 8 ♙e1, which you will see in the game following this one.

8 d5 (D)

White's two main strategies in the Leningrad Variation involve this central advance d5 and the break e4, seen in the next game. The older move 8 ♘d5 has failed to produce any advantage after either 8...♙a6 or 8...♘d5 9 cxd5 ♖b5 10 ♘g5 h6 11 ♘h3 e5.

After 8 d5, if White can play ♘d4 and then enforce the opening of the c-file, the queen's



c5. Playing b4 has the additional benefit of discouraging Black from ...c6 because of dxc6 followed by b5.

On the negative side, 8 d5 opens the a1-h8 diagonal for Black's bishop and gives him squares on c5 and e5 upon which to put knights. White's advance is also very committal and thus allows Black to focus upon a narrower set of problems than would be presented by a more flexible move.

8...♘a6

8...a5 is the main alternative. It forestalls White's b4 expansion on the queenside (which is a plan that can cause Black considerable discomfort following 8...♘a6), and in doing so it secures a post on c5 for Black's queen's knight. Now 9 ♖b1 is rather slow after 9...♘a6 10 b3 ♘d7 (versus ♘b5) 11 ♖b2 ♘c5 12 e3 c6. White has any number of other replies, includ-

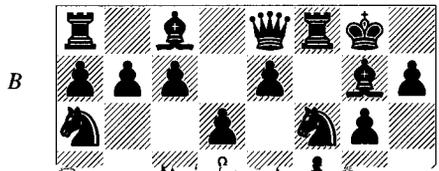
a) 10 b3 ♘d7 11 ♖b2 g5! saves Black a tempo, because in other lines he usually has to play ...h6 and ...g5, the former move contributing little to his plans. One instructive variation goes 12 e3 f4! 13 exf4 gxf4 14 ♘e6 ♖xe6 15 dxe6 c6 16 ♘e2?! fxg3 17 hxg3? ♘g4!, when White has problems in the face of ...♗h5. After 18 ♖h3 ♖xb2 White has to give up a pawn by 19 ♗b1 ♘xf2 20 ♖xf2, etc., because 19 ♖xg4? ♖xa1 20 ♗xa1 ♗g6 21 ♖h3 ♗h5! costs him more material.

b) 10 e4 fxe4 11 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12 ♖xe4 ♖h3 13 ♖e1 (or 13 ♖g2) 13...♘c5 14 ♖h1 ♗f7 15 ♖e3 ♖ae8 (15...♘d7!?) prepares ...c6, not necessarily immediately) 16 ♗d2 e5 17 dxe6 ♘xe6 18 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 19 ♖ac1 b6 with equality, Van der Sterren-Nikolić, Ter Apel 1994.

Naturally, there's more to be said here, but White should probably look into his 9th-move alternatives.

9 ♘d4

9 ♖e3 isn't bad (compare the reversed position in the Bird Opening, where it equalizes). But the most important alternative to 9 ♘d4 is 9 ♖b1 (D), which removes White's rook from the long diagonal and prepares b4, both capturing territory and restricting Black's pieces.

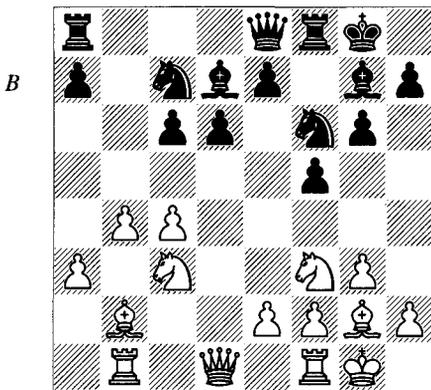


Kindermann suggests 16...♖c7; if White has any advantage, it's not much.

b) 9...c5 (or 9...c6) 10 dxc6 bxc6 11 b4 ♘d7 and then:

b1) The aggressive 12 b5, trying to win the c6-square for a knight, isn't terribly effective following 12...cxb5 13 cxb5 ♖c5 14 a4 ♜c8 15 ♖d4 (or 15 ♘b2 a6!) 15...♖ce4 16 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 17 ♘b2 ♜f7 18 e3, when 18...♜a2!? eventually resulted in equality in Babula-Beim, Bundesliga 1999/00, but it might have been easier to double rooks via 18...♜c4!; for example, 19 ♖c6 ♘xc6 20 bxc6 ♘xb2 21 ♜xb2 ♜c8.

b2) 12 a3 is a move that was found only after lengthy investigation. 12...♖c7 (12...♜b8 and 12...h6 are also played) 13 ♘b2 (D) and now:



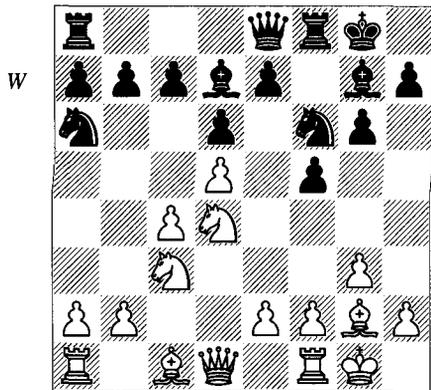
b21) 13...a5 is worth thinking about, since after 14 b5, 14...♖e6 or 14...♜b8 followed by ...♖e6 gives Black the c5-square or allows him to exchange off a white knight on d4.

b22) Kindermann's idea 13...♖e6 14 c5! d5! has been tested several times and seems to hold, but needs precise handling.

b23) 13...♜b8! (introducing a speculative pawn sacrifice) 14 ♜a4 (14 ♘a1 is a safer continuation) 14...♖e6!?, Fridman-E.Berg, Bermuda 2003. Black is reacting to White's queenside drift by using the standard Leningrad Dutch attack on the other wing. Whether it fully compensates after 15 ♜xa7 f4 16 ♜a4 g5 17 ♜c2 ♜h5 is not obvious, but these attacks are always very dangerous in practice.

9...♘d7 (D)

Black can also increase his control over e4 by 9...♖c5, but it's more direct to develop a piece and support counterplay by ...c6 or ...c5.



10 e3

Rather slow. The natural 10 e4 has also achieved little after 10...fxe4 11 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 12 ♘xe4 c6. Then Black can play ...♖c7 (to cover e6) and ...c5; after attending to the centre, he will often get a good queenside attack.

A positional trick that comes up a lot goes 10 ♜b1 c6, when 11 b4? c5! 12 bxc5 ♖xc5 secures an outpost for Black on c5 in front of the backward c-pawn. In Bu Xiangzhi-Galyas, Budapest 1999, White recognized the danger and undertook quick action to simplify: 13 ♖e6! ♖xe6 14 dxe6 ♘xe6 15 ♜xb7 ♘xc4 16 ♜c7 ♜c8 17 ♜xa7, when Black had a slight edge based upon his central majority. However, White can improve by 11 b3, which keeps both sides' possibilities open.

10...c6 11 b3 ♖c7

11...c5 12 ♖de2 ♖c7 is also possible.

12 ♘b2 c5!

Black takes the opportunity to attack on the queenside. He will play ...b5 and potentially render White's c4-pawn vulnerable to ...bxc4, ...♖g4-e5 and ...♜b8-b4.

13 ♖de2

13 ♖f3 b5 14 ♖d2 places the knight on a better square than e2, but takes an extra move. After 14...♜b8 15 ♜c2, White isn't threatening anything right away, so Black might continue 15...a5, and if White tries to block by 16 a4, then 16...bxa4 17 ♖xa4 ♖a6 intending ...♖b4 creates queenside counterplay. This variation offers opportunities for both sides.

13...b5! (D)

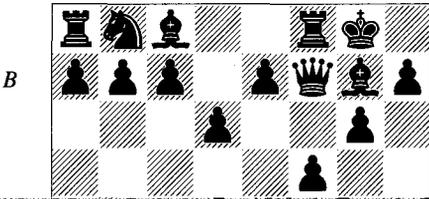
14 ♜c2?!

Since White's c-pawn now becomes weak, 14 cxb5 ♖xb5 15 ♖xb5 ♘xb5 16 ♜e1 should

a) 9 $\text{g5!?$ xc4 10 $\text{f1!?$ gives White active play and compensation for his pawn. Following 10... c6 , the position is considered satisfactory for Black; for example, 11 e4 fxe4 12 b5?! b6 13 c4+ h8 14 f7+ xf7 15 xf7 and now 15... f5 or 15... c6 gives him two pawns for the exchange with the initiative. However, Neverov's suggestion of 11 b3+ d5 12 f4! is worth looking into.

b) 9 d3 h6 10 e4! demonstrates how White's light squares in the centre and king-side can become vulnerable in conjunction with Black's f-file pressure: 10... fxe4 11 xe4 xe4 12 xe4 c6! (with the idea ... f5) 13 d5 (13 g4?! xd4 14 xd4 xf2+ 15 h1 xd4) 13... b4! with the point that 14 a3?! (better is 14 g4 c6 15 dxc6 xc6) is met by 14... f5 15 h4 f6! 16 hxh6 c2 17 g5 g7! .

9... e4 10 b2 (D)



11 c1 e5

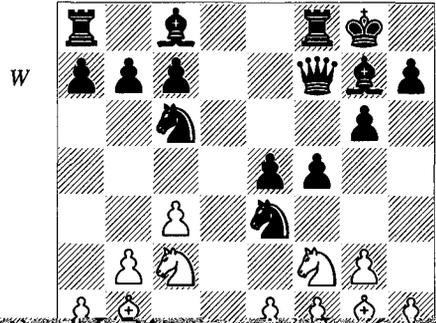
11... h6 12 d5 b4 13 d4 ultimately seems to favour White, especially because 13... xc3 14 xc3 xa2 15 f3! launches a terrific attack, with e4 coming next.

12 $\text{dxe5!?$

Introducing a tactical struggle. 12 d5 xc3 13 xc3 is of a strategic nature and deserves consideration by White. Then Kindermann's preference for Black is 13... d8 14 c5 we7 .

12... dxe5 (D)

12... xc3?! 13 xc3 dxe5 was eliminated from practice by the move 14 d5! . Then e5 is attacked, and 14... e6 15 g5! xd5 16 xd5 xd5 17 cxd5 is followed by e6 or b4 .



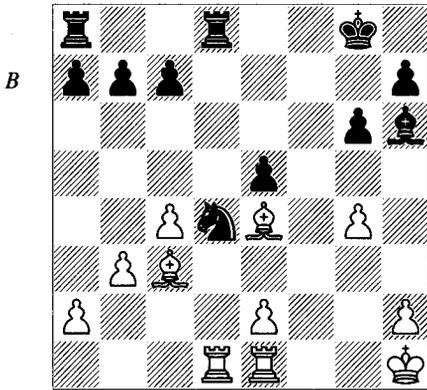
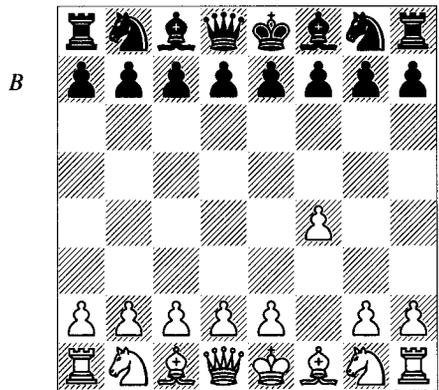
18...♖xc3?!

18...♖h6! 19 ♖xe3 ♙xe3 20 ♜cd1 ♔g7 has been played several times, with Black apparently achieving equality. That will doubtless continue to be challenged, but 18...♖h6 appears to be better than the immediate exchange.

19 ♙xc3 ♖h6 20 ♜cd1 ♘d4 21 g4!

This wins the bishop-pair and thereby establishes a clearly favourable endgame.

21...♙xe4 22 ♙xe4 (D)



The opening is over, but the rest of the game is very much worth playing over. Note how White advances every pawn in a relentless territorial expansion; this enhances the power of his bishops.

22...c6 23 b4! ♙g7 24 e3 ♘e6 25 h4! ♜xd1 26 ♜xd1 ♜d8 27 ♜b1! ♔f7 28 ♔g2 ♜d7 29 ♔f2 a6 30 ♔e2 ♘c7 31 ♜f1+ ♔g8 32 h5! gxf5 33 gxf5 ♘e8 34 ♜g1 ♘d6 35 ♙c2 h6 36 c5! ♘f7 37 ♙f5 ♜e7 38 e4 ♘g5 39 a4! ♔f8 40 ♜f1 ♔e8 41 ♙g6+ ♔d8 42 b5 axb5 43 ♙a5+ ♔c8 44 ♜d1 b6 45 cxb6 c5 46 axb5 ♔b7 47 ♙f5 ♘f7 48 ♙d7 ♙f6 49 ♙c6+ ♔b8 50 ♙c3 1-0

Bird Opening

We aren't done with the Dutch Defence by any means, but I want to turn to the reversed opening, 1 f4, known as the Bird Opening, both to examine it on its own merits and in order to compare it to the Dutch.

1 f4 (D)

The Bird Opening has never had a steady following at grandmaster level. For most players, its main drawback is that Black doesn't have to

work hard enough to reach equality. In most openings, White has an initial advantage that persists for a while and requires accurate handling from Black in order to achieve equality. The Bird Opening doesn't present that level of challenge. In addition, some players are reluctant to deal with the From Gambit, 1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6, which takes the initiative away from White in the first few moves.

Having said that, 1 f4 is perfectly respectable from a theoretical point of view and, along with other unorthodox openings, has been receiving renewed attention. Today's players have an understandable desire to get away from 'theory' once in a while; that's not always possible in standard openings because the most interesting systems include at least a few very lengthy variations which need to be memorized. By contrast, there are few truly critical variations involved if you pick a repertoire based upon 1 f4. The From Gambit is one of them: you have to study it (or play 2 e4, transposing to the King's Gambit). But this gambit has been looking increasingly shaky versus accurate play by White, and the relevant theory isn't too difficult to absorb (see the next note). The other lines that you'll probably want to master are those that stem from 1 f4 d5, a reversed Dutch Defence. For one thing, statistics show that you will see 1...d5 far more often than any other reply. Although you can always avoid playing reversed Dutch positions, it's more promising and instructive to take up the challenge and see what you can do with your extra move. In fact, many 1 f4 players also use the Dutch Defence, so the two openings can reinforce one another.

In the first two games, I'm going to look at the reversed Leningrad Dutch variations, dealing primarily with the main lines. At the same time, there are many early options, and I'll try to supply enough background details so that you can get a feel for how the opening breaks down in general, and which lines might appeal to you when playing either colour.

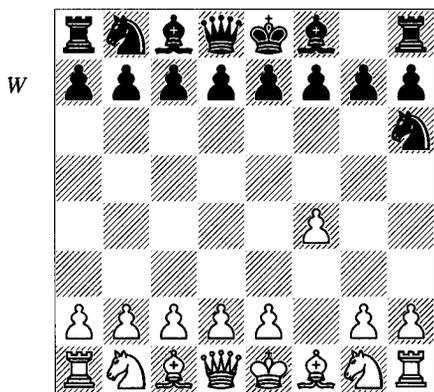
1...d5

Obviously, Black can do without ...d5 and thus side-step a main-line Dutch Defence position; for example:

a) Black can contest the critical e5-square by 1...d6!?, with the idea 2 ♘f3 ♙g4. Upon 2 e4, Black might play into a line of the f4 Sicilian by 2...c5, a King's Gambit Declined by 2...e5 or choose a Pirc set-up with 2...♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 (or here 3...♙g4!?). You can imagine how many independent move-orders can result from this or other slow first moves. That's because 1 f4 puts so few demands upon Black.

b) The natural 1...♘f6 is another example: after 2 ♘f3, it can transpose to a reversed Dutch after 2...d5. Alternatively, Black can play 2...c5, 2...g6, 2...b6 or another noncommittal move. The position is practically unconstrained, which is the reason so many games with the Bird Opening leave the beaten track early on.

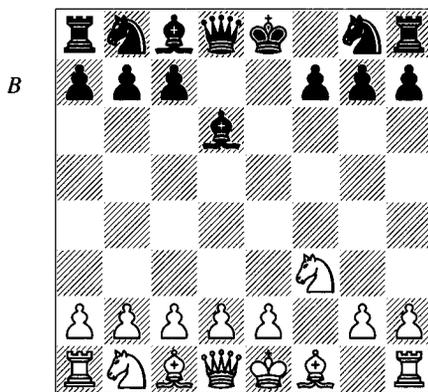
c) 1...♘h6! (D) is a curious way to get to unique positions.



This resembles variations of the Dutch Defence in which White plays ♘h3. Black's idea is for his knight to occupy the f5-square; for example, 2 e4 (2 ♘f3 g6 and now 3 e4 d5 is similar; naturally, White has solid alternatives such

as 3 g3) 2...d5 3 exd5! (3 e5 also opens the way for Black's knight to settle on f5, after 3...c5 or 3...♙g4) 3...♙xd5 4 ♘c3 ♙d6 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 (or 5...g6) 6 d4 ♙f5 7 d5? (overextension) 7...♘b4 8 ♘d4 0-0-0 9 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 with the advantage. This is analysis by Reinderman. I won't go into further detail, but 1...♘h6 is a legitimate choice.

d) I'm going to refer the reader to books and databases for a detailed coverage of the From Gambit: 1...e5 2 fxe5 (2 e4 is the King's Gambit) 2...d6 3 exd6 ♙xd6. At the moment, it seems to favour White in the main lines after 4 ♘f3 (D).



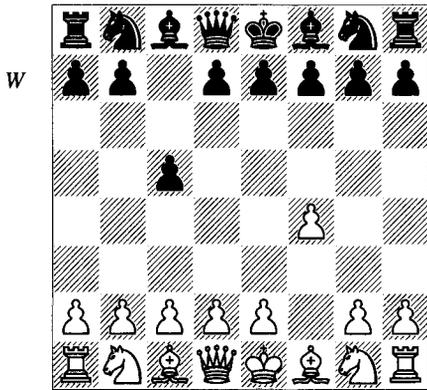
Here are a few thoughts about theory, featuring some practical approaches:

d1) 4...♘f6 can be answered by the slightly unusual 5 ♘c3 (recommended by Larsen; the main line 5 d4 ♘g4 6 ♙d3 c5 7 ♙e4+ is a bit hard to assess; for example, after the recommended 7...♙e7 8 e3 0-0 9 ♙d3 f5 10 ♙c4+ ♘h8 11 ♙d3, 11...f4! 12 0-0 ♘c6 offers compensation; 5 e3 opens another can of worms following 5...♘g4 6 ♙e2) 5...♘g4 6 g3!; for example, 6...h5 (6...♘xh2 7 ♙xh2 ♙xg3+ 8 ♙f2 has been analysed at some length and seems to favour White) 7 ♘e4 h4 8 gxh4 (8 ♘xd6+ ♙xd6 9 gxh4 ♘c6 10 d3 is recommended by Vigus) 8...♙f5 (8...♙e7 9 ♘eg5 ♙xh4 is rather slow after 10 d4! ♙h5 11 h3; for example, 11...♘c6 12 ♙d3) 9 ♘xd6+ ♙xd6 10 d3 with the idea ♙d2-f4, when White has the upper hand.

d2) 4...g5 5 d4! (again, not the normal choice; loads of theory indicates that White can survive some dangerous attacks and emerge

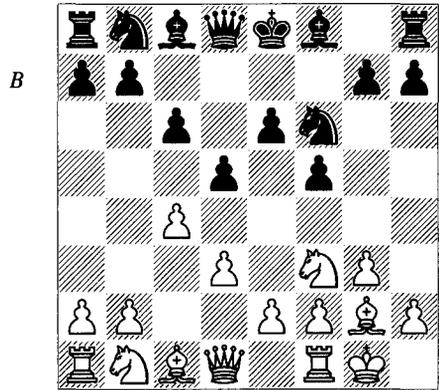
with the better game after 5 g3 g4 6 ♖h4 ♗e7 7 d4 {7 e4 should get another look} 7...♗g6 8 ♗xg6 {8 ♗g2 is equally complicated, and unclear} 8...hxg6 9 ♖d3 ♗c6 10 c3 ♗f5 11 e4 ♖e7 12 ♗g2 0-0-0 13 ♗e3, although 13...♗e6 can be interesting) 5...g4 6 ♗e5 ♗xe5 7 dxе5 ♖xd1+ 8 ♖xd1 ♗c6 9 ♗c3 ♗e6 (9...♗xe5? 10 ♗f4 f6 11 ♗d5) 10 ♗f4 0-0-0+ 11 ♖c1 ♗ge7 12 b3 ♗g6 13 g3 (13 ♗g5!?) 13...♗gxе5 14 ♗g2, and White has two well-placed bishops with good prospects.

e) The most important of Black's positional alternatives to 1...d5 and 1...♗f6, at least in practice, is 1...c5 (*D*), often used by Sicilian Defence players.



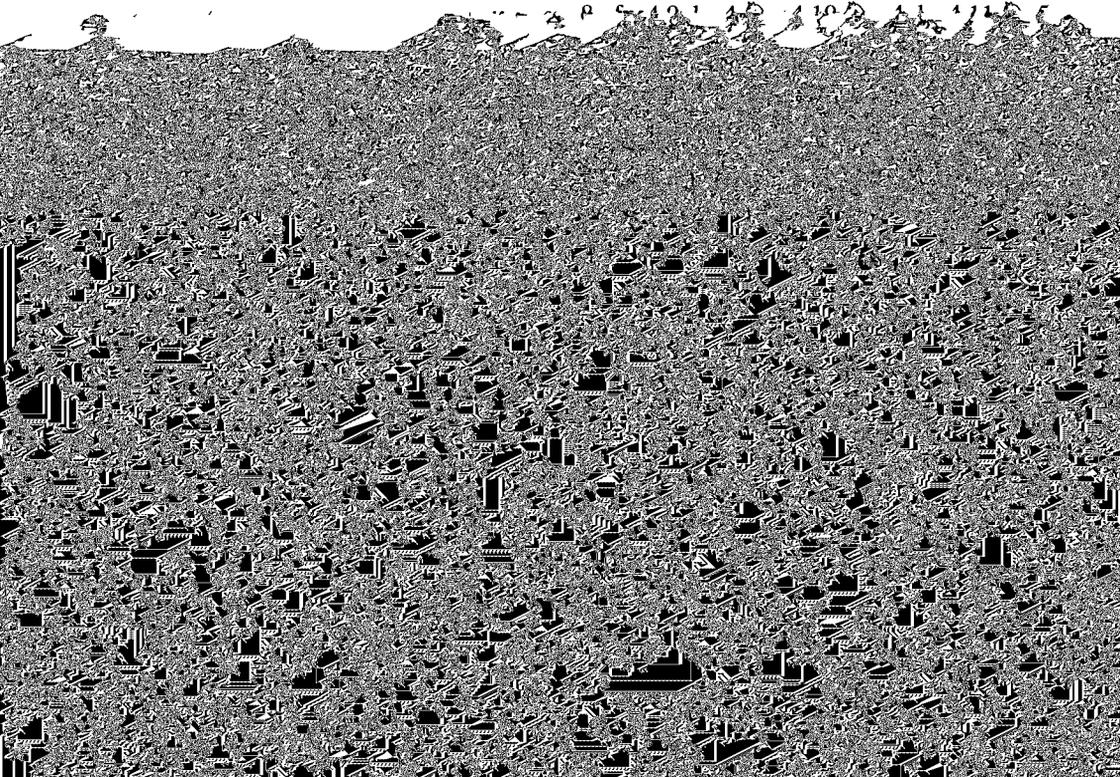
e5! (a common Closed Sicilian and King's Indian Attack theme; 6...e6 and 6...♗f6 are conventional alternatives) 7 d3 ♗ge7 8 ♗c3 0-0 9 ♗e3 exf4 (9...♗d4) 10 ♗xf4 (10 gxf4 f5!) 10...♗d4 with equal prospects.

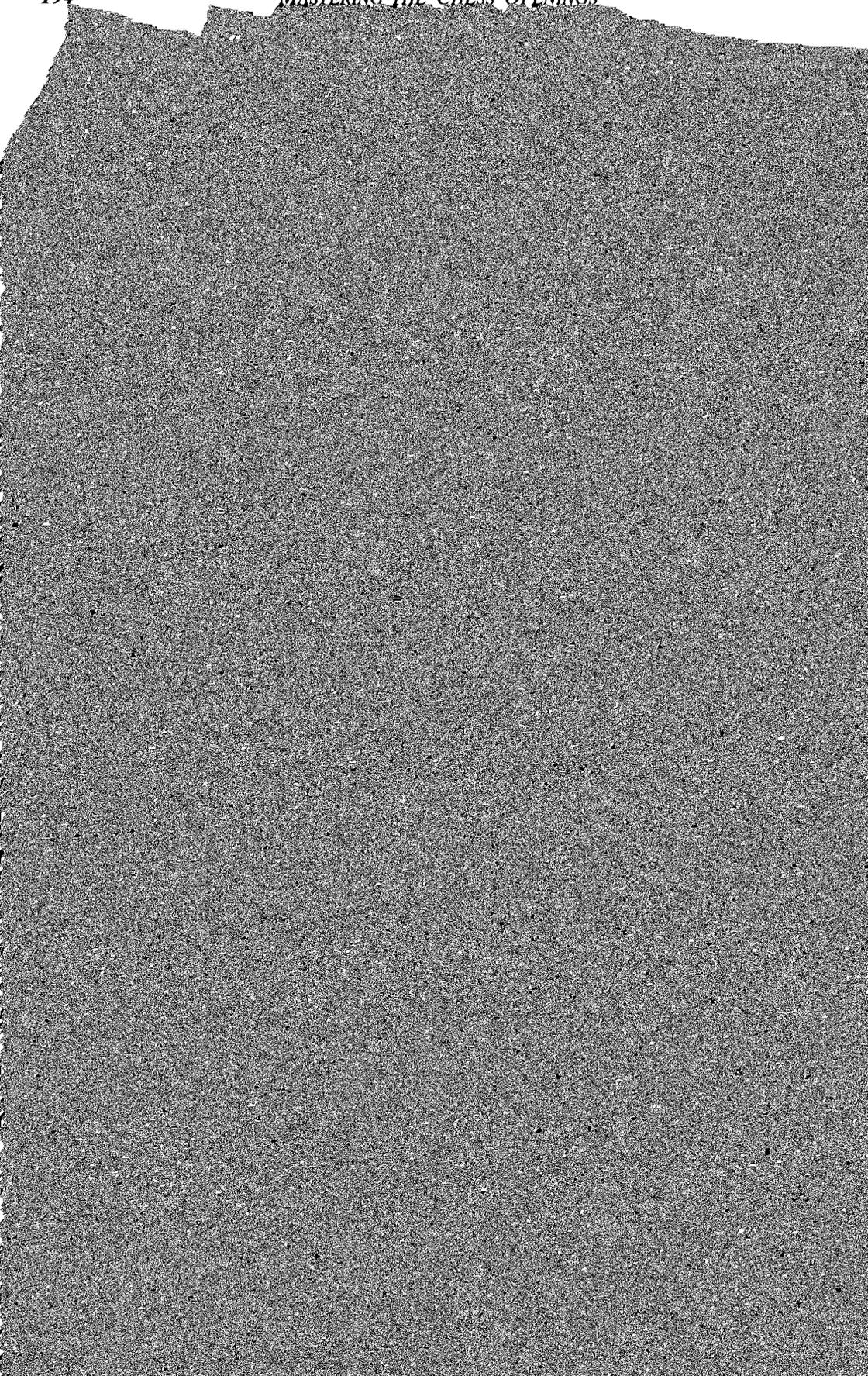
Please forgive me a digression here. This idea of ...d6 to cover e5 comes up with reversed colours in the English Opening version of the Stonewall Dutch if Black is not very careful with his move-order: 1 c4 f5 2 ♗f3 ♗f6 3 g3 e6 4 ♗g2 d5 5 0-0 c6?! 6 d3 (*D*).



This is strangely difficult for Black to play against; for example:

a) 6...♗d6 7 ♗c3 0-0 8 e4! with the idea







a) 4...♘h6 with the idea ...♘f5 and sometimes ...d4 is a legitimate alternative. In fact, when White plays ♘h3 in the reversed system, one of his problems is that Black will liquidate

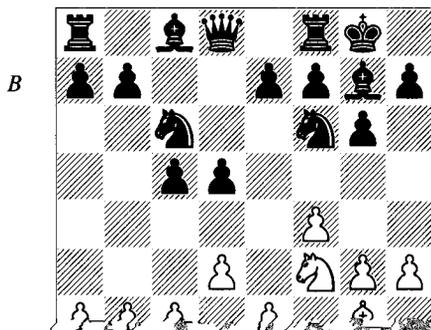
6...♘c6 will transpose in most cases, but does make the move 7 ♘c3!? more appealing to White than usual:

a) 7...0-0 permits 8 e4; it's unclear how 8...dxe4 9 dxe4 comes out, but White has the better prospects for an edge. White can also play 8 a3, which anticipates the need for b4 and is consistent with the idea that follows. Finally, Bückner's suggestion 8 h3!? is another useful semi-waiting move, in that it assists White slightly in most possible continuations, without hurting him in any obvious way; however, compare 7 ♖e1 ♘c6 8 h3 in the note to 7 c3 below.

b) 7...d4 8 ♘a4 ♘d7 (contemplating an exchange sacrifice with ...b5) 9 c4 (9 ♘g5 ♖c7 10 f5!? is Lars Karlsson's idea, leading to exotic tactical play; this is fun to analyse) 9...0-0 (*D*).

Dutch position. Then if Black plays 7...♘c6, White might want to reply 8 h3, as suggested by Stefan Bückner.

After the more conventional 7 ♖e1 (analogous to the main line ...♖e8 in the Leningrad Dutch), a similarly thought-provoking line is 7...♘c6 8 h3!? (*D*).



White's extra move h3; 10 ♖d2 ♕d7! also exploits the extra move h3 by threatening ...♗c8, with a double attack on h3 and c2) 10...♕d7 11 ♖a3 (11 ♗xd4 ♗c8!) 11...♗b6. It's hard to imagine that, with ...♗ac8 coming, Black has any serious difficulties here.

7...♖c6 8 ♗e1

Now we have precisely the ...♗e8 Leningrad Dutch with the extra move c3 in. You'll also recognize the alternative 8 ♖a3 (D) from the reversed position:

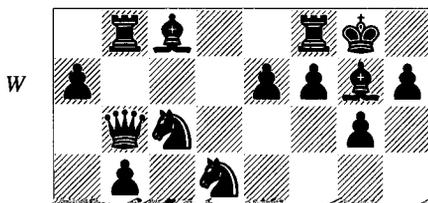


better-placed pieces for the exchange after 12 ♗f4 ♖h5 13 ♗f3 ♕xe5 14 ♕h6 ♖f6 15 ♕xf8 ♗xf8) 12...♗xe5 13 e4 dxe4 14 ♕f4 ♗e6 15 ♕xb8 ♗xb8 16 ♗f4 ♗c8 17 dxe4 ♖g4 18 ♕h3 h5 19 ♖c2. The game has been dynamically equal for some time, but here Black needs to protect against ♖e3, and blockade the isolated e-pawn, which can be done by 19...♕b5 20 ♗fe1 ♕e5 21 ♗g5 (and not 21 ♕xg4 hxg4 22 ♗d2?! ♕c6) 21...♕f6 with a repetition.

d) An online game with 8...♗e8 shows White achieving his model attack: 9 ♖h4!? e5!? 10 f5! ♖h5 11 e4 (Vigus recommends 11 ♗b3) 11...dxe4? 12 ♕xe4! (now e4 is an outpost and White is attacking) 12...♕d7? 13 fxg6 hxg6?!

the other reversed system, with the idea ♖a3-c4 and ♗d2. If Black plays ...b6 and ...♗a6, White's knight might come to b5. Again, however, the committal moves ♕e1 and a4 combine to give Black an opportunity that he doesn't get in the reversed position: 9...♗e6!, which is a safe enough deployment in any case, hits the newly weakened b3-square; for

11...b5 12 cxd4 cxd4 13 ♕f2 ♕b6 (D)



Let's return to the Dutch Defence and see what happens if White isn't so eager to play d5 himself.

Dreev – Malaniuk

USSR Ch, Moscow 1991

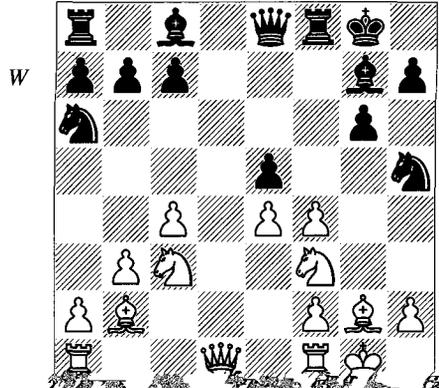
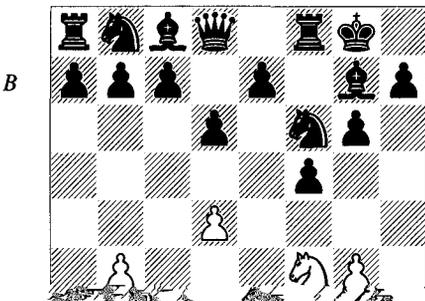
1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♙g2 d6 4 ♘f3 g6 5 b3

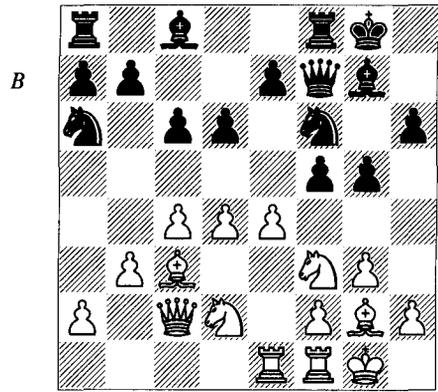
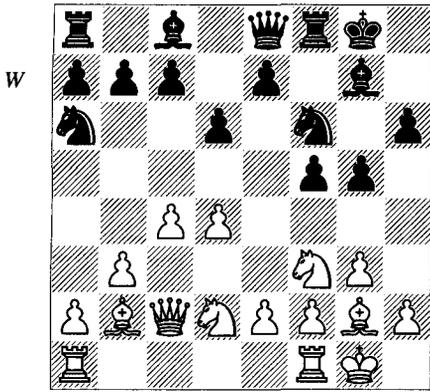
A popular set-up; this fianchetto can also be played after c4.

5... ♙g7 6 ♙b2 0-0 7 0-0 (D)

with the idea ...♘c7xe6 and ...♙c8 scoops up the pawn on e6 without apparent punishment.

Given all that, White will often allow ...e5, but he needs to avoid a standard attacking theme that everyone should know, since it has appeared in hundreds of games like this one: 7...♙e8 8 c4 ♘a6 9 ♘c3 e5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 e4?! f4! 12 gxf4 ♘h5! (D).





♖b1 c5 14 a3 ♘a6 15 e4 fxe4 16 ♘xe4 ♙f5 17 ♘fd2, which is more pleasant for White to play, but acceptable for Black) 12...c6 13 ♖h1?! (this looks wrong as it's generally better to have f2 covered; White's idea was probably to meet ...f4 at some point with gxf4 and occupy the g-file) 13...♙d7. As in many of these positions, an e4 break can be good, but the timing has to be right; otherwise White's light squares can become a little weak in combination with the open f-file. Here, for example, 14 e4 fxe4 15 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 16 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗f7 might follow, with the idea of ...♗af8.

11 ♖ae1

An interesting way to develop. Often White puts his king's rook on e1, but after Black's ...♗f7, he won't be able to play e4 without considerable pressure on f2 resulting from ...fxe4. With his queen's rook on e1, there's really no reason to avoid e4.

11...♗f7

11...g5, with the idea ...♗h5, is more aggressive. Then White should probably be content with the modest edge afforded by 12 a3 or 12 ♙c3, as 12 e4?! ♘b4! gives Black enough play; for example, 13 ♖c3!? a5 (13...♘xa2?? 14 ♖a5) 14 e5! ♘xa2 15 ♖e3 ♘e4! 16 ♘xe4 fxe4 17 ♖xe4 ♙f5.

12 ♙c3

It's still too early for 12 e4, which surrenders interior light squares after 12...♘b4 13 ♖b1 fxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♖xe4 ♙f5 16 ♖xe7 ♘d3.

12...g5 13 e4! (D)

13...fxe4

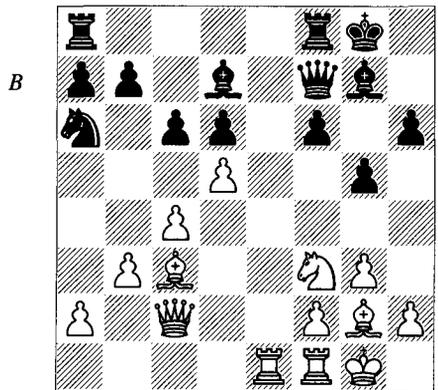
13...f4 is a thematic response to e4. Then Black threatens ...g4 and intends to sink the knight into f4 following 14 gxf4 ♘h5!. In this

case, however, White is far enough ahead in development to counterattack effectively by 14 e5! ♘e8! (14...♘h5 is answered by 15 exd6 exd6 16 ♘e4!, with the idea 16...♙f5 17 g4! or 16...♖g6 17 d5!) 15 ♖d1!, intending 15...g4 (what else?) 16 ♘h4 f3 17 ♘dxf3! gxf3 18 ♙xf3 ♙h3 19 ♙h5 ♖e6 20 d5! (20 exd6 ♖xd6 21 ♙g4 ♙xg4 22 ♖xg4 is also promising) 20...cxd5 21 cxd5 ♖c8 22 ♗e3! with the idea 22...♙xf1? 23 ♙g4 and Black's position collapses. There's a point at which space, centre, development and activity win out, even if it takes a piece sacrifice to prove it.

14 ♘xe4 ♙d7

14...♘xe4 15 ♖xe4 ♙f5 16 ♖xe7 ♙d3 17 ♖xd6 ♙xf1 18 ♗xf1 gives White the bishop-pair and superior centre.

15 ♘xf6+ exf6 16 d5! (D)



This is basically what White has been looking for. He fixes the weakness on e6 and takes command of more of the board. Right away, ♘d4-e6 is threatened.

16...c5 17 ♖e6!

You'll see this sacrifice for light squares arise in numerous queen's pawn openings. Here it attacks d6 and gives White a much superior position.

17...♟c7!?

Black decides not to open up a diagonal for White's bishop on g2. After 17...♟xe6 18 dxe6, his light-square weaknesses are almost impossible to deal with: 18...♞e7 (18...♞xe6? 19 ♟xg5 attacks h7 and prepares ♟d5) 19 ♞f5! ♟c7 20 ♟d2 ♞fe8 21 ♞e1 and Black's position is passive and depressing.

18 ♟xd6 ♞e7 19 ♞xd7 ♞xd7

In return for granting White a valuable passed pawn, Black has some room to manoeuvre and hopes to bring his knight to d6 in a blockading role.

20 ♟d1

Good, but still better is 20 ♞g6! ♞f7 21 ♞d3 with the idea 21...♟e8? 22 b4! b6 23 bxc5 bxc5 24 d6 ♞d8 25 ♟xg5!, etc.

20...♞ad8

20...♟e8 is worth a shot, to blockade the passed pawn. Still, White controls too many squares after 21 ♞e1 ♟d6 22 ♞e6 ♞ae8 23 ♟h3 f5 24 ♞g6 ♞e7 25 ♟e5!.

21 b4! b6 22 bxc5 bxc5 23 d6!? ♟e8 (D)

Black can fight on by 24...♞f7!, when 25 ♟e5! ♞xg6 26 ♟xg6 ♞f7 27 ♟d5 ♟xd6 (or 27...♞xd6 28 ♞e1!) 28 ♟e7+ ♟f8 29 ♟c6 ♞c8 30 ♟xf7 ♞xc6 31 ♟d5 ♞a6 32 ♞e1 favours White. Now it's over.

25 ♟xg5! fxg5

25...hxg5 loses to 26 ♞h5+ ♟g8 27 ♟d5+ ♞f7 28 ♟a5!.

26 ♞xh6+ ♟g8 27 ♟d5+ ♞f7 28 ♞xg5 ♟f8 29 ♟xf7 ♟xf7 30 ♟xg7 ♟xg7 31 ♞xc5

White has five passed pawns for the piece!

31...♟e8 32 ♞h5+ ♟f8 33 ♞h8+ ♟f7 34 ♞h5+ ♟f8 35 c5 ♞e6 36 ♞d4 ♞d7 37 ♞h8+ ♟f7 38 ♞h7+ ♟f8 39 ♞f4+ 1-0

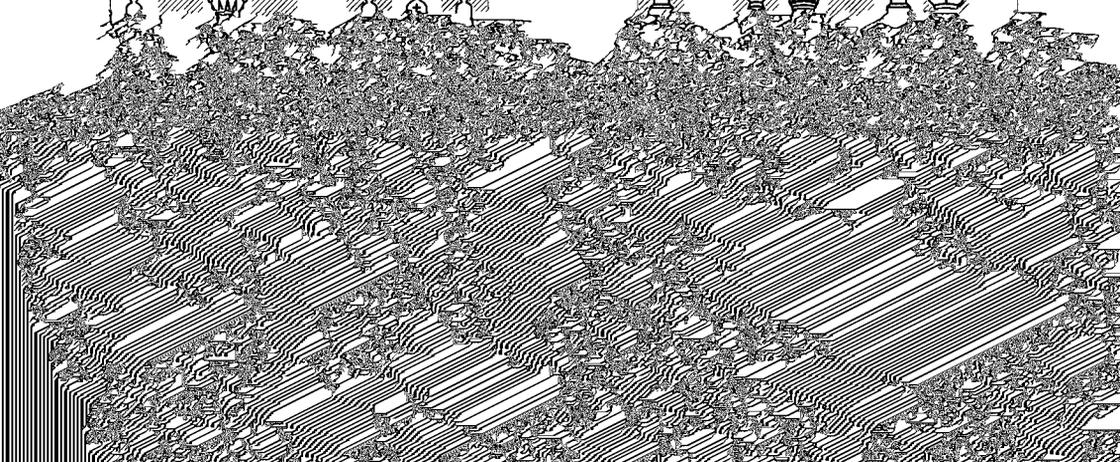
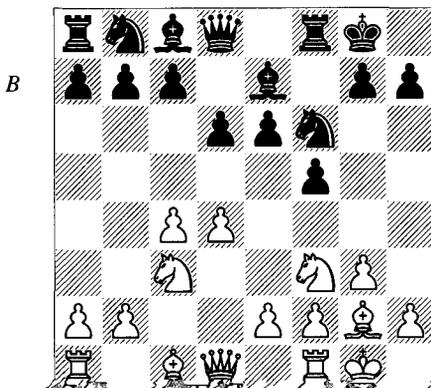
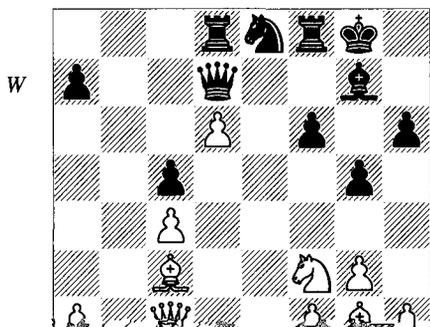
Classical Dutch

The Leningrad may be the most popular interpretation of the Dutch, but it's not the only one, as we'll see in this game:

De Boer – A. Rotstein

Wijk aan Zee 1993

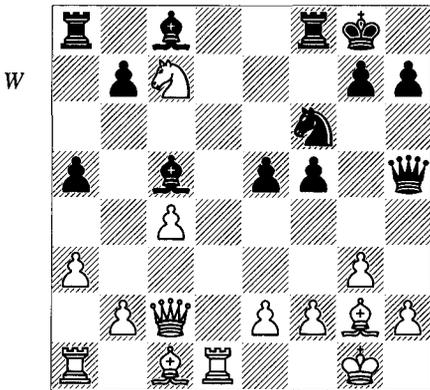
1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♟f6 3 ♟g2 e6 4 c4 ♟e7 5 ♟f3 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 ♟c3 (D)



Classical lines are just as subject to the paradoxes of time and information as any other.

7...♖e8

Bringing the queen to h5 is the standard manoeuvre in the Classical Dutch. Black has a number of other moves; for example, 7...♘e4 and 7...c6. Of these, the modern 7...a5 is the most flexible. It has the idea of meeting 8 b3 ♘a6 9 ♙a3 with 9...♘b4!. The entertaining game Barlay-Canney, Colorado Springs 2003 went 7...a5 8 ♖c2 (8 ♜e1 with the idea 8...♘e4 9 ♖c2 is more direct) 8...♘c6!? 9 ♘d1 (White wants to prevent ...e5; there's nothing wrong with this move, of course, but White has to be careful about drifting away from the kingside; he can prevent ...♘b4 by 9 a3, when 9...e5! 10 d5 ♘b8 11 ♔g5! exploits Black's weakness on e6; for example, 11...c6 12 ♘e6 ♙xe6 13 dxe6 e4 14 f3 d5 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 fxe4 fxe4 17 ♙e3 and ♜ad1) 9...♗e8 10 a3 e5 11 dxe5!? (11 d5 11...♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 dxe5 13 ♘b5?! (tempting fate) 13...♗h5!? 14 ♘xc7 ♙c5! (D).

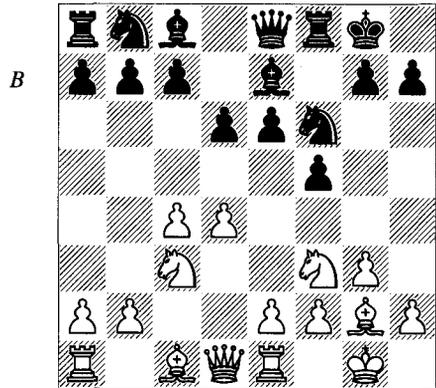


A rook sacrifice in the spirit of the opening; this type of attack is fairly common. The game continued 15 b4? (15 ♘xa8! f4 16 e3! ♘g4! 17 h3 ♘xf2! 18 ♔xf2 fxe3++ 19 ♔e1 ♙xh3, and White has to walk a tightrope to draw; for example, 20 ♗e4! ♙xg2 21 ♗xg2 e2 22 ♗d5+! ♔h8 23 ♙f4! exd1 ♗+ 24 ♜xd1 ♜xa8 25 ♗xc5 ♗h1+ 26 ♔e2 ♗h5+ with a perpetual) 15...axb4

♘e3+! 20 ♙xe3 fxe3 21 ♜d8 ♜xd8 22 ♗e4 ♙h3 23 fxe3 ♙xg2+ 0-1. A great attack with themes that Black uses in a variety of Dutch Defence positions.

8 b3

The main variation for nearly a century has been 8 ♜e1 (D).



Out of the many, many possibilities, I'll give a quick overview of which lines might be the most important and/or capable of improvement:

a) 8...♘e4 has a fair reputation, but I think 9 ♘xe4 fxe4 10 ♘d2 d5 11 f3 should give White the nod; for example, 11...♙f6 (11...e3 12 ♘b1 ♙b4 13 ♜f1 dxc4 14 ♗c2 is miserable for Black after both 14...b5 15 a4 and 14...♗b5 15 ♙xe3) 12 fxe4 ♙xd4+ 13 e3 ♙b6 14 exd5 exd5 15 cxd5! with the idea ♘c4.

b) 8...♗h5 9 e4 fxe4 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♜xe4 ♘c6 12 ♙f4 ♙f6 13 ♗d2 ♔h8 14 ♜ae1 is already clearly better for White, who has the dual ideas of d5 and c5, Keres-Simagin, Moscow 1951.

c) 8...♗g6 9 e4 (this thematic break doesn't lose a pawn due to a tactical trick on move 11; the rare 9 ♗b3!? has a good record in practice and is worth a look; one idea behind it is that 9...♘e4 10 ♘xe4 fxe4 11 ♘d2 makes it impossible for Black to hold on to his material without large concessions, whereas normal moves

dx5 ♗g4 used to be popular, but for one thing I think that White can improve upon 14 ♖b3 ♗f7 15 ♗f4 ♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 with 16 ♖xf3!, based upon 16...dx5 17 ♗e2! (12 ♗e1 ♗f6 13 ♗e3 e5 has been extensively tested; then 14 dx5 dx5 is approximately equal) 12...♗f6 (D).

Black will have to do his own research into this main variation with 8 ♗e1. For the moment, the variations seem to favour White.

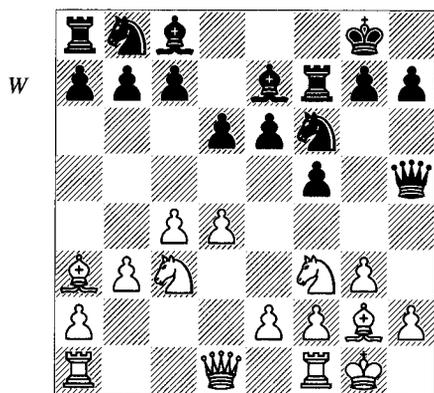
8...♖h5 (D)



21 ♖f1! ♜xh1 22 ♙xh1, when 22...♞d8 secures an unclear but ongoing attack. However, White can turn the tables with his own exchange sacrifice 16 ♞xd7!? ♜xd7 17 ♙xb7, which wins the bishop-pair, cuts into Black's attack, and affords White a significant positional advantage. The only problem is that 17...e4 prevents his bishop from returning to the kingside for defence, so the situation isn't entirely clear.

9...♞f7?! (D)

This makes sense, protecting e7, but it blocks the queen's retreat from h5. 9...a5 looks better, with the idea 10 d5 ♜e4, but not 10...e5? 11 ♜xe5!



10 e3

Rather slow. 10 ♜e1!, with the idea of e4 or ♜d3-f4, would be a tempo up on Larsen-W.Schmidt in the Bird Opening game below. White should be better; for example, 10...♜c6 11 ♜d3! e5! (11...♜xd4 12 ♜f4 ♙h6 13 ♙c1!) 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♙xe7 ♞xe7 14 ♜d5 (or 14 ♙d2) 14...♞d7 15 ♜xf6+ gxf6 16 e3! with a significant positional superiority.

10...♜bd7 11 ♜e1 ♙h6 12 ♜d3 c6 13 d5!?

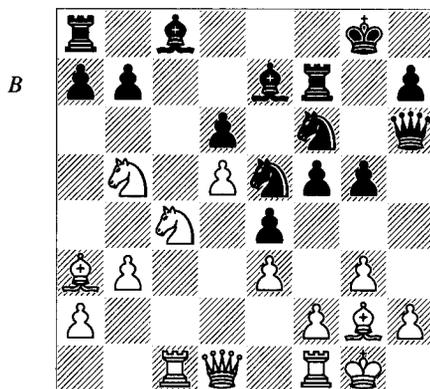
White tries to create something in the centre without delay. Allowing ...e5 doesn't appear as good; for example, 13 ♙d2 e5 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 ♙xe7 ♞xe7 16 ♞ad1 e4 17 ♜f4 ♜e5 18 ♙d6 ♞e8 19 h4 (versus ...g5) 19...♜f7 20 ♙c7 ♜g4 with the idea ...g5 and sometimes ...♜ge5-f3+.

13...cxd5 14 cxd5 e5 15 ♜b5 g5

Black pursues the attack. It's also reasonable to play 15...a6, and then 16 ♜c7 ♞b8 or 16 ♜xd6 ♜g4 17 h3 ♙xd6 18 ♙xd6 ♜xe3! 19

fxe3 ♙xd6 20 e4 ♜f6, which is balanced, since 21 exf5 e4! may even favour Black.

16 ♞c1 e4 17 ♜b2 ♜e5 18 ♜c4 (D)



The position resembles a King's Indian Defence.

18...♜fg4!?

Black can simplify the position to good effect by 18...♜xc4 19 ♞xc4 ♙d7 20 ♜c7 ♞c8.

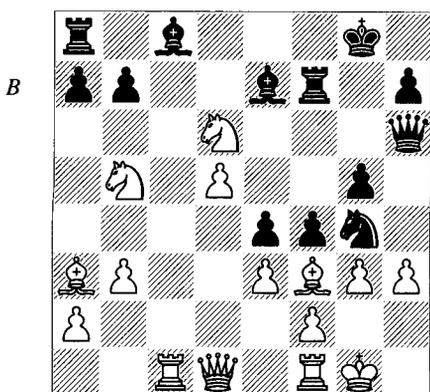
19 h3 f4!?

A bold and thematic stroke; unfortunately, White's attack in the centre is at least the equal of his opponent's on the kingside.

20 ♜cxd6 ♜f3+??

Black miscalculates. He can hang in there, albeit from an inferior position, by 20...♙xd6 21 ♜xd6 (or 21 ♞xc8+ ♞xc8 22 ♜xd6) 21...f3 22 ♜xf7 ♖xf7 23 ♙b2 ♙f5!??.

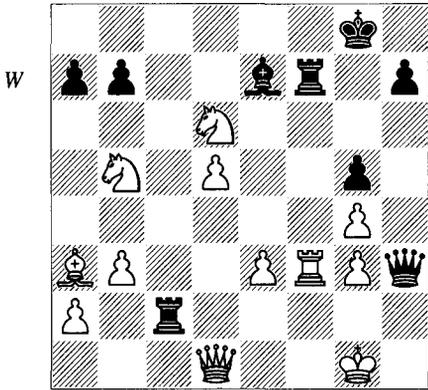
21 ♙xf3 (D)



21...exf3

Probably Black had counted upon 21...♙hx3 22 ♙xg4 ♙xg4, but then noticed 22 ♞xc8+!.

22 ♖xc8+ ♜xc8 23 hxg4 fxg3 24 fxg3 ♔h3
25 ♙f3 ♚c2 (D)



One last try.

26 ♜xc2 ♙xf3 27 ♜c8+ ♙g7 28 ♙b2+ ♙h6
29 ♗f5+ ♙xf5 30 ♜xf5 ♜xg3+ 31 ♙f1 ♔h3+
32 ♙e2 ♜g2+ 33 ♜f2 ♜xg4+ 34 ♜f3 ♜g1 35
♗d4 g4 36 ♜f2 ♔b1 37 ♗f5+ ♙h5 38 ♔h2+
1-0

Mate follows: 38...♙g5 39 ♔h6+ ♙xf5 40
♔h5+ ♙g5 41 ♔xh7#.

In terms of structural issues and its variety
of positional and attacking themes, the game
above, with its notes, is one of the best in this
volume. Try giving it a careful study.

Now let's take a look at the reversed Classical/
Ilyin-Zhenevsky Variation as played by
White in the Bird Opening. As usual, the chal-
lenge for White is to make use of his extra
move without allowing Black opportunities
beyond those already present in the position.
That proves to be difficult.

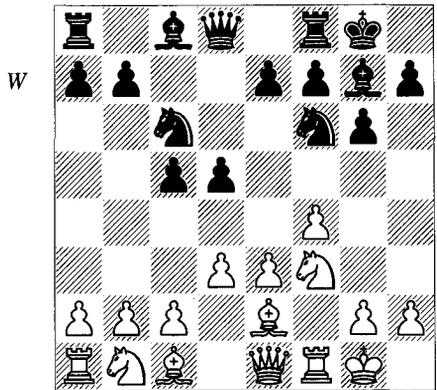
T. Taylor – Martinez
Los Angeles 2002

1 f4 d5 2 ♗f3 g6 3 e3 ♙g7 4 ♙e2 c5 5 0-0
♗f6 6 d3 0-0 7 ♔e1 ♗c6 (D)

This is the main line of the Classical Dutch
with colours reversed.

8 c3

A flexible move that covers d4, so as to play
e4 without a piece landing on that square. The
text-move also prepares queenside expansion
by ♙b1 and b4. But it's almost unnecessary to
say by now that Black can get counterplay by

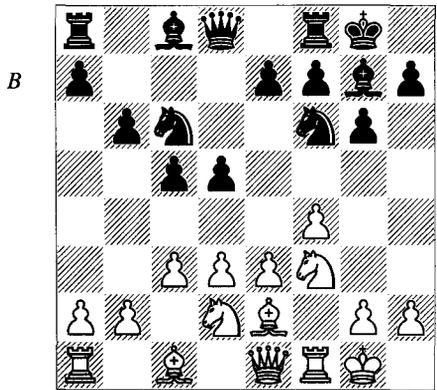


homing in on the drawbacks of White's extra
move.

The Dutch Defence move 8 ♔h4 was well
met in Larsen-W.Schmidt, Århus 1971: 8...b6 9
♗bd2 ♙a6! 10 ♙f2?! (compare our last game
with colours reversed; the extra move ♗bd2
isn't helping matters) 10...♗e8! 11 c3 e5 (a
good move, and 11...♗d6 is also strong, threat-
ening 12...♗f5 13 ♔h3 ♙c8!, as we saw above;
then 12 e4 dxe4 13 dxe4 ♙xe2 14 ♙xe2 e5! 15
♜xd8 ♙axd8 clearly favours Black) 12 ♜xd8
(12 ♜g3 e4! emphasizes the problems with d3,
since 13 dxe4 ♙xe2 14 ♙xe2 dxe4 15 ♗xe4??
loses to 15...♜d3) 12...♙xd8 13 fxe5 ♗xe5 14
♗xe5 ♙xe5 and Black has a clear positional
advantage.

8...b6 9 ♗bd2 (D)

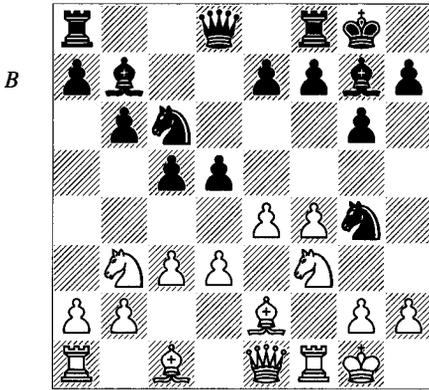
White keeps his queen close to the centre.
After 9 ♔h4, 9...♙a6! exploits the fact that
White's d-pawn is pinned and the d3-square is
weak, so achieving e4 will be difficult.



9...♗g4!?

Black stands well here, and the knight's attack on e3 succeeds in disturbing White. But he can also play in straightforward fashion; for example, Taylor suggests 9...♖c7 with the idea 10 e4? ♜xf4 11 exd5 ♘xd5 12 ♘e4 ♜c7 13 ♜h4 ♜d7 or 13...f5. The natural response 10 ♜h4 ♘a6! 11 ♜b1 is a common device on the queenside, intending b4-b5, but apart from 11...e5, 11...♜ad8 is effective, with the idea 12 b4?! cxb4 13 cxb4 ♘e4!, and then 14 b5? ♘c3 or 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 ♘g5 h6 16 ♘xe4 ♘xd3.

10 ♘b3 ♘b7 11 e4 (D)



11...c4

Breaking up the centre. 11...d4 commits Black to playing ...♘e3 in certain lines, but that's a common and effective move in the Dutch and King's Indian Defence, among other openings. For example, 12 c4?! (12 h3 dxc3 13 bxc3 ♘f6 has the idea ...c4; White also gets nowhere in the line 12 ♘g5 h6 13 ♘xf7 ♜xf7 14 ♘xg4 dxc3 15 bxc3 ♜xd3) 12...a5 13 a4 ♘b4 14 ♜h4 ♘e3!.

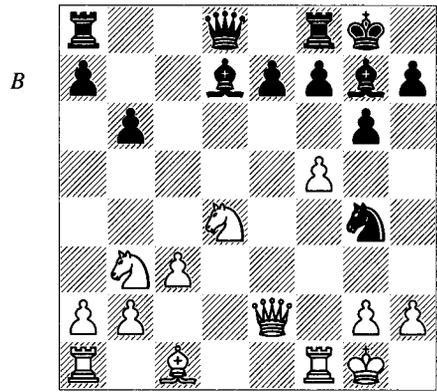
12 exd5 cxd3 13 dxc6 dxe2 14 ♜xe2 ♘xc6 15 ♘fd4 ♘d7 16 f5! (D)

Here's this key theme again: White frees his c1-bishop, attacks the knight and begins a king-side attack.

16...♘f6 17 ♘g5 ♜e8 18 ♜ae1 ♜c7 19 ♘f4! ♜b7 20 ♘e5 ♜ad8 21 ♜f3 ♘c6?!

Perhaps 21...a6 should be played, asking White what he's doing.

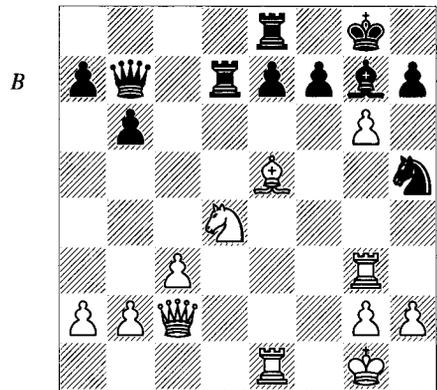
22 ♜h3



26...♘h5?? 27 ♜xh5! gxh5 28 ♜xg7+ ♘f8 29 ♘e6+ fxe6 30 fxe6 spells doom for Black.

27 ♜c2 ♘h5? 28 fxg6! (D)

A nice finish that is a logical consequence of White's build-up.



28...♘xg3

There's nothing to do: 28...hxg6 29 ♜xg6! fxg6 30 ♜xg6 ♜f8 loses to 31 ♘e6!.

29 gxf7+ ♘xf7 30 ♜xh7 ♜g8 31 hxg3

Or 31 ♜f1+! ♘xf1 32 ♜h5+ ♘f8 33 ♘e6#.

31...e6 32 ♘xg7 ♜xg7 33 ♜f1+ 1-0

There follows 33...♘e8 34 ♜h8+ ♘e7 35 ♜f8#. This nice game illustrates White's attacking potential, but again, the opening analysis demonstrates that White's extra move c3 fails to deliver any advantage.

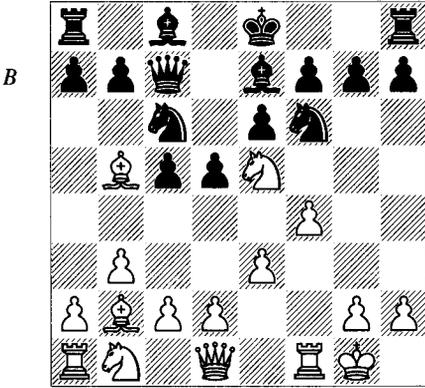
The Bird Opening can also become a re-

Hergert – Coenenberg
Pont 1986

1 f4 d5 2 ♖f3 c5 3 e3 ♘c6 4 ♙b5

Obviously Black doesn't have to allow this pin.

4... ♗f6 5 0-0 e6 6 ♘e5 ♚c7 7 b3 ♙e7 8 ♙b2 (D)



This is a case of White playing a reversed Nimzo-Indian/Queen's Indian complex, one in which his extra tempo is extremely valuable and has no serious downside. The corresponding reversed position would arise via 1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♗f3 ♘e4 6 ♚c2 ♙b7 7 ♙e2 0-0 8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 bxc3 f5. To be fair, White won't usually play that way, and in our Bird Opening equivalent, a strong player will seldom be so cooperative as Black. As you know by now, he has plenty of other ways to react to White's opening, from the first few moves onward.

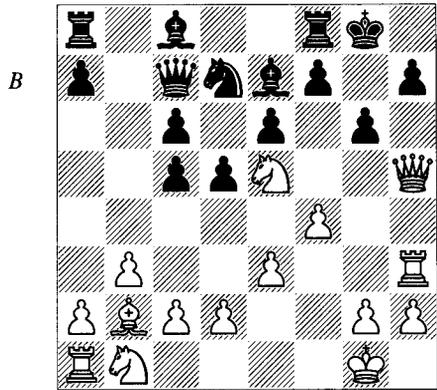
8...0-0 9 ♙xc6 bxc6 10 ♖f3

Very 'Nimzo-like' would be 10 d3 ♙a6? 11 c4! ♖ad8 12 ♚e2, intending ♘c3-a4, ♙a3 and ♖ac1 if necessary. Of course, the rook-lift targets the king, a piece of more consequence than Black's c-pawns!

10...♘d7 11 ♖h3 g6?

This is played to prevent 12 ♚h5. However, the only correct move is 11...f6!; for example, 12 ♘d7 (12 ♚h5 fxe5 13 ♚xh7+ ♘f7 14 fxe5 ♙a6 isn't so clear) 12...♙d7 13 ♚h5 h6 14 ♖g3 ♘h8 15 ♘c3 and White retains an edge because of the pawn-structure, but this should be within acceptable bounds for Black.

12 ♚h5! (D)



Anyway! This queen sacrifice arises in mid-legames that can come from various openings, so it's good to know the associated tactics.

12...♘f6

12...gxf6 gets mated after 13 ♖g3+ ♘h8 14 ♘xf7#. After 12...♘f6, Black appears to be defending, but another surprise awaits:

13 ♘g4!!

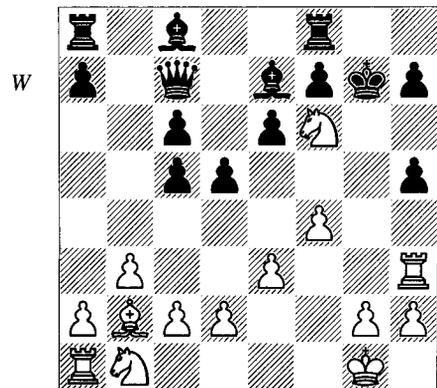
This attractive queen sacrifice threatens 14 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 15 ♚h7#.

13...gxf6

13...♘xh5? 14 ♘h6#!

14 ♘xf6+ ♘g7 (D)

14...♙xf6 15 ♖g3+ ♙g7 16 ♖xg7+ ♘h8 17 ♖xf7+ d4 18 ♖xc7 nabs a piece, with more to come. The win takes a bit longer after 14...♘h8 15 ♖xh5. That threatens 16 ♖xh7#, and Black has to settle for 15...♘g7 16 ♘d5+ f6 (16...♘g6 17 ♘xc7) 17 ♘c7 ♖b8 and, for example, 18 ♘c3 ♙d8 19 ♘e4 ♙xc7 20 ♖g5+ ♘f7 21 ♙xf6, with three extra pawns.



15 ♘e8++! ♘g6

Or 15...♖h6 16 ♗g7+ ♖g6 17 ♜g3+ ♖f5 18 ♜xc7.

16 ♜g3+ ♖f5 17 ♜g7+ ♖e4 18 d3# (1-0)

Try it on your friends!

Stonewall Dutch

Finally, let's get a feel for the Stonewall Dutch, without any pretence of being thorough. This venerable opening produced some classic battles in the olden days, with Black trying to rip apart White's kingside. Today, we usually see it with a modern interpretation.

Gligorić – Tukmakov

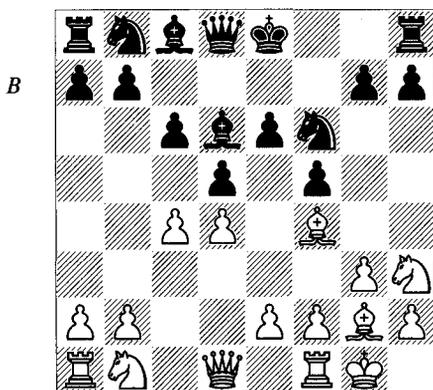
Palma de Mallorca (GMA) 1989

1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♜f6 3 ♗g2 e6

Black's move-order doesn't reveal which system he is heading for, which makes the following note significant.

4 ♜f3

White commits to playing the main line against either the Classical or Stonewall, according to Black's preference. As in other Dutch variations, this knight can also go to h3 by, for example, 4 c4 d5 5 ♜h3 c6 6 0-0 ♗d6 7 ♗f4 (D).



7...♗e7! (a shrewd idea: Black wants to show that White's knight has no good square other than f4, which is now occupied by his bishop; retreating loses time, but Black will gain it back if White moves his bishop again, and sometimes Black can play an effective ...g5) 8 ♜c3 (obviously not the only move; upon 8 ♜d2, Johnsen and Bern like 8...♚b6! with a

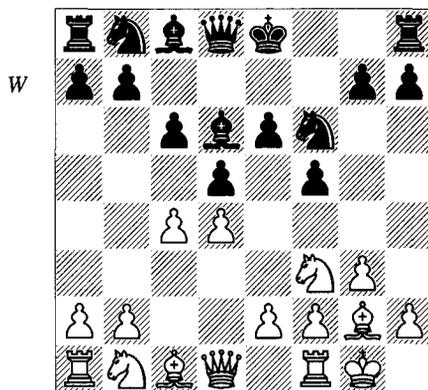
double attack on d4 and b2; then 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 ♜b3 can be met by their suggestion 10...♗d7 11 ♜c1 ♜a6 intending ...♗a4 or ...♗b5, or 10...a5) 8...0-0 9 ♚d3! ♜a6 10 a3 ♜c7 11 ♜ac1. Black stands solidly, but White has more positive prospects.

Actually, if Black wants to play a Stonewall Variation after 4 c4, he can avoid such problems with the clever move 4...c6. This is designed to prevent ♜h3, since Black preserves the idea of booting the knight with ...d6 and ...e5; for example, 5 ♜h3 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 and now 7 ♜f4 d6, or 7 ♜d2 d6 intending an early ...e5. Instead, 5 ♜f3 d5 reverts to a normal Stonewall.

4...d5 5 0-0 ♗d6

This active move has largely overtaken the older 5...♗e7 in popularity, so we'll focus on it. 5...♗e7 is still viable, however, and might even have some surprise value.

6 c4 c6 (D)



This is the starting position of the modern Stonewall Dutch. It has a rather anti-positional look to it, because Black's bishop on c8 is already very bad (even if he achieved ...e5, the pawn on f5 would be in its way). White also has the wonderful e5 outpost available to his pieces. In view of this, it's not easy to explain why the Stonewall Dutch is a respectable defence at all, but let's tackle the issue of that bishop on c8 first. Kramnik, who has played the Stonewall, defends the honour of that piece with the simple statement that it is no worse than White's bishop on g2! By this he means that White's fianchettoed bishop has virtually no scope as it runs into the 'stone wall' of

Black's pawns, which guard both e4 and d5 twice. In addition, White can hardly suppress the development of the c8-bishop forever. In normal practice, it will often come to b7 (or a6) after ...b6 or to h5 after ...d7-e8. The activation of this piece corresponds to what I think should be a chess mini-rule: that the earlier one assumes weaknesses or bad pieces, the more likely they are to be manageable problems, or not problems at all.

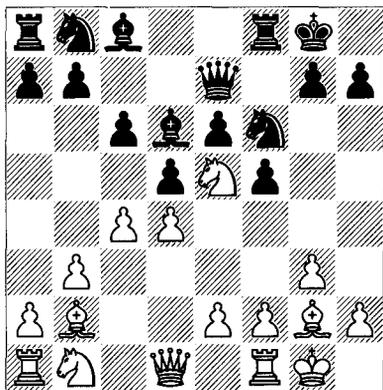
As for that outpost on e5, it is indeed a negative feature of Black's position. But in modern chess we can often accept a central weakness

Stonewall, Black very often plays ...♘b7 and ...c5. Well, it would be stretching things to claim too much for the analogy, because other factors in these positions obviously differ. But the Sicilian and Dutch Defences (whose first moves are mirror images of one another) share the principle that you can live with one significant enemy outpost in your midst.

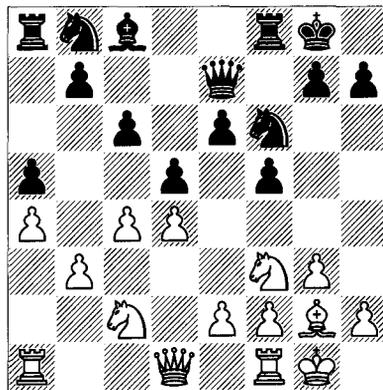
Finally, returning to the virtues of the Stonewall Dutch, a black knight on e4 can be very powerful. True, that square isn't an outpost, as is White's e5, but White finds it difficult to expel the intruder. If he plays, for example, f4!

combine ... ♗e8-h5 with the strategy that follows) 12 ♖h8! (this is the standard plan after ... well; Schipkov suggests 20 ♗e1, when 20...g5!? is messy) 20 ♗xf3! 21 ♗xf3 ♖5! 22 e3? (22

B



B



not be too great a problem. After 11 ♖c2, Johnsen and Bern suggest 11... ♕e6 with the idea ... ♖c8 and perhaps ... ♕xe5, rather than the immediate 11... ♕xe5?! 12 dxe5 ♖e4 13 ♕a3 c5 14 f3 ♗g5 15 ♖c3 with excellent central pressure and a substantial advantage to White.

b) Instead of all this, Moskalenko prefers not to weaken Black's queenside and has played 9... ♖b7 10 ♖d2 a5 on several occasions. His idea is some combination of ... a4 and ... ♖e4, worrying about his queen's bishop later. It seems a workable remedy.

8...a5

Black duly proceeds to fix the weakness on b4. Johnsen and Bern designate 8...0-0 as '?!', and in the game Kasparov-Short, Rapid match (game 1), London 1987, after 9 ♕a3 ♕xa3 10 ♖xa3, they also disapprove of 10... ♖b7. However, it's not clear where they think White should have improved following 11 a5 b6 ('!= ' according to Schipkov) 12 ♖d2 ♖e4 13 ♖b2 ♕b7 (Schipkov gives 13... ♕a6 "with pressure"; this looks fine) 14 b4?! (14 e3 is better, although Black stands nicely after 14... bxa5 15 ♖c2 dxc4 16 bxc4 ♕a6) 14... bxa5 15 bxa5 ♖ab8 16 ♖fb1, and here 16... ♕a6! would favour Black. So 8...0-0 appears to be a legitimate alternative.

9 ♕a3 ♕xa3 10 ♖xa3 0-0 11 ♖c2 (D)

A basic position. Now Black tries to get his problem bishop into play. His queen's knight has b4 in its sights.

11...b6 12 ♖ce1

This is a standard idea, to put both knights in touch with the superb outpost on e5. Nevertheless, Black stands very solidly, and apart from a

knight on b4, one on e4 will be hard to drive away without concessions.

12... ♕b7 13 ♖d3 ♖a6 14 ♖c1

We're in one of the main lines of the Stonewall, and 14 ♖c1, 14 e3, 14 ♖fe5 and 14 ♖f4 have all been tried. The first three are well answered by 14...c5, and the last by 14... ♖b4.

14...c5! 15 ♖b2 ♖e4! 16 ♖fe5 ♖fd8

16...cxd4 with ... ♖ac5 to follow is a satisfactory alternative. The play around this point of the game is balanced.

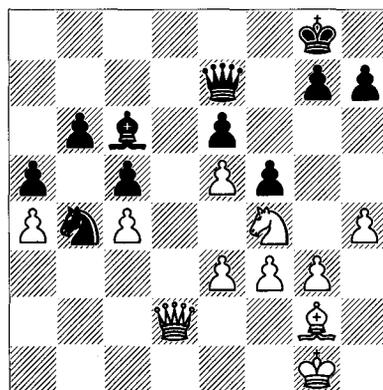
17 e3 ♖ac8 18 ♖fd1 ♖b4 19 ♖f4 dxc4 20 bxc4 ♖d6 21 f3 ♖f6 22 ♖d2 ♖cd8 23 ♖ad1 ♖d7 24 h4?

Allowing an unfavourable simplification. 24 ♖fd3 ♖xd3 25 ♖xd3 was roughly equal.

24... ♖xe5 25 dxe5 ♖xd2 26 ♖xd2 ♖xd2 27 ♖xd2 ♕c6! (D)

The a-pawn can't be defended.

W



28 e4 ♕xa4 29 exf5 ♖d7!? 30 ♖e1 ♖d1! 31 ♖xd1 ♕xd1 32 fxe6 a4 33 ♖d5 a3 34 e7 ♖f7 35 ♕h3 ♖xd5 36 cxd5 a2 37 d6 a1 ♖0-1

King's Indian Attack

The King's Indian Attack is a simple system involving the moves ♖f3, g3, ♗g2, 0-0 and d3, which can be played against nearly any set-up by Black. In most cases, the moves ♖bd2 and e4 follow, and in fact some lower-rated players will make those moves without thinking.

Lovers of chess and readers of Volume 2 understand that the King's Indian Defence is one of the most popular and exciting of Black's defences. And yet the King's Indian Attack, which reverses the King's Indian and even gains an extra move for White, is rarely played by grandmasters, international masters, or na-

to put only one pawn on the 4th rank and has given himself a bad bishop on c1 which already can't move!

Returning to the King's Indian Attack, we find that, much as with the Bird/Dutch duo, Black needn't even play modestly to secure equality. Remarkably, he can use most of the formations that are main lines when White uses them with colours reversed, even though those are aggressive and committal. Let's look at some games and see how that can be.

Larsen – Ljubojević
Bugojno 1978

1 ♖f3 d5 2 g3 c5 3 ♗g2 ♖c6 4 0-0 e5

11...h5 12 ♖f3!? (12 ♜f3 ♖g4) and now 12...♖f7 looks all right for Black. Instead, White seems to gain a small and rather unstable edge from the lengthy line 12...g4 13 ♖e2 f5!? 14 exf5 ♖xc4 15 dxc4 e4 16 ♖e1 ♜d7 17 ♖f1 ♜xf5 18 ♖g2 ♜f6 19 ♖g5 0-0-0 20 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 21 ♖xe4.

12 ♜h5+ ♖d7 13 ♜xh4 f5

Ljubojević gives 13...h5!? 14 ♜f3 ♜h6, presumably counting upon 15 ♖xh6! ♜xh6 16 ♖h3!? f5!? 17 ♜fxe5+ ♜xe5 18 ♜xe5+ ♖c7 19 ♜f4 ♖g5 to hold. Then 20 ♜f7+ ♖xf4 21 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 22 exf5 ♖d7 23 gxf4 ♜f8 24 ♖ae1 yields something for White, perhaps not enough to win with.

14 ♜h5?!

14 ♜h3! fxe4 15 ♜g4! ♖c7 16 ♜h5 is far from obvious, but seems to favour White.

14...♜f6 15 ♜e2 fxe4 16 dxe4?!

White should accept the slightly worse position after 16 ♖xe4 ♜xe4 17 ♜xe4 ♖xc4 18 dxc4 ♜g8! 19 b3 ♜h7.

16...♜g8 17 b3 h5!

Black has the initiative now. I won't go into the messy details, but he won in nice fashion:

18 f4 ♖xc4 19 ♜xc4 ♜xc4?!

19...♜xg3! wins quickly; nevertheless, Black has a large advantage and goes on to convert it after some inaccuracies:

20 bxc4 ♖ag8 21 fxe5 ♜xe5 22 ♖f4 ♖d6 23 ♖ab1 ♖c7 24 ♜f3? ♜xf3+ 25 ♜xf3 ♜xe4 26 ♜fb3 b6 27 ♖xd6+ ♜xd6 28 ♖d5 ♖g5! 29 ♖e1 ♖h7 30 ♖g2 ♖hg7 31 ♖h2 ♜f5 32 a5 ♜e3 33 axb6+ axb6 34 ♖a1 ♜xd5 35 cxd5 ♖d6 36 ♖xb6+ ♖xd5 37 ♖a3 h4 38 gxh4 ♖g2+ 39 ♖h3 ♖g1 0-1

Piket – Timman

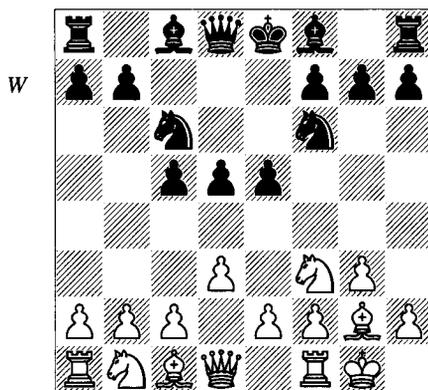
Dutch Ch, Amsterdam 1996

1 ♜f3 d5 2 g3 c5 3 ♖g2 ♜c6 4 d3 e5

If Black plays 4...e6 here, the game may enter into a variety of French Defence positions after 5 0-0; for example, 5...♜f6 6 ♜bd2 ♖e7 7 e4 0-0, which is now regarded as fully equal for Black, or 5...♖d6 6 ♜bd2 ♜ge7 7 e4 0-0, which is another respected variation. For more equalizers against the King's Indian Attack, see Morozevich-Kramnik, the last game in this sequence.

5 0-0 ♜f6 (D)

In the previous game, Black played 5...♖e7 here. Incidentally, I've messed with the actual move-order of the game before us, which was 1 ♜f3 c5 2 g3 ♜c6 3 ♖g2 ♜f6 4 0-0 e5 5 d3 d5. As you might imagine, there are other ways to reach the position; for example, beginning with 1 g3 or 1 ♜f3 ♜f6.



6 ♜a3

This is the mirror image of ...♜a6, which is Black's second most popular move in the main-line King's Indian Defence. After 6 e4 ♖e7 the traditional main line would arise following 7 ♜c3 d4 8 ♜e2, with Black a move behind. As might be expected, he doesn't have to walk into the standard King's Indian pawn-storm, particularly as he has not yet castled. You might want to play around with these positions, as well as with 7 exd5 ♜xd5 8 ♖e1 f6, to see how they compare with the reversed ones.

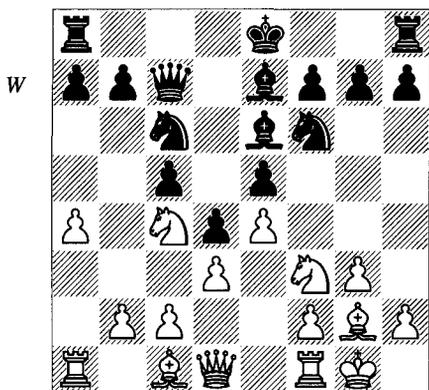
6...♖e7 7 e4 d4 8 ♜c4 ♜c7 9 a4 ♖e6!? (D)

We've arrived at a reversed King's Indian position; in the regular King's Indian line, White would already have castled by this point. In this actual position, Black can seek to benefit from not having castled, for reasons that become clear in a moment.

10 ♜e1

Or:

a) 10 ♜fd2 h5! takes advantage of the delay in ...0-0: 11 f4 h4 12 f5 (12 ♜a3 hxg3 13 hxg3 exf4 14 gxf4 ♜g4) 12...♖xc4 (12...♖d7!?) 13 ♜xc4 hxg3 14 hxg3 0-0-0. In spite of his excellent knight on c4, White has no way to open lines safely and can become saddled with a terrible light-squared bishop, whereas Black has kingside prospects; for example, 15 g4?! (15

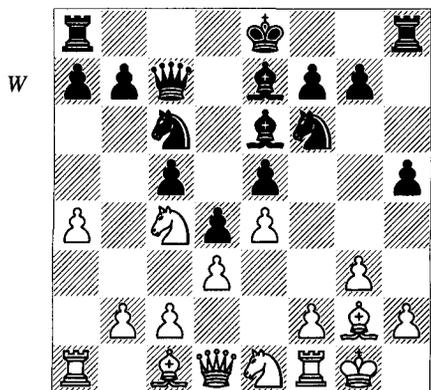


♠d2 ♜dg8 16 g4 ♘h7 17 ♚c1 {versus ...♠g5} 17...g6 18 fxg6 ♜xg6 19 ♜xf7 ♜xg4) 15...♘h7 16 ♠d2 ♠g5, and White is left with a miserable bishop and no promising plan of action.

b) Black can also castle queenside if White plays 10 ♘g5; for example, 10...♠xc4 11 dxc4 h6 12 ♘h3!? (12 ♘f3 ♘h7) 12...0-0-0, intending 13 ♚e2 ♘b8 14 f4 h5!.

10...♘d7

The normal move. Here's the point at which White can be faulted for following the main moves of the reversed variation too faithfully. Black can change the entire dynamic by 10...h5! (D).



b) 11 ♠g5 and now 11...♘d7 or 11...♘g4 either exchanges White's good bishop or, upon its retreat, enables Black to pursue his kingside attack.

c) 11 ♘f3 ♘d7 12 ♘g5 ♠xg5 13 ♠xg5 f6 14 ♠d2 h4 with good chances on the kingside.

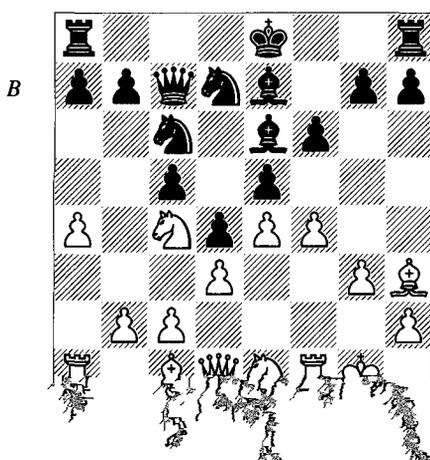
d) 11 h4 is reasonable, but now if White plays the thematic f4, he loses the g4-square. Black could even castle kingside here, but it's consistent with the pawn-structure to expand on the queenside; for example, 11...b6 12 ♠d2 ♜b8 13 f4 (13 c3?! 0-0) 14 ♜c1 ♜fd8) 13...♠xc4 14 dxc4 exf4 15 gxf4 (15 ♠xf4 ♠d6 16 ♘d3 0-0 followed by ...♜fe8 and ...♘g4 takes control of e5 and leaves White with a backward pawn) 15...♘g4 16 ♘f3 0-0 17 ♘g5 ♜bd8!, threatening ...d3.

It's remarkable how being a move behind the reversed position opens up this whole set of new ideas for Black.

11 f4 f6?!

This is a positionally suspect move. Piket suggests 11...♘b6, an unambitious attempt to simplify, after which there might follow 12 ♘a3!? (White doesn't seem to get anything special from 12 ♘xb6 axb6 13 ♘f3, 12 ♘d2 exf4 13 a5 ♘d7 14 gxf4 f6 or 12 b3 ♘xc4 13 bxc4 exf4 14 gxf4 0-0) 12...0-0 13 f5 ♠d7 14 b3.

12 ♠h3! (D)



♖g4! develops and attacks g7: 13...g6? (but 13...♙f8 14 ♘f3 favours White) 14 ♖xd7+! ♖xd7 15 ♙xd7+ ♗xd7 16 fxe5 ♙xc4 17 exf6, etc., winning a pawn.

13 ♖h5+ g6 14 ♖xh3 ♗b6 15 fxe5 fxe5

15...♗xe5? fails to 16 ♗xe5: 16...♖xe5 17 ♙f4 or 16...fxe5 17 ♖e6!

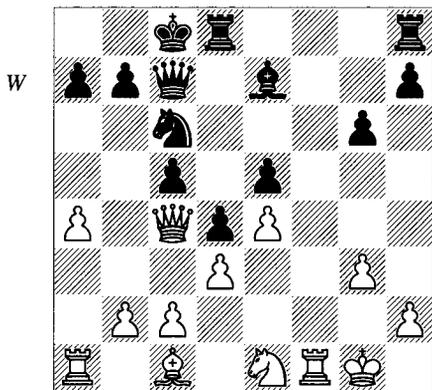
16 ♖e6

16 ♗xb6! axb6 17 ♖e6 is more accurate, with the idea 17...♗d8 18 ♖b3 or 17...♖d7 18 ♖b3 0-0-0 19 ♙h6!, preventing ...h5.

16...♗xc4 17 ♖xc4

After 17 dxc4!? ♗d8 18 ♖d5 ♖d6 19 ♗d3 ♖xd5 20 cxd5 White's better bishop and lead in development guarantee him some advantage.

17...0-0-0 (D)



18 ♙h6

Piket suggests 18 ♗f3 h6 19 ♖e6+ ♗b8 20 ♖xg6, although White is still subject to attack after 20...h5.

18...♙d8 19 ♙f7 ♗d8 20 ♙g7 ♙xg7 21 ♙xg7 ♙e8 22 ♗f3 ♙d6 23 ♙h6 ♖f7 24 ♗d2 ♖xc4 25 ♗xc4 ♗d7 26 ♙f1 ♗e6 27 h4

Now every white piece stands better than its black counterpart, although his advantage is difficult to convert into victory. He went on to do so after some inaccuracies.

Nisipeanu – Volokitin

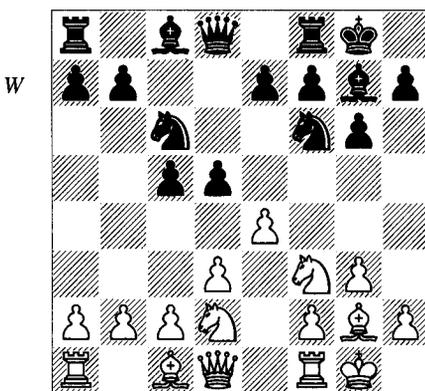
European Ch, Silivri 2003

In this game we'll see another major variation of the King's Indian Defence, the Classical Fianchetto, played with colours reversed. The players get there by means of a Sicilian Defence:

1 e4 c5 2 d3 ♗c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♙g2 ♙g7 5 ♗f3 ♗f6

It's worth noting that Black can play reliable, time-tested, systems with ...e5 and ...♗ge7 or ...e6 and ...♗ge7.

6 0-0 d5 7 ♗bd2 0-0 (D)



Again, Black has made no attempt to tone down his central commitment. The King's Indian Attack move-order would be something like 1 ♗f3 d5 2 g3 c5 3 ♙g2 ♗f6 4 0-0 g6 5 d3 ♙g7 6 ♗bd2 0-0 7 e4 ♗c6; of course you can get to the same position in a number of ways by slightly reordering the moves.

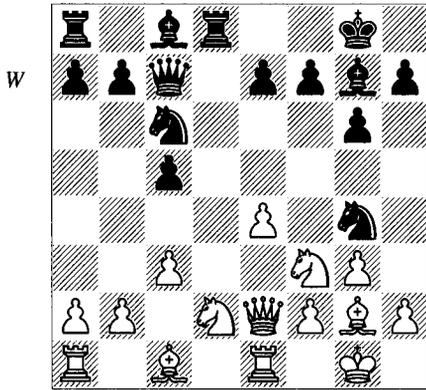
8 c3

In Radev-Přibyl, Tbilisi 1971, White did without c3 by 8 exd5 ♗xd5 9 ♗c4 e5!? (thumbing his nose at White's extra tempo, Black plays the move that makes his whole position most vulnerable!) 10 ♙e1 ♙e8 11 a4!?, and here Gufeld suggests 11...♗db4(!?), a trick which comes from the white side of a standard King's Indian Defence line. Then White can't evict Black's knight by c3 because his pawn on d3 would be lost. Nevertheless, White can target Black's weakness on d6 and the vulnerability of his c-pawn by 12 ♗g5! f5! 13 ♙e3 h6 14 ♗h3. Then Black should respond by 14...♗d4 15 ♙xd4 cxd4, and if 16 ♖d2 ♗c6 17 b4, he has 17...a5! with dynamic counterplay.

8...e5!?

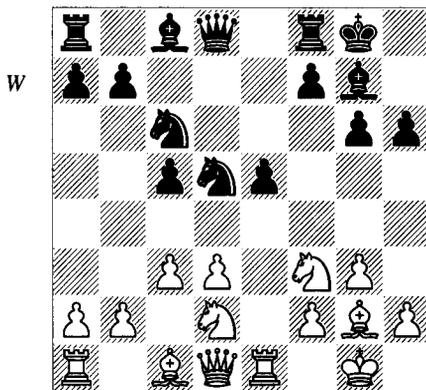
A daring move which exposes Black's centre to serious danger. He could also turn to the other standard technique in reversed positions, that is, picking a slow line which doesn't pretend to do more than equalize. In this position, one such line is 8...dxe4 9 dxe4 ♖c7, with the

idea of simplification; for example, 10 ♖e1 ♜d8 11 ♜e2 ♘g4! (D).



The fight for e5 defines the game: 12 ♘c4 b6!? (or 12...♖b8) 13 ♗f4 ♘ge5 14 ♘fxe5 ♘xe5 15 ♘e3?! (Petursson gives 15 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 16 f4 ♗g7 17 e5 ♖b8 with equality, intending ...♗a6) 15...e6 16 ♗g5 ♗d7! 17 f4 h6! 18 ♗h4 ♘d3 19 ♖ed1 and now 19...♗a6?! 20 c4! ♘e5!, with the idea of 21 fxe5 g5, was unclear in Vogt-Petursson, San Bernardino 1990. Instead, 19...c4! looks better, nailing down the knight on d3 and relying upon active pieces; for example, 20 e5 ♖b8 21 ♘g4 ♜c5+ 22 ♜f1 ♗b7! 23 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 24 ♗xf6 b5 and ...b4 followed by penetration on the b-file. White's king is exposed to various attacking ideas, so he doesn't have time to undertake anything on the kingside.

9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♖e1 h6 (D)



Now White is a full tempo ahead of the reversed position from the g3 King's Indian Defence. Since that variation has produced many

exciting wins for Black, it's surprising that White would have any problem drumming up an advantage. But he does.

11 ♜a4

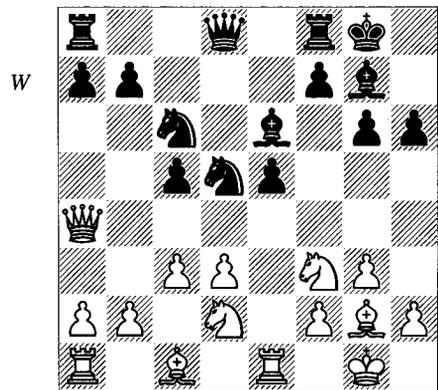
Or:

a) The natural 11 ♘c4 ♖e8 12 a4 can be safely met by 12...♘b6, with a solid game, and 12...♗f5 13 a5 ♖b8 is also fine.

b) 11 ♜b3 is a tougher test: 11...♘c7! (Nisipeanu's suggestion; 11...♘de7 is the most common defence in this kind of position, but here 12 ♘c4! harasses Black's e-pawn, after which 12...♜c7 13 ♗e3 renders the c5-pawn impossible to protect) 12 ♘c4 ♖e8 13 ♘fd2 ♖e6! (not 13...♜xd3? 14 ♘e4! b6 15 ♖d1 ♜e2 16 ♘ed6; the alternative 13...♘e6 14 ♘e4 ♜e7 is playable but a little awkward) 14 ♘e4 b6 15 ♖d1 (15 ♗e3 ♗a6 16 ♖ad1 ♜e7) 15...♗b7 16 ♗h3 and Nisipeanu suggests 16...♗c8!? 17 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 as a playable exchange sacrifice, which is true, although White needn't accept so quickly. He rejects 16...f5 due to 17 ♘ed6, but then 17...♗a6! 18 a4 ♘a5! 19 ♘xa5 ♜xd6 20 ♘c4 ♜d7 leaves Black safe and in command of more territory.

11...♜c7!?

11...♗e6! (D) is the most direct way to equalize:



Black wants to play this anyway in order to develop and centralize while fortifying his position. Those familiar with King's Indian Defence theory will recognize this exact position as yet another in which White is playing the role of Black with an extra move. But White has the usual issue that if he plays the equalizing moves available to Black in the King's Indian

Defence, he can't expect more than a level game. And the tactical possibilities appear insufficient to produce an advantage; for example:

- a) 12 ♖a3 ♘de7! 13 ♖xc5 ♖xd3.
 b) 12 ♖b5 ♘c7! can be followed by 13 ♖xc5 ♖xd3 or 13 ♖xb7 ♙d5!.
 c) After 12 ♘b3, which is the main move with reversed colours, Nisipeanu gives 12...♘b6 13 ♖b5 (13 ♖h4 ♖xh4 14 ♘h4 ♘a4) 13...c4 14 ♘c5 a6, which is good for Black after the forced 15 ♘xe6 axb5 16 ♘xd8 ♖fxd8. Why does this work? In the King's Indian Defence position, White has played the extra move ♖c2.

17 ♘h4 a5! 18 ♘f5 gxf5 leaves White's knight stranded.

17...exd4 18 ♘xd4 ♖b6 19 b4 ♘dxb4! 20 cxb4 ♘xd4 21 ♙b2!

21 ♙xa8? ♘c2 is virtually winning for Black.

21...♖ac8 22 ♖ac1 a5?!

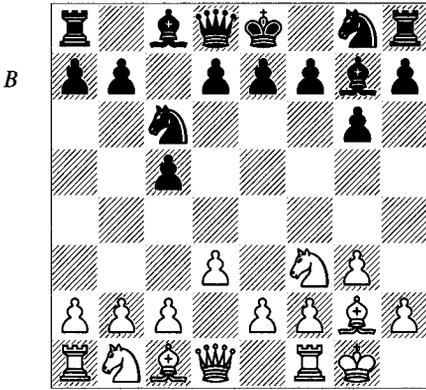
22...♙g7! is correct.

23 ♖e3! ♙g7?

Wrong timing. He can't play 23...♘c2? in view of 24 ♖xc2 with the idea 24...♙xc2? 25 ♖c3, but 23...axb4 24 ♙xd4 ♖xd4 25 ♖xd4 ♙xc5 gives Black some compensation.

24 bxa5 ♖xa5

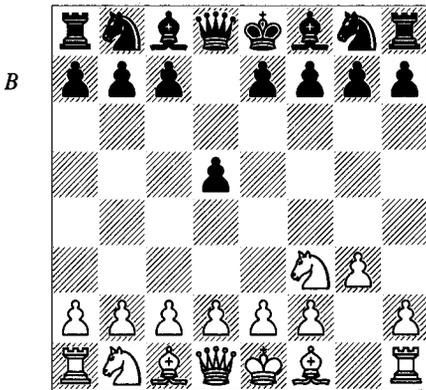
24...♖b8 25 a6 isn't much better. At this



♠e6 with smooth development for Black, who has ideas such as ...♗d7 and the possible pawn advances ...f5 or ...g5, or simply ...♖c7 followed by ...d5.

b) 1...♟f6 2 g3 g6 3 ♟g2 ♟g7 4 0-0 0-0 5 d3 c5 (5...d6 is still more flexible, if not necessary; then 6 c4 e5 is a 'reversed KIA') 6 e4 ♟c6 7 ♟c3 (after 7 c3, 7...d5 is fine, but 7...d6 can be effective if White tries to enforce d4; for example, 8 ♞e1 h6 9 d4?! cxd4 10 cxd4 ♟g4) 7...d6. This is a rather harmless type of Closed Sicilian. For White to create problems for his opponent, he would ideally have his pawn on f4 in front of his knight, or his king's knight on e2. All of these lines are equal, of course, but the latter set-ups force Black to play accurately.

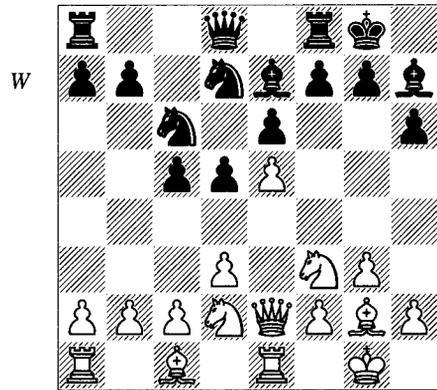
2 g3 (D)



2...c6

This is the move we saw in the Réti Slav chapter. 2...♟f6 3 ♟g2 ♟f5 is another popular set-up: 4 0-0 (4 c4 can lead to some independent lines, including 4...dxc4 5 ♟a3 ♟e6!?)

4...e6 5 d3 h6 (not strictly necessary, but it will probably be played later anyway) 6 ♟bd2 ♟e7 7 ♖e1 (again the most popular move, to enforce e4; I should mention that 7 b3 0-0 8 ♟b2 is also played, when White will normally follow with c4 rather than e4; then the game can transpose into the Réti Opening) 7...0-0 8 e4 ♟h7 9 ♖e2 (or 9 e5 ♟fd7 10 ♖e2 c5) 9...c5 10 e5 (10 ♟e5 ♟bd7 11 ♟xd7 ♖xd7 is harmless) 10...♟fd7 11 ♞e1 ♟c6 (D).



This position has occurred numerous times. Black's h7-bishop defends the kingside and will gain extra influence if ...c4 follows, whereas White's best strategy isn't clear. Stepak-Chandler, London 1985 continued 12 ♟f1 ♟h8! (12...b5 13 h4 ♖b6 14 ♟1h2 c4 15 ♞d1 cxd3 16 cxd3 ♞fc8 gave Black a nice queenside initiative in S.Kravtsov-Y.Geller, Samara 2003) 13 h4 ♞c8 14 h5 f6! 15 exf6 ♟xf6 16 ♖xe6 ♟b4 17 ♞e2 c4! and Black stood better, since 18 dxc4 ♟c5! 19 ♖g4 ♟xc2 20 ♞b1 dxc4! would leave him totally in charge.

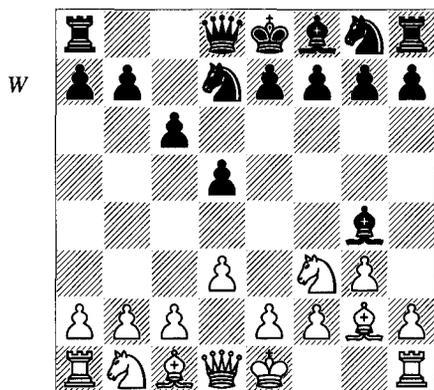
3 ♟g2 ♟g4

An extremely popular line among grandmasters. Unlike the extravagant variations in which Black exposes to attack a large centre with pawns on c5, d5 and e5, this deployment has simple ideas relating to a smaller centre.

3...♟f6 4 0-0 ♟f5 5 d3 e6 is a traditional defensive set-up – a reversed London System; it has an excellent reputation. As White plays moves such as ♟bd2, ♖e1 and e4, Black follows up with ...h6, ...♟e7, ...♟h7 and ...♟bd7. At this point, White's standard manoeuvre 6 ♟h4 ♟g4 7 h3 ♟h5 8 g4 doesn't accomplish much because of 8...♟fd7!, hitting h4. Instead,

the retreat 6 ♖fd2!?, an idea from the London System versus the King's Indian Defence, deserves notice, if only to mix things up. Then 6...h6 7 e4 ♙h7 8 ♘c3 produces an unbalanced game.

4 d3 ♘d7 (D)



5 ♘bd2

Or:

a) 5 0-0 is the natural move. Then Black has played a variety of plans; for example, 5...e6 (covering h4 and thus preventing the bishop from being exchanged following 6 h3 ♙h5 7 g4 ♙g6 8 ♘h4), followed by development with ...♙d6 and either ...♘e7 or ...♘g6. Also possible is 5...e5 6 c4 dxc4 7 dxc4 ♙c5 8 ♘c3 ♘g6 with equality.

b) 5 h3 ♙h5 (or 5...♙xf3 6 ♙xf3 e6; when White has spent a tempo on h3, the exchange on f3 becomes more attractive) 6 g4 ♙g6 7 ♘h4 e6 (7...e5!?) 8 ♘xg6 hxg6, and Black's h-file and smooth development balance out White's bishop-pair.

5...♘g6

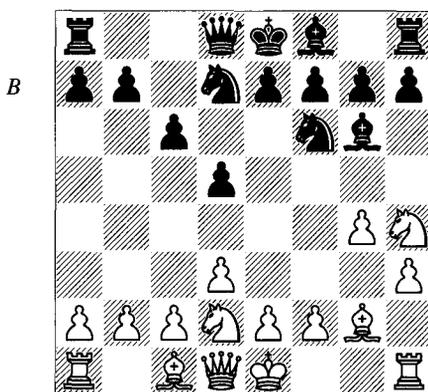
Naturally, 5...e5 and 5...e6 come into consideration, to prevent the following manoeuvre by White.

6 h3 ♙h5

With 6...♙xf3 7 ♘xf3 e5, Black gives White the bishop-pair in return for setting up an ideal centre and developing quickly. This has generally been satisfactory for him; for example, 8 0-0 ♙c5 (8...♙d6 lets White's knight into f5 with tempo after 9 ♘h4 0-0 10 ♘f5, which is slightly awkward) 9 c3!? (9 ♘h4 0-0 10 e4 ♙e7 11 ♘f5 ♙e6 is about equal) 9...0-0 10 b4 ♙b6 11 a4 a6 12 ♘d2 ♙e8 with a balanced

position, Petran-Westerinen, Cappelle la Grande 1988.

7 g4 ♙g6 8 ♘h4 (D)



8...e6

There's nothing wrong with 8...e5. White has a wide choice, but he doesn't command enough space to expect any advantage; for example, 9 c4 (9 ♘xg6 hxg6 10 e3 ♙d6 11 ♙e2 ♙e7 12 c4, Fuller-Greenfeld, London 1984; then heading queenside by 12...dxc4 13 ♘xc4 0-0-0 is a good course for Black) 9...♙c5 (or 9...d4) 10 ♘xg6 hxg6 11 e3?! (11 0-0) 11...0-0?! (11...d4!) 12 0-0 d4!? 13 exd4 ♙xd4 14 ♘f3 ♙b6, J.Bradford-Ki.Georgiev, Catalan Bay 2007.

9 e3

Naturally, White has other moves, but he wants to avoid the positional difficulties which follow 9 e4?!, when his g2-bishop can end up locked in. A simple response is 9...♙c7 10 ♙e2 ♙d6 11 g5?! ♘h5.

9...♙d6 10 ♙e2 ♙c7 11 0-0 0-0 12 f4 h6!

Black concedes doubled pawns; his idea is to play ...♙h7 and then ...e5 or ...g5.

13 ♘xg6 fxg6 (D)

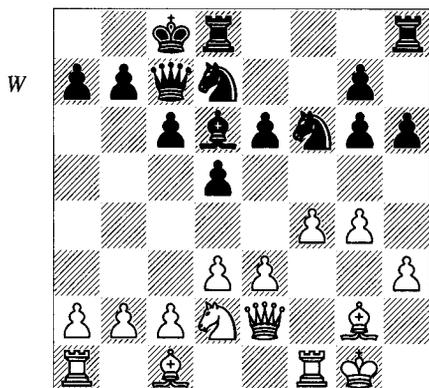
14 ♘f3

14 c4 g5! 15 d4 gxf4 16 c5 ♘xc5!? 17 dxc5 ♙xc5 18 ♘b3 ♙b6 is totally unclear; Black has three pawns and an attack for the piece, but White can loosen up Black's king's protection by 19 a4 a5 20 ♘d4 (20 ♘h1 ♙e5) 20...♙he8 21 b4!? e5 22 bxa5 ♙a7 with a disorderly position.

14...e5 15 ♘h4 exf4 16 exf4 ♙he8?!

16...♙c5+! 17 ♘h1 ♙he8 is a more accurate continuation.

17 ♙f2 ♙c5 18 d4 ♙b6 19 b4?!



Ljubojević – Ciocaltea
Skopje Olympiad 1972

1 e4 e5 2 ♖c3 ♜f6 3 f4 d5!

This is the standard reply, held in high regard for well over 100 years.

4 fxe5 ♜xe4 5 ♜f3 (D)

Effectively wasting a move. 19 ♜xg6 ♜e4 20 ♙xe4 ♜xe4 21 c3! is better.

19...♜e4 20 ♙xe4 ♜xe4 21 c3 ♜de8 22 ♜xg6 c5!?

This breaks into White's position, although 22...♜e2 23 ♜f3 ♜c2 is a safer route to advantage.

23 bxc5 ♜xc5 24 ♜f3 ♜a4 25 ♙d2 ♜xc3!
26 ♙xc3?! ♜e3 27 ♜xd5 ♜xc3 28 ♜ae1 ♜d8

Black gets his pawn back and opens lines against White's vulnerable king.

29 ♜f5+?!

29 ♜g2 ♙xd4+ 30 ♜h1 ♙f6! with the ideas of ...♜c2 and in some cases ...♜dd3.

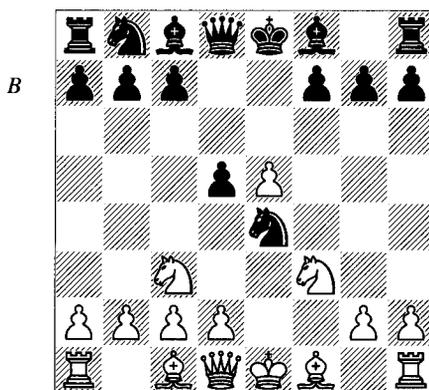
29...♜b8 30 ♜h2 ♙xd4

30...♜c2+! 31 ♜h1 ♜c3 32 ♜e5+ ♜a8 33 ♜e3 ♜b2 34 ♜g3 ♜xd4 is virtually winning for Black.

31 ♜e2 a6 32 ♜fe1 ♜a7 33 ♜e4 ♙b6 34 ♜e5?

But White has a terrible game anyway.

34...♜d4 35 ♜f5 g5 36 fxc5 ♜dd3 37 ♜g2 ♜g3+ 38 ♜f1 ♜g1# (0-1)



5...♙c5!?

Black intentionally loses a tempo to set up a pin that in turn forces White to lose time on the queenside. 5...♙b4 is a sensible alternative; for example:

a) 6 ♙d3!?! has the idea 6...♜c5 7 ♙e2 d4 8 a3 ♙a5 9 b4 dxc3 10 d4 ♜e4 11 bxa5, when White seems to have a modest edge. But Black might try 6...f5!?, which looks fully playable after 7 exf6 (7 ♙e2 0-0 8 0-0 ♙e6) 7...♜xf6 8 0-0 0-0 (a small joke is 8...♜c6 9 ♙b5?! 0-0 10 d4 and Black has gained a move!) 9 ♙e2 ♜c6 10 a3 ♙a5 11 d4 ♙g4.

b) 6 ♜e2! may be as good as anything; for example, 6...♙xc3 7 dxc3 0-0 8 ♙f4 ♙e6 9 0-0-0 ♜d7 10 ♜e1 c6 with active chances for both sides.

Compare the reversed position with 6 ♙b5 in the Ponziani Opening game below.

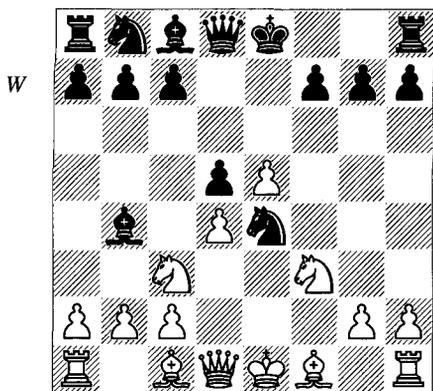
6 d4 ♙b4 (D)

7 ♙d2

7 ♜d3 positions the queen slightly oddly: 7...0-0 (7...c5 is also satisfactory) 8 a3 (8 ♙d2 ♙f5) 8...♙xc3+ 9 bxc3 c5 10 ♙e2 ♜a5 11 ♙d2 c4 12 ♜e3 ♜c6 13 0-0 ♜e7! with the idea ...♜f5. In this position, strongly reminiscent of a French Winawer, Black's knights are aggressively placed and White's bishops have yet to find active roles.

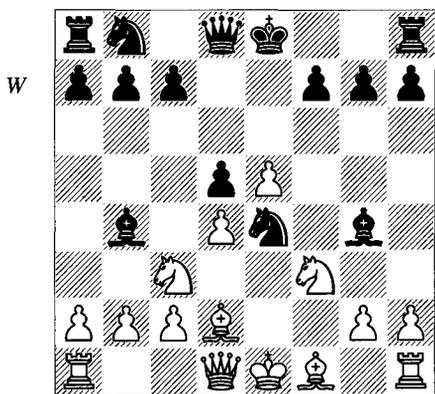
Reversing Double e-Pawn Openings

In this section, I'll present some examples of 1 e4 e5 variations in which either White or Black plays a known position in reverse (a tempo up or a tempo down, respectively). Let's start with a pairing of two openings that are out of today's mainstream: the Vienna Game and the Ponziani Opening. We'll see how the most modest of extra tempi impacts the resulting positions.



7...g4 (D)

7...c5! is the main line, after which Black is considered to have levelled the game. He may even do better than that; for example, 8 g4b5+ (White achieves nothing from 8 g4d3 dxd2 9 Wxd2 cxd4 10 dxd4, when only Black can claim an edge after 10...dxc6 or 10...0-0; 8 dxe4!? leads to the approximately forced line 8...dxe4 9 g4xb4 cxb4 10 g4b5+ dxc6 11 d5 exf3 12 dxc6 f2+ 13 cf1 Wb6 followed by ...bxc6; again, Black has some advantage) 8...dxc6 9 0-0 10 ge1 g4 11 gxc6 bxc6 12 Wd3 gxf3 13 gxf3 gxc3 14 bxc3 dg5 15 ch1 c4 16 We3 de6 intending 17 f4 f5, once more with the better of it. Compare the next game.



8 dxe4

8 ge2 is the best chance to keep an edge, but after 8...dxc6 9 0-0 0-0 that seems unlikely.

8...dxe4 9 g4xb4 exf3 10 Wd2!?

After 10 gxf3 Wh4+ 11 ce2 dxc6 12 fxg4 Wxg4+ 13 cf2 Wf4+, White should take the draw by repetition.

10...dxc6 11 g4c3 Wd5 12 h3

12 dg1! isn't pretty, but threatens to invade on g7 after gxf3, so Black will count upon his superior development to make up for the pawn after 12...0-0-0 13 Wf4 f2+! 14 cfxf2 h5 15 h3 ge6.

12...ge6!? 13 gxf3?

13 0-0-0 Wxa2 14 Wg5 0-0 15 gxf3 ad8 16 dg1 g6 17 f4 Wa1+ 18 cd2 Wa2 19 cc1 repeats.

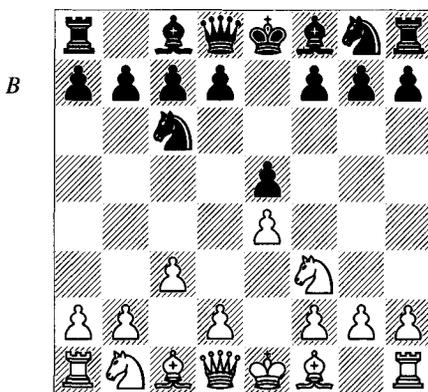
13...0-0-0 14 0-0-0 Wxa2?

14...dxe5! is better, with the idea 15 dxe5? Wxa2.

15 We3 de7 16 g4d3 d5 17 We1 cb8 18 h4 1/2-1/2

Now compare this with theory from the dual opening:

1 e4 e5 2 d3 dxc6 3 c3 (D)



This is the Ponziani Opening, which is perhaps a bit better than its reputation.

3...f5!?

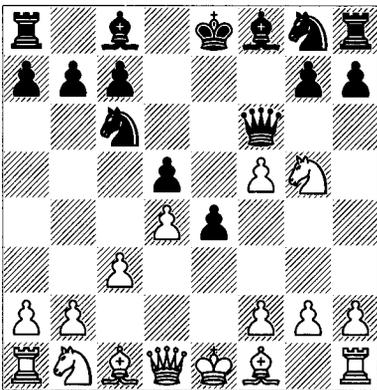
This is a Vienna Game (1 e4 e5 2 d3 c3 d3 f6 3 f4), with reversed colours and as if Black had an extra ...c6!

The moves 3...df6 and 3...d5 have always been the standard ones, but 3...f5 has a good reputation.

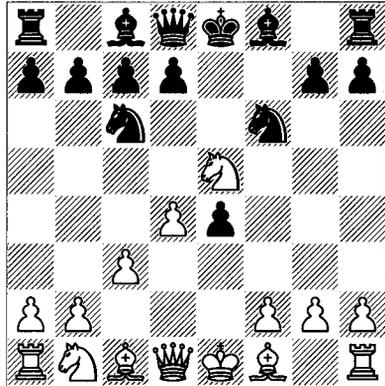
Speaking of reversed openings, Marin points out that after 3...df6 4 d4 dxe4 5 dxe5?! (5 d5 is normal), 5...d5 6 g4d3 leaves Black a tempo ahead of the respectable Pirc Defence line 1 e4 d6 2 d4 df6 3 g4d3 e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxe5 dxe4 6 df3 dxc6. To clinch the case against 5 dxe5, 5...ge5! also looks effective; for example, 6 Wd5 gxf2+ 7 cd1 f5 8 g4c4 ff8.

4 d4

It's logical to strike back in the centre in this way, as Black does in the Vienna Game. The only other reasonable way to counter Black's threat of ...fxe4 is 4 exf5, when the obvious course is 4...e4, but 5 ♖d4 with the idea d3, played in many games, seems to keep a small edge. Maybe Black could play 4...♙f6, trying to win the f-file in old-fashioned King's Gambit style. The play could go 5 d4! e4 6 ♘g5 d5 (D).



W



W

Here White needs to disturb the equilibrium:
 a) 7 ♙h5+!? g6 8 fxg6 hxg6 9 ♙e2 ♖d6, and in terms of space, open lines, and development, Black has quite a lot for a pawn.

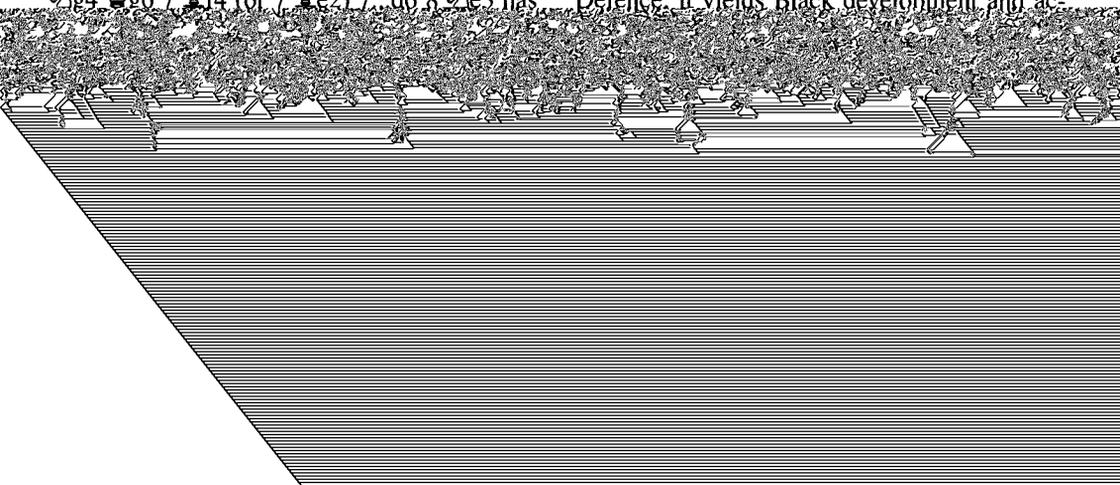
b) White can also try to undermine Black's centre by means of 7 c4; for example, 7...♙b4+ 8 ♘c3 (watch out for 8 ♖d2?? ♙xg5) 8...♘ge7! (development comes first; the pawns are not as important) 9 g4 (9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘gxe4 ♙xd4) 9...♙xd4 with an obscure position, which is about equal.

4...fxe4 5 ♘xe5 ♘f6 (D)

After 5...♙f6, the blocking manoeuvre 6 ♘g4 ♙g6 7 ♖f4 (or 7 ♖e2) 7...d6 8 ♘e3 has

tempo up on what is after all a pretty good line for Black. Naturally, White has other ways to handle the position, of which 6 ♖g5 may be the most important. White stands well after 6...♖d6?! 7 ♘g4! ♖e7 8 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 9 d5!, 6...♖e7 7 ♖b5! or 6...d6 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 8 ♘d2 d5 9 ♙a4 ♖d7 10 f3. Following 6...♙e7 7 ♖xf6 (7 ♘g4 d5!?) 7...♙xf6 8 ♘g4 ♙g6 White can try 9 ♘e3 or 9 d5. These ideas are barely explored, as is typical with some of the oldest openings.

The entertaining and instructive attacking game Nakamura-Becerra, USA Ch, Stillwater 2007 continued 6 ♖b5 ♖d6 (6...♙e7 may be best, as in the reversed position) 7 ♘c4 (7 f4! exf3 8 ♘xf3 is a fighting alternative; compare 6 ♖d3 f5 in the reversed line) 7...♖e7 8 ♖a4 (8 d5 a6 9 ♖a4 b5 doesn't improve much upon the reversed position, because White's extra move c3 isn't generally useful; he can win a pawn at the cost of development by 10 dxc6 bxa4 11 ♙xa4 d5 12 ♘e3 0-0, but Black has a strong centre and excellent attacking chances) 8...d5 9 ♘e5 0-0! (this is a typical sacrifice in double e-pawn openings, famously in the Two Knights Defence; it yields Black development and ac-

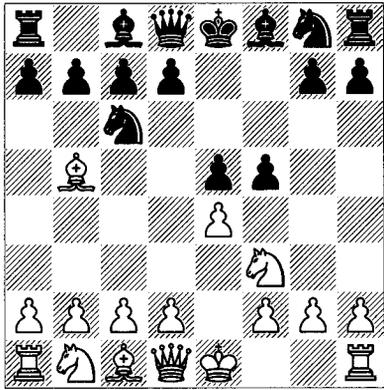


example is 2 ♖f3 f5 3 ♘c3 fxe4, when 4 ♖h5+ is illegal – the extra move gets in the way, as opposed to 1 e4 e5 2 f4 ♘c6 3 fxe4?? ♖h4+.

Finally, 3 d4, trying to reverse the Falkbeer Counter-Gambit upon 3...exd4?! 4 e5!, runs into 3...fxe4! 4 ♘xe5 ♘f6; note again that if White didn't have ♘f3 in, 3...fxe4 would be a blunder due to 4 ♖h5+.

All of the 3rd moves above are playable for White, in spite of the differences I've noted, but they aren't convincing ways for him to secure the better game. As a consequence, you will see the move 3 ♘xe5 in most Latvian Gambit contests, which isn't a reversed variation, and yet offers the best chances for a substantial advantage.

a2) 2...♘c6 (D) has its own twists:



still on f1, so this tempo-gain isn't possible) 7 ♘c4 (having come this far, White normally tries the unclear piece sacrifice 7 ♘c3 cxb5 8 ♘xe4) 7...♖a5+ followed by 8...♖xe5 wins a pawn. White should play otherwise; for example, by 4 d3 or the traditional main line, 4 ♘c3.

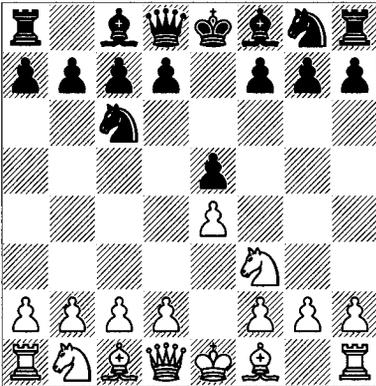
b) 2 d3 is a bit odd for White, but the idea is to delay the move f4 until Black commits. Then 2...♘f6 (the equivalent of 1 e4 ♘f6 2 d3 e5) 3 f4 is a sort of reversed Philidor Counter-Gambit, an opening which goes 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 f5. After 3 f4, there can follow 3...exf4 4 ♘f3 (4 e5 ♖e7 5 ♖e2 ♘d5! is good, with the idea 6 c4?! ♖b4+!) 4...d5 e5 ♘h5!, and Black has a typical King's Gambit Accepted position, but with the move ...d5 in exchange for d3, clearly a trade-off in Black's favour. Compare the actual Philidor Counter-Gambit with 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 f5 4 exf5 e4, when 5 ♘h4?? loses a piece. On the other hand, White can play 5 ♘g5, which is theoretically favourable for him, so this comparison merely reveals a drawback to the line with 2 d3 and 3 f4, rather than providing salvation for the Philidor Counter-Gambit.

2...♘f6 (D)

3 ♘c4

Or:

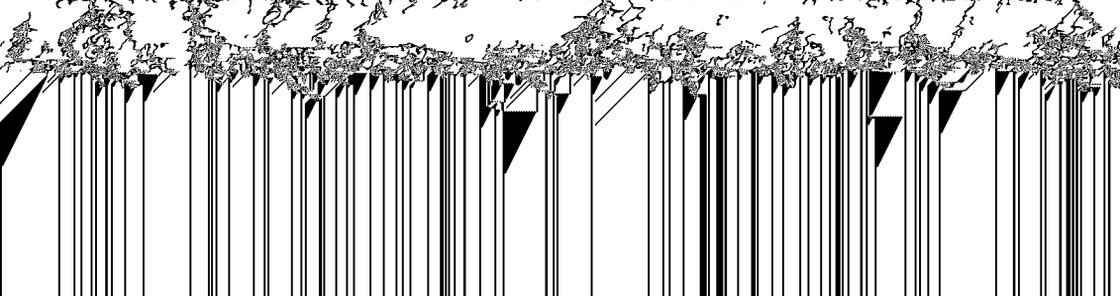
a) One of several replies to 3 g3 is 3...♘b4, a reversed Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘b5 g6) in which g3 and ♘g2 is enough to equalize, but too slow for White to expect an advantage.

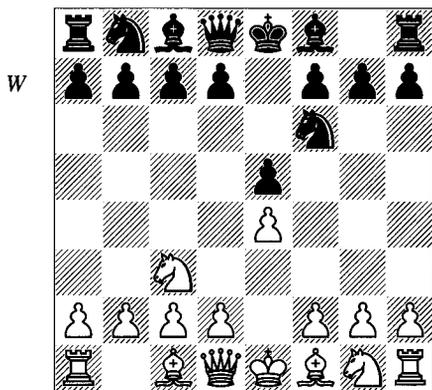


a21) 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 is the Four Knights Game, which we shall look at in Chapter 7 as an example of symmetry in the opening. Now 4 ♘c4 ♘xe4 5 ♘xe4 d5 6 ♘d3 dxe4 7 ♘xe4 is yet another reversed position, probably favouring White slightly. Its twin is 3...♘c5 4 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 5 d4 ♘d6 6 dxe5 ♘xe5 7 ♘d3, and if 7...♖h4, 8 ♘d5. In this version, White's tempo helps, and his superiority is clear.

a22) 3 ♘b5 f5 (D).

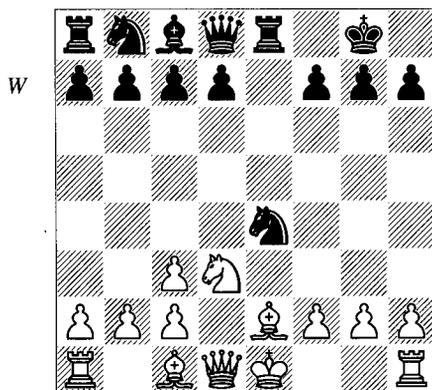
This is the Schliemann Defence, which has a decent reputation. In terms of a reversed opening, it's a Vienna Game (1 e4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3





active pieces; 9...d6 is better) 10 bxc3 d6 11 e4 f4 b6 12 d5 e5 13 d6 e4 14 e3?! (14 dxb7 c8 15 d6 cxc3; 14 e1 e2 15 e3 with a pull – moves like b1 and d4 can follow) 14...d4 15 dxe4 dxe4 16 d4 a5 17 fe1 ae8?! (17...fe8! 18 e1 ac8) 18 e1 a3 19 e3 d3 e6 20 f3 c5 21 e5 e6?! 22 cxd5 cxc3 23 ad1 with numerous threats, beginning with e5.

b) 3 d3 e4 is a reversed Ruy Lopez in which White has played the extra move d3. Now the obvious try is 4 dxe5 (4 e4 transposes to the main game) 4...0-0 5 e2 (another try is 5 e4, producing an unbalanced ending after 5...e7 6 d3 e3 7 dxc3 8 cxe4+ 9 e2 cxe2+ 9 e2, with a familiar situation with two bishops versus doubled pawns) 5...e8 (after 5...d5?! 6 exd5, neither 6...e8 7 d4 nor 6...dxd5 7 0-0 gives Black enough for a pawn) 6 d3 e3 7 dxc3 dxe4 (D).



This looks like a cross between an Exchange Variation and a Berlin Defence to the Ruy

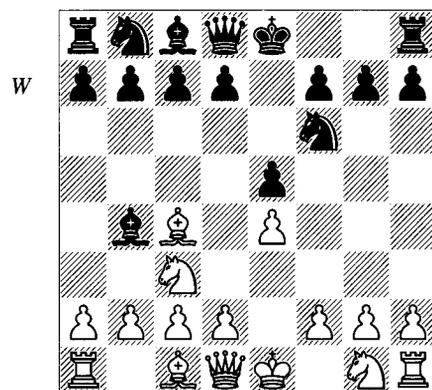
Lopez. In spite of Black's weakness-free position, White is slightly better and can work to prevent ...d5 by 8 d4; for example, 8...d6 9 0-0 d7 and now:

b1) 10 c4 d6 (10...h6!?) 11 e1 b6 (or 11...e5) 12 f3 c5 13 b3 e7 14 d2 e5 15 b1 b7 16 e2 g5 17 bd1 and White's pieces make a better overall impression, Svidler-Gashimov, Dagomys 2008.

b2) In Shirov-Akopian, Linares 1995, White contested e4 by 10 f3! and got the better of it in spite of the weakness on e3: 10...d6 11 c4 d8?! 12 b3 e7 13 f2 e5 14 b1 d7, and here Shirov likes simply 15 d5 dxd5 16 cxd5 with an edge because of the bishop-pair.

3...e4!? (D)

A much-analysed Vienna Game line goes 3...dxe4 4 h5; you will see the same idea in the next couple of notes.



Now we have a reversed Classical Variation of the Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 e5 e4), with Black a whole tempo down. The Classical can be a pretty active system, so let's see if White can make good use of the extra tempo.

4 d3

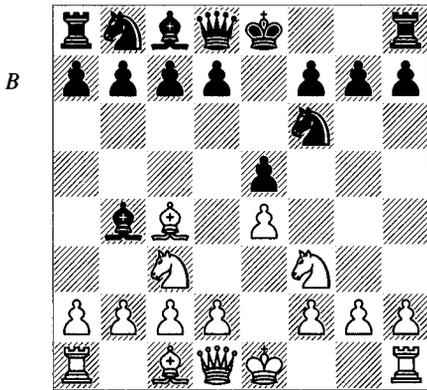
This is the purest reversed system, imitating the normal Classical Ruy Lopez with 3...d6 4 0-0 e5. Two alternatives:

a) 4 d3 isn't bad, of course, but it does make 4...d5 possible, which is at any rate close to equal, if not fully so, after 5 exd5 dxd5 6 e2 (6 e2 d6 7 0-0 b6 8 e3 0-0 9 e4!?) has the odd-looking intention of playing f4; this is probably about equal following 9...a5! 10 a3 e7 11 h3 h8?! 12 f4 a4 13 a2 f5 14 d4c3)

6...♟xc3 7 bxc3 ♔d6 8 ♖h5 ♜f6!? 9 ♞f3 0-0 10 ♞g5 ♜g6? (10...♙f5 is better) 11 ♖xg6 hxg6 12 0-0 ♙e7 13 ♚ae1 ♞c6 14 ♙d5 ♙d7 15 ♙xc6 (15 f4! is strong) 15...♙xc6 16 ♚xe5 ♙xg5!? 1/2-1/2 J.Andersen-Velička, Germany tt 1993/4.

b) 4 f4 has White playing the Schliemann Defence to the Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 ♞f3 ♞c6 3 ♙b5 f5; see the discussion above), but with the extra move ♙c4. The problem is that this gives Black the tactic 4...♞xe4!. Then if White follows the normal Vienna Game strategy of 5 ♖h5 (which is probably best, since 5 ♞xe4 d5 is at least equal), Black plays 5...0-0!, a move unavailable in the Vienna Game (as opposed to 5...♞d6 6 ♖xe5+ ♜e7 7 ♖xe7+ ♙xe7 8 ♞d5+ ♙d8 9 ♙e2 ♙c5 10 ♞f3 with better-coordinated pieces for White; he has ideas of b4, d4, or in the case of 10...♞c6, 11 c3 with the idea d4). Then 6 ♞xe4 d5 7 ♞g5 h6 wins the piece back with a good position for Black.

We now return to 4 ♞f3 (D):



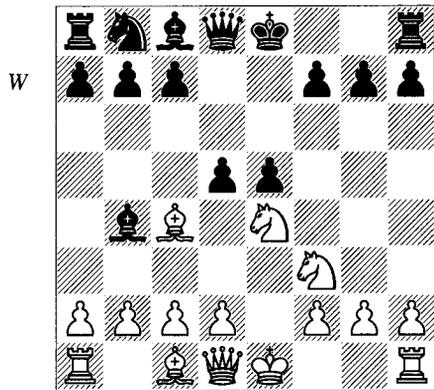
After this move, Black really should deviate from the reversed position at a fairly early stage, rather than put up with an attack by ♞d5 and/or d4. He picks a good way to do so:

4...♙xc3

Or:

a) 4...♞xe4?! 5 ♞xe4 (there's no 5 ♖h5, as in the Vienna Game) 5...d5 (D).

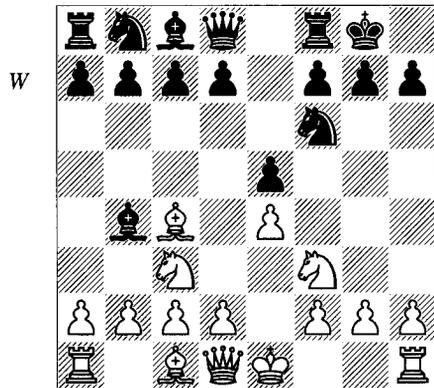
Once again we encounter this tactic. However, Black's bishop is poorly placed on b4, and 6 ♞xe5! dxc4 7 ♞xc4 is almost certainly in White's favour. Compare the reversed line with 2 ♞f3 ♞c6 3 ♙b5 ♞f6 4 0-0 ♙c5 5 ♞xe5 ♞xe5 6 d4 ♞xe4? 7 dxc5 ♞xc5? (but 7...♖e7 8



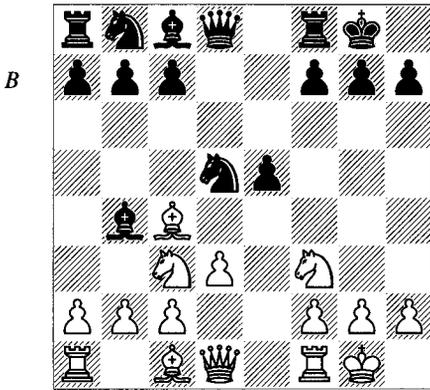
♚e1 ♞xf2 9 ♙xf2 ♖xc5+ 10 ♙g3 isn't adequate either) 8 ♚e1 and White wins; in our position, Black hasn't castled.

Interestingly, after 6 c3 ♙e7 the sequence 7 ♞xe5 dxc4 8 ♞xc4 f5 may not be as good, as the white c3-pawn sits on the knight's best retreat-square; so 9 ♞g3 f4 follows, and Black gets practical chances after 10 ♞e4 ♖d5 or 10 ♞e2 ♖d5 11 d3 f3. Nor is 7 ♖a4+!? simple, in spite of winning a pawn after 7...c6! 8 ♙e2 dxe4 9 ♖xe4 ♞d7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♞xe5 ♞xe5 12 ♖xe5 ♙d6 13 ♖h5 g6 14 ♖f3 ♙e6 15 d4 ♚e8.

b) 4...0-0 (D).

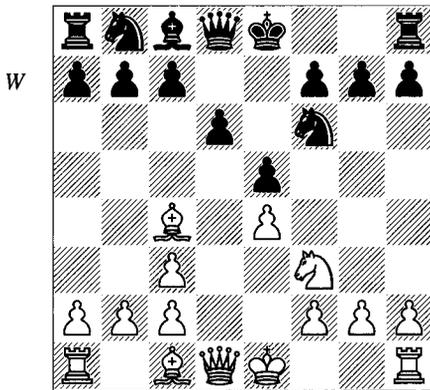


5 d3 (or 5 0-0, when 5...♙xc3 6 dxc3 ♞xe4!? 7 ♞xe5 favours White's superior development by a small margin) 5...d5 (5...♞c6 6 0-0 ♙xc3 7 bxc3 d5 8 exd5 ♞xd5 9 ♚e1! is a tempo-up version of a Classical Ruy Lopez line; White's development gives him some advantage after 9...♙g4 10 ♙d2 f6 11 ♚b1 b6 and now 12 ♖e2 or 12 ♚b5 with the idea 12...♙e6?! 13 ♞d4!) 6 exd5 ♞xd5 7 0-0! (D).



This is a thematic pawn sacrifice, based upon speed of development more than anything else. 7... dxc3 (7... $\text{xc3}?! 8 \text{ bxc3 } \text{dxc3}?! 9 \text{ } \text{e1}$ and xe5 cedes the bishops for nothing) 8 bxc3 xc3 9 b1 c6 10 g5 h6 11 e4 b4 12 h5 with a nice initiative and notions of g6 and xh6 .

5 dxc3 d6 (D)



The last reversal: Black has played the Exchange Ruy Lopez, and apparently given White much better development than he gets in the reversed position. But in fact, Black doesn't generate many powerful attacks in the Exchange Ruy Lopez, and in this reversed position, White has nothing to be particularly excited about.

6 0-0

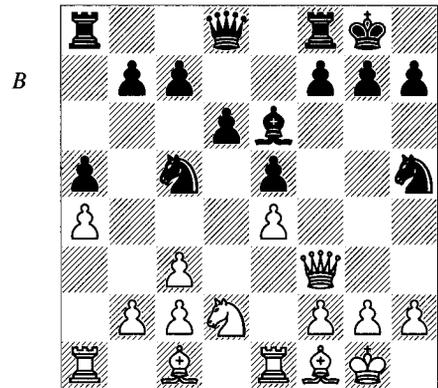
White could try to lure Black into an inferior line by 6 e2 , and if Black replies 6...0-0, and then answers 7 g5 with 7... h6 , White can play as Black does with reversed colours: 8 $\text{h4}!$, with the idea 8... $\text{hxg5}?! 9 \text{ hxg5 } \text{g4}$ 10 0-0-0 e6 11 h4 xc4 12 dh1 , etc. But

that is wishful thinking, and among other ideas, simply 6... bd7 7 g5 h6 8 h4 c5 9 0-0-0 e7 is fine for Black.

6... bd7 7 e1 0-0 8 $\text{a4}?!?$

A strange move. 8 $\text{b4}!$ would stop ... c5 , a move which now puts White on the defensive.

8... c5 9 d2 a5 10 f3 g4 11 g3 e6 12 f1 h5 13 f3 (D)

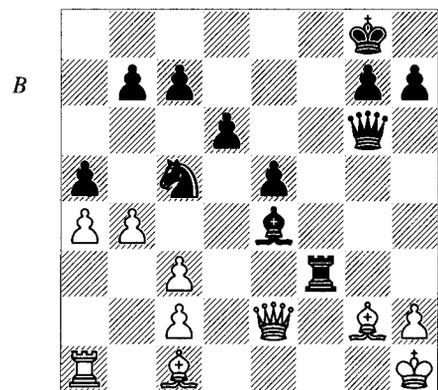


13... f4

Black has already got the upper hand, and the game quickly turns worse for White:

14 $\text{c4}?! \text{ f5}!$ 15 exf5 xf5 16 $\text{e3}?$ $\text{xg2}!$ 17 xf5 xel 18 e2 xf5 19 xel f6 20 g2 g6 21 h1 f8 22 b4 e4 23 f3 $\text{xf3}!$ 24 e2 (D)

24 bxc5 $\text{e3}!$ wins for Black.



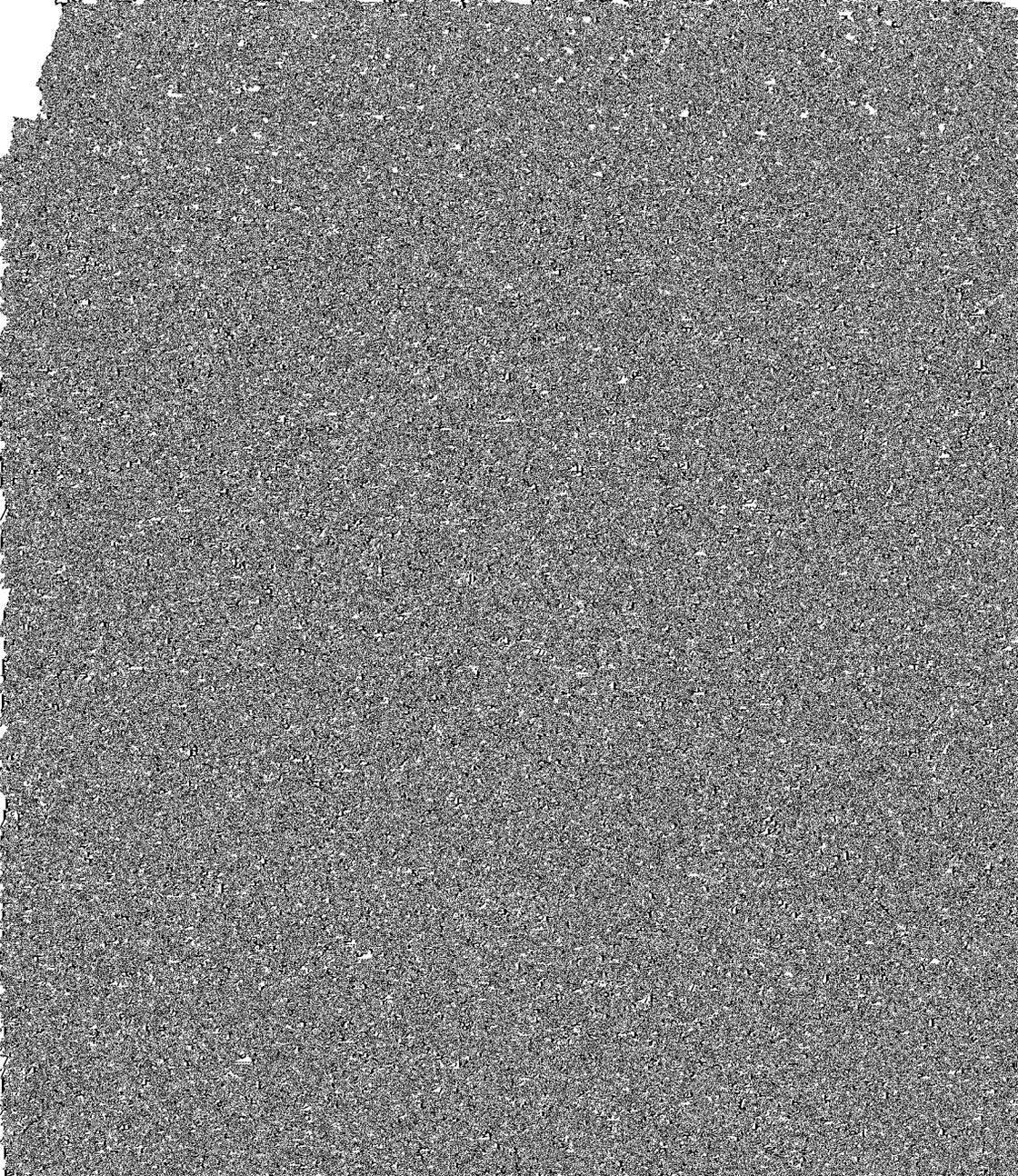
24... g4 25 bxc5 $\text{f7}!$ 0-1

Most of this 1 e4 e5 analysis has been in the nature of an exercise, but it might give you an idea of why the main 1 e4 e5 variations do not lend themselves to profitable reversal.

7 Symmetry and its Descendants

Students often complain about how this or that opening is 'drawish'. However, it's hard to find convincing examples. Even well past the opening stage, simplified and equal chess positions can be won by the better player on that day.

We've already seen numerous examples of symmetrical openings in this series, notably in Volume 3 with the many variations of the Symmetrical English (1 c4 c5). After 1 d4 d5, the best-known truly symmetrical opening is the



Like many symmetrical variations, it has a reputation for dry or even drawish play. This stems from the perceived drawish nature of games between elite players and years of commentary from books and magazines. To be sure, of the 900+ Petroff Defence games in my database between opponents who are both rated above 2600, we find that 63% of the games are drawn, as opposed to 50% for both the Sicilian and French Defences. Nevertheless, White has an overall success rate of 58% (well above average), and a solid lead over Black in performance rating. Clearly Black doesn't get his normal share of wins, a fact which can easily be missed as we see elite players like Kramnik using the Petroff in order to secure effortless draws (and even occasional victories) as Black. But just because a world champion manages to pull off a draw doesn't mean that you, as White, won't find ample winning chances.

Let's explore some theory of the Petroff Defence, keeping in eye on the very first summit

3...♞xe4

These days, 3...exd4 is less popular. One main line goes 4 e5 ♞e4 5 ♜xd4 d5 6 exd6 ♞xd6 7 ♞c3 ♞c6 8 ♜f4 with the idea of ♞e3 and 0-0-0, posing Black some problems.

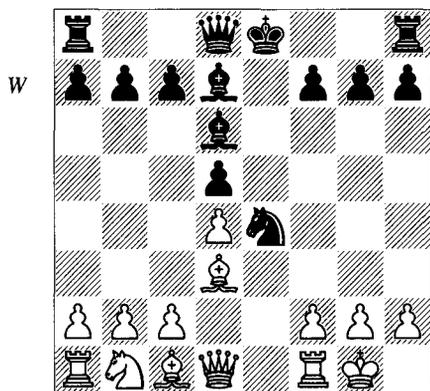
4 ♞d3

If White plays 4 dxe5, Black usually replies 4...d5, when after 5 ♞bd2, 5...♞xd2 and 5...♞c5 are the main lines. White has been finding his way to modest advantages versus those moves. But 4...♞c5 may be considerably stronger than previously thought, especially with variations like 5 ♞c4 ♞xf2 6 ♞xf7+ ♞xf7 (6...♞f8 7 ♜d5 ♞xh1 8 ♞h5! is unclear) 7 ♜d5+ (following very old theory) 7...♞g6!. This was played in Short-Smeets, Wijk aan Zee 2010: 8 ♞g5 ♜e8 9 ♞h4+? (9 0-0) 9...♞xg5 10 ♞d2 ♞h6? (10...d6! should win, as the black king survives its walk) 11 ♞f5+ ♞g6 12 ♞h4+ ♞h6 13 ♞f5+ ♞g6 14 ♞h4+ with a draw. Of course, White has many alternatives early on, but nothing that

looks particularly attractive

dxe4 13 ♖xe4 ♗b5 14 ♗g2 ♜f5 15 ♗e3! ♗xf1 16 ♗xf1, as in several games, White drums up a major attack after ♜a4 and ♞d1-d3-b3/a3. The modest 8 g3 is also good; then 8...♜h3? is poor in view of 9 f3! ♗f6 10 ♞e1+ ♗e6 11 ♞e5! with the idea ♗f1. So 8...♜f6 9 ♗c3 ♗xc3 10 bxc3 0-0-0 11 ♜h5 usually follows, with pressure.

b) 7...♗d6! (D) pursues a quasi-symmetrical strategy:



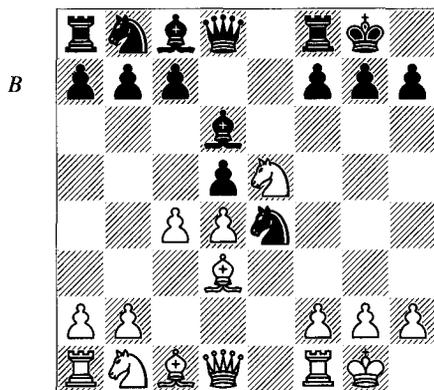
Black is reasonably well developed, and it's difficult for White to remove the knight from e4 without oversimplifying. His most thematic approach involves targeting d5. Briefly:

b1) 8 ♗c3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 0-0 10 ♜h5 f5 11 ♞e1 c6 is solid for Black.

b2) 8 ♜h5 creates more problems for Black. After 8...♗f6 (Kramnik has tried 8...♜f6) 9 ♞e1+ ♗f8, one example is 10 ♜e2 ♗e4 (nonu-

6 0-0 0-0 7 c4 (D)

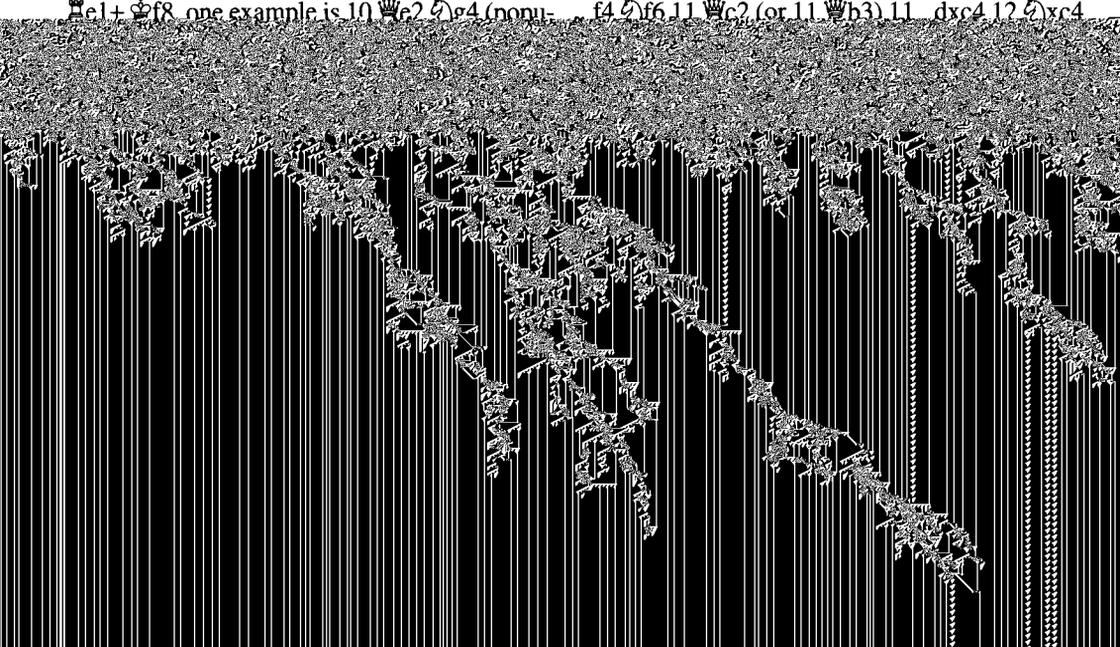
White can't get much out of 7 ♗c3 ♗xc3 8 bxc3 ♗d7 (8...c5!?) 9 ♞e1 due to 9...♗xe5 10 dxe5 ♗c5; for example, 11 ♜h5 ♗xd3 12 cxd3 ♜d7 (shamelessly heading for ...♜g4 or ...♜f5) 13 ♞e3 ♜g4 14 ♜xg4 ♗xg4 with a quick draw, Shanava-Mchedlishvili, Tbilisi 2008.

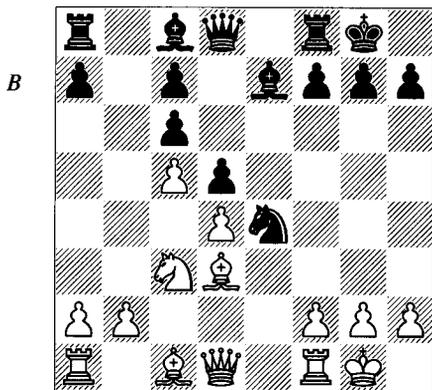


7...♗c6

Black develops and attacks d4. Other moves:

a) The line 7...c6 8 ♗c3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 pretty much expresses White's strategic goals with respect to undermining the knight on e4 and maintaining central pressure. He generally keeps some advantage; for example, 9...♗d7 (in the game Maroczy-Marshall, Paris 1900, Black chose 9...♗xe5?! 10 dxe5 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 ♜xd1?! 12 ♞xd1 ♗f5 13 ♗a3, when White had the bishop-pair and a mobile kingside majority) 10 f4 ♗f6 11 ♜c2 (or 11 ♜b3) 11...dxc4 12 ♗xc4

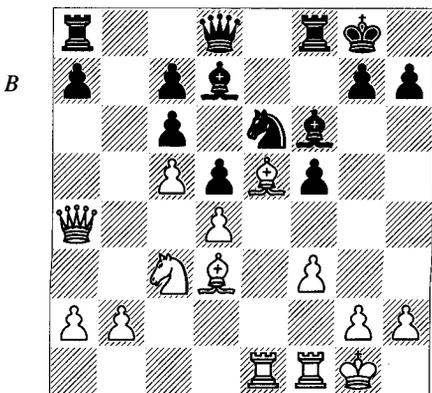




17 dxc5 d4? 18 e5 g5 1-0. Since 16...f4?! 17 fxe4 fxe3 18 e5 ♖h4 19 ♖a4! ♜xb2 20 ♖xc6 is also good for White, Black should try 16...♟f6 17 e5 g5 e6 18 ♟e2!, when White can claim positional superiority, but it's still a game.

b) After 11 ♟xe4 dxe4 12 e4, Yusupov suggests 12...a6; then 13 e3! e3f1 14 ♖xf1 looks to be a promising exchange sacrifice: White gains a pawn, the bishop-pair and the initiative.

11 f3 ♟g5 12 ♖a4 e4d7 13 e4f4 e6f6 14 ♜a1 ♟e6 15 e5 (D)



White has achieved two basic positional advantages: the better light-squared bishop and an outpost on e5. In the meantime, Black's queen-side pawn-structure is less than ideal.

15...e5 16 ♜e5 ♖h4 17 f4! ♟xf4 18 g3 ♟h3+ 19 ♟g2 ♖h6 20 ♟xd5 f4?

White stands clearly better after 20...♜ae8?! 21 ♟e7+ ♟h8 22 ♖c2!, but only moderately so following 20...♖d2+ 21 e2 ♜ae8! 22 ♟e7+ ♟h8 23 ♟xh3 ♜f7 24 ♖d1.

21 ♟e7+ ♟h8 22 ♟f5! ♖g5
Shirov gives 22...e5xf5 23 ♜xf5! ♜ae8(?) 24 ♖d1!

23 ♟h4 ♖h6 24 e5f5! f3g3 25 h3g3 g6?

Black's last shot was 25...g5! 26 ♖d1! gxh4 27 e4d7 ♖g6! 28 g4! ♟f4+ 29 ♟h2 ♟d5 30 e5f5, although White is still well on top.

26 e4d7 ♖d2+ 27 ♟xh3 ♜xf1 28 e4xc6 ♜af8 29 e2g2 ♜f2 30 ♖d7 g5 31 e7 ♖c2 32 e4!

White finds a pretty finish, marching his king up the board.

32...♜h2+ 33 ♟g4 ♜xh4+

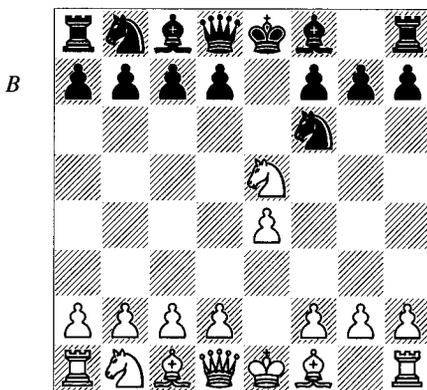
33...♖e2+ 34 ♟f3.

34 gxh4 ♖e2+ 35 ♟xg5 ♜g8+ 36 ♟f6 1-0

Solodovnichenko – Backlund

Rocheft 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟f6 3 ♟xe5 (D)



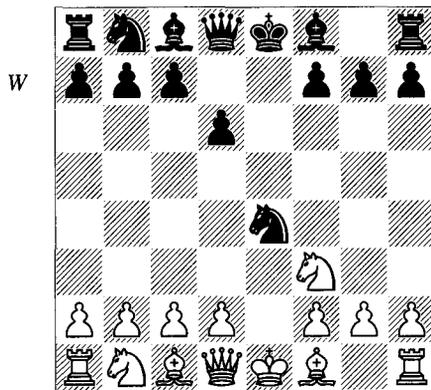
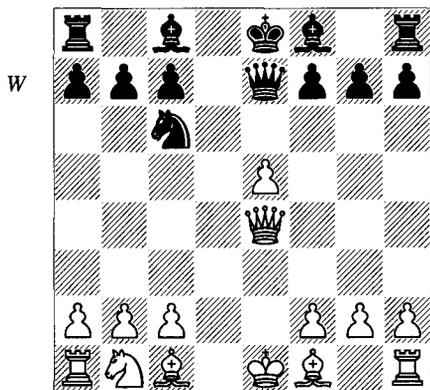
3...d6

Full-blooded symmetrical play can be pursued by the amazing 3...♟xe4!?, which for years books assigned a '?', simply giving the line 4 ♖e2 ♟f6?? 5 ♟c6+. Actually, 4 ♖e2 isn't the disaster that it looks like, because of 4...♖e7! 5 ♖xe4 d6 (granted, 5...♖xe5?? would be taking symmetry too far!). Black recovers his piece and is sacrificing a pawn for compensation. It's hard to believe that White can't retain some advantage, but it's fun to see how even this discarded line is taken seriously in the age of computers. Briefly, the main line is 6 d4 (the only important alternative is 6 f4, when after 6...dxe5, 7 ♖xe5?! ♖xe5+ 8 fxe5 ♟c6 9 e5b5 e4d7 10 e4xc6 e4xc6 gives Black obvious compensation;

instead, 7 fxe5 f5! is a line analysed in depth by O.Cohen – whether or not it equalizes completely, as he suggests, Black has lots of play) 6...dxe5 7 dxe5! (7 ♖xe5 ♖xe5+ 8 dxe5 ♗f5 is equal, based upon 9 ♗d3?! ♗xd3 10 cxd3 ♘c6, with moves such as ...♘b4 and ...0-0-0 to follow) 7...♘c6 (D).

wildly overrated, and that Black gets a definite advantage with correct play. On the other hand, Black seldom plays correctly, and in fact the few times elite players have faced 4 ♘xf7, they have reacted with playable but inferior moves!

4...♘xe4 (D)



5 d4

We have seen the idea of exploiting such an e5-pawn on an open file in many openings before. The success of this strategy depends upon developing quickly and maintaining the initiative; for example:

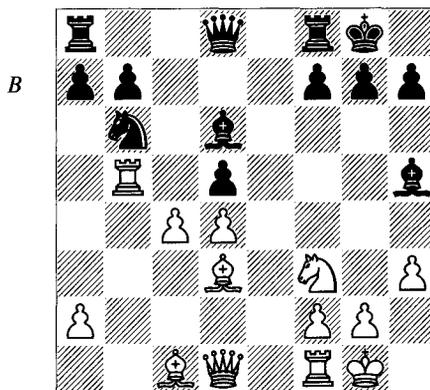
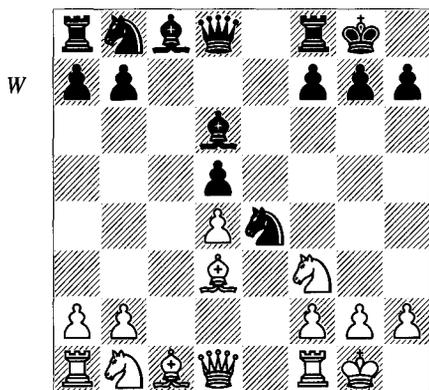
- a) 8 ♗b5 ♗d7 9 ♘c3 ♖b4! was played and analysed by Friedrich Volkman and others and seems sufficient for equality.
- b) 8 f4!? may be underrated. Then 8...♗g4 with the idea ...0-0-0 has been recommended, along with 8...♖b4+ 9 ♖xb4 ♘b4, but I suspect that White retains the better game in both cases.
- c) 8 ♗f4 g5! 9 ♗d2 (not 9 ♗g3?? in view of 9...f5!, and ...f4 will win the bishop) 9...f5 10 ♖e2 ♗g8 with the idea ...♗e6 and ...0-0-0, Baron O.Cohen, Givataim 2007.

The Petroff Defence is not as limited as you might think from watching top-level technical games over the years, most of which repeat the same lines over and over. Here is a brief outline of some early alternatives for White, of which 'c' and 'd' are the most attractive:

- a) 5 d3 ♘f6 6 d4 d5 (an Exchange French) is not the most inspiring of symmetrical positions, but the players can always get creative later.
- b) Another attempt to break symmetry has been used extensively over the years: 5 ♖e2 ♖e7 6 d3 ♘f6 7 ♗g5, threatening to double Black's pawns on f6. This has tended to allow Black easy equality; for example, 7...♘bd7 (or 7...♖xe2+ 8 ♗xe2 ♗e7 9 ♘c3 h6 10 ♗h4 ♘bd7) 8 ♘c3 ♖xe2+ 9 ♗xe2 h6 10 ♗h4 g5 11 ♗g3 ♘h5 12 ♘d5 ♗d8 with a good game, Reinderman-

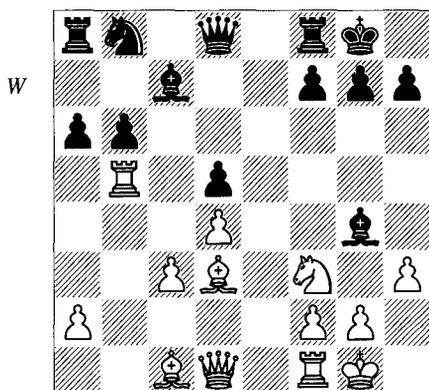
well-prepared, he should equalize; often, however, the resulting position will be sufficiently

transposes, while 7...♙g4 8 c4 ♘f6 9 cxd5 ♙xf3 10 ♖xf3 ♗xd5 11 ♗e2+ ♚e7 12 ♙b5



10 ♖c3 ♜xc3 11 bxc3 ♙g4 12 ♜b1 ♗d7

White gets an excellent attack following 12...b6 13 ♜b5 ♙c7 14 h3 a6 (D).



White insists upon grabbing the initiative. The threat is c5, and Black's loose bishop on h5 has tactical drawbacks.

15...♙xf3!

Other moves are worse:

a) Black will suffer after 15...dxc4?! 16 ♙xh7+ ♜xh7 17 ♜h5+ ♜g8 18 ♗h4! with the idea of ♜g4 and ♗f5.

b) White's two pieces will be superior to Black's rook after 15...♗xc4?! 16 ♜xd5 ♙h2+ 17 ♗xh2! ♜xd5 18 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 19 ♜xh5, as in Brandenburg-S.Ernst, Dieren 2008.

16 ♜xf3 dxc4 17 ♙c2

White has the bishop-pair, open lines and a potential kingside attack; Black has an extra pawn and active pieces.

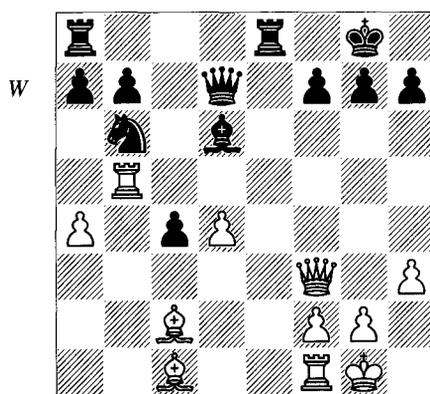
17...♜d7 18 a4 ♜fe8!? (D)

15 ♜xd5! (15 hxg4 axb5 16 ♜c2 g6 has won some pretty games for White, but is probably about equal after 17 ♙h6 ♜e8 18 ♙xb5 ♜e4! 19 c4 ♜xg4 20 cxd5 ♙f4 21 ♜e1 ♗d7 22 ♙xf4 ♜xf4) 15...♜xd5 16 hxg4 gives White a nice initiative in return for the exchange; for example, 16...♗c6 17 ♗g5 h6 18 ♙h7+ ♜h8 19 ♙e4 ♜d6 20 ♗f3 ♜fe8 21 ♙c2 ♜d7 22 g5 with a terrific attack, Benjamin-Sammour Hasbun, Philadelphia 1999.

13 h3 ♙h5 14 ♜b5

White attacks the d-pawn and pins it laterally. Instead of this, 14 ♜xb7!? ♗b6 traps White's rook, but it's not clear whether that can be exploited. The sequence 15 g4 ♙g6 16 ♙a6 ♜e8 with the idea ...♜c6 is still being debated, and undoubtedly other possibilities will be discovered.

14...♗b6 15 c4!? (D)



19 h4

There's a saying attributed to Larsen: when in doubt, advance a rook's pawn! With this move, White gains space, helps fortify some kingside attacking ideas, and leaves open his

options as to the placement of his dark-squared bishop, which might go to e3 or to the a1-h8 diagonal. In other games, forcing the pace with 19 ♙f5 ♚c7 hasn't been effective: 20 ♙e4 (20 a5 ♚c6 has scored well for Black) 20...a6 21 ♚g5? ♜xe4! 22 ♚xe4 ♝xa4 . This position occurred in both Ponomarev-Safin, Erevan 2001 and Kristjansson-J.Gunnarsson, Icelandic Ch, Seltjarnarnes 2002. Black's queenside pawns should prove superior to White's temporary threats.

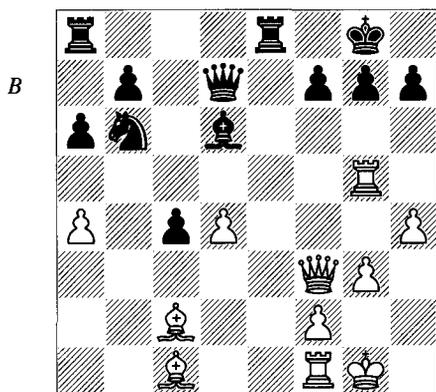
19...♙c7?!

Black has the double idea of playing ... ♚d6 and attacking White's d4-pawn. But neither idea means that much, so Black might prefer 19... ♜ad8 or M.Ivanov's suggestion 19...h6 20 g3 $\text{♜e7!?$ with the idea ... ♜ae8 and ... ♜e1 . Then White still has to prove the worth of his bishops.

20 g3 a6

20... ♜ab8 21 ♙f5! is complex, with the immediate idea 21... ♚xd4?? (21... ♚e7) 22 ♙b2 and White simply mashes Black on the king-side; for example, 22... ♚d8 23 ♙xh7+ ♝xh7 24 ♚xf7 , etc.

21 ♜c5! ♙d6 22 ♙g5! (D)



22...♙f8

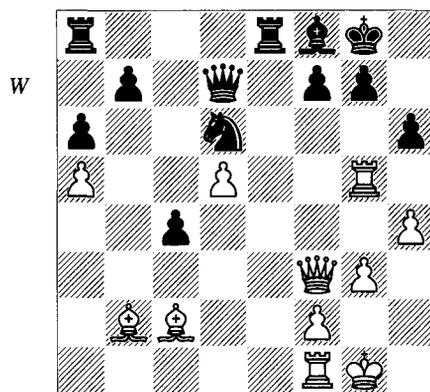
A standard but nevertheless very pretty combination is 22... ♝xa4?? 23 ♙xa4 (23 ♙xh7+ also wins, based on 23... ♝xh7 24 ♚h5+ ♝g8 25 ♜xg7+! ♝xg7 26 ♙h6+ , mating) 23... ♚xa4 24 ♜xg7+! ♝xg7 25 ♙h6+! ♝g6 26 ♚g4+ ♝f6 (26... ♝xh6 27 ♚g5\#) 27 ♙g5+ ♝g7 28 ♙e7+ ♝h6 29 ♚g5\# . Everyone should know these tactical patterns.

23 a5 ♝c8 24 d5! ♝d6?!

Probably Black should stunt White's attack by going into the simplifying line 24...g6 25 ♙b2 ♙g7 26 ♙xg7 ♝xg7 27 h5 ♚e7 28 hxg6! hxg6 29 ♚g4 ♚f6 , when 30 ♜f5 ♚e7 31 ♜g5 ♚f6 is equal, and White may have to take chances if he is to do better.

25 ♙b2 h6 (D)

25...f5!? 26 ♙xf5 ♝xf5 27 ♜xf5 ♜ac8 28 ♙c3 with the idea h5 gives White some edge.



26 ♚h5 ♝e4?

Black had to try 26...f5 27 ♚xh6 ♝e4 , but then 28 ♚h5! intends 28... ♝xg5? (28...c3 29 ♙xc3!) 29 hxg5 , winning, because 30 g6 follows.

27 ♙xe4 ♜xe4 28 ♚xh6 f5 29 ♚g6 ♙g4 30 ♜xg4 fxg4

At this point, instead of 31 h5?! (which could have been answered by 31... ♜c8), White had the clever 31 ♜e1! intending ♜e5 or ♜e4 with a clear superiority. The point is that upon 31... ♚xd5? , 32 ♜e7! wins outright.

These last two games demonstrate how, although the symmetry of this opening can hurt its reputation, both sides have more than enough ways to unbalance both the pawn-structure and the position.

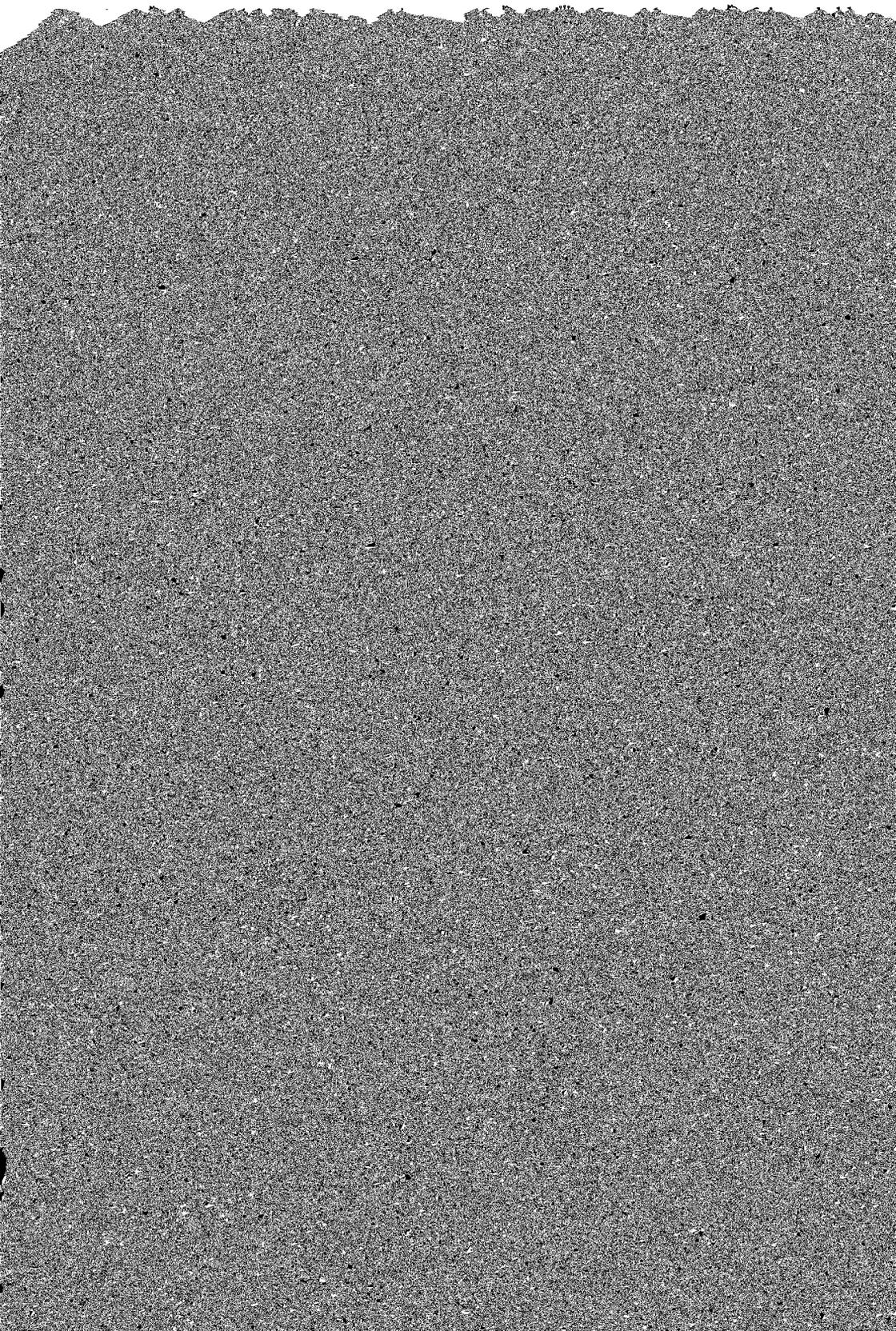
Four Knights Game

Yuldachev – Kholmov

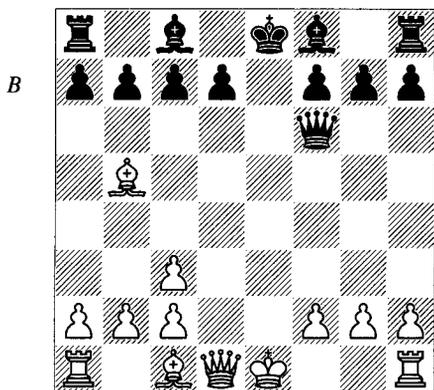
Kazakhstan 1994

1 e4 e5 2 ♝f3 ♝c6

The Petroff Defence, 2... ♝f6 , also affords White the chance to aim for the Four Knights



then 11...♖g5 12 ♜e5! or 11...♗d6 12 ♜f3 c6
13 ♘c4 ♘g5 14 ♜e8! with a very strong attack)
8 dxc3 (D).



Marin points out that Black has “no active prospects at all if White so wishes”, and that he “has to play carefully ... to avoid falling behind in development”. This is true, but the majority of games are drawn, so as a practical matter this can't be to White's liking either. Alekhine-Capablanca, St Petersburg 1914 was an early illustration: 8...♖e5+ 9 ♖e2 (9 ♘e2!? with the idea 9...♘c5 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♘d3 d5!? 12 ♜f3 gives White a few chances) 9...♗xe2+ 10 ♘xe2 d5 11 ♘f4 c6 12 c4 ♘e6 13 cxd5 ♘xd5 14 0-0 ♘c5 15 ♜fe1 0-0 16 ♘d3 ♜fe8 17 a3 f6 18 ♖f1 g6 19 f3 ♖f7 with dead equality. The point is not that 4...♘b4 is a superior move, but that it seems to be a better way for Black to guarantee himself an unbalanced game.

b) 4...♘d6!? illustrates the creativity in modern opening play. Black has had reasonable success with this move, which prepares the re-organization by ...0-0, ...♜e8, ...♘f8 and perhaps ...d5, while protecting the e-pawn so as to give the opportunity for ...a6 if desired.

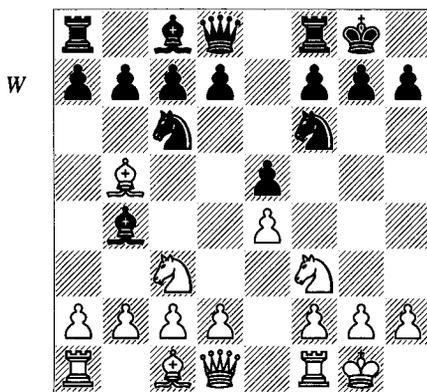
5 0-0 0-0 (D)

Once again, White has to decide when and how he wants to break symmetry.

6 d3

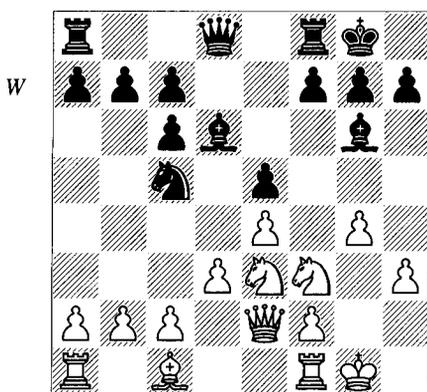
Or:

a) The natural 6 ♘d5 ♘xd5 7 exd5 ♘d4 8 ♘xd4 exd4 returns to a symmetrical position in which White hasn't yet demonstrated an effective way to disturb the equilibrium. In this regard, however, he might try 9 c3 ♘c5 10 ♜f3, or the more ambitious, if committal, 9 ♜g4



♘c5 10 ♘d3!? d6 11 ♜f4 with the idea b3 and ♘b2, or sometimes c3.

b) After 6 ♘xc6 dxc6, White gets nowhere with 7 ♘xe5 ♜e8, and so plays 7 d3. This is another type of Exchange Ruy Lopez position. Black has tried many moves here, such as 7...♖e7, 7...♘d6, 7...♜e8 and 7...♘d7. They are all playable, but direct and active solutions are generally easier to handle, so I like Marin's recommendation of 7...♘g4 8 h3 (after 8 ♜e2, Black can play 8...♘d7 with the idea 9 ♘d1 ♜f6!) 8...♘h5. Then Soffer-Alterman, Tel-Aviv 1998 continued 9 ♖e2 (9 g4? ♘xg4! 10 hxg4 ♘xg4 11 ♖g2 f5 is too strong; this is a sacrifice which comes up in several e-pawn openings) 9...♘d7 10 g4!? ♘g6 11 ♘d1 ♘d6 12 ♘e3 ♘c5! (D).



Black imitates White's idea: he intends to play ...♘e6, hitting the weak point at f4. The game continued 13 ♘c4 f6 14 ♘h4 ♘f7 with a balanced contest. In place of this, Alterman suggests the tactical device 13 ♘xe5!? ♘xe5

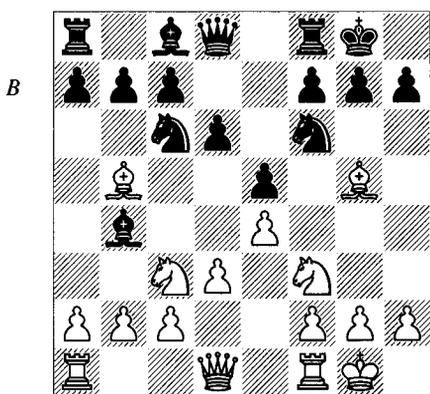
14 f4. After 14...♗d4 15 f5 ♖h4 16 ♘g2, Marin says that Black should choose among 16...♗ae8, 16...♗e6 and 16...h6!?. The first two moves let White reorganize with 17 ♖c4 and in some cases ♗e3, but 16...h6!? forces 17 fxg6 fxg6, which establishes control of some dark squares and keeps White's knight from f5. That should be fine, and 16...h5 17 fxg6 fxg6 might be even more accurate, since 18 gxh5? allows 18...♗xf1 19 ♖xf1 ♗f8 20 ♗e3 ♗xe3 21 ♗xe3 ♗e6!.

6...d6

Maintaining the symmetry. 6...♗xc3 7 bxc3 d6 is also possible, if only to avoid White's alternative in the next note.

7 ♗g5 (D)

With this move White threatens 8 ♗d5. 7 ♗e2 is another standard idea; then Black's bishop is a bit stranded on b4 and the move ♗g3 is useful for kingside action. In top-level encounters stretching back to Tarrasch, Rubinstein and Euwe, Black has chosen to imitate White by 7...♗e7 (Smyslov once played 7...♗d7 8 c3 ♗c5) 8 c3 ♗a5 9 ♗g3 c6 10 ♗a4 ♗g6 with a perfectly symmetrical position. After 11 d4, Black finally deviates with 11...♗e8; for example, 12 ♗c2 h6 13 h3 ♗b6 14 ♗e3 and now 14...♗e6 is sound enough, but 14...d5! is also sufficient, particularly if after 15 exd5 (as in Kozlov-Atalik, Moscow 2005) Black chooses 15...e4!.



7...♗xc3

White's last move has truly succeeded in breaking symmetry in view of 7...♗g4?! 8 ♗xf6! gxh6 (not 8...♗xf3? 9 ♖xf3 ♖xf6 10 ♖xf6 gxh6 11 ♗d5 ♗d4 12 ♗a4 ♗a5 13 c3, etc.; 8...♖xf6? loses at least two pawns: 9 ♗d5

♖d8 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 ♗xb4 a5 12 ♗xc6 ♖e8 13 ♗cxe5) 9 ♗xc6 (9 ♗d5 ♗d4!) 9...bxc6 (9...♗xc3 10 ♗xb7) 10 h3 ♗e6 11 ♗e2!, when White threatens to conquer f5 by ♗g3 and ♗h4, and after 11...f5, 12 exf5 ♗xf5 13 c3 ♗a5 14 ♗g3 has the ideas of ♗xf5, d4 and ♖a4.

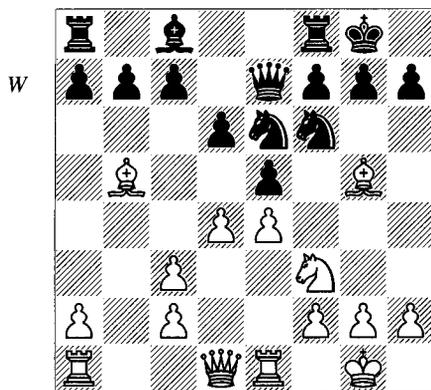
8 bxc3 ♖e7

Sometimes called the Metger Unpin, Black's idea is to play ...♗d8-e6 and drive the bishop away from g5. This has been the main line since the first part of the 20th century, and constitutes the bulk of master practice, but naturally there are other moves such as 8...a6, 8...♗d7 and 8...h6.

9 ♗e1

White protects e4 and plans to use his extra time to expand in the centre.

9...♗d8 10 d4 ♗e6 (D)



This position, the result of a manoeuvre by Black which is not intuitively obvious, has nevertheless been reached in over 800 games in my database. After 115 years or so of practice, it is still the main line of the Four Knights Game. Historically, 4 ♗b5 ♗b4 has a drawish reputation, but in fact White has a 57% score from this point, and a considerable lead in performance rating. Even the drawing percentage, at 37%, is not out of the ordinary, and includes a large number of quick draws in which the variation went essentially untested. In other words, this position is full of life.

11 ♗c1!

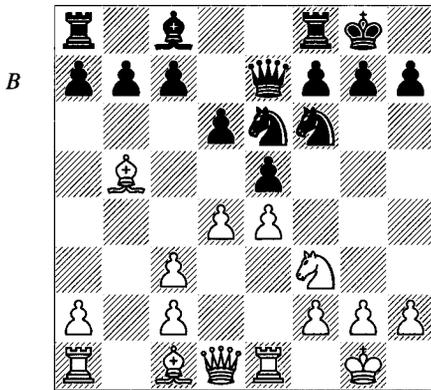
White has ideas of using this bishop on a3, but his retreat is also a reaction to the lack of promising alternatives. He has to preserve his bishop-pair as compensation for his structural

problems, but 11 ♖e3? loses the pawn on e4 and 11 ♖d2 is passive. After 11 ♖h4, 11... ♟f4! intends ...♟g4 or ...♟g6. For example:

a) 12 ♟d2 (played in anticipation of ...♟g4 and, in some variations, ...♟h5) 12... ♟h8! (Marin points out that the simple 12... ♟g6 breaks the pin, with easy equality) 13 ♖f1 h6! 14 f3 g5 15 ♖g3 ♟g8 16 ♟c4 ♟g7 17 ♟e3 h5 18 c4 ♖d7 19 c3 ♟ag8 20 ♟f5 ♖xf5 21 exf5 h4 22 ♖f2, Kamsky-Timman, Tilburg 1991, and here 22...c5 (versus dx e5 followed by ♖d4 or ♟d4) leads to double-edged play.

b) 12 h3 h6 13 ♟d2 ♟g6 14 ♖g3 ♟h5 15 ♖h2 ♟hf4 with a solid defence. As previously explained in the context of the King's Indian and Pirc Defences, a knight on f4 has more effect if there's a pawn on h3.

We now return to the position arising after 11 ♖c1 (D):



After this bishop retreat, we can see the basic features of the position developing. White has a bishop-pair and prospects of gaining space, which is generally a good combination. But the difficulties with his structure are worth noting. White has three options regarding what to do with the d-pawn:

1) He can exchange it on e5, but that isolates his c-pawns and frees the c5-square for one of Black's pieces.

2) He can advance the pawn to d5, but this seriously reduces the mobility of his pawns, because c4-c5 is easily prevented (by ...b6, if nothing else). Worse, if Black can play ...c6 and ...cxd5 (or recapture with a piece if White plays dxc6), then White's pawns on c2 and c3 will be especially exposed down the half-open c-file,

and Black will have permanent outposts for his pieces on c4 and c5. Therefore White will normally make the advance d5 only when he has a strong attack elsewhere (for example, on the kingside with f4), or when Black has already committed to ...c5 and cannot open the c-file. These themes are almost the same ones that we saw in the Nimzo-Indian Defence in Volume 2, and especially in the Sämisch Variation.

3) White can and usually does leave the d-pawn where it is, exerting some pressure on e5. Then he can organize f4, to attack that square further, and/or play for ♟h4-f5.

Black would like to neutralize White's bishops by locking the position, but there's no way to rule out some pawn-break by White, regardless of whether d5 has been played. So he will generally try to reserve activity somewhere else on the board. Depending upon circumstances, that may well involve a queenside advance such as ...b5 (particularly in the ...c5 main lines); sometimes he can aim for ...d5, either with or without ...c6. Black will also try to prevent or anticipate any attempt to play f4, and in doing so he can even play on the kingside himself if the opportunity arises.

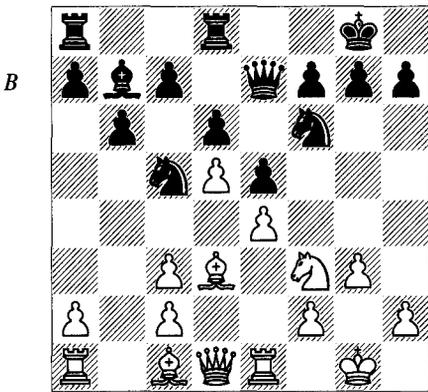
11...c5

The most direct move, trying to resolve the central situation. Black has a row of legitimate alternatives; for example:

a) 11...c6 12 ♖f1 (intending a double capture on e5) 12... ♟c7 (or 12... ♟d8) 13 ♟h4 ♟e8 14 g3 (14 ♟f5 might be better) 14...h6 15 f4!? ♟a5, Sturua-A.Mikhalevski, Biel 1999, and now Mikhalevski suggests 16 ♟f5 exf4 17 ♟xd6, but then the tactic 17... ♟xc3! 18 ♟xe8 ♟xe8 19 ♖xf4 ♟xd4! wins back material, in view of 20 ♖d3 ♟xe1+! 21 ♟xe1 ♟f3+. In all of these positions, White has to prepare f4 carefully or risk overextending his position.

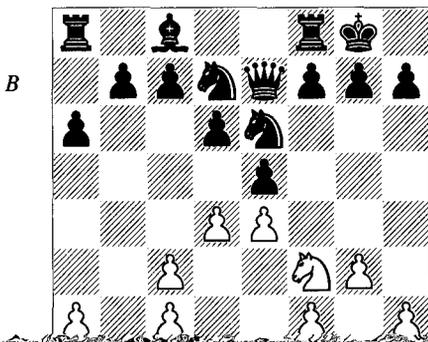
b) 11... ♟d8 12 ♖f1 (12 ♟h4 c5 13 ♟f5 ♟c7) 12...b6!? introduces a strategy of luring the d-pawn forward so as to eliminate the central tension and target White's queenside. For example, 13 g3 (in Grishchuk-Morozevich, Dubai 2002, White avoided committing to d5 by 13 ♟h4 g6 14 g3 ♖b7 15 ♖g2) 13... ♖b7 14 d5?! (14 ♖d3) 14... ♟c5 15 ♖d3 (D).

This is Fauber-Bisguier, Las Vegas 1973. Now the most promising course comes directly from Nimzo-Indian positions in which



White has doubled c-pawns: Black should play 15...c6!, when 16 dxc6 ♖xc6 leaves White's c-pawns exposed along the c-file, and 16 c4 can be answered by 16...b5! or 16...cxd5 17 cxd5 ♖c8 with the idea of ...♗d7 and ...♞ac8.

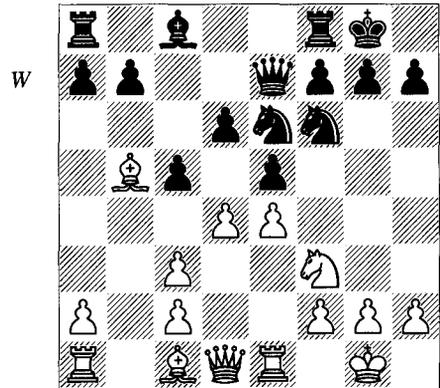
c) 11...a6 12 ♗f1 ♘d7 13 g3 (D) (13 a4 would restrain Black's queenside for the moment) and now:



20 gxf4 ♜xh4?? 21 ♗g5) 20 a4 b4 21 ♜d2 with the idea f4.

These are not dull positions. You can see that the symmetrical nature of the Four Knights doesn't limit its strategic complexity.

We now return to 11...c5 (D):

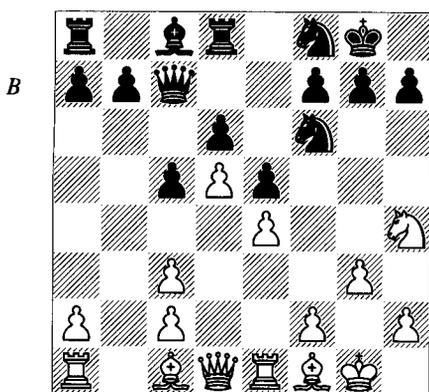
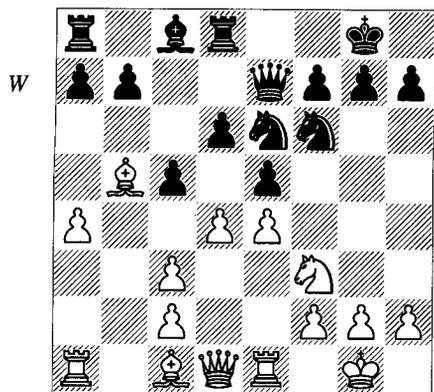


12 ♗f1

Another bishop retreat to its home square! There are several points to this move, but the main one is that White would like to play g3 in order to support the move ♘h4 and, in the best of worlds, f4. But if he is to do this, his bishop is needed to defend the kingside light squares.

Instead, 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♘xe5?? loses to 13...♘c7, and 12 d5 releases the tension before it's necessary; in response, Black can smoothly develop his queenside play via 12...♘c7 13 ♗f1 ♗d7 14 a4 ♞ab8, with ...b5 to follow shortly.

White's main alternative is the flexible move



b3) 13 $\text{e}c4$ h6?! 14 h3 $\text{d}f8$ 15 $\text{d}h4$ cxd4 (Shirov gives 15...g5! 16 $\text{d}f5$ $\text{e}xf5$ 17 $\text{e}f5$ e4, when 18 h4! puts some pressure on Black) 16 cxd4 $\text{e}d4$?! (Black shouldn't open the position) 17 $\text{e}b2$ d5?! (this faulty combination leads to a nice finish) 18 $\text{e}d5$ $\text{b}b4$ 19 $\text{b}xd4$ $\text{d}e6$ 20 $\text{d}xe6$! $\text{e}xe6$ (Shirov analyses 20... $\text{e}d4$ 21 $\text{e}f7+$ $\text{c}h7$ 22 $\text{e}d4$ $\text{e}f5$, when the easiest way to win is 23 $\text{e}f1$! $\text{b}xd4$ 24 $\text{d}xf5$ $\text{b}c5$ 25 $\text{e}d3$ g6 26 $\text{d}e7$ with material and attack) 21 $\text{b}e3$! $\text{b}xb2$ (21... $\text{b}xc4$ 22 $\text{e}xf6$ $\text{g}xf6$ 23 $\text{b}xh6$) 22 $\text{e}xe6$ $\text{f}xe6$ (22... $\text{e}e8$ 23 $\text{b}b3$) 23 $\text{b}xe6+$ $\text{c}h8$ 24 $\text{d}g6+$ $\text{c}h7$ 25 $\text{b}f5$ and in Shirov-Lesiège, North Bay 1994 White went on to win.

12... $\text{e}d8$ 13 g3

A sort of main line, although 13 a4 is often played.

13... $\text{b}c7$

After 13...cxd4 14 cxd4 b6, Marin recommends 15 a4, which is probably a bit better for

23 $\text{b}h5$ $\text{h}xg5$ 24 $\text{e}xg5$ f6, and instead of 25 $\text{e}h4$? $\text{b}g7$, as played in the game, White had at his disposal 25 $\text{e}xe5$! $\text{d}xe5$ 26 $\text{b}g6+$ $\text{b}g7$ 27 $\text{b}xf6$ $\text{e}f8$ 28 $\text{b}xg7+$ $\text{c}xg7$ 29 d6, when the bishops are very strong.

b) 15...h6 looks best, since White should avoid 16 f4?! $\text{e}f4$ 17 $\text{g}xf4$ (17 $\text{e}xf4$ g5 18 $\text{e}5$ $\text{d}e8$) 17... $\text{b}e7$, which threatens ... $\text{d}xe4$.

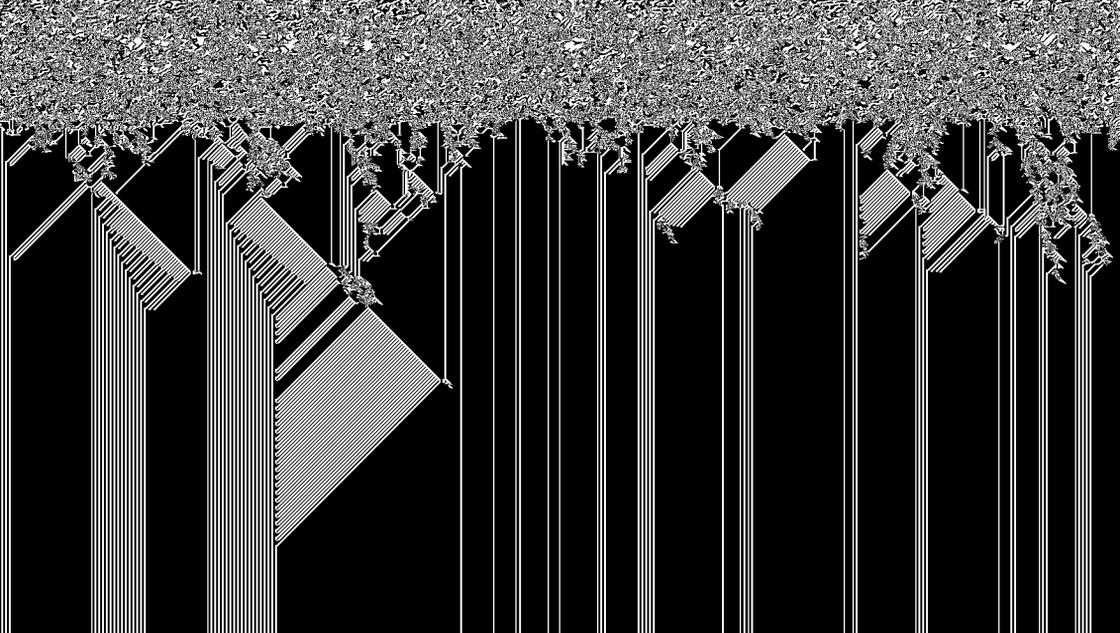
16 $\text{e}g5$ $\text{d}6d7$ 17 $\text{b}h5$!

White's pieces are clustering around the kingside.

17... $\text{d}b6$ 18 a4! $\text{e}d7$

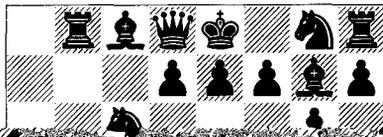
Serper gives the cute line 18...a5 19 $\text{e}b5$ $\text{e}d7$ 20 $\text{d}f5$! with the idea 20... $\text{e}xb5$? 21 $\text{e}f6$! $\text{e}d7$ 22 $\text{b}h6$! (or the more brutal 22 $\text{d}h6+$, forcing mate), winning (22... $\text{d}e6$ 23 $\text{e}xg7$).

19 a5 $\text{d}c8$ 20 $\text{d}f5$ $\text{e}xf5$ 21 $\text{e}f5$ $\text{d}e7$ 22 $\text{e}b5$ $\text{e}ec8$ 23 $\text{b}g4$! $\text{d}xd5$ (D)



24...h5! delays matters, although White stays on top after 25 ♖xh5 ♜xc3 26 ♙c4 d5 27 ♜xd5! ♜xd5 28 ♙xd5 (28 ♜e4!!) 28...♜d8 (28...♖d7 29 ♙e4 ♖a4 30 f6) 29 ♙xd8 ♜xd8

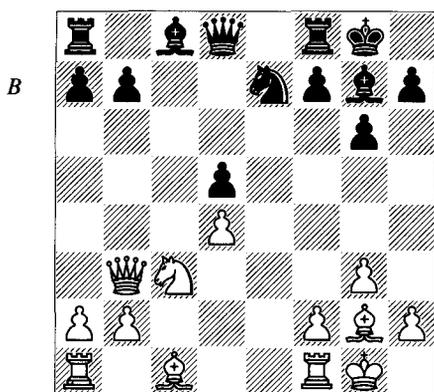
B



6 ♖ge2 ♗ge7 7 0-0 0-0 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♗xd4 d5 10 cxd5 exd5?

Rather than retain his passive knight on e7, Black does better to play 10...♗xd5!, when 11 ♗xd5 exd5 returns to complete symmetry and almost no prospects. Instead, 11 ♖b3 poses certain difficulties, but if you have studied the variation, they are quite manageable. On the other hand, 11 ♙e1 creates winning chances that seem real enough, and avoids excessive simplification. This rook move was played in Ivanchuk-Kramnik, Amber Rapid, Monte Carlo 1995, which is analysed in Volume 3 in the notes to the game Andersson-Gheorghiu, Moscow 1981.

11 ♖b3! ♗xd4 12 exd4 (D)



White has reached a clearly superior position; see the game Benko-Geller, Wijk aan Zee 1969 in Chapter 7 of Volume 3.

English Double Fianchetto Variation

In Volume 3, I bypassed coverage of the Double Fianchetto Variation of the Symmetrical English, a set-up with ...b6 and ...g6 which goes well with the fianchetto openings in this volume. The issues will be familiar by now: can Black break symmetry without disadvantage, or can White force a favourable deviation from symmetry? The games and notes that follow by no means represent high theory, but will hopefully serve as a guide to some of the major themes and issues of this opening.

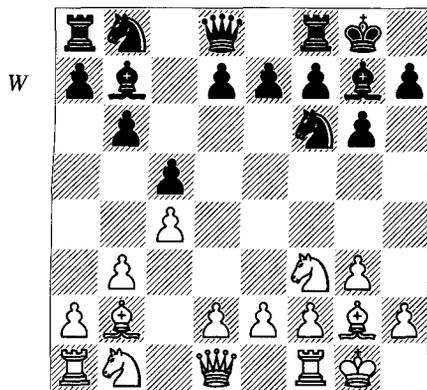
Andersson – Kasparov

Match (game 4), Belgrade 1985

1 c4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♗f6 3 g3 b6 4 ♙g2 ♙b7 5 0-0 g6

This defines the Double Fianchetto Variation. Note that 5...e6 introduces the Hedgehog Variation, examined in Volume 3.

6 b3 ♙g7 7 ♙b2 0-0 (D)



White has chosen to enter into the truly symmetrical version of the Double Fianchetto. Black is supposed to equalize rather easily here, and indeed, the variation has a high percentage of draws. The key for Black is that he's under no pressure, and can therefore break the symmetry without much risk. Often this takes the form of a central liquidation.

8 ♗c3

In a position this flexible, there are always too many lines to mention, so I'll limit myself to some common ones:

a) 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♖xd4 d6 10 ♙d1 ♗bd7 sets up a standard Hedgehog structure. 11 ♗e1 (11 ♗c3 ♗e4 12 ♖e3 ♙xc3 13 ♙xc3 ♗xc3 14 ♖xc3 ♙c8 presents Black few problems; for example, 15 ♖d4 ♗f6 16 ♙ac1, and 16...♖c7 with the idea ...♖c5 is equal, whereas 16...♖c7 17 ♖e3 ♖a8 is a bit more interesting) 11...♖b8 (or 11...♙xg2 12 ♗xg2 ♗c5) 12 ♗c3 ♗e4 13 ♖e3 ♗xc3 14 ♙xc3 ♙xc3 15 ♖xc3 ♗f6 16 ♙ac1 ♙c8 17 ♖e3 ♖c7 18 ♗d3 ♙xg2 1/2-1/2 Dizdarević-Psakhis, FIDE Knockout, New Delhi 2000.

b) 8 e3 d5 9 cxd5 leads to tedious play: 9...♗xd5 (9...♖xd5 equalizes as well: 10 ♗c3 ♖d7 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♗xd4 ♙d8 13 ♗c1 ♙xg2 14

♙xg2 ♖c6 15 ♖cb5 ♗xd4 16 ♗xd4 ♖ac8, Gerber-Babula, Zemplinska Sirava 2004) 10 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 11 d4 ♖a6! (or simply 11...♗d7 12 ♗e2 cxd4 13 ♗xd4 ♗7f6) 12 ♗e2 cxd4 13 ♗xd4 e5 14 ♖b5 ♗e7 15 ♗d1 ♖fd8 16 ♗d2 ♗ac7 with an uneventful position, Kurajica-Atalik, Sarajevo 2001.

8...♖a6

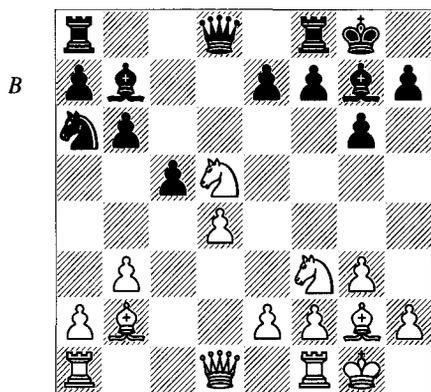
The move ...♖a6 shows up in several variants of the Double Fianchetto line. It leaves the b7-bishop's diagonal open, while positioning the knight to go to c5 if White plays d4 and Black replies ...cxd4. The most important role of ...♖a6, however, is to support Black's central pawn-break, as follows:

9 d4 d5

This is the standard solution. 9...e6 and 9...♗e4 are among the sound alternatives. For those looking for longer-term play, a Hedgehog set-up might be of interest; for example, 9...cxd4 10 ♗xd4 ♙xg2 11 ♙xg2 ♖c5 12 f3 e6 13 e4 a6 14 ♗d2 d6 15 ♖fd1 ♗c7 16 ♖ac1 ♖fd8.

10 cxd5 ♗xd5 11 ♗xd5 (D)

Moves such as 11 ♖c1 and 11 e3 aren't much more exciting.



11...♗xd5

11...♙xd5 is also satisfactory; then a plausible follow-up would be 12 e3 ♗d7 13 ♗e2 ♗b7 14 ♖fe1 ♙e4.

12 ♗h4 ♗d7 13 dxc5 ♗xd1 14 ♖fxd1 ♙xb2 15 ♙xb7 ♗xc5 16 ♙xa8 ♙xa1 17 ♖xa1 ♖xa8 18 ♗d1

It's hard for either side to find a serious plan in this position.

18...a5 19 ♗f3 a4!? 20 bxa4 ♖xa4 21 ♗d2 ♗e4 22 ♖c2 b5 23 ♗d2 ♗d6 24 ♙f1 1/2-1/2

It's worth noting that, although the positions in this variation are equal and often dull, most of them can be played for a win by either side. An opening like this can signal drawish intent in grandmaster play, because White doesn't aim for the initiative or an attack. But that doesn't preclude a normally contested game if the players choose to pursue one.

Having said that, it's still a relief to turn to the following modern treatment:

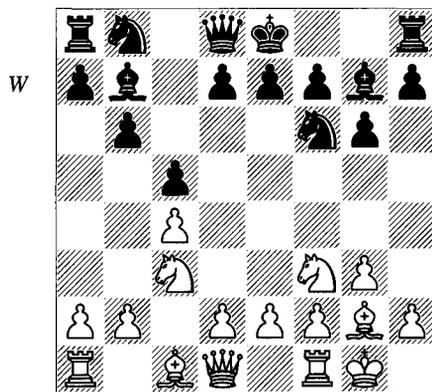
Pantsulaia – Gelfand

FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005

1 c4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♗f6 3 g3 b6 4 ♙g2 ♙b7 5 0-0 g6 6 ♗c3

White avoids the excessively symmetrical b3 lines above.

6...♙g7 (D)



7 d4

This is the most ambitious move. There are two alternatives which delay immediate confrontation:

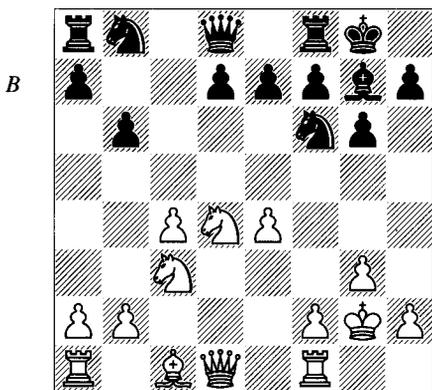
a) 7 ♖e1 tries to enforce e4, and secures long-term chances if White can get e4 and d4 in. One problem with it comes from the move 7...♗e4, which has generally proven satisfactory. For example, 8 ♗xe4 ♙xe4 9 d3 (9 d4 cxd4 10 ♙h6!? is clever-looking, but not particularly effective after 10...♙xh6 11 ♗xd4 0-0 12 ♗xe4 ♖c6 13 ♖ad1 ♖c8 14 h4 ♙g7, Stohl-Tukmakov, Bled 1997) 9...♙b7 10 e4 0-0 (10...♗c6! 11 ♖b1 0-0 is dead equal) 11 e5!? (trying to stir something up by laying claim to some territory; 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♗xd4 and now 12...d6 is a pleasant Hedgehog position for Black, since White's

king's bishop is restricted, while 12...♖a6 is another good way to develop) 11...d5!? (after the logical 11...d6, 12 e6!? is worth a whirl, but Black should be fine after 12...fxe6 13 ♗g5 ♙xg2 14 ♜xg2 ♚d7 15 ♗xe6 ♜f5! 16 f4 ♗c6) 12 ♙f4 (12 e6 dxc4) 12...dxc4?! 13 dxc4 ♚xd1?! 14 ♜axd1 and it's not easy for Black to develop, Beckhuis-Sulskis, Vienna 2005.

b) 7 d3 has the same idea of e4 and prevents ...♗e4, but now it will take two moves to play d4: 7...0-0 (after 7...d5, 8 cxd5 ♗xd5 9 ♙d2 0-0 is equal: ...♗c7, ...♗c6, and in some cases ...♗e6 and ...♗cd4 can follow; White might as well try something like 8 ♗e5) 8 e4 ♗c6 9 h3 d6 10 ♙e3 e6 (10...e5 is equal and dull) 11 d4 ♗a5!? 12 ♚d3 d5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 dxc5?! (14 e5 ♗e4 15 ♗d2 is better) 14...♗xe4 15 cxb6 axb6, Berkes-Z. Almasi, Budapest 2003. Black has very active pieces, plans of ...♗c5 and ...♗c4, and a modest advantage.

7...cxd4 8 ♚xd4

In contrast to the lines with 6 b3 above, the symmetrical characteristics of the opening have vanished. 8 ♗xd4 is an older move, which was dealt a blow after 8...♙xg2 9 ♜xg2 0-0 10 e4 (D).



Here Black found 10...♚c7! (hitting c4) 11 b3 ♗xe4! 12 ♗xe4 ♗e5, a pseudo-sacrifice that neither Karpov nor Kasparov was able to crack as White in their 1984/5 match. To this day, it remains the principal deterrent to 8 ♗xd4.

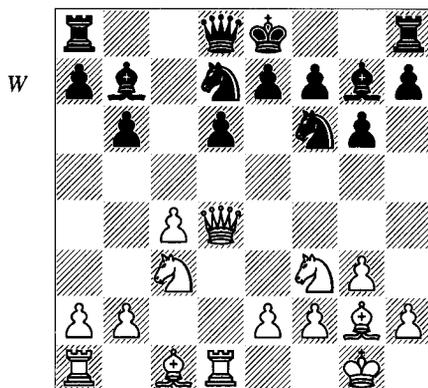
8...d6 9 ♜d1

The slightly odd-looking 9 ♙e3 is the most popular move at this juncture. It very often transposes to the note to Black's 10th move

after 9...♗bd7 10 ♜fd1, so I'll defer a discussion about it until then.

9...♗bd7 (D)

Black often delays castling in these lines to keep more options open. Here 9...0-0 should be answered by 10 ♚h4, as in the game. If the queen remains on d4 it is subject to discovered attack by ...♗e4 or ...♗d5.



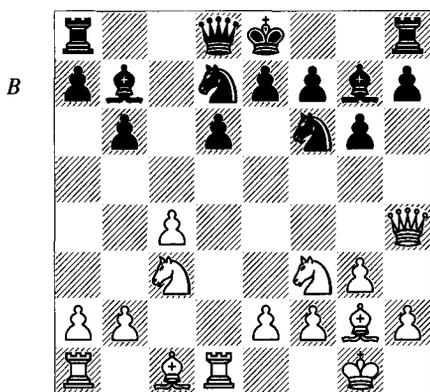
You may recognize this as the Hedgehog Variation from Volume 3, but with ...g6 and ...♙g7 replacing ...e6 and ...♙e7. It's an interesting trade-off. At first blush, this seems to favour Black, who can boast that his bishop is more active on the long diagonal, and that he has no weaknesses, in contrast to the weakness of the pawn on d6 which can be so important after ...e6 and ...♙e7. Needless to say, that's not the end of the story. For one thing, in the Hedgehog, a pawn on e6 covers d5, so Black needn't worry about ♗d5 in most lines. In addition, Black's kingside structure (with pawns on f7, g7 and h7) is ideal for protection against a direct attack, whereas Black's structure with ...g6 in the Double Fianchetto leads to the possibility of attack via ♚h4 and ♙h6. In the end, the two systems are roughly equivalent in worth, with the Double Fianchetto having a slightly safer feel, and the Hedgehog giving more counterattacking prospects.

10 ♚h4

The most common move-order is 10 ♙e3 (which is the equivalent of 9 ♙e3 ♗bd7 10 ♜fd1). As mentioned, the bishop covers c5 against a rook-lift, and it also aims at b6; the latter tends to be a sensitive point because the move ...a6 is almost always included in Black's

plans. One game went 10...♖c8 11 b3 0-0 12 ♖h4 a6 13 ♖ac1 (protecting c3; 13 ♖h6 ♖xh6 14 ♖xh6 invites 14...b5!) 13...♗c7 (this prepares ...♗a8; see the next note) 14 ♖h3! (you'll see this in many games: now White can play ♘d4 or ♘d2 without exchanging bishops, and the bishop on h3 proves to be an influential piece) 14...♗a8? (14...♗e8 15 ♖h6 ♗c5!? 16 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 17 ♖d4 ♖g8 gives White some extra space, but Black seems comfortably placed) 15 ♖xd7! ♗xd7 (15...♘d7 16 ♖xe7; 15...♖xf3 16 ♖h3 ♖c6 17 ♖xb6) 16 ♘a4 (White threatens ♘xb6 and wins a pawn) 16...♖xf3 17 ♘xb6 ♖b7 18 exf3 ♗c7 19 ♘d5 ♘xd5 20 ♖xd5 and White went on to win in Anand-Gomez Esteban, Santurtzi 2003.

We now return to 10 ♖h4 (D):

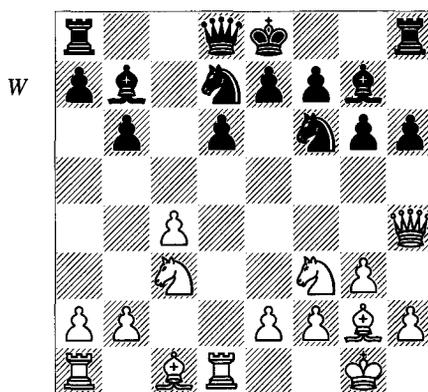


10...♗c8

This is sometimes played after ...0-0, and will often transpose. Black wants to have ...♗c5 available at the right moment, helping to defend against a potential kingside attack by White; to that end, ...♗c5-h5 is a theme. He also prepares ...♗c7, in order to shift his queen to a8 and then double rooks on the c-file. The latter manoeuvre, in conjunction with ...a6 and ...b5, can create great pressure on White's queenside. In fact, Black's discovery of this rook manoeuvre was key to making the Double Fianchetto popular some years back and remains essential to the variation today.

As regards move-orders, the game's 10 ♖h4 is less frequently played than 10 ♖e3, perhaps because of the response 10...h6 (D).

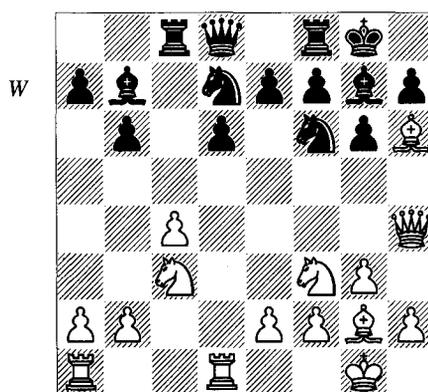
Then the simple idea of ...g5 can be a problem in various lines, especially since the retreat



♖h3 runs into ...g4, and ♖d4 might subject the queen to discovered attack. Kramnik-Nikolić, Amber Blindfold, Monte Carlo 1999 continued 11 ♖e3 (11 ♘e1 ♖c8!? 12 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 13 ♖e3 ♗c8 14 ♖ac1 g5! 15 ♖d4 ♘h5 16 ♖g4 ♘hf6 17 ♖d4 ♘h5 was later drawn in Korchnoi-Gulko, Hastings 1988/9; 11 ♘d4 ♖xg2 12 ♗xg2 ♗c8! has the idea 13 b3?! g5 14 ♖h3 g4 15 ♖h4 ♗c5) 11...♗c8 12 ♖ac1 g5! 13 ♖d4 0-0 14 ♖d3 (what else?) 14...♖xf3! 15 exf3 ♘e5 16 ♖e2 ♘xc4 17 ♖d4 e5 18 ♘b5 ♖d7! 19 b3 ♖xb5 1/2-1/2. In fact, Black has had the better game for some time, and following 20 bxc4, he would stand better after either 20...♖d7 or 20...♖a4.

11 ♖h6 0-0 (D)

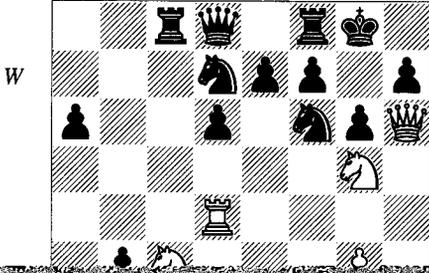
After 11...♖xh6 12 ♖xh6 ♗xc4 13 ♘d2! ♗c7?! 14 ♘b5 White wins the exchange.



12 b3 a6 13 ♖ac1 ♗c5!

Threatening ...h5. Instead, 13...♖xh6!? 14 ♖xh6 b5 15 ♘g5! ♖xg2 16 ♗xg2 bxc4 17 ♗d4! with the idea ♖h4 is very difficult for

Black. In Gustafsson-Babula, Hamburg 2004, Black continued 17...cxb3? (D) (17...♖e8 18 ♜h4 ♜f8 19 ♜d5 ♜h5! 20 bxc4! threatens g4).



14...♙xh6!?

Or:

a) 14...♙xd5?! 15 cxd5 ♜xd5 has no tactical refutation, but White can switch sides by 16 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 17 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 18 ♜c4! with a clear positional superiority after 19 ♜xa6.

b) 14...♜xd5! is a good solution, with the idea 15 ♜g5 (15 cxd5 ♜f6 16 ♜g5 ♙xh6 17 ♜xh6 ♜c7) 15...♜7f6 16 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 17 ♜xd5 ♜c8!.

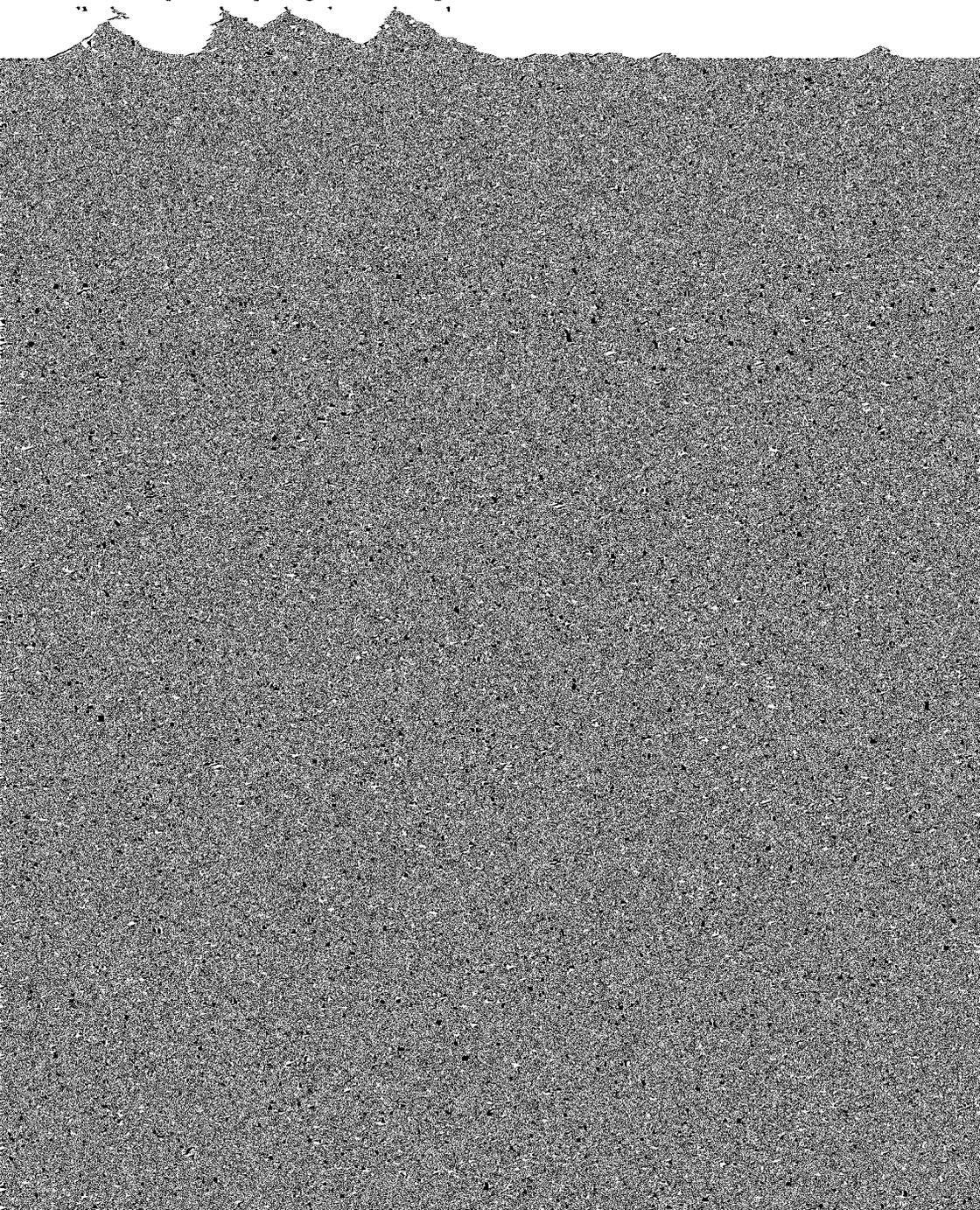
15 ♜xh6 ♙xd5?

Again, 15...♜xd5 is best; for example, 16 ♜g5 ♜7f6 17 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 18 ♜xd5 ♜c8! 19

8 Irregular Openings and Initial Moves

In this series, I've focused primarily upon what I call the 'important' openings, which are gen-

The Appeal of the Irregular



Depending upon the time you have available, getting away from your opponent's favourite opening can be a practical necessity. Just don't forget that opening preparation has benefits that go well beyond the immediately practical; as I'm constantly stressing, it will increase your understanding of middlegames and of chess in general. Perhaps that's why we see so few uncompromising adherents of irregular and even out-of-the-way openings reach the top of the chess hierarchy. There are exceptions, of course, but you will find that the successful grandmasters who play anti-theoretical lines (including obscure sidelines of mainstream openings) have previously or concurrently spent years playing and studying more conventional openings. The knowledge and skill derived from knowing a wide variety of standard opening ideas and associated middlegames informs their use of irregular openings; it's not so clear that the reverse is true. In any case, most masters who employ unconventional openings aren't simply tossing out the moves; they have usually put a great deal of time into examining their consequences. Properly motivated, this kind of investigation can increase your understanding and playing strength, just as any other kind of opening study can. Thus, by itself, playing out of the mainstream shouldn't do damage to one's results; after all, a strong player can win with any opening. But playing something just because it gets you 'out of the books' probably won't pay off, because your overall understanding of how to play openings is a more important factor than the specific opening you use. Finally, the major openings have for the most part achieved their status because they tend to produce the best practical outcomes in master play. I don't believe this consideration affects the inexperienced player much, if at all, nor even the average one. Playing gambits, for example, can be very healthy for your rating at the club level. Nevertheless, as you begin to improve and play stronger opponents, the objective worth of an opening takes on more significance. So there's a point at which you will want to know which irregular openings are actually inferior, which are acceptable but unpopular, and which are easy to play. In addition, if you're going to use such an opening, you'll want it to conform to your personal tastes.

We still find a widespread snobbishness about irregular openings among masters and teachers, many of whom seem to ignore the finer distinctions among them. Teachers find it easy to inculcate their students with the popular openings they themselves are studying and playing; that is fine, but at the same time many become dismissive of everything outside the received wisdom. Thus we see juniors who feel that anything except main-line Sicilians are inferior (and, as a result, we see a monotonous stream of Dragons, Najdorfs and Sveshnikovs at scholastic tournaments).

It turns out, however, that much of what is irregular today becomes conventional tomorrow. The contemporary literature on irregular and unusual moves, in both book and periodical form, is increasingly professional, much of it written by masters and grandmasters. They are discovering that more opening ideas, including old ones, are playable and can lead to rich positions. By keeping an eye on such literature, you can more easily separate openings with real worth from those with only shock value.

Adventures with 1 e4

It's staggering how much is going on at the most fundamental levels of opening theory. By way of example, and with an eye on ways that we might spice up our chess experiences, let me list a selection of unconventional variations following from the initial move 1 e4. They all arise within just the first five moves, all have been played by grandmasters, and all are good enough to be worthy of consideration for practical play. Most of them are truly irregular lines; to the extent that a couple have assumed top-level respectability, they have only done so recently. And, in spite of being recommended by players and theoreticians, the majority of these lines haven't gained large followings or elite approval. To be clear: I'm not including the countless ingenious new ideas that are refreshing already established openings. Rather, I am selecting very early moves that define a unique opening variation.

Let me begin with what is easily the most popular 1 e4 opening, the **Sicilian Defence**.

Players on both sides of the board are discovering that variations previously ignored at the top levels are in fact legitimate. To put that in context with an older example, it's worth remembering that about two decades ago, 1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♟b5 (the Rossolimo Variation) was still considered somewhat irregular (or at best harmless), and now it has driven some grandmasters away from their lifelong preference for the move 2...♟c6!

As **Black** in the Open Sicilian, there are many irregular set-ups which now seem quite playable; for example:

a) The Löwenthal Sicilian with 1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♟xd4 e5 5 ♟b5 a6, allowing 6 ♟d6+. When I compare the various recent books and articles on this system, including those by grandmasters recommending particular systems for White, I see nothing to indicate that Black doesn't stand perfectly well.

b) The Grivas Sicilian with 1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♟xd4 ♖b6. This isn't terribly ambitious, but gives you thematic Sicilian positions without requiring memorization of the ultra-critical variations of, say, Dragons and Najdorf's. A related and playable irregular system is the 'Gaw-Paw': 1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 ♖b6, and a move earlier in this sequence 4...♖b6 is also used (the Kveinys Variation).

c) The O'Kelly Sicilian: 1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 a6, which is undergoing a great resurgence of interest. Properly handled, it consistently produces unbalanced positions in which the better player on that day will win the majority of games.

d) Various lines of the amazingly flexible Paulsen/Kan Sicilian. For example, 1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♟xd4 a6 5 ♟d3 g6 is still an irregular line, but has serious theoretical backing. After five moves, Black appears to have the weakest dark squares imaginable – but a playable position!

Next, let me turn to some irregular early moves on the white side of the Sicilian. As **White**, you can have fun with slow and eccentric moves because of your extra tempo:

a) 1 e4 c5 2 a3. This is Grandmaster Bezgodov's move; he has written a 200+ page book on it. White's idea (among others) is to play b4 in some lines to get a favourable form of Sicilian

Wing Gambit (1 e4 c5 2 b4) while avoiding some of Black's most active defences. Each of 2...♟c6, 2...e6 and 2...d6, for example, are answered by 3 b4. There are also elements of the English Opening reversed; for example, 2...g6 3 c3!? is 1 c4 e5 2 g3 c6 with the extra a3 for White. Incidentally, there have been a number of articles about the Wing Gambit itself, and that might be another choice for the well-prepared player.

b) A related, somewhat older line is 1 e4 c5 2 ♟c3 ♟c6 3 f4 g6 4 ♟f3 ♟g7 5 a3. White intends to play b4 (especially on a move like 5...e6) and otherwise uses a2 as a potential retreat-square for his bishop (for example, after 5...d6 6 ♟c4), while holding up ...b5-b4 under some circumstances.

c) 1 e4 c5 2 ♟a3 has been played by the strong and experienced grandmaster Zviagintsev (7 times against 2600+ rated opponents!), as well as a few other prominent grandmasters such as Malakhov and Sashikiran. This is a sound line with some surprisingly positive features. It's also a real mix-and-match. For example, White can enter into a sort of c3 Sicilian with ♟c2 or ♟c4 via a sequence such as 2...e6 3 c3 d5 4 e5 ♟c6 5 ♟f3 with the idea ♟c2 and d4. Or, against 2...♟c6, the Rossolimo-like 3 ♟b5 leaves the Grand Prix move f4 available to be played later.

Moves like 2 a3 and 2 ♟a3 will probably never become wildly popular, but they are sound lines which will doubtless see periodic usage by strong players.

d) The Closed Sicilian with 1 e4 c5 2 ♟c3 ♟c6 3 g4. The idea is to accelerate White's expansion on the kingside; normally, he plays 3 g3 and only later, g4. Another offbeat Closed Sicilian is 1 e4 c5 2 ♟c3 ♟c6 3 ♟b5, used by a number of grandmasters.

e) I'll also mention Vasiukov's variation 1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4, playing for rapid development, which is orthodox by comparison with the ones above. This has been around for ages, and although it has never really caught on at the elite level, it has scored reasonably well. It is also wide open to new interpretations.

What about 1 e4 e5? For **Black**, irregular old lines are being reconsidered; for example:

a) 1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♟b5 g6, played by Smyslov, is an interesting alternative to the conventional Ruy Lopez lines.

b) 1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♟b5 f5, the Schliemann Defence, is still irregular but has been appearing in elite practice and has much new high-level theory devoted to it. As a practical consideration, very few opponents will enter the lengthy and tactical main lines of the Schliemann (starting with 4 ♟c3), so you will often see modest responses, such as 4 d3, which is generally regarded as more or less equal.

After 1 e4 e5, many of **White's** newer approaches come well beyond the first few moves and don't define independent systems. However, we do see the revival of some older lines. Remember that the Scotch Game (1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 d4) had arguably become an 'irregular' opening by the time that Kasparov revived and popularized it. Here are some other double e-pawn openings which have recently had attention drawn to them:

a) 1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 ♟f6 4 ♟c3 ♟bd7 5 g4 is Shirov's gambit in the Philidor Defence (an opening which nowadays more often arises via 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 e5 4 ♟f3 ♟bd7). It continues to do well and for many players, that beats 20 moves of positional manoeuvring!

b) In Chapter 7, I covered the Four Knights Game, 1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♟c3 ♟f6 (this is also a possible outcome of the Petroff Defence: 2 ♟f3 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 ♟c6). White is playing several 'irregular' moves following 4 ♟b5 ♟d4, whereas Black has deviated successfully before that with 4...♟d6!?. A half-move earlier, White can get a fresh set of positions out of 4 a3!?, the Gunsberg Variation; this little move prepares d4 without having to worry about ...♟b4, and tries to create new problems based upon 4...♟c5?! 5 ♟xe5 and 4...d5 5 ♟b5.

c) 1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♟b5 a6 4 ♟a4 ♟f6 5 ♟e2, the Worrall Attack, has never been in bad standing, but has generally been treated as an irregular variation. Now it is seeing a revival. Incidentally, various Ruy Lopez lines with 4 d3 and 5 d3 have been increasingly employed by top grandmasters.

In the **French Defence**, **Black** has always had great leeway in how to bring his pieces out. For example:

a) Recently, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♟d2 is being answered by irregular moves such 3...h6 and 3...b6, even at master and grandmaster level, as well as by the better-established but still non-mainstream moves 3...♟c6 and 3...a6.

b) In the Advance Variation, after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5, 3...b6 is increasingly respectable. Black can also play the odd-looking 3...♟d7, which reserves the option of the normal ...c5 (when d7 is the most common square for the bishop), but also ...a6 and ...♟b5 in the right situation.

c) After 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♟c3, 3...♟c6 has been an irregular byway for years, but now has strong adherents and a respectable body of theory behind it. Strange to say, even 3...♟e7 and 3...h6 are being played by strong players. With regard to the latter move, the seemingly unrelated and bizarre 1 ♟f3 h6!?! (the subject of intense analysis by Wind), may well have drawbacks, but it can lead to 2 e4 e6 3 d4 d5, and the pawn on h6 proves useful. Indeed, 4 ♟c3 ♟f6 is then a transposition to the French Defence variation 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♟c3 h6 4 ♟f3 ♟f6, a line which has been played by numerous masters and grandmasters.

For his part, **White** periodically experiments with irregular moves in order to keep the play outside the main lines of the French; for example:

a) On the second move, in addition to the previously irregular but now-established 1 e4 e6 2 ♟e2, 1 e4 e6 2 b3 d5 3 ♟b2 is being seen as a provocative way to mix things up.

b) 1 e4 e6 2 ♟f3 d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4 cxb4 5 a3 (or 5 d4) is the French Wing Gambit. Although infrequently used at grandmaster level, it has an earnest following below that and considerable theoretical backing.

In the **Caro-Kann Defence**, **Black** has many new ideas in established variations, but also some within the first few moves:

a) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♟c3 b5, with the idea 4 exd5 b4, is an old line by Gurgendize. It is being reinvestigated and seems a useful weapon.

b) Against 1 e4 c6 2 ♟f3 d5 3 ♟c3, often a dull variation, some high-level players have used the line 3...♟f6 4 e5 ♟e4.

Much of the experimental action for **White** is taking place in the Advance Variation:

a) After 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♗f5, the variations 4 ♗e3 and 4 ♗d2 have gone from being wholly irregular to respectable enough that they now have numerous grandmaster practitioners.

b) Versus 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5, we are seeing 4 c4 and 4 ♗f3 ♗c6 5 c4. Up until recently, these moves were virtually unknown.

c) The pseudo-Advance variation 1 e4 c6 2 ♗e2 d5 3 e5 has drawn some high-powered attention of late, both in theoretical articles and grandmaster play.

In the **Pirc** and **Modern Defences**, **Black's** flexibility is such that irregular or, at least unusual move-orders are commonplace. Essentially, he can play the moves ...♗g7, ...c6, ...a6 with ...b5 and ...0-0 in almost any order to keep White guessing. Several unconventional lines have recently attracted attention in the Modern Defence:

a) 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♗c3 d5!? is a surprising thrust, mentioned in Chapter 3, with the idea that 4 ♗xd5 c6 wins back White's d-pawn, and 4 exd5 ♗f6 will either do so or extract other concessions from White. I'm doubtful that Black can achieve real equality after 5 ♗c4 (5 h4!? intending 5...♗xd5 6 h5 could be tried) 5...♗bd7, but it's a position into which many strong players have entered.

b) A whole complex of ...a6 systems, sometimes referred to as 'Tiger's Modern', can be played against White's main set-ups, especially 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♗c3 d6 (even 3...a6 is possible) 4 ♗f3 a6, 4 ♗e3 a6, and 4 f4 a6. I examined these in detail in Chapter 3.

White can also play outside the main lines; for example:

a) He can launch early h4 attacks, the most common one going 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 ♗e2 ♗g7 5 h4.

b) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 ♗e2 ♗g7 5 g4, less frequently seen, has had some success.

c) In the Austrian Attack, 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 f4 ♗g7, the move 5 a3 was almost unknown a decade ago. Pushing the a-pawn avoids the standard line 5 ♗f3 c5 and the large amount of theory associated with it (that is, 5 a3 c5 6 dxc5 ♗a5 allows 7 b4). 5 a3 0-0 6 ♗f3 (equivalent to 5 ♗f3 0-0 6 a3) is a related line which has met with some success.

The Modern Variation of the **Alekhine Defence**, 1 e4 ♗f6 2 e5 ♗d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♗f3, is an astonishing example of the increasing interest in what had been minor sidelines. First, the top grandmasters are treating 4...dxe5 5 ♗xe5 as the main line of the entire defence (with first 5...g6 and more recently 5...c6 as the follow-up), even though it was a minor irritant just two decades ago compared to 4...g6 and 4...♗g4. Then, on the same move, we see a distinct revival of the irregular moves 4...♗b6 and 4...♗c6, accompanied by much analysis. Even Miles's unlikely-looking move 4...c6 has a following and continues to perform reasonably well.

Finally, in the **Scandinavian Defence** with 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♗xd5, so much has been discovered over the last decade that it's hard to distinguish what's irregular from what isn't. As a general observation, I find it amazing that after 3 ♗c3, Black's popular move 3...♗d6 was an irregular sideline just 10 years ago. It is now arguably the main line, especially at grandmaster level. Incidentally, it wasn't so long ago (perhaps 30 years or so) that the Scandinavian was seldom played and considered marginal by most masters. A number of older opening books even dismissed it entirely on the basis of Black's loss of time with his queen. The great Bent Larsen was instrumental in changing that assessment.

In this by no means complete review, I've limited myself to 1 e4 openings, and to the first five moves; as you can imagine, a similar array of irregular lines is associated with 1 d4 openings. There's a feast of offerings out there. Of course, some of these ideas will prove wanting in the long run, just as new ones will appear. The real point is not to fill your repertoire with unusual openings. In fact, I personally advise against that, and believe that you will learn more about chess if you mostly play (and study) major openings. But I also think that the judicious use of some irregular variations can make your chess more fun, and stimulate you to think creatively.

Responding to the Unfamiliar

Of course, a lot of the time you'll be on the other side of the board when the surprising

move or variation appears. What should you do when faced with an unfamiliar opening, or even an unfamiliar move in an opening that you know? Your first reaction should be to take a deep breath and try to understand what your opponent is doing. Is he attacking or planning to attack any weak points? Is he preparing a certain positionally desirable move? Are there any tactics involved? Once you've got a feel for the key factors of the position, you can react accordingly.

For example, against most slow moves that don't engage your pieces, it's appropriate to occupy the centre with pawns (many irregular openings permit you to do so, which is part of the reason that they're irregular!). Then develop pieces towards the centre, just as you would do in the majority of openings. Of course, even if your moves are more principled than your opponent's, you shouldn't expect an immediate payback. The game of chess is forgiving enough that most pawn and piece deployments, however strange, can be coordinated in some logical fashion, so that the disadvantages of most irregular openings won't lead to disaster.

If the situation is turning tactical or exceptionally dynamic, you should take extra time to assess the problems and do as much calculation of concrete sequences as possible. In that way, you may not be able to solve the position but you'll get a clear idea of what the issues are. You shouldn't be intimidated; after all, it's unlikely that an irregular opening will win by force, and it's quite possible that there's some serious flaw or drawback to it. Be alert and take advantage of specific mistakes. Say that you have a fair general knowledge of openings, but within the first few moves, your opponent plays a gambit that you've never seen. It's likely that the reason you haven't seen it is because you can safely accept the pawn. For example, the sequence 1 d4 ♘f6 2 g4 has a cult following, and might make some sense in conjunction with the moves g5 and perhaps ♗g2. But 2... ♗xg4 3 e4 really isn't very impressive; among others, 3...d6, followed by ...♗f6 if the knight is attacked, leaves White short of compensation. Similarly, a gambit such as 1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 d6 should be accepted by 3 exd6; White has no weaknesses to assist Black, who has only slightly better developmental prospects.

Declining such gambits lets your opponent off the hook.

Assuming that the irregular opening is logical and contests important squares, it's useful to keep your pawn-structure in mind. Quite often, unusual openings either come with weaknesses or they allow you to create weaknesses in your opponent's position. Regardless of the specifics, replying with common-sense moves and applying what you know about analogous situations will serve you well.

Assessing the Initial Moves

If you look through a listing of irregular openings, you'll find that a majority of such openings include weakening moves, unjustified sacrifices, or a disdain for central control. You are also confronted with an intimidating reality: irregular openings, even limiting ourselves to named ones, are more numerous than conventional ones! The cynic might say that's because there are more bad moves in chess than good ones. Indeed, when we find out that there are at least four named openings beginning with 1 a4, including 1 a4 b6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗c3 ♗d7 (with the 'idea' 4 ♗xd5 ♗b7), which has been called the 'Cologne Gambit' of the 'Ware Opening', it's easy to agree with that. By the time we get to move 5, the number of 'irregular' moves explodes for both sides. Rather than tackle the near-infinite subject of irregular openings in general, I thought that it would be fun and indeed revealing to look at openings defined by the very first move. This exercise is particularly appropriate for the average player, because the logic of these openings does not depend upon prior knowledge of variations leading up to it. As it is, there's not nearly enough room to cover even these first moves in a comprehensive fashion. But I think that there's much to learn from how the variations break down, even if they can't be subject to detailed analysis.

For many players, unusual first moves are the most attractive; after all, what's better than playing an initial move that makes your opponent think? This psychological motivation has its effect, as evidenced by the number of games played with the least promising of first moves. For example, in one of my combined databases,

here is the number of games (in parentheses) with the following first moves for White. In every case, numerous masters (over 2200 rating) are represented: 1 f3 (166); 1 ♘h3 (231); 1 c3 (437); 1 e3 (1,190); 1 a3 (1,829); 1 g4 (2,845). Non-transpositional games with 1 ♘c3 (which is used frequently for transpositional purposes) number 9,152; and 1 b4, respectable but nowhere near mainstream, is represented by 20,689 contests, more than the main lines of many major openings. These figures include some joke draws and 1-move contests, but not enough to have a significant effect. And, to be sure, they represent small percentages of the entirety of games. Nevertheless, given the thousands of conventional (and unconventional) variations to choose from that stem from 1 e4, 1 d4, 1 c4 and 1 ♘f3, I'm surprised that tournament players are inclined to choose those above so frequently. And you should keep in mind that these numbers would surely balloon if you included amateur and club games (which are for the most part absent from standard databases).

So what are the characteristics of these first-move openings? First, it's useful to classify them according to evaluation. I'll call some openings 'good enough' (if they were worthy of an unqualified 'good', they'd probably not be irregular!), others 'substandard', and still others 'bad'. 'Bad' and 'good enough' are readily understandable categories; I'll get more specific on a case-by-case basis. A 'substandard' opening is generally uninspiring and tends to produce below-average results. This kind of opening is functional at lower levels, especially if it's tricky and has surprise value; however, a substandard opening becomes difficult to handle as you come up against stronger opponents.

Of course, any assessment depends upon what you expect to get out of the opening. I often hear advocates of irregular openings for White bragging about how their opening 'hasn't been refuted'. That's not a very good criterion! After all, it takes some pretty poor play for White to actually come out of the opening with a disadvantage, and when White goes through contortions merely to reach equality, we shouldn't be impressed. To the extent that the opening is harmless, easy to play, and leaves White with the ability to pose as many problems as Black, that's

'good enough'. But if, in practice, the opening is more difficult for White to play than Black and also doesn't yield any advantage, it qualifies as 'substandard'.

When it's Black who is playing an irregular opening, my assessments are naturally more forgiving. If Black can achieve a normal (i.e. very slight) disadvantage with perfect play, that's probably 'good enough'. An exception might be when the resulting position, although theoretically only moderately worse, requires a sophisticated handling that is out of the range of the average player. For example, Black may come out of the opening with quasi-permanent weaknesses or horrible-looking doubled pawns. A top player might know how to play around them, find a complex way to liquidate them, or even use them productively. However, if that involves extremely refined moves and/or extraordinary accuracy, then the opening isn't really satisfactory in practical terms and I'd call it 'substandard'. You can see that my evaluation isn't perfectly objective, and it is skewed towards the 'average' player, which in this case covers the broad range from developing players to experienced ones who are nevertheless below master level.

It turns out that everything has a name, and usually multiple names. For example, according to irregular openings aficionado Eric Schiller, the "greatest living exponent" of the move 1 h4 is the Hungarian master Kadas, after whom he names the opening, but he points out that it is also known as the 'Desprez Opening' and the 'Reagan Attack'. This reflects the fact that chess-players crave immortality; it also confirms the old saw that 'bad publicity is better than no publicity'. Curious, I went to my large combined database and found 354 non-trivial games with 1 h4, including 23 games by a fellow named Ats, which swamped the number by his countryman Kadas or anyone else. A number of masters have used 1 h4, among their ranks even a couple of 2400+ players. It somehow didn't surprise me that the overall success rate of 1 h4 was only moderately lower than White gets in chess overall. In over-the-board play, versus Black's replies 1...d5 and 1...♘f6, White has a typical edge over Black in raw score and performance rating, but he does quite

poorly in both respects versus 1...e5. In correspondence play, White does reasonably well except when playing against 1...d5, which scores exceptionally well for Black. Remarkably, looking through the games themselves, I didn't find any in which h4 made a significant contribution to an opening advantage for White! I suppose that should be no surprise either: on a lower or even average level of play, 1 h4 can be used without disastrous consequences, because both sides' more serious mistakes later will easily outweigh the disadvantages of the first move. Nevertheless, I believe most leading grandmasters would assess White's game after 1 h4 as already inferior. If nothing else, it's a major concession when you forfeit the possibility of castling kingside in a large majority of positions. In addition, the g4-square will often be occupied by an active black piece that will be hard to get rid of, because the move f3 would create further weaknesses. If we had a large sample of games between master players, I'm convinced that 1 h4 would score considerably below 50%, and trail significantly in performance rating. In my judgement, then, 1 h4 is simply 'bad'.

To get a feel for the consequences of the choice of first move (and have some fun), let's run through every initial move for White, and a selected group of them for Black.

First of all, the 'regular' first moves 1 e4, 1 d4 and 1 c4 all occupy and/or control central squares without exposing the king or creating weaknesses. 1 ♘f3 controls two central squares and develops in a way that is compatible with a wide range of good systems for White. These four moves are indisputably good ones.

Continuing with moves for White, both first-move fianchettoes 1 g3 and 1 b3 are logical and safe. Having studied 1...g6, we can infer that 1 g3 must be satisfactory. Most of the time, it transposes to openings such as the English Opening and Réti, or to any number of d-pawn openings featuring a fianchetto by White. But 1 g3 has also been played in many games which haven't transposed into other variations; for example, it often becomes a reversed Pirc Defence such as 1 g3 d5 2 ♗g2 e5 3 d3 c6 (or 3...♗c6) 4 ♘f3. The same comparison holds for 1 b3 (which we looked at in Chapter 4),

since it is an 'improved' 1...b6. Both 1 g3 and 1 b3 are a bit too passive to produce an advantage against solid play, but that's a different issue. Similarly, the Bird Opening (1 f4) was examined in Chapter 6. It has a longer history of master play and is clearly sound.

That leaves what I consider truly irregular first moves, divided by colour. We begin with White. Most of White's irregular first moves are 'good enough', even though some of them are passive and fail to challenge Black at all. The only reason that some of those survive 'substandard' status is that they are not particularly difficult to play. A few irregular first moves have positive qualities, and are sufficiently attractive to recommend for the occasional experiment, and I'll start with those:

Sokolsky/Polish: 1 b4

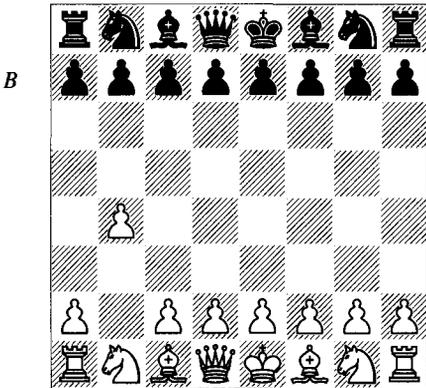
As discussed above, this is the most popular and respectable of the irregular first moves. To the untrained eye, it may seem a bit bizarre. Yet several books, including two very recent ones, are solely devoted to 1 b4, which is called, variously, the Sokolsky Opening, the Polish Opening, the Orang-Utan, and probably a few other things. 1 b4 is obviously good enough; it will probably never break through on the grandmaster level, but it can lend a lively flavour to the game and deserves special attention. With that in mind, here are two games in very critical variations, with notes to indicate a few other directions.

Schiffler – Skirl

corr. 1950

1 b4 (D)

What's the idea behind this move? First and foremost, White wants to fianchetto his bishop, as he does when he plays 1 b3. In addition, he takes some queenside space and discourages the move ...c5. In some cases, White will play b5, and the mere possibility of that move can dissuade Black from playing ...♗c6. As we have seen following 1 b3 and 2 ♗b2, White can develop in a variety of ways. Most frequently, he plays e3, ♘f3 and c4, but a double fianchetto by g3 and ♗g2 is also possible. Sometimes



White will play f4 before developing his knight to f3, in order to strengthen his control of the long diagonal.

Black is also flexibly situated. First, there's a decent chance that ...e5 or ...e6, attacking the b-pawn, will gain a whole tempo without a meaningful concession. Since White isn't placing a pawn in the centre, Black frequently takes the opportunity to do so himself by ...d5 and/or ...e5. He also faces no serious threats, so he can pick from a number of set-ups and develop quickly.

1...e5

I'm going to focus on this thematic move, which attacks the pawn on b4, since it is by far the most frequently played, as well as the best chance to 'refute' 1 b4, in the sense of giving Black the better game by force. That may or may not happen with best play, but White has to be careful in many lines. Here, extremely briefly, are two of the main alternatives:

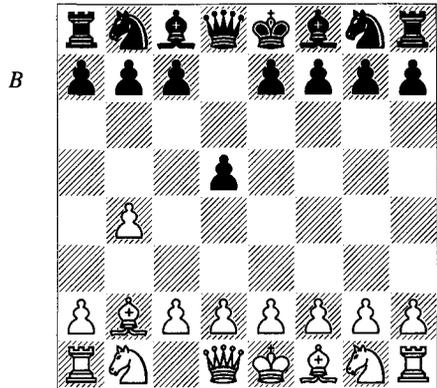
a) 1...♟f6 2 ♖b2 and then:

a1) 2...g6 is a safe line, with a typical continuation being 3 e3 (3 c4 ♟g7 4 ♟f3 0-0 5 g3 was used by Réti; 3 ♟xf6 exf6 isn't so effective when White doesn't gain a knight outpost to offset the bishops; compare 1 b3 c5 2 ♖b2 ♟f6 3 c4 g6?! 4 ♟xf6 exf6 5 ♟c3, controlling d5) 3...♟g7 4 c4 d6 5 ♟f3 0-0 6 d4 ♟bd7 (or 6...c5) 7 ♟e2 e5 8 0-0 (8 dxe5 dxe5 9 ♟xe5? ♟e4), and Black has a broad choice; for example, 8...exd4, 8...♞e7, 8...♟e4 and 8...e4 9 ♟fd2 ♞e8.

a2) 2...e6 3 a3 is playable, of course, but 3 b5 is more challenging, planning to maintain the pawn there as long as possible and cramp Black's game a bit. This position has occurred

in many games, without dramatic results for either side.

b) 1...d5 2 ♖b2 (D) also gives Black numerous options, among them:



b1) 2...♟f6 3 e3 ♟f3 4 ♟f3 (4 f4 e6 5 a3 a5 6 b5 ♟bd7 7 ♟f3 ♟d6 and Black's rapid development ensures a good game) 4...e6 5 a3 (5 b5!?) 5...♟e7 6 c4 c6 with a standard London System formation and equality.

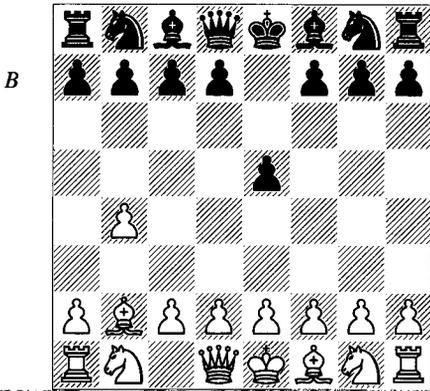
b2) 2...♞d6!? has the dual ideas of ...♞xb4 and ...e5; for example, 3 a3 (after 3 b5, 3...♞b4 wins a pawn, even if 4 ♟c3 ♞xb5 5 e4 offers White some compensation; Lapshun and Conticello prefer simply 3...e5) 3...e5 4 e3 (4 ♟f3 f6!? 5 d4!? e4 6 ♟fd2 f5 7 c4 c6 is unclear; White has a sort of reversed French Defence with extra tempi, but Black hasn't had to play the obstructive ...♟d7; compare 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♟d2 ♟f6 4 e5 ♟fd7) 4...♟f6 5 ♟f3 ♟bd7 6 c4 c6 7 ♟c3! with the idea of cxd5, and exerting some central pressure.

b3) 2...♟g4 makes sense, interfering with White's kingside development and planning to set up with, for example, 3...c6, 4...♟d7, and either ...e5 or ...e6. The play can go almost any direction; for example, 3 c4, 3 ♟f3, 3 h3 ♟h5 4 c4 (4 g3) ♟ or the odd-looking but logical 3 ♞c1, preparing 4 e3.

2 ♖b2 (D)

White sometimes plays 2 a3, although this isn't challenging and uses valuable time. Black gets time to construct and successfully defend an ideal centre: 2...d5 3 ♖b2 ♟d6 4 e3 (4 f4 exf4 5 ♟xg7 ♞h4+ 6 g3 fxg3 7 ♟g2 ♞f4! {or 7...gxh2+! 8 ♟f1 ♟f6!}) 8 ♟f3 ♟h3!! doesn't essentially differ from the 1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♖b7 3

♠d3 f5 4 exf5, etc., of Chapter 4) 4...♘f6 5 c4 c6 6 ♘f3 ♚e7, with a sort of reversed 1 e4 b6 line in which Black stands at least satisfactorily.



4...♚e7

Black seeks to discourage 5 f4, which gives White a King's Gambit-style attack.

a) 4...♘c6 is a sound alternative. Then 5 f4 exf4 6 ♘h3 has been played, but 6...♚e7! has the idea ...♚xe4+, and prevents 7 0-0?? because of 7...♚c5+.

b) A game involving Bobby Fischer himself, Fischer-Gloger, Cleveland (simul) 1964, went 4...♘e7 5 ♚h5+ (Tartakower-Réti, Vienna 1919 is a classic example with 5 f4: 5...d5 6 exd5 ♠d6 7 fxe5 fxe5 8 ♚h5+ ♘g6 9 ♘f3 ♘d7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♘c3 ♚f4!? 12 d3 ♘f6 13 ♚g5 h6 14 ♚g3 with an unclear position) 5...♘g6 (5...g6 6 ♚h4 ♘ec6 7 f4 is complex) 6 f4 (6 ♘f3 is suggested by Konikowski and Sosvnski, and approved by the computer = the

gxf6 16 ♖h6+ ♘g8 17 g7 and White wins. This line is fun for a tactician, but you can see that it is fundamentally satisfactory for Black.

5 ♖e2

Thinking about either f4 or ♖g3.

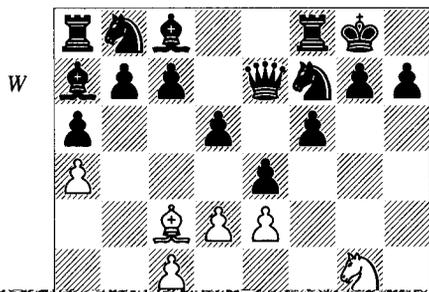
5...♖h6!?

5...d6 is a natural alternative.

6 ♖g3 d6 7 c3 ♖c5 8 d4

Now the game looks more like a conventional 1 e4 e5 gambit, and in particular an Evans Gambit, since White's b-pawn has been captured.

8...♖b6 9 a4 a6 10 a5 ♖a7 11 ♖d2 ♖f7 12 0-0 0-0 (D)



14...♖xe5 15 ♖b3 ♖e6 and 14...dxe5 15 ♖a3 ♖d7! 16 ♖xf8 ♖xf8, with more than ample compensation, are also good for Black.

15 ♖b3 exd4 16 ♖h1 dxc3?

16...d3! returns one of the two pawns to damage White's pawn-structure.

17 ♖xc3 ♖d4 18 ♖xf7! ♖xf7 19 ♖f1 ♖f6 20 ♖xf6?!

20 ♖h5! leads to a clear win according to Konikowski and Soszynski.

20...gxf6 21 ♖h5 f5? 22 exf5 ♖e5 23 ♖g3+ ♖f8 24 f6 ♖d8?

24...♖e8 25 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 26 ♖g7+ ♖e8 27 ♖e4!.

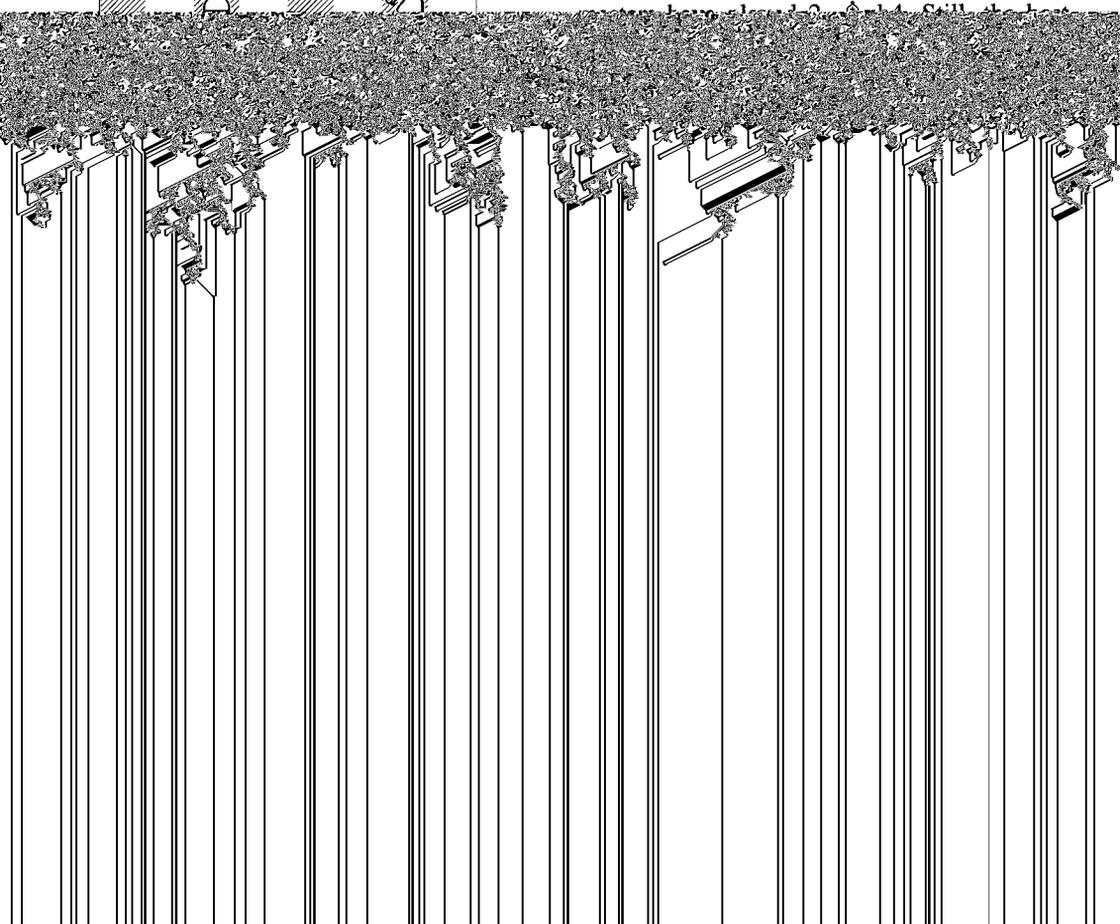
25 ♖xf7 1-0

R. Franke – A. Löffler

ICCF corr. 1986

1 b4 e5 2 ♖b2 ♖xb4

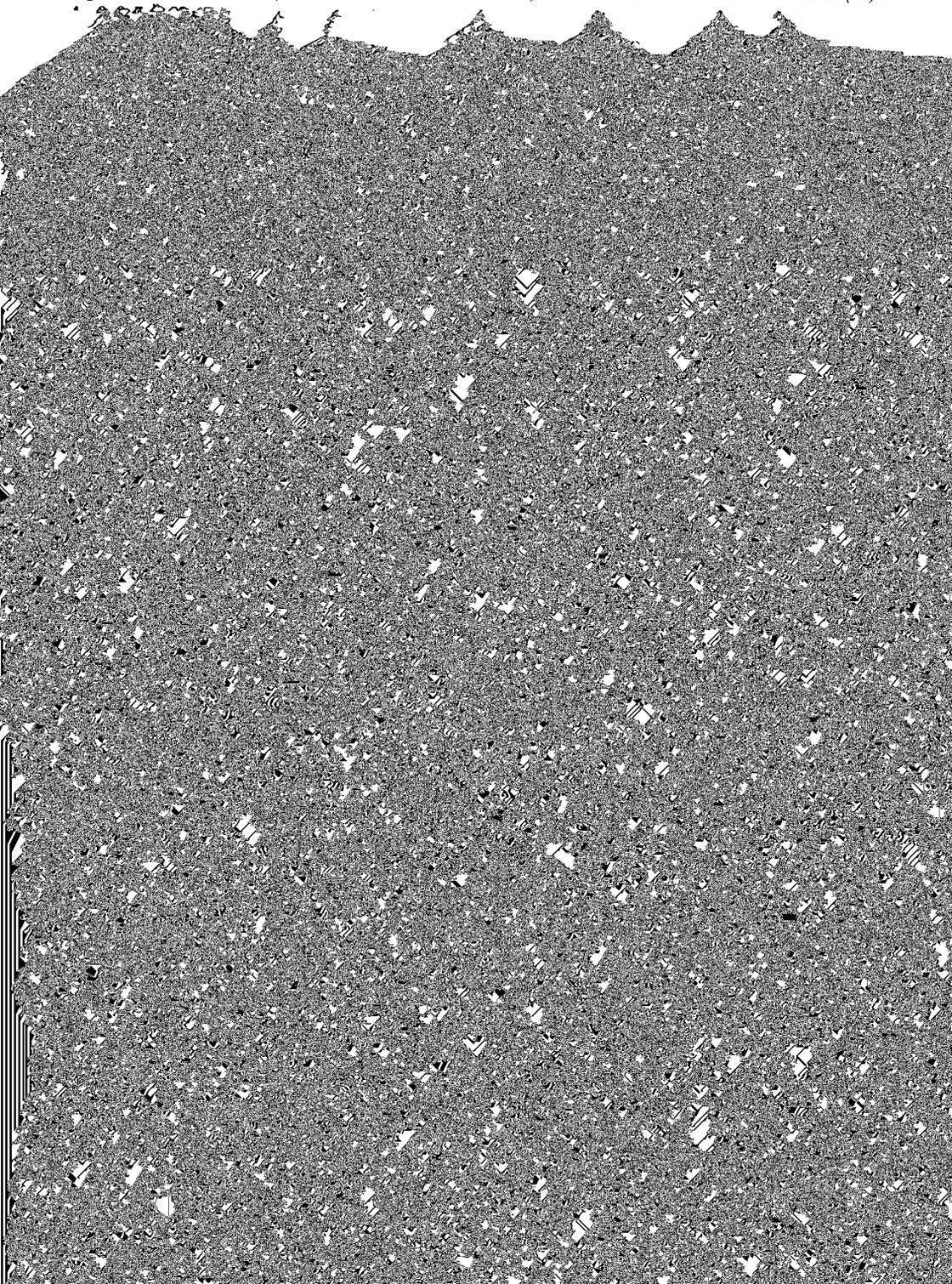
This has been the bane of the Sokolosky Opening's existence, leading to all kinds of sacrificial wins for Black, as well as positional binds. It's remarkable how many leading grand-



the insertion of a3 and ...♗a5; compare the similar line below. Of course, Black can play 9...c5! with the idea ...♘c6, when he has gained a tempo in lines where ...♗c7 follows (that is, he plays ...♗a5 unprovoked in lines below, and a3 is unproductive for White).

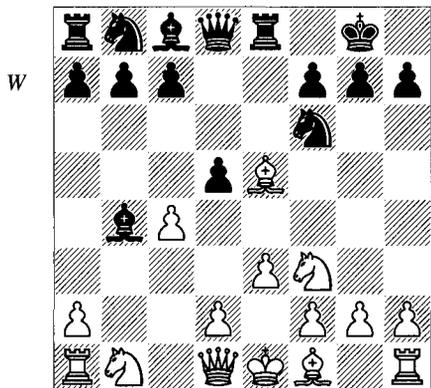
a) Sometimes he attacks with 5...♘c6, which is reasonable, but it's nice to retain the option of ...c5; for example, if White doesn't play c4, then Black can set up with ...d5 and ...c5, as in 'b'.

b) 5...d5 6 ♗e2 c5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 ♗b2 (D) is a



White could also have played this last move. The safer 6 ♖e2 d5 7 0-0 c5 8 ♖b2 ♖c6 transposes to the previous note.

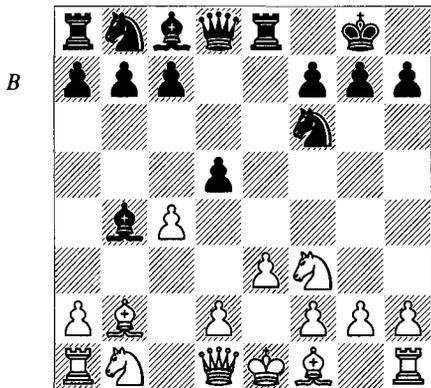
6...d5 (D)



7 cxd5

Or:

a) Palliser mentions 7 ♖b2 (D). Then Black has several possibilities:



a1) 7...c5 8 cxd5 ♖xd5 9 ♖e2 ♖c6 is solid. I think that White should play 10 ♖c2, preventing ...♖f5, rather than 10 0-0 ♖f5!.

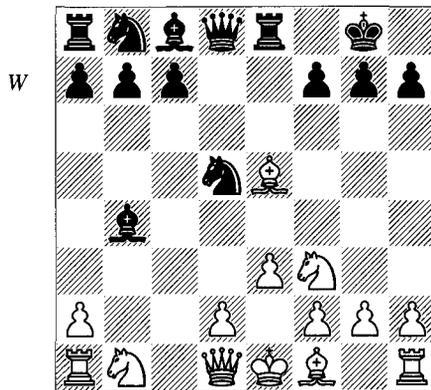
a2) 7...♖f5 threatens ...dxc4 and ...♖d3.

a3) 7...♖c6 8 cxd5 ♖xd5!? has been a fairly popular set-up for Black, since 9 ♖xf6 is the fourth move by White's bishop and leaves d3 vulnerable to attack by ...♖f5 and ...♖ad8.

b) 7 ♖e2 is arguably White's safest way to proceed, but it allows simplification by 7...♖c6 8 ♖b2 dxc4 9 ♖xc4 ♖e6, securing light-square influence in White's camp, although this time there are no tactics.

7...♖xd5 (D)

7...♖xd5 8 ♖b2 ♖c6 is line 'a3' of the previous note.



8 ♖b2

Black has won several games with tactical tricks on the e3-square; for example:

a) 8 ♖e2? ♖xe5! 9 ♖xe5 ♖f6 (now both the knight and d-pawn are pinned) 10 f4 ♖xe3 and now:

a1) 11 ♖a4 b5!? (11...♖d7 12 ♖xd7 ♖xa1 13 ♖f2 ♖d5 is also strong) 12 ♖xb5 c6 13 ♖d3 ♖xg2+ 14 ♖d1 ♖xf4 15 ♖e3 ♖xe2 16 ♖xe2 ♖a6+ left Black the exchange down but with a winning attack in Jaskulski-Zehm, corr. 1985.

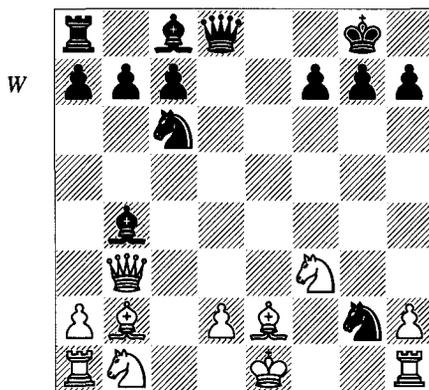
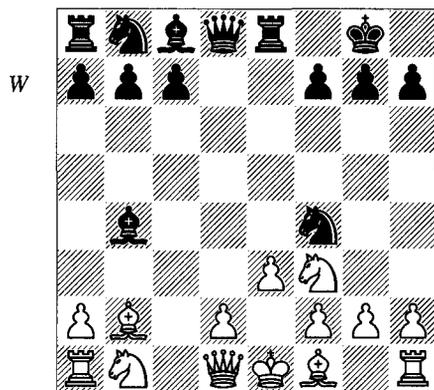
a2) 11 ♖b3 ♖xg2+ 12 ♖d1 ♖xf4 13 ♖xf7!? (there is no remotely satisfactory move for White) 13...♖xf7 (or 13...♖e6) 14 ♖c4 ♖e6 15 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 16 ♖e1 and 16...♖c6 was good in Lindqvist-Sörenfors, corr. 1975, but 16...♖d4! 17 ♖xb4 ♖bc6 threatens moves such as ...♖g6, ...♖h5+ and ...♖d8, and wins for Black straight-away.

b) 8 ♖c4 ♖g4 9 ♖b2 ♖xe3! (or 9...♖c6) 10 fxe3 ♖xe3+ 11 ♖f2 ♖xf3+ (11...♖e4!?) 12 gxf3 ♖h4+ 13 ♖g1! ♖h3 14 ♖f1 and now 14...♖g5+ 15 ♖f2 ♖h4+ 16 ♖e2 ♖e7+ is perpetual check, but 14...♖c6!? has been played as well, trying to win.

8...♖c6

White might prefer another move-order (such as delaying cxd5), since here 8...♖f4! (D) poses problems. White has to avoid all kinds of dangerous tactics; for example:

a) 9 ♖e5 ♖g5! 10 exf4 (not 10 g3? ♖xe5! 11 gxf4 ♖xe3+! 12 fxe3 ♖h4+ 13 ♖e2 ♖g4+)



10...♖xf4 11 ♙e2 ♜xe5 12 ♙xe5 ♖xe5 13 ♘c3 ♙xc3 14 dxc3 ♜xc3+ 15 ♗f1 ♘c6, Billig-Bogert, corr. 1993. This has all been forced, and Black has two pawns for the exchange with a much better position.

b) Palliser analyses what is probably the best move, 9 a3!: 9...♙d6! (9...♙a5?? 10 ♖a4!) 10 ♜c2 ♙g4 11 ♘c3 ♘c6 12 0-0-0!? ♘g6 with complications.

c) 9 ♖b3 ♘c6 is depressing for White. Palliser continues 10 ♙c4?! ♘xg2+ 11 ♗f1? ♙h3 12 ♙xf7+ ♗h8 13 ♙xe8 ♖xe8 with the idea 14 ♘g5 ♘d4!! 15 ♗f7+ (or 15 ♙xd4 ♖b5+) 15...♖xf7 16 ♖xf7 ♗f4+ 17 ♗e1 ♘d3+ 18 ♗d1 ♘xb2+ 19 ♗c1 ♘d3+ 20 ♗d1 ♙g4+ 21 f3 ♙xf3+ and Black wins.

9 ♙e2

After 9 ♙b5, 9...♙f5!? and 9...a6 10 ♙xc6 bxc6 give Black active play; in both cases, he will try to put pressure on White's light squares, in particular d3.

9...♜xe3!

A bold and wonderful shot, giving up a rook

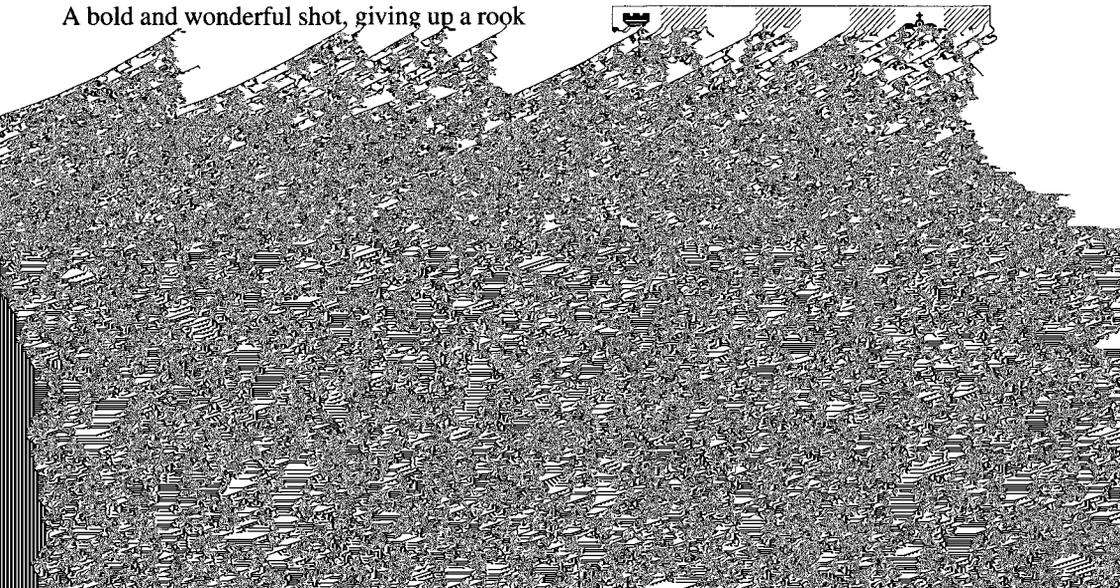
In spite of appearances, things don't always go badly for White; for example, 12 ♗d1 ♙e6 13 ♖d3 ♖e7? (13...♖xd3! 14 ♙xd3 ♙g4 15 ♙e2 ♗f4 16 ♜f1 ♘xe2 17 ♗xe2 ♙c5 18 ♗d3 ♜d8+ and with three pawns and an attack for the rook, Black has adequate compensation, Dziel-Szimmat, corr. 1997) 14 ♘d4 ♗f4 15 ♘xc6 bxc6 16 ♖d4 ♙b3+ 17 axb3 ♖xe2+ 18 ♗c2 1-0 Lapshun-Sinn, Philadelphia 2003.

12...♙h3! 13 d4?!

Konikowski and Soszynski improve by 13 ♜c1! ♖e7 14 ♙b5 ♙c5+ 15 ♜xc5 ♖xc5+ 16 d4, which remains quite unclear following 16...♖f5 or 16...♖d6.

13...♖e7 14 ♘bd2?? (D)

A blunder. Black still has an attack after 14 ♜g1 ♜e8 15 ♙c4!? ♗a5! (it's not clear who stands better after 15...♗f4) 16 ♙xf7+ ♗h8 17 ♖xb4 ♖xb4 18 ♙c3 ♖e7 19 ♙xe8 ♖xe8 20 ♜xg2 ♙xg2 21 ♗xg2 ♖g6+, when Black's superior activity gives him an obvious advantage.



This doesn't ruin everything, but 14...♙xd2! wins outright, in view of 15 ♘xd2 ♘xd4 16 ♖xh3 (16 ♙xd4 ♖h4+) 16...♗xe2+ 17 ♔g3 and now 17...f5 or 17...♘f4.

15 ♜h1 ♘xe1 16 ♜xe1 ♘xd4! 17 ♘xd4

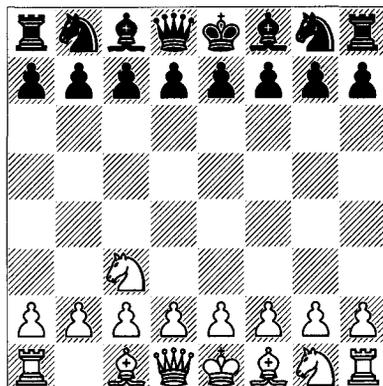
17 ♙xd4? fails to 17...♙xd2 with the idea 18 ♘xd2 ♖h4+ 19 ♖g3 ♖xd4+.

17...♙xd2 18 ♜d1??

But the much better 18 ♖xh3 ♙xe1+ 19 ♔xe1 c5! 20 ♖g4 cxd4 21 ♙xd4 f5! 22 ♖f3 ♖b4+ 23 ♖c3 ♖xc3+ 24 ♙xc3 ♔f7 still leaves Black with enough pawns to win, in spite of White's bishop-pair.

18...♙e3+ 19 ♔g3 ♖g5+ 20 ♔xh3 ♜e4 21 ♘f5 ♖xf5+ 22 ♔g2 ♜g4+ 23 ♙xg4 ♖xg4+ 24 ♔f1 ♖f3+ 25 ♔e1 ♖f2# (0-1)

B

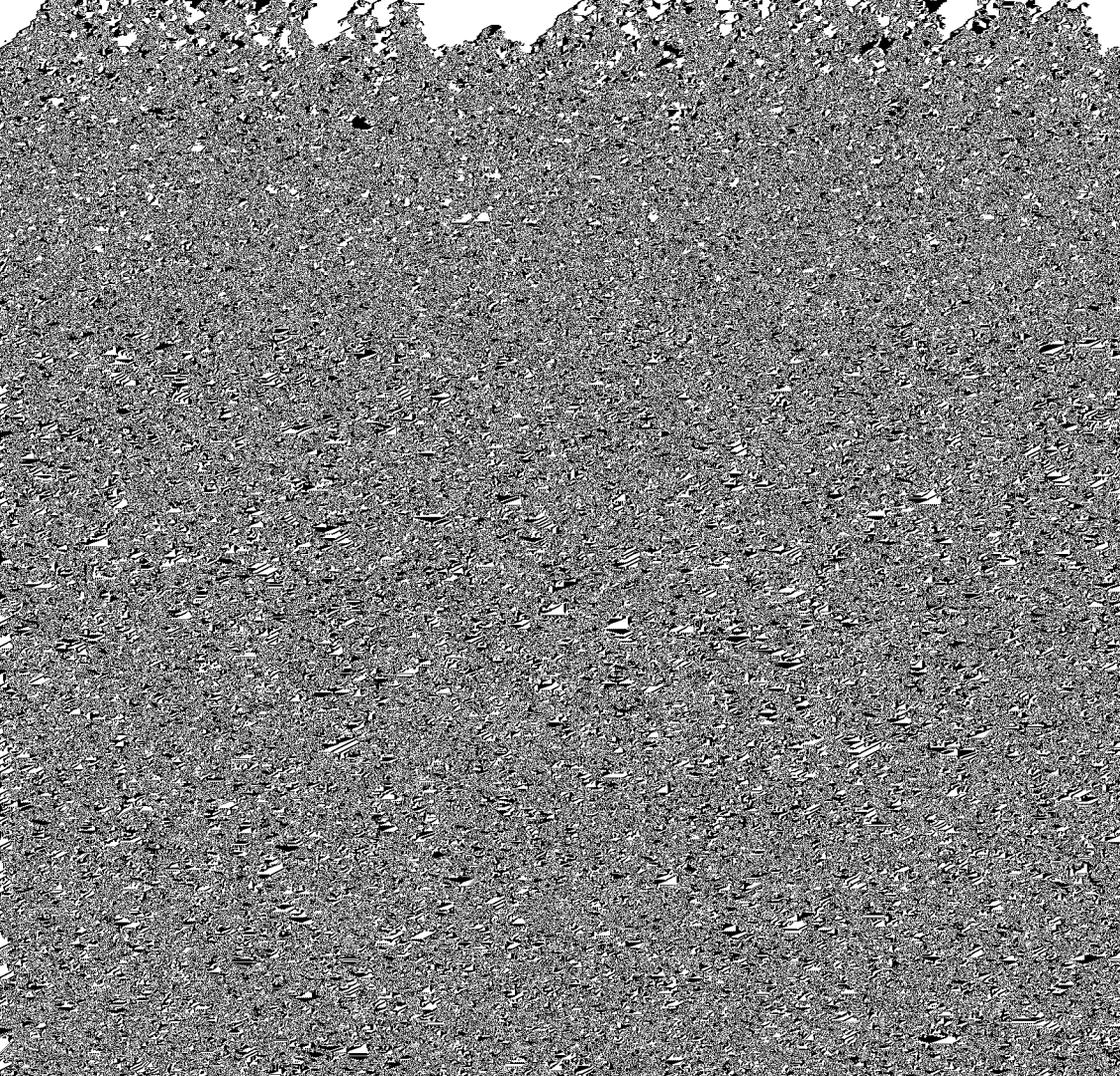


function. This is best explained by example, as are Black's counter-strategies.

1...e5

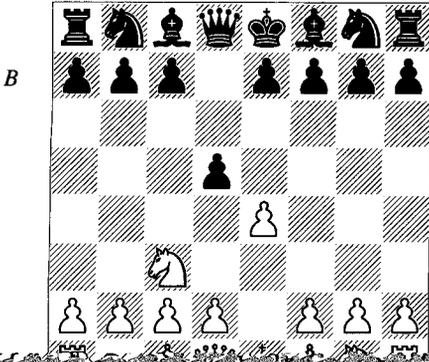
1 ♘c3 can lead to an outrageous number of potential transitions and original paths

Linkspringer: 1 ♘c3

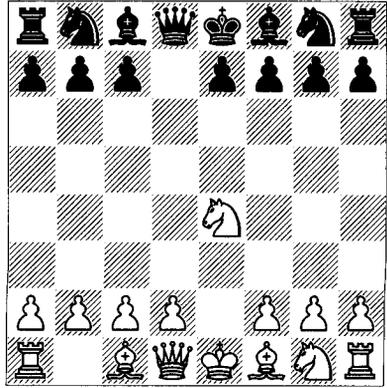


can play 3 ♘f3, to be followed by 4 ♖f4, 4 ♙g5 or even 4 g3.

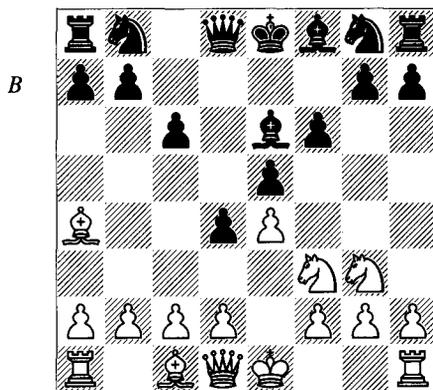
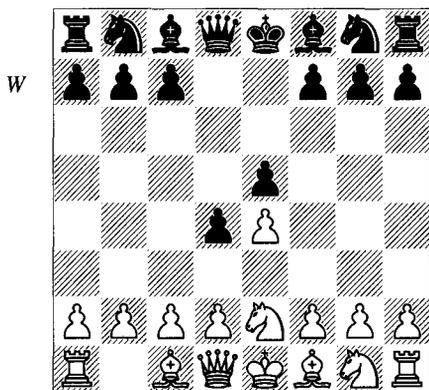
But by far the most important move is 2 e4 (D).



B



is possible, when play can continue 7 ♖c4 e6 8 d3!?, while after 7 d4 e6 8 h5 ♙h7 9 ♖d3 ♙xd3 10 ♗xd3 ♘c6. Black hopes to play ...c5 and



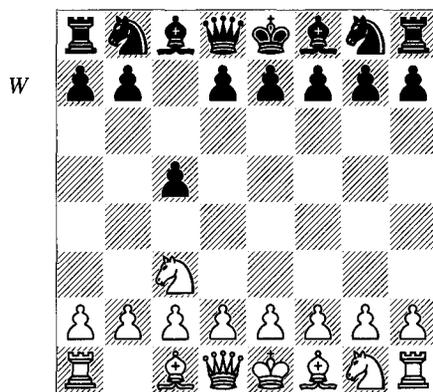
he can set up with $d3, g3, \text{♙}g2, \text{♘}f3$ and $0-0$, reversing a King's Indian position; or better yet, he can get $f4$ in before $\text{♘}f3$. The latter requires accuracy to implement; for example, the immediate $4 f4!$? (rather than the normal $4 d3$) can run into $4... \text{♗}c6 5 \text{♘}f3 \text{♙}g4!$, when instead of $6 d3?$ $\text{♙}xf3 7 gxf3 \text{♖}h4+ 8 \text{♗}d2 \text{exf4} 9 c3 0-0-0$, as in Ardaman-Yermolinsky, Philadelphia 2002, White should consider $6 \text{♗}xe5$. Somewhat riskier but more interesting is $6 fxe5 \text{♙}xf3 7 gxf3$; for example, $7... \text{♗}xe5 8 \text{♘}g3 \text{♖}h4 9 d3 \text{♗}g6!$? ($9... \text{♙}b4+! 10 \text{♗}f2 \text{♗}e7$) $10 \text{♖}d2! \text{♙}d6 11 \text{♗}g5$, as in Sydor-Kapengut, Lublin 1973. White has the bishop-pair and mobile kingside pawns to compensate for his lack of space and poorly-placed pieces.

White's second main idea is get his bishop out to $c4$ or $b5$ in front of the pawn-chain (that is, before closing it in with $d3$); for example, $4 \text{♗}g3 \text{♙}e6!$ (versus $\text{♙}c4$; naturally there are many other moves) $5 \text{♘}f3$ ($5 c3 c5 6 \text{♙}b5+$ gets the bishop out safely, but Black has nothing to complain about following $6... \text{♗}d7 7 \text{♗}f3 f6$) $5...f6 6 \text{♙}b5+! c6$ (or $6... \text{♗}d7$) $7 \text{♙}a4$ (*D*).

$7... \text{♗}a6$ ($7... \text{♗}d7 8 \text{♙}b3$ is similar, although Black lacks the option of $... \text{♗}b4$; one line is $8... \text{♙}xb3 9 \text{axb3} d3 10 c3 a5 11 0-0 \text{♗}c5 12 \text{♗}e1$, which is not easy to assess; another tempting move is $7... \text{♖}a5$, when $8 c3!$ prepares $9 \text{♙}b3$) $8 \text{♙}b3$ (or $8 0-0 \text{♗}c5 9 \text{♙}b3 \text{♗}xb3 10 \text{axb3} d3$) $8... \text{♙}xb3 9 \text{axb3} d3 10 0-0 \text{♗}b4 11 \text{cxd3}$ ($11 c3!? \text{♗}c2 12 \text{♖}a2 \text{♙}c5 13 \text{♗}e1$ is double-edged) $11... \text{♗}xd3 12 \text{♗}e1 \text{♗}h6 13 \text{♖}c2 \text{♗}xc1 14 \text{♖}xc1 \text{♖}c7 15 \text{♗}f3 \text{♖}d8$, Lammens-Ehlvest, Vlissingen 1996, and now $16 d4! \text{exd4} 17 \text{♖}fd1$ secures some advantage, with ideas of $\text{♗}xd4, \text{♖}c4$ and $\text{♗}h5$.

You can see by all this that $1...d5$ (is certainly an acceptable way for Black to play, and gives both players opportunities to unbalance the position.

b) $1...c5$ (*D*) is likely to be the Sicilian player's choice. Then

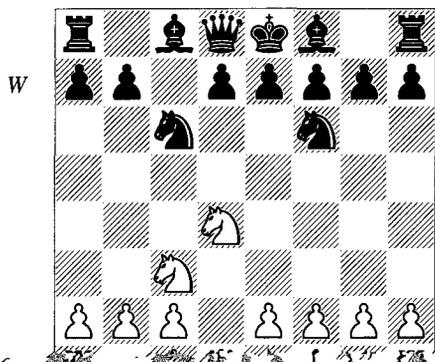


b1) Indeed, $2 e4$ transposes to a Closed Sicilian.

b2) $2 d4 \text{cxd4} 3 \text{♖}xd4 \text{♗}c6$ ($3...e6$) $4 \text{♖}h4$ is quite interesting, and occurred in no less elevated a game than Morozevich-Kasparov, Frankfurt rapid 2000, which continued $4... \text{♗}f6$ ($4...d5$ is the most frequent choice) $5 \text{♗}f3$ (White could transpose to a Trompowsky Attack by $5 \text{♙}g5$, that is, $1 d4 \text{♗}f6 2 \text{♙}g5 c5 3 \text{♗}c3 \text{cxd4} 4 \text{♖}xd4 \text{♗}c6 5 \text{♖}h4$) $5...d5 6 \text{♙}g5 \text{♖}a5 7 0-0-0 \text{♙}e6!$. Then, apart from the game's $8 \text{♙}d2, 8 \text{♗}d4 \text{♗}xd4 9 \text{♖}xd4!$ is inviting.

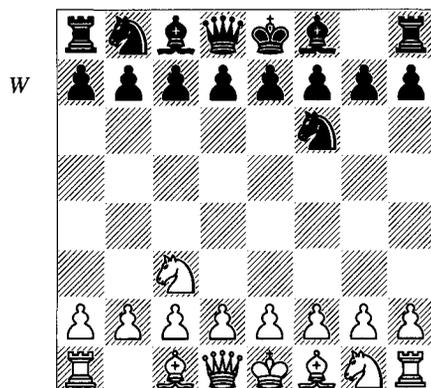
b3) White usually plays $2 \text{♗}f3$, when Black can play almost any move, and $2...e6, 2...d6, 2...a6, 2...b6$ and $2... \text{♗}f6$ can all go their own way. $2...d5 3 d4$ is mentioned under $1...d5 2$

♖f3 above, while 2...g6 allows 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♜f6, when perhaps 5 ♗h4 with the idea ♘h6 is the most attractive choice. The richest line may be 2...♜c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 (D) (4...d5 is usually answered by 5 ♘f4!? or 5 e4; after 4...g6, 5 e4 ♘g7 6 ♘e3 is a Sicilian Accelerated Dragon, while 5 g3 and 5 ♘e3 are unique options; in reply to 4...e6, 5 ♘f4 is attractive, since 5...a6 6 ♜xc6 bxc6 7 ♘d6 should yield some edge).

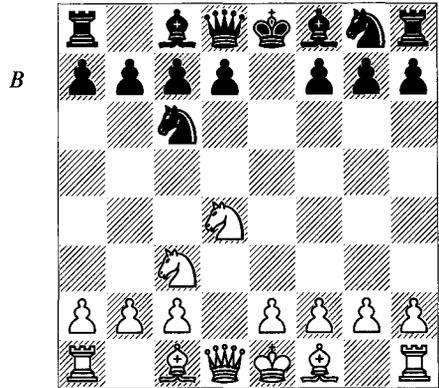
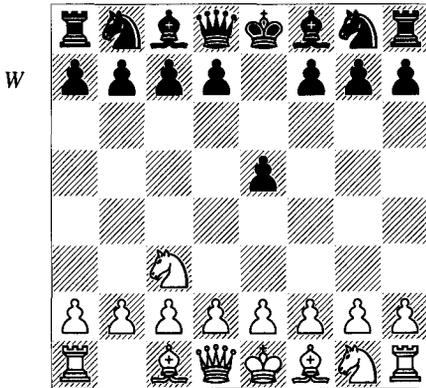


even if White's bishop-pair ensures a modest edge) 12 ♜xa7! ♜xf1 13 ♜b5! ♜a5 14 ♜d6+ ♜e7 15 0-0-0 with a comfortable advantage for White, C.Beyer-Ortmann, Stuttgart 1999.

c1) 1...♜f6 (D) and now:



c1) After 2 e4, 2...e5 is a Vienna Game and 2...d5 is the Alekhine Defence line 1 e4 ♜f6 2



2 e4 is a Vienna Game. In that regard, you will find many such transpositions after 1 d4c3 that are theoretically harmless; still, White may be able to move his opponent into unfamiliar territory by employing them.

A refreshing alternative is 2 d4!? exd4 3 ♖xd4, which is a reversed Scandinavian Defence with an extra d4c3. This leads to distinctive positions; for example, 3... d4c6 (3... d4f6 4 g4!? is a bizarre idea from C.Horvath-Lukacs, Budapest 1994: 4... d4c6 5 ♖e3+ ♗e7 6 g5 d4g4 7 ♖e4 d4b4 8 d4d5 d4xd5 9 ♖xd5, and now 9...f6 is best, since in the game 9...d6? 10 f4! deprived the knight of squares) and now:

a) 4 ♖d3 d4f6, as in the 3... ♖d6 Scandinavian, is of course playable, but not so impressive with a knight on c3, preventing the move c3. The popular idea of a3 and b4 doesn't go that well with d4c3, which blocks off White's long a1-h8 diagonal. Nevertheless, an extra tempo is an extra tempo, and White might want to investigate independent ideas such as 5 d4f3 ♗b4 6 ♗g5 h6 7 ♗h4 0-0 8 0-0-0.

b) 4 ♖a4 d4f6 (4...d5 5 d4f3 has the idea 5...d4f6 6 ♗g5 ♗b4 7 0-0-0! ♗xc3 8 bxc3 h6 9 ♖h4) 5 d4f3 ♗c5 6 ♗g5 h6 7 ♗h4 g5 8 ♗g3 d6 9 0-0-0 ♗d7 10 e4 with a complex battle.

2...d4c6

After 2...d6 3 d4 (3 e4 and now 3...d4f6 4 d4 is a Philidor Defence; instead 3...d4g4 4 d4 d4c6!?) appears to favour White after 5 ♗b5 or even 5 d5 d4d4 6 ♗e3) 3...exd4 (3...d4d7 4 e4 d4gf6 is another Philidor Defence) 4 d4xd4, and here 4...d4f6 5 e4 (5 g3!?) is yet another Philidor Defence, while 4...d5! 5 e4! has the idea 5...c5 6 d4db5! a6 7 ♗f4 axb5 8 ♗xb5+ ♗d7 9 d4xd5.

3 d4 exd4 4 d4xd4 (D)

4...d4f6

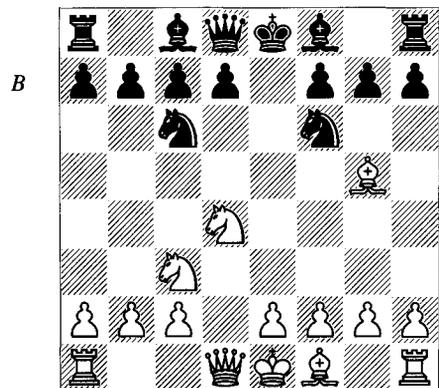
4...d4b4 5 d4xc6 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 bxc6 7 ♖d4 is unclear, with themes resembling those in the game. 4...d4c5 can be met by 5 d4f5!? or 5 ♗e3!?, both giving the play a unique flavour.

4...d5 is also playable, but White's position looks preferable after 5 ♗f4.

White has great fun after 4...g6? 5 d4d5! (threatening 6 d4b5) 5...a6 (5...d4b4 6 d4b5 d4xd5 7 ♖xd5 with the ideas of ♖e5+ and 7...d4g7? 8 ♖c5!) 6 ♗g5! f6 (6...♖xg5 7 d4xc7+ d4d8?? 8 d4de6+) 7 ♗h4 ♗g7 8 e4 d4h6 9 ♗c4 and White can be very happy with his position. In fact, Van Geet-V.Sokolov, Wijk aan Zee 1970 continued 9...d4a5? 10 e5! with a winning game for White.

5 ♗g5 (D)

5 e4 is a Scotch Four Knights Game. It doesn't hurt for either side to be familiar with a lot of different openings and structures when 1 d4c3 is involved!



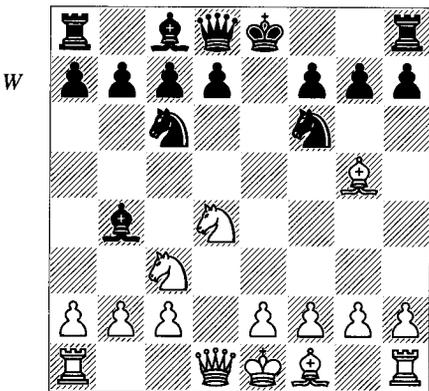
5...d4b4!

It's hard to argue with the logic of pinning White's knight once the c1-bishop has travelled to the kingside. 5...♗c5 is also perfectly acceptable, when, for example, 6 e3 0-0 7 ♗d3 can follow. But Black should avoid these natural moves:

a) 5...h6?! 6 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 7 ♘db5 ♗e5! (7...♗d8? 8 ♘xc7!; 7...♗d8 8 ♘d5 ♗b4+ 9 ♘xb4 ♘xb4 10 ♗d2 ♘c6 11 ♗e3+ ♗f8 12 0-0-0 and Black's king position is a problem) 8 ♘d5! (8 ♗d5 is a solid option) 8...♗b8! 9 ♘bxc7+ ♗d8 10 ♘b5 (Keilhack isn't happy with this move, but it suffices, and 10 c3 a6! 11 e3 with the idea 11...♗d6 12 ♘a8! ♗xa8 13 ♘b6, threatening ♘c4, still isn't clear following 13...♗c5 14 ♘xa8 b5) 10...♗xb2 11 ♗b1 ♗e5 (11...♗xa2 12 e4 a6 13 ♘bc3 ♗a5 14 ♗d3) 12 e3 with a comfortable advantage for White, H.Steiner-Morris, corr. 1995.

b) 5...♗e7? results in a clear superiority for White after 6 ♘f5 0-0 7 ♘xe7+ ♗xe7 8 ♘d5 ♗e5 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 c3. Keilhack indicates that this position has occurred 'incredibly often'!

We now return to 5...♗b4 (D):



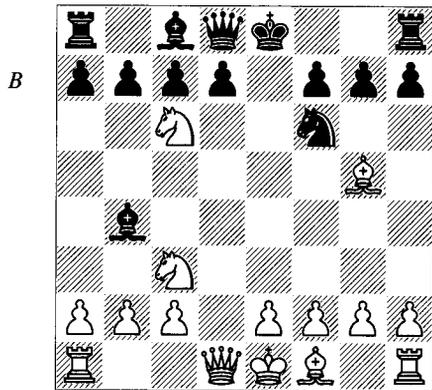
6 ♘xc6 (D)

Or:

a) Ivanchuk's flirtation with 1 ♘c3 versus Anand in blindfold chess in Monte Carlo 1998 ended badly after the slow 6 e3 0-0 7 ♗e2!? h6 8 ♗xf6 (8 ♗h4 is natural) 8...♗xc3+!? (or 8...♗xf6 9 0-0 ♘xd4 10 exd4 c6) 9 bxc3 ♖xf6 10 0-0 d5 11 ♗b1 ♗d8 12 ♘xc6!? ♗xc6 13 ♗d4 ♗e6 14 ♗f3 b6 15 c4? (Kostakiev suggests 15 ♗fd1! with the idea ♗d2, ♗b1 and c4) 15...♗ab8 (or 15...♗d6!) 16 ♗b4 ♗e8 17 c5

♗e7 18 c6 ♗d6 19 ♗c3 ♗e8 and White's pawn falls.

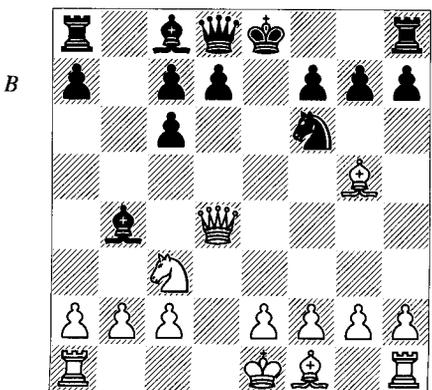
b) 6 ♗d3 seems roughly equal; the play might go 6...0-0 7 a3 (7 0-0-0 ♗xc3! has the idea 8 ♗xc3 ♘e4, so Suba-Korneev, Zaragoza 1999 continued 8 bxc3 h6 9 ♗h4 d5 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♗d4 g5 12 ♗g3 ♗e7 13 f3 ♗e8 with active pieces) 7...♗c5 (7...♗a5!?) 8 e3 h6 9 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 10 ♘e4 ♗e7 11 ♘c5.



6...bxc6

6...♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 dxc6 (7...bxc6 8 ♗d4 seems slightly to favour White) 8 ♗xd8+ ♘xd8 gives White a kind of abstract advantage with his bishop-pair and kingside majority (Black's queenside majority isn't likely to produce a passed pawn). Then instead of Keilhack's 9 0-0-0+, 9 f3 seems to be the most accurate move, since neither the king's nor the rook's best squares are apparent as yet.

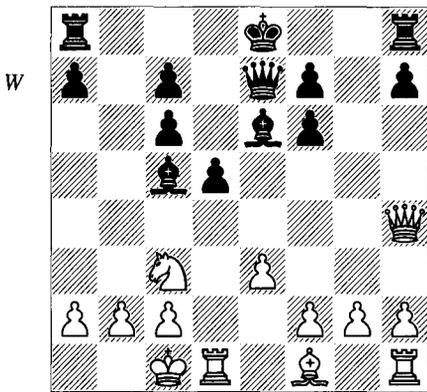
7 ♗d4 (D)



7...♗e7?!

7...♙e7! is solid and equal, although still interesting; for example, 8 0-0-0 0-0 9 e4 d6 (after 9...c5!, Keilhack prefers 10 ♖d3 to 10 ♖d2 d6 11 f4?! h6 with the idea of 12 ♙h4? ♗xe4!; Pell-R.Bellin, Montecatini Terme 1995 continued 12 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 and Black was for choice) 10 ♙c4 ♗d7 11 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 12 f4 a5 13 ♖he1 ♗b6 14 e5!? ♙g4?! (14...d5 15 ♙d3 ♖b8) 15 exd6 ♖xd6, Kielczewski-E.Romanov, Warsaw rapid 2005, and now 16 ♖xd6 cxd6 17 ♙e2 keeps a positional edge.

8 ♙xf6 gxf6 9 e3 d5 10 0-0-0 ♙c5?! 11 ♖h4 ♙e6 (D)



12 g3

Black's structure is shot. Easier ways to stay on top were 12 ♙d3 and 12 ♗e2! (with the idea 12...♖b8 13 ♗d4).

12...♖b8 13 a3?!

To prevent ...♖b4, apparently, although that wouldn't accomplish much.

13...♙f5?!

13...♙d6! threatens ...♙e5, to grab the long diagonal and threaten the knight on c3. Then 14 ♖a4 ♙d7 15 ♖xa7 0-0 gives Black at least enough counterplay for the pawn.

14 ♙d3! ♙g6?

14...♙d7 15 ♖he1 ♖e5.

15 ♙xg6 fxg6 16 ♖a4 ♖d7 17 e4! ♙xf2 18 exd5 0-0

White is winning now. If 18...cxd5, 19 ♖f4! hits f2 and f6, when 19...♖f5 20 ♖xf5 gxf5 21 ♗xd5 results in White having an extra pawn and Black a horrendous structure.

19 dxc6 ♖e6 20 ♖e4!?

20 ♗b1! with the idea ♖d7 would lead to a quicker win.

20...♖fe8 21 ♖f3 ♙e3+ 22 ♗b1 ♙c5? 23 ♗d5! ♖e5 24 b4 f5 25 ♖he1 ♖xe1 26 ♙xe1 ♖xe1+ 27 ♗a2 ♙d6 28 ♖f2 ♖h1 29 ♖xa7 ♖f8 30 ♖f2 1-0

The Strange Ones

Now let's turn to some truly eccentric first moves for White, beginning with the 'good enough' category:

a) 1 a3 can't be too bad (it creates no weaknesses), although it is difficult to recommend. In fact, the move a3 can be useful in the 1 e4 e5 openings and the Sicilian Defence; there's even a whole book on 1 e4 c5 2 a3, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. However, if played on the first move, there are too many lines in which it is hardly relevant. For example, the 'irregular-move killer' 1...g6 makes you wonder why anyone would trade a3 for ...g6. White could argue that after 2 c4, there are many lines in which a3 will eventually prove useful, but that's a little lame. More ambitiously, Neil McDonald tried to solve this problem by means of 1 a3 g6 2 f4!? ♙g7 (2...e5!? would be a strange spin-off of the From Gambit) 3 ♗f3 d5 4 g3, a reversed Leningrad Dutch Defence with an additional a3, which is interesting but no more than equal. Of course, a properly-handled 1...d5 can also render 1 a3 harmless.

b) 1 e3 has little going for it in a positive sense, but it's trouble-free, since 2 d4 can always follow, and 2 f4 with a Bird Opening is often possible. After 1...e5, French Defence players might like 2 d4, and English Opening players 2 c4; also, 2 b3 would be an Owen Defence reversed with the normal move e3 included. Against 1...d5, 2 d4 will probably become a Colle Opening or Queen's Gambit Semi-Tarrasch, whereas others might like 2 f4 or 2 b3. And so forth; the point is that, while 1 e3 is a thoroughly uninspired move, and I'm not recommending it, it isn't 'substandard' or 'bad'.

c) 1 d3 is slightly more conventional in spirit, because White can slip into default Pirc Defence/King's Indian Attack mode by 2 ♗f3, 3 g3, 4 ♙g2 and 5 0-0. Otherwise, the comments about 1 e3 apply here too.

d) 1 c3, sometimes called the Saragossa Opening, commits White rather early on. This

rather pathetic-looking move has been associated with the truly abysmal ♖c2, but if White keeps wasting time in that manner, Black really *will* stand better. So 2 d4 should probably follow. As applies to 1 e3, Black can play almost anything, but 1...e5 2 d4 exd4 3 cxd4 d5 is a form of the Exchange QGD that is harmless to Black, and 1...d5 suggests itself, because then 2 d4 is equivalent to the anaemic 1 d4 d5 2 c3, 2 ♟f3 ♟f6 doesn't inspire, and otherwise Black has nothing to fear.

The following two first moves may in some theoretical sense be adequate, but will be difficult to handle and are somewhere between good enough and substandard:

e) 1 a4 strikes me as playable, much more so than 1 h4, although I can't particularly recommend it. You can generally pick conservative openings in which a4 tends to be useful, or is at least not harmful. Let's see how this might go. My own sense is that King's Indian Attack set-ups are compatible with a4; for example, 1 a4 d5 2 ♟f3 c5 3 g3 ♟c6 4 ♟g2 e5 5 d3 (the equivalent of 1 a4 e5 2 d3 d5 3 g3 c5 4 ♟g2 ♟c6 5 ♟f3) is a King's Indian in which, regardless of whether Black plays for ...f6, ...♟f6, ...♟e7 and ...♟g4 or otherwise, White's move e4 will at some point (perhaps after ♟a3 or ♟bd2) secure the use of c4. There are any number of move-orders for both sides, of course and Black by no means has to commit to either ...c5 or ...e5 when he plays 1...d5, nor White to ♟f3. But I think there are clever ways for White to squeeze at least some utility out of the inclusion of a4.

Versus 1...e5, White can play in similar fashion with a reversed Pirc Defence (2 d3, 3 ♟f3, 4 g3, etc.), or even a Philidor-style formation, getting a playable game in which a4 can help his cause somewhat. There are more provocative ways to set up. After 1 a4 e5, for example, it seems to me that 2 ♟f3, a reversed Alekhine Defence, is a legitimate try; many variations of the Alekhine utilize the move ...a5, as you can verify by going through the main lines, although naturally Black can benefit too (versus lines with ♟c3, for example, ...♟b4 might be useful).

Don't get me wrong: 1 a4 is basically only a waiting move and you have little positive reason to play it. It allows instant equality, which White shouldn't really concede to Black on the

first move. For Black, the possibility of coming to an actual disadvantage is reduced dramatically, almost regardless of what his first move is; in that sense, 1 a4 isn't really to be played except as a matter of fancy. I should also note that against 1 a4, 1...g6 is a sound and useful reply. That will apply to many other irregular first, second and third moves as well. I made the same point in Volume 3, when talking about irregular moves in the English Opening.

f) 1 ♟a3 is definitely ugly, but not so bad. I actually played many games with it as a 2100+ player. Against 1...e5, I liked to try 2 ♟f3!?, when 2...♟xa3 3 bxa3 is a double-edged decision, since White gains the bishop-pair and b-file and, as noted elsewhere, doubled a-pawns tend not to be much of a problem until the end-game. Moreover, the move ♟a3 sometimes proves useful in the reversed Alekhine Defence positions after 2...e4 3 ♟d4, because the move c4 can justify some otherwise marginal formations. Versus 1...d5, White can play 2 ♟f3 (2 c4 is safe but less flexible); for example, 2...c5 3 c4 or 2...♟f6 3 b3 (or 3 c4). 1 ♟a3 c5 2 e4 is a Zviagintsev Sicilian, which turns out to be perfectly respectable; White can also play 2 ♟f3. Finally, as always, 1...g6 is quite satisfactory. The rationale given by some books for 1 ♟a3 is that the knight will be re-routed to c2 after White plays c3; that is rather sad-looking, however. A more interesting course for White against 1...g6 is to set up with e4, d4 and c3 and await the chance for a profitable ♟c4. I won't go into more details about this eccentric knight development, but you can probably put together enough ideas to elevate it to the 'good enough' category.

Finally, we have some moves that I'll assess as simply 'bad':

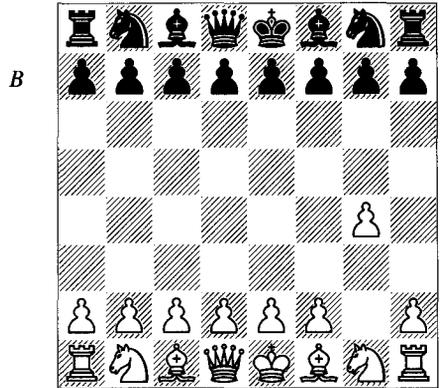
g) The unpalatable 1 ♟h3 simply puts the knight on a bad square from which it will soon have to move again. In contrast to 1 ♟a3, White cannot normally permit his h-pawns to be doubled after ...♟xh3. If he prevents that with g3, the knight is still subject to attack by ...h5-h4 or the queen and bishop along the h3-c8 diagonal. Normally one might be able to use this knight productively to support the move f4, but here that will dangerously weaken White's kingside. It's hard to argue with 1...e5 as a response, but 1...d5 2 g3 e5 is the obvious course, when 3

♠g2 ♖c6 4 0-0? h5! is not what White wants! Another logical set-up is 3...♗f6 4 d3 c6.

h) 1 h4 is described above. It has no redeeming value that I've found.

i) 1 h3, Basman's Opening, moves a rook's pawn for no reason, except perhaps to play 2 g4, with a transposition to 1 g4 below. True, 1 h3 doesn't create as serious a weakness as 1 h4. On the kingside, however, every situation tends to be more delicate; after 1 a3, for example, an early c4 is often desirable. After 1 h3, by contrast, White would court disaster by playing the mirror-image move f4. A more serious problem for White is that 1 h3 wastes a tempo and essentially hands the advantage of the first move to Black. That's because, unlike most slow first moves by White, it doesn't go with or support many (if any) logical piece deployments. That is, if Black plays 1...d5 or 1...e5, it's unlikely that White will be able to arrive at a position in which h3 is useful without making concessions elsewhere.

j) 1 f3 is sometimes used to set up strange formations with, for example, ♖f2, g3 and e3, and sometimes White plays g3 and ♗h3-f2. Unfortunately, 1 f3 does more than forfeit the advantages of the first move. It hurts White's future chances for occupying the centre with



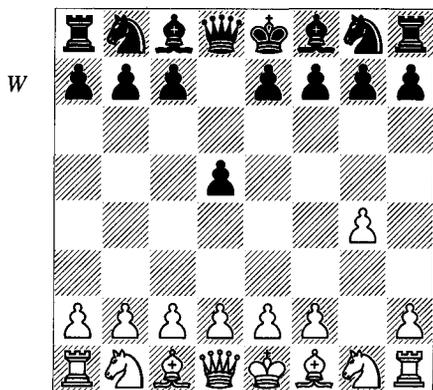
or merely find it difficult and impractical to play. At any rate, because of the cultish status of 1 g4, here's a serious look at some of the most critical lines.

Basman – Kudrin
Manchester 1981

1 g4

White has the same basic goals as in the Sokolsky/Polish with 1 b4. He will fianchetto quickly and at the same time grab some king-side territory; this is obviously more ambitious than 1 e3. It also has terrible drawbacks; by not

$\text{e}3\text{c}3+ 9 \text{bxc}3 \text{d}2\text{h}5$ made things worse in Skembris-Mariotti, Budva 1981.



2. e3g2

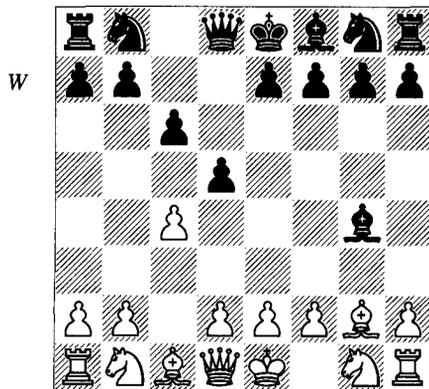
This is the traditional move, introducing a sort of gambit in which White hopes to put pressure on Black's d-pawn via c4; he usually regains the pawn soon. If this fianchetto, consistent with the purported aggressiveness of 1 g4, doesn't work, that's a very bad sign for the Grob.

The passive alternative 2 h3 will transpose into our main game if Black chooses 2...e5 3 e3g2 c6. He can also play 3...d3, which has a good record. Then Basman-Miles, Manchester 1981 tested the consistent move 4 c4!?, but Black gained the advantage after 4...dxc4 5 ♖a4 d3 6 d3f3! (6 ♖xc4 e6 is very awkward; for example, 7 ♖a4 ♗d4! 8 ♗d1 ♗d7 9 d3c3 h5 10 g5 0-0-0) 6...d3g6 7 d3c3 e6 8 h4?! (but White is already a pawn down with the inferior position) and here, instead of Miles's (perfectly good) move 8...e3b4, 8...d3f4! 9 e3f1 ♗d7 would be extremely strong. Perhaps White should resign himself to the passive 4 d3, but then it's difficult to justify 1 g4 with its attendant weaknesses.

2...c6

Black simply blocks the long diagonal and maintains the threat of ...e3xg4; White will find it hard to justify the move g4 in the resulting structures. Nevertheless, in my opinion,

but leads to a fun position following 4 e3xb7 d3 5 e3xa8 ♗xa8, when White must go in for 6 f3 e5, since after 6 d3f3?? d3 he loses a piece!; alternatively, 4 ♗b3 d3 5 ♗xb7 ♗b8 6 ♗xa7 e5 gives Black plenty of compensation).

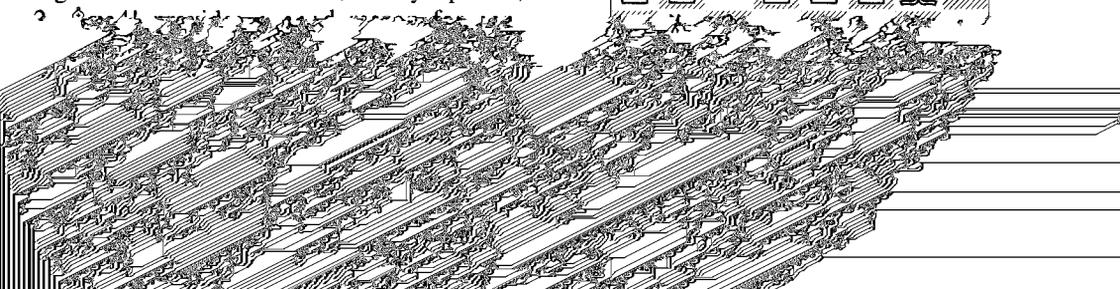
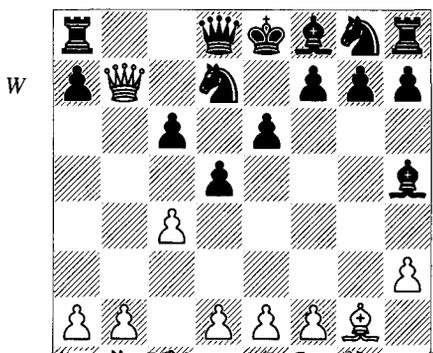


White is a pawn down and his options are not enviable:

a) 4 ♗b3 has several good replies:

a1) 4...♗b6 5 cxd5 ♗xb3 6 axb3 cxd5 7 e3xd5 d3c6 is more comfortable for Black, although White can almost equalize by 8 e3xc6+ bxc6; for example, 9 ♖a6 e3c8 10 ♖a4 e5 and in place of 11 d3a3 e3e6 12 d3c4 e4!, as in O.Vovk-Kernazhitsky, Kiev 2000, White should accept the mild discomfort that follows 11 d3f3 f6 12 d3 d3e7.

a2) 4...e6! is a more advantageous approach: 5 h3 (or 5 ♗xb7 d3 6 cxd5 cxd5) 5...e3h5 6 ♗xb7 d3 7 (D).



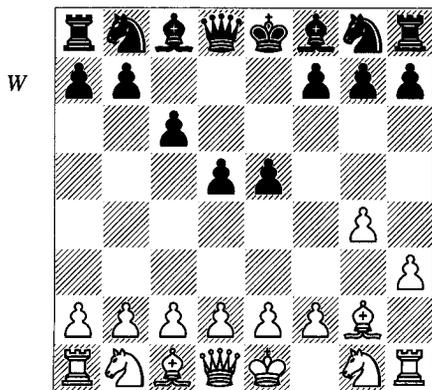
Black with the better development and a structural advantage following, for example, 8 d4 ♖b8!.

a3) 4...♟f6! is also very effective: 5 ♖xb7 (5 cxd5 transposes to line 'b1') 5...♟bd7 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 h3 ♟h5 (7...♟c5!?) 8 ♟c3 e6 9 ♟b5 ♟c8!, Lambiris-Martidis, Athens 1987. Compare the position after 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 ♖b3 ♟f6 6 ♟c3 e6 7 ♖xb7 below: the insertion of h3 and

10 ♖a4 0-0 11 d4 ♟e7 12 ♟d2 ♟b6 13 ♖b3 ♟c4 with great pressure.

I suspect that 2...♟xg4! constitutes a virtual refutation of 1 g4 d5 2 ♟g2. It doesn't bode well for White that Black has so many options which appear to give him the advantage.

The game's 2...c6 (*D*) remains relevant, however, since it can transpose to 2 h3 e5 3 ♟g2 c6, and in any case it produces standard pawn-

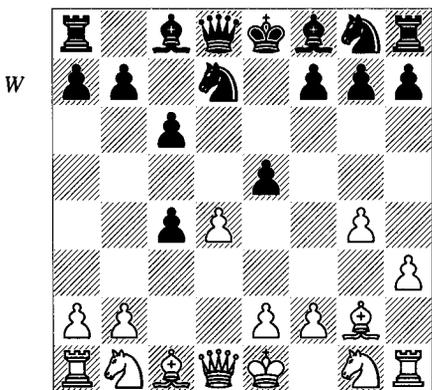


4...d7 (contemplating ...g6-h4; 4...h5 is also good when, in order to avoid split pawns, 5 g5 is probably best, but the resulting position after 5...d6 or 5...e6 can't be attractive) 5 d3 g6 6 c3 h5 7 gxh5 (7 g5 lets Black play ...e6 without worrying about d5) 7...h4 8 dxh4 wxh4 9 e4 d4 10 d2 wxh5 with the better pawn-structure.

4...e4

This is played most often, although with White's weaknesses, it should come as no surprise that more restrained moves also do well. For example, 4...exd4!? 5 wxd4 d7 has an excellent practical score.

4...d7 is also convincing: 5 c4!? (White gambits a pawn; otherwise, how does he gain any activity for his pieces? 5 dx5 dx5 leaves him with a serious disadvantage in the centre) 5...dxc4 (D).



6 d3 (after 6 dx5 Kosten gives 6...wa5+! 7 d3 dx5) 6...d6 (or 6...wb6!) 7 d3 and now 7...d7 8 d4 gave Black an edge in

Basman-Strauss, British Ch, Brighton 1984, but 7...h5! is even better; for example, 8 g5 d7 9 d4 c7 10 dx5 dx5 11 wxd8+ dx8 12 e3 dx3+ 13 xf3 e5 14 0-0-+ c7 with the idea ...d5 or ...d6. Lines like these illustrate a general disadvantage for White that goes beyond any particular move-order.

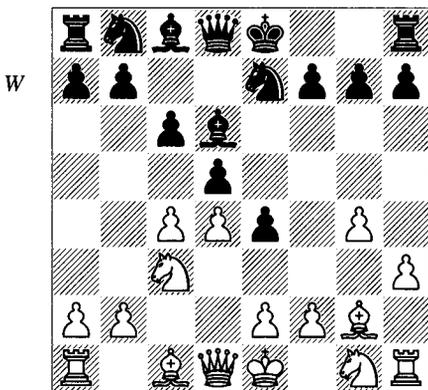
5 c4

Otherwise Black develops casually and plays on the kingside by ...f5.

5...d6

This is the most ambitious move; nevertheless, 5...h5, 5...f5, 5...a6 and 5...b4+!? have all functioned satisfactorily.

6 c3 d7 (D)



7 e5!?

White's idea is to provoke ...f6 and thereby open the a2-g8 diagonal; then wb3 will have more effect. Two alternatives are particularly revealing:

a) 7 g5 e6 8 h4 d5! 9 e3 (9 e3? dx4! 10 hx4 wxg5). Now in Basman-Keene, Manchester 1981, Black won a fine game after 9...0-0 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 dx5? (11 xf5 is better) 11...g3!, but more convincing is simply 9...dxc4!, which nets a substantial advantage after 10 c2 0-0 11 wx4 g6! or 10 dx4 0-0 (or here 10...dx4 11 xe6 fxe6 12 e3 df5).

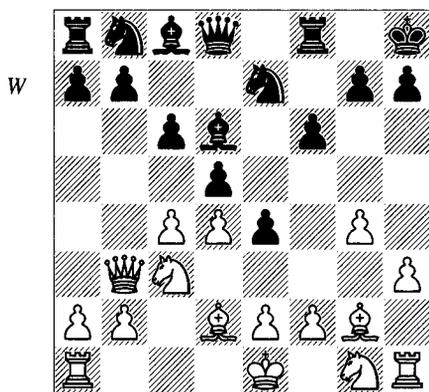
b) 7 wb3 can be met in several ways (for example, 7...a6). The most important response is 7...0-0! 8 e5 (after 8 d2, the simplest way to a better game is 8...dxc4 9 wxc4 e6 10 wa4 f5) 8...f6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 dx5?! (10 d2!? wh8! transposes to the note on 10 cxd5 below) 10...e6 11 dx7+ wx7 12 d5 e7! 13 e3

♭a6 and Black will win back the d-pawn with much the better position.

7...f6 8 ♖d2 0-0!

Precisely the move that White was hoping for, since after 9 ♗b3 he can try to use a pin on d5 to amplify his pressure. Nevertheless, it turns out that Black can easily defend against any threats. 8...♭a6 is also acceptable; for example, 9 ♗b3 ♗b6! 10 cxd5 ♗xb3 11 axb3 cxd5.

9 ♗b3 ♖h8! (D)



10 ♜c1

Bücker likes Black after 10 0-0-0 a5 11 c5 ♖c7 with the idea ...f5.

The most critical line is 10 cxd5 cxd5, and now:

a) 11 e3 ♭bc6 12 0-0-0 (walking into an attack, but 12 ♭ge2 f5! and 12 ♭xd5? ♖e6 13 ♖xe4 ♖c7! are no fun either) 12...♭a5 13 ♗c2 ♖e6 with a promising queenside attack for Black, Querataro-Golmon, CompuServe 1994.

b) 11 ♭xd5 ♖e6 12 ♖xe4 ♭bc6! 13 ♭f3 (13 ♗xb7? ♗b8 14 ♗a6 ♖xd5! 15 ♖xd5 ♭b4) 13...♗b8! 14 ♖c3 ♖c7, and White is reduced to 15 ♭xe7 ♖xb3 16 ♭xc6 ♗e8! 17 ♭xb8 ♗xe4 18 axb3 ♖xb8, which is hardly desirable.

10...♭a6!?

10...f5! looks better still. These positions all favour Black; almost as importantly, they are difficult for White to play.

11 e3

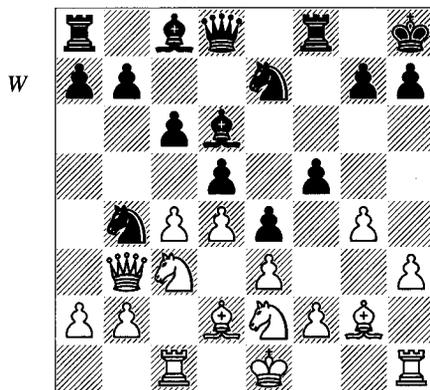
11 cxd5 cxd5 has the idea 12 ♭xd5? (12 e3 f5) 12...♖e6 13 ♗xb7 ♖xd5 14 ♗xa6 e3!.

11...f5!

White's kingside is weaker than Black's queenside.

12 ♭ge2 ♭b4?! (D)

12...♭g6!, threatening ...♭h4, is both better and strong.



13 ♖xe4 ♭xa2 14 ♭xd6?!

An interesting try, but White will come up short of compensation for the exchange. 14 ♗xa2 fxe4 15 0-0 is unclear.

14...♭xc1 15 ♭xc1 ♗xd6 16 ♖b4

At this point, instead of 16...♗c7 17 cxd5 cxd5, when 18 ♗c3! followed by ♭d3-f4 would initiate some counterplay on the dark squares, Black had the clearer 16...♗f6!, forcing 17 ♖xe7 ♗xe7, which neutralizes White's initiative and produces a clear advantage.

Even if you're satisfied with the game's main line, which is hardly likely, Black's many early alternatives should prove discouraging. As far as I can tell, 1 g4 is competitive with 1 h4 for the honour of being White's worst first move. Against an informed or skilled opponent, it is simply masochistic.

Universal First Moves for Black

Since the quality of Black's first move depends upon White's, we shall have to talk about individual cases. But some first moves have a 'universal' character, in that they can be played against any first move by White. For example, 1...g6, while thought of as eccentric and/or inferior in the past, is now an approved way to answer 1 e4, 1 d4 and 1 c4 (see Chapter 3). The acceptance of 1...b6 has taken longer, and it is

still viewed askance in some quarters, although that mainly applies to the 1 e4 b6 lines (see Chapter 4). Probably 1...b6 can be given the assessment of 'good enough', but it's a bit more marginal than 1...g6.

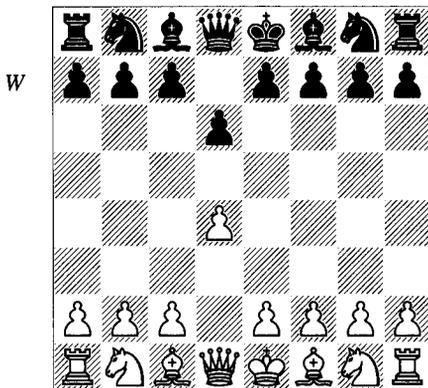
Two other irregular opening moves, 1...d6 and 1...c6, can be played as universal systems. They aren't seen a great deal at top levels, but are effective enough to have grandmaster adherents. In part, that's because Black can pick and choose against which of White's first moves to play independently, and against which to transpose into conventional openings. I should mention that playing these systems will repeatedly expose you to ideas and manoeuvres that crop up in mainstream openings, and of course mainstream opening ideas inform the use of all four universal systems that I've mentioned.

Black Plays 1...d6

1...d6 has long been used as a transpositional device but has grown into an independent weapon against 1 d4. Recently, strong players have used 1...d6 with increasing frequency and promoted it in books and DVDs. Let me outline

& ...g6, or simply ...g6 & ...g7 with Modern Defence themes. Finally, 2 d4 g4 transposes to 1 d4 d6 2 f3 g4.

1...d6 (D)

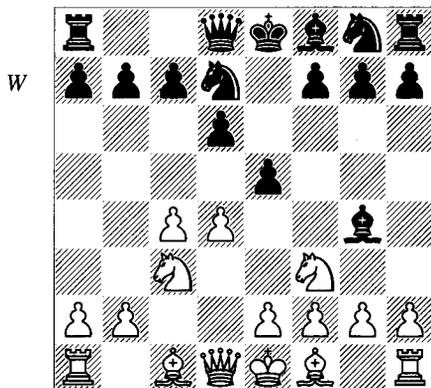
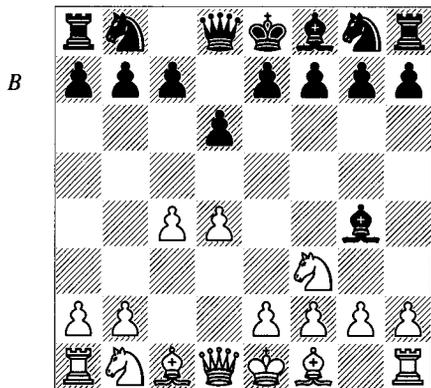


2 f3

Or:

a) 2 g3 e5 3 dxe5 (3 g2 f5) 3...dxe5 4 Wxd8+ Qxd8 is regarded as perfectly safe for Black. A bishop on g2 can be opposed by ...c6.

b) 2 c4 e5 (some players prefer 2...f6 3 c3 e5: 2...g6 will usually transpose into a



g4-bishop, Black wants to be assured of getting ...e5 or ...c5 in. The alternative 3...♗xf3 looks premature, but is playable; for example, 4 gxf3 (4 exf3 g6 5 ♖c3 ♗g7 6 ♗e3 ♖f6 7 ♗e2 c6 has been played in many grandmaster games;

0-0 0-0; for example, 8 b3 ♖e8 9 ♗b2 ♗f8 (or 9...c6; in either case, Black would like to play ...e4 and possibly ...d5) and now:

a) White can play h3 at several junctures, when Black has to consider whether ♗h5 is

more conservatively than White usually does when he embarks upon 1 $\text{c}3$. Let's see a game with notes which outline the possibilities.

Campora – Wockenfuss

Amsterdam 1985

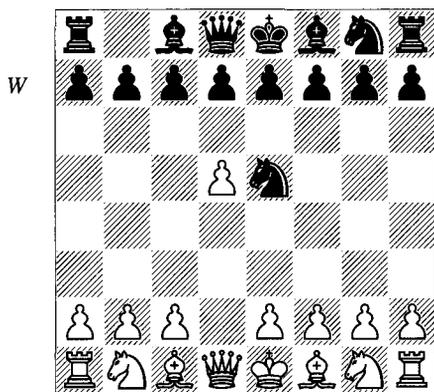
1 e4

1 d4 $\text{c}6$! is daring, and usually considered slightly inferior because of 2 d5. In view of that, Wisnewski, who champions 1... $\text{c}6$ against other moves, prefers to play 1...d5 and then ... $\text{c}6$ next, regardless of White's second move. That is somewhat less than a 'universal' system, but it's in a similar spirit. Anyway, let's look at 1 d4 $\text{c}6$:

a) 2 e4 transposes to our main line 1 e4 $\text{c}6$ 2 d4.

b) 2 $\text{f}3$ can be met by 2...d5, with a type of Chigorin Defence, and it can transpose to that defence upon 3 c4. Most books on that opening cover moves such as 3 $\text{e}4$ and 3 g3. Instead, 2...d6 3 e4 is mentioned below, via the move-order 1 e4 $\text{c}6$ 2 $\text{f}3$ d6 3 d4.

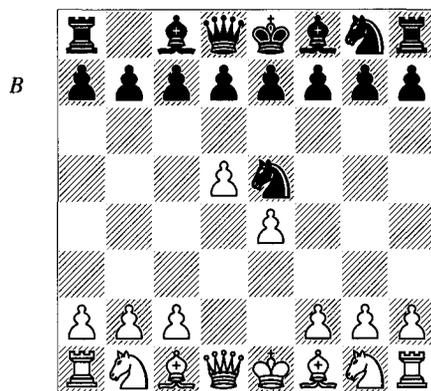
c) 2 d5 $\text{e}5$ (D).



Black is playing a mirror-image Alekhine Defence. As in that opening, he hopes to lure White's pawns forward and then decimate his centre. Most of what follows depends more upon specifics than principles, but a general difference consists in Black's ability to play ...c5 in many Alekhine lines, whereas in the variation before us, ...f5 could only be played at some risk to Black's king and kingside. Having said that, Black has the resources to make a real game out of it:

c1) 3 f4 is a reasonable move, and after 3... $\text{g}6$, Black's knight is immobilized and lacks immediate prospects. Still, the move f4 is itself weakening, and White has to be careful about overextending his centre. After the natural 4 e4, Black has 4...e5!, preparing ...c5, when White must avoid 5 f5? (simply a mistake) 5... $\text{h}4$ + 6 $\text{d}2$ $\text{f}6$! (this is better than 6... $\text{xe}4$ 7 fxe6 $\text{xd}5$ + 8 e1 $\text{xd}1$ 9 $\text{xd}1$ hxg6, as given in some sources, which may be only slightly in Black's favour) 7 $\text{f}3$ (the knight on g6 can't be taken due to 7... $\text{e}4$ +, but there's also no good way to defend the e-pawn; for example, 7 $\text{c}3$ $\text{b}4$ or 7 $\text{d}3$ $\text{e}4$ + 8 $\text{e}4$ $\text{xe}4$ $\text{xe}4$ 9 fxe6 $\text{wg}2$ + 10 $\text{e}2$ $\text{xd}5$ + and Black ends up with four pawns and a strong attack for the piece) 7... $\text{e}4$ + 8 e2 $\text{f}4$ + (8... $\text{f}6$ 9 fxe6 hxg6, with an ongoing attack, is also promising) 9 $\text{xf}4$ $\text{xf}4$ 10 $\text{xf}4$ exf4 11 $\text{f}3$ $\text{f}6$ and Black is clearly better; for example, 12 c4?! d6 13 $\text{xf}4$? g5+! 14 fxe6 $\text{h}6$ + 15 $\text{f}3$ fxe6 and ...0-0, which is simply awful for White. Instead, 5 dxe6! is best, when 5...fxe6 6 h4!? might be better than it looks, with the initial point 6... $\text{hx}4$? 7 $\text{g}4$! $\text{g}6$ 8 $\text{hx}7$. Another line is 6... $\text{c}5$!? 7 h5 $\text{d}6$ e7 8 h6 g6 9 $\text{f}3$ d5 10 $\text{c}3$, intending 10... $\text{f}6$ 11 $\text{g}5$!. There is a lot to explore here.

c2) 3 e4 (D) is White's most common and natural move:



3...e6! (presumably 3...c6 is playable, with the idea that the natural response 4 $\text{c}3$ blocks a later c4; then 4...d6 5 $\text{f}3$ $\text{xf}3$ + 6 $\text{xf}3$ $\text{f}6$ with the idea of ...g6, either before or after ...cd5, looks fairly normal; for some reason, 3...c6 is represented by only one game in my

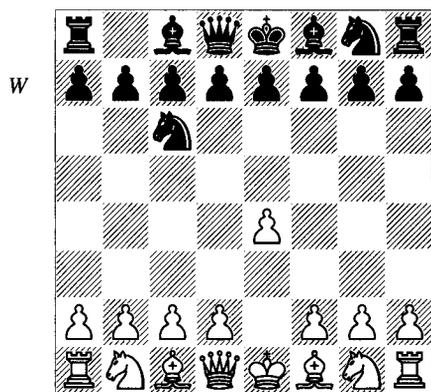
databases, and that with a spectacularly weak 4th move by Black – maybe I’m missing something) 4 dxe6! (this simple solution is a problem for Black; if White continues in a type of reversed Alekhine Four Pawns Attack by 4 f4 ♖g6 5 c4, then either 5...♗c5 or 5...♘f6 is satisfactory – the latter is a variation from the Knight’s Tango, which goes 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 ♖c6, and is one of the most respectable irregular openings) and now we have:

c21) 4...fxe6 5 ♗c3! waits for Black to commit: 5...b6!? (5...♗c5?? 6 ♖h5+ picks up a piece; 5...a6 6 f4 ♘f7 7 ♘f3 b5 is worth a shot) 6 f4! (after 6 ♘f3, 6...♘f7!? 7 ♗f4 ♗c5 8 ♗e2 ♘e7 doesn’t look too bad; instead 6...♘xf3+ 7 ♖xf3 ♗b7 was cleverly answered by 8 ♖h5+! 6 9 ♖e5 ♘f6 10 ♗b5!, threatening ♖xe6+, in Volkov-B.Savchenko, Moscow 2006; 6 ♗f4 ♘g6 7 ♗g3 should also give White an edge) 6...♘f7 (6...♘g6) 7 ♘f3, and Black’s development is awkward; he might try 7...♗c5!? 8 ♘a4 ♗e7 9 ♗d3 ♗b7 10 0-0 a6 with the idea ...b5 and ...♘f6.

c22) 4...dxe6 5 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 and now 6 f4!? ♘g6 may slightly favour White, but is a bit loose; instead, 6 ♗f4 seems to yield an edge: 6...♘g6 (6...♗d6!? 7 ♗g3 ♖e7 may be better) 7 ♗e3 ♘f6 8 ♘c3?! (8 f3! with a modest central advantage) 8...♘g4, and Black equalizes after 9 ♗d1+ ♗d7 10 ♗c1 ♗c5 11 ♘h3 ♖e7 12 ♗e2 ♘f6.

Let’s return to the game:

1...♖c6 (D)



This is the long-debated Nimzowitsch Defence, one of the best of the irregular openings versus 1 e4. Black will usually attack the centre

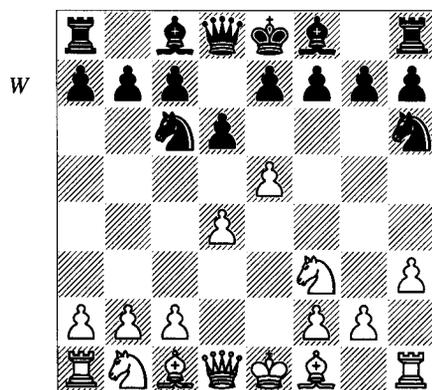
by ...d5 or ...e5, but he hasn’t committed yet. Again, over the years, several books and many theoretical articles have been produced about 1...♘c6, mainly by the move’s advocates, but it still isn’t used at the elite level. I’ll outline selected variations, trying to concentrate upon critical lines.

2 d4

2 ♘f3 is the main alternative, and a popular way to side-step Black’s speciality lines. Then Black can switch to a main-line double e-pawn opening by 2...e5, or enter a somewhat shaky form of the Scandinavian Defence by 2...d5 3 exd5 ♖xd5 (the development of the knight to c6 is usually deferred or skipped altogether). Another reasonable line that has been played by numerous grandmasters is 2...d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 ♗g4, with the main line going 5 ♗e3 e6 6 h3 ♗h5; it is theoretically somewhat in White’s favour. Even the absurd-looking continuation 2...f5!? has had serious analysis devoted to it.

But the most intriguing independent reply to 2 ♘f3 is 2...♘f6, when after 3 ♘c3, 3...e5 is a Four Knights Game, interesting but not usually feared by Black. Or Black can enter less charted waters with 3...d5; for example, 4 e5 can be answered by 4...d4!? or by 4...♘d7 5 d4 ♘b6, after which Black’s bishop will get to g4 or f5 with approximate equality.

So the main line after 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 is 3 e5! ♘g4 (3...♘d5 will transpose to a line of the Alekhine Defence that is considered a little risky, but is nevertheless quite respectable; note that Black’s move-order has avoided the Four Pawns Attack of that opening) 4 d4 d6 5 h3 ♘h6 (D).



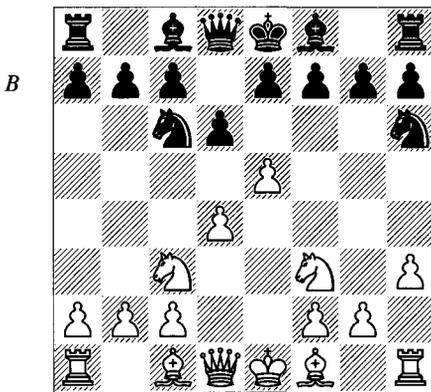
Black has a pretty ugly position that nevertheless has some merits. His decentralized knight is an undoubted disadvantage, but he has prospects of chipping away at White's centre, after which that piece might be reintroduced by ... $\text{d}5$. Of course, White can hardly complain about his prospects, but he shouldn't expect too much from the capture $\text{d}6$, which gives up the bishop-pair. $\text{d}6$ introduces a wide range of eccentric possibilities that are typical of irregular openings; for example:

a) $6 \text{ e}6!?$ $\text{f}6$ $\text{g}6$ $\text{h}6$ $\text{h}4?!$ ($8 \text{ c}4$ $\text{g}7$ 9 0-0-0 is comfortably equal; Wisniewski gives the cute line $10 \text{ e}1$ $\text{h}8$ $11 \text{ x}6?$ $\text{x}6$ $12 \text{ x}6$ $\text{x}f3$ 13 gxf3 $\text{xd}4!$, threatening both ... $\text{g}8+$ and ... $\text{xb}2$) $8 \dots$ $\text{d}7!$ $9 \text{ h}5+$ $\text{d}8$ $10 \text{ c}3$ $\text{e}8$ $11 \text{ e}2$ and now $11 \dots$ $\text{g}7$ was fine in Trias-J.Ramirez, Catania 1990, but $11 \dots$ $\text{h}5$ $12 \text{ xh}5$ $\text{e}5$ would definitely favour Black.

b) $6 \text{ exd}6$ $\text{xd}6$ $7 \text{ c}3$ $\text{a}6$ looks strangely similar to a Scandinavian Defence with $3 \dots$ $\text{d}6$.

c) $6 \text{ b}5$ $\text{a}7$ $\text{xc}6+$ $\text{bxc}6$ 8 0-0 $\text{g}6$ is OK.

d) $6 \text{ c}3$ (D).



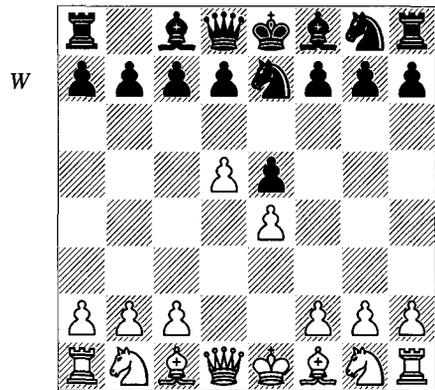
Now $6 \dots$ $\text{a}6!?$ intends $7 \text{ exd}6$ $\text{xd}6$ $8 \text{ d}5$ $\text{d}e5$. This favours White somewhat, but seems better than Narciso Dublan's $6 \dots$ $\text{dxe}5!$? $7 \text{ d}5$ $\text{d}d4$ $8 \text{ dxe}5$ $\text{d}hf5$, when many moves have been tried and analysed, but not the simple $9 \text{ e}3!$.

e) $6 \text{ xh}6$ $\text{gxh}6$ $7 \text{ b}5$ $\text{a}6$ $8 \text{ xc}6+$ $\text{bxc}6$ $9 \text{ e}2$ $\text{g}8!$, Sprenger-Keilhack, corr. 1996. Now if $10 \text{ g}3$ $\text{b}8$ $11 \text{ b}3$, Wisniewski recommends $11 \dots$ $\text{d}7$ $12 \text{ c}3$ $\text{c}5$, although 13 0-0-0 or $13 \text{ d}5$ looks better than his $13 \text{ dxc}5$ $\text{dxe}5$ $14 \text{ d}d1$ $\text{c}6$.

In general, White seems to keep the advantage in the lines after $5 \dots$ $\text{d}6$, but Black's position is within playable boundaries.

2...d5

$2 \dots$ $\text{e}5$ $3 \text{ d}5$ ($3 \text{ dxe}5$ $\text{dxe}5$ is another story; without going into the details, it seems that $4 \text{ d}f3$, $4 \text{ c}3$ and $4 \text{ f}4$ all achieve a modest advantage, which is perhaps enough to discourage Black from $2 \dots$ $\text{e}5$; on the other hand, my database shows over 1000 games after $3 \dots$ $\text{dxe}5$, so not everyone feels this way) $3 \dots$ $\text{dce}7$ (D).



This is the reverse of $1 \text{ c}3$ $\text{d}5$ $2 \text{ e}4$ $\text{d}4$ $3 \text{ dce}2$ $\text{e}5$, as discussed earlier. As in that line, Black's goal is to play ... $\text{d}f6$, ... $\text{d}g6$, and bring his bishop to $\text{c}5$ or $\text{b}4$. Now White has many possible moves, of which I'll note just a few:

a) In keeping with the reversed variation, $4 \text{ f}3$ has the idea $4 \dots$ $\text{d}g6$ $5 \text{ e}3!$ (compare $1 \text{ c}3$ $\text{d}5$ $2 \text{ e}4$ $\text{d}4$ $3 \text{ dce}2$ $\text{e}5$ $4 \text{ d}g3$ $\text{e}6!$). But since White's queen is cut off from $\text{h}5$, Black might try $4 \dots$ $\text{f}5!?$, to which White could reply $5 \text{ g}5!?$ $\text{h}6$ $6 \text{ e}3$ or $5 \text{ c}3$ $\text{d}f6$ $6 \text{ g}5$. For any plan in which Black plays ... $\text{g}6$ and ... $\text{g}7$, White can claim the normal advantage that he gets in the Sämisch Variation of the King's Indian following $\text{c}4$, $\text{c}3$, $\text{e}3$, $\text{f}3$, $\text{d}2$ and 0-0-0 , because Black's knight really doesn't belong on $\text{e}7$ in that case. Also, $\text{h}4$ - $\text{h}5$ might gain in force.

b) With the above in mind, it seems to me that $4 \text{ d}3$ also deserves a closer look, with the same ideas.

c) Another interesting idea is $4 \text{ h}4$, with the idea of advancing the h-pawn in the case of either ... $\text{d}g6$ or ... $\text{g}6$.

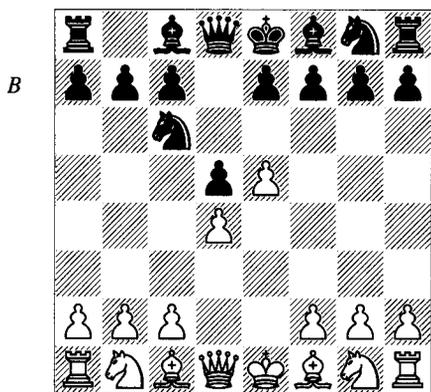
d) The usual version of the h-pawn advance has gone $4 \text{ d}f3$ $\text{d}g6$ $5 \text{ h}4$, when A.Ivanov-Benjamin, USA Ch, Parsippany 1996 continued $5 \dots$ $\text{h}5$ $6 \text{ g}5$ $\text{d}f6$ $7 \text{ c}3!$? ($7 \text{ d}3$ $\text{c}5$ $8 \text{ d}bd2$) $7 \dots$ $\text{c}5$ (Ivanov analyses $7 \dots$ $\text{b}4$ 8

♖d3!? ♗xc3+ 9 ♖xc3 ♜xe4 10 ♗xd8 ♜xc3 11 ♗xc7 ♜xd5 12 ♗xe5 with an edge for White, in view of Black's inferior pawn-structure) 8 ♜a4?! (8 ♖d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 is better) 8...♗b4+! 9 c3 ♗e7 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 with approximate equality, or perhaps a very slight edge to White because of his superiority in space after 11 g3.

3 ♜c3

White attacks the centre directly, but this isn't his only move:

a) 3 e5 (D) bears some resemblance to the French and Caro-Kann Advance Variations.



It's true that Black's knight on c6 prevents him from attacking the d4-pawn by ...c5, but in modern openings Black attacks the front on the pawn-chain (in this case, e5) as often as the 'base' (d4); after the move ...f6, that attack is assisted by his knight on c6. In terms of development, Black gets the best of both openings: in contrast to the French Defence, he can get his queen's bishop out to f5 or g4, and in contrast to the Caro-Kann Defence, he can put his queen's knight on c6! White's main advantage is his firm command of territory and the cramping influence of his e5-pawn. For example, in both the French and Caro-Kann, he finds it difficult to shore up his pawn-chain with f4; here it's easy. Unfortunately, he creates some light-square weaknesses by so doing. Let's see how this plays out; Black has two main moves:

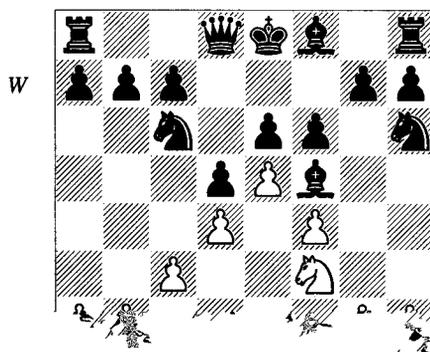
a1) 3...♗f5 isn't approved by most theoreticians, but it is sufficient to establish a meaning-

ful ♖d7 is probably a better approach) 7 ♜e2!? (a little outrageous; White neglects his development, but threatens ♜f4) 7...♗f5!? (the third bishop move) 8 ♜f4 (and the fourth by this knight!) 8...g6 9 c3 ♖d7 10 ♜d2 (10 b4!) 10...f6! 11 exf6 e5!? 12 dxe5 ♜xe5, Romanishin-Mariotti, Leningrad 1977, and here 13 ♜f3 is dynamically balanced.

a2) Instead, 4 ♜f3 can be met by 4...♖d7, 4...f6 or 4...e6. In the last case, 5 ♗e2 ♜b4!? 6 ♜a3 c5 7 c3 ♜c6 8 0-0 with the idea ♜c2-e3 is a possible continuation; compare the Short Variation of the Caro-Kann Defence.

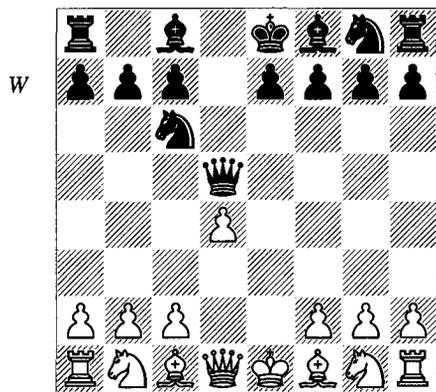
a3) White's most important move may well be the ultra-flexible 4 c3. The play can go in a great many directions at this point. 4...f6 5 f4 ♜h6 resembles 'a2' and 4...♖d7 is often played with the idea of an early ...0-0-0. The obvious 4...e6 defines the light-squared pawn-chain with Black's bishop outside it. After 5 f4, Black should consider restraining White's kingside first with ...♜h6 or ...h5 and ...♜h6 before undertaking action elsewhere. Compare line 'a2'.

a2) 3...f6 has several possible replies. Perhaps the most significant is 4 f4 (4 ♗d3 can be met by 4...♜xd4!? or 4...g6; 4 ♗b5 ♗d7 has the idea 5...♜xe5, familiar from the French Defence, so 5 ♜c3 fxe5 6 dxe5 e6 7 ♜f3 ♗b4 might follow, with perhaps a slight edge for White after 8 ♗xc6) 4...♜h6 (trying to take over light squares; f5, g4 and e4 are all potentially vulnerable; simply 4...♗f5 5 ♜e2 ♖d7 6 ♜g3 ♜h6 is also playable) 5 ♜f3 ♗f5 (or 5...♗g4, which White could have avoided by 5 c3 first; with the text-move, Black has in mind some combination of the moves ...e6, ...♗e4, ...♜f5 and ...fxe5) 6 c3 e6 (D).



7 ♖e2 (7 ♖d3 ♖e4! 8 ♜e2 f5! 9 ♘bd2 ♜d7 10 0-0 ♜f7, Bengsch-R.Becker, Kassel 1998 – Black will play for ...g5 by ...h6, ...♖e7 and ...♗g8, and White has no equally productive plan; 7 ♖b5 doesn't achieve much after 7...♜d7 8 0-0 a6) 7...♖e7 8 0-0-0 9 ♘a3 ♖e4! 10 ♘c2 ♜e8! 11 ♘e3 fxe5 12 fxe5 ♜g6 13 ♖d2 ♜f7 14 ♘h1 ♜af8 with play on the light squares and kingside pressure to counterbalance White's spatial advantage, F.Gomez-Castro Rojas, Medellin 1977. In general, 3...f6 seems satisfactory for Black.

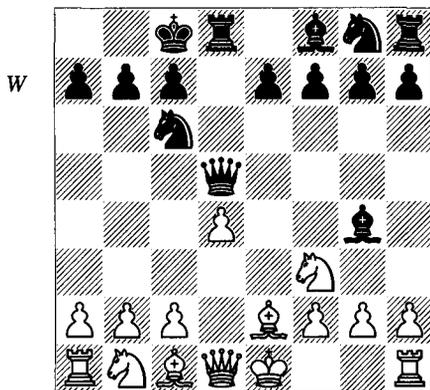
b) 3 exd5 ♜xd5 (D) is equivalent to 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♜xd5 3 d4 ♘c6.



Black intends to play ...e5 and bring his pieces out quickly (as in the Chigorin Defence to the Queen's Gambit). Since this is critical for the fate of 2...d5, we need to be careful about details: 4 ♘f3 (4 ♖e3 e5! has scored very well for Black after 5 ♘c3 ♖b4 6 a3 ♖xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♘f6, the most frequently seen line, as well as after 5 ♘f3 ♖g4 and 5 c4 ♜a5+) and now:

b1) 4...e5 has to be taken into account. After 5 ♘c3 ♖b4 6 ♖d2 ♖xc3 7 ♖xc3 e4 8 ♘e5 ♘xe5 9 dxe5, if Black tries 9...♘e7, then 10 ♜e2! is probably the best try to extract something from the position, and indeed, 10...♖e6 probably won't equalize after 11 g3! e3 12 f3, as in T.Schmid-Vitouch, Bundesliga 2008/9, while White's bishop-pair gained life after 10...♖f5 11 ♜d1 ♜c6 12 g4! e3 13 ♜g1 exf2+ 14 ♘xf2 with the idea ♜b5 in Arribas-Bruzon, Havana 1997. Probably 9...♖e6 is more accurate, when 10 ♜e2 can be met by 10...0-0-0.

wild and unclear: 7 0-0 ♘f6 8 h3 ♘xd4! 9 ♘xd4 ♖xe2 10 ♘cxe2 e5 or 7 d5 ♖xf3 8 ♖xf3 ♜e5+ 9 ♖e3 e6 10 0-0 ♘f6) 5...0-0-0 (D).



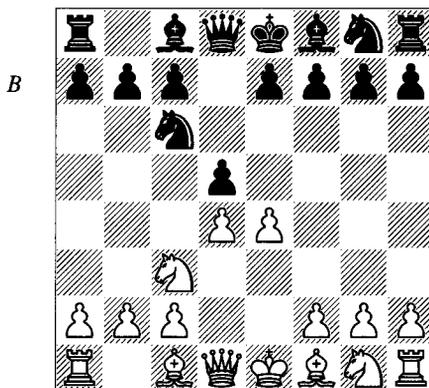
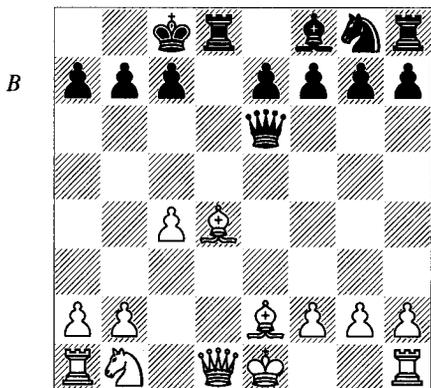
We've reached a curious juncture. Now 6 ♘c3 ♜a5 is a major line of the Scandinavian Defence, and 6...♜h5 is also played. White has two other important moves:

b21) 6 ♖e3 e5 (after 6...♘f6 7 0-0 both 7...e6 and 7...♜f5 have been satisfactory for Black) 7 c4 ♜a5+ 8 ♖d2 ♖b4 9 d5 ♖xf3 10 ♖xf3 ♘d4! (even better than 10...♖xd2+ 11 ♘xd2 ♘d4 12 0-0 ♜b4 13 ♖e1, C.Koch-Rahde, corr. 2005, when 13...♘f6! is correct) 11 ♘c3 ♜a6 12 ♖e2 ♘f6 13 a3 ♜he8! 14 ♖d3?! e4 15 ♖f1 e3! 16 fxe3 ♖xc3 17 bxc3 ♘f5 with a winning game for Black, Draeger-Bellmann, corr. 1999.

b22) 6 c4 ♜f5 (6...♜a5+ 7 ♖d2 ♜f5 {not the only move} 8 ♖e3 transposes to 6...♜f5 without allowing 7 0-0, and other 8th moves have not been effective; if nothing else, 8 ♖c3 ♖xf3 9 ♖xf3 ♘d4 transposes to the 7 ♖e3 main line) and now 7 ♖e3 (after 7 0-0, Black has equalized with both 7...♘xd4 8 ♘xd4 ♖xe2 9 ♜xe2 ♜xd4, which requires some care, and 7...♘f6 8 ♖e3 e5; by using 6...♜a5+, Black bypasses the issue entirely) induces Black to combine by 7...♖xf3 8 ♖xf3 ♘d4! 9 ♖xd4 (9 ♖g4 ♘c2+ 10 ♜xc2 ♜xg4) 9...♜e6+! 10 ♖e2 (D).

Now:

b221) Curiously, 10...c5 hasn't been played much, but my engines approve, and White hasn't won any of the games I've found. Keilhack and



or 12... f6 13 a3 a6 should favour Black. My guess is that this would be an easy way for Black to play the position, with the proviso that it is relatively untested.

b222) 10... e4 11 0-0 xd4 (even 11... xd4 12 d2 e6 13 a4 !, previously thought to give White good chances, only draws after the forcing 13... xd2 ! 14 ad1 xd1 15 xd1 f6 16 xa7 a6 17 d4 d6 18 a7 a6 , etc., D.Bosković-Savić, Vrnjačka Banja 2009) 12 a4 e6 13 c3 d6 ! (after 13... f6 , White has succeeded with 14 b5 b6 15 b4 c6 16 c5 , but it is probably unsound, whereas 14 fd1 b6 15 xd8+ xd8 16 b4 a5 or 16... c5 only very slightly favours White) 14 fd1 (14 b5 e5 15 xd6+ cxd6 16 f3 b8 leaves White with compensation, but no more than that) 14... e5 15 g3 b8 16 b5 a6 17 xd6 cxd6 18 f3 f6 19 d3 , Michna-Prié, San Sebastian 2009, and here 19... e4 is most accurate, again leaving White with compensation for the pawn, but only just so.

The line with 6 c4 f5 7 e3 has been part of White's claim to advantage after 3 xd5 , but it now appears harmless for more than one reason.

We now return to 3 dxc3 (D):

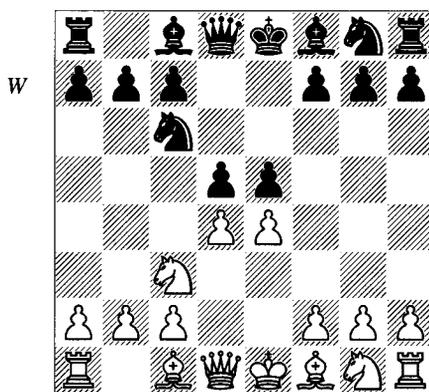
3...dxe4

This is the main move, but White apparently comes away with some advantage, so Black's alternatives are noteworthy:

a) 3... e6 transposes into a line of the French Defence, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 dxc3 dxc6 , that has been played regularly and accumulated a great deal of theory over the last decade. I'll leave it to the reader to research the details, but its current reputation is good, and, for example,

1... dxc6 specialist Wisnewski builds his repertoire around 3... e6 .

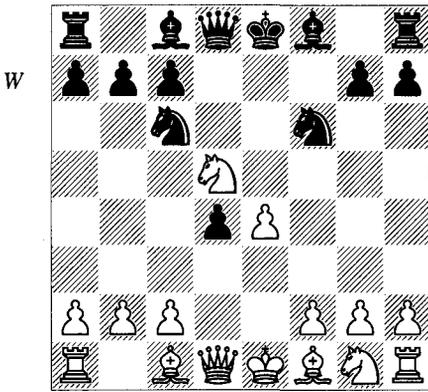
b) 3... e5 !? (D) is a bold attempt to clear out the centre.



White's best reply seems to be 4 dxe5 (4 exd5 xd4 and 4 xb5 dxe4 5 d5 a6 6 a4 b5 7 dxb5 axb5 8 xb5 dxe7 are not serious threats to Black's position) 4... d4 and then:

b1) After 5 dce2 !?, 5... f6 is recommended by Keilhack and Schlenker, perhaps not so convincingly after 6 exf6 dxf6 7 d3 . Instead, 5... c5 could be considered, with the idea 6 c3 g4 7 f3 dxc3 !, which is lively, if hardly forced. Black threatens ... f2+ , and after 8 xd8+ ?! xd8 9 fxg4 ? db4 he wins material.

b2) 5 d5 ! and now Keilhack and Schlenker put loads of engrossing analysis into the amazing 5... f5 (5... dge7 6 g5 e6 might be objectively superior), which has been played surprisingly often (perhaps as a consequence). 6 exf6 dxf6 (D) and now:



b21) One of the nicest lines goes 7 ♟c4 ♞e6 8 ♞g5 (8 ♞xc7+ ♞xc7 9 ♞xe6 ♞e7 turns out to be quite unclear) 8... ♞xd5!! 9 ♞xd8 (9 ♞h5+ g6 10 exd5 gxh5 11 ♞xd8 ♞b4+ 12 ♞f1 ♞xd5 13 ♞xd5 ♞xd8 14 ♞xc6+ bxc6 can probably be held by Black) 9... ♞b4+ 10 ♞e2 (10 ♞f1? ♞e3+ 11 fxe3 ♞xc4+ 12 ♞e2 ♞xd8! with a winning attack) 10... ♞c3+ (10... ♞f4+ 11 ♞f3 ♞xc4 12 ♞xc7 ♞e6 is also unclear) 11 bxc3 ♞xc4+ 12 ♞f3 0-0+ 13 ♞g4 ♞e6+ with an ongoing attack.

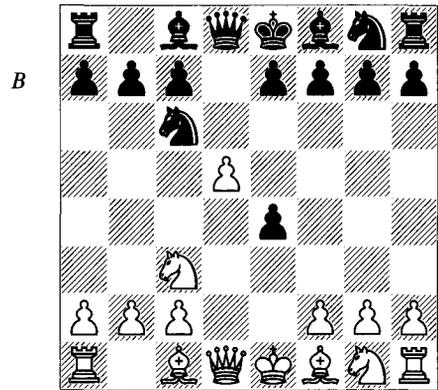
b22) Speaking objectively, however, the whole line beginning with 4 dxe5 must favour White. For one thing, 7 ♞g5 poses Black serious problems. If he tries to transpose by 7... ♞e6?! , 8 ♞xf6 gxf6 9 ♞c4! is strong. And here 7... ♞xd5? 8 ♞xd8 ♞b4+ doesn't work, if only because the simple 9 ♞d2 ♞xd2+ 10 ♞xd2 ♞xd8 11 exd5 leaves White a clear pawn ahead. So Black apparently has to be satisfied with 7... ♞e7 8 ♞xf6 ♞xf6 , which is rather depressing after 9 ♞c4 or 9 ♞f3 .

c) 3... ♞f6 combines French Defence and Alekhine Defence themes after 4 e5 :

c1) 4... ♞d7 works out tolerably well in the popular lines 5 f4 ♞b6 6 ♞f3 ♞f5 , 5 ♞f3 ♞b6 6 h3 ♞f5 with the ideas ... ♞b4 and ... e6 , and 5 e6 fxe6 6 ♞d3 (or 6 ♞f3 g6) 6... g6 7 h4?! e5 8 h5 exd4 9 hxg6 ♞f6! . Unfortunately, the simple 5 ♞xd5! ♞db8 , which used to be considered equal, favours White whether the knight retreats to c3 or e3; for example, 6 ♞c3! ♞xd4 7 ♞e3! , with the idea 7... ♞xe5 8 ♞f3 ♞d6 9 ♞e2 or 7... ♞xd1+ 8 ♞xd1 ♞b4?! 9 ♞d2 ♞f5 10 ♞b5! ♞8a6 11 ♞d4 ♞d7 12 e6! fxe6 13 ♞g3 0-0-0?! 14 ♞e5 ♞e8 15 a3 1-0 Soln-Haas, Faakersee 2001.

c2) 4... ♞e4!? 5 ♞ce2 (threatening to trap the e4-knight with 6 f3 ; 5 ♞xe4 dxe4 6 c3 has also enjoyed success because Black's e-pawn is vulnerable) 5... f6 6 f3 ♞g5 7 ♞xg5! ffg5 8 ♞d2 e6 (8... ♞f5 9 ♞g3 ♞g6 looks a better try for Black) 9 ♞h3! ♞e7 10 f4 and White has the initiative.

4 d5 (D)

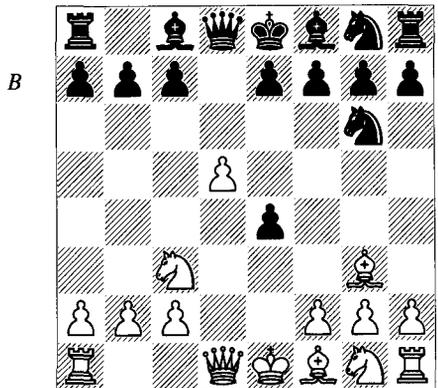


4... ♞e5

4... ♞b8 is also played, but it is quite slow and requires precise defence in many variations, including the main line 5 ♞c4 (or 5 ♞f4 ♞f6 6 ♞c4) 5... ♞f6 6 ♞f4 . Black should be well-prepared if he wants to take up such an undeveloped position, which is not to say that it is objectively bad.

5 ♞d4

White gains a small but safe edge with this move. 5 ♞f4 ♞g6 6 ♞g3 (D) is more active and critical.



Then Black has two serious tries:

a) 6...f5 7 d3! (with the idea d5) 7...e5 (7...a6 8 f3! d6! 9 fxe4 dxe4 10 dxe4 fxe4 11 d5! and White recovers the pawn with a positional advantage) 8 dxe6 and now:

a1) 8...c6 9 d8+ d8 10 d5 d6 (10...e8 could be answered by 11 h4! e7 12 d7) 11 0-0-0+ e8, Apicella-Vaisman, French Ch, Angers 1990, and now 12 h4! is very strong.

a2) 8...xe6! 9 d5! d6! 10 d6 cxd6 11 d4 (or 11 d6, when 11...f7? fails to 12 c7+!, while 11...xd6 12 d6+ e7 13 dxb7 c8! 14 0-0-0 d6 15 d5 gives Black some but not full compensation for the pawn) 11...d6, Rogers-Dunne, Philadelphia 1986, and here White can keep an edge with 12 d6+ e7 13 0-0-0 b6! 14 d7! h6 15 c5+ xc5 16 d5.

b) 6...a6 7 d4 (7 h4!? has the idea 7...h5 8 d4!? b5 9 d3 d6 10 e2 e3 11 0-0-0! exf2 12 d3 and Black is under great pressure, but 7...e5 8 dxe6 xe6 improves, when 9 dxe4 e7! threatens 10...f5 as well as 10...b4+, so 10 d3 0-0-0 11 e2 d5 might follow, with equality) 7...d6 (7...f5 8 d3 b5 9 d3 d6 and in place of 10 0-0 h5, White can try 10 e2 b4 11 d4 d5 12 0-0-0 with some compensation; for example, 12...e6 13 f3 exf3 14 gxf3 f7 15 h1 with the idea of dxc7) 8 e2 d4 9 f3 exf3 10 dxf3 d5 11 0-0-0 d5 12 hxg3 c8 13 h1 with open lines and a dangerous attack, J.Peters-T.Taylor, Los Angeles 2004

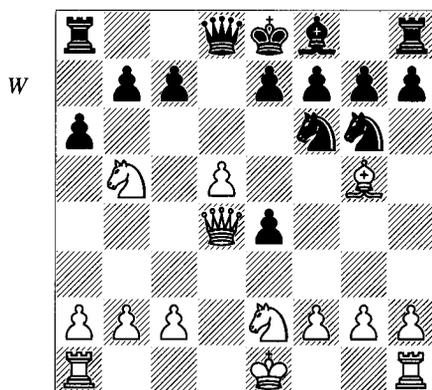
awkward defence of b7) 7 a4+ d7 8 b5 (or 8 b3 c8 9 e3) 8...a6 9 d7+ xd7 10 xd7+ d7 11 d3 d8 12 e3 de5 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 0-0-0 and White's quick development combines with his cramping d-pawn, Barle-Knaak, Pula 1975.

6...d7 7 d2 d6 8 g5

Or 8 d7+ xd7 9 g5 with some advantage.

8...xb5 9 dxb5 a6 (D)

9...c6 10 dxc6! bxc6 11 d3 bc3 xd4 12 d4 e5 13 d5!



10 d3 bc3 h6?!

10...e5! almost equalizes after 11 dxe6 xd4 12 d4 d4 b4 13 dxf6 gxf6 14 0-0-0 dxc3 15 bxc3.

11 dxf6 exf6 12 dxe4 e7 13 0-0-0 0-0 14

Volovik – Kozlov

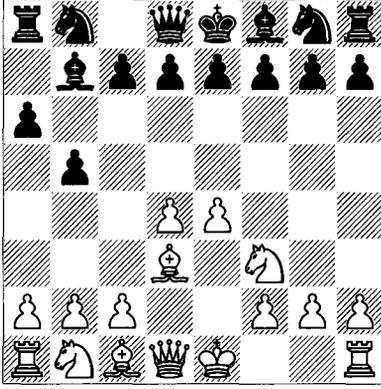
USSR 1987

1 e4 a6 2 d4 b5

This is a reversed version of the Sokolsky/Polish variation 1 b4 e5 2 a3 d5.

3 ♖f3 ♗b7 4 ♗d3 (D)

B



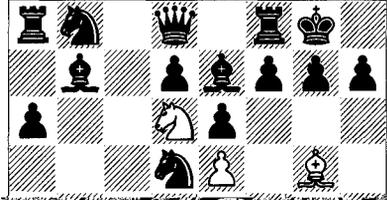
♗g5! is much more fun: 7...g6? (the cutest line after 7...h6? is 8 ♗xf7! ♕xf7 9 ♖h5+ ♕g8 10 ♗g6! ♜h7 11 ♖f5!, although of course 8 ♖h5 hxg5 9 ♖xh8 is also winning; the best defence is 7...e6, but 8 ♖f3 f5 9 g4! ♗e7 10 h4! keeps the pressure on) 8 ♖f3 f5 9 ♗xf5! ♖c8 10 ♗e4 1-0 Ochoa de Echagüen-Gomez, Seville 1994.

5...e6 6 a4 c5 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 ♗bd2 b4 9 e5 ♗d5 10 ♗e4 ♗e7 11 ♗g5!

Up to here the game has followed Karpov-Miles, European Team Ch, Skara 1980. In that famous game White played 11 0-0, which isn't as incisive.

11...0-0 12 ♗d6! (D)

B



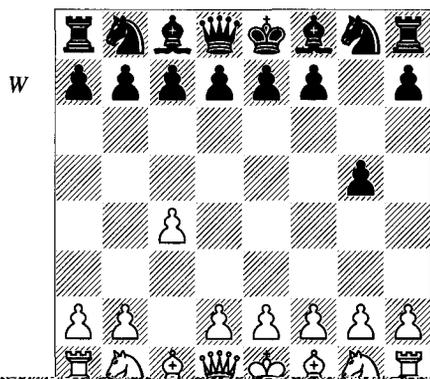
14...gxf6?

14...xf6! is unclear.

After 14...gxf6?, White played the inspired 15 e5?! and won, but that would only have drawn if Black had defended correctly. The right move was 15 e4! f5 16 e5 with domination of the dark squares.

1 f3 b5 has a decent reputation (the related 1 d4 b5 gives White extra options; for example, 2 e4 b7 3 d3 or 3 f3), although 2 e4 b7 (2...a6 3 d4 b7 4 d3 takes us back to the St George) 3 xb5! xe4 4 0-0 is a full tempo down for Black compared to the Sokolsky/Polish main line 1 b4 e5 2 b2 b4 3 xe5 f6. Even the reversed 1 b4 e5 version is difficult for White to negotiate, and adding a tempo here makes Black's task much harder.

1...g5 is a horrible choice versus 1 e4 (when 2 d4 is a tempo-up version of 1 g4) and even worse against 1 d4 (2 xg5!), but it makes some sense versus 1 c4, and **1 c4 g5 (D)** has actually been played in over 400 games in my database.

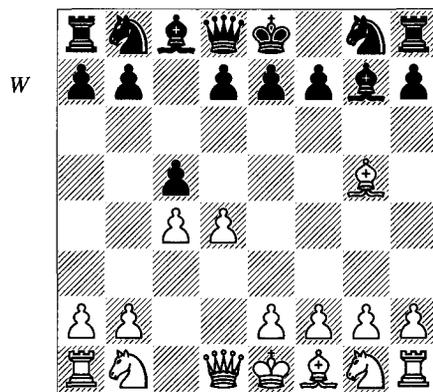


2...h6 is slow, and White can pick a comfortable route to advantage via most common-sense moves; for example, 3 h4 (or 3 c3 g7 4 h4 with the idea 4...c5 5 e3 or 4...g4 5 e4, transposing) 3...g4 4 e4 g7 5 c3 d6 (5...c5 6 e3!) 6 ge2 and now 6...f6 7 e3 or 6...c6 7 e3 e5 8 d5 ce7 9 g3! A 'theoretical' line goes 3 e4 g7 4 c3 c5, and now 5 ge2 is a good alternative to 5 dxc5 xc3+ 6 bxc3 a5 7 e2 f6 (7...xc5 8 d4!), when at least Black has something to play for.

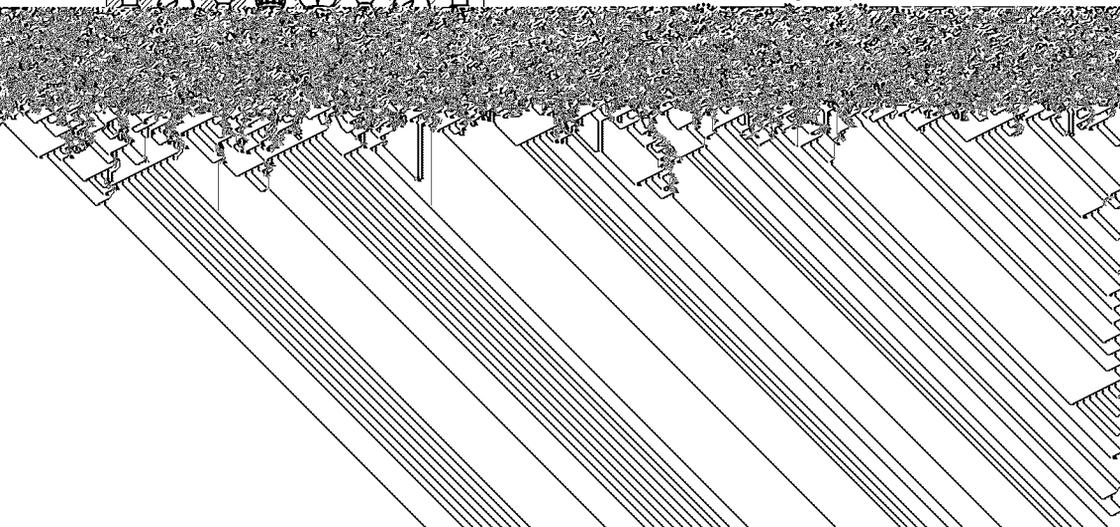
3 c3

Or:

a) 3 xg5 c5 (D) is Black's point, although if White gives the pawn back he should emerge with the advantage.

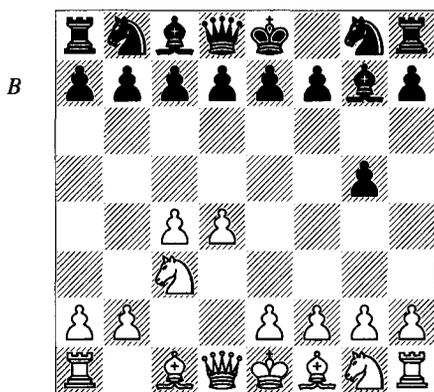


For example, 4 f3! (after 4 e3, rather than 4...b6 5 c3! xb2 6 c1! xc1+ 7 xc1 cxd4 8 b5, Black should play 4...a5+! 5 d2 xd2+ 6 dx2 cxd4 7 0-0 dxe3 8 xe3 c6 9 g3 h6! 10 h3 f5 11 f4 fd4 with approximate equality), and now:



to believe that improves anything, and White obviously stands better after 4...d6 (4...♖a5+ 5 ♔d2! ♜b6 6 ♘c3) 5 ♚e2 h6 6 ♘bc3 with h4 to follow. Nevertheless, it's a game and with care, Black shouldn't get into immediate trouble.

We now return to 3 ♘c3 (D):



3...h6

Upon 3...c5, one good reply is 4 dxc5. For example:

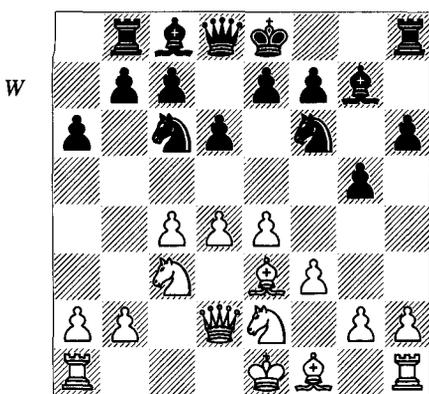
a) 4...♔xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♖a5 6 ♔xg5 ♜xc3+ 7 ♔d2 ♖a3 8 ♜b3 (here Wind believes that 8 g3! leads to a clear advantage, one point being 8...♘a6 9 ♜b3!, and otherwise 8...♜xc5 9 ♔g2 intending ♘h3-f4 and ♔c3; this is very convincing) 8...♜xc5 9 ♔c3 ♘f6 10 ♘f3.

b) 4...h6 5 ♔e3 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 ♖a5 (6...♔xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♘f6 8 ♜c2) 7 ♜d2 ♘f6 8 ♘d5! ♘xd5 9 ♖xa5 ♘xa5 10 cxd5 ♔xb2 11 ♜b1 with an impressive centre and better-placed pieces, Benjamin-Heinola, Honolulu 1996.

4 e4 d6

Black foregoes ...c5 this time.

5 ♔e2 ♘c6 6 ♘d2 ♘f6 7 ♔e3 ♔e6 8 ♜d2 ♜b8



h4 g4 10 0-0-0, since 10...b5 11 cxb5 axb5 12 d5 ♘e5 13 ♘d4 b4 14 ♘cb5 isn't attractive for Black.

9...♔d7 10 ♘b3 e6

Awfully passive. 10...e5 is a better practical try, even if it gives White targets; for example, 11 0-0-0 (or 11 d5 ♘e7 12 h4) 11...exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘e5 13 ♘b1 b5?! 14 cxb5 axb5 15 h4! b4 16 ♘cb5 gxh4 17 ♜c1.

11 0-0-0 b6 12 ♘b1 ♘h5 13 g3 e5 14 ♔e2 a5 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 c5! a4

Black is paralysed and pitches a pawn for activity, but it doesn't help.

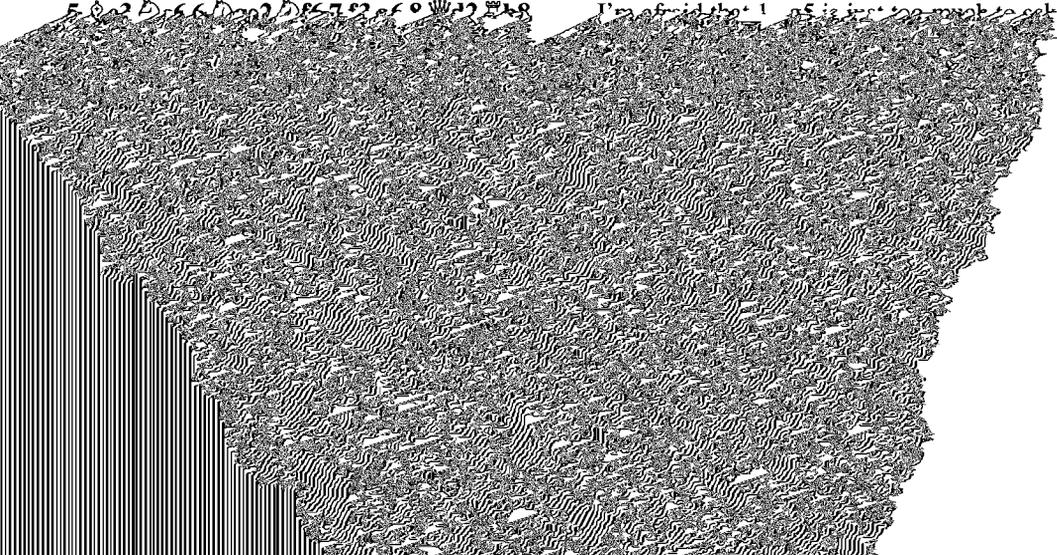
17 ♘xa4 ♘d4 18 ♘c3! bxc5 19 ♘xc5 0-0?! 20 ♘b3?

20 f4! has multiple threats and wins straight-away: 20...gxf4 21 gxf4 ♘xf4 22 ♔xf4 exf4 23 ♜hg1, etc.

20...c5 21 ♘xc5 ♔c6 22 ♘b3 ♜xb3!? 23 axb3 ♖a8 24 ♔xd4 exd4 25 ♘b5 ♜d8 26 ♔c4 g4 27 ♘c7 ♖a7 28 ♘d5 gxf3 29 ♘d3 ♘h8 30 ♜xf3

and White is winning.

I'm afraid that 1...g5 is just too much to ask



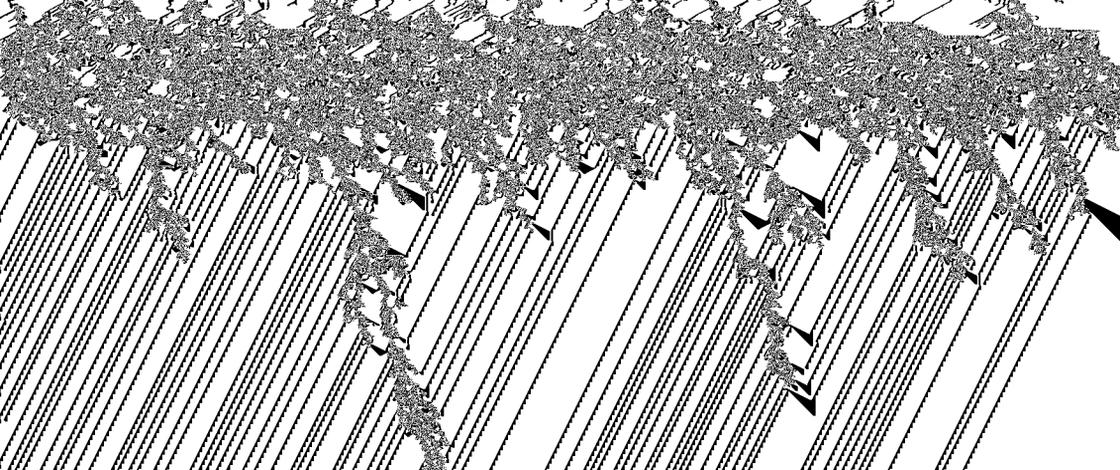
9 Choosing and Preparing Openings

Every student eventually comes up against the issue of how to select and prepare openings. As it turns out, the problem never completely goes away, not even for the strongest players in the world. Teachers and writers express various opinions about how to choose openings, but they disagree firmly with each other and haven't even begun to arrive at a consensus. Some fundamental questions arise: whether to specialize in one opening, whether to pick extremely thematic or open-ended openings, how to match openings with your style and predilections, and how much time to devote to opening study. On a concrete level, we have questions about how to organize and record a specific repertoire, how to learn it, how to get practice with your chosen openings, how to improve your play in a certain opening, and so forth.

In my opinion, some of the most common answers to these questions fall short in that they don't distinguish students by their level of strength and experience. In reviewing the literature, I find that most of the books are written from the standpoint of grandmaster needs and circumstances; for their examples they use the experiences of some titled player or other and explain how they prepared their openings or solved their opening problems. Of course, what the near-beginner needs out of his chess openings is quite a different matter from what the average club player requires, or the casual Internet Chess Club aficionado, or the profes-

particular significance because of the limited number of hours the average person has for chess. In lieu of so much attention to openings, would our time be better spent on, e.g., middle-games, endgames or tactics? Naturally these are all interrelated areas and, in varying degrees, essential for improvement. Still, I think you'll find that the much-maligned emphasis on opening study isn't such a bad thing after all. In fact, it's probably no coincidence that in the real world, most experienced players from lower master level all the way up to World Champion spend *far* more of their time studying openings than all the aforementioned options put together! I don't think that we can write this off as a mass delusion among players (and their coaches), or as something that is fundamentally against their best interests. For one thing, opening study provides a disciplined entrance into the broader area of middlegame study.

It's also interesting to see what other areas of the game our top players study away from the board. After years of being around masters and professional players, I would say that reviewing, studying and writing about their own games consumes the second largest amount of time after opening preparation. As far as I know, every top-level teacher recommends self-critical analysis of your games, and it should be given high priority for anyone seeking to improve. But even that process includes in-depth consideration of the openings in those games and the



openings. One is to study the middlegame. But in modern chess, as has been pointed out by many writers, the middlegame is very often subsumed within the opening. That is, when players study the opening, they are in part studying what we used to call the middlegame, and in some cases beyond that. The most useful kind of middlegame knowledge, and the easiest to retain, has to do with frequently-arising, thematic structures. It's difficult enough to know where your pieces should go and what their future might be, the more so when you haven't seen the structure before, or something similar. This knowledge can be picked up by investigation of particular openings, and enhanced by playing over exemplary games (preferably annotated), comparing different interpretations and absorbing specific theory. Important tactical devices and attacking schemes will recur, very often also applying to tactics that arise in unrelated situations. Naturally, the study of a finite set of openings can't cover the broad diversity of possible middlegames, and it's helpful to read books which talk about strategies in the abstract. However, middlegame theory that is too general tends to be of little use in over-the-board situations.

Apart from openings and middlegames, the student is commonly advised to study the endgame, sometimes with an admonition to stay away from serious opening preparation until an unspecified 'later'. When I was beginning to play chess four decades ago, this advice was ubiquitous, accompanied by the 'fact' that all the Soviet children learned endings in depth before they were allowed to play any games. That turned out to be an utter myth, but there's no doubt that learning a limited set of basic endings is absolutely essential for your development as a player. What's less certain is how many endings this involves, at what stage you need to learn them, and how many of them you will absorb by experience, just as you do with openings. Students to whom I assign endgame study constantly point out that they seldom get as far as the ending, at least not to one that doesn't already have a clear result; and when they do, it is usually decided by tactical means. Part of this has to do with the level of play, but grandmasters say the same thing, attributing it to the complex and often sharp openings played

at their level. For the majority of us, the dearth of challenging endings may also come from the short time-controls that are now customary. Taken as a whole, I think that there's much wisdom in most players' intuitive feeling that openings and middlegames can take priority without damaging their long-term prospects. Fortunately, the majority of ending types, apart from a set of standard and recurring elementary ones that everyone should know (and periodically refresh their knowledge of), are those that you will commonly get from the openings you play. In most mainstream openings, there are characteristic endgames that arise repeatedly from the structure of that opening. If you think about your own favourite openings, you'll probably recognize connections to representative endings. In fact, speciality books upon particular openings will very often include an explicit discussion of the typically-occurring endings. So a serious study of complete games in your opening will go a long way towards improving your practical endgame results, as well as developing your ability to think about endgames in general, which is the most important skill in the long run.

Let's face it: it would be ideal to have time to study middlegames, endings and openings, along with the great games of masters; and it's also hard to argue with doing tactical exercises and problems, annotating your own games, and playing as much as possible. To the extent that you can do so, explore all of these options. In the context of this book, however, I would argue that the tremendous amount of time spent upon the openings by leading players young and old reflects the importance of such study. While other types of knowledge are necessary if you are to become a complete player, opening study is the single most practical and efficient means of improving your mastery of the game as a whole.

Openings Selection

Before moving on to suggest methods of study and preparation, I'll make a stab at the most difficult question to answer with any kind of specificity: what openings should I play? Once a player decides upon an actual set of openings to

play, however provisionally, the subsequent sections about how to study and prepare them will take on a concrete significance. Of course, there are myriad openings with countless variations, and any suggestions that I make will be fundamentally arbitrary. Nevertheless, I'd like to give some concrete examples so as to make a general point: your choice of openings should be based upon your level of playing strength. With that in mind, I'll separate advice into broad sections, distinguishing choices and objectives that apply to players of various strengths who wish to improve their opening preparation. Within each general section, I shall break down the material on the basis of playing level. Of course, given sufficient knowledge, a player can succeed with any conventional chess opening. Nevertheless, you can improve your play more quickly and less painfully by tailoring your openings to the development of needed skills. With that in mind, I'll talk on a broader level for the less experienced player, whereas for more advanced players, discuss mainly the practical implications of opening choices. In general, I suggest learning a wide variety of position-types in order to become a stronger player.

Assessing your own level and degree of sophistication in handling opening situations is difficult. Rather than get too picky, I've divided players into four very broadly defined skill categories, from the lowest, D, through to the highest, A (these are chosen to minimize confusion with the many other standard divisions of chess strength by letter). Naturally, these are approximations and my advice will significantly overlap between them, so your precise category isn't crucial:

Category D: beginners, near-beginners and relatively inexperienced players (e.g., the latter might have three years or fewer of playing regularly, and not necessarily devotedly).

Category C: players with a moderate level of experience and some opening competence. This broad group might include club players, intermittent tournament players and consistent online players. People in this category probably lack sufficient free time for intensive study and play, or they may be stuck in a rut, have bad habits, etc.

Category B: players of considerable strength (say, 1700 Elo and above) who already have a

fairly stable repertoire and have looked into at least some of their openings in depth. But the general level of their openings is clearly below someone rated a few hundred points above them, and that is demonstrated by the inferior positions they often fall into.

Category A: Players above 2000 Elo up to about 2300 Elo with the typical problems that arise in finding openings that combine the ambition for opening advantage with some degree of safety. I won't presume to give professionals, who exceed this level, advice about their opening choices, so this section applies to advanced amateurs who are, for example, regular tournament players, rapidly-improving juniors, and/or devoted online activists.

The advice and potential repertoire choices that I'll suggest next are necessarily broad, if only because they don't take into account the distinctive traits of individuals. For fine tuning, or to decide which pieces of advice given below apply, you may want to consult a chess teacher. Alternatively, a disciplined, self-aware student can make those decisions based upon an analysis of his own games and some study. I'd be a little careful about plunging into complicated opening variations that just happen to present themselves to you because of, for example, a recent grandmaster game or a friend's enthusiasm. Study of any sort can only help one improve, of course, but this might not be the most efficient use of your time.

Regardless of your category, the most basic goals will be obvious: to survive the opening without serious disadvantage; and to gain an advantage sufficient to discomfit your opponent. Beyond that, always pay attention to the typical middlegames and endgames that your opening produces.

Finally, remember that I am only indicating some personal thoughts on how to make progress with openings. You should follow your instincts, especially if you find a method that works for and motivates you.

1. Choose openings corresponding to your skill level and available study time

This is fairly obvious, but some teachers will entice you into playing their own, sometimes too sophisticated, openings. It's important to

stick within your capabilities, and at the same time master traditional concepts before taking on exotic piece and pawn deployments. Let me explain this by means of specific examples. I won't build a complete repertoire for you, of course, but I'll try to indicate what would be involved in doing so.

Category D Openings

For players with very limited experience, I recommend using openings in which the play can be clarified at an early stage, often with a degree of simplification. To accomplish this safely will take a little study, because you will have to get used to playing with open lines for both sides' pieces, but you can't eliminate risk entirely in the opening anyway. If that approach doesn't appeal to you, you should at least try to occupy the centre and bring your pieces out quickly, aiming them at central squares if possible. I think that it's best to avoid manoeuvring games in which most of the pieces remain on the board for a long time and don't come into contact with each other. At this level, you should be studying tactics independently, and it's good practice to play openings of at least a partially tactical nature.

There's nothing new about this advice. For example, teachers all over the world suggest that inexperienced players begin with 1 e4. Advancing your e-pawn may be unoriginal, but it allows you to control the direction of the game to a greater degree than other first moves. You will undoubtedly see the reply 1...e5 most often when playing at or near a beginner's level, when I recommend using some system with an early d4 to at least partially clear out the centre and give your pieces room. In that context, the most common move 2 ♘f3 is a good one. For example, if Black plays 2...d6, you can get practice playing with extra space by 3 d4. Black may not often answer 2 ♘f3 with 2...♗f6 (the Petroff) at this level, but again, 3 d4 is a straightforward answer for the inexperienced player, intending 3...exd4 4 e5 (and if Black plays 4...♗e4 or 4...♗d5, 5 ♖xd4) or 3...♗xe4 4 ♗d3, to get developed quickly. Another choice is 2 ♘f3 ♗f6 3 ♗c3, and if 3...♗c6 (the Four Knights Game), 4 ♗b5 or 4 d4. One advantage of this latter choice is that you can also play 2

♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c3, when 3...♗f6 will transpose. The Four Knights is a sensible opening choice as you start out.

After 2 ♘f3, 2...♗c6 will occur in the bulk of your games. Then the Scotch Game, 3 d4 (intending 3...exd4 4 ♗xd4) is a possible first opening, but I recommend taking up the classical and instructive move 3 ♗c4 at an early stage. Then, against 3...♗c5, it's thematic to try to establish the ideal centre by 4 c3 and 5 d4; after that, things can get complicated enough that you need to take a look at some theory and learn the basics; for example, you could use Chapter 5 of Volume 1 (or any standard source). Versus 3...♗f6, you might pick 4 d3 as a solid beginning point, and be sure to get castled and bring your pieces out quickly. Both 4 d4 and 4 ♗g5 are more adventurous, but they absolutely require serious hours of study, as you will see by glancing at Volume 1, Chapter 6.

The Sicilian Defence, 1 e4 c5, is the most popular grandmaster opening, but when lower players use it, they usually do so with some memorized systems in mind. I recommend playing simple, principled moves against it; for example, 2 c3 makes sense, intending to capture the centre with 3 d4, which is what you should do versus most slow moves anyway. A typical line is 2...♗f6 3 e5 ♗d5 4 d4, when after 4...cxd4, 5 ♖xd4 is a handy first system with open lines and quick development. You can follow with ♗f3, ♗d3/c4 and 0-0, moving your queen to e4 if attacked by ...♗c6. If Black plays 2...d5 in response to 2 c3, then 3 exd5 ♖xd5 4 d4 will also open up lines; generally ♗f3, ♗e2 and 0-0 follow, with ♗e3 if necessary. A slightly more advanced possibility against the Sicilian Defence would be to clear out the centre with the Morra Gambit: 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 ♗xc3, as described in Chapter 5 of this volume; beginners should delay taking this up, however, as it's important to learn the value of material before experimenting with openings that sacrifice it for other gains.

Against the French Defence and Caro-Kann Defence, the easiest way to stick to the open-lines policy is to avoid e5 and develop quickly. In the French, for example, a possibility is 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 ♗d3, followed by ♗f3 (or ♗e2) and 0-0. Or you can do something similar starting with 3 ♗c3, playing 3...♗b4 4

exd5 or 3...♟f6 4 exd5 (in the latter case, experienced players may wince at allowing theoretical equality so early on, but at a lower level such moves can be recommended as both sound and instructive).

Versus the Caro-Kann, the exchanging policy of 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 ♟d3, again intending ♟f3 and 0-0, is a good starting point, with the same philosophy that we applied to the French Defence. You won't see the Alekhine Defence, 1 e4 ♟f6, very often. But if you do, you might want to play 2 e5 ♟d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♟f3, usually followed by ♟e2 and 0-0. Most other moves, such as 1...g6, 1...d6 or 1...b6, can normally be met by 2 d4, 3 ♟c3 and 4 ♟f3, followed by a move by the f1-bishop and 0-0.

Of course, you can also play 1 d4, the other central move, but then you probably want to keep the position fairly quiet, because it takes a longer time to castle to safety than it does with 1 e4. A solid and more-or-less universal set-up is 2 ♟f3 and 3 ♟f4, followed in most cases by 4 e3, 5 ♟e2 and 6 0-0. I'd rather see my students fight their way through open positions instead; however, if you're not getting out of the opening alive after 1 e4, this method of playing 1 d4 deserves consideration.

A word of advice: notice that a commonly suggested 'easy' repertoire for White with 1 ♟f3 and the King's Indian Attack (that is 2 g3, 3 ♟g2, 4 0-0 and 5 d3, with ♟bd2 and e4 to follow) doesn't lead to an open game, or one with a clear plan for White. Furthermore, it encourages mechanical play. Similarly, teachers sometimes recommend the Colle System (with 1 d4, 2 ♟f3, 3 e3 and usually ♟d3, 0-0, c3 and ♟bd2), which can also be played too automatically, and usually doesn't lead to an open position. For true beginners, the King's Indian Attack and Colle System have the benefit of offering a safe position that nearly guarantees passage to some kind of playable middlegame; they may be a reasonable alternative if other openings are too intimidating. But having gained even a small amount of experience, you really should switch to more open and less automatic play.

As Black, I think that a Category D player would do well to proceed classically. That means playing 1...e5 versus 1 e4 and 1...d5 versus 1 d4. In this, again, I am repeating the

advice of teachers since time immemorial. The idea is similar to that behind White's 1 e4: you are guaranteed a strong presence in the centre and relatively quick development. When starting out, it's useful to play positions in which you control space. After 1 e4, 1...e5 serves that purpose. By contrast, the Sicilian Defence (1 e4 c5) normally leaves you with little room to manoeuvre and is best left until your positional skills develop. If you don't take to 1...e5, you can also consider answering 1 e4 with the Caro-Kann Defence (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5) or the French Defence (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5), both of which put the d-pawn on the 4th rank and stake a claim on the centre. They have the advantage of being slightly less expected at this level, but they have the drawback of allowing your opponent to create fairly closed positions if they choose to play e5. Versus 1 d4, 1...d5 achieves similar results in terms of central control. It's true that 1...♟f6 also stops 2 e4 and introduces a number of established defences. The latter tend to require some sophistication, however, and it's easy for the inexperienced player to end up facing a large and dangerous white centre.

In more specific terms, let's assume that you've decided upon 1 e4 e5. It will involve a fair amount of preparation even on a low level. In chess, playing Black tends to require more study, since you are at more risk of serious disadvantage when moving second. I'm not going to go into detail, but you'll need answers to various less common but perfectly legitimate openings such as 2 f4 (the King's Gambit), 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 (the Danish Gambit), as well as 2 ♟c3 (the Vienna Game) and 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♟c3 ♟f6 (the Four Knights Game). This is easier than it sounds, because there are fairly simple ways to proceed against them. In Volume 1 of this series, for example, I examined some fairly easy responses to the King's Gambit, and in this volume you'll find suggestions against the Danish Gambit and Four Knights Game. If you don't see something that appeals to you or I haven't mentioned something, you can look for master games in a database or use an opening encyclopaedia. Just be aware that all of these moves are perfectly playable for White and you can't force your way to an advantage against them.

Assuming that you narrow your difficulties down to 2 ♟f3, one option is to conserve your

study time, and play something relatively simple like the Philidor Defence (2...d6). It's a legitimate choice, but gives you a cramped game, so as early as possible you should take the plunge with 2...dxc6. Doing so requires more work, but it will teach you more. By now you may be familiar with 3 dxc4, and you'll have a good idea what to do about it. Again, refer to Volume 1 of this series and/or outside sources. White's most respected line is 3 dxb5 (the Ruy Lopez), when it's a lot easier to avoid the complications of 3...a6 and play 3...dxf6. Then after 4 0-0, you can opt for a move with familiar themes like 4...c5.

You won't be seeing 1 d4 too often from inexperienced players. As mentioned, 1...d5 gives you a firm central presence, and you can bring your pieces out relatively quickly to establish some central control. If White plays the most important move, 2 c4, inexperienced players might want to begin classically with 2...e6 followed by ...dxf6 and ...e7 (see Volume 2, Chapter 2). Slower moves such as 2 dxf3 or 2 e3 are less challenging. It's logical and safe to start out with 2...dxf6 and 3...e6 (although if you can play ...df5 before ...e6, it makes your development even easier). Then you can set up a formation with ...c5, ...dxc6, ...e7 and ...0-0. If you feel confident about your handling of open positions, you can play ...c5 on your 3rd or 4th move and create some open lines.

Finally, it's important to use the 'What if?' procedure that I recommend below. That is, as you study openings, ask yourself why moves other than the ones listed aren't played. In doing so, watch for basic captures and tactics. At this level, it doesn't help you to win games if you memorize certain moves and then drop a pawn or piece the minute the opponent plays something different. On the other hand, that will inevitably happen – it has happened to all of us – so don't become discouraged. You'll be surprised how studying chess in any form will improve your visualization and reduce errors.

Category C Openings

At this level, the benefits derived from playing with space and open lines still take priority, but it's also a good point to begin including variations which can yield other types of positions.

For most players, 1 e4 will probably still be the most attractive move, especially if you have already played it while at a Category D level. On the other hand, there are practical benefits to taking up 1 d4 – namely, your opponents will have seen it less and you will expand your bank of familiar positions. The English Opening with 1 c4 is a different matter. It tends to put opponents of equal strength on their own, which is good, but requires sophisticated positional handling, and unless you are conversant with specifics, it may not yield enough open positions to provide the valuable training such positions offer. Similar considerations apply to 1 d4f3. Nevertheless, these openings are acceptable as long as you determinedly look for active play with parts of your repertoire. There's always time to emphasize slow positional systems as you improve.

You can play solidly at this level, of course, but you might also begin to incorporate the ideas of setting initiative off against material. As White, along with some main lines, you might want to incorporate a gambit line, or even two. As a 1 e4 player facing 1...e5 (which is still the most likely response at this level), 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 dxc3 is a type of Danish Gambit that will often transpose via 4...dxc6 5 dxf3 to the Göring Gambit. One advantage of playing this way (with the 2 d4 move-order) is that you bypass Black's second-move alternatives that follow 2 dxf3 (such as 2...dxf6 and 2...d6). This is described in Chapter 5. The Göring Gambit is a good practical attacking system, in that Black's position can easily come under fire, while White retains a lead in development in any case. If nothing else, you can have it as a surprise weapon to supplement something less adventurous.

Understandably, giving up material may not appeal to everyone, and you should try to balance that activist tendency with learning classic variations as well. Unless you have a lot of study time and motivation, it's best to do so without being laden with too many double-edged and/or heavily analysed positions. After 1 e4 e5 2 dxf3 dxc6, 3 dxc4 is a conventional choice – you can utilize and expand upon the knowledge that you gained if you played this move as a Category D player. Or you might prefer to play 3 dxb5 (the Ruy Lopez), but stick to

lines which steer clear of the heaviest theory; for example, 3...a6 4 ♖xc6 (the Exchange Variation), or 3...♟f6 4 ♖e2.

Versus the Sicilian Defence, which you will be seeing increasingly often, you might also consider playing a gambit. Specifically, 1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 (the Morra Gambit) offers a pawn for initiative. Following 3...dxc3 4 ♟xc3, White's most common attacking set-up is ♟f3, ♟c4, 0-0 and ♖e2, with the idea of bringing a bishop to e3, f4 or g5, and a rook to the open d-file. This sort of thing can be fun, and has no simple solution that negates your chances. See Chapter 5 on gambits.

Assuming that you don't want to play a gambit (or want to have options), you could explore your first fianchetto system with 2 ♟c3, 3 g3 and 4 ♟g2 (the Closed Sicilian). Alternatively, you can construct a repertoire around 2 ♟f3, picking and choosing which main lines, if any, are worth embarking upon. Some strong grandmasters, for example, have made a lifelong living off moves such as 1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 ♟b5+ and 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♟b5, which are relatively safe systems. For the most part, however, 1 e4 players eventually seem to settle upon the lines involving 2 ♟f3 and 3 d4 (the Open Sicilian). If that's your inclination, you still needn't commit yourself to heavy theoretical study. For example, versus the move 2...d6 (most common at this level, because your opponents will want to get to the Dragon Variation or the Najdorf Variation), 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 is a perfectly respect-

the Exchange Variations mentioned above, but at some point you'll probably want to try to create more problems for your opponent. With some study, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 can be a nice weapon, and has the additional benefit of introducing you to the theory of pawn-chains. Versus the Caro-Kann, you can begin to build a classical repertoire with 3 ♟c3 (or 3 ♟d2) 3...dxe4 4 ♟xe4, but it's even easier to learn some basic lines after 3 e5; for example, 3...♟f5 4 ♟f3 followed by ♟e2 and 0-0, with the pawn-chain move c3 in most cases.

As Black, 1...e5 is still a good answer to 1 e4, of course, but this time you should seriously consider other defences such as 1...c6 and 1...e6, which allow for both open and closed positions. They also involve some recurring structures which will serve the student throughout his playing days. I'm still not excited about my students playing the Sicilian Defence at this stage, because it almost always means playing with less space and development, and in some cases with exotic and not particularly instructive pawn-structures. The Pirc (1...d6), Modern (1...g6) and Alekhine (1...♟f6) Defences are perfectly logical and sound openings, but I think they have practical drawbacks for the player below 1600, in that they concede space and don't generally yield as free piece-play. But if you have a strong affinity for any of them, that could outweigh other factors. Personal enjoyment should definitely be a consideration when you're deciding what to play.

followed by ...0-0, gets your pieces out rapidly, and the Bogó-Indian, 3 ♘f3 ♗b4+, does the same.

Category B Openings

At this point you should be ready to tackle positions of most types, so the number of appropriate opening choices increases dramatically. Still, players with limited time for competition and study have to consider the practical drawbacks of using too many variations which entail a large initial time investment, and then require continual updating of theory to avoid unpleasant surprises. It's valuable to play a couple of theoretical 'main lines', even if you need to use your understanding and instincts as well as your memory to tackle them: you might even

time, although it's easy to get in positional trouble doing so against top players. I'd still try to mix in some of the systems without d4 that I listed for the Category C player. Versus the French Defence, you're on solid ground with any of 3 ♘c3, 3 ♘d2 or 3 e5; unfortunately, there's no escaping some theory if you want to use pawn-chain lines involving the move e5 (which you should, if you want both to learn about the opening and to maximize your chances). The main thing about all of your choices at this stage is that you would like to keep them in your repertoire for at least a few years. With luck, you will have them for the rest of your life, at least as a second or third weapon if you find something more attractive later on. Against the Pirc and Modern Defences, I would still recommend staying with a

until you become a little more experienced. Similarly, versus 1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6, 3 ♟f3 is positionally less committal than 3 ♟c3 ♟b4, and a good choice. Nevertheless, you can learn a great deal by allowing 3 ♟c3 ♟b4 and then accepting doubled pawns in return for potentially strong bishops by 4 a3, or by 4 e3 and, depending upon Black's response, 5 ♟d3 or 5 a3. At this stage such decisions become a matter of taste, and you can hardly go wrong in investigating all of these types of positions.

1 c4, the English Opening, is a first move that you can use for any occasion and indeed, some grandmasters play nothing else. A simple way to get started is to play 2 g3 against all of Black's normal moves 1...e5, 1...c5 and 1...♟f6. Later you'll almost certainly want to add in variations beginning with 2 ♟c3 (or 2 ♟f3), and be able to switch into some 1 d4 openings (for example, 1 c4 e6 2 d4 d5, 1 c4 c6 2 d4 d5 or 1 c4 ♟f6 2 ♟c3 g6 3 d4). Just don't think that you can go on autopilot after 1 c4. You need to have a specific answer to every major black set-up (and there are quite a few of these, because 1 c4 doesn't limit Black's structural options as much as 1 e4 and 1 d4 do). On the other hand, playing 1 c4 will expose you to a range of positions and structures that you can use in other openings.

As Black in Category B, you should definitely incorporate one or more major defences into your stock of weapons; hopefully you'll stick with these and learn them in considerable detail through practice and study. Within the major openings, some variations are clearly more manageable than others, so keep your eye out for those. Obviously I can't set forth a repertoire for each major opening, but you should try to work with basic structures. If you're going to play the Sicilian Defence at this stage, for example, you can consistently aim for ...d6 and ...e5 in most variations, or choose lines with ...d6 and ...e6 in every variation, or play ...g6 and ...d6 whenever you can. Keep in mind that, because the Sicilian is the most popular opening in chess, no opening has less surprise value. You'll be running into opponents who have been playing sharp lines against it for 20 years. So if you're taking the Sicilian up at this stage, you should put in a lot of serious study time, as well as commit to playing it for a few years.

One way of doing this relatively painlessly would be to start with irregular variations of the Sicilian, some of which I mentioned in Chapter 8, and move to mainstream lines later.

In the French Defence, Black can steer the major variations into similar structures involving d4 and e5 by White, unless White chooses to concede equality (i.e., by choosing exd5). The French is a good lifetime opening, either as a main defence or a back-up, because Black has so many sound ways to play and can shift from system to system when necessary. That is certainly true of the Sicilian Defence, but perhaps less so with other major defences to 1 e4. The Caro-Kann Defence isn't as flexible; however, it is so inherently solid that it's hard to imagine any of the basic main lines proving unplayable, or even unpleasant enough to reduce the opening to an outsider status. It also requires less concrete study than most major openings. The Pirc Defence is an excellent choice for players who want to be able to switch between positional play and dynamically-charged lines. I think that it is underrated as a defence and appropriate for any strength level. However, some players will get discouraged because they often end up having to play with less territory under their command than with many other openings. All of these choices include an element of personal taste.

Against 1 d4, this is a good point to pick up an Indian Defence. Like so many teachers, I would recommend the 1...♟f6, 2...e6 complex, because it's both solid and instructive. Versus the conventional 2 c4 lines, you would use the Nimzo-Indian (1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♟c3 ♟b4), and either the Queen's Indian (1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♟f3 b6) or the easier-to-learn Bogo-Indian (1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♟f3 ♟b4+). Those inclined to sharper and somewhat riskier struggles might choose the King's Indian Defence (1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 g6 followed by ...♟g7 and ...d6) or the Benoni (1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 c5). Of course, any other major defence is also playable. The one thing you want to be careful about versus 1 d4 is conceding too much space without knowing exactly why you're doing so.

It would be nice to have something simple to play against 1 c4 and 1 ♟f3; unfortunately, since White hasn't fully disclosed his intentions with these moves, Black has to be able to

respond to multiple set-ups. One way to approach 1 c4 is to limit the number of reasonable options for White. For example, you can begin with 1...e5, and then if 2 ♘c3, play 2...d6 or 2...♗b4, either of which limits White's choice of moves if he's genuinely trying for an advantage. For example, after 1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 d6, White ordinarily chooses between 3 d4, leading to 3...exd4 4 ♗xd4 ♘c6, whereas against 3 ♘f3 or 3 g3, 3...f5 narrows White's options and keeps surprises to a minimum. After 2 g3, the variations 2...c6 and 2...♘f6 3 ♗g2 c6 are positionally forcing. You can see how these strategies play out by referring to Volume 3 of this series. Versus 1 ♘f3, someone who plays the Sicilian Defence might choose 1...c5 (allowing 2 e4), and then learn a system versus 2 c4, a Symmetrical English in which White has committed to 2 ♘f3; the latter task isn't so hard. A Queen's Gambit defender might be happy to play 1 ♘f3 d5, since 2 d4 will normally transpose to that opening. And so forth.

At the risk of boring the reader, I should emphasize again that the suggestions above are merely a small subset of reasonable variations, selected to give you a feel for how you might choose openings at various levels. They are mainly given so that you have concrete advice to go by, rather than some airy generalities. But any time that you are strongly attracted to a certain opening and have fun playing and studying it, that trumps other arguments. There is no substitute for enjoyment when you're trying to

dozens of Internet games. My advice would be to play only a few fashionable main lines (three at most, fewer if you're so inclined), and fill in your repertoire with variations designed to make your opponent think on his own. You should also take into account whether you are good at retaining material that you have memorized; there's nothing worse than studying a line for days and then mixing up the moves when you finally get it over the board!

At this level, a couple of irregular openings can be of value to counterbalance the detailed theoretical knowledge possessed by many advanced opponents. In fact, many strong grandmasters benefit by *judicious* use of openings that are out of the mainstream. You can even implement this on move one; for example, 1 b3, 1 f4 and 1 ♘c3 are candidates for White. As Black, you can save some time and play a 'universal' system against 1 e4, 1 d4, 1 c4 and 1 ♘f3; for example, 1...g6, 1...d6 or 1...♘c6. However, be sure to employ these as secondary weapons for now. Using such moves exclusively can limit your general chess understanding; I have seen players damage their chess skills, and their long-term results, by never varying from 'safe' openings such as 1...g6 or, as White, the King's Indian Attack, Colle System or 1 b3. Even a blind use of 1 c4 can be counterproductive (for example, using 2 g3 with studied avoidance of any central confrontation). You simply have to keep the play sharp in a reasonable percentage of your openings if

discernible style; most players don't have one until they become skilled at the game. Second, the openings that you use have already partially defined how you play, but that doesn't necessarily reveal a true 'style'. Furthermore, by studying openings of another character, you may find that you enjoy a different type of chess entirely, and that you play it well. At any rate, I don't think this advice would apply until you have reached at least master strength and have a true understanding of your strengths and weaknesses.

Finally, as indicated above, it would be presumptuous to give masters concrete suggestions about which openings to play; they have their own ideas and tastes. But in general, I believe that strong players should try to have a flexible repertoire, broad enough to adjust to different opponents and different tournament situations.

2. Choose openings that will improve your play

On the face of it, this piece of advice may seem silly. Of course you want to improve your play, but can one opening really teach you more than another? I think that the answer is yes, even up to a fairly high level of player. For example, openings which lead towards 'automatic' play can retard your progress in terms of understanding, and demand less in terms of creative thought. It's a bad sign when you find yourself going on autopilot.

If you want to investigate certain structures more deeply, you might use two or more openings that are related. For example, you can get standard isolated d-pawn positions as White in certain lines of the Queen's Gambit, Nimzo-Indian, c3 Sicilian, and Panov Caro-Kann; and as Black in the Tarrasch Variation of the Queen's Gambit, the Tarrasch Variation of the French Defence, and other defences. Alternatively, you might want to adopt what I call the 'restraint structure', that is, ...c6/...e6 structures without a d-pawn (see the introductory chapters of Volume 1). These can be found in a number of defences such as the Caro-Kann, the Slav and the Scandinavian. Many 1 e4 e5 openings feature Black upholding a 'strong point' on e5 with a ...d6/...e5 structure, and the King's Indian Defence often does the same, so it might provide a

complementary defence to 1 d4. Sometimes there's a general resemblance between openings; for example, the moves ...e6 and ...b4 are common to the Nimzo-Indian Defence, the Ragozin Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined, the Winawer and McCutcheon Variations of the French Defence, and a couple of variations of the English Opening (including the English Defence). You probably won't want to play all of these lines at once, but it doesn't hurt to consider similar piece placements when trying to find openings to your taste.

Naturally, you should be careful not to over-indulge in this practice. After all, as I'm constantly saying, it's also important to learn as many structures as you can and expand your chess knowledge in the process. So, while you will do well to learn a few structures deeply, don't limit yourself by trying to force your repertoire down a single path.

3. Be daring and play new openings

The legendary Viktor Korchnoi has said, bluntly, that if you want to improve your chess, you should play a new opening. I guess this is a variation on a theme that I'm starting to bore everyone with. But it's a controversial point of view, and one that not all coaches agree with. One traditional philosophy has it that you should specialize in your openings in order to understand them on a deep level. For one thing, by doing so, you can reasonably expect to avoid serious trouble early on. The more modern view, however, tends to be that it's important to learn about the game as a whole, and since different openings lead to distinct kinds of play, you will become a more complete player by exposing yourself to a wide range of positions. Moreover, the freshness and creativity that you bring to the board will often compensate for lesser familiarity, even to the extent of avoiding or setting early traps.

Not surprisingly, a combination of these two approaches will probably serve you best, and in fact most strong players have a wide repertoire, but also a few favourite openings that they play more than the others. In any case, you shouldn't abandon any well-established opening based upon one loss. At the very least, you should research the opening to find out where you went

wrong (or where theory can be improved upon). And if you take up a new opening as your main weapon, play the old one from time to time, especially if you can limit yourself to variations in which one new move by the opponent won't be likely to lead you into a bad position. After all, you've invested time into the first opening and it's foolish to waste it.

In practice, I think that the tendency to cling

positional ideas and tactics which will apply to other openings and middlegames. Furthermore, new positions are very helpful in improving your sense of timing, that is, how much you can sacrifice in one domain (for example, development) to gain in another (for example, structure). Finally, there's the obvious point that if you become disillusioned with a particular opening, you may have an opportunity to

The most common questions from students have to do with how to go about learning openings. Naturally, that relates to how to play them well. First, understand that there are no magic shortcuts. If you read through chess literature or go to instructional sites on the web, you'll soon realize that no one can possibly implement all of the various tips and strategies that are supposed to lead to improvement. Too much

which taken together would overwhelm their purpose. So by all means look over this advice, but then pick and choose what seems useful for you, and don't try to do too much at once.

1. Committing to and recording a repertoire

Let's assume that you've chosen your major

particular if it means discarding what you currently play. In each case, ask if an opening is too complex or theoretical to use at your current playing strength. Some players like to look at what variations the specialists in certain openings are choosing, on the grounds that they know what they're doing. Copying a grandmaster's *entire* repertoire isn't good, in my opinion. You'll tend to end up with too 'professional' a repertoire, constructed for another player's purposes (for example, a top player may only want to draw with Black).

Having decided upon a set of opening variations to start out with, it is essential to document what you've chosen, including the main lines and however many provisional variations that you are willing to commit to. This absolutely requires that you chart out your new repertoire in some handy format. There are several ways of doing so, but whatever method you use, save copies of your older repertoires even when you move on to revised ones.

The first option is rather primitive, but may appeal to those who still prefer physical media such as paper over electrons. It consists of manually written charts, possibly in tree form, which list the chosen variations and subvariations. This corresponds with the famous 'notebooks' that the great masters of old used to carry around with them. Another common method is (was) to use index cards.

On a slightly higher level of sophistication, you can enter the same information into a word-processing program on a computer. Then it can be either printed out or read on the screen. One benefit of doing it this way is that the chart can be modified and edited with a few key-strokes.

The most sophisticated and best way to record a repertoire is to use a chess database program such as ChessBase or Chess Assistant. Using ChessBase, for example, you can create a single game with an overall tree of the main moves of each opening you use. Then you can create 'games' containing each variation (or subvariation), doing so to whatever degree of detail you desire. Here are just a few advantages of this approach:

1. You can play over every move of the repertoire on the screen, going back and forth through the variations.

2. You can change the moves whenever you want to without having to rewrite.

3. You can include verbal commentary, cross references, and printable diagrams wherever you choose.

4. You can take relevant games from other databases and merge in the ones that you think will be helpful.

5. You can turn on an analytical engine and have it assess positions in your repertoire, as well as suggesting alternate moves.

6. You can always look at and/or print out the repertoire in chart form, or game form if you prefer that.

7. You can catch transpositions more easily.

These days, not surprisingly, just about every serious player uses a database program to construct their repertoire. It doesn't take much computer literacy to learn how to get your moves entered, after which they are automatically ready to replay. The actual information that you use in your files needn't come solely from databases; in fact, opening books are still by far the best source for most players, and you will want to input analysis from them into the repertoire file in your chess program. In fact, the process of keying in moves from books is an excellent way to fix them in your mind. I recommend it for everyone from beginner on up.

Having recorded everything in orderly form, you can and should periodically review your repertoire to see which variations aren't working well, which need more study, and which you find unpleasant to play. These can be replaced, but only after a good-faith effort to solve the problem by making minor adjustments, picking different subvariations, and looking for different ways to play the same basic positions. Of course, you can always expand the repertoire at any juncture and have two options available.

2. Strategy, tactics and memorization

After some study of an opening, and perhaps experience with it, I strongly recommend explicitly writing down the typical strategies and themes that go with a variation. This includes basic goals, tactical motifs, opening traps, typical piece positions, standard manoeuvres, potential pawn-breaks, common pawn-structures

(perhaps with a few characteristic endings), and probable middlegame plans (including potential weaknesses to attack). You should make up an ordered list of these ideas; it's helpful if you yourself decide how you want to organize such a list, and what should be included in it. How complete or even accurate your list is doesn't matter as much as getting it down on paper to refer to. Also, don't forget to go through this process for both White and Black! That is, you need to be aware of your opponent's ideas as well as your own.

This task should be done early on in your repertoire-creation process, and not put off. Depending upon your outlook, such careful charting might be slightly boring, certainly more so than playing, but in that case you can make the list fairly quickly and then come back to it later in order to add to, modify or delete items, based upon the games that you play and books that you read. I'd be sure to keep an eye out for typical tricks and tactics in your openings; if you fall for one of these, everything else is irrelevant, at least for that particular game.

At the same time, don't undervalue straightforward memorization of opening moves. Most players will find that, as they memorize openings, they will absorb by osmosis most of the typical themes and structures. After all, memorization in chess is a method of acquiring real knowledge, just as it is in the sciences, crafts, and most fields. The more that you play over opening moves, even by rote, the better they will be absorbed and some of the wisdom behind them will inevitably sink into your consciousness. Naturally, memorization is not a

decided upon gradually, and may even take years to pin down completely.

3. Study model games interactively

The best teachers universally recommend studying master games to improve your play. In the case of opening study, an obvious method is to choose games directly from an opening book, ideally finding copies of them in your database and collecting them in one place. You can also collect a series of games from a database with the desired opening variation, and then sort them according to rating, so that you see how the best players handle the positions first. If you have narrowed down the variation to a particular line, you may even be able to play through every game with it.

Still another useful technique for gathering samples is to use the games of a specialist in each line. This is also easy to do with a database – by examining the openings key, you will soon recognize who has played the variation for the longest time (in certain contexts, there may be a function informing you directly about who the most frequent practitioners are). The same goes for reading opening books with an eye towards the opponents in relevant games. Often a particular player is closely associated with an opening variation, either as Black or White, although it makes for a more productive experience to pick at least two or more players, in order to compare treatments and find lines where you can implement your own ideas.

Having located games, the way in which you study them will depend upon your time and or

a time. The truly dedicated student can try to predict both sides' moves, but it's probably more realistic to analyse continuations from 'your' side of the board, and you can get through more material if you do so. Not surprisingly, you can also go through this process with a database program. ChessBase, for example, has a 'Training mode' that reveals only one move at a time as you work out the next move. Some very strong players have emphasized that it helps to periodically use a physical board to play over games (rather than the computer monitor), because that's how you will be seeing things at a tournament.

You will always benefit most from analysing a position deeply, but realistically, studying opening theory involves a lot of material and you probably won't get to enough games or variations if you worry over each move in every game. As time progresses, you will be able to identify one or two positions from the opening of each game that require the most serious consideration. If you only have time to spend a minute or so on a move, at least this approximates the time you might actually get in a real game! Some teachers recommend using a clock to discipline your time management.

With respect to available study time, you have one more decision to make. For your general chess education, there's nothing better than analysing the whole game using the cover-up method. But if your goal is to study openings, you simply won't get through enough helpful material unless you cut the process short as the middlegame begins, and stop there or quickly play through the remaining moves, by hand or on a screen. Of course, it's hard to assess where the border between opening and middlegame is, so you'll have to get a feel for where to stop as you play over more games. In this respect, it's probably easier to use the games in an opening book (or DVD) than in a games collection, but

4. Creative learning: what if...?

As mentioned, you can apply the active method above to opening books and articles as well as games collections. But I didn't explicitly mention what is perhaps the most important part of the process: asking the question 'What if he [your opponent] plays move X? What happens then?'. If you do this consistently for most of the moves that you're looking at, and answer the questions as you go along, you will improve at an accelerated rate and greatly broaden your perspective on anything you study. Furthermore, you'll find that sometimes there's no clear answer to your question about a proposed move, or perhaps no good reply at all. That means that you've come up with a worthwhile new move. It turns out that there are plenty of them; every player, once he's learned the rules and played some games, can find moves that haven't been tried before (at least moves that aren't in the books or generally known). Sometimes, in fact, the less you know the better. When I began to play chess, the books available to me were mostly games collections, and I was already a passably competent player before I ran into opening pamphlets and the like. So I became my own main source of ideas for the opening, taking the first moves of a game from a collection and using the 'What if...?' method. After a while, it wasn't that difficult to put my own stamp on the variations I played.

That still holds true today. You should be able to personalize your repertoire with a small improvement here or there, a change of move-orders, or even a new strategy entirely. If you play very sharp lines, you may find a blockbuster novelty in a tactical situation; of course, that is much more likely if you stay away from the most popular lines of the day.

Even if you don't introduce new moves, asking the 'What if...?' question can lead you to understand the evolution of a variation which

Players everywhere will tell you that finding new opening moves or charting new territory in the opening is among the most rewarding experiences that comes from study. For some, it is their proudest achievement in chess.

5. Practice makes perfect

Not surprisingly, it is vital to play your openings as often as possible. This can be done in casual play and tournaments, against computers, or in online playing situations. These days, most serious players take advantage of the latter possibility, and there are numerous playing sites on which to do so. In general, inexperienced players can get by using a free or inexpensive site, and that may be the proper budgetary decision. But as you get more serious, the major pay sites such as Internet Chess Club or Playchess offer the strongest opposition and the chance to sit in on grandmaster games, along with many features that other sites don't offer. You should do your own investigation before deciding what fits your needs.

There are other ways to make your practice more efficient and rewarding. For example, if you're trying to learn an opening as Black, practice playing it from the white side, and vice-versa. You can even set up a series of games with a partner and agree to play the same variation again and again. Such practice is ideally suited for online play, and this is one situation in which I can recommend blitz games (in sensible, non-addictive, quantities). Otherwise, for the sake of opening practice, try to make your online games at a 10-minute or preferably 15-minute time-control (or longer, if it's possible to find an opponent). In that way, you get to reflect a little about the opening and early middlegame issues before descending into a time-scramble. It's even worth sacrificing some rating points by taking an impractical amount of time to emphasize opening accuracy instead of results; after all, it doesn't take too long to get your online rating back to its natural level.

Finally, many players test their openings by playing against a computer program. That's an excellent way to gain experience, and puts the learning process under your control; for example, you can pause the play and contemplate the position, look up the line in a book, jot down

what's happening, or take a break to eat something. One drawback to this kind of study is that it takes place in a less competitive atmosphere than online play, and might make your transition to over-the-board games more difficult. In addition, you might find that you miss the social element of the game; of course, that might be an improvement when you consider some online behaviour!

6. Over the board

This chapter isn't about psychological issues, but let me devote a few words to playing openings in real, over-the-board situations (for example, at tournaments). Right away, I believe that it's a mistake to blitz out opening moves at a rapid-fire pace. For one thing, it's rather obnoxious, and may unnecessarily provoke more determined play from your opponent. More importantly (for most players, anyway), you will probably play an unintended move from time to time. This can happen even if you're familiar with an opening and wide awake. For example, you might be prepared to make a certain standard move in any case, but then fail to adjust to your opponent's unexpected move. Or you play your moves in the wrong order, which is, incidentally, a common time-trouble slip. Probably the most frequent mistake when slamming out the opening moves is to play a customary move automatically, and then suddenly remember that you had actually decided to play something different if you ever reached the position. All these possibilities are very unlikely to happen if you take more than five seconds per move. And pressing the clock with normal force goes a long way towards establishing your maturity.

Next, you have to realize and accept that you'll seldom get the exact subvariation that you're hoping for, that you'll often not get the exact variation, and sometimes, you won't even end up in the right opening! The bald fact is that there are two of you playing, and your opponent has his own preparation as well as limits on his theoretical knowledge. So he may deviate into a sideline, use a move-order that you hadn't anticipated, or play a new move, whether intentionally or not.

How should you react when you are surprised by an unexpected opening move, and are

unsure of whether you're facing something new? The obvious answer, one given by some books and teachers, is that you should avoid speculating about your opponent's knowledge and play the position objectively, at normal speed, just as you would any random middle-game position. After all, unexpected moves are commonplace throughout a game. But in fact, it's absolutely justified to hit the reset button and take an unusual amount of time to think. After all, your opponent hasn't studied that random middlegame position, but there's a good possibility that he *has* studied this particular opening and therefore a chance, although hardly a certainty, that his last move is a prepared novelty. If so, then there are more likely to be different kinds of issues in the position, and possibly tricks for you to negotiate. What's more, small mistakes are more likely to be punished when your opponent has had time to reflect about the possibilities away from the board. So additional caution is desirable. It's also possible that the surprise move is an inferior one, or an outright mistake (after all, there may be a good reason why you haven't seen it before). In that case, taking extra time to check for a possible flaw is also worthwhile. In either case, don't feel intimidated into making a quick response. While it may be more macho to throw down a 'You-don't-scare-me', 'Try-that-out-for-size' move, you really should expend some resources at this first critical juncture of the game.

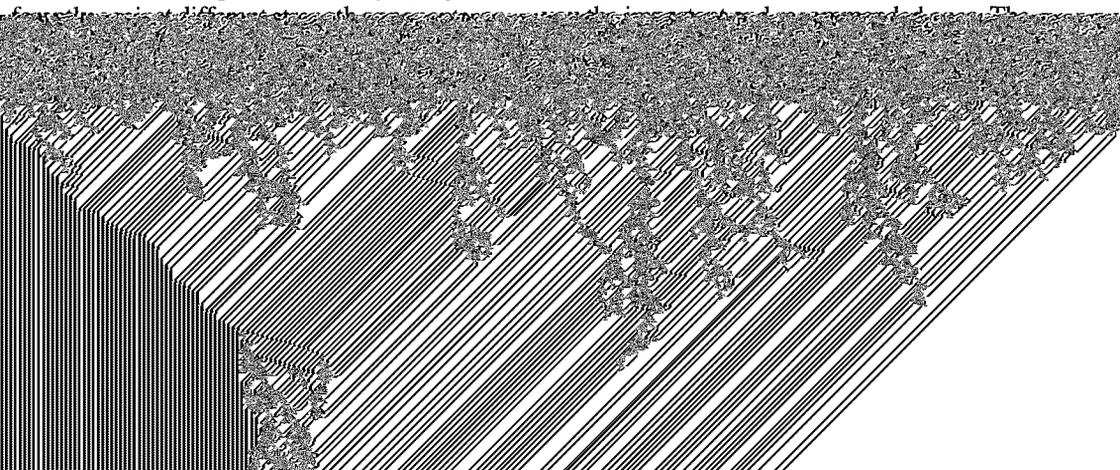
Finally, a time-honoured question in chess is whether to 'play the board' or 'play the opponent'. My general inclination in the middlegame is to play the board, which means to make your moves without taking the tastes or foibles of your specific opponent into account. That doesn't eliminate speculation, or playing dif-

that is, if you're quite sure that you're familiar with someone's style and preferences, it makes sense to guide the play away from those. For example, many wild attacking players don't like simplified positions, especially with the queens off. Other positionally-oriented players become uncomfortable in out-of-control tactical positions. I think that it's too risky and difficult to try to channel the direction of the play in the middlegame or endgame; for one thing, their assessments will be approximate and the final positions fuzzy. But in the opening, because of previous and fixed knowledge, you can be almost sure whether a certain kind of position can be forced, and what the evaluations of the resulting variations are. Therefore you'll know what, if anything, you are sacrificing in objective terms by forcing the play in a certain direction. Putting this together, I'd say that it's all right to play opening variations that take into account your opponent's style, but be careful not to lean too heavily upon the practice.

7. Chess information and the openings

In today's chess world, there are more sources of information and analysis about openings than can possibly be kept track of. Here's a brief guide to what's out there:

1. For starters, you can find multiple opening books about every conventional opening, as well as books about most of their variations, and even some about subvariations. If you include books written in various languages, literally hundreds of opening books by master-strength players appear each year. Some of these are appearing in e-book form as well. One enormous advantage of opening books is that you have a strong player (usually an expert in the line) sorting through hundreds of variations to show



2. The most significant longstanding periodic publications with an emphasis on openings are the Informator series, which has annotations by strong and elite grandmasters, and the New in Chess Yearbooks, which consist of opening articles by leading experts. ChessBase Magazine, an electronic magazine on DVD, publishes numerous opening surveys in each issue.

3. In electronic form, DVDs about chess openings have expanded. Be warned that these are mostly of poor quality, but there are notable exceptions, primarily in the series of high-quality DVD videos from ChessBase.

4. Many websites are loaded with information about openings. Every year, the website ChessPublishing produces the equivalent of many books' worth of opening material, all annotated by grandmasters, along with e-books summarizing the information. Elsewhere on the Web, innumerable teaching sites, blogs, and players' home pages have opening analysis.

5. Chess magazines not only have many games annotated in detail by leading players, but they often contain separate opening articles. Almost every country has a national publication, and many other wonderful magazines are published around the world. It wouldn't be fair for me to recommend particular ones, but you can combine the recommendations of friends

own repertoires. With their years of exposure to opening ideas and large blocks of available time, some grandmasters practically live off databases to satisfy their opening theory needs.

That isn't realistic or even desirable for the non-professional, however. For the majority of us, an opening book is still the best way to understand a variation's positional and tactical ideas, and to pick up intelligent suggestions. One reason for this is that it's difficult to assess the worth of the moves that you find from databases. When doing searches, I sometimes filter out all games below a certain rating level, and I also try to include all the annotated games that I can find; nevertheless, I'm continually surprised by how often this gives a wrong impression about what the best lines really are. In addition, with the arm's-length view that comes from a database search, it's not easy to decide which variations are practical or which move-order problems will prevent you from getting the positions that you're after. By contrast, when a titled author has reviewed, thought about, and (ideally) played an opening, he will have insights and explanations that the average player can't generate on his own.

In conclusion, there's a lot to consider when choosing and preparing your openings. In this chapter I've attempted to provide a basis for doing

10 The Future of Openings

Having described the range of openings used in contemporary chess, I don't think there's much doubt about their vitality in the immediate future. These days, it's hard for us to imagine that in the 1920s, Capablanca and Lasker were fretting about how opening theory had progressed to such an extreme that chess had become fundamentally limited. At the time, it was suggested that no one could win against a skilled master if he chose certain openings (the Caro-Kann was a particular worry, leading Réti to reject 1 e4 altogether, and the Queen's Gambit Declined seemed an insurmountable barrier versus 1. d4). That being the case, the percent-

manageable for us as humans than a random middlegame since we have a body of accumulated knowledge and recognize recurring structures. But the number of opening permutations is so great, and the difficulties of assessment so far beyond the grasp of the most powerful computer ever contemplated, that we can be confident about the game's longevity in that respect.

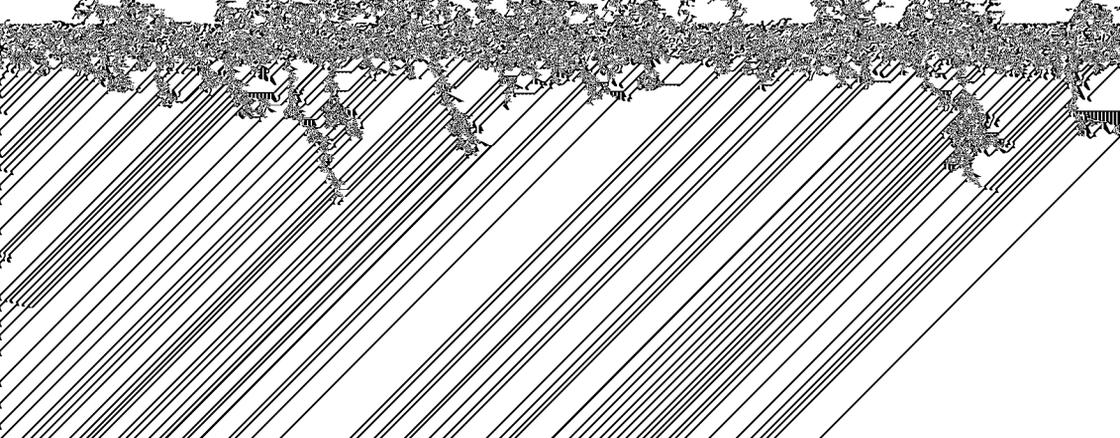
When we get to specifics, the issues are more involved, and vary sharply from group to group. Even professional players use different approaches to their choice of openings based upon their strategies regarding both competition and rating. Let's begin at the very top, with

The leading players exhibit more variety, although almost everyone includes the super-solid 1... f6 and 2... e6 (the Nimzo-Indian/Queen's Indian complex) in their repertoires, sometimes exclusively, as well as a large number of games with 1... d5 , the other most conservative first move. To the extent that 1 d4 play sometimes turns wild, it usually does so because White feels obliged to try to win against an inherently solid opening such as the Slav or Queen's Indian, and is even willing to sacrifice a pawn or two in that effort.

By contrast, it's worth noting how World Champions Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov, the two most prominent players of the modern era, made winning as Black an integral part of their approach. Fischer drew only 37% of his games as Black and won 51% (versus considerably lower average opposition, to be sure); whereas Kasparov drew only 48% of his games with Black and won 40%, far ahead of his contemporaries. They both specialized in the dynamic Sicilian Defence, and both initially used the double-edged King's Indian and Grünfeld Defences as Black, turning to more solid approaches later in their careers. Kasparov ultimately went through every major system versus 1 d4 , and naturally played them all well.

We also find a contemporary set of top players who lean in the Fischer/Kasparov direction, and take many more forays in experimental directions. It will surprise no one who follows their games, for example, that Veselin Topalov and Alexei Shirov, who boast of wide repertoires filled with active openings, have had unusually low drawing percentages with both White and Black; nor that the eccentric Alexander Morozevich and aggressive Judit Polgar have Fischer-like drawing percentages. So even the accelerated growth of professionalism at

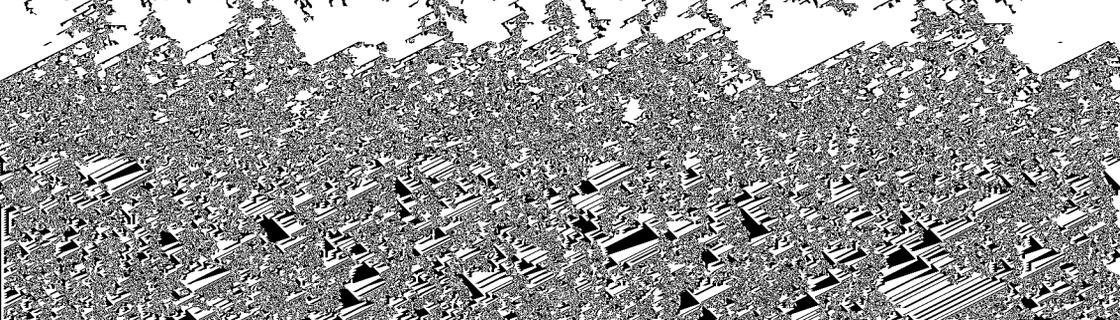
At the current time, I find that the most interesting opening play (and games, for that matter) tends to come from the next couple of tiers of players. Most professionals below a certain world rank, perhaps 15-20, don't have enough invitations to support themselves, and so they play extensively in leagues, team events, and Swiss System tournaments. Under these circumstances, a higher proportion of wins is necessary for success, and the 'hold as Black' philosophy is much less prominent. Thus, every month, we see an amazing array of openings used by extremely strong players (including those on their way up or down in the rankings). To be more precise, every major opening discussed in this series gets tested in numerous subvariations, and even very minor openings are consistently represented at the level of masters, albeit somewhat less as the competition stiffens. You can explore this on your own by downloading games from a number of prominent websites. Is this set of players using a wider variety of openings since, at 50-100 points below supergrandmaster levels, they can count on their opponents' less precise play? That is extremely unlikely, especially since theory is spread and devoured at outrageous speed these days, and every grandmaster has his own prepared ideas versus every opening. Then what's the difference? For one thing, a very limited number of openings are being played consistently by the highest-rated players at any one time, because in exclusive tournaments they tend to dispute the latest fashionable openings. Nevertheless, those openings are changing on a regular basis, if sluggishly, as they have in every period of modern chess history, especially post-WWII. So the idea that openings are 'inferior' because they aren't consistently played at supertournaments is simply misguided. Right



number of Closed Ruy Lopez lines? Yet right at the moment you won't see them played much until you drop below the top ten. Even the most maligned of openings may ultimately equalize; out of the blue, for example, Carlsen and others began to play the Alekhine Defence with success, and a variety of lesser $1\ e4\ e5$ variations appear to be perfectly sound. If you look at the actual theory as well as practice, it seems as though, played accurately, almost any major e-pawn or d-pawn defence will achieve a *de facto* equality at a certain point of the game. This leads to two main questions: how early does that ultimate equality express itself and, on a related note, how hard is it to reach a level game in over-the-board play? These are practical matters. It would be great if we could evaluate openings these days by including a number or designation reflecting how difficult each opening is to handle! That degree of difficulty translates directly into how likely it is that you'll make a mistake or, if not, run into time-pressure. It's not always important in practice whether you stand equal, or slightly better, or slightly worse in theory, if on every move you're confronted with problems that are especially hard to solve. I could probably make a good theoretical case for the objective equality of the Modern Benoni after many accurate moves. But the difficulty of finding those moves is arguably much higher than finding the right moves in the Nimzo-Indian Defence or Queen's Gambit Declined. Clearly, that will be reflected on the players' clocks. From White's viewpoint, the same consideration applies: versus accurate play by Black, no opening is likely to give him a forced advantage in the long run. But the mainstream ones tend to retain some edge into the early middlegame, and continue to pose nontrivial problems for Black thereafter. I discussed this in Chapter 6, where I suggested that White's preference for 'mainstream' openings such as the Ruy Lopez and Queen's Gambit over the Scotch Game or London System has more to do with the first two's ability to pose lasting difficulties than

vulnerable kings and a material imbalance, even grandmasters commentating live on websites will say 'The position is drawn now', or 'drawish', although a 2700+ player then manages to lose it after errors by both players have given them alternately winning positions! One difficulty here is the reliance on computer assessments: a '-0.10', even if accurate, doesn't distinguish between easily drawn king-and-pawn endings and complex positions with a high probability of a decisive result. The other problem is the egoism of annotators and commentators, who want to show how easy chess is for them, and act as though they're shocked when great players make minor errors (sometimes given '??' for dramatic effect) which result in one side being able to win a complex position with perfect play. In view of this, imagine how far away from a draw you must be in the opening! Barring cases of a particular variation or subvariation that leads to a draw by repetition, that should be your last worry. To be sure, aiming for complex and/or dynamic positions in at least some of your games is generally good for your chess, but not for the sake of avoiding draws. You can confirm that by examining the allegedly drawish symmetrical lines that I've written about in this series; they may seem dull, but they almost always afford realistic winning chances. So be sceptical when someone tells you that one opening or another is 'drawish'; arguably, none are.

Returning to high-level play, I think that the general positional character of the opening is a major determinant of its appeal. For example, throughout the history of chess, the best players have unquestionably preferred having positions with more space (that is, with control over more territory). Arguably, all of the World Championships have been partial to space, excepting possibly Steinitz and Petrosian at certain times during their careers. While modern masters have incorporated quite a few more restricted positions into their repertoires (for one thing, the Sicilian Defence is currently played in 30



be a practical differentiation (if not a clear one) between defences involving fianchettoes and those without. The former, even when sound and objectively worthwhile, seem to require greater accuracy. The Modern Defence (1...g6) and 1...b6 are the most obvious examples, and some grandmasters would say the same about the Modern Benoni and the King's Indian Defence. Still, there are prominent exceptions; for example, the Queen's Indian Defence isn't usually looked upon in this fashion, nor is the Grünfeld; and the Sicilian Dragon rolls merrily along. So there are no hard-and-fast rules. And naturally, these considerations are much less meaningful at a lower level, where games are seldom decided upon the basis of territorial control. In fact, defending territory is often harder for the lower-level player than playing with less of it!

Nevertheless, along the same lines, most strong players seem to have found that, in response to 1 e4, 1...e5, the French Defence, and the Caro-Kann Defence are easier to handle in practice than most other systems. Both 1...e5 and the French Defence establish an actual stake in the centre, and the Caro-Kann, while surrendering the centre by ...dxe4 in the main lines, opens the d-file and creates room for central piece activity. The latter is missing in most variations of the Sicilian, Pirc and Alekhine Defences, and that can make them more difficult

to handle in practice. Perhaps as players become more proficient at managing positions with less space, variations involving spatial deficits will acquire a status of practical as well as theoretical equality. That is already the case with well-established variations of the Sicilian Defence which were looked upon unfavourably in earlier times. If this increased skilfulness proves to be the general case, a positive consequence would be the expansion of creative possibilities in the opening. That is certainly the current trend, considering how many new early moves are suddenly becoming respectable. One happy side-effect already is that Internet players and club players, who are experimenting constantly, have become important contributors to the discovery process. As an amateur, you can have an independent say about opening theory and more importantly, feel free of its constraints. I won't need to convince most active players of this, certainly not my students and friends, who are both extending established lines and trying out new ones.

How long will all this last? There's no way of telling. But I wouldn't argue with the continuation of the current direction of events, particularly since the scope of opening theory has expanded steadily for 150 years. In any case, you should take advantage of the opportunity to go in new directions with your own play.

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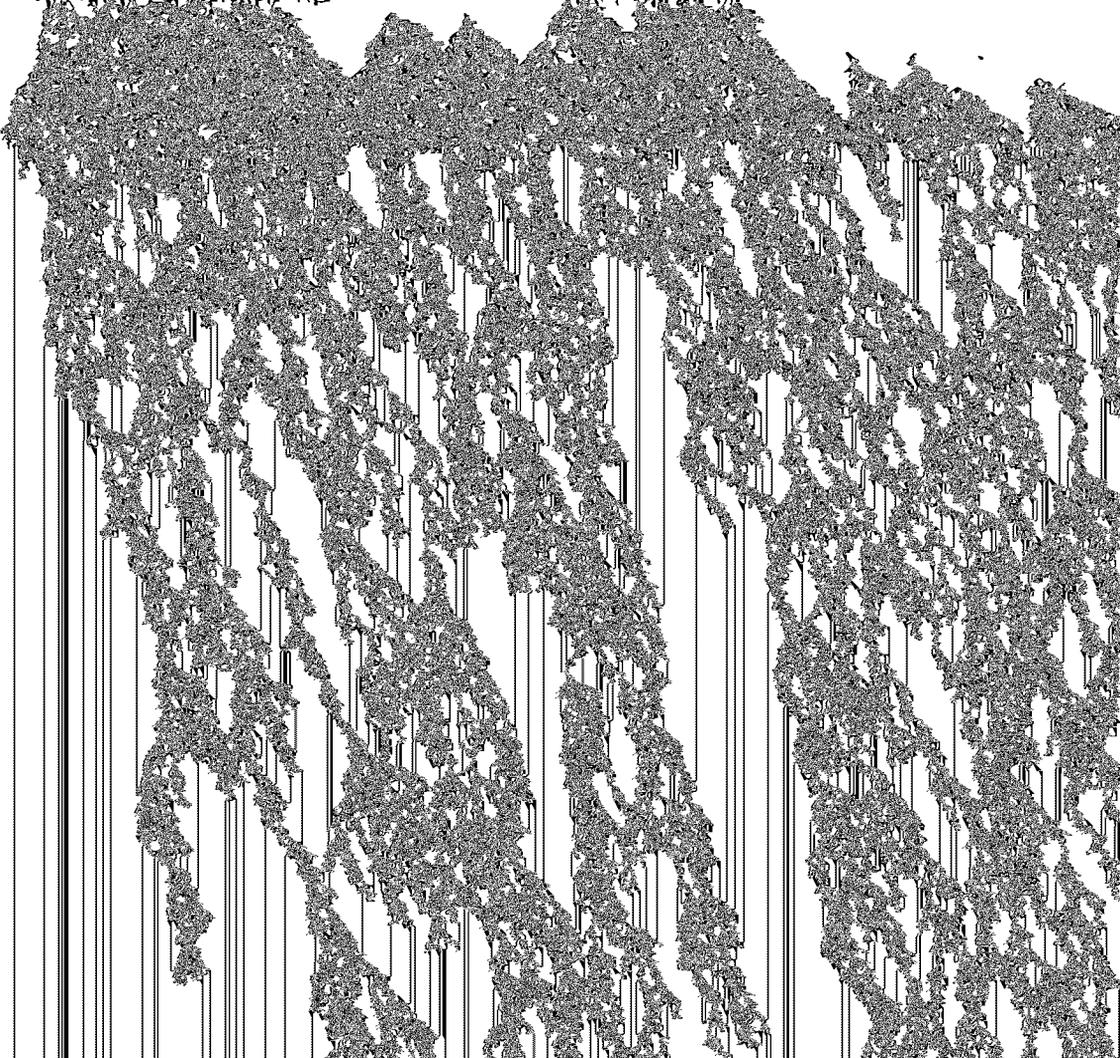
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